Contents

Christopher Middleton 4
Rosmarie Waldrop 9
Ray DiPalma 11
Susan Connolly 14
Anne Gorrick 17
John Mateer 26
Amy Evans 28
Nathan Thompson 32
Gareth Durasaw 34
Nathaniel Tarn 36
Toby Olson 38
John Levy 43
Peter Robinson 45
Martin Anderson 51
Isobel Armstrong 63
Sean Burn 73
Penny Harter 76
Simon Perchik 78
philip kuhn 83
Aidan Semmens 86
Jon Thompson 88
Alan Wall 90
Juan Antonio González-Iglesias 95
(translated from Spanish
by Curtis Bauer)
Paol Keineg 99
(translated from French
by Rosmarie Waldrop)
Élise Turcotte 102
(translated from French
by Andrea Moorhead)

Biographical Notes 105
Much blood spills in the kill and sharing out.
None smears our cave walls, as yet.

* 

To make good I have spat, hoping for a bird
to take shape, a mouthful of manganese.

* 

Here and now it will be forever home;
piqued by no phantoms we share and share alike.

* 

A sight better than us, the beasts know
what is what. What if we made do with that?

* 

We had luck and chose this shell of rock;
river glitters below, with fish we’ll harpoon.

* 

How temperate now these people are, they think
no gods could come and dare play dice with us.

* 

I’ll tell a story of how we came to be here.
Pleasure in the design will drive them to believe it.
Young and old model to their measure
Moments of night, moments of day;
As for their gods, who do not break faith
Piloting now and then people home at last,
Rites trim their mass but not their beauty.

Significantly less than seven inches tall
This formal scene, a glimpse. Taken off-guard
We know that what we know will not be all.

A True Tale of the Anecdotes Improvised
by Villiers de L’Isle-Adam

Ropes in their coils now the men have cast off
And the Mariner eyes the deep—
So in a bar that is gaslit
And homely to him, though it reeks of piss,
Villiers would begin, impromptu, an anecdote.

Marvels he spoke, and the air burned them up.
Marvels, we say, for they were not bookish.
To this day the bright legend travels by voice.

But when invited to collect between covers
Some of his stories, Villiers
Could barely account for those he had published.

As the Mariner puts in at a hospitable island
For supplies of water and meat,
So Villiers knocked on the door of the Master.

Welcomed in, Villiers watches the silent
Master withdraw into a room apart.
Soon the Master is stepping forth with an Album:
Saved from the daily papers and reviews,
All the stories Villiers could not account for.
The Master had harvested every tale in print.

Of the impromptus not a scrap
Came down to us. All went up in smoke—
Gone with the old Parisian reek of piss.

True, their fraîcheur had to fascinate as much
As anything Villiers wrote on paper:
And now even more so—

As long as the anecdotes,
Richly flowing, leaped toward horizons of hasard,
Make-do phrasing likely
Tempered the thrust of recital; but
As the legend about them prospered, those anecdotes,
Not in the least bookish, lit all the faces up.

Even in ink, unbookish tales
Such as were spoken in gaslight once
Might be no mirage: Eldorados for feeling,
Not even the ghost of a statement in them;
life-giving their book of mysterious vagaries,
like space the Mariner houses in his compass,
Evolves to measure and in perspective.
And: in the beginning was death, black black behind the eyes, the light from below, the waters ungathered.

Whether in war or peace, we carry our bones wherever we go. Counting how foot follows foot on the ground; and idea, idea in the mind. Or not. The air does not resist. Thus it refutes us.

How plant the roots we come from, you write, artifice, effort, fatigue, the image subsumed, sifting to settle, approach the river, the troops at the ready.

Trapped in the skull, a roar we cannot recognize. In terms of “the nature of war.” Or repair in parallel sentences, with punctuation in the right places. Rain, storms, fire from all sides. But the best way to measure time, says St. Augustine, is by reading a poem.

Our war was mental, you write, a net toward the insides of skirmish, raid, raw pronoun, preposition in ambush, patrol, pitched battle.

Even if the clock stops, each cell pulses. Deep in the body we feel silently flowing water. Consciousness plays its searchlight on this image and on the surface of this image. The flesh turns transparent, and the organs sit next to one another. We refine our ability to kill.
Thirst was the inherent cause, you write, shared language of destruction, mutilation, waxy days, the tribe of warriors rode down the abstractions.

Not far below the skin, the habit of pillage, rape, murder, flash of fire along our arms. Compatible with gestures in vain from a clean, well-lighted street. The physicist sees the passage of time as loss of organization. But the rhythm of a sentence, like the water we drink from the faucet, has the form of our inner sense. And one minute devours the next.

The poem is ashes, you write, set free on the inner surface of the world. Thus it remembers.
Ray DiPalma

The Persistence of Memory

Very evil people cannot really be imagined dying.
—Adorno

The wall against which they flattened their backs and raised their arms without quite knowing themselves—some former pedestrians some former individuals

sacrificed to a perpetuation of the modes of indifference approval and dissolution

talking through broken doors fatal witnesses to apocryphal knowledge that harbored the means of the ancient wound

propaganda and admonition ensured a turning point—merely a transference of loss to reflex-dominated pathos abandoned to the calamitously relative

Site

Buried today
No, buried yesterday

The light rain had stopped
The late May evenings still cool
Lapsus in ms. but not in substance
The light rain diswritten discomposed

Thought to sit through—the floor turning
You are found composed of last lines

The floor turning thought
You are found

A fragile alignment will get this back

Nostalgia remembers how to seem

The vertical bars placed closer together
The horizontal arranged further apart

**An Expense of Blue Pigment**

Attentive to the unquestioned finality
the esteem that exults in its rags

I went to sleep wondering
and nothing is more difficult

a triple consequence of all that
had happened only hours before

vanishing causes whose powers are
surprising because they conceal themselves in logic

inconceivable to reason while still remaining legible
accorded not closure but a closed subject
SUSAN CONNOLLY

