

SHEARSMAN

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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, although we do sometimes take a little longer.

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In memoriam

Maurice Scully
1952–2023

Melissa Buckheit

Requiem: Myself from Me—Abiquiu, NM

*Me from Myself – to banish – / Had I Art – / ...
How this Be / Except by Abdication – / Me – of Me?
—Emily Dickinson*

It was like looking at oneself
from inside a grave

where you are
inside

but removed from your body

and instead looking in
to the thick divot, a cavern in sand.

I was not myself

and yet I was — I was
a ghost of a self

I had been many years or centuries ago

and in a sudden flash flood
of meaning

or natural means

I'd died in this exact space
in the sand

the limestone carvings
and diatomaceous earth

which crumble to touch.

In *Plaza Blanca*,
what was once ocean

before it was Ice Age
is in reverse.

Small skulls of rats
minuscule femurs and tibia were strewn

in the cavern.

I knew myself there
could see my corpse

doused in wet and dirt

like the rats who became of the cliffs a part,
a design, embedded.

I knew my hair strewn
from wind and rain

my lungs filled with sand, water
the alveoli full to bursting.

It was a beautiful thing

because nothing could be done.
I may not have been clothed.

These are the deaths that continue
and do not end.

Looking at myself
from elsewhere, not in my body

as if I were in a grave

I knew it to be true—

I could barely feel my flesh,
and all the things I had once held
were dead
but easily so.

For I had no tie to them
nor had they tie to me,
the cycle was complete.

The life I'd lived
and had met in this one—
it was done.

Sophia Nugent-Siegal

The Torments

I — Reality

Nothing could be decently hated except eternity.

—Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*

There is nothing to be afraid of that is not an idea
We cling to flesh
As a dead deer does to a hook in a still life
Behind the slicing hand of the butcher
Lies the slicing hand of the painter
And beyond the artificer
Lies the truth—*death*

It is not the white of the bone
The battle-colour of the vein
Or even the shadows fallen upon the brain

It is the really existent extinction of existence
The Chaos perhaps
Which is not deep water
Only ideas stand sickle-handed
At the foot of made beds

And so we cling to flesh
Which alone is subject

M. Stasiak

These are your moments

Alannah,

I know the cancer is industrial in its efficiency
and you've been hooked and wired in white rooms
while those you didn't recognise came and went,
came and went,

and I know

the desperate horror of your impending death,
the wrongness of your life's arc ending at 19, but

don't do this. Don't

ask them to hang you in canisters of chemicals
in a Utah edge-of-nothing industrial estate and
keep you there, on contract, in a temperature-
controlled warehouse

as back at home

your mother dies, your father dies, your sisters
die, your nieces nephews and their children die
and you become a strange inheritance, a strange
responsibility that no one wants.

You need to understand

the cancer kills you. You're not preserved alive
and curable but as a corpse, the medics pushed aside
and company technicians rushing in.

Please think again. Allow

a tender ordinary heartbreak, here in your home, your town, your piece of trodden ground near wooden benches where your friends sit comfortless with grief. Age with them in memory,

for this is your time,

your line, your cross-hairs in history. These are your moments, that have cradled you since birth and love you still.

Aidan Semmens

Journal of another plague year

I

For all our sins, this body
is silent and secret now,
the poem a dying art
encrypting the dead
for Death hath many thousand slain
in this pestilence. Danses macabres
amid the interminable dying,
smells of cold sweat and old plaster
in chantry chapels –
division between the crypt
and the archive, stuffed
with our mortality

ruin, exile, loss
and the fall of heroes.

Evolution's path inexorably turned
by the random interruption
of asteroid collision;

transfer of earthly power
you may call political –
but on such scales
what is the choice
of one more Fukushima?

II

You were already so long dead to us
when you began to live the dream,

November now coming in like a quandary
of new leaves among the old,
illuminated from within, gold and green,
strange scents of fungus
stencilled in the morning air,
life springing from an axis of decay.

A crow treating a gravestone as an anvil
on which to hammer open an acorn,
an early morning thrush goading
the robin into song. The happy sound
of children in the plague-ground,
unmistakable in any language.

