

spring 2004 issue
edited by tony frazer



shearsman 58

poetry by
peter boyle
andy brown
kari edwards
david greenslade
trevor joyce
nancy kuhl
john levy
marianne morris
alistair noon
estill pollock
monika rinck
mark weiss

translations by
nick grindell

shearsman books
58 velwell road
exeter ex4 4ld
england
www.shearsman.com
£2.50

TREVOR JOYCE

4 Poems from the Chinese of Ruan Ji

24

Deep grief
 constrains
 the will;
long pain
 is this continuing
 fear.

Does pleasure
 take?
 Sun
plunges
 down
 the west.

Crickets
 wither
 at the sill;
brief cicadas
 cry
 in the yard.

When heart
 and mind
 conflict,
who can
 discern
 true inclination?

Distant,
 a bird
 among the clouds,
I would
 shriek
 once.

Alexipharms for death
flourish
in paradise;
long flight
there brings
long life.

50

Dew stiffens
into frost,
grass frays
to husk.

What moral
there?
What truth
survives?

Bestride
the stratosphere,
hold incorruptibles
for intimates;

take pause
unceasingly
for breath.

66

Polar
cold
marks terminus;
escape,
even by ocean,
has its end.

Our sun
 gone out,
 we stand
alone
 benighted
 and unkinged.

Better
 tend
 orchard
than forever
 watch
 your back,

yet see:
 even the vulgar
 sparrow
sits
 in someone's
 sights.

In a trice
 power slips
 the grasp;
armed men
 defile
 the grave.

Now loyalty's
 exemplars
 are all dead,
tears
 cancel
 face.

Give me
 a purebred
 from the riverlands,
let me
 traverse
 my range.

70

We, all impassioned,
suffer
grief;
feel no
passions, know
no grief.

If not already
snarled,
why covet
further
traps
and goods?

Minor
vortices
approach
the utter
limits of
the atmosphere;

in light
the rain
-bow
glitters
and grows
parched.

Heart
to ash
exhausted
settles
in a ruined
house.

Say, why
should I
experience

nostalgia
for the forms
of men?

How,
rid now
of all familiar
fixes,
slough
my self?

MARIANNE MORRIS

Four Poems

Poem

Observed from the top
of the horse-and-cart.
Naked, with a

curved set &

dimples; in a Quaker hat,
pulling on the rumour

reins you noose

the decision & it laughs to you.
Romance, take hold
of her bruised

calling to life

clutches to her mouth
the last attempt at

breathing

Drowning divides us, like good
 art. Cannot fish the two
 as one mesh
laboured
dark and your scandal.
Sensual power is better,
loose the net
black and bring it back
 full of our red lips
 longings &
attempts
at chastity, which mock us;
even in earnest the disparity
mocks us.

Poem

These vast
 chances, all
scalpel intimacies. Burning gun chariot
billowing polyester doom, cock her trigger
 with a click
 & the clomp
 of hooves, our night
mares. The bells peal seven o'clock's
news. She wants a cheap black raincoat
 & its slick
with the rain
 makes her Bergman,
stamping through colossal weights,
like memory. It's not true; film
sticks

on a wasp-tooth. Perjury
to link in & watch

the idea returning, repeating
on itself. You're mad, you're

puppy-hair curdling
on the stone wall.

Breathe in deeply with me,
motorist, does the smog

hit your throat at the back
as good as his rejection?

Meteorological
sightings.

Was I pushed too hard, was
how far up

from where she jumped
were the

red finger-marks?
Pulse on the window.

Copious beauty
sung on her lungs, pillowed,

shying each
peppered disappointment

with one cold, wet lip,
pressed to the other.

Memento Mori

How's my
soul he kept as if
spun in a bottle memento
mori, added to which I
butterfly wing, half moult.
Green on the edge, it laughed
like unbeautiful sitting in a
beauty mask I mistook
many things. Took
he many things it's good
to talk about. You decipher
that's a hidden message, sure scrambled
months and months of jigsaws it's good
to talk about in a safe place not
being safe, she said wet by the
shower curtain. Not place specific, only
products of time, she
said stood in the middle
of a month, these
things are lost in their disguise
as less important. Lives
without meaning do you feel nothing
to the extent you push
under carpets what who
deemed a crummy memory; broken
I fear by that
headless lack. Strength
in a form, like lacking; comes dressed
like absence and is recognised. I masquerade
my defiance. Party favours.
No tears over buried masques
under which you are actually beautiful.

