Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
LOTTERY FUNDED

Please note, *Lunar Poetry Podcasts* is produced as 'audio content' and is intended to be heard and not read. These transcriptions are to be used as an aid alongside the audio recordings. If it is possible I recommend you listen to the audio which includes emotion and emphasis, not included in this text. This transcript is produced by a human and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding audio before quoting in print.

If you would like to see any changes to the way this transcript is formatted, then please contact us on Twitter or on Facebook. Alternatively, please take the time to complete this short online survey.

Episode 01: Pat Cash – Spoken Word London (October 2014)

Host: David Turner – **DT**

Guest: Pat Cash – **PC**

Transcript edited by Martin Pettitt – 24/06/2017

Conversation

DT: This is the Lunar Poetry Podcast, I'm David Turner and today I'm joined by Pat Cash. Yeah, I think we're just going to start today with Pat introducing himself for a couple of minutes.

PC: Hi, I'm Pat Cash, I'm a journalist, performer and creative writer. And what transcends the latter two, of being a performer and a creative writer, is being a spoken word poet. And

I started off doing spoken word at a night when I lived in Paris, when I was 25. And I started off doing it at a night named Spoken Word Paris which was completely open mic, five minutes for everyone. No one got any more than 5 minutes. So, when I got... Came back to London I couldn't find quite the same night with the same ethos, so decided to set it up with spoken word Paris's blessing, and it's called Spoken Word London. And now I flip between my three roles: journalist, performer and creative writer around town both in London and Paris.

DT: Okay, so that leaves me on quite neatly to the first question. You just mentioned Spoken Word London, which in my opinion is the most interesting and welcoming open mic night in London, well, North London at least. I really wanted to ask what did you hope to achieve when you started the night and how, if at all, did you want to make it different from other open mic nights in London.

PC: I think I wanted to achieve a welcoming... Primarily, a welcoming atmosphere so just anyone can feel, you know, accepted and almost at home. And that it's kind of nurturing idea. That people who come along... If they are coming for the first time they've got this poem in their bag and they've never ever read before in their lives and they want to... They're really really scared that, you know, this night is going to give them the support and the ethos that they can read for the first time. But also, it's something for established speakers, for anybody to come along and just be part of something. And eventually evolve into a little community which it has done this, which I'm very pleased about.

DT: Was it like that from the start or did it take a while to get that mix of newcomers and established performers?

PC: Well, at the start we had about 10 people, literally in the corner of... We run it in this basement bar called Vogue Fabrics which you know obviously because you've been there a number of times yourself...

DT: A number of times as a general punter at the weekend as well.

PC: Oh, really, yeah, yeah.

DT: But that's another story.

PC: Vogue is a sweaty club at the weekends, so we are like its arts relief during the week. Yeah, and there was about 10 people there and we had... There was one amazing girl, I can't remember her name, I think it was like Amarie, I think, who did a brilliant piece. And it just built up from there, like we did... We went on to... promoted over social media mostly. But I don't think I've ever done any flyers or posters for it. And... Just through Facebook, Twitter, through the group Poetry in London it's kind of built up over time. And I think it was very important as well...

I mean, I'm not here to like denigrate any other night in London, but why I set it up… I was going around nights in London and it seems open mics at some nights were kind of tagged on after the hosts had had their friends, you know, to feature, which is great. The features

were generally really really great but then half the audience would leave for the open mic, you know, and mostly it just be the people who were open mic-ing and their friends. And then there were slams and slams are amazing, they can create a really edgy energy and really get people on the edge of their seats. But if your first-time reader, you're not going to go to a slam and get up there and have to, you know, do your 3 minutes then be rated out of 10 by, you know, everybody afterwards. So, I wanted to create something that was just, you know, equal, an equality ethos.

DT: Yeah, I think the one thing that stood out for me the first time I went to Spoken Word London was the feeling that you could just get up. It felt like a true spoken word night rather than a poetry night. Although you are free to obviously come and read poetry you felt like you could come along and just use your voice in any way you chose to and it was really... Yeah, it really stood out in my mind.

PC: I think that's definitely a thing, I mean, I called it a poetry and performance night because it is completely open mic, like anyone could... As long as it's got some form of, you know, verbal communication you can come and do it. No one is going to come up and, you know, push you off if you decided to just, you know, speak naturally. And a lot of people... Well, we've had a lot of people in the past who have done. It's not kind of like this has to be spoken word poetics.

DT: And you tend to get quite a good crowd there of people that are coming just to watch as well, don't you, which is I think because of that blend of... Because it's not strictly speaking a poetry night, it doesn't put off people coming just to watch... Entertain themselves, you know.

PC: I think the five-minute thing kind of adds to that as well because people know that there's generally... But we're really lucky and I'm honoured that there's been so many great people of such top-notch calibre that have been there and have taken their slots. But also, that it appeals to the audience in a way because they're going to hear like a multifaceted, you know, a hundred-headed concept of voices through the evening. But also, if they don't like... If they're not particularly engaged by one speaker then there's a five-minute rule which means that the speaker will be gone relatively quickly and someone else will be up. They are not going to be there for 25 minutes listening to this person. So that kind of, you know, the rapidity of it also appeals to people. But I would like to say that the number 1 factor of appeal is the inclusiveness.

DT: Great. I think next I'd like to talk about your own poetry and what I've seen of it, which is quite a bit now but your poetry often has a strong social message to it. To pass this question, is that a very conscious decision and why do you choose the spoken word scene as a platform to discuss these issues?

PC: Yeah, definitely now it's a very conscious decision and I don't want to take [INAUDIBLE], this answer could go on forever. But when I started off in Paris a lot of my poetry was a personal, kind of like I guess the word would be epistolary, you know, to somebody written with the 'you', with the kind of like the neutral pronoun. Never like 'he' or 'boy' but I am gay and I was out as gay the time in Paris when I was, you know, expressing

myself down the on page for some of the first times in terms of... I've always been a writer beforehand but I wrote in prose beforehand like when I was expressing at spoken word when I was actually going to be... I knew I was going to be sharing in front of an audience, I still wouldn't use, you know, writing about like past love or something, I wouldn't use 'he'. And I think that's because I still did have some hang ups about my sexuality at that time. And then I came back to London then I started working for a gay magazine as a journalist in which it's at the heart of the gay community in London.

