



ATLANTA REVIEW

CORNWALL & WALES

Guest Editor
Agnes Meadows

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ATLANTA REVIEW

at the Georgia Institute of Technology

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WELCOME

Editors are often challenged by the realities of getting issues to press—publishing is fraught with unexpected delays and last-minute corrections. Occasionally that can also necessitate a change to the editor’s note. What I never expected was a near complete revision of my note because of a pandemic. As people world-wide shelter in place, the need for poetry is more imperative than ever—both as a distraction and as a reflection on our shared humanity. As I write this I have no way of knowing when the issue will be printed or distributed, but we remain committed to sharing the contents in whatever ways we can. To our loyal subscribers, your copies will arrive at some future point, but I hope you will indulge us as we make an exception and release an open-source digital version of this issue. These are extraordinary times, and we want to do our part to bring comfort to anyone we can.

As our regular readers know, each spring/summer issue is an invitation to “travel” and experience the poetry of contemporary writers in other parts of the world. This year, courtesy of guest editor Agnes Meadows, we journey to Wales and Cornwall, for a glimpse into a poetic tradition that dates back to a period between 400 and 700 CE, as the Welsh and Cornish (along with Breton and Cumbric) developed as languages. It is a rich literary history, and poets from these areas are as prolific and poignant as ever. Our gratitude to Agnes for the amazing work she has done putting together this collection. For anyone fortunate enough to know her, you are already aware that she is a poetic force of nature! Her commitment to giving voice to contemporary writers across the world seems tireless, but I want to especially note her dedication to the work of British writers, especially marginalized British writers. As founder of *Loose Muse*, the longest running reading series for women poets in Britain, she has created a space for women of all cultures, ages, and experience to embrace and share poetry, and Agnes’ own poetry is fantastic.

As always, we also have additional work from our general submissions, and we continue to be honored to share that terrific work with you.

We send everyone our very best wishes for well-being, both physical and emotional, during this difficult time. In true British tradition, we suggest you have a strong cup of tea and a biscuit (cookie) as you read this issue. Having lived with a Britt for many years, I have come to believe, as many Brits do, that an excellent *cuppa* makes almost anything better. And, remember, if you love what we do, please tell a friend.

Karen Head

Mariensztat Retrospect	1	<i>Jeffrey Alfier</i>
What We Knew of Midowa Street	2	<i>Jeffrey Alfier</i>
Midnight Prayer	3	<i>Rebecca Baggett</i>
Swamp Report	5	<i>Matthew W. Baker</i>
A Watched Pot Never Boils	7	<i>Kevin Burris</i>
Missing Is the Secret Light Years		
Away	8	<i>Ronda Pizsk Broatch</i>
In the New Land	10	<i>Mark Anthony Burke</i>
Confidence	12	<i>Thomas Cook</i>
Bats	13	<i>Gregory Djanikian</i>
Grimoire	14	<i>Jeannine Hall Gailey</i>
table setting	15	<i>Robin Gow</i>
Another Rainy Morning in Ohio	16	<i>Peter Grandbois</i>
Sometimes, at Night	17	<i>Peter Grandbois</i>
Body	19	<i>Siân Griffiths</i>
Refuge	21	<i>Shakiba Hashemi</i>
Trench	22	<i>Charles Kell</i>
Fire Season	23	<i>Jeff Knorr</i>
Your 9	24	<i>Jeff Knorr</i>
My Parents Named Us for the		
Dawn	25	<i>Xiaoly Li</i>
Su-Mei from Su-Zhou, China	26	<i>Xiaoly Li</i>
Pumpkin on the Porch	27	<i>John Linstrom</i>
It Was 10 A.M. When the Angel		
Said You Have to Go Now	29	<i>Robert Okaji</i>
Hard Ghosts	30	<i>Frank Ortega</i>
Nights at the 7-Eleven	32	<i>James Owens</i>
The League of Failed Superheroes	34	<i>David E. Poston</i>
The Gardener and the Garden 11	36	<i>Phoebe Reeves</i>
The Gardener and the Garden 13	37	<i>Phoebe Reeves</i>
Sleeping with a Single Father	39	<i>Melanie Shaw</i>
Floral Arrangement for		
My Grandchildren	41	<i>Ronnie Sirmans</i>
Cumberland Gap	42	<i>Bonnie Thibodeau</i>
After Losing a Child	43	<i>Adam Vines</i>
All Souls Day	44	<i>Grace Wagner</i>
International Feature Section	45	
Intro to Cornwall & Wales	46	<i>Agnes Meadows</i>
Charity Jump	47	<i>Sally Spedding</i>
Cow Hand	48	<i>Sally Spedding</i>
Hiraeth	49	<i>Emlyn Williams</i>

Leon Trotsky In Wales	50	<i>Phil Knight</i>
Time for Song	51	<i>Sue Johns</i>
Dolly Pentreath	53	<i>Sue Johns</i>
Aegeas	55	<i>Brian Mitchell</i>
Plygain	57	<i>Nicholas McGaughey</i>
Ten Minutes	59	<i>Sonia Davies</i>
About Turn	61	<i>Anna Chorlton</i>
1985	62	<i>Sophie Toovey</i>
The Hare in the Moon	63	<i>Sue Moules</i>
Mushrooms	64	<i>Gareth Writer-Davies</i>
Carrier Pigeon	65	<i>Angela Croft</i>
Dressed in Midnight	67	<i>Mike McNamara</i>
Alone in the Kitchen	69	<i>Anthony Powers</i>
Torture	71	<i>Anthony Powers</i>
Afon Rhondda	72	<i>Rob Cullen</i>
Bitter limp fruit	73	<i>Rob Cullen</i>
Choughs	75	<i>Vicki Morley</i>
On Newport City footbridge	76	<i>Lawrence Illsley</i>
Emily Brontë's Bath	77	<i>Tiffany Murray</i>
Superlative numinous silence	78	<i>Anastacia Ackers</i>
Two sides of the coin	79	<i>Patric Cunanane</i>
On the dressing floors at grass	80	<i>Patric Cunanane</i>
Visitors	81	<i>Phil Jones</i>
Bird prayer	83	<i>clare e. potter</i>
Garden	85	<i>Vicky Morris</i>
Seasons	86	<i>Abigail Elizabeth Ottley</i>
Dying Breed	87	<i>Abigail Elizabeth Ottley</i>
At the End of the Day	88	<i>Michael Hall</i>
Mamiaih	89	<i>Ness Owen</i>
91 Flugelhorn on a Pembrokeshire		
Beach	90	<i>Philip Gross</i>
The Solomon Browne	92	<i>Anne Symons</i>
The Welsh, A Summer Experiment	93	<i>Kate Noakes</i>
When the best vase was an egg cup	94	<i>Kate Noakes</i>
Gull	95	<i>Rhys Owain Williams</i>
Swimmer	97	<i>Grug Muse</i>
Tether me	98	<i>Alice Kavounas</i>
Welsh Confession	99	<i>Gwyn Parry</i>
Treffynnon (Holywell)	100	<i>Gwyn Parry</i>
Surrendered to the sea	102	<i>Lola Stansbury-Jones</i>
Matches	103	<i>Stuart Buck</i>
Borlais Smart Poems	104	<i>Evelyn Holloway</i>
Pebbles	106	<i>Evelyn Holloway</i>

Dal dy Dir	107	<i>Eabhan Ní Shuilleabháin</i>
Sylvia	108	<i>Susie Wild</i>
The Lash Museum	109	<i>Susie Wild</i>
Mothering under the Mandala	111	<i>Guinevere Clark</i>
An insomniac dreams		
of sleepwalking	112	<i>Gilla Evans</i>
Hours between wolf and dog 1	113	<i>Alan Kellerman</i>
The story we tell when there		
is no moon	116	<i>Alan Kellerman</i>
Thoughts on a king's idyll in		
city of the legion (Caerleon)	117	<i>Peter Gaskell</i>
Ding Dong Mine	119	<i>David Hale</i>
Four Haiku Sequences	120	<i>Paul Chambers</i>
Blodeuwedd	122	<i>Angela Stoner</i>
Dragoncloak	123	<i>Angela Stoner</i>
Love Song	124	<i>K. S. Moore</i>
Shiver	125	<i>K. S. Moore</i>
Passing by the lock in winter	126	<i>Lesley Hale</i>
Gannet Flute	127	<i>Lesley Hale</i>
Rhigos	128	<i>Mab Jones</i>
Valli takes a bath	129	<i>Mab Jones</i>
Contributors	130	
Benefactors of <i>Atlanta Review</i>	140	





Mariensztat Retrospect

1.

A man forsakes his homebound refuge of solitude,
his Hölderlin text — its heavy foreign wisdom,
to meld with walkers on the late Warsaw streets.
He moves with vagrant grace past the indulgent darkness
of alleys, tramway rails cambering deep into the distance.

Hands clutch collars flared by wind. Streetlamps
inch obliquely through curtains that line the old square.
Faces spill through the neon of a nightclub doorway.
One more beggar slumbers on the Archcathedral steps.
A fringe of low voices on the other side
of a walled garden, come soft as secrets between brothers.

2.

Heavy bells echo like far-off grief.
Old men hunch like penitents over board games.
At the edge of his hearing, someone tunes a cello.
From her park bench, a disheveled woman
feeds a dwindling swarm of birds, crumbs thrown
at such a pace they seem like pieces of her hands.

A door slams behind him. Someone swallows bitter words.
A radio on a windowsill sings itself into nightfall.
Cafes begin to close. Crowds in porticos thin out,
each voice fading, like the words of someone
who pleads too long at a bolted door.

Jeffrey Alfier

What We Knew of Miodowa Street

Warsaw, Poland

It was outside Costa Coffee, you recall. We watched the sun flood the whitewashed peaks of St. Ann's. In a windowbox behind us, languid flowers gave up on blossoms.

A sparrow landed on our table, looked left and right, decided we were no company to keep. Crows just kept distance, let everyone know they prevail ungoverned.

Girls with healthy thighs and silky dresses passed quietly on bikes. Young men stepped quickly, exuding the same aftershave, like a shared fate.

Even in that spring warmth, the old ambled by in coats thick enough to envelop every winter they'd witnessed, the way scents of baking bread shrouded streets that morning.

Then, that hurtling taxi — so ancient it rattled near extinction. Across the way, remember, how that woman gripped a nightgown on an outdoor sale rack, as if it was hers in some other life.

Jeffrey Alfier

Midnight Prayer

Bass thump of a rap beat and squeal
of brakes around the curve announce
the neighbor boy's safe arrival home
and wake me from my first, deep sleep.

I stare into the dark
and think of Tigger, the ginger tom
who prowls the neighborhood,
wish him keen ears and swift paws,
and of the children across the street
who shriek around the treacherous curve
one-legged on rollerblades and scooters —
quick reflexes, I pray, sharp eyes,
slow and mindful drivers, and everyone
safely home.

Safe—

my prayer tonight for everyone
I know and love, for those I cannot
love, for those I'll never know—
for the gawky boys and glowing girls
who roam from bar to bar downtown,
old people hesitating at the tops of stairs,
toddlers navigating playscapes,
pilots over oceans and everyone
the planes carry. For whales
easing along ice floes and the sailors
I hope will not find them,
for troubled men tossing in desert heat
far from home, for women awake
too late in kitchens, sipping burnt coffee
as they page through photo albums
and old letters. For everyone in waiting rooms,
worn men shuffling along city streets,
horses clumped together under trees
in the rain,

all of us spinning together
on this fragile shell
encasing rock and flame,
each of us a tiny flicker of light
in the great dark.

Rebecca Baggett

Swamp Report

—after *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*
by Rembrandt

I am curious about the corpse, of course,
its arm flayed its skin splayed
so as to invite the eye like a dinner guest
into the den of the body.
And I am curious about their curiosity—
how it shifts through the room like light.
How the innerness of man—just now being opened—
either sparks a hunger in their cheeks or a timidity.
The one man looks over his shoulder, confused,
perhaps a little scared someone else would enter
the ghoulish gray of the room and realize
what threshold had been breached;
that these men, huddled around the altar
of the criminal's corpse like Christ's disciples—
and the doctor himself Christlike in pulling back
the flesh to reveal not a burning heart but muscles,
bone—were witch-like in their black smocks
calling upon some forbidden force.
But who was this body?
Why his and not a richer man's
equally dead flesh? What a screen class guarantees
against having one's inmost parts exposed,
being an animal on display.
And what was it I heard reported this morning
as the neighbors below me laughed, fire
engines wailed out on the streets
to another blaze (or perhaps the same
since the sirens seem to perpetually peal
through the air in this city of never-sleep)—
that some white man in a pressed suit in a white
house was somehow not the thief I thought
and somehow more untouchable yet still
culpable in a different way like a miniskirt
bares the legs all air and bright flesh

and the idea of something hidden
but just out of reach. And how far will
the doctor go I can't know because he's arrested
there, mid-cast, clamp like a divining rod
pointing down without being allowed to go
down saying here is water here the object
of desire waits. His stayed hand a slow curse
like pearlescent maggots flensing the flesh
only in picometers. The audience perched
on the verge of discovery, teetering, worrying
what comes after the fascia, what lies
beyond the cracked bone.

Matthew W. Baker

A Watched Pot Never Boils

said Poor Richard to his almanac,
measuring the unimaginable
distance to his afternoon tea

through the quantum lens of a proverb.
Never having seen an electron
he could not know he could not

watch one without changing it.
Nor would he ever watch
Schrödinger's cat while Schrödinger

stepped out through a slit in a screen
focused on some brilliant insight
like a laser, probably.

He would never see the train coming
or Einstein in it, waving
from a relative point of view,

bound for Los Alamos on a probabilistic track
by way of Las Vegas
where God plays dice with the universe.

Poor Richard couldn't have known
except in the bones,
that it takes a lot of dark energy

to hold the roll in that game,
to bet on luck and a hot black cup
of coffee you can't see coming.

Kevin Burris

Missing is the Secret Light Years Away

The day I broke the bridge
of your violin I burned

learned gravity
with stars

was a kind of practice
for the grave

To the doves I say joy is the oil
of black seeds, a song of

hollow bones
a trickery

of spacetime

O my aunts

I wish to tell you what was written
in the ledgers far from

the gas vans of Kulmhof
to warn you of the fist

that reaches opaquely
down the throats

of many
so slowly

fills what was once void of
with madness

The yew bow, horsehair
vibrating strings of memory

the table spread
with Zweigelt, Emmental, thin

sliced Vollkornbrot, two pears
linen *serviettes*

curled up dimensions
awaiting your return O my aunts

In my mirror
your eyes

stare back
I wish to tell you

some bridges were repaired
the bow restrung

still sings of the grave
the joy of doves

Ronda Pizsk Broatch

In the New Land

That first winter we moved there,
the hooked bay of the lake
froze between our house and town,
soothing jell of dreams I'd watch
make love to the wind,
stiffened into a white prairie.
I waited tables, worked the dinner shift,
poured leftover booze into a glass
I hid behind the dishwasher, skated all night.
By midnight, sailing sprung and jazzed,
I'd run home over the frozen shortcut,
the opaque sky of the underworld
and aimed for the lights across the ice.
Five-second gusts jammed stone fingers
through the wool to my skin
but I traded the chance of cracking through
for another hour of sleep.
On Sundays, we'd walk the edges
wanting nothing to break apart,
as the ice groaned, word-clouds
rising when we danced around our promise .
I couldn't stop what was breaking,
couldn't find the song that eased the pressure.
Guttural laments below the ice
rumbled like quakes,
shoved car-sized chunks up the banks,
jagged barricades for some battle
piled higher by morning.
I'd get to the edge just after midnight,
climb down and run the black tundra
watching for the lighthouse of our kitchen,
climb up the heaped shards on the far side.
I wanted the dancing soul to come back,
way we were when it all started,

the rigid notes to soften
back into the song I loved to hear
before the shattering came.

