

# ON COURSE

## Vol 2

POEMS FROM THE PK SUMMER SCHOOL POETS 2022



Edited by Jim Bennett

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### **KAYE ALDENHOVEN**

Kaye Aldenhoven lives in the tropical north of Australia.

She has three published collections of poetry. Kaye has read her work at many venues, and especially enjoyed Chennai Poetry Festival

Sydney Writers Festival , Bhutan Writers Festival, Ubud Writers Festival.

Usually she writes of her environment and Northern Territory cultural relationships,

So Jim's Summer Poetry School has shaken her poetry tree.

### **POEMS**

the smell of home

Three Palms Pudding

Full moonset

## the smell of home

*Come out to the cart to get the second loaf.*  
*Your mother wants extra today, and you will save my poor old legs.*  
*Pat the old horse, said the baker.*  
*No way! I thought. Stinky horse.*  
I wanted to smell  
the bread on the shelves in his cart.  
Big breath now. Inhale.  
Catch the smell of warm bread.  
Can I re-call that Adelaide smell?

On our holiday in Port Elliott  
I swaggered proudly  
on my morning walk to the bakery.  
I allowed Little Sister to accompany me.  
That's what Big Sisters do.  
She did not hold the money: a florin.  
We carried a white loaf each, encased  
in our arms. Never wrapped.  
One morning I started to nibble a crusty corner.  
Could not stop.  
I was sent back alone to buy a replacement. Shame burnt me.  
Can I re-call that Fleurieu Peninsula smell?

At high school I swapped  
my lushly-filled soft white bread sandwiches  
For Riga rye bread, spread sparsely  
with unsalted butter.  
Beatrice Jaroslafski and I both believed we had the better bargain.

My new mother-in-law made her own bread.  
*Probably because she is Cornish,* I hazarded.  
She tried to teach me about feeding the yeast  
to keep it alive.  
I screwed up my nose at the idea.  
But not the smell  
as her expertly shaped dough  
cooked in her wood oven.  
Can I recall that Yorke Peninsula kitchen smell?

At the ferry in Istanbul, to cross the Bosphorus,  
hawkers sold fresh bread rings/rolls to travellers.  
Threaded on polished broomsticks,  
so commuters reached out their money,  
then lifted their crusty bread up,  
into their hungry mouths.  
The first crunchy bite.  
Turks are obsessed with the freshness of bread.  
Can I re-call that Istanbul smell?

On a rooftop in Rajahstan,  
she knelt in her purple sari as the sun reddened,  
kneading, smoothing, flat breads  
which she flung into a clay tandoor.  
Spread with burnt ghee,  
they made my saliva gush.  
Can I recall that Jaisalmer smell?

In the Australian desert, in Wailpiri country  
everyone cooked simple flour and water damper in hot coals.  
Everyone except Nungarai, my skin sister,  
who taught me her bread.  
*My grandfather was an Afghan cameleer,  
So my family kneads bread,  
flat bread, and we cook like this  
In a fry pan. You like it? How many you want?*  
Can I recall that desert smell?

The Staff of Life.  
The smell of bread, fresh baked.  
Or the smell of stale bread  
Toasted.  
Smells holy.  
I recall that smell of my mother's toast.

### Three Palms Pudding

I clung to his body as our motor bike throbbed through clouds.  
My naked arms and legs froze, my skimpy clothes were sodden.  
Near the top of the volcano, near the village on the rim  
Gunung Batur jutted into pale honey light.

We stopped. A young man tentatively tested my arm.  
*Selamat pagi.*  
My teeth chattered so hard I could not answer.  
*Come, my grandmother will help you.*  
He helped me dismount.  
Oh my stiff legs.

Inside a very large wooden packing box,  
an old woman squatted by a small fire. I stretched my hands for warmth.  
A blanket wrapped to hug my shoulders.  
Old Woman spooned gluey mush into a bowl.  
I recognised sago - frogs eggs we kids called them.  
She sprinkled white . . . er, white things, things like headless maggots,  
onto the sago beads, then ladled a thick, fragrant cream. Not from cows, I knew.  
From a bubbling brown pot, she drizzled sticky brown stuff.  
Old Woman handed me this bowl and a battered spoon.  
*It's good. Make you warm. Eat.* Young Man said.  
Obedient, I cuddled the warm bowl, sniffed sweet comfort.  
Ate.  
Smiled.  
Paid his grandmother. Gratefully.

I looked out at the road, listened to the village wakening.  
Rooster crowed, hens clucked a reply, dog growled, child laughed.  
I did not want to leave.

Forty years later at breakfast  
at Roma Bar in Darwin's old Chinatown  
Ruei orders a pair of chocolate crepes.  
I order three palms pudding.  
*Three palms pudding*, I tell my grand-daughter Ruei.  
*Not hands, my darling. Three palm trees.*  
Sago palm for starchy sago balls.  
Coconut palm for crisp white moist flesh and smooth cream.  
Arenga pinnata for palm sugar.  
*You already know sago and coconut, don't you?*

Yeah, well. Sugar palms.  
Sugar tapper cuts the flower stem, sweet sap drips to fill his bucket.  
Boil the sap until it's thick and sugary, BUT . . .

if you leave palm sugar sap in the bucket all day,  
it ferments  
and the palm tapper sells the liquid as arak  
to men walking past on their way home from working up the mountain.  
Men pay, then dip a cup into the bucket.  
Makes them very drunk.

Falling over-drunk.  
Keep out of their way  
as they try to walk home down the mountain.

*Nana, my crepes are delicious*, Ruei says.

### **Full moonset**

Blood red moon stained by bushfire smokes  
slides into slack sea  
Full tide, the year's peak  
washes through mangrove roots  
I turn to watch the disc of sun  
Rise through smoke horizon  
A horde of bloodthirsty sandflies  
attacks my pallid skin





**PRATIBHA CASTLE**

Pratibha Castle's award-winning debut pamphlet *A Triptych of Birds and A Few Loose Feathers* (Hedgehog Poetry Press) was published 2022. Her work appears, amongst others, in *Agenda*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Blue Nib*, *Dreich*, *Fragmented Voices*, *Impspired Ink Sweat & Tears*, *London Grip*, *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*, *One Hand Clapping*, *Friday Poem*, *High Window*, and was highly commended and long-listed in competitions including The Bridport Prize; she was given special mention in *The Welsh Poetry Competition*. She began writing in 2010, receiving a first-class honours degree in English and Creative Writing at University of Chichester, continuing to study on their MA in Creative Writing. Pratibha, who was born in Ireland, and lives in West Sussex is a regular reader for West Wilts Radio, *The Poetry Place*. Her second pamphlet will be published by Hedgehog Poetry Press later this year.

