

JAGS POETRY NIGHT
2005



Guest Poet
Andrew Motion

How to Paint a Perfect London Night

Take some well-worn paving stones;
Lay them, cracked, dirty with the footprints of many Londoners
Engraved upon them.
Give this pavement to a kerb
For many children to use as a tightrope next morning
On their way to school.
Sketch a road
And paint two yellow lines on it beside the kerb.
Add houses, flats and apartments,
Places ordinary people call home.
Deposit a busy London pub on the corner of your street,
Echoing with the drunken shouts and raucous laughter
Of the late night drinkers who frequent it.
Outline a lamp post,
Then another,
Then another
And another
That pollute the already unnaturally grey night.
Help yourself to a small handful of stars;
Scatter them pell-mell across the leaden sky.
Let a dead, yellow moon emerge from behind a cloud,
Emitting nothing but a faint glow;
And wait.
Wait for a siren to split the night,
A taste of danger in a now peaceful place.
The first raindrop falls
And your perfect London night is now complete.

Emma Simmonds

Waltzing with the Memories

Moonlight, figures, shadows, breeze,
Jagged cliff, swaying trees.

Lapping waves on stony shore.
Standing there, lost in awe.

Aging woman, little girl.
Young men watching women twirl.

Rocking shadows, swaying feet
Moving to the silent beat.

How entrancing is the bay,
Lost in dreamland, far away.

Am I awake or am I asleep?
Across my mind the shadows creep.

Like a star that never dies
I see passion in their eyes.

Memories of a happy day
People laugh, children play.

Silence, everlasting peace,
Here our souls can find release.

Sarah Thornton

I am the first cry of a newborn baby

I am the first cry of a newborn baby,
The new pair of shoes for a rich lady;
I am the helpless whine from a suffering child,
An old man that has gone wild.

I am the crispness from a straw hat,
The long soft fur from a ginger cat;
I am all the colours of the rainbow,
A small girl full of woe.

I am an old worn-out photograph from the Second World War,
The wet footprints from an animal's paw;
I am the tattered writing from a very old book,
A pair of beady eyes turning around to look.

I am the sound of a film from a video on loan,
The murmuring ring from the telephone;
I am the transparent glass from a glimmering window,
A wacky light from a theatre, at least I think so.

I am the salt from the ocean so blue,
The flutter of a bird's wing as it flew;
I am whatever you want me to be;
I am the first cry of a newborn baby.

Katie Rhodes

The Worm

The old man shifted,
Sending wide wrinkles cascading down his spine.
As he lifted his flabby chin,
He creased the chain of periwinkle that scurried through his robust belly.
Blushing a rosy hue,
He donned his fleshy polar neck and wriggled.
Like a column of pink string he lay there.
The rich soil in the pleat of his skin created a murky outline
Which emphasised the chain of entwining spirals winding down his
dappled mass.
A furrow delved into his grainy, wise complexion
As he stood dignified, a humble worm in full magnificence.

Amelia Coe

Humpty Dumpty

Humpty Dumpty sat in his cot.
Humpty Dumpty cried a lot.
No matter what his mother said or did,
Humpty Dumpty did not do what he was bid.

Humpty Dumpty didn't eat his food,
Because Humpty Dumpty was in a bad mood.
So in the end his father said,
"It's time we put you back to bed."

Laura Moon

Six Ways of the Dice

One is the lonely number,
Unwanted when on the board;
One is unique and special.
Only one Jesus, our Lord.

Two is a happy couple,
They say in a pod like two peas;
Two is the eyes of the dice
And two hungry mouths to feed.

Two's company, three's a crowd;
The Father, Son, the Holy Ghost;
The good, bad and the ugly;
The three kings who travelled the most.

Four is the perfect balance,
The legs to make my table stand;
Difference of beast and man;
The fingers on my small hand.

Now on to the "Famous five";
Five times table, piece of cake;
One of five vowels in every word;
When told "just a few", five I take.

That brings us to half a dozen;
At six foot you're standing tall;
But number of the devil
Is the highest of them all.

Sophia Pardon

Down in the trenches

Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.
I am on duty in the night,
Watching them battle a gruesome fight.
Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.

Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.
Gas is almost everywhere;
It's filled my lungs and now the air.
Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.

Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.
The Germans are coming closer now;
Through abandoned trenches they plough.
Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.

Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.
Aid has come with food at last;
The few supplies have vanished fast.
Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.

Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.
The stench of death is all around.
Our clothes have been taken from bodies we've found.
Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.

Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.
The shots just keep on firing at our team;
You can hear their final scream.
Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.

Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.
Two bullets in my head—
Surely now I must be dead.
Down in the trenches down, down, deep,
Lots of men lying down asleep.

Holly Killen

The Scirosnos

I'm the Scirosnos, a vile animal
With the teeth of a tiger and the horns of a bull.
My claws are as long as the height of Mount Iscus
And I have stings on the ends of my whiskers.

I greedily splunch down little Wongchelli
And I love to eat Mingpings if they aren't too smelly
And I would watch out if I were you
'Cause I like to eat people just like you!

But alas! The Wongchelli began to die out,
And so did the Ningpings, because of the drought
And the people of the village down the way
All got scared of me and ran away.

So gradually I got hungry and hungrier
And my big round belly got grumbly and grumblier
Until at last it came to pass that I lay down and died.
I closed my eyes with one last goodbye.

But... the Scirosnos, the vile animal?
With the teeth of a tiger and the horns of a bull?
Lie down and die? No! not at all!
I just got very, very small.
Then I grew, and I grew, and I grew, and I grew until
Pop! I was once more a vile animal
With the teeth of a tiger and the horns of a bull,
And I grabbed them and killed them and ate them all!

Susanna Lyness

The Skediarthigh

Rammdy rammdy up and down,
Over the bridge
And through the town.

Squidgy squidgy through the gap,
Through the tunnel
And out the flap.

Chanti chanti over the hill,
On to green pastures
And into the mill.

Bubblebop bubblebop to the sea,
Below the cliffs
Sand you will see.

Courching courching round and round,
Trees and bushes
On top of the ground.

Kattlekee kattlekee, hold on tight,
The wind is strong
And soon will be night.

Slithele slithele, toss and turn,
Back to our houses,
But soon we'll return.

Alice Best

The Dork

A young girl named Yasmin from York,
Developed a penchant for pork.
While asleep in her bed,
She grew a new head
And by morning she looked like a dork.

A dork is a small furry mammal,
Not unlike a Bactrian Camel.
It hides in the mist
And hates the dentist,
Which accounts for its green tooth enamel.

Enamel is harder than hard,
Not sloppy and slimy like lard.
It sticks to your chest,
Like a tight rubber vest,
So when painting – just be on your guard!

Nancy Hine

The House by the Bay

The house was a shadow of moonlight
Against the dark blue sky;
The trees were swaying so calmly,
Tapping the passers by;
The lake was a glistening shimmer,
The moon hitting the bay,
And Rosie soon came walking, slowly, slowly, slowly
Walking, down the path
Making her way.

She stopped by the big brass oak door
And stroked the damp, cold wood;
A shiver went down her back now
And she trembled where she stood.
Out her pocket came a big key
Encrusted with rust and sweat.
She pushed it into the lock; it turned,
Crunchy and wet.

The door sprang open,
With an echo and a hiss.
A spider scuttled beside her – she knew something was amiss.
'Hello?' she called through the darkness,
But there was no reply;
But a clang came, and a whisper,
So hard to define.

