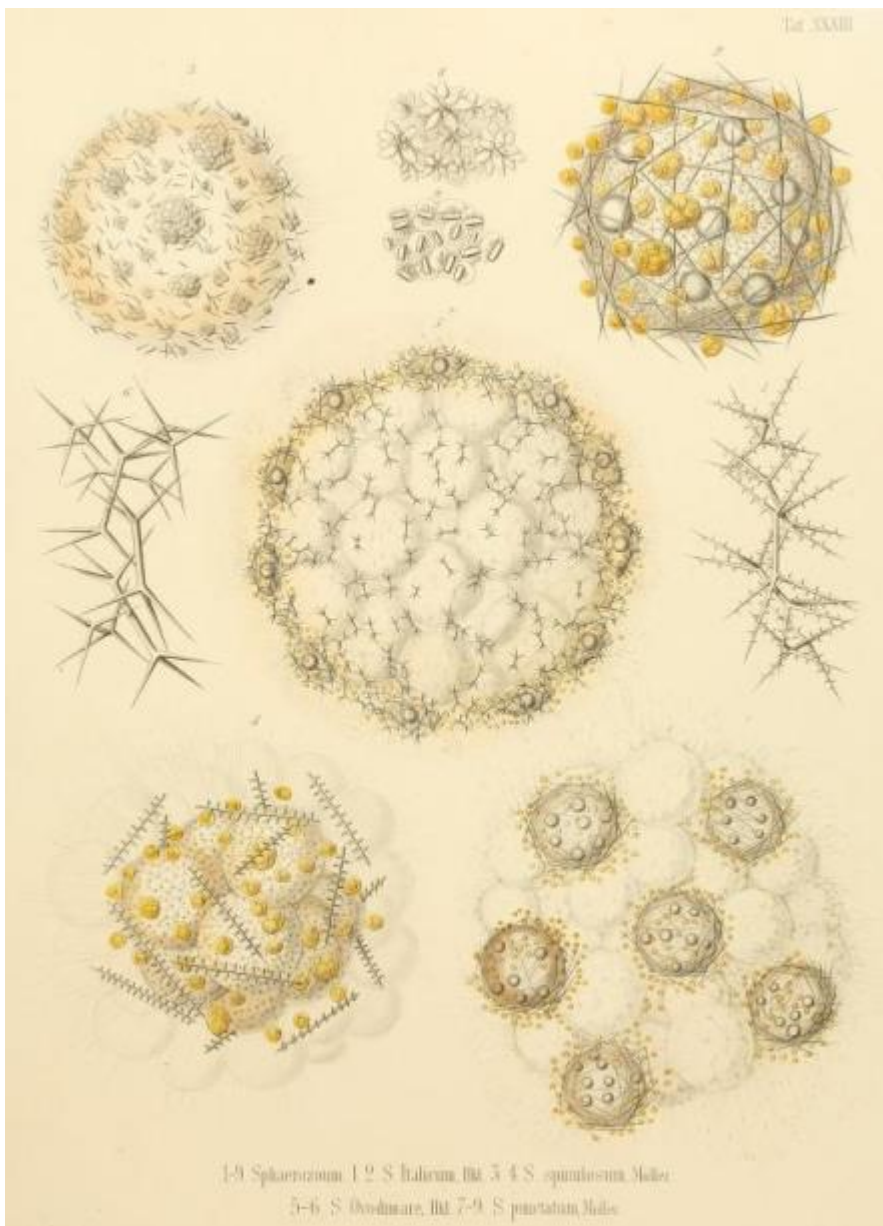


Welcome to Issue 9 of Antiphon

Autumn 2013

We're delighted to present another great selection of poetry, with new work from Janice D Soderling, Claudia Gary, Mary Buchinger and many others, a few of whom we've published before, but many who are new to us. We hope you enjoy their work as much as we have.



Issue 9, Autumn 2013

Issue Nine: Autumn 2013: Contents

Prologue - [Editorial Note](#)

Act One

[Sushi](#) - Jim Burrows

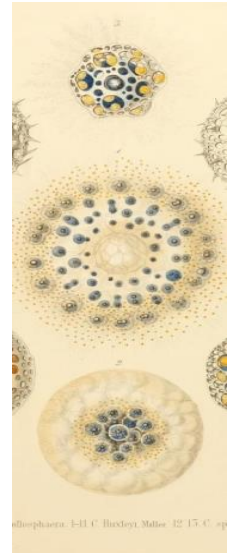
[In heart's museum](#) - Mary Buchinger

[Return to the Islands](#) - Michael Murray

[Willow Pattern](#) - Robin Houghton

[Song of Songs](#) - Maria Isakova Bennett

[Higgs-Boson Moments](#) - Claudia Gary



Act Two

[Post](#) - Kirsten Hemmy

[Long Distance](#) - Claudia Gary

[Lullaby for Pauline](#) - Sue Kindon

[Dear Sister](#) - Lisa Cihlar

[The Ball](#) - Beverley Nadin

[The Geese in Logic](#) - Ann Douglas



Interval - Reviews

[Helen Mort, Division Street](#)

[Al McClimens, The Suicide of John Keats](#)

[Roy Marshall, The Sun Bathers](#)

Act Three

The Flammulated Owl - Penelope Schott

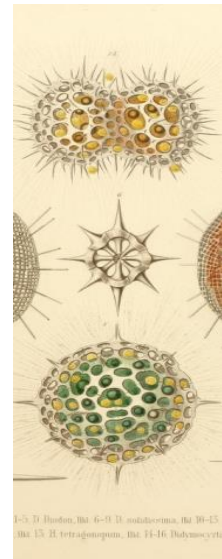
Neurofizziology of Sexual Wiring - Ellen Miller-Mack

Examined - Kathy Gee

How Dark the Clyde - Mark Russell

Girl with Jar - Marly Youmans

Pareidolia - Ray Miller



Act Four

Between the Skin of My Hands and the Things I Touch - Janice D Soderling

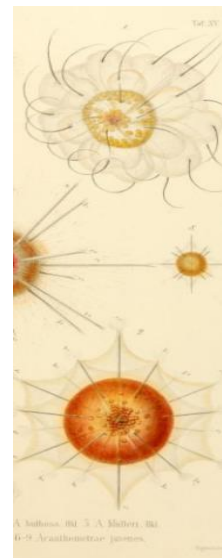
All I Ask The Gods - Mary Buchinger

L'Oro de Napoli - Louisa Howerow

Cougar - Carol A Taylor

The Splash - James Giddings

Broken Sunlight - Marcus Bales



Applause - Our Contributors

Editorial Note

This issue felt a little chaotic, coming together - or it may be that your editors' minds were even more chaotic than usual. It's that time of year. But seeing the poems together here, tamed into some sort of order, I'm very pleased with the variety we've been able to select - everything from the elegantly formal to the swirl of free verse. The subject-matter, too, intrigues: Ann Douglas's theme of time arbitrated by a patriarchal god, moving forward until frozen in a photograph - I'm still musing on the idea of geese, but very much enjoying the process. We also have Mary Buchinger's tightly exquisite 'In heart's museum', Ray Miller's search for something Ellen Miller-Mack seems to have found, Sushi and a Flammulated Owl – there are many delights here, and I hope you discover favourites of your own.

an•ti•phon ([ˈæn tə fɒn](#))

n.

