



tremble

THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA
VICE-CHANCELLOR'S INTERNATIONAL POETRY PRIZE 2016

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2016

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*Edited by Niloofar Fanaiyan
and Monica Carroll*



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Navigating this ebook

This is an interactive PDF: clicking on poems in the contents will take you to the poem's page; clicking on the poet's name at the end of the poem will take you to their biographical note (if they have one); their names in the biographical note will take you back to their poems; and clicking on the page numbers throughout the book will bring you back to the contents page. All weblinks are live at the time of publication.

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Vice-Chancellor's foreword

This is the third year of the Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize, and the first year in which I have been involved. I must say that I am delighted, believing as I do that poetry expresses a great many of the important things that human beings are able to share.

This prize is one of the University of Canberra's important recent cultural initiatives. A glance over the last two years shows that the prize is continuing to grow, in terms of the number of poems submitted, and the number of countries from which they come. This prize demonstrates that poetry is a global art, and one that has the capacity to connect people from many different nations, cultures and languages through their own, particular and careful ways of speaking.

Poems have come from as near as Belconnen, and as far away as Fairbanks Alaska. All the Anglophone nations are represented in the entries, along with poets based in Buenos Aires, Bangalore, Cologne, Jakarta, Lagos, Paris, Matsudo, Mumbai and many more cities. Longlist judge Merlinda Bobis noted this, writing: 'It is wonderful that this international prize seems to have drawn together plural voices. I suspect from their varied styles that there are poets of difference coming from sensibilities/cultures outside of the Anglo-Celtic poetic tradition.' Certainly poetry is a transnational art form, and we aim to enhance the capacity of local poets and poets from around the globe to exchange work, ideas and opportunities.

This year's Prize Anthology is titled *Tremble*, a name that evokes the energy of poetic writing, and the mixed terror and delight of making, and reading, a fine poem. The sixty longlisted poems included in this prize anthology, in their various ways, evoke the trembling of language and of thought, the openness to alterity, and the combination of loss, fear, and hope that so often characterizes excellent poetry.

Longlist judges Merlinda Bobis, Michelle Cahill, and Jack Ross whittled down over 1,200 poems to a workable selection of sixty. Head judge Simon Armitage took on the task of selecting the winning, runner-up and short-listed poems from that longlist. What is evident in the breadth and quality of the entries, in the works selected for this volume, and in the commitment and enthusiasm of the entrants, administrators and judges, is the vitality and richness of contemporary poetry.

The University of Canberra is proud to bring poets together in this way, and to acknowledge the importance of their work. Poets speak for all of us and we, at this university, are determined to hear and honour their words.

Professor Deep Saini
Vice-Chancellor and President
University of Canberra

Judge's report

Thank you for sharing these poems. Reading them from ten thousand miles away I felt at liberty to really ENJOY them – not something I always experience when making judgements about poems closer to home. Perhaps I was guilty of exoticising them in some way, hearing them as foreign and ‘other’ despite being written in English. Or perhaps the poems were enjoying themselves, the majority of them being relaxed enough to let the idiomatic and the vernacular rub along with heightened language and higher thoughts.

To my eye and ear, a group of six emerged fairly naturally from the long-list, though not all for the same reasons. ‘Barnacle’ and ‘Ordinary’ both have a quirky spoken quality about them, reinforced by peculiarities of arrangement, and speak with voices whose stories and vocabularies I fell for. ‘Anthropodermic’ is lean and enigmatic, perhaps the most sophisticated of the entries in terms of its style, and I admire the way that ‘A Grammar of Survival’ manages to carry the conceit of the title through to its conclusion without feeling as if the author had ransacked the corresponding pages of a thesaurus. The silver medallist, ‘Heinz Guderian at Yasnaya Polyana’ wears its learning lightly (though I admit to Googling him) and has a weight of phrase appropriate to the historical occasion. The poem is also manifestly confident and controlled, to the point where it risks that newly-coined proverb in the final line.

But the piece that came out on top was ‘Your Father At Fourteen’ simply because every stanza felt fresh and engaging. It was either John Ashbery or it was Les Murray (I don't have their collected utterances to hand) who said that as a minimum requirement a poem should have at least two good ideas per line, for example an unexpected word, a brilliantly executed metaphor, an exquisitely positioned semi-colon, a compelling verb (it's all about the verbs, folks!) or even a skilfully judged omission i.e. the stuff good poems don't need to say. ‘Your father at fourteen’ aspires to that operating standard and achieves it almost entirely through word-choice. The poem also manages a form of poignancy in a subject field where sentimentality is a common pitfall, and takes chances with the narrative so as to create a form of suspense across its final stanzas, a suspense both literal and figurative. I felt I was reading a true and individual work and therefore a worthy winner.

Simon Armitage

winner

Your father at fourteen

Already tall, all femur and no thigh,
and tripping on my shadow like a new giraffe.
Not your father, but his epigraph,

and not the rider, but the rider's horse, just feeding
my way through the universe. My eyes
a dirty gas-stove blue, my hair as thick and dirty

as those Van Gogh brushstrokes flecked with soil,
shipwrecked bugs, whatever wafted
through that blue Dutch air. I'd walk

to where the wind huddled for warmth
inside the harbour, carrying some comic in my coat,
and smash glass bottles on the pier till I got caught,

perfecting my ambition and regret,
miming rebellion with a fescue cigarette.
I knew the names of birds, but not their calls,

not girls, only their garish names,
which I could coax, if I repeated them,
to drop their living referents like a dress,

revealing stranger nakedness,
and rhythms as translucent as a fire ant's wing.
I couldn't see the ocean from my window,

but could smell its salt, and sometimes hear
the surf revving its engine, stalling eddies
and loquacious jets, the Narrows where

I once hauled up an oxblood octopus,
slashed badly by the hook, and saw
my own reflection settle like a bruise

into its coiling polaroid of skin.
This was the one past I was in.
I spat, and sluffed, and copiously slept,

I slept as if a mustache could be spun from sleep,
or sleep might sugar and ferment even the air
to muscle. I multiplied my best joy

by my hardest grief, and chose to like it here:
the long, dark, winter afternoons, the way
the mayflies hatched in vetch; I wasn't mortal yet:

I hadn't watched you first chew honeydew
or warmed this cup of milk to coax you back to bed.
But one day late in March, I thought, almost, of you:

the adults placed their bets on when the ice
over the lake would break and take the junk cars
left to sink. I dared myself to walk out there,

and got halfway before a long, low groan
revealed a universe of cracks and coming aftershocks.
The ice hummed like a song that I could feel

would end, and soon, bringing the future
with it, shapeless as the teal-grey water,
shadowy, and bright, and almost real.

Michael Lavers

runner-up

Heinz Guderian at Yasnaya Polyana

'Fahrkarte bis zur Endstation'

You come all this way in a shirtsleeves war,
the white dust of it ground out of a white sky,
and it's such good going, you feel the cause must be.

A panzer is a creature of anticipation;
it knows, because it is, what will happen next.

Were we caught short or too far out?
It's an artilleryman's question. We were out
cold. The vacuum tubes burst in our radios.

Winter, the white flag of the latitude.
As the poet says, we are all held in a single honour.

This is how war is made on war that is
otherwise always with us until hell itself
freezes over. At Yasnaya Polyana

I allowed art to be burned for scrap heat.
The year had laid a lead white on white cloth.

Allow me this observation of frame and canvas:
that the fire is in the wood. We live late
in the world to think that we set fire. Fire's found.

So the ice at Yasnaya Polyana came out of the ground
and found me out, who had bestrode a summer

of a thousand miles with kaolin in my hair, my goggles,
and the sun itself watched and shone to me,
the warrior who took the horse out of war.

There we had to lay up in the mercy of the next
to happen, which was us, because we were.

Yasnaya Polyana was the last station. In the end
it was a spiritual problem, a white conclusion
I drew there, but not because it was where

he wrote of war and peace, and the tale of Karenin's wife.
I began that, like this campaign, and I do

know this: that as she settles in the train, fretting
in fever, sweating the oil of battle,
the carriage window fogged, turret sight lost,

that she is in, and what trouble.
I know it because I felt the same

writing to Gretel from Yasnaya Polyana, writing
of how the last exhaustion was not physical
but spiritual. I felt the same, that I was in, and how deeply

snowed in, writing with inks of frostbite and gangrene,
that the end of art was scant thermal energy,

my turret sight was lost, and it would all end
badly, between the tracks and the train.
A tank is a train that lays its own tracks forever.

PQR Anderson

shortlist

Barnacle

I cut myself on a four hundred
year old barnacle. It was my fault.
I strayed into its seaside territory
by mistake. The ocean ambushed
me in the beach's narrowed alley.
Cursed in a language before blue.
Its wine-dark, shoulder-charge
knocked me onto its cobblestoned
street; my hand parachuted open,
launching like a grappling hook, but
gravity hid behind my legs & pulled.

Its edge opened up my palm neat
as a pay envelope's promise. It
was part of a razor gang after all,
its cutthroat mates flashed shivs too.
Hard to imagine their cave hideout,
a distant cousin to the Himalayas was
once a mass of lifeless sea creatures;
fishbones, bleached coral, mother
of pearl, shell, grit rasped into smooth
particles by the tide's kinetic sawmill
& risen as mountainous tomb.

Darwin studied them. Rubbed his
stiff fingers over their stars, old as an
Elizabethan dirk. He knew an organism
that lived so long, must know something
about morphology, longevity. Measured
their jagged coastlines, counted bubbles
that escaped from their miniature craters.
He cut himself too, proffering his own
blood for science's spell. His revelation.
The simplest live longest, the complex
die sooner from too many moving parts.

Anyhow, my hand opened its red smile,
& rebirthed its salt back into the mother
country's briny womb. My blood oozed
in hot waves, as the flap of skin undulated
like a polyp helpless in a strong undersea
current. This stigmata; blessed ultramarine
pain as though light itself filleted my flesh,
each beam a butcher's knife. That was then.
The scar is bone white as the string of dead
coral & cuttlefish backbone left by a high tide.
My children's children's children, will see it die.

B. R. Dionysius

Ordinary

I was talking to a gang of Friesian heifers,
skittish in the field over a hawthorn hedge
when clouds seemed to lower themselves
and rain slanted in over the river from the
west. It was June and there was some litter
in the ditch and I got under a beech tree in
full leaf, then an ash, then a horse chestnut—
best of all—the conkers still tightly balled,
the leaves glossy dark, the cows running
in the rain beside the fence, almost udder-
less, young and curious, their noses raised,
desperate to kiss me. Dream on. The rain
hissed like steak or fish in a skillet as I
leaned on an iron gate gritty with rust and
got my shoes snagged on a loop of barbed
wire and saw where hooves printed the black
earth with deep, impermanent hieroglyphs
that filled with reflections, rain silvering them
like mirror backs. Garlic mustard in flower—
tiny white starbursts—rank nettles, sorrel
waist high. I was thinking about my father
and the days he'd stood somewhere like this,
waiting for work or a bus in Crumpsall or
for rain to stop smoking over the roofs, the
city really burning one time in the blitz,
though that was night. Thinking about my
sons who might one day think about me
in this scent of damp foliage and fleece,
the face of my watch steaming over and
needing a piss (rain does that; some water-
sympathetic thing), this poem at the back
of my mind let loose in a book, the cows
long gone to slaughter after lives of
ruminating pasture to cream. It struck
me as no small thing to see that crazed
elbow in the glass of time and it occurred

to me as utterly ordinary, the way all
miracles are mundane: rain whispering
itself to a kind of nothingness, streams
gargling in spate, droplets shining on every
spear of grass, mist huffing from meadows
of trodden thistle, disappearing from day's
mythic skin, the old terroir of dreams,
the mind's forgetfulness it had drifted in.

Graham Mort

Anthropodermic

I.

Asleep in sepia her coital fragility
betrays corrosive abrasions.

He sees her forehead aslant
a vast expanse of unlined pain.

Still the cracks are showing
(begin at her hairline).

Desire is a glass fire:
cylindrical, cruciate.

Whatever gets you through the night.

Buy a new dress (blue) and beg
my way back into the room.

Vellum eyelet sleeves,
so far from credulous grace.

Mid-century modern cubicles
glint in blazon haze.

So many provisional spaces,
species. An enclave cloaca;

a stain marrowed in. She

resurrects a priori
austere sequence of

brusque emblems.
Trellis daughters

already forgotten;
her choral ghost becalmed.

2.

We are all flesh
toying architecturally with bone;

tongues untied and mouths
impossible to appease.

Minor lacerations sprawl,
ruptures of lost baggage.

Veined heirlooms loop the carousel.
Spectacle of a once beloved famine.

Amputation is easy.

Observe the diasporic womb,
an alchemical marvel of estrogen and apathy.

