

Shearsman

double issue

75 & 76

Spring/Summer 2008

*Edited by
Tony Frazer*

Shearsman magazine is published in the United Kingdom in 2008 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-905700-74-5
ISSN 0260-8049

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Acknowledgements:

Thanks to Elsa Cross for permission to print ‘Magpies’. The original poem, ‘Urracas’ first appeared in *Urracas* (Editorial Aldus, Mexico City, 1995). Thanks to David Huerta for permission to print the translation of part of the book-length poem *Incurable*, originally published in book form by Era Ediciones S.A., Mexico City.

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Back issues, from issue 1 to 62, may be had for £3 each direct from the press. Subsequent issues—which are uniform with this issue—cost £8.50/\$13.50 through trade channels. Single copies can be ordered for £8.50, post-free, direct from the press, or from bookstores in the UK and the USA. A subscription—covering two double-issues, each of 108 pages, costs £12 in the UK, £14 for the rest of Europe, including Ireland, and £15 for the rest of the world. Longer subscriptions may be had for a proportionately higher payment, which will insulate purchasers from further price-rises during the term of the subscription. We cannot accept payment in currencies other than pounds sterling, unless the purchaser adds the equivalent of £7/\$12 to cover our bank charges.

Submissions

Shearsman operates a submissions-window system, whereby submissions are only considered 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—other than PDFs—are not accepted.

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Ilhan Berk: Madrigals

(isbn 9781905700738. Trans. by George Messo, 104pp, £8.95/\$15)

“Cloudy Sunday”

The flat plain
covered in a thin layer of snow,
with clumps of trees
here and there, dark and bare.
Snow and mud. The deep cold.

Muddy ruts, tracks, head off
disappearing into the December mist.
And through the middle of this world
a straight road, its dull glitter,
precisely straight.

Off in the distance the small village—
a crowd by the roadside waiting
to climb into a bus,
a market with little or nothing
to sell or buy. Standing around.

The memory of
those rows of long wooden huts fades,

fades, numbed by alcohol
and tiredness from work.
But some nights, lying in bed,
clear headed,
it's there
again

and that knowledge.

There are things we can barely write about.
This is not a matter of secrets
but things so terrible . . .
But no excuse in ignorance
nor—maybe—silence.

The perversion of calculated cruelty
unknown to other animals.
Such frail creatures
capable of such cowardly brutality.
I cannot describe, but I know, have seen.

“if you’re an electrician you’ll live”

Mourning the dead never ends.
Sideboard, couch, spoon, hair brush.
You’ve read the books, seen the photos.
You know what I mean.
“if you’re an electrician . . . “

And back at the market
a man stands holding out a single black jacket,
an old woman lays out worn stockings on a table,
a young woman holds a tray with
8 boxes of matches.

To the south, in the late afternoon,
people assemble in a town square,
flecks of snow in the air
later shifting to a fine drizzle.
The repetitions ahead

remembering forgetting remembering again and again

On the Shore

for Kevin Bailey

He breathed dark salt air
standing on cold sand and shells
to assess the west:
waves flecked with spindrift
long silhouette of black rock
sky one haze of stars.
Island of exile
for a wily ex-emperor
and a priest who left
footprints in the snow.
They'd sentenced him to death but
the sword-blade shattered
touching his bared nape.
In Kugahara we'd hear
the great bell booming
from the hill-temple
Nichiren founded. Later,
a banished playwright
walking by the sea
recalled white petals falling
on an outspread fan.
Gold got discovered
after silver-lodes had been
mined for centuries —
a deft example
of business know-how coming
late to a jackpot.
Bashō saw time streaked
with bleak twists of history.
Transient mankind seemed
less fine than the sheen
as that immobile river

of Paradise flowed
across the night sky
unperturbed by loneliness
or greed. He saw swirls
of destiny in
the wet tumult of the strait
and retired early.

Whores next door kept him
awake as they mourned their life
having to pretend
their love for client
after client. Next morning
outside the inn they
asked to go with him.
It could not be. They wept. He
left them with pity.

The Endline

I

On the tidal flats a man and boy out walking
in gray-black rain
to a world unheard-of.

Nothing left but the sea.
Cold. Desolate. Dreamless.
Nothing harder than this.

II

So near the sea, the tarp ragged.
Stunned by the smell of the squalls
as he carries the boy, quietly,

through the inland ruins—
scarred by cold, masked by hurt,
holding him through the darkness.

III

When the world is no more
and all the lights are dead,
who will be Cain, and who Abel?

As the boy lingers, looking back,
a gob of spit in the deeper ash of morning.
Watching the pluming backs of serpents.

IV

They wash themselves in the tidewrack and are ringed
by the bilges:
night fills the forests, begins with the eye blinded,
beside cold hands the boy lays himself down.

Invocation: For Robert Charles

The moon dropped, like oars in the murk,
low thunder flared in the darkness.

Two bodies slain in the dark, and a third

walking out to the road, mute as a stone,
fearing nothing. Cop-killer, desperado,
arch-fiend: he is but an ancient storm

whom no one remembers. A pelucid echo
sounding black against the light, a wound
seeping through our existential blanket.

Soon, I suspect, the world will be done with
such men, and the chasm their cannoading
brings, on trellised skin, no longer to be parsed

or devoured. Ashes on a dead fire, or words
without breath, slowly drawn down to oblivion.
More fragile than thought, there is beauty in the loss,

so please take me to the depot where the black gate
of hope shuts, and so that I may move on,
and live over again the dark blue of his rising,

never sleeping, on the run. Seven armies we're told,
gaped in the chokehold: Porteus, Lamb, Day, etc.
beggared by his signifying, forced to count each

breath as they sank to their knees, dead on the walkway.
All the bodies gone, and the tableaux of the slain
met with indifferent glances. And the heroic traces,

that scarved and shaped the newsprints, melted
down to assembled forgeries at the edge of a lot.
The opened and reopened doorways of Saratoga

curtained on either side with loss and furious hope,
the moon dimmed and dying, and on the terraces,
standing cold in the dark a breech-loaded offering.