Mark Anthony Burke

Confidence

What I know about the morning air,
entering—because we sleep with the door open—
disappears and returns again, like the strange words
I hold in my mouth. Walking, in that brisk way,
that's what I've wanted, but different,
in everything. The roots of the giant trees—
the first of which a sailor traded for his bar tab,
in Santa Monica, two hundred years ago—
arch up from the earth like spines.
The roots I step over are full of knots,
bulges where growth met a limit
imposed by the universe, a place where
potential was redirected, a new course taken.
I watch my dog among her labyrinth, sniff the dirt
for figs. What have I asked for? I am more lost than she.

Thomas Cook

Bats

They are like the body unhinged
the soul made almost visible
a swerving of wings
erratic slicings
that keep us awake
like narratives that have
no certain end or wavering
hands in the fog
nothing distinct except
their curve and flit
under sky or bough
unbird-like as they are
unknotting the air
with loops and veers
catching our blithe attention
what makes them suddenly
leathery and fearsome
passing as they sometimes do
into our lives
through the smallest apertures
we who are their kin
back-boned cochlear
crouching below them
with our gloves and nets
plastic bowls and cookie sheets
all the domesticity we can muster
wishing only that the moonlight
might lure them back
into a steeper darkness
toward everything they are
nocturnal unfeathery
silhouettes of incongruous motion
momentary arrhythmic glimpses
we endure
keeping our distance.

Gregory Djanikian

Grimoire

Have you tried the Wahl's protocol, asks one well-meaning friend,
kale, fish oil, blueberries? The Paleo diet or Ketogenic?

Our modern spells for ending illness, for mending brains
that have started to unravel. Exercise, vitamins, horse-whispering.

What are the words I whisper to myself over and over
at night in the hospital bed. The night nurse says I spoke

of murder, I was laughing. She could swear I was a witch,
with the essential oils of lavender and peppermint I brought

to exterminate the ghosts and medical smells,
to suffocate the scents of decay. I could share the prayers

and songs that bring me peace: Miyazaki's *My Neighbor Totoro*
and Disney's *Moana* on regular rotation as I learn again to walk

with a walker, as I struggle to hold a toothbrush. Be patient, say the kind therapists
who, like the earliest witches, know the keys to healing include gentle hands,

a smile for suffering, sometimes, popsicles. I could use a little magic,
a few wise women. In my home my alchemies and elixirs await,

the familiar fur of my blue-eyed kitten, my husband's cooking
my first day home, potato soup the way my Irish mother liked it.

Here is the truth of it: the miracle, the secrets you seek are already at work
within me: the cells that strive for homeostasis, for regeneration, for immortality.

Jeannine Hall Gailey

table setting

my brother & i set a table under the blue tarp sky that's keeping the hail from smacking down on the fine china. forks go to the left? a ribbon of gold. we trace on the gold on the utensils because it makes us feel fancy. he points to my arm & asks what happened & i explain that underneath the skin we have layers of gold—my wrists are a crosshatching of gold. spoons standing up in the center of the plate at attention like soldiers ready for pudding. we spend forever balancing them & it's especially hard because the hail is turning into rock just upstairs. a spilling of bucket after bucket of rocks. i tell my brother to get under the table if he's scared & i'll keep working. i take the knives & jam them into the table all of the forehead first right above the plates so as to make sundials if the sun ever eats all the blue tarps away. we sit at both heads of the table & laugh because it looks silly. i love my brother & we eat every dinner together like this, raising our utensils & biting invisible forkfuls of food. he says, *tonight i'm having bratwurst & sauerkraut* i nod & say *i'm having a plate full of lettuce* & he passes me the dressing because he knows i should consume more fantastically & for a moment or two i do think about angel hair pasta which i think is disgusting & stringy—i do this to focus on the lettuce. a stone breaks through the tarp & shatters one of the nice plates. we don't panic. we have known this would happen. it's just a blue tarp. we pick up the pieces together & i tell him *we can't go walking in here with bare feet*. in the trash the dish hums to itself as if to sing its own farewell. we carry on with dinner & then go to sleep beneath the table with eight legs the flex all night—this wonderful beast & we tell the table *hush & stand tall & sleep with us*.

Robin Gow

Another rainy morning in Ohio

And I'm thinking about my childhood
In Denver. I must have been thirteen
Or fourteen. No matter. It's November
And the wind's slow, cold breath
Rimes the branches of every tree,
And a covenant of blood red leaves
Cling to the Japanese Maple
In our front yard, and I stand before it
Basking in the amniotic light
Gathering, like loneliness, in the shards,
Until my father calls me to join him.
He says he needs me for an errand,
That we'll return soon and then I can play.
What he doesn't say is that we'll be
Breaking and entering, stealing a console
TV he can't lift himself from renters
who are behind on their rent.
I'll never forget the fear limning his mouth
When he told me to hurry up as I strained
Under the load, how he reminded me
They could return any minute, that they
Wouldn't take kindly to finding us
In the middle of their living room.
That night, I lie in bed watching the moon
Slipping loose from the winter sky,
Just as now, in the absence of the present,
I find myself raking wet leaves into
The forest at the edge of our yard,
Wondering how this song of praise
Became a confession of crows, wishing
That this time the cold would descend
Like the original blood of the world
And that ice would rime the branches once again.

Peter Grandbois

Sometimes at night

I feel my body
deepening to trees,
trickling into
pools that whisper
like the eyes of birds.
And memory
like a spidery
beard grows thick,
pulling me through
one door and into
another where I
open my hands
to the darkness
before me but cup
only the owl's cry
drawn from this
unwieldy air.

Where are the fields
with their honeyed
light? Where the
scalped moon?
Where the fluttering
sleep that slips beyond
this muffled meaning?
Where the parade
of stars that might lead
back to the fabric
of day, that pale
and unfinished dream?

In the morning,
when fog enshrouds you
like a cloak, don't

be afraid to glance,
just once, behind you,
to listen to
altars built by
turning away.
There are voices
in the river.

Peter Grandbois

Body

for Nathanael

The bottle says blackberries, cherries, smoke. The wine is none of these,
Only grape, but the full body holds earth, tastes of place,
The weather of one year, its sun and rain, its partly cloudy, its mist.
Vines telegraph the relations of all these things to fruit,

Only grape. But the full body holds earth, tastes of place,
I clink this glass to yours, sounding the two bodies, the collision.
Vines telegraph the relations of all these things to fruit,
The collusion. The voice of glass speaks boundaries and separation,

I clink this glass to yours, sounding the two bodies, the collision.
But the nose of the wine in my own nose, and its body on my tongue—
The collusion. The voice of glass speaks boundaries and separation,
Makes a unity of particulars, like any true kiss.

But the nose of the wine in my own nose, and its body on my tongue?
Wine: the word, drawn from vines,
Makes a unity of particulars, like any true kiss.
Vin, vino, the connection of grape to grape,

Wine: the word, drawn from vines
The taste, the soil, the things we take into ourselves
Vin, vino, the connection of grape to grape,
Through years and all those storms together weathered

The taste, the soil, the things we take into ourselves,
Love plants its seed. Your child that grew her vine to me,
through years and all those storms together weathered,
Sleeping quietly, in another room, as if she was ever separate.

Love plants its seed: your child grew her vine to me.
The scent of the wine says all: There is no you, nor me, nor her. No individuals
Sleeping quietly in another room, as if they were ever separate.
Apart from the kisses that join them, no single grapes, no disconnection

The scent of the wine says all. There is no you, nor me, nor her. No individuals
Of time or place. We hold it all, fully that which we consume,

Apart from the kisses that join them, no single grapes, no disconnection
The tastes, the nose, the body, what has fermented in us over years

Of time or place. We hold it all, fully that which we consume,
And create more velvet than vinegar, a fullness on the tongue
The tastes, the nose, the body, what has fermented in us over years
Has gone beyond anything our rootless, vineless bodies thought to become.

Siân Griffiths

Refuge

lurking above the water
ghosts with burning throats
sing melancholy psalms

the lake is on fire
larks are wrapped in marine layer
over the horizon line

bodies float
on water
limbless

hearts
without chambers
the land of my parents is slowly

burning
and I can't turn back
I will find refuge from the hunt

leaving behind
my grandmother's
outstretched palms

Shakiba Hashemi

Trench

The boy blows a thin brown
line off a Rolling Stones record sleeve—

Beggars Banquet—yellow-hued toilet
stuck under graffitied walls

calling us to sniff the clogged
stench until our rusty noses run red.

What a sick, staid pastoral posture:
as again I'm writing about him—

Mark Kettler—shadowed in black light
at the beginning of January, in the trailer

park, buzzed on Jack Daniels & laughing
as we scream Parachute Woman, land on me tonight...

as his skeleton-thin body beats a bead
of time on a broken amp & I stare—

Charles Kell

Fire Season

for my son, inmate firefighter

The fires burn all around us.
Tonight the moon rose like an orange
over our valley. I imagine you in those flames

the whine of your chain saw screams against
the roar of the fire and wind, a freight train of air.
This burning and the scent of smoke will stay with you,
the memories wax and wane like that orange moon,

maybe taking the place of the guy whose head
was smashed into the stainless-steel cafeteria table
or those big eyes getting bigger on the face
when the shank gets driven in. Your heart

flows like water even in the middle of fires;
You tell me you found a lizard out there on the line
set him along your broad shoulders and let him
crawl and sit, watching, doing pushups in the heat.

Jeff Knorr

Your 9

I'll shoot you motherfucker
blasted down the driveway
before you slammed the metal gate.
Your XL hoop shorts sagging
with that 9 in your pocket.

And I know from watching you
cradle ducks after peppering them
with shot, smoothing their heads,
stretching wings into color,
stroking their neck hackle
you'd never put a bullet in me.

It's why you walked off into black
night, took my car speedballing
into the streets, your fury
burning hot as a gun barrel.

The next morning, we ate omelets
by the pool and you apologized
for what you didn't even remember,
memory blazed out like oily
junipers popping in fires.

I just said *make sure the
numbers are filed off* though
I should have fought you for it.

Sometimes a father moves
in to put out the flames,
sometimes he lets it burn.

Jeff Knorr

My Parents Named Us for the Dawn

Flying swallow of dawn (晓燕),
my sister's name.
Beauty of dawn (晓丽),
my name.
Light of dawn (晓光),
my brother's name.
Our generation, the hope of the dawn.

Red (红) , the color of our armbands
became my sister's changed name.
My changed name, Guard (卫)
to protect the Cultural Revolution.
Soldier (兵) , fighting for the cause,
my brother's changed name.
Our generation, the Red Guards (红卫兵)
of the crazy era.

A cucumber
called *yellow melon* (黄瓜) in Chinese
had to be called *green melon* (绿瓜) ,
because yellow, a symbol
for the immoral West.
A hand fan, painted with Chang'e (嫦娥)
the myth of the lady in the moon,
destroyed, because too pretty
to be proletariat.

A long night of incubus ended.
Rainbow (虹) , a new meaning
but the same sound, for my sister's name.
Xiaoly (晓丽) , my pen name
brings back the beauty of a new dawn.
My brother's name, his old name,
the light of dawn, keeps shining.

Xiaoli Li

Su-Mei from Su-Zhou, China

She stares at the couple, no words, at the orphanage. Her small body doesn't move when

her American mother tries to hold her —
accustomed as she is to being alone and still.

She was named after the city where she was found,
abandoned at a farmer's market at dawn —

a victim of the one-child policy, not a boy. Tension
slips from her spine, they bring her home to Boston.

Su-Mei opens a bag of persimmons, eats them like candies.
She follows her father's Tai Chi and topples into his arms.

Richard works late in a chemical lab for more pay,
mother studies physical therapy to help Su-Mei.

You give this girl a better life, says a neighbor
She gives us a family and happiness, reply they.

One morning Su-Mei wobbles toward snow on the
pine branches and calls "Mommy" for the first time.

Father lifts the child, points to
the *bald eagle* gliding over the clean sky.

Xoali Li

Pumpkin on the Porch

1

Sitting on the porch, I watched a red leaf waft in
and light on the orange pumpkin as if to accuse me

of my lateness. Soon the neighborhood would be full
of pumpkins carved so long their faces would fall

in through their noses. *Quite*, said the leaf,
late. I pondered this. One needs a knife.

The best detail is brought by the dull ones
with rounded edges, safe. Real pumpkin knives.

I had no pumpkin knives. But then again,
meat knives work about as well, and are more satisfying.

2

Then again, to carve a pumpkin without company
is strange. My neighbors down the road

might have mentioned they'd be carving this weekend.
And yet, a pumpkin is truly large. What if I walked

the whole way to their other porch to see
two well-carved smiling Jacks staring back, or worse,

no one home? And me,
with this pumpkin weighing on my chest.

3

I think I'd like to smash this gourd, and leave

the wet remains on the stoop, like kids

did it. I'd like to feel the soft quash
and the seeds like atoms popping, let my knuckles ring

for the fun of it. But then again I'm not sure
what kids use to smash pumpkins: a sledge, a bat, or what.

I'd have to change my clothes, and the laundry's in the basement.
Now the neighbor's watching from across the road,

and anyway, with the red leaf it looks somewhat nice,
picturesque in the slanting light, and tired.

John Linstrom

It was 10 A.M. When the Angel Said You Have to Go Now

Forgive me for seeking clarity, but do you have a specific destination in mind, or are you saying, with a little less force, get lost, go away, I'm done with you, or might you merely be suggesting that I go *forth*? And what exactly is your position on, oh, let's just say the afterlife and the journey there? As for turning, you certainly did, offering both in sequence, again and yet again, to my great appreciation. Butter. You must explain your fetish and how the room exuded pale gold and sweet after one little death, as if a honeyed light had oozed in beneath the door, and, in kissing the carpet, released endorphins and cool warmth, and love-moths frantically flapping to dry our sweat without the slightest chill. *It's the little things*, my mother always said, never considering size, but meaning those thoughtful touches, the fresh flowers, a plate of cheese and fruit, and yes, the tenor sax moaning in the alcove. I'll go, but you know this is my apartment.

Robert Okaji

Hard Ghosts

If the wind blew at Annaberg plantation on St. John,
then the windmill could be used to crush the cane.
The juice ran down gutters to the factory,
the constant sound like crushing bones.
Under the mill is a room made of stone
with a chain and a pair of handcuffs
fastened to a post in the corner on Anna's Hill.

Green islands once cut for cane,
cut quickly before it soured;
three to five hundred gallons of juice
would be produced per hour,
with the irony of that beautiful ocean view
that promises no freedom to a slave,
just a contradiction of heaven and its progress,
the labor of paradise.
Black people made brown sugar
to go in white people's mouths.
A cunning system of cruelty
to create sweetness.

If the juice boiling in the last iron kettle
was removed too soon,
it prevented sugar crystals from forming
and created dark molasses instead
—left too long, it burned;
whole islands in insurrection.

The slave had to wait for just the right moment
to make sugar for the master;
just the right moment to rebel.
Sticky liquid dripping from the filled hogsheads
was collected to produce rum.
In a free moment the slaves would pick sugar apples to eat
—a sweet pulp abundant in this Eden, devoured raw.
Their teeth screamed at the contradiction of this existence,
how wisdom was fruitless.

