

# FUN poems from Agenda

**Andrew McNeillie**

## **BOSSA NOVA**

None of this is in my name  
eavesdropping at a café table  
on moneyed Mayfair people,  
not May but June between showers.  
The scraps I hear might just as well be Greek,  
might be from any ancient city  
anywhere, even Rio de Janeiro  
now with Bossa Nova on the air  
somewhere from a passing car  
like longing, fleeting.

We cannot have all we desire,  
desire being incommensurable,  
coterminous with being here  
or falling short in living death.  
The girls are walking from their hips  
their mobiles at their ears and lips.  
My eyes follow them, my ears pricked.  
Invisibly, I remember their tragedy  
their walk to the end of the street  
down to the anonymous sea.

## **Brendan Kennelly**

### **Waking up**

Yes, there's Pessoa, Yeats, Kavanagh,  
Paradise Lost and Found, Blake's London,  
and then there's waking up in hospital  
thanking God you're on your own

apart from the pain in every bone.

### **Question**

Is the earth facing the sky  
or turning its back on it?  
The same question might be asked  
of lovers on Saint Stephen's Green.

But who is the earth and who is the sky  
when they swap positions as the hours drift by

**Caroline Clark**

**To Tula**

Last year we went to Tula  
to Tula we went last year,  
we walked the streets of Tula  
to see what we could see:  
the Kremlin, armoury chamber,  
the crafted horseshoed flea,  
gingerbread presses, sugar tongs,  
all manner of pots for tea.  
For we had gone to Tula  
to note for what she was known,  
yet I remember Tula  
for two lilac trees alone,  
one white, one lilac like the name,  
above a sky-starred cupola  
and a mist of scented rain.  
We took the train from Tula  
from Tula we took the train,  
for we had been to Tula  
and we hope she was glad we came.

**Donald Avery**

**FUN**

The law, without the laughter, soon becomes  
solemn, dreary, ponderous. Gaiety,  
lightness of touch and spontaneity –  
yes, and abandon – should be in the sums.  
The universe appears the work of one  
who's well aware of nonsense-value, play  
and of imagination. Yet, today –  
unlike the world – we do not find life fun.

But, I believe not Death himself disdains  
deep-bellied merriment. Divinities  
roll in the aisles. The blessed galaxies  
are – even now – shaking their fiery manes  
with laughter. While the sober are in shock  
at lack of gravity. And lack of clock.

## Don Bloch

### Chocolate

When greed prevailed  
and the last pretence  
of civilization  
had been abandoned,  
what remained was a dying man's  
love of chocolate.

.More than half brain-dead,  
too weak to lift a finger,  
my brother craved chocolate  
night and day

The evidence suggests  
he was a chocolate freak  
his whole life, and used to sneak  
hits from a secret stash.  
Shame failed  
to sate his appetite.  
How he loved the sound  
of chocolate breaking  
in the night!

Hollow Easter bunnies, long  
ears devoured in a single bite,  
x-mas coins in thin gold foil,  
Hershey's silver kisses-  
trick or treat Mars bars, and Milky Ways,  
Nestles, Mounds and Almond Joy.  
M 'n M's, chocolate sprinkles,  
Betty Crocker's brownies mix,  
Benedicts and After Eights,  
Chocolate pudding, My-T-Fine,  
Our tastes closely intertwined.

He was an ardent cocoa fan,  
drank his fill with grand elan  
What can compare to Drostjes  
steaming on a snowy day,  
clumps of cocoa undissolved.  
The double boiler foaming over,  
milk bubbling from beneath  
a dancing cover.

And in summer, best of all,  
ice cream in a dozen magic flavors  
all chocolate in some kinky version,  
from Haagen Das to Movenpik:  
And Ben and Jerry's rich fudge ripple  
Cold lips turning a deep purple.

What does dying mean  
if not the end  
of needing to keep up appearances.  
No need to say, No, thank you  
any longer. With Death  
stalking him, he gave in  
to his sweet tooth  
with a vengeance, from milk  
to pure and back again,  
free from inhibition.

Whole boxes from Belgium  
near the end, bon-bon's at a single go,  
costing a king's ransom.  
Empty wrappers on his bed,  
and floor, he licked  
his fingers, one by one,  
and prayed for time  
to gobble more.

His eyelids quivering  
like a moth  
I'd hold a spoon  
up to his lips,  
say, open wide,  
and as soon as he complied  
I'd slip it in,  
one hand clamped firmly  
right beneath his chin.  
My taste buds tingling.  
envying him.

Greg Delanty

### The Creators

The owner informs us the restaurant's closed, summer's over,  
but we're welcome to a few beers, sit on the deck.  
We're sensible enough not take any notice  
of the begging dog with a stick in his mouth.  
We ignore life for the day—work, phonecalls, emails—  
that annoying tail-wagging mutt. Buoys bob like planets,  
each with its own biosphere of creatures and plants.  
It sounds like the unseen god washes his hands  
of the motor boat, the jet stream that is hurting him,  
the radio reporting the all-too-human news  
of the planet heating up, the awareness that the only species  
who laughs is also the only one who creates gods.  
He reflects, 'Ah, they've been at this deity-making for ever.  
A way of making something of themselves, Homo Importanticus.  
Let's cut them some slack. Where we would be without them?  
Soon they'll be no one here. Let them off for now.'

