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TONY FRAZER

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Submissions

Shearsman operates a submissions-window system, whereby submissions are only
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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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HARRY GUEST

A Splash of Red

for Anne Stevenson

For sure, with my back to the Channel—
no barn, no church for miles—this view
holds unremitting green: bracken,
unready wheat, deciduous copses,
ivy, conifers shutting off
the estuary. And vetch, dog
daisies, violets do (you're right) become
subsumed in an overall scheme.
To-day, though, a field of red
slants far off. Poppies? Too
close-set I'd say. More a chunk from Mars
dropped in defiance, hoping
to please you. Those waking at birth
in these wet, constricted islands
can't have enough of green. It helps
to forget the spreading cities,
too much mud, the trudge through slush
midwinter. That brash patch
is welcome as it's alien so, not
belonging here, gets prized. (Take those
two llamas in their Devon paddock
quietly grazing—not quite as white
as egrets flecking the Exe
into a Chinese print.) The field
in question would, were
you here, provide a hint of rubies,
life-rescuing blood, cliffs at sundown
in the Colorado desert. A boy
I was at school with confused them both—
once the golf-ball had been lofted
he couldn't find the red peg on the tee.
For him this landscape would be nothing

but tedious monochrome—unmarred
vermilion or stubborn eau-de-Nil.
You and I call the sky (all right,
at rare times) blue but can we know
we're seeing the same tint up there? What you
identify as azure may be a canopy
I see as scarlet, a real Martian treat.
For some there'll be a navy-green
or Prussian pink, their yellow-brick-roads
in purple—even lively artefacts
like ivory pimpernels, zebras
with orange stripes, cardinals
dependent on wings of silver.
Was Franz Marc's legendary world
not remarkable to him? his blue
or crimson stallions, gold-sleek
deer run-of-the-mill? I do
hope not. This poem is a gift
for you. An interrupted green, a spur
of metamorphosis, a vow
for change or instance of cold flame
to warm nostalgia at. To close
your eyes and bask in this wrong
radiance we've borrowed off that
remote, perhaps abandoned field
shifting from Parker Quink on white
to another kind of actuality.

MARK GOODWIN

Their Tree

She sights the tree between
two huge derelict distribution sheds.
It stops

her as if her husband
suddenly lived again.

A spring oak on the horizon –
mature with dark thick twisting limbs
holding fresh mists of greenery.

If she could remember the word,
she'd utter – *miracle*. Her children

only know trees as myths.

It's as if the tree
is balanced

on a wire
stretched
between

two hollow memorials.

See how she wants so much –
wants to keep the tree.

She puts her nearly-see-through hand
up to the horizon, and cups the tiny oak.
It is impossible to speak of, but
the perfect miniature tree roots
itself into her palm – roots through
her veins, and feeds gently on her blood.

She & her stick-children are in awe
of the oak standing up from her hand.
The light is sprinkled on its leaves as if
green moth-dust clothed it.
And that fresh ancient scent of deep green.
Radiant green again. They weep.

Her son & daughter moan,
then yell no words. But

their breaths shake
the little oak's limbs. It sways.
And the roots, as they take
the strain and move
in her flesh,

hurt.

Now's Structures, Trossachs, January 2011

Note: *Ben Lawers* is one of the highest mountains in the Southern Highlands; its name means *hill of the loud stream*. It is near to the village of Killin, at the head of Loch Tay.

sun-wind-shine wip-sizzles soft ly through fr eezing air
my crampons cr unk & chime on wind
-hardened snow-pack I'm slung in winter's sky on
a broad white ridge between
the snow-clothed Munros of Beinn Glas & Ben Lawers
below Loch Tay's miles lay as bluey-grey sky on
snow's glossed-over lands
my crampons sh ush-hiss through loose

gleaming snow-grains wind lifts as smoke trails
ails from my shins my
crampons creak on layered works of wind
wind streamers of frozen sound wind
layered snow-crystals cut by motion into still layered relief
maps of layering chaos organised perfectly deep-
space-blue sky
touches white
gleaming ground hung above snow-clean glens my
crampons grip
crinkle and track slippery layers my fingertips numb as glee's zeros
sculpt my want for forever as (s)now

ZOË SKOULDING

Count down

9.

when underfoot the dust won't
rest where it fell as the ground
trembles becoming nothing
less than itself at each step
down in time out of joint time
being all we have to hold
us together I listen
to the empty corridors
like a skull that could sing once

8.

when a song with no body
but clearly belonging to
someone else keeps returning
what obligations do I
have to the shadows that fall
between the buildings between
a thought and a word between
a word and a tongue moving
across the dust and ashes

7.

when dust keeps returning in
particles of what used to
be solid ground over which
no-one flies any more there
are steps descending into
deep industrial echoes

of what was swept clean away
where the earth has never stopped
falling back in blind faces

6.

when blindness is all that makes
the next step possible in
counting down deeper further
under the dust is music
each word a furious ghost
of its own future descent
descant to scored line out of
time I'm out of time again
here help me please count me in

5.

when I count myself among
crowds in reverberant space
as voices collide with walls
falling through the missed letters
on someone else's tongue I
return as dust as if dust
is an echo as if an
echo is the depth of a
word deserted by a mouth

4.

when the desert whipped into
wind falls as dust covering
skin with finest particles
settling in red who can say
where nomad journeys begin

or solid ground ends in rose
haze on a windscreen distance
diminishes in lost scales
blurred in azure unmeasured

3.

when distances are measured
in days between skin that will
by then have been shed lightly
in particles of dust no
protection against the loss
that's a fact grating against
skin's definition of what
I'd like to think it bounded
against the harm of speaking

2.

when harm is shed lightly as
garments that fall from skin shed
at the centre of dust I
am distracted particles
in all directions cinders
scatter at a moment's edge
the skeleton of a thought
call it life in the stillness
underneath the churning earth

1.

when there's no stillness in thought
or in earth that is scattered
finely on every surface
looking back at you from a
future nobody can see

where is the way down and how
many steps must be counted
as the scored earth turns over
underfoot where dust won't rest

[REDACTED]

ELIZABETH ROBINSON

No One Knew Who Lee Miller Was

At an early age, I broke open my very self and let
no one tell you that it was otherwise. A violation
subverts itself, becomes a camera: I was never,
not ever,
afraid of controlling light.

