

Shearsman

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*Edited by
Tony Frazer*

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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. We aim to respond within three months of the window's closure.

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Palaeontology

On the edge of town the half finished buildings,
a red neon sign flickering in the distance.
You step off into the scrub, an abandoned orchard.
The thick summer darkness, crickets whirring.

Was this where you expected to end up?
lost or mainly so? in a dream?
Planks scattered on the ground,
cement smeared shuttering just left.

But the night not *that* frightening,
the landscape well known despite the strangeness.
Been-here-before one way or another.
To push on past weariness, but with so much baggage.

You know? and . . .
You cry out in your sleep.
Why, how is that?
“Carelessness is also disastrous”, someone wrote.

An ice coated ledge or a small neglect
decades ago when a little clarity . . .
A daily haunting, a nightly haunting.
Heavy with memories.

Ordering the ordinary—that surface stuff—
move the chair, safely put away that dish
—but below, gnawing at the foundations,
ignorance or just avoiding the questions.

To stand back from bare times—alive and alert—
“Shall we exchange gifts now?”
looking up at the night sky—that simplicity.
A street light seen through the branches.

Here comes Mrs. Trilobite, fresh from the shale.
She’ll shake the nonsense out of us.

Christopher Middleton

The Dance Itself

What could he have been sniffing at,
This red dog like a retired greyhound
In Gauguin's picture? An enigmatic wave
Runs down his backbone, then up
It goes to the shoulders, those
Of two women, one of them whispering,
One in a dusty blue, the other in white,
Cross-legged, putting a hand on her ankle.

And what could they, posing side by side,
Be communicating? One in profile
Has told the other, in white, of troubles
Perhaps, yet the other looks out at you
Straight-on: surely she has often heard
This sort of little sylvan history?

Behind them, a hard green. Three
Female figures whirl in a dance there.
Our couple sits beneath a tree.
The dog was passing by, in a moment
Off he walked, having doubtless
Dramas of his own to be taking care of.

Might not the eyes then have it to be
That in the picture its principal figures
Articulate one wave, its rise
In the sniffing, its crest in the dancing
At the apex, its fall for the time being
In the whispering? And that this,
Here, is an image of time caught,
Caught by the tail, made by colours
To open itself, become transparent?

Yet in the wave secreted there are messages:
At what the dog sniffs we only know
That in no time at all he'll piss on it;

Of what the one woman whispers to the other
We cannot so much as guess, truth to tell;
And what are the distant dancers dancing about,
If not to rhythms inaudible the dance itself?

(Arearea, 1892)

A Stuffed Shirt

In our dispute relating to rats,
As far as concerns the art
Of their portrayal with heart
And no disparate squeamishness,
We are asked to concede that portrayal
As such would not be a treat.
How should the portrait of a rat
Be wholesome if the rat is not?
And the arts, are they not wholesome?
Never paltry, but impartial?
Even when great, portrayal
Of a rat could exasperate
The wiliest writer: who could fail
To feel in the rat a threat?
Erupting in frat house or Tarrytown,
Won't rats inflict a trauma?
In the theatre you smell a rat:
Can you not trace in every part
The tracks of a rat? Also athletes,
Training cannot eliminate
Two pieces of rat in the rapture
Of racing for trophies and whatnot.
When you are left for dead
There's a chance the rats will eat you.
For reasons possibly obvious
Women fear them greatly.
Like us they are greedy creatures.
Like us they run for shelter.

In the laboratories pampered,
Some rats are even learned.
In sewers the world over
Rats wallow in the wet,
And do they or don't they resist
The bacteria they propagate?
For their continued existence,
Like ours, there must be an argument:
You bet your boots any rodent
Attempts at least to be prudent.
Yes, and the white rat with pink eyes
Does befriend the boy who loves it . . .
Have I lost the thread? I think not:
Comparative images ratify
Rather than serve to denigrate
Our arbitrator's rationale.
Now can we not congratulate
Ourselves on being, as usual, right?

A Spider's Web Caught In Amber

On what plain old beach
was it found, this wonder?

The spider, how fortunate,
must have got away.

We who strive for a mere lifetime
to create a thing of value

envy perhaps the fortunate spider.
A closer look into the pale gold

subdues any grudge: in the web
not one single fly.

Ending with a spell incised on a rib of scrimshaw

The thing is, I thought the proclamation bruited
that you were to be the ruler and the dance was to be
anything, even sleep. You had kempt shoes. And.

