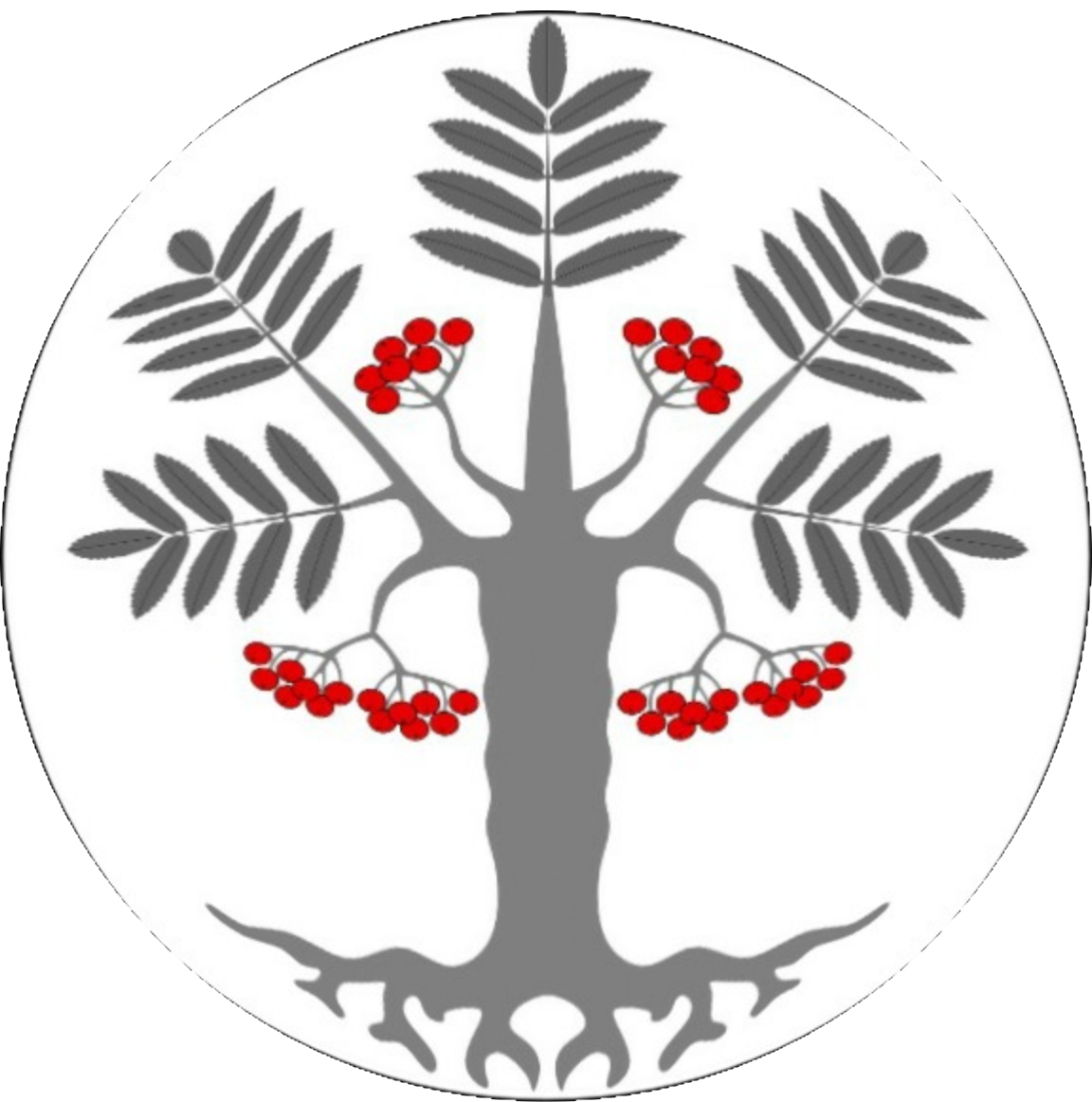


CERASUS



Poetry Sampler

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painting for lemonade



sj howarth

sj howarth was born in the north of england in the 1970s

*since then life has taken him here and there - downward, landward,
upward, seaward and back again*

