

AGENDA

Welcome to the poetry supplement to the 'Past Histories' issue, Vol. 43 No. 1.
The following poets and artists come from the U.K., Ireland, Canada, the U.S. and France.



Michael Flaherty: Nameless Road

Michael Flaherty comes from Brandon, Co. Kerry, attended the Sligo School of Art, was in Edinburgh for a time and retired to Kerry in 1988. His apocalyptic landscapes are said to remind of Van Gogh, Paul Henry or Sean McSweeney, though his style is highly individual: 'a layered process, of great stretches of time and slow change.' His 'frenetic emotional intensity' recalls the German Expressionists. He says, 'No city or landscape is truly real until it has been given the quality of myth by a writer or painter, or its association with great events.' His work is exhibited in the Greenlane Gallery, Dingle, Co. Kerry. www.greenlanegallery.com

Sarah Hymas lives in Lancaster where she is a puppeteer, collaborates with a musician and edits Flax Books, publishers of digital anthologies. Her poems have been published in anthologies, magazines, pamphlets and multimedia exhibits around the U.K.

Nidderdale

Father was just back from the quarry,
his Humber still dusty, when both legs warped
like wet cement, sending his body dirtwards.
I took his car to tell the Killinghall men
the news, then went down dale, as planned,
to Starbeck to check out brick order.
Father mistrusted their count. The cheques
in his pocked had to be banked before close of day.

As I drove alongside the Nidd, I saw
myself become two rivers, split to navigate
the island of my dead father: one sky-silvered,
quick as the trained son; the other muddied.
his chest, rising with grass and rocks, prevented
me from seeing where the two might meet.

Postmarked today

A forget-me-not envelope opened in the dark hours
of a hospital ward, as honeysuckle stolen from Scarborough.

He writes in soft leaded whispers, long-limbed
like the wind, furnishing my mind with pictures

of our future bathroom suite with matching mirror and lino,
in a hand that cups and curls like breath in sleep.

This paper, part flesh part linen, has fibres for endurance
beyond us, if secured in a beech box with brass keys.

I keep my script miniscule, my vowels compressed in prayer
and the spaces between words filled with the guiding spirit

that joined us, so none of my patients hear me agreeing
how a nice bathroom will make all the difference to our house.

But I hope our children will read my permanent ink
and one day inhale what I now fold, tuck and seal away.

Lucy Hamilton lives in Hythe, Kent. She is working on translations from French prose works into poem versions and on another project based on the pre-Islamic epic of Antar and Abla – in terza rima. Some of her work is in the current issue of *Modern Poetry in Translation*.

Shipwreck

Opening my pocket canon Gospel
for a quote about the ship at Capernaum,
I find the seeds she saved me from her garden
in a yellow envelope, named and sealed.

The agapanthus had seemed to cast a spell
that held me through all her delirium
and shock. As if the dew and early sun
had lulled the horror I couldn't dispel.

But her words struck me to the very heart:
Je suis naufragée sur une plage déserte
d'une île inconnue. I felt in awe

of her deep need. It was the stone that hurt
and hardened me: to see that in the storm
it was her priest who brought her back to shore.

Blackbird in August

Small hunchback in the hot, crusty earth,
her wings outspread as screens to fend off heat,
she looks like something lost or obsolete
merging with the umber dust of birth.

While you, a prisoner in your chair, thirst
in folds and hollows of your body. You meet
incarceration not as a defeat
but as an implication of your worth.
Your long-lost wedding-ring's returned at last
with magic of a marriage long-since dead —
some reconciliation with the past.

It fits your finger just as if you'd said
it had a second chance — and it has asked
to circle man, woman and bird instead.



Suzanne Clark: Birds on the Horizon – oil on gesso canvas

Suzanne has a studio, with several other artists, in Brighton. Her work has been widely exhibited in the U.K. and Holland. She is featured in past **Agenda Broadsheets** and in the most recent **Broadsheet 9** on this site.

Jill Townsend lives near Farnham in Surrey.

