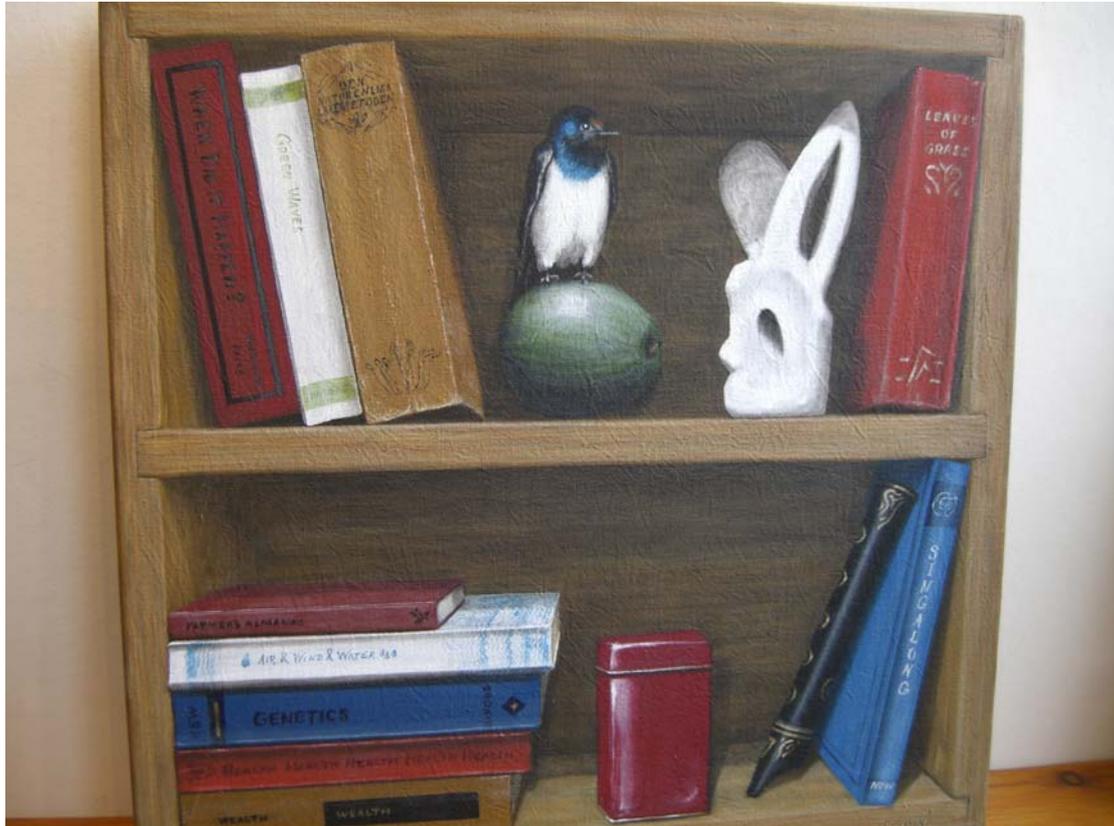


Supplementary Poems to the Rilke issue

A special online supplement to accompany the poems to, on and for Rilke in the special double issue of *Agenda*, 'A Reconsideration of Rainer Maria Rilke', Vol 42 Nos 3-4



Painting by **Maria Froman**, 35, born in Sweden, a prize-winning student of art in the U.S. and in Lund University, Sweden. Her work has been exhibited in Sweden, Australia and the U.K. More details on www.nickwhistler.com

Tim Dooley

For Ernest Seigler

I came across your books last week
in the Ealing Oxfam,
Rilke's *Orpheus* in the New York
first edition of the German text

that will keep as a gift
for Christmas. A Robert Frost
I knew, but didn't know:
A Witness Tree. (I couldn't give

somehow, good money for
the Ronald Bottrall from
Tambimutti's press. But
took the Sidney Keyes).

There they were, with your name in ink
and '46 in subscript.
So in the dying days of this year,
sixty years after

you spent hard earned,
I'd guess, cash
at Better Books, 92 –
94 Charing + Road,

I noticed the tiny
bookplate for the shop
and, turning a page,
the line drawing of Frost,

youngish for his sixties
and already outliving
the poet friend his
face now reminds me of.

The poem I read on to
speaks of a 'day
no shadow
crossed but ours'.

And today is set fair
to unravel in such
another movement
from clear clearly to clear:

the sun mirrored
by the river's small waves,
jazz, like a muffled joy
playing in the back room.

Such easy heights or depths
give form to what is passing
some sense of compensation
for what it lacks in length.

