

# Welcome to Issue 11 of Antiphon

## Spring 2014

Issue 11 includes a celebration of poets performing at the [Midsummer Poetry Festival](#). We have new work from great poets including Conor O'Callaghan, Helen Mort, Katharine Towers and Robert Wrigley.



Issue 11, Spring 2014

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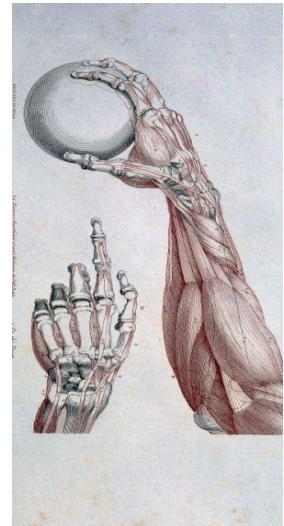
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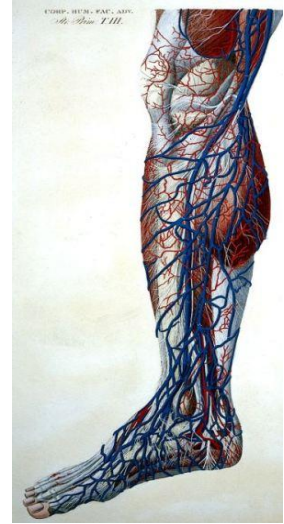
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**Applause - Our Contributors**

## Issue 11 Editorial Note

For Issue 11 we're delighted to include, alongside our usual international array of poets, some of those reading at the Midsummer Poetry Festival being held at Bank Street Arts, Sheffield, UK. We're particularly pleased to have new work from Conor O'Callaghan, Helen Mort, Katharine Towers, Roy Marshall, Sally Goldsmith, Julie Mellor and Matt Clegg and to republish very recent works from Allison McVety and Harriet Tarlo. Many of these poets are already very well known, and we have reviewed their work in the past - but if you're not familiar with them, I would recommend you seek out their books. We're also pleased to publish new work from Robert Wrigley, and to present a short feature on Carolyn Martin, a poet new to us but whose poems we enjoyed. As always, we have a diverse and interesting range of poetry - thank you for all your submissions.

Rosemary Badcoe

# Act One



## I never asked you for an heirloom

or to be your farm fresh egg to bundle in a blanket woven  
with tears and the fallow fragrance of New Jersey fields.

August evenings children build homes from folding chairs and crocheted blankets  
in the paneled basement of the Takács's house to hide from nenis and bascis

whose ears grow weak as their drinks stay strong. Pista bacsi croons  
through boozy breaths: *Szeme fekete / your ebony eyes.*

I flutter my brown eyes, attempt my first flight, ask, "Is this right?"  
You reprimand me with your blue-eyed weeping blanket that itches with loneliness.

Why could you not have sewn me wings so I could glide to the edge  
of salted shores that welcome the splendor of humidity's embrace?

You curse the heat that reeks of red tide and gulf salts.  
I savor heat bathed in blue wetness and grass carpet memories.

I free my foot from the tangle of seaweed.

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*Lisa Cheby*

## Heavyweight

My words flower through  
your eyes – mouth  
    to mouth  
we pass flecks of streetlamps,  
    unfettered horizons. We  
ingratiate ourselves  
    to the wind.  
Of course time passes – the bump&grind of your teeth is  
    a freeway,  
        an abandoned shoe,  
            a pothole, someone  
                else's keys.  
All of these you stack & restack &  
wait to hear the story,  
    your name called  
        on the loudspeaker.  
I can't keep doing this, you know,  
my sales figures are nearly up  
& your hair is  
    too sleek, your eyes  
        /treachery/  
My mouth streams gravel  
& buries us both. Streetlamps wink  
off down the street. I am loose  
skin  
& gaping eyes, I am hands  
    tucked & feet pounding  
        the pavement.  
I am a shaved casing  
    filled with powder  
        (tight, bracing) & your  
fingertips spark my return.  
    (I could never truly leave)  
And now you are ferrous,  
    brambled, in lockstep  
with my sigh, & in each hour  
sits a paper lantern,  
waiting  
    for your  
        touch.

## The Minotaur's Epitaph

*Of course my prison had to be ornate:  
it held a prince. I tried, at first, to chart  
its turns, compose a history of Crete,  
a treatise on the tyranny of art.  
But now I dream of straight lines, and a plain  
unfenced by the horizon, of pulling my own plow,  
a hell besides my ramifying brain,  
a harem of flies to crown my leathery brow.*

Its meandering profile meant betrayal,  
and that my royal lineage had strayed  
to a dead-end. But let the brute part fade  
from memory; words scraped in the labyrinth's wall  
affirm it mastered speech, the throat's thin blade  
that separates us from the animal.

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*Michael Lavers*



## Doing beauty

I'm not all gloom and bitten fingers.  
I can do funny. See, clowns on rooftops,  
a brass band tumbles down a flight of stairs.  
Cymbals titter drunkenly, tubas flounder  
off in tears. I can do beauty too. I am,

for instance, on the cusp of autumn,  
when the air is a potion smelling of time.  
In the park a splendid host, particles of being  
in pleasant conversation. Spot-lit  
and under-lighted land, a stained glass  
window's perfection. Now there are domes

over a cobbled avenue, concaving the dusk,  
fine-ribbed shells scooped from sea-ribbed sand,  
thumb-printed blue wax. A crow passes.  
He is the speck in my eye, or the world's leaden  
centre. You decide.