Two Birches

We named them Nanna and Grandad
since a bequest had paid for them
but, though patches are spotless white,
they stand in threadworn underwear:

Baucis and Philemon, facing
an accident-scarred road junction,
breathing together steadily
through exhaust fumes - CO₂ in,
oxygen, just as slowly, out.

A good thirty feet, they have grown
almost unrecognisable
from the pair of six foot striplings
we brought home in the Allegro,
sprinkling soil on the finish,
heads already through the sunroof.

Two Poems from The Hunterian Museum Revisited

(The Royal College of Surgeons, London)

Birds' Heads

See how their heads float
in air without wings, bodies;
they are caught with the idea
of song in their throats
where disbelief bubbles

like the unremarkable
music of the grouse,
the eider's coo-ru-er.
Only the puffin's usual
silence rings true.

Quins: Blackburn 1786

Synchronized even in death
they are rising to the surface
of the tank they share

and all these babies
who never had a chance
press their noses on the glass,

their science fiction masks,
huge heads, too surprised
to think of crying.

Would they know they're us?
Does any baby, staring
at the blurry husk

of the stranger who coos
and provides?
Would they refuse

to be separated now
for homes and love
if they discovered how?

Merryn McCarthy Marshall has taught English Literature for most of her life. On her M.A. course at the University of Sussex, her poems, some of which were based on Virginia Woolf, won the Robin Lee Poetry Prize two years running. Her poems have been published in *English* and *Agenda*.

Letting Go

to my mother

You are dying with the swollen river,
turmoil of wind and rain.
We try to calm you, soothe you,
cradle your familiar hands,
your warm tapering fingers,
the thumb I have inherited,
knowing that in giving comfort
we seek our own. Softly urgent,
we name our presence, willing you
to bless us with a smile, dreading
your going. But we pray
for you to be gathered up
for a voyage, hearing seabirds call,
feeling the strength of the river's flow



Michael Flaherty: Private Point of View

Marc Harris lives in Cardiff. His work has recently appeared in *Agenda*.

Swallows

Like darting fish
flashing in the shallows,
they trawl the slack;
swallows.

They come in waves
with fins for wings
to fish the ocean sky –

trawl their catch;

suck their minnows dry.

John Gibbens was born in Cheshire in 1959 and grew up in West Germany and West Cumbria. He moved to London at 18, where he has worked as typist, secretary, typesetter and, laaterly, journalist. He was deputy editor of *The Oldie* for a while, and is now a freelance newspaper subeditor. He won an Eric Gregory Award in 1982 and was Southwark Poet of the Year in 2005. He published a *Collected Poems* in 2000 and *The Nightingale's Code: a poetic study of Bob Dylan* in 2001. 'Shelf-Life', a column about his adventures in secondhand bookshops, appears occasionally in the *Sunday Telegraph*. There are eight CDs of his Songs with The Children available.

View

How does a view become
more and more dear to us
and more clear,
which the days of wind brush,
of rain wash, and of sun
bring more near,
the parts weld to a sum,
patches of cloud, trees, air,
such pieces,
adjusting, exchange their
looks, light, each unnamed form,
their faces,
for the seasons' causes,
being veiled, being bared,
stormed or calm,
as if long, deep regard
made the world virtuous
for someone?

An Invitation

Come to the garden surrounded with trees,
The oaks are dark with pleasure of the sun,
The fullness of its yielding has begun.
While the air's still sweet with smell of sweetpeas,
Fruit boughs are bending with work of the bees
And beanpole pyramids lean, overfreighted
With fine purple pods; beneath their serrated,
Prickled leaves, the cucurbits sprawl at ease,
Which swell in a week to immensities.
Crowns of the earlies are yellow and done,
The fat little gems of their spuds are spun.
May gentle phrases of an August breeze,
Conjuring scents and sights and savours mated,
Murmur you rumours of how you're awaited.



Faye Joy: Winter Garden – embroidery
Faye’s work features in the previous online supplement to the Rilke issue of *Agenda*.

Dylan Willoughby lives in Studio City, California. His poems have appeared recently in *Stand* and *Shenandoah* in the U.S. and are forthcoming in *Salmagundi* and *Southern Humanities Review*. Littoral Press is putting out a broadside of one poem. He will be an artist-in-residence at the Yaddo Writers’ Colony in spring 2008.

