

# JENNIFER WOODHOUSE

## A VOICE FROM THE *SMALL ZONE*

There is no-one to hold me.  
In the gulag's definitive cold  
I hold memory's icons:  
a lover, a home; the green  
conflagration of summers.

A guard has offered his body  
as payment for mine; he says  
if you're pregnant they're kinder.

The 'nuns' they transformed here  
to haggard old women  
left us warm underwear (soon  
confiscated) having become  
as barren as we will be  
after *shizo*, and the years  
of salt meals. As a rule,  
prisoners must be kept cold;  
hungry people respond to control.

In the *small zone*, that grim  
little ship of lost souls,  
drift the outcasts of nation,  
disgraced: for example, to be  
unemployed is a crime; it's a legal  
offence to be homeless; to read  
certain poems is a short cut  
to five years hard labour.

The function of memory  
is to remember

what it is death to write down.  
They can't search your brain cells.

In good faith, the children of Russia  
still memorise icons, to take  
to the *small zone* as poems.

The *small zone* is a Soviet labour camp for women who are deemed 'especially dangerous state criminals'.

*Shizo* is detention in a special punishment and isolation cell.

(Source: Amnesty International)

## ANDREW LANSDOWN

### SO QUICK TO GO

In the water, clouds  
and a skein of geese, going  
not in a V-form  
-ation but loosely — small, deep  
down because they are  
high up — and black, in silhouette  
against the white clouds.  
I look up. The swirling sky  
is empty. So quick  
to go, the wild, winging geese!  
Yet their reflection  
returns. This mystery, like  
migration. Look close.  
Not the water but the mind  
is wrong. Midges from the sedge!