This issue is dedicated to the memory of

Christopher Middleton

(b. Truro, 10 June 1926;  
d. Austin, TX, 29 November 2015)
Shearsman magazine is published in the United Kingdom by Shearsman Books Ltd
50 Westons Hill Drive | Emersons Green | BRISTOL BS16 7DF

Registered office: 30-31 St James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
(this address not for correspondence)

www.shearsman.com

ISSN 0260-8049

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Subscriptions and single copies
Current subscriptions—covering two double-issues, with an average length of 108 pages—cost £16 for delivery to U.K. addresses, £18 for the rest of Europe (including the Republic of Ireland), and £21 for the rest of the world. Longer subscriptions may be had for a pro-rata higher payment. North American customers will find that buying single copies from online retailers in the U.S.A. will often be cheaper than subscribing. This is because airmail postage rates in the U.K. have risen rapidly, whereas copies of the magazine are printed in the U.S.A. to meet demand from online retailers there, and thus avoid the transatlantic mail.

Back issues from nº 63 onwards (uniform with this issue) cost £8.95 / $16 through retail outlets. Single copies can be ordered for £8.95 direct from the press, post-free in the U.K., through the Shearsman Books online store, or from any bookshop.

Issues of the previous pamphlet-style version of the magazine, from nº 1 to nº 62, may be had for £3 each, direct from the press, where copies are still available, but contact us for a quote for a full, or partial, run.

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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Wishing at times things wouldn’t change

to guard a wayward cloud stained by
a falling sun unmoved its curves
unfretted all the tones between
electric scarlet and a smear
of almost green to catch before
their fading disappoints to greys
eventual dark like foliage
that crackled underfoot turned brown
then to no colour only slush
a nuisance broomed away as both
the dying and the dyeing lie
in movement paradoxically.

Time lingers sometimes with the dusk
at hand to shroud those boughs against
the sky once any suns have left
a glowing backdrop to their fate
replaced perhaps by rain

— is wrong —

or even childish. Recognition, life
from birth past death, growth, fever, failure, all
is change brought forward for the best
though often vice versa, worse
than hope had been so sure about.
A transitory fact is such
you know each lived-in moment won’t
survive except in files, cold archives, vaults,
and they too are a waiting prey
or likelihood. Worms, lightning, flood,
moths, conflagration, every threat
from earth, fire, water, even air
when hurricanes are imminent,
cascades which wear away the very rock
that made them so impressive or pollution
    (Niikuni’s so
    meticulously concrete print
    of kanji’d pus — one small space only on
    the centre of those seas still holds
    pure water).

    Hard to learn again

how all is temporary, will
be lost, destroyed or just not there
now. If we rot, towns fall, birds beasts
fish insects one by one become
a sad guess like a dinosaur
or dodo how can we regret
the exit of a sunset, loss
of petals and the daily drift
to nothing of the details in
those photos we took long ago.
You can’t stop music like an act
captured by some cunning camera of
three leaping dancers in mid-air,
the sword about to win the duel
immobile near the soon to be
struck heart that goes on throbbing till
the movie moves again and then
no more. So symphonies switched off
aren’t there, there’s nothing to assess
like the iced smile or silent scream.
It’s not the question of a note
sounding for ever. Sound has gone.
The flow of intricate response
from flute to cello, sharp to flat,
now nowhere like the absence of
touch, hearing, taste, sight, odours like
dismay, joy, carelessness and love.
All must go on and fade or stay
in place for languished moments, know
what’s mourned in time and then replaced
by need or apathy, get thrilled
by novelties which never last
forgotten sooner than the start
of autumn when all will go on
to snow and bleak sterility
and then to spring and yet again
to spring so better shrug, ignore,
walk out in rain and back in hail,
deny, remember wrongly, dream,
plant hyacinths, yawn, weep, sketch out
another novel, squander, fail
to pray, recover, understand,
play Mozart clumsily and wish
in vain things didn’t change until
Ode to Spring

White councils
of the season

sun-bleached days
    before the harvest.

Rooms enfold with a static confidence
afternoon hours lived with windows’
immaculate lungs, umbilical sunlight.

An angel draws upon the wall
    words eternally pregnant with silence :

unspoken, with clasped hands,
we lean against his wings.

A newly reborn hour
bequeaths us its renatal clothes.
    We exit the clock and slough
    our names and shadows.

    The angel retraces upon the sky
    our outlines
    with chalk.

Lenten

Spring transcends with a quiet step
its thaw, – with an amorous hand
breaks the mirrors.
Its ardour leaves unstirred the surface of spring water, smooth the surface made of cloth, of virgin paper, of stained porcelain.

The Spring justifies him who receives it with cupped hands, with open arms, with naked face and uncovered shoulders; with palm branches and mute mute solitary walks up and down the hill.

of Evolution

This tree, departed from its species, all ashes sweeper.

in our secret, we grow skin and bark, rootlessful, sacri- and sancti- fied kernels and bones, sky- and heaven- wards.

( We part and depart, abnegate and negate ourselves, taking turns, in the deciduous season, florescence season,
dispelling our selves,
spelling
    the selves away,
upholding each other – for bridges –
    slenderly, over each winter
)

in our secret
we are in light :
a spacious room,
a timeless hour.

Here, you have grown an olive branch.
Here, I am seeing the dove in.
1 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields

Observe this morning’s luminous étude:
how godhead enters
man’s diminutive stone wigwam.
Molten gold. Zeus impregnating
Danaë’s brazen tower.

Alone once more I light a fire
kindled from sundry owl-eyes
crystal tears from Pliny’s crocodiles
one lizard tongue, its wreath of ribboned flame
a rainbow dancing. 

