

# ON COURSE

POEMS FROM THE PK SUMMER SCHOOL POETS 2021



Edited by Jim Bennett

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## MARGARET BESTON

Margaret Beston has been widely published in magazines and anthologies, most recently, *Of Some Importance*, 2020, *Grey Hen Press* and *New Contexts*, 2020, *Coverstory Books*. She is the author of two collections, *Long Reach River*, 2014 and *Timepiece*, 2019, and a pamphlet, *When the Ground Crashed Upwards*, 2020. She is the founder of *Roundel*, a Poetry Society Stanza based in Tonbridge where she lives.

[www.roundelpoetrytonbridge.wordpress.com](http://www.roundelpoetrytonbridge.wordpress.com)

### POEMS

The Other Mrs Lot

Posting

Body Brace

Flowing

Travelling Light

MARGARET BESTON

### **The Other Mrs Lot**

It isn't hard to walk away  
from rooms where anger buffets  
empty air and grief is pasted  
into every wall, where memories  
are layered in a jar with salt,  
like beans from summer glut.

She ignores the voice at her shoulder  
coaxing her with promises of sun-veiled  
cherry blossom, evening shade of vines.  
She chooses not to turn, let her crusted  
eyes glance at faceless windows  
staring out from a slowly melting void.

She welcomes exile, the relief  
of rooms where nothing happened,  
where she can kill last year's  
invasive weeds with boiling saline,  
throw salt in the Devil's eye.

### **Posting**

Jane is at a hen night at Woongarra Winery – posts up  
pictures of a stretched white limo, while from Toronto  
Malcolm shares a poem written for his grandchild.

Chased by magpies in the garden, someone's cat  
looks warily at camera. There are daily updates  
of campaigners fighting to save a much-loved tree.

Around the world, videos of oceans choked  
with plastic are viewed by millions; we all  
plant lavender and nasturtiums to save the bees.

People are invited to philharmonic concerts,  
poetry readings, exhibitions, and to submit  
photos of the town for next year's calendar.

On Prince Edward Island heavy winter snow  
has melted, while in Hiroshima the cherry  
blossom season is coming to an end.

And a wife, watching, waiting, posts up pictures  
of the Hospice garden – water trickling over rocks.  
I share my photo of a thousand origami cranes.

MARGARET BESTON

### **Body Brace**

At first she's grateful,  
enjoys the daily ritual  
of putting it in place,  
how it holds her head firm  
fixes her body inside its rigid frame.

She welcomes the security  
the comfort of tight straps  
keeping her safe.  
It is a positive in her life  
through dark days.

With the approach of Spring  
she thinks of leaving it aside,  
try to bear her own weight,  
but fears the consequences.  
She still needs its support.

Then in the heat of Summer  
the padding under her chin  
begins to itch and irritate,  
she feels constricted, stifled  
by unbending steel and plastic.

Stronger now, more confident,  
she releases the straps,  
loosens the grip  
restricting her head and body –  
lets the redundant contraption fall.

MARGARET BESTON

### **Flowing**

If this were silica sand heaped on your driveway  
you could melt it into glass, add manganese,  
iron oxide, create vibrant decorative objects,  
but you will add cement to this river sand

to mortar concrete steps, where a voiceless  
blackbird pecks at breakfast seeds while church  
bells break the silence of this summer morning,  
and reflected colours from its cobalt windows whisper

along gravel paths that lead down to the river,  
where barges once ferried cargoes of hops  
and grain along the Medway, and gunpowder  
was transported to feed cannon at Waterloo,

meander past print works, warehouses, converted  
into luxury flats, and by the lock a conference centre,  
new age church and high-rise blocks – temples of steel  
and glass. Swans glide by in their shadow.

### **Travelling Light**

We climb the pyramid of the sun,  
touch the stone where dawn light broke  
only when a human heart was sacrificed  
to placate the angry god.

I feel the heat of Mexico on my skin,  
your hand on my arm as we seek  
shade beneath the bougainvilleas  
framed against white stucco.

The air is heady with gardenias  
lining the market square, stalls  
tempt me with rich-coloured rebozos,  
clay pots in dazzling designs.

I choose instead this tiny spoon,  
the Sun God glaring from crafted silver.  
Wrapped inside my single suitcase,  
it leaves with me in the morning.





## **LESLEY BURT**

Lesley has been writing poetry for about twenty years. Following retirement from social work education, she completed an MA in Creative Writing from Lancaster University. She lives in Christchurch, Dorset.

Her poems have had success in competitions over the years and have been published widely in magazines including: *Tears in the Fence*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Prole*, *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*, *Reach*, *Sarasvati* and *The Butchers Dog*; also online, including in *Poetry Kit*, *The Poetry Shed*, *Algebra of Owls* and *Ink, Sweat and Tears*.

### **POEMS**

Black Canons step through the priory museum  
gardens open to the public

LESLEY BURT

**Black Canons step through the priory museum**

Black-cassocked-and-cloaked, linen rochet  
and – beware the vanity of a head in vair –  
a woollen almuce.

Tonsured, otherwise unlike  
a toad-squat Tuck, a naked-toed Friar –  
shoes conceal feet, heels-to-ankles.

Shoes to speed-walk cloisters  
in accordance with the calls of bells  
at lauds, vespers, compline –

process to plainchant on stone floors  
beneath vaulted roof and pillars where  
pipistrelles cling until evensong,

stride beyond the monastery mill,  
the plough, reap, winnow and grind,  
beside rivers of salmon, estuaries of flounder,

glad to replace pagan footsteps yet innocent  
of Saxon warriors' bones beneath their feet  
dissolving in graves of acid soil –

leather fragments unearthed  
from the priory dump – displayed under  
photographs of Saxon stains.

(first published in *Prole* 32, 2021)

LESLEY BURT

**gardens open to the public**

sky's bright    splashed with cloud  
shape-shifted by breeze

outside the dome of an iron pergola  
overhead becomes

a watercolour  
turquoise fading to washed white

and seen through this almost-cage  
trees are patches of pointillism

still striving    even in late summer  
to flaunt the forty shades

on the far side of imitation foliage  
wrought in iron curlicues

standing season after season  
between the world and so many colours



## CLAIR CHILVERS

Clair Chilvers lives in Gloucestershire and divides her time between writing and running the charity Mental Health Research UK that she founded in 2008. She was a cancer scientist and latterly worked for the English National Health Service.

She started writing poetry after retirement. Her work has been described as ‘powerful and moving’ by Anna Saunders, CEO of Cheltenham Poetry Festival, and has been published in online and print journals including Agenda, Allegro, Amaryllis, Apex, Artemis, Atrium, the Ekphrastic Review, Impsired, Ink Sweat and Tears, Sarasvati, and The Journal. Her first collection *Out the Darkness* was published in 2021 (Frosted Fire). She is a Poetry Kit CITN poet.

<https://www.poetrykit.org/CITN/citn%20192.htm>

She was inspired by the work of UA Fanthorpe. She studied with Dr Edward Clarke at the Oxford Poets’ Workshop and Dr Angela France at Gloucestershire University. She has attended an Arvon course and several PK courses.

She won second prize in the Poetry Kit Ekphrastic Competition 2020 and her poems have been longlisted or commended in the Cinnamon Press Pamphlet Prize 2020, and Poetry Kit Competition 2020.

<http://clairchilverspoetry.co.uk/>

### POEMS

Black Truffles  
The Exile  
Easter Images  
The Mother  
The Strike Breaker

## CLAIR CHILVERS

### Black Truffles

Sunday, a shady courtyard  
a hill-top village in Umbria  
a grandmother orders lunch  
pasta with Parmesan and black truffles  
waits for her family      and remembers

the foghorn faint at first  
as the yacht approaches the shore  
then suddenly louder  
as it goes about      too late

the recurrent dream  
she walks down the stairs  
into the bright sunlight  
passes the tables decorated  
for the wedding breakfast

dives from the caique at anchor  
into the clear blue sea  
feels the caress of the warm water  
as she turns onto her back  
and contemplates      a future alone

## CLAIR CHILVERS

### **The Exile**

Matron said she could take one piece of furniture,  
and her television of course,  
two pictures, clothes to fit the narrow wardrobe.  
So she gave the pot plants to her neighbour;  
her children didn't want the furniture  
nor her collection of china birds –  
most had chips after so many postings.  
But she kept her photographs in their silver frames  
children neatly posed in sunhats on the beach,  
grandchildren who didn't visit any more  
but sent bouquets of funereal lilies on her birthday.

Today she wakes at dawn in her narrow bed  
light streaming through skimpy curtains.  
She knows she will never walk barefoot on the grass  
through the dew of a summer morning,  
nor hear the sea crash on the beach on winter nights.  
She will not potter round her garden  
picking a rose or two for her dressing table  
nor walk to her neighbour's for tea one afternoon  
nor choose what she will make for dinner  
from her old Elizabeth David cookery book.

## CLAIR CHILVERS

### Easter Images

That first Greek Easter I meet the Holy Father,  
tall black hat jammed on his head  
rusty black skirts tucked up beneath him  
on his motorbike  
grey beard flying in the wind.

We pack into the church  
behind Babis's restaurant in the square  
to hear the Easter liturgy  
the smell of incense,  
candles bright in the cramped dark space  
bells ringing afterwards.