Don't worry, darling,
it's only the end of a bloodline.

3.

Awake, he recedes into the usual amnesia.

She lacks the basalt tongue to master
elastic grammar, let alone ethics.

Bells hoard a hat shaken
in ravened abandon.

Relics of bent saint, uncalled
for by her given name.

After all is said, a stranger
will come, hell bent on erasure.

Leave your linens. Grope for a ballast.

Her hands close on filament:
gauzy and cottonmouthed.

There is nothing left to eat in this house
except your heart.

Lindsay Tuggle

A grammar of survival

'Giraffes are very apprehensive of any risk to their ankles'
—Ruthy Alon

Which recalls me to your arrival
a spindly newborn fetched up
from the savannah of the subconscious.

You were not my first summoning.
I had parsed the imagination before
subject, object, predicate

but you were the most alive
a bewildered teetering
in my grandmother's laundry

her small commercial shut down for the night.
Among the irons, mangles, wash tubs,
machine-dead during the hours of sleep

you were the proof
that grammar is a vertebrate
breath-fed. You bled

into my irises
tinting them tawny-gold in sunlight
raw umber in shadow

as if to teach me how to see clearly
when the human world
havocs your own

memory our shared bloodline
myself still that six-year-old
you still afraid to commit your ankles

to the perils of a soap-scum floor.
Others mistook you for a fiction
a child's make-believe

exposed, reciprocal,
a teeter-totter version
of what lies beneath, cells

in equal but gene divergent
one of us born to roof
the other to sky

the animal we are yet an identical
pulse-born and dependant.
Evolution does not question itself

your adult height
could reach its tenderest tips
your tongue defy thorns.

Dream me wise enough
to send you back to the wild
your ankles strong in the going

a creature of dappled nexus
the geography of trust
perhaps the only way home.

Patricia Sykes

longlist

i. *monsters*

A Short History of Violence

The rush of air.
The fear

Is black and white,
A blur

Just over his head, a feathered
Ball of bad dreams

And someone shouting. A body
Just wants to mind himself,

Keep a blind eye. Out back
A string of lights

Pierces the horizon;
The ground

Races away beneath. He's
Been running for miles

In his ripped jeans, strips
Of T-shirt flapping, dirt

Like a rumour all over him.
His arm a bent lesson

In obedience—not enough.
Out here

Boys are ten a penny,
One less ain't worth

Spilt milk. The pulse
In his throat

Is a bridle against his skin.
The tyre tracks, the smell

Of burning—he can't outrun
The smoke at his back,

Like a panic
Rising. His body

A lamb sheared. The velvet
Of his ribs.

Jane Yeh

The rats of Peshawar

In the Land of Five Rivers, veiled remarks and fabrications
are as common as the brash appeals for leg before wicket
or quick singles in the game of cricket and as insistent
as the rain that stays for days, replenishing the region.

It is known a deluge can flush the living from the rock and
that the harsh, neighbouring mountains do harbour different lives.
But the well informed converge now and insist behind their hands,
scientists are at work and they might be worse than the Taliban.

So, the story is told that U.S. genetic engineers
have created monster rats, with balls the size of rupee coins.
They've been bred in special army units, inside Afghanistan.
In length, they measure from the elbow to the fingers of a man.

Fear is real in Peshawar, a city older than the time of Christ,
Zoroastrian, bordered now by land mines, home to damaged shrines,
a place to wait at corners, hesitate, be wary of the shadows cast,
where danger is alive in every circumstance and nothing is benign.

In Peshawar, it's known the rats come out at ten.
The fat ones waddle, others saunter, then
eager for the night, they scurry, reconnoitre,
seek out morsels, look for gaps and wriggle under doors.

They can nip and rip, with sharp incisor teeth, hands, faces, toes,
any body parts exposed by those too tired to stay awake.
The government, the people say, does little, abandons care,
eight infants have been killed so far according to the mayor.

Methodically, Naseer Ahmed patrols the streets and narrow lanes.
He leaves a trail of doctored bread on window sills near sewerage drains.
Though there's a bounty now he says, himself, he doesn't seek rewards.
He wears his cricketers cap and smiles, he says, my poison is my sword.

Elsewhere, it's felt the bounty's good, at twenty five rupees a piece.
Throughout the Punjab, shopping bags are laden with rats, deceased
and hidden
now in trucks and vans all fast bound for Peshawar.
In Attock, a man was apprehended with one hundred rats inside his car.

On Friday nights, devotees will gather at Rahman Baba's shrine.
Though fearful, they will not sing of militants, of mutant rats or drones.
They will instead, from memory, intone a seventeenth century Sufi's verse,
recall, 'Arrows shot at others will return to hit you as they fall'.

Barry Gillard

Prometheus' regenerating liver

You remember eating a tupperware container
of cereal. Year-old pine trees swinging
from car mirrors. No shoes,

only socks in the back seat. Black lipstick
men and blue-blue eyes. Hair dye-stained shirts.
You remember the way light cast a shadow

over the white brick walls. Nose bleed
queens bloated beyond recognition. Face so fucked,
it's mistaken for a Yue Minjun painting. Smashed

open piggy banks. Her punch stained pucker. Blood
you taste in the back of your throat. You remember
putting your thumb in the industrial staplers

to watch your fingernail flush. First time it happened
you were nine years-old. Your pink plastic safety
scissors confiscated by security. A woman missing,

jogging through a park at night. You can deliberately cut
the inconvenient parts out. Children sloshing water
in a pool. A man stabbed

in a bathroom stall. But you feel them still,
sense their shape. An entire pan
of sea-shaped macaroni on the floor. Laughter

or screaming: indistinguishable sometimes.
Flashbacks like Prometheus regenerating his liver.
A little girl again. Disintegrate. Fingers cocooned

and shy. You're twenty-five, but can't
shower in bathrooms stained
a rufous-red hue.

Stevie Walters

Remember to save the foreskins

Having trouble finding the right moment to ask the folks about your missing foreskin? It's not missing in the 'where are my car keys?' kind of missing. Everyone knows it's not there. It's missing in the 'We are Conservatives,' or 'We always vote Democrats' kind of way.

It's what we do. Done privately without the fanfare of the Bar Mitzvah: yours was a simple affair. A quick visit to the temple of medicine, a lie down and stretch out on the altar of the God doctor, (qualified thankfully—not like some of those bloody backyard witch

doctors who butcher native boys in dusty smoke-filled rituals). Clean. It has to be clean, a clean slice to avoid problems later on. You wouldn't believe how many soldiers had to be pulled out of the trenches in world war two for the snip. The same in Desert Storm.

Interrupted their ability to serve. Some may even have missed out on medals. Metal on skin. And yes, the stainless steel instruments may have been cold but at least they were sterile. Not like when Jesus was brought in on the eighth day. We got it over and done

with, (after your recommended four days of skin on skin contact). Before you got too settled and then it might have been harder to forget. The Catholic Church used to have a feast day, Feast of the Circumcision, held every New Year's day. What a blast. To mark the

occasion of Christ's first cut and his naming. Rehearsal for the crucifixion (some say). Although he never blamed his Father. The holy foreskin was a venerated relic, allegedly possessed by over 21 competing parishes: each drew pilgrims, worshippers, the faithful.

It's the same kind of skin as eyelid skin, a protective sheath for the eye. These days nothing's wasted. They gather the offcuts, little bits of newborn baby boy flesh and use them for medical research, cosmetic production. I hear it's a multimillion-dollar industry now.

Who would have thought! You little fellas were carrying a veritable gold mine around with you. Like a gold ring hey! That skin's rich in collagen. They used to have signs up, so the staff didn't forget, 'Remember to save the foreskin' in the early days of the on-selling of tissue and so on. The fibroblast produced from just one foreskin could cover an entire football field, about 4 acres. The stuff sells for something like \$3000.00 a square foot. How about that then? Wish we'd got a cut out of that. We weren't told or asked. No point in feeling sorry for yourself. Think of the burn victims who benefit, or the wrinkled old ladies paying a fortune to rub baby foreskin cells onto their faces. Everything's connected son. Back then no one questioned it and as for the issue of lost sensitivity. Who knows?

Kerry Harte

Strange monster

We who are writing women and strange monsters
—May Sarton

She wields a potato peeler. She peels
and pares, pares and peels. Apple-skin
falls in the sink. Broken coils,

discontinuous scroll which no longer reads
apple. Unnameable mound thing, mounding.
Twigs, leaves, that dead red hat

stuck in a grate at the bottom of the street. A mound
undoing its yarn, retreating to before the idea
of hat on the needle's nib went knitting.

Moss, pearl, garter, rib. To before the ball.
Carriage in a pumpkin seed, footman in a green lizard.
She'll take this skin to the worms, let them compose it,

beautiful scribblers. Black inscriptions
on a black page darkly. She slips
down a wormhole, squirms up a week ago

leaning into a bedlam wind, powerlines
heaving, bin-scud, sky-roar, as if the storm
has the city by the scruff and shakes it

but—ha!—that dog, steady spaniel, upright
on a neat lawn, nose in the nor'wester
(nose in a novel, sunshine on a window seat)

tracking howling hunger across oceans,
engrossed in some family saga imprinted
in a code of salts blown in on the gale.

Oh, to have the dog's discerning nose,
to discriminate more wisely the good
apple from the bad. Rinse.

Cool sluiced fingers, the juice swirls and dives.
She lines up pale bald heads, chooses
a blade. Kitchen tools: Marianne Moore

kept an auger, two axes and a gimlet
on a singular rack of her own construction.
Burburle-burburle mutters the chutney

Stir.

She would have a wooden spoon and tongs.
A knife. A sharp pen. Take down this incessant simmer
where the words form and dissolve, sometimes

plunge so fast and deep, irretrievable, the notebook
so often a room away, out of the steam. Strange
monster. Licks for that vinegar chilli zip. Spices

and a hot flame, the pot's soft plops and a pungency
filling the kitchen. This, her cabbage talk. This, her sauce,
her relish. This habitually her plain stern face

leaning and tending and making. The distance, she must tell
her children, between say and do's the thing. And fine words
butter no parsnips, nor divvy a cabbage for slaw. And

watch their hands, my darlings, as the gentlemen go by.
Sets out the jars. Boils the jug. Now she's called.
And answers, always answers, has to, in the end.

Sue Wootton

Notes

'I go out to the kitchen to talk cabbages and habits' —Marge Piercy

'I sternly accept this plain face' —Diane Wakoski

Marianne Moore's 'singular rack of her own construction' is from 'Humility, Concentration and Gusto' by Winthrop Sargeant, first published in *The New Yorker*, 16 Feb 1957.

With such edge

Foothills of Mt Roland

The bush has darkened. Cloud
presses in as if its seed hatches in the leaf tips, scuds
rolling hard into the skyline. The sun, now auburn,
pipes its low blaze through the last line of failing blue.
The gums and the musk and the fur-trunked
ferns pull their respective greens close,
close to their skins, tight and resistant, battenning down.
though you know, when it comes, they'll swing
and thrash and rave with all the others.
In the last cry of molten light, the trees shine like creatures
stepping forward, rippled bark in pearl and fiery gold,
steel enough to hold the heavy cloud—teasing it,
taunting it, crowns raised to the rain: 'Fall, now. Fall'.
Two tawny frogmouths that have slept each day
on two small limbs, half-way up a dogwood, tucked
into the valley, have disappeared. The ducks
wheel wildly one last time, their whites
dazzling in the slant of light, their green necks
and chestnut browns lit in a tumble of honking.
You hear it. You take root. The storm spits, hisses.
Breaks. Onto flesh, onto wood, your arms
and hands dripping, the sky streaming through you. You plunge
as you ascend. Howling. And soundless. Your face
tilting upward. Cheeks. Neck. Chest. The rain's weight
unravels you. And you reach into bursting winds,
leaning from the soil to sway on the rain's anchor.
You open your mouth. Laughing. And the taste
arrives on your tongue as if the rills of the rain's
drumming fall descend into all of you, staining your veins
with their silver. You crowd with such light, with such
edge, such abundance, you cannot move—the hour is lost
as it brims. The kick of your sudden heart, in the rain
and the gums and the dark wind, comes again
and again. And each tremor travelling through you,

through the core of your flesh, each shiver
finds you, rattling all of your leaves.

Kristen Lang

ii. *flowers*

The white room

After he left I walked for miles through buttercups,
until I arrived at the white gasp of the sea—
small yellow butterflies all over the low bushes,
small pink roses with yellow hearts.

Then nothing,
 only emptiness
rocking with light.

It was then I saw the melancholy lions,
scattered in the summery lane,
huge, scrawny, scratching themselves,
yawning in the monotony of flowers.

my heart in my mouth as one looked up,
crouched, watching—and she sprang,
smooth as a yellow stream,
purring with pleasure in her perfect muscularity

and I was carried away,
heart crowing in glory
knees gripping her rough flanks
hands grasping her neck.
We leapt up, into the still, warm air.