Marianne Morris was born in Toronto, raised in London, and is now studying in Cambridge. Her most recent chapbook is *Gathered Tongue* (Bad Press, Cambridge, 2004).

kari edwards

the ice complaint is saved as exact change for the one in the mistaken room

I belong to just one hour – 6 in the morning until eternity; striking the white flag out for no one. did I mention the mechanical intrusion; prolonged psychosis without the business aspects? when I said had a fit, which turned out to be an earthquake, was in fact an hour later and an earthquake nonetheless.

I belong to the morning until eternity, waiting for a decent exposure to lucidity. they don't come any more; just detach someone absent from some social fraternity. I forgot to mention each turning page is a life time, which is a medieval metaphor for the miracle of roses or the rose bowl parade and all that.

I belong to the morning until eternity; no ordinary beggar's scrip world wide distribution random pork sausage; no executed victim, or at least not executed alone in an instant of eternity; an illusion in sweetened condensed milk tattooed with a smile: "I am dead, never existed, just ritual smoke that vanished in the ultimate alchemy; blue obscenities, myrrh and frankincense."

this is high mass; my high mass in artificial silence, an eternity with call waiting. I take it from the bottom up, read backwards, get truths faster and faster; get arms broken, legs shattered, left blind, pale against a carpet. no escape, no eternity.

I read and reread the present, the future and past; snap back to blue gray; no just gray; need a quick adjective; an eternity of ending modifiers.

ESTILL POLLOCK

The Lute Girl

(after Po Chü-i, AD 772-846)

The maples decayed.
The cut flames of a few, last leaves
sank back into the river.
My host and I, warm with wine and the soldiers' songs,
led his skittish grey down by the muddy quay.
The horse shied farther up the bank, dragging its reins
as my old comrade, wading in at the water's edge,
pushed hard against the bow.
As my little boat met the wider stream,
I heard his voice, disembodied now, *goodbye goodbye*
and then the dark.

The stars were drunk and the water swirled.
An hour, a moment, ten destines passed
and I awoke in reeds, downstream to the world
in the mouth of Ko-pen creek.

In the cool of the evening, the rushes
trembling, whispering with crickets
and the water lapping in the shallows, at first
I mistook the lute strings plucked in time
for river sounds, then gathered my senses, wrung them
dripping in the chilly air, and still the notes, and now
a sweet voice neither above the strings
nor beneath their liquid resonance, yet
something of the colour of the forest birds
calling from the shady canopy, or a handful of river pearls
rolling in a marble dish, silk split with a sharp blade
then silence with the plectrum's pause,
and in the clearing a figure's silhouette
where the untrimmed lantern flared and guttered.

We faced in silence, she half-hidden by the lute
and shadows, and I hung in river tides
and a silver, swimming autumn moon.

Caught in the chords' charm, I sat heavily before her,
that she oblige a traveller one song more. She said,
'these notes are no man's, and bitter reminiscence
ices passion – who are we
that love should triumph over silence...'
I stared, transfixed, yet as she rose and turned to go
she turned again, and walking forward
knelt, and locked my look in hers.

'I passed my childhood in the capital.
I was twelve, and with my fingers teased
sweet sorcery from the strings, and rubbed my voice along the frets
until the masters of the arts themselves
acknowledged my worth, and praised its milky subtleties.
The ladies of the court envied my gifts,
burning incense at secret shrines
against simple beauty and a voice that knew the world.

'A look encouraged young lords their applause,
and silver brocade, and gold enamelled ornaments
followed me year by careless year, and the wine
that stained our mouths stained too
spring's breezy expectations
until winter came, spare and unforgiving.

'Times changed; my brother sought the wars in Kansuh
and never returned; my mother died.
Nights chased mornings,
and morning showed the truth of fading beauty in the glass.
The courtiers drifted
back to their estates, their dogs and wives.

'Humbled, I became a trader's wife, a mean life
reckoned by profit and separation.
With the tenth moon, my husband journeyed south
where tea fields await the scales, and I,
wandering the river banks these many nights,
remember the shape of the past, its features
cut from empty dreams.'

She stared past me into the river eddies.
Into the silence between us a cuckoo's curdled note,
or out amongst the dwarf bamboo
the mournful cries of animals without names,
then nothing, until vagrant, hollow pipes
announced the distant villages awake, again the day
beaten of its hours, the thin beast
yoked to stony soil, and the shaman at the day's first fire
casting saltpetre against fever.

