

# Stuart Vallantine:

# All Times Are Approximate

## About the author

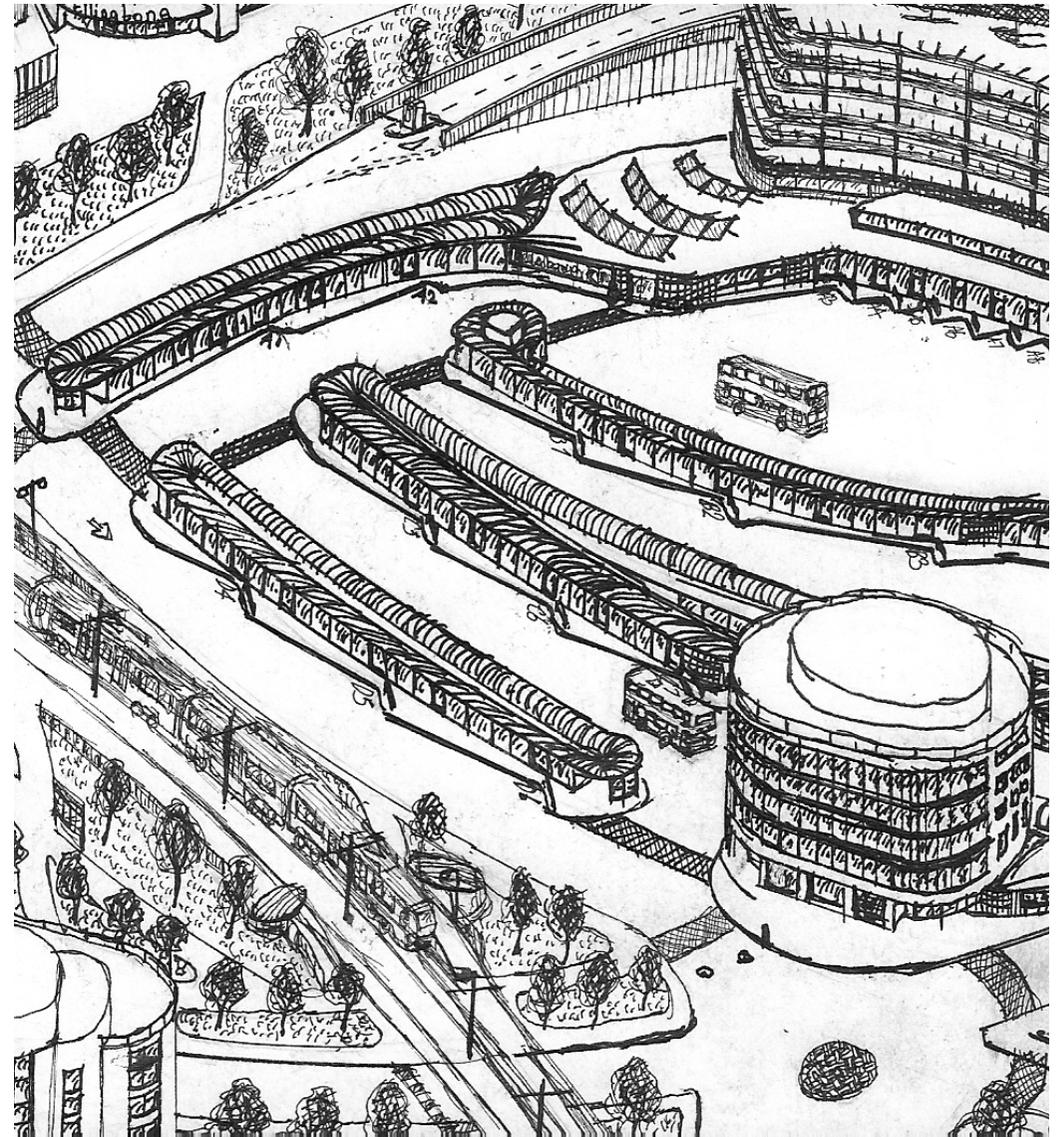
As well as being a poet, **Stuart Vallantine** is also a visual artist and public transport enthusiast. He was also diagnosed with Semantic Pragmatic Disorder (a high functioning form of autism spectrum disorder) in 1986, having been regarded as 'autistic' and 'hyperactive' before then.

