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EDITOR
TONY FRAZER

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Submissions

Shearsman operates a submissions-window system, whereby submissions may only be made during the months of March and September, when selections are made for the October and April issues, respectively. Submissions may be sent by mail or email, but email attachments are only accepted in PDF form. We aim to respond within 3 months of the window's closure, i.e. all who submit *should* hear by the end of June or December, although for recent issues we have sometimes taken a little longer.

The poems by Petra White in this issue first appeared in
Reading for a Quiet Morning, (Melbourne: Gloria SMH Press 2017).

This issue has been set in Bembo with titling in Argumentum. The flyleaf is set in Trend Sans.

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Mary Leader

Acreege Triptych

Upon a decision by twelve of Adam's surviving grandchildren, a scant six decades after his death, to sell the 2,304.82 acres of land, for which magnitude, piece by piece by piece, Adam sacrificed every muscle and sinew, every blood vessel, any spare time and any spare change.

And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

—Ezekiel 1:19

I.

A vehicle rolls

up, stops,

discharges a driver,

and on occasion passengers,

and possibly tools,

and possibly bags.

A vehicle, maybe a

wagon and team.

A vehicle, maybe a

pickup, not called rustic.

Rusty. Or the crowning

glory, a clean sedan,

just for driving to church

on Sunday

and back. Each

wagon, truck, car,

is by and by used up,

is sold at least for scrap

along with whatever else

one foot in front of

the other got.

Barn, house, silo, tank, windmill,

well, coop, hutch,

built with materials

dismantled and hauled from Eden,
then maintained, mended with
any old piece of wire
still flexible enough,
and long enough,
and ready to hand.

II.

One, a littlest daughter
of a littlest daughter, remembers,
how “Mother” (as she came to be)
was afraid of the geese.
A smiling matter now
but any five-year-old
at whom a goose
has stuck its neck straight out, and
hissing loud, run toward
can tell
of aggression
and of fear.
A grandson remembers,
as the ultimate peaceful feeling,
hunting. Quail. Deer.
Another, who prefers silence,
remembers how
being taken out to cut
the young bulls did not mean
cutting them from
the rest of the herd but
that somebody
young and male
held the animal down while
a grown man seized, in one
work-gloved hand,
a scrotum, in the other,

a whetted knife, the job
 over mid-bellow, almost before
 pain suddenly starts.
 A now-bent-over granddaughter
 asks the assembled,
 “Do you remember the big hill
 west of the house
 where all the fossils are?
 Brachiopods and Crinoids.”

III.

A stick that God whittled
 to a point, roughly,
 in a quarter of an hour,
 points. Eternities
 hence, an auction
 that was bound to come
 comes. Who
 can even know,
 Ezekiel
 having oversimplified time,
 which is the little wheel,
 which the big,
 which gear moves inside of which,
 which forms the individual unit,
 which the span of it all?
 Whatever can like wire
 be twisted
 offers itself to the twisting.
 A hand
 that has withered
 can be stretched out to the Lord,
 and as it uncurls, it points
 to the turning
 that is next.

Michael Aiken

The ritual

(killing a forest spirit)

First: the hacksaw,
drawn in small, worn hands;
follow the lonely asphalt road
to a seasonally abandoned home.

Take the path that snakes between trees
and deep, dense gardens
to enter the Bamboo Forest:

– mystical place,
invasive church –
that cathedral of leaves,
vast rain shelter.

Next: select the victim,
the stouter the better,
and set-to along the seam of the thing
sawing...

Take him by his feet, that felled monolith,
drawn down like a serpent slowly swallowing,
branch-hands grasp desperately at friends'
as you drag him away on his back.

Haul his carcass out in the sunlight
and butcher the beast in the open,
splayed on a concrete drive:

twigs, leaves, a dismembering;
great oriental spriggan
brought low by bored children.

Last: split the body,
fracture the heart, the torso,
trunk. Grind edges of the phalanx
against plain cement, shape a speartip
never to know flesh.

Julie Maclean

Why wives like Mrs Melville get sick of waiting

Where birds hover

whales rise to the Doppler shift

He cannot hear but round the Horn
choirs of sperm whales blow

Moby and the mob swell
in a symphony of sonar ecstasy

Baleens compose foraging songs
as simple pings from fields of krill

Inside cathedrals of trill and gather
the she-devil calls him to heel

but try as he might Mister Absent and Original
he cannot see her lips move

Cheddar Memoir

After Augustus Montague Toplady 1784-1872 and Cheddar Man

Back lanes were always
stone cold
the sun ten years away

My mother told me never
to come home
with a belly full of sperm

I ran away to a timber house
with a paling fence
I burned

in a black gloss fireplace
Whenever I returned
to a glass of sweet Jerez

assault of hyacinths
on the windowsill
at Christmas

rape of interrogation
over roast chicken
I was ready to stitch

my mouth
to become every mute
swan scabbling

down an iced river
to get away transmogrify
into a stalagmite

alone with the sound
of a limestone drip
coiled snake of a road

cleft of a gorge
where wild strawberries
become blood spots

between lines of the hymn
oh the guilt, the shame
but not of a cave-dwelt pagan man

Jonathan Catherall

Berlin Allergy

(after Rilke's 'Duino Elegies')

If only we too could disappear into
recognisable difference, the chains
we don't have at home, brands of toothpaste
and the pleasant confusion of S-Bahn maps.
Ich möchte ein Eis, bitte. A word like ice-
cream but not, folding itself on the tongue,
a beautiful frisson. In the partytown
of novelty, it seems you could take on
allcomers. More so when the museum
is undergoing a facelift, sections of scaffold
sheathed in metaphorical plastic, neither
historic nor ahistoric, but either.
A sheer frontalisation, an emplacement
of greying angels. You too have seen
the Wim Wenders film and so, slap
bang in the middle of Middle, we swallow
our own fluids. Every angle is terrible,
the eternal streaming service of those who
like us, take the bridge and broad parapet
as a prop for our notebook, and we, too,
only deeply reflect while away. This depth
gives us credit, which can be redeemed
at neighbouring outlets, as in the river
soap suds make photographable patterns.
For every wary animal there's a Buddha Bowl
of sweet potato, edamame, beetroot, walnuts,
salad leaves, quinoa and brown rice. What
would it be, to be able to ask rhetorical
questions to which we didn't already –
wow how cool is that so-named endlessly-
deferred-onto sprayed-on window.