1 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London was once the home of Sir John Soane (1753–1837), and is now his museum. Soane, the most inventive architect of his day, had a lifelong obsession with the interior effects of light, and he could be equally unexpected in his treatment of exteriors. The loggia of Number 13 is made of Portland Stone, and inserted into it are four corbel stones, dating from the fourteenth century, taken from Westminster Hall. This loggia displays the incised lines which Soane employed to indicate pilasters and columns, instead of reproducing them in three dimensions, once they had retained no structural purpose. The radical modernity of these incised lines, together with the antiquity of the corbel stones, displays Soane’s genius at a glance: the present must keep hold of the past, and the past is ever-dependent on the present for its presentation and survival. Nothing could better summarise Soane’s architectural philosophy. The kindling items listed here are imaginary, but are in fact no stranger than many of the objects to be discovered in the basement of 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields.
2 Chiaroscuro

Light was ever my study
its high enchantments
grading down to shadowed rest.
How Helios caresses his brief creatures
for a day (we are ephemera, no more)
before arriving with one hot kiss
to sign us off.
A holy breath that smells of asphodel
spearmint
the faintest hint of methylated spirit.

The canopy in my Breakfast Room
suspends from nothing visible
so light arrives from everywhere and nowhere.
Each time an eggshell cracks
hosts of angels chant masonic halleluiahs.

Each lunette His peephole. ²

² Soane was a mason in all possible senses. His father had been a bricklayer. The boy learned the craft of making buildings from the material foundations upwards, as masons in antiquity reportedly did too. In 1813 he himself was initiated as a Freemason, and had a portrait painted of himself in full Masonic dress. He went on to design the Masonic Hall on Great Queen Street. And in his obsession with the effects of light, he was reflecting the central Masonic belief that God, as architect of the universe, spoke through light, since He Himself could never see a shadow. Freemasonry can be seen as the natural religion of the Enlightenment, its emblems appear on the title page of the Encyclopédie, and so it is appropriate that the luminous syllable at the heart of that word Enlightenment became Soane’s lifelong study. Each mausoleum he devised is intended to be shrouded in light. He himself translated Le Camus de Mézières’ book The Genius of Architecture, or the Analogy of that Art with our Sensations. In that work Le Camus expounds his doctrine of lumière mystérieuse.
3 Amanuensis

Out of the sepulchral cave
a cult man comes, dressed in shadows
having gleaned the secrets of the dead.
Ready to survey the tumulus
check that its burial ship is caulked and tarred
Arthur once more ready for his journey.

The day Joe Gandy arrives in heaven
he’ll promptly paint the place in ruins
as eternal sunset fractures to a million lucid shards.
Then watch our man present his panorama to the seraphim
waive any bill in lieu of future kindnesses
doubtless to be given him in Paradise.

I only hope they take him at his word
a good man destined for a dark asylum
whose incomparable eye will never
see the good clear day again.

Joe Gandy, Patmos John to me
limner of my curious Apocalypse
its megaliths and microliths.

Mine the shining city on the hill. 3
Joseph Gandy (1771-1843) effectively became John Soane’s painter. He depicted not merely the edifices Soane was planning to have built, but also the ones that never would be built. Never could be built. Vast cities on imaginary hills. Buildings that achieve their only life on Gandy’s canvases. Regarded in his day as a failed architect, altogether too awkward professionally ever to succeed, and therefore obliged to hang on to Soane’s coat-tails, he is now thought to be a genius of a curious and rare nature: he could imagine into being architectural scenes of such grandeur of spirit that it seems as if they really must have been built; built in the only place his contemporary William Blake believed anything ever could be permanently built – in the vast labyrinth of the imagination. His vision of Merlin’s sepulchre, or of a Pandemonium taken out of Milton, inhabit a topographic world of their own.

He and Soane shared a land of vision, a terrain midway between the antique ruin and the modern dream. If the obverse of the Enlightenment world was Palladian design with its lucid structures of symmetry, white stucco walls encasing shining interiors, there was always a reverse to this vision of logic and reason. Many buildings of the time employ exaggerated rustication in their basement storeys, as though acknowledging all the roughness, the incommensurable chaos that could never be translated to exposition and justice. This was the age of misshapen hermitages, hidden away in the grounds of grand estates. Sometimes hermits were actually employed to fill them, as though Poor Tom were still hidden away in his hovel, awaiting the arrival of the demented king. Piranesi’s *Carceri* provided glooms deep enough for the abyssal opium journeyings of a De Quincey – and both Gandy and Soane were devoted to Piranesi. They both contemplated mausoleums so beautiful no corpse would ever decompose inside them. They saw Rome in ruins; in the distance oriental monuments of unimaginable grandeur. The whole suffused with the ambience of a cosmic twilight. Like John Martin, Gandy created palaces with smoke emitting from them, potent enough to occlude the sky. This was after all the age of industry and revolution. Something else to be made out on the horizon. The eyes of the great Mason had to squinty sometimes, in order to retain their focus. Gandy’s wits finally came astray, and he ended his life in an asylum in Plympton. There is a tradition that King Arthur sleeps in the Welsh hills, but since he is *rex quandam rexque futurus*, he will awake one day and return in glory.
4 Inventory

Item:
One terracotta of Aeneas
carrying Anchises out of burning Troy
upon his shoulders.
Were it my son George
he’d throw me back
into the Trojan flames
and grin.

