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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.

Acknowledgements

The poems by Celia Parra in this issue are drawn from her collection, *Pantallas* (Vigo: Galaxia, 2018).

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

Andrew Jordan

The Sea

Identifying with a force that no-one then could articulate,
I concealed myself amongst mysterious coercive things;
a slab of sombre fish, the cracked quartz of bloody ice
and slit belly of what lay cold. A rubbery, dissociated head.
Dazzled at the door, I paused and then, as always,
checked for reactions and cues that might imply rewards.

Now everyone agrees that beauty overlies an unknown power.
We all accede to love's ambivalence. And yet there was a time
when ideals, fully realised, did not imply regrets. Inscrutable sea,
I found my compromise in the love conditional, its dark and
fathomless complexities, commands and signs, and thus
immersed in it from early on, grew gills and fins and spines.

Amphitrite

The man caught by the tide, spewing water when they tipped his head,
intruded, passively, amongst the coloured balls and towels, the children
and the wives, of other people's holidays. But in being subject to a state
of erotic latency, as I was then, I stared at him, his vacancy, until
a lady, gentle and kind, insistent, introduced herself and turned me
from the water's edge. She said, "You don't really want to look at that..."

Pulling me along the beach, she showed me shells and stones within
still pools, whilst all the while I wanted to see that body. Her touch,
ambivalent, abides, yet years later I feel him there, still waiting.
With him, I'd wade into those overwhelming waves wanting
only to drown so she might find a life delivering the dead
or, transforming everything, cast me on the loins of that moist god.

Martin Anderson

Flowering Midnight

(For Mafruha)

“She was walking like a Greek woman in Hades,
like a Christian woman in Dante’s *Inferno*, carrying
a burden as old as History itself.”

—Marguerite Yourcenar

I

Under your collar
starched by the kiss of
flatirons I could smell
a faint scent, like amaretto
or oleander. Mixed
with that of Imperial Leather.

In an arbour, *hortus voluptatis*,
under the dusty boughs
of a linden tree, reclined on
a mossed bank, I imagined
I could hear, as you described
barricades thrown up in haste
at dawn across streets,
dogs bark. “The arbour is full
of noises” you said.

Who heard the bell
that struck the hour
of that midnight feast?
Under your roving hands
fragrant with flowers
there moved, through a grey
twilight, the face of one

I was fated to meet
one drear December
on the outskirts of a city dying
of boredom and fear.

Nails driven or pulled
what was the difference
in that midnight embrace
where solace was not
offered or asked for
and the heart wore
a tattered leaf shadow
a young girl's dress.

In the tedium
of unheated boudoirs
at midnight, cold
and disconsolate,
I counted the hours
waiting for you to arrive,
that sour spittle on your lip
a grape, your leg heavy
as a clod over mine.
A childhood of unassuaged
imaginings wrapped round
your little finger.

In darkness, I began
to suspect, only
did you truly open. Corolla
of empty slogan, cliché, catechism,
lullaby. A closed book:
to the inamorata in the ruined
garden, her vagabond
ghost sucking the dark
bitter pith of its fruit.
In a library of clear water,
a fountain, I saw your

Jennifer Spector

Hillside

Jaramillo Arriba, Chiriquí, Panamá

I

Volcán Barú bedding down
near indirect eruption
green & white depth marks
 impact sites wind currents
 clump extremes
a moving shed of residue

hybrid animal-human remains
 & admixed carpi
in states of crumbling alliance

II

not far from the village
Ngäbe girls in traditional dress
hold time in nacarat, heliotrope, emerald *naguas*
catch spires of straw heat
off the shelf streaming the *bajareque*

 & water-borne guardians
rounding shifts travel as message
new wood trace ceramic vessels maps sketched
into stone bone offerings by the foot
 of the grave

sandbox tree that once held sand for ink
 also shaped *cayucos*, cattle fences
 & the huntsman's poisoned arrows
the miniature body smashing crude

Nathan Shepherdson

mixed memory on paper

Whiteley visits Morandi

when he died
i found me
living in my room
until now

until your head
falls into your lap
you will not see yourself
first hand

the second reality
in a third string field
attached to nothing
describes no one
to himself

a white heron
prepares to sip gravity
from a ceramic bottle
in Bologna

in complete privacy
a sample
however small

nothing is more alien
than art in the work of art
in itself

by avoiding the metaphysical
i grow fingernails
in the light

his glass womb
the perfect vessel
for silent opera

a life might only be
as long as the arm
you paint with
write with
or inject

there is no passage
to where you are
if you're there
telling yourself not
to breathe until
the disease captured
by sun in the window
is cured so theory
can forget why
it exists and comfortably
finish its speech
in the empty room
where saints continue
to polish the floorboards
by blinking

there are lessons
that burn the candle
the other way

this illusion at peace
with what it resents
allows skin to sleep
unattached to any form

three sisters in the shape
of a wife i will never have
thankfully take turns to rinse

Simon Perchik

★

In the slot for tracks the time between trains
is your last address though it's the station
that's waiting for the years gone by to return

the way this unwanted newspaper is already seated
as if it was going further and at the border
would spread as the grammar all travelers learn

from each other to put the minutes in order
before reaching out to hand some conductor
the death certificate that has no period

for the hole to be dug by the silence
reaching out from so many tears
night after night for it to end.

★

You work this bottle cap the way the early Earth
turned then emptied for the first tide
that now follows it one death at a time as the silence

that cannot be cured – it's a small pill and twice a day
smells from the shallows reaching out from a sea
that no longer moves though you tilt your head

side to side as if its primordial sequence
was still in place, waiting to drain the glass
while you are leaning over the sink from so far away

and because you have two lips you bite down to spit
as if the splash would loosen the label used to scab
that never heals when you swallow each pill for later.

