

Shearsman 56

autumn 2003 issue

i.m. Peter Redgrove
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*featuring **poetry** by*

Kelvin Corcoran

Catherine Daly

Lyn Lifshin

George Messo

David Miller

Peter Redgrove

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KELVIN CORCORAN

MIROLOYI for Doug Oliver

I saw Doug Oliver last night
standing in the shadow of the tower,
Christeas's tower guarding the harbour.

He was not in line at the ditch
and did not need to drink,
he was listening attentive, invisible.

The black sea filled his eyes,
he walked with Shelley unconfined
along the sea lanes of perfect sound.

He turned his good ear to the waveform;
his words, his maps and theories of song
released on the air unencumbered.

I heard the dialogue with Alice begin,
a woman came into the room a woman
back and forth flooding the paths under the sea.

I heard it all for the first time,
pretty weeds streamed from their hands,
bodies in sea light walking in one another.

*

And sucked down into the oracle of the drowned,
into the dry cave, back-lit psychorama and honey glow,
the echoed rise and fall of the waves
beats this moment and the next to the breathing of the sea;
he stands on the dry powder floor of the cave,
Peak district manifold, Apollonian on this shore.

But the dead can speak only through us,
around here the living feed the grave,
talk, share food and pour out their hearts
unblinking with love in the mortal fact,
the secret monologue broadcast,
I'm talking to my mother though 18 years dead.

So if I wait for Doug to speak, my teacher, my poet,
I imagine I'll wait for ever,
even in this dry cave, in honey light,
wrapped in the murmur of the sea, of bees;
in the honeycombed tunnels running to Matepan,
you hear Doug speak in a land made unstrange.

*

Look the owls swoop and dive from the tower for you,
alive in their dialogue of death;
I was thinking Alice of the life shared
and the lamentation of its ending,
their flight sounding in your ear, patterned and lethal,
their beautiful trajectories alight
against the black wall of mountain darkness.
Poetry is the way we think and speak here;
in one moment wing-beat instants take flight
over the gulf under the eyes of the serene empire,
to Methoni and Coroni in the darkening west
and the unpeopled cities of the sea.

MacSweeney

Here's a jar of honey for you;
we stand the beehives in the fields of borage,
the pollen's rich, the yields are high
from the bright blue flowers you knew.

Morning light spreads across the floor
despite liars in public places,
lapis miners get to work in Badaskhan
and wind lifts the ivy on the wall.

I walked out into the street,
we all moved together in a film;
faces lit from below, easily engaged,
and the blue Autumn sky falling away.

As if we said forever, buildings rise in air,
lives going in and out of them
and that would be above ground,
my girls growing up for instance.

The valley of the assassins has been extended
and escaped our rhetoric;
I'll pour the honey in the ground,
you rise up and spit the pearls in their faces.

The pollen's rich, the yields are high
from the bright blue flowers you knew.

The Empire Stores

(Make the Ordinary Language Good or Die)

*A reading of Alan Halsey's 'Dante's Barber Shop (De Vulgari Eloquentia)'
(Parts 1 & 2 of 6)*

We closed down the Empire Stores in the bay,
we don't shop there now, only for our imaging
of the map of others and zero longitude fancy,
globally patched, then a rising tide at your door.

Or the ineluctable, brimful culture piled up
lettering every street, heaps of incoming names
and even this is not my thinking,
see all this dirt fair clogs my eyes.

Shearsman 56

Be clear: we reject the new but old holy war,
the demographics of canonic fodder and new but old flags,
– these colours don't fade;
give me rivers of dirt and bring my poets back to life.

It's those conversations I want, you speak
Oh England, on slick rails to the dumb chamber;
put your ear to the ground and your hands in the air,
there's a chance archival unity won't get you up in the morning.

If what follows is a metaphor then this is not a poem
– Caspian oil sucked across the Stans to Karachi;
it's not a silvery tubular zero but ignition:
make the ordinary language good or die.

*

With grammar stocks rising on song
he sat opposite me at the presentation;
– Cosy up to them and push their hot buttons,
triangulate Blair's blueprint and the common thought.

When Shelley arrived out of the ever-living past
he checked in at the King Otto, with Byron next door;
he saw dark figures rising before the liberals,
how the few valued the many and bought the government.

Mary dribbled conscience on the accounts,
we stare at the glaze mostly, eyes glued to the past
cold filtered through a grovel image voodoo,
and apply for the post in Concept House.

