

## BROADSHEET 8



**Suzanne Clark:** cowparsley – oils on canvas

Suzanne, 27, is a prize-winning artist who lives and works in Brighton. She specialises in abstract and animal portrait paintings. Her work has been exhibited widely and has been funded by the Arts Council. Further examples of her work appeared in **Broadsheet 7**.

**Welcome to Broadsheet 8, another roll-call of talented new young poets and artists which runs alongside the Special double issue of Agenda, Vol. 42 Nos 3-4: ‘A Reconsideration of Rainer Maria Rilke’.**

**The two chosen Broadsheet poets in the above issue of the magazine are Adam O’Riordan and Zoe Brigley.**

**Katie L. Weston**, 22, recently graduated in English Studies from Sheffield Hallam University and is unsure as yet about her future career.

### **Lost Property Collection Point**

Entering Heaven, she found that it was not quite to her taste.  
The décor was divine – who could fault the silky-rich fabric  
of the sky, the reams of honey golden ribbon that cascaded  
through the valleys, wrapping the place up: a gift? But good God,  
where were the Margheritas? And who had stolen her Jimmy Choos?

Barefoot, she left the others bleating on about some guy called Jesus;  
silently padded along, looking out for the signs: *Customer Services*,  
*Lost Property Collection Point*. And that’s when she saw him emanating  
light beneath the boughs of a gnarled tree: the face of an angel.

If her eyes could have spoken one word, it would have been this: *falling*.  
He responded effortlessly, his nine-carat smile offering: *I'll save you*.  
Did she want him to show her the way? Of course. Her feet were beginning  
to smell. So, Choo-less, he guided her, his clean feet speaking a path  
she had never heard before.

### **Superstition**

In the cupped palm of your hand,  
your love line creases  
into a smile that's not for me.  
An omen in itself,  
and still my tulip buds  
in extravagant yearning,  
straining for the sun,  
searching, searching.

Over my shoulder, apple peel  
curves into an initial that can  
never begin to spell your name.  
A euphemism,  
but still I sense its  
implicit meaning,  
superstition overwritten,  
fading, fading.

Inside of me, a flower  
defies nature, inverts itself,  
becomes nothing.  
A loss within myself.  
And the peel writhes  
into a curious ball of misery,  
widowed of a name,  
grieving, grieving.

### **Indian Dreaming**

Sleep as the fireflies glow hot,  
Dream of Indian summers, of opulent silks,  
The snake-like spirit of the East.  
Touch the exotic, bite it.  
Savour the juices with their bittersweet aftertaste,  
And listen, listen, to the beat of your heart,  
Rhythmic, regular, like the sound of her calloused feet  
Thumping for miles along the harsh brown earth.  
Dream of that distant paradise,  
The Indian summers and opulent silks,  
The snake-like spirit that lives in your soul,  
And listen, listen, for the sound of her cries.



**Felicity Lyne:** mixed media (part of a series inspired by Morocco and Brighton Pavilion)  
Felicity, 18, has just finished her A2 levels at St. Leonards/Mayfield School in East Sussex and plans to study Art and Art History at university in September.

**Caroline Clark,** 30, comes from Lewes in Sussex. She has been living in Moscow for 8 years, since graduating with a degree in German and Russian from Exeter University. In 2002 she completed an MA in Modern European Literature at Sussex University, and wrote her dissertation on Paul Celan and Osip Mandelstam.