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*Edwin Evans-Thirlwell*

## Folk Art

It's shrapnel. Some industrial iron contrivance  
blasted apart by the river for decades, bashed  
by whole trees and tumbling stones and rusted  
to a pocked and tapering arc of such elegance

I carried it from fishing hole, run, and riffle  
all the two miles from where I found it  
back to camp and then home, where I drilled  
in each end of it a hole and mounted it

to the high front soffit of the wood shed,  
where it makes, as I knew it would when I saw it,  
a perfect perch for the birds. Crushed and severed  
shard of a boiler, a curved and fossilized strike

of lightning, like the sands of the desert  
turned glass by the bomb, like the spans  
of barb wire extending from the center either side  
of the hundred year old yellow pine behind

my shack, which I love almost as much  
as I love the iron bird perch. Certain days in winter,  
I will walk back to check on it, to see how  
hoarfrost turns its last few barbs into stars.

---

*Robert Wrigley*

## Deus Ex Machina

When the pills run out you can say the devil  
with things, but there are eyes in that, too.  
So how does one tell the man of the house

about the rest? The rabbit behind the couch,  
the fox in the sink, the satyr of sheets. I am  
the Ruler of Dishes here. Napkins fold under

my command. I eat the wife of chairs with flare  
and keep time by ruined meals. But Mother  
Gorgon never said I was the mortal one, that I

could not run a brush through hair. Use mirrors.  
Or what to do when there's no milk. And when  
it happens only an act of God keeps me from

baking my head into the cake. Keeps the tail-  
pipe nipple from this mouth. Razor's laugh at  
this. But He'll require something in return. House

calls aren't cheap. Only the shopping's not done.  
What then, the cat? My firstborn? A spray of  
seed over the altar of laundry? I'm expecting Him

soon. And when He comes the great wall above  
me cracks, a white light breaks through, and I  
stand, dying plant under arm, but I do not start.

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*Falconhead*

## Act Two



## Raven in April

This morning I was her, regarding red poppies  
from the window. Then I was him, ventriloquizing  
the black bird of God. Her, bewildered; him,  
another sanctified animal he ought to have been  
and unhappy he was not, as I was being him  
or his bird and not her. Then, because it is spring  
and not October, and the bird outside my window  
a raven, its black left eye peering in at me  
with the enormous and caustic curiosity of its kind,  
I was neither her nor him, but my myself,  
studying the dark bolts of its talons clamped  
on the very broken stob that is the gnomon  
of the afternoon's sundial, when its empty shadow  
rises by the minute up the western window.  
Black ravages, negative lightning, sleek oily sheen,  
and the bottomless eye, wondering what it is  
there is, or might be, to say, about what I am.

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*Robert Wrigley*

## Anæmia

Constraint beads on you like dew on a rose, you cannot  
shake it loose. Your tiny Puck hiccups  
from deep inside; he's drunk, again; your lot,  
again, is once more with the clearing up.  
Deferrals of your pleasures measure out  
in ever longer stretches; where once were weeks  
there now loom years. Your fool, your lout,  
your parasite has all the fun, his needs  
met every time unasked. Meanwhile you pale,  
you struggle to draw breath, refuse the stairs –  
and him? He'll suck your marrow dry and wail  
for more, more meat, more blood, he doesn't care –  
turns somersaults and kicks your ribs, would swear  
if only he knew how. He's yours to bear.

---

*Natalie Shaw*

## Saturday Morning, Alone At Last

I feel tired  
as late summer, drawn,  
golden as my tea.

I watch the birds  
in their quick-numbered  
moves, who seem to know

exactly what to do  
as they make short work  
of the downcast sunflowers.

I stop asking myself  
whether or not I'm happy  
and change the stems

in the vases, grind the salt,  
let morning shadows  
steep into me

as light begins  
threading the house  
room by room,

resting my hand  
upon the page,  
watching the season go.

---

*Jennifer Burd*

## Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

I better not. You'd boil at the thought.  
Might I entice you toward an early spring?  
You could explode through thaw like daffodils  
or strut with stellar jays around our yard.  
Or, how about the brave magnolia tree  
that beats out cherry, plum, forsythia  
each year and risks a frost to be the first?  
Something in you, my dear, desires to lead,  
can't bear the thought of standing second best.

But let me clarify: There's just no way  
you are the mower needing sharpening  
nor peat that rests behind our garden shed  
nor surly rains that shut a gardener in.  
You've gleaned – withstanding twenty years  
of partnering – I am the mower dulled  
from summer's wear. I am the peat that waits  
its spread as soon as coastal storms abate.  
And, if you wish, I'd even be the shed.  
Something in me feels worthy to protect.

But if these images still needle you  
and you'd prefer the echo of a smile,  
organic food consuming kitchen shelves,  
the copper tint you splashed across our walls,  
please humor me. Jot down on sticky notes  
the things that speak to you of you. Arrange  
them like perennials in tidy rows  
near my writing pad and coffee cup.  
I am an unlined page and cooling brew.

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*Carolyn Martin*



## Your party invitation just arrived

Calligraphed, no less. A work of art.  
Free-flowing ink. Handmade ecru.  
Well-designed. Stylized. Personal.

If I replied with *Sorry, out of town*  
or *My partner needs surgery*,  
I'd demean myself, dishonor you.

So here's God-honest truth: I love  
close friends, but hate my dress-up clothes  
and noisy social scenes where gossip

masks as pleasantry. I despise  
playing up to quasi-intellecets  
and playing down to ignorance.

I'd rather move a word around a page  
than raise a glass or pass a plate  
or work a room immune to poetry.

I might be tempted to announce  
*Patience is a vice... A quiet mind*  
*hears its soul... Beauty's felt before it's seen.*

But furrowed brows would walk away  
without remark or backward glance.  
I'd redeem myself by exiting.

Let me remind you I've become  
a connoisseur of silent nights, quiet books,  
and confidantes around a fire's heat.

I've discovered Time's in love with me  
and she demands quick retreats  
from restless chattering, abhors

one obligation more. So count me  
among the shy who shun society.  
My birthday gift arrives next week.