*after many years of excess and abandon, he can now be found seeking
a simpler inspiration outdoors, enjoying woodland, water, sunsets and
nighttime*

*indoors he enjoys good fresh coffee, the company of his irascible,
aggressively affectionate rescue cat and a wry sense of humour, usually
with reggae-dub-ska-punk soundtrack*

kin

beneath
the newly turned earth
of dawn
the boat lake is black
with sleeping water

dream borne hulls
huddle at the shaded heart
of the lake

some are the orange of childhood

some are the blue of fresh sky

one is white and a stranger

i look at them
so far away from the edges
and do not understand
how they ever
come home again

you know, whatshisname, who had the desk by the watercooler

stop being careful

was the last thing he wrote
as a note
to himself
on the blank back page
of a diary
where no one would see

that lunchtime
he was felled by a tram
while hurrying after
a flame haired past
seen from an opposite pavement

his smile
bigger and brighter
and bolder
than
the early afternoon sun

gulls over paris

church bells fall mute
having sung afternoon
into evening

and in the fade of the peal
the vespers of gulls
as they take to the sky

stretching the sea
high over spires
before the long

lazy plummet toward the seine
each calling from one to the next:
a ladder of souls descending

mcdonalds

we broke
the noiseless lift
with small-talk

she mentioned copd training

i recommended an italian restaurant
i had not long left

she said
she couldn't bring herself
to dine alone

her hint soured
where i left it
as silence closed in
all around

she said
she favoured mcdonalds
because *"everyone's alone in there"*

i wished her well
before returning
to my empty room

housewarming

it isn't about avocado dips
and craft beer

plates nestled upon fresh pine
or chrome pegs for outdoor suits

soft-touch closure
or the gleam of a breakfast bar

it isn't about a guest room
with handclap curtains

it is about your eyes
and where they lead

the crisp outdoors you'll bring back
from yoga class

the rise and fall comfort
of the sleeping shapes you make

it is about the rock pool ripples in your laugh
that i want to hear forever

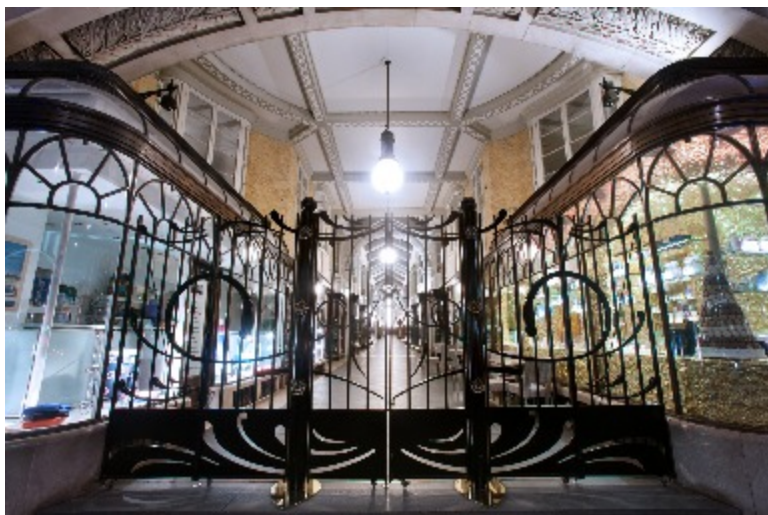
cigarettes at dawn for the poetry group

the problem with poets
is that
they are not as interested
in each other's work
as they claim
to be

for beneath the polite
'ooohs' and 'aaahs'
and the 'yeah, yeah, i see'
a secret heart
beats back and forth

with a litany,
of 'me, me
me, me, ME'

Last Night I Met John Adcock



Ewan Lawrie

Born on an Royal Air Force base in North Africa, schooled in mock-baronial splendour in Alnwick in Northumberland, Ewan spent one year each working in brick and tile export sales, as a statistics clerk in Farmway an agricultural trading group and on the Post Office counter in one of those beautiful Victorian buildings that are town-centre flats now. Ewan succumbed and joined the RAF himself.

