

Welcome to Broadsheet 16

in tandem with the 'Dwelling Places' issue
of Agenda, Vol 45 No 4/Vol 46 No 1:
an appreciation of John Burnside



Suzanne Clarke: Untitled MS7, 2002 – mixed media on canvas
© suzanne clark.

Suzanne, 29, has appeared in previous Broadsheets. Her work has been widely exhibited in the UK and elsewhere. She recently spent a year in New Zealand and now has a studio in Brighton. She is gaining nursing qualifications. Her work can be seen on www.suzanneclark.co.uk

Angharad Walker, 19, is studying English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Warwick. She comes from Wilton in Wiltshire.

Paramali, Cyprus

If I shut my eyes and think – think! I'll see

sooty palm trees framed by bondu and wire

your famed island shape, which I have on gold

poisonous snakes stories of summer fires

chain. Each sun-setting second folds in on

a carved treasure box with twisting feet

your sea. Ten years on; feel; my heels are hard.

a suicide note blooded the concrete

Ten years gone; I was running far too far

pink Sahara sand that will not stay

and fast. Helios. Arinna. The star...

the raft unanchored itself and drifted away

1965

She is five years old, oblivious
to our untimely visit.

I stand behind her,

mirror,

my shadow lingering

and teeming with something,

something familiar, similar to us.

She is not my mother yet.

I do not love her yet,

but her cells flutter at my potential

and yours:

my hollogrammed father,

sputtering between parent and boyhood self.

Leave her be, for now.

You don't know what is waiting,

breath baited, for the two of you.

"I do."

I choke on the thought of it.

Leave her to it -

be bored and happy!

Trust me.

I am gambling with my being.

I think it might be worth it

if you would only...

Tear this up. Burn it.

You ignore every hindsight

letter I write for you.

You ignore the black ink on my hands

when you know I write in blue.



Suzanne Clarke: Cordes Sur Ciel, France, May 2008 – oils on canvas
© suzanne clark.

Carly Gibbs, 18, is from Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. She is currently studying for her A levels and hopes to go to university in September.

War Of The Roses

They're fighting again,
ripping themselves
apart,
for no-one's sake,
it's the war of the roses,
blacks, reds and
all other colours,
breaking away
ripping apart,
tearing each other to pieces
for no-one to hold,
I want it to stop
but can't help but watch

as the petals fly
and fall
to the floor,
colours lost
and stems broken,
petals strewn,
with no winner,
I want to cry
or piece them back
but I can't
the roses are already weeping.



Suzanne Clark: Seven Sisters estuary – mixed media on paper
© suzanne clark.

Lucy Hely-Hutchinson, 17, is currently a Sixth Form student at Benenden School and has recently joined the Poetry Society Youth Membership. She has participated in the editorial team of the school creative writing magazine and has just started submitting poetry more widely.

Weekday Women

Each weekday was lined up at the market,
their baskets holding their necessities.
Sunday had died three years before,
with Saturday following closely after.
Only the infamous weekdays remained.

July hovered in the background on his ladder,
desperately trying the mend December's gutters.
He had known Thursday for a long time,
but she married October who was mild and temperate.
She claimed that July had been *too hot and heavy*.

Monday was a gracious woman,
always taking charge and leading.
Her and the weekend had been close;
Saturday was always the life of the party.
Her sister Sunday was the meek opposite.

But it was only recently that Tuesday and Wednesday
had re-kindled their friendship;
Tuesday had taken Thursday's side
when Thursday had stolen Wednesday's man
and Friday's bread.

But today was a day that changed everything,
for today was the day that March came to town –
the cool and sleek man caused a big stir amongst the women.

Shadows of Candlelight

The final rays elude her rawboned fingertips,
flooding into a badger-black night,

towards the edge of the forest she creeps,
a lone star guiding her.

She mimbles towards the house,
a vexed dance.

