

Jaki McCarrick
The Selkie of Dorinish

She has come to love meadowsweet,
and rubs its Germolene smell
into her sallow skin.
In the evenings she gathers wingnuts
for her new artwork
and makes eyes and beady lines
from black bluebell seeds.

Around the cottage are the trees
I planted as seedlings in '67:
Spanish oak, a row of limes and elder,
and everywhere the stark green water –
on which, at night,
the mainland throws
its gold and amber elvers.

Sometimes ships will stop for stones
for ballast on the western beach.
Once a sailor saw me
changing from my wet-suit;
then Yoko came and we three sat together
drinking, then watching
the grey Atlantic skies
burst open with light.

There is an island for every day
of the year in Clew.
And here we should have come
after she'd had her New York premonition.

But better late than never.

She keeps the house now
and I the sea around it.

In winter she collects her kindling
in the morning,
wearing lambswool boots
that make no sound.
If out, I'll cast an eye across and at Croagh Patrick
then watch the mist fall over Inishcuttle,
thick as sealskin on the reeling sea.

Carole Bromley
I was the one

You don't know me. I was the one
who screamed myself hoarse
that night at the de Montfort Hall,

the one who took her knickers off
and threw them onto the stage.
The one who ran towards you
as if there was a wind behind her
and tried and tried to make you hear.
I was the one, the only one in that room
apart from you ten rows and six policemen
away from me and you were singing
Love Me Do and shaking your hair
and even from there I could hear
your voice with its rasp of gauloises
and I wanted to, oh how I wanted to.
I was the one they carried out
on a stretcher into the cold air
so I missed Twist and Shout
and when I came round it was over
and weeping girls walked past me
in the darkness, their eyes bright
under the stars, repeating *Wasn't he
wonderful* and stumbling on. You
won't remember me and now you're gone,
but for me you'll always be the one.

Christopher James

THE PAINTER

His wife greets us at the door in a purple kimono.
Their house is all wooden floorboards,
back copies of *Granta* and oriental prints.

We trail her into the garden, three of us,
students, scruffs, like the figures crossing
the bridge on a willow pattern.

He holds court on a gin balcony, grafted on
to the back of his two up, two down.
Tea lights burn on each corner of the table
and his hand lies across a tin of thin cigars.
His white collarless shirt is open at the neck
and is several sizes too large.

Are you an artist? he asks. *John Lennon and I
went to art school together; we shared
a house actually. It was so cold
his pet monkey used to beg to be put
into the oven at gas mark one.*

Later he shows us his signed copy
of *The White Album* and through the window,
the yellow MG that once belonged
to the President of Egypt.

Clive Allen

Metaphorical

By the time I knew him he was already a metaphor
for peace and love and paranoid fantasies,
still bashing the lyre, still seeing angels, still
playing the prickly ex-pat, but mellowing
like afternoon sunlight over Central Park.

I was getting to grips with diminishment, listening
to the White Album's big, baggy, blissed-out scrapbook, when
cold irony struck and history swept in
like a tidal wave. Oblivion overtook him.
He became a myth. Later he became an airport.

Michael Ray

John

I first saw John
at the doctors,
waiting with my mum

among the dark wood furniture,
shabby 1966 Country Life
and Rolling Stone magazines

He came in with his wife,
wearing afghans and surprised hair,
trailing patchouli.

The waiting room was full,
mysteriously they were ushered through
the big white door, where the Doctor hid.

I watched them leave.
still sitting there waiting my turn
deciding the speed of their visit

was to do with the strange exotic
scent that lingered.
I wondered if it was catching.

Paul Groves

Witness

Ooh, I just missed you. You were here
five minutes ago at the intersection
of Abbey Road and Grove End Road,

striding between Belisha beacons in
a natty white suit. Earlier you strode

out of the Apple Boutique on Baker Street.
I should have been there to catch you,
but I was loitering along Savile Row
near your pulsating London HQ.
It's the same old story. I don't know

if we'll ever meet. I was in Hamburg at
the very beginning. The Kaiserkeller
bouncer said the place was full
and I didn't want to argue with the feller.
You, George, Pete and Paul

could be heard rocking from within.
So I waited ten years, and drew
up outside Tittenhurst Park in Ascot.
Uh-uh. Security gates. The view
blocked by mature trees. What

would it take to make your acquaintance?
When you decamped to New York, you could
frequently be seen in Central Park
and the adjacent neighbourhood,
even strolling alone after dark.

So I went there in nineteen eighty
towards the end of the year, certain
I'd catch a glimpse of your lean physique
and knowing expressions. Some cretin
got to you first, the very same week,

and then it was over. For good. For bad.
The components of your legend were complete.
The last vinyl disc had been cut,
the final tape spooled. The beat
had stopped. The ultimate door had shut.

But, hey, you're still around.
I can't quite put my finger on it,
but you haven't gone away. Ethereal.
A cloud. A reflection in a Rolls-Royce bonnet.
Something at once tangible and immaterial.

Robert Hazleton
Roses in The Park

Written on the 25th anniversary of John Lennon's untimely death.

We gathered speechless in the growing dark
remembering the brilliance of his light
and left our rosy sorrow in the park.

As one of four he made a lasting mark
which cruelly found his heart that fateful night;
we listened speechless in the growing dark

and prayed the news report was just a lark,
for who would ever... but no, it was right;
we lost our rosy visions. In that park

so named for berried plains, the truth is stark
that being human should bring great delight,
not speechless mourning in the growing dark;

commemorate the magic of his spark
and offer love to all within your sight.
The scent of rosy tributes in the park

imbue the air with their resigned remark,
imagine his disdain for this sad rite.
We gather speechless in the growing dark,
and leave our rosy visions in the park.

Kim Moore

John Lennon

He called the local churchyard 'the bone orchard',
imitated the choir master by conducting the cats,
stole fruit from the church at harvest time,
called kissing his uncle 'giving squeakers'
and read Alice in Wonderland over and over
shaped like a hairpin, legs propped against a wall.

His Aunt Mimi said *the guitar's all very well John,*
but you'll never earn your living with it
brought him up to speak proper, to write
thankyou letters, was outraged at his hair.
Picture Paul in one armchair, John in the other,
batting lyrics back and forth, learning chords

by shape. When the Beatles played in New York
criminals were so entranced not even a hubcap
was reported stolen. And what about the songs
he wrote for her and her for him, how they went
their separate ways and when he asked to come back
she said *you're not ready, you're not ready*

until eventually he was. Rolf Harris said being angry
with him was like trying to punch away a raincloud.
He was born without brakes, this boy who would
never wear his glasses, who dreamt each night
of circling in a plane above Liverpool, looking down
at the Mersey and the docks, climbing higher
and higher until the city disappeared from view.