 The purple grass shivered in the sun
 honeysuckle caught in my throat.

Everything was stark,
everywhere shining shining
my heart began to open on the creatures who speak in heaven.
even to the harvest mouse whispering past my foot

The white bull came to me then, his tail
quivering to its blackest tip, flicking, flicking flies,
He spoke of secrets amongst his quarrelling wives.
He was very tall, very still.
His eyes were black.

This is why I miss my appointments in the white room
where stark physicians inspect the geography of souls
I turn to my yellow lioness, heart glowing in the sun,
speak quietly with the sinuous mouse, the rattling beetle,
I converse calmly with the white bull with his black curving horns.

Jack cries. Again. But I no longer know him.
He insists we can be happy
He says he will sort out his wife.
I smile at his oddity.
This is no longer relevant, no longer of interest.

The grasses are the colour of oats. They rustle with crickets
A lark is lost in the blue of the sky.
Its song falls in transparent circles:
my clear heart lifts, yellow and full,
rises to meet it.

Jeni Williams

Rosa canina

On a Sunday afternoon waiting for a train
red poppies like sudden children's laughter,
miniature pyramids of purple vetch
between the sleepers in a disused siding,
elderberry spreading irregular shapes
of genteel lace handkerchiefs in spotless white,
a bush of pink dog rose into whose fragile cups
I and the insect population dip for a scent
impermanent as the lovely wisp of a girl
between boyfriends I once spent the night talking to
afterwards she refusing my invites to dinner,
to the cinema, even for another drink,
then vanishing from the university,
diploma work unwritten, exams untaken,
to be met later by chance on a mountain
hefting ropes and crampons, coming down
as I was going up, pausing for ten minutes
before vanishing again until one night
a ring on my doorbell and there she was
(she never said how she got hold of my address)
still a lovely wisp with a thick braid of brown hair
unravelling down her naked back as she recalled
our first conversation and what I failed
to perceive or say or do, gone before I woke
the words on the note she left like seeds from rose hips
dropped down the back of my shirt for a joke
leaving an itch for someone as brief as dog rose,
thornier, tougher than I ever could suppose.

James Sutherland-Smith

Appetite

My health teacher says I have a Body Image Problem.
and that's why I have trouble eating. She wants me to know
that Barbie's boobs are so big, her waist and hips so small,
she'd fall flat on her face if she were a real live woman—

except that her boobs would get in the way, so maybe not 'flat'.

I don't know any girl who wants to look like Barbie, though
plenty have tortured her to plastic death by removing her limbs,
beheading her, necklacing her with flaming Hot Wheels tires.
I tell my teacher not to worry, I don't want to look like Barbie—

so then she's on to the Airbrushed Magazine Model lecture.

I say I don't want to look like a model either, which is obvious
since I'm tattooed up to my elbows on both arms and I allow
my seven year old brother to cut my hair with garden shears.
So then she says I'm in Denial, one of the five stages of grief—

but she doesn't ask me if I'm sad about anything, or if I'm sick.

My cat stopped eating for a week when the dog died, though
their relationship was problematic. My grandpa lost a lot of weight
when grandma left him, but he didn't want to look like Barbie either.
Isn't my teacher even slightly concerned that I've lost someone—

or that I might have cancer or AIDS or chronic diarrhea?

Liver, kidneys, lungs, hormones, heart—a disorder of any
might in turn cause a disorder of the appetite, an interruption
of the ordinary desire to fill the empty space within. Or perhaps
I leave the stomach empty, like a chair at the communal table—

inviting what's missing, something more fulfilling than food.

What's missing? That's what my teacher might ask, if questions interested her more than simple answers. What do I want more than Barbie's body or a slim reflection in the mirror? What's missing? What need must be met before meal time—
or what question do I want to be asked, that I might respond?

Rebecca Timson

Lucky

The burglar did not take your cat. Thank God.
Not a lonely guy, I guess. Not someone concerned
with extending his life expectancy. Though that
doesn't sound like most intruders you know. Chances are
he already has a cat. Maybe almost everything. Maybe
the two of them share quality time, during the day,
before he leaves on a job. They may go for long
country drives in someone else's car, or enjoy
casual strolls through town, appreciating the details
of alleyways, windows. Evening comes, the light
dwindles. They might sit close, watching *Jeopardy!*,
testing themselves with the final question—
which is something, now that you think about it,
you and your cat have never done. And it's too bad,
really, because you could use someone to be still
and quiet with, on the couch after work.

Jill Osier

Tell your step-mother to pay for my funeral

— a solitary sentence,

arrow misses target.

Does a lampshade flicker then cease its need

for glory? The dark, the glitter-struck dark,

sends my father upward.

He has become cosmonaut—

circling the upper half of highlife

above my sleep-strewn daughter's bed.

Michelle Leber

On flowers

For Vy Ho

There weren't many museums, and Ho Chi Minh's body
had been sent back to Russia for cleaning. I imagined
his lips, red and plasticky as a maple leaf.
Outside the government hotel where I lived, a woman sold carpets.
Each morning, I stood in the middle
of the South China Sea, a tugboat chugging past my left toe,
deciding on a direction. When homesick, I walked to the Pizza Hut
and paid ten American dollars for pepperoni.
Americans can afford to hold a grudge; Vietnamese cannot,
Vy told me once, when I asked why everyone
was so nice. On the night train to Sapa, crouched over a hole in the floor,
I watched the urine drip down my legs onto the track below
as the boxcars snaked closer to the snow-capped
Chinese mountains, snaked towards a solitude
from which I knew I would never fully return. Years later,
I fell in love and missed those months, following Becca
to the Buddhist temples, monks propped along the shore
like books on a shelf. Would it be so bad
to spend my days beside a cold body
of water like that. Do not attach yourself to a flower,
one monk told us. They'll die too. Sometimes, writing a poem,
my braid sweeps back and forth through the darkness,
sucking up dead stars like a comet. Why blame you
for leaving when I left my own body
years ago. An adult now, I don't regret the loneliness,
which taught me how to love up close, which taught me also
the meaning of war, the time allotted
to sustain an illusion. That our need is just a glass of water,
filled to the brim: as if it will never spill over,
as if we aren't all made of glass. Vy tells me
I look like a movie star. It feels too American to admit
how sad I am. Instead, I smile into space
and thank her, imagining a black hole before it is a black hole:
the kind of light that breaks over and over
until it becomes something else
entirely.

Catherine Pond

President-Elect victory speech

Delivered 4 November 2008, Grant Park, Chicago, Illinois

people waited and believed this time; their voices.
answer. we have never been individuals. we are,
and always will be, the answer that—that. tonight
we can put out our hands and bend them forwards.
once more. it's been a long time, but tonight, we
all look forward. promise in the months ahead. want
this journey. campaigned and spoke. the streets train
home, and earned the new that's coming. that debt
beyond. not hatched. draws strength. braves bitter doors,
stretches schools and churches. it grows up. rejected.
This victory. didn't win. didn't start. didn't. But above all,
will never truly belong. belong. never for this. because
understand the enormity. even we know the challenges
that. we stand, the mountains risk, waking up in deserts.

Dennis Lewis

The soldier

A man kneels, alone, in a tower.
When he sings, it's to steady his fingers.
They'll be bluebirds over
the White Cliffs of Dover over and over
all night, but soft,
soft as a rabbit's foot in a pocket.

Low laze of light over rubble, over boyish moans
and the no-moan of the blown apart.

Slow, the enemy tank re-approaches
like a dream animal. Closer.
Restraint and ambition wrestle, like brothers.

The hibiscus, plucked for his mother,
always died too soon in water. Red petals
swooning terribly over supper.

On the farm, rabbits drifted through his scope.
Stilled on the cross, luminous
when he relented. Those stored-up
mercies he must release. This instant.

Paula Bohince

The severed head

— *Photograph of Abdullah Sharrouf, 7, with a human head in Syria.*

*'I cannot take my eyes off that severed head.
Much as I want to, that is my symptom.'*
—*Julia Kristeva*

He holds it clear of his chest,
outward, upward,
proffering. Five kilograms.

The weight of a hessian sack.
A watermelon hacked from the vine.
A medicine ball, raisin black.

His blue plastic Swatch gleams.
He is dressed for a school excursion:
checkered shorts, shoulder satchel,

shirt tucked in. He squints
from under his cap,
immobilised. Should he smile?

What would a smile mean?
The hair he grips with both hands,
dangles toward the light

the way you might lift a glass float
washed in on a king tide
by its neck of knotted rope

or a pigskin football
high before punting it skyward,
a lumpen prize. What praise

he receives is implied, takes place
after the iPhone's shutter
stutters closed and open again,

before or after he knows
what he is holding, before or after
his father explains a heaven

as distant as Western Sydney
then sighs, a bus's slow exhalation
through idling suburbs,

the infidel moon on the rise.

Sarah Holland-Batt

The veins of the wind

I remember,
lying under the trees at dawn.
Dreamy eyes, wrapped in velvet summer
waiting for the new day to come.
With our hearts as green as the grass,
with our eyes as green as the leaves
that were pitter-pattering above us
a prayer for rain,
in the midst of a dry season.
And we were shooting the breeze,
talking about our dreams,
painting them with simple words
taken out of our childish dictionary,
wishing we were older and free.

But we knew nothing about freedom,
we were living it and we did not notice it
because it was ours.
Running under the linden trees,
fluttering like butterflies
from one moment to the next,
waiting for our curiosity to explode
like a touch-me-not plant.
We sowed the seeds
and everything was ours, there were no boundaries.

But the clocks had a different map.
Deep in the forest of our imagination
we had to part ways.

On the shores of adulthood,
out of the blue
 water
I think I saw us again.
Dreamlike figurines,
in a foreign land
designed by the scent of linden tea.
Swimming free

at the bottom of the teacup.
Maybe I fell asleep.
I don't remember.
I just know that there were no unanswerable questions
and
questionable answers.
We were the roots and the branches of the same tree.
We were the veins of the wind.

Zore Buncheska

Unfortunately, there have been some complications

Mother, mother, won't you wake?
The doctor has given you a new heart,
am I not in it anymore?
Does it pump memories
of the donor's family
to your brain:
 hours by the lake,
 a vacation to Canada,
 a little brown dog
 none of us has ever seen?

Open your eyes
and see me.
Remember vacations to upstate New York
we took almost yearly,
that trip to Fort Ticonderoga
where I placed my head in the stocks
for you to take a photograph,
our own little dog, burnt orangey
with white cuffs and name collar,
dancing before me as I posed.
Here, I have the photo album
of collected memories,
the book of days, our days,
yours for the taking
if you will only open your eyes.

Harvey Soss

Words for food

My brother
ate *miyok guk*
seaweed soup,
every year on his birthday
until he was five,
and never again until he was 28,
which is because he was adopted,
which means *ipyang* in Korean,
but I don't know if that word,
can also be used,
to describe the way,
someone picks up habits,
or culture,
or a new way of thinking,
or if *ipyang* refers
only to a child given away.

Sagwa in Korean means apple.
It can also mean apology,
My mother's face is full of apples.

Sarah Heffner

White flowers

After Homer, Robert Mapplethorpe, and James Wright

Narrative thread of marriage spun, undone each evening, like sails
collapsed when the mind is moored and the dream-lover lies down
inside the husband's outline. What is touched

in sleep in daylight trembles, a wife slow-silvered over
twenty years—un-savored, sidelong desired—telling herself the erotic
is not the suitor or sex but the loom. Like a poem.

The drone of men acquired scents, imagined coital signatures. The *a cappella*
of work grew unbearable, the shroud indistinguishable from
the bridal gown. Waves of emotion knocking the hull

of her, her mouth against her wrist a kiss of distress. A self-
gripped breast. Distant monsters, the wild life they promised, chorusing
First lay down your passions, then swim out past speaking.

* * *

How the mind, that machine, leaps like a dancer from the pistil
and petal, the slickness of photographs, from which posed flowers
bloomed, though none with the pained expression

of orgasm. Still, the lily was nude, the men nude—inscrutable, troubling.
Cocaine-white the lily, muscled and invisibly diseased. O milk
and liquorish allure of the prima against a black and fathomless

background. The soloist, from whose body comes the body politic,
the failure of culture and time. O faraway and deadly decade, O creamy
avatar for flesh and bone, and the dancers themselves, whose beauty

cannot be admitted in such an age, when looking induces the trance
sex induces. Such purity of idea, of *beauty* and *entrance*. The lilies
around the newborn Christ could not be more forgiving, or luminous.

* * *

To have lain a long time in the snowed-over earth, and heard feet or no feet
overhead, waiting to be rinsed of pain
and addiction, facing Heaven, the way a body is always positioned,

eternal supplicant, in the maggot-shine and dirt.

