



You are not a proud sound,  
Not the godly thrum of Mariners beating their soles against dry land  
Nor the Promise of a flood.

You are the almighty drench of Life,  
Dancing itself twistedly into the fabric of the air,  
The crunch of a spine broken a thousand times from reaching to feel the reason.

You terrify and crush me, for you are not like anything.

You are a discharge of electricity,  
30,000 degrees of death,  
And ions tearing themselves apart.

No myths or giants or even gods could ever contend with that.

## Some Shadows in St James's Park

By Joshua Clayton

*where once sparrows could be found by the hundreds, ...  
a single pair nested in 1998, and in 1999,  
for the first time, no birds bred.*

MICHAEL MCCARTHY

*for D. S. 18.05.18.*

I'd waited for you by the biggest tree  
I could've seen from the lip of the park,  
but before I sat and pushed my back  
against its welted, crusted skin, I'd passed

on the green a blackbird half-pressed into  
shadow. Regally profiled, its candy-corn beak  
gaped towards the slate-grey talons that stroked  
themselves like two hands never warmed enough

to interlock. I felt sick, but still more sad  
than sick. The tree wasn't far enough away  
not to see it. For a time, it was the closest  
creature in my world—until you strode

full into view. (You correlate with summer,  
as I see it.) Before I let us talk I stood  
and beckoned you over to show you just  
what sort of scout Death'd sent to check on us.

## Falling Forever

by May Hawkings

Cherry blossom lining the street below -

Falling then,

Falling now.

The pavement enveloped in pink snow.

Spring brings a new air -

A new light,

A new wind.

A glimmer of hope in this despair.

What is it like to feel so alive?

When your petals light up the town.

What is it like to glimpse all those faces?

No distance, no hesitation, no frown.

I saw you appear all those weeks ago,  
Bringing light in a time of dark.  
You brought happiness and colour to my bedroom,  
The four walls from which I could not part.

Now you return with your rose-tinted confetti,  
Full of spirit, life, and love.  
Stuck inside I long for your vivacity,  
Enamoured by your blushing elegance and splendour.

Cherry blossom lining the street below as I wander freely about your petals.  
Falling then,  
Falling now,  
Falling forever.

Telemachus At Afales  
by Will Andrews

The sun rises brazen out of the  
deep close sea slowly rolling into  
the white stone harbour cleaved at  
Afales beneath our home still sleeping

waves

crash

waves

so I step beyond the oak threshold  
and down to the sloping beach where  
I sit amidst the seaweed on the sand

crash

waves

and watch the surf's shadow spill over  
pebbles spat up onto the grey shore in  
the pale mist that echoes across the bay

crash

waves

and lies between me and my father  
made strange and invisible above all  
men by the ill-devising gods whose

crash

waves

distant storm-winds have snatched him  
away without word vanished from my  
sight these twenty long years stuck alone

crash

waves

beside the broad ways of the great gullet  
sea on the steep cliffs of Ithaca's northern  
side while the rulers of these rocky islands  
vie as suitors for my mother's sewing hand

crash

## ***A January Afternoon***

by Christie Patel

Golden light like gossamer threads  
Entangle and knot as they pour through the window -  
Watch how the flecks dance on the wall and spread,  
Bathing my hands in the sunflower glow.  
Would that I could dissolve into the chiffon haze,  
For I am in the mood to melt and disappear:  
As if spiralling steam consumed by the heat  
Escapes and disperses into the warm air.  
Tell me, where you are does it shine like this too?  
Does it drip syrupy through your room and stick to the walls,  
Or do grey fingers of mist stifle the yellow hue?  
This is a light not crisp - but creamy, inspiring drowsiness  
Slowly squeezing time through an hourglass as you sit careless.  
I try to drown in the sunlight, but it is fleeting, gone by four  
Yet seemingly eternal; molten gold will sing through my window once more.

## **Frog-song**

By Alastair Smith

The frog-priest sings a frog-song  
as he cuts across the pond.  
The topsy-turvy alders  
are a froggy sign from God -  
he knows their glassy, supple fronds.

And in his froggy frog-song  
he sends up a froggy prayer

to the rippling bed of alders  
and the God he senses there -  
he lays his tiny frog-soul bare.

He bares it in a language  
that no tongue can translate -  
his voice is melancholy, sanguine,  
somehow meek and yet irate. How tender  
are the weeping croaks his tiny frog-soul makes!

Thus sang the froggy priest-frog  
and gave his soul release:  
*ribbit ribbit ribbit*  
*ribbit ribbit ribbit*  
which God heard  
and God was pleased.

In the headlights  
by Amy Wolstenholme

In the headlights  
I want to say  
*look at me this wild little thing* but I lost my wildness somewhere around eighteen  
(say: *sorry*)  
I don't want to say  
*this city is hell* or *this city is killing me*  
because that is the sort of melodrama you only see on a screen but I'm running  
honey please I'm running somewhere left of stage  
(the way women can in high heels / baby I want you / baby I want to)  
drill my thumb in the green earth and scream  
I want to say  
*I don't know the meaning of this* how the sky empties and refills itself

and is always the same sky

I want to inhale the clouds like something bad for my health

I want to say: *here is true wealth*

here in the eye of the sunflower bowing to earth / here the earth-bowed sun,

(I watched the boys at the bus-stop snap the necks of daffodils and screech)

I want to meet myself somewhere deep in a forest / sing the oldest song

(my love, you know the one)

the one about a tree somehow held inside a seed

gently, gently

I want to emerge, like this, from all that growing, all that green.

I want to know if the rabbit staring blind at the sky

was struck deliberately, or if they swerved. (say: *sorry.*)

what I'm saying is I don't know

if the motion of the world has any meaning,

but I want to plant myself firmly in the way.

I want to say: *look at me here, born in a crack in the concrete,*

boots on either side of a white line,

watching an oncoming universe rush on.