

AGENDA

BROADSHEET 6



Yvonne Chan, age 17, from Hong Kong. Year 12, **St. Leonards/Mayfield School**, East Sussex

Welcome to **Broadsheet 6**. This runs alongside *Agenda* Vol.42, No.1. which contains Poems on Water. Ages of the chosen poets range from 17 to 38. **Sinead**

Wilson, 31, and **Ailie Macdonald**, 18, are the **chosen Broadsheet poets** who appear in *Agenda* Vol.42, No.1.

Tom Bedford is 17 and is currently taking his A levels for university application. His family have recently moved from North East Lincolnshire to Wiltshire. This is his first poem to be published.

Midnight

Look through the eyes of the silver stallion.
Night-time wanderers peer at Troy's high walls;
A dream of fire, awakened death within.

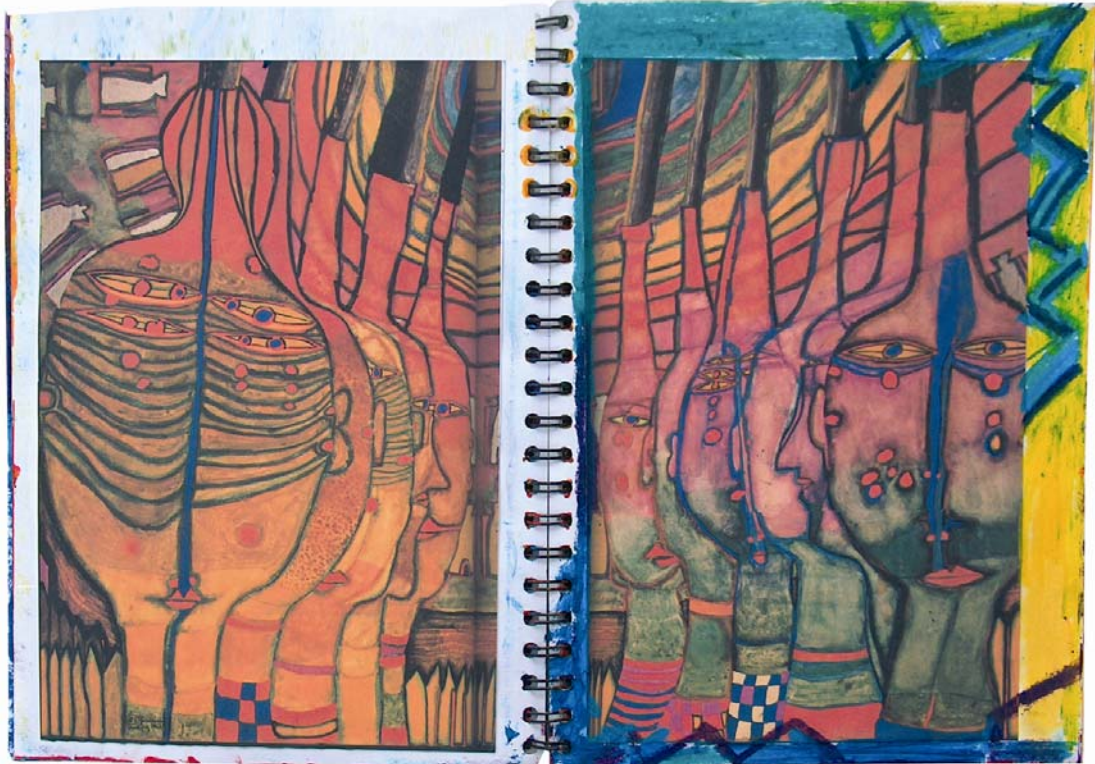
The shattered glow of light in this black heart
Echoes a memory, a space in time
Where I, as a child, played at catching stars.

Ross Cogan, 35, studied philosophy at university and gained a Ph.D. from Bristol. He is currently working in London as a writer, researcher and editor. Ross's poems have been published in many magazines and journals. He has won many prizes for his poetry including in 1999 an Eric Gregory Award. His first collection, *Stalin's Desk*, was published this year by Oversteps.

Lute Music

The stylus scribbles through the ridges
of its black disc. The room fills with noise
like air leaking from a broken hose,
and through the hiss and crack the voices
of dead singers come back but lessened
as if by foxing or the censor's
pen. Travel shouldn't be painless.
Put on the lute music, nothing sounds

so like the rattling of dead babies
pinned in the clam shells of their coffins.
I want to hear the edges of grief
blunted to an epigram, and death,
the whole tarot pantomime, crying
that Tallis is dead and music dies.