Rosalynde Price

Orpheus in the Underground

All the seats were taken
on the Circle Line train
so I was standing by the doors
when, at Kings Cross, he bounded past me,
his loose hair flying,
as long as a girl's, a couple of Kirby grips
holding it off his face.

Suddenly he had a guitar in his hands
and he was fingering the strings
and the dry air was streaming and eddying
with his music.
A few smiled, some averted their eyes.
The train trundled on
in the dark of the tunnel,
the carriage transformed, spilling with sound
before the chords ceased.

Puddle

How lowly you seem to be,
lying there
on your back
where anyone's shoe can shatter
your equilibrium,

a miniature boot,
stamping
into your middle,
fling out arcs of beads,
abaci fingered by light,

or the dip of a beak
send a series of circles,
delicate,
over your surface
like song waves in air.

Though the rain needles you
and the wind roughs you up,
you are so laid back.
In the crook of a path's arm
You rest, dark,

a camera obscura,
which, at the right angle,
flashes
your upside-down world view,
disturbing assumptions.

In your silver the sky studies
its moods.
Face to face,
you, too, on reflection,
can frown, sulk,

or blush
every shade of purple, orange, rose,
unnoticed,
before pulling your
here-today-gone-tomorrow

vanishing trick.

Chris Preddle

The Tower

No matter how often the TV replayed
the plane igniting the tower, no matter how many
fell like any sky-
borne plague of Egypt from the disobedient East,

the watchers in a kafenion in the Mani –
Katastrophí, katastrophí? – a Greek chorus, replied
in the answering strophe, 'You in the West
have brought it on yourselves. It's gone home, Yankees.'

Volta. *Káno vólta*, I take a turn
round the top of this afflicted tower
we rent for a season. About turn. I watch like a Maniot
for all that I've brought on
myself, no matter how often I tour (about tour)
these battlements distrest. No matter.



Painting by **Bill Day**, born 1945, educated at Canterbury College of Art, and Royal Academy Schools. Widely exhibited in the U.K. Further details: www.nickwhistler.com

Donald Avery

A Man of Letters

If present should arrive today
of First Edition for my shelf,
Collected Poems – by myself,
whatever might I think or say?

That I at once must sender thank
for gift – though of so little use;
these pages I preferred as loose
and every second one as blank.

Yet I am pleased, if truth be told,
and I am pleased to tell the truth.
My life the book; on every page,
in language of some distant age,
the poems of some distant youth.
As letters. Which I sign and fold.

Kathy Miles

Lichfield Angel

He heard the muffled music from far away. This
buried angel, carved wings clipped in stone,
the keen lines of his profile cracked and chipped.
Far beneath the cold heart of the nave,
he couldn't hear the hushed responses, or clasp
his hands together for the prayers he craved.
Only sometimes could he feel a missed note
as it slipped the organ's cool sealed throat.

He wished for the Missa Brevis, Agnus Dei,
for Eucharist and Liturgy, for morning Matins,
for the Kyrie. All the loved words of Latin
that he knew. Psalms and Benedictus.
Blessings of showers and dew, of cold and frost,
ice and snow and all the flowers.
Pinned down, his sky a shaken dark vibration,
memory of Evensong, the Feast of Annunciation.

Over the years he'd heard snatches. Tallis or Vivaldi.
Cantatas, fugues, a mass. Motets and chants,
harmonies of sound, descants that rose in chords,
words and keys he didn't understand. He knew the harp
and organ, shawm and dulcimer, but not these sharp
new instruments and tunes. Oboes and bassoons,
the stringed thin quiver of cello or viola,
chaotic quavers, fragments leaked through the cracks.

They walked above him. Bishops, deans and men in black,
congregations whose singing soared to the spire.
Times when the church was still, and the empty priest
had used up his chalice of words. When the shrill choir
was quiet, and the feet like strikes of iron in his ears
had turned to things he didn't know, for he'd been buried
for many years. Split into three, a limestone Trinity,
had missed the chatter of the scattered centuries.

And then at last, they opened the floor of the nave.
Sun streamed through the eaves, through shattered flags,
the clerestory glass. Dust thick as smoke from a snuffed
candle, a mantle of sacred light. They brought him into
the white day. His wings with their fiery ochre glaze,
his foliate sceptre, the folded robes restored.
He listened for the Lord's voice, silvering the promised days,
looked for seven stars shining. Listened for His word.



Kate Woodyatt, 94, recently gone to a care home in Sussex -
Tobias and the Angel: egg tempora and oils.

Jane Clark

The Cliffs

As wild grass
mirrors great waves

to despair's edge
I step

sore words fly
on conflict's wind

buffeting failure
in love's dive

vertigo eyes
blur scene blind

until horizon finds
a hint of pink

moving me through
jagged pain.

