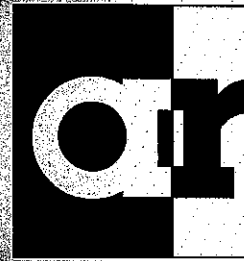


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ATLANTA REVIEW

REVIEW

SCOTLAND

Edited by

Ilyse Kusnetz

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ATLANTA REVIEW

*In memory of Eugene Ellis
Poet, musician, architect
and friend of poetry in Atlanta*

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Editor & Publisher Daniel Veach

Senior Editors Memye Curtis Tucker
Lee Passarella
Alicia Stallings

Scotland feature editor Ilyse Kusnetz

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Welcome

We begin, as is fitting, with "First & Best," the joyful agonies and agonizing joys of youth. After some apt descriptions of the nondescript, we find "Something Funny Is About to Happen." (Don't say we didn't warn you.) Visiting earth's driest and wettest places, we end up at Skara Brae, a stone's throw away from the Highlands.

Our tour guide to SCOTLAND is Ilyse Kusnetz, who lived there for eight years, immersed in its vibrant poetry scene. From the cutting edge and cosmopolitan to the deep roots of Gaelic tradition, we'll see it all. If you're looking for the soul of Scotland, thistle be the place. We're especially proud to feature the United Kingdom's current Poet Laureate: Carol Ann Duffy, the first woman, and the first Scot, ever to hold that position.

Our third section opens with a tribute to those who died in the attack on Paris, written by Antonia Alexandra Klimenko, Poet-in-Residence at SpokenWord Paris. After musing on war and survival (don't miss the charming "Admiral Nimitz") we take up a common concern of baby boomers—aging parents. These problems don't happen in "Supermanland," Charles Harper Webb points out. As spring approaches, wry graveyard humor gives way to lyricism, and summer makes children of us all again.

I'm pleased to announce that, after twenty-two wonderful years, I will be passing on the editorship of *Atlanta Review* to Karen Head, a superb poet and dynamic organizer who will be taking this journal to new heights. Look for an enhanced online presence, with every issue and every poem we've ever published!

It's also my pleasure to announce that *Atlanta Review* has found a new home at Georgia Tech. Already home to the renowned *Poetry @ Tech* reading series, Georgia Tech has become an international poetry powerhouse and—refreshing in these times—an ardent advocate for the humanities. I will continue to be actively involved, ensuring that *Atlanta Review* is still the journal you've come to know and love. If you're at AWP this spring, come by and chat with us. Otherwise, we'll see you in the fall!

Dan Veach, Editor & Publisher

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First & Best

You're thirteen, and you're employed
cutting grass for the summer. This customer
has miles of roadside along his fencing.

It's nearly a hundred—temperature or humidity,
take your pick. You're steady and sweaty
till almost noon—then you gas out before the push mower.

Shirt off, back against a scratchy shady oak,
you try to suck it up. You're making money,
unlike most of your friends. You're dying,

unlike the aimless fellas in AC watching cartoons.
Your head tries to sort direction, justify the means and end.
But you're close to shaky, self-argument brewing

when a beaten-up car slows down with some old grinning dudes
who want to know if it's hot. You close your eyes
and the word *hell* flames up in your mumbled answer.

You hear the car door open, hear the steps coming
and try to pull it together when a rough hand grabs your arm.
A fearful sensation prickles as something cold slaps into your hand
and you open your eyes to the laughing man waving bye-bye
before getting back in with his buddy, the two of them roaring away.
Miller High Life. You can't believe how golden it is

through the clear glass. You touch the bottle's icy tears to your brow
and the angels sing. You roll it back and forth, praise God
and old bad boys. You've seen the way to unscrew the top

and you pop it no problem first try, then slowly, reverently sip.
When you too are old and rascally, your graying buddies will argue
over the best hops and barley, micros vs. big batch, ale vs. lager

and you will sit back in the shade in your armchair, quietly recalling
a devout, awe-struck day when divinity touched your tongue like truth
and the heavenly roar that rose from your throat

laughed as it beat back the sun.

Scott T. Hutchinson

Lifeguard

You are just coming into the newness of your body
when summer begins its raucous invisible heat
and she is entrusted with your well-being.
If she only knew. This crushing age
of twelve has a few new splashes and sunburns
to teach you. Older boys have shown you
their hidden magazines and they crudely informed
on the places you will soon be going,
the body changes and
the wild-blood strangeness
destined to haunt your nights and days—and then
comes the tight red one-piece and the firmness
of arms abs thighs long legs
behind mirrored sunglasses
barefooting the town beach sand
with a sureness that cuts the heat
and she elevates your pulse with each stern
hard whistle at the baby-dumb fools
trying to drown themselves who actually
kinda need drowning, while you stupidly dream
of a more macho means of distress
that might obtain her assistance
and resuscitation. Three-month
Goddess of the White Platform,
taut as umbrellas in sea breeze
blonde as a two-scoop vanilla cone
and brown as dark chocolate—
you're shaking your head when
your body talks naughty to you because
she is in your shower, your bed, your bowl of Kix cereal,
and when you see her running
at the edge of the wave-lap
building wind and endurance
and when you stare as she breast-strokes and butterflies,

you live in fantasy and somewhere, somewhere
sad and young, you know that this is not
the woman who will ultimately save you—
but she can watch over you until
cold water comes and finally douses you,
till autumn arrives and colorful leaves
cover and calm the surface.

Scott T. Hutchinson

Paris Spill-Over

Finally mustered nerve, my last day in Paris,
to venture up the narrow alley outside a dirty window
where I'd kept watch from my hostel bunk
for two women who loitered in an open doorway
every early evening till past I'd fallen asleep.
A flaming beehive redhead, the other all swirls
of platinum curls piled like ice cream.

