



VESSELS OF TEARS

6pm, 7 May 2014
G.E. Fogg Lecture Theatre
G.E. Fogg Building
Queen Mary, University of London
Mile End Road
London E1 4NS

VESSELS OF TEARS

Every tear I ever cried
Turned to pearl before it died.
Every pain that in me burned
Forged to wisdom I had earned.

from a Cup of Sun Joan Walsh Anglund

This event is like a string of pearls, small glimpses into all the water projects I have been involved in this year. As many experts say ‘Water is Life’ and the preciousness of it is in no question as battles around water are the next prediction. That we ourselves are around 70% water and require water to stay alive is well known but it is lovely to think that the mixture of a tear with its drop of saline is a direct reference to the amount of saline in proportion to fresh water on the planet, a connection between human and earth.

Like water we are all connected by tears. Tears are shed for all manner of reasons though emotion has been the link to | my collecting for the tear treasuries. For which I thank all the people who shared their stories, I so enjoyed my personal time with each.

Water is H₂O, hydrogen two parts, oxygen one,
But there is a third thing that makes water
And nobody knows what it is.

D H Lawrence

I want to thank Thomas Dixon for inviting me to be part of the History of the Centre of Emotions for a year and to have time to think more about tears. I am glad I found a way to link the place and the people so personally through the tear bottles project and to be able to work on both Stream, WaterWeek and have time in Iceland progressing ‘Compass Me’ as well as finding artists to create a ‘Bowl of Tears’ and a ‘Dress of Tears’.

I am happy to leave the Centre; a song by Kerry Andrew ‘But When Mine Eyes Did Weep’ which accompanies a film of the Jewish cemetery, the installation of its own miniature Library of Tears with its book of tear bottle poems, two large photographs from Stream and the podcasts.

THE STORY OF A TEAR

BUT WHEN MINE EYES
DID WEEP

TEAR TREASURY POEMS

COMPASS ME

ALL THE WAT’RY THINGS

SIX TEARS

WATERY OFFERINGS:
WOMEN AND WATER IN
THE MIDDLE AGES

STREAM

ALL THE WAT’RY THINGS

Dr Thomas Dixon

Welcome to Queen Mary and the Centre for the History of the Emotions. This evening’s event – ‘Vessels of Tears’ – is an affective meditation on the emotional meanings of water, linking human tears with nature, the environment, and cultural history.

In the middle ages, the passion of Christ was the primary focus of affective meditation – a kind of spiritual exercise widely practised by both laypeople and those in religious orders. Passion plays, poetry and paintings all dramatized the sufferings of the human Christ in order to teach the faithful how to feel, and how to weep.

A late medieval poem written in Middle English, but with the Latin title De Arte Lacrimandi, is written in the voice of the Blessed Virgin mourning over her son. Its refrain is ‘Therfor to wepe come lerne att me’. Visual art could reinforce the lesson. St Francis was reputed to have gone blind from the extent of his weeping, over many years. His extreme and compassionate response to the suffering of Christ was first triggered by a painted crucifix, from which Christ seemed to speak to him, leaving him trembling and in tears.

Tears were directly associated with three of the most Catholic of Catholic institutions: the cult of the Virgin, the practice of confession, and the doctrine of purgatory. Furthermore, in the Catholic world view, tears could do things. After the Reformation, tears of penitence could no more achieve salvation for oneself than they could help the soul of another towards heaven. But they did show that both God and nature were at work.

George Herbert and John Donne both contributed to the Anglican poetry of tears in the seventeenth century. Neither was averse to tears, but both painted them in the proper Protestant proportions. Weeping for one’s own sins was allowable, but not necessary. What was truly required was an inward change of heart, not an outward display of grief.

George Herbert’s poem ‘Grief’, published in 1633, explored the parallels between tears and other natural water sources. It begins:

O Who will give me tears? Come all ye springs,
Dwell in my head & eyes: come clouds, & rain:
My grief hath need of all the wat’ry things,
That nature hath produc’d.

