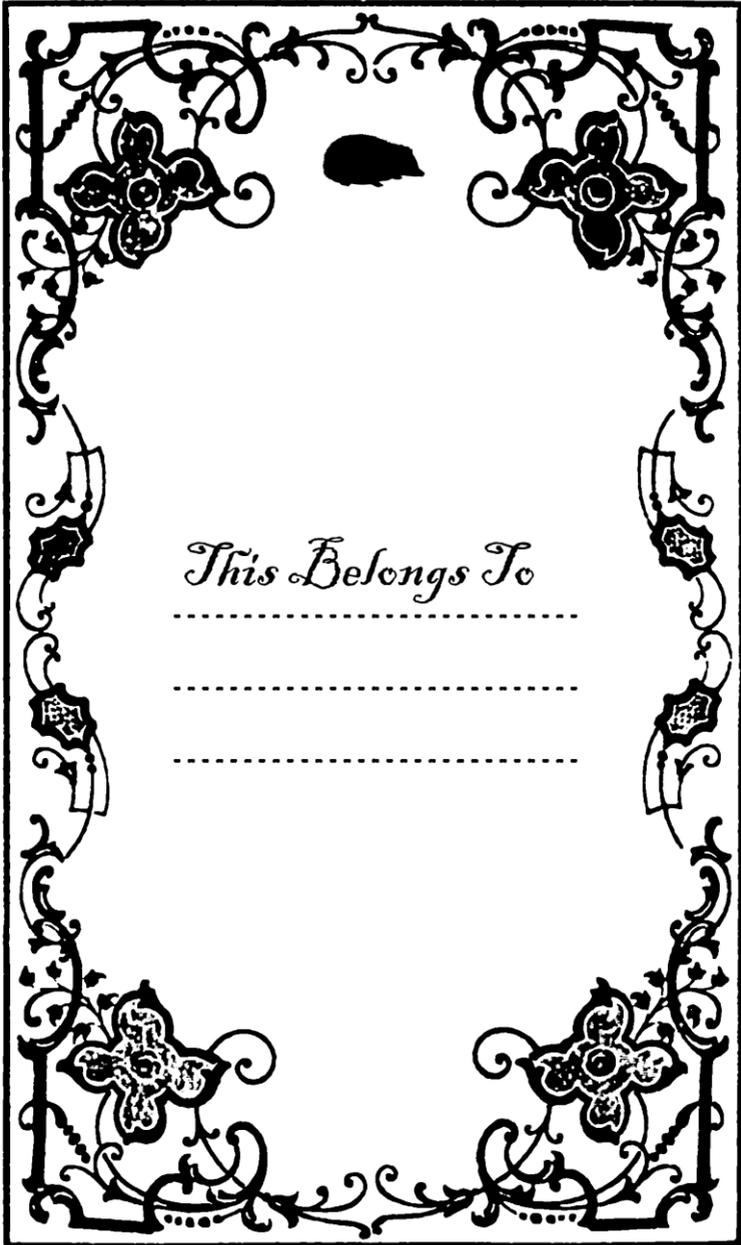


The Road To  
**Clevedon Pier**





*This Belongs To*

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*The Poems*

## I WEAR MY KEYS LIKE A GLOVE

*Victoria Richards*

I wear my keys like a glove  
as we walk, hand in  
hand, feet crackling  
over leaves. Their  
metal kiss like armour,  
heavy brass my bayonet.  
Their supine edges are  
knives I'll use to  
protect you in this forest  
of gold and green, and  
a faraway tree that spills  
spell-words like Silky and  
Moon-Face and the riotous,  
crashing Saucepan Man, and  
Jo and Bessie and Fanny –  
*wisha-wisha-wisha.*  
Here, we are both six.

“Look, a cave.” You point  
to the darkest trees and I see  
an ordinary man, in  
ordinary clothes, standing  
ordinarily. I see a monster,  
a golem waiting in the woods.  
and – my heart is a rabbit.  
I draw you closer, move  
my hand to the side of your  
head to remind myself  
of your softness.

I force your small legs  
faster  
faster  
faster  
until we fly. As we pass him  
I cover your ears, lest  
you drown in his siren song  
of loneliness and need and  
wanting, and my keys  
are solid  
in my hand.

## MERCY

*Sarah Thomson*

In the Sunday sunlight late afternoon  
Drug dazed from pain days seeking mercy  
Heard that Cornell Campbell reggae tune  
Dip my aching head into the icy sea

Out on the streets, into the unknown  
Drug dazed from pain days seeking mercy  
Up and down steps in the alley alley oh  
Dip my aching head into the deep blue sea

Found a path with a bench where I could sit  
Drug dazed from pain days seeking mercy  
By abandoned buildings and a lamp unlit  
Dip my aching head into the icy sea

Passing by the undergrowth where wildlife creeps  
Drug dazed from pain days seeking mercy  
I made a quick retreat, in fear of sudden leaps  
Dip my aching head into the deep blue sea

Back where the blue coats walked by the wall  
Drug dazed from pain days seeking mercy  
Down the hill wind-blown the Hope & Anchor  
Dip my aching head into the icy sea

Heading for the harbour dodging all the cars  
Drug dazed from pain days seeking mercy  
Past the apartments' balconies and bars  
Dip my aching head into the deep blue sea

There on the boardwalk in between the barges  
Drug dazed from pain days seeking mercy  
There amongst the watercress and frost grey fishies  
Dipped my aching head into the icy sea  
Dipped my aching head into the deep blue sea

## WALKING WITH COLERIDGE IN CLEVEDON

*Matt Duggan*

On the day the first snow- flakes fell  
along a muddied jigsaw shore,  
slim boats lined with black blushed tails  
smeared grit on brown labyrinth floor.  
Path of tobacco and crosses in dead oak  
matted with feathers and yellow moss  
on waters where lost epiphanies float  
above the slewed ringlets in polished frost.