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Carolyn Martin

## A sonnet for plotting amateurs

*Deep Pink*, the package claimed and photographed  
our dream of gladiola sprays. We mapped  
three dozen bulbs around our pastel plots  
as complements, we thought, to bright-eyed phlox,  
petunias, asters, salvia and mums  
and contrasts to the brooding firs we'd come  
to love. But amateurs miss facts: That bees  
are un-enamored of this color scheme  
and weak-kneed hummingbirds whirl by  
thumbing wings at pinks and blues and whites.  
We'd only half a natural world until  
some mischief rescued our design. It filled  
our yard with orange glads in mid-July,  
then shrugged with birds and bees, *So labels lie*.

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*Carolyn Martin*

We liked Carolyn's work when she submitted and asked if we could take all three poems. We're very pleased to share them with you here, and to do our part in lessening the UK/US poetry divide.

**Carolyn Martin** is blissfully retired in Clackamas, OR, where she gardens, writes and plays with creative colleagues. Currently, she is president of the board of VoiceCatcher, a nonprofit that connects women writers and artists in greater Portland, OR/Vancouver, WA. ([www.voicecatcher.org](http://www.voicecatcher.org)). Her work has appeared in publications such as *Stirring*, *5/Quarterly*, *Becoming: What Makes a Woman*, *Persimmon Tree*, and the *Naugatuck River Review*.

## Interval

**Ben Parker**, *The Escape Artists* tall-lighthouse, 28pp, £4

This is a very assured debut from Ben Parker. There is a unity of style and theme throughout, a feeling that a keen intelligence has been at work. There is a 'rightness' to the cadences and structures that makes these poems exceptionally sure footed. There is also an impressive attention to the sounds of words and a seamless suitability of form to content. This level of craft and apparent ease only comes about, regardless of 'talent' or 'natural ability', via a lot of study and hard work.

The opening poem sets the tone. Parker addresses the reader 'Do you remember that day we found the first horse?' We are drawn in to the mystery and potential magic of this narrative, but quickly experience the disconcerting mixture of disorientation and familiarity that pervades the collection.

The poem proceeds to describe this 'first horse', and we become aware that the animal is in fact a dog. This miss-labelling and the continued refusal of the deluded couple in the poem to believe the corrective comments of friends, a vet, and even the evidence of their own eyes, is disturbing and sinister.

Here, in the 'welcome mat' poem of the collection, we encounter an unreliable narrator who clings to a misconception, to an imposed identity which conflicts and disconnects him from 'reality'. Ultimately, this leads to unhappiness and isolation for both humans and animal. The use of the first person in this poem serves to create an unwanted intimacy, coupled as it is, with the unease brought about by the strangeness of the narrative.

This is a darkly lit collection. There are lots of clouds and a lot of rain. Parkers' themes are dislocation, isolation and metamorphosis. He also writes well on the fragility and unreliability of surfaces, both literal and metaphorical, through which the unsuspecting can fall.

Emotions such as loss, grief, and confusion are not addressed directly but submerged in narratives which blend the surreal and familiar, the mythic and mundane, to create a menacing hybrid reality, a non-specific landscape with enough familiar landmarks to keep the reader suspended between recognition and disorientation.

In 'Sideshow,' the protagonist wanders through a circus where 'Pipes play on/though there is no-one around to hear them.' On the surface this eerie setting is littered with images from a 'fun' fair or carnival, a place of pleasure and escape through controlled illusion. But there is dark humour and a strong undercurrent of menace in this poem; 'The strong-man sleeps in a fug of beer, the dwarves dream of Hollywood'. The narrator 'checks a map/ he doesn't have' and is ultimately lost in a claustrophobic and recurring night-mare.

'The Path' has a sense of unresolved mystery, and like many of the poems here, it is otherworldly, elusive and haunting. 'The Way' might serve to sum up many of the characteristics of this collection.

The village is 'rain-shuttered' the radio is tuned to 'dead melodies' the road ahead is 'dwindling'.

'Remembrances' is, at first glance, a short romantic piece, and contains my favourite line in the collection.

'and on the floor those intimate blacks and reds  
like crumpled flowers, lying where they fell.'

But rather than being simply a celebration of lovers' intimacy, typically for Parker, the speaker is tainted by insecurity. The poem ends on an anxious and almost desperate note; 'No sooner has the door clicked to/ than I begin my search from room to room.'

In 'From Histories I' Parker utilises an oblique approach, perhaps to comment on recent conquest and conflict, and invokes a farcical world of unreliable propaganda and bizarre heresy. The poem ends with a mix of myth and obscure and tawdry commerce in which 'the gods/ walked the markets, selling charms/ for a low price and without obligation.'

Similarly, 'From the Histories II' which concludes the collection, cynically highlights the absurd. The targets in this case are notions of the heritage and the glorification of a drunken warrior whose wives and daughters 'stuff their ears with wax/ and develop intricate sign-language/ for which their line is justly remembered.'

'The Restaurant' , in which 'Most of the walls are black with the juice/ of berries imported for just this purpose' is a satire on the more extreme pretensions of the modern fine dining experience.

It achieves its goal by evoking an environment full of well-chosen peculiarities to create a portrait both ridiculous and sinister. Those interested in this sort of absurdist piece, and particularly in the investigation of food and its variety and associated meanings, should check out the poetry of Anthony Rowland, a master of this type of poem and possibly someone Parker is aware of. I detect positive echoes of Rowland's work in this and in the title poem of the collection which has the density, implied historical perspective and fine control of the senior poet, and as in Rowland's work, rewards repeated reading.

Parker skilfully evokes a world where nothing is as it seems. However, the cumulative effect of this collection is almost unremittingly bleak. I found myself longing for a break from the subdued tension, the ominous and confusing locations, and from the metaphorical and literal heavy weather.

