

SHEARSMAN

99 & 100

SUMMER 2014

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The poems by Christopher Middleton in this issue have already appeared in the
author's *Collected Later Poems* (Carcanet, Manchester, 2014), the publisher having
beaten us to the punch. Please buy the book.

Subscriptions and single copies

Current subscriptions—covering two double-issues, with an average length of 108
pages—cost £14 for delivery to U.K. addresses, £17 for the rest of Europe (including
the Republic of Ireland), and £19 for the rest of the world. Longer subscriptions
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that buying single copies from online retailers in the U.S.A. will be cheaper than
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are printed in the U.S.A. to meet local demand from online retailers there, and thus
avoid the transatlantic journey.

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Submissions

Shearsman operates a submissions-window system, whereby submissions are only
accepted during the months of March and September, when selections are
made for the October and April issues, respectively. Submissions may be sent
by mail or email, but email attachments—other than PDFs—are not accepted.

We aim to respond within 3 months of the window's closure.

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CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

Eurydice Perceived

‘...the singing insect whose records
are inscribed in our coal-seams.’
J.-H. Fabre

What if I never again for once could see
her strict small face brighten to a gift
What if I tipped the attic windows open
and never woke again to birdsong rushing up
Torched by curiosity even as I caught my breath
I let the forelock of a moment slip
so rare a time that idled is

A moment captured strikes you unawares
but grows a form gradually in afterthought

Wait: in immediacy akin to music
unlike music the moments change their form
And even music loved but heard distractedly
a ton of times weighs never quite the same

So in a shroud the figure lifted
now most herself
shocked by the light out there incipient
her gaunt features were shaping to smile

What end then spells out the stuffs in variance?
What were the words that came to grandfather?
*It is the quality of the affection
that carves in a mind the trace...*

I trace values on a map until the end
Let the quality, gods, of my affection
go deep as the clarity of grandfather's eyes

When memory in a moment shifts its parallel
I'll see and hear again re-opening the question

Even if Eros with a tusk scatters her garden
O predecessors you who teach restraint
with the grasshopper's voice our whispers blend
yours console in the shadow of her pergolas

Our Rain Crow

'Car no chanta auzels ni piula...'
—Arnaut Daniel

How apt of this rain crow
as rain came pattering down
for our flowers on the fresh grave
to hoot from his haunted orchard
sotto voce twice.

Then a wave had crested, giving rise
to fields of force; foaming vortices
carpenter the island of Phaeacia;
liquid eye-beams, Greek and chisel
carve to measure the finest of ships.

'Some few accustomed forms,
the absolute unimportant':
thus E.P. on a distinct slant
(still at an early age)
plotting some real connections.

So it is, here for the oldest folks
who still can hobble by,
there is a dangerous dog proclaiming
his Ah Ah Ah. One rough day's ride
and the sea crashes ashore.

I see my orchard gone for good.
Antiquated, for a moment
reasonably trees revive. One single twig
or two blossoming would cradle
a twitter of linnets. Soon
the punctual cuckoo too must croak. If
a cherry reddens,

it is for air, also the choir
far out in France at first light
let fly with one voice overtopping all;
yes, in the accustomed form,
it was the oriole, his folded fluting
for dear life I now recall.

What sense do I make, shedding this skin?
Memory, had you none tougher hidden?
Ancient shipyard fantasm,
fantasm orchard, sacred ground;
the texture puzzles, there is disbelief.
I do perceive it, past denying
pedestals to my words; to our crow its rain.

*[Note: Rain Crow is the by-name, current in rustic
Central Texas, for the yellow-billed cuckoo.]*

from The Mayroyd Notebook

Three turns of the concrete road up through the woods,
you sense warmth from the valley below: voices,
chimneys, shopping, a silent and invisible wall
cloistering hope and resignation. I have brought
my ignorance and wordlessness up the hillside in spite
of sciatica, to plant them in last year's leaf mould,
where the trees cease the stonewalled pastures begin
and after the last wall open moorland, above all else,
the wind tugs the heather stalk, the wilderness rhetoric
flatters my ignorance and a glance back opens
an archive of industrial prints, of belonging,
inward-facing houses, the old fellow takes
his usual lunch. Why must we say goodbye to all that?
Because it was never there, we made a show out of it,
a show to show what we are, to show us at our best,
desire in meadow and stream, local voice
vocal choice as if stable.

Round the last corner the late sun
smites the hill slopes tumble
out of the horizon a white horse
takes the full slant of light a
wordlessness of babies resounds
across the world and the show
must go on, it *must* go on.

MARY LEADER

Crone Cards

Series II

1.

You, Polymath, come, tattooed with the word
“Strange.” Not the words “The interior of
The person,” where, according to Bacon,
Words “come from.” Me, I look to the margins:
A shoal of chevrons, a staircase of curves,
Near words. There’s “mystical” for you, sir:
Ruins of sulfur- or mustard-colored clay
Walls, writ upon with shadows not quite black.
Relief. Now you’ve called off the search, read me
As inner/outer, as alchemical.
Meanwhile I putter, which constitutes urge
Without desire, cogitation without
Heat. I shall wash in tepid, rinse in cool,
My soap attesting to roses and rue.

2.

