

Two Poems by James McGonigal

Housekeeping for Infinity

For grandparents

In your absence she made supper; looked to the lift
and fall of breath in children's bodies. Dodging trees and
stars the moon just balances her tray of light
across a crowded sky — the uncertain way
we grow old. I forget what I meant to say.
But then the back courts of miners' rows

shone, their nettle patches the rain
had hammered to silver. Arrows came slanting
through the open eyes and hearts
of houses. Look where clouds fight
bare-knuckle battles in the smoky air. Red
splash and crust of clay on all our shoes.

The dead were stretched on shelves of infamy.
Here's cotton rags for dressings, pads to staunch
still living wounds.
Remembering the blood of those
who crowned this wasteland: in darkest Lanarkshire
a train is coughing between heaps of slag.

So we lose the whereabouts we started from:
now when autumn flexes a brown arm over the rooftops,
almost as if you might come strolling in
through this house of words, and settle back
and reach for your cup of tea before going up last
to bed; or long lost sons like James and John

come rowing the maze of waves to their father's nets.