The Sun Artist

at the Cross of Muiredach, Monasterboice, c. 850–2009AD

deepest pot shadowed sunset renews fading patterns
sudden illumination shadow-worlds fluttering
Laundry and Wonder
for GG

Drugs in garland
dege her gangways

Gala lewd, dyed and lunged

An aged waggery null, wrung

A ragged ally with (equally) ragged lungs

She yawns and dangles, raw
She glares like an August lawn
Gulls and gully danger her gardens

Rage and gnawed, grayed

The walled gulag laden in alder
in lawyer glad

An unwary runaway: she is gluey
wary
wan

Her grand drag unwell
aged like drywall
like (mathematics)

Eggs in error put in with the laundry: gangs of angels in
their larded waggle

The Lady yawns legalisms
her gear argyle: a dawn in rags
Laundry Ugly
An allergy regally, waggery, grange

Really!
Rude duels, naggery

The wall or war: a gray lawn
The lawn gulled with yarn, drawn in her warn(ings)

Fear of Hotels and Photography
after a dream by Diane Arbus (1959)

Pressed with want
in an enormous flowered hotel
She is condemned to fire
The building contains both stopping and wandering
Quiet and idle in golden elevators

A white hotel filled with a morning on fire
in the form of enormous blossoms
I am pressed to the I extremely
My grandmother is perhaps under this room
How the building divides her
How much time in canned food, photography?
Perhaps she is not really in this movie
We are seized and strolled by neighbors
peaceful and idle in golden elevators

In the white hotel, there is only one morning left inside
condemned to fire in enormous blooms
Smoke hangs in proximity, particularly in light somewhat
Ekphrasis

These Mozambican figures
in the billionaire’s African Collection,
phantasmagoric. One of a spirit
standing on a man’s bent back
and hacking into his spine, though the grimace
such he could have been eating flesh,
drinking from a skull-cup. Like the protean
in Mia Couto’s tales: war’s phenomenology,
how photos ‘capture’ what we either struggle
to remember or can’t forget, our regressing
to the scene of the crime
as to a lost country, edenic.

Coimbra

Slitting open the pages of an edition
of The Tragedy of Inês de Castro,
reflecting on the experimental
poets of Coimbra, their insistence
on the dissolution of the FIRST PERSON,
you remember, earlier in the day,
picking oranges for the first time
in your life, floating, a cosmonaut,
between the suns in an Australian’s
poem, and then, somehow anticipating Inês,
THE FIGURE, you must have read elsewhere,
as effigy, as corpse, you are wondering
whether your own dissolution has begun,
whether, between these memories,
you were SELF, or could be ‘mere’
allusion, a cloud, drifting;
Stalking Gerald Manley Hopkins

I’ve been reading your diary and sniffing its flowerbeds
The white violets are broader and smell of April 15, 1871
treading in my bare reader’s feet the sharper whelking and
a more winged recoil in the leaves. I’ve left some of the days
to themselves, unfinished like Spring, 1871, April 21
We have had other such afternoons, one today—the sky a

I’ve whisked past that specific (it was beautiful grained) blue
and backwards to peruse you, in letters to your father,
to read you caught believing, between him 16 October 1866
You are so kind as not to forbid me your house, to which I have no claim,
on condition, if I understand, that I promise not to try to convert
my brothers and sisters

and your superiors  Before I can promise this I must get permission,
wh. I have no doubt will be given. Of course this promise
will not apply after they come of age. Closeness to a God penning
the distance—grown child’s to parent’s soul—that’s as much
like doubt as faith  Whether after my reception you will still speak
as you do now I cannot tell

I can spell no comfort in my witness’s wince, though I spy onwards
irreverent with chronology and plundering half-sprung authorship, poet
to his pal 15 Feb 1879  When I say that I do not mean to publish
I speak the truth. I can wedge myself in between you, your mum and
Marvel most rich and nervous of verse, not knowing who I was
looking for in your bud-filled universe until via post–Herbert Vaughan
27 Feb 1879 . . . and even his muse underwent a conversion
(for he had written before).
The Writer’s Portrait

Sun beats that bashful brain protectionless and exposing itself as if to pervert, to offer alteration from an original course, meaning or state to a distortion. Corruption of what was, first intended, natural? The abnormality and sex ever-present, thump as solar power. Pulse.
by a haunting

what I mean is the of course of [rain]
listening to slow harm
as (is this the town or the country
you decide)
chimneys fresh outmoded
gas-lit perhaps a miracle’s atmosphere
filmed sheen as paths cross

I could have remembered you into this
but it’s already too complicated
contemplation eased over
diluted songs undermining a certain flavour
concentrated repression behind closed eyes

you become the moment before a calm starts
widowing widening out grief movements
to believe is to have come a long way
[mist] circling a kept thing losing time
to stop when it all becomes too beautiful

details of the impending season

it is no longer necessary to look for

instead things are waiting
shadowed shadows inside your head

weighted glottal stops the shape of angina
see where your eyes were
GARETH DURASOW

Regina Lisso

The little box, instrument of metaphysical shrinkage, wasn’t intended to
witness the intrusion of ultimate realities.
—Eugenia Parry

