from **Ada's Silent Word** by **Linda McDonald**

5. In Trouble Again

'Deaf children who were taken to church by their parents said they had little idea, before education, of the purpose of this assembly.' Snap-Shots p 59

In church Ada claps while
Everyone prays.
Mam frowns, shaking her head.
Ada looks down, confused.

Praying hands are quiet hands.

Back home Mam shows Ada how.
Ada claps hard, tingling her skin.
Mam sighs and gives up.
Ada hides under the table,
Out of the way.

Her sisters are swinging their legs
While Mam's legs stay still,
Encased in her thick woollen stockings.
Dad's Sunday trousers
Cover his boots.

Ada's fingers feel the smooth shine
Dad gave them last night,
Ready for church.
She traces the eyelets,
Follows the laces, tugs at the knot.

Dad's hand clamps her head.

In a flash, she's under his arm,
Kicking her legs as
He takes her upstairs,
Dropping her onto the bed.

Ada feels the slam of the door.

Alone and in trouble again.

Linda McDonald, is a novelist and poet. Her novel *The Lavender Pool* won the Yeovil Literary 1st Prize 2005. Her poem, *Watching* was commended by Raymond Antrobus, Magma 2024. *Ada's Silent World* charts her born-deaf grandmother's life 1899-1985.

from **Anglia File** by **Flora Elmi Beagley**

Sutton Hoo

All our lives we have swam the flat-land's wæter
east-west; swuster, swuster, bróþor, bróþor.
We are four fisc from guð
knows where says mum and I stroke the bones
that we share. Two of us have the same thigh,
the other two the same hair. I do not know if they brought us
here by boat and I do not know if I care. A great cyning
is buried here. I fear I think things small
because my hands can get to them; a rib cage
imprint and a gilded lyre.

I turn my face for the photo
and I know that we can smell
each other's scalps. With love,
I think of how smells die. Cyning,
did you share a scalp
with your sibling, did you share
a thigh?

swuster, swuster, bróþor, bróþor

Flora Elmi Beagley's work explores intimate histories, Anglo-Finnish heritage and interwoven linguistics. She won the Queen Mary Wasafiri New Writing Prize for poetry, has been shortlisted for the London Magazine Poetry Prize and longlisted for the National Poetry Society competition.

from **Call Her the Locksmiths' Daughter** by **Lydia Harris**

Leah in the glass forest

hides in that spider's nest
but I can see her flowered apron

she stumbles with the jar of water
spools one unbroken thread behind her

her body teaches the whole
of what the spider teaches

she spins a web of starlings
on the level ground

opens the gate of the Lord
passes among thorns

in haste bees dart from foxglove
to hawthorn back and forth beside her

her own flesh is spun
she eases seven pins into her hair

her opal ring weeps on her finger
I'm learning that everything is present

the sunlight of then and now
the loaf maybe butter wrapped in paper

I run I run is all I know
through the glass forest

the filament spun
from her body to mine

Lydia Harris lives in the Orkney island of Westray where she hosts Westray Writers and Y(oung) Writers round the table in her living room. Her first collection *Objects for Private Devotion* published by Pindrop in 2023, was longlisted for the Highland Book Prize.

from **Elder** by **Linda France**

Bindweed etc.
Convolvulus arvensis

Granny-jumps-out-of-bed and she's a glory
in the morning, a wild lily – see how
her hair stands on its head. She's had enough
of snake's meat and withywind – other things
on her mind – sylvatica, calystegia…

The day begins, as it must, convoluted,
as it will go on. Granny knows nothing
is simple. Robin-run-the-hedge with his pink
ticking against time, Christ's blood dried on his chest,
spills the devil's guts. That's the way this is
going – bellbine, bethwine – playing delicate,
living tough.
Granny-jumps-back-in-bed,
shuts the door on the lot of them – Jehovah
and his Witnesses, POTUS, Amazon.

She has stems to knit, stitches to twist, miles
of hedgerow to festoon with her green hearts,
her Schiaparelli trumpets, the whole earth
to hand down safe before the day gets old.