Were alone again. As was I. Come midnight, I
dipped the sponge, dropped water drops upon
my collarbone, asked imagination: *Over at your house,*

does my image ever whistle through, just another sailor?
Or. Are you or are you not the token tree,
the head of some triumphal avenue? Even now,

thoughts of you cause me to know lyric's
true compound, close-afar, give rise in me to
memories of a time preceding you. Of. The last

farewell in bed put the wonderful doings into my history,
said last being none other than a drover, rough,
who had me in Wales. I would have been your most

precise friend, if not your enchantment, the winding of
your air. I'd have tolerated affairs, real or make-believe,
or some of each, and in the long run, in quotidian old

age, I'd have looked at you as an attorney looks at his watch.
But. You married another. This midday, I am forced
to ring forth in language shaven from the bindery,

merely to pretend I could write: "Beloved. Leap from
my hold to my gaze—O free, O feline-like—instead of
from gaze to hold, and that will be just as good."

Death of a Gypsy

A woman of the winds anticipates
bartering old harmonies for sheep, sheep
for wool, wool for cloth, cloth for paraphrase,
common language for a spell of godspeed;

trade trade trade until she coins! Redundance
is not possible but repetition
is. She gets caught outside in the thunder,
departs, like lightning, with a last vision:

the morning star, soaked with feeling derived
from rivers of cobalt-glazed pottery,
points to the caravan she has outlived
as it loops back! She is not forgotten!

Her skilled mother, next to her young uncle:
“Là!” Pink and gray. There! The first cathedral.

MARY LEADER practiced law for many years and served Oklahoma as Assistant State Attorney General. She received her MFA in poetry from the Warren Wilson Program for Writers and left the law for her PhD in literature at Brandeis University. She is now Associate Professor of English at Purdue University, Indiana. Her first book of poems, *Red Signature*, won the National Poetry Series in 1996, and her second, *The Penultimate Suitor*, won the Iowa Poetry Prize in 2001.

Ray DiPalma

Ten Poems from PURGAVAGO

Order is determined only in what has been left behind—beyond the blue savannahs the roofs are dreaming of Europe. Blown forward by all that is ignored what pulls against you? All that happens in the room cannot happen in the street. With the most pointed attention given to every syllable, it could just as well be otherwise—arrested in the approximate, the interior revealed via the strange turn merely to advance the point. The fault of the climate imprudently brought to perfection—the damp air from the river, the poor light because of the trees, the mist and the small rain . . . variants in stasis, a focus about them to which a silence is attached, a refined elaboration of something that is not—reciprocal demarcations of the graphic and geometric, the half-empty room before departure, three figures and an abandoned shadow, the wind coming off the lake . . . I am in this public place in order to avail myself of your private ear— something the open hand would explain.



Rain falls straight down
carries off perspective

proportion's terms are built of the numbers that remain
the architecture yields to the elaboration
built of dispossession

its arrangement stands apart
constrained by what has been reconciled



One is one, one or the other not another
expectation built on such a phrase privileges order
—what it means to live in a room—

unused staircases once devoted to vain searches
another blank page covered with grayish streaks
the space will slip into an envelope at any point

the streets below are provisional
ill-divided domains stretching in opposition to one another
successive forms of gross and subtle self-display

from the everyday to the mythological plane
their own philosophy and justification in every transition
of minimal resolve, their consequence an exasperation of crises

the necessary prolongation half-dismantled, *significantly different*—
as usually defined within the narrow limits of expectation—
places of origin and nothing more

the day's events episodic and disillusioned,
mechanism without analysis, memory without perspective
the trains and buses haven't been stopping for years



Nothing left to gain
or little of real consequence
black ink, blue ink, or green?

blue shirt, white shirt, or red?
skeptical, martyr, or prophet?
the light transforms the face

but the heart in darkness transforms
the light—no need to look to know
same face, same clothes, same ink

☪

One loses oneself and all
at once one comes to oneself.
But what actually happens?

Voices are intertwined
as in a responsory whose tempo
accelerates into delusions

of further explanation and then
dissolve into nothing—from
innermost origin to ephemeral collect.

Anecdotal forms and transitory purposes
are capable only of reflex action—
another misconstruing of rapport

limited by the promptings of memory
and bearing the colorless marks
of the situation that gave rise to it.

☪

Artis Natur

Trees whited with blown snow
to look like birches.

Sodden fields green in winter
mirroring sky's blue.

All this whose coming down,
a hands' full of undertow;

sea humped up and lunged—
fretted all and flowed through.

A naked breast and back,
a white bird, the brown beasts

line up. The forms
and colouring heave.

One bent brush stroke, one
trowel shoved in, palms squeezed

around a flipping fish—
its grip on life appeased, for now.

I paint and let it pass.

Perils of Domesticity

What happened today when you hid the whisky,
looked at the wall as if you could make your eyes
leap out of your head and turn into bullets?
I've tried to clean the floor. There is all this dust.

You can't understand the way I say tidal.
These silences could be fear or the moon or
cocktails. Your office is full of boxes that
keep emptying themselves into more boxes.

What we don't tell one another is secret.
I polish the crystal glasses with paper
and Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice and then
they sparkle as if they were loved by someone.

