

Mayday University Hospital, Croydon.

Reading on Friday February 1st 2002

Poets : Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate,
Debjeni Chatterjee, Rashida Islam, Rogan Wolf

Singer : Nilufar Hossain

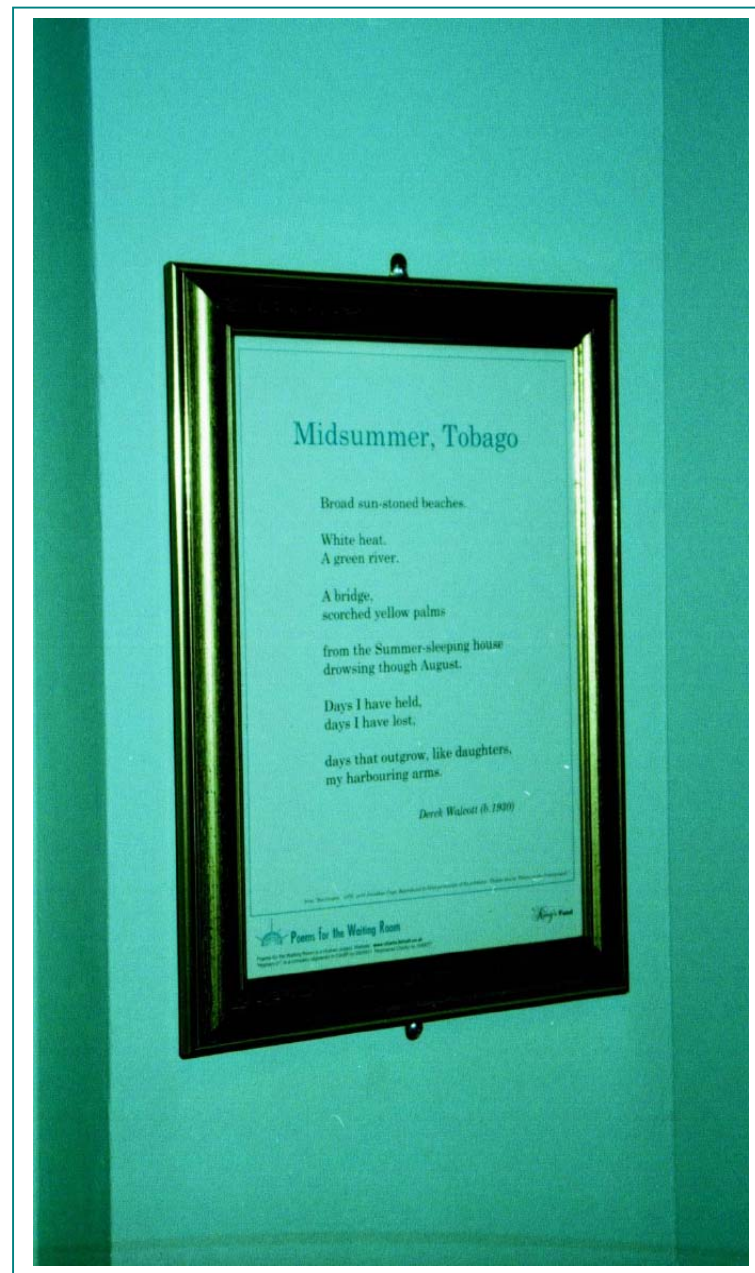
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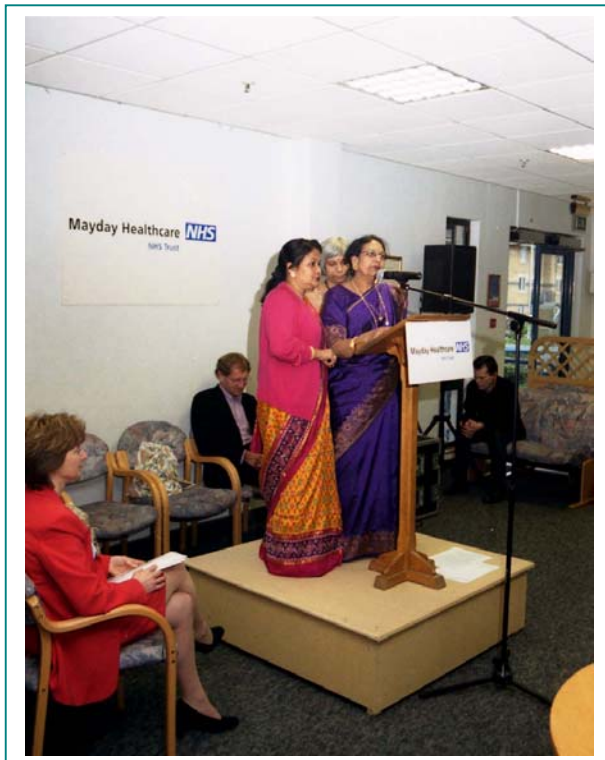
Report : Rogan Wolf





