

# The added value of narrative

The first national one-day conference for  
occupational therapists working in diverse practice, University of Brighton

*Dedicated to the memories of Pat and John Smart, members of Pecket Learning Community, Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers and of the initial Voices Talk and Hands Write group, discussed here.*

Nick Pollard

N.Pollard@shu.ac.uk

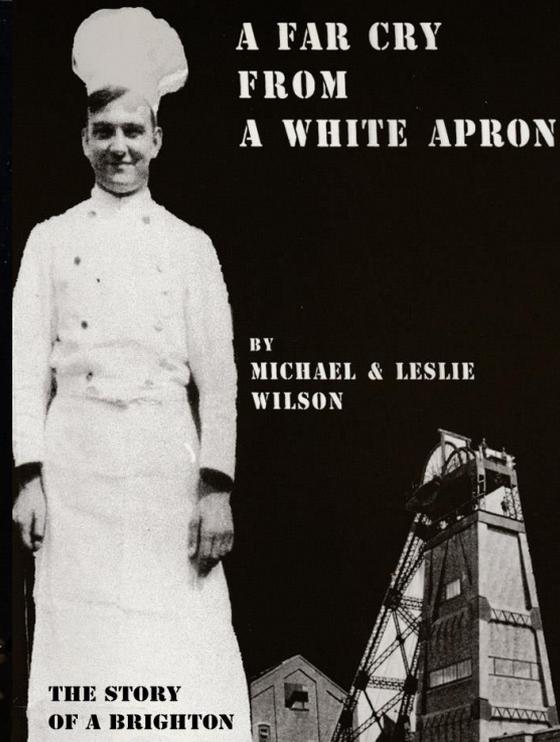


# A republic of letters



# THE CROWD ROARS

Tales from the life  
of a professional stuntman  
**THE GREAT OMANI**



## A FAR CRY FROM A WHITE APRON

BY  
MICHAEL & LESLIE  
WILSON

