

**WE USED TO
LIVE THERE**

**DOROTHEA MACKELLAR
POETRY AWARDS**

2020

PRESENTATION BOOKLET

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

PAN POETRY

What a year this has been! The pandemic has turned our world upside down, change has become the new norm, but 2020 has been one of pan poetry.

Despite our misgivings, the disrupted school year led to a jump in our entries with more than 7500 poems entered from all over the country.

And this year, instead of Gunnedah's Civic Theatre bristling with important guests who are our prize winners, their families, invited VIPs and local school children, I am talking to a dark house. How weird when one remembers the music, the lights, the laughter, the tears, the nerves and the pride that are a part of our annual presentation ceremony.

This year's ceremony is going virtual, like everything else. Prize-winning young poets have submitted recitations of their winning works. The judges have recorded their comments from afar, our patrons have sent supportive words, government ministers have chimed in on the

importance of this competition.

We have a marvellous video that showcases Kurrumbede, the former Mackellar family home near Gunnedah, and local teachers and schoolchildren. All of these clips will be packaged into our "virtual" presentation ceremony which will be held at the same time - the first Friday in September.

You will find the video on social media and on our website www.dorothea.com.au. We hope you can share and enjoy it at your leisure.

This year's entries have been breathtaking in their sophistication - I urge you all to read and savour them in these quieter times. I congratulate those young poets whose work caught the judges' eye. Keep writing for us all to enjoy.

– Philippa Murray



OUR PATRONS

THE HONOURABLE MARK VAILE AO

During his 15-year parliamentary career, Mark served as Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the National Party, as well as minister for both Trade and Transport.

As chair of Whitehaven Coal, he is a frequent visitor to Gunnedah and surrounding districts in north west NSW. Whitehaven has been a long-standing sponsor of the awards and is the custodian of the Mackellar family's homestead Kurrumbede near Gunnedah.



SUSAN DUNCAN

Susan is a strong supporter of the poetry awards and an advocate for Australia's literary heritage. After 25 years as a successful journalist and editor of The Australian Women's Weekly and New Idea, Susan turned her hand to writing best-selling fiction, including *Salvation Creek*. Her books are set in Pittwater north of Sydney where she lives with her husband Bob at Tarrangaua, the house Dorothea Mackellar built in 1925. Susan became a patron of the awards in 2018.



SAVING OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE



Kurrumbede, a powerful connection to Dorothea Mackellar's "sunburnt country".

BY DEBORAH FITZGERALD

The phrase "I love a sunburnt country" from Dorothea Mackellar's *My Country* is arguably the best-known line of verse in Australian history. The poem has been mentioned more than any other in contemporary Australian political discourse. Yet its origins have been almost forgotten including the role of the former Mackellar family property Kurrumbede, near Gunnedah, in the state's north west.

The first time *My Country* appeared in its entirety in one of her verse books was in 1908, which coincided with an intensely creative period when Dorothea frequently stayed at the country property. The poem was published in *The Spectator* in London in September of that year.

In her extensive diaries, Dorothea writes about Kurrumbede with great affection. In a diary entry from March 1911, Dorothea arrived at the property and rushed down to the Namoi river to see a team of bullocks, twenty-eight in all, taking timber across the waterway. In November 1918, the Mackellars were at Kurrumbede when word came that the Armistice had been signed. "At the end of a hot afternoon, a storm broke on us after waltzing

completely around the horizon. I'll not forget the two dust-devils who strode across the plain just ahead of that black-purple storm." The Mackellars drove into Gunnedah just in time to hear the tail-end of the Royal Proclamation and the rattling of cans and the tooting of horns.

It is not only the 110-year-old homestead that is important. It is the vistas and the outbuildings. The vantage points Dorothea exploited while scratching away in her verse books. The landscape is part of the history of a poem that lit up the national psyche. We still have time to give future generations the chance to walk the halls of that homestead and gaze upon that landscape, seeing it through Dorothea's eyes and hearing her lyrics echoing across the countryside.

My Country evoked a powerful connection to the Australian landscape at a time when our country was finding its feet politically and socially. We still love our sunburnt country and we need to do all we can to preserve the cultural history that served as its inspiration.

Deborah FitzGerald is writing a biography of Dorothea Mackellar, due out 2021 (Simon & Schuster Australia), and is a Doctor of Arts candidate at the University of Sydney.

Work has begun on a \$500,000 restoration project of the Kurrumbede Garden, funded by Whitehaven Coal. The importance of a secure water supply, after a lengthy drought in north west NSW, is a priority with pipes being laid from a bore in addition to water pumped from the Namoi River.

The society's nomination of the homestead and outbuildings to the NSW State Heritage Register continues, with a heritage garden architect expected to make recommendations on new plantings and layout.

