



Garden

‘In play we transform the world
according to our desires’

Today I am cloud-minded, bookish, my pages illumined
by this lichenish leaf-sieved light. Time is the artist here.
What you can see from the dark-eyed rooms of your tree-house

is child’s play, look, a lawn of shadows, quick accomplices
in the planting of ancestral wychwood, a sarsen under the stars,
a park bench in the sun. My students are effortlessly disciplined

in the greening of stories, finding new eye-rhymes for dwelling.
Here. Sit with me. *In the trees birds of paradise are calling.*

Lesley Saunders

The poem is dedicated to the memory of the landscape architect Dame Sylvia Crowe (1901 – 1997) who was commissioned in the 1960s to design the garden at 15 Norham Gardens for the then Department of Educational Studies at Oxford University. All the ecological principles she espoused and illustrated in her book *Garden Design* (first published 1958, third edition published by Garden Art 1994) are intimately enacted in this courtyard-like space: unity, scale, space, time, light and shade, tone and texture.

The poem’s epigraph is from *In Search of Pedagogy, Volume 2*, by Jerome Bruner (published by Routledge 2006). In 2007 Professor Bruner, eminent and influential educational psychologist, gave his name to a new set of buildings in the Department. He is best known for his work on the development of children’s thinking and the value of story-telling.

The quotation in the last line is from Penelope Lively’s novel *The House in Norham Gardens* (first published by William Heinemann 1974), in which a young girl discovers a personal connection with a deep past, and comes of age.

Lesley Saunders



Lesley Saunders took her PGCE in 1974 and her DPhil in 2001 at the Department of Education at Oxford University. She is now an honorary Research Fellow of the Department.

From 2000 to 2008 Lesley was Policy Adviser for Research to the General Teaching Council (England). She is also a poet. Her publications include a pamphlet, 'The Dark Larder' (Corridor Press 1997), of which the title poem won first prize in the George MacBeth poetry competition, and 'Christina the Astonishing' (Two Rivers Press 1998), co-authored with Jane Draycott and illustrated by Peter Hay.

Her long poem, 'The Uses of Greek', was shortlisted for the Best Single Poem in the Forward Prize 1999 and her portfolio of poems won joint first prize in the Manchester Poetry Prize last year.

For 2008/9 she was a visiting scholar at New Hall, Cambridge, creating a poetry project around the college gardens. Lesley's new collection, 'Her Leafy Eye', a collaboration with artist-horticulturalist Geoff Carr, was published by Two Rivers Press in July 2009.

For more details visit www.lesleysaunders.org.uk