Recipe from a Friend

for Calum Carmichael

i

Blanche the Isles, then let the glaciers retreat,
Tilling the land with an icy rasp, drift sheets
Will thaw and pool into peaty heaths
Dusted lightly with rock flour.
Soak in sea air, be careful to avoid heat,
Liberally drizzle rainshowers,

Then wait

ii

Fetch some peat briquettes to feed the smoky fire
(The Rayburn's starved and loves meat from the mire)
Grab the bucket of Solan Loch water
I pinched from the nearby still –
It has the color of tinned pears, put up to light –
Now pour, but don't overflow

The pot I found near the *rewins and rubbidge*
Of Dunyvaig Castle – we're making porridge
Not hasty brose! – think of that lost drawbridge's
Weep-hole, how the water trickles
(The oats won't take kindly to a deluge)
Now get some handfuls of meal

From the gernal, slowly sprinkle the oats
With a gentle touch, like playing grace notes –
Note *dare*, but *taorluath* – think of the note
Of gathering, the note of love
I'll get the spurkle to stir the pot
And warm my sopped socks in the stove

iii

Mind that you stir deiseal so you don't spoil
The blanter, it's a way the cook can foil
That infernal stealer of the soul
Who rises in widdershins
Turns porridge into English gruel
And pulls other shenanigans

iv

Now listen to the shrill pee-wit of the lapwing
And the chwee-ow of the chough diving
And make your piobaireachd like their singing
Let's start with Colla Mo Run
Feel the fire of its warning on your tongue
Let the chanter sing what can't be sung

Oh, there'll be time for swimming at Kilnaughton
Or playing in the ruins where Vikings fought once –
Think, now, of that piper captured in the bastion
His fingers playing a *siubhal*
His *crunluath* not yet forgotten,
The gust of Ceòl Mòr fueling
My stove's slow burn.

v

Now as you look towards Antrim and Kintyre
Playing the Flames of Wrath, think of the fire
On your fingertips, a rousing choir
As I salt the swelled oats
Look, your song has made the stovetop flare!
Tomorrow, you'll get yours with a moat

Robin Maunsell is a chartered accountant who lives in Lincolnshire. He paints and had an exhibition 3 years ago near Cambridge. A poetry collection, *Night Sea at Aldeburgh*, was published by the Shoestring Press last year.

Making His Mark

Evening. Mauve over North London.
He walks the station ramp, across
the car park, a razor gap in the fence
and he's become a bush merging
into undergrowth, a shadow sliding
the well-worn path down to the line,
spray can in his sports-bag loaded with lime

green. He knows how to cross the rails,
how the snake of lights of an approaching train
is on you quicker than Jed
and the purple gang. Emptying
his head through a mist-haze
onto the wall of an electricity sub-station,
a brick arch, a workman's tea drinking
hidey, is a setting free. Tonight it's

*wembley tossers/smile, you bastards/
red ken up yours/next station vomitsville*

which he believes will be held in the mind
of people travelling to work in the morning,
up and down moving staircases,
along passages between stations,
across bridges, in lifts to offices,
let slip to colleagues: words
released into the blue like flocks of birds.



Claudine Fournier: Medieval Contemporien

Claudine Fournier studied painting in Paris for four years at the Martenot School. Her passion for a rich palette of pure and glowing tones is assembled into her vivid compositions. She worked in a studio in Montmartre, Paris for several years. Her work can be seen in the Greenlane Galleries, Dingle, Co. Kerry and Paris www.greenlanegallery.com

Penny Brinnen is a part-time student at the University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham where she is studying a Creative Writing degree. She moved there from North Wales and has been writing for twelve years.

Framilode

I am moving, leaving the canal-side
stable with its damp and draughts,
rippled reflections on the ceiling

Giverny sunsets and twin moons;
its humble foundations – and rent
that rises like the morning mist.

