

BROADSHEET 4

Welcome to **Broadsheet 4**, the second 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.



Agnes Treherne, age 18, has just finished her studies at St. Leonards/Mayfield School, East Sussex. She is going to Edinburgh to take a degree in Fine Art.

Ed Lucas is 27. After graduating with an English degree from Oxford, he spent the next four years working in London. As well as poetry, he has written two novels, and works as a copywriter in London. This poem was written during a period of travel to Australia and New Zealand last year.

William Buckley to Her Majesty

Nothing I ever did was good enough
for you – I can see that now. It was tough
for a while but the end was my escape.
So I took my chances with the natives for
thirty two years until the red empire
caught up with me. Now you can read about

my outback life in an exhibition
under glass alongside Bradman's typed letters.

The white world found me again; shocked by my
strange tattoos of sun and moon and possum,
and the initials W.B. – sum
total of what I'd been in between.
But my aboriginal hosts knew I was
one of them: a pale face back from the dead.

Kate Treacy, age 24, graduated in English and Related Literature from the University of York in 2002 and went on to study an MA in Human Rights at the University of London. She is now Publications co-ordinator at The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health, where she edits the quarterly newsletter, manages the website and is involved in the production of the Foundation's publications. She grew up in Derbyshire and is second generation Irish.

The Cruellest Month

Tick Toc, Tick Toc, Stop.
The air is thick with absence
And with the clock stuck at ten to six
You are forever coming home.

Tick Toc, Tick Toc, the clock goes on.
A gentle stream of people bow their heads
And with a faint trace of *deja vu*
The how do you dos set in.

Time marches on.
The pendulum swings.
But it is still the cruellest month:
The earth blooms, we live with hope and
Tick Toc, Tick Toc, Stop.

Clare Sager, age 21, is studying Creative Writing under Steven O'Brien, an *Agenda* poet, at Portsmouth University.

Tennyson for Cleo

It makes a silence in the mountains.
These valleys hold breath of breeze
To await homecoming

You can only make in soul.

We left you bound in
Blighted lands,
Blown bare on humble hills.
But your soul sighed for
The crag of mountain might,
The town clinging down the vale,
With cowslip and silent mines.

Your heart always lay in places
Named of familiar rhythm,
Of sing-song words
Your child passed down
And I remember.

Ben Macpherson, age 20, is also studying Creative Writing at Portsmouth University under Steven O'Brien.

Innocence (at last)

After Sappho

Night draws slowly in
Closing its curtain,
Fire blazing.

If not, winter
It settles.
Cold as ice
Warm as goose down.

Solitude begins;
Just for me
Alone
With everyone.

Innocence at last
Settles white,
Covering completely.

If not, winter,
Pure in pretence,
Where it never lays.

A poem by **Gerry Stewart**. Originally from the United States, she works as a freelance creative writing tutor. She has recently finished her first poetry collection and is beginning a novel.

Inhabited

An empty rowboat rides
the lake's faded current,
a faultless snapshot.
No life jackets under the seat
or picnic lunches stowed away,
not even a wave-smooth oar
dripping into autumn's reflection.

Into its shell I drop
dreamstones pulled
from beneath
the water's clean face,
alive with shades, textures,
whispers of moments
I bestow upon them.

The wood soaks up the paint
of my first summer from home,
kisses beneath a full moon,
colours at once bright
and faded against the grain.

Each board settles around
the resilient nails of road trips
across darkened fields, rowing
competitions with my brother,
fishing off the dock for blue-
gills with bread on the hook.

The bottom is filled with
hope-chest treasures, strings
of worn, cracked beads,
wooden shoes wrapped
in half-finished quilts
meant for unknown children.

All fall invisible, leaving
the scene unwrinkled,
no ripples beneath its bow
or wind through maple leaves.

An empty rowboat rides

the lake's faded current,
waiting to be captured.
It will lead the stranded
to the other shore.

Gil Percival, age 20, is in his first year at Nottingham University where he is studying Philosophy. This is his first poem to be in print and he lives in Kingston Upon Thames.

