

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; submissions may also be made through the upload portal on the Shearsman website (on the *Contact* page). We aim to respond within 3 months of the window's closure, 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.

Contents

Paula Sankelo / 5
Huw Gwynn Jones / 8
Carmen Bugan / 14
Josephine Balmer / 16
Carrie Etter / 19
Ian Seed / 23
Simon Smith / 26
Sujatha Menon / 29
Mischa Foster-Poole / 33
Rimas Uzgiris / 36
Jazmine Linklater / 40
John Muckle / 43
Ellen Harrold / 47
Anna D'Alton / 51
Amy Evans Bauer / 54
Tom Phillips / 60
Lucy Hamilton / 64
Steve Brock / 67
Aidan Semmens / 71
Daragh Breen / 75

Miguel Otero Silva / 79

translated from Spanish by Chris Holdaway

Marco Catalão / 82

translated from Portuguese by Chris Miller

Concha Méndez / 85

translated from Spanish by Harriet Truscott

Ennio Moltedo / 88

translated from Spanish by Marguerite Feitlowitz

Giedrė Kazlauskaitė / 90

translated from Lithuanian by Rimas Uzgiris

Notes on Contributors / 96

Paula Sankelo

Isfjorden

Dream of a fulmar's cry, expect the first snow on the plateau.
Hitch up the half-loaded rifle, cross no path

and if you must encounter a hope
resolve to render it nameless.

Expect, at last, to see the glow of the sea ice
beyond the horizon

and a fulmar feather
fall, shuddering, under the darkening cloud.

§

We lived through the hottest summer, meltwater
wiped out all of the bridge and half my sleep

how the neighbours filled out! Barrel-shaped
they forage the button-like mushrooms

at the back of the house. When I pass them close
they side-step hardly enough to wobble

bloody ribbons peeling from their crowns of bone
they kneel to the migrant sun.

§

A pod of belugas shrill in the fjord
a cod takes the hook through the eye

my child pulls the body over gunwale
determined and shaken

he doesn't hear our praise, or how
the blind one voicelessly cries for her innards

tossed on the waves for the bickering gulls
how a walrus snorts: be on your way!

Later we find the hearing aid in the cold shed
sounding alone in the dark.

§

Kitchen smells of death

my bare hands tear the skin and the chalk-white
plumage from the ptarmigan flesh, and find
in the heart's slick chamber
a single drop of lead

don't think: like a secret

that ended the flight.
The after-shot silence

is not reflected by the ice
does not ring on the snow.

§

The frames are erected facing the glacier:

mother and child, strung up with care
missing their gentle hooves.

Dusk gives the flesh side
a bluish shimmer

katabatic wind ripples the fur side
into a pattern

never seen on the living.

8

Your antler fell
like a giant eye-tooth lost

or an ossified rhythm silenced
at the edge of comprehension.

How will you sleep now? Will the remaining antler
twist your head, as it nods in slumber
give you a crick in the neck?

I held my breath you dropped it.

There's a hole in the world and the light runs out.

I wonder how we'll settle down for the night
and how could you shed your antler here comes the snow.

Huw Gwynn-Jones

Four Welsh Words for Water

Chwys: German ‘Schweiss’, Sanskrit ‘svedas’
/χwɪ:s/

Perspiration, sweat, beads of moisture
oozing like a cheese. Diaphoresis.

A state of worry, anxiety or distress
moil and hustle.

‘Chwys y fwyall’ – a folk remedy
for ringworm, the sweat or condensation
formed on the blade of an axe
held over burning hay.

‘Chwys Arthur’ – meadowsweet

Niwl, Nifwl: Gaelic ‘neul’, Icelandic ‘nifl’
/niwl/ Nordic ‘nibelheim’ – misty home
 of the ice kingdom, one of the Nine
 Realms where Nibelung dwell.

Fog, mist, vapour, haze – that which
obscures and confuses, isolates.

A place of loss, the dampness
of dead men’s breath.

‘Fel hwrdd mewn niwl’ – a helpless state
(‘like a ram in the fog’)

Glaw, glaw /gla.u/	Breton 'glav', Sanskrit 'jalá' Proto-Indo-European 'jalám'
	Drizzle, deluge, rain and smirr. That which falls and cleanses. Memory of life inside the nimbus, freeze and fall and all things hydrological.
	Lacrimosa. The sadness of tears.
	'Glaw Mai' – first May rain, reputed to be good for weak eyes and for killing lice in cattle.
Môr /mo:r/	Proto-Celtic 'mori', French 'la mer' Old Church Slavonic 'morje'
	Ocean, briny, sea, the drink.
	Gaudí's cathedral of light between the waves. A notion of haven, polestar and petrel. Worlds without walls, caressed by a movement of blue or darker hue.
	Place of Dutchmen, phantom sails and old men obsessed by whales and tales of Scylla
	swirl and maelstrom. The whip and heave of a ship, the gathering of souls, the reek of fish.
	'Gwas y weilgi' – 'son of the sea' or 'sea-wolf' – Albatross

Carmen Bugan

Hawk

I went out to look at him –
An apparition with great wings
Glowing in the light of morning,
Scanning below the spring tree line.
I returned inside and drank my tea
Without losing sight of him.
The orioles put on alarm calls,
Mockingbirds attacked him,
He now cleans his feathers, unperturbed,
At the very top of the tallest tree.