Into his mother’s womb
I injected treachery
for which I am
repaid in kind, each day.
Repaid most handsomely. 4

---

4 This might be the saddest part of the whole story, sadder even than the destruction of his Bank of England in 1925, for this was the familial ruin that he had to live with daily. The son, one of two, was called George. Soane had dreamed that this boy would become a great architect like his father. He even built ruins for him at Pitzhanger Manor over in Ealing, so as to give the lad something to get his teeth into. But George preferred chewing on other things entirely. If he inherited one thing from his old man it was neither his architectural flair nor his ability for such mighty toil, but that saddest of all bequests: ressentiment. Both father and son had a genius for this corroding faculty, the acid solvent of the soul, but only the son actually made it into a career. For years, as Mrs Soane received the peevish, ill-tempered and abusive letters from her offspring, ceaselessly riddled with demands for money, money, and yet more money, payment for a life with no real purpose but parasitism and revenge, she hid them from her husband, knowing the fury they would provoke in him. In the Champion a two-part article was published, The Present Low State of the Arts in England and more particularly of Architecture. Soane’s work was singled out for a venomous attack. It was soon established that the anonymous piece was actually the work of Soane’s younger son, and Mrs Soane did not long survive the revelation. George was ultimately imprisoned for fraud. He was later to try to prevent the Act of Parliament which facilitated the endowment of his father’s museum, believing the money concerned should go to him instead. When Soane invented the Monk’s Parlour at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, he also invented the disconsolate eremite who had seemingly lived down there among his memories of the earthly life and thwarted love. Padre Giovanni he called him. Father John. Father John had been so tormented by the world that he had left it behind for a life of meditation and prayer. One senses that John Soane, the father, not infrequently envied his own creation.
5 Lachrimae rerum

Two glass lachrymatories I purchased at the Yarnold Sale of 1825 vanished in the lists of 1837 (ah how the tears of yesteryear gain antique lustre with every day that passes) stolen perhaps by one who scarce knew how to cry himself.

I think I know his name.

An incubus riding the corpse of my elevations. 5

5 All ages have their intellectual clichés. One of ours is the Oedipus Complex. So awful were relations between father and son that we might even be tempted to invoke it, but there was no such notion available for either of them to invoke at the time. Soane would have been entirely baffled by any such reference to Oedipus, who was called upon then as a solver of riddles. As in Ben Jonson’s line from Sejanus: ‘I am not Oedipus inough, To vnderstand this Sphynx.’ The nearest usage to a medical notion would have been oedipodic, signifying a swollen foot. The infant Oedipus had had his ankles pierced, so as to facilitate his death from exposure. Even as late as 1928, when the first full edition of the OED appeared, there was no reference to oedipal in its Freudian sense. How times change. Curious, is it not, the tradition of preserving someone’s tears in tiny receptacles? Soane’s buildings all tended to be reduced soon enough to rubble. And so his elevations were levelled. Only the groundplan remained. Lines incised on a grey metal plate.
6 Palaeontology: its records

What do we know of seeing
who barely open our eyes
before they close once more?
Now look hard at this trilobite
nestling in my palm so tranquilly.
Calcite eyes. Calcium Carbonate.
Same stuff made the white cliffs of Dover.

So much white powder
since those once living are now dead.
After millions of years
commanding the ocean floor.

He fashions fossils
(the Great Mason)
as I shape ruins:
our only true and lasting gift to time. 6

---

6 Soane lived on into the great age of fossil diagnosis. Fossils had for centuries been employed to exemplify, back up or clinch whatever version of life, cosmology and creation the displacer elected to project. In the Wunderkammer, they were even exhibited as sinister creations from the left hand of God, products of the vital energy of earth. And sometimes they were the Satanic exercises that took place under cover of darkness, when no one was looking. But some had already spotted the living form in the petrified remains. Leonardo and Robert Hooke were both in no doubt what these fossils represented. And throughout the eighteenth century, palaeontology proceeded apace. Riddling out the meaning of those bones soon transmuted antiquarianism into science. This process could be haphazard: Cuvier’s readings of the ancient skeletons placed before him, often lifted from the gypsum quarries of Montmartre, were hampered by his belief in the Biblical Flood, and the immutability of species. But in countless publications, like the Transactions of the Royal Society, the fossils were being analysed, a sense of the past life of the planet was being attempted. Geomorphology and stratigraphy proceeded apace. The trilobite was one of the most successful species that has ever lived. It lasted for hundreds of millions of years, then simply disappeared in one of the great extinctions. All that was left were fossils; time’s ruins. Soane’s obsession with ruins was once more vindicated. He had even built his own. And Gandy painted the ones still to come. In this vision, the ruin is our ultimate destination.
What Hughes Believed

That rowan is used to draw information from reluctant demons.

The wryneck is an ancient erotic charm.

The raven’s cry means, “The farther I am from man, the better I feel”.

Cultivating land drives out fairies.

To be humanised means to be denaturalised.

Foxes possess people in Japan by creeping in under their fingernails.

A fox once took the shape of a train on the Tokyo-Yokohama line.

Werewolves who stalk the University Library are called ‘lupinomaniacs.’

A dream about a tiger coming down the hill, and knocking over your hut, will make you write about a jaguar.

In Scotland, Gruagach sprite-maidens often keep their souls in external things: three trout in a stream, or any bird on Ben Buidhe.

The tribes of Mount Elgon do not dream. Only their witch-doctor dreams, but he hasn’t dreamed since the British came.

The Papuans think crocodiles have gone over to the British Government.

Apples symbolise Avalon, and poets’ immortality.

That even in the midst of fierce flames the golden lotus may be planted.
Before each landing these stone steps
soften for mops and brushes
the way all feathers are preened
by heights and distances –this old tenement
is heated for 6 moons, 12 stars, 1 stairwell
for each ascent, spreading it out

and though there is no fire
you dead still arrive as smoke
that now is the other way around

has become a river, on course
waiting for the wind to let go
touch down, suddenly dry your hands.

* 

“To undress
the river and
place the water beside your body.”
Bruno K. Oijer

You cover your eyes the way this casket
reaches around from behind then falls
where the darkened water comes undone

as moonlight, spreads its make-believe
already filled with streams bitten into
by the small mouths guessing who

is standing beside what has become a lake
calling to the boat below that’s not moving
though you are drowning in this bathroom mirror
that’s waving its arms where there are no waves
from shipwrecks or oars or in your heart
some rope that’s lost the sound from bells

could no longer pick up the bottom, tie it
to your bones that come only at night and knock
as the thud that cannot dry in the open.

