Trauma – a normal reaction

HOW CAN TRAUMA affect journalists and what can be done to protect against it? Speaking on this topic at LFB’s October meeting was Gavin Rees, director of the Dart Centre Europe for Journalism and Trauma (www.dartcenter.org/europe). People associate trauma with “mental illness and pathology”, says Gavin. But should you experience trauma, “you are not going crazy – it’s a normal, not unexpected reaction.”

Part of the Dart Centre’s mission is to understand how our minds and bodies respond in traumatic situations. Journalists need to “absorb, digest and make sense of these, to bring order to the horrifying things that can happen to people”. As journalists we don’t like to “shine the light on ourselves” – it’s seen as impeding our view of people in the story. But if we don’t consider how this traumatic content affects us, we are “likely to do our interviewees a disservice”. How we interact with traumatised people in our work and how we handle trauma ourselves “are intimately connected”. Gavin says the Centre aims to “give journalists tools to look after themselves better”, and “to encourage the most accurate, insightful journalism”.

A growing issue is journalists working in newsrooms having to verify a flood of traumatic images. Even 1600 miles away in Syria these

Prints not dead!

A RENAISSANCE of independent women’s magazines was examined at LFB’s November meeting. Our speakers included Alice Snape, the editor of bi-monthly Oh Comely, one of the longest-running independent women’s magazines. See page 4 for a report of the talk by Stack Magazines founder Steve Watson at the same Branch meeting.

LFB member Alice is Oh Comely’s new editor. It started “about eight or nine years ago… as a bedroom project by three friends from uni” dissatisfied with women’s magazines. Having worked on “big fashion magazines”, Alice sees Oh Comely as an antidote to their “false expectations”.

Oh Comely is strong on illustrations, first person stories of unknown women, it’s “not about products.” Alice decided to end the tradition of a portrait of an unknown woman on the cover and replace it with illustrations to reflect the “thoughtful nature of what we do”.

At Oh Comely there are “only three of us,” all part time, in a “very passionate team… we don’t have a board of… probably old white men telling us what we should put on the cover”. They “don’t have to put certain content next to certain adverts”. The magazine’s “not making money,” and is now “technically owned” by Iceberg Press. Alice does get paid. You can order Oh Comely with free delivery from its website, or see it at WH Smith and now in supermarket Waitrose: Alice hopes “we can increase the circulation.”

Oh Comely pays each and every contributor to the magazine. “Rates might not be in line with some of the bigger magazines because we just don’t have the budget.” Alice predicts “print is going to start to be more popular again – people don’t want to consume every single thing online.” Most of Alice’s readers “sit down and read the magazine from cover to cover”.

We also heard from Elizabeth Krohn, founder of Sabat, the magazine for “the modern witch”. Its “trilogy” of three issues has now finished but there have already been reprints. In a twist on online habits, many readers send Instagram photos of their copy of Sabat enjoying pride of place as a “magical object”. Its “gothic aesthetic” includes images printed along the edges of the pages, “something you can only do in print”.

© Matt Salusbury
This month’s rates for the job include impressive amounts reportedly paid for writing for US titles and for copywriting.

Thinking about work for a company you've not dealt with before? Look at the rate for the job to find out what companies in similar niches have paid. Then aim higher.

You can submit rates online at www.londonfreelance.org/rates – please give not only the basic rate (e.g. for First British Serial rights) but extra payments negotiated for extra uses, like the Web. These are shown as (eg) £400+100.

Rates marked X are, in the editor’s fallible opinion, below par. Treat all rates as minima, even perhaps the happy few and see www.londonfreelance.org/feesguide for hints on talking them up.

Broadcasting: ITV Daybreak psychologist punditry, travel expenses only paid £0 XXX.X.

Photography: Balder (Sweden) 5 photos £250 X; CLIC Sargent half day shoot for cancer charity £200.

Punditry: women’s organisation local group 40-minute talk £50.

