Poetry

War and remembrance

Pain and tenderness combine in a masterly collection. By Maya Jaggi

Collected Poems
by Chinua Achebe
Heinemann, £8.99

Footnotes: periodicals

Boats, bards and bomb shelters

Journal of Design History, Vol 19 No 1, Spring 2006 (4 issues £49; http://jdh.oxfordjournals.org/)

You could almost believe that the gods were having a right old laugh when they decided that the newspaper tycoon Robert Maxwell should meet his end by falling (or whatever) off his luxury yacht in November 1991. For, as a fascinating article by Andrew Jackson in this special "Do It Yourself: Democracy and Design" issue of the Journal of Design History points out, in the 1960s the Daily Mirror played an unprecedented role in introducing working people to the delights of this formerly elite sport. Sold as a kit through the paper at a modest £63 11s in 1964, the Mirror Dinghy was the brainchild of TV handyman Barry Bucknell and gave ordinary folk their first chance to possess a seagoing vessel of their own. Around 70,000 are estimated to have been built, and a Mirror Dinghy club lasted until 1971. During this golden era of home-hobbying, quiffed, pipe-smoking dads had a tendency to assemble them à la maison, with the result that parlour windows often had to be removed to get the finished craft out of the house. Other DIY gems under consideration here, in what can in terms of writing style be quite an academic journal, are the punk rock fanzines Sniffin' Glue and Panache, and the Eisenhower administration's campaign to persuade US citizens to convert their basements into nuclear fall-out shelters.
Travis Elborough

The Seventh Quarry: Swansea Poetry Magazine, Issue Three 2006 (£3 per issue, subscriptions £6)

There was scarcely an acquaintance that Dylan Thomas didn't, at some point or other, tap for money. One of his longest-suffering piggybanks was the Welsh poet Vernon Watkins. Watkins toiled in the Swansea branch of Lloyds throughout his working life and died in America in 1967, though in less tumultuous circumstances than his better-known peer. Somehow Watkins found it within his heart to forgive years of Thomas's wheedling requests for money and the poet's failure to attend his wedding, despite being the best man. This outing of The Seventh Quarry, the Swansea-based magazine edited by the poet Peter Thabit Jones, honours in verse both Watkins and Idris Davies, another poet in his circle. Perhaps somewhat neglected today, Davies, a committed socialist, was published by TS Eliot, and his poem "The Bells of Rhymney" was put to music by the folk singer Pete Seeger and subsequently covered by The Byrds and Bob Dylan. And though the lion's share of the poems here are, naturally enough, from Welsh poets writing in English, it feels wholly appropriate that a not insubstantial percentage of the work featured comes from across the pond. Also included is a piece in which Vince Clemente, the American poet, biographer and trustee of Walt Whitman's birthplace, discusses the muse that has guided his poetic output. **TE**

Nicholas Le

To fight the unbeatable