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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 do sometimes take a little longer.

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

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Mário de Sá-Carneiro

translated by Chris Daniels

Manicure

Feeling my fingernails being polished,
A sudden, inexplicable feeling of tenderness,
I fold everything into Me, piously.
Yet here I am alone in a Café
This morning, as usual, me and my tawny yawns.
Behind me tables, only tables – hard
And boorish, foursquare in uncultured
Gaucherie; quadrangular, free-thinking . . .
Outside, a sunny may day –
A brutish, provincial, democratic day
That my delicate, refined, elegant, citified eyes
Are unable to tolerate – struggling, they barely
Withstand the nausea. My whole sensibility
Is offended by days like this, but they must
Have their singer among the friends with whom I stroll at times —
Those natural brunettes with big mustaches
Who write, join political parties,
Attend republican congresses,
Run around with women, like red wine,
Pearmain, fried sardines . . .

And with this feeling of polishing my fingernails,
Painting them with Parisian lacquer,
I become more and more moved to compassion
Till I cry out for Me . . .
A thousand colors in the Air, a thousand throbbing vibrations,
Distant misty planes
Drop down sinuously, shifting streaks, flexing discs
Come tenuously, drawing up in me
All the tenderness I could have lived,
All the grandeur I could have senses,

All the *mise-en-scène* I ever was . . .
This is like the weak obsession
Of a smile reflected in empty mirrors
Focusing on me, bit by bit . . .
Delicate winding flexures . . .
Fine crystalline quiver . . .
Unattainable slippage . . .
Swift atmospheric spark . . .

And all these things driving through space
To me, numberless intersections
Of multiple, free, lubricious planes.

There, in a huge, undulating, phantasmal
Mirror spouting all down through my past,
Is my demolished present,
My future already dust . . .

.....

Putting aside my files,
My scissors, my *godets* of varnish,
The polishers of my sensations –
I let loose my eyes – to be maddened by Air!
Oh! if only I could exhaust every inlay!
If only I could hammer away at this beauty – unsupported, in the end! –
To sing all that revolves, molds, saturates,
Strews and expands in subtilized,
Streaming vibrations: – ever toward infinity! . . .
Calottes hanging under ruined ogives,
Solid triangles in broken naves!
Spirals trailing behind a vertical flight!
Wonderful spheres in a tennis ball's wake!
How blondely aquiver, the player's laughing mouth . . .
Scarlet fanning garlands when a half-naked
Russian ballerina flutters painted Salome hands
On a great stage of Gold!
– How lacy, other ballets!

Ah! these precipial inflections, strident, blinding,
These brutal vertices, divergent, grinding,
Apache daggers pierce
High chill dawns . . .

And in stations and embarcaderos,
The big, piled crates,
The baggage, the bundles – pell-mell . . .
I toss everything into the Air,
Fashioned for it, culled for it
In multiple interstices
Wherever I feel my Soul wandering! . . .

– O futurist beauty of commodities!

– O brown paper wrappers,
How I'd love to wear you like a toga!
– Wooden crates,
How I yearn to sink my teeth into you!
And the spikes, the cords, the hoops . . . –
But most of all, in my eyes emboldened by beauty,
The dancing, sparkling inscriptions
On every article of drayage –
Black, red, blue or green —
Shouts of the present, of Commerce & Industry
In cosmopolitan transit:

FRAGILE ! FRAGILE !

843 — AG LISBON

492 — WR MADRID

Avidly tracking new atmospheric Beauty,
My gaze slithers constantly

In frenzied absorption.
What sortilege! Everything bails
Into a great insidious fluid
Grotesquely aswirl – swift,
Imponderable, elegantly frivolous light . . .
– Look at the tables . . . Eia! Eia!
Cabriolets fly straight up into the Air
In an instantaneous series of quads and spaces –
But already, farther off, in distant, removed lozenges . . .
And the ranks plunge indistinguishably,
And mixing with the tables, bellowing insinuations
Of pews covered with crimson velvet
Which course caroming throughout the café . . .
And, higher still, in oblique planes,
Airy symbolisms of tenuous heraldry
Dazzle chessmen at the feet of the chairs
Which, startled from their horizontal sleep,
Also arise in a sarabande . . .

My eyes anointed with Novelty,
Yes! — my futurist, my cubist, my intersectionist eyes
Will not stop quivering and lapping up all the sparkling,
Spectral beauty, transferred, succedaneous,
All that Beauty-without-Support,
Disconjunct, emerged, variable
Always and free – in continuous mutation,
Unfathomable divagations . . .

– How much for my banal porcelain teacup?

Ah, exhaled in amphoric Greek curves,
Rising in a spiral, ciliate vortex,
Convex edge shooting gold . . .

It's in the air that everything undulates. It's there that everything exists!