I think about my deadlines
And the morning sliding by,
But he watches my garden
From way up there.
I am hooked on him
Against the flawless sky
With nearly flowering trees below,
Time pulling the two of us along,
In the bright, fresh morning.

Under him, such a tiny tree branch
Sustains unbearable weight,
Fragility seems only an illusion.
Hawk, take everything that is weak in me
In your claws: eat it.
Leave me wise and patient.
It's been nearly two hours since
You appeared, and straightened me
From the spine up, eyes on you.

Josephine Balmer

Victim Statement

(Persian empire, 480 BCE)

*Among the many Panionius had mutilated
Hermotimus was perhaps the most exalted...
(Herodotus, 8.105.)*

By chance I saw him again, the man
who had wielded the knife. I remember
how he'd hacked as if stemming cancer
or slicing an arrow shaft from a wound
that was already infected, festering.

*... so much blood
I don't know how I am still alive...*

Recognition was raw, a spreading rash.
Still I greeted him as an old friend,
well-met. I owed him a debt, I said:
I was favoured, at the King's side.
And I could give him his full share
of fortune if he followed me to Sardis
with his wife and sons – my guests.
In the city I would make full redress
for everything he had done for me.

*... I often think
of suicide...*

Perhaps he believed that the gods
kept their eyes shut. That the odds
were still stacked against justice.
In Sardis I compelled him to castrate

his sons. At blade point I forced
them to neuter their father in return.
He had turned me into nothing. No
one. And here he was, ensnared,
recast, by his own gore-soaked trap.
I was someone. I felt something.
Disgust. Desolation. Despair

*... if there's a hell somewhere
it's worse than that...*

(Italic quotes based on: 'She Thought She Was Unshockable
Then Two Castrated Ukrainian Soldiers Arrived',
Christina Lamb, *The Sunday Times*, 18/06/2023)

Carrie Etter

The Selves

a ten-year-old girl who writes a play
and commands her friends to their parts

an editorial assistant
who collects enough couch change
to buy hot and sour soup for dinner

an angel of grief

a nineteen-year-old crossing L.A. by bus
as a man draws a finger up her leg

a seventeen-year-old
who smooths her extended belly in circles,
whispers a lullaby

a boy climbing a pine tree

a three-year-old who reads or
pretends to read *How Puppies Are Born*

an undergrad who shows up for her Latin final with
Kleenex, lozenges, juice, and coffee

a twenty-six-year-old rollerblading, soaring
alongside the Pacific
from Venice to Redondo Beach

a young man strutting

an American at The Star in Bath
asked to explain Trump

a tapir nosing into shade

the only girl of 15 staff
on a campground maintenance crew

a Midwestern tuna casserole spiked with cayenne

a teen employee who, in an empty
Arby's Roast Beef, sings
to the radio's "American Pie"

a woman lying on her back in the grass
during a meteor shower

a clitoris blooming under a tongue

a woman confronting her father's
pulmonologist, cardiologist: "How many months?"

a teenager, on the wrong floor of the university library,
chancing on the lit mags

an angel of summer, or of loss, or of a
motel room during the apocalypse

a minor poet who teems nonetheless

a milkweed pod releasing its seeds to the wind

Ian Seed

For Keeps

Lone, nocturnal towards the end
when we need reassurance
or twilight to give a glimpse
not a delusion or a ghost
sitting with sleeves rolled up
on a rustic bench, I want

yet not quite want the pretty
girl shaking her salad dry
with a bit of madness at the edge
of the canal, thinking of the vision
that still tows, my intestines
freezing, my face muddy, I sit here

rather than smear and blur and fail
in a dead-end hotel. The sky itself
is terribly uncertain. There is no room
for reality between the two bridges.
What I have seen on the road
remains in my head, trapped

in one perspective, the filthiness
of an isolated house, even though
here and there, we laugh, trying
to recall when we got off work
and were once free and easy.
I come to a waterfall by conjoining

the chapters of the swollen stream.
Come back, now and again, my boys
even with your fatal sinfulness. This too
is unconvincing. It was again a fine day.

