

# SHEARSMAN

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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, i.e. all who submit  
*should* hear by the end of June or December, although for recent issues  
we have often taken a month longer.

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# Ken Bolton

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## Fewer Pages—A Review

*Fewer pages left—*  
in this pad I found—  
than I thought.

Not a metaphor.

“(W)e’ve come to put our trust in suspicion”

says a canny review  
in—the *London Review of Books*—

accurately shafting Alex Katz’s innocence,  
his having (finally, it becomes clear)

bitten off less than he might have chewed.

I like him—but agree.  
I wonder if—like him—I have, too.

I always liked Katz. Tho it was clear  
—*was it, always?*—they were not quite enough. The  
emptiness was... “a little empty”.

Bored, rich, the shirts too clean & pressed  
(too ‘Beach Boys–Pat Boone’)—

characters preppy, bland,  
unashamed, too—

a quality, this,  
they held positively—

derived, says the reviewer,  
from Manet &—further back, Velázquez—

or Milton Avery (a possible first instance)?

Now they *were* empty  
(the Milton Avery)—

tho the colour might  
also have been of note,

to Katz—a tip, an influence?

The books I'm reading, for various  
reasons all halfway thru

—Sloterdijk, Roussel—one too  
thoughtful for my current mood—

the other hard to read  
except in the best light, *but funny*.

Susan Sontag I could pick up—  
her journal, the second volume—

& drift back to the sixties,

my seventies. That is, 'the sixties' occupied  
my *nineteen*-seventies.

Pam's recommendation—*Panegyric*—  
at work,  
where I take it  
& read at lunchtime:  
so amusingly declarative &  
calculatedly 'insolent', harsh, firm,  
cheerful (cheerful 'in despite'  
of things).

Not very Alex Katz.

Too Gallic for the *London Review of Books*.

A snotty reviewer  
damns Zadie Smith for  
—pointlessly, he says—  
focusing on guilt  
at achieving a degree  
of middle-class status. (Hard  
to please the *London Review*.)

And then he ends: *Still, it  
may be her best book.*

‘Take that?’

I sit with Pola for a bit.  
Her doggy head absorbs a great deal  
of massage & scrunching & stroking.

She rests it on her white paws,  
wet, I see, from wading in the pool,  
which she does  
every so often, because it’s there.

It might behove, or complicate  
a Katz character,

but I don’t want her to feel guilty. (Do *they*?  
Katz’s characters?)

The fish pond  
is an amenity  
she should use.

How she sees it.

And we are amused.

And I write this...

because I can  
& have time, suddenly, free—  
a review written—that I dreaded—  
days early!—

a busy week

thus prepped,  
so my day off becomes  
my ‘day off’, &, like a Katz character,  
what to do with it?

Like Debord, sharpen  
an axe or two?

Or like Manet—whose

Sunday sailors  
sometimes were given  
to wearing striped shirts,  
straw hats—& hung, for comfort,  
with the picnic basket

(but his ‘Impressionist phase’—yes?—  
he probably affected the carelessness.)

(Or not: must Manet  
be *Oskar Kokoschka*? No,  
much as I like Oskar K.)

One prefers the anxiety  
of the woman & daughter,  
near the train at the Gare St Lazare:

more stripes, but anxiety  
in buckets.

#

“One prefers”—

& I am *one* with that one.  
How about you, reader?

#



Guy.

I heard an awful story once—  
from the Children's Court  
or Family Law—the judge asks,  
And what is the child's name?  
Gooley, comes the response.  
Gooley? Yes, your honour.  
How do you spell that? G. U. Y.  
Judge nods.

Like the *London Review of Books*  
I wonder—well, I might—how  
did I get so middle class? And  
*how* middle class, exactly (rather upper,  
rather lower?) & how do I feel  
about it?

Though I do not wonder.

The defining

middle class anxiety  
might be  
about becoming *no longer*  
*middle class—losing the money.*  
I will find out when I quit work:  
A life not devoid of surprises.

I am not middle class enough,  
for the *London Review of Books*.

Only an *Australian* this poor  
*would buy it.* That's a thought.

(In England I would  
'know my place'?)

Ha ha.) In fact, I 'scarcely' buy it:

they write, begging for money.  
Pam gets me a free, 'guest', or  
'trial' subscription & they write  
testily to her  
that their gift subscriptions  
are *not for* repeat  
*but for* new readers: they have  
seen through "Ken Dark Horsey"—  
tho they "will *honor*  
*the subscription*".

Another offer from them—  
is addressed to me as Fran Daddo.  
But I refuse, as Fran, to subscribe.  
I plan to join next,  
via Pam,  
as Kenneth D'Accorsi.  
Will my luck hold?

The current issue—just when  
I am about to throw it out—  
  
suddenly becomes interesting.

"You think it's lame  
& *then it isn't.*"

My ideas about Katz  
shift and settle slightly—

I remember the extreme,  
bleak serenity of some—

a wow factor associated  
with Abstract Art—the paint

"as good as it is in the can".

Frank Stella? I remember  
the intake of breath,

the Katz blues, the reds—like  
gifts.

(Like compensation for the  
emptiness—which they ask us to understand.)

(Sad, troubled pretty pictures.)

# Jill Jones

---

## About the Soul

Every isthmus is an opportunity,  
every mouse is a rodent.  
This is only the beginning.  
Then the thugs arrive  
and start dividing the factories.

Wires change direction.  
What now?  
The serious stuff goes underground.  
That's some claustrophobia.

I've been calculated. I am a mix.  
The brewing storm.  
The churning soul.  
Lace panties. All the fashion.

The thugs storm the soul.  
I flee the isthmus in a skip.  
The mouse builds its house  
of lace. It seems to be  
the better deal. Thank you.