Lee Miller at Leipzig
the statue that came to life in the Blood of a Poet
photographs the selbstmord in the Rathaus
Mors certa, hora incerta
the parents just bodies but the daughter Regina
chiaroscuro courtesy of the hour
Regina you have such Fabergé teeth
the very pietà the Third Reich deserves
coiffure dishevelled by furtive caresses
gaunt young men compelled to touch your will-o-the-wisp hair
Permission to sit with her awhile
to defibrillate her with my eyes
a kiss so voltaic
her needlepoint hands unfurl &
Vogue all over my roughshod face
Nurse’s fingers gone to waste
expending their vestiges of dexterity
unpicking a button from the upholstery
like a girl chastised in the fairy wing repair shop
plucks out an offensive eye
To sleep more soundly in the sun’s black spot
a Rammstein espresso shot straight down her throat
derailing all the enzymes till the air is no use.
Incredibly—from vertical to horizontal in one moment (moment as long as some sang passages in bygone eras from a named purgatory to their named heaven) the day, turning from tempest to just fine; all lowering clouds drowning the earth to smiling azures; brown landscape turned to green; the silent birds now perpetrating riots of conjugated melody. Romantic time has, true, evolved from patience to consumption. Below the birthplace of the earth is seen, wreathed in black, blond and burnished auras—its mines await the miner while from blood and lymph he turns mud into gold and diamonds. Higher than centrifugal valley all senses radiating, the birthplace puckered symbol smiling in its heartland, twin mountains holding up the planet high above the centripetal turtle understanding. Higher yet, those two-way windows giving/receiving, opening wide onto the widest azure sky, closing as breath comes faster, as flights of fancy multiply and mastery of life flowers and spreads its seeds with wind-like laughter. Is it not passing brave to be a king and ride in triumph through Persepolis? But now, however, the novel’s on its downward path—it must decline into misunderstanding or ghastly tragedy and winds dissolve to tears. To lamentations. Readers, dreading the end, yet racing to the end—as if another death were to be added to a list, a litany of deaths, begin to try to think, prod memory for last reviewer’s commendations; the choices of the famous for the year’s best produce (famosi ah!), to court desire, to count and to make notes of which—
soever other plots, why, just might satisfy: but, what, by other authors than this present one? No, god forbid, this tittle-tattler by far a favorite, one cannot exit from his list, plots, famous / infamous, his grand finales so vastly credible no other maker to whom one can subscribe lives now on earth, publishes daily, reads to a vast, adoring public on 365 out of 365: despite book-perishing, publishes on, endures forever. This is no fair description of the greatest writer. Now rage devours his reader’s mind; great dragons of desire break, overwhelm his will. Black clouds are back, depressing him into the garden. Oh for Persepolis!
Toby Olson

The Houses

The houses on the cliff can block the bay,
thought it is still there
    between them and in memory.
Ocean like
in flatness and dark amoebic shadows
    of weed on this calm day,
our anger’s only periodic,
just when the four-master’s passing,
seen only in blinks
    in the interstices,
but the houses have no volition.

Anger at objects, as if people’s
    mistakes and miscreant behaviors,
fighting off the passage of time’s
perpetuality, the body’s noted accelerants,
as we grow older...
    the frozen bolt rusted,
a chain-saw that won’t start.

“Come to me now in your sure fading,
put your foot on my neck,
before twisting me.
Sentimental,
    I too was born from the dead
conventionally,
but that was years ago.”

This, then, is the dream that rises
like a whale in that calm water
glimpsed only in the interstices,
    those fucking houses
blocking our view.
John Levy

Four Untitled Poems

“You are the hottest one for years of night . . .”

John Berryman wrote, in #4 of *The Dream Songs*, about a keenly desired woman eating chicken nearby for whom he

(if I make the error of calling the poem’s narrator the poet himself) hungers. But when he reads it aloud he says,

“You are the hottest one for days of night . . .”

I prefer years. Listening to the recording it’s obvious he often reads different words from what’s

in print. Wishing he’d written something else? Or careless with his own writing, disdaining the bridges

of words he’d built, not wishing to cross silence the same way again? Or wanting to sing and dream

a little differently each time? Needing to be free of all that’s boring, especially himself?

§

Lorine Niedecker’s Good Success Bay in her poem ‘Darwin’—now there

in a poem of glaciers and pigeons, barnacles and delirium, Port Desire and Andean Peaks
Peter Robinson

Epigrams of Summer

‘as a haunted man—a man haunted
with a memory—he was harmless’
Henry James, The Wings of the Dove

Two coots have built their nest
on a tipped-over shopping trolley;
a mattress of wet plastic litter
supports the twigs they meshed together.

Now mother coot is sitting pretty
in shallows and her found-art splendour,
while, me, I find a theme from whatever
happens to be happening . . .

*

Bedraggled summer, overblown,
comes at us from under trees,
their thick-surging leafage
near summer’s full opacity.

So you see this opaque world
(its piled clouds once more making
a three-dimensional sky)
carries us on its broad shoulders.

*

Walking back into that world once known,
there are glints of copper pipe-work,
fuss and palaver in pointed brick,
privet hedges, you alone . . .
Then a piffling kerfuffle of weather
might blear the window pane
with your memories of judgment,
of being judged again.

*

Sensitive to initial conditions,
here I am back in a Britain
like memories of things written,
the white roots under turned stones;

and find I’m living a broken series
of acronyms, every new-to-me term,
rain scents, words or idiom—
things to get done beyond these.

*

It’s like we’ve got to do to others
what had been done to me
and there’s no help in it, you say,
for that misery—

as if I could be both quick and dead
by lapping river water, a
world once known, bankrupted,
etcetera, etcetera . . .

*

Cow-parsley, buttercups, seed-heads
in extents of moving waves
are traipsed past by late revellers, 
the house-backs like a stain.

Late revellers in their dribs-and-drabs
come murmuring out of the dawn.
Overcast, a morning greets them,
and what remains of their lives.

*

It’s a Sunday, long before car noise,
and youth’s in this June daylight:
one carries a girlfriend on his back;
others stalk with naked feet

from summers gone, at other dawns,
cloudless skies, bird choruses,
a yard’s tree shadow thrown against
its house-back like a stain.

*

Momentary, come bungalows,
anemone-filled gardens, and enemy
infiltrations—
as if these were the front line . . .
Far fields are flecked with poppies.
It’s like a mute complaint
about the further sacrifices,
this compliant scene!

