



POETRY OBJECT

2016

WINNING &
HIGHLY COMMENDED
POEMS

JUDGE'S REPORT

Inside the cure
there's the hope.
Inside the hope
there's a smile.
Inside the smile
there's the child.

'Crocodile Tooth Necklace'

Niamh, Year 6

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel



I was looking for poems that surprised, that played with language in all kinds of ways, and played with the idea of object. I was more than delighted to find so many poems getting right into the workings of language, the idea of the page, the sound and feel of words, to really extend ideas of poems about object and poems as object. Well done, you all!

I had the whole world on these pages: funny world, weird world, sad world, moving world, memory world. This shows how much can be done with, sometimes, just a very few lines or, on the other hand, the great big cornucopia of language. With big or small poems, seemingly modest or wonderfully strange poems, you all made things happen on the page. One of the delights was coming across poems that offered up not just English but other languages or indications of other languages within. I was given all these poems without names, or schools.

They simply were what they were, as poems. Of course, there are almost infinite ways of writing great poems and there were a lot of those to choose from. The ones I settled on, eventually (and it took me some time), really exemplified the ways a poet thinks about how form, in all sense, works in language. And form is one important aspect of the idea of the object. Also, a lot of the writers of these poems were able to make the familiar unfamiliar, new and strange, via a new sounding, a new turn to the poetry idea or shape it was working with. I hope everyone who took part in this keeps on writing, keeps on thinking about poems as objects to keep turning and turning into wonderful new shapes, new ideas, new feelings. I congratulate everyone who worked on making this so successful, and so heartening. To think, there can be so many poets in the world! And, this year, I got to read so many of them.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016



THE SOLE OF A POEM

Poetry is an abstract form that can connect people across cultures and countries through the expression of shared human experiences. Therefore, as a class we have written verses from our talismanic poems onto canvas shoes and decorated them. This represents how through literary forms, like poetry, we are able to put on a new pair of shoes and take a walk through an unfamiliar or alternate perspective. The power of poetry lies in its ability to transport us to different places, times and experiences.

However, we also want our poems to literally connect us to others around the world. Therefore, these shoes are going to be donated to the Cambodian Children's Fund, an organisation that provides education and support to over 2400 children and their families who are in the heart of Cambodia's most impoverished communities from the former dump of Steung Meanchey. We hope that our poems are able to provide the children who receive them with both a sense of global community and much needed practical protection as they navigate through the hazardous terrain around them.

YEAR 10
St. Mary's Anglican Girls School, WA

JUDGE'S NOTES

St Mary's Anglican Girls' School's installation is based on a clear and powerful idea. It takes that simple object, a shoe, and allows it to say something about bodies, movement, and words. Our feet in our shoes walk daily places, they move us through the world safely and efficiently. The installation connects poetry to this through the very simple idea of placing poems on shoes along with wonderful visual decorations. So poetry is afoot. Art is afoot. Poetry moves with us. We can take our words on whatever short, or long journeys we make every day.

This installation also says a lot about the process of writing, that poems must shape themselves to the environment in which they are presented, published. The shoes themselves have a limited space so you would have to think very clearly and shrewdly about which words should adorn the shoes. And the words also become part of the body that wears the shoes and walks the path. Poetry can go everywhere. And just as importantly, this project shows how poetry can be part of a creative gift. This school is making a gift of these poem shoes to impoverished people in Cambodia. A gift that contains poetry, a gift that is both practical and inspiring. In all senses, well done.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

**WINNING
SCHOOL
INSTALLATION**



**POETRY
OBJECT**
2016

CROCODILE TOOTH NECKLACE

Inside the tooth necklace is the cavity.

Inside the cavity is the fish bone.

Inside the fish bone there is the mite.

Inside the mite there's the plankton.

Inside the plankton there's the salt.

Inside the salt there's a chemical.

Inside the chemical there's the chop of the disease.

Inside the disease there's the cure.

Inside the cure there's the hope.

