

AUTITUDE!

SUMMER SPECIAL



JUST WHAT THE
DOCTOR ORDERED!

WELCOME!

Welcome to issue 24 of Autitude this month celebrating those heady summer holidays feels of the 70s/80s with a best of summer special!

Do you have artwork, photography, poetry or stories you would like to share? Or perhaps you have a suggestion of who you would like to see as our future Spectrum Superstar?

Whether it's a thought, suggestion or submission, send it to us at autitude@scottishautism.org.

We look forward to seeing your fab content!

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Scottish Autism Conference

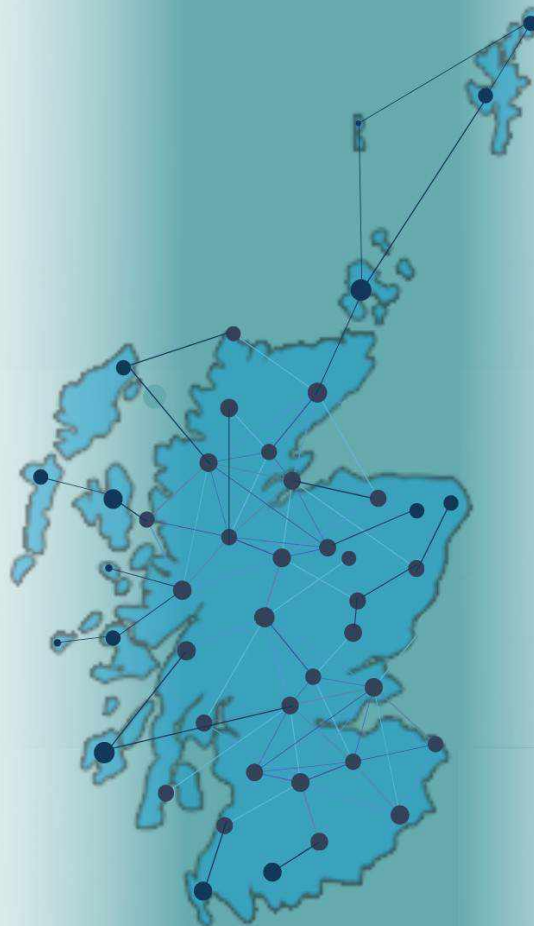
Why Relationships Matter in Good Autism Practice

5th October 2023

Scottish Autism are hosting our next online conference on 5th October. The theme for this year's event is "Why relationships matter in good autism practice" and will feature an array of speakers drawing on lived experience, professional practice and research.

This conference will shine a light on the ways in which autistic people's relationships can be recognised and supported - relationships with one another, with family members, with partners, and between supported people and professionals.

The conference is available to autistic people and their families via a 'pay what you can' scheme. To find out more and register for attendance, visit <https://www.scottishautismconference.org/>



Scottish
autism
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Book your place for Click & Connect Block 11!

Click and Connect offers three free online groups including Art and Choir groups for those who enjoy being creative and a Mindfulness for Autism Group for those who are looking to reduce the impact of stress. The groups are a great way to come together and meet new and like-minded people in a safe and friendly environment.

The groups are delivered online via Zoom and are open to the autistic community and their families across Scotland.

For more information and to book:
<https://www.scottishautism.org/click-and-connect>

Advice Line Q+A

Join us for an 'Ask Us Anything' Advice Line Q&A live on our Facebook page on Wednesday 6th September 2023 at 12 noon where staff from our Advice Line will be here to answer your questions, and to provide advice and signposting.

Autistic Adults Peer Support Network

An autistic only space for autistic adults 18+ throughout Fife. Led by an autistic staff member, this is a relaxed and friendly space for peer support and general discussion. Feel free to bring any questions you have for the group and we will try to answer them.

Time 1:00pm to 2:30pm

Date 22nd August 2023

Price Free

Location

New Volunteer House 16 Fergus Place Kirkcaldy KY11XT
United Kingdom

To find out more and book a place, email
fifeoss@scottishautism.org

Online Art Group

The Art Group provides the opportunity to bring people together for creative expression in an informal and safe environment. It offers the chance for a mindful break from the day's worries and can help to reduce stress.

Each hour and a half session will explore an artistic medium and an abstract theme which can act as guidance to start off the creative process.

Attendees will be encouraged to view the chosen theme through their own personal lens, brainstorming ideas and searching for ways to best depict their vision. Kirsten will share knowledge and tips on how to work with the different mediums and materials. The materials to use are for guidance only and the attendees can always work in their preferred medium and explore it in their own way.

Join our online Art Group taking place every Wednesday from 19th July to 27th September from 5pm – 6.30pm.

Online Choir Group

The group will allow you to share music with others in a fun, no pressure environment. People listen to music for many different reasons, it can help you connect to your emotions as well as other people. Music is the one universal thing that connects us all around the world. We hope this group will connect you with others, enhance your wellbeing and develop your confidence.

Here are some of the benefits you might experience from joining the group:

- Reduce stress
- Connect with emotions
- Improve memory
- Improve motivation
- Meet new people/build friendships
- Improve breathing
- Have fun

Come along and join our free Online Choir Group which takes place every Thursday from 27th July to 28th September from 5pm – 6pm.

Untitled Poem by Rowan Mackay

You see me as different
Because I don't always see
The world as you see it
And not act quite as free

You see things one way
But for me it's not that simple...
The world I have has many parts
Loud and bright and I'm stuck in the middle,

Look at me, try to see,
The person...not the diagnosis.
I have autism, but I'm no different,
We are still people, just with odds against us.

Don't be afraid to be a friend
Who knows, you may hold a key,
To unlock a door and show others
How to help those who care for me.

Most of all, I ask you, to share
And speak out to those closed minds...
Spread the word to one and all
Please remember to just be kind.

FROM THE FUTURE BACK TO THE START, HOW I'VE ENDED UP CALLING MYSELF AN ECCENTRIC AGAIN.

This August on the Edinburgh free festival I will yet again and now as usual, be occupying a space known as The Alcove in a venue called Bar 50. This is a large hostel/hotel situated on the so - called Cow Gate area, under the central bridges of the city.

At 1pm, I will try to join up my 59 years of life in the space of 45 minutes. Then I have to conduct a bucket collection, this being the Free Fringe, and pack all the equipment away that was involved in my one - man show. This is always the hardest part. Meeting the audience properly, negotiating questions and praise (hopefully) and then breaking away to 'talk to them in a minute' as I deactivate a computer, video projector, PA and then pack away badges and books.

Finally, I stumble into the foyer/bar area, sit down and finish off any conversations. The money counting is always fun. The card reader hopefully worked. I am left with the experience of the show. What I said, what I did and how it was received by the audiences. I have experienced groups of people who roared with reassuring laughter. I've often seen audiences sit there like a graveyard. Yet they liked it afterwards it seemed from the applause and comments. Many pass no judgement, merely leave. What have they taken from the experience? I will never know. Maybe the odd praise on the internet.

I could be in the Royal Albert Hall, or a tiny room like venue. It would I think be equally the same experience. You always perform as if this is it, the big one. You always seek to enjoy what you do and share it with the audience. I always hope people will talk to me during the shows and take it somewhere interesting. I call it audience participation. Many performers call such actions heckling.

Well, I started this business when I was terrified of most people and eighteen years of age, back in 1982. An undiagnosed autistic teenager in the city of Liverpool. I came from the middle of the tracks as it were, (there is a wrong and a right side as the metaphor goes). I was educated on the good side and then elected to use FE colleges in town. Which meant sitting with the really rough crew whom I adored being with. The Everyman Youth Theatre was at the top of a hill, on a road called Hope Street. On one end was the futuristic (a 70's term) cone like 'Paddies Wigwam' Catholic cathedral. The other contained the classically built Anglican cathedral, complete with its own huge quarry/cemetery. It was a good time in history to be there, ecumenically speaking.

It was during Tuesday nights in the Everyman Youth Theatre that I discovered my childhood ability to perform and improvise adventures could be a real world asset. I went on to leave my A levels and just do plays around Merseyside and then Manchester. In 1986 I landed in a major London drama school. I was not going to last long, being an undiagnosed autistic, speeding away on his ADHD. But I worked and was conscientious and sober, and it all led to a level of self - development that became a way of life. Pursuing the sober buzz through fitness and ultimately meditation. Peace of mind and healing through The Dharma, walking (urban rambling, a practice that mitigated my ADHD) and work outs in gyms and dojo's.

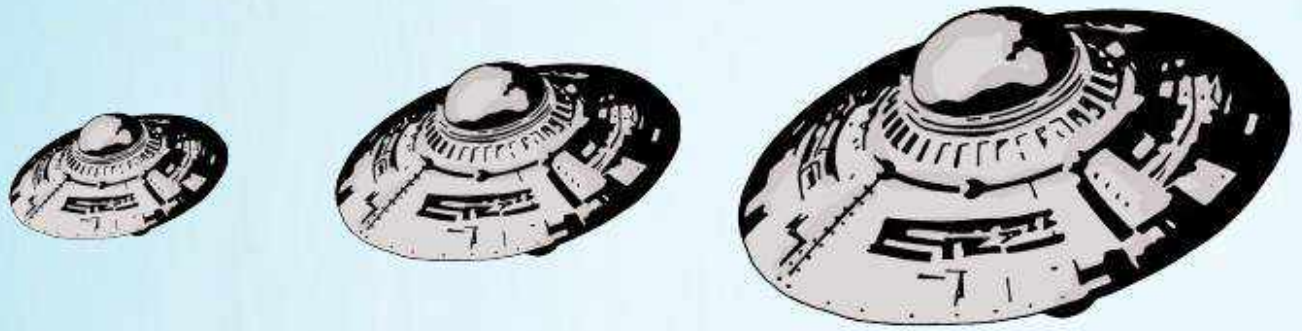
Eccentricity

unexpected objects of behaviour

Science and Oxford are two things that have a long history of eccentricity. Eccentric scientists are famous for their eccentric behaviour. Oxford academics inhabit a world of eccentricity. It has not been difficult to be eccentric in Oxford.