*
You died with your eyes open
though the scream smells from salt
hidden in the chimes pulled by boats

and reefs that become waterproof
once they leave land the way shorebirds
track a fishing fleet and what’s left

–these gravestones no longer move
are shining where a sea should be
could show the sun on your face

at low tide, waiting for you to let it rise
and from the wet dirt between your lips
finish the drink, swallow you whole.
Dialoguing Deserts

a) 600 kilometres of apple trees and the cities dissolve. This sparse constellation is a suspension of southern winds, a barrier against sparse but icy sand, a mainly tussock strewn space on the road, no road, a never-ending road, heaping itself over hillocks.

b) A hard-shouldered morning, with no road, a series of scarcities, literally, figuratively, figuratively, figuratively natural, nature-beamed and west. Just a constellation on a map.

c) Like a chill effect of the poetry of known places, spaces. This is no frost, only a tussock, haumata, an intersection of darkness beneath a perplexed moon.

d) To the drying poem, salted and hung up: a city’s winter voice receives the Whangaehu that gurgles and roars indefinitely.

(Haumata is a variety of tussock grass. Whangaehu is a river that runs through the central North Island of New Zealand.)
That was when I lived near the big river. Don’t ask why or how, it was just because.

That river was old school – a meander towards its annual ice quota, grumbling away underneath. We’d walk out on the thick ice and cut a hole. Fish, in a paroxysm of boredom, would open their mouths to the hook. We took our crepuscular trophy pictures. Life of man. Life of fish. Half-life of isotope.

There was nothing shoddy about that ice, though. It endured. Where it made its last stand, in the heart of the river, they would set charges to crack and rumble downstream. Think of the arc *basso profundo* makes from Last Judgement to your gut. Or ice-breaker waves of vodka shaking the tongue loose. Or the munitions of Spring.

The Spring of the air. The Spring of the birds. The Spring of the riverboat wakes, fanning out like flourishes from a swaggering accordion played by a friend who’s not quite sober, to lap the feet of birches skittish in their dance-hall queue. The Spring of the captain, emerging from his winter hibernation among the furs and pickled mushrooms. He walked the gangplank all smiles – gold gold gold gold gold.

In the passenger saloon, a land of spirits and murky views, down where words burned recklessly, some rhapsodised about the river – all we can learn from it, how it waits patiently, steadfastly, to slip its ice-shackles and wrap itself in green. Others would say – the real lesson, surely, is the persistence of ice.

And me, the minority party of one, back on the promenade, who thought both schools of thought could be right, but then, what of it? And skimmed a stone towards the meltwater and celebrated its unlikely teeter for that moment and that moment and just that moment more. Ripples. Chords. And not forever.
On Hebrews 13

Any god that keeps you going is a good god by me, except when choices rattle like dice in a chalice. Throw a three, say a prayer, throw again. Take those pictures down from the wall, the banners from the hall. Is it true that you’re a finger-pie brain tweaker, reluctant jovial ready-speaker, cloying programme cult leader? Thirteen step breeder? Any god that keep you bowing is a good god, so have you taken on that role? Does your disapproval keep them from falling down that hole of misery and death? Do your words mark flesh? I know a son who knocked another to the ground so he wouldn’t be late for your laying on of handy hot drinks—shocking, yes, but I have experience of promised pressure to tick my lists, so perhaps could understand your brand of love, even though I velvet-glove my cold ferrous fists. But then I don’t metabolise, metastasise like you. We’re systematically different, despite our origin-myth sympathies, that same cracked cradle. It’s fucking fascinating, truth be told. I wonder how your day has gone today.

Mind Reading

This happens all the time. A red dress, fitted correctly. Perhaps my first tour through your dusty house moves a mouth well prepared with farewells. Don’t bring bread into it, or arguments about the philosophy of art, but invite some tenderness to get bitten on the back, much too hard, while we lead our ignorant armies up to bed.

This has happened again. When I can laugh at your structured ladders, boxes, but nothing after that, it’s like some madman’s decision to miss the train. Enough to recall a hand on the cheek, loudly ignored armpits, the invitation to preen. My height, adjusted to reflect magnificence, became a confirmed ending, and I would remind you of my eyes but can’t see you any more.
This is happening now. We watch the speeches. Flout the stink-mouth rule by eating my wrist. There is always more art, more science. We make darkness in the dark.

“Some Good Stuff Here”

For RML

Writing a poem for you means I’ll breathe out like you, unlunging a process beyond myself. Glue mischief down with sneaky cut-up phrases imported, unboxed, then write by smashing that green glass ball no one wanted, the one left on the highest shelf. Dustpan and brush is a collocation I can’t clean up. Am I allowed to say I tried? It’s a pain, though. Later, in the pub, Carter suggests that pauses are immoral. I agree, but not immediately. The students are practising necromancy again and though I’d love this last stanza to get really fluffy, open out with inclusive statements, (love as a leaf, shared human frailties, fucking is dangerous, and so on,) I’ll resist. It’s SO hard. That snail has been on the bathroom wall all week. I’ll heat up my coffee now.
Addis Ababa

I am there and not there, walking pocked pavements with the weary and the wary, listening to Mulatu Astatqe’s ethno-jazz and thinking back to the florid shirts of the early Seventies. I have no sense of the geography of this city that I wander in, stared at by sad-faced young men in brown jackets and disdained by Abyssinian maids with brightly-coloured headscarves. I have no clear sense of a centre, and Le Corbusier boulevards give way to shacks and corrugated panels. Signs declaim wares in syncopated English, and the eyes of jackals are upon me as I parch – or so I imagine. Not one of the seven million inhabitants can lead me out of this labyrinth. I reach into my pocket and all that it contains is sand from the Danakil Desert.

Cherkos, Kebena, Urael, Kazanchis… I drift from district to district, dodging vendors whose goods I cannot afford to buy this evening. So can I bluff my way into the Sheraton, ‘the best of the best’ and revive myself in a marble bath? Or beg and cajole my way to a plate of fasting wat? Night will fall soon. I wander up Churchill Avenue, with its most English of names post-liberation, asking myself if it was ever Via Mussolini.