The Winds That Wash the Weathered Thigh

The winds that wash the weathered thigh
Whisper the waking word,
Where deep beneath the lover's sigh
The weeping winter stirred;
By the brush where the withered breath
Rousts the burrowed rhyme,
And long inside promise rests
Of flowers of forgotten time.

Where waters run in ancient tongues
And swell their laughing hips,
Honey from the hornet's tongue
Trickles on the cushioned lips,
And where they run their laughter sung
And broke their swollen sides,
And where they laughed the hornet stung
And gilt their golden tides.

Where rising out the rottenstone
The steeped blossom stalks,
The laggard in its sleepy thrown
Blossoms from the worded chalk;
With tears of light it cries for breath
And seeks the salvaged sun,
And seals in scent its weeping wreath
Where winds and waters run,
And softly on its pearly breath
That stems the fathomed hand,
Long forgotten promise rests
Written in the sifting sand.

Nicholas Blincoe, a novelist aged 39, lives in London.

A Torturer's Apology

If I were employed, freelance, in torture,
I would first soften you, not with batons
Or attack dogs, but with music and rations
From the Red Cross, whose vow of silent care
Would offer a context to the space we share.
I would promise you shade, let your Korans
Rest undisturbed by the pail through sessions
Marked by the halting breaths that I procure.
Subdued by my relative gentleness,
We might agree that moderate pressure
Gives your words weight, through the act of measure,
That would be lost by cranking up the stress.
Just concede this: whatever I might do,
Were you to speak free, who would believe you?

Rebecca Bennett, age 30, lives in Liverpool and has had poems published in various magazines and competition anthologies.

Looking at a Dead Man's Things

Men bring out armchairs,
singed covers flapping
in the sooty breeze.
Like a peculiar garage sale,
his charred possessions
spread across the lawn.

The mattress is a struggle
with its pool of fireman's water.
She pictures him in bed when it started,
his head on one side,
smoke stealing in to his nose.

Melted picture frames line the path,
a gallery of family life waits for the skip.
She scans the grass until she finds
her father's shoes. Ten pairs of Brogues,
tan-brown, polished, perfect.

Gentleman's shoes, surviving
an ungentlemanly man.
She can still hear his steel-tips
march the hall, the belt buckle
being loosened at his waist.

Red

On the red carpet
in my childhood home,
I emptied the bag
full of you.
Photographs I'd taken,
photographs I'd torn.
Your watch,
your letters, so few.
Shirt, slippers,
Penguin short stories
and a Murray Mint.
Navy Blue, double-breasted suit,
dry cleaning bill
still
in the pocket.
Newspaper cuttings of your suicide.
A single violent movement,
my father becomes
a column of words.

Andy Smith, 17, has been published in numerous anthologies and has been writing poetry since the age of 14. He has also started a novel.

Bone Machine (Homage to Pixies)

Whirring away, callous marrow,
drifting into the sea of noisy grunge.
And parked pink Ferraris.

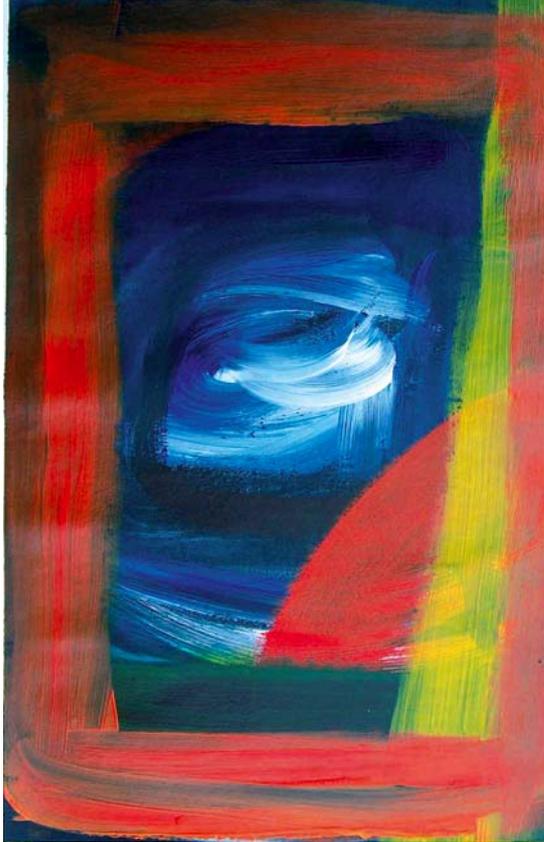
Little vibrating stick,
brittle and snapped, spread on
the ground like raffle tickets.

