

£1 from every anthology sold will go to CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young), a charity which works at preventing young sudden cardiac deaths through awareness, screening and research, and supporting affected families in memory of Stevie Jivani the daughter of one of the Mole Valley Poets former members.

CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) www.c-r-y.org.uk
Registered charity Number: 1050845

Home
Mole Valley Poets Anthology
2021

This year's theme is Home - a word that conjures so many things and means so much - places, people, buildings, countries, music, memories. Each of the Mole Valley Poets has taken the theme and spun a colourful and varied collection of poems, many written over the last year when we have spent more time than ever at home.

Mole Valley Poets meet monthly to celebrate, discuss and share poetry in all its many forms and expressions. If you would like more information visit www.molevalleypoets.co.uk.

We are also a Poetry Society Stanza group www.poetrysociety.org.uk

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Contents

	Page
Heather Shakespeare	
Dwelling	6
The Intruder	12
Journey's End	28
A A Marcoff	
Home	6
Gogyoshi (five-line poems)	13
A Fairy Tale	22
Gogyoshi (five-line poem)	23
haiku	28
Susan Thomas	
House Hunting	7
Judgement	29
Back Home	33
Sue Beckwith	
haiku	7
Still Life with Daffodils	8
Helen Overell	
Home	8
Shelter	20
Home again	25
Tony Earnshaw	
On the shelf	9
Hefted	13
A love letter to the planet	14
Diana Webb	
haiku	9
Meltdown	22
Home	27

Judith Packer is exploring how poetry can unearth memories, capture everyday experiences and help us understand scientific concepts. An engineer and project director by profession, she has a particular interest in emerging technologies. An holistic world view of the challenges of climate change coupled with nature-based solutions form the backbone of her new poetry.

Mark Boor dreamt of being a poet as a child and, after a break of 30 years, he is now giving it his best shot. His inspiration is eclectic; he writes to better understand what captivates or moves him, because it brings him joy and also to disconcert his two daughters who “don’t get it”!

Pauline Watson has always loved poetry, both reading and writing poems. Taught English at Wallington Grammar School for Girls before opening her first Antique Jewelry shop in Dorking. Enjoys living and walking in Surrey.

Richard Lister takes you into the stories of intriguing people, cultures and places. His poetry is ‘a celebration of ordinary magic perceived by a keen eye’. He works as a coach for leaders and enables communities to move out of poverty across Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Rosemary Wagner studied modern languages and worked in education, administration and translation. Her poetry has been published in a number of magazines and she was long-listed for the National Poetry Competition 2020.

Sue Beckwith is the editor of the Mole Valley Poets anthologies. She has had haiku and haibun published in Time Haiku and Blithe Spirit, the British Haiku Society journal.

Susan Thomas is a Senior Staff Nurse in a Hospice and lives in Westhumble. She enjoys walking her dog every day and has been commended in the Hippocrates Prize 2021.

Tony Earnshaw is a Dorking based poet, playwright and author. He has recently published his poetry collection *Paths and Digressions* (Dempsey and Windle 2021) and is a director of theatre company Damn Cheek Productions.

Contributors

AA Marcoff is an Anglo-Russian poet who lives near the River Mole, which is his inspiration and meditation. He is a long-standing member of the international haiku and tanka community and has also had longer poems published in many journals, including *Poetry Review*, *Ambit*, *Agenda* and *Fire*.

Denise Bundred trained as a paediatric cardiologist and completed an MA in Writing. She has recently had her pamphlet *Litany of a Cardiologist* published by Against the Grain publishing.

Diana Webb is editor of the haiku journal *Time Haiku*. She runs a local haiku group called *Leaves to a Tree* and has won both the British Haiku Society Award and the Genjuan Contest Award.

Elizabeth Barton lives in Cobham and loves walking in Surrey's woodlands and heaths. She has poems published or forthcoming in magazines including *Agenda*, *Acumen* and *The High Window* and is Stanza Rep for Mole Valley Poets.

Heather Shakespeare worked for many years teaching English and Creative Writing in colleges and prisons. She now facilitates workshops, which focus on the writing process and its potential to enhance wellbeing and encourage self-development, both personally and professionally. Her own poems have been published in *Antiphon* and *The Interpreter's House*.

