

# I N S T E R E O S C O P E

Poems Commissioned by StAnza 2012

By the Great River

Past fires. A risen dusk.

You come.

The tired shuffled cards of days

Remain

But by the water

There is calm.

What's soon to be

Will soon be past.

Maureen Sangster

## Funeral By The Tay

Labouring like farmers with his corpse,  
unwieldy as potatoes in a sack,  
we march him on his palanquin  
along the shining path, pausing at kerbs,  
waiting for the green man to flash.

Cars slow, offer a petition of horns  
as smoke blows from the eastern ghats  
of Tayport, holy dormitory town, thin  
of streets and grey of walls, undisturbed  
by grief beneath its shallow patina of ash.

Menfolk wait for us along the shore,  
nervous as they chatter, offering to light  
each others' cigarettes, trying not to laugh  
too loud at whispered filthy jokes. Eyes dim,  
the procession stops, faces set like rock.

We settle him upon the pyre, a little law  
of walking sticks, umbrellas, last night's  
copies of the Dundee Evening Telegraph.  
The fire is lit, but no-one waits for him  
to burn; we walk away, not looking back.

The burden of his body is behind him now,  
but he has parcelled up his dowdy soul  
for us, a dubious ornament bequeathed  
in devilment. I picture him, a gallus shade  
tapping minor deities for twenty quid.

The peculiar light of his dharma is a glow  
you will not see for long. He leaves a hole,  
as does the drawing of a needle from a sheath  
of skin. The man he thought he was will fade,  
and leave behind the things he never did.

Andy Jackson

## Moon Goddess

Artemis strides agile, sinuously adorned in moonbeams.  
Dryads, skilled in ancient tree lore, guard her pathways.  
Hounds glide at her sides, baying in adulation.  
A deft arm movement changes the timbre of her moon-bow  
and quickens the truth of her aim. Her arrows command  
the strength of tides as she chases down Gods, or men.  
Their quest to usurp her powerful luminous glow  
with their own bright star of gold.  
Here, in the fullness of her light, water controls all edges of land.  
Her language, the kernel, will be safely coppiced for all to share.  
Folded lives will be given connections for the crossing of time.  
Her arrows sing on, to link our shadow world forever with her night.

Sheena Berry

## Sea-Henge

On that far wall  
four blank slabs of light.  
On this, the window shows  
a sapling ash, bare-limbed,  
black buds not yet breaking,  
clutched tight against the blue  
stealth of a sullen spring.

The years have flowed like the sea  
over these withered bones,  
uprooted and laid out  
between sheets of cold linen.  
They bear the weight of memory,  
the lovers, the children,  
grassy play-times, ink-stained desks,  
the fall of governments, music,  
the planting of gardens.

The years have flowed like the sea  
over the henge in the saltmarsh,  
the alder carr over the bog,  
peat building over the alders,  
the sand over the peat,  
and, over the sand, the sea.

I wait for the tide and a wind  
screaming with gull-cries  
to take me out between the layers  
between memory and reflection,  
between the glass and the light.

Elizabeth Rimmer

## The dilemma

A bare ash tree in the winter hills,  
moonshine on the silver sea;  
two segments of a single country,  
two dear, desired landscapes,  
and don't make me choose  
where I most want to live.

Spring's green hands are furled tightly  
behind black scales, as day-length's  
clockwork spring unwinds, slackens.  
How good it feels to walk  
through the trees, ascending  
a well-made path.

The smell of old weed cast up  
by the last big storm, the track  
by the golf course, standing still  
for drives, chips, putts in daytime,  
and at night, now the lighthouse is dark,  
we depend on searchlight moon.

Don't make me choose.

Colin Will

## Vigil

Soles, almost silent on warmed stone,

leave behind little

to show they were there,

while mist from the river

sighs like a legion of ghosts,

to succumb in the dusk,

fold upon whispering fold.

Karen Doherty