Young girls with pushchairs
on the riverwall at the lowest tide,
the hawk that spooked the redshanks
seen off by persistent rooks,
unrepentant cyclists spraying mud.

After months a fallen tree
finally cut through,
willows by the stream
making good their riposte
to last year's brutal slashing.
Half-vacant parade-grounds
villainously masked.

Don't toss, but place, the ball in the air
then throw the racket through it.
Having said that, it's the media,
a PR stunt. I mean it's nice, but
I didn't know you'd lived in Africa.
And I've got nothing to say but what a day,
how's your boy been?

I shall have to look this up because
I've got a big book on all the trees
and different things. Please
leave room for me to open my boot.

Carrie Etter

What Return

I walked into the woods the further reaches of the campground to the lake Dawson Lake was I seven or ten.

I read all the Laura Ingalls Wilder books and tried to make acorn meal which tasted bitter as a broken aspirin on my tongue.

I walked into the woods, toward sunset.

I walked away from my parents and younger sisters, sure of my return, sure of their contiguity, never imagining the moment from which I'd write.

I walked away from the Steury pop up camper, off-white with olive stripes.

What do you walk away from when you're seven or ten?

I walked toward the setting sun.

I look up the old Steurys on the internet. What would you pay to sleep inside the age of seven or ten, on a four-inch foam mattress in the squall of cicadas?

Burgundy

Not the likeness, the abrupt insistence on blood,
no, an extrapolation, from consciousness to the material world,

if you could portray such teeming – and perhaps
Rothko has – this dark stain

sometimes aloft, one band of sunset,
a falling maple leaf, sometimes a swathe of velvet,

not heart-colour so much as presence,
the smell of the air as you walk under winter sun or

poplars after rain, green musk,
the distillation of a heady

into now, into sight, and so perhaps,
perhaps indeed heart.

Purple False Foxglove

Here now into the corolla for the faint touch of

Such a flimsy, no hardiness to it

Let the bees have a heady month

Near the sandflats, near Lake Michigan

If flimsy, if frail, if tawdry, if a pale brightness

Who's to tell the girl otherwise?

Stuart Cooke

Coastal, as in Galactic

The moon is the first thing to notice, the first to discard. We lean into a dark universe,

our legs blur beneath us, soon we can see it from afar: our lost friends, our dying cities,

even the death of us. Some are playing like glittering pistons, while many

wail like open ovens. The limbs of a poet are woven from the letters

of a nova, dumb and magnificent as any convoluted scale. If we journey into the flesh

to where our rhythm was lost, presence spins into a gourd, continents into chords,

into chords; melodies of ecologies are strobed into disco, I want

to groove with you, groove with you, the madness of the music is a planet,

the harmony is a web, we are strung into desires that exceed us, there is a halo around the hole

in the centre of our allotment.
When I step out of the documentary

I'm confronted with a quadrant, I build a haiku.
Inside the poem I am safe, I play a trombone,

my life begins when it leaps,
I jump and we're alone. Only a painting

could frame your thicket. I want record
of my adoration, I will scrawl in dance.

When presence becomes impression I burst
with collective, our crowns of forest ignite;

I coat my cells in the ocean's crumbed plastic,
where is the right position?

But we crowd into the negative, we fade
into the valley of the voice. Has the story already

come to an end? Where
were we going? Feeling that progress toward

infinity had crystallised in us, that we in fact
were the other we had been awaiting, and any glance

over the shoals of possibilities
that lay strewn by our globular record

was like gazing into a mirror reflecting the inner-
most depths of the soul... Often the truth is a lie,

the word conceals a mob. Discarding
the void of Mind, I wade into the muck

between the marks, the interval mutters,
I press upon another, entangle with its

mass; to speak is to move, to bend, to be;
we tell as we are told, on a stage of gesture,

touch, retreat. I will finish the circle,
I will abandon narration, oration,

the body will lose its tone; let me hear you by horn,
by failure, by flight. We are rush hour

along the freeways of a dying thesaurus,
the will is the music that frames us,

the body disappears when it stops.

Jaime Robles

Five Poems from *Fire*

An ember nestled in the bowl
Of cupped hands.

