

## Welcome to Fun Poems!

*'The only good reason for doing anything is for fun'...*

W.H. Auden

This is the first of a new series of 'fun' poems, often with an underlying seriousness.

The artist featured here is **Anna-Louise Felstead** (also to be featured in Broadsheet 11). Visit [www.alfelstead.com/main1.html](http://www.alfelstead.com/main1.html)

Anna-Louise, 27, is based in London. She is a reportage artist and illustrator who draws and paints on location. She travels the world for inspiration. Her work focuses on people within environments, ranging from day to day images of characters drinking coffee in Soho to models being hastily prepared for the catwalks at London Fashion Week. After Central St. Martins, she graduated from The Royal College of Art in 2003. Her work has been widely exhibited and published in many magazines



**Andrew Waterman's** nine books of poetry include his *Collected Poems* (Carcanet, 2000) and *The Captain's Swallow* (Carcanet, 2007). He is a recipient of the Cholmondeley Award for Poets and lives in Norwich. [www.andrewwaterman.co.uk](http://www.andrewwaterman.co.uk)

## Lost Worlds

Gaslit London, horse-cabs trundling, choking through pea-souper fogs,  
nose-to-ledger on a high-stool ink-stained till you pop your clogs,

or at 'Forward, Jinks!' advancing, collar chafing, to display  
drapes that 'might just suit you, Madam,' priced at twice your monthly pay.

Like the sticklebacks your childhood fished from ponds in a tin cup,  
circling the alien jamjar for a bit, then floating belly-up.

All very well for those off stomping tundras, deltas, sun-drenched veldts,  
blazing away with guns like drainpipes, bagging mose and lion-pelts.

Beats your Sunday skulks on Penge municipal grass. What's there to lose  
but what you stoop to every weekday buffing a shine on cardboard shoes?

'Yes, Professor Challenger! – deck-hand, tea-boy, take me on!'  
Next thing you know your paddle's whacking water up the Amazon.

Jungle-trek to the lost plateau, get up, find Jurassic brutes.  
'Sportin' risk, young fellah!' Lord John squints along his sights and shoots,

bullets bounce off, iguanodons go on chomping foliage while  
Challenger scribbles zoological notes with a *Eureka!* smile.

Terrible snarls, trees snapped like matchsticks, tyrannosaurus looms, gives chase,  
teeth like scimitars; hide in shrub, it pounds past. Challenger mops his face:

'Cranial crevice too minute for reason, we are the masters there!'  
Hairy arms grab you, gibbering ape-men drag you to their skull-strewn lair.

Get away, join their smooth-skinned humanoid foes, Lord John foresees  
'dooced good scrap!' Guns win, apes wiped out. Grateful cave-girl on her knees,

absolute corker, flutters eyelids, love her madly for a week,  
pterodactyl swoops, she's gone, legs wriggling in receding beak.

Tunnel finds escape-route down, reach coast, ship home, thank lucky stars  
snug in a leather chair, smoke curling as Lord John hands round cigars.

Danger is addictive, soon you're off with Allan Quartermain,  
deepest Africa discloses Twala's murderous domain:

rightful king restored, discover Solomon's Mines, the hag Gagool's  
crushed by the door she slams to trap you; exit, pockets crammed with jewels.

Next there's *She*: Ayesha, beautiful merciless queen the tribe knows 'must  
be obeyed' - the spell reversed, she crumbles into age-old dust.

Fugitive from 'The Country of the Blind', sometimes adventuring  
heroes you guest along with perish - Dravot, 'The Man Who Would Be King'.

Meanwhile redcoats push back frontiers, capital reels the unknown in;  
sundowns on far-flung verandas, ice-cubes tinkling in gin.

Round the corner, unsuspected till you're in it, Flanders mud,  
technological massacre, gas shreds lungs, you gargle your own blood.

'Up and at 'em! Salt of existence!' Lord John is hung out to dry  
stiff on barbed-wire. A shellburst, hunter Quartermain is blown sky-high.

Haggard, Doyle, Wells, Kipling, Lost Worlds topple dead as ancient Rome.  
Europe claims the title now, the Heart of Darkness has come home.



**London Fashion Week**

**Anne Leahy** 's poems have won many prizes in Ireland and the U.K., including The Patrick Kavanagh Award (2001) for her first collection. Her poems have twice been commended in the British National Poetry competition (1999 and 2004). She has been shortlisted for a Hennessey Award and for the Hamish Canham Prize (2006). She lives in Drumcondra, Dublin. She is featured in the *Past Histories* Poetry supplement on this website.