Tonight, with you watching, I spilled your curry,
sauce bubbling on the bottom of the oven.

So Much It Hurts

Washer woman hands, wrinkled and red,
nail beds peeling, white-edged.

Bruise, a plum, eyes urge, "I am so . . ."

Why does she love? Why does she,
muslin, bent over, everyman, because,
because she wants his, washer woman
smells like clean linens. Soapcake,
fat pastry, limp dick, stranger, who?

Because of the claws in his back, because
of the dead in the night—
tubfuls of tears, really, pitiful.

Vengeance of sorts. The dark lot.

Nothing.
She Loves *she loves*
So Much *so much*

It Hurts—dumpling in steam,
red hot plastic heart.

At the door; his stick,
boots covered in mud from the street.

Aromomentic Lo(r)cation, Andalusia

planet-old plat eau(-)built from time's a
roma land scape pushed through a bull's no

strils stone smeared on my finger prints
volatile rosemary per formed upon by wind

& water sinuous sweet stinging medium sea
-bed micro-bones & muscles of youths stretched

through soft hot torture a cabra monté's sweet
unsayable memories his horns weapons el

egant as nostalgia across the valley from him
light smells as possible as fragmented chess

pieces on the wrecked foot path females are
flaking look-outs stunted Classical statues

written through pre -histories' dimensions wild
crystallises in the sun shine I scramble in among

my hat's miniature mountain-range stain round
my crown of buttresses & thorn -full slots

I get myself beneath my steps clonk-rattle jump
an irreversible moment all the stench collects

on my mask sweat erodes sierras gleefully night
rises its loaf without light frightened among aroma

I clamber round closed among neon-purple petals
dark mouths curl fragments of bird song cold

through pine-needles my fortieth year's ghostly
blue noise I hang my meat on one direction's eroded

remains freighted to be smelled a small animated
statue annihilating wrong worlds with bright weight

less selves brain maze with a cloud-shadow pass
fold flaps & channels of nostalgia across a synapse

battling like bandits & fascists dance I could laugh
some world's limestone plateau in my mouth hear

grey matter's coppery spread feel azure's evil iris
rise on a pale green length of exit perspective

steps amongst brief flowers & human effluvia

Linda Black

from: **The son of an Apothecary a Shoemaker**
(after Constance Buel Burnett)

1. Nor the most prosperous

Going without needed more but cared less. So far did his thoughts carry they often had to speak to him twice dependent on no one's hire. With hammer and needle and knife he could lay his hands far beyond. A rude wooden shelf contained everything out of the same piece of calico except on their backs the four shining plates spotless and tidy. Reverent fingers turned foolish dreams into small garments. (Her shiftless parents had driven her to beg nor a decent dress.) To be a scholar! Frustrated in boyhood (as from scorn) his mind under the rumpled blonde thatch was never meant. He broke the silence. She pushed. Indignantly for the poor little one he read aloud from the plays of Holberg.

4. For he was guilty of writing poetry

A-P-O-T-H-E-C-A-R-Y opened his speller. A clumsy young stork in wooden sabots sprouting about his clothes. Half-eyes slipped shut. Imagine living in a few moments ago! Unwise remarks stirred under the quilt. Several jumps ahead the king's fool arms protruded through dense clouds with amazing ease. A jester with a big nose. A good natured clay pig. If he did not walk carefully! Extra richness passed without further comment. Clattered in his presence for all the street to hear. To flavour the soup. That must be the reason. Life denied came forward himself a Prince of Denmark with very long legs. *Come and see!* The strangest child encased in neatly darned stockings. Fru Bunkefold took the hat-box gently from him. She had heard of hunger of the soul.

8. Was he not already a little famous?

For three consecutive nights her tired brain jumped from the frying pan. Dropped unheeded in a glass of currant jelly shared with a sullen man. Scrawn and spindle clasped behind a crippled lap. Matters slowly

growing. (If she hurried she would have time to cry.) It was not long before now Hans became an object. Nights slipped out unobserved scrambled into the wings his wide mouth fastened naïvely on the edge of the auditorium. Most in the world consisted of only one word. To seek his fortune. *Is it a monkey?* asked the Herr Direktor. How to save his white frilled shirt from the unforeseen? The boy must be confirmed. In the parish of St Knud his new boots creaked magnificently.

11. Many dancers are not at all handsome

Gaunt length hardened into angles the man he was to be. All nose on incredibly big feet. The not distant future in which he was to be famous swam with just such illusions: began to do unaccountable things. *A little fun—nicht?* Siboni tapped Hans' thin chest making the room ring. It was his big bone structure. (He needed no make-up to play the part of a troll.) *What to the voice happened then?* Splinter-like legs drove both to the verge of frenzy quite unintelligible to anyone but himself. No use thinking shivered in the corner. Throat tightly closed. The world would look different after soup.

