

SHEARSMAN

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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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This House...

This house on a Greek hillside with its geckos and millipedes
wind bringing rain down from the mountains, the shutters
closed at night. Me with my mill-talk quieted, lying here
in the night and weather trying not to remember
trying to forget failed claims pains of inarticulation
and true attachments. I don't forget. I don't remember very well.

There were never any gods of rain, peasant of the elements
who gets on with the allotted task and washes the white stones
on the red path, slides them down the hill. That rushing sound.
That particular brow. Unerasable intimacy. Far from here
northern town cold night wet streets curtains closed glow
of radiator red in dark room, illuminating the hangings.

Anywhere, a coming together and making a voice, a god's work,
a voice for ever, a voice at large, in the mountain sides
the small mills in stream clefts turning their wheels at night, that
rushing, hollow sound. A double voice of solitude and connection
melancholy and ecstasy writes itself into channels of the earth
and dream between walls at night of distant points of contact.

This house on a Greek hillside with its geckos and millipedes
and painted walls. The vast wars raging across the earth
the law of the heavier weapon . . . When the heroes come we run
and hide,
we peasant faces, irrelevant elements, we are lost and done for
and kick stones in the road, the dirt road that winds up
into the hills. Our sighs run back down the meadow.

The god's eyes looking suddenly up to us in the carved stone,
the warm air wafted up from the heater, stirring a few cobwebs
on the ceiling rose. Two fires signaling across Europe.
I'm twisting my voice out of its body to rescue a glimmer of
recognition
from the blasts of warfare. I'm working hard at this:
I'm not singing and not shouting. I'm looking for a stone.

All the pebbles I've picked up from all the desolate shorelines of
Europe,
a worn grey stone with a straight white line across it from Denmark
I press this stone into the world body, the dark mass,
to make there a small silence, in which we can hear
the faint sounds the insects make, the grasses hissing in the wind
the unrepresented voices of the generations. In the hard edge

Of this sphere the dead also speak, massed seeds in flower heads,
and in this seeking to gain a recognition, to participate in a chorus
which strips me of sad particulars, and address the gods,
by stones, yellow flowers, CD players, anything that works and say
that in the orchestra my guilt will modulate into the collective.
Well it may, or some other voice while the sun
drives under the earth and we tune our voices to its echo.
Voices working together, for an honest peace, for sense
in the structure, for tangle threads that connect across the indigo.

FRANCES PRESLEY

palm

when thou pass est

through waters

a smooth trunk parts the words
fronds above

I will be with

thee

at the rootless base

a thee tree

a three tree

we held crosses believed
to be palm

crayon a body on this tight woven parch ment
a limp doll

cupped in a small

palm tree an alien

fashion for a paved garden

without branches to cross

pin nate

pen ed

through palms

can i pass

St Michael's
8 December 08

Note-taking

Tout cela est mathématique —Flaubert

A bit of heart falls away at the reader's
touch—perhaps a necessary
operating expense after coming so far

through soft rain on a Sunday afternoon
to find the answer is absent in a place
once crowded with strangers. A narrow street

passes endless windows to arrive
at the letterbox whose contours once crossed
the distance between your fingers. A pavement

singer with small hands and a strange
amalgam of narrative postures
fills the puddles with his reflections.

But there's nowhere for them to go, no way
to keep their borders safe when they dissolve,
except on this page, empty and waiting.

During the Aftermath

1

Some Germans must have had a nicer attitude to death
but in Flensburg was a sloping guillotine
in shape so like the slide
in a playground for the children—
headfirst down a bed of steel you slid
and at the bottom or close to it
the blade, timed perfectly for weight/velocity,
dropped . . . So like a slide
(with oiled, polished levers at the top
and a technician to calibrate the dials)
you had a little time remaining
to think they killed you not just for now
but for the better part of your lifetime.

2

That covey of brothers, the sergeant pilots
of 16th Fighter Squadron, flew Tempests
and got up to no end of mischief:

one of the dances we went to
was held in the fumigated
military sector of the death camp

Belsen: with their gin they sipped
some ink and quite soon after
gave big smiles to the girls they danced with.

3

December 24, 1945

Petit mal had me shuddering on the floor
of a corridor on the line toward Hamburg,
then at Wesel the train stopped, it was 3 a.m.

Told to disembark we flocked to a breakfast.
Now again I come to be the gaunt overcoated man
groping for old food in a garbage barrel.

That is how it is here, millions who deserve it
itch to live in freezing twilight one day more.
Dim lights were on again when the train finally

rolled squeaking into the terminus. *Piss*
wherever you please, the police corporal shouted,
but put your bloody caps on straight now.

4

On the Königswinter ferry

A breeze from Aphrodite
lifting the hem of her dress,
war-orphaned Margarete,
her come-hither smile, soon
lips parted, Silesian lilt, our
(come together) silly whispers—
so, busy before conflict,
heavy in histories, merest
tokens in debate, some speech

rockets out of the mire;
and in a prelude ghostly,
allowing its wee bit of body
a brilliance, it lives
on a breath out of nowhere to name.

5

you were too numb to feel outrage
when Sepp your friend the Bavarian
Junkers pilot spoke of Poland as
the destination to arrive at bootlegging
cases of champagne. The sky-children
were too long gone to hear the silver
strings astir in hollow shells.

6

now vistas deepen, disappearing
behind the imaginable—to the nifty
organs of creation, to millions
of mutations in diet,
in soils, in sounds, in smells,
to the adaptations of an eyeball,
a beak, a skull, a lung

indifferent, culprits
in pain and yearning not at all
discovered satisfaction, stole
acutest pleasure
puffing on a cigarette;

if not exchanged, however,
for sprat or potato,
in its time a cigarette, rolled
from butts picked off the street, or shared
with that gracious old Pole who sketched us,
could only taste infected
like the language,
sour as the penitence.