Whitehaven Coal has committed to the preservation of the buildings, with a heritage management plan expected shortly. Interpretative signs for the buildings are being prepared by the company in anticipation of a series of open days which will allow the public to visit this important historic and cultural site.

ABOUT THE TROPHIES

A superb collection of coolamons handcrafted by Indigenous artist Ronald Long form this year's trophies. Coolamons were traditionally used to carry and gather food.

A proud Gamilaraay man, Ron has sourced the timber from around Gunnedah, using acacia, bimblebox and yarran.

"I love a piece of wood, it doesn't matter what you are making - boomerangs or didgeridoos - the wood does its own thing. You're not telling it what to do, the wood shows you the direction," he says.

Ron collects the fallen timber, often not completely dry, and then burns it to season the wood. The coolamons are chiseled out by hand,

taking many hours of patient and persistent craftsmanship. Sanding highlights the beautiful grain of the timbers.

The decorative touches are added with a small carving chisel which he uses to imprint designs that represent traditional stories. There are footprints to represent journeys through country, white cockatoos in trees on the river, leaves, trees and circles which indicate waterholes.

Also a talented painter, Ron believes strongly in passing on his people's stories. His work is all carried out in his garage at his Gunnedah home.

He says coolamons were often used by women to transport babies across the river.



President Philippa Murray with artist Ron Long.

Photo: Namoi Valley Independent.

OUR COMMITTEE

The Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards were founded in 1984 by the late Mrs. Mikie Maas. She was inspired to create the awards by her love of the landscape immortalised in Dorothea Mackellar's My Country poem. Dorothea often referred to the rivers, hills and plains around Gunnedah where she spent time after her family bought the property Kurrumbede in 1905.

The national poetry writing competition grew to attract thousands of entries each year from school students around the country, from inner city to regional schools, to the School of the Air,

Distance Education, juvenile detention centres and home school students.

The awards are coordinated by a volunteer committee in Gunnedah, and independent judges are appointed each year to select the finalists and winners. They are themselves distinguished writers and poets who share the committee's dedication to fostering creativity and a love of country among young Australians.

Philippa Murray (President), Shirley Urquhart (Vice President), Owen Hasler (Secretary), Cheryl Hofman (Treasurer), Lauren Mackley (Gunnedah Shire Council delegate), Committee members: Glen Jones, Jenny Darley, Susan Wilson.

POETRY A PATHWAY TO ESCAPE

Poetry is a voice – a means to express stress – and this year there has been much to talk (and stress) about! I am thankful that the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards have given kids an impetus to write poetry, because I have had the privilege of reading their words. And in 2020 kids have needed poetry more than ever. I have heard their fears, frustrations and fortitude; grappling with bushfires, coronavirus, isolation, racism, cancer, abuse, loss ...

The beautiful thing about poetry is that it isn't just about here and now – it's also a pathway to escape the complexities of our world; to imagine a better place, to savour simple beauty, and to dwell in happy memories.

There have been so many poems that I've wanted to recognise or respond to. Poems that have moved or concerned me, made me ponder, made me laugh. Poems I wanted to read over and over again, from poets whose craft I admired. Poems I could relate to!

Not all poems can gain recognition through awards or publication in the pages of a book, but that doesn't mean the words have been wasted. The act of writing them ensures you've benefitted. Write what you're passionate about, write from your heart and write for the fun of it! Just keep writing! Next year this fantabulous opportunity will be offered again, and you will be 'write' ready to take advantage of it!

KAT'S INSIDER TIPS

1. So many poems were brimming with promise but took themselves out of contention because of errors; punctuation, rhythm, spelling, in one case I suspect a whole last line missing. Get a friend or family member to read your poem to you, without rehearsing. Where they stumble, you need to edit, because your rhythm isn't right. And get an adult to help check your spelling and punctuation.
2. If writing to the competition theme, try to respond without directly quoting it. Bear in

PRIMARY JUDGE

KATHRYN APEL



PRIMARY SCHOOLS' AWARD

Winner: Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW

Wonderful to see entries across a range of ages, categories and poetic forms, demonstrating wordplay, unique voice, creativity and polish.

