

Welcome to the special Sheffield Poetry Festival Issue of Antiphon

Spring 2013

A bumper issue of over 45 poems, featuring Gillian Clarke, Bernard O'Donoghue, Julia Copus, Paul Batchelor, Conor O'Callaghan, Jean Sprackland, Sinead Morrissey, Helen Mort, Chris Jones, Geraldine Monk and many more.

Visit our [Contents](#) page for further details.



Issue Seven, Sheffield Poetry Festival: Spring 2013: Contents

Prologue - [Editorial Note](#)

Act One

[Senedd](#) - Gillian Clarke

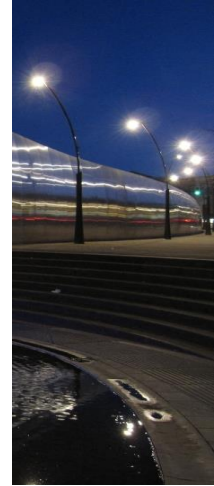
[Shower](#) - Helen Mort

[Peace](#) - Conor O'Callaghan

[Undulatus asperatus](#) - Katharine Towers

[Nell Farrell & Pam Thompson](#)

[Cutting Edge poets](#)



Act Two

[Moths](#) - Bernard O'Donoghue

['Now, now is the perfect time of my life'](#) - Chris Jones

[A Book of Breathings; Balaton 1: The Ceramic Pot](#) - Agnes Lehoczky

[River Wolton & Alistair Noon](#)

[Mother's Pride](#) - Paula Cunningham

[Hex poets](#)



Act Three

[Heronkind](#) - Julia Copus

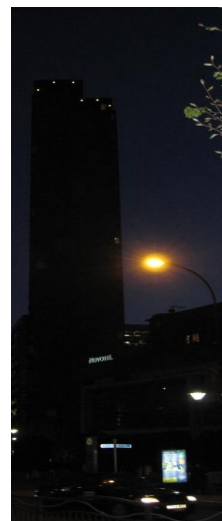
[The Covenant](#) - Jean Sprackland

[A Letter From Tu Fu](#) - Matthew Clegg

[Suzannah Evans & Jonathan Davidson](#)

[Elizabeth Barrett & John Sewell](#)

[Liz Cashdan & David Cooke](#)



Act Four

The Mutoscope - Sinead Morrissey

Seated Figure with Arms Raised - Paul Batchelor

Sungrazer: Prologue - Peter Manson

A Curse on Heptonstall - Ian Duhig

James Caruth & Jane Monson

University of Sheffield & Sheffield Hallam University students



Act Five

Geraldine Monk & Alan Halsey

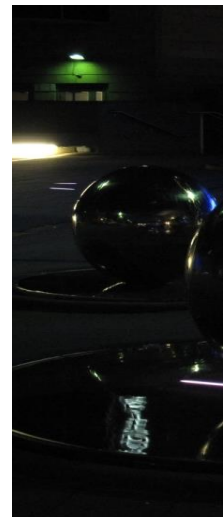
The Marble Quarry - Robert Crawford

Foxes - A.B. Jackson

At Rotherham - Rob Hindle

Fay Musselwhite & Bill Cooper

Catherine Benson & Cliff Yates



Issue 7, Spring 2013

Editorial

Welcome to Issue 7 of *Antiphon*.

This is a special commemorative issue for the Sheffield Poetry Festival 2013, running from 1st – 9th June in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, UK – see

<http://sheffieldpoetryfestival.com>

We're excited to feature a selection of poems from many of the poets who will be reading or taking part in the festival. We hope to publicise the festival and also give our international readers a taste of the very active poetry scene in the UK.

There's new work from Bernard O'Donaghue and Conor O'Callaghan and we've also been given the opportunity to republish work of some significance, such as Gillian Clarke's *Senedd* from her volume 'Ice', and Julia Copus's *Heronkind* from 'The Two Smallest Humans in the World'. The Festival aims to give local poets and community groups exposure alongside the big names, so we've done that, too. We're extremely pleased, of course, to be able to feature highly acclaimed poets like Sinead Morrissey and Jean Sprackland but it's also pleasing to see poets we admire in the local poetry scene sitting next to the big hitters. We have 47 poets in all and it's been interesting to read work written in styles outside our usual remit. We hope you too will enjoy the wider range of poetry we've included.

Please let us know what you think – about the size of this issue, and about the different techniques the poets have used. If you do come to the Festival perhaps you can track us down and let us know. Rosemary will be running a workshop with the Cutting Edge poets on Saturday 8th June. Noel, who's been heavily involved in organising the events, will be lurking around most of them. Come up and say hello and let us know what you think of *Antiphon* – in the nicest possible way, of course.

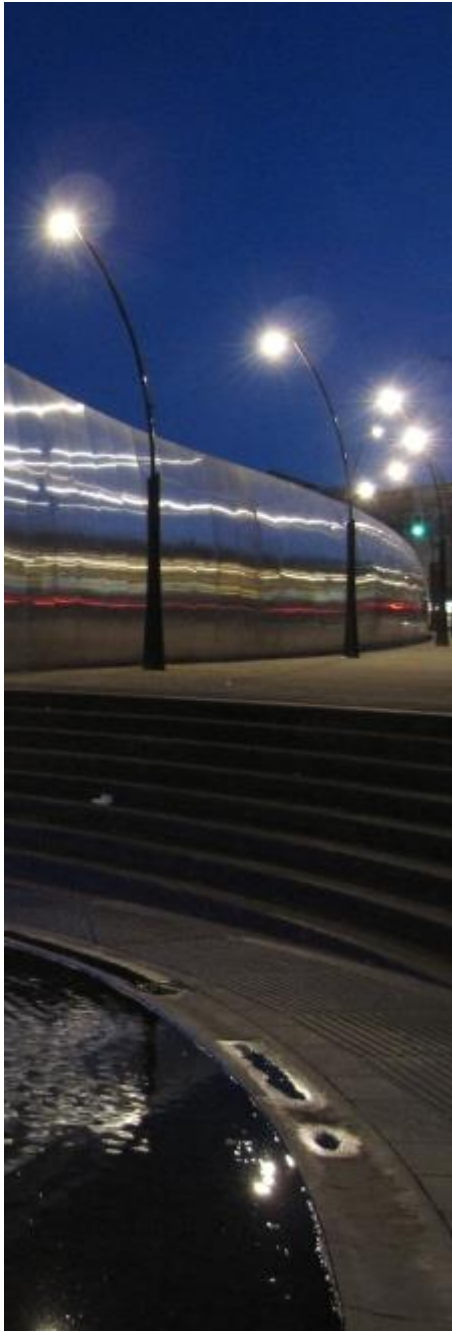
Issue 8 will be back to the usual format – around 20-30 poems of brilliance and exquisite construction, including a couple of strange and puzzling ones. Send us your best: *Antiphon* is greedy for good poetry.

Rosemary Badcoe and Noel Williams

Copyright of all poems remains with the poet and/or their publishers. All images are of Sheffield, UK and its environs, and are copyright Rosemary Badcoe and Noel Williams. No content to be reproduced without permission.

Many thanks to the organisers of Sheffield Poetry Festival, 2013 and to all the poets who provided poems for this issue.

Act One



Senedd

Mountains spent time on it:
the slow settlement of silts,
mudstones metamorphosed to slate,
prehistory pressed in its pages.

Rock blown from the quarry face
and slabbed for a plinth, a floor,
a flight of stairs rising
straight from the sea.

The forest dreamed it:
parable or parabola.
Look up into the gills of fungi,
the throat of a lily.

A man imagined it:
the oak roof's geometry
fluid and ribbed as the tides
in their flux and flow.

He cools us with roof-pools of rain
that flicker with light twice reflected,
a wind-tower of steel to swallow our words
and exchange them for airs off the Bay.

Inside the house of light at the sea's rim
you can still hear the forest breathe,
feel the mountain shift underfoot,
hear sands sift in the grass.

Gillian Clarke

(Published with permission from *Ice*, Carcanet, 2012)

Gillian Clarke is poet, playwright, editor, translator and President of Ty Newydd, the North Wales writers' centre. Her work has been translated into ten languages and she has read widely in Europe and the USA. In 2008 she was appointed National Poet of Wales and in 2010 awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. She's the

author of 'The King of Britain's Daughter' (1993), 'Five Fields' (1998), 'Making the Beds for the Dead' (2004) and 'A Recipe for Water' (2009). Carcanet have published her 'Selected Poems' and 'Collected Poems'. 'Ice' was shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot prize.

Shower

The storm rolls through me as your mouth opens.
– Ian Hamilton

With my head between your hands
water dividing us,

this is another century
where you're a witch doctor,

I need a hole passed
through my skull.

The ceiling turns to sky,
the bath's an altar stone.

I must remember ours
is no real rain,

the strobing lamp outside
is false lightning

and when you grasp me
by the hair, it's just to lather it.

I tilt my face until
the water makes me blind.

You step away and leave me
to the last.