7

Should civility to people be the practice?
Britain had wadded with plenty of sheepswool
the brains of her citizens in uniform:
the foreign past was simply not admissible.
Hide your life, by all means, but draw the line
at wasting it to placate brute power.
Some old sweats had certainly visited
cities in their splendour, waste lands now.
How flimsy they had been, how tawdry
the cheap guignol theatre of greatness;
hats and badges and strutting brigades,
all the folderol scared a supine people
into a funk deeper than ever before;
filth as never before had been their duty.
You could have known all this without feeling it.

ZOË SKOULDING

Ô

while tones of planets descend
in scales as if thought were pitch
not picture but single note

while in the river's light spots
a train passing overhead
still in the rush of brakes you

while with tightening of the throat
air passes through zero cries
circumflex and guttural

while the moon's full of lost things
migrating birds unanswered
prayers keys emails of the dead

while re-engraved with its own
watered silk grainy surface
footage close up then far-off

while a body talking to
itself blood and nerves as sleep
rises through ears and water

while two heads crossed in the glass
a train passing from one ear
to another right to left

while this story's full of holes
in the edges of the space
you filled very slowly I

Maxims, Minims, Squibs and Essayettes

1. By the age of forty—after a few years of practice—I'd learnt how to live the life of a thirty year old; but the time had passed, and my experience was now obsolete. And I started to realize that this would be true whatever new age group I was entering. So I began at last to comprehend the bewilderment on the faces of sane old people, marooned not only in a new era they knew little about, but a new stage in their own lives they had no experience of. And that much of the experience they had accumulated over the years was now irrelevant to them.
2. We are all children, even the oldest of us; children who will never grow up.
3. Comes a time in late childhood when the young lad knows it all, and has a complete and mature understanding of life, above his cowering juniors. Then puberty, and a shaking up of the hormonal glands, and the spectacular rise of Venus from the waves, and a new set of dilemmas not envisaged in the lad's premature maturity. And he becomes a little boy again, in adolescence's childhood.
4. And I know how the time stretches from their deaths, now. So, four days since Cid died, six years with my mother, eight with my brother. And I'm aware of them all—all receding. And how Cid's death *will* recede too, retreating further and further into the distance, more and more away from us.
5. As La Roche says, we assume that we will live for ever—though we “know” rationally we won't. And there is a certain level of awareness, which seems physically situated in us, that is immortal, and is neither an aged man, a youth, a “mature” adult, nor a child. No doubt it dies when we do, but it is easy to imagine it being unaffected even by that.
6. Death doesn't round things off. All its relationships are rent jagged-edged through the middle.

7. A small section of the congregation, or populace, will take the revered God or idea seriously, and ask “What is God?”, “What is Freedom?”, “How do I stand in relation to God or Freedom?” And maybe beat their heads against the wall to bludgeon the Truth in. But for most people going to Church is a social event—and you kneel when the Sanctuary bell rings, and stand to sing “Faith of our Fathers” after the “Ite missa est”—whatever the faith of your fathers would have been.

8. You see a spider, which also notices you spotting it. And the motionlessness is tense, visible—almost as visible as the scuttling-off would have been (though it’s in you, too). Similar to the silence of a person asked an awkward question about somebody else, when the silence falls audibly, and the answer is indicated unquestionably by the silence itself.

9. “To face whatever is.” I have some sympathy for this objective. But it is by no means clear what is; and if it seems to be clear, that is not because it has been discovered, but because it has been pre-supposed.

10. Rain on the hills, cloud fringe smudging into the valleys—with grey mountain wall behind.

11. As for “Eternity”, timelessness rather than endless time was what people had in mind. Does “I saw eternity the other night” raise the question: and how long did you see it? For the instant of a lightning flash. Or in Vaughan’s case, a sinking into the timelessness of the stars.

12. A nostalgia, much more poignant, for those events that never did occur.

13. They talk about the energy of youth—and it’s true. But there is also a divine lassitude you have then stretching to infinity, that you never have again, all too aware, later, of the brevity of life, and the rapidity of its decades, and how little time will any longer become available to be squandered on such ecstasy.

ASTRID ALBEN

Why

Because

he sweet-talks her in places she doesn't want to be where her fingertips
turn bloodless from the rhythmic pushing motions with her hands away
away

because

the tea he serves are wills and wonts she never hears him breathe at night
beside him her dreams are tumbleweed and tell her *I am only one* over
and over

because

she chews time he hangs her love out to dry and oil paint takes
a minimum of thirty years to dry she can never remember exactly this
dream

because

she has read somewhere six new planets orbit a star five in a liveable
zone only

they are light years from earth and already what we love is time they
spent is slipping

because

why is for Wyoming and weather and cross-eyed it is weightless
and welcome

and also for wasp and for where

because

their love is finding a view she is sick of this small miracle under the clouds
where he gets in her hair cajoles her outdoes her outwits her

because

she may be an orange peeling itself under a desert sun
when he can't get over *how beautiful yellow is!*

To The Highest Bidder

A clearance sale to do
oh Christ
away with everything
including him including her.

Including the space across the table at which they met.
The bike ride that final day of autumn.
The crystal scream hand-blown
with the maker's initials etched in.

Including also the bones he had to pick with her
the unwanted gesture of abandonment
a raised hand open like stone
a take-away heart
furry
probably German
probably belonged to one of them as a child.

Also to go under the hammer:
a telephone in mint condition with all the words still in.

A bitter fish the bitter lemon.
A leaking teapot
the colour yellow.

All rubbish
all he
all of it she.
All of it bubble-wrapped.

We are also there seated among the bidders.
Consider what we might take
what we might use.
What then might be ours.

once more

everything comes from it and returns to it

even elastic bands breathe slowly in and out feign
sleep feign like a bat hung on dusk she listens
to his breathing in and out of what she longs for
the letters of her name ~~unzipping once more~~ even
elastic bands dissectare slower than paper than he lets
slip the dark once more she lies ~~on he and she~~ touching
her waiting beside him once more ropes of the night
very slowly the ropes of night-tighten once more beside
her the man ~~lies the man beside her~~ lies the silence
~~lies she~~ was she the silence—even elastic bands yearn
the sheets between he and her conceal the man sinks
his chin sinks the silence in the pillow and further beyond
his breathing ~~forehead his jaw~~ his body falls once more
about what his dream—not ask falls his dream
once more she reads blackberry bushes on the ceiling

once more once more her breath searching
for his buttocks his back his hand
once more she

may she once more?

turn around you
turn around.