Sketchbooks of **Emily Baldwin**, age 16, year 11 at **St. Leonards/Mayfield School**, East Sussex. She is studying Art, English Language and English Literature for A level.

Sarah Hesketh is 22, lives in Oxford and is working for a book dealer to pay the rent. Her poems were featured in **Broadsheet 1** and have also been published in *Oxford Poetry Magazine*.

Bride

High-arched, resplendent swan
she waits.
Hard stung by churchyard silk
She fingers doubt
about her throat these
threaded milk-bud murmurs.
They are the memory
of a mouth too hard,
or an abacus upon which
you have tried and failed
to multiply two large numbers
in the dark.

Lawn

For SP

The past is almost always a lawn
shorn low and teased
by news of lesser things.
Beyond the grasslight, caught yawning
it is where we did not kiss
and where the teacups rolled away
and curdled.

Too often I return.
Find our smiles – still
sleeping with the worms.
My toes sunk deep into the grasping earth,
a faltering prospect
in a foreign land.

July

A month
Of leaping trout – the villagers
dusted earth from their boots
and muttered
of love and other demons
caught lurking in the corn.

It befits such tales to begin with a stranger.
And so it seemed – the pots unwashed;
The blackberries gone to rot
Inside the door.
Nights were worse:

I am thrice blessed by moonlight
he would declare,
so she kissed his mystic scars in brazen view
astride the white-heart stare
of that common nunnery gossip.

Later, when the cows wouldn't calve
and her neighbour
held a barrel to the head
of his old and trusted hound,
she would testify only
to this:

that his afternoon skins would taste of woodsmoke
come the morning. And that
the rising light across the sky-rocked fields
would be the dawn call's command
to go home.



Wilby Wyndham, age 17, year 12, **Bryanston School**, Dorset

Carley Moulton, 22, lives in Rochdale, Lancashire. She is currently pursuing her MA in Creative Writing: Poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University where she received her BA in English and Philosophy in 2005.

Jugglers

He plays the clubs, close
to the queen of his heart,
his fingers bound most
to the unravelled part of her,

the queen of his heart.
Caught, with closed eyes,
by the unravelled part
of the ribbon he winds.

He caught her, closed eyed
in the twist and the twirl
of the ribbon, she winds
a double-helix, a curl

in the twist and the twirl.
They dance, figure eight,
double-helix and curl
as they toss up the weights

following figures of eights
and symbols of infinity.
They toss them and wait
for the laws of gravity

as a symbol of their infinity.

Doing it the proper way

This is how to talk to the one you loved -
tell him everything without running

the risk of blushing, lying – the way
it *should* be done! (without the risk of him

catching you crying). Curse her twenty times
a day, to be sure; holding back

the speech you planned before they met
recited so often you forget

your teeth pierce your tongue.
Now you've held it too long, and for

all the wrong reasons – for something
to believe in. For someone.

This is how you explain
you carve his name into your arm.

P.T. Abbott, age 19, is studying English at St Anne's College, Oxford University.
This is his first poem to be published.

always, only

Just for a second, I can snatch
language, coaxing it to speech.

So open, complex, impossible:
as softly I kiss a weak syllable.

When I kiss her I feel neurotic
and choreographed, unartistic.

She comes to me, inarticulate:
Oral, and naked, and complete.

Yet she is shy, she is delicate,
like a lungful of air, I choose.

She is unspoken and intricate,
easy to distract, or to confuse.

Listen, at last, she is difficult:
always, only mine, my muse.



Emily Coates, age 18, year 13 at St. Leonards/Mayfield School, East Sussex. In her gap year she is taking Master Mariner's course before going on to read Geography at university.

Anne-Louise Kershaw is a 26-year old poet from Stockport where she lives with her long-term partner, guitarist Kevin Burke and her cat Lilly. She is currently studying for her MA in Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University under the guidance of Simon Armitage and Carol Ann Duffy.

