

BROADSHEET 3

Welcome to **Broadsheet 3**, the first online *Agenda* Broadsheet. You can print it out if you wish and stick the pages together into a long screed of talented young voices. Please send any comments on your favourite poems or any constructive critical appreciation by email to: editor@agendapoetry.co.uk and we will post some of them up on this website.



Painting by **Judith Sutton**, age 23, who graduated from St Andrews University in History and Art History and is now studying Law at the College of Law in York.

Three poems by **Jenny Pagdin**, age 25. Graduated in English from Oxford and works in IT at UCLH Hospitals in London:

Day-Spring

After you'd left us, the blue morning ringing,
The colours of your garden were bright in the rain,
Cherry flowers and inlaid wood.

Hope blossoms like a chrysalis, a flock
Of hard-edged butterflies, still wet
And clear as embryo skin.

A babble of wishes opening in the trees,
White and gilt-rimmed, iridescent,
Brimming with the sheen of the chorus, the glory.

Solstice

That old paradox: new leaves
And tarnished pewter. A float of green
Threaded sea-glass, a watery net.

The spit of breaking glass, and a mosaic
Of spun-grey, lambent films.
Light frets branches like harp strings

Or as a window in the turning stones
Flecked with laminates of sun.
The bright words hand, like charms.

Icon

Choral notes spiral like water
A shell-gold membrane,
Angels etched in clear bones and insect wings.

Face to face, the sheen of light
Both seen and seeing,
Glass-bright aura, something understood.

Kiss of redfish and the water's skin
Circles iridescent on the water
Sound and return like womanflesh.

Jemma Borg has a Ph D in Genetics and works as a freelance editor from her home in Tunbridge Wells:

Orbit

Look
at these hands

reaching out to you
as though holding globes:

the shapes of worlds
These are the moments

I've spent with you
Circling around themselves

They're weightless
air
nothing

A planet
doesn't fall through

the vacuum:
gravity cradles it

just
as it bends

the timed space of our
two faces

Again see
our breaths

floating

Two poems by **David Briggs**, age 30, English teacher, St. Edward's School, Bath, won an Eric Gregory Award in 2002:

Other People's Children Scratch into Sketchbooks

Up here, where the granite breaks through

purple heather and gorse flowers
time-lapse shuttering in the wind,
I supervise other people's

children as they perch, scratching
weather beaten headlands into
sketchbooks. 'Observe, there, far out
at sea where clouds ribbon horizons,

trawlers net their own observations
of tide and time, and shoals of sunlight
shepherd cumulus!' My words
tarpaulin-flap, are swept back inland

like waves waltzing through inlets, salt
spray like ballerinas' *descendres*.
Missing you soaks into my bones –
pastels into parchment. I become

sketchbooks westward, measuring
our distance, noting how something
in the way the dog-rose nodded
in the breeze conjured your wobbly

head when the electric surge and storm-
shattered synapse cracks like surf
breaking on the foreign shore
behind your azure eyes, cheeks –

wind-flushed purple-pink as brain tissue –
observing febrile suns perform
their absentia evening
after convoluted evening.

They have put down their pencils.
I attend to them, now, knowing
that tomorrow, while other people's
children manipulate wire

studies of other people's sculptures –
are encouraged to succeed –
I will send you a postcard
you may never be able to read.

The Loneliness of the Long Distance Conversationalist

Tell me where you go when you have ceased
to remain conscious of conversation!

Is it something like landscape?
I presume the hiss and suck of waves on a beach,

gulls mewing across a harbour and you,
troubled man, rolling like a marble in
a pudding basin on the single-masted
yacht you plan to buy with your redundancy.

You must try to understand my anger.
Years of silence have broken to rescind,
echoed in the lonely cove where – plaiting
my hair – I wait for you to sail against

tides, around the last headland toward me.
I remain hopeful. I cork little
messages in bottles, launch my precious
flotilla with prayers for safe passage

across the gulf between us, these days. Or
maybe it is more abstract than that,
that place you go to? Maybe you are one
yellow wash among many on a Rothko

canvas, where the cherubic, humming
vibrancy of layers of oil-paint merge
with what has become of my voice in these
rooms we inhabit daily? Perhaps, you

remain in an office re-winding
unsatisfactory meetings with colleagues,
or management, determined to unravel
clues you believe you have left yourself:

that point at which, as the poet, said, you
remained conscious when you needn't have,
in reverie when you should have been conscious.