My feelings saunter. I am arcades.  
I fend for necessities.  
The tiles are like fancies.  
Ah, little beauty sounds  
coming and leaving.

Two seconds into terrible  
awe, then there's trouble.  
But above, the blue west  
chortles with bells.  
It's the thing we need.

Fresh words  
in itchy machines.

## Accounting

As if aplomb was a value.  
As if outcomes went anywhere.  
As if shadows were made of more or less.  
As if shadows were made.  
As if there's nothing more precious  
than light on earth.  
Even sleep maintains this.  
Who rests may not sleep.  
Who sleeps may never rest  
upon the dearest ground.

But how will you ever identify  
these things if they lie untasted, if they  
do not rattle or move, if they aren't said  
among people. Therein lies a bond.  
Therein lies a way beyond marks.

If the people will have you.  
If history will jump. If epochs will gape.  
If laws will succumb, if not the years.

Because time is dumb, actuarial  
seasonal, full of so much verve.  
There's something more or less  
blue in all this.  
No wonder it's not to be trusted.

I want the yellow city.  
I want some of the cold light as well.  
But I want most of all  
the living, that they live  
without all the modest accounting.

If there are no exceptions, and this ground  
is dangerous, you may learn  
how to comprise yourself.

# Sheila Mannix

---

## Baltimore in Twelve

### One

The Postman speaks Latin. “*UBI SUNT*,” he cries, in a West-Country accent. A medievalist re-enacter, no doubt. I foresee dwells and laments on the transitory nature of life and beauty. “Where are they?” Where, indeed. “You said seventies bungalow. The place is full of seventies bungalows. You said palm trees. The place is full of palm trees.” On the radio: howling like wolves at the side of the road...the dandelion verges on being a symbol...a wolf slaughtering a black lamb and Vulcan hovering over the scene...is there any such country? The herding of the cows lashed across the skies of Ireland. Durations, dynamics, articulations.

### Two

Two magpies in the garden  
Cordylines, dog-roses, wild  
Sea grass with squid leaves

You could put that on a menu  
Set up a stall in the market  
And now for the good news!

### Three

Excavate. Archaeology of Self. Yes, we’ve all read Lacan. I can still hear Emilia Weber’s laconic, “Have I confessed something?” Let’s start with the books. Sceptics, cynics, romantics, revolutionaries, hermits, beatniks, punks, dissidents, decadents, oulipians, existentialists, three waves of feminists, atheists, nihilists, idealists, materialists, anarchists, communists, socialists, realists, naturalists, abolitionists, expressionists, impressionists, symbolists, modernists, linguists, cubists, structuralists, satirists, classicists, formalists, futurists, constructivists, semiologists, dadaists, surrealists, absurdists, psychoanalysts, situationists, neo-realists, relativists, postmodernists, deconstructivists, liberationists, ecologists, vitalists, conceptualists,

post-humanists, objectivists, phenomenologists, post-structuralists, neo-avant-gardists, trans-avant-gardists, post-avant-gardists, neo-modernists, post-postmodernists... I meant Dust. Forget I ever used the word *Evacuate*, I mean *Excavate*.

#### Four

*Brief tableau.*

FINNEUS *faces a wall and replicates imaginary death positions, wears a long black robe.* STONE *smokes and drinks wine, sports knuckle dusters under lace mittens.*

STONE: Let's give mystic nature a bash. For the competitions.

FINNEUS, *engaged in act of auto-asphyxiation, turns to* STONE.

STONE: Here goes. Storm-fronts queue dark skies like jets on a runway. A saffron-orange ferryboat is away to Cape Clear.

FINNEUS: I'm reluctant.

STONE: We're broke.

FINNEUS: We have enough to eat and a roof over our heads.

STONE: I'm running out of wine.

FINNEUS [*Sighs.*]: Beyond the Sound the islands Horse, Hare.

#### Five

A subject comes into being who has been mortified in his sovereignty, whose "crown" has slipped into the "creaturely." This subject has passed through an abjection and has constructed – through the "artifice" of material and mental writing and drawing – a new ego, a Lacanian sinthome, a dialogical self.

#### Six

STONE: More complications!

FINNEUS: Wasp's nest under eave. Wasps thud and whirr, destroy my ease. Buzz-off wasps. DIE!!!

STONE: What? Are you referring to me? You kill woodlice, fruit-flies, mice, rats. You're some Zen-Buddhist.

[FINNEUS *jumps up.*]

FINNEUS: Enough of this self-laceration! I cannot be a monk on a rock!

[FINNEUS *sets to ramble.* STONE *follows him.*]

STONE: Sage-green, duck-egg-blue. Palette of the bourgeois. Apt called Plantation shutters. What a beautiful view of the sea!



# Michael Farrell

---

## The Artist

has four Arms and they are assumed to live a sheltered Life. but an artist falls in love with a Murderer, in love with the child of a Murderer, in love with the brother of a Murderer, in love with a suspect and a Witness. the artist's barista is also murdered this admittedly is Shelter, compared to the Lives of those just mentioned. there is sweetness out of Windows, but try to imagine a time before Windows. everyone you see is painting a Picture on a wall and when you go up close You see it is their self portrait. some People are alarming; sometimes the Artist is one of those People. try and soothe them, try and find out their favourite Tunes in order to soothe them this is barbaric, You say, when you come across their Writing in an email sent to an editor. the Culture of barbarians is older than that of magazine Editors, let alone emails, so respect that, please if an Artist hurts you physically by all means report Them: they are not above the law. they contribute to the Law, but so do you. they have four Arms to hit you with, but you have a lot of Skin like everyone else, with nerve endings You might pogo down the street and see a gang beating up an Artist. use your pogo stick in any way You feel comfortable in order to afford the Artist protection. this need not be a violent use be creative, if Anxiety doesn't override this Possibility. anxiety can be used creatively if you think for a Moment. time tends to slow down during Acts of violence, and while this seems unfortunate to the Victim, it can be vital for the use of the hero

this Time is similar to artistic time, but it reflects a different Colour and it vibrates with a different Sound. they have taken all the willows from the River, wanting to free the river of the willows Where else would such a thing happen? councils are the same Everywhere. the artist follows the river Track, stops at the bouquet of flowers signifying Someone has drowned here. the artist moons, muses for a while until a Family with dogs appears to be heading in the same Direction. the artist wants to be more at Ease with dogs but not today. the Artist is in love with one who is in love with dogs