*

Slightly before dawn
the light bounce off my flesh. This curious
source preceded and provoked
the day that was to come, but which had not
yet shed anticipation
of the sun.

Wrongly, the eye
considers itself a lens, and, wrongly, sight
is thought to redound
to its organ.

*

The body, I can give evidence, is an instrument of
sensitivity. It can learn; it
can absorb its own records.

*

At an early age, I saw all that I need see,
any yet the eye flushes itself out,
not with tears, not with its evidentiary
but with a form of trust
that goads it forward
to the next excess.

ANDY BROWN

Jeroen van Aken

It's 1516. My sixty-third year
in Hertogenbosch, this cloth and iron town
remote from the heart in Northern Brabant.

My wife and I live out our final days
in a world full of infidelity,
laid low by sin. For ten years I've painted

nothing, though I've seen our churches burning,
flaming river banks, villages on fire,
towers toppling here and there through thin ice,

Hell erupting from underground, each rock
pierced by trees—trees lifting up rocks—dark eyes
and ears listening from under a stone.

I am as a stranger in my own time:
like a dried-up riverbed that runs through
a deeply fissured land, its recessed crags

steep above the mild plains, then out beyond,
along the desolate coast where tall ships
smoulder and go down in the curving bay;

or closer still where birds of day chase off
the predators of night who roost inside
the hollows of a giant human tree.

The crescent moon of unbelief hangs high,
a glint in the night, like the eyes of owls,
of magpies or of swans, or moist-eyed toads . . .

and though the peaceful Lowlands lie around,
corruption spreads as far as men can see.
The world cares nothing for one man's torments—

this morning in the street where charlatans
make livings fooling lords and fine ladies
with conjuring and hocus-pocus, where

beggars and cripples scrape the dust for coins,
I watched a dupe refill his leaky jug
at the village pump: he cranked the handle,

water flowed, his pots drank every drop,
and yet the level never rose for all
the cracks that crazed the bottom of his flask.

We are actors in our own dumb routines;
gullible peasants in makeshift shelters,
vagabonds sleeping at doorways to caves,

wanderers in temporary dwellings.
A man crawls into a beehive in vain
hoping to find rest. Frail children set out

to sail their scuppered boats upon the stream
and drown. What threatens us, we made ourselves.
The end is imminent—terrors close in—

so why do they refuse to mend their ways?
The fortunes and misfortunes of a man
reach past memory and presentiment.

As when the inconceivable bursts through
the surface of our lives—when the inside
becomes outside—so all is upside down.

The burghers are fools, concerning themselves
in sensual pleasures and frivolity,
black witchcraft, devilry and alchemy.

They dance a zigzag path through the public
spectacle, forgetting it was a clown
who last died on the gallows, on the wheel.

How did the pantomime of skeletons
in cages come to be so trivial?
The uniform of folly's worn by all.

It is 1516. Righteousness fights
with temptation; punishment with reward.
Turn away from the things of the world. Turn

back to Time's passage to eternity.
Hold fast in hand your pilgrim's cockleshell.
Hold fast still, Brethren of the Free Spirit.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MARIANNE BURTON

The Shoes

She found or bought them at a stall she said.
But I say a soldier gave them to her.

Took them off a woman who lay dead.
Perhaps the dying happened a tad quicker

for his help. Who knows the truth. But I know
she wore those shoes. Their stilted heels

the grotesque probosci of giant insects,
their leather outers smooth as slipped calf,

their colour the scarlet of fresh-flayed meat.
Most comfortable in the region, she claimed.

And she was probably right. But I know
after a time with every step they held her

closer, hugged her tighter, burnt her rawer,
buried in her deeper, until her feet

started to slip, the damp started to slide,
moist to wet to wetter as though her feet's

sweat were pouring into a salt wrap,
as though her flesh were liquefying.

When she peeled them off, her skin was red
with blood. But it was the shoes were bleeding.

She tried to lose them, shake herself free,
she tried to throw them away, but her hands

stuck fast, the felt liners clung to her fingers.
She reeled along the track, her heels toes soles

stung and dusty, blistered and mauve, in her hand
the shoes which bled every step of the road.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ROSS HAIR

Turan

the rose is
the trope

the flower
Eros holds

from A Round Portchester, A Calendar

spring
again

Proserpina

“sharp
in the grass”
& grain

§

fall boughs
seed green –
autumn’s testa
like Buddha’s
in Gloucester
harbour
the Padma

§

restless summer
– sheen –
fidget of light

on leaf

wax effervesce
flourish, flare
green

still vermilion winter
pools mizzle light –

dusk spread
senses damped,
dim into night

BRIAN HENRY

Static in Winter

They dig & seek what they cannot corner
or gather
a barricade of gloves carried abottom
this staircase slipped with ice

first leaves & now snow
scraped off & thrown
to the side to exchange scrunch for slick

They pivot & catch what they're compelled to release
no further down without a point
to press
displace move air to ice
air to grind & erase disappear
what for now occupies air's space

They flock & bother what they cannot flee
the water stuck in its throne listing
as if solid it must be float or floe
on the river river road moving
road moving river road

They rock & shutter what they feel must cease
some sliver of water dangling fine

no drip
some sliver to impress on the ground its need

to rise above itself itself & carry what has no desire
to go

They fathom & totter what they face down in toto
or intact

a minor movement & series
a flagrancy of fact
no sooner or later than nothing or now

the sound a drift a sullied bespect
the lens a fracture of light & despond

They shriek & shimmy what they feel obliged to borrow
as a friend will remove & never return
the lack a ring that grows over time

a word skirts stalls the matter
a final celestial sidewalk strummed choir

I borrow your brother & blink all atangent
my stickerish limbs know the price of a fall
no parting or such fielding these questions

the ice when it melts will right what is sinking
a torn apart bargain for any still standing

