



THIS EVIL THING

This play, written and performed by Michael Mears will be performed at the Ipswich Quaker Meeting House on Friday 3rd November at 7.30pm. Tickets are £5 on the door or you can ring 01473 257649 to book. THIS EVIL THING is the compelling, inspiring and rarely told story of the men who said no to war; and the men and women who supported them; involving a dizzying journey from a chapel in Yorkshire to the House of Commons; from an English country garden to a quarry in Aberdeen; from a cell in Richmond Castle to a firing squad in France.

With military conscription still in force in many countries today, and prisoners of conscience still languishing in jails, the questions posed by THIS EVIL THING are as relevant and urgent as they were one hundred years ago. It is directed by Rosamunde Hutt, with sound design by Mark Noble and set design by Mark Friend.

'A moving and dynamic retelling of a hidden story'
(The List)

'An inspirational and disturbing work' - (Festmag)

'Magnificent storytelling' - Amnesty International

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More info at www.michaelmears.org

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For further information, including rate of pay, contact:

Rev. John Midgley, chair of the board of directors
(johnmidgley60@hotmail.com)

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Rowing Back into Lyra's World

by Lewis Connolly

Sitting at my desk, my dæmon sits perched behind me - she's a rather scruffy looking koala. Her name is Stichastis. She's wearing what can only be described as a rather intense expression, certainly for a koala. Just between you and me, I can tell you she can be quite irritable at times. She settled on her form as a koala when I was about thirteen, during the summer holidays before I started year nine at my boarding school in Frensham. Before that she changed her form all the time. She'd been a grouse, a gazelle, a crow, and even an otter at one stage. But during adolescence everyone's dæmon settles on a permanent form, everyone knows that...

Dæmons are fictional beings within Philip Pullman's fantasy trilogy – '*His Dark Materials*' - creatures which manifest external aspects of one's interior self. Dæmons have human intelligence and are capable of human speech, regardless of the form they take. Lyra's dæmon, for example (Lyra Belacqua is the protagonist of the trilogy), was for a time a wildcat, a moth, and a mouse, before settling as a beautiful pine marten. Her dæmon's name is Pantalaimon, though Lyra usually called him Pan. Lyra's world is one that echoes closely our own. Apart from the dæmons, witches, and armoured bears in the north fighting over supremacy of the poles, there is a great deal you would recognise. Lyra's world is set in a parallel universe to this one. Pullman masterfully weaves together theoretical physics, dark matter, and religious mythology, while critiquing the children's literary trope that to grow up would be a terrible sin. Pullman is an avowed atheist, infamously so. For this reason in some Christian circles his trilogy is scorned, which of course only adds to its mystique. He wrote his trilogy in part as a response to C. S. Lewis' Narnia, which Pullman loathes with a passion, mainly because Narnia is ostensibly a piece of religious propaganda – the death and resurrection not of Jesus, but of Aslan. Narnia promotes a worldview which is culturally conservative and even misogynistic. An example being, at the end of the series, Susan is banished from Narnia (i.e. Heaven) because she likes lipstick and boys. Tut tut. One can think of '*His Dark Materials*' then as an antidote to Narnia.

As the trilogy progresses Lyra discovers a means of travelling from one parallel universe to another. She ultimately makes her way into our world, and is shocked to discover we don't appear to have

dæmons ourselves, but is then comforted to learn that of course in this world we do have dæmons, they're just integrated within us. I think Lyra is a great protagonist, because unlike many females in children's literature, such as those in Narnia, Lyra is scrappy, and a badass, and doesn't conform to tired literary stereotypes. Unlike Narnia then, Philip Pullman frames growing up as a positive not a negative, avoiding the temptation to keep children innocent. Part of that growing up lies in allowing old childish ways of thinking to fall away and die. One of the more speculative aspects of the trilogy sees this theme manifest in the literal death of a being purporting to be God. Though this God is not all powerful, but a frail, egotistical, fallen angel, vying for power in the heavenly realms.

With the death of God, the end of the trilogy culminates in Lyra and her partner Will making love in a new sort of paradise, mirroring Adam and Eve in the beginning of Genesis, a new love and feasting upon the fruit of life, emanating out from our humanity, and not imposed upon us from authorities beyond. During this intimate scene Lyra and Will's dæmons even touch each other – which is, generally speaking, a taboo. For me, Pullman's playing with religious allegory here mirrors closely the heart of a contemporary radical reading of Christianity. That a generous openness and compassion and embracing of the Spirit of Love, is an outworking of accepting or coming to accept that the old baggage of religiosity has died. That the old childish spectre of God, or imposter God, has to die that we can be awakened into a new spiritual reality of love manifested not in a speculative time or world beyond us, but wholly in the present. If you can't tell, I'm a big fan of the trilogy, which is why I have been excited to get my hands upon the new '*La Belle Sauvage: The Book of Dust*', the first of what will be the long awaited prequel trilogy to '*His Dark Materials*'.

I eagerly anticipate rowing back into Lyra's world.



More reflections on walking round

Needham Lake from Riena Jackson

This morning we stood as usual for a time at the edge of the lake. The water was calm and completely smooth. The trees in the distance were not particularly vibrant as the clouds covered the sun. Ducks and five cygnets with their two parents, who we have got to know since their first outing together in May, were just floating on the water, in a group, preening themselves occasionally and looking completely at ease. Observing these swans I was struck by the fact that these creatures were just there, at that time, with nothing to do, nowhere to go, without thoughts, without worries. I then realised that for me the main benefit of doing these walks is that I enter a different world of nature where my own thoughts and worries quieten down too. By walking and just looking and listening to what is around me and by refraining from talking or engaging in inner comments or judgments, I feel differently and for a time I really do feel that 'all is well'.

