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Poems for the Waiting Room

Although there have been exceptions, the majority of texts associated with writing and healthcare have been published in book form, and have tended to be of participants', that is patients', own writing. The exceptions have included the use of text in displays and even performance, but this effort to collect together poems which are intended to be displayed in waiting rooms is a welcome initiative.

Poems for the Waiting Room is a collection of 52 poems each on an A4 sheet, which, it is intended, can be exhibited on notice boards and walls. The linking theme of the poems is time and waiting, but this has been interpreted as broadly as possible. The breadth of the collection should make sure that everyone finds something that they can relate to, whether that be doctors, practice managers or arts workers involved in providing arts content for a health related environment. Published by Hyphen-21 and commissioned by David Hart, there are poems in this collection from names such as Danny Abse ; Mahendra Solenki; Maura Dooley; Debjani Chatterjee; Jackie Kay and Andrew Motion; and from the West Midlands Charles Johnson, Miriam Obrey, Judy Tweddle, Roi Kwabena, Roy Fisher, Milorad Krystanovich, Roger Garfitt, Eleanor Cooke and Miranda Tite. A poem from the series by the late Amryl Johnson can be found elsewhere in this issue.

Especially noteworthy among the poems is one from a writer from the West Midlands, Jayne Greathead. Her first published work, "The Meeting" made me keep coming back and rereading it to try and take in the boldness of the idea. I can easily imagine contemplating it in the silent time before my appointment.

The Meeting

*I sometimes wonder what it
would be like to meet God.*

*I'd talk to him
and he'd talk to me.*

*He'd forgive me
and I'd forgive him.*

*But then. just as God was leaving
I'd slap him, just once, hard
in the small of the back.*

And THEN we'd be friends forever.

Congratulations to Rogan Wolf at Hyphen-21 for publishing these, may it be the beginnings of an initiative which becomes as well known as the Poems on the Underground series. The set of 52 poems is available to any organisation working in any broadly health related field (Doctors, hospitals, day centres, etc) although not individuals. An Arts Council New Audiences grant means that they can be obtained free of charge while stocks last. To order a set, or for further details contact : Poems for the Waiting Room, Bishop Creighton House, 378 Lillie Road, London SW6 7PH or telephone 020 8871 4020.

Dave Reeves

Dave Reeves is currently undertaking a writing attachment to Wolverhampton Health Action Zone.