

ISSUE
16

BROUGHT TO YOU BY
THESOCIAL   **WHITE
RABBIT**

19 JULY
2020

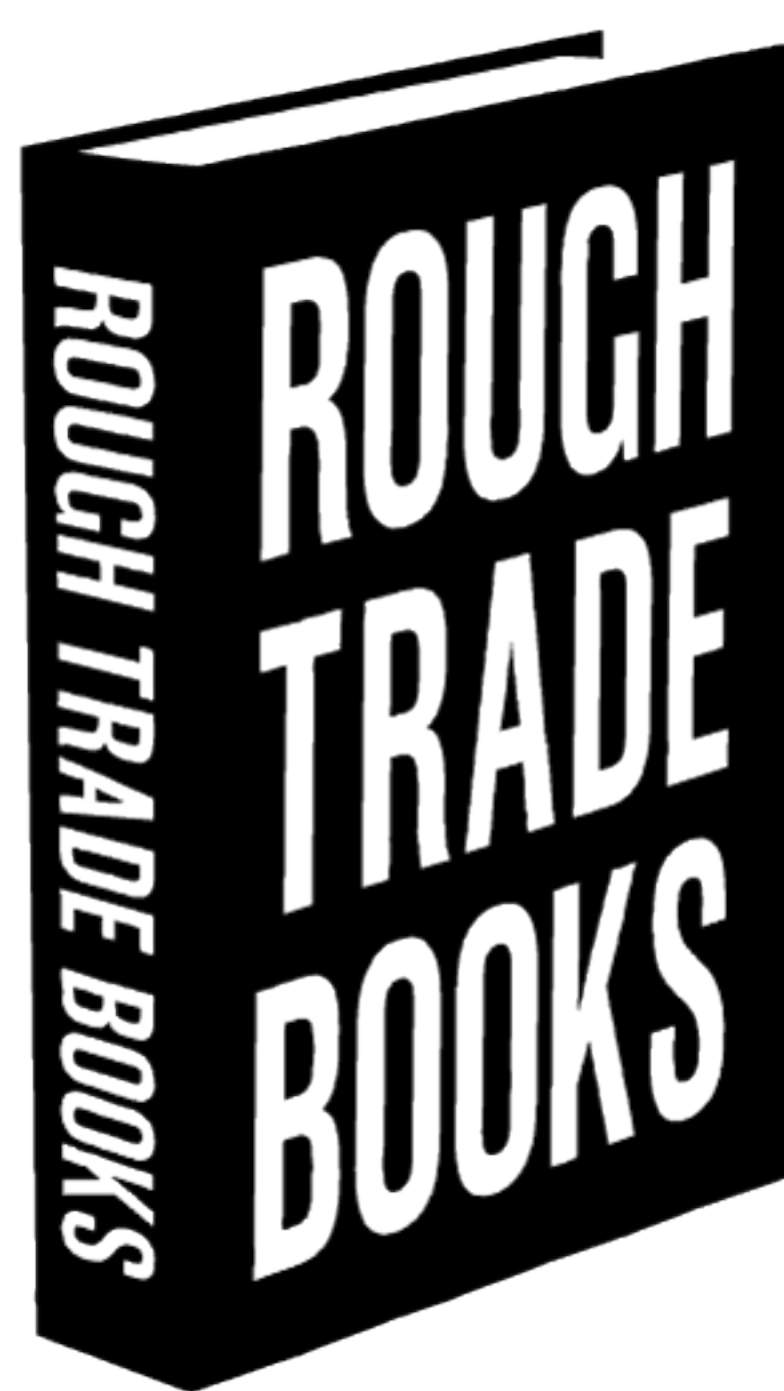
Other than what we've published on the website I've found reading anything other than Twitter near impossible for 3 months. I didn't read a single book for most of lockdown, that was until Sophie gave me her copy of *Sixteen Trees of the Somme* by Lars Mytting. She hadn't even read it herself but was told by her local book shop it might be a good way to get back into a reading state of mind again when she was struggling in the earlier stages of lockdown herself. The fantastic **Ebb and Flo** in Chorley was closed but still in touch with regular customers and doing an ad hoc mail order service for people. I somehow managed to get through all 400 pages over the course of month, very on and off, I didn't really enjoy it to be honest, kind of a bit boring, but it did actually work. The story, and the family mystery threaded through it surrounding 16 walnut trees that grew in the battle field of the Somme did keep me going back for some reason, that and the realisation when staring at my bookshelf at home that I have a very poor hit rate on finishing books. I put down 60% (maybe even higher if I was being really truthful) of books I start and never pick them back up. I've given up several big books with less than 100 pages to go because frankly they've gone a bit shit and life is too short for reading shit books, listening to shit records and watching all the shit TV programmes that people insist are good, isn't it.

