

*Simon Fletcher*

**Gall Wasp Takes a Bow at 'The Globe'**

[For Cherry & Kuli]

I know, I know, it's true that I'm the cause  
of all this thespian action on the boards;

if I had not produced such marvellous galls  
there'd be no power-crazing climbs, no falls,

no tales of love or blood-soaked tragedies,  
no pastoral or doubtful comedies.

The ink that's ground from our grubs' homes  
is mixed with soot to write of castles, thrones

and all the other studied whys and whats  
of man and monarch, their unending plots.

The Chettles of this world can't get along  
without my golden dust or print a song

or sonnet on their finest paper, no,  
without my mark there'd simply be no show!

Notes: A tiny wasp, *Andricus kollari*, causes marble galls on oak, collected for their high tannin content, used in ink-making. Henry Chettle was a printer in Elizabethan London.

## Daisy Riot

In May the daisies riot in the grass  
above my house. Their white gloss florets sing,  
their golden button hearts print golden rings  
of pollen kisses neat on all who pass.

My gloomy neighbour, Mr Order, hates  
their youthful verve. They're far too frantic, free,  
so bundles them in wheelie bins to be  
re-cycled with the trampled garden waste.

I nurture them, each one, and like the bees  
adore to see the daisies in full bloom,  
they scatter light and love, bring vavavoom,  
and fill the house with happiness and ease.

Yet when we're both no more, have passed our hours,  
we'll both be pushing up the vivid flowers.

## Common Spotted

The pale pink orchids mark this meadow,  
stretch as far as eyes can see,  
the margin of the limestone cliff.

The purple scribblings, looping lines  
and patterned dots on lower lips  
are hieroglyphs for fly and bee

and tell them charming nectared tales  
of all they want, a birthday list;  
oblique as cuneiform to me.

**Refuge**

*Capitalism's gratuitous wars and sanctioned greed have jeopardized the planet and filled it with refugees.* Arundhati Roy

In warm, high meadows, well above the beach,  
we sat and heard their stories raining on  
a bone-dry afternoon.

They talked about injustices, the lack  
of water, food in baked and desperate zones  
we knew so little of.

Their attitude was testing, near the mark,  
as if they knew who'd pushed them to the edge,  
to arid, marginal lands.

Our comfort blinded us to their distress,  
perhaps we should have done a little more  
to understand their pain,

what caused such anguish, homelessness and fear,  
perhaps we didn't want to know their lives,  
their dark and hungry mouths.

**Simon Fletcher** is a widely-published poet and writer who lives in Shropshire, England. He's manager of the ACE - supported Offa's Press: [www.offaspress.co.uk](http://www.offaspress.co.uk). He's won various prizes and awards and read his poetry on BBC Radio Shropshire and the BBC Asian Network. He MCs the monthly online literature event *Virtual Voices*. Simon's read his poetry in Britain and abroad, including in Pakistan, Norway and Germany. Since 1994 four full collections of poetry have been published. He's also collaborated with Debjani Chatterjee and Basir Sultan Kazmi, as *Mini Mushaira*, on two joint anthologies. He was a literature development officer from 2001-2013, in Wolverhampton Libraries, and set up Offa's Press in 2010 to promote and publish poetry in the West Midlands. His most recent collection, *Close to Home*, Headland, 2015, was described as "beautiful, poignant, joyful poetry." He's recently been a 'poet on loan' in West Midland libraries.