THE STORY  
OF A BRIGHTON

## Refuge



Stories of  
Survival  
&  
Escape

The  
Migrant  
English  
Project  
at  
The  
Cowley  
Club



## THE TOWN BEEHIVE

A YOUNG GIRL'S LOT BRIGHTON 1910-1934



by Daisy Noakes



# ONCE I WAS A WASHING MACHINE

THE WORKING CLASS EXPERIENCE IN POETRY AND PROSE

From The Federation of Worker Writers & Community Publishers



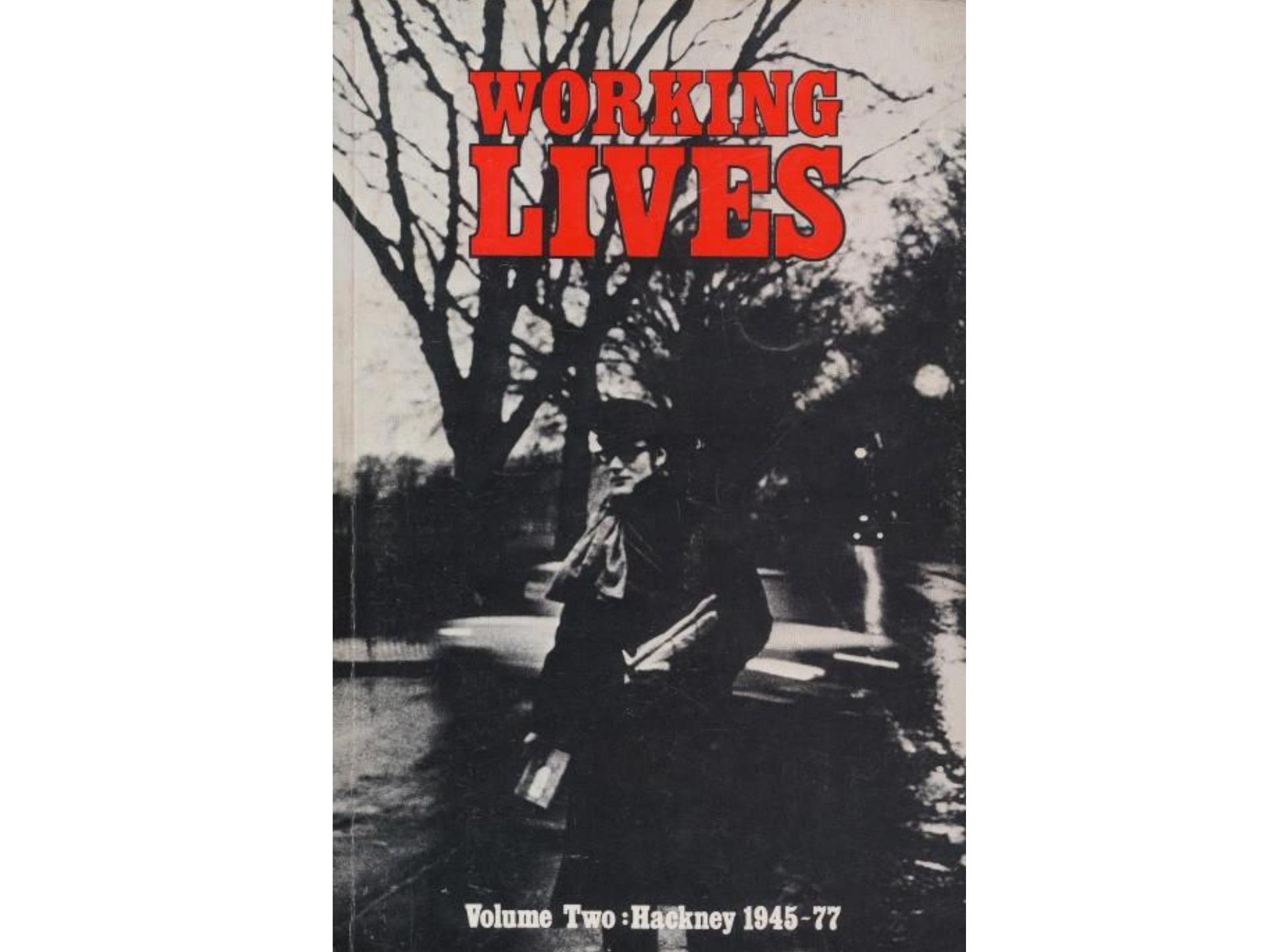
With an introduction by Ken Worpole



NEW CITY COMMUNITY PRIZE - | STRACUSE UNIVERSITY PRIZE

# The Republic of Letters

Working class writing and local publishing  
Includes Perspectives on Worker Writer Movements



