

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Phantoms

by Steve Brown

These phantoms press the margins of the page:
all that we fear, or feel, or wish; all that we expect –
those figures scribbled on the windows
before we began to look. Those jabbering ghosts
who mean: that we are never really innocent,
or never wholly here; that now is always handled
with burnt fingers. So you come to say,
and say it with the face of others' absence,
those others present in their clamouring emptiness.

All the amputated limbs: the wires are down;
still messages swarm the gap. The fictional sock
on the now fictional leg covers real itches.
So, you are here – though I cannot bring you back;
you are in everything I see, though I cannot touch you.
We live by stumbling in this bush of ghosts;
the lines are singing, although each one is cut.