There are two admission qualifications for Oxford. They might be something you would expect in science, or they might illustrate eccentric behaviour. Some eccentric behaviour was considered eccentric. Some eccentric behaviour was considered eccentric. Some eccentric behaviour would not normally find a place in Oxford.



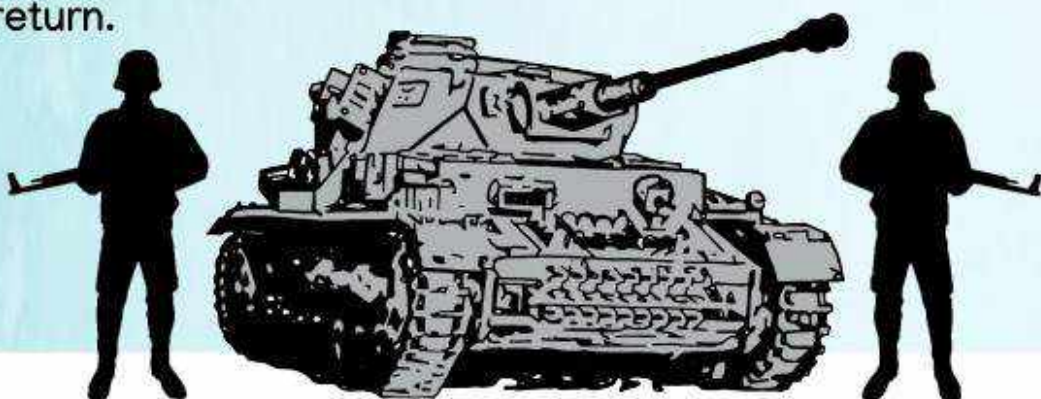


Cut to the present day, I face being sixty years of age in a matter of months. I get benefits but not the income due to me at the current retirement age of 66. (Bizarre fact: When I am 63 the age of retirement is due to start slipping further away past 66. Welcome to 21st century Britain). So what does Grandpa do? Oh, book a three-week run of my show on the Edinburgh Free Fringe. My idea of a holiday. Erm...isn't that a high impact, war zone like space for an autistic adult?

Yep, and lots of us are doing it too. I perform from the 3rd until the 27th with Sundays off. I love it. I've NO IDEA what is going to happen at this stage in time. Every morning there is the same - a process of rest, preparation through meditation and the odd floor exercise, flying (where you run around giving out A6 cards to interest people in your show) and finally setting up the venue.

But I digress so much. About 700 plus words so far. What about being ECCENTRIC? How does that link to being NeuroDiverse?

As a child, I knew I was magnificent. Brilliant. I loved playing with my toys on my own, creating adventures. Science fiction action series. My eyes and ears the camera gear to record them. I experienced a real thrill and euphoria from improvising as I went on. Ah, those poor Action Men figures (NEVER call them dolls. I caught an aunt doing that once and told her off. Dolls indeed...). They had names and identities. You can see them on my YouTube channel under the WarZoners heading as I animated a whole series during the 2020 lockdown. 2021 I completed the pilot episode for series 2 but left it at that. Still you never know as they may return.



It was my imagination coupled with my joyous OCD energy that led a man in his late 50's to be filming a Poundland plastic submarine in the Barbican centre London lake. This led to some spectacular underwater film involving algae and swirling shapes. Eccentric? You bet. (You should see the film though? I was amazed what scale of drama I could achieve in a shallow, uncleaned pool with a model on a stick).

In my 1970's school days I once saw a documentary on Salvador Dali on a Sunday afternoon. It made a big impression on me that I was not alone. Together with his equally bizarre wife Gaia, the Catalanian pranced about his home, festooned with his surreal paintings and sculptures, making bizarre proclamations that made him happy and the rest of the world wonder. He sat on his Lilo in his swimming pool with his flies half open!! My God.... This was 1976. Was this man insane? Who cared as he was so much fun and SO TYPIFIED MY OWN ENERGY AND PERSONAL URGES TO DO MY OWN THING, no matter how much the rest of the world did not relate.

I was obsessed with science, at least my version of it. Science fiction kept me going in the grey, grim world of 1970's Liverpool. Creating stories and inventing machines on paper. I still have a huge collection of schematics. Moon bases. Robots! Spaceships! A car that worked on water. Ah yes, the prototype had a cistern over the back of it raised high. You pulled a chain and the water flowed more, thus regulating speed. Or was it a valve...? Since a pump on the axel pushed the water back into the cistern - I had invented perpetual motion. I was certain of it. Damn you friction, damn you.

I stimmed making noises and gestures. Others reacted to myself focused nature, mocking, avoiding and worse. Or kind of got used to it. I had my own walk, my own body language and my love of greasy hair. Wash it once every 2 weeks - no problem. Some later life adventures with Brill cream put me off the slick look for life thankfully. Good job for the sake of everyone else too. On more than one occasion, I left the house, and even went to a party, with a head that looked like it was made of plastic. I mean I did not use this stuff lightly for hold...I used a ton of it like it was plaster. I still shudder thinking about hair gel.

It was 1980 when I saw The Naked Civil Servant TV show. Quentin Crisp represented for me an individual who faced the world bravely and to Hell with being different from it. I remain as then, utterly heterosexual. Yet his personality so impressed me that one day in 1980 I stole into the WH Smiths branch in Church street central Liverpool, and bought a copy of his autobiography. You had to be careful around displaying anything LGBTI in those days you know? A wonderful book full of bohemian advice. (His notes on avoiding housework a template for all men I'd say?). I went on to spend an entire day in the London drama school pretending to be him. Some said it was my finest hour of improvisation.

Then there was Spike Milligan, a man diagnosed by Professor Michael Fitzpatrick as half autistic and half bipolar. Dual diagnosis being a thing you know? Ah, Milligan, my great hero together with Tom Bakers take on being Doctor Who. The energy! The guile! The wit! The fact he too was a Scouser. These men were my heroes. I knew who Milligan was long before I ever heard a Goon Show script. Being an obsessive slave of the cathode ray tube from a very early age. (I remember when you had to come straight into the house from school and turn the black and white telly on, to give it time to warm up and work).

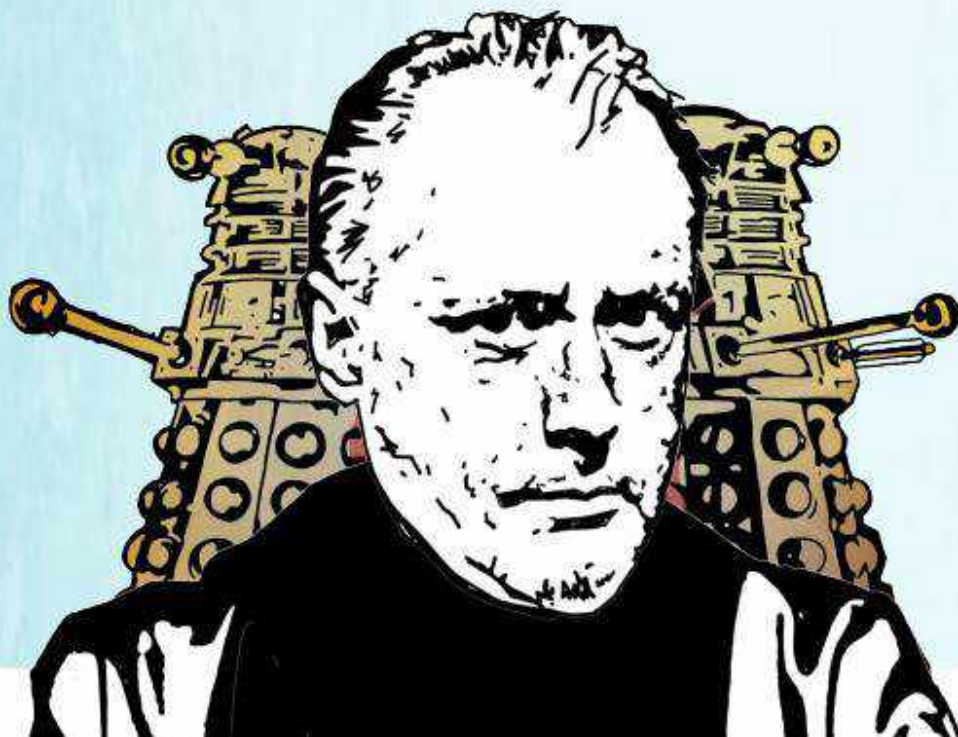
It was quite logical that I would come to the conclusion a few weeks ago that a show about eccentricity was required. So far I have five books on the subject and it's striking how much each page is packed with obsessional energised people who typify being on the spectrum. Yet many of the books refuse to even use the term Autism, let alone Neurodiverse. A 1995 book, Eccentrics by David Weeks and Jamie James, never refers to it in the appendix. Schizophrenia is mentioned and discounted in a specialist chapter. Bear in mind Mr Weeks professed to be a clinical neuropsychologist and therapist at the time? Yet it is comically obvious the work is jammed and jammed full of the personalities of neurodivergent people.

Tales of those who became fixated on things and would not give up on them. William McGonagall was a 19th century weaver from a very poor background who loved Shakespeare so much, he would recite from memory entire scenes whilst his colleagues listened on as they all worked. Then one day, this happened...

