

# One-Eye'd Leigh

Katharine Kilalea

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## **'You were a bird' by Katharine Kilalea**

You were a bird before we met. I know that  
because over your skew front teeth  
your mouth makes a pointy beak.

I saw you first in Dickens' London,  
an evening of frosted windows  
and hot steaming steak.

That night we were drinking,  
the chimneys were smoking,  
and my lips swelled up

like bread baking in the oven.  
I met London in your face,  
I smelt wine on your breath

and the shape of your mouth  
left me feeling slightly lyrical.  
We drank a lot that night

we drank so much  
you would have seen it from heaven.  
With you there, sitting there in my kitchen,

the cooking pots start to sing.  
Now the letterbox is a bird  
and the telephone is made of birds when it rings.

**from *One Eye'd Leigh* by Katharine Kilalea, published by Carcanet**

## **'Goodbye is a semi-circle' by Katharine Kilalea**

Goodbye is a curving shape  
like a sickle  
or a cow's lick

or the way of ironing  
a wrinkled shirt flat. Goodbye  
is a grip gone slack,

a playground swing  
arcing through hurt and confusion  
then reversing

to the morning after a dinner party,  
packing away dishes.  
The last taste was a cheek

offered like a tea cake.  
The leaves are rustling.  
The wind has grown a long beard.

Goodbye sounds like  
a straw slurping the last juice,  
and the low hum of trucks in the distance.

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