

DOROTHEA MACKELLAR  
POETRY AWARDS

2017

All Over the World



NATIONAL PRESENTATION CEREMONY



## Our Trophies

Gulargambone artist Alison Dent has created the trophies from a fusion of found objects. The Japanese glass floats had been lying idle at the family's western NSW sheep and cattle farm since Alison picked them up, with the fishing net still attached, in an antique shop years ago. Her intention was to give the net to her daughter to make a curtain but after unravelling it, the size and smell changed her mind!

The beautiful hand blown glass floats - no two are the same - were detached and left for inspiration to strike. When the commission came from the poetry awards for their highly individual trophies, which have become a hallmark of the event, Alison designed them to reflect this year's theme. The pine bases were made by members of the Coonamble Men's Shed, the springs around the floats are recycled from a lounge and the map was produced with the help of a friend and an atlas. As Alison explains "there were no round maps of the world!"



## *From Strength to Strength*

We have taken big strides into the future this year with the opening of the Mackellar Centre and the provision of a permanent home for the *My Country* collection of 32 watercolours by Jean Isherwood. Through the sourcing of sponsorship, donations and grants, the centre is slowly transforming to a vibrant, interesting resource facility with new furniture, computer stations for students and other learning materials.

Intended as a tourist destination that will contain memorabilia and historical items from the poetry competition, the centre is a welcoming airy space that has already attracted numerous visitors. The dedication of the W.R. (Bill) Clegg gallery, named in honour of a late councillor, has given the magnificent Isherwood collection an attractive venue for visitors to view the unique set of watercolours. The works, depicting lines from the iconic poem by Dorothea Mackellar, hang in a professionally lit space replete with seating. Also the administrative base for the poetry awards, now in their 34th year, the centre is open Tuesdays to Thursdays or by appointment.

With a bronze statue of Dorothea on her horse opposite the building, the adjacent Gunnedah Shire Band Hall, the Water Tower Museum and the War Memorial Swimming Pool, soon to undergo a multi-million dollar refit, the centre is ideally placed in a tourist precinct.

The poetry awards are run by members of the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society, a group of volunteers who cherish the written word, are passionate about ensuring that schoolchildren experience poetry and are proud of the land in which they live. Among the committee ranks are farmers, school teachers, writers and retirees as well as two delegates from Gunnedah Shire Council which, together with the Australian Government, are the primary sponsors. The competition, which is open from March to June, runs with the help of part time project officer Ruth Macauley whose background in children's theatre has added another dimension to this year's awards.

Our patrons The Hon. Margaret White AO, a former judge of the Queensland Court of Appeal and currently co-commissioner of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory and the Hon. Mark Vaile, Chairman of Whitehaven Coal, find time in their hectic schedules to lend their support for which we are grateful. The competition receives up to 12,000 entries per annum, presenting a daunting task to the judges, James Roy, Leonie Tyle and Catherine Bateson, all eminent and well known names in the world of children's literature.



The Honourable Mark Vaile AO, Chairman, Whitehaven Coal (left) and The Honourable Margaret White AO, former judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

## Primary Judges' Report

Judging any writing competition is always a difficult task, but the Dorothea Mackellar Awards offers particular challenges. The sheer diversity of themes and poetic forms make it a delight to read the entries but can also make it difficult to compare one poem's merit against another's. The difference in vocabulary, too, between the youngest poets and those just one or two years older has to be taken into account. Our selections reflect these challenges. All the poems we've chosen display that little extra flourish. Some brought self-deprecatory humour to a subject. Others created images that resonated long after the poem had been read. Still others played with rhythm and rhyme in an unusual way.

Our judging criteria was simple – we looked for poems that displayed original voices and a deft use of poetic devices – whether that was tight, unpredictable rhyming, strong images or the intense snapshot brevity of a fine haiku. We wanted to honour the diversity of subjects and themes chosen by the young writers and not neglect humorous poems, traditional subject matter or those poems that explored this year's theme in an effective way. It was heartening to read so many poems that confronted important social and environmental issues – and even a handful of poems that commented on recent current affairs both at home and abroad. These demonstrated a high level of political awareness and sophistication – Australia's future is in good hands!

In the end, the poems we have chosen often raise the ordinary to the rank of extraordinary by their assured poetic attention and the young poets who achieved this are to be congratulated.

