



2020 Bruce Dawe Poetry Winners

Winner

Life Cycles of our Trash and Treasure Market

by Alicia Sometimes

One Sunday—the morning light framed J.H. Lynch’s painting *Woodland Goddess* as if the sun was arching

long-boned to outline the curve of the tree. Mood in Giclée print. You picked the picture up—held it firmly

in one hand, scuffling for the cash before you’d even asked the price. You told me there was a plinth at home

just for this. The turquoise biscuit tins smelling of vanilla. Hyphens of cinnamon baked goods with the hint of chalk

(One person’s kitsch is another person’s dainty Pomeranian bracelet). Laid out on blankets: miniature cars, pocket chess

boards, strawberry-patch quilts, rusted old irons, aerial photographs and postcards with unknown stern faces

You took to each lane of the market as if it were a maze always seventeen steps ahead and a keen eye—you could

spot Giovanni Bragolin’s *The Crying Boy* from a mile away. My maroon parasol for shade but mostly so you could locate

me. This Drive-in bazaar with sheer crockery that would be delightful at any Jay Gatsby cocktail party. Burnished

tea pots we’d never use again. You knew how to scalpel through a box, a surgeon cut to get in and out so no-one



would notice. I would fumble with newsprint, magazines
from the 60s to use for collage and bruise my way through
the crowds building up after breakfast. That day I see clearly—
I had found the grenadine cardigan to go with the sleeveless
dress. You were clasping a copy of *New Scientist* as you paused
running your fingers along a cedar bench. Your eyes were murals
reflecting the kids on the slides and swings in front of you. But
I knew. I could see you had found something you would love
and take home. Your body stiffened, your arm stretching for
the handshake, the nod for me to come over quickly to share
the glee. This here, with your unfussed hair and giddy smile
the exact moment I knew my weekends would be second-hand



Runner-up

Billy Collins' Online Writing Course

by Louise Nicholas

“Write about something you did yesterday,” he says.

So I take it to a coffee shop – that day now passed –
and set it into middle distance. I stare at it, as we did
those 3-D Magic Eye books back in the day, and wait
while it lifts like a stain from the grey wash of days.

And yes, there we are: Jill and I at the Strand:

Jill picking the tomato skins from her gnocchi,
me pernicketing over an underdressed squid salad,

Two women well into their invisibility, glad
our daughters aren't here, their lips pursed, or
smiling their tetchy little smiles. Either way,
they're grateful not to be us. Nor will they ever
become us, they think. Let alone the woman



in the nylon crepe blouse and elastic-waisted skirt
who's just now parked her walker and, bending over
the cake display, forced the ghost of morning teas past
to overflow her waist band.

But that's today. Back in yesterday, Jill and I have split
the bill and are sitting in a movie theatre, in seats
with easy toilet access, tut-tutting over the endless ads
and hoping the crisp packet sitting two seats along
meets a sudden death in the first scene.



Runner-up

The Diamantina

by Kevin Smith

Though you cannot see or hear them
they walk the dunes through channel country.
They shift among the ghost gums
and walk tall with cloud and move
like wind through gidgee, bustard and broлга
stepping through the grasses beside them.
Something of them was left among you,
something fallen from the parched
pockets of time, that birds and mammals
built their nests with, something reforged
in fires they have lit. White
as you are, you cannot know this. The birds
you know by given names only. Footprints
in sand tell the way bilby's
have come and gone, and when. But you
are no kin to them, nor ever
will be. On your way back
across the dunes from the lake you find
a stone ground over millennia. You lift
it from the sand, heft it in



your palm and search the landscape for
an answer, then set it down again
and go on, emptied. Time announces
itself in dunes, in creek beds and mesas,
in stories you've never heard—stories
sunk into land by time too deep
to comprehend. When you sit
in your car in blinding heat a whirl
wind spirals to life. It lifts dried leaves
from the claypan and dies before
you notice it. At night, lying under
the stars, the blackness a well you drown in.



Short List

'A gladness for all times' - Gary Zadkovich

'Adagio of Departure' - Michele Saint-Yves

'Billy Collins' Online Writing Course: Lesson 4' - Louise Nicholas (Highly Commended)

'Chained Sonnets' - Damen O'Brien

'Dog Rocks' - Davide Angelo

'Life Cycles of our Trash and Treasure Market' - Alicia Sometimes (Winner)

'Marrying Freud' - Gayelene Carbis

'Memento Mori' - Angela Szczotko

'Tableau Vivant' - Rosie Bogumil

'The Diamantina' - Kevin Smith (Highly Commended)

'Three approaches to memory' - Ruby Hillsmith