I am exchanging paths for pavements
a universe of stars for street lamps
cows for cars and crows for people;

the rush of the river in seven directions
for the din of rush hour and fumes,
its urban foxes and howling sirens.

I shall miss the seasons and creatures;
the honking of geese and swans
as I migrate to crowds of my kind,

to pastures warmer and drier
where no duvets of cloud
shadow, veil the land.

Lichen will no longer form on my limbs,
blisters of moss – or rust;
I will be carried on a new

Poles Apart

Trees
without
roots
or
branch-
es stand
quietly
in relay,
their
displac-
ement
measured,
unequal
to
the
hills.

Winds
beat
their
cords
umbil-
ically
tied,
they
whistle
and hum
major
notes
and
minor in
perpetual
encore.

Strings
are
plucked
launching
Valkyries
and
acrobatic
larks,
while
red
squirrels
trapeze
to the
chorus
of
swallows.

Miles
high,
victories
of geese
vortex
the skies
taking
their
calls
trans-
atlantic,
beyond
Gulliver's
game
of twigs
and twine.



Claudine Fournier



Claudine Fournier: Ephémères

Julia Fairlie is 53 and lives in West Cork, Ireland. Her poems have appeared in *Stinging Fly* and on VirtualWriter.net.

Gullible

A man charms the birds from the trees.
The jackdaws persevere with their nest.
You win my trust, I am tame,
I take food from your hand.

Enchantment is thwarted
as the hand that feeds me bites.
I persevere in thwarting the jackdaws.

John White was born and grew up in County Londonderry. He read English at Oxford, and has worked as a civil servant, teacher, and since 1999 as an officer with Oxfordshire County Council. He recently completed the Oxford Masters Degree in Creative Writing, passing with distinction. Several of his poems appeared in *Oxford Poets 2007: An Anthology* (Carcenet).

Apples

i

One who knew was Uncle Tom
who'd show you how to cup
the apple, twist the stem.

He came from Portadown
the orchard country, took up
with my aunt who'd have thrown

a peel over her shoulder
unbroken, or lodged the pips
discreetly in the fire

and saw they fitted to a T.
In North Tyrone he'd switch
to other produce, slowly.

Tomatoes were his pride,
the apple's life from stalk
to flower unsafe – a fusillade

would fall and sweetly seep
into the soil, slug black
fit only for the cider heap,

not sturdy like the apple
crops of old. At home I climb
a ladder so unstable

I've my mother deaved
with worry, freckled limbs
stretched out in firm belief

I'm fit to reach the stars.
The gods eat apples and stay young
the pagans said. My ladder's

heading for a fall.
I cup my knee, stunned,
branded brown and purple.

ii

We're talking planters
rather than the wild, the 'bitter
apple' only a young elephant
could eat but which with soap
a rarity would nicely lather up
when sliced and rubbed,
or the 'Sodom' - once reputed
to dissolve in ash and smoke
if plucked, but on parched plains
quenches the Grants and 'Tommies':
what gazelles have found to work
the tribesmen ape, boiling the roots
to fortify their stomachs.

iii

For my sister

All that training just to paint
domestic scenes – my mother's cookers
hanging green beside the hedge,
the whitewashed wall behind
of the Orange Hall where once Big Ian
had stood on top of a trailer in a strop
and swore he'd drive the Southern foe
into the sea and hold them under
with such sturdy lungs we had no need
to prise open the bedroom window.

Timothy Cooke is retired and lives with his wife in the Lake District, close to Ullswater and the site of Wordsworth's 'Daffodils'. From 1969 to 1997 he taught English Literature, particularly Renaissance and modern poetry at university level first in Italy, then in Northern Ireland and finally in London. He lived in India as a small child, spent a year at university in Vietnam and during his compulsory National Service, he learnt Russian, as well as French and Italian. He has travelled widely.