Helen Overell lives in the Mole Valley and has published widely in magazines and anthologies. Her publications include her collections *Inscapes & Horizons* (St Albert's Press, 2008) and *Thumbprints* (Oversteps Books, 2015) and a booklet *Measures for lute* (The Lute Society, 2020). Her website is: www.overell.co.uk

Jacky Power is an addictions psychologist and poet who uses poetry to open up conversations and her therapeutic and psychological training to make those conversations deeply meaningful.

	Page
Rosemary Wagner	
At home: in music	10
At home: at sea	16
At home: spring 2021	27
Elizabeth Barton	
Dartford Warbler	11
Briar Rose	23
Judith Packer	
Inter-Home Telescope	15
Richard Lister	
Tatanka Iyotake	17
Denise Bundred	
Crux of the Matter	21
Jacky Power	
'Bad' dreams	22
All at sea	26
Homeless Bum	31
The Séance	33
Mark Boor	
A Lifetime Walking Home at Dusk	24
Homeless	32
Pauline Watson	
Memories of memories	30
Fish on Easter Friday	32

Dwelling

Home is a nest, a burrow, a lair
it is twigs, a hollow, feathers and fur
it is birth, growth, a quiet passing

Home is breath, blood, soft skin
more presence than place
more how than where

Home, whether here or there
is a settling, a belonging, what
is longed for –
a way to be.

Heather Shakespeare

Home

summer fishing boats also returning home
voices
&
traces
of
the
sun:
I
can't
imagine
not
being
here

A A Marcoff

The Séance

'Oh bottom of the laundry bin,
can you help us - are you there?
We've formed this séance to connect with you,
so show yourself, please dare.

We remember when we saw you,
a familiar ally in our midst;
but we seem to have lost sight of you
with all these growing kids.

Have you passed to the other side?
Will we see you ever more?
We wash and rinse and spin the clothes
to try to see you like before.'

The cards move around the table...
what is it that they spell..?

"No, sorry love, 'til uni
you're stuck in washing hell."

Back Home

There was no evidence.
The whole thing was
rotten from the beginning.
Back home
after my exoneration
I found I could not open a door-
because for 17 years
they had been opened for me.
To open one myself was forbidden,
impossible.
Now I had to, even could,
just turn the handle -
push
and walk through.

Jacky Power

Susan Thomas

Homeless

Having only memories and the possessions you hold,
Ostracised, bombed, fleeing with your life,
Migrant now, dreams of home, flimsy as an inflated raft,
Every hope drifting away with each wave,

Losing your home, your dignity, your history.
Eventually lights glint optimistically on a distant shore, but...
Strident self-interest mixed with bigoted fear
Shocking and shaming, you are not welcome here.

Mark Boor

Fish on Easter Friday

Everything in place
my frying pan
dab organic butter
flakes of Cornish salt
swirl of froth, lay
the white fish fillets
skin side down
dusted in seasoned flour
listen for the hissy kiss
of crispness.

Boil tiny new potatoes
chop chives, parsley, mint
pile high in the Wedgwood tureen
legacy from my mother
silver laid on the shimmering
polished Cuban mahogany
dining with William Morris walls
clatter of chairs, passing plates.
We chatter, toast health, my family,
as the room fills up with memory.

Pauline Watson

House Hunting

This week I have lived in a thatched cottage
sat by a winter's fire, cooked on an Aga
I have hung my things up in that cupboard
and painted the dining room green.

This week I have lived in a barn
danced under beams, twirling to loud music
flinging my arms into the space.

This week I have lived in a converted pig sty
in need of a floor, I could have wonderful views
of the fields from my pen!

This week I have lived in a Grade II wreck
with rain washing my bedroom walls
and an indoor paddling pool in the cellar.

This week I have lived in a modern flat
all granite and glass – telling myself I belonged.

This week I have lived in a tiny tiny
disposed of all my treasures
but found myself crying for them
heartbroken on the kitchen floor.

This week I have lived in a semi
semi content, but my other half
keeps whispering in my ear.

This week I have lived in a wild croft and
pulled a tartan blanket over my head in despair.

This week I have moved into my mind's eye
leaving a post-it note on my forehead – 'Back Soon'
searching, searching for that place I can call
home.