Cathy Dreyer

Ewelysses

For Tom Clucas with apologies to Alfred, Lord Tennyson

If I am Queen of all the Kindly Bred
I rule these barren crags to little end.
Rams come, rams go, their services distract
Me briefly, then it's back to collop spats –
Which ewe was ewsed to graze which heft? (Or not.)
They hoard, and sleep and feed, and never think
To ask how I got here to this small field.
I roamed the world beyond these leys, beyond
These dry-stone walls. My deeds inspired the bards.
Sometimes the fates dispatched me quite alone
Sometimes I led a fearless flock, a bold
And brave brigade whose hearts I held and who
Held mine through storms whipped up by gods and men,
Across the wildest ponds and greenbelt lands,
Exotic suburbs where we dined with theaves
And bought strange tinctures from illegal stands.
Oh yes! We tasted riot's heady drench
And always my bell withered at the front.
Far on the pealing streets of brassy Bath
From where I saw the wool of lands beyond,
And spun and wove a tapestry of proud
Tomorrows with fresh woods and pastures new.
How are the mighty hefted. You have found
Me broken-mouthed on claughty soil, confined,
Riggwelted, in a barren hirsels' scope.
Provincial nickerings of rams and lambs
Are satisfying ruminations for
The mutton-hearted. But I am brave.
Yes! Underneath my dagged and frizzy coat
This gray spirit burns with hot desire
For sorting races to the heftless stars
Beyond the utmost bound of sheepish thought.

They took my sons, each sweet Telemachus.
There's nothing I can say of that blackloss.
Besides, I have no crook or field to will.
Some gimmer not-yet-born will take my realm
Of cairns and dung-specked grass beneath the clouds
When I am drafted down to gentler fields.
To her will fall the task of mustering
The flock to march from here or there, from up
The field to meadowlands below and back
Again, because we need fresh grass, because
The weather's worsened or improved, because
We're due at our *al fresco* salon for
The season's new look cut 'n blow-dry style,
Or because the dog has teeth. It's boring and
Demanding. I won't grieve my stony throne.

On cloudless nights the lights of motorways
Could guide me down to town, from where I
Would escape concealed inside a truck and jolt
The dark, broad roads to distant parts to find
My followers, the flock that battled by
My side (without a thought for grazing rights
Which might accrue through customary ewes
And family association with a pitted field).
They took the rough, cold winds and boiling
Sun without a bleat, nor whined of hunger
In austerity, or moaned of injury on walks.
I'm almost cast and for the cull, but I dream
Still of great travails, of winning once again
The grace and favour of the gods with nerve
And grit preserved in fleece. Before the darkness
Shuts my eyes, before the calls of missing
Lambs return to block my ears, let me round up
The ewes of yore, and gather too my wits
And let us lift our noses to the air, forget
Our bursenbellies one last rambunctious time.
It's not too late to seek a better world,
Set off and, trotting two-by-two, eschew
Our wool-lined furrow; for my purpose holds

To find a lunky through the crumbling walls
And roam beyond the limits of the farm
And meet the famous Mary and Bo-Peep.
Our three bags are not bursting full, and they
May need repairing. But our spirits knit
To glatter what's reduced by time and fate.
We meet the moment with unbratted will
To graze the verge and not stray into fields.

Pa'ing It Forward

Dad says that

I

must be

careful

that men can't

stop once the point of no return has been surpassed there is no control it's simple physiology the relaxation of smooth muscles in the sponge-like regions of erectile tissue their transmitters spewing nitric oxide from deflaccidating caverns to commence tumescence not forgetting acetylcholine which helps to regulate the NO a NO that's stronger than a woman's NO it roars into the sponge-like regions of erectile tissue increasing intracellular guanosin monophosphate in great waves decreasing calcium ionized of course to relax the sponge-like regions of erectile tissue aided by the cyclic adenosin monophosphate pathway turned on by intercellular emissaries from neural or cryptoparacrinal sources including prostaglandins also a variety of phosphodiesterase enzymes inactivate the cyclic nucleotides thereby limiting their erectogenic action which is another reason why

Dad says that

I

must be

careful

Simon Perchik

It's easy – you wait for these leaves
to finish feeding, pick clean this soft scarf
dropped unopened on the ground

– it's then you can lean over
the way this branch gathers around
though each death still hides behind

what the wind looks like
when you take hold the same day each year
and jump face down for the landing.

★

Though you say nothing about the road north
these curves strike back, make one breath
take longer than the others to begin and end

as the migratory route all stone follows
reaches the horizon without moving
– in such a silence you dead

never had a chance, are held in place
to be pulled out the ground as the shadow
you need to say goodbye, letting it fall

still alive into each stream that left
for the open sea, already smelling from salt
and the small stones to be swallowed whole.

★

It's your usual wound :one day each year
gaping from under the ground as some flame
sure it can stay lit alone, won't need this

half glass, half still circling down
listening for the smoke making room
by relying on you to stay

and with barely enough string
weep, make the rescue, let the fire go out
on its own and hour by hour each separation

become one year heavier, harder
though the dead still meet in a near-by grove
marked off the way each calendar is at home

clinging to branches covered with leaves
in rows to help you remember where
it keeps the horizons, when to look around.

★

Just a shoe, unlaced, left on the floor
near the one you wear to bed
making sure you stay awake

where there should be two – are trembling
with tears from each mouth
all night calling to the other – you start

the limping side to side as a wound
waiting to be brought closer
held tight, make the bed stop.

★

Claire Crowther

Think Workers in Energy Futures

The ship of our time is no tree
with a yard arm, a mast. No walnut shell rocks us home.

Planes charge across skies, leaves blowing
away from the branch. But we two travel water-earthed

in this swaying skyscraper of a carbon-saver.

We think
We think and talk
We talk of thoughts

*We – what workers are this we –
think – what work is not thought –*

Whose thought crosses:
hours with days
power with energy
means with ends

Outside, a feral surface.
It hisses apart for our ship seething and soothing
the dry soles that walk our way.