# WORKING LIVES

Volume Two : Hackney 1945-77

... Meanwhile, in **Grimsby**, a project was about to be evaluated

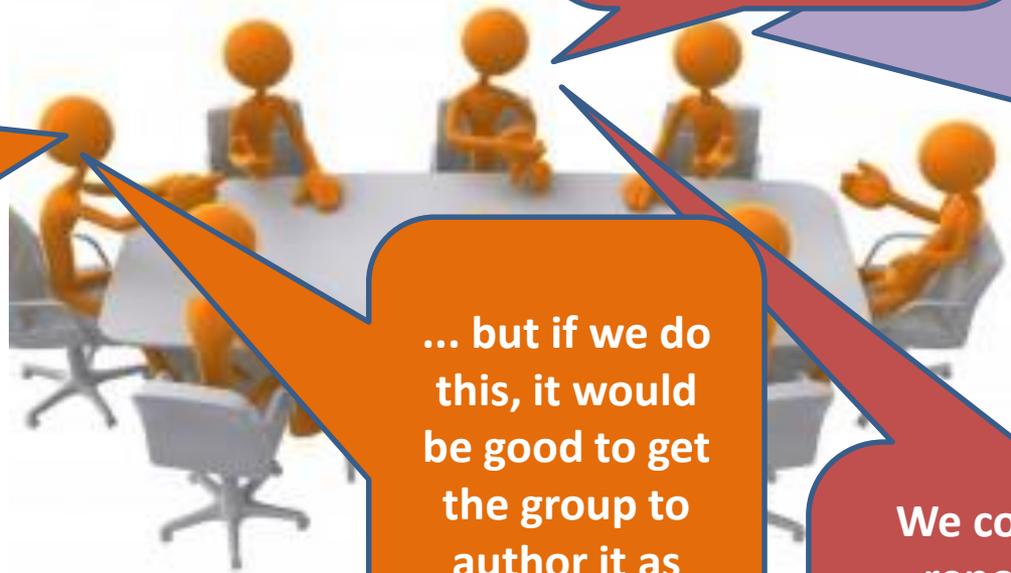


A group of people with learning difficulties had been enabled to form a writing group to write about their experiences....

The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers were a group with a mission to bring the experience of community publishing to people *who did not have a voice....*

I work in the health trust, and we can offer to write it up as a research project - that might help get some funding

*My role, as the OT (working in the Trust research centre) was to write up the project*



... but if we do this, it would be good to get the group to author it as well. After all, it can't happen without them.

That's great, the council could do with some 'good news' stories

And we can send the group's publications and the research articles to the arts council who fund us

We could have a report for the council newsletter, and maybe get something in the local paper

And there were lots of different reports...

WE WROTE TWO BOOK CHAPTERS AND AN ARTICLE

This is *Radio Grimsby*... we've one of the writers of Voices Talk Hands Write here to tell us about their new book

We did live performances!

Nick took it to a conference in Greece

As *Lady Mayoress of Grimsby*, I am proud to announce the publication of Voices Talk Hands Write!

And we reported it all to the community forum

We all talked about what we would let Nick write about, and we had the drafts explained to us

**Voices  
Talk  
Hands  
Write**

ology2003.04

“What works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts, and how?” (Pawson and Tilley 1997)

- So - who do you need to inform about the project? (Who are the stakeholders?)
- What might the project story be? (Are the stakeholders part of the story and can they be included in choices about its presentation?)
- How can that story be told in ways that meet stakeholder needs? (Different stakeholders may need different aspects of the story to meet their needs?)

## Who are the stakeholders?

- The group members (service users) - they want to write and publish their work.
- The service - they want a project they can sustain which will demonstrate some values of empowerment.
- The council - wants innovative practice, and a good news story for social services
- Carers and relatives - want something that will enhance their the lives of those they care for, and regular respite
- How can that story be told in ways that meet different stakeholder needs?

## Evaluation has to be built into the plan, not done afterwards

- Realistic evaluation allows you to use whatever methods are convenient to best indicate the outcomes of the project - whatever works best (see above).
- While typical methods are questionnaires, focus groups, surveys, and standard tools - perhaps some basic health measures, even occupational therapy assessment tools... don't forget reflective diaries, narrative methods and other approaches like autoethnography
- Think whether ethical clearance is required as permissions will be needed for publishing and photographs. Build the permission process in from the start, if you intend to use community publication make this clear at the beginning - but negotiate it, it can't work unless people consent.
- Who owns the reports? It could be important to establish who has copyright. This may not seem important but can be problematic later.