What scene unfolds in that domed snow shaker?
White boys on the road, zoot suits and patronage,
a limited view of human nature
in a medium of implacable pessimism.

To make us the object of such devotion
the secret voiceprint calls us,
in rank order, men, women, family groups,
our faces tipped into the light and locked.

Against Purity

Out of sight, at the boundary,
blue hills and magical trees
mock and dance in a round,
the greater life flashing in the sky.

Somewhere believe or singing her
a field god rises, hungry,
close to the ground, eyes like smoke,
singing her those particles wake.

They say that they say
that sometimes she's seen in the neighbourhood.

*

I see things out in the fields,
the word heliotrope written in blood,
in the faces of the children
the road's a dark river.

I see things in the other room,
Melanie's dream speaking
the old women, click clack
blind in a circle oblivious.

They say that they say,
she forced her way into the room,
she broke the circle, slit the cloth
of the empty air where the dead spin round.

Here there is no shadow
in the sky, no authority
rising to dull the lens of light

here I am, this way boy,
swim to me, into my arms

Notes on Contributors

Kelvin Corcoran lives in Cheltenham, where he is Deputy Head of a large Comprehensive School. He is the author of eight collections of poetry, the most recent of which are *Your Thinking Tracts or Nations* (West House Books, Sheffield, 2002) and *When Suzy Was* (Shearsman Books, 1999). Shearsman will publish his *New and Selected Poems* in the first quarter of 2004.

Nick Grindell is a professional translator, living in Berlin.

George Messo is the editor of *Near East Review*, and lives in Ankara.

Peter Redgrove was born in 1932 and lived in Cornwall from the mid-1960s. One of the most consistently remarkable English poets of the post-war period, he was the author of over thirty verse collections and ten works of fiction, as well as plays and works of non-fiction. His collections include *Selected Poems* (Cape, London, 1999), and *From the Virgil Caverns* (Cape, 2002). He died on 16 June 2003. A posthumous collection *Sheen* (166pp, £10) appears from Stride in October 2003, and a tribute volume, *Full of Stars Dreaming* (54pp, £5.95) appears from the same publisher in September. Both books can be ordered, post-free, from the publisher at 11 Sylvan Road, Exeter EX4 6EW.

Monika Rinck lives in Berlin and is the author of *Begriffsstudio 1996-2001* (edition Sutstein, Berlin, 2002).

Peter Robinson teaches at Sendai University in Japan. His recent *Selected Poems* (Carcenet Press, Manchester, 2003) is a major retrospective of his work and includes some early material that is hard to find. In the late 1970s he edited the Cambridge magazine *Perfect Bound*, which was recently the subject of a retrospective study on the *jacket magazine* website. He has also translated the work of Vittorio Sereni, and written works of literary criticism. He has edited critical volumes on Roy Fisher, Adrian Stokes and Geoffrey Hill, among others.

Zoë Skoulding lives in north Wales, where she teaches, co-edits the poetry magazine *Skald*, and is working on a PhD at the University of Wales, Bangor. Seren are to publish her second collection *The Mirror Trade* in 2004.

CATHERINE DALY

(St.) Hildegard von Bingen's Visions

The devil is filled with what other creatures aren't,

anger at Adam and Eve in their innocence,
jealousy of Adam and Eve in the garden,

deceit. He changes into a serpent, hollow, almost
eternal, disguising what his form makes plain.

Adam and Eve turn from innocence
toward the tree, their first work.

* * *

Eve is taken from Adam, so Adam assumes her,
embraces her words.

The devil saw Adam and Eve k-i-s-s-i-n-g.
Conquering tenderness conquers strength.

A cloud threw
the form of man out of the form of man.

The ancient seducer dispelled them
into destruction.

* * *

We rebel in the place of sweet things.
Eve opposes Adam, from whose rib she was cloned.
Even clones have separate agency.

In a remedial attempt,
a son was made within a virgin mother.

* * *

Shearsman 56

We shine free.
Shines in us freedom, butterflies,
brightness we enjoy. More lifts, shining.

Humility is Queen of the virtues.

Pride lifts the devil. Death casts him down.
Divine power opposes him not;
Humility opposes the devil.
The humble live eternally.

Satan opens the barricade, shouting, Who will help me.
Devils reply with a roar.

* * *

When a woman makes love with a man,
delightful heat communicates that delight (salt)
and summons semen.

