

# AGENDA

Welcome to Broadsheet 15, in tandem with the 'Hoofmarks' issue of *Agenda* (Vol 45, No 3).

As the great classical master of equestrian art, Nuno Oliveira (who also has a passion for Opera – a 'Poetry and Opera' issue of *Agenda* is planned for next year), says: 'Sadly enough, this art is fugitive, as once the horse is dead, nothing, not even films, can reproduce the sensation felt when the horse is seen in movement. Death eradicates all the work of the artist, unlike musical scores or paintings (or poems) which live on to lend immortality to their creator. After the horse is no more, only those who have admired him keep a remembrance of his quality in their hearts, which is gradually effaced by Time; and others who have not seen him know him only by romanticised tales, recounted – and sometimes embroidered – by those who have truly loved him'.



**Emma Cookson: White Horse, oil on canvas**

Emma Cookson is the daughter of William Cookson, founding editor of *Agenda* who died in January 2003. Emma did this painting when she was twelve years old in 2000. She is now a graduate of Exeter University and still loves horses.

**David Owen**, 23, has just started an English PhD at the University of Winchester after gaining his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Creative Writing. He currently lives in Penge, a south-eastern suburb of London, where he is working on his first novel. He was previously featured in Broadsheet 11.

### **Musical Chairs**

When the phone rang  
before school  
to render the news

I stepped back into those amorphous  
summers spent at the house,  
the days of commemorative tins  
that emerged from the side cupboard  
to honour the passing of lunch.

Domino chains of bourbon biscuits.  
French Fancies like an iris of Ludo men.

I sought distraction  
in the furniture shop at  
the end of the road,

lingered in the showroom kitchens  
and wished I had left  
my expectant hand  
above the perennial virtues of cake,  
stalled the inevitable  
growth out of  
those summers,  
the news of her death.

Slowly I moved between the armchairs,  
the empty displays of sofas and suites  
that belonged to no one,

an unspoken game of musical chairs.

## **Penge Panther**

It's just past midnight  
and someone has spotted  
the panther.

Finally, after weeks  
of paw prints in the garden,  
spurned offerings of Whiskas,  
we can rouse the dogs  
and bait them on their leads,

check the batteries in the camera,  
scramble the torches  
from under the stairs.

We see a tail on every shadow  
amongst the lamp posts  
until enough bedroom lights  
blink up to expose them  
like bonfires at a witch hunt.

We put the dogs ahead of us,  
(as if they'd stand a chance)  
and turn onto the allotment path.

Even the police are out,  
the purr of a helicopter  
lingering overhead, a shred  
of paper spiralling  
on the breeze.

Its searchlight startles  
the foxes, steeps the greenhouses  
in the splendour of ghosts.

But it's us that finds it first,  
tinderbox eyes in the torchlight  
brooding on the alien landscape  
of carrots, the irregular  
broken stems of bean poles.

For years after we will hush our children  
at the noise in the garden,  
press our faces to the window.

## **Off the Edges**

The snow is enough now to douse my footprints,  
blend the path into the field, only the spit and crackle

of the electric fence to honour the divide.  
Wire and nettles are frozen in coils.

I have met a horse and I envy his coat,  
snow piling on his back like ash.

The dogged whiteness is effacing our existence,  
apparitions in static between television channels.

I build a snowman on the horse's back  
to guide him through the night.



### **Tony O'Connor: Melancholy**

Tony was born in Moyvane, Co. Kerry, Ireland in 1977. He studied Fine Art at Crawford College of Art and Design in Cork. In 2003 he founded White Tree Studio from where he now works, specialising in equine art. To Tony, the horse is already perfect in nature. He just tries to do justice to that absolute quality and majesty of the horse in his paintings. His work can be found in the Greenlane Gallery, Dingle, Co Kerry, Ireland. [www.greenlanegallery.com](http://www.greenlanegallery.com)



**Lucy Sixsmith**, 23, grew up in Bath where she now lives. She is part of a vibrant local church. She is an MA student at Bath Spa University, taught by Tim Liardet whose poems appear in the 'Hoofmarks' issue of *Agenda* and whose collection, *Priest Skear*, is reviewed there by Patricia McCarthy. As an undergraduate she read English at Trinity College, Cambridge.