And a lot of the issues that I'm dealing with daily involve internalised homophobia, shame about gay men's... lingering shame about gay men's sexuality and about sex, you know, about gay sex. Because we live in a very... in a world very heteronormatively infused with sex to sell advertising, to sell toothpaste even and you know... And on billboards, you know, when you go past. Whereas a gay sex, gay male sex, is particularly under the table still. It's a case of like, yeah, great for the gay marriage but no sex please boys. It sometimes feels like anyway. So, I had to... dealing with all these issues, I'm writing about them daily. That became a step to, I can't do this neutral gender, gender neutral pronoun anymore. I've got to make it explicitly about being gay and I've got to make a voice for it.

DT: So, did becoming involved the spoken word, or performing your own poetry, did that help you come to terms with any issues that you had to yourself, personally? Did it help you overcome it?

PC: Definitely. Yeah, I'd say so. It's a way of... It's also in terms of he can reach as an audience, and it's a way... It's about inclusivity. I mean, I do hasten to add, not all my poetry is about gay stuff but a lot of it is.

DT: I did want to make that point quite early on, you are not... I didn't invite you here as that gay poet that I know. It isn't that, I do think you're very talented poet... These issues that you're talking about aren't solely because you're a gay man, the ideas of masculinity and gender roles, these affect everyone, you know.

PC: Exactly, there's a lot of that. Then there's a lot about division, social division, I think, that there is ongoing social divisions between minorities and minorities against one another. And, you know, I guess if I wanted to sound a little bit like hippy-like my ultimate... Underneath everything that I write is a call for harmony, greater harmony. And yeah it is about... And so, because a lot of spoken word audiences are largely straight, then I will... I am performing... I'm bringing a voice of gay people... When I do LGBT issues I am bringing a LGBT voice to...

DT: Actually, that might be a good point to go on to the next question. No, actually, it's... So, having spoken to many performers about this perceived lack of social commentary in spoken word somehow people are perhaps not political enough. This is just one view, it's not an issue of whether that's true or not, it's just this perceived idea. Most have sort of agreed that the best place to seek out that kind of poetry is within the LGBT community and do you agree with that or do you think that it's just those outside of that community mistakenly categorise poetry touching on those issues as being social commentary rather than just, it could be... Do you understand what I mean? It could be... You yourself could get

up and tell a poem... Read a poem about your sex life or issues around that, it may be a deeply personal poem to you but others may mistakenly read it as some sort of social act.

PC: It's... If you're giving a voice to a minority group it's always going to be a slightly political act, however personal it is because often the most personal poems will deal with... Well, from my experience in the LGBT community will deal with feelings of rejection or inferiority or having been side-lined in any way, growing up, either by being side-lined, by being actually homophobically bullied or side-lined as in having to stay in the closet and act to avoid that.

And then in that sense, you do... Because you're talking about... However personal it is to you, it's still something that is a commentary upon wider society and the flaws in wider society and the division in wider society that exist and therefore that's always going to be political. But I think also it's about voices, it's about being heard, it's about coming out with your... Literally coming out with your words, be it from being smothered, you know. I remember talking to Jacob Joyce who's a regular at Spoken Word London, a brilliant regular at Spoken Word London and has hosted it for us. And We...

DT: Sorry, that's good... Just to mention Jacob for a second, if people want to find him because I think the issues we're talking about is really great place to look for this kind of poetry, he performs under... You can find him under... Is it Silk...

PC: Silk Word on Facebook. He's also got a website I think is JacobVJoyce.com. And I was interviewing Jacob actually about race, about LGBT Community and race a while back and because... I know a lot of Jacob's poetry deals with race politics and I was saying... But when he made a comment of like, if you are... It was it was about like, are black people more homophobic? Because there's a stereotype that homophobia is more ingrained in the black community. And he said, no I think they're louder. Like, you know, that girl on the bus, that black girl on the bus, is going to be louder because she's grown up with no Disney princesses black, you know, and no voice, you know. Because if you've grown up with no voice then you're going to, you know, use your own voice louder in society in general and therefore you might hear things, you know, like slurs more.

And I think that is applicable, that scenario Jacob brings up, is applicable to the idea of LGBT people in spoken word, you know. There are... I say to audiences straight... I was thinking of like because they're different nights. Like if I go to Until the Lights Go Down, for instance, I think the majority audience there is straight. Actually, at Spoken Word London about half the audience is gay.

DT: There is a very mixed audience.

PC: Yeah, I don't know if it's half, I mean, maybe, but it is... it attracts a lot. It attracts a lot of gay people and attracts all kinds of minorities along, which I really love. And I really think is great. And that's the thing... Sorry I don't want to...

DT: No, go on.

PC: Yeah. It's about... Different groups, different factors, different elements of the city... Of the city of London coming together, that's why it's called Spoken Word London and different threads intertwining.

DT: Yeah, it's a good point. Actually, now I want to move on to... Similar to what we've been talking about now but really where your poetry strikes me the most or affects me the most is when you talk of issues that you face as a man, regardless of your sexuality or your background or, you know, or your alter-ego Patricia, who we'll talk about later because she's fantastic. But this idea of masculinity and the expectation placed on men and boys to conform to certain gender roles. I was going to ask if this was a subject you'd like to see more poets discussing but I think we've probably agreed that it probably would be a good thing but...

Do you think because we're all up at the mic as it were... I'm talking about male performers just for a moment, but this could be applicable to the females as well, just the other way around. We're up there talking about our feelings, that there's a mistaken belief that we're all too well adjusted to discuss these topics. Like we're all seen as well-adjusted boys because we're talking about our feelings so...

