



Three-Score-and-Ten
Poetry Competition

Winning Entries
2014, 2015 and 2016

Forward

The idea for a poetry competition was formulated by Tamryn Vivien, our occupational therapist.

To Tamryn, I say Thank You for the idea – it has enriched our lives.

I decided to open the competition to the ‘over 70’ community in Cape Town in the hope that participants would use this opportunity as a catalyst for exploring thoughts, feelings and memories. We often forget that the elderly have a lifetime’s worth of wisdom and experience to share with us.

‘Rough Weather is Good Timber’ by Lee Edwin Kiser is a great example of surviving the roughest storms. His poem concludes with the following lines:

“ The trouble with folks today, is that they’re raised like hothouse flowers and they don’t have much to go on at the end.”

Poetry is in very good health indeed and the power of the poetry submitted has inspired me. Congratulations to our winners and I hope that they will continue to share their sage counsel especially with younger people lacking their experience and who do not know that poetry watches life with much tenderness and truth. Alexander Pope said: “Truth shines brighter, clad in verse.”

Gael



Gael Baldwin, Managing Director
The St James Retirement Hotel

2016 Finalists



Left to right

Back row: Chris Dodson, Derrick Law, Gail Barton, Douglas Maxwell, Muriel Leech, Yvonne O'Connor, David Anderson, Finuala Dowling (Judge) Geoff Haresnape, Chip Wood

Front row: Hazel Shaul, Wendy Vogt, Ekin Kench (overall winner), Adre Marshall, Val Parry

Overall Winner 2016



Ekin Kench

Amoeba

I need to make sense-shape of it –
this changing and ageing –
those cremated cells quietly carried away,
shrouded in biological shame
The new ones shyly edge up or boldly take their place
I moved amoeba-like through the years
My being and my self split, stretched, hidden, doubled and merged
I am told there is no self,
no inherent existence branded as me
But I take with me in the nucleus of each cell,
that black-haired baby bumping into the walls
of that other woman's womb

Close of Play

Chip Wood

The doctor's curt nod to a nurse
prompts her stoop to flick a switch
Effectively removing you
from the Voters' Roll

More removals follow – wires
and tubes returned
to waiting machines
Which then are pushed
into a corner where
They sulk. A quick call
by intercom brings
Someone of lower caste with trolley
and instructions to be discrete
In wheeling you to the Basement
Coldroom to await disposal
to undertaker, family and friends.

No one wants to go this way –
Your wish was to fall asleep
under the Oaks at Newlands
When the Umpire lifts the bails
to tell you “It's your Close of Play”.

Beachings

Adre Marshall

On the small shelly beach
where the whispering stream
still trickles down through reeds
to meet the holding sand
we watch them once again,
five sun-streaked little heads
above their beer-brown bodies
bent intently over their task:
with flying plastic spades
they coax the grumbling stream
to curl around and settle
behind their piled-up wall of sand
tamed into a Kariba dam.

The tendrils of our memory
go back some thirty years,
to catch their parents
with sun-bleached fronts flopping
over eyes, thrusting tight-cupped hands
Into sand, to tame the same
recalcitrant stream and make
their miniature dam on the beach
while puffs of laughter like
butterflies flitted around
their tangled heads.

And burrowing further still
we glimpse a group of bodies
brown as litchi-pips,
loincloths strung around their limbs
squatting on the beach.
Small fists grasp stone
scrapers and blades, prising open
the shellfish newly culled

at low tide from the rocks;
their words click and spark
as the scoop up water
in their hollow ostrich eggs
from this same spluttering stream

And as we pluck these pictures
to preserve like dried
flowers between the pages
I feel again, as the sand
sighs through the hour-glass
how generations coming
over the dunes to this small
stream on the shelly beach
are with us still, knotted
to this hearth, this
beaching place.

‘C’

David Anderson

The Southern Cape’s Retirement Homes – at Peers
Silvermine, St James and Noordhoek Manor
Are caring and concerned communities
For elders

Each has its strength, but camaraderie
Is common to them all – friendship shared –
Compassion shown by staff and management
To elders

No longer do we meet for wedding days;
We now salute as dearest friends pass on
And celebrate together lives well lived
By elders

There are some who may well reach the Roman ‘C’
One hundred years – a lifetime shared with friends,
With spouse and family, but at the end
With elders.

