

### Everyone hates Asta

At recess, when all the kids  
act tough around the playground  
pushing, playing tetherball  
and four square and tag  
Asta leans against the wall and watches

Then the bell rings  
and everyone runs  
to the classroom, giggling  
Asta comes in last and sits on a tack  
yelps, I'm glad it wasn't me

When Asta makes a mistake at the board  
and the teacher yells, and when Asta  
spills her milk or drops her lunch  
and when Asta cries  
we all laugh and chant:  
Asta's got the cooties!  
Asta's got the cooties!  
and we chase her home

Finally when Asta talks back  
and tells everyone she hates them  
and she swears at me and hits Susan back  
pushes sandy in the mud, and when the girls  
start to cry

and everyone yells FIGHT!!  
and Asta starts to run and  
Jimmy throws a stone and it hits  
her in the eye and she starts to cry  
and it bleeds, the bell rings  
and everyone points at Jimmy  
and the lunch teacher is yelling  
and the ambulance comes  
and when the principle asks WHY?  
nobody knows.

And when Asta's seat is empty  
and she's long forgotten  
everyone hates me

Paul O'Donnell



### JERUSALEM

the stars  
in the blue black sky  
they blur  
around the stars  
of Orion's belt

the grave  
stones in  
the military  
cemetery



## a sesqui-monthly review

### child

in first yellow rainboots  
standing ankle deep  
looking for fish

on flooded back lawns

### gallant

### The Gift

When Nate was born, he come out wid' a  
second skin over his face like a veil. Nate  
mother don' want to hear nothin' 'bout de  
power. "He can't have no power because it ain't  
have no such thing," she say.

But Nate in de playpen an' he sittin' an' smilin'  
up at nothin'. He reachin' up an' strokin' air.  
His mother turn de other way. "I'm a modern  
woman, she say, dey ain't have no room for  
spirits in de modern world."

When Nate was seven he bring home a spirit  
for dinner. He pack de plate in front de empty  
chair an' his mother sit an' watch de food dis-  
appearin'. When de visitor leave Nate mother  
ain't say nothin'. What you could say to visitors  
you can't see?

Nate gone on a hike in de rain forest when he  
reach ten. His friends come back widout him.  
Two days de neighbours huntin' for de boy. De  
third day she find him in his bed when she  
wake up. "I went lookin' for Papa Bois but I  
ain't see him." That was when Nate discover  
how leather feel to skin.

After that Nate mother take even less kindly to  
spirits. Every time he start to talk 'bout what  
he could see, she hummin' "Rock of Ages".  
Nate learn to keep his mouth shut.

But on nights when de weather good he's wait  
till midnight. Then he's steal out to de front  
steps an' sit an' watch douen rompin' in his  
yard. Dey tossin' dey big straw hats in de air  
an' dey laughin' hard. Dey grin at Nate but dey  
don' talk to him. "Douen ain't playin' dey lucky,  
nuh," Nate say.

Micheline Adams

### AB

a B  
sideways squished heart  
child's valentine  
or when you  
can't find the scissors

B, a  
damaged love shape  
always second best  
two chambered  
without a pulse  
muscle of (the)  
Broken and Blue

### April Bulmer



### children in the yard

children were sleeping  
when I went past,  
sleeping in the yard  
hands across their stomachs  
gently feeling their breathing  
hardly touching the air

### C. Steadman

and when you have  
found her  
say the acolyte needs her  
to erect the monastery for his  
ministry

and you will find her tethered  
with the wool of innocence  
to the abandoned tree  
the seeds of which feed the spirit

and you shall take her by the fingers of faith  
walk the alley of life  
through the woods of fast forests  
into the secret grove  
where i am cocooned  
a tuft of grass waiting for her, lamb  
to graze

waiting to enter  
the monastery  
of my ministry

esiri dafiewhare

### from: Irene and the good life

Now that she is dying  
Irene tells me of her good life  
I've had a good life, a long life  
I'm ready to die  
she says

Irene and I work together  
she tells me these stories  
at break time, at lunch time  
stories of her sons  
four strong sons with hereditary  
disorders, taking over slowly, growing  
but she sees them strong  
and taught them the good life  
she says

Irene married young  
a long time ago, a man  
no ordinary man, a man with dreams  
yes dreams and disorders  
he exploded in her face  
twenty years later  
no less a punch in the face  
she says

Irene with no money  
and four baby boys struck out  
and built a house and worked  
seven days, seven days seven nights  
and worked for her boys  
baked bread late at night  
at night the rest of her life  
this is life? yes  
she says

And through time, lots of time  
the boys all passed school  
with socks on their hands  
to make it through winter  
so poor, charity at Christmas  
eating bread and tinned fruit  
they thanked God, praised God  
for their lives, long and good  
she says

Irene's now old, well fifty  
yes old and the sons are mechanics  
and two are married but  
they all live at home  
extended in the basement  
and I visit Sundays after working  
with Irene, she drinks a beer  
we both play cribbage  
she shows me the garden  
and tells me she likes this  
growing things, watching life  
and time, all the time, happy  
she says