Skein

I came to university
from a childhood in the country.
For months, of an evening
the distant, drunken laughter
sounded like skeins of geese
so I’d look up into the sky
and see nothing.

Ten years later, I’m still stuck
in this town. Often there is
drunken laughter, but when I
hear it and look, the people
I remember are no more.
Suddenly a honking, feathered
arrow crosses the sky –

another great movement away
to somewhere better, leaving
me half-drunk and quiet,
thinking about the lateness
of the hour, day and year,
looking up and looking down
at always the wrong time.

Richie McCaffery
Howick

The smoothest wood I’ve touched, not cane-tip or pew finial,

but the top bar of an elm kissing-gate in the middle of no-where

on a path overgrown with gorse. Only the two of us, pausing

in that slow burnished rudder of field-wind, just passing through.

Richie McCaffery
Wayward bound

In the back-garden, the boys play battles
with windfalls for their weapons.

In her newly silent house, the furniture
I mocked as a boy is sending down roots.

She said she would only be buried
in grass trimmed by sheep-hunger.

From the train window, dead crows nailed
to farm fences look like musical notes.

*Richie McCaffery*