

“As an American—even as an American who is passionate about poetry from the U.K.—I cannot see what I might see if I lived in the U.K., but from my vantage, it seems to me any discussion of the most important figures in poetry in the U.K. at present would have to include Aaron Kent. And perhaps when one thinks of Kent, one thinks first of him as a publisher. But it is as a poet that he most directly electrifies me. I chase his work down as soon as it appears, eager to make fresh contact with English at one of the spots where it is most alive. His *Selected Poems 2013-2026* demonstrates why.” — Shane McCrae

“The boundless and ferocious energy of Aaron Kent’s poems is tempered by a mordant knife edge wit and keen observation of our dystopic human moment. Through this runs a thread of lyric beauty, revelatory in its profound joy and grace. A deep awareness of mortality haunts each page, as does the long process of recovery from illness.

These *Selected Poems* reveal a poet of wide reach, intent and purpose, with poems that amaze, challenge, and rip away assumptions. We meet foxes purring about redemption, we sail the long river of the unconscious. We share the pain of the poet’s insomnia, which he renders with vehement clarity, we go into pubs armed with boxing gloves and a can of socialism. These poems ready us for everything.

The poet says there are more cops in this world than dreams. Our over regulated unequal society is a main source of concern here. The poet shows the hard scramble of life where the economic dice is cast against the majority of us; he speaks with earned anger and comprehension of the realities of social deprivation, locating some of his poems in Redruth, West Cornwall, where he grew up. This is an area that despite being flagged up as part of Cornwall’s tourist paradise is, in reality, a community still battling post-industrial decline.

The complex webwork of familial relationship generational memory, and dialogue with the past gives these poems additional impact. Throughout, an imagination is at full stretch, and craft and confidence is at work in every line.” —Penelope Shuttle

“Aaron Kent has created a densely woven and yet philosophically ‘open’ poetics of confrontation. Steeped in a vital, sometimes grim but always rejuvenating irony, he offers a manifesto of survival wrought out of loss.

Constantly challenging the discreet charms and the exclusions created by class oppression, he has given us poems that embody love, parenthood, marriage, body and environment, to guide us towards complex ways of understanding physical and conceptual health.

Uniquely but socially voiced, this is a committed poetics of necessity in which language bends around opposition to work the alternatives and find a way through inclemency. The nests may be vulnerable, but knowing how they might persist in a toxic environment increases the prospects for life and maybe even some forms of liberty. These are linguistically disruptive and innovative 'personal' poems with an underlying public conscience.

There's a weird addiction to life while things constantly threaten to unravel. Resisting the privileged operators' schemes to make things even more their way, 'the scum' finds a way to float out of range, creating a poetry of refusal, a poetics of opposition to class control. This is poetry at a slant to privilege. Precarious as the image itself, life under pressure persists against the investments of class distinction, working to foil the hazards created by the wealthy.

"This is also a poetry about reclaiming the damaged body."

—John Kinsella

SAMUEL

Aaron Kent

Selected Poems

2013–2026

SAMPLE

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2026 by
Shearsman Books
PO Box 4239
Swindon
SN3 9FN

www.shearsman.com

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
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EU AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVE:
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Email: compliance@lightningsource.fr

ISBN 978-1-83758-053-4

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SAMPLER

SAMPLE

Levant 1919

Other materials, even in iron
pressed fatigue. The calm
precedes the storm precedes sleep
stretched so thin it is broken
in twilight. Home is void by work,
miners are void by pattern.

Full of intent, patterns
of populace against iron
for the sake of cheap work.
Cracks spread across calm
chatter, the bulk of broken
beams turn'd loose in sleep,

so deep to be eternal sleep.
Every timber leaves a pattern
neither confirmed nor broken
in the wake of the iron.
There is a permanent calm
with the permanent loss of work.

Choked by the need for work
in the palm of dead; sleep
as insurance against calm
infinity. the depth of patterns
in the onyx of an iron
wall. The rods are made to be broken

and rebuilt to be broken
again. Across the soiled work
tundra, run beneath iron
rain scalding the dreams; sleep
tonight in delicate pupils. Pattern
patchwork fields for the rest, calm

to be laid upon the sweet, calm
soil. Tin prices are made to be broken
and lost as prayers spread pattern
across a duchy sky. The end of work
and the frightful, long sleep
of an anxious walk to ruin. Iron

every calm friend lost to work
into all of the night's broken sleep.
Press their pattern deep with iron.

SAMPLE

Imagine what he could've done if he'd used his MAXIMUM HEADROOM

Whenever I forget what AI is,
I ask myself what my primary school teacher would say.
He'd whip his shirt off several times a lesson
so we could all watch him make his pecs dance.
Wait a minute, this was supposed to be a poem,
I forgot to include all the poetry and whatnot.
All the bits about the flowers catching the morning sun
reflecting off the back of a lake's shimmering mystery.
The definitive reason for existence that of watching
a bee collect enough pollen to have itself killed.
In hindsight, there's too many poems that exist to be poems,
too many PE teachers tensing their chests for meagre applause.

SAMUEL

When things get tough I imagine I am a snail experiencing the sweet relief of being crushed by a boot

My poetry tries too hard to reveal the depth of my self-loathing in ways I can attune to music. It has taken me three weeks to write a sentence that exists to say I hate myself. I haven't fallen off the bed, don't worry. I'm supposed to be writing about stingrays being magnetic, 'cause even if they aren't they should be. The middle-class won't publish my poems 'cause they don't like reality, that and I don't send them poems. Who wants to read about terraced houses and free school meals when the hill's travelling light meanders in ways the salamander can but dream of. I have eaten the pithiviers the Royal Society of Literature served me, and now my parents won't allow me home, instead pointing to the 'No Class Traitors' sign. I've tried to tell Mum I didn't like the rich almond filling, that I laughed at the sight of the Pumpkin Seed Mole, that I made them all feel guilty about inviting the grandson of a refugee to a party explicitly designed to exclude us. Mum, you tapped so hard you dented the sign. I had the advantageous ineptitude of sleep to tremor the hotel room they wouldn't subsidise. There are no late nights when every morning starts with you still awake from the night before. Bedtime is just an excuse to save money on heating. The last time I properly slept I felt my brain switch off like a kettle during the adverts at half time.