The seed falls into its place. Heat descends from her,
draws the seed to itself, holds it.

Her sexual organs contract
the way a strong man encloses something in his fist.

* * *

Around a king stood ivory columns bearing the king's banners
(the banner is love, over me, love, my banner, love is a banner).

The king raised a small feather from the ground, commanding it fly.
Air bore the feather, not the command.
Thus am I, a feather on breath.

* * *

Sky brightening. Virtues overcoming the devil's snares sing
to various types of music praises of the city of celestial joy.

Dawn's sound is a multitude.

* * *

Leaping fountain of words
into jewels, sun's glory:

the world from words
Eve threw into confusion
formed the word – person – from the sun.

You're bright material
through which words breathe.

This daughter is a water drop in the eye
– sun, bright flower, with mind made light.

* * *

Light behold with burning desires eyes.
O joy – your garment – has a form
untouched by work.

order shine
O dharma form shape in your make face figure,
configuration form
poor materials I piece into this edifice.
Listen: little places of the ancient heart in the fountain.
See stone breathe.

Catherine Daly's poem in this issue is included in the forthcoming volume *DaDaDa* (Salt Publishing, Cambridge). Previous publications include *Locket* (Tupelo Press, 2002). Her poems and critical work have been widely published in the USA. Catherine Daly is based in Los Angeles.

David Miller lives in London. His *Collected Poems* are available from Salzburg University Press / Poetry Salzburg, and his prose collection *The Waters of Marah* has recently been published by Singing Horse Press, Philadelphia.

PETER REDGROVE

Four Poems

Unity Of Volume

She encloses
a little of the universal space
like a potter
Or a water-lily
that meditates
‘It is a long journey
From the mulberry leaf
to the silken gown’
I laughed at the fragment
Of Jupiter’s thunder
lodged in my head striking down,
while she transferred
Zest to all my organs; the rough gold
under her armpits was berserk
creating a large
Movement as of swamps and woods
and faces in the stone,
changed to a region
Where the veil is thin:
‘The first church above ground
anywhere in the world’;
The glass mountain of the sweat – sleep,
entering into the same mountain;
they had come together
Like two cats lapping
at the same milk.

Mistress Shivers

The spinet declares
the waters shall be healed
and be full of fish

Like gardens of flowers
as the flow-er plays
and the moths shall carry

All leprosies away on their backs
on their scaly backs
with formal magnitude.

We love among the shrubs
greeting friends
to the music of spinets

Among the notes that fly
as the insects do
into the shrubs

Who are our friends
at this garden party all dressed up,
humans

In floral prints among the flowers
invisible among their friends as spirits
gathering their perfumes

Under spreading skirts
to the music of spinets
how easily is a bush

Supposed a broad in clouds of perfume
broadcast like spinet music
pleasured from the flowers

By bees triple-tonguing each instrument
invisibly;
is that pink-blossomed tree

Shuddering off clouds of its perfume, Mary,
or an Artemisia swived

By attendant bees
as Mistress Shivers pleasures the spinet
on spinal keyboards,

Creature of scent and electricity
in her floral gown
and symphonies of shudder.

Lamps And Fire

The oyster's pale phlegm,
its satin mucus-and-muscle,
a big black pearl inset:
It looks like a putrefact,
but it is phlegm
and good fortune,
Its mantle-lip like a slippery-kiss
is studded with sky-blue eyes,
an aware arch of firmament –
Any true Christian
views the male human body
as the centre of experience:
While the men debate at table
over their oysters,
she busies herself behind them
With lamps and fire.

Moth And Motor-car

Moths rolling over and over
in the car lights,
the beams and rafters of light,
Their widening rooms
wedged open. The goldstone
of the moths' eyes flashing.
We stood under a gigantic hedgerow,
moths lying on the sheet
like broken yachts.
Her breath took frosty forms
like moths. She released
a potion from her cunt
As a moth might ooze its balsam
and fan it with its wings,
her dress started this,