PC: Because were taking the step of...

DT: Of getting up and talking about things.

PC: And taking that communication... Yes, but, you know, people can still... I've still seen people get up on stage... We were talking just now about a guy who, I didn't see him, but before the podcast started you were saying about the guy who got up and spoke a pro UKIP poem, etc., you know. UKIP, I mean, they seem to be a group that are pro division. I mean, they want to take us out of Europe and they also... If you type in UKIP to any kind of news website, if you go back far enough, even recently, and you will find the most racist homophobic, transphobic stuff coming out, I mean it's... So, in terms of people, performers, getting up on the stage, it depends on the content. I don't think getting up on the stage is something that you can say, I do spoken word and therefore I am connected with...

DT: No, no, no. sorry, I was just thinking that there's maybe this mistaken belief that... And that's maybe why these things aren't talked... It may just be through embarrassment that guys won't get up and talk about issues of masculinity, because ultimately they come back to perhaps an acceptance of a certain level of femininity. You know, finding a balance between what's a healthy level of... Which we... Without referring to too much stuff that's happened. We've talked about before this podcast and we've discussed this idea before about this need for a healthier view in society for the way men behave particularly towards women and other groups of society.

PC: I think we do live in a patriarchy where power is automatically placed upon the male, from an early age. And so boys are growing up being told they need to be strong and they need to be big and they need to be muscled, and to be the action man, you know. And that, you know, things like flowers and things like, you know the colour pink. And, you know, almost things like kindness and being gentle and having some tenderness around you are

girly effeminate things that, you know, shouldn't be part of your butch, invincible masculinity. And that's quite unhealthy I think for a lot of children to be brainwashed into, for any child to be brainwashed into thinking because in your later psychology, you know, you [INAUDIBLE] anything that might be.... That might allow you to accept and talk about things and bring a greater idea of acceptance, I guess. Of acceptance of... Because we're all supposed to, I mean, if you go into gender theory there aren't these two binaries of... I mean, Judith Butler is... It's a construct and this performativity. And so, there isn't like male this side... I just hit the table with my left hand... And female... I just hit the table with my right hand... On this side.

We are on this spectrum that's between us but if you have... I mean, it's almost creating a split personality with boys. [INAUDIBLE] if you're brought up and told, you know, like get rid of this, get rid of this, get rid of this, an innate part of yourself already, then you're really kind of like fucking someone up psychologically. So, I think there's a lot of like insecurities about masculinity going on in this kind of strange weird patriarchy that we live in. And that can be brought out and that's oppressive for a straight white man, you know. That they've got all this social pressure around them.

So that can find its outlets in... And you know, Panti Bliss says in her... Panti Bliss is drag queen from Ireland, she says... Well, actually, sorry it is Rupaul.... It's Rupaul from Rupaul's Drag Race. He as a man, I can't remember what his name is, but he's incredibly intellectual and eloquent. And when he was interviewed he was like, people who have been oppressed take on elements of their oppressors. So, you know, even the straight white male, that boy growing up in our society, has taken on elements of oppression that he's going to, you know, bring out into outlets of oppressing others.

So, to go back to your original question of masculinity and how... Yeah, I mean, I think for myself personally when dealing with my sexuality, when I was coming out my late teens, it was incredibly important... I mean, I took it as a real compliment if I told someone at a party, you know, I was gay and they said I would never have realised. It's like, that's amazing, it's so important because, you know, I'm never going to be camp, I'm never going to be effeminate. But actually that was me, you know, there was a combination of what I was just talking about the elements of oppression.

DT: Trying to conform.

PC: Yes, so, but now I'm completely changed that and I completely take on all elements of my femininity and masculinity.

This is Hate by Pat Cash.

I've been thinking a lot lately
About hating
What eats at the heart of hate
Because you know
I hate people every day
I hate tourists on Oxford Street

I hate children on the tube
And I hate slow walkers
Stopping me getting to my train
I wanna grab their faces
Say with all that rages:
'Get out of my fucking way'

But I don't
Because I know
My hatred is a ghost
It's a quick-flicked switch
A brief-lit wick
It's a fake shade of hate
Just a frustration of place

And don't get me wrong
I'm not a saint
I dislike a fair few people
But that's not the same as hating
That's not the same
As wanting to stamp
On their faces

Because haters always
Gonna hate, they say
And in some places
If you ain't got hatred
You ain't got status
So let's play with
The face of hate

Hate me for a moment
Hate everything I am
Hate me because I am different to you
Hate my words and my brothers too

Hate me for my body
That ends at my fingertips
Hate my skin, my pigmentation
Hate me for the sensations
I share with another in bed

Then take your hate away
And make it something great
Nurture your hatred
Feed it and mould it like clay
Stoke at its embers

Until its coals glow red
Sculpt it like glass being blown
Until it fits the shape of your soul
And hate will heat you in the cold
Hate will be there when you're alone

And at this point I would speak
Of the crimes of hate
Of screaming ugly at a woman
In a magazine
Of a woman in Iran stoned
Because she was rape
Of misshapen faces
And mistaken shame
And yes, this poem is about hate crime
But it's also about why
It's about Cameroon, Uganda and Russia
It's about a neighbour hating another
It's about men deciding on abortion rights
And Europe losing the right-wing fight
It's about LGBT, it's about immigrants
It's about antisemitism in Hungary
And Pegida rising in Germany
It's about Orlando
It's about Britain First and the EDL and the Printemps Francais
And a black boy shot on the streets in the USA
It's looking at a human race
That sometimes seems
Consumed and wasted
By hatred

It's standing up to that
And saying
I am not afraid

DT: I think I'd like to talk a bit now about your work as a journalist. I suppose the first question, just a simple thing, is does your work as a journalist influence your poetry or vice versa or do they just exist as two separate natural outlets for you to discuss and explore topics?