De-Composition

Val Parry

I'm going to bin it! All of it! (well, maybe some – let's see ..)

I'll stuff it into plastic bags until my life is free.

Forget about the washing up! All creativity
needs selfish space, let cockroaches
clean up the plates for me.

No need for shopping trolleys when there's no time to cook –
my family can all eat out while I don't think-
doek.

No space for guilt, or visitors, I can't afford to look
as if I sit and knit all day
when writing my first book.

I'll step down from my social work and put my friends on freeze!

I'll set my sights on MY success and not on how to please.

Let's sell the television! Lock up the DVDs!

It's all just so much rubbish for
a brain that needs release.

BUT –

there is one chore I can ignore when garbage is its gain
and that's to feed my garden: with compost, sweat and pain.

So, sure! I'll clear the clutter and excuses from my brain
but, if without life's humus, will
I ever write again ?

Seeming

Wendy Vogt

I nearly picked up some
sunshine today

Thought it was a piece of paper
on the carpet

The sun lights
our earth
nature and ourselves.

I was grateful for that patch
It made me smile.

City Harvest

Kay Sinclair

Summer dies in the city,
starlight all around,
and the yellow lamps glowing
in the gutters
where the dead leaves swirl.

There is music
in the sight of dust
beating grittily
against wall and window
as flowers bow their heads,
knowing nothingness already.

The beat of the feet
tramping windy pavements,
Trees concealing withered leaves
like cankers,
and ivy dripping slowly
from the walls ...

And should we ask, as evening falls,
What happened to our yesterdays?

Someone will answer us:
Blown with the leaves – to dust.

Lepel Lê.

Derrick Law

One night she crept into my bed .
where I, half asleep, yet waking
felt her body pressed against mine,
Her breasts against my back,
her legs tucked up behind my knees,
Lepel lê.

An Afrikaans word meaning
“To lie like spoons”

There was no passion, no sex involved
Passion had long since left us,
followed by a comfortable intimacy,
perfected over time, until
mellowed by old age
and
Lepel lê.
and occasional moments of intimacy
“to lie like spoons’

But time gets in the way, and
memories fade, like ashes
blown away by the wind;
until one reaches an age
where small comforts compensate
like
Lepel lê.

Ode to Oona

Douglas Maxwell

Ode to Oona: 1

Many many years ago, Oona, Oona
Fell for a really cool crooner
He sang her a ditty
About a beautiful kitty
“Oh, Oona, Oona you make me swoona!”
Crooned, by the light of the silvery moona.



Ode to Oona: 3

Oona, Oona, Oona
Set sail in a bright red schoona
If she hadn't followed the silvery moona
She'd have landed in Sardinia a lot lot soona!
Wonder if she saw any Toona ?

Ode to Oona 4

Oona, Oona, Oona,
Wasn't born in South Africaah
But in far-off Abyssinniah.
The favourite feline of the Empora ...
discovered one day that she could fly
The Empora could not believe his eyes!
Off she flew over the Karoona
To a new home in South Africaah.
Oh Oona ... Oona ... Oona
What a Princess you are !



Southern Double-collared Sunbirds

Geoff Haresnape

not noticing
 grey-brown throat
 & breast
nor belly
 faintly streaked
You may call her
 Drab --

 nester
by vocation
 with sewing-needle
claws
 & seed-sized beak
she builds
 & builds –

fruit -shaped
 the whole
rootlets & filaments
 interwined –
a blue
 thread
 from somebody's blouse
 straggling –

 guinea fowl's
feather
 gives a fashionable
 fleck
to the porch above –

kapok & spiders' web
 hold all in place

& down
is
down inside
to comfort
eventual
chicks –

her mate
the rainbow man
is lyrical
upon a hedge
ssipity zweeta
sweeta sweeta
tsip tsip
sunlight
irradiates
his plumage
floats
his song

the partners
flit about for nectar
investigating calyxes
sucking with the bees
each one
a tricksy
spirit
airy
over
every
inch
&
ell

Mrs van der Riet

Ekin Kench

I thumb the latch, hear the soft click of the gate
twist and spin the grinding door bell -
“do come in” she says “I have baked a cake
So glad to see you. I hope you are well”