DAVID MILLER

Untitled

water to blood

stone and wood

in a corner
my own corner
sorrowing

/shadow

/glory

/crosswise

Spiritual Letters, Series 3, #10

Waking to a bright, warm morning in the port, with men washing down cars and motorbikes across the street. A mail-boat on a stamp; an envelope addressed to someone *in the neighbourhood of the spirit*. Despite a heavy cold, I went out in the rain to meet him when he phoned to say that he was lost. — My doctor advised me to take long walks, I told him, with old friends from far away. Birds singing loudly as I made my way to bed. From my friend's flat, I walked past a church and drop-in centre, charity shops and outdoor stalls. The balcony door swings back and forth in the wind. It was only when the service was over, and she was standing with her back to me, that I was able to speak to her; she turned to face me, and wasn't the friend — loved and lost for years — I thought I'd recognised. False apprehensions: a form of constancy. I was staying in a caravan, beside a shack with most of the rooms derelict, wild kittens for company. During her parties she would play recordings of Gregorian chant. When we met for the last time, you told me you'd been working on a series depicting nearby buildings, abandoned or set for demolition.

GEORGE MESSO

DECLIVITY

He spoke a peculiar dialect.
The ruined monastery
was now his farm.
Cowshit filled the nave.

Sound of stone
I thought he said
falling through air,
falling through the centre of a well.

Then
I wasn't sure what he'd said.
Frescoes, devils-full of naked flesh,
women baring breasts.

A well-centred stone
falling through air,
falling through the centre of sound.

GEORGIA IN THE 11TH CENTURY

I

Your name for it is 'pudze'
a plot of land, fields,
a sodden marsh.
Forests owned by all.

Beneath the earthen roof,
your several rooms.
The sting of pig-piss
fizzing in the dark.

II

Arab geographers
wrote of orchards,
of turnips
heaped in cities,

hearsay of a mill
on the Mtkvari river.

PETER ROBINSON

What Lies Sleeping

Then it comes out with the sight of faint breeze
that billows a sun-filled lace curtain
like serried phantom pregnancies,
the abstracted gaze
of a woman who suddenly loses her looks
in childbirth, or of eyes
disappointed in marriage whose tears
start as if unbidden
at something someone says...

which is how unutterable meaning
makes itself felt now a loved one
nods off on the train
as features are shedding defences
to tired eyes or, again,
a life's glimpsed with no stances,
without self-presentation –
this truth never hidden from the senses;
it just needed underlining.

The Bays

1

Brained by fronds and branches, crowned
with leafage slipped down over the eyes,
that's how I stumble on this empty beach round midday,
aware of the other ones bending away
beyond headlands, and how these
histories of slow swell lapping on shorelines
make themselves felt as so many mild concussions,
numberless whisperings to a tired mind,
and how at sea defences, harbour wall or bay
smelling an air of fish-work and wrack
I follow the paths by gleaming black anchors,
nets, the floats, and hear dogs bark –
there being that many ways to feel confined.

2

So as the ocean
mitigates silences
waves flash with daylight
piercing through cloud tails,
we're in an in-between
chasing our children,
the summer still ending
without a finale;
that's why I wander
all down the tide-mark,
jetsam and driftwood
dried in the sun,
and why, understanding
how it's not possible,
count starfish or shell-shard,
accepting acceptance
given alternatives –
there being none.

3

High time, even if I don't say it enough,
now, come what may, as sightings of these
cormorant sentinels up on a cliff
from a pleasure craft in calmer seas
or the gull's wing flexing above
raised fingers, its red-tipped beak, its eyes
trained towards food two sisters leave
on ripple and wave are examples of...
High time, even if I don't say it enough.

The False Perspectives

Everything's sloping off anywhere else –
like that faulty landscape
with a crack in it, a gap
here where whatever the false
perspectives carrying us away
they also serve
to bring back, just once in a while, a love
along with the whole cabaret
of mental furniture, double acts, turns,
rare views from the provinces...
and love, she makes her entrances,
exits under my defences
where everything sloping off returns.

Where larger items in the distance
grow to insignificance
as they go near, I'm done
explaining to her mother –
nothing untoward between us, no one
proved wrong or right, but rather
spaces weakening the ties
and all of it like a sleight-of-mind
deceiving me, while eyes
follow a stream to the hill's brow,
or I'm leaning from a window
to touch the paths that wind
there, there which used to be where here is now.