That text was one of the original inspirations behind Clare Whistler’s residency with us at Queen Mary this year. This evening’s event is the outcome of a year of intense creativity and conversation about ‘all the wat’ry things’.

THE
M A N
OF
F E E L I N G .



L O N D O N :
Printed for T. CADELL, in the Strand.
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THE STORY OF A TEAR

Filmmaker David Wright
Composer Kerry Andrew
Dancer Laura Gwynne
Director Clare Whistler

A site specific film of The Neuvo Sephardic Jewish Cemetery, Queen Mary University London. Music performed by Kerry Andrew to part of ‘Praise III’ by George Herbert (1593-1633).

I have not lost one single tear:
But when mine eyes
Did weep to heav’n, they found a bottle there
(As we have boxes for the poor)
Readie to take them in; yet of a size
That would contain much more.

But after thou hadst slipt a drop
From thy right eye,
(Which there did hang like streamers neare the top
Of some fair church, to show the sore
And bloudie battell which thou once didst trie)
The glass was full and more.

TEAR TREASURY POEMS

Clare Whistler interviewed academics and staff from the History Department about tears and asked them to imagine a tear bottle (lachrymatory) for all their precious tears. Each participant was given a small book filled with tissue paper called a ‘Tear Treasury’, in which to collect their tears. Found poems were formed purely from words spoken by the interviewees and collected in the book ‘Tear Treasury Poems’.

With thanks to interviewees: Fay Bound Alberti, Katherine Angel, Stephen Clark, Thomas Dixon, Jules Evans, Adrian Garvey, Laura Gwynne, Rhodri Hayward, Hetta Howes, Jane Mackelworth, Chris Millard, Paul Roberts, Chris Sparks, Sigridur Erla Gudmundsdottir, Daniel Wildman, Jennifer Wallis, Emma Yates, Juan Manuel Zoragoza



COMPASS ME

(work in progress)

Moving image installation with interactive sound. Artists Clare Whistler, Rebecca E Marshall and Nichola Bruce create an immersive state that explores the relationship between the physical and the emotional, based on a filmed performance by Clare Whistler in response to the Library of Water, Iceland. They will continue the process in a residency at Blast Theory in May.



STREAM

Charlotte Still and Clare Whistler have been inspired by spending a year exploring local sources and streams of the River Cuckmere. As an offering of their work they conceived Waterweek which involved more than fifty contributors across five venues in Hailsham, East Sussex. Each event brought together people who are interested in, inspired by and knowledgeable about water – local and global.

SIX TEARS

Composer Jonathan Dove
Movement Clare Whistler
Made from images in the Tear Treasury Poems

‘Bowl of Tears’ was made by Icelandic potter Sigridur Erla Gudmundsdottir from lava clay with lava stones as tears, some melted into the surface of the bowl. ‘A Dress of Tears’ has been made by Icelandic designer Asta Gudmundsdottir.



WATERY OFFERINGS: WOMEN AND WATER IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Talk by Hetta Howes



ALL THE WAT’RY THINGS

Talk by Dr Thomas Dixon



BIOGRAPHIES

Kerry Andrew is a freelance composer, performer and writer. She specialises in experimental vocal music, folk, jazz and community music. She is a published choral composer with two large-scale choral releases on Boreas Music. Choral and experimental work has been heard on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4, 6Music and Classic FM and on national news channels. She won a British Composer Award in 2010, was shortlisted again in 2012, and was 2010-12’s Composer in Residence at Handel House Museum. In 2013, she wrote a community chamber opera for Wigmore Hall as part of their Britten centenary celebrations, and a wild-swimming themed chamber opera for the Tete a Tete Festival. Her first short story will be broadcast by BBC Radio 4 in May. She performs with the award-winning experimental vocal trio juice, chamber-jazz/classical/rock collective DOLLYman, prog-jazz crew Metamorphic. Her debut album as alt-folk soloist You Are Wolf, ‘Hawk to the Hunting Gone’, has just been released.

