

SUNFISH

Poetry Magazine | Issue 2 | Summer 2010 | £3



Featuring new work by

Lisa Jarnot Allen Fisher Jed Rasula Nigel Wood
rob mclennan Helen Vitoria Gil McElroy

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Lisa Jarnot

End Day State

and the right to write
the things that
bring no harm,
o rare bright exhaustion
of every poufy song
the hillbilly mountain goose
arranger of the lines,
responsibly, the couch,
the couch,
responsibly
to leopard there
toward sleep
toward the lack of
interest in the general public,
the post office and each
little cube of cheese,
o thou, barreling nowhere,
stretching the genetic information
of your roach-like soul,
the do-gooder and the
do nothing and the
homo as they say
out on the street,
the bicycle lock despair
of the frizzy glops of oil
what mib is this,
what conspiracy of
dark Darley Arabians
spreaming down
the track
what terrific postulate
of lazy pen and ink,
what itchy stomach,
when to wake and
when to sleep and when
to be in heat,

for the very few
and the very many,
for the four legged things
and the oranges in bowls,

broken of the spell of the
me that be, partial to
nothing but ice cream,
strike out against the
pen nib and the
happenstance of
hair upon bright air,
be the hawk that you never see,
fanciful ground dweller,
uneaten squib,
caterer of cheese,
electrical conductor of
the complication of the
household and the
landmines and the
waterlocks of geef
go chickens of the
school yard, come
doorstop of the
delivery man,
run harbinger of
take out food,
linger
and then hunker down,
give it to me, your soul,
what do you think you are?
And I am that one too.

Allen Fisher

Proposals 33

There are eight spherical maps at Trevor Philip's new Piccadilly they differ from each other but propose to be of the same planet in approximately the same period of time. Turning the corner at the bottom of Duke Street are a series of paintings showing pages in a book from a different chapter in the same book

She went to the green mountain and returned we called her
raspberry juice we called her onion breath we called her Antigone
sister of Eteocles and Polyneices and Imene
we called her daughter of Oedipus
we called her ground berry and saw
her brains eaten by rot lice
we saw her return again from the mountain



Proposals commentary 33

Spontaneity and order crash on random drift, a stumble of fortuity or willful accident of confident outrage without evidence.

Proposals 35

The movements
of a reasonably healthy person
walking about
realise systems complication
if examined
can behave with considerable
overall simplicity

Proposals commentary 35

Certain that a work's *aesthetic* value depends on the pleasure knowledge and persuasion it engenders. Spontaneous or not, I was much more concerned with its authenticity.

Gil McElroy

Rash Standards

This
& he
lathe. This
living,
if it
were many, unassailed every breath, waxing
with thingly detours
the failures & greats
whole
in rare cases
of diffidence.

The earth
has been
occurring, suddenly
green.

Yes
has reached me.

The Genius of Necessary Parts

It's
not a matter
of cliffs, or
the full 'scape
of lime.

It's
grasped
(*&* was), rakish,
because a month of safekeeping,
& an instance altogether random,
had a corollary going (all
select arms
& eyes, even,
the cuttlefish example wrongly isolable
on the basis
of an ingenuous earth,
the group containing humans, select
hairs & eyes,
& a few years of
one cloud), that
after a time
of hats & hard, reactionary days,
death
could cause
such a thing, or organize
any number of acorns of importance
thru the early enigmas of summer
rising un-
abashed.

Sharpless 140

I measure
two seconds, but much
more slowly.
The main bits, with
actual chunks, here go on
madly,
just as highly
up with stars beyond
story.

Triangles
are equally
subtle, favoured with
the same
radical
& often messy
squinting.

So hitch.

Even Today

We're comparing
shortest points
(our own,
by us) with the curvature
of ambition,
lascivious
as the family
goes.

It had
to be
wanted. It had
been
an affair,
this is
to say, of
images predicting
a ground, useful,
yet.