## **Archaeology**

*Here is a simplified history of the Enigma cipher: Scherbius made it, Schmidt sold it, the Biuro Szyfrów broke into it, and Bletchley Park followed them in and stomped around smashing things.*

### *I. Arthur Scherbius*

The man who invented invisible ink.  
The man who put locks on another man's doors.

He couldn't have known what was done with the ink  
or what was said behind the doors.

There's no harm in invisible ink.  
There's no harm in locking doors.

There's no harm in a galloping horse—

### *II. Hans-Thilo Schmidt*

Opulence, and a fat cigar  
at the Grand Hotel in Verviers;  
the manuals to photograph;  
a sense of having been betrayed.

The envelope his children found,  
his holidays, his flannel suits.  
His soldier-son on the Russian front,  
their country's cause. His son's wound.

April Fool's Day, '43:  
a mattress, gutted; a ransacked flat.  
The hernia they would not treat.  
The prison that kept his daughter out.

The scorn of both the Church and State.  
"Forget everything bad about me."  
His trying to be brave, be brave.  
A journalist at his unmarked grave.

### *III. The Biuro Szyfrów*

Work in the cellar. Rejewski's lucky guess  
about the wires connecting to the entry-disk. Planes,

bombs falling. Zygalski, hauling away  
the wreckage of the train from around the refugees.

Różycki giving advice to his baby son.

A night-time trek through the unknown Pyrenees.

### *IV. Alan Turing*

apple stalk  
apple pip  
paper tape  
gummed strip

daisy petal  
knitted glove  
sherry bottle  
stammered laugh

cipher text  
decision tree  
relay switch  
"I see! I see!"

homemade chess set  
gas mask  
bike chain turning  
Hershey bar

snow on Gable  
Scharnhorst sunk  
electronics  
mushroom hunt

white noise  
Hanslope Park  
London Wilmslow  
apple stalk

## Woman

She thought, at first, that the juice on her lips was sin.  
She touched her swollen waist, touched her hips.  
She thought that the righteous were thin.

The core and pips accused her from the ground.  
She thought that, by eating, she'd made herself unclean.  
She thought, and the thought came with a soft hissing sound,  
that it was her fault, it was irremediable. She did not want to be seen.

It does not say  
with what name one who walked in the garden late that day  
called her near, or what he said, as they talked,

as he covered her nakedness with an animal skin, that set her free,  
so that it was his hand she held most tight while she walked the earth.

But it says that she said:  
*My son, it was with the help of God that I brought you forth.*  
And it says that she said:  
*It was God who granted you to me.*



### **Ellen Braende: Dingle Races**

Ellen was born in Oslo, Norway and has always been fascinated by horses. She was practising as a graphic designer before moving to Dingle in 1999. Self-taught in her favoured medium of oils, she is inspired by the horse fairs she visits in West Kerry. Her work can be seen in Greenlane Gallery, Dingle [www.greenlanegallery.com](http://www.greenlanegallery.com)

**Hannah Copley**, 22, graduated from the University of Leeds this year, and is about to undertake an MA in Modern to Contemporary Literature. These are her first poems to be published.

### **Sightseer**

I followed your train of thought:  
It was blue with six even compartments  
and those old fashioned windows; pull downs,  
the ones in the old films  
that you could put your face out of, feeling  
Tall and alive as you glided sideways over fields,  
or saying goodbye to a lover  
your chin resting on the black ledge.  
You shut the window and withdrew  
As the train pulled into the city,  
Dwarfed by the uneven landscape  
Half-seeing, half-watching your own face in the glass.  
A translucent being on the tower blocks  
your eyes were in the buildings watching.  
As your train of thought slid away  
It had become my own.

### **Young Woman**

I was born first with the face of an old man  
But this I can't remember;  
The purples and reds and yellows of a new world  
And the contact of wet skin to the hot heart of woman.  
The cries from heads and tails made us seem like a creature.  
A two-headed monster, a screaming coin.

I was born again as a muse  
Emerging out of the pain and pride  
Of what verse is made of.  
Unable to revel in such an awkward minute  
Of hip bones, and grey sheets  
On a single bed.