Susan Thomas

at the end of the road
a ripe harvest moon
and home

first bumble bee
busies itself in a purple crocus
outside the back door

Sue Beckwith

Home

Home is within-bone memory.
Happenstance, pattern of leaf shadow.
Hand-me-downs, much mended, inhabit us.
Touchstones, smooth as pebbles, talismans
chosen from the neat cairn at the hearth
carried with us out over the threshold,
ease bewilderment at the haphazard world,
take on deep meditation of river, still of trees.
Moments fill with hidden birdsong,
hold cadence of bamboo wind chimes,
comfortable embrace of welcome.
Warmth of glance in shared humour,
those crinkles of laughter lines.
No matter the season, the way light falls.

Still life with Daffodils

Chestnut deep shine
on a vase of straight
green stems and cloud
of yellow mirrored
against the dark gold
and turquoise stripes
of a pleated lampshade
- if you look carefully
your silhouette is in relief
bent over a book
in quiet repose
like the blue bird
on the glass dish.

Helen Overell

Sue Beckwith

Homeless Bum

Go on, you're right - walk on.
I'm just a homeless bum
who doesn't deserve your glance or cash.
No, run on by, off you dash!
I'm just a homeless bum.

I'm not a survivor
whose nights were scarred,
whose innocence
was bruised and marred;
who, by anyone's book
'has had it hard'.

Go on, you're right - walk on.
I'm just a homeless bum.

I'm not a survivor
whose flashbacks are near,
who drowns them out
with spice or cheap beer,
and lives in walls,
built from fear.

Go on, you're right - walk on.
I'm just a homeless bum

I slur my words
so you can't make out
my muffled screams,
my voiceless shouts;
my untold story -
so smelly, disgusting,
bloody and gory...
like me.

Go on - you're right, walk on.
I'm just a homeless bum.

Jacky Power

Memories of memories

The old dog slumbers on
snoring grey whiskered dog
whose grandfather fetched pheasants
for a younger, head-scarfed queen.
His father posed with silver cups.
This dog forgets his noble bloodlines
forgets his aching bones and heritage
thinks himself a spanielled lap dog.

My Dad, soothed by a spiral of smoke
Old Holborn in his pipe, and Motorsport,
strokes that wise old head and silky ears.
My sister, chattering, her comics resting
on his ribs and loyal beating heart.
My mother, with her slipping glasses
needles clicking as she turns a sock,
cushions her arms on his comfy rump.

And me? I am reading my book,
bookmarked by his thumping tail.
All together on the sagging sofa.
They are long gone. Passed into dust.
I sit alone now, reading, blanketed,
cushioned on the battered old sofa.
Listening as their voices creep quietly,
seep softly through the walls of memory.

Pauline Watson

On the shelf

On the shelf, books,
schoolboy stories from a different era,
jostle for position with the greats,
each with its own freight
of attitudes, its own tales
of power and excess,
of bullying and deprivation,
attitudes to women and other races
we would not tolerate today,
would we?

As a boy I was much taken
with the fifth form at St Dominic's,
with a Sparrow in search of expulsion,
with a world of prep, dorms and fags
about which I knew mercifully little.
Tom Brown and Flashman struggled in my mind,
Stalky stalked my dreams,
but our paths diverged as they moved on
to conquer India
while I turned my face against empire
and the supremacy of race.

Tony Earnshaw

fresh from washing up
your hand
still warm

your dressing gown
let fall across the chair
its folds and crumples

January
a thistle seed
deep in the laundry bag

Sunday morning
just a wood pigeon's cry
and the click of Lego

Diana Webb

At home: in music

Last night I tried on Grieg's hands:
my fingers grew long, baton-thin and straight.
They lifted, flexed and flopped
like strung puppets.
It was a miracle.

I had seen the Thinker sitting hunched
on a beach of grey stones by a lake. Behind him
a log cabin fringed and curtained
by the conifers of Norway.
It was Edvard Grieg,

listening to the silence. He put his hands over mine
and smiled. They were small and misshapen
under his. No matter, he said,
take these for now,
you won't drop a note,

but you must work to make them dance
as I do, and focus, and place
them carefully. I did as he said and found
invisible grooves he had played
into the keys of his piano:

the errors and calamities
of my practice became a stream of passion
flowing through my fingers, pooling
and bubbling from darkness to light
into a mountain torrent,

while the old wind raging through
the green night of the trees
let its tantrum go and sang to us,
the pebbles and the water,
a paeon of clarity and peace.