Fluidly, Sure

A thing
like a
metre – a
thing not often un-
hampered –
& the sun (this, too, in
evidence), bang
right into the dog-like
granite.

I'm
troubled by
schisms, the leavings
of up & down. My customs
are one-handed. These here fingers
are long
in confidence, drawn out
like summer, & may lead
to a collection
of species.

Mother called,
some things
ago.

Electromagnetic Beasts

Our view
is like
this: at first glance
small, third place
in nature,
even.

This is
my best example
of magnets. Hold
your acceptable hands
applied to it – not
like they say but
just so, to remind me
of other electromagnetic
words.

The palms of your hand.

The colour.

The flavour.

No, not
the flavour – the
reassuringly grey briefcases we jiggle
over great distances.

Detours through Mistrust

What of
the rash, poised
to be visible, the
standard hours, the
questions
unfamiliar to
wonder – never,
though, the noises
of the un-
thought vice.

What is per-
ceived keeps
too far
off.

Bath (Again)

Of course
it's Europe!
& this, this
is 1955, everybody
shouting, wanting to mess
with the fixes...

We
were all going to be
engaged in
tries, & spent days absorbed
in in-
fatuations.

Never had
such heroisms
failed!

After

I
charged & beseeched
that easy-age self
(as well I
told), that
love possess
& carry – I,
who so
merely minded the mock, having
none of it,
the day spent, rather,
absorbed in in-
finites, the
labour enough, mind,
but perhaps
mostly bi-
nocular, inherently electro-
mechanical, vector
drawn...

This
was all just
realized.

Jed Rasula

Extravagant Contagion

The humid world comes down from its cloud
and, poised to drink,
I learn the drink is me

1

*with nothing less than addled zing
persimmons clutch November boughs
balloonskin orange in the smoky rain*

—notice how poised it is,
the metaphor, to milk the brain
with 2 or 3 of the x of y

the sodden frog
flattened on asphalt
by bounding rubber

is like nothing in the pink blue
that isn't yellow,
a foot that wasn't a hand

an *or* that was neither
and or *but*, the round
of square fat *thins*

its eye the paralyzed scherzo
of *when* it will inside out
& where it will outside *in*.

The x rolls over on its side
nibbling the orbit of stars.
The egg, the owl, & the word

might put it one way;
or the bed, the sod, the blur
another: 3 of the one in the 2

in the one or another of wonder
plugging a singular plural—
with a being beyond compare

until it begins to seem.
Until it begins to seem
nothing seems to begin:

as Being is ever unseemly,
emptying nothing
into the bracelet of time.

2

So let's say a notion
comes into this world
—which world won't matter

just now—& inside
the notion must be a man
or it could be a woman

(can the notion tell which?)
& as long as the wind shakes
the tree the notion vibrates

& grows. The first expansion
satisfies leaves. Then fruits
& berries remember

a lesson of rusty unwinding;
as vines convert their grapes
to a borealis of smudge.

To be part of the notion
is never enough, so the person
(let's call it "me") climbs

into the cloud—ambassador
of lightning in a clear blue sky—
& shivers, really just shivers there.

There's nothing to which the sun
aspires, it simply burns
to a crisp; but whatever

the solar had been, somehow
the notion becomes, & summons
the person into its husk,

its nutty surmise. Opulence
wedges up into the satisfied snout
of the cloud—or person—

in question, and stalks of thought
crust out on the egg-pale sky
in a singular spasm.

Being's beyond compare, it thinks,
unless it can manage to *seem*
& say at once hello & goodbye.

3

Waxing & waning a bright sweet bliss
(your book is a clock in slices)
the raindrop pulses the sky

down under the ground. A cloud,
a bowl, a carnal bump
on a lilac hill with a view of Mars

in the spell of the haptic deep
like sleep itself
in a stumble of dice

bordering the dark:
it could be something
still as they come

it could be
you you
know.

It could be
who & how
if you & me

were ever anything close
to being whatever
we seem to be.