Just nod, if you've heard anything I've said.

Two poems by **Loveday Why**, age 20, a second-year student studying English at the
University of Warwick:

Wilderness

Perhaps because of the noise,
unbroken cries, laughter, and then
silence you can squeeze like feathers,
in your Africa I might not find language, love.

Knee-low mist, thick,
shielding the mountains you filled me with
and a top up of fear that sank
like a shooter at the end of a summer
that opened me so I was big and afraid
and waited by a top floor window
pretending to read when you came in.

Waited in night clothes,
opening coloured shells in the garden.
A far shore in my palm.

Then in winter,
flowers falling from an envelope,
your writing thick and curled on the floor.

Perhaps because it's Easter and I sang on my own.

Perhaps because I love you
but sometimes can't think when I'm with you
being too consumed by your body
and having no line left but that
which joins your nape to your waist.

Muddy

Beneath us concrete grainy as the sky,
as your hands, gardener man.
We walked chasing light
that was settling to night
even as we began
a camera our chaperone
and this light-suck our backdrop,
containing us only half.

Now sky is striped dark,
glowing only with street lights lowly
and our cotton jumpers are thin
and let the subtle cold in.
Unprepared, we watch
boats lean into the mud.

A move to my mouth – my surprise
clean as your acceptance.
Shoulders close for warmth, thanks,
I give you less than you deserve.
So we name the mud and its ridges:
cities, rivers, dragon's back, snake's tongue,
a dry stone wall and it is not yet thoroughly day's end.
Certain, silver creeps through the sky and notices

a circle of gulls above the saltings,
broken mast in the soft air,
your hand at my back and before us
the Pennines in mud,
mountains on a map.

Peter Van Belle is 38 and lives in Antwerp, Belgium:

The Burnt Mimosa

Tramp lantern, leper roost,
what lightning struck among high beeches?

At their feet you bowed.
Drawing back, they left you
locked in shafts of sun,
in a cage of shaking leaves.

What use the red hole glowing?
A demon vulva or martyr's mouth
erupting from your cinder skin?
The only fruit you'll bear is ash.

But raging, as the flames devoured
the lace of your yellow blossom,
you made the beeches' shadows shiver.

Andrea Naffis, chosen young Broadsheet translator featured in the current issue of Agenda 'Translation as Metamorphosis' is 18 and also writes her own poetry:

Navigator's Lore

Boatmen splash into warm waters

as a blistering ocean breeze sets in,
drawn by rising tides,
 desert chills frighten as
cold sand grains hover about,
forming like drones over
head – sunlight refracting
mirrors, winding musical chords
in Dravidian sailors hearts.

 Tagore-resurrected chants
mythical Bengali verse
in a learned pose among
withering ropes tied to
rusted barnacled hulls,
reading from a green
 tattered
threadbare volume,
brisked by salt fumes
in its berth below
 gas-stained sails
unfurling
 in the bay.

A sea-wink beckons...

Gregory Leadbetter, age 29, has just completed an MA in Creative and Life Writing at Goldsmiths College, London, before which he was a practising solicitor. He lives in Birmingham:

Codicil

Although the time you read this by
is missing me, and the hands
that held me in their hours
have stopped, let me off
their hook, given up
their chase, and I have slipped
the noose of days with nothing
but the skin I stood in –
no, not even that –
I leave to you, who knew me best,
those fifteen minutes of mine
that no one will find
among my effects, the time
that was all my own – when I
was most expected, always
late, the time by which
I told my freedom.
This lapse of life they think

Is lost, I saved for you:
a window of time to see me through.