Rosemary Wagner

Judgement

Just get House Clearance in
some say, as though it would
be the easiest thing in the world
to let a stranger take away
a chunk of your life with a scalpel,
without anaesthetic.
No, it will take time
and time's accordion now breathes
slowly in and out, with a melancholy tune
as I move through the quiet house.
I will sieve it all, cushions, clocks, key rings
consider each teaspoon-
divide all those years into
Charity, Dump and Keep
hold each item in my hand
before its fate, my memory compass
pulling heavily towards Keep.
My 'letting go' is being watched
by the living and the dead
their judgement whispers
along the skirting boards –
a draft nipping at my ankles
as I gently unpick everything

Susan Thomas

Journey's End

We thought this was her home –
this spacious, triple-aspect flat
with river view and castle on the hill –
but she had somewhere else in mind

not that you'd find on any map,
a place beyond, no bricks, no postcode
but a mansion nonetheless with just
her name there on the open door

and welcoming her in a face she loved –
though only seen quite dimly until then –
now bright, suffused with aureate light,
almost too much to look upon

as though the clouds had parted
after days of unrelenting rain,
the sun breaking through at last.

Heather Shakespeare

sunrise
morning tea
& the rim of a cup

spill the world
from a cup of green tea
& stir the silence

sipping tea
& once again
the rain

AA Marcoff

Dartford Warbler

The wind flays our thighs as we trudge
through the heath, rucksacks cutting, noses
weeping. Our ranger's run through the risks –

adders, ticks, strange objects junked by the MOD.
A Chinook thunders above us and I wonder
why we've come so far in search of a scraggy bird.

The bog guzzles our feet as we squeeze
through a maze of gorse so barbed and deep,
even the dogs are afraid to go on.

We emerge, shin-spiked, skin shivering
into the loneliest spot where the warblers breed.
Its openness unsettles us –

no hills, no landmarks, no full-grown trees,
only a sea of moor grass, dun-coloured ling,
a blur of pines on the blue horizon.

We tread soft beds of moss,
our senses sharpening and a curlew's cry
ghosts our longing for the home we've lost.

We glimpse ourselves in the black bog water
and with every step on stone and sludge,
we feel a brush of wings as light as grace.

Our ranger whispers, *There, above the gorse!*
and we see the fiery breast and eye of a bird
so rare, it holds the fate of the wild in its song.

Elizabeth Barton

Published in South 60 October 2019

The Intruder

I don't know which of us was startled more that afternoon:
she by the door opening, my heavy tread on the boards,
the clunk of secateurs against a garden fork
or I by her sudden clumsy flight to the balcony rail.

Intent upon my task, I moved aside a cast iron chair
and saw it there. Behind a half-used sack of compost and a stack
of terracotta pots containing only weeds and vestiges of last
year's blooms – victims of neglect – her nest.

A pile of twigs in this unlikely place was home to twins
half-naked then, pin feathers pricking up through wrinkled skin
replacing sandy-coloured down. Seeing no beauty, yet endeared
by their fragility, I stepped away not wishing to disturb.

A week on and I see her there, a sentinel with gimlet eye
guarding her now soft offspring, soon to be labelled vermin by all
except the woman in the threadbare coat, who'll toss them crusts,
call them friends, tell them they have a right to be here.

Heather Shakespeare

Blown in on the wind an upstart crow

At the top of the house in the room facing out to the full force
of this morning's storm, raindrops are hurled by the wind
onto the windowpanes. There they either hang in the light
shattering the view into a kaleidoscope of greys and white
or race down the window, slowing to a puddle on the windowsill.

searching for the right word
I watch a crow teetering
on a windblown branch

Sue Beckwith

At home: spring 2021

There comes a time for doing less
and being more, for grasping not only
the nettle but also the rose,
and giving each our full attention.

As now, when the sun ascending
is turning all our bluebell woods
to singing greens of lime and emerald
while we sit dully at our screens

with only ten springs left perhaps,
and maybe not all quite as good,
or even fewer, or one, or only this!
So every day I'll go out more,

however cold, and crunch the unexpected
frost beneath my feet, and give sweet thanks
to life for this fresh joy, and slowly
wonder how I came to be so old.