Her palm against the strings damped the last chord.
We departed, companions in this afterlife, she
to the river path and I – wrongfully dismissed from office,
exiled here these past two years
far from the Prefecture of the Nine Rivers –
to the cold shore and my boat within the reeds,
gathering around me my chrysanthemum robe,
bright with dew.

Fired-Earth Figures in a Red Relief
(Pompeii, AD 79)

A shaky, freehand shoreline mocks the notion
of perimeters— leggy, Italianate,
the slip-stack tiles and melting oleander
pooling to a bas-relief of broken gods.

Lizards cling to Mars, the alphanumerics
of his dedication lost to shrugging earth,
volcanic ash and knock-kneed, dazed verticals:
underfoot, smithereens of fractal *tempus*.

The scenery is goat trails, twisting cart ruts.
The foreground figures sprawl in fixed positions
of tableaux heat and vacuum, everyday life
a held breath, sculpted lastly fallen, spellbound.

Their memories survive these exhumations,
scale models of imagined cities dreaming,
neither sleeping nor awake, patient within
the asphyxia of blue skies swollen red.

In the die trace of streets, a neatness nowhere
in geography accepts time's tourists, here—
these others, as we, but different now, cast
cold in gypsum— once fizzing, festival things.

No bold poses, mimicking the immortals:
instead, on a day much like any other,
a field hand, pausing on the slopes, sees sparrows
burst and burn, before the shaking loose of stars.

JOHN LEVY

Emily Dickinson and N

Emily Dickinson: "... to N's I had an
especial aversion, as they
always seemed
unfinished M's."

A world of the
unfinished
next to the finished. A
world, for

her, alive and
emotional, full of
seeming, all the way
down

to where a letter is never
fulfilled
no matter where
it appears.

A Speck of Suspense, or, The Fate of a Particular K

Few people read a poem for the
what next, what next sense of
suspense. For example, to find out

what will happen to the sound of a
particular letter as it journeys
through the poem. The suspense of

hearing, say, the fate of a k
that started as captain
(k at the steering wheel)

and was rebuked, then kicked
by cruel kismet, and knuckle-
headed knaves, onto the deck, onto a k's

knees

then made to walk the
plank
to the concluding kerplunk

John Levy is a lawyer, working as a public defender in Tucson, Arizona, and was a contributing editor to this magazine's first series in 1981-2. Tel-let published his chapbook *Oblivion, Tyrants, Crumbs* in 2003. **Trevor Joyce** lives in Cork, Ireland. The second edition of his Collected Poems, titled *with the first dream of fire they hunt the cold*, was published by Shearsman Books in the UK and USA in November 2003. Two chapbooks, *Take Over* and *Undone Say* have also recently been published by The Gig in Toronto. He was awarded a Fulbright scholarship in 2002-3, and in 2004 was elected a member of Aosdána (akin to the Académie Française, but restricted to creative artists). **kari edwards** is based in San Francisco and is the author of *iduna*, (O Books, 2003), *a day in the life of p.*, (subpress collective, 2002), and *a diary of lies* (Belladonna #27 by Belladonna Books, 2002). edwards' work can also be found in *Aufgabe, Fracture, Bombay Gin, Belight Fiction, Van Gogh's Ear, Vert, 88: A Journal of Contemporary American Poetry, Narrativity, Shampoo, Big Bridge, Boog City, Word/For Word, 5 Trope*, and *The International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*.

ALISTAIR NOON

Slight Things

Landscapes hang there, highways in the air, curl upwards, sideways, to the base,
intimate mists coil around outhouses, hiss in the grass: *There, then where?*
The eye names hill, plain, is a flux-map, a flower for an evening,
invisible lines launch clockhands forward, or
jolt them brake, sunsets loiter;
the globe as an orange, its prised-off segments.
Morning repaints the land, not hill but plain, not plain but pine that stabs the
crumbleground –
yesterday red earth, today brown, tomorrow blue?
Hills roughen and smoothen, fields stripe green and yellow, carnival faces flow –
city observes country, pixels on a screen,
our breath condenses to a journal,
the ideal pine, the real heights and diameters, the rule and its pig-trough
of exceptions,
glimpses of a loco, pine sparsens, the brief arc of streams –
across ridges and oceans, landscapes to guess at.

Wilderness

For Valeri Scherstjanoi

There's a bottle
on a pebbled shore;

and a bell,
kicking in the air;

a horn, harsh
as bark;

and an engine
in the constant wind:

there's a saw,
icy as a stream;

and a drill, white
as the sun;

there are the clear
peaks of a hammer

and the dark lake
of a voice.