*
Invisible beyond a taxi’s windscreen, 
pasts blank me, on the High Street, 
like none of it had ever been 
over grounds where we can’t meet.

Just so, the pasts won’t speak, 
except in sly objection— 
money, lust or interest, 
most other values gone.

* 

My projections of irrational fears 
on cornered, desperate men 
are summoned in the summer losses, 
a village’s mourning routine 
or like an attack on the everyday 
at Hungerford and Dunblane 
or Whitehaven, us, implicated 
in lives not being enough again.

* 

Yet still things come and steady you 
at a pumping house arched window, 
its biscuit-brickwork textures 
a survivor down the years.

My hand remembers what it would do 
to get through tricky transitions, 
pinching between forefinger and thumb 
that scrap of shirtiness too.
From traffic by Christ’s Pieces
those pasts can still be caught
in my heart-rate, chest,
lawns where we tried goodbyes . . .

Reflected in the river’s flow
now other pairs are drifting past
under a guestroom window,
towards this Bridge of Sighs—

*  

as elsewhere, they’ve renewed
a path across the grounds;
dusty, bereft of lampposts,
the old paths trouble knows.

Even water birds foul this new one.
Beyond a weariness and fret,
another life’s to be retrieved
under the leaves of summer.

*  

But here, I walk back under leaves
past black wrought-iron gates,
over flagstones sunk in grass
and more checkered shades.

Through the event-filled ordinary
postponements of that life,
these ghosts, you might suppose,
had our pasts in sole possession.

*
Like attacks on the everyday
or kind of self-betrayal,
how could they not spoil
this summery array?

Then come the extra mile
to exorcise those years,
a dazzle of sunshine appears
and words, words to say.

*

In ill-lit rooms across town
lives had altered course;
their ghosts on a horizon
(it’s understood between us)

are dazzled by the mote-stream
as currents of talk along backs
come clearer in fresh air
and lift them away.
The Banana Archive

“My children too have learned a barbarous tongue”.
Tu Fu.

I

Alone in this dead city by the salt marsh. City I long to leave. City I long to return to. Each morning workers coughing on their way to the factory. Each evening mist over the quiet quays. After the export trade declined. Importers now of oil and wood, of electronics and food. After the sea withdrew its bounty from us. Exporters of spent uranium and industrial waste. Poisonous rains at twilight. The river with its dead dogs. Two blocks away the Mint, the Ministry of Financial Services. Close by, the Numismatic Museum. Behind dressed granite generation after generation of the country’s Kings and Queens, Emperors and Empresses, pseudo Sultans and Satraps: their heads embossed in gold. From far flung corners of the globe. A collective effulgence. Now, in the gloom of yet another polluted evening they shine, if at all, with a less than vigorous light. I stand on the balcony, smoking. All traces of the day’s deliria having subsided from the roads beneath me. Like a painted mime faces linger in doorways and in shop windows, each one having pursued his or her “separate interest and pleasure.” Each one reluctant to go home. The faces of a city that has died, that has been reborn and has died again. In its canals the waters, still, forgetful and habitual. Dark as the ink of any actuary or obituary. The great warehouses gone. Docks and schools turned into luxury apartments—still vacant. The wind rattles through deserted goods yards at dawn. The bodies of dead soldiers returning. Rumours of another war. Of borders sealed and of people fleeing. No love amongst the populace of a common good at home. Even less of it for those abroad; exploited, murdered or pauperised by those we elected. In cemeteries of de-consecrated churches, in parks, on wayside verges, autumn encamps. Blood red coppices emblazon air. Days shorten. Mist wraps viaducts and bridges. I lean on the balcony, dreaming. Sound of an oratorio through an apartment’s broken window. A solitary drunk walks down the side of the road, unseeing. No one pays him any attention. In
the canals the waters have begun to harden. Harden around this present. Present which perpetually returns. With a yesterday and a tomorrow; in an unbroken circuit. Taking its place amidst all time’s other inventions and appearances. Here, on these roads which no longer vibrate to the triumphal return of armies, it waits, like a foul shadow between the houses, trying to extinguish itself. Enveloping us, too, in its disguises. Seeking, like the stale Ithaka in our bones, a home. Which we, through the grace of our fictions of memory and experience, always provide for it. An exhausted destination. Standing at the door, beckoning us to follow. And we comply. Turning back again to the contaminated moment; of an evening plundered by love or hate. The grey gestation of the day to come, much like the one before. So it was, though they did not know it, when they set out. Dead men singing on the current. Cadavers, not angels, for burying. Men whose narratives would never be completed. Completion requiring surrender. Surrender to what was beyond them. Not suffering—for surfeit of profit or passion. As they left they heard a song above the osier-beds. Fiercely compressed as if it desired never to be repeated. *Acrocephalus palustris*, marsh warbler, singing in a voice reconstituted from all its migrations; each syllable, each phrase, a locus. Singing a song reinscribing in itself the songs of many others. Stumbling through ruined villages at dusk, half full of vermin, they imagined they still heard it. Through fields of unharvested wheat. Presiding at baptisms in remote mountain gorges. Whilst climbing paths treading wild garlic and jasmine into the dust, the sea behind them, before them a fragile carapace of snow and ice—cerement of crystal. No looking back. Whilst scrambling over dry river courses, then down amid arid plains welcomed by horse traders and hunters—for a lame piebald with a downcast look which moved them they bartered a silver fork—through landscapes without cities, without boundaries. Into those immensities of unnavigated, and unrecorded, space and light.
“[June 21st 1571] A long strand broke upon us, suddenly, out of the sea mist and it was as if in that perfect parabola of sand and foam, that gently sluiced—O sempiternal referent!—light, the accumulated rime of all those years sea-wandering was lifted from our eyes. Here, we thought, amidst sweet solaceful scents wafted offshore from some ripe and verdant interior, is the beginning of that world of limitless possibility we had imagined. Day after day, year after year, watching the horizon for sign of some such land, our very selves poured on ahead into the distance, our minds nurtured on the prospect of the destruction of all boundaries. The Absolute, in a form, we veritably believed, of some demiurge or afflatus, beckoned. Only our ever sanguine and sceptical Doctor, Garcia de Aguiar, cautioned us that we might well be pursuing nothing more than residual effects of repeated calentures, or of insufflation of the nerves brought on by too much confinement. ‘That unconstrained condition which you seek, too, is not natural. And’, he added as an aside, I suspect, upon all our ‘continual exploring . . . the whole person is never completely anywhere’”