The Piano

Playing a lonely minuet
in best kept dress

to the chorus
of imagined angels

as quivering candles
give sad hands haloes.

Music sheets of purity
remind me you're here

dancing with the youth
I used to be

from room to room
towards heaven's heart.

Until those low notes
echo with dusk's divorce.



Molly Gaisford, actress, composer, artist and film maker; lives in London.

Merryn McCarthy Marshall

Tulip Fever

My eyes are feverish
with tulips:
crinkled, frayed edges,
veins of carmine,
streaks of shot-silk
green; the fine cream
of their crinolines.

In full bloom
such exquisite flair.
Skirts swirl for display,
lift for curtseys
and drop in flounces.

I stare and stare,
absorbing their strong
draughts of colour,
their terrible nerve.



Annie Charlesworth lives and works in Devon. Tulips in vase

Sue Roe

Dutch Tulips

the sudden spring scherzo
tints them white, splays back
a petal here, one there
they lean, careening

full-falling colour
heavy as stones down a chute
hurling down into the street
from a blown-open window

big, blowsy bowls
full as a call girl's lips
dozens of open mouths
spiked with green grass

and then they're gone
as quickly as they came
dry as burnt-out fuses
brittle pink pizzicato

Tulips Turning

their lips are curled
they've bent over backwards
now they're bending again

fine-woven fireflies
their stamens yesterday's ash
strips of torn petal

rolled like acrobats
in lycra, leather, wax
their second skins

red gauze, pink lint, winter's
fleshings, unpeeled for the night
January's wet, spent candles



Annie Charlesworth: tulips in vase

Jill Townsend

Cotoneaster Berries

Less prized than holly
at this time of year
yet intense clusters
and reddened leaves
on spokes and fans
wheel against the fence.

These are the beads
blackbirds tell, a rosary
against dark winter nights
when a woman with imagination
might burn her lips on one
or, tasting, scald her tongue.

Linda Benninghoff

Your Words

We talked for hours.
Your words would fill me.
Your hands in my garden
dawdled in a bed of zinnias.
I cannot believe you are not here,
holding one hand in another,
your feet treading across
the blue carpet in my room.
After your illness had progressed,
you sat quiet at dinner,
and muttered,
'I thought I would lose control of my car.'
Too much light splashed
into the apartment. I felt blinded.
We kept trying to shut the shade.
Two months later you moved to your brother's in Ithaca.

The twisting clouds that climb upon the air
leave me grieving.
Cloud howls to porous cloud.
The sky echoes with old voices.
I wake up on these red days
sorrowful.
Nothing consoles me,
not the swath of hills,
nor the February trees crouched in light.

Jennie Christian

Compost

The love I wanted
you could not give
joy and wisdom
you withheld.

Instead you gave me
a wheelbarrow of twisted stems
handfuls of blackened peel
the unwanted parts of blemished fruit

in time, transformed
to the richest soil
where roses grow tall
in the summer sun.

Linda Saunders

Birds of Pompeii

On walls washed the colour of garnet,
they brushed little birds, touching in
beaks, furred wings and feathers.
Notes of a tune played by firelight,
suspended in silence, yet piercingly
sweet.

 Songsters in the groves,
butter-breasted warblers, with firecrests,
rosy finches, flash of sapphire or violet-green
whetting parched senses with colour and
voices like a freshet bubbling up.

Did they fall silent?

 – a quietness of birds
unremarked against the day's bustle
and the mountain's fractious mood?

Then exploding from the pines
beat upwards against searing shadow
and a hail of sparks, flight itself combusting
around their racing hearts, flocks
of small flames turning in the air
to ash?

 At times something flutters

below my throat like a premonition,
residue of a terror whose cause
I can't ascribe, unutterable song.

Where?

They might be lost, the pair of them,
pausing in the glades bewildered,
like sleepwalkers in search of a dream.
Just the eyes must be quick,
but the body, slow, suspended
in the wood's medium.

Rustle in the undergrowth.
Tick-tick of warning.
Brief whistle – *Where are you?*
Where? the bird asks repeatedly. *Weep? Weep?*
And they pivot intently,
their gaze craning up into the canopy.

From which something
falls ...
a speck, a few golden needles
sifted through bands of sunlight;
a downy feather.
Voices at the shy margins

tease them. Wingshadows
flit across the leaf-mould floor
where they move to the vague
traces of a tune
they are trying to recapture:
he drifts a few paces, she

about-faces, he...
makes a sudden sign
and they freeze in a game of statues.
Weep? Where?
They lose substance, outline,
becoming all sense, whiskered on the air

to catch the short waves of the wood.