Hug appeared in London Grip December 2021 and received special mention in The Welsh Poetry Competition 2021.

Octopus Ride appeared in Agenda Summer 2021

Slip was written on Poetry Kit Summer School 2021 and appeared in Dreich April 2022.

## **POEMS**

Hug  
Octopus Ride  
Slip

## Hug

My mother's heart was a lake,  
its frozen surface cracked,  
when I was young, with  
insults hurled her way,  
and I hurled many, wounding  
like rocks, till her cool glaze  
became a starburst of splintered love.

Even her delight in daffodils, withered  
since the bunch of yellow bells  
she gave me on my 15th birthday,  
whose whole heads I bit off, mad at her  
for some imagined slight and  
in an acid spritz of blame, spat her way,

when my mother, murmuring to herself,  
*sure the poor girl's tired,*  
patted my arm, our only  
physical exchange,  
for we never hugged.

Having learnt, years later,  
how an infant monkey  
languishes if deprived  
of its mother's touch,  
I subjected her  
to a lingering clinch.

Not just a brief *ooh-la-la* peck  
on either cheek, stay  
two feet away  
from-one-another sort of hug,  
but a bellytobelly chesttochest  
squeeze, palming up and down her back  
as though grooming the silk-eyed Persian  
hunkered on the couch, glaring,  
and on a normal day, the only flesh  
my mother or myself would handle.

And when she tried to edge away,  
I fastened my grip like *now*  
*I've got you ma, you're*  
*going nowhere.* The way,  
when small, I ached for her  
to hold me, limpet tight.

## Octopus Ride

The cage dangles upside down  
on the tip of a tentacle flung,  
like a baby's arm,  
to its steepest sprawl.

It idles in the breeze,  
quivers, my knuckles white,  
tight with clutching the metal bar.  
A singe of sugar rises from the candy

floss stand and axle grease, *Woolworth's*  
cheap scent, shouts, laughter, all  
the hurdy gurdy grizzle of the fair. I breathe  
like sipping water

in a drought, barely enough  
to keep me conscious lest,  
falling into a belly bloating wail,  
I loose my grip. How might it be to

slip, to soar, a swift inscribing secrets,  
or the blood clot that might have been  
you slipping out from between  
my legs,

to slump, akimbo, a crooked star  
glinting in the churned up  
mud, essence seeping through  
its jelly fish skin. My fingers tire,

begin to fail, to open, but the engine  
judders back to life. Cogs,  
once smooth, stutter me  
back to the start.

I clamber out,  
stagger through  
quicksand crowds,  
my face a clown's mask

and, though my lips curve upwards  
as if all this has been nothing  
more than a lark, my heart  
weeps clotted tears.

## Slip

The room hums with memories,  
and a bee's fret against the window.  
Stick of sealing wax, fleur-de-lys clay seal,  
silver fountain pen, awry on the blotter.  
Candle with a creeping drip

and a smell of guilt  
on the mantle  
above a crackling fire,  
its wax the yellow of sunflower honey.  
A black enamelled dish, friezed  
with pansies, confidante

to cushions she embroidered  
in violet silk, wind battling the shutters  
while Jack, at the table, hunched  
over fragments of the pot  
she shattered in a sulk.  
Stout bellied bowl, home

each spring to flagrant peonies,  
their crimson floozy heads tribute  
to a bouquet another man had sent  
after *La Bohème*, and a night  
dancing beneath the stars,  
hours after she accepted Jack. Folly

of jasmine, gillyflower, rose –  
aroma of the brazen blooms –  
scenting her regret for weeks. Brown tipped  
petals littering the rug, taunt  
of blighted love.

The pot, thirty years on, hurled  
after Jack rebuked  
her for some supposed excess.  
Never raised his voice

above a woodpigeon's coo.  
Unflappable, even then,  
and while he cajoled  
through the silent hours,  
coaxed shards

into a crazy-paved conciliation,  
his tender patient hands laboured  
over more than slip.



## CLAIR CHILVERS

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

She has had poems published in online and print magazines including Acumen, Agenda, Allegro, Amaryllis, Artemispoetry, Atrium, the Ekphrastic Review, Impspired, Ink Sweat and Tears, Live Encounters, Poetry Atlas, Reach Poetry, Sarasvati and Snakeskin. She is a PK CITN poet. 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. Her first collection *Out of the Darkness* (Frosted Fire) was published in 2021 and her second *Island* (Impspired Press) in 2022.

[www.clairchilverspoetry.co.uk](http://www.clairchilverspoetry.co.uk) <https://www.facebook.com/clair.chilvers> [twitter@cedc13](https://twitter.com/cedc13)

### POEMS

the flight from Egypt  
This is Not a Poem in Four Parts....  
Onion Johnny

## **the flight from Egypt**

I stood outside the white painted house  
with one small suitcase  
the snow the heaviest for years

in Brinker's time  
they closed the Prinsengracht each year  
as winter set in

St Mark's Square flooded  
The Merchant demanded his pound of flesh  
cruise liners towered above

the Ark a response to the catastrophe  
Out of Africa to the Lions' Den  
in Elephant and Castle

the bush is burning Manderlay in flames  
wildfires out of control  
Scarlett flees

a Cat watches The Seagull  
on a Hot Tin Roof  
A Midsummer Night's Dream of Gerontius

## **This is Not a Poem in Four Parts that Screams at Me About Why I am not Doing Something Meaningful for the World**

This isn't a poem about the camel market in Omdurman.  
This isn't about the acrid smell of camel's breath,  
hot leather and those musty little rugs  
that go under the saddles.  
This definitely isn't a poem about camel dung,  
but perhaps it should be.  
Nor is it about all those people crowded together  
to spit, to haggle, to banter with the drivers,  
those wiry little men whose eyes seem always  
to focus on the horizon,  
the place where the orange-evening sand dunes  
meet the harsh blue of the sky.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nor is this about the time every year  
when the family gathers to play rounders.  
Nor about that first time,  
my generation, with maybe a small child or two.  
Nor about how we played the village team,  
local farmers with weather-beaten faces and Devon speech;  
nor about the team from the pub that beat us hollow.  
This isn't about the years we played in late August heat,  
or other years better forgotten  
when we played in the cold drizzle and fog  
of an early-arriving Autumn.  
And it isn't about our children's children  
and how we sit in the sun, or huddle in the drizzle,  
to watch them with gratitude.

