

**Bush Close:
funny name
when you
come to
think about
it.**

by Jessica Yeung

In Top Valley, there was a house;
A white house filled with growing blackberries,
Oranges and apples,
A white house with a wooden door,
Painted aqua blue.

Inside it was huge,
Mother loved tidying up and creating it into her own home,
Adding toys for us,
And hanging photographs for her,
It was the place where me, my brothers and my sister,
Could do almost anything.

It was the place where many memories were formed,
Where over 100's of photos were taken every single year,
In the kitchen,
In the garden,
In the living room.

Birthday parties were planned yearly,
We'd invite our friends and our neighbours,
See kids make their way through to ours,
Holding gifts carefully wrapped up in paper and ribbons,.

Cameras would click,
We'd say cheese,
And maybe even do the occasional peace sign.

Cakes would be made my mother,
Like no other,
Draped with cream,
Slices of fruit,
And neatly written happy birthday on top.

I'd fall asleep,
Next to mummy and daddy,
And wake up alone,
Frightened and panicked.

Only to find that they were downstairs,
Huddled together,
Watching TV,
Waiting for me to join them.

They'd tell me everything is okay
That the nightmares wouldn't really happen,
That they were just to scare me,
To trick me.

Before you know it,
We moved away...



Coming Home

by Sooree Pillay

The flute murmurs, I wane.
Dissolving into its elusive scales,
Up and round and round,
Calling me.

Warding me off,
That lonely beckoning,
Reaching out closer than breath,
But untouchable,
I could never reach you.

Water and the eternal bereavement,
Weeping for that which I never knew I could
never know,
Here waiting for you to seize me,
Hold me; caress me in your vulnerability,
Your constant, soft, palpitating, pulsating
rhythm.
I am enchanted and you are my lover.

I take you as you will not take me!
In admiration, flying high above the gods,
Above myself, looking down and...
Yes!

I am!
Intoxicated, charmed, the hapless, venom
less serpent,
Simply swaying in your gaze,
Captivated by my Indian master, I.

Moving hopelessly now,
Lost in your frantic beat,
Breathless,

My naked eyes seek a refuge,
But you are too close!
Once in your hands, what becomes of me?

I disappear, sinking to my knees,
I improve you,
Want you,
Have you,
But you are not there.

My witty mind makes a clown of me,
Whilst the table mimics my heart,
Laughing gently, spurring me on.

The long, slow, relentless calls me back,
But I am spent,
Nothing more of me remains,
I keep walking,
Now far away, my darling beauty.

Colours and sounds,
Deep and noble,
Soft and strong,
Coaxing me back.

But my sweetest nectar,
As I cry out for you,
Teach me then, dearest teach me!

I look into your heart and I do not
understand,
Make me whole for I have lived an eternity,
The vampire that cannot take a bite!

And so must live, and die, all at once.
My angel, my child, my mother and my
father.

If I Died Today, What Would I Leave Behind?

by Deborah Stevenson

I would leave behind my best friend Suzie,
My memories between the 4 and 16;
Building boats out of beer barrels,
Screaming at each other on the central line,
Getting lost on the 25 bus,
Eating pasta from polystyrene with our hands.

Teaching her not to be a racist.
Teaching me not to be a cocky bastard.
Plucking her eyebrows,
Painting her face the right shade of skin.

To remind her she has no rhythm,
To remind her there was a time when slits in eyebrows were
sexy.

I would give her my phone voice,
So no one could notice the change
And she could see we are each other.

I would give my mum my poetry,
And hope it pissed her off,
For a good ten years.

When she picks them back up-
Missing my brothers boisterousness-
Reads the dark anaemia around
Her beautiful eyes deepened from screaming
Up the house then laughing up Bolognese.

Then she will remember,
That it is in her patronising kisses and childish grip,
That I have learned charisma,
(and oh wow I won't need to leave her that.)
She will forgive my exposure of her
When she reads that she is my punctuation.
I will leave my father my emotional vocabulary.

So his grandchildren won't have to wait until they're 18,
To hear that he loves them.

I will leave my adopted brother Arun my sobriety.
I will leave my oldest brother Richard forethought,
So he can stop upsetting himself into being a bully.

I will leave my boyfriend, Joel, my skin,
For fear that in my absence,
His muscles will be exposed,
When, like a snake, he eats life whole,
His body swelling,
and tearing.

In the country of Turkmenistan

by Jeren Artykova

In the country of Turkmenistan,
City of Ashgabat,
There was a flat,
That I was happy in,
It was the place where I first tasted my mother's milk,
The place where I ate the butter off the bread and fell over a
lot,
I am here again.

I touch the walls they are ice cold.
The bathtub is slowly rusting,
The overhead shower is weak,
The kitchen is the same sky blue, broken hinge,
Just like the photo of me when I was three,
The rich traditional red carpet covers the huge living room,
The material is itchy yet feels good on my toes,
My garden is big, but the fence is gone.
Presidents orders.

The lush green is long replaced by the dry yellow.
The sun has beaten the lush green,
And replaced it by the dry yellow,
Mother is cooking Pavlov and has left the front door open,
Lacy curtains blocking visiting flies,
Carrots and cooked chicken scent the air,
The air con is on air,
I know because the outside fan sounds like a tractor,
Grumbles, bringing the air to consume.

No rain since May,
The sound of falling water, as I water the garden with a
punctured hose,
Watering the cement and tarmac around me,
Cooling the air,
I thought I would be happy here,
That I would belong there.

What is Home?

by Jim Hall

It is the rust across front door lower-lock,
Knowing the fumble of drunken fingers at 2am,
It is 10am As-Salamu Alaykum's,
Wafting from Normanton Road take away,
In place of morning breath.