PC: Generally, I try to keep them separate. But if I am writing an article about... Like I wrote an article... having just spoken about the masculinity subject, I wrote a poem called Real Man which was about a gay man who was going around telling himself, telling everyone, that he's a real man and he [INAUDIBLE] any feminine qualities but actually he's a drag queen. But then he's actually a boxer as well, and so he goes as a drag queen to

become a boxer to go on to fight as a drag queen Boxer in a boxing ring. But some of the lines in there are taken directly from an article I wrote about doing drag and about issues of... In the gay world, of why on one side everyone loves drag and everyone embraces it; on the other side everyone's like mask, you know, on Grinder, which is this gay app. It's like, must be masculine, no fems, no gesticulations, etc., you know. Get rid of your personality.

DT: Who is the poet, Keith...

PC: Keith J.

DT: Keith J. He does a fantastic poem about, you know... I think it's sort of loosely based on Grinder but it's basically all the things that that person doesn't want. You can't be feminine, you can't be camp, you can't be black, sorry just my preference and all that. And it is just a fantastic idea.

PC: He did it at Velvet Tongue, didn't he?

DT: Yeah, yeah, I really liked that.

PC: Yes, so sometimes inevitably what I am writing about journalistically will find an outlet also of my spoken word. But generally, yeah...

DT: And do you do most of your writing for one publication or do you [INAUDIBLE].

PC: I work like for 2 full-time to pay the rent, during the day. But also, because I enjoy it, for this magazine called QX, which is the gay community magazine. But, yeah, and outside of it I write for various other publications as well.

DT: Yeah, and just because I saw you on... Like so for the Lunar Magazine launch last... We are recording this on Friday, it was last Sunday, whatever that date was, I can't remember what it was. Anyway, and Pat came along and you did a short story.

PC: Oh, yeah, yeah.

DT: What... I am quite interested, because a lot of the stuff I do is quite rambling and it's not really poetry as such anymore. Do you see that as a... Because when you introduced the piece or you suggested... You asked the audience, do you want a story or a poem? It sort of led me to believe in that situation, maybe just on that stage, you felt like you had to have permission to read a story. Is that right or have I got the wrong impression?

PC: Yes, definitely, because it was Lunar Poetry, it was a poetry night. But then I had just finished the story that day and so I was like, do I?

DT: But do you in your own mind see the stories and the poems as separate things? I mean, as physical structures they are different things but, you know, in terms of creative outlets.

PC: Yes. For myself definitely. I mean, I know if I'm writing a poem, I know if I'm writing a short story, it's a different thing.

DT: I don't see that but that's just a personal thing. Right...

PC: But, you know, poems can have stories in them, you can have a narrative poem that is a story. But it is the structure.

DT: Yeah. Yeah. I think perhaps my... And this will become quite clear in the next few minutes, that my mind rambles too much to see a difference. When I start writing I have no idea what's going on. Right, so I'm going to basically ask you some rambling and pretty leading questions because, you know, I've frankly made a lot of assumptions of what your answers might be.

Actually, it's a very common thing just because it was a very big issue in the first few issues of Lunar Poetry Magazine, it was an article split up into two which was written by Paul, the editor. There's this question about page versus stage, in that you know some poets see their work as printed and some, like myself, I don't submit my work for publication it just exists it's onstage. Is this an issue for you and do you think it's an issue at all for the spoken word scene in a wider view? And would you change your writing style depending on whether it is a poem only to be printed or performed?

PC: No, definitely not. I wouldn't change it a bit, if it works on the stage and people connect to it and people hear it as they hear it then it's going to work on the page as well. There's no reason why it won't and I think it only exists in other people's minds. Why there's a difference between page and stage. Of course, there are kind of like... You will get pedants about meter and about, you know, like iambic pentameter, etc. But I think that's all in the past. We need to be going forward.

DT: People keep challenging me to write sonnets, I still don't know what one is.

PC: Fuck it! I have never written a sonnet in my life and I don't intend to start now.

DT: I think they're just going to find it hilarious, I think that's all it is.

PC: I think writing can be very imprisoning. Sometimes it can be great but, you know... I mean one of the best poets... in my opinion one of the best poets in the world is T. S. Eliot. He never used any, he used free verse.

DT: I think actually it's a good point you that make about it existing in other people's minds. I tend to find that when you are... Whenever anybody says, oh there is an issue, that this page versus stage issue exists and you ask them, does it... What, do you think that? And they will always say inevitably, no, no, no, some other people think that. And I've never found those other people that... I don't think anyone really does think it. I think there's this idea that there's a problem or there's an issue but it doesn't really exist, because I mean frankly, why should it? I have noticed for myself, if I tell people that I write some pieces only

to be performed. I think they assume that I've got a problem with things being printed and it's not that at all. It's just I choose...

PC: I mean, this is still kind of like... Not to downplay what you're saying, but in general, in the kind of like the general vision of things, this is all superfluous fluff around, you know, a core. And at the core is honestly and if you have honesty then it's there. There's no issue of page or stage it just about being honest or not honest.

DT: This is going to be seen as equally as fluffy. But, you know, it's something that comes up and people... It seems to be an issue for some people but... The feeling of reading from paper or reciting from memory, and this actually does divide some performers and they will admit to not liking when someone gets up with paper. And what's quite funny is that some people will just about accept reading from paper. But if you dare try and read from an iPhone... It could be the worst thing you could ever do. But, I mean, do you have any feeling... I mean, I think I know what your answer is but do you have any feelings on it? Because I think it probably puts a lot of people off if they think this issue exists.

PC: I read from paper all the time, I mean, it does create a better freedom of movement and I would definitely say a better freedom when I've memorised a poem. When I'm doing it from memory to the audience I can connects more, I can see their eyes, I can really talk to them. The paper is binding and it means you have to kind of like, you know, go back, refer back to it. And so you have to take away your connection to the audience while your onstage to connect with the paper. Which is... You have to be... Which can be, you know... It's risky because you can lose the audience in doing that, if you look at it too much. But if you have a supportive audience, which you do at Spoken Word London, almost everyone reads from paper at Spoken Word London. And that's... And iPhones as well, there's no difference between paper and an iPhone, if you're reading, you're reading. Anyone who says this has got some kind of hang up about that really need to check themselves in some way.