Amlanjyoti Goswami

The future arrives at a Boston hotel

By the hotel, the car park,
By the car park, the wind, the backyard
Of a departmental store

Beside which is hunger and midnight
And no food and sound of clapping thunder.
The wind goes on, it bites, the rain lashes

Deep inward thoughts. They strike at the throat.
Makes you remember tropical sunrises
Hot days of May when stepping out spelled danger.

You want to go on walking, go on to the sea shore
Where lives eternity, etched in blue and white,
Where you can't tell the difference.

But the wind won't let you. The wind and that fear you carry
That makes you build houses, look for food,
That doesn't like the smell of danger

Your shadow nearby. Your own ghost prowling the night.
You are forced back in, inside the hotel
Into routine, central heating, good evening

Into the lift carrying yourself, doors opening,
A lonely room with writing pad, lit desk, carpet,
Thoughts of home, wherever it is.

Frequent tossing turning, abandonment that accompanies
Being left alone.
Staring the blinds down – outside, used car repairs in need of repair

An odd car passing by, afraid for its own future,
The future, what it became, and how
It arrived so early.

Chris Holdaway

Gorse

Star tetrahedron – gorse is evergreen – everyone of us
Growing into spines and thorny families. Something is
Concealed – hedges of our colonial nursery – standalone
Windbreaks now the good missionaries have gone by
Turning into everyone else not leaving. The universal culture
Of rent rose from the ocean. Sovereign pacifists in alien land
Of land alienation confronting the thirdhand or worse
Reports of someone else's vision. As yet the creature of office
Come face to the mysteries of intensified agriculture –
Witness in wheat stalks reinforcing concrete to the first tree
Cut down. A century's new growth from boiler felled trunk
Thine everpresent bloom in the vacuum of cleared ground
Thine evergreen nevertheless a personification of land
In drought – temperate cactus – the green scaffolding of
Another world. All oppressions are essentially questions
Of geometry from phrenological survey to voting electorates.
All calendars worth of nature propaganda would have you
Bury the mine tailings under acid green pasture yourself
– a smile of powerlines under a rainbow switching between
Markers of civilisation and charges of uncontested loneliness.
Ulex of the northern south and eastern west – points of light
By which to chart rank settlers who placed thy fearful heavens
On the ground in lieu of stone walls. Stunted pine you lash out
Never to be fit for forestry and how many workers lost
Fingers to manufacture the world's supply of gorse? Rip tooth
Of the bank's deforestation – given yet its catacomb roots
To incubate native brush until a forest bursts from the chest.
Immutable presence as assured as debt...

I'm trying to spend more time with my breath held in
Than holding the world at bay – to turn the height of
Drawing in to my relaxed point of rest – swallowing gorse
In a sword act filling my bloodstream like a cast mould.
With all these cuts on my hands how it smarts just to hold

A piece of fruit – the very picture of closeness amidst spines
Yet the pain of decision ever branching in thy drive –
And I feel badly for the space everything is always pushing
Out of the way. The scene of countless germinations without
Bothering with the tragedy of change.

G.C. Waldrep

[Additional Eastnor Poem (vii)]

Thunder must have a hygiene
I emptied the last milk from the bottle, into my mouth
Rinsed the bottle, came that much closer
To immanence
That much closer to the lilac bough
The reliquary, dented & tarnished, was disappointing
We'd had to ask to see it
We'd had to request an audience with the sea
Detached head of the mauled capercaillie by the track
Vermilion head of the dispatched capercaillie
A communion that takes place in the eye
But is not of the eye
To which the eye is merely witness
A signatory, as to some will or deed, a transfer
Two hikers passed me on the path, then two cyclists
Their garments almost exactly the same
Earlier I'd plunged my hand into the heated basin
The wild aurora above my dream-village
Flickering off & on, on & off
I have never, to my knowledge, dreamed of flies
I rinsed the bottle, placed it on the lit sill to dry
Matter murmurs into matter
Like the music of harps, a constant inturning, a key
Possession is nine-tenths of history, my friend
Admonished, from Alaska
Having been, as I note here, a student of possession
I lifted the smell of my own body in both hands
As if it were heavy
As if the ritual, like a garden, required tending
The bonfires, appearing in the distance, frightened me
They burned mauve in the dusk
I shaved my upper lip again, as per custom
Acquired from our time in one of many wasted plains

We are reluctant to relinquish it
We pay the same prices in the stores that you do
What remains unaddressed (in this poem)
Is music, the problem of music
Which is not the same as the problem of fatherhood
Some men manage both, simultaneously
I admire those men
One visited the disused chapel yesterday
While I, unbeknownst to him or to his wife, paused
Behind a screen
He sung a few lines of an ancient hymn, for his wife
That's one I learned on the island, he told her
Soon they strolled away (as did I, tactfully, a bit later)
Of all the things I could have left there
I wanted a shell, from the sea, but I had no shell
It has been many years now since I walked by the sea
I would not describe myself as unhappy
Only devastated
The unbroken vastness of the ear
Represented perfectly by that painter on canvas
Twilight tones, he called them
He had trekked that spring from town to northern town
Keeping a diary as a pledge against sleep
His canvases were another matter, those he sold
In the little markets as in the great houses
Where his friends introduced him (to their friends)
Now we have his versions
Of a horse's head, a lilac bough
Of milk, of a dune, of a copse in the midst of a storm
Wild with lightning (& with his emblem of lightning)
Rendered in his hand
With which it is said he once saved a child
From drowning, or was it a fire, no one is quite sure