You're so pretty when you're unfaithful to me.
You're the bone machine.

Electronic pencil sharpeners,
grinding up wizardry and profound lyrics.
And the rat queen, kicking our ratty flesh.

Yawning dogs you two are,
lovely in your ways, burn us all
with your amber gazes.

You're so pretty when you're unfaithful to me.
You're the bone machine.



Natassja Norman studied art under the inspiring Mr. and Mrs. Joy at St. Leonards/Mayfield School. She is going to the Courtauld Institute to study for a History of Art degree.

Anne Bailey, a 32-year-old Scot, lives in the borders of Essex. For the past ten years, she has been a librarian specialising in rare books and in human rights law. She also attends creative writing classes taught by Tamar Yoseloff in The Poetry School.

My Grandmother's Fuchsia

The winter frosts have come too soon.
In the front garden, Grandmother's fuchsia
Stands unprotected. Too late now even to prune,
Her back remains arched, like the old lady
To whom she once belonged, bending towards me,
Brushing my hands as they till the soil.

Grandmother gave me these hands.

See how the nail on my littlest finger crinkles?
No calcium deficiency, but genetics at work,
Like the silver strands I found at nineteen,
Proving, Gran said, my ringlets from her,
Not Dad, whose hair stayed black till he was thirty.

She gave me these hands and taught me to use them.
Right-hander, impostor, I iron like a leftie,
Twist the crochet needle and hold the wool
Her kack-handed way. She was a beautiful seamstress,
Taught at school, where they hit her with the rule
Till she could sew a straight line with her right.

Right-handed, I wield my needle as she showed me,
Lips pursed, completing the petals as she began to darn
On that table cover for her sitting room-
The one she was working the last time I saw her.
Mum saved it for me, along with the fuchsia
These earth-stained hands struggle to protect.

The Instrument Maker

And so the rains come again.
In ancient times our kind believed
Rain to be a judgement, not so much
Cleansing as smiting their creations,
Leaving them destitute and without homes.

Later, as we learned Geometry,
Forming architectural marvels, stretching
Tree to tree, house to house, lamp to lamp,
Artisans found prisms, light dancing
From droplets cast in their web.

Endless chains they wove then,
Reflecting energy from Heaven grasswards,
Giving thanks for rains and morning dew,
Rising at dawn to pass the secrets of the Craft
Grandmother-spider to Mother to Daughter

Of which I was one, poor craftsman I,
Thinking too deeply, dreaming near evening's
Moonrise of more than light on the ground
And flies in my stomach. Galileo Of Spiders
Was I, and now I share my witchcraft.

See this dew-drop in the centre of the web
I had you spin, my daughter? Look closer still:
Dandelions spiral away from us, heads magnified,
Merging in the centre of the lens with fir-tops,

Dancing not in the breeze but my kaleidoscope.

You think this a toy, to play and spin?
This is my web-map, my Arachne, a spider-plan,
Guiding where to place your threads. Take heed,
For I am old now, my science spent on this one,
Great experiment. I focus the lens of my ambition

On you, spiderling of my heart, and bequeath you
A keen mind, soft rain and the fresh morning's dew.

Niccolo Milanese, age 20, is a philosopher at St. John's College, University of Cambridge, where his research interests include Wittgenstein and aesthetics. He is also poetry editor of the international magazine *The Liberal* and general editor of the Cambridge magazine *Inprint*. Two years ago he founded the Cambridge University Writers' Guild, which currently has over 600 members.

