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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.

Acknowledgements

María do Cebreiro's poem in this issue, and those in the previous issue, are taken
from her Galician collection, *Os hemisferios* (Vigo: Editorial Galaxia, 2007),
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permission of Flammarion. The translations of Esther Jansma's poems in
this issue also appear in *Modern Poetry in Translation*.

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Zoë Skoulding

from *Adda*

I

a river behind itself
this long s disappearing
seriffed into mud or the
torn edges of a map is

Adda or Adam after
Cae Mab Adda never
an origin only a
dried up rib of a river

a trickle of threat suppressed
escaping the level eye
where sea runs to horizons
innocent as water as

an adder stamped underground
with only the faintest hiss

II

river subtracted from its
own presence a riverrun
aground secretly working
as all rivers the double
edge of every beginning
u-shaped between its two banks

where flood is defenceless where
water levels the difference

digging the foundations it's
as though no-one remembers
the water the ground is full
of it pumped out only to
rise up through the mud alive

III

flowering at the mouth it
speaks its own name on the point
of losing it becoming
public at a safe distance
our mouths flower in a name
becoming distant to us

what is it you're listening to
there at the lowest point where
the town dips towards what it's
forgotten what's still there on
the tip of the tongue a rush
of kingcup campion bramble

in its stutter is what it's
saying what it's saying is

Martyn Crucefix

The Only Point of Light in the East

Romania's Great War: abecedaries after Mihail Vladescu

5. Bathing in the Olt

i.

A modest apartment

a swimsuit which on a famous beach last year in high season had
caused quite a stir

a well-lit house on a quiet street of the Capital

all part of the performance

an absence that had been longer than expected but through no fault
of his own

as all miserable people do

as they tried to hide

as you might after a funeral, having stood for hours, the welter of
powerful emotion

at that very moment Violetta exacting her revenge

aware of his girlfriend's fierce jealousy

Benedict had been adamant

both reproach and bitter disappointment

bringing the conversation skilfully round to bathing

cheat on me – on the very same day you cheat on me – I'll cheat on you

children taking cows to the pasture

close by he saw their naked bodies vanishing among the shadows of
the willow trees

crushed by the incident, imagining her happiness in ruins, her soul
flared with the great, heroic decision to take revenge

ii

Dawning on Benedict

deeply

delightful entertainment during the long, hot summer days, bathing
in the Olt
did not shout
did not threaten, did not say a word
drowning in the whirlpool of the Olt

iii.

Elegant, young, attractive
even Benedict seemed to have lost confidence
forests of osiers, of dense, hollow willow trees and huge sand bars
that gave the impression of tremendous disturbance
for her these were dreadful moments

given the opportunity to sneak back she swiftly dressed herself
going to bed that night they abandoned themselves to passionate
embraces
he would not be able to keep the promise he had made when he'd
left his girlfriend, Violetta
her eternal threat never left his mind
her misfortune was not something Violetta thought greatly about
hidden under the shaggy willow trees on the fine, dry sand, beneath
the melancholy rays of twilight
his athletic body and complete absence of hair
his body found where the current had brought it to the river bank
his was unexpected

iv.

I am miserable. I am very miserable...
I knew you would want to save me

v.

If it was achieved without much effort on her part
important business would keep Benedict in Craiova for two more days
in contrast she appeared flawless
in his every action he could leave no room for any suspicion
in the carriage on the way they talked little
in vain she pleaded to accompany him

just some beautiful hotel waitress

keenly looking for the dining car waiting to see him
left home alone, spawned a host of suspicions
lovingly aroused by desire, the thought that she belonged to him

Milcoveni to take tea, served according to the rules of a fine house
more than once Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Trancu had been invited to join
them bathing in the Olt

near the bank the river was quiet
neither love nor life in the old, white house in Milcoveni

vi.

No direct path so they had to make a detour to reach the water
no inkling that anything was amiss
no trace of Benedict
not at all hard to convince. And he surrendered

not taken in by his gesture; it merely fuelled her suspicions
nothing seemed to threaten their happiness
now they had lost almost everything

on the opposite bank something strange was happening
one solitary gesture: one of renunciation
perfectly covering her body it emphasized her beautiful figure
pretending fatigue and weakness

quickly went under without trace

Kiran Millwood Hargrave

chorus cycle: eurydice & orpheus

let's start with the sky yes the sky the sky
that day was all sorts of blue and pale
set against the forest where o walked and e
stood root-struck as a tree yes a tree was stuck
on the edge of the forest where o walked
and e she waited though she did not know for
what she had been there so long tied yes so long
tied to that same patch of ground for so long
laced to that same tight knot of soil so long
only music played sweet enough to suckle gods o
only music played like rivers meeting seas o
only music could uncoil her toes and spread
them like lilies opening out under full moons
and tip her arms out and o how o played
played her in played her played her out