They lay the foundations of buildings with volcanic rock,
brick from ballast in Denmark, and brain coral,
cut when soft, having just been taken
from the sea, gathered, as their souls were,
and made to fit among bricks and stones,
all set with a mortar made of sand, fresh water,
molasses and lime to support arches and walls
that would inevitably fall into ruin,
the cut coral hardening over time
until it looks like human brains,
lives turned into stone just to make a barren wall.

And the bitterness of it, that this is all that survives
—you touch it, almost expect it to feel soft,
but the living have fled this place long ago.
They are bones, statues, hard ghosts.

Frank Ortega

Nights at 7-Eleven

I wouldn't, then, have thought to write this.
Six days a week, Emmet worked the night shift,

bookish and shaggy, from some rough place
up in the hills like a cradle around the town.

Ten years older than I was, he wore
a silvery, admirable knife-scar down the left side

of his face, laid open when he tried to help a girl
who ran into the store, pleading for safety.

Now he kept a gun under the counter,
beside *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

My one overnight shift every seven days was quiet,
cleaning and stocking, toting up the purchases

of the truckers who passed through at three a.m.
or of university kids still drunk from a party.

During lulls, I would stand in the cool, outside
the bright-windowed store, watching headlights

turn into taillights speeding toward D.C.
I got to know the bored cops who came in to chat.

Once a woman bought gum and flashed
her breasts on the way out, turning shy and tender

as she lifted one on her palm like a question,
looking down at the veined flesh, surprised.

The guy from the bakery unloaded fresh doughnuts
at five, when the sky was bleeding violet,

and birds were tuning up in the boxwood hedges.
I would carry home a bag of day-olds,

if good ones were left, cheese danish and bear claws
and lemon long johns. Nothing wrong with them.

I walked. It wasn't far along the highway,
grainy sleepiness pleasantly weighting my limbs,

everything else waking, cars blowing past.
Then I climbed stairs to our apartment.

My first wife – what children we were,
wondering where to lodge our best devotions –

was still asleep, but by the time I had coffee
going, she would be up, yawning and dressing

for her job at the mall, and we would sit
in the shadowy kitchen, eating the free doughnuts

and planning through the day ahead, interested
in how the hours caught and reflected curious

gleams, as we turned them in our hands,
certain that our real lives would begin soon.

James Owens

The League of Failed Superheroes

with apologies to Cypher

One by one, we gave
our powers back
until I was the last holdout.

Being Language Man
should have been grander
than any school of poetry.

I could understand
every tongue, every dialect,
both current and across

the scope of human experience,
including every variety
that ever faded into oblivion.

What finally broke me
was this: picture a
crowded, upscale restaurant.

At the next table, a couple
argues in rapid Mandarin.
As heads turn toward them,

I eavesdrop
and understand every
angry word, each bitter

recrimination. But then
I realize everyone else
in the room has grasped

exactly what is going on
and returned

to their veal piccata

and their smart phones.
Nothing more to hear.
As the woman dabs her eyes,

his suddenly meet mine.
Neither of us
knows what to do or say.

David E. Poston

The Gardener and the Garden 11

Work is life, the bumblebee
seems to say—or am I

anthropomorphizing again?
But this one on the stonecrop,

covered in pollen grains,
working ten inches away

from the spider who is waiting
for her flight path to take her

into the long rest of its web,
she works without hesitation

and I want to learn that resignation—
or maybe its determination,

the Tao of this bee, to be
the work and let the pollen

come over her, the dust of her labor,
the dust of quickening

and germination, the dust
of planting and blooming

and other bees' future labors—
does she ever want to lay

down her evolutionary burden
and tell you to pollinate

these flowers yourself?

Phoebe Reeves

The Gardener and the Garden 13

There's not much left here for the bees
or the monarch pair wheeling

over browned blossoms—some tiny pink asters
I missed when weeding,

a little wild boneset and snake weed
growing up by the garbage cans,

a few last low clumps of white on the buddleia,
but nectar's getting hard

to come by and the lawn is thick with rotting
walnuts, their black flesh dyeing

anything it touches a dark mud color.
I hacked down all

the pokeweed in the scraggly margin between
our driveway and the neighbor's—

the heavy clusters of wine-red fruit waiting
to make hundreds of new

poke plants, or to be crushed and pressed
against my hand, staining it

a royal purple. What will sleep and what
will die, in the approaching

cold? Earthworms, carpenter bees, praying
mantises, snails—the orb weavers

have all disappeared, but a cluster of egg cases
clings high in the corner

of the porch. So many of these green tomatoes
will never ripen—so many

of these new rosebuds never finish their flowering.
Even the morning sunlight

has an antique quality, hanging golden and heavy
on the maple's yellowing frame.

How can you bear knowing? How can I bear
not knowing? What's left,

the deer will scrape their teeth against.
What's left fills me

like dark water, cold, unmoving, touching
each place inside

with motionless fingers that will freeze
and expand.

Phoebe Reeves

Sleeping with a Single Father

We have sex in an old queen-sized bed where his daughter leaves Barbie Dolls and empty juice boxes,

small hand-prints tattoo the wooden headboard, and I notice empty candy wrappers and a rainbow of chewed gum amongst the flurry of emptied condom boxes on the laundry filled floor.

He weaves our sweat rich limbs into damp sheets stained by cookie crumbs, and crusted melted ice cream, and I

wonder if I linger on after pillow casings are washed, and if a three-year-old girl knows what gold hooped earrings left behind on a nightstand mean?

Tiny, mismatched pink and grey socks lay exposed beneath the dresser where half emptied bottles of *Shea Moisture-Baby Lotion* cuddle amongst lavender and teal hair ties.

I quickly bury myself into the creased valley of his maple painted chest away from photographs decorating the dimmed room of the two of them together,
and we continue to have sex
in this bed

I wonder,
if his daughter might have been created here,
though I don't stop to ask.

Melanie Shaw

Floral Arrangement for My Grandchildren

We wrung our hands as bees diminished:
What can we do? Not much, so many said.
So, my grandchildren will be forced to take
their small swabs and go from one flower
to another, pollinating with clumsy fingers.
We lacked prescience for loss of presence:
Too late we realized ladybugs too
had taken their leaves, no longer
appearing in our potted plants
to surprise us again and again
when we dusted or vacuumed.
Only shiny spotted shells remained,
and I've saved a few and framed
them to present as an austere gift
for my grandchildren to share.
Aphids and thrips so innumerable
we ignored them until the equation
of multiplication was missing factors.
Even the poor dung beetle got tired
of the world's shit, an exasperated
Sisyphus rolling along dirty oblivion.
Petals fell ignored, trees turned fruitless,
our crops' blooms felt the humble losses
of the bugs, beetles, and wee beasties.
Perhaps we'll learn to brandish tiny swabs,
stamen to stigma, like the least of creatures.
My granddaughter Anna jumps around
me and says, "Watch, Pa-Pa. I can fly!"
and she buzzes like the sound I have
taught her. She's too young to realize
her little feet, like dwindling flowers,
are rooted to the ground. So how did
the bees do it? Was their secret always
our unwitting pleasure before the sting?

Ronnie Sirmans

Cumberland Gap

A cathedral of tall black pines
still form great halls and cast shadows
in Old Germany, the only place for miles
still lovely during a snowless winter.

Two people feed each other
small cumquats for the first time,
surprised to learn
they're meant to eat the bitter skin.

He apologizes
for how far he asked her to travel
when he thought he was meeting her halfway.

The sun is absent and the sky is only gray over a lake
the shade of hunger
—hungry enough to swallow them and all the world whole.

She imagines all her want was smaller,
acorns she could save in a tree knot until Spring.

Bonnie Thibodeau

After Losing a Child

The sun is winking early daffodils,
the yellow bells the same. The late spring frost
will knock them back, but you are lost
in turning soil, tomato seeds the pills

you plant, your body hunched in shame or prayer.
We haven't talked today. The curtains wrap around
my cheeks like a wimple I can almost bear,
and I am counting prey in webs, the mound

that must have been a moth, the lightning bug,
dirt dauber (its organ pipes upon the eaves)
now all encased, escaping entropy,
the fodder for a coming brood. I dug

into your drawer last week—I must confess—
though you can't hear, and found the ace of spades,
the bookmark I gave you, not black enough these days,
my number scrawled across the back. The window's less

a way to see you now. It's just a wall
like any wall, its molecules intact.
You place a cage around the row you made and ball
your gloves. The garden will beget

what we cannot, despite the cold and rainless days ahead,
and we will sow into ourselves, unsure of how we're fed.

Adam Vines

All Souls Day

The chrysanthemums
are blooming again,

petals piled
upon petals, unfurling
inflorescence beneath
the November sky.

I thought I heard you
at the door today,
your soft shuffle, a cough.

I remember how once
you stood outside my door, knocking
and knocking, how I refused
to answer.

Now when I open the door,
there is no one.
Only the chrysanthemums.

Many-pointed stars, halo
blossoms. An incandescent
constellation fixed
in green firmament.

I stand in the open door,
thinking of you, of these flowers.
How silent they are in their petalled fury.

Grace Wagner

International Feature Section

CORNWALL & WALES



Dear Readers,

When Professor Karen Head invited me to Guest Edit this edition of the renowned Atlanta Review Poetry Journal, naturally I was very flattered and extremely excited, especially when we chose to focus on poetry and poets from, or living in, either Cornwall and Wales. But I had no idea what an avalanche of poetry from these two places would wing my way. I eventually received a total of 92 submissions – 26 from Cornwall, and 66 from Wales – containing over 350 poems.

Knowing that I only had around 60 pages to fill, my dilemma was that almost all of the submitted pieces were very fine and deserved to be included in this edition of the Review, so whittling them down to just over 60 poems was a mammoth task, taking many more hours of solid reading and re-reading than I had anticipated. Eventually I made my choice, and this edition contains 63 poems by 48 poets, each one of them a jewel in the crown of poetic expression.

At this stage it's important for me to stress that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is made up several countries – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Cornwall is a county within England. All have their own fierce identities. Wales has its own language, said to be one of the oldest tongues in Europe, together with a long and distinctive history. The Cornish have a national movement plus their own language, which became extinct as a first language in the late 18th century, but which was revived earlier this century, and is now a living language again.

This sense of separation from England is written about more than once in this collection, the strong sense of identity of both Cornwall and Wales inevitably being emphasised. And in communities where mining was a major occupation for centuries (tin in Cornwall and coal in Wales), inevitably disaster often struck, and these tragedies are written about emotionally more than once here.

It has been a total pleasure to Guest Edit this edition of the Atlanta Review, to read such fine work, where the love of words, and the need to express the inexpressible, shines through page after page. I hope you also enjoy walking through these extraordinary vistas of poetic communication, and what is written about makes you want to learn more about both places.

Agnes Meadows

Charity Jump

Queen of the sky, her eyes ignite at the space
of space that tears her breath
as she leaps to float
newborn and cradled down to earth
over Ffos-y-Ffin and the muffled sea
facing the land that made her.
Spreadeagled, splints along her thighs, she rides
the kites that lurch from the Saturday hill.
Still mute with joy she sees her house, her
lover, child. Both arms embrace the drift
of sheep on shapely green before Brigantia's
breath - a sudden roar, sweeps her north and
listing on the mercy of emptiness.

This is not the plan.
A martyr's tear drags from her eye, her burden
locked, unbillowing. Falling past ancient
trees, log cabins with retirement teas and news
east of the hills.
A place of strangers, sheltered host
of cries lost to the foreign breeze.
Its layered humus, after centuries
shivers to this breech death.
Welcome to the silence of a myriad
small things.

The couple from Todmorden make their
way on unworked ankles; knotted fingers
clinging to a life endured as the forest
fills their shoes.
'Happen it were a bird,' he says, his tired eyes
already in the Otherworld. His stick divining
in the Sidh for gold, while above, the palaver of
rooks is stilled for the Greater Queen's whispering
note. And they sing as if this was the only voice.
Their lullaby.

Sally Spedding

Cow Hand

Through the muck he ran,
soft dung pats sucking
his rubber calves
to that wide mirror
of sky grey water, and his cow
heavy with milk.
He'd seen the pretty toy town train
all lit up, fall like a dying firework
into the threshing flood.
He pulled again, uncomprehending,
calling his lover's name,
Rhiannon. Who gives the living sleep
but now too deep
to wake the dead.

Small window corner above the torrent,
frail, man-made,
a flimsy tomb for
those who'd paid half price
for the pleasure
of its cold embrace.
A best nightdress folded
round a pouch
of lavender.
Fish food. Out of reach
to the propellered flock above
scouring the shadows,
hovering, stirring his hair
and haunting at night
his slurried sleep.

Sally Spedding

Note:

* On 19th October 1987, the bridge at Glanrhyd near Llangadog collapsed into the flooded river Towy, while a Heart of Wales train was making a trial run. Four passengers including a young schoolboy lost their lives.

Hiraeth

When will it stop, this longing for the past?
Now all is lost between us, we who knew
Such tender moments savoured by so few.
Yet, from the first, you said it would not last.
Could you foretell a love once held so dear
Might bring such bitter tears and endless spats?
The midnight sounds of feuding alley cats
Who, spitting at each other, show no fear.
You needed city streets, and I the grey
Green depths of seas as yet unplumbed and wild,
Finding no comfort in your corner shops.
In suburbs grim I now have lost my way
Amid the A to Z of life, a child
Astray, until the day the yearning stops.

Emlyn Williams

Leon Trotsky In Wales

The hot Therimidorian Sun was at my back
when I arrived at the Chapel as requested.
They started as always with singing,
at first in English, a hymn in praise
of a Jew, but there was a dignity
in this choir of colliers
with their blue scarred hands
and hard faces which seemed to be hewn
from the rocks at which they laboured.
Then they sang in Welsh
an ancient oppressed language
in its rhythms one could hear beating
the heart in the heartless world.
Many voices as one, more than harmony,
solidarity, there is strength in unity.
Then the Preacher began to expound as ever
on the wages of sin and not the sin of wages.
With the heat enfolding me I took off
my glasses and closed my eyes and
soon I found myself in the Synagogue of childhood.

Phil Knight

Time for Song

I am in the kitchen with my father
He has his arm around my shoulder
We are singing our hearts out
Two generation Celts

“I didn’t know you liked to sing” he says
Where were you, all those Speech Days?
I was in the choir
Too busy always
Now you’ve time on your hands

Time for reflection
Time for song

Bread of heaven
Bread of heaven
Feed me
Now and evermore

Next door someone is playing the drums
As this party comes to an end
We proclaim we have not finished
We are very loud indeed

Two generation Celts
Sing old songs, Cornish songs
When fish and tin were as plentiful
As the time on your hands
Time for reflection
Time for song

And shall Trelawney live
And shall Trelawney die
Here’s twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why

There is red wine on my white shoes
Someone says it won't come out
We shout for a song-sheet
Proclaiming we are not English
We are very drunk indeed

Two generation Celts
Filling glasses, filling ashtrays, filling bins
Never quite fulfilling dreams
Time reflecting
Our swansong

**I love the white rose, in its splendour
I love the white rose, in its bloom
I love the white rose, so fair as it grows
It's the rose that reminds me of you**

I am in the kitchen with my father
He has his arm around my shoulder
We are singing our hearts out.

Sue Johns

Dolly Pentreath

Dolly Pentreath was the last person to speak Cornish as their first language. In 2005 Cornish was recognised by the Government and is now taught in some schools.