Anyway, Ruby May (my 10 year old daughter) laughed at the pile of half read stuff by the side of the bed (all pre-lockdown failures) and joked about the fact I can't complete a book. My own daughter saw me as non book finisher, and therefore a bad example no doubt, a failure as a person and a father. So I was determined to do it. To prove everyone wrong (no one cares really do they, I wouldn't be surprised if you've given up reading this) and prove to myself that I can see it through. That my scatterbrain can still undertake the task of following a whole story through from cover to cover. I've celebrated my reading of a single book loudly and joyously making sure RM knows all about my heroic feat. And since then things have actually improved, I've caught up on my stack of *New Statesmans*, I'm now only one and half

full issues behind. If you've ever spent any time in my company you'll know that all my opinions on the world are formed from NS articles. I started to pick it up a few years ago and became an evangelical subscriber. I think it is one the greatest sources of balanced and reasoned debate (and pretty bang on book, film and tv reviews too) that it is possible to buy in train station WHSmiths (remember them?). Well anyway, I couldn't even read a full page of my beloved weekly copy mid lockdown, skipping whole articles which pre Covid would have sent a shiver through me. Weirdly I have way more issue not reading every word of the New Statesman than I do flinging a book in bin after reading 200 pages or so.

I suppose really though I've been reading a bit more than I'm giving myself credit for of late. All the posts on the site, almost every day. Reading with a new intensity if anything because it's going on our website, one eye on editing, another on pulling out a quote for social media and of course just reading with immense pride, happy that someone, a proper writer, has written this for us! We've been very lucky to post some really extraordinary writing. In the case of Will Burns almost half a book of words, so I guess that means I've read a book and half in lockdown at least.