[Untitled]

A question flutters, still green:
how long will litter seal to the ground?
What weight stops departure when
lightest leaves sprint with the wind?
Ringpull, acorn, styrofoam, fork –
easy to alter the fallen fact
or brook, quicker over stone:
for an eye's brief look, oil-unstained.
From refuse container, roof and drain
sparrows horde, their shapes then drowned
in bloom-draped bushes, to surface
faster then before, faster
than the fuselages from below,
exhaust-prints lost in the blue
sahara, undercarriages preened, sound
recoiling, body sucked sunwards –
a swelling, failing, recovering lightburst
squashes the space between the entrance gate bars.

Alistair Noon lives in China, where he works as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language. He has translated from, amongst others, August Stramm, Gennadi Aigi, Mayakovsky and, more recently, from Classical Chinese. Poems have been published in magazines and anthologies in Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Russia.

NANCY KUHL

Divining

There are answers
 in arrows, in their arched
paths in green air. Afternoon
 tea spilled into china,

and a girl — back to the crowd, hands wooden
as any snake charmer's — reads
 the trajectory, the splitting
 of air, the landing, angle lodged

in the spilled grass. This is
 the love of promise, stuck
45 degrees from the gentle lawn.
 And there are answers in the carousel's chaos,

its spin, the rise of horses and reaching
for rings. Calliope tin
 and swirl: shards of light
braid themselves into what must be

a man. A house — which is not
 a house but the iridescent
curve of an oyster shell — is caught
 under a spill of mud and rock.

There are answers, too, in the teen-aged lovers who drive the curves
of Red Hill Road until it bends into Kings Highway
 near the elementary, near the brick church.
Or say they are grown and mute, peeling

 the old wildness from their skins — couldn't they
find answers there? Couldn't they look
into their hands and know something?
Who couldn't learn the secret —

the tarot's tripping fool, the smooth language
runes scatter like salt?

A Saint Christopher medal swings
from the rear view of that Dodge.

Keys

Some men love order. One
boards the bus at 6th and Chestnut each
afternoon at 3:07. Until the bus stops
at the train station, he walks

the aisle, shouting *Turn off the music; No
gum chewing; No eating; No drinking.*
Another, seated in the bus's last row, stands
in his place at 3:15, yells *Can't you read*

the sign (he points at the stenciled cardboard)?
Passengers must remain seated at all times. This
happens every day. At 3:18 they get off the bus, race
to catch the same 3:20 train. I imagine they are at it

again by 3:21. Theirs is collapsed wanting.
Certain nights I dream their faces, broken,
listing in the bus's back window.

lowest note; list of solutions (as in: the Master used a);
the hold which plaster has on a wall;
a pin, bolt or wedge (as in: a cotter); a cardinal
point; vibrating steel tongues; spiritual authority
(as in the Bishop's or the Spiritual Power
of the); primary claw of a hawk's foot.

common in phrases and proverbs (such as: to the street; as cold as a; and book).

Marigold custard: crush 1 cup of marigold petals; mix with salt, sugar, nutmeg. Scald 3 cups of milk with 2 vanilla beans and an egg yolk. Combine with dry ingredients. Cool before serving.

The air in here suffers from suggestibility; it stinks
of rubbery skin. And what's left behind.

My friend wanted to live in a kaleidoscope;
she painted every room in her house
a different color. The bathroom on the third floor,
battleship gray. This is what it means
to be in search of origins.

Wives' Tales: Vinegar will dry
up all your blood (not true).
If you eat too many carrots
your skin will turn orange (True: palms
and the soles of feet).

I served divorce papers to suited and severe men and women every Friday in
July. I once chased a woman three blocks, waving her bulky envelope. Her red
blazer flapped behind her like a cape. By block two I was gaining. She wasn't
one of those pumps-in-handbag-gym-shoes-to-work types. She had no idea
how to run. That was during the city's dry spell and hydrants were opened all
over; they bubbled like picture-book fountains. Imagine that.

black-canal. blue-ferry
route. yellow-rail-
road. green-bridge. red-snow
emergency. double
green-covered bridge.

From a distance, a dead sheep and a dead deer
look about the same. If a sheep dies
when the ground is frozen, you can
haul it out to the highway, dump it,
drive off, and no one is any the wiser.