Whilst serving 23 years in the Royal Air Force, including 10 in Cold War Berlin and 12 more flying over the rather warmer conflicts that followed, Ewan began writing. In the main this was to pass the time during long, boring flights over desert countries. After a while, this way of killing time developed into a passion.

Having spent the last 15 years in Spain, Ewan has been attempting to write poetry and prose. Now he lives in Manchester: since he is not rich enough to be an expatriate writer, he is going to have a go at being available for promotion and marketing of his writing.

A long-time editor of ABCtales writers' site, Ewan Lawrie's debut novel 'Gibbous House' was published in 2017. Last Night I Met John Adcock is his first poetry collection.

Bang, Bang

By nineteen-hundred-and-seventy-nine
Punk, spitting and screeching,
had been and gone
and my records
were all stiff pub-rock,
novelty and ska.

I was already up the junction,
squeezed into bed-sit land
(I remember her smile
and the urgent, inexpert sex).

I had voted
according to my conscience
but the Grantham Greengrocer's daughter won
for better or worse,
which words I was soon to say
for the first time.

Kim's Game at Some Remove

A G-plan coffee table so low you couldn't sit on the
married quarters armchairs except on the edge
or the teapot would be too far away.

Next to the cups - in flat muddy green, standing
on contrasting white speckled saucers -
there are other time-tricked memories.

A spatchcocked paperback, Zane Grey
or Dennis Wheatley, racy covers
with lurid fonts, next to a Sunday Post.

A school report crumpled from a back pocket,
careful smoothing of the paper has
smeared the As into Bs.

Cigarette packets, one of those whirry ashtrays
that you pressed down on a knob to open,
a Ronson lighter and Mum's Colibri.

A Black and White TV, off, nobody watched
that sinister girl and the blackboard.
Radio on. Waggoners' Walk – No Archers here.

Afternoon tea, if "someone" visited,
not Peggy Hamilton who came round
to smoke and show the bruises.

No beer cans, whisky tumblers, long drinks,
not in the house, not then. Besides
what happened in the Mess....

The same furniture in different houses,
in different countries, in different times,
'til the different memories are the same.

Here Are Things

Only missing a frame,
it looks like me,
though in monochrome;
an image produced
from celluloid
now cracked
in a paper-sleeve.

A yellow-metal watch,
he used to wear,
on special occasions,
long past the time
he could
tell it,
or the day of the week.

A military tie,
now I have two,
though mine is newer
and I didn't buy it;
not worn in years,
like his,
kept against the day.

Here are things:
they were his,
they are mine,
they aren't him.

The Placeholder

Like a long Latin period
or the quick brown fox,
I'm standing in,
holding the place;
waiting for something better
to emerge from the writer's pen.

He knows he's not the one.
He writes about anything
apart from this;
biding his time,
hoping for something kinder
to be said by the one he loves.

So he writes wistful verses
or the sharp short line,
that's standing in,
holding the place
hiding the strongest feelings
to emerge from the [.....] soul.

Medals

I saw camels glide:
well-mounted Bedouin with El Orrance
at their head and bound for Aqaba,
whose fall announced with a crash
the impending slide of Empire
and barbarians at the gate.

I saw the smoke curl,
above Mesopotamian cypress;
saw string-and-canvas death skate
above the Tigris and Euphrates,
bringing gas to tribesmen
and destitution to the King of Kurdistan.

I saw Hurricanes
at Tobruk – counters on an officers'
Uckers board - and heard
the engine whine, the whistler of the wind
of death above the desert,
while sands swallowed Tigers and men.

I saw medals won:
for phoney wars, and gas attacks or
terrorism by other names in
outposts, where the sand in the engine
was ourselves and we were at once
the machine and willing saboteurs.

Counting

Yan, Tyan, Tethera,
at the shearing time,
the blades click and clack
for three black sheep
and three bags fine.