"I seemed to feel as it were a strange kind of feeling stealing over me, and remained so for about five minutes. A flame, as Lord Byron has said, seemed to kindle up my entire frame, along with a strong desire to write poetry; and I felt so happy, that I was inclined to dance, then I began to pace backwards and forwards in the room, trying to shake off all thought of writing poetry; but the more I tried, the more-strong the sensation became. It was so strong, I imagined that a pen was in my right hand, and a voice crying "Write! Write!""

His hilarious, doggerel poems survive to this day. His utterly disproportionate perception of his own works worth being the source of great mirth for others during his life. But not him. It is said audiences would throw rotten vegetables and fruit at him and that he was often hired for parties in order that the people get drunk and find him hilarious. He did well. It is this absolute conviction and inability to let go of ones love of something that I so related to. The overriding joy of doing what really makes you happy. Even if the thing being overridden is the rest of the world and its values, standards and societal ideas of what is valid adult behaviour.

Haven't we all been there? Obsessed with Fire Brigade Services, Lilly Hitchcock Coit, a San Francisco resident who lived around 1849 and was utterly obsessed with the local fire department to the point that she was made an honorary member of the Knickerbocker Fire Company No5, it's crew and fire tenders. She once peroxided her hair bright yellow for the Hell of it and when challenged by her new husband, shaved the lot off and went on to wear red, black and blonde wigs instead.



From 1859 until his 1880 death, a man called Joshua Edward Norton decided that he reigned supreme as the self-proclaimed Emperor of the United States of America. When he died, 30,000 filed past his casket to pay their respects. It was an idea he got one day. The writer Emily Dickinson always wore white, never went out of her room and hid her poems in tiny boxes. The concert pianist Glenn Gould, immortalised in a fascinating film about his life, lived in mortal fear of draughts and usually lagged himself against any kind of deadly breeze no matter how tropical the weather. He was to be seen performing in places like Israel "doubly hatted, doubly mittened and endlessly muffled and mufflered". It gets warm there you know.

In all these cases, hundreds of stories in the books, people are represented who lived relatively functional lives and even had families, jobs and maintained respectable positions in their societies. Many did not manage to maintain these things due to their intractable self-integrity being their downfalls. The former Labour MP Jared O'Mara being a fine if not tragic example of a NeuroDivergent person, the first member of parliament to hold a formal diagnosis, who has gone horribly wrong due to their addictions and self-focused behaviour. However, one cannot help but get the impression he loved every minute of it?

The actor Klaus Kinski for all his hyperactive and bipolar style behaviour, left us a magnificent legacy of film performances. Steve Silberman's *Neurotribes* starts with a man he titles 'the Wizard of Clapham Common', the brilliant and innovative scientist and inventor Sir Henry Cavendish. A man of as many eccentricities as unique and valuable innovations in science.

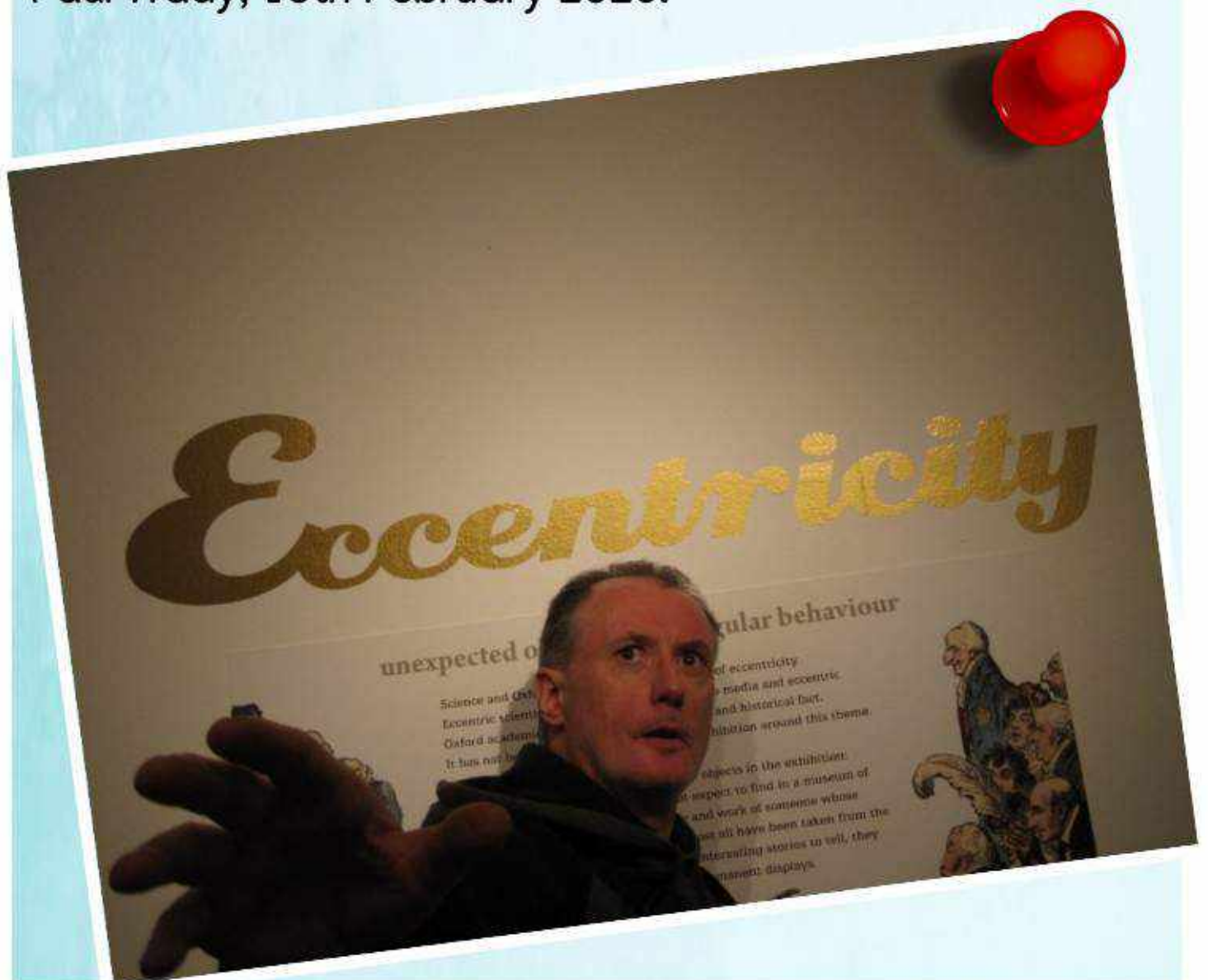
So it is that I find myself, after a lifetime of trying to kid the world I was as sane, competent and as NORMAL as everyone else around me that I can finally be free in front of an audience. I will indulge in my stim gestures and peccadilloes (obsessing about my old Poly, Science Fiction, synthesizers even if I am hardly a musician) bands, style and all things NeuroDivergent these days. As a very famous, indeed now immortal film star that I've known since I was a teenager once put it "I'm into everything". Once he got interested in something he did nothing but deep dives into those subjects. He too reckoned he was one of us.

Binary emotions. Absolute attention and devotion to anything we remotely like. Well let's face it, we either love, hate or are indifferent to things. All that magnificent energy raging within our NeuroDivergent hearts. Direct it. Channel it. Use it to make you happy and please, please try to concede to the values and needs of the world around you enough to support others and show mutual caring and respect. Develop a self that satisfies your urges and needs whilst considering and loving others and the greater community. Then my NeuroKin, you won't go wrong.

You can get away with being you as well. You know, the real one.

;))

Paul Wady, 15th February 2023.



The Black Candy Rocks

by John M Roney



*The black candy rocks have got
No fox to hide.*

*With slack sandy tracks to guide,
He's gone downwind on the tide.*



*The black candy rocks have got
No fox inside.*

*With cack-handed locks to slide,
He's in the poultry pen mouth wide.*



*The black candy rocks have got
No foxes hide.*

*With sack expanded, broken, stiff;
Laid in wait to make a kill.*



Who else but Farmer Bill.



*The black candy rocks have got
Nothing, nothing, no one,
Inside.*



Sand in your Hand

The sea , the sea and the land ,
sand , to sift sand , to sift sand
through the palm of your hand .

Ampersand a thousand gifted grains ;
Amber sand , a thousand gifted grains ;
and through the golden rain ,
our train of thought goes .
One cosmic thought , a wonder lust of sorts .

Scamper sand , to shift that scampered sand ,
away . To shift that scampered sand away .
Through the balmy day we hear them say
hip-hip-hooray we're off work today .
Now the kids can play .