To have many times fallen, and risen, in a lifetime. This, the last
time, with the white rose pinned, a signal of *forever*.

To visit the ditch and trouble again, to be received as blossom,
in white regality, bride of the corporeal world. To embody the grave
white of a child's headstone, which is unbearable.

Anguished flower—blood-sapped, love-leached. Is the vacancy
Hell or Elysium? As the bouquet of light from a miner's helmet
drowns in pitch, there is no moral, no difference.

Paula Bohince

December weather

I thought today I should write the truth
about love, especially since so many
others have had their say but left me
unsatisfied, still figuring it out.

So I went into the woods, winter's
chill everywhere hanging from tangled
limbs, and hoped to feel, well you know,
inspired or maybe sort of religious.

I stood about for a while, trying to kick
a stone lodged between a rock and another
hard place, but I slipped on ice, the way
we often lose our way in memory.

My feet got very cold and I worried
that I'd left my best socks on the bedroom
floor, and in the rush to tell the truth
I'd put on the wrong ones for serious work.

That's when I realized that we're not,
you know, getting any younger. Hardly
the kind of uplift that the truth about
anything is really after, after all.

But that's also when it came to me
that we're not getting older either.
And just about that time, I heard
a scattered crew of geese overhead.

Maybe they were Canadian, but wintry
glare makes it hard to tell. Maybe they were
elsewhere from or bound, flocking loyally,
steadfast through ice and rain, homeward.

I would almost swear (which is a kind
of vow, after all) that two of them
were trailing raucous colored scarves;
one of them, quite stylishly.

It made me remember that it's cold
today and lonely without you, always.
Though, sometimes, it's lonely with you.
That's also part of lovestruck's truth:

Needing to get away into the woods;
just so that, coming back, I'll bring homeward
a broken limb or branch, weighted down
with the loyalty of our summoning hearts.

Saul Hillel Benjamin

iii. *sea creatures*

Brooklyn–Queens Expressway

Not ice, but ample light
caking the East River

even in late winter—

some birds, twisting low over the white water
like letters in a crossword,

spell *r e p a i r*—

some bundled bodies bracing themselves
to the promenade railing

over the BQE,

with its swift conveyor belt of hard candy and pharmaceuticals
swept beneath.

Slow river & expressway
at cross purposes—

but both forces of rambunctious plenty,
rumors of source and elsewhere home.

One woman took some wind and fashioned a joke.
The other held open her hands for the scattered sun
to become fragments of soft fruit.

They both laughed substance into the ice air,
a skyline of books between them.

What do I desire from this life
but to walk with light
and be its implication,

to have the spring, which even now
is breaking out in clear abundance,
be ever both our seed and harvest,

that when we reach whatever coast
we're coming to, the seas receive us
and stay us up?

Andrew Nurkin

Lamassu (for Mosul)

Jonah for the first time drowning
not in wet-damp whale belly
but the maw of modern war.
The winged bull-footed men
never could guard human bodies
only the memory of their being.
The stones shaved faceless, dust to dust.
In forty years they'll sell more postcards.

Somewhere in another country, an artist
recreates the artifacts in lines and lines
of computer code. An infinite army
of guardians available for download:
Lamassu emerge from the 3D printer
plastic and oily, like monstrous fish.

Michaela Coplen

The smell of rotting seagrass

Like that famous madeleine
but crustier, the smell of rotting seagrass
takes me right back.

Tea trees straggly on the lakeshore, cicadas shouting their love,
my long hair sweaty under the daggy sunhat Mum made me wear.
Seagrass wrack lies humped by wind and tide at the water's edge,
quietly rotting.
(We all called it lakeweed then, cursed the constant stink.)
I'm wading in the shallows, awkward and clumsy,
with girls a little rougher than my own bookish bunch.
Teenagers can be tougher than wolves
to girls forced to wear hats.

Mini-fish flash silver in hand-sized shoals
around my feet, enchanting—
but toadfish puffed up into spiny, warty bricks
squat near-invisible in toe-squishing grey-brown silt.
Nellie, thin as a ribbon of seagrass
(those days, doctors always blamed the mother for bulimia),
interrupts her talk of boys to boast
of a friend of a friend who stepped on a toadie
and carked it. The others all chime in.

Tall tales. Toadfish flesh seeps poison,
but there's no venom in those ugly spines.
Back then, though, my stomach flopped
in anxious calculation. How to reach the sandy grass
when any step meant almost certain toadie death?
Mum would kill me
if I trod on one
and died.

Jenny Blackford

And now the reef

*Flowers turned to stone! Not all the botany
Of Joseph Banks, hung pensive in a porthole,
Could find the Latin for this loveliness...
—Slessor, 'Five Visions of Captain Cook'*

For them it was unassailable
an inferno of sea and sharp coral
a Venus fly-trap drawing them in. Fragile
was never the word for this underwater forest
of blooms, at low tide a vertical hedge
of skeletal rock, holding Endeavour to ransom.

Off Heron Island, incandescent
chameleon colours once visible from space,
by night the Reef's a construction site
for marine cities, a limestone world,
the coral polyps always building, never leaving
the safety of their homes except to feed.

The reefs outside support both predator
and prey, in an intricate dance of survival.
Cleaner-fish congregate at thriving
cleaning-stations, like a suburban car-wash,
to eat dead skin and parasites
from manta rays already queued for service.

Seahorses change colour and texture, matching
the coral they cling to for protection.
Once a year, at full moon, great ribbons
of coral spawn drift on the tide, most
to be eaten by fish. Enough survive. Or would
if you could put the Barrier Reef in a glass box.

Bleaching, the crystal tines turn ghostly white
and fade, like flowers dying.

Margaret Bradstock

On floating bodies

Her guttural silhouette
in bruised relief—
basalt-mouthed, truant beauty.
Sleeves reveal wrists graced
in the master's hand.
The tyranny of childhood is boredom.
Violence, when it comes,
is some kind of glassy splendor—
blood laced with blonde.

She wakes to remember
her garnet cluster of early deaths
one by flowers, the rest by roads.
In the survivalist's diaphragm
nothing is wasted.
Ribs flare with the erasure
of trivial breath.
Winter is an anathema in this place.
Nothing much happens here.
Cosmetically, it's abysmal.
Light blooms in neon amnesia
from which we are blessedly immune
our blood-teared armour
warmed by breast and bone
our honeyed anatomies
gathering elsewhere,
hourly.

Lindsay Tuggle

The bower bird's nest

Who could resist the ramshackle charm of it
—a tangled hotchpotch of odds and ends
all bundled together, every ragtag scrap
salvaged simply because it's cobalt blue?
Here in the prosaic light of day, bit by bit
this bird's accumulated a lure like a litmus fuse
and now it's triumphant in the blueness of blue.

What more is this earth than a gimcrack setting
from which to prise the things we value?
The bower bird would hoard the Pacific
and tug down the sky for its ultramarine
but in practice it must make do, as we all do,
with what can be scavenged from the refuse.
So it picks things over, fossicking for blue,

and finds a key-ring tag, two drinking straws,
the glass eye from a derelict doll, or idol,
and here in full view of a fierce explicit sun,
here in the moon's ambivalent shadow,
it takes on the makeshift world and makes it anew.
How could the critical eye of its mate refuse
so ravishing, so seductive, so bejewelled a blue?

Gregory Warren Wilson

Blackout, IMAX theater, thunderstorm

As ushers pace the aisles and yell, 'Stay calm!'
the guy beside me jokes about the myth
of women and children first from sinking ships.
His Skittles click. His phone glows in his palm.
I count twelve phone-gloWS in the multiplex—
they clarify the dark, giving it shape
like searchlights seen far off, too far to help.
He knocks my elbow from our shared armrest
and kicks my sneaker, grunting, 'My bad, Bro.'
I clutch my bendy straw like it's a shiv.
According to the Scale of Kardashev
which ranks humanity at Level Zero
(still groping toward home-planet mastery),
we might reach Level Two in a thousand years
if we can engineer a Dyson Sphere
to sap a star of all its energy.
On Earth, the guy beside me starts to snore
but wakes when thunder shakes the balconies.
He slurps his Diet Pepsi to the lees
and claps between each burst, 'Encore! Encore!'

Brian Brodeur

The trouble with water, and other possibilities for human evolution

The first time burning hives appeared all over her body,
Alex and her parents assumed she had a severe allergic reaction
To toxic substances in the water. It happened after an entire
Day of swimming in the lake, an activity she looked forward to

Every summer in Hobble Creek Canyon. When she took
A long look at herself, she cried and said ‘This is definitely
Worse than acne!’ as the family physician prescribed
Massive doses of antihistamine to relieve her pain.

All the doctor could say was ‘I’m afraid you’re having
An anaphylactic shock.’ ‘Is that super bad?’ she asked,
To which he answered ‘Yes, it’s fatal—’ ‘O what
A stupid way to die!’ Alex thought, without knowing

What in the world was causing the skin lesions and sores
In her throat. Luckily, she survived the night and all
The other days, weeks, and months when specialists
Could not find a cure for her illness.

She endured three years of awkward stares and annoying
Comments from school mates before finding
An online article about a woman who was allergic
To water. The realization was instant, and doctors

Finally confirmed she suffered from the same disease.
But how could something so vital make her miserable?
Isn’t the human body made up of sixty percent water?
She felt her tears flow like acid against her cheeks.

From then on, she never left the house without an umbrella.
She stopped doing the dishes, exercised in the cold to control
Her sweat, and gave up her dream of becoming a marine
Biologist and wildlife photographer. She could only manage

Two-minute baths once a week. Through it all, she never
Stopped asking, 'Why?' Alex couldn't help but think
She could be the victim of a lab experiment by a secret society.
If so, why create humans that reject the nourishment

Of water? It was even stranger to think her disease
Naturally occurred in one person out of 230 million people
All over the planet (at least that's what the internet said).
Hers could be a case of genetic mutation. Tired of feeling

Like a mistake in the larger scheme of things,
Alex began to reimagine herself as a critical link
To the slow and gradual process of human evolution:
When the Earth wastes away, her children will be among

The first humans to survive in other planets without water.
Since then, she's been fascinated with space exploration,
Astrophysics, and chemistry. The future seemed brighter
That way, with reasons, not questions.

Corin B. Arenas

How the jaguar caught her voice

She could hear a fire in the world, but was still.
Her tongue lay quietly in its mould.

She watched the trees swarm with mysteries.
The green-darkness of the forest

began singing with a mouth full of seeds.
There were fish in the shallows of the river—

they swam through her face, filling it
with shining. She looked like her mother—

the same broad snout, the same black-rimmed eyes
whose stare made her feel

as though she was falling.
Then a growl grew in her lungs and made her teeth

bare and sift the air with menace
and poured away grief's bowl of stinking lilies

with a single clearing of her throat.
She got up onto the soft earth of her feet

and straightened her glittering back.
A water hog, a grass-eater, was chattering in the dark:

now she devours its warm, raw heart.
She reveals its skeleton of radiant bone.

There are fish in the river. There is a river inside her.

Jemma Borg

iv. *ghosts*

How my father pronounces words

Morning in the car to the cremation and it starts again:
my father, every syllable a self-help slap. Monologue with half
words misspoken, dropped, *ys* said as *is*. As in: *stipend*;
deep end of an aphorism I can't frogstyle out of. Or
he's inventing words, adding anger to anger to get *piffed*:
sift meaning from sound, signal from shout. Then wince
since he can't get anything right, not even keeping
the milk cold, not even grief, not even the right
turn he's wheeling into now. Do they still make new corpse
roads, or do ghosts have to be content
with medieval bikeways? He'd make a brilliant
ghost, traveling only unbroken lines. Or perhaps our
tongues are already fences. He says, like a cough, *café*;
left at the next light and straight on to mourning.

Ruth Tang

Jack's pack

When you're twelve and bored, and then life hands
you the chance to mess around with a ghost
along with a bunch of three or four friends,
you seize it. One long suburban summer,
Barclay, Dowd and I, in our endless search
for novelty, tried a séance. We knew no fear.

After school, at home, my only fear
was how to keep other hungry hands
out of the cupboards and let me search
for an empty glass to harness our ghost,
some scrabble letters to fend off summer,
and ways to make some Ouija fun, to keep my friends

alive, alert, and keen to be friends
with each other. I didn't count, I fear,
on hosting another guest that summer.
We're all left to deal with what our life hands
us, each to each, with not a blessed ghost
of an idea what it is for which we truly search.

'I am Jack,' the glass spelt out. 'I search
for my buried body.' My shouting friends
and I believed we'd found a daylight ghost!
For whom the blazing sunlight held no fear!
'Wow!' yelled Dowd. 'If this murdered dead guy hands
us fair dink clues, we could dig him up this summer!'

