

Fingal Valley

Nan's budgerigar,
cat fed squeezing like morning
fog between oxidized barbed
wire and gorse
with an older cousin
and a slug gun

booting sheep skulls
stripped by gusts, our fathers'
1950s snares swooped by plovers,
daring: 'yellow spurs! forearms
up!' shooting star-
lings for laughs

another exhausted afternoon:
a hotted-up Torana: another burnout
to Warrant, to Poison
footy, swimming, cricket
on Pop's prized green, putting
with the wrong kind of club

transfixed by sixpence-
riddled heads hooked over the wash-
board another hand of Patience
and Snap! the glass swan
brimming with owl-red water
numb on mother-of-pearl veneer

lake one more theft—
a short-finned eel, writhing
and crackling—from the Esk
squeal of cast iron frying
pans slaps on the back each mouth-
ful of muddy flesh foreign to a South-

erner on each empty double bed
a leering toilet roll
doll full moon, mid-
night's deer-sprint to the outdoor
loo the top bunk's hexagonal wiring sprung,
mattress oozing through cells like honey

The Moon and the Mason Jars

for Ruth Whebell

Purified in stainless stockpots
with black Italian cursives and gilt,
stuffed with smashed green cabbage, sea salt,
yoghurt's

whey; three-quarter revolutions compel
the Latin blanks. From elliptic orbit a well-
versed silver tongue assuages the dish rack's
topsy-turvy characters.

Ebon Cans

*In the twinkling of an eye,
in a moment, all is changed*

—Gwen Harwood, 'Bone Scan'

In the twinkling of her eye, all is changed:
the small blond child afraid of almost every
thing — father, mother, himself especially —
but books, and paper and pen, awakens

in the vestry where, in four years, the lick
of the oily priest's hand against his thigh
will roil minds. *In the twinkling of an eye*
he'll coil at high school. 'Here's another — quick!

— stuff it in your pocket — it's so important.'
Blackout, blackout — here it comes — his father's
negativity. 'There's zero future

for you as mathematician, doctor.'
Such depths they charge; such queer laughter.
He glances over his shoulder. She mouths *Write*

Tzameti, lines to a rondeau, chapters in *The Art of War*. Cards per suit, steps to the gallows, loaves in a baker's dozen. Diners at the Last Supper, gods at Valhalla's banquet, dismemberments of Osiris. Studio LPs by The Cure, lunar months every calendar year, primary members of The Thirteen Club. Olives, olive leaves, arrows and stars on the Great Seal of the United States. Players in a rugby league team, teenagers starring in *Thirteen*, the Broadway musical, letters in Bixby, Oklahoma, the town where Scott Westerfield's *The Midnighters Trilogy*, gripped by this troublous number, is set. Syllables till the broken motif of this poem. Lucky for some.

из России

Alitalia: hazy, like Nan & Pop's ... Rome: the taxis! the cats! ... Moscow's gilt mocks, McDonald's', too: one goddamn Big Mac 'meal' = one month's wage! ... Fifty dead presidents for genuine black market sailor shirt: itch -y, made from wool ... Gypsies nearly whoosh our bus in Pushkin ... Saint Petersburg ® Karelia train star-red, ash-blond scouts snooze like speechless speech marks ... Lake Ladoga: icebox; MOSQUITOES; white nights bewilder Siberian cedars ... Kath & I boomerang to demountables: 'Il y a un beau garçon là-bas': Ilya's cheeks borscht-pink ... T's headphones: The Cure's 'Fire in Cairo' ... **I ♥ zh** ... Homesick for Hobart ... с любовью

ValproateFluoxetineClonazepam

Every day four purple pills,
four laughing Smarties (cochineals
steamed, boiled, burned alive)
for disguise

a capsule, half ivory,
half peppermint (an elephant's
head severed, a plant's leaves,
flowers crushed) for grunt

another pill, pure
white, quarter-scored,
like the Eucharist,
like a sport

These are the cures that isolate
These are the cures that chill
These are the cures that splice the will
These are the cures that kill