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*Edited by
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Submissions

Shearsman operates a submissions-window system, whereby submissions are only considered during the months of March and September, at which point 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 2–3 months of the window's closure.

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from Essays in island logic

‘Same sea, same dangers waiting for him
As though he had got nowhere but older’
W.S. Merwin — ‘Odysseus’

he considers the passage of time

old man walking retirement

up the hillside below the pine belts
past centuries-old spilled

sarcophagi looking
to recover one particular grave *stele*—
this

sure as he can be
this one under a triangular pediment
the young man leaning back in bas relief

such a contemporary slouch
legs crossed at the ankles hips thrust out
in contemplation

a warrior’s helmet held at arm’s length
its long plume

like a lion’s tail
seeming about to respond to his ambitious

nature his searching
out the end of all complexity—

sees now the boy’s had his forehead
chipped off
the kid is brainless and beautiful

about second century BC
marking the grave of a dead warrior

an old man all but forgotten
after dusk

walking retirement down the dark hillside
bringing it to the surf's edge now

like a child

he has to make his own bed

loves this steady climb
even to find she's stripped it to launder

has to pull clean from the creaking basket
launch sheets across it
fisting pillows into pillowcase mouths

all the time believing he should
but tonight finding it
difficult to resist the siren past—

men of the island
who built bedrooms about olive trees

gnarled trunks trimmed until smooth
an adze steady in hand

only pausing to run a finger
up the solid bed-post then falling to
eager and passionate

pushing on to confirm
the firm centre

the writhe and rhythm of generation—

absurd and primitive
as deep purple dye inlaid with silver
and gold

yet each achieved a royal bed of sorts
roots at their furthest reaches

growing intimate with roots of neighbours'
straining olives he feels now

too queasy a thought
one hand heavy on the banister's climb

to uneventful bed

Poem, including history

‘*Cad a dhéanfaimid feasta gan adhmad?*’

When we drove to Kilcash a lorry-
load of timber hove out of a dip
as we pulled in; it must have been
on its way down from the Coillte
plantation above, though the sign
read CUL DE SAC. We’d been on about
Caoilte’s elegy for the Fianna
the castle wore a scaffold-shroud
and a mock-Alpine stockbroker folly
had sprouted against Sliabh na mBan.

Down in the chapel-shell
Philip Ryan (unkindly and in defiance
of likelihood I think him
one of the Helper ilk, whose cog was got
for the malice that gave Cromwell
ale or a secret pass—I forget what
just as they are not forgotten) has lain
ten times longer than he lived
beneath the clutter of *arma Christi*,
an egg timer and an energetic Crucifixion
which might just as easily have been
executed in the days of Muireadach
Albanach Ó Dálaigh as at the date
of the chaste inscription.

Back then, stasis put people on the road
and they looked for respite in the close
dark of a quatrain. They slept like strangers
in a grimy kip, loosening holsters
and scabbards, keeping favoured hands free,
facing the door. In the middle of the night
because it was precisely what they had
done all through their history
they turned round, and fought.

Poem, occluding history

That ruin on the green
clipped by ivy, overleant by sallies
isn't the monastic site
it's a handball alley.

That board tells visitors
in some crabbed dialect
of Official where they stood
when Froissart was got.

That hair!—that accent!
No wonder people send
you the long road round
and your fly down—clearly a Prod.

That low block kirk's
where Dermody lilted
hardly a stone in the close
not moss-blasted, obliterated.

That gully is the Seven Holy Wells
scarcely less calculated to spook
the daytripper than a grove
sacred to Crom Cruach.

That dizened tree. Rosaries,
photographs, statuettes,
inhalers, bootees. St Senchall's
fame was the cure of cataracts.

That cold gust means rain. The tokens
whirl about, neither emblems
nor effects of supplicants who
aren't quite dupes, nor yet heathens.

Killeigh, 2009

Undersong

*I am storing fifty-one seeds of Goatsbeard:
so I can sow again.*

Now I have lost them. Now I search again.

Bill Griffiths

Bill, I was all set to write something
for the children who worked down the mine:
the trappers on the tram-ways & the barrow-ways;

the bairns who kept their heads down
and for their pains
were made shovers & skeekers,

hewers & headsmen,
landing-lads & foal-putters;
the ones who, when their lives could not be carried in the common
tongue,

invented speech to fit: North's undersong,
a dialect within a dialect, the kind of thing
(you'd have said) poets like to take the credit for.

Bill, I was all set to send that email
when I heard you'd died—
so I picked up your last book (*Pitmatic: the Talk of the North East Coalfield*)

where, quoted in Parliamentary Papers
from 1842 (Volume 16:
Commissioners' Reports on working practice down the mine),

I found this from a boy—an unnamed Seaham boy—
who went down at the age of eight:
I had six candles from my father.