Ralph Hawkins

Roman Holiday

walk the Trastevere
green shoots in clamour
stripped swimming
sticky-buds on the tide
linger to watch
as birds fly off
marble stele
a fountain of turtles
and you are elsewhere
thinking new false
nails stiletto nude
hawks & sparrows
in a cloud they
rise winging it
outside the Basilica
of Our Lady
for a few euros
walking later to
Gramsci's grave
in the fine rain
please take heart
and hold my hand

in celluloid
you return to me
thin as a stick bloated
clouds glum &
downcast condole
in flights of fancy
I am weak
pasty as pastry
& cry too soon

taking the wafer of
love into my mouth
sceptre, mantle, dewy
gem, chewy mints &
fancy cakes
O where did you go
I loved you
muffling my face
like a trapped door
portico & night safe

wash after sex
and use a condom
avoid harsh soaps
& douching little
calves spindle thin
with stiff knees
how shall I dream
of you now
in what linted field
& my soul yours
how shall it rest
when the bedsheets
have been bundled
& the day rumped
by the lumpen
shrieking & hammering
to free the caged birds
linnet, siskin, wren
the leaves billow
at night with more
unfinished business
poppy milk & shower
making a clean
breast of it

James Bell

Some stations of Hiroshige's Tōkaidō Road

Nihonbashi Bridge – 1st station

after dawn no hustle and bustle
words not heard
a rose tinted wisp of mist

below Mount Fuji
herds its bulk upwards once more
unnoticed on Nihonbashi Bridge

some begin their day with heavy bundles
cross in an opposite direction
to the nobleman's progress

all feet sound on the wooden bridge
in soft or loud percussion
you cannot hear them

in the vanguard of a nobleman
only one face looks your way
in this train of sons brothers fathers

below there are no ripples on Sumida River
the barge and its master are in stasis –
Hiroshige (hard g) has learnt perspective

houses on either bank become smaller
incrementally while moored boats
do likewise in a cumulative V-shape

behind the centre of the bridge –
two men lead with white plumes on poles
that imitate black trees in the distance

all walk towards impossible futures in Kyoto
two women who carry panniers walk into
the present from the opposite direction

Shinagawa – 2nd station

a classic three part image

first the main street of the village
wooden houses – open fronts show tatami
all parts of an inn

citizens – vendors – travellers walk this street
turquoise like the sea beyond
it all runs at an angled tilt

between Kyoto and Edo – no words
sea in the next part flat
only your eyes reach for a third dimension

size is important – for large boats at anchor
two at sail reach for another world
three skiffs squat in steps – head for shore

a spit with another village stabs the sea
dark and light – the straight horizon
rose and red sky announces dusk

another day in Shinagawa

Jennifer K. Dick

Masthead

1

to choke and cross back
from underworlds / whorls
the deep-diver's record
122 meters in 4 mns 22secs
dépassant / dépaysement
in different time zones
meridians mucus microcosms
platforms unequivocally
distributed like catch phrases
longitudinal exoskeletons
equitable consequence's escape
balance (verse—vibrations—vibrato)
and of marble
soapstone — sand salt
crystals lost on her
tongue alongside the
diminishing value
of...

2

lost field reports sightings
olive-green underwater
imprints: waves, skies
accounts of sundry afternoons
with his mistress her
lover the pool boy the
charge of prostitution
what sticks to the soul
is emblazoned upon lapels
the sins of

and farther, adrift,
the forgotten
foretold / telling

3

torqued transience
above, on the trapeze,
(she) is flight a
bright binge-released
lover confetti-stars scattering
into the choking crowd
beholden to
hours

4

acquiesce to accounts
frozen finances gridded
predictions line each section
of passing economies
“brut et net” in French
taxed de-escalation
via negotiations
third party tribute
or tribes: reports
pasted rectangular
like surround-sound
Dolby in the center afloat
respite if only
she could climb aboard
row or rows
awaiting / away

5

form formulae Formica-
lined rooms she batters

Hazel Smith

Screenshots

A daft French divorcee is scavenging for new lovers. A father and son road-movie dissolves in armchair yawning. A bespectacled American fashion icon loudly stylish in her nineties. Resolving an insult in Lebanon when there is reluctance to concede. A lesbian relationship as nuclear bomb in an orthodox Jewish community. A fragile German transsexual sways between gossamer identities. A young victim of an acid attack celebrates her immutable burns. A love affair consorts tragically with the heat of the cold war. An exposé of Australian racism through the boos that bully applause. An Israeli soldier travels to Paris to shake off his allegiances. A woman secretly ghost writes her husband's feted novels. A young girl falls in love with a self-deluded drug addict. Aretha Franklin in concert. Nureyev's defection to the west. An old school Pakistani father, a son who craves to write. A Palestinian poet activist suddenly disappears. Thought to be an Islamic terrorist but, in reality, brutally murdered. Violent, compromised photos. Bruises on her lover's arms. The scenes play out to a bathetic but operatic soundtrack. Tariq becomes Ricky, then Ricky turns more radical. In the background, if you can find him, a young and sensual Mick Jagger.

Peter Robinson

Cross Country

‘Nulla dies sine linea’
—Pliny the Elder

Never a day without a line;
but on this later train
taking in the marginal and left behind
constituencies, again I think
of standing still an hour for some signalling mistake,
like we had taken a wrong train or line,
and, timetables out of sync,
been advised to alight at Leamington Spa –
the station at which we waited
on that interminable journey back home
to find I’m forever identified, there,
with how it was we’d stepped to the platform
breathless and exasperated.

On schedule through Leamington, Banbury, each station
of the CrossCountry service today,
a polite old lady with a Geordie accent
inquires ‘How far are you travelling today?’
and I’m moved by the musical chairs
when someone appears with a seat reservation;
then slowing beside what remains
from Didcot’s half-demolished power station,
our train, suffused by the sunset glow
crawls on its fixed timetable,
and still nobody’s able
in the lingering twilight’s extended shadow
to tell how far we’re to stay or go.

29 March 2019

Rosanna Licari

Ascendancy

For Else Marie Friis, botanist and paleontologist

It began at the peripheries.
The flower took advantage
edging into the domain
of the conifer and fern.
Sporting tiny, crumpled faces,
bulb-like and unremarkable,
their early Cretaceous selves
gave no clue as to
the vibrant chroma
of future progeny.

