

# SHEARSMAN

## 131 & 132

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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*

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## 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,  
Pearmains, 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 sensed,

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,  
Disconjunction, 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. Hofstader

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  
twho 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'd 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 Hjelmggaard

---

## 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 *Vattenfall 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 patterning 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

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## Lent

Lent as component part, a knee or an elbow, not borrowed but owned. Lent as *lencete*, 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

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## 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

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

## 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 windscreens 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

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## 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	scud forage	or steerage
to bring back from	the shed	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>I am not known for my hospitality</i>	how then to accommodate	
the archive	curate the bobbins	through time's kidnap
pointedly	object as in a refusal	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*

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## 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.