.....
“[December 12th 1571] On the night air were the odours of burnt meats and the sounds of far off dancing and music. In life, according to our good Doctor, whose discourse inherits the complexion of the Philosopher, one is either moving away from something or someone, there is either a leave taking, or one is moving towards them in impending arrival. Attraction or repulsion, terror or joy, we move, within ourselves, always between opposed or different states and emotions—our being never exclusively engaged within either. Arriving, we are also departing, departing, we are also arriving, and in this slow sad music in which all our lives are conducted there are only impure journeys, imperfect divagations, towards a union which always eludes us. So, as the horse traders settled down with us outside the walls of the city of the ancient kingdom, their mallets pounding tent pegs into hard earth, as dark lanterns swayed in the breeze and braziers of spluttering coals glowed red in the dusk, we were informed that though we had arrived at our destination there was, the good Doctor reiterated (by which some of us were much disquieted), no cause for celebration.”

[Translated from Fernão Eannes Azurara’s Jornais]
Beneath me, on the street, a faint burnishing light. Late November. Cold gleam upon the window. Words from a meeting, past remembering. From another landscape, perhaps, another life. Voice lost in the endless excursus of its re-working. Impersonated persona of another November. Gulls, blown from the headland by the sea wind. White underparts gleaming, incandescent against sky. I listen to their cries above dull accents from the street below. Axles grind the air. In the outer precincts of this paradisio all postal deliveries have been suspended. All postal codes, it is rumoured—rumours, wildly abound—will be abolished. Will they then, I wonder, revert to the Creatrix, to the O of an absence greater than their sum? Our dull sublunary language be superseded, perhaps, all the seas rising around us, by the ethereal music of birds? A gust of wind, thick with the smell of saw-mills and crude oil from refineries, fills the balcony. Under the passing darkness of a squall newspapers and litter are lifted and threshed down emptying streets. Close by a dog howls from a vacant lot. A broken latch bangs on the security gate of a boarded-up beauty parlour. Above the increasing tumult I imagine I catch, for a brief moment, a shard of frenetic song; Acrocephalus palustris, wringing its repertoire of motifs above the osier-beds. Beds where pill-boxes still stand, crumbling on jetties. Where once, damp days among the fens, they waited: time, monotonous and cruel. A continent on fire, a people burning. “Minds bent on a debauchery of destruction . . . a boisterous joy.” Windows blacked out. Beyond the saltings dark breakers overwhelmed.
liminal
(for dancer Tim Rubidge)

always
this rocks cumulative rotations

wind drag across bones
tongue becomes fight

the mirror azure
to depths undreamt

unarmed by sun
fist of light tightens

time brittles
with each slow breath

amplify light
bird without roots

a flightless tree
fight and upside

and concrete pages
encourage tears

bloody page spill
lives unread

whose out of step?
turn the book around
feather necessity, flesh
being flesh is torn or worn
at dusk and dust recall
lips skipped in stutter-rhyme
this sweet day, between yourself
and child-song pures

* 

outreaching to the broken last, trying to? not so much bridge as
milky-span, toe the line, keep within channels, don’t jerky-dance
some magenta-bleed, eyes glide from hand, try some slammer, for
crying out. winged, but then who is? and who is lidless sweat, ever
kneeling, supplication in deep-sunk inhibiting machine

* 

light swelters
swells in gesture
jester you
apply match
urging shelter
in airs rare shell
oxygen unfurling
kindling tricks
and again
trip/ripped
ripe flailings
back slam
coincidencing
the spilt up
rouged flight
necessary
as splitting light
pained air lines
reverb bleeding
extraordinaire
this arabesques
inked in stutter
mining somewhere
around dawn

spark eyes fruit lung
from tree of body
no sudden gusts
giddying toward
unusual shoulderings
destroy hard data
write vast surfaces
stare unlocked
saffron wide
border is
borders are
wingfold chained
edges of chaos
fist years, flux us
lung ecstatic
grasp at skybreath
your winged tang
on differing tracks
At dusk, rain begins.  
A black bird flies into black leaves.  
Rain enters the dry dirt.

I step on an ant.

Last night I could not sleep,  
Something buzzed just under my skin.

Today a dragonfly lit on my arm.  
Its wings were humming.

Startled, I brushed it off.  
The wind blew it back into my face.

Last night I could not sleep.  
Something buzzed just under my skin.

The black leaves of the tree are raining.  
The black bird has disappeared into rain.

The ant is gone.

Buzzing is the same as humming.  
I have no wings.

Green at morning, black at night—  
Where are those leaves now?

The ant is in the dirt.  
The dirt grows black with rain.  
I cannot sleep in this tree.
Every love note starts out warm
sent by one hand over another
is pressing down on this snow

making a fire on her grave, covers it
with those songs from the 40s
still trailing smoke, longing for rain

that’s not one night alongside another
each falling off as the name
at the end, a pet name, a secret

you would write on a wall
to whiten it, begin again
already winter and bleeding to death.