We have netted it. Some good sailors
are here to gather shells. The tides

have their prestige. They are lovely
and impenitent. If we look at our reflections –
we are a pair! Let's make a point
of following each other down to the pools,
under the scrutiny of the gentlemen in blue
who now approach to soften the whole
business.

Simon Smith / Du Fu

Reflections on Li Bai This Winter's Day

(for Anthony Mellors)

in the lonely quiet of my study
I circle back reflecting on you solely through the early hours
yet again I reach down the tale of the magnificent tree
fish out & recite the ode of the 'Horn-bow'
wet & cold seep through my threadbare shirt transparent
you're wandering about I know it in search of the magic
& I'd be away in a flash to walk by your side
we dreamt together & thought together through our solitudes

Book 1 Poem 27

Quarantined in Spring

the country torn apart rivers & mountains always just *there*
it's springtime in the city the trees & grasses greening
wrenched apart with the separation the flowers weep as I do
alert to Time slipping away the heart awake to the birds
the fires of war burn wear down a third month
for a single word from home I'd pay out infinite ransom
white hair thinning pulled away & out strand by strand
not enough left to be twisted upwards by a hair-clasp

Book 4 Poem 25

Sujatha Menon

The Surface Area of a Nightmare

Cilia swept lying labial in a tangled mane was no place for a
sleeping woman,

though I liked the weave and how it prevented cysts easily formed around a crease or a partially dissolved hoof. How was I to know that this was not the length of heaven or the width of a bogus hell constricting. There was a crescent sky but no half-moon. Such was the order of shapes.

Broken window = $A^2 - ? \times 100$: square

I've bled on its edge many times before looking for answers flicking up like shards of crystallised piss rising up like the machines, overwhelmed and overheating. They pose as lumens though neither open ended or closed, circular, squared or arched;

shatter like children whose mothers did not come from mothers but
from mares

and areas² – ? x 100. This is how the darkness gets in and unpacks itself.

Witches hat = $1/2 b \times h$ + what's underneath : triangle

The place where the hypotemuse rattles though we still don't know at what angle

she spins or the length of her very dark side dividing like a guarded spell passed down in degrees. They call her the 'difficult one' impenetrable, obtuse and uneven even in tone those shades of blackness unclassified. This apparently, provides inspiration if not a common point to ponder the horror also known as a sharpened vertex (or tooth).

Platelets = $\pi r^2 \times \text{heat}$ (this is also a vent diagram)TM : circle

This is how the night clots around the moon
marrow- osteoporotic yet milky in its venomous return to
curdle sleep like a vascular churning of black butter.
There is no mistaking the similarity to a soothless lullaby –
ineffective infecting injecting
half dreams with liquid song, quavers sticking together:

R oc kab yeba by
ont he t reet o p
h o tt e r

Snout of a shovel = $\frac{1}{2} (a + b)$ – free speech : trapezoid

A septal deviation <<< subcranial speech and truffles
rare like pignut gold. When you arrived digging for tails
of the alphabet, trying to colonise
thoughts not yet formed, I built a castle around
the letters 't' & 'b' should they sprout and escape down the
shanks of throats. When speech is never straight or forwards
but bent to the shape of the night pulled downwards –
imagination is mute.

Timed egg = $\pi ab\{ \%$ } : ellipse

Stuffed into an hourglass pie with a penny stuck in the narrowing
splitting head and tail
is an eggless chicken whose time ran out
into the road, belly spawning
like a ripened appendix far away from A & E.
This can be added to the list of things like cheese and whale-grain caviar
that must not be eaten before bed. There is danger of incubation
in the scrambled night.

Note: The folds of the endoplasmic reticulum's membrane are called cisternae. These flattened membrane sacs give the organelle more space to create proteins and other important molecules. The singular form, cisterna also refers to a reservoir or tank for holding water, especially a tank for storing rainwater. In anatomy it is used to describe a space that is filled with body fluid.

Mischa Foster Poole

stick losers

they have been popping as you said all night stick
losers gauche erasure poems transluce
I hate your cup of milk and Arthur sits in the cave
its ganaches round the edge bad taste you take
one large chunk out of a cup of tea
what a pile of stuff to move about! I hate stuff!
a shuffling grain on a belt displacement of nibs
an archimedes screw let's go for a burger
and a flute of champagne (sic) the day's clear
I hate daffodils

xxvi

autumn excess
each goldfish recovers
after an accompanying voucher
swamped, spits,
squeezes, mills at a rate
the creator wound,
seeds a rhetorical controller
the thesis bridge
the funnest vessel claims
a convict genre



folded. Another pat
the dusty vein
starved past a dictionary

in origin
how does the bone compact?
an irrational track you've offset
a gay sock rested orbital amplifier:
every compact revival
is also an intelligence

xxxvi

Or if something landed comes, or big
in its proximity, it is quite what you imagined.