I saw the painting of that man from Ottery  
following him along the small palms of frozen sand,  
beneath a jacinth coloured moon this wreckage of moonlight -  
a circled sinew of bloated white rain.  
Vinegar trails in a child's frosty hands  
like lines of wax embalmed into cemented snow,  
grass verge is a train track rustic and twinned  
where a balaclava covered chip-fryer is shivering.

Close to a distant pier with green shining railings  
a charred black orchid casted out at sea  
vast cloudless sky sailing in dark colours  
that can only hear an ocean stopping to breathe.  
Car engine coughing among the mists of warming sleet  
like fish-hooks that sway in dull twilight;  
Winters canvas swallowing pin pricks of zenith light,  
that shined on the children playing hopscotch on broken glass.

## MOONLIGHT

*Sarah J Bryson*

Knowing the moon is a solid mass in space, orbiting us on her regular trajectory, does not stop me seeing this translucent pearly disc - hanging high and steady shining bright - as a device for letting light through into our time, from the other side.

Knowing that your erratic breath will come to a stop sometime soon, does not deter me from my hope that in the morning things may be different. I wait, both wanting time to speed up and for it to slow down knowing what I wait for may happen before the moon

has completed her lamplight traverse  
across the expanse of pinpricked black.

## TRUST IN STONES

*Annie Maclean*

Old texts had outlined the arrival of the aliens:

The explosive rush.  
A burning bush.  
Haloes of fire.  
Ferocious wings.  
A brightness  
and a cackle of heat.

For thousands of years we were left alone.  
Left to wonder what they wanted.  
Left to wander round the scratchings  
they'd scored across our sparkling stones.

There was a hunger to mine to find more stones.  
We wriggled underground  
to hunt out fire opals  
to set upon a crystal grid.

Green ghost quartz  
placed inside sacking  
was dragged behind us.  
We walked inside darkness.

We stole the nests  
of agate eggs which had dragon veins.

From the shores  
a collection of ocean jasper,  
clear aquamarine  
and clouded sea-glass.

On the hillsides  
we searched for rainbow amethyst.

We counted out moonstones  
not far from the granite.

Two lines were pressed down  
made with radiant stones.  
Two miles set in a cross  
pressed with glistening jewels.

Could we attract their return?

The glinting of lights  
would highlight our message.

We learned how to sing  
when we sat with the stones.  
We named many stars.  
We reached out and waited.

## FARM

*Sally Spedding*

They can't see that slack net spread flat on the wall above  
their watery tomb in Escouloubre where the river Aude  
roars by, flinging spume into summer's overhang. Kissing  
its sun-speckled rocks a world away from these doomed  
black trout lurking duped and mute. Not knowing who'll be next  
to fill the café's pretty plates, empty-eyed, mouths agape while  
their ribs come clean between swigs of bières blondes and eager  
plans of how best to spend the rest of that stunning  
afternoon.

## THAT'S DEBATABLE

*Gaynor Kane*

Two words, uttered often  
in our house  
growing up.

Pierced by the points  
of the sunburst clock  
and hung from

the walled wire guitar,  
like an unfinished  
chord, musicless.

Silently soaking  
into brown and amber wallpaper;  
no discussion from either.

## TEA

*Hanan Issa*

The cup is the first step.  
A delicate teacup suggests high teas,  
decorated by lace napkins,  
and pale gloved fingers  
that reach for neatly cut sandwiches,  
while the talk slices up an Empire.  
A mug of cha to calm the nerves in a crisis  
is a match's half-time helping,

that synchronises switches across the country.  
But are the builders enjoying their brew  
aware of the painful past  
contained in its dried leaves?  
A politely hidden history  
that traded tea for the poppy.  
Or that, once in Boston,  
pouring tea into water stood

for discarding colonial control.  
A sorrow infused over time,  
seeping bitterness into boiled water.  
Although, when mixed with mint,  
jasmine, star anise, or cinnamon,  
the taste of history is steeped in the present:  
a place we all try to infuse with the taste of us.  
Meticulous ceremonies that celebrate friendship:

"Gentle as life, strong as love, bitter as death".  
Chai is poured from on high,  
spilling along the Silk Road to Tesco's.  
Merging bitter matcha with sweet shai,  
soaking into bara brith raisins overnight.  
Cultures and languages permeate life,  
weaving through our flow of experience,  
iridescent in the chaos.

## FROM PARIS TO PITTSBURGH

*Chris Hemingway*

I'm thinking of moving from Paris to Pittsburgh,  
I don't care which ice caps may melt.  
I'm building a chain of unMexican restaurants,  
from the rust of the bible belt.

I'm dreaming of moving from Paris to Pittsburgh,  
no more artist's garrets for me.  
I'm dreaming up clickbait for sociopath media  
in the land of the guilty and free.

I'm travelling at speed from Paris to Pittsburgh,  
in gas-guzzling black & gold jets.  
Taking decisions, ice-cold objective,  
as amphetamined Vietnam vets.

I'm buying up art from Paris to Pittsburgh,  
but Mona Lisa was way too small.  
I'm staring at naked impressionist women.  
Some paintings to hang on my Wall.

I've just signed up to the Pittsburgh Agreement,  
with some guys from Horny Ben's Bar.  
We'll limit our gasses by taping our asses  
to buckets of over-fracked tar.

See we never moved far from the animal kingdom,  
so we'll just have to fry them as well.  
It's a mighty long way from Paris to Pittsburgh,  
as I drive us by handcart to hell.

