Innocence

By Patrick Kavanagh

They laughed at one I loved –
The triangular hill that hung
Under the Big Forth. They said
That I was bounded by the whitethorn hedges
Of the little farm and did not know the world.
But I knew that love's doorway to life
Is the same doorway everywhere.

Ashamed of what I loved
I flung her from me and called her a ditch
Although she was smiling at me with violets.

But now I am back in her briary arms;
The dew of an Indian Summer morning lies
On bleached potato-stalks –
What age am I?

I do not know what age I am,
I am no mortal age;
I know nothing of women,
Nothing of cities,
I cannot die
Unless I walk outside these whitethorn hedges.

A Call

By Seamus Heaney

'Hold on,' she said, 'I'll just run out and get him.
The weather here's so good, he took the chance
To do a bit of weeding.'
So I saw him
Down on his hands and knees beside the leek rig,
Touching, inspecting, separating one
Stalk from the other, gently pulling up
Everything not tapered, frail and leafless,
Pleased to feel each little weed-root break,
But rueful also ...

Then found myself listening to
The amplified grave ticking of hall clocks
Where the phone lay unattended in a calm
Of mirror glass and sunstruck pendulums ...

And found myself then thinking: if it were nowadays
This is how Death would summon Everyman.
Next thing he spoke and I nearly said I loved him

A Second Hand World

By Eleanor McLeod

What am I bid for a second hand world,
Tattered round the edges?
It's lost some rainforests here and there,
But we're left with a couple of hedges.
It did have a fancy cap of ice
But it melted just like a dream.
Occasionally it rumbles and blows
And sometimes cracks at the seams.
Some of its rich and some of it's poor,
It can spew out gas and oil,
Or yield no crops for years and years
In parched and arid soil.
Its inhabitants scatter their waste,
There's a poisoned stream or two;
The air is heavy with industry,
So you see what we've got to do –
We've got to find someone to bid for it,
Despite the holes in its sky,
What is it worth? And do you want it?
Or shall we just leave it to die?
Going....going.....

Chocs

By Carol Ann Duffy

Into the half-pound box of
Moonlight
my small hand crept,
There was an electrifying rustle.
There was a dark and glamorous scent.
Into my open, religious mouth
the first Marzipan Moment went.

Down in the crinkly second layer
five finger-piglets snuffled
among the Hazelnut Whirl,
the Caramel Swirl,
the Black Cherry and Almond Truffle.

Bliss.

I chomped, I gorged,
I stuffed my face,
till only the Coffee Cream
was left for the owner of the box -
tough luck, Ann Pope -
oh, and half an Orange Supreme.

Breaking the Rules

By Coral Rumble

When Nadia started at our school
Miss said she should join our table,
But she didn't, she couldn't –
She sat with us, but apart,
Nobody let her in
That would be breaking the rules.
Friends have rules to keep others out,
To let them know they're not part of things.

Nadia had an accent,
It marked her out.
Lucy said, 'People with accents can't join us,
It's against the rules.'
Gemma said, 'People who aren't from round here
Have different rules.'

But on Saturday I saw Nadia in the park,
Pushing backwards and forwards on a swing,
Her feet still on the ground – with her heart.
When she saw me I noticed her melt into nothing.
Sorry seemed a small word.
'Do you want a push?' I asked
Nadia smiled in a language I knew.
We spent all afternoon laughing and messing about.

At the End of a School Day

By Wes Magee

It is the end of a school day
and down the long drive
come bag-swinging, shouting children.
Deafened, the sky winces.
The sun gapes in surprise.

Suddenly the runners skid to a stop,
stand still and stare
at a small hedgehog
curled up on the tarmac
like an old, frayed cricket ball.

A girl dumps her bag, tiptoes forward
and gingerly, so gingerly
carries the creature
to the safety of a shade hedge.
Then steps back, watching.

Girl, children, sky and sun
hold their breath.
There is a silence,
a moment to remember
on this warm afternoon in June.

The Chair

By Paul Gallico

This is my chair.
Go away and sit somewhere else.
This one is all my own.
It is the only thing in your house that
I possess,
And insist upon possessing
Everything else therein is yours.
My dish,
My toys,
My basket,
My scratching post and my Ping-
Pong ball;
You provided them for me.
This chair I selected for myself.
I like it,
It suits me,
You have the sofa,
That stuffed chair
And the footstool.
I don't go and sit on them do I?
Then why cannot you leave me mine,
And let us have no further argu-
ment?

My Hamster Has a Skateboard

By Kenn Nesbitt

My hamster has a skateboard.
When he rides it, though, he falls.
He takes off like a maniac
and crashes into walls.

He screams, “Geronimo!”
and then goes crashing down the stairs.
He's good at knocking tables down
and slamming into chairs.

He'll slalom through the living room
and then you'll hear a, “Splat!”
which means that he's collided with
my mother or the cat.

He plows right into cabinets,
and smashes into doors,
I think he's wrecked on every bed
and every chest of drawers.

It's fun to watch him ride
because you're sure to hear a smash.
He doesn't skate so well but, boy,
he sure knows how to crash.

Homework

By Elizabeth Smith

I'm going to do my homework,
As soon as I've had my tea.
I'm going to get on with my homework –
After I've watched TV.

I'll just have a run around the garden,
And then I'll work really hard,
As soon as I've telephoned Jane,
And sent off that birthday card.

I'm going to get on with my homework,
As soon as the rabbits are fed.
I'm going to get on with my homework,
Before it is time for bed.

What! Bedtime already? It can't be –
To get all those good marks I planned,
I simply must do my homework!
Oh Mummy! You don't understand!