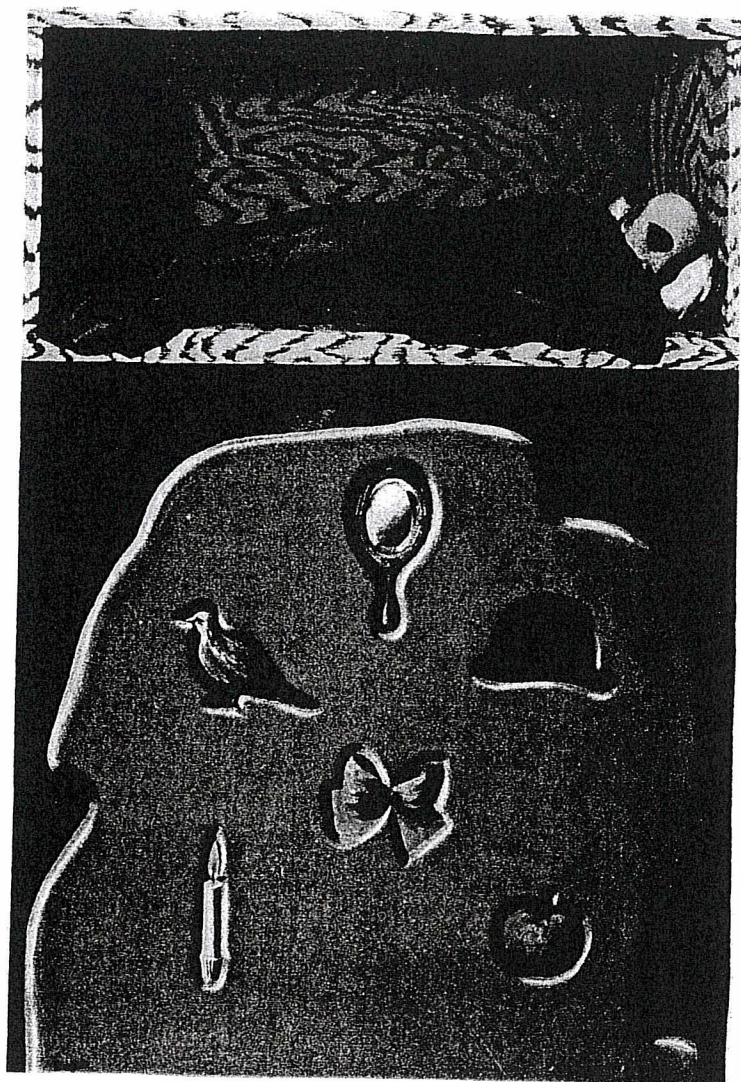


Selected
poems
from



The Mountbatten School

POETRY
FESTIVALS



The Mountbatten School's Annual Poetry Festival was started in 1973 by Isobel Butler in order to encourage pupils to take pleasure both in writing their own poetry and in performing published poems to an audience.

Eileen Betteridge then encouraged a generation of young poets to pursue poetry writing through her inspirational Poetry Workshops.

The school's English Faculty has since striven, through storms of change, to keep the ship afloat – with Sylvia Curtis ensuring that thousands of poems were safely stowed, hence our ability to publish this 'Hall of Fame' selection. My thanks also go to all the English teachers who, throughout the years, have encouraged all pupils to take part in the writing and performance of poetry in the classroom and on stage.

Above all I would like to thank all the young poets who have given us all such pleasure in reading their work over the years.

Will Jones
(Head of English 2008)

***Sympathy
And
Suffering***

"1989"

In a flat,
High above the umbrellas.
A tap runs idly
Whilst a child watches
A plastic duck
Bob on the water.
The sink overflows.
The duck falls on to
The soaked carpet
And the child cries.