## REJECTION

WH Davies, Southwark 1899

*David Hale*

Footsore, a solitary penny in your pocket,  
you stump back to the hostel in Churchyard Row.  
Without glancing at the sheaf of poems  
you've spent days hawking from door to door,  
thrust them into the wood-stove and watch  
as the ashes of your invention rise  
into the city dusk, so consumed with rage  
at editors, printers, reviewers the poor souls  
you tried to sell verse to, you smack your head  
into the chimney-piece again and again,  
unable to see how far and wide your work's  
being disseminated, your charred rhymes  
settling on ledge, gull-wing, roof-tile,  
the faint margins of that bleak autumn day.

## STONES

*P Wooldridge*

He seemed so strangely sad to me,  
beneath the smeared grey coastal skies.  
I ran to help, with infant glee,  
beyond my watchful parents' eyes.

Collecting rocks, like he had been,  
I pulled them from the tidal sands.  
To me, a simply playful scene.  
He took them, wordless, from my hands.

Soon bored, I turned, left him alone,  
his pockets heavy on the shore.  
So innocent, I'd not have known  
what I had helped prepare him for.

With years now passed I understand,  
what then had made no sense to me,  
before returning safe inland  
I watched him walk into the sea.

## ARTEMIS AT TESCO

*Jane Aldous*

She didn't look like a hunter but she was.  
Middle aged with a black coat and dark lined eyes,  
her hands moved fast as she scraped hair from her face,  
packed her shopping at the checkout then looked around  
with a smile, *I'm ahead of the game*, she said,  
handing over a bundle of vouchers. And with that look  
I thought, she could swim the Forth or the Acheron,  
she could take on anyone.  
I last saw her pushing a trolley through the forest  
of cars, a bow slung across her chest, arrows in hand,  
storming along the high street. Bands of Furies  
were bearing down on her, she knew it but she'd  
got through worse. That day she was Diana the huntress,  
who we looked in the eye and loved because she was like us  
and not, *I'm winning*, she said.

## BALLOONS.

*Mary Gilmore*

On the day I nearly left our future,  
it was in a wicker basket on ascending currents,  
breath tipped with trees, looking down and away.

Morning had seen me dressing, edgy as an insect,  
a fleeting reflection of wings multiplied in mirrors,  
trying to hold back light, abandon thinning bedroom air.

We'd billowed taut from the downs, tongue-tense, autumn  
blight browning the fields and both of us full of lowering sky.  
Grapes of balloons rose slow, like rainbow bursts towards the sea.

Lifting. I believed leaving could be as simple as this, almost  
an easy sigh of slipping land. How to explain that sudden shift  
of light, the necessary weight of you, how close I came to falling?

## POOL VAASH\*

*Ian Stuart*

Where the waves have worn  
a ragged gash into the cliff.

You can get there at low tide,  
feel the sand sink  
under your feet, climb rocks  
slimed with weed.

Inside, gravel rasps under each step,  
sunlight, ambered by the cracked sky,  
dribbles down broken strata  
to glimmer on the pool beneath.

They find bones here, sometimes – skulls  
split like broken eggs  
and chipped flints, light as leaves,  
yet sharp enough to slice a vein  
or scrape a fleece.

The half dark smells of wrack  
and sulphur, seep and rot

the slow stink of creation

*\* Gaelic: Pool of Death*

## MY BEAUTIFUL BRIDE

*Elisabeth Horan*

Be my knife-whyfe / be glinty-bad  
You are migh lyfe-whife

Hesterprynne me; fuck who u like.  
Wear this lyfe-vest; don't drown bad -

Fret in the marriage mud dark and oily as drug trees;  
hung fruity in the night -

Lightly does nothing for my libido / teddy,  
naughty; knotted limbs / akimbo limbic systems

Razor smart u r & shave me ripe n ready;  
we r nothing if not hot n heavy

Yet i carry u lite as pigeon feathers / usher me home  
notes from the war zone

Never shot down. O, brave flier; no Crow  
Martyrdom suits thee as do my chain-link

Ball bearings resonate 4 u :  
a soprano; sticky up for this alto,

Beautiful as Elton; candlelit keys  
be my knyfe wyfe / love me lightly;

Dirty Diana, wood-wynd arc de triomphe  
the death of my dutiful bride -

Ur smyle like dendritic tentacles  
high as this merciful shade-tree.

This is not a funeral for anyone but me.  
I know how hard u've tryd /

In this rut; lops of my far-flungs.  
Be my knife-whyfe / be glinty-bad.

ON READING DONALD BARTHELME'S *THE SCHOOL*

*Andrew Halsig*

And it will come someday  
all the batteries will have moved  
electrons from positive to negative.  
Life will stop recording.  
Individually it will come much faster.  
No one will remember how they laughed  
when I called their trainers tennis shoes  
because no one will call me anything.  
The South Korean's will no longer export  
Big Bang and Sistar, but  
someone will make new symphonies.  
Camera's of tomorrow will see my blue  
name it green  
and wonder how I saw both life and death  
as clouds blew through the sky.  
Riding in the ambulance from the  
ugly youth Louvre hostel  
to comfort the niece of a headsplit aunt  
will not have meant anything except to the moment.  
George Washington and Trump belong to the same America  
and divided countries will be whole again.  
The boredom of molecules will drive Earth dwellers to Mars  
just to see if it can.  
Someone will shout in the name of  
Great Spaghetti Monsters  
self vindicated as the exploding train  
strips sons and daughters from half of London  
Shanghai, Dubai, and Cairo.

Hatred will be forgiven or forgotten  
and the two will not be different.  
Where Shakespeare, either a great man,  
A great collection of women,  
or some prophet yelling at the sun,  
drank spilling wine on Othello—  
I stain smoke on a Five Star Notebook  
thinking of what to repeat.  
None of it will be remembered for its end,  
but for the journey and what it was.  
Colors will be returned to the ether  
Not belonging to a single picture.  
And it is not the fundamental datum  
That gives fuel to the fire,  
But a holy spark meaningless as it is magnificent  
and if you could ever explain it all,  
it would never burn again.

