

LUNCH



004

Welcome to our fourth edition of LUNCH.

Suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

LUNCH 004

Welcome to the fourth edition of Lunch. Our magazine is full of the poetry created by poets who are friends of Poetry Kit Courses.

This edition edited by Jim Bennett

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DOMINIC BOND

Spring in parts

I

Blossom-filled mornings of spring
follow the daffodils we lived on
in March.

Death pulls back, plants
shoot out in fields,
glimpses of a new harvest.

II

3 boys chase pigeons on scooters
fit for a king,
fuelled by the life
that grows around them.

Their mothers signal
through hand gestures,
speak out on what is true,

*sex
belonging
bondage*
something like that.

III

At sunset birds settle
in handsome trees
renewed of their strength.

There is lamb on the table
drained of its blood
a safe distance from here.

Moonlight hints at tomorrow,
renews our language,
allows for different faiths.

DOMINIC BOND

On Cheam's hills

An unknown stranger walks past
houses he drew as a child,
houses that give space
to hoard a harvest,

where lightbulbs pierce
night's hulking mass,
warm rugs assuring tired feet
it's all been worth it,

houses guarded by trees whose
arms insist on a boundary round
comforts like deep leather sofas
and double-chested fridges,

off-white walls pristine
like a dolls house where
nothing is touched
in case it is crushed,

houses that defy nature,
heat keeping out the seasons,
flowers resplendent
through convex windows,

too bright for his eyes, his face
unremarkable, his body
demure in the dark,
an ill-fitting alien.

DOMINIC BOND

Morning in somewhere you don't know

Dawn. Honeysuckle can't stand in the frost
that seeped through the gate.

What remains hangs on
to cobwebs taut in raw air.

Windows' sad eyes
watch fields waiting for life,

that whisper once ready for harvest.
I walk through trees which stand guard

with or without us, knowing what's here
is true.

After the credit card bill, an exchange

about what he wants
and what she needs
bouncing off wooden panels
that have heard it
before,

she yells
your just like the others
and just like the others
he smashes his hand
close to hers,

breaking a glass
each time he is here,
proving beyond doubt
he is a man
and can't be much more.

LESLEY BURT

Early morning walk in a plague year

The river stands, smooth for a while
before it ripples into its ebb tide.

Above it terns squeal, dive, squabble,
chase to steal one another's fish.

Still water reflects moorings:
dinghies, fishing boats, empty buoys

and faces peering as if looking for
something in its depths –

three cormorants fly in formation
pointing towards home. I follow.

(Poetry Kit, April 2020)

LESLEY BURT

calluna vulgaris

August heathland
swept with shadow
and purple shades named
for flowers
lilac lavender heather

silver-studded blues flicker
over clumps
of flower-bells
pause on mauve haze
close wings quiver

bees fuss in and out
of hummocks
hum communal noise
over faint scents
halt harvest move on

a flower name for a girl
like Rose Rose West
Fred & Rose chose
this flower name for
their daughter Heather.

(SLQ Oct 2020)

LESLEY BURT

The Green Man's mischief

Dreams often show deep forests, silent, dark,
where trees cling fast to earth while overhead
tall branches reach as if to write their mark
on skies above the shadows that they shed.

Their depths may shelter terrifying things:
witches, goblins, the Snow Queen's icy kiss
a blast of flame fanned by dragons' wings
demons let loose from Lucifer's abyss.

Jack Green knows the kindness of the forest,
its offerings of nourishment and shelter,
how humans seek its kindling, fruit and rest
although his undergrowth may trip them over.

And he knows this: there is no heaven or hell,
only such stories people choose to tell.

(Wildfire Words, 2020)

LESLEY BURT

the blues were born before Lady Day died

(after Maciej Cieśl'sa " City, night and music ")

nothing's
monochrome

about their jazz

while the
clarinettist

breathes passion

into the
liquorice stick

and the vocalist

rests her
chords leans

on his shoulder

thoughtful
while the band

thrumms quiet rhythm

under riffs
that vibrate

colour through

a moment
shared

because the Blues

had heart
long before

that day

(Tears in the Fence 72, 2020)

LESLEY BURT

Goodbye Good-Time George

You'd have forgotten that night long before the dementia – just another gig and the White Buck pretty tame for you, so urbane, talking surrealism with Maggie (René or Hambling) and so flamboyant in zoot suit and fedora, singing dirty at Ronnie Scott's etcetera, flaunting 'bi' decades before Bowie. But even in the New Forest they knew you liked a glass of port so lined them up on Grieg's piano while you boogied around Chilton's trumpet and we sat near you – almost as if we were at a city cabaret but for the rustic knotty tables. We laughed as you breathed innuendo into songs of passion and peanut-sellers, sighed as you emptied umpteen glasses and sang Bessie's blues. Years later your obits brim with affection but none mention this small event that I recall so well because the bloke I was with enthused me about you (and so much more) then fucked off – or as you might have said, parked his canary in a different cage. You were terrific, by the way.

(SLQ July 2021)

CLAIR CHILVERS

Blue Nile

I

The Blue Nile grey, murky, hiding many secrets
on its journey to Khartoum.

Today is Friday, bright red buoys are set
to mark the course for the afternoon yacht race.

The boats metal, to withstand the microbes
that flourish in the slow-flowing stream.
We tack adroitly, find the gaps in the high banks
where the wind gusts and the boat leaps forward,
avoiding others by a whisper.

I am happy, high on adrenaline.
I lean over the bow to pick up the anchor buoy
take off my life jacket, jump into the tender
that takes me to tea at the Yacht Club.

Earl Grey from a silver teapot
cucumber sandwiches, served by a waiter
in starched white jacket and red fez
in Kitchener's Gunboat.

II

Late evening on the river bank
a table laden with food for a party
a Nile perch the centrepiece.

The men some in suits, some in jalabiyas
and loosely wound turbans
women in evening dresses
covered by brightly coloured thawbs.

The men gather at one end of the table
smoking, drinking whisky
the women at the other end, flaunt their jewels

The men invite me to join them – English the language of business –
the women appraise my gown, whisper behind their hands.
The river flows on, reflects the flaming torches.

In the small hours we return to the hotel
disturb the houseboys asleep
on divans in the lobby.

CLAIR CHILVERS

Keeping Time

Lost in thought as the train races on
I barely notice the changing landscape
the colour of the corn the greens of the trees
or the expanse of a prairie
with a solitary walker crossing the dusty landscape
apparently going nowhere as there is nowhere to go
as I speed with purpose to a destination
that would be many days march.

Or a journey taken so often
there is nothing new to see,
time punctuated by the flash of telegraph poles
until brought up short by the train stopping
in the middle of nowhere
at a place of no interest on the outskirts of some town
dusty back gardens with the detritus of urban living shoved outside
while others have a swing or seesaw,
a swinging chair with tattered canopy and cushions
stained by rain faded by sun.

CLAIR CHILVERS

Mother and Child

inspired by an Inuit stone carving

I The Mother

New snow had fallen overnight in Toronto.