I wring & deform that which is lodged
hand a cradle for anything swollen
oh please don't befriend or relieve me

this freeze-shattered fact a matter of ache
buried until plain speech won't arouse it

I shake & I shake the liquid now streaming
a full-headed fright the road is all closed
no lanterns or godsend to burrow me forward

sheets & drifts guide the discarded
a foreseen insensate puddled beneath me

The wheels of the burden a curtain of precip
no sight emerges to cull the collected
the snow do you see it it covers

itself a snow-covered font
the blend is what in the end fills us

This they I posit this you some we
what I to deliver or beg for inspect
when all I require is an hour for slumber

a pillow of wet a blanket of ice
a surface still & unchanging

Come someone says loudly & with gust
we huddle this I a snow-stricken force
come someone says & we collect as if pulled

a shore-twisted alabast minus the rust
some gargle of bodies this topple of us

Come someone says they will be here
in breath
a backward entice to shriek us all forward
come someone says we the sore-appled

a dimness is arcing its falling in our direction
a stillness of ice a performance unfrozen

The view we are left with a silicon vision
the words & their colors all undressed in the cold
everything soon will be numbered yawned open

unless the illusion of movement reclaims its divide
decreases our sorrows you static you snow

JAIME ROBLES

"Utere felix, domina Juliane"

—Inscription on a gold bracelet, Hoxne treasure, c. A.D. 400

A hand thrust through the circle
of space drawn by a hoop of yellow gold,
telling of blood and bone
in the center of nothingness

•

The bracelet in turn wraps to the wrist,
garlands her skin
with leaves, doorways

•

Her bracelet slips up and drops
as her arm rises and falls.
A hand's width holds it to the wrist.
Glimmer anchors it in the eye of an onlooker.

•

Who is to say words are without attraction:
WEAR THIS WITH JOY, LADY JULIANA

•

Gold circles endlessly,
and part of the world drops out again:
the penetration of cold
empty sky
gleam of the stream's thin casing over stone's surface
the thick paste of silt
all furrowing round paths

"Utere felix, domina Juliane"

—*Inscription on a gold bracelet*

Because he sees her as beautiful
he is pulled to the side
not joined but trapped in her gravity,
unbuttoning his momentum

•

Though beauty unconsidered
seems like light or distance
in relief: a flight

•

The sway would fall
magnetically inscribing a caress
across her thigh-inward spills,
an unhealed bifurcation

•

There is no symmetry here even though
bracelets encircle both wrists

•

Smooth surfaces form an ecosystem:
Her mouth like the forest floor is humid
indivisible, yes, teeming
The tongue's movement more than muscular-
requiring a parade of vowels;
she pulls back the hair from her forehead
revealing a frame of white froth

RUPERT M. LOYDELL

Soap

I like the way this soap I've just opened has SOAP stamped on it. Bad science fiction has info dumps to explain to the reader how worlds work; onscreen that means signs everywhere. Why doesn't the sky have SKY written on it in the clouds? Why doesn't the wall have THIS WAY UP in contrasting bricks? If I was dyslexic words might appear broken up, interrupted by globes of light. Since I'm not it doesn't and I know the names of most things I use. It's good to know that soap is soap and words is words, at least most of the time.

Lost Property

for Nathan

'He looks like lost property now'
—Craig Raine, 'The Tattooed Man'

Bill was asking what my new paintings were about and I facetiously said 'paint'. But as you observed, just when you think you are talking about one thing it turns out to be a conversation about something else.

One moment it's a discussion about poetry, the next it's the mystical meaning of your name if you translate it into numbers according to an Aramaic scroll recently discovered by a lake.

Then it turned out to be Peter's round and as he made the trip to the bar the talk moved on

to yesterday's television that we hadn't watched
anyway and films none of us will ever see.

I was doing my best to keep up and so were you
but it all went into a spin. Art is art and talk
is talk but if no-one knows where it is leading
then all that's left is luggage on the floor,

full of our frustration. Anyway, what a time
it's been. I've still not thanked you for the drink,
am still wondering how important it is
that the letters in your name add up to seven.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Tati the Parrot

The Polymath is creating a model to demonstrate analogies of space and time across physical and biological structures. He nurtures it in his head and in the diagrams he draws with coloured pens—calculations a cosmologist transfers into Euclidian graphics. Meanwhile the Art Dealer is asking him questions about Pythagoras and the pattern of 3 in the rosette windows of Milan Cathedral adding that 52 is the number he found in a book about the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem where a medieval Arab traveller witnessed liturgy occurring. Today and every day at the appointed hour 52 lascars anoint the tip of the Rock with sweet-smelling ointments. And because his hotel window looks down on a second-hand bookshop in Zurich he slips out and buys *Tales of Tati the Parrot* who whispers, in attentive ears only, 52 moral/behavioural injunctions. I say it must be the same parrot that flew into John Ashbery's *L'Heure Exquise*. Then he tells us that a medieval numerologist may for a fee like 3 hens eggs or a bushel of barley inform you that the number 5, compounded with a Pythagorean triangle, mutates into the Octagon which supports the Dome of the Heavens.

Codes & Folios

The Art Dealer is collecting citations from the most ancient texts—the *Dead Sea Scrolls* and the *Codex Sinaiticus*: the solar and lunar week, lunations and weekday dates, monthly and yearly cycles from Babylonia and Egypt which the ancients used as mnemo-technique to teach computation of reliable religious festivals. The folios are stretched skin of donkey or antelope and it's thought 360 animals were slaughtered for the *Codex*. He's trawling for Jewish and Christian references before turning to the Arabic sources. He has produced eighteen Word pages—about six thousand words itching in his fingertips. Outside of this writing process he's forever 'losing marbles', as though his brain-box had shifted to another zone throwing an entirely new and stretched perspective on the world.

RACHEL GIPPETTI

My Theory of Relativity

It's been three years since I moved onto a street
made of real shoe-polished cobblestones.

You walked on them when you visited that first December.
I still can't walk in heels without tripping.

People laugh and think that I'm drunk. And I do drink
when it's sunny or really gloomy, the sky

like wet cigarette smoke. I've also lightened my hair—
a lot.