I was reborn as a mirror,  
The most painful of all my transformations.  
In black, in a black car, in a black day  
Where everything feels so dark against the paper white  
Skin that I touched as I dressed you.  
Reflecting death is the burden that comes  
With knowing you remain.

I opened my eyes once  
To the eyes of another  
And understood.

I am alive as an oven.  
Big as one, overheated, and cooking at a low simmer  
The new life within,  
That rises like bread or a phoenix  
From knowledge and touch and death.  
Not quite a cat,  
I bask in my reincarnation.



**Suzanne Clark: Archie** (her beloved horse that lived into his late thirties) –  
oils on gesso canvas

**Rachel Faulkner** was born in 1987 and grew up in the Dorset countryside. She studied English Literature at Cardiff University and went on to complete a Masters in the same discipline at the University of Warwick. She now lives in central London, working for a publishing house. She is one of the two chosen Broadsheet poets in the 'Hoofmarks' issue of *Agenda*.

### **Blackberry Picking**

Out walking in late September,  
the last stroll before another year away,  
and you at home, now working in the office  
with your father. We carry with us buckets  
that we fashioned from icecream tubs.  
We'd emptied them the night before  
with spoons and clumps of chocolate spread,  
as we had thought to do as children.  
The evening sun is warm still and water tracks  
its way between the hairs along our necks.

Plucking blackberries from the bushes,  
fat as plums, packed with orbs - swelling  
black pupils. Not checking for dust  
or bugs, but with each bucketed fruit,  
another tasted straight from the stem.

Painted jeans and Wellington boots -  
children's clothing. We walk slowly  
down the long road from my house.  
We'll reach the end just to come back again.  
Mouths bleeding sweet and sticky juice  
over our lips and chins. Red smiles  
stuck with seeds between the bottom teeth.

## Deer

Tumbling from the path, deep into the thicket,  
he'd pulled himself, somehow, many metres from the road.  
Leaning up against the skinny body of a silver birch  
I searched the open eyes, black as polished eight-balls,

and lit my first Marlboro in weeks. The smoke's  
dance, almost in rhythm with his body's twitch.  
His face, firm and motionless. His coat  
and tail fluttering like moth wings. Insects  
already would have been moving underneath us.  
Brought out by the smell of damp hair,  
the thump of his heartbeat soaking into the ground  
with rainwater. I too will tremble in the darkness  
one day. I too would choose not to go alone.

I stayed until the cigarette had burnt out,  
until everything had ceased to stir or glow.  
Everything except my distant car blinking  
faintly through the silver birches in the night.

## In the mornings we'd break the ice

over the pools, buckets, baths. To see them  
lick the wet tops, great tongues lolling,  
was fun, but only for a moment,  
so we'd take our boots to the hardened water,  
thick in cooler dawns, opaque as oak nuts.  
At times we'd use spades or broom handles.  
You used your fist once, and saw  
how the cold made it bulbous and pink.  
You warmed it in the beet before serving.  
Waiting on the gate, heels hooked  
between steel bars, you leaned in  
and showed how your hands smelt of beer  
from the chaff, sweet from the haylage.  
In the field the bays chased one another,  
teeth nipping as hind legs weaved  
between empty feed bowls  
and the piles of hay, steaming.



### **Gerard Byrne: Killiney Hill**

Gerard was born in Dublin and is a self-taught painter. Poetry and Opera inspire him for their emotive qualities, also the French impressionists. Like the latter, he works *en plein air*. Colour and light are his great challenges. His work can be found in the Greenlane Gallery, Dingle, Co. Kerry, Ireland. [www.greenlanegallery.com](http://www.greenlanegallery.com)

### **Wood Pigeon**

*Take too coos, taffy.*  
Take grey plumes and green throat.  
Thick moans knocked  
between leaden oak trees.  
Blue water swilled  
in garden ponds,  
lavender quivers,  
fat drum splashes.  
Pine needles creak  
under drowsy pink feet.