Even when I understand how you, care-
Fully, use a word as a term of art—
A technical term—in physics, painting,
Philosophy, I snatch it, plug it in-
To the socket of the quotidian
As if it meant that too. Or worse, instead
Of. You say “field” as in realm of action
And thought, then I turn around, fill it per-
Versely with Queen-Anne’s-Lace Milkweed, Monarch
Butterflies and patches of mud. The best
Light I can put on this violence is
Calling it interference as you
Elucidate the concept(s). Forgive me.
I cannot thank you enough for your works.

3.

One needs some kind of a crest in order
To lead soldiers into battle or send
Them into battle but not to lead them
Wending to where the access road ceases
And the war zone recedes, spared by dint of
Desertion, attention turned to trees and
Eventually back to tables bright
With color. (All heresies, so saith
Jerome, come from women.) Autumn trees, like
Hung tapestries, done up in fading pomp.
Not that I damn, per se, Jerome's busy
Solitude. Afternoons, right where the sun
Shines in from, casement to flagstone, the saint's
Lion mellows out, warm and protected.

4.

O shapes who rode with the spur, and the rust,
The washing damp on the rocks, how is it
The field must have been seen, how it is cupped
Forearms beneath the shape of the hill, how
Is it in need of explaining, how such
Brimmed forearms kept filling; who is it
Is filling the skim and sway in the hill?
The line of your man's hand points to those
Who cannot hide. Are you Don Quixote
Who rode out wing whip of air explaining
The ground, but not when it is as damp as
Washing, how it is it offers the sun
Dew, condensation, the sky bent over
Whom it is that the forearms belong

Su Fan Shan at Dajin Waterfall

She wades through the pool
towards the fall's clatter, each
dappled step deeper;
and the eye takes part in the
current's green ascent,
after its leap into space,
to lap her brown limbs,
like schoolboys in a classroom
hungry for knowledge—
shall we say of the language?
its many clauses
a lifting hem as one thing
follows another
into an opposite track,
changing the subject
from life's possibilities
to what they become,
just a matter of grammar
or a bird's chirrup
from the hollow of a rock.

Correspondances

Walls crumble in the wind and already
The blurred petals of birds in tumbling flight
Scud over the road like rags tugging free
From the structure. Incised in the surface
Some figure or script would draw you beneath
That when you try to decipher is gone;
Only attentive inwardness remains

And the greetings of correspondences,
A statue's discarded arm pulling down
About your shoulders the rustling water
Of burned leaves and the hum of bees looping
In emerald necklaces through the orchards.

What there is to reveal does not travel
Such pathways, unweave as you will the clue
Lizards leave, pore where the paws of squirrels
Pause or go the way that monkeys augur;
They only lead deeper into the maze
Where the muse's siren serenade is
The bullfrog's call that has your name by heart,
Not knowing you are nearby to hear it,
The day's reiteration of voices
Each with its own variation of air
No competition changes to coherence.
Dragons writhe round the newels as you walk,
Golden nymphs launch heavenwards from the lamps;
From the crook of trees and cracks in the wall
Orchids unfurl celestial garments.
Every trunk in the dry climate doubles
And then redoubles into a cloister,
Living pillars of confused utterance
Where perfumes, sounds and colours worship
The archetype's primitive completion.

Though the sum never adds up, yet counting
Continues, like a warbler wooing you
Over and over from the reeds: 'How do?'
And as promised it's there in the rhythm,
In the unmixed colours—arterial
Red, the sun's butter spread on still water,
The deep sky's sapphire at meridian.
But don't you hear instead the translation
Of rainfall into the mango's flavour

Strumming on glass like the stone's fibrous strands
Wreathing the cusps in the mouth's rock pool?
Yet behind it the fruit's single sunburst
Insists it is greater than that mating
Flight of butterflies, 'how do?', that if you'd
Let them would dance your glance away again
Into the distance. Resist their allure.
All that remains is to straighten your back
And mount one by one then the waiting stairs
Anonymously into the thin air.

ALEXANDRA SASHE

pour Jean, tout cher

You are offered a wing
of your left hand's
emptiness,
loosed strings,
desireless surface.

You receive the offer with your
rightwinged hand.

The daylight breathes through your lungs,
conductive of oxygen.

The name of the offering rests on your shoulders
unburdened of all
hide-and-seek names.

The straight line of your spine,
your walking cane ever in blossom.

With the sun on your back and face
you stand in your own zenith. —

The shadow-pointer under your feet
shows the way.