One or the other sat in a folding chair with a platter
of pastries on her lap. The other leaned against the doorjamb
smoking and smoking, flicking her spent fags
to smolder in the cobbles. Now and again, men
vanished inside, returned disheveled, and hurried off.
Gendarmes in silver-buttoned coats and flattop caps
sampled pastries, chatted awhile, ambled up the alley,

smiling. *Am-air-ee-ka*, the redhead called me,
mon chère, mon chère. Lifted a pastry all too close
to her chest, snapped one button loose, then two,
and half of Paris spilled over right there before me.
Still a boy, homesick, heartsick. I stammered. I blushed.
What's it cost for a memory to last?
Paid fourteen francs for the pastry, twice what she asked.

Lowell Jaeger

The Lovely Miss McKendry, Librarian

Or, How I Became a Socialist

She had the look of cash about her, so
How she landed in our school is hard to say.
Her lovely face, her body, were as out of place
among us as we felt about ourselves—
the outcaste handful who, though born to farm,
were fated not to care for hogs or corn,
or tear an engine down behind the barn,
or make sense of the commodities markets.

Even then I knew I'd soon be leaving home,
but hardly knew a likely place to go.
So she gave me the key to her office,
a place to hide when classes moved too slow,
and I read everything that I could lay
hands on, most of it twice. One golden day
she cracked open the door, smiled and said
in a voice as sweet as rain falling on money,

"What would you like to read? Anything?"
Those words still make an old prof's heart sing.
She'd found some shekels in a dead account
so she told me I could pick a book out.
Just let her know, she said, she'd order it,
though it might be helpful not to mention it.
That was the best proposition of my life,
offered by the kindest face in my memory.

Maybe it was the romance of the blacklist
or because he sang a world I knew I'd missed,
but I chose Pete Seeger's radical red book,
The Incomplete Folksinger, a volume packed
with sufficient leftist political entendre
to lead any young Republican astray.
Astray, just where I'd always hoped to go.
And the lovely Miss McKendry seemed to know.

William Jolliff

You Salvaged What Was Left of Me

The year I stopped caring if a hood would cover me,
I'd been fired from my newspaper job in Martinsburg &
now worked beside you in the record store/
head shop/ sex room where business suits
meant jeans & tie-dyes or concert tees.
Stuck living with my parents, I smoked weed daily &
drank or popped whatever I laid hands on
as I waited hour after hour for the world to end.
It got so bad I started reading Sartre for fun.
Yet there you were, looking up at me with eyes like martini olives,
hair black & blond, roping bangs like forelegs of a tarantula.
You smiled, sniffing at me like a cocker spaniel.
You made demands, telling me what you wanted
as if any of it mattered, as if I did.
We lay together on your mattress on the floor,
listening to Syd Barrett & breathing in
coconut smoke off incense cones.
I wanted to tell you then how you rescued me,
forced me to stop, drop & roll to put out a fire.
Call it laziness or cowardice. Call it insanity,
call it youth—I left the gratitude language unspoken.
Is it too late to say I embrace you & the memory of you
such that even recollections of my own self-
doubt & misery show their faces in warmly blushing hues?
I haven't let go despite years like miles between us,
so you save me again & again *ad infinitum*
like the greatest play in a ballgame shown &
reshown on TV long after it becomes old news
when I'm the only viewer left who wants to see.

Ace Boggess

Three Feral Black Kittens, with a Modification to My Emerging Thesis

For days I have been note-taking
for my opus chastising the poets
for their cat poems. But as I ease shut
the lock on an afternoon expedition
trespassing Casa Ramón—
revealed in the future—the first
black lump, fleeing up stone steps
with a faint, half-hearted meow,
surprises me, then a second in retreat.
The third—glowing emerald eyes,
patchy fur—holds squeezed ground
beneath a slate stoop, hissing
with all the high-pitched kitten ferocity
it can muster, teeny red maw
stretched wide, teeny pointed teeth,
a display of hatred and fear laudable
for one so little. No mother's tit,
no shelter from the week's cold rain.

When I return with two deep jar lids,
carton of milk, tin of chicken
and liver cat food—to be explained
in my exposé—I find the runts
in a dark, dank gap in rubble
between uninhabited houses.
Out of human reach, anyway.
One, possibly Badass, watches me.
One climbs. One, lost in that gloom.
I pour milk, finger out gelatinous
paté, place both lids on a flat log,
foolish I will be exposed. But kittens,

I decide then and there—I've
been weighing this—are exempt
from all diatribe, and maybe
even deserve an occasional verse.
Especially the hissing, shivering ones,
with green eyes and nowhere to go.

Gaylord Brewer

Schrödinger's Dog

is puzzled—he keeps
circling the box,

sniffing. Off and on
his ears perk, his tail

thumps the floor.
Does he hear something?

Smell...?
He whimpers,

scratches one corner,
and lifts his leg.

Jane Rawlings

room zero

strikingly non-descript / my face attracts strangers who need to
project / as if onto a blank
screen / the movie of their lives

to one i was her long-lost brother / until our tearful mid-embrace /
to another i was steven
spielberg / her side-crabbing husband snapping photos of us /
despite my denials / which
she responded to with a coyly scolding / *oh Steven*

you look like my husband looked / one elderly woman told me /
relying / in stunned
confusion / on her cane / *thirty-five years ago / god rest his soul*

my buddy would look just like you / a bewildered guy in a yankee
jacket said / after giving
my back / as he'd run up from behind / a hearty whack / *if he
shaved his beard*

this bewildered me / i had just shaved my beard so i wouldn't look
like steven spielberg

greek / hebrew / spanish / czech / all have been spoken to me on
the street or in shops /
without a moment's hesitation or doubt / while my real friends
often pass me by / not
recognizing me / or my following shouts

once / checking into a motel in a featureless pennsylvania town / i
was handed the key to
room zero / and my traveling companions laughed / *it fits you
somehow* they said / not
meanly / just as a matter of fact

the key turned the lock easily / and the lights flicked on to a room
like a thousand other
motel rooms in a thousand other small / featureless / american
towns

holding the key / i sat on the creaky bed / far from home / far from
feeling arrived to
anyplace / far from feeling like anyone / anywhere

Mark Belair

The Wing Man and the Bridesmaid

They have your back. They warn of sister seducers,
social climbers, cads, latches, those who can
be trusted as far as you can throw them.

