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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 we have sometimes taken a little longer.

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

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Jill Jones

Undo Everything

I resurrect the dead for a second when I close my eyes
remembering the spring and the sea.
I look at each plant for belief or breath.

Sorrow isn't something I'd name.

Knots are possibilities. I weave them
out of themselves, tenderly, curiously, like a charm.
There are cold things I can't brush away.

How everything has shifted.

Sky's beautiful dry shadows fall on my pages
through the familiar spectrum.
I remember the taste of water.

'I will let loose my longing.'

Maybe there's also that weird glimmer
of hope or fantasy that now itches along
with the lies I told.

Cup water and spill it, undo everything.

I am alone yet among a great crowd, ravens
gather in the old dead tree, there are minutes
that remember me when I still don't know myself.

Everything hurts, so, maybe that's the case.

I'm leaning into the darkness yet again.
I have boxes of medicine for everything. I think about
dreams of mutiny and burn the poems.

Even the yellow door is sighing.

When rain doesn't come, it's still a sound
in the earth. In the lateness every hour retreats.
In these shiftings something unexpected

which isn't sorrow.

Jodie Dalglish

The Birdman

(on hearing the dream of Graciela Iturbide)

I saw a man with a plough, as he moved
the earth
birds were released, over his head, through
his hands
that he raised to them—
birds everywhere, as if he were the birds
because he
went to the field to sow seed; of course,
not any ordinary
seed, and this was also the surprise!

The seed
was the food of all the people around
who stopped
to watch the birds, and the food of all the
children
who waited for them
in their homes, who knew already how to
eat
the air
like song rising from the hot oblivion
of clods
that packed themselves into their fingers
they held against
their throats opened to the tuber of their
lungs.

The seed that had already been planted,
maybe even
in the old times
of the children who leapt from home to
home,

breaking a toehold,
into the green sky's mantle as it fell to the
ground, where their fists turned over the soil
and birds
were breathed
by them into the finest particles of the dirt,
in which
this man
would make his furrows from the sprout of
all the
alveoli of all
the people. And he said, 'In my Land.
I shall plant birds.'

Jaya Savige

The Nothing

A hole would be something (Rockbiter)

i.

Compared to The Nothing that is nowhere
yet engulfs all Fantasia
in the *NeverEnding Story*, all other celluloid villains
a child encounters seem vanilla:

none of Scar, the Queen of Hearts, Cruella de Vil,
Sid Philips, Voldemort, Vader or Jabba
come close to its sublime incomprehensibility
(perhaps excepting No-Face and Miyazaki's Yubaba).

Years on, you recognised the chasm
in your introductory class on French Existentialism.
Then you saw it everywhere: in Villon and Nin;
Boundary Street; an episode of *Friends*; a windchime;

and later still, in the car park of a crematorium,
say, or a clinical waste disposal bin.

ii. (Falcor)

Thanks to Bastion, I had a decent grip on nihilism
in good time for my first orgasm.

He knew the void, the gist of entropy.

Remember when the ancient turtle sneezed,
and Atreyu blew in the swamp like a windsock,
only to learn that the oracle in the sky
he needed to get to was a squillion miles away?

Then, when quicksand took the white horse Artax:

the off-white blur in the clouds:

just the sweet rope he

needed: Falcor, the plush luckdragon, who came to impress

a generation (and who, to stop The Nothing, Bastion and

all of us squeezed

as we rose, like freshly minted gods

on our way to name the Empress.)

Julie Maclean

In flagrante delicto

i.m. Mirka Mora

As we witnessed her worldly goods
craned to the back of a truck

we lost count of big-eyed babushkas, earth-bound cushions,
empty frames waiting for a thought.

She was poised under the eaves of heaven
brushing swallows from her hair

chain-smoking Gitanes
a bottle of St Emilion at her winged feet
as Japanese masks of a couple

/he with a cracked cheek
from being dropped in '87/

made their chalk-faced way
to the mountain.

Ravines and rift valleys
formed by boxes of books

gave off the smell of old forests,
dry rivers, death in the Gulag,

death on the land, dead ideas
like truth and adjectives.

And the tribal rug she'd rolled on
over centuries making babies.

We can see it teetering on the summit
in the descending light
stained by blood and love.

Makyla Curtis

water lines

the water lifts us and shudders
sediment drenched, there is a familiar swallow
a reticence

my throat looks west and south
like two clouds
it marks the move from point A to point B

the oar reaches in and
pushes at our debris, climbs the chanting
of our impositions

each stroke of the water
leads us further through a network
rivers in lines meandering across pages

there is a way here. it is possibly at a depth
that I cannot draw

a tongue tears home reaching for subduction
over and under the sands shudder in speech

at the last crossing was a 2b line
next, the page will end
and my run will cease

this trench so deep I cannot fathom it
thundering black songs down below I cannot
feel them in my throat

I cannot stay here, though I never arrived
at this cleft in the earth, all blue and
sea green

my voice visits, reaching with speech from the cliff
I try to plant my voice here
but the waters wash and wash

Helen Tookey

swimming again (Yvonne)

among inverted papayas
a reflected small sun
then Yvonne was swimming again

series of small spouting fountains
fresh mountain water
from the cracked broken hose

hovering over the parapet
hullo, good morning
the object shaped like a dead man

as with a stale thudding of drums
the silence between them
Yvonne God

finding himself with a dead match
mirroring the sky aping it
water still trickling into the pool

almost full still filling
a little turquoise set in the garden
blown fragments of memories

he imagined he still heard the music
immediately below them
the howling sea

for a moment not holding hands
without speaking just meeting
then Yvonne was swimming again

Text collaged from Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, chapter 3

Diane Mulholland

The Sea Is Both Green and Blue

Day one

In the centre of the bottle a framework of ribs has appeared, like the curl of an upturned leaf.

