

scratched CDs and Old tapes: Scarecrow" (p.16), with "Sigur Rós floating over lettuce, / Puccini lifting up under apple shadow. / Yesterday, she had Led Zeppelin hitting / the westerlies behind the calabrese, achieving / the exit of crows."

This collection, dedicated to Flint's family, is at once close to home whilst embodying a wisdom and understanding of the world, lived in all its complexity. In a series dedicated to her grand-daughter, Nancy Rose (pp.24-26), the deep knowledge of what it is to thrive and survive as a female is translated into "Circus Skills for Young Girls" with "How to tear fishnet, use silver, / achieve muscles like hawsers under silk / green and fine as the turn of the tide" and in "All the horses are gifts" the wishes for her to "... enter the place of risk and trusting / all that is Other: horses and trees, the star-wheel / and the glittering sea – to learn the great universe / of your own heart's bright compass", and my favourite lines in the book, contained in "Going with the Magician" are:

*Remember your own magic  
is sacred sun, true ore and if he pulls down*

*the black velvet sky to wrap you,  
places the Pearl of the Crown in your hair*

*with soft fingertips – so you kiss –  
and become part of the wild atoms*

*of the world and you two are the universe –  
then you will remember nothing that I have said*

*it is the beginning of the story  
that unlocks time. Changes everything.*

This sense of transcendence and being transcended is continued as the collection closes with poems around health and the life-and-death knife-edge of working as writer-in-residence in a hospital. In "Elements of Healing: Angel with glittering hands" (p.36), Flint writes: "They are always coming and we never know them, / the great dark angels with wings as heavy / and cold as winter midnight studded with stars, / with their breastplates of moon." Her perfectly balanced sonnet, "In my surgeon's hands" (p.44) explores an understanding between doctor and patient, encompassing the world that connects them: "his own

heart answers mine with tenderness, / he feels the weight of love in my heart's hold: *the morning fox, my daughter's gentleness, your music lying late on frost and cold –*"

Readers of these poems will be rewarded with Flint's love for connection with, and understanding of, all things, as in the final poem, "When there is a word for joy" (p.51): "but whatever their word is, we understand it / as our own desire and hope, and we want / its diamond shining reflected in our own eyes". You too will find yourself and all that you treasure about the world's miraculous beauty, reflected in *A Prism for the Sun*.

Claire Williamson

**Anthony Wilson (ed.), *Lifesaving Poems*, Hexham: Bloodaxe, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78037-157-3, £12, 256pp, paperback.**

This is a wonderful book of enthusiasms, intimacies and epiphanies and an unusual merging of a traditional poetry anthology with a compilation of blog posts. Permeating the whole text is the personality of its compiler, Anthony Wilson.

The book opens with an epigraph from Bart Simpson, "C'mon people, this poetry ain't gonna appreciate itself." "Poetry appreciation" carries echoes of the classroom and it's probably no coincidence that Anthony Wilson is a Senior Lecturer at Exeter University's School of Education, as well as an acclaimed poet and blogger. The word "appreciation" is closely linked to valuing, to assessing worth and quality, something that is not always fashionable but also has the meaning of increasing awareness of something and feeling grateful for it. This book is infused with gratitude, not just for the individual poems but for the memories they invoke.

Along with thousands of others, I've followed Anthony Wilson's blog from time to time. Blog posts are to a greater or lesser degree "of the moment" but his are not ephemeral. They are, rather, mini-essays carefully crafted and designed to be re-read, sometimes re-posted. Blog-to-book has been around as a form for many years but what makes this one different is its merging with a

poetry anthology. The poems are those that moved Anthony Wilson enough on first reading that he copied them into a notebook and blogged on why he liked them. The introduction describes how his first significant encounter with a poem at the age of 13 was with John Logan's "The Picnic", a long single stanza poem that seemed to be talking to him, but artfully. He writes that he still thinks "of reading poems as like falling in love" and this is reflected in the reverence and affection with which he introduces each poem.

The actual selection is predictably personal and eclectic. There are poems by the familiar big names listed on the cover but one of the pleasures of this book is the inclusion of work by less well-known poets, published by small presses, many of them personal friends of Anthony Wilson and members of his own writing group. For anyone engaged in working with poems with groups, this is a treasure trove with unexpected gems.

There's also a rather voyeuristic pleasure to be had from the details of Anthony Wilson's life as a teacher, poet, father and friend. The reader is invited into his world of Arvon courses, writing groups, attendance at private views and weddings, visits to the Poetry Society, workshops at festivals, "the game of submitting my work to magazines" – with each encounter linked to a specific poem. There's a moving account of being at Lumb Bank when the death of Ted Hughes was announced and several blogs relating poems to Anthony Wilson's experiences as a cancer patient.

The word "Lifesaving" in the book's title may seem like hyperbole but my own practice in biblio-poetry therapy often reminds me how encountering a poem, or, sometimes, a single line in a poem, can, at the right time, provide a lifeline, pun intended. Occasionally, Anthony Wilson's enthusiasm bar is lifted unfeasibly high, for example in statements such as, "To say I loved this poem immediately would be an understatement" but the warmth that pervades the book means such comments evoke smiles rather than irritation. There's a rapture here at times which puts me in mind of the practice of *Lectio Divina*, even though, apart from one psalm, the poems chosen are mostly secular and concerned with the material world.

It's a given, or should be, that readers of *Writing in Education* are convinced of the power of literature to

uplift but if we should ever need reminding, this is the book that will do so.

*Victoria Field*

#### About the reviewers

**Victoria Field** is a writer and poetry therapist based in Canterbury. She offers training in poetry therapy via The Poetry Practice. Her most recent collection, *The Lost Boys* (Waterloo Press, 2013) won the Holyer an Gof award for Poetry and Drama.

**Dr Ellie Piddington** is a Creative Writing Lecturer in Higher Education.

**Claire Williamson** lives in Bristol and writes poetry and prose. She facilitates writing in a wide range of health and social care settings, specializing in themes of recovery and transformation. She is Programme Leader for Metanoia Institute's MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes course and works as a mentor, facilitator and host within the UK writing community. She has published two narrative poetry collections, *Ride On* (2005) and *The Soulwater Pool* (2008). She is working on a novel entitled *The Scarab Bookshop*.