# Michael Ayres

---

## Inside a book

Ten years inside a book. And all the things he encountered there  
sustaining a kind of afterglow, happily forever after  
blurred like the lights of a departing train  
in a mid-summer shower, the very  
last to leave the station tonight.

A great oversight, to set against a great fecundity.  
Ogres, musicians, poets and pigs, and whole cities  
hidden inside the bud of a rose:  
magicians, psychos, sailors, populace enough to cast  
a thousand Shakespeares, and sad palaces  
sufficient to expel a million Versailles,  
with mazes of mirrors innumerable  
as the waves of the sea,  
with their reflected jewels of images  
like shimmering weapons drawn,  
more than adequate to exhaust  
a hundred years of glaziers' armouries.

And in that book, intense and detailed love.  
Duels fought for honour in a mist-hushed meadow,  
life stripped back to its essence and its end,  
in the pulses of principals and seconds  
the working parts revealed, the cover thrown open  
on the relentless engine of moments.  
Intense, and harrowing, and detailed love.  
Engagements and derangements,  
wild scarlet hullabaloo and deer-leap fleeting  
visions on the run, in motels and mid-70s discos,  
beds that become Africa or Antarctica,  
with hipsters and youngsters, the fools and the wise  
all equally desperate to read the signs  
inside their hearts, to search for their kind of others,  
at last to find themselves in their lovers' eyes,

and so, in the night shift, as always,  
plenty of work for Saint Valentine.

And in that book, a cornucopia of locations,  
from Mondrian uptown boogaloos of New York traffic,  
to the golden boredom of the August steppes,  
the simmering bullion of ripening grain  
and too much Soyuz-blue space to entertain  
lasting thoughts of rebellion.  
A stream of concepts, too, and a glisten of dragonfly minds  
flitting above them; and in the evening  
the drifting fireflies of dreams  
as if scattered from some distant conflagration.  
Doors, and doors, and doors, and doors!  
Such an opening and a closing, a clicking and a slamming shut  
as might compose a staccato symphony,  
each and every one the result of a vital decision.  
Furore, tumult, gods and bores.  
Episodes and incidents. Crescendos and interludes.  
And sometimes, even, moments of pure peace.  
An abrupt departure. Back-stories. Plot-holes.  
The moral, supposedly.  
The climax.

What was it like, the world he found  
when he emerged at last from within that book?  
Like Crusoe or Rip van Winkle,  
Dracula hammered into his coffin, or Howard Hughes  
tented in oxygen and dollars,  
it had been a while.  
Was it as he remembered? How had it changed?  
With his butterfly beard and haze of reference,  
what did he make of a planet returned,  
the new schools, radical movements,  
happening styles, deep cuts, fresh grooves?  
When he heard the voices, did they make sense?  
And had his opinion altered at all  
on what appeared to happen  
when words melted into silence?

# Julie Maclean

---

## In the Annals of Tourism at The British Library

‘But I don’t want to go among mad people,’  
–Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground*

Once I’d boned up on  
Von Guérard and Buvelot,  
Warhol just in case,  
up to the armpits  
in special facts, anecdotes highlighted in fluorescent pink,  
jokes to break the ice  
and readiness to say  
‘I don’t know now,  
but will find out’ when asked ‘Did Gauguin visit Geelong?’  
it was not my job to measure satisfaction  
although mine stood at zero  
in a range of 1-10, ten being ‘most satisfied’.  
In a co-production there might  
have been asides and a giggle,  
light at the end of a worthy tunnel.  
In its absence I conducted a ‘probabilistic analysis  
of guided tours during the slack season’ and found that  
guiding a tour on Saturday in regional Australia  
is a waste of blood and adrenaline since most  
of the population is doing the weekly  
shop or yelling from the flanks of a foreign field.  
Fanatics in pursuit of the pneumatic, he might have said,

or engaged in what is known as Aussie Rules—  
the first and subsequent being fuck knows.

Maybe I should have devised

an ‘alternate approach to modelling the slack

season provision of guided tours to tourists’

Tourist Management, Vol.31 (4) pp 482-485 (Peer reviewed)

Our slack season’s been running for two hundred plus

non - peer - reviewed years.

Answer under my breath      No, you idiot!