We follow the crowd to the harbour  
to boats that take us to *Panagia*  
follow the procession round the island  
stop at *Agios Nikolaos* to break the fast  
with bread and offal soup.

I have a photograph of lunch next day  
Patrick and his friends  
at a long table shaded by olive trees  
eating kid cooked on a spit  
drinking Antipaxos wine.  
All dead now, but for my daughter and me.

CLAIR CHILVERS

**The Mother**

*Inspired by an Inuit carving of a mother and child*

New snow had fallen overnight in Toronto.  
A car collected me at 6 took me to the hospital  
to present my paper at the breakfast-time Grand Round.

Afterwards still high on adrenaline  
I find my way downtown  
to an area of artisan shops just opening  
new snow still on the sidewalks  
windows almost impenetrable with steam.  
An old Inuit man sweeps the doorstep  
beckons to me to enter.  
The heat hits me, clouds my spectacles

and there, among the polished soapstone seals  
sad-faced with downturned eyes and whiskers,  
I spot a mother and child  
carved roughly from a heavy cube of dull grey stone.  
The child carried on the mother's back,  
his arms around her neck, looks sideways, alert.  
The mother's face intent, but kindly.



## CLAIR CHILVERS

### **The Strike Breaker**

Patrick meets us at the airport  
his new mistress wearing  
vertiginously high-heeled scarlet shoes

drives us to the grand hotel  
orders champagne cocktails  
before he breaks the news –

banners everywhere around the port  
more pay, less time  
the eternal politics of Greece  
the ferry will not run for days

he makes sure we are unheard  
whispers that he has a plan –  
tonight a boat will wait for us  
in a remote cove  
to take us to The Island

the sea is calm, no moon  
we wait in the dark  
then the creak of rowlocks  
as the tender reaches the beach  
to take us in silence  
to the fishing boat that stands offshore

the passage uneventful, slow  
without lights  
then the ribbon of surf ahead  
and the sudden flare of a match  
as a dark-haired man  
waiting on the coast road  
lights a cigarette



## ANNEST GWILYM

Author of two books of poetry: *Surfacing* (2018) and *What the Owl Taught Me* (2020), both published by [Lapwing Poetry](#). Annest has been published in numerous literary journals and anthologies, both online and in print, and placed in several writing competitions, winning one. She lives on the coast of north west Wales with a rescue dog. She is a nominee for Best of the Net 2021. Twitter: @AnnestGwilym

### POEMS

Sometimes at Twilight . . .

Wasp's nest

One Day in August

ANNEST GWILYM

**Sometimes at Twilight . . .**

I open my back door  
to the high clean ozone of the tide,  
when the chill small evening  
clinks with sounds of crockery  
from the beach-side bistro  
and wine-hazed banter.

And I'm glad of cormorants  
that dry their wings  
on the jetty's end,  
sloe-dark eyes of a surfacing seal,  
plants that grow  
despite the wind's salt charge.

Glad that in spite of poverty  
there are watery days  
of soft rain and poetry,  
the past that is always present  
beneath the surface of earth and our skin,  
the lost graves of my peasant ancestors.

Glad of the balm this place brings  
to a frightened rescue dog  
who now calls it home,  
for being able to stand on my step at night,  
sniff the air like a fox,  
for what the wind brings.

Inspired by Helen Dunmore's *Glad of these times*.

Published in *The Dawntreader* and *Fevers of the Mind*. Nominated for *Best of the Net* 2021.

## ANNEST GWILYM

### Wasps' Nest

In the dark interior of the shed  
where only night's voice speaks

the hours here are alive, urgent,  
with a furious, red-hot buzz.

The paper globe, a palace  
made of wood and saliva

contains an invisible seethe –  
pollinators, drunk on nectar.

By spring the empire falls –  
a mass of tissue in my hand.

Published in *Reach Poetry*, October 2021.

### One Day in August

Soft summer rain shakes  
the buddleia tree growing on  
the corner of a run-down house, releasing  
the sweet smell of lilacs, and dust.

A shrill breeze makes the cables  
on the boat masts ring like bells –  
an urgent, amorphous symphony  
in the salt-sharp air.

Pink clouds at sunset –  
*Breathe, breathe in the air* playing –  
punters from the pub zig-zag up the hill,  
waltz with wheelie bins.

Oncoming night blurs, erases  
the sharp angles of buildings.  
Like a television set just switched off,  
the air crackles with static.



## JAN HARRIS

Jan Harris lives in Nottinghamshire in the UK. Her poems have appeared in various journals including *Acumen*, *Atrium*, and *Poetry Wales*, and in anthologies including *For the Silent*, (Indigo Dreams Publishing, 2019) and e-books published by The Poetry Kit. Jan was awarded third place in the Wales Poetry Award, 2019. Her first collection, *Mute Swans on the Cam*, was published by Oversteps Books in July 2020.

### POEMS

Urban Sheepdog  
Friday, six thirty  
Opening the bell jar  
Scandinavian visitors

JAN HARRIS

### **Urban sheepdog**

He's your uber-cool streetwise sidekick, hyper-connected through the wavelength of his lead,

but unleash him and he flows like a brook  
through the park, gathers you in the oxbows

of his meanders. No city nine-to-five for him -  
he keeps a farmer's time. Wet nose in your face

at dawn and instant-coffee eyes that perk you up  
for work - no time to play. The sticks you throw

are sheep to stalk in stealth mode, belly low  
to dew-damp grass, his gaze unflinching

before the fetch. He's partial to the urban life.  
A taste of pilau rice from late night takeaways

goes down a doggy-treat. He works out weekly  
at the canine gym, and though he'll sleep on a rug,

he always prefers to snore amid the snowdrift  
of your crisp and clean Egyptian cotton sheets.

But see, his muzzle's flecked with moorland brown.  
He dreams and his paws shake like a new-born lamb.

### **Friday, six thirty**

windblown leaves scuttle  
down the pedestrian precinct  
tip-tapping like tiny claws  
taking flight like autumn moths

the barber closes metal shutters  
on the scent of hairspray  
hurries to the Posh Meze grill and bar  
the smell of burgers frying

magpies chatter from shop rooftops  
like clacking castanets  
behind them the sky turns red  
as a flamenco dress

a man in a wheelchair hums  
along the quiet road a driver brakes  
needlessly blares his horn  
swerves past him laughing

JAN HARRIS

## Opening the bell jar

after *Ennui*, Walter Sickert, c. 1913

Sometimes, in a Sunday afternoon's silence, happiness enters Henry and Marie's parlour, whooper swans flying over Windermere, their cries so wild the sky could not contain them.

Henry lifts a decanter from the mantelpiece,  
unstoppers memories of wood smoke  
through the open window of a modest room,  
their moonlit bodies tentative as April snow.

On a chest of drawers, hummingbirds in a bell jar.  
A memento of their honeymoon. Exotic wisps  
of unspent lives. Marie places them in the sun,  
watches rainbows appear in their wings.

## Scandinavian visitors

flock to our garden  
starry-winged iridescent  
in advent sunlight

they convene in cliques  
chit-chat on aerials  
bicker from twiggy branches  
descend  
with stabbing beaks

until        at a secret cue  
or coincidence of thought  
they scatter  
                 leave us with a lawn  
pecked clean



## CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

Catherine Heighway lives in London, Ontario, Canada. She has been writing poetry for a number of years and has had her work published in local anthologies. She also has had essays published in newspapers, journals, and newsletters. In 2019, she self-published a book – *Yoga for the Seasons* – which she co-authored with a colleague. She enjoys helping people write their memoirs. Catherine has taken several poetry writing courses with Jim Bennett through Poetry Kit.

### POEMS

auntie's marmalade  
where wisdom begins  
needlecraft  
like the first morning  
empty as a pocket



CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

**auntie's marmalade**

came in a squat glass jar  
dark orange threaded with  
bitter shredded peel  
stored sunshine of Seville  
still warm from the pot  
offered from grey gloves  
while snow blew in  
around her feet  
at the open door  
as my father lay dying  
in the next room

**where wisdom begins**

we stagger under the stone archway  
Welcome to Ghandruk - elevation 6,600 feet  
almost every one of those feet  
stepped up unforgiving stone staircases

interspersed with swaying suspension bridges  
sheer drop offs    no railings in sight  
my husband's face white under a sky  
the colour of Himalayan poppies

light-headed    trembling    we choose to stay behind  
wait two days for a jeep to take us back down  
while our companions complete the journey  
I weep at the dismal end of my bucket list trek

at sunrise as the others shoulder their packs  
the snowy slopes of Annapurna tinged golden pink  
we are left in the care of a porter named Krishna  
whose t-shirt says "Wonder is the Beginning of Wisdom"

CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

**needlecraft**

*“The woman with the long feet ends up alone in a room”*  
*Chinese proverb*

she squints at the eye  
of the steel needle

snakes the thin strand  
of embroidery thread

pulls it through    ties a single knot  
follows the rice paper pattern

at ten years old her skills  
like her mothers are strong

intricate stitches  
in colours of precious gems

chrysanthemums  
animals of the zodiac

twining branches that coil  
across the top    down the sides

for special orders  
onto the sole of each shoe

her long feet occupy  
cloth soled slippers

she keeps tucked under  
cotton trouser hems

never bound the way  
the girl who will wear these

lotus shoes had done  
she sees them

carried in servant’s arms  
hurried by in litters

sometimes in the bridal chair  
red lacquered    curtained

decorated with details as fine  
as her embroidery stitches

## CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

### like the first morning

the trumpet of the Morning Glory unfurls  
Heavenly Blue after all summer growing  
profuse vines faithfully trained on a trellis  
colour like the sky of the Sistine Chapel  
Michelangelo on his back all those years  
with paint dripping in his face  
Charlton Heston forever painted in my mind  
that biblical voice and chiseled jaw line

carved like the Pieta weeping Mother Mary  
damaged by a mentally disturbed soul  
who took a hammer to Her broke off Her arm  
a chunk of nose chipped an eyelid  
as he shouted *I am Jesus Christ risen from the dead*  
Mary restored now under a bulletproof acrylic panel  
preserved for all eternity or at least as long as  
St. Peter's stands but the Mother Church is in trouble

with the discovery of mass graves  
of hundreds of residential school children  
buried under the desperate blue vault of heaven  
their mothers and grandmothers weep under the same sky  
did the nuns or priests weep I wonder  
in their black habits and cassocks  
who broke those children beat the culture  
language and soul out of each one  
surely heaven weeps for them

and for my mother who adored Morning Glories  
whose love was a trellis to twine and climb  
life tried to break her as a child but she flourished  
in the end it was a stroke a nursing home  
immobility so unlike these plants  
she grew up the side of the garden shed  
waited all summer for them while they reached  
for the first rays of sun just over the roof  
her favourite hymn *Morning has Broken*

CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

**empty as a pocket**

turned out before being sent to Goodwill  
golf tees a few coins scent of Old Spice  
closet door shuts the mirror rattles

she stares in the mirror turns sideways  
clutches her waistband in one hand  
she's almost at her pre-wedding weight

the weight of empty dishes on the floor  
basket cleaned out toys blanket  
carrier donated to the rescue society

she can no longer see her mirror image  
only shadows she tilts the paint brush  
rescued by points of light

in a box at the back of closet  
pointe shoes never worn again  
still cries at ballet performances

he cries promises he'll never go again  
straight flush beats four of a kind  
kids wait in the car as windows fog up

like the refugee's apartment windows  
we give them all of her kitchen things  
footsteps echo on the linoleum

in the mirror her tongue traces the rough gap  
where for a week it wiggled and dangled  
she places it under her pillow for the tooth fairy



## **FRANCESCA HUNT**

Francesca Hunt is an enthusiastic writer of poetry and fiction living near Welshpool in Mid-Wales. She has won three poetry competitions, been short listed in four and had several poems published in anthologies and Reach magazine.

### **POEMS**

Still Birth

Freedom

sounds of sixties

New Messages

Foot Fish and Fancy Free

Orange

Title Plop

## FRANCESCA HUNT

### Still Birth

December's frost hangs from picture rails  
with faded paintings of summer daisies.  
Teeth scrubbed once, and once again,  
removing sweet remnants of dinner's tiramisu.

Clothed in thick winceyette,  
buttoned to the neck, light off, she inches  
to her edge. Football finished, six-pack  
downed, burping, he staggers out.

The nightly ritual, both relieved to escape  
the black cloud hanging on five amp cable  
where once there was laughter and light.  
A stone monument, bent, desiccated,

cowering in empty prayer, she mourns  
her vacated womb, barren to future seed.  
No child cries from the dusty crib,  
no wide-eyed gurgles framed by golden

curls. Neon, flashing red against black sky,  
burns his loins— cheap at twice the price  
until his stoned statue of guilt, crawls  
home to bed with icicles wrapped in winceyette.

(after Dali's Archaeological Reminiscences of Millet's Angelicus)

## FRANCESCA HUNT

### **Freedom**

they sail out dark to sea the slow tide turns  
no bat nor bird nor tree  
spirit awakes sprite can see  
float in freedom fire lifts me

### **sounds of sixties**

raging fire broke those nights rags from bodies  
hit the sky high as kites  
bags packed bogus pace of frights  
he died of hidden delights

### **New Messages**

anger drums my head I grab his mobile  
lust-fed cheat lost sheet-cred  
burps and belches bound for bed  
untethered no text unread

### **Foot Fish and Fancy Free**

I follow him out to the pond  
there is no one there  
no human just fish  
unperturbed knees bent back arched  
I plunge myself forward

diving to darkness  
deeper than its depth of one-foot-six  
my arms thrash through a swarm of koi  
orange white against black  
I follow an oven-glove fish

into the nowhere of infinity  
into before and after time  
beyond the pond  
to no one now here

*(Inspired by Grandma's vintage oven-glove fish)*

## FRANCESCA HUNT

### Orange

no sugar black and strong  
orange goes with his autumnal  
years the days of log burners  
and closed curtains order logs  
delivery's tight as you get closer  
to Christmas no cream but orange  
marmalade the window seat  
I do love to people-watch  
something about the fact  
they don't know I'm visiting  
their world thank you lovely  
just a knife look at her orange coat  
far too tight boobs bursting the buttons  
keep the change

B&Q orange logo a vinyl-silk  
for the ceiling white gloss for wood  
the wallpaper is orange to go with the burner  
his choice not mine never could take advice  
order the logs he feels the cold  
soon be Christmas will he come  
it will be orange by then  
he loves holly berries

He did come  
and it was orange  
with thick snow outside

now it's magnolia again  
wreaths are cheap cancel the logs  
it will soon be Spring



## FRANCESCA HUNT

### Title Plop

my hand runs rough with bark  
through red valleys searching for tea  
where little acorns shed tears  
as they land plop without amalgam filling

some are tube squeezers random graspers  
aim for the middle where green leaves  
start to orange as the kettle whistles  
I write my name with pride

choking back steam toothpaste  
is an excellent medium but choose your  
brush with care sable is preferable  
unless the horse has bolted then

I'd opt for hog milk first  
or milk after or lemon  
from the bathroom squeezed  
methodically from the end

a scientific approach the careful  
winder should use a ladder to prune  
the oak before winter ice cracks  
the tea cup wetting great aunt Agatha

as she cleans her teeth the whirl  
of the motor the twang of Darjeeling  
as acorns plop plop Ah fresh baked  
croissant vive La France plop



## **DORRIE JOHNSON**

Dorrie has been writing poetry for many years. She has won competitions and many of her poems have been published in small press journals or anthologies, including *Orbis* and *Acumen* and others accepted for on-line publication. Her collection *Following the Monarch's Way* was published by *The Battle of Worcester Society*. A second collection is with a publisher at present.

### **POEMS**

Come walking  
Among the sundries  
 $4/3\pi r^3$

DORRIE JOHNSON

**Come walking**

I wake to bright curtains.  
You are up, smiling,  
opening the curtains to the sun.  
I'm not ready yet.  
Yesterday is still with me.  
'Come walking', you said,  
'you choose where'.  
Or did I dream that?  
did I wake to cloud?  
Were you up, frowning,  
curtains still closed?

Was it yesterday the old man died?  
'I'm sinking into the dark abyss', he said.  
His dread was real.  
I remember his words  
taking him to a death  
that had no hope of anything more.  
And she was there,  
grey with despair.  
They used to walk.

And today I woke to dim light.  
We walk. The forest floor  
still carries the storm's kill.  
Trunks shattered, branches, half branches,  
leaves, cones, lie, gathered  
testimony to a brutal end.

You are looking for mushrooms -  
those undamaged. Your camera ready  
to record life among death.  
At the edge of the forest  
the remains of an old castle.  
with a dungeon still there.  
They say it's haunted.

W go over to look.  
I trip, I'm falling, I can't scream.  
It's cold. It's dark.  
I'm shaking, Someone is shaking me  
'Wake up. You're here with me.  
I'm held. The curtains are bright.  
The sun must be shining.  
'Come walking ', you said.

DORRIE JOHNSON

**Among the sundries**

Just an object.  
Nothing special.  
A small Viking figure,  
owing more to romance  
than to fact.  
In a drawer it would be among the 'sundries'.  
'Neither use nor ornament',  
my art mistress might have said.  
She'd be wrong.  
It does seem unimportant,  
non-impressive,  
non-conventional,  
but by association  
                                dearly loved.  
Just a dearly loved object.

**$4/3\pi r^3$**

Effervescent light  
Quickens. Transcendent. Spits. Pops.  
All maths and physics.



## **CORINNE LAWRENCE**

Corinne lives in the South Manchester area of the UK. A specialist teacher of Speech and Drama for over thirty years, Corinne started writing seriously in 2010. Her first placing was as a runner-up in a Writers' Forum monthly competition and subsequently her work appeared on the Visual Verse website. She enjoys poetry writing courses. She is also a long term member of a local writing group. Corinne has had poems published by Indigo Dreams Publishing in Reach Poetry, in 'For The Silent' - an anthology published in 2019 in conjunction with The League Against Cruel Sports and also as a 'Poetry Kit' poet 2020.