For future entrants, here are half a dozen pointers that will help them hone their submissions. Poetry does not have to rhyme. Indeed, free verse

has been the dominant form since the early 20th century. Rhyme can be predictable and can trap a poet into using contrived and inappropriate words or phrases simply for the rhyme. Repetition, while effective, should never be confused or inadvertent. The title of a poem acts as a key to the poem – choose it as carefully as choosing words for the first line. Remember, every word must count in a poem – there is no room for ones that don't pull their weight. Verbs are the muscles of language and nouns are the bones – it is better to choose a strong verb to describe a subject, rather than relying on adjectives. And, finally, the last line needs to be memorable. Many of the poems we read suffered from throw-away lines which gave us the impression the poems had been too hastily concluded. Revision is your friend!

Although it's true that few writers become poets – it is also true that writing poetry sharpens all your other writing - and that includes essay writing. Poetry is, after all, an art of persuasion. Every poet wants to persuade the casual reader to look more closely at the world, an emotion or a life experience and see those through new eyes. The awards encourage all young writers across Australia to enter this rich world, and all students who submit their work with care and enthusiasm are rewarded by their own efforts.

Congratulations to all the winners and the commended entrants. Our thanks to all who entered – and to those who didn't make the shortlist this year, don't be discouraged. Writers, like athletes, need to practise their art, so keep writing, keep editing and keep reading!

Our thanks to the committee and project officer for all their work – it's been a pleasure to work with people actively encouraging poetry in our schools and for our young writers.

*Catherine Bateson and Leonie Tyle*

*'We have chosen poems that raise the ordinary to the rank of extraordinary.'*



**CATHERINE BATESON**

An award winning author for children and young adults, Catherine began her writing career as a poet, with collections for both adults and children. Her latest novel *Lisette's Paris Notebook*, was written after a three month residency in Paris from the Australia Council.



**LEONIE TYLE**

A lifelong dedication to children's literature has seen her work as a librarian, reviewer, speaker, editor and publisher. Leonie is a partner in Tyle & Bateson Publishing, a multi faceted publishing services enterprise based in Melbourne.



### JAMES ROY

An author of more than 30 books for young people, James has been awarded a slew of literary prizes in NSW and WA and nominated for the German Youth Literature Prize. A former member of the Literature Board for the Australia Council for the Arts, he is currently in the final stages of his Master of Creative Writing at the University of Sydney.

*‘Thank you to the young people who dug deep down into their creativity and passion to share their thoughts and ideas with us.’*

## Senior Judge’s Report

We had more than 1,400 entries in the Junior Secondary category, almost 100 in the Secondary Learning Assisted division, and over 600 in the Senior Secondary category. Many of these 2000 poems dealt with the optional theme, “All Over The World”, with a number of different approaches – travel, food, the unity of humankind, geo-politics, and the environment.

I was especially amazed and encouraged by the large number of entries that confronted difficult social issues: war and peace; the conservation and protection of our planet; the plight of refugees and the homeless. And of course there

were love poems, hate poems, silly poems, funny poems and, yes, one or two dark and disturbing poems.

The common thread in so many of the entries was a clear desire to search for solutions to what ails us as a species, either by questioning the status quo, or by pleading to our common sense and our instinct for justice. Thank you to the young people who dug deep down into their creativity and passion to share their thoughts and ideas with us – it was an honour to read your words.

*James Roy*

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## *Schools’ Award*

### WINNER – PRIMARY

Tamworth Public School, TAMWORTH NSW

### *Commendations*

Cherrybrook Public School, CHERRYBROOK NSW  
Essington School Darwin, NIGHTCLIFF NT  
Fitzroy Community School, FITZROY NORTH VIC  
Loreto Kirribilli, KIRRIBILLI NSW  
Newcastle East Public School, THE HILL NSW

### WINNER – SECONDARY

Youth Education Centre, CAVAN SA

### *Commendations*

Applecross Senior High School, ARDROSS WA  
Brisbane Girls Grammar School, SPRING HILL QLD  
Byron Bay High School, BYRON BAY NSW  
Frensham & Gib Gate, MITTAGONG NSW  
Hobart College, MOUNT NELSON, TAS  
Hornsby Girls High School, HORNSBY NSW  
Macquarie Grammar School Sydney, SYDNEY NSW  
Merici College, BRADDON ACT  
Presbyterian Ladies College, PEPPERMINT GROVE WA  
Redeemer Baptist School, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW  
SCEGGS Darlinghurst, DARLINGHURST NSW

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# *Winner - Lower Primary*

Mila Milanovic

THOMAS HASSALL ANGLICAN COLLEGE  
MIDDLETON NSW



## *The Night Witch*

The Witch on the broom with the tall pointy hat,  
flew through the mist with her shaggy brown cat.

