

# TESSA GORDZIEJKO : CREATIVE PORTFOLIO



*The Grand Departs, Yorkshire Festival 2014*

## A SELECTION OF WRITING, PERFORMANCE AND CREATIVE PARTICIPATION PROJECTS



*breath[e]:LESS, Liverpool 2015*



*Haunt, Harrogate, 2016*

## WRITING : POETRY

### AIR BABY

Air baby moves between the trees  
Feet silent as mud  
Her hand raised to shield sun and wind  
From her shining face.

We move behind her  
Our feet in her footprints  
Branches tear at our arms  
As we pass, stiff handed in the breeze.  
Our stare is rigid and ahead.

She smells smoke in the valley  
Breathes in the autumn  
Exhales warning.

We raise our chins to listen  
Hold our lungs  
In the blue haze of danger.

This place is hers, but once in a moon  
It holds a weapon to her singing throat  
Caresses her cheek with threat  
Whispers danger in her ear  
And shows her who rules the space between the hills and the sky.

We are the interlopers, the swarm  
Of woodbreakers, cracking  
Through the undergrowth, making her visible,  
Exposed and defenceless.  
We are her uninvited army.

### WE ARE RUNNING

We are running.  
We are hot and damp,  
brushed with a fine hair of drizzle,  
we run apart, we keep together,  
we run each day, we run in every weather.

Ice is the only leaden thing that halts us,  
compacted snow, slippery as wax.  
We are running, hardened to the cold.  
We run in frost with sunshine on our backs,

The warmth that makes us feel we are not old.  
Yesterday, fog, thick as wadding,  
we couldn't see ten yards ahead.  
But we ran, we run to feel we are not dead.

Hail or tiny lumps of rain, hurled from blue  
sky bouncing off our shoulders to the ground,  
sky-shot scurrying across the path around  
our feet, violent, brief and sharp, we know  
that if we stop running the air will choke us, waters rise,  
the wind will lift whole trees into the skies.  
The waves will pummel the shore and forests burn.  
So we will run and run until our breath returns.

### **COWBOY BOOTS ON VALENTINES DAY**

Germaine Greer  
takes a pot and a sneer  
at Suzanne Moore  
wearing Fuck Me Shoes.  
"Sisters, she's a birdsnest-headed whore"  
Germaine makes news,  
accusing Suzanne  
with her three-inch fat cleavage  
of being out to hook a man.  
a statement which proposes  
that lifestyle feminists are tarts.  
The sort that can be bought  
With champagne and roses  
and chocolate hearts .

Fuck Me Shoes.  
So totteringly, calf-shapingly,  
Deformingly, impractically, immobilizing.  
So passively, disempoweringly, revealing.  
So flirtaciously, voraciously, destabilisingly,  
obviously man-appealing.  
So impossible to run  
in (believe me I've tried)  
when all's said and done ,  
those shoes are for none  
other purpose than pointing at the ceiling.  
Or so Germaine implied.

I bought these cowboy boots today,  
a valentine to myself, they  
are made for walking  
with attitude, with high backs,  
their Cuban heels do the talking  
clickety spit across the tarmac,

striding with a gaucho sway  
past cafes, shops, a city bistro bar  
where meals of cheap romance are underway  
at prices which reflect the special day  
while a man sings with a guitar  
in bad Italian, to high heel girls and men in cheap suits.

I'm stitched and hitched and pitched to say  
I mean business, I know my way,  
but have no business here today. They are  
my Don't Fuck With Me boots.

## HASHTAG

Night out with my gorgeous man **#lovehim #lovemylife**  
On the beach with my beautiful kids **#happyfamily #happywife**  
Pimms on the terrace **#summerfun #lookingyoung**  
Our divine new kitchen **#foodiedream**  
Our super new decking **#strawberries andcream**  
My shiny new car **#goingfar #lifeupforgrabs**  
My flat new tummy **#workthoseabs**  
Five A grades and four A star **#proudmummy**  
Our anniversary meal **#yummy**  
Romantic night in, wine by the fire **#desire**  
**#perfectwife #lovemylife**

Got promotion at work **#fatsalary**  
Doing great on my new diet **#lowcalorie**  
We're here at the airport **#fabholiday**  
Plane delayed but we don't care **#celebratethejollyway**  
Here we are in paradise **#proseccosunset #citylights**  
**#livingthedream #gettingitright**

Tonight he is my valentine **#marriedbliss**  
He's brought me jewellery and wine **#guiltygift?**  
Such a beautiful surprise **#cheatingshit**  
Roses and card with a lovely rhyme **#takingthepiss**  
*The moon and stars are in your eyes* **#moronic**  
Another gin and tonic? **#rightoncue**  
Don't mind if I do