DT: I think the reason I brought these two points up... Because even though they seem maybe a little bit ridiculous to you and I. [Inaudible] I think because like we discussed before we started recording, I'd like this podcast to be for anyone that's either involved... Have been involved with spoken word for a long time, a short time or not at all. And I think issues like this, issues that don't really exist can put people off starting and I think it's important that maybe someone might hear this and actually realise that it doesn't matter if I'm too nervous to memorise a poem, I can read paper and it's okay, you know.

PC: Yeah, definitely, read from paper but it is just enough, read from paper, read from paper, read from paper. Do not put extra pressure on yourself, it's nerve racking enough going up and speaking in front of an audience in the first place. Do not put extra pressure on yourself to memorise stuff. I've seen some amazing people, amazing poets who... Amazing poems at Spoken Word London where it's probably... I mean, I'm not trying to honk my own horn, it is a really supportive like loving kind of friendly audience. Whenever there's a new comer everyone is like, yeah, really kind of giving them all the strength and support they can.

But still you've got all these faces staring at you and, you know, and if you make eye contact... It's happened to me before, I made eye contact with someone while I was trying to read something from memory, it's this is cosmic blast in my head. Everything's gone, literally. And some people I have seen bring it back they can stand there and close their eyes and be like... I can't, after it's gone it's gone, I have to get out my phone, scroll, it's really embarrassing, scroll through looking for it, or just or just stop it there. Yeah, you know, I'm doing it... I've been doing spoken word for, I'm 27 now, I've been doing it for good two and a half years, I guess. I'm only just getting to the point where I can do stuff from memory, it takes it takes a long time. And, yes, definitely. Actually, do not listen to anybody...

DT: Just last weekend, actually, I was a Platform One which is at the Poetry Cafe on a Saturday evening, the first... One Saturday per month and Niall O'Sullivan got up and did a 10 minute or 15 minutes set. And for those who don't know Niall O'Sullivan, he's the host of Poetry Unplugged. He's been the host for about 357 years or something and he's fantastic and an amazing poet. And got up and said... First thing he said was I used to read from memory but now I have a baby and now all I can remember is the theme tune to whatever. Whatever children's program there is now. And he did the whole set from paper and it didn't break down because he had the confidence to read from paper and not worry too much. And, you know, it worked out fine. I think personally I would have liked to have seen him do it without paper but then, you know, it didn't ruin the poems, at all.

PC: Of course not, yeah. And because those... The performances is... It's called performance poetry for a reason and performance is part of it. But the performance is probably about 25 percent, 30 percent at its heart. Going back to the page/stage thing I'd say the same thing. Like if anyone said, what's good spoken word? There's is no good spoken word, there's no bad spoken word, it's honest spoken word. And if you've got that honesty it doesn't matter the little details surrounding it, it's superfluous fluff.

DT: Yeah, I think the reason... Maybe the reason it gets brought up as an issue for me, because I so very very rarely read from paper. People assume that I have a problem with people reading from paper. But the only reason I don't read from a paper is because half the time it isn't written down. I don't have anything to read. But it's everyone doing their own thing and I think that's the one thing that I try to hold when I was writing was that idea that if what I was writing was honest I could handle people telling me the technique is slightly wrong. You know, or I could've have changed this word for that word or, you know, put a slightly longer pause in. But no one can ever tell me it wasn't true to what I felt.

And, you know, I think you're right and you made an excellent point there, I think all these issues are just so really meaningless. Sometimes in spoken word you get the sense of like an old boy's club and they're trying to impose some rules. You know, because... I don't know why. It should be all inclusive which is why I love your night and hopefully our Lunar nights are going to become the same and there's apparently a night down Oval, Silence Found a Tongue, something, I don't know.

PC: It's very good.

DT: Really really great night. You can find that on Face... Something anyway, let's move on from that rubbish. So, the next question to which I'm assuming your answer will be, that depends. Because it seems like the fairest answer, but, you know, if you could maybe elaborate a little bit either way... Do you write with the intention to perform or do you allow the performance to suggest itself after you've written a poem?

PC: That's an interesting question. I think I let the performance suggest itself. But if I was saying like my poem on hate... When I'm writing that it does have shorter lines than I usually write because it's got that kind of [INAUDIBLE], you know, that kind of fiery, hate-filled essence to it in the way that it's written, even though it's not about hating people. It's an anti-hate poem but that seeps into a as I was writing. And remember I wrote it in like an afternoon in my bedroom, I had the day off work or something. And then that comes across because in your performance... Because you're... short lines create more a sense of...

DT: Do you find the physical look of a poem helps you to cue your performance in some ways. Maybe just in that sense.

PC: I think... I've never thought about it that explicitly, the physical look and the how... But maybe subconsciously as you do it more you will begin... And you see it on the page, if you're reading from the page, you will know which breaths to take and how big your breath is. Because as you do anything, as you practice anything, you become better at it and your brain becomes attuned to it, I guess. So, I would say yeah. Yeah... But generally let the performance just happen on the night. And sometimes I get overwhelmed by something which is like... Because write stuff is very emotional for me and it's not like a gimmick that I do but if I'm in an emotional place anyway...

DT: No, you're one of the few performers I see get truly, properly emotional.

PC: There was one time when I just...

DT: No, no and I think it's really admirable, you know, that you do let yourself get into the moment like that. You know, because I know from my own experience, you know, even though I write quite emotionally charged stuff it doesn't always grab you because sometimes you're too in the moment. It takes a lot of courage to let yourself, 1., concentrate on what you're reading and 2., let yourself go with emotion as well. It's quite terrifying to let that happen. Because you don't know how far it's going to go. So, do you find... Does it take much practice to find, to polish, a particular performance or help perform as a poem?

PC: No.

DT: Do you find it comes quite naturally?