One of us
 meditates
on how to demonstrate linkage
 repeatableconsistentreproducedoverandover.

Another remarks on the glory of coincidence:

'Is sun gold
because, of all its photons,
golden ones
are the most plentiful?

Causal connection
or coincidence?’

‘Coincidentally,
the energy of a golden photon
is just right for a solar cell
to operate most efficiently.’

Margins, curled
gingerly between light and hydropower,
run
till horizons claim the sun.

Sunbeat

Don't we feel the natural sound of sun beating inside itself as any
human body beats?

Don't our atoms measure disruption into unexpected lines or graphs
as we float on?

Do we take ourselves to heart and resonate?

Are we all Antarctic ice sheets cracking in weakening heat, singing
under strain?

Surely the sun gives us our physic.

John Levy

How Diane Arbus Would've Photographed Me

Say she happens to be in Tampa when my family is staying at a hotel there. Summer of '58, which makes me six or seven. She's out by the hotel

pool. She likes pools, just as she likes beaches and nudist camps. She positions herself near the steps in the shallow end as I begin to climb out. Surprised by the fully-clothed woman

with a big black camera around her neck I stop, one foot on a higher step, water dripping down my face, thin arms drooping at my sides. I have my mouth open for that first photo, the one

she exhibits, as I look into her camera with no thought in my head that I should do anything with the face I forget all about.

DS Maolalaí

Writer's block

she said
she took three short showers a day
and her housemate
took a long one
once a week

“so we balance out
sort of.

it's almost like
we're one
normal person.”

she cooked really
well
and fucked
really
well
and had an apartment
with a view of the stadium nearby
rising out of houses
like a pot of geraniums.

she worked
in some tech thing
and read cheap books in paperback
and loved tv
and meals
in expensive restaurants.

she didn't write poetry
or paint
or make music. so different

to all the other girls I'd loved.
I loved her anyway.
she was easy
to love
and be around
and she never asked for more of me
than whatever I had in my pocket.

I loved her.
and being with her
made me write
so
badly

Kerry Featherstone

Jonathan and Carl at the Battle of Maldon

Four battles with the Vikings
on the coast that year.
Silently on the Blackwater came two or three thousand
to the Northey Island Causeway,
and the Essex men went out to fight them,
where the maps show mean high water.

And one March morning a millennium later
Jonathan and Carl went out to read *The Battle of Maldon*
in that place.
They looked out over the shire and
studied the ways,
for the number 75 via Colchester Zoo does not run on Sundays.
And for this they cursed Regal Busways.
Of Chelmsford.

Only God knows
what the milita saw as they allowed the enemy to crowd closer.
Their leader so sure of his manhood that
he gave them a foothold on the narrow beach.
He showed them how to hold a weapon, weight a spear:
so they fought.
“Thought the harder, heart the keener, courage the greater as our
strength faileth.”
But the chief was already dead.
And the poet says “Only God knows who at the end shall possess
this fight’s field.”

And Jonathan took Carl by the hand
past the football ground,
down South House Chase
to Furthersea Field.
And Jonathan began to read as they looked over

the causeway to Long Marsh.

But Carl proved soft for the coming battle, and at line 98
in which the Northmen cross the shining water shore,
said firmly “I need to pee”.

And Jonathan kept on: “Thought the harder, heart the keener...”

But Carl, like Ethelred, was unready, and would have paid Danegeld
for the onslaught to stop.

And he said “I’m busting”.

And Jonathan closed the book with a slap and said
“Christ, Carl, it’s not always about your cock!”

Who at the end can possess the fight’s field?

The surface needs to be broken before

we can tell the full tale:

between the centre circle and the changing names
might be more stories than a plough can find.

The battle left no trace

of young men finding their death on the Blackwater,

or of the pages flapping

back in the wind to a world when

love between them needs

great courage and a heart that is keen.

David Rushmer

What Space Between Us

language

a stone

total

weightlessness

attachment

the circle

one becomes

violence

I was the object

the anguish of disappearing

pain of our speech

Petra White

The Lovely Sphinx

She knows already he will solve her riddle: she must dash
herself against the rocks, all her lovely parts,
the supple lion legs whose fur she combed and kept so bright,
her woman head, her crackling dragon wings,
princely gleaming teeth,
gently webbed fingers, delicate brown nails,
a puckered and mottled green torso,
naked and soft as an infant's, her sprightly odour
of raspberries and almonds.
The riddle, so perplexing
it kept the city free of men
whose minds were not fine.
Their bodies piled around her, she killed them
with a jet of blood from her heart,
poisonous to all who walk on two legs.
Now Oedipus stands before her,
squat, young, bald,
all the blather comes out of his mouth.
I will defeat you, give me your riddle,
I killed a man on my way here, don't mess with me.
She sees his fate in a snap.
In a moment of motherly compassion
is tempted to withhold the riddle.
But he leans in closer, he seethes into her teeth
Give. Me. The. Riddle!
Then in a breath he solves it.
The blood jet bubbles and sears in her chest.
She watches him run off, squawking with glee.
I solved the riddle! The city is mine! Where is the princess?
What now, she wonders. Must I?
My life is only just beginning.
She sees Death coming to escort her to the cliff.
He is a man with eyes of tedious fire.
She smiles at him. Answer my riddle.

Peter Robinson

Return to Sendai

for Miki Iwata

Beyond a rusted, padlocked gate
at Matsunami-cho
where for years I'd wait and pine,
under its branches' long wave curve
what with the Lawsons convenience store
and local supermarket gone,
it's really like there's no such zone.

Beyond the rusted, padlocked gate
at Matsunami-cho
where our flat-block's since demolished,
although you say those lines of mine
have a place in the place's history,
I'm far too old to clamber over.
It's like those fourteen years had been abolished.

Beyond this rusted, padlocked gate
at Matsunami-cho
a risen sun would alter all
moving across its scuff-marked parquet,
souvenirs of elsewhere on each wall.
Here two daughters came to life,
and we played 'nothing but blue skies' in the dawn.

Beyond that rusted, padlocked gate
at Matsunami-cho
we've been exiled from our exile
under the pine wave's broken curve,
and pushing through rucked, buckled asphalt
even here the summer grasses
show deep-buried traces –

like those verses of mine from some thirty years ago.