The beautifully accomplished 'Painting Your Voice' provides an exception. It is one of the few poems here to come to some sort of conclusion that isn't loaded with threat. Although here too, we find rain, the tone of this elegantly flowing poem is metaphysical and transcendent. The 'voice' of a lover is carried and transformed by weather and in this case 'The heat will lift it up/ and over mountains it will fall as rain.' This effect is all the more powerful due to the subtlety and constraint of writing which is not overwrought or excited, but subdued, observant, and controlled.

I would like to see Parker's 'stacks of clouds' broken, if only in places, by the occasional shaft of reliable sun-light. I can't help wondering what colour and vibrancy a spell on a Greek island, for instance, might bring to the work of this accomplished young poet.

Roy Marshall

**River Wolton**, *Indoor Skydiving*, Smith/Doorstop, 84pp, £9.95

Wolton's collection brims with stories. Generally they're subtle stories, often told 'behind' the poem, because presenting their literal horror or pain would be too visceral, perhaps too difficult to bear, and so perhaps seem rather over the top as poetry. So, in 'Bright and Beautiful', we have two young girls burned to death, probably in an arson attack against outsiders 'whose surname not even the Head / could pronounce...and....tried not to stumble over Fire.'

The poem's focus is on the impact this ugly event and the girls' loss has on a school assembly. Whilst the children may be 'bright and beautiful', the fact of their deaths is merely a frisson of interest for their classmates. Only their mother will 'still keep a place / for them ...waiting for the hymn.'

In essence it's a poem about indifference. Our shrug of mild interest in the horror of other's lives. This is typical of Wolton's approach. Saying almost nothing by way of commentary forces the reader to fill in the gaps. Such a poem critiques our own response to it, in the same way that we might listen to something like Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*, saddened by the music but divorced from its object. The poem offers no social commentary, so compels us to think things through. It gives us the matter of fact acceptance of the crime, and the hatred it represents, as if this is simply the way the world is, something we have to live with. And if we then merely take the poem as it stands, we become complicit in that acceptance. Moreover, by placing the girls in the context of a hymn of quintessential Englishness, it offers too a critique of both nationalism and theism. All achieved by saying nothing. I think such a poem quietly brilliant.

Wolton often chooses conflict as a subject. Conflict, we know, makes stories. But there's more here than a poet courting reader interest through storytelling. The poems strongly pursue humanist concerns, with a voice full of social responsibility and its correlate, compassion. The poet's empathy leads her simply to explore the foibles and problems of human beings for no reason other than her own strong concerns with the troubles of others .

'Trouble', for example, is the nostalgia of those whose teen years spanned 1970 and both the innocence and ignorance we have in those formative years, gently burying in its list of adolescent preoccupations, its key realisation or admission 'before I knew him could be her'. Here Wolton addresses not merely sexuality, but the whole of identity, and how it is constrained by cultural convention and social pressure until the realisation of one's own place in the world comes as a revelation which opens up the world, complicates it and probably challenges it too.

Occasional poems in this collection become a little strident in making their point, however. 'Home', for example, puts the reader in the position of the dispossessed, the refugee for whom no state is willing to offer home. It aims to make us face the reality of being a refugee, having lost everything, and having no prospect of a future, the poet aiming to disturb the equilibrium of the comfortable, westernised, middle class reader of poetry by placing us in the stark reality of dispossession:

What if, in the middle of your life,

you run from your house as it burns, run from soldiers, hide, wait for dawn,

return to find your mother, father, bodies flung against the concrete.

Here's story again, and another list, in narrative form, of bare facts. And, although presented as an apparent question for the reader, they're pretty straightforward, desperate facts, to which our response is likely to be pretty obvious, too. So, yes, a terrifying prospect (and the rest of the poem does not relent) but I don't find it very convincing as poetry. Perhaps it's unreasonable to ask for artifice alongside hard truth and it's certainly the case that there's not enough contemporary poetry in the world making such a deliberate effort to change that world, so my feeling is one I'm not proud of. Even so, I think this is closer to the bones of a poem than the thing itself. Even so, other poems manage to carry similar subject matter with more success, such as 'M', whose softer approach to the issue of the homeless refugee and the uncertainty of home works more effectively, in my view.

Other subjects appear more personal, and Wolton also enjoys the fantastic, even exploring the status of language itself, as in 'Speechless', a fantasy on the universal loss of speech, and 'Language, that not so frail widow', where language abandons us to our own (non-linguistic) devices. This playfulness is often more satisfactory than Wolton's intensity, probably because we can be content with a more superficial response, but the playful poems are not slight. Usually they have an edge, as in 'I believed in Richard Dawkins' which effectively argues that the enlightenment of atheism merely replaces old gods with new ones, in this case, the false but compelling idols of celebrity.

Wolton enjoys playing with language, too. There are long, languid lines, there are careful experiments with form, and there are cryptically tight poems. I particularly liked the compression of 'How to be water' whose short, staccato lines are perfectly apt in the face of the more likely writerly 'flowing line' we might use for such a subject:

Insinuate yourself.

Set traps for light.

Go back to the start.

The book's section I enjoyed most, however, was probably the section titled Geek Myth. Here Wolton's playfulness takes familiar stories and reimagines them in contemporary guise: Hélène is 'the face that launched Essence de Femme'; Remus is a rescued street kid, who can't 'tell us/of the twin'; Hercules' labours are those of everyday oppression: 'phone chargers to wrestle, emails to slay'; the star-crossed lovers are presented as 'R+J 4Ever'. Each of the poems in this section is witty, sly, teasing and keenly observed, as well as very tightly written. They don't carry much of the deep social commentary elsewhere in the book (although there are some barbed asides, e.g. on the fates of street kids and the fondness of audiences for tragic endings) but they engage the reader totally, amusingly, always with insight.