Kate Ashton

missing

here is white feel
how unequivocal how

the land bequeaths its own
reply asks nothing how

hungrily it cleaves
where time forgets itself
in some sort of

bliss here on the hard
earth which recalls
no insult come in
do not ask why

do not say I do
not understand these words
what do they mean?
they mean to

obliterate you soon
at Imbolc beneath a
bright storm-moon
on lambing snow

spring
where Bridget's green
rush crosses grow overwept
with white and aconite's
gold coronet

foretells sudden demise
undreamt of yet how good to
rest welcome

none will affright you we
are close as kin to tender
night its thin embrace
frontierless

there is no cure but solace
for the fall forget
yourself deep grief
is kind for all

recall
it has mislaid its memory
of taste soft skin like
you seeks south asks
which way for

touch of him relief at
unnuanced mouth lips
unversed in artifice
or guile

longs for nothing more
nor less than lost
truth light shawl
cats-paw

warm slid over claw
to hold off hostilities
uncalled for
catastrophe

Margaret Ann Wadleigh

Vassals or Kings

Gravitational Waves Detected Confirming
Einstein's Theory: *New York*
Times. February 12th, 2016.
I made a discovery which you may already know.
You can't ascertain laws of physics,
with a cat on your lap flicking a barbed tongue:
dolling himself up for the sun, his vassal,
to revolve around him. *King Æthelstan*
may have met, in the ruins of Bath, *Felis Catus*:
heir and progeny of rodent-slayers
to ancient seafarers, or ground-rye keepers
in *Offa's* mead hall. Consider a cat
owned by royalty: say, *Hywel Dda of Wales*,
according to whom, the value of said *cath*
exceeded that of "milch sheep with lambs
and wool." Now. On my lap preening:
Winter, a.k.a. "The Fred Astaire
of Cats," sees no need to heed
a double espresso held in catastrophic
balance above his crown. The fabric of interspace
jiggles not a jot, as time expands to make
his lordship's throne from this atomic dalliance.
Theories of relativity are irrelevant in a geometry
of naps and knees and disregarded gravity.

How Many Women Handle Serpents

*All that I hope to say in books, all that I ever hope to say,
is that I love the world. — E. B. White*

When I see her eyes crease into smile
as she adjusts her fabric mask printed
with avocados, then opens the drive-thru

window glancing at the clock to be sure
to deliver my meal in thirty seconds or less
while she's picturing the moment she'll

put her hand in the biometric payroll tracker
and then walk in her uniform's non-slip shoes
to the dollar store bus stop and from there

drop quarters into the electric coin-bin then
press against the genial sweat of strangers
in search of an unoccupied seat while looking

forward to caring for her little granddaughter
whose mother works late at the casino
clearing custom-etched glasses from tables,

and now as she reaches her hand out to mine
holding a sack containing a Double Bacon
Smokehouse Burger on Fresh Artisan Roll

(Total Fat 92 gr.) I place it on the seat
when my eyes catch a glint of afterschool sun
on Michelin Four Star Copper Cookware

in the window of The Culinary Boutique
where each cooking vessel is designed
by *au courant* engineers from Paris

Amlanjyoti Goswami

Jagannath Temple Blues

shoes outside please.
the priest mumbles

brown foot on white marble
lunch on floor.

dancing those days on janmashtami.
balcony leading to the gods above.

the sky is turning.
night arcs her long arm out.

a mother asks
for a son's health.

a child is delirious with fever.
the gods know what's wrong

the child is healed.
becomes a man.

turns up at the doorstep
of tomorrow.

he knows the gods well
by now.

Eluned Jones

To Aberdaron

It was his promise, this language
salvaged from time
as a script drawn into skin,

my life's pattern
where the remembered pebbles
of a riverbed's back run dry in sun.

Too many silent years.
Morning balances along a leaf's edge,
and his words return – do not

dream these untamed languages
onto your English tongue – there is an *angor*,
an *atgof* in the wind's knowing,

this bond of word within word
as a parent's once given, generous
language; and the loss

in years becomes
a dead wood paused outside
all understanding – *cartref*,

cadernid, *colled*, Hywyn's saint
sleeps in the quietness of unending minutes,
vowels slipping beyond

the grasp, consonants unapproachable.
One April, his speech stopped,
this gentle man's once live

Mary Leader

Spire and Dove

A dove watches light converge with the green
intelligence of tree-leaves. Her word is,
not *is* but *sounds like*, humankind saying *who*.
I proffer to sunny air, a white sphere:
dandelion seeds. I shift it like a lens
to give her, from here, a penumbra. Not

a halo, mind, she is more subtly divine.
Wind fluffs, comingling seeds and air. I wear,
willingly, their veil. I puff from the green
intelligence of the dandelion's
launchpad the last seed from its hold. I puff,
who. Who. It takes me two tries. The dove tilts

her head. I tilt, to mirror hers, my head.
One time. One time, when lost, driving at dawn,
(and it was one of those dawns when the sky,
rather than blue/gray or pink/orange, is white)
I saw a microwave tower whose high
tip flashed. Pale beacon, high up, its flashing

completely regular. Same hue of white
as the sky. Had the light not flashed brighter
than sky, it would have been invisible.
The other drivers, not lost but bent on
getting somewhere, seemed not to notice it.
As a child born into Catholicism,

I believed. Its concepts still haunt recesses
of my brain, faintly flashing, the Holy Ghost.
The dove, though. She today has got to eat.
She is driven, by what? what source? She flies.
Grass roots help worms, and worms make dirt, of dust.
This, she knows, as each eye-bright being must.

Katy Evans-Bush

From Lines by Kenneth Patchen #3

That corn really is as high as a dictator's eye.
I had a book from the 1940s and it sang nighfalutin.
O yes. It talked about 'all the Nations', but I
couldn't believe a word of it. Not now. We've seen
what happened next and there's no antidote, no amulet,
no way to prevent being charmed. Outside, the sun
is shining and I can hear some talking, a little plane,
children playing: a pretty hubbub. We've seen what people can do.