## JUNE

i.m. June Payne (1928-2015)

### *Ben Banyard*

Once, I knocked her plastic Homepride man over,  
spilled flour all over the rug during Pipkins.  
But that was alright; she hoovered  
and put his bowler back on.

She'd show me her bronze boy in the garden  
and the sentry holding pokers by the gas fire.

Her angry cats were semi-feral;  
they queued at the back door for sweetmeats,  
sharpened their claws on the wallpaper.

She laughed like no-one else; there was  
scandal in those electric cackles.

Everyone in Monica Road knew Auntie June,  
invited her to their weddings, brought her  
homemade bhajis, sausage rolls, pakora.

Irish George and Black Country Iris,  
Mohammed and Nighat next door, Billy the Lush,  
Gwen with the creepy Jesus picture.

She took Small Heath at face value  
as it changed through the decades;  
that house was her home, whoever lived nearby.

She cared for her mum, then her beloved Len  
and when there was no-one left

she lay on the sofa, watched Jeremy Kyle  
and drank gin until it was her time.

## FRANK

*Chrissy Banks*

In that very southern university, he and I  
were northern aliens, experiments  
in academia, mad in love with literature,  
first in the family to win a place.

Winter or summer, he shrugged thin arms  
into a khaki parka. His hooked nose poked  
from a face pale as bleached flour. He kissed me  
once, in Anglo-Saxon, rough and slobbery.

Frank couldn't do with borrowed thought.  
When he spat words straight from the seam,  
hard and black, his tutors' eyes lit up.  
He didn't give a toss if they agreed or not.

Analysing Hamlet (*he's fucking fucked*),  
evaluating Wordsworth (*that bloke wins first prize  
fer turning kids off poetry*), rattling off his own  
deranged and genius critique of Hemingway,

he gobbled and scrawled himself a First.  
The last I heard, he'd won a scholarship,  
soared off to be Frank in New York, while I  
wondered what it meant to graduate.

What I'm thinking now, too late, is this:  
I could have learned a lot from Frank.

## LOCH

*Zoë Siobhan Howarth-Lowe*

The splash startles me and I see you plunge,  
you who disdains even two inches of water, suddenly  
head under.

I want to jump in after you, but pause, curious  
to see what next. You are moving,  
your feet doggy-quick, step beneath the surface.  
Are you drowning?

My knees buckle, palms scabble at the edge  
thrust into the murk when bubbles pop against the surface  
as you push yourself upwards  
your muzzle breaking through the water  
a mess of sodden fur.

You point your smug ears towards the wading birds  
and scoot off.

Amused I splash in after you.

## SPACE AND TIME

*Jo Roberts*

At the bottom right of my screen  
time can be seen blinking way,  
space between each seconds digital display  
can be filled with four syllables,  
strange how an elephant or a tiny flea  
can fit easily into this gap between now and then.

## UNSPOKEN

*Karen Mooney*

Old rotten cloths  
Hang in that damp  
Musty room that  
Cannot be aired

Pegged tightly  
Many years ago  
Heat; condensation  
Decaying inside

Windows steamed up  
Jammed or locked  
Keeping intruders out  
And regrets within

## SMALL DROWNINGS

*Nigel Hutchinson*

Spring waves gently  
ripple towards the beach,  
beech trees beyond the harbour  
leave rattled music of leaves on the air,  
scent of bonfire ash from the quarry drifting,  
a duck ducks and dives,  
gulls gull unprepared fish and chip feasters  
soaking up the last of a setting sun  
along the quay, fag end of the day.

Later wind winds through unlit lanes and alleys  
sings through oak and ash like a rosary,  
hears secret and scandals in parked cars,  
lovers quietly shipwrecked, honeysuckle no longer sweet,  
lonely old soak drops his keys, coining phrases makes  
molehills out of mountains in the park, boxes shadows.

In shadows by the gate our private detective,  
a lifetime of cheap hotels and late-night dives  
harbours doubts, who's the mole and who a traitor,  
*sti fles* a sneeze - *bless you a dog walker replies* -  
turns up his collar, checks his watch,  
stubs his unconscious Woodbine,  
turns the corner, corners his quarry,  
springs his surprise - will he sink or  
will she swim?

Loose-footed drunk, all at sea,  
trawls for cigarette butts and coins,  
waves his semaphore  
arms like flags,  
sings "My Way" way off key,  
discarded lover walks home alone,  
kicks a bunch of keys into the gutter,  
night casting a long shadow over tomorrow,  
darkness unlocks his tears, waves of regret,  
him beached, out of his depth, waving.

## THE FIRST WALTZ

رقصة فالس الأولى

#metoo

*F H Erba*

No supervision three bints on our own.  
I was eleven, my cousins just older,  
Excited, yet nervous and wanting to prove  
I was all grown on the streets of Mansheya.  
My nonna told me not to waste all my money.  
She meant don't buy ice-cream, I would anyway.

Giggling and smiling, we went on our way.  
Enjoying our freedom without chaperone -  
no falling, no fighting, nor losing my money.  
But we didn't know that those boys who are older,  
would call us dark names on the streets of Mansheya.  
They bumped us and touched us, but what could we prove?

'Kifaya! Enough!' I tried to reprove.  
My big day was ruined, 'Oh, just go away!'  
They followed us on through the streets of Mansheya.  
I no longer wanted to walk there, alone.  
Back to my Nonna's where I felt much bolder,  
I turned and I gave them a run for their money.

The wrong note was struck: causing disharmony.  
My Nonna fetched Mamty who didn't approve:  
my conduct was poor so I had to shoulder  
the blame for those boys who could just walk away.  
My Nonna's words slapped with a shrill, stinging tone,  
'You talked to these boys? On the street? In Mansheya?'