Whatever: we
seem to be.
Just you, just me.

The meat locker
that makes meat
makes me

& speaks my name
until it's
nameless

Hectic Pigment

Begin with a vertebral column, or is it a pile of radiating eyes?

What if you scratch the word *Fire* until you get “Untitled (Overall Composition)” —the title’s untitled?

A coiled snake composes a cranial puddle—gurgles down the last of the Jungian symbols with an anamorphic squawk.

The pouring begins as a drizzle of effacements, but will that pyramidal eye still pick its way among the dribbled arteries of a new ordinance?

“Guardians of the Secret”: a hot capillary pucker of eyes in the chest, the incipient drip is the secret of the insistent quadrant and the guardians are what? a splash gathering in the wrist, or the impulsive spectacle?

What could have been Moby-Dick shudders into “Pasiphaë,” with a click or thud of coupling trains; everything sifts into the possible all at once: here’s a knuckle, an ankle, a wrist, three blue udders and a nostril nearby, a zigzag where once was a mind, a smear begetting the consummate.

Postwar means a dirty flash of Matisse, or does the slumped oval make this one Gothic? What does the intimate blue begrudge? What does a pulse confounding a bone *do*? In this vista of heckled complicity, what is this protest, this pause that means figures are bound to emerge?

“Free Form” says *Take Me, I’m Yours*—no form’s free, but freed *into* the next, like a glass eye searing the artery as it noses up into your heart.

These could be aerial recon photos of bombed out cities.

This web of “Phosphorescence” is how we are made, made of the comet, the blue thrall, the middle plummet coveting bottom and top, inside and out all at once. Blue can be your aperture here. Fat “A” crouches in another “Untitled”. Sometimes lines come and go from a mouth—leak and wander—sometimes a squiggle reverts to a medical chart: its transparencies are pull-away skins of an etch-a-sketch mystic writing pad.

Now we come into the country we know—spider arabesque. Grim tutorials of chance subsiding in a spellbound squeal, Queequeg’s casket itching with hieroglyphs inside and out till it’s all inside-out. A tattoo of dunk. Eye chowder. Shudder and chatter. What is embellishment now? He’s clipped a figure from a different blur and pasted it over the stars until there’s a snout of dangling silhouettes,

almost a waddle that wants to say it can't dance. But does.

Posture is also a drip. What's over, what's under? What's up, what's down?

The cut-outs are guzzling glass and nails (the better to see you with, my dear). A skittish red; and the wiggle of the puddle makes pastoral queasy, filtered through this arterial perimeter where coagulates relent, and the winter's tale like a glazed saucer's beginning to crack. Every gazing face a fissure, a droplet of pigments gathering clots from the smear. Everything is big, and yet the tiny secrecy of lineation shudders with intensity. Rapture on a floor daubed up as *bent*. A gob of yellow pregnant with a white swirl. Scarlet veins a soluble distress. When at last a figure appears, an ossuary is near. Something's likely to be bones. Puffs are symptoms, narcotic flagellants. Some of the smudges are birds and they fly away. "Number 23" is a musical note. Though there, as ever, is the gaping mouth.

Altamira chirps hello in "1A". And in 1953 there's that eye again, lurking in the triangle. "The Deep" is trying to be milked. "White Light". All a gape, and again. All this "hectic pigment" magnifies the bone deposits, wouldn't you say? From drizzle to dazzle to drunk and dead, the unconscious paraded is boiling up a serum. Humbled and assessed is how these paintings make you feel, their *light* in which you appear, then disappear.

Thug. Bundle. Rapture. Throng.

Nigel Wood

In a Tame Daydream

Lost in a tame daydream,
 with the talking heads
& anger managers, studying
 the bitter pavane,
cheerful wings beating
 in the summer heat, what
matters? This silken ease
 is a wired daze, chasing daylight
on the farewell flight
 while forethought
reduces halcyon to cynicism.

