Rosemary Dobson Prize
Short-list: Dan Disney (VIC) -- 'On Regarding Kant’s Statue'.

On Regarding Kant’s Statue
... we must be able to view the ocean as poets do, merely in terms of what manifests itself to the eye
Immanuel Kant Critique of Judgment

Drumming the cobblestones, fuming Lada
the boulevards of Kaliningrad
jolting as promises loby call girls call
below Soviet chandeliers hanging from the fundament. Soldiers in big hats, swarm city
of kleptocrats, nouveau firstworkers, nuns. 'What
for do you
come in Russia?' a uniform snark, oligarchs in glam Mercedes gliding past
dull as fists. In shade, the shopping-cart elderly gnash gold teeth
sipping stale bread beer
above a Waffenad bunker’s mass grave, one hundred thousand ghosts
in trees, in four days dead
in the German Overgovernment Bofina (The, of the Great Patriotic War). How to be a priori
about such wilful making? This is
the Immanuel Kant State University of Russia’s front lawn.

Under the lunge of airliners, of smog-dirty billboards
Kant’s gaze. 'What
can I know? What ought I do? What may I hope?' Five foot tall dandy
in a smock of bird shit, Kant’s statue
before eternity, points beyond glesnost and cosmonauts, apartment blocks
terraforming bony swamps like a death mask.
'Two things fill the mind ... the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.'
The prospect is in overdrive. An old patriot coughs, stops. Lights up
and marches on.

'What is a human being?' Kant’s shoe buckle
burnished by wishing. An essence of crowd tumbles across dimensions into the daytimes
of itself, gizmos aloft
lit immemorial in a raven and drizzling sky. Churchbells pound.
The air claps.