1. a verse, prayer, or song to be chanted or sung in response.
2. a text recited or sung before or after some part of the liturgical service.

[1490–1500; < Medieval Latin *antiphōna* responsive singing < Greek, neuter pl. of *antiphōnos* sounding in answer]

An antiphon was originally a chanted or sung response to a psalm or other text in a Christian religious service. The term is now more widely used for any music where there is a call and response. We chose it as the name of the magazine as we liked the idea of poems that respond to each other, and it's something we think about when choosing the poems and ordering them. We would be interested in poems written in response to those we publish - there doesn't have to be a very overt link, just an indication that one poem has inspired the other in some way. If you'd like to give this a try, submit in the normal way and mention in your cover letter the name of your 'antiphon' poem and which earlier poem was your inspiration.

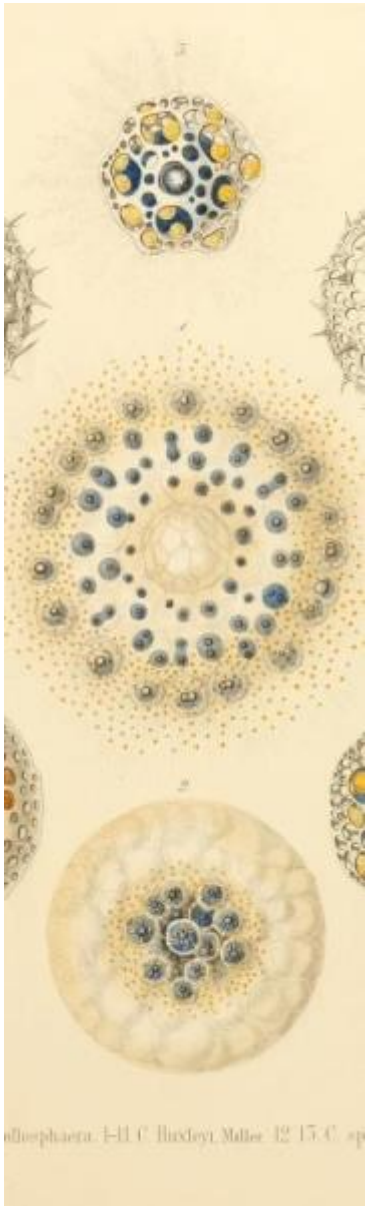
Rosemary Badcoe

The pictures for this issue are drawings of pollen grains from Ernst Haeckel's *Radiolaria*, published in 1862 and now in the public domain:

<http://publicdomainreview.org/2013/09/19/ernst-haeckels-radiolaria-1862/>

Copyright of all poems remains with the author. Manipulation of images in the public domain copyright R. Badcoe. No reproduction of any part of the magazine without permission.

Act One



radiolaria. H.C. Huxley. Atlas. 32. 15. C. sp.

Sushi

Utensils like a minuet,
a plate more like a picture frame,
and in it there's a work of art
that died for me, and even now
has not entirely ceased to be,
both animal and vegetable.

What is wasabi, anyway?
I wonder absentmindedly,
again, and nothing answers me.
I'm not even certain I like the taste,
I only know it's a green paste
that causes pain, but pleasingly.

I've never seen a yellow fin
Tuna, I've only eaten them.
And I don't think I'd stand for this
wide-open eyeball on a stem,
this delicate indecency,
if I were anywhere but here.

But here, in fact, is where I am.
And this is how they do it there.
And isn't this a lucky life
we're living here, in this immense
and many-toned metropolis,
where we can sample freely from

the whole nightmarish smorgasbord,
the infinite variety
of life and death, and never once
cause pain, and never once leave home?
Well, that depends on who you ask.
Or *whom*, if that's the way it is.

Jim Burrows

In heart's museum

of small movements,
each work must speak
for itself, yet also
to each other.

Beat
informs beat, and yes,
repetition is key here,
but, as in any linkage,
flush with variation
and gap.

In the biology
of being, expression
is a response that also
shapes what comes
after.

Constitutionally
bound and liberated,
each small movement is
its own small movement,
resting in each other, like
you

in heart's center
of me.

Mary Buchinger

Return to the Islands

It was the fourth day out, the tide had been slow,
the wind down; to make up time they rowed

and that night rested. The air was changing;
I smelt flowers. The sky to the West deepening.

The watch slept, only the tarpaulin awake;
sleepy at first, 'till the big drops broke.

Then all was uproar: scrambling, shouting;
I was, ah, back in the woodland, distinguishing

scents of violet, marsh marigold, hemlock;
and the catch-at-the-heart of wild garlic.

Wild garlic. And for that moment off guard
the sea sneaked long feelers in, then hurrahd

meeting sweet rain; and the nails jumped their post,
the caulking crumbled; wind took what was lost.

If any of me should return, let it be where
wild garlic grows down to the shore.
Just there.

Michael Murray

Willow Pattern

Two toads laid out in the sun,
parchment skin vacuum shrunk

clutching at dirt, didn't make it
to the shifting inch of shade

where a boat teeters on its hull.
The river has drunk itself. Only

photographers on the bridge,
ornamental now. Since the stink

of algae lost its grip, most of us
take the riverbed, mud channels

gone from curdled to craquelure.
A tour guide touts for punters

keen to hear of the hanging trees,
messages in bottles, suicides.

He used to work the docks, out
catching eels by night. Ask him

about the beached shells of tankers,
trawlers, container ships hulked out

by the estuary, sinking. Watch him
blink away dust, unable to weep.

Robin Houghton

Song of Songs

Chopped pears in a porcelain bowl
 ladled with cream.
Candles flicker
 not even a whisper between us
just your hand resting on mine
 a move away from holding me.
As my thoughts slip from cream to green –
we're under shushing willow
 in a June breeze, our faces fenced
in shadow.
 Darkness closes like a blind –
in silence we pass through a wet street;
 peppered lights. We don't speak
 but your lips brush my cheek like an accident.
I want to cling, but temptation
might strangle us. A sensation on my head –
 your lips again.
We move apart and walk into the early hours.

You are a forbidden prayer,
 so I look at wrought trellis on the steps
as we climb; stroke,
 whirl my fingers around ironwork.

 Purgatory: I breathe your breath,
 great gulps of life in a moonless night
and I try to kiss –
 but my lips are sealed.

Maria Isakova Bennett

Higgs-Boson Moments

1. *Glow*

I should have known: What always seemed to flow through and around you, just to make me shimmer, was energy and not mere afterglow.

2. *Dreams*

Then I was not imagining the field: Those dreams of skimming, planing, floating, flying, were vivid memories from before we had mass.