Eight when the Spanish came.
In the wake of the burning
(the Mousehole market gone)
fish were trudged to Penzance.
Plaintive hawking
wind-born
in your native tongue.

As unyielding as granite-
in a molten state
as slow to cool.
Soothsayer? Witch?
Salted and preserved
in myth, immortalised,
beside the church at Paul.

Klywes hemma!
Hear this!
Off the harbour bus,
a generation bright as gorse,
competes with the gulls,
revives your voice.

Me a wra
Te a wra
Ef a wra
Hy a wra

Reminded by the plaque
to pause outside your
ancient home-
hear your last words

(Me ne vidn cewsel Sawznek)*
as echoes from the stone.

Sue Johns

Note:

*I don't want to speak English.

Aegeas

The summoned armies of the dawn
have toppled the stars,
Come, cry the gulls, uncoiling the salt air,
Go, urge the lean migrating clouds,
as waves, tangy and raw,
tip their enduring mystery
recklessly onto the shore.

Why does Theseus delay?
The hour has opened its hand,
the tide pulls stealthily away.

Now they come: priests pouring libations,
others blowing horns; Aegeas the king,
his young impatient son, and women
keening a nation's sorrow.
Here come and here halt,
held in the shadow of the black sail
hanging darker than Hades' door.

Why is Aegeus downcast?
His son embarks on a noble quest
to undo the shame of defeat in the past.

Addressing the heavens Aegeas cries out
“How is it just that this fate falls on me; I
that have ordered the building of temples,
made observance the law? For my son to die
mere meat for a monster, is this fair reward?”
Says to Theseus: “You carry my seed
to destruction, my house into despair.
Already dead, you go, and if this floating hearse returns
without you, let it present this same grim show,
but if --as every breath shall be my prayer-- you do come back,
god-favoured and glorious, alive in every limb,
then set a sail of purest white, and I, to sooner know
if Gods can pity a parent's grief,
will keep a constant watch. Yet don't go!
Many I love less would give their life for yours.

Stay!” But Theseus will not stay. He shakes off restraining fear, leaps laughing aboard the waiting craft, and his men cheer loudly, spurring the water with their oars.

2

Where is Aegeas, our King?
The land is wild and starved, its people
fatherless in him.

All now goes for sacrifice: whole forests
hauled to the fire, the screaming of beasts,
the channels of blood, smoke in rancid columns
rising like titans to reclaim the sky,
yet never a sign to solace the King
where he stands in a fierce wake of watching,
outstaring the sullen sea.
How often a distant scrap of cloud
has caused his hungering heart to race
only to splay slowly into some gape-shape
announcing nothing.

Listen, O King; hear once again the hollow wind
spit back the pieces of your prayers
like rain.

3

Until one day there blows into the world’s eye
a speck, a mote, that will not be blinked away,
that will not be dashed away, but steadily grows,
stubbornly holding its dark unwelcome form.
Then Aegeas knows
the cliff, the land, the whole earth is no more
than vacant stone; compacted extinction,
dead even of death; the rest a fiction
of populated air. A hundred feet below,
where thunderous waves crash against rock,
he sees only the endless, brutal clash
between the shunted and the shocked, and there
discards his life as so much worthless trash.

Brian Mitchell

Plygain

Earlier than shepherds or kings,
before light and stockings;
hastening to a square Bethel, loud as whispers:
a muffled congregation moths
to a solitary candle from the rain.
There are shadows in the porch
proclaiming a hush- feathered welcome.
Touching pews down the stony aisle,
by the grace of dimmed tallow,
jet figures abound in the heat of breath..
held unseen. Aware and wary
we feel along the way and sit.
Exalted in the pulpit, golden-lit
in his waistcoat of satin red :
Y Parchedig Jones,
mellifluent as the language of heaven,
flocks us into his sway, with words
persuasive and Christian-kind...
Then, magics the sweetest,
anonymous singing and stringing
from the balcony's black..
No pomp and bombast organ
shudder these pews with fear.
This is faith in a minor key, in litanies
more harmonied than any opera's call.

And I believe.

I see nothing

but the night.

Feel all... in flower..

And follow the star

to the vestry lit,

where white-haired seraphim smile

and greet me friendly,

with fine china tea, warm toast..

....And show me the way
to our earthly host,
loud as his waistcoat,
calling all to him
 in the monetary light.

Nicholas McGaughey

Ten Minutes

About the murder of Anne Boleyn

So cold, so cold.
My hands are so cold, and I cannot feel my feet.
My fingers and toes are numb
And I shiver, yet must succumb
To those men, those harbingers of my final heartbeat.
Spring sunshine never shone so sweet
Through that narrow gap in the wall.
May. Spring. I wish I may fly away from it all
And never return to this moment.

They are coming, I see them walk with purpose
Along the bright, green length of polite and courteous
Grass that will soon stain bright and red
With my innocent blood. Not guilty, not guilty.
My insistent pleas fall upon ears that will never listen.
I am caught in their treacherous web.
Like a moth, I flew too close to the flame and my wings
Are starting to burn.

I allow myself to be prepared
In sombre shift and gown. I wonder that
They allow me to be spared
The axe.
The patrician sword awaits my slim neck
And my mind cannot accept any of it.
Why bother? Why comb my dark and whorish hair?
For who will even care
When my white face gazes up in disbelief at the severed neck
Which lies bleeding on the straw.
Is it mine?
Today I will die, according to the law
Of this monster I once loved.

And still love; will always love
For the next ten minutes, which is all that remains

Until my spirit will fly like a dove
To God, if He exists.
Ten minutes.
My life is ticking away, I start to pray
For forgiveness, absolution - for retribution
Against this miscarriage of justice.

My ladies fuss about me, weeping softly
And I wonder at the fact that tonight
They will still be here, in the gently fading light
Of England's purple dusk, when I am gone.
My sun sets already behind the lofty
Columns of men's ambition.
How can I feel contrition?

The small life in my cell continues quietly,
The spider crawls silently, dispassionately
And a fly flits to and fro, oblivious
Of my complete and utter terror.
I smell the damp, the denial of spring-like warmth
As the knowledge of the horror
Of my last few minutes seeps slowly
Into my desperate consciousness.

I must wear a coif. My neck must lie exposed
To the swift and shining sword
As it flies humming through the air
And cuts cleanly like a butcher's knife.
Severing my life.
Will I detect the metallic scent of blood
As it flows in a rushing, gushing flood
Before my fading, once-bright eyes?

My prison door opens.
I am ready.
I must keep my appointment with
Monsiuer Rombaoud and his shining sword.
Farewell, my Lord, though you left me without a word.

Sonia Davies

About Turn

Some time ago
looking out over
dark harbour waters
we had agreed
to forgo a baby
birthing risked life.
Things have changed
hidden within,
new life rouses.
I walk beside the river
boats wait black
before rising moonlight
tide pulses amongst
water sliced by
ghostly gold.

Anna Chorlton

1985

It was
the year
of the strike

My da, his hands
were seamed with coal dust
his palms were open
my starfish span contained
in his

Each week
another line
was drawn
on his face

The picket line was angry
as people shouted fire,
hammered the buses,
spat at the rats within

It ended.

Something else dislocated
my world
Something unseen amidst the
fire and the cold of the
gas switched off

My mother
Fell in love
With the policeman

Betrayal
the worst kind
it was

Sophie Toovey

The Hare in the Moon

Last night I saw the hare in the moon,
a grey shape against bright white.

Creature old as earth among toadflax and clover,
a twitch of nose as she wriggles into her form.

Leaping hares in running stitch tell history
in the embroidery of the Bayeux tapestry,

the goddess Eostre with a hare's head,
Boudicca freeing a hare at the start of each battle.

She's there in mythology, but not in today's fields
empty of wildness, no Fescue or Foxtail.

The hare in the moon looks down in despair
at green flat fields without borders or hedges.

Sue Moules

Mushrooms

last night, I heard the cows mooing
like a man trying to start a chainsaw

my host said, they had probably eaten magic mushrooms
and tomorrow's milk would have a real kick to it

the hill of the anchorite
is fiery with autumn bracken, as I take the steep way

of hawthorn and rabbits
my eyes large with last night's candlelight

the soft eruptions of agaric on toast
that had I known

I would have set aside
my portion for the cat, which tracks me now like a panther

is this how the cloistered life began
waiting for the master?

last night, I heard the owl snore
and buried myself in blankets

my eyes are large
the path between the trees narrows

Gareth Writer-Davies

Carrier Pigeon

Did you hear the milkman's horse
pulling its cart behind him?

Panting like a dragon, it was,
churns chattering like tumbrels.

One tumbled off and rattled down the glen
turned to butter by now Meinwen

now watch the butcher doesn't
palm you off with horse meat, look you

better to buy a fresh rabbit to stew
with some carrots and a dumpling or two.

And did I say? A carrier-pigeon
perched on our windowsill today

message round its leg,
might have been for Churchill, Megan said,

we should have summoned
the Fire Brigade, but the boys

scared it away with their clapping
and those English in the flat

above the surgery, blackouts full of holes,
signal to the Germans when

they flap like crows,
while her old man works nights

for the ammo factory
sends his children to Miss Wright's

school so they can't learn Welsh
and play with our Gwen.

No oatcakes for them from under
the counter unless they pay twice,

which they won't, but for you cariad
here are five for two-pence-three-farthings

and not a word to anyone mind.

Angela Croft

Note:

First appeared in the Imperial War Museum.

Dressed in Midnight

On this street
where only ghosts walk,
behind curtains and blinds,
parents watch
tv shows five decades old.
I wait without hope
for nights that will never return.
For that place
where the heart at last
is home.

I fear the old widow Winter is coming,
howling, for her lost sons of Summer
raging, for her Spring girls and
weeping, for old man Autumn.

The nameless star shines just as bright
as that which bears a name;
still waters reflect the blind man
and woman just the same.

The long October gods
in
cobweb tongues
pray in deserts
dressed in midnight. Songs.
All holy in the half light
unheeded. Unheard.
Half cast paeans washed
in dust.
Wrongs
written. Righted.
Forgotten flumes forged
with taut vegetable hands.
Hear us. In the cadence.
Here us. In the credence.

No follower, no gangster, no Dion O'Banion
no cult Christ in Haight or hot Laurel Canyon
alone like the leper, the penny black spider,
the stranger, shape shifter, solitaire, outsider.

Mike McNamara

Alone in the Kitchen

I am tired. The veil
of innocence returns. I keep nodding
off to sleep, and waking again.
I can feel it, but so quietly.
I have been reading, letting poems
run over me, and listening to soft
Bach from the Little Organ Book.
I didn't think it would be so easy.
The panorama outside – so familiar.
It is the world. It has come to me.
The light is fading, still
the birds are feeding. The book lies folded.
Weariness is gathering. It is time
to think of my family, my life.
Ah, just in time, I hear
'Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ'.
Someone said they wanted it played
at their funeral. I should have specified that,
too late now.
Every sadness of your heart will
Come out, but in a good way,
Raised up like an offering,
Perfect, beautiful; and you know
You want to relive that sadness,
As memories you want to keep
Alive, for the sadness is
Forever beautiful. You don't
Realise how beautiful until you hear
The music. You don't want it to end.
Perhaps it is only heard by the old,
Happy in their own remembered sadness.
It is how to walk from life into death.
The weakness is taking over.
I struggle to lift my head to the flitting birds.
They are everyone I have ever known.

Singing, composing, laughing,
loved ones slowly dimming.
I am shrinking.
My lids are closing. I am falling
Inside myself. It is easy.

Anthony Powers

Torture

Oh, where do you pour yourself today?
Oh, kindly one,
seething with anger and
silent howl, clawing
the slit throat
that will not bleed,
distorted, dissonant whisper.
It is only fear that takes you,
buries you and your longing.
The moor top withers in
the aftershocks
of your itinerant mind.
It is only poetry
that relives and relieves,
a conjuror showing the moon,
and with sleight of hand
it disappears
quicker than a cry of pain,
but as phantom limbs
the eidetic images remain.

Anthony Powers

Afon Rhondda

In the Cymer, a gold eyed grey white heron
Stilted stands where two rivers collide
Commands the stream in its stiff eyed gleam
One peat whiskey brown, the other bottle green.
In the break and rush of an old fords remains
In its broken rapid cold crackling ice water
Among worn rounded scoured stones
Graylings Queens of the Stream
Gleam and glide ride the current
Sails aloft hunting nymphs unseen.
In the slow wash of the silt drop zone
Goosanders dive through darkened swirls
Hunting with sharpened eyes and beaks
While green necked mallards cruise serene
And gold skinned eels burrow roots of trees
And lie glass-eyed grey through winters dream
And the Cymer's deep dark pool waits the run
Of spawning silver spring Atlantic salmon.

Meanwhile horse eyed on the rivers path
Blinkered people thumbing dull blue screens
Walk their way virtually oblivious to the snare.

Rob Cullen

Note:

*Cymer – Welsh for the meeting of two rivers.

Bitter limp fruit

Imagine fishermen labouring in a heavy swell
pulling in the trawl to find silver bitter limp fruit
entwined in the mesh of drip green nets,
the dead eyed souls of their own young children.
And we stay silent for our history is never told
silenced from the hour, the days, and the years
for we are edited out of the hour of our times.

Imagine coal miners hollowing out the seams,
men stripping coal a mile and more underground
and the hooters above ground call them away,
brought up into blink white light to see the black tip
the waste of their toils washed into the village,
spewed over the school where small children,
sang hymns and songs and were supposed to be safe.
And we stay silent for our history is never told
silenced from the hour, the days, and the years
for we are edited out of the hour of our times.

Imagine the trail of letters written foretelling concerns,
the dead nerved fears that a disaster would occur
and the NCB replies not days, not months but years later.
And on a grey fog filled October day after weeks of rain,
a small children's school and a day of devastation,
exactly in the manner and the way foretold.
And imagine if no one was held to account,
and those families told make the slag heap safe
from the proceeds raised for the disaster fund.
And we stay silent for our history is never told
silenced from the hour, the days, and the years
for we are edited out of the hour of our times.

Imagine the miner, the father, the brother, the son,
looking out at the sprawl of waste they'd dug.
Imagine the mother, the sister, the daughter,
looking out at the grey listlessness of another day.

Of the silent keening, the numbed grieving,
of the impossibility of using words to describe.
And we stay silent for our history is never told,
silenced from the hour, the days, and the years
for we are edited out of the hour of our times.

Imagine the mothers bringing up children,
the happiness and hopes for the future.
Imagine the sisters who stayed off school.
Imagine the brothers too slow and were late.
Imagine the vacuum where a life had been once.
Imagine a young life where a vacuum is now.
And we have been silenced, our history just words
and our future is silent and will never be told.
Silenced from the hour, silenced from all those days.
Silenced from the years, silenced from all that might have been.

Rob Cullen

Note:

At 9.15 am on Friday, October 21, 1966, a waste tip slid down a mountainside into the mining village of Aberfan, near Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales. It killed all the occupants of a farm cottage in its path, before engulfing the Pantglas Junior School, and about 20 village houses before coming to rest. 144 people died in the Aberfan disaster, 116 of them school children, about half of the children at Pantglas Jnr School, and 5 of their teachers. The Aberfan Tribunal found that repeated warnings about the dangerous condition of the tip had been ignored, and that colliery engineers at all levels had concentrated only on conditions underground. In the House of Commons debate on the Inquiry Report it was asserted by the Government, on the advice of the National Coal Board, that the remaining tips above Aberfan were not dangerous and did not warrant removal, but merely required landscaping, costing £2m – a much cheaper option. The government made a grant of £200,000 to the NCB towards the cost of removing the tips, and the Trustees of the Disaster Fund agreed to contribute £150,000. No NCB staff were ever demoted, sacked or prosecuted as a consequence of the Aberfan disaster or of evidence given to the Inquiry.