Inside the hope there's a smile.

Inside the smile there's the child.

Inside the child there's a tooth.

Inside the tooth there's a cavity.

NIAMH

Year 6

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, NSW

JUDGE'S NOTES

This is a remarkable poem which offers a mysterious, primal vision through that most primal rhythm of repetition. Some of the repetitions work deftly with opposites – disease/cure – and others take an oceanic journey through fish bone, plankton, salt. All this performs the idea of change, as well as insistence or propulsion, where each of the poem's moves takes the reader right into a vast space which is also a very individual small, daily place. In this poem even states and emotions become things and dance together.

The poem can be read in so many ways but what struck me powerfully was how it worked with the power of thought and how that links to objects and images. I also connected emotionally with how it moves towards hope but lets us know that in that is also the experience of damage, that we are all a part of. It performs its work as a type of wisdom.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

WINNING
PRIMARY
POEM



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

DAD'S GARDEN

The blossom appears
In the heavenly springtime
The daisy is pink

ABBY

Year 5

Hahndorf Primary School, SA

JUDGING NOTES

This is an apparently simple poem, only three lines, but it does so much within its economical form. It is, of course, that perfect Japanese form, the haiku, and in this case has been written using the usual 5-7-5 syllable count. The key to a great haiku is its movement. This terrific little poem flows lightly from one object to seasonal scene then to another specific object. This is that simplicity that offers revelation. It opens up the poem to other ways of thinking (what does 'pink' mean for any of us?) as well as grounding the poem in colour. And in this poem it's quick and effective. The idea of pinkness adds a touch of deliciousness to the whole effect.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(PRIMARY)



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

MY TIMEKEEPER

The metal buckle grasps my wrist,
the stains drenched with memories.
Corners are gathering dust,
the glass has cracked
the durable plastic wears away.

Every time I glance
a paradox of emotions drown me
my watch's weight grounds me
I carry the spirit of the giver
with me

The numbers mesmerise me
like I could travel back to the past
or forward to the future.

Without it,
I feel empty,
lost in time,
like a watch without a function

I feel safe, happy
as the metal buckle grasps my wrist.

TRIST
Year 5
Greenacre Public School, NSW

JUDGE'S NOTES

This definite poem is about the power of the object, the thing that is almost body, corporeal, visceral – that grasps the wrist. The images remind us forcefully of the physical thinginess of objects. This is reinforced by the title; 'My' it says, this is part of me. And like the watch band, the poem is full of links, link to memory and the giver of the object, as well as that direct physical skin-link of self to object. The poem also performs a form of circularity, like the face of a watch, the way the hands move around a watch, indeed, the way time is cyclical. The poem also reminds us that time is a thing as well as a process.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(PRIMARY)



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

THE TOTEM CUP

The totem cup is icy blue like the ocean
Vessels for evil spirits

Shiny as the scars on a dragon
The totem cup was like a child staring

They are short ceramic
The scary serious carved faces

Clink it falls to the floor
Sipping the totem cup

Clank
The totem cup can roll sideways
on its side whispering secrets

The totem cup is wood blue mud brown and coal
Pretty, painted pottery
Nice, neat nose on the object.

THOMAS

Year 3

Shell Cove Public School, NSW

JUDGING NOTES

This poem is another mystery, the kind of mystery that is both unsettling and also very ordinary and everyday. It does this cleverly. The title alerts us to this object's place in the world of the writer. And to what a totem does. It implies a relationship with an object that is special, even a spirit being, a symbol for an individual or group. In other words, this poem shows something about the special relationship we can have with things and they with us. The symbols in this poem move about. This seems a slippery totem object, the cup is secretive, scary yet also pretty, a simple pottery thing, yet ... It is a shape-changer, something quite paradoxical and mischievous. The poem uses sound, the sound of onomatopoeia but also the idea of whispered secrets, to achieve its light-foot shape shifting way.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(PRIMARY)