Later that day

The frame is wrapped with thin, overlapping planks. Watertight, although there's no water in the bottle. And now the deck paints itself in, back and forth around the hatches, narrow at the bow.

Day two

The masts rise. Ropes uncoil at their ends like the tips of ferns and in less than a day the sails have budded along the cross beams. So tightly packed to begin with, but warming and blooming as I watch. I do watch, and try not to disturb anything.

Day three

The sails lift and settle, although there's no wind in the bottle. They're not white, they are no colour at all, and the sun leaps at their edges. Every detail of the ship is tiny and complete and I can't help admiring it just as a new father can't help counting the fingernails on a baby. It darkens and thickens and grows stronger.

Day five

It's growing into the bottle. Out of the bottle. As the masts reach the curved sky they fold into themselves and the sails pleat in layers. Starboard and port press against the walls like a large bottom in a small chair. The figurehead has grown two twig-like antennae and she has almost reached the cork with her little carved nose.

Day eight

I come down early but it's too late. The bottle is broken and the ship is gone. I get a torch and search the corners of the ceiling and behind the wardrobe. Nothing.

I take the pieces of the bottle and break them smaller, then dissolve them in milk and strain them through muslin. Carded, they are as light as the foaming tops of waves. I get out my spindle and start to spin.

Day thirteen

The thread is finished and I tie it in a skein and dip it in indigo. When I take it out it is green and then blue, or both green and blue at the same time. I fold the skein and lay it in the base of a new bottle. The sea is both green and blue and the sun leaps at its edges. I place the cork in the bottle, then rest my elbows on the table and watch.

Peach Rush

There's a rhythm to the orchard harvest,
pick and sort, store neatly. It's a dance
generations have practised since the farm was young.

But one tree won't play our game.
These peaches won't be hoarded, can't be kept.
They seem to mock our prudent plans, 'Today,' they say,

'or never.' And so we try, as they ripen in a rush
and thud, swollen on the grass. We tire of peach
and start to give them all away, and still they swell

and fall. We haven't learnt to celebrate abundance
and feel sorry when the wasps have them in the end.
They feast like pigs along the sweet skin cracks.

Judith Willson

The Parrot-Keeper's Guide, by an Experienced Dealer

That it is necessary to slit a parrot's tongue to enable it to talk
is fallacious. Caress the bird. Indulge it with sponge cake fancies,
bean flowers and strawberries in season,
to produce the desired effect.

A Ring-necked Parakeet requires a patient tutor.
If not taken in hand very young it will learn nothing,
content to pass through life lacking accomplishments,
like many an idle girl.

The African Parrot receives the lessons of its teacher
with docility and grace. Apropos of the female Love Bird:
a more surly, ill-tempered little glutton never existed.
She rips out her husband's feathers.

The vivacity of Bengal Parakeets is charming when they perform
their little exercises, their perfect *As-tu déjeuné, Cocotie?*
But they will too often persist in their own speech –
a disagreeable, incessant screeching.

The female Groffins Cockatoo is demure but dull.
I have kept one that never mastered more than two words:
Well and *Martha* repeated in a low timid voice.
The latter was her own name.

Eggs of the Paradise Parrot are white. Turn one in your hand.
So perfect in itself – like a full moon that does nothing
but widen the icy distances over our rooftops.
The shell has a faint lustre, as of marble.

Maria Stasiak

Archivist

It was dusk but the sky
shone yellow
like a backwards dawn.

The crows were black on grey and
blinking, serious,
watching the first step.

And the houses turned away
as I went past.
The city shied away from me.

Understand that I was not
assassin.
I was archivist.

I came to trace your story
bring back pieces
for the tapestry, the shroud.

Behind the staggered junctions
and the grieving
streets I looked for you.

We lay inside that tiny
terraced house beside the by-pass
laughing across the dark

bound in blood and
flashing into life with lorry-lights
across the roundabout

matches striking out
discarded from your fingers
into the tin dish.

You'd have got it, this dislocated
space, this passage through
a night-time, anchored and adrift.

Streaked across the buildings
and my face
the rain blew in like judgement.

Lightning lifted up the sky
and let it drop.
I journeyed solitary, surrendered.

Far behind my back
the daylight gathers, vastly over-
whelms this restless night.

I'm left against a doorway
wrapped in grey
withdrawing into stillness.

We're diffusing, you and I,
like bruises lifting, lightening
into pale thin sky.

Kate Ashton

for the boy who wept at Fauré's Requiem

i

borage blue sky unclouded as cobalt
eye old stone fenestrate place
star

smitten upturned face glazed gold azure
dazed cherubim swum troubled
jade

of inturned sea caught piteously pray
for me a little birth a lamb low
born

ii

in blood and snow opal apostle
fist of flame names Jack James
Stephen

Latin carved in old black oak aback
white lace framed face
sinless

iii

as love's plainsong a prayer
flown apse altarless bare
as ages stripped

iv

of singing stone echoing holy
Mary muse a requiem
for them a

men another Kyrie eleison a son
a mother seated in the choir
calm beauty

v

beneath reaching roof
of upturned ark steep
stern drop

dream deep drown the boy
is lost at sea head bowed
suddenly she

sees he is weeping averts her gaze
preserves his dignity he
rubs his eyes ten

vi

years eleven maybe I see
he gives me glass he
gives me sliding

river flow sepia sky above
shy upturned glaze of stone
and dispensation

at last he gives me grace to melt
like glass-eyed sky or sealed
sepulchre of salt

vii

become sprung rainbow heart
sung open as the Book
of Life itself

Daragh Breen

Lear with Antlers

Boxed by the white glare of the lift
in the dark realm
of a multi-storey car park basement,
he is stooped as he wrestles with
what began to bramble from his skull
in the wilderness
and as he stumbles forward
the ceiling lights tumble on one by one
as he looks around for someone
that he can articulate to
the emptiness that he had witnessed

like the astronaut who travelled
along the length
of a mountain-side track in Nepal,
lined with school children
who knelt
with lit candles as he passed,
as he had walked
among their ancestors on the moon,
yet had failed to see anybody.