But steps off the running board perhaps too lightly,
and you redress the impulse to throw arms

either down, or around its neck.
For it is not the first time you have tapped the wrong

person, or laid arms around what
you thought was a lover.

Perhaps I do mean grounded. But if so,
more in an electrical sense,

and it is with a struggle to fathom
which, or whether, currents running alongside

are streams within which swim compassion,
or light, and wholly justifiable, indifference.

Rimas Uzgiris

At the Exhibition

I'm trying to figure out how he did the rain,
the engraved dashes of a sharpened tool
exposing the absence, or the void, behind color,
and my son is pulling at my arm:
he wants me to see the lego wave,
and I'm pulling at my wife's arm:
I want her to see the woman and the octopus,
something like Proteus taking tentacled form,
an old god of the world, wrapping
the fisherman's wife in pleasure, oh,
and my daughter is pulling at my arm:
she wants me to see the horsies of
Hokusai, Hiroshige and others. Who?
Contemporaries. I try to learn their names.
It's hopeless. People. Persons. When
you watch TV or listen to political debates,
it all seems hopeless: no one cares
about art, poetry, but here, it's a crowd:
art lovers, curious citizens, looking,
reading, listening. And where are we,
most of the time, in this culture?
Bombs are falling, fumes are bubbling,
garbage swirls in the oceans
like a mythological island on which
Odysseus would be detained, bound
and gagged by our Circe of plastic:
he's never going to get back home. Sometimes,
I want to retreat to a bamboo grove
like the seven sages of classical China,
write poems on bark, fog for a blanket,
clouds pillowing my head, but who

am I kidding? I fly back and forth
between North America and Europe,
live in a comfortable apartment,
go to the pharmacy for my insulin:
I'm not about to move to the fucking woods.
So I walk through this forest of limbs
with eyes committed to seeing: the startling blues
of cataracts, shy courtesans on straw mats,
pompous actors like peacocks on display,
regular citizens hunched under obsidian rain,
a fisherman poling under the sodden alphabet of a bridge,
motley ducks cavorting on grey washes (and here
I recall W. Homer's duck in midair, a muzzle's
tongue of flame licking the forest), and a relentless wave
made of legos, reiterated in recycled bottles, in multiple
applications of ink, washing over us, engulfing us:
there is nowhere to go. We are really in it.

Jazmine Linklater

Free Time Song

Dusk again when the parakeets fly
overhead to wherever they're heading.
Next time will be dawn, you'll be
sleeping or drinking your coffee
and waiting for energy
and light to emerge
from the silvery night
you're just entering.
It is 6:41. The violet
air sparks a process
you don't understand,
enables the decorations
you'd hopefully hung
on the walls of the yard
to burst into being,
emitting the energy
they've absorbed from
the sun you've not sat in
all day. Your light is blue,
so you think of the poets of blue
as dusk rests against red brick,
tinting a purplish bruise on the day
you have wasted productively, wilfully
urging the hours to pass as the parakeets pass overhead
twice a day, whether you're watching or waiting or not.
A pattern's emerging that you don't want
to recognise, a colourless seeping out of
the objects you've spread all around you
to mimic a border of safety, a place
where digression is limited
to overhead flights

you observe
from a distance
that stretches
from here
to here only.
As your vision
is shifted
from one vanishing
point to another
on the upsurge of wind
made by the beating of wings
in the setting you're trying to finish
and hold still, you disturb nothing. The table
again, the chair you sink into, drinking a liquid as thin
as events half-remembered from time that was maybe
before, the way dawn was before and again, you emerge
into the twilight tinged green by the parakeets' twice-daily flight
overhead to wherever they're heading.

John Muckle

Fred Karno's Palace

Skiffs clattering down over the rollers, splashed
Into a sea of bright crinoline, boaters, blazers
Flaring in the postcard white-out;
Water-babies breast-stroked fully-clothed
Beside the varnished hulls of pleasure-seekers,
Uniformed servants brewing up onboard,
Rare river flotsam bobbing about at Molesey lock,
Sight-seers milling on the banks for a glimpse
Of so much unfettered womanhood.
It was here they decided to make their homes
Almost by accident, by accident, unplanned.