He has also read examples of poetry and shared stages with fellow speakers on the autism spectrum such as Donna Williams and Wendy Lawson. He has also contributed to the Jessica Kingsley Publishers book 'Asperger Syndrome and Employment: Adults Speak Out About Asperger Syndrome', which was released in March 2008. He has also contributed to Bradt Travel Guides' 2011 bus 'Bus Pass Britain'.

**All Times Are Approximate** is a loose collection of poetry created by Stuart Vallantine himself, inspired by a message on bus timetables in Greater Manchester.

**Website:** <http://www.stuartvallantine.co.uk>  
**Blog:** <http://mancunian1001.wordpress.com>

**Cover picture:** City Centre Terminus (March 2006)



Passing time pressed commuters and attendant glares.

**Chorus:** Instead I waited by the entrance  
And I moved no further  
As I alighted soon after  
As the sound started grating  
Despite the fact I'd still be waiting.

Off the 'bus I waited for another  
Though it was due an hour later.  
So I walked to the tobacconist for my *New Scientist*.

Back to the stop; 40 minutes to go  
But the traffic was moving slow.  
It was half past nine, just past peak time  
But another bus came, reading 'Mauve Line'.

Whether it ran to time (or not) it worked fine  
Though I should have left at quarter to nine.  
Instead the journey took twice as long this time  
And was destined to take longer.

**Chorus:** Instead I waited by the entrance  
And I moved no further  
As I alighted soon after  
As the sound started grating  
Despite the fact I'd still be waiting.

Temporary lights stood between me and my destination  
So I came to the realisation that by the 'bus station  
I would have missed my train  
So I missed it in style and walked the journey.

## The Smiley Ones

You can tell who we are  
It's us who are singing  
To the beat of a different drum  
Whilst everyone is noticing.

We are oblivious to the crowd in our ways of expression  
Much to their chagrin and tension.

We are the dreamers, artists and pioneers  
The musicians, writers and seers  
In a sea of 'all right' instead of waters far from bright.

They are too scared to see our hive of activity.  
They are struck by their creativity.  
Our poetry's deep and ethereal  
Our drawings are bold and colourful.

You can tell who we are; we are sometimes introspective,  
We often see things from a different perspective,  
Entranced by the moquette of '80s 'buses  
Of orange sprinkles on black cushions  
Or two tone orange tartans on Leyland Atlanteans.

Maybe you'll see us, busking in town centres,  
Conversing on '60s architecture  
Or travelling far and wide in search of [Class 40] Whistlers.

We'll be whistling Supertramp till kingdom come  
And 'The Birdie Song' before we are done.  
They'll mind, though you will find, we wouldn't mind  
As they left their sense of fun behind.

Their 'music of being' has DRM.  
 To them, 'Dreamer', off key is mayhem.  
 We need to whistle, we need to sing,  
 I wish for one day they could do their own thing...

Then we could all become the smiley ones...  
 This is contentment.

## For Those Who Could Find The Staple, We Salute You

One staple, reminds me of goalposts  
 For me, several make a road tunnel

Able to find the one on the floor  
 I knew for sure which part had the staple  
 In the midst of the pattern so swirly.  
 From the Axminster, I was able to register this right angled  
 paper fastener.

I saw my fellow colleague's straight line.  
 Without a dip it looked sublime  
 As we made a table on the whiteboard.  
 I envied his precision  
 Mine were dogged with undulation.

I took the circuitous route  
 Stopping and going round the houses.  
 His was point-to-point, through speedier passages.  
 Allegedly his route was faster, so everyone went his way.  
 Mine was slower, but I arrived earlier  
 Than the fellow on the other route, allegedly faster.

"Did the man throw you off  
 Because you were crying when you were pleading 'Stop  
 moving, stop moving, stop moving' as the tram was bouncing?"

I left the city in a huff still steaming  
 Due to the crowding as the tram was teeming.  
 I pleaded 'stop moving' as I found the ride frustrating.  
 Passing Sale in diagonal hail,  
 I sensed my brain fogging, wondering where my mind was.

Alighting at Altrincham I had this notion  
 Of taking a taxi to Warburton  
 And walking the journey back.

I switched off the 'phone, fulfilling my need to be alone and  
 walked the way home.

A move I didn't regret.

## Still Waiting

Quarter to nine, I await the bus to town  
 Coming in before the crowds  
 It's the rush hour; there'll be plenty coming down  
 Though I was mistaken.