Straying

Glimpsing again on
another smothered
morning—hot clouds low
over Heidelberg—
the tall blond student
who doubtless carries
sure as nonchalance
the avoirdupois
of a dustier
scholasticism

who I suspect's now
off to select books
(*real* books) which kindle
sparks of fact, complex
illusion and love's
enthusiasm

*who's unaware / at
his spring-age / that such
response / though lovely
must / belong alas /
to youth alone*

who'll
stay nameless, one to
leave lodged in the past
like an expanse of
ordinariness, pale
water pocked with rain,
unforgotten

who
drifting from square to
square (not too near the
swirling Neckar nor
at times the Alph or
Styx) passes thirteenth-
century crannies,
cafés and a pink
church where Catholics
and Protestants vied
every Sunday to

out-sing the others
segregated by
The Reformation
and a makeshift wall
(petty but better
than roasting at stakes)

who might these days lack
religion bleakly
given examples
of intolerance,
bigotry and spite
(our fault who've tended
to treat naves as craft
grounded in dry dock
trendily missing
the mystical side
and lost the lesson
from soaring angels
who won't just jut like
their wood effigies
gilded or not)

The Change

The relief!
While olive groves part along clean lines,
their leaves relieving the greys of stones, I

am relieved
not to worry that occupation...
not to have to worry that part of me

is shaken
like a duster out of a window.
The lower bole is leafless, windowing

groves of boles.
No hiding, no watcher, spine to bole
like a bud sealed against its own beauty,

figure once
fitted in me. Dove, don't bring a branch
to me, its brimful tiny vats uncropped.

Heathrow Lakes

Once at Heathrow visionaries saw
a flesh-thrown vase of darker matter

than the gravel pits whose moorhens, March
butterwhorls of marsh-flower, warblers'

bright voices, tone with planes, drone thunder
stop drone thunder stop. With swans and rats.

Thus my visitors, though waste, being
one mind, true bodies, each tucked inside

the other, asleep—these lovers think
they'll resurrect. They cast nets on spring.

And they question me, can your lakes clean
all this handmade muck from air, or flood

the traffic lanes that we've travelled? Yes.
Like calves skipping by the Reservoir,

ducks calling hark hark and following
floating sheep's wool, plentiful willows

straying from lakes along Coppermill
—when their panic is over, lovers

will decompose in me, as all will,
in water. Hail ditches, rain, or rest

in ponds in fields. Turn a million
lips on liquid swathes from Colne to Staines.

The Queen of Heaven in the Morgue

'That's not my son,' Mary said. 'Too young.'
Back in the drawer slid the black bag.

The river of blood was thick, crashing
attendants who overturned tables

damming stickiness. They were retching.
Another drawer slid from the wall.

Old enough. White hair, grizzling from black
skin. It was a woman. The super

said 'Sorry, this is wrong.' But Mary gathered the plastic as if lightweight.

Before she reached the door, the viscous emptying dried. You could see the floor.

Week of Flies 1968

A spray, 'Finito', was at our disposal.
We were urged to use it and not to crush them
against the walls or ceiling, to take care

to switch lights off before opening windows,
to excuse authorities for the success
of spiders escaping into our house.

'We must afford an invasion of insects
coming from the lake. They do not sting.'

I dressed in a black cloak. We swarmed unguarded
offices. Alsations chased us and we lived
on free soup cooked up in Europe's cities.

SIMON PERCHIK

*

With just one heart and so many nights
you mistake this cane for a camera
that stopped one foot from walking away

reminded it to end the wave goodbye
as if the trigger and flash that followed
were no longer moving —what you hear

is your hand clinging to this photograph
the way a map unfolds on a wall
to memorize how loose the corners are

—you limp as if the cane was adjusted
for distances, is carried too close
tries to remember what happened to it.

*

The hand that is too heavy
once lifted planes, suns
now wears a glove to a bed

that knows all about darkness
and the emptiness waiting inside
where your feeble-minded fingertips

no longer can fold in
then yank as if a sheet
would open and just this hand

make its descent side by side
the warmth smelling from breasts
and afternoons spreading out

though now their sunlight
circles the Earth as ashes
—you pack this glove each night

the way a brace is locked in place
to hold on, take root
without air and now you.

*

This is it —a match, wood, lit
the way a butterfly returns
by warming its wings wider

and wider, one against the other
then waits for the gust to spew out
as smoke lifting you to the surface

—this single match circling down
half on fire, half held close
is heating your grave, has roots

—embrace it, become a flower
fondle the ashes word by word
that erupt from your mouth

as an old love song, a breeze
worn away by hills and the light
coming back then lying down.

*

ROSIE BREESE

Examination: Weather

Section A: Sun

1. It is scientific fact that an old man stretched out in raptures of sun-worship by a pool in Cyprus will eventually ripen as brown as a pod, so that you might expect his organs to rattle like kernels when shaken.

Given this evidence, can it be argued that the sun is cruel?

2. Dust: If the sun was to turn its torch on you, and this torch was so bright that we could see particles of your skin as they were shed, would you say you were more or less human?
3. I wish to calculate what proportion of my body is a sly trick of the light. Devise a formula for this below, showing your working.

Section B: Rain

1. Assuming that under normal conditions a face will be mirrored by the droplets that fall in front of it, how many versions of you will appear fleetingly during an 8.5-minute wait in light drizzle* for a bus that you know you've probably missed?
2. If a droplet is capable of carrying emotion at a dilution of 0.01%, how long must I stand in heavy rain[†] before I feel nothing?
3. Is rain
 - a) a tinkling of knives?
 - b) a slicing of bells?

Discuss, using real-world evidence to support your answer.

* Falling with an intensity of less than 0.20 inches (0.51 cm) per hour.

[†] Falling with an intensity in excess of 0.30 inches (0.76 cm) per hour.