Choughs

The Lizard is a lost lonely place
home to a boiling sea.
Wild haven for noisy choughs
in their crimsoned leg regalia.

A cleft in cliffs matted with sticks
dried seaweed and fleece makes a nest.
A hide was built for watchers
on guard to protect hatching
and despatching. New
fledglings plunge giddy into blue.

Her morning face red with heat
a woman raises binoculars
before she sinks down
into feathery memories.
Her body cools but her watch ticks on.
Diagonal she's a weight wedging shut the door.

The helicopter kills the afternoon.
Blades cut and slice, pilot circles, lowers hook
creak of winch metallised in sunlight.
Twice girdled the shed is lifted.
Startled choughs resume their search
for invertebrates while recovery continues.

Vicki Morley

Note:

*Choughs are a native Cornish bird being successfully re-introduced to the county.

On Newport City footbridge
(after Alice Oswald and William Wordsworth)

Lost seagulls fight, the low river is grey.
The sloped, muddy bank, slick and glutinous,
sweats in the sun; a scrunched toupee of grass,
like a drunken uncle's at a party,
askew on its brow. The Roman castle,
silhouetted, slumps in the mid-distance,
bored of its posting. Soapy foam dances
on the out-rushing tide escaping Wales.

On each white-metal post is written Ray,
in permanent marker, below the wire.
The names beat time with my rhythmic footfall
on the silvered deck. A summoning call,
somehow escaped from the future's swift curve;
a shrouded figure along the pathway.

Lawrence Illsley

Emily Brontë's Bath

A granite lintel, strong as sisterly love
protects it on this blasted hill.
It's lasted centuries,
your bath.

Was it you who lugged it here
up your father's field, behind your
father's parsonage? Was it you: tall,
wiry as a laming lurcher, with

your cook-steady hands, who
shoved it through this drystone
wall –cursing probably–
until each enamel end poked out into

each field, for buck-toothed sheep to suck on?
Or did you lasso a chain tight around
Keeper's neck, yelling, 'Do it, lad!'
as the poor dog –used to your tormenting–

dragged the bath up through the heather?
At last, you thought, no more shared water
with adoring sisters. No more lathered
confessions, carbolic ambitions. No more

chairs backed into a bathroom door
in case a brother, drunk from the Black Lion,
takes a wrong turn. No more of that;
for up here it's you and the tub, Emily.

You wait days for Pennine rain to fill it
and you slip in
alone.

Tiffany Murray

Superlative numinous silence

These words and more reverberate through me,
Spinning through my mind until they spill onto the paper,
Struggle to be contained there.
For all of these words I know,
I'm haunted by the ones I don't,
The Spectres.

Sometimes when I hear the language spoken,
Cymraeg, my heart dances to its rhythm and for that beautiful
moment
My mouth forgets my tongue is not that of the dragon
And moves in such a way as to form words that my Nain's would
have spoken.
Moving as though my ancestors gave me not just my lips but their
speech.
Then I remember, Cofiwch,
That I am Welsh in all but my language.

In these moments, the weight of the words
Unspoken
Is too great a burden to bear.
Empty mouth
and an empty heart.

Anastacia Ackers

Two sides of the coin

Stood high on Porthleven cliffs
Disused shafts raised like fingers on a fist
Once capable of plumbing cruelty's depths
Taking men under sea
Coaxing tin from reluctant earth

Not just men but boys
Descended those precarious steps
Pasty in a towel, bottle of cold tea,
Blinking away memories of sun
Sparkling on the morning sea

Toiling all day
Returning to sleep exhausted nightmares
Of death by tunnel flooding
The only warning, a terrible crack
Before the roof caves in
And along with lives snuffed out
The candle of profit flickers
Not long enough to shelter doubt

By Porthleven bay
A simple cross reminds of mariners
Who perished fishing out this way
Driven deep to let their bones rest
Feet above the miners' daily living death

Separated by so little, united by so much
Uncommon cruelty with a common touch
Were these workers in Cornish industry
Scraping either side the silver coin of sea

Patric Cunanane

On the dressing floors at grass

Before that suffocating moment when
The bottom of Dolcoath fell in
A godsend of stones and dust
Signalled flight to safety, a scramble
For the dressing floors at grass
The collapsing stull held granite
One hundred fathoms weight
And seven men under crushed

Only Robert Davies survived
Among the matchstick timbers
Clinging hard to life
And dreams of autumn mist curling
On the dressing floors at grass
That morning Captain Johns had ordered
New timber balks from the hanging side
To the footwall of the lode
And work had just begun
When the ground above opened like a road

Creating a draft so fierce
Men fleeing were pinned against the rock
Powerless of speech, while the boy
Jimmy Tresawna was blown four fathoms
Through the choking dust
In hellish contrast to coastal breezes playing
On the dressing floors at grass
But death had eaten well that day
And spared those pummelled by the violent air
Sated by the lives of seven
Who never more would see or pass
Soft rain falling
On the dressing floors at grass

Patric Cunanane

Note:

*On 20 Sept 1893 Cornwall's Dolcoath mine collapsed, killing seven men trapped underground. The dressing floors is the mine surface.

Visitors

We kept the branches from the dying tree in the workshop.
By morning a canopy of mushrooms
had grown from the pile, head against head,
a bird-bone cathedral, and Dad said
we won't cut these branches for firewood,
not till the visitors have left.

How long had the mushrooms been waiting in the bark
ready to birth in the cool womb of the workshop?
By morning they were gone
leaving only the smell of oysters.

We planted trees to dry the bog,
built stone walls to break the wind,
sunk coils to draw warmth from the earth,
solid things, for us and the people next,
but who here is not a visitor?

It was the same summer the cat lost its first litter—
only just an adult itself—too young, too hot.
What to do with half-formed kittens?
We put them in a cardboard box
at the centre of a bonfire
while the cat smelt at its basket
looking for its motherhood.
After that she spent more time
on the farm across the valley.

The night was as warm as day
and I stood at the boundary of the garden,
where this land stops and another begins,
and Dad, barely clothed, joined me. I offered an earphone
and we listened to music while we watched
the breeze tread footprints on the ready-to-harvest wheat.
This heat will break, this song will end
and I will leave for the city, this summer's work done.

In the ground there is a network called mycelium
under my bare feet as I walk to bed
and the soil fits between my toes.
What's left of the fire smokes
around my father and his vigil
of his gentle valley, God for the season.

Phil Jones

Bird prayer

1. Chick

When she was carrying me, my teen mother,
pennies in her pocket, walked over the Showfield
where autumn had dragged summer's yolk into September;

she crossed fields and hills, making her way
to the river to silence the gaping beak of fear.

Above the dingle, the peregrine dive-bombed,
tear-shaped sky stone, unsheathed talons
snatched the fat ground bird to feed her young.

My mother wiped the blood from her mouth.

2. Golden Eagle

Barranca del Cobre, after two hours on dirt roads,
my silent guide lay on the bed of his pick-up,
sombbrero on face, asleep in seconds. I stood at the lip
of the steep ravine and dipped over,

scootched on my backpack, a hundred foot
wall of loose rock, petrified I was death descending—
vultures sky-lurked tourists here.

Sun and fear flushed, cuts dusted, I reached them: paradise pools.

Beyond the boulders, I slid naked into my own
hot waters, laid on my back and surrendered
to the tapioca of bullfrog spawn.

I let my fingers go into that mass of beating hearts

those thousand budding eyes until my holy cries honoured
the canyon and the golden eagle riding the thermals I'd set to
rising—

sacred messenger to creator. I heard my joy as echo-blessing.

3. Red Tailed Hawk, Louisiana

Another morning of it. I sat under the porchway waiting
for the hummingbird on the feeder, but there beyond,
in the overgrown corner on the wire fence, there you perched:
a shock, you showing up in this concrete suburb
and the garden I was afraid to go in.

Were you after that rat skulking our thick grass,
or waiting for the lizard-heavy leaves to bend?

I wasn't sure what to pay attention to, your still deep gaze or
the way you swooped off—
your wing breeze told on next door's pear tree.

Later, a dove flew into our screen-door and he placed the dazed bird
into an old cage. As soon as it came back to itself with the wild eyes
of the newly trapped, it came to me, and I took to the road
and then, the sky.

4. Boncath

Welsh for buzzard, I learned, as I was carrying
my girl. One pinned her cries to the sky
above our house when I pegged washing,
or sat on a deckchair practising birth-breathing.

Contracting in the bedroom, no panic set in;
I rolled my pregnant self in increasing
circles, mandala-making, remembering
the patterns I'd seen her show in flight.
And at the hour of the new lungs' puling
the roof of our house split with buzzard call.

I've not heard her. I've not seen her since
—except when my little girl sings, or, like now
she's jumping on the trampoline as snow falls

and there's a moment when the gap between
going up and coming down . . .
there, in that gap she soars.

clare e. potter

Garden

(Chemo Summer, 2015)

With pesticide lungs I breathe her in,
a heady sea of sweet peas, tea rose, geranium, jasmine.
Our fast dividing soils have found a way
to germinate;
she comes into being –
perennial, I pass away.

Two years ago I planted the wisp of a clematis,
dreamed she'd creep up the fir tree. This year,
she weaves a ladder of purple stars,
and the honeysuckles have finally kissed the air
with their sticky lips, and the raspberries blush,
the herbs zing, stems grow wings and bulbs push up
from everywhere. Only the rhubarb sulks
under leaves that shield my sun-shy baby skin.

Now I must operate with gloves,
work her cells without getting cuts.
Her plagues are greenfly, slugs,
a neighbour's black and white cat,
the bindweed that suffocates all it clasps,
with its delicate white petals that ask to be kept,
but I rip at the roots because its nature, if left,
will grow and grow and grow.

Sometimes I think of this –
wonder what might be hibernating,
waiting for a spring where it might seed again.
Then I'm absorbed in all the green again,
making a bird's nest
from my falling hair.

Vicky Morris

Note:

Poem previously published in Butcher's Dog.

Seasons

Seasons on since you slipped away, summer ends abruptly.
The wind tears pink roses from their slender thorns
tosses them and tramples them down.

I sit in your kitchen and drink strong black tea
from your pink and yellow teapot.
Beyond the new windows, the rain-smudged garden
where we giggled and did not suspect.

On the walls, your pictures, on the shelves, your pots.
On the landing hangs the mirror you painted.
This house is full of humble ghosts —
though your shoes and clothes have gone.

Your son, grown taller, hugs the TV
gobbles cookies he made lately with his grandma.
On this, the first day of a new school year,
he brings me another lost tooth.

Abigail Elizabeth Ottley

Dying Breed

Dying Breed is an independent film documentary by Mick Catmull featuring the farmers of West Penwith, Cornwall.

The movie isn't beautiful. It's the landscape that shines, even in the darkness of winter.

This is no blockbuster, no arty film noir.
This is the story of three farmers and their cattle.

Season by season the camera tracks their footsteps, documents their stubborn resilience.

They see the future closing in.
No one here is following on.

See the gruff farmer's wife rattling her bucket
bringing out the early morning feed.

See her standing with her hand on one beast's heaving flank
while the stars blink their indifference.

See a meadow in spring where Red Rubies
kick up their heels in praise of grass.

Hear the lowing of a calf, his ear lately tagged.
See that calf turn his clear blue eyes to camera.

He cannot understand how the friend who feeds him
tomorrow will kill him with a kiss.

Abigail Elizabeth Ottley

At the End of the Day

A winding road wanders through country hedge bye-ways.
A gauze mist arises and creeps over land.
An evening cock crow summons hens to their night roost
And a lost lamb unseen bleats for comforting hand.

Oven black crows call from high treetop tangles.
They shuttle-bus hustle and rasp cackle call.
They wheel and flit-flutter, then sweep, swoop down, settle
And feather fall silence descends on them all.

As dusty-dusk softness envelopes the landscape
So shades mingle and meld with a low-setting sun.
An early owl two-hoots its greeting to evening
And ushers in darkness of night-time to come.

Humpty back houses cascade down the hillside
A comfortable huddle of cuddles so blest.
And chimneys wisp welcomes to firesides and armchairs;
To teacups and fruitcake; to slippers and rest.

As the achy-limbed worker draws close to his homestead
A wagging tail welcome meets him near the half way.
Then it's inside and coat off, a time for relaxing.
Just reward for all effort at the end of the day.

Michael Hall

Mamiaith

Stolen from my mother's
mouth, thrown back to me
in pieces that fit so neatly
inside my head but will
not fall onto the page.

Like an un-invited relation
still smelling of chapel
she tuts in my ear, shakes
her head, tries to make
me a stranger to what's
already mine.

Grandchildren of the Not
When will we break the chord?
How do we tell our story in
a thin language? Tongue-tied
excusing our way through
we breath in Mamiaith
waiting to be unearthed
always knowing our
pen will betray us.

Ness Owen

Note:

*Mother tongue

Flugelhorn on a Pembrokeshire Beach

For Pete Judge

A sea horn, a silvery
beach horn come ashore
on the grey shale, its silvery glint in the sun
against shingle that looks like another weather,
always a later time of day, sadder month of the year.

A horn washed up:
now, that I could credit,
a horn like a conch or a cowrie, picked up
from some layby back along the Gulf Stream. Or
like a nautilus that's been sailing since... prehistory.

But this was horn
erect, horn upright,
just above the tideline, and preening its glitter,
its visible flash of surprise: what land is this? Ear
to the ground now, wondering: Could I take root?

Horn, drawn back
to the waves' edge
now the tide's retreating, as the border collie
with us has to dance and dart back from its herding
of those never quite compliant flocks of foam.

What horn
says there, at the tide-lip
where the long grey backwash makes a wind-chime
tinkle out of flipped stones, well... though it's just
in earshot, it's not for our ears, not for us to say.

By evening, horn
had found the cliff path.
Sunset was rigorous and minimal, a single
calibrated line of pink. Horn waited,
I think, and then measured his first note by it.

When horn
escaped from his own dimensions
he went running out along the steep slabs of the cove
like a race-track's camber, right to the point, the last rock,
flushing the seabirds off their roosts on the way.

Those dark heads
surfacing, a hundred feet down,
they were only the rocks the waves heaved back
and over. Not seals come in to listen, or to sing.
For rocks to come and listen, though, that's stranger still.

When I was young
there were fog horns
I remember, all down the coast – a lost herd of them
out in the sea-fret. Their call, one to the other (I believe
they are nearly extinct now) was Come home, come home.

In horn's morning
he's back on the beach,
another, trimmer horn beside, a different glint
of their silvery chrome, their tubes and valves in parallel.
Walk on by. There will be music. Maybe, harmony.

Philip Gross

The *Solomon Browne*

The angel on the weather vane
swings north east as the storm hits.
In the pub they pause their game of darts
to listen to the radio:

*Penlee lifeboat can you hear me?
Coastguard calling Penlee lifeboat.
What is your position? Over.*

Above the wind the village hears the silence.
The boy sees his mother drop
the Christmas decorations back into their box.
We'll put these up tomorrow when your dad is home.
She switches off the oven, and supper grows cold.

