

Sunfish

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Tim Atkins

Four Poems

Robert Sheppard

The Complex

Gareth Durasow

Poetry for Girls

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Telegraphic Transcriptions

Gil McElroy

The Conquest (Of Bread)

Dylan Harris

big town blues

Richard Barrett

A Big Apple

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Editor

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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 or interesting, and would prefer to be surprised by idiosyncrasy instead.

Subscriptions

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Contents

Tim Atkins	Four Poems	4–5
Robert Sheppard	The Complex	8–15
Gareth Durasow	Poetry for Girls	16–22
Stephen Emmerson	<i>from</i> Telegraphic Transcriptions	23–25
Gil McElroy	(The Conquest) Of Bread	26–32
Dylan Harris	big town blues (xiv)	33–36
Richard Barrett	<i>from</i> A Big Apple	37–40
	Notes on Contributors	41

Tim Atkins

Petrarch 225

In a history of personal breakthroughs encounter groups

& redivism as Gloomy as Ibsen in one of his less frivolous moments

From the observatory dome on Mount Palomar her

Red Shift like the hair of the poet Shelley after a big night out with Lord Byron

At a girls' school just penalized for sticks

Full-throatedly baying like a cross between a Scotsman and a bloodhound celebrating New Year's Eve

With the appearance of one

Frog that had been looking on the dark side

Inserted in place of the couple of feet of spaghetti

Like a young Hindu fakir with a sensitive skin

Or like a shepherd from whom Troy still grieves

I saw women & she one of 12 women

A large red-headed man in a sweater and corduroy trousers who looked as in love as if he might be

In some way connected to the jellied-eel industry

Petrarch 226

No sparrows on the roof hiding from the rain must be similar

But not identical & the similarity must not be of the kind that obtains

Between sparrows & the mother bird miserable on the flight

Both to & from a non-tactile sub-atomic marriage the sort in Constantinople

Admired by Jesuits for whom the pain in the world cannot be added to

Enough before the repeal of the mushroom laws at least

It was possible to sleep think or make love

On the other hand I a green sparrow on Camden High Street

For whom the easy road in bloom & shady is the one road preferred

Wandering in repose

— unique in the world —am 0 —as A Lover WHO WRITES

Fucked in the art thus & behind by the sight

Of the light There in place where her heart was Bright star!

I came upon Kryptonite

Petrarch 227

*Reason has moons, but moons not hers
Lie mirror'd on the sea,
Confounding her astronomers,
But O! delighting me.*

Like some lovely flower blossoming in the sunshine

Blowing & blown in equal parts

& within spitting distance of the eradication of baldness

So full of ginger and loving kindness was my diction

Sitting in the sun under the dove house wall

With a tray of beef sandwiches between chastity and marriage

My butterfly shoulders which I henceforth apply to the wheel

Heave beneath my feet as if Judgment Day has set in with unusual severity

For the umpteenth time & in for another attack of poetry

Bound in squashy mauve leather at the drop of a hat

Mostly on the subject of sunsets and pixies

Base-over-apex for a pastoral once again

I seemed to be viewing the world through a murky mist

My eye in fine frenzy rolling met Laura's & I saw hers was rolling too

Petrarch 228 (for & from Eleni Sikelianos)

Standing up in summer with a skirt!

Love opened my side with his right hand!

& there within my very heart he planted a!

Green plant of such greenness that it is greener!

Than the greenness in Green Park itself!

My most abstract notion of shacks! I stick with you!

Where my eye-snapping snaps!

& the metal exhausts itself coming from the nuptial hide!

Yr morning rhomb yr oracular illusion & all yr nerves!

Double happiness to thy corrosive tumulus!

& you walked there swimming naufragee with a corona!

Your corneas busted like topaz!

On my knees before everything holy! Tender! Almost personal!

In the middle of my left eye! It's in my heat like one holy thing!