Together they flew, they would dip and then dive,  
creating patterns in the mist under the moonlit sky.

The children below her lay tucked in their beds,  
unaware of the witch that flew over their heads.

As they lay dreaming of everything nice  
the wicked old Witch, who was colder than ice

mumbled a spell with words of this and of that,  
to suck up their dreams straight into her hat.

Once they were there without even a care,  
she would replace the sweet dreams with a horrible nightmare!

Home she would fly back through the night sky  
mysteriously cackling as she flew by.

### **JUDGES' COMMENT**

A poem that combines a strong narrative, successful characterisation, good rhyming and sophisticated poetic techniques such as enjambment and imagery.

# *Runner Up - Lower Primary*

**Mia Polselli**

PROUILLE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, WAHROONGA NSW

## *Boy Germs*

I had to kiss a boy today  
Oh yuk  
My cousin Luke  
Oyie-Boyie  
Came to visit....Just my luck!

Now kiss your cousin - says my mum  
Oh no!  
Boys are germy, squirmy-wormy  
Sorry mum I have to go!

Oh don't be silly, just one kiss  
No way!  
Boys are icky  
Yicky, sticky.  
Can't we just go out and play?

Help he's coming straight towards me!  
What fun!  
Lips are wobbly,  
Slobbly-gobbly.  
Now I have no time to run!

Shut my eyes until it's over...  
Oh splat  
Slurpy, sucky  
Mucky-yuckie.  
Why would any girl do that???

### **JUDGES' COMMENT**

Good sound words and deft unusual sense of unpredictable rhyme and sound rhythm.

# *Winner - Upper Primary*

**Ruby Parsons**

NEWCASTLE EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL, THE HILL NSW

## *Seasons*

Wild hair, dirty feet  
Running fast to feel breathless  
Lips red from berries

Odd socks, knitted gloves  
Building blanket forts at night  
Tongue burnt on mint tea

Two braids, denim shorts  
Headphone music on full blast  
Free pink lemonade

White dress, sun kissed skin  
Sneaking out to see the stars  
Sucking on ice cubes

### **JUDGES' COMMENT**

A description of the seasons written in such a way that the reader experiences the four seasons through the poet's deft detail. This is a fine example of showing, rather than telling the reader - the golden rule for all good writing.

# *Runner Up - Upper Primary*

**Eamon Boyle**

ST PIUS X COLLEGE, CHATSWOOD NSW

## *Duck*

“Pad up Eamon!” The coach hollers like a bull to me.  
I can hear the cheers and jeers of our enemy.  
Another one of our wickets has just fallen,  
It’s my turn soon, but my batting is appallin’.

My thoughts keep going back to my last match  
And how I was dismissed by a stupendous catch.  
I imagine being at the crease and smashing a six,  
But I know that I cannot do those kinds of tricks.

Another wicket tumbles in the blink of an eye,  
It’s my turn now and I want to cry.  
I whisper to myself “do not get out,”  
But in my heart there is a tonne of doubt.

I crave for my teammates to look at me as a hero  
Not the kid who constantly scores a duck - ZERO!  
So I take my time to mark middle stump  
And all I can hear is my palpitating heart - THUMP!

