

Two Poems by Nicola Vulpe

How War Was Declared

We were busy, I suppose,
with other matters—

our mortgages, our in-laws
that unfortunate and sudden decline
of the TSE, the Nikkei and the rest.

We hardly noticed
when our ships put to sea,
and our jets shrieked off beyond the horizon—

to settle things, our leaders said.

The enemy, now we all know,
has slipped hidden onto our shores
I saw yesterday a message
he, or someone just like him,
had posted to a wall:

“Under the rubble of my house
the rats ate the face of my child.”

But I'll Speak

I have intimate knowledge of the habits of cockroaches.
I've known so many empty mornings, and days
and days pissed away.

I've watched my children one by one
fold up their hearts like old boxes and go.

I've dreamt the stars dropped, every one, from the sky.

My lungs will burst, and my tongue leap from its root
in my mouth, but I'll speak:

it need not be so!