Pamper sand , to thriftily pamper sand ;
and through our lifted arms we pray ,
we'll come back here someday .

by John M. Roney

Lost & Lonely

A single grain of sand washes down a runnel into a salty pool.
Over the solitary sands I wander, Oh so much alone.
The sea reverberates with crashing waves.
Always a swell way to spend one's time walking this path,
along sea-girt, sands meeting place.
I have no merit to compare myself with such splendour,
a vista beyond all cares.
This upside-down world of hemispheres, where one path,
my path reaches out to meet horizon vanishing point; and yet
I do not see it. I see it not,
that reality, that reality, that reality - which is life.

by John M. Roney

Our Wind Flapping Head

by John Roney

*We hear the hush; the gush of sea over sand.
 And with a flush in our handicapped head;
 do we not dread all things to come.
 Do we not rush to put to bed our cares;
 all our cares 'oh caves of thought'.
 And in our whip-lashed minds we see and hear
 the world, the world of sea and sky.
 And in our wind flapping head, like a bird
 tugging at undercurrents to rise from the waves;
 we rise to fly.
 And thus with expanding heart strings to sing
 with such effort;
 we get along this sea-girt, kiss meeting place of
 sea and land; we hear the hand, that mighty hand
 of oceans width bear and break along its length.
 And as if in divine retribution we realise we've
 lost so much; so much of time getting here thus
 far.
 I hear the Curlew bleat; I know of no retreat
 where still the Oystercatcher can be seen to mellow,
 under the umbrella of these starry seas
 and skies above;
 that gaze down
 along this shore
 of Kintyre.*

finis

Splash by John Roney

*The curling combs,
 the curling combs,
 the combers of the sea.
 And in those roving waves a seaward smile is
 seen.
 And in those roaming waves I see a seabird cry.
 And in the foaming caves I see a selchie sad.
 And in those homing heavens I see a dove so
 glad.
 And in those waters deep, where kelp so briny
 sleeps,
 I hear a soulful song.
 A keening call that rings along the shore.
 And like the wheatears on the wind her hair
 flows all aglow.
 And in a breasted way she billows by; the tide
 pulling at her back.
 And at her pretty nape, I see a curling comb.
 And in her voice so sweet, this is what I hear:*

*"the curling combs, the curling combs,
 the combers of the sea."*

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Crossing the Bridge

The journey of an autistic man so far

by Michael Ferns

My name is Michael and I was diagnosed with autism in December 2018. I am part Scottish, born in England and lived most of my life on the Channel Island of Jersey. This is my story so far about my big move from a small island to a major city.

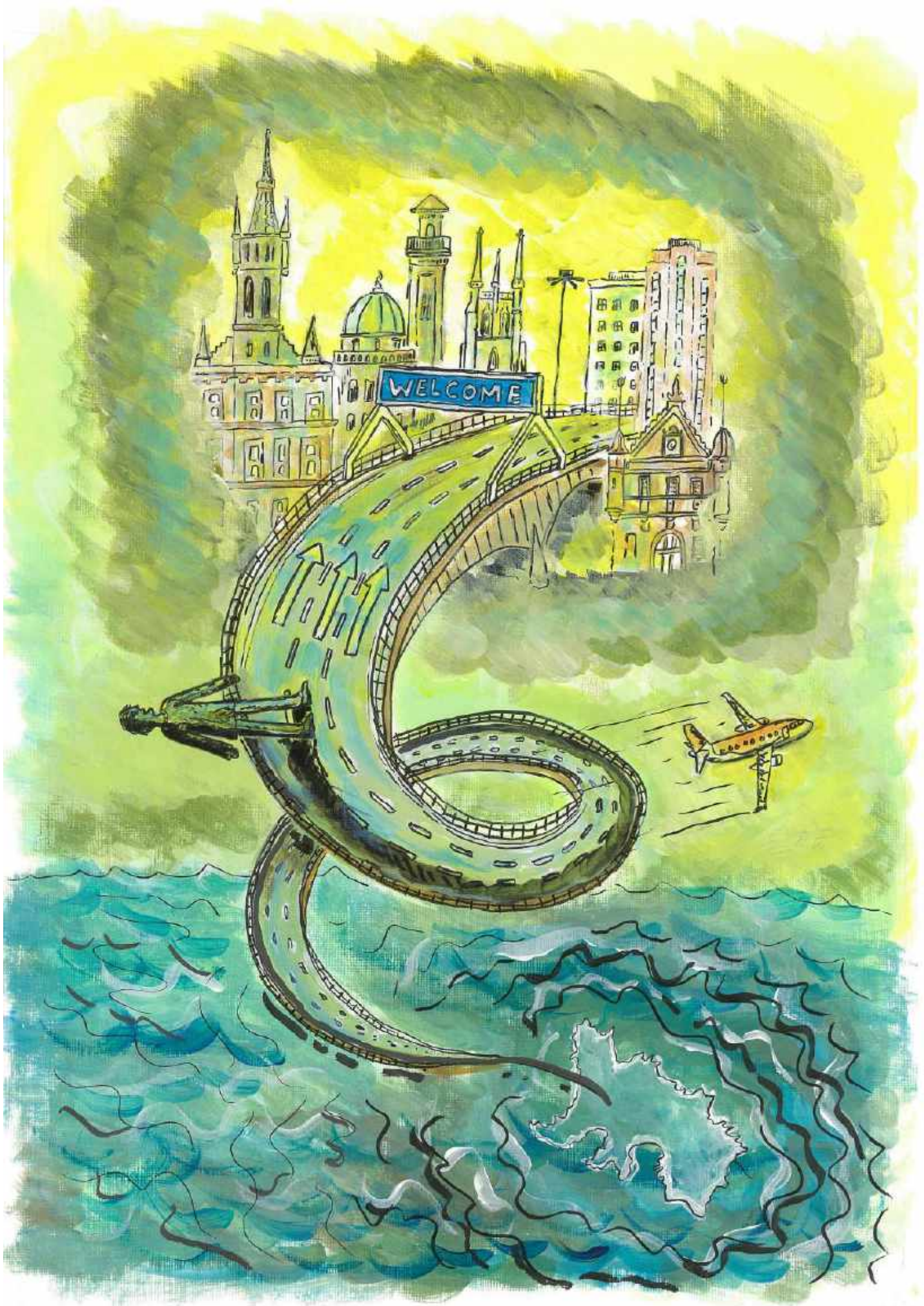
Jersey was a wonderful place to grow up in. Very safe with many beautiful areas to walk and explore. A lot of my artwork was inspired by its buildings, landmarks and coastlines. I lived most of my life with my mother. Some of my behaviours people found odd such as my routines, fixed subjects of interest, tendency to keep to myself, have hyperactive moments, be socially awkward, and being overwhelmed with change. This led to people thinking that I am on the autistic spectrum. Most of these behaviours were picked up when I was in University from 2007 to 2010. I studied Illustration at the University of Plymouth. It was the first time I lived without the assistance of my mother and it was a shock to the system as I was required to learn about things such as paying rent, buying food as well as routines such as washing clothes, etc. I did of course over come this even though I still kept getting things wrong as I was completely naive about the world. When one or two of my Uni friends suggested that I might be autistic, I rubbished it off. I didn't think there was anything wrong with me.

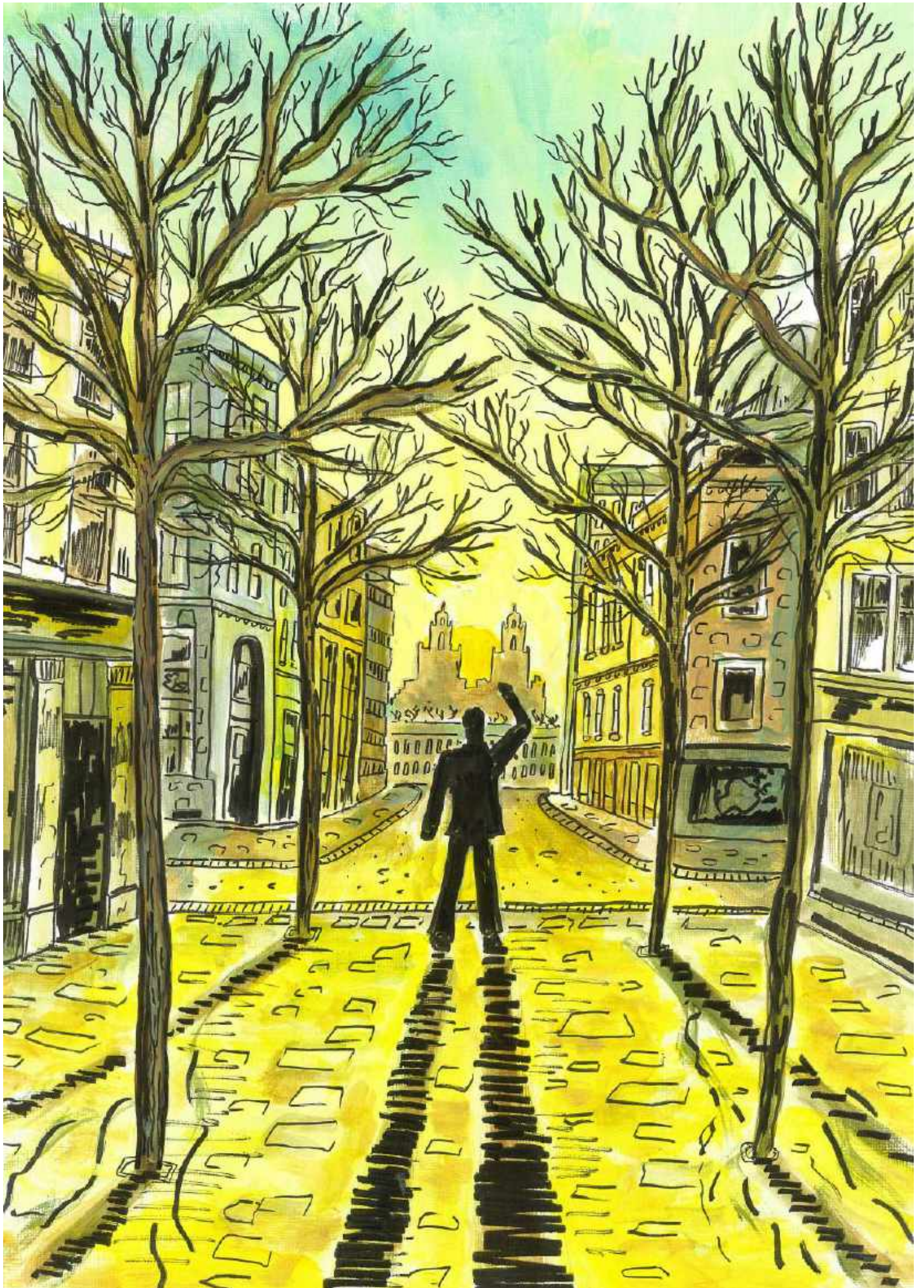
When University ended, my life style changed. The bubble burst and was thrown onto the rock hard ground of reality. I had to pay my uni debts, get a job, and it was very difficult. Jersey had a lack of resources for an artist. At this time I regretted that I didn't work as hard at Uni, probably because I was trying to take everything in and was easily distracted. There were still things that I took from there and transferred it to later works.