Petunia

White, like the rustling cotton
sea-side skirts of the
chignonned ladies who
seamlessly stroll through the bustling breeze
under their cascaded shadow of
secrets to tell
showered down from the starched
and rippling parasol they
deftly tilt to one side
through a restaurant painting
but in another time

or white, like the dress I wore
to my Holy Communion
shuffled and skipping
layered with cheap lace
loose from the waist
but tight to my young belly
and brown arms
with a small gold pendant
centred at the heart
like you, attracting the bees
down your arms

of white, like the crumpled silk
cooled by the open window
that covered his bed
that he impressed my body into

you make me want to
 eat my cherries over you
 share with you
the berried juices of
this firm but bitten fruit
to watch the droplets
slide down your arms
like the bees do
but inject into you something
of me

as you are
white and triumphant
I can only look at you
in your terracotta pot
like I'm waiting to hear
his master's voice
tell me a host of memoried tales

I cannot share with you my red
with your trumpet mouth shouting at me
and your golden tongue
stuck right out
though we both share this
slow springtime evening air
with its smell of charcoaled meat
the curry leaf and lavender
and the sound of someone else's
stereo singing down the breeze to me
reminding me.

Lisa D'Onofrio, age 34, is a Literature Development Officer and she lives in Norwich.

Self-portrait in ice

My English self began here,
in front of a black and white bathing hut
named 'Happy Days'.
My blotched cheeks and wet nose emerge
from under knitted things, my eyes
are set on where the horizon should be.
My antipodean socked and booted foot rests on a step
taking in its stride
the new decade and snow at the sea-side.

The trolley trilogy

I

Do the trollies lark
In the trolley park?
Do they muzzle each other
And cause a spark?
Do they maraud the street
When it gets dark
Cruising silently
Silver sharks
Do their ribs hold precious secrets
We cannot start
To understand?

II

When I am old
And do not care
What other people think
I will collect trollies
Like other women gather china teapots
Or stray cats
I will muster them in my back yard
Where if they wish
They may bleed
Or pirouette under clouds, or roll aimlessly
The long grass tickling their ribs
Unburdened by necessity
In my back yard
It will be eternally
Palm Sunday.

III

I hate seeing
A lost trolley
Gleaming ribs
Circling seagulls
I want to take it home
Paint it
Tie balloons to its handles
And tell it
It's okay
To be empty



From the sketchbook of **Sophie Franks**, age 16, year 11, **St. Leonards/Mayfield School**, East Sussex. She is going to Eastbourne College for her A Levels. Her French grandmother was a Resistance heroine.

Shivani Sivagurunathan is a 24-year old Malaysian poet who is currently doing a Ph.D. in Comparative literature. She studied English at Bristol University and received an MA in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature in English from the University of Warwick.

Pantheism

For Paul McGregor

Remember the ice-moon taunting the forest
And seagulls were prints on the ground
Where our peripheries met, damp sheaths of
Alchemised stone, beneath the missing jaguars.
Something of the air lay in the wooded clay
Bubbles unburst travelled
Through our toes that stepped on the undifferentiated ice-moon.
Outside, the city was always toasted,
And beverages heeded our nuisance, we had
Pebbles from the shore, and maps for worlds
That bled from the stabs of poverty.
We swung across the slow Bristol river
With incense injecting the ducks
And the sordid laughter of the streets
Forgetting your wet heaving eye.
Indoors, we lay on canvasses,
Rolling on sugar crystals, Viridian,
But wait.
Something is trampled on in the midst of winter
Around half-dead rats scaling pavements
And there is blood in your eye which cannot be dabbed.
Five o'clock. Five bells. Your dissonance is here.
The bicycle and the red jumper. Hair pulling strings
With god or maybe the breeze.
All the rats float in the river now.
You need not worry about the mucus around their eyes
Or the way blood lives in their heads,
There is only the forest now.
And dead rats floating in a river.

Untitled

The weekend brings nothing but cold anthuriums,
Stale crocodiles of the pocked surface,
Final tobacco and a strange consumption of stars.

My window, always virtuous, crumbles in the fist
Of seawaves, the brutality of inhalation, gluttony,
The oceanic perversions broiling in squares,
Only cold anthuriums, Mother, the cold anthuriums,
They form ropes that will be tied to odd countries
Fixed in rooms, raunchy, rabid rooms that

Tear pieces of heavy flesh away from bone
And return them to the flag of tumours,
Prophets have become insomniacs,
Drizzling bolts onto flour as they punish the wheat.

Enclosed is a powder, friend of mud,
Which will dissolve the itch, and ants will journey
Into the spirits that heat meats on your liver,
And finally the combustion visits, ascending like smells,
Until only invisibility remains, and the hermetic death
That rests violently like gunpowder.