Rosemary Wagner

With apologies to A.E.Housman

Home

a ring-necked parakeet
perched on the bird feeder
many greens of summer

Who will sit at the top of the table, presiding over the giant tea-
pot under its well worn cosy, when we all meet up as a family
again for tea? Cucumber sandwiches. Bread and butter with
home made jam. A cake with lemon-lime flavoured drizzle.

the cosy
removed for darning
a woodpigeon's coo

Diana Webb

First published in Cattails

All at sea

The papers you poke at
are not (in fact) a disorganised pile,
but a telescope where I can look for miles;
back to the things I may have missed,
when I mattered more, was less dismissed.

And that broken tea pot
is not (in fact) 'random tat',
but it takes me back to my first flat
with my only love when we laughed and laughed...
my teapot memory life raft.

And the fridge magnets and knick-knacks there
are not (in fact) random clutter,
but memories that unfurl and flutter,
if I were to hold them in my hand;
like lost treasure dug from within the sand.

And piles of books in every corner
are not (in fact) a random selection,
but a faithful rudder aiding my direction;
their words, coordinates to steer me on...
if I just had time to open one.

All this that you say 'must go'
is not (in fact) what's at stake,
but, like a boat creates a wake,
the consequence of my truth within;
that I'm afraid that I can't swim.

Jacky Power

Hefted

Tough beneath layers of wiry grey
the Herdwicks pay scant attention
to the booted intruders
with their walking poles, maps, and backpacks.

The visitors consult their Wainwrights
cross the fell
their compasses swinging on lanyards
and head for the next ladder stile.
The Herdwicks munch on.

Further up the fell the stone walls thin out
enclosed fields are no more
not required for these sheep
hefted over generations to their own particular slice of land
boundaries taught by the ewes rarely overstepped.

To the visitor this is a place of beauty
offering a chance to hear the curlew, spot the lapwing
a place to take the breath away.
To the hefted Herdwicks
it is simply home.

Tony Earnshaw

as gulls return
from the east
I have come back
to my home
the world

my father whistles
& in a moment
of pure joy
a robin
eats from his hand

A A Marcoff

A love letter to the planet

I knew you were the planet for me
the moment I first saw you,
a traumatic time, being born isn't easy.
All that pain and the shock of the new,
the cold air, the bright lights,

but then, the wonder, the birdsong,
the hills I could see as we drove along,
the intricate patterns of the twigs on the trees,
the shapes of the leaves.
I was in love.

The relationship hasn't been easy -
you tend to blow hot and cold,
can be cruel, unforgiving,
but I knew, before I was very old,
that you were why I was living.

You nourished me, provided food
for my body and for my soul,
paid no heed to my sulks and moods,
helped to keep me strong and whole.

For my part, I've made mistakes,
not nurtured this relationship,
not cared for your welfare,
allowed your beauty to be blighted.

I have at least been faithful,
not spent time with other planets,
satisfied myself with watching them on grainy film.
No choice I guess but I want to feel it would be the same
if my fidelity was put to the test.

So, what can I give you to prove my love?
Can't give you a rose, you've plenty of those.
Chocolates don't work, bottles of wine.
Can't give you anything to say 'please be mine'.

No. 80

Warmed by companionship, rugs on their knees,
Soulmates since they married in their twenties,
He reads the paper, she's calmly knitting,
Home; a treasure trove, rich from a love well fitting.

No. 92

The windows are blank, dark, broken hearted,
Empty now, who was within, recently departed.
Time will quickly erase lives that dwelt in this place.
Home now, in the glorious palace of eternal grace.

Mark Boor

Home again

Pinch-thin — her chiselled face abstracted into distances,
she stops at the mirror in the hall, still bundled in her coat,
her empty handbag tucked beneath her arm,

she turns, raises her hands, pats the simple chin-length bob
washed into gray-streak bounce that morning by her husband,
Looks good he says, her eyes meet his in a struggled glance,

words tangle in her head, Yes she says and a sudden smile
lights her face — the first that day — while sifted images fill
the bevelled frame, years drift about her shuffled feet.

Helen Overell

A Lifetime Walking Home at Dusk

No. 1

Sleeping new born baby, swaddled soft and tight,
All-consuming focus of parental delight,
Wintered faces glowing with deepest affection,
Home; safe and nourishing, womb-like protection.

No. 6

Two toddlers at play, hidden in a homemade fort
Of clothes dryer, rug, and sheet drawn taut,
Giggling as they plot baddy (Daddy) domination,
Home; playground of innocence, of endless imagination.