MY NANA BAY'S JUBES

Odd heavenly treat

My Nana Bay giving them to me

They are small stereos playing music

Sugary delight

Brings back memories of her

Tasty gentle aniseed flavour

As black as space

Snow made of sugar

Swallow, swallow

Odd heavenly treat

SAM

Year 5

Toowoomba Grammar School, QLD

JUDGE'S NOTES

Jubes are sweet, and usually colourful small candies, often gummy or resinous, sometimes harder. This resonant poem's jubes are special, however, because of their attachment to love, family and memory, as memory transforms the world and experience. Not only that, these jubes are active. Mysteriously but also as an apparent matter-of-fact, they become other things, 'small stereos' or 'snow'. The poem is full of opposites, and these strange parallels. Maybe it's like the way sweets change in the mouth, as their colours and flavours change. The writer has emphasised this in delightful ways, such as 'odd and heavenly', a wonderful, strange juxtaposition.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(PRIMARY)



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

MY GRANDDAD'S TRUMPET

It squeals like an angry baby
It's a big stamping trumpet
My granddad's trumpet

It's creaky like an old rocking chair
A musical machine
My granddad's trumpet

I can picture my granddad playing a jazzy tune
I tried to play it once, a dead cockroach popped out
My granddad's trumpet

I saw it in the cupboard
Motionless
My granddad's trumpet

Squeal
Tweet goes
My granddad's trumpet

I asked my mum if I could keep it
It's the only thing I have left of him
My granddad's trumpet

BEDE

Year 5

Toowoomba Grammar School, QLD

JUDGING NOTES

The title of this strong poem, as well as the poem itself, says so much about this object. It announces, because that's what trumpets do, that it is about music, of course, and it is about memory and family, a grandfather in particular. And the object is also the chorus. The music specifically continues into the poem through the simple but effective use of that chorus. It is also a trumpet that has a connection to jazz, we are told. The poem plays with that idea, so that there are the steady beats of some stanzas and the chorus, but also the mid-point stanza, like a jazz piece, stretches out in the middle like a solo, like improvisation, the way good poems shift around within their chosen form. It's like a great gig we go to, that takes us out to another place and then brings us back.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

**HIGHLY COMMENDED
(PRIMARY)**



**POETRY
OBJECT**
2016

ONCE UPON AN AUTUMN

Crunch, crushes the leaf
the last breath bellows out, like a wave crashing down,
stepping over the lifeless leaf
running on,
the last breath bellows out, like a wave crashing down,
waiting silently
running on.
on the bridge from memory lane,
waiting silently.
playing with my family and playing with the leaves
when I was little, sitting on a bridge
on the bridge from memory lane,
playing with my family and playing with the leaves
when I was little, sitting on a bridge,
stepping over the lifeless leaf
playing with my family and playing with the leaves,
crunch, crushes the leaf

SOPHIE

Year 8

Wilderness School, SA

JUDGE'S NOTES

What becomes immediately obvious in this accomplished poem is its use of sound effects. In the first line we get that marvellous play with cr, or, ch, sh, for instance, as well as later on the part rhymes of 'on' with 'down'. Another dextrous thing it does in the area of sounding is the use of repetitions that wind through the poem. Another thing the poem did for me that I admired, was the way it turned around ideas of cliché. Of course, 'memory lane' is a cliché but in this poem 'memory lane' becomes a real place, somewhere we've all been. It's as though it turns the phrase back to a time before it became over-used, where someone sat on a bridge after coming from this actual lane all the while playing with leaves. There is a real freshness here in this place; even though the leaves are 'lifeless' they still have a life of sound, and the poem has life in its playing with and turning over these ideas.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

WINNING
SECONDARY
POEM



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

MY HOUSE KEYS BACK IN FRANCE

Cross the seas to find
A use, nowhere belonging but
This door. Coming back?

Metallic smell on
Sweaty hands. What if I had
Forgotten their laughs

Et maintenant que
Faire des nuits lumière sans bruit
Attendant un signe.