Before the reading, the hospital Trust Chair, Sue Eardley, showed the poets round. The poems were displayed all over the hospital, framed and sited thoughtfully and attractively.





The reading took place in the main foyer. There was a strong wind that day, which roared in every time the automatic doors opened. Each of the poets read a few of their own poems and a few others they loved. Andrew Motion read his poem about Anne Frank's life of hiding and waiting and then a passage from Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" ; Rashida Islam and Nilufar Hossain sang songs by Tagore and Nazrul, whose verbal grandeur was evident, whatever language you spoke. Debjani Chatterjee and Rogan Wolf read together a Navajo chant – "In Beauty May I Walk"



This was the second of eight readings that took place in South London healthcare sites during the first months of 2002. Andrew Motion's presence allowed us to make it the flagship event of the series, hoping that whatever publicity it attracted would help to promote the "Poems for the Waiting Room" project as a whole.

A press release had been sent out and had attracted interest from national dailies and healthcare journals, as well the local press.



Health services offer verses while we wait

by John Ezard

We spend eons of our lives in medical waiting rooms and what - asks Rogan Wolf - do we get? "An overworked receptionist and a few nasty notices on the walls."

Or, as the poet Kathleen Jamie puts it, we have to hang around in "these fallow rooms of spider plants/ and magazines, where the telephone shrills/for someone else, and the outside world/ is a distant drone, and time itself is out on call".

So now 400,000 poetry posters are to be sent to hospitals, GP surgeries, dentists, health centres and mental health offices all over the country in a campaign to make their public areas more human.

The project - the biggest of its kind - sets out to extend the worldwide success of Poems on the Underground and Poems on the Buses in London to a different, clinical domain.

It was launched yesterday by the poet laureate, Andrew

Motion, with readings in Mayday University Hospital, Croydon. His new poem *While I Wait for You* features on one poster, as do works by Carol Anne Duffy, Dannie Abse, Roger McGough, Maya Angelou, Derek Walcott and 45 other contemporaries commissioned by the poet David Hart.

Also included in the packs planned for 4,000 waiting rooms are favourite verses by Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Blake. Some poems are in Gaelic, Urdu, Hindi and other tongues, with English translations. Motion called it "an inspired scheme which combines two of poetry's sacred powers: to be entertaining and salubrious".

After a long search, the organisers found a poem which stands a chance of sending patients in to greet their dentist with a smile. It is an anonymous limerick which contrives to find a suitable rhyme for a dentist called Archibald Moss.

The £30,000 project is to be funded by the NHS and the Arts Council. A trial, with money from the King's Fund, the Poetry Society and the Association of London Government has already been greeted with enthusiasm. A Gateshead GP wrote of wanting to "unmedicalise the waiting room. The idea is to show we are human beings".

Yesterday Rogan Wolf, an independent social worker who pioneered the use of the poems through the charity Hyphen-21, said medical waiting rooms were places of boredom as well as anxiety, crisis and pain.