Section C: Cloud

1. Is this a test?

Section S: Snow[‡]

1. If snow happens to be falling tonight on a hurrying crowd at East Croydon, is it fairer to compare it to dandruff, the crescent-moons of fingernails, both, or neither?
2. An empty bench, usually seating four, is refilled with how much snow?
3. “Every living person is tailed by fifteen ghosts.” Discuss.

[‡] (With thanks to Arthur C. Clarke for question 3).

LINDA BLACK

From a previous life

Speckle moon—what may you spill?

a rebel of sorts paints a wishing well

on dry land *in the middle is a large keep...*

pail empty as stockings

the morning after *pain & cinders fat goose fingers*

Mould in the cooking pot

gruel in the casket *there is washing to be done...*

each year scarcely decorous *nary nor kilter riven & splinter*

delivers scant proceedings

Keep us from those whose knives/playthings/multiples

are stacked fit to tumble clay too

shall wither *rib-spurge & kittens dry root & brigands*

Such wont such want such wasn't

never having seen such lovely flowers

MARTIN ANDERSON

In the Year of Expeditions

“We are filled with homesickness for no identifiable home.”
—James Hamilton-Paterson

Interlocutors of pure silences, and of snows. On a still night. What
eye's afloat. What heart's adrift. Upon a fragment. A phantom.

From swampy, tide-washed wild flower salterns where the creek once
bent by Lady's Island, poling with long oars up torturous narrows.

In our minds that 'implacable blancheur'; unmapped, untrodden.
Illimitable waste. Flower of a cold lattice, on which the wave breaks.

Across the horizon History marches. Shadows weep. From the Archive of Paradise a rare bird. In its beak—exquisite plumage!—bright petals. We sought warmth in the ashes of their extinguished fires.

An expedition of vanishings. Air beaten to airy thinness. From the alembic of the Word flesh and bone excised. Each thing that we extolled we removed. A fragrance hung on the world.

At night in our dreams a strange figure came toward us. Then stopped. From the alder swamp by the dim light of the creek head it waved. It pronounced upon us all the blessings of whiteness.

And Joas Croppenburgh, and Giles Vanderputt, held back the sea
for us. Day after day we heard, amidst sallow willow in the deep field
ditch, it rage.

Over their ruined roads and villages only phantoms returned. With no memories.

GERALDINE CLARKSON

The thing about Grace and Laura

was that they were sisters, vice versas.
The gentleness of the one, tender
as mousse, flesh like marshmallow;
her demeanour like Turkish Delight;
an apricot mooning
at the sun; a salve for sore I.

The gunmetal slickness of the other,
her flick-knife wit and belt-buckle
tongue; operating from offices
in the City. I couldn't love
her. A wildcat, out of
control, she stalked me through winters.

Grace slides laughing on her birthday,
her soft haunches streaked with yellow
from tiger-lilies I've placed on her path.
Laura sucks in her cheeks and
intimates that, as per her email,
she won't be celebrating
anything in the current climate.

I edge away from her
coat-hanger glance.

If Grace and Laura were to marry,
that would be incest, anathema.
I covet a calling card for Grace
and she is always welcome.
Laura has me poked to bits
with reminders; red letters.

JAMES BELL

the path

in its bend to the right the trees disappear
down the pathway

you cannot see
the path but see shade from full branches
sun shining on a hazel
in the foreground to the right
tells you where to walk

you will walk there later—in several days
or in a month or two

this path is overgrown
is hardly trodden now there are
other ways to go from here
to another place other than down
and across on foot

for now you take in only the perspective
dwell only on how it turns

in full leaf
for in winter it is a different
more open journey and you
see more beyond the trees
can decide how far to go

there is not this hesitation to fathom
such a pilgrimage on foot

where you cannot
see the way ahead but still go—
once it would have been
common to explore the ground
ahead and decide daily

the paths now are straighter and wider
have fewer surprises—you
 can see the future
arrive quickly from a long distance away
 no soft shaded bends
 beyond which you may pause
before following the fall of the land

love poem with Cadillac

most think themselves in a game with competition
moves in the game consist of improvements
where it lasts for the life cycle

playing well means forming a strategy
within the game where there is always a question—
how to interpret situations

this is when the Cadillac can appear
an *idée fixe* that will never really disappear
if only to keep conflict alive on the surface

once identified conflicts can be resolved
hearts are broken when the Cadillac stops
conflicts are never suppressed or circumvented

no one can say how they will be worked out
but true love is when the Cadillac has gone

7 Haiku

pills
for Wednesday
more clouds than envy

shadows changing the length of day
hundreds of years
on paper

natives
fireflies not waiting
for complete darkness

sunrises since 1492
colored lines cross
the graph

BECKA MARA MCKAY

Hands Are Better as Birdless Cages

I have a secret fear of being baptized by Mormons after I die. Some confessions are best boxed up and stacked in the attic—not the smoldering recent kind, of course, which would only make a tinder of the rooms you’ve carved for truth, but the old honesties left like dead begonias in the garden. Too heavy to lift and carry away; too sad to call ornament. Silence will be the first sign of the apocalypse. (My love for you, by the way, is like a taxicab with no driver.) It was not the rain that raised the gooseflesh on my skin but the way the light peered in and made a little film about dust’s journey through history.