Family summer, feeling blessed **#pissingdownwithrain**  
Quality time with my children **#youngestcaughtshoplifting**  
Love my kids they're popular and cool **#smokingskunkagain**  
Back to work and back to school **#shapeshifting**  
A monster session at the gym **#putting on weight**  
Birthday dinner cooked by him **#thirtyeight**  
Large glass of wine, everythings fine **#positive thoughts**  
**#worstthingyoucantthinkof #genitalwarts**  
**#ratinmyknickerdrawer #smellofrottingflesh**

Two whole days spent cleaning, **#housefeelsfresh**  
Smell of lavender , gleaming chrome, **#beautifulhome .**  
New job really full on **#goingforgold**  
Feeling quite exhausted **#lookingold**  
Daughter has been out all night **#worriedsick**  
Hangover from hell , all's not well, he's acting like a **#dick**  
Absolute wreck., too tired for sex **#readhistexts**

All dressed up for a wedding **#gorgeouscouple**  
Champagne on the dais **#lovelybubbles**  
Daughter's graduation **#burstingwithpride**  
Where did the time go? **#noplacetohide**  
She's flying now and on her way **#goingoutwithaknob**  
Son starts employment today **#mzerohourjob**

So glad I came, so happy we went  
**#beautifulday #moneywellspent**  
So much in love, so grateful for blessings  
**#lifesadream #dreamsaredepressing**  
So joyful and cheerful, delighted, contented **#demented**  
**#medicated.** Life's overrated,  
A fake playground  
**#lovemybreakdown**

Taking a break to find my inner **#thinner**  
self, grow my spirit **#comealive**  
He's left, but hey, I'm not on the shelf **#feelingstrong**  
Sieve the day, I Will Survive **#gotitwrong**

**#whybother #crapwife #crapmother #craplife**  
Just don't judge me, I'm doing fine. **#drinkwine**  
Having a ball , having it all, **#walking tall**  
My life is as good as yours. OK?  
**hashtag flashbrag cashnag bashslag mashfag lashdrag gashsag**  
**#carcrash #bodybag**  
**#wasteofbreath**  
**#lovemydeath**

## **MEETING THE SEA**

It came quietly one night  
and was singing that morning outside my window.  
I went down to the new shoreline,  
the ocean's edge, my doorstep,  
and passed a pleasant, sun-filled afternoon  
dabbling toes in the water and dreaming.

By evening the sky  
was looking cloudy and the tide

was out at the bottom of the garden, swirling  
with a soft-lipped turbulence among the cabbages.  
There would be time enough  
tomorrow to worry about  
newspapers, food, fresh water,  
and fetch out the sandbags.

The next day was dull and very still. □  
The sea was calm outside my window but rose  
a little higher with the tide I think, and  
like me, a little later. So I stayed inside,  
admired my new view  
and looked at the waves.

I missed low tide  
the next morning as well.  
And when it came in again  
the sea was in the house, it was cool and lovely  
around my ankles. Another day  
and I could go swimming in the kitchen.  
I moved upstairs,  
picked up the phone but  
it was dead. When the tide went out  
I didn't like to go downstairs to see  
how it was soggy and tide-wracked.

In fact, since I came up here  
I haven't even wanted to  
get up before the ocean is back in the house.  
There is something comforting about  
knowing it's down there: I am utterly safe,

I live in this room now, visiting  
the bathroom (the only other room  
on this level) is  
a feeble ritual when you consider  
how much water I can see from this window,  
so I never go there. I sit  
and watch the green, lapping sea, and know  
that I am lucky to have this horizon for my own.

Tonight the sky is red and exciting and  
we could be in for some bad weather



## WRITING : THEATRE

### FROM 'PAMPIRIC' :

Work in Development– scratch performance at Lush, Leeds 5/6/19.

A project about climate and intergenerational injustice and the dark side of the beauty industry in collaboration with Alison Andrews.

### THE AGER'S TALE

*VIVIENNE sits alone wrapped in a blanket. She is not Looking Well.*

VIVIENNE:

She is leaving. She has left. Left me here.

To die.

I have what I need. The swang. The view.

The time, the solitude, the memories. Blankets, water.

She's done what she can.

She has gone.

She was brave, selfless to the last glance – a glinting tear which burst in her eye, overflowed down her cheek as she left. Up to then, nothing.

She kept hidden the final embrace that said it all, or most of it.

All the goodbyes we could say

And some we couldn't.

I'm praying for her before I go. No, not praying – we don't pray. We don't have gods anymore, not real ones, just the ones who have made themselves.

Made of money. Looking Well. The ones who Planned Ahead.

She knows the dangers. To help a Deathseeker carries the end penalty for anyone under 50.