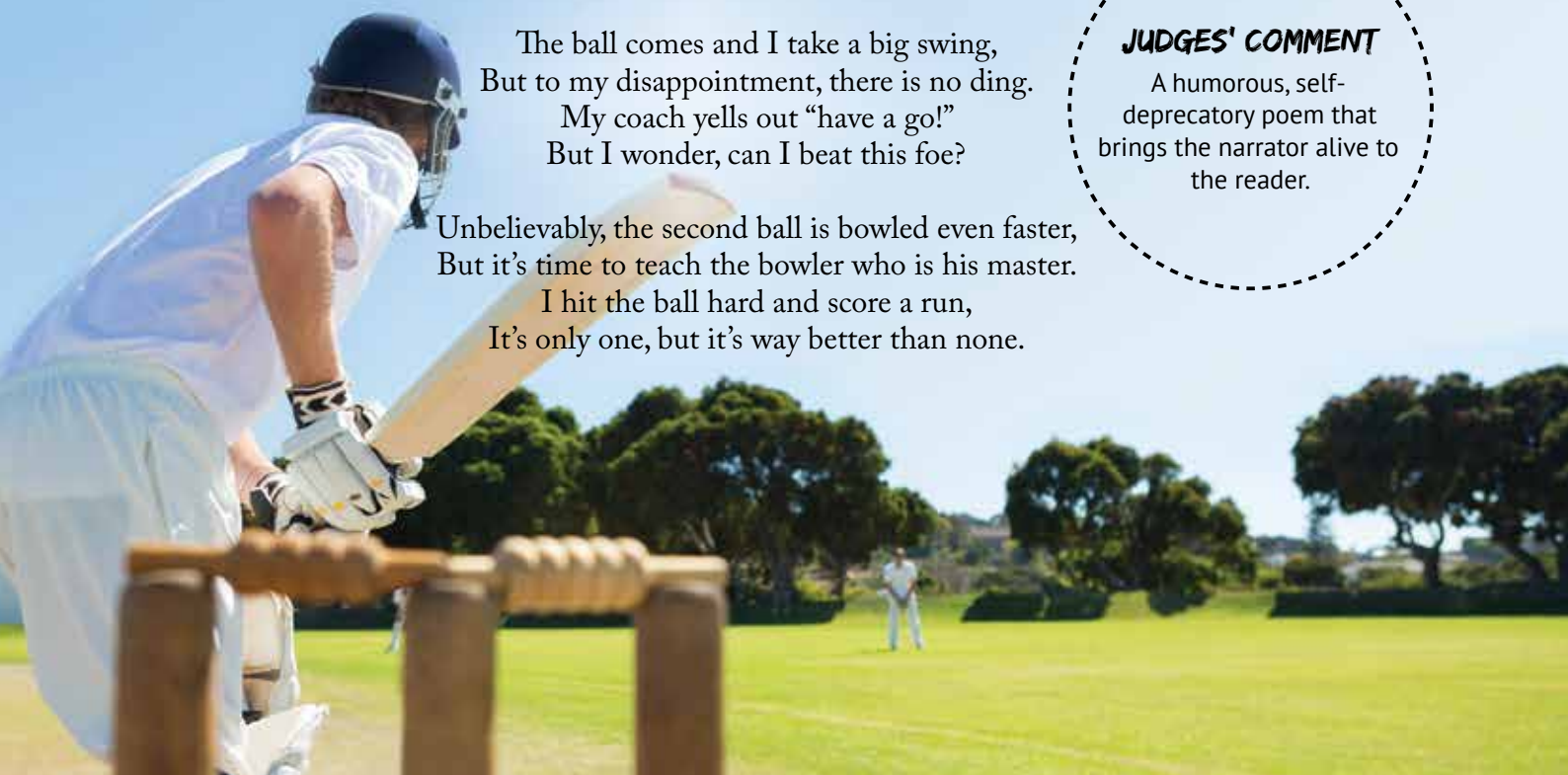
The umpire’s arm comes down to his side.  
The bowler, like a lion, takes his first stride.  
He launches the ball at a rocketing pace;  
My helmet is hiding the panic cemented on my face.

The ball comes and I take a big swing,  
But to my disappointment, there is no ding.  
My coach yells out “have a go!”  
But I wonder, can I beat this foe?

Unbelievably, the second ball is bowled even faster,  
But it’s time to teach the bowler who is his master.  
I hit the ball hard and score a run,  
It’s only one, but it’s way better than none.

### **JUDGES' COMMENT**

A humorous, self-deprecatory poem that brings the narrator alive to the reader.