A Brief Guide to the Firmament

Fresh angels are terrible diagnosticians. You know the old saying: *The fresher the angel, the worse the prognosis*. It has something to do with their new noses, or maybe the way their wings push so much truth toward their faces. It is not easy to be a new angel. The technology of Heaven is decades behind. The only medical supplies are reserved for the harpists who slice open their fingers. The older angels, of course, can play chords in their sleep, and they do, so that all the halls of Paradise are lined with the music of slumbering ghosts. *Son, you’ll understand when you’re older* are words that are never heard in the afterlife. Also, *Do you want to get out here and I’ll go park the car?* Small gallantries are unacceptable currency in Heaven. The valet says sleep, my angels. Sleep.

**from The Anthropony of Unfamiliar Landscapes
(Partially Catalogued)**

ADDRESS (98 Via dei Cappellari)

I needed weeks to understand: flip the iron loops just so, so that the shutters don't blow closed. More days to understand the laundry left below the window was for me: extra sheets baked brick-dry in sunlight for me to gather and to fold. That is Rome; that is what it means to be away: A foreign tongue twines with mine, and I succumb. Or I say *no, I'll go. The biting ants and signs of Christ have grown too large.* Weeks pass. I don't need earplugs to find sleep, but noises still invade me from the street. Is that like Rome, its cobblestones, its refusal to be home?

AMPHIBIOUS

Long after your departure I could not release the dry finger of your smile from the lockbox of my brain. Every trap is not a turtle, but every turtle is a kind of trap. Every creature that spends its beginnings underwater spends its endings avoiding the humiliation of grief.

BED

The problem with sleep is that it takes too long.

DEPARTURE

I pack up what I cannot leave: The wind that caused the sun's delay. The spray of syllables for the bereaved. Funeral trains in a field of sunflowers—simple gold rewarded by the light. I steal a phrase as echo of the path I take to Keats' grave, chiseled praise below each cross: *My darling son. What would I give to see him smile again.*

MAKYLA CURTIS

Gendered Poetics

—too large people in the room, she regrets being numerous
 she begins
drawing on passages of trueness, she declares a mood, a mode:
sunlight on vacant lots, her own back yard, making more money at the
 fading gate
 closing crossroads
shifting binary norms

She rejects being numerous.

 She begins again
the woman's body, she says, bodies in the text
forming sounds, like the lips of lovers

She wonders
dialectically
about her vulva:

imagines structural inhibitions that falter the ground work.

 She begins
translated problematic
 She describes
a nearness unlike bodily relation unlike preformed notions.

Her tongue hangs, followed by her poetry
and the language—darts and:

almost touching his arm in parts of speech
She names him
 nameless

With her eyes closed she'd know him, moving from stanza to stanza
his long pale fingers, dislocating sexual difference

but replicates
gravity and claims his weight

She begins again
dissecting, quite skeptic.
She'd know him with her eyes open
closed
or struck out.
Inside is implied in poems two pages earlier.

Most austere: rejecting the name she gave herself
She
renames herself He
and He escapes category
deciphered.

And nameless, like a leaf, floats on the surface

He, in an act of drinking it all in
finds me
you
thwarting readerly design.

He sips, swigs
conceptual austerity
and rejects the metapoetic;

existing only to provide opportunities
for tremendous isolations.

He begins again
unpacking a notebook, a stick of lippy and cigarettes

his motives, partly prudential, are like the unfinished cigarette

HELEN MOORE

Our Daily Bread

On the restoration of Talgarth Mill, Black Mountains, 2011

Seed crust dense body crumb—

at lunar Lammas here on Mynydd Du
giving thanks for water, fire, steel,
where reclusive springs rise,
begin their descent;

atoms of hydrogen clasped by two of oxygen
tumble through Cwm Dwr-y-Coed
(Valley of Water & Wood),
land of shorn Ewes, who browse behind the shelter
that Bracken fronds provide;

above, slate-grey cumulonimbus
(streaked as if the Sun just raked out its embers)
sees itself as liquid plying glassy lips of stone,
dark hairy mosses,
falling strands of come;

and on, flight of rotting debris, bark, leaf,
a sheep-skull white as the Moon;
here we sit to cleanse our minds,
make empty kists of bone—
back-to-back our bodies form
a Janus box
sounding upstream & down;

in-breath, hum circling
round wind-torqued Hawthorns—Birds drawn
to the hearth of our chant;

and on past stands of late Foxglove
the pagan-hooded stems that venerate the Sun,
nod & even bow as it bursts through chasms
in the cloud, charming all the streams
which now make common cause

before precipice pours
into ancient woodland,
& trees cling to gulleys scoured for thousands of years;

here in Pwll y Wrach, torrents—
pressure-wash on mud-stones
carving beds, tables, steps,
dumping Stork-nests of wreckage;

but downstream, how the river shrinks,
spreads a laundry of silks
where Dippers come to peck;
marbles enigmatic patterns—water-light on trunks;
hush, as the air shimmers with Coal Tits' piercing *tisou-tisous*;

then through a tunnel-shade of Hazels
spitting nuts in its pools,
it tinkers down the valley
with Enchanter's Nightshade
as it serpents into town;

there, tripping over boulders, it falls again, again,
smoothes itself back out,
kneads the feet of stone houses,
bubbles by the lovers huddled on a bridge—
flirts with us, makes postcards,
recalls how it's changed
course,

is autonomous
yet willing to slip back in harness,
replenish the headrace
(old familiar, a pleasant sensation)

lend its resource as onto the wheel the Ennig roars,
fills the oaken buckets
(slotted hands sparkling as the mighty wheel tips),

rumbles the axles,
& deep within the mill,

the massive shafts which drive the spinning grin—
cogs, teeth
that turn the granite millstone

where grist, rushing through its eye,
is crushed feathered into sacks:

baker dough town fired up.