Several of Corinne's poems have been reviewed Writers' Forum and Writing Magazine, and she has won, and been placed or short listed in a number of competitions in both of these publications. Corinne enjoys writing both formal and free verse and is especially fond of ekphrastic poetry:

### **POEMS**

Not Like Adlestrop

Deep Pockets

Centuries Apart

Teehey

Life Story – Seven Ages of Fire

## CORINNE LAWRENCE

### Not Like Adlestrop

To start with, it wasn't late June,  
but a January 2nd slump of a day,  
as far *from one afternoon of heat*  
as it was possible to be and for me,  
an uncomfortably early start to term  
in a new school of a thousand new faces.  
Would I even recognise hers –  
the young HOD I'd met only once  
at my October interview?

I'd been told to meet her outside  
the station at the far end of the village –  
both deserted, comatose, the community  
still nursing its collective New Year hangover.

A ghost train, the eleven forty-five  
from Chester, arrived on time. *No one left  
and no one came on the bare platform.*  
*What I saw was* railings and railway track,  
straight as a Roman road, disappearing  
with the empty locomotive into impenetrable  
grey rain – *mistier, farther and farther* –  
until absorbed by a vanishing point  
somewhere in an uncertain future.

No save-the-day mobiles back then: why  
hadn't she been on the train, as she'd said –  
the HOD whose only time to brief me  
on my new job was twenty-four hours  
before I had to face my first class?

*And for that moment*, apprehension and sleet  
trickled icily down my neck.

The lines in italics are direct quotes from Edward Thomas's poem, which is one of her favourites.

## CORINNE LAWRENCE

### Deep Pockets

I too possess a coat of many colours  
for warmth in the wakeful small hours  
woven from thoughts dyed with experience with emotion  
it has pockets deep enough for Caravaggio's *Supper At Emmaus*  
the second one and Schubert's *Litany For All Souls' Day*  
for word-hoards of enthusiasms and enthusiasm for word-hoards  
their history heritage and significance their sounds

and rhythms remembering the lilt and dance of nursery rhymes  
chanted with an infant lisp Ladybird reading books  
Uncle Arthur's Bible Stories the way from Genesis to Jesus  
early existential exploration then Shakespeare's beloved word hoard  
*now entertain conjecture of a time* of ancient footsteps  
finding a four hundred-million-year-old mudstone hurled up  
from its primeval past on to a Devon beach waves crashing

the thunder of a revving Vulcan mistaken for a storm rumbling  
around in the air for hours before breaking overhead  
as I run without stopping down the chestnut lined dirt track  
multi-coloured coat over bottle-green uniform to a maths lesson prison  
can't find Shakespeare's comfort too soon throw  
*the quality of mercy is not strained* at bullies and audience  
a plea for kindness compassion Hitler isn't alone  
creating grounds for Orwell envisioned goosestep strides *a boot*  
*crashing down on a face* from the Western Front to Auschwitz  
Montgomery Rwanda Kosovo or Kabul

### Centuries Apart

Beethoven felt he had to take the risk  
Never put anything in your ears'  
We were always told  
Desperate, he didn't have a choice  
Wish I could give him a pair of my spares

## CORINNE LAWRENCE

### Teehey

I am from the well-proportioned rooms of a 1930s 'semi'.  
I am from brown-stained skirting boards,  
gritty *Vim* and the smell of *Mansion Polish*.  
I am from shiny nuggets of coal – calling cards  
of the earth that left comfort and warmth  
behind them in a Teehey grate. *Music While You Work*  
teeheyed out of its windows to lupins  
and michaelmas daisies in our long, narrow garden.

I am from Enid Blyton's *Famous Five*  
devoured from the comfort of a Teehey hammock:  
I slept on summer nights in a Teehey tent.  
I'm from *Cowboys and Indians* played out  
in the field behind the Teehey Farm.

I am from any one of the numerous packs  
of cards spread around my Teehey home –  
ever ready answers for idle moments.  
I'm from *Patience* and *Whist*, *Gin Rummy* and *Snap*.  
*Newmarket*, *Old Maid*, and *Strip Jack Naked*  
giggled around the dining room table  
in the Teehey Christmas season.

I'm from roast lamb and apple pie with cream  
for Sunday lunch; I'm from the Teehey 'Taylors'  
and 'Pringles', (they're not the socks or crisps 'Pringles',  
so I'll never be an heiress.) I'm from my father's buck teeth  
to my mother's expression of purse-lipped disapproval.  
We called it her Teehey face.

I'm from '*Just wait till your father comes home ...*'  
and *All Things Bright and Beautiful* at church  
on Sundays to tell out my Teehey take on life.

On top of my wardrobe, with the cards –  
three ancient albums, full of Teehey faces:  
I hear their voices still, read their catch phrases  
written in faint, fountain-penned Teehey copperplate.

I am from the emoticon free albums  
of my forbears, clicked and scrolled  
into the non-Teehey now. I'm from  
Bebington on the Wirral – Teehey Lane –  
the only one in Britain. I'd forgotten  
how whacky it sounds.



CORINNE LAWRENCE

**Life Story – Seven Ages of Fire\***

A single embryo,  
I am kindling: flame conceived  
in a womb of straw.

Splitting

in the draught  
from a slammed door,  
my twin is formed.

We quicken side by side,  
are delivered as puckish sparks, our voices cracklings  
of wicked laughter, infectious  
as childish hysterics.

Adolescence explodes  
in ungovernable flares of heat  
and passion. Fire begets fire, breeds more of our kind.  
They call us Farriner's fiends.

Swirling in our own wind,  
we convert timber, pitch, and smoke  
to our cause, then blaze and conquer. Führers, our empire is Inferno,  
and there will be no end to our sway. Four epochs of flame scoff  
at the city's feeble firebreaks.

The sixth age,  
therefore, takes us by surprise.  
Roars reduce to whispers, wheeze  
with...laboured...breaths. No longer  
giants but dwarves, we lick  
where once we devoured:  
our wasted fingers fail  
to meet.

At the last,  
shrinking  
to smoulder,  
sans tinder,  
flashpoint,  
ox...y...gen  
or ember,  
we...  
are...  
ash...

*\* This poem was awarded 2nd prize in Writing Magazine's 'Great Fire Of London' competition in 2016 and was subsequently published in Writing Magazine in the May 2017 issue.*



## **KATHRYN DE LEON**

Kathryn de Leon is from Los Angeles, California but has been living in England for eleven years. She is a teacher and lived in Japan for six years teaching English to Japanese university students. Her poems have appeared in several magazines in the US including *Calliope*, *Aaduna*, *Trouvaille Review*, *Avatar Review*, and *Black Fox*, *The Ofi Press* (Mexico), and in the UK, *London Grip*, *The Blue Nib*, *Runcible Spoon*, *Neologism*, *Amethyst Review*, *New Critique*, *The High Window* where she was the Featured American Poet, and others.

### **POEMS**

High Fiving Angels

Prediction

A Little Boy by the Sea

Stumblebee

Shoes

KATHRYN DE LEON

### **High Fiving Angels**

It's hard to see their hands,  
they are so bright.  
They are soundless locomotives coming at you  
through the darkened tunnel  
that is your life.

Their light is so tall  
you have to raise your hand high,  
even jump a bit  
to reach them.

They wait like closed curtains  
that hide a brightly lit stage.  
Just a hint of the upcoming show  
shines through.

You'll wonder why they chose you.  
You'll feel unworthy  
of their attention.

Remember:  
You're not dead yet.  
You've not seen their halos  
nor their rich abundance of wings.

Just accept the moment and enjoy:

Your life is going right.  
Your life is good.

(published in Calliope, Fall 2017)

KATHRYN DE LEON

**PREDICTION    21 June 2020**  
**(after W.S. Merwin)**

The world was supposed to end last Sunday  
but I completely forgot.  
I had planned to check if the sky looked strange  
or if the sun dimmed at midday  
as it sometimes does  
in my dreams.

My mother remembered many such predictions  
in her lifetime.  
I myself have lost count of those in my life.

Some of us try to push and bend the world  
to fit neatly into these prophecies.  
Or we push and bend the prophecies  
to fit the world.  
Especially those of Nostradamus.

Nostradamus.

His huge name thuds  
like a black door slammed shut.  
How can we not believe?

I hold a bit of my breath  
with each prediction,  
wonder if this could be a correct one.  
In 1969 California was to sink into the sea  
so I should know better.

But none of this matters  
since we will all have our own unique,  
personal end of the world.  
We are each a sealed envelope  
with an indelibly written date,  
a life-sized secret, somewhere within us:

the anniversary of our death  
that we pass every year without knowing.

On that day, we wake, we eat, we live.  
The sky watches us,  
patient and filled with God.  
Waiting.

(cont)

KATHRYN DE LEON

(cont)

Then the day is finished,  
forgotten like a turned page.  
It rides the earth's sad blue away from us  
but returns again and again  
never giving up.

Until finally it stands before us,  
its God-sized hands raised  
blocking our way  
and the world ends  
without a prediction.

Published in London Grip, winter 2020

**A LITTLE BOY BY THE SEA**

He won't remember this warm May afternoon.  
He'll forget his hand is tiny  
encased in the ancient God-hand  
of his father  
as they walk by the sea,  
a full-blue sky with sun  
and soft winds.

Too many days will crowd in  
between today and the future.  
Then the years will come  
like endless bullies  
pushing and wrestling  
so many of his days  
from his crowded memory.