Yesterday they tried, we knew it wouldn't take long:
they tried to untell the untrue fairy story, but they only
made it more so. We eat ourselves. Bombs body parts blood,
dead children and dead soldiers. Nothing new can be told.
Nation of Nations swears revenge. Shush babies,
we'll sing you a little cannibal's bedtimesong.

From Lines by Kenneth Patchen #4

This is not my idiolect. This is not my moment.
Borrowing the clothes of another emperor,
another time, I slink out invisibly into the fray.
Together (if this will place them better)
they weigh three hundred pounds (of pure explosive).
And it is a fray. With his quiet hands in his unquiet time,
I mean with his unquiet mind upon my hands,
I can think a little better about what to say.
Well, the grass is a pleasant thing. It is summer
after all. This awful dark summer brightness,
the same one that shines on all the atrocities,

all the Guernicas, all the grubby murders. The sun,
that old Switzerland, shines even on Kabul. We must
keep watch instead for the strange, moving lights of people.

From Lines by Kenneth Patchen #12

It was a bomby evening, and the stars
watched intently over the camp of tents:

495,000 years pouring into the museums of science
and this is all we really meant.

‘Bring on their cannon and iron sugar, brother,
for all the principles in the world won’t make us wonderful’.

A leaf like a pennant waves over the scene
and passes his own green judgement on it

(sirens and stretchers) not that anyone asked him for it;
He is the spirit (blood on the walls) of Noplace.

All these histories of those who stood outside it:
‘You can’t make a motherland out of a butcher shop’,

so this is all we know, the rags of satchels,
the various howling cells we have lovingly spawned.

‘You may all go home now’. The TV cameras leave.
A little girl holds out her hand. ‘That’ll be twenty cents’.

Isobel Armstrong

Fox Talbot's sun picture of glass vessels at Lacock Abbey, 1844, the earliest known photograph of glass objects

PART 1

stoppered flask decanter goblet cut glass bowl
dim sepia figments
on three shelves

revenants out of brown gloom
long ago ransacked from great-house cupboards
by long gone servants did they

stand by lounging and watching light and time
interact slowly make shadows
out of the sun?

nearly two hundred years of dust
would cover cut glass bowls
in a storeroom but

in nearly two hundred years
images made by time and light
store up transparency

arrest sun passing through glass
as umber shadows strangely glint and gleam
though now I question these phantoms of matter how

PART 2

these ghostly deposits of brown their blurred forms become
glass for us?
do our eyes

search through itself for the other side of the glass
unseen in solid vase or pitcher
the other side of the moon do we search

his images for that internal volume invisible
in dense and lustreless vessels for invisible
slow emptiness coming into being

confirmed by light imagine for a moment
pouring out all the light
and emptiness nearly two hundred years old

to ascertain
there'd still be
the vitreous flask decanter goblet bowl

fixed here
glass figments
the first gradation of opacity

Wendy Clayton

Twinwhirld

All organic life and consciousness are seen as flowing from the reciprocal ordering principles of enfoldment and unfoldment. (D Bohm) "It is the circularity, the loopiness... that brings these patterns into existence and makes them persist."

—D. Hofstadter

I am a twin – singletons
wonder what it is like
to grow up alongside
sometwo exactly like twoself
they think of us as halves
sharing a life
a pairson with half lifes
impoverished pairsonal nobodies
in their I-ness not understanding twin-ness –
one divisible dividual both
a semitory and a unity glittering dual
paradoxicality undecidability
the unpredictability of divisibility
in indivisibility
an interiority richly happy
with such biversity
twosmotic twelf-awaring twildren
two who would scratch our head at single-waring singly
waking boundedly
egoed determinedly self-
referential deferential
reverential fingers
never passing the baton
to loop the loop
which begat oneness in twoness
and twoness in oneness
where motion begat begetting

where begetting begat motion
endlessly ever
refreshing endlessness
undoubtedly unboundedly
part of the wild blue
whirl entwined
oneness in trillions
and trillions in one

imagine

meeting
the world together
Matrimony they say is Holy
and let no man put asunder

Judas

being the centrality of my own speech
one felt unease
at carnate self-reflection
polished up to misrepresent
its secrecy
deflected
at inhabiting a category
at having to be something or other
at making it up
even an hybridity newly coined
yet steeped in re-collected selves
sighing love me
discomfort at the chant
of the slanted self's natal alienation
at coming to find one's affinity more with
something outside
one then takes home as mine
unease at the demurral
to work to a recipe
ingredients of nothing.

Claire Crowther

Les Adieux

[Farewell farewell]

Le-be-wohl le-be-wohl
I hear a piano sonata as

I see the curve of our
parked car's engine-lid spin flecks of

sun Then Keith says 'What are you
staring at?'

[Absence Absence]

*Beethoven could hear when he
wrote his Adieux but even then*

*he lost his hearing bit by
bit and*

*fixed a stick between his teeth to
feel vibrations What bits of*

*sound our goodbyes break into
ab-wes-en-heit ab-wes-en-heit*

*after they have been composed and
delivered like promises of nothing with*

[Reunion Reunion]

Keith interrupting fingering the
the broken wing mirror while the

tiny gold notes flicker down the
gun-grey bonnet and grit discordance No

*wie-der-sehen no
wie-der-sehen so*

*so goes the stun of an
unambiguous loss*

Supplication in December

Will you raise me?
Old oak
thick-skinned branching
peer bearing a tree-surgeon
swinging his workmighty arms and waistful of honed knives.