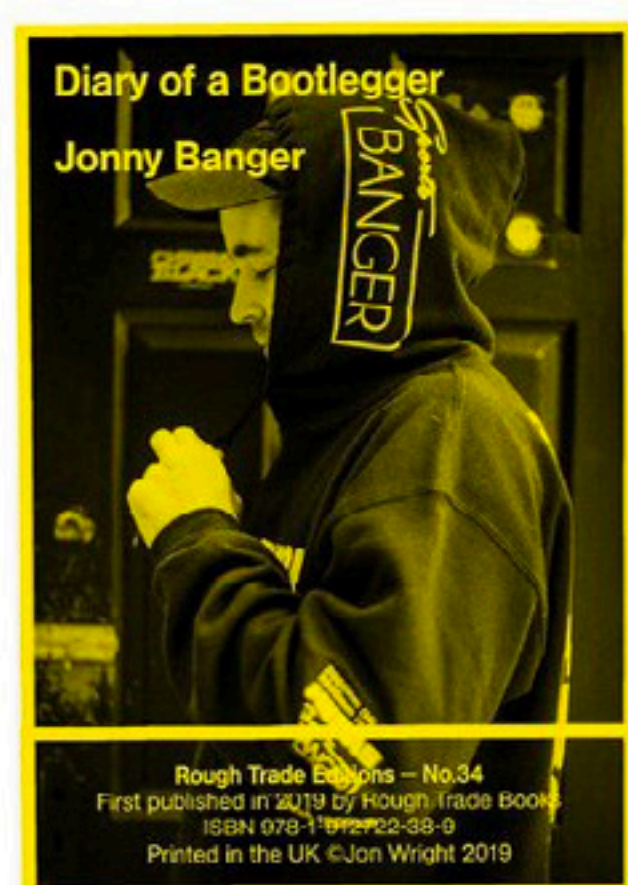
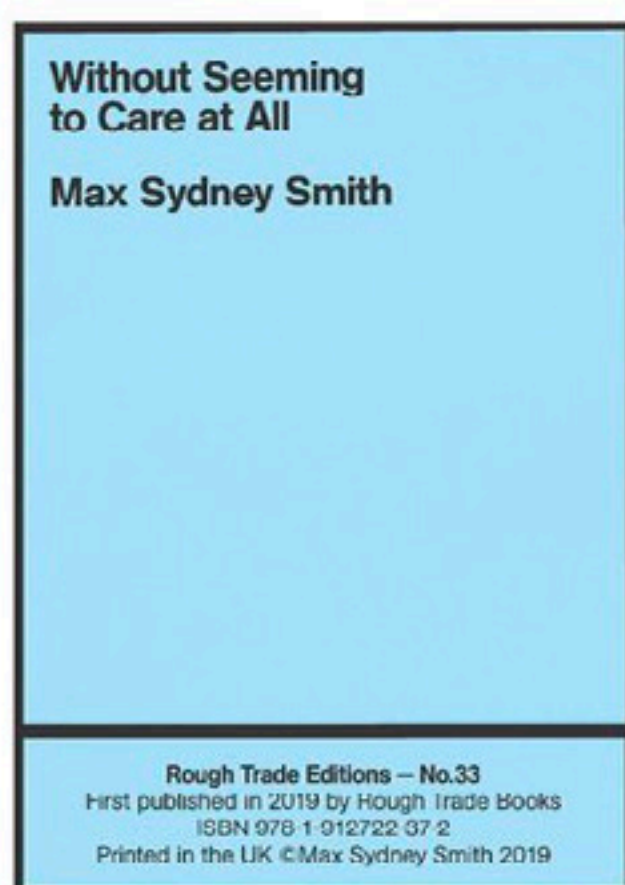
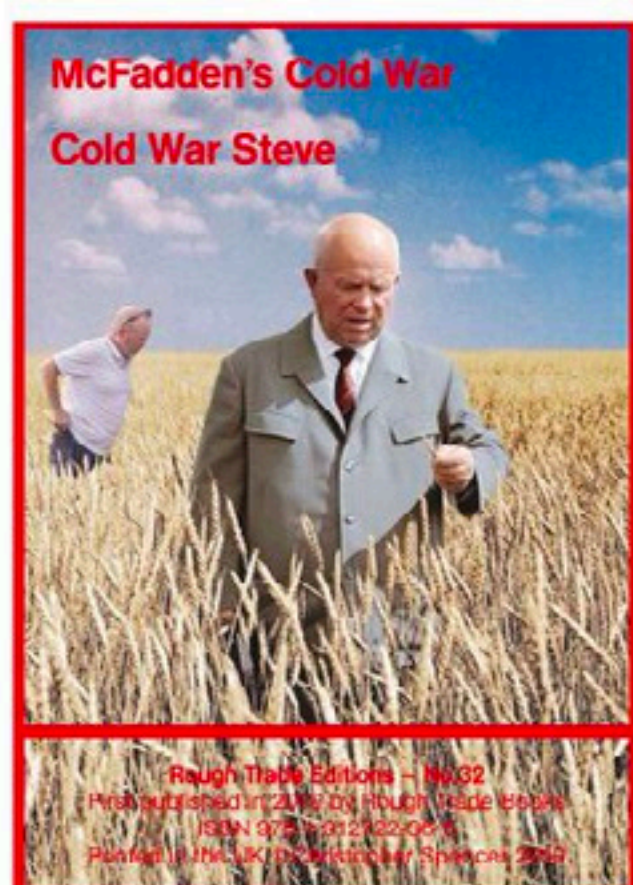
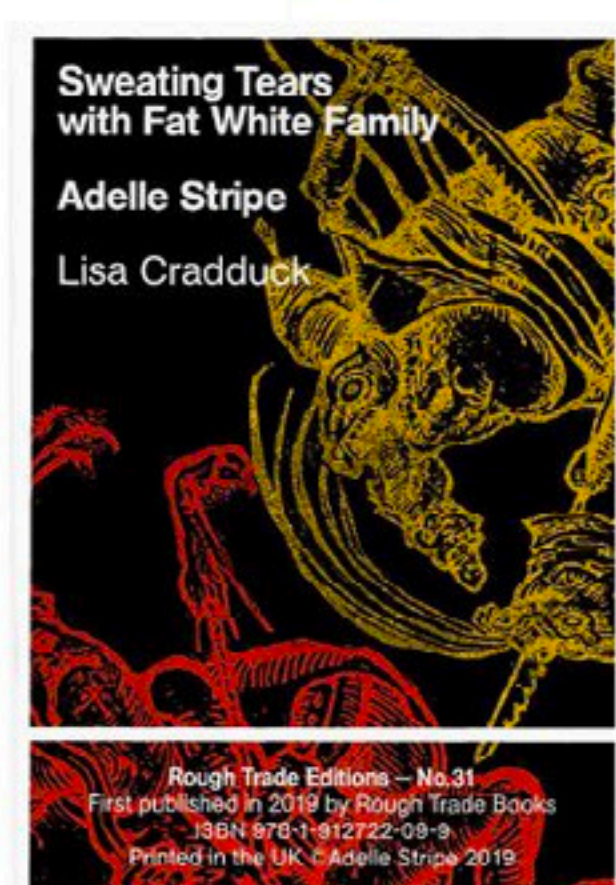
This week coming we're celebrating the second birthday of the brilliant Rough Trade Books. You could say as a publishing house (literally a house in 'the village') they're purpose built for an attention span such as mine. Dealing predominantly in shorter pamphlets rather than books, Nina has relentlessly built the list from scratch to include an unparalleled range of writers and artists. Only two years in it feels like RTB (definitely initialled) is fully formed and found its own place perfectly in the world. Frankly it can do whatever it wants now, put out what it wants and keep celebrating all the voices and art it does for years to come. Again, we are lucky as a venue to have RTB call us their home, and alongside White Rabbit Books (our Social Gathering partners) we are surrounded by people who know about good writing, encourage and support new writers. I imagine they even read whole books in the process.



