

*is that a bruise  
or a tattoo?*

ALSO BY SEAN BURN

*molotovs happy hour* (novella) 2012  
*dante in the laundrette* (poetry) 2012  
*next swan down the river might be black* (play) 2012  
*people are their own dreams* (poetry) 2011  
*responses to monochords* by yannis ritsos (poetry) 2011  
*no thunder* (visual poetry) 2010  
*all cut up* (visual poetry) 2009  
*wings are giving out* (poetry) 2009  
*edgocities* (prose) 2006  
*at the edge* (prose) 2006  
*north* (poetry) 2003  
*voltaire choruses* (poetry) 2001  
*outstaring* (poetry) 2000  
*leery* (poetry) 1996

sean burn

*is that a  
bruise or  
a tattoo?*

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2013 by  
Shearsman Books  
50 Westons Hill Drive  
Emersons Green  
BRISTOL  
BS16 7DF

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office  
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB  
(this address not for correspondence)

[www.shearsman.com](http://www.shearsman.com)

ISBN 978-1-84861-294-5

Copyright © Sean Burn, 2013.

The right of Sean Burn to be identified as the author  
of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the  
Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved.

## Contents

catwalk down a tongue old albion	9
jezebel of the waters	13
my butcher shimmies a rectum inside the warm duvet cow	16
steal this loneliness	19
liminal	29
of sand red stone i am	32
ravenswing	36
buds have spoken b(l)ack	38
when a child unseen encircles rough woods my mind	40
bastilles englan	46
birds beating their wings on cages, cages	56
pohádka	58
scarif	65
is that a bruise or a tattoo?	73

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

work first appeared in the following:

*blue and yellow dog* ('pohádka'); *blueprintreview* 24 ('scarif'); *libus berlin* ('steal this loneliness' ii); *hanging johnny* ('catwalk' and 'butcher shimmys'); *pinhole camera* 4 ('ravenswing'); *otoliths* published *is that a bruise or a tattoo* sequence july 2010; *liminal* was published in *shearsman* (april 2011)

parts of 'when a child unseen encircles rough woods my mind' were first exhibited as poster-poems for the annual art invasion of cumbria co-ordinated by fold gallery, 2005. the final section was made by sean into a poetry film, premiered at crosstalk video art festival, budapest, june 2010. it was first published by *fire* magazine 2011

'buds have spoken b(l)ack'—performance text with integral soundscape was premièred as sound installation at carlisle arts festival, 2009.

'bastilles englan'—an interdisciplinary performance involving text / soundscape / visual poetry and live art was premièred at platform 00000008 and has since toured internationally. the text was first published in *sunfish* # 5.

this book is dedicated to miki z





# catwalk down a tongue old albion

(after linder, pretty *girl no. 1*)

multiple broken  
brighting around  
adze and mirrors  
no particular  
your catwalk  
down a tongue  
old albion this  
immaculate  
end torn-under  
graspgrease  
—a run(a)way  
beleaguered  
catcalleyes  
lies and thighs  
leer and cheer  
stomachs in  
chest out  
mark births excise  
from cameras glaze  
glory holes  
more than a  
swallow good  
kiss night  
right over edges  
think brownfield  
ledge and legs  
open eye closed  
rape fantasy aint  
daubed across  
trading standards  
don't disturb

how this meat might  
always to carve  
wanna into this eat

forging new new  
by hook or  
perfumed  
the eternal  
incise rust  
weld us well  
us tight  
feedback-slow-  
sigh-trajectories  
boudoirs eventing  
evening views  
slow choke  
whose thin-sliced  
on the news?  
even broadsheets  
are downsized and  
shaking their  
porn-baron  
wingding  
behind another  
grinning re-erection  
is the premiers  
former daughter  
just-legal yet?  
black through white  
why do we  
have sex 'with'  
but make love 'to'?  
least theres no  
mistaking  
where hardcore sat

some private  
cutting us out  
soft has limpid eyes  
how do cow moo  
oh leaders wives  
spread your  
inflationary tease  
the net tightens  
bleeding hearts  
bingeing on all  
chairs-and-men  
the last one out  
please turn  
and the rest?  
drastic halves  
plastic arse  
more florists of unthink  
measuring con-con  
census of hard-ons  
liturg that dull familiar  
our wrists arent  
what they once

upsuck, unstuck  
get real, get bloody  
rages-grasp  
around fleshdom  
hinged on  
squeeze harness  
no lengths none  
cant stop looking  
chubby adult libraries  
grab a string flickerings  
uphold the honour  
bruisings hapless execute

the most cage inside  
different skins  
like nothing before  
this little went to market  
and this little too  
and this and this  
while that little suckling  
wrote the whole  
business plan

all vinegar petals  
honey wires  
and to the easy  
ever more remote  
scrap scarred scrips  
what makes me sick

for all the silence you are?

