the poem / fever /
axial section through putamen
with vessel territories

Elizabeth Morton

the poem:

earmarked for the shredder, the poem
had a flashback of its short life.
ballpoint on paper napkin,
it started in the sluice room.
it started with the word ‘bowel’.
somebody was rinsing a commode.
the countertop stunk of dettol and
incontinence. it was born during
a nightshift and grew its baby fat
under the halogen lights that
threw honey against the walls.
it caused a kerfuffle in the
nurses station. jabberwockies
hid in the medicine cabinet
and chowed down all the pills.
the poem grew legs. it kicked in
the laminate doors. it hijacked
the tea trolley and zoomed it
down the corridor. when patients
moved to pet it, the poem spat
and hissed through the gaps
in its teeth. when the charge nurse held it down, it grew wings and thrashed against the windows. when they captured the poem in a butterfly net and calmed it down, they found they had only syntax, the mothdust on their fingers.

fever:

moving away from the orchard plots, laundry lines that sag under macrocarpa. moving away from the crystalline skies, the salt-struck grasses, the train carts and the underpasses. i astral travel with a flannel on my head, drink litres of holy water, chicken broth. i vomit words into the plastic bucket, brush the acid from my teeth. i move away, over tussock country, along the desert road. i chew the pillowcase. i cling my body to the bunk. the streets unfurl, slick with gum and cigarettes. somebody is yelling my name. i quiver like a sparrow. hello hello, says the paramedic. but i am moving away from the city lights, the steel towers. and i shed my skin on a motorway and i float up into the sky.
axial section through putamen with vessel territories:

i saw mickey mouse ears. i saw a cathedral in the corpus callosum, and a waterhole where antelope might loiter. there was a little man hanging on to dear life below the wingspan of a giant silk moth. i saw an octopus in a balaclava and cirrus clouds spreading their fat fingers and sulci and sulci and a blackening which curbed the frenzied hands.

and then i spotted it – the alien, a head the size of a quail egg. it was so beautiful, i wanted to cradle it, to wrap it in my shirt. i wanted to make it lunch, take it to the zoo. i wanted to teach it to samba. i wanted to show it B-grade porn, play it dvorak. by hook or by crook, i wanted to take it out.

Elizabeth Morton is a New Zealand writer. Her poetry collection, *Wolf*, is to be published by Mākaro Press (2017). www.ekmorton.com or antici-pation@hotmail.com