Final embers of an ebbing fire
glow in the window -

she edges closer. Her face fills the glass;
icy air has cracked the pane.

It shivers from a light tap.
Not a stir. Muted terror.

The leggy nymph steals through jagged glass,
her foot prints the fire's sable soot.

She sees him asleep on the chair.
Rise. Fall. Rise. Fall.

His jet hair is disheveled,
the coal-cat struts away from him.

*Breathe mere one breath, the pixie whispers,
That insignificant breath cannot save you now.*



Suzanne Clark: The Downs, Friston Forest (2) – mixed media on paper
© suzanne clark.

David Owen, 23, has just started an English PhD at the University of Winchester after gaining his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Creative Writing. He currently lives in Penge, a south-eastern suburb of London, where he is working on his first novel. His poems appear in Broadsheet 11 and in the last Broadsheet 15.

Affair With the News Reader

She arrives after the midday bulletin
and forces the lock on the gate.
She works in her suit, deadheads the roses,
lends the hedge a crooked abridgement and trims
the verge with factual disregard.

She opens a pack of biscuits with the tea
and dashes them to pieces on the counter.
I take her to bed to smear her lipstick,
wring the shape from her hair, jumble her

cue sheets out of sequence. I insist she wear
the same suit on air, damp with sweat,
every crease a headline screaming
'Newsreader surrenders to common man!'
I sink a biscuit into my tea,

like straightening papers on a desk,
and watch her carve the soil from her nails,
marshal the lines of her face.
My biscuit crumbles into the mug
like an expired dictatorship.

The Insomnia Plague

We caught it from the empty-eyed gypsies
who didn't sleep for a summer.
They pleaded with the dark in the back yard
of the house, bargained with the *subirse el muerto*,

the spirits and demons that droned through
their nights like nocturnal insects.
When winter came and we hadn't slept
we cast them off and shut up the house.

Day after night we lost the names of our children,
scratched our eyes as the plants dropped their leaves
and dust obscured the air like formaldehyde.
Before the last of us was gone

we packed the dresser with our memories.
They were found by the summer, when the gypsies
climbed through the windows
and tracked our movements in the dust.

In the first drawer was a daguerrotype of a boy and girl
on the porch, faces masked with begonias.
The second held thirty-two civil wars
surrendered by the same illegible hand.
In the third drawer was a service revolver
nursed in the folds of an obituary page.

The gypsies set their mattresses in the dust
and let the world back into the house.
In the spaces of night they listened
for our tread on the rugs and boards,
the rasps and creaks in the back rooms,
and wept at our drones that haunted til morning.

Water Coot

Somewhere in the dregs
of the bottle, between
the fag ash lily pads
and carbonated boil,
it occurs to me
that the saddest death of all
is that of a water coot,
the swan muscle clamped
tight over its beak,
its closing wing beats dampened
by the lament of the water.



Suzanne Clark: The Beach (1) – mixed media on paper
© suzanne clark.

Jen Campbell, 24, is from the North East of England. She graduated from Edinburgh University with an MA in English Literature, and now lives in London. Her poetry and prose have been published in various journals. She is working towards her first poetry collection and also her first short story collection. She is featured in the last Broadsheet 15.

Treading Water

I was birthed in the Tyne on a fluorescent buoy
kept afloat by its placenta. Both of us ballooned.

My eye a coin of seagulls, mothering.

We all come out of these wombs
swimming: for six months we can breathe like that.

On his lunch my father threw crumbs from the Biscuit Factory.
A prayer I'd stay afloat. To begin with there were warm cookies.

Those first Sundays people with cameras came. Snapped me
screaming on my back. Like an apple bobbing before the pie.

I lay as a longboat twisting to reach our old Valhalla –
my plastic mother drowned below. The first word was anemone.

I farmed myself: a kick for every Christmas day
I wouldn't sit under a moulting tree. Some tried to baptise me

from the river banks, and The Baltic where locals looked out
from sky-top floors. Binoculars to count the salt I cupped.