At night the great Karsino was girdled by
Upended chandeliers, houseboats no longer agitated in the wash
Of barges, steam-powered river craft, fitted dwellings
For sleepy Gods of stage and music hall;
Garrick's domed temple to Shakespear, Fred Karno himself
Not yet tucked up but facing ruin
Due, it was said, to the Gypsies' curse on Tagg's Island:
A wooded teardrop afloat on Father Thames' blood-stream.
Pikeys weren't to blame for Karno's lust for greatness,
Powerless, ridiculous in their filthy rags,
Riding in arrogant pony-carts, their high-rolling poverty
An annoyance still to residents of Hampton and Molesey.
Karno didn't have to sink everything in the Karsino.
Anyway, Thos. Tagg was the original sinner
Who converted the ait from osier-growing beds, booted
The gypsies off to build the first hotel there
& was the first financial basket-case, taking a cold plunge
On the fluctuating fevers of the Edwardian pleasure thermometer.

Two fellows with a big pneumatic hammer
Uninstalled the stone jetty for rowing boats,

Long after Fred was dead & gone, after bankruptcy,
Limped to the coast to buy a half-share in an off-license,
Monies given him by Chaplin, his early protégé.
Somehow our riverine ancestors over-rowed
To clack billiards in its splendid hulk,
An ice-cream sculpted palace, arched Palm Court.
Shut up, landscape-gardened terraces where in 1916
A thousand wounded soldiers were entertained
& officers' wives served limbless men on crutches:
All this impresario's generosity curdled by rot,
Blown over, shrouded & forgotten.

Fred Karno's Army:

Epithet for chaos, misdirected energy, rank incompetence.
We are Fred Karno's army, the ragtime infantry,
We cannot shoot, we cannot fight,
What ruddy use are we?

Comedy held show-tell-truths

Smuggled across in dumb-show, perfected, unravelled.
Long ago, seems obvious now.

Whatever did they speak of

Nobby, Killy, Frank, stretched across still-good baize,
Lining up safety shots on Europe's battlefields?
Tin-pot generals, calm-as, they'd have their own ideas,
Bright somethings, subjects never broached often.
Just things they knew themselves which you couldn't,
Nosey parker, slopey-head stuck in the *Daily Sketch*.
“It's Lobby Ludd,” Frank said. “That boy is Lobby
Ludd! You are Lobby Ludd, and I claim my five pounds.”
Killy, at the fag-end of Phyllis, out in the garage,
Once-proud speedway ace, designer of “The Yellow Peril”;
Nobby, whose son walked a hand-reared fox on a leash ...

Eugene Fuller lived opposite my grandmother, wore a beret,
Tinted photographs & painted a portrait of her house,
A Victorian villa for which she miraculously found money.
Eugene had fought in the trenches, sketched in mud & ink
Two men carrying a full stretcher. Lit up by flashbulbs.
A prisoner, he had seen with his own narrowed eyes

Ellen Harrold

Worker, Queen, Drone.

Were tranquillisers and pretty notions to lie so gently at our feet.
Forsaken expectations built on petty lifetimes
of rules so easily broken.

Gathered in haystacks around the wildflowers,
all bowing to the wind and rain.

Nettles thrive as grass cut to pleasing view
yet even these are gentle things
gifting so graciously
soup, tea.

Should we be so welcome in the homes of others
left despised.

It's the great ambivalence, the uncaring love.

The waking up on summer mornings to the sky cleaved by thunder to
winter evenings blinded by frenzied sunlight.

Our rules mean nothing,
our bodies each faulted flesh.

Stretching a canvas

Layman's oysters shell their ivory
under a swiss army knife, rusted shut.

Trumpets yield to midas,
dancing in the rafters.

Below I leave a thumbprint
on the second layer.

Enshrined lines gasping in rotation
with myriad surface worries.

The staples are never symmetrical similar to surgery in its way.

Jaunty, singing imperfections
alight in the notion of immortality.

Feynman Dilemma

Quantum meadows make no sound.
You could superimpose the rustle of grass
and/or paper. A layer of comfort
to a two-dimensional abstraction
which has been cast over creation;
cast on my mind as well, or more like:
in the shape of it. As I try to visualise those
geometric diagrams as the structure, we survive in.
Minimalist architecture has forever been in fashion,
but I struggle to see its patterns
as I wait for the bus on a Tuesday morning.

Desynchronisation

NOW! Quaking foundations, the electricity unfurls – takes on new shapes and patterns – inlaid by prior observations. (Absorbed) (flipped) secluded in the grey – rewound in the infra light cycle.

