

LEAF FLURRY TRAM

On Dandenong Road the white tram
throws up the autumn leaves
to not-quite window height.

Those inside are unaware
of what beauty follows them—
leaves from the track dancing up

in the passing current of air
and staying suspended
until the eddy moves on

and fresh (dried) leaves take their turn
to levitate for this great wizard
the East Brighton tram

on its way to University
white as a bride
with a veil billowing

in the speed of passage
the tracks that lead to
a bliss not in front of us

but behind, a double
blessing, made more beautiful
because we don't see it.

BLOSSOMS, MARSHMALLOWS

Through the blue glass stoppered bottle
the pink and white marshmallows have
the look of blossoms under water.

The blue glass creates an illusion
of soft and yielding sweetness
carelessly piled up like little logs

cut into rounds. The real blossoms
have a similar compactness: they turn
inward in the triumph of being born.

THE CHIPPED LIMOGES PLATE

Because of the chip that mars its border
a midday sandwich can sit on it, a pear

or a slice of cheese, several cream crackers
and I can eat off it happily, aristocratically.

It is the advantage of chipping and flaws:
the beautiful damaged thing, adored

undoubtedly by someone who dropped it, swore,
took it to their room, placed on it

their fake pearls, their insignificant jewels,
hair clips, a chocolate wrapped in foil

and from it took, not just the border
in darkest gold-encrusted maroon

but the Fragonard romance at its heart
of male and female bringing flowers.

WHEN TO VISIT A CEMETERY

Fog is a good time. Showers that turn
to hailstones. Lightning if you can time it.
Thunder passing over the graves.

To see a funeral in extremis: the guard
of honour (some sporting achievement) under
ranks of dripping umbrellas or

the circle of mourners I once saw
in a great ring of linked arms
a bagpiper in the centre, piping

a dirge that escaped the palisade
of their bodies and sang across
all the stones, all the listening sleepers.

GOVERNESS SKY

A grey sky like a governess
in a calf-length coat
and a skirt longer than that.

A day when clichés might be spoken
with the kindliest of intentions
and passed to the listener with gloves

and no response needed. The grey sky
the grey governess with the grey gloves
doing all the talking.

ST FRANCES OF ROME,
PATRONESS OF CAR DRIVERS

Her guardian angel preceded her
casting dipped and full beams
of blue light before her feet.

A guardian angel as an usherette.

Did this angel ever turn and gaze at Frances?
Unnecessary. A life straight as a street
a field of grasses bowing to her
carrying a charity basket like a little car engine.

HOW TO RELEASE A BEE

Take a glass tumbler and hold it
against the window and over the body of
the bumblebee which is flailing and buzzing
with a drone of despair rising ever higher.

At first the wailing song continues close to
the glass but there is a chamber the bee
will soon, with a little shake, descend to.
Over the mouth of the tumbler quickly slip

a letter from the Inland Revenue Department
or something equally importunate and official
then, with your palm firmly pressed
over the letter, push open the window

with your free hand to release the bee
whose singing will instantly cease. Now
turn on the concert programme and
out soars the high C of Allegri's *Miserere*.

THE EYE IS BADLY DESIGNED

The closed eye is gone
under the lid like the moon
sliding under the sea.

Open it and it slides down
like someone sliding down
the balustrade of a stair.

It makes thinking odd
that the slide must come
before the look

and how can it be wise
to disappear inside your own head
leaving a blank screen?

The afternoon doze, the night's sleep,
write: I am no longer here
and vacate the scene.

Slip away and slide back,
how quickly we land
back at the scene, on our feet.