## Beleaguered

There's a mite attacking all the bees  
in Ireland: the *do bes* and the *don't bes*  
the *does bes* and the *doesn't bes*.  
It's come in from abroad  
but now it's in the blood  
passed from one to the next  
leaving a whole colony stunted,  
hyper-correct. On its last legs -  
this strain of the habitual present tense.

## Rules of Attraction

Two hard consonants rarely observed  
out together cheek by jowl.  
They rub each other up the wrong way:  
inside the confines of a single word  
they seem to need, between them, the play  
allowed by a series of vowels.

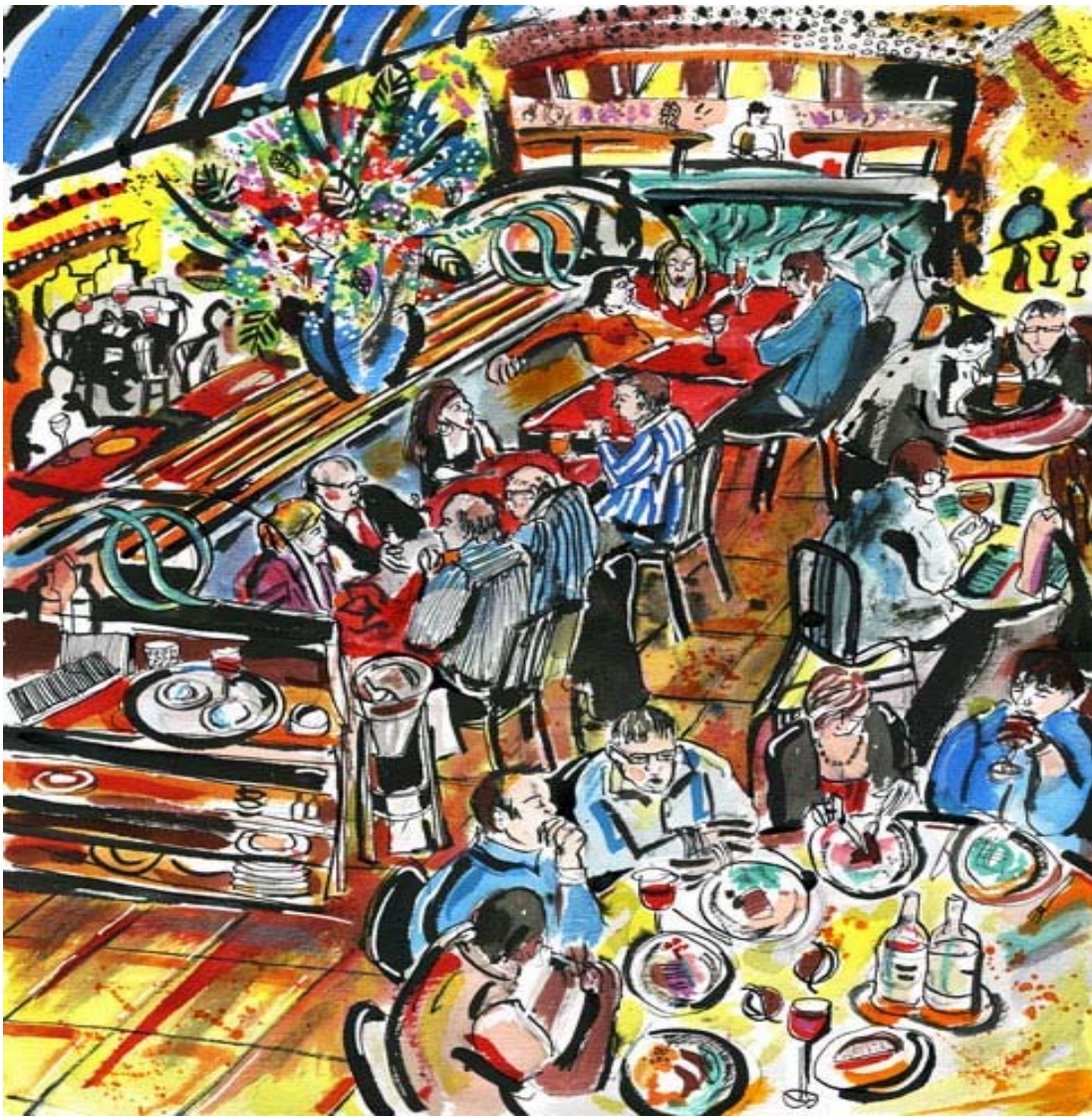
Yet here they are again in print –  
initial letters, two names, bunk-bedded  
at the back of a poetry review,  
alphabetical order seeming to flaunt  
an easy intimacy between the two,  
making their owners stop, muddle-headed

as to why – when the two of them have learnt  
to keep apart, dealings cordial but distant -  
do their separate submissions made at random  
hit their targets together, come off in tandem?