How Come

Browned into sepia sight
I look for an answer
amongst all those fixed motions
which must move again.

Who goes jumping on the sea-side sand
sinking into his own footprints?

Young children with bendy
plastic spades
that if you aimed at your toe
would only bruise
so you could not fit into your sandals
want to bury themselves
to feel the breath of the beach
on their chests.

Sonja Broderick, age 33, has been acting and writing for many years. She has just published her first collection of poetry entitled *The Things You Left Me With* (Lapwing, 2004), and she is working on her second volume of poetry. She lives in Listowel, County Kerry, Ireland.

I Didn't Forget

I've been keeping count, my love.
Every day you've entered the fray

Through the Mekong
And the monks' long mass of dongs
Through a noon vigil,
You're never far away.
I lie under a mosquito net
Smelling the mysteries of a country
Still new to a stretch of the West's vast need for imposition
As you lie on my lips,
Your life so full with races and braces,
And Damned from my arms.
You charm the scent of lotus leaves
In the long sun.
Racing cockroaches check the waking hours
And ghekkos grace the flowers
That visit your kiss
On my sea-toned skin.
The lights have dimmed.
While bedtime stories still
Skim the shores of fantasy
There is no room for me.
Kismet sets another course
And our molecules will
Merely meet briefly.

Dusty Presents

(For Peter Buchanan Bell RIP: 1941-2002)

Will you open them for me this year?
They've sat, undusted for so long now.
Sometimes I forget, trip over them,
curse them, then remember you
and so I leave them there.
I wrapped them so carefully,
pictured your stubby fingers struggle,
their violent shivers from troughs of wine
ever tormentors on the break of each day.

Will you open them for me this year?
They're lonely where they are,
unloved, untouched, waiting.
Through thick dust, the odd shard
of light laughs out from the gold ribbon.
I often think it's you laughing at my
clumsy attempt to get along alone.
Three dusty little boxes
for two years have awaited a home.

Will you open them for me this year
so I can set you free?

Wind back two years and freshly hold me,
tell me all your secrets again.
Through my living fingers,
please visit and uncurl the string,
unfold the cold, dark cage I have been in,
let gold and silver live again,
let snowflakes not be tears.

Zoe Brigley is a new Welsh writer. Her poems have been published in various magazines and literary journals, and she has appeared in anthologies such as *The Gift* and *Reactions 4*. She received an Eric Gregory Award in 2003.

The Travelling Companions

Things which have once been in contact with each other at a distance after the contact has been severed. J.G. Frazer

We wait on the overnight train, breath damp on the air; my body
is an avalanche, one white arm cascades into the aisle ending in splayed
fingers:

I close my eyes on the book open to the morning light.

<i>That balcony overlooking the square and the mountains: mountainside, mountains I scaled in a cable car, holding my mother tight, the ground swinging beneath as through the open door.</i>	I wake with dawn; darkness lifts from the tops too high to see through the train window. I will read all day and night squinting.
<i>On the plateau, my sister fell, sank in her red snow suit, then stood up to leave an imprint of herself in the snow. cheek).</i>	I finger the corner of a page with gloved hand (even in rising heat I cover all skin but my soft
<i>The cold deep to my knees, my mother's bitter fingers.</i>	And the pink flowers from that boy in Sophia
<i>and the panic that came as my father ducked into snow. More than this, the balcony overlooking the square canopies, and the evening light that turned the roofs red.</i>	will fade to brown on the leather seat. Outside, silver green olive trees, great leafy stalls in sparse villages selling huge jars of olives.

At the first glimpse of the sea, I pin my hair up tight round my head
and am glad when the train shunts into Istanbul; at last
we heave our bags on our backs, and go at once into the city to begin.

Dylan Brennan, age 25, currently works part-time for Poetry Ireland and Origin Gallery, Dublin. He was assistant editor of *Poetry Ireland Review* No.79. He is planning to move back to Mexico.