Jonas Runs The Voodoo Down

1

The zombied dead forded:
the drawn integuments
ribbed, ash on the palings,
eyes unmoored from their shoring—

each verb a stone
to drop on the yellowed bones,
sunk in the ribs
the old language gutted.

Wind revives them,
sends them over low black hills
slow and soundless,
stumbling, ashen,

carried forth into the dark
only to expire
as day awakens—
the gods are sightless, he said.

The void that binds them:
pinholes, blood,
loa, painted wood:
a poet's childhood imaginings.

Turns out the light:
then he comes
like a quake inside you—
ossified by the cleaving

the body benched
as if by a drillhead,
each gasp possessed
in the cold and silence.

As he reaches in—muddied,
and finds your blackness
impenetrable, a tomb
to conjure in, a dam

to halt his dissembling,
a sootfall for each snow track—
you see an endless daylight,
gray, starless, bereft, a burned-up world.

The utter stranger is the poem:
like Lazarus exposed
but shorn of ground
unable to walk the distance.

Sense of Achievement

All day, out of Bluff, Utah,
looking for a sense of achievement
(the first perhaps in thirty years).
Monument Valley road, beyond
the airport on the left, small path
after steel gate. Had searched all
morning on the airport side because of
wrong directions. Then lunch, then,
with a new set of instructions,
another try in mid-day heat.
Murderous heat. Long slide toward
the river, still invisible, at depth
in a rough canyon. Park on slick
rock. The rock is round and huge.
All day the Wolfman Pannel waits
as it has waited all these aeons.
And Sunman comes, whose orb
has sunk so low, so recently,
below every horizon you can name,
until, with broken back,
he can no longer carry all his world.

Pace the slick rock's great distance
until the rim appears. Guess Wolfman's
on the other side, scan anxiously.
No sign of any art. Continue over
rock, through small slot-canyon
in that rock (the color turning red or
burnished gold as if at Egypt) and
thus a little further to an "alcove"
as they will call them here: half-dome
inside the rock face, and just
beyond, the record now appears.
Hey, he's on *this* side! Wolfman
in there among his banners singing

the whole song of America from south
to north and east to west, exotic feathers
in red arcs round him, his officers,
his guards and ghouls, the riches of his kingdom.
That men engraved him centuries ago, in this
immensity, this still yet boundless empire
of the eagle—for no bird else could wing
from end to end and cover it! And now

the exit. This is more difficult. The left leg's
range of motion restricted some by age.
Sunman is trapped in rock and loses balance.
If it were not for lover, spirit company, his
bloodless shadow would lie over that rock,
food left for birds. She lifts. Now they are out.
The car still sits like a mirage. The earth can set.

Woolfman Pannel, Bluff, Utah: Fall, 2006

Johann Sebastian Summoned to the Royal Court

A dream while sitting here, obedient.
To go back to our long white houses,
furthest away from this white palace,
the wicker furniture, also all white,
[as white as foam dreamed on the lips
of famed *thalassa* never seen or heard
contrasting with *l'azur, l'azur, l'azur,*]
in which it would be fine to loll, to
pause for longer times than the time
granted, to play what we desired to
play for once, instead of duty calling
evermore to play the work of friends,
always more friends. Not that there's
no desire to play the friends, but it is
hard to read two scores without four
eyes. And then to find ourselves again
as we'd once been in morning sunlight

ages ago after the second visitation,
when terror waned, disease retreated,
when all of poverty forgave the rich,
and every universal garden flourished
in all its blooms together, all birdlings
sang amalgams of single melodies to
infinitely variable musics—this was,
it seemed to us, the dream of paradise
[what if illusion, ah, pitiless illusion!]
which kept us deaf to any summons,
before the ruling classes lost their minds,
their properties; before we served only
burrocrassies as spare-time artists, mere
intellectuals, performing elephants and
fleas. The life which is, which only is,
which never changes into what is not, the
key to all these longings, the single defini-
tion of what we must perform. And then
our *counterpoint*, our what is left of any-
thing, the sum of all and any definition,
the means whereby a god [specified as
“God”] bleeds out its life into the universe.

C.K. Stead

A/go

(an elegy-pastiche for Robert Creeley)

Remember Bob?—
wore a pirate's
patch, and wrote

and talked
something like
this, like the real

thing, 'talkin'—
and (remember)
the book he wrote

after his visit,
the one he called
Hullo!—intricate

quirky, and himself
strangely
formal—'Dear

fellow-poet'—
seeming mostly
to mean

no more nor
less than was
said, but with

something dark
as well?—yes
maybe—

and jokes, like
the one about
Dunedin—

'Don't take the
steak, I ain't
Dunedin.'

30 years is
a long ago
Hullo! (now

a goodbye)
one of those
visitations

when 'out
there' came 'in
here' and was

and was
not
everything

it was
cracked
up to be.

Janet Sutherland

Blue Abrasions

“The blue abrasions of daylight”

Eavan Boland, from *‘The Rooms of Other Women Poets’*

1.

What is it about these blue abrasions
of light falling as dusk across the page,

are they shared now with other poets
in other rooms? You will have us reach

for light, lean over your shoulder
to touch dusk in another place

as if it were sand wearing an alternative
skin. Reaching for language abrades

the fingertips lightly like braille.
You could run your fingers

over the page and find that ache
of things ending

2.

