

## A Passageway

*Lawrence Pettener*

We were coming or going, Benny and I,  
to or from the railway embankments  
and marshes – after tadpoles, perhaps.  
We may have been up to no good,  
for all I remember – a relative thing.

Suddenly I was a ball, or my head  
was, for bouncing off the narrow walls  
of the laneway. In this strange teen's hands  
I could let go completely, as my blood  
now implored me – let go, enjoy something –

an easier swim than ever achieved  
at pools, a state of flow to match any random  
dream. As I looked down on the scene  
it was action art; slo-mo sports replay;  
there was nowt to mither about.

But for the rhythmic interval thud  
it was nothing much like poetry,  
on the face of it; save what was written  
on the walls, in fresh falsetto blood  
which no-one would bother to read.

## **Another Passageway**

*Lawrence Pettener*

We were fifteen leaderless lads, led only  
by fire and an instinct for living.  
Some must have laboured an hour or two

to build it up (anti-climb paint on hands,  
smoke on faces), and soon there were shouts  
and whoops as we danced round the drum,

throwing pointed wooden stakes at its orange  
'flammable' symbol and skulls, and dodging  
the gush of chemical fire that issued

onto Litherland's cinder-track. It was  
some sort of civilisation, one built  
on survival; we all knew it well.

By the end we were thick as thieves; none enough  
to get ourselves hurt. Blackened, ashen,  
we snuck home quietly, painted young fools.