

the regular COLUMN

Tony Morris

Speaking into Space

This is my last Regular Column, my year is up. Why did I do it? Not only for the love of playing with words and ideas. I still remember a very early primary school essay, 'My Holiday in Blackpool'. Ordinary enough, except it was a fantasy of scaling Blackpool Tower! I probably wrote it for my teachers' approval, more than for me, and not just because I had to. So for whom have I been writing this column? Without the opportunity of being published I wouldn't have sat down to 500 words every two months, it's not 'I must write!', more 'I must be heard'. Obviously I have been, but except for a few friends' compliments, no one's written back. So if it isn't approval, what is it about speaking/writing into a void or silent audience? Putting myself on the couch, I'd interpret it as sheer attention seeking. But having spent sixty-years trying to secure Mummy's interest, why chose a medium that doesn't respond either? A perverse desire for non-fulfilment, or plain vanity? Neither feels right, too simplistic. No, there's something about putting words into space, without need of recognition, approval or feedback.

There's several stages, composition in my head and on computer, then cutting to size, trimming verbosity without sacrificing content. Emailing

it off, relief it's done; then actually re-reading it in print as though it was new to me - probably the vanity bit. Finally, others occasional positive response. By far the most pleasurable is the initial formulation, it evolves as I write, I don't know what I think until I see what I say and uncover original ideas (if only to me). Yet, this isn't enough, my words have to be out there. Cutting to 500 concise words, losing a word or two here or there is satisfying. But dropping whole thoughts is painful, though they're salvaged for future use. The fulfilment in the final emailing is definitely akin to the satisfaction of anal expulsion (one of life's little pleasures, and free). Now I'm not a Freudian so I'm not saying that that's what it's all about, though the initial playing with ideas has obvious sensual undertones. My creation (which is not shit) has to be seen, I have to be heard, even though unacknowledged. By making my mark the world is (slightly) changed by me. My thoughts and ideas may be picked up and used in new ways, but that's not important; I keep questioning my *need* to put them out there. Now, as I write this sentence, I sense the closest analogy and metaphor is of bearing a child (the initial formation); suckling and nurturing (refining and cutting); sending the child into the world to live their own life, saying a long goodbye (re-reading in S&S), then seeking the next impregnation, a new conception. As a man, but not being a father, I have womb-envy, that only women truly create and nurture life. So this is my latest, and currently last, child. Say hello and relate to him/her, while I leave you.

Could you follow Tony? We're looking for a new regular columnist - let Maxine know if you're interested.