

TENEBRAE

A Journal of Poetics

Fathomsun
Press

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Editorial

Dear reader,

Here we are once again, with a fresh selection of poems for the Summer.

However, in lieu of a traditional editorial this issue, I'm instead offering a slight list of the books that influenced me as I edited this issue! Take these as you will!

*

Anniversaries, by Uwe Johnson

At Your Own Risk, by Derek Jarman

Babel-17, by Samuel Delany

Drafts, Fragments and Poems, by Joan Murray

Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead, by Olga Tokarczuk
feld, by Jos Charles

Liberating the Canon: An Anthology, ed. by Isabel Waidner

Naturally It Is Not, by Callie Gardner

Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl, by Andrea Lawlor

Revolting Prostitutes, by Juno Mac and Molly Smith

Selected Poetry and Prose, by John Riley

Self Heal, by Samantha Walton

Significant Other, by Isabel Galleymore

The Weather, by Lisa Robertson

Works & Days, by Bernadette Mayer

Your Silence Will Not Protect You, by Audre Lorde

With my love & affection,

Kyle Lovell

Birmingham

Tessa Berring

Gloria

1.

I want to sing hymns
I want to pray ferocious prayers to a God above

I want there to be smiting and gnashing of teeth
Proper rage and action

You know the kind of thing

But it's then that I start to see legs
Those sandy Roman centurion legs

all sandals criss-crossed up the calves

Period dramas
Pleated metallic get ups

Get lost already!

2.

But what's that got to do with hymns?

I used to believe in the ridiculousness of church
the glorious ridiculousness.

The lets just do this!

Incense, kneel down, up we get.

A gulp of wine, a wafer.

Body. Blood. Shed for you.

Drink this, all of you.

Oh spells and ceremonies!

What's not to love?*

Crumbs under tables, Magnum Mysteriums

Wine drenched sponges

A plague of fucking locusts!

Lulla lulla lulla lulla lulla lulla

(O still small voice of calm x2)

3.

*But what's this got to do with Artemesia Gentileschi
in the library?*

God knows! (see what I did there?)

I suppose I can't work out what to say
I suppose if I go down the Artemisia route
I'll start to bleed and I'm too tired!

(Pray, pray, pray. Kneel down, up we get)

I'm not sleeping well in my cold house that is not my house
and I want a grand passion that will involve limbs.

Warm and moving limbs.
Actually my legs. In a marvellous get up

Oh to dress up like a fierce saint
To be fierce and

I am sitting here feeling fiercer than ever.

That's just it!
The tearing at the seams of ...

Just look in the mirror!

But I'm stuck and you are right.

The head-dress is too heavy. Everything is too heavy.
This wheel, this leaf, my own skin – too heavy.

We want to go to sleep, don't we?
We want to be able to turn off a light and sleep

(Drink this, all of you
Take eat, all of you)

These are our bodies, taken from us, holding us.
These are our bodies, taken from us, holding us

(*I know, I know)

Sugar

What they said was that I need
to take it seriously, that eels should
be bought alive, that when I imitate
a prehistoric creature I must immerse
myself in the idea completely and not
treat it as a kind of play acting.

I find it hard though, to get down on
all fours, to grunt and paw the ground
without laughing. Buy your eels alive
they said, so I do. Their bodies are strong.
I like to think that they love me.

They don't love me. I wear mohair
jumpers covered in ribbons. I wear
denim gloves which people compliment
for the tight pink stitching and studs.

Pralines

Tell me a story about good laughs
or a story about your most unusual clothes.
Everything will stiffen
if you don't come straight away
My most unusual clothes are very clean.

William Campbell

The Countess and The Koi Pond

She came with the coast in her hair, a copper colour done in to rust by the sea. Black-strap molasses satin, her silks smouldering on the moor's edge, the night before was a vigil at the lodge, curious of lupins, full of the luminous witchcraft of fox eyes. She had come to peep at it one last time, this Palladian mansion in aspic.

Climbers shrugging through pan-tiles, breeze through the clematis frame, the rickets speaking childish vowels against those glossy pushes, where moussey Perrier-hazes once went up through the limbs like smoke. Strange dissections of sun on drawing room samovars, broadsheets pinwheeled in grates like dove down, the Madame Isaacs gone to sprawling hives of tiny aphids.