# *Winner - Assisted Learning Primary*

**Zara Pearson**

CAMBERWELL GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL, CANTERBURY VIC

## *Granny*

All around the world  
My granny told me  
She's been all around the world  
At the age of 83

She's been to London to see the Big Ben  
I heard that she'd built it  
With her two hands  
She took a picture of where it stands

She's also been to India  
She stayed in the Taj Mahal  
And won a competition  
For the person who'd eaten the most dal

France, my granny's been there six times  
The goss is that she built the Eiffel Tower  
For her house in France  
But she lost it in a game of chance

America, she told me  
That she's one of the founding fathers  
She named Los Angeles  
Why? Because she's so fabulous!

Well, this is the reason that she's been all over the world  
She told me with a twirl,  
I'm the best liar  
And that's no lie.

### **JUDGES' COMMENT**

A delightful humorous poem that conveys the warmth of a grandparent and child relationship.



# *Runner Up - Assisted Learning Primary*

Lucy Torre

CAMBERWELL GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL, CANTERBURY VIC

## *Leaf*

A precious leaf is budding  
Its velvet touch a dream.  
As seasons pass, dreams shall not last,  
The leaf's vibrant green shall fade.  
From underneath, a luminous gold shines brightly from above.  
Then, as it glides, it falls to earth and changes to a fiery red  
That blazes into ash.  
A dark brown leaf will slowly crumble  
And life shall start again.

### **JUDGES' COMMENT**

Beautifully depicted life cycle of a leaf. Richly portrayed through strong visual images. Good use of language and rhythm.

## Winner - Junior Secondary

Damya Wijesekera

HORNSBY GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL, HORNSBY NSW

### *Paper Crane Memories*

*Start by folding a coloured piece of paper into four triangles.*

I always started with blue paper;  
Light blue, so we could write messages.  
I have never used anything else, even now, when there's nothing to say.  
Why change?

*Turn the paper over, and fold into four squares.*

I always liked that, turning the paper over.  
It was like a person, the good and the evil.  
But this isn't people, she said.  
Does it make a difference?

*Bring the corners together and compress into one small square.*

I always found that part hard.  
It's still hard, even to this day, when my repertoire is so practised.  
I used to need help. I was glad of her patience.  
Was she happy too?

*Fold one side into two triangular flaps, then, on the other side, repeat.*

I always remembered that; repeat. A word which became itself.  
Often I have wished I could repeat time,  
Go back to the days before, just for the pleasure, for the togetherness.  
Can the clock really be turned back?

*Open up one face, and fold it down so it is a long diamond. Repeat.*

I always liked how the shape was so different,  
Even though it was nearly the same, like us.  
Later I realised, how points that were once touching, grew far apart.  
Was that a prophecy of our friendship?

*Fold in two triangular flaps again, and repeat.*

I always liked how skinny it became, and  
I never forgot to point out the similarities.  
She retorted, it was the way the shadows fell on her, melting into summer pre-darkness.  
With only a dream as our connection, am I alone now?

*Fold up the tail.*

I always watched how she folded the tail; perfect.  
She tried to teach me, before she left, left for far-away.  
I don't know the name of the place.  
In the end, isn't 'not-here' the only description?

*Fold up the head.*

I always did the head scrappily  
Excitement at the penultimate step.  
I was excited when she first arrived here, home, my home,  
Was this her home as well?

*Now fly away...*



#### **JUDGE'S COMMENT**

Symbolism is one of the most powerful tools in a poet's toolbox, and this poem uses it incredibly well. The structure is also very impressive. This is a poem which deserves to be submitted to proper, "serious" literary journals. Fantastic writing.

# *Runner Up - Junior Secondary*

**Breanne McGuinness**

TAROONA HIGH SCHOOL, TAROONA TAS

## *Going North*

As we sat on the veranda  
in that quiet,  
peaceful afternoon,  
Old Hank looked up to the sky,  
and grumbled,  
not to me,  
not to himself,  
not to anyone,  
but said  
“I’ll be going North,  
I can feel it in my bones,  
I’ll be going North soon.”  
We sat in silence drinking lemonade  
and listening to the wattle birds.

### **JUDGE'S COMMENT**

This poem makes my heart happy and sad at the same time, and it's hard to explain why. All I know is that I love simple, “slice-of-life” poems like this one. With no unnecessary words and delicately unambiguous, it might be about death, it might be about change, it might be about new opportunities. But what it's definitely about is a long and familiar relationship where very little needs to be said, and this is beautifully reflected in the poem. Like I said, it makes me happy and sad at the same time, which is a task a good poem is perfectly equipped to deliver.