Ten past nine, still at the shelter  
 I wondered if my 'bus was missing.  
 Later on it came, the vehicle was an ancient double decker  
 Which did a good stint at rattling.

The bus was packed with passengers;  
 Standing room only downstairs  
 A squeeze here and there to get upstairs

30 minutes later came relief  
 Despite some grief from the driver.  
 My rear was in overdrive, though I managed to survive  
 20 minutes of the cheapest paper stuck to my rear.

Back to the loo, all I had to do  
 Was wipe the annoying bits away  
 To avoid itching the following day.

Worse still, I could have been the man  
 En route to my gaff in his little van  
 Needing to use the loo  
 In a stranger's house off the M62.

## Illogical Ballad

Call me pedantic, pernickity or exact  
 Everywhere I walk I see no connection  
 Nothing's 'as is' - that's a fact;  
 I've tried to beat their system.

I've tried my best to find some order  
 It seemed to me we thrive on chaos  
 And all of this comes at a loss,

A loss of selves, which we abandoned some time ago.  
 We started acting when the bell started ringing  
 We started yearning for things we didn't need.  
 Paradise was put on ice the day we ceased our dreaming.

"Were you 'home' that Sunday night  
 When the trams ceased running?"  
 "Or did you run your journey home  
 Shouting and screaming?"

The one who thought independently  
 Cut away from the sheep mentality  
 Of his supposed superior.  
 He found the staple on the patterned floor  
 Some several years ago  
 To the amazement of his peers.

"He hides 'in' the floor and disappears"  
 As the playground leader peers  
 Said his mother in '82.

At the time, she had no clues and didn't know what to do.  
 She found him quite social and highly intellectual.  
 He reproduced patterns of great intricacy  
 But he didn't like the company.

His mother was hysterical, as her son most wonderful  
 Faced struggles with the system to his condition.  
 Much to her derision, the system didn't suit.  
 Instead of talent, they took the behavioural route;  
 As a result, he felt insulted.  
 His mum felt his talent would have been wasted.

He was shortlisted for remedial classes  
 Due to minor discrepancies over his idiosyncrasies  
 He liked his sense of symmetry with the school cutlery  
 And was alarmed at anything other  
 Some found him most irritant  
 Being in thrall of the consistent.

They thought he had no feeling; he was highly sensing  
 And sometimes emotional.  
 At the time they had no clue, and didn't know what to do.  
 They found him asocial and unconventional.  
 He reproduced patterns of great intricacy  
 Much to their disdain.

## Celebrating Differences

I am proud to admit that I didn't like PE one bit  
And that I'm far from being average

My general knowledge and elephantine memory  
Are all part of me.  
I've tried too long hoping to follow the crowd  
Like other people I've seen around.

I'm happy being myself, instead of asking "Am I normal?"

I just wanted to fit in; when I tried, my chances were thin,  
As my mindset is different within  
Although I look average like the rest

They couldn't cope with the knowledge,  
My outlook, direction and probably emotion.  
After years of rejection and self-reflection,  
I've found myself at ease  
Celebrating, instead of berating my differences.

This for me is my clearest intention.

## Waiting For The Van

84 items and I'm still waiting...

One wet evening I did the weekly shopping;  
For my order I binned the bus shelter  
And did the whole thing online.

No more waiting in line awaited me in the store.  
I skipped the worst of this yawnsome chore;  
No bright lights to dazzle me,  
Plus I had my weekends free.

I chose a slot for the next evening  
Though the wait's less appealing.  
'Oh well' I thought 'I'll take the laptop downstairs'  
Reading *Slashdot* and checking new virus scares.

The following night, I awaited my groceries  
Read the *Daily Mail* for today's neuroses  
Plonked a curry in the microwave  
Watching *Top Gear* on *Dave*.

Ninety minutes later, awaiting my order  
I wondered what on Earth was the matter.  
There was I in frustration, bored in consternation.  
I should have tried the store beside the 'bus station.

I went to the loo, though I knew he'd appear at any time.  
Five minutes later, excreting the Masala,  
I heard a knock downstairs.

A minute later he was still knocking  
I couldn't stop poohing, so I resorted to stuffing  
Half a roll up my bowels, wiping my bum quickly  
Finished, I duly marched downstairs.