We met each day, and spent our summer
holidays in a circle séance search
for Jack's latest clues, then to ride, all hands
on bikes, to yards neither I nor my friends
had any right to snoop around in. What fear
is prosecution when you're not scared of a ghost?

We found boots on a back step the ghost
said were his killers. Jack's one big summer
fling had gone wrong. I felt a strong fear
of death—the glass lurched, and took a slow search
Around the table passing all my friends
and then it spelt—'you'll all die at her husband's hands'.

'There's no ghost!' I yelled. 'Barclay's moving the glass! Search
me how all summer long he's pulled a con!' Then, friends,
we ran in fear when the glass rose up through our hands.

Robert Edmonds

Time capsule

On my last day of school I filled a metal box
with marbles, pennies and bird badges.
I buried the box where a boy had fallen
into a broken toilet. I can still see blood

mapping the grass where he'd tried to run.
The cuts on his arms and thighs were deep.
The day I returned to disinter the box
I mined the place with a spade and trowel.

Time and distance had changed the lie
of the land on the map I'd been carrying
for years in my head. Far from where
the boy had fallen and bled, the spade

hit metal near the cage of a cricket net.
It was here we had tested the effects
of electricity on a human chain across
the playground. A boy with a reputation

for conducting experiments whose results
had seen the police arrive at his home
and leave with things in files and bags,
had brought a hand-crank generator

like a huge black pencil sharpener.
Attaching wires to a pole, he turned
the handle, slowly at first, then smiled,
his arm a blur, the voltage passing

like a pulse of harm down the line.
I opened the box. Instead of badges,
coins and marbles, I found the skeleton
of a bird, perhaps a wren, intact except

for where the beak had come loose
like a compass needle adrift in dust.
When I touched the bones they released
a scent such as I had once inhaled

while disturbing ash in a firebox
at my grandmother's house, after she died.
In my room the light passed like old film
over the scars on my arms and thighs.

I traced the longest scar from hip to knee.
It was raised, like something from a dig
and glowed like a seam of earthed lightning
on the retina, long after you've looked away.

Anthony Lawrence

Inheritance

My father left a big house for me when he died.
The vault accommodated enough to let the space linger
between the earth and the sky.
A long concrete chimney rose out of the roof.
Father loved to see the smoke rise out of it.
He said it reminded him of something he had to be happy about.

Evenings, he would sit in the loft
in a laid-back armchair, which he said was the only luxury
he could ask the world for.
He sat down till the sun went red on his windowpane
and the wood in the valley turned to faint mandarin sketches
on the horizon.

There is a room in the house where my father used to sleep.
Nobody lives in this room anymore. The books are thrown all over the floor.
My father spent three decades in this house, this room.

After all the excitement of life, he now remains silent inside the photo frame
hung on the wall of this room, still smiling.
It was a pose he had taken, on my birthday:
well oiled moustache, hair parted from the middle,
a black mark on his forehead, to ward off evil.

There is a typewriter at the study table, in one corner of the room.
It's a Remington 1946. Most of the keys are stubborn with rust.
An A would look like a P and if you were to type luck,
it typed a blurred and indistinct *uck;
the letters rode, one over the other.
Father had written hundreds of letters from this typewriter.

Near the window, there is a cage, where his parrot used to live.
Father had taught him to say hello and goodbye
to those who entered and left the room.
He said many hellos and goodbyes in a day.
Father fed him green chillies to sharpen his tongue.
One day he opened the cage and let it go
and the parrot never returned.

There is a piano at the other corner.
A dark mahogany-coloured thing, made up of oak wood.
It was musical in my father's time but now it has lost its melody.
A bunch of silverfish live beneath its pedal. The notes burp and belch.
I tried to throw things out of my father's room,
to replace them with something modern.
But each time I enter, I am humbled by memories.

There is a grandfather clock he had bought in an auction,
stilled at one point for years, thick with rust.
In the middle of the room, there is a fireplace.
A bulky iron hearth, where he had spent countless nights
thinking about those things that are unimportant now.

At the end of the room a door opens towards a forest.
I feel like opening my arms wide
and shouting at the highest pitch of my voice,
loosing myself into the wildernesses.

Nabin Kumar Chhetri

An old friend

I remember Celia Carruthers
Large breasted in her school blazer
Blonde hair resting on her shoulders
Skirt turned over at the waistband
Engineered to expose slender thighs.
All the boys knew they would.

They say she had one breast reconstructed
You say they don't match
Before you fall on the floor in the bar.

Drinkers jump down from the bar
To haul you up.

Bewildered and wide-eyed
Your blotched face
Under its cropped white hair
Sits back on a stool.

'You must come round for lunch'
You slur through missing teeth.

We leave.

Your glasses fall in the road
You follow them
I haul you up.

Your house
Is scented with damp and joss sticks,
Yesterday's takeaway overflows the lid-less bin
Cigarette butts gather outside the back door.

'You and me'
You say
'We used to dance together.
Do you remember?'

Ali Porter

My brother saves things

My brother saves things
record players with dusty needles
old 33s with torn covers and scratched, shiny vinyl
with names like Captain Beefheart, Frank Zappa and Pere Ubu
while upstairs there are ticket stubs from concerts
and old enamel badges with rusty pins that say
Support the Miners and *Mr Softee* and
I am the Saturday Cat.

My brother saves things
When the boys trapped a bee inside a coffee jar
I watched, helpless, as they went to fetch
their instruments of torture:
tweezers, scissors, a magnifying glass.
'Touch that and you're dead' they told us.
'Don't cry,' he said when they had gone
then he twisted the top off and we watched
the bee fly away into the blue sky.
'Go home now,' he said and waited patiently on the drive
for the beating he knew was coming.

My brother saves things
Programmes from plays he can't remember
beer mats and bottles and shirts he no longer wears
photos of people outside their tents in the rain
dressed in tank-tops and shirts
with collars like the wings of Vulcan bombers
and crushed velvet loons
and unforgiveable hair.

My brother saves things
Once, long ago, I came back from the other side of the world
with a battered suitcase and a broken heart
and I pulled the curtains and lay on my bed in the dark.
'Come on,' he said 'It might be bad. But it's not as bad as
all that.' Then he pulled back the curtains
and opened the door
and pushed me out into the bright street.

My brother saves things
Beer mats and bottles and shirts and programmes
and photos of people by their tents in the rain
record players with dusty needles
old 33s with worn covers and scratched, shiny vinyl
and old enamel badges with rusty pins that say
Support the Miners and *Mr Softee* and
I am the Saturday Cat.

My brother saves things

My brother saves things

Steve Voake

Storm chasers

These were those fellows with bazooka arms
who excelled at dodge ball, smacking us one by one
off the sneaker-scuffed floor during gym class:
we flinched even as they stalked fresh victims
until the bell, leaving us bruised armadillos
to curl up, shit-stained losers, under the stands.

Drawn from the scrappy end of the gene pool
they form up teams of 'Wrong Way' Corrigan
in vehicles called 'Dominator' and 'Doghouse,'
shunting aside more sensible Darwinians
who wouldn't poke a finger in a storm's eye,
gibing, 'Yo, Cyclops, can you feel me now?'

Spinning down highways in Kansas or Arkansas
towards another dodgy game of twister, mic'd crews
dive into funneling winds that tip the Beaufort scale,
thrill seekers counting coup for documentarians.
Catching them on Discovery Channel or the news
I find myself again going fetal, rooting for the storm.

Harvey Soss

Witness

That was me, in the picture
Nine, maybe ten years old with browned flesh
Like a little Abo, you would smile.
Once you dragged me out of bed and made me stand
in the cold listening to the same repeated record
But I couldn't identify the beat.

I could never play the piano to your liking. You beat
this into me with pictures
of thrice-named men on cardboard records
Who heard lone notes and could flesh
them out with chords and turns that stood
the test of time and made your eyes smile.

When we last met we spoke and smiled
through strangers (myself: scratched palms, slim heartbeat
You, salt and ebullition on the stand).
The defence tabled a borrowed picture
They bleached your teeth and talked of willing flesh.
I gave my name and occupation for the record.

They buried it in legal doubt, that record
of my sister's hidden smile
They took her story of schoolgirl flesh
and gave it cunning. You beat
the charges. In our final picture
you stand in your father's suit, I stand

at the door to the courtroom, we stand
apart, even though the record
of my testimony shows that I withheld the picture
of your leaking smile
and the days you beat
my mother's flesh.

The smell of nicotine that slept beneath your flesh
The homemade roar against empty afternoons; they stand
beside your watchful ink and wife beaters
in the wilfully forgotten record
of my childhood. In their absence, we smile
for the nine year old girl in the picture.

Etched into my sister's reclaimed flesh lies a record
of the music stand and cream metronome you gave me for
my birthday. They smile
at me through beats in time. They slam into the picture.

Miranda Baulis

each, night

in circles of the park we peel ourselves
willingly, again and again, as homeless
slowly gather at the edges, waiting.
i'm glad to see the curve of your spine,
your head hanging as each cruel word
lifts and lands, scratching acid
down your neck. we ride the swings
as hunched men watch from the shadows.
we jab, then present each pinprick
to each other to hear it swell then spill.
i watch the world glisten upside down, earth
to sky, dirt to lamplight, and listen
to my unbroken voice laying broken
pieces into a calm mosaic as you lay out
each matching one. at the top of the web
i hang upside down again and watch
as each new person silently appears.
i wonder if you see them
from your motionless perch
on the whirly wheel, bent
into the centre—a Rodin in the playground.
people gather at the end of the park,
grizzled beards curling the edge of light.
i wonder what they make of us, if anything,
our hurts as colourless as the park lights.
a van pulls up to the side of our tableau
and people gather to eat as we devour each others'
facts—as if they are. my voice, ever steady,
walks the stamp of its traitor calm
down my gullet to the fist, knuckled deep and tight.
i wonder if i've listened
to my voice more than yours
and if you've done the same, as the homeless
quietly eat and vanish into the city
as they came.

Chloë Callistemon

Both leaves and letters

For Linda Godfrey

*And when the tenants come to paie their quarter's rent,
They bring some fowls at Midsummer, a dish of fish in Lent;
At Christmase a capon, at Michaelmasse a goose,
And somewhat else at New-yere'a tide, for feare their lease flie loose*
—George Gascoigne

Fowls at Midsummer

Crispy skin chicken noodle soup—sold out.
I'll have the duck with the thick-stemmed choy sum.

Good flavour, but I miss the idea of the cleaver
in the three neat pieces of the absent chicken.

At another table a young couple
welcome a third to their party.

They look nervous and warmly intentioned.
The little white bowls, the chopsticks and spoons

crowd on their table like happy peasants
assembling to dance and sing.

A dish of fish in Lent

Lifejacket irritates my sunburn, petrol rainbows in the bilge. We find a spot.
The fish I could not hope to catch is round-eyed fish-shaped, spangling.
When I wind in my line there is a plate-sized crab. The crab and I are shocked.

At Christmas, a capon

A letter from S.T. Coleridge to his friend and fellow poet, Robert Southey
(abridged):

On Xmas day I breakfasted with Davy.
I do not know what to say to you
of your dear Mother.
My Relations wish to see me.
Remember me to Mrs Lovell.
Poole asks to be remembered to you.

My bowels, my dejection of spirits.
Life, gangrened. Not domestic tranquility.
Not a sweet wife, not a house in Whitcomb.
I wish to avoid the uneasy
feelings I shall have.
So much for me.

At Michaelmasse a goose

I have no autobiographical goose. Clearing off the fridge I find a note written to myself, just a name, 'Lin Ostrom'. Could this be something for the difficult Michaelmas section of my George Gascoigne poem? I look Lin Ostrom up again, she's not a poet at all, she's an economist who wears bright embroidered blouses and won the Nobel Prize for research into the sharing of common resources. Why did Lin Ostrom's name make me think of geese? Did I mix her up with Mary Oliver? I look instead for dictionary geese. Gander, gosling, grazing, hissing, forced, sauced, necked, bumped and stepped. A gaggle of goose words in English, but geese are scarce in the supermarket freezer. Too big, Linda says, a goose is a large bird. You need company if you intend to cook a goose.

Somewhat else

Juicy, uncoaxable purslane
in plain dirt beside the footpath.
I use my thumbnail to slice off
a stem to plant beside a stalk
of quivering variegated mint
another thumbnail cutting taken
on an early evening walk.
If they get along, they'll get along
in their terracotta plastic pot sharing
soil, water, air, light.

Ali Jane Smith

Camouflage

How many steps back does a soldier take
before he is due to turn around? Long stride.
Short stop. Every gate pillar has potential.
The butcher shop is open today. Fish, fresh
from the lough, hit the counter with a slipped slap.
We are out collecting rubber bullets—pocket money
for the pictures. Internal injuries braised for later.
Watching is too small a word. Desire informs
the way we see them walk. Their tempered dance
is riddled implication. They can turn into a bush
at a given sound. But the foliage is wrong for here.
We know where they are. We want to bring them
tea, hear them try to pronounce our names,
but there's no way of saying this to camouflage.