Barbara Sinead Smith, age 37, comes from Armagh, and currently lives in Drogheda in the Boyne Valley, Ireland:

Death of the Innocent

Their sun-strewn bedroom hazed
With the scent of out-haled alcohol
Tiny dust motes spiralled, caught
In the slanting draught of sunlight.

Grandma was gone to early mass.
I had gone into their room
In search of breakfast, a small child
Lively and artless in large volume.

Granddad huddled in the many-layered
Marital bed. Above the brown-barred
Bedstead, a picture stood to:
Edwardian starch, patricians
Ceding triumphs to the future.

Grandma returned, suited and gloved.
I told her
'Granddad won't wake up!'

Her eyes snapped shut like tomb slabs
Her face curious in its closed-ness
'Here', she said,
'Have a bowl of rice Krispies.'

What sound remorse,
The heavy tock
Of the mantel clock,
Or the faint popping
Of rice in milk?

Adam Boulton-Lear, age 26, is a mature student reading English Literature at Manchester Metropolitan University. Before this, he spent some time as a private soldier in the parachute regiment. This is his first poem to be published:

Brecon

Wind whips against my face

As salty sweat, mingled with cold rain,
Trickles down my neck;

Straps cut into my shoulders -
The weight on my back becoming
Heavier, forcing me into the ground –

My boots pound into the uneven surface,
Each step a scalding iron burning my heel:
Raw flesh and wet leather.

One line of a song repeatedly
Plays in my head, like
An old vinyl record
Skipping on an old needle
My mind trying to distract itself
From aching limbs and

Stinging back, where my pack
Strips another layer away
My fingers lost all feeling an hour ago,

But to see, for a hundred miles, the wet
Welsh mountains,

Restores me.

Three poems by **Rachel Ferguson**, an English Literature student at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow:

My Love Loved

My love loved another.
His lover bore a life.
They said I should be thankful
I was no cheated wife.
I had an empty bed.
I had a barren knee
As I watched them, from a distance
Become a family.
I was bereft of man and son
For they were three and I was one.
Night and day, rain and shine,
I wept for what was never mine
With anguish I could not explain.
This phantom loss was blind, raw pain.
My heart became a welcome sheath

To clasp a rusty knife
For my love loved another
And his love bore a life.

Shared Sleep

'Love does not make itself known in the desire for copulation...but in the desire for shared sleep.' Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

You say you cannot sleep when we're too close.
You turn your back through, not choice, but necessity.
You can't drift off if your skin is touching skin;
It is you, not me. I must not take it personally.

After making love, you linger, cuddling me
So that when you move near-immediately
You can turn away, an arm's length so far away,
And slumber peacefully. Unknown to you, dear,
That's when you take your liberty....

Your leg crawls back, your foot finds my foot
In a languid, lingering dance before our ankles hook.
Silent, I watch you relax, lay a palm upon my thigh...
Then with fervour, haste, you are upon me, your arm
Around my waist, hands cradling curves, my hip
Kissing your chest.... When each part is comfortable
Your head lays upon my breast. And there
You sleep, you dream, you so soundly rest.

When morning smiles before you stir, I, in turn
Move gently away. Night's manoeuvres
And their meanings are not meant for day.
They are not for the mentioning, not to be known.
They are not for you either: a secret all my own.

Steve Gowan, age 39, says he has not much of a biography:

Two Walks

An extract – part I

With Stegosaurus vertebrae
The pine cone spreads
When you are gone away.

In the wet forests
The pigeons turn in on themselves
like cut toenails.

Under the fir trees the earth is safe and dry.
And small protective circles keep the wet at bay.

When you are gone away
Smells of cast iron from off the gates
Are carried through the rain where I pass by.
Down these streets the pavements shine,
but still are grey
When you are gone away.

Tramping now, I move from where I stood,
Bursting twigs with every step
Across the cushion of soft pine needles
brown at the tip
And you are gone for good.

Past the smell of fungus in the wood
Touching at the cold air as I leave
The worms are coming up to breathe
Alerting the solitary returning blackbird.

Down the road the storm plays out
Though banks of cloud are slow to drift
The drizzle has had its time to lift
But shivers on in the blood

With the knowledge that you are gone for good.