He sets out at dawn along the cliff.
Gorse pricks through his socks, scratches his ankles.
Bushes here turn their backs to the sea
as if leaning away from danger.
Later she finds him on his knees
close to the edge, head butting the wind
top lip sticky with salt and snot.

*Come home son. What you doing?
She already knows the answer.
I'm looking for my dad.
Everyone's over at Lamorna.
No one is looking here.*

Further along the coast
wreckage is coming ashore.

Anne Symons

Note:

*On 19th December 1981, the Penlee lifeboat *Solomon Browne* in hurricane conditions went to the aid of *MV Union Star* that was being swept towards Cornwall's southern coast. After the *Solomon Browne* had managed to rescue four people, radio contact was lost. Both vessels were subsequently wrecked, losing all hands. In total 16 people lost their lives including the 8 volunteer lifeboat crew.

The Welsh, A Summer Experiment

We are creatures of soft soaked-in-minutes rain,
adapted to the mist that veils river fields at dawn
or masquerades mountains in drawn cloud.

Our habitats vary: bus shelters in a downpour,
the leesides of hedges. We keen to dripping taps.
On foggy mornings, our joy is ecstatic.

Irritable in the torture of an unwatered garden,
our hell is a heatwave.

We sweat dew till the sky cracks and fat drops
recharge us where we lie on electric grass.

Kate Noakes

When the best vase was an egg cup

The winter ground is a churn of mud and worm casts.
My mother lies pale in stiff hospital sheets.
Viburnum blooms pink over leaf crumblings.

The red-rippled camellias have opened early.
Pain keeps her still, as weighed down as damp air.
No frost has held back waiting inches of daffodils.

She shifts to rearrange the angry scar bisecting her belly.
Her body's taken fifteen years to grow the gall stone
that rattles in a jar - a truffle the size of a conker.

The stream dividing the garden is running furious-full,
and takes with it a chunk of the bank,
but not before I've picked a clump of snowdrops.

My mother smiles when she sees the little piece
of her Eden I've bought to the ward.
Clutching her middle, she laughs as I pull out the vase.

Tomorrow, she'll tell me her green dream
of white bells, so many drifts of glowing bells, and her
barefoot running through Blodwen's wood.

Kate Noakes

Gull

“Why we have so many gulls in poetry these days is a matter for reflection.”— Peter Sansom, Writing Poems

I

On a wrinkled edge of rooftop cliff,
you might catch a lull,
see a flash of beauty in my withdrawal,
find comfort in shared silence.
But lose me to the frenzy of flapping wings
and our link is severed.
I am just like the others.
See the ripple of long-dead monsters
in my gait,
and in my eyes the slow attend
of monsters still to come.

II

August is the kindest month, discarded
chip paper from ungrateful hands, mixing
vinegar and ice cream, stirring
wings, a glutton’s screech.

Replenish this dinner plate.

Cover these streets in what you cannot eat,
keep us sweet
with cold sausage rolls,
crumbs from crisp packets.
An empty belly is a sharpened beak,
a talon-scraper across tender hands.

III

At low tide, see the squabble die.
Dusk brings with it an uneasy peace.
The well-oiled shock of this machine
reduced, now, to watching, waiting.
Yes, predators come to take our young,

the search for higher ground breeds tension,
but above the mew and choke we rise as one.
It is not impossible
to see us soar.

Rhys Owain Williams

Swimmer

she's a damselfly, electric
blue she parts the water
with her toe
and it opens like folded cloth

she slips inside

as above her a plane
flying somewhere far
splits the sky
leaving it halved and tender
like an apricot

and she is swimming now the water
tastes like green and smells like cold

above her swifts are falling

and she wears the water like she wears her beads
lets them glisten at her wrists

as she slips
across the thawleg rides the pull
through popply water

above her nymphs and stoneflies spin

and she's dreaming now the water is night
and trout are stars and the moon is the
crescent of water as it curves around her waist
and the river is closing its eyes as her warm feet
pulsing with hot blood press down against the pebbles
surfaces cool and smooth and whole

Grug Muse

Tether me

Tether me to earth with a child
not necessarily one of my own, so I can witness joy.

Tether me with birdsong to the skies
so I can fly for miles, return home unerringly.

Tether me to this short life with your lips on mine
one life-long kiss, you know who you are.

Tether me to truth with rainbows
revealing the heart of light, splitting it apart.

Tether me to the now with nettles
a fistful of stings hidden in the tall grass.

Tether me to the sea with a shell clasped at my ear
as if I could fathom the distant shore.

Tether me.

Let me go.

Alice Kavounas

Welsh Confession

We are responsible for chapels
empty of song and prayer.
We closed the big door,
turned off the electricity,
put the Bible on the shelf.
We let farms ruin,
their chimneys full of crows,
floors fallen with rot.
We destroyed the old customs
of spring, harvest and winter
by introducing the tractor.
We built roads to English cities
to bring an infection of caravans,
an invasion of the retired.
We depopulated the land,
made farmers shoot their dogs,
encouraged young men to take their lives
in smoke filled cars.
We pumped sewage and waste into the sea,
painted the insides of crabs black,
made fish grow eyes on their backs.
We have thrown away our oral tradition
and installed the television.

Gwyn Parry

Treffynnon (Holywell)

My three year old son and I
are caught unawares
by this dark tower of water.

I hold him on the wall edge
and I hold him tight.
We both feel the need to dive

to clean ourselves in the pulse,
the bubble of this
1,000 year old spring.

Black gothic stone needles
above our heads.
Names of the healed

scratched initials - 1651.
My son says,
*Amser maith yn ol.

But before, before the rosary's drone,
before pigeons ever landed
on this dark stone

before the Church
made this place their own,
before the first pilgrim,

Long before the first factories,
the failed industrial estate
and the dirt of a modern road

Gwenfrewi lost her head
to Caradog's angry sword.
Her head fell

to be cradled
by strong clean water,
her blood coloured the river copper.

Gwyn Parry

Note:

*Amser maith yn ol - a long time ago

Surrendered to the sea

My heritage and my lifeblood
will be washed away in the flood.
With the thud of mankind's fall,
a sea appears within a sea.
Condemned by the powers that be
like ghost towns we can't recall.

Lola Stansbury-Jones

Matches

you are freefall among the pine needles
motes of dust and sunset pepper your face
we had found a box of matches
burnt every one within five minutes
gambled away our fingertips
on who could last the longest
if i could weigh this memory now
it would be wolves and yearning
a liquid mess seething through the forest
some jawline ruining my welcoming throat
a faint hum of confusion

Stuart Buck

Borlais Smart Poems

I am feather.
I am hair.
I flow and run into water.

I am tree.
My branches carry concerts of birdsong.
My branches embrace the sky, blossom towards sunshine,
drink rain, flow to the sea.

I am an empty shell now
Forgotten history
Who are you who lived in me?

My chest becomes a book your sound has written.

No strings attached
Free to enter the spaces you open.

Too high, too high, far too high you fly.
Too low, too low, don't fall into the depths
Where the void threatens

A giraffe made of ink afraid of rain
Little dog on the fence looking for adventures

The gull although alone is never lonely.

Attached to the weight of the world
My strings are healed; the bandage falls.
The world I carry hurls mountains of ashes,
torn out hair.

2
I am a wheel but cannot move, turned into drum.
Knife scratches, flute sings air.
A knitted beast moves with me.

A telescope of sound
Broken pots remember tea.

Childlike, slipping through strings
A new perspective
The boat out there knows nothing of our existence.
Prawntail, sea horses, a mermaid's steps on earth
The hill out there is where I walk.
Black rocks rise up like a town for shells.

Canvas? Sheet? Dreamcatcher?
A cradle for sand
Endings? Beginnings?
Are they the same?
Long hair drying on the line
If you close your eyes you can see her face.

Evelyn Holloway

Pebbles

Pebbles collected on beaches
or garden paths
keep fingers occupied
in and out of coat pockets.

Are pebbles the stone's children?
Stones thrown by boys whose
homes were bombed;
stones their only weapon
in wordless wars.

May stones learn from pebbles.
May they enjoy sunny days,
cool waves.
May the boy admire their
shapes and colours.
May they become houses,
not weapons.

Evelyn Holloway

Dal dy Dir*

We woke to sharp thin beauty,
Our eyes drawn down a road lost
Under frost, its trees letting pale yellow
Winter slip from ice-tipped fingers.

That day, we toiled up Mynydd Mawr,
My hands and face numb
Only to be stripped awake by pain;
So cold I barely made it.

I shuddered down to shelter in the cairn,
Ridiculously happy with my flask lid of tea.
We came down running, landing thigh-deep
In soft soft snow. We got down quicker that way;

It was still light enough he could translate
The bright red graffiti Dal dy Dir scrawled defiant.
I fell in love with his country,
The way it had withstood,

How it had gentled itself for lizards to live
Yet kept itself unyielding—
It is a perfect standing ground
And I brace myself against its rock.

Eabhan Ní Shuilleabháin

Note:

*Dal dy Dir (Stand your Ground) is one of the most resonant Welsh nationalist slogans and is often found as graffiti; it aims to protect the culture and language of Wales.

Sylvia

The tantrumming Atlantic,
bickering gulls. A curse of drivers
on the sharp turn in, the engine's chord
change. Her 3am damson-wine

laugh, ruby with gossip. The gate
embraces us, backdoor
visitors. A sea-dripping tideline of pets
and grandchildren, body-surfing up

and down the wave hill. 'I don't know what
to cook you' quiche. A dance of china
dolls behind glass. The hand-pat of earth
as she styled her roses. Waltzes, foxtrots,

songs from *Mamma Mia*. My latest
boyfriend met with cooed approval
—*such nice hands, ate all his food.*

A panic of birds after the solar eclipse.
The flash-circle of cameras
arcing cliff to cliff, our Perranporth view.

When the text alert sounds—
my mother, telegramming death
in a roomful of strangers—
I see the Bosphorus,
but hear the Atlantic.

Susie Wild

The Lash Museum

A gusty Cornish wind
slammed the caravan shut,
skinning a birthmark,
my head
a blood fountain.

Holding my doll by a pigtail,
I stood at the swinging door,
my pinafore dress
blooming red—

Woozy in the back of my
soon-to-be stepdad's Volvo,
a wad of cotton wool held to
my Shirley Temple,

my mother's voice high
above my head,
the streets raced by
to Trelliske Hospital
till the skylid shut.

When they removed
the stitches, I asked to keep
them, the start of an obsession
to display the things
that pained

me. I would look
at the long, black thread
legs, stiff as mother-of-the-bride
mascara: clumped lashes a-flutter
in a plastic pot.

Susie Wild

Mothering under the Mandala

You were still an egg in the cave of my hips
when I carefully folded the mandala –
still smelling of ink
and market fruits into my suitcase.
We flew from Istanbul,
dripping with the sweat and sequins
of my belly dance.

And now you sit – tiny son, shimmering
under the sheer pink fabric –
fixed in this square of light,
a Welsh dawn rippling the kaleidoscope
of your eyes.

On the loom of our universe, stretched wide,
pinned over the bed, behind it all:
a web, knots, pauses,
a star in making – the scaffold of beauty.
The sun of somebody else's morning,
sewn with thick gold thread
on this dot-to-dot.

You are the matrix
and we need no pages,
no planes, no more world travel.
This is the adventure now.

Elated, peach-bright in your crochet,
smiling beyond the edges of your smile.
Amaze me, again. Now,
I understand creation.

We are this pattern, stitched,
un-stitched from the rota of life for a while,
relishing the definition
of our faces – fresh from the black

tumble of a milk-hashed sleep.

And we drift, we drift
into the shape of our day,
the lights of the world
threading through our window.

I nurse the small purple snake of umbilicus
you gifted me – hard blood;
rattle the specimen bottle.
No fat placenta for the apple tree,

but enough for me, oozing
half-drunk from you,
arching into my capable breasts –
struck with your needle-thin scratches.

Guinevere Clark

An insomniac dreams of sleepwalking

I

To wake
in a day for night sort of way
and find the hours frozen
into midnight
as though you have travelled
time zones
and are chasing the night
as it swings west
is a form of flying,
the sort that dogs the dreams
of flightless birds
nesting on the ground
with one eye open.

To walk
through dark rooms
furnished with hard shadows
and not catch your hips
and elbows on each plane
and lip
is like swimming
through wrack and coral
with no thought
that the sand lies light
on outspread fins
and an eye is watching
like a precious stone.

II

You may never learn to ride a bicycle
but once you marry a certain speed
with the exhilaration of the inner ear
it is true you will never forget.

You may never learn to swim

to trust to the heaving water
the weight of limbs and laughter
yet water's density will always hold you.

But sleeping is a gift you come with from the womb
you lose it at your peril.

III

There is rain sometimes at night
or wind comes souging into the house
raising the hackles on the sleeping dog.

There is no elasticity to night
it is long, yet square like a black cube
and it weighs in your hand like lead.

IV

Perhaps it is not sleep that evades me
but me unsure of sleep
suspicious of its fabric, its indigo tint
wary of the muffling wrap of fibres
the twist and ply that tighten at my throat.

That is why I flounder in its grasp
fling out my arms in mock dismay
back myself into teary dayfulness
smiling all the while
in case sleep can smell my fear.

V

I'll hold a wake
for the death of sleep
throw a party in its honour.
I'll celebrate all night
the longevity of its appeal,
and sit in the long light of morning
amongst the crumbs
and empty bottles,

my sorrows drowned
like cigarette ends
in each empty plate.

I can live without it
I'll declare into the air
until it rises up, pale
from its oak-scented coffin
and takes me by the hand,
whispers the ghosts of goodnight blessings
into my ear:
sleep well
sóv gott
duerme bien
lull and bye.

Gilla Evans

Hour between wolf and dog 1

You come to me in winter when the gutted
moon spills over the rooftops. When the sometime-
rain shudders along the pavement, you come

half-formed into the sleeplessness of my
adopted city. A city forever on the edge
of startling itself into industry.

A city spooning the bay. You're not
part of this landscape and its hill-shelved houses.
You come to me in my street,

where a lamppost steps aside for intimacy.
For a moment, the wind is a flag furled between us.
Maybe I just like the idea of you

suspended in wait, as if hairstyles were all
that changes in twenty years. You lean in
to whisper one honest wish: come home.

I go cold. I am home. My hands have grown
out in branches, but my feet – these tentative roots.
Immigrants are made from their feet up.

I close my eyes. Come home. And when I open
them again you've emptied
all the windows – the houses unwelcome

dark. The materials of the past
invent this moment: the streets are snowfall-
quiet and we are two halves of the same kiss.

Alan Kellerman

The story we tell when there is no moon

When there is no moon – and though there are more stars, they are lonelier
without a fire to call them together –
we tell of the morning we woke to find someone had moved the trees, and the children
woke in each other's beds.
And they tell me I'm mad, but I know the river moved a few feet to the west.
Listen: that's the day rustling
began beyond the trees, where the water is stronger and pushes back against the land.
Our fathers said they would consult the speaking bones.
Mothers shook their heads. Strangers came to us, tough, like titanium.
But hollow.
Mothers said you could hear the wind pass through Them,
and the wind, even, was frightened
when it came out the other side. We listened as Their stutters scattered
seeds and soaked up the rain.
They took our rain with them, so we learned to read
the dust, live among the stones.