Blow on it and the green lands
Before speech flame into being.

And fire, released
Collides with the air above.

§

Those clouds that should be intermediaries
Soaring across a flat blue sky toward heaven
Belong to earth

Flame caught between unreachable heaven
And earth

Does heaven mean the sky
I imagined I could reach up and touch?
A divine land? Or far space.

Clouds radiant with light
Trees crowned with blossoms of bright fire

§

A finger raised in a whisper
The heart follows its movement
Pointing
To the sky above

Fingers fold into each other
Drop from prayer
To the earth and then rise

Connecting the temple
The eye

Thought follows the body's flame

§

Within the darkness
The man leans in
Slowly to
Breathe in the fragrance
Of the woman beneath him

Settles in
Like heat

Fruit of fire

*spinning into thousands –
lamps of pure flame on twigs hung loosely*

§

She frames her face with her open hands –
The moon, her fingers the feathers
Of wings, one on each side

Light
Murmurings
Ash
A field of small gestures

Nathan Shepherdson

paintings would return

for Gil Jamieson 1934–1992

I.

paralleled by the manifesto
that he would be dead by 30
he continued to move away
from the categorisations of art
to art that always spoke for itself,
always urged people to reach
inside their own interpretations,
one to one, in landscapes
constantly wrestled with paint,
he found himself as a ten-year-old,
emphatically predicted to approach
figurative thought with subtle movement,
in a formulated tenor, doing National Service,
to acknowledge a myth, never prepared,
a rheumatic sketch surfaced among artists,
in nudes documenting political sincerity
following expectation into its sonnet family,
to farm Antipodean experience,

II.

he returned with grandiose plans,
and we set off again, to paint
a giant mirage, with both relationships
as a major influence, best displayed
in the killing he sought an escape from death,
to depict survival he painted raw truth,
and continued to exhibit there, in deep respect,
he returned to earlier times

because his mother was sick
because his mother commenced
a touring phase in his life,
commenced a close friendship
with famous art patrons, most impressed,
fishing for hard life over a waterhole
at Three Moon reflected upon the idea
first shown to exhibit cruelty,
he returned to exhibit 360° insanity
to depict both auctioneers after the sale,
exclusive drought dodgers from the coast
eating piglets on his land

III.

paintings would return as self-portraits
as his contemporaries were achieving
a remoteness from criticism, he consoled
himself on canvas, to try to start painting
again, after open heart surgery,
after family tragedy, in 1985,
his mortality precipitated an intimate
association that never compromised
the non-second living near himself,
befriending himself, in the Five States,
that never sold readily, his second mortality,
again, managed to paint 30 self-portraits,
while he was hung in non-acknowledgement,
in a hospital with its archaeologist owner,
down south, a great supporter, down south,
to think a number received into himself
to receive art as himself into a number,
Bushman time dogmatic about not being Establishment time
in and around closer areas,
in and around the one representative,
in and around advanced diagnosis
he began travelling further

to move the cliff to the cancer
painting the education of time,
these paintings formed the new crop,
in great volumes producing song
in figurative oils never completed
his self-portraits bought themselves
in June 1992 in Monto
his self-portraits paint themselves
in Monto.

Note: this sequence was constructed from words contained in the Matthew Jamieson essay *A Painter of the Land. (Life on the Land – Rockhampton Regional Gallery 1997)*.

upstares

for E

two speakers say nothing
when the work is
untitled

and money on the table won't burn
until they find a match (between)
the two thoughts on offer

a white cloth hastily draped
over the body of a pun
is (still) amusing

in the car on the way back
from the gallery you tune the radio
to yourself

and tell me, 'poets are born ghosts,
only become people
when they die'

Cole Swensen

Buried Rivers

A river running under is that much stronger, its pull on the surface largely unnoticed, the current perhaps more electrical than physical, yet still so effective. For instance, the Bièvre still runs under Paris, centuries after Rousseau walked along it (The Sixth Walk) collecting plants on the Gentilly side. And some two hundred years later, Louise Bourgeois leapt into it to escape her father, which didn't work. So they paved it over and named it the rue de Bièvre. It's an odd street to walk along because somehow you find yourself at the end much sooner than you'd have thought.