Horatios to your Hamlet, Stonewalls
to your Bobby Lee, glad to fiddle their
second fiddle, never catch the tossed bouquet.
They keep their powder dry when you're half-cocked.
Rhodas to your Mary, supporting actresses,
they smile from the altar in their ghastly gowns.

Sidekicks who volunteer to walk point, take
the bullet meant for you. Such stalwart lads,
wry, good-hearted gal pals, BFFs,
Steady Eddies, soul brothers riding
stoic shotgun far into the sundown.

Mark DeFoe

To a Red Traffic Light

In my simulated leather coinpurse
of moments, yours are the paperclips,
the lint stuck to the Velcro, enameled
trinkets. I check for lipstick on my teeth,
do my Kegels. Some kisses I owe
to you, snagged with one eye open
in case I missed your passing. Used
to be I was young enough to glance
around hoping someone was glancing around
for me. Time machine, you turn me seventeen
when I crank up the volume and dance,
seventy when my kids see me and wince.
The rearview mirror is a scrapbook,
children sleeping like peaches
in carseats, teenagers gazing at traffic
while baring their souls. You make
of the windows a fake-walnut frame
for a suburban montage: loping
dogs, jogging housewives, wheelchairs,
elderly crossing guards. People
who pound their steering wheels, people
who weep. Nothing was ever a truer
mirror of a self unconstructed;
you'll be subpoenaed at the pearly gates.
You are the semicolons in my life, a pause
to feel my age. The place where I miss
my mother. A discothèque of ghosts.

Darlene Young

Something Funny Is About to Happen

Banana peels are begging to be stepped on.
There are whoopee cushions on every chair.
Clowns and midgets are squeezing into a tiny red car.
Jack is waiting patiently in his box.

Airplanes take off in every direction but up.
Subways run backwards.
Wine jumps back in the bottle.
Ping-pong balls refuse to bounce.

Crowds of onlookers fiddle-faddle.
Mental gymnasts do push-ups with their eyebrows.
Thoughts are provoked.
Dust is displaced.

Suddenly, from beneath the surface of the earth
a faint rumbling is heard.
It takes on a rhythmic regularity.
Soon the rhythm is clear.
It's the monotonous pounding of a disco beat.
All the creatures of the earth begin to dance.
"I thought disco was dead," says God.

John Randolph Carter

Boats

I once read an article about a man
Standing in a phone booth
At the bottom of a hill in San Francisco
When a boat being pulled up that hill
Broke loose from its trailer
Careened downward
Smashed into the booth
And killed him.
I would wager everything I own and could borrow
That the victim
However fretful and fatalistic he might have been
Did not wake up that morning
Worrying about getting bumped off
In a phone booth
By a boat.

Oh it is indeed a world of wonders and astonishments—
Meteor showers, migrating butterflies
Phosphorescent phytoplankton
Ice cold lakes above the tree line
Canyons where silence is visible
And that protean opportunist Sudden Death
In the shape of an ill-chewed chunk of apple in the throat
A gridlocked artery
A drunk in a Buick.
It could drive us mad
Trying to anticipate and protect ourselves from
Every possible guise in which
He could come to collect us
But I can tell you this
Whenever and wherever I am out and about
I keep my eyes open for boats.

Buff Whitman-Bradley

Bad Luck

A shop employee sweeps up
Bonjuk shards, fractured pupils
used to ward off the evil eye.
In the doorjamb the boss leans,
Arms crossed, his body split
By night and fluorescent light.
He looks at the fallen rack on the faux
Concrete cobblestones, the broken glass,
Reads the future gathering
Like Istanbul's sidewalk engineers,
Curious *flaneurs* asking themselves
How it happened—as if it matters:
Who would buy even an ice cream bar
From such an ill-fated merchant?
He might as well call it a day.

Jeffrey Kahrs

Namibian Landscape

At sand-blown dawn or swelter noon
In this relentless desert clime
What captivates: these sensuous dunes.

At sand-blown dawn or swelter noon
Burnt iron-red, grains sifted fine
To pile huge pyramids like Egypt's tombs.

They captivate, these sensuous dunes,
Bare curves of breast and hip and spine
Conjure smooth-skinned brides and grooms

Who spoon at dawn or 'neath bright moon.
On slope or slip they give no sign
Of knowing how their beauty blooms

And captivates. Such sensuous dunes
Shift slightly with the flex of time
Without affecting lovers' croons.

They span the years, July through June,
Granting texture, hue and line
By dawn, in heat, at rising moon
To captivate, these sensuous dunes.

Carol Kanter

Under Florida

I.

A river like the Styx flows under Florida,
an alternate world of rock, water
and darkness.

II.

In 1999, Lake Jackson disappeared,
drained down a single hole

into that nether world,
caves and underground streams.

III.

At twelve, my first death:
an abyss
I had never imagined
existed
so close to me.

Anyone could slip...

IV.

Sometimes the river breaks through,
spills along the surface.

Sometimes, a sudden rift:
the crust collapses...
swallows up a backyard swimming pool,
an oak tree, a three-story building.

V.

Stirrings. Rumbings.

VI.

This precarious life: A diagnosis.
Brakes shrieking. A knock at the door.