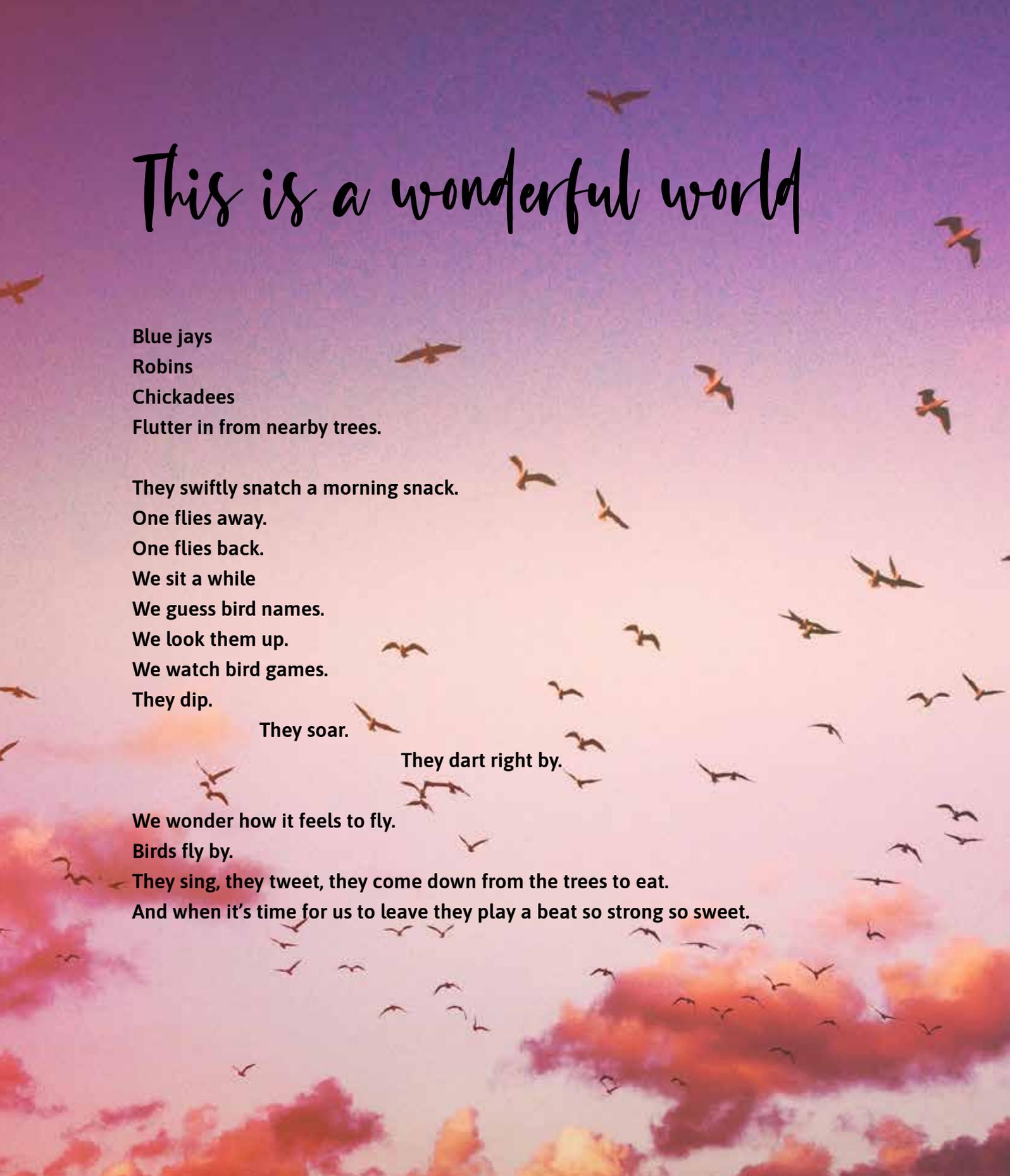
COMMENDED

- Newcastle East Public School, Newcastle NSW
- Cherrybrook Public School, Cherrybrook NSW
- Matthew Pearce Public School, Baulkham Hills NSW
- Warialda Public School, Warialda NSW
- Methodist Ladies' College, Kew VIC
- Acting Up Drama Academy, Wollongong NSW
- Tacking Point Public School, Port Macquarie NSW

Kathryn Apel is a born-and-bred farm girl who's scared of cows. She lives among the gum trees, cattle and kangaroos on a Queensland grazing property. Kat is the author of three verse novels and a rhyming picture book, and has been published globally in magazines, anthologies, text books – and on walls.

mind that many, many other students will write the theme as their title, opening line, closing line, and repeated refrain throughout. A subtle response is powerful and creative, so aim to be different!

3. Whilst your poem might initially be inspired by a specific format, such as sensory poems; (Topic tastes like... Topic smells like... Topic feels like...) in later drafts, try to mix it up so that the cue words aren't obvious. A judge gets to read a lot of sensory poems. You want to stand out!



This is a wonderful world

Blue jays
Robins
Chickadees
Flutter in from nearby trees.

They swiftly snatch a morning snack.
One flies away.
One flies back.
We sit a while
We guess bird names.
We look them up.
We watch bird games.
They dip.

They soar.

They dart right by.

We wonder how it feels to fly.
Birds fly by.
They sing, they tweet, they come down from the trees to eat.
And when it's time for us to leave they play a beat so strong so sweet.

winner

LOWER PRIMARY

Nina Cordaro, 8

All Hallows Catholic Primary School, Five Dock NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Lovely turn of phrase, rhythm and rhyme gives wings to this delightful poem, that flits beautifully down the page.