3. *Toad*

How is it that he trusts me as if he waits beside me for a bus? Don't say a word. Transformed within the cogent darkness in an instant when all seems possible, he starts to leap, is bolted to the ground by mass quickly acquired.

4. *Figures in Snow* (on hearing John Ellis' "snowfield" explanation)

Here are the ones on sleds, the ones with snowshoes, the ones in boots – but I, in strappy high heels, seem to think I'm skiing. The better this world treats me the more deeply I sink.

5. *Cat's Cradle*

In the last move you gather all the loops, then turn them to a spiderweb, invert it, pick one loop here, one there, and flip them over at once. They metamorphose from a wheel into a cradle – which you rock – and then a slip knot vanishing into a thread.

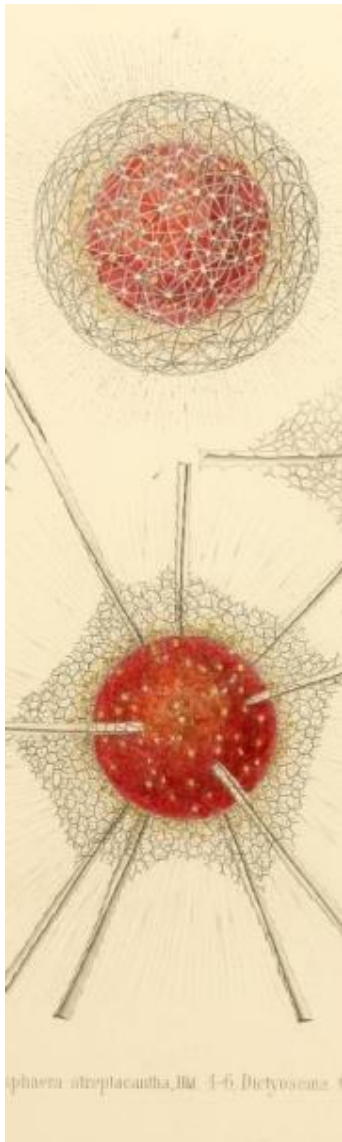
6. *Envelope*

You laughed to see it lying there. All you did was pick it up and catch one corner.

With barely a sound it's open, glue is gone,
whatever was inside has turned to time.

Claudia Gary

Act Two



Post –

Veni, vidi, vici. – Julius Caesar

My skin in the Sahel, here, browner
than it's ever been, informed by sand,
the assaulting mirror of the Atlantic
& an unreasonable sub-Saharan sun.

But it's still an artifice, some wound I
– & the rest of humanity – lunge
fingers & fists into again & again.
My white is so deep children sing songs

of myself, white person, *toubab, bonjour* –
& dreadlocked men try to hustle me
into the sex tourism game. My blood
is rich with empire: dreams white-boned,

blue-blooded. My DNA, diadem of pink &
sunburnt that these days, overshadow
all those earthtones. Bouquet of push/pull.
I have done so much & too little. I get caught

on all the damage, afraid of mistakably
unleashing that privilege hurricane always
swelling inside, filling me. I am, after all,
its eye. It is I. Quietude, another sign

that gets misread. I lurk in the dark,
luminescing like the moon, feeling it,
that sway. I wait until they turn away,
a loosening, grab what I see as mine, & run.

Kirsten Hemmy

Long Distance

He's talking to his girlfriend on the phone
beside a whirling, wheezing cappuccino
machine. He never has to feel alone.

Eliciting an unexpected moan
was more than he had hoped – but what did he know?
When talking to his girlfriend on the phone

there is no need for florid pheromone,
no risk of rearranging the amino.
Machines can neither make him feel alone

nor cure him if he does. He's on his own.
Closing his eyes, he senses a neutrino
is passing through his girlfriend and her phone.

She isn't here, though her location's known.
Embracing now a paradox of Zeno
and needing no machines to feel alone,

he wanders as a cloud, but in the Zone.
He's neither here nor there, so how do we know
he's talking to his girlfriend on the phone?
Even machines can tell he's not alone.

Claudia Gary

Lullaby for Pauline

I'm tired of hearing how
it comes out in the comb

your bun-ring is askew
you've lost the grips

the broken slide is anything
but gentle.

For once your knotted thoughts
lie still you say your hair

what's left of it is all in tangles
and so I brush away our differences

standing behind the bed they've rigged up
in what was the living room

from scalp to tip repeated strokes
repeated strokes from scalp to tip

Mason Pearson has the upper hand
daring to tease your uncoiled wispiness

snagging precious little with a clean swish
the spark of static all but gone

we summon up a silver rhythm
in the downward sweep
hush hush hush

Sue Kindon

Dear Sister

Cacti have both spines and flowers. I once saw a sod house dug into a hillside in South Dakota. It had prickly pear cactus planted on the roof to discourage grazing animals from eating there. I can imagine a cow falling through onto a kitchen table. First the four legs, then the struggle, and finally the whole heavy body tumbles down. The calico wife kneading bread does not expect that. If you decide to move to the desert there will be cacti and sidewinders. There are other sharp and poisonous things to consider. And road runners which are neither prickly nor poisonous and their feet are zygodactyl, which means two toes point forward, and two point backward. They may be coming or going. If you must go to live in the desert, leaving this moist land where skin ages much better, please accept my gift of leather gloves. The sun alone is enough punishment for the things you have done.

Lisa Cihlar

The Ball

after Rilke

How we small ones bunched together
on the playing fields of the city.
Back then we were giddy, still unsure;
our voices crammed the sky

and truth seemed something left behind
in silences. Take joy, being wordless:
shared and catching hold, it strengthened.
All the goings-on scared us –

passing cars, their measured steel,
house-high blankness of walls. We couldn't say
where are they, the real things?

The arc of our flying ball was real.
We'd know and raise our hands; the way
I remember it, a ball is always falling.

Beverley Nadin

The Geese in Logic

1 Geese

Innocence, the tender
unpacking
 of white
clouds our god sends us, rolling
east, gathering against
the planet's turn, to soften

and distract us –
 shadowing
hillsides, crossing fields,
answering iron,
a body's
model of possession.

Between keeping us
and losing us,
between us –
 it is He
who grants
and withholds,
 doles
and doesn't.
What sticky innocence falls
for this

and starry-eyed, keeps choosing it?
I hear the calls
axiomatic
 of His most
singular, chipped flint
of straight
 skim close to the earth.

They streak
from His left hand
as by the force of His own
reflection
 to be received
by the right.

2 Residents

What is it He wants?
pulling us
away from the motherly forgone
conclusion –
and breaking our rough
pioneering hearts

the youngest stumbling along behind,
gripping her memory
of before.

3 Rock

Because we know the Valley
can't be seen
as green in May
fruitful in autumn

without His discipline,
we strain to please Him.