Ruth McIlroy

Theme [exhaust]

I have reduced my price to free me

there was something exhausted
there was mistaken

flee the mine it is exhausted
flee the dead horse

the opal has fallen out of my ring
it was a catastrophe I keen and laugh

and it was important precious
gone finger empty for the miracle

A charm with Yarrow

I will choose yarrow and yarrow will delight my elegant fingers
warmer

my lips are the juice of six strawberries, in the sea I am an island
and on the land I am a hill and when the moon disappears, I am a
star

and I am a staff to you when you are weak, and my lips are warmer
and warmer
and I can love a bird out of a tree and I choose yarrow yarrow.

after A Charm with yarrow (Scottish Gaelic, traditional folk charm)

Amlanjyoti Goswami

Disobedience

(After Paul Celan)

They will ask you your name. They will ask you, they will ask you
Till they no longer want to know.
Till vultures circling the cold night air,
Tire of their flying.
Till cold hearts find something colder than
This vast indifferent universe.

Fight not, son, they are many, we few,
And they will blame you for fighting,
And find a reason for their blame.
No one will ever come to help, no one
Will come to save you.

I will not go out mother I will not see the stars tonight
Not look at the moon that is my blessing.
The walls of the night are cold. Outside, it rains
A sudden storm, a hard heavy rain that knows no end.
The night grips my fist, it calls me awake, though my eyes are closed
And they have forgotten what waking meant.

Above me is the tree with juicy guavas, where we once played.
Green as pulp.
Above the chilling words of justice, calling out to every bone.
Above those little men and women, who fought a weary fight alone.
Above, the tall television tower where the news is never born.

And where do I go, tonight, mother?
The doors of the heart are barred. Even the faithful have found
A way to depart.
I am brave they say, I am brave
To hear the silence that stalks this land.

Brave to call out to thunder: where are you, tonight?
Brave to see the light not the fire.

I wanted to obey you, mother, but life called me away,
And beyond life, the still shrill quiet of beyond, that no one
Sees from here. Beyond the glitter of the furthest stars,
Beyond forever. It is there forever was born, it is there
Forever stays
looking for a dwelling.

A god grieving

When Karna fell,
A passing soldier asked: Why?
Why didn't the better archer win?
And by far, the better man.

This isn't just.

Another, smoking a chillum,
Dead of night,
The blood dry:

That would change nature's wheels.
Imagine Krishna, driving the chariot, with no Arjun
Into the crowd of battle,
We would all make way,
But a god grieving?

How could humankind survive
a god grieving?

Vik Shirley

never been to volkovo

from Dostoyevsky's 'Notes from Underground', translated by Natasha Randall

ten

inexorable pleasure //
 among the dandies //
gentleman do you know // the main point //
 of my spitefulness //
 utter filthiness // scaring sparrows in vain //
i may foam at the mouth //
bring me // some kind of dolly // to play with //
 my soul might soften //
contrary elements // teaming within me //
 not on purpose // they tortured me //
 to the point of shame //

twenty-two

flog yourself // as painfully as you can //
 these bloody insults //
this mockery // the groans of an educated man //
 coarse *muzhik* // sort of nastily viscous //
 futilely straining //
 irritating // himself and others //
a half-*kopeck* piece //
 the roulades and the capers //
out of malice /// sensuality lies //
 feel it yourself // every minute //
 a *chenapan* //
my despicable groans // now //
 an even more awful roulade //

Jazmine Linklater

Mine

'But his wife looked from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt'

With my pickaxe I excavate you
Part by part by part

Chop out your heart & deseed you
for planting to coax into life again
like a fire

★

I molten me
tip into moulds
for the cooling

★

How you swelled up & captured
every detail imaginable
how you shrank again
retaining it all

★

I roll your amber & tsavorite organs
over my seal see your story

One panorama loops
thousands of moments
without beginning or end or colour

Compressed, there's no scattering
light, no sky

★

Not white

Not blue

★

Bones of steel & ceramic
but clouds weep
for your glittering asphalt
& your flesh become liquid
undrinkable

★

You dissolve you
evaporate part
leave behind nothing
more than a tear-mark

Norman Jope

Celluloid Is Colder Than Love

Night footage of the red-light zone. Whores with umbrellas, in a million-person village at the heart of Europe, patrol an edge-land like a frieze from a Sumerian tomb. There are showrooms and oil-spattered workshops, whores positioned at hundred-metre intervals like marker posts on a journey to Tartarus. The footage of the edge-lands continues for what seems like hours, but it's only for seconds.

The killer prowls in his extravagant hat. Murder, for him, is a kind of purification and he has something of a Bavarian Pinky Brown to him, the same self-righteousness turned sour. In contrast, the Director is flabby and thuggish, a machine that chews up cigarettes... only his playful walk beside the canal is at all endearing and this, too, culminates in an act of slaughter that is as instinctive as it is futile.

The three of them – the Director, the killer whose name is Bruno and Johanna, bouffant-haired and languid, in the mid-yawn of her life – live from one act of nihilism to the next. As the Director returns to the other side of the lens, Bruno and Johanna push a trolley through the Wirtschaftswunder's blandishments... sneaking a bottle of schnapps or a tin of calf's brains into their capacious pockets.

So where does the red road lead? It leads to a getaway through featureless countryside, the killer (unaccountably betrayed by Johanna) lying dead and fish-eyed on the pavement where his carcass was thrown. Johanna confesses and the Director absolves her with a single word – the word is Whore, which is what she knows she is. Only the sky retains its innocence, by fading to whiteness like the garb of a ghost.

James McLaughlin

[untitled]

1.

The sounds from the water were unhappy with us.

Let me do your bidding and do not hurry –

said an incline.

On the copper field wrought with insect
and jewel.

They were alone:

substance and time – rays set on a non-zero vector –

applied to the long grass –

to each variable complex,

together fleeting with no elision

What is structural here in this violet choir?

All is too familiar; too precise.

Mathematically we are made pure –

of complex numbers and factors –

just at the heart of the soul.