Fossil Hunting at White Park Bay, Antrim

(at the height of the Troubles)

Quite unremarkable
to a child's eye, those dull,
wave-sucked discuses.
surely that strawberry pebble
or that liquorice all-sorts shell
would be better choices

from the sea's corner shop.
but for us those sweet-jar splashes
are just flags to adorn the pins
on General Oblivion's map
to show where his Panzer putsch had
paused at the fragile dunes

regrouping before his last
assault on those bunt hearth-places
left by late Stone-Age women
who needed no tortured Christ
to tutor their sacrifices:
birth-pangs, dead kids, drudgery no man

could bear. Did terrorist arrows
end their poor peace? Barbed flints lurk
still in those charcoaled rounds
that edge their message of sorrows
to us with the decorous black
great grandmother used. Mourning bands

scarcely last the week now. We smother
death's after-throes in our minds, wipe eyes dry
quick. No pornographer's smut
embarrasses more than a father
in grief. That round stone's blue grey
's enough for the funeral suit.

Then it's quickly back to the din
of the anaesthetic dream-box: joys
and terrors that mayn't
survive a finger-flick. Tide's nearly in.
I stand on the sea's dampening midden, eyes
Alert for grey stones, see the glint

of a quartzite tear, a spearhead wounding
grey lias sides. Take the hammer,
break open the drab disc's heart with care,
reveal the crystalline windings
of a lifeline transfigured in rock,
trace its history's coils to the core

and remember those farms on the border,
those grim streets where wife, mother, nun
like as these grey stones, though foes in belief
hide, through fate's whims or high-toned murder,
behind time-hardened faces their own
precious ammonites of lost life.



Tomás O'Ciobháin: Geimhreadh 06

Tomás comes from County Kerry and is inspired by 'the Kerry of language, song, story and personality, the talk of the land.' He lives and teaches in Cork and is renowned for his graphic work – for his etchings and engravings for which he has numerous awards. He views painting as the collaboration between the artist and the fusing of ideas in trying to grasp the physical sense

of a place. He says: 'The work predates my own personal feelings. They are always ahead of my epiphany. The work leads me to a place.'

David Rain has published eight sf/fantasy novels under the pseudonym Tom Arden, and is now working on a literary novel under his own name. His short stories and articles have appeared in magazines and journals including *Interzone*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Critical Quarterly*, *English* and *English Studies*. These are his first poems to be published.

Odeons of Odessa

In Odeons of Odessa I have seen
White monuments to men who held the keys
To all the world. Too many have there been
To number now. They say resistant trees

Felled long before our time may not be dead.
Meticulous, through floorboards they've become,
They crack and shiver underneath our tread:
Like animals, the trees are never dumb.

From Odeons of Odessa have been raised
Immortal pictures heaved upon the white
Of plenitude surpassing any praised
In bread and wine. I once lived through a night

So long I thought that day would never break:
I hid amongst the chandeliers and chains.
A boy becomes a man and must forsake
The prospect of the sun, but teeming rains

Still offer him relief. Ah, for some spark
In me, some charm, to break the cobwebbed spell
That Odeons of Odessa in the dark
Have wrought upon me! In the woods a well

Was sunk a thousand years ago and now
It overflows. Expectant in the world
Are those who draw their breath but never bow
To Odeons of Odessa, flags unfurled.

Ethiop

We find that maize may often drop
Upon the plains of Ethiop,
Though puzzled children, nosing near,
Will make us wonder what we fear
In Ethiop, in Ethiop.

The pianist tinkles 'You're the Top'
In Harry's Place in Ethiop,
While roaring boys out on the town
Contend for who should wear the crown
Of Ethiop – the perfect prop!

They say that time must have a stop,
And stop it has in Ethiop.
Like old Italian men in bars
Who rode on Mussolini's cars
Through Ethiop, past palm, past kop,

We sit and tremble, eyes a-pop,
And wonder why in Ethiop,
As other places lately mapped,
Our little show has left us trapped:
A sure-fire flop! O Ethiop,

The branch the woodsman fears to lop
May be most rotten. Hope's a sop:
But on the highways of the heart,
We crouch and pray for rain to start.
(On squares in dust, the children hop.)

Redeem me blind, when summer's crop
Has failed again in Ethiop:
But gold and silver I have seen,
And gardens aqueous, gold and green,
In Ethiop, in Ethiop.



