

# Beyond Four Walls



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Transparent Words  
Beyond Four Walls

Issue 14

Lynn Ciesielski - Editor

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## **Transparent Words Beyond Four Walls Introduction:**

This is a special edition of Transparent Words, Beyond Four Walls Issue 14. It depicts a variety of interpretations of the concept “Home.” Each poem in this online magazine is accompanied by a picture. Most of these are photos but I was very fortunate to receive one drawing. The people who contributed to the magazine presented some very interesting aspects of the concept, making me rethink my definition of “Home.” I’m sure you will find their poems as intriguing as I do.

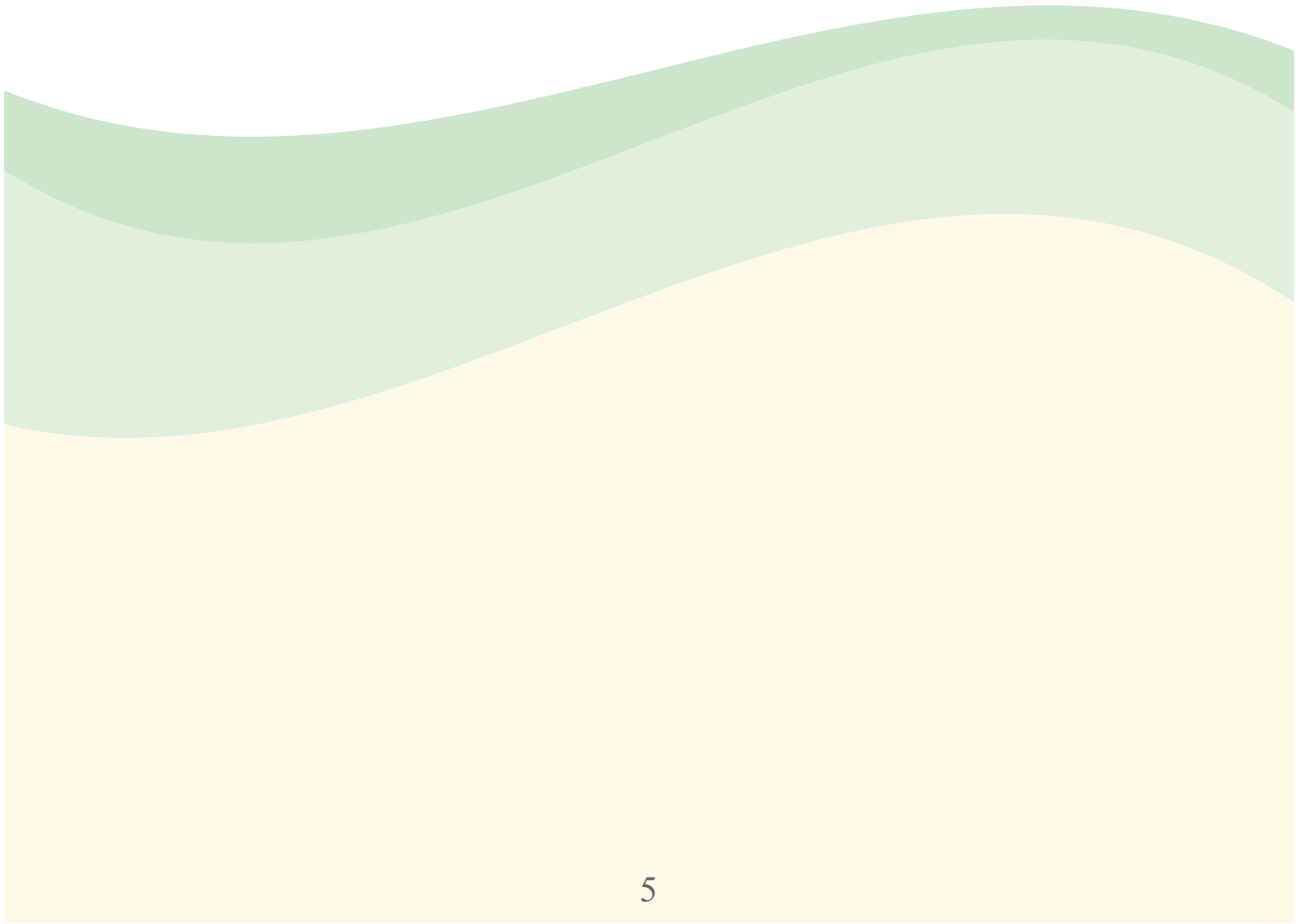
*Lynn Ciesielski*  
Guest Editor



where the heart is

home where one can rest  
with inner peace unruffled  
self without pretence

*by Angela Keaton*





“Barbados 2008 “ taken by Sheree Mack

## Home

*Where do you come from?*

asks the stranger by the ocean,  
who stops and looks me full in the face,  
all past activities of gathering blossom forgotten.