Savour the moment

Savour the moment when the breeze

b

l

o

w

s

through your hair

or when

a bird's song is as sweet
as honeysuckle.

Savour the moment

when the blossoms on a plant
are big white flowers

or when

golden sunlight filters through a canopy
in dappled pools.

Savour the moment.

runner up

LOWER PRIMARY

Adele Scully, 8

Prouille Catholic Primary School, Wahroonga NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

There is beauty in the simplest moments (in line breaks and alignment, too!) - as this poem captures.

Cherry-blossom

Cherry-blossom

Delicate, graceful

Flowering, fluttering, folding

Falling with the wind

Sakura

winner

UPPER PRIMARY

Iris Jiang, 11

Cherrybrook Public School, Cherrybrook NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Alliteration and alignment are skilfully employed to showcase fragile moments of delicacy and movement in this exquisite cinquain. In a world of turmoil, this poem is a restorative breath of beauty.

Haiku

Highest mountain peak,
Gazes at still, crystal lake,
Takes time to reflect.



runner up

UPPER PRIMARY
Dorian Ndongo-Empesa, 12
Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

There is not a superfluous word in this miniature masterpiece. I want to step into the tranquillity and reflect, too.

Throw, Bounce, Fetch

The tennis ball,
Chewed, wet, warm,
Well-loved,
Flies through the air,
Bounces in the grass
And hides.

I can't see it
But my dog can
He dashes over,
Sniffs the grass
Grabs it in his mouth
And brings it back to me,

Panting he begs me
To do it again
Throw, bounce, fetch, throw
Again and again!



winner

LEARNING ASSISTANCE PRIMARY
Curtis Giang, 11
Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Great word choice and description in this active poem that invites the reader to play ball with an exuberant dog - over and over again.

Gone

The flames roared and howled
But remained oblivious to the sound
of the plane, of help, of hope from above

With nothing left to spare
The empty soul could only stare
At the plane, at help, at hope that flew by.

Leaving him behind, trapped again
Leaving him with nothing but pain
Leaving with the hope, the help, the plane.

The trees blocked the sky
From secrets it wants to hide
Of a boy stranded alone, hoping to survive

runner up

LEARNING ASSISTANCE PRIMARY

Larissa Ma, 12

Camberwell Girls Grammar - Junior School, Canterbury VIC

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Succinct fragments heighten tension and move the reader quickly through this dramatic poem.

Cotton

Fluffy like soft clouds in the sky,
Bright white like cold snow,
on our farm at Boggabri
Cotton is what we grow.

It all starts with a tiny seed
as small as a single green pea
With fertiliser we will feed
It has a lot to grow, you would agree.

The seed turns into a little cotton shoot
It is like a baby... it has lots to grow
Hopefully not to get trod on by a boot
While the crop is still very low

The plant grows bigger into a bush
With lots of leaves and pinkish white flowers
The wind gives the flower a little push
Then out comes the bolls in hours

The green bolls dry and burst
Showing the fluffy white cotton
I think this paddock will be picked first
As the leaves fall to the ground, rotten

Vroom, Vroom the pickers come in
gobble up the cotton fluff,
then throw it in the picker bin
and roll it tight and tough.

This cotton could one day be many things
Pyjamas, t-shirts, jeans and bed sheets
It is amazing how a plant brings stuff to us.
Next summer it all repeats!

Cotton is my favourite crop on the farm
The fields of fluffy white cotton bolls
Make me feel peaceful and calm
Like rain when it finally falls.



winner

KURRUMBEDE AWARD PRIMARY
Evie Watt, 8
Sacred Heart School, Boggabri NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

An informative and entertaining introduction to the production of fluffy white clouds of cotton.

Darkness

Dark shadows haunt me in the night,
Engulfed by the darkness.
The evil of the world, in the corner of my eye.
We whisper as it lingers.

A soft glimpse of candle light,
Guides your way through gently.
Softly glowing, warding off the dark.

A flash of light breaks the darkness,
And swings back again.
The lighthouse's beam warns us,
Protects us from being consumed.

The bonfire rages, breaking the night.
Intense balls of flames roar like lions,
Embers soar hopeful,
Sailing through the blackest seas.

From high above lights twinkle,
Like fireflies the stars shine through.
Scaring the evil from above.
The darkness broken and lost.

Moments of light, burn the darkness away,
But to conquer, use the light from within.



winner

DAVID MAHER AWARD FOR SMALL SCHOOLS
Max Shearer, 11
Rowena Public School, Rowena NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A thoughtful poem particularly relevant to this year, where we need to remember to celebrate those shining moments... and share the light with others!

BLOWN AWAY BY THE CREATIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Once again I have been blown away by the talent and creativity of the young people of Australia. Congratulations to all those who made the effort to pick up pen and paper or wrangle keyboards into action to submit their poems to the awards this year. I hope the experience has been as rewarding for you as it has been for me to read them.