SOLÈNE

Year 10

St John's Grammar School, SA

JUDGING NOTES

There is a lot of movement in this short poem. The lines turn quickly, as though searching, for 'a use'. There are brief moments touched here, of smell and touch. How the metal of your house keys has a certain smell. The poem also plays with the idea of the way keys stand in as a sign of home, the place where people laughed, that you don't want to forget. One thing that particularly attracted me to this poem was the writer's confident decision to use two languages – English and French – and not to try translating the French. These days, of course, we can find a translation for many languages, or an approximate one, via a quick digital search. Or is it better to think about how these 'foreign' words add to the poem a sense of a language that is other, or one that was once lived in, that could be forgotten due to separation, as well as setting off a memory, that is, 'waiting for a sign'.

— Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(SECONDARY)



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

SEA GLASS

A token from the sea that clasps the shore.
You are a prism of frosted light, a glowing
Stone of crystal, I hold you in my hand evermore.
But you, you hold the sea when the sea cannot be held.
What is anything else in the world when your light shines
A diffracted oasis against the wall?

KIMBERLEY

Year 10
Darwin High School, NT

JUDGE'S NOTES

This economical poem, only six lines, deftly plays around with sound rhyme and part rhyme, and invokes repetition just as the ocean and its waves and currents are forms of repetition. It also had an attractive structural idea around the mid-line break, or caesura that, because it is a smooth not a hard break also mimics the movement of waves in and out. So, 'A token from the sea (soft break) that clasps the shore', and you see this operate in every line, variously. The sound scheme of the poem is also cleverly done so that it deviates from rhyme scheme then almost returns – so there's, again, an idea of resonance. The fourth line is a key to the poem, the idea of holding something that cannot be held, as objects slip away while they transform us.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(SECONDARY)



HEI MATAU

Maui pulls on the rope from the waka
Up comes the biggest ika ever, hanging on the hei matau
The North Island
Te Ika a Maui
The fish of Maui

Lying in the depths of the moana
The kaitieki of Aoteroa search
Ika, Fish
The spirit and hopes of the Maori inside a single hook

Once the plentiful provider of fish
Now a symbol of the land of my birth
Once a gift of food
Now a gift from my great grandmother
Paua emblazoned on the smooth bone hook
A perfect hei matau
Bringer of luck and strength
It hangs on my neck in tough times as if it were a newborn baby
A representation of my family values, of who I am
He aroha whakato, he aroha puta mai
If kindness is sown, then kindness you will receive.

DAVID
Year 9
Christ Church Grammar School, WA

JUDGING NOTES

This is another poem that moves boldly between two languages. Here the context is announced right from the beginning. It refers to the Maori story of the hero god Maui in his canoe (waka) hauling up the big fish (ika) that is the North Island of New Zealand: Te Ika-a-Maui. I am not from New Zealand but the poem is presented to me as a reader as a way to enter into such a story of such a place. To try to understand 'The spirit and hopes of the Maori inside a single hook'. So, the poem tells its story by alternating between the two languages, English and Maori, and the meaning is clear, the importance is clear. The writer also shows how this is embodied within an object, 'pau emblazoned on the smooth bone hook' that is a gift handed down, from great grandmother, part of a strong lineage 'luck and strength', a talisman. The poem's final line 'If kindness is sown, then kindness you will receive' also takes the story into another place, where kindness is also important, as well as strength, or that it, indeed, is strength, and a great value, whatever language you choose to say this in.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(SECONDARY)



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

NATIVE BIRD

Native bird,
Send a light
Try the window
That fires the night.

I walk past
Those cold calm streets
I come last
The all time sweets

I want to be
I would like,
That's better
I be might

The everyone's
Only person
The only one's
Very awesome

I'm not Elen
I'm not Gracie
I'm not Joan
Nor miss Chloe

I am only myself
That hides behind the shadow
Of you, or else
I shall not follow

Let me open my wings
And fly faraway
Start my beginnings
Of course, if I may?