You always wanted to be near ashes
close to shore, kept warm
between two fires and the afternoons

easing around the rocks
you dead go here with
adrift just below the surface

that has no owner
though nothing falls to the bottom
the way even now the rain
smells from smoke and your coffin
looks for another body
— you wanted to be water, run clear

take your bones with you
and after a long loosening
empty them as a go-between
	his hole to lean down
and filling it from shells
not yet your mouth and shoulders.

*

From far off though this wall
still grieves, stone over stone
closing from inside as mist

— still sags into each corner
the way mourners come by in twos
binding their dead to the dim light

that covers the Earth with your forehead
— you’re lost, sinking in
till you stop as you did before

and again your back breaks open
for air and wings and in your knees
the bones that will go no further

are filled with an immense arch
pressing down on the thin shadow
waiting at home and loosening.
nicods criterion & the paradox of ravens

the black mirror
which is also the obsidian mirror
through which the oracle returns

the black mirror
which is also
the beautiful black stone
by means of which dr john dee
conjured up the spirits

from the grim-gribbers
to the black body bags
masking
unfathomable darkness
eructing from the death
that illumines
the secret ferments of the mind

like
the glassy essence of lies
engraved in
memory
marking
ship s caverns
merging sand out of samphire

at first
men were counterfeited in the elements
then confounded
by the singing of the infinite abundance
even before it was hewn
from the cubic stone
but then men stood / outside the regolith of time
with the smell of carrion carried on the wind
&
turning east ward to watch
over the rising sun would demand to know
what songs the sirens sang

now the ancient mariners have set their sails drifting
over / blake s blackmilkwhite ocean
the black milk
drained from their mother s womb

or yet mother love
still stretches across globe & hemisphere
as perfect as the song bird named
or as bright as the marrow of the intellectual soul
defiled

t was the stench cast
by mazarine raven & miniscule dove
like the vortex in the plenum

oh exorbitant night
once
you desired that our love should extend over thresholds
but
chance encounters endangered our son
& so you
banished the remembrance of him

twas
rugged fate shipwrecked
the one thousand and seventeen lives
as if / each soul had become that song bird named
as her passions violated virgil s slick-sorrowed seas /
or drowned in the white flecked sounds
that drift over
the ruby wine-merled waters
or wash over
stones / that flail & flutter
whenever waves crush exegetical heroes
or
fling them hard against
sacramental creeds
there is the cool consolation where as for me
already putting out voice in distrustful morning,
everyone who fears awakening the minimum doubt
which you read the following shock which it should expect
threatened when being hardships, forfeit bad ribbon
capital punishment of the typewriter where in any case
because of those of camp illegally adjusts the radio
the good deed of the time of tribulation is this
but & which reads post together with us;
it is that it reaches the point where you are conscious for the
second time;
as for writing by pencil, possibility of camouflage
which is permitted in this way, with the Minsk reconstruction
depending upon me who am removed just under the refuge
of at least interesting darkness where the fresh air breathes

* 

but as the flesh fell from his face
vertical pride & bone growth
grey beard & sinks the eye fade
lost without sounding & spark
the full immerse attached spring will survive

living water from natural sources or wells
impure event in some time passes & flow

rainwater must still take its ritual effect
long-fingered hands gentle massage of the forehead
as he peers & pore over the mildewy page
JON THOMPSON

[The earth open to the sky]
(The Birds)

The earth open to the sky
receives a graceful light. The ocean shimmers
along the high California cliffs—
in the openness of the American century
the light falls everywhere—
the clean, well-ordered streets,
the curving Pacific highway,
the white cluster of a village nestled
against the bay.

At the edges,
forces
that cannot be acknowledged
flock together, gather strength
for a final assault.

People schooled
in unremembered pain, observe
in silence the
portents shaping themselves
in a blank sky.

Here strange mansions ring out with rote singing
& the dead bleed from empty eye-sockets.
But the true horror is the horror of the perfect coiffure.

The world as we wanted it to be signaling
no more. Bird cries & wingflaps
louder than desire. A new chorus
sounds, rising over the land.

Thinking outside of thought.
Water’s edge darkens in elegy.
The world to us:
I will dream you.

[Dusk as a pink & vermillion gashed sky]
(Stroszek)

Dusk as a pink- & -vermillion-gashed sky—
the large-scale beauty of it says, learn to die
& afterwards cars with their headlights on race
into darkness until
the flatness of the land swallows them
never touching what it is they came for . . .
Dionysius insisted there were the tombs of two Johns in Ephesus, and that is true: I am in both of them. I spent some time on Patmos, then came back here finally. Though written in various cellars of persecution, on an insignificant island, my words commanded attention.

If my Greek is wayward and odd
my Aramaic was a wonder to them all, believe me.
That’s how I wrote the gospel
which some redactor cast into the other tongue.
The original lost by Clio’s copyists.
Now through the window in the rain
the moon is weeping.
Stars are quicksilver spheres on a black silk windingsheet.

Don’t believe the Turin shroud—his was black
woven by the Magdalena from the fleece of a panther
through countless Gethsemane nights.
She knew her beloved Lord would lie inside it shortly.

If it’s evidence of chronology you need
read these gospels
each authentically carbon-dated
by our grief. Taste
the acrid stink of desolation’s cellar.
Penned in that catacomb each hides inside himself.

My words have resurrected him
as he dictated. My work now’s
writing his life, tending his mother.
Never a tear from her
since that day on Golgotha.
Should they fall they’d not be
salt water, but atoms, weapons-grade
plutonium, angry enough to eat the whole of Ephesus
leaving it void and smoking.
She keeps a drawer full of resurrection name-tags.

Revise.
Dead man rising in his rags
to stare incredulous into a saviour’s face.
And now they say that in the colosseums
lions feed upon his testament.
(Should Hegemon be used, I wonder,
in the passages concerning Pilate?)
Beloved disciple
a man hunted and haunted from Palestine to Patmos
half-insane with emblems, symbols,
eschatological venom.