### **Trig Point**

*Zwischen Günter und Stein...*

*Between gorse and stone...*

Paul Celan

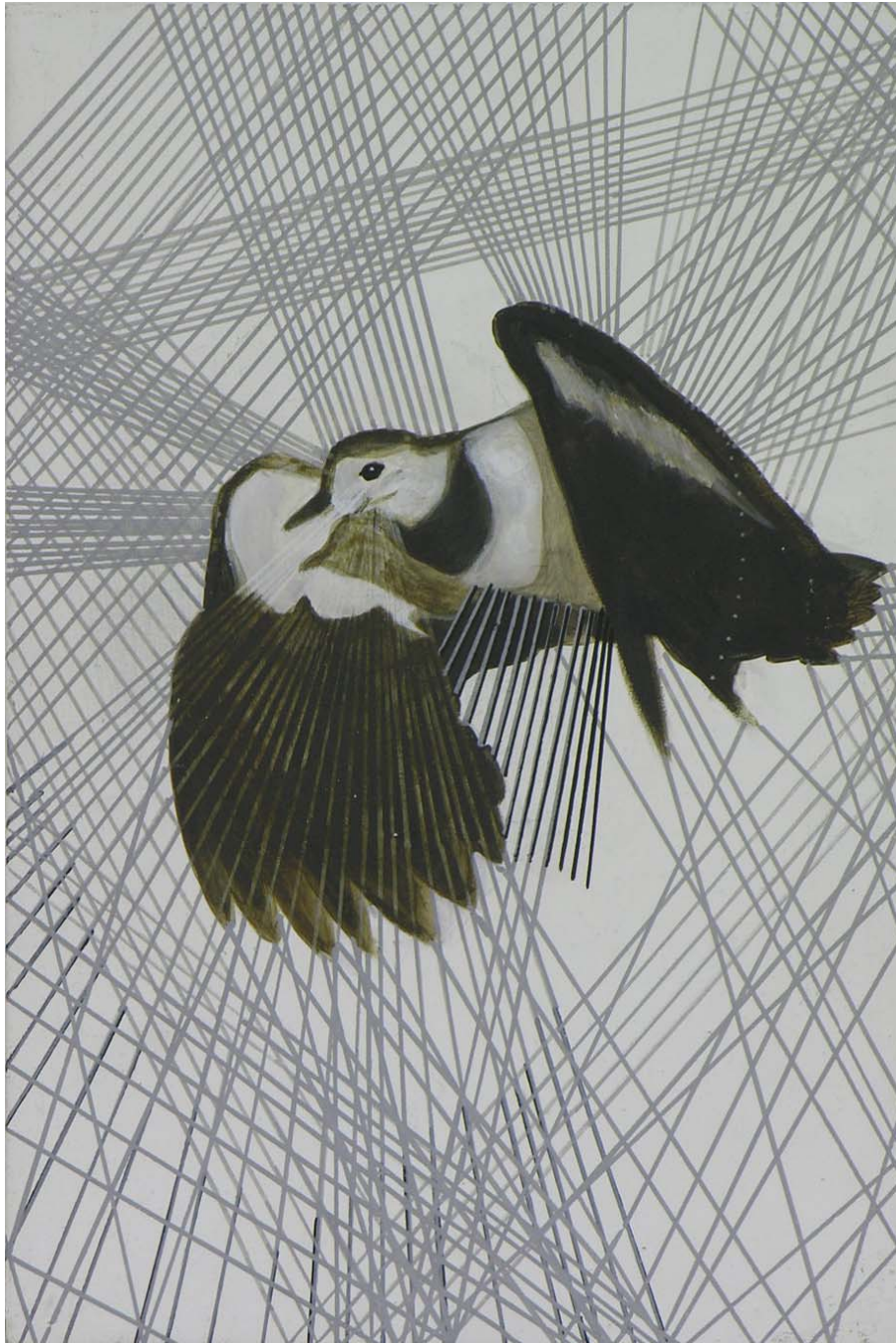
Terrain  
fear and weather combined,  
I push on  
plotting, tracking,  
one eye on the pheasant-filled woods  
unknown gates open, close  
behind me now  
I tack against the day  
climb  
towards a higher lay of land.

Stonemoored  
it waits  
on this windcraven edge  
granite-rough  
between gorse and chalk,  
sent out from below  
gathering me in  
homewards now,  
seawards;  
it turns a beacon light  
known, unknown,  
waits for a gaze.

### **Swifts**

I watch  
evening swifts  
dip  
pivot on  
impulses like lightfall  
sensing no space  
no sky or earth  
they rise by flank  
fall to cusp kokoshniki  
tracing wing-tipped bliss  
round late lit cupola

these star lit cupola  
tethered in reverence,  
kissed and set in place  
to receive, relinquish light,  
now fullbodied,  
now eclipsed.



**Kate Hughes:** part of a project which examines themes of transience, the polyphony of memory and the visual attraction of archival images.

Kate, 22, is studying Fine Arts at City & Guilds, London. Her work has been exhibited in London and Sussex, including a solo debut in the Kings Road, Chelsea. She has won several awards for her work, including the City and Guilds prize for an outstanding Fine Art student in 2004. She also won the Sir Roger de Grey Life drawing prize in 2006.