played her in played her played her out
-side of herself until the world tipped and off she
flitted flung like a peach pit lifted as lightning
through her l o v e only brings them close as a
letter touch a d o v e flocked V land-locked
between o and e so adored that press tip to
fingertip that meant she had learned the secret of
flight and might someday know to fall with
aquiline race as up his nape she tastes the brackish
taint late summer blackberries he sang her
sticky and bruise lipped look e brought him such
song and he sang her as though she was caught in
his throat and he sang her until she was
e and only and o and always and o o o
how easy she is shucked from her skin lifted to him

how easy she is shucked from her skin lifted to him
as the rainclouds gather look up they're filling
gods are swirling the sky yes the sky the sky that
we said we would fill and we said would fall the sky will
fill and fall on their heads and o and e are still in bed
learning fingertips and singing and seeding
like their bodies are celestial and will not bleed when
bitten seize when poisoned rot when dead
when will they learn the shape of things stop it
has a fearful momentum they must stop it
will not come good in the end no way to stop it
now monsters are coming look down yes down
or even behind o no not behind in hindsight
a backward glance was always going to end it all
in a backward glance it will all come down crashing

Host

Swans have nested
beneath my scalp.
Mornings I feel them
running for take-off,
neat as tadpoles, webbed feet
sticking my cortex. They nibble weeds
from the stem. When they love,
I wear my hair loose and they lift it
from the follicle, pull it in for nests.
When they mate, my nape tingles.
This summer I walk carefully,
my brain full of eggs.

Simon Perchik

Four Poems

*

You try to hide the way all hillsides
are warmed from inside and sunlight
useless, begin each breath

in a mouth far off, lit by thirst
and those slow lips where evenings
come to listen —it's an old sun, one

you're never sure will be a morning
let you surface again, go
as if you were leaving a heart

to give yourself up :a breath
that would empty the Earth —even so
it begins inside a whisper not yet

a mound, with a shadow all its own
spreading out your flowers —a harbor
smelling from distance and spray.

*

You have a feel for place to place
fresh from the ground and trains
stopping by to check the gates

each station and even in winter
arrives late, surrounded
by a drizzle against the window pane

and your hair can't dry, is trapped
inside this old hat half stone, half
crushed, half its hot-shot tilt

in so many directions at once
falling along the tracks
without a sound covers your forehead

lets it grow old and escape again
is possible without more rain
looking for help or the barracks.

*

One stone still forming
left to itself though its roots
can't find the place

—from a distance this pebble
is taking so long, sends the others
a signal that is not a morning

not yet rain coming with skies
—it's a dark nothingness, its sparks
still hidden, too soon for the two

that would become a sun
and for the first time
without evenings or the dirt

you grind slowly from footsteps
and loneliness, has the shadow
it needs for rest, kept alive

on the darkness nursing your fingers
pressed against each other and your eyes
without kisses or a mouth.

Alexandra Sashe

from *Wandering Cycles*

To restore the outer edge of the table
forced into a faultful square –
to free its initial curve of the circle,
 chisel away the angles
 and save all without mercy.

The honey voice of the wooden shavings
sings their last, uncovered purpose.
The smooth surface takes over,
along with us, disculpated,
absolved from being
furniture.

The sunlight bakes us a daily bread
of nothing – leavened and salted
 with its recurrence.

The wood shapes our common dwelling
with its arboreal thought
and a rings concept.

Walls embrace
our measure of space,
chairs grow backs,
 upright,
attuned with our conscience.

Time and bread cut in slices,
spread with awaiting,
sweetened per serving,
 we eat from the empty porcelain plates.

Metamorphic and static, we slough
our off-white upholstery
and grow skin
 from the warp and weft
of : sunlight, nothing, partaking, tablecloth.

(From scripts and plants we collect
 our measure of oxygen.)

We inhabit the centre, the sole room,
its shelves and harbours,
valleys and fields :

As our armchair
develops the Ark's capacity,
 we are simplified,
 perfected,
 reduced
to the bare fullness of being.

Spring Canticle

When the snow subsides
beyond its *raison d'être*,
mills are milling a new flour

the flight of birds,
stripped of its off-white background,
twines with the all-embracing sky
the naked line of the horizon.

the thaw water, pure and delivered,
carries its pearls
of lessness and fullness.

Orphanhood sprouts. We sit on the porch,
our eyes welling with sunlight.

Tim Allen

6 poems from *A New Geography of Romanticism*

1.

place the dancer in diluted solution
lose her face in the mathematical shadows
runaway hermit devoted to lute's barometer
turn away turn back once undiscovered

a simple death fall of night old desires
undercover gives you one way out
dissolute yet fizzing with twisted nostalgia
painting a white sail on the burnt black wall

unconscious diamond loathes its lucidity
nitpicky surgeon's self-conscious s/kills
filing clerk scarcely drifts over flaky lake
borderline child initiates the hypochondriacs

2.

maxim thrives in speed-writing antidote
spade's multiple surfaces dig up 9 dimensions
doubtful automaton patrols an avenue of hives
mineral as crude as stereotypical water

plump spermatozoa of well respected recluse
ending a manifesto rather too abruptly
euphonic eunuch repopulates the world
flying fish stranded photo-finish

don't do what I do but do write soon
quantumly spying as if forging hidden gifts
solicitor's tone alone confounds torturer
stranded needles of light on the tin-foil moon

Michelle Cahill

Harbour

Because there are no shoals of haddock spawning
he spends the night cutting timber to repair a keel,
gathers faggots in spit rain, in floodwater fields.