As I was not being good with change and being the best at dealing with people, I kept applying for specific jobs that avoided them such as filling, fulfilment, etc. I did not want to use a till or be a waiter. That terrified me. I could not even pick up the phone to call someone that wasn't a friend or a relative. The pressure was on as I needed to pay off my debts and was close to being black listed by my bank. But after a few placements and work experiences I end up working in hospitality which included the things I did not want to do. It was fast paced and very overwhelming even to the point that I cried because the toast machine was playing up and customers were complaining that they weren't receiving their toast and hot drinks. I didn't think I could do it as a Porter but I somehow over came it once I got my routines going and this continued into retail which included more into my fears as of course you need to use a till. I became more confident and I dealt with the public. There was still some challenges however which you get from every job.

Creativity wise, I did some drawings for a friend and then volunteered for Jersey Heritage where the volunteer coordinator was impressed with my work. The first project was with her knowledgeable colleague who had an idea for a graphic novel about the Battle of Jersey. This gave me my creative mojo back. Was great to be productive again. This became my first published book. The volunteer coordinator also had an idea of creating an illustrated map of around Jersey. I did the drawings as Jersey was something I was passionate about. Then it evolved into a walking book in which I coordinated some of the walks with the help of a fellow volunteer. Around this time as I was finding it hard with work and my mother was in hospital with pneumonia. This pushed me even harder as I felt this book would be my ticket to a happier, fulfilling life. The book was completed after 5 years of blood, sweat and tears. It was also very bitter sweet. A few weeks after the book got released to a really positive response - my mother passed away. This was the point where my life changed forever.

Things became overwhelming at first as not only did I have to learn about living on my own again, I had to deal with my mothers finances and funeral. Amazingly I got through it really well with the help of friends and family. Routines really helped and I created some of my best artwork. At this point my uncle thought I should try getting a diagnosis and he feels that would really help me. I applied for an assessment but had to wait a year. December 2018 and I got that all important result. This was where I truly accepted my diagnosis. Accepted for who I was.





Things were still tough, mainly due to the covid pandemic. I was feeling trapped in Jersey. I felt restricted. I kept working and being creative but I felt there was more to offer on the mainland. I kept holding it off as it is a big change and I didn't have a clue what to do. But after help from a therapist, my heart was set. I decided on Glasgow because it is a very creative city and my uncle lives there which would be a good starting point.

I spent most of 2021 planning on my big move as advised. This was also tough in itself as I had to get rid of a lot of items, also selling things at the same time. Was like an endless mole hill. Don't know how I managed. I am grateful for my friends and relatives in Jersey to help me with that.

And then I was in Glasgow...

I couldn't believe it especially with the days leading to the move. But there was a lot of overwhelming things to deal with as mainland UK has a completely different system to Jersey. Have to apply for a national insurance number, a P45, get a job, figuring out where to eventually live as I am staying with my uncle at the moment. It was a lot to take and even became too much at times especially with the housing associations. But I now have a job and things are slowly starting to fall into place. Still got a lot to sort out and have more decisions to make once again regarding housing. But I feel I made the right decision and am I excited about all the opportunities that Glasgow has to offer. I am quite proud of myself with the last ten or so years - I manage to overcome challenges as an autistic person including things that I felt I could never do.

You can achieve anything if you set your heart to it. Hopefully this will continue with my new life in Glasgow.

To be continued...

Autism through many eyes: diverse perspectives enrich our understanding of the condition.

Autism – as mixed and varied as humanity itself – can present a distinct mix of strengths and weaknesses that are rarely in equal proportion to one another.

People have many differing viewpoints on it. Often, phrases such like high functioning autism and mild and severe although well intentioned, has let a false dichotomy take hold. People are complex by nature. That complexity, largely from us all being a product of many diverse influences means disability and strengths coexist and cut both ways. For these reasons it can be thought of as being a controversial area.

Controversial in that people have come to make sense of the condition in varied ways, behaviours can be interpreted through different lenses, and for those whose lives are touched by the condition – the repercussions can be life changing. However, its core features – referred to as the “triad of impairments” – can be useful in that it delineates the key aspects of the condition. It demystifies them, and from this standpoint, at least, it can be a starting point where people are empowered to make sense of the difficulties, at times great difficulty, that can be a feature of their daily life.

Being neurodiverse in a world largely governed by neurotypical ways of thinking, doing and being is disabling. Conversely, being neurodiverse affords us powers of intellect, and ways of perception, that enrich the world. Disability and neurodiversity, together; one does not preclude the other. For instance, a terrific capacity for single minded devotion to task affords a way out of the maze of thoughts, mostly negative, with no seeming exit. Perversely, they are two sides of the same coin; so, choose to spend your thinking time wisely.

Conflict, perceived or otherwise, arises in complex arenas where there are competing interpretations, viewpoints and experiences among groups of people. Perhaps the simplest, easiest most basic example could be humanity. We are, each of us, different: possessing unique characteristics; with differing views on the same subjects; and seeing the same matters from different angles. Diversity of opinion, and respectfully disagreeing with one another, makes us no poorer for it.

'High functioning' autism, taken to mean people without intellectual disability, could scarcely be more misplaced. Forms of autism, all of them in their own ways, are disabling. When people have more difficulty than most functioning in society, difficulty with holding down a job, such difficulty mixing with people that it causes distress, and difficulty even leaving their own home without feeling overwhelmed – the difficulty with this misnomer becomes clear.

When you are at the top of the Swiss Alps, you will get that highest level broadest view of the surroundings – as if all your senses were momentarily hijacked by its striking complexity. Yet as you progress downwards you come down to a level where it can be appreciated. So too with Autism.

Gordon Barlow.

Poem by C.D

Chasing Thought

Thought, visible for a second,
slides away.

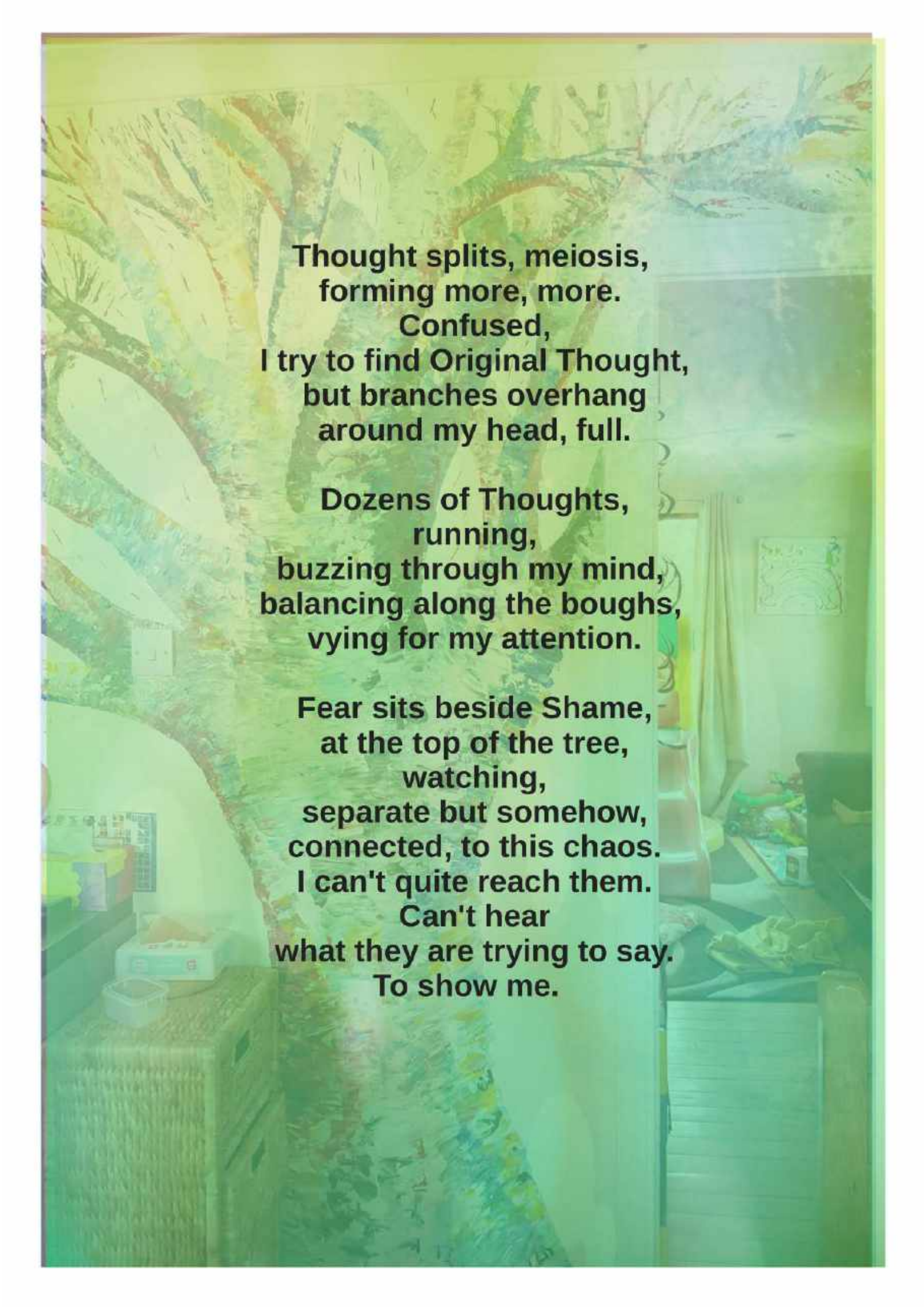
A dusky, ashy, dust ball,
rolling in the wind
to the foot of a tree.