13. The sleeves were only a little too short

There had been no stampede. He took the manuscript wherever he went. A human broomstick discreetly passed from house to house (before which the lorgnettes) ignorantly pushing into circles. Not a darn or a spot on the fine blue material. The next best foothold would appreciate the quality. How to fill out the depressions? The present wearer could only boast a concave wishbone. *So nice of you to come to see us this stifling day.* Strangely she had never seen a deformity before. (There was more than one hump). *Do unbutton your coat.* The pile of theatre programmes inside his chest crackled audibly. On the way back to his lodgings I must be leaving planned his next tragedy.

Little Banjos

for Christopher Middleton

He plays the piano in his sleep,
the piano plays the sleep in him;

he places chairs in the garden,
the garden places chairs in him;

once more the sun umbrella rises
and each day provides its little banjos.

And it is now, this moment, when he knows
that he will propose marriage to her;

they are both aged 83 and they marry;
and she dances for him and she dies.

The next day he plays the piano and sees her
in the sky and the piano music smells of grass.

The Poetry Reading

This is the man who has come to read the poems to us
and he is wearing casual because it will make us all feel
better and that poetry is natural and that we will like it;

and when we are asked for our names we all do that
thing we all saw in a film years ago
and shout out John Clare and William Blake and Christopher
Smart and Jumping Jack Jesus and Mary Of Madness;

and when we do the poems we tell him about
what doesn't
what cannot
what lost
what hurt

and ask him where they have put the grass.

DAVID H W GRUBB is the author of many collections of poems, most recently *The Man Who Spoke To Owls* (Shearsman Books, 2009). His collection of short stories, *Hullabaloo*, is due from Salt Publishing.

Anamaria Crowe Serrano

Playing Messiaen

For Thérèse Fahy

Birdsong rushes morning
to the tips of her fingers
quivering through trapezium
tapping from the trapezoid
capitulating to the capitata
the hammering of hamate

how to trap a sound—
bend its bones to breaking
tame the thrush in the hand
 worth two nightingales
 still chirping in the bush
subdue through orchestration
deft manipulation
in order to rework, replay, release

through honey-handed practice
practice practice practice
as the distal pecks and pokes
repeating keys it hones
plinks furthest from the body
soft **loud** piano *forte*
twitter soft
 tweet!
the bird, the hand, the ear
and bated breath
hunger for a habitat
worming through the piano jaw
trilling in a language that rebels
against all time and meter hour
and season till it
 stops

a noon cloud sneaks by

silence rubs itself raw

far away the bark
of a birch

silver leaves sucking light seeking sun
cortex heaves at the woodpecker's
rat-a-tat-a-tat
implodes under the weight
of a sound sent to

attack

siege by castanette, celeste
the birds are at her peck and call
as she modulates the pitch
stuffs the staves with sonic shifts
lunges into biorhythms, microtones
rush and gush of arabesques
the foot all furious action
timbre tumbling from the lark
harking back to desert bush
the nest packed tight and then
the jagged *crack* of birth
a song to celebrate the egg
jackdaw chack-chack-chacking
chaffinch chaffing skin
that swoops and glides
and rubs and races
fingers camouflaged as feathers
as they flutter, speckled, *cheeeky*
crested, fly, choke the spaces
in between the sounds

not
a
sound

messiaen messing with me here

messing with my ear, harnessing
some harsh realities - the tongue
is - not - a - tune the hand - is - not
a - hum, they are lumpish lunate
muscle melody impeccably performed
true to form, and to intent
but lunacy
 falling short
 of truth

suppress the metacarpal metaphor
take a break.
go for a walk
 in the woods

burn the energy of stillness
on your retina
the intervals of whispering
the speed of savage
on your scaphoid,
listen to the phrase that cannot
be controlled even when you hold it
in the palm of your hand
it's just a mood
to move you—no more
a caging of the senses, ineffable
approximation of a freedom

like a la-la-la-la-laugh
impossible to trap

Birds sing microtones. They phrase in arabesques that swoop and glide. Their staccato “notes” are more like jagged shards than human musicians’ points and beads of sound. The timbres and attacks are often energetic to the point of harshness, yet to our ears in the wild they may sound ineffably sweet.

(<http://ccrma.stanford.edu/courses/220a-fall-2003/sep-30.html>)

Birdsong moves faster than human fingers

Nightingale	Little Owl	Wryneck
Cetti's Warbler	Wood Lark	Blackbird
Nightjar	Chiffchaff	Robin
Song Thrush	Chaffinch	Mistle Thrush
Whitethroat	Cuckoo	Great Spotted Woodpecker
Melodious Warbler	Hoopoe	Green Woodpecker
Hedge Sparrow	House Sparrow	Redstart
Golden Oriole	Carrion Crow	Magpie
Blackcap	Turtle Dove	Blue Tit
Linnet	Wren	Garden Warbler
Willow Warbler	Greenfinch	Serin
Nuthatch	Goldfinch	Starling
Bonelli's Warbler	Wood Pigeon	

- 1. scaphoid
- 2. lunate
- 3. triquetrum
- 4. pisiform
- 5. trapezium
- 6. trapezoid
- 7. capitata
- 8. hamate

the end of time
 in the distal
 distance ringing
 ringing

what sound does a leaf make
 what language does a feather speak

ANAMARÍA CROWE SERRANO's *Femispheres* was published by Shearsman in 2008. She lives in Dublin, and is also active as a translator from Spanish and Italian.