Dogus

### Epiphany

What I've been afraid of has come to pass  
--the vague nothing egging me on  
to hope, work, attempt change  
diverting me from nothing.  
Nothing has caught up with me.  
In the beginning was the strange  
nothing, and the nothing was made flesh,  
and no thing dwelt amongst us.  
What was all the fuss, all  
the fear? I gaze out the window:  
fields, glass, sky, lake, snow, hear the bell  
calling us to mass, to our nothing God  
of St Josephs and I feel nothing  
but relief. Something has come of nothing.

Gnosticus

## The Era of Busy

The drudgery of another day ticked off the list,  
the palimpsest already filling up with tomorrow's chores.  
We barely keep our snorkel above the relentless waves  
of busy-ness in a time that according to the soothsayers  
of our childhood—what with computers, mechanization—  
we'd be awash with oceans of free time, lolling the weeks away.  
But my first snatch of a few free moments in days  
--allowing me a quick read of short poems, scribble this  
on the back of tomorrow's list-- is waiting for an acquaintance  
who thankfully is late, waylaid maybe by the muses  
who these days fight rearguard action; the resistance, the partisans  
of freedom, the foam of a few moments to myself in a bar.

Gregory of Corkus

## Julie Sampson

### For those who say there are no more poems

i

Look at these swallows  
swooping -  
the intoxication of loops -  
and under  
blue

headlong

dives  
over butterfly-skims above  
the whites of this green gold field

It's easy to miss them -  
they sail close to the wind -  
to misunderstand the  
turn of their phrase,  
the twisted spell of their  
secret code

and what can you say  
of the white under-belly flash  
silking those exquisite plaits  
of wheat?

ii

Tell them how it was  
for us  
not so long ago  
in a world where

there were no ...  
mobile phones [*phone-home home-phone*  
*Phone*

*Home*]

MP3s  
MP4s  
Ninetendos  
You-tubes  
i-tunes  
Face-books

Smart phones *no*  
*Phone-home*  
*Home-phone*  
*Home ...*

where home was a place  
not a meeting-site  
in virtual space ...

*Phone ...*

iii

It's calm tonight  
we're floating on a sea a wheat-green  
gold  
alchemy  
each stalk waving a soul from  
Underworlds where fallow deer  
swim a  
fox prowls  
and you imagine you can see  
the baiji dolphin -  
even re-imagine  
Persephone -

*You wonder what  
she is doing  
the schedule she set with  
her mother and Hadeian  
Underground lover  
has, after all been going on  
for quite a while*

*(and earth is still going round)*

*No she's probably having  
a hedonistic time - out of it  
on ecstasy -  
and forgotten long ago  
what she came back for  
or got bored enticing  
those poor souls beneath*

*She's obviously content  
with her lot - lover  
keeps her happy, doesn't  
need her dose of sun  
and sky -*

*or, she's fed up being  
a tool between Mother  
and lover not wanting anymore  
to do their dirty work*

*She'll drowse in the home  
of her deep earth-bed  
heady with day-dream  
sleep and idylls of night  
on bedded rock  
for another 2000 years -  
so many poems will enter  
her head only  
fragments  
seep up to ground as  
white-wheat seeds -  
they'll pick them up with flints*

*until mother and lover  
resolve their differences*

iv

Today I watched the swallows  
violet-black their  
midday  
swoop  
over shadow and field

and a white belly uplift  
to the perch on phone-lines and on to heaven  
through broken  
skies – (they're after all  
above it all a hieroglyphic  
sign from God)

v

... where Home was not  
a place in space

and poet was  
a Poet

## Thomas O'Grady

### Makeover

*Vestis virum reddit*, she likes to quote  
(the Latin tongue a tickle on her lips):  
“Clothes make the man.” So why not just devote  
a diverting hour to her hands-on-hips  
appraisal of my mock-mannequin pose,  
an all-of-me sizing-up of collar,  
chest, waist, inseam—hatband to wing-tipped toes:  
mere time well spent, not my last half-dollar.  
That I would invest, every red cent,  
one aisle over in eye-catching *Lingerie*:  
my pleasure to assess and nod assent—  
a befitting end to a frivolous spree.  
*Carpe diem!* Tickle me head to foot.  
Take no man's measure by a pinstriped suit.

**William Oxley**

**In this Daft and Stupid Art**

*(with apologies to D.T.)*

In this daft and stupid art  
for which I was hung  
in chains from the start  
because somewhere I'd read  
lovers undressing for love  
risk death through cold  
unless they stay in bed,  
leaving the rest of the night to us  
poets to moon in the dark  
before raging home on a late-night bus  
pissed as newts and singing like larks,  
spewing contents of lung and heart –  
not to mention tummies at times –  
and all for the sake of an art  
that rhymes. Or it does sometimes.

Appealing to the proud man apart  
or not as the case may be,  
or the man-in-the-moon-and-bus-queue  
and to every woman from nurse to tart,  
not to mention our very own muse  
who shares with us a leading part  
in this daft and stupid art.

**Necessarye Coniunction**

To Ezra P. wrote T.S.E.  
'Il miglior fabbro'  
Said Ezra P. modestly,  
'That sure is so!'

**Isabel Gallego – young Broadsheet poet**

**Misspellings or *Lapsus Calami***

From the place between the mind  
that knows and a neuron in day-dream  
they crawl like sub-species onto the page  
and peek out among words.

Each skeleton a framework of letters  
is unfamiliar, yet not so unfamiliar  
as to be alien: their bones whisper  
of a parallel world

where glooves are knitted with an extra finger;  
a man's sweetheart blushes more  
than appropriate; where they fall to their knees  
and they pray to a Good.