

Aspirations to simplicity

by Janet Manley

They say "He was a mere shadow
of his former self."
But my shadow is more than my self
can ever hope to be.
Gregarious, it invites itself
to the table next door
sniffing, peering at scrambled eggs
without a care, extending across a void
that holds me at bay, even as desire escapes
out and away from the morning, a mesmerising
knit of stained light in the steam of my tea.
Unapologetically black and white
my shadow touches those it pleases
with fluid caresses outside of my stifled affections;
it walks taller than exhausted self-esteem
can, and peels off down hills ahead of me
naked and carefree, prancing
where I would lope over potholes and up curbs.
Did I inherit some kind of detachedness
alienated from everything around me
connected only through the shadow I cast,
the negative on a bright, positive day?
I spoon porridge at the cafe, projecting,
contrasting my quiet doubt with set jawline
etched on brick; discarding the mess of 3D
and flattening my worries into a charming silhouette:
female; hourglass; ponytail.