The world will end one day
he said: never attempt to compute it.
She says almost nothing now.
With the boy at last outside her womb
the end of the world began.
Such a calm here finally
sharing our endings in Ephesus.

This afternoon as I wrote
she spent two hours staring
at a dead sparrow on the windowsill.
An invisible hand will surely
come to revive it.
I place a cup of red wine in her palms
and she looks down
as if at blood.
Who needs reminding of its colour?
She thinks she might have left some trinkets
on the dark side of the moon—
old CDs; an album of photographs—
a young boy learning the rudiments of carpentry
from his earthly father. Her son, she says,
will collect them for her
once he gets back home and picks up his messages.
The journey turned out longer than we’d thought.

(There is a tradition that, after the crucifixion, the disciple John went to Ephesus
accompanied by Mary. There they both lived to a great age. An early account
held that the author of The Gospel According to John was one and the same
as the author of Revelation. This has been disputed for centuries. The texts are
so different. But written in different languages, different genres, different times,
might they still claim a single author? No one actually knows. In any case, you
can’t always choose your redactor. History assigns them. One thing we do know:
after the original document was written, it has never ceased to be re-written,
in accordance with each new generation’s millenarian expectations. Apocalyptic visions born at the heart of the Empire.)

Part Three: Elegiac Days

The emperor always fears assassination.

Domitian my tormentor
spent hours alone each day
spearing flies
with a needle-sharp pen
while my own nib furrowed the parchment
here on Patmos.
A medieval theologist asks
if two angels
can
speak—converse—
without the other angels hearing them.
The answer doesn’t matter
but the almost
physical sensation
that beneath these symbolic codes
one can draw an exact
definition of how
poetry can be
transmitted
in book form, and this strange
pleasure
that spiritual things allow
provided
that they are written in lower case.
The Reign of Hadrian

It's about, above all, a theory of knowledge, of the manner in which a man steals himself little by little from the ideas of his time which he rejects.

Marguerite Yourcenar [on Zeno],
Letter to Alain Bosquet, January 1, 1964

The reign of Hadrian
is like the October the Japanese celebrate. But the nostalgia
I feel from those years isn't a result
of the absence of gods. Nor is it due to
the joyful government of this monarch.
Nor to the Hellenic culture, his trips
or the stability of the borders
of his empire. I recognize
that as my homeland,
as my own time,
because I sense that then I wouldn't have
this feeling of deepening
exile that wakes
in me the age that I have been given,
the anguishing culture
dictated by some who don't love,
the intellectuals
of the middle class, those
who are neither poets nor philosophers,
the cloudy future,
the uncertain situation of my country.
They’re still in our heads the good old fellows
let’s talk hormones
a monologue of the deaf—
we allow a ration of free sex
down at the ford—
would have to be dumb not to sing
now
that the story’s all over the world.

Béroul and Thomas,
of course we’ve read them,
bring up fornication
in every line—
a chance to embroider:
a tale of love won’t always
lead
to sexual reproduction—
terror isn’t the last word from heaven
we need the natives
for the lowdown.

Gains prestige
being on top of the queen—
she snaps, hurls insults
can’t take it no more—
he, aggressive, comes—
two dogs stuck together
their talk
a slew of droppings—
I’ll add a fool a dwarf a messenger—
as best I can.

Is nonetheless a cuckold,
par for a horse—
jeers at the one he adored.
his face drenched with rain—
a spectacle with plenty of spies,
enemies of abstract art
forced to pipe down.

International debacle—this job of
the enraged husband—
beware the mangy cur, disgustingly
happy—good for nothing
howling at the merciful sky—
I get lost here, all these memories
and the piles of critical editions.

Stick it to me, your dick,
says Iseut (would you believe it)—
everybody believes it
to the point, precisely, where
God is hard pressed preaching love—
God, would you believe it,
rustling in flowing robes
and complicit—
otherwise how explain it—
they never stop,
he’s going to kill her right there under him.

Iseut, black sky between her tits—
makes me hungry— me
who never thought I’d need
to thrown myself on the bread—
this piece of Iseut:
thorax night,
tear at it with my teeth—likewise
smashed dishes
around them—something
makes them lose it.
Five Poems

Dream where fear
is queen
as in a painting
where birds strike
the window
before devouring each other

My yard is covered
with a layer
of unknown material

I make the rounds
of the boutique
of evil spells
finding
neither prayer
nor magic formula

*

Children also
are destroyed
there’s a fire
behind the barricades
I can imagine
the chapel full
of hands, of sighs
piles of shoes lie unclaimed
abandoned
on the marble floor
war took a picture
of its people
but despair here
has no bond
it’s fluid
perfect
like the song
of a shell

*

The tombstones with children’s silhouettes
are the most difficult
to look at
they still carry names
that fly away
at the least breeze
then lie about
in such a lonely place
that I’d like to be imprisoned
there where the void remains

*

The wind doesn’t exist anymore
my own movements
are led
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MARTIN ANDERSON has been publishing with Shearsman since the very first issue. Recent books from Shearsman: The Hoplite Journals (2006), Belonging (2009), and The Hoplite Journals XXX–LVIX (2010).

ISOBEL ARMSTRONG is Emeritus Professor of English at Birkbeck, University of London, and a Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of English Studies at the University of London. She was featured in the anthology Infinite Difference (Shearsman Books, 2010), and in a chapbook, Desert Collages (Equipage, 2007). Critical work includes Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830–1880 (OUP, 2008).

CURTIS BAUER won the John Ciardi Poetry Prize for his first poetry collection, Fence Line (BkMk, 2004), and has been a finalist for the New Letters Poetry Prize, The Willis Barnstone Translation Prize, and The Glimmer Train Poetry Open. He is the publisher and editor of Q Ave Press Chapbooks and teaches creative writing and translation at Texas Tech.