# *Winner - Senior Secondary*

**Kate McCullough**

BLACKHEATH AND THORNBURGH COLLEGE, CHARTERS TOWERS QLD

## *Hope*

The ground is scarred beneath the sun,  
The rivers are baked dry.  
Hungry creatures crawl and creep,  
Beneath a cloudless sky.

The trees are still and silent,  
There's not a breath of air.  
The stockman's heart is breaking,  
His paddocks are all bare.

And then there comes a rumble,  
And eyes look to the sky.  
The kids let out a cheer,  
As the clouds begin to cry.

Water washes over earth,  
Soothing cracks and sores.  
The kids reach up towards the rain,  
And let it fill their pores.

Children raise their pannikins,  
Fathers raise their beers.  
Smiling mothers sit and watch,  
As clouds keep shedding tears.

Relief runs through the region.  
We know it's worth our toil,  
When we see the life erupting,  
From our beloved soil.

### **JUDGE'S COMMENT**

It's so hard to do rhyming poetry well, but this rhyming poem about a savage landscape is offered up in the proper spirit of Dorothea Mackellar, and I love it for that. It beautifully sums up the struggle and the heartache of life on the land, and its form lends itself to the rhythm of traditional "bush poetry" without being sentimental or forced. I honestly believe Dorothea Mackellar would have loved this poem as much as I do.