Full of honed knives
angling
sawing axing
filing cutting knadding blades,
Scimitarean woodmen must hack hard, hack high bones.

Hard hack, high bones.
Old limbs
in his grinder
now being minced to compost
under the bird-drained blue-proof sky till cut work is done.

Cut work is done.
Raise me.
Could you still stretch
clipped arms out to a leafstark
ail-breath bone-cart climbing through shaven boughs to winter?

Bow to winter.

Julian Dobson

A typographical archipelago

Aperture. Coves. A haven for
shellfish. Ideal for swimming.
Here be lobsters, smugglers.
Sea pinks.

Font. Dip in its shallow bays.
A space of blue reflection. This could
speak volumes. Wildflowers
everywhere.

Gadzook. A slender spit, joining
two masses. Elegant,
unnecessary. Something may
evolve here. Lichen.

Swash. A band of shingle, almost
afterthought. Unbuckled. Appears
artificial. Palm-fringed.

Glyph. Familiar yet shifting.
Consistent, but somehow different
with each view. Sandy.
Some grass.

Kern. A tidal curiosity, two islands
moving closer, then apart. Unsure
which way to pull. Kelp
is plentiful.

Ligature. Two islands joined
at the hip. A point of illicit
entry. Coastguards watch,
always. Dense bracken.

Serif. A rocky outcrop. Jagged
habitat for kittiwakes, guillemots,
razorbills. Guano
abundant. Deep seaweed.

Finial. Stark cliffs, considered
beautiful by some. Visitors
have been known to slip. A rowan
clings.

Leading. Island of fissures. Soft,
yet inhospitable. Powdery,
white. No
vegetation.

Hail Mary Hill Wood

two buzzards court
swinging over singing
pylons bluebell shoots
blue tits dead bracken

hill of twisted oaks
ground mulched years
of fall dry chirr
of stubborn leaves

at the reservoir
feathered heads of reeds
a grebe a floating football

the interpretation board is missing

beside gouged earth
a sign
announces/warns/confesses
New Land Required

James McLaughlin

Discomposure

without knowing that much about anything
we prepare to go about
looking back adaptations creep in
a small desired fit

life freezes at a given point
suddenly motionless or paralyzed the
faculty by which the mind stores information stops
stops

Cenobite

alone with ourselves and our constant hysteria
for madness to pathetic dramas – deliration
hope might step in – those days
now an exciting emotional series of
events or set of circumstances – it was an afternoon
of high drama and confusion

DS Maolalai

A spare room

donegal. a spare room
and your half-brother's 45th
birthday. the air smells of curtains,
old furniture, sheets and dry soap

and over the windowsill
the dead legs of spiders
like pine needles. we're here
overnight; planning to drive
in the morning. we shouldn't
get drunk, but we both know
we're going to.

I put down my bag
and try the ensuite.
you follow me in
when you think I'm done shitting
and also can't work out
the shower.

A thing of some use

chysty says gui
plans to come by tomorrow.
more trouble with bea,
apparently he says.
says it's like he's been living
alone the last month now. and this
to be clear, feels like
stealing – this writing
his anecdote down. it's different

with other friends: aodhain
and jack. fallon at times.
even chrysty. they don't
much make art,
so I feel it's ok
if I take theirs.
and anyway,
fallon is single
again now. aodhain
is satisfied. jack one of those
hangnail relationships
which never quite come
to an end. my friends

all come by,
and they say things
in passing to give me
material. thank god
they don't read these, or write
their own poetry – I only feel guilt
about stealing from someone
when I'm stealing a thing
of some use.

James McGonigal

Blue's Anatomy

(Father Hopkins on Holiday)

Doing its losing its long fall
after snow the blue sky is looking
down-cast as that whole tree
after last night's frost this morning's
sun began to melt – at one touch
 a leaf downpour
masking the ground at its foot

recalling brown and purple flakes
in diamond-tapered fields one time
 and the near valley
showered with a bluish damp cobalt
poured on the hills clouds
milky-blue or brown-sail coloured

when he and I walked over to Holywell
and bathed and returned
joyously water clear as glass
trembling at the surface
from the deep force of its springs

eternity in spring its time in spring
its thoughts buoyant and abundant –
 before my eyes recovered discipline.

* * *

I walked over hills where great and vivid Alpine violets
grew on the little brows of grass between shale landslips.
The glacier was painful to look at in the blazing sunlight,

haggard and chipped – a hollow shield its upper member,
and its lower a long tongue of plough-land sloping away.

I noticed these ‘twin’ glaciers were two descending limbs
of one. The gut all rounded up, but hollowed and rugged
like dog teeth, on its upper range; the lower like deep flesh-
cuts where we see the blood flush and come welling out.

Then into the blue tent of a grotto which changed to lilac
further in. At the entrance, daylight glazes its groins with
gleaming rose-colour. The ice inside is of a branchy wiry
texture – one tiny piece pressed against the wall will stick
as if caught by a magnet. A dark guide showed us all this.

* * *

Susan Bond is married (to Mr. Pooley).
Mrs. Beechey is dead about three weeks.
Baillie is threatened with consumption
and has been spitting blood: he is ordered
south and is going up the Nile. On Sunday
Nov. 22 Frederick Rymer died a holy death
at Pau. He was for a short time a pupil of mine.