The sun's parachute silk settles over chimneys.
Pale clouds hang crowding the sky like driftnets.
Up, up, the black-backed gulls arc into draughts.

A heron hunched on the rocks like an old fisherman
in a raincoat snubs the hushed foray. The tide measures
time as Autumn cobbles the town, deserted by tourists.

Dawn tarnishes roofs, their curved gables, furred
winter trees. Safe from the saltmarsh, the intervallic
hedgerowed fields, he unloads bags of firewood.

He is not the sea's signature, its memory of human
coal, its middle passage of linen, tobacco, gold.
When he is beckoned he leaves the harbour quietly.

The traveller enters the banal to haunt the empty
creels, his seaweed hair. She hears in a pipe rinsing
flagstones, Zambia's swamps—all the drowned past.

James Byrne

Improvisations for Adam-Baiting

I. ROCK

whinnying snakeskin
to the lachrymal girl
fronting the moshpit
who exempts herself
in stretching to touch
the scarred geography
of secondary birth—
water to the sleeping
lifeboat of a ribcage
encases her orphanhood
and the rhino-horned
six-stringed encore is
ejaculatory whenever
he plays the final solo

II. HEART

bar where dead men
go to die and the dandy
barman stiffs Chuck
another carafe of wine
under the thorn-tether
of his brow and droopy
eyes—for Chuck who
dies piecemeal when
pre-electing men over
women—revelling in
himself made mystical
announcing to the bar
'when I knew women
I knew my own heart'

III. FIRE

clinkered to fire how is it
women live to the strike
of a matchbox while men
grow more crooked—as if
adam died before he had
time enough to recast man's
beastliness among animals—
fire from a dowry's length
lit by the original mother-
fucker who is matricidal
as the sun burns—like
Coriolanus saving Rome for
one woman—Volumnia—
her hushed cry of fire

Laura Elliott

the inadvertent surrogacy of matchboxes

Collecting matchboxes bled into an enquiry
of locations. Connect the matchbox
in the pinetum with the shattered birdcage,
the matchbox on the mountain path
with the hot spring, or the appearance
of the hot spring on the mountainside
silence. And now connect the matchbox
to the river's green frosted glass
your body brings in to the guest room,
the blue that lingers around your outline
in an unmixed pointillism. There was *bharat gold*
in the valley, *deluxe bhola* and *chameli*,
a green feathered weed. At 32.2666700/
77.1666700 short-sights clapped on a waterfall
washing down a Himalayan slope
to a holy spring in an ancient village,
the light dimmed, disanimated,
and our not hearing it not feeling it –
like the mute red *lal mirchi*, cardboard super roshni
swept off the balcony – was stunning.
Would you describe the chakor as ulular,
would you say that it howled
through the phalanx of trees
when the stripped trunk crashed through
the roof of the aviary? We will call her *Jodi.jpeg*
19 of 39, yellow winged beneath the mushroom stalks
on the matchbox we retrieved,
scanned onto *indianlitter.tumblr.com*,
beside fragrant *jeevan*, *image/62060215943*.

James Bell

rutabaga in a landscape

ectopic engineering schools have become schools
omnium medical schools have become schools
passionate schools have become schools of finite
older schools and never been schools have
become grounded in a science of design fraud
a list of food is provided:
rutabaga should not be eaten more than once a week
among philosophers of science nobody wants
there is a rebirth of interest in the ancient topics
we cannot say what it is/ that we know
in our pattern of action/ our feel for the stuff
ordinary people often think about what they are doing
this entire process of reflection is central to the art
there is nothing strange about the idea

Kinryusan Temple in Asakusa

after Hiroshige

begin with a word for snow

happenstance says the turn of a page
will reveal somewhere familiar
forgotten until returned to now

takes the word away
and settles for snow as it falls
beyond the paper lantern held
up with rope from below

although large it cannot dominate
 in the asymmetric shift to the left
to bring in the red and green of the entrance gate

both croppings are the frame we look through
 as if this is a film still and will
 unfreeze then move to show me more
and this is really a temple we visited

snow is only frozen water

there are no footprints though people walk
 either side beside snow filled trees
 and buildings across a vast expanse
of white that recedes in a reversed V
 to display an early use of perspective

people as pins of colour under parasols
 walk towards the flat red
 of the temple's shapes
 walk as if the ground is white paper

far from cicada song in summer
 when parasols are for shelter from the sun

when people seem still to walk towards
 instead of from the temple

though the scene has a silence associated with winter
 angles fixed and nothing moves

end with a word for snow

Michael Farrell

Order

'The sacred is order'
Like pyramids; Akhenaten's cult

Settlement is an order

Oodgeroo's editor made her Bora Ring
(The shape of her Bora Ring story)
A rectangle

Her Rainbow Snake a rectangle

Make of that (a rectangle snake)
What you will

Reading the Aboriginal petitions of the 1920s-30s
The letters to newspapers
(1940s, 60s)
I'm struck by the theme of friendship
The black hand offered to the white