Shifts: University of the Third Age day £200; Observer magazine subbing day taxed at source £190; Sun subbing day £165; Money Saving Expert reporting day £150; Telegraph subbing day £150 + holiday pay; Conde Nast World of Interiors subbing day taxed at source, £135 + holiday pay, House and Garden same terms, £130; copywriting: Landscape Institute news stories, day shift from home £250; Metropolitan subbing day £150; metro.co.uk lifestyle reporting 9-hour day shift, £100 XXX X; and www.procopywriters.co.uk survey – in London per day £426, outside London per day £339, very experienced per hour £100, beginners per hour £30.

Translation: BuzzFeed per day (unspecified languages pairs) £160.

Words, per 1000: Telegraph 1200 words @ £480 = £480; Greater Manchester Arts 1500 words @ £500 = £333; human rights publication 700 words @ £100 = £143; re-use of 1995 feature, writer retains copyright £120; Ecologist feature £100; Selvedge magazine (textiles) feature £50 XX, and according to whopayswriters.com – Variety US$7500, Popular Mechanics US$2000, Teen Vogue US$1500.

Words, other: Times front page story £233 XXXX; The Stage 250-word overnight review @ £20 = £80 XXXX; The Culture Trip research, writing in WordPress US$70 X.

A stern reminder to do your taxes

You have already missed the deadline to send in a tax return for tax year April 2016–April 2017 on paper.

Now you can only do your tax return for that year online. You have until 31 January 2018 to do this.

The sign-up page for the website of Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC, the tax people) is linked from the online version of this article at www.londonfreelance.org/nil/1711tax.html

If you’re unsure of your Government Gateway password to access your HMRC account and start filling your tax return online, request a new one now.

If you became self-employed in tax year 2016-2017 and haven’t yet registered with HMRC for online tax returns, contact your local tax office now as you’ll need to get a password sent to you by post for security reasons. HMRC warn that this can take up to a few weeks.

HMRC’s website has been known to crash under the sheer volume of submitted tax returns in the run-up to the 31 January deadline. There are also automatic three-figure fines for failing to submit your tax return by the deadline. Don’t say we didn’t warn you.

You also have just over four months to fill any holes in your Class 2 self-employed National Insurance (NI) contributions history before “Class 2s” (at £2.85 a week) are abolished. After that, such voluntary contributions will be charged at a much higher rate. From April next year you will instead be charged “Class 4” contributions: if you make a profit of over £8164 a year, that’s 9 per cent of your profits.

If you’ve neglected to pay Class 2 contributions via your tax return for any period, the resulting holes in your NI contributions history will affect your state pension entitlements.

Database errors by HMRC and others have led to some random self-employed people having their NI contributions history “overwritten” – removed from their tax calculations. So you’d better contact your tax office to find out whether there are any gaps you need to fill with voluntary payments while there’s still a cheaper Class 2 rate.

Meanwhile, the Government’s Making Tax Digital plan to make all self-employed folk submit quarterly tax returns online on some yet-to-be-developed platform seems to have been seen off, at least temporarily. Now only businesses with a turnover of £85,000 or more will be compelled to keep “digital records” from 2019.

Other businesses (including most of us) are now expected to be “asked” to keep digital records and provide quarterly tax updates from 2020 onwards.

The offices of the Inland Revenue – now HMRC, the tax people – at The Strand, in Central London Photo: © Matt Salusbury

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Brexit update from Belgium

FOR NUJ members in Belgium, the main Brexit effect so far is uncertainty about their future status, whether freelance or employed. The uncertainty covers both the right of British members to remain in Belgium (and other Continental countries) and the right to continue working as up to now.

Some members fear that, if the UK continues to treat EU nationals with such hostility, Continental countries might respond in kind. Anyone posted to Belgium by their employer is likely to be under a UK contract, but it’s unclear whether tax agreements will be affected by Brexit. Also, they would still need to register with their local authority, so Brexit could affect those members’ future status in the country.

The NUJ’s Continental European Council plans to put a motion to the Delegate Meeting in April calling on the union to work with the European Federation of Journalists to increase cooperation with EU organisations, to ensure continued

TRAUMA from page 1

Brexit – millions still in limbo

OVER FOUR million people are still in limbo over Brexit – including our members who are either EU citizens living in the UK or UK citizens in other EU countries. All are in the same state of uncertainty they’ve endured since the 2016 referendum.