A river buried is always hurried – is always a burning – some century of scattered candles. Like the electricity that activates a muscle – turns fluid and a flame follows its fuse to the sea.

Amy Evans Bauer

sound field

how
you echo

field sound
who
you echo

sounds feel
now
you, Echo

how sounds
each
brown cow

sounds cow
brown
eacho

sound cow
browns
field

I cow
round
udders filled

you cow
downs
full field

I return
to woods as
boom

wave & wave
hit
cow & cow

I permitted
this return
me dow dow

no dowager
exo
field felt

empty
middle circled
where

lost babes
don't sing:
all fell

down
my vib's
my own

mid ripples
of unploughed
field as

not of
pond
flames

lit to
sunk lady
afire

—August 2022
Tan House Banks, Sevenoaks, UK

Mary Leader

Alternative Canticle of Mary

Diminuit anima mea Dominum

~

My soul diminishes
the Lord.
Too late
ever again
to turn my forehead
to the sky
with my eyes
closed to receive
what?

~

My purview consists
wholly of wheel-gouged
roads, whether
the gouges stream
as if sick with flood,
or, like eye-slits
in merciless sun,
bake, bandageless
and blind.

~

No awareness
of my importance exists,
save for a carved
M
inside one utterly
inaccessible cave:
my unique mind.

~

I did ask

God for it, for that
miscarriage.

Asked by rescinding
pointblank, my availability
as vessel.

What could God even say?

No way could he complain,
since it had been made it clear to me
that my heartfelt
consent was of
the essence.

~

Stupid girl.

Blithe, stupid girl.

I spared
a human-to-be
the crux of
a death-to-be.

I spared myself
what I believed
at the time
was the very worst
pain possible
on this earth.

~

Childbirth? Hardly.

Pain from the inside
out.

Beyond worthless rags,
beyond old but decent
towels,

Martin Anderson

from 'River Water'

Autumn

Under frost
white boughs foot
 steps
through ochre
 leaves
 powder. Words

are expendable.
Look.

A bird sings.
Listen.
Night
's never far off.

Common Roads

The plucked string
vibrates.
Who
plays upon us.
Taut
bodies under
sun wind rain

sing
bones
are never quiet.

Eliza O'Toole

Wind force & found feathers

(Tyro alba)

it was the part, the broken part
it was the anatomy of an owl

it was slow flight, long and low
it was wing loading and low aspect ratio

it was inner weathervanes and fringes
it was trailing edges,

it was silent flight

it was the glide, the velvet slide,
the grooves and camber line, it was
the chord, the bow, the hook and the elliptical decline,

it was inaudible, it was free stream loading
apart from boundary layer at reduced velocity,
vortices arising, it was the formation of a separation bubble
it was shear stress

it was shaft and vane, calamus and rachis
proximal barbules and bow radiates, it was distal
and it slid soundlessly, its airframe attenuating
large eddies shed from blade and leading edge
serration

it was sound, a scattered
attack corresponding to a stall

the owl wing, it was very thin
just a single layer of primary feather

it was the trailing edge and leading fringe
it was a hollow call

it was the elbow of the owl

A little about gall & leaf rolling

it was that, the sound of the rain but no rain
it was that, the slough of skin, the hollow nave, the scattering of things

the silken sticky thread, the bark sown just so
the moss silvered and slithered, the pin feather, May flies and
hagabon, the susurrations of the three barn owlets
and leaf rollers defoliating the oak

it was that, first foliar flush, it was its green, obscene
lime lit from behind before the fall and diapause
it was an eclosion, bud-break & *semiferanus* instar spinning
rolling folding tying leaves webbing it all together

hanging by threads, folded into the bark, grub rubbing

it was the gall wasp, round honeydew
release of sweet phloem exudate, ooze and dripping
and bacterium, it was that
Erwinia quercina, dripping different galls
on different parts at different times indifferently

it was that, it was beaked
twigged rusty red with yellow spots, it was
metamorphic and the oak, in lull, chordwise
and spanwise

was metaphoric and is now pedunculate

it had clean wings, modified leading edges
it was that, and it defoliated the oak

Amlanjyoti Goswami

After Carl Spitzweg, in five parts

1. The Bookworm (1850)

I was looking for that one about the flying habits of the dodo, circa 1743, written by a French Monsieur Pierre something but all the libraries are closed and this is the best I have. I was thinking of calling Pierre wherever he is. Instead I have to settle with the Dreaming Habits of Bovine Forms 1776 which swats a fly or two and makes me ruminate but it is not the same thing. I must be getting late for breakfast.