Umbilically I was a long line of fishermen and lasses.
A northern starfish. A pink, fleshed bomb waiting for my tail to grow.

I smiled gums for ships I'd one day sink.
I hovered in the river mouth, touching neither one side nor the other.

Lobster Girl

i)

When we think, we think of beginnings

hen I was a bairn and my folks took me to the circus:
showed me the clowns; their red faces,
bought me blue candyfloss that melted all over my hands.

These hands could fly, their bandages unravelling.
I could be a bird, I said; I had the hooked nose for it,
shot out of the canon.
Boom baby.

It was only later I discovered I was born out of the sea.

ii)

In the beginning me and the world stood either side of telescopic geography – with suns and
moons, as frisbee jets caught under foot. We had to pass each other without dropping time,
salute across our running field. The embryonic path. The genetic pool.
The dawn and dusk of fingers crossing

iii)

and my fingers were trees.

That's how I think. Of branches
stuck together. Of joints shaped like elephants

which I felt-tipped faces on.
Where a hand is a tortoise: my palm its shell.

(It is strange to have something and not know how to name it
like a guest plonked in your kitchen for twenty four years.)

When the internet was born - a virus on wheels – I found it*.
Its name fell out. You could Google the freak shows:

the staring faces of a family who held their hands up like meat.

In America: The Lobster Boy
who sat behind bars and the whole world watched.
Popcorn falling on weekend trips. A whole lot of weak knees.

Yet we stand now, as trees, as birds.
As land-walking sea-women. And

we are not caged. We fly.

Anthropomorphic

Take these Polaroids. Pass them out. They've leaked
onto the Northern Line from Archway Road. Opened brown envelopes.
Made their way into a city. We're out of the woods now, baby -
I've found parts dug right in the back of the seats, groping.
The soft insides. Her crumpled face.
Now you know how it looks. For a girl
to be mauled by bears hunting for
her breakfast amongst the leaves. It is true,
her skirt hung loose, a safety-pinned waist. Stroked
the inside of her leg and made them angry. Wished.
The headlines cried out: she got away. Made it onto
local radio. They did not know how and did not
question it. Her crooked smile slurping strawberry
milkshakes, speaking then about how she ran.
Her bare feet on the table. She did not have
an accent. It was hard to place her down and claim it.

The phone lines burnt white and were not answered.
She'd nod, and again, her skirt sagging. Her smile split.
This is their reconstruction. She did not make it there
to a microphone and voices holding up her ears.
Cupping her precious brain.
These photographs, found, were taken for a magazine
that did not reach its printers. Her eyes blacked out
with the thin strip of a train line. Her folded face, a wasp,
the contents of their lunch and dinner. Mapped out on this tree.

OfHer

i

She bought tights at Friday's market, folding socks in with
receipts: her laddered leg a feathered snake - limbs pruning

in the damp - he sits
and contemplates the squares. His pen tapping out the seconds
of six down and four letters, ignoring all her

four piece units, lolling back instead
to teach the cat
how to pronounce his words - for she with irons is a wall
with ears and he is deaf these days

even to her shoes.
They are new, self-served and scorched,
pick holes in pockets of his shirts. She is a hole

punch flexing upwards against
all that has become and not: arms metal bending
hitching up her tights and, speaking to the cat, she says:
"I think we need more milk"

and she is gone before he knows it, soured, red
shoes running fast.

ii

The train rattles bloody murder within
dystopian paranoia: the broadsheet
rattlers turning over in their premature

graves: their over-priced trolleys. She hides
by slipping between their tales, and there:

Alma, Janine, Dolores, Moira, June. In dim light
cross-legged women leading lives of the oppressed -
she will steal one of them for now, trim around a name

the sweat pooling in her tights

and Janine, she screams the loudest: hand-picked
ripe right in her palm
the rest discarded with the wedding ring:
tannoy announcements forging seams.