I colonise this city with my dérive, like an Emperor who, with a sweep of his hand, claims lands the size of Spain from his raft. The city will be named after me when I am dead (I hallucinate) and the Lion of Judah will roar at my graveside.

To be there and not there at all, wanting to be there in the land of antelopes, strolling like a ghost as rain begins to fall.
Susan Connolly
the seawall, Baltray

standing on the seawall at Baltray,
looking at Mornington,
the Maiden Tower and the caravans,
fishing boats upside down
on mussel shells
Starry

A lyric which is at best a silk
settled over and then staplegunned into
the flaking MDF poster-board of tradition.

Tradition at best a five-cent gumball machine
stocking only the acetic taste of anxiety. All round an antiquity,
which is bestwise a history-staid quintessence

of luxury. Luxury which barely conceals these
thriving bibelots of worry,
which at best are only a tawdry excitement which at best
is only a kitschy exemplar of the rush to lay a hand

or leastwise finger on the special cornucopia
of the plastic and the various
and the well-intentioned: the tenured chemist

smiling through his test-tubes the
sweet-sharp scent of alkanes and esters
drifting from his faculty-funded fume cupboard,
like smoke from the corners of a film star her
 collagen lips her signature brand

her gracious acceptance of a bouquet of asters,
her gracious acceptance a bouquet of asters,
it is the same complaints again.

We know nothing but it is synthesised.
Which is never a critique, only a curtseyed portrait
of the singing child, her dear dangling teddy-bear.
Dead Friesian in Winter

Far from the cusp of the tractor path, beside an empty creek, propped against a pin-oak like a fireplace aslant to the chimney of a toppled house. Still steaming, the nose firm glistening, the hips going. Gray tongue thick, purple in morning darkness, where needles of light strike the bulk of the wrenched head, reaching its knees to disappear in a moving mist. The grass a frozen crust, corn arched and angled into a field’s naked girders and beams, a stone wall in wet snow where blackbirds argue.

Braunvieh

She turns in the doorway buttoning her blouse, a mouth-sized bruise at her breast. Outside a cow has dropped green dung wet over a bucket of cherries left by the spigot – in the rain it smokes a little. The sun is perched on a crest
of thunderheads. She’s walked
now into the harsh light
of the kitchen’s bare bulb
and I am sitting like a scarecrow, like a
man shot through
the cheek, naked-legged.
Not ten minutes earlier
a bull jumped that cow
and their throttling
sent them thudding against
the clapboards, clattering
over the cellar door, a hoof
put clean through to the fetlock –
a wind brought the smell
of them in—the bull’s slobbery
head, the clumsy hot
lowing throat gulps.
The Memory in Our Wings

as if the possibility
were birthing its own ghost

the ether
to give up
all material bodies

human documents,
beams of spinal light
relinquish them
against the corpuscular theory

it goes, without saying.

in the form of waves
& the brutal loss
to injury.

We carry the memory in our wings.
II

wound, spread,
where
the tongue formed
the branching vessels of language
attached to the mother,

son followed
earth.

the paper bodies

bloody containers of matter
open, burning

night recovered
his voice
in lightning veins
asunder.

We carry the memory in our wings.
It’s years since the Diarist last saw it. Men had to manoeuvre it through trap-doors up to the third floor, winch it up on ceiling-rollers in two, or was it three, pieces? It’s the only object of his on display in the museum, one small notice with his name and the year of the Expedition. No items of clothing, no diaries or sophisticated instruments. When they were small her awestruck children fingered the intricate crocodile and the frigate birds in perpetual flight. Now the canoe is suspended so high you can’t see inside. Last night they all crowded round, skyping a granddaughter in Bolivia. And she could see her face and hear her voice. It’s amazing what that little ‘periscope’ can do.

Notes & Quotes

The Diarist’s son owns a fibreglass sports kayak. When he goes. When he goes white-water kayaking in the Atlas Mountains. Only a Greenlandic kayak is called qajaq. C’s kayak would be qajariaq meaning ‘like a qajaq’. Each man’s qajaq is built to the specifications of his own body. I always tried to make it so that it was not too short – so that I could load the insides with skins and provisions. The Inuit copy the animals – that ivory bear Uncle Tom sent for her 10th birthday! – match the skins to parts of their own body. The women stitch a seal-gut jacket – tuilik – with bone-needle. Sew two-layered leather stitching not to hole the fabric. To retain water-tightness. To stiffen where necessary. C. wears his neoprene wetsuit & jacket. When he goes whitewater kayaking on the Oued
Ouzoud. When he wears his fibre-glass crash-helmet. When he plunges between rockfaces. Flies between water & sky.

**Bedtime Stories**

I

And the Diarist smiles, seeing as vividly as yesterday their eager little faces pleading to hear again & again: *In the worst and deepest of the rapids, we touched a sunken tree, upset, and the canoe went careering bottom up down the stream.* The father she hardly knew … *I got caught in some of the underwater branches of the tree, was dragged deep down to where it was horrible and quite dark …* How still they lay and rapt, eyes wide as owls’. Oh, the times he escaped by a feather! *I was carried along by the current at a hideous pace towards another swift and deep rapid … which would certainly have been the end of me, had the Dyak not caught sight…*

II

Not a day goes by that she doesn’t think of Mother. Mother who was ‘waiting until you were old enough to understand’. Standing at the fireplace, turning her face away to tell what N. already knew – but he hadn’t believed the boy at school. Now it was true. He would never forgive. Not until he’d eventually write the book … *Ironically Dr. S. became better known for his appalling death than for his distinguished life.* Mother descending the stairs crying … *For us she published a selection of his letters & diaries.* Now it’s the grandchildren reading *The canoe was recovered, but the sack containing my bedding and everything else was lost.*
she boards the train at belleville