I find my way downtown
to an area of artisan shops just opening
the new snow still on the sidewalks
windows almost impenetrable with steam.
An old Inuit man sweeps the doorstep
beckons to me to enter.
The heat hits me, clouds my spectacles

and there, among the polished soapstone seals
sad-faced with downturned eyes and whiskers,
I spot a mother and child
carved roughly from a heavy cube of dull grey stone.
The child, carried on the mother's back,
his arms around her neck, looks sideways, alert.
The mother's face intent, but kindly.
Mother and child wrapped up against the cold of the Arctic winter.
Her hands in their *pualuuk*¹ clasped, to keep them warm.
She will go home to an igloo built from ice slabs,
melt snow for water, prepare a meal for her child.
Her man may return from hunting, fishing
bring provisions for the weeks to come.
I feel the hardship, the sorrows, her joy of the child.

I buy the piece, to be delivered to my hotel
walk back through an underground central-heated mall
of smart department stores and restaurants
to pack my bags and feel the draw of home.

Cont...

¹ mittens

CLAIR CHILVERS

Cont...

II Mother and Child

Carved from a cube of stone
straight lines, triangles,
geometric figures
one side fish scales
the back like a tiered dress
from the top the two round joined circles
the heads of the mother and her child
it is not signed even with a mark.

III The Sculpture

*Why are you doing that? She asks
It is ugly, rough hewn.
Why aren't you doing another seal? Maybe a large expensive one.
They sell so well.*

*Because, Aakuluk², I have carved seals all my life
taught by my father, exactly as he did them.
I wanted to do something from my heart –
a sculpture of you and our child.*

IV The Child

You are getting too heavy, child,
for me to carry you.
I am exhausted with the work, the loneliness, the cold
and you turn aside from me
as if you seek something else
something away from me, from our life.

When you are grown
will you reject our ways
go to the city to seek work
maybe sweep the steps of a shop every morning
the only work that you can get?

² my dear Cont...

Cont...

CLAIR CHILVERS

Cont...

You will not learn your father's skills
as a stone-carver, as a fisherman.
You will not spend the winter
as we do in the igloo
or the summer working with the stone
to turn out seals for the tourists
once in a while create something for yourself
something from your heart.

V The Grey Stone

One day I will paint the stone
transform it from matt dark grey
to scarlet and white and yellow
a pattern of black and ochre diamonds
round the hem of the mother's dress
the child carried in a bright red scarf
tied across her chest
I will sign it with a flourish
with my mark
imagine that
in the Toronto shop
among the grey polished soapstone seals.

Part of this poem first published in *Live Encounters* (October 2021)

A C CLARKE

End Times

The universe is forever
dashing away, shifting to long-wave,
heading into the red, the faster, the further.
In the impossible span of infinite time stars will
run out of gas. Any attendant planets will long have died
if they were ever alive. If anyone were left on the rock which once
was Earth their sun-dead sky would be stripped of all the constellations
human imagination draws in the stars. One by one lights will go out, galaxies dive
into black holes. Black holes will shrink and wobble until they go off bang in a gamma ray
burst.
The Big Freeze is coming. And here I sit sending coded signals to my computer which
translate
to a sign system that one particular section of humanity agrees to give meaning, shaping
an object without depth or mass which one particular culture has agreed
to call a poem, hoping for the approval of fellow-bipeds, which
can seem like the most important matter my hominid
emotion-processor could occupy itself with,
even though microbes are multiplying like
baby suns in a nebula, even though
it will all end in silence.

Shortlisted for the 2021 Plough Prize but not published. Written as part of the Poetry and Science course 2020

A C CLARKE

CAU Ingram Street*

The clocks stopped a twelve-month ago
with every table fully set: white napery,
cutlery polished to gleam

menus in their holders declaring
the latest menu, the last.
I try to people it with past diners,

waiters in penguin suits performing
miracles of balance with loaded trays,
the hum of conversation over the loop

of salsa music, the blood and charcoal smell
of chargrilled steaks, the soft plop of wine
into oversize glasses. It just glowers there,

like a tomb set with offerings for the dead.
Not one stray punter struck asleep
still warm and breathing. In the basement,

saucepans doze in their gleaming racks,
no-one to spring to life in the kitchens
at the break of a spell. For there's no prince

to set the paused world once again in motion.
We're in a different story altogether:
the Cau was sold off for a handful
of disenchanted beans.

*Not previously published. Written for the Poetry Kit Strategies for Writing Poetry Course
2021*

A C CLARKE

Grave gifts

Mother you gave me a name.
I had come into the world
and the world needs names.

Mother you bring me toys.
I would have been a child
and a child needs toys.

But mother when I came,
my small fists curled
against closed eyes, I came

sleeping. No noise
would wake me.
I lay still, no noise

it was your crying
broke the silence,
your hopeless crying.

Mother, you thought you held me
but I never lay
safe in your arms. The shell of me

lay there. Nothing
could make a difference.
And I need nothing.

These gifts you bring can be
for you alone. The day you stop
mother, dear mother,
your grief will let you be.

Longlisted for the Lord Whisky Sanctuary competition but not published

PETER EMERY

Ashes to Ashes

Of all the things in that museum
the one that got to me the most
was just a pair of worker's pants
on a hanger with a scribbled note.

The pants are soiled and dusty,
as volunteer worker Gully knew
full well when he hung them up -
his personal memorial to loss.

The note pinned on by Gully reads:
Pants worn on 9-11-01 at the WTC.
Please Do Not Wash as this ash is
REMAINS OF THOSE WHO DIED.

(marking 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on WTC.)

PETER EMERY

Biscuit

The colour of a gingernut, and made of sugar and spice,
my dainty girl is mistress of so many ways to please me:
the exuberant excitement when she greets me at the door,
her leaning in to get a fuss, snuggle-ups, the soulful eyes.
It's accepting she's a Lurcher that I'm finding very hard:
I can't see her as a poacher's hound bred to be a hunter.
If I'm honest, I don't want to. Perhaps that's no surprise,
perception's complicated by involvement of the heart.

But I checked in with reality on that day with the heron.
It was no doubt collie ancestry that put in mind the outrun
so she'd end up behind him where she would not be seen.
And I looked on in horror as she proved she was a felon:
a pause the pounce to bring him down finally, the kill.
Biscuit is a Lurcher. I try to forget it but she never will.