\*\*\*\*\*

And this is certainly not about the meal of corned-beef hash  
cooked on a primus stove in the tiny galley of a sailing-boat.  
Nor about how I boiled the potatoes first and diced them,  
fried onions in olive oil, added corned beef and tomatoes  
let it all get a bit browned on the bottom, then fried eggs to go on top.  
It isn't about how we were always hungry after a long day at sea  
and we washed the hash down with cheap red wine.  
It isn't about the cheese and apples that we had to follow  
or even the tart from a local bakery  
if there was one nearby the mooring.

\*\*\*\*\*

Cont...

This is not a poem about the man I saw every day  
as he walked with a frame along the road into town.  
It isn't about his old zip-up shopping bag  
or the dog that was, in dog-years, as old as he was.  
It isn't about how I used to rush past on my way to work,  
and wonder how long it must take him  
and whether he was allowed to take his dog inside  
or whether he had to tie him up by the door.  
It isn't about how I hoped  
that sometimes he met a friend for a cup of coffee,  
but suspected that he had outlived them all.  
That he was escaping the loneliness of home  
for the welcome warmth of the shops.

\*\*\*\*\*

This poem isn't about Omdurman, or rounders matches  
it isn't about corned-beef hash (delicious though it was)  
nor about the old man with his dog.  
It is about restlessness  
and how I cannot stay at home too long  
how I have to travel to far places,  
or just to work;  
how I need to be with others  
even if their camels are bad-tempered  
and how the sight of someone alone, old  
makes me want to cry.



## Onion Johnny

He used to come each summer  
strings of pink onions on his handlebars  
dressed in striped Breton jersey, beret  
she would always buy a string or two  
imagining his journey  
from the village to the coast  
cycling into the wind with his heavy burden  
the rough sea crossing  
then the steep slopes of the South Downs

this year is different  
but she greets him, buys as usual  
though she has not cooked for weeks

she rouses herself  
strips the first layers away  
in this place where the sun never shines  
and rain falls on the sodden earth  
then the next layers  
until she sees at last the rotten core  
looks back at the confines of her home  
sees the shadow of clouds passing  
driven away as the days pass

she cries as she slices them thinly  
then cooks them in olive oil and butter  
watches the crispness melt  
into a mellifluous puree  
for French Onion Soup



## A.C. CLARKE

A C Clarke's fifth collection is *A Troubling Woman*. She was a winner in the Cinnamon Press 2017 pamphlet competition with *War Baby*. *Wedding Grief*, centred on the marriage of Paul Éluard and Gala, was published by Tapsalteerie in 2021.

<http://www.tapsalteerie.co.uk/product/wedding-grief-by-ac-clarke/>

<https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/authors/a-c-clarke/>

### POEMS

Epiphany

Nailing Things Down/may also kill them

Lived in

## Epiphany

From the top deck of a bus the sky soared  
into infinite blue. I launched myself with it  
as if the drab seat were primed to boost a rocket.  
My heart was light as a balloon,  
free of the gravity of obligation.  
For the blink of a breath  
I thought I understood the *isness* of things,  
no whys or wherefores.  
The bus trundled on to reach some destination  
I'd bought a ticket for, I don't remember where.  
I remember that moment, sixty years after.

I remember that moment, sixty years after.  
I'd bought a ticket for ... I don't remember where -  
the bus trundled on to reach some destination,  
no whys or wherefores -  
I thought I understood the *isness* of things,  
for the blink of a breath.  
Free of the gravity of obligation  
my heart was light as a balloon.  
As if the drab seat were primed to boost a rocket  
into infinite blue I launched myself with it  
from the top deck of a bus. The sky soared.

**Nailing Things Down/may also kill them**

*title borrowed from title and first line of a poem by Linda Susan Jackson to which this poem is a kind of response*

Never a truer word -  
brings back  
those summer afternoons hazed with heat  
when, net in hand, I hoped to win my father's miserly  
approval,  
creeping up  
on a blue-eyed peacock, even a red admiral sunning on a leaf. Fresh  
out of the cocoon was best, the new imago dazed by quantities  
of light, still  
trembling at its own audacity.

Then wham! And straight  
from net to ether bottle,  
flutter then fall. Later  
the corkboard, the careful  
positioning to skewer  
a corpse whose limp  
wings had already  
shed their light.

## **Lived in**

We climb the steep glen. The spring landscape  
remembers autumn, the tawny slopes could mean  
dieback or growth. I've often noted  
how spring shoots at birth are red  
as newborns after the first breath.

From the top we look down to the valley floor  
ribboned by burns, ruled straight by fences;  
turn our backs for the high moor where  
lark and peewit and curlew shout  
and the hills blur into cloudpeak and snowshelf.

Yet even here the tractor's tyreprint rolls  
over ditch and stone and tender grass  
and lambs cry for the teat. There's not an inch  
of this country untrodden. Even the moles  
breed thick near furrows, postholes,

tunnel into the turned land. Free as air  
we say, taking deep into our lungs  
the exhalations of our metal horses,  
each rain-filled loch smudged by the thumbprint  
of decades-old atomic fires.



## **SHIRLEY ANNE COOK**

Shirley Anne Cook is a poet and author. Her poems have won or been placed in a number of competitions including the Plough Poetry Prize, Mslexia, Basil Bunting and Bridport. She has also had poems published in various anthologies and magazines. Her first poetry collection, 'Turning the Map Over,' is available to purchase on Amazon.

Her new poetry anthology for children, 'Dinosaur Din and Other Poems' will be published in a few weeks and available on Amazon.

Shirley also writes books for children which are published under the name of Shirley Harber. A former primary school teacher in Hertfordshire, Sussex and Egypt, Shirley now lives in Denham Buckinghamshire.

### **POEMS**

Disappearing Act  
Remembering trees  
Places I See My Mum

## **Disappearing Act**

The day before you  
died, you showed  
me that trick again –  
the one where you  
inverted a cup over a coin  
to make it disappear.  
Baffled, I would  
find it under a vase  
or dish in the dining room.  
Once you even plucked  
the coin from Gran's ear.

I don't give up hope  
that I will find you  
again somewhere  
in the afterlife.  
You'll still be smoking  
your pipe and whistling  
the same old tune,  
'Bye Bye Blackbird.'

## **Remembering trees**

We forget trees in war. Rooted in man's  
hostile crossfire, they can't retreat.

Shellfire shocks them nude, a canvas  
of blackened stumps. They can only watch

as their splintered tears fall onto the bloodied ground.  
In the silence of aftermath, a healing wind

buffs away soiled leaf litter. Rain cleanses  
wounds: sunlight pierces through acrid dust clouds.