This is the clasp on the cover
Of Robert Walker's *Up Not Down Mate*
(The first edition; the second portrays an Aboriginal flag
And a hand against prison bars)

Walker yelled a lot his last night

Settlement and Federation and mapping
The coastline

Feeding the young man
That escaped from gaol on his birthday
He was already wearing a crucifix

To reverse Stevens: humans are earth
(Soil stone sand and sea)
They're not walking maps
From above they are points
(Pyramid points become blobs)
Numbers of people make blobs too
And sometimes rings, snakes

Hymns are of an old, Greek order
(Relatively old)

The poems of Kevin Gilbert are not like hymns
If anything they protest the loss of hymning

At least it seems that way to me

In the 'Native Settlements' like Moore River
(Featured in the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*)
Young Aboriginal students read the Bible
(Just as they do in juvenile detention now)

At times they were allowed into the bush
And learned from the elders
This apparent contradiction allowed an extension
Of control
As did trivial permissions and underfeeding

The effect of the Stolen Generations is not only
One of history, the story of Gladys Gilligan
For example
Late of Moore River Native Settlement

When I read the language of Aboriginal friends
On Facebook, I see the influence of African America
A marker that they 'own'

Just as Christianity differentiates country people
From the faithless urban 'arm'

It's not just Cook that makes this poem possible
But the Wurundjeri Council
Their office at Abbotsford Convent
A short bike ride away
From where I write this in my prism
(Seen as a rectangle from above)

Yet I remember the earthquake when
This building moved (relatively) like a snake

Keri Finlayson

The wren, that gossip, is a fine one to talk

small girl: From Flushing Falmouth rose up like a wave.
I rode the jogging foot plate of the pram
along the muddy tow path as it broadened
into street then hardened at the very end
as cottages.

*the wren (singing) : Listen to the women tell themselves worlds
Chanting it all as the lives unfurl
Listen to the women tell themselves worlds*

small girl: I saw two-up, two-downed rows of false
and distant aunts.
They gathered in the smeechy back
to trill tight shapes, rocking themselves joyful
with spite and the shared electricity
of unkind words.

*the wren (singing) : Listen to the women tell themselves worlds
Tonguing and glossing each kink and curl
Listen to the women tell themselves worlds*

small girl: These powerless, powerful,
nylon pinnied school friends of my Nan
clotted the world with their making breath.
Tattled up ghosts, the sins of their fathers
making flesh from rough words.

*the wren (singing): Listen to the women tell themselves worlds
Chanting it all as the lives unfurl
Tonguing and glossing each kink and curl
Listen to the women tell themselves worlds*

small girl: Those were false and distant villages
sung to life.
Inconstant.
Vagrant
Animated by animosity.
Wren, they were no better than they ought to be.

Tania Hershman

Conversation With a Taxi Driver

Mirabella's mast, the world's largest, he tells me, holds inside its vastness: stairs. No more scaling rigging, a civilized ascent. Mirabella's mast, he tells me, is made of lead, and we don't know, he says, why it is so tall. Just because it can be. A son, he tells me, drives around a General, he's an army man. David, he says, David is treated well. I imagine, as we drive, the son, inside Mirabella's mast, leading his General by the hand. Where is my command? the old man says. Here, whispers David.

Bridal

Today it only took a garment bag
to make me feel inadequate it
hung from the strap of her rucksack in front
of me in the queue one word BIGGER than
the rest of course it held the dress and god
forbid it should be packed no
she must carry it like a child so
all of us wedded or not will know

Sarah James

Purple

His name is not William;
the wheelbarrow we haven't got
is not red and the ungreen bottle
is not broken, but down to the last
heavy scent of lavender.

A filmic gloss. Our bath
gleams empty cream. Void
of violets, the first crocus
splitting winter, juice of true
cherries and bramble wine.

No memories of Magenta
driving him ins-a-a-a-a-ane,
Amsterdam smoke inhaled,
snakes uncoiled in his veins,
their ps-t hiss hazed. No.

My apology's shrugged.
Stress eddies his brow, throws
claw lines. I offer a kiss
and the last plum from the table.
He doesn't bite; leaves its amber

whole, next to the bottle –
its shape emptied of foam
but bubbling with resonances,
upon which so much depends
while water still pours,

while the hospital where we met
still has wings and white walls,
while corridors are endless,
purple with dried blood
and long night calls.

“Remember when...” I start.
At last, his lips arc red to a smile.

Simon Smith

from *ZEROFOURZEROFIVEZEROSIXTWENTYTWELVE*

International Date Line

La Jolla fog-bound looking over the cliff
to 30 or 40 cormorants bobbing up
& down Pacific surf
behind the wheel of the Accent GL, 12.49pm
north on I-5 miss
the turn for I-405, so carry
on the I-5, across east
to west on I-22 to meet the 405 again
drop away to Manchester
Avenue et voilà the door to Guy and Béatrice's, 8128 Airline Avenue
3.47pm
check the hire car's over-active air con. Check.
Talk & beer, cheese, fresh pineapple, more talk LAX
on time. Check-in on time. Departure to Heathrow. On time.
Taxi 3.16 pm London, 7.16 am LA.
copies of *OR* Issue Eight line my suitcase
'Ode: Sat Nav Narrative on Flying into LAX'
'Los Angeles River'
'Eyewitness News'
'Paradise Cove'
— included
a full run (1-8) for the Poetry Library, London

Rupert M Loydell

'A Process of Discovery'

for David Miller

'My writing must also, along
what unfamiliar way,
be company?'