The Alarms

Factories fly south in winter.
Ducks vector the reservoir, northerly,
a fowl assembly line from dirt to dinner.
Chickens, however, are another tale,
where chickens are another tale entirely.
Machines chug the river to the plant,
ducks vector the reservoir, always northerly.
Larks chorus a car alarm hosannah.
Larks chorus a car alarm of hosannahs
as sunlight tilts off solar panels.
Machines chug the river to the plants,
snipes, cygnets, superseded.
Sniper, Cygon, Supracide:
the field's sibilant defenders.
Sunlight tilts off solar panels.
Dried produce strips the greenbelt—
dyed produce *stripes* the greenbelt.
A fox squats in the sheaves, moves on:
the field's sibilant defenders.
Agroeconomics.
Aggro-economics.
A fowl assembly line, from dirt to dinner.
A fox squats in the sheaves, moves on,
factories fly south in the winter.

Defining Deaths

1

the trees' past is alight
incandescing in cell and fibre
 blazing veins and capillaries
 squander aura
 the year's store of sun
leaves weightless
time falls radiant
light's afterlife flares from the ground

2

winter-hard tulips sealed in alabaster
yield stone to membrane
 petal-tense skin
gives peels pulls open
 grease-creased white-puckered
 crepuscular tissue

give themselves over to opening
hollow out the glossy air
afloat in air they hollow
intransigent green stems
sinuous to water now

give

Sestina for Browning

'I touched a thought . . .'

Robert Browning *Two in the Campagna*

an idea flashed in the sun
escaping from my window where
light and a glass surface met
in the gap between a second
it found a stream
what is the speed of thought?

a poet touched a thought
as it brushed a second
a floating filament where
an orange calyx and green beetles met
but it escaped across the stream
and floated off into the sun

into the sun
but his fingertips just met
a junction of things and consciousness where
he felt his thought
taut above the stream
held in a vanishing second

did my idea come second
to something? it flashed in the stream
was it tactile like his thought?
it glanced in the sun
less a thread than a gasp where
light and glass rhymed and met

in a triple rhyme as the idea met
and greeted window light and thought
it made its reflection? not the sun?
a gasp alighting where
faster than sunlight's speed per second
it dazzled the stream

or seemed to dazzle the stream—
an idea glanced in the sun
a gasp splitting a second—
things and thinking briefly met
and sundered as untethered thought
died alone somewhere

on second thought
after the idea fled where sun met stream stream met sun
there was nowhere only a second thought

ISOBEL ARMSTRONG's most recent magazine publications have been in *Navis*, *Tears in the Fence* and *Shearsman*. 'No-ing' (*New Writing* 6) was translated with an interview by Matilde Angelone and Annalisa Bergante in *Artepresente – L'Uomo, Il Tempo, La Storia* (NS 2001 23–26). Equipage published a long poem, prompted by the Iraq war, *Desert Collages*, in 2007. Poems by her will be appearing in *Shearsman's* anthology of experimental poetry by women, edited by Carrie Etter (2010). She is a teacher and academic and recently published *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination* (2008), which is a kind of poem.

A Cow is Dying

Beneath the House of the poet Tulsi
Where Ganga mud meets Chunar stone
A cow is dying.

Sheltered under saffron
Cosseted beneath a blanket
With fires burning at head and feet
A cow is dying.

Back beaten, legs broken
A cow is dying
And children bring her garlands,
While a sadhu ladles water
Onto her lolling tongue.

A cow is dying,
Her eyes two balls of crystal
Cloudy and mysterious with pain.

A raga is played in mourning
Today is the day it speaks of—
A cow is dying

Beside an upturned rowboat
A cow is dying
And when darkness falls
Like a great black bird
Its talons open jaws

She will be dipped into the river
Tenderly as the bathing of a calf—
A mother swallowing her own milk.

Grey, Languorous

The old monkey of the mountains
Sits in his Bodhi tree
Tail plumb as the pendulum
Of a cobwebbed grandfather clock.

He's given up on the world—
All of its comforts, all of its vices—
Left his home, abandoned the tribe,
Renounced his daughters, rejected those wives,
Relinquished his sons. His work is done
And he has done with it.

He seeks the enlightenment
That comes to those who wait.
And wait. And wait alone.