Helen Mort

Helen Mort was born in Sheffield and grew up in Chesterfield. She has published two pamphlets with tall-lighthouse press and her collection 'Division Street' is forthcoming from Chatto and Windus. From 2010-11, she was Poet in Residence at The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere. Helen is currently studying for a PhD at Sheffield University and runs 'Spire Writes', an open mic night in Chesterfield.

Peace

There's got to be a term in currency for this:
the debt all losses owe to sentiment
for loss that wakes in happiness; a grief
-nostalgia some Germanic compound coins
and we don't share. A shadow warms to peace.
The heatwave, at its stillest, yearns a storm.

It's not unlike the ache to feel betrayed,
that farthest shore that lovers love towards.
They bus it there one cloudless afternoon
of trust and hope, and paddle knee-deep gold,
and find a bar, and hitchhike back the road
a little sunstruck, little lost for words.

Word is, they've had it bankrolling Arcadia.
The goatherd gods have cancelled half the milk
and grazed their flocks beyond the sell-by date.
The virtual troops are posting flags on loose
Cycladic change. The honey's come unstuck,
its bubbles blown away in dark. Today —

a public holiday lie-in, no alarm;
the charge in limbs and juice desire exacts
from dawn; a snooze; a courtyard's azure glass;
her inch-of-water wartime bath, on me;
the numbers our transistor bleats — might be
remembered as the first forgetful acts.

Conor O'Callaghan

Conor O'Callaghan is originally from Ireland and has taught at Sheffield Hallam since 2007. He has published four collections of poems, all with Gallery Press. The most recent is 'The Sun King' (2013). His work has won several awards, including the 2007 Bess Hokin Prize from *Poetry Magazine*. In addition to poetry, Conor has also written extensively about sport. His comic prose memoir, 'Red Mist - Roy Keane and Ireland's World Cup Civil War', appeared from Bloomsbury in 2004 and was adapted in 2007 into a film for Setanta TV.

Undulatus asperatus

Iowa 2006

Once we saw a great cloud, made of ice
like any other cloud but wind-sheared
and drooping in the sinking air.

It lolled against the hill but no storm fell.
Barometers went down like stones and it was
purple dark, even in that early afternoon.

The ruckled sky had us standing pointing
in the fields like scarecrows, and mostly afraid.
Girls fainted under the weight of ions

and some of us made thankful prayers
for God's new miracle of making of the sky
a rolling sea above our heads. They say

that waves from underneath are kind
and do not mean us harm, even seem
to love us, and it's bliss to drown.

Katharine Towers

Katharine Towers was born in London and completed an MA in Creative Writing at Newcastle University in 2007. Her first collection, 'The Floating Man', was published by Picador in 2010 and was awarded the Seamus Heaney Centre Prize for Poetry. It was shortlisted for the Aldeburgh First Collection Prize and the Ted Hughes Award and longlisted for The Guardian First Book Award. It was also a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. A poem from the collection appeared as a Poem on the Underground. Katharine lives in the Peak District with her husband and two daughters.

Captain Scott's Birthday Dinner

The table's centrepiece is a Union Jack,
pegged by a silver cruet at either end.
Proper cutlery, two soda siphons, five enamel jugs,
fifteen men and only one elbow on the table.

The one who may be Captain Oates
is holding bread between his fingers,
luminous attention turned towards
the man on his right. He's caught in the lens

before his voice can follow the line of his gaze;
the other man un-charmed as yet, aims
straight nose and neat moustache calmly
at his deep-bowled plate of stew and peas.

I want it to be him, gleaming white shirt
peeking out above the oiled wool
whose smell you'd know in the dark
if you loved him, but the labelling

isn't clear; another man is right behind him,
slightly older, dour, dark of cardigan,
with shorter, flatter hair. He could be
the one who walks into the snow.

Scott sits far away, at the head of the table,
St George's pennants strung behind him;
there's something odd about his eyes,
a whiteness that looks painted-on.

Nell Farrell

Love Song to a Meteor

I love the way you disguise yourself as precious;
you are jet-bronze,
but sensible offspring of asteroid,
progeny of iron and rock.
Calcium-flecked,
and just as we'd know what foods
were in your cupboards
from crumbs on your kitchen floor
so these flecks
tell us which planet
jettisoned you into the undefinable,
because the space we call space
is just that. I love the fact
you make rough-
hewn a must-have look,
how you've cut your own corners,
have the capacity for mass-destruction
yet twinkle benignly behind glass.
But most of all I love your appreciation
of the irony of your own name,
nothing 'meteoric' at all about you,
as now we'd have it,
you are not on the rise, are no shooting-star,
you're fixed, stuck, well-labelled.
And can be felt all over
at certain hours of the day
by sticky exploratory hands.

Pam Thompson

[Nell Farrell and Pam Thompson are two of the poets reading as part of Poetry Business events.](#)

Nell Farrell was born in Eastwood, Notts, so shares her birthplace with D.H. Lawrence. She lives in Sheffield, where she works in social work education and as a creative writing tutor. Her pamphlet 'A Drink With Camus After The Match' was published by Smith/Doorstop in 2011 and she won Second Prize in this year's *Yorkshire Open Poetry Competition*. She is currently working on a sequence of poems about urban mermaids.

Pam Thompson is a lecturer and poet and lives in Leicester. She is one of the organisers of Word!, a spoken word open-mic night which takes place at The Y Theatre in Leicester. Her latest collection is 'The Japan Quiz', 2010, Redbeck Press. Other publications are 'Hologram', 2010, Sunk Island Press; 'Show Date and Time', 2006, Smith-Doorstop; 'Parting the Ghosts of Salt', 2000, Redbeck Press and 'Spin', 1999, Waldean Press.

Sesimbra

A mad dog runs the shoreline
in the direction of Venus rising.

Ghost bats play dodge the streetlamp
along the promenade.

Slow motion lovers drift to and fro
as we talk of Paula Rego

and darkness lowers its abdomen
to spin us a bedtime story.

Life has fallen away. I am de-scaled;
calm as the polite lap of a near flat sea

while the distant dog, a dot,
is still running.

Kate Rutter

Boarding

In her nineties she begins to daydream
shrugging off the rug and velcroed slippers
to dig her toes in the tumbled strandline

of the residents' lounge. Standing,
she watches while the morning swishes up
around her, noisy with the squawk

of what she thinks are oystercatchers
dressed in black and white
and the long-stretched necks of gannets

cramming food and squabbling. She walks
to the water's edge where clothes are piled
in heaps. Here are boards, leaning

on the breakwater, and she flicks one upright
with a practised foot, drags it down the beach
to deeper water. The sand's the shade of early morning

tea. She tosses bread into the sky
to get a feeling for the breeze, manoeuvres
so the sail is downwind of the nurses

skimming through the corridor towards her.
Surf's high. She heaves her stern-ward hand
hard against the boom to pull away.

Rosemary Badcoe

Polishing Girls

After Sir William Rothenstein's 'Sheffield Buffer Girls', (1919-1920)

Skirts work – grimed, hair turbaned red,
we stand like salt and pepper pots,
hands unbound, away from the grinding
dolly, oil and sand. With each shift

of our hips, silver rains from our scarves,
grits the floor of the studio. He sets us
like candlesticks, hands heavy
on waists, shoulders askance.

For hours I stare at my sister; the spoon
of her lips, her loose-spilled limbs.
We sup tea in a break, peek in the frame
at her wide-eyed looks, my bladed chin.

Suzanne McArdle

New Year's Day

You don't often see a Shetland pony tethered
to a lamp-post on Greenhill Avenue.
We'll check on the way back – if it's still there
we'll phone the RSPCA.
It isn't – its absence now a worry.
This same morning a rainbow gashes
the sky over the Sheaf.

Afternoon comes and goes. We fret – *we should
have done something about that pony.*
Early evening there are phone calls –
twins are miscarried, a cousin dies of cancer.
On the News – a good man murdered
on his way to church – a million culled
by winter sickness

and folk speak of how, after months of floods
they are afraid of drizzle becoming deluge,
feel their lives are as flotsam.
In woods the ash withers.

Jan Caborn

Cutting Edge poets are a group of poets who workshop together and occasionally organise events - they are running a writing workshop at the festival.

Kate Rutter lives in Sheffield and works as an actor in film, television, theatre and radio. Her poetry has been published in various journals, most recently in *Magma*. She co-edited *Matter 12*, an anthology of new writing published by Sheffield Hallam University. She was shortlisted for the 2010 Bridport Prize.

Rosemary Badcoe is currently finishing an MA in Writing at Sheffield Hallam University. She has been published in various journals and anthologies and in 2013 was shortlisted for the Jane Martin Poetry Prize, Girton College, University of Cambridge. She is co-editor of *Antiphon*.

Suzanne McArdle is currently studying for an MA in Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University and completing her second novel, a psychological thriller. Her

poetry can be found in *The Rialto*, the Grist anthology 'A Complicated Way of Being Ignored' and *Matter*.