Nichola Bruce works with the moving Image. Her work is primarily about expressing the way the mind composites vision through memory. She films elements of her life almost every day and has an extensive archive of over 25 years. www.nicholabruce.com

Dr Thomas Dixon is Director of the Centre for the History of the Emotions at Queen Mary University of London. He researches the intellectual, cultural and social histories of emotion, and his publications include *From Passions to Emotions* (2003) and *The Invention of Altruism* (2008). He is currently completing his next book – *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears*. In 2014 he wrote and presented a series entitled ‘Five Hundred Years of Friendship’ on BBC Radio 4.

Jonathan Dove has written more than twenty-five operas of different shapes and sizes – including the highly successful airport comedy *Flight*, first produced at Glyndebourne in 1998 and subsequently performed in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Australia and America. Winner of the 2008 Ivor Novello Award for classical music, he has written two operas for television, *When She Died* and *Man on the Moon* (winner of a Rose d’Or at Montreux), a church opera, *Tobias* and the *Angel*, and several chamber operas. An unusual achievement has been a series of community operas in different parts of the UK, sometimes involving several hundred performers in a single event. Jonathan has enjoyed a long and fruitful collaboration with Clare Whistler, devising and performing with her, and working together on outreach projects such as *Walking the Downs* and *Hear Our Voice*.

Sigrid Gudmundsdottir is an Icelandic potter. She founded Leir 7 in Stykkisholmur in 2007. The pottery only uses local Icelandic clay. She designs and produces products for individuals, communities and businesses. Her gallery shows ceramics in collaborative exhibitions with other art forms.

Ásta Vilhelmlína Guðmundsdóttir is an Iceland based artist and fashion designer. Ásta’s artworks and designs are often inspired by the ever changing Icelandic nature. Her creations are as rustic and contrasting as the Icelandic storms and eruptions – yet dreamlike at the same time. Ásta’s works evoke a strong bond with nature, bordering on the savage and the mythical. Ásta studied in Germany and has been designing for her own fashion label since the year 2000. For the last few years, Ásta has been expressing herself more and more with installations and sculptures. She has participated in numerous exhibitions, symposiums and residencies in Iceland and abroad.

Laura Gwynne has been exploring energy moving within the human body for 16 years. Starting with the expressive art form ‘5 Rhythms’ as her main training ground, she has studied extensively with core teachers, extending into other teachings by Anna Halprin and Suprpto Suryodarmo. Another central discipline, ‘Non-Stylised Movement in the Environment’ within the ‘Walk of Life’ programme integrates feeling and nature states. Her interest in movement has also inspired film and performance, including dancing for ‘She Who Walks’ a site specific show located in Dartmoor National Park, a solo piece ‘Lesser Trefoil’ in Clare Whistler’s *Wild Flowers* project, and being one of a trio of dancers in the film ‘On an incoming tide’ (2010), directed and created by Helen Poynor. Laura is one of the founder members of the ‘Dancers in Landscape’ collective based in East Sussex, with a view to creating a peer group of movers in Devon where she is currently based.

Hetta Howes is a second year PhD candidate in the School of English and Drama at QMUL. She is researching, under the supervision of Professor Julia Boffey, the significance of watery imagery in devotional prose and verse from the late Middle Ages, specifically texts written by men for female readers. She achieved a BA in English Literature in 2011 and an MPhil in medieval literature in 2012 from Cambridge University. This is where her interest in water – its cultural significance, its use as a literary metaphor, and most importantly its strong association with the female – began. Tears, baptism, watery offerings, streams, rivers, seas, blood, washing, cleansing and leaking vessels are all pivotal aspects of her research.