No. 16

Morose and troubled, internal hormonal strife,
Hating their homework, their parents, their booorringgg life,
“You don’t get it” “I don’t care” “It’s not fair”,
Home; like a prison, hard to get out of there.

No. 25

Prone on the sofa; remote to the left, phone to the right,
Days in the City, evenings spent getting tight
Visualising his fearsome, insatiable ambition,
Home; bachelor launchpad, a financial mission.

No. 30

Brushes, stepladder, late night decorating,
Freshly married couple, nesting before mating,
Future family plans, excitedly they rehearse,
Home; the North Star for an emerging universe.

No. 55

Microwaved TV supper, same chair each night,
No eye contact, terse words, atmosphere of cordite,
Both lost in worlds they’re living elsewhere,
Home; a barren bunker, beyond all repair.

Maybe my gift is to stop doing stuff,
stuff that threatens your future,
say ‘enough is enough’, that’s what you need.
Promise to do better, not be driven by greed.

So this is my vow to my one true planet,
from the valleys below to the sky above
I promise you constructive love.

Tony Earnshaw

Inter-Home Telescope

Words, the only porthole connecting our orbiting worlds.
Our ‘inter-home’ telescope exploring the galaxy of our minds
discovering new constellations in our one shared sky
through the ether, which no virus can destroy.

Words, like the flash-trail of kingfisher’s blue
dwell in the flicker of a candle’s glowing hue
cast a glint on the needle of my tapestry without a frame;
searching for words to describe this feeling I have not yet named.

A word is my boat, navigating mangroves of life
into worlds once unseen refracted by a thin shaft of light.
The brightest of stars weaves wonder in waves across oceans
and from this darkest night sky, we find precious new motion.

May words be the hugs we still cannot share
and embrace you as our labyrinthine lives cross, still bare.
May words linger with love during long cold winter nights;
cradle the essence of a moment, forever hold you tight.

Judith Packer

At home: at sea

So good to have you safe
my collection of sea-colours
in lockdown

each pebble worn and shaped
by the scouring pull and push
of sea-waves

playing with molten rock
or sand or chalk - minerals
from millennia

turquoise, aquamarine,
crustacea fossilized in amber,
sea-glass burnished

green as grapes, snakes
of light in serpentine
maroon-dark

or stone marble-white
smoothed cornerless
pitted with ochre

all colours of the sea,
becalmed, lie here,
cupped

in a scallop shell, scavenged
from sea-weed walks
so many shores

I pick out one, recall
that salt on sea-wind smell
gifting this present

honed by the power of an ocean
and now on loan
to me

Rosemary Wagner

Briar Rose

I watch you sleeping –
five toes poking out from the warmth
of your cocoon, a glint of gold on your pillow.

Nothing disturbs you,
not the blackbird's song purling
through your window, nor the tick of your clock.

Time jars with the rhythm
of your breath, holding you prisoner,
as though your finger's spindle-pricked.

Wrapped in the taut
bud of your longing, I wonder
what will emerge from the muddle of your life –

posters of puppies,
pop stars, floor cluttered
with felt tips, lipsticks, yesterday's socks.

You stir a moment, eyes
half open, limbs shivering, not ready yet
to claw your way through the thicket of thorns;

I let you rest.

Elizabeth Barton

we were children
learning our garden
we threw handful of leaves
into our sky
joyfully

AA Marcoff

A Fairy Tale

Out of the nowhere of the north, out of the nowhere
of wolves, she came through the forest to his hut and
kissed him.

Three times she kissed him.

They sat by the fire in silence and in the evening he
watched as she became the moon, shining in the sky
like pearl.

AA Marcoff

Meltdown

Rain beats the roof, drums the pane and plummets down the
chimney as I lie awake on this Twelfth night morning.

time to put away
the gingerbread hut
my grandson made
between choc drop tiles
a taste of salt

Diana Webb

'Bad' dreams

Hugging your
just out of the oven
woken up warmth
I inhale your just dreamed hair,
as you rub
the sleep from your eyes.
You mumble your bad dream
and it tumbles into our shared air
as I kiss the delicate damp sorrow
off your face.