Saga

For the hundredth
Time the poet
Dreamt of standing
Before his ancient
Nordic queen
And uttering that
Single, perfect word
And for the hundredth
Time she didn't listen.

Jonathan Morrison, age 26, graduated with a degree in English Literature in 2000. In 2003 he took a year out to write and research a novel set in 1950s Malaya, entitled *The Rain Tree*. Late in 2004, he was awarded the Promis Prize for poetry as part of the London Creative Writers Competition. He lives in East Finchley, London.

You only need some distance for a curse

You only need some distance for a curse.
A scene, a sorrow, a conflict:
But still this separation seems perverse.

I knew that we had stumbled, I, grown worse.
At last, I guessed you would restrict:
You only need some distance for a curse.

All through the arguments, the terse
Texts and silences, still I could not predict
A separation that still seems perverse.

I guess you don't need violence to coerce,
You don't need presence to constrict –
You only need some distance for a curse.

But still I need to reimburse:
You lie if you say we never clicked.
That's why this separation seems perverse.

I would with all my soul reverse
The scene, sorrow, loss and contradict
All hurt. You need some distance for a curse.
But still this separation seems perverse.

The Legacy of Stone

The Khmer lions cut at Ankor Wat
Are cloned with centuries of realism
And bear their weight like local dogs – and squat,
Tails up, like mongrels staggering to shit.
Four hundred years they stood, drew vines, forgot,
Out-stared the lootings and then Pol Pot.

Watching his dancers on a tightrope wheel
Through six brick towers, sixty foot above,
And topless hoplites shunt drawn thorns or steel –
A thousand Brahmins kneeling before him –
The great Jayavarman, The Leper King.
On the red terrace where he dug his throne,
His eyes slipping to the closest thing,
Saw a line of arseholes clenched in stone.

Ghosts

‘True love is like seeing ghosts; we all talk about it, but few of us have
ever seen one.’ Rochefoucauld

Intimate that last Valentine
With shadows from a burnt affair,
I felt the ghosts impending – everywhere
Like blunt defeats in some torn-out decline –
All full with angels, ghosts and air,
As if the witnesses to love combine
In echo or in silhouette.
If mirages perform upon a need
Then ghosts take vapours from regret;
The gestures and the ghosts align,
And what they haunt now will define
Remembrance. (All subdued,
Gaunt with inequalities renewed:
The ones pursuing, the ones pursued.)

If calcite fills a hollow shell
And coins more permanence than bone,
Perhaps our ghosts stagnated in a stone.
Perhaps our absences fill out as well
With salts of unisons we’ve known.
These ghosts are fat cooked off in hell.
A ghost is with us and assumes
Not true love’s shape, but something of its tone –
A crest of smoke that air consumes.
And time and scattering release

Just freedom for the sum of peace.
Even so, I mind less
That we could not then have designed less
This shade of an implacable kindness.

L.E. Harris is eighteen and is currently studying at Cambridge University.

Death Row Matins

We must talk of water, it is inevitable.
 Water that makes the whites of your eyes
Swim in their sockets in a dawn of light,
And then of fear,
That draws the strands of collagen tight
As the strings of a cat's cradle.

We must address baptism, a sprinkling
 of water like the wet mingling
Around your eyeballs which, already,
Are flat, round and argent
As communion wafers. *Ave Maria!*

Next we must discuss the correct impression
 you must make- your jurors are angels today –
While the salted water of tears you have tried
To drown amongst deep red capillaries, to hide,
Dive and draw attention to their presence.

To continue, we must speak of the thing itself.
 And you must relate to me for the seventh time
Your pupils dark as the confessional,
That you committed no crime.
In a pool of memories, on a cool night, it is easy
For a witness to be mistaken.

We must have a dissertation on beauty
 how it indicates innocence, implicates others.
I would have more confidence if your pale nails
Were failing to pluck
Your handsome lashes from glistening lids.

I shall predict the verdict only at the arrival
 of your sudden absence and silence
When the padre's footsteps ripple ghostly in the corridor,
Or as the damp morning curves around you
In a columbarium.