Native bird,
Let yourself fly.

IRIS
Year 7
Lycée Condorcet, NSW

JUDGE'S NOTES

This is a tightly wound, and urgent poem. The title's reference to a bird is even mirrored in the poem's shape, long and spread out like a wing. And like a bird, there is song echoed through the short rhymed stanzas. They are not all perfectly rhymed and, thus, introduce those variations you would get in bird call. Although the stanzas only seem slight there is a lot going on in them. For instance, the third stanza plays with syntax, the unfinished statements giving that sense of urgency and also openness. The fifth stanza does all its defining by what someone isn't. So, although it may seem a simple piece, it repays a lot of re-reading and re-hearing. It is invocation, it is about freedom and hope, it is about place and identity. There's a lot going on here.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(SECONDARY)



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

MY GUITAR

I grasped it very dear.
Tranquillity became deafening.
The timber answers back.
As the thread strikes.

Tranquillity became deafening.
Resonance soothing the air.
As the thread strikes.
Mountains rose from my arms.

Resonance soothing the air.
Tales are told.
Mountains rose from my arms.
As echoes begin dying.

Tales are told.
The timber answers back.
As the echoes begin dying.
I grasped it very dear.

ROVIN

Year 9

Tennant Creek High School, NT

JUDGING NOTES

In this accomplished poem, things are talking. The timber of the guitar is answering back to the guitarist's touch, their grasp. Of course, the timber of a guitar is a sounding board and, technically, there is a specific part of a guitar that is a sound board, the top of the guitar, the place where the strings vibrate. The poem also makes good use of formal structures just as music does. There are also more strange things here. What are the 'mountains' the guitar raises on the player's arms? Goosebumps, distant places of the mind, things that need to be climbed, that involve effort and time, that produce echoes? A reader can bring all that and more to bear on this. There is also the paradoxical claim 'tranquillity becomes deafening'. This seems a much larger and stranger statement than the old one about 'deafening silence'. Even the opening and closing line, 'I grasped it very dear', is clearly about much more than simply holding this instrument or even playing it.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

**HIGHLY COMMENDED
(SECONDARY)**



**POETRY
OBJECT**
2016

HONEY PIE

honey pie
(the white album)

unfashionable and conspicuous

in tattoo
text and metal

we caught those silver rings
in tongues / the cheek
and sucked

*till they broke the surface

every other elephant god in the room
would also swap

their teeth for the story

BRONWYN LANG
Teacher
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary
School Launceston, TAS

JUDGE'S NOTES

This poem attracted me because, despite the context – a song I am familiar with from the so-called White Album – it was trying to say some things I'm not sure I fully grasp, and I am happy for that. Much like when, although you try to read further and further into a thing, there is always something eluding you. The poem also treats The Beatles' song not just as itself but as artefact / icon, part of that strange beast, The White Album (not even its official title). 'Honey Pie' (not to be confused with the Beach Boys–referencing 'Wild Honey Pie' on the same album), of course, is Paul McCartney's pastiche of an old-time music hall ballad, with its 78rpm crackle enhancing that impression, giving it a cutsey aura. The song's lyrics also reference the 'silver screen', an old-fashioned way of talking about cinema, just as 'silver' hovers in the poem. The song stands out amongst the other more complex lyrics or louder rock or even proto-metal sounds on the album, as in the words of the poem, 'unfashionable and conspicuous'. I could start to wonder about the poem's images, such as the 'elephant god' and think of The Beatles in India, or the elephant god Ganesha, perhaps even dancing. I could wonder about 'those silver rings' and be distracted by 'Maxwell's Silver Hammer' ringing out, and I know I'd be wrong. We all want to know 'the story' and we never will. Does the writer have their tongue in their cheek? Most likely. The album, the original vinyl one certainly, spins as it will, nonetheless.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