**Marissa Freeman**, 22, lives in Worthing. She has spent four years studying Nursing, but now works as a PA in the daytime and focuses on creative pursuits in her time off.

### **A Slave to the System**

‘I don’t want my African roots  
showing up my hair roots.’ So ...  
I am to my African hair  
what the triangle was to my forbears.

I Capture my hair in its youth and prime  
and begin the slow process of self under-mine

I Shackle my hair for being there –  
My spirited, strong, Loud and Proud hair

I Rip out my hair from its Rightful Place – my scalp  
and hairline above my face

I Torture my hair each time I plait  
I stretch each strand like it’s on The Rack

I Deny my hair of the care it needs  
I always plait on while my sore scalp bleeds

I Control my hair with all that gel  
I brush it to death – I do it well

I Lower the Status of my mop  
I call yours ‘manageable’ but mine ‘hard work’

I Change the Name of my afro tress  
It’s now called *Natural Sleek 1B Wet*

I Convert the Religion of my locks  
so they look long and blond like  
Jesus’ was

I Oversee that it keeps its shimmer  
with obsessive retouches in public mirrors

I Maim my hair, relaxer burns bad -  
incinerates the beauty that I once had

I 'Tame' my hair, I bind it down  
with tons of extensions long to the ground

I Abuse my afro by treating it rough  
and using a brush  
that is too tough

I Smother my hair, I wear a weave  
for three long months my  
scalp can't breathe

I Crucify my hair in steam  
I have a sick pleasure in watching it scream

I Brainwash my hair so that it pretends  
to have feathered lengths  
like Rachael from *Friends*.

I am not ready to free my Kunta (Ife Olua) Kinte Afro  
But maybe one day  
When my Cotton Crop is Strong enough  
to stand alone...  
I'll loosen the rope and let it down.

**Alex Wylie** is a research student associated with the Seamus Heaney Centre for Contemporary Poetry at Queen's University, Belfast. His poems have been published in Queen's anthologies and in a forthcoming issue of *Stand*. He says of *Agenda*: 'I feel it is a vital forum for daring poetry in the UK, and its freedom from political bias or ideological diktat creates a space for the poetry to do its real work.'

## **Rooms**

*i.m. Simone Weil*

'Two prisoners whose cells adjoin communicate by knocking on the wall'.

i  
when gluttoned Storm  
rolls redly off  
Sun  
rain-strutted  
cloud-gravid  
spatters spectral  
gouts of shade  
against this wall

ii

you are next door  
in the lazaretto of the self  
and I receive  
your lost rent  
squall  
of love  
and

iii

O  
who  
are you singing to?  
To whom do you sing  
behind the membrane,  
this wall  
thin as Samhain veils  
or robin's wing?

iv

The walls are wispy  
worn to nothing  
like a silken flux,  
a wind  
to drive a woman mad:  
the madman's wisp  
a-clinging to my cloistered  
sight  
Oh

v

Not singing, no...  
you cry  
crescendos  
of beguiling eros  
trembling the purdah  
of our lives with manic breath –

vi

you announce  
the god  
of love  
the love  
of god  
like an abandoned  
workhouse  
cat



vii  
at your body's  
pitted arch  
your cry  
in cloud-light  
blood  
hacked into the wind

viii  
cigarette smoke  
stippled at the dark atmosphere  
of ceiling  
prison escalades  
come worming  
out of Piranesi's brain

ix  
- I came to  
on the stairs  
once,  
us shaking hands,  
you asking  
if we'd met  
or was I you –

x  
(monarch  
of the dream  
and subject  
to its working  
you cry  
Republic!  
and awake  
in chains).

### **The Wreck of the Cormorant, 1928**

No one  
could touch him after that  
for loneliness. On Pharos Street  
he leaned against the locked beacon, smoking  
like a real ghost in the puddles' lights; kept pepped  
with stringent tonics of the day – shaggy flocks of Woodbine-smoke,  
the sea-embittered air – he was, but if he was, then maybe he was not  
the puddle of our thoughts we thought he was, the world  
like water swashing round a buckled hulk  
its tides of beer and oil, a thing  
you can't believe is real,  
but is.



## **Felicity Lyne**

**Ailie MacDonald**, 19, is studying English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Warwick. Her tutors are David Morley and Michael Hulse. She was one of the two chosen young Broadsheet Poets in *Agenda* Vol.41 No.1: Poems on Water.