Jacky Power

Tatanka Iyotake

(i)
1859

Jumping Bull charges,
ignoring the pain of his old thighs
and the bullet searing hot
in his left shoulder. He reaches

the Crow warrior, a youth
with swelling muscles. The Crow
lunges and slips his blade
like an eel between Jumping Bull's ribs

and into his heart. And flees,
braids of blood flying from his arms.
At dusk Jumping Bull's son,
Tatanka Iyotake, kneels with his tunic ripped,

warm tears melting his cheeks,
his cut-off braids cast in the mud.
Two Crow women have been found.
They cower together as Lakota warriors circle,

their faces taut with hate.
Tatanka Iyotake quietly rises
and stands beside the women.
My father was a warrior and this

*was a warrior's death. Do not hurt them.
When summer has burned low
I will give these women two horses so
they can return to their people.*

Tatanka Iyotake's name translates as Sitting Bull.

cont ...

(ii)
1874

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 confirms that the sacred Black Hills belong to the Sioux. *It is unlawful for US citizens to come west of the Missouri*

at any time. Six years later Colonel Custer leads one thousand two hundred soldiers into those same Black Hills. With him is Horatio Ross, a miner with hooded eyes.

Ross sifts the streams for 'maza zee' and telegraphs his discovery: *Gold!* Fifteen thousand white prospectors pour into the Sioux lands.

(iii)
25th June 1876

I know what happened to Custer, I've seen it on TV in bold, bright colour. His forty men fought valiantly against five hundred whooping, mounted Sioux.

Custer - bolt blue eyes, determined jaw and one bullet left, stood alone, among his dead. He cried out, the 'Indian' braves rode in and his last stand was over. But then

I hear the oral story, eye witness accounts. Custer leads his men to the edge of the Little Big Horn river to attack the tribes. Tatanka Iyotake saddles his horse for battle

Crux of the Matter

You entered my heart
via the left upper pulmonary vein,
displaced molecules of oxygen, slipped
through alveolar membranes, caught my breath.
You hid in the left atrium, curled in the hammock
above the mitral valve where it curves against the wall.

You tickled the sinus node to see if my pulse quickened and it did. You tested the moderator band by jumping up and down. Palpitations upset my rhythm, disturbed its steady throb. You learned to step lightly on shiny endocardium and listened to murmurs in the dark. The billowing in my chest was a sailing boat that beat against the flow as you navigated my left ventricle. You constructed a harp from strings that anchored the tricuspid valve, played me to sleep while the moon spilled and tipped into the sea. You made your home in the best chambers, furnished them with kindness and care. You knew that I would never want you to leave.

Denise Bundred

Shelter

We carry our houses on our backs,
return to them at those moments
in the day when all seems lost,

hold, in our mind's eye, the way light
plays on the windowsills, throws leaf-clear
shadows on the bedroom door,

and how the kitchen looks out onto trees —
backdrop to potato-peeling —
in bud-veil, thirst-green, russet, gold,

and the front door in winter refusing
to budge as though to keep us in,
sheltered from the bitter cold,

the damp map high on the chimney breast
that drains to salt desert in June,
every window flung open —

blackbird-song, ginger-tinged rosemary,
heady lavender bold with bees,
the perforated edges

on young leaves, the slow skid on silver,
the neat spiral shelter swaying
in retreat, stilling in shade.

Helen Overell

1st prize in the Vernal Equinox competition 2016

but his aged mother says *you do not need to fight.*
Let the younger warriors show their worth
by protecting the camp. He bows to her wisdom.
In the time it takes for a hungry man to eat,

the battle is over, all the Americans are dead.
Tatanka Iyotake climbs the hill, lights his Cannupa pipe
and prays for the dead warriors, Custer and his men.

Wakan Tanka, receive the spirits of these warriors
for they have all fought bravely.

((iv)
2012

Three year old C.J. bathes in a kitchen sink
amongst the plates, her eyes as dark as her hair.
Twenty two people live in this three bedroomed house.
These houses aren't who we are.

Four young girls stand in the soft light
of candles, holding a photo of their friend.
A young lady who's all smiles, snuggled against her brother.
She is fifteen year old Dusti Rose Jumping Eagle.

She took her own life.
In 1980 the Supreme Court ordered the US Government
to pay for illegally taking the Black Hills.
With interest, the amount is now more than a billion dollars,
but the Sioux won't touch it. They want their land back.

Richard Lister