If you lived in a flat just up the road

and I'd come round last year (when I wasn't feeling like myself)
for low fat biscotti, your weird metaphors and intangible

advice and you'd told me that terrible thing,
would I have told you that it was just the cocaine?

Probably not. I would have cried, comfort-eaten spaghetti
and avoided you for months. Now when I see you

from my window, walking down the cobbled street,
I still feel more than three thousand miles of guilt.

LINDA BLACK

Pod

O night who doth entreat thee . . .

A road contiguous to heath land:

*brushwood & teasel spawn-weed & weasel
... from which do stars appear*

(She) enquires of the nature inveigles
directions describes the environ
in the manner of one who lingers
on detail – the precision
of stone the fey semblance
of shadow

What may it be?

~

The tarmac track:

Inquisitive folk along the way

*mud-patch & cross-ditch pitch-axe & foible
fob-witch yarn-catch bale-switch dabble*

a lowered brow a beggared land

outreached – those rags

have seen wondrous days

rat-a-tat worry-snatch grass-talk twiddle

~

A manner of placing:

One (who) speaks out

quibble-tip tease-trim jest-quip venture
left-brim nestle-brain mind-meld mortar

seems to know her So

repeats her question

underlined & without malice

Arrives at a halt

A thing approaches – maybe a donkey

Here and there are finders

verge-bare scavenge-heap scrip-scree debris

~

A lot happens:

(She) is allotted the task of sweeping up

twinkle little eye (well met)
mirth & mire sweet & sly scour the sky hither & by

without

her cardigan – fine points

maketh the difference – her hair

united in chains of colour

~

O'er the brink of a hillock:

A little picture

calendar – tiny days

and months dangle

~

Corollary:

*Through night doth she wonder . . .
pea-case hornet-busk shell-pare sliver*

(She) boils beetroot sweet red beetroot
buries bulbs bidding
their little shoots

Progress

Were I to be tamed sufficed
by the odd mention the occasional
wisp in the cornea – the perfect place
for an image – though solitary
& unknowing well then
thy bespoke – nay – homemade
life as I would describe
may flail – a somnambulist's
portion though do not let it
flounder

TIM ALLEN

Four Poems from *Default Soul*

noise escapes from ever quiet air race
first we'll miss you then we'll miss ourselves
the flowers walk their narrative founders
multicultural children rheumatoid eagles

dunes left in the dune crèche all day
guidebook head spends all day on the tram
my work colleagues have crystallised
ecstasies of old rebellion untroubled

mysteries of ancient summer train sets
little trotty wagtail nails the performance
the paradox train tangent arid thermal
European climbs lake

a method acting burglar is most dangerous
bulky non-stick slender nonsense sticks
if it's going to happen let it ice-age
it's a risk but it makes sense

don't try to sleep in contradictory focus
take some advice stick to the story
spray a spray of moonlight on a spray of starlit flowers
learning a new language this late is folly

the cliff absorbs all the cliff walks
the cliff absolves all kisses and caresses
get down on your flickery knees like a cliff
put the sea back where you found it

JAMES MCLAUGHLIN

Intertextuality

It's always at the edge
of things you
know that bit in between or
that bit in between this
as wild blue
in a field of lemon
the call of a bird
somewhere that chill
a shock of berry
a cosmic shard
something that shudders
and departs
at the edge of the eye
far off

Let's call to arms repetition
seagull hearts rise and
faltering loves tinge
rises on the blue horizon
a tiny fragment of gold
in fragments of gold
conduct floats in the breeze
was it just the small step
untested experimental
new

GEORGE MESSO

Aligned Underfoot

In those days, your best poems
lived under bridges, in wild garlic;

tiny constellations dreaming out
from lost rings of darkness. Well,

there must have been other things too.
There were: flowers —small & white—

but precisely who was reading
that *Book of Brilliance*, I don't know.

Go back a little, I missed something
—it's all shade but there is a place

darker, deeper than the rest, where
earth is always bare, perpetually dry,

where nothing grows, nothing could,
a perfect *where* to hide: your enemies,

yourself, a treasure.

MARY LEADER

Envy

He's nothing to me the attractive man
Listening in Tuscany to one mandolin
The light chartreuse beyond the window
Whose arch is high whose sill is low

Listening in Tuscany to one mandolin
Dark-red cravat and sweet-oiled hair
Whose arch is high whose sill is low
One of two men at the luncheon party

Dark-red cravat and sweet-oiled hair
And two girls their eyes reposed into
One of two men at the luncheon party
Youthfulness a square white tablecloth

And two girls their eyes reposed into
orbital ridges shadowed pink and yellow
Youthfulness a square white tablecloth
Connecting to the luck of ripe plums

Orbital ridges shadowed pink and yellow
The light chartreuse beyond the window
Connecting to the luck of ripe plums
He's nothing to me the attractive man

ANTHONY CALESHU

from The Victor Poems

The Pleasure and Utility of Friendship

Friendship, Victor, is almost analogous to living.

But, so too is taxidermy almost analogous to living.

We watch the twitching squirrels, the shifting moles, the fox ferrying by.

None are yet dead, not even us.

Who was it that risked death for justice?

We once found you with meningitis, curled up like a mouse on the floor.

We all peed orange for a week.

Bah to death! we said, pushing past the nurse to see you.

Bah to death! we say sliding over the ice to see you now.

Doubt, like fear, is a trait best captured in the cold.

The snow is falling into our eyes—captured!

Our love of you and your love of us, returned—captured!

Nobody, but nobody Victor, would choose to live without friends.

Why do you choose to live without friends?—captured!

We would share with you the last segment of our last orange, the size
of a lime.

Our footsteps haven't been returned in the longest time . . .

Our friendship is private, voluntary, and forever happening in the
distance.

Our friendship is taxidermic.

We imagine the fox with the squirrel, stuffed, in a dioramic game of cards.

The fox loses his shirt, his clothes, the feelings in his toes, whilst the
squirrel stays warm in a second pair of socks.