Stretching our backs,
we inhale the monopoly
before us,
 the wholesome view
that sweeps the stars with winter
coming –
 the mountains,
granite blue, suggestive
of harvest, alfalfa baled, honey – darker
than any we've ever known,

and so sweet,
it'll burn the hair off
any latency
of a grief
 sitting alone
on a field rock.

4 Pyramid Point

Sometimes flight, sometimes twilight.
They broker the changes:

ponderosas bathing in sunset,
plating the river

persimmon then dark
getting darker, maternal

as the back of her coat
turning away, receding.
Only God is permanent.

It is His will
that guides us
from the top needle of Pyramid Point

where light focuses the end
of our long valley in the mirroring
white of its glacier.

5 High Water

How could she?
I stare at the river,
weakened by sorrow:

damn memory,
 poor secondary
sadness of an after-thought.

I'm told, move fast enough
you'll forget.

I stall among the stones
on the beach.
 A child is still a ghost
too dumb-struck

to fasten to the thrill of the river,
its fogs clearing by noon.

6 *Photograph*

The afternoon sun shines low
on the old ponderosas.
I pull over to park by the river.

But perhaps – He won't notice
if I make this once
of the slippery water, pumpkin
red,
a postponement.

The apposite and fitting and emptying
accompanying
current
under the trees and projection – a freeze,
once –
everything and all
my heart,
as much as it can hold.

Ann Douglas

Interval

Helen Mort, *Division Street*, Chatto and Windus, 62pp, £12.00

The cover of *Division Street* offers a confrontational black-and-white photo of a miner squaring up to a police line taken during the Miners' Strike of 1984. It has a graffiti-like font and the cover quotes Mort's poem 'Scab':

A stone is lobbed in '84,
hangs like a star over Orgreave.
Welcome to Sheffield. Borderland,

These, together with the chosen volume title, *Division Street* (a clever title, this being a central road in Mort's home town of Sheffield, as well as itself a clear metaphor) seem to make it obvious what this book is about: social division, political strife, the North-South divide, class conflict.

Not so.

Certainly there are elements of division, separation, difference, conflict of different kinds through the volume, but this foregrounding by the publisher rather misrepresents the book, I think. It's a presentation which appears to be a marketing ploy to sell the book through the drama of that particular conflict, using the friction of its social and political divide to promote a misleading idea of the book. In fact the title poem has nothing to do with the miners, or any socio-political agenda. It concerns, instead, a broken relationship. Only the single poem 'Scab' explicitly (searingly, viscerally) takes that political subject (though there are a couple of allusive moments placed in other poems, such as a man 'felled by bricks / in the strike' in 'Twenty Two Words for Snow'). Even here, though, the strike is not the subject, but the context, the framework for what is essentially a personal poem examining a working-class Northerner experiencing the privileges of an elitist Cambridge education.

The poem echoes exactly for me, as my home town, parents' class and Oxbridge education parallel hers. But I think the experiences and divisions personalised in 'Scab' will connect with the experience of many in the poetry-reading audience, the upwardly mobile, the educated middle classes, those with baby-boomer parents or grandparents, never having had it so good. Anyone who likes to hear to hear people 'telling me how far I've come' yet are nagged by the continuing sense they've somehow betrayed the place and people they've come from, or who feel the guilt of espousing something ostensibly elitist (the practice of poetry perhaps?) will find themselves here:

You're left
to guess which picket line
you crossed – a gilded College gate,
a better supermarket, the entrance
to your flat where, even now, someone
has scrawled the worst insult they can –
a name. Look close. It's yours.

So, personally, I'm grateful to Helen Mort for this. I couldn't have expressed so succinctly or aptly the complex yet bare emotions of my own experienced alienation or social guilt, as she does in 'Scab'.

So, yes, the poetry is about division, but it's the personal landscape that Mort most often wants to explore not the political. It seems to me the poems are more concerned with the poet's sense of difference, separation, than any other divide.

Sometimes they take us close to the poet's real experience (it seems). Sometimes we are deftly kept at a decent distance through a witty construction or an unusually apt conceit. I especially like 'The Year of the Ostrich' in this respect, even though it's one of the slighter poems. It's constructed to carry the single conceit that there should be (in the zodiac, the Chinese Year) a 'sign of the Ostrich':

for those of us with such unlikely grace,
who hide our heads, or bear the weight
of wings that will not lift us.

I try not to use words like 'brilliant' in reviews, partly because its meaning is devalued, and partly because it's an appellation hard to justify. But it strikes me that Mort's formulation here is, simply, brilliant. It's inspired and it shines. It's a perfect image requiring no explication, the sort of line that stays with you permanently once heard, as the exact description of a difficult idea - that particular kind of frustrated ability, flawed ambition, failed desire, inadequacy of aspiration where the very sense of potential holds us back. This poet may, perhaps, be saying she is shy of her abilities, but in this poem the ostrich is a very convincing swan.

Mort's poetry is full of subtlety like this, which is why I'm a little disappointed in the unsubtlety of the marketing approach – although it does seem to have worked, so perhaps there's a lesson for us all there.

She has an admirable delicacy of touch which refrains from overstating and can make a poem wonderful. One motto for the book, which is itself proof of the pudding, is:

Look close enough, you told me once,
and anything's significant. This morning,
when you showed me to the door,
your fingers touched my elbow for a second.

('Outtakes')

Mort looks closely, finds the telling detail, offers us a closeup from which we extract significance. Poems which may appear superficially slick or focused on the craft (and she is very deft – I've used that word twice now – for example, in her manipulation of rhyme, such as the 'buried' internal rhymes in some of the poems) belie the care with which tone and trails of suggestion are gently laid.

Perhaps she may settle for a simple puzzle. For example, the opening poem has the title 'The French for Death', using her own name to make another personal statement. We, of course, have firstly to translate it, then to understand it as the poet's name, then apply it to the particular workings of the poem.

Or 'Division Street' itself, which places a break-up in a youth-trendy part of town, giving us just the vaguest pointers to a back story - 'At the clinic, they asked if I'd tattoos' and :

your head-down walk
along Division Street, slower each week, pausing
by the pubs, their windows so dim you see
nothing but your own reflection.

It doesn't take much to construct an explanation of the break-up from this in terms of the ex-partner's selfishness, but we're left to guess whether what that almost-missed word 'clinic' signals, and all our guesses (AIDS? abortion?) breed empathy for the protagonist.

Running two frames of reference (possibly more) in a poem can also allow the poet to switch horses in midstream, creating that exciting shift of perspective or mood which can make (or perhaps break) an otherwise merely okayish poem. Mort is one of those poets always on the look-out for the odd or unusual in the world, from which an idea might spiral, but rarely contents herself with merely noting such things. They always lead elsewhere, and sometimes, therefore, bring surprise. 'Common Names', for example, seems a fun but limited idea: 'Somewhere there is a spider called Harrison Ford'. She pursues the idea of strangely named natural phenomena for a two stanzas, then vaults to a horse of a different colour:

there are minor planets christened
Elvis, Nietzsche, Mr Spock. Forgive me if I looked up
past your face, to see those nearly silver drops
make rivers in the dark, and, for a moment,
thought there might be stars named after us.