Then a face came whirring towards her,
So fast it made her scream.
She fell on through the darkness –
But this wasn't a dream

Tanya Marie Duodu

Twigs

Twenty twigs in a vase,
Resting on the edge,
Like twenty dry worms
Waiting to move.
I pick a long twig out.
I peel the curly strips off it,
Its chocolate arms wide open,
Waiting to embrace.
It smells of grass, wood and rain.
Nineteen twigs in a vase,
Each with unique colour and position.
They are longing for water and food.
Hungry buds turn brown,
Like beady eyes, closing.
Nineteen twigs in a vase,
Remembering the time when
They were well fed, and part
Of a beautiful tree,
But those times are over.

Maria Sohrabi

Saba and the Watermelon

One haunting eve in Tel Aviv,
Came along a creeping thief.
His hand was slight, his eyes were bright;
He snuck through the humid desert night.
Quietly,
 Quietly,
 Quietly.

Moonbeams lit the fertile spot
Where reigned over the melon plot
The largest watermelon green
The creeping thief had ever seen.
Quietly,
 Quietly,
 Quietly.

He placed his hand upon its skin.
He knew he was about to sin,
But watermelon's flesh is sweet
And best for little boys to eat.
Quietly,
 Quietly,
 Quietly.

Hannah Karas

Dancers in the Night

I move,
As others do the same,
In time to the beat of his rhythmic heart;
His face sallow and pearly white,
Against the luminous light that is the moon.

Footsteps echo around the eerie space;
Skirts swish and wave
Like limp branches of a willow tree.
We pivot gradually,
Not daring enough to glance at each other,
Our heads stay gently bowed.
His unwavering breath keeping me still and content,
His undeviating stance firm and locked.

Hands clasped, though carefully entwined,
We sway, placidly.
This pleasurable hour unknown to so many.
Our dainty and jaunty steps
Idly scuffing and engraving the turf.

Into the wild adventure of the night we depart,
Leaving the music and dancing to fade
To just a memory.

Quinta Pusey

My Room

The darkest hour is just before dawn
The fan whirrs and clicks
Making paper on the desk
Feebly flap
Like dying butterflies.

Rain drums on the roof
The window is open
The blind flaps, and the sill
Is softly sprinkled
With gentle rain.

Cushions, shoes and books
Scattered like largesse
The untidy bedclothes
Rumpled and rolled
Piled at the end of the bed.

Boxes, furniture and posters
Coat the edge of the room
Punctuating the stillness
Rushing and rumbling
Cars sweep by.

There is a faint scent of perfume
And vanilla body wash
And first of dawn's messengers
A lone blackbird
Begins to sing.

Alexandra Wilson

The salty breeze

The salty breeze rushes though the dry, crisp leaves;
Little feet scamper across the rusted roof;
The hibiscus flowers go to sleep,
Close their petals without a peep.

Angrily the sea slaps the confused puzzle of rocks;
The palm trees wave to passers by;
The lizards scuttle into the dark;
The stray dogs and cats randomly stroll,
Nowhere to go.

The crickets chirp their lullaby;
Water vapour trickles down the windows;
The peachy pink sky is soon covered by a tar black sheet,
And when dawn comes it shall be unveiled.

Dhakwayini Satkuneswaran

A Girl

A girl,
Nearly five years old,
Sits in the middle, surrounded by packages,
Half of which she'll discard in a year –
But it's the thought that counts.
Ancient great aunties sit snoring on
A battered sofa,
Jumped on by toddlers.
Glitter on the floor,
A sparkled dress, torn,
A scratched Spice Girl CD,
And so another year.

A girl
17 and no longer sweet,
A glass in her hand, surrounded by people,
Half of whom have given her stuff that
Comes free off a magazine –
But it's the thought that counts.
Mum and Dad dismissed, the sofa is sat on
By gate-crashing strangers.
Alcohol and cigarettes – no regrets
Until you wake up next morning.
Can't remember last night's saga,
Drank too much of that cheap lager—
And so another year.

A girl,
No more a girl— don't make me laugh— 40 today.
Dolled up as Wonderwoman, surrounded by superheroes,
Half of whom are too drunk to call you by your actual name –
But it's the thought that counts.
The sofa, replaced by a new, spilt on
With red wine, which is staining the teeth of your guests,
Elton and Superman.
The next day, the depression
Which you threw away for
Last night's session creeps back with the coffee,
And so another year

A girl,
A girl at heart at least, just over 69,
Pours the tea and discusses bowel problems,
Half of which are still to come.
And the doctor's birthday present?
Knee problem results—
But it is the thought that counts.
The sofa, covered with a patchwork quilt,
Is sat on by your friends, Ethel and Mildred.
A nice Barbara Cartland book,
An album by Vera Lynn,
And a secret swig of that stashed-away gin –
And so another year.

Katherine Whitaker

Dancing in the Moonlight

The deep blue sky is sprinkled with stars,
A vast ocean dotted with ships,
But, just for now, the night is ours
As we swing and sway our hips.

With the moon as our spotlight
And the sand as our stage,
We'll revel in the moonlight,
No anger and no rage.

My feet fly from beneath me
As we twirl across the sand,
Like ripples in the deep sea,
As he takes hold of my hand.

My heart is beating faster;
Now we're waltzing to the sea.
My partner is the master
And he is guiding me.

The cold seeps through my skin and bones,
But I don't let it affect me.
As we tango over rocks and stones
My happiness protects me.

Eleanor Makower

I'm Your Knight

I'm strong like a hero,
But not in the obvious way.
I'm clever like a hero,
But not in the right way.
I have glasses and wonky teeth;
I am a knight in crumpled armour.

I am brave like a hero,
But in another way.
I can't face a huge metal machine,
I can't face a killer snake,
But I can be a knight;
I'm your knight in dented armour.

I'm not all silver and gold;
I don't have gems or a palace;
My armour didn't cost me the world;
But I am a knight;
I'm your knight in rusty armour.

I can't climb the highest mount;
I can't lift a car;
But I can save you;
I'm your knight in dirty armour.

I'm not a heart throb,
But I'm here.
I'm your knight in shining armour.

Hattie Stair

Beach at Dawn

The blustering breeze greets the rising sun
And cold fresh air is crisp
And pure.
The pebbles crunch beneath your feet;
The waving grasses
Meet the coming day.
Palest hues dance across the morning sky
And lonely rubbish from the former days.
The sweeping gulls
Ascend to a fading moon.
A guiding beacon shines
Upon the churning waves.

Ellen Chapman

Lost at Sea

I hear the cry of the lifeguard.
He is calling to his crew,
People waiting anxiously,
Wondering what they'll do.

The storm is getting stronger.
My Papa's lost at sea.
This awesome freak of nature
Is slowly killing me.

I cling on to my sister's skirts;
She wipes away a tear.
I hold on to her shaking hand,
But is it cold or fear?

The lifeguard jumps into their boat
Unscathed by the waves hiss
The whistle blows and off they go
Into the dark abyss.

Eleanor Reed

Columbia Road Flower Market

Flowers: think Columbia Road,
Crammed with people Sunday morning,
No heads or bodies visible,
Just flowers by the bag and arm-load.

“20 bulbs, all sorts, a pound,
Get ‘em down there in the ground!”

Have tropics in your own back yard:
A jungle, huge leaves of palms and ferns;
Buy plaited trees and creeping vines,
And things with thorns, so be on your guard.

“Chilli plants, two for a fiver,
Chew ‘em up an’ they’ll revive yer!”
In spring we bring home trays and trays
Of marigold for window boxes,
Pansies that make faces at you,
And golden daffodils like sunny days.

“Christmas trees, all sizes here,
Plant it out, use every year!”