Faye Joy: Yellow Garden

Sue Chenette lives in Toronto. She won the Canadian Poetry Association's 2001 Shaunt Basmajian Award for her chapbook, *The Time Between Us*. She is the author of two more recent chapbooks, *A Transport of Grief*, and *Solitude in Cloud and Sun*. Her poems appear in literary journals in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and in the Parisian journal *Upstairs at Duroc*; they have been anthologized in *A Time of Trial* and *In Fine Form*, the Canadian collection of formal poetry. Her first full-length collection, *Slender Human Weight*, is forthcoming from Guernica Editions. A classically trained pianist who performs and teaches in Toronto, she grew up in northern Wisconsin and has lived in Canada since 1972.

African Music

for Adelia Hultgren Jones

Her cheek still warm when I arrived.

Smell of menthol, unguent, undertone of urine.

Bruises blacken the back of her hand
where she scratched deep,
wedding band loose, now simply
a golden round object.
The white down of her hair almost too fine
to feel between fingertips.
Forehead wrinkles cut by furrows,
only below the faint widow's peak
smooth skin soft as an infant's.

At death, what spirits abandon bone?

Was there an infant, cradle-lulled,
tomboy balanced barefoot on barbed wire,
young teacher with pupils in a blizzard, huddled?

Had these slipped away long since, molted selves,
or were they breathed out
into the room's dense sunlight?

Aged, blind, her lap-robe smoothed
by the young black aide who wheels her chair,
tells her she's lookin' fine today,
in his deep lilting tones.

She'd yelled and yelled
the night before, "African music!
I want African music!"
until her voice was gone,
not even a whisper.

Chrys Salt is an award-winning writer and theatre director. She has performed country wide and in the USA. Her poems have been widely published, anthologised and broadcast. She has received many grants and awards. Her first volume of poetry, *Inside Out*, was published by Autolycus. She co-edits *Markings*, based in The Bakehouse, an arts venue in S. W. Scotland.

Mulberries

for the 80th Birthday of Bernard Kops

Mulberries...
mulberries in the communal garden
pendulant, succulent
grass squashed black with them
branches loaded, offering them up
and you gorging your vampire mouth
a child of eight – not eighty

We eat with much more 'politesse'
each careful berry twisted from
its stalk, intact, in case it bleeds
and spoils a shirt or dress.

But you, greedy for mulberries
stained to the careless core
with ruby juice eat more and more
juice running bloody rivers
down fingers, teeth, chin, cuff
as if you supped on glorious maidenhood
and there could never be enough
of your uncomplicated feasting.
Nothing between your hunger and the tree;
the impulse and the eating.

'Mulberries are Life!' you roar
and stuff and stuff.

She Dips her Brush in Light

for Ethel Walker

She dips her brush in light
makes lamps
of tulips

silvers knives of wind

haloes
dark edges

loch and haar

trims
cumulous

rims
porcelain
Imari
Glass

the colour
in her head makes
shadow sharp

fires sky with coals

of crimson
 amaranth

Craignish Mull Crinnan Islay
mountain inlet bay
light-boxed
made luminous
springboards for light
to leap
through time and paint
a resonance

 not of those things we see
 but what we are

and what we take away.



Ian Perry is a poet and artist from Bristol. A poem of his is in **Broadsheet 9**.

Ann Leahy's poems have won many prizes in Ireland and the UK, amongst which is the **Patrick Kavanagh Award (2001)** for her first collection (due from Arlen House, 2008).

Her poems have twice been commended in the **British National Poetry Competition** (1999 and 2004). She has been shortlisted for a **Hennessy Award**, and for the **Hamish Canham Prize**, 2006. She lives in Drumcondra, Dublin.

My Life as a Wardrobe

Clothes hangers line up, each one
a collarbone inside a form of who
I used to be or who I'd like to be.

Mistakes of seasons past
trail from those I try
not to take down any more:

a cashmere twin set
I didn't care for;
a halter-top that came

with strings attached;
a houndstooth suit
that never flattered me.

Meanwhile aspirations glitter
from evening dresses I confine
to plastic transparencies.