I see her sandals first
da broad strip above the toes
the red nails neatly spaced
jeans rolled up at ankle

ignoring me she takes out pen & paper
I keep on writing so does she
her head slightly tilted
shoulders hosting black bra straps

we pause at the next station
watch the panning billboards
each searching for stimulus
I catch her eye challenge her quest

at anvers she gets off
a broad footed woman holding a fan
takes her place opposite crosses her legs
uncrosses her legs parts her knees
starts fanning up her dress
it is 37 degrees in paris

the circus barker

if you would oblige me a trifle
ladies & gentlemen
I would you listen to a story
I entreat you not to turn a deaf ear
there’s a fish tale told by a fish
a toddler’s rhyme recited by grandma
the weird & wonderful expounded by darwin
he’ll even produce a monkey-man to prove it
or an elegy sung at a death bed
the girl with the goat has travelled far
to tell the story about man & beast
there is also the happy gathering for a chit-chat

the stars are out tonight

I would I had a voice to join the howling dogs
the costume of a fresh water fish
so I could offer you a dish from the swell
but if you get a-waking with your night legs
pausing at each stall each station
a character may be let out the bag
as old as an old sailor with a pipe
and a story as long as a line with a hook

there be an air of mystery
boys & girls the haunt of a melody
the stars are shining tonight

join the campfire
enthralled faces turned inward
pause at the camp bed to catch a strand of comfort
kneel in the lamp lit corner for ancient wisdom
sit on grandma’s knee for the storybook tale
hover by the tents catching snippets
dance round the lighted circle

walk the dogs or the goats
there may be angels in the woods

the stars shine brighter tonight
Experience, Again

I wanted to know
in order to do the right thing
in accord with the
perhaps inexplicable reality
if not mystery
of having been
brought into this life

experience may be many things
but it is not simply a game
and it is not lies
it is indeed
not what you say I am
experience, in short,
exceeds and takes priority over
what they deem to regard
as social adjustment
or, you are not me
you perhaps haven’t a clue
don’t even know me
or, who do you think you are
claiming and lying
about these things
you don’t own me

facticities feel the green sledge
mountain face curious among the dark
pilgrimage is it steep
am I getting it wrong again
letting (un)open or just tired
and pissed off
had enough of it
many props litter the stage
lots of seats but
are they empty
every time he looks
I feel like he wants something
maybe something I don’t
and never will have
stay or go
when you can
we must make arrangements
maybe I should leave
for other pastures
or merely continue here
somewhere I can
lay my head
glacial rock run cool pool
amongst light against walls
puer/
cronus agon
multiplicities
countless variations
perhaps one can only
make of it what you will
or is it can
what’s been
what’s next
Archive of Separation I

instruction led to belief & apostrophe

Rarely basic data observes
her absence
contributing other forms
or else
unusual applications seem to yield

ontogenetically proceeding from an end-product, walk
directly into phases of personality

s/he seems symptom & syndrome.

Regularly in childhood
starting points entail
radical end-stops,
present-day theory adjuncts
thought contributing to loss & trace
working prospectively.

Primary observations characteristic of the present
function as direct import

it is important to know this

these psychical processes enter the consulting room
whilst adopting a neural stance separates twigs &
drops off branches

s/he out theorises the theory
those trying offspring, spongy &
    how useful in proving ‘yes
or no’
    thick description proves its own
properties
focusing on pathogens

bright
& a synthesis so strange
    the strange say impossible things
microphones
doubt
& the doubling limitations of watching strength
in whose doubt accuracy races into traditional method.

Walk me home.

**Archive of Separation II**

Healthy
& after systematic conditions the first
separates into either

    studies occur in the ought
unlike possible observations the write-off
begins between age &
upsetting others,
a switchback to
uncertainty & other records,
afterward unsettling until describing in detail
little claws &
    soon after

in unfamiliar environments data collates
reasonable & secure
between two phases, describing the immediate &
the chancy
acutely distressed, the rest
diminishes into concave laughter &
other lessons

quiet &
not because crumbling but neurobiologically
it’s best
during subsequent visits the seat
languishes into lanes
untrammelled visitors leaf through gilt-bound
tomes & behaviour insincerely
each day he cried &
each day he appears the same
not much upset
in familiar environs the sheep are painful & yellow,
the eyes, eyes &
nothing left except, never
left in unfamiliar environs he looks about &
absence is evenings
familiar
& undoubted

insufficient levelling.
Two Sonnets

**Seeing The Light in The Star, York Road**

There’s filth and grace in a pigeon feather sent twirling by wind where cousins gather for a christening in the ground-floor church, a kickboxing gym upstairs when you search this art deco urn containing ashes of lovers, film fans; pigeon flight becomes ghost of a flicker – movie projector?

**Aerial stunt over The Regent**

Burmantofts twilight lingers like an ache for those who catch sight of the aeroplane Attendance is high on opening night, six block letters lie on the roof – don’t fight the urge to raise hands, clutch falling paper; our spectacle and picturehouse never could be seen for miles now Al-Murad Tiles.

---

*The Regent and The Star are two former cinemas in Leeds.*
Automatic Myth

After Ethel Schwabacher

Swollen with a warm rain the mind floods pink and a stroke of grey. Pain draws you into myth, into darkness, into a light you hunger for. Summon up a god and the colours relate or the woman’s face blooms; the floral nature of the design becomes eyes and trembled cold reminding the viewer of some chase through time where Eurydice fails to come to the sweeter calls of Orpheus. Forget the stone of circles for this is dynamism: how the stars vibrate whilst pain is always fertile purple crinkles upwards on another canvas my right eye patrols like the shaking yellow that announces arrival is all Seasons and Days; in the way that myth moves back through symbol and the unconscious is always remembering, like the stone moving towards liquidity there is some kind of dance and the city dances always, but to tell you that automatically these colours and how far they reach across the music halls of that day, where the sky shakes with gold and purple-red explodes within all heart.
A Supermarket in Honicknowle

What thoughts I had of you tonight, Walt Whitman
  Allen Ginsberg, ‘A Supermarket in California’

So where are you tonight
Allen Ginsberg
now that the supermarket has closed
and Santa Claus has gone back home
to wrap up warmly for Christmas
and the checkout girl from California
has flown across the Atlantic
to spend New Year in America
with the store detective
from your imagination.