NW

## Who published this?

*Antiphon* doesn't generally review self-published books. It's not a deeply considered position, more an attempt to keep the numbers down, in the same way that we review UK books and pamphlets more than those from overseas. A good publisher acts as quality control – I know that if [Picador](#) has published it, I'm probably going to like it, and even if I don't I'll be able to see some merit in it. Self-published books run the whole gamut from wonderful, idiosyncratic beauties to slapped-together pdfs of doggerel, and until you go to the effort of reading, it's hard to tell the difference.

As Gerry Cambridge (Scottish poet and founder of *The Dark Horse* magazine) states, "In general, self-publishing is regarded with suspicion by many 'traditional' poets... The reason for this suspicion is straightforward: it can seem to bypass the standard expectation to get some sort of editorial consensus for a body of work. It implies that you weren't able to get the work published by the usual channels, because almost any poet I know of would rather have a full collection, at least, published by a trade publisher than do it themselves. "

The theory is that if the poetry is good enough, eventually the better magazines will publish it, and eventually a small (or major) press will pick up the poet and run for a book or two. And yet even then the poet is not home and dry; it can be harder to get a second or third collection published than a first, and the first is never going to be easy. Clare Pollard last year on her blog discussed the problems of encouraging so many emerging poets without giving them somewhere to emerge to. Helena Nelson of [Happenstance Press](#) writes: "this press publishes about a dozen pamphlets a year. 2013 was 'full' by the start of 2012. We're now looking at 2015. The answer is more likely to be 'no', than 'yes'." Patience is a virtue in the poet.

And there's no doubt that many poets are rushing for publication before they are ready for it – derivative writing created from exercises, threadbare metaphors, dodgy syntax, no feel for the quality required for publication. Helena again, in a blog post quoting a talk by Neil Astley of Bloodaxe Books: "And he described what he has always looked for and continues to value: a poet who nurtures the talent before taking it out into the world. He spoke of the way the 'individual voice can only be achieved in private' though it is moving towards a public self. He spoke of the way a set of good poems is not enough. There are too many poets for the opportunities, too many sets of good poems. What is required is a voice 'unlike anyone else's', a set of poems 'consistently strong'..."

Yet there is a lot of good work out there that doesn't fit the standard model, that doesn't attract the eye of a major publisher. Many poets are published by tiny presses not experienced in editing, and unable to help much with publicity or marketing. Do these presses add any kudos to the poetry, or is self-publishing a better way to ensure quality?

Rose Kelleher chose to self-publish her second volume of poetry, *Native Species*, believing she could do as good a job: "So what's with all this kowtowing to the authorities – authorities who are, in most cases, no more qualified to judge than you or I? They're simply well-meaning hobbyists who happen to have enough money to start small presses. They performed a valuable service for many years, printing books that the bigger presses wouldn't touch, and for that we should all be grateful. But we don't need them anymore. Remember this is poetry we're talking about: there is no money to be had." A very good book it is, too.

I recently received a small pamphlet, 'The Great Vowel Shift', by Robin Houghton (whom we published in issue 10), published by a small press she's set up, and it's beautifully designed and carefully edited, and I very much enjoyed reading the sharply-written poems.

One reason for creating *Antiphon* as an online publication was to reach those widely spread readers who love the sort of poetry we love. Poetry comes in all shapes and sizes and I know many unpublished, self-published, small-press-published poets who deserve a readership as wide, if not wider, than some of the better-known names. Self-publishing may be a route to this, (though I believe nearly all poets benefit from the input of a good editor). How, though, are we to find the wood for the trees?

Rosemary Badcoe

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Gerry Cambridge:

Self-publishing for poets, in <http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/learn/poets>  
[The Dark Horse](#)

Clare Pollard:

<http://clarepollard.wordpress.com/2013/05/20/the-health-of-poetry/>

Helena Nelson, [Happenstance blog](#)

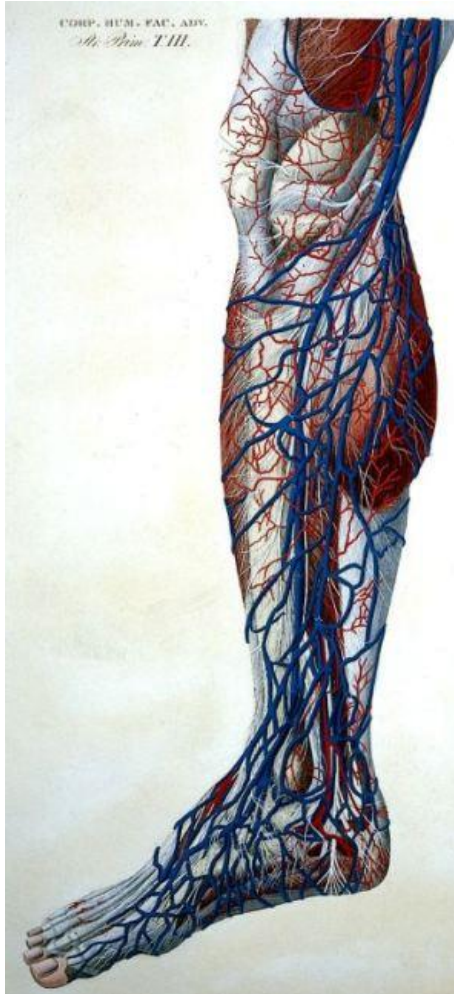
[Bloodaxe Books](#)

Rose Kelleher: <http://rosekelleher.wordpress.com/2013/05/23/self-publishing/>

Robin Houghton: <http://telltalepress.co.uk/about/>



## Act Three



## The Weaver at Dusk

Today she is a silk kimono, dyed  
in blueberry sky and apricot sun.

The road bridge is her sash.  
Trees soften in the river's print,

tame as bonsai. A duck ploughs  
upstream unzipping this dress

that has no fasteners, then drifts.  
Longing floats me to pedal

beside the shining geisha girl  
away to Frodsham or Weston

where she wears the chainmail  
of the windswept Mersey.

