

Sandra Burr

A Marriage

The stone is gone, unseated by the grit and muck of horses
Twenty years and then unnoticed for a day,
Perhaps for three

Later, the pigeon of the pair became embedded
Like a halter left too long, it dug into the flesh behind my swollen knuckle
that ached and ached from years of scrubbing bins and laying perfect sawdust beds
on cold winter mornings bathed in clouds of horses' breath
Dismembered, it lies forgotten in the bottom of a drawer
with other useless broken bibs and bobs of memories
that can't be thrown away

Now that finger wears an unjoined silver band
Two perfect flying hooves galloping in opposite directions.
It's an easy fit with open ends that sometimes snag a strand of golden mane
To hold me fast again

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Collecting Hay on Anzac Day

A huddle of plastic chairs leans higgledy piggledy between council chambers and the cairn commemorating Gunning's fallen.
The town's policeman steps out and halts the traffic:—two utes, one horse float filled with bales of hay and, a rangy dog yipping at the grey, damp day.

The watchers on the corner look left as the bagpiper swings into view leading the parade:—a khaki clad woman, eyes fierce with pride, shirt tucked in over hips that rise like dough, holding a limp flag stiff-armed across her chest.

A cluster of solemn children follow knees pumping, flap hats askew, grandfather's medals clanking on their breasts.

And last, five elderly gentlemen marching out of time, warm cardigans peeping through the gaps of best brown suits whose buttons haven't met their holes in many years, their large knuckled farmer's fingers pressed trembling to their hearts.

A rat-a-tat of clapping as they negotiate the gutter all untidy hesitations, small missteps, and little stumbles.

Plastic scrapes across broken paving and they settle in their seats, only to rise again as the policeman waves us through and the Last Post sounds.

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Spring

Overnight the apple bloomed
fists of white and flossy pink
along the boughs
and my winter feet wore sandals.
Clover stalks stand tall as fields of wheat
on roadside verges
waving like hitchhikers in the wind.
Safe behind their fences bands of mares
tug blissfully at the stems and heads of clover
fuelling hormones, feeding urges
that unfurl like lilies seeking light.
Their bodies sleek and fat and ripe as plums
are fit to burst their shiny skins.
Wispy beards still cling to their throats and bellies
where the follicles wait and wait.
Soon they will back up to perplexed geldings
and beg, hopelessly, with soft eyes
and clacking mouths
for babies.

Dr Sandra Burr was an honorary academic at the University of Canberra where she taught creative writing, and creative/cultural research. She was on the editorial board of the journal *Axon: Creative Explorations* and Project Manager for the Australian government Office of Learning and Teaching-funded *Examination of Doctoral Degrees in Creative Arts: process, practice and standards*. The holder of a PhD in creative writing, Sandra was a member of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research at the University of Canberra, and managed the ARC-funded project *Understanding Creative Excellence: A Case Study in Poetry*. She was also a longstanding member of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs and had been a key part of the committee organising two of their annual conferences. Her research interests focused on the cross-disciplinary field of human-animal relations.