# Mark Goodwin

---

## Ptarmigan Mist, Am Bodach, March 2016

Note: *Am Bodach* is a mountain just north of the head of Loch Leven; its name means – *The Old Man*.

behind us is  
sunlit snow

& soft white blades  
of corniced ridges

& Am Bodach's  
black rocks set

in shining névé

parts of our  
minds are

behind us on  
Am Bodach's

summit at a

recent past set  
in a glistening

history of

lit minutes & iced  
metres we have

just traversed

at summit fog  
enfolded ground

and we descended  
through grey air

on mist-smudged snow  
and just to our

north the faint

dangerous line where  
sky & cornice merge

and to south  
clear black rocks

of safe solidity  
up-poked and

marked way

now here in

a fog-hollow of  
corrie in

front of  
us perched on

a snow-tussock  
a ptarmigan

bold & gazing  
caped in white

red-smudged black  
-slash eye-mask

hooked apple-pip beak  
thick frosted legs



his

sudden ratchety  
guttural call a

miniature thunder

he is

massive in his  
little proudness

a bird of  
mountain

his feathery  
snow slopes his  
crag-black rudder

his cornice-grace  
ful curves

in front of us  
now a mountain  
of bird

set in mist pulls  
Am Bodach's

mass and we  
are tiny figures

climbing along a  
ptarmigan's wing

# Tom Cowin

---

## Bishopstone : Tidemills

downridge raised above a wash of dried  
chalk foam    descend the uncropped

path as per guide    on foot turning  
brittle carline thistle knots    the sum

is more hurt and walking grinds  
the glass in the ankles    Ouse

estuary sump dragonflies jag  
the reeds    the beaten zone

mocks natural landscape and the lives  
moved from aggregate beach

you would ghost this coast more  
than this haunting if I thought so

I try not    littoral hardcore  
and concrete remains tide

resistant and footsore    keeping  
defilade by sunblinding and being

elsewhere from reachable    past  
the stationmaster's ruined walls

and wild mallow interiors  
I am soled with sea beet leather

and hope against all that all  
ordinance will fall at my feet.

# Stuart Cooke

---

## Partial, & Remorse

—what we're left with here is a hand in another  
(the close examination of a knuckle): what

happens now, what  
happens now—these blurred  
wrens darting

into the scrub  
behind us—to us (in the wind

swept channel, the whipped  
cream of a tide's top  
retreating

the available possibilities in the tattlers  
the gingery hind-leg of a  
memory as it touches

an oyster catcher floating above the bow)—

back then (carving my lungs from the water)  
when I clung to you

like a barnacle on a hull: gestation  
of a muscle you didn't want

timbre of the flattest peaks;  
circuit of the smallest wing—  
what happens now, in your murky wake?

(as if the sky's searing slap:  
winded in the thump, the delicious beasts

of the blue-  
green multi, their hooking  
spoon) coughed spume  
torn

and ionic, coming up for air (where are you?)  
breaching that wary void

corrugated  
glimmers, the ecstatic  
noun of a night's suffocated face, seated

amongst bells:  
amongst hands

my feet are eaten by a magma  
slithering below the surface of the sand is  
needing

what I need, further & prior to any of this: your  
relentless desire—the design  
of a coast

one waiting for the other's  
unwavering voyage

# Maria Jastrzębska

---

## *from The True Story of Cowboy Hat and Ingénue*

**Inside the truck** there was almost no light except for the smallest crack in the metal shutter doors, which enabled her to guess if it was day or night. The drivers had shouted that they were not to try opening the doors when the truck stopped or they could be apprehended, maybe shot. They had stopped only once in a forest and been allowed to relieve themselves at night. A signal of knocks from the driver's cabin had been arranged to let them know when a border patrol was being approached. Inside the truck there was nowhere they could relieve themselves so someone suggested they make one side of the truck their latrine and all sleep on other side. They dragged some cylinders and boxes across to create a divide but sometimes the urine trickled across to the other side anyway.

The clatter of the truck and passing traffic were something she quickly got used to. Much harder were the heat and thirst as no one had brought enough water for such a long journey. On the third morning, as she imagined it, even over the stench inside the lorry she could smell something different. The smell of brine. Ocean. They had reached the ocean.

**Oh, oh!** cries Ingénue, when she sees two humpbacks breach, shattering the ocean's glass blue sheen. Where? shouts Cowboy Hat. *How come I never see them and you do*, even when you're driving?

Eagles flank their pathway, swooping down alongside the truck, which levitates above the tarmac's haze. Ingénue rests an arm on the rolled down window. She purses her lips and whistles to the birds, offering them fragments of quesadilla. Cowboy Hat opens one eye. Eagles alight on her lover's arm, snatching morsels from her open hand. I was gonna eat that, mutters Cowboy Hat then goes back to sleep.

# Ian Seed

---

## *from New York Hotel*

### **Late**

*After Joseph Cornell*

The palatial hotel is over a century old and retains its grand style. The wooden lift still sits in its steel cage. Leaving my suitcase with the porter, I go upstairs to say hello to my father, who has arrived earlier that day. But there is nobody in his room. I take the ancient lift again and go wandering from floor to floor. The search through ornate corridors is so pleasurable that I soon forget what it is I am looking for. One room has its door open. A woman as glamorous as a silent movie star is lying on the silk sheets of her bed. She blows me a kiss and beckons with her finger. I stand in her doorway, unable to move. Then she sneezes, and I hurry on my way. Eventually I find my father sitting at a table in a lounge on the top floor. He is staring at his watch while waving away a waiter in a white tuxedo. He looks disappointed when he spots me, as if he should have known all along I would only be up to my old tricks again.

# Hilda Sheehan

---

## **Cabbage is the secret to a view of the future**

At night, a plate of cabbage and the vagabond of my dreams appears outside Sainsburys on my walk home from work. Something of the cabbage in him, something of the future too. Should I stop dreaming by refusing the cabbage but this bored me. I needed the future, I needed the vagabond. To give him my loose change made me feel better, daily. On nights without cabbage I slept, I slept without dreaming of a future made of homelessness and a need to give to it. How can I walk past any other unknown vagabond?

## **Donkey Governments**

The donkey it had no legs but there was mud for it and could slide out of roads in the moans of animal cows who walked like he once had and there was mud for it when there were no eyes on this donkey or those eyes we so admired there was mud for it when it's belly sunk and its teeth sunk and its heavy liver sunk there was mud for it when nothing could save the mud or the donkey legs were received in limb-loads awaiting hand-outs empty of giving.