This year's optional theme—'We used to live there'—was a popular one, with many different interpretations. These ranged from nostalgic and sentimental accounts of a much-loved house or farm, to heartbreaking reports from an apocalyptic future, where all remnants of life have been extinguished by humanity's shameful actions, to memories of life in another culture, country or era of history, which for better or worse has been left behind. Unsurprisingly, many poems reflected on the loss of individual freedoms and valued routines brought about by COVID-19.

Other poems examined evergreen themes and concerns: destruction of the environment—whether by bushfire or greed, racism, war, oppression, the rise of technology and social media and its effect on society, the devastating loss of a loved family member. And then there were the poems that celebrated life and the tiny moments of joy to be found in nature, or recognised and revered the power of hope.

It was wonderful to see so many poets exploring different techniques and forms in their work, ranging from the light-hearted rhythm of traditional bush ballads to the mesmerising beats of modern-day rap. There were cinquains and sonnets, haiku and villanelles, and poems that required an incredible level of technical skill—for both the writer and the reader! For me, the strongest poems were those that employed imagery and other poetic devices to deliver an emotional impact, or paint a memorable scene with well-chosen words, rather than simply expressing a point of view or telling a story.

Thanks once again to the teachers—and

SECONDARY JUDGE

MEREDITH COSTAIN



parents!—who have worked hard to instil a love of reading and writing in their students. Their lives—and ours—will definitely be the richer for it.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS' AWARD

For schools that demonstrate effort, achievement and a high standard of entries, awarded at the judge's discretion.

Winner: Darwin Middle School, The Gardens NT

A cavalcade of poems flooded in from Darwin Middle School this year, brimming with vibrant imagery and diverse formats, and rich stories to share. A refreshing balm for the senses!

COMMENDED

- Brigidine College, St Ives, NSW
- Elizabeth College, Hobart, TAS
- North Sydney Girls High School, Crows Nest NSW
- Presbyterian Ladies' College, Burwood VIC
- Presbyterian Ladies' College, Peppermint Grove WA
- Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW
- St Michael's Collegiate, Hobart TAS
- University High School, Parkville VIC

Meredith Costain is a versatile writer from Victoria, whose work ranges from picture books through to poetry, novels and non-fiction. Her books include CBCA Honour Book Doodledum Dancing (a collection of verse for children illustrated by Pamela Allen), Musical Harriet, Bed Tails and her new series Olivia's Secret Scribbles. Meredith wrote stories and poems in her head while riding her bike to school along the banks of the Bunyip River, and her poem My Little Creek was published in the children's section of The Age when she was eight.

Mist

I walk through tangled shadows of fairytale bush.
raindrop diamonds cling to bare twisting branches
shatter on rocky ground as I pass.
a phantom of a wallaby
greyed by droplets of rain on dense fur
stands sentinel
concealed amongst bushes bleeding colour.
pillows of moss
brilliantly green
punctuate grey sky bush rock.
I lean to pat them
feel them give under my touch
spring back into perfect round poufs.

I climb
the track steep and narrow.
I grab branches the width of my wrist to haul myself up boulders,
watercolour bark smoothly damp.
as I ascend spidery tendrils of mist creep across the mountain,
cling to its ridges.

I remember as I climb
the way I traced your body in lamplight
fingers lightly tickling
caressed the contours of your body as mist on the mountain.
the way gold pooled in the hollow of your collarbones
necklace delicate and bright against brown skin.
the way your fingers
adorned also in gold, rings of intricately swirling patterns,
grazed mine.
traced my lighter skin up arm to chest
the way my skin was so attentive under your touch
the way you drew from it
simultaneously
shivers and heat.

all of a sudden I reach the top
burst through the last line of trees to exposed rock
a platform suspended between heaven and earth
am thrust out of my reverie with a slap of frozen air.
step onto the edge of the world.

I am cocooned in white
mist dampening sound and touch.

I breathe out clouds indistinguishable from deafening fog.

I am entombed in cloud silent and heavy.
soon I barely remember what it is to see.
I drown

forget to mourn the stolen view
as I struggle to draw thick air into burning lungs
when as swift as crumbs swept off dining table the curtain of fog is whipped away.
I gasp, grasp at the view
like a lifebuoy.
spread before me is the world.
rivers of fog flow down valleys and mountains drip with green.
far off the water glints greyly. I strain
to discern barrier between sky and sea
when I find it I cling to it with stinging eyes
afraid it will melt when I blink.