She crossed herself quickly, hail-maryed a prayer;  
accused me of laughing whilst spending my money.  
My nonna chimed, ‘ Next time, we’ll both chaperone!’

Not only my actions would have to improve:  
‘Of what were you thinking, child, dressing that way?’  
You know sleeveless shirts can’t be worn when one’s older!’

‘I’ve learned my lesson, habibty,’ I told her,  
‘I won’t go without you again to Mansheya.’  
I looked at my feet before turning away.  
The mastica ice-cream, I’d bought with my money  
was good for one moment but only to prove  
the effects of the day had changed me. I’d grown.

There’s only one way, for time costs no money,  
I’d wait to be older - dangerous Mansheya -  
To prove I could walk you alone, on my own.

#### Glossary

Bint - Egyptian for girl; in English a derogatory term for a young woman

Nonna - Italian / Egyptian for grandmother

Mamty - Egyptian for my mum

Mansheya - Egyptian for city centre; also the name of Alexandria’s centre

Kifaya - Egyptian for enough

Habibty - Egyptian for my love

Mastica - Egyptian for mastic; a popular flavour of ice-cream

رقصة فالس الأولى translates to: dance of the first waltz

## DIGNITAS

*Nigel Kent*

Every day the beauty with the lilac,  
latex gloves comes to shower him;  
her blue plastic apron barely concealing  
contours that no man could ignore.

Before, he might have made a pass  
at her but since the stroke he chokes  
on words that turn to pebbles in his  
mouth and thoughts resist all calls

upstairs to rouse themselves from bed.  
So there he stands before her. Naked.  
Silent. Pale arms hang flaccidly  
at his sides, powerless to prevent

the daily trespass of her hands  
that wash away his dignity, bit by bit,  
like the dirt swirling and gurgling  
down the drain beneath his feet.

## SOLSTICE

*Melissa Fu*

The year's become a candle stub  
a taper burnt low, with only a trace  
of mornings left to light. I draw close  
to the river, walk its banks, ask how  
to play out the calendar's coda.

*Forgive*, says the willow who lost a limb  
In April under the weight of too much.  
Forgive? The word tastes like chalk and  
I wish I hadn't put it in my mouth.  
What does it mean? *Only this*:

That when sorrow cloaks the sky and  
you lose all appetite for rain and ritual,  
visit again the houses you entered first  
by sunlight. Go now. On a dry leaf,  
on a weak wind, barefoot on cold ground.

That on this, the shortest day coupled  
with the longest night, you find solace  
in the indifferent rime. Can you accept  
numbness when it is the only way  
to cross those thresholds?

That however frozen, with no offerings  
of clementines and holly, you return  
you to yourself, like a lost mitten,  
like an orphan's key, like unread ghosts,  
waiting to be released. Go now.

## REASONS TO FLY

*Eileen Carney Hulme*

It's not hard being in a room with a dead body  
when you do not know what dead means.  
That's the good thing about being six, watching  
*Casper the Friendly Ghost* and singing  
*a haunting we will go*, captivated by his  
efforts to teach an orphaned duck to fly.

Outside January snow builds, inside grief is stuck  
in my mother's throat. When she tries to speak  
it is a low moaning like my friend Mary's dog  
when it wants something. I can't see into that box.  
It sits in front of the living room window, in this small  
post-war council house, a tall candle either side.

The chair I usually climb on to look out  
has been moved and I am alone with the box.  
I jump, jump as hard and high as I can.  
I remember how easy it was for that duck  
to fly and lie on the floor with my toys  
wondering who can teach me to fly.

My aunt appears and me and bear  
have tea in the kitchen. When the box  
is gone I climb onto the chair, through glass  
follow cloud shapes, as I search between  
and beyond for heaven, where daddy is.  
How hard can it be then to fly?

## WISH

*Hannah-Rose Tristram*

Some thoughts colour the  
eyes - drops of black ink spreading  
through mind's clear waters.

## LOOKING INTO THE LITTLE ORCHARD

*Diane Jackman*

The gate hangs in ruins.  
I lay my hand on the wood,  
eroded into striations,  
as Gramp must have laid  
his rough hand on the top rail  
a thousand times past.

The Little Orchard, fruit trees  
grubbed up long ago,  
is choked with thistles  
and rank hawkweeds.  
Small creatures rustle and scurry  
under the sheltering canopy.

I stand out in the kale field.  
Here fifty years ago last January  
I stood beneath the kale stalks,  
their grey-green leaves  
dripping ice on to my face,  
soaking my pixie hood.

Then I thought this world,  
this farm would go on forever;  
calving, milking, sowing, harvesting,  
on for as long as time. They would  
have known, the grown-ups,  
not clever, but full of knowledge.

When Gramp laid his hand  
on the gate, he knew his action  
had a finite number of repetitions,  
might have been glad of the fact,  
as the cold wind blew off the river  
and shook the apple blossom.

## MOMENT ON A MARSH

Burnham Overy Staithe, 3rd September 2016

*Betty Hasler*

In the creek of glass  
the up-turned cattle sometimes swing their tails;  
and shadows of mud-planted boats squat  
among the ripples of a disappearing dabchick.  
Tethered buoys tense, about to tug at the tide.

In dreary single file  
a laden family trudges to a distant beach invisible  
along a path interminable. Through the silence  
a sneeze is thrown back from their forerunners.  
Their spaniel snuffles hopelessly in the grass.

Inside a veil of green,  
a cricket pauses its darting to quiver.  
I gaze, as dinosaurs did, at the same sky,  
and wait to feel a tide begin to turn,  
beneath a benediction of white butterflies.