Who I am depends on several
mismatched hangers at one end.
There never seem to be enough

with this year's losses and gains on display
as separates that coordinate, their stitching
under strain at the top of a side slit.

Time going by I recognise in shapes
too wide on the shoulders
too short on the thigh

or in a jacket whose stress line on the hips
is becoming a permanent wrinkle
like the one between my brows

or like that semi-invisible seam
between what is and what might have been.

Roger Kennedy is a Child Psychiatrist in the NHS, working at the Cassel Hospital, Richmond, and also a psychoanalyst in private practice. He has had several books and many papers published, but this is his first poetry publication. The following poems are from a sequence addressed to his middle son, now 19, who was knocked down by a skip truck when he was 13 and lost a leg but otherwise survived intact.

Poems to J

The Dream, imaging the last minutes
before the HEMS arrival
turned round the crumpled leg;
its underside strangely unaffected.
The school bits of my groaning son,
his tie, trousers and white shirt,
all smudged and disorderly,
an exaggerated version of normality,
as if this were merely a bit of a fight,
his fourth encounter with some
local gang of muggers,
seeking more Nokias,
yet his eyes were drawn away
to some immobile place.

The leg itself, now detached,
began a dance, pumped
by a pulse of blood.
A lonely leg, its trainer
trailing care-free laces,
kicking an imaginary ball,
defied the collision's logic,
denying the reality of physics.
And the music, the music stirred
the leg into phantom rhythms,
as if still connected
to the nervous energy
of one who would never complain
or curse any kind of pain.

The skateboard his friends signed
hung over the head –
multi-coloured signatures peppered with
miscellaneous arrows and exclamations,
signs of boyish complicity that so
overpowered them that they stopped
playing their sport, as if their limbs
and his were intimately connected.
Not something they were aware of choosing,
and not even aware that they had hung up
their boards, but as if adolescence had so
taken hold of them overnight and driven
them off their balance that their new bodies
found the endless circuits impenetrable.



Patsy Farr: Back Room Blues

Patsy was born in Surrey and for 14 years as a professional musician performed blues, jazz and folk music before painting full time. In 1997 when she settled near Dingle, Co. Kerry, inspired by the wonderful visual images and the light and shade whose layers she unveils. 'Painting is alchemy', she claims. Her work is displayed in the Greenlane Gallery, Dingle.

www.greenlanegallery.com



Patsy Farr: Mending the Nets

Louise Fabiani is a science writer and lives in Montreal. Her alchemically inspired first book, *The Green Alembic*, was published by Véhicule Press (Signal Editions) in 1999. These poems are from *The Alchemist's Lover*, which is hardly about alchemy at all. She also writes fiction, usually about social issues.

The Day I Fell out of Love

The day I fell in love with him,
sunflowers blinked under a searing sky,
thrushes dashed about cultured lawns in search of grubs,
and traffic snarled on my corner:
the lights telling everyone when to stop or go
had gone out.

For months after, I was sustained
by a stubborn belief in infinite probabilities.
Forced to crossed off this permutation or that,
I drew up short against the undeniable truth:
he was gone. And even if he returned,
in a form of his own choosing, of course,
he would remain in that murky horizon
where hope waves its little brave flag.

On the day I fell out of love,
the fog cleared with a smart breeze from the sea.
Looking down, I noticed lines in the pavement.

But when I raised my head,
all had changed.
The thrushes always knew more than I did.

Pregnant Pause

With light and knowledge you filled me,
and with a craving for tart candies, fast cars
and full moons.
And my head began to swell
with the ripest response to all your attention
and the thoroughness of your instincts.

(It was not too late to bear,
after all.)

Fecund as I'd never been
in a decade of earnest marriage,

I was lifted by our salacious connections
to plentifulness
and a celebratory, thudding pulse.
And the new life came close to quickening.

But
the flicker died in the first trimester,
a sickening pang signifying nothingness.
And there was blood on the grass
where the purest snow should have been.

And then you were back in your harbour town
and I was alone on my mountain,
until my husband returned with his arms full of winter roses
as red as pride
and as sharp as truth.



Michael Flaherty: Beginish