I tremble at the size of the world
the thought you could be in any corner of it and I'd have no right to know.
as I hold that border where grey meets grey
feeble
I remember when you left.
when I buried my face in your pillow
cold by now
inhaled

hungrily searching for a hint of your scent
anything you might carelessly have left behind.

desperate, crumbling
fading memories all you left in your wake
I tried to recreate your shape
the lines of you curved beside me.

the concentration of the one who fancies himself guardian broken
the barrier dissolves
the tide of fog rushes back in
fills every space around me.
I square my shoulders
stare it down
take up space
when it threatens to overcome,
erase,
me. I am swamped once again in white.

winner

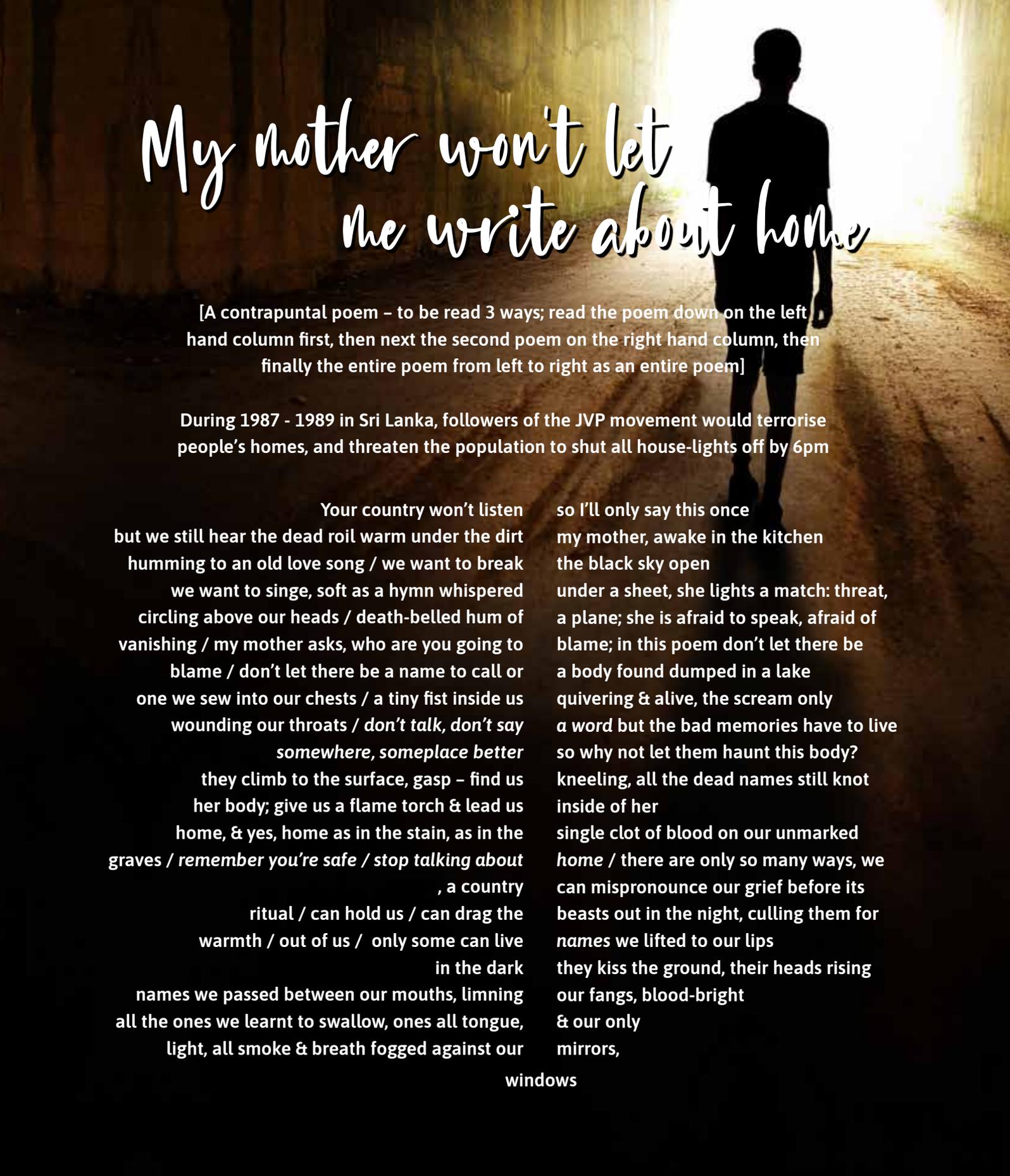
SENIOR SECONDARY

Theo Harkin, 18

Hobart College, Hobart TAS

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A highly evocative and lyrical poem, beautifully resolved, where each word has been carefully chosen to reflect both mood and landscape. The clever interplay between the account of the narrator's trip up and down the mountain and the status of his relationship is breathtakingly effective.