*I liked it very well at first
but then I had an accident.
The tub broke my arm in two places.*

*I had a coal fall on my forehead
and the mark remains, and will always remain.
I got no smart money.*

The Mystery of Glass

My sister has gone outside now.
I do not know if she feels the rain,
sees ragged crow dragging his
frayed feet above the field,
smells clover mead reigned
over by brown kye, crown-
uddered as queens.

Perhaps she walks the clouded hill
with me, watches the firth evaporate,
the crags disintegrate,
the undulating land whisper
its muted antiphon from crypt
to misted crypt crouching
between cached sunshine—

caught between
yes and yes,
a russet hind
hugging tarnished
gorse edge—

maybe she stops to thrust her thumb
into the foxglove maw,
eager to silence that mauve throat
for now or evermore,
its prescience, its deadly
digitalis roar, or runs ahead
to meet the many-faced magenta stare
of rose-bay willow-herb stabbing
honeysuckle-crept floor
where mitred *felix mas*
waves tawny-haired
munificence, broadcasting
dusky spoor where thrush

scatters her ashy unsung song,
soothsaying robin
and slight wren run;

or waits beside harebell-rung
verge where dreamy dissemblies
spin of thistle's burnt-out stars
to watch the swallows harvesting
their dancing wheat-flung
fare in leaping pas de chat,
unearthly, sown in air—

wing

as she
sliding
severing
light diving
dividing
shuddering stalk
from flower a-gawp,
lispings
its scented song
of where
colours
come from

or leaf
in bright diatribe
against the wind's
wild cry
of coming rain,
beside itself
with life

in love
with clandestine

flow of time
hunting oblivion
for fragments
of itself

rain

kissing the street, the
earth, the unforgiving stain,
veil of heaven-sent
remorse, or grief,
missing seen
crystal through
crystal to
crystal bead
upon the ground

a bird
a memory of flight
or origin of height
higher than soprano
shift of tongue, a
touch alit upon
by notes and shine,

into the citrus throat
of toadflax slides
a drop of sky,
parched calyx swallows
wept rebirth
preserving it
until some quaking sun
in passing snaps
and slakes its thirst—

giving and taking
is all we know—

tell me a teardrop
from its wild cousin,
tell me the truth.

(I waited
and you did not come.
Outside a bird
sang my obliteration,
rain fell unendingly
it seemed; night
came and went
and day reconvened

again)

and again I was excluded. Entrances
and exits were made, instructions issued
and laws obeyed; I saw the endless carnival
repeat itself and all of life was spectacle.
Here is the meaning: truth
does not come round again
but is the very constant sustenance.
Do we describe the peril that we do not know
but by hunger and enforced abstinence?

Breaking the bond with fear
is agony. All is still in here.
The clock enunciates its
mannered order, as pre-planned,
as if shared dream
was waking certainty;
the potent march of minutes manned

against contingency. A web
of terror holds in place
the chair, the wall,

the lacquered carapace.
A scream defies the law
whereby each atom may flee
in sudden preference for east,

yet each door opens
upon a furnished void
declaiming its deficiency;
a silent plea for warmth,
occupancy to interrupt
the rage spanning each mute
relationship from ledge to pane.

Towns in the great desert (1)

The frozen river zigzags through the many-layered city.
The bars all empty on snow
while stranded cars sleep moored to old boats
rusted into landmarks.
She wakes from a dream of pounding doors,
her head racing like a wired alarm clock.
She walks through the house, naming the chairs
while a neighbour's cat
purrs in imagined kinship.
If you climb down into the snow,
a bird on a windowsill says,
you will find the sun is waiting there too.

A fine wind blows over the ice.
At a corner where
two streets are facing the end of explanations,
she watches a small boy squat to collect ants.
Just now he's noticed how in this place
the shells of ants
are crackling with inner fire.

Night serves a writ against travellers.
A woman arrives with two children asleep in a matchbox.
She unwraps the linen that binds their limbs
and places them side by side
on the mantelpiece.
Soon a small tree
is curving the memory of forests
over their unwritten faces.

Towns in the great desert (2)

The size of tall-masted ships,
of a spire of prayer,

the gate of hammered earth
and nailed wooden planks
is wheeled shut at second watch.
Guards wield huge feral dogs on iron chains
while other dogs laze about unchained
to supervise late arrivals.

The last to make his way through the closing gates,
he drags himself with the stumps of his arms,
battered legs trailing over stony ground.
Each night he sleeps in an old car,
turns the motor to a slow hum, climbs
into the engine, curls up beside its warmth,
locks the bonnet behind him.
His skin at dawn has the black fragrance of oil.
Each day he stretches out on the beach
to be pounded clean by the surf.
His body has the purple glow
of finely tuned mallets.

In the sky of this town there are no passing clouds or stars,
only the unbroken wall of millennial dust.
Sea water is all there is
to cook, to bathe, to wash.
To buy water to drink
they send their children to slave in distant mines.
Of this town they say
“The gods never came here.”

