

Maggie Jackson - Writing Biography as at September 2017

I currently live in Selby, having moved in May this year from Leeds where I worked for 30 years in the Youth Service. I was a convert and received into the RC church in 1983. I was drawn to Ignatian Spirituality and trained in Spiritual Direction with the Jesuits at St Beuno's and in York (at St Bede's Pastoral Centre). I was a founder member of SIGN, an ecumenical, dispersed community of lay and ordained women and men involved in Ignatian Spirituality in parishes across Yorkshire. SIGN was active for around 12 years. Early retirement freed me to be a Spiritual Director and leader of a parish spirituality programme in Leeds for five years where I led themed retreat days, programmes for reflection during Lent and Advent and compiled resource material for sequences of retreats on 'Seasons of the Spirit' and on 'The Lord's Prayer'. I have led workshops at St Bede's Pastoral Centre in York on 'The Gaze of Love', 'And Still I Rise' (on Resilience) and on 'Happenstance'. I have had the pleasure of working as a Retreat Guide for IGRs (Individually Guided Retreats) at the Community of the Resurrection for 7 years.

Creative writing has allowed my imagination to find a voice, especially in recent years when challenges in life formed a landscape that I could depict and explore through images and words.

I remember being a novice 'performance poet' at Junior school and writing anti-war poems in the era of 'protest songs' at my 'High School for Girls', and I once moved my audience to tears by presenting a poem written specifically for a professional conference at which I was a key speaker.

I have three academic degrees - B.Ed Hons, M.Ed (Adult Education) and M.A. (Personal, Moral and Spiritual Development). My M.Ed dissertation focused on empowerment in community work in the inner city. My M.A, dissertation ('The Need to Dream') explored Imagination and Spiritual Development. The examiners recommended that this should be published.

My poetry often arises through prayer and connects with spiritual matters. I am told that it has helped other people to explore their inner-life.

I have had poems published in 4 anthologies: 'Journey to the Millennium' (McCrimmon Publishing 1998); 'Mystic Melodies' (United Press 2006); 'The People's Psalms' (Arrowriver CIC 2013); and 'A Little Book of Serendipity' (Thynks Publications 2013).

I was the Adult Winner of Leeds Together for Peace poetry competition in 2004. My poem 'For Miriam' was read on Radio Leeds for Holocaust Memorial Day in 2008.

I gave a day's workshop – 'Words for the Journey' for the 'Taste and See – Bite-sized Spirituality' event in York in 2009.

I gave an evening reading of my poetry at St Bede's Pastoral Centre in 2010.

I gave a day's workshop on 'The Dynamics of Poetry and Prayer' in 2011 at White Gables 'Quiet Garden' in North Yorkshire.

In August 2015 I gave a workshop on 'Transcendence in the poetry of John Donne and e.e.cummings' at a writers' retreat near Beverley.

Some of my poems appear on the Living Spirituality website www.livingspirit.org.uk and also on the Vignettes and Verses website www.vignettesverses.com (see *seanchai* on the home page).

My poem 'A Romance' was selected into the 'long list' for Fish Publications international poetry competition 2014. Five of my poems got into their long-list in 2016, and one ("Triptych") got into the short-list.

My poem "His Shoes" was published in 'Journeys – a Space for Words' - the Leeds Trinity University anthology 2016.

One of the highlights of my poetic life was an extraordinary encounter with Seamus Heaney at St Winnifred's Well in North Wales, and another was winning a place at a writing masterclass with Simon Armitage in 2016. A much earlier highlight, in 1979, was attending an inspiring reading given by Ted Hughes in the University of Leeds Adult Education Centre which was once the chapel of the Hostel of the Resurrection in Springfield Mount. I believe that was part of the thread I can trace which has woven together the spiritual, personal, professional, creative and political aspects of my life, and which has led, most unexpectedly in some ways, to my involvement in the Community of the Resurrection.

I am fortunate to be connected to a network of local and international writers through taking part in writing events. I have recently begun writing a novel and attend a W.E.A. (Workers Education Association) writing group in Leeds.

I hope to use my poetry residency at the Community of the Resurrection in Autumn 2017 to develop a collection of poems on the theme of 'The Tent of Meeting'.

A fellow poet - Rosemary Palmeira - writes the following critique of my poetry:

"Your poems are an absolute delight to read, and highly publishable.

You have a very sure and unique voice. Your poems are written with care and carefulness, rich yet spare, revealing yet never too much. They are like cut glass set into stone or journeys into places of peace and consolation, like dipping into holy wells."