

# **Bread Poetry**

**the best of the rest...**

## **Waiting**

I pour milk from the brown jug  
into the bowl like the woman  
on the postcard you sent  
from Amsterdam  
crumble the bread to make  
your favourite pudding  
sweeten it with sugar  
stir in the fruit, grate the nutmeg  
sunlight on my hands  
your shadow pegged to my shoulder

*Angela Croft*

**Table**

I built it myself, from a door found  
in a skip, sanded down and polished until

I could see my face in the wood.  
I sit here, at one of the short ends, and lines

crawl towards me like long, brown worms,  
like the future read in a palm, the lines

parallel, each following its own path until  
the other end of the table. I've sat here

for as long as I can remember  
(but that doesn't mean much) trying

to think. There is nothing on my table.  
Anything I try to put on it: a bowl of fruit,

a loaf of bread, to make it look nicer –  
even me, sitting here, thinking –

is too much, and doesn't add anything to the fact  
of this table, here, that I built, myself.

*Annie Muir*

## **Fire Dancer**

Her embers dance in the forest  
Slowly creeping up the vines, she grows  
The red sparks spit along the forest floor  
Attracting creatures to watch her show.

“Roll up! Roll up!” the little light whispers,  
Hypnotising all to fall and dance along to her red  
hot song.  
Slowly she emerges above the luscious trees  
Brushing her fingers along the new green leaves.

All night long she dances  
Consuming everything in sight  
Non-stop destruction  
Until the murky morning light.

Gradually she begins to shrink and fade  
And maliciously exits the sooty stage  
And with a final crackle and hiss  
She blows her last smoky kiss.

*Beth Steiner-Richards 7Y*

## **The Dead Must Not Go Hungry**

We place food at grandfather's shrine.

Sunset jewels picked from the market;  
oranges, peaches, apples,  
candies made of rice flour and bean paste.

Baba pours tea.  
A tiny white cup filled with  
pale flecked gold.  
Baba offers up the cup,  
pours it on the ground,

and I take my turn:  
hold three burning incense sticks.  
Hold my father's father in my thoughts.  
Bow three times,  
Place the sticks in the altar

and amongst the rising steam  
and smoke strings  
he is here. I know it.

*Christy Ku*

**Bakery, 1986**

Shooed out of the house to buy a bloomer,  
I rush to the bakery on my undersized bike.

The queue curves round the shop  
like a croissant. I check my watch.  
Looking at the encrusted loaves,  
I can taste the dry crunch of poppy seeds.

The slanted mirror  
that doubles the stock of cottage loaves  
reflects my fifteen-year-old face,  
hopeful as buttered crumpets.

The scent of swelling dough  
settles my breath,  
a comfort here not felt at home  
that pulls me back like the retraction  
of kneading.

*Claire Williamson*

**haiku for the inanimate**

here's to the houseplants  
which turn us into mothers,  
opening shutters

to the weekly soaps  
which show the day has not scrubbed  
us of our feeling

to the dough, which turns  
even us, demolition  
experts, to sculptors

*Hannah Ledlie*

## **Crumb**

Bread is about time,  
And the way time moves  
From evening to morning  
From the dough to the crumb  
Left on your dark shirt  
Like a star in the sky fading  
Morning to evening,  
Evening to dawn.

*Ian McMillan*



## **How To Belong**

At Jewish youth club we all wore  
Rock Against Racism badges  
and danced to *Glad To Be Gay* -  
girls in one ring, boys in another.

They ate ham sandwiches when  
their parents weren't looking yet  
scorned me for Smokey Bacon crisps  
and going to school on Yom Kippur.

The Evangelicals lured us into their  
church hall with ping pong then tried  
to keep us with singing and prayers  
and Jesus. They wanted all of us.

*Jill Abram*

### **A Daisy Chain of Bakers**

The kitchen infused with the smell of warm bread  
Nana takes a loaf from the oven  
Wearing her mother's oven gloves  
The ones she embroidered as a child  
Daisy chains on faded blue cloth  
Her mother's hands and now her own  
Inside an object singed with memories  
Of one who taught, the other who watched and  
Listened to stories kneaded in dough  
The history of family baked in loaves  
Wholemeal, Bloomer, Sourdough  
Her hands and now my own  
The inheritor of methods and oven gloves  
Bringing the ingredients of family together  
With a Dark Rye recipe of my own

*Julie Wilson-Bokowiec*

### **Daily Bread**

My father never taught us to pray but I thought  
there was something like ritual in this:

the way he held a mass of bread and split  
it open, cutting into the white as morning

slid to afternoon. There are only so many ways  
to eat out of the hollows of yourself, he'd say:

the tenderness of bread between your palms,  
the passing of it from hand to mouth.

Like father to child. Like animal.  
I used to think that his loaves were bodies

not unlike glass –  
made smooth with heat, ready to be undone

again to nothingness. As if all that had made  
them would disappear, that it would forget

his movements from just hours before:  
kneading dough with the same grace and anger

of driving a car, the wind-curve of his hand,  
steering. Whilst he baked, I thought about

all that flour and water, the darkness outside  
flowing into itself, the smell of baking bread.

The waist-high grass and the something  
inside of us, waiting to be fed.

*Lucy Thynne*

### **Weekend in Cornwall**

Ours was the mud road,  
The dark stones, the wet dog;  
Ours was the solitude,  
Diluted air and cow-breath fog;  
Ours, too, the sea pinks, the seal's head,  
The cold slate sea; ours were the deep lanes,  
The steep coves and narrow lees.  
Ours was the sinking sun and  
The lobster creel on the empty shore;  
Ours was the cuttlefish and  
The cottage with the yellow door.  
Ours was the old church,  
The barrel vault of ancient oak;  
Ours the carved columns and  
The tombstone like an artichoke.  
Ours was the little bridge,  
The foaming rill and calming pools,  
Ours the contemplation of the waves  
That turned the humble stones to jewels.  
Ours was the gulls' call,  
The sparrow hawk set in air,  
The hours spent with book in hand,  
The aga and the rocking chair.

*Macaque*

## **This Is Not A Loaf Of Bread**

This is not a loaf of bread  
This is daily sanctuary  
This is breakfast in bed  
Or beans on toast for tea.

This is not a loaf of bread  
This is shared community  
This is a soup-dipped crust  
Or a picnic lunch for three.

This is not a loaf of bread  
This is tasty alchemy  
This is a gravy soaker-upper  
Or a gourmet chip butty.

This is the not a loaf of bread  
This is a crafted recipe  
Of sun and rain and earth  
And oven-baked poetry.

*Polly Hall*

### **Givers this day**

You don't have to take two slices and put crisps or a fried egg between them, but you could do.

You don't have to cut a slice and spread it thick with butter and jam, but you could do.

You don't have to keep a couple of slices to toast later, but you could do.

You don't have to think about people who don't have daily bread, but you could do.

You don't have to give a slice to a friend or a neighbour, but you could do.

You don't have to give the cost of a loaf to someone else, but you could do.

You don't have to be givers this day, but you could be.

Yes, you could.

You really could.

*Rob Walton*

### **Serving suggestions**

To help heal a heart that's hurt, carve into  
doorstoppers and serve with Dad's Every  
Vegetable Soup,

Or, on wet dog days, during rainy holidays,  
slather two slices with butter and

butty them together

with Nan's round cut lard fried chips, squished in-  
between.

Keep stale crusts for Mum's Brum Butter  
Pudding sweet, custardy and filling.

Always console with toast.

Share generously

To ease loneliness or enmity,

Eat wolfishly and messily.

Make crumbs for the birds.

*Tracey Hammett*