From a series, **Callings**:

Mariner

Make a check list of
castaway and crow's nest
petrel and kittiwake
winedark and windward
soundings bearings craft
lightship or pharos
celestial navigation –
then ask do you really need
those metaphors?

Take the essentials:
patience, five senses

fresh water and a lemon.

*

Becalmed
in the very eye of nowhere.
With what speed horizons

expand.

Licks a finger
(tasting salt)
and feels for a wind.

Whistles
into the great silence
over which the stars
unfold their charts.

Escapologist

There's no secret
only the loosening not so much of joints
but of every thought.
Forget the cage, constraints,
just imagine

out there.
Sense how savvy, fluid
is the body, follow
the subtle knowledge of the tongue
the nerves' precision
and your dithyrambic blood.

Dream

vers libre

sprung rhythm

and the lyric air.



Kate Woodyatt: egg tempora

Angela France

Our Restless Dead

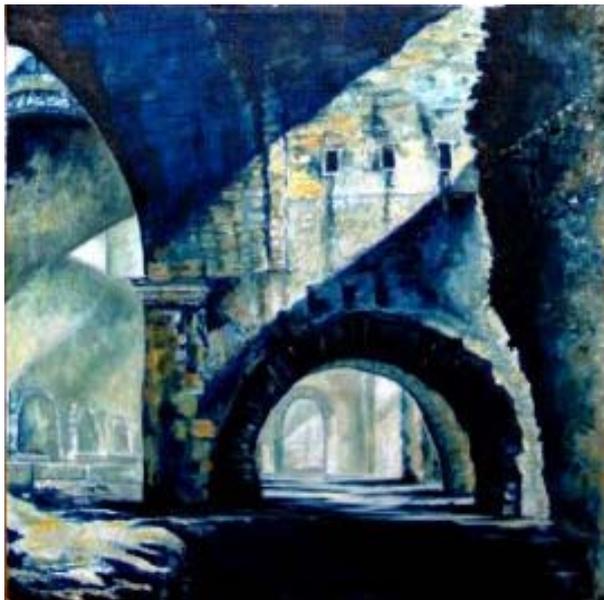
There are no graves to tend or neglect.
We own no bone-stuffed plots, no marble
slabs, no vaults where ancestors desiccate
in silent and dusty resignation.

We always burn our dead.

Maybe if we laid them down in earth,
with earth to cover them, left them flowers
and knelt at the grassy graveside to whisper
family secrets, they wouldn't stick around so long.

Great Aunt Lil wafts lilac scent
through the house and Great-Grampy Fred
mutters in the apple tree about how many
spits to dig for taters. Lucy doesn't like doors
closed while frivolous Doll can't leave
cosmetics alone. Dad calls my name
at night, just as I fall asleep: he calls
quiet and sharp as if there is a deer
on the lawn he wants me to see.

We always burn our dead, send them
to ride up the crematorium chimney on clouds
of fumes and heat.



Faye Joy: after Piranesi. Faye lives in Normandy, France

Robert Sheppard

The Hello Poem

for Alan Halsey

Hello poem, it's me again. I'm
the voice that lives upstairs. You

hear me reeling across my floor,
your ceiling, as I dance about my

affairs. And you about yours, not
miming my sound, un-

rhyming your eyes as they rise,
faltering, toward me, from the ground.

*

Hello poem, it's me again, the
other side of your world,

speaking long distance
straight

around your curve, racing
like a tycoon's jet

to overtake the dawn
and possess tomorrow.

*

Hello poem, it's me again. You
ran away with yourself to

stage your new self's forming. I am
the silence that inhabits your zero.

Mentendorff House, Riga

The bearded woman with amber eyes
makes me tie elfin aprons to my shoes
which glide like galoshes over the polish
of the timbers, while the bride's stilettos
tap-tap up the stairs without reproach or restraint.

The women scraped away these walls
to reveal layered fauns and fountains,
but when I pluck the harp that waits for me there
it lets off a slack, dead sound. Escaping

their scrutiny, I secret myself in the mocked-up
'Poet's Room'. His desk: a quill still rests across
a parchment, by a notebook embossed *Poesie*.

I lift the feathery pages loose from the flaking
leather spine, and find that they are blank.



Faye Joy: garden – embroidery. Faye taught Art and Art History for many years before retiring with her husband, fellow-artist Paul, to France. She began as a painter but print-making is her preferred technique. Now she is exploring possibilities of free-drawing with the machine needle and memories of her English garden.