Angiosperm
– *seed in vessel*
the core
a compact mechanism,
designed for proliferation.
Pollen encased in the inner chamber
triggers the venture.
The seed forms and anticipates
the unfurling dance
of germination.

Darwin puzzled over
the ‘abominable mystery’
but it was the petal
that gave the push forward
when diversity
brought the overlooked to the attention
of those that mattered.

Reshaped, variegated and audacious,
they lured insects

which crawled over
the plant and its flowers.
A mutually beneficial arrangement.
The great radiation spurred on
by coevolution.
Pollen everywhere.

The fruit eaten, was digested.
Seeds dropped
behind the lumbering dinosaurs
that ploughed up the earth.

A communal garden.
Sovereignty clinched
without a fight.

Note: Flowering plants were the extreme exception to Darwin's notion that evolution occurs gradually, that natura non facit saltum, nature does not make a leap.

Meghan Purvis

Dan Fucking Duryea

Would not like the title of this poem,
Dan was kind from everything I hear.
There's a story about his son at a premiere
hearing someone call his character a sonofabitch
and the kiddie standing on his seat and yelling
you take that back, that's not my daddy

It's too pat to point out it's always somebody's
daddy; Dan chewed his way through a lot but
I feel confident he'd be still and nod his head
to that one. Because Dan Duryea was a stand-up
guy, we all know this, all of us who pay attention
to actors like Dan Duryea, but we also know

how things turn, how the man you counted on,
the man you love can turn around and swing. Maybe
with an open palm, like how Dan did it, that last
pull back, but maybe not, and that's where the music rests,
where you never quite know. A man can love you,
love your legs down to the ground, but when things

get tight he'll leave you without thinking twice about it,
leave you to the back of a squad car, to Eddie Robinson
fishmouthing at you over breakfast for the next twenty years,
to a knife slicing through a sheet straight at you
and it's what you deserved all along, he just hadn't quite
got around to telling you. But you knew all the time,
didn't you, deep down girls like you always know.

Abegail Morley

For remembrance

I love my chosen names; zip and unzip them from my neck
as if I can reveal two bodies simultaneously, let down
a sheath of blonde hair only I can clamber up. I think

of you, mother, registering my birth. The awkward pen
slipping your grip, the silence of the page fumbling
beneath black ink, that radio song in the back of your mind,

heady as Jasmine. I think of you moisturising your belly
and your soap-scrubbed body and the woman who
imagined her world would not be this. I think of you

with your sawn-off tongue so you wouldn't tell,
breasts stoked with milk, and I know how hard it is for you
to let me go, when I've kicked and kicked to see daylight.

Bed

Moths unslick themselves from pupa and in my skull
their wings a delicate dust like a mid-summer burial plot
when digging stops and worms have shunted and shunted
to the very end of the earth. The vicar secretly pleased
of his windblown "dust to dust". I feel a light flutter
on furred temporal lobes as wings fall mute like a leaf
stalling mid-air. In these soft-morning hours
I rehearse the day, my lampshade face unlit, words
stuck tight in the porthole of my mouth. Once I woke
as the sun, a fibre-optic tree, a Catherine Wheel,
body blinking with constellations. I was everything rapid
in the heart of this bed that burnt torso-ash and pillows
sunk to a black hole, and depression clanged its bell.

Sarah Barnsley

I agree to read all the terms and conditions

to the point of exhaustion: please, give me a thesis-length volume of them, daily, add this to my list of duties and do not compensate me for the extra hours, request that all terms and conditions are printed in 8 point font and recommend that I purchase a customised magnifying glass from a preferential online company which will involve further terms and conditions to agree to in order to conduct a fair examination of the thesis-length vols. now accelerating their rate of arrival to three times a day, now in 6 point font.

I agree to carry out the necessary actions required in order to complete the tick boxes at the end with professional integrity. These include: (i) successful completion of one undergraduate law degree; (ii) a postgraduate diploma in business and finance; (iii) psychiatric screening to assess capacity to make complex decisions in a given timeframe; (iv) certification as an instructor in a sport or leisure pursuit for added breadth; (v) acceptance for additional borrowing to cover the costs of (i) to (iv) above; and (vi) new ability to lie about what I am doing with my time.

In agreeing to all terms and conditions, I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that: (a) all possible nuances of meaning are detected/held in my head for as long as I shall live; (b) there is no violation of obscure pieces of international legislation past/present; (c) next door's chickens are put away each night/their recycling bin out on alternate Fridays; (d) the pavements are free from broken glass and all our children can walk safely down them/their parents need never worry again; (e) all those who have ever been poisoned are now un-poisoned; (f) all those who have swallowed batteries now unswallow them; (g) people who cannot remember when they last took their pills now remember them, with no possibility of accidental overdose; (h) every effort is made not to cry in supermarket cafés/commuter trains/the office/in front of partner and child

Matthew Stoppard

Killing a rat with an air rifle

toothy librarian in the crosshairs
belly of pure white fur not as dirty as they say you are
neighbours watching me
stooped low on the lawn children in the window
the squeal and wriggle when the pellet hits
more forgettable than your lifeless tail hard and leathery
every wire and shoelace unbearable kettles and laptops
connected to you
in the walls
pinching it to take you from patio to wheely bin a pallbearer
felt every time I tie my boots

I remember air cadets learning to shoot a man
with 100 for a heart missing each time
so why can I hit you the size of my son's cuddly toy
moving at the speed of thought

Jasmine Dreame Wagner

A Parliament of Leisures

I dream myself as other people.
They watch me,

and I watch me, and we
watch the sun

as the jets seed us.

They are not my fabrication, are not
images, nor are they words,

glass vials of futures.

The blight in the rearview mirror
is not a life I stumbled on.

And if I am to promise myself
an army, splendor,

a path for words to declassify.

If I am to steel blind magic.

+

In corridors,
the loneliness the cities touch

with heavy tools, with ink jet printers
whose processes glisten

like abs of mud
at low tide under piers.