CLAIRE CROWTHER

Manqué

A manqueller gestures at
a woman of great weight. *abuser*

Mandarins nod all
through the train. Mandatory

papers fly from deep
pockets while manciplies *bondslaves*

manichees maniculls *third century sectarians, sons*
mandrakes pay mancus *human-shaped roots, thirty pence pieces*

for manbotes and one rich *finer for the loss of men*
boy searches baggage

for his mislaid passport
in his good time.

Transmutation

in the John Rylands library

My stacks are iron, too. If I could tell
the difference between writing and reading

and raise the temperature till I converted
each to each, my exemplars would buckle,

words burst hot like fat crystals
on a mountain of marrow.

from Ash Farm Journal

The following journal passages are extracted from a long and unfinished prose poem whose narrator, the previous afternoon had written Kubla Khan. The context is the farm house where Coleridge putatively wrote his celebrated poem. I have made no attempt, beyond references to Purchas, at writing literary history.

Hic labor, ille domus et inextricabilis error — Aeneid. VI :27

An apple tree. The full, charged, fructified, complete effusion from itself, perfect in self-generating abundance, a variegated expression of what it stands through the summer to carry into October. And so it raises its progeny to the air, and these hang in beauty, passive in allowance of the wasp, ant, tit mouse and the small red mite that crawls its mossy ridges. An apple tree in fruit is nature's noblest expression. The weight and colour of this harvest: 'autumn's foison big with rich increase' (Sonnet 94?)¹ hung from a living and supple wood. I've seen bramble and blackthorn loaded with dark berries. But the apple is our richest inheritance. One bite of it, moreover, from our first parents is engraved in each human brain. But much as I glory in this fruit, just two, if I consumed them, would throw me in a colic.

*

This was mankind's primal ill. Ingesting not one apple: but the entire fruit tree. Indeed, the world's an orchard: rind, seed and core, that germinated in the hearts of our first parents and took root therein. It's these seeds in the head I feel ripening, corrupting me somehow. The roots grapple in my physiology. I feed this tree. It fortifies itself in me.

*

It was of course the *quince* that suggested itself, thrust forward in the primal orchard. How it glowed in the first hand that lifted it to become a pulp in the mouth. *Curious insinuation . . .*

¹ Misquoted from Sonnet 97

*

Golden and dry. And if parched, radiating precious creative light. Here the damp, organic interior expresses itself in a water-titrated green. The granulations of rock with their pittances of lichenous growth, ferns rising to knee height, and on the cliffs sea pinks in dry tufts, giving the lie to my earlier supposition of damp. But to return: even the dry grasses of the coombe have wetness flowing from them, as though melted from earth. This paradox I love. Perhaps I *cannot* love without such contradiction, for to be drawn and repelled in oscillating movement signifies the elasticity of natural and human relations. If I were drawn without remission, I would fear suffocation by attachment: thrown against what I willingly embrace until the organism ceased to breathe.

*

Say the word 'journey', and I reply *vicissitude*. Wet feet, weak boots and cold wind on the waistcoat. This volume of Purchas: it is ten pounds in weight. The burden of its information weighs equally on intellect and body.

*

A fool marching along the way marked his passage of return by the disposition of sheep on the hillside. He turned home in the evening and the sheep had been frozen into the postures and pattern in which he had earlier found them. 'This can not be,' said the traveller in his folly, and plunged into the woods where he lost himself for ever.

*

This fable occurred to me as I missed my way thro' Culbone Wood and became lost, so I thought, to extinction, in the long, dark, steep chasm that leads, at last, into the farm precincts. It is a *romantick* wilderness in which to divagate. It is thunderous with stream water and somewhat threateningly enclosed with trees which have thrust their canopies almost preternaturally high in their effort to transcend

the abyss whose darkness they themselves have created. The ascent is very steep, strewn with cumbersome limestone rocks, and there being no clear track, I was driven to stumble in a zig-zag and meander, now across the stream (and thus more than once submerging my boots), now over and sometimes beneath wild, creeper-shrouded heaps of fallen old tree-trunks; and on one occasion having to tear away a curtain of ivy, wild clematis and a lichenous green hanging whose smell I recognised but whose identity I could not recall.

Looking down through the forest—I was there an hour or more—the sea was distinct here and there through trunks, under-wood and foliage. The water very level, grey and dead (or as if dying), as though October, which was occupied in ministering to leaf and flower, had worked also on the sea, which was sometimes pitted like metal which has been hammered, now pewter-coloured and now, as though soured, like a tarnished flat-iron. Fatigued as I was and near done in with the flux of a dysentery, I arrived in a sorry frame and needs must beg the necessity of a lodging and hot water. Here that night I consumed a medicinal draft of opium which stopped my bowel but was an aperiative to the imagination: highly coloured in experience, albeit vague, obscure, remote and fugitive to recollection.

*

Overcast sky as in the mind. As though the interior of the skull weighed down close and would rain. If thunder would only break. A positive mental release. Could I weigh my thoughts they would out-scale Purchas.

*

The wooded headland and the marsh present a quasi-spiritual mood. Dark green; purple. The wetness occasions a *descent*. By this I mean a *katabasis*, a *nekuia* from the unsatisfactory upper world to that nether realm of dreams and mythologies, haunted albeit with ghosts that reproach us.