Rebecca E Marshall is a filmmaker and artist who likes exploring natural visual effects. She uses an experimental style that informs her short films and documentaries in 35mm, 16mm and HD. Her work can make you aware of yourself as machinery: yet soft, fragile and very much alive. Her working process includes the use and reuse of her personal film archive; an expanding reservoir of vibrant moments from everyday life. Her work has been shown at the National Film Theatre, The London Royal Opera House and film festivals worldwide. In 2009 she published a solo book ‘Ways to Disappear’ of prose poems and DVD. May 2012 she received an MA distinction from The London Film School as director. September 2013 she was awarded a scholarship to begin a three year practice based PhD studying self portrait in film with Exeter University and The London Film School.

Charlotte Still is a visual artist whose work has been described as a ‘Wandering Curiosity’. Her deep exploration of the local landscape is an experiential quest for a deeper understanding of the world and our interconnectedness in it. Her environmental concerns are a major theme in the work and spending time in the wild edges of the built up world, gives her the inspiration to convey her ideas. She always returns to water and in this project she and fellow artist Clare Whistler were both inspired by the story of a mutual friend’s annual pilgrimage from the source to the mouth of the River Rother.

Natalie Steed is an audio producer. She has created work for the BBC as a producer for six years on Radio 3’s Arts and Ideas programme *Night Waves / Free Thinking* and has curated more than twenty editions of the poetry and music programme *Words and Music* on themes ranging from *Blood*, through *The Sublime*, the idea of *Constraint*, to *Apples*; as well as making programmes for Radio 4 (as a producer of *Something Understood* and *Soul Music*) and as an abridger (*Sounds Like London*, *Book of the Week*). Her collaboration with QMUL Centre for the History of Emotions has developed out of a documentary about weeping as a responses to art made for BBC Radio 3: *Margaret Are You Grieving* www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01pz96d

Clare Whistler is an artist, performer, curator and writer with her roots in dance and choreography. Trained at Elmhurst Ballet School and Rambert School of Dance, Whistler worked as a dancer and choreographer in Toronto, New York, and San Francisco, with her own company *DanceArtCompany*, for which 40 choreographers made pieces. Clare creates site specific collaborative performance works that are often accompanied with books. Recent pieces include ‘Bread’ (the sixth in her ‘Gifts’ series) and her site-specific work ‘The Visitor’, and has been Artist in Residence at Bunces Barn since 2010 working on projects about wildflowers, bees, poetry, and a Dancers in Landscape Collective. She has worked for the past 15 years in opera, as a director and movement director, mostly at Glyndebourne Opera House and including working on iconic productions by Peter Sellers and Bill Viola, Theodora and Tristan, as well as directing numerous education and community projects. She has been a visiting artist at the University of Brighton and Queen Mary University of London and has won two Royal Philharmonic Society Awards in 2006 and 2008. www.clarewhistler.co.uk

David Wright was born in 1982. He is Technical Manager to the Drama department at Queen Mary University of London, Mile End. He Graduated from Yale in 2001 with a distinction in Theatre Practice. He studied lighting production and design and graduated from Central School of Speech and Drama in 2005 gaining a BA with honours. He furthered his education at QMUL graduating in 2011 with an MA in film. David has been working professionally in a technical capacity within many forms of performance for 16 years. Starting at his local theatre, Theatre Cymru, in the projection room of the cinema working his way through London’s variety of theatres, cinemas and music venues. He has worked at QMUL for 8 years whilst maintaining regular work outside of the institution within his technical fields and setting up a film production company.

PODCASTS

Thanks to Natalie Steed for producing a series of podcasts inspired by and reflecting the ideas, collaborations and activity generated by the residency.

The audio can be downloaded at the History of Emotions blog page. emotionsblog.history.qmul.ac.uk

On the podcasts I would like to thank Dr Thomas Dixon, Dr Chris Millard, Dr Jennifer Wallis, Dr Paul Roberts, Charlotte Still, Hetta Howes, Laura Gwynne and composers Kerry Andrew, Jonathan Dove, Katherine Gilham, Joanna Lawrence and Ellen Southern for original music.

THANK YOU

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