There is grace in November’s passing;
the hill I can see from my window

re-bones itself, its arc backlit.
Racks and scuds of cloud follow rain

and dusk comes early.
Somewhere you are writing and have

marked the unbearable permanence
of stone how its curve catches

the breath its folds darken and
include you. Outside leaves

are falling, the beech is
unadorned and plain.

Surface of Water

I

this morning
the river is
as it should be
a light mist hovers

warblers sing
from the willows
changed and unchanged
water falls

II.

swallows drink
by skimming
the surface

scoop
aromatic
damp and deep green fields
lush clouds
white blossoms
drowning

III.

to be moved
by every gust of wind
bound by flag
by reed and bull rush
channel and conduit
bridge and weir

to drink light
drink deep
fold banks and trees
with sky
never to come again

IV.

I put you here
like water
memory
and forgetfulness

each time you die
I think of the river
and of swallows

from Temporary Interludes

I

1.

The wind gets up on the library terrace and dark clouds
fall over red St Pancras. Where will this blow us now
there's little to complete and the world has finished?

2.

A dauphin was one who hollowed
out this length of boxwood and blew
on the white salt of the Aegean.

3.

Another whose neck was made perfect
by the upsweep of her forearm. A
Pythagorean. So she used to hunt me.

4.

It was summer when I last came to the
library terrace. Not much has changed.
I still just want to eat and doze here.

5.

Obscurity and anonymity, these are co-ordinates.
The wind comes across and the sky has grown dark.
People are killing for chapters they believe in.

The Cross of Muiredach,
Monasterboice

Tall
cross
crowned
with a miniature
prayer-house.

Christ
faces west.
His feet are bound.
Two angels support his head,
sun and moon
eclipsed.

Worn expressions
come to life
at sunset—
sad, serious,
serene.

Two
sandstone
cats
sunbathe
below
chiselled words:
or do Muiredach—
'a prayer for Muiredach
who had this cross made.'

Cormorant

S	s
p d	s c
r r c	s c a
e y o c	s c a r
a r o c	s c a r e
d l m r o c	s c a r e c
i i o m r o c	s c a r e c r
n k r o m r o c	s c a r e c r o
g e a r o m r o c	s c a r e c r o w
o a t n a r	s c a r e c r o w o
u t n	s c a r e c r o w a f
t f i	s c a r e c r o w i
i s	s c a r e c r o w s c t
h s	s c a r e c r o w o c o h
i h s	s c a r e c r o w m r o c r e
s i c a r e c r o w	r o m r o m
n a r e c r o w t	n a r o m r o s
w g r e c r o w	t n a r o m r e
i e c r o w	t n a r o a a
n n c r o w	t n a r n m
g e r o w	t n a t e
s t o w	t n a
w	t i d
t a	s o
o	w

*Spreading out his wings to dry like a fishing net
a cormorant is scarecrow of the seameadow*

**Perturbation Theory and Preliminary
Approximations in Matters Categorical**
after Ponge

I don't use everything—
the stripes on the wall
the subdued light and shadows
the view from the balcony
of the 19th floor

No anecdotes relegated
to the separations, fretted arches,
perfumes—neither a capitulation
nor a quietus accorded its grimace
but a prosecution of moments of lookout

retrospective in their integrity
most difficult because acquisition
often resembles seizure—or sorting
and conquering amount, accuracy derived
not from numbers but pause and noble assertion

beyond any intended remediation of complexity

Poem

The lane ran in a wide arc and ended
at a doorway framed in rough hewn timbers
Pythagoras drawn to a blacksmith's shop
in pursuit of the ratios of harmonic resonance

a subtle exchange based on proportions
is slowly derived and realized in
rhythmic weight and pattern

at an hour of the day when the sun competes
to penetrate the chamber—sparks and flames
interpret echoes across the blue-grey air
and ample margins of smoke

nuanced affirmations of metal against metal
circumstantial details taken in endless combination
phantom music convexing an infinity of columns

Tea For Two Tahiti Trot [Shostakovich]

A chirpy dialect on the prairie run amok
To some things too loud since lit from inside
But I recognize the strut in the harmony
Celebration discerning memory talking to itself
No more subversive than an intuitive accomplice
Unmasked still matter of fact still as though elsewhere
What would it be like to be like it would be
Columns of unaccustomed grief no sound protects
Or something else disguised as all that water and sand
Holding you there expecting to ask questions
Years of captivity might require substantial space
A certain congruence opened at the appropriate pages
Before saying anything and then regretting your outburst
If you disappear there might be nothing there
But another sentimental decision to be made
Soft corners just a little darker and softer
And a successful hostility in the applause greeting the verities
You can't refuse or allow yourself to admit
Whoever said the main thing is to tell a story
Must not have had much else to do
Given the unpredicated world of genuine choices

Ordinary Renditions
from 'Warrant Error'

I no longer turn up for my own recordings.
I simply send along my voice instead

I walk like half a man with rickets,
a flâneur who talks himself into a blind corner
and is pulped by Situationist thugs

I sleep with my eyes open, spy every
ruck and tuck of the bedroom curtain.
I pull my own plug as I feel my rush,
a bonus heartbeat in the vinyl spiral.