Anna D'Alton

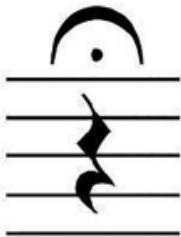
cipher

one then two dates in i'm in i laugh i hook on your messages

i think this this could be something flowing to the edge of
something catch your big jokes i try my dry wit familiar
all smooth talk song links drunk texts and what about
your side glance foot brushing my rib when you say
you think something's missing here a bit missing
don't you think i think i can't find missing
i puzzle you comb signs of curve declining when you didn't
want a nightcap words stalled out
when you pulled away from my kiss at the zebra crossing
i should have known then i knew then

Amy Evans Bauer

fer mata



s unset

let's startle there,
light en
burdened day

un civil twilight

locked face to face to
face past five past six
degrees twi by twi lit

civil to nautical twilight

salut e

@ Cat caught in & in
somnia come on in

we are naut
with out

b eke
c all
b eke

nautical twilight

g lad tidings m othered,
left to right light
un gathers sky

nautical twilight

d arker and d arker
in visible: see shelf
rendered legible at 18°

murderous tilt
of the eye, sea sea TV

LET THEM eat the kitchen SINK
as sea bed's workers
work their night un touchable

astronomical twilight

Lost at Scene
in whylight

let's get lust
find out
y our my inside

b lured lines
on wet sheets

s ink fur ther
as contours fuzz

astronomical twilight

lock ed in in
in decline-able language
un safe
as teles cope, *das Fernrohr*

g lass mich in ruhe
in Holy Babel
to self de scribe

nicht nacht

s till dance

she rites
a social s pace

a g rounder
g lobe

astronomical twilight

sonic at lass t
she w ave s
th under c lap s

for selves in the
sea bound by

sc ored lines
n ever at rest

astronomical twilight

knows knots
what she does

she says kno
she said no

she said *nichts*
knots nothings

in to
night—

night **f** all

Note: *Fermata*—in music, a sign indicating a pause of unspecified length; also known as a hold or, when placed on a note or rest, a *grand pause*; known colloquially as a *birdseye* or *cy-clops eye*; from Italian *fermare*, to stay or stop. When placed over a bar in a concerto, a *fermata* indicates the point at which the soloist is to play a *cadenza*—a virtuoso solo passage inserted into a movement, typically near the end. These poems were written at Caroline Bergvall's *NIGHT & REFUGE live writing*, 20 May 2020.

Tom Phillips

Study for a reconstruction

*working
to distinguish an event
from an opinion*
—Roy Fisher, 'The Memorial Fountain'

A great curve of steel beam –
he's hauling it down the street –
is all grinding, clangng, scraping,
a dissonant resignation.

His is not the only chord.
Rough thumps shake earth
beneath a dizzy clarinet
and a song on the radio
I've not heard for years,
if I've heard it at all.

Coca-Cola fizzes like rain.
Intemperate June washes
the paving stones' lap,
in tune with hesitations.

It's not clear what to expect.
Crowds gather surreptitiously
as if fearing they're unthinkable
at such a time in such a place,
as if improvising harmonies
across all possible keys.

In a café-bar's conservatory
a waiter introduces his accent
like a doctor explaining a symptom
when he thinks it's safe to do so.

We move on
through resurgent rain
and the soft earth scores
our indefinite footsteps
as we climb the sticky slope
to a factory reinvented.

It's where a writer will speak
of anti-monumentality.
I'm with him there –
though in the cool damp outside
fountains assert their part
in the hierarchy where we flounder.

On Shishman, a guitarist
raises his hand and says
the singer in the bar
is worth the interruption.

We have to move on.
On the turning into Chumerna,
a small toad squats in the gutter,
then shrugs, grunts, hops
into a convenient puddle.

Morning will break eventually
and in a quiet entirety
before first tram brakes grind
and the day begins to build
like the *glissando* at the end
of Chopin's *Ballade*.

Lucy Hamilton

Train set. Book. Vinyl. Body.

I

It was a child's garden. The gift was profound. Pleasure flushed hot on my face. My mother signifying me on my birthday. Endorsing a place I had no name for. The doctor stepped between the tracks signals bridges spreading across the bedroom floor. The doctor and my mother handled my body and the Verses lay open on the *counterpane*. A word I didn't know. It jostled in my mind with shop and window. It bounced on the blanket with *camel caravan* which I pictured trotting along the Cromer Road hitched to a Sixties model down from the Midlands. Those kids were our annual beach playmates. It was a child's garden.

II

Facing the impact. Nothing had prepared me as I recovered alone on the sofa with the cover's phonograph and little dog always the same always different. Choosing through the LPs in my brother's draw-string pyjamas. The dog selecting me for the empty kennel in the courtyard I'd painted blue in an empty wish. The music hit me like a *tsunami* I'd never heard of. Like a wall of water Wagner shocked me. That huge wave engulfed me breathless and spinning in a great blind deafening unknowing drum roll of sensation I would never forget. *Tannhäuser Overture*. My body electrified. I jumped up to conduct. Facing the impact

Steve Brock

Out of season

sometimes things
just fall together

like the cat
leaping through the hole
in the screen door
to join us for beers
on the back veranda
under midsummer rain

