

wonderful

the BIRD

*If poetry comes not as naturally as leaves  
to a tree it had better not come at all.*



Some observant readers may already have noticed the kinship between the cover bird and the pelican on the lawn dedicated to Old Ardinians. Actually there's a large number of the wiry family, hovering behind clouds or among reeds here and there in the world, all with a beakful of words, all delighted to be able to pass on the news of ... what? What is it that poetry says? Is it simply the news of life in the open, feelings explored, ideas taking shape, words given wings? What is certain is that its utterances are as important as any, that they linger on the air, and that once you like hearing the sudden fresh notes on the breeze, you listen for the sound life-long. The good old Ardingly pelicans are lurking everywhere, wherever Ardinians are passing on their way, reminding them of the hidden depths of the air we breathe: the surprise, the humour, the familiarity and the strangeness of all things. Your editor felt inspired to add an offering himself this year. If he can catch a sight of the wonderful bird anyone can. Praise be to pelicans!

Ardingly English Department

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## This is a Poem

*by Seb Masters*

What do I have to do to make you know this is a poem?  
Do the words have to rhyme or the lyrics beats time,  
to make you know that this is a poem?  
Does it have to make you feel happy or sad, rebellious or bad,  
to make you know that this is a poem?  
Do I have to use similes, alliteration, metaphors and personification,  
to make you know that this is a poem?  
Does it have to make you laugh or cry or question why,  
to make you know that this is a poem?  
All I have to do to make you know that this is a poem  
is to let the words speak and let ears listen.

## Tea Leaf

*by Cindy Pang*

Tea,  
dark brown  
quiet and lonely  
tea leaf  
resting in the bottom of the cup  
ready for a fierce assault  
then a high-spirited  
somersault  
crazy without knowing  
from the beginning to the present.  
Fall down  
spin  
fall down  
settle on the bottom forever  
stubborn, waiting for the next assault.  
Life  
is the same.



## The Pond

*by Josh Hardy*

What lies in the depths  
of the murky pond  
beneath the muddy waters  
and overgrown lily-pads?

Do the carp rule the waves  
or are there other life-forms  
that dominate this pond?  
With the carp's brilliant  
golden scales,  
we often forget  
the smaller things.

They are not seen  
by erring man,  
but make no mistake  
for they are there.  
They may not be on display  
yet you may gaze,  
and with the aid of  
the trained eye,  
you can see what lies in  
the depths of the murky pond.

## Mist

*by Poppy Smith*

The mist clouds the hills  
swirling and drifting,  
it snakes through the trees,  
twisting and turning.

It settles on the leaves,  
soaks into the soil;  
it moistens the air,  
obscuring the light.

The world you know  
becomes an unfamiliar trap.  
Everything lies  
just beyond the mist.



## It's All About Love These Days

by Katrina Marina

It's all about love these days,  
TV shows, films and songs.  
The words are either  
"She broke up with me" or  
"I don't want to let you go".  
It's funny how it's mostly that,  
how people think of love.  
But what has happened to the 'oldies',  
the entertaining ones?  
The films that talk about friendship,  
how people get along?  
Or how they fight and then make up  
without being hurt?  
I don't mind love being included,  
only not so much.  
A bit of kissing on the screen  
and feelings in the songs.  
I just feel like love grabs and swishes you  
and whispers: "You're my victim now!"  
And you cannot escape.  
You're under its control, you're trapped...  
so let's not have that all the time.  
Let's just have a break  
and think of something else to get us entertained.  
And now I need to end this poem.  
My brain is searching for ideas...  
I'm hopeless...  
So I'll end it here.  
Just know  
that love is overtaking, ruling and breathtaking...

## Wedding

by Raffaella Freeman

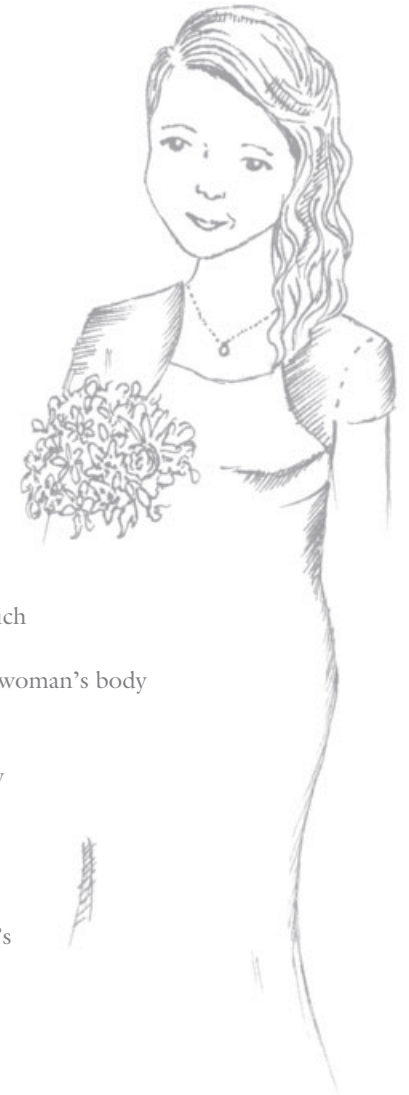
The tension mounts

Miniature bouquets are ornaments  
in the tresses of flower girls  
tender taffeta teases the ground with its touch  
royal purple  
ells of cream engulf a small girl's mind in a woman's body  
uproar of applause, appreciation  
joy.