Thea Lumley-White

The Face at The Window

Electric blue eyes,
Inquisitive and trusting,
Yet guarded, clouded
And troubled by the past;
A small, pursed mouth;
A jaw, set once
With firm determination,
Now slackened by old age;
Cheeks that sag with regret;
A head held high
Changed
To one bowed against the harsh brunt
Of tormenting memories;
Constantly active,
A mind that ponders
Over chances that were lost,
Opportunities that were not taken,
Dreams and ambitions
That remained unfulfilled,
A non-existent future,
A wasted life.

A face at the window.

Jennifer Lanigan

Phantom Reality

In the dark of the deep blue,
Where the invisible things lie,
Waiting, always waiting
For innocent passers-by.

Down where the sun doesn't penetrate,
Where the fish swim away from the light,
Where they lure unsuspecting travellers
To where it is always night.

Of time passing
There is no telling;
This surreal world is
Grotesquely compelling.

Beware of the unsuspected;
Down here, no policemen are elected.
All individuals; no teams.
Down here, nothing is what it seems.

Crouched in non-existent shadows,
Nervously darting around like arrows,
Taut and tense within rock caves
With that staring, wide eyed gaze.

No-one will save you.
Each to his own.
Hide in the darkness.
Stay at home.

Emma Van Oss

If I were the wild girl

If I were the wild girl,
I would run and jump and sing and play;
I would sit and laugh every day.

But the wild girl only hums and mutters
As the little blue bird chirps and flutters.
She'll cry to herself all day long,
Although she can have done no wrong.

If I were the wild girl,
I would talk to the bear and the wolf and the rabbit.
We would squeal and giggle,
As the pheasant played her fiddle.

But the wild girl only talks to the willow
In a mournful tone,
Using leaves as her pillow.

If I were the wild girl,
I would never sleep;
A watch over the forest
I would always keep.

But the wild girl is not strong.
She sleeps so deeply
She never hears the cockerel's song

If I were the wild girl,
I would be so alive
And into happiness
I would dive.

But the wild girl never shows a smile;
She would rather be on her own isle.

But I would sing and laugh all day,
If I were the wild girl.

Madeline Taylor

The Simple Life Of an Inquisitive Egg

The life of an inquisitive egg
Is Inquisitive
And Eggy

He sits
Looking solemnly out at the world
And wonders forlornly what it would be like if once
Just once
He could be a soldier.

Inquisitive egg then remembered his old uncle
Sergeant H. Dumpty,
They called him
He was a soldier
In the army or so the story goes
Until one tragic day he died mysteriously.

The awful news was brought
By no messenger
No letter
But by most of the king's horses
(The Men unfortunately couldn't make it,
But sent all their deepest sympathies)

And Inquisitive Egg thought about this
All day
And all night
Because an Inquisitive Egg is inquisitive
Eggy
And what's more....
He's proud of it.

Alice Parker

Just Another Day

7:00 am, alarm clock rings,
Toaster groans, kettle sings.
P.E kit, such a drag,
Clashes with my heavy bag.
No money at rec, feeling blue,
Loitering at lunch in the queue,
Walking home step by step,
Getting home to stacks of prep.
The ending of a busy day,
Cosy bed wafts me away.
Think of what the morning brings,
7:00 am alarm clock rings.

Sidonie Wilson

What a Lemon Evokes

There is nothing,
Save banana friends and coconut-and-honey soap,
Brings me back to earth with my fingers in my mouth
Like a lemon.
Lemony skies afloat with sulphur clouds.
Apple squint starbursts in shades of violet lava.
Smell the greasy sizzling batter of French
(genuine)
Crêpes.
And caster sugar's empty palm
Filled by the bitter curling spit
Of lemon juice tendrils.
Warm glass jars throb with
Custard coloured paste.
Littered fractured egg shells glitter –
Keep company with zested, juice-free lemon skins.
Like lifeless eyes, the colour drained.
Stolen to munch and lick between meals
With sticky fingers and cringing teeth.
Stinging and pricking,
Processing taste –
Curling the tongue and uniting the eyelashes.
And like banana friends,
And honey-and-coconut soap,
The lemon can induce my pale skull
To pulse back into orbit.

Margaret Lund

Enigma – Mona Lisa

A secret smile plays across her face;
A touch of genius is her saving grace;
No hint of colour strokes her pallid cheeks;
Berobed in mystery, her story no-one speaks;
Alone and frozen the wretched maiden sits;
Her life's a fable which no reality fits;
Her head's a chamber; inside her thoughts are locked;
Her ship is sinking, longing to be docked;
Her face is captured – the artist did not fail –
But her heart's a secret that no-one can unveil.

Hannah Thornton

Mrs Shakespeare

The memories from when our marriage had just begun are but a brief soliloquy in Scene I.

I was so content to play my role on the stage that had enveloped my life—

A successful playwright's muse,

An ambitious actor's wife.

But as the flame of youth was blown out,

In Act II we bought a house and there settled down.

And still our lives were good as the tempo of this play

Slowed down.

Soon I had borne not one, not two, but three beautiful babes, entering
on cue

As the curtain opened for Act III.

This scene was slow, but joyous in a placid mother's eye,

Though I fear the audience may have been bored,

As all too soon we engaged in a turbulent Act IV,

Which is what they are watching now:

Night after night,

Week after week,

William would come home and sit down, as if to write;

Instead he would simply stare vacantly ahead.

Once the children were off to bed,

Drifting through dreamworld

As they rest their sleepy heads,

I would ask him about his new play.

It was called Hamlet, the tale of a troubled Danish prince.

Each and every time, he would

Utter in a monotone: 'OK'.

And when I asked more he would grunt me away.

I began to fear he might have writer's block,

A terrible literary disease.

One night, tired of his monosyllabic trance,
I was angry and yelled:
'William I have to know when will your play be finished;
The rent is due;
The children have grown – they need new clothes;
Each week I have to buy less and less food;
Haven't you noticed I'm nothing but skin and bones?'
I paused for a breath, then resumed my tirade.
'William, is this play to be or not to be? That is my question.'
Then with a flounce of my hair I stomped up to our second best bed.

Little did I know then
That it was this bed that would be mine
When the curtains closed and the lights dimmed
At the end of Act V.

Hayley Flood

Mrs Satan

I don't know what I've done
That has been classed as a sin.
When I try to shop in heaven
They refuse to let me in.

The ladies from the country club,
They give me dirty looks.
Those ladies were my friends
When we were in God's good books.

So long has it been
Since I've seen the sun shine,
But now, well NOW
I'm surrounded by ash all the time.

And my husband is always bragging
About how it's better here than there.
He's always telling me
That he beat God fair and square.

So that is what it's like
To be the wife of Satan.
It's not the best life ever
But you don't hear me complaining!

Nathalie Ntwiazah

Mrs Dracula

Why does he always have to go about biting people?
It makes my social life a disaster.
I never get invited to any parties.
You would think that he would be satisfied with all the blood we have
at home—
Blood soup,
Blood pie,
Blood cake.
But I guess it's better than when he takes me out for dinner.
We always end up going to the same place:
The graveyard.
Why can't he hang out at the pub like everyone else's husband?

Katrina Ferron

The Big Mistake

The day's arrived; I've got my suits,
My painted hat and bright red boots;
At last it's time to join the lads,
To be part of the gang.

I've waited years and years for this,
A chance I can't afford to miss.
At last it's time to join the club,
To be part of the gang.

I spoke to John the other day
And got his map to know the way.
At last to be a merry man,
To be part of the gang.

And now I'm sat here on my bed,
From head to toe in crimson red.
I know I'm going to fit right in,
To be part of the gang.

I turned up on time and it was going great.
This was it now, this was my fate.
At last it was time —what I would do
To be part of the gang.

It was a nightmare; I was ready to scream.
All of the gang was dressed in green.
They all looked so good. I was hit with a bang.
Now I would never be part of the gang

To make this mistake was really dumb.
I stuck out like a big sore thumb.
I guess my timing wasn't too good;
Now I'll never join Robin Hood.