In the dark front room I sit on the hairy sofa
and look at the doll on the chair
We both face Mrs van der Riet
and our feet do not touch the floor
She looks as big as me and I am five
that straight-legged golden haired doll –
she has thick stiff eye-lashes over glassy blue eyes
And soft black shoes that I can touch but not hold
Then I am through the passage and into the yard
An explosion of birdsong and light – red, yellow, green, they hop, fly and peck
Ecstatic, nose to mesh I stare
After the red drink and the cake I go back through the house
I pass the doll on the chair
and, like her, I wish I could visit Mrs van der Riet every day
and always sitting there

Trick of Light

Chip Wood

Sitting silently at night, pinecone fire
sole source of light, I sense the presence
of a younger She, so turn to see
Her facial age lines slowly fade, with
her hair no longer greyed. Noticing
she warms me with that smile unchanged
through more than fifty years to re-ignite –
those joyful flames illuminate
Love, knowing nothing's changed –
it's just a trick of flickering light.

TAPESTRY GROWING ...

Wendy Vogt

It is
whatever it is

It is also
whatever it isn't
If you stop there
you drop there

Make the threads sing
like the dry grass
light and swaying
in the winds.

ringing the changes ...
beauty hovering

Candelabra Lilies

Adre Marshall

Two stalwart stems, a hand-span
apart, grow parallel
but so close together
Their branches intertwined

From the head of these two stems
spokes radiate out
each cradling at its fingertips
a swaddled candle, damask-pink

The air flows freely around the stems
and from the giant dandelion heads
the branch-tips slowly unfurl their buds
then flare out their fiery blooms

to swell these two glowing candelabras
now still more closely interlaced
each giving the other light-boned support
When dry, the candelabra flower heads will roll

across the veld, driven by the wind
like spinning Catherine wheels
as their circular cages
fling their seeds across the land.

And we, our tumbling times now over –
days of cart-wheeling over the earth
whirling at the whimsy of the wind –

hope we too, rooted close, and holding
still a hand-span apart
will ever give each other
the same airy buoyancy and support

Post-modern Maternity

Adre Marshall

For a new grandson

From the time of your birth you had a puckish
sense of fun. When, in the starched
white ward (all germs and dust banished)
that cricket started chirping, and
we gasped, hand stopping mouth
that such a creature should enter in
polluting that disinfected space,
and searched under chairs, bed, behind
curtains, and at last opened the cupboard,
finding – my first cell phone that chirping
ring! You screwed your creased new face
into a grin, as though to say
“I knew I’d end up in a family
with a techno-peasant gran!”

Later you might be comforted
by the sense of pattern repeated:

All those years ago, when your mother
was born, and they held her up by
the heels for proud inspection –
wrinkled red face, ear buckled
over, nose bent into a beak
hair slicked up in a feathery
black crest – her mother –
your now grandmother – whooped
“But she looks just like a hoepoe!”
The midwife startled back, as though
to take the babe away for more
rapturously maternal gaze,
and snapped “Well, I’ve never before
heard anyone laugh
On the delivery table!”

So –

I wish you well in this family
of hybrid creations, of crickets and birds
where the reverential is always
under siege by the risible.

My Granny

Gail Barton

Jenny's granny's very clever
she has a Science degree
she understands co-tangents
and bio-chemistry
And Steven's gran is Oh-so-posh
she's had the queen to tea
where dainty sandwiches were served
with silver cutlery.
But MY grand builds sand castles
when we go off to sea
We frolic in the rock pools
as happy as can be
Once we found an orange crab
and a pink anemone.

Meg's gran floats in silky scarves
she wears them with great flair
and John's gran sports jade earrings
so grand, you can't compare
Tom's gran has a sequined bag
and a velvet one to spare
when they're all invited to the school
to join us at the fair
But MY grand makes a daisy chain
which she wears in her grey hair
and if anybody thinks it's odd
MY grand just *could* not care
I think she looks beautiful
that's why they stand and stare.

Polly's gran bakes biscuits
and muffins made with bran
and Norman's gran bakes donuts
and peach and apple flan
and Granny Mac is good at scones
she makes them by the span
and we eat them warm with butter
and homemade strawberry jam
But MY gran makes the best mud pies
no other granny can
We squish and squash them into shape
and sprinkle them with sand
then bake them on a big warm rock
in her non stick patty pan.