Today will fall like a thin book  
from a packed shelf,  
forgotten.

He won't remember this warm May afternoon,  
how he walked with his father,  
ghostly as the soundless sailboats  
gliding white over the sea's distant blue,

changing nothing,  
leaving nothing behind,  
on this forgotten day.

But for now at least  
he's smiling.

Published in The High Window, September 2020

KATHRYN DE LEON

## STUMBLEBEE

This is the first time I've ever seen  
a stumbling bumblebee (a stumblebee?).  
He's a shrunken airplane  
rushing awkwardly down a runway  
of bumpy concrete at my feet by the sea,  
pitching left and right,  
unable to get off the ground.

He's not giving up.  
not slowing down,  
his wings understand nothing but flight.  
He's like a baby trying to walk,  
not accepting the ground,  
wanting only up.

I took my eyes off of him.  
Now I can't find him.  
He might have staggered into a nearby bush  
and not come out.

But I like to think he made it,  
that his black and yellow body's tiny engine  
coughed into life  
and up he went, smacked back into play  
like an out-of-bounds tennis ball,  
a five-eyed pollen god  
headed back to work with flowers,  
getting in as many nectar-hours as possible  
in his few weeks of bee-life,

enjoying the summer buzz of afternoon,  
talking to himself in a deep voice  
among green leaves,

flying off into the blue freedom of wild July  
thinking like the rest of us  
that these warm spicy days  
of sun and flowers will never  
ever end.

**Published in Neuro Logical, December 2020**

KATHRYN DE LEON

**SHOES            Titanic**

They say people were wearing them  
as they went down,  
shoes full of skin and bone  
gently escorting the body,  
slowly,  
never letting go,  
faithful to the bottom.

The bodies dissolved,  
left a haunting of black leather  
on the sea floor,  
pairs of shoes with perfect soles and heels  
lying sideways or upside down  
as if kicked off by tired legs at bedtime.

Many disagree,  
say the shoes were not worn  
but packed in suitcases or bags  
that also dissolved,  
leaving the shoes stranded  
in awkward positions unnatural  
to feet and legs.

Whether worn or packed,  
a sadness of unworn shoes  
is in that sea,  
shoes that have failed,  
that have lost the feet they were meant  
to protect, keep warm.

How many floors had the shoes  
moved along before they floated down  
to rest on their final floor,  
seawater filling them  
like the mouths of the drowned,  
but leaving them

like headstones that forever mark the spots  
where the dead lay down  
in the sad magic of the dark  
that would make them disappear.

**Published in Avatar Review, Summer 2021**



## **SHEILA LOCKHART**

Sheila Lockhart is a retired social worker living in the Scottish Highlands. She started writing five years ago and has done several Creative Writing courses, including with the Open University and with Poetry Kit. She's been published online and in print in anthologies and magazines, including *Northwords Now*, *Nine Muses Poetry*, *Twelve Rivers*, *StAnza Poetry Map of Scotland*, *Writers' Cafe*, *Words for the Wild*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Re-Side* and *The Alchemy Spoon*.

### **POEMS**

You Are Here  
Peter's Little Joke  
Little Buddha



## SHEILA LOCKHART

### You Are Here

watching a bumblebee  
squeeze its furry abdomen  
into foxglove fingers  
you're trying to work out  
how long it takes for a pollen molecule  
to travel from the soil up to its calyx  
you're getting close but now you see  
another galaxy has formed  
a splotch of swirling grey  
in a pink universe how many is that now?  
you count them one two three  
five hundred and sixty seven  
and the letters too  
directing pollinators to the hidden source  
of happiness and why not you?  
a message for bees  
can't be that hard to decode  
it's alphabetical after all a matter of  
triggering the right responses

now the rain splashes silver curtains  
smearing pink and cream  
blurring outlines  
its drops tap-tapping on cups  
their pipes vibrate with fugal harmonies  
truths which must be recorded  
with mathematical precision  
using special symbols on graph paper  
no easy task but the beauty of it  
oh the beauty of it makes you weep  
if only you could grasp its exactitude  
its magnificent systems everything  
would be clear

(cont.)

## SHEILA LOCKHART

(cont.)

there was a time you could enjoy  
simple pleasures of line patterns of colour  
as you would looking at an abstract painting  
no need to search for meaning everywhere  
until one day you started counting  
the number of flowers on each stem  
the number of bees ones twos threes  
stacking up behind your eyes  
and you began to see  
how every flower contains a universe  
that demands investigation  
how you could read their messages  
how they insisted on it

you'll have the answer worked out  
very soon you just need one more  
tiny calculation

After *You Are Here*, a painting by Lorette C. Luzajic 2021

### Peter's Little Joke

Peter Blake brings home another treasure  
to add to his cabinet of curiosities

the studio holds its breath  
crumpled newspaper flutters to the floor

he hears them whisper as they shift about  
to get a better view

and out she comes - a tiny doll  
all dressed up in silks and feathers

Maisie shrieks - it's shocking pink!  
I wanted sepia - you promised me

more Edwardian porn with lady bits!  
(she's jealous of anything with limbs)

Peter sets his acquisition down  
right in front of Ivan the balding cossack

he wants to see if Ivan will dare to  
put his hand up the new girl's skirt

Maisie's open-mouthed - she'll never get her head  
around the crassness of Peter's little jokes

**SHEILA LOCKHART**

**Little Buddha**

these days  
I hardly see him  
hidden in the shade  
between the Christmas cactus  
and the jade plant  
his scalloped lotus seems  
insignificant  
beside their lush growth

his butter lamp is crusted  
with dead flies  
his topknot flame of wisdom  
dull with dust  
his begging bowl  
balanced precariously in his palm  
holds out an offering  
of spider webs

If I could write  
just one true thing about him  
I too might sit utterly still  
with a half-smile  
not needing  
to look about me all the time  
eyes open just enough  
to let some light in



## **AMANDA McLACHLAN**

Amanda McLachlan lives in Somerset in the UK and is new to poetry.

### **POEMS**

An Instrument for Measuring Blueness

Climacteric

This is how he will come back to you

AMANDA McLACHLAN

**An Instrument for Measuring Blueness**

She says, I like this pale blue for the wall.  
He says, It reminds me of my mother.  
She collected aquamarines  
because they matched her eyes  
(she didn't count the tiger iron splinter in one iris)

She says, I like this greenish-blue for the door.  
He says, It reminds me of an eggshell  
I trod on, barefoot  
I will never forget the cuts in my sole  
the smear of yolk, of blood

She says, I like this richer blue for the skirting.  
He says, It reminds me of a broken teapot.  
Willow Pattern. It lost its lid  
and the porcelain was crazed

She takes him by hand to the garden.  
She says, Choose your blue from the sky.  
He says, I'd prefer something reliable  
like this – and picks a sprig of borage  
rubs the prickly leaves between his palms  
breathes cucumber scent  
to the top of his lungs

AMANDA McLACHLAN

**Climacteric**

That day, blowing across the grass  
a wasp nest flew into my hand  
like a tossed bouquet

I tried not to see it as a sign  
but it seemed to me the deadest  
thing I'd ever seen

It's no good being wide-eyed  
seeing luck everywhere

I saw only a ghost bride  
alone with her wedding cake  
and a clock stopped forever

I saw only empty cells  
where eggs should have hatched

Nobody else was there to catch it  
Nobody even seems to see me  
I put my hand to my throat  
to feel for lumps and

cough up a froth of ectoplasm  
so thin and silvery and clean  
it lights a sting in the tail of my spine

Look at me now, with my barb of fire  
and paper foaming on my tongue

Watch me sculpt a shining city  
with this mouth of mine

AMANDA McLACHLAN

**This is how he will come back to you**

Waiting in the car outside the shop  
on the main road. Bank Holiday traffic  
thunders past. A trailer rattles.  
Pallid teasels droop their heads  
by the church porch, next to a poster  
saying Thieves Beware.

Dad was dead set against priests.  
At the funeral parlour, the undertaker  
smiled when we told him that.  
One of mine, he said.  
He produced a black padded bag  
from under his desk and passed it over.  
This is how he will come back to you.

A single black feather puffs up  
from the hedge, rises through the air  
into the ash trees, defying  
the laws of gravity.

Dad went to the fire with a coffin full  
of grave goods – Spanish postcards,  
handwritten notes from his friends,  
an off-colour joke we couldn't believe  
that we tucked deep into the shroud,  
hid from Mum, who sat rigid in the front row.

The shopkeeper has nailed a sign to the wall  
Did you know...  
One in four hazelnuts end up in Nutella?!  
Lime-green blackberry thorns  
thrust into the footpath; a rough cross  
of two pruned Christmas tree trunks  
leans in the grass.

I read a poem about white roses  
being left to grow wild  
around my dead father.  
Mum fished in her bag for secateurs,  
produced a dry white handkerchief.  
Didn't I know his cross-quartered  
claret and blue heart, his yellow liver?!  
She stared at the poem  
like I'd offered her a cup of Earl Grey tea.



## NINA VIGON MANSO

Nina Vigon Manso lives in Vila do Conde in Portugal. Mostly, they writes prose and chronicles. Recently, they decided to engage into poetry because of their work (poetry analysis) and passion for poetry. Like Audre Lorde said, "poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital space for our existence. (...) Poetry is the way to give name to the nameless so it can be thought." They wants to find freedom, and sharing it with others, being poetry the language and space for it.