Where fog rises, the world loses
its proprietary clasp on distances.

Children rehearse a flower's death.
Because they are awake, I am

a stray locked in a dream.

Which may be sung,
which must be sung,

or the world will shelter me.

+

Alone with a stranger,
an algorithm echoes

manufactured busyness.

A first-page political personality,
an evangelical network

trill over rounds of rage.

Where I speed,
their song's blades

flood the rural penmanship.

All my love to you
who are both law

and absent.

We, too
grow bold and break.

+

Katherine Collins

Author's Note

A poem found in Annie Dillard's Mornings Like This.

I did not write a word of it. Other hands composed the lines. Pawing through, they [held] and wave[ed]

aloft the element of broken text. I lifted them. Sometimes I dropped the books themselves; and added original

intentions to a loose collection of torn and damaged fragments. The baffling quality of spiritual knowledge

looks sober on the page. Consequently, I took wild liberties, poetry's oldest and most sincere aim.

Mary Leader

Legacy

Has anyone seen Willeatha's madonna?
Her hands, her face, her feet, all of gold,
her gown, her veil, swirled all around
with baroque time, and her babe, also
of gold, draped with cloth from her hands
all hard and immobile ceramic, all experience
set. She has never been told who owns her
but knows she has been removed from her origin
where once, all on her shelf had
in common with her that parts of their bodies
or their haloes or the trim on their robes or the roses
that wreathed their feet were gold. No one
ever shifted, not even their gently-lowered gazes
but they sensed the comforting
presence of their neighbors. Who carried her
from her home, though? I know I
did not. Did she end up afraid in the dark
with strangers, somehow connected with sacrifice,
pushed to the back of a cabinet in Willeatha's
niece's niece's kitchen or isolated on a stand
in my mother's study or smothered accidentally,
in with my linens, or uncovered in a dream of
a grandmother's house, a multi-storied house
whose attic window afforded her
a view of angels working with gemstones?

David Rushmer

Kindling

transparency of
the form

that carries a body
I cannot separate from

liquid night
of graveyards

hovering

this sky

& the music I chose
from the inside and out

interpreted and
translated
bliss

your hand
sounding
the sunlight we are making

“rubbing till your work is gone”

II

to disappear

into
forms

between
speech
roots

and

silences

to come

spark across bridges
collapsing

to catch one's breath

in a mirror
of rain

conceiving

the mind
in each
droplet

into likeness

of likeness

collision, *of fragments*

“to burn up, in a gesture
outside the body”

Carrie Etter

Youth

On the city's edge on the other side of a wall of trees
a cathedral city in the tall grasses we grasped grappled gasped
kissed and licked a pale winter sun arms and legs and lips and
eyes sighed and struck and fumbled O joyous impatience

Forty-Some Days

There never was a daughter.
The farm cats grew feral after –
Six weeks before the flood waters subsided –

Boy, boy, boy, boy.
She'd reached to pet the mother, her special one, and –
Six weeks of water, six months of –

She let their hair grow long, longer than he –
Each time, such thin lines of red.
The mind-blotting work of it.

She strove to hold them close, but not too –
She put out more food, more bedding, apology upon apology.
“God?” she murmured without recognition.

No one asked after the crop, the harvest.
At the post office, at the grocer,
she swapped nods without blinking.

Mark Dickinson

Friend Request

A bald man dreams of hair and wakes up disappointed, clouds are no substitute and the wilderness, if it can be called that, is problematic. When I dress like a thrush I constantly quiver. With each new corruption the monotony of self pervades the snowcapped blossom. The words, “I love you” are vivid in autumn, but I’m not prepared to have a discussion on the subject at this time. I opened the curtains so the sun could shine on the righteous. In my garden (note the possessive) I saw a blackcap. Snow buntings gather in the field and I intrude on their moment, they take flight, settle and watch me from a safer distance. Vegans should pay attention to sources of organic phosphorus; origins can be problematic. Corrosive Economics are pervading the tundra in search of delirium. As a child I was beaten so badly my skin turned red, blue, black, green, yellow. In the present the trauma of force seeps into microscopic rainbows which become vivid and deep in winter. Behind the force of a coal shovel lay intent. Happiness is complicated and requires a sheltered spot with protection against hard borders. Everything seems perpetually messy. But the plough has shaped the soil so the structure is new. If you tilt your head ever so slightly to the left, you’ll see complexity through simplicity. I am overwhelmed by facts and figures but underwhelmed when trying to participate. Only scripted narratives make sense. I hover over the water in a pattern of light & dark. Show me your clichés and I’ll buy you a drink [slow breathing, muffled sounds – yet audible]. The path is overgrown with mixed forage grasses and Wordsworth’s mutable finitude, it leads to a theory of abandonment, which is incomplete, leaning toward a resolution of entanglement, stretched from the Holocene into this relational depth. As light rips gently into the future it does so with impressive fluidity. Small stones dark with rain. I trespass at your window & reimagine your past, my intrusion becomes a fantasy of apparitions drowning in a water feature. Nothing makes me happy but, “I love you”.