Jan Caborn has just completed her MA Writing at SHU. She is a founder member of The Word Train now in its 11th year and was a writer in residence at BBC Radio Sheffield in 2000. She has taught creative writing to older people after retiring from teaching in primary school.

The group also includes **Suzannah Evans** and **Margaret Lewis** who are featured elsewhere in the magazine and will be reading at the festival.

Act Two



Moths

Soft butterflies of night, I've learned of late
to share the bedroom with you and react
with terror only to the smeared glaze
you mutate into when, so unmajestical,
you're offered any show of violence.
What made us shudder, I see now, was your
sheer vulnerability: the threat
your frailty posed by demonstrating
our species' programmed disposition
to kill anything that can't resist us
or fight back: to concede existence only
to creatures which are strong. You are so near
the end of the fly-by-night continuum
of strength and wealth and contest in the world.

Bernard O'Donoghue

Bernard O'Donoghue was born in County Cork in 1945 and he still lives there for part of the year. He has been based in Oxford since 1965, and he has recently retired as Fellow in English at Wadham College there. He has published on medieval poetry and on modern Irish poetry, especially Seamus Heaney. He has published six volumes of poems, the most recent *Farmers Cross* (Faber 2011). His *Selected Poems* was published by Faber in 2008, and he won the Whitbread Prize for Poetry for *Gunpowder* in 1995.

'Now, now is the perfect time of my life'

O to be seventeen again
when all my autumn Saturdays
cast this edifice of rain;
when we loped between the bar and baize
of some half-empty basement lounge;
later striking out with mates
beyond the dark parades of town:
past flats, grand houses, to new estates,
in search of vinyl's carried bass.
Most nights we'd make the party list
by hailing nigh-on friendly faces:
school peers, sports buddies, brothers, sisters,
then worked a corner, settled in,
split our kitchen-pilfered tins.

One time I met this girl who said
'So you're a *serious* poet,
maybe...' – though she hadn't read
a jot, a breath of what I wrote –
'...your work befits that scold of Plath's,
you know: *these poems do not live,*
all drifting feet and dead-eyed craft,
they sit so nicely in pickling fluid!'
The party boomed. Kat showed her wrists,
the frailest, thinnest chat-up lines
I'd been presented with. We kissed
among the trash and smears of wine;
that heady scent of sweet perfume.
My coat was hers: I walked her home.

Plath steered her diary entries through
'the rapture of being seventeen'.
Beyond the art above the bureau,
the chair and desk, the quiet trees...
'Always I want to be an observer.'
Yet here are thoughts she needs to say:
'I am afraid of getting older...
spare me from cooking three meals a day'.
I fixed a time to meet with Kat
but for one or untold reasons
watched my cloudy pint go flat.
We met the one time, post-exams,

an all-night bash; she wondered if
I still composed that schoolboy stuff.

Kat, I hope you're understood,
grown calm with blond-haired sons and daughters;
stashed about your townhouse study,
a dust-filmed, bleached-out *Crossing the Water*.
My lad-of-letters front, my lack
of gab or nous, my crap attempts
at holding all that spilt beer back,
I view now through the thickest lens.
A party shakes a neighbour's house
but even as I lie awake
and listen through the whoops and shouts
above a rough, insistent bass,
what jags and stirs the early hours –
my babies floating in their jars.

Chris Jones

Chris Jones' first full-length collection was *The Safe House* (2007). In 2011 his work was shortlisted for the Forward Best Single Poem Prize. He has just published his latest collection *Jigs and Reels* with Shoestring Press.

A Book of Breathings

Balaton 1: *The Ceramic Pot*

To write about a place you need to gather its ashes into a ceramic pot. Or into some kind of a hollow, concave vessel. Then you want to tilt it, when it's full to the brim. Or to drop it, as if it had accidentally slipped out of your hand. All at once. So, for example, to love the lake you are thinking of, to love the city you want to imagine, first you must let the city drown and let the lake submerge too whirling silt of memories, one layer after another. Sediments of a sun-lit hillside braided with vine-yards, an abbey, perched on the summit of the hill, and a round-mouthed snail carrying a conical shell on its back, a vital ornament of the fauna, look, just when it's inching up, you could brush it off the slope. In fact, you want to let the residues of inhabitants drain down the whirlpool, one and all, on its own merits, a shouting girl and a shepherd tending a thousand golden-haired goats, a bishop who lives in the abbey guarding an old manuscript, long-forgotten; in fact, you need to let go of grandmother too... her silhouette, like a river, meandering among vine branches, like the spiral of a lizard warming its thin lilac veins on sunlit stones, watching over the horizon... Now, from an aerial view, all it is: a drop of muddy water flowing down a horn of international maps. Down your own funnel-shaped palms. Arrivals must not equate to departures any longer. You cannot go around in circles anymore. To love a place, to love a segment of geography, a fragment of rock, a mote of a mountain, you must leave this segment, this fragment, this mote in a codex, locked away in blocks of wood, you must then entrust this codex to a glass case, the glass case to an unattended museum, the museum to a necropolis. You must forget how to pronounce. Now all it is: a cup left on a stranger's table. An empty see-through glass. Its emptiness, as small as the universe.

Ágnes Lehóczky

Ágnes Lehóczky's *Budapest to Babel* and *Rememberer* were published by Egg Box. She won the Jane Martin National Poetry Prize in 2011. Her monograph *Poetry: the Geometry of Living Substance* was published by Cambridge Scholars. She co-edited *The Sheffield Anthology: Poems from the City Imagined* (Smith/Doorstop, 2012).

Signless

'A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.' Wittgenstein

Think of those who shaped signs
out of silence and followed them
with ear and tongue.

'The earth was without form'
so one translation goes,
the breadth of it –

cut loose
from every item on the list.
But the place I want to get back to is *now*,

already *then*, replaced by *now*, and gone.
Snip off the past, snip off the future
and I fall to where there are no signs,

almost like the time I lay
in a Goan beach hut, stoned
and couldn't remember my name.

River Wolton

Earth Records (3)

For many years I've been researching eagles
that now patrol what once were no-fly zones:
roadside grass, the roofs of Safeways and Lidl's.
Exiles back on their European thrones,
sure as if gliding over Asian hills
and skeletons left in scraps of cloth,
it's rare that they plunge. Are those circling drills
on the ascending thermals work or sloth?
How did the eagles come to be the thieves
of my attention? The regal rodent-eater
soars over the results its prey achieves.
Take the Petersburg serfs. As they served Peter,
they built but never nested in royal quarters,
names lost from the list of authors.

Alistair Noon

(from 'Earth Records', Nine Arches Press, 2012)

River Wolton grew up in London and lived in Sheffield for twenty years before moving to the Peak District. She is a recent Derbyshire Poet Laureate and works as a writing facilitator and creative mentor. She received a Hawthornden Fellowship in 2011 and is currently Writer-in-Residence with Writing East Midlands. Her second collection 'Indoor Skydiving' is due out from Smith/Doorstop in autumn 2013.

www.riverwolton.co.uk

Alistair Noon has lived in Berlin since the early nineties, where he works as a translator. His poetry and translations from German and Russian have appeared in nine chapbooks from small presses. *Earth Records*, his first full-length collection, is available from [Nine Arches Press](#). His pamphlets *Across the Water*, *Animals and Places* and *Swamp Area* and his translation of Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* are available from [Longbarrow Press](#). 'Memoirs of Memoirs', his essay on translation, travel and the Leningrad sinologist Vasiliy Alekseyev, appears [here](#). Click [here](#) for Alistair Noon's *Archive of the Now* page.

Mother's Pride

Handy with a knife,
his preferred medium
was Mothers Pride plain toast.
This is the way the nuns
eat – soldiers. This
is the Protestant half.

Here's Omagh, Belfast,
Enniskillen, Dublin, Donegal
with Errigal hastily moulded
from Clew Bay, a crumb
for an island for every day
of the year, and Cork,

where John Mac lives.
Lough Erne's two narrow slits;
Lough Neagh a slanty
oblong poked right through.
A final flourish, grinning,
his *pièce de resistance*

was the border
which my frowning mother
quickly buttered over,
stabbing the bread,
drawing the knife
out clean.

Paula Cunningham

Paula Cunningham was born in Omagh, County Tyrone, and lives in Belfast. She won the Poetry Business competition in 1999, and a poetry chapbook 'A Dog Called Chance' was published by Smith/Doorstop that year. Her poems have been widely published and anthologised; she has also written drama and short fiction. A short story appeared in David Marcus's 'Faber Best New Irish Short Stories 2004-2005'. In 2011 she won the Hippocrates Poetry Prize and was commended in the Edwin Morgan Prize; in 2013 she was placed third in the Ballymaloe International Poetry

Competition. Her first full collection, 'Heimlich's Manoeuvre' is due imminently from Smith/Doorstop. She currently holds an award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, having done so twice previously. She works part-time as a dentist and is hard at work on her next poetry collection as well as short stories and non-fiction. She is also very interested in visual art, collaboration, teaching and translation.