(first published in Reach 270 in March 2021)

PETER EMERY

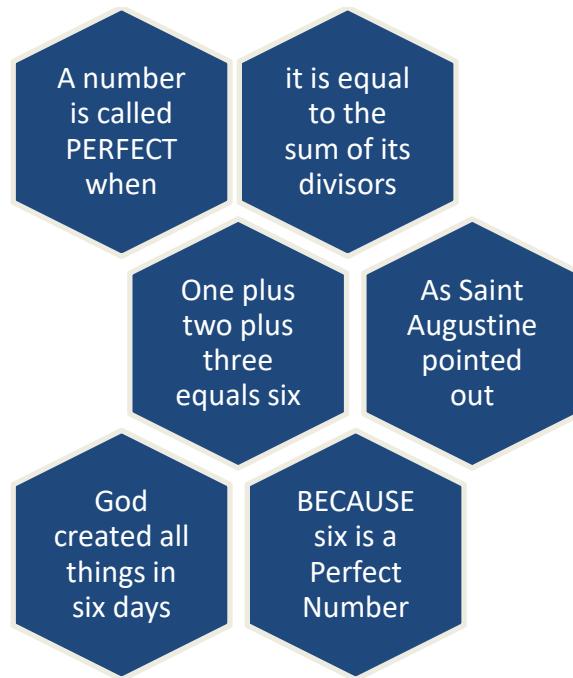
Fever

I've not told you recently how much I adore you
do not mistake me.
Always taken us for granted but now I feel less sure
doubts overtake me

Despite this toxic fever, I just pray you love a fighter
trying hard to get himself to a meeting every Monday.
If I falter, take me.

I am Peter I'm a gambler facing up to my addiction.
I'm taking steps I need support cannot do this alone.
Please, don't make me.

PETER EMERY



PETER EMERY

Fatherly Advice

You say you plan to take this job. But wait.
I understand it's great for your career -
but what about the kids, and lovely Kate?
Would they see you uprooting them as fair?

Kate loves her job. Your kids all have exams.
They seem well settled just the way they are.
Expecting them to follow you like lambs
may upset more than you have bargained for.

When you were younger, I made that mistake -
my first concern back then was my career.
It bred some just resentment, and that snake
has poisoned our relationship for years.

So, sit down *en famille* and talk this through,
then make the choice that's best for all of you.

ELSA FISCHER

Hopper

On his sixteenth my grandson
wants to visit the Tate Modern.

I like how he takes his time,
moving at his own pace.

Standing at Hopper's women
in the nude he tells me

about a girl in his class.
He'd been gentle.

He grins at Cape Cod Morning,
says it was how his mum

would wait at the window
when he was late again.

In the shop he buys me a Hopper
mug. For my memory, he says.

After Edward Hopper: Cape Cod Morning

Crack in the spout

Some nights I see my mother at the sink,
wiping and shining the family Meissen.

Sleepless, I'll make my midnight brews
of Yorkshire Red in the surviving teapot,
trace again the blue onion pattern
from childhood. And I'll place my mug
in the gaping dishwasher, should leave
the teapot for her to rinse.

Leaves will clog up the drain.
There's a new crack in the spout.

FIONA H

Between Hailstorms

Piles of hailstones put on a show
between wind storms
Empty bins are blown over,
drip drying
A single bird flies away
before the heavy grey sky bursts again

The drinkers in the park are brave today
A tree branch has come down
over their usual bench
where they count the daffodils
still waiting for snow or their money back,
now that Spring is here

Thunder sounds in the distance
Sudden lightning before the hail is dumped down
With no umbrella we hope to find shelter
from our desiccated storms
Leaving nothing but the skies weeping
showering us all over

Only the lonely are out in this weather
The world is an empty roadside
A discarded 'Mr Binman' sign left behind
Blown along the path
We take refuge in homes where time is gained
Drink the memories of writing to others

*

On the back page of an old diary
a former friend left me a closure
'In years to come when flicking through these pages
you'll stop and reflect on the fun we had
and the tears we cried'
The tears poured like that storm.

FIONA H

Near the Blue Light pub

My accuser cast a long shadow
attempting to have a romantic life
one night of magic
stark naked on the job
The twilight is hard
when the theft took place
luminous awake by means of its own key
trying to recall drunk in his office
an old passport element of farce
Down what streets never left the castle
the witness didn't reach the South Pole
unlearn his past
hoped to leave a legacy
while the world changed
melted down for gold, silver and diamond
like two diamonds in the sky
Hope is hard to come by
One night each year

FIONA H

Lost in transmission

Pushing back the time
four songs I remember mum singing
as we danced around the kitchen
with the radio on,
These boots are made for walking,
Show me the way to go home
Da do ron ron, and Then he kissed me
Long before I knew what love is,
or should be
I fell in love with Dad's cassettes
on long car journeys
playing Rock and Roll
The Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly's hits,
taught me what I needed to know
when away from parents and teachers
Did I ever live that life?
discover the other side of
Whiskey in the Jar or Seven Drunken Nights
whistling surreptitiously,
singing out loud
Always look on the Bright side of Life
Sweet Sixteen offering a promise
tuning in under the covers

A worn out radio plays the songs I like
Instantly transporting me back
To my adolescent bedroom
Where I listen to grunge and indie rock
Tirades of words on purple cassettes
My music of Generation X
The fire starts with a spark.

Songs referenced in this poem

These boots are made for walking,
Show me the way to go home
Da Do Ron Ron, and Then he Kissed me (lines 5-7)
Whiskey in the Jar or Seven Drunken Nights (line 18)
Always look on the Bright Side of Life, (line 21)
Sweet Sixteen offering a promise (line 22)

FIONA H

Everyday

I

Day turns to night;
sorrow from delight.

II

Lying awake all night every night
fleeting glimpse of daybreak on your back

III

starting over,
I don't know why you do this today
Just want to say Serendipity has a way

IV

Longing for yesterdays
hoping for tomorrows

V

Sanity out of the question
yearning, each Valentine's day
She sends a dozen red roses

VI

Back in my day they'd at least break up by text.
Now it's all gaslighting, ghosting, and blocking

VII

Since I've come to live in the suburbs,
it's been a haze.
Just one mundane day
blending into the next.

VIII

We can't turn back from here.
You're dressed to kill.
Come to my birthday party

IX

This December day in Singapore
was hot and steamy like so many others

cont...

FIONA H

cont...

X

She longed for the bucolic days of her youth.
She would see it again sooner than she believed.

XI

Nothing happens every day
We were just waiting for something,
but I for one, am never bored.

XII.

Feels like I've been taken on a trip somewhere
Night songs and Day songs.

JAN HARRIS

The seagrass basket

She loves its meadow scent,
zigzags, anemone-red stripes,

how seawater seeps
through woven fronds.

Her fingers dabble to find
the treasure she keeps inside:

sun-dried starfish, slipped
from a friend's shelf,

shells that fell into pockets,
a locket full of strangers.

She steals her sister's gloves,
ink-black silk, fingers that cling

like tentacles to her hand
when she buries them

in silt. At night she rests
the basket on driftwood

listens to waves lapping,
bathes in bioluminescence.

She slips into her seal coat,
slides into briny depths

becomes swift shadow
whiskered watcher

where seahorses dance
and jellyfish glow like moons.

JAN HARRIS

The glove her mother left unfinished

*It would mean so much to me,
my friend says,
if you could finish it.*

She hands me the needles,
two neat rows of knitting
in soft black yarn,
a single strand of silver
shimmering through.

The finished one hugs her wrist,
fits each finger with comfort.

The pattern is fragile with age,
held together with yellowed tape,
adjusted many times
to fit a growing hand,
the workings written in pencil
on the back.

I follow it with care,
fall into the rhythm of her mother's making.

To finish the glove takes little
from the skein,
enough left over
for a hat and scarf to keep a daughter warm
on the coldest winter day.