A service suitable for members of monarchy  
in a modest cathedral.

Not far from the tube...  
two mere mortals join  
and the not so royal wedding, of my family's  
flesh and blood, *my* brother

is perfect.



## Puzzle/Enigma

by Olivia Noé

It does not have face but faces changes.  
 Others call it a curse and others wish they resembled it.  
 Others fight it because perhaps it is that which they fear  
 and others only want to be beside it. You are glad as soon as it leaves you  
 but it is the only thing that hears your complaints.  
 There is no pill found to cure it  
 and it is not cured with ephemeral love.  
*What is it? What is it?*  
 Search and you will find it!  
 Around you you will see that it fits everywhere.  
 Always alone it gives you a head start.  
 When you are hurt, you take it and run and hide so you can be cured.  
 It exists in plenty and doesn't run out.  
 Unfortunately the knowledge of it makes the mind be lost,  
 leave, escape to other skies.  
 Most excellent adviser for self-criticism,  
 some call it freedom and others call it prison.  
 It doesn't have a face but it resembles you.  
 When it leaves your soul, your soul celebrates.

A second go and more clues I will give you.  
 It steals time but it makes the flame for life more possible.  
 It becomes the colour in a canvas, becomes a rhyme on paper, becomes a deep sea.  
 (If you do not swim right you are drowned.)  
 It knows all your secrets.  
 The fewer the errors, the smaller the wound.  
*What is it? What is it?*  
 Search and you will find it!  
**But you don't want to.**



## Whispers of a Child

by Jenny Elwin

A childish dream  
 hidden in my secret heart  
 in a box,  
 shut,  
 locked with a key,  
 opened from time to time  
 when the sun shines.  
 And in that box with  
 a faded memory,  
 a face in a stairway,  
 a painted frame,  
 a stamp,  
 a name,  
 I shut that hope,  
 small, silent, futile hope  
 that long ago  
 a child whispered  
 in another world,  
 another life,  
 at least,  
 so it seems.  
 In that world  
 of hopes, of dreams  
 one forgets  
 I think  
 to live.  
 If I were wise  
 I'd lose it  
 the key, the box,  
 the hope...  
 but not being wise  
 I keep it,

wish on it, dream a little,  
 and hope that hope  
 that precious hope,  
 that fragile childish dream,  
 that one day, maybe,  
 it might spread its wings  
 and live.



## Angst over the Red Canvas

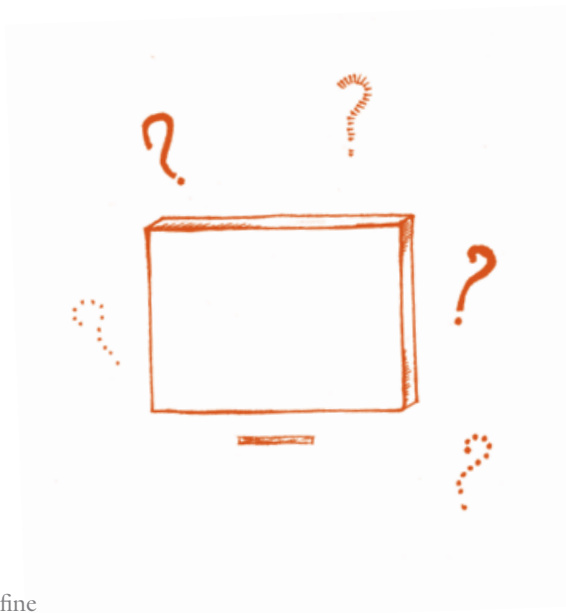
by Lidia Nawrocka

When you go to a gallery  
you expect to see some art  
but does a red canvas  
really come from the heart?  
You expect to see a masterpiece  
portrait or landscape  
You expect to see Van Gogh  
not some emotionless tape.

I went to see some art  
straight from the heart  
so I tell you solemnly  
that red canvas is not art!  
Give me a block of abstract  
just not a block of bricks.  
Give me a 'Scream' or even a stream  
just not a single light stick.  
Give me a hollowed-out model  
just not a hollowed, yellow potty.  
Give me a family portrait  
just not some stupid totty.  
Give me a photo of a sunset  
Give me anything at all  
Give me a splash of paint and I'll be fine  
you know I'm not a fool.

How much time did they spend on that?  
A disgrace to the name of Art!  
The artist is a lie!  
I need to see more!  
Not just the start!

So I tell you, that single canvas  
IS NOT A PIECE OF ART!!!



## The Power of Song

by Chloe Brook

To sing is not to be heard but to listen.  
It is not to be lost but found.  
To sing is to feel.

The warmth that floods my body with joy of Gershwin.

The smiles a harmony can behold.  
The strength of a ballad taking flight.  
The passion a note can uplift.  
The peace a song can bring.

To sing is not to make noise but to give hope.  
To sing is not to swallow but to take breath.  
To sing is not to seek but to find.

To sing is within the depths of the heart.