I open my mouth to reply but all there is,  
is a gargoyle glare as my tongue sticks  
in a groove and words lodge in my throat.

*Where do you come from?*

a second time the stranger asks  
and the greatest difficulty I experience  
is that I often cannot remember  
who I am and what I am about in my life  
when I am not by the ocean.

I am so far away from everything I have known  
that I do not know myself - with the turquoise  
layered water, and the purple blue mountains,  
and the red, red clay coating my skin -  
brings the old world into the new world,  
and the new world into another world.

From time to time, I lose a sense of who I am,  
what I think of myself to be,  
what I know myself to be, my own true self.

That what I am about to say,  
what I have in mind to say,  
what I have planned for more than  
a lifetime to say is still a mystery to me.

*Where do you come from?*

I close my mouth, and walk on  
where there is no path.

*by Sheree Mack*



## Harvest 1946

1.

We can't do this no more.  
Our hearts aren't in it. The men  
can't take such tradition serious  
after what they've seen.

And having foreigners watch  
threatens to shine too strong a light  
on things our fathers thought they knew.  
Only boys still, but they've got insight  
I don't want to catch.

The women  
like it, but harvest will still finish  
without the last sheaf cried and chased home.  
There's other ways the boy will get his kiss.

This is the last time we shall do this.

2.

Imprisonment's an uncovering  
of half-imagined corners  
in the life we were promised.  
When the workers mock us,  
take, as they say, the mickey,  
it's hard to understand,  
to bear, to laugh along.

Harvest's end is a matter  
of blood and soil, here  
on this red English earth  
as it is at home.

What they do is an echo  
of the peasants we laughed at  
during land service.  
We hear the men shout,  
and homesickness like hunger  
rises amongst us.



.3.

The binder's clacking stops and in the gloaming  
horses head-shake off their day's labour.  
The labourers solemn, anticipating  
the ritual's accomplishment and pleasure.

The prisoners half-recognising, half-amused  
can take no part, are set aside.  
Things they were prepared to do foreshadow  
the harvest home, this rustic English rite.

The tension of the moment holds them all.  
The horse-boy who will catch and run,  
run for the barn where the women wait,  
the prisoners and the reapers who don't know  
yet that something's ending.

The scythe sweeps once,  
the wheat's cut through.  
The scythe hisses  
and the wheat falls.

*by Stuart Nunn*



“Kathy’s House” taken by Lynn Ciesielski

## A Warm Welcome

The couple pulls into the gravel driveway  
toward the dome house.

A beagle warns the five acre area from her pen.  
Two boys wander over to the black Cadillac,  
The younger says, "Mom will be back".

Inside, appetites are spread like a tablecloth  
under chipped china plates, glass tumblers.  
All eat pasta, broccoli heads from the garden,  
drink tall servings of milled cider.

Chicken wire winds around an abandoned pen,  
stretches tree to tree, bound with rusty nails,  
reaches across to shed roof.

Lop-eared dog returns to the house, begs  
for scraps at the nine year old's feet .

After dinner they throw wood, paper into a fire.  
Ashes and smoke smite their faces,  
burn moist membranes of eyes and nostrils  
like a harsh desert sandstorm.

August sun drenches the teenage boy,  
indigenous to a country south of them.  
He pushes a lawn mower across tall grass,  
disturbs beetles which weave between stems,  
beetles that disturb them with dissonant clicks.

*by Lynn Ciesielski*



“Rowan” taken by Elaine Walker

## Autumn Horse

Against the scarlet brightness of a bank of mountain ash, with the burned brown ends of last year's reeds beyond, she surveys her surroundings. Behind her, a crown of red berries, a wreath of golden leaves, a swathe of crisped and faded purple heather. Her black and white spotted rump is round as a full moon floating across the tired-moss field. Her finely shaped head is alert, the arched-bow neckline echoes the curve of the moor against the muted sky. She plants her neat hooves evenly with each step. She is interested but calm as she explores her new field, keeping a distance from the unruly geldings crowding along the fence to call to her. She does not trouble with them. A whole day she wanders ground that's strange beneath her, smells air that's damp and rich with loam and tastes grass that's a new texture in her mouth. She is thoughtful, cautious, but not overwhelmed. She will breathe the peat-soaked air from the moors until the rhythms of her blood are attuned to this place and she blends like her patterned coat into the russet background of the rippling valley. By evening, I have named her 'Rowan' and the colours of autumn have gathered around her.