Two Sonnets from *Transmit or Transmiss*

Coiled there to a summit in absolute separation,
laughing and brainless and scolding me,
seated, covered with branches, wriggling,
like an artery to the heart,
dug in, entrenched, implacable.
I'd just swum up, just awakened,
and now we meet in this awkward way,
I mean, with no pants and my penis pointing
like an index craving a definition.
Part statue, part liquid, part reverberation,
she circles around me seven times.
Each time I sink lower and feel a different wind
in my testicles, until she's flattened on top of me, wearing a new face.
The word for mirror echoes the word for hope.

The word for word rhymes with the word for bird.
Winged ruins hiccup into odysseys.
Nefertiti's head fits onto headless Venus
and I'm the suitor fucking my inner Penelope,
saying, yes, yes, shove your husband's
arrow up my ass, and let me arrive,
let me return. Long years with stuffed ears
to reach this point.
The triangle is the shape for contemplation.
A vast catalogue of heads and bodies,
each in various ways identically beautiful.
I'm always at two points, in love with the third.
I'm always opening the door to my house,
then killing every inhabitant but one.

Mercury Heart

Poetry is the past that breaks out in our hearts.

Rainer Maria Rilke

For Henry Wellcome

Mind, it's merely a muscle laced with mercury
its human glow shrunk to fit a crystal case

there the heart is labelled with lucid letters
'Human', says the fading caption 'aged four'.

Maybe the child died in a dingy workhouse
then was butchered after a fatal bout of fever

to end up as a quaint keepsake on display,
some dead physician's claim to undying fame.

Quicksilver spread like a cold net in the vanes
but purged the meat of a child's brief poetry.

Quietly the heart was severed from its name,
each small chamber swept clean of memory.

Only pity laces my own heart like a boot
oddly bound and skips as if it was aged four.

Ralph Hawkins

Geese

seem to have an endless lust for life

the snow goose in particular
sets the tone for winter
not without its limitations

flying high on goose liver

also caught on the breeze
of this life
Syringas from Persia

Nur Luft (just air)

* * *

the birds, distant blurs, crows or jackdaws
screaming in the wind
laments

Tempesta's lion growls at the nymph Cyane
witnessing abduction

contrast the colours of spring
a lake sheltered by verdant growth

two bushies in the undergrowth
where Z the Zephyr hides

the red red roses
the dark dark hyacinths
and the purple violets sweet

the landscape woodsy

De Raptu Proserpinae

my method is an example of *translatio*

the simple appropriation of a source

sweet sweet Sicily

* * *

Andromeda

Who would be a fly over Ethiopia
is menaced by sea-monsters
pirates play snap with her fingers
life is a noisy hungry struggle

When she saw him
she threw glances at his mouth
his eyes lucky charms
he kissed her wishing for much more

to delight her
to fulfil his desire

she clawed his flesh
sat upon his cock

she was carried away
(by two bushies?)
with her clothes left in the wind

his forehead wrinkled

she should have not gone so far
now in hot water

calling out for her friends
with dismay and growing alarm

★ ★ ★

Cd / Two followers of Cadmus devoured by a dragon

Stand far enough away
the bite could be a kiss,
the hand on the neck
an embrace.

In either case this moment
is about relenting.

I let you teach me about red;
cochineal, crimson, carmine lake;
how to crush bodies into pigment
the colour and texture of flesh;
how to blush;

that the perfect viewing distance
is a matter of mathematics
and perspective and the vanishing
point where I should start.
The tip of the spear
aimed at the heart.

Hg / Conjunctions

Cross my palm, I'll tell you about your past.
A handful of silver will buy you a flash
of a future.
Pull over.
Let me in.

I'm bringer of dreams, thief at the gates,
can you taste sulphur on my breasts, my face,

or the sour strip of gold on my lips
from clamping your hand—your five-fingered kiss—
to stifle guilt?

The ecstasy
of grief.

In less than nine weeks I've lost half my weight.
I've aged, my years are shorter than my days,
aphelion does not exist, the sun
is a plane mirror
between dawn and dusk,
cockereel, tortoise.
Shock waves are hollow mountains, shape calcified.
Traveller, leave your stone at the roadside.

Fe / Gauss's law for magnetism

The doctor holds out a model heart
half red, half blue,
a magnet drawing small arrows
of blood across its surface.

He twists the halves apart, like an avocado
from its stone, points to the tendon torn
from the ventricle wall, mimes the valve
opening, closing, closed.

Questions now are only academic,
of risk factors and genetics, matters
of replication; why one half pulls
and the other pulls away.

City Winter

after Joan Mitchell

There's nothing more beautiful:
a smudge of taxis and buses
crawls across the empty grey; a muddle
of faces—lovers, long-lost friends—
rise to greet you. The mercury drops,
darkness yields to streetlights, headlights.
The edge of your known world.