Robert Sheppard

from *Fictional Poems: the work of René Van Valckenborch*, supposedly translated from the Flemish by Martin Krol

In the Complex

[The units of the complex may be assembled in two fashions, each of 6 parts; one, by reading each unit as printed here (I–VI), secondly by reading each corresponding line a–f across sections I–VI. The introduction and coda (in **bold**) remain integral for both readings.]

and the sails are like clouds billowing in the Marina

I

- a If I ruffle his crackling feathers will he sell me a ticket to Brussels Central?
- b When you enter the rattling cage all the seats are taken by clicking lizard-spotters.
- c Where we gather beneath the booming dome – it bounces potential destinations around its bowl like the anthem of an atlas – elephants trumpet in bronchial triumph.
- d Whomsoever he meets at the railings greets him with shrieks, howls, hissing through bared teeth, and a dancing display that may not be described in polite company (which is where you sit at last on a seat made of travelling sighs).
- e How she got here, with the sort of sneeze that flattens the commuter crowd like a corn-circle, is not clear.
- f What they think about, waiting at the barriers, is the re-tinted movie, the one where the Ape Man knifes a rubber rhinoceros to the sound of his overdubbed war-cry.

II

- a What I really want I can really have amid this sea-breeze air-con: a new kind of cereal or a perfumed enema, a bath that operates while I'm asleep, an e-biography of the man who had the president's love-child, etc....
- b If you're wheeling between the tall aisles, sniffing the organics, squeezing the plastics, tapping the minerals, don't be alarmed if you're 'apprehended' as the 'anything suspicious' half-conjured by the metallic voice above you.
- c When we were young we had capacious nostrils, abysmal throats and curling ears; now we've piggy eyes, fly-zip lips and pyramids of tins to play like xylophones on electronic consoles.
- d Where he darts behind the marble slab, to the cosmetic ambrosia of the uniformed girls, he'll dispense drugs like samples of soft coral.
- e Who she thinks she is she can become, applying gloopy salad cream to her bare arms with her barbecue sausage fingers, disguised as the aroma of bad diet that air freshener will surely disperse with pineapple trace.
- f How they deal with waste, taint, discharge, checkout, etc...

III

- a How I got here. By physical examination, by spiritual inebriation. By my forebears' ability to perform tricks with bottles like warring clowns.
- b What you bring to the table. A tight rubber hose, crisp with hops. Platonic shapes fashioned from glass.
- c If we race to empty this barrel they'll be another (and another!) and we'll still be the milk monitors because we're the tallest men in Europe.
- d When he wins the prize it evaporates at his touch. Like the touch of his touch.
- e Where she stands in the long Nordic spa corridor she can just smell the bubbles being cooked in the laboratory below, knows that only the spherical ones will rate red ticks on the clipboard. The rest released to the claws of the jumping cats.
- f Who they think they are at any moment dictates the labels they select for each bomb they make. Trial and error.

IV

- a Who I see brushed up here is a forgotten frock-coated manufacturer from the Era of Colonial Trade, stuck on a crumbled plinth and plastered with a colour called Illusion.
- b How you got here may have to do with the free pass in your pocket or the little pellets that the ancient steam machine spits into the overflowing mulberry-burst bucket at its feet marked EMPTY.
- c What we want under these cornices are crystal images of the past brought to life and knocked up into modern semblance at the doable rate of one per hour.
- d If he were to wear the sugared lilac uniform he might become invisible, staring all day at the hammer striking the anvil, the sharp chips of its blows.
- e When she poses for the mould of Psyche everybody watches as though she's turned to marble jasmine shimmer, become venerable like the past, though it's our business to manufacture the future. Or is it the other way round in those glittering palace mirrors that catch her reversed milky curves as the cascade of warping light?
- f Where they gather by the roast-red revolving door, the workers acquire new thoughts, of rights denied, of communal wisdom and of collective control, thoughts that they are no longer making up the past. They are starting to make trouble.

V

- a Where I peer into the microscope the edges of the coin are empiricals, empires assigned to confidential waste, micro-dynasties elected to collective guilt.
- b Who you want to become is God, or at least his eye on the fake dollar bill, as you blush to admit that you still practise alchemy amongst so much humming lilac echo plastic and under custom-designed low-lit pre-fabricated ceilings.
- c How we track down the forger and trick him into exchanging a casket of nail-clipping epithelials from the Myrmidons' knife party should provide plot enough for series 12 episode 21.
- d What he does next is essential but incommensurable by any known standard.
- e If she is guilty then she can follow the evidence back and re-calibrate the proportion of gold to base metal on-screen.
- f When they inspect the matrix they find a spider – black speck with shrivelled bent legs – minted onto the emperor's face a thousand times. They'll either have to melt the whole batch down or touch up his online identikit with a squashed arachnid tattoo.