Somewhere,
In postcards 'Paradise'
A child plays on the sand
His dark hands mimic
A white dove
Soaring across the beach
But the olive trees
Are dead and dry
And the dove is gone
Only the brown bird remains,
Its body flakey and sore.
Slowly it fades
As its creator stares
Towards the sun.
Wings melt into clay
As the child's fingers
Form a bowl,
And he prays for rain.

Sarah Baxter

There'll Always Be ...

*Yesterday was a red day
Red fire searing through a scarlet sea.
Red-throated battleships swallowing ocean.
Red anger
 red fight
 red war*

*Today is a white day.
White letter in white hands.
White tear-blanked faces
 washing white memories.*

*Tomorrow will be a blue day.
Blue mist of blue mood.
Blue gravestone
Blue sky
 and empty.*

*Red, white and blue.
We fight for you.
Sister of sorrows,
Mistress of morals,
Scarred with shadows
 in a cold, cold grave.*

Tamsin Saxton

DROUGHT

In days we just sat,
 Waiting.
In bored, silent, solitude,
 Waiting with the heat,
For days we watched as the crops began to wilt,
And our hopes also.
For a year it seemed we waited
 For the Gods to keep their promises
But the Gods had other interests.
All that was left was faith.
We began to feel old and worn, and, with parched
lips,
We watched the mud turn to dust.
For days we hid from the sun.
 For weeks we prayed for water,
But all that they gave us were winds,
Scouring winds,
 Winds that stung your eyes with sand,
Sand that was from the dust,
Dust that was from the mud,
Mud that came with the rain,
But the rain didn't come.
At night we saw stars.
 In the days we helplessly watched
As our flocks began to die
And our hopes also, for, with burning throats
All we could do was sympathise.
There were no greens,
The land was wearing dry brittle browns -
Dead colours
 and we wished we were the same.

Emma Crates .

SHUTTLE

*Fire, fire burning bright,
Seven more you claimed last night.
Your hands clasped round the
Gleaming hull,
Seven helpless souls were culled.
Their cage was breached by a casing crack,
You crept along the widening gap.
Only one breath of oxygen was needed.
Millions watched, prayed and pleaded.*

*And a galaxy of stars were falling.
NASA ceased its constant calling.*

*The solid rockets weave and twist,
Spreading webs of blue-gray mist.
With gazing eyes the gods deride
The warning blow to human pride.*

Mark Pomeroy

WHERE LIES JOHN SMITH?

Where lies John Smith?
A man of years.
Who left this world just hours ago
Where lies he now
And who regrets his life of woe?
Where lies John Smith,
Millers Apprentice
So cruelly crushed under a horse's dray
Who cries for him now?
And wishes he'd lived another day.
Where lies John Smith?
The parson's heir
Who became a missionary in foreign place
Who prays for his soul?
And looks for him in strangers' faces.
Where lies John Smith?
Brave if not honest
Who went to soldiering at Sixteen
Few wait for his return still yet
The years have passed, he's not been seen
Forget not the men of past and present
Anonymous now they are gone
Although your life is young and pleasant
You'll be forgotten one day, John.

Catherine Blundell

AGINCOURT

*Samuel Carter remembered his home,
As his open eyes saw the mass of bright blue
Marching swiftly in the distance.
He felt unworthy of his red coat -
All the men around him standing defiant.
'March!' shouted the man on the horse,
What else could he do?, he thought, so he marched.*

*Sam sympathised with the horse at the front -
The beast would be the first to feel its own heat
Streaming down its body to the earth.*

*That beautiful hide stalking onwards,
The first to be red meat for crows.
"Is a horse braver than me?" thought Sam.*

*"Maybe if I had done my duty," he wondered,
"With a few more ounces of polish and sweat, -
If only there was another week to become brave".*

*That noble horse now looked butcher's work
As eager blades sought flesh to cut,
Sam saw a friend at work on a Frenchman,
Sword jabbed into a trousered leg
And levered out a sopping muscle.
Sam felt a crash and blood on his chin.*

*His limp arms struggled with his leaden blade,
But the fierce face was above him,
Tearing off his helmet, leaving only hair.*

*O God, he thought, cover me now.
But God was busy,
And Sam was dead.*

Roderick Stedman

COLOMBIAN DISASTER

It was the cockerel that woke me.
Dust buzzed in the sunlight
Like midges on dung hills.

