**Checkpoint**

*Bethlehem, Palestinian Territories*

Richard Lister

Is this the place where

Christ first breathed:

sucking air into his flat lungs,

taking in life?

Smattering of sheep,

stony hill, bent tree.

Bethlehem's on pilgrims' lips

but it’s still poor.

Dusk stains the sky pink.

I see below my window

the street fill with youth

heading to my right,

hands curled on rocks,

half concealed.

Today Talib, the roofer, was beaten

at the checkpoint.

They hurl their stones

at the neat Israeli guards

crouched behind sandbags,

shades and toughened glass.

Later, down in Manger Square,

I buy a tea set

in a tourist shop.

Each pewter cup

when filled with tea

is too hot to touch.