PC: Yeah, I mean, I've always been like a performer outside of the spoken word poetry as well so that I think that definitely helps in terms of performance. But yeah, I think it just comes naturally. I think that's the best way of doing it. Rather than, you know, just kind of... I mean I think definitely if you're memorising something and you want to rehearse it...

Actually, you know, yeah, I say it comes naturally but I could be a lot better if I did stay in my bedroom and rehearse it in front of a mirror.

DT: The thing is it's better... The question is then better in what way, isn't it. You know, what.

PC: Better in terms of rehearsed performance, definitely.

DT: I know but then is that a goal?

PC: Yeah exactly, or maybe I'll lose that essence of naturalism about it. And that kind of connectivity... That raw connectivity. So, I prefer to keep that, I think.

<u>Gay's the Word</u>

Fuck, putain, merde, minchia, va fan culo, cock, cunt
Swear words have such immense potency
In any tongue, packed with power like a punch
They're the words of pain, of fury screaming
They're bad, they're naughty, they're the words of sex
Horny and grinding and fucking good
Oh they're rude and they're puerile but they're
Apexes of emotion and the salt of tears
How many broken hearts have been tattooed
With 'fucking cunt' on their cracks and shards?
And when I say these words
When I let my tongue run over cunt
Or lick the k in fuck
I am consciously stepping out of rules,
Said what can't be said before watershed,
How did we lend these words their split and spit?
Because they're just words, just ripples of ships

Gay gay gay gay gay gay gay gay gay gay
Gay gay gay gay gay gay gay gay gay gay

If you repeat a word too many times
You begin to defy how it's defined
Erase the world of the word,
Bathe it of meaning
No longer sign or signified
Until it becomes just sound
Noise of nature like whistling winds
Wolves howling at the moon
The tethered growl of the human throat

But if I say gay, now, just once
It echoes with resonance in my mind
Rich, deep, dark, vibrating like a harp's string
A word that strangely tied and still binds me
And I never wanted to be a gay writer
The gay poet with my gay poems
Yet my writing and the words I use
Are in a way a form of fighting
To elevate gay, negate any shame
And I fear the fight won't end in my life

For in Russia they give gay such power
That the word can't be spoken on the streets
Gay a word like a lightning strike on minds
Fizzing, sparking, a Catherine wheel at night
Black witch's spell cast by blacker witches
Who can't be heard nor spoken by children

Yet here gay is on children's lips each day
A word fallen swift, quick like sharp-shaped darts
Word to cloak the disliked and dispossessed
Noun for the rubbish, for useless and sad
Gay is for the lame, it trips off the tongue
'That's so gay, you're so gay, you're such a gay'
Weird oxymorons: 'my parents are so gay'
And it becomes a word with hooks like thorns
Because to state 'I'm gay' in youth culture
Is not: 'he who I love is a man like me'
It's to say, 'I am rubbish, I am lame.'
What strange, very brave words just to say gay

DT: How do you view your relationship to an audience? Do you view them as a necessity in that if they weren't there buying drinks or tickets you'd have venue to read in or do you hope to interact or connect with them in some way?

PC: Definitely. I mean... Well, you hope you're going to connect with them. I think audiences are a necessity in terms of a spoken word performance you need an audience even if it's just one person, you know. It's like Peter Brooks about the empty space you can create drama if one person sits and watches a man walk across a room. But, you know, that's... You need those two people, you need the watcher and you need the watched. You can't create... Is it a performance...

I mean, this is very philosophical, is it a performance if you're just in your room doing it to yourself. I mean, I guess, if a tree falls over in a forest then does it make a noise.... And there's no one around to hear it, you know. I think yes, so an audience is necessary to make

a succinct answer to what is potentially a complex question. Do I want to connect with... Yeah, of course, I mean there's no reason that you do if you don't want to connect with the audience because otherwise, you know, if you read something that's forced and doesn't connect with your audience then you feel like you've wasted your time?

DT: Are you... I suppose that what one question would be... The reason I've got these questions in my mind is through... In future podcasts, I'm going to be interviewing a couple of poets that think very differently on this subject. And while obviously, the audience if you accept that the audience has to be there for it to be a performance, without being... According to that philosophical question of whether they could not exist. Like if they're going to exist, can you perform and disregard them? So, there's this question...

PC: No, not for me personally. I love my audience as well. I'm not saying that because of... I love my fans. You have to have... for my personal style of spoken word... And I hope from talking like this because it sounds quite divisive but for my experience, I guess, of spoken word I do... You have to empathise with your audience as well. And that's how you connect with them. And you empathise with your... In fact, that act of writing is an act of empathy with your audience because you know you're going to be writing it out. So, you have to think from their point of view as well, as well as getting that emotional truth. You have to think how are they going to hear it. And in performance you create a sense of empathy because as much a spoken word...

I say this a lot, as much as spoken word is about speaking it's about listening. And it's about creating. And that's why I think it's popular particularly amongst our generation. Well to anybody but particularly ones, our generation, people in their 20s who have grown up in quite a capitalist, corporate-led world. It's creating a sense of empathy and through that creating a sense of understanding of each other and a sense of community. Which is very important.

DT: I agree with you and I'm also very happy that you put me in that generation. People in their 20s.

PC: I thought you were.

DT: I may as well be. I'm immature enough to be. Actually, just one short question, I'll tack onto the end of that. How much does the audience influence the way you perform and the audience's reactions influence your subsequent writing afterwards.

PC: I don't think it influences my writing in particular like if you... If I read a poem say at a night... It's unlikely that you're going to... Like touch wood, that I won't find a spoken word night like this. But a night where they were like deeply homophobic and they would like bottle me off the stage or something, you know. I am not going to go back and be like, OK I can never talk about gay issues again. But sometimes you will read out something that won't connect with your audience. Then I think you should try it again at a different night and see if it connects with your audience, don't throw it away straight away. If it doesn't connect at a different night then maybe try it a third time and if it doesn't then you probably need to rewrite it.