*by Elaine Walker*



“Ford House” drawn by Lynn Roberts

## Ford House

When I first went back, they had painted the walls  
like melon, like scallops, like dark peach ice;  
they had purged off the hide of lichen and  
stucco; they'd sanded and scoured it, and  
scalped it of trellis, and torn down the creeper  
and rambling rose.

This was not my home.

And I wondered why, if plaster and Dulux  
could so effectively disinherit  
me and my parents, obliterate, raze us,  
why would I stand in a garden in Hampstead  
and wait for the song of a nightingale,  
and try to feel that slim young man in black  
moving inside the uncommunicative and  
non-stick white arched house? And down in Kipling's  
home, his glasses, left upon the dark wood desk  
as though the garden called him, merely look  
lost and inanimate, unintimate.  
Houses slough us off.

But in my head,

I see those gray organic walls sequined  
with rosebuds, tiny, apricot; the wood  
weathered from some unknown and unguessed shade  
to matt dull dusty jade; the walnut trees.  
And I see Byron come down to the room  
in Seaham Hall to wed, reluctantly,  
his prim princess of parallelograms;  
and by imagined red brick Chawton walls  
a bright malicious eye flirts from a bonnet  
and looks and notes and goes.

Houses hold us;

though not within their untouched slide through time.  
Like frames within the memories and minds  
of those who conjure them they hang, complex  
and nebulous; images of the past  
inhabit them, and keep the frames themselves  
the same. So I can run through tussocks still  
of flax pale grass, climb up the oak, or feel  
the warm brick of the terrace, laid in  
herringbone; and I can feel late summer sun  
invade the drawing-room and lie down like  
a cat.

They've painted it light terracotta  
now, but I don't care, so much.

*by Lynn Roberts*



this place

he senses the parallels of survival that surround  
this place where stone is thick around the house  
and its windows let in light enough to keep it cool

in summer and heat remain for winter  
with the burning of wood chopped and seasoned  
to cook or heat - flicker birthed light

from logs that had grown in nearby forest  
when the road to and from here was long  
to any on foot in wooden sabots

made from the same wood that lit the fire  
and the wood from close by would dance  
on joyful feet to mark the seasons and ages

of their wearing - how he senses the shades  
of those who kept this place under shadows of trees

*by James Bell*



“Sheffield” taken by Marek Jira

## The Sound of the Birch Tree

I miss the sound of the birch tree swaying in the slightest wind,  
though the wind was more than slight most days back then.  
The howl would seep through the houses, blanketing the hills in freedom.  
From one floor up, the distant glisten of orange lights would twinkle over the almost black landscape  
below, filling my eyes with pleasure.  
A countryside filled with memories.  
Stories of battles and love, life and death, repeated and encased throughout.  
The sky above beckoned with chances and lust; it is the passion and vastness that enthralls.  
The belt, shining brighter every night would make me feel home.  
From the opera house, I looked to the same sky.  
I saw Orion again and the heavy penetrating moon.  
The light was as tranquil wherever I would be, but nothing could compare to that  
with the sound of the birch tree.

Ten years and forty miles I have drifted since then.  
With polluted sky and baffled air consuming the towers of concrete grey,  
my home was just a feeling, now just a memory.  
Every now and then I see the faint belt of Orion trying to get through.  
I hear sounds similar to that of the birch tree and a howl between sirens.  
The light isn't the same in this city.  
The sound is just a murmur of cars racing,  
The non-stop life I thought I need to always hear.  
Volume of life so severe that I would be cocooned by the safety in numbers theory  
Let me down.

As reminders die and time grows, I consider returning to ten years ago,  
For nothing since has ever compared to the sound of that birch tree.

*by James Christopher Sheppard*



“Settled” taken by Miki Byrne

## One Year Since Moving

I came, wary of this place. Moving out of necessity.  
Bound by fear and knowing no-one. I felt cast adrift  
from all that was warm and friendly.

My life was changing and I was as a speck of jetsam  
controlled by life's tide. It swept me, stumbling like  
a shipwrecked casualty upon the beach of a new existence.

I arrived as a foreigner, trespassing upon this unknown land.  
This had to become home but now, with roots put down,  
People becoming known and acquaintance thickening into

the delicate skin of friendship, there is a subtle shift.  
Welcomes have been given and received. The move now  
not so much a driving on, or refuge sought but somewhere

Chosen. Decisions have been taken and a stand made.  
Now it feels like a battle won with the comfort of it  
having been well-fought. I have found my home.

