

# BEST OF THE NET. TOPTWEETTUESDAY NOMINATIONS. 2023-2024

## Gwal

'Rent air, lament of raptors.  
Myth of Pi, radii pinned  
through feather to fulcrum'.

Under this buzzard's circling shadow  
the hare is frozen, mice are still,  
and my trowel hand falters.  
I pause, look down from heights:  
she spirals up, she twists, stoops,  
red hunger held. Red claws.

I wanted to preserve that moment:  
I built this wall round her curves,  
I drew her wings in this bend of stone,  
I trowelled her flight into these rocks,  
I harnessed this tunneller of clouds,  
I mortared her down to my world.

When the hare runs, and mice blur,  
my conceit will fall apart. Buzzards  
will turn again through sky:  
those captured thoughts set free.  
The bird cries, she circles high:  
I shake, new seer to sudden death.

*Miles Hovey*

## the gannets

the throat of the sky  
has opened, she is  
ruby-tongued and sliced  
with the ice-white  
of gannet-wing and  
no-one but those  
blue-eyed birds  
witness me  
and i – sky-drunk,  
earth-bound – am nothing  
more than a flicker, a wink  
upon the shore

what joy, to be so  
small

*Rebecca Hooper*

## August

Pink shouldered, red nosed August  
hands over ninety-nines and fresh dried donuts,  
slips you a fiver when your mum's not looking,  
smells of vanilla, cigarettes, and cider.

Patient August, sitting in the car,  
winding the windows down, she's sweating,  
cracking jokes and singing,  
hot thighs sticking to the plastic seat.

Generous August, gathering blackberries  
in a spare plastic bag, and eating them  
forgetfully, with fingers purple-tipped –  
laughing August, kiss-me-quick and squeeze-me-slow,  
finding the windbreak, cutting sandwiches –  
cheese or ham? – throwing in crisps and pop –

and under that creased skirt,  
the scratch of stubbled fields,  
a young fox creeping through the hedge, a hare  
running and leaping wild beneath  
a golden moon.

*Sarah Connor*

## Chai

She no longer thinks about it. Hot water  
and milk, 2:1. Steed pot, lighter, stove-top,  
flame.

Then the blood-saffron, just a strand.  
Seeds of fennel in wrinkled hand, cardamom  
crushed, fragrant. A bay leaf that smells  
of home. Not this one.

Yellow fingers sift tea leaves,  
fine and shrivelled  
like dried up dreams.

The sugar pot's lid is chipped.  
Like her husband's spirit: sliced  
by a line on the map.

Truth is a homeland stolen by ink  
a border you will not cross twice.  
A woman is born to endure, her mother said-  
little did she know.

Steam swirls: Lahore's rose-pink dawn,  
ghosts of sisters killed and lost.  
She pours and sieves  
a blood potion for those who survive.

'Chai' he booms from the living room  
she adds sugar and stirs-  
remembers her sisters and lets them go.

*Saraswati Nagpal*

## This Summer in the Cathedral of Bees

There is a green silence  
in the cathedral of bees:  
no monastic hum, no joyous treble,  
no benediction of hoverfly celebrants.

The flowers wave their censers,  
(garbed in new vestments,  
rich with brocade)  
filling the spaces between branchlet arches  
with incense and invitation.

Last year I revelled in polyphony and plainchant,  
marvelling at the drone and thrum  
of the winged hymnal. But today  
the long aisles are silent,  
and the choir stalls are empty.

The wind plays toccata and fugitive song  
beneath the vaulted ceiling,  
as a lone chorister, small and forlorn,  
hums quietly through the sacristy door  
and away.

*Yvonne Marjot*

## Las Posadas

We hoist the piñata star and process on Christmas Eve,  
remake the hymns of liberation, because even now,  
there is no room. The pregnant woman lumbers across borders  
to birth freedom, rejected by the powerful waving their arms:  
No room. Go home!  
There is no home but this body  
cradling the song that will not be silenced  
This night the milagro unfurls, swept into frosted streets  
on a slip of blood, the afterbirth a chrysalis

*Gayle Greenlea*