## For the Dinner Guest

*(starting and ending with a line by Keats)*

This living hand, now warm and capable  
of a thousand tender touches tends  
to spend them on mortise locks and ice-cube trays.  
It's intimate with indicator sticks and steering wheels.  
For you it's spent all day buffing glasses  
for the wine, caressing stainless steel.  
Here's a fork I fondled earlier;  
I hold it towards you.



**Quaglinos, Bury Street, London**

**David Curzon** lives in Melbourne, Australia. He edits the Forward newspaper and is contributing editor of The Jerusalem Review. He retired from a major post in the United Nations in 2001. His publications are too numerous to mention.

## Not a Prayer

Lord, restore to me the glory I have lost:

let this bald scalp once more be hidden as in  
my hirsute youth, and let its fibres curl  
defiantly, as I in fury strive  
to put them down and keep them in their place,

and let my grin be with incisors which  
have not been jaundiced by the mastication of  
so many mouthfuls, let me at least regain  
the uncontaminated enamel I had once,

and let my eyes take in the world without  
black detachments, floaters, little blobs  
flitting in a random agitation that  
flaunts before me the limits of my will,

and let the plumbing function as if the pipes were bright.



**John Fuller** is an Emeritus Professor of Magdalen College, Oxford. He is the author of many collections of poetry and a novel. He has received many prizes and awards. The following poems are to be included in *Song & Dance*, a lively collection of light verse and occasional poems due soon from Chatto & Windus.

## A Critic

Gup, lass!  
Front of the class,  
Quick now, come out fighting!  
Did you find it exciting,  
This daubed paper,  
This clogged boot-scraper,  
Glib as a label,  
Garbled as Babel?  
What does print confer  
On such hauteur?  
It leaves you where you were,  
That's what,  
Like as not  
In ignorance  
That you're a dunce.  
So you took your guesses  
For successes?  
Self-righteousness's  
Sneaky anatomy lessons?  
PC's quintessence?  
PC on the take,  
Ms Mistake!  
What on earth went wrong?  
You opened your lips too long,  
A sermon at Evensong.  
Hardly surprising  
That you're the Cat of Categorizing,  
The Sister of systematizing,  
The Or of theorising,  
The Mother Dog of Dogmatizing.  
Away with you, enemy of art!  
Self-important person, depart!  
You are a continuing false start.  
Towards you the starter's gun  
Will turn from the sun.  
Now you must really run!  
Run if you like, but we shall catch you.  
Run like watery colic, like a tinker's snatch, you  
Will never get away.

We will take you to the cleaners  
For your misdemeanours.  
You are the piss in the *pis aller*,  
Your briefs are marbled with café-au-lait,  
Your conversation has the rare bouquet  
Of the absolutely unendurable,  
Your slightest faux-pas's uninsurable.  
Think you are welcome  
Because you talcum  
Your picnic eggs  
And wax your legs?  
Because you can smile and frown at once?  
Your vehemence  
Empties a conference.  
You are too Concerned.  
You never learned  
That common-sense  
Is otherwise  
Than knowing surmise.  
That smear of innocence  
Widening your eyes  
Simply signifies  
The cobra's sway before it strikes.  
Yopur glower is the glower of shrikes.  
You and Bill Sikes are look-alikes.  
All that you dream of sex  
Was learned in bibliothèques  
And what you want of men is merely thuggish,  
Borrowing Caligula's vain wish  
For Roman necks.  
God, what did your father do?  
What did he do to you  
That makes you seethe,  
That makes you sorry that men breathe?  
Did he make you wear white socklets?  
Did he take away your chocolates?  
There, there then: did never kind hand  
Descend on you unplanned,  
Friendly and taken so?  
And made you glow?  
And did you never fall?  
A finger on your small  
Morsel of the future find  
You not entirely disinclined?  
Perhaps you never had the chance.  
You never were the dance  
Nor yet the dancer,  
And gave no happy answer.



Though they showed you the tune,  
Though you howled on the dune  
Like Bodyform, your brain leaked blue  
Through knowing what to do.  
Now it is like the chestnut,  
Floury and dry, isn't it?  
Why so eager,  
Your gift being so meagre?  
Well, well, we shall see.  
Remember, if you want to be  
A missionary with a mission,  
To assume the right position.  
That the highest of high-flyers  
Are Cretan philosophers, that liars  
Are often cannibals, every Cretan  
A liar – and missionaries get eaten.