She postured, *and how*, in her memoirs, that the whole affair had seen her eyes slope '*in the old way*', Pergamese and almond-halved, that she became wry-mouthed as a girlhood saint on a Parian apse. *And how*, come dawn, as she peered from the pond's edge, peered past the greens and milky films, *they still tesserrated*, she wrote, *light alive* turning on koi scales,

palindromic golds-to-green-to-gold. Karp-flares, tiny mouthings of undersun, straddling the distances of murk, fluid their mural surface, swirlings and jades. *And how*, she said, *with nothing but my roses and my memory books*, *I would have fed my silks to the moths long since, had I known like the koi how to speak these flaking silver syllables over and over my skin.*

Stephen Emmerson

26 (from *Sector Lights*)

It is all blue. It is all blue.
Blue it is all blue. Even
the clouds could be blue,
if they wanted, wanted
and if they were blue.

Blue it is all blue.
The water is blue, my hands
and feet are blue, and the
clouds could be blue,
if they wanted, wanted.

All blue. As blue as blue,
and as water as water is water.

Words are all words.
It is all words. Even the
clouds could be words.
If they wanted.

Cam Scott

Felled Notes

“Facts are dead without the opening that history offers. To the thanatology of facts we must counter-pose the living force of history, the defiant being of the occupied that frames these facts and gives them their significance.”

- *Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos*

It is difficult to think beginnings.

One always sets out with an end in mind.

*to hear the clearing sigh
a breath of wind
as through a wound*

I recall a talk by the poet Don McKay in which he asked if the Latinate names favoured by natural scientists might not represent a striving for a language appropriate to the unthinkable vintage of the objects it would seize. And in the essay ‘White Mythology,’ Derrida remarks on how philosophy purchases its most abstract general concepts —the Ab-solute, In-finitude—from specific discourses by use of the negating prefix.

In those cases where an element is named for its discoverer, perhaps the suffix works to negate the moment of discovery; reminding us that here is something of the absolute over-against its late entry into language. A ‘dead’ language whispers of timelessness. The negating power of ‘living’ language, on the other hand, which ossifies phenomena on spot, is the prerogative of each discoverer to deploy.

*a body of remarks upon a body
marks a burial in air—
or any meeting makes a curvature
in space (two people will
impel parabola
to share a cup)—
then isn't line a given?
The horizon a divisor of the body
halves inhabitants—
can think a place w/out a person
not a person w/out place*

Take the mineral Adamite, for example, named after Gilbert-Joseph Adam. By this nominative act, an index of zinc ore is retrofitted with identity, as though Adam's own limited purview were eternal; as though he were a term commensurate with the depth and extension of his discovery—the molten other of absolute thought. “We always mentally project ourselves as the intelligence endeavouring to apprehend the object.” (Lenin)

What of the world before consciousness? Says Avenarius: “We must simply regard the animal kingdom—be it the most insignificant worm—as primitive fellow-men if we regard animal life in connection with general experience.” Say the ichthyosaur was once foremost of conjuror worms, its drawbridge jaw an emblem of imperial strength. Too many epochs intervene, and we survivors strive to plumb time's depth by an extinct instrumentation.

*At the Noachian outset
Scratched the living scutum of the dome
Then cracked the planetary carapace
That shuttles under our false steps
What is a home?*

*From a cliff-side tuft of tansy
To the cold lip of the nearest inlet
Is it the grip of one's feet to the ground
The instant purchase of the earth
Upon a puny body*

*Home is where you come
From; for the place the heart is breaks
And must remake itself in place
Of where it came from
To be found again, in pieces.*

Further: “we can think of a ‘region’ where no human foot has yet trodden, but to be able to think of such an environment there is required what we designate by the term self, whose thought the thinking is.” As per Av-enarius, so long as something crawls upon the earth, there is a being for whom the term ‘world’ has transpired, as though each welt were pinched of one great view. The backdated watcher inhabits this worm, threading insensate soil and reporting to the Mothership, circling millennia hence.

If this is not the operation of the scientist, it is certainly that of the poet in nature, whose observational prowess is self-subtractive, like a language: “no plot so narrow, be but nature there.” (Coleridge) The poet nihilates amid attractive scenery, details of which are held in place by an imperfect interest. Personal identity shudders before the sublime tableau; consciousness inscribed as conscience, stark articulator of humiliation.

*Tracked east upon the diagram
We had already lost our footing
The better to found ourselves upon
When we came on a ragged party
Trace belying their equivalent text
“Formal transfer was a solemn ceremony
But we had to state the value first
Our staid annuity in ill proportion
To an exponential dearth*

Each intimation of the Other alters thingly details: and the missed encounter of metonymy commences from such subtle differences, repressed into a presentation. This is a vulgar posit of the intuition—invariance of nature underwriting speech; brand solidity borne out by repetition. Poetic rhetoric wields its examples to encircle every referent. Thought of the arche-fossil beckons an anticipated certitude: our wager hovering in space, a fantasy of pre-colonial time.