Janet Sutherland

Falls from Horses

By the second night in the saddle
I was reeling backwards and forwards
in an odd and ridiculous manner.
So black was the whole horizon,
so dense the forest through which we passed,
that although the Tatar had a white horse
we rode in loneliness all night.

Descending a hill my horse fell hard
in ground so soft I lay unharmed,
the roads quite saddle-girth high in mud,
my ears dinned by the howling of wolves.
In grey dawn my horse fell again
twisting the spur on my right boot
to a scrap of bent wire. Those hours
of watchfulness and mud!

I rode near the brink of precipices
through defiles that closed overhead
deep in trance till a nearby muezzin
called out the earliest prayer.
He called me to wakefulness too,
the dawn light tender on the mountains.
How thankful I am to Him who has thus
been merciful through this long journey!

*From a Letter of Colonel Charles Townley, Queen's Foreign Service Messenger,
riding from Belgrade to Therapia in November 1849*

Lucy Hamilton

The Red Jars

For Ms Ying Chen

Each morning the two jars respond to the day's glow
filtering through our roof's red window blinds

How elegant they are| here on the glass table
where they swell| drum-bulbous with a just pride

The low-framed table requires no further adornment
since the jars speak eloquently for themselves

their red bellies pregnant with sound & memory
I remove the black lids| and leaves dry as brown grass

fill them with fresh water| each to a disparate level
and tap out a rhythm with my bamboo chopsticks

I think of the ancient Jingdezhen mountain forests
and the valleys| where 'ten thousand men' stacked kilns

and fired ceremonial drums made of clay & kaolin
dyed in blood & cinnabar| decorated with cowries

Bewitched by tradition| villages danced to the drumbeat
aroused by the yin-yang dynamic of its power & spirit



Bi • Adorning

Guy Birchard

Old Mexico

Here we go, see?

Dirt road in country rattletraps drive—
Mine, the Stranger's, must brake
for what's coming through the floorboards.

Pickup overtakes, loaded with
campesinos obliged to stop too,
me being in the way. They don't object ...

We all pile out. Gracious, gentle men smile, say,
This is special place
and these Holy Days.

Yes. Young girls come
seeking
blessing of the Snakes...

Music like never before heard, from an instrument so
big it takes two to play, one fretting, one plucking,
fast trance/dance, melodious exotica.

There goes a bevy of señoritas
over the crest of a hill.
Hombres smile, nod.

¡Dog in tall grass has caught a snake! By God,
snakes plural all around underfoot—so leap! me,
aerial footwork a whole while to keep off of 'em!

No one else is bothered ...
Paisanos, accustomed, want nothing
of gringo, of vestals.

Trampled into the verdure: big, weathered broadsides—
Yanqui poems *from before the Revolution leftover*.
I can have 'em if I want 'em, nobody minds.

My truck they have fixed, U-turned
toward the Main Route. Can I
ford that creek, bottom of the hill?

Go, pobrecito, there is no problem here.

Tupa Snyder

Flight to India

To Jake and beginnings

Decades down, I will remember you
looking out of our bedroom window
at gentle horse pastures
silvering in autumn where the patchwork
countryside swells and greets me,
the turns in the roads
familiar when I come home from Uni.
The dark soil is alive
with ancient pottery that comes up
in the plough, this history of homes
burrowed in my heart.

I have watched the films
over and over our evenings of separation,
that my parents used to watch
in the ship crossing over to England.
Were things more certain then,
no gutted past
ripping like a skirt from a startled body?
You search for a comfortable place
to hoist your newfound identity
as you start out
from our broken marriage.

I would rather not know
where you are going;
I want this unhinged moment to become
only a beginning. That's what
my parents lived with
all their lives when there wasn't a home

anymore, the nuances of their arrival
in England
interspersed through my everyday
after they returned to India;

as I am doing now. In the beginning
St. Martin's bells were pealing
as we entered Doddiscombsleigh
the first time;
honeysuckle on the kitchen door
of the Nobody Inn,
our own maddened shadows
twinned amongst the hedgerows
as we took it all in. The beauty.
The stretched desire.

Divorce is giving up
the lap of sounds;
lambs belling for an udder
in the afternoon's quiet
as the jazz notes of lovelessness
strum in the belly
of the aircraft going back
to where I started from.

John Levy

Shopping for Groceries Saturday Morning, 2/22/20

A woman stands
in front of the cucumbers I want
to search among, she's

carefully, contemplatively handling small
green chili pepper after small green chili pepper.
I think she, like me, is nearing the age of 70.

I am loathe, as the saying goes, to ask her
to move for a moment. The little shapely bodies
she picks up and puts down, shiny green, dented, twisted,

gleam. I return three
minutes later and there she is, still inspecting those
lost little lives that a sculptor would be, could

be, should be proud of
if she sculpted them, but she didn't and I believe
the seed had no pride

at any stage of the process. Pride comes
before the fall has no
meaning to a seed, nor to the sun the seed requires

to become a small pepper being handled by an old
pair of eyes. I go some place else a minute, she
doesn't. Standing beside her I quickly find

cucumbers for my daughter's salads, rejecting
one in four unlike this expert's apparent rejection
of nine out of ten peppers. Maybe she's a painter?