Megan Dunn, age 28, comes from New Zealand, and is currently working as a bookseller in Islington:

The Mauve Room

I came to your house
Brick driveway full of sand
The sea a black glove that reached for the shore
Seagulls hungry henchmen in the cold.
'No plants grow here', said the glass house.

I was put in the mauve room.
Black cat pinned to the wall
The roar of the planes in flight.
The sea in my ear dark as the night.
Outside the aluminium fence rattled, 'it will be all right.'

You were buried up to your spine –
In books that turned their back to me.
Nasty intellectuals. Well versed in long pregnant pauses
I climbed up the wall of your library, part plant, part weed.
'Love is a boring read,' said the book sleeve.

I turned the saltwater pages but the words meant nothing to me.
Your grey face a fist clenched in silence
Your girlfriend sharp as a rock,
My tortoiseshell heart, a leak in the lock.
'Three's a crowd,' said the cat (and there was truth in that).

You liked to play chess. All winter,
You let the white queen chase me across the chequered kitchen floor
Her spite carved into stone
Her wooden mouth a closed door.
The pawn cried out, 'I can't stand any more.'
Our story is at the bottom of the sea,
When I was little you named a sandcastle after me.
Now my words swim back to your house by the shore.
The ocean is deeper than the waves on the water.
I never knew we never drifted apart.

Three poems by **Sinead Wilson**, age 30, who works as an English and Media teacher at Plumstead Manor, a girls' comprehensive in South East London. She is to be the chosen Broadsheet poet for the next issue:

Horsemanship

The *Cherry Tree* bought a job-lot past,
hung polished brass to oak beams

with leitmotifs of thistles, Shakespeare,
the jumping horses. I asked you, if original,
what happened to the working Shires,
who wore this stout jewellery –
manly, as boxers with their leather and sweat,
shivers ticking through shoulders
as, like gum, they champed the bit?

You said you last saw two in childhood,
standing by a fence, patient for chocolate, fistfuls of grass.
Late last night I found one,
waking to his hot breath,
his blind lips searching my hands.

Twenty to One

My mother tells of a greyhound
on their farm in Mullingar

who, though retired,
would raise his liver muzzle

from the comfort of her lap,
to walk himself lunch-times

down to the track;
one time coming back

a puce first-place rosette hanging
from a ribbon round his neck.

Last Boy in Hamelin

I don't believe in ghosts
and she's not dead, just gone.
But in the early evening,
I'll limp into a room: a pink sky
dissolving grey against the glass
and catch her smell
part ripe pear, part milk.
Or, in bed, turn in the dark
to see the dressing table stool
become her unbending to unlace a shoe.

Let me tell you how I stumbled,
arrived too late,
to find the cave mouth shut.
How my fists thumped the rock,
until the sound of singing disappeared

and left just a repeating ring –
a pigeon somewhere in the trees.

Each night I have the dream.
I walk unaided to the hill
and press my ear against the slate.
I hear her knocking out an SOS
and run my hands across its face
searching for that hidden latch
which opens the door;
then I wake, fingers plucking
the folds of the sheet, and her
left in some adjoining place.

Two poems by **Ailie MacDonald**, age 16, is in the sixth form at the college of
Richard Collyer in Horsham:

Fallen Short

It is hard to remember now
That dawn of the soul
Which crept in under tight knuckles,
A glorious but wavering projection
Dancing on honeydew bricks.
Left alone for a moment we could have
Ridden up so many gravel rivers.
This summer was my being;
Every day another happy annulment
That became too ripe, till we crumbled.

It is hard to see now
Where the sun almost settled;
The rain has covered its tracks again.
A talisman made from the rubber of your soles
Will sink into the sand folds
At the bottom of the stairs.
Circling doves; quiet, like white noise
A slow perfection that I kneel to;
Wait to pass through me.
Passeriformes, with nowhere to land, rise up and up.
I don't blame you for this.
Let the fish suck at my eyes till I can see
That there is, indeed, no face
On the cliff face – just scree.
The heady heights will topple and swing over
An armour-plated ocean.
The mermaids cover their hearts in the kelp grove:
We found them later with shrapnel wounds,
Hands clutched over selachian muscle.