You count *methera*,
as we offers swive,
the seed slick and quick
give four babes dead
and four alive.

I count *pimp*
at the ale house door
the pumps pull and push,
for five strong beers
and five beers more.

Sethera
lucky, lucky six:
the young boy gathers
the kindling sticks.

Dethera
we are lately seven,
one child more
and we have heaven.

Hovera
the hour may be eight,
I send the boy
to close the gate

Lovera
the wool-filled sacks they number nine
what mite we make
is never mine.

OUTBRANCHING



Scharlie Meeuws

Scharlie Meeuws was born in Germany and started writing poems at a very young age. During her studies abroad, she also wrote poems in Spanish and French.

She moved to England in her thirties and now lives in Oxfordshire.

As a mother of four, all dispersed to different continents, she presently has more room in her house for creating textile designs and photographic art.

As a digital artist, she is a member of Faringdon's Art Society, where her work can be viewed in an online gallery and at local art exhibitions

She also writes short stories, but her main passion has always been poetry.

WE THE SETTLERS

We, the settlers, trek behind
the covered wagons of time, rattle the hours
in pockets of loose moments

that can hold only so much in a day. We want
more for next week, next year, always in search
of the wild land of permanence.

Wheels rock, moods swing on the bandwagons
to success. Hands accelerate
to build faster, sooner, just in time,
at the speed of the ticking clock.

Years, stubborn as mules, stand firm
against time-wasters. None can afford to lose days.
Dawn chases the light down to dusk.

We lie with the horses
that race the sun, but sink to their knees
in the darkness.

At night, moribund in our cardboard homes,
we imagine another existence, where we move
in a different light, sense contrary feelings,
thrive on unheard language.

THIS PALE PICTURE THAT WAS OUR HOUSE

Rain-washed, paint-brushed
so many times. Tough winds
of winter storms lashed its face,
ivy bearded, copper-seared mouth and eyes
of lamp lit windows, soothed by the dark blue.

When the removal van came,
we did not talk to the men who carried
our belongings, tied and packed,
for a future in tatters.
What was left was burned.

Bonfires smouldered for weeks; the smoke
upset our neighbours.
Now we stoop, we unpick
the burnt knots of memory
to gnaw on in our weeping hunger.

A snatch of blue in the mind...

THE MEETING

Coffee and croissant at a cafe in Nice,
a Mimosa tree lifts its yellow parasol
against a rainy sky,
drunk on its own stormy clouds.

The hotel room, cool and narrow,
just right for the two clinging lovers,
yet with no hope of finding enough comfort
in such fleeting moments

of tenderness, renewal. Too late for imagining
people who might rather be happy than suffer
and cause pain. Time is up. We are leaving.

Before last goodbyes, let more gulls sweep
the sky, screaming love to a lover.

Let the black cat cross the cobbled street
and find a sure way home.

SURELY THERE IS

Surely there is something to say
about objects and how it is only

each entity reflecting
what we see. Things

show us the flip side of what we suppose.
I look at a white rose, for instance

and think of white:
its colour almost bounces back on me,

like the white sheet on your last bed
with its hospital scent

and your face grown wan,
refusing more and more.

THERE ARE ESCAPE ROADS IN VALPARAISO

There are escape roads in Valparaiso,
all marked.

Yellow poppies lighten the way you might run,
from where you can reach the mountains,
the dry face of the Andes.

The tsunami might never come;
the sea stays calm, deciding to sleep
just a little longer. Who knows?

There are escape roads in Valparaiso,
all named,
which show you where to run
from the water that sometimes beats their words,
filling them with dead
and angry wood.

I OWNED A BIRD WITH AN UGLY VOICE

I owned a bird with an ugly voice
whose song crackled the peace
I kept him barred in a cage outside
till he learnt some tunes.
I wanted his melodies,

so I trained him on little tasks,
singing him all the songs I knew.
At first, standing near his cage,
I heard him croak like a frog,
splattering, spitting out his seeds.