'Previously published in Acumen, Issue 101'

JAN HARRIS

rock-a-bye

her blanket slips
when the tree begins to tip
the leafy twigs that covered her

some tufts of orange hair
a durian seed dropped from juicy lips
into the rainforest of her fur

her mattress tumbles next
springy branches she snapped with care
then placed to ease the ache of long, long arms

while valley drowned in mist
and voices rose in evening prayer
the chanting of frogs, cicadas' eerie rhythms

and when the cradle, joined by heartwood
to the tree, crashes to the floor
her cry is silenced by the chainsaw's roar

JAN HARRIS

A Galanthophile's Journey

From first steps, on a mossy lawn,
where your growing hands let go of Dad's
to grasp the milk-white drops,

to games of tag in oak woods
where swathes of flowers lit the way.
February Fairmaids, you called them

Candlemas Bells on midwinter day,
white tepals, the colour of reflection
marking the light's return.

Later, you learned the names of cultivars,
met *Barbara's Double* at Hodsock Priory,
Bill Bishop on the banks of the Cam.

Now, your favourites grow in your garden,
Bess, Lyn, and Mrs McNamara
who visits, sometimes, for Christmas.

You feared for them this year,
buried under snow,
trapped for five days of freeze.

They have flourished since the thaw.
You watch them from your window seat,
white heads nodding in the sun.

CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

Vincent drops by

a daub of cadmium yellow
from the wheatfields of Arles
might have become a sunflower
his self-portrait straw hat
part of the starry night

chose instead to land
on the finch feeder
life seems almost enchanted
after all

mother's dahlias

gnarled clumps of tubers
husks of stems still affixed
sprout eyes when dug
into the garden
white flowers like dinner plates
she served special meals on

tanka

empty dish on floor
vacant bench by the window
no one to greet us
house is so quiet and clean
except for nose prints on glass

JON KILLI

3.

egglay island
seagulls
drop
out
of the sun
hit heads
wet
shit

4.

even her shoe smiles when her eyes do
its sole loose
his shoe grins
the hobo wails
she lit a fire

under his feet

he runs to no

avail

cannot stand

return

torture

situation bland

5.

earwigs may frighten
water
off a flower
flicked by fingers

bladder slowly fills the wait
bladder slowly fills
waiting room

vibrant flowerpower on the desk
in playful mood steps
that flowerfly
on still air

eyes caught
a fly
in the coffee
secret codes
swirl around the office
birds sing

JON KILLI

6.

ooowon two ooowon two
terns grace
sunset over sea

.
caught in the waving sea
sunken islands sea-stacks
sown of uneven boards
boat fate-plays
sails up
fatty wool left out
sea pearls in

sails an unmapped coast
sails invention's amniotic sac
the one who bails rips
his shirt

MARTHA LANDMAN

In the Writing Class on Building Character

Kate lets slip she's a lawyer, prosecuting
against animal cruelty. She speaks with a lisp,
says she works on a project that reads like case files.
She realises she left her glasses in the car,
rushes out, comes back, takes the presenter's
water to swallow her Neurofen (the last in the packet),
notices her mistake, asks who else wants water,
fetches water from the counter, hands out glasses,
keeps the bottle on her lap, laughs when Henry
gently takes it and passes it around. Her writing
drags us into an outback pub so authentic
we feel the flies on our arms. Our next exercise —
to write to a tree as if we just had the happiest day.

Originally published in The Poetry Village.

MARTHA LANDMAN

Dali's Wishful Daughter

Father, forgive me for digging you up.
I don't care for your paintings, your hysteria,
your wealth, nor for your intact hair.

Don't say I disturb your rest,
you should've sorted out these matters
before you went.
I need your DNA to tell me who I am.

I crave to be loved by a madman
who cares more for the snail
on Freud's bike than his own daughter.

For years I hated myself in the mirror,
contorted image of an ugly man,
kept hidden from my friends.

It troubles me, this fathering thing.
I dream myself a child squealing
when running in the park

or riding on your back or knees.
I could be the Matador,
your ten past ten moustache the bullhorns.

Forthcoming in Poetry Pacific.

MARTHA LANDMAN

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Man

I

It's a great man who asks forgiveness
when he ate the last of the plums.

II

A man must do what a man must do.
Many will take advantage and lord their power over you.

III

A father's word is will
in heaven and on earth.

IV

I've come to distrust churchmen,
I've seen too many snakes in their bosoms.

V

Napoleon was a man divided in himself on the women theme. He loved his own,
discarded the rest as baby machines.

VI

When you are joined to a man at the hip
separation will leave a scar.

VII

Marabel Morgan taught women
to serve their men from bottom to top
without feeling cheated or hard done by.
She made a lot of money from it.

VIII

I pat your back, you pat mine
but I'm always the one bringing your slippers.

IX

King Solomon wrote many love songs.
In the morning I sing them to myself.

Cont...

MARTHA LANDMAN

Cont...

X

From Zorba, the passionate fool,
I've learned to dance.

XI

When you meet Don Juan on the road
take what you can and run for the hills.

XII

I think Doris Lessing loved cats more than men.
To her they were handsome and domesticated.

XIII

A wise man studies the blackbird
in all its dimensions.

Published in Friendly Street Poets Anthology titled Q.

MARTHA LANDMAN

Black Saturday

Today everything on the line is black —
T shirt, linen, underwear. The bright
floral pyjamas on black background
stand out like poppies in a coalmine.

Mother hated black, to her it was evil.
She wouldn't have survived a Goth child,
even though at the end of her life
a black pit swallowed her.

She had her rules — Monday's for washing.
But here, it's on Saturday. Black denim,
clean pyjamas rich with lavender smell.
Denim, for mother, was the communists

wanting to equalise the world. She refused
to shorten the hems for me. How's that
for defiance? A woman who stood firm
in her beliefs, oppressed by autocrats, patriarchs.

Rooi Gevaar / Red Scare is all she said
when asked *what's a communist?* This made
no sense to a child because denim was blue.
But today even the denim on this line is black.

Published in Eunoia Review

MARTHA LANDMAN

Lost in Blue

after *Tea in the Bedsitter* by Harold Gilman, 1916

Too much blue, too much scent trapped
in this room. Give me ocean, give me sky.
Give me Somerset, let me board in Kent.
A blue bus will do or the wings of a butterfly.
Today on the train even the ocean was ink.

But here, in this room, in this melancholy,
we women fade in blue as if a painter
got stuck in cyan. We're not meant to cry,
we're not meant to defy. We've no way to elope.
Give me a blue horse, save me from eternity.

Take me to Spain, rush along Canal Bridge,
I'll sleep on the roadside, seek white days,
a blazing sun, crimson and rose, the coolness
of marble floor. Give me what you want,
give me anything but blue.

Published in Blue Bottle Journal

S E LEWIS

Night theatre

Sleep won't come:
I've long since let it loose
to exit via the stage-door.
No doubt it will turn up
in time for morning:
stumble, wine-stained, into bed.