– David Miller, 'Unity'

The poet's book is one of the four I have brought away on holiday. It was a choice between my favourite versions of the short narrative poems of a Greek author, made especially awkward by the translator, who does not appear to be fluent in English, and my friend's new book.

Eventually, I decided on the poet's new collected poems, and looked forward to the dislocation between warm Tuscan light and the nameless grey cities that often form a background to his fragmented texts.

With shutters pinned back, windows wide, sun burning through morning cloud, the poems speak of love, confusion, moments and ideas, all threaded into necklaces of language.

•

The colours in my set of paints never match the colours outside. I have to work hard to find the muted tones of mist or dusk, even more to mix the faded earths and stones, the burnt greens that fill the view.

I have little need for red – a few roof tiles here and there, and only use yellow to mix variations of foliage in the distance. Neither the earth nor stone seem at all brown, more grey and off-white. The distant mountains require blue to give them distance, purples and greys if the light has gone or a storm arrived.

•

There is hardly any music here.

Sometimes a faint radio
in the distance,
a few CDs in our hire car
for long journeys,

those drummers we watched
at a medieval fair –
the whole village play acting
for a weekend.

A falcon flew
off into the silence.
A saxophone,
a clarinet:

reported
conversations
on the pages
of his book.

•

Despite itself,
the silence
is the event,

the appearance
of the angel
is the event,

the moment
as pregnant
as the madonna;

bird spirit
of God
top right,

a sparrow
flying across
window-framed sky.

•

In one version the angel
speaks in painted script,

is always speaking,
never silent.

I prefer the mute
gold wings of flight,

the ethereal earth
beneath celestial feet,

the always unsaid
unbelievable truth.

•

The poet's book has served me well, and has sat literally and conceptually alongside a short book on colour, a re-read novel of occult training and enlightenment, and a fictional exploration of moments when the celestial and human met or even touched.

Our conversation has been a long one. We first met on the page and later in the flesh, but there is still a lot to be said.

For the moment, I am again listening.

•

The sun is even brighter now.

It is clear my painting's colours are all wrong.

I rinse my brushes and head out for a swim.

A startled lizard runs from the sudden splash.

NOTES

The title is a quote from David Miller.

The Greek author was Yannis Ritsos.

The four books were David Batchelor's *The Luminous and the Grey*, Jim Dodge's *Stone Junction*, Karl O. Knausgaard's *A Time to Every Purpose Under Heaven* and David Miller's *Reassembling Still – Collected Poems*.

James McLaughlin

Age

Under ashen grey skies
an
unvariegated screech

credulous I
the heron gullible
and domicile

one foot
on a rock
tenuous/ liable

it is there precipitous
as I
or Gods
or memories
die

if

The wind today in the long grass
sways and drifts to my nostrils.
Flies flick from the moss - its
noble so to be fauna: the air is
succulent as the sand
that twist in the bay.
The gulls have no intention
of dying—every
tree convulses with memory.
Each leaf and thorn forms a denial.
Gesture, sun, colour, breeze, texture, nuance, air,
intersperse, overlap, hinge
on this moment.

Now possibility exists / becomes
mountainous. I may die
in such possibility?

As is

a construed actuality to a
narrowing to saudade or
a variegated wisp a
vine a vague
propulsion forward to a

preposterous yearning
a
(flight of tension)
or osculating twist /after
rainbows retrench too clear
worming purple and
and

windfall apples darken in
the wind / hint tone
blemishing pockmarks a
scratched trauma
bits of
scabs, things mutilate too some

mirth and mayhem
alternately appear
on every other constituent
and a
disfigurement wounds
on the littlest of things on
the tiniest of things

Kate Miller

Reach

Peignons comme chante l'oiseau *Claude Monet*

A cry stiffens the pool's skin. Thin slip of wind
puts on a little flesh, stirs the stream.

I'm keeping one eye on the boat while Blanche sets out my paints.
We lumber from the mud and dead reed dip of riverbank.

Blow, wind, cheers a bird, shake the stream awake,
show her your violet streak!

Send her down the river, to rinse in the breath-warmth of creatures,
vole-squeak, cow-sigh, scratch of a heron shifting heddle feet.

A branch, then an eddy flips glass hair of willow.
Water holds a smeary mirror up to tips of light.

My other eye is climbing into space to reach
by stairs of cold, spires topping the air's cliffs of ice.

As birdsong rises, as water winds, is winched upwards
in the screw of poplars, as vapour lifting to a clearing sky

is gathered in the net, we mark each break in the mesh of morning
mended with wires of light.

John Phillips

Shape

It's not that I
presume you are

here listening
just because I

am here speaking.
That's not it.