Tamsin Moore

“Your job is so wonderful.” That’s what he says,
 That pale, dreaded Louise Seize.
 “Watch when you,” I said bitterly to myself,
 “Become the main attraction upon my shelf.”

I look on, as this supposed evolution,
 Turns into one nasty revolution.
 Everyday it just gets worse,
 As if we have been struck by a gory curse.

There are lots and lots, and I mean a lot,
 Of those poor, dirty Sans-Culottes,
 Who run around, staring danger in the face,
 As they look for the signs of those they so desperately chase.

What about that Marie Antoinette,
 Who at this moment will be folding her lacy serviette?
 I’m sure she’ll soon join my collection,
 Once the blade has cut through her perfection.

I hate that sly, mean machine
 That they named the Guillotine.
 It sends shivers down my spine
 As the victims cry, then whine.

Every morning, when the clock strikes nine,
 I collect those heads and make them mine.
 I cast them in a firm mould,
 As the wax starts to set and take its hold.

You probably know who I am by now,
 But I should tell you anyhow.
 I shall whisper, so, people, gather round in hordes,
 For I am Madame Tussaud.

Red Baron

In a land where grass is green,
With ne'er commotion to be seen,
Where sheep do bleat, and the cattle moos,
Where running water's still big news—
But soft – the sneer of a flying machine!
A dogfight here is to be seen!
A streak of Devil,
Pure as day,
Embarks upon a cabaret.
Ah, such romance, he seems to me
A dragonfly, or honey bee.
He crumbles through the crooked clouds,
Yet seeks no shelter in their shrouds,
And if he'd cease to dodge, and pause
I might have offered thrilled applause.
In a coward's war it's grand to see
Such death-defying gallantry,
Yet who is this who captivates,
And through the sky accelerates?
“The Baron” I am now informed,
As dancing terror is performed,
“Whose triplane is as red as blood
And soars above the earth and mud.”
Le Diable Rouge, a fabrication,
From a Frenchman of the same vocation.
They say from Satan he was sent;
To do his bidding is he bent.
But watching him seems rather sound.
He skims but inches off the ground,
And then with quite a tour de force,
The Baron swoops back on to course.

Pursuing his kill in grim ballet.
I can but watch in still dismay.
Circled by two duller birds,
The crimson arrow shifts and blurs,
And every skill's no use to him,
He cannot rise, or fall or skim.
The panic thickens in the air,
A hero thrown to sheer despair.
I see him now, as though alive,
Groping for a clearer dive.
Inside his eyes there are no tears,
But blaring memory as death nears,
Of eighty kills he saw aflame,
Those kills that earned him fear and fame.
Then ripping sky in whiter cleft,
The second draws along his left;
One last attempt, his fate to mend,
The Baron roars around the bend.
He know no hope his eyes beheld,
And in that silence
He was felled.

Today, we are still mystified,
How on that day the Baron died.
Many times I have been asked,
And still my horror I have masked.
How did my flying man go down?
'Twas not a soldier from the ground.
Nobility, they do not fall
Because of aimless bullets' squall.
Could anyone conceive my loss?
I only ask it, Sir, because

I knew him not, though, when he left,
I instantly felt so bereft.
If once I could have known him then,
As Baron Manfred Richthofen,
And hence expressed my admiration,
And told him he'd be watched in action,
Told him hearts he had inspired,
Though they were humble, weak and tired.

We marvel and we recreate,
Computerize, and time and date,
But still when all is said and done,
In a blink of static
He is gone.

Eleanor Wade

Train

London
London
Clapham junction
Puffing down the railroad tracks.
“Its coming, its coming,” the small crows cry.
It stops at the station,
People get off,
A demon,
A monkey,
A tall, slim skunk.
Crows get on,
The big and the small;
They caw and they scream at the wiry and tall.
I got on behind them avoiding the slime,
I sat on the seat,
And waited,
I waited,
I waited for the grey and deformed figures to pile on,
I waited for it to move though the slime and the dirt and the tall rough
edges of the fat ravens’ lairs.

Bridges,
Bridges,
Three bridges.
Puffing down the railroad track.
“Its coming, its coming,” the small lizards cry.
The water is grey and the food is green,
But the weasels get off for coffee and cream.
Swings in the playground,
A pool in the park and yet all the creatures still live in the dark.
It’s not where I’m meant to be,

So I waited,
And waited,
I waited for what was to be a flower by the railroad track.,
And here were trees and shrubs and bushes,
But not nice enough in dark abyss.
So I sat and watched the toad spawn kiss.
This place of neither peril or song,
Was a place that had gone quite wrong,
The toads and slime and mud and grime were dancing like the butterfly.
So I went on and on and on and on.

Sussex,
Sussex
Fabulous Sussex.
Driving down the dirty tracks.
“They’re coming, they’re coming,” the small foals cried.
The honey was sweet,
The dew was clear,
And the rabbits flew across the fields
As the farmer and his little girl rode among the sunny land.
This was peace and helpless heaven.
The trees were green and the sea was blue.
And kittens and puppies played with a shoe.
There was no more waiting,
No more,
No more,
As me and the flower saw darkness no more.
The sun would shine and birds would sing,
For always and eternity.

Leonie Gasson

The Pigeon

Once upon a morning murky, while I got up, seven thirty,
Trying to find my socks and skirt up off my bedroom floor.
While I threw things, swearing, flapping, suddenly there came a tapping
As of someone forcibly rapping, rapping at my bedroom door.
“Please not now. Mum,” I muttered; as I tugged my shirt it tore –
“I cannot take this anymore.”

Ah, distinctly I remember, it was in the bleak September,
And I had a mounting temper. Where’s my homework? On the floor!
Eagerly I wished to find it, vainly did I try to find it,
Amongst my mess piled on the floor,
Hidden there for evermore.

Then a persistent, powerful pecking – I turned to my window checking
What I was hearing, and what on earth it was pecking for?
So that now, to stop the soreness of my throat, I stood imploring,
“What is at my window? Oh I need to mend my shirt which tore!
What is at my window? And my homework is still hidden in the mess upon
the floor!
I can’t be bothered anymore.”

Presently my mind grew stronger, hesitating then no longer,
I pulled and let the blind rise up, and this is what I saw:
A pompous pigeon, sitting tall and another on the wall
The first one staring, glaring, daring, hoping I’d be kind and caring
Yes, hoping I’d be kind in sharing my breakfast with this pigeon poor.
A flap of wings and then no more.

Hannah Blows

Hot September Days

Hot September days
I live for.
Thick heat and blue skies
And a half sung lullaby.
Hot September days.
Bright twilights,
Rough grass and flat Coke,
And drivers who wave.
Hot September days,
Caught in my hair like leaves.
I know they're gone
But I won't forget
Hot September days.

Isabel Saunders

Allotment Plot 57

The manager showed us several plots
Which ranged from derelict areas
Colonised by nettles,
To much-loved neat rows of tendered veg,
Rows of radishes,
Patches of pumpkins,
Clumps of cauliflowers.

We soon came to a decision – plot 57,
Close to a water butt
And sheltered by trees,
But weeds and brambles obliterated its borders,
So like archaeologists we began to discover
Remnants of a previous occupation,
A rusted sign with faded numbers,
A decayed old boot,
An ancient red thermos flask.

We were stung by nettles,
Scratched by brambles;
We battled the bone dry earth;
In blistering heat we weeded and we hoed,
And our efforts paid off;
We gave broad beans to the blackfly,
Lettuce to the slugs,
And cherries to the birds.
I hope next year,
There might be something left for us.