LYN LIFSHIN

Swan Free, That's Our Goal Another Said

Yes, I know they're exotic
and we've pumped ourselves
up on myths of their charm
but listen, they're dangerous,
aggressive, they take over,
take what belongs to the
birds first in the state. The
swans are outsiders, not
native, they're too pushy.
Be careful, it's a small town
my mother said: when you
are Jewish, they talk, they
think you're rich. They
think you're dirty, have
horns. The birds make the
lake into squalor the warden
says, they are predators.
We wanted to transport them
to Texas but we couldn't
round them up. They are
sneaky, they're smart. A
woman from Finland says
she was horrified, those
beautiful birds, "I waited for
them each morning. I was
close enough to hear their
wings like breath. I never
thought a little town in VT
would remind me of the war.
They seemed connected
to myths in my past." We
did our duty the men with
guns said, our orders. The
lake now is swan-free. My
mother always remembers

being the only Jewish girl in
Maryland, how the southern
girls who said how lively
and beautiful she was said
Hitler was right but that
she was different than
other Jews

Mute, They Were Mute

lured, naked, with
out their feathers.
The swans were
like women, whole
families marched
into the gas. The
birds weren't
natives either,
were, some said,
taking over. A
strange beauty,
yes, but wardens
wanted them out.
First we tried
moving them,
he said coldly,
rounding them
up to ship out.
It was too much.
We had no choice
he said they were
startling, they were
mute. I emphasize,
they weren't our
kind of bird,
came from outside.
They would have
taken over.
Transporting them

was our moral choice.
We had to. Sure, a
few protested, said
it was inhuman.
The birds thought
they were going to
dip into the water
and they shot them

Lyn Lifshin's most recent prize-winning book, (Paterson Poetry Award) *Before It's Light*, was published winter 1999-2000 by Black Sparrow Press, following their publication of *Cold Comfort* in 1997. *Another Woman Who Looks Like Me* will be published by Black Sparrow Books (now published by David Godine) in November 2003. Also recently published is *A New Film By A Woman In Love With The Dead* (March Street Press).

She has published more than 100 books of poetry, including *Marilyn Monroe*, *Blue Tattoo*, won awards for her non-fiction and edited 4 anthologies of women's writing including *Tangled Vines*, *Ariadne's Thread*, and *Lips Unsealed*. Her poems have appeared in most literary and poetry magazines and she is the subject of an award winning documentary film, *Lyn Lifshin: Not Made Of Glass*, available from Women Make Movies. Her poem, 'No More Apologizing' has been called "among the most impressive documents of the women's poetry movement". For interviews, photographs, more biographical material, reviews, interviews, prose, samples of work and more, consult her web site at www.lynlifshin.com

NEW FROM SHEARSMAN BOOKS

Peter Riley: *The Dance at Mociu*. (120pp, 8ins x 5ins, £8.95.)

The Dance at Mociu is a collection of stories, epiphanies and prose poems by poet Peter Riley, author of *Passing Measures* (Carcanet, 2000) and *Alstonefield* (Carcanet, December 2003) as well as many other volumes. For several years the author has been visiting Transylvania, today part of Romania, mainly in search of traditional music and the remnants of Central Europe's peasant culture. These pieces document the slow process of discovery, wonder and delight occasioned by this rural province of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, an almost forgotten part of Old Europe that saw rulers come and go, borders come and go. What stayed was a vibrant local culture, remarkable music, and an ethnic patchwork that has only recently started to unravel.

ZOË SKOULDING

Through Trees 1

circled by gull
shrieks slicks of
mud sucking at
feet banded sky
black trees this
shaking palm of
ruffled grey-blue
water jolts foot
steps closer you
have to go with
what's coming
in a flutter of
oyster catchers
over water and
blood flowering
under skin tuned
to concert pitch
then wavering
slowly off-key
in frequencies
your ears will
never catch as
bones pile up
problems for the
future muscles
waste chances &
fat builds up for
nothing but to
bulk this column
raised in honour
of human futility

Through Trees 2

trees print on
skin a birch kiss
burns shadow on
your epidermis
flushed by wind
or sun peeling
slightly scratch
off to reveal the
winning answers
all correct but
the prize out of
your grasp like
the whole ethical
trouble involved
in wearing some-
one else's face
rather than heart
a light wind rises
& a momentary
shiver raises new
knots a second
scars you change
scores a surface
wrinkle trunks
lean into others
for safety in
likeness to build
a paper tower
everyone must
agree quickly on
the best method

Through Trees 3

a sharp frost in
Pentraeth woods
each leaf edged
in white in your
memory of 1987
Duisburg in the
snow you set out
without knowing
how far from
one lost street to
another through
such trees how far
from there to here
& now you are a
pillar of salt a slow
erosion in rain a
bitter crumbling
of your bones a
series of wooden
poses held in
wired anatomies
the head tilted to
look back frozen
to a pose dried
out in deserts
parched seabeds
snow that never
comes any more
the trees' harsh
angles falter fall