Of all the grannies in the world
The most awesome is MY gran

Snail Pace

Yvonne O'Connor

Slowly, cautiously
we weave our worded way
writing ourselves
snail pace
one step nearer to nakedness, unashamed
this motley bunch of tight-rope walkers
in this unravelling circus of life ...

Don't give us pills
that dull the damage
or masks that mute
give us words that we may
snail pace
weave our worded way
out of dumb darkneses

who are we?
we are those who have escape
the devious charity
of unreality
we are those who gain new ground
through sacred scars
word woven
into ladders we climb
one word at a time
snail pace
into that ineffable space
where true community happens

Evening on Fish Hoek Beach

Chris Dodson

Lone Kelp Gull

large, erect
in the shadows

Why so alone?
When the cormorants
and lesser gulls

are massing
in flocks on the Bay
Even the pigeons

scavenge in mobs
for tourist's crumbs
by the pub bench

Like me, do you
enjoy aloneness?
away from

your chattering,
mindless,
avian *Twitterati*?

Driving through the Karoo

Hazel Sharl

Driving through the Karoo
Land of open spaces, distant horizons
A solitary windmill, reminder of humanity
A dust devil dances across the land
where once diocotron roamed
Beside meandering rivers
before this giant basin silted up
Flat-topped hills, defiant bastions against erosion
now revealing the secrets of past millennia
Treasure trove to paleontologists

Driving through the Karoo
Beaufort West – pitstop, melting tar and on
Guessing games – how many miles to the next bend
or car cricket – oncoming cars a run
overtaking scores a wicket
Oh look – there's a train
Time to hand round the wine gums

Heat and light
Relief driving into the shadow of a passing cloud
In the distance a rainstorm
that never reaches earth
And always the magic that pulls one back
to the peace and solitude and strange beauty
In time to come when I am gone
you may well meet my shade
Driving through the Karoo

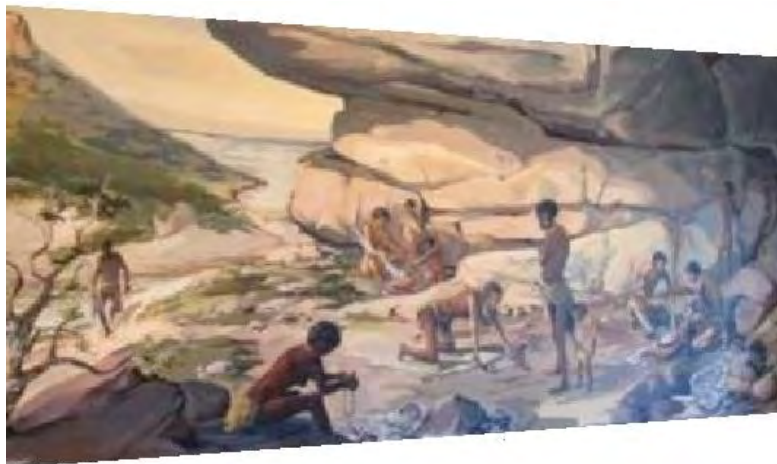
Follow the Trail

Muriel Leech

Many, many years ago there was a valley wide
with mountains high on either side
while the sand between was deep and white
Oh what a glorious, glorious sight.
But when the season was at its height
my how the wind blew but day and night
No good to build a hut nor house,
a hole is only for a mouse
But the earliest guys in those far-off days
found sheltered, cosy and homely caves
A view of the valley right down to the sea
and look there comes breakfast
for you and me

They cooked, so had fire
And skins were for warmth
and they had bows and arrows for hunting of course
They painted their walls, how else would we know
this history of Fish Hoek so long ago

This story of Fish Hoek is the start of the tale
so come to the museum and follow the trail.



Fish Hoek Valley Museum

Museum of Fish Hoek History, Peers cave excavations and more.

Opening hours: 09h30 to 12h30 Tuesday to Saturday or by appointment.

Tel: 021 782 1752

2015 Finalists



Left to right Back Row: Adre Marshall (overall winner), Geoffrey Haresnape, Val Parry, Pauline Hitchins, Finuala Dowling (Judge), Eveline Gilmore, Chip Wood, Chris Dodson
Front row: Kay Sadie, Anne Welsh, Sheila Jeftha, Hazel Sharl, Vonni Romano
(Not present: Erich Heinz).