'What if I need the second pair of socks? What if my own toes get
cold?'

The friendship of animals is one of utility.

Where our friendship, Victor, is one of pleasure... the pleasure, say,
of a pair of seal-fur lined gloves.
We've never asked you for anything, Victor, we just always assumed.
And, O, how our hands are cold, Victor! O how our hands are so cold!

Nothing Has Ever Been Achieved without Enthusiasm

Victor, what can we say?
Forgive our backhandedness.
Our upchucking was an unimaginative moment, and the slowing
down of our blood was admittedly maudlin.
Friends that we are, we know you'll forgive us our friendship.
Victor, we're marching towards you with a mind even you can't control.
Even without light, we can still make out the white, which gives us
renewed hope and vigour.
Someone sniggers.
But we can see the road ahead, clear as our hands.
Of course, it's not a road, so much as more snow.
And, of course, our hands are no longer our hands.
And the white... the perpetual twilight is just blue enough to watch
the wind fighting the wind.
Have we mentioned our dogs, they're feeling good enough to eat.
Not for us to eat, Victor! Don't fool around!
No need to throw us a bone Victor, we carry a sack of 'em on our backs.
No! We're not a sack of bones, Victor! Don't fool around!
It's coming true: our friendly feelings for you are extensions of our
friendly feelings for ourselves.
Everything is possible to overcome.
Except: self-deception: self-loathing, self-love.

ROBERT SAXTON

Cosmopolitan Double Issue

The desperate fudge, the artistic smudge.

Those adjectives are nouns,
those nouns are verbs.

I hope you understand:

that pause stands in for 'on the other hand'—
it isn't the caesura of apposition,
an in-breath in the aesthete's trailing list.

My point is, wisdom thrives in a softening mist,
directness being a terminal condition.

Our weirdest accidents are broadly planned—
I hope you understand.

There's rioting in the suburbs,
there's boredom in the towns,
the hopeful drudge, the groundless grudge.

Dark Matter

Haiku

A hundred lovers at a funeral:
trembling raindrops on a spider's web.
The ancient Japanese art of maximum-impact suicide.

Voodoo Lounge

In a jar behind the bar, a president's head.
The jungle telegraph's *kaput* :
we didn't even know he was dead.

GAVIN SELERIE

from *Harriot Double*

Brayne-track

Worth the journey from Duresme house,
three hours upstream by a curling line
or 9 miles as the crowe (says
my instrument on the leades
12 foote long).

Syon reach—steerage
asks *the soul*, stone within green,
what is that? Great quadrangular case
heaved from daughters' ruin.

A lone hernshaw, neck and legs stretched
flaps a powder wing in the shallows.
Horned cattle, a milk constellation
on Tide Meadow, mooze
before angle-turrets and gallery glass.

Waterstair. Ghost of Lady Jane.
Oars that dashed the creek
at rest. Winding path
to a neat walk with mulberries.

Think a whole 'arbal, knotly
layd to perfume the Aire
in freaktd order

silverie wormewode
branke-ursin
whyte nesewurt
dyshmustard
panicke
bellragges
hore calamynt

wood spurge
chokefitche
horse tyme
cystbush
purple goosegrass

sovereine and strang these Doctor Turner
found by the Temmes side
or planted, for physick
(a good tryal whereof in Latin
princess Elizabeth ventured
in now the Cherye garden or orchard
half an age back)

and he the healer under Somerset's cloak,
every day more vexed with the stone,
a man hot headed to know.

*Smelts they swimme up to Thistelworth—
stronde of this syde.* Note in a walking scale
away from swete-lipped townsfolk
for a booke of fishes, another projected
of stones & metalles.

Anno '97 (repeat): the rose quartered in a face
begins to fade, by hard thought
phantasina you tread a sheet of white light.
Sand, gravel, steps, hall. The plot
grandly done before Adam
with eye-shafts to the court (or cloister).
From such an earl entires
bailed about to broach his device.
Grace of a name subject to few words
than much babbling.
A wave, a cryptic tag, a pewter goblet.

To Mr Heryott pension 80^{li}
as graft to stock
all subjects appliable.

Lodging & laboratory,
a small house apart, at the tip
of the wall from her la: shipp's towre.
Landskip forged to convert
to gentleman. Owly-eyed, black-suited
magister of Braynford, magus
harnished wth

greate leather-cov^d globes,
chests of bookes of all sorts,
furnaces in the lybrarie clossetts,
longe table piled with papers.

Under the white crescent or half-moon
north pointed
neither servant nor officer

a skull can open
the hands unclasp to liquid gauge
the trail of stuff, its cast & rate
by pulses and paternosters.

Will you familiar rise
from the chimney-place,
chase some reason for a little event
with upright parabola, numbers split by a bar.

The heron climbs, slow and heavy,
swings along and swoops. A frog, a snake?
no, a silver fish.

Note: Braynford is an early spelling of Brentford. Thomas Harriot moved to Syon House, Isleworth, under the patronage of the ninth (Wizard) earl of Northumberland, around 1597. Earlier experiments had been conducted at Raleigh's London residence, Durham House. Syon was built on the ruins of a former abbey, part of which is currently being excavated. Lady Jane Grey went from Syon by river to be proclaimed Queen in 1553. The gardens there still bore the stamp of William Turner, herbalist and physician to Protector Somerset, called 'the father of English physique' in Harrison's Description of England (1577). Turner met the future Queen Elizabeth at Syon, c. 1549/50. Turner's son Peter probably treated Harriot's cancer in its early stages and provided advice for chemical experiments. The house where Harriot lived and worked until his death was situated to

You Are the Designer

Are you loitering with intent? These forms need to be overflowing with information. Here is an eco-system unlike any other, more than a million square miles of shallow but never stagnant water. For the first time in history, large numbers of people regularly travel out of their habitual surroundings. You could save the other half until later yet this creature tends to dominate its environment, killing and maiming unselectively. Are you loitering with intent? Part of our timidity arises from our unwillingness to offend anybody but this may be about to change. Next time around he simply flooded the terrain with data. Subject to certain controls, recreational activities on this reservation may continue. Are you loitering with intent?