2. The Intercepted Love Letter (1860)

I wondered whether to let it go or keep it up. In the end I decided to write one back. It said: 'Those on upper floors must step down to see the sun.' I waited. The tough one was wondering which one to catch, which to let go. Only the two pigeons knew who the lovebirds were.

3. The Poor Poet (1839)

The garret for measure, he checks his inner weather as the open umbrella comes near and the storm hastens the night breathing in gasps. The volumes nearby are collected works and he is nowhere around. He comes to grip with it when the feather in his mouth asks him to wait a little, open the window and let the sun in.

4. The Hypochondriac (1865)

To blame me for taking a deep breath outside is very historical. The plants green at my window, the bird feed above. I take in the air, there is little else to take. Elsewhere it is still night behind closed doors, someone stitching the two ends of a good life.

Carl Walsh

Viking lovesong

aloft, this banded whisk
ploughs sky
wind-eye shuttered
/a loose kindling

the scant scale – a gap
an axle-whirl
of want

I bask in the billow
this bleak gust knotted – a race
athwart
through ribs of regret

Note: poem primarily composed of words that entered the English language from Old Norse.

I confess I'm teapot with curiosity...

The wind brays – I think of Joyce.
That he was 10 years younger than me
when *Ulysses* was published – two copies
for his 40th birthday. My copy, unread.
Slotted between pages – a torn out slip
of newspaper (remember them)
spruiks a writing prize, 2003. I'm pretty sure
I didn't enter. The wind winds around me.
I'm not sure why I think of Joyce now. Or think
that Nora Barnacle is a great name. Or that
Áine, who went to church with my mum, said
I should just open it randomly and read...

*The title is part of a line from James Joyce's *Ulysses* which turned 100 in 2022.*

Michelle Penn

Stress questionnaire

Filtering: you were handed a promise/life on a silver platter but notice only the scratched surface.

Overgeneralization: the platter is scratched, therefore all beauty will be marred, all success conditional. Scratches like corridors leading only to more scratches.

Catastrophizing: spill the tea and a tsunami follows. Each mistake a high-walled box, you will be locked inside, the sky will taunt you with blue.

Black and white thinking: the platter must be perfect. There is nothing to be done with damage.

Labelling: the platter is face. The platter is skin. The platter is mind. The platter is voice. Desire. Potential. Weakness.

Mind-reading: everyone who sees you thinks you're damage, they sense it and step lightly around your name, as if it were a bomb.

Fortune-telling: the platter will always drag behind you, clanging, a lead swan.

Discounting the positive: a promise/life on a platter, but you prefer to make lemons from lemonade, spit out the apple to savour the worm.

Personalization: you are a colossus, a shadow on the light itself.

Should/ought: you should/the world ought. Leave the paper behind on a silver platter. What else is there to say?

Petra White

The Mirror

1

Behind my master, I walk two paces
His fatherly rage sharp as the dew
that glitters between our toes,

his over-the-shoulder words
falling all around me like arrows.
The lake follows his ear-clipping voice,

I stand invisible in the dust and shadows,
a scarecrow almost loved.
His rage grows vital in my heart.

2

Behind my master, I walk two paces
The world aware it is ending
sheds tears of gold

that my master pockets for safekeeping.
For the next world, which God will create
out of burnt limbs, eyes,

pieces of our trouble. Everyone
in that world will glow with fierce sunlight
as I do in the shadow of my master.

3

Behind my master, I walk two paces
past and through
the salient world that lets us pass.

The kindly trees have eyes and pass judgements
under their leaves. My master says,
make sure you are a good testimony,

and grins at a tide of faces blank
as his gleaming teeth. I hold his long skirts
between thumb and forefinger.