## **Going Cold**

We were called to the bedside of the suicide. Tubes coming out of it in unrecognisable piss and junk. I'd hoped that this might stop it from being hung, slashed or drowned, but I failed. Sitting side by side, we discussed the burger going cold, intended to cheer us up. There was favourite chocolate. 'I have consumed whole packets of capsules intended for you,' said the inconsiderate murderer, waiting in an ear. 'Let's rearrange the furniture into listed negativity, and make sure each pillow is depressed.'

# Alasdair Paterson

---

## My life as a detail

When I fell down in the wood did the trees hear? Did anyone?

How long would I have needed to lie motionless, supine in the wood aforesaid, to be pronounced dead? A minute, a week or a month? A few hundred years? And then, pronounced dead by whom? By you? By an expert? Before or after the leaves cover me? Is there in fact the slightest chance of a single leaf covering me? Do leaves fall here? Am I in fact dead now? What do I mean by 'fact'? What do I mean by 'now'? Is this a deathly pallor or leaf dapple? Or is the paint ageing, changing, though so much more slowly than flesh would?

Shall we go forward on the shared understanding that I really am dead? Shall we assume that understanding is something we can really share? Can we retain the word 'really', with all its dubious, head-scratching applicability, for the time being? What is the time with you, by the way? Am I in time and if so what time?

How do you die in a wood? In my own time, i.e. in the time herein represented? Shall we consider homicide? The footpad stealthy? The cuckold enraged? The war party past caring? The lunatic, terrified and terrible? The family, as usual? Or mishap, perhaps? The tree root? The fallen bough? The passing boar? The lightning strike? Should we not consider natural causes various? The whole unknown mechanism within, shuddering to a standstill, heart, brain, lungs, failing in a wood? Should we not suspect judicial issues or similar? The squeal at the end of the manhunt? Gurgle and twitch till the bough breaks? Is self-harm, alas, a legitimate line of enquiry? What about divine judgement? Does it exist? If so, does it cover all of the above? If not, can I blame the artist?

What do I look like? Is this a good colour? Can we blame the light through the green leaves? Do you agree, it doesn't look good for me? Supine, white hair, eyes staring upward? Can you see me, now?



Who else do you think will see me? The peasant and his horse, perhaps they'll see me next, as they plough a furrow in the direction of the wood? The shepherd who notices nothing, not even his sheep, but might hear a cry of discovery? In a moment? The fisherman distracted by a big ripple? The ships sailing on? Everyone who misses everything, even the tangle of legs and wings and estuary water out there?

You didn't miss that fall, though, did you? The watery one? At least, not the moment of impact? Wasn't it intended you would notice? The title being a clue? The Fall of Icarus? Or maybe Landscape with the the Fall of Icarus? Doesn't that get you looking? And the artistic framing that leads your eye there eventually? The splash you see, that no-one in the picture sees? Being the point about suffering? That no-one sees? But who notices me, here, lying in a wood? Did you really notice? How many times did you look before you noticed? Did you get a tip-off? About looking for the hidden meaning, the same meaning as the splash everyone in the picture misses, but a meaning you missed too? The real meaning? In a blind spot, in the corner of a scene, in a wood?

So will the plough-horse discover me in a second? Will he shy away? Will the proverbs rise like bones from the glistening furrows? The careless shepherd dreams while his sheep stray? The plough doesn't stop just because a man dies? About suffering they were never wrong, the old masters?

# Claire Crowther

---

## A Pacifist Matriarch Finds Herself at the Royal Air Show

Though they dye cloud red  
with a secondsworth of exhaust,  
I'll rest

while the chief pilot  
calls them to cross each other – *uuppp*,  
*haaruupp* –

since Two and Four waft  
half a smoke heart each – *formation:*  
*python* –

or get chips, or veer  
off to buy stickers. Could I break  
and take

this moment, feeling  
no body's weight and surely no bomb's  
falling?

# Cathy Dreyer

---

## Migrant c

*for Tania Hershman (no 'c')*

He thinks you can find  
a c, on e it's lost. But you can't  
whistle for it, or pluck the lyre  
to make it come back. You may  
find traces, in Poland or Greece,  
if you know what to look for,  
which is chalk. Chalk is made of  
countless microscopic shells,  
subjected to geological eras of seismic  
pressure. The shells were separated  
by tiny protozoans which lived and  
died a hundred million years ago,  
and armed themselves with  
miniscule calcium carbonate  
platelets, or rings, for protection,  
perhaps from predating  
zooplankton. No one is quite sure.  
When they died, their shields  
fell like snowflakes, dancing,  
through warm, shallow waters,  
as though they had all the time  
in the world and no special  
place to be, when they were  
always locked on target, heading  
for the seabed. There, they lay at the  
mercy of tectonic eruptions and re-  
settlements, pressed into ever  
condensing layers of space, pressed  
into seams of soft, fossiliferous rock.  
You need a c sometimes. A c to sail  
boats on. Boats to Africa, boats to  
America, boats to Nevercomingbakia.

You read a c, too. You read a c.  
Or You rid a c.  
Your idac Your idac Your idac.  
Maybe this time he will  
trust. Maybe this time  
he will commit to the music,  
let you find your path through  
the shadow lands. Maybe this time  
he won't turn around.