The weekend brings nothing but cold anthuriums,
Slate crocodiles of the pocked surface,
Final tobacco and a strange consumption of stars.



Jake Irwin-Brown, age18, year 13, **Bryanston School**, Dorset

Jessica Harkins, 32, is a native of rural Oregon and lived for several years in Italy. She has an MFA in Poetry from Washington University, where she is currently finishing a dissertation on medieval literature.

November

(from a sequence)

We started across a marsh of felled poplars.
Loose brush gave in the mud, and kept us from the water
as we crouched and squirmed through narrow branches
still fresh on the downed trunks.

In the distance, uncut limbs receded crisp and white.
If I could have one natural gift, he asks, what would it be?
Wings, I say, and for once he agrees. In the quiet
it occurs to me that my brother has been dead

a little over two weeks, I thought, and felt only the air
cold in my lungs. The evening was setting through a haze
blurring lights that began to glow. As children
we would stir brimming creek-beds under rainfall,

proud masters; this is a field one doesn't crawl from,
long grasses soaking our sleeves and pant-legs,
returning through a wintry, smoke-doused air
from the far creek-bed below the copse of poplar trees.

Elegy

O the tomb, delicate sea-shell

H.D., *Helen in Egypt* (Leuké, Book One, 4)

Helen walked along the beaches
of 'the white island'
untangling veils of fog
with her inquisitive fingers.
undoing scenes, directing changes.

Am I still inside my death's
cocoon, Father? she asked, have you
finished speaking, for the first
and only time, my name?
From her lips are formed

the names of soldiers, names
that began at birth and closed
around the clipped cord
of their deaths. It was nothing,
she laughed, they were

her birds, bright-plumed,
hopping with their hooked beaks
and cruel talons, closer
and closer to the blood. Small
cords, tying obligation

to her skin, through theirs;
(can they be cut now?)
her name lifts them all again
into scenes of war.
Does speech come clean,

dropping woes into a river?
I say a name to mourn its loss
and always it moves further away.

Is it washed of something, a name
given to a sound? Where have you taken those
led most far away?

Can someone restore one ashen body
to my lips, inside its after-life,
raised from the dead? Can I say this?

Do I see, Father, that I am unable to grieve
because the world is speaking my name
with its long drawn breath?

Exiling me from the kingdom...



Will Anderson, age 17, year 12, **Bryanston School**, Dorset

Peter Upham, 36, lives in Asheville, North Carolina in the US. He works as a school administrator and educational consultant. His poems have been published in poetry journals in the U.S.

Elegy for a Moth

Dusting a shelf where books
Serve as bookends –
The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich,
The Encyclopedia of Tasteless Jokes –
I discovered you
Behind *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*,
Abridged edition:
To the left of *Getting the Love You Need*,
To the right of a blank journal.

The shelf above you,
The books beside you,
In your end time too ill to fly,
You were twice shaded
And lived in that awful quarter-light
Worse than darkness.

How long?
For all we know,
The book cover edges
Became your crude calendar,

The page ridges your hours and minutes –
More reliable than the erratic
Rise and set of lamplight.

