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March 2011

Curriculum Vitae

Personal details: I was born on 28.02.67 in Melbourne, near Derby. I have been married for 22 years and have two children.

Employment: I currently earn most of my income teaching English Literature, Psychology and Study Skills at Stephenson College, Coalville, Leicestershire, where I am the course leader of the Access to HE programme. I also contribute to the college's Teacher Training provision, delivering literacy, communication and critical thinking sessions, and carrying out teaching observations. I have previously taught Creative Writing at a number of institutions, including various community schools and The University of Derby. I have also worked at a closed female prison (HMP Foston Hall, Derbyshire) and was involved with the production of a series of adult early readers in association with Gatehouse Publishing and The Writers in Prisons Network Ltd.

I work one day a week at home as a literary writer, and subsidise my income with readings and workshops at colleges, universities, reading/writing groups and festivals.

Organisational / IT experience: During my ten years at Stephenson College I have assumed responsibility for almost all aspects of the courses I have been running, from initial student guidance to structuring and delivery of the programmes, to dealing with administration tasks including communications with exam boards, external moderators etc. I have put into place a number of procedural and record-keeping systems and have a proven ability to cope under pressure. I am computer literate, with a good working knowledge of most common applications.

Education:

- **2005:** I gained a Certificate in Education (FE), from the University of Derby.
- **2001:** I gained an MA Degree (Distinction) in Narrative Writing, from the University of Derby.
- **1998:** I gained a BA Honours Degree (First Class) in Creative Writing with Psychology, from the University of Derby.
- **1995:** I completed an Access course at Mackworth College, Derby.
- **1994:** I returned to full-time education after several years of factory work.

Academic award: Whilst studying for my first degree I won an Ede & Ravenscroft award for outstanding academic achievement for the year 1996/97.

Publications: My debut novel, *The Entire Animal*, was published by The Waywiser Press in July 2006. I have also had a large number of short stories, poems and essays published in the small press and on BBC Radio. *Staple* have published my short stories on a number of occasions and I featured in their 2005 *Alt-gen* project, showcasing the best small press writers of the previous decade. I have recently self-published *The boy and his animals*, a collection of poems previously published as individual pieces in magazines such as *Aesthetica*, *Anon*, *Borderlines*, *Iota* and *Pulsar*. In 2009 I was placed 4th in the annual Mail on Sunday novel opening competition.

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Services

I am very experienced in teaching poetry, short stories and the novel, from both a writer's and a reader's perspective. In other words, I can effectively discuss the process of literary creation and / or the finished product. I have a considerable body of published work in all three genres to draw upon, as well as work in progress. My considerable experience as an English Literature tutor also enables me to appropriately contextualise my own work and the work of others.

For readers' groups, I can offer readings of my work, and discuss insights into the intended effects of my literary techniques, as well as answering any questions (ideological and / or personal) relating to the work. I think of myself, in fact, as something of a Q & A specialist, and take a very honest approach to this aspect of things. Not only do I appreciate that my work will never please everyone, I am also aware that it inevitably contains areas of weakness, some of which no doubt have yet to be pointed out to me.

For writers, I can offer the above plus techniques to strengthen writing in key areas such as plot, structure, characterisation and so on. I can discuss in detail my own creative processes (always acknowledging that my way is only one of many) and give a great deal of information on practical elements such as research and the route to publication.

My key strength, however, is adaptability, which means I can tailor my contributions quickly and effectively to meet the specific needs and interests of those I work with. If a writers' group wants to know how to create a subtle but convincing sense of place, I can help them to do this. If a readers' group wishes to take a feminist approach to my work, I can discuss it in this light, and so on.

Fees are by arrangement, and depend upon the nature and duration of the work. As a rough guide, though, I usually charge about £70.00 for a reading / readers' group appearance, and £100.00 for a taught workshop, including travel expenses. Although I am based near to Derby, I am happy to travel and will in principle work anywhere that is financially viable.

If you are interested in someone with a reliable, professional and friendly approach to carry out any of the above activities, or anything else related to reading and writing, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Availability

I currently dedicate Fridays (all day) and weekday evenings to literary activities, including those detailed above. I am also more than happy to work at weekends. My college teaching commitments mean that I cannot usually offer these services on Monday to Thursday daytimes, but there may be occasions (half-terms etc) where this is possible, if I am given sufficient notice. If in doubt, please ask.

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Samples of my work

An extract from *The Entire Animal*

Dennis. He's been thinking him almost constantly since that day at the studio. He's been trying to come to terms with the fact that the inside of his father's head is a place he's never known, a secret that his eyes have never betrayed. He's been summoning up images of him, pictures of those times when he most needed to know the landscape that was hidden behind those distant eyes, behind the frowns, the occasional smile.

The night after Michael's tenth birthday, Dennis had walked up to the Woodington Arms. It was the first night he left the boys alone in the house. He had checked on them to make sure they were asleep, but Michael had fooled him. He heard his father go, and he heard him return, the heels of his heavy boots scuffing the loose grit at the far end of the drive. Peering through the corner of his bedroom window, Michael saw a tiny red dot glow and fade, glow and then fade, which was his father, smoking.

Which was his father, thinking.

About what?

Now Michael's father is ploughing the Big Field, the long, narrow strip of land that climbs the gentle slope of the remaining valley. The freshly turned earth lies dark against the rest of the ground which still holds remnants of the morning's frost. He's approaching the top of the field, in a tractor that is in essence a Massey Ferguson Sixty-five, though it carries a visible history of adaptation and improvisation. The huge red cab once belonged to a larger tractor, as did the oversized mudguards that rattle and shake as if in fear of the engine's crude power.

Michael stands unseen at the bottom of the field. He's holding a flask of tea for his father, complete with a small plastic bowl for Sheba. Sheba is Michael's sheepdog. No, Sheba was Michael's sheepdog. Now she is his father's dog, she has adopted him. She goes with him

everywhere. They are friends, they know each other. Michael watches them, side by side in the cab, two silhouettes removed and protected from the world by this glass and metal box.

The tractor turns, the plough raised above the earth like a huge steel hand, before the shares are lowered once more and it begins its steady descent to the bottom of the field. Above the straining engine, man and dog are enclosed in a shared solitude, in complete absorption and peace. It's a peace that Michael does not want to disturb. And it's a peace that he wants to enter. He wants to run to the tractor, bang his fists on the door of the cab and say, 'Father, let me in.'



Signings at the launch of 'The Entire Animal', Derby Waterstone's, 26.07.06

Faith

I pass him his teddy, tuck him in, give him a kiss. I smile. 'What would I do without you, son?' He gives an answer: 'You'd find me.'

The Organist

His fingers dance
up and down the keys
as she walks the aisle
with another man.

His fingers betray him,
make him seem easy,
happy, young.

But he's ageing by the second,
twice her age already.

Old enough to be her father
he thinks,
and he wishes he was:
he could give her away,
not have her taken.

He holds the last chord just
a moment too long,
as if to buy time
as the irony hits him.

All those years he'd suspected
but had never been sure.
Only now he knows.
He loves her.