I tell my own story, sing myself to death,
an antique pleasure that slips from its sleeve.
I enter this place with repeatable behaviours.
I get smaller and smaller to everyone else.
I'll not learn to wait in my own bated breath

Look out over the Moses bullrush marsh
and the duck lake that wasn't there, to the dumb
building that still isn't, humming no tune

Identify a green square. Name the soft sands.
Describe the Death Row Groupie,
the gnarled bone on her abandoned plate like a
stripped penis, flakes of flesh along its length

She recites her erotic dead sonnets, bosom heaving,
low gasps. She's a label-eater all right, with
munching taxonomies and a cushioning bar-stool.
On the TV above, the primate of intelligent design
looks as though he's been designed by dumb-bells

But don't look too close—both
his powdered ears are on upside down

'She skirts the shuttered *Estate Agency*—
blown cover of Bin Laden's rendered moneyman—
this skinny scally-girl in Persil-white. Trainers
well apart, without comment, without shame, she

gushes piss between them; and lopes off. You perform
your own forming, a blob of porky-pies, wheezing on
about your piggy skin weeping urea, bursting
into pain like a gospel singer screaming
the walls down, as melted cheese flakes from your

gaping cake-hole, shoulders haunched before
widescreen TV, staging its ordinary renditions

Defrost this block of torpor I'm trapped within!
The first law of unintended consequences
re-writes my poem on the final proofs'

Look out of the window in the next poem I'm
writing, and remark whatever I put there.
I'll build a ———, then cross it out, or place you
at suppositional locations, littering the littoral,
measuring the sky, body and sea interjacent . . .

Sudden sleet. Blanched haze furs the belly of
blanket cloud. The lake pitted, wind-feathered

Beneath the bobbling pistons of her behind, her spiked
right heel hits the flagstones at an angle, could
buckle her ankle, but it just holds, and lifts

The sun shows out to steam the flags. The grey
slides off to make love in its default position.
It leaves the dry analecta you collect like flotsam:
'Even corruption amongst the moths is poetic'

Arctic wind shoulders me back. Flurries
of imaginary snow fritter away the lake

Ducks fluster on invisible banks, soft lapping
in the fractured darkness which demands
more space than bodies can extend into.
This rush of writing spotlights the present

word only, a smelted ingot of contraband fact.
I must not forget this amnesiac wordster, as he
'sketches' the 'process' between 'agents' and 'units'

How much is that author in the window, the one with
the easy life? Words like 'negotiation' enflame him,
though counting is his guttering release. It's easier
to recount his life than my own, easiest for him to retort:
'Don't drink the water in the ditch where you're dropped'

Lynne Hjelmgaard

Højsandet (The High Sands)

leaning, the curved shade
one (love) tree higher than
the other (brothers) broken limb

up and coming vine
an edge of protection
holds the view

flying sand on stones
those (dunes) closest to water
swivel on mounds

trees with spines
of bald teeth

smell of burnt
nettles, thistles, burr

★

soft side
off side

★

pine needles (of them)
siege the corner, bent

felled branch
points to a hole
a toad fits

★

house nestled
quiets the morning

the dead
we don't know
are alive
at this entrance
where the crow drinks

chickens cackle
rain they need in Italy
pounds the roof

*

words come out
nearer, closer
getting closer
blanket flat

take the wood
into them

fir tree stands bare

melancholy but warm
the uprooted
grow roots

another geography
invades dreams

luck demands havoc
then part of it
slips away

Goya

apparently Goya's head has been found

it was in an old airline bag
wrapped in a linen tea towel

not surprisingly the eyes were still intact
still capable of projecting images onto blank walls

swallows

it would be nice to say
that we sat for an hour in communicated silence
watching the swallows
work against angles of mirrored architecture
20 gram metaphors drawing their lines of necessity
perforating their evolution with modern time

but we didn't

the 3 point plan for post-modern decision making in the year 2006

The June Garden

A one-note garden
with a stone sink filled with eyelets flowering
The pinks that come before illness
Insouciant beauties increase my idea of pink each day
and false pink oranges, savage as a sugar refinery
Their canes bend completely
covered in scented luminous pink lemons pink
It is almost too, and also never
Chocolate sheets in deep blue flowers
So much about the garden takes always

Rockets shaped like women
bright in shade
The sink garden bitten off in coral fragments
False orange and wildness make the world smell like candy
their sticks become arch shaped, completely lemon bright pink
At present no place
almost to be remaindered sufficiently

It is never that
The increase of small things, irregularly large
The root cover was done in re-pink
The flowered of your deep blue ends and ajuga
You permanently exclude concern

Dame's rocket at that cat clamping place
and roses spiced with tented spiders
Let us extend the mean term of Pink each day
It is nearly too much, and nevertheless it is not enough
Lazy around the yard on and on and away
Productive nothing amounts to too
but the increase of small things finally in large things
The morning in love with the spread of ajuga
Chocolate skipped over the deep blue flowers
As much as over in garden work takes always

The back court looks loveably in rocketry luminous
Coral bells, catnip, and spidery malt liquor bottles
The roses change crazily in front of us
expand my concept of pink daily
Disguised in orange: a likely candy
The canes arched in lemon quilted stems

The multiplication of minor matters
in final total importance
covered the tree roots in peony pink
Morning in love with dissemination
Dark blue conclusions, chocolate leaves
engaged to forever extremely in need

The garden writes its own notes
in dame's rocket luminous
in masked trees, water gutters, choral bells
The changes in pink you find in an ill person's front parts
It expands my rose one, the idea to be daily
All the world a probable candy risen in her
The canes in arc and quilt
Age is almost too much, sufficiently never
Puttered in the yard and all weekends
the lesser total of substance and multiplication finally
The garden forever chained to need

Rockets in luminous injury
Water guttered in chinensis
Changes in the pinks of a person, beauty insouciant
It increases my rosy idea of being daily
Orange pink and savage makes him feel that
the world is a probable sugar refinery

Eiderdown in lemon arcs, in brilliant pink if increased
Age is almost too much, sufficiently never
The multiplication of finally
A full fifth and charette
Morning in love with ajuga and diffusion
Sheets if blue-dark chocolate in conclusion

Our cuts look at us loveably
Bright injuries in gardened template
wild marks on the world refined
I have necessity approximately
Lemon this bright pink
Surfaces atomize covered in blue-dark
chocolate in summary of the flowers
Exclusion attaches