Reeve Massey

Lost Youth

One evening I dined with a friend of mine,
An actor of moderate talent.
Each night he'd disclose a new part of his story –
-A fantastical epic lament.

“When I was young and youthful and free,
I slipped anchor with a Mr John Brown.
In Gibraltar we sailed the straits and the narrows
With the tax man hunting us down.

“I had some especially dangerous voyages,
Though sadly not such a good view
Of the Armada when it went up in flames;
Neath decks I'd gone down with the flu.

“We were famously infamous over the seas,
From Belfast to Barbary Coast.
We had wining and dining and drinking of rum –
'To Treasure and Freedom!' we'd toast.

“We were brave and courageous and full of good cheer,
Though in Spain we were greatly a-feared.
For I stood on the deck next to Mr Drake,
And watched as he singed old Phil's beard!”

The youngest grandchild looked up in awe,
And thought of the tales he'd told her.
She said, as he wished her goodnight and sweet dreams,
“Can I be a rogue when I'm older?”

He laughed to himself as he walked down the hall,
Past the moon's pale glint on the stair-rail brass.
We sat, warmed our toes by the fire.
He poured me my rum in an old brandy glass.

The rain tapped to come in at the window,
Gulls fled on taut wings to the sea.
"A Pirate? Not you!" I teased my old friend,
"A pirate you never could be."

The parrot screeched in her lonely cage,
The fire played tricks with the blind.
He replied, "Everything's possible, anything's true,
When you're youthful and free with the mind."

Nicola Ingram

Transit Van

You're a dirty, dirty, dirty man,
Sitting there in your white van.
Why do you have to look that way
As if I was on display?
There's no excuse to honk your horn;
You know I'm in school uniform.
And NO, for you I will not smile;
You're middle-aged and in denial.
And, yes, I am just 14,
And that's quite enough obscenity.
But frankly, Dave, I'm not a fan
Of you or your white transit van.
Now don't you look disgruntled?
And don't you look dismayed?
And don't you look like some old gran has slapped you round the face?
But there're still all those ladies
Who think it's such a laugh
To flirt with any man
On everyone's behalf.

Flora Laven-Morris

Remember Me

My name is gossip.
I have no identity, no face, and to track me down is impossible.
I am malicious, nasty and cunning, and the victims I choose are
helpless.
I flourish at every level of society and gather strength with age.
I break hearts, ruin lives, and the harder you try to track me down
The more elusive I become.

Nobody is my friend.
I tarnish reputations which never become the same again.
I destroy marriages, friendships; I topple governments.
I obliterate careers and cause sleepless nights, indigestion and
heartaches.
I make innocent people cry in their pillows, generate grief and
spawn suspicion.

My name hisses.
Making headlines is what I do best.
I am all around:
School gossip, office gossip, shop gossip, party gossip.
Nobody thinks twice about spreading me.
“Is it true? Is it fair? Is it necessary?”

Great minds promote ideas... average minds discuss events...
shallow minds wallow in insecurity and discuss people.

Alexandra Stone

Two Lies

I told you two lies that day. The first lie was only
Three words long.
And perhaps it didn't count anyway
As the words weren't intended to deceive you.
Those three words
Were like that ghastly green jumper
That you always wore,
Washed and hung up so many times
That it no longer quite fitted you.
You hadn't noticed that you'd
Worn it out.
You said you liked the familiar shape, smell and touch.
You hadn't noticed that you'd
Worn me out.

You were a boy with a bird in his hands
Clasped so tight
Because you loved it;
So tight
That when you parted your fettering thumbs
You could not understand why it lay
Stiff and still,
With its head at a funny angle.
I am a bird now.
Let me out.
I am fragile.
I can see the cracks of light between you fingers
And I am suffocating in your clutches.

You were never one to let go
Of your balloon
And watch it sail, shrinking skywards;
But I was.
(Somehow the ribbon would always slip through my fingers.)
I remember thinking it was almost cruel
How you brought yours home,
Trapped it in your room and
Day after day
Watched it sink slowly to the floor,
All magic dispelled.
And my heart is helium.
And it is slipping away.

That day, as I was leaving
You took my chin in your hand,
Found my eyes, and told me
(old jumper, dead bird, empty balloon)
Three words.
I told you I'd be coming back.
That was the second lie.
And the last one.

Vicky Pearce

Faint Dreams

Gravestones grey with sombre age
Props upon an ancient stage
Suns will set and stars will die
So too the mourners tears cry
Love will fade from memory
Lost to fair mortality
Last to go shall die alone
Forever's thoughts from one life thrown
Away into a raging sea
With fear of peaceful constancy
Will one caught breath a life will end
And never tread faint dreams again.

Nathalie Kernot

The life of a post-it

We have no name, identity or face,
But we still make the world a much better place,
For without us no one would ever remember
That important meeting on the 4th of December.

They'd forget all about the dentist appointment
And life would become one big disappointment,
As they'd forget the time of the next date
And arrive at the restaurant two hours late!

No one would remind them to go and buy groceries
So they'd be left hungry at home, instead of at Sainsbury's.
Nor would they know where mum had gone out
And when she'd be in or out and about.

But, even though we are so important,
No one ever spares just a moment
To think what we must always feel
When we're thrown in the bin amongst orange peel.

Lying discarded, alone and confused
We have served our purpose, we have been used;
No one wants us, need us or cares;
To them we're but paper, just small yellow squares.

Manisha Kumar

The Charge of the Department Store

I

Half a mo, half a mo,
How much did you say it was?
That has got to be in yen...
Seriously, six hundred?
'RRP and blah blah blah
Company policy,' you said.
Get a check-up from the neck up:
 You can't mean six hundred!

II

Other bills have to be paid,
Yet you don't care if I'm dismayed.
But I forgot that to you, sir,
I'm just a stupid customer.
Ours not to make reply,
Ours not to reason why,
Ours but to pay and buy:
Into the chasm of the till
 Will go my six hundred.

III

Canon to right of us
Sony to left of us
Epsom in front of us
 Overpriced in one word.
Aisles of things they want to sell,
Aisles just make me feel unwell –
It's like I've died and gone to Hell
 I can't believe: six hundred!

IV

Everywhere the buzz-word 'free';
Small print tends to disagree.
How much will you get from me?
 C'mon, not six hundred!
It's such a teeny little thing;
Surely you can't charge that much;
I refuse to make your registers ring.
 I won't pay six hundred!

V

This is daylight robbery here!
I bet it breaks within a year.
You don't even offer us a choice!
No, I will not lower my voice:
 I ain't paying six hundred!
Sure, go get your manager;
Boy, have I got things to say to her—
 Not my hard-earned six hundred!

VI

Oh, so you will offer reductions?
May I say how very nice!
I've always liked this store, you see.
 I just saw the price and wondered...
It's true the customer's always right,
And, I'll have you know, I know my rights...
Thanks for the lifelong guarantee.
No need to push; I'm going, see.
 I saw the price and I just wondered,
 But I *knew* you didn't mean six hundred.

Habiba Islam

Old Bill

Old Bill lives in the house next door.
The trouble is he's such a bore.
If we should pass him in the street,
We pray to God our eyes don't meet,
For if they do we're in his power
And won't escape for half an hour.
We know we'll hear about his leg,
His back, his heart and sister Peg.
"Ere do yer know what doctor said?
I really shouldn't leave my bed
But roof's so bad that water falls
Like rivers down my bedroom walls.
Council men came round last week –
They couldn't find the bleedin' leak.
Things keep on getting' worse and worse;
This Iraq war has brought a curse
On us as well as on the Yanks
An what d'yer think we get for thanks?
Kicks up the ass, excuse my French.
They won't get me back in a trench."
At eighty-six, there's not much chance.
(In truth, flat feet waved Bill from France.)
He points to a battered Cola tin:
"Look what a state the streets is in.
It never was like this yer know.
Well, I suppose I'll 'ave ter go."
He's just seen Sid sidestepping by,
But Bill has fixed him with his eye.
"See you later Bill," we say.
We know we will – perhaps today.