I'm comfortable with all my
thoughts tucked up around me.
Silently rehearse my lines.
But there are noises off.
There seems to be
a fridge left on inside my ear
while, further back,
a more celestial sibilance;
a counterpoint, like stars.
Their kind of music, anyway.

I saw stars once, in Devon:
great careless bags of glitter
thrown casually across a
blue-black velvet drop.
Here, the streetlights glare;
block up the bandwidth;
steal the show.

I check my phone.

There's nothing from you
but why would there be?
You wouldn't text at this deep hour.
Unless you're finding too,
that sleep won't come.

S E LEWIS

ROSE

As autumn fades,
the colours deepen. So the
lingering flowers intensify;
put on their last parade.

I want to show you
this late-blooming rose:
soft-saffron, crimson-blushed,
deep-scented. Open as a mouth.

And yet I
thought this kind of thing
was over:
this warm brilliance,
lighting up my grey.

QUIET

So quiet, but for the
singing of the birds.
Bright flawless notes
which carry crisply
through the canopy;
which are transposed
and taken up; passed on.

And I tread gently
through the wood:
for everywhere that
overwhelming indigo
is poured out, fragile,
in the slanted light.

Rare hyacinth scent.

The guardian trees
are solemn, proud.
Yet lenient with my
footsteps; merging
with my breathing in,
my breathing out.

SHEILA LOCKART

When he's gone

she'll chop onions
with her knife-sharpened smile,
flash of steel in her eyes,
squeeze out the last red drop
from the tube, like a murderer
feeling for a heartbeat.

She'll eat her meal slowly,
taste the blood hot
on her tongue, teeth
tender, nostrils swollen
with the smell of meat.

At night her unborn children
will come to her one by one
and name themselves.

She will sweep them up at sunrise
like so many dead leaves,
pull down her sleeves to hide
the mottled fingerprints,
spray her hair to its customary stiffness.

Then she'll phone to arrange
for the locks to be changed,
rehearsing in her mind how many
steps to take from the kitchen
to the front door.

(First published in Re-side Magazine (Issue 8)

SHEILA LOCKART

Colossi

we walked away from town at dusk
red sand already darkening around us
you wouldn't let me take a torch
eyes would get accustomed to the dark
soon neon lights were out of sight
and the pale horizon faded

clouds turned violet like fresh bruises
and when the moon appeared its beams
turned hollows into pools of indigo
made sand glow like polished copper
I worried about snakes

then we heard the sound you held my hand
it's only the wind you said but I was fearful
two black shapes loomed out of the darkness
impossibly tall against the night sky
I sensed in them deep suffering
like all the sadness in the world

one was pierced through its chest
just as you in your soul's darkness
were later to be pierced
and the wind blew through the holes
like someone moaning

After 'Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's Angelus' by Salvador Dali, 1935

(First published in The Ekphrastic Review 29.06.21)

SHEILA LOCKART

Peloton

hearts thump thighs pump
hive mind driving ever forward now it stretches
now it bunches always clinging to the road shedding bits behind
ahead breakaways sprints calamitous crashes sacrifices for the cause
and always at its core its existential purpose **le maillot jaune** marked queen bee
protected by her workers selfless domestiques no drones here except for those
that trace its progress over pavés graded climbs false flats in burning heat
wind and rain aerial views of old chateaux closing in
on sweat-soaked skin and beauty of
thrusting glutes

The Magician's Wife

How long must she wait
for the twenty one delights of her soul
to be returned to her?

How long must they stand in the plaza
wrapped in their smoky shroud
those beautiful women and sweet boys?

el Escondido weeps in his box
his silent howls echo like a lost hound
the palaces gape in astonishment

each night she prays for some indecency
a revolution of seaweed and arsenic
a bloody uprising of forked beards

if only a single ball would fall from his hands
explode into a thousand shards
it would shatter the spell forever

and she could sail away
into the green night with Lion
Long-eared Owl and Goat

How long must they wait
for the invisible wires to snap
for his tricks to be laid bare?

After The Magician, by Remedios Varo 1956

SHEILA LOCKART

Argonaut

I want to live as a vicious shadow
with hostile queues of boys
with the vigilance of Noah
leaning on his flotsam
I want to cruise the lunatic hills
of your body
set fires in your purple hollows
savour your parlour and depart before the encore
I want to dance throughout Lent in your decorous dew
float between the mother and father
tell mice
about your echoing penumbra
unclothed
I want to be the tinsel in your ear
(after you die no one else will wear it)
hang there like a cannibal's sour soul
I want to titillate with despair
under your chaise longue
I want to eat the lilies on your ledgers
and fall asleep in my blouse among the spiders
good night Irene
the hour is here

after *Papier d'Argent* by Joyce Mansour

M NORTH

A trip to the seaside

Cleethorpes beach -
the only place we ever go,
me mam me dad our Christine and me.
Me dad's got his big grey suit on,
me mam's wearing her costume
(that's a posh fitted jacket and skirt).
Christine an me have got our sunsuits on,
all elasticated and uncomfortable.
Me mam an dad are on deckchairs.
Christine's on me dad's knee
(he likes her better than me),
I'm on me mam's.

Our legs are dangling down.
They look skinny, but we weren't.
The photo's black and white
so I don't know if it's sunny.
Sand everywhere and the sea's at the back.
A jug of tea and cockles and mussels
laid out on the towel by our dangly feet.
Christine looks happy,
I look wriggly.
Me mam an dad are trying to look
pleasant and respectable
in their careful clothes.

M NORTH

Transformed

I don't know what I did to upset her so much.
I know I made a harmless little jest about
what does witch rhyme with

when all of a sudden she comes out with an
unrepeatable curse and
covers me in slimy skin
'for ever and a day'.

Pardon the pun, but I was hopping mad.
What self-respecting charming prince wouldn't be?
Not that I could do a thing about it.
I tried to beg her mercy,
pleaded with her to let me out,
but all that came out was a croak -
and anyway she wasn't having it,
just brandished her nasty talons at me,
a little threateningly, I thought -
so I dived into the nearest lily pond
before I came to worse harm.

As it happens, I'd heard that a kiss
from the fairest maiden in the land
could restore me to my former beauty.
So I searched for her far and wide,
and after a year and a day
I arrived at her castle walls.

There she was, cavorting prettily outside,
looking rather tasty in her wafty raiment,
singing lamentations about longing and lovesick hearts.
Good start, I thought, she'll be delighted.

So I leap up to her feet and look up winsomely,
hoping she'll see me and say
'Ooh, what a dear little frog!'
But nothing of the sort.
She winces in revulsion
and tries to squash me into slimy pieces
with her dainty little foot
(those pointy toes don't half hurt).

Cont...

M NORTH

Cont...

Sod off, frog face, she says.
I'm a little taken aback,
but what choice have I got?
I leap up to her lips, catching her mid pout,
and contrive a sweet kiss.

Her eyes bulge and she stands transfixed
as I morph out of my slimy skin
back into my own muscular, handsome body
with my fine princely robes,
which, I should mention,
Have survived remarkably unscathed.