Are you on the same flight
reading *Sunflower Sutra*
or out in the car park with Jack
waiting for a train
that passes through
the Nineteen Fifties
or are you pushing
shopping trolleys across the night
to distant high streets of the heart.

Are you working in a supermarket
or selling sunflowers
at the end of a switchboard line
chanting Buddhist mantras
over the tannoy
to get yourself through
another supermarket day
your voice moving
from department to department
calling workers on the shop floor,
workers in short-sleeved shirts
dressing shelves
and serving images to customers
or are you working the night shift
trying to make ends meet
like two old friends on a street corner.

So where are you tonight
Allen Ginsberg
are you haunting the dreams
of the next generation of writers
reading poetry
in dream supermarkets of the night
as you cruise the aisles
shopping for inspiration
filling your shopping trolley
with sunflower oil
and Valentine cards
for everyone you’ve ever loved.

And where are they now
where are all of my old
teenage friends from childhood
those cowboys from the corner shop.
I’ve not seen any of them for generations.
Are they happily married to television
or out walking the streets,
homeless shadows looking for shelter
and strangers to love.
Have they been consumed
by the Consumer Society
recycling themselves like Himalayan monks
or egg boxes in the cardboard bailer.
Have they fallen
into the black hole of capitalism
like Harpers garage
and Pete Russell’s Hot Record Store.
I’m working in a supermarket now
serving lunch to Mrs. Flatfish,
The Witch and the Wardrobe
and the Five to Five Man
working with my grand-daughter
reading Guthrie to Ginsberg
and other poems in church halls
and libraries
all the way from the Honicknowle Hills
to the outskirts of town,
but I’ve never read
in a Supermarket in California
or in the dining room of the Beat Hotel.

I remember the night you shared the stage
with Peter Orlovsky at the Lower Guildhall
on the corner of Catherine Street
and I remember that night
wanting to hear the lonesome whistle
of a locomotive replace the car horns
and scooters on Royal Parade
remember wanting to hear you read
*Howl* and *Sunflower Sutra*
for the Buddhists and the beatniks,
the prehistoric penguins
and the train spotters
wearing halos of nostalgia
and long hair in the crowd,
but you didn’t read
any of that old City Lights stuff
or bring Gregory Corso,
Lawrence Ferlinghetti
or the store detective from California
out from behind the curtains
to make their debuts
at the Lower Guildhall,
no trio of Penguin Modern Poets
no bunches of sunflowers
no shoplifters in the crowd
crossing the car park
with books of poetry.

That night at the Lower Guildhall
as we passed through evening stardust
you drew a sunflower
two or three inches tall
a black sunflower from America
which took root like a memory
and found a home
on the windowsill of my room
overlooking the park
and one afternoon
as March gave way to April
I found a packet of sunflower seeds
in a corner of old shadows
in my father’s garden shed
which I planted
to brighten the neighbourhood
a galaxy of sunflowers
constellations of them
all over the slopes
of Honicknowle and West Park.

The sunflower you drew is thirty years old now
thirty years since I stood in front of the stage
with Allen Clarke and Bernard Brotherton
and smoked cigarettes with Peter Orlovsky
until he realised it wasn’t weed.

Tim Allen was there
unknown to me then
one of two hundred strangers
in the beat poetry crowd,
but I didn’t see the store detective
was he hiding backstage
or lingering by the bookstall
did he follow you
periodically through the years
until his shadow grew thin.

Before I read you I knew nothing
about supermarkets or sunflowers
knew nothing about Lorca,
Whitman or Kerouac.
By the time I’d negotiated
the foothills of adolescence
I’d read snatches of T.S. Eliot,
Alfred Noyes and Ogden Nash
and listened to the blues singer
Bessie Smith
in Kenny Frost’s house
on Shakespeare Road
when I was fifteen and still at school
and now I’m approaching sixty
and my shadow is pointed
towards the supermarket
and the moon is following me
across the still forms
of sleeping policemen in the road

and you where are you tonight
Allen Ginsberg
are you walking home
with all those other beat poets of the night
while I’m walking around in crazy circles
outside a supermarket in Honicknowle
under the constellation of the sunflower
from where Walt Whitman sends his regards.
Valence

for Valerie Eales

A tarrier in the tumbled cuttings early sunlight warms
wants to fix its linger
ignore the fingers white clowns wag
tailor its shape to the shorn
sunday morning drunken parks
wherever silence perched
concentrate
young sap and marrow
ferment though a fatal term

*

Bruised wings flew black celldrunk echoes
over northern daylight tufts
slight webs
spotwhit
spunleaf edges
mercurial dog in dock
remedial re common nettle
yellow archangel
hop

*

to weak hook awake to white
regions and timid symmetry
deer-grass quave in the easterness
engrained a blext

snagged dusk clouds down
closed and flush-jambed doors

*

Moledawn
sunnel
golden/taupe gloss

all well in afternoon augusts
piling husks north of the crags
in corners of open boyforts
dirtwarm thornlike
patches of process

*

A hardly discernible stigma wakes
capsules of yellow rattle by
chitin-scales grazed opaque
buckled highland fern

*
(In spundown margins then eventuals
the imagined mother wrings
hands over fragile thought)
black brook meniscus
pure-glint context
ripple mint + juxt
hilt-deep in white horehound

Up raw milkroots supple pillars rocket
into the evening’s granular light
berries rust beneath the young
in October spikenard
  shoot-heart
folded in raintide
boatsmile a leaf
turned down at the margins
captains 48hrs

