

Cemetery Gate, Yea

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Through the quiet years

a random peach tree marked the gate;

incongruous among the scrubby gums.

Did as expected through the year: proper pink show in spring,

then hard, fuzzy fruit, a boon for local birds.

Leaves gone in autumn as prescribed.

Inside the gate the sleepers dreamed away,

remembering greener days

or the safe confinement of their narrow streets.

Struck down by so much emptiness to fill,

too soon they took their rest in dry, bark-scattered ground.

Farewelled by loved ones who, resigned to loss,

profusely sweated in their solid serge.

Mouths that were filled with dusty grief

craved the first reviving sip of liquid consolation;

faces sought the faint, caressing breeze

So busy flirting with the brittle leaves.

Home to the verandah's blessed shade, to toil anew;

their children laboured on; the land was tamed.

Changes by the gate this year.

Construction took the peach tree down
and loud machines have breached the sacred calm.

The grazing roos have fled the nearby slopes;
Our dreamers must be restless in their sleep.

Blocks fill up with houses, low and long
Solid, firm on concrete, built for life.

But sometimes, as the north wind toys
with sparks in the rustling undergrowth,
it makes the teasing pinpricks glow.

Then, on the air, a message blows
reminding us we are here upon the terms
of this ancient, unforgiving land.