## **At a Distance**

*We owe to the Middle Ages the two worst inventions of humanity –  
gunpowder, and romantic love (André Maurois)*

Cannon still cold when talky Troy was sacked,  
Hacking of kneecaps was an intimate act  
Promptly performed, risked for a clear reward:  
City or woman taken with the sword.  
Or death with honour (Old High Hildebrand,  
*Prut in pure*, fighting hand to hand).

The last ditch, where the hero slaked his thirst,  
Was simply a drier version of the first,  
Fate wrote his destiny in lines of blood  
That went on beating, even in the mud.  
The single killer faced somebody's brother  
And Mother Earth was just another mother.

Heroic couples met on field or bed,  
For some few seconds, or forever, dead.  
Heroic couplets symbolise their pairing:  
Combative, driven sparring feinting, sharing.  
Alike in love or war, their bodies met,  
Weapons between, in eager tete-à-tete

Consider now the heirs of Christendom:  
Manic idealists blown to kingdom come,  
The mercenary marching on his belly,  
Bertrams de Born, Dante, Percy Shelley,  
The liberal opinions of the highbrow,  
Flat Nagasaki, lines to a lady's eyebrow.

Once God was animated by our fears;  
Nothing today excites us like ideas.  
Once we heard clearly what our murderer yelled.  
No strong views now: 'extreme views, weakly held.'  
Our adorations hopelessly explode,  
And war is a dramatic episode.

Couplets were shelved with a Romantic curse  
In favour of blank, free, Projective verse.  
Our longings have been blank and free too long,  
And couples too contented with a song.  
Now mind works at a distance, calculating,  
And all perfection's waiting, waiting, waiting.

Hard to distinguish epicure and glutton:  
The feminist is fingering her button,  
Battle-lines are thrown up on a screen  
And tired professors tell us what they mean.  
In love and war, strong magic plays its part:  
Semtex, a gatefold stapled through her heart.



**La Brasserie, Fulham Road, London**

**Mike Godden** was a very special, eccentric intellectual who spent most of his life in the Royal Navy. He wrote a highly original book of his own brand of philosophy, *Ideas from Another Planet*, and a novel, as well as ditties, sea shanties and poems. He was the mentor and proxy father of Adam Wyeth, a chosen young Broadsheet Poet in the *Past Histories* issue of *Agenda*, Vol. 43 No.1. He was born in 1919 and died in March 2008.

## Detergentsia

The surf and tide at Seven Stones  
Gleam whiter than the sailors' bones  
From which they are compounded.  
'Sit lux persil et omo!' sigh those sea-washed spectres,  
Endlessly and everly confounded.

Doth Edith Sitwell on her llama?  
White horses ride the stones –  
Karma!  
By the Seven Deadlies mounded.

(Sicily 1955)

*The Seven Stones are a treacherous stand of rocks North of the Scillies, notorious for ripping the bottom of the mega tanker, Torey Canyon. Devastating oil pollution covered the Irish, Welsh and English Channel.*



**Campsbay, Capetown 2008**

**Rahul Gupta** was born in the Lincolnshire Wolds in 1976 and read English at the University of York, specializing in mediæval languages and literatures. He lives in the Cathedral Quarter of Lincoln and has also been published as an illustrator.

## Slugabed

An Exhortative Nursery-Rhyme for Lie-late Mattress-pressers, Jacks-Still-in-Bed-at-Noon, and other such Lazybones

*Late to bed and loth to rise  
Marketh the sluggard of evil guise:  
To bed betimes, and rathe to rise  
Maketh man healthy, wealthy and wise.*

—after English proverbs

‘Awake, awake, it’s already late!’  
Spoke, tick-tock, the clock  
At a quarter to eight.

‘There’s still time! All’s fine!’  
—He ignored and still snored  
Around twenty to nine.

‘So when? So when?’  
Sang the warning of the morning  
Gone half-past ten.

‘Cheep-cheep, he’ll sleep’  
Said the finch, ‘till noon at a pinch  
Without the least peep.’

‘Hear my gospel,’ pealed the church bell:  
‘Nigh is the time so heed my chime:  
Snoozing till noon dooms fellows to Hell;

‘Arise! Behold, thy lifetime flies;  
Hark to my toll and think on thy soul:  
When will the scales fall from thine eyes?’

Then the weathercock, as the hour struck  
— past eleven and all hope of Heaven —  
Turned his beak and said with a cluck:

‘You’ll stir your stumps, like it or lump it:  
Just you listen...  
...at the Last Trumpet!’



**Shampers, Kingly Street, London**