My mother won't let me write about home

[A contrapuntal poem – to be read 3 ways; read the poem down on the left hand column first, then next the second poem on the right hand column, then finally the entire poem from left to right as an entire poem]

During 1987 - 1989 in Sri Lanka, followers of the JVP movement would terrorise people's homes, and threaten the population to shut all house-lights off by 6pm

Your country won't listen
but we still hear the dead roil warm under the dirt
humming to an old love song / we want to break
we want to singe, soft as a hymn whispered
circling above our heads / death-belled hum of
vanishing / my mother asks, who are you going to
blame / don't let there be a name to call or
one we sew into our chests / a tiny fist inside us
wounding our throats / *don't talk, don't say
somewhere, someplace better*
they climb to the surface, gasp – find us
her body; give us a flame torch & lead us
home, & yes, home as in the stain, as in the
graves / *remember you're safe / stop talking about*
, a country
ritual / can hold us / can drag the
warmth / out of us / only some can live
in the dark
names we passed between our mouths, limning
all the ones we learnt to swallow, ones all tongue,
light, all smoke & breath fogged against our

so I'll only say this once
my mother, awake in the kitchen
the black sky open
under a sheet, she lights a match: threat,
a plane; she is afraid to speak, afraid of
blame; in this poem don't let there be
a body found dumped in a lake
quivering & alive, the scream only
a word but the bad memories have to live
so why not let them haunt this body?
kneeling, all the dead names still knot
inside of her
single clot of blood on our unmarked
home / there are only so many ways, we
can mispronounce our grief before its
beasts out in the night, culling them for
names we lifted to our lips
they kiss the ground, their heads rising
our fangs, blood-bright
& our only
mirrors,

windows

runner up

SENIOR SECONDARY

Janiru Liyanage, 15

Baulkham Hills High School, Baulkham Hills NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Carefully chosen language, powerful imagery and flowing rhythm combine effortlessly to produce an outstanding piece of writing in a distinctive and technically brilliant format. Well done!

Stars

I saw the stars last night.
I lifted my head as if to drink the darkness, and I saw them.
The streetlight flickered out, with my fluttering breath.
And I saw the holes in that great tapestry of sky
Perforated with a knife of fire.
I saw them. I listened to their silent symphony,
Hardly breathing, because too much noise and I would
Scare their beauty away.
I saw them.

When you spend your whole life with something
You forget to wonder.
For so long I forgot to wonder.
I forgot to listen to the stars, their whispers and their music
Their cosmic mutterings.
I forgot to let the night take me in its shadowy embrace,
gentle arms. I forgot how to whisper, holding my words close to me
"Oh, how beautiful."
I forgot.

Because your perfect, poised, vase-of-roses, trapped-in-glass looks
Your lips like petals, your magazines
And pretty laugh, they will fade.
Like all things they will fade, into wan, sepia ghosts.
Except for one thing. One thing that has never faded
In ten billion years of galactic rumination.
The stars. They will never fade.
Their beauty, it can be heard and felt, and drunk and cradled.
It will never fade.



winner

JUNIOR SECONDARY

Ivy Downes, 13

Individual entry, Katoomba NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A beautifully controlled and sincere poem, with a clever extra layer that set up questions about how we view and value what is undeniably real, and what is purely artificial. Its powerful imagery will linger long after the page has turned.