Now. They had to introduce an age limit, too many Deathseeker pacts between agers. Die one, get one free.

Free death is not permitted.

They need us, you see, the immortals, they need us agers. They need to see us every day, be reminded of what they have averted. And they need the younger ones to see the price of Not Planning Ahead.

We are Not Looking Well, we who did not invest in our future.

We are their otherwise future, we who age.

In all our shrivelling decrepitude, our agonies, our incontinence,

Our brain rot, blindness, trembling and rambling,

Our collapsing focus, prolapsing bodies,

Our bed sores, cracked skin, crumbling bones.



Our inability to hear, to speak, to move  
Our ability to wail and rail and suffer  
Our inability to understand.  
Our ability to piss and shit and bleed.  
Our inability to remember.  
Our inability to forget.

They take kids on trips to the Ager Houses. The places they send the ones who aren't lucky like me, who don't have someone. They take the kids on the first day of big school. First lesson. Planning Ahead. They take the kids to the houses of the Undead to watch the agers before they die.

My Generation. We never had that lesson.

Then, there were no Personal Immortality Plans for employers to pay into. Looking Well was for the super-rich, we never thought about it for ourselves. It was out of reach and – lets face it, it was for freaks. Us? We hoped we'd die before we grew old. That's what the song said.

A few friends donated their way through college, it beat waiting tables they said. But I never had the stomach for it.

Then suddenly... there were lots of small start-ups doing Wellness. The Wellness industry. Then, they were cool, not for freaks, for everyone. Then, lots of people made lots of money in a short time, took their companies public, sold them on. Now there's just the two biggies. Ambrosia Corp and Bezma.

And you know what? It turned out, there were plenty my age who *had* been Planning Ahead. Quietly, furtively because it wasn't cool then to think about the future. But they're Looking Very Well now thank you.

I never wanted that. When the time comes I'll go, that's what I thought then. And that's what I think now.

Except now... they won't let you go. They give you just enough to keep you alive, to keep you in view '*pour encourager les autres*'. Ambrosia and Bezma fund meds for Agers, part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programme they say. But everyone knows it's because it suits them to have us around, spectres of what an Unplanned future looks like. We help business. More than all those pictures of the ones who are Looking Well and Enjoying Life laughing hysterically at their salads, showing their white teeth and shining hair, their flawless skin.

We drive sales through fear.

Unlicensed Deathseeking is outside the law. Unless you buy their Designer Death Plans, a trip to an LEC - Licensed End Clinic – there's no way out. They have privatised death. And anyone who helps you...

But she helped me.

We'd planned it for a year. She ordered the Swang on the lightwave. It arrived here weeks ago. Long enough to know it hadn't been tracked. She managed to get an unregistered transport through her group, we drove through the night avoiding Wellcams. She brought me here, where we used to spend holidays when she was little. It's safe here. Cold, damp but safe. And beautiful.



She couldn't stay to the end of course.

They don't Plan Ahead, her and her group.  
They have other ideas, other stories, other plans.  
They don't want to live forever.

The friends they went to school with are all Planning Ahead. Donating Ahead is the trend now.  
Donate for today's immortals and you're investing for your own future programme.

But She and her group know there'll be nothing. All those monthly deposits their friends are making,  
that's all going up the arms of people my age. When their time comes there'll be nothing. Nobody  
will be making deposits for the next wave, for those who are Planning Ahead today. The next  
generation will have wised up.

That's how it works, Planning Ahead. Looking Well. It's a money bubble and it will burst. That's how  
money works. And the immortals - they're made of money.

I have to wait till I know she's home before I go.

I have the grass, the sea, the sky  
The cry of the seagulls, the song of the waves  
The caress of the wind. The clouds dance beyond the shore.  
Between them in the distance, a shaft of light  
Paints a sun patch golden on the mountain  
And a faint moon rises in the blue,  
Ready for the long night.  
I can spend a few more hours in this world,  
And almost forget that I want to leave it.

I gave her life.  
She gave me death.  
It's a fair trade.



## PARTICIPATION AND CO-CREATION

### RESIDENCY BY HAUNT CREATIVE TEAM AT THE EVERYMAN THEATRE, CHELTENHAM 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017

In 2015 and 2016, Imove developed a creative writing project with homeless charities and people in Harrogate, exploring the stories of marginalised people living in wealthy spa towns. The project culminated in a promenade performance production co-produced with Harrogate Theatre in June 2016, directed by Tessa Gordziejko and including writing from 14 participants and the voices /images from a further 7

The Cheltenham residency came about as a result of Tessa Gordziejko approaching The Everyman Theatre in 2016 about the potential for a development of the Harrogate project.