PETER LARKIN

Hollow Allow Woods

Trees into limbs alerting what foliage spaces abide refractive
cancellations but the loss only knowable in earlier measures of
subtraction bare structure awaiting in the lessened beds its over-
pinnings restipulating earth through its stranger woods

chastened yelps of the en-
tanglement cornering a
void already pitched
to another tang-
ential fashioning

tentative claws of trees
overstay their timid
pioneer straying

maimed to a target of loss
but affixed to a vesselling
in siftable hard tissue

instructive voids at a
rote of desert seedling
then climax dishevelment
revisits ramifications
straddling a blip of light

That the empty of stone is to be tossed toward a tree supplement,
no other interval than this to be a local dent out of step with its
ground rock defers to a null henceforward nil crushing steering
from a rod to fix things into sill the escapade is slipknots in
trees filling out the prior drabness in dip no concave this raw
once extractable, how trees flex their superadded seams toward the
off-glow of convexity

A stouter nudge is disenclosing stony vent for rough para-locations of the sent away is it a sunken site of the world which pits against any product-transfer of vertical slightness? or was it too heavily dropped for that retrenching invocation? the void proffers an out-of-stance but has long since been cistern-heavy with the shade-acute density of another need

translatable squat nurture
of thanked holes
risking boles thinking erect
amid unprotection's
kneeling surrogate

plunged arena of ordinate
extraction, flanks hubbed
not ridged, flatness
of sink calibrated upon
other flotations of
profit removal

insecurely sprung-from
offers retention at a
variable compass of attachment

Storm-lipped, sonically lean planking gainful across cushioned stores of void no replacement of lost stones according to such a solo-absent remand self-pinning micro-forest but as deeply into the matting of recurrence the good of browsing a wound curtailed onto trees ancient violence intimately definitional, painfully implemental tubes of wind-screw oaks in the dependency grain adzed out of quarry the most supplied wreath is a cloud of seed-heads

Lightly inured at peak foliage to being wrapped in a foxhole because there is no more burrowing into remnant stone than here no entrance to the extraction source itself which could arise only from a revision of the offer, or have coped with being basketed out of itself no more stunt growths, having already elongated the pit platform

trees don't nest in the
quarry but are the spares
for a more maculate delay

its very plunge already taken
up, this is not openness ajar
but a void in a shell not
of its own making

the loophole given sticks
a forage flecked in scales
of counter-serration that
skies will crank whichever
is crisper than emergence

A negative enclosure made negotiable by transit quantities of loss but scratched at zero such micro-abridgements short-root towards the belated traction-trails of trees the only aftermath is what incoming trees do tail off from the subtraction—not covering over so much as conferring a renewed leanness of ground what is exact to sky but its non-piercing only apparently hewn in what puts to stalk as topping the outside of this locus

SONIA OVERALL

inverted

There are stars in the grass. You feel these with outstretched fingers. Your nails root in the soil, tickling the soft bodies of seeking worms. Your palms flatten. Your toes spring skywards. Your wrists beat with pressure, your knuckles rise and fall like viaducts.

Your fused calves are an arching whip above your torso. Your pointed feet are a hovering scorpion sting.

You look the laced boots of your companions humbly in the eye as you recede, a scraping suitor, from their presence.

You are a diver. The horizon swallows you.

subliminal

Do not look down. You have no need of maps. The path is sinking sand beneath shallow waves. You keep the world on your left, the sea on your right.

This is the street. You simply feel it. At the corner is the abandoned grocers, shutters down. The sign is illegible; you do not need the sign.

You need no compasses. Your feet swim below you. You sense the quiet ticking metal of parked cars, the distant reversing of vehicles, the whirr of passing bicycle wheels.

You cross the street. Your ankles describe the inclines of curbs, the distinctness of grass and gravel. The house peers above a bib of white-pebbled driveway, fat-cheeked, pink, stippled.

You no longer notice how ugly it is. You no longer notice the yellowed newspaper against the porch glass, the abandoned milk bottles, the layers of weather.

You open the door, remove your skin, hang it on the coat hook.

retreat

Go. Do it swiftly, hand at mouth, marvelling. Do not look back.

Paper darts will rain at you, each point perfectly folded, the creases sharp, the words within sweetly plosive, seeking. Do not commit the shapes to memory, repeating them silently in the night, testing them on your tongue.

Go. Go before the fragile shoes shatter beneath your feet. Hesitate, and grind glass fragments with your heels, waltzing the crazed pieces into pebbles.

Stop, and you will find yourself kneeling at a grate picking peas and lentils from ashes, said from unsaid, truth from text. Unhook those tugging barbs, the tender tendrils reaching for your ankles, the slow ambush.