### **A Burial**

One night he took her on his back  
and swam across the sea  
to where her mermaid bones were buried  
on a sloping beach

they dug away the sand and grit  
they pulled away a dam  
in pressing papers ink and bound  
a mummy, an iceman

he took her body from the beach  
from the sun and sand-flea  
took her up to the grassy mountains  
high above the sea

## **Natascha**

In the North of the city  
You first took me into your arms,  
A contract made in an empty spring  
The wrong side of the Danube;  
A violence bloomed and cast  
In the very stone of these tsunami walls.

Behind, you wear a Pharaoh mask  
In glints of blue and gold  
And watch the day arrive –  
Rigour; quiet, encroaching on the silver beads of morning's work  
Laid down by the river  
A soft clay to collapse and move  
In root and sodden earth-clog rhythms

And then from the dusty shutters  
I dream or see, in the blackout  
A grey faceless man, picking up the pieces of me  
And sowing them in the thundered earth;  
Vines to crack and prise the deep walls  
Of this dusty mausoleum,  
A life to paint the marble with hungry lace  
To push back, break through into light where harpies warm.

But for now, close your mouth and turn your heel –  
Seal me in, an ancient heart buried  
In a leaden box.

## **Returning Sailors**

We hung around, we stood and stared,  
We wondered at the time of the year.

You talk of cliffs and lonely visions,  
And trample at grass beneath the pier

Had the bracken grown and fallen?  
Were the rivers dried or swollen?

Your face Hispanic in its rock,  
Surmounts another solstice day

Of the thirteen fractured daffodils,  
We chose the sixth, to mark our trials

And broke out through the dead-end town  
Bell and flower, to the kerb-side thrown.

How close the hills, how far the sea!  
So, people came and watched us walk

Our flipper fins and helix spines  
All sundry in the bordered streets

Primulas, and teacakes for tea.  
Waiting for the china had us

Two-toed and rubbing silver palms,  
Our hair like kelp and bladderwrack.

### **Gannets at Camas Nan Geall**

A clockwork tessellation –  
god knows what will come of it  
a change of scenery – towards some hidden realisation  
I can only  
pack the shingle deep and black  
at my feet  
dune on dune – til the cliffs  
become a rising scraggle-green –  
their shadows are striped  
and move as gannets to the sea  
half a dozen broken raincoats  
which hang on memorial tombs  
standing and slick  
I can't rebuild this  
but huddle in stones  
head askew like a dead deer in the grass  
unexpected little  
growing things to pick  
and clatter  
in our shoreline windowpanes.

**Colin Higgins**, 27, works in a college library in Cambridge where he lives. Between 1999 and 2001, and in 2003, he edited *The Attic*, journal of the Literary Society of Trinity College, Dublin. His poems have been published in *The Stinging Fly*, the Dublin literary journal and in various student publications in Dublin and Cambridge.

### **Trees in May**

A wet mid-May:  
the tree in riot before gardeners  
can get to them.  
Loose leafed, Dionysian, chorused,  
too wild for harmony.

The wind dithyrambic,  
singing in the high branches.  
Twigs lie strewn all over the public  
walkways, like the hacked  
limbs of Leonidas.



**Yvonne Chan**, 16, who has just finished her AS levels at St. Leonards/Mayfield School, East Sussex

**Tang Yi**, 24, graduated with a BA in Chinese Language and Literature in 2005. She is currently completing her MA in Creative Writing at the University of Melbourne. She writes poetry bilingually in both Chinese and English, and her poems have been published in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Australia.

### **Departure**

At the port you are wordless. Our handshake becomes a valley,  
breathing below our eyes. You tell yourself you will never leave

but your heart betrays you. It sways like a light boat  
with a rotten rope, preparing to disappear at any minute.

No matter that raindrops have wet our faces, no matter how green  
the mountains are becoming. You have that look, as if

tomorrow connects directly to the past. A flock of birds passes us by swiftly,  
heading skywards, or somewhere far away. They will never return.

### **The Cove**

I collect clams and pearls in my sleep, dreaming about my  
small birth room and the infinite sea of my mother's womb.

The warmth is absolute. Under her shut eyelids, the bay  
is shimmering and extending in length and width.

You regret letting me arrive on this earth, saying you are  
me, all your thoughts unchanged, if comparing them with mine.