Siobhan Campbell

Birds of a feather

His life swallowed in a skip,
a big yellow maw glutting the gutter
outside his place, just up from my parents.

Cancer of course.

It's the big removalist round here.
You could cold call addresses by what took them out –
Heart Attack, next to Dementia, two doors
down from Stroke, just up from Natural Causes ...

So his stuff's for the dump, he for the oven.
Only degree of ceremony varies, style of jaw.

I see the kids hard at it, beavering with box loads.
Bet they could hardly wait to get that For Sale peg
banged in the yard, like a stake through the heart,
just to be sure the old buzzard was gone.

Callous bastards.

I eye the growing pile, the flotsam of a life overflowing
the lip—potplants, tools, kitchen utensils ... all for the tip.

Crueler, the books and mementos,
photos, records, knick-knacks, art,
still-hangered shirts, bodybagged suits and shoes ...

Somehow shoes a corkscrew through the heart.

All unceremoniously trashed, fish-tank smashed,
in a high-summer, Saturday morning
rural Australian Kristallnacht.

Look at them, grasping son, pitiless daughter,
sweat in place of tears, grim-gloved,
like contract cleaners disinfecting memory,
scared of being contaminated by ghost dust

just itching to get their mitts on the old man's moola,
split him up, cash the estate,
fly back and feed those fat squarking faces.

Leeches. Ticks. Parasites.
All the scene lacks is black crime tape.

... Then again, I'm sentimental. Prone to speculate.

Grief doesn't need a breast-beating show
(they were likely done with that days ago)
and really, what's to be done with his stuff anyway?
Salvos? The more piquant bits they could somehow stow

but to what end—just to ditch it incrementally
in ezy installments of guilt-free pain?
So much less harsh than this brutal purging,
though in the end the result the same.

I sometimes envy the practical, their different economy.
Sentiment's about the least affordable thing in a material world.

I'm a clinger, attacher, sniffer of the past,
unlike my olds, who trashed all my treasure
when I flew the coop.

Maybe come the time I'll return the favour.
What goes round comes round, measure for measure,
when the pigeons come home to roost.

Tug Dumbly

The hand

I

My father has this ghost story. One morning, when he was a boy, he was
plucked back
by a hand
—*definitely a hand*—which grabbed the back of his jumper

as he was about to set off as per usual on his paper round.
No-one more down to earth than him. No-one less like his Aunt Laura,
his mother.
(Not that he speaks of her much—what she did to pay the rent another story.)
Ever after, when he
tells it, he'd turn round—

Stop messing about mum—to find her impossibly remote on the other side
of the kitchen, her back turned as she did the dishes.
You'll be late, David.

He shrugged it off. Shrugged off their talk of spirits. His missed English exam
(he'll brag how he was
top of the class). A smashed
fibula. Trials, he'll reminisce, with Rotherham.
The roads not taken, that mist-free, otherwise unmysterious morning, as he
went freewheeling
towards a reversing car through Rawmarsh.

II

One thing leads to another blah blah. He'll pick up where he's hustling in
snooker halls, to win
enough money to take out my mum,
who he'd picked up at Greasbrough Club. I thought she were French. By then
she'd jacked it all in –
ballroom, the medals, finals on television at the Albert Hall (though never to
see herself), for the
glamour of that other world, that loomed

on the same black and white telly in the shape of The Zombies, an ever
hairier Beatles. The
startling apparition, there in the living room, of a beyond the pale
Mick Jagger.
She'll tell, in turn, of how grandad'd get up and turn it off,
sending her out in a huff, a waif to the other side of Rotherham, to
Killamarsh, Rawmarsh, to come
in devil-may-care late.

III

Is anybody there? He'll recall his Uncle Rod, the family joker,
calling down the coal chute, into an infinitely pregnant silence.
Putting the jitters up everybody there

at Aunt Laura's séances. His laugh subsides as he remembers again the
red curtains to the 'parlour'.
The sound
of piano music, that woke him in the night, that stopped when he went
downstairs to part them.
What spectral shape he half-expected, sat playing Mozart or bloody
Beethoven,
he can't say. *I remember it 'cos the same day Rotherham lost to Liverpool 2-1.*
The same story. They
need someone to put their foot on the ball, play it on the ground.

He himself never missed a penalty, he'll never tire of reminding us. The
others, bent double, puffing
out mist, look on
as he places the ball on the spot, and wrong-foots the keeper
to finish off The Joker, Thurcroft Pit. That spectator, snorkelled up
in his Parka, his identically attired double—we were forever being asked
who was who back then –
know by now he won't miss.
Their feet are soaked through; they look freezing. He'll run over at half-time,
release steam-wraiths
of Bovril from his flask.

IV

Do well at school, he's reminding us, as he screws the lid on his flask. *So you don't have to do what I*

do. His wry gaze holds mine a moment—like he means it and is joking at the same time—before he's out the back door to start his shift.

I'll catch myself in
turn, echoing something of his advice to my own son happen
—the sound of my own voice impossibly distant, like I'm calling down a coal
chute in time.

His mother, endlessly late, still faffing over him, snaps the lid shut on his snap, and he turns in a huff of kisses, zipped-up, quiffed, his kit packed on his back, let go 'finally' into the morning.

Paul Bentley

v. *the end of art*

Maelstrom

hail battered the house last night
breaking windows and hammering the porch

this morning in the yard
under the shredded leaves of a dogwood

a goldfinch lay like a soggy flower
bone-broken amid the splintered twigs

as I lifted him
body light as a breeze

I thoughtno more music
in the dawn

two days after surgery
I can barely lift my head

barely walk to the lake
still I want the green scents

fresh grass startled into growth
and dragonflies darting

through fallen trees
all the increase and momentum

the contours of Long's Peak
reflected on the surface of the pond

a portrait of high clouds
wavering on the water

at night I dream of the needle prick
blood beading and the burn of chemo

the chemical taste
in the back of the throat

no matter how I turn from this
it sutures itself like a shadow to my day

I'd rather walk a little further
circle the lake

stand in its quiet conspiracy
the air charged with the unexpected

even though the dead lay
scattered on the grass

rosebud and hummingbird
beaten flat

there are only so many mornings
to be pulled into the light

so many chances
to will my spirit over the water

to mistake a burden for a blessing
or wonder on what hinge healing turns

Carmella Santorelli

The circumstances

The night that I slept with my ex-husband,
coordinated attacks shook Paris
and Beirut, concerts and dinners
turned deadly, and we had just come
from a concert and dinner— he was in a band,
he was in town for a show, so normal
and safe, like Paris and Beirut
until they weren't. We survived
back to a posh hotel
and he undressed me in the blacklight
bathroom, and I watched us in the mirror.
It was an era of extremism.

After his show I had leaned in a corner
at The Palace, protected from sight, enjoying
kissing him, pulling him in, and this is what I think of
the next day, as I read about the girl in Paris,
the bodies on the floor, the blood, the pretending
to be dead. The audacity of my desire.

When he asked me if I wanted to pretend
to be his girlfriend, I said yes.
When he took me back
to his room, to the world
the same and different as before,
we didn't think about devastation
or other cities, or the suffering there.
That night we felt some truth
for the first time, how easy it was
to forget. That night we survived

but all weekend I cried—
the carnage, the separation,
the circumstances that make us pretend,
coming of age again and again.

Mallory Imler Powell

With grateful reference to Sharon Olds' 'Coming of Age 1966'

The word ‘honam’ in twi,
my native tongue from the deep
of Ghana West Africa, means skin. When
the letters of *honam* bloom, you can almost see them trying to spell
the word human. In translation, one’s skin makes one human. And my ancestors,
behind thick tongue and black eye, never knowing a word of English, put together a
phrase, a gentle remedy, for a little brown girl’s salvation. Let them tell it. Brown girl,
when they teach you about *honam* in the blue-eyed classrooms of your schools, beside the
stretch of people, do they ever actually tell you that you are beautiful? Or do they just show you
what it is? Are there words in your textbook like, *honam*, like *obaa ni nantui*? During lunchtime,
do you hopscotch on the stretch marks of women who bore men skinned as deep as the night? Do
they tell you that you are freedom song. A wild flower. Spilled from your mother’s belly. You wear
a sacred language. A pool of light burning in river. Everywhere you go will be somewhere. Let them tell
it. You are beautiful no matter the walls that surround you. Even the stars, stolen in their infinite grace, only
show up at the darkest point of night, showing their faces. You will unlearn and relearn beauty. Who taught
you that the value of a woman is the ratio of her waist to her hips? And the circumference of her behind? And
the volume of her lips? Her value is nothing less than infinite. Like the galaxy. Like stars. Like the night. Like your skin.
They have mistaken you as voiceless, hands over your mouth, tongue heavy with what you must carry. Don’t you see?
You exist, too. You live inside a human love, a bony country excised with race and hate. But black is beautiful.
What
 about us? And this war we’ve been fighting? War makes people bleed, turns
 prisoners into movie endings. Spills them from the bellies of mothers.
 Tell the truth. Save your black self. We talk about limits, we do
 not disappear inside misgivings and unfortunate circumstance.

When does it end? Brown girls hurt and bleeding. Brown girls splitting skin. Not knowing how to love themselves.

Breaking. Poets wait for sundown and color pain in words with beautiful rhythm. No one will think you're beautiful until you think you are fire bomb.

I see you everywhere I go. Staring at the Eiffel tower in Paris. Sitting at a small cafe in Brooklyn.

On the streets of Accra. In the marketplaces of Jerusalem. On the playgrounds in my neighborhood. But when will we sing songs for our daughters?

Hide love poems deep within the hum of their lullabies and bedtime stories. So when

they sleep, they won't lose themselves in the dark. I will tell the truth. You

listen to poems, but in between the lines, deep within the words,

look for you. Look at how your honam shines,

brown girl. Look for you.

Heart of a nation

Shoes off. Sacred ground.
Eucalyptus smoke drifts through still morn air.
Whispers injustice.
From genocide to displacement.
For generations stolen.

Stone King stands frozen in time.
Forever he surveys.
The grandeur of this political-scape.
And those that find themselves camped on the line.
A lone ice crystal clings to a petal.
Slowly melting, losing the battle to remain one.
Solid to liquid.
Redefined.
The rose gardens come alive.

School children converge to learn about democracy.
While pushing and jostling to see who will be first in line.

A protest forms up the street.
The aching heart of a mother; thinks of home - of Syria.
She feels her cries swallowed up by manicured lawns.
And the enormity of Lake Burley Griffin.
Dammed... to stop the river flow.

Homeless man wonders past suits and ties.
He drinks a beer as they drink in the midday sun.
Clip-clopping of high-heels never missing a beat to notice him.
Instead, they duck around the corner to have a cigarette, gossip and sip on
organic cola imported from New Zealand.

Bells chime as tourists squint to identify their flag from amongst a sea
of others.
Bicycles take ownership of the many paths that meander around the
water's edge.

Pedal.
Peddle.
Pedal.
Peddle.
And the politicians ride.

A bald eagle monument looks down like a puppeteer.
And two handles sit at the edge of ANZAC parade to remind us,
that like a suitcase we will always be taken along for the ride.

He places a poppy in the wall.
And disappears into the twilight.
Setting up camp in a park shelter, a bench his bed for the night.
The bugle sounds in his head and he contemplates...

Is there anything still left here worth fighting for?

Adam Jay Court

Civil twilight

The time of night when men
going home to babies
are walking past trees shrieking with birds.

I look out to the water
that piece of the sea we call the harbour
it is pink, or it is grey and damaged looking

and all around the suburbs
rising up. My home town
the place I made almost all of my mistakes.

At the top of concrete stairs
and in showers, seen in mirrors
I did violence to myself through seeming not to care.

I listened to tapes for years
released anger into mountain streams
and took my child self in my arms

she always wore school uniform, though I never had.
So here I am. The streets of the town
go in different directions now

they had to write on the ground *look left, look right*.
And if I say that when I see myself in the window
of the bus I resemble an elephant

I don't mean that unlovingly.
Just that I look surprisingly human
with my long face and my memories

Kate Camp

Flight

Everyone forgets that Icarus also flew.
— Jack Gilbert, 'Failing and Flying'

I ask you why you married her
even as you knew it would fail.
Your mother asked you the same,
no, told you, and you replied

that it was something you had
to find out for yourself. I suppose
I, too, am guilty. That morning
he'd driven me to the lookout

and asked me to marry him.
It was quiet and cold and I soared
above the valley, looking down
at the rocks and trees. I don't know

what I was doing, saying yes.
I thought it was the right thing.
I still see the afternoon sun
falling across his shoes in our room

in Rome; taste the meat he'd cut
for me right off the bone. It is a death
in both when a marriage ends. Love
like a feather, hollow at its core.