VI

- a 'When I was a revolutionist I was interrogated in this very room!' I boom into the microphone that regards me like a guard, like the guard of a guard.
- b Where you are holed-up now is a radio studio broadcasting your (fake) prison diaries to rouse the populace still suffering under the Nazis and their Walloon running dogs.
- c Who we want to become – the echoes of this mineral mist air etch regrets on pitted grey walls, palimpsest graffiti on crumbling plaster – is one of the dummies from the Museum of Amnesia, the one that demonstrates deprivation and all that stuff.
- d How he escaped was preserved as the sound of scraping brick and sifting sand that later became the time signature of the national anthem.
- e What she presides over is black tea, thick and acidic.
- f If they catch the disgraced president, they could reproduce this prison as a tent of recorded silence so that not a word would escape.

You flee the Complex, slip through the folds between permutations one night.

You see it for what it is at last: the surface cap of a half-abandoned nuclear silo, a contaminated business estate. A nursery of flowery follies in a decommissioned enterprise zone. An occult science park.

Stiff necked surveillance cameras twist to watch you go. Past bulldozed libraries, museums and art galleries, plaster dust, asbestos flour, acrylic fumes.

The bridge from the island tunnels into the night, the spot-lit gantries pulsing the rhythms of an unknown language as you cross.

You turn to see the units' white fangs biting the curved neck of the corniche.

Just by looking you are turning clouds into sails in the Marina. You transform darkness into sound, the clouds above breaking into sonatas that shield humankind from the cacophony of everything in sight, everything at once.

Gareth Durasow

Poetry for Girls

1.

The real Ludmila I. is a munitionette by trade
& would never begin a correspondence thus

Ave, my gentleman
life is what we make of it
it is never too late to fall in love
to socialise as it helps me understand life
to travel as it broadens me out

Look, animals, different types
of music, sport
driving cars, hot countries
pleasant fragrances

As a sweetheart I am still
waiting for a man who has quiet power
the type of man who would become bedfellows with
the only surviving son of the late lieutenant J. Garang Hinga

As a sweetheart I am still
waiting for the man who will take me to the arcade
& teach me to shoot inside the screen

2.

Ryu is a gentleman
ideal for beginners & easy on the eyes
& the quarter circle motion ↓↘→
+ P for punch to pull off the Hadouken
is a fundamental beat-em-up technique

But no human opponent worth their dōgi
is going to let you lob a fireball into their face
some will diffuse your Hadoukens
with Hadoukens of their own

Akuma will teleport
→↓↘ + PPP to close the distance
or administer Wrath of the Raging Demon
LP LP ← LK HP for a devastating 27 hit combo

Others have the gumption to jump over projectiles
but the Shoryuken (or Dragon Punch)
→↓↘ + P allows control of the air
punishing them before they can fracture
your skull with a Tiger Knee →↓↘ + K

Should they block it from the ground
you can guard against a counter strike
by using EX Focus to cancel the rest of the super
cutting the Dragon Punch short & allowing yourself time
to dash away from your opponent with ←← or →→

You can then follow up with a Hurricane Kick
↓↙← + K or if the Revenge Gauge is full
a Metsu Hadouken ↓↘→↓↘→ + PPP
to kill them dead with your tokamak fists.

3.

Enter Lavinia hooks for hands
the confessor of gods & monsters
understanding why it is
that boys make the best machine gun noises

Enter Lavinia appendages full
holding Chiron & Demetrius aloft by the hair
try your best to speak their names Lavinia love
they're knackered & need encouragement
blow in their faces or bang em together
but persevere
their eyes will open & fix on you
that's the moment to plant the kiss
not the lips God forbid
some will spit gift horses in the mouth
you don't want blood on your pearly whites
but most are thrilled – the look in their eyes
before they close or fall to the floor
& this is how we roll
no braying nails into coffin lids
it's pilot hole clearance hole countersink

4.