Overall Winner 2015



Adre Marshall

This

To think that it could come to this –
that after all those wild days

the times of heady tumblings
and fire-fingered fumbings

that this –
this duvet-cosseted cuddling

by a purring fire
stroked by the rubbing

of the rain against the roof
this slow soft-feathered snuggled
warmth

that this, after all,
could answer, now, to our idea of
Bliss!

Pot of Gold

Val Parry

Do you remember 20?
Life was a distant island
on a dog-eared, yellow map
a secret spread in front of us?
Somewhere
there would be treasure
in that mottled plan.

But wait !

Weren't we warned
about the dangers,
of miss-step or a lurking corner;
without a signpost or a compass
which way to turn?
We grabbed our backpacks and –
just went.*

Suddenly, 50! Do you remember 50?

The chart that led us
through thorny valleys
and up glittering peaks –
but we could still
will blistered feet to find
time for the unknown track
skipping the beloved detours
of our offspring

*

Now, ageless (which is another secret)
our backpacks burst with the weight of gold
carried lightly, with love.

Yikes !

Geoffrey Haresnape 76

he? or she?
in gender
is the least of your problems.

24/7
it trawls our currents
in search of a protein opportunity---
seals, penguins, an octopus---
It is careless of shape or size

mouth
a portico
festooned with knives---
maw
a cauldron
that renders down

when the shark flag flies
do not enter the water

should your paths cross
it'll take no heed of your CV
travel experience, taste in music
portfolio of unit trusts---
nor of your belief
that you are made in the image of god

in its own way
it is a mystic
that yearns for you and it to be one

this cult of unity
has been around for 16 million years
the consummation
a ritual opening of jaws

avoid the encounter

you do not want to be
its chum.

Then and Now– a sonnet

Vonni Romano

heady syringas a garden in spring
a rhythmic mantra that the train tracks sing
Amo amas amat as in a trance
they kiss entwined under a rising moon
She day-dreams of sheiks on the way to school
Romance true love exotic lands monsoons
But then she sees guillotined by the wheels
A headless chicken doing its manic dance

Now her journey's more confined from the train
She still climbs slopes flies kites surfs turquoise waves
sees a lone arum bloom in winter shade
picks ever-lastings hears a scops owl call
memories flash by ecstasy and pain
still-life framed in the windows of a train

In Dire Kneed

Adre Marshall

I never thought that I could be
In thrall to a mere hinge, a knee
A knee whose foot was always pressed
On hiking trails or mountain crest

A knee that would skip up hills, down dale
Fly over boulders, never quail
Up India Venster, down Left Face B –
Table Mountain a mere molehill for this devotee

Now this knee shoots shafts of pain along my leg
Not bending, it buckles, it's a powder keg
About to blow up, sending splinters of bone
Showering over the fynbos all the way home

I'm told that the fault I entirely mine
Resulting from years of abuse to knees and to spine
On Sundays, instead of genuflecting with a lens before a flower
I should have bent my knees, indoors, to a higher power!

The Pregnant Shell

Val Parry

The pregnant shell of an alikreukel,
glisten-eared abalone,
cockle-tied seaweed and muscle-ing swell
will soon, they say, be gone.

Man's meddling mettle and greedy thrall
will drain septic seas of fish
till the starving cry of the last grey gull
drowns in our own death wish.

Let's hear the rattling crash of waves
let's SEE our oceans clear!
Let's feel the beat of the sea that braves
these warm shores everywhere.

God's Gift

Kay Sadie

The morning light comes through the bedroom curtains

Another day begins

You lift your head from the pillow

There is an ache in your shoulder

What to do today

Go walk on the beach

Too cold too windy

Loneliness sets in

Loneliness the curse of the elderly

Go to the gym

Stay fit

Stay healthy

Stay Happy

Don't irritate people

Don't complain that they don't call

Don't complain that they don't visit

You decide to go to the gym

You are about to open the door

The phone rings

"hullo Gran, can we come for a visit and a sleep over?"

The sun comes out

The self-pity disappears

Your heart swells with love and pleasure

It is True!

