

Galatos: those who came home

For K F

Mac and you after haymaking, over a beer
talked of leaving Crete, smoking rollies – stukas
the bombs they dropped, other signs of war

it was to silence the other neighbour, a man
who'd had a lesser Pacific war, you told me later.
Your eyes only see inward now, change takes

toll of certainties, and we are growing older.
Back then I should have asked what makes
for lesser wars or, what kind of war is worth it?

Ah, Galatos. Maybe you were there, knew some
of the men who never came home – which one
fell awkwardly, with a sigh, nothing more

than gossip on the breeze through an olive
grove, branches already bent to accommodate
the presence of your nightmares years later.

Penelope. She would have told you to go home.
These islands have been washing boys' blood
off their hills to the cerulean waves below, for ever.

Pat White lives at Gladstone, Wairarapa, New Zealand. He has published several volumes of poetry, most recently *Planting the Olives* (Frontiers Press). His touring exhibition *Gallipoli: In Search of a Family Story* was shown most recently at the Waiouru Army Museum in New Zealand in 2008.