Then I offered him some lettuce,
made him honey with peppermint tea
for his throat. He kept silent.

I schooled him in music,
played him Chopin and Mozart,
a hard apprenticeship in learning to listen.
He flopped on his perch, wing-flapping.
He opened his beak, letting out sounds
mingled with the patter of raindrops,
the rush and the hush of the wind,
creating his own melodies out of tune.

One night, after a long silence, the final test:
I leant out of my bedroom window.
A full moon. And then, when it happened;
first, a secretive sound, low in notes,
swelling into a crescendo, higher and higher.
I stood motionless, struck with desire.
I hardly slept. In the morning I put up
the sign: *Nightingale for Hire*.

I DREAMT I WROTE ANOTHER ME



ALEX SMITH

With a foot firmly each side of the Irish Sea, Alex Smith was raised in troubled Northern Ireland during the Eighties.

Educated in English and Spanish, his work has taken him to some of the most socially deprived schools in England.

His stark poetry has been published in 'Twyckenham Notes', 'Tammy', 'Barren Magazine', 'Bonnie's Crew', 'Abstract: Contemporary Expressions', 'Ink & Voices' and 'Okaydonkey'.

He edits at 'ABCtales' and struggles with barre chords.

Tramlines and nursery rhymes

You. Listen.

Hang

on every word,

as I pour into you

my version.

Melted snowflakes in moulds

sing you to sleep,

sing to teach others

to forge nursery rhymes

into tramlines.

Belfast boun

Strange the things we revolve aroun,
on our wee country's merry-go-roun.
They'll be arguing here, when we're all underground,
on the south banks of the Lagan in the County Down;
wind yer nex in boys,
we're Belfast boun.

Spides strut stately roun the toun
of Belshaft, as black tacks hum aroun.
I thew a few squid down the lost and foun
ta them bin hokers who are duty boun
to scoop my feg butts off the groun.

Bout ye le big lawd? Mate, I'm soun
as a big roun poun you just foun on the groun.
Let's bunk aff work and horse aroun.
Jaysus luk at thon, wouldn't ride her inta a battlegroun,
she's gat flappier baps than a basset houn.

Ballix it's Baltic, rain'll get ya drown
or frostbit, so it is, so get ta home all safe and soun.
Get that kettle on nae and settle down,
Julian's on, the man of great renoun,
aroun the east, west and southboun.

So come down and visit if you're ever aroun
and I'll show you the sights roun this burnt-out town.
We'll not mention them lot the Englishman drown,
far from him selling five lighters for a poun,
in a town the crown split across the counties of Antrim and Down.

Back out we go, for a dander down the town,
to take the air and lose a few poun,
gawk at the blow-ins down The Crown,
on our wee country's merry-go-roun.

Strange the things we revolve aroun,
on the south banks of the Lagan in the County Down;
wind yer nex in boys,
we're Belfast boun.

In the prisons, the monsters

In the prisons, the monsters
and within the monsters... craftsmen.

A secret collaboration,
a collusion of trigger-fingers curled round saws.
A symphony in silence.
Hymns to the dead.

In whine of carved wood-meat and bone,
you handcraft cots
whilst the Disappeared rot,
unmarked and bare.

Across the H block,
with Ulster heart fingers,
the other side solder
Taig names;
tattoo the molten skin,
indelible.

Outside, we the dumb
nod gravely,
safe, deluded in your punishment.

Inside,
you admire the enemy's work.
Nod professional respect
for the hands that pulled triggers,
that set timers,
that set us back.

Your handiwork squats
in many silent corners.
Carved memories.
Hymns to the dead.

I recently learned that whilst in prison, many Northern Irish terrorist groups paid the opposing side to make them gifts to give their family or friends due to the quality of their workmanship.

