**Road to Liberty**

Legs in a half kick, head arched back,

she sprawls on her right side in wild grass

beside the hill path surrounded by dock leaves

and dandelions, belly swollen as if with calf or gas -

a white and brown speckled Normande cow.

My map says this is near where labourers

of the Resistance furtively sketched tracks

and beaches from their bikes; dodged guns, Gestapo

and dogs. Then landings at Utah, Gold and Juno.

Cemeteries raised in Brouay, Bény-sur-Mer, Bayeux.

To be sure, I watch. Sticky scent rises from gorse

in bloom. From a ladder a farmer prunes apple trees.

Twelve solar panels on the farmhouse roof.

No scavengers come near, but the cow’s eye stares

and her pelt stays damp from morning dew.

And I thought of my father, his care each dusk

as he counted the beasts he so often named –

alert for any that stood alone, scoured or had

sunken eyes. The darkness and shame if one died.

His Home Guard medal secreted in a sock draw.

Next day as I climb the farmer meets me.

Her overalls scowling blue, her French precise.

A milk truck grumbles past. I must retreat.

This is private. In these territories of unripe sleep

the cannon blasts hourly to scare the crows.

*by Danielle Hope*