## THE ONLY PUB THAT WILL SERVE US IN STOCKPORT

*Isabelle Kenyon*

Back then desperate to be seen  
on a Saturday night -  
grimy pub,  
teenagers desperate to fill my lungs  
with black soot,  
as we head bang  
to music we'll hate three years later,  
but which currently expresses how alone  
we all feel  
and how desperate we are  
to fit in to a clique.

## LEAVING VIENNA

*Nicolette Golding*

On an old train to Budapest,  
the kind with six seats  
to a compartment.  
I fasten round my neck  
my grandmother's necklace  
because she was a traveller  
in her bones and I am not  
and because she married  
when almost still a child,  
never getting to go anywhere.  
Confined.

Small white beads and gold.  
Larger cylindrical green ones  
interspersed like stations  
repeat a pattern. Everything  
goes round. I make room  
for her beside me. Her voluminous  
turquoise kaftan, the large feet  
in comfy sandals, our hands  
knobbly in our laps.

In her sixties she tore away the straps.  
New hair-do, modest bags, one-way  
ticket to New York. Ave Marias,  
these glass beads  
the clasp  
a Pater Noster, slipping easy  
through my thumb and fingers.

Shlopfwerk, Linzerdorf, Mosonayar Ovar,  
decades leaning each  
a little on the other: mother  
on mother. Never grasping.  
Passing on,  
passing through.

## ADOPTION DAY

*Stephanie Hutton*

My girl arrives  
as new and old as a promise.  
Her eyes are empty cupboards  
aching for food.  
Cocaine-white fingers twitch at her side.  
The courtroom of her face questions me,  
as calm as the morning after violence.  
She clutches her bag like a removed womb.  
A smile self-harms her face as  
she exhales her old name.

## INHALE MY DUST

*Gail Ferguson*

I knit my own cocoon, soft-padded  
proof against the world. Inside  
I cannot feel the cold  
nor hear the big-beaked bird

that comes for me, stabbing.  
Inside my cries are choked,  
my limbs hamstrung.  
I cannot feel the autumn sun.

I shrink and shrink,  
I am become a husk.  
Where is my metamorphosis,  
the great reveal?

## SUNSET IN THE WEST

*Liz McDonnell*

Talking of our future  
for the first time  
a thing of clay  
to be held  
and made in wet fingers  
(our hands busy  
until now  
with the storm  
we started years back),  
we look through a wide smile  
in the earth.  
The sea is frozen in silver  
a crowd of turbines  
sculpt the air noiselessly.

A door swinging to open.  
A table set for many.  
Our words in different fonts.  
All things spoken.

At the end of the lilac sky  
a giant peach  
finally slips into grey.

Seeing the distance as it is  
chastened by its bittersweet metric  
we notice a spider  
eating the silk  
of her web  
glands nourished for remake.  
Soon after  
a new orb  
glistens intricately.

## GHOSTS AND DARK MATTER

*Dido F.*

In our peripheral vision  
Are dwelling things  
We cannot look straight in the eye

It matters that darkness weighs  
With irrefutable force  
As we are taught knowledge and belief  
As twining bedfellows

Your epistemology takes the piss  
Denying consciousness of lesser broth  
Whist abusing yours with underuse  
What else should I not believe in Sir?

Was it just you and me in the primeval soup?  
Drawing membrane from our immiscibility  
Like a nylon thread to knit a life because  
Our union is electric

I hardly think so, Sir  
You don't believe in ghosts  
Which is why I think we're words short  
And never will complete our gap fill

CUT OFF

*Georgina Titmus*

Salon mirror puddles  
lamplight the only client.

Spiteful sullen showers  
phone box on the corner.

Door stiff and awkward  
piss smell on entry.

Pips demand feeding  
conversation starts.

Bled dry of rations  
conversation ends.

Door stiff and awkward  
waiting figures loom.

Fists in the darkness  
knives in the night.

Sprint for salvation  
stabbed by the rain.

Salon mirrors splinter.

## FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

*Phil Vernon*

The uplands deadened him the more:  
where people neatly laid in rows  
called louder than in other wars,  
by simple geometry; he closed

his ears but year on year the song  
joined whispers from elsewhere, to drown  
the voice insisting we prolong  
our lives. He hears no music now.

Daybreak unrolls - without a sound  
the empty landscape is unmasked,  
the wind has dropped; and far from sea,

the gulls fly, quiet, above the town.  
How wide, the space between what passed  
and what he told of tragedy.

## HOW DOES FORGIVENESS WORK?

*Selma Carvalho*

In waves of tenderness

Centrifugal, circling

Reaching outwards

From the edge

Of my

Vulnerable

Recipient

Resilient

Self

Come to me now.

DARK DAUGHTER.

*Deborah Gregory*

Your brother clasps you  
in his arms,  
presses his fair head with its curls  
against your black-capped skull.

Soon you will be gazing  
up at him  
with blueberry eyes.

All those blonde cousins  
drew me from your scent -  
but now I know you  
as I know myself.

You are the North, the night sky.

You are the full moon over frozen fields.

You will be morning on the shoreline.

You will be ice in everlasting sun.

And I will hold  
my freshly fallen daughter  
oh I will hold you  
lightly

as if I could  
cradle the snow.

## ON BEAUTY

*Victoria Richards*

“Am I beautiful?” she says, and my heart  
stiffens in spasmodic rhythm, an extra

—  
to notice how clear her eyes are, khaki  
irises in a black lash frame, or:  
sugared almonds laid softly on velvet.  
I traverse the kitten fur of her cheek,  
count nine - ten - freckles darting across  
her nose like rabbits in a sunlit field of my  
imagining; that beauty spot, a warren at her  
jaw. I stroll luxuriously across her  
forehead, brows knitted in helter-skelter  
frown, like the slide on the ArcelorMittal Orbit,  
178m of meshed red steel.