Part of Riena's article was included in the October issue, but this concluding paragraph was missed – apologies all round.

Events in November

1st – All Saints/Souls day

2nd – What would Luther say? – lecture about the reformation by Bishop Martin at the University of Suffolk. Please book via the link below. Tickets are free-6pm start

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/what-would-luther-say-by-bishop-martin-tickets-38331980987>

3rd and 4th – Jesus Queen of Heaven – Hull

Unitarians - <http://www.hullunitarians.org.uk/> (see last month's issue for more details)

11th to 25th – Ipswich Art Society – Pictures for Christmas

Exhibition at Artspace, Thoroughfare, Woodbridge (10 – 5)

12th Our Meeting House AGM – after the service – all welcome.

14th – Ipswich Faith and Community Forum AGM

7.30pm at Co-Op Education Centre

18th – Poetry Soup – Avenue Theatre, Gippeswyk Hall,

Ipswich 12 noon to 2pm - £5 in aid of Inside Out

18th – Shabbat Service – 11am in Interfaith week, led by Rabbi Mark L Solomon at our Meeting House – shared meal afterwards.

30th – Poetry Group meeting - 2pm in Upper Room – bring a poem by WH Auden to discuss

Meeting House AGM

After the service on Sunday 12th November we will be holding our Annual General Meeting in the hall. As well as hearing reports from the trustees, catching up on the news over the year, checking out our financial status and voting for trustee positions, this is a good opportunity to show your support for our Meeting House. Whether you are interested in taking on a formal role as a trustee, or a more informal volunteer role, please come along. Members will have voting rights, but attenders of the Meeting are also welcome.

We also hope to find a volunteer to manage the volunteer rota, so this is another way you can offer support.

Hiring the Upper Room

We hire out the Upper Room (above the room where we have coffee after the services). It has a spacious room, tea making facilities and a toilet. Access is via the wooden external stairs. Some groups have a regular booking for their meetings, others may book for a special event. Rates for hire are very reasonable and this all goes to support the finances of our Meeting House. If you would like to book for your own group please contact Rosemary Hamilton, the Warden on rosieandivan@uwclub.net or ring 01473 215686. If you need an urgent reply and Rosemary cannot get back to you quickly, then contact our secretary Riena Jackson on mjack76748@aol.com

Birthdays in November

Happy birthday in November to – Hilary Hamilton on 11th and Mathilda Hawes on 24th.

Coming up in December – services and events at the Meeting House -

3rd December at 10:45 – First Sunday of Advent

Friday, 8th December at 8pm – UN Human Rights Celebration

10th December at 10:45 – Second Sunday of Advent

Saturday, 16th December at 6pm – Carol Service

17th December at 10:45 – Third Sunday of Advent

Friday, 22nd December at 8pm – Reflective Taize style service.

24th December at 10:45 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Monday, 25th December at 10:45 – Christmas Day

Reflections on the definition of

trauma by Rev Ellen Spero of Chelmsford MA

We are living in a time when we cannot process one traumatic event before the next happens, whether it is a natural disaster or an act of human violence.

I have been reading *A Hidden Wholeness* by Parker Palmer, in preparation for a training I will be attending later this month for leading a curriculum called, "A Geography of Grace." In the introduction, Palmer writes: "There was a time when farmers on the Great Plains at the first sign of a blizzard would run a rope from the back door out to the barn. They all knew stories of people who had wandered off and been frozen to death having lost sight of home in a whiteout while still in their own backyards. Today we live in a blizzard of another sort. It swirls around us as economic injustice, ecological ruin, physical and spiritual violence, and their inevitable outcome, war. It swirls within us as fear and frenzy, greed and deceit, and indifference to the suffering of others. We all know stories of people who have wandered off into this madness and been separated from their own souls, losing their moral bearings, and even their mortal lives: they make headlines because they take so many innocents down with them." (p.1) He goes on to say that by tethering ourselves to communities grounded in trust, integrity, kindness, and deep listening, we can keep in touch with our souls, even in whiteout conditions, and thus, better weather the storms.

We are in it for the long haul, and there are not quick fixes. We can only keep tying the rope between our soul's home and the world we must live in as we suffer its storms. (edited)

Donations of bras

Thank you to everyone who donated used (but reusable) bras to support a Soroptomists' initiative to send bras to Africa to assist victims of sex trafficking to set up in business and earn an income. They collected 1100 bras and some are still coming in. If you would like to see what happened at Sailmakers, have a look at the website- www.sigbi.org/ipswich-and-district

Back on both feet

Beryl Beech is feeling much better, hopes to be back at a service at the Meeting House soon and would like to thank everyone for their kind messages, visits, cards and greetings. She says she is now walking with only one stick and is almost 'back to normal - whatever that is'.

Harvest Festival



Minister Lewis Connolly - after our Harvest service on 1st October – thanks to all who decorated the Meeting House and contributed food.

Contacts

Contributions for the next newsletter to Tessa please before the deadline of Wednesday 29th November – to ipswichunitarian@gmail.com or post to 48 Crabbe Street, Ipswich IP4 5HS – this will be a combined December/January issue. If you would like to receive the newsletter regularly by email, please send a request to go onto the mailing list. Feel free to pass on copies to any interested person.

To contact our secretary Riena Jackson, ring 01473 210064/email mjack76748@aol.com

To contact our Minister, Lewis Connolly, ring 01473 422528/email

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Thought for the month

"Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves" - Carl Jung