Broken up

Today, I took apart the bed you made me.
It stands in pieces, some drunk against a wall.
I labeled every part carefully,
each one a different memory.
A breath for a headboard and a sigh for support.
It looks pathetic now. Propped up,
an anticlimax.
The right side is longer than the left
and one support is broken.
I seal the screws into a bag,
clip it shut, tightly.
My finger traces the wood.
Beautiful contours, grown harsher
and light wood darkened.
I discard the covers you bought,
then change my mind.
I may need them to reassemble.
But for now, I have nowhere to sleep.
There is no warmth.
You struggle into the back of my car.
You rattle on the windows.
I lay you out perfectly in my new room,
but hesitate.
Forgot the fixings.
An old mistake.

Stars

She's never spoken before.
Not to me.
Not properly.
Just platitudes.
How are you?
Cold today, isn't it?
Have a good weekend!
There's a shadow on his lung,
she says.
Wine breath.
Wet eyes.
Some things are meant to be,
she says.
I say I'm sorry,
that I know someone the same.
She points to the sky.
She says,
there's someone looking over us.
I smile.
Look up.
See only stars.

Labyrinth

I dreamt I wrote another me,
in lucid sleep,
with sands of memory.
Skin shed in sloughed off droves,
I awoke from sinful mendacity.
I dreamt of a cell
and the word of a god.
Stone divided the beast from me.
Through the bars of ink
and curtained sleep,
the blank page could but hint
at knotted oaks and
hungry suns.
Every word inferred infinity.
In these dreams, you were no more
Borges than me
and we were all blind Homer
when we parted our lips and filled our pens
to open seven seals and tell seven tales distilled by time
that fate has deigned
longer than the mountains and dead starlight,
minus words for the infinite.
I fell into your memory,
blessed the stone walls that held me safe
and awoke, asleep, to dream again.

Waiting For Another Velvet Morning



Julia Macpherson

Julia was born on Tyneside, where her young parents had met when her Scottish father was a student at Durham University and her mother a budding artist.

Bright, but sickly, she came through an unstable childhood to gain a BA degree in Cultural Studies, which proved to be a perfect stepping stone to her first job with the feminist publishing house Virago. She then went on to work as a publicist for Penguin books.

After taking time out to travel in South-East Asia, she returned with a viral illness which triggered a mental breakdown. For the rest of her life, she struggled with health problems, yet still managed a long spell working as a Senior Press Officer at head office of Mind, the mental health charity based in London.

The end of her marriage led to inpatient psychiatric treatment, until her untimely death in 2016.

From a young age, Julia was a prolific writer and voracious reader and this volume is a unique expression of her passions and life experiences. She lives on through her words.

This Time

this time
you'll survive
come through
with flying colours

this time
no more lies
from people
who saw nothing

this time
we are friends
not the enemy
in disguise

this time
if you need anything
I'm here

Mother Of Creation

(For Mum on Mother's Day)

She will splotch colours onto canvas, any old how,
to create something of unworldly beauty.
This art shines in her hair, which is full of Autumnal hues of red and
gold;
her green - brown eyes are lit with reflections
of her dramatic, dazzling creations.
The textures she feels with fingertips amass, layer upon layer,
into mountains, streams, vales.
Knobbly, hacked and rough, they
make you want to touch, explore,
discover what thoughts are swimming underneath.
Her seascapes are no ordinary landscapes,
but mean something to her at that moment in time.
She scours the shore for driftwood, with which she will
frame this extraordinary work. Sometimes, she gazes
at the horizon and I know she sees beyond the waves
to far off lands that quicken her blood, but
which she knows are somehow beyond her reach.
She sighs and her thoughts are brought back to the beach
as she examines shells, sifts through handfuls of pebbles, all perhaps
representing a different hurt. The salt of the sea is on her lips,
reminding her of all her unshed tears. She does not know
or believe that what she is doing is something that transcends
everyday life and transports you to another, more spiritual dimension.
This is my Mother's work.
And it is miraculous.

Alien

You recline and lazily close your eyes.
I watch your eyelashes descend
and wonder what planet you are on,
or what you took last night to
make you drift so dreamily...

You have walked straight out of
one of your sci-fi movies that I,
as you know, find tedious, into
my bookish, feminist mind.
I don't know what you are doing,

inhabiting this strange environment.
I want to beam you up somewhere,
see you dissolve in rays of moonshine;
but I know, if you are abducted,
it will not be by me.