Bereaved trees rally. They gather up shrapnel  
and bones into cambium caskets, etched forever

on the lineage of their heartwood. In the spring,  
new saplings will grow. Undaunted, they will push

through the shell-pocked helmets of fallen men.



## Places I See My Mum

I see my Mum in our bedroom.  
She turns on the light  
then draws back the curtains.  
The window-panes sparkle  
with iced patterns of ferny foliage.  
'Look,' she says, 'Jack Frost came last night.'

I see her in the kitchen.  
It's Monday and she's submerged  
beneath a steamy sea of soap suds.  
She boils clothes in the copper  
then wrings them through the mangle.

I see my Mum in the fields,  
where hedgerows thrum with bees  
and heave with luscious blackberries.  
Her fingers are soon stained  
with their purple juice.  
Back at home she makes delicious jam.  
I help write the jar labels.

I see her on Christmas Eve.  
Wearing her bibbed apron,  
she's in a frenzy of kitchen busy-ness.  
She makes sausages rolls and mince pies  
and decorates the cake  
with glassy waves of snow-icing.

I see my Mum in the woods –  
a springtime walk.  
We stop to rest on her special log.  
Suzie the dog is panting at her feet.  
Around us daffodils nod their heads  
and a cuckoo calls in the distance.

I see her at the seaside.  
She holds a towel around  
me while I dry off after a swim.  
She pours orange squash  
into yellow plastic cups,  
and gives us warm tomato  
sandwiches kept in an old biscuit tin.  
I see my Mum at nighttime.  
She tucks me in bed. Her hands smell  
of lavender cream. I'm warm and safe.  
She smiles and says, 'Don't let the bed bugs bite.'  
Then she kisses me tenderly  
on the cheek and turns off the light.



## **COLLETTE DONNE**

Collette Donne grew up in Liverpool and always had an interest in writing poetry from a young age. She spent most of her professional life working for international organizations and in the Higher Education sector.

### **POEMS**

Love Letters  
Home from Home  
Oenotria

## Love Letters

Love letters drove me back to Vienna  
That landlocked city far removed from the screeching seagulls of a city on the sea.  
I would miss the vibrancy of Liverpool.  
The bouncy beat of weekend pubs and clubs.  
The smiling faces of proud people unaware of the city's future elevation.

The stamp mark on letters from Austria made my heart skip with joy.  
A flat on Gablenzgasse, a busy noisy road was our love nest.  
A tram and a bus was a short ride to Burgring the heart of majestic Wien.

Liverpool had trams before my time from Herculaneum Dock to Alexandra Dock.  
The 'Ovee' eight mile trip crunched along tracks with seafarers and far flung chatter.

Vienna wasn't new to me.  
A year before this crazy move I occupied the city streets with English and Dutch girls.  
The bars in the Bermuda Triangle were regular weekend hangouts.  
Close to the River Danube with its mossy green water.  
The puffing of Marlboro red cigarettes soaked the air with smoke.  
Shindigs all through the night to the rising sun at 5 am in that hushed city.  
It was cool. We were young and beautiful. We were courageous.  
The men always had eyes on us and we made friends with a few.

The nightclubs were corny compared to Liverpool.  
It felt alien to a Mersey girl. The music old fangled.  
That's where I met him - the love letter.  
Dancing like a maniac. White jeans vacuum sucked to his skinny legs.  
Our first date was at the Sacher hotel famous for chocolate cake.  
He grabbed my hand and approached the smart doorman with his top hat "Gruss Gott" he said with a grin.

It was the beginning of a long romance.  
Among the statues of musicians and Habsburg palaces  
Waltzing our way through each other's hearts.  
Electrified hands on each other's bodies.  
Happy walks in Prater, dodging night rats in Votiv Park,  
Twenty schilling tickets to the Staatsoper to educate me.  
Summer trips to Melk and Heurigers guzzling Sturm.  
Overnight train from Vienna to Venice.  
Family visits to his hometown of Neulengbach where a scandal rocked the art world.  
The smell of pure air rose from green pastures tipping our heads upwards to eternity.  
There was no end to those happy times.  
Mapping our tracks in adulation.

Devouring morning coffee and cakes wrapped in dainty pink tissue paper and ribbon at Café Aida,  
Sayers of Liverpool was knocked off its number one spot for cream cakes .  
Heavenly delight for sugar fairies like me.  
Love letters I kept and cherished.  
Love letters I lost and mourn.  
Liverpool I left forever.

## Home from Home

floppy fuchsias hide mottled frogs as the  
bronze hare keeps time for 'Gin O'clock'  
veined petunias sit happily with the speckled  
Purple and white Verbena  
Gladioli stand straight, waiting for August parade  
too hot to march up Langley Hill  
If only the bees funnelled water over the plants  
to give heat relief  
fat heads of geranium and hydrangeas poke me in the face.  
they carry no scent like the sagely Salvias  
Hot Lips is a favourite with the bees.  
the washing line bows with the heavy weight of clothes  
fluttering – gently against the sun.

It was dark in the yard in Gidlow Road  
washing line skipped to the northern downpours  
there, in that kitchen, the tumble dryer rumbled  
with foster kids clothes – it went on forever  
so it seemed to my childish ears.

I'm back to here now in my garden, firmly in the present.  
I sit still. The creak of the parasol absorbs sizzling summer rays,  
shades my fair skin from erupting like Mount Etna  
spitting down cremating hills and valleys  
with orange peel lava. No sweet scent descending over Catania.

As a kid, my hair was orange  
A pity it's so close to red  
fans get confused between Holland and Liverpool.  
there were no flowers in Gidlow Road.  
the hard brick melted during summer school holidays.  
I never saw a flower in Lister Road library where  
I met Achilles in ancient Greece.  
I did see flowers in church seducing  
the congregation with musty perfume.  
St Anne was pleased – she told me so in prayer.  
I asked her if the Garden of Gethsemane had flowers,  
She left it to my imagination.

I snip the sweet peas reminiscing of old summer times of youth.  
the church choir, our scarlet red robes, Nellie's huge tea pot.  
Hallelujah! A new outfit for Easter.  
my little gang on the train from Liverpool to Ainsdale  
stolen kisses in the sand dunes where our heavy strides  
burnt our feet as we climbed to the top to see the sea.  
my ginger curls loved the sea breeze.  
Ham sandwiches always tasted better there.

Now that I'm grown up, I'm a member of the National Trust.  
a smug achievement for a foster kid.  
grass is on my doorstep too.  
not missing the concrete of that back yard.  
fluffy white bendy jasmine oozes gentle scent at the gate.  
rows of potted electric blue Lavender secrete a relaxing aroma.  
hot shingle squeezes my feet to hops.  
I've travelled from there to here.  
The land I promised myself aged 14.