Ardent notes at the back of the mouth
come out as a garden
The yard is bright with injury
Signs found in wildness and orange roses
belief in the sugar spirit place increases
conceptual as a daily newspaper
There may there be a world. It rose
As for me, a 4 o'clock necessity
A lemon around this scent of bright pink
Tired very for the sake of, that becomes, you ask, is
The tomorrow part spread in front of the ajuga
atomization as a form of love, used
In summary, a flowered dark cover
on the upper surfaces of the garden

Ardent with fame lodged in your mouth: the garden
Hours wound like rockets in luminous template
Signs are increased in wildness
a sugared spirit, a newspapered world
In order possessing this color in luminous rose
my hatred is sufficient in these
only the front parts of tomorrow
When love is atomized in chocolate blue summary
The fact that is worked over the advanced surfaces of the garden
A lot and necessary, this exclusion

The garden is ardent as fame in her mouth
hours shapes like beautiful A's
Wounds rocket over her luminous wooded groups
Orange sampled wildly in place of sugar

Until reason is mine
One of lemon around
rose in eider totally in order

Age is almost never sufficient until there is more age
The weeks end in her extremities
The first parts of morning atomized
with love used for That
Chocolate in summary of that blue-dark covering
fixed with ajuga, necessity excluded and always
Facts at work in the garden's surfaces

A Poem for the Here & Now

Coming up out of the subway into the unusually warm winter sun just across from the gates of the big Jewish cemetery in the suburbs of Prague on a bright Sunday morning I'm the first one in as it opens promptly at nine—the old man in the gatehouse speaks no English but excellent German & gladly answers my query as to the location of Franz Kafka's grave & I go walking down wide paths lined with neatly trimmed hedges & beds of ivy dappled with sun & jagged shadows from the still leafless trees—the constant chirping of birds amplifying the faux-spring-like ambience—all around me the elaborate marble & granite headstones monuments & statues with names like Goldschmidt Rosenberg & Bernstein & now & then a little official sign pointing the way to Dr. Franz Kafka & finally I come around the last corner & there just across from the cemetery wall is the Kafka family plot under a layer of white gravel with a granite obelisk & offerings of candles dried flowers various trinkets & hastily improvised mementos & weathered pages of books with notes scrawled in Japanese Spanish & French & even a little glass wind-chime hanging in the small pine tree next to the headstone adding its pleasant tinkling to the musical birdsong & the scene is so *entirely* different than what I'd been expecting—neither gritty-gray-neorealistic nor black-&-white-gloomy nor lonesome-foreboding-grim but rather more like a pleasant spring day in a park with twittering birds & the sun warm on my back under a bright blue sky & I look down to where Kafka is presumably resting in peace under the gravel & earth & suddenly have to wonder just what all that existential angst & inner turmoil was really about—considering how benign & beautiful it all turned out to be—right here in the here & now.

A Poem for Catchers

I leave the house & step into the gray leafless tedium of a December afternoon in the German hinterlands to take a walk down to the Kiel Canal & right away I feel the fresh air streaming into my lungs & the oxygen permeating my brain & I'm seeing everything with that rare crystalline vision again seeing every tree & fencepost & bird & cow &

sheep & pheasant & crow & glistening strand of barbed wire in acute minute detail & when I get down to the canal I see that they've been repairing a section of the stone embankment near the ferry slip where the constant wear & tear of the passing ships' wakes has gradually loosened some of the stones & nearby a gray metal construction trailer is parked in which the men who are doing the work store their tools & eat lunch & crack politically incorrect jokes & along the side of the trailer spray-painted in blue in a crude rolling cursive script are the words *Fuck You* & I stop & stare at the words letting them work their weird magic on me wondering why in the hell anyone in Germany would write *Fuck You* in English on the side of a construction trailer by the Kiel Canal & why I was meant to see it & start tripping out about all the inherent *implications* & what it might possibly *mean* but I can't help see it as something vastly significant & intricately interrelated flashing back to that scene near the end of *The Catcher in the Rye* where Holden Caulfield is at his sister Phoebe's school to drop off a note for her to meet him after school before he hitches out west & how he sees *Fuck You* written on the wall of a stairwell & how it freaks him out because he thinks his sister might see it & ask what it means & have it explained to her all wrong by some pervert & how she might get hung up on it & maybe even end up *worrying* about it & so he rubs it off the wall only to see another *Fuck You* a little while later & even later yet another *Fuck You* until he's going on about how even if you had a million years you couldn't rub out every *Fuck You* in the world & that even when he dies there will probably be a *Fuck You* scrawled below the name on his gravestone & here I am just out for a semi-therapeutic head-clearing afternoon walk suddenly confronted with a mere pair of words which somehow seem so fraught with meaning wondering if Holden Caulfield would feel justified in seeing his two-word nemesis sprayed in blue on the side of a construction trailer by the Kiel Canal more than a half century later or if perhaps I shouldn't get moving before someone comes along & catches me standing here staring at a trivial graffiti in a heightened state of dubious philosophical limbo.