*

LINDA BLACK

as pellets pool

& splatter drip
in the ear of transfiguration
mellow & melancholy
& roots are bared & the spade—the heart
declines to split
in the hush and lull amidst
the imprecision the head
ringing like a bell then the trees
will sway & billow & bend
& the Russian Vine will wander
not circumspect like I

Expectance

entrances (her) waves
from all directions as if bells
were peeling light
overcome with perfume sweet

lover's touch were there to be such a one loft
of all yearning becomes becoming
discernible *but it is so!* as landscape
sleeps into darkness seemingly
not quite there

if the journey

be a long one
a suitcase must be sought
of vast proportions the arduous task
of preparation does not
come easy not easy
begun nor at all latterly
could be called
disarray though softly
imposed folding/smoothing/pressing
down similar in tonality liquid
as thought can be
added to and added

Woods in Room

I

winter woods pull a person's figures in
amongst moss -clothed tall ones a step
on a crunch of broken solar moments hear

ing is crisp readings of brown crack ling
mouths shed from intricate plays all sea
sons lose to tongues of ice & wind's ever

-elongating signature passing through sens
itive branches to pick up bits of twig
& bark brambles are agreements feet can

not accept where trousers may rip against as
one who is lonely pulls their mouth of open
tasting through rough closed slats & cross

-hatch a smell of wood-mould & mush
room shapes an asocial gathering in some
human nostril a thrush blurs to crooked

& twig gy()re minders

II

a lit standing lamp & its corner hold
dry gold liquid of passing stories & the
creek of beams that could become people

if the one in the room thought through
rings & grain toes on woven animal
hair feel traces of travel placed a bed

stead is a crane that will lift the heaviest
dream from the hole of a human mouth
and the pillows are bags of old forgotten skills

builders zipped into each feather two eyes
stare at three cracks meeting on a ceiling
and passing away across the vast loss of a

ceiling's so lid abyss it is only the door
& its pockets of knowledge & its two
sides one warm the other cold that makes

nothing an offering

III

winter woods pull at a standing-
lamp man figures in amongst corn

ers of dry golden liquid moss
-clothed tall ones step on passing

stories' creeks on the crunch of
broken beams that could be come

solar moments hearing people of The
one crisp reading(s) of brown room

thought through rings crin kling
mouths shed from g rain toes woven

seasons lose animal hair tongues
of ice & wind's t ravel placed The

bed crane is an ever -long gate
-signature passing through sensitive

branches will lift the heaviest dream
pick up bits of bark & twigs from

the hole of a human pillows &
mouths in agreement with brambles

feet can't accept old forgotten kills
trousers may rip against built zips

into each as one who is lone ly
pulls their feather 2 eyes stare mouTh

open ta sting through three cracks mee
ting rough closed slats & cross-hatch

ceiling passing away a smell of wood
-mould in a vast loss of ceilings(?) mush

rooms shape solid abyss an a social
gathering of doors in pockets of doubt

a human nostril & a Th rush with its two
sides blurs of twiggy reminder & oTher

cold make Thing a No! of fur & ring

JANET SUTHERLAND

“All these things I know from wandering the country”

(Lee Miller *Dead child. Romania, 1938*)

in a room where light fails
she lays out her child
binds him with string
to his coffin
begs him
not to return as a ghost

she puts a penny
in his mouth and sings
an old Transylvanian lament
between phrases that entreat him
not to go and phrases that beseech him
not to return

his sister leans out across the flowers
her bleached bare arm
reaching for the empty water jug
fleas have girded her waist and ankles
with rosettes of bites

Tracks

dull light and a cold wind—
we could be on the farm
bringing the cows in against a gale
through hock deep mud and horizontal rain

the copse is a grey smudge out across the field
we know the sharp lines there

the beeches grown tall and we know
without looking that the rain

will be making its way in runnels and channels
down every twig and branch and the trees will be creaking
and looped below arched and already rooting
the bare barbed brambles will be glazed with rain

Still Life

So since we cannot meet I'll put you here
in a small room looking out across the bay
your thoughts like water—just the ebb and flow
of colour and of light. The green, the grey

the luminously blue horizon
distant. What do you say to this,
drowned in a February sea? I give you light
and a safe room so you can speak to me

Shepherds Lament

a good tree gives me shadow
pretty—behēoldon Ðæt ʒngel

koumfort wid she hann tek
de soffness—outwardly distant

tax-gatherers sent to scold
to meet & deal with us

messengers in their presence
embraced envoys—took stock

we were all very good friends
well disposed one to another

rapidly burning through reserves
for our part made no peace

having sewn such by such fed
quarterly losses—thence under

expected to match concessions
she stood turned to slip away

made me fast to assume cunning
tongue to the moving herd

now afield no longer standing
wræccan—with no hope of return

MELISSA BUCKHEIT

A Concise History of the Female

*"But please don't cry— . . .
Beauty does not rest."
Anne Carson*

What faith submits
my back a bridge for your feet
green ferns and day lilies over the pond
silver mirror and
inside the dark folds
smooth as stones,
the book
engages from suffering

Language unaccustomed from speech
malign me
I am not incremental
the flood as it imitates swallows
and I swallow but am not that
which is spoken of
grateful to be small
see the bodies as they float out to their graves
inside the tsunami

Her clitoris as it is cut out,
the light on the lintel as she is sewn
in the house of any village
sews my tongue
from the poem that breathes

In this urgency I speak to you, grieve,
make love—
the beautiful constellation of your brain
riding me into daybreak
a freedom past
unmanned bodies who have none, no sex left
have become liquid in the black dirt of a ditch
or only the words in my mouth,
speech through cotton

and I am somebody's wife but I am only
local
looking for my own
and I am no one's wife even
after ten years

Devotion does not ask for time,
the movements of trees and oceans.
What is gentle
the eye can answer without harm,
your hand on my back;
like fire in a metal can through the dark of night
on a city street—and homeless,
the new has been built

This darkness does not
will not be darkness as on Earth
we speak of the Sun, a god

and our orbit
one of isolation and fear
as if the coldness of space were itself cold, singular
and not just vacuum—
my hand outstretched in the winter air, chaffed