The ground gives way. The earth opens up.

Dorothy Howe Brooks

Galápagos

The Pack 'n Play with its reversible diaper changer
and mini-bassinette stares back at us from its new home
beside the TV. Even the bulging belly I've grown

more or less used to over the long months
doesn't seem to make it as real as this first piece
of equipment we've bought in anticipation

of our new sport. Instead of scuba tanks
and respirators, a playpen where the baby can sleep
in the afternoon. Though I always thought I'd choose

something more exotic like the Galápagos Islands
and those giant sea turtles, rather than this teak cabinet
full of hooded towels, onesies and tubes

of Butt Paste. I have friends who go there every year.
They've dived on almost every continent, swum
with the manatees off the coast of Florida,

the dolphins in Fiji. I never took the diving
classes, gave up on surfing. But I've learned
this: if you don't choose something,

something will come along and stake its claim
in you. The Pack 'n Play looms large
in our living room, its little orange stars dangling

over the deep blue sheet where she will lie,
our Galápagos in her Pack 'n Play, where we will gaze
down at her as we would watch from an airplane

window the archipelago coming into view, the dark
green islands rimmed in white, and on rocks
along the shoreline, the brown noddy

and blue-footed booby, the turquoise waters
rippling, their promise of exotic marine life:
red-lipped batfish, whitetip reef shark.

And the sky, powder blue with the slightest whisper
of a coming rain on the violet horizon, a delicate
lacework of clouds parting as we touch down.

Jackleen Holton Hookway

Night Industry

We wake separately, roused
by her cries. You're up first,
heating the bottle. In the kitchen, we brush
past each other without acknowledgment—
me gathering the parts for the breast pump—
last night's harsh words still hanging
over us. Yet we are together in this: the night work
of keeping this little machine running.
In the back room, hooking myself up,
I can hear her wailing, *a-nah-nah-nah*, those hunger
cries escalating as the milking machine
with its wheezy whisper starts up, mimics
the rhythm. *Parmahansa Yogananda*
never had children, you said the other day
when we were talking about being
in the present moment. When your baby is crying
for the bottle or the boob, you only want it
to be the next moment, the one
that finds her suckling, silent at last.
And when that moment comes, we each,
in our separate rooms, feel the same relief,
the quiet noise of the pump the only refrain.
Once our jobs are done, we walk past each other again
in the hallway, dazed from lack of sleep, our eyes
still not meeting. Back in our bedroom, you rock her, place
her, swaddled, in the crib, and we both look at her—
face peach-glowing from the lamplight outside
the window—in this moment I imagine
we share, a small candle held
between us in the silence.

Jackleen Holton Hookway

Rome

Newcomer, if you're seeking Rome in Rome
And missing Rome in what of Rome you see,
These ancient arches, temples of history,
Walls, and palaces bear the Roman name.

Grandeur in ruins, see what's now become
Of Rome that swayed the world, learning first
To rule itself, and then to rule the rest,
Devoured by omnivorous, ravening time.

Nothing of Rome but Rome endures forever,
And only Rome can conquer Rome at last.
Only the inexhaustible Tiber River

Remains of Rome. O world, inconstant ever!
Time guarantees that what is hard is lost.
And what persists is what has yielded most.

Joachim du Bellay
(1522 - 1560)
translated by J. Kates

Skara Brae, Orkney

Those who dwelt here knew how to angle
slatestone doors to deflect the wind.
At viewing point No. 1, you can see
a stone doorway and a stump of wall.
Follow narrow paths to other dwellings
and look for doorstops, which kept
stone doors in place, and when
you find them, stay there, turn, put your
pots and bowls in the stone cupboard,
sweep the grinding stone and the hearth,
check small stone boxes of seawater
to see if the limpets soaking are soft enough
for bait. Curl up in the stone bed and before
you sleep you hear the sea retreat or approach
over the crescent beach and you dream
the purple heather sends down roots
between stones scattered in the midden
along with nettles, thistles, hogweed.
You kneel there, in the lee of flagstones
stacked and tucked into earth. See how
from the seed of this hearth dwellings
grow like petals that become stone
flowers in this windswept place.

Listen to the wind. *I come
from the north. Soon I bring cold rain.*
Know that just before dawn, the hills of Hoy
appear through the fog. Listen to the cries
of the great auks and the gannets.
You listen to the silence:
treeless pasture, heather, wild fields,
grey and white clouds like tufts of lambswool
carded by the wind. You watch small boats
return, fish-laden, barnacle-heavy.
You have small tools of flint and bone and no
weapons. You live and die as cod and barley do.
Nothing is written on the stones.

Every year the sun sets into the longest night,
and the heart of Maes Howe mound fills
with light. The sun says: *Grow your villages
like flowers, and catch me in your sacred tomb.*
No need for them to write. Five thousand
years later we send out written words
like cautious roots. We hope for connection,
even when we are mute, or dead. The lines
of this poem, on this page, make a ladder
descending through inarticulate spaces
of great things we no longer know.

Rosalind Pace

SCOTLAND

Edited by

Ilyse Kusnetz

Introduction

When I heard, in late 2015, that the Isle of Bute in Scotland had agreed to take in 15 Syrian refugee families, I wasn't surprised in the least. I remember thinking how my own time in Scotland had felt very much like being taken into a welcoming culture that, while by no means perfect, opened its arms and its literature to me with a singular generosity. When I moved to Scotland in October of 1992 to begin my Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh, I had no idea of the rich tapestry of Scottish poetry I'd encounter during my eight years living in country.

The writers in residence at the university I met included Andrew Greig, Ron Butlin, Alan Spence, and Valerie Gillies. In addition to sharing their work, they took time to encourage and read deeply the work of the students they encountered. When Andrew Greig read and commented on my very first poetry manuscript, it was also the first time anyone had ever engaged with my work in a large-scale way. It felt good to be taken seriously as a writer.