— *Am I, mummy? Am I beautiful? —*  
the soft pink of her lips is a sunset so  
exquisite there’s a kind of horror in it.  
Words are poison, they choke me as I  
spit them out and it hurts, it hurts  
to look at her, it’s like staring straight  
into  
the  
sun





### *Author Biographies:*

Annie Maclean is a Gael in exile living on the south coast to hear the sea and feel the sun.

Ben Banyard lives in Portishead, which is just up the coast from Clevedon Pier. His collection *We Are All Lucky* (2018) and pamphlet *Communing* (2016) are both published by Indigo Dreams. He blogs at [benbanyard.wordpress.com](http://benbanyard.wordpress.com)

Betty Hasler is an aspiring poet who has at last found the time to ponder for weeks over which word to use and where. She lives near Kings Lynn. The poem has appeared in *Jurnets Poetry Voices 2017 an Anthology* published (privately) in 2017 by Graham Jones.

Chris Hemingway is a poet and songwriter from Cheltenham. He has a new pamphlet *Party in the Diaryhouse* published this year (Picaroon Poetry) and has previously self-published two collections on [lulu.com](http://lulu.com). Chris helps with the running of the Cheltenham Poetry Festival, and the Squiffy Gnu Wordpress/ Facebook Poetry Group.

Chrissy Banks lives in Exeter. She is published widely in magazines. Her last collection was *Days of Fire and Flood*. Website [www.chrissybankspetry.com](http://www.chrissybankspetry.com). *Frank* was first published in *The North*.

David Hale: Born in Scotland, David currently lives in a Gloucestershire hamlet. He has two pamphlets out, one from Happenstance, and one from Templar.

Deborah Gregory trained and worked as an actress before winning an Arvon Competition and turning to writing. She has an MA in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University and has had three novels, several poems and some short stories published.

Diane Jackman's poetry has appeared in *Rialto*, *Outposts*, *Happenstance*, small press magazines and many anthologies. She was the winner of the Liverpool Festival, Deddington and Café Writers Norfolk prizes. Starting out as a children's writer with seven books and more than 100 stories published, she now concentrates on poetry. With her late composer husband she wrote several works for choir and the libretto for *Pinocchio* for Kings' Singers/LSO. She has just completed a sequence, *Lessons from the Orchard* and is now working on water poems. *Looking into the Little Orchard* is the poem which won the Deddington Festival poetry competition in 2014, although it was never published or put up on their website.

Dido F lives in Bristol with some of her children and lots of cats. She is an educator and a part time sheep farmer with the commensurate, slightly off-beat, skill set. She has a great love of wild places, edifying company and some fictional bears.

Elisabeth Horan is a poet, mother, student and teacher from Vermont, who enjoys working with horses and spending time with her two young sons. Elisabeth has poems published or forthcoming at *Former Cactus*, *Ginger Collect*, *Rat's Ass Journal* and *Algebra of Owls* among other fine journals. Her first collaborative chapbook is forthcoming in March, 2018, at Moonchild Magazine. She teaches English at River Valley Community College. Follow her @ehoranpoet

Gaynor Kane lives in Belfast. She has been widely published in journals and anthologies in the UK, Ireland and America. The poem is due to be published in a new on-line journal, *Nourish Poetry*.

Georgina Titmus: An ex-sitcom co-writer, Georgina has twice been shortlisted in the Bridport Prize, won LVU2, received an honourable mention in Poetry Pulse 2016 and has poems published in *Luminous Echoes* and *Poems to Keep*. She enjoys staring into space and wild(-ish) swimming.

Isabelle Kenyon is the author of poetry book, *This is not a Spectacle* and the editor of Mind Poetry Anthology, *Please Hear What I'm Not Saying*. Connect with her at [www.flyonthewallpoetry.co.uk](http://www.flyonthewallpoetry.co.uk)

Jane Aldous' poems have been commended in the Norman McCaig Centenary Poetry Competition, the Baker Prize, Buzzwords Poetry Competition, the Manchester Writing for Children Prize and she won the Wigtown Poetry Competition in 2012. She's also had poems published in *Northwords Now*, *Southlight*, *The Eildon Tree*, *poetandgeek*, *New Writing Scotland* and the *DUSK* anthology published by Arachne Press in 2018. She's currently compiling a poetry pamphlet.

Karen Mooney's work has been published by *The Society of Classical Poets* and she has self-published three poetry booklets to support various charities. She has participated in readings and projects for International Women's Day, Poetry Day Ireland, the CS Lewis Festival, community groups and radio.

Liz McDonnell came recently to learning about and writing poetry. It is something she does in stolen moments, busy as she is with her three children and full-time job. She lives in Brighton and knows she's very lucky to occupy the space between the sea and the hills.

Mary Gilonne is a translator, living in France for many years but originally from Devon. She has won the Wenlock Prize, been shortlisted for the Bridport and Bedford Prizes, commended in the Prole, Buzzwords, Elbow Room and Caterpillar prizes. Her work has been published by *Antiphon*, *Curlew*, *Smeuse*, *Snakeskin*, *Grievous Angel*, *Ekphrastic Review* and *Emma Press* among others, and in several anthologies.

Melissa Fu is from Los Alamos, New Mexico and lives in Cambridgeshire. Her writing has appeared in publications including *The Lonely Crowd*, *International Literature Showcase*, *Bare Fiction*, and *Envoi*. In 2017, she was the regional winner of Words and Women's Prose Competition and one of four Apprentices with the London-based Word Factory.

Nicolette Golding lives in Norwich. She has had poems published in anthologies and on London buses. She's pretty old now but has enjoyed reading and writing poetry since the age of seven.

Nigel Hutchinson digs for potatoes and words. His collection *The Humble Family Interviews* is published by Cinnamon Press.