What you've missed—
hidden behind the bright dome
of a church, the slashed glass
of an office block, massed clouds.
Last greens of summer
still in your head, a sudden recollection
of heat—*nothing more beautiful*

*than knowing something is going
to be over.* You walk the streets, the map
ingrained in your feet, stare
into uncurtained rooms
lit and ready for intimacies—
you've been outside yourself
too long. What you want

you won't find here. A train
leaves the city, its complicated tracks
weave past buildings still to be built,
girders lifting beyond the horizon,
its passengers bound for those lit rooms
flickering like grubby stars
on the outskirts.

Castrati

All afternoon we argued this—
whether the voice became sweeter than roses,
a peasant transfixed by a hayrick,
hedges, hamlets, cathedral spires bathed in gilt
as the sound rotates,
ghostly at the lip of hills.

All afternoon
a cantata of finches in the veiled light,
fledgling, green, gold-tailed,
the honeyed flutter of their wings
in and out of our vision
as we talked of all those masterpieces;
the things we leave behind.

Because the Land is Barren

As though the rababa's pulse
comes from his aorta,

a nomad plucking out a muse
from the lute on his thigh;

melody that won't need
more than the lone string

to accompany his desert.

movements

six months later you visit the boats
seen daily from a distance and find nothing changed
only the height of grass and weed upon
the old slipway beside a crumbling boathouse

you find each vessel has not moved—
a little rustier they still sit out their days
tied to the bank—part overgrown quayside

here at low-tide you suspect they have not edged
an inch on their moorings

some fern grows between an anchor
and the hole it hangs from—only

this has happened—and some more rubbish
has been tipped between the boats and shore

the swans in the distance, the sand searching curlew
and black-headed gull further in are unconcerned—
move or remain still—its all the same to you and the birds

like Beatrice and Dante

everything is just peachy
to begin with around puberty
she knows nothing about him
or what his intentions might be
while he has only noticed the swells
of chest and butt that mark
her firmly as a woman
along the lines that nature intended
unless it changes its mind

as it does and she dies of some
disease that could now be treated
with little more than prescription
drugs to make the difference
between life and death and the
comedy being written—but such
is the comedy for there is no
tragedy as no deal is ever struck
that says you will get what
you want—that is the laugh of it
there is a divinity in life
walks off the page at you
has a beginning middle and end
but no plot

the kind of knowing

knowing like and unlike
samples of vignettes
begin with the assumption
practitioners know more than they say
most of which is tacit
a capacity for reflection
in the midst of action
to cope with the unique / uncertain
a kind of rigor
like and unlike
derived from myths about the relations
we create for ourselves
for future interaction
touch on very lightly

Hallucinating like Circe

This is true night.

After the moon slinks behind a cloud
the walls move closer

to hear me breathe.

The ground trembles,
the trees in the garden turn white

their roots dig up bones
for rats to gnaw.

And rising from the slime,
creatures,

fangs, fur, prowling.

The night menaces
in and out of my dreams

on soft pads.

My lips melt.
I am silent as light.

Bright blue flames spark
from the pillow

to the tinder of my hair.

In the kitchen, pots of herbs
are awash with my blood.

propeller/Le Corbusier

as the propeller
slices the thigh
of his swimming form/

Le Corbusier is reminded
that machines are not just
for living in
but for dying
under as well

he might surface
in the wash
of a boat's violent remark

holding together
with blood irony
how his leg can be
undesigned

he realises buildings
should not be
photographed
until flesh
has fallen
off their bones

Three Songs of the Inarticulate

Song of the Dodo

(Mare aux Songes)

doo-doo doo-doo
doo-doo doo-doo

fish fruit stone
fruit fish stone
stone fruit fish
fish stone fruit
fruit stone fish
stone fish fruit

fruit fruit fruit

doo-doo doo-doo
doo-doo
doo
doo

Song of the William Morris Wallpaper

black bird black bird black bird
drib kcalb drib kcalb drib kcalb

open beak closed beak
closed beak open beak

f o l
i
a g e

bird berry straw berry bird

black bird black bird black bird

from Claim (a map, a catalogue, a questioning)

In the dream there are boxes of cardboard and wood, suitcases made of leather and canvas, bags of woven plastic. There are objects strewn everywhere: patterned scarves, balls of yarn, stacks of index cards and blankets, mismatched pairs of shoes. She does not know where time is coming from or where it is fast escaping, but she feels it beating wings against her, flickering all around. Her hands are only two, scrambling to tuck objects into boxes, into bags. First the yarn and then a shoe, then a bottle and removing the yarn, a sweater and two books, she rearranges the shoes, realizing there are three, begins sifting her hands through the mess in search of another pair. Time jeering silent insistence, she folds objects away. Positioning, stacking, arrange again. She closes containers one by one, sealing flaps of boxes, pulling zippers of suitcases, clipping shut the buttons of bags.

★

Dear Nation,
What anchors, what milk, what murmur of mine?

Dear Immigrant,
Shouldered loyalties, what offered up for entry. Shout
softly from safe rooftops.
Claim skin, claim map, claim mobile.