I met Don Paterson in 1994 when he came to the university as a visiting reader, not long after his first book *Nil Nil* was published to great acclaim. It would be the first of many books to win him honors, and it was easy to see, even then, that his work would blossom into greatness.

It was through the University of Edinburgh that I encountered Kathleen Jamie and John Burnside, frequent and favorite visiting readers. Years later, as I reported on the events at the Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF) for *The Scotsman*, I remember Kathleen's declaration one evening over dinner that she intended to become a nature poet. She has since become, to my mind, one of the finest poets writing in that vein today.

Another visiting reader was Jackie Kay, who dazzled all of us with her vivaciousness and her boisterous laugh—both she and her work exuded a sense of vitality and genuineness.

Back in 1995, W.N. Herbert and I shared the stage at Shore Poets, a monthly poetry reading that traditionally paired a published poet with a younger poet (I formed the latter portion of that equation). Herbert has since published a cornucopia of amazing books—both his own poetry

and books of poems he has co-translated. And I remember seeing Tom Pow read for the first time at Shore Poets. Here was a strong voice, an adamant voice, a voice that would last.

Andrew Philip was an undergraduate at Edinburgh while I worked on my Ph.D. He has since garnered accolades for his two collections of poetry.

Other poets represented here I know only in passing or by reputation. Some I met years later, after I no longer lived in Scotland. Although I had long been an admirer and a reviewer of Carol Ann Duffy's work, I didn't actually get to see her read until 2010. It's an electric experience—one I'll always treasure.

John Glenday's work is a touchstone for me. I admire his spare lyricism, his exacting, heart-wrenching imagery. Tracey Herd, always a huge talent, has become a poet of spectacular dimension.

Compiling this collection, I had the pleasure of getting to know better the innovative work of Alison Fell, Angus Peter Campbell, David Kinloch, and Richard Price. Also work that focused on the subtle minutiae of home and family such as that of Gerda Stevenson and Liz Niven.

I had a chance to admire Rody Gorman's linguistically antic prose poems, pushing themselves to breathtaking limits. To spend time with Christopher Whyte's sustained, epic verse. To apprehend a mythological sense of Scotland anchored below its everyday topography in Robin Robertson's work. To enjoy English translations from the Scottish Gaelic of poets like Whyte, Campbell, and Aonghas MacNeacail.

And I found myself returning to the poetry of more established voices woven deep into the fabric of the culture—Glasgow through Stuart Conn's eyes, Shetland island through Christine DeLuca's.

The raw energy of Marion McCready's work drew me to her poems, as well as the scope and ambition of Gillian Ferguson's work. The tender images and observations in James McGonigal's work created a silence almost like a force field, in which one might hear the connections of the world unfolding.

The work I've gathered here is meant to be a rich sampler of the great and inspirational variety of voices in Scottish poetry. I have not gathered all the voices I wished, so know only that there are other prodigious voices waiting for you. It is my hope that this collection piques your interest enough to explore further.

Within these voices you'll find a sense of place and landscape connected to each poet, an environmental consciousness, a yearning for justice, and an exploration of grief and loss.

There's a playfulness, too, to many of these poems. It's not like the Scottish character to buckle under a weight of seriousness—instead, the poetry exudes a sense of irreverent irony, challenging what might otherwise pin us beneath a great existential weight.

I also hope that you will find comfort in many of these beautiful pieces. My favorites among them are perhaps those whose images are taken from the natural world rather than the urban. I confess that, although I lived in Edinburgh most of my time in Scotland, and that the cityscapes gave me great pleasure, it is Scotland outside its cities that I will most remember. The smaller towns and villages, the vibrant lochs and forests. And, of course, I will treasure the friendships I forged with fellow writers and artists even as I gathered poems for this issue of the *Atlanta Review*.

In Scotland, you could come from somewhere else, and by virtue of writing the land, living within the land, you could become a bit Scottish. For eight years I did, and then I returned to America. But part of me will always be Scottish – I will be a practicing cultural refugee, and this will be, in part, the territory of my heart. I hope you will also find yourself in it.

Ilyse Kusnetz
December 2015

At Tempelhof¹

To live well, says the master,
Tsunetomo

—and here, I paraphrase—

to live, one must account oneself
already dead.

As I do now, the field larks
rising above this disused

airstrip at Tempelhof; a half-dozen whinchats
calling across a meadow of *Arrhenatherum*

elatus, (in German, *Glatthafer*; or, on occasion,
Französisches Raygras; in English

false-, or tall-, or even tuber-oat)
calling through grass blades and dust and this morning's heat,

like children playing catch-kiss
in a maze.

Forgive me, but I can't go out into this
stone-dry meadowland, so flat, so stark,

the worn blue of the sky
like something from an old Nativity, (the Magi's gift

of myrrh foreshadowing
the Passion; thin

horizon scarcely baffled with a hint
of lapis, in the *cinquecento* style),

¹ BERLIN RESIDENTS BLOCK TEMPELHOF AIRPORT PLANS:
Berlin residents voted in a referendum on Sunday, with the results overturning the city government's plans to use almost a third of the site to build 4,700 homes. The referendum was the culmination of a campaign by local residents, and almost half of Berlin's 2.5 million eligible voters turned out to cast their ballot. Over 64% voted in favor of keeping the land as a public park. (*Dezeen Magazine*, 27th May 2014)

without recalling what the masters knew:
And if, by setting his heart right, morning and evening,

he lives as though his body were already dead,
the Samurai gains freedom in the Way—

or words to that effect, in various
traditions.

It's all so still, it seems inanimate,
even to fly is to hover, the lark at its zenith,

the kestrel hanging softly in a whirl
of tinder, hanging long before it drops,

then rises, something passive in its grasp,
surrendered already, as if it had willed its own end.