Go. Believe in the midnight carriage, the wheels carrying you to an absolute ending.

Inheritance

From the two battered boxes
the postman brings
I take the knowledge of stars for beginners,
a book with old songs, school reports
and the pictures of my wedding day.
A brochure of indigenous reptiles.

In a few minutes I have sorted them
in little piles, seeing before me
the shelves they used to stand in.
And in one arm I carry what is left
to the cellar.

In the chest half filled with letters
there is room for it.
Yet when I return I find
the *Divina Comedia*
still on my desk.

The boxes I will burn tomorrow
with the driftwood
we pull from the river.
And with the past beneath me
I will write now
what I remember.

HILDA SHEEHAN

This Missing Arm

Martine had an arm off. How would Martine ever get repaired? Thought Frances, she was never a looker, as it was, and relied on her second arm to make up for her lack of beauty. How will you ever get a man, or another job without it Martine? I have two legs and I can cook. You can't cook without your second arm because you will never control onions or slice carrots. You are so much less with one arm. I will find something that one-armed women can do and I never planned to marry. You are now enormously difficult Martine, not owning up to the disability one armed ugly women face. It is now twice as bad for you with your arm off and your ability to do so much less than the pretty, subdued, public face. I have a plan to hide my missing arm under experimental clothing made for women twice my size, no one will see my missing arm because it is not really there, and also unimportant.

The Rocking Chair

Do you think we have discovered a true relationship and if so which one are you? Are you the one in the rocking chair making everything move and am I the still one? What kind of art are you? Am I art? No one can actually tell me if either of us are painted or in a photograph because we are so realistic. This is getting in the way of me being true to you Martine. While you rock I am watching you think about saying goodbye and it hurts my feelings when you go so quiet. Will you rock with me Martine? Take time to think about the future of us. If at the end of the book your chair immediately stops, because it is written to stay this way, even after death, it is always sad, is it not?

**Cézanne: *Still Life with (Red)
Onions and Bottle (1898)***

Each stroke flies into the singular,
like disconnects, free accents on
the top of the cork and an
onion's base.

 The wineglass
stem, off-centre, too far right,
keys a drama of poles
and pivots, turning points;
the onion,

 central in its lack
of centre, unlike the apple,
less solid somehow in its layers
and skins and micro-layers,
in its known but unseen
translucence.

 To be grounded
like an apple, each onion
would have to spin in space.
The wineglass stem
a variant

 of onion shoots
and vice versa, elements
of a proposition reversed
as if each refracts each
and form needs form
needs form.

 And the bottle (left)
and the cloth billowing
off the table? The blown glass
says all is design, the cloth
all is feeling; the desire
for the sign, the sign
escaping, escaping.

KEN COCKBURN & ALEC FINLAY

Glenelg

*Dun Grugaig, Dun Troddan, Dun Telve
broch-of-the-queen—and one each for her sons?*

each broch's
a sounding chamber
portioning the river's babble
so let's roll Gleann Beag
up the Balvraid cow-track

is it there then
hid in the trees?
we've to gauge Grugaig
by following Iosal
down to the bend

the curved walls hint at
the twinned shell bottle-form
roof-beams at a height
my confused imagination
can't return

Troddan's stepworn cross-
sectioned scarcements
and slabbed lintels
rimmed with melancholy
thistles and pale grasses

Telve still bending
its trim tower
below Cul an Duin
each stone runs
the river farther on

over the glen
the hidden burn's shown
in a paper-tear of trees

alder, willow, rowan, hazel

threading a soft vein
through the spruce regimen

these broken crowns
hidden by docks and nettles
thought's full of gaps
ground to chaff
in the broken quern

so close your eyes
and cover the wall-
tops with eaves
adding the bustle that flickers
round a big fire

The Singing Sands

Moidart, Arisaig and Morar

It's another day
to walk the strand
on Rubha Da Chuain
where every cap
could be a seal flipping

another day
to look south
for the lost wind

which will open the bay
to gentler weather

another day
when our shell-cult holds sway
in Chonzie's crown of razors
tucked in the fold
of his Thinsulate hat

another day
to sip dark tea
from the mussel's flared rim

another day perfection
dulls the shore's zonation
as we squeak the fine
white sands of Morar,
their dead silica so clean

another day to finger poems
for the tide to read
and erase
while the beach counts
over and over

another day
of salt water
without storm,
light shattering
glinting fragments

another day
the sea reaches deep
spray falls
and orange-shanked
littoral birds want mud

another day
it's all unfolding
under the fucoid wrack
quieting the dark
tidal wood

What is a mountain?

a mountain is what you go a long way round to avoid
a mountain is a walk into the unknown
a mountain is the crazy river's reason
a mountain is what's not worth having
a mountain is identified by its thumbprint of contour lines
a mountain is nothing without its skyline
a mountain is a zone of intransigence
a mountain can't even recall its own name
a mountain is where we realise how far short we fall of the birds
a mountain is where even the scouring glaciers had to admit defeat
a mountain is the last resort of extreme views