for all the silences you are

## jezebel of the waters

water companys thievery of these parts  
cloudbomb pipe-burst or just slow drip  
sip lascivious pilgrimages to from of jezebels  
silently sweating a floodbloodied valley  
kitting out carafe of table decide  
kind-of liquortender and the lions lie down  
a new chapter of blue-blue etceteras  
all lipslicks truthpicks upsticks  
and shower me dark deep  
offmessages of *your call is precious*  
*have please unique pin number to hand*  
the blood granita flush falls just off-tap  
oh how the water bankers laugh

and outrages a label jezebel wears skin-tight  
thirty percent sweat-lycra reminding  
if canals a street then rivers a Broadway  
cruising and oozing so sip the tall glass yeah  
their encyclopedic cleansing via rich voice  
neurotypical furred tea ever warned warmed  
ready battened battered and downheavy  
how the water bankers laugh  
their tenderizing pearlchapped peal  
playing footsie of pump and fizz  
taps and turnpipes, standpipes and standbys  
cutoffs and goodbyes, turncoats hosing wells  
through one-liner lonelinesses sewer corruptible  
through multiple lease greasebacks  
barebacked at years turning

perfecting excess  
don't iceberg poor, don't watersteel

just lowspit mid-hiss reive  
for all you threatening to spill  
and over and over in on s-s-some  
water-borne droit de seigneur coursing  
the rest go screw without lube  
countless counties awash  
pale flooding, huge numb lies  
of coming knowledge-o  
throw down, throwing down  
walking on water, the walking of water  
seducing to the depths of liquid light  
down drownpipes of memory, memories of  
the floodclear valleys of north-torn, solway to kielder  
the company knows best, company knows best, company knows  
so arrest the water, timetable the water  
castrate, perforate, score a perfect  
frustrate now and prostrate—just how dya  
calculate the water bill? after all

waters still multilingual multi-angled and viva bisexual  
great fat beats sucked from the uncountable teat  
slipside reverb of jezebel sighs never-to-be  
untamed newborn blueskies wetdreaming  
down the last siren wailproudwater  
virtualwater optimistwater loudbruise-water  
big and hard and heavy, la-la underground  
mamabuddhas seduction wars to the depth  
to the unfathomable s-s-suck the clear h2o snake  
oh you jezebel of the waters dam-blue skirts  
lifting outside the slippery drainmain/s of love

perrierslaves, volvic voyeurs, crispclean malvern slappers,  
ballygowan tarts, carreg sloggers,  
bouteille bleu sluts, pellegrino sans everything  
and the badoits up for rent, again

how you distort the line, the lie, the dribbling lie  
pooling downwards to restless tv symphonies  
postcolonial nil by mouth buzz overheadunderfoot  
the flight no fight kind of we are doing everything  
leading the world, pissing you now, gold gates open  
oh youre pissing us now, pissing us and how  
the companies flowerbeds, their immaculate quiet art  
drip-drip-dripping saltstuff into our direct debit mouths  
leave us thirsty, leave us wanting more, we want more  
want it now, try through dryfried prism, heavysiege  
drownlung suck, the kiss of reducing, seducing, our bottle to dry

my butcher shimmies a rectum  
inside the warm duvet cow

105 106 108

and this in the shade  
an unbearable waiting  
coming in under radars  
all neonburger and pizza  
all waffle and southern syrup  
all tutti-fruity and vomiting  
an all screaming all dancing  
all-cabaret the untied states dreaming  
blow me now baby oh yeah the greed  
creaming chelseas buns of honey  
randy valentines and cruella de clinton licking  
lip-synch lewinsky screaming desert foxy  
*milf astride a cruise to die for*  
how about 0898 senate sluts pumping white  
how about fist-twisting bowels  
your house of unrepresentatives  
chief justices blown until  
theyre smoke ringing and singing  
this ones beyond politics and skin  
and can we have our bomb back please

how about the blast of mingus monk and ayler  
of harvey milk kathy boudin and angela davis  
their blast the beat the beat

*hei-ho hei-ho*—our father, tart dreaming  
split screen liver spleen ribs  
for what we're about to deceive  
it could-of been mind fist blue  
it could-of been plus full colour



can you believe in out in  
and all for 64,000 rightwing dollars  
6 million oil-pumping and rocketing  
coke future tax free and low fat  
reporting your fabulous bitching birth  
all viagra, voodoo and sleazeration viva dot visa  
salute the holywood nazis all singing all dancing  
ve have vays of making you bambi  
rifles for jesus—this ones a k k k 47  
the barrelstock all sanded down  
of rebelheart and magnolia  
already swung in the wind  
and above all if the glove don't fit wear it  
lost and found oh yeah baby  
meat thieving king of swingers  
hand me down your ruby slippers  
your ruby slippers now

but the blastbombs of carla bley etta james ma rainey the beat  
the beat going on

fire deep in dollar zero  
ham and pineapple deserts  
gritting technicolor teeth  
pilgrim mothers hung out to dry  
the schmaltzdisney vein  
mined for anaesthetic  
all cocktail aesthetics  
icepicking through the cryofreeze  
goof guys, you flame-resist cretins  
throbbing the new olympics  
cock-bobbing the synchronized bush beat  
hundred metre peanut dash  
quarter mile blow-off porkonautics  
long-distance club-class endurance-slop-shop

following the leader, following the breeders  
aerodynamics of shuttles gone spectacular wrong  
a generation of kiddies up on nasa porn  
science never used to be this much fun  
i wanna be like you-u-u  
i wanna do ba doo ba boo boo  
now we're kerosene dreaming  
crackling frequencies of mullah  
a fucked fanfare of suck it and see  
the poet rambo don't know, he don't give a  
a jazz jive uzi old glory spattered  
star strangled and mother of all  
*we'll be back*

but the blast bombs of carlos williams tennessee williams john  
coltrane clifford brown lawrence ferlinghetti the beat the heat  
the heats going on