When the moon had come close enough to whisper, They came again from their green
earth and wanted, not the stones,
but what was beneath them. We said, *Will that restore our families?*
Our mothers know their children
in other clothes – even in another's house – but what do you say when children don't
see
their mothers in the women before them?
Strangers shook their heads, and it sang to my memory of how the long grasses
used to weave through each other in the wind.
They hauled the stones to one side and cracked long wounds into the ground
so that even to our neighbors
we had to shout across chasms. It took days, sometimes, to hear what was for dinner.
We can't live between the earth
and each other; our children said. They left for the green land beyond the trees
where the earth is whole.
Once in a while, one writes to tell us stories of water. In all of our gouged land, hope
is an empty pair of shoes.
One of the mothers picked up a knobby stick and began scratching into the flaked
earth,
a letter to the moon.
Ten years she's been writing. Last I saw, she was scribbling west past the burned-out
gas station.

Alan Kellerman

Thoughts on a king's idyll in city of the legion
(Caerleon)

On the bathfloor
Through the rippling water
Did you see the tiled blue dolphins
Swimming beneath you?

In the amphitheatre by the barracks
Of the deserting garrison
Who entertained you,
Gladiators, beasts of the wild
Or clowns play-acting
Emperors with no clothes?

That amphitheatre
Where you were
Crowned King of Britain
In the City of the Legion -
You were 15
As said the Poet Laureate
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new"
Rome is sacked
Power now in Britannia
From a new centre will radiate

Your Caerleon that poet called Camelot
A Round Table
At the centre of the old amphitheatre
Concentric circles
Rippling grace and peace
Out across post-Roman world

That poet fond too of saying
"Knowledge comes, but Wisdom lingers";
Wise indeed to carve your table round
So your knights did not

Compete for position,
But was it wise of you to
Let intrepid Lancelot
Flush warm his loins
In the tepidarium
At the baths with Guinevere?

You in Caerleon, Arthur
Custodian of the civilised life
A chivalric light in those dark ages

Pax Romana Britannica

Peter Gaskell

Ding Dong Mine

Lads up from Pendeen
on a mackerel-blue morning,
might pluck a sprig
of purple heather for luck,
or pass through the heart
of the Crick-stone
before heading up
through rowan and barberry
to the engine-house,
fortress-like above
the network of shafts
that undercut
this black moorland
close to the land's end;
tucking this talisman
into pocket or flap
as they were lowered
hundreds of feet
into a dripping world
where all colour and light
was gifted by lines
of flickering lanterns,
the impact of picks
on dull seams of tin.

David Hale

Four Haiku Sequences

--Reflecting the Four Geographical Areas of Wales

North

pre-dawn stars...
plumes of breath
from a cattle truck

goshawk's cry
deep under snow
the road turns

moorland edge –
darkness hardens
to a crow

a shadow across the crucifix hunger

South

morning coolness
the meadow holds the shape
of a deer

the path down
to the river
flowering gorse

late warmth
a farmer spills light
from a grain sack

blue hour...
the day's heat lingers
in lilac scent

East

autumn evening –
hail bouncing out
of a doll's pram

the uneven click
of a prostitute's heels
falling leaves

the arm
of a roadside cross
bent by snow

a prayer card
softened by her touch
winter moonlight

West

headland mist
a curlew at the tip
of a cry

long afternoon...
the sky trickling
from a tide pool

twilight tide
the last glimmering
of oystercatchers

seaside dusk
the surf washes over
a donkey's shadow

Paul Chambers

Blodeuwedd*

but what choice did I have?
I was given to my husband
as though I had no feelings of my own.

My sap could never stir to his limp touch
My lover electrified me; after his kiss
how could I face a life
stagnating in a rotting flower bed?

What will my sentence be?
A fate far worse than death they say.
Will I be turned into a rosebush
in my husband's garden?

No, they don't have the wit for that.
When I hear their decree, I'm hooting with delight –
No hardship to become a face of feathers
after I've been a pillowcase of weeds.

I fly alone,
under the ice of stars, the streak of moon,
tasting the oak, the broom, the meadowsweet,
hearing the tiniest rustle of the smallest mouse.

I swoop with power and grace,
I cry to who to who must I bow down?

I am the partner of the night.

Angela Stoner

Note:

From the flowers of oak, broom and meadowsweet, Blodeuwedd was created to be Llew's bride. After she and her lover, Gronw plotted to kill Llew, Blodeuwedd was punished by being turned into an owl. It was decreed that she should never show her face again in the light of day.

Dragoncloak

At the back of my wardrobe –
a dragoncloak.

I do not wear it often and never in public;
I parade before the mirror:
a parody of dragon woman.

It was given to me by a dragon I once met,
who informed me, in that off-hand way that dragons have
This skin is so last-year. You're welcome to it

I can't decide if I look awesome or ridiculous.
The gold and purple – though magnificent –
don't really suit my colouring.

There's a restlessness about the shoulders,
a rising and falling, as if the cloak remembers flying,
misses it.

If I stride out in dragon wings
will I sing fire songs, burn the world brilliant?
Or will I be ignored, ridiculed, or silenced?

I always put it back in the wardrobe,
right at the very back,
and close the door.

Angela Stoner

Love Song

As we lie
in the swan neck
of spent love,
my hands play the ivory
rush of your skin:
summer smooth, petal keys
sound out the first chord.

I wear you,
my sash, tag of my
loved by you state.
I am proud, rough-touched
by your tree bark hands
climbing my sides like
the too many times
washed cloth of your shirt.

You prickle,
raised nerves
rash and impetuous,
the wire woollen fence
of your thighs, curves
into the wing of
our still whirring flight,

as we
count down,
curl up,
sleep.

K. S. Moore

Shiver

The wind soothsays in the key of G, sighing,
I match my tone to his.
In our duet I hold out strong, harmonise

while he exhales, one lowing note that
swoops, rounds, clarifies
everything I know in a wild sonata.

I close the window, end his song, believe
in me, my solo pending, yet my vocal chords
are searching for the accompaniment, now lost.

And so I let him back in,
let his gushing presence blow my sound,

until I am left, a shiver of myself,
undermined to the bone.

K. S. Moore

Passing by the lock in winter

He unfolds
from the door of the houseboat

carrying two plastic bags to empty
refill with bottles and cans.

The salmon-ladder is a frozen cascade
clinging to water-worn stones.

He navigates the rim of the lock gate
by habit, no hand free to hold the rail.

Icicles hang from the weir.

The river bank is white
frozen so hard that he walks
without footprints.

The birds do not fly this chill afternoon
pecking and bothering to keep their feet on the ice.

Nothing else moves.

The field where he stumbles
is furrowed by snow and sunset.

Lesley Hale

Gannet Flute

A long-winged gannet flies above a rock of stammering birds
that lift themselves in sudden silence
to form lines across the cove.

Mackerel ride the currents
flow in shoals around the bay
wind into silver balls
bait the scanning birds.

Black-tipped
torpedoes
foam the sea
salvos of divers
drill the shoals.

Gannets feeding.

Crashed at 60 miles an hour
the bird is broken
floating
to the shore.

A flute is fashioned from the wing
the hollow bone carved with holes
finger tips engineer a rising sound
lips feather breath.

Lesley Hale

Rhigos

“This is the land that grew me,”
she says, as we speed to the top
of the Rhigos, where wild daffs
wait like valets at the skirts
of the waiting mountain.

We park the car near its feet and
she sprints up, confident as a ram,
while I stumble, wool-footed, the wet
grass filling my daps with water that’s
winter-cold. There are tides

swimming within these hills but
I, city-dweller, am not familiar
with their rhythm or their flow.
She disappears into cloud whilst I sit,
flopping on scree composed,

I discover, of crystal, coke, and
slate, stuff I could use to build,
heat, and decorate a house - but
not here, where only the land is,
plus the odd tree or sheep, flower

or woman; the earth spitting its minerals,
offering up, as we clamber down,
a cowbone the size of a vase.

Mab Jones

Valli takes a bath

Written whilst at Skanda Vale, Llanpumsaint

I step through a hatch of shadow and we're
nose to trunk, my white eye drawn up to that one
which is liquid as amber, brown as a coconut,
tufted lashes thick as the brush the monk uses
to soap the creature clean. Valli

is two years younger than I am, but
her wrinkles are rivulets to let the water run,
to hold the mud her dermis needs to breathe.
She was born as my hands, my face, will become:
lined and creased, parchment pressed into shape

around the cosmic dust of bones. I watch as she dips
the soft lips of her trunk into the metal bowl
and blasts her body with suds. Brother
bathes her twice a week, he says, sloughing
the flesh from her hulk so it can replenish,

the fresh skin a regeneration which, in this
land, requires man's hand in the place of palms.
My own show paths fanning into futures I won't know as
the frayed map edge of her ears gently furl,
the mala beads of her forehead shine. Her strength and her

tenderness are as everyday and as unstoppable
as time; as humble and as powerful as a birth.
She is a firebreath of life wrapped in a dinosaur form,
natal yet ancient, primordial but still in the hands
of the priest as, during our end, that great cleansing, we all are.

Mab Jones

Contributors

Anastacia Ackers is a theatre practitioner based in North East Wales. Her most recent project, funded by Arts Council of Wales and supported by Theatr Clwyd and National Theatre Wales, is theatre piece exploring verbatim accounts of homelessness and the character of Myrddin Wyllt, who inspired Merlin.

Jeffrey Alfier's most recent book is *Gone This Long: Southern Poems. The Shadow Field*, another collection, is forthcoming from Louisiana Literature Press. His publication credits include *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Copper Nickel*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Permafrost*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. He is co-editor of Blue Horse Press and *San Pedro River Review*.

Rebecca Baggett's poem, "Alleluia," was the winner of Atlanta Review's 2010 International Poetry Competition. Her first full-length collection, *The Woman Who Lives Without Money*, is winner of the Terry J. Cox Poetry Award and will be published next year by Regal House Publishing.

Matthew W. Baker teaches high school English in Reno, NV. He is the author of *Undoing the Hide's Taut Musculature* (Finishing Line Press, 2019), and other work has appeared or will appear in *The Briar Cliff Review*, *The Baltimore Review*, *The Summerset Review*, *Booth Journal*, *Sundog Lit*, among others.

Ronda Pizsk Broatch is the author of *Lake of Fallen Constellations* (MoonPath Press, 2015). Ronda is an Artist Trust GAP Grant recipient and Pushcart nominee, and her journal publications include *Blackbird*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Sycamore Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, and Public Radio KUOW's *All Things Considered*, among others.

Stuart Buck is a poet and artist living in North Wales. His second book *Become Something Frail* will be published by Selcouth Station Press later in 2019. When not writing or reading poetry, he likes to cook, juggle, and listen to music. He suffers terribly from tsundoku—the art of buying copious amounts of books that he will never read.

Mark Anthony Burke's work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *North American Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Sugar House Review*, *Nimrod International Journal*, and others. His work has recently been nominated for a Pushcart prize. See: markanthonyburkesongsandpoems.com.

Kevin Burris' work has appeared in many literary journals, including *Poetry East*, *Atlanta Review*, *Bitter Oleander*, and *The Timberline Review*. His first poetry collection, *The Happiest Day of My Life*, was published in 2016 by FutureCycle Press.

Paul Chambers is an award-winning haiku poet and editor of *Wales Haiku Journal*. He has published two collections, and several hundred individual poems in national

and international journals. He has also contributed creative material to publications and organisations such as the Times Literary Supplement, the BBC and the Arts Council.

Anna Chorlton writes in the Cornish wilds. She lives with her husband, young daughter, and surfing son. Anna is author of *Cornish Folk Tales of Place*, published by The History Press, and writes for Mazed Tales. She's also a member of Liskeard Poets.

Thomas Cook is the author of the forthcoming poetry collection *Light Through a Pane of Glass*. He is an Editor and Publisher of *Tammy*, and he lives in Los Angeles, CA and Galesburg, IL.

Angela Croft is widely published in magazines and online with 40 poems entitled "Dancing with Chagall" anthologised in *Caboodle* by Prole Books. Much of her work reflects her childhood split between North Wales and Cornwall where she lived before coming to London to work as a journalist.

Guinevere Clark is studying for a PhD in Creative Writing (Poetry) at Swansea University, writing a second collection based on motherhood. Her first poetry book, *Fresh Fruit & Screams* was published by Bluechrome Press (2006). Her poems have appeared in: *Reach*, *A3 Review*, *Minerva Rising*, *Black Bough Poetry*, among others. She was a commissioned poet for the 2019 Dear Christine combined arts exhibition. Visit her website at www.guinevereclark.com.

Rob Cullen grew up in the Rhondda. He attended Art Schools in Bristol, Cardiff, Brighton and lived in New York. Rob returned to South Wales to work in the criminal justice system. Rob's collection *Uncertain Times* was published in 2016. He's been published in *I AM NOT A SILENT POET*, *The Bezzine*, *The Learned Pig*, *Red Poets* issues. Rob has written a novel and is writing his second.

Patric Cunanane is a poet who also writes fiction and drama. He co-organises readings by Dodo Modern Poets in London and elsewhere in the UK and Ireland. His latest collection, *The Ghost of Franz Kafka*, is published by Palewell Press, and he currently lives in Folkestone on the south coast of England.

Sonia Davies is a qualified nurse, midwife, and health visitor, but no longer work for the NHS. Instead she plays keyboards in a rock band and write poems. Her first novel is nearing completion. She is married, with two grown up children and two large dogs, and lives in Llanelli, South Wales.

Gregory Djanikian has published 6 books of poetry with Carnegie Mellon; the 7th, *Sojourners of the In-Between*, will appear in 2020, also with Carnegie Mellon. One of his poems from the book appeared in *Atlanta Review's* 25th anniversary issue.

Gilla Evans lives in Penzance, Cornwall, where she moved 24 years ago from the North of England. She is a translator by day and a poet by night, with her poetry

published in magazines such as *The Rialto* and *Plume*, but says she “tends to leave them in drawers for long periods.”

Jeannine Hall Gailey served as the second Poet Laureate of Redmond, Washington. She’s the author of five books of poetry: *Becoming the Villainess*, *She Returns to the Floating World*, *Unexplained Fevers*, *The Robot Scientist’s Daughter*, and *Field Guide to the End of the World*. Her web site: www.webbish6.com. Twitter and Instagram: @webbish6.

Peter Gaskell has been writing poetry and plays since gaining a Masters degree in Scriptwriting from University of South Wales in 2014. He writes mostly about Welsh subjects as well as reviews of theatre, books, film, and concerts for *Wales Arts Review*.

Robin Gow is the author of *Our Lady of Perpetual Degeneracy* (Tolsun Books 2020) and the chapbook *Honeysuckle* (Finishing Line Press). They are the founder of the NYC trans and queer reading series Gender Reveal Party and are a managing editor at The Nasiona.

Peter Grandbois is the author of ten books, the most recent of which is *half-burnt* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2019). His plays have been performed in St. Louis, Columbus, Los Angeles, and New York. He is the Poetry Editor for *Boulevard* magazine and teaches at Denison University in Ohio. You can find him at www.petergrandbois.com.

Siân Griffiths lives in Ogden, Utah, where she directs the Creative Writing Program at Weber State University. Her work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Georgia Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Cincinnati Review*, *The Rumpus*, and others. Currently, she reads fiction as part of the editorial team at *Barrelhouse*. For more information, please visit sbgriffiths.com

Philip Gross, born in Cornwall, now living in South Wales, has published some twenty collections of poetry, winning the T.S.Eliot Prize 2009 with *The Water Table*. He is a keen collaborator with artists, musicians, and writers and, most recently, with scientists on *Dark Sky Park*, a collection for young people.