### POEMS

Poem

spaces or chaos

In the pocket

I tell you a mystery

Remains of a Singer - part I



## NINA VIGON MANSO

### Poem

yellow sparrow chirps  
convince flowers to come out  
scented gardenias  
randomness spreading the air  
whispers to leaves when to fall

### spaces or chaos

the room is narrow and the floor creaks  
near a crackling fireplace of trophies and family albums  
room body odour remains in the stains  
life as we know continues rotating

entangled in smooth bedroom sheets  
a mix of blue silk threads  
a small table covered with oriental spices  
the mouldy living room is also a pantry

people wore boots  
humming alternated with lullabies  
of your days as an actress  
right next to the dressroom

while stargazer lilies garden turns to the sun  
three bodies aligned from dark to light for life  
sometimes Earth places itself in the middle  
as sun and the moon stay in shadows

### In the pocket

if time flies when we're having fun  
consider this as a master of none  
a device of precision, meant to measure  
where pleasure has nothing to do but fear  
taken by the wind-up regular mechanism  
where is always time to organize  
synchronize                      no heart beat                      but pulse  
internalize a clear sense of tempo  
stricted with no memento or ode to joy  
it's not about who makes the click  
it sticks, so strict, fixed  
hypnotic but no magical  
repressive in fractions of seconds  
stripped of tricks in the pocket  
it aimed straight barely with no hands  
in the pocket                      in the pocket

## NINA VIGON MANSO

### **I tell you a mystery**

ambulance passes while a woman gives birth in a basement  
old ladies scorn smothering child's first cry  
the trumpet shall sound when help arrives with glances of shame  
penniless young mother drips blood attached to a knife

seats at the back swing like a rocker  
stacked with dust carrying dreams enchained  
it's always rush hour in these pavements  
the bigger the dream the slower the lane

first the dead shall be raised incorruptible  
it is time for the last ball with the company  
band enters aligned looking shiny  
bodies so close one to another in the dark hole

later archeologists gave pairs a last chance  
straight yet entangled all those brothers in arms  
and these mortals must put them on immortality  
but not all we shall or want to be changed

(partially inspired by the Aria "The Trumpet Shall Sound" - Messiah, Handel)

### **Remains of a Singer - part I**

made to complete and fit  
it is used to reveal the unique  
protocol mimic repeat

a machine running on wheels  
to flatten all edges of wedges  
tuned with oil needles and speed

it can sow patch seduction  
cheek bones left hips turn right  
insinuating there is more to come back

it hides bobbins of threads gone wrong  
wanted all flat match with large hat  
embroidery jewelries wearing bodies

egos passing the eye of the needle  
made to fit and making the cut  
dressed to impress not to interest

world of hard working noisy hours  
still nobody figures out what's to come  
this innovation was made for aspiration



## EMMALINE O'DOWD

Emmaline O'Dowd lives in Derby in the U.K. She has had poems in several magazines, including *Poetry Nottingham*, *Staple*, *Assent* and most recently *Acumen*, and two of her poems were included in the anthology *A speaking silence*, (eds. R.V. Bailey and Stevie Krayner). Recently she gained a 'highly commended' in Amnesty Internationals 'Poetry for Social Justice' competition and will be included in their forthcoming anthology.

### POEMS

Falling to the Ground  
Nothing, probably  
Cliff-top

EMMALINE O'DOWD

**Falling to the ground**

Peggy reminds Tully that we bought his print,  
asks him again about the making of it.  
But *It's all a bit scrambled now*. So  
she tells how there were bird-designs  
in fragments everywhere, *some of them quite beautiful,*  
*later, people would buy them*. When he asks,  
*Are you enjoying it?* so good to say, *We love it!*  
and mean it, to be able to thank him,  
for him to understand. I used to go armed to meet him,  
ready for his pepper. Now  
his meekness makes me gentle.  
The thoughts that hop in his mind  
Often fall to the ground.  
Some of the fragments are quite beautiful.

EMMALINE O'DOWD

**Nothing, probably**

Not like you to say  
mid-afternoon  
let's go for a walk, just you and me.

Of course it's probably nothing serious...

This was the canal. We walk on water,  
or the ghost of it, ankle deep only in grass.  
There are wild roses. There's birdsong.

Of course it's probably nothing...

We don't hold hands.  
Occasionally glass to glass,  
our watches kiss.

Of course it's probably...

Here's the stranded bridge, a solid shallow arch,  
jointed copings carefully preserved,  
now strongly linking just two fields lying fallow.

Of course it's...

A runner floats past, his body's springy machinery  
keeping him a foot above the ground, as though  
he just opts to touch down lightly at each pace.

of course...

We plod in his wake through the heat.  
Tomorrow, will we need a miracle?  
No of course not. It's nothing.

Probably...

EMMALINE O'DOWD

**Cliff-top**

The wind feeds the boy's hat to the white horses  
at work a hundred feet below,  
pulling the sea to the foot of the cliff.  
The mother has been reading a rather bizarre novel.  
*Unquestioning obedience seldom tends  
to complete satisfaction with circumstances.  
Keep a rebellion or two in your back pocket.*  
His green and yellow kite isn't seriously trying to lift him,  
it's easily tamed, like the little leashed dog  
walking demurely beside the push-chair  
where a toddler strains against her safety straps,  
wailing to be let loose.  
*There's no equitable way to govern horses.  
And the women are just as bad.*  
The boy keeps to the rule, run anywhere you like,  
so long as it's inland of the path.  
*Obtusely she allowed the diamonds  
to slither down between the platform and the train.*  
There's a rider coming towards them, reins well in hand.  
Politely, he holds back to let them pass.  
The mother wonders where she can buy a replacement hat.  
*The champion angler in the next carriage  
gallantly hooks them for her  
and is amply recompensed with a gold doubloon.*  
The horse is laying back its ears,  
not liking the little girl's crying. It's a white one.



## **MANDY PANNETT**

Mandy Pannett lives in West Sussex. She taught children with special needs for many years but now works freelance as a creative writing tutor for adults.

Her poetry pamphlet 'The Daedalus Files' was published in May 2021 by SPM Publications and was recently selected as The Poetry Kit's Book of the Month. Five poetry collections have been previously published: 'Bee Purple' and 'Frost Hollow' (Oversteps Books), 'Allotments in the Orbital' (Searle Publishing), 'All the Invisibles' (SPM Publications), 'Jongleur in the Courtyard' (Indigo Dreams Publishing). A selection of her poems was issued by Integral Contemporary Literature Press with English and Romanian parallel texts. Two novellas have also been published: 'The Onion Stone' (Pewter Rose Press) and 'The Wulf Enigma' (Circaidy Gregory Press).

Mandy was also poetry editor for five years for Sentinel Literary Quarterly and has edited anthologies and poetry collections for them and for Earlyworks Press. She has acted as an adjudicator for national competitions and won prizes and been placed herself in several others.

### **POEMS**

Enjoying Sunlight with John Donne in Derek Jarman's Garden  
Instruments from a Silver Band, flattened, hanging  
From 'Thing of Weld'

MANDY PANNETT

**Enjoying Sunlight with John Donne in Derek Jarman's Garden**

it began  
with a dog rose  
stalwart against the easterlies  
by the back door of a fisherman's cottage

salty winds  
incessant in winter  
an expanse of shingle

everything is on the edge  
a garden both  
Gethsemane and Eden

driftwood rust cuttlefish stone  
sea kale green and purple scent of honey across the marsh

lavender lovage samphire fennel  
the dark red of valerian  
golden orange of California poppy

an *unruly sun* and a north-sea wind  
comes in with the tide  
bringing  
*hours days months*

*the rags of time*

*(lines quoted are John Donne's 'The Sun Rising' which were inscribed on the wall of  
Derek Jarman's cottage at Dungeness)*



MANDY PANNETT

**Instruments from a Silver Band, flattened, hanging**

They would reach for the sky  
these filigrees of earlier shapes  
silvered, skeletal, compressed.

Once earth, now air, one form of art  
transforms to a new. There's a shift  
in the meanings of things and they are

feathers on the scales of destruction  
and creation

suspended as if still  
at the moment of crush

or the moment after.

As they move from sound into sight  
silver tongues are silent and lost.  
Thin shadows sway in a half-lit room.

**From 'Thing of Weld'**

You deserve the best portrayal.  
Cubism was invented for the likes of you.  
Nothing *avant garde* shall be ignored  
for I shall be your Picasso, pin you down  
and release an inner being.

But – a sticking point. You are no  
Dora Maar, long fingernailed and supreme  
in elegance. Your eyes are blobs, blind  
blobs, iron-coloured, not red as you gaze  
one way, not green the other.

Frontal view or mixed with profile  
your long screw neck will always stick out  
in rigid defiance. Already a combination  
of bits you are who you are.  
I shall leave you whole; complete.



## **GRAÇA ALMEIDA RODRIGUES**

Graça had several lives, as an academic, diplomat, founder of a Centre for Economic Social and Cultural rights. She started writing poetry in March 2020 on her return from a yoga retreat in Sri Lanka, when lockdown started. She now lives in Portugal. She went to university and worked in England.