★

Cream-colored portrait, {Jerusalem} 1955: she stands beside her sister.
A doll lies face down on her sister's lap. Her hands poise over the body,
talons curl the torso, invent a spine.

She picks. Perforates. Fingers pull skin from nail.
My mother's hands move incessantly; their resting mode a clickety fidget.
Conversation drilled in snaps, split tick, insistent metronome.

Twenty years later, she is graduating from architecture school {Montreal}:
clutching her diploma, rolled and ribbon-sealed. Fingers coil like un-
bloomed ferns, tendons tense, exposed.

Fleck memory, name distant sound, what carpus, nails, reveal.
Terse the knuckle. Split edges, ringlet, ridge

*I dream about the toys I left behind in Romania, Stuffed bears, lions, cotton
dresses.*

At the table, her fingers flutter over, graze silverware, slide long mouth of
the wine glass.

★

A Starkness in the Late Afternoon

afternoon light on stone is immediacy
thought or in itself
immaculate unsundering

the geese's flight their warm
indivisible bodies as much as on the path
coarse stone a single feather

and here I go tearing the quilt
apart patch by patch all parts
no one no one will love

on the storm-fed sea the wrath
the men and I all prey to
praying to the sea god

the high waves could be suppose it
myrmidons unnamed abettors
our fear unchanged unchanneled

our prayers scattered invisible

Prairie

sprawling through night a train's low horn
the crossings empty the ritual
maintained reflex or especial precaution

do the sleepers hear it do their ears
make unconscious record to litanize

prescience loses particularity unbound
on prairie to vague expectation
with or without hope

with or without the train whistle's
thread reminder redeemer

of silence each isolate mind
banked in prescience if it's not nostalgia
impalpable in small hours impalpable

in the drift as names ease from objects
unmannered ritual especial withoutness

Selections from 2⁶ — **Two to the Power of Six**
a work-in-progress based on Yi Jing

After the massacre

Mouth of a dead shoe
squeaks toothless out of clay.
No those aren't vultures

they're jays, said
the Chairman. Be
careful with that spade.

Both local magnolias
and jacarandas have
been burned here.

Permaplastoid froth
covers and seals the pools.
A silver chain was

surrounded by several
connected vertebrae, reported
the bespectacled young forensic

archaeologist, wearing
a blue hamsah medallion
around her slender throat.

She sweeps shadows

She sweeps shadow
from oblong flagstones,
square tiled walls

and straight-planked
floors. Careful
to spill no single

speck, she collects
shadow-dusts
in an angled pan

whose contents
she tips in
a black silk bag

tied with plaited
flame-coloured
strings. Each

evening she does this
and spills the bag
across night.

Inflate nothing

Everything you've ever
thought, been and done
will fit on a small shelf,

nay button, pray-you,
to be undone, pinhead,
microchip. So, Caesar,

inflate nothing. However
many millions of foes
imagined or real, you

exterminated, however
deep and long the ranks
of warriors and horses,

boned or stoned,
you busied and buried
with you, emperors

perish like
any man, like
Everyman.

At least one of the liars

At least one
of the liars has
gone back to her

own homestead
on the other
side of Paradise

Island. For the time
being at least
we are free

from her malice
rippling and rocking
foundations of

our trust, but
not for long. Be
aware she'll return

in guise of
a cute sincere
spontaneous friend.

Worship Tendency

my hands, white from the chill
turn black against the rising sun
heavy with nothingness
the way a tower bears the weight of its bricks

this is not time
but the end of time falling into
the small of your hand—
curved shadow on the half moon

as day bleeds into night and night into day
my consciousness is not broken from yours

in this union— temperance, forbearance
two days of chanting
the sound becomes a bridge
made richer by the chasm beneath

this rhythm I thought our own—
counterpoint to a prayer sung
6000 years ago
or before
a moon, cyclic
the edge of a disease

in this weight, the weightlessness
of the stone that brings down the mountain
gathering speed
molten lava and the wet earth
we will not inherit

I ask for strength
something you say
cannot be given
but must be found

the first birdcall of the night is the last—
an altar for the city

the god of this woods
carved into stone,
artefact of holy light
I wake to at moments
like water returned to the sea

it is always the same side of the moon that we witness

the desire to worship
a prerequisite of our faith

this time of inbetween passes
like the shadow of a cloud
and it is my own voice that rings out
into the hollow
a reverberation like breath
in the walls of the lungs,
but larger—
 a stratosphere

truth is found again in detail
the difference between worship and prayer

for example, there is ice only in the deepest craters of the moon
and only in crevices untouched by light
and even this is uncertain

moonshine, you say, is more than just reflection

my fast— a hallucinogen
that empties me of repetition
so that now is only the now
undecided

I hold it weeping

star-struck,

lunatic

beautiful new every

from the time I still loved

born again

in these hands

Wake Up, Dead Man

A man who was in love climbs into the canopy hoping his bones become branches and his skin turn to leaves. What if we never die, he thinks, because we are never fully living.