David Hale was born in Scotland, but now divides his time between Portloe in Cornwall’s Roseland peninsula and a hamlet in Gloucestershire. He has three pamphlets out, and a collection forthcoming from Eyeware.

Lesley Hale lives in St Ives, far west Cornwall. She writes words mostly for performance but has also published poems in journals and anthologies, including *Poems for Freedom* (London, UK) and *Anthropocene* (Naropa, US). She writes about the beauty and anxiety that have shaped her social and environmental activism.

Michael Hall lives in Tregaron, a small market town in the Cambrian Mountains in West Wales. He trained in Fine Art at Aberystwyth University but has now developed

a passion for writing. He relishes the challenge of trying to capture the visual through the medium of the written word.

Shakiba Hashemi is an Iranian-American poet, painter, and teacher living in Southern California. She received her BFA in Drawing and Painting from Laguna College of Art and Design in Laguna Beach. This is her first published poem.

Evelyn Holloway is a poet and playwright who currently divides her time between Vienna and St. Ives, Cornwall. She has published two collections, including a bilingual poetry collection, *Shadowlights/Schattenlichter*, and has also had her work in a range of magazines, anthologies and chapbooks. Her play *Graphite and Company* will be performed at the St. Ives Festival in September 2019.

Lawrence Illsley is a Cornish poet based in the Welsh Valleys. He is currently studying for an MA in creative writing at Birkbeck University. His poems have featured in *The Mechanics Institute Review*, *Shooter*, and *Ariadne's Thread*. His narrative poem "Astra and Sebastian" was shortlisted for the International Proverse Prize.

Sue Johns originates from Cornwall where she started writing and performing as a "punk poet." Publications include a collection *Tantrum* (1998) and a pamphlet *A Certain Age* (2003). Her collection *Hush* was published by Morgan's Eye Press (2011) and a pamphlet *Rented* by Palewell Press (2018). Recent projects include a pamphlet inspired by trains and studying for an M.A in Writing Poetry.

Mab Jones is the winner of, most recently, a Literature Matters award from the Royal Society of Literature. She is the author of three books; teaches creative writing at Cardiff University; presents regularly on BBC Radio 4; writes for the *New York Times*; and is Cardiff Wetlands writer-in-residence.

Phil Jones is a writer who was born in Birmingham, was a teenager in Pembrokeshire, and now lives in Cardiff. He has a Creative Writing MA from Cardiff University and is a Hay Festival Writer at Work. Also a musician, Phil records and performs under the name Dusty Cut.

Alice Kavounas has lived on Cornwall's Lizard Peninsula for thirty years. Born in Manhattan to Greek parents who left Europe for America, she read English Literature at Vassar. *Abandoned Gardens Selected & New Poems* is her third Shearsman publication. Together with developer John Kennedy, Alice created the Poetry-in-Place app *Words in Air*.

Charles Kell is the author of *Cage of Lit Glass*, chosen by Kimiko Hahn for the 2018 Autumn House Press Poetry Prize. A chapbook, *Ishmael Mask*, is forthcoming in the fall of 2020 from SurVision, a surrealist press based in Ireland. He is an Assistant Professor at the Community College of Rhode Island.

Alan Kellerman was born in Wisconsin, USA, but has lived in Swansea for over 13 years. His work has appeared in many journals, including *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Poetry Wales*, *Planet*, and has been filmed and featured on *The Crunch* online magazine. His first collection *You, Me and the Birds* was published by Parthian in 2012. He lectures at Swansea University and occasionally edits poetry for Parthian Books.

Phil Knight is a poet from Neath in South Wales. He has been published in *Poetry Wales*, *Earthlove*, *Planet*, *Dial 174*, and many other publications. In 2015 Red Poets published his collection *You Are Welcôme To Wales*.

Jeff Knorr was the Poet Laureate of Sacramento from 2012-2016 and is the author of four books of poetry. His poetry and essays have appeared in literary journals and anthologies including *Barrow Street*, *North American Review*, *Red Rock Review*, and *Fifth Wednesday*. He lives in Sacramento with his wife.

Xiaoly Li is a poet, photographer and computer engineer, and lives in Massachusetts. Her poetry is forthcoming or has recently appeared in *Chautauqua*, *Rhino*, *Whale Road Review*, *Rockvale Review*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *J Journal*, and elsewhere. She has been nominated for Best of the Net, Best New Poets, and the Pushcart Prize.

John Linstrom's poems have appeared in *North American Review*, *The New Criterion*, and *Vallum*. He edits the work of Liberty Hyde Bailey, with whom he shares a hometown, for Cornell University Press. He lives with his wife in Queens, NY, where he is a doctoral candidate in Literature at NYU.

Nicholas McGaughey is an actor living in Pontypridd, Wales. He is also part of Literature Wales Mentoring Scheme 2019/20. He has new work in a broad range of poetry magazines, including *Prole*, *Envoi*, *the Lampeter Review*, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, and *Poetry Scotland*.

Mike McNamara (B.A. Hons.) was born in Ireland but lives in South Wales, UK. He had his selected poems *Overhearing The Incoherent* published by Grevatt and Grevatt in 1997. Mike is a published songwriter. His poetry has been published in a wide range of journals and poetry magazines, including *New Welsh Review*, *Tears in the Fence*, and *International Times*. He has also had a selection of poems published in *The Pterodactyl's Wing* (Parthian, 2003).

Agnes Meadows is a London-based poet/writer who has toured nationally and internationally, giving readings, workshops, and residencies all over the world, most recently in Bangladesh at the Dhaka International Poetry Festival, where she was awarded a Literary Award for her contribution and commitment to poetry. She was a Guest Poet at the Austin International Poetry Festival for 10 consecutive years, twice winning awards for Outstanding Writing, and has read three times at the Babylon International Festival of Arts & Culture in Iraq. Agnes has written six collections of poetry, three with

Flipped Eye/Waterways. Her last collection was a dual English-Chinese collection *The Light On the Wall* (Morgan's Eye Press), from which she read at the Formosa International Poetry Festival in Taiwan in 2017. A collection of poetry based on her visits to Iraq, entitled *Back to Babylon* will come out in October, 2019 (Palewell Press). Since 2004 she's run Loose Muse Women's Writers Night in London, with regular satellite events elsewhere in England, and has also advised Chanel 4 tv on poetry. Email her at agnespoet@googlemail.com.

Brian Mitchell received an MFA in creative writing from Washington University in St Louis, Mo, and then became interested in exploring how text and graphics might be merged into a new form. He moved to Wales in 2000 and is currently working on a verse piece for radio, a re-telling of the myth of Ceyx and Aleyone, updated and set in the Welsh landscape.

Vicki Morley lives in Penzance, Cornwall. She worked at GCHQ, Cheltenham, in Russian intelligence, then ran two comprehensive schools as head teacher, and now writes poetry. She has read at venues throughout Cornwall, and won the Plough International Poetry Prize in 2017 awarded by judge Philip Gross with "Double Zero Flour." Her ambition is to keep her local independent book-shop open by buying from their poetry section.

K. S. Moore is a Welsh poet, based in Ireland. Her poetry has recently appeared in *New Welsh Review*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Boyne Berries*, *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Stinging Fly*, and *Southword*. Shortlists have included: Trim Poetry Competition, Americymru West Coast Eisteddfod Poetry Competition, and Blog Awards Ireland. K. S. Moore shares poetry and other thoughts at ksmoore.com.

Vicky Morris is a poet and creative practitioner born and raised in North Wales, UK. She's been published in places like *Poetry Wales*, *The rialto*, *Butcher's Dog*, *The Interpreter's House*, and *Silver Birch Press*. Vicky won a Northern Writers Award in 2014 and is currently an Arvon/Jerwood mentee for Poetry (2019/20). Visit the poet's website at www.vickymorris.co.uk

Sue Moules was Honno poet of the month in July 2012 and July 2014. Her most recent collection is *The Moth Box* (Parthian). Her poems have been widely published in magazines and anthologies including *New Welsh Review*, *Planet*, *Poetry Wales*, and *Ambit*. Her work was included in *Sixty Poems for Haiti*, *Glimmer Anthology* (2011), and *A Star Fell From Orion* (2012).

Tiffany Murray has been a Hay Festival Fiction Fellow and Senior Lecturer at the University of South Wales. She programs Hay Festival's Writers at Work and her novels *Diamond Star Halo* and *Happy Accidents* were shortlisted for the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize. Her most recent novel is *Sugar Hall*.

Grug Muse is a bilingual poet, from Gwynedd, Wales. Her work has appeared in publications such as *O'r Pedwar Gwynt* and *Poetry Wales*. She is co-founder and co-editor of *Y Stamp*, a Welsh language Arts magazine, and her first volume of poetry is called *Ar Ddisberod* (2017, Cyhoeddiadau Barddas).

Kate Noakes' most recent collection is *The Filthy Quiet* (Parthian 2019). She was elected to the Welsh Academy in 2011. She lives in London where she acts as a trustee for literature advocacy organisation Spread the Word.

Robert Okaji is a displaced Texan living in Indiana. He once won a goat-catching contest. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Crannóg*, *Boston Review*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Vox Populi*, and elsewhere.

Frank Ortega has been a writer all his life, with all the attendant sacrifices of comfort and security, because he knows no other way to live. Everything that he takes in becomes part of his work, those messages we send to each other, always trying to make this a better world. Instagram: @tiopaqui

Abigail Elizabeth Ottley writes poetry and short fiction from her home in Penzance, Cornwall. Widely published in magazines and journals and anthologies since 2009, in 2014, her work featured in *Wave Hub: new poetry from Cornwall* edited by Dr Alan M. Kent. Last year some of her work was translated into *Romanian for Pro Saeculum*.

Vanessa (Ness) Owen is from Ynys Mon (Anglesey), Wales. Her work has been published in journals including in *Poetry Wales*, *Red Poets*, *Mslexia*, *Culture Matters*, and *I,S&T*, and in anthologies by Mother's Milk Books, Three Drops Press and Arachne Press. Her collection *Mamiath* (Mother-tongue) was published by Arachne press in August. She writes mainly in English, but sometimes also tries to write in Welsh.

James Owens' most recent book is *Mortalia* (FutureCycle Press, 2015). His poems and translations appear widely in literary journals, including recent publications in *Adirondack Review*, *The Shore*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, and *Southword*. He earned an MFA at the University of Alabama and lives in a small town in northern Ontario.

Gwyn Parry has had his work published widely in poetry journals in the UK and Ireland. He has collections published by Poetry Wales Press, Seren Books, and Salmon Publishing. He was facilitator of the Dublin Writers Workshop for many years and is a regular reader of his work. He lives in Gwynedd, North Wales. He writes both in Welsh and English.

Clare Potter has translated for the National Poet of Wales, was a Hay Festival Writer at Work, enjoys facilitating community projects and making jazz/spoken word pieces with musicians. She's currently working on a new poetry collection thanks to a Literature Wales bursary. She directed BBC documentary *The Wall and the Mirror*.

David E. Poston's work has appeared most recently in *Kakalak 2018*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Crack the Spine*, *The Cape Rock*, *Charlotte Litmosphere*, and *Rise Up Review*. He is the author of the chapbooks *My Father Reading Greek* and *Postmodern Bourgeois Poetaster Blues* and the full-length poetry collection, *Slow of Study*.

Anthony Powers began writing poetry about ten years ago after retiring from medical practice. He has a Certificate of Special Commendation in the Welsh Poetry Prize 2013, and has had other poems published. He holds a Certificate in Higher Education (Liverpool University) and B.A.(Hons) English Literature and Creative Writing (Open University 2018). He currently lives in Flintshire.

Phoebe Reeves earned her MFA in poetry at Sarah Lawrence College and is now a Professor of English at Clermont College, University of Cincinnati. Her poems have recently appeared in *The Gettysburg Review*, *Phoebe*, *Grist*, *Forklift OH*, and *The Chattahoochee Review*. Find out more about her work at www.phobereeves.com.

Melanie Shaw is a Public Speaking and University Writing Lecturer at California State University, Northridge. It is here that she finds her home in the Department of Africana Studies and EOP. Her career as a poet is a newborn. However, her love for the art is everlasting.

Eabhan Ní Shuilleabháin, the daughter of an Irish American father and an Irish mother, grew up in Dublin, Ireland, but now lives in Gwynedd, Wales, with her husband and son. She is interested in the stories we tell each other and the multiple perspectives of those stories. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals throughout Europe, Australia, and America.

Ronnie Sirmans is a digital editor at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. His poetry has appeared in *The South Carolina Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Gargoyle*, *BlazeVOX*, *Deep South Magazine*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Third Wednesday*, and elsewhere.

Sally Spedding was born in South Wales, and trained in Sculpture. She is now the author of fifteen crime novels and a short story collection, set mostly in Wales and France. She has also won awards for poetry, and enjoys adjudicating, performing and meeting readers. Now in Carmarthenshire, she still spends time in the Eastern Pyrenees. Visit the poet's website at www.sallyspedding.com.

Lola Stansbury-Jones is a poet from the post-industrial carcass of North Wales. Her poetry has been published in *Down in the Dirt Magazine* and areyoulostyet.com, an online zine founded by Welsh students. More of her work can be found at lolastansburyjones.wordpress.com

Angela Stoner is a poet and experienced storyteller who has lived in Cornwall since 1998. She performs her work across Britain and abroad and won the Poetry Out Loud

Bonnie Thibodeau lives nestled in the hills of Southwestern PA. Her love for the forests and rivers of Appalachia shapes her identity as a writer. She holds an MA in English from West Virginia University. Previous publications can be found in *Cathexis Northwest Press* (featured poet), *River River* (Best of the Net), *Still*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *Third Wednesday*.

Adam Vines is an associate professor of English at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he is editor of *Birmingham Poetry Review*. He is the author of two poetry collections, *The Coal Life* (U of Arkansas P, 2012) and *Out of Speech* (LSU Press, 2018), and coauthor of two more.

Grace Wagner is an MFA candidate at the University of Houston. They worked as Assistant Poetry Editor for *Copper Nickel* and now holds the same position at *Gulf Coast*. They have attended the New York Summer Writers Institute where they studied with Carolyn Forché, Campbell McGrath, and Robert Pinsky.

Susie Wild grew up in Cornwall, but moved to Wales aged 18. She is currently based in Cardiff, working as the publishing editor of Parthian Books (Wales Publisher of the Year, The British Book Awards 2019). Wild is the author of *Better Houses*, *The Art of Contraception*, and *Arrivals*. Her second poetry collection, *Windfalls*, is out through Parthian in 2021.

Emlyn Williams lives in Cardiff, Wales, and has worked variously as a film editor, a screenwriter, a film and television director, a nursing auxiliary at a local hospital and, finally, a teacher. Following a motorbike accident in 2011, Emlyn took early retirement from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Having been totally rebuilt by our marvellous National Health Service, he is now studying for a bachelor's degree in French and Creative Writing with the Open University.

Rhys Owain Williams is a writer from Swansea, Wales. His first poetry collection, *That Lone Ship*, was published by Parthian in 2018. Rhys is co-editor of *The Crunch* and *The Ghastling* magazines, and is a Hay Festival Writer at Work. He is also the literature co-ordinator for *The Swansea Fringe*.

Gareth Writer-Davies lives in Brecon, Powys in Wales. He was shortlisted for the Bridport Prize in 2014 and 2017, was Commended Prole Laureate Competition (2015) Prole Laureate for 2017. He was also Commended in the Welsh Poetry Competition (2015), Highly Commended in 2017, and has a number of publications to his credit. He is also a Hawthornden Fellow (2019).



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