### **POEMS**

The Measure of things

The Thread

GRACE ALMEIDA RODRIGUES

## THE MEASURE OF THINGS

My uncle Raoul worked  
At a **Singer** Co. outpost

At lunchtime on the train he rushed,  
Time was tight, like a rope.

Measured were also the pills  
Kept safe in that **amber box**

Like secrets that give thrills  
Kept away under lock.

The **pot** is like a vessel,  
A container of all things

Water fire metals  
Gives measure to our wings.

A **thermometer** is on hand  
To control the temperature

For the heat is to be tamed  
To prevent a sudden rupture.

The **head** is also a vessel  
That provides containment

This doesn't always happen  
And leads to derailment.

Comforting was the **candle**  
Raoul lit in his house

The wax smelt of sandal  
The warmth of his spouse.

One morning the body of Carmela  
Was found by the tracks,

"It's where the train passes", said the fella,  
"This is where the mettle cracks."

GRACE ALMEIDA RODRIGUES

**THE THREAD**

It comes in cotton linen wool metal silk  
Talks of slaves weavers merchant prayers  
All sorts of people of that ilk  
Going about their daily fares.

It witnessed life at the plantations  
The flax fields, the Silk Road  
Peoples from all nations  
While along deserts and crossings they flowed.

Memories of those picking cotton  
Flash in our absent minds  
Maybe a better life they could have gotten  
Had we taken off our narrow blinds.

I love my cool linen sheets  
I dive in them every night  
To meet the gods for their treats  
And get rid of all my plights.

Father's business was wool dealing  
We grew up honouring sheep  
While knitting for mother was healing  
We children knit woollens for Mozambique.

Ariadne's thread was red gold  
She wove it with great love  
Nothing less could be unrolled  
To meet the demands of her beloved.

For Theseus she abandoned silk atires  
Woven in China no less  
She also left her sapphires,  
For in the end, who could have guessed?



## **CAROLANN SAMUELS**

Carolann Samuels lives in Kent and has been writing prose for about ten years. She has had short stories published in: *Ways of Falling*, *The Folkestone Anthology 2010*, and *One Hand Clapping* (online). In the past couple of years she has started to write poetry. She belongs to two writing groups and has attended several writing courses, both online and in person.

### **POEMS**

how you peel an apple

Hanging Flattened Brass Instruments

Sea Sculpture from the Ca Mau Wreck

CAROLANN SAMUELS

**how you peel an apple**

You stand at the kitchen counter  
notice how the coating  
has peeled off the dividing strip,  
how crumbs catch in the join  
to be cleared, time and again.

Bramley apples  
on the chopping board,  
newspaper to collect peel,  
a bowl for the slices.

A magpie wipes his beak  
on the fence;  
a jackdaw dips his face  
into the birdbath,  
tips his head back,  
you watch him swallow.

You spiral the apple  
in your left hand,  
the right guides the peeler.  
The crunch as the blade enters the skin;  
a remembered taste of the apple tart.

You dig out bruises, the apples'  
memories of bumps and jumbling  
on their way from the tree to here,  
the imperfections that will sour the pie.

The blade bites as it enters the skin,  
a spurt of juice, sticky on your hand.  
You guide the peeler, adjusting,  
to make the skin as thin as possible.

You take your time,  
resting now and then, your arm aches,  
the one that hauled the vacuum cleaner  
up the stairs and cleaned the windows  
and beat eggs for breakfast.

CAROLANN SAMUELS

**Hanging Flattened Brass Instruments**

(from a sculpture by Cornelia Parker)

They look like people  
hanging around distorted  
reactions to what happened  
the brutality of it  
alike and different  
made voiceless  
then remade  
to shine.

**Sea Sculpture from the Ca Mau Wreck**

A black mark, like the eye of a crow  
on a clam as big as a blacksmith's hand,  
whose broken shell looks like stubby fingers,  
engulfing damaged cups and bowls.

Cobalt blue flowers on white porcelain  
still bright three hundred years on  
after all those men's lives were lost  
to flames and the waves.

76,000 pieces, bound for Europe,  
and the new fashion of tea parties,  
unexpectedly condemned to settle for ever  
in a briny mausoleum with clams and crabs.

Now we admire how accident and nature  
produce an item worthy  
of a glass cabinet in a museum  
and a brand new name.



## JO SANDERS

Jo Sanders lives in Covent Garden UK and has been writing for the last 10 years , having rediscovered poetry late in life. She had a poem translated into Polish in 2014. She contributed a poem to '154' - contemporary poets' responses to Shakespeare's sonnets pub Live Canon 2017. Long listed for Live Canon international prize 2017  
2 poems included in 'In honour of the artist ' Collection of essays and poems by Polish and English speaking writers, edited Maria Mickiewitz.2018. A poem in ' More new poems for Christmas ' pub Live Canon 2018 poems included in Cold weather anthologies ed RuthO'Callaghan. 2018 and 2019 Commended PK poets ekphrastic prize 2020 shortlisted King Lear prize 2020.

### POEMS

Time please

I want to go to heaven in a blaze of brass

On the way to somewhere else

About a pebble 2

A kind of magic



JO SANDERS

**Time please**

During the siege of Leningrad  
the only thing broadcast on the radio  
was the ticking of the clock  
day and night for many months.

My grandfather's timepiece  
under its dome of glass  
was hidden away in the front room  
and wound up every Sunday.

The clock on my wall  
synchronises with the British Standard  
Frequency Time Signal  
accurate to one second in a million years  
but ultimately dependent  
on one AA battery ( not included )

I consult my watch incessantly  
all the time in the world  
but never enough  
time is a healer  
time is a thief.

**I want to go to heaven in a blaze of brass**

I have seen them in the moonlight  
suspended from slender threads  
instruments silver-lucent floating in the soft air  
moving together a flashing canopy under the sky  
a flugelhorn flies with a refulgent tuba  
a trumpet outshines a euphonium  
as a trombone long and luminous  
slides alongside a saxophone.

No sound reaches me  
but when my time comes  
I shall hear them in their full glory  
too terrifying for ears on earth  
I shall cede my body to receive them  
as their sonority swells within me  
and harmonics become limitless  
in music unimagined.

*After seeing a photo of hanging, flattened brass instruments.*

## JO SANDERS

### **On the way to somewhere else**

I saw nothing behind his black sunglasses.  
Lock the door please he said -  
the start of my hitching experiences  
scary sometimes on my own  
but mostly an excitement and delight  
and when there were two of us  
sometimes we'd just switch  
to where the car was going.

Verona our best diversion of all.  
We were delivered there late evening  
and sat outside in the heat-shimmering air  
surrounded by the sound of Aida  
drifting from the amphitheatre.

As it drew to a close in the early hours  
we made our way unnoticed up stone steps  
till we could see far down below  
Radomes and Aida in each other's arms  
as they sang their dying duet of love.  
Fifteen thousand people clutched candles  
that fluttered in the darkness  
hardly daring to breathe  
as they fought back the tears.

### **About a pebble 2**

A pebble found and saved  
by my mother  
sits on my mantle piece  
valued but no longer noticed.

Today I take it in my hand.  
It lacks the shiny smoothness  
of my other polished ones  
feels rough and unappealing.

It is very pockmarked  
with deep connected holes.  
Now I see a skull with eye sockets.  
I see a scream.

JO SANDERS

**A kind of magic**

I remember the little things  
an air-raid in the middle of supper  
two sausages that danced on dad's plate  
as we ran to the shelter.

An air-raid in the middle of supper  
that spoilt our special treat  
as we ran to the shelter  
bombers in the sky

that spoilt our special treat  
searchlights criss-crossed lighting up  
bombers in the sky  
streaks of metallic strips

searchlights criss-crossed lighting up  
snow falling to the ground  
streaks of metallic strips  
moonlight and leaping shadows.

Snow falling to the ground  
two sausages that danced on dad's plate  
moonlight and leaping shadows  
I remember the little things.



## **JONATHAN SHAW**

Jonathan Shaw lives in Marrickville an inner suburb of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. He has been writing poetry on and off, mostly off, for 50 years. In the last 10 years he has had poetry accepted for publication in several Australian journals, and in 'The Last Page', a feature of the European Journal of International Law. He blogs, mostly about literature, at <https://shawjonathan.com>

### **POEMS**

Ritual Vessels  
Letter to my mother  
Overlooked  
Pot

## JONATHAN SHAW

### Ritual Vessels

#### 1. *Saucer*

His special saucer,  
wider, deeper, than the rest,  
ideal for holding tea,  
*suscipe domine*,  
for blowing on, and slurping.

#### 2. *Glass*

Cut glass beside the samovar  
in its silver filigree  
shows the cherry jam  
swirled by Raïssa's spoon.

#### 3. *Enamel mug*

It burns your lips,  
the cuppadee Nangala pours  
from the black billy  
on Warlpiri land.

#### 4. *Chinese tea cup*

Fill, drink, fill,  
drink, fill, drink.  
The yum cha trolleys  
come and go.

#### 5. *Moroccan glass*

Waiting for the virtuoso high pour.

#### 6. *Bone china cup*

On its base there's plaster  
where she wrote the name  
of which child should inherit it.  
The ink has faded by the time she dies.

#### 7. *Keep cup*

Locked in the cupboard,  
useless in lockdown.