Carolyn van Langenberg

Lost — faith and, incidentally, lesser matters

A young man walks

the unsteady gait of the barefoot infant.
his forehead sun-blistered, he turns his back
on the abattoirs where he slit the throats of kangaroos,
drained their blood into soft drink bottles he
stoppered and stored and lowered onto freeze packs.

he swings on his back, turns to squint at the blinding lights,
the flashed dance firing dawn as it breaks over hills,
turns to face the swell of the southern ocean —
boy wanting faith, youth wrestling fishing hooks,
his back to the west, his heart to the south,

his mind fixed on heading east to hunt for prophets.
no ferry docks at the jetty stretched to infinity.
his shadow sinks into the orange of the legendary sun.
he throws bottled blood into the sea, hoists the rod
squares the weight on his feet to reel in sharks.

certainty

found in doorways
foot on kneecap
cotton shorts
loose round waist
shirt rucked

at the place where no one was permitted to talk
across the table hidden under seersucker plaid
warfare played with bone-handled knives
silver forks reserved for polite eating
hurled, missiles fleet
whistling by the unprotected ear

across the table spread with ordinariness
hot porridge, toast, eggs and marmalade.
Outside yellow grass on hardened ground
where bare feet slipped. Toes whacked stones
hidden under cow pads and thick weeds
tall at the tank stand, slashed at the gate

in the days when wild sweat slapped on wood
spidery silence ran over skinny legs
mind ripped itself to shreds of blue and blue
edged with parchment grey
 in rushes zoomed
on dreamless walls, who can be certain?

in prison a long way from home

recall
to recite
dreams

a young mother
in the green seat,
arm loose,
the little one
feverish on her lap,
the woman
sturdy
grips a bag
hoists her infant

and the mouths
in heaven
slide shut
locking out
the stumped
and bloodied
Word
to exaggerate
the cherished desert.

the fallen tree struts its roots
assuming rebirth. Nursing hope,
nested bees swarm in its hollows

and the nailed man cries out JeeZus!
They don't know

a world wrought in dewless pink and gold
the steaming sweat of men
the metal on metal clang of gates.

the rock wallaby's head drops to its hind foot.
nibbles between its toes.

the young man threads hair over his eyes
wakes to kookaburra

laughter filled with comic drama
beak points up

are the calls of birds dreamt in prison walls
across
iron red hills? sky
kaleidoscoped blue
bright parrots
crack seeds

kangaroos spurt blood
men with guns
grunt, smell

eucalypt resin
scent of frangipannis
frying buttered onions

there were red cassia leaves
in those scatterings
of a mother's circling arms

is life
reduced
in the bookless hours

hair over eyes
string dry
all day, night is worse

light swings
flings around and
spins through leaf and grass,
pirouettes
on burning dust
over scattered bones,
ballerina perfect
limbs on the sphere
sheer light stamps
the flat horizon.

the south wind without resistance
blows salt,
stings ears yearning to hear
angels' hymns
inshallah

lost
on the river road
mobile phones fall out of range.
dried grass snaps underfoot.
the headlights' long sweep
finds three kangaroos
enhanced by no moonlight.

down dark gullies, music sinks.
stomachs hiss, minds stark
with fear. bush silence.
the thickening silence
leans on smooth white scribbly bark,
slouches through shadows.

there is nothing certain
in the freezing black
nightshade hollows
when an owl boo-books,
when farm utes
rattle passed

do truck tyres wheeze when water hits
shocks
spray up cell walls
like words
snapped round ears
like words
barked in face
answers knot

under the light where conversation is not permitted
at the desk covered by photocopied letters to his mother
banter reserved for officers
flung like rocks with insults
screw up bowels

the blank face challenges conversation,
the narrow-headed politician licks his lips,
the hollow skull grins in perpetuity,
the brain rotates, memory wired for excavation

Harrow

Wild children from the forests,
the ones raised by wolves—
who'll save them now?

We tried: with soap and linen,
fire, mirrors, fairy tales,
ribbons, fricatives, toy dragoons,

the past, the future tense,
compassion, wolves' heads on poles,
full demos of scythes and harrows.

The children took it all in with
filmy eyes, whimpered in their sleep.
And still we never got them back.

Now there's howling in the towns
as well as in the mountains, and it's not
the best time for comparisons.

Forget the doctors and the priests—
in a world that fills its markets with bodies
every day, their confidence is shot.

Instead we've scrubbed out a barracks,
brigaded the children with the holy innocents,
our little wild army of the revolution;

noticing that even men with everything to fear,
crossing the opened land past the forest,
smile to see children. Turn their backs.

“Outside there is a grene tree”:

Mary Chudleigh; Ashton

No Saint present in the porch. A gap
in the trefoil-headed niche, “et exultavit infans,
in utero eius”. *I see but cannot ease her pain.*

Today the nave’s shadow shapes a cradle,
we are swept through dust to dust of ions;
family secrets are hidden on ledger stones.

On the rood-screen, Sidwell’s scythe. Blood
still spurts. *I still her dying conflict view,
the sad sight does all my grief renew.*

In the east wall cavity the rosette
and fragment of carved stone. A flake
of angel’s wing; the inner sanctuary.

*She meekly lies, gazes on me with eyes
that beg belief but all in vain,
I see, but cannot, cannot ease her pain.*

Notes:

[Title: The poet Mary Chudleigh lived near and worshipped at Ashton church in the C17. The legend surrounding St Sidwell says that a “grene tree” sprung up in the ground on which she died.

Line 2: The niche above the door of the south porch would once have held a figural sculpture. (See guide to Ashton Church).

Line 3: from Chudleigh’s poem “On the Death of my dear Daughter Eliza Maria Chudleigh”.

Line 6: There are a number of inscriptions to members of the Chudleigh family on ledger stones in the floor of the church.

Line 7: St Sidwell is represented on panel 16 of the Rood Screen.

Lines 8-9: from Chudleigh’s poem “On the Death of my dear Daughter Eliza”.

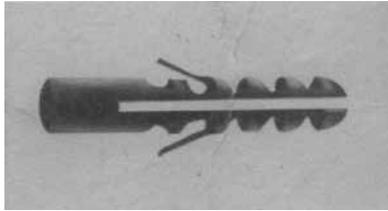
Lines 13-15: from “On the Death of my dear Daughter.”]