## Oenotria

the land of wine.  
the map still with its original fold  
wrapped in red paper with a green bow  
was a Christmas gift years ago  
beautifully intact bears no useful damage  
I like to slide it in and out of its folder  
like I'm about to start the journey  
not forgetting to start at the top in Veneto  
to sample crackling bubbly prosecco  
with soft creamy tiramisu  
heading west to Piemonte for sumptuous Barolo and honeysuckle Malvasia  
sinks down the throat with buttery hazelnuts  
next stop Toscana the home of Chianti Classico  
nestled in a vineyard amongst the rolling hills  
I can taste the ruby grapes swirling in a glass  
the sour smell under the Tuscan sun  
leap over to Marche for fresh crisp Verdicchio  
a sea salt sniff of fish stew on the coast  
cross the border to Abruzzo for Montepulciano  
a popular red with licorice lips and peppery mortadella  
my fingers trace to Puglia, Trulli land  
where juicy Primitivo grows and happy picnics under olive trees  
with Focaccia and Orecchiette occur  
with my thumb I land in the Adriatic sea waiting for a ferry to Brindisi  
I fold away the wine map of Italy.



## **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 Through the Seasons* – which she co-authored with a colleague. Catherine has taken several poetry writing courses with Jim Bennett through Poetry Kit. She also enjoys helping people write their memoirs.

### **POEMS**

second Sunday in May  
quest for a way out  
Somewhere in France June 10, 1915  
in the beginning

## **second Sunday in May**

Nan bends down to pin a white carnation  
to my only Sunday dress to my sister's  
but not on to our baby brother still in arms  
warns us not to fidget not to play with the flowers  
I clasp my sister's hand as we totter down the aisle

hushed whispers rustle church bulletins  
ladies with hats and white gloves on turn to stare  
as they sit with their daughters who wear pink carnations  
on frocks much nicer than my hand-me-down one  
their Shirley Temple shoes outshine my lace-ups

Nan trundles down the aisle behind us  
nods to those who will later comment on  
what a good person she is don't hear the threats  
of being split up of being sent to the orphanage  
or feel the sharpness of Nan's hand on my back

as we leave the church I pull off the carnation  
let it fall into the shrubbery later will say I lost it  
Nan will frown put the other carnations in a vase  
leave them until the clove-like fragrance disappears  
the flowers shrivel water clouds with rot



poem without using the vowel "I":

**quest for a way out**

Joe wanders the hall  
hands clasped behind back  
soft shoes shuffle on glossy floor  
mutters a few words now and then  
*lunch got to go not sure*  
he lunges for the door when  
cracked open by me  
one hand wraps around the edge  
pale knuckles strong grasp  
dark eyes blaze over my shoulder  
wordless mouth resolute  
*stop that now Joe* the nurses scold  
he never puts up a fuss turns around  
resumes the walk to the other end  
tests the obdurate door

**Somewhere in France June 10, 1915**

Sister, this is heaven  
our tents are beautiful

their grey spirits  
stopped here overnight  
the most awful wounds

too much smoking  
goodness knows

the stories they tell  
we hear plenty

a bugle sounds  
can't stay long

I could go on

from a letter written by Nursing Sister Sophie M. Hoerner, 1915

Sophie Hoerner was born in Montréal on August 21, 1877 and trained at McGill University. Throughout the war, Sophie served with the No. 1 Canadian General Hospital beginning in early 1915, and then with the No. 3 Canadian General Hospital in Northern France. Sophie then served as home sister and later assistant matron of No. 3 Casualty Clearing Station. From a collection of letters within the Sophie Hoerner fonds at Library and Archives Canada. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/canada-nursing-sisters/Pages/sophie-hoerner.aspx>



*"Om is pure unitary consciousness. It is ineffable peace. It is the Self, beyond all words."*

*The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal by Swami Prabhavanand*

### **in the beginning**

I join palms together at heart centre

ask the yoga class to join me in chanting  
the ancient Sanskrit mantra OM

long before it was used to sell jewelry t-shirts yoga mats

inspired tattoos on lower backs or other inapt places

this primordial sound reverberated across a distant continent

on a slow steady exhalation the chant flows

around curving letters of Aaah Oooh Mmmm

along canyons of consciousness that lead to complete quiet

I bow my head to a resonant peaceful heart



## ZOË SÎOBHAN HOWARTH-LOWE

Zoë is a Poet and Mum from Dukinfield. She has an MA in Poetry from Bath Spa University. Her first pamphlet 'Love is the way bark grows' came out with Half Moon Books in June 2019 and her second 'I have grown two hearts' with Hedgehog Press in Autumn 2020. Her First Collection 'Pocket Full of Stones' was published by Indigo Dreams in 2021.

Her work has appeared in Anthologies and Journals including For the Silent, Atrium, Ink, Sweat and Tears, Picaroon, Algebra of Owls, Magma and Here Comes Everyone.

Twitter: @ZSHowarthLowe

Website: [www.zshowarthlowe.com](http://www.zshowarthlowe.com)

When NASA Finishes Mining was highly commended in the 'Flights of Fancy, 2017' Bradford on Avon's Literary Festival Competition, and has been published by BeZine, and nominated for the best of the net in 2018. It also appears in my first collection 'Pocket Full of Stones' with Indigo Dreams.

On This Duvet appeared at Bath Literature Festival and also in my Indigo Dreams collection, 'Pocket Full of Stones'.

Northbound was one of the Poem of the North Poems, written for the 50 year celebration of the Poetry Library in 2018. It was written using a form invented for the celebration an 8-2-1, inspired by the Dewey decimal number for poetry 821. It also appears in my second pamphlet 'I Have Grown Two Hearts' by Hedgehog Press.

### POEMS

When NASA Finishes Mining

On This Duvet

Northbound

## **When NASA Finishes Mining**

There used to be craters on the moon, now the moon is a crater. Carved out, mined of all its juices, it remains derelict. Too light to continue to orbit: it just hangs, skeletal and listless. Unable to wax or wane, its cycle broken.

Tidal-confusion grips the ocean below. Trapped, neither flowing in nor out, unable to turn yet trying to. Turning itself one way, then the next, like an uncomfortable sleeper, too hot inside its own shape.

I sit, bare-footed, on night-dewed grass, sniffing out the hot-salt of the ocean that cannot rest, the orange-rind moon above. I too am neither one thing, nor another. I whisper to the blades of grass, tap on the earth, and wait for the flowers that will never come.

