

patients, only endless meetings, reminiscent of insurgent political discussions, with heated discourse about how to implement change, with a critical difference—patient involvement.

Health, especially mental health, is inseparable from current political agendas and Foot's account exemplifies the power of the politician in transforming society. This book is not merely rehashing the story of Gorizia according to the Gorizians, rather, it is a historical narrative that contextualises an era of radical anti-institutionalism and empowerment of the rights of the individual. There is very little about mental illness itself; Foot does not venture into any diagnostic or even treatment-based details. Instead, there are stories of rivalries, especially between Basaglia and Giovanni Jervis, who was a member of the original equipe in Gorizia, student demonstrations, political influence and interference, and the legacy of published work, most notably the "bible of 1968", *The Negated Institution*. Foot also goes beyond Gorizia, to other Italian asylums, led by other radicals, some of which replicate, others of which advance and evolve Basaglian ideology.

Foot is clear about the polycentric nature of the anti-asylum movement, "involving a number of actors (psychiatrists, intellectuals, ordinary citizens, patients, journalists, academics, students), cities and institutions". Basaglia is not the idolised or idealised protagonist, and although his work precipitated mental health reform, some holes were left unfilled. Emptying and closing the asylums is a laudable goal, but what happens following the liberation? In 1971, Basaglia addressed a group of students. He had, he said, become "a star for the bourgeois world...I have become an institution." The price of fame, of hype, and publicity is that the man himself becomes more important than the cause that made the man.

Foot's story is in part biographical, but essentially a book of well-researched critical objective narrative. Informative and comprehensive, it can be repetitive, most likely because the structure is not chronological. There is also very little detail or contribution from patients, which is disappointing. However, if you would like to read a historical and compassionate picture of radical reform in mental health, this is your book.

Jules Morgan

## "The smallest things are gifts"



**Lifesaving Poems**  
Anthony Wilson  
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How many poems resonate with a person over the course of their lifetime? Anthony Wilson's *Lifesaving Poems* began as a personal notebook in an attempt to answer this question. Wilson, a poet, writing tutor, blogger, and Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter, restricted himself to "unscientifically" copying out longhand one poem per selected poet, asking himself—upon first reading—if he was so moved by the poem that he could not live without it. Wilson then posted the poems on his blog with a description of the personal significance of each; this subsequently led to thousands of followers reading and sharing their views on the posts. Wilson, a cancer survivor, described how his notebook and blog became much more significant to him following a period of disconnect with poetry during treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2006. The anthology is a way of giving thanks to the poets for their works, to his mentors and friends for influencing his reading, and to the poems themselves.

*Lifesaving Poems'* title was drawn from Wilson's belief that "there is something redemptive and healing in the art of making, speaking, listening to and reading poems". Indeed, Derek Mahon's *Everything Is Going To Be Alright* underscores that poetry, in challenging our perceptions, is a means for healing: "The sun rises in spite of everything/and the far

*cities are beautiful and bright*". Wilson happily lets us into his world, into the moments that shaped him. For Wilson, Mark Robinson's *Domestic Bliss* is particularly significant because it reminds him of the time in his life in 1991 when he started *Bull*, a writers' and artists' group where he first found other people who "cared about words and poems and metaphors in the same way".

Wilson's selections emphasise the importance of mindful awareness, regardless of one's personal journey. *Chemotherapy* by Julia Darling approaches the everyday from a grateful perspective: "I never thought that life could get this small,/that I would care so much about a cup,/the taste of tea, the texture of a shawl,/and whether or not I should get up". Darling goes on to state that "the smallest things are gifts". This, for Wilson, summarises "the entire universe of pain, gratitude, suffering, relief, anxiety and humour which the word 'cancer' registers". Regardless of your own unique story and life lessons, *Lifesaving Poems* offers an avenue to mend the intrinsic brokenness of the human experience. For Wilson, reading poetry continues to be "like falling in love". *Lifesaving Poems* can help you fall in love over and over again—and save your life too, one stanza at a time, line by line.

Allison Gonsalves