DT: I think that's more... That was more of what I was getting to. Not letting go of any firm moral viewpoints that you hold, it's just in that... Would you... You would tweak your writing style if something clearly wasn't working you wouldn't, for instance, blame the idiot audience. You would walk away and try and change things.

PC: I think, yeah, it depends... It is awkward in terms of thinking whether this is first time poets or whether it is someone who's done a lot.

DT: This is a question to you and this is how things affect you. I think these sort of questions that I don't know if you...

PC: Do the audience affect my writing, I mean in terms of delivery in terms of… Occasionally, yeah. In terms of empathy, yes, but of the issues I write about, no, I'm not worried that I'm going to find an audience that's full of people who won't get gay issues, you know, or something like that.

DT: OK. So, finally get that chance to talk about Patricia a little bit here. You were up at Edinburgh Fringe in August.

PC: Sorry, can I just add something on to that last bit, if they are an audience who aren't going to connect with something like... That I'm writing... That I've written about gay issues and such. That is my job to create a sense of empathy through my emotional truth and through my eyes to performing in front of them to change their minds and that's the power of spoken word in a way.

DT: It's a good point to make, it's... I think the reason I ask that question is because I don't think everyone has that same viewpoint. And I don't... I do think some people do need to change their writing styles in order to get their point across more, you know.

PC: Yeah you might...

DT: I mean, some people perhaps don't care about it.

PC: It's a vast and complex question. I mean, and not every poem is going to be the same. Not every poem is going to be under the same writing style and sometimes maybe I would need to change my writing style for something maybe I've written... I've written a lot of bad poems in my time, you know, they haven't connected. But has that made me change things? It depends upon... I think any writer is going to be multifaceted and poly-hued and have a lot of different approaches and different styles and, you know, kind of like swirling rain clouds that they can use, you know. And hopefully a collage of paints you can use and you will dabble in lots of different things and your experimentation hopefully.

DT: Talking about dabbling with different things, if we could chat about your trip up to the Edinburgh Fringe in August. If you want to tell us about that and how that went down.

PC: Well...

DT: First off maybe just explain what you did up there what was going on.

PC: Well, I also write for the theatre and I wrote these short monologues, each 10 minutes, about contemporary LGBT characters which I called the Fag Ash Monologues and they're all smokers. They all have like one scene in particular where they are having a cigarette. And one of them was created... Actually, written a long time ago. In Christmas of last year when he set up a cabaret show, at the same... In Vogue, I needed to differentiate the cabaret show from Spoken Word London which is held at the same venue and I was like, well, how do I... I still need to host it, how do you differentiate?

And so, I came up with a drag alter ego. It's called was called Patricia PreMarché and she's very cheap and she always keeps the price tag on, she dresses only in Primark. And to introduce her I wrote... This is how the monologue started. I wrote a short monologue around her, which went very well. And so, in Edinburgh... And so, I performed them in London, I had them at the Landor Theatre first with some friends playing... And then I performed at the RVT, which you came to, very very kindly. And it got a really good crowd at RVT and a really good response. And then I took them up to Edinburgh for a week and now we're in the process of filming them.

DT: Oh, you're filming them?

PC: Yeah. Well we're filming one to show at another night which I run. Which is a kind of community based gay night called, Let's Talk About Gay Sex and Drugs because there's... I don't want to get side-tracked but there are a lot of drug use problems amongst the gay male... Certain sections, let me stress, of the gay male community in London at the moment. So, we set up a night for him to talk about it.

DT: And this night, if anyone listening is interested in that, that's the title of the night, isn't it? They can find it on Facebook and...

PC: Yeah, it's quite memorable, Let's Talk About Gay Sex and Drugs. We've actually got funding from a council in London to do a Let's Talk About LGBT Sex and Drugs because beforehand it was just gay men. Now it's lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgendered, if anyone doesn't know what LGBT is, you'd be surprised. And we're going to show one of these because one of these deals with gay drug issues... Gay men and drug issues and we're going to show one of them... We're filming it to show one of [INAUDIBLE].

DT: I highly recommend anyone listening to [INAUDIBLE] if you... Once this stuff goes out... The film of these monologues, they're really fantastic.

PC: I'm working on a workplace monologues as well, which is more... Because as I said I've never ever wanted to be like... I think one of the lines one of one of my poems is... Which I've done before, that you've heard, is, I never wanted to be the gay poet with my gay poems. I don't want to just write about LGBT issues I'm more I'm more interested in society in general but right now that's what I'm focusing on. So, the workplace monologues

are more about the kind of like corporate, cold capitalist world, but they're also humorous and also comedic. And they should be ready next year.

DT: I mean that's the thing about your writing, and a lot of writing on these issues, and just seeing the fantastic Andrea Gibson in Stockholm, who is... Sort of talks with a lot of similar issues. What's at the heart of them is just the loneliness and rejection that people often feel and the despair at not being accepted by society. That isn't solely an issue for minorities, a huge amount of people live with that, you know, and that's what came really came through from the monologues you took to Edinburgh. It didn't matter that... The sexuality of the main characters in all of them was inconsequential on that level. You know, they were all just lonely, desperate people wanting to be loved by someone else. And that isn't... That's nothing to do with sexuality, you know. So...

PC: I guess they are... Yeah, they are all lonely people. But [INAUDIBLE] unless people think they're going to come and be depressed. It's morbid... They're are quite funny.

DT: Yes, they are funny. Patricia in particular.

PC: Yeah, Patricia, trash bag Trish.

DT: Sorry, I wasn't thinking that, I didn't mean to make it sound... It's not as depressing as my stuff.

PC: They got... They're generally quite optimistic as well.

DT: Yeah, definitely.

PC: Which is my personal outlook on life.

DT: So, we've come to our 2 final questions, which I think they may end up being the two final questions for every podcast, but we'll see about that. It just depends whether I can keep remembering to write them at the end of the paper. What or who has had the biggest influence on your writing and performing? And also, they can be separate... I mean this is just the first question, by the way... They can be separate influences but, I suppose, I'd be interested also if there's been any influence that overlapped the two.