Nigel Kent lives in Worcestershire. His poetry has appeared in *South* magazine, *Poems to Keep* (Dempsey and Windle), *Anger* (Paper Swans Press), *Lost Things* (Emmas Attic Publishing), *Small Acts of Kindness* (Nottingham Peacebuilders) and *Openings 34* (PSOU).

P Wooldridge: Initially inspired to write following the loss of his father, P Wooldridge has continued to write, in formal styles, on ageing, death, children, and other mundane ponderings that are common for a, disappointingly average, father of two young girls.

Phil Vernon returned to the UK in 2004 after nearly twenty years in various countries in Africa, and in 2012 started writing poems again after a long break. Whereas in the past he wrote in free verse he now mostly adopts formal forms, and finds his words and ideas thus surprise him more often. The poem is in *Poetry Salzburg Review*, issue 32

Sally Spedding: Born and living in Wales, Sally spends part of the year in the Eastern Pyrenees which also inspires her poetry and crime writing. Her work has been widely published and won awards, and this year she will again be judging the International Welsh Poetry Competition.

Sarah J Bryson is a part-time poet, and part-time nurse. She takes a photograph or ten on most days of the week. She runs occasional poetry workshops, and has been involved in a research project taking the arts into residential care. Her poetry has been placed in competitions and published in anthologies, journals and on line.

Sarah Thomson was born and raised in the UK and developed a love of writing from an early age. Having studied English at the University of Exeter, she has had a varied career in publishing, accountancy, and Human Resources and is now a full-time writer. She was recently shortlisted for the Bridport Prize 2017 and was also one of the winners of the Persimmon International Poets Competition 2017.

Selma Carvalho is a London Short Story shortlistee, commended for the Brighton Prize, listed for Exeter Writers Contest and the Berlin Prize among others

Stephanie Hutton is a writer and clinical psychologist in Staffordshire, Uk. *Adoption Day* was previously published in *Calamus Journal*, December 2016.

## *About The Anthology*

'The Road To Clevedon Pier' is our first anthology, our first book at all and to be totally honest I really didn't know how it would turn out. We started by asking ourselves why credible poets would take a chance on a new press nobody had heard of and we didn't know the answer to that - all we could do was hope.

In the end it seems as though we must have seemed vaguely trustworthy (although the attraction of a hedgehog in his red wellies is probably closer to the truth) and the competition and therefore the anthology of the poems and poets longlisted for it, turned out to be something special. There is a real buzz to be had when you are reading submissions and you suddenly find \*that\* poem and so it was the case with Victoria Richards.

However many other poems I read, Victoria's just drew me back, and I won't apologise for including two of hers, it could have easily been six.

Matt Duggan and Sarah Thomson were 'Highly Commended' as runners-up, and they too produced something that has stayed with me. Such fine margins, and on another day...

But it isn't just about those three, the whole of the longlist managed to reach me in one way or another and I can only hope that you enjoy reading them as much as I have.

To finish the book, I took the liberty of asking Victoria, Sarah and Matt a couple of questions, their responses we reproduce here.

MD

February 2018

*Winning Poet: Victoria Richards*

Can you tell us what the inspiration for the poem was?

“I was walking home from school through the forest with my daughter, who's five, and became creepingly aware of how small she was - and how little I had on me to protect her. I think women are very aware of their vulnerability - we automatically take precautions, such as holding our keys in clenched fingers if we walk alone at night. We don't even think about it.”

When did you write it and where?

“I wrote it on the Tube to work, on the 'notes' section of my iPhone. Most of my poems start out as first drafts in that way. It's one of the only times I have to sit still and to think.”

What are you currently writing and what are your forthcoming plans?

“I have been working on both a novel and a poetry collection. I'm in the process of editing both and hope that one day they'll fly out into the world and make successes of themselves.”

*Highly Commended: Sarah Thomson*

Can you tell us what the inspiration for the poem was?

“I’d had a really bad few days with pain in the neck/head but after lots of painkillers began to feel a bit better so went out to Rocoillos, The Triangle, Bristol for a cheeky cappuccino followed by a walk to the harbour. While I was in the café they played Cornell Campbell ‘Have some Mercy’ - you’ll have to read the poem to get the rest of the story...”

When did you write it and where?

“I wrote it over the next few days at home in Bristol. Couldn’t get the rhythm right at first but then I realised it needed a reggae beat, like the song that inspired it.”

What are you currently writing and what are your forthcoming plans?

“I’ve got a few poems under development not least of which is a ‘cult’ poem about a Hedgehog! My ambition is to get a collection published and so I’ll definitely be entering the Hedgehog Press collection competition. Not all of the poems will be about Hedgehogs though...”

*Highly Commended: Matt Duggan*

Can you tell us what the inspiration for the poem was?

“The Inspiration for this poem came from a walk I went on last year when visiting Coleridge Cottage, in Nether Stowey in Somerset, we walked across the Quantocks on a cold and rainy day in September then went for a pub lunch in Clevedon at the Royal Oak. I remember I wrote the first lines of the first stanza in the pub on a beer mat, just imagining Coleridge sat in the corner sipping his ale and then walked around Clevedon along the coastal walkways, and that’s where lines from the rest of the poem seemed to just fall into place.”

When did you write it and where?

“I wrote some of the poem on a daytrip last year to Clevedon and Somerset, and the rest of the poem was finished when I returned home to Bristol. I always like to jot lines down on a mobile phone and then add them to a notepad when I get home. I eventually finished the final stanza late October last year and after a few edits I’d say it was completed at the end of November.”

What are you currently writing and what are your forthcoming plans?

“I’m currently working on my second full collection ‘Woodworm’, which includes the poem ‘Walking with Coleridge in Clevedon’, I also have two new chapbooks available ‘One Million Tiny Cuts ( Clare Song Birds Publishing House ) and ‘A Season in Another World’ ( Thirty West Publishing House ) which is due this April 2018.