

**Independence: *Ornamental Shadows* by John Jenkins**

**Ornamental shadows**

Those dear ones adored the storms  
above their nursing homes,  
    in my dream they  
all threw away their walking frames,  
grew back their teeth and ran  
out of their wards at midnight

they laughed at the wind that pushed them back,  
growing younger and younger as they fled,  
their bodies burst with flowers

while re-living their truce with life,  
its dark beauty, they ran on  
    in fluffy dressing gowns  
until the coast was clear

back to prams and nappies,  
to single cells, to just an impulse  
in their parent's eyes, and beyond that  
to a gentler silence

All to wait and wait...  
for another big bang,  
a storm to lift the roof off,  
to do it all again, grow back more teeth  
    brave the storms, the journey,  
grow old again, and smile, and laugh  
then rub all their wrinkles away,  
bodies transparent and vanishing  
into the falling night.

*John Jenkins*

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### **Age on the Page – Poetry Challenge 2021**

All poems were judged anonymously, and poet Anne M Carson awarded poems which combined literary merit with how well the poem addressed any of the 5 categories identified in the competition:

- *What It Means to be an Elder*
- *Independence*
- *Stereotypes*
- *Identity*
- *Wisdom*

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This poem celebrates the important role that memory, imagination and reverie play in life and how they can lead to degrees of independence in identity, thought and experience. The poet has imagined time going backwards and uses memorable, humorous images such as the old folk growing back their teeth and running out of their wards back into their youth and even beyond. The poem works both as a fantasy and as a metaphor for how as we age we include the whole cycle of life within us, accessed via memory, dream and imagination. The poem also includes the beautiful image of old bodies bursting with flowers.