Ianthe Poems
Also by Peter Philpott

The Bishops Stortford Variations
What Was Shown
Some Action Upon the World
Textual Possessions
Are We Not Drawn. . .
To the Union
Peter Philpott

Ianthë
Poems

Shearsman Books
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CONTENTS

Speculations 25

Noting Nothing 53

Dubbadea 71
for Ianthe Judith Smith-Spark
(b. September 16, 2009)
The desire to tell within the conditions of a discontinuous consciousness seems to constitute the original situation of the poem. The discontinuity of consciousness is interwoven through the continuity of reality – a reality whose independence of our experience and descriptions must be recognized. In response, the poetic impulse, attempting (never successfully) to achieve the condition that the phrase “language and ‘paradise’” names, seeks to extend the scope and temporal continuity of consciousness.

—Lyn Hejinian, *The Language of Enquiry*  
(University of California Press, 2000), p 77
Speculations

Bertan jaio naizen arren,
Ez dut ezagutzen nire herria.
Nire hizkuitza bera duen arren,
Ez dut ulertzen nire herria.

Felipe Juaristi, “Geografia”
What you read is here
open at its jaws
like a really killer simile
can you believe? the facts
are the things made
and make us oh like words
uncoiling and beginning to glisten
I love this world for appearances
shining shining shining
and sometimes sounding
a far off deep hum
or the lilt of actual voices
can you hear it?
oh, do not fear this caress

what you read here is
what wisdom in these words
uncountable but singable not
what is said but how
each word points at this world!
here is what you read in fact
oh what a big and complicated text
who made it?
we did, then, every bit
I love its punctuation marks
we can only do it once
oh beautiful world
utterance must quietly end
brief as the shining sun
Be careful of the poets
they can’t always know
just the clumsy algorithms for perception
what did you expect then?
I can’t tell you what is at the centre
something is very circumscribed
here is metaphysics and history
words like days and bodies
unrepeatable and separate

be careful of the poetry
it lies
in lines and verses
a sort of unprogressive dialectic
nothing at its centre
but an influx suddenly of meaning
sometimes of its lack
a great shadow
turns off the light
Who turned this line around
setting its repetitive trudge here
to open at the ragged headlands
like a hand of nine fingers
all the more for solace
the question drops ungrudging into evening
a dear clear light
transparent and remorseless as your gaze
unconvinced of causation

back like a little patient ox
I am harnessed to good labour
up here above the town
little and bright like a toy
this sight will give solace
as the night grows into the unquestioning
of course you must play
this game is serious
it must convince you of causation
But be still and sleep now
growth comes in the night
something here is very quick
and the heavens mean nothing to us
rumours of colossal machines
that vast space you will grow into
at its edge where we were born
your sleeping eyes track the body inside
oh let the lights swing crazily around

and now still sleep but be
resting unpredicated
wordless

like a missed beat an
influx of that joke
bursting at our hearts
uncertain and miscounting
some fine shadow games
The pressure to think and sing
who said that?
not really a manichee but
these unsubtle dialectics will suffice
bursting out in farts and hiccups
diverse encounters with the uncontrollable
we are placed within all this
like in night and day
the problems are all the night

all night that pressure then?
an hysteria in the dark
you live within these intensities
the secular shifts ignored
each beat counts
the world crystallises around
like ice on our windows
sign that cold queen has visited
our problem within our night
This is where the old lines playing in the darkness with a deep full-bodied song thrums and redoubling it will ascend the green lanes what ought to be shining here? all our quick voices running like wild animals some exercise in hydrostatics

following the pistons off into the darkness where song ranges through its gamut ascending like the sun shining above the green lanes out into some utopian fantasy buy into this or perish! corralled with psychographic isoclines plunge into the masses now