



## Gallery of poems: Antony Dunn

Antony Dunn was born in 1973. He won an Eric Gregory Award in 2000 and his latest collection 'Flying Fish' was published by Carcanet in 2002. He works for the Riding Lights Theatre Company.

Antony wrote about an antimony cup which was made in about 1720. Medical opinion until the 19th century held that illness could be caused by the build-up of bad 'humours' in the body. Purging, in the form of bleeding or induced vomiting, was believed to be useful for expelling them. Antimony is a toxic metal that causes vomiting, diarrhoea and breathing difficulties when touched or ingested. Cups like this were filled with wine. The metal would then react with the wine. Patients would drink small amounts of the liquid to induce vomiting. The cup needed protection, as antimony was expensive and also toxic in concentrated amounts.

### Antimony

It is a poisoned chalice  
that we raise -  
but as we toast each other's healths,  
and chink  
our fragile cups together,  
let us praise  
the nation we're creating  
with this drink,  
as we beget a finer race  
of men  
and draft its customs with this  
alchemy -  
eternal Friday nights  
of swirl and churn  
of wine and air in this  
antimony.  
We sink a cup to purge what makes us  
sick,  
and sketch out shapes of Empire  
on the floor,  
in splash on spreading splash of pink  
on brick  
and blanket; wine and bile. Landlord,  
one more!  
One final shot to get  
under our skin.  
Sorry, gents, it's time.  
Better out than in.