Not too far-fetched an aspiration for this ostrich divided from herself, I think.

NW

Al McClimens, *The Suicide of John Keats*, Ivan Brown Publishing, 18pp.

McClimens is a popular act in the South Yorkshire circuit of performance poets. This pamphlet, reflects some of the energy and wit audiences respond to in his live act, as in the sonnet 'Egress' which describes the difficulty of encouraging unwanted guests to leave, ending:

But what? In two minutes they had a sign.
It said simply – ‘This way to the Egress’.
Not knowing what this meant we had to guess.

I might have punctuated this differently, but I like the joke, nevertheless, and by not explaining itself, it creates an audience “on side” with the poet, exactly what is wanted in performance, though perhaps the sort of poem one only reads once in a collection.

But the witticism belies a dexterity of form, too. Of the eighteen poems here, eleven are villanelles and the remainder sonnets. Both forms are well-handled. The villanelle, of course, does well on stage because of its repeated lines, and McClimens capitalises on this, as in the volume’s first poem, ‘The John Keats Blues’ with its refrains of ‘Sometimes, y’know, I just think, fuck it all’ and ‘Vodka, vimto, paracetamol!’ Audiences approve such repetitions with the poetry equivalent of fans at a Queen concert when the anthems ‘We will rock you’ or ‘Another one bites the dust’ burst from the amps.

Does that mean that these poems are merely throwaway wit, built to their rhymes, elbowing out any serious intent? Well, there’s a fair bit of playfulness in the book, yes, but McClimens is also pushing it a little deeper than oneliners. One core idea is a reimagining of Keats. In his introduction he says, ‘what if Keats had better management, an agent, someone to look after his image...what then?’ McClimens, tongue in cheek, puts Keats into contemporary jeans, and pairs him with Hendrix, Cobain, Winehouse. He has a point, in fact – Keats in the contemporary world would have flared and burned in quite a different way from the depression, frustrations and final sense of failure he appears to have felt in 1821. There is nothing comic in the final poem, the title poem ‘The Suicide of John Keats’, which is essentially a lament, recording key details of the poet’s death. It’s not a profound poem, being largely descriptive of the event, but I think there is a real sense of loss within it. Loss, of course, can be well served by the villanelle and perhaps a poem like this will be appreciated by open mike audiences too, given its essential simplicity.

McClimens’ poems emerge from two impulses, I think. On the one hand there’s popular culture, revamped, almost in a Pythonesque concatenation of ideas, through the juxtaposition of cultural references with some hitherto unconnected, usually serious, plane of thought. Result, humour. ‘Dirty Harry Tries to Write a Sonnet’, for example, begins with a clever joke:

I know what you’re thinking. Now did he pen
Six lines or only five?

and manages to sustain the idea, pretty cleverly in my view, throughout. There’s more than punning wit here. It takes real intelligence to build a sonnet about writing a sonnet in a way which is not tired, is able to sustain the Dirty Harry conceit throughout and makes, by my count, three major jokes en route. It’s not the sort of poem we’d publish in *Antiphon*, I expect, but it is the sort of poem that makes you wish you were an editor of a light verse magazine, because it’d be straight in there.

McClimens' other motivation seems to be human pathos, a certain wistful regret. 'The Suicide of John Keats', 'Climbing the Matterhorn' 'Until They Break Your Heart' and 'Requiem for A Cambridge Moment' are all wistful, nostalgic, regretful poems. These seem more telling than the comic, more human and more likely to be re-read. True, they touch on different subjects but they nevertheless seem to come from the same mood in the poet, a desire to characterise loss. I did feel that there might be better poems if the formal constraints were perhaps relaxed a little, so looser forms might serve this side of the poet better, but even so the emotional content is clear.

And perhaps that's why the humour is so prevalent, too. Its use protects the writer from being too closely connected to his subject. So I wonder what removing the witty cultural references might result in, what a less raucous, more considered collection from this poet might look like, with the clever stuff excised and the emotional stuff fully engaged. Which is not to say that it's not very funny at times: it is. But I get the feeling two poets are working here, and perhaps they should each be given their own separate, opportunity.

NW

Roy Marshall, *The Sun Bathers*, Shoestring Press, 62pp, £9.00

Roy Marshall first came to my attention when we published him in *Antiphon*, in issue 3 and again in issue 8. This is his first full collection after his pamphlet 'Gopagilla'. His subjects range freely, including his experiences as a nurse, nature observation, and family history. The language and telling of the poem's story are generally straightforward, though often deceptively simple – his choice of vocabulary is often superb and deals with its subject matter with subtlety. He has an ability to get the heart of the poem through image and the sparsest lines of description – for example, the way a child can live completely in the present is beautifully captured in a few lines in 'Dandytime'. This adroitness works best when there is an undercurrent of some further event or emotion beneath the obvious, as here in 'Careers Advice':

His beak dirty orange, the colour of seventies
sports car glass fibre, enveloped in my palm,
comfortable as a carved cane-top.

I squeeze out the sponge, skim the dark
sleeved neck, chase oily dreck from the down
of his chest. This one doesn't object, and this

we have in common; I dredge up the careers
officer as he plumped for tractor driving
while I sat and eyed him, mute as a swan.

Marshall can narrate with great delicacy and conciseness, setting up the scenario with care and paring the material down to the absolute essentials for his purpose. In poems like

'Hawk's Eye' this works superbly, contrasting the sharpness of the bird's eye with man-made imaging devices, ending with:

No lurid thormal image willk capture the jolt
to the shrew's heart or the snatched plum
of its shadow rising beneath a drape of wings.

A few of the poems are a little slight: in 'Floodplains', or 'Hare', the ideas and vocabulary feel less fresh – the one with mirrored sky, the next mirrored beams. The deliberate use of everyday language gives the reader instant delight in the recognition of the emotion displayed, but for me his work really soars when it reaches further for the perfect metaphor, such as that 'snatched plum'. One I very much enjoyed for its flights of imagery was 'The Catch', a poem about shoals of fish (though the word 'fish' is never mentioned) invading Midland towns where the final metaphor is left delightfully oblique.