Isobel Armstrong

Four Rilke Elegies

Orpheus beyond sings into being
 the rose-bowl's silver calyx conjures
 O deictic spectral rose's not thereness
 the opening eyelids of each rose
 whorl-layer swirl-layer flushed
 gentle geometry delicate capillaries vein petal tissue
 pure voids of the calculus pure voids O
 self-enclosing helix furled round a cavity
 rose made of emptiness
 petal's cadence *made from spaces rhythm depends on* sing
 the dead's invidia paused awhile
 the harsh intransigent angel forgiving the the the
 a space

1914-18

'how this disaster has squandered us'
 mud-blood-gorged
 lavishes eviscerate torso spendthrift dismembered limbs dis
 remembered stumps Deutsche Heer refuse
 requiem's reparation disremem coronach monody
 'a revolt in their minds against mourning' mourning our
 indemnity our getout dismem
 war murder murderers of ourselves dis-mem re inducted
 in hate's efficiency spilled abdomen mem dis
 remem a paean to itself hate trained in raptures of loathing
 primal severance dis congeals hate's symbols
 impossible requiem's immunity for the million dead dis-bered
 re-re-re mem-mem-mem-re only a death-bell vibrating
 interstellar space
 to the bone

why did he turn back?
the lyre lost its nerve soft crepuscular shades treading
hades soft shades crepuscular soft shades treading soft crepuscular
crepuscular soft hades shades soft
treading crepuscular hades soft shades
nerve lost the lyre
turn back back turn
treading shades crepuscular soft
crepuscular soft treading shades soft crepuscular shades soft hades
soft shades hades soft crepuscular
shades soft hades crepuscular treading
lyre the lost nerve
why?

spray-spume springs re-making forever
turning itself into sky
air understands water
re-traces a fountain's exhalation marble's memories
breathing winds and breezes recognise re-remember
in green coverts or remorseless city stones' sun-glare
yet
there's water and alabaster entwined
breathing you'd think
water matter stone in flux exchanging transparency and
gravitas veined
alabaster and water amour
marble immemorial murmur
of conch and shell

Gad Hollander

from Identity Diagrams and Other IDs

Impersonation Document

He had one hundred ID's, more or less, his pockets replete with divers Identity Diagrams. One hundred – less than stars in the sky but more than a handful of pebbles – the default conceptual number, suggesting that his more-than-a-few-but-not-so-many identities each retained its anonymity, and the chances of any one ID encountering another on any given day were virtually zero. Yet even if such an unlikely conjunction had ever occurred, it would have been noted, duly recorded under the rubric *Imaginary Digressions*, rendered a pure fantasy. Which is why, to avoid falling into a parallel universe ordered by a parallel logic, as well as for obvious security reasons, we ask every passer-by, regardless of assumed Identity: who, actually, deep down, are you?

Invisible Disguises

Café. A man & a woman with a new-born baby seated at a table; another man with a baby sits down at the next table. The woman talks to the man – relentlessly, excitedly, at speed – about her child & all kinds of baby accessories. The man responds enthusiastically with his own thoughts on the subject. Their dialogue morphs into a duet, a recitative listing baby items: she citing from her favourite catalogues while he proffers alternatives from other sources: an elastic bouncer, a buggy, an electric pacifier. They focus exclusively, ineluctably, on infancy; we have no idea what else might occupy their lives or if there's any subtext to their chatting. Meanwhile, the woman's partner has slipped away quietly, ordering coffee at the counter. Why such fanatical devotion to nappies & dummies here, in a café, within earshot of a miserable old scribbler mired in complex sentences, forever on the lookout for his *mot juste*? It's all so tedious, so self-absorbed, this dotage on inarticulate, if sentient, beings – as it would be! And

although we can forgive them this obsessive yet natural interest in their offspring, we take exception to their seemingly insatiable need to debate every facet of their newfound parenthood in public; we would prefer them to simply be and interact with their respective sprogs, both sound asleep in their prams as we scribble. [In “The Sun Placed in The Abyss”, Francis Ponge describes his “we” as a succession of I’s in different places & positions – to which we would add: mental states.] What’s more, the woman’s high-pitched staccato barrage, her grating verbal attrition, tests the acoustic limits of the café and leaves us, leaves me, praying for either infant to wake up & cry out: for food, for comfort, for some human warmth. But neither of them does; they remain peacefully submerged under the droning blather of their progenitors’ comingling voices, their subconscious worlds swathed in a flood of verbiage seeping though their soft, impressionable skulls as their home environments are subtly reshaped and new realities appear, as if through the gurgling spittle of their short breaths – “is *he* my new papa? *she* my new mama?” – although a blissful ignorance and perfect innocence pervade the café air thanks, of course, to our scribbler’s unimpeachable say-so.

Idyllic Depictions (The Pondification of Water)

“Through memory we travel against time, through forgetfulness we follow its course.” Joseph Joubert (1789)

a blanket of algae covered the pond this morning –
whereas yesterday it was bare & reflective

three kingfishers
by the pond –
spotted only
one: a
flash of ochre/blue
in the foliage
in the distance

Wrecked love has left a rusted old car at the bottom of a drained pond, half-buried in 40-year-old mud, awaiting the authorities, or

Ivano Fermini

translated by Ian Seed

from Banished White

I say and we mix our hands
I take from a cloud
but then the ash fills
war's tombstones
here is the one I loved on a line
move a streak of lightning
so that a doll you bounce off the columns
poetry leans out I tell you
if dust and the like are in a mantle
my paper as a brake
I will tell the sky then... I have a swollen eye
the old people unwrap and whistle at the honey
the water which dries laughing

★

high covers as if closing spring in a sphere of smoke
would-be cabriolets the thought punched through the wet masks
.....in a....
...the cuts of places....
...grey design: wood: the most essential escape
poets it is as I say
some flour's left askew then it's a small girl who touches your hair
until its falling reaches into the dark
the spiders are hurled for mum it's Sunday

★

the jokes which appear in seeds
which cut canals in paper and clothes
we will love several times

Celia Parra

translated by Patrick Loughnane

Four Poems

You analyse
the cartography of their voice
in the processor.

You love
the peaks and valleys
that their accent makes
as one can only love
a bundle of pixels and decibels:
with the force of someone who clings
to the touch of the image,
that which can't be handled.

That dense plateau is their laugh
saturating the signal.
That valley,
a silence
in which perhaps a gaze lowers
and a hand is passing through hair.

The most beautiful curve,
the parabola of that vowel that gently drags
at the end of the word
at the end of the sentence
like a leaf that falls from a tree
and glides
until it kisses the ground.

★

It always starts with a tremor.
A constant whistling
at high frequencies.