But your passing by has touched him
With an awareness of an awareness –
What if he's missed out on life's pleasures
Only to retain the sum of its pains?

His face is black as coal, eyes
Glowing in their grates, with a screech loud
As a swooping Eagle Owl's—
He would surely crush the skull
Of any monk who wandered by
On his own path into the mountains.

DAMIAN FURNISS lives in Exeter. A chapbook, *The Duchess of Kalighat*, appeared from Tears in the Fence in 1995, after which he retired from poetry for ten years.

Lucy Hamilton

The Blue Sea

The air is sweet with hyacinths along Claremont Street and Great Western Road and I'm eager to get out of town to the docks and further round the coast to Nigg Bay where on stormy nights the sea crashes over the rocks and the foghorn breaks into my nightmares. This is where I cycle on my afternoons off to read my library books and to shake out my thoughts in the bracing salty air. The problem of Natúsha Máslova is occupying my mind. I'm absorbed by her pretty face and dark ringlets, her black eyes sparkling with the strange squint that bewitches Nekhlúdob, his confused feelings of pity and revulsion when he visits her in prison. I feel great sympathy for his sin against her, for I have left my own in the outskirts of Paris. Unable to bear the weight of my action or to piece together the smithereens of my heart, I arrived in Aberdeen with nothing but a small suitcase and 200 duty-frees. And it was right here walking along Market Street that I suddenly knew I would suffer for many years to come.

L'Heure du Déjeuner

Come rain and shine and upturned collars we seek one another's eyes as we scurry across Place Victor Hugo as if to some important business assignation or an eagerly anticipated rendezvous with a lover, or to a casual meeting with one of many friends. As we pass the brasserie we glance furtively into the glass-covered *terrasse* where groups of men and women are talking, drinking good wine and laughing as they slither oysters down their throats. A few sit alone at ease with themselves, reading *Le Monde* or *Le Figaro*, holding the espresso between index finger and thumb, the raised little finger chirpy in its signet ring. When we find each other out—which we always do—there's no feeling of shame, only of recognition as we hold each other's gaze and pass invisibly by.

Buckingham Shed

Some children have imaginary friends.
I had an imaginary garden shed
in an imaginary garden,
a polo stroke away
from an imaginary house.

I imagined if I peeked through
the shed's weathered boards
I could turn the big house
into a big imaginary palace

I would imagine this palace
until my imaginary pocket money
ran out in its imaginary plimsolls
and I'd be back in my garden shed
growing imaginary turnips
and thinking about the train
leaving platform eleven
from my imaginary railway
station in life.

I carried my garden shed to school,
and out on my newspaper round.

I smuggled it on the bus
to town and smuggled it back.

I took it to see
Lady Chatterley's Lover
in The Gaumont
and stood with it
at the end when they played
the national anthem.

Back in Wild West Park

I took it out with my imaginary pack
of feral cats and hunted imaginary corgis.

I was born
on the second of November
which is my official
working class birthday.

I also have an imaginary birthday

On my first imaginary birthday
my imagination sent me a birthday card
and the keys to Buckingham Shed.

On my next imaginary birthday
my imagination sent me an exercise book
in which I wrote Christmas speeches
from the monarchy in the shadows.

When I was small I'd sing
imaginary songs to
Buckingham Shed,
and I'd be rich and famous
and meet Alan Freeman,
David Jacobs and Cathy McGowan.

My first rock and roll band were called
The Buckingham Shed Collective
who were always top of the bill
and talk of the allotment.

In Buckingham Shed I was taller
than any tree I ever climbed
in Woodland Wood.

In my garden shed I'd flick through
wildlife shots of wise old owls
and imagine them reading

The Honicknowle Book of the Dead
as they filled their larders with field mice.

Sometimes I would imagine
the owls discussing literary criticism
with a flock of crows
under an imaginary sky
under which Ted Hughes was standing,
the last in a long line
of collected Poet Laureates,
each one wearing a poetry medal
for services to the imagination.

Sally Flint

Party

Somehow a baby sleeps among peoples' coats
as bass music batters the walls.

In strobes and shadows women who wouldn't
normally wear short dresses are impressed
by the shrill whistles of drunks, unaware
there's a plan to make beds out of cushions.

When he finds her barefoot in the garden
he hits her in the face. Blood seeps
from her lips like a rose opening.

Someone said the child inside
isn't his. He picked her up before,
lying on the grass, the girl who lost
a shoe when she danced.

Chicken or Egg

If you push me in a cage with five other females,
and as we grow that cage becomes so small
we are forced to keep our elbows by our sides,
the roof of it touching the tops of our heads,
so all there is to do is eat the same food for the rest
of our lives. In such confinement we won't know
the difference between day or night;
there'll be no sleep, even though we tumble
to our knees heavy-breasted,
and get leg-burn lying in our own excrement.
I'll wish we'd all been plucked at birth by a giant hand
and placed with the baby boys in a chamber.