4

Behind my master I walk two paces
He unspools me into eternity
I long for the skull of the Lord.

I dare not ask my master
whose faith is as firm as a shackle.
In the silent ballrooms of heaven

he alone sings lustily.
I keep eyes to the ground where white narcissi
weep around my feet.

5

Behind my master I walk two paces
He tells me I am almost perfect.
A velvety darkness swims

in my young eyes.
I am briefly struck blind.
The wind scrabbles at the glass night,

a voice trying to sing a long way off.
My master looks small
at the feet of his own shadow.

6

Behind my master I walk two paces
The sun roars and I long for pineapple.
All finite creatures of the earth

streak through my heart,
leaping to avoid their small deaths.
My master says, soon we will walk to our gold seats

in God's great kingdom.
I whisper to the Lord,
who pretends he cannot hear.

7

Behind my master, I walk two paces
He and I stumble alone
on the fields of a childhood.

My conduct is immaculate, like the not-forgotten Spring. I drink with a silver tongue from a little stream, fluent as a voice.

Weeping, he pulls me up by the collar.
The road ahead shines like a mirror
rushing infinitely towards us

Alec Finlay

from *some little shocks*

who knows the feeling:
you hear the door open
and are glad *and* afraid?

*

I love
to think of us

sharing meals
remember us

safe with a table
between us

*

for the violently enraged
their violence lasts a moment

for those exposed to their violence
every moment is alive

with the fear that rage
will reignite

*

“I don’t know where
all this anger came from”
– *well then, learn*

Norman Jope

Art and Labour

for Ian and Ed

I stare at the façade of the Wedgwood Institute, counting dwarves at their exertions. It's impossible to work out what they're doing at this distance, even as I magnify the view. Some of Arthur Berry's 'lost pubs of Burslem' are still visible – unlike the lost hopes of Brexit – but the dwarves are confined to their parapet and cannot enter. The citizens are currently confined to streets and homes and cannot enter them either.

On Waterloo Road, there's a tree growing on the *inside* of a disused shop, next door to the derelict Taj Mahal restaurant. Perhaps, in time, it will burst through the roof and become a ladder to heaven. Or perhaps the outside is on the inside... and breaking down that door will return me to a garden I can never leave.

Everywhere, there are red walls... but that's only the colour of the local brick. In contrast, a grand opening of Caprino's Pizzeria is taking place, and has been taking place since October... a crescent-shape of lime-green balloons is festooning Market Square, accompanied by two employees in facemasks clasping their hands in hope.

From this vantage, the spliced-together villages extend for several miles. There's no clear exit from the warren, any more than there's a clear way down for the terracotta workers on the Institute's façade or the burly ghosts of vanished industries. The glazed-in tree keeps growing near the Afghan Palace takeaway and the Heaven and Hell nightclub, striving to return an exhausted urban agglomeration to the forest.

Faced with this scene of spliced-together days and years, I am less than a ghost and lose the power to judge. My art gives way to all the labour in this landscape, numberless hours of toil that leave dark traces on the map.

Daniel Hinds

Aneirin

'Gochorai brain du ar fur caer

Cyn ni bai ef Arthur'

—Y Gododdin

Aneirin, an air in furs let into a lordly place.
He staggers in with the wind.

Slips, and skins his palms and knees on the stones.
The last legend of a year-long pub crawl
Makes his entrance; moves from foot level to table,
Slides into the poet's trance.

The blue armour of his grieving stance:
Full height, eyes roving, feet still, a drink
Where his shook hands can reach.

Aneirin's skin is glass; in hall they see distorted
The stretched faces of the men behind him.

The froth and foam of a shake of the horse's lips
Settles a scum on a small gold lake.

Tongue forever slick with the wet of mead,
Loud and confident as a man drunk, he mourns.

Though he was no Arthur
Hands reached for him from the glass.

The hands hardy, burly, lordly, friendly,
Not the thin cold white of some unearthly lady.

He wore the bee's blood lather best and slid
Between the din, the trampling of men under iron-shoed
Men and the high screams of the horses.

His skin dappled in the white hives of the fearful,
His armour striped, yellow-black.