Not

Approximate to our intentions,

contrite limitation –

At this distance and ineptitude

In the insolate equality –

2.

a lull a still

moment into moment

movement into movement

some sweep over the bleaching dune

Diane Mulholland

You Asked Me if God was Real

And while I was considering my answer, a solitary bee flew inside my open mouth and made her nest. She laid an egg and packed it deftly in a case. Then six more, in a row along my stifled tongue, before she flew away.

I held them there and thought of daisies, of fresh-cut grass, and summer wine. And by the time September came any words I might have spoken were not needed. All I did was stand still as seven tiny, perfect bees broke free and balanced for a moment on my lips to dry their wings.

The Three Angels, or, How We Found What We Truly Wanted

The first angel came to us limping. The wound in her heel was edged with black and the poison crept upwards, drawing with it a map of her stretched and screaming veins. The surgeons caught up scalpels but when they cut into the flesh and saw that the angel's bones were made of purest silver they laid aside their saws for who could destroy such beauty?

The second angel clutched her side but the slash was too broad and blood ran through her fingers. Where it dripped and soaked into the earth, green shoots sprang up and we were delighted at them and followed the stream as flowers bloomed along it. We plucked vivid bouquets and used them to buy favours and power for ourselves.

Still hungry, we went looking for the third angel, and found her hanging high at the top of a tree. Her robes were star-bright and their warmth stirred the scent of pine and drew us into the branches. Coloured lights dazzled all around us as we climbed higher and when

we couldn't get close enough to her outstretched arms to be satisfied we hung ourselves to be more like her. And our faces turned blue like hers and our protruding tongues flapped out our message to the rest of the world.

The Five Sisters

after a painting by Pablo Picasso

I have heard that there was only one woman,
one of Picasso's lovers, who posed for him again and again,
getting sharper and crosser each time. If this is true,
the five minds behind the five faces
may or may not all have the same opinions.

I didn't want to carry a poster tube through the streets,
so in the gift shop I chose a postcard. It was too small.
Only by bringing the point of my nose right up to the cardboard
could I get anything from the picture. So I bought five wooden dolls –
my very own demoiselles – and posed them around my bedroom,
little angled legs dangling off tops of bookcases.

They answered my questions just like sisters might.

'How do I know my soulmate?'

marry money

why marry at all?

you're too attached to your work

go with the boy next door

clock's ticking you know

'You're not giving me the right answers!'

I gathered them up and put them in a row along a shelf
and stood in front of them. 'Tell me, where do I find God?'
They laughed, their tiny, tinny voices ringing around the room.

I turned their backs on me, let them bump their knees and noses
on the spines of books. I got into bed with arms and legs held straight
under the tightly-tucked sheet. I tried to dream a road
but I couldn't see anything at all through their chattering.

Luke Palmer

This pen is a facsimile

of the original pen burnt
before the submission had dried.

The pen wrote several lines of varying proportions
from which this pen has been 3D printed.

This pen is a tool but not in the way a hammer
or a scalpel is a tool. It's more like a bag.

This pen remembers the interior spaces
that pens, bag-like, had hitherto surrounded.

This is all heavily ironic.
No one uses pens anymore.

There isn't even a pen here.

Yogesh Patel

Hope

They planted the bones in this desert
And hoped for the trees

The rain never spoke here with
The tap-dancing on barren roads
They are the words children won't hear
Yes, the tears may rain
But the trees won't grow

History never had a heart, just rubble
The future has a tail, coils, runs away
The birds are the circling Mig-29s
Cloud-tails scratching a silver-line

Damask Roses have fallen to dust
In the only monsoon where bullets rain
The hands that can farm are bones
In barbarians' metal-mushroom farms

The buzzards are the circling Mig-29s
Their cloud-tails drag a smoky silver-line
Puffed straight from a hookah by an old man
A wish: the man-made clouds will rain
One day
Where they planted the bones in this desert
And hoped for the trees

Aidan Semmens

In a Holy Place

the ruin is uninhabited
except by a seemingly ancient
wooden statue of the virgin

odd visions of maybe familiar
people on an unfamiliar street
an altar to the unknown goddess

illustrations of bewildering plants
charts of impossible heavens
female figures in a heavy hand

their postures and activities
having no parallel
in words or their erasure

the agents of conformity
pound highway and byway, not all
their weaponry metaphorical

in this brick structure great families
holy men and mystics meet
women with the saintliest of looks

Brueghel and Dürer study alchemy and law
clocks and musical instruments
in neat but unreadable glyphs

penned into tight cryptographic circles
the manuscript sold at a humiliating price
now available online, alien

fighter pilots and tank commanders
need to focus quickly
on all this corrugated dereliction

coming from an urban neighbourhood
places you in a higher category of risk
where it's not wealth that counts, but change

no one ever launched a war for numbers
and logic won't do it
we need a story, a moral decocted

from the most limited evidence
simple words in a half-formed language
sinister analysis of ritual codes

or perhaps, satirically, vice versa
musicians and enthusiasts, ghosts
at the soft edges of consciousness

mission creep and collateral damage
sipped from exotic, esoteric glasses
in bunkers that may not be secure

beneath their breath, hands holding
red and black cards, the ace of wands
gently waving in a breeze

the cover is blank, the water nymph
and virgin faintly seen, or perhaps
to read it this way is to miss the point

Valeria Melchiorretto

Blood Moon

Follow your inner moonlight; don't hide the madness. —Allen Ginsberg

We sailed the Ocean of Storms on a wooden spoon with a dishcloth sail.
Waves were as tall as tradition, as hefty as the decades that set us apart.

Luckily no logbook survives so we now think it as the Sea of Tranquility
for the moon feeds on madness and make-believe in order to wax and wane.

We also insist the moon landing actually happened how else could we go on?
That motherly moon had to be conquered so mankind could make that
giant leap.

Men claim and defile that virgin sphere high above by planting a crude flag
so we won't be tempted to trespass or forget our rightful place on this earth.

But tonight I call you away from the kitchen sink to point at the night sky
For tonight the moon menstruates on a scale only a dead stones can bleed

because tonight moon and sun, past and always align with our delusions.
Our milky dreams are clearer and we both see the maternal is but a veil.

All lines up with our female lineage, a heritage I so carelessly squandered.
Yet sticky blood not only binds us together it also guides us through life,

it rules us the way sailors rely on a tide table to navigate rough waters
that wordless flow beyond data so badly misunderstood, over and over.