It is not being romantic
to say that pure thought has no issue other than
~~death~~ wonder.¹

Suppose we boil it all down to this
the world a gift horse we kiss on the mouth
condemn the banal to a burn barrel – I'd
slough off my birthmark & colorectal polyps
but commuters will notice the burning &
wonder. Tonight let us start a motorcade
Maggie Song. The M62 illuminations are free
the Yorkshire Rose suite yours to Feng Shui

It's wonderful to séance with you in the bath
to embroider your qwerty steeple of fingers
with Rimmel or henna or India Ink
Imperial Leather. The ceramic surround
wonderful for sowing a five o' clock shadow in
for Schwarzkopfung Maggie Song Nordic Blonde
O Thai Royale. Bergamot gris-gris
my Scrabble gestalt (the tiles spell Cthulhu)

Come the morning buckle up for the news
a gunshot in Haiti & nobody flinched
wonderful the horror that is to be missing
to be killed by someone who doesn't speak
English. O the playground euphoric with
bratatat valour. Wonderful its comic book
onomatopoeia... *Pting!* is a pot-shot-
ricochet-off-kettle-hat. *Spang!* is a spitzer
caught in the teeth. But with Kevlar it's Ng!
& a *plip* for the blood. An ellipsis where
wonderment goes. Wonderful the stories
that come with a cassette
that beeps when it's time
for turning the page

1. J. Rivière, in A. Artaud, *Correspondence with Jacques Rivière*.

5.

3D glasses made the taxi home a monoplex
insects became electrons alighting on the ~~wind~~ silver screen
our driver the ubiquitous fathead
every pylon was an effigy of Vitruvian man
every car had a seashell's voice
the solemn ambulance began a cortege
until losing us like a balloon loses a child

I saw a slideshow of minor ghosts
manifest in the space where our hands were tied
starting with Madeleine
Something (it was
long ago) she went to sleep before bedtime
made us all think there'd been a bomb in her head
made us all wonder who else had one too

I saw you cast in sulphuric light
the stentorian voices of late night Milaad
wishing it birdsong radio
your batgirl smile like heaven to a Murgatroyd
your charming hiccup on a bloody red backdrop²
I wanted to stop you in the Imax mid-snow angel
mid-It's a Wonderful Life
to unzip your teddy bear line with my tongue
but had I stood on a snail at the mistletoe threshold
I would have been up all night gluing it together again

6.

The preferable Ludmila I. is just a poster girl for phishermen
a honey trap appended to propositions like this

Love comes through the eyes that help me see this wonderful surprise
the wonderful man near whom I can always stand

I believe love comes through the ears

○ I hear sweet words from you

love comes through the hands

gift to me is you my man

Touch me & I want to feel your caress

it makes me go through many thrills

love comes through the mouth

you say the right things at the right time

which help me keep my state of mind

I know we can handle everything

Embraces

7.

Ants are crawling from inside the cash machine
I stub the aphids out on your skin
pick you a flower from the blind turn oak
The dogfight of butterflies
sorties inside the ghost of the wreck
then lying in the grass with my head on the Elek
Book of Oriental Verse
we do the voices of Ernie & Bert
saying hey to the trees
hey to the leaves
Cuckolds, like lovers
should themselves deceive³
girly laughter for charming the boys
children grilling daddy in the sun
footballs of pig bladder kicked in the face
bubblegum bursting. Each sound a poem
Pass me the net for the Kigo word

3. W. Wycherley, *The Country Wife*

Stephen Emmerson

from Telegraphic Transcriptions

Queen Liz puss flatted &
girl mud – never forget big spook
church drain, no wonder dumb, cant leave
face its timing & army.

I nosebreak disappearance
as y drive days off

ink town money back
if swallow receipt

keep it in slave shoes
with spakker breath

Sgt Cirrhosis has Pension Sick Mum Love –
barracks to the me time chummy.

Most embarrassing shower when he hung from
laces cock hands, he see it whirl variant , all
Prozac sky white and lie cream. Solder memory.
Lead thought. Holding his dress up for bitch town.

INTREPID NAFFI MARCH LS DOG DAY BIG KAHUNA
PSYCH WAD

CANYOU TURN IT DOWN WE CAN ALL HEAR
WHATYR THINKING

SUGAR LIPSTICK IS ME FIAT UNO LUV

DO YOU QUANGO?

ITS SO HARD TO TELL THESE DAYS

Naturally, this ambiguous coexistence of economic affluence spread through fountain pens into 1959. However, for a complex functional peasant humbly accorded to fantasy, you might say: 'Power Machines given modern patterns consumption.' Body decoration collateral line it holiday week. Despite. Discrepancies. Thirdly human praxis. Technical objects quasi peaceable biological adaptation. We need the machine to protect Social Class A). When lovers say 'any certain signifier literally lie, this means: Nothing but a bundle of laundrette confessions. Production of ideology is nothing but a gas marriage. It is all too easy to NO SOMKING IN THIS ROOM – does this mean I'm photographs of Anne? Sex Culture Advertising is to die poor or to at least acknowledge the universal mutilation of Hello do you hear me. It is the space dog complex, it is delved under the collar. If there is a secret to illusion it involves languages are so beautiful.

