

[Recording of the week: Wioletta Greg reads her poetry](#)

This week's selection comes from Stephen Cleary, Lead Curator of Literary & Creative Recordings.

Polish poet and writer Wioletta Greg has attracted critical praise for her coming-of-age tale *Swallowing Mercury*, which was published in January this year by Portobello Books. For this week's 'Recording of the Week' we offer a unique recording of Wioletta reading her poetry, made by the British Library in 2012 at the poet's home on the Isle of Wight. The reading is in Polish, with English translations made and read by Marek Kazmierski.

[Wioletta Greg reading_C1340/79](#)



This recording is part of [Between Two Worlds: Poetry and Translation](#), an ongoing Arts Council-funded audio recording project conducted by the British Library in collaboration with the poet Amarjit Chandan.

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[Public sector pay – lets have pay rises with productivity rises](#)

Some people in the public sector deserve a pay rise. Some parts of the public sector need more money to pay for the services they provide. They will receive more, though as always there be arguments about how much more. Tax revenue will go on rising without increasing tax rates, all the time the economy grows.

Some parts of the public sector have done particularly badly at improving quality and efficiency. There is considerable scope for people to work smarter, and to benefit from the wider application of digital technology.

The way to square the circle of wanting people to be better paid, but wanting to keep the overall costs down, is to boost quality and output without having to add to staff numbers, or without in some areas having to replace all those who retire or leave.

I will be looking at how public sector management can be improved, with higher quality services at an affordable price, in blogs this summer. A crucial part of getting progress is a better motivated and better paid

workforce that benefits from improvements they help implement in service quality and cost of delivery.

In the current national debate we are offered a silly choice. Do we with Labour want to raise the cap and pay people more with no regard to the consequences for taxes and borrowing, or do we with Treasury orthodoxy want to keep the pay cap in place to control public spending and keep the pressure to cut borrowing?

I recommend following neither of these choices. Let's have some pay rises. By all means await the Independent Pay Reviews who will assess pay against the background of supply and demand for labour, living standards and past price increases. Let's at the same time prepare plans for how to raise quality and productivity in each service, and engage staff in ways that lead to their promotion or higher remuneration.

In the private sector a "something for something" deal is usual over pay. I want better paid staff and affordable services and think we should be able to deliver both. It is most worrying that public sector productivity has been stagnant this century, despite the huge breakthroughs with digital technology.

[8 dead, 35 injured in gas pipeline explosion in SW China](#)



The site of a gas pipeline explosion is seen in Qinglong, southwest China's Guizhou Province, July 2, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

At least eight people died and another 35 were injured in a natural gas

pipeline explosion in southwest China's Guizhou Province on Sunday, local authorities said.

The explosion occurred at around 10 a.m. in the town of Shazi, Qinglong County. The injured, including four in critical condition, have been sent to hospital for treatment, according to rescuers.

Days of heavy rain triggered a landslide, which crushed the pipeline operated by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and caused gas leak and ensuing blast, according to the preliminary investigation.

The fire caused by the explosion was put out and residents nearby were evacuated, while further investigation continues, said the rescuers.

Bully victims learn to manage their emotions



A social and emotional learning (SEL) class is given to students at Sanjiang Ethnic Experimental School in Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County. [Photo/Xinhua]

At a school in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, several children shed tears as they share their experience of being bullied.

“He broke my pencil without any reason, punched me, and gave me a bloody nose

after I asked him to pay for my pencil," a fourth-grader recalls.

The boy takes off his glasses, briefly wipes his tears then bursts out crying again. His teacher walks over and gives him a hug.

The class at Sanjiang Ethnic Experimental School in Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County is called social and emotional learning (SEL). It is a joint project run by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

SEL is about helping students develop skills such as self-recognition and confidence, understanding and managing emotions, and maintaining positive relationships with others. "Say 'no' to bullying" is one of the topics.

During the course, Zhou Lihong, the teacher, tells a story of an imaginative but introverted girl's long-term bullying and asks students for ways they would help the girl.

Some suggest making friends with her, some advise her to turn to teachers or parents for help, someone suggests "an eye for an eye."

