

VISUALISING DYSFLUENT IDENTITIES (?)

CONOR FORAN

DYSFLUENT MONO

therapy, and as a result of that I did speech therapy for the first time. Then I got involved with the Irish Stammering Association (ISA)¹.

BEVIN The two of us got involved with the ISA. When I was twelve or eleven, they set up a drama group, ISAYiT [Irish Stammering Association Youth international Theatre] which allowed me to meet other young people who stammered. I definitely think it was the best thing. I felt that I wasn't a loner or isolated and it made me much more comfortable with my stammer from a young age. Which is why I continue to work with ISAYiT.

VERONICA What I tried to do with Bevin and her stammer was to normalise it. It's just something that you have and you just have to get on with it. I don't think I dismissed it, but I kind of thought that if you're going to stammer, you should figure out how you are going to stammer.

BEVIN You paid attention to it but you didn't see me for just my stammer. You always reminded me that I was unique, and not just because of my stammer, I had so many other things going on for me. You were like, 'Right, you stammer but you are not your stammer.' If I wanted to talk

think that it matters
ambivalence around

GAINING
(CONTROL

Looking back over
isolated and speak
school where I had
age English but I
read out in class
down to pass level
with her so she'd
I was troublesome
making decisions
ing I stammered.
looking back I won
a social life—I
times looking back
allow myself to ac
always felt that
pure luck, and not
put in because of
this phrase, but
of my life'. I was
life. I didn't val
a voice telling me
ure out how not to

People are fascinated by it. I think that people probably know within like five seconds, 'Oh this guy's got a stammer.' You know those times where you can't even get a letter out, it's like you're pushing out air and your eyes feel like they're going to pop. Vowels can be ok. It's mostly with blunter sounds words—B, D, T, P, etc. It's funny: I'd used to say 'eh' all the time but then I couldn't say the word 'effective', so in the end it would be me saying, 'eh eh effective'. If there's a word with syllables in it—as most words do—I'd break it up and it would sound like I'm saying three different words: eh-fec-tive. Or ah-com-plish. And with James—JJJ was bad for a while.

I've always liked music. It makes me wish that I could sing because I don't stammer when I sing. I wish I could walk around singing, 'Hi, my name is James!'.

I'M JUST
SAYING
A SIMPLE
THING BUT
I'VE GOT
TO GO
THROUGH THIS
PROCESS.

It's funny though that you might get through loads of sentences fine, and then you come across just one word you can't get. Other times I've found speaking in a rhythm helps. Though I find that I opt for silence. When you stop half-way during a sentence, you've got a choice to just be silent or keep stuttering. All these things are so hard to explain to people.

I'm really fortunate that I get on with it every-day, and I feel bad when I meet people that have really bad ticks with it too. I used to find that I'd look to the left. If I felt I was going to stammer I'd just look away. Or suddenly I would just bark it out. I would be there for the past thirty seconds trying to say the sentence. And I notice myself twitching to the left. So while I do struggle with it everyday, I get on with it. My friends said that after hanging out with me for a while, they notice themselves picking it up a little. And then with Amanda, my girlfriend, at the start she said that it was kinda cute. My friends would slag me that I take long pauses. Half-way through a sentence I would just stop. It's kind of like a fear, like I'd rather be saying nothing than actually stuttering. As I said my dad has one. He gets on with it. He always just talks anyway. But me, I'm like a stuttering thesaurus.

I was in drama with Amanda when I was younger. So I remember one year, there was a summer camp on. They wanted to put on a play for the parents. I had this part in the script and I remember going to the teacher's house because in the class I couldn't say any of my lines. And I think in the end, she called off the whole play. So Amanda knew really well that I had a stammer. And even her mum now, she'd be like, 'I remember you when you were younger with your little stutter, where's it gone?' and I'd be like, 'Well it's still there.' So she knew and not that she would have any reason to be intimidated by me but I think it made me less scary. It takes the edge off of you.

It can be an anxiety thing. I was away with Amanda on holiday and we wanted to go into a restaurant. As soon as they speak English, we're fine, but one of us would need to explain first that we only speak English to get the menu. I asked Amanda would she be able to 'handle this one', but y'know she's shy and she doesn't want to do it either. I'm not really that shy, but I have a better excuse for not doing it if that makes any sense. So there's shy Amanda, and then there's me, so we don't get any menus.

'A demand for one's
voice to be heard is
a demand for fluency'

I'm

'Hello?