As Dewdney writes, “devoid of perception the/blind form of the fossil/exists post-factum.” These are a crucible of faith. Christianity posits that God was incarnated as a human being two-thousand-odd years ago, an event which is as yet incomplete, and will only be granted its full meaning by a second event that retroactively constitutes the meaning of the first. Thus the “flesh of these words,” these paleontological traces, mark the procession of the Holy Spirit in Dewdney’s symbolically saturated cosmos.

*A waxen wedge parting the waves
Of meek surmise, we make our
Fortunes by decree; our wake
Ruffles the reeds indifferently as
Our tread spreads salt over grasses—
The shore is wherever one is standing
Before being made to step off of it
Into the morass of someone else's
Wrong description of the path
One takes to get there*

Pteranodon swoops, dactyls swing. Deep time digs pits against recursive paradox: it is the privilege of the poet to name her own earth, part by parceled part. But if we, the inconstant ones, remain homesick atop this shelled terrain, then only for its being hewn by water, what respect does this give to its dispossessed? What hospitality proceeds? “The lyre made from murdered animals” (McKay) will sound across the lake as though the landscape were an ear. Dare we speak only for ourselves. The clearing is vacated and we packed a lunch.

Nature as void, an empty set on which may be constructed. Nature as commons, ripe for picking by each biblical Goldilocks, replete as a refrigerator. Deep time wielded deceptively makes terra nullius of the earth. Can any Anglo birder tell us how he got here? Was he born into his waders, naming flowers for his friends? The law as count before which operation nothing counts. The state as craft; a false whole. Nation-state as ship of Theseus, a metabolic bilge tossed on time as a brooding sea.

*There is no document to seal
The living under their estate;
No errant fragment of the whole
May synecdochically erect this stake:
The molten immemorial
Abuts the bottom of each placid lake.*

*It sends up bedrock as the scab
Atop some greening wound;
This grants all life its proper scope
As well as common ground.
As genesis is in medias res,
Trees topple at a profit, without sound —*

The pre-historical pastoral an attempt to cancel debt. Start with the end in mind, for it remains there is no tale without a moral: “The Adamites are thus called after Adam, whose nakedness in paradise they imitate, because it was prior to sin.” (Augustine) Does Dewdney, in his account of a materialist transubstantiation, give a like account of nudity? “Is what we wish to inhabit/just the bread, just the wine?” Only there is no body freely given to its momentary bearer; no cup not inherited; no primeval state of which the settler-poet may avail themselves.

We prefer to think of ourselves as original; in signing, to refuse the contract from surroundings. Yet it remains for the settler to “be-as-written”—to cease writing our history incessantly, as though complete. A predatory cenancestor chasing its own tail into the future, shitting time linearly as she chews. Perhaps the Time has come to name our daemon-sponsor, to submit for once to our own science-fiction: a baroque ontological fable that begins with a knowledgeable theft.

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Maria Stadnicka

Morning Drill

A delivery of boiler suits:
each of us gets in line.

*Take the gas mask out.
Chin in, straps over your heads!*

Back to back on the floor
we breathe in unison
and steam blurs the classroom.

I recite the times tables, correct
my spelling for long words
like *armghedon* and *eggsistenz*
and tell god I want to become
a Father when I grow up.
Or a baker;
they know the difference
between plenty and nothing.

*In case of attack, keep calm.
move to the nearest shelter. Sit still!*

I watch my brother coughing
as someone reads us a story.

Lotte L.S.

The State Of

Whereas I lived as a pulse moving underneath the sea—
not below ground
not above ground
but somewhere inbetween.

This needs a witness.
or at least;
this needs to be witnessed.

Looking back I suppose has everything to do with continuous warfare
against the state
before the chatter of rain
the eye of silence,
perfect titles of sincerity.
Soon I became soaked in subtitles;
I notice then my cigarette is no longer lit.

And so I began with a first note to myself—
Is it ever safe to say “we”?

I flirt with the idea of how “we” slept:
squatted over our own bodies
the waistband with or without grenades.
That technique most commonly known as celibacy;
my body its unfathomable practitioner.

A singular thought lingers.
What pushes them to represent the state like this?