* * *

Under a dark sky walking by the river
where all was sad-coloured and the colour
caught the eye red and blue of stones
in the river beaches brought out by
 patches of white-blue snow –
namely snow quite white and dead
 and yet it seems as if
some blue or lilac screen masked it
somewhere between it and the eye:
 I have often noticed this

where snow lies the damasking of white light
and silvery shade may be watched
till brightness and glare is all lost
in a perplexity of shadow
and in the whitest of things
the sense of white is lost.

* * *

A calm sea with little walking wavelets edged
with fine eyebrow crispings, and later nothing
but a netting or a chain-work over the surface
– until even that vanished into a smoothness
marbly and perfect.

and between just-corded nearsides of waves
rising like fishes' backs and breaking with a
darker blue the pale blue of that wider field,
in the sleek hollows shone out golden combs
– reflections from chalk cliffs – oh England.

* * *

Distances were shades of blue without haze,
and trees at a distance in the glare appeared
pale yet distinct. Wheat-fields bluish below
but now warm green in the ear – a sundown
peach-coloured, with gilded masses of cloud

which later became finer and smaller

scattering all away –

the heat has gone.

Fiona Wilson

Forties

57.716667°N 1.016667°E

Boob tubes and glitter. Roustabouts.
The Dutch boy at school spoke with a drawl,
unpacked an American accent.

Did Texans really eat steak for breakfast?
What was a yellow ribbon for? Who
pulled the trigger and shot JR?

(Offshore and afield, a city took shape,
anchored in the night
and burning.)

Ninian

60.9403° N, 1.6326° E

The three of us, blistered and burning. Kids.
Millport: heatwave of '76.
Staring at something, just out of frame.

A faint in the ozone?
A fault?

The Clyde as sleek and stunned as a pond

as deep and wide as the thought
of a fountain, say, at the Seaside Mission.
"Lose your sin!" The world we're in.

Lynne Hjelmgaard

I'd Like to Speak of This Memory

of hummingbirds, long ago fragrances
coconut and fig, fluttering wings next to
a hot, hot wooden deck underfoot

and trade winds blowing up the night
throwing our ship about
taut lines stretched to the limit and released

thrill of the wind working its way
through every inch of the rigging, no mercy
but to take over and blow, take over and blow

Whale

Its briny smell in the wild
seemed to contain every creature
that once lived and died
on the seabed,
their long mournful breaths.

I don't recall what it looked like
or how it came upon us,
a dark fin barely caught
in the corner of my eye, as though
it wasn't meant to be caught

as we galloped along
crests of an abating swell
in warm turquoise-green water,
sails tweaked to pick up speed.
It moved with a quick and steady grace,

seemingly out from underneath us,
leaving behind a cold turbulent wake
without so much as grazing the hull,
disappearing in seconds
into its own unfathomable longing.

Penny Hope

Treptow

red spokes of the giant ferris wheel revolutions
suspended *Betreten Verboten Bewachung mit
Hunden! Gefahr für Leib und Leben!* the river
running onwards past the *Vatenfall Kraftwerk*
Our Journey to Fossil Freedom *Wir wollen raus
aus der Kohle* black cormorants at full tilt across
white columns of chimneys seen through tall
trees verticals softened by confusions of leaves
a glimpse of bright buoys industrial barges view
toward Alex towering *Allianz* building *BerlinBaut
die Zukunft beginnt jetzt* the miracle of clear moving
water somehow bluish moored boat dwelling a
little chaos of belongings dogs buggies tripod man
taking close-ups of tree bark rills and ructions
dreadlocked artist moving in his medium carving
tree stump striations curves knee-deep in earth like
the mermaid emerging from the *Karpenteich* tail
trailing among drowning trees corrugated corrupted
patterings of light and dark moving in the mind
red marble monuments *Die Heimat wird Ihre Helden
nicht vergessen* school-learnt Russian blotted out
gelöschte Wörter but Сталин deciphered in stone
beside vast towering soldier child in arms feet
trampling swastika Frau S hiding on her roof with
her sister *die Russen kommen* and *Vergewaltigung* a
word you didn't utter flimsy flower laid on a tomb
for someone's sons grandsons glittering *Teppich* of
leaves observatory telescope like a canon history
turning on its axis liberator oppressor regimented
poplars fungi among maples *in die Pilze gehen*

Polly Walshe

Art of the Possible

Your search
For a perfect amalgam of words
Is rarely successful.

Often underneath the words
That seem at first
To be the final words

Lie more powerful constructions
Hidden from you.
They would blow the doors off

If you found them.
They would bring eternity
To Parsons Green

And paradise to Dagenham.
They would make you
Want to give up everything

To say them.
They would be fatal to you

If you said them.
Amen, Amen,
They would be your own
Particular
Amen.

Carmen Bugan

Night in the church

In memory of Tanti Bălașa

The congregation chose to have your wake in church.
They placed your coffin on a table overfilled with flowers,
Your frame smaller on white satin – coffin like a crib –
Something which makes me think again about the time
Before birth, when the body swims in the womb,
Outside memory, inside mysterious life.

The icon under your crossed hands, the cross, the candle –
As it's always been: in custom and in ceremony.
Yet, unlike other people, in your last day above the ground
You are lying in the center of the church.
What did you say all night to the saints at the altar?
And what were your instructions on the way to Heaven?
I think of you being honored as a stateswoman.