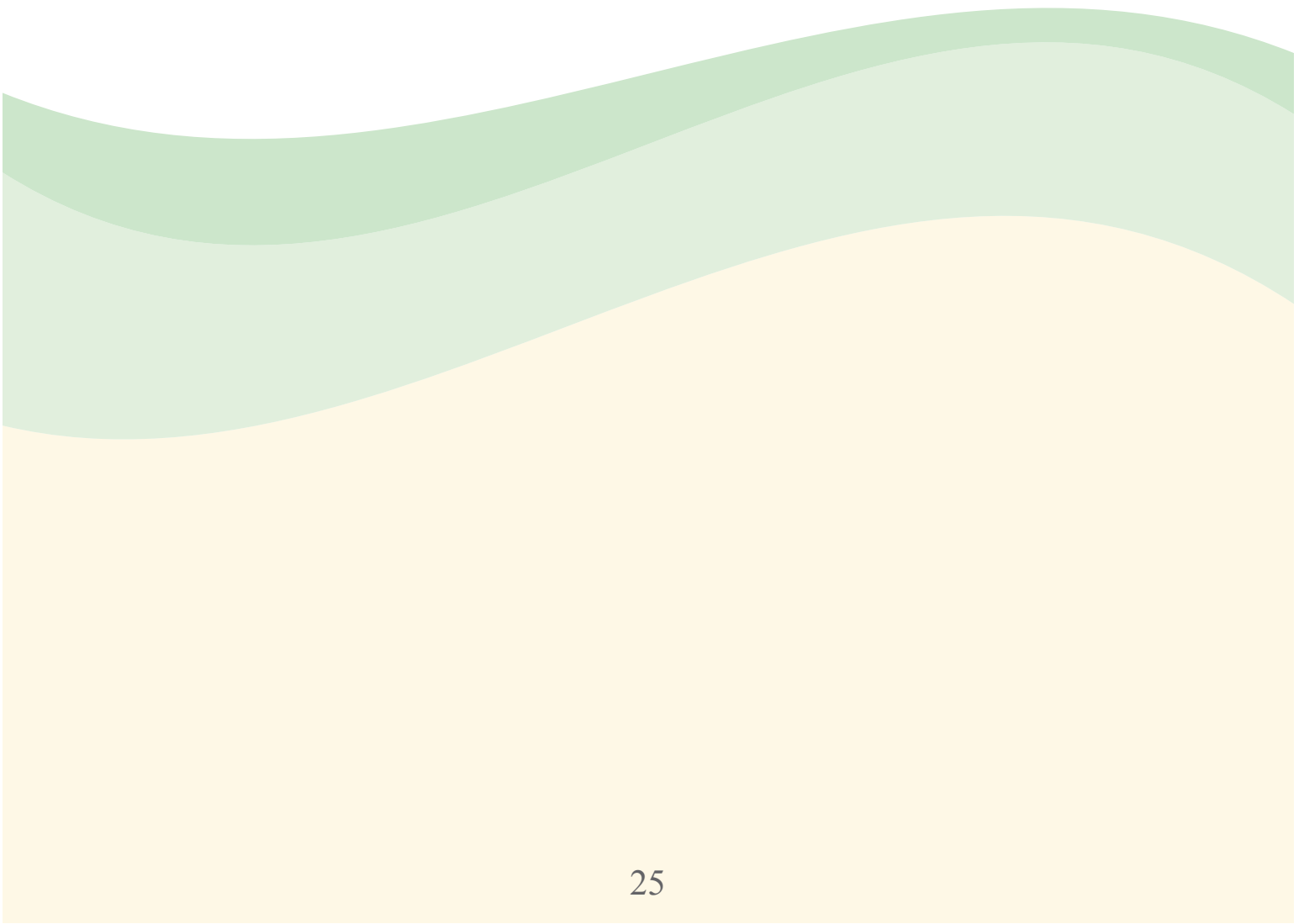
*by Miki Byrne*



Urban Tanka #6

the couple sleeping on the sidewalk  
snuggle together  
a wheelchair at their feet  
closer than you and I  
in our warm bed last night

*by Zack Rogow*





“Rose” taken by Catherine Graham

## The Street

A black dog stands perfectly still  
like a full stop at the end of the lane.  
She wonders if the man at forty-two  
still cleans his bike in the bedroom  
and did his wife ever get sectioned?

Does the man at thirty-nine  
still wear a wig and mime to Cilla Black?

The street still smells the same:  
Newspaper, vinegar, Mrs. Blenkinsop's  
warm savaloy dips - her Max Factor lipstick  
red as tomato sauce; hair as black as the dog.

And the shop on the corner:

Dear Mrs. Fanthorpe . . .  
small white sliced  
Omo  
bag of sugar  
fire-lighters  
'til Friday  
Much obliged.