The smells of night
Made our crowded room hot.
'The Great Hill's angry',
The voices were crying,
"It will burn us with fire".
'Don't believe it, they're lying',
my father said.

Others believed. Like a tidal wave
They broke over the lorries,
Which swept them down
To safer lands.

We stayed in the village.
My father and mother planted crops,
in our field
We children were sent on our way to the school.

'You run ahead'
I said with a laugh.
I'd made up my mind
To climb the high path
of the lesser Mountain.

From there I could see
The great river of fire
That my grandad told me
Spews higher and higher
up into the sky.

It'd be like fireworks.
It would be like a game...
But it wasn't like that,
The Great Fire came...

And it melted my world.
A grey river of sludge
Swallowed the village.

James Ravenscroft

THE RAT

The rat leans up against the glass.
An injection pierces its pure, white coat.
The scientist is gloved and masked
To test for human antidote.

Its dainty, soft paws
Reach up gently for attention.
His pink skin is raw
From the distressing reaction.

It gently grooms its pink nose.
It is clean and friendly, small and aware.
To its bowl of food it goes
And delicately nibbles there.

Its fur is soft and silky
But will never be touched by someone ungloved.
The eyes are warm and milky
But will never be noticed, never be loved.

Lois Wright

AFRICAN FUNERAL

Two ivory candles
Shine bright
Against the grey corpse
Tiny eyes stare
From whirlpools of wrinkles.
He will not see
The attendants
Light the candles
At the base
He will not feel them
Burn and crack
And break away
Stolen.

Sarah Baxter .

AFRICA

Cracked lips, parched land
Dusty promises of help at hand
Hungry children on Christmas cards
Won't help a world that's growing too fast.

I just wish it would rain on Africa.

But storm clouds gathering won't bring relief
Just darker days with no hope of peace.

I just wish it would rain on Africa,
Wash out all the pain of Africa.

Guns and bombs, tears and mud
Luxury limos race through blood
But bound by debt to hopelessness
Can we ever clean this mess?

I just wish it would rain on Africa
Wash out all the pain of Africa.

Emma Mould

THE WAITING

I squinted at the silver glint of my bayonet,
Its glassy edge split on the bright glare of the desert sky.
It threw an image of itself, blue, far across the plain.

I sat up. It was then I heard the distant thunder,
Rolling across the desert, far from the east

It came, whipping into steam the topsand, catching up the
Metal fragments, forcing them to the surface, bursting out.
Each one sang the deadened song of these brewing times. War.

Behind the gaseous blast, came the empty echo of bomb munitions,
Cracking open the cold carcass, concrete bunkers.

A man's name, on every hit.

But I could see nothing. Only stretches and stretches
Of fine, yellow powder.

I gazed back at the halo-like image,
Jutting away across the plain
Away from the turning edge of the blade.
I caught the falling stock of my rifle,
Felt its weight in my hand,
And, just, perhaps, its meaning.

The image shimmered, sliding across the desert.
It climbed an embankment towards the silent, hulking gun.
It hit one of its gear levers and shattered,
Dreamily spreading fragments of light through the workings,
An invisible hand playing with a power not meant for man.