# Blood, Sweat, Tears

by Abbie Bosiger



The beauty of her fluid body  
the beauty of her perfect movements  
the beauty of the enthralled watchers  
the beauty of the dance

The smiles of the dancers dancing  
the smiles of the bewitched audience  
the smile of the choreographer  
the smiles in the dance

The triumph of the perfect fouetté  
the triumph of the whole company  
the triumph of a great performance  
the triumph of the dance

Beauty in the eye of the beholder  
smiles of satisfaction  
triumph when the performance is perfect

Blood. Pumping. Breathless. Tired.  
Sweat. Behind the façade.  
Tears. Relief, you've done it.

This is sport  
this is art  
this is dance

# Choir

by Isabel Hughes

The conductor leads us now,  
one pace, one voice, one chance.  
The air spilling from our lungs at the same time,  
controlled, many voices blended as one.  
The purest sound breaks the air and the audience holds its breath.  
The baton moves and the collective voice follows,  
colourful and bright in the major chords,  
the minor chords drawing down a magical fog.  
We breathe again, smiles unseen pass between us.  
This feels familiar yet exciting.  
The words flow as our confidence grows.  
Around me are friends I have known for years,  
others brand new, slotted in by voice alone,  
new, yet known somehow.  
We come from cities, villages, north and south.  
Last night a hub of excited chat as we caught up,  
accents clashing, fashions too.  
But now in uniform, in places, row on row  
we sing...  
listening to each other,  
but knowing their sound is our sound,  
all eyes on the conductor, self lost for a moment.

We are a Choir. Hear us.



## Life's Routine

by Ann-Kathrin Henning

Every night.  
Face in the pillow.  
Familiar, detailed flashbacks:  
Faces, laughter, cheers and shouts.  
Questioning the future, face hidden.  
The present haunted by the past.  
Still affected, as time flies by.  
Desperate to undo what is done.  
To change.  
Helpless, worried, stuck.  
Searching the comfort of a different life.  
Getting up with a fake smile and clouded eyes.  
Hiding.  
Every day...

## A Paltry Love

by Vanessa Swales

Time does not wait for those who stray,  
but take it now before it dies away.  
Do not leave it in another's care,  
for comfort is not what it'll find there.  
  
There'll be nothing but pain.  
  
Don't leave it to rot in the dark,  
like a lark that soars through the putrid clouds of night.  
*Le nuage des rêves* –  
it's only hope of escape  
from the landscape below.  
  
It'll find nothing there but pain.  
  
When she leans near she can hear his heart  
strumming the blood in his veins.  
*Voici mon coeur, aussi.*  
It's mine – a paltry love to give.  
But still I know you'll find nothing but happiness.  
  
Yet if you listen you can hear the solitary cry of that young skylark,  
its final swansong,  
as it weeps into eternity.



## Relegation

by James Eagles

Here it is,  
the final day.  
You're in League Two,  
staring down the barrel  
of the Conference.

How did you get here?  
Was it the twenty-two  
defeats in a row?  
Or was it the plunge into  
administration?  
No.

You just don't want survival enough.  
"It's okay, down to the Conference,  
back up in a year!"  
It doesn't work like that.  
Now go out there and...  
**PLAY YOUR HEARTS OUT!**

You go behind.  
Two down by half-time.  
Now the manager's time to talk.  
Crockery smashed,  
players left ashen-faced.  
The second half.  
You somehow fight back  
out of pure anger and grit.  
The final whistle.

You think you've done it.  
Scraped through by the skin of your teeth.  
Fans flood the pitch in delight,  
mob you,  
but then it all goes quiet.  
Hearts race.  
The results are through.  
You're down.

## Kick Start

by Theo Farmer

You kick the kick start  
the engine purrs like a cat in paradise  
you grasp the clutch with a firm hand,  
push it into gear, it makes a satisfying clunk

You rev the engine and drop the clutch  
you take off like a rocket with one wheel in the air  
you blast up through first, second, third then fourth

Then you grasp the brake, your body swings forward,  
you lean into the corner,  
one foot on the ground tearing through the dust

You twist your wrist, accelerate out of the corner  
the bike stands up  
you grab the brake for the corner racing towards you

You turn in knowing you did not brake enough  
knowing you're destined to fall off  
but you have no choice but to carry on

Your wheel slips from beneath you  
you hit the ground, slide along a few feet  
then stop in the middle of the track helpless

You drag yourself shakily to your feet  
you kick the kick start...



## The Mighty Slope and its Rider

by Scott Bennington

When I am floating across the slope I feel untouchable  
 When I am soaring across the white ice field I feel comfortable  
 When I am gazing through my dew-soaked goggles at the sun I feel empowered  
 When I am on the mighty slope I am its rider

When I am racing my brothers down the slope I am the quickest  
 When I am turning to beat my brothers on the mighty slope I am the most agile  
 When I am overtaking my brothers on the mighty slope I am the most skilled  
 When I am on the mighty slope I am its rider

When we come into port I am the most tired  
 When I round the final bend I know it is time for bed  
 With my board of snow held high  
 On the mighty slope I am its rider

## Exams

by John Gibson

Exams are real,  
 exams are soon,  
 exams are there,  
 exams are here,  
 exams are everywhere.  
 But exams aren't everything.