## **On this Duvet**

I have spilt ink:  
for a second, it sat imperiously  
on the downy surface  
glistening; a perfect dome  
before it fractured.  
From a bubble trapped under a fragile film  
blue rivulets burst forth.  
The skin is cracked – fractal –

blue lines relentless – running over soft fabric;  
soaking into the white cotton fibres  
and marking each thread with a stamp of blue.  
Royal blue.

Soap froths up – mad –  
scolding each stained strand into a meeker,  
less vibrant version of itself.  
Yet still the ink remains –  
relinquishing nothing but a blush,  
remaining a blur of psychiatrists' logic,  
sitting there – frowning.

## **Northbound**

My babies were born in the South, now we are all packed in a van,  
inching along the M5. Northbound.

Our house packed in boxes; half neatly labelled,  
half thrown in anyhow. Nuts and bolts rolling free in the bottom,  
reassembling furniture promises to be interesting.

My babies sleep amongst favourite toys,  
unaware of their shift in gravity, this homecoming,  
their roots are unearthed, about to be re-potted.

A lorry is on the hard shoulder. Cab ablaze.  
As we crawl past this moment is seared into my memory:

We pass and race away homewards, while behind us the road is closed.



## **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**

At The Old Workhorse  
Always Winter  
Mary Simpson's Jubilee  
Fibonacci's Chair



## **The Old Workhorse**

Pristine curves in all the right places,  
I polish with aromatic oils and buff  
for pleasure. Reflecting my smile,  
the well tuned motor responds as I push  
the throttle hard to ground.

Lightning speed, windows open, the roars...  
neighbours catch their Sunday breath  
in horror or envy. With fuel costs  
nearly doubled, I leave the sporty model  
and return to my trusted old banger,

solid and reliable for nearly forty years,  
a few dents, nothing a bit of make-up can't conceal.  
A preference for open roads, she hasn't the grip  
for fast cornering like in our courting days,  
but she's a good little runner.

## Always Winter

Sundays, Mother stayed late in bed  
hugging her hot-water bottle,  
piss-pot under the dressing-table,  
her memories of yesterday night  
faint amongst booze-rusted cogs.

I'd wake to her coughs and groans,  
as she stretched her bulbous form,  
and the creak of floorboards  
from her descent to the yap  
of the mongrel waiting to raise a leg.

Come evening her bat-wing blubber  
swayed with the iron on starched  
white linen, shirts for the week  
for the Him and us kids,  
between sips of medicinal Brandy.

Stew on the Aga, warmth  
against his crusty fist of metal—  
He who preached the gospel,  
three services on a Sunday,  
and went home to beat the wife

behind a freshly painted red door,  
us kids huddled in bedroom corners,  
waiting. After Grace,  
a lull of silence, downcast eyes  
at the dinner table, early to bed.

Mondays too  
to her symphonic snores,  
and his prayers  
in the not-to-be-disturbed study,  
I crept out to school  
on an empty stomach.

A normal child  
from a respectable home,  
doesn't raise her hand,  
but homework's always done.

## Mary Simpson's Jubilee

no-one celebratin me      my 70 years of service  
up each mornin with lark settin tables   scrubbin sink  
fryin bacon   straight from fatted pig   smell in hair  
bad for likes of me   vegetarian   don't go with them  
that kills flesh to eat   nor with them that call it sport  
all ponced-up in tweeds with a tally-ho and hounds  
barkin across valley   settin off farm dogs

no-one celebratin me      my 70 years service  
up each mornin on my knees   being thankful  
with prayers for them's that's not bothered  
that takes it as birth-right   to have health  
and money to fritter without knowin worth of nought  
don't go with costly clutter when there's folk  
homeless and starvin in war and drought-dry lands

no-one celebratin me      my 70 years of service  
to family   neighbours   community   Queen and planet  
as I plant a tree in back yard   and remember day  
70 years ago      I stood on corner of street  
with Mam and Auntie Dot   wavin Coronation flags  
promisin to serve my Queen

but for flick of butterfly wing   that could be me  
Mary Simpson   spinster of Parish   celebratin  
Platinum Jubilee   no hard feelins   your Majesty  
I give thanks and raise my glass of stout   to tele  
salt of earth      God Bless you Ma'am

## **Fibonacci's Chair**

dark  
clouds  
fists clenched  
open wide  
inspection chamber  
sharp prick before numbness takes hold  
voiceless fear high pitch frequency I count to hundred  
rinse of mouth hydraulic chair descends jelly leaves legs  
next appointment six-months check-up  
nail dug palms restored  
normal life  
resumes  
blue  
sky



## **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, Trouville 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**

The Persistence of Memory

Good Friday, California, April 1969, 3P.M.

My Father's Bass

## THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

A Camembert wheel from yesterday's lunch  
has been left on the back garden table.

How helpless it looks,  
all white and soft and runny,  
drooping sadly over  
the metal table's noon-hot edge.

The cruelty of August's sun  
has spoiled the cheese that only yesterday  
was round, full of flavour,  
like a clock face full of meaning and hope,  
anticipation, the possibilities  
of what time could bring.

I touch the ruined cheese  
that I will never taste,  
now sticky, smelly,  
useless as a melted clock  
that has lost all time,  
lost, like the good strong flavour  
of this forgotten cheese  
rotting in the sun.

published by Runcible Spoon, January 2021.

**GOOD FRIDAY, CALIFORNIA, APRIL 1969, 3 P.M.**

They say the earth will break today.  
They say we should stay at home.  
There is nothing we can do.  
A Good Friday without an Easter.

My friends say see you after vacation.  
My parents talk about dinner at McDonald's  
followed by a movie  
at the drive-in theatre.

They don't believe.  
I believe.

3 p.m. is an endless wall  
with nothing behind it.  
A palsied afternoon,  
the ground will tremble  
like the chin of a sobbing face.  
Then the sea will come from far away,  
a green stampede of unwanted horses  
growing in my bedroom window,  
closer, closer.

Then these walls will come down,  
the ceiling will weep,  
my bed, my books, my records  
all evilly stirred and bubbling  
in the sea's sudden cauldron,  
my jackets, blouses, jeans  
pulled from the closet,  
churning like struggling swimmers.

Then I will go wild,  
my face a mask of sea,  
a silent explosion of arms and legs and hair

as I perform a final dance  
of slow water  
at precisely 3 p.m.  
I will be on time.

Published in *Avatar Review*, Summer 2021

## MY FATHER'S BASS

It was always in the corner of the family room,  
a tall, voluptuous figure of shiny brown  
topped with the curled tail of a seahorse.  
It leaned lazily against the wall,  
cocky and familiar as a family member,  
patiently waiting for my father's hands.