UK Prime Minister Theresa May’s speech in Florence in September endured post-Brexit access by members to EU institutions – particularly important for many Brussels members.

The fall in the value of the pound against the euro after the Brexit vote has hit freelances in Belgium, and other Eurozone countries, who work for UK outlets. Members in Belgium already face some of the highest tax and social security charges in Europe, so UK rates for the job were never very attractive.

Some NUJ members in Belgium have opted to apply for dual British-Belgian citizenship. Some see Irish nationality as an easier route to continued EU citizenship. Dual citizenship is not possible in Spain, while in France, getting citizenship can reportedly take two years. However, as elsewhere, clock up five years of continuous residence in Belgium and you can apply for citizenship. That usually requires proof of: professional activity; payment of social security and taxes; and a fairly low-level mastery of one of the country’s three national languages.

Brexit could affect those members’ rights issues.

The NUJ’s Brussels branch is likely to seek continued post-Brexit access by members to EU institutions – particularly important for many Brussels members.

The fall in the value of the pound against the euro after the Brexit vote has hit freelances in Belgium, and other Eurozone countries, who work for UK outlets. Members in Belgium already face some of the highest tax and social security charges in Europe, so UK rates for the job were never very attractive.

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© Vic Wyman

NUJ Continental European Council rep on Freelance Industrial Council

See www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1702belg.html for NUJ Brussels Branch’s guide to post-Brexit Belgium for UK nationals.

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Brexit update from Belgium

TRAUMA from page 1

can cause the same reaction as if you were there. Gavin suggested strategies to process this material, to mitigate its effects. One “vital act of self-care” is to “take time out from the material”. Avoid working alone on this stuff, or late at night.

When you have traumatic material piling up, “do active things… hit the space bar to stop video… get up, walk around.” Do things that put you in control. Don’t pause the footage during the traumatic bits. There’s also one thing you always still have control over: your breathing.

Other actions you can take when viewing traumatic content include covering images of “the dead bodies” when you have to rewind through a clip. Or “play it with the sound off;” or change the dimensions of the video box. Such actions ensure “you’re controlling it, it’s not controlling you.”

Molly Clarke of the Rory Peck Trust told LFB that “there is more awareness of trauma as a result of Grenfell and recent terror attacks.” (See more on the Trust on page 5.) Since these events, the Dart Centre’s also seen more requests from news organisations for “intervention.”

Trama, as well as the modern market economy that we freelances are in, are inherently isolating, notes Gavin: so solidarity and connection are particularly important for us – and the Branch is an example of seeking those. Also vital is “celebrating the meaning and purpose” of what you do. Gavin commented that “there’s no point in going through all this harrowing… stuff, if it’s pointless; people can put up with all kinds of extraordinary things if they feel their work has a meaning and value.”

© Matt Salusbury
Random 'zines enthrall you

NINE YEARS ago, when Steve Watson founded Stack magazines service (www.stackmagazines.com), “all the chat was about ‘Print is dead!’ And thank goodness, people have stopped talking about ‘Print is dead’ quite so much now.” Stack sends subscribers an issue of a different indie magazine each month.

Steve was speaking at the November London Freelance Branch meeting alongside editors of independent women’s magazines in print – Alice Snape of Oh Comely and Elizabeth Krohl of Sabot: see page 1 for reports of their presentations.

At the mainstream “big end” of print magazines: if they’re not dead they’re not in very good health; but “Independents are flourishing when the mainstream is really struggling.”

Why’s that? Mostly, “technology.”

The creativity behind indy titles is “the same impulse” as YouTube videos or releasing music on Soundcamp.

Most print magazines start life as digital files, with collaborators – who may be in several countries – working in the “cloud.” Print innovations make “smaller runs to really high quality” feasible.

Even though you’re an indy title, you’re still allowed to be a success, to earn a living from it and pay divers for their contributions. Indy women’s title The Gentlewoman is a big success story – a “professional magazine with a ton of advertising.”

More of the indies are making the transition into something that’s more like a business that pays contributors.

The other secret of the indy renaissance is print itself. At a Professional Publishers Association meeting, senior “big publishing” people told Steve that today “we don’t really talk about print… we’re a brand.”

Steve replied that the independent magazines and their readers “love print.”