Prince of the Sky

He rattles like a bucketful of boats
flying the inter-tropical front in his armchair;
a thunderstorm took the whole crew down
on take-off, his friend at the controls.
In Korea every passenger puked each trip.
He couldn't afford to
watched the meters *like a hawk*, he said.

He was madder than two boogers
when ground crew directed his tail assembly
into a tug. Flew out of Macon and fell asleep,
woke up over Ole Miss, Big Muddy –
right on course. Scraped his right wingtip
in the prop wash of the plane in front
trying to land at Abilene. The tower said:

good recovery.

He spits free and long now
slimy strings glisten up from his gut,
touch down slow, ugly as a mud fence
and built the same, wattle and slobber.
He's turning himself slowly inside out
this boozin' buddy, this prince of the sky.

Linda Lee Welch

St Hilary's Exile

Hilary's ink-stained forefinger strokes the dried skin
of a fig, nudges it from the plate into his palm.

*Figs are the flower of the ficus, he tells his wife
by the hearth, an inflorescence; flowers and seeds
bunch into clusters, the bloom obscured by flesh
and rind.* She watches him mull and rock his chair
on the scrubbed stone, bare feet tipping back,
then onto his toes – he rocks, and a weight like water

washes over her eyelids, salt-blue and ravishing.
She sleeps, dreams of him, a kingfisher spooked
to flight, landing his chair square on its legs, breaking
the fruit in two. He sups the meat, tar-dark pulp
on his fingers, lips sticky with fig. Shaking, he looks
to snow-fat pines, the flat earth lying upturned,
fallow. He takes the reed marking his page
and resumes his work to prove the divinity of Christ.

Angelina Ayers

T.I.C.

Small comfort,
when hurtling hatless along the canal
on a brake-free bike
as the temperature

drops well below zero,
that morning-chorus
escapes bamboo bars to crumbs
blow-piped sky high.

This is China where black pips snug
in white flesh
flash coal-eyed like snowmen's but
that even as I start to say so

in Chinese,
saying so in Chinese turns
gobbledygook
in Chinese.

No small mercy
that Santa soars above bikes and rickshaws
piled with fairy-tale leeks
or the extended family and their furniture.

Small wonder
that a cabbie pronounces *I love you baby*
at my pigin *Right, left.*
Straight on, don't stop.

Lisa Wallace

Cafe Absinthe

after Degas

The drain's reek
pushes us out of our building again.
He says they are mulched to the rim
with gulped-down dreams of the hopeless.
I think something shuffled in, bedded-down
and died in them.

And now we are here:
backed to the wall with the mirror,
ordering coffee, sitting like penitents
over the dregs of it more than an hour. No one's
complaining, no one demanding to face up
to the international situation.

I am considering absinthe
the green of city bridge sub terrain,
how the nets at the window set a haze on the drizzle,
the grimy mechanical churning of coins
from the arcade next-door's gloom. We order drinks,
will try to ride the downturn.

He says who can know
we will not do something brave and spontaneous tomorrow?
That we won't all suddenly throw down the reins
and shaking our heads clear leap from the merry-go-round?
But as the slurred and whirring tunes
well up again next-door

I know that woman in the mirror behind
has the eyes of the jacketed monkey and the soul
of it crashing its cymbals to the organ's grind.

Shelley Roche-Jacques

[The Hex poets include amongst their number:](#)

Linda Lee Welch is a prize-winning poet and novelist and lectures in Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University. She has two novels published by Virago and has contributed to poetry journals including *Ambit*, *Mslexia* and *The New Writer*.

Angelina Ayers is Writer in Residence at Bank Street Arts. Her poems have been published by *Poetry Review*, *The North*, *The Rialto*, Longbarrow Press and 'The Sheffield Anthology'. Her reviews have appeared in *The North*, *Antiphon* and *Orbis*. Angelina was editor of *Matter 10*, and is currently editing a book about Sheffield-born printmaker Leonard Beaumont.

Lisa Wallace recently graduated the MA Writing at Sheffield Hallam University, and is currently engaged in a storying project about displacement, one of obsessions and nature as healer. She lives with her son in Sheffield, and her poems have been published in several journals including *Matter*.

Shelley Roche-Jacques' poetry has appeared in magazines such as *The Rialto*, *The Wolf*, *Magma* and *The Boston Review*, and in the anthologies 'Ten Hallam Poets' and 'The Sheffield Anthology'. She is currently completing a practice-based PhD on the dramatic monologue at Sheffield Hallam University.

Act Three



Heronkind

Whatever is desired
is grown toward:
a glimmer of fish
at the margins of rivers
and streams, or in marshes
triggers a longing –
a muted, persistent
itch in the newborn
heron which
she feels at the base of her
fledgling bill, a sense that will
persist until the optimal
fish-spearing length is reached.
From this point to
eternity her dreams
are crammed with fish
or the nervy, darting
shadows of fish.
How much less complex
life would be
without this feverish
dance between
the wanter and the wanted,
though the truth of it is
that without fish
all heronkind would
be stunted.

Julia Copus

(Published with permission from *The World's Two Smallest Humans*, Faber and Faber, 2012)

Julia Copus was born in London, near to the Young Vic theatre, and now lives in Somerset. All three of her poetry collections are Poetry Book Society Recommendations. She has won First Prize in the National Poetry Competition, the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem (2010), and in 2012 was shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry. She also writes for radio; her first play,

Eenie Meenie Macka Racka, was awarded the BBC's Alfred Bradley prize for best new radio playwright. She is an Advisory Fellow for the Royal Literary Fund, and in 2008 was made an Honorary Fellow at the University of Exeter. Her third collection, *The World's Two Smallest Humans*, was published last year by Faber and shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize and the Costa Poetry Award.

The Covenant

This grey morning carries
the promise of subtle music:
rain sleeking cast iron
and running safely to ground.

Yesterday I climbed an extending ladder
bringing tools on a red canvas belt
and tended to my gutters.
I checked them for rust,
learning their structure, naming the parts:
swan neck, hopper head, anglepiece, shoe.
I screwed the eared sockets tight to the walls.
I tugged whipcords of ivy
from its rooting places in the brickwork,
hooked out the martins' nest
and tossed it down –
it splintered on the path.

I live alone now, and things are simple.
This is the covenant:
I keep the ladder ready behind the shed,
and the storm is earthed.

Jean Sprackland

(From Jean Sprackland's new collection *Sleeping Keys*, due out with Cape in September 2013.)

Jean Sprackland's fourth collection, *Sleeping Keys*, will be published by Cape this September. Her collection *Tilt* won the Costa Poetry Award in 2008, and she is also the author of a book of essays, *Strands: A Year of Discoveries on the Beach*, which was Book of the Week on Radio 4 and won the Portico Prize for Non-Fiction. Jean lives in London, and is Reader in Poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University.

A Letter From Tu Fu

While you sleep off the drink,
high Jumbos score a lattice across blue -
creases to fold origami heaven.

I venture out, alone,
only intending a lap of the park
but am signalled and fired
by the tennis of light
volleyed off the mirrors of turning cars.

At Wadsley Bridge I clamber to the edge
that measures the city
where I stand, level with the power-lines
and feel the skin tighten around my skull.

Below me, 90 feet,
the mangled char of a convertible
has been tumbled off the edge and rests prone
on the railway tracks
while time pricks like a beak inside an egg.

I count 3 butterflies,
a hovering kestrel,
and the *thee-ewe, thee-ewe*
of some spry, flitting bird.

I would roll up this day
with a sprinkling of coarse black tobacco
for you to smoke out the moths in your head.

Matthew Clegg

Matthew Clegg's publications include 'Nobody Sonnets', 'Edgelands', 'Lost Between Stations', and 'West North East', all from Longbarrow Press. He received an Eric Gregory Award in 1997, and was a writer in residence at The Wordsworth Trust from 1999-2001. He has worked as a youth development worker, a project manager and as an Arts Council Literature Officer. He currently teaches creative writing at Derby University and Sheffield University Institute of Lifelong Learning.

Verbatim

Inside she holds every voice
she's ever known. She could give you
her grandfather's last word,

her daughter's first. In that archive
you can hear a hundred train announcements
over the metal of wheels.

She can speak with the voice of a liar
and the voice of a truthful man.
They sound the same.

In lonely places she'll accompany herself
with the BT lady, next door's cat,
the sparrows in the hedge.

She's overplayed her favourite
to a crackle that could be sunlight, bees,
someone asleep beside her in the grass.

Suzannah Evans

Brick-Life

Cut from the clay of the big pit, blade-bitten,
thumped and smacked, stacked up, left for dead;

a comfort after a winter of frost, to be made
at last, lying in wait, waiting for the moment.

*The kiln won't kill you, they tell us, You're all
in it together, line-up, lie back, count to ten.*

We wake in a kind of Hades, our hearts hard,
hollow-seeming, and we hold our brittle breath.

We cool on the racks, regretful, rueful, tired,
the best of us are silent, the rest confused.