[just say your name is Michael]

Are you

still there?

[for Paul or Mark]

[for Paul or Mark]
[breathe!]

I'm

[or something else!]

My name is

[breathe!]



Con [just breathe] Con
Con
III'
Con
[or something can click!]
My name is
[breathe!]

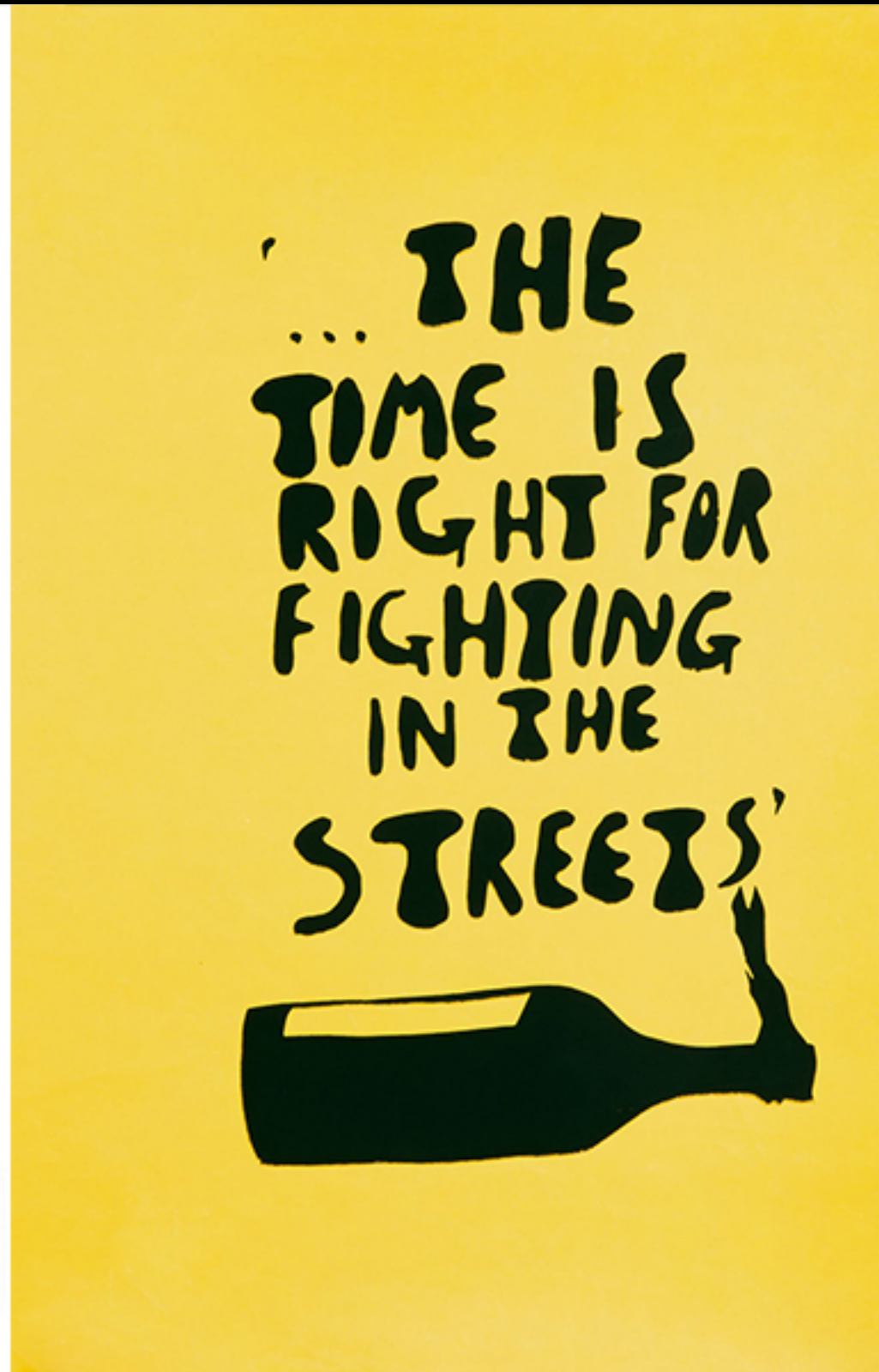
PUBLICATION:

'The action of making
something generally known'



PROTEST:

'A statement or action
expressing disapproval of
or objection to something'



THANK YOU