



## Bookside Down

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

These poems have an enticing intimacy. Often funny, almost never sad, they are mainly celebratory of life even in the down moments, and always celebratory of language. It's mostly the familiar domestic round of family, friends and school, portrayed, it seems, despite the range of style and subject matter, by a singularly consistent sensibility. Here are everyday joys and frustrations, but also some flights of fancy which take off from there into absurd, and sometimes faintly disturbing, speculation. The title poem imagines the way a favourite book might take a turn for the worse if read upside down. Another projects the sinister development of a collectable series of unspecified toy creatures. One of my favourites offers a series of unlikely but recognisable reasons why the dinosaurs might have died out, including 'because the mammals came along and wouldn't share?' and 'because they ran out of crisps?'. Another imagines humans as aliens might see them, concluding: 'Such are the humans then: horrible, pitiful,/ tail-less absurdities,/ ruthless mistakes,/ that gibber in daylight and whimper at night time,/ lost as last Wednesday, and sadder than soup?'. I could go on quoting, there is so much to enjoy, particularly when **The Potatoes My Dad Cooks** get the **Song of Solomon** treatment: 'when they sit steaming in their dish,/their crispy coatings delight my eyes?'. Many poems for children hit you over the head or shout in your face, these, whatever their theme, are unfailingly elegant, even if, when confronted by the awesome sight of a 14 metre totem pole in a museum, the most interesting aspect to our childlike poet is the line of sight to 'the eagle's bum?'.

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