Maybe she's in no rush to go home. Maybe
she's composing an ode, silently, without a need
to write it down because her memory

is 10 times better than mine. Maybe
in this floating world
she loves the drift and sadness (uki) of life (yo).

We are both upright and breathing, near
hundreds of mushrooms, cucumbers, peppers,
zucchini, and several thoughts

in our heads depend
only partly on what we see and what
we want to see. We were both children

at about the same time, perhaps both
looked in the mirror in sixth grade wishing
we could know how we'd look as grown-ups.

How disappointed would those sixth graders be
if they stood off to the side, observing us
in our late 60s? Would it even occur to those kids

that we both made it through more than 50 years
of countless ways we could've perished before now?
Would they think, "No, there must be some mistake!"

John Phillips

Prague

for Naomi Frears

The painting was titled *Prague*, the city where the artist spent her honeymoon. In the centre was a white metal bed and the head of a young man. Behind the man's head, the erased image of a tree. Two small, delicate impressions of branches – one at the top of the painting, one on the bottom left. Almost invisible. The ghost of grid-lines over-or-under-lay everything else.

For the artist, the bed was an erotic symbol. Jasna and I thought it the bed in which Gregor Samsa awoke. The man's head even reminded us of Kafka.

The artist said the pencilling of transparent grids was a substitute for her desire to smoke. Sartre wrote whoever smoked imagined each time they lit a cigarette they were destroying the world.

Jasna noticed the man had no lips. She said this deepened his silence. I thought it a silence coiled around a scream.

After we'd hung the painting above the fire, she lay down in her thin dress on the white metal bed, hugged her knees to her stomach and wept.

Windows

My words don't have to be thinking the same thing I am, unless they say what they're thinking to me. If they keep their thoughts to themselves, what they think is invisible. Sometimes the moon is invisible. The distance between my thoughts and the words which express my thoughts might be the same as the distance between the moon and myself. I can't calculate where to begin that thought and my words don't want to. In the sunlight, in the moonlight, distance is different. There are buildings without windows from which to see the moon. Some thoughts are windows.

Giles Goodland

Over

His arms back over his head
Sand turns over the narration
roads web over the planet
gulls yawk over like street vendors
hold equal dominion
soar over the red roof-tiles
Brunel's bridge over the Brent
or over single-pole bridges
over 95,000 flights cancelled
shivering over the whole body
advertises plastered all over him
the river turns over small stones
pours its waters over a precipice
this is turned over to the note teller
spirit places a hand over it
clouds are bricked over
click on an arrow to turn over
over the next two turns
wind is driven over the bottle
the moon over the trees
the cock is rubbed over the axe
fixed over gates and doors
over a wide geographic range
pressure over the diaphragm
the transfinite towers over the finite
over a 131-meter beam distance
white silk is drawn over red silk
wind running over barley
rejects rocks over 380 mm
any male over forty years old
survival jacket over the torso harness

the pipes play over the funeral
chieftain of over 1,000 tents
spread over the vast night city
control you have over content
pisses over the pastel of me as a boy
over the full travel of a screw
a wastewater ditch washes over him
the gums close over the areola
cage-cloak over a white mini dress
over baggy boyfriend trousers
the moon hangs over us its grey flag
plays over us its unkind light.

Richard Berengarten

from The Wine Cup

Drinking Songs for Tao Yuanming

Dark Blaze

How many of us find the way of ways
that has no name? There's one reply: Who knows?
I sip my wine and relish its dark blaze.

I pour another cup. How the light plays,
changing across the sky in streaks and glows!
How many of us find the way of ways?

Tracking the rising moon through summer haze
after my work is done, as the light goes,
I sip my wine and relish its dark blaze.

Dissolve desire? Stop searching? Simply praise?
Another cup, perhaps, before repose?
How many of us find the way of ways?

See fireflies flicker in their damp arrays
down by the brook. Longing for dreamtime grows.
I sip my wine and relish its dark blaze.

Dusk thickens and my eyesight ebbs and sways.
Forgetting is a way too, I suppose.
How many of us find the way of ways?
I sip my wine and relish its dark blaze.

Simon Smith

Angel Road

I look upon you with utter delight
that's my job

operating well in excess of recommended safety levels

halo/hallo/hallelujah
my life of distractions

caught on the entry camera
is to have no memory is to have
no enemy

this is a Love poem
in the poem's embrace that loves the World
like a new (invisible) planet

beyond
unnamed cosmic dust
there all the days of humankind

& more
in my life of distractions

in series
in this envelope between
earth & stratosphere

twelve miles high
crash out stay put
therefore this poem doesn't exist

the place of removal
thinking things out
thinking things through

thinking things
I don't know why when
it all feels wrong

there's no moving forward
& how I miss you & howl
symptoms synapses

& signposts through the eyes
buds to statistical analyses

conduct oneself with grace is the goal
as a line of poetry

a flower on the mouth

Susie Campbell

A Deictic Miracle, this Boxwood Prayer Nut

(Waddesdon Bequest, 1510)

'I made them contained within the thing I wrote that was them. The thing in itself folding itself up inside itself like you might fold a thing up to be another thing which is that thing' —Gertrude Stein

To hold and be held, an uncracked walnut, a little earth. There is something strange about this richness, growing into its own boundaries, rank and subtle as a hunted creature. Time has become a strongbox of interlocking branches. Global complexities, plumbed with pipelines of gold, are reduced to wafer-thin discs, slotted one into the other, light bevelled into a compound syntax of mortise and tenon. An articulation of honest wood, it holds the shape and hard veins of the forest by fitting it to the palm: an armillary sphere circling an internal sun, opened by flicking up a tiny hinge secured on its pin. Ahead, glimmering through a tiny screen, carved and fretted to this terrestrial cage, a thimble saint with his trembling hound bows before the stag. Kneeling here, prayer beads in hand, an intricate system of shadow blows from antler and slender branch to form the cross, thorn-sized and lifted to the wooden sky, as outside bends to imitate this reconciliation.

Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese

tropospheric turn in Douglas Fir's overstory

in this high blue clearing
I'm one with the clouds

like them I've left the Dalradian
rocks and etymology
insistent on facing down

I've learnt to counteract
by assuming the upside

my upper branches of pliant
green join now the white cumuli
in their feathery glide north

my soft flat needles upturn
their undersides to align
each pair of whitish stripes
with the drift lines
of water vapour
and crystal ice

I too move

over the Birnam Slates
and Dunkeld Grits

over the furrowed fields
moor heather grass

over the shimmer
of lochs
and lochans

towards the Highland Boundary Fault

and beyond

no longer rooted
in earth

rooted
for as long as it lasts
in this wind

Notes:

* 'troposphere,' the name for the lowest region of the atmosphere, derives from the Greek 'tropos,' i.e. 'turn, turn toward, change'; 'cloud' comes from the Old English 'clud/clod,' that is, 'rock/hill' and was applied to 'cumulus' at the end of the 13th century; 'overstory' is the specialist term for forest canopy.

** 'The structures in the Dalradian rocks near the Highland Border of Scotland consistently face downwards. They are upside-down.' Robert Millner Shackleton, 'Downward-facing structures of the Highland Border,' *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society* 113 (1 Oct 1957) 361.

Andrea Moorhead

Lying away from the darkness

as if night were a function of the body
a turning over of neurons
in obscure sections of the brain
influenced by solar waves
skin stretching out of shape
the tongue dangling droplets of light
speech so far away
the other end of the cortex
the sudden lacuna perceived
as the eyes gaze farther and farther away

Rejection

Huddling under the fires, it's all in your mind, the burning trees, the molten ground, the heaviness of smoke in your lungs, huddling under the snow, it's not true, the searing cold, the crackling snap of trees, the pungent clarity of the sky, huddling under the barren wind that brings in nothing, the blackened rivers of your blood revolt, and these words tear a furrow through speech, eradicate the need for conversation, anything that escapes your lips will be condemned as the ravings of a semi-conscious maddened being, stranded in a snow bank or half buried under the blazing ground.

Sarah Watkinson

Rural Assets, Blenheim

Underfoot's not dirt, not soil – but earth,
skin of the planet where we live, allowed by leaves.
This morning bluebell shoots poke up. It's spring!
Moss glows green in the wood, paths run with water,
snails are on the move. Sun spotlights the palace.
Let's deny our dread at the jaundiced field,

think instead how like prairie a huge field
can feel; how a sea of barley covered the earth
last summer, foreground to a vista of the palace.
Let's pretend we're not offended at the dead leaves
of sprayed-off oat grass, forget our fear that water
flows nitrate-gluttled even from the spring.

The farmer's doing his best. We spring
to his defence and praise how the field
is spread with sewage sludge, how flood water
drains off through new ditches, how gaily his earth-
moving JCB shines through quickthorn bare of leaves,
his entangled banks richer than the lawns of the palace.

The park is let for shooting; corporations fill the palace
with away-days and silver service lunches; by late spring
guides will talk of Blindheim, seen through tapestry leaves
on the eve of battle; show private rooms; *Tatler*, *The Field*
on rosewood tables; the animatronic ghost. Who on earth
eats round a rococo gold centrepiece? The ground water

that rises at Rosamund's Well – unholy water –
sells for souvenirs, custom-bottled for the palace,
linked to a legend: King Henry and his girl, the earth
briefly theirs alone, the wildwood leaf-dark in spring

myth-haunted, concealing, with no house or field
near; horned figures, magic, eyes behind the leaves.

Then, only autumn yellowed the leaves,
lakes and streams glittered with living water.
The ploughman dreamed his fair field
full of folk who'd never see a palace –
new grass and milk made their spring,
creatures beyond imagining, their earth.

This spring walking leaves earth on my boots. My house is no palace
but I have hot water; and my study, where I write and field calls.

Corporate Q and A

'What does it take to be a truly effective board?'

I am proud of my straight grain, strength and resilience. Ten of us
were delivered by a Stenner saw, from a felled oak dragged in chains from
a southern wood.

'Discuss the importance of clearly defined roles,'

I will always feel vertical at heart, though now I am alone and
horizontal. The wind no longer stretches me, I have no roots to resist it.

I am dried and abraded, waxed and polished smooth. My legs have
made me immobile. The Board members admire my fine figuring:
heartwood and sapwood, knots from branches lost to deer in my green
days, even the tawny spalting from a rot that my young tissues resisted.

Spring is for their AGM, not my rush of sap. In the wood I bore acorns
and suffered squirrels, now I am papered over with their accounting.

'and setting achievable goals'

In the beginning they made us for gift, communion and sacrifice. A
board can host a faculty, give or withhold approval; aspire to sanctity as
altar, or gravitas in its board-room.

'in our latest corporate governance article.'

I may be board now, but know this: only weather and daylength
governed the wood where I grew.