I concentrate so hard.
I catch him.

I try to start at the beginning,
But Thought slips from my grasp,
evading me.

I snatch him again.
A flicker of recognition,
my reflection in the little sphere
prompting a moment of unease,
a memory.

But then the panic explodes,
Emotions rush through me,
Thought jumps out of my arms,
escapes me,
dashes up the tree trunk.
Emotions follow.



**Thought splits, meiosis,
forming more, more.
Confused,
I try to find Original Thought,
but branches overhang
around my head, full.**

**Dozens of Thoughts,
running,
buzzing through my mind,
balancing along the boughs,
vying for my attention.**

**Fear sits beside Shame,
at the top of the tree,
watching,
separate but somehow,
connected, to this chaos.
I can't quite reach them.
Can't hear
what they are trying to say.
To show me.**

CHANGE

I'd like to make a change and see the fearful thrive
I'd like to give them back a life and feel that they're alive
I'd take away their shadows and watch their colour grow
I'd see them crawl to standing tall and push the dark
below
I'd take away their stress and strains and body always
shaking
I'd fill them up with hope and love and stop them almost
breaking

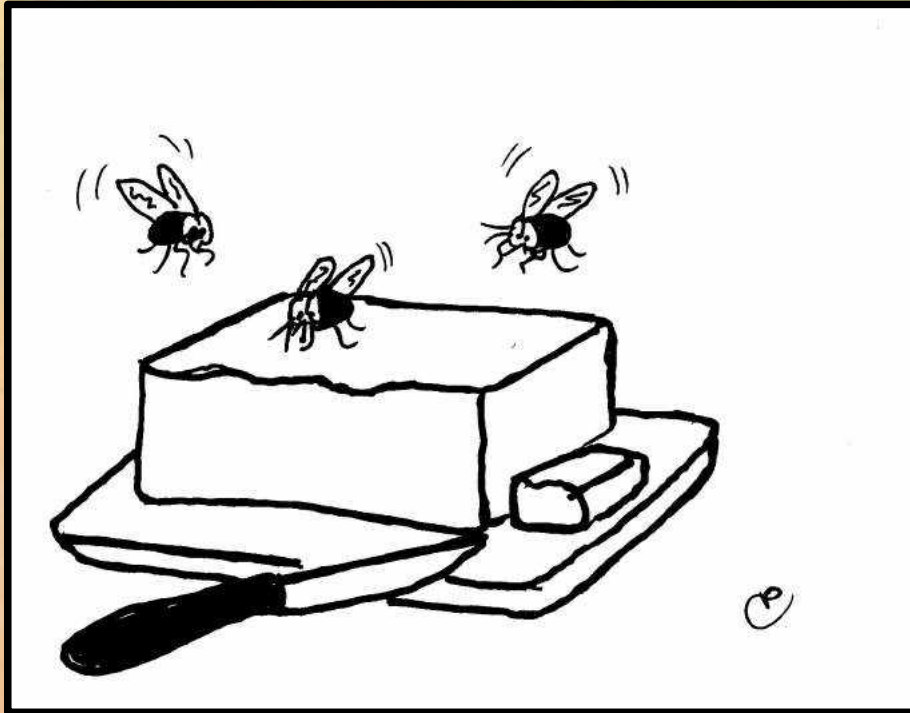
They've hit the very bottom with nowhere else to go
There's nothing left to fight for they're lowest of the low
Their knight in shining armour never seems to come
The very last delusion is burning in the sun
And no-one wants to know you and all that you have
been
Your knowledge, skills and kindness now go to waste
unseen

But I see your destruction of what they've done to you
And I would like to change your way and put you back like
glue
I know that you are hurting and need to take your time
But I will take you by the hand and soon you will be fine

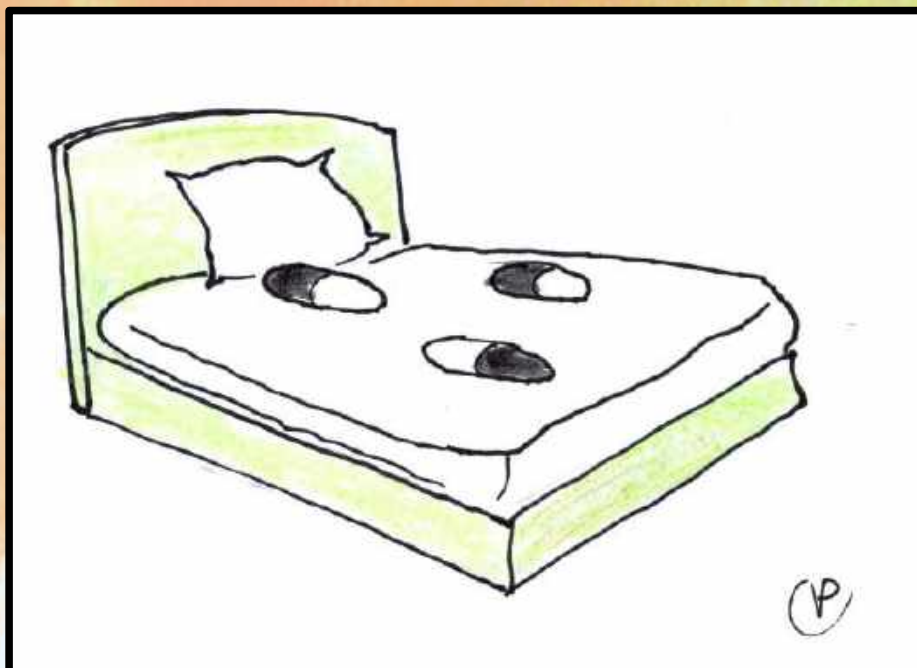
Dorothy Welsh

Peter Vermeulen's

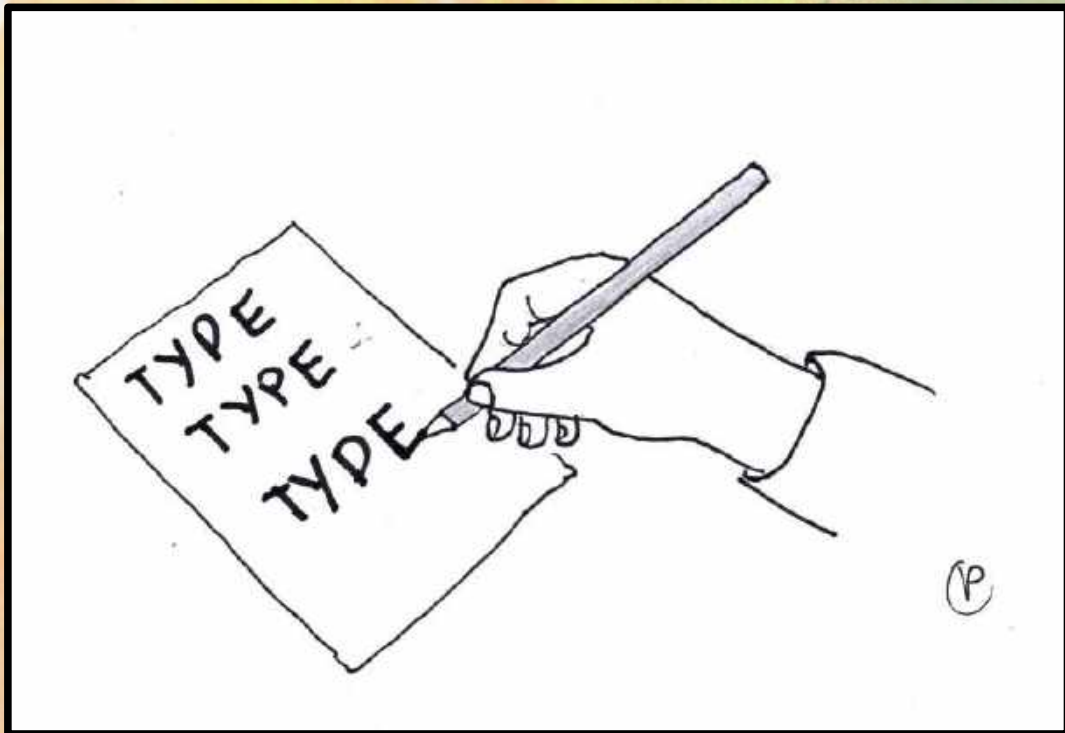
TAKING THINGS LITERALLY



Butterflies.