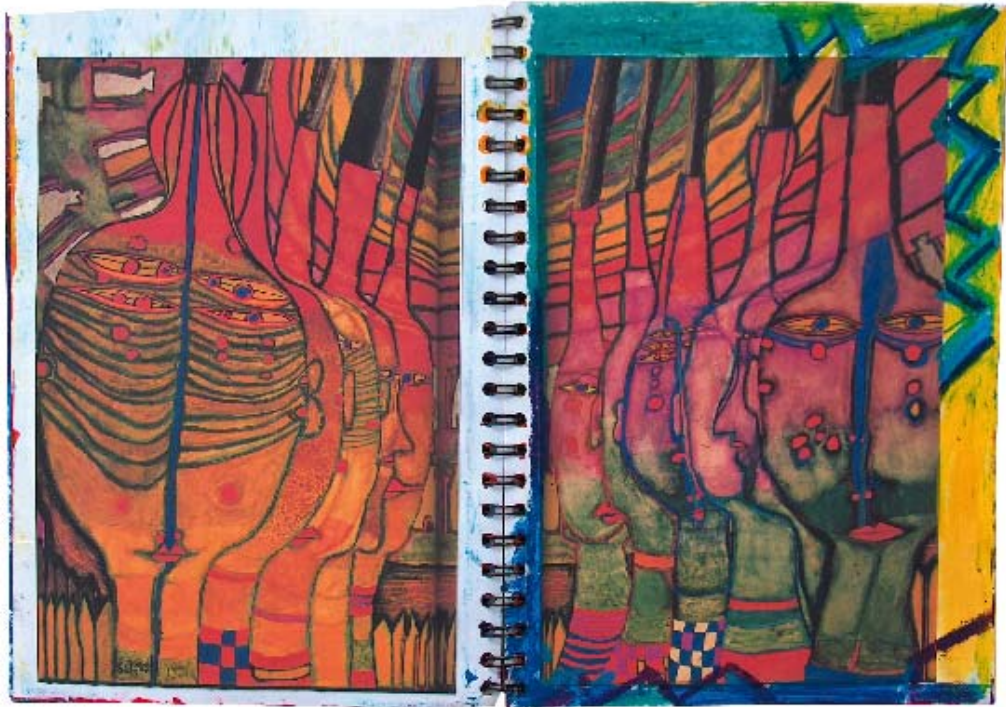
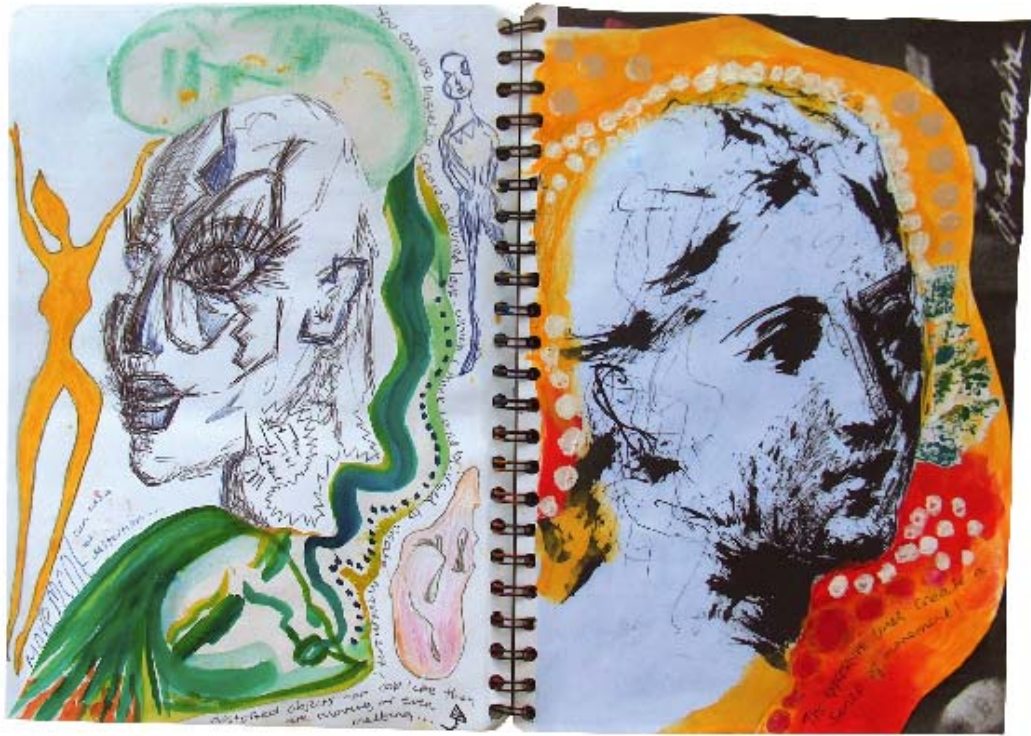
You couldn't confirm direction,
Authenticate a past,
Or know if you were living forward
Or back. Just the counting remained.

The covers, pressed tightly back to front,
Braced the deep wall of your prison
Library. You never saw the spines or titles.
They would not have made sense.

And having chewed on an excerpt of Swift
Before your fluttering dwindle, you learned
Not to judge a book by its pages, either.

An average book is wide
As a moth is long.

Gray lepidopter, after spring cleaning
There remained of your wing dust
A small shimmer, like graphite,
Buried in the shadows.



Emily Baldwin, sketchbooks, age 16, year 11, **St. Leonards/Mayfield School**, East Sussex

Lawrence Bradby is 36 and lives in Norwich. He was born in Glasgow, raised in Kent and started his working life in Cromer. He trained as a geologist and he has an on-going interest in alternative ways to put poetry into the public domain. His poems have been published in several magazines and he has had two pamphlets published. The following poems are part of a sequence called 'Stations of Arrival' which describes the typical locations in Britain which asylum seekers pass through from the time they arrive until the time when they get a decision from the Home Office on their refugee status.