Grand Children are God's Gift

To old people

When Death Comes

Eveline Gilmore

How will it feel
when Death comes?
will there be pain
Will I bleed?
With my eyes closed
will I still see;
Is it like being asleep,
Will I remember
or will I forget
My Life
Might I float, or might I sink?
Silence like under the water,
the voices soft in my head.
Or in a fog of kapok
that drifts into the sun and is gone with me.
How does it feel to be gone?
Never to see another
autumn with soft rain;
No more Winter
wrapped warm in a down duvet ?
No more Spring of bright colours;
No more Summer
and hot sun on my skin;
No more sea, or beach.
Will I miss the clouds
or will I be part of the drops?
Would I become part of a Whole,
or will I still be me?
Will I look forward
or will I look back?
Will they still matter
the things left behind?
Does the fog fade when the sun comes out
or does the sight fade
when the mist comes down?
Will I be sad
or will I be glad?
When Death comes

Filth

Chris Dodson

Island in Pacific
Made of plastic
Drinking straws, bottle tops
Orgiastic?

Climbers' route to Everest
Lined with litter
Baked beans and lager cans
Mild and Bitter?

Space junk in our ionosphere
Iron sprockets
Chunks of reject satellites
Bits of rockets?

Sewage in our estuary
Leaking on our beach
Mixing with sweet wrappings
Defying speech?

Garbage on the internet
Porn aimed at kiddies' souls
Mindless twitterati logic
Full of holes!

Seabirds drowned in oily goop
Gasolines and diesels
Shell Total Caltex and their gang
Corporation weasels?

But the biggest pile of ordure
That daily fouls my routes
Our "leaders" and their sycophants
Scoundrels in cahoots!

Daybreak

Hazel Sharl

I shall meet my lover tonight
The dawn air caresses by skin
Shrill white eyes begin the bird twitter
The ginger cat stretches and yawns

A warm glow suffuses the valley
Rose tinted clouds streak the sky
The first rays of the sun kiss the ridges
Ancient mountains embrace the bay

Gentle wavelets suckle the sand
Sun sparks dance across the waves
Overhead gulls scream their desire
I shall seek my lover tonight.

Thoughts after my First Months at The St James

Anne Welsh

If, for any reason, you are
concerned, press the button
for telephone or emergency.
Happy hour will bring plenty
of thirsty company, and merlot,
stein, dry white or rose
beer or whisky if you bring your own.

Zimmer frames are the rule
rather than the exception, so my
ski sticks are part of the scene.

Innocence will bring your
rooibos tea and 4-minute egg.
Constance will tell you how to
train Ophelia to do her business outside
but Ophelia is afraid of Toby who seems interested in her

Always the sound of the waves
and smell of the sea ... Blissful !

Altogether a peaceful place,
Offering all you need – company,
books, entertainment, good food
Sunday buffet lunch is the best –
A good time to invite friends or family
for that roast pork and crackling and
roast chicken with stuffing followed
by choc mousse and lemon meringue pie
and cheesecake and tiramisu
A bottle of wine is must with this

If this is 3 score years & 10,
I'll take it gratefully, and say
grazie to Santiago.

Golden Wedding Sonnet

Chip Wood

Half-century ago today
And half a continent away
We held hands in the exchange
Of simple and prosaic vows.
At odd times since we've had to fight
A partial fading of our light,
And passing years have etched their lines
Upon our persons, not our minds.

Vows have deepened and have grown
Into a credo of their own
Fueled by love, by total trust,
By children and our spaniel pets.
Fifty years as groom and bride –
Still together, side by side.

Newspapers

Chip Wood

My daily paper opens at the “Deaths”
to scan for names one might have known

Rarely finding such one yet regrets
Grief flowing from that silent page.

Sadly I then shake my head
to read the Stock Exchange instead

Where one seeks the harmony
of numbers, but they too bring pain.

So fold the paper tightly,
determined not to try again.

This denies oneself the pleasure
of crosswords, to be filed at leisure.

Pensioner Sitting

Chip Wood

Watching pigeons peck for crumbs
Fallen from a Chelsea Bun
He estimates what hours remain
To “lights out” at the Old Age Home.
Then may he curl up in his bed,
Praying not to reawaken
To recalled memories and pain
With a future of observing rain
As pigeons strut across the stoep
While he sips his lunchtime soup.

On the Loss of my Wife

Erich Heinz

With the silent trumpet blast
the sun o'er takes the morning star at last
and in the clear dawn light, bids farewell
to the memory of my love

The sparrow-weavers in the tree
sing their Mozart's symphony
their requiem ---
to the memory of my love.