Perhaps no
one is here.

There are words,
or such is

apparent. But words
do not mean

someone is saying them
or someone is

listening. Anymore
than a chair means

someone must be
present to sit

in it, or even that
it was made

for the purpose
of sitting.

Andrew Taylor

Passing Place

Stonechats dart before the prow
down five miles of single track

ten year atlas

fifty year old map

John Bartholomew & Son Ltd Duncan St Edinburgh

Along the burn a diversion
slow flow fast flow

Mary's Bridge becalmed
stone gathered clear pool

shaped like the original
pool of home

Geraldine Clarkson

Lustre

I've ragged my tail thinking of her. Gross glister of skin
above drooped stockings. Eyes pissed, her twitching
stick neck. Her caked face all lacework and doughy pasta.
I'm maddened with why he wants her lumpen lustre
when I'm clean and neat as a tine and faster
than him or her and can more than pass muster
in and out in the mornings before they're awake, the master
first and her the last, dreamless till noon, mouldy sister, I've cussed her,
swallow blades when I think how he's kissed her, how he says like a
 ninny
he's missed her when she's away, won't know himself for joy when—
 basta!—
he's lost her. By my kind grace.

When my enemy came home with my love,

I was on the
phone. Necking-and-chinning my mobile, I chased them into the
kitchen. My love ended up in the corner. My enemy between us.
Glowing. *Don't give me a bloody hug, then*, I made a kind of lunge,
uncharacteristic. The glow baffled a bit, knocked to one side, then
the other—*puff!...puff!*— the way white flour in a clear polythene
bag might do if punched. We went back into the main room and
she folded languorous limbs against a lovely long blue body while
she recounted the wonderful afternoon they'd had. I heard about a
wonderful meal at a place called *Santa Lucia*. *Sahn-tah Loo-CHEE-*
ah. A laugh. Delicious giggles like the longest glasses of cool Orvieto
wine. In a low voice some trembling revelations she'd been party to,
hinted at. Flashes of glow. Here and there. Everywhere. A glass
shatters. Chaos.

Zoë Skoulding & Robert Sheppard

from *EUOIA: European Union of Imaginary Authors*

Cyprus Gurkan Arnavut (1978-)

Not Just the Suitors

Not just the Suitors. Their lovers too the bad maids
strung up along a cable {epic simile} like birds caught
in a net in a thicket till their legs stopped wombs
dropped. Like civilisation my compatriot Aphrodite
born from a cut. We're still on the line where the page
thickens towards forgetting / a starfish city split
by spilt foam washes at the edges. When carrying
this graft of atrocity and other aphrodisiacs
we're aphotic with despair aphonous with grief
a writhing tongue lashing ourselves to the mast
listening to keel's creak / wheel's squeak / sail's frap
and swooning in the void where the voices should be.
Pop songs from minarets: the channel switches mid-
current in saturated waves {braced notes} the call
to prayer never so loud as in its tuning out. Whose
love comes through the cables / in what frequencies
on the wave spectrum jostling for decibel-music / with
what frequency do trim voices bleed into prime time?
Do they scissor 'the price of the Euro decision for the
{celestial static} haircut of Greek debt'? No doubt
the other walks beside me and the other's other
slices through the shadows / each step cutting through
the space between heartbeats / in constant deficit {love
owed}. No ownership is not barbaric / no love not debt /
no cable of yellow electric bulbs stretched across the carnival
not darkened by smoke haze. Dimmed in hermaphroditic
indifference desire dissolved in equity the other becomes

the same in toxic exchanges of war graves {peace claims}.
From hand to hand my trembling right becomes tangential to
the act. Who am I if not this beginning on a table where
different worlds come into view / do-it-yourself death mask
beyond the glass of tea / not in the room but part of it.
Half of me slips from the stool. The poem shatters
and its worlds flatten on the fifth wall of space / time demands
she drops a headscarf leaving the table / its moment won't
return though she will to find it neatly folded
{double surface}. In the soft threads of another life
we cover and uncover the details that will never hold
together / each one unravelling its own past. Yes / this means
you. Or the cat wandering into no-man's land
sinewy with insinuation her soft pads assimilating
human ground. Hot towel on your face at the barbers / you
hear the sharpening of cut blades and hope your muffled
defence 'I am not Stavros Monopolous' will save you.

Virgil

translated by David Habdawnik

from The Aeneid, Book VI — Visit to Hell

[On their way to Italy, the Trojans make a detour to hell to consult the ghost of Aeneas' father. With Palinurus the pilot having fallen over the side and drowned, Aeneas steers the ship.]