They try to remember, and drown.

Orbits

Have a word for me, brother,
Mine was lost in a sea of unclean pasts.
Catch a glimpse of where once
Our providence fell
Where driftwood swung to face the day:
Where, in their swash, Neptune's muzzle foams still dusk.

Cool, damp death of a thing, like a flagship
Departed, deep in its hull your carved dust
Cradled, cast in creaking beams of oak.

This sleep is too long a sleep,
This deep is too deep a deep:
Progressing, tiring – wing beats on grey sky
Cast in those few maiden moments.

Don't take his eyes
We begged them not to take your eyes.

Left to the snow;
Left to the birds,
Bastards of an unbound generation
Left to breathe up the glass.
Here to keep the gravestones clean.
Left, barefoot.
The face of that a creature had us
Pinned against the wall
The death quiet encircles us
In footpads of the winter fox -
A rhythm for you, swamp man.

Then, too late
Seen by the eyes of two,
Rising and falling to one another

One above,
One below,
Caught in the smoke of their own gaze.

Natasha Nicholson, age 17, finished her studies in the sixth form at St. Leonards/Mayfield School, East Sussex in July 2004. She is now studying for a degree in English and Film Studies:

Wings

Roll on sweet honey,
flow thick and sugary
down the slopes of my lost hometown.
Rise early, strong sunshine,
chase the shadows out of my lost childhood.
And where am I?
Fly fast, be swift,
beat your wings in the winds and find me.
For I am lost, too,

in a world where paper and gold
take the souls of men,
and boxes take their minds,
where dark figures move through the rain
and the only sound I can hear
is that of running water rushing through my ears.

I move as though rooted to the spot,
running to keep up with the world turning.
I cry out to the skies to take me back
to my dreams,
where I am more than I am now,
just another shadow.

Patrick Fogarty, age 19, from High Peak, Derbyshire is a previous chosen **Broadsheet** poet:

Lessons in Reverse

Hypercritical, hyper-cynical and hyper-real
he would sit, biro in hand
like a modern-day Gramsci.
His own hyper-organic pen grip
like a tormented G-clamp,
fingers racked and fretted,
a complex apparatus of supports and counterweights,
of valves and keys.
A power struggle even Gramsci couldn't theorise.

Like apprentice and hypothesis precast into one
I would sit and try to mimic that pen grip
until I could precast ideas of my own.
I could never bring myself to do it,
A style so perfect that plagiarism
Felt like saying 'No' to a child.

Exchanging fresh

(and not-so-fresh)
poems in a pub car park
his fingers looked as mine.
It is only our grips that differ
and years of experience
that make my sheets of A4
like a kitsch welcome matt to his castle.

Drowning Mark

Charged and unofficial,
your last acknowledgement was a tongue.
The first was in a library,
official.

Surrounded by the knowledge
that Prospero had drowned
I had created my own cell,
knew its crags, its smell
and where I had buried its weaknesses in dust,
regularly exercised his discarded staff,
(who would legitimise my borrowings with small talk,
a rubber stamp and a return date.)

A cell that you boldly invaded to ask my name.
A cell redecorated
into the coded chemistry lesson that I never did understand.

Now, with knitted eyes
we play corridor chess.
Strategic clusters of smiles,
waves and glances
imploded with the tongue.

...Checkmate.

Adam Rudden, Irish, age 20, appeared in **Broadsheet 2**:

Manchild's Tears

I

Domina,

You are the skeletal sun
setting
in my orchard of dry bones.

Madonna,
you are the sediment
carried
by my ricin rivers.

Notre Dame,
you are the screech owl's egg
hatching
in my shadow's nest.

II

The wind blows

Virgin,

Soothe its wails in your arms:
the manchild's tears
soak in your breast.

The cradle rocks

Whore,

Ease its roars in your arms:
the red dragon's horns
penetrate your thighs.