I shine shoes on the busiest corner
in Philadelphia. I draw a circle on each
cheek with discarded apricot lipstick. My mother
has moved to a leaf-shaped island where storms lift

dogs and even cars right off the ground, plant
them, sometimes, miles away.

There's a gray leaf pressed
to the windshield. It's stuck
in the wiper blade whining
across the glass. Back, forth
back. They're calling for rain.

Nancy Kuhl, who lives in New Haven, CT., is co-editor of Phylum Press with Richard Deming. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Verse*, *Fence*, *Phoebe*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Cream City Review*, *The Journal*, and other magazines and her chapbook, *In the Arbor*, was published by Kent State University Press.

PETER BOYLE

The Museum of Space

In the museum of space you open the lost codes. They glide around you – emblems and word fragments, pierced shells that become once more perfect spheres. You remember watching a man counting the beads. Though small enough to vanish into his hand, they tumbled through infinite circles. As you looked out one window, the cliff directly in front loomed up like a future you would never scale. Why are water and sand always used to measure time passing? They must then be the one substance – what never gets dry, what never gets wet, the absolute embrace that says, Wade into me.

In the high empty room of the museum the artist sits in primordial solitude, slapping layered paint on the wall. It twists and curves, at one moment resembling his face, at another the sky. The same idealized bubble sustaining both life and extinction. And the children who walk across the room scatter iceblock sticks and chocolate wrappers that give a wispy transience to the portrait.

In the museum of space no art work is ever completed. Sand and water filter in equal measure from the ceiling to the basement. Constructed on the ancient alignment of heaven and hell, the museum opens onto the silent inexhaustible corridors of the brain.

The Philosopher of Leopards

“Peacocks flutter in autumn.

They have lost the will to migrate.”

(Shen Shen, philosopher of leopards, 3003)

Why is a child’s ear like a carhorn?

Why are toes always too heavy for the journey?

Forever ahead of every shadow

the philosopher of leopards has no names.

To her even adjectives are insufficient,

not yet truly fleeting (those niggardly noun-huggers!)

Verbs trouble her deeply –

their imposed repetitions,

all those runnings and jumpings and glidings.

She has restricted herself to the classic languages
consisting only of 'buts' and 'wells'.
There the subtlety of a gaze,
the sadness of a hand that has given up on gesturing
could best approximate her texts.

The philosopher of leopards does not translate.
It does not matter to her
that the Japanese version said "what. . . what . . . what",
the Persian "now. . . now. . . now",
the Polish "and yet. . . and yet. . . and yet"
so long as they got the intonation right.

The leopard is the landscape without holes,
the hand blurred by the foot's arrival,
the spots that are the snow
that was the sky.

Disappearance is all.

Apologia pro vita sua

One night in Paris I saw glowing in a small shopwindow a page of René Char's handwriting: *Recours au ruisseau*. The delicate ink of finality. At the foot of the poem I saw where Char had dated it – three years and two days before my birth. At that hour the backstreet, somewhere between the Musée d'Orsay and Opéra, was completely deserted. Lit by a single lightbulb, the window seemed to have waited over half a century to find me.

Last night I dreamt again of my own death. Guided by the head priest of some strange church I was ascending the inner staircase of an immense tower, just ahead of me my family and the serene and tender face of the Buddhist poet, my friend Judy. We marvelled at the wall we were climbing against – a magnificent rust red patterned in waterpipes, putti and other embellishments of the underworld. With my crippled leg and damaged body I had fallen behind the others when a stair broke, the cracked stone slab crashing into the darkness below.

I woke on a stretcher inside the church. The priest had bandaged me and removed my calliper and I lay there praying that I would stand and walk again.

In the poem Char promises that he will “begin again higher up”, that when all is destroyed the river will speak. The priest’s voice flowed on, a darkened stream in which I could recognise no reflection but which held, I sensed this strongly, no malevolence. Weighed down by his robes of office he was simply doing what he could, human and divine, to summon a miracle. Impatient to rejoin my family I tried to put the calliper back on but my fingers no longer knew how to grasp laces or buckle straps.

I rested at the top of a low hill where the dry yellow grass folded around me. In the distance, unreachable now, was a small stream that divided me from the others. The magic rites of the church were beginning to take effect as I woke again in the air a little way above myself. The panic of not being there for my children came and went in waves like a long cargo ship buried in the shadow of bridges, like everything else abandoned to its own fate.

