



The T S Eliot Prize 2009

Reading Groups: *Over*

Jane Draycott was born in 1954 and studied at King's College London and Bristol University. Her previous collections include *Prince Rupert's Drop* (1999; shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Collection) and *The Night Tree* (2004), both Poetry Book Society Recommendations. In 2002 she won the Keats-Shelley Poetry Prize. She was chosen as one of the Poetry Book Society's Next Generation Poets in 2004. Draycott has worked as a teacher in London, Tanzania and Strasbourg, a resident writer at Henley's River and Rowing Museum and a Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Oxford Brookes University. She now lives and works in Oxfordshire. *Over* is published by Carcanet.



Pass

for Holly

We calculate you're two corners away by now,
first time alone in the car, navigating through
the twelve big houses at the edge of town,
the fallow field where once in a blue moon
a spring appears like a flying fish at sea.
The winter night's as clear as cooling glass
but you accelerate away from us too fast
to see the stars, the arrows on the ground.

Your music steers you on a sail of sound,
you are on fire. Your hands are Mercury,
your heart and eyes the Sun. You plough
the top road like a submarine – we try in vain
to visualise your course, the unlit shipping lanes,
the shoals of stars. We cannot see you now.

Zulu

One thing my father never did
was slip out under the mimosa trees
at dawn to where the blacksmith
in the last patches of night was already
at work on the *iklwa* blade, beautiful
as a new leaf, a young fish hurtling,
named for the sound it would make
in and out of the body – *iklwa*.
Nor as a boy single-handedly kill
a leopard down from the plump hills –
mountain saffron, iron-wood, assegai –
nor to his clan (named for the heavens
or sky) bring great victory or pride
though working late on summer evenings
amongst the trees of our small orchard
he did make us a playground out of oak
and ropes and hammering well beyond dark,
a nail for every port he'd ever sailed to,
and then come in and play for hours
on our old Broadwood, his fingers
truly a river in spate around the house
and out into the desert of our street,
named for the small hill on which we lived.

Technique

A house is a good large object to visualise
'Seeing With the Mind's Eye', Samuels & Samuels

Walk slowly round it, then picture yourself
in one of the rooms. Now move through
the rest of the house as if you were a camera.
The kitchen's a back street in a labyrinth
of slums, impossibly hot, where the heroine's
hopelessly lost but daren't stop searching
though her kids both sense something's
terribly wrong. In the back room a woman
sits on the stoop with her head on her knees
since a tornado's wrecked every inch
of the cabin she had held together for years.
Now visualise the hallway (something like
a Hitchcock, one jacket on the coat-stand,
the key swinging in the door as if possessed),
then up to the landing where two children, girls,
are struggling in a plunging torrent to save the dog
and precious childhood toys caught in the flood.
Finally go back to the room you first visualised,
the one with the mirror, then look outside
at the men circling the house, the one just leaving.

Buy Jane Draycott's *Over* from the Poetry Book Society's online bookshop:
www.poetrybookshoponline.com.

Call the PBS on 020 7833 9247 for details of membership or to request a copy of our quarterly poetry review, the *Bulletin*, or visit our website www.poetrybooks.co.uk.