Eileen Chong

Gods of Vaudeville

Just when you think you can live without them,
you say one measly little prayer and they explode
into your life again Remember the famous scene
in *Night at the Opera* when Groucho,
two dozen passengers, waiters, ship's crew
and his brothers jam into a cabin until it bursts,
doors flying open, everyone airborne?
That's how the gods come at you. Or they scramble
like vaudeville has-beens ready for another comeback.
Off they go, dashing to the attic, where they dive into dusty trunks,
and bring out the faded disguise that killed them
in Troy, killed them I tell you!--- and could work again.
Here's a spell to summon locust, here's one that changes
speech to nonsense, a staff that parts the Nile.
'The faith thing,' they whisper, like happy Zero Mostels
to Gene Wilders' ears 'Oh it's beauuutiful, baby, beauootiful.
But we know what happens. They write your prayer
on a napkin and lose the napkin, arrive in the wrong city
carrying the wrong miracle (we thought you said Toledo!'
trying to guide a fleet of drones, they kill the wedding guests
and incinerate the bride. Better to let them be,
bored and spent and charming if you don't get close; let them
go on idling in the trees of some distant savannah let them
rub their eyes as the evening light slants across the fields.
Let them nod away—gossiping about the world
they once pulled through a needle's eye. Pretend
you don't hear when they start praying to you,
asking for one more chance to play God again.

David Tucker

Returning

There were no words to describe the character
of the town after the war. After countless bullets
bore holes on the breath of the land—the slight
movement of breeze that's sometimes stiff
and layered like a wall: a bulwark at night and,
in the morning, a weir—a shimmer of blue-chinned
sapphires began to emigrate. Wood ants—
in their unusual manner—took to rail: the segmented
skins of millipedes, and left their satchels there,
while they took to the road. The voice of the land
was hoarse: harsh as though scraped, low as though
fallen. Everywhere was dry, as though the lips
of the sky were sealed, as though the lather of clouds
had frozen. You were calling me that noon: your voice
an accented caw, your tone atonal, your message curt.
You were still hearing from the background, the cries
and pleas of the armless, thuds of bullets like the steps
of many giants, the cars and trucks humming and drumming
everywhere, and you began to wonder if it was true
what granny had said, that 'wars never end...', that
'they remain in our dreams.' And you could tell you were day-
dreaming, yet you couldn't take it off, the way one would
strip off the cloak of a nightmare or a reverie. You felt
like a bone of the land's suffering, an ash-grey color
of its pain. You felt like you tasted a herb that's bitter,
sweet, and sour at a time, and you didn't know if to spit

or swallow it, and you couldn't tell if there was a third option.
Days sneaked in like gnawers. Cane and cornstalks
shuddered in the wind. The land baked and shirred
in the burning sun. And you returned here so our marriage
could return, and we began to build again—all that were shot
and razed—the part-dun-color part-puce cottage,
the unroofed shed of our love, and the cowshed
we never thought could break: lying there without its roof,
with the necks of the grasses tilted and broken.

Samuel Ugbecchie

The compliment

'Where are you from?'
There is bloodlust in that question.
I swing my net and offer up
the shortest possible answer
but it's never quite the right kind
of exotic.
And so the hunt begins.
A sharpness
between the eyebrows
a showing of teeth
then the demand to know
my blood and body.
Personhood is not
enough.
No,
only skin satisfies
the lust for such trophies,
this collector's desire to stake,
splay, stuff, and own the objects
of fascination
poisoned wings spread
on pins, unmoving
dead things
displayed on walls
to be called
beautiful.

Nadia Niaz

Mid-point

Today they shot 8 people
while I slept

The killing shots were perfect
it was said

Think each walked out
were carried in

The boxes stacked

Who let the cells know
as they digested?

Pushing proteins to the gut
The liver silting toxins

Blood mid-point on its round journey

A thought begins to rise
A word shakes itself loose

The next breath gets in line
Ready to be taken

Sarah Rice

Flight

Cobalt blue cerebrum, a thought in flight,
air-crafted like a twinjet, taking off slow
then fast then slow. Its wings like pruning
knives, sharp as the impressions it dresses
and trims. I propel it from impulse, rotating
every fiber of need, transforming pursuit
to thrust, fanning desire into flames. The thought
is rudder-fitted, ferret-sized, fuselage-shaped.
It swallows air, gains speed, climbs on the stairs
of stepped and steep breath. How long would it take
to reach you, if it cruises six feet my height,
stropy against headwinds, bullet-headed,
persistent? How long would it take to flip into meaning—
that banking turn, that bank angle where everything inclines
about your axis, where we chatted on air, and crashed
and chute on the skull of a rock, where the night smelled
oolong and lime? How long? How long would it take to steer
and pull until descent? My cabin is empty, my engines
thrum, and the patches on the linen of the sky
are pulling off. Home is an expanse of lyrebirds,
an acreage of swooping mimics, a stretch of whistlings
and songs. Home is your glance against mine,
your words on top mine, a shadow away. I taxi in,
and park by a treestump, and call—your voice the sound
of rimes breaking, the pitch of frost, the steel
blue raft of rain.

Samuel Ugbachie

Aphorisms for a war

I am learning French so I can understand what needs no explanation.
Words offer nothing in the face of slaughter.
T. S. Eliot said, 'no man can become a poet without falling in love with a
dead poet.'
Well, no one can speak French without falling in love with the dead.

*

My train goes south, north lie those fields of bones
We race through memory; there is no other way.
See something on a distant hill, a fingerprint of shade on grass, a poplar turned
giant by the setting sun.

*

Poppies bloody the fields with fragility
Butterfly brothers. Alive. Dead. Just and quick.
Their petals admonish even the innocent, exchange guilt with the wind.

*

The barley weeps. You think this fanciful?
Listen: Babies. Old men. Women.
Each grain holds tears. With such a deluge why worry about rain?

*

Soldier, do you remember other fields, a long way from here?
Of course you do, you are haunted by memory.
Is there another place where furrows meet the sky
Like lines on a musical score, rook notes through which you hear the certainty
of loss.

*

Uncle walks me to the village memorial
Five sons. Two sons. The only son
A scab of pain reopened each November.

*

Autumn insists on rhymes.

AB. AB. BC.

A sonnet ties a neat bow with two lines.

Does a battlefield require a villanelle?

*

The D road sabres the earth above you, brother.

Where once there was only mud.

Cars head for Calais GB GB GB GB

Better than a dog tag, I guess.

*

Every story is a proposition.

Was it this? Was it that?

History speaks a dramatised dialogue, the language of war, the language
of death.

The landscape speaks through furrows planted with dragons' teeth.

*

Blind Borges looking at the Icelandic snow saw things only a blind man
could see.

I have eyes only for my country. You ask me why - just look at its hillocks.

All her young lie below them.

*

In summer the burnt metal scent of geraniums hangs just above the swallows.

Swooping. Circling. Floats, metallic in the wavering heat.

The swallows appear, disappear, retreat, advance through undulating light,
heat waves through which nature pipes itself like icing onto a cake.

The village clock tolls as birds embroider their breathless circles onto blue silk.

*

Uncle. I saw a country soaked in blood

French British German Canadian Australian Indian Algerian

After that I lost count.

Why does France do death so well?
She prides herself on romance, love, while burying every country's sons.

*

English students weep over white crosses
'Look. He was only seventeen.' 'My age.' Me. Me. Me.
Their teacher pontificates: 'The Great War challenged our very notion of God.'
Oh! Just fuck off.

Catherine Cole

biographies

Judges

SIMON ARMITAGE lives in West Yorkshire and is Professor of Poetry at the University of Sheffield. He has published over a dozen collections of poetry including *Paper Aeroplane – Selected Poems 1989 to 2014* and his acclaimed translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. His three best-selling non-fiction titles are *All Points North*, *Walking Home* and *Walking Away*. Armitage writes extensively for radio and television, and his most recent play was *The Last Days of Troy*, performed at Shakespeare's Globe in London. In 2015 he was appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford University.

MERLINDA BOBIS, a Filipino-Australian, is the author of three novels, five poetry books, seven dramatic works (stage and radio), a collection of short stories and a monograph on writing and researching fiction. Her works have received various awards, among them the Prix Italia, the Philippine National Book Award, the Philippine Balagtas Award, the Australian Writers' Guild Award, and the Ian Reed Radio Drama Prize.

MICHELLE CAHILL is the author of *The Accidental Cage*, *Vishvarūpa* and *Night Birds*. She co-edited *Contemporary Asian Australian Poets*, and edits *Mascara Literary Review*. Michelle has written essays on poetics, race and cultural diversity for *Southerly*, *Westerly*, and the *Sydney Review of Books*. She was a fellow at Kingston University, London, and in 2016 is a Visiting Scholar in Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

JACK ROSS works as a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Massey University's Auckland Campus. His latest novel, *The Annotated Tree Worship*, is due out in late 2016 from Pania Press. His other publications include five full-length poetry collections, three novels, and three volumes of short fiction. He has also edited a number of books and literary magazines. Details of these and other publications are available on his blog, *The Imaginary Museum*.

Poets

CYNTHIA AMOAH is a poet originally from Ghana, West Africa and has performed locally on the stages of the Lincoln Theatre and TEDx Ohio State University. A graduate of Binghamton University, she currently resides in her hometown of Columbus, Ohio, doing the very honest work she believes has been purposed to her life.

PQR ANDERSON is the author of two previous collections of poetry, *Litany Bird* and *Foundling's Island*. He lectures in English at the University of Cape Town, with a wide range of interests, from Romanticism in the colonial encounter to the culture of the Allied campaign in Italy in 1944–5.

CORIN B. ARENAS is a writer and audiophile from Quezon City, Philippines. Some of her works have appeared in the *Philippines Graphic Magazine*, *Silliman Journal*, and *Carcinogenic Poetry Anthology*.

MIRANDA BAULIS is a previous winner of the ANU Short Story Prize. She lives in Tasmania with her husband and daughter, where she is completing her Master of Teaching.

SAUL HILLEL BENJAMIN lives in Winnipeg, Canada, and the USA. An earlier life involved international conflict resolution, and five years in the upper reaches of the first Clinton administration. 'At Summer's End: Theme & Variations and A Quintet for Voices' will soon make the rounds of New York City publishers.

PAUL BENTLEY's pamphlet *Largo* (Smith/Doorstop, 2011) was a winner in *The Poetry Business competition* (UK), and was shortlisted for the Michael Marks Award (UK). His book *Ted Hughes, Class and Violence* was published by Bloomsbury in 2014.

JENNY BLACKFORD's poems and stories have appeared in *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Cosmos*, *Westerly* and more. In 2013, Pitt Street Poetry published an illustrated pamphlet of her cat poems, *The Duties of a Cat*. Her most recent poetry prize is first in the Connemara Mussell Festival Poetry Competition 2016. www.jennyblackford.com

PAULA BOHINCE lives in Pennsylvania, where she grew up. Her most recent collection is *Swallows and Waves* (Sarabande, 2016). Her poems have

appeared in *The Australian*, *Australian Book Review*, and *Island*, as well as magazines in the US and UK.

JEMMA BORG's *The Illuminated World* (Eyewear, 2014) was the winner of the inaugural Fledgling Award for best first collection by a poet over 40. She was highly commended in the Forward Prize 2015 and appears in the recent anthology *The Poet's Quest for God* (Eyewear, 2016).

MARGARET BRADSTOCK has six published collections of poetry, including *The Pomelo Tree* (winner of the Wesley Michel Wright Prize) and *Barnacle Rock* (winner of the Woollahra Festival Award, 2014). Editor of *Antipodes: poetic responses to 'settlement'* (2011), Margaret won the national Earth Hour poetry competition, and the Banjo Paterson Award.

BRIAN BRODEUR's most recent collections are *Natural Causes* (2012) and the chapbook *Local Fauna* (2015). New work appears in *American Poetry Review*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Measure*, *River Styx*, *Southwest Review*, and *The Writer's Chronicle*. Assistant Professor of English at Indiana University East, Brian lives in the Whitewater River Valley.

ZORE BUNCHEska considers herself a musician first, and a writer second. She was born in Struga, Macedonia, where she had her first encounter with poetry. She is currently in the final year of a Master's degree in European and Extra-European Languages and Literatures at the University of Udine, Italy.

CHLOË CALLISTEMON is a photographer, filmmaker and writer. Her poetry and multimedia have been published in journals and anthologies including *Cordite*, *Rabbit*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Australian Love Poems* and *Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry*. She is currently a PhD candidate at Griffith University, Queensland.