I remembered the flooded world of Char’s landscapes, barges gliding through villages and under fortified walls, and that beautiful word “I’amont”, “upstream”. I remembered the confident builder he was, defiant of all downfalls. I was already dead and I was still only just underway.

Peter Boyle is an Australian poet living in Sydney. His three collections of poetry *Coming home from the world* (1994), *The Blue Cloud of Crying* (1997), and *What the painter saw in our faces* (2001) have received several awards, including the New South Wales Premier’s Award, the South Australian Festival award and the National Book Council Award. Forthcoming this year from the University of Queensland Press is his latest collection *Museum of Space*. His next book as a translator is *The Trees: Selected Poems of Eugenio Montejó*, due shortly from Salt Publishing, Cambridge.

Monika Rinck lives in Berlin and is the author of *Begriffstudio 1996-2001* (edition Sutstein, Berlin, 2002). Her first collection of poems will be published later this year by the zu Klampen Verlag. **Nick Grindell** is a professional translator, also living in Berlin.

Estill Pollock has recently completed *Blackwater Quartet*. The opening movement, *Constructing the Human*, was published in 2001 by Poetry Salzburg Press; it is followed by *Theories of Fugue* and *Tsunami Muses*, selections from which are being published by Flarestack Publications in 2004. Several poem sequences taken from the final part, *Adventures in the Gothic*, are selected for wider publication in 2004 in British and American journals. American by nationality, he lives in Essex.

MONIKA RINCK

Four Poems (translated by Nick Grindell)

park

the white light in the streets
bundles the city and in the park
above the paths where summer's burned
stand sails of smoke.
we'll sacrifice your chastity first, dearest
and get the gift of language in return
spent and relaxed the bodies lie
in the shade of speech.

feelings at windows

supplementary desire takes place when
ever desire itself adds that which
even fulfilment, if it existed, would lack.
when the unknown meshes with the absolute
in the mingling light at evening windows
and distance dissolves into expanse. i shout:
i want none of what i already know!

otherwise there's cold solitudes
like there's cold chicken in paris restaurants.

disembodiment

tapirs are complex minions of diligence.
the way they go about on low-down legs
with their much too dainty hooves –
parading penumbral beasts that send
gravity into a measured sway.
their tracks are surely indiscreet patterns
where those in the know
can decipher their only joy –
proceeding to mate with the utmost politeness.
but their voice, we are told, is a feeble zizuzizu
not unlike the squeaking of suspension coils.
sunday, get out of bed and off to the museum
where behind glass their wired skeletons
wait for the second lesson:
today the animals will learn from me
what it means to be anguished
but agile nonetheless.

the disciple

an obstinate disciple, so youthful
but the one whom jesus loved
who laid beside him at the last

kissing him was like kissing a door
slim flat stern with hinges on one side
but moveable on the other
how it swung open how we fell
there were boats and we took them
our nicotine-sour mouths in each other
like an element to shape something from –
the bitterness gathered in the hollows
when it wore off we smoked

in the end a rain fell
a rain we could barely believe
it turned cold, things got wet and everywhere
the shivering began – our
three-dimensional talk folded.

then the plain grew wide and dark
no one was left, not a sound to be heard

when i meet him again he can speak
i think he is my brother
say something, he says and i speak

MARK WEISS

from ELEGIES

4
Temporary lives in the tidal slough
where four feet out the bar has become
a long slice of sand, parallel to the beach,
glazed by the wash
of the receding tide
(the water as silver and quick
as a school of alewives).
There is a need for continuity of purpose,
a study beyond the instant.
The moon tilts
like a rakish hat, those dry
lava planes called
“seas” clearly visible above the horizon.
A crow flies eastward. In the distance
children, dogs.

..
.

6

The drowning man's thirst.

.

Building a structure out of moments of clarity.

.

Let's imagine ourselves through *this* one.

.

To heal the schism.

.

As if to demand of the listener

light streaming through high clerestories,

The mechanical squeak of a gull's wing. To deny clouds

to deny grey flowers

to deny all colors. I say

the lips the hair

the purple iris.

..

.

7

Said nothing. Slipped a knife
between his ribs.

.

The war to end time.

.

Had to climb over a wall
to get here.

.

What you want

is a strenuous analysis

of the simple

act,

the doe

forming

its cheek

to the man's

hand.

The fact:

her face molded

to the man's hand,

the geometry of passion

for all practical
purposes endless.

..
.

9
The mythic event of entry into the earth
made banal by the proliferation of tunnels. I know
what the hill hides, what's under
the hill.

..
.