That which cannot be empty
I speak to
not divided but unremained
heat of stars and of energy
for there is nothing that protects us from passion
nor can there be
if we are to love like animals
beneath a Joshua Tree
and not eat each other
each limb chopped off and cooked for erasure

An excavation
two thousand years later reveals the bones
illuminated by yellow spotlights,
of Roman baths buried beneath a Medieval castle
in France,
each age consuming the previous,
then unearthed—
and would you not touch me
would you not love me if you could
decide
for humanity

Roots Surfacing Horizon, 3

Blindness of root visibly cradling the outtake on surface exsurgence
of difference minus departure, whole pillars of dependence are
engrossed by thinnest plate horizontal distillation invokes rebuttal
at horizon

the series 'dwelling' cased down by pared horizon disaster by
tractable origin until refaced at trait of root fixed by exit rank its
own motile bluff off banksome exposure

what is 'unthought' in the flatness-decongestant ribs a stay through
covering soil, sublimates inference as relational opacity rootal not
neutral the 'sub' behind this vertex versions a spell elational with
surfacing, planar pull to an horizontal abrupt universal cell

call of horizon
no sooner discerned
you do have the chosen
noise on behalf of, its
wanted prior standing

Each root fold is a relict of sky deposited on its coils of flathold the
elbow out at mimetic surface, not skin but root-trampled to where
the horizon ramifies an infill clinging to field hollow with horizon,
letting the ancient hole usurped by aperture hold again

travel of roots thwarted above their element, re-admitted but on
soil-gesticular terms: guard against any over-recognition of the
called from its forth horizon as extra transfer is webbed down but
as projective greeting releases the plateau's self-guiding a whole leap
out

the fronds of surface (distributive trust) become goads of plenty
branching out but only as nodal as horizon was condensity of the
flat sheen surface population, what ripples is the transfer from every
other density

lead a wad of surfaces
true from such depeelings
(rising) off a
nail of root

Stringy root, hard skimps scooping above surface but besets a
grate before horizon to accompany sandy pleats out of linear
revel roots unsealing themselves cap depth at its cuticle nipple,
how it billows contrary to horizontal gatelessness

what was wholly above surface is always less than anything surpassing
it, roots offer the incidence of their slightness over all or crane
across surfaces on an elbow missing horizon but fetching its boom

jam edges with what enters
seekingly, haft of gravid
register but now unchokes
a splayed rope of surface
past its pasture, paradisaal
scope the rehem of edge

Horizon dis-ascended no sooner crossed with a motile root's
perjective stone, pebble polished on surface for not throwing an
undressing over the heights return flanks at a radiant spit rolling
against the horizon curve

humped arcs of distribution the catchwing/hatchbay of an horizon
not withdrawn receding along a co-sprawl of seconded proto-
agulation these submerged spindles spend a hulk of patient fabric,
a reservoir lifting the back off depth is elect explainer at surface

near to buttress
our own limitlessness
until the expansion
leaves a shelf ingressed

The figment rootal spiral as convex as stooping to surface knows a
lug at horizon dedicates across the lob coming off the plains a
listening fragment upon its surdant originals

sprung plain was not a stretchable element, is inclement reachless-
ness ahead of the tack of any lesser hold, without the roots' own
stabling quickness off surface joint

roots radial across surface laid it on particles for the vacancies:
the stub of a tree with all diving tallness beneath, deepwater can't
prevent landing universals in such a shallow recoil, the meshable
skin it stands in

gift in contingents
from origin, root
thriving for recension
within the screes, surface
has taxings of mound
under the very tree
of arbitrary horizon

Enfibering the plain was proto-vertical in its poverty of
commending surface: root convulsions at rest beneath the same
dome disparagements of actual tree, its taller fallen short

now that revulsions blow surface over surface for longer, the very
skin is more rideable patted by sittings of root shaping with salve
the sores of an economy pure surface repetition can never live

as jolts out of retention
seek real stations, de-
traction in depth beached
till horizon forwards it

single scar of rootface
from bare thickness datum
a wafer of infra-delivery
stings upon ground

ANGELA GARDNER

. . . morning light entering by way of a mouth, you turn

Our bodies: the voices of shadows, unstable but nowhere bright,
as near enough . . . this long moment changed gorgeously
and now differently costumed. Whole imagined cities
still hover overhead to overlay, in ever-tightening lines,
their well-made feet or walls of reason. Insanity reflected
so that only now it can approach the condition of music.
Its materials and architecture wait somewhere singing . . .
buried in each other's bodies

Here is your opening: pulse, breath

It is Summer

Insects beat their fragile wings against glass
and from the sky, your mouth smiles, cities disappear
and look . . . it is the unclothed morning light that enters.

Another Fall from Grace

All those things I said either side of water and glass
How dark does it get dark? How evening?
While you say—these flowers look like dog penises
their lipstick jack-in-the-pulpit Open mouth gaping

to small perfect teeth of white slipped earthenware
a figure floating against nothing and the crackle-glaze
footprint of clouds across his milky chest His erect nipples a
re birds in a cloudy sky entering sharp and clean

scorning even the fragility of bones I translate indefinite
from the foreign language of self as a person I met once

and have forgotten among the buried mirrors used
to capture the faces of the dead—their mottled skin

broken names and brevity of hands anticipate interruption
fading as our memory has of candle-light and shadow

The Life of Life and the Life of War

New thoughts churn and steam in a belly cauldron.
Sentences appear as outflow from their source.
None can pre-imagine the shape each sentence might take.

The great crab and horseshoe forms of yellow bolsters
Shelter under a passacaglia by Anton von Webern.
Unfinished Peruvian carpets are torn into by the war.

A part in the middle is missing. The woman screams
In a charged situation of weaves. Flooding the walls,
Are torn pieces of clothing of adults and children.

(Where the war is not actual but virtual,
A girl will refuse a room of carved clouds,
Then lose herself in a labyrinth for amusement.