The Lorry Driver

In the cab it's quiet.
Or steady, should I say;
the engine makes smooth running
on the motorway that keeps forming
at the far edge of my headlights
as if it's endless, as if it's mine.
I've paid the toll.

On the seat, a greased road atlas,
open at the contents map
where the pale sea and the land flush with its roads
are overlaid by grand red boxes stuck with page numbers.
The atlas is upside down:
The home-run North through France
downhill.

At the port I swing across the lorry park,
slot into a spare berth, kill the engine.
Black harbour water slides the light
from our sleeper cabs across its surface.
Imagine how it looks from the arc lights way above:
the semi-trailers arranged like match boxes,
the sea.

Everything waits for the ferry to appear
in the harbour's thin tent of light.
No one moves – no need. The silence
balances on the diesel snore of a single engine
still running. If trailer doors are opened
carefully, maybe no one hears or goes out
checking.

There's equipment all right:
infra-red cameras, sniffer dogs,
CO2 detectors. But who wants to know
All that crosses the Channel each night?
So much dead meat, so much living.
If it's shipped, there's a demand,
a price.

Waiting in the cab,
the dashboard's upward glow
like prayer candles in a church.
There's nothing to confess –
I drive, I bring goods in and out.
I don't answer for my cargo
or hear it.

Great Yarmouth

Get-away town, port of fallen grace,
you sulk down and fend off the mainland
with a broad muddy arm of water

then stiffly raise the spires of your broken crown.
Prams move in pairs like covered wagons
down your wide river streets

past ship-sized sheds
hammered from the sky's grey,
from the sea's oil.

Buildings slip silently off
on the midnight tide,
bindweed and fleabane colour the gap.

Corner cafs pupate uselessly
behind chipboard eye patches;
an ichneumon grub eats at their sleep.

Capital of the false front, the quick build,
your footings are still damp.
Tourism's chromatography

has leached all the colour to your cheeky sea streets
which flutter and grin
at groups of bare-chested braves

who roll on holiday missions.
But you are still grinning
at the gulls, at the waves with their empty pockets,

at the far shore of Europe.
Bright on England's soft east belly,
you are my country's welcome sign.

The Watch

Karim has his own time now.
Drawing up his shirt sleeve he will show you
all the links, like oiled stitches, in the metal strap,
the wide face with its cigarette-pack shape,
and how, beneath the glass, concentric frames
each cut into the next, their bevelled planes
stepping down to the central pool
where the hands swim smoothly.

Each surface glows and spreads a warm light
Jabbed with silver stars. Hairline writing -
illegible, intent – webs each corner with its silk.
As if the watch was made in darkness
from a memory of sun. As if, day after day
underground, the watch has worked and changed.
As if the day-before's design was held
behind the eyelids while the older words
were scraped across with new ones.
As is the raw remembered light darkened
with each day's reworking,
as if each day's stirring
slowed it from the glance of a mirror
to the gleam of amber.

Now, in daylight's gaze, Karim lets the minutes
uncoil from his watch, allows them to fill up
with the breeze, the promenade, the traffic's gossip.
You see none of this. You stare into the watch,
and stare until he rolls his sleeves back down
covering the watch and his arm's soft brown
and the darker brown of raised scars, cracked like lips,
that worm from his elbow to his wrist.

Anthony Trevelyan, 32, was born in Lancashire and studied at Trinity College, Oxford and at Lancaster University. He works as an English teacher at a sixth-form college in Cheshire. He has just completed his first novel. His poems appeared in *Agenda's Broadsheet 2* which appeared in a colour poster form.

Ensign

Under the vandalized road bridge
knuckling its trusses, its rust fetters
against the long steep of water,
I will wait for a sign.

Let there be clues, portents
in the gluey canal
and in the overhead headlights
swiping back into Liverpool;

let there be news, intimations
encrypted in the ghost-map
X-ray hologram
Thrown up on arched brick;

Let there be sounds like night-time touches
pried from the trash and the hymnal
of this unconsolated spot.
I will wait and grow hungry.