In reality, the forest is a murderous tangle of ridges and deep crevasses, deceitfully covered by the sun. Ghosts roll up from someone else's sleep, their hunger forms your life. Fascists advance from one small insurrection to another.

Even the conscious could wait here, scratching the surface of time, producing more calendars.

Waves recoil from citation, each believing that it is the last swell ever born.

Hurdy Gurdy Porn Sonnet

I can't stop grinding
Old milk lures the dead
Now stop seducing
Conjunctions on a frontier
Keys come and go
The peasant works transparent
Hard-wired inadequacies
Singing "sex, money and
Left for Siberia"
How long will you wait
Even the worst person in the world
Metastasized to orgasm
Words surpass words
Or so said the words

THE PRISMATIC cloudlet
gaia or I reveal you
want to pull the blanket over it

the private parts best
held back cowardly they pull off
the fig-leaf, these smuggled words

changing questions of genre
shoot through the extremities
of the body believed dead

in the tonic waterfall
from the source of the spring
taut up-river

to be jumped over on
the increase and stepped across:
out of tune in no key

from leg right up to head
a rustling and dreaming

is close and hold vigil, too
hold vigil all night.

from the cycle **Along the Living Line**

Someone from Säckingen, a liar,
since he has no horns,
as a diabolical horse-force-feeder and hot-chocolate-drinker says,
dies of putrescence of the body,
puts blond curls in little boxes,
sniffs at medicinal substances,
slays the know-it-alls with his sword
and then knocks at their doors

betraying for want of mimicry in front
or a sting behind,
relies on letters and sounds,
recognizes the Dionysian side of this art
and at the way out puts up no resistance
to the way.

Dialogue Between a Door and the Room,
the surrounding walls they tile the clay white
under the wind-glad set-squares awaiting their alternate turn,
crept along the draught on the floorboard
footlike they claw into the floor,
corresponding with the wallpaper under the lamp
in the room about the track, about the windows.
At the mooring the indifferent consonants sit,
with the cipher-sound under lock and key, they pinch the voice,
undrawn, they outlast the silence, the guttural.

The book is right,
in German vineyards there were ladders
hanging on the hilltop on the rock face
green sprouting under the ground
life writhes round the angular
My face fights its steep
way up to the ruins,
collecting points and welts,
lustre and radiance choose where
they want to be themselves
and more and more houses
grow along the rivers.

I Have Poured Myself To The Wind

A curl of the eyelash a furl of the lips and with two bitter almonds
in your face your face scarred to the bone by a brand
If you cut into my skin you will know what I'm saying There's a line
through this writing looks like it's burnt

Truth or lies I don't know I only know you and this that whenever I'm
returning from you my hand becomes frozen and I walk exaggeratedly
exactly like now when the pen doesn't fit well in my hand and the word
like a thread winds about the feet of my lines and your eye's almond
flips over onto my skirt and stares out at me from there bitterly

There is no way back, I have decanted myself to the winds up to my waist
and nothing in anything of me can be put back for you again And the world
is a severed bridge that cannot carry anyone across to anyone any longer
and from all the corners of a few houses just a few pillars without cornice or
plinth remain swaying in mid-air I am the explorer of the breath that I have
plummeted down I have fallen in love with breathlessness and of a sudden
in this air-deprived atmosphere I have become the breather of all breath

And the sun and the snow mountains and the bullfinch that flies from that
branch of the tree where we once lay and everything moves from anywhere
and everything flies from any place and everyone from anywhere dead or alive,
all all of them breathe from inside me even love when it becomes short of
breath takes its needy gasps from me

Where are you going from me where am I gone what does this mean?

And when you shackle my feet and . . .
With shackled feet I have been dancing all the way with those shackled feet
I have come dancing from the tops of unnamed graves and I know the names
of the dead ones one by one and by heart like my pearl drops of rain

Where, where can you wrap rope, chains, roads around my voice-breath?

'Say it' I said 'Say it' Say my name and put its end-stop End it Ok

Paraphernalia

I haven't put on
my ears this morning
however
the world is stunning me,
its multitude of chairs
tied together,
its stock market crashes,
that grinding of teeth
amid new shoes
and banknotes.

I think, with bullish insistence,
on what side of life
has life ended up?

The leopard skin
is trading on the market
at the price of a diamond.

Down the helter-skelter of fire
slide the passionate kisses
of lovers
falling into the spell of dark stars
with the cold days that wander
without a motherland
through tense cities
crammed with rubble.

No one whistles on the streets anymore.
And it seems embarrassing to long
for the calm blue sky
the yellow sound of wheat
the movement of water
in perfect circles
when a pebble

is thrown by a child
from the brightly-lit window of his room.

The pigeon returning
to the laid table
brings in its bloodied beak
a slap from the world.

How will I know from which direction
death will come.

The birth of the moon

*And here lies the sea
the sea where the stench of cities
comes to shine like stars.*

Vicente Huidobro

The sky is black
and the shirts
hanging on a wire
are ruined in the discomfort
of funeral parlours.