Mark Dickinson

Wodwo

After Ted Hughes

i.

Hill-crown like a spirit
Crammed with darkness
And the incomprehensible cry
Coming at the pace of oxen

ii.

Hill shaped like a wave
Dragging me through // Dragging its hair
Out of the depths
Bleeding mud.

iii.

That is illusion, leering, drumming
Its rods . . . nobody believes
It has no face // their faces lit
Like angels on the sea.

from squalls

ii.

We followed that path through the woods.
the deep horizon flooding

the shallows. Small shrubs, deep furrows,
where leaves shape tomorrows surface

out of decay we pressed our feet
in to soft ground, scanning in-

timately the clouds nourishing
an evenings dream, in which heaped

clouds prevent, flight to a far I-
deal where the moon pleads only

the moon and the stars, a home
beneath rings of shelter

covering the heart in
atmospheres of everywhere.

iv

bitter box worm
searching the woods
bids the rash gazer to reform
bodie and minde
dogging sinne in the name of
flowers we neglect
micro-pores roots beneath
moldic pores and the pore network
under the low cowl
rustles in magic
stretching the surface of bone
to the reason of speech
what creeps is what clears from shadow
attended by music & light.

from Shell keep

why stiff-brained edict in the flap
cloture: hearth bathgate—this spring's molten
hierophany such a pent-up
normalcy whither unmarked
hall of horrors whither unmarked
to the folk resistant personality dome
to the cocktail snickers down the tube
in a nubbly yellow theorem pet
this candy-wrapper earth
still holds

2/22

in such homesteady
skyscraper tunesign
underscrib totes

fault me, girls,
when the time comes
shining with love

in the troubling rush
quiet riverstone

we do learn narrative
here

weeding the theory grass
call our nubbly float

call stars & other directions
form this bright house

from *degrees*

Threadwaste

Everyone went there to be seen by someone.

Send six, or five, of your best.

Evening as a differential equation
from here, barred in triple reveal,
loose change blocked from view.

The ripped out, free matter roughly torn
from tripods of western perspective, now
only somewhat recognizable
lumped here, more garbage than sourcebook.

That some came from rolls . . .
fell a manufacturer's sortage plan—
down, deft, voter-less. That impression
so negligently made recurs at what noise level?
bent back, thin straw paper soggy
with it, grid to equidistance one from one another
so no conversation, disgruntled sub-vocalizing
makes jointure of pain, rip-off by degree
saccade coverage where mitigation enters late.

★

Wedding Trip Sequins

Step One: Bride Arrives.

Bride,
that mountainous monster
of hope arrives
with a clatter

unbethrottled

to announce
a cutting from here to here
through ice.

She will not stay
where it puts her.

She's had herself
hooved for the vault
up the aisle.

She's had herself
amplified to crack
our smiley ears.

She's instigated great expense:
a clamour for bold cutlery
to clash in the air

that she may not sickly stink
perfecting pettiness
and poultry kisses.

Step two: Bride's Whoosh.

When Bride said I do
her sap
shunted up and out the top

fountained into the trunk
branching
beside her.

What a clot. What a notion. What a terrible devotion.

Hark. A flowering leaves her.
For this

this whoosh up the sunshine,
this turmoil. De-light?

It shook the girl.
Really I mean, shook her.
Tree bud shade root girl as she was,
used to be,
standing there now,
all the blossom blown off

Step three: Bride gets Stuck in the Lift

Hmm When I lifted my veil
he didn't notice
it was me.
But his face changed.

It fell down.

Later when I lifted my skirts,
and he looked again,

I was nowhere to be found.

from Rift Designs

XLVIII

every time I write the date
I think it should be the future where
a boy with a pasteboard face
snakes through town saying
goodbye to all the fixtures (he's
one of the geniuses who invented the head)
lick the salt from your tongue,
there are many like this
who struggle on till they collapse and
nonetheless demonstrate some engaging
inflects of memory,
it's then that we break open—
this thing seems to exclude from the flesh
so uncertain, so steady

XLIX

the present function is clear enough
three estates of consciousness found where
she reminds me of someone I once
with her figment of local exchange
and sixty-eight memories of echo, parallel retorts
rallied for the first time—
it seems she's factotum to the dead cell
from cave to idiot diaspora—
a floodlit house provides a narrow sequence of
starting points, pursuing the arrows of a cabbed eloquence
dog-toothed with squares but not squares:
one chancer, one wife
something like that
just the once, and a long long time ago at that

Xibalbá¹

*for Verónica Murguía
and David Huerta*

1
Roots emerge from the body,
gazes spread around.
A sap is consumed within,
it brings resins out,
attracts transparent insects.
And there,
 thigh of a tree,
he sinks into dream.