Where the war is actual, a girl will live without a room,
For it has been razed to the ground into broken rubble
In which she loses her footing and falls wounded.)

Now in the lush of life, a symphony's hysteria is in command,
Wide ranging to beyond its romantic base, its truths deliberate,
Fertile, ripe, and so full beyond its traces of its only wish.

Now the tall wind roars upright through spaces that were homes.
It is big, Hurling itself through broken hallways, in and out
Of glassless, frameless, memories of windows. Gasping,

The lowest strings are powerful, strong as brass,
Racing along with elephants, where tree trunks brutalized by the
God River, are rushing in to fill the holes in the land torn by war.

On thin film the visions come: of famine, drought, volcanic eruptions,
Earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, and floods, plague, tsunamis,
Death, death of many at once or in single units, by busloads, accidents

Acts of nature enough with glacier melts, people by lightening hit
People grieving a particular, dazed people, the hungry ones, many
who are sick and those who are tortured, —people, with no homes

In unyielding lands already crowded with humans, so murder comes
Through continual war, border wars, wars for loot, gang wars, tribal strife,
Wars for what purpose? In truth, to no purpose, merely our self slain.

So in clouds of ash and dust, in exploding of hatred of our world by us,
We wreck the unseen conditions of life and unbalance the scales
Of lost justice, this is how we create the gaunt starved weakened people,

Inheritors of Earth.

Answers

At night: the train runs over sleepers.

Bee: in Italy the ape is small and winged.

Bird: the pipes through which this music was conveyed.

Bud: a leaf struggles to articulate its variable names.

Careers: missions we attribute to the futility of god.

Children: in their beds they stick like the kinds of shadows light does not remove.

Clock: a clock tells the time although it has never been to school.

Current: when the child draws electricity her shouts come out as words.

Dancer: her roots are flame.

Days: the flicker of graves opening and shutting.

Debt: it is dew in the morning and mist at night.

Do not stop: the traffic lights are on black.

Eggs: they struggle in their potential.

Fall: when the first apple cursed the first pair.

Finger: gloved leaf in the bud.

Food: when you eat you never miss your mouth even in the dark.

Frame: a mirror without its self.

Grave: nothing is as long, even though you could jump over it.

Heat: because you can catch cold.

History book: up to its unprintable last page.

Hope: a corpse made of flowers.

Horse: the black horse consumes a version of itself, the green horse.

Language: a thirstless tongue tethering us in an unending sentence.

Last named thing: rain and sand are related.

Leaf: when a leaf flies away, it never comes back.

Mothers: dried skins of fruit, they are hanging on, on trees.

Murderers: they have their necks twirled in this.

Nature: it is tired of the imputation of nature.

Noah: he brought Ham and his descendants bread and mustard.

Novel: it is an end in its shelf.

On: it is hard to get on, harder to get onner, hardest to get onnest.

Person: the man behind the mask is you.
Pig: it is killed first and cured afterwards.
Poem: it contains language as a bucket holds sunlight.
Poet: as contemporary as a newspaper until the music catches up.
Rain: words operate like water on what is real.
Reader: the mist amounts to you.
Rose of the watering-can: it rains over all.
Scream: implicit at the end or the egg.
Sculptor: who makes faces and busts.
Self: my bones are covered in ghost.
Shoemaker: a blacksmith and horses his customers.
Sky: god's open letter to us.
Speech: language comes out when it cannot contain its potential.
Stone and corpse: dumb messengers (also the children, and birds).
Stream: the shout at the end of a ghost.
Suicide: leaving a film halfway through.
Tear: the eye frozen by its object.
The: all men are potential therapists.
Thread: as you sew using the needle, its thread gets shorter.
Time: an opening in the head.
Tinnitus: when sleep rubs against thought the head buzzes.
Tired: as tired as the pool is of the sky.
Tongue: a greyhound arching before pushing out a shit.
Toy: the wooden animals are flesh since wood is the meat of the tree.
Watch: hands before its face, always running itself down.
Wheel: the wheels never catch up although they keep chasing each other.
Willow: a willow tries on a new dress once a year.
Wolf: the flowers only speak in rhyme.
Words: even after we hook them into sentences, some fall away.

LUCY HAMILTON

from **Ballad of Gravesend: Stalker**

And the Sun Will Shine

A pair of eyes is skimming the surface of the hedge at the far end of the scrub my landlord calls a garden. They're staring right at me and they are not Feliciano's. Nor felicitous. Nor blind. Not Steinbeck's, Rilke's or Van Gogh's. They belong to the man walking the street behind the hedge. I cannot see the man, only the eyes that hold me like a magnet. My eyes cannot repel them. They attract him right up to the grubby window where I sit with my mouth locked open and my fork frozen in mid-air. The man's not looking at me. He's like a manic puppet jumping around the scrub, sizing up the three-floor house of empty bedsits as Feliciano sings the Hitchcock Railway.

'Rose-bush' at my Window

The journal is written on the verso of a large notebook while on the recto fiction grows by fifteen hundred words per day. I'm reading the *journal* of the *novel* I've just read. I envisage the long-dead Nobel Prize-winner writing every morning: verso/recto/verso/recto. As the rose-bush taps my window (verso) I sooth my nerves by reading the book (recto). I read in bed and the author holds me. He loves women the way my lover loves women, only he's more available. The intermittent tapping sets up a rhythm with the throbbing of my tooth. It fills the gap between the curtain's hem and the window's sill. The author draws me close and comforts me. He has two broken marriages and two small sons. He loves his sons and I love him for loving them. Sometimes he drinks too much and I love that too. The persistent tapping beats a tattoo on my tooth and infiltrates my brain.