I'm used to estuary, to mudflats, to the back and forth
of curlew and godwit, to shifts the eye can trace

and measure; I'm accustomed to
the pull of the moon in the tide like the pull in my blood

and the shore dweller's long-haul stare that waits
for nothing.

But if I told you this, it would only
bewilder you; you've always loved it so,

(like anything fought for, and won,
at least for the moment)

turning your back on the kite-surfers, girls
on skateboards, the man

in his string vest and wizened shorts
crossing the runway, a radio-controlled

Sturmpanzerwagen rolling along in his wake, as he tries
to strike up a conversation—

turning your back

on everything, to read what you think of now
as scripture: the meadow in full

—oat grass and kestrel,
pipit and red-backed shrike—

the meadow in full, no litany of facts,
but absolute, a door through which you pass

forever,

no before

or after.

Only now.

John Burnside

Twenty Questions

We fell asleep and left the windows
open to the night,

the sheets kicked off
in heaps, our bodies

dark and mineral

and nearly
foreign to the touch,

another life
unfolding from each pinprick
on the skin;

though later,
when it rained,
I thought of trees

that might have stood for days
in heat and dust,

all of a sudden drenched, a sticky
sweetness pouring down

through canopy,
the pattern in each leaf

revealed as vein, or snakeskin,
intricate

and hungry to be answered,
like a tongue.

John Burnside

Marginal Jottings on Plato's *Symposium*

I

That soul is incomplete, the flesh
forever pilgrim: this
we cannot doubt;

 that blood is native
to the coldest rain, a dimmed
immensity of bruise and appetite
we guessed before we knew: fabric of brine
and toxin, fabric
of murmur;

but close your eyes and nothing comes by chance,
not darkness, or the miles of scrub and dust
where something darker than the usual skin
feeds on its own spoilt heart and calls it sweet
to draw his true companions from their den:
Erkönig, Slenderman, Dust Devil, Spring-Heeled Jack.

II

When I think how I might have strayed into the hills
or wandered upstream to the black of a stranger's attic,

I wonder why this one room of the heart
holds nothing but a wash of fog and pines,

a psalm from long ago, the sound of rain
from somewhere in the house where no one listens.

Drift was the only rule I understood
back then, when I imagined I would find

the perfect shadow, like a second skin
or something feathered, so close to my own

unknowing, I could stitch myself inside
and feel the knit of tissue, blood

as slipstream, while those phantoms in the woods
hallo-ed me back to a fire at the city limits

where nothing ever ended—cat's-tails, snow,
the rainjacket filling with river, *ad infinitum*.

John Burnside

Darien Disaster II

The Darien Scheme of 1698 was Scotland's attempt at creating an international trading company to rival those of the English and Dutch. Speculation gripped the country, many rich and poor invested all their savings. They lost everything. Of the original 1,200 men and women who colonized the Isthmus of Darien, only a few survived. Had they been able to Google "Panama" before setting out, much misery might have been averted. Perhaps.

Real-time seems to pass too slowly?
Then defragment it.

If that doesn't work—

RUN a virus check.
QUARANTINE the Scottish gods who've hacked
into the system.

If that doesn't work—

- GOOGLE "Financial Speculation:
The Darien Scheme / Disaster, 1698"
- Print off each sorry A4 sheet
- Origami a fleet of paper boats
- Add 1,200 human lives for ballast
- Float the doomed armada 300+ years into the past

UPLOAD the slurried, fever-ridden Panama swamps,
the gorged mosquitoes, the rats,
the snakes, the total lack of
anyone to trade with.
Most of all, the endless
tropical rain rain
rain and more rain.

UPLOAD the weight of Scottish gold
and silver coin (half the country's
hoarded wealth) stacked
and strongboxed on the nation's desktop
as on a green-baize gaming-table....

If that doesn't work—

SWITCH OFF at the mains and wait for 30 seconds.

REBOOT

Go to VIRUS VAULT
SELECT 'Scottish gods' and 'Unforgiveness'
Right-click both
DELETE

Meanwhile, Scottish history will have timed out.

REFRESH?

(Warning—Real-time does NOT repeat!)

Ron Butlin

Life's Work

If I could bring my father
back to life
I'd ask him
to build me a house

for he was the finest joiner
in the whole world,
his wood-work
like Donatello
and his stone-work
like Michelangelo himself

and once
he'd built the house for me,
with stone walls
and oak roof-beams
and the large double window just there
with a view over the Sound of Barra

I'd ask him to sit by the stove
and begin at the beginning
and tell me
how to live.

Aonghas Phadraig Caimbeul
(Angus-Peter Campbell)

Charmed Lives

That pair of collared doves canoodling on the patio
and cooing on my window-ledge, how would they take
to being garotted and trussed, then turned on a spit?

Not that I could bring myself to do it, given the demise
of their cousin the passenger pigeon whose flocks
in their millions once blotted out the sun from Florida

to Ontario, till forests felled for timber and firewood
and predatory raptors aside, the fad for pigeon pie
sweeping eating-houses across the States saw them

salted and transported daily by rail; then finally
blasted out of the sky, in pigeon shoots back east.
All furthers the cause of today's domestic intruders:

despite their constant call-notes and mess I've no
desire to see them follow the Carolina parakeet
and Eskimo curlew into extinction, far less share

the fate of the last great auk, a fierce storm
raging in the wake of its capture on St Kilda,
the frenzied islanders clubbing it to death as a witch.