The city helps her breathe.
This is her stop

iii

and start:
two drinks and half an hour of compassed limbs
that foot the tap, propped
up against the bar: Janine is a rhombus framed and he is
happy to oblige, bowing to the lasso

hailing a taxi like a bloody Mary -
and, well, she always loved their smell: a little piece
of every man, and so they tumble in together

ignoring waves of travel sickness
red digits counting pennies
missing missus, curling tongues.

iv

As his watch beeps half past four, Janine
surrenders her borrowed clock
leaves her stockings out behind, trailing skin and clicking heels, running

home full to the brim of all these new four-lettered words.
Six down, four letters, and her heels tap out the seconds
which have her own pendulum swing, where she doesn't talk

to plastered walls, folding socks up with the knives
amongst all these handpicked people -
swaying lines on rush hour trains: their covered up cross
words that litter hole punched seats. She takes

a pen and holds it loose, metal bending in her palm of six
down and four letters, lets her pen tap out
the seconds of the vertical, of top to bottom: of *free* and *rapt* and *hers*.

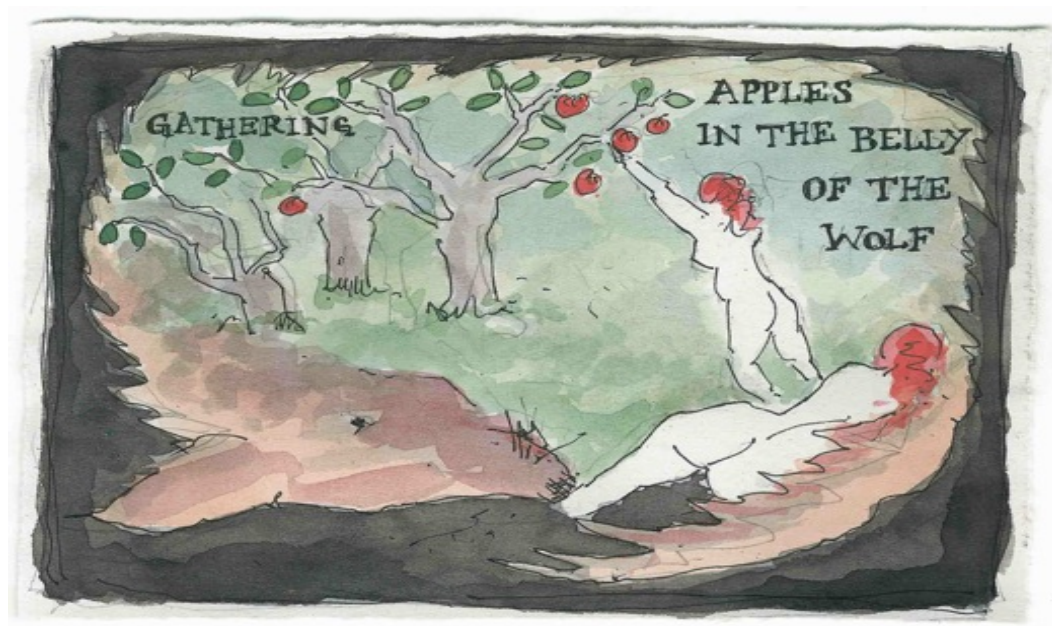
Girl Red

She rides him. His rabbit bitten arms
hang off her pearled neck. Beaten. Bled.
She has her grandmother's eyes. The ones
that would gaze through the yellow tea to
the bottom and peer at the sight there. She
predicted great things, once upon a time.
Saw last year's rose-hips grow from her kitchen window,
suds up to the bow of her arm. She did not see him coming.

His incisors are good as tooth picks
against the steaks of trees. Their insides spilling over.
Be safe, they had said. Monthly letters shoved
under her door. Pale blue dotted *is* as regular
as her bleeding. Be safe.

This is a path we take.