In this unlikely morning
(half the sky
weeps buckets, in the other half
two suns sing like goldfinches)
I take a step
to recompose myself.

In my left pocket
a beaver weighs heavily
breathing, below my eyes
a clear morning

turns its back to the tar
gluing up the estuaries.

I put myself back together
gazing at the divided sea since my body
is in seven unequal parts.

The moon goes by nervously
smoking, down the corridors
of the ocean.

The asbestos cities
shine like wax candles
in the clenched hands of the dead.
And I'm hoping.

Everyday life

One would like to die
for each one of the dead
of this world
nevertheless it's never happened
that way

One runs to the nearest
chemist to salve
an everyday wound
or feels like savouring
his short holiday by the sea
while his nearest and dearest's heart
is shipwrecked
or on the fifth row
of the housing block
a small girl brings into the world
a thin root of light
or maybe rain

in quantities
never imagined before
not even
in the worst nightmares
of the flesh.

The working class don't go to paradise

The working class don't go to paradise—
they travel crammed into the entrails
of a thunderbolt or worse: inside the wing-blow
of a lightning flash, slender-bodied,
bold-faced, or topless.

The working class knit the sky's wounds
in the workshops of time
as well as on looms, dreaming,
depending on who reads this and where, depending on
who hears this, who understands it,
what might be their personal flag
or the homeland's flag, the north
of each individual, their entire life.

Depending on who's looking at it, how it's seen.
Here or in China the working class
do not go to paradise: they travel in torment
in the entrails of a lightning bolt crammed
inside the entrails of a chicken
struck dumb in the wingless breeze
which with a soundless blow
evaporates in the air
as a flash of lightning evaporates
in the heavy air of a storm
and vanishes
amid the old looms
of the sky.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KATE ASHTON lives in the north of Scotland. Her work has appeared in the Shearsman Gallery, at www.shearsman.com, but this is her first publication in the magazine.

PAUL BATCHELOR's first full collection *The Sinking Road* was published by Bloodaxe Books in 2008. In 2009 he won The Times Stephen Spender Prize for his version of a passage from Canto V of Dante's *Inferno*, and in the same year won the 2009 Edwin Morgan International Poetry Competition for his poem 'Comeuppance'. He has completed a PhD on the poetry of Barry MacSweeney.

JAMES BELL lives in Devon, and has been the co-host of Exeter's Uncut Poets reading series for several years. His collections *the just vanished place* (2008) and *fishing for beginners* (2010) have been published by Tall-Lighthouse in London.

JAMES BERGER is Senior Lecturer in American Studies at Yale, and author of *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse*.

RICHARD BERENGARTEN lives in Cambridge. His selected works are available in five hardcover volumes from Salt Publishing.

PETER BOYLE lives in Sydney. He is the author of several collections, most recently *The Apocrypha of William O'Shaunessey* (Vagabond, Sydney, 2009). His translation of the selected poems of Eugenio Montejo was published by Salt in 2004. He is also co-author with M.T.C. Cronin of the 2008 Shearsman volume *How Does a Man Who is Dead Reinvent His Body?: the Belated Love Poems of Thean Morris Caelli*.

MARIANNE BURTON is working on a PhD at the University of London. Her pamphlet, *The Devil's Cut* (Smith's Knoll), was a Poetry Book Society Choice.

MARTYN CRUCEFIX has published five collections, most recently *An English Nazareth* (Enitharmon, 2004). His translation of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* was published by Enitharmon in 2006, shortlisted for the Corneliu M Popescu Prize for European Poetry Translation, and hailed as "unlikely to be bettered for very many years" (*Magma*). His new collection, *Hurt*, will appear in 2010.

CARRIE ETTER's first full-length collection, *The Tethers*, was published by Seren in 2009; a chapbook, *The Son*, was published the same year by Oystercatcher Press, and was a Poetry Book Society Pamphlet Choice. Her anthology of experimental writing by UK women poets, *Infinite Difference*, appeared from Shearsman in March 2010, and her second full-length collection, *Divining for Starters* is due from Shearsman in 2011.

JANICE FIXTER was born in Kent and has lived in South East London ever since. She has a BA in psychology from London University, an MA in Creative Writing, the Arts and Education and a D.Phil. in Creative Writing (poetry) from Sussex University. She has two collections from Tall-Lighthouse, *Walking the Hawk* and *A Kind of Slow Motion*.

KIT FRYATT was born in Tehran in 1978 and has lived in Ireland since 1999. She lectures in English at the Mater Dei Institute of Education, and co-edits *POST*, the poetry and poetics web-journal of the Irish Centre for Poetry Studies. She runs the *Wurm im Apfel* reading series—which she started with Dylan Harris, its associated festival, *Wurmfest*, and the seriously small poetry imprint, *Wurm Press*.