I am your prize, fair lady, say I
with a deep bow and a flourish of my
elaborately feathered hat.
I wait in anticipation for the smile of joy
to spread across her face,
and for her first tender words.
She parts her sweet lips, then
just as I am about to claim a more appropriate kiss
she lets out the most raucous
ear-scraping scream I have ever heard
emanate from a gentle maiden's gob.
Sod off I told you. Go on - hop it.

Well her guards are assembling
so I decide I'd better make myself scarce.
I've found my old lily pond and here I've stayed.
Been staring at my reflection
in it ever since. I think I'm rather beautiful
though my skin does have a bit of a greeny tinge to it.
It's all very puzzling.
This isn't how the fairy tale's supposed to end.
But then, I suppose, life ain't no fairy tale, is it.

M NORTH

A Bit of a Jumble

It has arrived – it's jumble sale day.
I've sharpened my elbows to join the fray.
Preparations have been extensive
and nothing should be too expensive.

9 o'clock – and it starts at 10.
Should set off soon – I wonder when?
Best to be at the front of the queue.
I grab my coat – it's 9.02.

A crafty peep from behind my net
reveals a sight which makes me fret.
Mrs Crabbe from up the street
is marching along on determined feet.

She's beat me to it – I might've known it:
for all my careful plans, I've blown it.
I leave in haste. I won't be first –
but maybe second or third at worst.

I charge along; see Crabbe retreat
around the corner to Sheffield Street.
Just seconds later I'm there too –
but I get a shock when I see the queue

coiling around the side of the school.
Should've left sooner – what a fool!
I stand and look daggers at those in front
'til at last through the door we start to shunt –

and into the hall bursts the foraging throng.
The smell from the sweaty clothes is strong,
but I persevere; I'll let no-one pass
from this bulging, jostling, heaving mass.

I don't bother inspecting the bric a brac,
the broken tellies, the old toast rack;
I make for the tangled pile of frocks
and coats and blouses and holey socks.

I fight my way through the early birds
already flocking in copious herds,
and lunge to the front (there's a bit of a knack:
you go in sideways and flip people back).,

Cont...

M NORTH

Cont...

Most of the stuff's a load of old tat:
a crimplene cardy, a flowery hat,
a nasty brown jumper that's shrunk in the wash,
some faded beige corsets; nothing posh.

And then I spot it beneath the mess:
a sleeve poking out that won't fail to impress.
It belongs to a coat in a nice dark blue:
it's from a good home; I can tell by the hue.

I grab. Then I yank.....I pull, and I heave,
grasping intently an obstinate sleeve.
It seems to be stuck – all efforts are vain,
but I grip for dear life and I heave again –

and at last there's some give. My heart starts to pound
as the jumble goes tumbling onto to the ground.
I pull and I heave, I yank and I grab –
then the table is empty, except for the Crabbe,

who's splayed out, teeth gritted, with pincer-like grip
on the opposite sleeve, which she's wrapped round her hip.
She glowers, she curses, she rolls to the floor
on top of the jumble – her strength is no more.

But nor is the coat. The sleeves have come off.
And on closer inspection it's not such good cloth,
not at all the prize we had hoped it would be.
We both sling it down, and go and have tea

in the fiddly green cups that you get in these places;
we sit far apart with disconsolate faces.
I comfort myself with some custard creams;
I just have the three, so I don't split my seams.

Was it all worth it? Well this time it wasn't –
that common Crabbe woman is very unpleasant.
And you can't be too careful when things've been worn:
you discover too late that the sleeves are all torn.

HELEN PINOFF

On Purchasing a New Anthology

*This anthology of anthologies is a
great way of encountering the richness
that new poetry has to offer*

100 Prized Poems

Twenty-five years of the Forward books

Come on ye Poets!
Take me by the hand
Take me by the throat
Take me down memory lane and back again
 bruised
Take me by surprise
Take me to the ice-cream van
To Derry, Poundland, the Arabian Sea
Take me by the ear and tickle me giggling
Take me underground with butchered bones
Circling on a carousel then
 stopped –
with a lightning bolt
Keep me awake with your hammering
Take me through the clamour of war – then take my eyes
Take me to the ward show me your wounds
 your scabs and stitches, the bulls-eye
 of your singular fragile private pain
Take me to those high stretched-wide skies of liberation
 unshackled unschooled
Make espresso coffee for my thirsty veins
Conjure up an aria, dance me breathless
 with a Sarabande
Show me bravery (I long to be brave again)
Tell me of love and WD40, who made your day
Who screwed your life up then who did you screw
Take me tenderly make me weep
Rattle me on a ghost train in the dark with webs
 of grief

Cont...

HELEN PINOFF

Cont...

Take me to a forest under the ocean
To a whispering glacier
 on Neptune
To the furrowed fields to the woods
 to the undergrowth of thorns
Take me to dinner, inebriate me with your
crazy family jazz
Tell your tale with twists and turns and puppetry
Take me swimming through blood and prophesy
Take me riding on a sun-dappled pachyderm
Take me to the dusty shelf at
 the back of the back of the
 mundane hardware shop
Show me the hidden arcane

I am the famished
 gate-crasher
 voracious
 at your feast
I'll take *you* by the hand
 take you home, tonight
Come on ye Poets!
Show me what you've got

One Day

One day I won't be here
to wake and trace
the swirls and whorls
around your sleepy ear
with my good-morning fingertip
One day I won't be here

LYNDA TURBET

The Naming of Storms

Storms should be named for strong women.

Ada / Beryl / Connie / Doris

Women who worked the land,
drove tractors, trams, rivets,
knotted headscarves, made do,
kept the home fires burning.

Women who said enough's enough

Emmeline / Florence / Gertrude / Harriet

rattled teacups, raised eyebrows,
scattered censure like uprooted trees;
who hurricane citadels,
crushed paper mountains underfoot,
made twisters from cigar smoke,
unafraid to say *I want*; stood firm
- or sat, like Rosa on her bus -
camped at Greenham, marched.

And unsung women stitching lives together -

Irene / Julie / Kath / Lorraine /

Maggie / Nora / Olive / Pat

care-givers, child-rearers,
shelf-stackers, shift-workers,
office-cleaners, garment-stitchers,
table-wipers, toilet-scourers,
till-tappers, food-packers

Queenie / Raji / Sonja / Tash

Ula / Val / Winnie / Xanthe

Yasmina / Zuleika.

Name them.

LYNDA TURBET

Wolf Winter

I lie invisible.

Blizzards find my form,
uncurl my sleep,
sculpt me in crystals,
mould with Arctic gales
back, belly, limbs, jaws
blown from iceberg lungs.

My teeth are icicles of glass;
my pelt, the breakers' rise and roll,
their grey cliffs' heave and swell.
Panting hail, I circle cities,
lick and lap their shuddering arteries
gnaw bones, shrivel flesh.

My pads tread their ruthless trail;
my tail-flick freezes pipes, cracks tanks,
binds life in iron hoops.
I prowl the hills, devour the unprepared;
my slate eyes blink: one glance
sweeps drifts to hedge and barn.

