

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

Zoe

by Malcolm Walker

I must tell you about Zoe. Zoe lives in a cloud. Perhaps she is a cloud. Not in the sense of being an aerosol consisting of a visible mass of minute liquid droplets or particles suspended in the atmosphere. At least I think not. No she is more like a fleeting mist, untouchable, yet distinct as a whole, but intangible and indefinable in the detail. You see, I suspect Zoe was born in a bubble and remains so.

Zoe was a walking, talking daydream. Her reality was a figment of my imagination. She was born in Mongolia, conceived in a yurt. Rumour had it that her mother gave birth on horseback. Zoe's reality did not match mine, but then I was born in Bow, a vista of unbroken uniformity. Her vista, although unbroken was panoramic and endless. Is it any wonder she became detached. In a sense she created her own experience.

So it was that Zoe became a poet. She wrote of her teacher being a creature of mystical extremes, full of diverse themes, of her brother who had a stutter, and a sister with a huge blister.

She founded a Mongolian Poet's Society but this disbanded by the time she was five. The two Mongolic languages, oirat and buryat did not lend themselves to rhyme. Blank verse was too prosaic for Zoe.

I first met Zoe as a student on a gap year. I found employment in the mining industry. At that time Zoe was on a mission to teach iambic pentameter to the copper miners. I told you she was not on this planet.

The abuse she endured touched her not one jot.

She drew me in like a diaphanous web. Not that she was conscious of her allure. It was just her. An elusive indefinable attraction. I was but a moth entranced by a 100 watt bulb.

She kept a diary which she called her blue tome. It bore a great resemblance to Mao's red book in its puerility. But that was Zoe. Zoe is the kind of person you lose easily. To keep up with her perceptions would have tested Shakespeare at his insightful best.

Despite my misgivings I clung to Zoe as a barnacle to a ship. I tried to justify it by deluding myself into thinking that understanding her mind could be scientifically productive, and for quite some time I was convinced that I would succeed.

Her fame spread rapidly. Her thoughts were translated for publication in China and South-East Asia. I accompanied Zoe to America on her first lecture tour at Harvard and Yale. She was able to pass the student's censor and the university proctors by reason of being a woman and a member of an ethnic minority, but only by the skin of her teeth. I thought it more likely that they lacked the wit to absorb her ideas.

In the event Zoe is what she always was, the bearer of fake news, Fact and fiction interchangeable. A lost soul.