Through Trees 4

each breath sifts
air for salt soft
rot to heave a
blush of oxygen
into its hollows
on Llanddwyn
beach a red
balloon is rooted
in dune grasses its
taut string pulls
air tight against
air you gulp at the
sky vaulted vapour
in this movement
perpetual over the
globe fiery mobile
& lucid it haunts
you at the core
a deep gap shot
through with fizz
white foam seethes
at the waves' edge
breath traverses
you as if words
come puffed out
forced panting
from these gapes
in the self & its
very own stink

Monika Rinck

translated from the German by Nick Grindell

pond

says he: grief is a pond.
says i: yes, grief is a pond.
because grief lies in a hollow,
reeking and shot through with fish.
says he: and guilt is a pond.
says i: yes, guilt's a pond, too.
because guilt sloshes about in a hole
already reaching the flattened pit
of my stiffly upstretched arm.
says he: deceit is a pond.
says i: yes, deceit is also a pond.
because on summer nights you can
picnic on the banks of deceit
and something always gets left behind.

things

things today are somehow lonely
things are like vases without friends
like the sideboard here with its marble
slab stood against the wall and left there.
what we want to know is: don't things
have other things to play with?
have things been given nothing, not the
slightest thing, to hold on to?
but if we were perfectly frank,
we would have but a single question:
where have all the things gone
that are willing to shoulder our guilt?
winding thread me, spinning top you.

Shearsman 56

New Books (n.b. these are mostly VERY abbreviated, and the full versions of each notice – which include more extended quotations – can be found on the shearsman.com website):

M.T.C. Cronin: *beautiful, unfinished*-PARABLE/SONG/CANTO/POEM (Salt Publishing, Cambridge, 2003. Isbn 1-876857-29-3. 103pp, pb, £8.95 / \$12.95).

Margie Cronin has written a lot, and seems to write fast, something that is sometimes looked at askance, as if it's not done for a true artist to knock off fine work too often and too consistently. Blame the Romantics for this, and the starving man in the garret versus the jobbing versifier of earlier years; blame it on angst-ridden Beethoven versus glorious, and fluent old Haydn. This 77-part *Parable* that opens the book carries the dates 26-31 October 2000; quite an impressive feat to do it in 6 days, especially when it's this good:

XLII

You never write again
 What you have written
The night is under my skin
Like long grass it grows
Like want it grows
I am fishing in it
 With the hook of morning

The 77 poems that make up this sequence are single statements, fragments and impressions that have been put together to make a quilt-like and powerful whole. It's a lyrical sequence about love and communication, about feeling and being in the world, and about nothing at all, about epiphanies and the measure of experience, the impossibility of expressing the truth of experience. These parables are parabolic.

The *Seven Mysterious Songs* seem unlike songs, but are more incantation, prayer and celebration, with a touch of the surreal unifying the mysteries of the whole. *Cantos Minus Melody* is another dangerous title, *cantos* recalling towering figures from the past and *minus melody* an odd confession for a poet. What there *is* here however is more parable, and a quite liberating fluency. There's an air of mystery and surreality about this section too, with poems such as *Canto of the Lemon Orchard*, which reminds me of east European post-folk poetry, albeit without the disguises that that kind of work had to wear for political reasons. This volume was Shearsman Book of the Month for August 2003.

Ian Davidson: *Human Remains & Sudden Movement* (West House Books, Sheffield, 2003. 24pp, chapbook, £3.50).

Davidson's work should be more widely available, and this sequence of 17 poems will do until Shearsman Books publishes a large collection of his work in 2004.

This is a poetry grounded in the person of the poet. There is no 'I' in the poems, but the poet's presence is felt throughout, filtering experiences and landscapes, shuffling and blending them, draining them through a colander of tightly-wrought language. Excellent stuff.

Nate Dorward (ed): *Removed for Further Study. The Poetry of Tom Raworth* (The Gig, Toronto, 2003. ISBN 0-9685294-3-7. 288pp, pb, US\$19, £15, €22.)

23 essays/studies from a wide range of contributors. They vary in tone from the festschrift celebration to serious academic study and back to illuminating personal memoir. There are two studies of *Ace*, which surprises me a little, notwithstanding that book's interest as a new departure in the author's work in the early to mid-1970s. *Writing* is also covered, but *Eternal Sections* – to my mind the magnum opus of Raworth's work so far – is not analysed. Excellent volume.