#### 8. *Ceramic mug*

The curtains open.  
Day dawns.  
I bring it to you.

## JONATHAN SHAW

### Letter to my mother

Dear Mum, I won't write you a novel.  
Barely fourteen rhyming lines  
I'll manage. No space to unravel  
the half a century that twined  
our lives. Perhaps I know you better  
now than when your weekly letters  
filled me in on family news.  
I wish that you could know me too,  
that you could look down from some heaven,  
hear the words I wish I'd said,  
see the tears I should have shed  
back then, take thanks for all you've given.  
The grave is deaf and blind and still.  
What we didn't say, we never will.

### Overlooked

The blueberry bush on our balcony  
is white with blossom.  
No one looks at its green pot,  
as Norman Mailer  
prisoner of sex  
lamented that for novels to be written  
someone had to do the dishes.

### Pot

Shelf on shelf in the kiln  
pots whose clay still smells  
of earth, showing no fingerprints  
waiting for the fire

Before Mao,  
before Chiang Kai-shek,  
brush and stencil, slip and glaze,  
repeat

Always a key in our front door  
this pot the only sentry  
silent and accommodating

No one expects fruit  
from its painted blossoms.  
A child touches them with a question.



## **MARGARET SIMPSON**

Margaret Simpson lives in Bolton UK, has had poems published in anthologies produced by 'Write on the Farm' workshops, 'Bolton WorkTown' and 'Creative Minds'. She has also had writing performed at 'Best of Bolton' at the town's Octagon Theatre and herself performs at open mic nights. She is a member of the Bolton based writing group, Bank St Writers.

### **POEMS**

Dear Wasp  
Regret is  
Wind of Change  
Fork in the River  
Missing

MARGARET SIMPSON

**Dear Wasp**

I could huff     and I could puff  
and I could blow your house down

but   instead   I will take my sleekest pen  
the one with the finest nib and  
fill it with the smoothest (least viscous) ink.

I will remove my shoes and my sullied outer layers  
and   if permitted   enter your home

I will step lightly across your threshold  
pass through the portals   pause  
at the fragile deckle edges

before entering the inner chambers  
of onion skin lining   and listen

your hum may bristle  
my innocent skin  
or it may psalm my senses

and on the translucence  
of the hot pressed surface (that one might call a wall)

I will trace your image  
so that ten thousand years hence  
worshipful eyes will know the Builder.

**Regret is**

the stone she wears round her neck  
honey warm   embedded in heart wood

a seaside post card   edges furred  
but the blue inked address   clear penned still  
square nibbed in a slant hand

and the monogrammed badge  
wreathed and crowned   in its box still  
a hint of Duraglit when opened

that shows who she once was.



MARGARET SIMPSON

**Wind of Change**

If I were the sea  
I could pound your cliff face  
until you cracked and crumbled and left streaming pillars  
for tourists with cameras  
not knowing they were witness  
to a crime scene.

If I were the wind  
I could lift your roof tiles  
rearrange your furniture  
in ways you never thought possible  
or  
I could fell trees  
and block your path  
so for once  
you had to find a new way  
home. Remember home?

But I am neither  
so once more we'll dig out the photos  
laugh at our eighties' hair  
count the missing persons.  
Then we'll put the album away  
on another wedding or christening or bar mitzvah  
draw the curtains.

But Dylan was right,  
the waters around you have grown  
and you never did learn to swim.  
Since you last looked in the mirror  
leaves have fallen.

One day I want to walk past you  
on the street and have you tap me  
on the shoulder and say.  
"Hey remember me?"

## MARGARET SIMPSON

### Fork in the River

Metal in gravel glinting like a lucky strike,  
an old fashioned fork with long thin tines,  
heft in the hand, substantial.

I posed for a photo,  
the legs are whiter than I remember  
above the peaty water,

rucksack latched on my back  
like a monstrous red growth.  
Contents weighed, calculated,

heavy as the day we started  
though the food was mostly eaten.  
And a hall marked fork with long thin tines,

cold steel on the teeth.  
Me hands free  
as if about to be daring, afterwards

we used to wonder  
from which kitchen table and who  
noticed its absence.

### Missing

I take out the canteen, lift the sateen lined lid,  
release each piece, hold it up,  
turn, turn again, (wrist and handle,  
one efficient tool) looking for evidence,

each facet reflecting a fragment.  
I polish, polish, polish,  
place the spoon and knife, just so  
by cut glass. Since last time

the constellations have changed.  
Guests arrive, flushed  
with their own stories. Air  
tastes brittle in winter.

For the first course you won't be missed,  
songs will be sung, the wassail cup emptied,  
we will eat our fill, be merry.  
I will still be hungry.



## SUE WATLING

Sue Watling is a writer and poet, living near the River Humber in the UK where she has an allotment and keeps honeybees. Sue has had poems published in The Adriatic, Seaborne Magazine, The Tide Rises, Amethyst Review, DawnTreader, Saravasti, Green Ink Poetry, ASP Literary Journal, Poetry Shed and Dream Catcher. Sue can be followed on Twitter [@suewatling](https://twitter.com/suewatling) and her blog about poetry and bees can be found at [suewatling.com](http://suewatling.com)

### POEMS

For Anne Bonny and Mary Read, 18th century pirates

Unreachable blue

Walk in the park at the dying of the year.

Home for a song thrush

Safe for a Samhain Spell.

Research into the nesting habits of birds

SUE WATLING

**For Anne Bonny and Mary Read, 18th century pirates**

We will birth girls,  
astride the waves,  
in the swing of a hull,  
to the keen of gull,  
and rattle of black-fingered reef.

I'll teach them to bind their breasts,  
while you sew pouches for blood,  
they'll straddle rigging,  
tilt with the tide,  
while all through the night,

boat beds rock them with salt star  
dreams of tarnished moons and flying fish.  
When we dock in a harbour,  
houses will scare them  
for how can the world be made of stone,

when breathing is motion,  
life is curves,  
and living means  
finding your feet  
on uncertain ground.

Published in *The Poetry Shed* - Nov 2021

SUE WATLING

### **Unreachable blue**

Birds are indifferent to misery,  
they chatter, chatter,  
like black-feathered demons.

If I had wings,  
I'd fly, like souls might do,  
dancing their sorrow,  
as if they were equivocal,  
tethered by our grief,  
yet sensing joy.

Who knows  
what the dead become  
in that final dream,  
or if space exists  
where souls might strut,  
          before taking flight  
                  like birds or kites  
against an unreachable blue.

### **Walk in the park at the dying of the year.**

The language of winter trees  
is stark from an absence of colour,

trunks black in the rain, branches spindle  
against grey skies, think Times New Roman

with skinny legs, serifs like punctuation,  
I want so much to read what they say.

Searching for clues, I scuff through leaves,  
heavy with wetness, their life over,

they've nothing to do, just rot dank breath,  
hunch on cold grass like crouching toads,

or dirty confetti, fallen on snow,  
white as the wings of angels.

If the park were a book of poems, would they  
include a language for prayer before sleep?

SUE WATLING

### **Home for a song thrush**

Perched in a hedge,  
on the edge of a field of barley,  
this is home for a song thrush.

Round as a cup, bowl, scoop of hands,  
woven from sticks, roots and grass,  
no doors or windows, ceiling of sky.

I had a home like this where I laid my eggs,  
their mystery hidden in shell so thin  
it looked like transparent membrane.

Inside, a heartbeat,  
curve of spine, arms,  
legs, like spindly balloons,

mushrooming longer, stronger,  
the curls on their heads  
soft as feathers lining the nest.

It's empty now and smells like absence,  
while the song thrush sings a lament  
for those who are lost, or fallen.

### **Safe for a Samhain Spell.**

If I'd been there,  
my hand on your chest,  
counting down your final breaths,  
running my tongue around their shapes,  
like tasting clouds, I'd swallow them whole,  
each one with a lick of the louche, dripped through  
iced water, listen, there's more, can you bear it? I'd steal  
the prints from your fingers to make me a dress, and where your feet  
pressed into the bed I'd make me a collar, then snip a curl from your head  
soft as a sleeping comma, slipping it into my pocket, safe for a Samhain spell.

SUE WATLING

### Research into the nesting habits of birds

Many species of birds dress up their nests  
Anna said, as we set up the cameras,  
disguising them the best we could,  
with bales of straw and branches.

Some use bright coloured objects,  
others gather feathers,  
magpies like silver,  
while storks, crows, swans,

all collect wool, hair, shells,  
nails, pieces of glass or stone.  
No one knows why they do this,  
we're going to try to find out.

I was seventeen and in love.  
Anna was funny, clever,  
amazing legs, knew all about birds,  
I was her errand boy, DIY call upon,

she worked for my father,  
who led a big charity,  
something to do with water,  
and his turn to have me for summer.

Maybe they do it to attract a mate  
Anna said, with a smile, It's what most people  
think. I flush, cheeks red, seems  
everything's down to sex these days.

What we leave makes a difference,  
Bower Birds fill their nests with blue;  
plastic bottle tops, ribbons, straws,  
pebbles, thread, our research

will go in a paper, would you like that?  
I nod, thinking of nests and how we might  
fit within their curled walls, like brackets, comma's  
or a seahorse tail, curled in a permanent question.