It is anchors of 'grateful' moored to passport,
When the boughs of foreign country,
Point toward the itchy feet in your heart.

It is the areas of Derby,
The called discarded chipping teeth,
It laicised meticulously down forearms,
With feathered pen reverence.

At 17,
It is hunched in a curled ball on flat roof gravel,
Falling for broken sunsets and quiet girls,
You are too shy- stutter,
Too awkward dance step,
To speak a single word to,
It is kneeling in the verses,
Of Jimmy Eat World slow-songs,
Panning for the cluttered language of youth.

At 22,
It is inexplicable urges to rip rucksack,
From the Brisbane- kissed shoulders,
Of gap-year twenty something's,
In the costa at Heathrow,
Pray they packed, a polaroid of Chesterfield,
A handwritten letter scrawled from their Grandmother.

Because what scares you most about new,
Is all that your bones might forget to love,
When they resettle into old.

It is your birth certificate,
Folded into origami swan,
Sailing effortlessly through bloodstream.

It was a house on a hill,
There were 2 sisters,
And two brothers,
Mom dad and dog galled Goldie,
On the 10/04/85 I arrived,
It was good for a while,
The rooms where massive,
It could have been a mansion,
It has 5 acres of garden,
And that was my favourite bit.

Hiding in the flower beds,
Waiting to jump out,
On innocent passers-by.

The summer's day,
And the sweet airy smell,
Soon turned to auburn leaves,
Falling from trees,
I would kneel down in the freshly raked piles of leaves,
And throw them above my head.

It would be getting colder,
Late snow flowers,
Apart from these ever greens,
With snowy tops,
And the bringing of the -----,
To time to celebrate.

Not allowed out,
And waiting,
For neighbours,
And extended family to come round.

The season after fall is spring,
That is the exciting part,
Where the seasons meet,
To recreate outside,
Then time of many things growing,
Shooting up.

The slow build-up of -----
We were nearly here,
We were,
Where we started.

Where We Grow Up

by Alex Cooke

It was like falling down a black hole,
Grasping for my life,
I'll miss the humour of the people,
I'll remember the jokes and long story telling, by the local
woman at the market, by everyone.

The dusty sandals, burning heat.
We shared so much,
Relationships that changed them and gradually me.

You can't eat sun- but I can smell the bread,
Until there was none,
Open shops and empty shelves,
Large unfilled shopping trollies,
We started to use small baskets.

Banks running out of paper,
Chuckling out recycled notes with stamped expiry dates,
We could use for toilet paper,
Handina Mari- No Money.

The petrol queues, exciting at first...
Standing by our cars, we joked, drank lots of wine and
laughed until sunrise,
A heard of cars pushed by their owners,
Met empty tanks with no oil.

What was it all about?
1 year turned to 10 years,
No turning back,
A one way ticket to predictability and boredom,
I drove every day to the top of the hill,
Watched the red sun,
Saw the future and blinked the past behind me.

This country that had taken me in,
Owed me nothing,
And now I was returning home.

What Was Leaving Like?

by Beverley Sterling



Sandals and Knives

by Miah Jumbo

Shuffling sounds of leathery feet,
On wood laminate floor hissing toward the kitchen.
An outcry of unavoidable accent.
“Miah fetch my sandals and let cooking begin”.

I ponder towards the array of slippers
And sandals lined up in a row.
Asking myself what ones does he mean?
But when in doubt,
I grabbed the trusty dark sandals,
From when cars were invented,
Falling to pieces,
Stiffened by the swat of raising 6 children.

He hits play on the stereo,
Moving in tandem with Dub Reggae,
He unfolds his cotton knife bag.
He turns to the knives and says:
“Why hello ladies, I require your help you see”.

He kisses the blades together,
He whispers “that’s it ladies, sing let us make magic you and me”.
Rusted Nigerian hips swinging low,
And high every cut and slice,
As stylish as the last.

He finished cutting Okra, Onion and Snapper Fish,
Still flirting to the ladies,
“O ladies if you were alive, you would savour my dish”.

What Is My Homeland?

by Maresa Mackeith

My homeland is a place where I smell the freshness of grass,
Where I belong to the walls of the garden.
My home is where longing stops and I come back to my
apple tree.

What is my longing?

Is it the unseen whole out of my grasp: the longing for
connection when friendship is broken?

Is our connection broken to enforce our death: as our life of
companionship is too powerful to control?

Where is my home?

My home is my power which breaks me with loss.
I love my apple tree and it's power to bear fruit.

Where Do I Feel Welcome?

by Ellen Storey

In this boohoo kitchen,
Cat crunching on biscuits,
Sounds like a stapler,
Seagulls shrieking on shed roof,
Attacking leftovers.

Phone rings too frequent,
But keeps the air vibrant,
Mum embedded in her chair,
Leaking thoughts as she sews,
Machines backdrop drones,
Cushion the four walls,
And offer up space,
For archived feelings.

A home land I never knew

by Ingrid MacLaren

A home land I never knew,
Full of sunshine and beaches,
Palm trees and coconuts,
A small island but perfect,
A place where no one will look at you strangely if you
claimed free fruit.

Jamaica, Jamaica.
Reggae music and Motown,
Hearing it playing all around my home since before I can
remember,
Like a sound track of my life, of my childhood.

Sometimes I try to imagine it,
What it smells like,
What it feels like.
I imagine it smelling like seaside and jerk chicken born on
BBQ,
And fruit on every corner of every kind,
On trees and in shops.

Hopefully I can go there one day,
So I no longer have to imagine.