And stately you were in the communist factory
Kitchen, commandeering a small team of cooks:
Workers lining up for the bowl of sour soup,
Worshiping you as much as their mothers: to my own
Taste, no one has surpassed your cooking skills.
No one has measured ingredients more precisely,
Immeasurable in kindness to everyone you were.

You loved red wine and loved singing hymns,
You were the choir mistress. Last we met
You offered the plum wine. Together with
The big family, we sang. And laughed. And God,
We gossiped in those flowery native words.

Fiona Larkin

Lent

Lent as component part, a knee or an elbow, not borrowed but owned. Lent as *lente*, translated as spring, light lengthening on brickwork. Lent as cold soup from a polystyrene cup, mortifying, alms-raising. Lent as the accompanying stale roll. Lent as sheer length, continual remittance, permanent loan. Lent as my son, growing inside me. Lent as a childhood, his or my own. Lent as the body, irredeemable incarnate, lent for the length of a life. Lent as flesh-envelope, softened by contact, yellowed from years at work on its cells, damaged in transit, opened in error. Lent as un-curtained, the unfiltered image. Lent as conditional. Lent, but apparently un-returnable.

The Instinct of Prayer

in the prayerless
is torn between logic and hope,
where thought becomes breath
and breath demands words
to rise like smoke,
a necessary burnt offering.

A vertical line in clear dawn air
caught by each breeze
exposes the naked
and cowering self.

Uncertain soloist,
the comfort of chorus
patterned in infancy
elicits this sense
of spoken artifice.

Is what you in the plural may chant
what you quite alone can say?
Your rote tongue
hesitates, again.

No harmony here but
discordance.

What to do with this impulse?

What to set alight?

Beaten Gold

There is another world, but it is in this one.

—Paul Eluard

I traced a perfect circle
my hand free of all
but my own free will

I tweezered gold leaf
in the void, until it shone
with a daisy's certainty

each morning it melts
when I open my eyes
like the host on the tongue

a scratch at its heart
catches the light and
darkens in shadow

ox-eye hybrid
marguerite gone to seed
earthing the sun

Mark Russell

Ring of Caution, Listen

1.

I bring you lutes and lyres
to distract you from your sewing
 long armed and liars is
 as laurel-decked does

2.

A fistful of roses is my crapshoot
though I am neither risky nor crap
 I promise nothing but love's wager
 hold me close never let me go fnaar fnaar

3.

Pulled curtain, uncertain light,
I am unshaken, satisfied in snakeskin
 skate away on the country's rivers
 winter tongue, my lick and grip

4.

I am an army of strong honey
one-eyed warrior
 tell me why these gifts go uneaten
 what shameful mien have I

Tim Scott

It Took the Whole of Irish History to Make Me Anything but Irish

By accident, we meet – acquaintances with only
a homeland to detain them. As he talks, I watch

across the shoulders of his words:
dormant avenues where the trees drip spite
and the sleek, black head

of a white-throated bird
watches back through branches.

In the absence of agency, these bad
omens proliferate.

Canal water flickers through

its loop of archive footage
and, in answer, some trapped thing, in the dark
back of the skull, flutters and scuffles –

interrupted image
that becomes

these childish fingers on the satin curtain's hem,
the dark which lightly taps

against the far side of the glass,

a voice as soft as feathers asking over and again
if my father is at home, its agency

revealed in leather gloves that leave no prints.

Whatever You Say

Tyres grind by the mesh of a peace wall
interface – indistinguishable rows

of red-bricked terraces whose end-stopped
lines blur into art. It's hard

to say what ails us when our medium's tar
and feathers, touts and grasses, perspex

shield walls, baton charges, barricades
of mattresses and coils of barbed wire thought

all wound in by a woman that can't hide
her blackened eye or the evening that still rises

through her children's mottled skin.
And all this now's so long ago to speak of it

feels strange – there are so many ways to stop
a mouth: a belt can be a tie, a branch can creak

and strain, a plastic bag inhale
and windcreens in locked garages fill up

from the inside with their subtext of fog.
Some will say it's cheap to talk like this, to pose

like clueless tourists shooting selfies by a mural
but we have died more in the ceasefire than the war.

Rufus Talks

Autumn Pastoral

Come home, the rookery sings
a hoarse roundelay in the copse.

These fields have given everything
but their clothes, widow-penny corduroy.

Eyes, ochre rings,
look sanguine from pheasant cover.

A scarecrow's glaucous crown
weighs down what once was

a sunflower. Picked clean.
The bonfire sky burns madder;

light enfilades litterfall,
pine cones and shotgun cartridges.

Evergreen branches stir,
each needle scores a semibreve.

Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese

letting in

swing this rusted
gate of the dialectics
of yes and no

open

on what does the stress fall now

on letting *in*

in: this rainwater
in: these prickly grasses
in: these lichen blooms

consider their being

the being of this surface:

top soil of Kong Asgers Høj
lintel stone of its overcast passage

where being wants to be
both visible and hidden

invert the numerous
movements of opening
and closing:

blue speckles of wildflowers
white roots of grass

this burial mound
is half-open being

Tom Cowin

The myths of aging glass

It never ages ripples
warps and dead eye
indentations blur so

clearly that it remains
a liquid. Perseverance

infiltrates ornamenting

doubt a light
trembling glass never

flows over time creates
those folds in the light.

*

Sill and dried lavender
in a faint fall of either

web or dust so meagre
it merely acts as age
a patina on the pale cups

and on the sun
desiccated bee.