Christopher Ng

Deadicated Silence

*Red and yellow.
Yellow and red.
Here's where the soldiers
Lie in their beds.*

*Snipers and rifles,
A boom and a yell.
Here's where they stood,
And now where they fell.*

*The war, it is over,
The silence now lies.
The soldiers have gone,
And with them their lives.*

*Red and yellow.
Yellow and red.
The birds fly past,
But nothing is said.*

*Sun will keep shining.
Wind it will moan.
But the soldiers don't care
This is their home.*

*The red of the poppy,
The yellow - the corn.
The soldiers remembered,
Their children unborn.*

*Red and Yellow.
Yellow and red.
Here's to the soldiers,
The field, the dead.*

Amanda Weeks

The Price of War

*Great buildings destroyed, like paper they crumble,
Falling like mountains to piles of dust;
Monuments of man, reduced to nothing,
Concrete to rubble and iron to rust.
Rivers run thick with the blood of the dead,
Naive as children, believing the lies.
Fields of bodies turned deep, deep red,
Scores of innocents who gave up their lives.*

*Destruction and death, chaos and rain;
Those are the certainties of war, nothing else.
Let no one tell you of glory and wealth,
There is so much to pay for so little gain.
Victory they promise but at what price?
Separation, suffering, mass loss of life.*

Ailsa Bown

Man Made Creation

The fields had lost their colour
The trees were dirty grey
The light blue sky was a raven's feather
Black as night in the day
Day-day
Black as night in the day

Swirling around the dull grey street
Peering at unknown faces
A rabble of chaotic children
From a hundred different places
Places-places
From a hundred different places

Exiled from a faraway place
That no-one has ever known
Waving goodbye to a land full of hope
Now they're all alone
Alone-alone
Now they're all alone

Trying to make some sense of things
Searching for a life, a dream
Wanting to be a part of this
Or that is what it seems
Seems-seems
Or that is what it seems

Smiling when a stranger walks by
Hoping that it would be the day
They would be taken from the streets
Where lay the sins they had to repay
Repay-repay
Where lay the sins they had to repay

Ellen Jocelyn

Sunday Afternoon

*A rich blur of blood-red
Whips
Sleek brown beauties.
Hooves pound like heartbeats for
All those bright and beautiful.*

*Yelping pack of glinting eyes
Sniffs.
Greedy black snouts
Hungry for the blood of
All creatures great and small.*

*Beautiful bushy tail
Glow
In the afternoon sunlight
Doomed to caress the necks of
All those wise and wonderful.*

*Jubilant shouts as the pack
Pounces.
Entrails drip from greedy snouts.
Was it for this "sport" that
The Lord God made them all ?*

Lydia Smith

In dreams of home

Sleeping beneath the stars, the lost boy
Dreams of home.

He wanders those paths he trod last spring,
The woods alive with the blossom of bluebells
In dreams of home.

He nestles beneath an oak and watches
As the sun goes down beyond the edge of the world
In dreams of home.

He is beckoned inside by glow of firelight
And the smells of wine and roast draw him to his hearth
In dreams of home.

Siren call and lost boy is heaved awake.
Thunder of cannon, crack of bullet, groan of tortured earth.
Shrill of whistle, scream of agony, maiming of innocent flesh.
The lost boy falls
Sees fire,
Tastes blood,
Smells death.

In a pit of Hell gouged out of mother earth
The lost boy lies still, in the company of the dead-
Their hollow, stony eyes glistening in the gathering gloom.
The lost boy's eyes, those wavering sparks of life,
Shut out the abhorred pit, shut out the crowded womb of death.

Sleeping beneath the stars, the lost boy
Dreams of home.

He wanders those paths he trod last spring,
The woods alive with the blossom of bluebells
In dreams of home.