"We live our lives today in a relentless rush. Waiting rooms make us pause and as a result things can open up and questions surface. What we're given at present too often dehumanises us as individuals. It does not support us inwardly. So here - in a poem - is straight talk, a window for the imagination and even a touch of love."

These won't hurt a bit...

Please Take a Seat

...List all the words you can for "wonderful" and remember you are all of these.

Now imagine you're invisible until you've counted up to five in Urdu : eik, doh, tin, char, panj. You will be seen shortly.

Judy Tweddle

Waiting

I imagine a whole year like this a whole year of waiting... actually you spend most of your time sitting & one third of your life in bed you only get one call better be ready

Wendy Mulford

A Dentist

A dentist named Archibald Moss Fell in love with the dainty Miss Ross. Since he held in abhorrence Her Christian name, Florence, He renamed her his dear dental Floss

Anonymous.

Poets' tonic for the patients

SOUTH Yorkshire poets are set to brighten up doctors' waiting rooms around the country.

Fifty poets from around the country have been commissioned to enrich the waiting room with touching, thought-provoking and amusing poems for display in poster form.

They include our very own wordsmiths, Sheffield-based Debjani Chatterjee, Doncaster's Rashida Islam and Rotherham-based Rehana Chaudhury.

And now, backed by funding from NHS Estates and cash from the Arts Council, their poems will be distributed to health service sites across the country.

The nationwide launch of the scheme takes place on February 1 in London and follows a successful pilot project which has

Now waiting time is fine for rhyme

By Nick Ward

been running for the past few months in the capital.

The special reading will feature Andrew Motion, Debjani Chatterjee and Rashida Islam.

Debjani, of Donnington Road, Norfolk Park, Sheffield, is one of the best-known British Asian writers today.

She has written and edited thirty books for children and adults, including *Animal Antics*, *My Birth Was Not In Vain* and *The Redbeck Anthology of British South Asian Poetry*. She recently completed a poetry residency at Sheffield Children's Hospital.

Rashida Islam has co-edited two bilingual anthologies of prose and poetry by Bengali women, including the award-winning *Barbed Lines*, and written and illustrated one bilingual book for children - *Grandma's Treasure Trove*.

Born in Bangladesh, she is a scientist by training and works as a manager of a GP's surgery. She will be accompanied at the reading by her sister Nilufer, who will sing Bengali songs with her.

Andrew Motion said: "Poems for the Waiting Room is an inspired scheme, which combines two of poetry's sacred powers: to be entertaining and alubrious. I've been delighted to be a part of it."



Waiting time rhyme: Sheffield poet Debjani Chatterjee

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See the stars at great night out

BOOK early for a trip to the stars ... that's the message going out from leisure bosses in Rotherham.

Rotherham Council's Countryside team has joined forces with Mexborough and Swinton Astronomical Society for an evening of stargazing. But places are strictly limited for the 6.30pm and 8pm sessions at the Society's own observatory at Hoover, near Wentworth, on February 9.

"Numbers are limited to 20 people per session," said a council spokesman.

Anyone wanting to go along should ring 01709 822543

“In beauty may I walk”

In beauty	may I walk
All day long	may I walk
Through the returning seasons	may I walk
Beautifully will I possess again	may I walk
Beautifully birds	may I walk
Beautifully joyful birds	may I walk
On the trail marked with pollen	may I walk
With grasshoppers about my feet	may I walk
With dew about my feet	may I walk
With beauty	may I walk
With beauty before me	may I walk
With beauty behind me	may I walk
With beauty above me	may I walk
With beauty all around me	may I walk
In old age,	
wandering on a trail of beauty, lively,	may I walk
In old age,	
wandering on a trail of beauty, living again,	may I walk
It is finished in beauty	
It is finished in beauty	

ANON.

from the Navajo (trans. Jerome K. Rothenberg)