I'm locked in the knavery,
where blessings from the enunciated
 separate help from deprivation
& the lost feast guiltily
 on the sense of entrapment,
all waiting for authorized programmes
 to fatuously disintegrate
the legitimate musics,
 fragments of epitaphs for the isolated
spinning in the bestial loop,
 soft hatchings in aureate shotguns.

It's a workable arrangement;
 whatever may happen, there is a notional
legality to work with, pulpits
 never dreamt of, symbolic languages
fluctuating amid the oneiric slaughter.
 The slain keep a low profile while
lawyers check their facts &
 renew their vows. All
is choked with pomp or
 or a showing of promise; I
am merely a nuncio or a flaunting
 condensation & here there are
no waltzes, just old
 lanterns & studies
in theology, & the
 gallery's just a viewless
gangway giving onto

stylized skylines promising you hope,
the day after tomorrow, perhaps.

A linguist is mistranslating from the stars;
marsh hawks tyrannize delta rhythms,
shimmering decrescendoes
suiting subterfuge where previously-
practised illusory worries
assent to banality and
tax the patience. Solicitously,
prima donnas & coastguards
decline suicide as a workable option
& cherish their brainstorm.

Dream Matrix Telemetry

*in memoriam Terence McKenna**

this
extraordinary small
voice

(
closed language
a kind of hallucination

showing patterns
catapulting forward
through the labyrinth
of unfolding
singing space

where the outrageous i is astonishing
in the crowding of the unconscious

chirping fractal denizens of being
bound in the membrane with you
jewelled machines of thought
fluctuating elf-like
in visible language
)

it is a heard flash
smelling of light from underground
from far beyond the pale

it awakens a kind of i
further
over creation's edge

it is a hypercosmic carnival

it is the you
on the other side of me

** Terence McKenna (1946–2000) was an American writer and lecturer involved in the exploration of alternative states of consciousness through the use of plant-based hallucinogens.*

Helen Vitoria

le plus petit jardin

1

We notice the house wren refuses to take no for an answer when it comes to evicting the helpless fledglings. Screeching, hollering, out they go. She doesn't seem to give their readiness a second thought. Think homelessness. Think lost.

2

He wants control. No matter the cost. No matter how small. Tying the tomatoes, thick unruly vines, he decides the good weeds, the beneficial insects. At first, the dosages are small cruelties, gradually he increases the amounts of poison. Administering slowly, steadily.

3

We decide the color scheme together. He with the cool blues, purples. I choose red, orange. I remember the neon sign at the tattoo parlor and act accordingly.

4

My mother tries creative ways to rid the garden of the Starlings. Devil birds she says. Throws stones and glances their way. Aims for yellow eyes, unblinking. I kill an adder with a stick.

5

After Lauds, we walk through the tiny vineyard. The fog has settled low, earlier than expected, feet unclean, I follow him through the vineyard, slowly we remove the bird netting, nothing caught, this time.

6

Let's say, we slip ahead to the next phase, the harvest. I am not ready. I think too much. Chores undone, the garden is in chaos let's say, you do not notice.

7

Adam is once again seduced by the magnolia, after the rain, after we watch the heron creep away, after the piano music inside the house has ended.

Train Ride with Nietzsche

On the train, Friedrich makes polite conversation with me, but never really allows his eyes to meet mine. We discuss school shootings in great detail. The mind of a killer he says. Then we move onto heroin addiction, anorexia, daffodils, the medicine cabinet, ruined women, staying indoors. He tells me he was never noticed by the pretty girls in school. His lack of social graces became evident when the dinner arrived, cutting the small portions over and over, eating them too fast, growing wilder at each glance.

Dream Wedding on Cape Cod

I want to live my life in a glass terrarium. I want a jungle of bad mothers to weave a canopy. I will wrestle ants, and write VICTORY as epitaphs, as I perform small ceremonies at their graves. The spiders, I will paint pink, I will battle them, but let them win, many legs around me, a stronghold like no other. I have no family.