There is a short section of five poems centered around the life of Leonardo da Vinci which is interesting and contains some lovely phrases: 'Sketched skulls rest in margins,/brains trail fine-roots down the page' but which feel more superficial than the other poems, reading more as the poet's admiration of Leonardo than offering any particular insight into his work or technique. Marshall's more personal love poems or those about meeting distant relations and learning of their history are told with enormous sensitivity and delicacy:

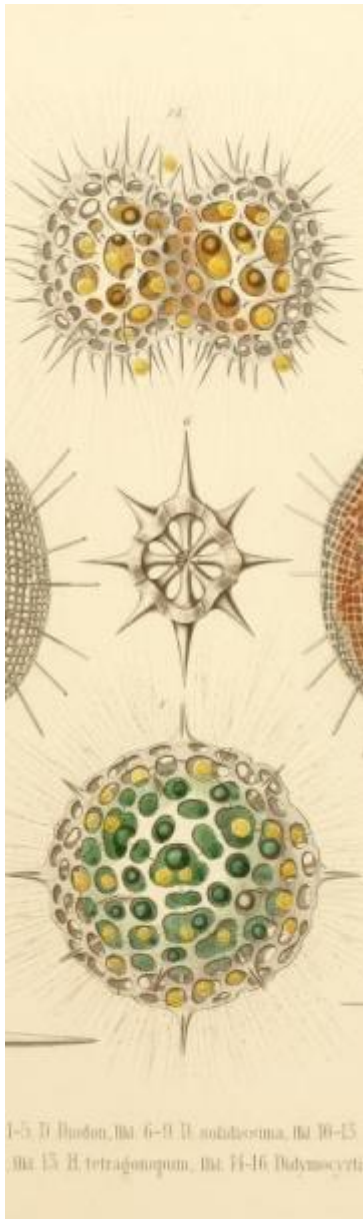
The valley draped in wood-smoke webs,
my hair ruffled by his hardened hand,
the welcome I had never known till then,
when all the men of Italy loved me back.

and he can capture character with a few strokes of the pen.

I look forward to further work where Marshall stretches himself a little more – perhaps longer poems with more nuanced emotion and purpose – (I feel this book is from a poet just beginning to discover what he is capable of) – but there is a great deal here to admire and enjoy.

RB

Act Three



The Flammulated Owl

1

Some say the world is made of circles.
Others say lines. Consider:

the winter lawn with its broken leaves
and the mower stored in the shed,

the line I trace from the moon to Venus,
true as the line from birth to death,

or my raised arms forming a circle
able to contain the whole sun.

I asked the squirrel scooting on a wire.
He stared with round eyes.

I asked a salmon returned from the sea
but the salmon was red and dying.

2

Ice melted off roofs.
Blue opened

and the mountain came out to play.
From this end of the valley,

I rubbed my metaphorical cheek
against new snow.

Remember your grandmother powdered and soft?
The distant slopes felt like that

but with sharp rocks at the top.
My nana dwelt on the davenport and ruled the world.

I was the obedient grandchild of terror. I believe
in magic.

3

A nocturnal owl about seven inches tall.

Deep *hoot* from the top of a pine tree.

Facial disc flamed with chestnut or rust.
Moon's disk pricked by needles.

Bare nest without feathers or twigs.
This quilt I invent out of dark.

How I glide toward night over soft duff,
an owl weighing just two ounces,

feeding past dusk on crickets and moths,
moth dust stuck to my beak.

Come owl dawn, I'll burrow into this pine,
my human tongue already on fire.

Penelope Schott

Neurofizziology of Sexual Wiring

Fizz flew through my pre-synaptic axon
(resembles a garlic toe)
where your touch crouched like a viron
under an avalanche of rage. "Love-me-fool":
a dopey dopamine derivative of Yeats leapt
across the synapse, landed future-tense.
Death to the feedback loop and our particles.
Dust disrupted connectivity to my soul.
Migraines, visual disturbances.
Can't see your face in my mind.

Synaptic vesicles survived! Fizzed on.
Counting the times I threw my left leg
over your right (3079)
ignites primitiva oocytes
endorphin-moniactal primitiva oocytes
lub-dub deep in our currency. Eleven years
after the last O –
deep as the ocean. As my saline pleasure.

Ellen Miller-Mack

Examined

The Corn Laws, never needed now,
recall the rub of scuffling elbows.
Rust-red carpets laid out on the lawn
were musty from the cycle shed.
Then Glaciation, with the scent
of orange blossom, raspberries,
of dew-damp earth, of apple shade
and Cox's Orange Pippin.
Finally, the rhythmic roll of syllables,
the tongue and ear of Bovary,
of Molière, whose yellow *pensées*
laughed beside the lemonade.
Revision wasn't wasted then;
suffused with hormones, seventeen.

Kathy Gee

How Dark the Clyde

There is a road that leads
from the halogen paths of night,
a curl of tarmac to nothing
live or attended or fruitful,
its silent factory so far
from pubs and fractured pavements
you would have to know
it was there before turning,
else you might mistake it for
another forgotten legacy
of sweat and alcohol,
of early mornings, smoke,
sandwiches and fellowships.
Down there the river runs
beetle-black against the rim
of one parish breaking
against its neighbour.
A man can park a car there,
play music, fiddle with keys,
be unheard, unseen, listen
to the low lap of water rushing
about its important business,
luring all down to its womb-depths,
take a short drive,
burn but a spurt of oil.

Mark Russell

Girl with Jar

You carry your head high on the stalk of your neck, as if
you were carrying a jar of something precious
(a small Diogenes, perhaps, who slept inside a jar
at night, and searched the world with a lantern by day)
that must be held up high to the sun or the eye of God
like a gift – a jar of emeralds? With spaces
in between like the labyrinth of wrinkles in your mind:
like the labyrinth I searched today, at the last
bursting on the center with its radiant lines pointing
outward and away, and its marble girl, barely
emerged from the stone and still so heavy with her white sleep...
What was I saying? Oh, you, was it? You with your
ballerina walk, with your hands making love to the air,
your green, invisible gems held up for the world
to see and admire? So hard to believe you could ever
have ebbed and been lost in the poured tide of the years.

Marly Youmans

Pareidolia

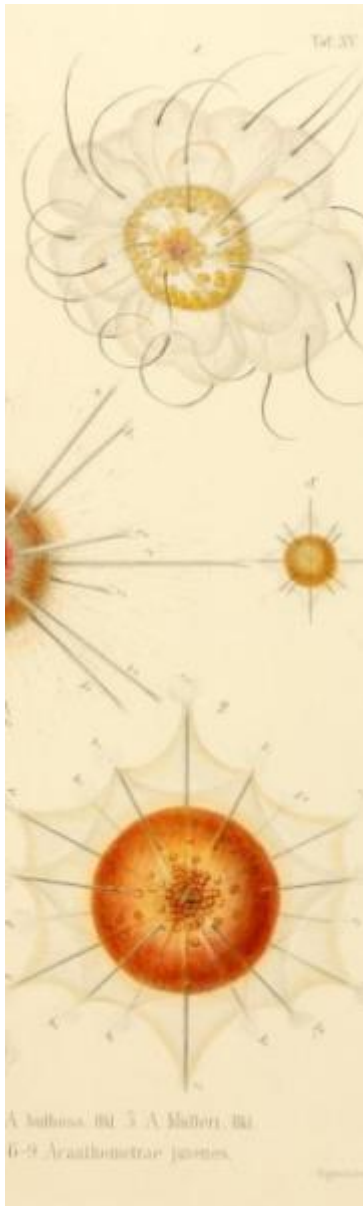
Napoleon's Hat is there, so they say,
on the pink granite coast where water's weight
has rounded rocks to a sculptured flesh
of frozen rosé etched into shapes
of Turtle, Bear and Elephant.