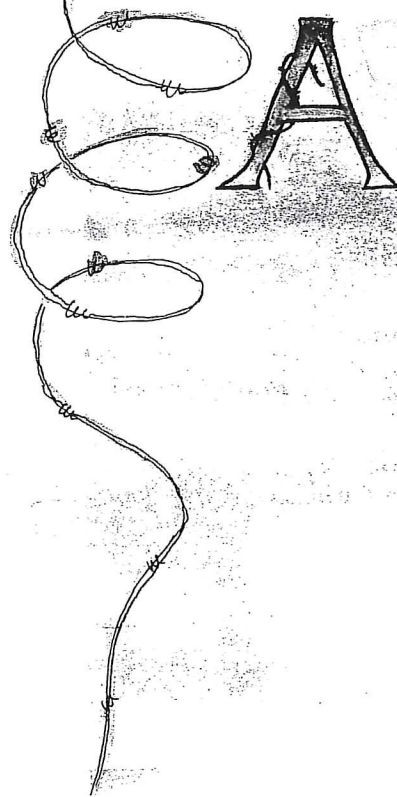
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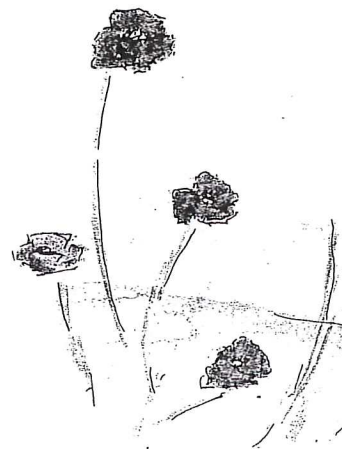
Light of morning and the lost boy is eased awake.
He sheds a lonely tear, for he knows in his heart
That he will never go back
And the bluebells, the sunsets, the firelight glow
Are distant memories, glimpsed through a haze of smoke
In dreams of home.

Charlie Cooper

OVER FLANDERS' FIELDS



Among grey barbed coils,
Delicate petals shimmered,
White heads whispered,
Unheard words.
Silence was enjoyed.
Among tea-cups and papers,
Bald heads discussed;
Furrowed brows planned war.
A piercing shot ricocheted over Flanders Fields.
Answered by a chilling cry.
Hardened petals glowed blood-red,
Their stained heads shouted,
"We will remember them."



A paper flower,
Falls to the ground,
Is crushed.
Eyes that will never see, turn,
As he marches past the cenotaph,
He still remembers.,
Tea-cups rattle,
The bald heads have forgotten.

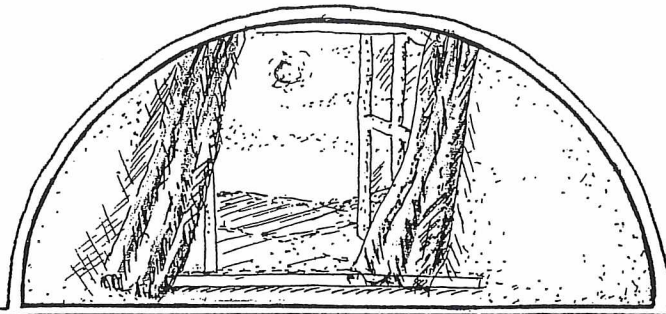
Joanne Savage

LIFE IN EAST BERLIN ?

6.15 a.m.
I woke to hear a gunshot,
Murdering the silence of dawn.
I looked out
Of my uncurtained window
To see a guard
On the wall
Aim
And take another shot.
I followed the line of his fire -
Some poor bastard
Was lying in the river,
Dying.
Then the shot
That he would never hear
Killed me.
A little more.



Roy Biddle



CRIPPLED CHILD

Why can't I get up Mum?
The sun is streaming past the trees,
Into my bedroom lair.
And now and then I catch the breeze,
Soft and salt with the morning air.
And the curtains faintly whisper,
Of how the wind does blow,
And where the birds are singing most
Alas, they whisper low.
I strain to catch the sounds of life,
That flutter from our road.
They float away from hearing,
Elusive, unbestowed.
And the clatter of the children's play,
That's drummed into my ears.
Leaves me sad with hazy memories,
Of those carefree distant years
Oh why can't I get up Mum?
And be just another child,
With that child's unchosen future,
Running free and running wild.
The sun is streaming past the trees
Into my bedroom lair.
And sometimes when I catch the breeze,
Reality takes flight,
And I'm walking on the windy shore -
The only soul in sight.
With the shingle rattling in my shoes,
Fine droplets in my hair,
And I'm talking with the sombre sea
Which sighs at all my cares.

Emma Crates