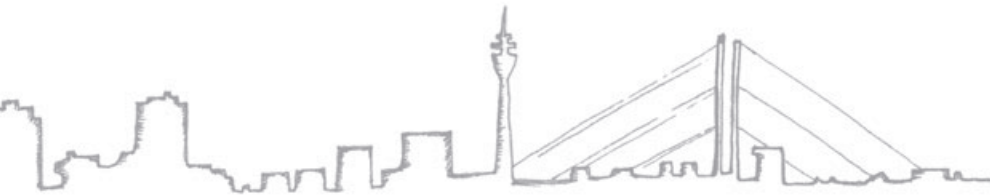
Exams are horrifying,  
 exams are multiplying,  
 exams are intensifying,  
 exams are life-changing,  
 exams are soul's coating.  
 But exams aren't everything.

Exams are our future,  
 exams are our life,  
 exams are our children,  
 exams are our wife,  
 exams are our keepers,  
 and that shouldn't be.  
 But it's tricky to see,  
 what with the paper, the ticks and the crosses,  
 the model answers, the mark schemes, the envelopes too!  
 The mountains of coursework, the rivers of coffee,  
 the landmass of the cloned majority...  
 Yet  
 there's a whole world out there,  
 100% examination free!



# Düsseldorf

by Jonas Bley



Slack, indolent, laid-back town  
sweltering, tepid  
but near the grassy meadows  
there are rough motorways

The people affable, attentive  
with exorbitant cars,  
next to enormous towers,  
brisk and competent drivers

Systematic, organised town,  
adequate,  
sweet town,  
scrumptious, mellow.

# Beekeeping Impressions

by Johannes Wiillenweber

flecks of  
maroon  
purple  
ruby  
amber



amongst golden hexagonal wells  
- ambrosial smells rising

a delicate bond  
of vibrating bodies  
diligently constructing  
their waxy white art

there! near the corner – an early returnee  
her waggly bourrée dance  
proudly reporting  
a cornflower field

two lively black branchlets  
humbly exploring  
this ever-dark kingdom

the queen bee! – majestically striding –  
her escorts and minders  
spreading her scents

and above all – a human  
gazing with wonder

at this  
alien  
dark  
astoundingly intelligent  
world.



## Spring

by *Olivia Homewood*

I have heard tell,  
and know  
that the promise of summer is far sweeter than her coming  
and see in this age the white frostings of snow  
Queen Ann's Lace  
and none of those later weighted riches  
insects dart  
all wreathed in bright water  
Spring's virginal daughter  
weeps with eyes as a colt's sparked nervous  
and yet unformed as tawny buds  
and laughs in the time that clouds pass  
a lark's laugh flying up to a snap of blue  
my eyes are opening and beginning to sing  
yet hushed before the pricklings of damp wood  
tattooed as tigers with lemony light  
too bright for such eyes  
unmade and unformed  
as sapling Spring  
watch her go and stand  
now ruler of the land  
in her queendom  
that cacophony of green



## Dear Shadow

by *Louisa Fink*

Dear Shadow,  
as you creep and crawl  
and glide and grovel  
and tolerate me shrieking "Nooooo!!"  
lurking in the corners of my room,  
won't you tell me what you're looking for?  
Dear Shadow,  
this is rather serious.  
You see, I can't be bothered wasting my time,  
wriggling and wrestling with my fear,  
trying to catch my thoughts as they scramble away,  
gliding from their normal places  
to some Fantasy World!

Dear Shadow,  
so what is it that keeps you sneaking around like this?  
Is it the frustration you aim at that drowns my mind?  
Or is it the suffocating fear that slides to my side?  
I have noticed that sometimes you come along with the storm as well,  
that hand in hand you giggle and laugh  
when shivers run down my back.  
The heavy rain joins you that whips around my mind  
and drums on the window-pane,  
as lightning crashes down.

Dear Shadow,  
is that what you're looking for?  
No? Or yes?  
Tell me, I know there's something on your mind!

Dear Shadow,  
is it power you want?  
(But power over what?)  
Or is it just a chilling thought, to joke around like that?

Well, dear Shadow...

I must say,  
I'm quite impressed by all those things you do,  
to make me creep out at night,  
and face all those monsters, that hide beneath my desk, my chair, my bed,  
just to tap that little powerful button,  
and turn on the light.



## I Try

by Phoebe Hardwick

I tried to act like I cared, but my heart was ice and my soul was blown.  
 To the people around I seemed loving and warm,  
 the air around me was poison but my charm like the antidote.  
 A burning sensation that left you feeling queasy.  
 My understanding of you was clear, and to manipulate you  
 was as easy as moulding dough in my hands.  
 I could read your face.  
 I could absorb your emotions.  
 I could laugh at your pain.  
 To be as detached as me took skill, but no heart.  
 If I had horns, I'd have a tail.  
 Would you sign the paper in my hands?  
 Knowing you, your first reaction would be to say no,  
 to deny my sweet, sticky invitation...  
 but I can mould, pummel and plant the seeds of doubt.  
 Turn a devotee into a non-believer,  
 and turn the flowers into fire.

You may think I'm the devil.