## Originating

start from here, but here I am, I wouldn't  
start from here, but here I am, I wouldn't start  
here, but here I am, I wouldn't start from

but here I am, I wouldn't start from here,  
here I am, I wouldn't start from here, but  
I am, I wouldn't start from here but here

am, I wouldn't start from here, but here I

I wouldn't start from here but here I am,

wouldn't start from here, but here I am, I

# Isobel Armstrong

---

## **The Atheist as Refugee**

(Atheist Series, No. 3)

lie at the bottom of the sky  
in the bombed street's chasm

a patch of petrol a smear of blood  
on concrete they left behind

crawl along this space beyond nowhere  
the dimness is not light or darkness

there is only thought here but  
it does not grow dreams

somebody else's soft warm body  
is unimaginable

nothing grows here so I thought to plant  
plastic flowers

this must be hell for  
death has already been and gone

a single pomegranate seed here  
would be voluptuous

what did I hear in the distance? Qui tollis peccata mundi  
that takest away the sins of the world...

all nonsense he lifts them up occasionally  
then they fall back you hear them fall with a crash

words shrivel  
plastic flowers shrivel  
petrolpatch  
bloodsmudge

# Carrie Etter

---

## The Gist

*These words come from the first page of The White House's "Fact Sheet: What Climate Change Means for Illinois and the Midwest," dated 6 May 2014 and beginning with the word today.*

Today, phenomena generated farmers and ranchers vulnerable to late spring freezes.

Today, importantly, Illinois.

Today, the Administration acknowledges climate.

Today, pests consider added stresses.

Today, already, already....

Today, the Obama generated a plan.

Today, climate impacts already underway include increased heat, flooding, drought, late spring freezes, pests, disease, economic shocks, and extreme weather events.

Today, Illinois alter[s] in ways that most people in the region would consider detrimental.

# Sarah Cave

---

## Reversed Catechism

In this dark wilderness, do we walk?  
*webs of silken linearity*

This is what makes the world dark.

In this dark wilderness, do we seek?  
*an abandoned home*

This is what makes the world dark.

In this dark wilderness, are we tender?  
*shells broken – warmth, inner cocktail*

This is what makes the world dark.

In this dark wilderness, are we obscured?  
*concealed in rock pools, moon making milk of darkness*

This is what makes the world dark.



# sean burn

---

## heather leigh

(from cracked handful ov blue -on free jazz / free improv musicians)

foot forced to floor  
accelerants burn to lair  
signalling from stars  
the howl life-giving no un-  
hinged holler but redeeming

## mette rasmussen

(from cracked handful ov blue -on free jazz / free improv musicians)

deliquesce around  
mercury badass heels  
reel in golden nets  
ov air snare times under-tow  
and towering play it rare

## sabine vogel

(from cracked handful ov blue -on free jazz / free improv musicians)

wings liquid vibrates  
wind-funnels - that whispered  
tunnelling ov desire  
as lungs long lunge blows urgency  
over the singing notes

# Simon Perchik

---

## Five Poems

\*

You fill in the name then prop it  
with the same black ink  
that will widen for the underline

and keep the word from falling  
as your shadow still holding on  
to the pen and your fingertips

that stop by twice a day  
and each evening draw a name  
on wood the way rings in a tree

keep count how many times  
you circle her graveside  
to keep it from moving, warmed

under a sun made from paper  
whose silence goes on living  
as just another word for two.

\*

It's all they know —these drops  
fall, then feed —by instinct  
coil around their prey till a puddle

oozes out the ground —rain  
will never stop swallowing you dead  
though for a few hours at a time

you become water, make your escape  
as mist where there was none before  
rising the way your tears even now

are burning out between your fingers  
as the stench you need for ashes  
and forgetfulness —you become a sea

ankle deep, with tides and a shoreline  
where something will happen  
someone will turn up pulling a boat.

\*

The man in the mirror pictures you  
covering his forehead with a cap  
the way a grave is held in place

by a lid piecing together his grey hairs  
makes you lean closer to the glass  
—it's a ritual, a tight fit

and though you tilt the brim side to side  
the dirt stays blanketed with ice  
and every morning now —the man facing you

wants you to close his eyes then sing to him  
over and over the same lullaby, help him  
remember the darkness, its little by little.

# Mark Harris

---

## Entrance to the Dove Holes

*(after Joseph Wright of Derby)*

Erosions we follow  
down limestone pale as

erasure  
windblown contour, bone laid bare

to the open oval the eye knows  
the way through

hollows wept dry, gray washes  
of looped space

winding toward a keyhole of light  
the plumb line

unspools, a soft call echoes

# Eluned Jones

---

## My English

Llywelyn's death-song ignites, rain re-making  
the drabness of my coat into something uncommon.  
Gruffudd knew this intensity of a grey autumn;  
his words burning centuries, my thoughts fashioned  
as leaves as missals as missiles. Now  
the old crow elaborates wind into denuded wings,  
his call an obsession for the pasty-faced palms  
of men who fire borrowed synapses between screen and screen  
while coffee mingles with spices on my tongue  
as I attempt in an illusory moment  
to taste the tang of a decadent chocolate.

## Van Eyck's 'Adam'

The pity, tempera and oil on panel.  
Texture has become unpronounceable,  
blending light with despair; such capture  
in the definable moment when knowledge  
is brutality and a flawed man in his veins  
darkens into the physicality of sudden, palsied  
bone, unfathomable muscle – the humble  
material of his sweat, of his aware, cringing  
sex. Eyes recess; an artist's hands  
disturb the outside of mortality – his  
translucent sin rendered as if the finger  
could encroach this candid density  
that foreshortens an unlooking stride.  
A son will make death in his discarded blood.

# Rachel Sills

---

## ***from* Essays on Rain**

### **On the Edge of a Roof a Cloud Is Dancing**

Threat of rain. It's slate grey today across the way but I do like an urban landscape, lovely lead-lined ranges. I have used up all my data and I and I want to call a taxi due to peep-toe shoes. Those grim hooves. Them grim hooves. Rain tap-dancing across the roofs.