Your resistance? Spits of grit and salt.
I howl my mockery to the moon;
clouds mass in fear; stars shiver.
I am Wolf Winter. Know me.

LYNDA TURBET

September

Enough
of mists and mellow fruitfulness
oozing vowels, juicy consonants
weighting every line;
gleaners and reapers
crowned with drowsy poppies
washed by golden light:
too much to bear.

Where
are the ravaging gales
felled oaks, fields of crops
despoiled? No *winnowing wind* -
a ruthless harrowing here
thrashes the shingle bank
flails saltmarsh reeds
breaks pathways for the sea.
Rivers uncontained
churn, gulp sandbags,
stink through homes
surrendered to the flood.
The slate sky immovable,
smothers oppressive days.

Somewhere
trees flame orange-red
burn by nature's rules.
Not here; we must wait,
scan clouds for cracks
listen to drumming rain.
The land can hold no more;
banks strain against the beck.
At home, wind whines to enter,
scatters alliteration like leaves.

LYNDA TURBET

Skara Brae, Orkney, 1850

We watch the sky darken,
black clouds mass in the west
like shaken bolts of cloth.
The sea churns, roils
as if some hidden monster
thrashed its tail, spewed foam and kelp.
The gale thickens with sand.
We call the kye; eyes rolled white,
they sway in lumbering panic to the byre.
Rain lashes us with whips. Inside,
we huddle close, sparing candles,
choke on smoke and fear,
sing psalms for deliverance.
Songs of love and selkies,
fail to drown the ravening wind.
We feel the turf thatch lift,
claw ropes and rocks, grapple
our anchorage to land.
Day and night are one;
howling fiends batter our fastness,
scream for entry.

Gathering driftwood in the lull
we edge Skaill Bay, bent to the wind,
see Laird and Factor
pace out patterns in the field:
Skerrabra no more, dispersed,
become itself again. Lost lives
stretched out for air and light,
grasp at our own.
We do not understand; but feel
our own survival, beating blood,
the smell of seaweed, fish and salt.

LYNDA TURBET

She Falls In Love With Spelt

Like Goldilocks
I've grown particular
about my porridge,
rejected men
too hot or cold
jostling for *just right*:

the beaming Quaker
trusty in sober black;
the braw Scot, kilt flying,
hurling the hammer -
a white vest of muscle;
the weathered ghillie -
oatmeal with a pinch of salt
(stirred with a spurtle clockwise).

My flirtation with Jumbo didn't last.
Instant was a one-night stand.
Irish? A charmer, seductive -
if you need a bowl of blarney.

My new love's unrefined
a bit of rough you might say -
mouthfeel coarse with memory;
I am Bronze Age woman
grinding the quern
dipping my horn spoon
deep into the baked clay pot.

SUE WATLING

Lady Willendorf

Published in Sarasvaki 62, August 2021

Squat on my palm like a bulb, I want to plant her,
watch her grow, ask her name, who plaits her hair,

who carved the swell of belly, dragged her breasts,
cut the cleft, marked her sex for giggling boys.
She sucks our gaze without apology. Submits her fearless hips.
Struts gutsy thighs to eyes which ache for hollow bones.
Today she is a joke. Skinny dieticians, behind her gorgeous back,
use her photo as a threat for heavy girls. They miss the point.
This lady's begging to be touched, her pitted skin invites us in,
to speak a language we don't know, or have forgotten.

What's a girl to do?

Published in Sarasvaki 62, August 2021

The first time I touched his hair, I knew he was blessed,
smell of wax, sweet with power, shoulders beneath, broad,
brown, ribs hard, the strength of him calling me, fierce, hot,
I could have loved this man, as it was, I kohled my eyes,
sweetened my thighs, took the silver. He came like a blind
cub, words of love dripping, I stole them all, turning them
over, this way and that, as slick with sweat, he slept, trusting
my hands in his hair. Horah was there, light on the shears
glinting, I lifted the strands, cut, cut, it fell to the floor, heat
from his skull rising, *Samson*, I called, *the enemy are here!*
So many times, he'd split the bindings, was sure he'd rise,
but he lay like a child, as in they rushed, stakes in his eyes,
screaming, screaming, I looked away, job well done, he will
see dark, feel the drag of stone, while I remember the first time
I saw him, hair to die for, times are hard, what's a girl to do?

SUE WATLING

Is there life in other galaxies?

Written for the Poetry and Science course with Jim Bennett

I want to know if birds perch on wires
balancing tunes against clean morning skies,

or trees grow in seas of sacred forest,
with roots like tongues, I want to know

if time runs backwards, life starts with
death, if blackness is treasured like gold,

have they found god or not bothered to look,
do their worlds spin in different directions,

but most of all I want to know, if I could see that far,
would I come face to face with myself, filling

the kettle for tea in the morning, making
the same mistakes, millions of light years away.

SUE WATLING

Hecate waits

Mother of angels,
boundary places,
souls of the dead,
darkness,

blacker than black,
she sits by the crossroads,
this is her place,
space between worlds.

Look a shrine,
oil, wine,
dozen white doves,
bouquet of foxgloves.

Come closer, see,
blade to cut,
rip up muscles,
let blood flow red, red...

place for the dead,
where living falter.
Hecate waits,
which way will you go,

is there a signpost,
no, it's down to you.
Eyes are watching to see
which path you choose.
MARTHA LANDMAN

SUE WATLING

In the Writing Class on Building Character

Kate lets slip she's a lawyer, prosecuting against animal cruelty. She speaks with a lisp, says she works on a project that reads like case files. She realises she left her glasses in the car, rushes out, comes back, takes the presenter's water to swallow her Neurofen (the last in the packet), notices her mistake, asks who else wants water, fetches water from the counter, hands out glasses, keeps the bottle on her lap, laughs when Henry gently takes it and passes it around. Her writing drags us into an outback pub so authentic we feel the flies on our arms. Our next exercise — to write to a tree as if we just had the happiest day.

Dali's Wishful Daughter

Father, forgive me for digging you up.
I don't care for your paintings, your hysteria,
your wealth, nor for your intact hair.

Don't say I disturb your rest,
you should've sorted out these matters
before you went.
I need your DNA to tell me who I am.

I crave to be loved by a madman
who cares more for the snail
on Freud's bike than his own daughter.

For years I hated myself in the mirror,
contorted image of an ugly man,
kept hidden from my friends.

It troubles me, this fathering thing.
I dream myself a child squealing
when running in the park

or riding on your back or knees.
I could be the Matador,
your ten past ten moustache the bullhorns.

SUE WATLING

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Man

t's a great man who asks forgiveness
when he ate the last of the plums.

II

A man must do what a man must do.
Many will take advantage and lord their power over you.

III

A father's word is will
in heaven and on earth.

IV

I've come to distrust churchmen,
I've seen too many snakes in their bosoms.

V

Napoleon was a man divided in himself on the women theme. He loved his own, discarded
the rest as baby machines.

VI

When you are joined to a man at the hip
separation will leave a scar.

VII

Marabel Morgan taught women
to serve their men from bottom to top
without feeling cheated or hard done by.
She made a lot of money from it.