In an aim to reach that Terra Vitae, you and I eclipse in a bloody duty.
You seem to accept I had to follow my moonlight to its ultimate madness

while I perceive how madly you tried to turn into Venus of Willendorf
each time the moon was full, each time the gateway to history lit up.

Together we stand and gaze as if the sun could rise twice in a single day
as the bluer light simply scatters at the deepest depth of our womanly well.

Gerry Stewart

Invocation Against Winter

Unravel the skeins of geese
and lash them to the green fields.

Hold back the mushrooms' bloom,
warn the winds not to rise.

Blaze your bonfires on all shores,
their flames washing away night.

Till the earth with ashes of spruce
and birch to warm its depths.

Eat only fresh picked peas and berries,
fight the wasps for your share.

Build up the löyly* in your sauna
until you burn clean all doubts.

Whip yourself raw with branches,
hot blood raised to the surface.

Drench yourself in the freezing lake,
alive in the glittering waves.

Pinpoint with your dart when the sun
arches high, dripping with honey.

Close your eyes and whisper three times,
se on kesä, se on kesä, se on kesä.

**Finnish: literally 'steam' or 'heat,' but it refers more to the atmosphere and mood of a sauna*

Louise Tondeur

After leaving you

The flat is full of your sleep. Like Bagpuss, everything sleeps with you. In the laundry basket, brown jeans, tracksuit bottoms, that top with the heart I bought from Target in Minneapolis, the one you don't like, knickers, my snoopy beach towel, fourteen years old: they act like odd fruit, spilling out onto the carpet, all asleep. Your suitcase, the batik of Saraswati that your friend brought back from Agra, book after book after book: all slumbering, leaning on each other's shoulders. Your dressing gown, torn and blue, is curled up beside me like a cat, rising and falling, breathing on its own, and Glen, the heater you bought with DO NOT COVER under the name like a clever slogan, white and beautiful, is asleep too. He's a new arrival, hasn't seen or heard or tasted anything, he is only ever hot or cold. The TV with the dog that you won in a raffle. Our clothes, not dry yet, drying together, shirts holding hands like we're not supposed to, although we keep forgetting. Candles, camomile tea in a mug bought at the top of the Cairngorms, plant, fan, futon, chest, photo, vase, bookshelf, carpet, walls, train ticket, letter, diary, cushions. All asleep: dreaming, turning, snorting, rubbing their eyes, banging their pillows, curling up like dormice, rehearsing lines to say in the daytime, playing out what they did yesterday and the day before. You've got flu. I made you soup. You were so hot it startled me: fiery, exhausted, scared and now asleep, like Bagpuss, pink and ragged. *Heat* magazine, a box from Office World, a ticking alarm clock, a wastepaper basket, coasters, remote control, hand-held Hoover, more letters, photo albums, lights, weights, toaster, doors, old tan kettle, shoes, paint pot

Maximilian Voloshin

translated by Alex Cigale

War

1.

Peace hath dominion.
The nations, satiated,
Revelled: satisfied with themselves,
Their material abundance, their general amity.
And only rarely, exchanging glances,
Did they pounce on the weakest and,
Swallowing him whole, growling, withdrew,
Their jaws scowling sideways,
Once again grown tranquil.
All things went well with the world:
A trillion cog wheels
Manipulated the hammers and the lever gears,
Forging the steel,
Boring the cannons,
The Chemist
Prepared the lyddite and the melinite,
The learned men invented a means
After a means for exterminating the masses,
Politicians surveyed the maps
Of new colonial routes and markets,
Thinkers scribbled about the general,
Undisruptable peace upon the land,
Women swayed in the grips of limber tango,
Baring the attractions of their powdered flesh.
The manometer of culture was approaching
The ultimate degree of crushing force.

2.

Just then, out of the nether depths,
Was heard a voice, proclaiming: "It is time

To stomp the wine press of fury. For out of
Demons sent to serve them,
People did fashion bodies
And erect thrones,
Giving the wrath of fire free rein
In the muzzles' acceleration
And the compression of the projectile,
For having bestowed the muscle
Of running feet and the wheel's whirlwind
Onto the indifference of flowing waters
And humid fog, for having woven a nest
For the rebellious spirits of explosion
Within the wilful currents of the air,
Into the host of iron spiders,
Relentlessly weaving
Both suckling and suffocating webs –
For all of these, I discharge
The captive demons
From their oath of obedience, and chaos,
Constricted in the whirlwinds of substance,
From their structured order of music!
I grant them dominion over the earth
As long as people
Vanquish them not again having
Subdued and conquered within themselves
Anger, greed, willfulness, and indifference.”

3.

And saw I this: the heaven's gates did open
In the constellation of Leo, and the demons
Flung themselves upon the earth...
People huddled together in the river vales
Signifying the boundaries of mighty kingdoms,
And having excavated in the earth
Tunnels, serpentine and murine passages,
They pastured herds of gluttonous monsters:
Themselves both pastor and fodder.

4.

It was as though time itself was overturned,
And the world seemed alike onto
The unchristened waters of flood: gargantuan
Contorted serpents crawled out of the slime,
The iron spiders swarmed,
The asps did swallow lightning,
Dragons spewed forth
Shafts of flame and stung with their tails,
In rivers and in seas the fish
Spawned
Deadly roe,
From winged lizards
Light flared, explosive and fiery eggs
Poured down upon the earth,
And swarms of insects,
Monstrous in dimension and formation,
Implanted flaming maggots
In the bodies of men –
Having acquired from people
Wrath and lust and rage,
Stung the human flesh, clawing,
Tearing, crushing, searing, chewing, devouring,
And the cities, like millstones,
Turned tirelessly and milled
Their select grain
Out of each family's firstborn
To make demon feed.
And thousands of people
Flung themselves in inspired frenzy,
With joyfulness, under the rim of the wheel.
Nations, one after another,
Conjoined and twined into choirs
Under the clatter and clanging of machines,
And never was such dance of death
Seen before in this frenzied world!