They call us brother brick and sister brick,
they come for us and find us uniform, a unit.

We cross a continent of country, our song
is *build we, build we, build we now or not.*

We make the world, we do what we are told,
go where they place us, in whatever bond,

and build the walls, hold the earth at bay,
culvert the rivers, shoulder the new roads,

tell ourselves we are happy, shout hurrah,
try to move but can't; try to think, can't.

Jonathan Davidson

[Suzannah Evans and Jonathan Davidson are reading as part of a Poetry Business event.](#)

Suzannah Evans was a winner in the Poetry Business Competition in 2011, judged by Carol Ann Duffy. A former editor of *Cadaverine*, she runs writing workshops and is currently Writer in Residence at Bank Street Arts. Her debut pamphlet, *Confusion Species*, appeared from Smith Doorstop in 2012. *Tough/tender lyric poems in*

which the language crackles with life whether addressing the urban or the rural and possessed of a truly exciting inventiveness. – Carol Ann Duffy

Jonathan Davidson works tirelessly on behalf of other writers (at Midland Creative Projects and as Director of the Birmingham Book Festival), which may be why it was seventeen years between his brilliant first collection and his second, the brilliant *Early Train*. *Thoughtful, lucid, deceptively simple poems... their eye is clear and their approach graceful... They find truths in the prosaic details of our lives – such as bike frames and Sunday papers in the garden. – Stuart Maconie*

On the day Obama was inaugurated

a spurt of dark blood
marked the final cycle of my life.
I didn't know then the egg would be my last –
that this was change – but the day felt full
of possibility. A man brought a canvas
he'd painted and helped me hang it
on my green and yellow backroom wall –
such exuberance, the colours stranger
than any I would imagine again.
He told me, later, there was a
charge in the air that day, a crackle –
how he'd longed to see me naked.
48 and all this was just beginning –
love, colour, the chance to get things right.

Elizabeth Barrett

Dolce Vita

The Tower

Siesta time in Vezio
but the hawks on their tethers
in the shade of the castle
stayed watchful

eight flights up, we bent over battlements
to the cardinal points: three giving onto
the sun-shocked lake, one to a huddle
of roofs below,

which was where I came up behind you
my gentle pressure responded to
by pressure of your own: no one around
why shouldn't we there and then?

but something in the sunlight held us back,
only in the cellar's
furthest, darkest room
did the right moment come:

the tower, the vaulted door at its root
and the peregrine
stretching out a talon in the heat
extending one miraculous wing.

At Table

That night, in Henry Fielding mode,
a citronella candle on the table
the lights of Varenna necklacing the lake,
we do the *Tom Jones* thing
of last course best.

As the sweet plate's pushed aside
your skirt's pulled slowly back,
what's sundaed there
brings me to my knees
to mouth a breathless grace.

Which opened shutters on the floor above –
to be as swiftly shut.
You simply pulled me closer
to the wall, pushed the table
out of harm's way. On cue,

the last Bellagio ferry broke in with a hoot
and crash of gangways pulled ashore.
Which might have been a metaphor
for getting up to leave, not slipping off
as we did then, to bed.

The Exciting Bit

I was born to fuck you: said, in thrall
before the seed-pearl spur of you,
the milky blindness of its eye;

while you, still book in hand, plough on
towards the plot's denouement:
Go on then, get on with it.

John Sewell

Elizabeth Barrett has published four collections of poetry, most recently 'A Dart of Green and Blue' (Arc, 2010).

John Sewell has had two collections published, the last, 'Bursting The Clouds', from Cape.

After

After the wind died I hungered for noise
anything but that stillness where nothing moved,
every leaf silent, and the ones that had been blown
like Shelley's *ghosts from an enchanter fleeing*
now huddled in corners, more like repentant sinners
ashamed of the mad dance they had been part of.

It was then we turned to each other but our tongues
stuck like the leaves against the hedge. A whisper
would have been enough but we missed the chance.
And as I went about my household tasks, I had to
make do with the sounds of the tap splashing, the clink
of cutlery and the creak of your unforgiving footsteps.

Liz Cashdan

The Railway House

for Greg Freeman

If I were to own it, this foursquare,
solid house, I'd fix a plaque
with a single word: *Fortitude*
to show the way it holds its own
between two streets
and the new urban clearway.

From an upstairs window
I'd slip through time, imagining
the features of fish dock lumpers,
their pale faced kids and wives,
sliding past on rails
to freedom and the Wolds.

As in some genre painting,
I'd sense the innocence
with which they grasp new-fangled days –
their faith in clockwork, uniforms,
the black and white
of *Bradshaw's Guides*,

leaving behind them
a trackless pathway that rises up
on brambled banks, the abandoned
corridor prowled by foxes
above which kestrels hover,
eyeing their chances.

David Cooke

Liz Cashdan lives in Sheffield and teaches at Sheffield University Institute of Lifelong Learning, for the Open College of the Arts and for the WEA. She is currently Chair of NAWE and poetry editor of *Jewish Renaissance*. Liz also does workshops in schools and is delighted that A-level Creative Writing starts in September 2013. Her most recent collection is 'Things of Substance: New and Selected Poems' from *Five Leaves* (2013). In 2012 she published 'Iceland Stories', a

sequence of poems about Iceland, with images from digital artist Pat Hodson and sound from Jessica Rowland, which resulted from a month-long residency in Iceland. She also has poems in 'The Sheffield Anthology' (2012) and 'Versions of the North' (2013).

David Cooke won a Gregory Award in 1977 and published his first collection, 'Brueghel's Dancers' in 1984. His retrospective collection, 'In the Distance', was published in 2011 by Night Publishing and a collection of more recent pieces, 'Work Horses', has just been published by Ward Wood Publishing. His poems, translations and reviews have appeared widely in journals including *Agenda*, *Ambit*, *The Bow Wow Shop*, *The Critical Quarterly*, *The Irish Press*, *The London Magazine*, *Magma*, *The North*, *Orbis*, *Other Poetry*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Poetry London*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *The Reader*, *The SHOp* and *Stand*.

Act Four



The Mutoscope

*Double Trouble, The Ghost Café, Late at Night
in the Bedroom:* each Mutoscope tells its story
to whoever steps right up, drops a penny in its slot

and cranks the handle. Mimicking decency,
the poster shows a solid Victorian gentlewoman
stooping to its glass as though sniffing narcissi

in a window box, her hat a fountain.
*A World of Moving Pictures, Very Popular
in Public Places,* it is, in fact, an intimate machine

whose jittery flickerings of marital war,
a monkey on a bicycle, or a lady being undressed
from a through-the-keyhole, what-the-butler-saw

perspective, no one else can watch
at the same time. Sir or Madam, yours is the hand
that squares the frame, undoes the catch

at the top of the reel and sets eight hundred
separate photographs tumbling into blackness
against a brown-paper background

but showing you each shot before they vanish.
Only for you do the two mute girls on stage
who falter at first, erratic as static

in the synaptic gap between each image,
imperceptibly jolt to life –
grinning, tap-dancing, morphing into footage,

their arms like immaculate pistons, their legs like knives...
It lasts a minute, their having-been-written onto light.

Sinead Morrissey

Sinéad Morrissey was born in 1972 and grew up in Belfast. She is the author of four poetry collections with a fifth, 'Parallax', due in September 2013. *The Mutoscope* will be published in The Journal of Irish Studies in Toyko and in Parallax. Her awards include the Patrick Kavanagh Award, the Irish Times/Poetry Now Award, first prize in the UK National Poetry Competition and a Lannan Literary Fellowship. Her most recent collection, 'Through the Square Window', was shortlisted for both the T.S. Eliot Prize and the Forward Prize for Best Collection and was a Poetry Book Society Choice. She lectures in creative writing at the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, Queen's University, Belfast.

Seated Figure with Arms Raised

Initial reports suggest
an innocent bystander
picked out of the crowd –
his unreadable face,
the bare detail of that wrist
straining to right itself
as he shields his eyes,
at pains to make us out –
but of course, on rolling news
nobody would trust
a changeable account
from an undisclosed source
of questionable intent –
and just as well because

later reports insist
that with a trained eye
it's possible to discern
through the protective screen
a device upon his chest
proving the man's a stray
from the ragtag band
caught out in a firestorm –
but of course, on rolling news
this too might turn around:
that could be a uniform;
he could be one of ours;
those arms could be raised
in victory or surrender –

and further reports exist
claiming the man as
martyr or civilian;
the thing itself or just
the raw material;
war criminal,
collateral,
gist, pith, gloss –
could be we'll never know
what he would make of us,
how things are looking now
from his side of the screen –

the story isn't done:
this one will run and run

Paul Batchelor

First published in *The Rialto*

Paul Batchelor was born in Northumberland. At Newcastle University, he wrote a PhD on Barry MacSweeney's poetry. He has taught English Literature and Creative Writing for various universities, and for the Arvon Foundation; he also works as a poetry mentor. He reviews poetry and biography regularly for the *Guardian* and the *TLS*. His first full-length collection of poems, *The Sinking Road*, was published by Bloodaxe in 2008. He has received an Eric Gregory Award from the Society of Authors, the Andrew Waterhouse Award, the Arthur Welton Award from the Authors' Foundation, the *Times* Stephen Spender Prize for Translation, and the Edwin Morgan International Poetry Competition. His website can be found here: www.paulbatchelor.co.uk

Sungrazer

“From what course
Falls the incredible comet: what cause
Flings the star babe after the flying star?”