WINNING
TEACHER
POEM



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

JUDGING NOTES

The line breaks in this poem work cleverly with the idea of the object. The principal object, an orange ball, is there, up front. It is the full first line and, thus, inescapable. The first stanza could, almost, be worked into a haiku. The image, the movement between lines. But we're in a different kind of poem. In an apparently ordinary backyard, there is the movement of a child with a toy running into the yard to grab the ball they are too short to reach. There is no rescue. The poem is particularly remarkable for the clever use of internal and irregular rhymes that make links with various images and ideas. Such as the ball and the child being too small, as the scared bear toy, the link between creosote and the bear via what hangs in the air. This clever interplay of sound effects is coupled with a striking use of line breaks creating various, moving points of focus. This makes the poem a pleasure to re-read.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(TEACHER)



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

(FAUX) TORTOISE SHELL KNITTING NEEDLES

once tapped a faint heartbeat,
a winter evening pulse,
birthing love garments.

I glimpse my mother's midwife hands,
their milky outline ghosted
over needles of toffee two-tone gloss,
one thick finger flicking wool,
narrow rods kissing. Clicking
as bright yarn dribbles
across her pillowed lap, illuminated
in a spill of yellow lamplight,
now and then her mouth whisper-counting
lines and lines and lines and lines.

Now, on chilly golden nights
I slip into another pilled jumper—
obsolete, silly-stretched—
and see those lustrous sticks labour
as my mother's hands deliver
a slow, boundless love.

DEBORAH RITCHIE
Teacher
Bowral Public School, NSW

JUDGE'S NOTES

There is something so strong, clear and moving in this poem despite, or most likely because of, its somewhat awkward (deliberately I assume) title. The second stanza in particular is the heart of the poem and treats the memory of the narrator's mother via a clear-sighted recital of the very act of knitting, the performance of these moving objects, the knitting needles. It uses all those resources of literal and figurative language to give a feeling of this knitting: 'toffee two tone gloss', 'a spill of yellow lamp light', and the simple but effective repetition, 'lines and lines and lines and lines'. It may seem easy to do this kind of poetry work but it takes a certain skill to keep the lines turning over and not lose interest or to drop a stitch, so to speak. The objects themselves are closely associated with the mother through both sight and sound and then the writer brings us into the present. But we are also left not, not only the jumper as symbol of the memory but the true idea of 'a slow, boundless love'.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(TEACHER)



POETRY
OBJECT
2016

LEE ST.

Cracks on the wall since I can remember,
Each connecting vein a memory of a shout, a laugh or a Greek spoken word.

The smell musty,
Mixed with cigarette smoke creating a yellow buzz as the fry pan sizzled with the
finest form of liquid gold.

I remember the rooms. The one with the door locked to those who could only enter
with the password of "the innocence of a child".

Mentally unstable. Pills of all the coloured lollies I thought would only exist in
a Roald Dahl book.

I listened to each word as they were repeated and drilled into my head. They
didn't make sense but nothing did here.

I felt safe and that was enough as a ritual developed visiting each Sunday as if
I had found my own little Greek Orthodox church.

Safe until the cracks re-appeared each moving as rapidly as the sickness that
was devouring your body.

That smell,
Those puffs of smoke finally caught up with you.
Our mental asylum was no more.

Sold.
Bought.
Renovated.
That was our place.

KONSTANTINOS RIGOPOLUS

Teacher

Fitzroy North Primary School, VIC

JUDGING NOTES

This atmospheric poem deftly works with narrative interspersed with descriptions that evoke the power of things, things such as pills, smoke, food, kitchen utensils, and the power of memory, of what swims up and out of it. These things in the poem have an almost magic power, the cigarette smoke's 'yellow buzz' the frying pan sizzling its 'liquid gold'. It almost feels alchemical. There is also the unsettling connections made between a someone's early years and adult instabilities – 'the innocence of a child's password, the Roald Dahl reference, the pills like lollies – as well as the connection with religion, 'my own little Greek Orthodox Church', and the idea of sanctuary, in a language – 'a laugh or a Greek spoken word', the safety of some kind of ritual. But despite childhood and religion, everything is unstable, cracks like veins appear. This poem reminds us that everything catches up with us.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