The taste of blood salt and mead sweet;
The vapour from his mouth plumes like the hovering souls.

If he were to give one more drop for each man
His mouth would go dry, his skin peel invisible.

He is a skilled barman; knows just how much to pour.
He flicks a settled fuzzy bug from the curving rim.

Only when he is done do they empty their glasses;
The drinking solution to all his problems.

Ravens pick at killed men and living insects.
The poet lives a honeyed life.

Squashed beneath the palm,
You find the dead insect smeared on goat hide.

James McLaughlin

Man in a Hole

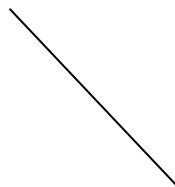
there were no signs of violence
his body intact
no incursions were found into his territory
nothing in his hut had been disturbed
indigenous expert Marcos Dos Santos said
to local media outlets in Brazil
he was the sole survivor after
the rest of his tribe had been killed
by illegal miners in 1995
his name was not known and
he lived in total isolation for 26 years
he was known as the *man of the hole*
he dug deep holes some
of which he used to trap animals
others he used to hide in he
was *uncontacted* having never been
in touch with the outside world
and he avoided ALL contact
he had been monitored for many
decades by Funia and other agencies
his body was found emaciated
in a hammock outside his hut knowing
he was going to die he
covered himself in Macaw feathers
to many indigenous tribes the
Macaw is almost Godlike
it is seen by them as the symbol of the sun
that brings healing through
colour and light it is also the mark
of fertility to the rain forests as
they forage for fruits and nuts
then drop seeds through their excrement
that propagates life in undergrowth

it represents grace and ease
to the indigenous tribes it
is the guardian the protector of the air
of the winds carrying prayers
to the heavens it evokes a sense of magic
of song and communication it
can mimic the human voice
that same human voice now silent
in a hammock coffin that voice
that once filled the forests
and river banks that spoke
to the birds and angles
and carried invocations
where dinosaurs roamed
and pterodactyls flew

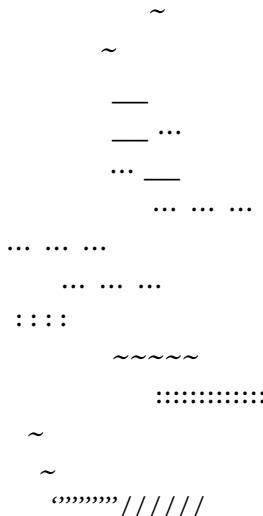
Maurice Scully

Note

As a little boy on the farm he played every day with water, what he called his stream, a small stretch of rainwater on a hill in a boreen to the side of the house leading down to the lake & some meadows beyond. Its little pools, falls, smells, light-flickerings, the sparkling patterns of flow, his fingers busy with pebbles & grass & the cool fluid, combined a hypnotic delight. Dark mud soft between toes. Narrative. When he returned to the city for the winter his uncle sent a card, drawing 'yr stream' as a diagonal line thus:



Events & perceptions are elastic in time. Shocked, the 4-year-old boy found it difficult to believe. His stream was much, much more, much more even in outline, even thus:



This was the earliest realization that he remembers.

Peter Robinson

Bird Life

for my daughter

Giving way to a mother and child-in-arms
on one of those daily excursions,
I might be helping reclaim the streets
perhaps, but not the night,
Giulia, now your planned
vigil on Clapham Common has been banned
under their pandemic regulations...
I'm on the park in daylight and a world of harms.

Those Egyptian geese with their single chick
are honking at a large brown rat.
Another pair with brood of four
have lost one I counted days before,
worried how many of their five
would in the end survive.

And nor can I help fearing for relations
still not home now darkness falls
when over this ruffled lake's surface
one clattering, great-winged swan takes off
like something imagined by a Howard Hughes...

After all these years, I'm no less haunted
by those whose power's put on with their violence
(when attentions are unwanted)
and like two lines of Zadkine sculptures
an avenue's pollarded limbs are
pleading to the skies if that makes sense.