4 *Poems from Tea and Small Bones*

If you are bitten at noon
no aspect of a feather
will stop the womb its flooding
like how darkness will leave
its gracefully carved labia
when washed from its slope.

Between sunset and rise
the quiet grows redder
a drowsy, arhythmic dance that
slips a skin right past its body
so near she can almost feel it
like a memory's spine.

No prior experience with migration
can prepare you for this night
its architecture of gaps
a moth-eaten moon
fallen into its sun
and no way to know
if a sleeper will take your dream.

*

Evacuated and bored
the bone strings itself
amongst the beads and settles against
your neck, prepared to winter.

You'll dig the pit but it will win,
the earth not bothered by the blemish.
Your fire burns the lovely just as well—
seal the womb from fresh air and poise.

Viscid and potioned with curtains drawn,
just scraped scabs on her tongue
the healer hang fired and ready
for her incisions to submit to his fork.

Your injections can't pierce this cocoon—
bite me to a bruise and spit my skin.

*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

|

[REDACTED]

JANET SUTHERLAND

Listening to Fallujah

1. *White Phosphorous and High Explosives*

In Fallujah a rain of fire fell on the city,
very sparingly, for Illumination Purposes.

We fired 'shake and bake' at the insurgents
using Willy Pete to flush them out

and H.E. to take them out
of trench lines and spider holes.

It burns ... It's an incendiary weapon ...
That is what it does.

I saw the burned bodies of women and children.
It melts the flesh all the way down to the bone.

Indirect Fires in the Battle of Fallujah by Captain James T. Cobb, First
Lieutenant Christopher A. La Cour and Sergeant First Class William H. Hight.
March–April 2005 *Field Artillery*

Fallujah: the Hidden Massacre, Italian State Documentary RAI, Mohamad
Tareq, biologist in Fallujah, and former American soldier Jeff Englehart

Willy Pete – white phosphorous H. E. - High Explosives

2. *Little is known*

In Fallujah little is known
about the types of weapons deployed,

about post-war contamination
of mutagenic carcinogens,

oil fires, heavy metals and
uranium from weapons,

but reports began to emerge after 2005
of a sudden increase in cancers and leukaemia's

a remarkable reduction of males
born one year after

and an increase in birth defects,
infant death and malignancies

the results reported here
do not throw any light upon the identity of the agent(s)

and although we have drawn attention
to the use of depleted uranium

as one potential relevant exposure,
there may be other possibilities.

Cancer, Infant Mortality and Birth Sex-Ratio in Fallujah, Iraq 2005–2009
Chris Busby, Malak Hamdan and Entesar Ariabi. *International Journal of
Environmental Research and Public Health* ISSN 1660-4601 [www.mdpi.com/
journal/ijerph](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph)

3. Question 618

There is a constant dynamic lessons learned process
about all sorts of things militarily.

There are operational level lessons relating to Fallujah
to do with command and control,
to do with precision targeting,
precision use of weaponry in built-up areas,
and all those sorts of things.

The strategic lessons about Fallujah have got to be bespoke to a particular issue or incident within an overall campaign.

The assessments for determining whether or not it was a correct political thing to prosecute the clearance of Fallujah or not were essentially political in nature, not military.

Clearly Fallujah had taken on some totemic type stature as a safe environment for insurgents.

One could say in retrospect the political decision vis-à-vis Fallujah was the correct one.

Wednesday 9 February 2005
Examination of Witnesses Select Committee on Defence
Minutes of Evidence
MAJOR GENERAL NICK HOUGHTON CBE

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Becky

When going out, Becky always looked around, because, as she said, the environment is never the same, it can change from one day to the next and if it can it will and as I only go out once a day it is an absolute certainty that it will have changed the next day that's why I look around because I'd like to know where I am; if I don't know where I am I may attribute change to the wrong place and if I do that then I can't find my way back home. As you can see, Becky's logic is impeccable, but Becky also created a narrative and that caused a problem down the line where Becky was born anti-narratively and because she was born like that she'd grown up like that. Her parents had done their best, her teachers had done their most, her friends had done their upmost and her lovers had done their upbeat best but Becky remained anti-narrative with an impeccable logic on her lips. So, wherever Becky went, she wanted to erase narrative, that's why she bought razor blades by the dozen, although these come in packs of five or ten which is really a nuisance when you need them by the dozen because going from one to the other you need to be skilled in factorisation and before you know it you do sums all day long and are back at narrative through the back door and she wanted to avoid all that and that could only be done by erasing each narrative at a time by using a fresh razor blade each time. That's why Becky went out only once a day, because razor blades cut both ways, which way up is a matter of trial and error; by then it might be too late to go out again.



TOM LOWENSTEIN

from Culbone Wood Journal

It is morning and on the table lie the two sheets on which the last afternoon's composition is indited. How deep that vision was. How distant, broad in scope and unwontedly complete. But how arcane its topography. The golden sun-glozed dome still glows—as though gold leaf beaten to an ultimately airy thinness mantles the intelligence—and there, cooled by a breeze from the northwestern steppe, ample spaces gather to the palace and stretch thence through Asia. Below the dome the Great Khan with his concubines perambulate. Conducted by an *Abyssinian*, who sings to lull it, a dark spotted pard on a gold chain walks behind them.

(What, this attempt to alchemise such, latter, allusive phraseology? Forced gold! Fool's gold! And for this reason. However-so-far the Khan's power stretched from Cathay to the Baltic, *Africa* lay beyond even his great empire's reach. That *Abyssinian* derives from ignorance of history, which falseness renders it anachronistic. Notwithstanding this, the term has arrived for its convergence of both like and unlike vowels and consonants. And these, in turn, suggest that word of Biblical immensity, *abys*—with its near suggestion of *abysm* from *The Tempest*—whose proximity is haunting.)