An Experiment in Material Redundancies

At midnight I used to count small mercies
along the perpetual sandman has left dust
in the corner of the room again. We have
asked for it to be sieved like loose leaf

tea into our eyes, delicately so as not to
interrupt suburbia is a place in hell. The
radiator is always set on high and I am
living vest to vest in in effort to control

this sweat but you love the gloss of rain
against my is that the time? I am watching
clocks instead of sleeping, a habit bore
into me through superstition it may kill

night is torture. I've slept once before
and it was everything you spoke of, all
translucent vellum guillotined to fit today's
architecture. Can we spend tomorrow

measuring every moment so I have
a catalogue to wear me like a gown
on a cold morning and tell me you love
me in ways dreams could never express.

Dear Mother You're Dying

You are wasting away, you have
cavernous sinuses and hollow flesh.
Eat gracefully: there are those that are starving,
you told us this and shoved our faces into

Mother, ten years dead and veering further
right. We held a wake while you overslept,
I forgot your name, had to cycle through
every teacher I knew before I got Mother

you're like communal wine: a representation of
blood. This is how we love each other now,
posthumously, wafer thin, before a father who
believes in spirits more than us. I've tried to save

you, but you don't need saving — there are scars
on your pupils, lessons embedded in the corner,
rope knotted red in veins across your milkclapped
eyeballs. Your funeral was joyous, we sung

the only song you ever knew. Your body so pale,
So sodden in drowning, you are course corrected,
Mother. You were as small and tight as a
lock of hair at birth. I've tried to shut the

casket but your arms stick to the seal. You've
been dead longer than you were living, Mother,
and we've left a hole next to yours. Two singing
bodies.

Moult

You say we're the sum of our
Ancestor's parts, of our heritage
as reckless abandon. I swear
I can be more than the late owl
as omen in refined sunlight,
or a bell struck for early winter.

In the eclipsing of our sleep
patterns we learn to abide
hole in the ceiling, through
which Jupiter swells and fills
what little room we have left
for night's impossible ballet.

Spirits wander as I wait
with you for all that may,
and all that will, endeavour
to hurt the things we love,
and so I hold you for the song
of both starlings and starlight

Portmanteau

All of us; you, Aaron Kent, and I
spread ourselves across the mattress
where we read ergodic fiction to each other –
where she lay the golden chariot,
alchemy by alchemist,
unenviable task of poisoning
the dinner party. We bought a simile,
like we had bought a mouse –
petted, fed, hygienic
born to serve a different purpose.
We, all Aaron, carried him in our arms,
our wasted arms in nuclear unrest,
and dug lead into turf
as we pressed its aching body
into a shoebox and begged
each other for entropy. The tone
of conversation had changed
and the split had guaranteed doubt.
I've seen myself against a foreign backdrop
like the breast of a white swan
paralysed by the lines and ripples
elegantly stamped on water's canopy,
where the drinks are quaffed
before the bruschetta stuffed.
Three of us, the inheritance of each other,
like buds snatching for the sun,
sent to follow a slope so weak so long so dark
against the paleness that eats the very best
of every silver lining etched in the folds

of heavy cloth / case. I still hear them,
us, myself in every quaint out-dated
piano solo of a rehearsed broken
moonlight sonata, like a sober actor
playing drunk – the chimes jangling
somewhere in absentia,
the simile sleeping on the crook of midnight,
a desperation becoming faint. I overcame
and landed with tender spring
between the three of us
there, between the Godlessness of uncertainty.

SAMPLE

A God Counting Jinxes

If we're really slipping in and out of
hourglasses, then I suppose we should
cross our arms and hope to space between
us. I don't think there's a crop duster

in the upstairs apartment collecting
my assumptions, listing tiny omens
in my feeding tube is empty. Having
a catheter removed is a whole new

level of saw a charcoal-black fox.
It purred redemption as we drove
south for the winter, arguing whether
foxes purr or wait for melancholy

to harmonise with the ultrasound
night. I hear it sleeping on the ward,
a low hum beating like the sky God
playing a new drum. I think it wakes

when we're silent as grotesque
architects to heaven; I know it counts
our jinxes. I know it wants me to pray.
I have nothing to offer but a phone-call

home declaring a date for my return,
a sacrifice to the bookkeeper notching
stolen promises into the curtain. The
cloud man humming to himself in the corner.

Between All of Us Like a Wavy Halo Form

The long river of the unconscious
 where we all are home,
tossing planets and asteroids aside.

The yawning drag of orbit
 I haven't breathed since
 I got back from Paris,
the oomph is real. The soundless

silent and the voice of the voice,
 there's little time. In time
we might have to be the first to go.

The cycle of birth and death:
 pressure, seeped in blues,
carries deep echoes of the dotcom boom
and bust. Wife E Coyote is still
 beneath the soft space
 and press back down.

The universe under our skin
 like carpet. I go in to feel
 a sound and a feel,

 crawl inside the blood
 brain/ear/brain and look
around inside the shadowy corners
with half-light and half-darkness:
three in the morning. Contrast this

with the feel of a hand coming
out of a jacket, the sound of a hand
on a shoulder. Come close to sleep
with the heat rising off the pavement.
I am tired to the bone but I will not sleep
for night-time is our friend.

SAMPLE