10
ON GREAT SOUTH BAY

All day the night-chill
nestles beneath the eaves of the house,
waiting for darkness.

..
.

The sun seems to hang in the sky.

..
.

Any source of joy.

..
.

Underfoot, the weathered terrain of old boards.
The sharp squeak of two trees
rubbing their branches.

..
.

34 swans on Great South Bay,
a dozen baymen, and
one white sail. Sharp steady breeze
southerly, off the ocean,
sun to the south.
Wind-blown sumac.

..
.

Because a fire was in my head.

..
.

Low sun through the thicket of overgrown sumac.
Now 46 swans on Great South Bay
feeding and preening and
spreading their wings to the last light.

..
.

And then
the dark passion
intrudes upon sunlight, my heart
aches and a
drowsy numbness,
or worse, the stalker that
battens on happiness.

.
And I built him a bower in my breast.

.
Very quietly trying to change things.

..
.

DAVID GREENSLADE

Animals

When I fall in love
animals appear
at the very edge.
I follow them –
the birch-white spike
of a blue heron
waiting among reeds;
the yellow head
of a green woodpecker
cackling as it dips
across a field;
a black otter
shaking spray
like a fireworks display;
two kingfishers
burning through river
willows below the filthy
railway bridge.
I walk with unfenced,
untidy horses

near a basin of
flooded spear thistles,
learning phrases off by heart.
There was a fox
and, near Sand Lake (Ontario) a bear;
even the Babylonian track of an artichoke
when I reclaimed my oldest daughter.
Where my limits are indistinct,
fade, shine, I watch
dragonflies pincer
at the abdomen.

Tulip Tree

One glorious night
when every blade of grass
carried a hod of stars,
I wanted to sleep under a tulip tree.
I knew by morning the ground
would be white with frost
so I found some cardboard boxes,
taking my time, busting
them open like wedding
presents in the dark. All
night the cardboard shifted
underneath me like escalator plates.
My pillow, a pair of boots that wouldn't fold.
If I slept I don't remember.
There were other voices nearby. I woke
every time I heard a peacock bray.
White scooped petals fell like boats
from the moon towards me. The city shimmered
like burning alcohol and I was happy
deep in the drunken poem of my tree.
The wet park stained a boundary
around the island of my sleeping bag.

ANDY BROWN

My Hair Shirt

On the fringe of Nothingness lies a choice: tell the truth or live the lie. The lie is inviting but empty – a ballet of fear and curiosity. The truth is inviting and full as an autumn barrel. Just as river currents speed up here and there, so memories part and stream around us. My eyes pullulate with big gummy tears. We hang suspended in the heart, skulking in the jumble of each other's foibles.

'Tell the truth or live the lie.'

With a big clumsy boot heel, the life we dreamed of often is scraped in the dust. The familiar turns a stranger. Night falls and buries us alive.

'Tell the truth or live the lie.'

I stumble on, a wind from nowhere pushing me. Turning back into the corridor of our lives – a station on the underground of intimacy – I cling to your face like a fly. Your eyes are little crucibles.

"Perhaps we *could* adapt to a new life," you reflect, "free from all this language."

Across the blush of obscure dawn, we stare at each other like decorative book-ends.

The Past

Archbishop Ussher of Ireland *proved*
that the world began at midnight on
the 23rd October, 4004 BC.

Perhaps you thought as once I did the Past, which made the Present possible, was the crystalline palace of ancestors? Or that Time was a mountain pass and what we thought must be a mirage turns out to be an impassable wall that makes us feel we're moving forwards in Time but standing still in Space?

Perhaps. But this is no time to discuss our appraisal of the flaws in Paradise. No, Time resides in what we *like* avoiding.

Does that wreck my theory of looking at maps of the past and willing ourselves there? Perhaps.

The pass is preposterous. That should read 'past'.

The Author

In the corner the fridge hums, hungry as a Venus Fly Trap. The author – he who owns the fridge – does not relish the idea of trying to buy back copies of his own book but, on seeing his reflection in its sheer chrome surface, realises that his work is less plausible after all these years of suffering his own personality, and so the contract begins...

'There were once these two towers, I mean brothers; I mean... there were once just two reasons for doing anything Power and love, ah yes, Love, so distant and yet, so distant. There were once these two lovers...'

Morning parks a thunderstorm above the author's roof. He is made thinner by the dimming light.

'... and then your feet beat you away... My stomach made a falling leaf. So this is how you leave, I thought, listening to the blunt clock as I emptied the bottle...'