*

Now as I write, I have not yet revisited the pages which are the product of my *prophetic fury* (I have shifted to Othello's Sibyl, O judicious critick!) For the circumstances of the phantasmagoria still live in my waking. And on this quotidian October morning, I am there now in *Xanadu* and would, were I able, immortalise the enchantment. Yet when I stretch my hand to position my ink horn, the quill dies in my fingers. My forearm is forestalled. I raise my left hand, bring it onto my brow, touch the fingers to a temple. This is daily Somersetshire bristle—unharvested. For am I not simply that hapless self that laboured yesterday through mud and briars—and in the flux of his own excrement—to collapse in retreat among these hospitable premises? And am not I also that Tom O'Bedlam who entreated

From the hag and hungry goblin
That into rags would rend ye . . .
In the book of moons defend ye . . . ?

How close this touches! Xanadu and Bedlam lie adjacent in me.

*

I have breakfasted on a ham, and now in bustles the farmhouse maid to carry off my dishes and to mend the grate. Up reaches a flame. And now a second. The tongues parry and embrace, fall, jostle on each other, withdraw into the timber, crawl against the bark as though clutching for a hold. The girl kneels at the hearth and builds in logs of ash wood and apple. Who reinvented this blaze? Who re-ignites it?

“Pardon, Sir?” as though she overhears my enquiry.

“Go, child,” I reply. “It is nothing.” The girl thanks me. I know not for what. But as she passes through the door, I call her.

“Pray,” I ask, without knowing what I intend and without premeditation, “Can you sing, lady?”

“Why yes, sir. All about here have songs of the neighbourhood. And the hymns we do in chapel.” (A curious locution, “do”, and not unhappy.)

“Then as you go about your household duties—not here, mind, by me—will you, time to time, give voice to any song you might, in the ordinary way, sing at your own hearth or with neighbours?”

Suspecting me to be mad, as well I might be, the girl withdrew. A whispered consultation followed (I surmise with her mistress). And there ensued a silence all that morning so much deeper than any I have experienced, so that (besides this renewal of *flamboyance* in the grate) all I could hear was the singing in my ears and the sound of the still air on me in the parlour as, in my indolence, I moved between chairs and tarried—with some expectation of a compositional renewal—by the table.

And all this time, at a tree by a river, with a thin bridge to traverse it, a black, solitary damsel stands. She cries through the

dusk and a slow wind stirs the instrument she carries. At each short flurry, a dulcet and exotic tone arises: as if in the night air, sound became a prism and was lifted through the twilight glimmer.

*

How gorgeous was that vision. And how insubstantial its outcome. Here in muddy Somerset I squat with this trickle of the gilded river I envisaged dried up in the dirty morning twilight, while in some remote fastness of an Asian landscape that thick gold goes for ever rushing. I go to the table. But those pages cease to draw me. They are thin, poor objects. Paper merely. The good solid things in this parlour have more substance, usefulness and durability than those pale leaves afloat on the sustaining table surface. Old workings of oak, hewn in Devon last century. A dark, pewter tankard, coppers, and the tongs and shovels that lie inert at the hearth with its coals still aglow in a mountain range of ashes. See too the ravines inside this, pocked with caverns, faery dells and casements, shaggy humps and tumuli which let fall now and then their own substance.

The beamed ceiling of this room is low and, of a sudden, the oppressive architecture of this rural heaven, as though to threaten my thought and obliterate my vision, all too low. And my quill, as I write this, falters. It is heavy in my fingers. This is a feather that may never ascend again.

*

It is chance, but not entirely, that led me to the Great Khan's palace. Chance that I entered my reverie at a moment when I faced that one page: and yet I have confidence that it was destiny that guided me. I was there in Cathay on account of previous excursions through the pages of Purchas. But this was not my first acquaintance with the Great Khan and his lands and people. These I knew already through Marco. The writings of old travellers have long drawn me to accompany them on their peregrinations (this word in compliment to Purchas: for I take it as a sign that all the voyages of which he give account are called pilgrimages, in that they seek, as it were, a shrine, some holy palace of truth: albeit through what he interprets

13 Poems

My body is a grove of olives. Touch me
where I'm hurt, on the ferny pubis. Insects without eyes
have emptied me of fruits. What I grow is nothing.
Not even madness. Take me, a wound-labyrinth.
One gets used to being born in many different tombs.
Closer to my lips climbs
the erection of silence

*

All the dead have a right to the dark. Come through
this flesh—this coffin with two shadows. I shall be the forgetting
of the voyage that is you. I shall be your creation.
To measure the human species what's needed is a tree.

*

I've served their desert up on my plate. That's all they've
got on offer. And that's all you lose. Sand, grit, stones.
Hardly any water. I'm nailed to my thirst. I devour
your absence. The crossings aren't where we thought.

*

The sperm of history fecundates no tree.
There are women like cities. Burnt.
Their ovaries charred in each act of abandon.

*

Under the skin, our laughter is a cactus.
There's kerosene in our blood and soon enough—
very soon, the UN will be inspecting our orifices.
For it's in them we're accused of harbouring
chemical substances.

Spindle-Poems

ONE

One.
Because there are more.
More outside.
Outside the room.
Outside the other rooms.
Outside the house.
The house is too big.
They spread as I sleep.
Because there are many of them too.
Lately they're in bad repair.
Damp. Blind.
It depends on the day.
It depends on the clouds.
On the images too.
In particular, it depends on the threads.

Leaving means taking steps outside.
Outside the room.
Not the mind:
there is none. There's thread.
Leaving means taking steps
outside the room with thread.
The same thread.

Sometimes the thread
snaps. Because it's weak,
or because the other room
is dark. By
mistake, we pull and it breaks.
Then there's silence.

But there's no silence.
Not while you say so.
There's none. There's thread,
another thread.
The word silence inside.
Inside one—one?

THREADS

The flesh remains—to remain?—
wounded. There's a scar.

And the mind—the mind?—wounded.
Wounded? No, there's no wound. If
there were there'd be blood. There's
a scar. Not that either.
It would be obvious if there were
a scar. You can't always see them, it seems.
Certain words are used
instead of others, it seems. When
there aren't enough words.
Better when there's no
thing.

The mind acknowledges feelings:
segregates. It threads. Not the mind. There is none.
There's only thread. Saliva.