The quote marks around “martyr” like a barricade.

Never sure if protection was for those inside, or those outside;
neither able to “see” the other—

Glass that only lets the light in, not to let the gaze pass through.
Her unfurling a black umbrella as a rose growing backwards,
swelling into a bud; to when things were not “simpler” but easier to avoid.

All the other women were killed.

One action multiplied to provide meaning to the rest.

Can anything really make a multitude?

Waiting here at a quarter to two;
orange glowing through the curtains.
Leaves falling from the softly lit trees.

Window open, cold though it is—

I can see to the corner of the next street
as errands run through the mind:

whether to “see” C or break it off
before even beginning
whether to write J and tell her I miss her,
is she alright, what does sunrise look like
over there?

Tell her,

I have discovered that there are no gaps but language itself.

In the midst of experience I ask myself—

What would a history based on the state of exception look and feel like?
This world isn’t dissolving.
But the idea of “now” seems pathetic and irrelevant and run dry;
and all I gained was loss.

J writes, finally, to transform is not to abolish:

They perform as if there is “a state”;
even though there is “not” “a state”;
even though “they” are “against” the “idea” of “a state”.

Waiting... for what?

Just because something is current doesn't mean it is newly felt.

The whole thing
must be reimagined.

Orange hesitates to pink in the sky outside.

The singular window lets in no light but finally I can gaze out.

What I see.

I dream each roof has its own assembly.

The people—neighbours, friends, the cashier from earlier today at the bank

(in anticipation I withdrew everything I had down to £0.001)

aren't living in tents (who can in this climate?)

but sitting in circles, chucking pans of water to quell the tear gas,

brushing away the tracks.

Waiting for one another to piss in the enormity of

“just” “being.”

Yes desire is endless.

It needs to be witnessed.

Rain accelerates down the orange-red roofs,

dismantling into disciplines;

collecting into bottles and saucepans and strategic plant pots.

One barricade climbs over another.

Everything in the world seems so small and so quiet and

so distant

and unbelonging.

By which how to talk about what is still ongoing?

Two whole days of rain and the trees are still thirsty
so sweetened by their plural existence
by which I can feel my own need
by which I bring it into the present tense
by which I attempt the negation of what is already absent;
the dark insides of sentence
barricading all pleasure in the plural.

This poem is nothing if it has no reader.

The reoccurrence of history, style, crisis—

I began again with a list of luxurious devastation.

The techniques of the body grew to resemble a prisoner of a drop of water;

its doppelgänger romanticised as strategic instrument,

as symptomatic hunger

for innovation.

I wait here and I am overcome,

strangely suspended,

not with what was—

the loose dogs held aloft under streetlight,

the quiet confidence of motion in the cantons,

my own peripheral and inquisitive cunt,

indeterminately touched by the changing seasons—

but what could be.

A note on the text: Some words, lines, ideas and images have been taken or reworked from ‘The Mastery of Non-Mastery’ by Michael Taussig, in the 2016 collection of writings, *To Dare Imagining: Rojava Revolution*. (Autonomedia, ed. by Dilar Dirik, David Levi Strauss, Michael Taussig, and Peter Lamborn Wilson)

Connie Judkins-Law

Heart Attack in a Sunroom

rotten apples he always liked better than toffee ones cos you really get its essence like *eau de pensioneer* but with vinegar and maggots, lurking in ditches to smoke fags blinded by brambles and sunshine mumbling in hedgegoblin to three knock-kneed kids, calmness of hospitalisation thrill of body shop lip gloss a twix and a fanta in a glassy eyed lobby roots curling from ventilators like crocus shoots losing sight of the sun, wet socks from clingy grass on swollen ankles or causing a fright from the garden by smacking his puffy face to the wet glass why aren't you in bed why isnt he? out of key carols yellow teeth yellow fingertips a five-veined guitar and dial-up lining the room watch it pounce with its jig of despair, butter lumps in your beard who puts salt on bacon well nobody not anymore, never liked toffee apples but he eats them anyway the doctor says they're bad for him but he says, an apple a day

Nat Loftus

A Glimpse of the Reels at Work

No one really knows how an engine works, but we suffer faith
and let them tinker

Best of all is to stroll casually by and catch them working late in winter;
blush at heaven's gate in a damp dark street

A diorama, a Christmas card, the nativity starry on the bare belly of a Beetle.
Don't kid yourself I am looking in there for father figures

when there are far more useful things at hand:
Better loves to be lifted and held, put together after being taken apart

This sort of motor must be made of more love and more —
why else would they work for free? They work for me and I am undeserving

I offer up biscuits on a Friday, my jeans for oil, keep a jar of solvent
under the sink by the greasy rags. There is a masculinity of mind that maroons me

in the kitchen like this (and I'm forgetting for now the masculinity of money)
but every one needs some thing. They take it when I'm not watching

and give it the works. Better not ask how long, or how much and certainly
not what they are doing with your little poppet. You shouldn't name these things,

it isn't your job.