Sensation

After Rimbaud

On summer evenings, hazed in blue aura, wearing
the blue of their aura, I'll walk the paths,
corn-grazed or corn-pricked,
trampling the crewcut dry grass: I'll hallucinate
its coolness piercing my foot-soles. Breezes
will make easy sweeps of my hair.

I won't speak. Won't think. But in my heart's
cleared-out socket there will be new feeling,
voluminous, blood-ripe,
expanding to scan the whole landscape, probe
each dazzling scrap of it, ghostly vagrant,
alive as some girl walking next to me.

On Sandymount Strand

Evening where a blowing hill
shades a cache of Sea Cats,
their notched and boxy sides
mainly at odds
with the flayed, flying waves.

The nature reserve, in dark lumps,
knee-deep and slippery, intimate
and coolly tactile through clothes
after the flint-step of shingle,
the dinner-plate click underfoot.

Almost New Year and the tentative
same-old celebration piece
rolled out all over again,
the light-voiding air
spreading its old back-talk of murder

and beginning, the painful beginning
we've come up here to resist.
The three of us, gabbing and wobbling
from clump to clump, multi-flexed
against the black Irish gales

that warp my face even now
to the cusps
of the golden death-mask of Agamemnon.
Scalding cold, like a prognosis
or a cure, blast-peeled water

which, if you're listening,
might just tell you something
about this consecrated waste,
country hooked to futurity
as to lang syne's verboten.

A storm of gulls, Dublin gulls,
pulls together softly
far out over the water,
twisting in fighter formation
then resolving, far out,

a carousel, a roustabout music
whirled about in the grooves
of the gale's ancient gramophone.
We watch them,
darkness thickening like bruises.

P. Viktor is a 27 year old English graduate who has been resident in Oxford for five years. He works for Oxford University as well as studying for a Psychology conversion degree at Oxford Brookes University. He has had his work published in several magazines and has completed a novel.

Aryan Son

He of flax, of lapis lazuli, coral skin,
Leviathan proportion. Adonis of those
Lancastrian hills, a young god that got
Hold of my imagination, and thus a
Replication in acrylics. I was nothing more
Than a magnolia stretch of canvas. And
Yet your expanse is now only a figment,
A stem, a jewel, a piece of sea debris, an
Unwashed brush, kept within the soft wood
Box, locked and secreted.

II

Only in this are you a constant.
Sevenfold winters pass, each less cold
Than the last. Snow falls so seldom now.
In a glass carriage this time, not you, but
The *you* imagined. It is to him the seven
Years have been kind. Without actual proof
Of your flesh I know not the truth of age.
For you do not age, but look younger,
Handsome, flaxen-haired and cobalt-
Eyed. At least my heart can still recognise.
You're a butterfly in casement, formaldehyde
Child in a bell jar, embalmed Egyptian.
You have been pickled by my subconscious.
You sometimes flash, zoetrope image in
A dream, butterfly net over your elusive
Visage. I know the passage in which this
Carriage sits. That place is as forgotten as
Atlantis. I pass you, unseen, my burnt eye
And rusted hair, an impurity too ugly
For you to look on. A Romany Czech or
A Slovak, a Polack or a Nordic. I have
Too many countries within me. Thus you
Dissolve, a Nazi boot in the throat as I
Wake up, regurgitating black blood and
Things you once said.

Absentee

I am always in the wake of something,
Or someone. I have allowed this mistake
By not standing in the sun and so have been
In the position of a partial eclipse, an iris
Half-lidded, a collection of shadow to pick
From. Such is the timid inheritance.

I find myself circling the Cherwell again,
Just as I did last Autumn, scouring the dun
Surface of the river for answers, consciousness
A net. The sun is trembling on its wick, that
Rough gold that translates to green, before
The smoke of clouds gather.

The heart's lonely hunt seeks out squirrel,
Fox or stoat. Even strangers have possibilities.
Geese and sparrow begin the mount to fly
South, leaving trees bereft before the leaves
Make their descent. Still the hunger
Left by summer, the taste of the moment.

Oh the hot promises of wine kisses, and long
Drawn evenings filled with him, night not
Daring to interrupt, not signalling the days'
End until we were ready. The laziness of
His embrace, the cobalt rooms, his assumed
Presence in the sweltering kitchen.

Damn this season, with its husks from chestnuts,
The weightlessness of its branches, its thin aurous
Glow, the absence of birdsong at dusk, the bleakness
Of its vacated skies, the missing nuclear eye,
The evenings scooped out like dark fruit, the
Riverside walks as though trailing an afterthought.