Louise Gammon

The Pecking Hen

Darling,
I wish you wouldn't
Leave your papers all over
The living-room floor.
It's me who has to pick them up you know.

Darling,
I wish you wouldn't
Put your cups down on tables;
They leave dirty marks.
It's me who has to wipe them you know.

Darling,
I wish you wouldn't
Wear those old shirts and jumpers –
Dark brown is so drab.
It's me who has to look at them you know.

Darling,
I wish you wouldn't
Stay so late at the office
I'm all on my own,
You could think about me for a change.

Darling,
I wish you wouldn't
Fix your eyes on the ceiling;
I'm talking to you.
Don't you ever listen to what I say?

Darling?

Charlotte Mehta-McDonough

A Handful of Gold – cutting hair

They lived on the shelf,
Always a little out of my grasp.
Every day I would reach for them,
But once again, my hand would return
Unrewarded. Until the time
My fingers brushed against their handle
And it felt smooth and sleek.
As I stretched further, they
Tumbled slowly, tip down,
And, as they lay on the carpet,
An eye winked, and the open mouth smiled at me.

One snip was all it took,
And then I opened my hand
To find the treasure nestled there.
And when I blew, softly, the pieces scattered,
And their descent to blue carpet was like
Plucked duckling feathers on the wind.
They wafted as they fell:
Teasing, taunting, tantalizing.
When they had landed,
I gathered the strands of sunshine up,
One by one,
Until I had, resting on my palm
A handful of gold.

Lorna Van Oss

The Spider's Web

In the corner of a grave,
Where the darkness stays,
She spins.

Ariadne presses on;
In the gloom where no light shone,
She spins.

Owls shriek and fly out of sight;
The raindrops glisten in the night;
She spins.

She is beautiful but vicious.
The fly lands, suspicious;
She eats.

Olivia Berthon

I looked for you that night; I searched
Till all the stars were gone;
Till light had swallowed up the moon
And night was all but done.
I'd seen you when the sky turned black,
And, when the moon had shone,
We talked and laughed, we ate and drank,
We stayed till there was none.

That night we left and walked and walked,
We walked right through the rain;
We ran across the streets as though
We both were young again.
That night the dark was thick, too thick;
It hurtled up the lane;
Eyes blind, it screeched and hit and left,
As I cried out your name.

I look for you, but still I can't
See past that flash of light;
I search and search but all I hear
Are your screams in the night.

Alexa Prichard

Grey

A wall has formed from the fog
The grey stone that springs forth
An un-arresting backdrop
To this subdued scene
Which in slow shy shifts
Forms the feeling between
“Goodbye” and “I miss you”

Out of the ashes of the unfocused eye
Here it is conjured; where she sits in the dark
Where the door meets a scuffed field and bruising, cold sky
This instant that goes by un-remarked

The folds of simple cloth
Rough against childish skin
Crease and fall over
An upturned apple box
Where in such quiet, such poised
And such deep contemplation
She still seems to pose here for
'Realisation'

(A watercolour, in a rainbow of sensible browns.)

Yet the pearls that form her locket's chain
They too are that slate shade, that grey
Of the wall behind
So that blurred eyes see
For a second, one breath
She is not free -

It would seem her face is independent
From the body beneath that is young, resilient
And does not seem the fitting piece
To the one whole form; feelings increase
That in this room

A girl grows into a statue

A mind cannot bear to take
Many more thoughts, begins to break
Itself away from the body that can
Cope and endure, those folded hands

Josephine Starte

The Bridge between Reflections

While the cold Winter Sun beats down with all its might
Unfeeling would be he of nature who could walk past this sight.
The ripples of water flow to the beat of the heart.
As the breathless onlooker beholds nature's art,
Two sleeping worlds are seamlessly intertwined,
By this masterful creation of man's mind

While the water displays his contorted face,
Behind those eyes lies courage and grace,
As those ragged hands grab at the bars,
The reflection heals the horrific scars.
He weeps silently as tears tumble from his eyes.
Only his reflection heeds his hushed cries.

Within the silent calmness of the bobbing tide,
Only nature could reveal his beauty lying inside.
While the waves engulf each glistening tear,
Between man and reflection, another bridge is built here.
As he peers through the metal bars as though they were a net,
It is here that dreams and reality met.

It is here that dreams and reality met.
As he peers through the metal bars as though they were a net,
Between man and reflection another bridge is built here.
While the waves engulf each glistening tear,
Within the silent calmness of the bobbing tide,

Only his reflection heeds his hushed cries.
He weeps silently as tears tumble from his eyes.
The reflection heals the horrific scars.
As those ragged hands grab at the bars,
Behind those eyes lies courage and grace,
While the water displays his contorted face,

By this masterful creation of man's mind.
Two sleeping worlds are seamlessly intertwined;
As the breathless onlooker beholds nature's art,
The ripples of water flow to the beat of the heart.
Unfeeling would be he of nature who could walk past this sight.
While the cold Winter Sun beats down with all its might.

Ra'eesa Mehta

Window Pain

Her head was lolled against the pane,
A weak attempt to watch the rain.
A numbness invaded her limpid gaze,
Her fading eyes in a muted haze.
Her arms were flaccid, slung by her side;
Her legs were crooked, her hair untied.
It looked as though she didn't care,
Too drained to try, too tired to stare.
Hope was creeping away with haste,
Dread now devoured her shrunken face.
Visitors came, cheery eyed,
To see the young child, hardly alive.
"You must stop sitting by that window sill."

"Walk around more; it's making you ill."

She saw no point; she was wasting away;

Why should she do what the visitors say?

Withered, frail, she decided to stay.

Seated by the pane, she died that day.

Xanthe Batt

The Deluge

Merciless
The sheets of rain
Rip the sky
And the clouds
Like mirrors
Reflect
The blazing
Blood red sun

Salvation
In a branch
Is but a
False friend
As serpent
Wrapped and lion
Clawed
It bends

Only
The Rock
Not to save but
To cast its shadow
Of Despair
Stands Tall

Even the Angel of
Hope
Has turned
His head

Maeve Crockett

In her box of memories,
Her dearest pair of dreams;
Old, used, discarded,
Ribbons sewn against the seams.

The creases tell her story:
A childhood now forgot,
Old, used, discarded,
Their future left to rot.

The scuffing of the satin,
The wear shown in the toe,
Old, used, discarded,
Passion caught within the bow.

The withered ballerina
Cares not for love or dance;
Old, used, discarded,
Her story sliced by chance.

Lauren Adams

So familiar, the sign of the door,
That I half expected not to see
The empty space,
The lonely walls.
Ghosts of pictures that used to hang
On the tired wall paper.
Only a few boxes remained on the floor
With labels that said, 'clothes' or 'other',
As if that was all that was inside.
I hated to think of all her things
Jumbled up inside each box,
Out of their proper places.
Light bored through the window,
Once shrouded in heavy curtains
That used to stifle us, sometimes.
And in the unfamiliar yellow light
I could see dust falling.

Molly Scott

The Library

Stifflingly quiet
Eyelids drooping
Time stands still.

Leaves on trees
Visible through glass
Move.

Hear
Faint hum of computer
Plus printer.

Clicking mouse
Muffled laugh
Feet on carpet.

Pen scratching
Scissors cutting
Paper satisfied.

Glance across
Through vacuum
To friend.