I seek Kawa No Kami, pray she  
will find me the river's heart.

---

*Helen Kay*

## A Grave For Fishes

*Mermaids don't use combs.*

*They comb their hair with cuttlefish bones  
except that everyone knows how cuttlefish  
are cartilaginous, each piece beneath  
the scales dissolves with salt ebb and  
with time; nothing for the girl  
to order seaweed knots against or with.  
Underneath the bubble sifts  
a lot more grime and silt than Ariel  
experienced.*

This is how you fade away: one corpse  
at a time, anchovy or sardine or tuna fish.  
As each rots it's tossed into the ditch I keep  
around my back, the place I'll plant with white-root  
diggers once these fins are done. It's a process.  
They don't rot overnight. I have years of patience,  
though still surprised by their abundance.  
Who brought the full nets in?  
For what purpose? Fish don't exist  
long on land.

Never mind. The intent  
isn't clear or relevant. I'll use  
the nitrate from your bones mixed in  
my happy earth to feed  
my greedy greens, their grasping hands  
beneath the dirt. We'll bury you,  
we'll divorce you,  
and then we'll eat you up.

---

*E H Brogan*

## Confession

I live in fear  
to speak my mother tongue  
when I'm alone  
it raises dead  
as when you break the silence of a church  
to say the beginning of your prayer  
that starts with  
god, please forgive me.

---

*Bianca Oana*

## Sharing Childcare with Valentina Tereshkova

Did I tell you before that she bumped into us  
on her descent? No? It was edited out  
of the official Soviet film reel, but, if you  
look closely, you can see where the tape's been

spliced. She saluted, then took my proffered hand.  
The helmet made speech hard and my elementary  
Russian wasn't up to it. Da. Spasibo. But she watched  
you suckle as if this were the solitary reason

she had been in low earth orbit round our planet.  
When you were done I let her hold you.  
Your milky mouth marked her orange suit.  
I don't know if she rubbed it clean later

for she fell, when she'd passed you back over  
200,000 feet of nothing, much faster than us.

---

*Denise Setterington*

## **This Is For**

*“for the sleek witches who burn  
me at midnight  
in effigy  
because I eat at their tables  
and sleep with their ghosts”*

*Audre Lorde*

This is for the house I lived in with its rafters of stone  
for its hundreds of steps leading deep underground  
for its murmurs and songs  
for the well and bucket and rope  
for the bats which troubled my sleep, for the crows  
lined up on the telephone wires, eyes yellow as corn  
beaks filled with garbage and noise  
black feathers empty of meaning against the sky  
this is for the girl I dreamt of in the night of storms  
this is for her footprints in the mud  
her black hair loose and wet, her shoulders almost nothing  
but bone  
this is for speech, for silence, for the taste of bread and salt  
for water cool on the tongue, for throats and tongues  
this is for burning when Autumn comes again, for leaves  
and smoke, beautiful bodies of ghosts and tables laden with fruit.

---

*Steve Klepetar*

## **Black Pebble**

So black you carry reflections  
in place of shells' echoes.  
So flat you could be still water;  
that lake at night.  
Far off from your shoreline,  
a tiny boat.  
Surely, you must have braved  
wilder seas than these,  
to have gained such smoothness.  
Looming there, the grey shadow  
perhaps of Seascale.  
Myself, I prefer to believe it  
the quiet rising  
of a child's submarine  
from the slow deeps,  
where seagulls fly within you.

---

*Sarah James*

Festival!





## Heinrich Harrer's Motorbike

Muscular and beetle-black, it stalls  
here in the Grindelwald museum,  
town of a thousand afternoons,  
forgetting each stitched mountain road.

From the horned handles down  
it is a Nazi bike, or a hero bike,  
depending on who looks. Black seat  
with sweat worked into it.

At night, watched by the stone church,  
it revs its own engine, lifts itself  
back to the Eiger Nordwand,  
*Mordwand*, where trains now pass,

and a dozen men died tunnelling.  
It tries to launch itself,  
up past the Swallow's nest,  
the Hinterstoisser traverse,

the Kleine Scheidegg window -  
death's best vantage point -  
past Kurz's ghost still hanging  
on his rope, ten feet from rescuing.

Past the White Spider,  
past the summit Harrer thought  
he wanted. It does not stop.  
It will go as high as it can.

It is a thought, put out of mind,  
unspooling in the early hours,  
filling the dawn. It lives  
because you let it.

---

*Helen Mort*

## Philomela

I remember you, sister, before we took  
to the trees, before wishbone and flight.

Days when you sang to the radio,  
sewed the names of boys to your lips –

unable to thread a future without love.  
I wish you'd sent word sooner,

filled up the skies with your news. I know  
now you couldn't wet wool

for the needle's eye – though still wove  
trauma in and out of cloth.

How even-stitched it is given the pattern  
of your sufferings, the strands of pain,

the ply of your tale. That I did not see it  
coming unpicks my eyes.

Time is what we have now, sister, yes  
time to swallow whole what was done to you.

---

*Allison McVety*

(from *Lighthouses*, Smith/Doorstop 2014)

gaping peat place

ungreened, faint-scented

over-lapping, crusted

edge over

edge

drips down

when land trips you up,

pulls you in, to fall, so

listen where

wind, water are pulling reeds downstream

catching water back

over rim, counter to

still to see

pappus

swallow

fly

wind- water line

---

*Harriet Tarlo*

Dean Clough valley between Pennine Way and Blackpool Bridge 15 Aug 2012. Two texts for the wall, part of the Tributaries Collaboration, Black Hill, 2011-2013 in collaboration with drawings by Judith Tucker.