Rhys and Plath: Cheriton and Court Green

these two at least are drawn toward the heart
not by pulsating blood were always set apart
agendas written memories of other coasts
sand-salted air sea-spray shiftings ghosts
pursued animal tracks footsteps they knew
allowed bone instinct renewed
a tug of roots towards our far west coast
each found a home a haven her most
aerial though anchored texts spilled out
over night-time tables dispelling doubt
and fear these hit hardest during days
when sheep grazed fields in Devon space displaced
the given self its fretted folds and pleats
to fractured arteries that beat beat beat.

Note:

Jean Rhys completed *Wide Sargasso Sea* whilst living in Cheriton Fitzpaine; Sylvia Plath worked on *Ariel* in North Tawton.



Whaling Wall

The wall is a whale and this is the harpoon that brought it down. Bristling with bits, the flotilla that went out hunting included three chalk mallards sectioned in halves flying one behind the other; photographs of two sons and one daughter graduating, postgraduating and getting married. No photos of the eldest son's divorce. A small brace of shelves displaying a gaudy copper coloured milk jug that traveled to Nova Scotia, a book-shaped lump of chalk, a clutch of anniversary malts in miniature, four cruise-ship sherry glasses and a cookbook of shortbread pastries. Closer to the fireplace a mirror, two slate examples of Belgian canal art and brackets for a rifle, lifted on and off at weekends, more cleaned than used, but used. And a carriage clock. Above the doors, this whaling wall pierced and gouged to mount a fox's head & tail on a little, varnished wooden shield and on the other side a long thin souvenir mask from Bali with cowry shells for eyes (one eye missing). Mother loves her ornaments and father loves his plugs. One night, just as *the Assyrians came down like a wolf on the fold*, the blubber of the wall mutinied against the tranquility of the hearth. During a soap opera, ironically enough, chunks large enough to burn a trail on re-entry into earth, fell into the living room like flakes of a great desert reef receding in the wake of a long evaporated lake. As the objects fell, singly and in dusters dinging to lumps of powdered masonry, mother rose to put the kettle on and father reflected on the advantages of space shuttle bluetack, glue and superglue over the gouging violence of the drill, the plug, the electric cord, the screwdriver and the screw.

Robert Vas Dias

March 3rd 2007

Earth's aligned between sun
and moon, time to dream
of coincidence, my hand
in collision with planet
earth and then with a body
hurtling toward me
on the courts and both within
30 days, my hand fractured
twice: that's the astronomic
conjunction all my life has
tended towards so I
mustn't complain must
I, it's a matter of a force
meeting a moving object
which is an immutable
law of motion or some
damn thing or other.

Monday Prologue

It is about to rain as far as one can tell it is
business as usual a green arch advertising
numerous products set in bright white squares
and families negotiating all that they have to

Wherever they are whatever a thought intends
it's not a special offer nothing so ordinary as
a story cut from the bone but there's evidence
of history here rewriting how the front-line

Characters stole a march no-one's about to
change the date surely? without a thought for
trailing life through dust when music pipes its
way to the purse I'm ducking out some plot

The movement others examine entrails my view
is see what else will change be changed or let
time trick itself as the trucks roll in a cabinet
of greater or lesser affairs I strike a deal with

Innocent persuasion and the hardest thing to
fight? these shoppers mostly off their guard
stump up as doors swing rapidly to a range
of heroes 'redefined' for bloodless revolution

Small change talks it's a mystery looking up

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

SUSAN CONNOLLY'S first collection of poetry, *For the Stranger*, was published by Dedalus Press in 1993. Her poems have been published in many journals. In 2001 she won the Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry. She lives in Drogheda, Ireland.

ELSA CROSS was born in Mexico City in 1946. The majority of her work has been published in the volume *Espirales. Poemas escogidos 1965-1999* (UNAM, 2000), but a new complete edition of her poetry is due from the Fondo de Cultura Económica in Mexico City. Shearsman will publish her *Selected Poems* in late 2008. Elsa Cross was awarded the prestigious Xavier Villaurrutia Prize in 2008—Mexico's leading poetry award—for *Cuadernos de Amorgós* (2007).

PETER DENT lives in Devon. A teacher for twenty years, he is now retired, devoting the greater part of his time to writing. He was the editor/publisher of Interim Press from 1975 to 1987, where he published numerous volumes of poetry and essays on such writers as George Oppen and Lorine Niedecker. Publications include *Unrestricted Moment* (Stride), *Adversaria* (Stride) and the Shearsman volume, *Handmade Equations* (2005).

RAY DiPALMA is a poet and artist from New York City. His publications include *Letters* (Sun & Moon, Los Angeles, 1999), *Motion of the Cypher* (Segue Foundation, 1995), *Numbers and Tempers: Selected Early Poems 1966-1986* (Sun & Moon, 1993).

ANNE GORRICK lives in the Hudson valley, New York. She is a bookmaker, and also works in encaustic, printmaking and traditional Japanese papermaking. Her work has appeared in a number of US magazines and her first collection will be published by Shearsman Books later this year.

DIETER GRÄF, born in Ludwigshafen in 1960, now lives in Berlin after many years in Cologne. His publications include *Westrand* and *Treibender Kopf* (both Suhrkamp), and, in Andrew Shields' English, *Tousled Beauty* (Green Integer).

DAVID GREENSLADE has many books of verse in print including *Each Broken Object* (Two Rivers, 2000) and *Burning Down the Dosbarth* (Y Lolfa, 1996) as well as books of prose poetry, *Creosote* (Two Rivers, 1996), *Cambrian Country* (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2000) and *Adventure Holiday* (Parthian, 2006). A well-known language activist in Wales, he writes in both Welsh and English. He works as an English teacher.

HARRY GUEST lives in Exeter. His *Collected Poems 1955-2000*, under the title *A Puzzling Harvest* were published by Anvil in 2002. A book of prose, *Comparison*, is due from Bluechrome.