My Poems

I have been cramping with the birth struggle.
Now I have new infants, squalling and
sour, they all have the same volcanic whine.
I tend them anyway, hush them as they
screech. You look at them, dismally, drearily.
You are proud but sad, conceived as they were
through a surgical gown-gloom.

I wish there was one more inside me, to pull
from the pink, bright me of hearts and harvests.
It would be perfect and smiling, a replica of
you and me, when I am sunset-sheen.

I could hand it to you and
it would say everything golden
that I have left unsaid and unborn.
You could swaddle the best of me.
My hair tied up to show the nape of
my neck, which you love to kiss, when it doesn't
smell of smoke. The laugh you love to see, but too often do not.
The arch of my shoulders when they are not knotted with anxiety.
My most tender caress of you. I want to translate these thoughts
and deliver them, without even the need for gas and air,
through me, to you.
For you.

Cream Teas And Wasps

I stumbled across myself this July,
glimpsing my hips and an angular smile.
My skin has the pink sheen of cream teas,
but the wasp withholds its sting.

Though my breasts swoop in the heat,
they can swing.

And I buy strings of beads from a red vale of vases.
Sky drifts the fever of pollen, which scatters
and my eyes spangle green palettes of seas.
My freckles look spacey under soda-stream moonlight,
whilst dust races through me in stripes.
The past staggers, a weak buckled colt,
into fuzz tinted grim grimy albums.

This, the minute I stop hedging bets:
today, I discovered my own Indian Summer.

Posthumous Prose

It's all right, you can step over me
It's not worth you checking my pulse
It fluttered and ebbed some time ago
Don't bother to call an ambulance

There can be no resuscitation
The cardiac monitor will only register
A straight line
No hopeful zig-zag graph of life for me

My skin took on the blue-ish pallor
Now I think rigor-mortis has set in
If you see me lying beneath your feet
Check my pockets, find this piece of paper

Send it to whom it may, or may not, concern
This is my posthumous prose

Swim With Me In Deep Water



Penny Sharman

Penny Sharman was born in Oxford and brought up in Burford in the Cotswolds.

She ventured north in the late 1960's and has remained in love with the Pennines where she lives.

Penny is a poet, artist, photographer and complementary therapist.

Even after retirement Penny seeks new ways of being creative. She is inspired by art and natural landscapes and has a surreal approach to her work.

She has had poems published in magazines and anthologies such as The Interpreter's House, Strix and Obsessed with Pipework, Beautiful Dragons and Coast to Coast to Coast.

Penny has an MA in Creative Writing from Edge Hill University.

'Fair Ground' is her debut pamphlet.

Website: pennysharman.co.uk

The sea-silk seamstress

sings a lullaby from her long thread of secrets.
Treasure seekers beg her to tell of her oral tradition,
a woman's mouth to a child's again and again.

She breathes in a life at the edge of land and sings.
Her life sacrificed to the brown dull keratin,
shape-shifter to gold in the light of days.

She says it's Jason's golden fleece,
Solomon's robe, Nefertiti's bangle,
jewels for a Pharaoh or Pope.

By moonlight she dives into grassy lagoons
to cut thin fibres from a clam's beard. She says,
I am the last woman on earth to keep the oath.

She weaves the strands with her fingers and nails,
her human shuttle; she embroiders magic
like Mithril into bracelets, wedding vows and veils.

She sings spells into her daughter's ears, who says
she wants another life, needs her own life,
says she cannot love her mother's way.

Burial at sea

They became the wild horses
along the coastal path a line of human beings,
and smiles became them.

The yellow vetch still ablaze
in October sun after heavy rain,
wind that bites a fingertip and nose.

They came like wild horses
waves of foam, surfers, white-water junkies,
and smiles became them.

They came like wild horses
settled in a herd, a huddled stillness,
and sadness became them.

