

**JUNIOR SECONDARY**

**Runner Up**

**Emma Dell**

Gosford High School  
GOSFORD NSW

**The Wanderer**

At noon  
red ochre sun sleeps.  
bubbling the asphalt  
rehearsing the moonshadow dance,  
beckoning him to the shoreline.

Footwhispers on the sand...  
green hat bobbing  
arthritic hands clasping,  
and  
brown-knit jumper sprigged  
with tumble-weed  
limbs...  
bobbing, bobbing.

Gravel voice sigh  
unheard...  
in the waxing breeze  
waning, winging  
among salt-tattooed bay –  
and the silky oaks  
stage-whisper  
of the ageing monarch.

He remembers  
the red-cast tide,  
the trees, the dunes,  
the ebbing wind tsunami's,  
Gone and blown  
by.

As the shadows kiss the ruddy sky  
Lianas grovel  
to  
The Thunder Clappers,  
tussling above.  
His wreck-wood stave  
Drums  
the smouldering sand,  
and deep down

Poseidon  
Swims  
Strong,  
he knows.

His fool-failing gaze  
hard  
at the rattle of pills  
In  
His  
Pocket.  
Stark white brazen ghost gums  
kneel  
to  
honeycomb cliff  
and  
thousand-facet sky.

And Thor's-thunder-hammer flashes  
Bright.  
'Sunders  
dark from light  
and  
light from dark,  
and thunderbird cries,  
the Old world's mourner,  
quake  
pyroclastic rain cloud...  
bends knee  
as the  
King is  
leaving.

Back to the old chair by flickering fire,  
in rendered house on the brink  
of lonely suburbia.

But it walks with him.

*Judges' Comment:*

*A beautifully achieved study of old age, which manages to combine the tragic inevitability of passing time with a sense of mythic immortality. The poem vibrates with the sounds and sights of nature. Its staccato rhythms and sophisticated enjambment give it an exciting momentum.*