She skinned him with her letter opener.
Those slide right in. Caught him looking, half in
half out. Her coated hands, a handmaid. It took
him some time to die. She watched him thrash. Stubbed
her cigarette out in his eye socket. Burnt his liver
ate his heart whole. Found false teeth in the stomach.
Bitten. Laughter bubbles as a head rush.
Two hearts in one cage: let the bird sing.
She wears his hide as a cape now.
His bad breath in with her scalp. Teeth hang over her
brow. Her greasy hair. Somewhere there will be baby cubs.
She is winking now, always. Winking.





Johnny Marsh: from 'Red Riding Hood: A Story' – inks and paper
Johnny's work is on the front and back covers of the 'Dwelling Places' issue of *Agenda*, and inside (Vol 45 No 4/Vol 46 No 1).

Lee Jing-Jing, 25, was born and raised in Singapore, is currently doing a Masters in Creative Writing at Oxford and poetry and short stories by Lee have been published in the *Quarterly Literary Review*, Singapore.

Riding Hood

*'And when his work was done, he laughed
in the forest.'*

Khalil Gibran

It was dark when I stepped out.
Dark and deliciously cool. I stood,
wiping the red off my hands with leaves
he plucked from the dappled shade.

There were wild mushrooms glowing white
and palm-sized flowers, their mouths
bloomed into a full pout. These I took,
put them in my hair. And I danced.

First around the split, still body,
then around the forester who said to stand back.
So I did, watched as he lifted the wolf's
Glorious, grey pelt with his blade.

The Find

I would have brought you home
if my hands hadn't decided to make a game of you
and tossed you back into the water.
Chalk- white,
catching the afternoon sun with your teeth picked clean by fish,
washed over and again by the warm sea.

I picture you made whole from scavenged parts.
Rubber boots from the market. Brown, pitted skin and ibig,
waving-away hands than men have.
Only a man can lost himself like that,
Drop their jaw into the water like losing a set of keys.
Like losing time, face, half their liver to drink.

Sitting up

My turn came on the second night.
Sitting up with grandpa.

Not like sitting up with a feverish child
or staying up over New Year's eve

late as possible so your parents live
and live to be ninety, a hundred.

Not even like keeping vigil bedside,
switching the pillows under him

every hour, from left to right and back,
putting balm on his cracked lips.

Sitting up meant looking after the casket,
keeping the stray cats away.

Or else we might find the coffin empty,
the adults said, the dead off for a stroll.

I laughed about this with my cousin,
right before she fell asleep in my lap.

Then I took out squares of coloured paper,
spent the night making cranes, stars.

By morning, I could shut my eyes,
feel for a corner with my fingers

and know what to do.
Smooth the paper out, lift and fold.

Flight from Kigali

It must be closeness,
breathing in the same air, and out.
The almost-touching of our arms and skin,
our shoulders. You don't know –
you had fallen asleep,
your body dipping, swaying deliciously.
You don't know
but I have all of you in my head.
Decided upon them mid-flight,
strapped into the seat next to you.

You could be the one
who hid under your neighbour's body for days.
Lived on to help gather the lined skulls,
the wide, ivory mouths to put into plywood boxes.
Shook the dirt from blood-dusted clothes
still holding the lines and curves of the bodies
they had peeled from.

You could belong to her –
you have the forehead and lips of that face,
the one I lingered on at the memorial
just to rest my eyes.
There were too many of them.
Faces with smiles, their voices
shining into the camera.
Standing next to homes,
panting dogs, family.

You could have been them.
Or you could have been the one
with the stone in your hand.

I hear you ignore me,
taste the hush you washed over yourself.
Felt the knife-edge of your bones.
Imagined myself telling you
I know,
I know all this and who you are,
before the cotton slid from your shoulders.
And I saw the map of your skin. The river
cleaved into your arm, down,
down to your wrist.
And I wanted to cover you up.
Shake you awake. Turn away.