### **The Evening Cuts a Fine Figure in the Theatre of Roofs**

Rain that moistens the moss on the roofs of the lofts of Castlefield. From a tram through these roofscapes, a seat in the gods, the seat of the gods, you see little lives play out. Someone owns a book called *The Breathing Book*. It's me. If I could see, I'd consult it. I'm concerned. But in this weather I just stroke the blurred line of figures.

### **Under the Weight of Clouds**

Rain like a cow relieving itself and I mean that most sincerely. Afterwards, roses lie battered in the manner of a disillusioned new wife. I can no longer look at things, the sky is so heavy. This contains scenes which may be upsetting to some viewers. Tiny apples have been massacred in the June drop and lie in pools of russet light.

# Agatha Abu Shehab

---

## The Scrying Mirror

Lightning, Sand and Silver  
bound together in a violent marriage;  
these are the materials of magic,  
these are the materials of Mirrors.  
Be wise if you offer your thoughts  
to reflection. You stand before the *other* plane,  
sly, with a neat trim of faux gold or flashing bulbs.  
You stand before the twin of everything. Sly  
and aloof whilst envisioning your fate.  
Never flickering, never altering its gaze on now  
as you graze your chin with a fingertip –  
bothering a blemish. Now, as you embrace  
your beauty, now, as you abandon it. Now  
as you bargain with the glass.

# Valentino Gianuzzi

---

## Three Erasures from César Vallejo's *Trilce*

Between 2004 and 2007, the Irish poet Michael Smith and I collaborated in a translation of César Vallejo's poetry, eventually brought together in one volume in 2012 as *The Complete Poems*. During those years Michael lived in Dublin and I lived in Lima and our translation was done through email correspondence: it was an intense exchange of almost daily messages with attached drafts of versions, discussions about word choices and arguments about how to read Vallejo's famously cryptic poems.

Although I started living in London in 2009, I never met Michael personally. Peruvians need a separate visa to travel to Ireland and I focused on my studies with the hope that, after finishing my PhD, I would find the time to travel more extensively and meet Michael. His death in November 2014 left that hope unfulfilled.

As an attempt to try to approach this void textually, I began to work on erasing words from our translation of *Trilce*. That erasure seemed to me to best represent that 'falta sin fondo' (to use Vallejo's words) caused by Michael's parting. I have approached the act of erasure not with a set of pre-conceived constraints or restrictions, but with the freedom that Vallejo's work embodies. At times, it seemed to me that Vallejo's original words should be transplanted into the erased English translation, in order for the result to foreground more clearly the palimpsest-like qualities of this mode of writing. Below is a sample of this work.

I  
that din,  
let  
it be late,  
be better  
, the simple  
briny  
insular



swish.

the liquid evening  
THE PROUDEST

unafraid,  
the deadly line of balance

||

Time

time drains

Era

en vano.  
el claro día  
era

Mañana.

El caliente

mañana.

Name

name that which  
suffers  
mE.

# Jon Thompson

---

## *from* The Notebook of Last Things

Shadow calligraphy wavering on the ground.  
Slender branches write Chinese characters  
over one another.

\*

The play of afternoon light & tree shadow  
on green grass should  
be remembered for its ever-changing grace.

\*

Old shotgun houses built  
by former slaves torn down &  
replaced by white McMansions.

---

Things get lost in  
words, generations  
lost without a trace.

\*

Things get lost in  
words & no escaping it, we  
need/want/desire that loss.

\*

Death, it's said, is not  
a thing. It's just you  
happening in time.

---

Screeching of the Norfolk  
Southern wheels coming to a halt,  
hauling chemicals west.

\*

The poet who crossed  
the street couldn't  
see the poem in front of him.

\*

Through the years he remembered  
the dream of a teenager friend, a suicide, sitting  
in the branches of a tree saying something unheard.

---

The Recording Angel does not  
listen to the arguments regarding why the innocents  
are gunned down. He just tallies the numbers.

\*

Other countries have poets  
with dangerous dreams. We have  
zealots & businessmen.

\*

# James Sutherland-Smith

---

## **3 poems from *The River and the Black Cat***

\*

The grammars of all our friends  
have gathered on the powerlines  
and the topmost twigs of trees  
then ascended to inscribe  
on the past or the future  
various loudly twittering  
four-dimensional figures,  
a murmuration of syntax,  
tachyons and tachyoffs,  
nobody will see us coming  
when we're gone and do be quick  
into an ether where we've barely.  
Tachyderms lift their long  
hairy snouts from swamps to trumpet  
the coming apocalypse.  
The river suffers tachycardia  
when swollen with rain water.  
Tachyscopes provide no other  
finding than infinity  
ends neither sooner nor later.  
Tachydramas are enacted  
on pavements in our neighbourhood,  
a couple shouting at each other  
in dialect about stains  
of bodily fluids on knickers  
which belong to neither of them.  
The black cat becomes a grin  
a mile high which a gothic church  
could never accommodate.  
You and I interlocute  
then interlock and can't be

told apart of life's simple pains  
and pleasures oneself whilst  
reading the inside pages  
of the Daily Telegraph  
featuring an especially  
scandalous divorce's details  
the assassin to leave no phrase  
alive or identifiable  
after forensic examination.

\*

The black cat knows all there is to know about  
the four hundred thousand years before the Big Bang.  
It's a pity she's so far outside language.  
You've never played the violin for me.  
Just the once I overhear your showing  
our granddaughter a scrap of Vivaldi.  
Olga! I think , but then take a linguistic turn  
for the better away from ranting on the radio  
and recall Toni Gramsci in pain all his life  
as the black cat comes in out of the rain  
and grooms her fur which settles under the forces  
of gravity and a tongue with hooks  
into its petty bourgeois order and shine.  
Rain punctures the river surface with silvery glints,  
a long cadenza of whispers and light.