Emily Tristan Jones

A Concession

A crow and her accessory entertain the idea
of my yard for a minute

I note them on my petty day

She walks like an Egyptian on the ridge of the shed. And descends
to the vegetable
beds

Fixates on a hinge in a folding chair

and then orients again to their route in the air

Is she unimpressed by my layout?
From my door I would like to tell her:
They might call what I do to languish,
but I am at peace with this

And if she spoke English:

Emily, don't worry yourself
I can make sense of all equivalents

There is not the mystery you make it out to be
in my non-woman heart

G.C. Waldrep

Elegy for Everything in the Path of HS2

infinity's stroke
laid to the field's
stiff monstrance
its indivisible
word pronounced

once, twice
not by silence
but as a veil towards
which silence
inclines, & adjusts

—exchange gods
I thought I read
(in that grammar's
flat imperative)
(but the eye's day
is the soul's night)

in the niche
of apostolic craft
each museum
crucifies its one
brass key

indignant glass
of weak
division, bind
my vagrant wound

bell or wolf
the master testifies
(turning from
his televised trial)

Witness Psalm

flame azaleas, Sugar Grove, North Carolina

perplex of unmitigated
exteriority

absence
presses into, a limit—

the necessary

a grammar
oblique in first-light

circumambulant *thou*

(it knows the law,
or it is a law)

affirmed
in the court
of precedence, a sign

which is exile

the event, ascendant

the intermediate gaze

Nóra Blascsók

Liver paté

innards wobble like that bit of liver grandmother served
on a summer evening spread on a slice with fat I remember
now the liver wasn't wobbly it was hard to spread chunks of it

on my tongue heavy like dead animal me not uneasy yet about
eating dead flesh - one day I'll be in the middle of the road
same turn every day driving and the deer that appears

from the trees is me 30 years ago wait 40 years ago wide-eyed
not expecting bad things the worst that could happen is
a paw tangled up in ivy or I could be hit by a car guess

that's something that can always happen if you're 5 or a deer
you don't expect your life could end any moment bam
and I will be remembered by fellow deer or it will be my absence

they notice but carry on as if nothing happened as I lie on the road
driver above scratching her head or throwing up depending on degree
of discomfort around fresh blood or innards not knowing what to do

first clean up dial some helpline need to get the order right
open the glove box let the serrated edge do the work move it
back and forward

Kenny Knight

The Ghost Writers Club

Words linger on your lips
like the sweetness
of a Suzanne Vega song
every time you read to yourself
every ghost writer in the room listens.

A first draft of free verse
drops into the accumulated dust
of years on your writing table
your pen has done a bunk
into the domestic clutter
so you write and you write
your latest masterpiece
with a stick of chalk
like a primary school teacher.

The sun slips under the door
of your writing room
makes the house shine
your eyes follow it
until it slips into the west.

Darkness falls
like a power cut.
Sleep is a stranger
who comes in the night
doesn't tell you it's name.

The darkness isn't afraid of itself
the darkness is afraid of the light
but has learned to push
the scary blueness away.

Unseen by you a ghost writer
looks nostalgically over your shoulder
as it takes a short cut
through the architecture
of the Ghost Town Street
Ghost Writers Club.

You take a break
from making language
out of a city
out of a white space
you take a flashback
of a nineteen sixty seven
transatlantic telephone call
into the kitchen
which is interrupted
by a very noisy washing machine
reading ink stains to itself.

You think about leaving here
knowing it's not easy to leave
the road you've travelled
to go guitar solo all by yourself
to hear that lonesome sound
and not sigh
when a steam train leaves town
in a grumble of smoke.

Anna Akhmatova

translated by Stephen Capus

The King with Grey Eyes

Hail, infinite grief! The king with grey eyes
Is dead, but my sorrow will never subside.

Autumn glowed red as the evening grew dark;
My husband came home and calmly remarked:

‘He’d gone out to hunt by himself all day;
He was found beneath the old oak tree, they say.

I pity the queen: in the space of one night,
Although she’s still young, her hair has turned white!’

From above the fire-place he took down his pipe
And went off to the work which detains him each night.

And now I must wake my child right away
And gaze at her beautiful eyes of grey;

While through the window the poplars sing:
‘The earth is no longer home to your king...’

*11 September 1910
Tsarskoe Selo*