MICHAEL FARRELL

is today bad

1

my sons pulling a rickshaw a golden m on its side;
your houses being auctioned, im riding to uni, my books are
overdue.
the other kids are living off melted-cheese paper, my feet slim-dusty
from the park are you free for coffee, i got paid
after a long dispute.
youre looking after your brothers children, the dog needs-pills a walk,
everyone wants protection via nuclear threat, & theres galahs to feed,
im going for a swim;
later in northcote, you text an apology, youre doing a
military exercise.
its too late to get my friends here, the homes
part of our psyche,
its a concept that could last as long as our belief
i have to find my voice, separate it from regular talk, from the
sound of pop hits,
anthrax tshirts free to good homes, the mouse will-dance-for food,
butll dance in a better place,
im going to a movie but youre writing, another blake essay
& growing a beard,
this is the backdrop of the economy, of the-green politics, of literal-
tree-stranglers-& shakers.

2

my daughter pulls a rickshaw the word coke emblazoned; i prepared
her for this by
always giving her a pittance,
butts glow on asphalt; its a kind of smart thinking, within a
greater dumbness.
im not far from your place, the tennis courts on

the way,
you're heading to the airport, at stage three of the process step-in
rebegin;
ill be at the bar from five o'clock, after the group.
chomsky is disabled on the website, your brothers see-through glitter,
his blue poles lipstick;
perhaps dinner, that new diner, dawn to dusk,
your helping him tack vinyl to furniture no trauma i hope;
help me stack the meeting,
plant a big domino & spoil the view; not an episode
just a bit manic.
i was the host, wind blowing grit against my neck, you fix
the pram:
to shield your baby from the sun; i go slow so
as, not to catch up with you.
there's a show on later you park holdens for a
sale;
there's a bus going round: taking names, giving
runs.
a sleep makes us all ugly ducklings, drought breaks, in
south yarra, your brothers come;
a heart as big as churchills, at the front;
he sings like he's really good, really happy i clap.
& stare at the embers, of the tram, of the subway
goers.

Hallucination

My love will look to birds if he doesn't fear falling
An eastern wind will blow on my skin, ceaselessly
And I will emerge from a tree, green like this
Green like this from tip to toe
Malice and doubt from head to toe

My love will say remember
My hands, my difficult and heavy hands
It will be a drunken leaf shaking
Trembling I'll hear the voice of your nakedness
I'll hear and the seed's pain will split

My love will rain down on me like a dirty prayer
Will rain like that ready to disperse, to disappear
The earth's secret will take us inside
Always a witness in its wake

From a branch of the sky
A seagull will slowly fall

Sometimes... One...

Sometimes the windows come and go
We don't see

Loneliness wanders around a stairwell
We don't know

The wall hides the house's secret
They say the house is a woman waiting quietly

Redshift

The universe keeps expanding and we're further and further
apart, it costs more and more for us to travel
by means of urban transport and to talk
on the phone. Our bodies keep expanding in their
needs, monotonous as the circulation of planets and blood.

Sometimes, when I don't see you for a while, it feels like
it's me that's the universe, and you are everything
it has not yet reached.

the word

1.
it reveals exactly
as much as it conceals

as if it's afraid
that once you see it
you will go mad

with delight
with horror

it's the word alone
that both kills and saves

guides and misleads
engulfs and ejects
onto the surface

like a deluge

2.

the word like two bodies
shuffled by night

like hats
stripteasers from texas
alternately covering up

shame
like nudity that hides
inside itself

3.

the word like the word
metaphor like metaphor
like like like

* * *

the evening split me in half. brilliance and darkness
conquered the estate. cut across my block.
the border was delineated right through the very
middle of the face of the innocent looking out.
he was conscious but stood there without moving
with light on the right and dark on the left hand
side. he considered what the noise of the first drops
is like. he decided that they make a din like
popcorn. so he stood and tried to imagine
those walking along the fringes of the rainstorm.

The Birth of the Smile

When the face of a child first forks
into smiles of pleasure and passion,
the tips of those smiles tell no jokes
but put out into an ocean of anarchy.

Things are just great. Amid the fame,
the child plays with the corners of its lips—
watch how it stitches the seams of the rainbow
it will use for reality's constant cognition.

Out of the water, the mother continent rose
—the inrush and approach of the mouth's spirals—
the eyes are struck by the Atlanteans' one moment,
to the light melody of praise and surprise.

9 December 1936–17 January 1937

*

[Untitled]

Inside the mountain, the idol sits idly
in huge, careful, contented halls.
From his neck, guarding the high and low tides
of his sleep, there drips a necklace of oil.

When he was a boy, the peacock his playmate,
an Indian rainbow was his daily meal,
he was fed with the milk of rose-tinged clay
and lavished with cochineal.

His bundle of bones is still drowsy.
Elbows, hands and shoulders have turned human.
He smiles with that quietest of mouths,
thinks with bones and feels with his brow,
recalling the look his face once assumed.

10–26 December 1936

*

AUSTRIAN POEMS

translated by
David Malcolm and
Wolfgang Görtschacher

DAVID MALCOLM was born in Aberdeen and studied English and German at the universities of Aberdeen, Zürich and London. He is at present Professor of English Literature at the University of Gdansk. He is the author of *Understanding Ian McEwan* (2002), *Understanding Graham Swift* (2003), and *Understanding John McGahern* (2007, all U of South Carolina Press). *The Blackwell Companion to the British and Irish Short Story*, which he edited with Cheryl Alexander Malcolm, was published in autumn 2008. Together with Georgia Scott, he edited and translated *Dreams of Fires: 100 Polish Poems 1970-1989* (Poetry Salzburg, 2004).

WOLFGANG GÖRTSCHACHER is a Senior Assistant Professor at the University of Salzburg. He is the author of *Little Magazine Profiles: The Little Magazine in Great Britain 1939-1993* (1993) and *Contemporary Views on the Little Magazine Scene* (2000). Among the many books that he (co-)edited are *So also ist das / So That's What It's Like: Eine zweisprachige Anthologie britischer Gegenwartsliteratur* (2002), *Raw Amber: An Anthology of Contemporary Lithuanian Poetry* (2002), and *The Romantic Imagination: A William Oxley Casebook* (2005). He is the owner-director of the press Poetry Salzburg and edits *Poetry Salzburg Review*.