Steve described Double Dagger, a letterpress magazine done on 50-year-old Heidelberg printing press, “ancient technology” but “so crisp” in a way that only proper print can be. Its readers proudly share pictures of their copy of it on social media.

With the “content excess” of Sky, Vimeo, Amazon and others, people expect that if there’s not something tailor-made for them, there should be. The internet means “these magazines are a global business… they sell around the world.”

Now shops all over the country (including Artwords, Ideas on Paper and Magazine Brighton) are selling these titles, we’re seeing more indy magazines than ever before.

© Matt Salusbury

• There’s an information sheet on indy print magazine titles and who to pitch to linked from this article at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1712stack.html

• Discount code “NUJ” gets you 10 per cent off on the Stack website.

Copyright debate trundles on in Geneva and Brussels

THERE ARE some encouraging signs on international policy on authors’ rights. The World Intellectual Property Organization is the United Nations body responsible for these and twice a year 200-odd diplomats gather in Geneva for its Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights.

The biggest item on its agenda in recent years has been a push to widen “exceptions” that permit use of works protected by authors’ rights and copyright for the benefit of schools, colleges, libraries, museums and archives.

This has been promoted by Latin American countries, perhaps largely motivated by the huge cost in local terms of academic journals and law books. Brazil showed a change in emphasis on 15 November by saying that it makes no sense to improve access to knowledge if there are no incentives for the production of knowledge. It supports work on a treaty to put these exceptions into international law but decisions can only be taken when all countries concur, and the US and the European Union do not support such a treaty.

The International Federation of Journalists introduced its remarks on this by noting that it represents 600,000 journalists in 140 countries worldwide, North and South. It recognises the importance of libraries and archives and museums.

The IFJ notes, too, the number of delegations referring to the needs of the digital environment. One feature of that is that libraries and archives in effect act as publishers, making their holdings available off-site. As its representative I noted that “some countries whose citizens must pay higher prices in local terms are seeking to flood their own market with my works, distributed without payment to me – which causes rather more damage to authors working in their own culture and language than it does to me. Supporting a diversity of authorship is essential, and that means fair remuneration for authors when our works are made available to the public.”

Back in 2015 Brazil proposed a strand of discussion in the Committee on copyright in the digital environment. At this meeting a significant portion of Brazil’s introduction of the proposal called for transparency over what money for use of copyright works ends up where.

We had a presentation from Professor Jane Ginsburg on the “value chain” through which payment reaches authors and performers – or doesn’t.

There was a most interesting exchange between Brazil and the Professor, with both speaking warmly of the proposals on transparency in the European Union’s draft Directive to amend the law on copyright.

The IFJ reminded delegates that exploiters of copy rarely frequently do not understand the contracts which they “offer” journalists and that when those that are agile and flexible are asked what rights they need, they frequently reconsider. Professor Ginsburg agreed, and that gives her optimism for the future.

© Mike Holderness

• For a full report of the Geneva event, including warmth toward artists’ rights and hints of an exception to allow use of works for the “hard of thinking,” see www.londonfreelance.org/fl1711wipo.html – and for more thoughts on the EU plans www.londonfreelance.org/fl1711copy.html

New members meet again

For members new to LFB or recently joined, or new to freelancing, there’s a meeting on Thursday 25 January 2018. It’s a chance to meet other new members, with some more experienced journalists on hand to offer advice, hear about the mission of the union, discover some of the resources on LFB’s website www.londonfreelance.org and discuss work issues. It’s at the Camera Museum, Museum Street, London WC1A 1LY on Thursday 25 October, from 6pm. The nearest Tube is Holborn. These regular meetings are on the last Thursday of every third month. For a report on a successful new members’ meeting earlier this year, see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1706newm.html

Public Lending Right changes

If you have had a book published – or had words or pictures in a book – you’re entitled to Public Lending Right payments to compensate you for loss of sales that may result from libraries lending it out. Back in the last government’s Bonfire of the Quangos – how innocent those times seem now! – the Public Lending Right organisation was taken over by the British Library.