Stewart Conn

Milky Way

Not being breast-fed I'd no chance
to savor its comforting next-best
to a return to the womb, my earliest
milky association a wobbly kitten
lapping at a cracked saucer; later,
undrained bottles gone rancid
beside the heater in primary school;
and on the farm, that rhythmic
spurt from teat to pail, the heifers
hand-milked, the churns taken
at dawn by tractor to the creamery,
each rolled dexterously on its rim
then, emptied into the frothing vat,
sent clanging against the others,
the hollow ring still striking a note
of forlornness and loss as, for some,
the eerie *whooo-whooo* of a freight
train crossing the prairie at night,
or a misty foghorn's melancholy moan.

Stewart Conn

Ever decreasing circles

for Arne and Anne Ruste

The old dog knows the way: leads us
along narrow paths through forest, over
ice-scratched granite; brushes against
wild rose, berry and heather; checks
who's been here before her; snuffles
underfoot at pine cones, needles;
smells all her little pleasures.
Everything about her breathes
what it means to belong.
She waits for Arne to lift her
when the way gets steep. He has
a biscuit in his pocket to tell her what
he wants to say: so many words,
a dog's lifespan. He remembers when
she came as a pup, trusting him;
how he made his bed beside her
for a whole week, till she settled.

Today, she manages the morning path;
tomorrow, maybe a brief walk out about;
next summer likely just the garden.
She knows she's not the dog she was.

We talk on and on about the past; it's as clear
as the view across the fjord. I'm remembering
a final outing with my mother. We went
to Dale. She had been saying for some time
if I can just get outside for the briefest moment.

Christine De Luca

Pathway

I saw my father walking in my garden
and where he walked,
the garden lengthened

to a changing mile
which held all seasons of the year.
He did not see me, staring from my window,
a child's star face, hurt light from stricken time,
and he had treaded spring and summer
grasses before I thought to stir, follow him.

Autumn's cathedral, open to the weather, rose
high above, flawed amber, gorgeous ruin; his shadow
stretched before me, *cappa magna*,
my own, obedient, trailed like a nun.
He did not turn. I heard the rosaries of birds.
The trees, huge doors, swung open and I knelt.

He stepped into a silver room of cold;
a narrow bed of ice stood glittering,
and though my father wept, he could not leave,
but had to strip, then shiver in his shroud,

till winter palmed his eyes for frozen bulbs,
or sliced his tongue, a silencing of worms.

The moon a simple headstone without words.

Carol Ann Duffy

Hunters in the Snow

The depiction of snow in art
depends on shelter.
Brueghel was the first
to take winter to his heart—

seen from the sanctuary
of his window,
bonfires are a red mercy
against the ice-crusts snowdrifts
and the plaguey green of the sky

Those Alps on the horizon
(a mere grotesque) hark back
to the days when winter
had a dozen white ways to kill you—

frostbite, starvation, the slow fade
of hypothermia—a prehistory
of dread, heightening
the anticipation of roast meat,
a full woodshed

When night climbs down
those stark hunters on the hill
have homes to go to

Those skaters on the frozen pond
will probably survive till spring

Alison Fell

Moon Slips Her Skin

The feverish summer Moon
has slipped her luminous silver skin
to bathe—

there it rocks on the black water.
A gleaming film.

Now her glistening hot stars dive
to dance on frothing glass horses—
like incandescent lilies.

Some moons and stars never return,
drowned by dawn—

washed up on the blue shore
as flatfish, starfish, jellyfish.

With a last luminosity.

Gillian Ferguson

The Writing Lark

A flock of yellowhammers in the hedgerow:
one yella yite undulates in flight

to its nest of moss in a tuft of coarse grass.
Three eggs, a purplish clutch: fine lines are blotched,

streaked with brown, boldly scribbled down.
The writing lark has made these marks,

a cryptic watchword inscribed by the bird,
whose message begs, *Dinna tak ma eggs!*

Valerie Gillies

A Pint of Light

When I overheard my father say
it was his favorite drink, I closed my eyes
and imagined his body filled with a helpless light.

Years later, I watched him pour out
the disappointing truth, but still couldn't let
that image go: he's trailing home from the pub

singing against the dark, and each step
he steps, each breath he breathes, each note he sings
turns somehow into light and light and light.

John Glenday

The Constellations

The trick is always to appear fixed,
whatever happens. To hold the pattern

we were born to, though its significance
may be lost to us. Here is where we make

our stand; our love will be defined not by
attitude or by embrace but by the distances

mapped out between us. We'll light
everything that needs our light, steadfast

as the stars we fell from, trusting
in them through disaster and catastrophe,

though we know in our hearts
they are burning in their traces, like us all.

John Glenday

The Modern Prometheus

How terribly I miss it—family and everything.
Father in that lab coat fathers wear;
always too close, always too distant,
always too keen. You may have heard—

my mother was the product of unmentionable
absences and storms; my siblings
a tick-list of slack, discarded failures.
We are all born adult and unwise.

Don't judge me too harshly.
Which of us was not coddled into life
by love's uncertain weathers? Are we not
all stitched together and scarred?

Step forward anyone who can swear
they are not a thing of parts.

John Glenday

Adhan

I misshearfeelsense the censurvowelvoice-sound of Ronan
Finn's pacifying blisterclockbell being wrought rung far off in
Magheralin and headend along with that a land-desiresongair like a
muezzin warnannouncing and calling out to the rarejust from early
canonicalhourmealtime to separationevening. And imitatereciting
in outcropresponse and dawnroostnestlaircall accordingly, late-
slowly, as a cragcryecho, with one antlerpeak-cliffedgesweet voice,
a band of his own familycommunity across the sea in the Outer Hebrides.

Rody Gorman

Wrenchwringwinding

Although I can't get any delaysleep and I've no relationfriends or
music, I see in my nightmareAislingvision-poemdream the super-
naturalnunwife on the calmgentlesweet musicstrings of the croft-
lassiehunchbackcymbalharp *fail iù fail eò hi ù ho rò* like she was
wrenchwringwinding a silk-thread out of the chrysaliscocoon of a
silkworm tidefull of mulberry leaves in a *davochvat hi rì hò ro bho*
o hug ò in her shift into a shroud like I wastewore warpclose to my
skin that day in the chipped white-faced battlefieldflatmoor.