The bough breaks

Mother,

Lay it down to sleep,
place it inside the cot
perched among the branches.

III

And blessed is the fruit of thy womb

In my orchard of dry bones,
your cradling arms,
your lullaby,
a faint memory.
My raging fists,

my screeches,
a sharp reality.

In my orchard of dry bones
your lips,
your kiss,
left its skin unblemished.
My teeth,
my bite,
leaves its flesh torn.

In my orchard of dry bones,
you drank
its rush of juice -
cool and sweet
I drink
its surge of blood -
warm and bitter.

Michael Venditozzi, age 31, a Buddhist monk who lives in Cambridge. His poems have appeared in Agenda and in Broadsheet 2:

New Territories

They have cut back the reeds
a quarter of a mile. The air
is scrubbed with coconut breezes
from the gorse, and the road that leads here
yellow again, its bare spine sense
pricking my memory's palm.

They have cut back the reeds, cleared
new territories like tentative maps redrawn
when the world was a work in progress –
so we can be at liberty behind the scenes,
beneath the previous surface, where
each step might sink down into the scythe-work
and what the cut stalks cover over; daffodils
are now the only life-markers, odd
ones and twos strangely invulnerable.

*

The reeds are drying bundled across the ground,
top-knots on a series of scalps
in the warm afternoon after the battle.
We imagine ourselves alive and exhilarant
suddenly in all the inner places
opened up to us and our penetrating glories;

like Aeneas forging through, coursing the waterways
of a whole other realm once forbidden.
And yet we are more like Ulysses, stood on the brink
talking to the blind with ritual words
to find out where he can go; the life of the marsh
allows us only so far, then remains the preserve of birds.

*

Even down forgotten tracks no longer flooded
there is always an end: thus-far-and-no-furthers,
where the element and the man must change.
The medium, the relationship to it – both must be
renewed in one another without discretion
and without continuance: the land
will always evaporate beneath our feet,
condense in deep pools and flow on running
the full world differently, in a time all its own.
Perhaps to watch it in these spaces, to revisit
time and time again and guess its names
and say out loud what will be written down
in surer surrounds perhaps, in context,
to watch it is to partake: it falls, at least,
not short of worship.

The reeds stand still as the guardians of horizons
protect the paths that lead to the heron
maintain their silent aspirations
draw their breath from the sun.

II

They have cut down the rushes
to ankle height, but already one old bull missed
is busy re-seeding the world
with a Spring wind in his head.

And here we find the Famulus
where he has always been,
sat on a plank pulled from a rush-bed
like a piece of Charon's lost canoe.

A bear has come to him out of the forest,
deer have come to him out of the reeds,
telling him what we have been up to
these long years of being inhuman:

gathering tales and memories and placing them
before him on the grass as he, and the earth,
soaks them in and sits an age not moving,
always on the move, waiting for our story to resume.



Painting by Jasmine Frederick – aged 18.
Studying Tourism at a Brighton College.

Brian Carr, age 32, lives in New York City. He received his degrees in Classical Philology, after which he taught Latin and classical literature to university students for some years. He runs an online journal of philosophy, *Pankalon*.

Love and the Trick-Stitching Child

a translation from Sappho

Everlasting Love rich in heaven's chair,
trick-stitching child: don't beat my heart
down with too much worry. Maiden,
I pray...
Come to my *pied-à-terre* if ever so many times over
I cried out for you so far away. You heard.
You believed. You left that golden palace.
You came
chauffeured. Sparrows! Beautiful swift sparrows
flapped you down to me on quick-trembling
wings over black earth. Straight through,

no wandering,
they were here in a flash. You! Like a sacrament
you smiled. Your face ageless, you asked
why again I suffered
why again I called
what my crazy heart really wants this time.
“Who again convince? What quick friendship
do you want? Who hurts you
this time?
Does she run? Then she’ll chase.
Didn’t like the gifts? Then she’ll give them.
She does not love? Soon.
No choice for her.”
Get here now! I’m strangling in worries!
Cut them. My heart wants so much!
Make it happen! This time,
fight on my side.