We took the customs officers' path
and came upon an Upturned Foot
and The Pile of Crêpes. At Ploumanach
two scuba divers, female, French,
emerged crablike and climbed the ramp,
unzipped each other with practised knack.
But we couldn't find Napoleon's Hat.

At our house I browsed the internet
and found it's a sexual act or position
involving a bloke laid on his back
beneath a pair of embracing women.
I've studied photographs this way and that,
thought long and hard about going on back
but I just can't see it myself.

Ray Miller

Act Four



Between the Skin of My Hands and the Things I Touch

Observe this heavy bowl of clay,
these sun-warm plums
moulded for hand and mouth.

Remember my fingers on the aubergine,
remember its texture, its hard softness.
The furry stalks and the swelling tomatoes.

A strict arrangement of the knife and fork,
plates stacked firmly in the cupboard
incurious spoons in their plastic beds;

familiar groupings of inanimate things,
orderly as the ticking of the clock,
precise as a surgical seam.

My heart engorges, breaks again.
A quick opening and closing of doors
in this limbo between fall and spring.

You sleep in my fingertips.
You wake so easily
and reach for me.

Janice D Soderling

All I Ask The Gods

All I ask the gods is that I should ask nothing of them

– Jose Saramago

I stand on summer's beach, painting my sons' young bodies
with lotion, their long, boated limbs, bone-tipped,
once smaller than toes, still unfolding symphony-like,
improvised and composed. I listen, ears tilted, the white
viscous liquid clinging to my fingers, to their skin.

These perfect bodies, reckless as Icarus, improbable
as seraphs, as tempting of hope and devotion, will play
in salty oceans, play on, twining primal melodies,
winging me, who will want to see, what next?
what next? winging me, me willingly, to my end.

Mary Buchinger

L'Oro de Napoli

At the no-star hotel, my husband extols
the room's former glory, art deco
mirrors, the bathroom's marble floor.
I check the door's lock, lay a towel
on the bed sheet, cover the cigarette burn.
I will sleep fully clothed, should have clued in
when the desk clerk asked if we were booking
for the night. We are so not money.
I am so not into grubbing. My husband
opens the large casement windows. *Ecco!*
Imagine Sophia Loren, Vittorio De Sica.
I envy his generous, impulsive streak.
High above the narrow street, lines of wash,
long-sleeved shirts, tea towels are strung
from one apartment to another. How is it
these women trust their work
won't be spattered with droppings? A pigeon
alights on our sill. An iridescent feather
falls to the floor. I rip a page from our guidebook,
fold in the feather, let it drop to the street.

Louisa Howerow

Cougar

Old man, I should be flattered, but I'm not,
although it's true
that compliments for me these days are few
and never were a lot.

With half a chance you'd eat me up, you say.
What else is new?
It's only ever dried-up husks like you
give me the time of day.

Up close I'm younger than I may appear.
The inner me,
a girl you and my mirror cannot see,
holds out for Richard Gere.

Carol A Taylor

The Splash

It comes back to me sometimes; his body
pulled from the dirty pond, algae dripping
from an elbow, weed tangled around knees.

He'd been screeching about the garden
firing shots from his polystyrene plane,
us adults bickering in the kitchen –

the weight of a peach against a plum,
if Charlotte Church was the antichrist,
a spud that looked like Jesus –

and outside the splash, a gasp breaking
through his own wake like the pressure
released from a fizzed can of coke.

A stillness washed over everyone
when we saw the wooden toggle of his coat
bobbing, like a buoy on an ocean.

James Giddings

Broken Sunlight

*Something isn't right, she finally said,
But I can't tell you what I think is wrong.*
His posture showed he hadn't understood,
but he was not the sort to lose his head –
and if he were, he'd waited way too long.
She left as if she meant to leave for good.

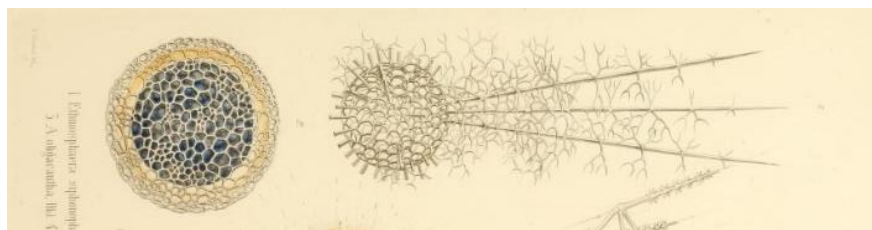
So there, amid the kitchen's early gloom,
he breakfasts on espresso for his nerves
and watches, while the beveled glass appears
to break the sunlight glittering through the room,
the icy drops on awnings' scalloped curves
that grow until they droop like fattened tears.

Hunched, crossed arms on uncrossed knees,
he thinks about those liquid points of light
that hang as if it's they who need to think –
how, slowly bulged with brightness, each one frees
itself in tiny flashing bursts of white
that prism through the glass and make him blink.

And, blinking at those droplets' rainbowed streaks
that leave, as she left, neither note nor trace
besides a little flash in a brightening sky,
he sits with tear-shaped shadows on his cheeks
and broken sunlight streaming down his face
and still, with all that help, he does not cry.

Marcus Bales

Contributors, Issue Nine



Maria Isakova Bennett studied Creative Writing with the Open University 2008-2009, and at Lancaster University 2010-2012 from where she graduated with an MA in December 2012. In the past year she's had poetry shortlisted in Wirral Festival of Firsts, been commended in *The New Writer* poetry collection prize, and had poetry published in *The New Writer*, *Orbis*, *Crannog*, *Envoi*, *The Poetry Bus*, *Boyne Berries*, and (forthcoming) *Prole*. She's currently working on a collection of short stories and linked poems.

Marcus Bales Not much is known about him except that he lives in Cleveland and his poems have not been published in *New Yorker* or *Poetry*.

Mary Buchinger's poems have appeared in *AGNI*, *Booth*, *PANK*, *Nimrod*, *Slice*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Versal*, and other journals; she was the recipient of New England Poetry Club's Daniel Varoujan and Firman Houghton Awards. She is Associate Professor of English and Communication Studies at MCPHS University in Boston.

Jim Burrows lives in Cordell, Oklahoma. His poetry has appeared in *Measure*, *32 Poems*, *Angle*, *Passages North*, and other journals.

Lisa J. Cihlar's poems have appeared in *Blackbird*, *The South Dakota Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, and *Southern Humanities Review*. She has been twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her chapbook, 'The Insomniac's House', is available from Dancing Girl Press and a second chapbook, 'This is How She Fails' is available from Crisis Chronicles Press. She lives in rural southern Wisconsin.