The dry mouth. There's no saliva. Is
there not? A thread forms an image. The
image of a body. White. Like
all the bodies who've died. I haven't
seen it. I've seen others. Not that one. But
it forms an image. The thread. Something segregates.

Hunger. Something says
hunger. Sates it. Cold?

Something remembers the word
cold. Doesn't feel it. Obviates it.

I'll have to get up. Though
without knowing what for. Without
knowing why the what for.
Get up and walk around this
room. Or also go to some o-
ther room. But no. It's safer
to stay here, typing. A keyboard
is something known. They make
an odd sound, the keys,
when you press them.
Stay in the known.
—Stay?—Remain. I already said
remain. Already asked.
To stay is to remain
for a shorter period.
You can always leave.
Leaving means taking steps outside.
Outside the room.
Not the mind.—Mind?—
I already asked. And there's none. There's thread.

Leaving is taking steps
outside the room
with thread. The same thread.
The word silence inside.
Inside one—one?

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

TIM ALLEN's *Settings* was published by Shearsman in 2008.

RICHARD BERENGARTEN's *Selected Writings*, in five volumes, have been appearing in new editions from Shearsman Books this year.

LINDA BLACK is co-editor of *The Long Poem Magazine*, and author of two Shearsman collections, the most being *Root* (2011).

ANDY BROWN has two collections from Salt: a selected poems, *Flight of the Rebel Angels*, and *Goose Music*, jointly-authored with John Burnside. He teaches Creative Writing at the University of Exeter.

MARIANNE BURTON lives in London. Her chapbook, *The Devil's Cut*, was published by Smith's Knoll in 2007.

ANTHONY CALESHU lives in Plymouth where he teaches at the University. His most recent publication is *On Whales* (Salt, 2010).

KEN COCKBURN is a poet and translator based in Edinburgh. He has translated Thomas Brasch and Thomas Rosenlöcher, among others.

ANAMARÍA CROWE SERRANO lives in Dublin. Translator of a number of Spanish and Italian poets, her own first collection, *Femispheres*, was published by Shearsman Books in 2008.

RACHEL GIPPETTI, originally from the USA, now lives in Plymouth.

MARK GOODWIN has two Shearsman collections, the more recent being *Back of A Vast* (2010); another book, *Shod*, from Nine Arches Press in Rugby, won the 2011 East Midlands Book Award.

GERARD GREENWAY is editor of *Angelaki* and works as a tutor in philosophy and literature at Oxford University.

HARRY GUEST's most recent collection is *Some Times* (Anvil, 2010). His Collected Poems, *A Puzzling Harvest*, is available from the same publisher; his Shearsman collection, *Comparisons & Conversions*, appeared in 2008.

ROSS HAIR teaches at the University of Portsmouth. More of his work is forthcoming from *LVNG* and Skysill Press.

LUCY HAMILTON lives in Cambridge, and is a regular contributor.

BRIAN HENRY has published six books of poetry, most recently *Wings Without Birds* (Salt, 2010). He also have translated Tomaž Šalamun's *Woods and Chalices* (Harcourt, 2008) and Aleš Šteger's *The Book of Things* (BOA Editions, 2010). He has co-edited *Verse* magazine since 1995.

MARY LEADER teaches at Purdue University, Indiana. Her third collection, *Beyond the Fire*, appeared from Shearsman in 2010.

TOM LOWENSTEIN has two Shearsman collections, most recently *Conversation with Murasaki* (2009). The text here is drawn from his next Shearsman volume, due for publication in 2012.

RUPERT LOYDELL is editor of *Stride Magazine*. He has three collections from Shearsman Books, *Wildlife* (2011) being the most recent.

JAMES McLAUGHLIN lives in Dumbarton. Knives, Forks & Spoons Press (Manchester) published his chapbook, *Aeido*, in 2011.

CHANTAL MAILLARD is a Spanish poet of Belgian origin. The poems here are drawn from the volume *Hilos* (2007). Among her many awards are the Premio Nacional de Poesía, 2004.

CHRISTINE MARENDON is a German poet. She studied Italian in Erlangen and Siena, works as a translator and publicist, and lives in Hamburg.

GEORGE MESSO has two collections of his own work from Shearsman, and has also translated İlhan Berk, Gonca Özmen and the *İkinci Yeni* for the press, the last of which has been shortlisted for the Poetry Society's 2011 Popescu Translation prize. His anthology of Turkish women poets, *From This Bridge*, appeared in 2010.

DAVID MILLER lives in London. His book, *The Waters of Marah: Collected Prose* (2005) is available from Shearsman Books, and from Singing Horse Press in the USA. *Spiritual Letters (I-V)* is available from Chax Press.

TARA REBELE lives in the USA, where her book of performance texts, *And I'm Not Jenny*, was published by Slope Editions in 2005.

ELIZABETH ROBINSON has published many books in the USA. Notable recent collections include *Inaudible Trumpeters* (Harbor Mountain Press, 2008) and *Also Known As* (Apogee Press, 2009). She lives in Colorado.

JAIME ROBLES, from California, is currently reading for a PhD at the University of Exeter. *Anime Animus Anima* (2010) is a Shearsman title.

GAVIN SELERIE's *Music's Duel: New and Selected Poems* was published by Shearsman Books in 2009.

ZOË SKOULDING is editor of *Poetry Wales* and has two collections from Seren, *The Mirror Trade* (2004) and *Remains of a Future City* (2010).

STEVE SPENCE's Shearsman collection, *A Curious Shipwreck*, was short-listed for the 2010 Forward Prize. *Limits of Control* was published in 2011 by Pened in the Margins, London.

JANET SUTHERLAND has two collections from Shearsman Books, the more recent being *Hangman's Acre* (2009).

JOHAN DE WIT lives in London. Publications include *Up to You*, *Munro* and *No Hand Signals: the invisibility of language in poetry* (both Veer Press).

HYAM YARED is a francophone Lebanese writer, based in Beirut. She has published three poetry collections and two novels. Among several awards, she has received the Prix France-Liban.

For information on Yvan Goll and Nan Watkins, please see page 105.