Mark Leech

Lips and Fence

I had sought out a suitable man
but he was ill-fated, full of grief
The Wife's Lament (9th–10th century)

While I'm on the wire the cars can't hurt me.
While I'm by the road the boys won't come too near.
My eyes bulge through chained diamonds
staring so deep into the headlamps' white gaze
they might drip the same pale light
into the tracks he left, who'd earned
gods' voices in his head, who came and touched me.

The road fills with lights, the tower blocks
rise bulked by shadows over the junction –
where I hang by the turn
that sticks the curl of the road between us
my sight is metallised and edged and I dream
this is all there is, towers and exhaust –

He smelt of the road, the curled fur of bus seats,
the cursed burn of sun on black paint,
a man who hauled gods' voices.
His hands were full of things to give.

The boys keep me as if my tongue
was tied in the hooks of this fence.
They handle me as if they only hated him,
as if I was a wound they could salt.

I sent him home. I saw the breaking of him
when the door broke and they rushed us
with their fists and contracts.
Where I fell I dreamed that I
straddled the bus north and west, riding
faster than the city lights, the air
kissing me home, away from this place
of arriving, arriving, never set down.

When I woke, the blood had dried in his nose.
When I spoke, he left, thin as rain on tar,
empty of what he'd given me.

The roadside's my refuge, safe exile under
boarded windows until the night I slip through
these diamonds, land my feet
on the floor of the coach and ride north and west

faster than the city lights, settle my bruised spine
where the road runs out,
where I can touch another skin.
How I need another skin.

Michelle O'Sullivan

Reverie

The muse doesn't tempt or ask,
she whispers lightly as she opens
the door, touches your earlobe,
the soft curve of your neck.

She doesn't beckon or whinge
but takes your hand in hers,
sings low at the side of your face.
Everything, she says, bring everything.

Imagined Desire

I will dream of you and you will never hear of it.
-Pasternak

There was never anything physical
and what he felt was never spoken,
though sometimes he would allude.

Between them, they held a net of
gems - red and gold and blue.

In his dreams he holds her close,
kisses those small red lips, feeds
from those delicate white hands.

Bridges

*Neither meeting nor separation,
Neither silence nor conversation...
And because of this,
Your blood chills a bit.
- Akhmatova*

The sad girl watches as the town
turns black and white, snow and
grey ice have covered the brass
domes, the silver bridges and
the even rows of linden trees.

She's turned her collar to the wind,
her face away from his, and gazes at
a nightingale as it takes flight, its
effortless pace in the sweet damp air,
how it clings to the sudden deep quiet.

Two Profiles

*To you I gave my life- but my sadness
I will take to the grave with me.
-Akhmatova*

In one of them, you are loving it –
fingers touching your chin, smiling
ever so slightly as if you are laughing
inside, a discreet pose of that
sought out profile.

In the other, you are not there – its
all a grey veil, though sunlight mounts
the pines along the road in Komarova,
you are downcast and disgusted as if
your soul had taken flight.



Kate Woodyatt: egg tempora

Sheila Hillier

Fisherman

Shatin, New Territories. China

From the pre-stressed concrete Song dynasty bridge
I watch him set up by the Danger notice.

Bamboo rod arced, he braces his plastic sandals
against the manmade bank, to cast in the canal.

Soon there's a bite, a splash, a big grouper
with nickel body and Imperial yellow head
is swung onto the cement where the fisherman
unhooks him, cuts the gills and drops the fish into
a plastic bag from Five Red supermarket,
dangling from his Flying Pigeon bike.

Ignoring the silent European, he deftly re-baits a hook.
After a minute, from the bag, a rustle, then a flap, a louder rustle,
a tearing sound, a beat, a batter and the bag
convulses, jumps, the grouper undulates
with primal electricity that's patterned there from tail to head.
The old bike shudders on its rusty foreleg.
The fisherman pays no attention, concentrates
and casts once more, into the torpid water.
I watch for twenty minutes, until finally I hear
only occasional whispers in the plastic folds,
small movements, gentle twitches. I wish the grouper dead
long before that. How lazy, the big-eared gods of fish!
Dredgers are scooping sea bed and floor,
grating the canal, mixing coast and creek,
piling up artificial reefs and islands. The growing
isthmus will sprout searchlight factories and towers,
under the sky of the Pearl River delta:
each day a dust-film screens the sun that should be there.
I sprint home, panting in the laden air.

Joel Deane

Thunder gun

Cracking Hestia's knuckles,

shouting at a sky pregnant with hail,

will not precipitate delivery.

Those gods are deaf (deaf and dry)

and their hearth a cold altar alone

atop a mountain of dust.



Faye Joy: Storm skies over garden