*Runner Up - Senior Secondary*

Margot Lee

SCEGGS DARLINGHURST, DARLINGHURST NSW

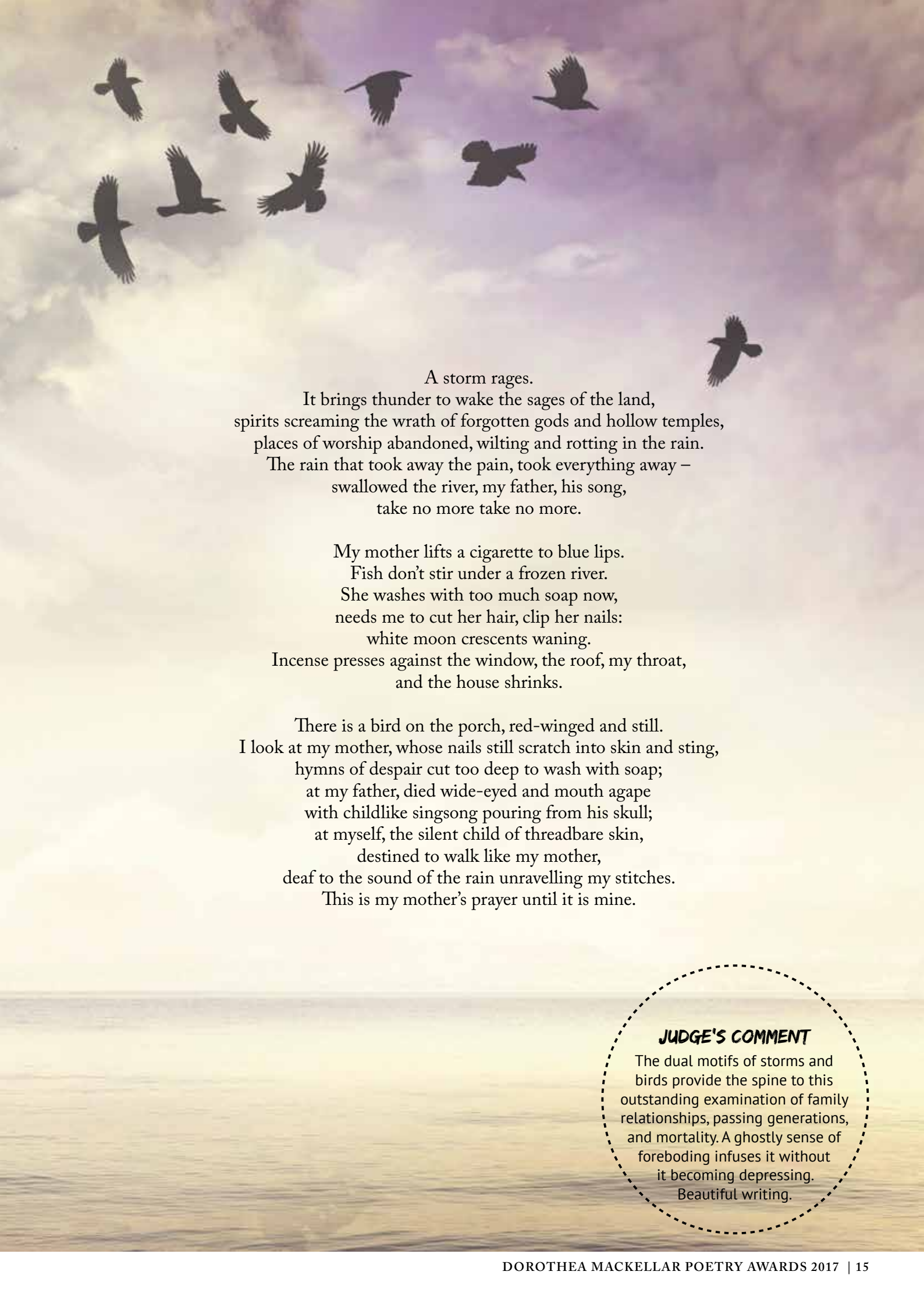
*What We Leave Behind*

My mother stands under the sky's blush, indigo,  
A woman stitched from the silk and skin  
Of her mother and mother before.  
Ten birds embroidered in the generations  
Of her dressing gown struggle in the fabric,  
Their white wings beating against the needlework.  
They are desperate to flee the unravelling cloth.

I make my midnight escape, barefoot in pursuit,  
Shadowing my mother as dirt laneway turns to field, turns to river,  
The light of a hundred silver moons on the water  
and the trail of a hundred threads behind my mother,  
white from the birds, like her wedding day resurrected.

My father waits for me, a subterranean ghost,  
sand in his stomach and water in his lungs.  
He was singing his song as my mother prayed,  
and her mother prayed, and her mother prayed  
alive in the same prayer.

She kneels at the silver water, her river shrine,  
and his fingers reach up to cool her fever  
and the water stains her brown eyes silver.



A storm rages.  
It brings thunder to wake the sages of the land,  
spirits screaming the wrath of forgotten gods and hollow temples,  
places of worship abandoned, wilting and rotting in the rain.  
The rain that took away the pain, took everything away –  
swallowed the river, my father, his song,  
take no more take no more.

My mother lifts a cigarette to blue lips.  
Fish don't stir under a frozen river.  
She washes with too much soap now,  
needs me to cut her hair, clip her nails:  
white moon crescents waning.  
Incense presses against the window, the roof, my throat,  
and the house shrinks.

There is a bird on the porch, red-winged and still.  
I look at my mother, whose nails still scratch into skin and sting,  
hymns of despair cut too deep to wash with soap;  
at my father, died wide-eyed and mouth agape  
with childlike singsong pouring from his skull;  
at myself, the silent child of threadbare skin,  
destined to walk like my mother,  
deaf to the sound of the rain unravelling my stitches.  
This is my mother's prayer until it is mine.

**JUDGE'S COMMENT**

The dual motifs of storms and birds provide the spine to this outstanding examination of family relationships, passing generations, and mortality. A ghostly sense of foreboding infuses it without it becoming depressing.  
Beautiful writing.

# *Winner - Assisted Learning Secondary*

**Kyle Mac**

YOUTH EDUCATION CENTRE, CAVAN SA

## *Looking Over Your Shoulder*

Yeah this one has always been a struggle  
Looking back I'm doubting  
I'm always in trouble  
And the beat about to burst  
Like a bubble but my family come first  
Then come the brothers who ain't even blood  
Make your life flooded with broken dreams  
You lose all means to your family  
Stepping into them hard days  
Once ya stuck you'll never make it back on track  
You'll be stuck on that dusty track  
Now you're lost  
it was all at a cost  
You're looking over your shoulder  
Older than you first thought  
But now ya lost everything that you fought for  
From one day you'll never get paid  
Behind the four walls you're living in  
Living with your sin on your right shoulder  
With the devil standing high he looks as big as the sky  
Ya gotta quit this hocus pocus  
Cause this is all a joke it's time  
Be reawakened  
And you'll never get taken  
My life has been taken I've finally been shaken  
I'm a new man awaking.