SEAN BURN has 3 full-length collections, most recently wings are giving out (Cardigan: Skrev Press, 2009).

SUSAN CONOLLY’s first collection of poetry, For the Stranger, was published by the Dedalus Press in 1993. Her second collection, Forest Music, was published by Shearsman Books in 2009. She lives in Drogheda, Ireland.

RAY DiPALMA lives in New York City; he is the author of a number of books, most recently The Ancient Use of Stone: Journals and Daybooks 1998–2008. (Otis Books, Los Angeles, 2009). His visual works (including artist’s books, collages, and prints) have been exhibited in numerous shows in the United States, Europe, Japan and South America, and in a one-person show at the Stempelplatt’s Gallery in Amsterdam.

GARETH DURASOW has work in Onedit, Great Works, Spine, Grist and Freak Lung and Sunfish, and a chapbook, Obelus (Knives, Forks & Spoons, 2010).

AMY EVANS’ poetry, art-work and critical writing have been published in Openned, Jacket and The Wolf respectively. She is completing a PhD on Robert Duncan at King’s College London; she was co-editor, with Shamoon Zamir, of The Unruly Garden: Robert Duncan and Eric Mottram, Letters & Essays (Peter Lang: 2007).

JUAN ANTONIO GONZÁLEZ-IGLESIAS is Professor of Latin Philology at the University of Salamanca, Spain. He has translated Ovid, Horace, Catullus, Stendhal and Sebastiano Grasso. In addition to Eros es más (selected by El Cultural, El Mundo as Spain’s best collection of poetry in 2007), his other collections of poetry include La hermosura del héroe (Premio Vicente Núñez, 1993), Esto es mi cuerpo (Visor, 1997), Más hermosura (CELYA, 2002), Un ángulo me basta (Visor, 2002) and Olímpicas (El Gaviero Ediciones, 2005).

Penny Harter lives in New Jersey, and is the author of a number of books, most recently *The Night Marsh* (WordTech Editions, 2008). Penny and her late husband, Bill Higginson, both featured in early editions of *Shearsman*.


Phillip Kuhn’s *at maimonides table* was published by Shearsman in 2009. His co-translations of German poet, Gertrud Kolmar, will also appear from Shearsman. The text here is scission 4 from *how to make radical leaflets*, just published by itinerant press.

John Levy lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he works as an attorney. He was one of the contributing editors in the first series of Shearsman. He has recently published a prose volume, *A Mind’s Cargo Shifting* (First Intensity Press); his last poetry collection was *Oblivion, Tyrants, Crumbs* (2008) from the same publisher.

John Mateer lives in Western Australia, but was born in South Africa. Books include *The West* (Fremantle Press, 2010), *The Ancient Capital of Images* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005), and the bilingual volume *Ex-white/Einmal-Weiss: South African Poems* (Klagenfurt: Sisyphus, 2009). Forthcoming is *Southern Barbarians* (Giramondo).

Christopher Middleton is one of the UK’s finest poets. Carcanet published his *Collected Poems* in 2008, and Shearsman recently published his *Poems 2006–2009*, comprising all the work composed since the *Collected* was assembled. Christopher Middleton’s work was featured in the first series of *Shearsman* in 1981–1982.

Andrea Moorhead is editor of *Osiris* and a translator of contemporary Francophone poetry. She publishes in both French and in English. Poems and translations have appeared in journals such as *Abraxas, Great River Review, The Bitter Oleander, Autre Sud, Estuaire, La Traductière, and Metamorphoses*. Collections include *From a Grove of Aspen* (University of Salzburg Press), *le vert est fragile*, and *Présence de la terre* (Écrits des Forges). Translations include books by Hélène Dorion, Abderrahmane Djezlfaoui and Madeleine Gagnon.

Toby Olson divides his time between Philadelphia and North Truro, on Cape Cod. His most recent novel is *Tampico* (University of Texas Press, 2008); his most recent poetry collection is *Darklight* (Shearsman, 2007). Toby Olson’s work was featured in the first series of *Shearsman*. 

PETER ROBINSON is a professor of English and American Literature at the University of Reading. His many books include The Look of Goodbye (poetry, Shearsman, 2008), Spirits of the Stair (aphorisms, Shearsman, 2009), and a Selected Poems from Carcanet Press.

AIDAN SEMMENS lives in Suffolk and is a journalist. His first full-length collection, A Stone Dog, appears shortly from Shearsman.

NATHANIEL TARN, poet, essayist, anthropologist, and translator, lives in New Mexico. Most recent books: Avia (Shearsman, 2008), Ins and Outs of the Forest Rivers (New Directions, 2008), The Embattled Lyric: Conversations and Essays in Poetics and Anthropology (Stanford University Press, 2007). His work was published in the first series of Shearsman in 1981.


NATHAN THOMPSON is currently studying for a PhD at the University of Salford. His first collection, the arboretum towards the beginning, was published by Shearsman in 2008.

ÉLISE TURCOTTE was born in Sorel, Québec, and has published ten collections of poetry, for which she has received numerous prizes. Her most recent books are Ce qu’elle voit (Noroît, 2010), Piano mélancolique (Noroît, 2005) and Sombre ménagerie (Noroît, 2002). She has also published several books for children, short stories, and three novels.

ROSMARIE WALDROP appeared as both poet and translator in the first series of Shearsman. She is the author of a number of books, six of them from New Directions (most recently Driven to Abstraction, 2010), and the translator of many more, from both German and French, with her many renderings of Edmond Jabès justly celebrated. With husband Keith, she runs Burning Deck Press, a beacon of light in the darkness for several decades.

ALAN WALL is a professor at the University of Chester. Author of a number of novels, most recently Sylvie’s Riddle (London: Quartet Books, 2008), his poetry is published by Shearsman: Gilgamesh (2008), Alexander Pope at Twickenham (2008) and Doctor Placebo (2010).