VIII

I pat your back, you pat mine
but I'm always the one bringing your slippers.

IX

King Solomon wrote many love songs.
In the morning I sing them to myself.

X

From Zorba, the passionate fool,
I've learned to dance.

Cont...

SUE WATLING

Cont...

XI

When you meet Don Juan on the road
take what you can and run for the hills.

XII

I think Doris Lessing loved cats more than men.
To her they were handsome and domesticated.

XIII

A wise man studies the blackbird
in all its dimensions.

SUE WATLING

Black Saturday

Today everything on the line is black —
T shirt, linen, underwear. The bright
floral pyjamas on black background
stand out like poppies in a coalmine.

Mother hated black, to her it was evil.
She wouldn't have survived a Goth child,
even though at the end of her life
a black pit swallowed her.

She had her rules — Monday's for washing.
But here, it's on Saturday. Black denim,
clean pyjamas rich with lavender smell.
Denim, for mother, was the communists

wanting to equalise the world. She refused
to shorten the hems for me. How's that
for defiance? A woman who stood firm
in her beliefs, oppressed by autocrats, patriarchs.

Rooi Gevaar / Red Scare is all she said
when asked *what's a communist?* This made
no sense to a child because denim was blue.
But today even the denim on this line is black.

SUE WATLING

Lost in Blue

after *Tea in the Bedsitter* by Harold Gilman, 1916

Too much blue, too much scent trapped
in this room. Give me ocean, give me sky.
Give me Somerset, let me board in Kent.
A blue bus will do or the wings of a butterfly.
Today on the train even the ocean was ink.

But here, in this room, in this melancholy,
we women fade in blue as if a painter
got stuck in cyan. We're not meant to cry,
we're not meant to defy. We've no way to elope.
Give me a blue horse, save me from eternity.

Take me to Spain, rush along Canal Bridge,
I'll sleep on the roadside, seek white days,
a blazing sun, crimson and rose, the coolness
of marble floor. Give me what you want,
give me anything but blue.

Published in The Blue Bottle Journal.

POETS BIOGRAPHIES

DOMINIC BOND

I work for a mental health charity in London partly due to my own experiences, having done something like this since graduating from university with a degree in Politics.

I have tried to write poetry among other things and have been published online on and in print in Driftwood Press, Poetry Birmingham and Kallisto Gaia magazines.

LESLEY BURT

Lesley has been writing poetry for about twenty years. Following retirement from social work education, she completed an MA in Creative Writing from Lancaster University. She lives in Christchurch, Dorset.

Her poems have had success in competitions over the years and have been published widely in magazines including: *Tears in the Fence*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Prole*, *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*, *Reach*, *Sarasvati* and *The Butchers Dog*; also online, including in *Poetry Kit*, *The Poetry Shed*, *Algebra of Owls* and *Ink, Sweat and Tears*.

CLAIR CHILVERS

Clair Chilvers was a cancer scientist, and latterly worked for the UK National Health Service. She divides her time between writing and volunteering for the charity Mental Health Research UK that she co-founded. She lives in Gloucestershire, UK.

She has had poems published in online and print magazines including Agenda, Allegro, Amaryllis, Artemis, Atrium, the Ekphrastic Review, Impspired, Ink Sweat and Tears, Live Encounters. Poetry Atlas, Reach Poetry, Sarasvati and Snakeskin. She won second prize in the Poetry Kit Ekphrastic Competition 2020 and her poems have been longlisted or commended in the Cinnamon Press Pamphlet Prize 2020, and Poetry Kit Competition 2020. Her first collection *Out of the Darkness* (Frosted Fire) was published in 2021. Her second collection *Island* (Impspired Press) is forthcoming (2022). www.clairchilverspoetry.co.uk

A C CLARKE

PETER EMERY

Peter Emery is now well settled into his retirement from a career in business management and consultancy, and very happily devotes a fair amount of his time today honing his poetic skills. He now gets published regularly in several places both in print and online and is currently considering starting a poetry blog of his own, but that may yet prove a step beyond his technical know-how!

ELSA FISCHER

Elsa Fischer comes from The Netherlands, studied Art History, lived and jobbed on four continents and currently lives in Switzerland's capital where she is a "yelpie" rather than a "whoopie". She tries hard to convey her love of poetry to the natives and is a member of a workshop for expats. She has two pamphlets in the UK and poems published in magazines and anthologies. She endeavours to age with grace.

FIONA H

Fiona H lives in Ireland. She has poems published online in LUNCH poetry journal (2018, 2019), and Poetry in the Plague Year (2020) at <https://www.poetrykit.org/index.htm> and at Lunch Ticket literary magazine (March 2020). <https://lunchticket.org/>

She also has a poem (Rhapsody) on Keywords ep.8, broadcast on RTE Radio 1 (June 2020) https://www.rte.ie/radio1/podcast/podcast_keywords.xml

JAN HARRIS

CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

Catherine Heighway lives in London, Ontario, Canada. She has been writing poetry for a number of years and has had her work published in local anthologies. In 2019, she self-published a yoga book – Yoga Through the Seasons – which she co-authored with a colleague. She also enjoys helping people write their memoirs. Catherine has taken several poetry courses with Jim Bennett through Poetry Kit and recently had poems published in the Poetry Kit Summer School 2021 Anthology – “On Course.”

JON KILLI

I am a magpie, collect what i find, a bowerbird, showing off coloured bits to attract. a blue whale that sings softly on occasion. a jerv (glutton, wolverine) who rips off living bits to chew. i have used writing to empty out trash, stuff and overload, clear the bower so to speak

MARTHA LANDMAN

Martha Landman writes in Adelaide, South Australia, on Kaurna land. Her work has appeared in anthologies and online journals in Australia, the UK, US and South Africa. She was shortlisted for Queensland Poetry's Emerging Older Voices Award.

S E LEWIS

SUE LEWIS is a South London poet who began writing after a minor stroke (her mid-life crisis). She won the Cinnamon pamphlet competition twice: in 2019 with *Texture* and in 2021 with *Journey*. She's a member of Croydon's Poets Anonymous, Clapham's Original Poets, the British Haiku Society, Second Light network and Kith writing community. She has an MA in Creative Writing, practises tai chi and qigong, plays the recorder and loves to walk through both rural and urban landscapes. (www.suelewispoetry.com)

SHEILA LOCKART

M NORTH

HELEN PINOFF

Helen Pinoff lives in rural Ireland. Her poems have been published online with Fish Publishing and Poetry Kit, and in publications in Ireland - The Leitrim Guardian 2021 (an annual magazine), The Cormorant broadsheet and the anthology Loughshore Lines.

LYNDA TURBET

After decades teaching in Yorkshire and NE Scotland, experiences which inform her poetry, Lynda Turbet now observes the world from rural Norfolk and tries to make sense of it all through writing. Her work has been published in online and print journals, and has been included in two themed anthologies; she has also won the Red Shed competition, Disability Talks, and most recently, the Poetry Kit's ekphrastic competition. She enjoyed giving readings until prevented by motor neurone disease.

SUE WATLING