Linda France, FRSL, has published ten collections of poetry – the latest include *Startling* (Faber & New Writing North 2022) and Laurel Prize-winning *The Knucklebone Floor* (Smokestack 2022). Her poem *Bernard and Cerinthe* won the 2013 National Poetry Competition.

from **I wove my love an overcoat** by **Peter Julian Taylor**

Thirty-three names for nature

Earthgift, sunblessing, something-in-the-park,
of birth and death, hedge-dressing, Edenporn,
your Adam's apple, fur and feather, lark
ascending, scatter-good-seed, weather-worn,

treetalk, the rose of promise, meadowspread,
antithesis-of-prose, the pollenbomb,
a sort of slaughterhouse, the thunderhead,
a sense of season, soil-song, a robin from

the afterlife. Leafmonger, blossom-snatcher,
trillion-year-old mother with a further
billion children due, the infidel,

wild west, a beetlefest, the nest-egg hatcher,
seed-bank benefactor, faunafather,
soul recycler, hymn to green, Immanuel.

Peter Julian Taylor lives in Cheshire. His poems have appeared in *PN Review*, *The Rialto*, *MODRON*, *Cambridge Poetry*, *Lucent Dreaming,* and various anthologies. Long/shortlistings: Ginkgo/AONB 'Best Poem of UK Landscape', Rialto/RSPB 'Nature and Place' Prize, and Wales Poetry Award (twice).

from **Songs of Other Names** by **Victoria Spires**

The Lambs-in-Flight

"… now she was avenging, not, as a queen of glorious ancestry, her ravished realm and power, but, as a woman of the people, her liberty lost, her body tortured by the lash, the tarnished honour of her daughters."
The Revolt of Boudica (Tacitus, Annals)

from out of the folds of her
from out of the folds of her dress
from out of the folds of her dress she produced the creature
from out of the folds of her dress she produced the creature she kept tucked there
from out of the folds of her dress she produced the creature she kept tucked there; its warm cunny-scent
from out of the folds of her dress she produced the creature she kept tucked there; its warm cunny-scent familiar as her own breath
from out of the folds of her dress she produced the creature she kept tucked there; its warm cunny-scent familiar as her own breath, her cunning
from out of the folds of her dress she produced the creature she kept tucked there; its warm cunny-scent familiar as her own breath, her cunning coursed as an augury
from out of the folds of her dress she produced the creature she kept tucked there; its warm cunny-scent familiar as her own breath, her cunning coursed as an augury; it scarcely mattered whether to victory or death

Victoria Spires is the author of *Soi-même* (Salo Press) and *Rube Goldberg Machine* (Shadow and Sax). She has been widely published – recently in *Wet Grain*, *Slow Burn Poetry* and *Finished Creatures*. In 2025 she won the Alpine Fellowship Poetry Prize.

from **The Architect's Daughter** by **Alison Tan**

Not even God could

find peace in London, not with His priests processing
like rows of white asparagus from the church
on Farm Street. At each corner I was assaulted
by roses, beer-soaked grass, men with lowered heads
and plastic cups outside cinemas from 1958,
when Sarah Vaughan cried out from a door in Soho
you can say that you're leading me on - but it's just
what I want you to do—and the banshees screeched
on the old Northern line tracks from Barnet
to Battersea with London's endless demands, black cabs
and black figs, and underneath its profane streets
its lost rivers ran like black ribbons
in a girl's hair, the Tyburn, the Fleet, keeping in flow
its lifeless salaries, pungent rents, and London
stamped its foot and shook me like a kitten; told me
to eat, fed me spilt pints of Guinness off the brilliant
mirrors of Hackney dancefloors, crammed with girls
named Isobel and boys named Harry, all turning
to kiss me, all too much at once, London, and I fled
over roads of damp smoke till London was seeping,
undeniable, cut with towers of icebergs and beetle wings,
where fathers in dark suits gazed at constellations
of schoolgirls arrowing over the Millennium Bridge
into the night sky of London, soiled with silver
Mary Janes, salads, sleeping bags, and now just go,
like a god, to the small vesper of my girlhood,
and tell her of London. O again.