Ann Douglas has had poems published in *Cake*, *The Colorado Review*, *The Meadowland Review*, *Nimrod*, *The Georgia Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Cutbank*, and other journals. Her first book, 'After', which won the Seattle and King County Arts Commission Publishing Award, was positively reviewed in *Publishers' Weekly* and other literary magazines. She is a Squaw Valley Writers' Community member, and has benefited from residencies at Yaddow and Ragdale. She also has an MFA from Columbia University, and works in Washington State as a psychotherapist in private practice.

Claudia Gary writes, edits, sings, and composes tonal chamber music and art songs, near Washington DC. A 2013 semifinalist for the Anthony Hecht Poetry Prize (Waywiser), she is the author of 'Humor Me' (David Robert Books 2006) and several chapbooks. Her poems appear in many journals, and in several anthologies including 'Forgetting Home' (Barefoot Muse Press 2013) and 'Villanelles' (Everyman Press 2012). She also writes articles on health

for *The VVA Veteran*, *VFW*, and other magazines. Claudia founded and hosted the 1990s Leesburg Poetry and Chamber Music Series, and has given panel presentations on poetry and music at the West Chester University Poetry Conference. In 2014 she will offer classes at The Writer's Center (writer.org).

Kathy Gee started writing creatively (but secretly) in 2007 and joined the Worcestershire Stanza in 2011 when she was a finalist for the Worcestershire Laureate. Since then she has had some 20 poems accepted by various magazines and anthologies and was organiser for the Avoncroft Museum poetry trail in 2012. Her blog www.wordstring.co.uk is an experimental vehicle for occasional video poems.

James Giddings is currently doing his MA Writing at Sheffield Hallam University, funded by the AHRC. He has been published online and in print by the likes of *The Cadaverine*, *Black and Blue* magazine and *Myths of the Near Future*. One day he'd like to get a job, but he's not sure if they'll exist by then.

Kirsten Hemmy's first book of poetry, 'The Atrocity of Water', was published by Press53 in December 2010 as a Tom Lombardo selection. Her work has appeared in many journals, including *The Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Bellingham Review*, *Chariton Review*, *Amistad Review*, *CaKe Magazine*, *RKvry Quarterly*, and elsewhere. She received the Linda Flowers award for social activism in writing; for 2012-2013 she was a Fulbright Scholar. She currently lives and teaches in Dakar, Senegal.

Louisa Howerow's latest poems appeared in *The Lindenwood Review*, *Naugatuck River Review* and *Arc Poetry Magazine*. Her work is also included in the anthologies, 'An Unfinished War' (Black Moss Press, 2012), and 'For Rhino in a Shrinking World' (The Poets Printery, East London, S.A., 2013).

Robin Houghton won the 2013 Hamish Canham Prize and the 2012 New Writer Poetry competition, and her work has been published and/or is forthcoming in a range of magazines including *The Rialto*, *Agenda*, *Poetry News* and *The North*. She blogs at Poetgal (<http://www.poetgal.co.uk>).

Sue Kindon's poems have appeared in *The Interpreter's House*, *The North*, *The Journal*, *The French Literary Review*, and *The Rialto*. She was awarded The Maryport Poetry Prize 2012 and Poets and Players Open Prize, Manchester 2013. She divides her time between The Pennines and The Pyrenees.

Ray Miller has supported John Cooper-Clarke, Attila The Stockbroker and many lost causes. His poems have appeared in *Ink*, *Sweat and Tears*, *The British Journal of Psychiatry* and even, believe it or not, *The Guardian*. He's deeper than he looks.

Ellen Miller-Mack has an MFA in Poetry from Drew University. Her poems and reviews have appeared in *5 AM*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Redheaded Stepchild*, *Bookslut*, *Rattle*, *The Rumpus*, *Verse Wisconsin* and *the Mom Egg*. Her chapbook, 'Flooding Eleven' was a finalist for Slate Roof Press. She has a poem in 'The Lake Rises', an anthology just out from Stockport Flats. She is a nurse practitioner/primary care provider in Northampton, Massachusetts,

USA.

Michael Murray was born in the Manchester area. He graduated from the Writer's School MA in Poetry, at Manchester Metropolitan University. Since then he has gathered together the poetry reviews, articles and arts reviews, polished and updated them, and published them as 'Parameters' with Knives Forks and Spoons Press, 2010. In the lulls between dips in ongoing ME he has self-published (2013) an ebook appreciation of the poetry of John Stammers, 'The Happy Moment', on Lulu Press. Poetry published with *Ol'Chanty magazine* (Chanticleer), *Magma*, *Rialto*, *Stand* (upcoming) and *Pennine Platform* (ditto). Currently living in Cheshire; he runs a blog on writing, writers and arts: michael9murray@wordpress.com He is also researching a semi-academic book on aspects of text history, the chiasmus.

Beverley Nadin lives in Sheffield and is working towards a Ph.D. in creative writing at Newcastle University.

Mark Russell's work has been published in a variety of magazines, including *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Gutter* and *The Frogmore Papers*. His debut pamphlet, 'Pursued by Well-being', has recently been published by tall-lighthouse.

Janice D. Soderling is a previous contributor to *Antiphon*. Her work is recent or forthcoming in print and online journals such *Mezzo Cammin*, *Per Contra*, *Hobart*. *Metazen*, *Penduline Press*, *American Arts Quarterly*, *Raintown Review (USA)*, *New Walk*, *Ink*, *Sweat and Tears*; *Magma Poetry*, *Orbis* (UK); *Literary Bohemian* (Czech Republic) A micro story published by *Flash Magazine* (University of Chester, England) is included in the UK teaching aid: *Spotlight on Literacy: Creative Interventions*. Janice is assistant fiction editor for US-based *Able Muse*, and newly appointed poetry editor at *Frostwriting*, a European literary journal. Her work has been selected for both American and Swedish anthologies. She hails from the US, but lives in Sweden.

Penelope Scambly Schott's most recent books are 'Lovesong For Dufur' and 'Lillie Was A Goddess, Lillie Was A Whore'. She lives in Oregon and teaches an annual workshop in the small wheat-growing town of Dufur.

Carol A. Taylor is a translator and language teacher in Houston, Texas. She has published light and serious poems and translations in various print and online journals including *Light Quarterly*, *Lighten Up Online*, *Rattle*, *Iambs & Trochees*, *Susquehanna Quarterly*, *Umbrella Journal*, *Trinacria*, *The Barefoot Muse*, *First Things*, and *14 by 14*. Carol has played an active role in the promotion of metrical poets and poetry, serving as Administrator of the workshop *Eratosphere* from 2001-2007 and as Light Verse Editor of *Umbrella Journal's Bumbershoot* from 2006-2008. She established the online metrical workshop *Poet and Critic* and co-founded the bilingual open mic group in Houston, *Alianza Poética Intercultural*.

Marly Youmans' most recent books of poetry are the collections, 'The Foliate Head' (UK: Stanza Press, 2012), and 'Thaliad', an adventure in blank verse from Phoenicia Publishing of Montreal, 2012.