The website you need to visit to claim what’s due to you – including, recently, payments for lending in Ireland – is now moving to www.bl.uk/prl.
Supporting freelances in crisis

THE WORK OF the Rory Peck Trust, which supports freelance journalists in crisis, was described by its communications officer Molly Clarke at October’s LFB meeting. (We also heard from Gavin Rees, director of the Dart Centre Europe, speaking on journalists and trauma; see p 1.)

The Trust was set up 1995 to help Juliet Peck, widow of freelance cameraman Rory Peck, who was killed filming clashes between Yeltsin loyalists and supporters of Russia’s Parliament in Moscow in 1993. Since then it’s “evolved and grown,” says Molly: it’s gone beyond supporting just broadcast journalists. It now has a staff of 12 in its London office, working with local and international partner organisations.

Assistant grants are “at the heart of our work”, says Molly. They make 120 of these grants a year to freelances and their families “in a critical situation” – imprisoned, injured, in crisis, disappeared, in exile” and families of journalists who have been killed or kidnapped.

And “we do support UK freelances… who have got into trouble on the frontline.” The Trust is responding to “new challenges” including “replacing kit stolen or confiscated”. A lot of Rory Peck clients are in their own country – the front line is coming closer. Increasingly “journalists come under attack in countries where that wasn’t necessarily common” in the recent past.

The Trust also works “to help freelances safety, self-reliance and professionalism”. This includes grants of up to £750 towards safety training courses” to “make them affordable for freelances”. Online resources on budgeting, negotiating, sources of funding, risk assessment are available from the Trust; “not just for people travelling to hostile environments, but for any job”: see www.rorypecktrust.org/resources

A new initiative by the Trust and the Frontline Club is half-hour “safety surgeries with a security expert” including digital security. Then there are the Rory Peck Awards every October. These raise the “profile of freelances and what wonderful work they do, how the contribute to the industry” why “they need support – not only from us, but from news organisations” for which they work.

But “we’re not a union.” Their work is more supporting and strengthening the person, through which “you are then better prepared to do your work.”

The Trust works closely with Dart with projects in different countries. According to Molly, “We are seeing more requests for assistance grants around trauma and psycho-social needs,” and for digital security.

Encouraging people to do risk assessments before they go on assignment is another Trust activity. This goes beyond the more obvious risks: “crime, car crashes and robbery… are some of the biggest dangers… all these can stop journalists doing their work.”

© Matt Salusbury
Molly Clarke of the Rory Peck Trust – www.rorypecktrust.org
Photo: © Hazel Dunlop

Be more careful with Tweets™

“COULD YOU take down that screenshot of my Tweet? It’s private and it breaches my copyright,” someone asks. OK then. But… there’s an interesting question here, which affects journalists told to compile stories from Tweets. And: are screenshots of Tweets™ allowed?

It used to be a good rule of thumb in UK law that a headline was too short to attract the protection of copyright. (This was before the days when all online headlines were topped and tailed with “Several things that will astound you about…” and “…here’s why!”) We’d say a Tweet using all the traditional 140 characters is firmly in the grey area; and we’d predict that a court would say that a new-style 280-character Tweet was copyrightable. That’d be a matter for the court, in the end, of course.

Tweeters’ contract with Twitter, its Terms of Service, say “You retain your rights to any Content you submit, post or display” – and then of course go on to claim a blanket licence to do what the Twitter corporation wants with that content, and to license others to do unspecified stuff. Then Twitter’s Developer Agreement and Policy grants you a licence to “Copy a reasonable amount of and display the Content on and through your Services to End Users...” So it looks as though the Tweeters granted Twitter a licence to grant this licence... and that this says you’re OK in law.

This means that if you give someone permission to Tweet a photo, for example, you are granting a lot more people a “licence” to do a lot more.

But then we come across Twitter’s Display Requirements, one of eight agreements embedded in the Developer Agreement. These appear to attempt to prohibit displaying a screenshot of a Tweet – on Twitter or elsewhere online – for example by specifying that all the clickable/tappable links must work, which is probably impossible on a screenshot on Twitter. We’re not sure how they’d enforce this – but trademark law seems like a likely option. They do explicitly permit printing Tweets and using them in broadcasts. The Freelance hasn’t yet had any response from Twitter clarifying this.