Richard Burns: *Book With No Back Cover* (David Paul Editions, London, 2003. ISBN 0-9540542-3-7. 108pp, pb, £7.99)

This is Shearsman Book of the Month for July 2003 – see the website. *Book With No Back Cover* is a life-affirming book that ought to convince a poetry public, whose taste has been deadened by too much pap, that verse has something to say that matters.

Michael Ayres: *a.m.* (Salt Publishing, Cambridge, 2003. 272pp, pb, £11.95 / \$16.95. ISBN 1-876857-28-5).

This huge collection is dominated by the 75-page poem *Transporter*, about which I remain somewhat ambivalent (having first encountered it in manuscript form a year ago). The rest of the volume however, is a cornucopia of pleasures. Ayres' discursive style, positively luxurious in the way the poems unfold, is something rather distinct in modern British poetry; he uses long lines, is unafraid of long poems, and is quite prepared to adopt narrative forms in a way that seems utterly foreign in this country — a country in which the ruling mainstream seems to be in love with the inconsequential anecdote, but is afraid of grand themes and long arching narrative. It's the kind of work you can wallow in, but it doesn't lapse into prose despite the long sentence-based cadences; it offers instead a powerful alternative to other orthodoxies, mainstream as well as experimental. It is in fact a truly radical poetry, in that it stands outside all current norms of writing in the UK. This could mean that it will be mauled by all comers, but I hope the reverse will be the case, because this is an art that should be celebrated.

There's a sense of rightness about some of the lines, that curious sense of recognition that occurs when the poet's said something you've never quite been able to put into words. Ayres manages that so often, that it's almost uncomfortable. *a.m.* is a masterly book, one that demands to be read. *a.m.* is Shearsman Book of the Month for October 2003. See the website for the full review.

Theodore Enslin: *In Tandem* (Stop Press, London, 2003. 262pp, pb, £14.50. ISBN 0-9529961-8-9). With photographs by Alison Enslin.

This is Stop Press' second edition of Enslin's work: the earlier, and much shorter *Sequentiae* (1999) was very fine, and similar in formal terms to the poems presented here, which draws on work already published in chapbook form in the US. Enslin's work has taken on a different kind of organisation in recent years, in which repetition is used musically — *pace* the several clear references to J S Bach, above all in the *Six Music Lessons* group of poems. The result is an odd (at first) incantatory quality, that also suggests to me Beckett's late prose. The whole book is shot through with musical forms and sounds, with landscape — Enslin's New England, its sounds, smells, and changing seasons. His way of dealing poetically with nature in a poem is quite fascinating, an attempt to convey its wonder through participation rather than the haphazard similes we tend to be fed by lesser writers. In the USA, the book can be ordered from SPD; in the UK, from Peter Riley's mail-order service, or direct from the publisher at 263 Nether Street, London N3 1PD. *In Tandem* is Shearsman Book of the Month for September 2003.

William Fuller: *Sadly* (Flood Editions, Chicago, 2003. 58pp, pb, \$13)

This is a fascinating book, but I'm not sure there is an adequate critical language to deal with what's going on here or, if there is, I don't know it. There is a strain of contemporary American verse which is innovative, communicative, not afraid to glory in linguistic surfaces, while at the same time eschewing the Language School's self-referential, determinedly alogical and uncommunicative perorations. Looking at the poems in this volume from a more traditional perspective, I suppose one problem for a reader might be the lack of a discernible beginning to many of the poems; they tend to end with a nice flourish, but the first line often feels as if it's an interruption of other things, as if the poem has just sneaked into one's awareness, nudging its way to the forefront. There's a sense of indeterminacy here, which I find interesting, disruptive and really rather exciting. It's not a one-string bow though; poems like *Hyperboreans* are written with a laconic cod-archaic tone, crossed with the other-worldliness that typified some of Borges's shorter metafiction.

If pushed to define this, I suppose I would have to say that it's a kind of modern lyric poetry, maybe a metaphysical modern lyric, but I can't seem to get away from the verbal play, the dazzling reflections in a broken mirror that so much of this poetry seems to be like. Maybe there's even a kind of surrealism at work here.

Sadly is an extraordinary book that demands to be read, and read many times. I recommend you buy it immediately.