# Lucy Sheerman

---

## *from One-Way Chorus*

i.

You have a one way ticket  
There is something soothing about this  
It could be joyous and amazing  
It would be nice to be somewhere with no distractions  
You don't have to think  
Just listen to all the crackle of life  
You have a very curious nature  
You can't ignore the clutter  
Don't grow accustomed to it  
In the end you won't have to accept it

Could you make a decision like that?  
All sorts of things could go wrong  
You can't be what you don't know  
I don't think you have to say yes  
Don't take the risk without knowing  
Would it make you stronger?  
Could you become a much more global person?  
Could you do without books?  
The scary bit only lasts three minutes  
Subliminally it sounds like you want me to take the risk

ii.

We are in a long distance relationship  
To have just the one other makes it a challenge  
Do we agree on anything?  
I'd like to continue my life with you  
Shared experience brings you closer  
If I had to go with someone I'd prefer to go with you  
Perhaps we feel we ought to want to go  
I wouldn't go to live on a desert island with just you

You think we'd grow apart  
You don't know do you?

Why on earth did we get together?  
We don't actually agree on anything  
We will get more set in our ways  
We might end up counting the days  
You spend a lot of your life in a relationship  
You live separate but linked existences  
Our views are very different  
It would be a shock to be talking to each other  
We could disagree in order to arrive at an ok outcome  
Talk more about bigger issues

iii.

The journey's part of the experience  
Who wouldn't want to go?  
You really want to know the person you are travelling with  
It is just the two of you forever and ever  
Maybe it is all one way  
We are sharing time together  
We are doing something although it might not feel like it  
This is a different scenario  
Space makes you feel so insignificant  
You can think about things in more holistic ways

Every now and then you do fight back  
You know who's in charge  
Who's going to be the leader?  
Dissect how you arrived at that point  
You can't always have your own way can you?  
You're making yourself vulnerable  
The need for other people is there  
We could procreate. Create people around us.  
We can work together  
We might both arrive at the same ending

# Robin Fulton Macpherson

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## The Lakes Have Their Say

White Swedish nights staring at me,  
relentless lakes with just one word  
they can never stop repeating:  
if that word “defied translation”  
it might tire of following me  
but no,  
it’s at home in any language.

## Evolutionary

Low on the scale? No fins, no feet?  
But aspens and jack pines far north  
survive  
as if there’d been no forest fires,  
tormentil tiny and local  
survives  
as if there’d been no winter ice –  
and trailing nasturtium tendrils  
reach out the way theologians  
reach out hoping to taste the air  
beyond the wires of their reason.



# Kjell Espmark

---

*translated by Robin Fulton Macpherson*

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## The Bird-Sermon

I'm all that's left of our village,  
too withered to be raped.  
They call me feeble-minded  
for I claim to know what the birds say  
and feel the pain of Africa in my joints.

I've heard the thrushes preaching  
on the avaricious rule of the whites  
who stroked out a piece of *Genesis*  
and left nature gasping  
as if unable to breathe.

And I've heard the swallows prophesy  
about the black people who'd come  
on wings stolen from the *Koran*  
and steal our children. The horrified trees  
tried to pull up their roots and run.

The rebels hammered us with their message  
and forced our girls up onto the lorries –  
then I heard the very ground screaming  
instead of the murdered victims.

I trudge away in search of my own  
in village beyond village,  
beyond time if need be.  
I see how the forest around me  
has retreated to long ago. And the birds seem  
as if they've just flown up from Mother Sea.  
Their space too is incomplete.

## Inquisitio

When my gay leanings were revealed  
I was summoned before the inquisition –  
ancient men who bowed to each other  
in the Spanish fashion  
before letting their bodies take shape  
from the experienced chairs they sank into.  
Their faces were of dark parchment  
which had been scraped and scraped  
for each century's new text  
while preserving traces of the earlier.

Well, did I acknowledge my name, Alan Turing,  
and my address in The Right City?  
I have never denied my identity.

Before the judges stood a pair of scales.  
My war effort was laid in the one pan,  
how I cracked the German code  
and sketched out a machine  
to compete with the human brain.  
That I made love with men was laid in the other.  
And that scale-pan sank with such force  
that the first tipped out its contents.

I was sentenced to have my lips sewn  
and my testicles burnt to ash  
to prevent my heretical notions  
and my diseased seed  
from infecting future centuries.

But they failed to erase entirely  
that sketch which bore my name.  
You who find each other in cyberspace  
borrow my voice.

# Mercedes Cebrián

---

*translated by Terence Dooley*

---

## **Andorra: See what happens**

People sometimes mock  
little things and Andorra  
too is little.

(300 cigarillos  
are no small thing: arranged  
in indian file they can cover  
up to 27 yards, and what about  
two and a half kilos of white  
powdered milk

representing the concept  
of a vast ski-slope.)

Verifiable data, and if we haven't  
mentioned the co-princes it's because  
we can't get our minds around them, we haven't  
brushed their cheeks with our lips, but we do  
understand their flag: look, let's fix our eyes  
on its 3 primary colours, you could  
combine them to make  
purple, green or orange with the greatest  
of ease, and this probably arouses  
dread in us.

What to make of the muddle, of the purchase  
of video-cameras in a mountainous  
landscape, with freshwater  
waterfalls. What to make of  
the cataract, the transaction,  
the miniature life-blood  
flowing through Andorra  
whether the shops  
are open or not.