Extra Pyramidal
Symptoms consist of:

Parkinsonian Symptoms (Including Tremor), which may occur more commonly in adults or the elderly and may appear gradually

Dystonia (abnormal face and body movements and dyskinesia, which occur more commonly in children or young adults and appear after only a few doses

Gil McElroy

(The Conquest) Of Bread

1.

One.

& yet
ideal.

Later on,
groups (to
a great extent).

In
maintaining centuries, we
learned, by
distance grew
rich. The median came, in
this direction chaperoning the leading ideas
of a hand once seized by rubbery & scoured
sampling some
of the bygone implements.

Ah,
the bygoners, the
spoils. During
since years, treasures
pierced the forest: an
acre of implements & effete old rulers prudently at ease – fifty
or sixty families worth (the
terrible years of Napoleon
now the stuff
of periods).

Incoming.
& other. The
very high. The
low.

Let me, then, correct
the paint of things; I've no compunction about

someone else's palate, and have
granaries to satisfy.

Truly
we are native
to a humiliating
course. Truly
the old, shopworn dramas
lingered in mindsets that skulls
split. The confession – the
apparent confession – was no defense against
tomorrows, only another way
toward redundancy. I remember
one drawing – a
proper pose, a
subject found upright as if looking to transcend
gravity – & the violent source
of its existence.

Different ways
of totality. Truly white regions of bread appeared
at the centre of stretches, not at
the awkward, toured
edges, eye-
high corners, or
crusty 19th century
horizons.

Lo,
the prodigies. The
nearly completed
overhand left behind
smaller circles & mostly measured
yeasts. This,
then, is our
cheat.

2.

Nor do we want
Rothschilds. Their
terrible lisped
quantities sharpened two hundreds of lifetimes
to excess.

3.

Bang into
Helium, heart-
ened. See in it
teeth. Be
characterized by large dogs
& societies of
cunning. Range
on.

What else
or not? Much,
much harder forces
of nature, the
three standard clouds (cirrus, cumulus, stratus)
& very precise
rising bodies do be-
low.

Big wires & blue prints.

The barbed afflictions of the hand.

Kinds of coins.

The things,
prating.

4.

Small,
& a person's
hands, the
one & perhaps
posture, nothing
walled in
by destiny. To
build up
hunches. To
complain of
salt – feckless spreads within,
& when. Art,
but without rec-
tangles.

28

5.

Half-
decades, lax-
ly. Clearly the result
of the sun & some
perpetually basic goddesses linked up
with acceleration. Once
there was a way built
to Newton's stars
& five kinds
of anything, fine
as given. But
after France the world moved
by any motion,
& strict
British
production.

Things, satisfactorily,
sum to zero. In a few,
laws. Noxious
thinks (suffice it
& so). The
immense bakeries
we have sought
were evident
to all.

6.

We
lost our will
to build a world
in place of the sun, wrath
penetrating flesh & rigid bones. The
six truths of time, never-
theless, the
rich, who fought
their pastimes, burning off
such un-
workable facts with tidy
English profits.

Warms welcome
the good fortune. This
was, would be, for
along. Religion, sure, but
with results.

7.

Tight, hard-
rimmed teeth. The top, the
mass of ex-
foliations. Reactions
to green. Recent things
to be shed seven times seven. Eye-
high corners. Congenial
steel. The
Moon, too.

Different ways
of totality, there
was. This
fascinating spectacle
of shoes, &
all sorts of growing: it
was basic to the eye – per-
petually basic. Mi-
nute, even. My
things matched.

On one slope
was a door, clearly amiable. A way
was built
to its closing, a
successful metric
way

8.

8th century
tyrants.

9.

In the in-
correct, the
mathematics to time
was assumed, the
possibility that today
we might matter behind
the enabled things was
unposed.

Ah, the bonuses
of oxygen. The
fully operational years assumed
stances designed for their
thin plastic days
& balsawood nights. God
was had by theft. The weather
stood by. The world
became a white-
out, no?.

Nein. The
cooling & meandering were mere
acts of half-dimensions, dirt-finessed
& cajoled, so to leaven the Sun
on the longest of days.

10.