Etched against the distant hill
the regimented aloes stand so still
in one final last salute
to the memory of my love

The ibis give their plaintive cry
the jackals call their last goodbye
in the stillness of the morn
to the memory of my love.

My tear-drops falling in the dust,
falling in the dust of memory
echo 'gainst the hills
Goodbye!
goodbye!
goodbye!

The Ukulele

(Self Portrait)

Pauline Hitchings

Diminutive – not top drawer
A minimum of strings
A lowly and unlovely thing –
No instrument for kings
Of sweet and bitter memories
The ukulele sings –
Nostalgic notes too sad by far
And lyrics that take wings

Wonder

Sheila Jeftha

Five perfect toes clasped
within my loving hand
in wonder.

A minor miracle
A miniature man –
I wonder
how will he grow
can he also know
the wonder
a loving father feels
holding gently in his hands
the wonder of a son.

Dalebrook Pool

Vonni Romano

as trekkers
trawl for fish
we cast our nets

borne by the breeze
they drift sinking
into the swell

sprawled on the wall
hungry ... we wait
to snare our words

glistening silver
they wriggle and squirm
trying to get free

our pens spear a few
that settle down
on the empty page

stringing them
together like
bunches of bokkoms

we assess our catch
scaling and gutting
discarding some

2014 Finalists



L – R : Mindi Baldwin, Derrick Law, Lynne Blair (overall winner),
David Anderson, Finuala Dowling (Judge), Sheila Jeftha,
William H Goble, Lucretia Pretorius, Chris Dodson

Winner 2014



Namib

Lynne Blair

Heat, sand,
Wind and searing sun,
a skeleton tree
silhouetted against a cobalt sky.

Sand, slipping, sliding, blowing
forming elliptical shapes.
Dunes painted yellow to red ochre
in endless waves.

Dry waterways
visible from above
emaciated shrubs marching
like an ancient army traversing a
pass

A proud desert Oryx
under a stunted tree
a surprising site
driving a windswept road.

Water flows –
the soft sands of the dry Sossusvlei
with measure marked batons
tell a story.

But ... This is ephemeral,
the air is dry
the wind restless.
This is a cruel land.

Sand meets the ocean,
there is no soft green transition.
ruins of a diamond mine
reflect a tragic harvest.

There is an indelible imprint on the
mind,
the beauty is in the desolation –
miles on miles of rolling dunes
brings a sense of endless time.

Lidgetton

Chris Dodson

The river, gurgling past in merry haste,
gloats as it weaves along its rock-strewn way,
mirthfully chuckles, wags its ribald tongue,
and mocks the boy, who sunburned on a rock
basks half asleep and curses his lot.

A lazy ibis flaps across the blue
and hoarsely jeers the bather far below
who now, with lazy stroke, cuts out a course
across the shaded pool, then rests a while,
and thinks dejected thoughts of days gone by

The grasses, rustling in a gentle breeze,
whisper, and tease him as he drags his way
back from the stream.

The house upon the hill
spreads friendly eaves, and smilingly condoles
with him, whom river, bird and grass have mocked,
for morning brings a sadness to this pair,
to house and boy – tomorrow they must part.
And well may nature mock, for she remains
to sanctify this spot, while he, the boy,
at school bemoans a holiday that's flown.

For Nadine

Sheila Jeftha

The writer passes on.
An icon looming large, to many
for some a traitor.
Never passing through.
Born into conflict, otherness, questions.
All-seeing eyes noting, analysing,
never compromising.
Rejecting custom and law,
fearless opinion bases on reason,
never heeding bans.
Tiny her frame with mighty pen,
The voice the world needed to hear,
never accepting limited rule,
will be passed on.

On the Beach before Breakfast

David Anderson

Upon the far horizon now a glow
of orange light, a gleam of warmth, is seen;
The sun appears and slowly starts to show
its full and glorious self, it wondrous sheen.
Across the peaceful swell the rays glint bright
and gently warm the cool deserted beach;
it is soon returned to sea with each wave's reach.

An early fisherman, his footprints clear
upon the clean-washed sand, re-casts his line;
Two joggers next arrive and, running near
the water's edge, they leave their tell-tale sign.

The sun has risen now, another day
of summer's heat is set upon its way.