David Sergeant

from Common Sonnets

My identity I think is worry
And a visionary glimpse of a monopoly
Scarcely acknowledged, on these clouds, even as it slips
Into the terroir of History, an exemption from which
Was its power, the exemption from identity
Its gift, notwithstanding the boutique pass
It handed out to aisles of dates and nouns
And powdered wigs. Counting back you reach 8,
A rhyming word, to heave and hoick
Into the plot the cliff in the sailor's storm
That feels like a bedrock and would make
For an easy fate, the orgasmic
Annihilating embrace of Master and Slave.
You have said the words, and set that hare running.

*

Hard not to be a preacher when sat
In the passenger seat and the last zebra
On earth has wandered out from its crossing
In dream-conspiracy with tortured cows
Straight into your road, hard not to yell
And feel your bladder ding ding on your heart
Like a supposedly neutral umpire on a boxer's bell –
But O, my friend, myself, when you wake and see
You're the driver, I'm curious
And genuine, what do you yell out then?
Take it as a symptom I'm sometimes aware of
That your presence still seems available
Without question and corresponding
Behind my back with the letters on the page.

*

Nadira Wallace

Surrender Harder!

0. [Ars Poetica

I like a long tongue which can reenter the past,
and get to licking there with phrases;
get to massaging there
my injured ago's.]

1. First Love

We woke up and the deeper dream we had been dreaming clung to us
groggily.
We woke up and saw the lawns of April framed by extending and nonsense
space.
We woke up and found we had erections where there had previously been
simple air.
Mine was chilly like Orion's spear. I felt it swaying above the earth, her
scuffed Adidas,
broken membranes of plastic arranged like cards for solitaire.

I am still awake,
but tap these computer keys using fingers that're stiff: ten freckled caskets.
There needs to be another awakening
before I can properly lie down,
and with you rest.

2. Apology

10+ swigs of bourbon, not bourbon really, but a fount of

1. ballistic vests,
2. whistles for summoning the super-black compassion of a night,
3. cotton-wool for winding around 200 million cars
that were coughing lustily
a dirt-cumulus,
earlier.

On Western Avenue and 24th Place,
I was worrying about my weakness but now I'm fine, really,
drunk as a hit-skunk,
leathery paws to the sky—

while I am taking in the unexcavated shadows around your human belly
and inside its button, as you bend down
and come close,
proving it's possible to be close again,
and also that we, who have held to childhood's flame-gun of promise,
aren't such fools.

3. *Hangover*

This sunset is inundating my eyes, ouch, the whole colour-spectrum of regret.
There's vomit in a large Nike-swoosh down the side of our 4-Runner.
And the warehouses opposite haven't budged, squat and white, like molars...

Unintoxicated time,
she takes the throne again
and wags a finger at me:
*remember the seed from which you sprang,
you were not made to drive your blossomy
attention back underground,
but to branch into this rain-slashed charity.*

4. 2013—

was the year my original name flew off like a bird
to find a more secure perch.
That one outing, we could have had these labels pinned to us, though:
lesbian-loser/stockholder + sex-worker,
wrapped in the sun's hair streaming to unending radius.

I said: *I'll un-break you with plenty of twenties—*
later at the hotel (it was a *Hilton* with pig-
obstinate windows). That's when the MDMA-high started to melt
and run down the wall-paper,
like tear-tassels—without impairing, however, the vision I had brought
with me

Alexandria Peary

Sonnet branches

The forearm of spring rests on the window sill
to the kitchen where I'm boiling opera for pasta.

This branch of spring is a real interloper,
a man's arm covered in hard yellow blossoms,
No. 2 yellow, like a line of forsythia
in inter-winter-spring. Other sonnet branches
are scattered in the backyard, fourteen limbs
decked out in the *darling buds of May*.
The man's branch intrudes through the open
window in early spring, so it's a line in a poem.

Those italicized and underlined branches
about timeless beauty, a love w/out physical detail,
maybe the pivot toward writing and the writer,
I'll have to pick up after them after dinner,

I'll organize w/ a ladybug red wheelbarrow,
kindling for prose or a Triskelion.

Hannah Star Rogers

Good news, I have been advised, you live in your head

I mourn you like the wind
over a hollow cave our

hollow cave where I can go
but can never be

the hallowed world howls
the animal fur mind taints

any recollection save the
bequest of the the body

the passenger rocks
make possible the irony

of sand. the volatility of time,
lurching behind another place.

Chicken Ain't Nothing But a Bird

The work
He did was
Making animals.

All that is real are
My memories of
Saying chicken, bird.

Eggplant stems,
Touch-me-nots, mimosas
Dried, become feed, scratch

Shells of mussels,
Limestone slivers from the ossuary
Mineralize new eggs, dog food.

The morning gloat
Of what was once only holy
Denies wholeness.

Peter heard the birds
Their portraits only tronies,
Ledgers in the barn.

The work
Animals do is
Animal work.

Apricot Forms

Open to the impression of the stars
Unwilling in their glory to stop for time

Our mouths shut to the possibility
Of their blaze and signing out

The movement as like us, as like
The life wanting to be recognized

As unfolding or at least a little change
Blessed by motion we long for permanence

The opposite of the triangle of
Place and position makes waves

I cannot gather in the fabric, cannot
Reconcile to loss, will shine instead.