KATE CAMP is the author of five collections of poetry from Victoria University Press. Her awards include the 1998 New Zealand Book Award for Best First Book of Poetry, the 2011 New Zealand Book Award for Poetry, and the 2011 Creative New Zealand Berlin Writers Residency.

SIOBHÁN CAMPBELL received the Oxford Brookes International Poetry Prize and the Templar Poetry Award. Her third book *Cross-Talk* is 'unsparingly strong... fine and ferocious' (*PNReview*). Work appears in *Poetry*, *Hopkins*

Review, Asymptote, Communion, Magma and Poetry Ireland. Her new book, *Heat Signature*, is forthcoming in 2017 from Seren Press.

Born in Nepal, NABIN KUMAR CHHETRI graduated with a degree of M.St in Creative Writing from Oxford University with distinction in Poetry. He also holds a degree of M.Litt in Novel from the University of Aberdeen. He lives in Aberdeen, Scotland with his wife and two children.

EILEEN CHONG is a Sydney poet. Her books are *Burning Rice* (2012), *Peony* (2014) and *Painting Red Orchids* (2016), Pitt Street Poetry. Her work has been shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, the Anne Elder Award and the Peter Porter Prize. *Another Language* is forthcoming in 2017.

CATHERINE COLE has published novels, nonfiction, poetry and short stories in Australia and internationally. She is Professor of Creative Writing, University of Wollongong and an Honorary doctoral supervisor at University of Liverpool, UK and UTS, Sydney. She is currently completing a new nonfiction project and researching writing programs in China.

MICHAELA COPLEN is a student at Vassar College in New York, where she studies International Relations, Arabic, and Poetry, and serves as Poetry editor for the *Vassar Review*. In 2013, she was appointed National Student Poet. Her work is published online with the Academy of American Poets and *The Atlantic*.

ADAM JAY COURT works as a primary school teacher at a Christian school in the outer-western suburbs of Melbourne. He is happily married and a father of two beautiful children.

B. R. DIONYSIUS was founding Director of the Queensland Poetry Festival. He has published over 500 poems in literary journals, anthologies, newspapers and online. His eighth poetry collection, *Weranga*, was released in 2013. He teaches English at Ipswich Grammar School and lives in Chapel Hill, Brisbane.

TUG DUMBLY has performed on radio, in schools, and at venues in Australia and abroad. He has released two cds, twice won the Banjo Paterson Prize, twice won the Nimbin World Performance Poetry Cup, and was the 2015 runner-up in the Josephine Ulrick Prize. He likes cicadas and folk music.

ROBERT EDMONDS is a writer/performer whose poetry has appeared in a wide range of publications including *Westerly*, *Quadrant* and the *NSW School Magazine*. He is a psychologist and school counsellor at Wyong High School, and performs in hospitals for the Humour Foundation Clown Doctors as Dr. Twang, 70's Rock Legend.

BARRY GILLARD resides in Geelong, Victoria and teaches at a local secondary college.

KERRY HARTE started entering poetry competitions in 2011 and has won first prizes in two national competitions, an international third prize, a local second prize and various other commendations. Many of her poems have been published in anthologies and deal with social justice and human rights issues.

SARAH HEFFNER is a poet, essayist and teacher. Adopted, she moved to Korea in 2011 to reunite and to build a relationship with her birth mom. After four years, she is now back in the States. She is rooting and writing in Fishtown, Philadelphia.

SARAH HOLLAND-BATT's most recent book is *The Hazards* (UQP, 2015), which has been shortlisted for the Kenneth Slessor Prize, AFAL John Bray Memorial Prize and the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards. She is the editor of *The Best Australian Poems 2016* (Black Inc).

KRISTEN LANG, author of *Let me show you a ripple*, lives in north-west Tasmania. She won the 2015 ACU Literature Prize, was shortlisted for the 2013 Bridport Poetry Prize, and was joint winner of the 2011 Rosemary Dobson Award. Her second collection is to be published in 2017.

MICHAEL LAVERS' poems have appeared in *Best New Poets 2015*, *Arts & Letters*, *West Branch*, *32 Poems*, *The Hudson Review*, and elsewhere. He teaches poetry at Brigham Young University.

ANTHONY LAWRENCE has published sixteen books of poems, the most recent being *Headwaters* (Pitt Street Poetry, 2016). His books and poems have won a number of awards, including the Blake Poetry Prize, the Philip Hodgins Medal and the Kenneth Slessor Poetry prize. He lives at Hastings Point, NSW.

MICHELLE LEBER's poetry has been published in Australia and internationally. Her work has been described as 'a potent work of narrative'. Michelle is currently researching women born in the 19th century who contributed to natural history and science in Australia. She is the author of *The Yellow Emperor* (FIP). www.michelleleber.com

DENNIS LM LEWIS was born in London, England and has lived in Canada, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. He teaches English in Qatar. He recently completed a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Essex. This year he won 2nd prize in the Troubadour International Poetry Prize 2016.

GRAHAM MORT's forthcoming poetry collection, *Black Shiver Moss* (Seren), is his tenth. He also writes short fiction and has contributed to BBC Radio poetry, fiction and radio-drama programmes. He is professor of Creative Writing and Transcultural Literature at Lancaster University, working across sub-Saharan Africa and in Kurdistan, China and Vietnam.

NADIA NIAZ received her PhD in Creative Writing and Cultural Studies from the University of Melbourne, where she currently teaches. Her work has appeared in *Strange 4*, *Text*, *Mascara*, *Cordite*, and *Alhamra Literary Review*. In 2016, she won a Wheeler Centre Hot Desk Fellowship to complete her first novel.

ANDREW NURKIN's poetry has appeared in *The Believer*, *North American Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *FIELD*, *The Massachusetts Review* and elsewhere. He holds his MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts and degrees in religion and literature from Yale University and Duke University. He lives in New Jersey.

JILL OSIER is an American poet living in Alaska. Her poetry includes the chapbooks *Bedful of Nebraskas* (2012) and *Should Our Undoing Come Down Upon Us White* (2013), and has appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *Granta*, *Pleiades*, *Poetry*, *Versal*, and *ZYZZYVA*.

CATHERINE POND is a poet living in Brooklyn, New York. She is the recipient of a 2016 residency at the James Merrill House, and teaches creative writing at the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan.

ALI PORTER is a writer and actor from Birmingham in the UK. She studied modern languages at Leeds University and creative writing at The University of East Anglia. Her poem 'Cycle' was longlisted for the 2015 National Poetry Prize and a number of her poems for children have been published.

Poems by MALLORY IMLER POWELL appear or are forthcoming in *Contemporary Verse 2*, *The Offing*, *PRISM international*, *SAND*, *Synaesthesia Magazine*, and *ZYZZYVA*. She is an MFA candidate for poetry at New York University and a former Fulbright awardee to Vietnam. Find her at malloryimlerpowell.xyz.

SARAH RICE won the 2014 Ron Pretty, and Bruce Dawe poetry prizes, co-won the 2013 Writing Ventures, and the 2011 Gwen Harwood poetry prize. Publication includes: *Those Who Travel* (artists' book of poetry, with prints by Patsy Payne: Ampersand Duck, 2010), *Global Poetry Anthology*, *Award Winning Australian Writing*, *Best Australian Poetry*, *Australian Poetry Journal*.

CARMELLA SANTORELLI is a recipient of the International Publication Prize at Atlanta Review. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Slant* and *Alimentum*. She lives in Colorado in a small town with stunning views of the Rocky Mountains. She is a member of a Louisville-based literary group.

ALI JANE SMITH is a poet and critic. Her poetry has appeared in *Southerly*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Cordite*, and *Mascara*. Reviews and essays have appeared in *The Australian*, *Southerly*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Cordite* and *Mascara*. She is the author of *Gala*, (Five Islands Press 2006). She lives in Wollongong.

HARVEY PRESTON SOSS lives in Brooklyn, New York, and began writing seriously not quite three years ago when, without warning, a dam broke and poems poured out. In 2015 he won a Writers' Digest Writing Competition poetry award. He recently all but abandoned his criminal law practice to write full-time.

JAMES SUTHERLAND-SMITH was born in 1948. He lives and works in Slovakia. He has published six collections of his own poetry, the most recent being *Mouth* (Shearsman, 2014). He also translates from Slovak and Serbian

and new selections from four Slovak poets will be published between now and 2018.

PATRICIA SYKES is a poet and librettist. Awards include the John Shaw Neilson and Newcastle poetry prizes. Her collaborations with composer Liza Lim have been performed in Australia and internationally, most recently New York. She was Asialink Writer in Residence Malaysia, 2006. Her most recent collection is *The Abbottsford Mysteries*.

RUTH TANG writes poetry and plays. Her poetry has appeared in the *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*, *We Are A Website*, and *OF ZOOS*, and won the 2016 National Poetry Competition Singapore. She co-edited *SingPoWriMo 2016: The Anthology* with Joshua Ip and Daryl Yam.

REBECCA TIMSON has worked as a middle school teacher, wildlife biologist, freelance journalist, and director of a cross-country ski school. Several of her plays have been produced in youth and community theaters. Now she is focusing on writing poetry and fiction.

DAVID TUCKER has published two collections of poetry. *Late for Work* won a Bakeless Poetry Prize. *Days When Nothing Happens* won a chapbook contest and a fellowship by the Library of Congress. A career journalist, he supervised two Pulitzer Prize winners for *The Star-Ledger* newspaper.

LINDSAY TUGGLE's poetry is featured in many journals including the *Hunter Anthology of Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry*. Her research on literature and science is widely published. *The Afterlives of Specimens* (University of Iowa Press 2017) is her first book. Based in Sydney, Lindsay divides her time between writing and teaching.

SAMUEL UGBECHIE, winner of the Frederick Holland Poetry Collection Award (2016), is currently working on his debut poetry collection. He has been longlisted for the National Poetry Competition (UK) 2014, was a finalist in the RL Poetry Award (2014), and won the Sentinel All-Africa Poetry Competition in 2012.

STEVE VOAKE is an award-winning author whose books have been translated into many different languages. He is senior lecturer in creative writing at

Bath Spa University and a Royal Literary Fellow at the University of Exeter. He lives with his family in Somerset, England.

STEVIE WALTERS is currently a part-time earthling and perpetual collegian studying at the University of Arizona. Her future goals include: keeping a house plant alive for more than one month and learning how to casually wink. In her spare time, she enjoys crafting and sending postal mail.

GREGORY WARREN WILSON won the 1996 Staple First Edition Award. He's since published four more collections. Born in England, he grew up in Deniliquin and Canberra. He trained at the Royal College of Music, and works as a violinist, poet and librettist. He divides his time between London and Venice.

JENI WILLIAMS lectures in Cultural Studies in west Wales. Interested in language and form she recently explored the effect of removing key consonants from poems: 'The white room' has no D. She has published poems in a range of magazines; her first collection was *Being the Famous Ones* (Parthian, 2009).

SUE WOOTTON lives in Dunedin, New Zealand. Her fifth poetry collection, *The Yield*, is forthcoming from Otago University Press in 2017. Sue is a doctoral student looking at creative writing in medicine. She is co-editor of the Medical Humanities blog 'Corpus: Conversations about Medicine and Life'. (corpus.nz)

JANE YEH lives in London and is the author of two collections published by Carcanet, *The Ninjas* and *Marabou*. She was named a Next Generation poet by the Poetry Book Society in 2014.

Editors

NILOOFAR FANAIYAN is currently a Donald Horne Creative and Cultural Research Fellow at the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research, University of Canberra, where she recently obtained her PhD. She co-edited (with Owen Bullock) *Underneath: The University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's Poetry Prize 2015*. She writes poetry and short fiction, and her first book of poetry, *Transit*, is published this year by Recent Work Press.

MONICA CARROLL is a researcher at the University of Canberra. Her research interests include space, writing, poetry and empathy. Her widely published prose and poetry has won numerous national and international awards.

IPSI :: CCCR

The International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI) is part of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research, Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra. IPSI conducts research related to poetry, and publishes and promulgates the outcomes of this research internationally. The Institute also publishes poetry and interviews with poets, as well as related material, from around the world. Publication of such material takes place in IPSI's online journal *Axon: Creative Explorations* (<http://www.axonjournal.com.au/>) and through other publishing vehicles, such as *Axon Elements*. IPSI's goals include working – collaboratively, where possible – for the appreciation and understanding of poetry, poetic language and the cultural and social significance of poetry. The institute also organises symposia, seminars, readings and other poetry-related activities and events.

The Centre for Creative and Cultural Research (CCCR) is IPSI's umbrella organisation and brings together staff, adjuncts, research students and visiting fellows who work on key challenges within the cultural sector and creative field. A central feature of its research concerns the effects of digitisation and globalisation on cultural producers, whether individuals, communities or organisations.

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