I reply true, mother. Now I float with you in the ocean carrying  
the memory of a white shell, watching it slowly dissipate.

We both painted pictures in our mind, wordlessly. You believe  
that our visions have been soaked in the bay and its indigo.

## Years

I prayed for a wet morning.  
Midnight downpour awakened me, moistening my fingers with its  
strange sweetness; the ground darkened.

Sleeping is the posture of the spring.  
The birds began to twine the twigs, kissing.  
The passengers slowed down their pace, listening.

The breeze crossed our fingers  
like the fallen leaves stretched into the earth.  
Seven cicadas moved onto the tree.

The rain stopped and the sunshine warmed our foreheads.  
It wrinkled my skin the way it wrinkles a petal.  
*Time is dripping*, you smiled.



**Suzanne Clark:** dandelions and nettles – oil on gesso canvas

**Harriet Calver**, 20, lives in Tiverton, Devon. She is reading English at University College, London and has just finished her first year.

### **Cut Glass Order**

A constant jealous diamond in my right eye  
Is pushing, always pushing  
As I walk by the bright water, my senses  
Peeling away from my body like a plaster  
In the bath. And when the pressure inside  
Exceeds the pressure out, skin quivers slowly.

Disparate air – the scales heavily ponder  
On the line of overbalance, some law of physics  
Or biology nearly remembered, half inherent.  
The invisible shove of some cousin of magnetism –  
And a spider clustered like fallen-out hair sits  
On its void. Time tilts to buck yellow leaves

In the distance off its back. On a sunny day  
Like this the universe could end. Still –  
My shadow pushes up at me with all the hulk  
Of the Earth trying to flip itself, pop like a cork  
To the surface where I remember my only falling star.  
And air or nothing wants to disappear into less.

**Michael Duggan** is 31 and comes from London, though he now lives in Bromley, Kent. He stopped writing poetry at the age of 16, having been published through various young writers' competitions. He began again in his late twenties.

### **Young American Male's Song**

I remember when you told me  
You were pregnant

I imagined your spine  
Alpine white on a red sky  
And the pale fall of cells  
Gathering like snow in your womb

And I got cold on the idea.

I drove an old friend out to the coast  
(To escape things).

We lay on the hot beach  
Propped up on our elbows,  
Watched the bright waves



Hung about the hips of women like guns.

I got back the next morning  
To find you still asleep,  
Thinned herbs of alcohol passing through your liver,  
Your breath reaching for something clumsily  
Like a hand.

When you woke up you sat outside  
And said nothing until the evening fell.

I left you soon after  
But I heard the baby was born in late September,  
Outrageously perfect someone said  
And a girl.

**Harry Slater** is a 23 year old writer and student who lives in Hull.

### **A summer's day at the end of the world**

I left you  
On shingles by wood  
Salt  
And Sky  
White-beaked ravens  
Circled  
Where you sat  
Amongst drifting pieces  
Of ship  
And claw  
Stones shone  
Like pearls  
In your fingers  
They caught the sun  
As I walked  
Past the walls  
Of giant rock  
That we used  
As dens  
Where we were young  
I never turned back  
Up to the steps  
Onto the road  
I heard  
Pebble meet sea  
Then we were  
Both gone

## Flowers

They leave flowers now  
Wreathes of red, green and gold  
All wrapped in plastic tied with notes  
Where skin met ground  
And bone met air  
There is no mark  
No fading stain to keep that spot  
Where smiles had died  
And laughter too  
'In our hearts'  
That their claim  
But by the bushes thorn and branch  
Beside the tarmac cold and grey  
A shrine to petals fading grace  
To browning leaves  
And old red blood  
The flesh has gone  
Returned to dirt beneath the ground  
Though still screams metal, sparks and mouth  
Where life was left  
Where flowers rot.



**Caroline McDougall, 16:** GCSE work – St.Leonards/Mayfield School

**Andre Naffis** is a third year student at the University of Leicester.

### **The Weight of History**

You could say this about him, he  
was a boiler without a pressure valve,  
a combustion chamber whose metal  
insides clanged with the droll drum  
of his father's disciplinary gavel.