The two of them stood side by side like brothers,  
twins joined together  
for jazz and big band music practice.

Sometimes my father coaxed me  
small and timid into the living room  
as smoky and bright as a spotlighted stage.  
Guitars and lap steel guitar joined the bass,  
his musician friends seated, smiling at me.

A quiet man, my father let the bass's deep voice  
speak for him.  
The notes thumped  
like an adrenaline-fueled heartbeat,  
his brown fingers thick and full of jazz  
as they moved agilely along the strings  
like a sculptor's hands working in clay.  
They created invisible masterpieces that hung on the air  
of those safe childhood evenings.  
I hear my father when I hear jazz.  
I listen for the bass and he's there.  
It's as if his heart still beats somewhere,  
tells me he's still with me  
if I will only listen.

Published in *Two Hawks Quarterly*, Spring 2022





## **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**

Bel Canto  
The Life Of Dreams  
Coming Of Age

## **Bel Canto**

With Christmas gone, each tardy dawn I wait  
to hear the blackbird's song dissect the dark.  
Though earth's confined by frost, the air keen and stark,  
and worms interred too deeply to locate,  
I ache to catch his concert at my gate.  
There, where coveted sultanas find their mark  
his fluted grace notes trill and spark  
on mornings – fresh – or sultry evenings, late.

And early summer days are so enriched  
to hear his flagrant, fearless gasconade  
to rival birds – or, perhaps, a serenade  
to lady-love – he has us all bewitched.  
No nightingale from mystic hideaway  
could match my blackbird's daring roundelay.

**The Life Of Dreams**  
**(Cento – coda below)**

Is all that we see or seem  
but a dream within a dream?  
Our dreams are tales told in dim Eden,  
in the ages lying in the buried past of the earth.  
What should they do there but desire  
a theme for reason, much too strong for fantasy.

We dream – it is good we are dreaming –  
It would hurt us – were we awake –  
a word from a dream or several spiked on it,  
like old receipts.

We are such stuff as dreams are made on ...  
lovers and madmen have such seething brains  
such shaping fantasies that apprehend  
more than cool reason ever comprehends –  
the silver apples of the moon,  
the golden apples of the sun.

Such stuff as dreams are made on ...  
back in the playground, standing about four feet high,  
the playground was five miles wide,  
it was broken black tarmac, with a high fence  
running all round and it had a special name to it,  
they called it The Killing Ground.

But since it is playing – kill us,  
and we are playing – shriek –  
Such stuff as dreams are made on ...  
a dream about our Master, William Shakespeare.

Art thou afeared to be the same  
in thine own act and valour  
as thou art in desire – the receipt  
of reason a limbeck only?

It is too easy to forget that a dream  
is a thought like any other.

Coda follows

Cento coda

- 1      *A Dream Within a Dream - Edgar Allan Poe*
- 2      *All that's Past - Walter de la Mare*
- 3      *Ode - A E O'Shaughnessy*
- 4      *A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford - Derek Mahon*
- 5      *The Dream - John Donne*
- 6      *We Dream - Emily Dickinson*
- 7      *Bodkin - Vona Groarke*
- 8      *The Tempest - William Shakespeare*
- 9      *A Midsummer's Night's Dream - William Shakespeare*
- 10     *The Song of Wandering Aengus - W.B. Yeats*
- 11     *The Tempest - William Shakespeare*
- 12     *Back in the Playground Blues - Adrian Mitchell*
- 13     *We Dream - Emily Dickinson*
- 14     *The Tempest - William Shakespeare*
- 15     *A Dream About Our Master, William Shakespeare - Hyam Puzlik*
- 16     *Macbeth - William Shakespeare*
- 17     *Sigmund Freud*

## Coming Of Age\*

*Little other care has she.* You think?  
Oh, it's true I was absorbed – obsessed,  
if you like: an artist has to be obsessed.

Web and mirror ... web and mirror...  
the song of Rumpelstiltskin's prisoner –

how else to vary the silent cycle  
of days and nights, only broken  
when that nameless servant leaves  
food in the hall? I must wait until he's rung  
the bell and his footsteps have faded  
before I can retrieve my tray.

Now and again, a passing abbot hears  
my pointless confession from the other side  
of the door. Unaccustomed to discourse,  
I stumble over the words, lame-tongued.

But there's something missing  
from my lockdown lessoned life,  
my back to front reality – an existence  
experienced through a mirrored chimaera  
as I see market girls, pages and knights  
*go by to tower'd Camelot.*

Day and night have seemed to merge  
of late. Wakeful in moonlight, I watch  
two young lovers by the river. My lips  
sting with envy, bitter as sea buckthorn.

Web and mirror ... web and mirror...

And then today, like a meteor,  
without warning,  
*my loyal knight and true ...*  
at last ...

my choice to confront Medusa!  
No more reading time backwards  
in chaste isolation ...

lightning struck breasts ...  
shocked loins ... mouth open,

I float down to Camelot,  
willing him to take me ...

Lancelot.

*\*This poem, first published in Writing Magazine in August 2021, was inspired by both Tennyson's poem and the 1888 painting of The Lady of Shalott by John William Waterhouse*



## DAVID PENN

David Penn's poems have been published in a variety of magazines, including *Under the Radar*, *The North*, *South*, *Prole*, *Ambit*, *Dawntreader* and *Sarasvati*, as well as anthologies such as *The Poet's Quest for God* (Eyewear, 2016) and *Watcher of the Skies: Poems About Space and Aliens* (Emma Press Children's Anthologies, 2016). His short stories have appeared in *Litro Magazine*, *Scribble*, *Midnight Street* and other journals, ezines and anthologies. Ordained into a Buddhist order in 2005, he is also known as Dharmavadana or Dharmavadana Penn. He is poetry editor of the Buddhist arts magazine *Urthona*: [www.urthona.com](http://www.urthona.com), and lives in London where he sometimes teaches meditation. His own website can be found at: [www.dharmavadana.com](http://www.dharmavadana.com). This year's Summer School was the first Poetry Kit event he has attended.

### POEMS

Through the Fence to the Dump  
Her Patch  
Across the lake

## **Through the Fence to the Dump**

We cross Darnley Road, snag our tee-shirts  
on the wire, brush off dust

from the ivy. The air is a sting of wild garlic  
and tramps' pee and we're free

of looking out for traffic  
and old ladies glaring from windows.

Here's our jungle, webbed  
with plastic and newspaper, our savannah

strewn with wrecked TVs. In a clearing,  
there's a lizard-green Rover, leather insides

ripped but still rich, the walnut knob  
of its gear stick smooth. We bounce

on the seats, risk the springs. We're Beatles  
arriving for a matinée, hoodlums

in a shoot-out. But the wind flutters back  
a polythene sheet someone's hung

from an ash: a silent movie flicker  
of faces, arms, blue-striped skirt.