### **JUDGE'S COMMENT**

Outstanding urban poetry. The final four lines pack a powerful punch with a strong sense of hope and redemption. Terrific stuff.

# *Runner Up - Assisted Learning Secondary*

**Ruth Burns**

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

## *Mount Kosciuszko*

Near the heart of the mountain ranges  
Is horse-roaming land.  
It's called the opal coloured land  
By many who live on its steep sides and rivers.

Near the heart of the mountain ranges  
Is a tale that will never wither  
About the "Man From Snowy River".  
It's known through the rivers and hills.

Near the heart of the mountain ranges  
Is a land covered in a blanket of snow  
Where winds howl and blow  
The river now is frozen, is silent.

Near the heart of the mountain ranges  
Is horse-roaming land  
Steep-sided Kosciuszko  
Is inscribed with hoof prints...  
They leave their mark on the land.

### **JUDGE'S COMMENT**

Fantastically evocative poetic journey. I especially like the beat line that leads off each stanza.

## *Multicultural NSW Winner*

**Ejoy Zhang**

NARRABUNDAH COLLEGE, NARRABUNDAH ACT

### *Phantoms*

The Australian Dream isn't home-ownership; the Australian Dream is to own a home.

Sung by the stateless, the desperate, the hopeful, the haunted,

They flee what haunts them towards a comparative utopia,

But the haunting manifests from a different source.

A conflict of conscience -

Ten parts assimilation; one part defiance.

My parents live through a second Cultural Revolution:

They see their books, their history, their culture razed to the ground once more

But this time of their own doing.

As their parents return from labour camps, they, in turn, set out to theirs

As gardeners and delivery men and nannies and cleaners,

Hoping to become public servants and IT workers and teachers and officers,

Ending up as all four at once, seven days a week.

They become model workers, model citizens,

A model minority,

Model Australians haunted by phantoms of the culture they left behind.

That phantom now drapes across my back and steers the steps I take,

Her colour taints my skin,

Her left hand digs crescent hand-holds in my eyes,

Her right tendrils around my neck, constricts and lodges loquat syrup in my throat -

Viscous and tacky, gumming the words it makes me speak.

She cries when I learn to use forks before chopsticks,

English before Mandarin;

Australian before Chinese.

There are others, too

They latch onto arms, sit perched on the shoulders of children who bear the sacrifices of their parents as reliance and expectations,

Of children who write their parents' emails for them,

Who translate between broken tongues.

我头晕了 wǒ tóu yūn le I'm dizzy I'm dizzy.

Of children who don't know if anything they own is Theirs or Their Stereotypes,

Who carry the fates of their family in their toil.

In row upon row of Guildford units,

Where Arabic flowed over Farsi flowed over Canto flowed over English,

Where those who've come across the lands settle in boundless plains of a Sydney suburb

An amalgamation of phantoms chase each other endlessly tail to tail.  
I'd gotten so used to seeing phantoms everywhere that it was all the more jarring when I didn't,  
When the phantomless would see her and never see past her.  
My phantom grows three sizes when I'm signed up for Sunday Chinese lessons,  
Where I learn to tell my grandparents my favourite colour,  
Where they tell me I've died building Great Walls and fought wars along the Yellow River,  
Where the Monkey King takes me on a Journey to the West,  
Though I was already there.  
I tell others I have church instead -  
My phantom shrinks back two sizes.

My phantom cradles my head to her chest when I tell her I'm not qwhite Australian  
My phantom strokes my hair when I find myself too Chinese to be Australian but too Australian to  
be Chinese  
My mandarin is too clumsy, my eyes are too hooded, my frame is too large, my skin is too tan-  
She tells me I am neither.  
She tells me I am both.

One day my phantom - she will cease to fly.  
She will cease to cling or hover or perch;  
She will plant both feet into Australia's red soil.

The Australian Dream is the Immigrant Dream.  
My phantom will take my hand in hers and carve a hole in Australia's heart,  
where she will nestle into a home she will build and own -  
A place in the Australian identity where phantoms may stay.

#### **JUDGE'S COMMENT**

Deeply moving and heartfelt poem of dislocation and belonging. Quite dynamic and heartfelt imagery.

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Australian Government



*Allen and Unwin, Fremantle Press, University of Queensland Press  
Gunnedah Conservatorium*



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