Poem 1

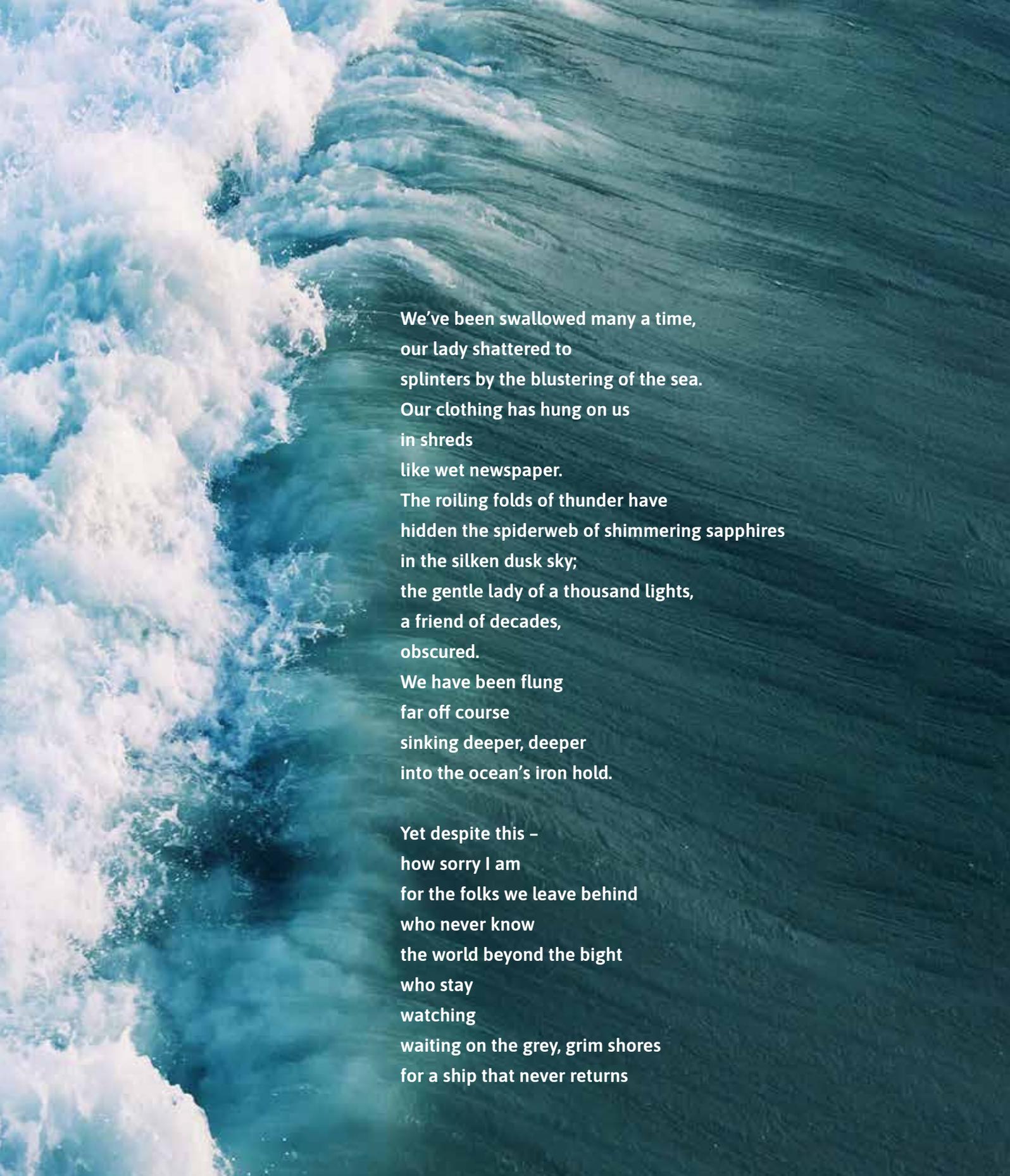
The siren's sea call came lilting
over the foam and waves
washing us forth in a myriad
of warmth and cold.

The bubbles churning
stirring
the sail cracking like a
whip in the wind as we plunged
into the Kraken's domain.

The sea, ever changing
like a sheet of burnished bronze
then like a pool of ash and grey,
is wed to the tempest and squall.

It drives us forth
until a blood-dawn comes,
licking like flames
on a red-rimmed horizon.

Scattering the clouds like grey
ashes on the briny breeze,
it darts
down
across the gold-streaked jade of the
waters and crafted ripples -
wider and wider they go, foam churning
in our wake.



We've been swallowed many a time,
our lady shattered to
splinters by the blustering of the sea.
Our clothing has hung on us
in shreds
like wet newspaper.
The roiling folds of thunder have
hidden the spiderweb of shimmering sapphires
in the silken dusk sky;
the gentle lady of a thousand lights,
a friend of decades,
obscured.
We have been flung
far off course
sinking deeper, deeper
into the ocean's iron hold.

Yet despite this –
how sorry I am
for the folks we leave behind
who never know
the world beyond the bight
who stay
watching
waiting on the grey, grim shores
for a ship that never returns

runner up

JUNIOR SECONDARY

Janice Han, 14

North Sydney Girls High School, Crows Nest NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

A well-constructed and clever poem, that hints of the poet's knowledge and love of mythology. As readers, we are plunged right into the thick of the trouble at sea – our hearts breaking for those left behind on the shore. A poet to watch!



Flowers

Flowers

Head down,
Walking on a quiet path,
A scent of fragrance is blowing in the wind,
Suddenly awakens the human body,
Giving people new hope.

winner

LEARNING ASSISTANCE SECONDARY
Lola Wang, 13
Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

An understated, delicate and well-constructed poem. Its simplicity belies its powerful message of hope.

Running Wild Tomorrow

Cross Country tomorrow,
My table of joyfulness is,
Full of ridiculously amazing things,
Until my brother, who was always full of the brick of anger,
Burst in the door of my enthusiasm,
Causing in it to smash under the brick of anger.

My good feelings started to scatter
And sour ones came charging through,
But my mum always throws a brick of excitement
Into everyone's flash of frustration.

We shoved the grumps away,
Stopped our huffs and felt inspired
Again to dash through an epically,
Stupendous Cross Country event.



runner up

LEARNING ASSISTANCE SECONDARY
Adrian Burns, 13
Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW

JUDGE'S COMMENT

So many different emotions coursing through this poem. Who could forget the recurring – and highly original! – image of the 'brick of anger'?



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