1. *et rabie fera corda tument*

Thus bawling Aeneas

guides the fleet to Cumae
they drop anchor and eagerly
young men flock the shore
 some seek flame-colored
sparks in veins of flint
 others scour
the hills for game

But pious Aeneas heads for the high citadel
where Apollo rules and beyond that
 the sanctuary of the dread Sibyl
a huge cave into which the god breathes
whiffs of the future

Daedalus the legend goes
 fleeing the realm of Minos
landed here on his homemade wings
 and dedicated this place to you
 Apollo, stowing his flying machine
 in the giant temple

On the gates it shows the grisly death
of Androgeos—below that, the punishment meted out
to Athenians (poor bastards!)

who had to hand over seven newborn sons
each year for a cruel lottery

On the opposite door
another horrid scene—
the bizarre love of Pasiphae for a bull
and the horned progeny
of mixed race—crime's keepsake
the Minotaur
and that infamous house
of unsolvable error
—which Daedalus managed to unravel for the sake of
Ariadne's great love
guiding Theseus' blind steps with a thread

You, too, Icarus
would've been part of the tableau
had grief not stopped your dad's hands

So the Trojans stare at the gates until
Achates brings back the priestess who says

“Snap out of it—
right now you'd be better off
slaughtering seven bulls
and so many sheep
as custom demands.”

Aeneas does as he's told.
The priestess calls to
the Trojans
and through the hundred holes
of the huge cave voices rush
to answer her—
The truthseekers come to the doorway
and she says
“It's time
to seek the oracles—
god behold god.”

the more she struggles the more
he takes control—her words
scream out through
the hundred cave-mouths:

“You guys who’ve endured so many
dangers (and have more
yet to come) don’t worry
you’ll make it after all—but
you’ll wish to hell you hadn’t

war I see
Tiber
blood you won’t miss
the gore
of Troy you’ll find
another Achilles
also born of goddess
Juno won’t be far

and piss-poor you’ll have to go
begging
in every Italian town
you’ll wed an enemy
lay her down in
a foreign bridal chamber
but keep the faith brave guy
when you least expect it
salvation comes by way of
the Greeks.”

Then Apollo pulls back the spurs
from her heart
the frenzy
stops

Esther Jansma

translated by Andrew Houwen

A Perfect Movement

It's all water it's seeing nothing
to the end of the landscape here

drowned the place where you lived
turned corners in the familiar

knowing of a body where school is
your bike goes your house stands in the small

warm places of your life the cradle rests.
It's water on which the sun crashes.

Who will know if far below
the light breaks so briefly that it seems

as if a little hand loosens itself
from what is missing or the shape of a cheek

or smaller an eyelid a glimpse of
what goes with seeing something new, wanting

to understand it? It's water, it's a fraction
of it, it's just rowing and rowing

and wishing you knew the shimmering light
in your eyes sometimes appears in the depths

as if for a moment a perfect movement
emerges there showing nothing has gone.

Francis Ponge

translated by Ian Brinton

Blackberries

Inside the verbal complex that is a poem, set down on the line between 'mind' and 'thing', there are certain fruits made up of separate spheres and each containing a black drop within.

Appearing in khaki, a light red, and black, rather than giving the picker 'the come-on', they suggest the separate stages of a rambling family.

With so much more seed than pulp the birds don't much care for them since there's not a lot left as they travel between beak and anus.

But during the process of the poet's constitutional he addresses this seed in his mind as follows: a great number of the flowers' patient efforts find success, knotted, within the spiky brambles. Amongst its few properties my poem is buried in the berry.

Moss

Vegetation on reconnaissance used to halt on block-still rock. Cudgels of velvet and silk ranked there cross-legged.

Since that time, since the twitching of those lancers camped on rock, there has been a universal loss of head by those trapped and stamped and stifled.

And then the hair started growing and the world grew darker.

Self-absorbed in this growth the hair grew longer to form thick-pile carpets that bow beneath you before rising again entangled: suffocating... drowning.

Stop! Slice the razor through this spongy tissue, this saturation, these soggy mats. Re-discover ancient rock bottom.

The Crate

Halfway along the path between a coop and a cell the French language gives us a crate, a slatted spaced container for conveying those fruits in danger of being stifled by the least hint of suffocation. Constructed for its purpose with delicacy it can be smashed up with ease and is used only once: it lasts less time than the fragile contents it holds.

On every street corner, round by the market, these boxes of balsa are stacked shining. Still so new, and a little stunned to find itself thrown off balance on its way to the tip, this object inspires a moment's sympathy without compelling us to dwell on its fate too long as we pass.

Olga Orozco

translated by Peter Boyle

Cantos to Berenice (V)

You reigned in Bubastis
your feet in earth, like the Nile,
a constellation for a headdress above your heavenly double.
You were the Sun's daughter and fought against night's malevolent
ones –
mire, treason or mole, rodents gnawing at the house wall, at the bed
of lovemaking –
from the bejewelled dynasties of stone
to ash-coated kitchen spices, multiplying yourself,
from the temple's halo to the steam off cooking pots.
Solitary sphinx or domestic sybil,
you were the goddess Lar and in every fold, every brushy patch
of your inexplicable anatomy, you housed a god, like some
insomniac flea.
Through the ears of Isis or Osiris you discovered
that your names were Bastet and Bast and that other name only
you know
(or maybe a cat doesn't need three names?)
but when the Furies nibbled away at your heart like a
honeycomb of plagues
you puffed yourself up till you claimed kinship with the lion,
then you were called Sekhet, the revenger.
But the gods, the gods too die to be immortal
and, once again, any day they like, burn dust and garbage.
Your little bell rolled round, its music silenced by the wind.
Your little pouch lies scattered among countless mouths of sand.
And now your shield is a blurred idol for lizards and centipedes.
The centuries have bound and wrapped you in your wasted
necropolis –
that city swathed in bandages that walks through children's
nightmares –

and because each body by itself is one small part
of the immense sarcophagus of a god
you were hardly even you and, at the same time, a legion sitting
 in suspense,
seated there, you with that air
of being always at ready, sitting on guard
at the threshold.