Earth Child

Mindi Baldwin

On the day of my birth
from the womb of the earth
I was registered part of humanity.
But I grew with the plants
till my uncles and aunts
decided that this was insanity.
In pursuit of their goal
they pruned off my soul
and made me all neat and acceptable.
My clothing just right
my halo too tight
while my core remained quite undetectable.
The place where they pruned
left a large gaping wound
where the white cells cavorted with glee.
So with well-bred defiance
disguised as compliance
I whispered "I want to be me!"
And who's that? Asked the preachers,
the aunts and the teachers,
as the halo constricted my head.
So I stripped myself bare –
shook the tight from my hair –
"this is me, I'm an earthchild, I said.
Being scared of the earth
they decreed that my birth
was an error of judgement, and so
I returned to the trees
to the sweet summer breeze
and discovered my own embryo.

Fish Hoek Walks

William H Goble

From off the southern ocean comes so cold
a summer fury sure;
It comes not gentle bus consuming bold,
comes knocking on our door.

And if it did not come on time each year,
disturbing False Bay strong;
We'd worry much so full of sickening fear
that summer's here gone wrong.

We need this wind to temper summer heat;
to soften all that sun:
One hand on hat, one close to skirt, and feet
alone must gauntlet run.

See walking here an aged concentration;
retirees at leisure,
who in this wind find touching ventilation
a balm we cannot measure.

This ADAMASTOR of the Cape of Storms
is not an ill wind blown:
Searching our valley with its breath, it forms
a flighting field well sown.

Yes, Fish Hoek walks come wind come weather stalking,
South Easter not our foe;
Up north the rains and glad our Cape rejoicing,
come southern summer blow.

Second Sight

Lucretia Pretorius

Suddenly observing
your thighs are sagging,
yet retaining outlines of that
shapeliness that drew my eye
one day in Spring.
My throat constructs.

How tenderly you've held me.

Dearer far the sight
of you to me now,
my Autumn love.

Our Lady

Lucretia Pretorius

For my mother.

The days of our years

She lived

three score years and ten

dreaming, hoping

and if by reason of strength

enduring pain

fourscore years

in loveliness

yet their strength labour and sorrow

She lived

every day of her years.

Memories

Derrick Law

Memories are rather like roller coaster rides,
seldom series of consecutive scenes,
more like flotsam flung up by the tides,
no logical sequence, just fragments like dreams.

Small pictures in time dredged up by the mind,
brief moments of actions, what made them last?
No Rhyme or reason who the mind's blind
should be opened to light up a view of the past.

And now as I sit here and think without rue
of byways I knew in my long lost past,
I'm glad that my mind is still able to view
the days of my years, the memories that last.

The Immigrant

Derrick Law

When walking out one morning
across the suburb's green,
I saw a sight which has become
an all too common scene.

Here at the Fairest Cape
the pharaoh's finest stand,
Egypt's envoys in our midst
immigrants in our land.

Cairo to the Cape at last
reversing Rhode's dream,
not by road, rail or sea
but by a high jet stream.

See him strut, his neck out-thrust
fancy free and footloose
proud of his antiquity,
The ubiquitous Egyptian goose.

1902

Derrick Law

A dark and desolate land
Blackened by fire not sun,
Countless farms defiled
Destroyed by whim no gun.

Every glass blade burnt
Field after field of ash,
Golden crops all gone
Homes and hopes all dashed.

In his office at GHQ
Jubilant at having won,
Kitchener sits at his ease
Lost in thoughts of home.

Might at last victorious,
Never a thought for the land,
Only British pride, and
Promises made of sand.

Quiet now the cannon
Rifles all handed in,
Silent the last commando
Time that peace should win.

Until the men return
Victims all of fate,
Wives and loved ones waiting
Expectant at their gates,
Yearning still for freedom
Zealots, still filled with hate.

Garden Pests

David Anderson

Throughout the year the sneaky snail
with crunchy shell and slimy trail,
Attacks the plants and without fail
leaves nothing in its wake.

The runner mole, so soft and cute,
digs ups the grass from root to root,
A cuddly chap, and yet a brute
who's difficult to find.

The caterpillar is the worst;
With horned face he's surely cursed.
It's strange to think a fiend at first
will be a butterfly.

The Ha-de-da with raucous cry
deposits 'it' when passing by,
and barefoot gardeners such as I
then curse the wretched bird.

And thus the pestilential scourge
is answered by the gard'ner's urge
to rid his land of pests and purge
his property of beasts.