She remembers how she'd wait and wait  
until the shop was empty  
before slipping her mother's crumpled note  
across the counter, passing the time  
counting the lovebites  
on Mrs. Fanthorpe's dinosaur neck.

No talk on the street now.  
NO LOITERING. NO BALL GAMES. NO FLY-TIPPING.  
No skipping, no songs.

The faint sound of a bicycle bell  
ting-a-lings the silence as Mr. and Mrs. 42 pedal past.  
Other ghosts wave from frost-flowered sash windows.  
The only survivor on the Street -  
Mr. Brown's peachy rose bush  
waiting to explode into bloom like a firework.

*by Catherine Graham*



## Gatekeeper Mel

lives right across the street, plants himself  
next to his Rose of Sharon tree.  
His eyes and ears are keyholes; he unlatches  
neighbors' lives, frees them for anyone  
who opens a porch to share some off brand beer.

His face matches his grey sided house.  
He sinks down into the porch step  
which grows around him like the Elm  
that embellishes his curb.

He watches when you turn your lights out,  
knows how many boys courted your teenage girl,  
and which explored her geography in front  
of the house from their cars.

When Mel's belly swells with beer, he opens up wider,  
floods you with stories that drown even him,  
female neighbors he would like to cheat with,  
odd things he's eaten, possum in backwoods days.  
Here in the city, he just chews the fat.

*by Lynn Ciesielski*



## Unpacking And

tugging the kitchen's orange curtains that almost close  
while running the bath, the sound of it  
and next door's telly. Hanging Van Gogh's Café,  
taking it down. Then shivering into the bathroom,  
getting undressed. Soap from the last flat,  
still soft. Turn off the cold tap. More hot.  
Naked. Crouched. Lowering. Slowly leaning back,  
seeing the tide-mark his water reached to,  
his toilet roll hanging, the last sheet creased.

*by Bob Cooper*

## The Brightness In Mr. Wilson's Day

The clock's stopped, he can't reach his watch,  
guesses it's afternoon as he lays there studying  
the hem of rain on the window's handle, its quivering,  
and the sharp sound as it falls on the bush, the sill.  
Then he stares at the brightness over Low Fell,  
hears two cars, an aircraft, a pram and footsteps,  
and now, as clear as childhood, someone passing, singing.

*by Bob Cooper*



Urban Tanka #3

sitting cross-legged head  
bowed right to the sidewalk  
homeless man  
please move please  
show me you're still alive