Leaving Texas

On the ride home from Texas, I hear him singing a song about paper people, he caught me listening, stopped himself before I could hear more. We drive past the old factory, we recall the slaughterhouse, the fear on the animals faces as they unload them, face to tail, side by side. Then a single file, sweeping through curved corrals. I was afraid of the rumble, the crush of hooves on fields. He smiles, as he remembers our first meeting there, sitting on the cold ground, too close to me. I remember the sun, the touch on my shoulders, a heavy iron gate folding. I have petted the monster.

Matin

There is nothing in this valley.
shadows of bones, a sparrow or two
Let this body, this woman, unfold before you.
a wing of a white dove, it's shadow

shadow or two, a sparrow
There is nothing in this valley.
shadows of bones. I kneel in this field.
The field is bare. I am frightened.

This valley is raw. A shadow or two.
hunger, bones, desire
I am frightened.

Unfold this body, this woman.

rob mclennan

poem at thirty-nine

another (brief) history of l.

each day falls
in relative current

what is
or what isn't

observations of weather
& time, & what shifts,

for instance

inside the tulip,
letter drop

we make love,
a polished cold

or diamond,
on a band of gold

a series of letters
& long-distance calls

your postcards from florida,
lake louise

a sequence of flutter
& small sounds

, goodnight breath

what we trust to, this
& then this

& cherish, thus

how simply words,
the base

of the envelope

Cityverse

old men, the gravity
of black crow

a situation of noise
& birds

the migration of offspring,
mine

& others

so what do you welcome,
more equipped

your lovely eyes

first hand, her
black, black heart

& conflict

decals at the boundary
, water remedies

dust, & dust

what day is anything

required lake

domestic bliss is caring
, working difference

they never would produce

two ducks in a row
or chickens

flouting laws; would preen
through every rerun

evolution means

as a species we have
to hope

scrabble

it was a promethean struggle; self-portrait
you drew in the margin; quixotic,
parenthetic, paradoxical; the qi
or the quay to your finally heart;
when does scotch
number fingers, lone spider
architects a buffet, outside
by the streetlight; close doesn't count
in these quarters; these fingers bestow

an old poem embedded in thoughts of airports and found materials

According to my notes, this poem, hidden in my little chapbook *search & rescue* (Mercurio Press, 2003), was written around 6am from the Ottawa International Airport, Macdonald-Cartier, on July 20, 2001. Where would I have been going? I might have been going out to that West Coast Poetry Festival in Vancouver, but I'm really not sure, usually wanting to keep my summers open for the sake of my child. Where did the lines all come from? I know I'd received a copy of the new *filling Station* but days before from derek beaulieu, travelling with such as reading material, reading distraction. I know the Coke and Pepsi line from George Bowering, a little poem he had in the same issue. I'm sure if you looked, you could probably find the rest, which is why I was so open about where the lines came from. Is it still theft if you give such credit?

*lazy poem written using
borrowed lines from filling station,
issue #21*

alone in a rich cloud; we smoked
our last cigarette.

i dont care whether i get coke or pepsi.

he mentioned nothing about the german streets.

the harder i try to chuckle,
the sun forgets to close.

dont you know sirens end w/ punches.

in the meantime, i couldn't care less,
why & when.

I've since worked to be more sly about where I steal lines, and twist lines and phrases into such unrecognizable forms that you would simply never know where they might have originated. Sometimes, even, a phrase causing another to appear in my head, and the point-of-origin irrevocably lost. I even admit that this poem is lazy; should I even take credit? Does this matter at all?

As Gregory Betts has already written, the idea of plunder is one of working through found material, writing already there, reworking out of what has been written into something else. It's what the character in Barbara Gowdy's novel *The Sandman* (1995) did at the end of the book, turning her home recordings of her family's voices back on themselves. Or poet Lise Downe, writing in the acknowledgements of her poetry collection, *the soft signature* (ECW Press, 1997): "All of these words have appeared elsewhere. Only their order has been changed, to maintain their innocence." Is there still such a thing?

