**Visitors**

The poet comes with long grey hair,

a used and much-loved book as a gift.

She comes with rain, the earth so dry,

the heat and smells of southern Italy.

She knows all about broken bones,

her husband had a way with falling

and she herself fell once, tripped into

the dark room they kept their wine in

and broke her nose. So much blood,

but little else to be concerned about –

the nose healed by itself, she said.

Then the sculptor comes with thin

chocolate biscuits, her long fingers

dark from welding in the foundry –

clutch of bronze tern eggs, dimpled,

and patinated for the grass at Baltray,

cast iron starfish to cartwheel playfully

over the harbour wall at Port Oriel.

We eat chickpeas, hunks of rough bread,

our stories scattering like breadcrumbs.

How love can find a new path into life,

the way an old house can be renewed,

its heart a stove, abundant rising heat,

high walls all around to keep you safe

and its gate left open always for friends.