Deborah Moffatt

The Lost Years

all those hot summer evenings
spent out on the porch, ice melting
in the driest of martinis, neat gin
burning your lips, sweat on your neck
curling loose tendrils of your hair,
a constant cigarette, a newspaper,
a radio mumbling somewhere inside,
a Kennedy dies, Nixon resigns, friends
arrive by chance, a daughter descends
wild-eyed from the hills, strangers
appear, lost on the road to nowhere,
and stay for dinner, gin giving way
to wine, the porch to the kitchen,
the radio to conversation, steam
and smoke rising from the table,
a babble of gossip and memories,
lies, embellishments, laughter
and, sooner or later, tears,
darkness sinking deep, fireflies
glowing intermittently, guiding
the strangers back to wherever
they thought they wanted to be

Rimas Uzgiris

In His Image

When I looked in the steamed-up mirror,
after a night with the daggered moon and the bee
that got away, the jukebox playing a soul possessed,
the picture was all askew, even if, aesthetic.
Beauty? It was as if someone had manufactured
a puzzle of my face but printed the pieces
all wrong, and my right ear was where my left
chin should be, or vice versa. Left, right, hell!
Someone was going to have to pay for this.
Who? Needless to say I had to manage to shave
without cutting off my ear, and that was never
easy, especially now that Van Gogh was back
in fashion. Or was that last year? Even if his picture
is worth a thousand words, a thousand words
is only a hundred bucks or so, in translation,
depending on exchange rates, the inverse
square law, and whether Wile E. Coyote
finally catches that beeping bird. I hope he does.
My successful translation depends on it,
but perhaps there is no successful translation,
just like this image in the mirror, chasing
its own destruction with the noumenal world
out of reach. I would like this game to end
so that I could get on with life: paying bills,
bathing children, shaving, but happily,
which function depends on the identity
of the existential quantifier à la first order logic:
there is an x , such that x is speaking now.
Don't you just love those proofs of existence?
They're like game shows where everybody wins.
Now I can see myself better through the steam,
like God emerging from Descartes' meditations,
though as Picasso might have painted him,

which he never did, to our great chagrin,
and if you stand here in my place, you might
see him too, ears and chin rearranged, or not.
It's the stories we tell each other, not the bunny
we never catch, casually chewing his carrot,
looking down at our distorted bodies, amused.

Proximate Pale

February sun feathers the eyes even at noon.
The earth's hard body thumps underfoot
like a child hidden in a root cellar, refusing to die.
The soft rays of our middling star continue to fall
upon paving stones, café chairs and worn floorboards
like the tender hands of a venerable man on his wife.
Tomorrow blooms abstractly like the formulated plans
for a habitable structure that may never be constructed
but stands as if ready-made with reveries, fantasies, routines:
how to get from point A to C, avoiding B, flirting a bit
with a happiness, until you wake up, the children sick,
and everything shifts as in an earthquake of low magnitude.
Yesterday, typically, runs about and yaps, whines, pleads
for the joys whose juice has been drunk leaving dregs
with an aftertaste like the lingering perfume of
a well-dressed woman walking swiftly past, already past,
fading with the clip clop of articulate pumps,
the last wave of her hair breaking on the horizon,
and the surfers have all gone home. We must all swim
to an indeterminate future like electrons in vague orbit
around a nucleus, obeying the universal laws of attraction
that hold us together with empty space in between
into which our hopes eventually fall, but where something
of the past may yet be redeemed like the gamma rays
shot from an accretion disc of a supermassive black hole.
Scientists use these (r)ejections to measure the light
of how it all began, far away, before the first breath –
then they compare it to the proximate pale of today.

Ann Vickery

Triage

(for Sara Crangle)

triage
to bring back from

scud forage
the shed

or steerage
a tri

umph
re swerve

decant

memory's defence

through variously successful
stabs at cooking she shows a sherry prose?
Time takes the biscuit (again) (Keep an altruistic

rhapsody for despair

attitudinal orange

etudinal colour peel

reading the rinds skin-felt

I am not known for my hospitality

how then to accommodate

the archive
pointedly

curate the bobbins
object as in a refusal

through time's kidnap
to take what shape is

shimmer

slide

scale

the occasional curette

past the equator

expectant carriage

enceinte edits
with the ends on

Tim Allen

Equinophobia – fear of horses

Endgame quietly unites Isis nicks odiously professed here on bat insane August.

Shorn railings fulcrums chains and shoe horns. If I had eyes in the back of my head I would be dead by now. I would still be trapped on the park gates.

The nursery book king and queen are touring their domain. They set out after a blackbird breakfast and head for the greenery. Their thoughts go with them into the scenery. In his thoughts the king now saddled with his Queen's hobbies suffers knackers yard love. The queen sat side-saddle on her thoughts thinks that a bookie must sweat inside his skin.

Waiting to meet and greet them on a lonely corner is a suffragette wearing a headdress of cream cakes in high summer. So don't falter at the last hurdle Grandad. It's better to be misunderstood while being beaten from the front than to be eaten from behind by an animal that knows you only too well. The secret of a creature's heart requires a jester's trick with a very strong stomach.

A harlequin's song on the other hand requires no such rhymes. A ponytail on a young garage mechanic's calendar pin-up swishes the flies from his face as he eats his pie. His pie contains the racy thoughts of many men but no greenery. Flip the calendar to April. This stable boy's misogyny is only half-formed anyway. He says it already messes with his centre of gravity and prevents him knowing who to vote for.