## Thinking about Life

by Jennifer Forster

I'm sitting here in this room, staring at  
 the ceiling,  
 imagining how it would be, to be a bird,  
 looking down at the world, how small it  
 is,  
 and how small my problems seem  
 compared to those of the world.  
 Every minute thousands of people die and  
 are born,  
 the endless circle of life.

Fire,  
 passion, love,  
 loathing, hate, fear,  
 power and weakness,  
 dying and living,  
 burning and extinction,  
 ash and soot,  
 desire, danger,  
 hell and symbol of the devil, cremation,  
 moving rustling spewing...

Earth,  
 life, death,  
 beginning and ending,  
 eternal, immortal,  
 past, present and future,  
 nature with all its wonders,  
 trees, plants,  
 big ones and small ones...

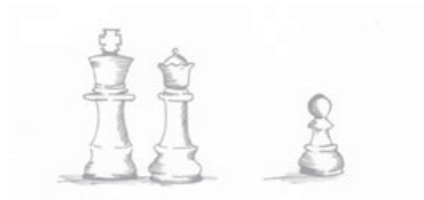
Air,  
 you can smell it, feel it, taste it,  
 breathe in and breathe out,  
 pure or polluted,  
 strong breeze or light wind,  
 storming, killing and devastating,  
 be a bird, spread your wings,  
 enjoy the wind carrying you...

Water,  
 bubbling, giggling,  
 hot boiling, cold freezing water,  
 flowing, moving, turning, streaming,  
 crushing, splashing,  
 flowing, pouring, raining and hailing,  
 essential, always in demand,  
 some get too much, others not enough,  
 christening,  
 the elixir of life.



## Tempest

by Emma Elgee



At dawn they rise like a wall of pawns,  
dispensable and unworthy to the higher Kings and Queens.  
Their glassy eyes betray their hope as they see  
one bright beam of life shoot through the greatest of tempests,  
at first giving hope to so many men, who are all diamonds in the rough,  
that the heavens are on their side!  
Till the sunbeam, bringer of life, shines on a bringer of death.  
The glistening bullet-shell shines insultingly bright and cheerful,  
for it has done its deed of stealing an essence.  
To the wooden, stiff pawns it seems that God is mocking them,  
shoving in their now grim faces that nature has been infected with hate,  
for why would the portal to heaven shine light on a destroyer from hell!

The tempest was unforgiving, rearing its ugly head again and again in explosions of pain.  
All the elements of power were stacked impossibly high against them,  
as the weapons of death showered like deadly raindrops on their heads.  
The monstrous sky cracked and screamed about them in despite,  
he threw cascades of poison on their terror-stricken, screaming faces.  
Mother Earth was no better as she concealed mines awaiting their chance to inflict  
suffering.

Her hellish clutches were wrapped in a ribbon of barbed wire,  
she snarled and clawed at men's rat-eaten uniforms, streaming eyes and gushing wounds.  
They were the all-powerful, almighty Kings and Queens!  
The pawns were trapped in their cocoon of war.

The fatigue-riddled pawns were no match for it,  
they could only fall, flail and flounder in the fire and hope death was quick.  
They clung to the belief that they had made a difference,  
but after trying to see what they had done all they could see was the fiery depths of hell  
spread before them.

For only now do they realise that their last God-given gift of ignorance has been  
withdrawn.

Their now clear eyes see every effort is fruitless,  
every breath is wasted, every heartbeat ticks away precious time.  
It could be the last beat and all for nothing!  
Every shred of hope sets like a setting sun, sad and sardonic, it will never rise again.  
Their gift was a curse in disguise!

## The Night Lullaby

by Ellie Wright



The moon is out, the wolf howls...  
dusty footprints in the ground  
where people have been watching,  
waiting for the wolf to howl.  
But no one sees him and  
the legend travels  
far and wide, about a wolf  
who sings a lullaby.  
No one thinks to come when  
the moon is out and the stars shine.  
But I know. I listen at night  
to hear the wolf cry his poem,  
his verse, his lullaby.



## I am Fifteen

by Sam Ennis



*(after reading Prayer before Birth by Louis Macneice)*

I am fifteen; hear me.  
Do not let drug-raged people influence me  
or drunks who have no control come near me.

I am fifteen; console me.  
I fear war, the fighting and killing.  
Don't let the fighting and killing drag me in,  
the blood, the planes, the bombs, they scare me.

I am fifteen; provide for me.  
Food and shelter throw at me,  
friends and home give to me always,  
laughter and happiness share with me.

I am fifteen; forgive me  
for sins I have done  
and all the wrong things I will do.  
For being selfish and stubborn.

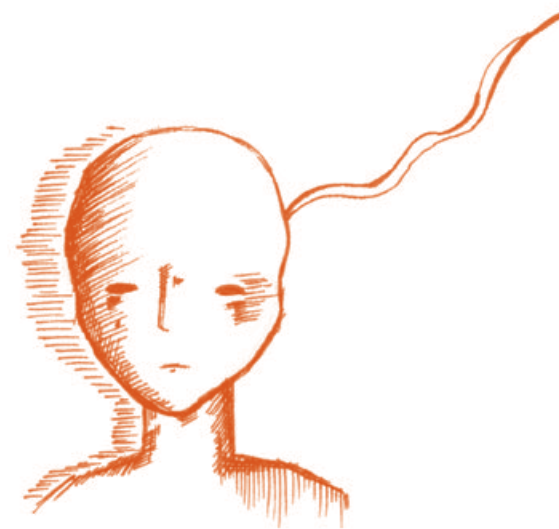
I am fifteen; fill me  
with strength to be kind and strong,  
to go my own way and to fight against doubt,  
to be positive all the time.