ELŻBIETA WÓJCIK-LEESE

Nordhavn Offings

‘In this way, when I write *bougie* and so evoke light,
on the inside the Italian word *bugia*, which means lie,
is “lunging” and attracting around it a darker semantic field.’
(Jean Portante)

4 MAY 2011

today only the spilt glare
signals the sea *havet : morze*

5 MAY 2011

the horizontals care
fully displayed
against the turbines and cranes *turbiny*

7 MAY 2011

the blue underlined
with emerald
or is it turquoise *turkus*

8 MAY 2011

lustre of the littoral
underpaths *of Polish*

^^^

the white spotting of a whale
ferry—breathturning *my first language lunging*

9 MAY 2011

the right half of the harbour
outsparkles the left

left for languages

10 MAY 2011

two bulging lamps slowly slide back

as the ship pushes forward *Danish wedges itself
between Polish and English*

11 MAY 2011

a sudden raft topped with

orange
sits squarely midwater

svimmelt hen over det hvide

12 MAY 2011

mute wind turbines mill the
haze on the horizon

pijane ponad bielą

15 MAY 2011

one turbine has stopped
mesmerized
by the slate hulk tearing itself
off the coast

dizzy over the white

19 MAY 2011

the punch card of portholes
slotted into
the row of S-tog windows

Ord som flade fisk der flaprede

23 MAY 2011

the golden streak clearly claims
larger
much larger area

Words like flat fish that flapped

24 MAY 2011

smeared in the rain drops
extinguished by the grey
electricity shack

Bathing in a drop's quiet light

25 MAY 2011

early morning, concealed by the red of the S-train
early afternoon, the red revealed in the rescue

boat on the pewter waves *Bader mig i en dråbes stille lys*

30 MAY 2011

shimmering flatness
waves resting to ripples
Monday-tired with

their routine *mig (my) submerged in English*

31 MAY 2011

one wind turbine scooping the warm

sheen

in the corner of
the train window

me : mig : mnie emerging to breathe

NOTES:

svimmelt.../Ord.../Bader ... —Pia Tafdrup, 'Min Mors Hånd,' *Dronningeporten* (Gyldendal, 1998)

dizzy.../Words.../Bathing... —David McDuff's translation of Tafdrup: 'My Mother's Hand,' *Queen's Gate* (Bloodaxe, 2001)

pijane... —my translation of Tafdrup's Danish and McDuff's English into Polish (Copenhagen, 2011)

In Water

'The colours aren't blending' she said

Light froze. Sound was hidden in stone.
Wind held its breath. Two pebbles
Talked about a long-faded joy.
In the wind-lashing storm,
The lake envied the sea.
Time wiped away the stone's face.
The cloud was alone
Seeking its shape and place.
In an ancient volcano's silence
The woman raved "there is no sun."
The desert hid in sand.
A hammer-blow hit my brain
Spiders everywhere. Everywhere webs...

But where were your hands?

Fire Consumes Itself

I wipe away that vapour in me now

My hands left still in that thrum
My face volatile, expressionless

Your memories like smoke drifted off
Not even fire knows they're spent

Your voice, the past's trace in air
It cannot return to itself

Rooms with many doors open onto solitude
Flowers undress morning for themselves
Darkness itself sleeps at night

If Stone Could Speak

Stone is nature's silent witness, its patient observer.
Only stone listens to the worn-out stories of man.
Stone: the deep breath of history.

*

It looks with a naked face, without a mask.
The stone's ringing intoxicates the temple.
Stone is hidden by the goddesses' skin.

*

Stone says 'Beauty is fleeting', staring at flowers.
But still it suffers its silence.
Stone is loyal to man. It even waits for his death.

*

Stone thinks, without knowing what it thinks.
God insisted on stone's muteness, people's too.
Stone: the colour of waiting.

from *Banished White*

words arrive dressed in dust sharpened
however lit the grain mouthway
straightaway a sand or strangled mind is made
the stinging springs of eternal valleys opened
never given in dry ribs
and that it originates again
and that it takes the cord and leaves it hammered and defenceless
you win above those craggy eyes
the structure that of falcon that of silver

*

wherever goes the ash of the atmosphere against
the small stones become silent terrified wherein I cannot disappear
not even that hooking of the eye
the hand which waves for help
on the belly sinks into the current and touches itself
I have another oval which says horizon
when it's dry at the front of the mouth
same thirst of runners who drop out

*

each thing lines up in the smoke and then can't restart
how many times there was a fish to astonish the folds
in the circle each time secret
with less grand power the circles appear
the rush for the entire sculpture
frees the cloudy invitation to chains
and my sister comes by again and all whole
an inheritance of leaves to chew upon

*

having shaken the calendar of the plot
the wrapping rises then sinks
other birds I tarnish
to call it wax if the scrambling of feet settles
snow leaves the number of leaves always great
thing I drag in my pocket so you can look at the flowers
and whisper the statue under still eyelashes

*

you can't be the first liquid and that's enough
I was climbing
not to monitor the swallows
but to hear a trilling
to feel it pass through me
from a motionless stroll
in the evening of the past
everything here in a fist of women
with the men
all placed and squared over there
and fixed in themselves
framed uneven smoke

*

and last come the eyes

and all the colours are boats
on arrival
the empty star as if still all white
while I choose stone of
two feathers one will fall away