"Bullying is constant and intentional, initiated by the stronger against the vulnerable. We should learn to protect ourselves, and meanwhile, never bully others," Zhou tells the children.

UNICEF educationalist Guo Xiaoping says that since launch of the SEL project in 2013, the number of participating schools has increased to over 500.

These schools are mainly in less-developed middle and western parts of the country, said Guo.

"With the support from local education authorities and experts, some schools that are not included into the pilot have also joined in," she said.

Wu Xinyun, head of the primary section at the Sanjiang school, says students receive an SEL lesson every two weeks, using textbooks provided by the project.

"We have found there is less physical conflict among the children," she said.

Each class has around 60 students, more than the advised national maximum of 45. "Physical contact is very frequent in the classroom, and often led to fights in the past. SEL helps students understand each other, so brawls are much more infrequent," Wu said.

Guo says a study of US primary and high schools and kindergartens in 2011 found SEL participants did 11-percentage points better than control groups.

Wei Jiaqi, 12, has drawn a picture of a classmate holding an umbrella for her in rain. She names the drawing, "Thanks for caring about me."

"I was upset as my mom had scolded me that day. It was my classmate who kept me company," she says.

“I changed my girl pal into a boy, because drawing a boy is easier,” she says, adding that they like the SEL courses very much.

Li Fuzhuo, head of teacher education at Guangxi Normal University, said SEL is meant to create an atmosphere in which students feel, experience, think and acquire the related skills. Competent teachers are vital.

To address this issue, the ministry and UNICEF organize training and demonstration courses for school heads and teachers.

The project also encourages parents to participate and the team is compiling articles about SEL to be released via the UNICEF WeChat account.

In this way, parents, especially migrant workers who have left their children behind, will be able to join in the SEL project.

Huang Guizhen, an official at the education ministry, believes SEL not only improves teaching competence, but enables vulnerable groups, such as left-behind children, to feel more care and love from school and the family.

“We want to expand the project to more schools, so that more children benefit from it,” she said.

Aircraft carrier fleet to visit HK for anniversary



Aircraft carrier fleet to visit HK for anniversary [File Photo/Xinhua]

A port call in Hong Kong by China's aircraft carrier fleet to mark the 20th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison has been described by experts as a sign of good will and firm determination.

The fleet, which is on a routine training mission at sea before the port call, is expected to arrive early this month and be open to the public for the first time during its stop in Hong Kong to mark the anniversary, which fell on Saturday, Liang Yang, a spokesman for the PLA Navy, said on Sunday.

The formation comprises the CNS Liaoning, China's first aircraft carrier; the CNS Jinan and CNS Yinchuan missile destroyers; the CNS Yantai missile frigate; and J-15 carrier-borne fighter jets and helicopters.

By participating in the anniversary celebrations, the PLA Navy can demonstrate its achievements in defense and military construction to the Hong Kong people, Liang said.

This will further invigorate Hong Kong compatriots' patriotism and love for the city, and inspire national spirit, he added.

The garrison was formally stationed in Hong Kong and assumed defense duties on July 1, 1997, when its sovereignty was returned to China from the United Kingdom.

It currently has about 6,000 personnel and is commanded by Lieutenant General Tan Benhong.

Major General Ma Gang, a professor at the PLA National Defense University, said the fleet's visit demonstrates the PLA Navy's good will, and showcases

its firm determination and capability to protect all Chinese people.

“Hong Kong was taken from China by foreign colonial powers in the 1840s, and the Qing government could do little about it because its naval forces were weak,” Ma said.

“Now, China has its own aircraft carrier fleet, and its visit to Hong Kong signals a strong sense of reassurance that Hong Kong cannot be taken away again.”

Chen Xingxin, a researcher of law and Hong Kong affairs at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said it is understandable and in good will that the carrier fleet is visiting Hong Kong for the anniversary, because both the carrier and the return of Hong Kong are proud milestones in Chinese history.

The CNS Liaoning is a refitted Soviet-era vessel that was commissioned by the PLA Navy in 2012. China also launched its first domestically built aircraft carrier in April.