**HIGHLY COMMENDED
(TEACHER)**



**POETRY
OBJECT**
2016

OUR JACK-IN-THE-BOX

Wind me on its metal coil
frozen by rust, time

(Taken thirty years prior through a touch,
a half-forgotten childhood slinking beneath its lid)

Wind me on its tiny spindle
taut to explosive

(Its jester returning thirty years over to a laugh,
undiluted joy - my niece's open eyes)

Spin me like a Catherine Wheel
sadly real,
performing

TOM KRISTOF

Teacher

Fitzroy North Primary School, VIC

JUDGE'S NOTES

In this striking poem the narrator is part of the object; the need to be incorporated into the jack-in-a-box is evoked right at the start: 'Wind me on its metal coil ...'. Indeed, all the repetitions, which replicate the idea of such a toy, relate to the idea of winding and spinning, so that the poem's world is also this object, and completely in the three un-bracketed stanzas: wind me, wind me, spin me. But there is also a fascinating formal move within the poem, a call and response perhaps. The longer bracketed stanzas are like a whispered counterpoint or explanation of the provenance of this toy, the memories that lie within it and that connect it to the present, particularly the niece of the narrator. Although that stanza leaves us with a child's joy, the final stanza returns to the metallic melancholy of 'sadly real, / performing'. Such is the give and take the poem moves within.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

**HIGHLY COMMENDED
(TEACHER)**



**POETRY
OBJECT**
2016

2016 TALISMAN, BRAND NEW

Tonight I should be writing poetry, but there is a party in our living room
for the new car in the garage and my mother, who holds the key

My aunts are here. My father is here. We raise our glasses to the sun, form dissolving,
streaks of light bleeding puddles of pink

A new car is no Christmas Day or Happy Birthday, but the key is hers
and in our lives, we celebrate anything we can

So why waste my time writing words, on a night like this-
poetry will not make a difference. Nothing but more tears on a page
and my eyes are tired and pink

Instead I take my mother's hand, while the others dance
and make a mess of this house, this little house of ours

The car rests on the cold cement. It is static and silent, but it shines
and we can see ourselves: Mother and Daughter. In the darkness, it glows

In this new quietude, such welcome stillness, I can almost hear the beating
of a pulse, steady and sure

It waits, but only for her. She sits behind the wheel to test the seats. They're soft and high
her bones, riddled with toxins, will no longer chink as she gets in
and there's a sun roof, so the wind will ripple through her hair as it grows back

Both hands grip the wheel as she hits the accelerator, and she laughs. Hers to keep
because it's new, and it's bright. And it's brilliant.

ELLE GRACE

Teacher

Cranebrook High School, NSW

JUDGING NOTES

This is another accomplished poem dealing with the idea of talisman, but in this case it is also a brand name, presumably referring to a recent car model, a Renault Talisman. This touching poem works interestingly with form which is mostly built around the couplet as a complete stanza. However, it wanders sometimes into three or four lines. Writers obviously have all kinds of reasons to work on deviations from a form, and I felt in this poem it may have something to do with the claim in the poem that 'poetry will not make a difference', that other things are at stake. However, the poem itself, as the object before us as readers, tells us that poetry does matter, that it is not a waste of time, despite what it tries to say. The writer wrote this and here it is, for us. It contains a succession of very grounded and clear descriptions of a particular family and the loving gift of this shining new vehicle to a mother. Despite the ordinary suburban setting there is something that shines in here, the idea of brilliance is signalled early and it ends the poem also. Nothing is so ordinary that it cannot shine, out of loving kindness. And, simply, of itself.

~ Jill Jones, Judge, Poetry Object 2016

HIGHLY COMMENDED
(TEACHER)



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