PC: What has been a big influence? I mean, my writing is nothing like his but I studied T. S. Eliot in sixth form, The Wasteland and The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and Hollow Men. That was a huge influence, I still do think he's fantastic. In terms of bigger influences... I talk about personal life, you know, connected influences. Sarah Kane is a fantastic playwright who deals with a lot of issues in very succinct text, it's very pared down and image based. There was this... And when I was 17 or 18 which was probably, you know, a very formative time for me, I was just coming out at that age. I was bisexual first and then, you know, in a natural transition to gay. There was this girl who I knew called Melissa Mary Finch, who wrote the most amazing poetry and she inspired... She was a member of Deviant Art, I don't know if you remember Deviant Art which...

DT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

PC: This website full of aspiring artist, that was just full of teenagers [INAUDIBLE] their poetry and... And I say just full of teenagers, I mean it was amazing and I thought... Everyone was doing self-expression, it was fantastic. If it was still going and there was still people doing it now maybe we wouldn't live in such a cold-hearted world. She wrote the most amazing poetry and I loved it and that inspired me to try it myself, I was writing prose like it already. And then we kind of like lost touch for a long time until I'd finished all my studies and I'd been traveling in America and I was back in Bristol, where I come from, for Christmas. And I was there for a couple of months after Christmas as well living at home just deciding what to do. And just before I was about to leave for Paris we went to... On Valentine's Day, well, Valentine's Eve, I met up with Melissa for a drink and we went to see this spoken word night on the nature of love at Bristol Old Vic.

And I've never thought this connection before, until you asked me just now, but actually she inspired me to write poetry when I was 18, which I stopped doing for a while. Then I went with her to see the spoken word night and it was the most amazing thing. There were people there like Adam Campbell there, there was Johnny Fluffypunk, there was Rachel Rose Reed. And they were all doing spoken word about the nature of love. And I've never seen it before. And I was I'd love to do something like this. And then I left, said goodbye to Melissa, went to Paris shortly after that and started doing spoken word. That was that was my story of how I was influenced into...

DT: That's the most romantic intro to spoken word I have ever heard…

PC: Yeah, romantic, you know...Yeah. But even though I'm gay and it wasn't with a...

DT: The romanticised idea of finding it, you know, finding the words.

PC: That's the thing as well like, I mean, gay men who hate women I can't understand. Female friendship has been hugely important. Male friends... And straight male friends, one of my... My best friend in the world is a straight man, so yeah, that's my personal idea of better harmony, you know, how we can all stick together as well.

DT: We're all just humans, man.

PC: Exactly, underneath it's a social construct. I mean, obviously sexuality is an innate thing but the concept of gay is a social construct. We could break free of these kind of...

DT: If we were all allowed to exist on a spectrum rather than being forced to take one side of anything, it just is divisive in politics or society. It just doesn't make any sense that things are on the left or right, it just doesn't...

PC: Of course, but if we all exist in kind of harmony with one another the top-down power pyramid doesn't work anymore, which is some food for thought.

DT: OK, so this is the final question, so this is really tips for the listeners to this podcast, all four and a half of them. What or who... And this doesn't have to necessarily be spoken word, should people go and check out, that's happening now... We could just... It doesn't have to be, you know...

PC: OK. I have been talking about it all the way through, please come Spoken Word London, I'd love to see you there. Your night, Silence Found a Tongue is brilliant, I really enjoyed it when I was down there. I was a featuring at it but then... I really enjoyed it at Cable Cafe. Lunar poetry of course, I came for first time last Sunday and Hannah Gordon, who's a regular at Spoken Word London, did a fantastic job. Forget What You Heard, up the road from Spoken Word London, which actually we clashed with when we started but they are now on the third Wednesday the month at Ryan's Bar in Stoke Newington. Brilliant night run by Rikki RicktheMost Livermore and Matt Cummings.

What else? Some of the people that come and perform, I mean, there's Andreas Bisto, there's Hannah Gordon, there's Jacob, his Silk Word. I would say Ragus Mistry is great, Lisa Luxx does some fantastic stuff, who runs Prowl House magazine. This is very off the top of my head... Richard Lionheart is amazing, I've seen some people at the Poetry Cafe who are brilliant. Jay, I can't remember her second name, she's trans poet from the US. It's Gi something. We see amazing people at Spoken Word [London] all the time like it's... There's too many to list. I think, Roberta Francis actually is a tran... A middle-aged transsexual male to female Irish poet, who has done some of the most effect... One of the lines that... She read at the last Spoken Word London, and one of her lines is about receiving abuse in the street. And because as she walks past, by like young straight males and she wants to turn around and say, do you know how brave I am? Yeah. Yes, she is brave, I think people should go and see her, and yourself of course.

DT: Well, you're very kind Pat. And on that bombshell of how amazing I am... That's it, we're going to wrap up. To say thank you once more to Pat Cash and get yourself down to Spoken Word London, Vogue Fabrics on Stoke Newington Road.

PC: Yeah, 66 Stoke Newington Road, it's on Kingsdown Road, it morphs into Stoke Newington Road.

DT: Yeah, but you can find it on Facebook.

PC: Facebook.com/Spokenwordlondon.

DT: And Dark Fabrics is the cabaret night?

PC: Dark Fabrics cabaret night is every two months.

DT: Let's Talk about Gay Sex and Drugs.

PC: On the second Monday of the month in Soho...

DT: And you write regularly for GX?

PC: For QX. Yeah and I write for Attitude as well and the Morning Star and Huffington Post.

DT: So, there is absolutely no excuse [not] to find Pat. Thank you very much Pat, it's been great chatting.

PC: Thank you. It has been really fascinating. I hope haven't motored on too much.

DT: No, it was perfect. You really outshone my lack of preparation. I'm only joking. Right, this Lunar Poetry and that was the podcast. Bye.

End of transcript.