David Greaves

map revealed via caustic wash

lines preceding &
further on. this
ends. these
justify & *I am*
& that said.
if it were said,
say it: the illumination a wide & uncertain cast
which beholds. shouts
ongoing/the street as a mnemonic,
this device in/of
wide lines.

light is a wide shout.
this will end. the murmur
like shouting back to starlings,
& hands were never enough,
were they, *I am*
& so on.
if you were walking & it was morning
& birds said so. say so.
they will tell us
it is morning, & that morning ends.
the lines end.

if we were the shouts birds make
then meet us. *I will meet*
lit by flame, say,
or else it's simply that the moon stares
how it always had to, I said,
& *that I am:* say or not
it's all said. the negatives,
the in-between will shout like light
cast on/through lines
that said
that I cast. that ends.

Contributors

Tessa Berring lives in Edinburgh. Her poetry can be found in a number of magazines/anthologies, etc. These include Datableedzine, The Rialto, Adjacent Pineapple, and Blackbox Manifold. She is also a member of “12”, a writer’s collective based mostly in Scotland, but also Nottingham.

William Campbell is a poet. He studied Music and latterly Liberal Arts in London with the Benedictus Trust before taking up a place to read History of Art in Florence and at Buckingham. He writes on modernism, specifically on H.D. and Sitwell, and is currently in Rome researching Mendicant aesthetics in Late Medieval Central Italy. He plans to undertake an MPhil in English later in the year.

Stephen Emmerson is the author of *A Piece (If P Then Q)*, *Invisible Poems* (ZimZalla), *Family Portraits (If P Then Q)*, *Telegraphic Transcriptions* (Stranger Press), and *Poetry Wholes (If P Then Q)*. More info can be found at his website: <https://stephenemmerson.wordpress.com/>.

David Greaves’ poetry and fiction has appeared in Valve, Lune, Hypnopomp, and Datableed, and his prose-poetry pamphlet, *Hinged*, was released by the New Fire Tree Press in 2011. He generally doesn’t tweet at @dgrbolith.

Connie Judkins-Law is a writer who studied English & American Literature at Kent and UC Berkeley, and is soon to begin her MA in Paris. Her poetry has been published in Datableedzine, and she also writes short stories & plays. She presented a paper on ‘seasons’ at the 28th International Conference on Virginia Woolf, and is fascinated by eco-criticism and the anthropocene.

Nat Loftus is an MA Creative Writing student at the University of Sheffield. Her short stories and poems have appeared, or are forthcoming, in the Mechanics' Institute Review, The Curlew and Route 57. As a former singer-songwriter (Nat Johnson / Monkey Swallows the Universe) she earned national press acclaim, songwriting commissions and live sessions for BBC Radio 4 and BBC 6 Music. Nat has also worked as a freelance copywriter and has a degree in journalism.

Lotte L.S. is a poet living in Great Yarmouth, the furthest easterly outlier of England.

Cam Scott is a poet, critic, and improvising non-musician from Winnipeg, Canada, Treaty 1 territory. A visual suite, *WRESTLERS*, was published by Greying Ghost in 2017, and an installment of the long poem *ROMANS/SNOWMARE* is forthcoming from Arbeiter Ring Publishing in fall 2019.

Maria Stadnicka is a Romano-British writer and journalist, winner of twelve national Romanian prizes for poetry. Her poetry, essays and reviews are published by Axon, Dissident Voice, International Times, Litter, Mary Evans Picture Library, Meniscus, Molly Bloom, Ofi Press, Osiris, Social Alternatives, Stride, Tears in the Fence, TEXT, The Journal, The Poets' Republic, Weinzeile. Her collections include *Short Story about War* (2014), *Imperfect* (2017), *The Unmoving* (2018), and forthcoming works include *Somnia* (Knives, Forks and Spoons Press), *Bearings II* (The Poets' Republic Press, Edinburgh), and *Uranium Bullets* (Cervena Barva Press, US). Further information about her work and collaborations can be found at : www.mariastadnicka.com.