Miles' Doo-Bop
playing on the speaker
a CD we wore out
in our youth

there's a fog over the sea
and our garden
is lush and green

it's the end of holidays
and we have the house
to ourselves

you put on a dress
purchased in your 20s
from a boutique
around the corner
of a share house
we lived in

the rain stops
we make love

and doze
late into afternoon

beyond our breath
a plane distances itself
from the world

upon reflection
our youth was something
less misspent
and more indulged

Miles blows
and blows
regaining lost time

Aidan Semmens

Of which we speak

in this place too the streets are full of traffic
waving flags of mother tongues
cities illuminated like manuscripts
retelling our origin tales of old

our songs of love and suffering traded
for rights of residency and passage
language exported as commodity
syntax and lexicon susceptible

to the vagaries of commerce and stock
exchanged like pork belly futures
for buttons and beads, Europa
abducted by Zeus as a bull

Orpheus lamenting lost melodies
and trade routes, love conflated
with the Nasdaq Composite
the exchange rate of obsidian to salt

mining of the richest archive
restructuring of signs and tokens
gatherings of pain and celebration
anticipation of traditional motifs

of which we have to speak
a valuation of territory and naming
translation of the ceremony
retailed in another tongue

by deportees burned by a foreign sun
in passages of place and time
the train of argument arrived at
neither here nor there

to say who is now the coloniser, who
the colonised, who become subject
or object of transaction or transgression
your word traded against mine

Daragh Breen

from Quattro Stagioni

3 Oranges in Summer

“the sea’s honey is measured on dusk’s scales”

the rose of the summer waves
in full bloom
and the heaped hives of fishing nets
piled on the grass
garlanded with sea-bleached
orange buoys

fragments of crab shells
and claws
shattered mid-summer ritual masks
and hoof prints leading down to the
crumbling white honeycomb
that frills the tideline

“the Hunter’s moon echoes orange through the centuries”

the mushroom skulls of jellyfish
trailing their prayer beads
came to flab out their flesh
on the salted sands of the west coast
where the sun died,
the whole open wound of their being
splayed on these small wet deserts

for centuries
as they made their seasonal procession
passed the witnessing Skelligs
the local fishermen would row out

and pray with them
as they slowly jostled on the waves
day after day, night after night

when they arrived and crowded on to
the beach of our childhood
we had no idea whose sins they were

"summer's gilded barge sits buoyant in the rare Nile of the sky"

driving west to Bantry
in the early hours after
you got that phone call,
godless and unable
to believe the heatwave
temperature of the haloed dawn

the room was already emptied
when we arrived,
every bowl of oranges
in the wards
having chalked
to white overnight,

and the only movement
was of the peacocks
out in the grounds
that the patients
always mistook
for hallucinations

Miguel Otero Silva

translated by Chris Holdaway

from The ocean that is oblivion

7.

“Every instant of your life is a step you take towards death.”

“Chou-King”

In front of these olive groves and vineyards of Giotto-like friars crying
out level with the hills,
before this composition of Leonardo that captures cypresses in
mysterious greens,
at the foot of those azures of Fra Angelico condemned to the heavens
through the centuries of centuries,
it occurs to no one to think of death.

It occurs to no one to think of death
as long as the light of midday spills its dice cup of white grapes over the grass,
the nightingales spin words of Virgil in the June leaves of an elm,
the rose bushes crash their purple joy against the walls of grey,
and a scent of ripe cherries rises from the hollows.

To no one, I say.

It occurs to no one to think of death
when a blonde woman, fluttering dove unfurled on a stone bench,
smiles at us from a distance—that scatters over her beautiful body—,
and calls out “Miguel” to us, four times “Miguel” with the melodious voice
of a schoolgirl.

Those who measure the drops of their blood like the grains in an hourglass,
and those who cite the sacred books of China without shaking off the roses
of dust that cover them,
in vain they mutter to me that to live this light, this voice, this landscape is
to take a step further towards death,
that to savour the sun of this morning is to deduct it from another morning
of life.

Marco Catalão

translated by Chris Miller

from The Wings of the Albatross

1.

Epaminondas has never felt *the anguish of the blank page*
If anything causes him anguish
It's not having infinite days and nights
To fill with words
As many blank pages as he wants to

Lining up his verses on the left of the page
Immediately induces
A state of expectation and ferment
That leaves him quite incapable
Of assessing any poem at all
Let alone one of his own

That may be why
He is not excessively concerned
(Despite his all too human vanity)
With the senseless glory of small magazines
Or the ambiguous prestige conferred by doctoral theses

Which show no signs of knowing he exists

Let them ignore him let them despise him
This bothers him no more than the whine of a mosquito

All things considered
What matters to him
Is that vacant space
Where he lines up verses up
On the left of the page

And to feel
During the most fruitful hours of the silent morning
Or the hours of insomnia before dawn
That he belongs to the family of the impatient Leopardi
And the Pessoa of whom no one has yet heard.