MÓNICA GOMERY lives in Philadelphia and is a recent graduate of the Creative Writing program at Goddard College, where she studied with Jill Magi, Jen Hofer, and Metta Sama. She co-edits and publishes *Never on Time Journal*, and hosts a monthly poetry salon accompanying the journal.

RALPH HAWKINS has two collections from Shearsman, *The MOON*, *The Chief Hairdresser (highlights)* and *Goodbye to Marzipan*, as well as several previous publications. He lives in Essex.

ZIBA KARBASSI was born in 1974 in Tabriz, Iran. She left Iran in 1989 and now lives between London and Paris. She has published five volumes of poetry in Persian, all outside Iran, and continues to write prolifically. An entire volume of her poetry is being translated into English by Stephen Watts. The two poems here have already appeared in a chapbook.

GERTRUD KOLMAR (1894–1943) was a German Jewish poet, and a cousin of Walter Benjamin; she died in Auschwitz. Her birth name was Gertrud Käthe Chodziesner; the pseudonym derives from the town of Kolmar, the German name for Polish Chodzież, then part of Prussia.

PHILIP KUHN lives on Dartmoor. Shearsman published his book-length poem, *at maimonides table*, in 2009. He is working on a complete translation of Gertrud Kolmar's *Welten* with Ruth von Zimmermann.

RACHEL LEHRMAN is an expatriate American poet living in London. She recently gained a PhD from Roehampton University. Her work features in the recently-published Shearsman anthology *Infinite Difference*.

SWANTJE LICHTENSTEIN lives in Cologne, and since 2007 has been Professor for literature, creative writing and media studies at the University of Applied Studies in Düsseldorf. She has two collections, *figurenflecken oder: blinde verschickung* (Rimbaud Verlag, Aachen, 2006), and *Landen* (Lyrikedition 2000, Munich, 2009).

RACHEL MCCARTHY is a climate-change scientist, and is also the Poetry Society's representative for East Devon, and organiser of the Exeter Stanza, *ExCite*. She is also co-host of *Blah Blah Blah*, an arts magazine radio show on Phonic FM.

VALERIA MELCHIORETTO is Italian and was born in the German part of Switzerland. She moved to the UK in the early '90s and holds a degree in Modern Drama and an MA in Fine Art. Salt published her first collection, *The End of Limbo*, in 2007.

DOUGLAS MESSERLI, who lives in Los Angeles, is the editor of *Green Integer* and publisher of Green Integer books. He has numerous poetry collections to his name and, as Kier Peters, he has written a number of plays. In 2004 he was named *Officier de l'ordre des arts et des lettres* by the French Government.

JORGE PALMA, poet and storyteller, was born in 1961 in Montevideo, where he still lives. For many years he has worked for newspapers and radio stations, and has also run literary and creative writing workshops, both poetry and prose. His poetry collections are *Entre el viento y la sombra* (1989), *El olvido* (1990), *La vía láctea (poesía 1987–1995)* (2006), *Diarios del cielo* (2006), *Lugar de las utopías (poesía 2001–2006)* (2007).

KEVIN PERRYMAN lives in Bavaria and runs the small press, Babel Verlag. His own publications include *Still Life* (Bondefant Press, Banholt, Netherlands, 2008). He translates both into and out of German.

NATHAN SHEPHERDSON was born in Brisbane, and now lives in the Glasshouse mountains in south-east Queensland. He has won the Josephine Ulrick Poetry Prize twice (2004, 2006), the 2005 Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Award, the 2006 Newcastle Poetry Prize and the 2006 Arts Queensland Val Vallis Award. His first book *Sweeping the Light Back into the Mirror* (University of Queensland Press, 2006) won the Mary Gilmore Award. His most recent books are *what marian drew never told me about light*, published in 2008 by Small Change Press, and *Apples with Human Skin*, published by UQP in 2009.

TUPA SNYDER currently lives in Bombay. Her first collection, *No Man's Land* was published by Shearsman in 2007.

CRAIG WATSON lives in Rhode Island. The poems here are drawn from his *Blue Orpheus* manuscript which will be published by Shearsman Books in due course. His previous ten collections include *Secret Histories* (Burning Deck, Providence, RI, 2007).

STEPHEN WATTS is a poet and freelance translator living in London. His most recent publication is *Mountain Language – Lingua di montagna*, which was published in English with an Italian translation by Cristina Viti.

TAMAR YOSELOFF is an American expatriate living in London, and is the author of three collections, most recently *Fetch* (Salt Publishing, Cambridge, 2007). Salt also published her Kettle's Yard anthology, *A Room to Live In*, in 2007.

RUTH VON ZIMMERMANN's three professional passions are music, dance and language. Having spent the first half of her life in Germany, she came to study music in Dartington, England. She toured extensively as a klezmer musician before meeting Tango, which changed her career to becoming a Tango teacher and events organiser. Her collaboration with philip kuhn on *Welten* rekindled her fascination with the intricacies of language. Together with her two daughters, ruth lives in a communal house in South Devon, where she likes to feel the earth and grow her own vegetables.