*by Zack Rogow*



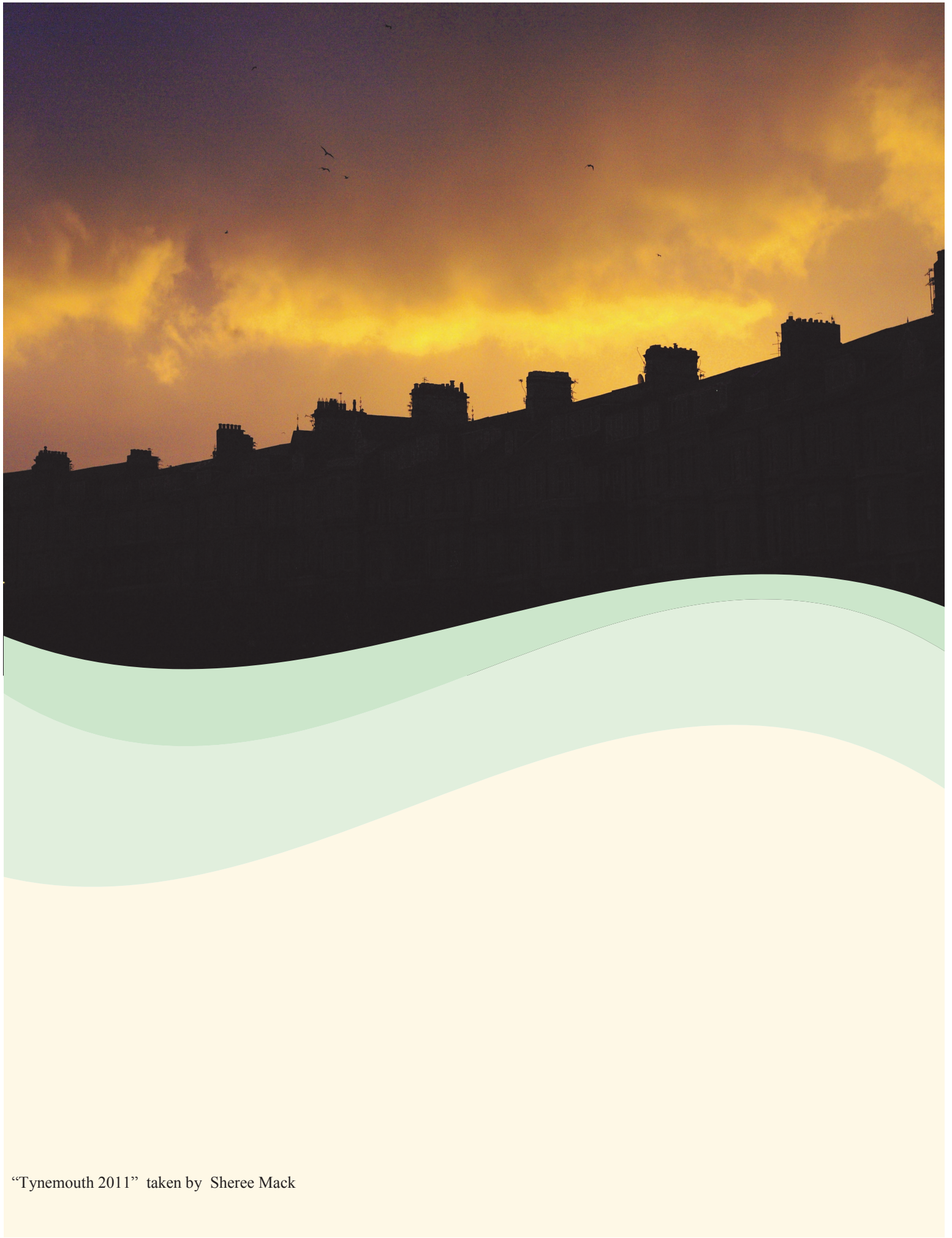
## Homeless

Ronnie empties his pockets:  
large hammer; inhaler;  
copy of *Helter Skelter* ~  
*true story of the Manson murders*,  
and a Taschen  
*Art of Eric Stanton*;

Maglite torch  
same length as the hammer;  
Mini Address Book, Walkman,  
Camel match-book, Route 66 lighter;  
clothes-brush, pen;  
Virgin-Atlantic ticket: LA to London.

Before adding it to the heap,  
he strokes his thumb  
on the grubby velvet ears  
of a small stuffed elephant  
that, perhaps, keeps memories  
of childhood and soft, clean pillows.

*by Lesley Burt*  
*(after seeing photos by Moyra Peralta)*



“Tynemouth 2011” taken by Sheree Mack

## Our House

One son is tidying his room, his face crocheted.  
He's putting away his washing, and hiding magazines under his bed.

Along the passage, his mother writes a poem,  
reordering lines, changing a word here and there.

And his father is at the computer, shooting soldiers  
and driving a jeep off a cartoon cliff to gain extra points.

One daughter lies on her back and runs a long slender finger  
along her full lips, kicking her legs out in time.

The intercom buzzes in the hallway and the central heating  
kicks in with a rattle and a hum.

We are a multicoloured family of four, in a Victorian flat in Tynemouth.