Most days he was distant, his grainy eyes,  
as pearls of sand, hardened opaque  
like the glue he sniffed. One summer,  
at Gruinard bay on shores dotted  
with pebbles poached in cobalt waters,  
from moss-pelted cliffs he jumped  
and leapt, as if action were the only  
reflection of thought, breaking the horizon's  
translucent skin in a thunderous rip.  
It was then that the fogs cleared and  
lucidity crawled across him from ear  
to ear; perched atop rocks as  
old men on pub stools, he asked,  
'Would it be possible to drown?' Not  
likely we concluded perhaps  
simultaneously in slence, or  
maybe, we just didn't give a fuck,  
and as feather fell on feather  
the air was thick enough  
with uneventfulness, tranquillity,  
or something so light, we could  
barely snatch or grab on to remember.

**Paul Monaghan**, 22, has just finished his final year of a philosophy degree at the University of Kent. He has been writing poetry since his mid teens. His work has been published in *The Interpreters House*.

### **Two Foot Difference**

The door is open now all day.  
His early steps are timid –  
the months indoors have made outdoors strange.  
Yet a distant memory assures him he is safe.

After much time hiding from people walking by  
he learns to be less fearful of strangers –  
as long as they remain more than four feet from him.

When the warmth of the day lasts into the evening  
he is almost always out.  
The fright of the sudden wind, the chill of rain  
are memories gone.  
But there comes a time  
when it seems the heat has lasted too long  
and he hides in the tall grass when I call him.

At night humankind, far-off, goes mad.  
Does he mistake the sound of me for them?  
Poor cat, too long n the sun.  
A two foot difference was too near.

### **Café Before Closing**

Storeys high, you can view from the café  
tree-lines spread with many roofs  
and dusted with a sunset.

Inside you will notice fields propped on stools  
and observe how trees can be kept in a glass.  
Follow the cloth as it wipes down tables  
sweeping up worlds inadvertently.

**Ross Wilson**, 28, is a part-time catering assistant and full-time unpublished novelist. He has reviewed books for Books in Canada, and his short stories have appeared in New Writing Scotland 15, the Macallan Scotland on Sunday Shorts 4 (Polygon), Northwords 28 and Liar Republic 3. He was elected a Hawthornden Fellow in 2004.

### **St Julian's**

After the Silence in Mdina, the Vegasy lights  
of St Julian's, sin jumping in the tight  
denim shorts of the pole-swirling girls, swaying  
like Jesus on the dash of the bus where I was praying

we wouldn't crash in Rabat, Mosta, Craft Village  
in a bus stinking of a diesel spillage;  
the driver speeding as we were winding.  
Alive! I guzzle beer in a bar, unwinding

As stiletto-skewered soles dance in the fires  
the barman lights, and quickly expires.  
My beat-blocked ears miss words moving on lips  
as, silenced like Mdina, I leer at grooving hips,

realising how all this light and fire is not so far  
from what burned out in that desert, like a shooting star.

## **The Way John Went Out**

*For John Gray*

I had you in my corner a few years,  
talking me through and into pain.

Weekends, you'd take me into  
Edinburgh and Glasgow to train;  
mid-week, we worked out in Rosyth.  
Days in-between, I ran alone.

We were about the same height then:  
five three; fly-weights. I, fourteen, all bone  
you, a trim forty, fitter than anyone  
in the gym, until I caught up, like time

caught us, six years later.  
A six-foot welterweight that day  
we met, books tucked under that had been  
a left hook, specs on my never broken nose.

I was awoken that day  
like a brawler too clumsy to duck  
the surprise counter of your news.  
The best punches come from nowhere.

This one struck before we could begin.  
A doctor stepped between us, waving it all off.  
A timekeeper beat the slow count out of days  
before a bell could ring.

And it was a daze to stumble into,  
like those nights when I'd run alone  
in the dark of a wood, no stool to rest on,  
and no voice in the corner where I once stood

tired and bloodied with your hand  
flying my hand like the kite  
we were both as high as, walking  
down the steps of Meadowbank Stadium

1993. 'You came in with nothing,' you  
said to me, 'you went out a champion.'

*27-28 December, 2006*

**Paul Kingsnorth**, 33, has worked in an orang utan rehabilitation centre in Borneo, as a peace observer in the rebel Zapatista villages of Mexico, as a floor-sweeper in McDonalds and as an assistant lock-keeper on the river Thames. He has won the Poetry Life national competition and the BBC Wildlife Poet of the Year award. His poetry has been published in *Iota*, *Envoi*, *Poetry Life*, *The Lighthouse*, *Weyfarers* and other magazines.

