

## Dart

Someone seated a child on the wings of this dart  
and whoops he's off, he's sliding down the red  
smooth steel bumping his bony bottom on  
those cut words, trailing his fingers over  
their polished lamentations, gee whizz,  
there he goes, bumpety-bump all the  
way down to the tip that rests on  
a concrete plinth and points  
emphatically into the earth,  
only now he's an old man  
saying that was fun but a  
very short run, asking  
with surprise what  
are you indicating,  
Time, and must  
I get under  
this  
lid  
?

*After 'Bud' by Phillipa Wilson (2002)*

*a steel sculpture incorporating the poem 'Time Out' by Hone Tuwhare*

## Ginkgo

A concrete plaza beyond the glass, and one tree.  
Someone said it was a ginkgo. She fancies working at a desk

whose window opens to (are they not magnolia leaves?)  
a ginkgo. Endurance tree, survival tree, tree of absorbed millennia,

of scampering ghosts. Witness tree: flood, locusts, plague, cruelty,  
passion, maybe even love. Hiroshima-resistant. Immutable. Tree

of a thousand fluttering golden fans. Soft-shawled seeds, undressed  
to offer health or poison, whichever aphrodisiac.

\*

Huh! (she bites her sushi) It's lunchtime  
and she doubts this tree. Cold death's been

stalking through the summer suburbs: green plane tree shade,  
pohutukawa life-red joy – slashed.

She knows someone broken by a loss, broken  
as a vase might slip and smash from the shock of emptiness

at the moment the sweet bouquet is lifted, dead  
from its clasp. And she knows someone whose nape receives

the ice-whistle of the blade's pass, its *hoo-hoo* lick  
a little closer every day. Call a scythe a scythe.

\*

Yet (dipping chopstick in black soy, in neon-lime  
wasabi, and tip-tongue tasting) when dark comes

night in its silent stars  
touches the *it can't be so*

shimmers there, and is visible; leaf  
tells stories and is heard, that faint

true rustling. She remembers a belief in this.  
Insubstantial. Flickering.

\*

Okay then (chopsticks and plastic  
in bin, wiping fingers, sitting down

at keyboard): a ginkgo. Malodorous,  
nutty, prolific, strange. Sprouting from concrete

in impossible latitudes –

dream tree. Thrive.

## Ideas above my station

Cup of tea? I'll just turn on the Zip. Grab those two thick mugs, yep, those ones on hooks next to the timetable. Curling up a bit, that timetable. Let me stick another pin in it, there you go. Hang on a tick. Somewhere I've got – here they are – gingernut? Let me show you round.

It's a humble hut, T&G, nothing fancy but I'm fond of it: bare floors, pot-belly stove, tin roof. Love the posters. Ruapehu, Lake Matheson, the slim-buttocked gondoliers of Venice gliding under that bridge. Makes you dream, that poster. Might win Lotto. You never know. See this hollow in the ticket counter? Worn smooth – *tickets, coins, tickets, coins, tickets, coins* – back and forth through the glass tunnel, shunted by thumbs. That dim echo – can you hear it? Voices: *one way please. Or two return.*

But you don't know this place until it rains. At the first drop the hairs on my forearm prickle; at the second the nape of my neck zings; at the third, well, so it goes – each cell of me electrified and pattering, and the guttering, skewed as truth, pouring puddles on the platform. Bit cracked, this platform. Mind your step.

This is where I stand for greetings and farewells. Hello! Goodbye! The rattle of trains, the Doppler effect of visitors. Convergence illusion of the tracks: ladders laid flat on lonely country. Tilt your head back now. See those towering nimbo-cumulus castles, filigreed with thoughts, spiraling into the sky. There are emerald ballrooms up there, amber bedchambers, glass slippers, goblets, goblins, frogs, harps, dragons, unicorns, portals, pumpkins, witches, runes, tunes, wells, spells, magic wishes –

– what was that? It's totally over the top? Yes, I take your meaning. Come inside then. Gumboot? Milk and one? Sorry, the teaspoons are overhead with the silver. Stir it with your finger. Oops. Right down your front.

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Sue Wootton is the 2008 Robert Burns Fellow at the University of Otago. She is the author of two collections of poetry: *Magnetic South* (Steele Roberts 2008) and *Hourglass* (Steele Roberts 2005). Her work has been broadcast or published in various journals and magazines, including *Turbine* and *Best New Zealand Poems 2004*. 'Gingko' was written about the magnolia tree visible from the Burns' room window.