Inked

*For Holocaust Memorial Day

27 January 2018, whose theme was:

“The Power of Words”

This tattoo is not:
a souvenir of a drunken night in Malaga
a Maori tribal pattern
a symbol from Lord of The Rings
an inspiring quote
her horoscope sign
the names of her dead children.

This tattoo is not:
the winning numbers on her lottery ticket

although these numbers, crudely inked
on the outside of her thin ageing left forearm,
did signify the allocation to slave labour
rather than the gas chamber which meant –
for a few at least – a random chance of survival.

This tattoo is:
a bar-code that sought to reduce her to ein Stück.

Please write about me, about us, she asks,
the few who survived and the many who didn’t:
historical revisionism
anti-Semitism
competing forms of genocide
the passage of time
fake news –
all erode our story
seek to rub us out.

And so I ink the page:
her story their story our story –
indelible.

ein Stück: “a thing”, used by the Nazis to refer to the women in the camps.

Christine Vial

Cranes in the Snow Country

It has to be white, the paper,
for how else would you see the loneliness
of house and fence and tree

or the red caps of the cranes
who dance their stately dance
deep in the Snow Country?

There they spread mulberry fibres
on bleaching fields for the ultraviolet
and ozone of snowmelt,
harvesting the weather’s gift
so that what blanks out thought
(the sliding doors my father opened
upon a pure wall of white)
can be overwritten
with what we can speak of –

the man with the plastic bucket
who tramps out every day to throw
handfuls of grain,
or my father tunnelling
towards the light.

Dorothy Yamamoto

Loving the Scars

In the art of kintsugi
nothing is really broken

the shattered pot
is not discarded

nor its cracks
invisibly mended

its brokenness
is honoured

bandaged
with gold

Kathryn Southworth