*After Julia Darling*  
*by Sheree Mack*

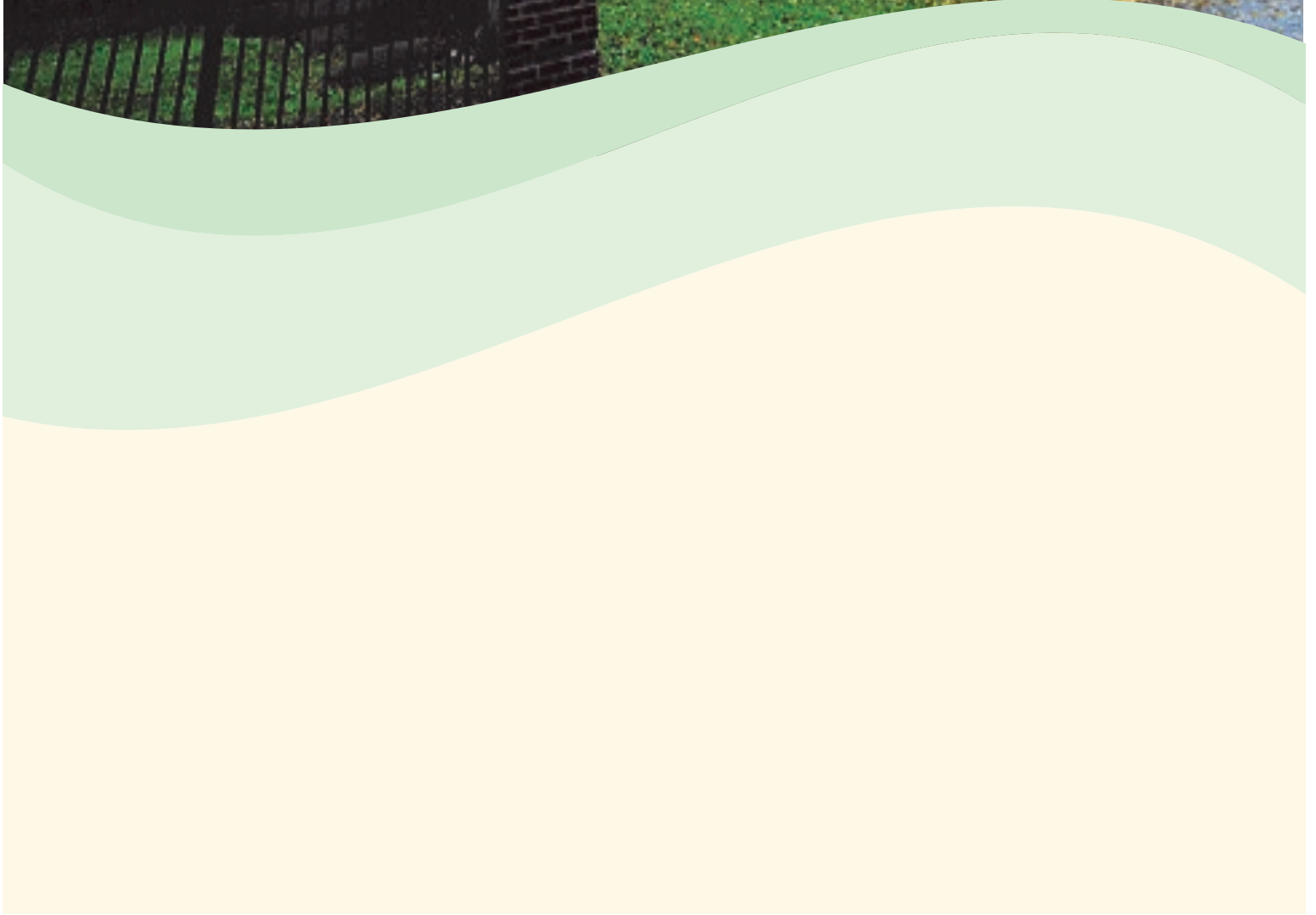


## Renovations

I wasn't there  
but I heard how the renovations  
toppled the kitchen  
and the purple toy-room walls  
making awful puffs of dust  
into the April dusk.

The children watched from a hillside balcony,  
“Grampa, will they take  
the whole  
my-house down?”

*by Timothy Charles Anderson*



## A Step Back

I took one step  
Inside the building  
To acknowledge  
I could go no further  
The smell was still there  
I could hear voices from the past  
Fighting to get out  
The screams, the cries, the pain  
Of yester year  
It may have changed  
Its appearance  
But to me  
It is  
The place  
I know where it  
All went wrong

*by Kauser Parveen*



“Wasdale, Cumbria,” taken by Martyn Halsall

## Borrowed Ground

Tick list for the next house: large-print street atlas, easy access to doctors, bus service, handy for shops (chemist important), good neighbours who might fetch things, a manageable garden, somewhere inside suburbia's.

Instead a map unfolds, showing open country without the fly trap clusters of crowding towns. The doctor follows Matins in the services section, listed with vets in the parish magazine.

Bus stop and garage are journeys in themselves, an almost acre of garden, quarter-mile track through a wood from the nearest road takes the house back to 1725 chiselled in a bread cupboard,

wood panelling that Wordsworth would have found familiar, his soundtrack same wind through the larch, same mingle of fields and woods to an opening line's ruled blue horizon; same stretched view to the island.

We could bring our jigsaw of blues, that wedding-present counterpane, place the brass bed back in its time, re-fill the illiterate bookshelves, prune, turn soil towards fresh light, re-open its intentions.

A skirling buzzard would pipe the morning music and an owl call through birches silvered to moonlight. We could turn this house to home on this borrowed ground: late years; between settling in, and not over-staying.

*by Martyn Halsall*

## Contributors

Timothy Charles Anderson lives in Toronto, Canada where he writes poetry and plays in Stone Road, a local rock band. He is the author of *Funtimes, the Snail*, a musical storybook for kids. His poetry is featured in *Redheaded Stepchild*, *Frostwriting*, *Damazine*, *Jones Av*, and the short film *Orbit*, directed by Shunsuke Teshima.

Lesley Burt was born in Christchurch and has lived there almost all of her life. Her poems have been published online and in various poetry magazines and in her first collection *Framed and Juxtaposed*. She has received commendations in various UK competitions, and was especially pleased to receive the first prize for poetry in the Christchurch Writers competitions 2009 and 2010.