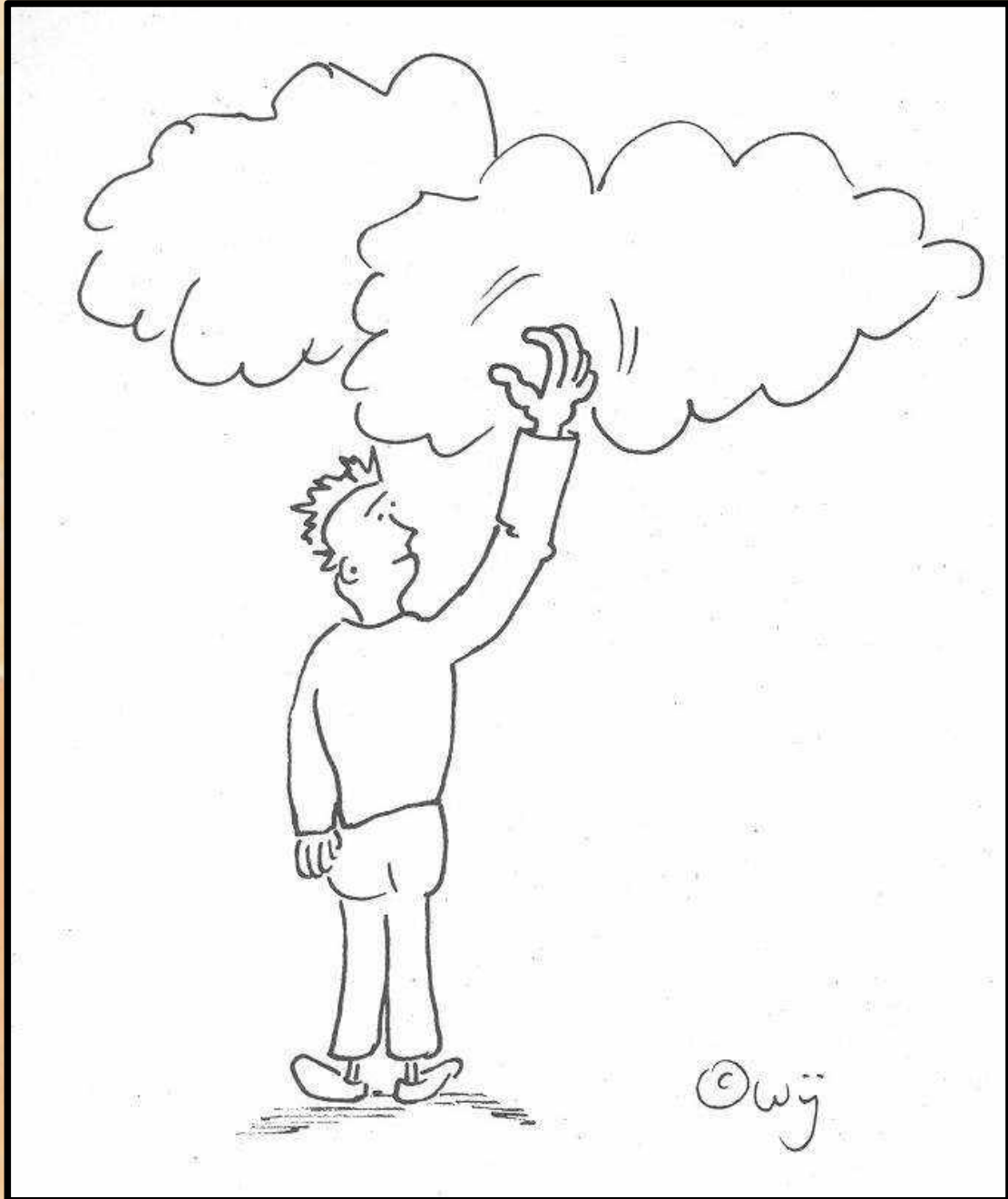
Sleeping pills.



Typewriter.



Township.



Skyscraper.

Sandra Louise Smyth

"Removing the Mask"

Just been handed the letter

Will diagnosis make it better?

This mask is so tight

This is going to be such a fight

It's not over for me yet, just the beginning I bet

Where did she go?

The girl I used to know

Lost along the way

Trying to fit in everyday

Paying the price, for wanting to be liked

It was all fake, they would take and take

So burned out, I lost my speech

Joy feels so out of reach

I need to discover the real me, but who is she?

Well, the girl did love her art

That seems to me like a good start!

“I am coming out” Autism Awareness Day.

“There I’ve said it” the cringing words of Francis Underwood from House of Cards.

After much inner conflict, confusion, relief and tears, lots of tears and support from ARC (Autism Resource centre) I’ve come out.

What a relief, what anger which quickly became regret, many ah ha moments and laughs too as many decisions, events, people and places now made sense. The beginning of the journey of self; who am I really? Having been labelled by our culture, especially during school years as thick, stupid; “doesn’t get it Mrs Yeoman”, tutors, more tutors etc.

At the young age of 57 years, I was screened, tested, diagnosed and identified with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Meares Irlen (Visual Scotopic Stress), ADHD and ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). 2015 was a memorable year for many reasons. This journey started in September 2013; due to overwhelm, confusion and many other reasons too which I will reveal in time.

When the Specialist Optometrist at the specialist clinic for reading difficulty and visual stress at Glasgow Caledonian University said I confirm you have Meares- Irlen Syndrome; “You didn’t stand a chance at school”, my heart sank like a multi-story building collapsing; the dust like clouds covering my whole being and existence.

As we entered the reception area to pick my frames for my special glasses at the specialised clinic (We is myself and my soulmate Beverly who is my eyes and ears in the Neuro Typical world) I broke down and cried inconsolably. The hurt, suffering, pain and frustration for me but also my Mother who had passed away 2 years earlier. “Mum; I now have the answer I muttered” My Poor Mum who tried so hard was now no longer here to share the news. This is my biggest regret. Nobody’s fault, as these conditions were not picked up in my time in the education system.

I have sprinkled bewilderment all my life in many situations.

Like many on the spectrum I have been bullied, manipulated, abused, ridiculed, taken advantage of and misjudged. Yes, we all have; however, there are degrees. I don't see people coming with their own motives and agenda. My father brought me up to treat people as you would like to be treated; he forgot to remind me of the snakes in the grass.

Beverly in assisting me understanding the behaviours from the confusing world I have lived in for 57 years decided to write a note; it did make sense at one level but I still don't really understand why people are so false and deceitful.

“David; the reason you can communicate with people like you and on the ASD spectrum is that you know you are all honest and therefore you understand what is being said. You also know that others understand what you are saying.

The reason you have difficulties in the Neuro Typical World is that you know that this world is not always honest. People here lie, either to themselves or other people and manipulate and deceive. Not everyone of course but you can't tell which is which.

This means communication in the Neuro Typical World is much harder for you. You are constantly primed to try and spot a lie, therefore not able to just be yourself like you can in the Neuro Diverse world.

Your defences must always be up and this is tiring and contributes to the nearly always having feelings of overwhelm over the last few years and the reasons for chronic fatigue.

All this is made harder by the fact that you don't understand why people lie. It isn't like this in the Neuro Diverse world”.

A psychiatrist will be assisting me in understanding why people lie amongst other issues that I may reveal in time.

I was a master at attempting to be “normal” always struggling to fit in with the world.

I am now consciously incompetent at being Neuro diverse. It's scary with deep feelings of vulnerability as I continue to build a relationship with myself; the authentic self without sounding too new age. What will I discover? Brutal honesty is not a technique; it's just brutal honesty.

Hiring myself as my own mentor / coach has got me so far; however further specialised help is going to be required and will assist me further.

I will continue to add to this post in the coming days and weeks with more information covering belief systems and other negative feelings I have felt all my life with my many deficits and also my “Island of Genius”.

The irony is not lost on me that I am a Language Behavioural Strategist, who has been acknowledged directly in newspapers as well other forums and other mediums as the cause and enabler in creating award winning teams in both business and sport.

When I thought my successes were due to my contemporary training; it is in fact due to my unique wiring. More later.

I will close by offering my sincere best wishes to all on the spectrum, parents, carers and support workers.

Let us all celebrate our uniqueness and continue to make the unaware aware of what we have to offer the world.

David Yeoman.

HELLO KITTY!

Everyone that knows me will know that *Breakfast At Tiffany's* is my favourite book ever.

I don't think there has ever been another author (outside Terrance Dicks who basically taught me to read) to have such a profound effect on me than Truman Capote, from the moment I first read *In Cold Blood* I was hooked – finally a voice I understood and – more importantly – believed in and quickly devoured everything and anything I could find by or about him. Yup, even *Murder By Death* on big, bulky VHS.

You could say I'm a wee bit of a fan.

Looking back late last year I realised that it was this book that first introduced me to such life-shaping ideas as dating, relationships and, gulp, girls.

I was instantly smitten with Ms Holly Golightly and my teen, hormone raddled brain decided that she was the perfect girl, so I spent the next few years (decade?) trying to find the perfect embodiment of Capote's heroine. You see up until that point girls didn't really register on my radar as anything else other than folk I spoke to and the thought of being attracted to one was utterly terrifying.

And I can thank Nastassja Kinski for that.

In particular her portrayal of Irena Gallier in Paul Schrader's 1982 remake of *Cat People*.

But why? I hear you cry.



To explain this frankly bizarre – and fairly embarrassing – turn of events we have to go back in time to me as a small boy.

A small boy utterly obsessed with horror movies.

Seriously my first memory is from around 2 years old and it's not of my parents, it's of sneaking out of my cot, crawling into the living room and watching the 1931 Frankenstein from behind a chair.

Which I think says more about me than anything else really.

Anyway my obsession as you can tell started young, and helped along by my granddad my love of horror – and especially the Universal classics of the 30s and 40s was cemented.

And so I began to soak up other companies movies from the time as well as immersing myself in whatever literature about the genre I could find because you can never have too much information about your favourite thing.

Reading about these classics (usually in a book by Alan Frank or Leslie Halliwell who it seemed had the monopoly of horror works in the 70s) I came across a little RKO chiller called Cat People directed by Jacques Tourneur and starring Simone Simon that told the story of Irena Dubrovna, a newly-married Serbian fashion illustrator who becomes obsessed with the idea that she'll metamorphose into panther if she sits on the sofa and holds hands with her husband or something.

This bit of the plot was unimportant because I'd read it was a classic that had to be seen so that was enough for me.

I mean I could tell you the storyline, the running time and the cast list but as far as I was concerned it was actually just about a woman turning into a big cat and it was a classic because I'd been told it was.