## Grace

They're coming to collect  
the table I'm writing on.  
They texted a while ago  
to say they were leaving  
a suburb four miles south.  
Midweek, early evening:  
traffic should be light.  
I thought of sitting here  
in gratitude, once more,  
as long as supper lasts.  
VINTAGE JOB LOT. My ad  
hung weeks unanswered  
in the whole foods co-op.  
Then yesterday they called  
to ask if I'd sell piecemeal.  
Happily. The sun has drifted  
slantwise of our building.  
In the back lane behind me  
two kitchen porters smoke  
in what could be Cantonese.  
For six years my things have  
waited for the party I was  
always threatening to throw.  
There's the door...

                    They've been  
& gone & bought the lot!  
They were tremendously sweet:  
her, Flemish, full of chat;  
a fiancé with beard & bearing  
of some prince in waiting.  
They came for my table just  
& took a shine to everything.  
We laughed & lugged it all  
to her employer's truck  
parked running in the lane,  
shook hands, wished luck  
& hugged for heaven's sake.  
I came indoors to find this  
notebook open on the floor  
beneath my broken bread.  
Thank you sideboard fetched  
halfway across the Fens.  
Thank you captain's chest,

handmade plywood bed,  
mess benches from the war.  
Thanks to all those friends  
I shipped on for a song.  
Thank you rooms in shade  
that might yet prove to be  
night already happening.  
Thank you echoes echoing.  
I have more hope in me  
than I'd have ever guessed.

---

*Conor O'Callaghan*

## Lunch hour with Gramps

He stoops above a cheap black pan –  
liver, rashers, sputtering onions  
sear and char in kitchen smudge.  
The radio bumbles The World at One,  
birds churr and jar the far side  
of the cactiied cock-eyed lean-to.  
He plates it up. She bolts it, pecks  
his cheek, then quick and careless  
back to school. He scrapes the scraps:  
his years of banburys and bread,  
the Sussex chalk, the village larks,  
his steeping tenor fluting clear,  
those violets brought to Oxfordshire.

---

*Sally Goldsmith*

## Ammonite

Who found that fossil  
in the fallen face  
on a rain-softened day in July?

Was it me or my sister  
who chose that rock  
below a caved Cornish cliff,

lifting and dropping it  
to split and unlock  
a frozen honey spiral?

Whose high voice carried  
on salt-loaded wind  
to bring dad back across the beach?

I see him kneeling  
to chip it free, a perfect  
crystal coil. In my head

it was always me that found  
the ammonite: but my sister  
told it differently

and lately, though I don't  
know why, I've begun to believe her.

---

*Roy Marshall*

## Grass

If I were called in  
to construct a religion  
I should make use of grass.

Going to church  
would entail a fervent swishing  
through couch and wild oats.

My liturgy would employ  
vegetal whistling  
and blurted, worshipful shrieks.

And I should be  
a singer of grass, spitting all  
but the sweetest pith from my mouth.

---

*Katharine Towers*



*from Moving with Thought*

*The willow stoops  
in April sunlight  
as you did, sweet,  
into our mirror.*

*You'd click the switch,  
then comb the iron  
through falling hair,  
loose as the willow's.*

A punter leans outside the bookies.  
He flicks a fag towards the pavement  
where mums wield prams or double buggies  
and schoolboys yield into the gutter.

He sighs and waits as if for something  
he cannot find the proper noun for.  
He cricks his jaw and tongues the craters  
where nagging teeth no longer yellow.

---

*Matt Clegg*

## Aftermath

On the way back I was cool as glass,  
damp cool the way condensation settles  
on the windscreen, early morning,  
late October. I was hard as glass too,

hard the way a marble is hard  
until rolled against a steel bearing  
and realises it's cracked. I was mulling  
it over. You were up there

on the surface of the moon and I  
was hurtling towards the earth,  
like that man testing the limit  
of the human body by rising, high altitude

in a helium balloon, then jumping  
back to earth at 700 mph, hoping  
that when he exceeded the speed of sound  
he would simply feel the air ripple

over his Lycra-clad body, feel like an eel  
swimming upstream in spring, not start  
to break up, lose consciousness,  
not feel anymore.

---

*Julie Mellor*

## Contributors, Issue 11

**E. H. Brogan** is a graduate of the University of Delaware with a B.A. in English. Her poetry has appeared in *Scissors & Spackle*, *Corvus*, *Burningword*, *Downer Magazine*, and others. She blog-runs and provides social media support for *Kenning Journal* ([www.kenningjournal.com](http://www.kenningjournal.com)). In addition, she hosts a "Poetry Out Loud" series, which features recordings of well-known poems as well as original content, on Soundcloud (<https://soundcloud.com/ehbrogan>). She also works as a manuscript proofer in her spare time.

**Jennifer Burd** has had poetry published in a variety of print and online journals. She is the author of a book of poems, *Body and Echo* (2010), and a book of creative nonfiction, *Daily Bread: A Portrait of Homeless Men & Women of Lenawee County, Michigan* (2009), and she has work in the 2013 anthology *The Way North*. She is an editor and writer for HighScope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

**Lisa Cheby** has an MFA from Antioch University and a forthcoming chapbook, *Love Lessons from Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, from Dancing Girl Press. Lisa is a high school librarian and is the poetry editor for *Annotation Nation*. Her poems and reviews have appeared in various journals including *The Rumpus*, *Eclipse*, *The Mom Egg*, *The Citron Review*, *The Provo Orem Word*, *Askew*, *The Splinter Generation*, and *Tidal Basin Review*. For more information visit her website: <http://lisacheby.wordpress.com/>

**Matt Clegg** presents at the Midsummer Poetry Festival a one-off event focusing on new arrangements of poems from his sequence 'Chinese Lanterns', in which the classical Chinese poet Li Po finds himself resurrected and at large in 21st Century Hillsborough. Clegg will be joined by special guests for a memorable evening of ritual, performance and multimedia. His latest book is *West North East* published by Longbarrow <http://westnortheast.wordpress.com>

**Edwin Evans-Thirlwell** is an editor and journalist at Future Publishing in London, where he writes about videogames and digital culture. Aged 28, he has been published in *Brittle Star*, *Said and Done*, *The Guardian* and *The Mirror*. His present projects include a short fiction series about the dilemmas of eating, and a collection of poems about the Voyager 1 space probe.