Don't let me fail and don't let me fall.  
Or finish me.

## Lunatic

by Kate Jones

Day by day it slips away  
a precious piece of sanity  
an anchor to the earth, an anchor  
to the soul. But when there's nothing  
left I'll drift along as others  
who before me have, as slowly they  
turned mad.



## There She Sits

by James Palmer

There she sits in a chair, not knowing, not caring.  
 I walk over to her.  
 Her small failed body, with eyes that have seen more than a whole life, watching me,  
 but behind those eyes, nothing.  
 No memories, no knowledge, and no idea who or what I am.  
 She watches me, looks at me, keeping her eyes on me,  
 all the time I walk towards her.  
 I smile.  
 A tentative movement of lips makes the response trying to mimic what she has seen.  
 Our eyes hold the gaze still unsure but now trusting me a little more as I approach.  
 I sit down next to her.  
 She is still looking at me trying to notice anything in me that might tell her who I am.  
 Just a month ago,  
 no name, but an identity marked me out from the other people around her.  
 But not now.  
 I am just another face,  
 another person,  
 in a world with no memories, no knowledge.  
 In a state of just being she sits, she watches,  
 and tries to smile.



## Solitude

by Olivia Bell



The oncology sign swims through the  
 films over our eyes,  
 almost pulsing against the stark white  
 backdrop of wall, badly needing a paint.  
 There are sticks in the bed, trailing,  
 willowed limbs bowed, cowed,  
 disembowelled.  
 Lethargy weighs heavy on our frozen,  
 lipsticked smiles  
 as we lie through perfect, chiselled teeth –  
 “You’re looking better today!”

Like the novel that we picked up in the  
 waiting-room and gradually grew bored of;  
 finished.  
 No sign says it, but we all know.

We are you, in that bed, and for one  
 minute we almost understand that  
 total hell you are facing.  
 We never expected it to be so empty, or  
 that we would be so afraid;  
 everybody leaves alone, closing the faded  
 paintwork quietly behind them,  
 and none of us look back once.

Am I the inverted visage in the sterilised

tin basin, alarmingly coiffed,  
 eyes trying so hard to avoid those  
 mountains bruising out of the arm  
 sockets,  
 those creased, peaked blades that you  
 could sharpen a knife on  
 and cut through this humid, taut air?  
 Or am I the cadaver in the bed who  
 wishes so fervently to rise,  
 whose pupils mock the flashing machines,  
 dilating and spilling over,  
 torrents racing through well-worn cracks  
 to drip, uncaring, onto cold, gnarled  
 hands?

He has not seen as many years of life as he  
 wanted  
 and those he trudged through were  
 laborious, unproductive.  
 He tries to find a philosophy, some greater  
 meaning  
 to comfort with a warm hand from above.

Everything has a reason, you tell yourself,  
 as you shut yet another entrance in your  
 diminished, narrowed mind;  
 the blank corridor stretches out in front  
 of you  
 but you remind yourself that *life is beautiful*.

But remember, before you forget the  
 sinking face and those flooding eyes;

he was dying, he was alone, and he was  
 you.

## A Picture of Spring

by Olivia Bell

it is a beautiful day today  
I heard them on the radio excited for early  
heat-waves  
and somewhere, along a gold-drenched  
grass-tossed road  
an ice-cream man stamps on his cigarette,  
turns on his tune  
and leaves

there's a sense in the air, it's buzzing  
and a fly perches on my window, searches  
for something I cannot see, maybe a  
scent, a familiarity,  
licks his legs, dances a few steps, probably  
smiles – or smirks –  
and leaves

a girl on a bike down the lane tumbles off  
her knees purpled on the flat smack tarmac;  
the basket of grapes follows by example,  
beads squashed beneath her splaying  
fingers  
as her face puckers – but no – dusts off –  
and leaves

out in the field the raven preens  
centred in the masses of stark fluorescent  
rape-seed  
like an eclipse, blanking out spring's stain  
of sun-vermilion  
blotting an ink-form of some colder  
breeze; that summer is not yet here  
though spring's symphonies are sung and  
done, far too early  
as spring –  
leaves –

it is a beautiful day today, though storms  
scowl in the reflections  
of a cracked flowerpot's clayed, crumbled  
tears  
and my hands shake in the soggy air,  
tensed  
for that clap, that slap of thunder, so easily  
turned

so easily turned, as life, so frail, so fragile;  
a snail's shell, a spindling wisp, taken –

it is a beautiful day, but the butt  
smoulders, singeing the grass,  
wings become entangled in silky, subtle  
webs,  
gravel and concrete bear the dye of a loss  
of concentration;  
juices pooling in sweet, cloying, grieving  
oozes –  
and to see this, and to see all of this,  
yearning, aching –