 He glimpses a life's fate
 dangling from a hanged man's knot
 or an open ovation.
 Yellow memories at the back of a bar.
 The eyes trying to fuse
 into impossible horizon lines.

Far-off sprigs brush his feet,
dragonflies flutter their wings.
His fingertips unfold
to touch the shoots of the almond tree.
His ears feel the distant cape
where a hammering on tin
 is turning into song.

His eyes attempt to seize
 a shore they cannot reach.

¹ The underworld or the region of the dead in Mayan cosmology.

what should be said to cross the boundaries

—Just what we forgot.

3

Flesh of gods.

Torsos of precious timbers,
arms of turned mahogany,
hair smelling like cedar.

—All of it offering

Everything's over

—and we ended up

like an oriole's nest

collapsed by the weight of other birds' eggs.

Everything's over,
everything's finished.

There only remains in the wilderness
the game
where the sun bounces burning
like the sting of the vicious wasp
with no truce,
raising its flesh-slicing edge,
bringing its fire closer,
turning the grass in the fields
into coarse needles.

Everything's over.

4

*—In Xibalbá
one's voice is frozen in a rain of stones,
blades appear on the leaves of trees.*

Wandering gazes,
changing edges.

Eyes
stalk him by the railway lines,
by the ravine.
They chase him
with questions he cannot evade.

Stranded
in the middle of night.

His memory, bewildered.
His whole life
is that night
of malignant insects.

On paths that fork
or intersect,
his body lying down
every night bleeds to death,
stands up
at the stroke of dawn.

In the limits of his knowledge
he glimpses the horizon
where the mind never reaches.

5
Relentless the outer solitude.
Unfathomable
the edge where subterranean life begins—
and in the middle of the field
he disappears.

Only the spellbound eyes remain—
thus the carnelians, dulling

with the passage of the day—
stones only visible under a crescent moon.

Cool stalagmites,
enclosures
where the sun pierces like a spear
from the high cracks.

A ceiba tree of jade,
bottomless blue waters—
the heart sunk in them.

6

—*Through a bird's cry,
through a ray of light
we entered.*

*We still saw a flapping of wings,
a passage through the branches.*

*We got rid of time,
the purple scaffolding
and we slowly parted with
all that made us what we were.*

7

He goes deep into the night.
Glow-worms light up
like human lives.

Flowers bury the stone,
cover the precious inlays.
Jaws block the way
to the niches.

Violet climbers
hang like funereal ornaments.

He goes where no one can follow him.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

(NB In some cases biographical notes appear at the end of the author's contribution.)

LINDA BLACK lives in London. Her first collection *Inventory* was published by Shearsman Books in 2008.

PER K. BRASK is Professor of Theatre and Film at the University of Winnipeg. He has published poetry, short stories, drama, translations and essays in books and journals. His works include the libretto for Michael Matthews' chamber opera *Prince Kasper*, 2005.

CHRIS BROWNSWORD'S work has appeared in a number of magazines and chapbooks, as well as the anthology *The Canting Academy* (Ispress, 2008).

ELSA CROSS is one of Mexico's leading poets. Her *Selected Poems* was published recently by Shearsman Books, and she also features in the forthcoming Shearsman anthology *Mexican Poetry Today: 20/20 Poets*.

PATRICK FRIESEN is a Canadian poet, based in Victoria, BC. He has published numerous books of poetry and has written several stage and radio plays. He has recently released a new volume of poems, *Earth's Crude Gravities*, with Harbour Publishing.

LEE HARWOOD'S *Collected Poems* and *Selected Poems* are both available from Shearsman Books, as is a volume of interviews conducted by Kelvin Corcoran, *Not the Full Story*. He lives in Sussex.

LUIS INGELMO lives near Madrid. He has edited and/or co-translated a number of Hispanic poets for Shearsman Books. He has recently published his translation of Natasha Trethewey's *Native Guard* in Spain, and is now working on Spanish versions of Martin Carter, Wole Soyinka and Frederick Seidel.

RICHARD MAKIN is a writer, poet and artist. His long sequence *Dwelling* will be published in 2010 by Reality Street. It was previously serialised online by *Great Works* (2006–09) under the working title of 'St Leonards', and followed a previous sequence, *Work*, also published serially by *Great Works* (2003–06). Poems from *Rift Designs* are also published in *The Reality Street Book of Sonnets*. Other publications include *Forword* and *Universlipre*, both from Equipage.

MICHAEL SMITH has translated, or co-translated a number of Hispanic poets for Shearsman Books, and his own *Collected Poems* also appeared from Shearsman in 2009. He lives in Dublin.

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CRISTINA VITI lives in London. Her translations have been widely published, the most recent being an Italian version of Stephen Watts' long poem, *Mountain Language/Lingua di montagna*, published as a bilingual edition by HearingEye.