5

Yet more! more! For nothing seemed to suffice...
And then another cry resounded: "Away with
War between tribes, and armies, and front lines:
Long live the cause of Civil War!"
And armies, having mingled their ranks, in rapture,
Did kiss the enemies' cheeks, and then,
Flinging themselves on their kin, chopping and killing,
Executed by firing squad, hung, put them to torture,
Feeding upon human flesh,
Pickling the children away for future use –
There was devastation, and famine.
And finally came the plague.

6.

A sightless time now dawned upon the earth,
The world seemed wider, somehow more spacious,
For now, there were fewer men,
But for these too,
Among the wastelands, room was insufficient,
And they became inflamed only after one thing,
To sooner build yet more machines
To resume the same war yet again.
This skirmish, delirious, came to an end,
But in this slaughter they grasped nothing,
And from all this learned was not a thing.

January 29, 1923, Koktobel

Notes on Contributors

MICHAEL AIKEN is a poet from Sydney, Australia. His first book, *A Vicious Example*, was published by Grand Parade Poets in 2014 and was subsequently shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry, the Dame Mary Gilmore Prize and an Australian Book Design Award. His second book, the verse novella, *Satan Repentant* (UWA Press, 2018), was written under the mentorship of David Malouf as part of the *Australian Book Review's* inaugural Laureate's Fellowship.

JONATHAN CATHERALL has published work in *Blackbox Manifold*, *Molly Bloom*, *Tears in the Fence*, *Envoi*, *Datableed*, *3AM*, *Epizootics!* and others. He has reviewed for a range of publications, and edits the quarterly online magazine *Tentacular*. (www.tentacularmag.com)

ALEX CIGALE's own poems in English appear in *Colorado Review*, *The Common Online*, and *The Literary Review*, and his translations of classic and contemporary Russian poetry in *Harvard Review Online*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *New England Review*, *PEN America*, *Plume*, *TriQuarterly*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Two Lines*, *Words Without Borders*, and *World Literature in Translation*. In 2015, he was awarded an NEA Fellowship in Literary Translation for his work on the poet of the St. Petersburg philological school, Mikhail Eremin, and guest-edited the Spring 2015 Russia Issue of the *Atlanta Review*. His first full book, *Russian Absurd: Daniil Kharms, Selected Writings* came out in the Northwestern University Press World Classics series in 2017.

CLAIRE CROWTHER has three collections and a chapbook from Shearsman, with a new full-length collection, *Solar Cruise*, in the works. She lives in Somerset, and is co-editor of *Long Poem Magazine*.

CATHY DREYER is a poet and critic who lives near Wantage in Oxfordshire. Her examination of Carrie Etter's *Imagined Sons* and Ted Hughes's *Birthday Letters* is shortly to appear in a special edition of Intellect's *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*.

KERRY FEATHERSTONE teaches at Loughborough University, and was the 2017-2018 Poet in Residence at Bradgate Park, Leicestershire.

AMLANJYOTI GOSWAMI's collection of poems, *River Wedding*, was published by Poetrywala in March this year. His poems have been published in India, Nepal, Hong Kong, the UK, USA, South Africa, Kenya and Germany, including the anthologies, *40 under 40: An Anthology of Post Globalisation Poetry* (Poetrywala) and *A Change of Climate* (Manchester Metropolitan University, Environmental Justice Foundation and the University of Edinburgh). His poems have also appeared on street walls of Christchurch, exhibitions in

Johannesburg and buses in Philadelphia. He grew up in Guwahati, Assam and lives in Delhi.

NORMAN JOPE has three collections, one of them, *Dreams of the Caucasus*, from Shearsman Books. He lives in Plymouth and was editor of *Memes*.

DMITRY KEDRIN (1907-1945), a second generation Russian Modernist, remains almost entirely unknown in the English language. That this master craftsman was almost certainly murdered is not what makes him the ideal subject for this miniature study in literary history. While Kedrin's very substantial gift spanned both lyrical and dramatic poetry; he is perhaps best known, and most interesting for, dwelling in myth and history, his work with folk and epic materials. Though he published only a single slim volume in his lifetime, the 1940 *Witnesses* (17 poems), he was influential, much read and admired, including for his translations (from Bashkir, Balkar, Tatar, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Belorussian), and published widely in the periodical press. In addition to his civic lyrics from the beginning of WWII included here, he is best known for the first poem (1938). 'Zodchie' (Master Builders) retells the story of Ivan the Terrible, who had the architects of St. Basil's Cathedral blinded to prevent them from recreating their masterpiece. The poem was widely perceived as a deliberate, conscious (and conscientious) attempt to directly address the current tyrant. Stalin's personal animus casts a long shadow over Kedrin's lack of book publication, and ultimately, over the untimely "cause of his death". Dmitry Kedrin died on the night of September 18, 1945 when he was thrown from a train platform, in a second, successful attempt on his life.

PETER LARKIN has several volumes from Shearsman Books, most recently *Introgession Latewood*. A new collection is in preparation.

MARY LEADER has published four collections, the most recent of which is *She Lives There Still* (Shearsman Books, 2018). Now retired from teaching, she lives in Oklahoma.

JOHN LEVY lives in Tucson, Arizona. "I have had the pleasure of being published in *Shearsman* previously. I am submitting again because I like the magazine." [And what John doesn't say here is that he was involved with the magazine at its very beginnings in 1981...].

JAZMINE LINKLATER has published the pamphlets *Toward Passion According* (Zarf, 2017) and *Découper, Coller* (Dock Road Press, 2018). She works for T-Junction International Poetry Festival and Carcanet Press, and co-organises *No Matter*, a new experimental reading series in Manchester. She is one of three poets chosen by *Poetry London* for mentoring in 2018-19, and is mentored by Vahni Capildeo.

DS MAOLALAI recently returned to Ireland after four years away, now spending his days working maintenance dispatch for a bank and his nights looking out the window and wishing he had a view. His first collection, *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden*, was published in 2016 by Encircle Press in New England. He has twice been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

RUTH McILROY has been published in *The Poetry Review*, *The Rialto*, and *The North*, and in anthologies produced by Templar and The Poetry Business, among others. She has been placed in various competitions including The York Literary Festival Poetry Competition and The Philip Larkin West Riding Poetry Competition.