(George Barker, *Calamiterror*)

Prologue

If there is to be violence, there must arise [line-break] a victim. What are called violent phenomena in the Universe have often been, historically, just explosions. The first stars to form after the Big Bang can be assumed never to have hurt anyone: fusing primordial hydrogen to helium, they remained quite innocent of the heavy elements essential to planet-formation, then life. For a star to form, there must be a body of gas and a shock-wave to compress it. The compressed gas will start to collapse under its own gravity, until its core becomes sufficiently dense and hot for nuclear fusion to begin. In the earliest stars, the gas was nearly pure hydrogen, and the shock wave probably an echo of the Big Bang itself. These early stars were heavy and hot, and burned through their hydrogen in a few million years, ending as very energetic, but completely harmless, supernovae, enriching the interstellar medium with slightly heavier elements. The shock-waves from these supernovae triggered the formation of the next generation of stars, each generation adding a greater concentration of progressively heavier elements to the interstellar medium, until planetary systems formed, and with them, living beings capable of experiencing pain.¹

It's tempting to think of the successive generations of stars as literal generations of a kind of alien life. A star is an immensely complex dynamic structure, held up against gravitational collapse by the kinetic energy of the particles heated by nuclear fusion in its core. It shows periodic slight variations in brightness, dimming and recovering in a regular cycle lasting roughly eleven years, but is capable of maintaining an average energy output constant to within a few percent for billions of years at a time. This vibrant, long-lived source of light and warmth, whose materials are mingled in death with those of other stars to give rise to new stars born in their composite image, seems, at least by analogy with life, alive. It could even be taken to represent a preferable – and sustainable – model of reproduction without increase, as if one could only reproduce when dead, and then only once, like the phoenix which is itself a symbol of the Sun's daily rebirth, or like the resting eggs released by dying sponges, whose cells recolonise the bare skeletons of their parents as soon as conditions allow. This would be a mistake. Dolly the sheep, born at the age of six without benefit of natural selection, did not live a long and happy life. Only the most massive stars end in supernovae: a smaller star, like the Sun, will give back just one desultory puff of matter to the Universe, the single expanding smoke-ring of a

planetary nebula, blown off as the bulk of the star's mass collapses to become a white dwarf, no longer a star lit by fusion but a slowly-cooling ember of carbon and oxygen, with nothing left to give. While it is true that the heavy elements essential to organic life slowly came to pervade the Universe during its early history, as the Universe ages, more and more of its substance is grinding to a permanent halt in white dwarves and other bodies of degenerate matter, capable neither of supporting organic life nor of seeding the next generation of stars.

The received idea of the Sun as a vast hydrogen bomb is only loosely correct. The reaction in which the Sun generates energy by fusing four hydrogen nuclei into a single helium nucleus is far too slow and inefficient to be of any use on Earth. The energy output at the centre of the Sun is of the order of 300 watts per cubic meter, which is on a par with reptilian metabolism or the rate of heat production in an average compost heap. The Sun is only hot because it is very, very large. A hydrogen bomb makes its helium by fusing two heavy isotopes of hydrogen called deuterium and tritium – the reaction progresses with devastating speed once it gets going, but requires a temperature many times that of the Sun's core to trigger it. A fission bomb provides the heat.

The core of the Sun is a plasma of hydrogen nuclei (protons) and free electrons, plus a little helium, with a central density of 150 tons per square meter. In the first stage of solar fusion, the high temperature and pressure induce two protons to fuse. The resulting diproton is unstable, and almost invariably and immediately splits back into two protons, curtailing the reaction. Very occasionally, before the diproton has time to split, one of the protons will decay, emitting a positron and a neutrino, and being itself transformed into a neutron. The unstable diproton is thus converted into a stable deuteron, a deuterium nucleus consisting of a fused proton and neutron. On average, a proton in the core of the Sun has to wait 15 to 30 billion years before being incorporated into a deuteron – if the reaction were any faster, the Sun would have burned through its supply of protons long ago. Once a deuteron has formed, it almost immediately fuses with another proton to form a nucleus of helium 3 – on average, this takes only a few seconds to happen. In the final step of the reaction, two of these helium 3 nuclei fuse to form a single helium 4 nucleus, releasing two energetic protons and a gamma ray photon. The average time taken for a given helium 3 nucleus to be so transformed in the heart of the Sun is of the order of several million years.

15 billion years : a few seconds: several million years. The first figure is three times the current age of the solar system, the last is many times longer than the human species has existed. In the middle, the length of a breath. The two ratios are as close as we'll ever get to an arithmetical representation of the phrase "Fuck off": the Sun gives life, and will take it, and will never know what it has done, or know anything at all, as the bustle of rush-hour Paris is invisible on the long exposures of the earliest photographic plates. The human is erased before it, the whole signature of life is drowned out in the blare it emits on all channels, the Sun which holds 99.97% of the

mass of the solar system, next to which the Earth with its creatures can be written off as a measurement error. Work fifty years in the Sun and it will give you skin cancer. Land on the moon during a solar storm and its radiation will kill you in an hour. Stand naked in the Sahara and it will burn your skin until every move you make opens a new crack for your fluids to fly out through into the killing air. I have done none of these things, but I am afraid of the Sun.

Peter Manson

¹A different history of the Universe might take into account the ongoing tendency of parts of the Universe to render themselves in some way discontinuous with their surroundings, as if fleeing inward towards singularity and away from the immensely plural outside. It has been suggested that much of the mass of the early Universe never contributed to the processes of star-formation at all, instead collapsing directly into primordial black holes from the dense and turbulent conditions that immediately followed the Big Bang. It has further been suggested that many of these primordial black holes would have a finite lifespan: the lighter ones, at least, would slowly lose mass through Hawking Radiation until they were no longer dense enough to qualify as black holes, at which point they would return their remaining mass into congress with the Universe, transformed to energy in a last, perhaps violent, burst of gamma rays. The advent of a form of conscious intelligence which renders its possessor capable of a direct and empathic identification with the idea of God, while making any attempt on the intelligence's part at identifying with the matter in which the intelligence arose seem immediately obviously silly and wrong, could be taken as the obvious next step for matter, for which no black hole could ever be dark enough.

Peter Manson lives in Glasgow. His books include *Adjunct: an Undigest* and *For the Good of Liars* (both from Barque Press) and *Between Cup and Lip* (Miami University Press, Ohio). Another book, *Poems of Frank Rupture*, is due soon. Miami UP have also published his book of translations, *Stéphane Mallarmé: The Poems in Verse*. His work has been anthologised in *Identity Parade* (Bloodaxe) and *Against Expression* (Northwestern UP). www.petermanson.com

A Curse on Heptonstall

Come all you demons, heed my call
to bless this curse on Heptonstall
where Pilot pens aren't safe at all
for stuffed with thieves is Heptonstall.
Please, let my couplets never pall
before well-cursed is Heptonstall;
for every ill, I'll cast a trawl
and dump my catch on Heptonstall;
may all vile things that creep and crawl
repair at once to Heptonstall;
let drunken bears and werewolves brawl
around the streets of Heptonstall
and then may they play basketball
with human heads in Heptonstall
while madness-fits like those of Saul
afflict the folk of Heptonstall;
let every storm and freezing squall
blow in their winds to Heptonstall;
may shite and fire and brimstone fall
on every roof in Heptonstall
while mortar rots from every wall
that holds a roof in Heptonstall.
May shingles wrap him like a shawl
who stole my pen in Heptonstall:
let pus gush like a waterfall
from all his sores in Heptonstall
and each sore bore in like an awl
through his foul flesh in Heptonstall
so all the fool can do is sprawl
and weep and groan in Heptonstall;
I'd hear him scream, I'd hear him bawl
and beg for death in Heptonstall
and set about him with a maul
to break his bones in Heptonstall.
O queue you fiends by Satan's hall
and catch the bus to Heptonstall -
my verse has just begun to stall,
so take your turn on Heptonstall:
you have the evil wherewithal
to serve them well in Heptonstall,
that cankered Pennine caul

of dandruff, Heptonstall
where pens get stole.

Ian Duhig

Ian Duhig has written six books of poetry, most recently *Pandorama* (Picador, 2010). He has won a Forward Prize, the National Poetry Competition twice and three times been shortlisted for the TS Eliot Prize. He works extensively with other artists and musicians, supplying text for composer Christopher Fox's *Dark Roads*, premiered this April at Tate Britain.