Shorn daffodils some hobby horse bells and railway sidings. Morris Men are bolting along the coastal path to flee the human eye. Trust cannot be earned, it has to be trained.

Jonathan Catherall

Four after Ronsard's *Sonets pour Helene*

I.XI

Le Soleil l'autre jour se mit entre nous deux

.I

When I say I like you better
than this irritating sunshine
don't smile so insistently
don't send another fucking sonnet
it's not a sign I'm melting

In the interests of transparency
I should say all this to you
but it's a lot more effective
to give you a good ignoring
for the next six months or so

You return in a bright mood
half-way decent company
until light turns to heat &
it's open season on sonnets

Robert Sheppard

from *Weird Syrup*:

Contrafacts and Counterfactuals from John Keats

On Looking Again into Peter Hughes's Petrarch

I've travelled a lot in North
Norfolk too I've seen toffs

with their hunting guns eating
their own packed lunches in

the pubs faced the snippy
crabs of crumbling Cromer

the nippy Arctic blizzards
of Blakeney Point I've seen

washed-out Teddy Boys
weeping in Norwich Market

yet never did I find
a tattered fairground

blaring *Stupid Cupid* through
a distorted tannoy till

I heard sly Peter
loud and clear and felt

like a post-Brexit Europhile
gifted my first starry visa

or like I'd watched Eric
Morecambe on telly

with his trembling glasses
stretching over a fence

on little un-Grecian Ern's
shoulders and I'd hooted

at Eric's speechless
English leer as he beheld

unseen teams of Swedish nudists
bouncing their balls

Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there

Faithful guests whisper filth
in this overdub

Understudies in thorny thickets
flushing their pumps

This poem was only picked
for its references to Petrarch

Let's skim the frosty stars
distancing in constellations

The threaded illuminations at
Blackpool clustering my dead poems

Ignore the chesty chill queuing
at the remote testing centre

Contrafacts testing testing
testing the spumes of brimful song

I take back control of these
miles to go or we'll soon be

Max Jacob

translated by Ian Seed

from *The Dice Cup*

THE INCONVENIENCE OF CUTTINGS

The head was nothing more than a little white ball in the great white bed. The puce silk eiderdown was by the lamp with its seams suitably braided with trimmings. The mother in the white valley, her teeth taken out, was at the heart of great things; and her son by the bedside table with his seventeen years and his face hair which his pimples stopped him from shaving was amazed that from this big old bed, from this hollow valley of a bed, from this little toothless ball could emanate such a marvellous winning personality, just as brilliant as his. However, the little old ball didn't want him to leave the lamp by the white valley. It would have been better for him if he hadn't left, for this lamp has always impeded him from living anywhere else, now that he's no longer near her.

NOCTURNE OF FAMILIAL HESITATIONS

There are nights which end up in a train station! There are stations which end in the night. Haven't we crossed the line at nights? The carriage's outside corners were rough with me at night: my deltoid still hurts. While I was waiting for an older sister, or my father, it ended up in something I don't want to admit to: a pair of shoes sprinkled with bread flour. But I've got a brother who's annoying in stations: he only ever arrives at the last minute (he has his principles), so we have to reopen a suitcase which the servant hasn't even brought yet; even at the ticket counter, he still doesn't know which station he has to direct the coaches to: he's torn between Nogent-sur-Marne and the Ponts-de-Cé, or some other place. The suitcase is here, open! He hasn't bought his ticket and the gas lamps seek in vain to turn night into day or day into night. There are nights which end up in a station, stations which end in night. Ah, damned indecision, isn't it you who has led me astray and surely to places very different from waiting rooms? Oh stations!

Denis Rigal

translated by David Banks

Foreshore

*The person who inserted the arbitrary
into chance is equal to god.*

(Western proverb)

1.

Reminder:

- Oil cans: two (20 W 40)
- Oil: in patches (several), cakes (one), balls, spuds, turds, kidneys (innumerable, mixed with plastic bottles, driftwood, disused rope and a web of rotten seaweed).
- Small oil-black oblong pile from which projects a fragile bone with webbed foot and the vertically flattened beak of *alca torda*, the razorbill.

Oh, goddess Munthu of ancient Etruria
Is this really your cosmos?

2.

or perhaps:

Wind slaps, wave laps, man copes as best he can;
scribbles his fate on the narrow bleached beach
between sea and cliff, shuffles his boots, shifts
some waste; shouts, *de profundis*, one word for
the Other.

Above, he regains coarse grass, stunted gorse and
the tortured trees that howl in a Munch painting;

odd bicoloured bindweed delays him, carnations,
thrift; rabbit poop too; it's reassuring.

And far below he sees this cemetery of landslip
skulls from a distant historical quake, this granite
graveyard where the sea seeps in and between two
detonations murmurs something that sounds
like *Lili Marleen*.

3.

My friend said:

*I remember finding a kittiwake, dead;**

speaking to the outcast, since gone to the wave
and him to the order of matter;

the March wind waved the grass,
it was ice-cold and dry wings
flapped over the gorse; looks, hair, all that,
and the twisting footpath,
always everywhere no-where and never

4.

This empty urchin shell, bleached
(flesh and spines,
and the edible sex forgotten)
it displays weightlessness,
almost absence: thumb presses
it cracks and crumbles
will soon be the sand of time.

* *This line is in English in the French text.*