*

For two days four-fifths a taper
flits over sparse turf sprung plum limbs
moss walls thatch-ricks
the ventured-blind abounding with

encounters encounters
behind a facial cone

branchshine and pictures
auburn citrus
pinebread
milkpots
sitting around on grass-stems lightships stalk

*
One white clown cell sidles through the flush nodes
keeping healing blood from harm

like a minor fauna
into dottings semilunar
calamint and clary
light sleepers reaping pinlight
clinks on the lawn

Please help
Please help me
find and know a name enough to generate the face

elese we are only

offspring

of wordshape

*

Every breath a grey sac
dissembling through the dark
a secretive eluder skulking foodplant

beyond bound chambers
ditchborn screams
bush-hidden
scar-glittered
windows in knapweed
patched with neural tatting

*
Shadow-tailors threading
unbolted eaves to rust-eaten eyes
widened in outhouse subsidence

sang the epiphanies tabbies retire to
deep in crannied granary walls
never once in excess of the broad
shining median oblique darkness cuts
burrowing into the high barn rafters hollow knots

abandonment-embracers clone and

mother

their own wings
The Fish [edited]

wade [this question] through[, and back with] black [proceed, drop] jade.
Of the crow-blue [stirs, the] mussel-shells, [and burn seeds] one keeps adjusting [an order of the visible] the ash-heaps;
opening and shutting [divisibility] itself like [i know]


sun [and ideal],
split like [you are] spun
[and the] glass [within], move[, underlight] themselves with spotlight swiftness
[quivering] into the crevices [skinny]—
in and out, illuminating

the [silt of]
turquoise sea [and curl] of bodies. The water [presses flowers] drives [weed] a wedge of iron [air] through the iron [sky top] edge of the cliff; whereupon the [emptied of] stars,

pink [silver our love] rice-[pale in] grains [my love], ink-[sunk since or] bespattered [eyes where] jelly fish, crabs [die] like green [sick and then] lilies, and submarine [you are with spore-filled] toadstools, slide each [in so] on the other [you
All external marks of abuse are present on this defiant edifice—

[its] all [toward a state] the physical features of [my ball fisted]

incident—lack [the story]

of cornice, dynamite [of astral aspect and] grooves, burns, and hatchet strokes, these [claims masked] things [with] stand out on it; the chasm [lung no]-side is dead.

Repeated [water is] evidence has proved [kinful] that it can live.

Put] on what can not revive its youth. The sea grows old in [fussing] it
Eyes adhere to bodies, they cede to their rigour and their clay. They lose whatever made them eyes, and yet they see more clearly, with more hands, more iron, more irony, like magnetised moons. Eyes, birds in a storm, are raised to other surfaces, and see within the seen. They isolate the bodies then, they wrap them up as if in gusts of winds that disappear into their own vortices, extract the brilliance of their dreams, the substance of their cloth, their sounding ruins, what they keep of bodies born to die.

The flow of gulls. The pavement is a cry. (To cry out is to age, as to caress). Cars drink the space.

(A black man passes by, I listen to his skin of water, skin of reeds. It whispers like silver. I hear the pain revealed in his sandals, his dusty glance, I hear the white extension of his silence, within it alkaloids and night. His every part: sphincter, lashes, fear, all told in his tense blood, in the elastic oneness of his blood beneath an aura of acacias and handkerchiefs).

Bodies carry with them ugliness or gift. My arms are theirs, their death is mine. Their roll towards repentance drags me down. My nipples, and navel, and inches, and vertical blood, and joints that sketch vague smiles, the rigging of my body brothers me to all the other bodies. In them lives what I have never been, flowers decapitated by distance, the noise eyes make, solidities that other lips have kissed, smouldering smiles, flames in whose waters I bathe, swamp-crystals of consciousness. Shapes that absorb the past and all that never came to exist.

(A lifeless someone passes by. Collar and tie. He doesn’t know he decays. I note his yellow crown, his incogitant capillaries. Yet I need
the odour of his evanescence, the brief infinitude that keeps him with us still, brief petiole).

Such longing to become the thing I see, to lodge in difference, to cross the threshold of the eye, to breathe through it, to light the dark spark, the stump of harmony.

I struggle with myself, my walls bite. I pay my skin no mind, it lays me siege. I fell the tree I am, it flees and hides in all its rectitude, and from its crown the birds fly up. To break out of one’s skin, tear off the bark of breath, to make myself into someone outside myself, within the shining dark that covers every tomb and attitude. To glide like gulls along the edge of day, along the paper’s blade, to be more, ambiguously more, but in the river of the new, in which one body breathes made up of all the bodies.

(An inspecific someone passes by. He smells of birth, of nothingness; he shifts like me the weight of slavery. Another blow whose force is stifled in this polystyrene street. Another way of facing up to death).

The houses also move. Doves and geraniums breathe. The colours altered by the sun protest. Would I be them, the multiplicity that lives inside them, or the soft sky alien in its quietude? Would I be the silent washing hung to dry, or music of the unseen?

(Something goes by, an imaginary dog, a shape, a light, and in its lines I recognise the tongue I aspire to, the sons forgotten, standing on the back of time, the eyes, the birds, the symbols that draw breath, the names of all the nameless beings, these that loom about me like a body or a flood).
§

The gardener seeds a lawn among tares,
plants a bed of phlox by the wall.
In my room the cobwebs have all been swept away
so time doesn’t snag there.

Just let go of them: Bellum Gallicum,
Rembrandt, soup kitchens, artichokes in Bern,
sea-views and graves –

lawn, tares and phlox,
sown together with hopes
for cobwebs and laughter,
for the world’s unpainted pictures.

§

May doesn’t stay for long,
seven eight nine minutes,
an immaterial blink of the eye
with light rain and a southerly breeze,

one might ask it nicely to come again,
as if it mattered,
one might ask it nicely to stay,
as if it mattered.