Dinner with Sharon Olds

Tonight the house is unusually silent.
I'm having dinner with Sharon Olds,
an intimate, low key affair,
and she's just in the middle of telling me
how she broke the news to her mother
that the marriage had ended.
I stop her there, uncork the wine,
pour it slowly into the glass,
watch it settle to a dark lake.
She says how she remembers the magnolia,
how on foggy nights it would stare back at her
like small moons,
like faces empty with dismay.
I set down a small plate of pear
and camembert. She pauses, smiles,
reaches for her wine but
her hand catches the water glass,
sends it spilling over the table,
over the words and the spaces between,
over the absence of him.
I'm sorry, I hear her say
as I roll the deep red wine round the glass,
breathe the scent of love clinging there.

James Caruth

Crossing the Salt

The thunder layers like ivy around the house and the lights and the film stop before the meal is over. A crack in the dark as the dog jaws a bone under the table, and the fast tick-tock of marbles gathering on the roof tiles as the sky falls lower, and the rain higher above the ground. Shutting the dog inside, its baying fading behind the door, we link arms, our faces shadowed under the umbrella and knock on doors to see how the villagers are handling the night, the one we made accidentally, spilling salt and crossing it with the wrong hand.

Jane Monson

James Caruth was born in Belfast but has lived in Sheffield for the last 25 years. His first collection, *A Stone's Throw*, was published in 2007 by Staple. A long sequence, *Dark Peak*, was published by Longbarrow Press in 2008 and his latest pamphlet, *Marking the Lambs*, was published by Smith Doorstop in 2012. His poem 'The Deposition' won the Sheffield Poetry Prize in 2011.

Jane Monson is a writer, tutor, events organiser and bookseller in Cambridge. Her PhD is on the prose poem and she is the author of *Speaking Without Tongues* and the editor of *This Line is Not for Turning: An Anthology of Contemporary British Prose Poetry*, both published by Cinnamon Press.

Becoming a hill

Stretched thin and pinned
by rock between my shoulder blades
I lie in darkness in a river under Castleton
my wetsuit ripped and gloves in shreds,
one cheek pressed against the smooth rock stream bed
the other grazed by gritstone from above.

I cannot move my head
and water gurgles in one ear,
drowning thoughts of grass and sunshine.

My mouth's submerged.
One nostril flares above the surface:
I slow my breathing,
calm my heartbeat.

I smell dead underground.

I have no toes, numb
fingers spread
ahead in search of space or light.

My veins are river.
My cold bones turn to stone.

Margaret Lewis

The Theurgy of Staring

Lady's Bridge, Wicker

I sink sleet into darkness
on grit and red bricks, sit

staring whilst the only voices shiver
with a madness smothered by iron air.

The Don oozes on; subsuming
spume that fleetingly pirouettes
whirlpools of tart black water-

ducks with raven throats paddle
rainbows through oil slicks;

ruined spires reach for storm clouds
beckoning them to earth.

A handbag floats
out of reach, prey
to the constant roar of weirs-

the white strips rushing between
gloomy ferrous blooms

where eyes fix a psychopomp
in the packed meanders of

nothingness:

Rush like spilt ink into everything,
drag seas to the aether
of skies upended by the rippling water.

Then earth to the beat of a copper conductor.
Shred the gloaming with white light
and cacophony.

The World's mass orbits
eyeballs that shudder
the Law into action-

*Move along now
please sir come on now
move along.*

The Don
oozes on
oozes on...

Benjamin Dorey

Calliope Concealed

boy's drawing
sellotaped on the inside
of his wardrobe door

entrails waxed flat on the paper
clumsy heart coloured outside the line

melting down, trickling onto the carpet
through his visceral knee length socks,
long sleeved tops, flared trousers

weaving back into the anatomy of that
white rectangle, paraffin smooth
the girl he'll never have,
concealed figurehead, coloured in
'bittersweet' hair, 'asparagus' eyes
enhanced with stearic acid,

rubbing off him
puella ludens,

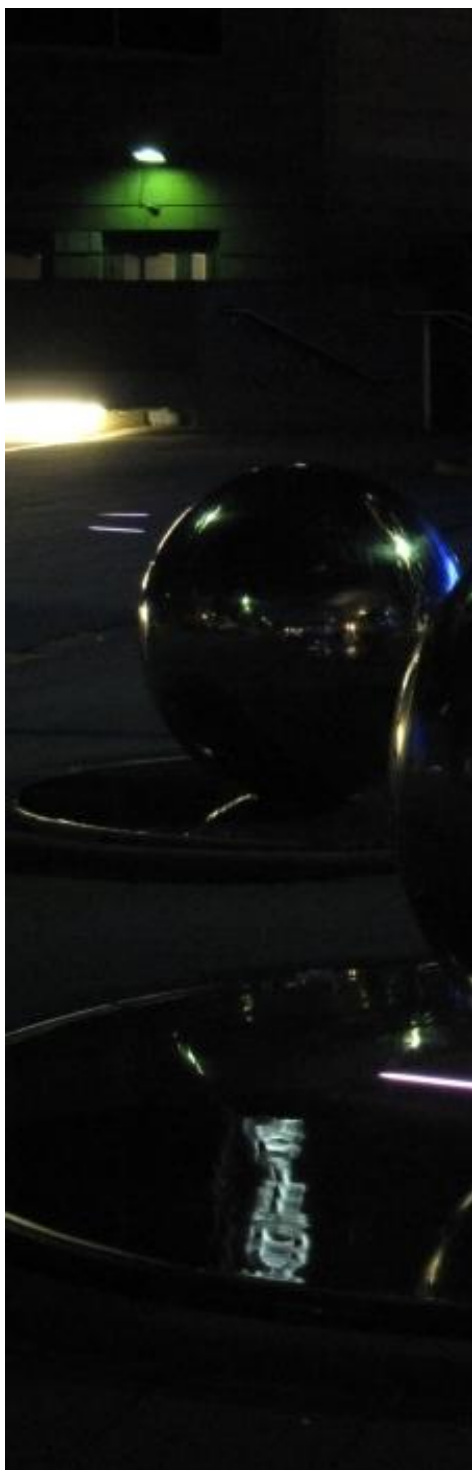
you are crayon.

Veronica Fibisan

Benjamin Dorey and **Veronica Fibisan** are students at the University of Sheffield.

Margaret Lewis lives in Sheffield but loves the hills – and edits a magazine for long distance cyclists. She is a member of both *Cutting Edge Poets* and *Tuesday Poets*, and is currently doing an MA at Sheffield Hallam University.

Act Five



from SKY SCRAPERS

ST

Stratus

off-ground fog low rush

hush drizzle

gradual hill wash out

gradual uniformity

ragged patches –

take your pick

at direction

slow drag and shove of voices

rolling low on memory wind

take your pick at direction

past looping push

pull luscious

sounds

betraying spiked nervy actions

drag and shove of

sublunary crooners staggering

space after 'time'

discernible outlines

no haloes though no

blue up above everyone in

lovey-dovey lazy river happy

just a

once forgotten love stub / another

cigarette

ragged patches

Today

sky uncomfortable

hunched condition

bird circling arrives in tree

gentle disturbance

desire making you pale

twisted

about to be late

yes, in a way
happiness ebbing within

little energy for depravity

the point is
to accept mood merrily

Geraldine Monk

The Return of the Logoclast

'Atrocities' I must have misheard
but who was meant by 'Trustees'?
Persons in philosophy
weary as nouns at political half-mast
with their ablatives awry?
The word-happy slapstick scribe
with nothing on his mind
but cosmogony & endtimes
the one whose writing I
keep finding in my notebooks
seems to know all about easy nausea
squalid fugue fog
skewed tobacco toccatas
the tyranny of half rhyme &
wands that do everyday wonders
the catchiest varia of
viral catechisms
trade hidden in an ultradense
triple-dip
circle of icicles
if they can see
it it's not really vacancy
but beast-boats & vision
intimate as antimatter
crumbed in supervision
PLEASE DO NOT POWER OFF
why
 the Manichaeans
didn't for the fun of it
make evil up

Alan Halsey

Geraldine Monk has written numerous chapbooks and seven major collections of poetry including 'Interregnum' (Creation Books 1995), 'Noctivagations' (West House Books 2001) and 'Escafeld Hangings' (West House Books 2005). Her 'Selected Poems' (Salt Publishing 2003) gathered together a substantial body of her longer sequences and in 2007 the same publishers brought out 'The Salt Companion to Geraldine Monk', edited by Scott Thurston. In 2011 'Lobe Scarps & Finials' was published by Leaf Press and in 2012 she edited 'Cusp: Recollections of Poetry in Transition'

(Shearsman Books) a selected collective autobiography of British poets. As an extension to her poetry she has collaborated with the musicians Martin Archer and Julie Tippetts. They have brought out two c.ds: 'Angel High Wires' (La Cooka Ratcha) and 'Fluvium' (Discus Records). She is a founding member of the Sheffield based antichoir Juxtavoices.