## Squirrel

Hands that are like your hands,  
tucked in neat  
between the plates of bark;  
the sodden moss; the woody veins.  
Voiceless, but hurrying,  
scuttling (vertical dances),  
makes the tree chatter,  
and the leaves loosen and fall.  
Then crackling into  
those brown webbed stars  
with gentle fingered paws,  
I clear the conkers  
my black rippling oyster eyes



### **Suzanne Clark: Avoca Beach, Australia**

Suzanne's work is celebrated especially in Broadsheet 16.

Suzanne's work has been featured in a past Broadsheets. She recently spent a year in New Zealand and was inspired by the landscape there. She has her own studio in Brighton. [www.suzanneclark.co.uk](http://www.suzanneclark.co.uk)

**Sarah Sibley** is 25 and lives in the Suffolk countryside where she works for a small publishing company. She has had her poems published in *Orbis*, *The Interpreter's House* and *Obsessed with Pipework*. She will be starting an MA in Creative Writing at Lancaster University in the new academic year.

## **Ten**

Some sat close with words  
to burn all her ten years.  
The flame they hoped would smoke out  
her illnesses and the diary she kept them in,  
the one with the hedgehog cover.  
She started eating it and spitting the spines  
at all the viruses and theories spiralling:  
Lips white  
making her feel like  
she couldn't be alone with all those children  
barking and following,  
finding school so interesting.  
Her lemming anxiety multiplying  
as playground lorries turned up to dispatch more.

## **Texas**

You try a bed for size  
then rise like a baked cake  
under spotlights of every kind.  
Running through back to back  
bathrooms and kitchens  
flipping toilet lids  
and collecting plastic fruit.  
You imagine the squeeze of shagpile,  
two carpet rolls like a giant mangle,  
then finish up by the samples  
which have wallpapered every school  
face and uniform,  
every school exercise book  
but never a room.

## **The mechanical man**

At the back of his head  
I saw a key turning slowly  
until he stopped speaking

and the key froze  
and he froze over me.  
I saw his eye colour clearly  
for the first time  
and couldn't wind the key.  
I savoured like I shouldn't savour  
but then reality hiccupped  
and I couldn't hold my breath long enough  
for the nonsense of his far-away face  
to go away, along with images  
of him lost in his own village  
where there is no key  
and he's never stopped speaking.  
And now he asks me a question  
but I don't know what I've heard.



**Suzanne Clark: Mountain on the Tongariro Crossing, New Zealand**

**Jen Campbell**, 24, is from the North East of England. She graduated from Edinburgh University with an MA in English Literature, and now lives in London. Her poetry and prose have been published in various places, including *The Rialto*, *Poetry London* and *Short FICTION*. She is currently working on a full-length poetry collection and has just finished writing her first short story collection, *The Aeroplane Girl*. She blogs, interviews authors and writes the 'Weird Things Customers Say in Bookshops' series over on her blog <http://jen-campbell.blogspot.com> .

### **what he did can be found in genesis**

He loved wild things because they matched / how he'd fold girls' hands against / their wallpaper. Against pages of the big book. / Stolen from hotel rooms appearing / like convictions of forgive me for I have. / He put duct tape on his tyres / pulled straight into garages where / his ID wasn't needed. / Another day on the M4. / The hard shoulder made for skidding on. / In the heat he swore blind / there were lasses there. / In the hedgerow running. / Like some theatrics he'd been dragged to see. / Crawling down / on their hands and their knees. / Like they were praying.



### **Tony O'Connor: Breaking Through**

**Sofy Bevan**, 18, lives in Gloucester and is reading for a degree in English at the University of Exeter. She has won several prizes for her poems, including in 2009 being shortlisted for the Christopher Tower Poetry Competition, Christchurch.

### **Road-kill**

Exhaust-stained canvas stretching for miles  
decorated with powder-pale fur,  
tasteful arrangements of puce entrails  
and a glittering glass eye stares.

Clouds of feathers linger by the road,  
some sticking to the crimson oil-slicks.  
Crunch of tires grind the bones to powder  
disturbing the flies and the beetles.

The stench of sun-baked carcass wafts  
on stifling waves of sickening air.  
Their backs arched, mouths silently screaming  
in a permanent state of terror.

The rain leaches the colour away  
from the startling palette of death,  
leaving the canvas blank once again  
till the artists behind the wheel create.



**Gerard Byrne: Vico Road, Killiney, Co. Dublin**