I went to a charity shop yesterday, I went to quite a few. I was a little hungover, a very bad combination. A brilliant one if you run

a charity shop though because I am a giddy idiot, I will buy it all. Yesterday I came out with a pair of amazing brown Levi's cords which set me back £20 in one of those posh charity shops (which it turns out don't fit around my thighs, waist or more sensitive areas - quite an eye watering display), a large green Murano glass ring, a cap with a squirrel playing a guitar on the front, and three new books . . . Shackleton's *South* (inspired by Steve Mason), Phillip Roth's *American Pastoral* (inspired by Sky Atlantic) and Paul Auster's 1000 page *4, 3, 2, 1* (haha). The whole day felt like the first normal one for a very long time - a bar, a restaurant with family, hungover browsing in a shop or two . . . I'll report back on how far I get on the books, but don't hold your breathe.

Rough Trade Books will be celebrating their birthday all week with us. A very special online event on Monday night kicks things off followed by daily posts from RTB writers and contributors over the rest of the week on the Social Gathering.



Slightly slimmer feel to this week's Broadsheet... we're having a poke around under the bonnet and changing the way we present things. Next week should be the start of the School holidays, though it's felt like they've been going on since March. We'll hopefully be offering up some heavy holiday vibes on the site that'll make you feel like you've left home even if it's just in your head.

BACKTRACK, APPLETREE WICK 1

VASHTI BUNYAN

“My bliss turned to sorrow; was he hating his life? Just twenty years old, looking like a trapped deer – was he hating me? Even as young as I was I felt bad for him. What must it be like to be him?”

[Read in full here](#)



THE TERRIBLE AND OBSCENE YEAR 1981 WHEN THE PEOPLE STILL TRIED TO DANCE

WENDY ERSKINE

1981

“They’d be dreaming it up all week as they worked under a car chassis, did a granny’s perm, handed over a prescription, carefully counting the tablets. Dreaming it up as they passed army check-points, heard about the latest deaths. Why don’t you enter that competition for fuck’s sake! somebody said. You’re a good dancer. It’ll be a bit of a laugh. You’d get on the telly.”

[Read in full here](#)

NIGHTONES

PET DEATHS

A warped blanket of night time textures to send you off into slumber – [Listen to the playlist here](#)



ENGLISH

PATRICK OFOSU



Image by Mella Dee

My 2 by 4 English, bare grammatical errors. I man, result to broken English.

Deh propa name be pidgin, mix am wit our local dialect, code switching.

Boarding school initiated, adding its own rules n ting, strengthening a language tool.

Come back to London Town with a heavy accent. By the time one realises, in this “meltingpot” from another “meltingpot”.

Cockney sounding, awite mate, chill out! African cockney, a uni mate once said to me.

Playfully adding patwah. Cos man, thinks him a rudebwoy. A who try fi tak rit dere soh! Not happening as I had expected. We still go go, try am small, small.

London blends like the multi-instrumentalists, multi-skilled, multi-talented ladies and gents. You see, hear, commune and play with.

Dem ones dere in isolation. In this lockdown situation. Some coping alittle and not others, pressure cooking.

We are open spaces, no borders. Borders caging walls, captured in. A prison not that prison!

Staying in mi, we yards, doing all sorts. Wiv family, lonesome, partnering and coupling.

Each and every one of these has their challenges, uplifts, adapting to the nu school.

This is teaching we, a new subject in life's headmaster schooling. A kiss to the wind. An elevation to swing into new horizons.

THIS WEEK HAS BEEN POWERED ON BY...

AYA - Maida Leng / Bulbils x 50 lockdown records / Champion Trousers / Source Direct Bandcamp / actually reading *Shadow State* / Sophie Green's meatballs / Amen breaks a way of life / Boris Johnson admitting he thinks about fucking animals / Grayling turning a stitch up into a fuck up / UK Rave YouTube Comments / Actress - 88 / tie dye jogging bottoms / that Murdoch TV programme / Posthuman - Jupiter Jaxx / Pete Fowler's Tunnocks PPE / Crack Cloud - Pain Olympics / standard lager / Tricky 'Fall Please' / Stockholm Syndrome, only for your lockdown hair / being the 10 millionth person to say *I May Destroy You* is amazing / David Coverdale's Twitter, and the Pomp Rock scene in general / new IDLES / Annie Nightingale on *Desert Island Discs* / sobbing whilst rewatching the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony / John Lewis RIP / massive curry night x 2 / Leeds United promotion vibes / Collapse The Light Into Earth - Porcupine Tree / Ravesignal 3 / pants audit / Doomscrolling the whole day long / *Even in Exile*

The Social Gathering Broadsheet is brought to you with love from Lee Brackstone, Carl Gosling, Tom Noble & Robin Turner.