Denni Turp

grounded

leaning over

head down in submission

back bent like a Capuchin

monk in silent prayer

but with antennae poised

as if seeking some response

some sign from the still cold air

you are

nonetheless so beautiful

in death

small

glistening

dual wings

up

as if alert for flight

& caught like that

legs splayed

supportive

yet

without messaging to come

you leave your shadow

on the wall

like a tiny hand

at play

Kit Hanafin

Farm Drama 2020: White House Murders

To get to the ending you already
know, you must go around the
houses, past the brick building set
in England's mastered prairie, her
silent wheat fields apt to seethe
 at a breath of mercy, here
are the murders unfolding again on
television, pity declines to
the mirrored family cloistered
in the inner chamber of a
sponsored grain economy/ was
heat the mystery that eluded
us?/ the victims retired indoors from
the light of August, it is the same

blank light of high definition,
falling on gleaming sheaves,
the twins warming in their beds
like wuffled hay prepared for
threshing on the homestead floor,
a rakish villain stepping through
his likeness in the aftermath
and vomiting, they say, a comb
is present and correct in a hair
brush, blood has dried like paint
on the floor, the inspector is
a buffoon, with his unsteady
footwork, scuffing the gravel
driveway to the charnel

*my heart is aching for
that poor man, one viewer wrote,
who's lost his baby boys (Don't
miss Love Island 2020, winner already
revealed thanks to famous ties?)*

I could slip inside with the police,
blind to one another cruelty
and curiosity could follow me,

rejoice

& fumble stick in

hand triumphant to disaster/
kindness tramples the soft toys
and blunders in the golden stubble
hiding its eyes

Conversation

Uncertain as we walk if it's towards
the light, away from that obsidian curve
behind us, a cliff of opaque glass,
answer me as a reader talks to
a poem, whose train of thought
is grounded in specific love of
landscape, figured in local diction,
grist to a sense of commonwealth
or merely a model of how
we'd converse beyond the page, as
listeners so to speak – & you deserve
a hearing one day we hope,
your sweet free-ranging verse
will overrun the citadel by stealth

Luke Palmer

In all my books my father dies

-i-

Seated in a throne-like chair — Father.

A magnificent suite of rooms, a garden
smell of lemon trees

Inside
sofas deep as small ships.

Arms held out massively leonine.
Eyes
two slabs of mahogany
Mouth
surprisingly delicate.

Imperial he was. All huge. Enormous.

He decided very quickly, lowered his soul
to unconscious form
blood
leaking through his body

Terrible times

merciful deeds.

He grievously wounded held
on the other side of the fence
among the undying.

Paul Rossiter

North

the train halts

windless silence, falling snow
visibility ten metres

twigs and branches, silver
birches muffled with heavy white

*

north-western coast
a sea in turmoil
among dark rocks

*

FUROUFUSHI ONSEN

a concrete path across a stony beach
 yukata flapping wildly in the gale
to an open-air hot spring exactly at
the sea's edge

waves heave towards the land,
sheets of foam criss-cross,
overtake each other, subside
into an agitation of blue water
amongst black rocks beside the bath

Charles Wilkinson

le vent

a late hour wind sawing into sleep.
through a window a curl of moon
caught between clouds; length of a howl
powered down & deep, shrilling into
the mountain pass; rain-rap right-angled
to the wall, one drip as if starlit, glint-flow
on glass ...

so stunned back to the dream
& high bare hills polished to an inch
of grass ... awake again to the stars
strewn wild across
the carpenter's floor.

from slumber to cold morning
& wind-swagger still caught lumbering
about the trees; to the west the blast
quickens into the gap: so a sting in light,
charged & white, its movement alive,
as if chemical

far above level ground,
grey black rain-fleece, dishevelling
in the gales, slides on the glacial face
of higher cloud stacked square
to the troposphere, soundless beyond
the crack of ice & without motion,
as if spellbound, pinned to the top
of eternity, outside the spin of earth,
its racing storms –

the quietest place,
lacking haste: wordless white paradise.

Notes on Contributors

KATE ASHTON lives in Nairn, on the Moray Firth. Her collection, *Who by Water*, was published by Shearsman in 2016. From 1979 until 2003 she lived, worked and wrote in the Netherlands, publishing full-length fiction and non-fiction. She has translated widely from Dutch and Flemish.

RICHARD BERENGARTEN has published a large number of books, many of which are available from Shearsman, such as *The Blue Butterfly* (2011) and *Changing* (2016). A collection of his essays and writings on the Balkans will be published by Shearsman in 2021.

GUY BIRCHARD lives on Vancouver Island, Canada, and has one book from Shearsman, *Aggregate: retrospective* (2018). Other recent publications include *Further than the Blood* (Pressed Wafer, Boston, 2010), *Hecatomb* (Pressed Wafer, Brooklyn, 2017) and *Only Seemly* (Pedlar Press, 2018).

DARAGH BREEN has two collections from Shearsman, most recently *Nostoc* in January 2020. He lives in County Cork, Ireland.

SUSIE CAMPBELL's most recent publication is *Tenter* (Guillemot Press, 2020). She is currently researching for a practice-based poetry PhD at Oxford Brookes University.

MAKYLA CURTIS is currently studying for a Masters of Visual Arts at Auckland University of Technology. Her work has previously appeared in a number of New Zealand publications (*IKA*, *Brief*, Blackmail Press, *REM Magazine*).

JODIE DALGLIESH is a writer, curator and sound artist living in Luxembourg. After over a decade of creating exhibitions for museums, she is now focused on poetry and fiction. She holds a Master of Creative Writing from AUT University, New Zealand.

GILES GOODLAND lives in West London, and is the author of a several books, two of them from Shearsman: *What the Things Sang* (2009) and *The Masses* (2018). Other recent publications have been *Gloss* (Knives Forks and Spoons, 2011) and *The Dumb Messengers* (Salt Publishing, 2012).

MARK GOODWIN has a number of books to his name, several of them from Shearsman, including *House At Out* (2015). Another, *At*, is currently in preparation.

LUCY HAMILTON co-edited *Long Poem Magazine* from 2008 to 2018, and now works for Cam Rivers Publishing. Her two collections of prose poems are *Stalker* (Shearsman, 2012), shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection, and *Of Heads & Hearts* (Shearsman, 2018).