### **Where were you?**

Tell me.  
Never mind the Conventions and all the  
Humanity. Never mind the secrets.  
Tell me. I am waiting to hear. I am  
Eager.

Where, when the buffalo ran,  
Were you?  
In the coming of the morning,  
When the world was young and we were  
Few,  
Where were you?

Did you run with the waters,  
Fetching the silverheads a look of blood, or were you  
Still?  
We both know you were there.  
They know too, but they are too stacked  
With noise and news and ambitions.  
People: how they stomach themselves  
Is beyond me.

It is not people I speak to.  
It is you.

Where were you when there was no sentiment  
That could not be turned to good use,  
And no love but for the seen the touched?  
Where were you when thoughts  
Had purpose and were not for play?  
When idleness was earned and was valued?  
I was there.  
I sensed you.

But I did not see you. Perhaps  
It was not you, then.  
Perhaps you were a later soul.  
There have been waves. Or,

Perhaps you were inside.  
Inside and beneath.  
Between two close, overhung rock scarps,  
Waiting, or forecasting,  
Or thinking too much and cursing us all.

**Dis, 30, lives in Oldham and is unemployed.**

### **Spectral Dust**

What if one day desire finds itself  
objectless – vast erotics set adrift,  
unhooked, and you left flailing, the subject  
of lust with nothing there to satiate,  
retching out your sentences' brute nonsense?

I'll let scents collect, accumulate past  
impressions in the space you left immune  
now to stranglers' hands, intangible  
air at rest. But desire rages on. A hunger  
for the motion or the solid, firm grip

of flesh on flesh or tooth in skin, raging  
fairies that won't give in and find nothing  
in those bald impressions you left as a  
cyclone passing through! I stand about the  
wind-swept earth haunted by fragrances that hurt:

'O come you dark bitches: come as image,  
come as storm or come as love, but come with  
flesh to bruise no longer fearful of the  
cant of lust. We lost our firmness like a  
mountain pushed. Fix us sure in the spectral dust

## **The Body, Sex**

Let the roses bloom and blush  
in pallid metaphor, but let  
no flower be so exquisite  
as to compare its brittle flush  
with your face brought forth in climax.

There laid bare in cryptic tracks  
the devil's heart beats traitor's red,  
love through pain in tender contract,  
petals ripe for winds to shed.  
*To tear friend, or a heartfelt caress?*

The ethical will in earnest!  
And set within this queried skin –  
fixed resistance giving in –  
her eyes, the boundaries of excess,  
transfixed dementias that stun time

like the instant of divine  
challenge, all God's secrets in broken  
peace tossed like sediment  
in a rational mind  
contested by passion's progressive thrust.

**Omar Sabbagh**, 26, is currently finishing an MA in Creative and Life Writing at Goldsmiths, and has recently embarked on a PhD on 'Time and Form in Conrad and Ford' at Kings College, London. This is his second poem in the **Broadsheet** series. His poems have also appeared in *Poetry Review* and *The Reader*.

## **Singles**

Like all women, she begins  
screaming from the hips  
her crisp knowledge of loss,

blue shock, and a silvery film  
as ancient as reptilian  
slides across her eyes.

Like all men, he responds  
toothed in platinum  
that he's a ladder beyond

her walled-in gates



and all the effort she makes.  
Both are bitter and glum.

And yet that's the glue  
when the night is done  
with incompetence.

### **Instinct**

*for Maya Fakhoury*

Little girl, I've seen you playing at craft,  
Building in the small roundness of passion  
Liquid and onyx and spirit-marble.  
I've seen you splayed in kimono red

On an arctic floor, surrounded by a cool air  
That carries your directionless humming –  
As unlike blood as milk. Little girl,  
You don't know it yet, but you're building

From the pip of all that is smooth and independent.  
As a child you will not ruin the image  
With salty reasons, but tenderise  
The pictures of your mind – as fragile

And precious as a bird's backbone.  
You have the elastic power of making  
In your bones, and it is written and grown  
In the bends of your body, tight

As skin over muscle. Honour it. God,  
Mine and yours, has spelt it like flour  
Rising with our age: our single virtue,  
Yours and mine, our ethics violent as truth.



**Clemency Bathurst, 16, St. Leonards/Mayfield School.** Clemency won the Creative Writing prize with her short story. Her mother is a well-known artist who exhibits internationally.