

Author Interview: Jurgen Olschewski

By Nalini Priyadarshni

Jürgen Olschewski is a British writer, poet and songwriter presently living in South Wales. He has published several short stories, and poems in a wide range of literary magazines and anthologies (most recently in Unthology 5, Unthank Books) in the UK, Ireland, and Italy, and has had his work broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and BBC World Service Radio. He has been shortlisted for the prestigious Bridport Prize. His first novel *The Blue Box*, published in 2014 has regularly been an Amazon Bestseller in Metaphysical and Visionary Fiction.

Born in Sennelager in what was then West Germany Jürgen Olschewski grew up in England. Before becoming a writer he has been, among other things, an actor, cleaner, salesman, barman, clerical worker, carer, warehouse assistant, and shop assistant. Jürgen Olschewski's first collection of poems, "After School", has been released in January 2015 and followed by his first collection of short stories, "The Chocolate Room and Other Stories" closely afterwards. Jürgen Olschewski is currently working on producing a CD of songs. Demo versions of three songs may be found here: <https://soundcloud.com/pumpstreetsongs>

Jürgen works as a medical transcriptionist when he is not writing. He loves reading, walking, and hopes to learn more about cooking.

Interview with Jurgen

1. What does it mean to be a writer to you?

Writing for me grew out of reading, out of loving stories and poems and plays, and indeed out of listening to songs. I believe it is something I will always do. I did not come to it early, and my dedication to writing has grown over time. I feel now that writing is quite fundamental to who I am as a person. Going about my day, shopping, talking to people, working, ideas for stories or poems, or simply the discovery of an interesting line or image,

most often by chance, or as some kind of gift, has become part of my everyday life. As is reading.

2. What inspires you – in life and in literature?

I like to think that poems or stories find you. If you let them. For me, I seem to be more creative out of calmness rather than any sense of urgency or pressure. Things happen, somehow, when I have managed, albeit temporarily, to clear other concerns and worries out of the way. I read both for delight and for consolation. For escape, and to learn about other people and places, and to learn, I hope, more about myself. Reading is also a hotline to the past. And possible futures. It is magical, in my view. And mysterious. Always.

3. What's your writing process like – an organic discovery or a methodical construction?

An organic discovery. And when I have tried to plan something in advance, somehow the life drains away. The love goes. I do not know why. I do not wish to know where things will go. I wish to be led, I wish to follow rather than to lead. Characters lead you. Your obsessions lead you. Your care leads you. The mystery leads you. That is my approach and really what I most love about the whole affair.

4. What is your writing routine like? Is there any rituals?

I want to develop more of a ritualized approach. In the sense of creating a space of open calmness. Of openness per se. To see what might come through. I like the idea of becoming a conduit in some regards – and to avoid rigidity or control. To trust what comes, where so ever it may come from. I want to start writing more with a pen again. And perhaps in different settings. Perhaps this year I will go to the sea for a week, and see how that affects things. To stay nearby the sea.

5. You are a writer of prose and poetry. Can you tell us how different the two medium of

expression? Do you prefer one of the other?

I see them as part of the same thing. Perhaps all art is from the same well spring. I believe it may be. Certainly the impulse. Form is interesting. Perhaps subject finds its form. I like the idea that what you care about will find the form it is meant to be. And can indeed be expressed in more than one form. I have no preference. Perhaps longer pieces have particular structural concerns. However, everything has structure. I find it all so very fascinating.

6. How has the reception of your books been like?

I have been wholly grateful that anyone has read my books or individual stories. I am truly grateful and touched by this. I love it also that some books and stories have been read in various countries. That feels lovely. I find it very interesting to hear what other people may make of my stories or poems, and most of all I hope people enjoy them, and that they may have some meaning for other people, as they have meaning for me. I would love, one day, to have some of my stories translated into other languages, as indeed I would like to try translating others' work in the future. This must be a fascinating process.

7. What would you tell your younger self if you could travel back?

Be kind to yourself. Know that despite set-backs you are on the path you were meant to be on and it will lead to a place of creativity and mystery. I would tell myself to trust my instincts – to trust the small quiet voices of conscience and of intuition.

8. Do you have a favorite quote or philosophy?

I do not have one favourite. I wish to read more philosophy. I also believe each person may make their own philosophy. Walk their own path that no one else can walk for them. This is our birthright, I believe.

9. What is your idea of happiness and misery?

Happiness is freedom from mental and physical pain. To have enough food. Clean water. To not be in fear. Never to be dominated. To feel calm and hopeful. To maintain a sense of wonder, and believe in the goodness of life, of other people, and of the natural world.

Misery is fear of harm, mental or physical or spiritual harm. Hell is losing touch with your soul, with all that is dear to you. Hell is oppression, and fear of violence. Misery is wanting too much. Hell is not wanting anything, perhaps. Hell is to deny your truth, your heart's affections, your dreams. Misery is hell in this plane, I feel. I do not mean sadness, as sadness is necessary and can be beautiful, it gives your life meaning, I feel.

10. Any parting words for writers struggling to find their feet?

Follow what you love. Let the mystery take you in. It will look after you. Trust yourself. Always. Listen to others sometimes but not all the time, or maybe hardly any of the time, and in the end work to your own values and your own intuition. Listen to your soul. Your heart's intelligence. Your unique sensibilities. No one can do what you can.

Nalini Priyadarshni bio: Nalini Priyadarshni is a poet, writer, editor and amateur photographer. Her work has appeared at Up the Staircase Weekly, eFiction India, Mad Swirl, Crescent Magazine, The Riveter Review, Writes & Lovers Café, The Gambler, Camel Saloon, Earl of Plaid, CUIB-NEST-NIDO, and The Open Road Review, Phoenix Photo and Fiction, Undertow Tanka besides numerous anthologies including I Am Woman, Awakening of She, Art of Being Human etc. Her forthcoming publications include I Am Waiting series by Silver Birch Press. She lives in India with her husband and two feisty kids.