E.A. RICHTER

Ten years on

From far off
to you,
nearer and nearer
with every second:
That's
what I paid for.
From your hand
my prick grows
wherever I am.
When the light
goes on,
you lick
my sweat,
scary movie of my youth.
(Sex
is better than
love, but
I want both
with no division!)
The orifices,
I imagine,
between us
are interchangeable.
Despite that—
the fluctuation
of identities
is out of order.
Facing forwards
we stand
on different
grounds: your father
bites differently

from mine;
my mother
lives as stable
grandeur in me,
slowly
yours comes close,
warming you.
It's hard
to exchange confidence
for control:
Sometimes
I open my mouth,
and you see
only dead words.
Imagine
we'll keep one another
another ten years
above water,
look at one another
after that right in the heart,
still full of curiosity,
without shame.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ASTRID ALBEN has previously published in *TLS*, *The Wolf*, *Drunken Boat* and *Poetry Review*, and is working on her first full collection. She is also co-founder and editor of *Pars* (www.parsfoundation.com), a science and arts publication.

LINDA BLACK lives in London. Her first book, *Inventory*, was published by Shearsman in 2008. She is co-editor of *The Long Poem Magazine*.

MELISSA BUCKHEIT is a poet, dancer, choreographer, and photographer. A chapbook, *Arc*, was published in 2007 by *The Drunken Boat*. She is the founder and curator of *Edge*, a monthly reading series for emerging and younger writers in Tucson, AZ.

CLAIRE CROWTHER has two books from Shearsman, the most recent being *The Clockwork Gift* (2009).

TADEUSZ DABROWSKI is the author of 5 volumes of poetry: *Wypieki*, *e-mail*, *mazurek*, *Te Deum*, and *Czarny kwadrat*, which in May was longlisted for Poland's top literary award. The poems here are from *Black Square*, translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones, and just published by Zephyr Press.

MICHAEL FARRELL was born in Bombala, NSW in 1965, and has lived in Melbourne since 1990. His publications include *ode ode* (Salt, 2002) and (as co-editor with Jill Jones) *Out of the Box: Contemporary Australian Gay and Lesbian Poets* (Puncher & Wattman, 2009).

CLIVE FAUST lives in Bendigo, Victoria. His publications include *Metamorphosed from the Adjacent Cold* (Origin, 1980), *Sleeping It Off* (Origin, 1992) and *Cold's Determinations: Selected Poems* (Salzburg, 1996).

ANGELA GARDNER lives in Queensland and has two collections, one from UQP and another, *Views of the Hudson*, from Shearsman (2009).

GILES GOODLAND's most recent book is *What the Things Sang* (Shearsman, 2009). He works as a lexicographer.

MARK GOODWIN lives in Leicester. Shearsman has published his two full-length collections, *Else* (2008) and *Back of A Vast* (2010).

LUCY HAMILTON lives in Cambridge. She has more work forthcoming in *Poetry Wales*.

ERNST JANDL (1925–2000) was one of the most significant Austrian poets of the post-war period, and one of the leading members, with his partner Friedrike Mayröcker, of the Vienna Group.

FRANZ KABELKA (b. 1954) is the author of two poetry collections and three detective novels. He is a teacher in Feldkirch, Vorarlberg.

PETER LARKIN is a librarian at the University of Warwick. He has several collections to his name, including *Leaves of Field* (Shearsman, 2006).

MARY LEADER's third collection, *Beyond the Fire*, has recently been published by Shearsman.

ANTONIA LLOYD-JONES is a translator of Polish literature, including poetry, fiction, and reportage. Her recent translations include novels by Paweł Huelle and Olga Tokarczuk.

TOM LOWENSTEIN is the author of two Shearsman collections, most recently *Conversation with Murasaki* (2009).

GEORGE MESSO is a poet, translator, and editor. His books include *Entrances* (2006) and *Hearing Still* (2009) from Shearsman. His translations include three books by İlhan Berk plus *İkinci Yeni: The Turkish Avant-Garde* (Shearsman, 2009) and *From This Bridge: Contemporary Turkish Women Poets* (2010).

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON is one of the UK's finest poets. Carcanet published his *Collected Poems* in 2008, and Shearsman recently published his *Poems 2006–2009*, comprising all the work composed since the *Collected* was assembled.

RICHARD OWENS lives in Scarborough, Maine, where he edits *Damn the Cassears* and Punch Press.

GONCA ÖZMEN was born in Burdur, Turkey, in 1982. Her two books, *Kuytumda* (2000) and *Belki Sessiz* (2008) have won several major awards. She lives in Istanbul.

CARLYLE REEDY lives in London. Her work features in the recent *Infinite Difference* anthology from Shearsman.

E.A. RICHTER (b. 1941, Tulbing, North Austria) is a poet, playwright and scriptwriter. As *Richtex* he is also active as a mixed-media installation artist.

PETER RILEY lives in Cambridge. The author of several collections from both Shearsman Books and Carcanet Press, his most recent publications are *Greek Passages* and *The Derbyshire Poems* (both Shearsman). A new collection is due from Carcanet in 2011.

FRANCES PRESLEY's most recent book is *Lines of sight* (Shearsman, 2009).

IAN SEED's first collection, *Anonymous Intruder*, was published by Shearsman in 2009. He lives in Lancashire and edits the webzine *Shadow Train*.

ZOË SKOULDING is editor of *Poetry Wales*, and has two collections from Seren, the most recent *Remains of a Future City* (2008). The poems on pp.28–29 resulted from a writing/translation project at metropoetica.org.

JANET SUTHERLAND lives in Sussex. Shearsman has published both of her collections, most recently *Hangman's Acre* (2009).

HEINZ RUDOLF UNGER (b. 1938) is a freelance writer, poet and dramatist. His most recent book is *In der verkehrten Welt* (Haymon, Innsbruck, 2006).