# Examples

- Marti i Pol garden project University of Vic  
<http://www.salvadorsimo.org/en/proyectos/miquel-marti-i-pol/>
- Pecket Learning Community <http://pecket.org/> an archive which evaluates 30 years of radical basic adult education
- SAGE Greenfingers in Sheffield uses its allotment space to stage theatre, singing events and poetry, for example, combined with the sale of produce <http://www.sagesheffield.org.uk/>
- Food - one of the longest running forms of community publication is the community cookbook <http://viewshare.org/share/5155595b-3e29-4fa6-b21d-d2ea205e3f80/>

## Are these products, poetry anthologies, performances recipe books genuinely part of your evaluation?

- They demonstrate what the project is about and they show 'added value'. Poems and stories can be a source of evidence to supplement arguments and key points (<http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/poetry>; <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/stories> )
- They are means for inclusion of people on their own terms and give them a stake in the public profile of the project
- They provide a lay message to the reader, and their actual performance as part of an event can be a key part of the presenting of the evaluation  
<http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/InteractiveTheatre>
- If published as a supplement to the main evaluation they may have to come out of the funding for other activities of the project.
  
- Are they worth the additional expense? Calculate using this site <https://mixam.co.uk/> - but that is just the print cost. It may be possible to set up the additional publication with volunteers, but you will need to ensure the quality.

# If you do a publication, launch it

- All external publications raise the value of your evaluation and give it more credibility, it can add value to your project and may help with securing further funding because it raises the profile of the stakeholders.
- Community publishers often use launch events to sell most of their print run. An event could include the cost of the publication in the ticket price, or a voucher that offers a discount
- Launch events can features performances and other ways to include participants as the authors and voices of a publication

# Other narrative formats



- Postcards
- Calendars - get your message all year round
- CD - gets your performances played in the car
- Broadsheet - up to around 10 poems on A4 double sided paper
- Zine - an A4 paper cut and folded like a magazine (see next slide)  
<http://www.rookiemag.com/2012/05/how-to-make-a-zine/>

What am I thinking about  
creativity and wellbeing?

How could I use what I have  
learned in my occupational  
therapy practice once I am  
qualified?

What feedback have I had  
from tutors/peers this week?

Why? Elaborate on one or  
more of the words you have  
circled.

2

My plan :  
What needs doing between  
now and the next workshop

### **Creativity Occupation and Wellbeing**

My reflections on my  
experience of the model  
Making and Stop-motion  
experiential workshops

Name:

Week:

What do I want to do and  
explore at next weeks  
workshop

What did I get to make in the  
workshop?

How do I feel about what I  
have made? (Circle and add  
your own)

Happy  
Uncomfortable  
Disappointed  
Stimulated  
Proud Frustrated  
Excited Comfortable  
Annoyed Relaxed

# Get people to write or talk about it

- List poem: 5/10 things. 15 minutes to compile list (walk around to get ideas; things you can sense or have done). For each thing write a sentence, then start a new page and for each sentence develop paragraph. Read back and for a real challenge cross out the 'best line' - see if it makes a difference.
- Post card: Write a post card (because it is more personal than a text) to someone you know about what you have done through this project, what was good, what you have found out about yourself, and why you wish they were here.
- If you insist on writing a text include a selfie.
- If writing is a problem record it on a phone and get someone to write it down for you.

# Forming individual objectives

- Another way of getting people to write or talk about their involvement in the project is to get them to plan their individual aims and objectives at the beginning.
- This way they can talk about what they have achieved and how they did it. It may not be possible to get everyone to stick to keeping a reflective log, but just getting a comparison with how they felt at first can be enlightening

# A human library event

- Another possible way of developing ideas for a project, or indeed for project members to develop themselves as a resource may be as a human library: <http://humanlibraryuk.org/>  
However, this works best where participants are able to identify a good number of differences amongst themselves - 10-15 - for this approach to be useful.

# The added value of narrative

- A lot of what we do (i.e. occupation) can be described in various forms of narratives
- Because they are concerned with understanding experiences of change narratives can be incorporated into evaluations or used to supplement them, and they can be much more than mere quotations - they can be social events
- Narratives can be developed in many inclusive and engaging ways, people can represent themselves directly, the design of evaluation reports can incorporate the inclusion of materials such as literacy publications or be associated with interactive events.
- There are many ways to involve project participants in developing publications, resources or performances and these may take a on a life for themselves.