Rody Gorman

Fib

A perfect ordinary seventeen year old girl
leaning in for a kiss on a blustery night,

couried down at the Billowness,
was Venus on a half-shell.

The lager and lime on her lips had been
swigged in Attica,

her hair smelled of green tamarind
half-translated the night before,

by candle-light, from Baudelaire.
Laughable? We knew that.

It's daft we were, not stupid.

But having spent a lifetime since
stripping away delusion and myth

till all that remains is
a papier-mâché mask and dirty hands,

it is time to return to the kingdom of Fib,
the golden fringe on a beggar's mantle.

Next time the gods arise as you kiss,
laugh and salute them in human eyes.

Andrew Greig

The Losers' Table

It had already been raining and was promising more
like the raised pad of an elephant's foot
when we came out from the lacquered teak chest interior
of Adishakti's mud-brick theatre like wrong notes;

it was already dark and the pineapple-large lamps
were lit above the two round tables where we sat outside
between translations and after rehearsal—one the good table
for chai and morning papers if you've done your yoga;

the other for losers, stacking bottles and glasses and lighters
Babel-high on late-night malt, gin and nimboo
and the remains of rum, as though some buried lodestone drew
the worse half of us toward midnight's court

to hear our sentence from our own drowned mouths—
the between-rain air like a long gulp of breath
had pulled with it hundreds of forefinger-length, soft-winged bugs,
cotton come to life, ash aloft: they gathered in white night flakes

about the dizzy lightbulbs dangling across the yard, as though
peeled away from the kernels of those incandescent globes:
all swarm, unstill, not focusable upon until
each white-hot needle body, caught up in its solo swirl,

seemed nothing but flight, less definite than its own shadow
on our skin as we moved among them, not listening to us
but caught up in the rhetoric of light, colliding with, unsettling on
our arms, the up-reach of our palms, in our hair and on our faces,

gathering and shredding haloes and wings about us like all
our scribbles turned inside out, all punctuation shaken loose—no bail
just a jailbreak of the dozen languages we'd ganged together,
imagoes of all the shibboleths we'd had to let go of

to sit down here, to drink together and to be at one.

W.N. Herbert

Sang (After a Hungarian Folksong)

for George Szirtes

A totie wee birdie fae yestreen's meh guest
In meh gairden she's biggit her wee nest
But meh doldrums ur sae deep, they blot oot hauf thi sun,
Sae she's stoappt hir biggin wi hur nest hauf-done.

Canty wee cantor, cairrier o meh dool,
Blether on sae blithely, till Eh'm schoold
Laive ma hert tae strachil in the middie mirk o nicht
Sing about yir pleisure, an bring ma sowel tae licht.

W.N. Herbert

Totie wee—especially small; *yestreen*—yesterday evening;
biggit—built; *dool*—misery; *blether*—speak rapidly;
strachil—struggle; *mirk o nicht*—dark of night.

The Afternoon Shift are Leaving the Port Talbot Steelworks

The men are leaving the Port Talbot Steelworks
As the day is sharpening its edge on a bright sky.
They stream through the last ever light in the world:
Their tread, heavy and tired, but their heads unbowed
As they set their soft caps at the afternoon. Their
Faces are blurred because they are just a little too far
From where the man with the camera stands.
A few steps forward would have sharpened the focus
But it is better to be uncertain. They are merely
A group of anonymous men. No one is marked.
It will always be afternoon and a brilliant one
Where grubby sleeves are rolled to the elbows
To catch the sun and where the men walk forward
Towards the children, the unborn and the never
To be born. Somewhere, the photographer
Has caught the shadow of a shadow.

A copper penny bearing the King's silhouette
Is found by a little boy under the kerb where
It rolled after wobbling like an old bicycle
Over the stones. A copper penny for every
Last thought. Steel reflects the sun all over
Europe and the Pacific. The machines don't stop,
Night or day, although one by one, the
Anonymous men are slipping away.

Tracey Herd

Joan Fontaine and Rebecca

You were never given a name of your own. The dead had a name,
Rebecca, and the sad lunatic down at the shack by the shore.
Even that damned house had a name: Manderley,
When you broke the porcelain figurine, I thought it was a portent
Of things to come. I thought your fragile mind would shatter.
You were always huddled against the world, all nervous, flitting gestures.
Handing out the scripts, Hitchcock casually let slip that the cast and crew
Hated you. Olivier had no time for you. He wanted his Scarlett,
black-haired
With eyes the color of a dangerous green sea. He wanted to drown.
Her dark hair blowing in the wind.... Who was Danvers really
taunting you with?
You walked into the West Wing with its view of the sea. Danvers
followed silently
To present Rebecca's wardrobe of fine, expensive things, lingerie
she held onto a little too long, a
monogrammed pillow slip, the nightgown by the immaculately
turned-down bed as if each dawn
Rebecca would return from the tour of her domain and slip silently
into her gown. *Have you ever*
seen anything so delicate? Clumsily you turned and ran from the room
but you returned.
In Rebecca's cursed final masquerade costume, you leaned out into
the misty night,
Mrs Danvers perched like an angel of death at your china white,
flawless shoulder
Whispering as if from far far away, out at sea, luring the tiny
vessel onto the rocks.
Rebecca echoes her entreaties from the ocean floor, coughing up
rocks and shells.
She is possessed by Rebecca, her memory sailing at the edge of reason.
Would you
Have jumped had the warning flares not shot up? I like to think not.
You were
The only one of them with any sense. *She can't speak. She can't*
bear witness.