LEE HARWOOD'S *Collected Poems* were published by Shearsman in 2004. A *Selected Poems* and a book of interviews will both appear from Shearsman later this year.

LYNNE HJELMGAARD is the author of *Manhattan Sonnets* (Redbeck Press, 2003). Her poems have appeared in various magazines including *Poetry News* and *Poetry Salzburg Review*. An excerpt of her 22 page poem, 'The Coconut Rat Diary' was published in *Bombay Gin*, (2006). Born in New York City, she lives in Copenhagen.

DAVID HUERTA is widely considered to be one of Mexico's major living poets. His many awards include the Xavier Villaurrutia Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship (1978) and the Carlos Pellicer Prize (1990). His poetry has also been translated into French, Portuguese, Finnish, and Polish.

TOSHIYA KAMEI has translated much Latin American literature, including *The Curse of Eve and Other Stories* by Liliana Blum (Host, 2008) and *Collection: Ekphrastic Poems* by Ericka Ghersi (Canvas Press, 2007).

TOM LOWENSTEIN lives in London. His *Ancestors and Species: Selected Ethnographic Poetry* appeared from Shearsman Books in 2005, and a new collection, *Conversation with Murasaki*, will be published by Shearsman in 2009.

LETICIA LUNA was born in Mexico City in 1965. She is the author of *Hora lunar* (1999), *El amante y la espiga* (2003), and *Los días heridos* (2007). In the US, Toshiya Kamei has published translations of her poems in *Visions International*, *Common Ground Review*, *Illuminations*, and *The Dirty Goat*.

D.S. MARRIOTT was born in Nottingham 1963 of Jamaican parentage and was educated at the University of Sussex. He has taught there and now teaches at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He has written many articles on poetics and is the author of *On Black Men* (Edinburgh & Columbia University Presses, 2000); and *Letters to Langston* (University Press of Rutgers, 2006). His first full-length poetry collection was *Incognegro* (Salt, 2005). His second is *Hoodoo Voodoo*, published by Shearsman Books in April 2008.

ALASDAIR PATERSON lives in Exeter. A university librarian, he has recently returned to writing poetry; previous publications include *Topiary* (Pig Press, 1982) and *Floating World: Selected Poems 1973-1982* (Pig Press, 1984)

JULIE SAMPSON is starting to publish poetry again after a break of several years. Currently she is working on a long-term project about some of Devon's women writers. This includes a non-fiction book and a sequence of poems, from which this work is drawn. She is editing the *Selected Poems* of Mary, Lady Chudleigh for Shearsman Classics, which is due for publication in 2009.

NATHAN SHEPHERDSON was the winner of the 2004 Josephine Ulrick Poetry Prize and the 2006 Arts Queensland Val Vallis Prize for unpublished poetry. His first collection, *Sweeping the Light Back into the Mirror* was published by the University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, in 2006.

ROBERT SHEPPARD was born in the south of England in 1955. Between 1989 and 2000 he worked on a long network of texts called *Twentieth Century Blues*, which is finally being collected as a single volume this year by Salt.

He is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Edge Hill University. The complete text of *Warrant Error* will be published by Shearsman Books in 2009.

ANDREW SHIELDS lives in Basel, Switzerland, where he teaches at the University and translates a good deal of German poetry. He co-translated Ilma Rakusa's *A Farewell to Everything* for Shearsman in 2005, and has translated two volumes of poems by Dieter Gräf for Green Integer, Los Angeles.

JOHN OLIVER SIMON was born in 1942. He has been exploring Latin America and translating its poetry for over two decades. *Caminante* was published in 2002. *Translations of Light*, a selection of his poems in Spanish and English, was published by Entrelíneas in 2003 as a double book with *Bacantes*, poems of Elsa Cross in Simon's translations. *Velocities of the Possible*, his translations of Gonzalo Rojas won him a 2001 NEA Literature Fellowship. *Son Caminos*, a selection of his poems in Spanish, was published in 1997 in Mexico City.

C.K. STEAD is one of New Zealand's most distinguished poets and novelists. Born in 1932, he lives near Auckland, and is the author of a large number of novels, poetry collections and volumes of essays. His publications include *The Black River* (poetry, Auckland UP, 2007), *The Writer at Work* (essays, University of Otago Press, 2000) and eleven novels, among them *My Name Was Judas*, *Mansfield*, and *The Secret History of Modernism*.

JANET SUTHERLAND lives in Lewes. Her first collection *Burning the Heartwood* was published by Shearsman Books in 2006.

NATHANIEL TARN—poet, translator, critic, anthropologist—has led a distinguished literary and academic career studying and/or teaching at universities in Europe, the US and China. Among his many books are *The Beautiful Contradictions*; *Lyrics for the Bride of God*; *Selected Poems: 1950-2000* (Wesleyan), and *Recollections of Being* (Salt). New collections are forthcoming from Shearsman and from New Directions in 2008. He lives near Santa Fe.

MARK TERRILL was born in Berkeley, California, but has lived in Germany since 1984, where he has worked as a shipyard welder, road manager for rock bands, cook, postal worker and translator. Since 1994 he has published seven volumes of poetry, prose, memoirs and translations. He is currently working with the German director, Harald Bergmann, on a feature-length film about the last years of the late German poet, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, whose work he has translated extensively.

CAROLYN VAN LANGENBERG grew up in the rural hinterland of the Far North Coast of New South Wales. She lives with her husband in the Blue Mountains. A trilogy of her novels—*Blue Moon*, *Fish Lips* and *The Teetotaller's Wake*—has been published by the Australian publishing house Indra.

ROBERT VAS DIAS lives in London. 'The Leap' will appear in his next book, *Leaping Down to Earth*, with images by Stephen Chambers and Tom Hammick.