

Martin Robertson

War-time Anecdote

“After they caught me behind their desert lines
I was in gaol, a women’s prison it had been
under the Italians. The cell-walls were streaked
with red-brown smears. Jesus, what people!”

Unhappy women
caught from their open world into a cell,
uncomprehending, lost,
illiterate most likely, no resources
but a dull hope.

Once each month
peeling a sodden rag from her body she’d
wipe it down the wall, marking the snail-course
of her sentence. A calendar.