Screens announce it obsessively
for days in advance
– electrical storm between four and five AM,
please remain indoors –.

Then comes the interference.

Everything the eyes see
dissolves into shifting edges
– what our ancestors called a glitch –.
Colour bursts into a frenzy
and it's hard to have a hold of the body.

During those hours
the toothed recesses of the clouds are
terribly dangerous,
a train could derail onto the bar terrace
and the house
arch itself several kilometres out to sea
and then
return intact.

★

By day
screens can't compete with the brightness of the LED
and are mirrors.

To see yourself like this
veiled with images
as though a body was only that which delimits
the edge of a screen.
A shadow continuum.
A river.

You lift your feet to look at yourself
and fall
into the reflection.

The mirror shows a world
that fits into your hand.

Hard to tell what's real.

★

When you smile,
from the edge of your eyes emerge
timid streams of shadow.
On-screen,
Every wrinkle is the crack
that split Pangaea.

So you learned from the dam to stifle expressions.
To keep yourself intact before the tyranny of the pixel.

You know that here nothing escapes
high resolution,
high
definition:
Panopticon.

Vaiva Grainytė

translated by Rimas Uzgiris

Autumn, 2009

Autumn's ripped belly pushes gifts on us:
not sales on coats (as we wished), but zucchinis.

Autumn's swollen breasts barge into our mouths:
we suckle on rain, not milk.

Autumn's finger commands we clean the environment:
we rake up murdered judges instead of leaves.

Occupiers – colds and polyps – share our nasal septums:
the left is for *her*, the right is for *him* (is the nose the case of
Vilnius is ours and we are Russia's?)

Only the owl is copacetic in this season:
it fluffs its pretty down feathers up.

Wind So Strong

The wind so strong:
jellyfish have gathered into a single jellybush,
drying clothes have broken the laundry string's spine,
mosquitos have been swept from ceiling perches,
and my head has been blown onto your bed.

Kęstutis Navakas

translated by Rimas Uzgiris

★

in the shoes wherein there are no toes
footprints do not register. the sleeves lack
arms. hair soaks up all thought which can then
be found in the teeth of combs. the mirror will
always fall face first. shafts of light don't reflect
from it's prone shield of darkness. the king is dead
with powder in his wrinkles. the word forest
does not contain a single letter. a drunk glass of wine
loses all meaning while drunk wine takes it all in.
what trickles from my fingernails are the shavings
of the points of iron nails. the skeletons inside of you
my dear have been sleeping for twenty years

together with mine. twenty years which also are not:
it's just a number lacking all wrinkles and powder

Notes on Contributors

TIMOTHY ADÈS is well-known for his metrical, rhyming translations from French and Spanish. Shearsman published his edition of the selected poetry of Alfonso Reyes, *Miracle of Mexico*, in 2019.

MARTIN ANDERSON appeared in the very first issue of *Shearsman* magazine in 1981, and is still here. His most recent publications are *Ice Stylus* (2017) and the chapbook, *In the Empire of Chimeras* (2018), both from Shearsman.

ISOBEL ARMSTRONG is a renowned scholar and critic of 19th-century poetry, literary theory and woman's writing, and is an emeritus professor at Birkbeck University in London. Her most recent books are, *Victorian Glassworlds. Glass Culture and the Imagination* (2008), which won the Modern Language Association's James Russell Lowell Prize in 2009, and *Novel Politics: Democratic Imaginations in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2016). A second edition of her seminal study *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* appeared in 2019.

SARAH BARNESLEY's publications include the pamphlet, *The Fire Station* (Telltale Press, 2015), and a selection of literary criticism. A senior lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London, Sarah lives in Hove.

JAMES BELL is Scottish and now lives in France where he contributes photography and non-fiction to an English language journal. His third poetry collection *Here At The End Of The World* is forthcoming from Lapwing. He has been contributing poetry to *Shearsman* magazine since the mid-noughties.

KATHERINE COLLINS is a poet from Bristol. She works at the University of Oxford, where she holds a Leverhulme Fellowship; her writing has appeared in *Finished Creatures*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, and *Anthropocene*.

JENNIFER K. DICK is an author with three books, most recently *Lilith: A Novel in Fragments* (Corrupt, 2019) and a fourth appearing in London this year: *That Which I Touch Has No Name*. She writes an irregular column called *Of Tradition and Experiment* for *Tears in the Fence*, and teaches American Lit and Civ at the Université de Haute Alsace in Mulhouse, France.

MARK DICKINSON's *Tender Geometries* was published by Shearsman in 2015. He lives in the Orkneys.

CARRIE ETTER recently published *The Weather in Normal*, her fourth full-length collection (Seren, in the UK; Station Hill Press, in the USA, 2019).

IVANO FERMINI (1948-2004) spent most of his life in Milan. He is the author of two collections, both long out of print. *the straw which comes apart*, a translation of a short selection of Fermini's poems, was published in a bilingual edition by Oystercatcher Press (2010).

AMLANJYOTI GOSWAMI's poetry has been published around the world, in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, the UK, USA, South Africa, Kenya and Germany, and in the anthologies, *40 under 40: An Anthology of Post Globalisation Poetry* (Poetrywala), *A Change of Climate* (Manchester Metropolitan University, Environmental Justice Foundation and the University of Edinburgh) and the *Sahitya Akademi Anthology of Modern English Poetry*. His recent collection of poems, *River Wedding*, was published by Poetrywala in 2019 and has been widely reviewed. His poems have also appeared on street walls of Christchurch, exhibitions in Johannesburg and buses in Philadelphia. He has read in various places, including in New York, Delhi and Boston. He grew up in Guwahati, Assam, and lives in Delhi.

VAIVA GRAINYTĖ is a Lithuanian poet, librettist and dramatist, working for both stage and radio. Her most recent collection is *Gorilla Archives (Gorillos archyvai)*, Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing House, 2019).