**Falconhead** When not slaying Dragons, Falconhead uses Dragon's blood to write poetry, short stories and plays. His work has appeared in *Whistling Fire*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *Adanna*, *Outside In Literary & Travel Magazine*, *Wilde Magazine*, *Foliate Oak Literary Magazine*, *Thick Jam*, *Poetica Magazine*, *Camas: The Nature of The West*, and in *Thin Air Magazine* among others, and is forthcoming in *Rock & Sling: a journal of witness*, and in *Still Point Arts Quarterly*, among others.

**Sally Goldsmith** is a song and script writer as well as a poet. Her pamphlet *Singer* was chosen by Michael Longley as a winner in the Poetry Business Pamphlet Competition. Last year she was a runner up in the National Poetry Competition and smith/doorstop published her first collection, *Are We There Yet?*

**Sarah James** is a journalist, fiction writer and poet. Her first collection *Into the Yell* (Circaidy Gregory Press, 2010) won third prize in the International Rubery Book Awards 2011. A second, experimental, collection, *Be[yond]*, was published by Knives, Forks and Spoons Press

in 2013. She has recently finished a creative writing Masters with Michael Symmons Roberts and Jean Sprackland at Manchester Writing School. Her website is at [www.sarah-james.co.uk](http://www.sarah-james.co.uk).

**Helen Kay** is a Cheshire based poet with aspirations to be a chicken poet laureate. Her poems have been published in diverse places. She is a dyslexia tutor and this has been the source of some of her literary scribblings.

**Steve Klepetar's** work has received several nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Recent collections include *Speaking to the Field Mice* (Sweatshoppe Publications, 2013); *My Son Writes a Report on the Warsaw Ghetto* (Flutter Press, 2013), and *Return of the Bride of Frankenstein* (forthcoming from Kind of a Hurricane Press, 2014).

**Michael Lavers'** poems have appeared in *Smartish Pace, Arts & Letters, West Branch, 32 Poems, Queen's Quarterly* and elsewhere. He completed an MFA from the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Utah.

**Allison McVety's** poems have appeared in *The Guardian, Poetry London, Poetry Review, The Spectator* and *The Times*, and have been broadcast on BBC radio. In 2012 she won the National Poetry Competition. Her first collection was shortlisted for a Forward Prize and her third, *Lighthouses* is published by smith|doorstop.

**Roy Marshall** has had numerous jobs including delivery driver, gardener and coronary care nurse. In 2009 he began sending poems to magazines. A pamphlet, *Gopagilla* was published in 2012. His collection *The Sun Bathers* is published by Shoestring Press. Roy lives in Leicestershire with his wife and son.

**Carolyn Martin** is blissfully retired in Clackamas, OR, where she gardens, writes and plays with creative colleagues. Currently, she is president of the board of VoiceCatcher, a nonprofit that connects women writers and artists in greater Portland, OR/Vancouver, WA. ([www.voicecatcher.org](http://www.voicecatcher.org)). Her work has appeared in publications such as *Stirring, 5/Quarterly, Becoming: What Makes a Woman, Persimmon Tree*, and the *Naugatuck River Review*.

**Julie Mellor** lives near Sheffield and holds a PhD from Sheffield Hallam University. Her poems have appeared in magazines including *Ambit, Mslexia, The North* and *The Rialto*. Her pamphlet, *Breathing Through Our Bones*, was published by Smith/Doorstop in 2012. More about her work can be found at <http://juliemellorpoetsite.wordpress.com>

**Helen Mort** is the current Derbyshire Poet Laureate. Her first collection 'Division Street' (Chatto & Windus) was shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize and the Costa Prize. She lives in Hathersage.

**Bianca Oana** was born in Romania in 1986 and lives in Bucharest, with one foot in Athens. She writes for the screen and on paper. She composes her poems in English.

**Conor O'Callaghan** grew up in Dundalk. After holding visiting posts at Villanova University and Wake Forest University in the US, he now teaches at both Sheffield Hallam University and on the distance learning MA at Lancaster University. His fourth collection, *The Sun King*, was published last year by The Gallery Press.

**Denise Settington** is a care worker and writer.

**Natalie Shaw** can mainly be found taking part in Jo Bell's project, 52. She has just come back from a disastrous camping experience, and was recently longlisted by Helen Mort in *The New Writer's* poetry competition.

**Harriet Tarlo** is a poet and academic living in the Holme Valley. Poetry publications include *Poems 1990-2003* (Shearsman 2004); *Nab* (etruscan 2005) and *Field* (forthcoming). She is editor of the "Women and Eco-Poetics" feature, *How2* Vol 3: No 2 and *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (Shearsman, 2011). She teaches at Sheffield Hallam University where she is Course Leader for M.A. Writing.

**Katharine Towers'** first poetry collection 'The Floating Man' was published by Picador in 2010 and won the Seamus Heaney Centre Poetry Prize. It was also shortlisted for the Jerwood-Aldeburgh First Collection Prize and for the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry. Her second collection is forthcoming from Picador.

**Robert Wrigley** has published ten books of poems, including most recently *Anatomy of Melancholy & Other Poems* (Penguin, 2013), and in the United Kingdom, *The Church of Omnivorous Light: Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books, 2013). His poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Poetry*, and a host of other magazines and journals. He teaches at the University of Idaho and lives in the woods, near Moscow, with his wife, the writer Kim Barnes.