KIT HANAFIN, whose poems have been published in *Wretched Strangers* (Boiler House Press, 2018) and *PN Review*, is working on a long poem about the first Palestinian intifada and environmental degradation in Europe.

JILL JONES was born in Sydney and has lived in Adelaide since 2008. Her recent books are *A History of What I'll Become* (UWAP), *Viva the Real* (UQP) and *Brink*

(Five Islands Press). With Scots-Australian poet Alison Flett, she publishes chapbooks through Little Windows Press.

JOHN LEVY is an American poet based in Tucson, who has been involved with *Shearsman* magazine since its very beginnings in 1981.

JULIE MACLEAN is the author of *Tango Boleo* (with Avril Bradley, Ginninderra Press, Adelaide, 2019), *Lips That Did* (Dancing Girl Press, Chicago, 2016), and *When I saw Jimi* (Indigo Dreams, 2013).

SYLVIE MARIE is a Flemish poet, from Ghent. Her first collection, *Zonder*, (Vrijdggag, Antwerp, 2009) was a great success in Belgium, and was followed by a novel and three more collections, the most recent being *Houdingen* (Vrijdggag, 2018). She is also an editor at the magazine *Deus ex machina*.

ANDREA MOORHEAD, editor of *Osiris* and translator of contemporary Francophone poetry, publishes in French and in English. Poetry collections include *The Carver's Dream* (Red Dragonfly Press), and *À l'ombre de ta voix* (Le Noroît). In 2018, she was awarded the Prix International de Poésie Antonio Viccaro.

DIANA MULHOLLAND was born in rural Australia and now lives in London. Her work has appeared widely in journals in the UK and Australia, including most recently *The Manchester Review*, *Finished Creatures*, *Not Very Quiet*, and *Long Poem Magazine*.

LUKE PALMER's debut pamphlet, *Spring in the Hospital* (Prole Books, 2018) was the winner of the Prole Pamphlet competition. His first novel is due for publication with Firefly Press in 2021.

ALEXANDRIA PEARY was recently appointed Poet Laureate of New Hampshire, and is the author of six books, including *Control Bird Alt Delete* (University of Iowa Press 2014) and *The Water Draft* (Spuyten Duyvil 2019).

JOHN PHILLIPS' most recent book, *Shape of Faith* (2017), is from Shearsman. His most recent publications are two chapbooks: *No Preference* (2018) and *Hourglass* (2020), both from Longhouse.

HANNAH STAR ROGERS' book-length collection of ekphrastic poems accompanied by the visual work that inspired them, *Exo-Sanctuaries*, is due out Fall 2020 from Bijou Art Books. Her first poetry monograph, *American Valentines*, will be published by Wesleyan University Press.

PAUL ROSSITER retired from teaching English and applied linguistics at the University of Tokyo in 2012 and in the following year founded Isobar Press. He has four books with Isobar, the most recent being *On Arrival* (2019) and three earlier volumes of his poetry have been published in Japan.

JAYA SAVIGE was born in Sydney and lives in London, where he lectures at the New College of the Humanities. His books include *Latecomers*, and *Surface to Air*, which was shortlisted for *The Age Poetry Book of the Year*. *Change Machine* is due from University of Queensland Press in late 2020.

DAVID SERGEANT is Associate Professor at the University of Plymouth, where he teaches modern literature. He has two collections to his name, *Talk Like Galileo* (Shearsman, 2010) and *The Pronoun Utopia* (Green Bottle Press, 2017).

SIMON SMITH has a *Selected Poems* (2016) with Shearsman, and a collection of translations from Catullus with Carcanet Press (2019).

SOPHIE (JIANGHONG) SONG, was born and grew up in China, and is now an editor for Cam Rivers Publishing. She lives in Cambridge with her husband and two children.

TUPA SNYDER lives in Calcutta. Shearsman published her first collection, *No Man's Land*, in 2007.

MARIA STASIAK grew up in Newfoundland and now lives in London. She has had work published in *Magma*, *The Rialto*, *Envoi*, *Iota*, *The North*, *Interpreter's House*, *Brittle Star*, *Urthona* and *Poetry Salzburg*.

JANET SUTHERLAND lives in Lewes, Sussex, and has four collections from Shearsman, the most recent of which is *Home Farm* (2019).

HELEN TOOKEY is based in Liverpool. She writes poems and short prose and has collaborated with musicians Sharron Kraus and Martin Heslop. She has published two poetry collections with Carcanet, *Missel-Child* (2014) and *City of Departures* (2019), and is currently working on a third.

DENNI TURP grew up in London but now lives in north Wales, where she graduated from Bangor University and pursued postgraduate research in Arthurian literature. Her poems have been published in a number of magazines, and she is a member of the Second Light Network of Women Poets.

NADIRA WALLACE is a practice-based PhD student at Royal Holloway, University of London. She received a BA and Masters from Oxford University before going on to study creative writing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

SARAH WATKINSON is Professor emerita in Plant Sciences at the University of Oxford.

CHARLES WILKINSON's collection, *The Glazier's Choice*, appeared from Eyewear in 2019. He lives in Powys, Wales, where he is heavily outnumbered by members of the ovine community.

JUDITH WILLSON grew up in Manchester and lives in the Yorkshire Pennines. The poems in this issue will be included in her second collection, forthcoming from Carcanet in 2021. Her first, *Crossing the Mirror Line*, appeared from the same press in 2017.

ELŻBIETA WÓJCIK-LEESE writes with/in English, Polish and Danish. *Nothing More* (Arc, 2013), which samples the Polish poet Krystyna Miłobędzka, was shortlisted for the 2015 Popescu European Poetry Translation Prize.