

# Trauma – a normal reaction

HOW CAN TRAUMA affect journalists and what can be done to protect against it? Speaking on this topic at LFB's October meeting was Gavin Rees, director of the Dart Centre Europe for Journalism and Trauma ([www.dartcenter.org/europe](http://www.dartcenter.org/europe)). People associate trauma with "mental illness and pathology", says Gavin. But should you experience trauma, "you are not going crazy – it's a normal, not unexpected reaction."

Part of the Dart Centre's mission is to understand how our minds and bodies respond in traumatic situations. Journalists need to "absorb, digest and make sense of these, to bring order to the horrifying things that can happen to people". As journalists we don't like to "shine the light on ourselves" – it's seen as impeding our view of people in the story. But if we



Molly Clarke and Gavin Rees **Photo © Hazel Dunlop**

don't consider how this traumatic content affects us, we are "likely to do our interviewees a disservice".

How we interact with traumatised people in our work and how we handle trauma ourselves "are intimately connected". Gavin says the Centre aims to "give journalists tools to

look after themselves better", and "to encourage the most accurate, insightful journalism".

A growing issue is journalists working in newsrooms having to verify a flood of traumatic images. Even 1600 miles away in Syria these

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## Prints not dead!

A RENAISSANCE of independent women's magazines was examined at LFB's November meeting. Our speakers included Alice Snape, the editor of bi-monthly *Oh Comely*, one of the longest-running independent women's magazines. See page 4 for a report of the talk by Stack Magazines founder Steve Watson at the same Branch meeting.

LFB member Alice is *Oh Comely's* new editor. It started "about eight or nine years ago... as a bedroom project by three friends from uni" dissatisfied with women's magazines. Having worked on "big fashion magazines", Alice sees *Oh Comely* as an antidote to their "false expectations".

*Oh Comely* is strong on illustrations, first person stories of unknown women, it's "not about products." Alice decided to end the tradition of a portrait of an unknown woman on the cover and replace it with illustrations to reflect the "thoughtful nature of what we do".

At *Oh Comely* there are "only three of us", all part time, in a "very passionate team... we don't have a board of... probably old white men telling us what we should put on the cover". They "don't have to put certain content next to certain adverts".

The magazine's "not making money," and is now "technically owned"



The panel of speakers on independent magazines. From left: Steve Watson, Alice Snape, Elizabeth Krohn. **Photo © Hazel Dunlop**

by Iceberg Press. Alice does get paid. You can order *Oh Comely* with free delivery from its website, or see it at WH Smith and now in supermarket Waitrose: Alice hopes "we can increase the circulation."

*Oh Comely* pays each and every contributor to the magazine. "Rates might not be in line with some of the bigger magazines because we just don't have the budget." Alice predicts "print is going to start to be more popular again – people don't want to consume every single thing online." Most of Alice's readers "sit

down and read the magazine from cover to cover".

We also heard from Elizabeth Krohn, founder of *Sabat*, the magazine for "the modern witch". Its "trilogy" of three issues has now finished but there have already been reprints.

In a twist on online habits, many readers send Instagram photos of their copy of *Sabat* enjoying pride of place as a "magical object". Its "gothic aesthetic" includes images printed along the edges of the pages, "something you can only do in print".

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LFB meetings:

8 January

Branch Annual  
General Meeting

NOTE new venue

12 February

New data protection  
rules and you

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