Alison Clara Tan's poetry appears in *fourteen poems*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Under the Radar* and *Gutter Magazine*. She has been placed in the 2026 Alpine Fellowship Poetry Prize, and been shortlisted for the Wasafiri New Writing Prize and the Bridport Prize. She is a Barbican Young Poet and a London Library Emerging Writer.

from **The Bride's Deceit and Other Mistranslations** by **Mary-Jane Holmes**

Girdle Song

My grandmother votary of elastic diaphragm control

loved Permalift and Playtex
the lustre of steel spiralled rayon, feathered whalebone

and all their cinched secrets:

the talon-slide fasteners the firming panels both pelvic and pectoral,

the perforated gusset

She moved with such ease with her whittled waist, extended mid-riff

so sleek under her empire-waisted dress

that I too believed in nylon marquisette and ruched batiste

the body as strictured hourglass

that might transfigure me from scrawny pubescence

to glossy-ad elegance

until that burnished afternoon a silk-thread from death when she relinquished

the gardenia-pink frame

of her oldest corselette all taffeta ribbon, for a shapeless cotton-twill shift

with its loose ties of Velcro tape

that failed to hide the brocade of scars, diastasis recti, the bound grist

of a misplaced shame

To turn one's girdle: *find an outlet for your anger*

Mary-Jane Holmes is a poet, translator and editor, and former winner of the Bridport Poetry Prize. Among its explorations of mistranslation, voice and desire, this pamphlet includes six poems reimagining the medieval Iberian *muwashshaḥ* as a newly created form: The Girdle Song.

from **Twice Islanded** by **Claire Cox**

Balcony

Hung thing, a building's toehold, playpen
for pleasure. Only the very rich have gardens.
But in our concrete box we can relax,
govern gravity and warm air.

I learn with my toddler's tongue
rolling hot gloss and sharp, vitrified tiles.
I learn sea salt. I learn constraint and ashtrays.
I side-eye other high-rises, scrubland, shacks.

Wind sheers between its tall slits.
We commandeer the only horizontal
in our vertical life, treading over sampans
and clouds to a far-off sunrise.

The hillside disallows us, its horseshoe graves,
ancestral terraces. But space is empress
and a police baton. The flower factories ignite.
Grown-ups talk, it sounds like communism

beyond the rooftops. My red water balloon
bursts on the steps below, our linnet sings
in her bamboo cage, suspended. It's a state
of dependency. From it, I see myself waving.

Claire Cox completed a practice-based PhD at Royal Holloway on poetry and disaster. She's co-founder of **ignition**press, winner of the 2020 Wigtown Alastair Reid Pamphlet Prize, and included in *Primers: Volume Five* (Nine Arches Press).

from **We are Daughters** by **Sheena Hussain**

Kick it Out

"I am the child of immigrants; illegal immigration is creating division across our country. It's a broken system and we have a genuine problem to fix it. My job is to find a proper solution that can unite a divided country." (Shabana Mahmood, Nov 2025)

If I could, I'd kick it owt meself
Friggin 'eck machine, twice in one-week, spiral holder—motor malfunction

If I could, I'd kick it owt meself
Iz nose poppy red pinned against winder of me eyes, eying Skittles, M&M's

If I could, I'd kick it owt meself
Go on lil fella do what they do at Central Pier Arcade, kick brass out

If I could, I'd kick it owt meself
He's five, his legal rep said so. Ey up Mother, please dunt abort him…

If I could, I'd kick It owt meself
Aye, it's fructose, E nombers, still a lil treat for lil Daryan, say iz name

If I could, I'd kick it owt meself
Look at 'em; suits, salaries, smart sentences, sheking hands for Chrissake

If I could, I'd kick it owt meself
But ah'm broken, when will somebody fix this son-of-a gun vending machine?

Sheena Hussain is a former lawyer-turned poet from Bradford. Her recent work has appeared in *Covert Literary Magazine* and soon to appear in *Gutter*. She has been shortlisted twice for the Creative Future Awards and is a New Northern Poet.