Miki Byrne is the author of *Nice-bits & Hissy-fits*, a collection of poetry. She has also had her poems included in over twenty-five respected poetry magazines and journals. Miki has read her work on TV, radio and at many literary festivals. She has judged poetry competitions and won prizes for her own work. She has a website and blog. She is disabled and living in Gloucestershire. Miki writes something every day.

Lynn Ciesielski lives in Buffalo, NY, USA. She worked in Special Education for over eighteen years. Currently, Lynn's focus is on her poetry and her family. She was published in last year's *Transparent Words* and has appeared in over sixty publications worldwide. Lynn has featured at a number of poetry readings in Western New York and will appear in England in September, 2011. Her web site is <http://lynnciesielski.webs.com/>

Bob Cooper lives in Birmingham, UK. His last collection is still available. See <http://www.arrowheadpress.co.uk/books/allwe.html>

Martyn Halsall lives in West Cumbria, where he writes poetry and journalism. His current writing interests are expressions of exile and inter-relationships between people and places. He is poetry editor of *Third Way Magazine*, reviews poetry for the *Church Times* and lives in a Vicarage because his wife is a Church of England Priest.

Catherine Graham is an award-winning poet. Her work has appeared in a number of magazines and anthologies in the UK and Ireland as well as on the web. Catherine lives in Newcastle upon Tyne and has read at numerous poetry events including the Durham Literature Festival, Northern Stage and several Amnesty International Poetry Benefits. Catherine's poem *Hyem (Home)* is a featured poem at the 60th Anniversary of the Festival of Britain Exhibition, Southbank Centre, London 2011. Her chapbook *Signs* is published by ID on Tyne Press, 2010.

Angela Keaton is resident in the North of England, citizen of the world. Her love of language is to be seen in her tributes to the traditional, where she may bow towards haiku but not be bound by its confines; equally she stretches the boundaries of poetic surrealism to 'shouts' of silence. Her poems on and off the page are to be seen, heard, performed, experienced.

Sheree Mack was born in Bradford to a Trinidadian father and a Geordie mother of Bajan and Ghanaian heritage. She has lived in Newcastle from the age of ten. She works as a freelance writer and lecturer for the Open University and has recently completed a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Her first full collection of poetry, *Family Album* was published in May by Flambard Press. You can read more about her at [www.shereemack.com](http://www.shereemack.com).

Stuart Nunn is a retired teacher living in South Gloucestershire, England. He has won prizes in poetry competitions, had a few poems published in magazines and has self-published a collection, available from <http://www.blurb.com/my/book/detail/853464>.

Kausar Parveen is a working mother with two children. She has an ambition to become a writer/poet of sorts. In the meantime, she shall keep plodding at life.

Lynn Roberts is an artist and art historian. Her poetry has been published in *Outposts, Envoi, The Frogmore Papers, GRIST, Shit "Creek Review, The Tablet, Pulsar, Red Poets, Lighten Up Online* and *Agenda*. She won the 2009 Writers' Week Poetry Collection and has been placed in other competitions; in 2011 she published *Rosa Mundi*, a sequence of poems and *Pandora's Book*, a collection of light verse.

Zack Rogow is the author, editor, or translator of eighteen books or plays. His sixth book of poems, *The Number Before Infinity*, was published by Scarlet Tanager Books. He is the editor of an anthology of contemporary poetry from the U.S.A., *The Face of Poetry*, published by University of California Press. Currently he teaches at California College of the Arts in San Francisco and in the low-residency writing program at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.

James Christopher Sheppard recently graduated from Kingston University's acclaimed Creative Writing Course. He was born in August 1984 in Surrey and is a poet and music journalist and critic <http://jameschristophersheppard.wordpress.com/>

Elaine Walker writes magical realist fiction, poetry and non-fiction. Her novel, *The Horses* (Cinnamon Press, 2010) was featured at the Hay Festival and her cultural history, *Horse* (Reaktion Books, 2008) was chosen for translation into Arabic by the Kalima Project and has since been translated into Italian, German and Russian. She's lead singer in a rock band called Two Suns and, as well as writing about horses, she writes about music and her moorland home in North Wales. For more details on her work, see <http://about.me/ElaineWalker>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Photo taken for Timothy Charles Anderson, “Demolition” by Frank Anderson.

Photo taken for James Christopher Sheppard, “The Sound of the Birch Tree” depicts Sheffield at the top of Green House Lane by Marek Jira.

Photos taken for Zack Rogow, “Tanka #3” and “Tanka #6” by Alexis Villay.

Thank you to Nicholas Todaro for providing technical assistance with this project.

“Unpacking And” by Bob Cooper was first published in *All We Know Is All We See* (Arrowhead, 2002).

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