

# Tourists

by Rachel J. Fenton

I went back to the church  
where we married, Saint Matthew's  
in the City; the one where  
someone left graffiti on the billboard  
over: *God's a hard*  
*act to follow*; the one that made the news  
(world headlines) but we  
chose it for the white sun streaming in  
through those high  
coloured slots like filtered spotlights  
at a disco, and I sat  
on a pew at the back and cried and tried  
to remember why we  
decided not to get hitched outside.

A couple of tourists  
came in, I could tell by their clean  
boots and backpacks  
they'd just got off the plane, I entertain  
the idea they thought  
I was praying which was true in a way  
and they smiled  
sympathetically. You must understand  
it seemed real at the time,  
though I know now I was dreaming  
else pretending to  
with you at my side and I wonder,  
with so many quakes,  
why they built a church with a spire;

how it stays up.  
I think of its shape as an angular spiral  
like the crooked one  
at Chesterfield I saw in passing on a train  
as architectural DNA  
or a tornado pulling God out of the sky,  
and all that hidden space

inside; caves like those  
underwater formed by chemical  
corrosion of streams  
I imagine in dreams I'm swimming down,  
only there's never any room  
for turning at the end, but a few people  
have passed through  
and taken pictures, samples, there  
is no art work as such,  
save the structure, no rudimentary  
painting, pigment smeared  
by hand, and some appear in fiction  
(strictly literary texts),  
Ondaatje's English Patient's one example  
of several lying on the bed.  
I'd like to know how to turn, I have the urge  
to ask you. I can't see  
your face in the dark. It's featureless.

Can we talk about this?  
You're not asleep are you? I'm inspired  
but it's late, the curtains,  
white as icing, show the first signs;  
one more night over. In  
another hour the sun will take a slice  
but, for now, it stutters  
and as I wait for it to rise I consider travel;

going back to study,  
to learn speleology, but I know you're just tired.