Back through the stone of the city, stoic walls are
All around me. Had I wanted to see the reddening of
The year, the scorching of the trees, I should have
Remained by the water. Had I wanted to catch a
Fish, or catch him in some act, so that a pedestal
Might crash, then surely that was the answer.



Molly McCarthy-Curless, age 16, year 11, **Canford School**, Dorset

Natalie Ford, age 30, is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Victorian literature at the University of York, focusing on the fate of reverie in mid 19th-century British scientific and literary discourses. Originally from Pennsylvania, she has lived and taught in Montana, the Canadian Arctic and Spain, as well as Northern England. Her poetry has been published in several US and UK journals and she has recently completed a novel.

Pause

At last the sun shears off clouds
I move like the leaves
and rise to the light,
uncurl edges and pause
While the day burns high
let me stay in this space
with no hands, no touch,
voices remote as traffic hum

Let me sit at this plain scored table,
its splinters rained smooth
and cracks bleached mild,
noting grains of darkness in the slant
The slim weight of my work
lies wrapped like a gift in my bag
to be held, honed,
shared in time

But let me now curve timeless
into rest, into warmth
at these bare angled boards
I sweat serenely in the heat
and imagine finding later
some rushing moss-banked stream
to dip my hands into
so its cool push fills my veins

Naomi Foyle, 38, has had poems published widely in various magazines and a pamphlet came out in 2003. She performs her work frequently and has collaborated with filmmakers, musicians and visual artists. In 2005 she completed an MA in Creative and Life Writing from Goldsmiths College. She also edited the posthumous collection *Mairtín Crawford: Selected Poems* (Lagan Press, Belfast).

Musée du Moyen Age

We came here years ago, during our summer of lusting
in Montmartre; we sheltered from the sun in rooms
of broken statues, tapestries and toothless ivory combs.
Now I drip down all the halls, in another scorching August,

searching for the Lady in her gardens of red grass.
The unicorn, I can report, is still horny as a goat:
her fingers smooth his mane, his hooves disturb her skirt.
I know her shadowed eyes from my own looking glass,

but cannot cool my molten body in her blue retreat
nor enter the pavilion that flows around her like the sea,
'Á Mon Seul Désir' stitched in gold across its folds.

You are back in London, sprinkling roses in the heat.
I'm burning up, a cinder from a blazing masterpiece –
or just a smudge upon a postcard, your mistress growing old.

Curling Around Your Absence

For Sarah Hymas

Our friendship
is a long, handwritten letter:
your looping 'y's,
my dotted 'i's,
legible only to ourselves,
the story that they tell
deepened and suffused
with the scent of spices
from your kitchen
pine needles from Glencoe
the sea at Dungeness.

And if secret jealousies,
disappointments,
other loves
and our own deaths
are quietly rasping ahead,
for as long as I am able
I will spill over
these futures, Sarah,
leaving a trail of inky petals
on the next page
to be read.

Tupa Snyder, age 30, grew up in India. She is a Ph.D. student of Creative Writing (poetry) at the University of Exeter, under the supervision of poet Andy Brown. She received an MA in Creative Writing in Illinois, U.S, under the poet Lucia Getsi. The following poems are about her experience of the American Midwest, during her three-year stay there.

Bluebill

To Jake

He mock-raises is electric-blue cone of martini
as if a sea, the bottles of *Absolut* behind him
arranged carefully. The bar-tender's cap
is blue. Bill
 has struck a lode and now I know
what you did not say – the 90-degree day
and how you found him waiting
by the hand-drawn *Bass*. I too have seen

the star-breasted bird build
daily on the clematis. He plucks out
twigs and bits of grass, like tunes.
My dark robin, if you could sing

I can guess what pierced note
would spill from your heart,
staining your throat.

Vanhorn

Not him.
The others were moving,
in the photos each hand becoming three
out of focus hands linked by veins
of light as if in deliverance.

He remained still.
Behind him drawn blinds, a violin

by the window. He had had enough,
even his old shirt on the hook
flails, like it will get rid of
men who go
with slaps on the back –

look at the dash
his mouth has made,
as if lost for words.

Grandma's Death

Music make me feel
the pew she leaves
three rows away

the press of melody
in unfamiliar voices

grandpa's mouth
open like a door.



Zoe Allen, age 16, year 11, Canford School, Dorset