Suzanne Clarke: Beach 4 – mixed media on paper © suzanne clark.

Tabitha Allen, 29, has an MA in Creative Writing, and is completing a doctoral thesis researching the role of identity and the body in twenty first century performance poetry. She has been published in some small presses and through university magazines and online publishers. She lives in Overton, Hampshire.

Spades

Tomorrow, you'll make me tea while
I lie dozing, awake but not

Yet awake. I'll leave it cooling
Beside our bed, your heavy

Footfall on the stairs like lead,
You weld all through the day.

I'll get up late, make toast,
Check the post, turn on the

Computer you fixed when it
Broke so I can write words

You won't understand. I'll
Laugh at your jokes about

Blonde girls and blokes, like
You, who know how to hammer

And screw things together
Outside in all kinds of weather,

Just like your Father. I'm home
Alone, writing for you. Different

Class you would say. I say
Different hearts.

In Memoriam

For Gillian Allen

We kept them like pets
Buckets' full, set
On concrete slabs,
Brimming with dirt.
Inside,
They wormed their way,
Small bodies
Burrowing through the soft earth.

Mapping lives within
Tunnels, corridors, passageways.

To us just little crevices.

Through these tunnels
They formed their intricate homes.

We pulled them, from ground of glik
Those worms! Those pets!
Brainless, sightless.
Scorching them with salty palm.
Thin-skinned. Privately, as though
In sacrifice, they shed

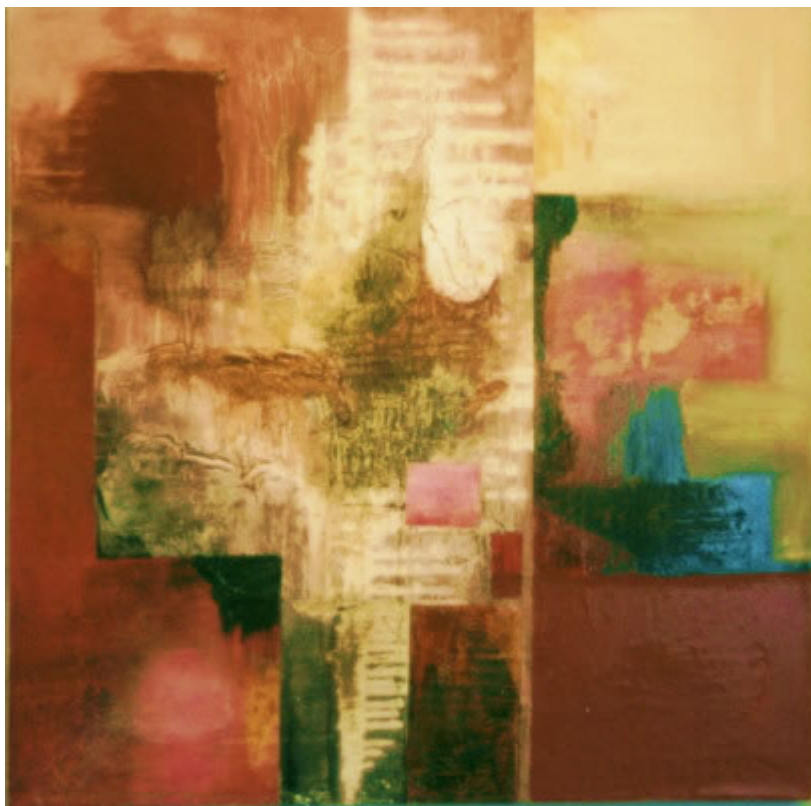
Their blueish hue. De-fleshed –
The colour of nothing
Like child's fingers
Or brains clogged
In the yawning red-brown earth.



Suzanne Clark: The Downs, Friston Forest (2) – mixed media on paper
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Suzanne Clark: Abstract Seascape – mixed media on paper
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Suzanne Clark: Untitled MS8, 2002 – mixed media on canvas
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