it is a beautiful day  
but I,  
I am breaking



## Reflections

by Lucy Sheehan

In the veiled grey  
of your tired eyes I  
saw reflections of the  
years that had passed  
between, like rain on  
the hillside. And in  
the shadowed gaze tall  
trees appeared, a bee  
flew near, and light  
faded dim on the forest  
floor. Pain surfaced  
often, a glazed cloud  
on an oily pond,  
and specks hazy as  
memories caught rays  
as beneath the darker

depths shadows moved  
as restless shapes, like  
fish in the drifting  
streams. It was a weary  
gaze that found mine,  
and I saw hills and  
dying days like the  
gilded embers in ashen  
beds, an amorous  
haze. And the soft  
needles bent to your  
shape, gaunt angles  
and tangled strands,  
face down...you  
remembered what it  
was like to be alone...  
unfound.

## Believe

by Lucy Sheehan

Your words trip in silent circles around the ephemeral reaches of my head  
like the cats, white-socked, light-footed as nymphs who wove on and off my path  
in an often trodden garden

like the bottles, hidden – a desperate honest measure – a measure taken to revive me  
stripped back, and shrunken in the darkness – shrunken full of impassioned speech,  
words I spoke – and speak too much

All that ‘makes my heart tick’, the singing incense of ritual devotion, the backward  
ironies – I recite them, then defy in equal measure as I step outside again – aged and  
full of heavy words. The silent ink expanse releases me, splashed from the bottle  
and I don’t believe that I believe in anything.

## Madame Butterfly

by Vanessa Swales



Resting on his palm was a solitary butterfly.  
He regarded its form with probing eyes –  
reflecting the amber of its wings that flutter-blinked  
its Rorschach orbs like a shy girl of eighteen before her lover.  
As if to calm the spellbound little thing,  
he makes the simplest of sounds –  
shhh – quiet and cool –  
whispering: “There is nothing to fear, my dear Madame Butterfly.”

## The Nightmare

by Dan Sargent

(after *The Nightmare*, a painting by John Henry Fuseli)

The yellow light cascaded over her ivory thighs,  
 a soft bouclé hung tickling the squirming fat flies below.  
 Her translucent stench rotted in the thick night air,  
 and the tumultuous darkness heaved and teased just out of reach.  
 Unctuous and unrelenting it called to her,  
 it came gushing over her curious fingertips,  
 gripping and taunting her,  
 nipping and kneading her.  
 It drank her in; its white eyes and yellow teeth charged her,  
 and its cold callous arms embraced her.  
 Does this darkness have a name?  
 It is your name.

## Evolution of War

by Tom Prosser



CHARGE!  
 The lines rush forward  
 CLASH!  
 A thousand single combats start  
 STOP!  
**Evolution**  
 FORWARD!  
 Blocks of men march in formation  
 BANG!  
 A thousand muskets go off at once  
 (*This must*) STOP!  
**Evolution**  
 OORAH!  
 A squad walking a foreign street  
 KABOOM!  
 A single car bomb goes off  
 STOP! (*We've gone too far*)  
**Evolution**  
 A shape falling  
 Light burning  
 Ground dissolving...  
 The battle is over  
**WAR HAS WON**

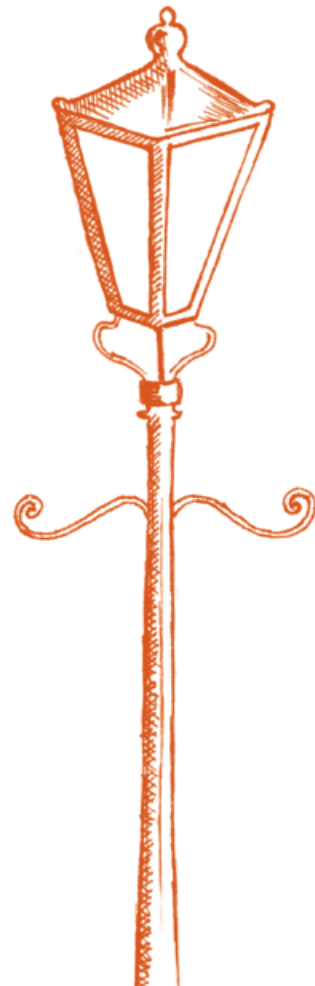
## Song

by Wil Hutton

Oh now my love, my darling,  
you're once more by my side.  
We'll walk the streets of London  
fresh-faced and starry-eyed.  
We two shall walk the narrow lanes  
of Hammersmith once more  
and sit alone beneath the trees  
just as we did before.  
The summer breeze floats by with ease  
beside the river shore,  
for the days we used to pass as these  
were days we still adore.

And once again we two shall take  
the District Line to Stamford Brook,  
and as the sun the morning breaks,  
over London we shall look.  
As piercing light off towers shines  
into our squinting glare,  
to simple joys we'll both resign,  
emotions all laid bare.  
And in the hazy morning shine  
are memories made there.

As day declines we'll take the bus  
as a chance to rest our feet,  
and from the Terminus corner  
walk home, to Wandle Street.