She won the 2017 Poetry Business Book and Pamphlet Competition, and her winning pamphlet *Guppy Primer* was the Poetry Book Society Pamphlet Choice for Winter 2017. She read at the launch of the Spring 2018 *Poetry Review*.

JAMES McLAUGHLIN has been in these pages on several previous occasions. He lives in Dumbarton, Scotland, and has published three collection with Knives, Forks and Spoons Press: *Justified Sonnets*, *Aeido* and *Text 1*.

JULIE MACLEAN lives on the Surf Coast, Australia. She is the author of *Lips That Did* (Dancing Girl Press, Chicago, 2017), *To Have To Follow*, a collaboration with Terry Quinn (Indigo Dreams, 2016), *Kiss of the Viking* (Poetry Salzburg, 2014), *You Love You Leave* (Kind of a Hurricane Press, USA, 2014) and *When I saw Jimi* (Indigo Dreams, 2013). Website: juliemacleanwriter.com

VALERIA MELCHIORETTO is the author of *Podding Peas* and *The End of Limbo*. She won the Writing Ventures Competition in 2005 and received an Arts Council bursary. She is a Hawthornden Fellow. In 2012 she represented Switzerland at the Poetry Olympics. She holds a MA in Creative Writing from Birkbeck, and her short collection *1348 & Other Equations* is due out soon from Eyewear Publishing.]

DIANA MULHOLLAND is a poet and essayist. She was born in rural Australia and moved to London with her husband in 2006. Her work has appeared in several online and print journals including *The Interpreter's House*, *Brittle Star*, and *Under the Radar*, and in 2017 she was highly commended in both the Bristol Poetry Prize and the Manchester Cathedral Poetry Prize.

A former primary-school teacher, Diane is currently studying for an MA in Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University and is working towards her first full collection.

LUKE PALMER is a recent graduate of the MA programme at Bath Spa University and has placed work with (among others) *Agenda*, *The Interpreter's House*, *The Cardiff Review* and *The Tangerine*.

YOGESH PATEL runs the *Word Masala Project* to promote writers and poets of the South Asian diaspora. He also edits *eSkylark*. He writes a regular column for *Confluence*. Additionally, Yogesh is a founder of the literary charity, Gujarati Literary Academy, and has served as its president. He was a Fellow of the International Poetry Society and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He was awarded the Freedom of the City of London and, as a trilingual poet, has four LP records, two films, radio programmes, children's books, fiction and non-fiction books, as well as poetry collections to his credit.

Apart from being a recipient of the IWWP award, the International Scottish Diploma for excellence in poetry, and an Honorary Diploma from the Italian University of Arts, he has won the Co-Op Award for poetry on the environment. By profession, Yogesh is a qualified optometrist and an accountant.

SIMON PERCHIK is a retired attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Forge*, *Poetry*, *Osiris*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *The Osiris Poems* published by boxofchalk in 2017. For more information, including free e-books and his essay 'Magic, Illusion and Other Realities', see his website at www.simonperchik.com. To view one of his interviews go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSK774rtfx8>

PETER ROBINSON published his *Collected Poems* with Shearsman Books in 2017. He is a Professor at the University of Reading.

DAVID RUSHMER is a librarian at Cambridge University. His first full-length collection, *Remains to Be Seen*, was published by Shearsman Books in 2018.

AIDAN SEMMENS is the author of four poetry collections, *A Stone Dog* (2011), *The Book of Isaac* (2013), *Uncertain Measures* (2014) and *Life Has Become More Cheerful* (2017), three of them from Shearsman. He is also the editor of *By The North Sea: an anthology of Suffolk poetry* (Shearsman Books, 2013) and of the online poetry magazine *Molly Bloom*.

For several years he was a weekly columnist for the *Ipswich Star* and the *Eastern Daily Press*. He has been wielding a lens since 1965; his photos have appeared in various newspapers, magazines and academic books.

VIK SHIRLEY is a poet from Bristol. Her poems have appeared in *Queen Mob's Teahouse*, *Zarf Poetry*, *Stride Magazine*, *Shearsman*, *The Interpreter's House* and in the *Dostoevsky Wannabe Cities: Bristol* pamphlet. A poem of hers was commended in the Verve Poetry Competition 2018 and published in the associated city poems anthology, *It All Radiates Outwards*. She has an MA in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University.

GERRY STEWART is a poet, creative writing tutor and editor based in Finland. Her poetry collection *Post-Holiday Blues* was published by Flambard Press. Her writing blog can be found at <http://thistlewren.blogspot.fi/>.

LOUISE TONDEUR was born in Poole in 1972, and grew up in Bournemouth. She is a graduate of the MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, and was singled out as one of the most promising contributors to their *First Hand* anthology. Louise lives in Cambridge, and has published two novels and a collection of short stories.

MAXIMILIAN VOLOSHIN (1877–1932) – a second-generation Russian Symbolist poet, important translator of French Symbolist poetry, late-in-life world-class watercolourist and landscape artist – was a central figure of the Russian Silver Age. A selection of Alex Cigale’s translations of his ‘Inscriptions on Watercolors’, which he had elevated into a unique hybrid poetic form in its own right, appeared in *Eleven Eleven* 14 (CCA). In 1909, Voloshin carried out one of the great literary hoaxes – the so-called Cherubina de Gabriak affair – that ended in a duel with Nikolay Gumilyov. Alex Cigale’s translation of Voloshin’s account of this was published in the *New England Review* 36.3 (2015). In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, Voloshin’s house and place of self-exile on the Crimean Peninsula became a temporary home and refuge for poets of all stripes and aesthetics, from Khlebnikov, to Gumilyov, Mandelstam, and Tsvetaeva. As it remains to this day, Crimea was one of the focal points of the Russian Civil War (1917–1922), and these are among the first poems to document the famine, starvation, and political terror that followed in its wake. Also of significance is that these are among the earliest poems to bear the stamp of Constructivism. They are a small selection from his little-known book, *The Terror*, published in Berlin in 1923.

PETRA WHITE is an Australian poet, born in Adelaide in 1975, and now living in London with her husband and daughter. Her first published collection of poetry, *The Incoming Tide*, was shortlisted for the Queensland Premier’s Literary Awards and the ACT Poetry Prize. Her most recent collection is *A Hunger* (Melbourne: John Leonard Press).