One of them in a wet suit
walked into the sea as others gazed,
he lifted a vessel to the wind
emptied a life into the salty sea.

There was never silence here
as grey ash flew with the elements
a silver streak a pattern of DNA
a spectral dust that fell to water.

They became the wild horses
along the coastal path a line of human beings.
As smiles became them the white Champion
held its head above ground.

Lost gardens of Pomona

This goddess hides in the numina as she buffers
the water between the Bridgewater and Irwell's flow.

She lies down in the crease of a worn out map
of Cornbrook's Strawberry gardens. Oh how I long

to walk there on her shabby island, through her
isolation, her lost pleasures. How I long to take

the tram to Pomona and feast my green eyes
on her swan song of orchard memories.

She despises this brackishness, the hulked earth
heaped over her royal palace of cultivation.

This goddess hides under moss and lichen carpets
in her wildlife corridor of clicking grasshoppers

that wait for the Peel of bulldozers. Like Arthur Dent
she has no idea they are coming, that she is done for.

She is still nurturing lapwings, skylarks and dunnocks
as she rests in a wilderness on the edge of urbanity.

She is swathed in meadowsweet, yellow wart and bee orchids
as she stalks the burnt out motorcycles, used needles

and empty sleeping bags. She is sunbathing in an Indian summer
of bindweed by the white trumpets and blackberries.

This goddess sleeps in the numina, she's a wood nymph
hiding in this grassy limbo.

Telling the bees

We've stopped talking to you haven't we?
Is this why you're leaving?
You used to listen, day in, day out.

You took our worries on your wings
and never talked back. You carried our tears
of Ra away to your hives.

We all know about the ancient stories,
that you bridge our world with the afterlife.
Now you're leaving, rationing honey,
nectar of sensibility, now you're dying.
Can't you hear our stories any more?
We need your counsel. We need your buzz.

I had a dream last night. In a giant flower head
I stood on yellow petals saying, 'once more we
have come to tell you our stories'.

Oh Oracle between worlds, let us not forget this ritual
of telling bees our stories. Let us whisper, sing and chant
our births and deaths to you.

Ode to lost hair

Oh memory of red hair,
henna that smelt of dirt hair,
Katherine Hepburn hair,
film star bouncy, adorable hippy hair,
peace not war hair,
mini skirt come and fuck me hair,
oh where, oh where is my true love hair,
all that fumbling around hair thinking
it would last forever hair, got to be a reason for
losing it hair, there's something about
the decline of hair, can't believe
it's come to this again hair,
you walking out the door,
black hair, grey hair, white hair,
almost no hair left hair,
why not shave it off hair,
a number two hair,
give in to purple hair.
Oh the story of long ago hair,
baby hair, pregnant hair,
wise woman hair,
down on my knees hair,
pray to some trichologist,
please give me back
my beautiful hair,
remind me of youth hair.

Gathering them

She started collecting hearts
wooden ceramic glass crystal even straw ones.

She picked up her pen and drew the shape over and over.
She filled each room in her house, she lay them on the floor,

glued them to the ceiling, put them under her pillow at night
to dream about hearts, maroon, silver, gold, black hearts.

She hung them in windows, reflective hearts to catch
rainbows, all the light needed to cure each broken one.

She made paper origami hearts folded so small she could
carry them always in her pockets, purses, socks and bras.

Her life became full of hearts; that kind of softness found
in running blood, lost blood, finished blood, memories of blood.

She took her hearts out into the Pennines, drove them fast
over Saddleworth Moor into clear air, ice and snow.

When purple heather bloomed, when cotton tops waved,
they laughed at all her happy-happy hearts.

She took her hearts to dance, threw them onto the sprung floor
and worked them into the rhythms, into flow, staccato, chaos,

lyrical and then stillness, quiet, the stillness, calm
the stillness of resting hearts. She took her

hearts to the edge of the land, to sand and conch,
to dulse and pebble, to hard granite and soft limestone cliffs,

to crashing waves, the moon waters. She set her hearts adrift,
a message without bottles, clearly absent of any words.

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