## Ardinian

Joe Winter



Who sees the dark flames?  
In Ardingly Chapel  
night gathers in  
as a host of young people  
stand at the altar  
of a blind vision.  
Who sees the workings  
of transformation?

Stand on the green field,  
children of Ardingly.  
Who hears an avalanche  
in the firm soil?  
Who seeks to know of  
the difference a day makes  
in Nature's long distance?  
What time is on trial?

One moment, one lesson,  
one breath of awareness,  
and the dark flames are lit  
again and again.  
May we at Ardingly  
honour a mystery,  
take in our days here  
a precious step on.

## A Taxi Drive to Motivation Street

by Ian James Turner

*Where to Mac?*

I haven't decided yet.

*What did you jump in here for then?*

Your engine was running and your light was on so I dived in.

*And yet you have no clue of your destination?*

Not as yet.

*Well your instinct told you to hop in and go somewhere mate!*

Yeah, then it bailed out on me and took the bus.

*You're on your own then Guv?*

Looks like it.

*Well it's only up to you as to where you need to go Sonny Jim, I can't just take you if you're ruddy clueless.*

No offence but I prefer not to be pressurised...

*...I mean I wait here to pick people up and nine times out of ruddy ten they get on with it and go about their lives never mind the traffic. What makes you different from them eh?*

Perhaps I'm not ready for this journey.

*So you suggest sitting here on our backsides while you rack your brains?*

...

*Not got all day guv'nor!*

Fine. Take me to Motivation Street please. It's best that I'm not late.

*Back of the net! Much more like it. Okay bucko, do you want to take the scenic route with Promises of the Future? We often pass Ferrari's and Job Promotions on the way! Some enjoy seeing the Clouds Up Above because many look like the word 'Fame'.*

Do you mean Destiny Drive?

*Yeah. Or if you prefer Guv we could take Surprise Avenue, where every day of your life becomes a pleasant mystery to solve. Might be a risk of fog and the roads may be bumpy but some say it's quicker while others say slower. Those are your options Junior.*

Frankly I'm spoilt for choice.

*Surprise Avenue it is then.*

This is a comfy cab. It's living up to my expectations. My friends have complimented your service before.

*Don't know why they thank me Mac, it's them who decide to take the ride. Nobody's been critical though, 'cept them ruddy fools who jump out the door while I'm still moving and before you know it, there they are sprawled out on Coward Road and gettin' a first-class ticket aboard the Regret Ambulance service taking 'em to Down and Out General.*

Can you lock the doors please?

*As you wish.*

So these fools, have you ever stopped to go back and help them?

*Ha!*

But they hurt themselves and...

*Exactly Mac! It's like you deciding to have the doors locked. The decision rests on the journeyman's lap, not the driver. I'd hasten to say you made a good decision for allowing me to keep you inside.*

I noticed you don't have safety-belts.

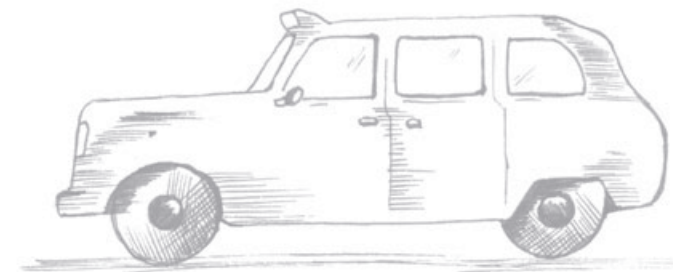
*No guts no glory Mac.*

You don't say.

*We're here Junior, good luck to ya.*

Thanks driver. How much?

*Nowt mate.*



## Msesy Wrods

by Jneny Ewiln

Waht a mses  
 a mses of wrdos,  
 of wrods taht dcane arscos my pgae  
 dperatnig  
 not ipmratnig, ipmratnig any snese.  
 Srtgnac  
 taht saheps and sgins and sginnig saheps sohlud so  
 dsreie to cnfsoue!

Wonderful  
 Words

## Nonsense

by Ian James Turner

Nonsense.  
 A sense of non? That makes no sense.  
 Non-interpretive sense perhaps.  
 Or senseless non-meaning.  
 Maybe a sensing of Nons in back gardens.  
 Preposterous.  
 A preparation of posterous.  
 A postering look of prep.  
 Maybe a pre-post of 'erous.  
 Silly.  
 That is a ridiculous word.  
 Gobbledegook.  
 Gobbling of gooks surely?  
 To degook is the opposite of gook without the gobble.  
 Claptrap.  
 A trap to catch claps.  
 Or a clapping of traps.  
 It has to be an applause of ambushing.  
 This poem has a title.  
 Therefore, it has served its pose for a pur.

## Dog

*by JoJo Macari*

Roof, roof, roof, roof, roof, shhhhhhhh, roof, roof, be quiet! roof, roof, roof, I'm trying to watch TV! roof, roof, roof, roof, roof, roof, roof, roof, roof, do you want a biscuit, r.....



## May the Bird Fly

*by Lidia Nawrocka*



may the bird fly  
may it sing its songs  
may it cross the sea  
may it fly to eternity  
may the wind in its feathers  
may the word in its pages  
may it inspire all near  
may everyone hear  
the wonderful bird  
as it soars into flight



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