

Two Poems by Craig Sherborne

The Cabinet of Wins

A stable of silver
was our sacred skite.
It's the poor in us
my father said; we are ill
with going without
even when we gain
a stable of silver.
'Bring the guests this way, son.'
That's Oreka from his Hotham
rout. That's Ima Martian from
leading all the way.
Sliding the glass, the mirror skins
of trophies warped us round.
Decanters and their goblets of young
buckled the face of a bender-down.
Trays and teapots like models
for a meal, never used,
hardly touched except by my mother
when champagne washed the plum
from her mouth and improved her swearing.
China was not a country,
it was a cup and saucer place
in there at arm's length from the world,
her arm's length, turning over a dish
to show her Wedgwood or Doulton tattoos.

A Racing Life

My uncles and I weren't related.
They had something they did in Chinatown.
They poked a washboard of maths
on their betting-stands, and wore
a white side-drummer's bag.

They flashed the badge of their stomachs
at my father, fist on hips, parting
the curtain of their suit-coats.
He flashed his stomach back,
took off his pork-pie hat to lick
his thumb across its feather.
My mother chose what colour rose
he popped in his lapel.

You were in the know or you weren't.
You said 'zilch' not 'nothing'.
You plunged on Comet Boy
at 33 to 1 because you got the wink
Presidium was nobbled.

That night my father trampolined on the bed,
flinging dollars from his Mackintosh pockets.
My mother grabbed and shrieked,
heaping a pommel of them in her lap,
her temples wet from heat and drink
as if there was water in money-rain.