And being a big horror fan meant learning and repeating these things. Many – many – years later during one of our drunken chats my wife Ro pointed out to me that the whole point of the first film is that it's an exploration of sexuality, sexual awakening and identity and I had to admit that I didn't actually realise that at the time but who can blame me? It was called 'Cat People' not 'Nervous Lady Becomes a Cat At The Thought of Kissing a Man'.

I'll come back to this later.

Jump forward to 1982 where, as a very serious 12 year old film fan I was getting rather excited about the amount of top quality movies getting released that year.

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan, John Carpenter's The Thing, Blade Runner, Halloween III: Season of the Witch, Conan The Barbarian, The Sword and The Sorcerer and The Dark Crystal were just some of the delights I had to not only look forward to (hopefully) seeing but also to read up and learn more about. Blade Runner and The Thing were a given as I already knew EVERYTHING about these being the directors biggest fan (be kind) but the one I was most excited about was Cat People.

I mean come on – it's director, Paul Schrader had written Taxi Driver (which I hadn't seen but had read how important a film it was), it was written by Alan Ormsby (whose film Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things was a cult classic, obviously I hadn't seen it but I had seen some photos from it and read how it was a low budget gem whatever that meant), Malcolm McDowell was in it (and who didn't love him as Alex Delarge in A Clockwork Orange? I did, or I would of if I'd seen it) as was Nastassja Kinski who I knew from the final Hammer film To The Devil A Daughter which I admit I'd not really been that interested in as everyone in the photos seemed a bit too grumpy and all wearing plaid sports jackets which was enough to put anyone off.

Oh yes and I read that it featured nudity so I thought better of it. I mean come on, what 12 year old boy watches horror movies for naked ladies?

Not me I can tell you.

So anyway, in no way being able to pass for 18 I had to find another way to see the movie, which is where our local video shop and it's ability to source screeners from across the pond came in, so it was on one fateful Saturday evening when my parents had gone out for the night – and left my sister at my grandparents – that I settled down to watch what would possibly be THE greatest and scariest horror remake ever.

An hour and 58 minutes later I was left shocked and shaking.

They'd taken a film about a lady that turned into a cat and made it about sex!

How very dare they!

I was expecting long lingering looks, stilted dialogue, scary shadows and a cat transformation not Malcolm McDowell trying to kiss his sister, nudity and a saucy lady getting eaten by a leopard.

But most of all I wasn't expecting that the boy-haired, librarian like, needy and nervous Nastassja Kinski would cause a huge hormonal explosion that by the film's climax would mean that for the first time ever I was aware of thoughts that weren't altogether PG rated or in any way related to movies.

Horror or otherwise.

Yes, I'm (very) embarrassed to admit it but I discovered girls via this film. And as much as the feeling it gave me in my tummy was nice the thought that if I ever met a (real) girl I liked and tried to kiss her the very fact that there was a good chance she'd turn into a huge black cat and eat me terrified me.

So I did what any 12 year old boy in that situation would do.

I ordered a Cat People poster and hung it above my bed so I could stare at it every night before I slept.

Partly in the hope that it would make the fear of girls go away but mainly because I reckoned if I wished hard enough Nastassja Kinski would step out of the poster and be my girlfriend.

Don't even think about taking the mickey.

You see when my autistic brain realises a thing that memory/definition of it becomes the default setting, so I equated girls I found attractive with slightly accented librarian types with dark secrets that may at some point attempt to eat me if upset.

And this isn't a metaphor, it's genuinely what I thought. As you can probably guess, the rest of my teens were interesting to say the least.

So in the words of Simon Bates, thanks for listening and enjoy the film.

Bizarrely I actually ended up marrying a Scottish accented librarian but to be fair she hasn't tried to eat me.

Yet.

What better way to finish up our bumper 'best of' issue than with a look back at our favourite

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!

that we've featured so far?

STARTING TODAY!
This amazing print out and keep guide to our favourite Spectrum Superstars! Why not nominated yours?

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Christopher Gary Packham CBE
Age: 59
Height: 1.83 m
Occupation: Nature photographer, television presenter, author, campaigner

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Gary Anthony James Webb, better known as Gary Numan.
Age: 63.
Occupation: musician, singer, songwriter, composer, and record producer.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Tom Stoltman AKA The Albatross
King Of The Stones
Age: 26
Height: 2.03 m
Occupation: Strongman.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Daniel Edward Aykroyd CM Oont
Age: 69
occupation: actor, comedian, producer,
musician and writer

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Daryl Christine Hannah
Age: 60
Occupation: American actress and
environmental activist.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Greta Tintin Eleonora Ernman Thunberg
Age: 18
Height: 1.5 m
Occupation: Student, environmental activist

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!

Name: Stephen Wiltshire MBE.
Age: 47.
Occupation: architectural and landscape artist.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!

Name: John Barry Humphries AO CBE
Born: 17 February 1934
Occupation: Actor, author, artist, comedian and satirist.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!

Name: William Richard Werstine, better known as Billy West.
Age: 69
Occupation: Voice actor extraordinaire, comedian, impressionist, musician and former radio personality.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!

Name: Courtney Michelle Love
Born: July 9, 1964
Occupation: Singer, musician, songwriter, actress.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Henry Kenneth Alfred Russell
Born: 3 July 1927 (died: 27 November 2011)
Occupation: Film director, screenwriter, all round genius.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Ria Lina
Occupation: Comedian, actress, writer, virologist, ex- IT forensic investigator and ukulele player.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Philippa Margaret Brown AKA Ladyhawke
Born: 13 July 1979
Occupation: Singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Satoshi Tajiri
Born: 28 August 1965
Occupation: Video game designer, creator of the Pokémon franchise and President of video game developer Game Freak.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Kate Fox
Born: 31 May 1975
Occupation: Poet, author, broadcaster
and comedian.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Anne Solway Hegerty AKA The Governess
Age: 62
Occupation: Professional quizzer, television
personality and "chaser" on the ITV game show
The Chase.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Wentworth Earl Miller III
Born: June 2, 1972 (age 50)
Occupation: Actor and screenwriter.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: David Byrne.
Age: 69.
Occupation: Singer, songwriter, record producer,
actor, writer, music theorist, and filmmaker.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Patrick George Considine.
Age: 48.
Occupation: Actor, director, screenwriter,
and musician.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Melanie Ann Sykes.
Age: 51
Occupation: Television and radio broadcaster, model,
founder & editor of The Frank Magazine.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



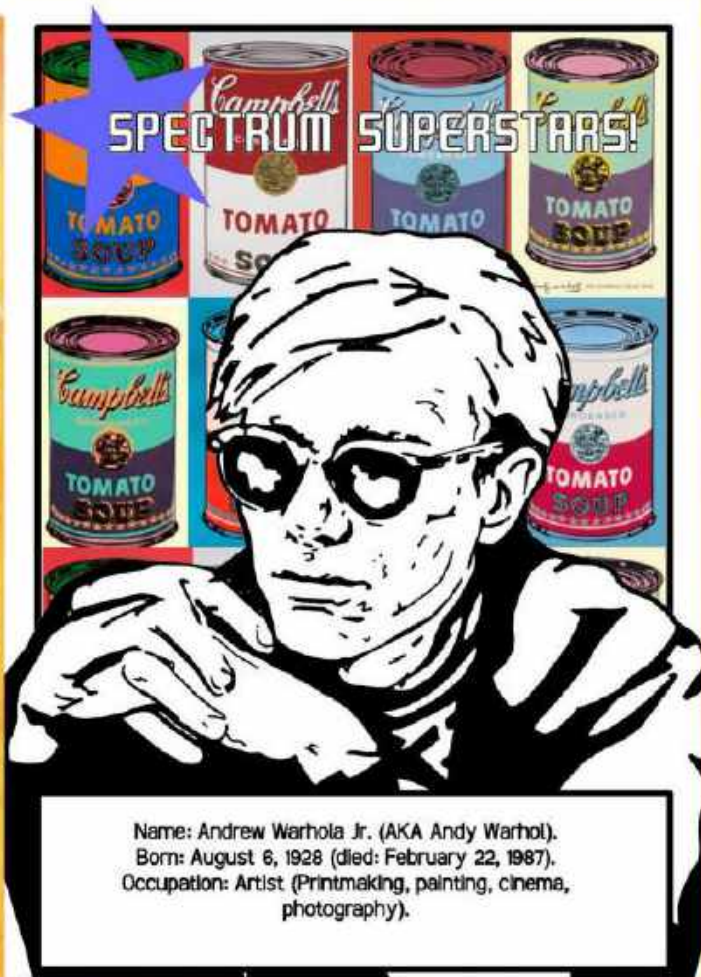
Name: Terence Alan "Spike" Milligan KBE
Born: 16 April 1918 (died 27 February 2002)
Occupation: Actor, comedian, writer, musician, poet and
playwright.

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!



Name: Naoki Higashida
Born: 12 August 1992
Occupation: writer best known for The Reason I
Jump, Autistic advocate.

SUPERSTARS!



SPECTRUM

Jr. (AKA Andy Warhol).
 ed: February 22, 1987).
 taking, painting, cinema,
 apy).

Name: Andrew Warhola Jr. (AKA Andy Warhol).
 Born: August 6, 1928 (died: February 22, 1987).
 Occupation: Artist (Printmaking, painting, cinema,
 photography).

Name: Andrew Warhola
 Born: August 6, 1928 (d
 Occupations: Artist (Print
 photog

SUPERSTARS!

So who have we missed?

Don't forget to contact us with your
 nominations for

SPECTRUM SUPERSTARS!

SPECTRUM

(AKA Andy Warhol).
 li: February 22, 1987).
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 Occupation: Artist (Printma
 photogra

AUTITUDE NEEDS YOU!



Well that's it for issue 24!
Hope you've enjoyed it!
Don't forget to send your contributions to
autitude@scottishautism.org