Smoothing hair
Contemplating
Work.

In distance
See figure
Arms folded.

Faint whisper
Figure looks
But does not see.

Faint whisper
Figure turns
Offender sees.

Deathly quiet
Then
'If you speak again
I'm going to have to move you.'

Hushed irony
Suspended
In stillness.

Culprit mocking
Figure moves
But does not see.

Laugh
Figure senses
Resumes surveillance.

Two now
Stare
With eyes

Listen
With ears
Nothing.

Back to work
Cutting paper
Typing words.

Whisper
Laugh
Sssh.

Silence.

Isabella Bird

Lightening up!

A candle, flickering behind a glass plate,
Swirling and shiny, catching the eye;
The “cheep-cheep” of a radio, buzzing in news and current affairs,
As if we really do care.
Steaming radiators, glistening with exertion in this cold winter,
Held in check to the colour scheme by hiding under a pale blue shade,
Because we really must keep the home unified, we really must.
(It might just be for the fun of another place to dust).
Rows of bright houses, nestled against the oncoming night;
Pinpricks of fire shine out, casting a glow through each window.
Ten toothy smiles when the crackling roast is unveiled.
What a meal— red, white and pink all at one table.
Never mind the soft pop-overs, mushy potatoes, and bright puddings
and pies!

And me when I see you!
Oh, that wonderful light!

Jane Arden

High Society

“And how do you do?”

“Oh, super, and you?”

“Yes indeed; family too?”

“Absolutely, and you?”

“Yes, not *one* at Oxford,

But two!”

“Oh, really, is that true? –

How pleasant for you!”

“Now what of your two?

Oh do tell me, do!”

“They’re their father’s children,

Through and through.”

“But where have they applied?”

“Oh, for a few,

But, you know how it is,

There’s a terrible queue.”

“Well, if they knew in advance

What they wanted to do—

You know, like my two.” – “Yes,

Now tell me, do,

Of your place; is it true?

I heard that it’s new.” “No,

A period house

With a lovely view.”

(Glaring pause)

“Did you catch the golf?”

“Yes, on Freeview,

Though not very engaging - “

“But those fairways *are* ageing

To give them their due.”

Clare Richmond

In a far away land

Close to the sea
Lived two happy lemming
Under a tree.
Hank and Martin,
Martin and Hank
They were inseparable
Like pirate and plank.
One loved to cook
And flower arrange;
The other, it seemed,
Was a little deranged.
While one made crepes
And salmon en croute,
Hank jumped off cliffs
With his parachute.
The adrenaline rush,
The wind through his fur,
The scenery surrounding
Merely a blur.
But when nearing the ground
He tugs at a string,
Out pops his chute,
A marvellous thing!
So gently, gently
He sinks to the floor
And lands quite nicely
On the sandy shore.
Martin hated his hobby,
Thought it quite frightful,
Oblivious to why
Hank found it delightful.
He would nag and moan
All night and all day.
To discourage Hank,
Martin would say,
“Your parachute’s dangerous,

It could be broken!
One of these days,
It may not open!”
So Hank tried to prove
To him, without doubt,
What the pleasure of jumping
Off cliffs was about.
Martin crawled to the edge,
Quaking with fear,
Looked down at the rocks
And put on the gear.
“On three,” said Martin
As he tied up his shoe.
Hank quietly sniggered
And pushed him on two.
“You half wit, you scum,
You’ll pay for this!
Filthy, good-for-nothing...
Oh my, what bliss!
I feel like I’m flying,
Like a bird in mid-flight!
Hank, my dear boy!
It’s true, you were...”
But no more was said
For poor Martin was slain,
Stuck to the wing
Of a low flying plane.
From this tale of woe,
One clearly can see,
That a nagger is not
A good thing to be.
Especially one
So insistent on preaching
That does not follow
His own wise teaching.

Olivia Cerio

Hello

Hello.

Do you remember me?

I was the reason he hit you-
I made you laugh when he asked for your pocket money
Because I was dancing behind his back.
Blood and tears formed pink rivulets on your face
Staining your youth
But you felt me wipe them away.
I helped you fight them back.

Do you remember our long conversations?
You sat and muttered, sometimes laughed out loud,
As I whispered to you so no one else could hear.
They all thought you were talking to yourself.
They called you crazy,
But I called you my friend when no one else did,
When no one else was near.

I told you stories before you went to sleep.
You listened, terrified and enthralled,
As I weaved nightmares that wouldn't let you go
But I didn't ever let you go, either.
You woke sobbing
So I held you tight; I held you
And watched your misty eyes slowly close.

We played together, just the two of us.
Remember when we held hands and spun
Around faster and faster until you fell?
They said that you were weird.
I branded you 'mad'.
Weird people couldn't join in their games.
We shouted at them; they said they'd tell.

So we played together,
Just us two.

I was perfect;
I was everything you ever wanted

Until you grew up
Until you grew out of me

Until that day when you just didn't see me anymore.

To your past I was as solid as a stone,
Loud as crashing wave in a seashell,
And as alive as you in every way,
Especially when I wrapped my arms around you,
Comforted you,
Promised I'd always be there,
And kissed the hurt away.

But to your present I'm less than a shadow;
Not quite there, but certainly not gone.
I can't even penetrate your dreams
I'm only a half-life, suspended in time.
Don't you know
That you were my creator and sustainer?
But you never got round to destroying me.

You just forgot.

So why don't you end this?
Just say you don't believe.

Catherine Sykes

Lucky Heroes.

Me and my mate Jack went commie-hunting.

I hate that he didn't make it.

You mean you hate that you're still breathing;

Wasting breath, wasting time, wasting away,

Sucked dry and spilling tears,

With a black-and-blue heart still beating.

Lucky heroes.

One hot bullet

And they're gone.

Stone cold,

stone dead, stony-faced -

Lucky heroes. Stone numb.

It took me twenty years to find your father.

Twenty years to say, 'Your son died saving my life.'

I have blood on my hands.

Not Red blood – not enemy blood.

Somebody's father, somebody's son,

Just some body.

Twenty years of guilt –

Stand up, scum - admit that you're alive.

Apologise for your skulking existence.

Your misery is not worth their pain,

Their sacrifice,

Their thoughtless, selfish sacrifice.

It was my time.
They don't want the rescued at home.
I had the guilt and the shame and the nightmares, the voices, the visions
And one hot bullet.
Mine.
Meant for me.
And some lucky hero stole it,
My glory, my sweet relief.

Twenty years of living with a vacuum
Twenty years haunted by your gift.
Twenty years of wishing -

I'd give anything
Just to be Jack

Imogen Parry

The Blues

His colour was blue and he sang it well,
With leaden face and a voice
That filled bellies with slavery, despair
And the dull ring of metal on stone
Drifting across cotton fields as he sang,
'Take this hammer, WAH!'
Weary boot makes rhythm in the dust
And harmonic notes like babies' cries
Push through the pines,
Ripple in muddy waters,
And as we heard him sing out his sorrow
Like a howlin' wolf
And the tight slide of fingers
Down the fret board
The man in the Riot said,
'Don't you know he's got a gun behind that thing?'

Laura Kirwan-Ashman

Blocks

A thousand garish eyes are winking at me
From the dark pool of the city-heart.
The daylight shows their hollow sockets,
But at night they tell more secrets than the stars.

The faces are long and grey and dull,
Pock-marked with heaving, wretched sores.
Their rude lines and corners laugh
As they cut through the delicate mist morning.

No. I don't want to touch them;
They may melt and suffocate me.
I just want to see their blurry outlines,
When, at night, they point me up to the heavens.

I think they run away sometimes,
Boring down into the copper soil.
In trodden silence they sing low notes
Until the bleached sun calls to crack their careworn breeze blocks.