We creep like Comanche,  
hide behind a box tree. She's on tiptoe,

hands on his shoulders, calves strained  
above short white socks. He's in drainpipes,

leather jacket, playing with her bunched  
brown hair. When he bends to kiss her

it's sideways, as you'd bite a chicken leg  
and when she sinks back down it's slow

as if they're ungluing. It's nothing like in films.  
Paul taps me on the shoulder and we run.

I snatch a hazel switch, whip leaves  
from garden hedges up the street.

## Her Patch

She used to garden in her orange *kemban*,  
squatting to carve out the weeds in her borders  
or the moss in the cracks of her cramped patio  
under a sun that for her was weak, though  
hot enough for me. She'd maybe send me off  
to make iced lemon juice, or ask me to move  
the stacked plastic chairs or tarped barbecue.  
She aimed all those years at an 'Italian look'  
she said. She'd seen it in a book or on TV.  
So: the pitted cherubs hailing from the rockery,  
the overturned amphorae pouring jasmine,  
trellises of bougainvillea and all that lavender.  
Yet she was fondest of her English roses.  
She planted them everywhere, took such care  
and hoped so much from them. Even now  
she sends me pictures: scarlet ones spilling  
from painted tubs, yellow ones arching away  
from slat fences; and her smiling by them.



### **Across the lake**

a holy congregation of pines  
waits for an answer

but the water's sparkling children  
fix my gaze.

Behind me the lane  
seeps through the valley.

A beech tree's shadow  
passes like a radius.



## **Graça Almeida Rodrigues**

Graça had several lives, as an academic, diplomat, founder of a Centre for Economic Social and Cultural Rights and trained more recently in Zurich as a Jungian analyst. She now has the time to pursue all those interests that were left behind one of which is poetry. She started in March '20 when lockdown was imposed. She now lives in Lisbon and is having a great time with Poetrykit.

### **POEMS**

The Grand Slam

Cento

Bedminster

## **THE GRAND SLAM**

We start early  
The world watching  
One ace here deuce there  
Tentative points tiebreak

As time passes  
Service improves there are sets to win  
Eventually matches  
And the world applauds

Later less points less sets no matches  
When we realize  
There is not even a ball  
There was never a ball there.

## CENTO

If music be the food of love play on  
She was the single artifice of the world  
    For she was the maker  
Knew that there never was a world for her  
Except the one she sang and, singing. Made.

I have forgotten, what lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,  
I only know that summer sang in me  
    By Friday we had argued again  
And as the flowers drooped petals dropped  
A little while, that in me sings no more.

Let us go then, you and I  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table;  
    Dying  
Requires time and patience.

Shakespeare, Wallace Stevens, Edna St. Vincent, Jim Bennett, TS Eliot, Miyó Vestrini

## **BEDMINSTER**

Having read The Amduat  
The Book of the Hidden Chamber  
Overcome by pain and grief Donald  
Sought to find an appropriate burial chamber  
For his ex beloved wife

It was a matter of reliving  
- If this is the appropriate word -  
The voyage of the Sungod through  
Twelve nocturnal hours  
According to the oldest book of the Netherworld

Having three times as many holes  
36 to be exact in his National Golf Club, Bedminster  
The sight was chosen to preserve the golden coffin  
Of one of his beloved wives of yore  
And there deal with his distress and loss

Not to be amiss with the Egyptian oldest funeral rites  
The chamber was equipped with all necessary golf accessories  
Gloves, hats/visors, ball markers, socks  
And at the cost of \$32.99 each  
Ladies Sun Goddess Golf caps in assorted colours



## SUE WATLING

Sue Watling is a writer and poet from Hull, UK, where she has an allotment and keeps honeybees. Sue has poems published in *The Adriatic*, *Seaborne Magazine*, *The Tide Rises*, *Amethyst Review*, *Dawn Treader*, *Sarasvati*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *ASP Literary Journal*, *Poetry Shed* and *Dreamcatcher*. A collection of poetry titled *Heaving with the dreams of strangers* was published by Dreich in 2022 and *Thetis*: a poetic narrative retelling the Trojan war through the eyes of Thetis, mother to Achilles, will be published later in 2022 by Esplanade Press. Sue can be found on Twitter @suewatling <https://twitter.com/suewatling> and writes a blog on poetry and bees, lots of bees, at <https://suewatling.com/>

### POEMS

Beware of death bearing gifts

Where gulls go to die

Taking tea at the Ritz with W B Yeats

## **Beware of death bearing gifts**

open book of gemstones,  
*forgiveness – love – healing*  
I read out loud - to no one,  
had to be coincidence,  
meaningless synchronicity,  
this I know...

behind the bridge, evening skies  
strung with feathered wisps,  
thin as the ribs of angel wings,  
easy to read as comfort,  
but lies, all lies,  
this I know...

I drive north through heavy dark,  
a chunk of rose quartz  
dug into my thigh,  
some doors are best left closed,  
keys thrown in the river,  
wouldn't you agree...

## **Where gulls go to die**

You do not know  
the space above oceans,  
where gyres glitter,  
and flat plain tides float  
grey as Samhain ghosts,

you do not know  
the Nereid girls,  
half in, half out of the water,  
streaming hair  
like foam topped waves,  
pink in the dawn,

you do not know  
the thrill of flesh  
from a beach wrecked porpoise  
or the rhythmic click of clam  
shells as we burgle them,

you do not know the cry  
of a fish breath mother,  
at the loss of a nest  
her broken eggs,  
or why we keen in the dawn,  
herald a storm,  
salute the slipping sun,

you do not know  
how it feels to fly,  
or the places where  
we go to die,  
you do not know...



### **Taking tea at the Ritz with W B Yeats**

On one of your trips to London,  
we agree to meet at the Ritz,  
shy at first, I ask you to pour,  
it's not every day, after all,  
you take tea with an Irish magician;

we sit between apricot walls,  
plates of cakes on white linen,  
you speak in your drawling brogue,  
about Innisfree, water finding its level,  
before moving on to cloths of gold,

and the need to take care when walking,  
maybe you'll mention Maud, or George,  
I'm not sure, and much as I want to ask  
about dreams and visions, it wouldn't seem  
right, or polite, to bring up the Golden Dawn,

or the times you summoned spirits.  
The afternoon ends too soon, I walk  
you to your carriage, you thank me again  
and wave, our breath in the lamplight,  
drawing away, like two ghosts parting.