The Everyman Theatre had already embarked on work with homeless charities and saw this approach as an opportunity to develop this work with the Imove team. It was agreed that the team would work intensively over five days alongside Everyman Director of Community and Education, Camille Cowe and writer Martin Lytton who had been working with the participant group prior to the residency.

The Imove team comprised :

**Steve Toase** : Lead writer and originator of the Haunt vision

**Becky Cherriman** : an established poet who performs her work regularly across the north, and has recently had her first full collection, Empires of Clay, published by Cinnamon Press She is

**Paul Floyd Blake** : a photographer who specialises in sensitive portraiture and people in landscapes.

**Tom Hunt** : a physical theatre and circus performer, cabaret compere and writer.

**Zoe Parker** : a choreographer, movement director and performer, also a physical therapist.

**Tessa Gordziejko** : Tessa is Creative Director of Imove, an experienced producer and also a writer, director and performer.



The week was arranged to offer different ways for participants to tell stories, and to bring them together and share them, focussing on significant places, significant objects, images and stories that attach to them. In particular, the week would explore themes of two realities co-existing within the fabric of one town.

The aims and activities of the residency were :

- To engage people experiencing homeless or vulnerable housing in a range of creative ways to tell their stories.
- To connect stories of contemporary participants with the town's history and heritage as a spa town, to help participants develop a sense of place and belonging.

The aims of the week were delivered successfully, with some outcomes that astonished staff from P3 charity. The quality of the work produced by participants, the fact that five participants had performed and that two participants in particular had kept coming, was seen as testament to the power of arts to make significant shifts in people's lives. In particular :

- The week after the project, one young woman spoke at a P3 conference about her experiences as a service user, and performed her poem.
- P3 found accommodation for a participant who'd been living in a tent
- The Everyman Theatre has proposed further regular weekly work with the group, and P3 are enthusiastic about this continuing

*"It's been life changing. Holly has since performed her piece twice! Can't thank you enough !"* Josh, P3 Manager



## BLOGS AND RANTS

### TEXT OF PARTICIPATION IN TRUTH TO POWER CAFÉ, 30/6/19, HEBDEN BRIDGE

The people who had power knew it was happening.

They knew. Because they employed the scientists who told them four decades ago that their whole business model was warming the planet, dangerously.

They believed the scientists. But they used their power to bury that knowledge.

In 1989, a group of big business including Exxon, BP and Shell formed the Global Climate Coalition to cast doubt on climate science and lobby against efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

To them I say : Blood is on your hands.

The blood of those who have died in drought, in famines, in floods, mudslides, hurricanes, wildfires, wars caused by our escalating climate emergency. The blood of those who have died fleeing those things. The blood of all our grandchildren who will try to survive the failure and breakdown of the life systems which support 9 billion people on this spaceship we call planet earth.

You had the power to change that. But you lacked the imagination. You would rather face the end of the world than imagine the end of capitalism.

You had the knowledge and the power. And what did you do with it? You invented a new language, a discourse of denial which said everything would be OK, when you knew it would not. You funded fake science, think tanks, you warped the semantics of academics and policymakers to be conservative in their comprehension, cautious in their analysis, muted in their fearsome findings.

You invented a dialect of stupidity that imbecilic presidents and crooked media moguls could adopt to prop up their corrupt interests and the vacuous implosion of their humanity. All shades of denial. It's a hoax. It's a non-problem. It's not urgent. It's not us doing it. It's a plot to damage our economy.

You gave the world that language. You used your power to make us all apathetic, ignorant, comfortable idiots, you fed us false scepticism to make us complicit in the Faustian bargain basement, carrying on business as usual whilst ignoring collective, existential threat.

Silence about silence.

Indifference to future loss

Powerless but unchastened

Waiting in line for chaos

The solid turtle-head of time

The world's our pot and we're shitting

Innocent bystanders to a crime

We're knowingly committing

*But - What's The Worst That Can Happen?*

Fortress continents rising

Hyperbolic rain, surprising

Anthropogenic footfall

Climategate football

Albedo emissions  
Inversion addictions  
Cracked earth destruction  
Dustbowl catastrophe  
Poisoned in committees  
While they lose their land and crops  
Flock to the cities.  
Mass destruction lobbyists  
Last ditch atrocities  
Threats the west cannot ignore,  
Disease, conflict, forced migration  
Drowning, shootings, terrorist war  
What you see is just the start.  
This kills conversation...



This heretical shout  
from the heart.  
*Don't upset the apple cart*  
*Something we don't think*  
*about. Lovely meal. Another drink?*

...

To the men of power who constructed this invisible field of silence... I say:  
The silence is breaking  
We face a time of unravelling.  
A time of humbling.

You will be humbled and held to account.  
We all will.

**Blog site :** <https://www.tessagordz.co.uk/blog/>