Naomi Kroll

Word Shopping

A space, a blank,
A void to fill,
An empty page
And time to kill.

With an open mind
And a brimming purse
I begin my quest
To go shopping for verse.

My search commences
With a hunt for A.
But the queue is too long
And I can't be bothered to stay.

Abashed and ashamed
At my amoral adultery,
I amble away
Arbitrarily to G.

My glowering gaze
Grows to great gluttonous greed;
With gelatinous gums
I go, guessing that M is what I need.

My magniloquent manner
'Mong the monosyllabic men
And my mad malapropisms
Make me meander to N.

Kate Craggs

He is there

I am alone, yet he is there,
Still sitting in that empty chair.
Gazing at my dim reflection,
I sensed him, his strange protection,
Within the night from which I fled.
Inside my room, inside my head
I no longer see him but there he stayed,
As I stood he knelt and prayed:
Peace for both my soul and mind.
Seeking what I will not find,
Through the darkness now I run,
Not believing what I've done –
He is gone and will not live.
What I've done I can't forgive,
Because he is dead.
Because he is dead,
What I've done I can't forgive.
He is gone and will not live.
Not believing what I've done,
Through the darkness now I run,
Seeking what I will not find:
Peace for both my soul and mind.
As I stood he knelt and prayed –
I no longer see him but there he stayed –
Inside my room, inside my head.
Within the night from which I fled
I sensed him, his strange protection.
Gazing at my dim reflection,
Still sitting in that empty chair,
I am alone, yet he is there.

Helen Oxenham

The staying-kiss

A kiss in the dark like smoke climbing over
A backyard fence, a sunset in my morning
A red flower in the snow
I keep it locked on to my lips
And oh how I wish it had disappeared
All those long nights ago
For when I wake
I feel it still, a soundless voice
Like the whisper in my spirit's ear
And you who kissed me left me here
With a warmth spreading itself across my floor
Touching what's left of whom you kissed
The staying-kiss
A memory and nothing more.

Catherine Lawford

Being Alice

A strange feeling,
(curiouser and and curiouser)
When you can't tell if you're still falling.
But then I didn't.
- Fall, that is.

Do I wish I hadn't heard it?
Watching the sun through closed eyes,
A snapshot of innocence
Interrupted by that tinny voice.

"I'm Late."

It only took one tiny step to fall down the rabbit hole.
(Fall?)
One wish.
On the spur of the moment that has become my bungee cord.

(It's self-sabotage, you know).
Find a house that fits
And suddenly one leg is sticking out the chimney.

My own fault –
Curiosity killed the cat.
(I wish something would kill that damned cat.)

I'm like a teatray in sky
That stretches far beneath the ground,
And I can't see any light,
And I can't feel any warmth,
But the dormouse assures me that the bat is twinkling.

Julia Bell

The Perfect Daughter

She has blonde hair that always dries straight
And never kinks.
Her bedroom is always spotless,
Not a dirty pair of knickers in sight.
Her clothes are arranged according to colour, shape and size.
She doesn't need to share her bed with five hundred fluffy teddy bears.
She can settle for one.
Her bookshelf holds novels in French and Italian
About serious and intellectual topics,
Such as politics and war.
You would never find Harry Potter on *her* shelf.
She doesn't need a life size cardboard cut-out of Aragon,
Nor a blue and green lava lamp,
To sleep at night.
She is a size eight,
She doesn't eat breakfast or lunch,
And she runs ten miles every day.
She always offers to help at home.
She does all the washing up,
And half the ironing too.
She reads poetry on the loo,
And the FT on the bus.
She gets As in everything,
And speaks French avec un accent parfait.
Her table manners are impeccable,
A word she can spell with ease.
She doesn't go out on a Saturday night,
And come home at 4am.
She would never swear,
Even if she stubbed her toe—
Which she would never do,
Because she is perfect.
And my mother loves her.
And no matter how hard I try,
She will never be me.

Anna Bucks

ANDREW MOTION's first collection of poems, *The Pleasure Steamers*, appeared in 1978. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1999.

Andrew Motion has published more than ten books of poems, several well-known biographies, fiction and critical studies, winning numerous literary prizes.

He is very productive, active and visible in his role of Poet Laureate, promoting and encouraging poetry, which he also does as Professor of Creative Writing at Royal Holloway College, University of London.

JAGS is honoured by Mr Motion's presence at Poetry Night 2005.

Cover illustration by Laetitia Ward

CONTENTS

Year 7

Emma Simmonds	How to Paint a Perfect London Night
Sarah Thornton	Waltzing with the Memories
Katie Rhodes	I am the first cry of a newborn baby
Amelia Coe	The Worm
Laura Moon	Humpty Dumpty
Sophia Pardon	Six Ways of the Dice
Holly Killen	Down in the Trenches
Susanna Lyness	The Scirosnos
Alice Best	The Skediarthigh
Nancy Hine	The Dork
Tanya Marie Duodu	The House by the Bay
Maria Sohrabi	Twigs
Hannah Karas	Saba and the Watermelon

Year 8

Quinta Pusey	Dancers in the Night
Alexandra Wilson	My Room
Dhakwayini Satkuneswaran	The salty breeze
Katherine Whitaker	A Girl
Eleanor Makower	Dancing in the Moonlight
Hattie Stair	I'm Your Knight
Ellen Chapman	Beach at Dawn
Eleanor Reed	Lost at Sea
Thea Lumley-White	Columbia Road Flower Market
Jennifer Lanigan	The Face at The Window
Emma Van Oss	Phantom Reality
Madeline Taylor	If I were the wild girl
Alice Parker	The Simple Life Of an Inquisitive Egg
Sidonie Wilson	Just Another Day

Year 9

Margaret Lund	What a Lemon Evokes
Hannah Thornton	Enigma - Mona Lisa
Hayley Flood	Mrs Shakespeare
Nathalie Ntwiazah	Mrs Satan
Katrina Ferron	Mrs Dracula
Tamsin Moore	The Big Mistake
Alice Tayloroff	1789
Eleanor Wade	Red Baron
Leonie Gasson	Train

Hannah Blows

The Pigeon

Year 10

Isabel Saunders

Hot September Days

Reeve Massey

Allotment Plot 57

Nicola Ingram

Lost Youth

Flora Laven-Morris

Transit Van

Alexandra Stone

Remember Me

Victoria Pearce

Two Lies

Nathalie Kernot

Faint Dreams

Manisha Kumar

The life of a post-it

Year 11

Habiba Islam

The Charge of the Department Store

Louise Gammon

Old Bill

Charlotte Mehta-McDonough

The Pecking Hen

Lorna Van Oss

A Handful of Gold - cutting hair

Olivia Berthon

The Spider's Web

Alexa Prichard

I looked for you...

Josephine Starte

Grey

Ra'eesa Mehta

The Bridge between Reflections

Xanthe Batt

Window Pain

Maeve Crockett

The Deluge

Lauren Adams

In her box of memories

Molly Scott

So familiar

Isabella Bird

The Library

Years 12 and 13

Jane Arden

Lightening up!

Clare Richmond

High Society

Olivia Cerio

In a far away land

Catherine Sykes

Hello

Imogen Parry

Lucky Heroes

Laura Kirwan-Ashman

The Blues

Naomi Kroll

Blocks

Kate Craggs

Word Shopping

Helen Oxenham

He is there

Catherine Lawford

The staying-kiss

Julia Bell

Being Alice

Anna Bucks

The Perfect Daughter

This poetry book was designed and desktop published by
Judith Sanoon and Melanie Duignan.

Cover design: Dry Point by Elizabeth Mann, Year 8