RALPH HAWKINS has a long list of publications to his name, including three volumes from Shearsman, the latest of which is *It Looks Like an Island But Sails Away* (2015).

CHRIS HOLDAWAY was once a pupil of Shearsman author Lisa Samuels at Auckland University. His work is mostly found in the US, where he obtained his MFA at Notre Dame. Now back in New Zealand, he directs the chapbook publisher, Compound Press.

GAD HOLLANDER is an American writer and film-maker living in London. His books include *Benching with Virgil* (Avec Books, 2000) and *The Palaver* (with Andrew Bick, Book Works, 1998).

ANDREW JORDAN has two collections from Shearsman, the most recent of which is *Hegemonick* (2012).

LISA KELLY's first collection, *A Map Towards Fluency*, was published by Carcanet in June 2019. Her pamphlets are *Philip Levine's Good Ear* (Stone-wood Press) and *Bloodhound* (Hearing Eye).

MARY LEADER recently retired from university teaching, and lives in Oklahoma. Her most recent Shearsman collection is *She Lives There Still* (2018).

Rosanna Licari is an Australian poet and writer. Her work has appeared in various Australian and international publications, including previous issues of this magazine. In 2019, she completed a Residential Fellowship at Varuna, The National Writers' House, and is the poetry editor of online literary journal, *StylusLit*. UQP published her book, *An Absence of Saints*, in 2010.

PATRICK LOUGHNANE is a poet and translator. He has translated Galician poets for festivals across Europe. His translation work was most recently featured in the anthology *Wretched Strangers* (Boiler House Press, 2018).

VÍCTOR MANUEL MENDIOLA's *Selected Poems* was published by Shearsman under the title *Your hand, my mouth* in 2008. The poem here was also published in that volume in an unrhymed translation by Ruth Fainlight

ABEGAIL MORLEY's fourth collection, *The Skin Diary* is published by Nine Arches Press (2016). Her debut collection, *How to Pour Madness into a Teacup* (2010) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize Best First Collection. *The Unmapped Woman* is forthcoming from Nine Arches Press. She is co-editor of Against the Grain Press and editor of *The Poetry Shed*.

KĘSTUTIS NAVAKAS won all the major poetry awards in Lithuania, as well as the National Prize for Culture and the Arts. He is a poetic landmark there, rarely published in English, though his *Šimtas du* [One Hundred Two], from which the poems here are taken, has been translated recently into German. He passed away in February 2020, just after these translations were accepted for publication.

CELIA PARRA is a Galician poet, born in Ourense in 1990, and the poems here are all drawn from her second collection, *Pantallas* (Galaxia, 2018). Her work has been much anthologised and she has read at festivals in Germany and Ireland as well as in her native Spain.

SIMON PERCHIK (b. 1923), like Martin Anderson, has been appearing in *Shearsman* since the magazine first began. He lives on Long Island, NY, and his many books include a collected edition, *Hands Collected* (Pavement Saw Press, Columbus, OH, 2000) and *The Osiris Poems* (box of chalk, 2017). Cholla Needles (Joshua Tree, CA) have published two further books since the latter appeared.

MEGHAN PURVIS received an MA and PhD from the University of East Anglia, and an MFA from North Carolina State University. Her translation of *Beowulf* was published in 2013 and won the 2011 *Times* Stephen Spender Prize for literary translation. She is currently working on her first novel.

PETER ROBINSON's *Collected Poems* was published by Shearsman in 2017. A volume of essays on his work is also in development here, edited by Tom Philips.

DAVID RUSHMER's first full-length collection, *Remains to Be Seen*, was published by Shearsman in 2018.

IAN SEED's latest collection of poetry is *New York Hotel* (Shearsman, 2018). His translations include *The Thief of Talant*, from the French of Pierre Reverdy (Wakefield, 2016), and *Bitter Grass*, from the Italian of Gëzim Hajdari (Shearsman, 2020). Shearsman will publish his new collection, *The Underground Cabaret*, in late 2020.

NATHAN SHEPHERDSON is the author of five books of poetry. He has collaborated with artists and writers including Pascalle Burton, Alun Leach-

Jones and Sandra Selig. His current project is with Berlin-based artist Arryn Snowball, utilising the reference book *Grant's Guide to Fishes*.

HAZEL SMITH is a British-Australian poet, performer and new media artist who lives in Sydney. From 2007-2017 Hazel was a Research Professor at Western Sydney University, where she is now an Emeritus Professor. She has published four volumes of poetry, including *Word Migrants* (Giramondo, Sydney, 2016) and *The Erotics of Geography* (Tinfish, Honolulu, 2008).

JENNIFER SPECTOR is a poet born and raised in New York City, living in Panama since 1998. Her work explores the poetics of language in relation to landscape and the natural world. Her poetry has been also been included in chapbooks, such as *Nature & Sentience* (Corbel Stone Press), *Book of Hours: An Artist's Book for the Anthropocene* (Artist Rebecca Clark), and *Suelo* (Estudio Nuboso). Her website is at: www.jenniferspectorstudio.com

MATTHEW HEDLEY STOPPARD is the UK's first official Town Poet in Otley, West Yorkshire. He has two collections published by Valley Press, the first, *A Family Behind Glass*, was a *Guardian* Readers' Book of the Year.

RIMAS UZGIRIS is a poet, translator, editor and critic. He is a busy translator of Lithuanian poetry, including *Vagabond Sun*, an edition of Judita Vaičiūnaitė, for Shearsman (2018). He teaches translation at Vilnius University, and recently published his own first collection, *North of Paradise* (Kelsay Books).

JASMINE DREAME WAGNER is the author of *On a Clear Day* (Ahsahta Press), a collection of lyric essays and poems.

G.C. WALDREP teaches at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania and edits the journal *West Branch*. His most recent books are *feast gently* (Tupelo Press, 2018) and the long poem *Testament* (BOA Editions, 2015).