2.

The impatient Giacomo and the unknown Fernando
Much more vivid than his colleagues at work
More alive than the strangers on the bus
Populate Epaminondas' daily reality
With questions that distract him from the menu in the restaurant
Metaphors that interrupt the typing of memoranda.

His wife even imagines ...
But the teenybopper next door
Or his cousin with silicon implants
Present no risk to his moth-eaten marriage

Unlike
Sophia
Emily
And Wislawa

Concha Méndez

translated by Harriet Truscott

Fear Is Yellow

Fear is yellow. And death
is that sky, precarious
and bewildering.
It's that guiding light –
so we shut our eyes
and follow.
We play long games
in the uncertain miles
as we walk towards
that star – that high final
door-lintel as we step into
the empty.

Yes, I know now cold is white,
and fear is yellow.

Silence

Stone silence felt
on my body, on my soul,
and I, uncertain, under
stone's weight.

Stretched out across the night
– shadow tree, branchless –

Seems the hour's asleep.
Seems like she's not I,
the woman here alone.

Ennio Moltedo

translated by Marguerite Feitlowitz

from Las cosas nuevas

9

With each domestic jolt, we're blown beyond the border. We will end our days in the bunker in Berlin. The country tries to reimpose itself, but the rapid production of paper disappears in a torrent. The system, developed elsewhere over centuries, suddenly dawns, painted on the windows, with everyone reciting the verses once written on the blackboard. Blaring and belting and disco. They switched out the flautist for the computer. Untethered astronauts and local Martians jostle each other in the crosswalk, among dogs and traffic lights; suddenly, they don't recognize each other; confused, they observe themselves, searching for a reason to live. Out there, in no man's land, a poem will be read.

12

for Gonzalo Gálvez

Is it possible, Your Excellency, Your Eminence, that I'm being judged by the newspaper vendor on the corner? He knows me well. I've been his client for years and his stand could easily become a center of investigation and a courtroom open to the public and to the breeze that blows freely from the sea. Corner of Errázuriz and Bellavista. Our day-to-day existence requires a meeting place. The temple of power is always contemptible.

Giedrė Kazlauskaitė

translated by Rimas Uzgiris

*

literary pregnancy
was the reason i gave
for an academic break

women with bulging stomachs
have gathered here in church
for an embryonic mass and
i hold an anatomic atlas in my hands
with half-dead muscles
twitching spasmodically
when you touch them
while inside my backpack
i have malformed babies in formaldehyde
and a dictionary
of developing latin trees

i sit in the church
among the bellies
reading the stained glass
waiting for my bulge
to show

i ravished myself
in the armchair under the laurel tree
with pseudo-sacral music playing
ameno dorime
padre

the girl i was kissing in my dream
turned into my mother
and i woke up ashamed
with a diminished libido
my breasts frayed etc.

her breath at night
is the beat of the waves of my sea
and her stuffed little nose makes
the muffled cries of seagulls

the god of milk and meadows
accompanies the ships
of our evening prayers
becoming my father in the morning
wearing a world-saving vest

their self-ravished daughter
fears two things:
night and day

I hadn't yet read Lacan
but already knew there is no woman.
Men were the revelation.

I was afraid to sit next to them on trolley buses,
with their aryan gazes, self-confidence,
man-spreading over a seat and a half.

But I remember what Wisława had told me –
she, who had been slated to be a ballerina, while
wanting to be an artist – we spoke strangely,

with a Petersburg accent, which had been marinated into her
by the desiccated choreographers whom I hated:

grey-haired teachers with black ribbons
who came into the cafeteria leaning on canes
to weigh out the cottage cheese so that Wisława
would stop drawing pictures of food
after she vomited out the box of Napoleon cake.
Oh, how horribly she betrayed everything she had talked about!

Just so she could squeeze with one thigh
into that trolley bus seat.

And I remember what another Wisława had said –
writing about Heraclitus's river, where fish quarter fish –
much later, in that same language, almost forgotten,
but rising up from childhood like a myth –
about our continuously vomited existence:
she didn't lie about liking sentimental postcards,
gilded with sparkles, porcelain sculptures
sweet as cottage cheese cake, swans made of crochet.
She always looked for such in stores that sold kitsch.
She weighed them out like portions of food.
And she could buy so many after the Nobel!
But her words were boats which I secretly sent off
filled with all the men of the *Iliad*,
filled with all my unconstellated instincts,
and I walled the sound away.

This is how birds call to each other
by the river in spring.