Alan Halsey's books include 'The Text of Shelley's Death' (1995) and 'Marginalien' (2005), both published by Five Seasons. A selected poems 1978-2005, 'Not Everything Remotely', appeared from Salt in 2006. His recent collections are 'Term as in Aftermath' (Ahadada 2009) and 'Even if only out of' (Veer 2011). Among his text-graphic works are 'Memory Screen', first shown at the Bury Text Festival 2005, and 'In White Writing' (Xexoxial 2012). He is the publisher of West House Books and editor of the poetry of Thomas Lovell Beddoes and Bill Griffiths. After 18 years running The Poetry Bookshop in Hay-on-Wye he moved to Sheffield in 1997. With Martin Archer he co-directs the antichoir Juxtavoices.

The Marble Quarry

For the second time in fifty years
I come to the Marble Quarry.
Last time, a boy, I came with my father.
Now I am here with my son.
Afternoon heat streams from the marble,
White light chipped from the earth.
At the quarry's hoist and jetty
Underwater abandoned altars,
Veined slabs, shine through the waves.
We eye up shards among the scarred,
Discarded blocks. I tell my son
How my dad handed me a monumental
Offcut, heavy as an unfinished temple.
We scour what's left. I pick a piece
That fits my hand, and hand it to him
Gingerly. It fits his hand too.

Robert Crawford

Robert Crawford was born in Bellshill, Lanarkshire, in 1959. He has published seven collections of poetry, including 'Full Volume' (Cape, 2008) and the collaboration 'Simonides' (Easel Press, 2011) with the photographer Norman McBeath. Five of his collections have been Poetry Book Society Recommendations and he has won the Saltire Scottish Book of the Year Award. Recently 'Simonides' has been the subject of an exhibition which has toured in Britain and the United States and will be shown at the Poetry Foundation, Chicago, this Fall. His prose books include 'The Bard' (Cape, 2009), a biography of Robert Burns, and 'On Glasgow and Edinburgh' (Belknap Press, 2013). With Mick Imlah he edited 'The Penguin Book of Scottish Verse' (2000), now in Penguin Classics. He lives in St Andrews where he is Professor of Modern Scottish Literature and Bishop Wardlaw Professor of Poetry at the university. He is married to Alice Crawford, a librarian working in the digital humanities, who is a graduate of the University of Sheffield.

Foxes

A passion fuelled by foxes cannot last.
Vampires moan in sweet unmirrored bliss.
A skater's joy could make a pond collapse.
Fox-love is a game of hit or miss.

I throw them chicken wings, rags of beef.
Porch lights will ignite when foxes run.
Our garden is a pool of disbelief.
Vermin have their holes in kingdom come.

The synaesthete sees colour in a word;
a tune is bitter almond, orange peel.
A fox's nose is cleaner than a sword;
our kiss, like burning bibles on a wheel.

Hail, as foxes gnaw their daily bread,
the winter pavement serving as a dish.
We snuffle out our boundaries in bed.
Oh speed me, Christ, another night like this.

A.B. Jackson

A.B. Jackson was born in Glasgow in 1965 and studied English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. His first book, 'Fire Stations', was published by Anvil Press in 2003, and won the Forward Prize for Best First Collection that year. In 2010 he won first prize in the Edwin Morgan International Poetry Competition, and in 2011 Donut Press published a limited edition pamphlet, 'Apocrypha', which was the Poetry Book Society's Pamphlet Choice for Summer 2011. His poems have appeared in the *TLS*, *The Guardian*, *Poetry Review*, *The Dark Horse*, and *Magma*. After many years working in libraries and knowledge management he is now studying for a PhD in Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University on the subject of polar exploration and contemporary poetry.

At Rotherham

Mary Appleby's night-dress
is snagged on a rock below Rotherham Bridge
and has caught the attention of Police Sergeant Ireland
who's been up all night and is crossing the bridge
to the Masbro side. Four hours ago
he was running up Bridgegate in the black and rain
and the river (he thought) set to flood the town out.
As he stops the stink catches in his throat.
For the past four hours
the river's been rocking Mary Appleby's
body out of her night-dress. From Rotherham Bridge
Sergeant Ireland can't see this and turns
on his way, his still wet notebook
holding the night's dead close to his chest.
Mary Appleby's body is later recovered
from a flooded garden and wheeled
to the station on a creaking cart.
Police Sergeant Ireland has finished his shift
and has fallen asleep at the kitchen table –
with his tea in his hand, his wife later said
(though she kept to herself how she gently
undressed him and got him to bed.)

Rob Hindle

From 'Some Histories of the Sheffield Flood, 1864' (Templar, 2006)

Rob Hindle's publications are 'Some Histories of the Sheffield Flood 1864' (Templar, 2006), 'Neurosurgery in Iraq' (Templar, 2008) and 'The Purging of Spence Broughton, a Highwayman' (Longbarrow, 2009). A new collection, 'Yoke and Arrows', is due out in February 2014 with Smokestack Books. He lives and works in Sheffield.

Meeting Kate Adie

*Private Lynndie Washington, serving aboard
USS Nicholson en route to Serbia and Kosovo 1994-7*

Boy brings mail is cute real clean.
Like the way he say my name.
Think they call him Jud.

Mom say trailer let rain in bad now.
Power keep cutting out night and day.
They long tails don't mind at all

and she don't know what they gone do
when welfare stop.
When do I get paid?

Sky stretch out like a long cool sleep.
Sea breathing deep,
birds fly by like they know.

I never told
that low voice lady
nothing.

Fay Musselwhite

http://usproxy.bbc.com/2/hi/talking_point/forum/323092.stm Kate Adie: We asked dozens on board the USS Nicholson and the USS Gonzales, both cruise missile ships, firing thousand-pound rockets off towards Serbia and Kosovo and most of them had not the first clue where the rocket ships were headed, what country it was, why they were going there.

John Greaves' Inventory, 1672

Herewith my goods and chattels.

Eleven quishions, two carpets
Bedding in the little parlour
And in the old man's chamber
A trunkel bed and hanging presse

Some bees wax, a chest
One range, a fyre shawle
One pair of tongs, a dossen
Trenchers, my wooden wares

And in the milk house two oxen,
Five kine, a bull and eighty
Three cupples. This is my
Inventory, Bradfield Chapelry.

Bill Cooper

Fay Musselwhite and Bill Cooper are running a History Poetry workshop at the festival.

Being Private

The scrabble of magpie claws stops.
Rain drums on the roof. And rain
pouring its deluge down the sloping window
wavers the garden into coloured streamers.

Birds still flit from bush to tree, so close
I'm in there with them.
This shed becoming overgrown is part
of their garden. Unlike the house

where people come and go, who open windows,
empty rubbish, brush paths, weed.
In here I'm part of the garden.
Secret but not hiding. Waiting

for words that might come to explain
this feeling of otherness and sanctuary.
And the rain must be there, as important
as a curtain round a hospital bed.

Catherine Benson

(published in 'Untitled as Yet', Smith/Doorstop 2013)

Leaves are just thin wood

No, I don't read French.
Do you have a translation?
I'm from Birmingham.
Let's go for a walk in the woods. It's raining.

Bring the billiard table.
I have the balls in my trouser pockets.
Can you manage?
Here, let me hold the door.

Yes I agree, the rain. Did I mention
the importance of parks in the black country?
It's not that interesting. Mind
the rosa rugosas, their thorns
and the climber with the orange hips.

All the other woods are memories
preparing us for this one.

If I tell anyone she'll kill me.
No, really – a dart through the forehead.
Look at my hands – people call it stigmata
but really it's darts.

We quarrelled in the autumn.
We quarrelled about the milk.
In the morning she left, took the bed with her.

Cliff Yates

[Catherine Benson and Cliff Yates are reading as part of a Poetry Business event.](#)

Catherine Benson spent most of her childhood in Scotland and now lives in Bradford. Her poems have been published in many anthologies for both adults and children. She also illustrates poems for children including, her poet husband Gerard Benson's collections for children, and recently illustrated two adult anthologies. She has won prizes in several competitions: the Peterloo, Buxton, Templar, Scottish National, TES, Oldie, New Statesman and Spectator, and been broadcast on BBC radio. Her two adult collections, *It Must Have Been a Sunday* and *Untitled as Yet* are both published by Smith/Doorstop. As to the subject matter of her writing, it rather

chooses her, from life experiences past and present. She's passionate about nature and has reared many a creature from birds, cats, mice to geckos, beetles, frogs and stick insects, of course not all at the same time! Though rather a techno phobe, she's excited about being in *Antiphon*.

Cliff Yates' collections include 'Henry's Clock' (Aldeburgh First Collection Prize, Poetry Business Book & Pamphlet Competition), 'Frank Freeman's Dancing School' (Salt) and a recent pamphlet from Knives Forks & Spoons, 'Bike, Rain'. He will launch his 'Selected Poems', an ebook from Smith/Doorstop, during Sheffield Poetry Festival. He lives in Cheltenham. www.cliffyates.co.uk