The clock's hands fan a never-ending present. He writes his billets doux long since his lover has gone. He writes his at dawn; can't justify it – feels well short of par; the words stumbling from his pen like a line of drunks.

'Love scratched in the dust with sticks will blow away. We carved our names in bark but, like the tree that falls in a distant forest, at night, whilst no one else is there, it all took place whether we were looking or not.'

The author lives off the headstones in their own back yard.

The Short Career

Coming from the West we have already come
From the Land of the Dead, our journey was long –
We left them there snapping at butterflies.

from an Aztec mourning ritual

“Life’s emigrants extend their filaments. The chapels grunt below their spluttering flues. We haul forgotten litanies to our lips, opting for the joke in the garden; the crease between *Belief & Knowledge*. Hope is not enough for what’s not yet happened.”

You were already speaking like a ghost when you slipped on the muck of existence.

It was never you, but the thought of you that caused the pain; the truths we carried in us. Not that there was much at the end of things: a few pieces of the jigsaw scattered here; a few there.

People seem to live and die with such great crust.

Explanationless planet.

Andy Brown is Lecturer in Creative Writing and Arts in Exeter University’s English Department. His prose-poem collection *Hunting the Kinnayas* appears from Stride in April 2004. At the same time Stride are republishing in one volume his two books of interviews with poets and editors, *Binary Myths*. His most recent verse collection is *From a Cliff* (Arc, 2002).

Mark Weiss, who lives in San Diego, is the publisher of Junction Books and is the author of two collections of poetry, most recently *Figures: 32 Poems* (Chax Press, Tucson, 2001). His anthology of Cuban poetry, *The Whole Island / La isla en peso: Six Decades of Cuban Poetry* will appear shortly.

Shearsman magazine is published quarterly by Shearsman Books Ltd, and is also made available at the Shearsman website, approximately a month after publication of the printed version. The online version also carries reviews of new books and magazines, for which there is usually no room in the print version. A single copy costs £2.50. A four-issue subscription costs £7 in the UK, £9.50 for the rest of Europe (including the Republic of Ireland), and £12 for the rest of the world. Payment must be made in sterling, and cheques should be made payable to Shearsman Books.

Shearsman Books is publishing several new titles in both the UK and the USA during 2004, all of which are obtainable through the book trade and online sales outlets. Some will also be available from SPD in Berkeley. Recent and forthcoming titles are:

Chapbooks:

- Anne-Marie Albiach *Two Poems* (translated by Peter Riley, Feb 2004) [£5.00]
 Robert Sheppard *The Anti-Orpheus: A Notebook* (Feb 2004) [£4.00]
 (UK only. Available as a pair from the press for £7, post-free.)

Books:

- Ian Davidson *At a Stretch* (109pp, Feb 2004) [£8.95/\$13.95]
 Ralph Hawkins *The MOON, The Chief Hairdresser (highlights)*
 (110pp, March 2004) [£8.95/\$13.95]
 Kelvin Corcoran *New and Selected Poems* (198pp, April 2004) [£10.95/\$17]
 John Welch *The Eastern Boroughs* (148pp, April 2004) [£8.85/\$13.95]
 Lee Harwood *Collected Poems* (528pp, May 2004) [£17.95/\$26]
 Colin Simms *Otters and Martens* (166pp, May 2004) [£9.95/\$16]
 Gloria Gervitz *Migrations* (400pp, July 2004) [15.95]
 (translated by Mark Schafer) (Not for sale in the U.S.A.)
 Christopher Middleton *Palavers, and The Nocturnal Journal*
 (Long interview & a journal, 130pp, Sep 2004) [£8.85/\$13.95]
 M. T. C. Cronin *<More Or Less Than>* (128pp, Sep. 2004) [£8.85/\$13.95]
 Catherine Walsh *City West* (100pp, Oct 2004) [£8.85/\$13.95]
 Peter Philpott *Textual Possessions* (112pp, Oct 2004) [£8.85/\$13.95]

Recent titles:

- Trevor Joyce *with the first dream of fire they hunt the cold:*
A Body of Work 1966/2000 (2nd ed. 241pp) [£11.95/\$18]
 Peter Riley *The Dance at Mociu* (128pp, prose) [£8.95/\$13.25]
 David Wevill *Departures. Selected Poems* (144pp) [£9.95/\$15]

Copyright © 2004, Shearsman Books Ltd.
 Copyright reverts to the authors & translators upon publication.