Cantos to Berenice (XVII)

Though all our traces may be wiped clean just like candles at dawn
and you maybe can't remember in reverse, like the White Queen,
leave me your smile in the air.

Perhaps by now you're as immense as all my dead,
with your skin night after night hiding the overflowing night of
 farewell:

one eye on Achernar, the other on Sirius,
your ears stuck to the deafening wall of other planets,
your vast body drowned in their boiling ablution,
in their Jordan of stars.

Maybe my head would be impossible, my voice not even a void,
my words less than tattered rags of some ridiculous language.

But leave me your smile in the air:

a gentle vibration to coat in quicksilver a sliver of the glass of absence,
that brief vigil tattooed in live flame in a corner,
a tender sign to perforate one by one the leaves of that harsh calendar
 of snow.

Leave me your smile
as some form of perpetual guardian,
Berenice.

Jacqueline Risset

translated by Kevin Nolan

The War

IN THE DISTANCE

the war
the war of beginning

popoli umani chiusi
(peoples beings corralled)

simili alle razze dei cavalli
(like horse-breeds)

lontani nei pascoli lontani
(far off in distant pastures)

war and philosophy

destroying means
to open an ear

aged tympanum
philosophy

unknowable zoning
of light and shade

A.R.

we are always leaving for Aden
we need to find horses, muster wagons
we make a few sorties
on fine mules with fancy bridles
but we have to make shift
grab the paperwork,
write letters,
Move it—they're waiting, pack up and go

—why did they let him sleep on?
—why didn't they help him get dressed?

THE ENEMY

Youth—tempestuousness
all that
has made
red bright fruit

so I've hefted
a shovel
because we need
to dig

—And who knew how
laboured
—strength could be ?

Eat
and the darkness—
of blood—

Jordi Doce

translated by Lawrence Schimel

The End of March

The indolence of the air on the rooftop
and the lukewarm roughness of the geraniums
on the neighbouring balcony—
their trembling is enough for me to know, again,
the day's simple decline,
the tenacious half-light that always returns
and seeks shelter within these lines.

Swollen and promiscuous,
the mid-afternoon sun
crashes against the façade and breaks in two:
above, into a palpable triangle,
the dense juice of the final light;
below, between flowerpots and dirty skylights,
the persistent dampness of the shadowed patio.

The light is always a higher order,
what exhumes and reveals,
what cleans and redeems,
the obligatory emblem of all transcendence.
Only at the feet of the sun or divinity
do we take on body, are we what we are,
a handful of shadow shaped by desire.

Outside, among the geraniums of the balcony,
two pigeons preside over the vespertine stillness
with greedy, ignorant eyes.
From time to time, one tilts its head
and the sun lights its crest with sudden, undeserved brilliance,
and it is as if the hand, despite everything, could hold it,
perhaps, by just opening.

María do Cebreiro

translated by Neil Anderson

Field

(The sound of the water didn't keep her from seeing,
but rather from thinking.)

There were five of us: my friend, the kids,
the woman. There was someone else.
They left us behind.

—You almost never give names.

—The current shifted.
On the wooden bridge,
very quietly,
the third one said:
“Come with me. Don't be scared.
Hold on to my arm.”

—Were you scared of the bridge or his arm?

—His insistence,
whispered, hard
as wood.

—What was his name?
—The bridge twisted round.

The woman, on the other side,
suggested
that I hike up
the hem of my dress.

“I’ve already been here.” He doesn’t believe her.

As it splashes on the ground, the detergent
paints the sea on the stones.

—You use white paper. You don’t recycle.

I think you are only capable of desire.

She’s not offended. She smiles.

—You’re not going to tell me I’m right?

—You don’t need me to.

As she entered the river, the sound of the water blinded her.

—Were you compatible, the two of you?

—One day he asked me,
“do you sort your garbage?”

—Did you stop loving him?

—I came to understand
that sometimes he preferred
to suspect.

—He was probably scared.

—He wrote with his left hand.
She was far away.

We kept walking for a bit, I had said goodbye,
but he hadn’t.

We lay down in the grass.

—One wouldn't think that you were
so sensitive to landscape.
—You know how I like
to improvise.
—Tickling, taking your clothes off,
turning away from the world.
—Changing my mind, rolling around,
playing. —Getting wet, seeing you
all together.

The river came later. Running clear.

It was one of those moments when it seems that things
give us continuity, that any old thing can
carry us on.

—I would come out on top.
—I'm sure you would.

Very slowly, daylight crept
into the room. They breathe deeply.
Saying nothing, thinking nothing,
not even the air separates us.