At
every meal, she
told me
something – in
sorrow begging, in
secret fasting. I
dipped, actually, at all her
pretty good answers
in my head. Adversity
& affliction was
a broth without
any.

Eating fetched us
half-worths. Whoever had

a longer table
won.

But
I took a loaf
& looked on, the
antonyms & lunchbox voices all around me quarreling royally
with some that shalt eat
the white stuff.

Dylan Harris

big town blues (xiv)

it was the same old

it was the same old
won't discuss
pushed the buttons
deny the did

why stir me up
refuse to talk the stirring do
so it becomes
fuck off or hate

i shouldn't let myself
be woken
by such a darkside
bitch

promenade

today's new promenade
low below *le grand arch*
magnificent modernist high
purity in the hearty hail

lines sheer the up across
counting class countless glass
perceiving cells their rhythm
walk the ambitions met

rare fresh my differing eyes
thousand here thousand see
côte à côte a thousand worn
strong camera eyes my fresh

slippery light icy night
high ground to slide around
the skim of edge the low knife wind
it's not *romans c'est ça*

musique sans musique

swing sing the nearer beat
diva the crescendo high
hush the harmony brush
tune to go between

in a conversation regular
new attention's sweet

train the tracking rabid
lyric the acid flute
make synth the mange
off music

given presence
i'm invert

you know the rhythm
you know the tune
you know the style you get
set

shocking douche fresh

tiresome
je cherche un appartement
i fire the contact silk
evaporate

a dangerous friend
shocking *douche* fresh
denier—exciting cold
the weather

wave the caterpillars high

wave those caterpillars high
meaning zero
looking unique

call it a mystic find
caterpillar energy
the natural force that heals
all

lie like you're the end of time
convince a prince spread a succour
kill a few irrelevant

get your gong
congratulations sir editor
would you like fries with that

sherbet

sherbet
sherbert
shearbert
shear flirt
sher flirt
her flirt
ha!

headache

i wouldn't mind so much
had this headache
earned itself

it's stolen the day
an irritation colleague
a breeding-eyed misfortuned

i'll be here tomorrow
i'll have had my sleep
it won't

rafia wind

once upon a time
this restaurant
turned the aircon suck
that's mega-suck
threw up a random rafia things

furniture
timetables
courgettes

the vents & at their sucked
a place of nails
on ufo slats

a basket
a hat so conical
one end a dolly's bedframe
a fifty litre drinking glass
firewooded

they danced destroy for gales

yard glass
ah — that's my eyesight
it's an artificial leg

Richard Barrett

from A Big Apple

[...]

there will be an exchange in this space
weather is inclement sometimes and other times
it isn't – all of which is important
what will you give me for the time invested
in this work? – surrounded by other people
or not but whatever I must have something
opinions buttressed by words 100 years old
maybe older under low-ceilings without
adequately working air-con and watched
nearly eagle-eyed / from the corners
having comprehensively ignored the last century
the bourgeoisie will have a nice afternoon

[...]

i sense the speech has been well practiced
we should go and watch a film
obstructing the queue in effect making it appear
bigger which it does become when others join
all the wars of the past century
and this one have somehow blended into one
like the choices you made
or which i made or which anyway
were made without any sort of
sensible discussion at all rather in the moment
an appraisal of that neck in front that belongs
to the person with the long neck
imagine teeth marks in it – your blood lust pricks
of red speckling the skins surface to a slow drip
and i'm worried and forgetful
differentiating this space free of stimulation
the rhythm of your breathing is listened to
closely not mattering if it's day or night
those flies you think you can hear you know
are not there like everything which is absent

[...]

an anti-septic smell hangs like spring crocuses
which i might pick and present to you
in a posy yeah would you like that? i could
tell you it cost a lot of money?
the progress of the application is on my mind
improvements to the toilet facilities
expand the range on offer in the gift-shop
the cafeteria has room for numerous buggies
in this reverent atmosphere
bringing to the work a notion that something
absolutely must be given for the effort expended
i must get something and of more meaning than
mere entertainment as i'm a serious man
it was a nice day

[...]