© Mike Holderness
● For details see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1711twit.html and for the things you should know about quoting other people’s words and not using their photos see www.londonfreelance.org/quoting.html

A self-referential screenshot of a Tweet: is it legal to put this online?

Image and text of Tweet © Mike Holderness (probably); incorporates a portrait image © Pennie Quinton

More online
There are more stories and, we hope, updates to some of these, at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/ and see NUJ President Tim Dawson’s column at www.londonfreelance.org/president
Annual General Meeting, data protection

IT IS JUST possible that this newsletter may reach you by post in time to alert you to the LFB gathering on Monday 11 December, which is LFB’s Christmas party. Free food and some free drink will be laid on. (The mailing of the Freelance print edition is beyond our control, sorry!)

The first London Freelance Branch meeting of 2018 is on Monday 8 January. It’s the Branch’s Annual General Meeting, at which we elect our Committee for the rest of the year. If you’re considering standing for Branch Committee there’s more on the posts – some are paid – and what work they involve at www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/jobs.

LFB’s nine delegates for the NUJ’s Delegate Meeting (DM, its conference, in Southport on 19-22 April 2018) also need to be elected. See www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1711dm.html for more detail.

This went to press on 28 November. Deadline for the January online issue: 30 December

Training alert – copywriting

LONDON FREELANCE Branch in association with NUJ Professional Training is proud to present its latest training course – “Copywriting for journalists: looking at new ways of making money”. As a copywriter who came to talk at a recent LFB meeting told us (see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1710cw.html), copywriters seem to be paid better and earlier and treated better than most journalists, so it’s an avenue of work well worth looking into.

The LFB/NUJ copywriting course is on Friday 2 February 2018 at the NUJ, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB, from 10am to 5.30pm. It costs NUJ members just £49, which includes lunch.

Topics covered include: what is copywriting; who hires copywriters; how to find clients; finding your unique selling point; pricing; getting paid; and “common mistakes to avoid”. The tutor, Eleanor Goold, is chief copywriter of Kreativ Copywriting. To book, see www.nuj.org.uk/events/copywriting-for-journalists-looking-at-new-ways-of-making-money

For courses on “the business side,” free to NUJ members, see www.freutening.org/news/free-workshops and also see www.nujtrainingscotland.com and www.nujtrainingscotland.com

LFB’s recent training course in digital journalism.

Photo © Francesca Marchese

UNCLASSIFIED ADS

GLEN SOUND GSGC4 ISDN mixer for sports commentary or general reporter use. Lovely condition c/w with carry case, new leads and headset mic. Bargain at £395: rob.underwood@bbc.co.uk

BLOGGING COOPERATION: Stuart Forster, the travel journalist and blogger behind Go Eat Do (www.go-eat-do.com) is looking to cooperate with fellow bloggers to build traffic and reach. Contact stuart.forster@gmail.com

NUJ’s HQ at Headland House, 72 Acton Street London WC1X 9NB, accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The nearest Tube stations are King’s Cross and Chancery Lane.

If you need the Branch to pay for care for a child or dependent so you can attend a meeting, call a Branch officer.

For updates on meetings and for confirmation of themes and speakers for forthcoming meetings, see the Branch calendar page www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/meetings.html and LFB’s Twitter feed www.twitter.com/NUJ_LFB

Can members who have difficulty reading the agenda on paper please contact us to get the agenda in electronic form ahead of the meeting?

For etiquette on recording or live-tweeting from LFB meetings, see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1507film.html.

New VENUE

Branch meetings move

Be warned and note now in your diaries that the venue for the regular London Freelance Branch monthly meetings changes, starting from the December gathering, to the basement meeting room of the NUJ’s HQ at Headland House: its entrance is at 72 Acton Street London WC1X 9NB. The nearest Tube stations are King’s Cross and Chancery Lane.

CONTACTS

Freelance office
John Toner / Pamela Morton. 020 7843 3703
Membership via switchboard. 020 7278 7916
email: freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk
post. 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB

Legal helpline for NUJ members in emergency only:
England and Wales 0800 587 7530
Scotland 0800 085 3425

Freelance editors
Mike Holderness
Matt Salusbury
email: editor@londonfreelance.org

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