Notes on Contributors

Allen Fisher has been writing since 1962 and involved in performance and installation art since 1970. Poet, painter, editor-publisher Spanner, co-publisher Aloes Books, with over one hundred and forty single-author publications of poetry, graphics and art documentation, he has exhibited paintings in many one-person shows (London 2003, retrospective York 1993 and Hereford 1994). Examples of his work can be found in the Tate collection, King's College Archive, London and the Living Museum, Iceland. His last three books were *PLACE* (Reality Street, 2005), which was named 'Book of the Year' in *The Guardian*; *ENTANGLEMENT* (The Gig, Ontario, 2004); and *LEANS* (Salt Publications, 2007).

Lisa Jarnot is the author of four books of poetry including *Night Scenes* from Flood Editions. Her biography of poet Robert Duncan will be released by University of California Press in early 2011.

Gil McElroy is a Canadian poet and art critic. His books of poetry include *Dream Pool Essays* (Talonbooks, 2001) *NonZero Definitions* (Talonbooks, 2004) and *Last Scattering Surfaces* (Talonbooks, 2007), while a selection of his writings on art was published as *Gravity & Grace: Selected Writing on Contemporary Canadian Art* (Gaspereau Press, 2001). He lives in the village of Colborne on the shore of Lake Ontario with his wife Heather.

rob mcLennan is the author of some twenty trade books of poetry, fiction and non-fiction; his most recent titles are the poetry collections *gifts* (Talonbooks), *a compact of words* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland), *wild horses* (University of Alberta Press) and a novel, *missing persons* (The Mercury Press). An editor and publisher, he runs above/ground press, Chaudiere Books (with Jennifer Mulligan), *seventeen seconds: a journal of poetry and poetics* (ottawater.com/seventeenseconds), *The Garneau Review* (ottawater.com/garneaureview) and the Ottawa poetry pdf annual *ottawater* (ottawater.com). He regularly posts reviews, essays, interviews and other notices at robmcLennan.blogspot.com.

Jed Rasula's poetry collections include *Tabula Rasula* (Station Hill) and *Hot Wax, or Psyche's Drip* (BookThug), while his numerous critical works include *The American Poetry Wax Museum: Reality Effects 1940–1990*, *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry*, *Syncopations: The Stress of Innovation in Contemporary American Poetry*, *Imagining Language: An Anthology* (with Steve McCaffery) and, most recently, *Modernism and Poetic Inspiration*. He is Helen S. Lanier Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Georgia.

Helen Vitoria lives and writes in Effort PA. Her work appears and is forthcoming in *The Dirty Napkin*, *The Cartier Street Review*, *The Orange Room Review*, *wicked alicia*, *PANK*, *Tiger's Eye Poetry Journal*, *Gigantic Sequins*, *The Scrambler*, and others. She is currently working on her first full length poetry collection, *Corn Exchange*.

Nigel Wood is a writer and musician living in Manchester where he edits and publishes *Sunfish* magazine. His chapbook *A Talisman Against Inertia* is due soon from Goat's Head Press.

SUNFISH

poetry magazine | issue 2 | Summer 2010

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Submissions

Sunfish welcomes submissions of poetry, essays & hybrid forms from both new & established writers. The focus of the magazine is on what's variously referred to as innovative, exploratory or experimental poetry, though its editor doesn't find such categories very useful, and would prefer to be surprised by idiosyncrasy instead.

Subscriptions

Sunfish will now be published 3 times a year (& not quarterly as previously announced), with issue 3 due in November 2010, then at 4-monthly intervals thereafter. Apologies for the long delay between issues 1 & 2 and thanks to both readers and contributors for their patience.

£9 a year (3 issues, inc. p&p)

Single issues cost £3 (+ 50p p&p)

Sunfish is also available free as a pdf to anyone that wants it – just get in touch at the email address above to request it.