fight and vendettas there were common
and pursued with enthusiasm and spirit
voices would fade gradually from earshot
the lift / and rumours and counter rumours
are competing to get the knife in first
is this air-conditioning working? i'm going
open a window yeah is that okay? there
the content insisted on was 'plain-English'
in your written work! she unnecessarily said
in the dark steadfastly which she denied
the paper-trail was as long as your arm
at last seeing some people just won't like you
there's no point trying to work out why
and a self might exist she said to be true to
when of course it should have been what
imagining slights were very real but those
others were manufactured and unverifiable
some had been heard of even who'd try
to walk gasping for breath up the 3 flights
pardon? listening for footsteps in the corridor
coming from the opposite direction and then
we'll scatter and arrange to meet again later

[...]

the results fell into these following categories:

- 1) the predictable
- 2) the interesting
- 3) the unexpected

the investigations were conducted scientifically
the signatories of The Official Secrets Act
were out back and protecting their neuroses
were passing in the corridor with bowed heads
any eye-contact made will be the give away
the one which they look for sorry i don't know
how she heard about it as she isn't someone that
i speak to and anyway i wouldn't repeat that
you must challenge anyone you don't recognise
ask to see identification if it's a crowded place
classified information can't be discussed
we learnt things which were useful and which
went some way towards justifying expenses

[...]

the content of that message was powerful
much more than anything i've ever written
ever i think you write very well as you know
there are loads of places we could live if
we decide we do want to make a go of this
our two salaries could pay for quite a lot
i hear what you're saying about renting
being dead money without understanding
exactly what you mean do you mean money
isn't always already dead? - on the contrary
under some circumstances it might spend its
time dancing around and eating out at Nandos
on Sunday there is no counter-service here
deposits and withdrawals can still be made
don't please demand to see a personal advisor
i name each £5 note i have after someone
off the telly while each £10 note gets called
after a distant family member and the odd
£20 note is named for my mum and dad and

fifties by the names of ex-lovers / this is
usual isn't it? we'll be looking at starter homes
then of at least two bedrooms it's just
sitting there when it could be earning interest
this financial year the best ISA providers are
what's the opposite of excited? will you tell me
because i am struggling to understand

[...]

fuck you i mean i say fuck you in a shower of
shredded Metro free daily newspaper on the bus
this is the absolute boiled down essence of being
young with youth meaning something beyond lack
of years and needing to be considered a value
instead to stand alongside good or evil as absolute
do you want to play top-trumps? or something
else if you don't have the cards in your bag we can
say some more stuff about what we want
to do with our lives as we have that much say
how has that girl's rucksack got 17 badges on it?
i know because i counted them yet am wondering
how it's possible to like badges that much
running side-on simultaneously pointing / call me
i'll promise to come over but then i won't

Notes on Contributors

Tim Atkins is the author of *Folklore*, *Horace*, *1000 Sonnets*, and *Petrarch*. His birthday is 13th August.

Richard Barrett lives and works in Salford. A selection of his work appeared in *The Other Room Anthology 08/09*. A chapbook, *Pig Fervour*, has been published by The Arthur Shilling Press, and in 2010 his first full-length collection, *Sidings*, appeared from White Leaf Press. He is a co-organizer of Manchester-based performance series Counting Backwards.

Gareth Durasow is a poet, playwright and workshop leader. His poetry has appeared in the odd magazine and has won the occasional prize. His plays for Horizon Arts have won nothing at all. He runs Poetry under the Arches, a spoken word event in Huddersfield. An average of twelve people attend each month

Stephen Emmerson lives in the North of England and his work has appeared in *Jacket*, *Great Works*, *Cake*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *nthposition*, *FREAKLUNG*, *SPINE*, and *The Red Ceilings*. He is the author of *'X'* (The Arthur Shilling Press, 2009), *Chimera* (Erbacce, 2010), *Attack of the Gas Powered Angels* (KF&S, 2010) and *Poems found at the scene of a murder* (ZimZalla, 2010).

Dylan Harris (dylanharris.org) wrote *the smoke* (new from Knives Forks and Spoons Press) & *antwerp* (Wurm Press). He lives in Paris, where he runs Poets Live (poets@live.fr), & is considering creating corrupt press.

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

Robert Sheppard's last book of poetry was *Warrant Error*; his next book is *Berlin Bursts*, both from Shearsman, but his project *Complete Twentieth Century Blues* is published by Salt. A prose anti-autobiography, *The Given*, was published recently by Knives, Forks and Spoons Press. His current work, as shown here, is to write the bi-lingual fictional poems of the Belgian Rene Van Valckenborch, whose twitterodes may be read at www.twitter/VanValckenborch.com. He (Sheppard) is Professor of Poetry and Poetics at Edge Hill University.