



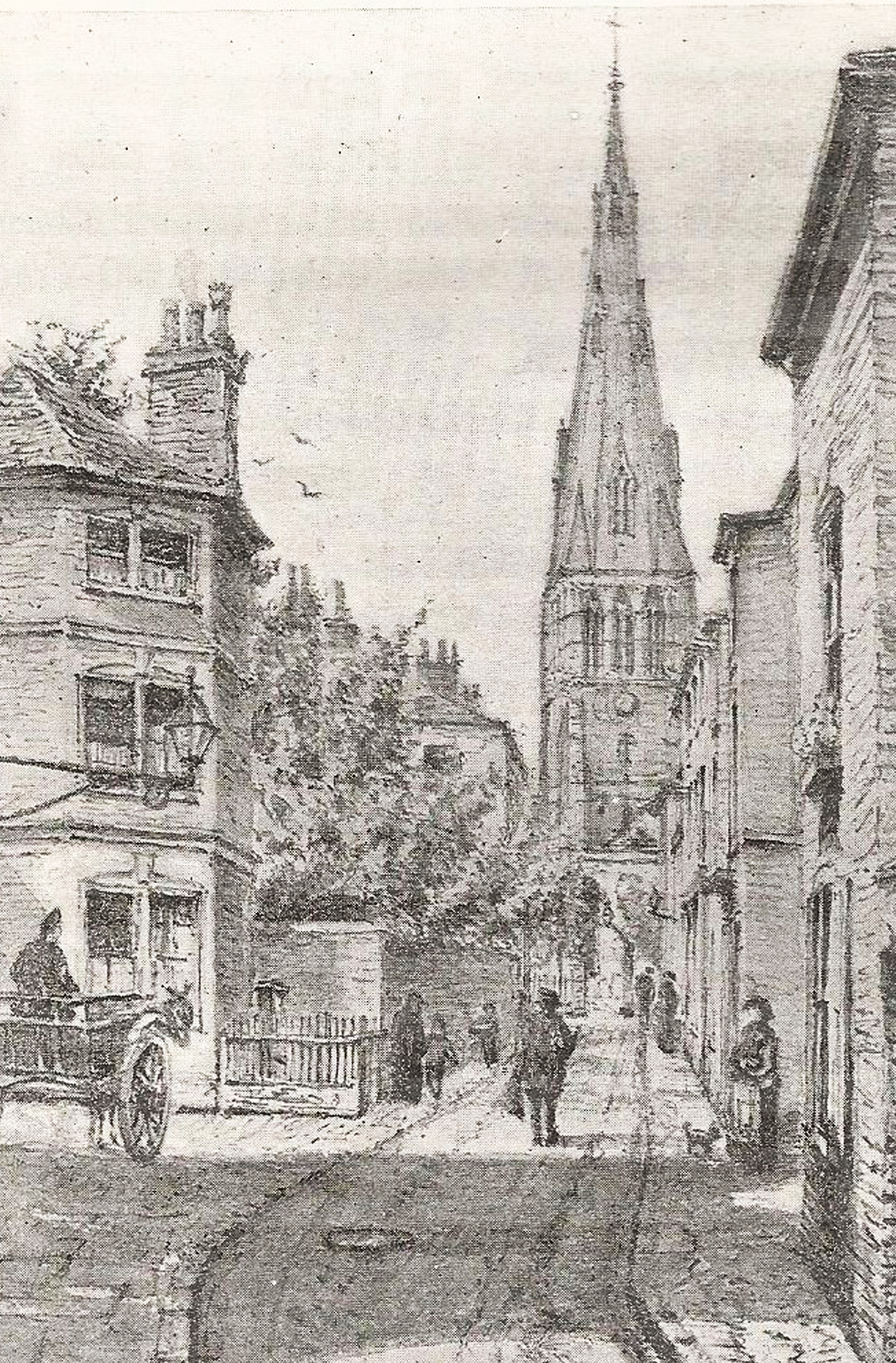
Caramelized

Civilization

Traein

A curated collection of poems and prose edited by:


*Hilary Downey    John F. Sherry, Jr    John Schouten*



*New Street and S. Martins Church by Miss E. S. Paget  
Image from Glimpses of Ancient Leicester by Mrs T. Fielding Johnson*

# Foreword

*Written by Hilary Downey*



This year has brought unimaginable changes to work and lifestyle, beyond our comprehension. Yet the poetic tongue has flourished with new blooms in the chapbook garden. This is encouraging and we welcome emerging and fresh voices to the poetic community.

We have had to adopt a new way of talking this year and we were conscious of all who had made the effort to be part of Leicester CCT. Rather than putting us all on hold to 2021 and lose the poetic thread that has become synonymous to our community, we have moved to offer poets and their supporters the opportunity to take time out and mull over this season's catholic mix of emotion and reflection. The bringing forth of new conversations, posed through new lenses, offers the reader in its novel e-chapbook presentation a companion for locked down days. The cover design draws on an historical image of Leicester, reflective of quiet street life and the shuttered outlook we experience today. The title of the chapbook, *Caramelized Civilization Traein*, pays homage to this, signalling up the stationary position we wrestle with; yet equally conscious of the power inherent in the human-engine, to drive future progress.

We look forward to CCT 2021, to the physical performance of poets and the camaraderie this session brings, to poets and non-poets alike. The gathering in, the occasion for stepping out from the norm; to share with others, pieces of self. We hope you will continue to imbibe of this golden mead.

No introduction to this chapbook would be complete without drawing on voices that have stirred the soul, especially needed in these times. We leave you now in the safe hands of William Butler Yeats's, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* (1888). The words finding resonance in our self-isolating mantles:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

We acknowledge and appreciate the ongoing support of the CCT Board, over the years, in this endeavour.

Thanks to Steph Wulz for her creativity and inspiration year on year, in bringing the chapbook to life and for our e-book format this year.

Hilary Downey, John F Sherry, John W. Schouten (editors)  
Belfast Basement Publications

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Hilary Downey, John F. Sherry, Jr. and John W. Schouten

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# John F. Sherry

bob seger travels incognito

kodak moment

mirror homage



bob seger travels incognito

responding for perhaps  
the thousandth time,  
i fix them  
with the resting face  
my kind wife christened  
'irish death stare,'  
the one she knows  
will get me pinched  
for menacing one day,  
call out  
my carny incantation,  
groucho channeling w.c.:  
"close, but no see-gar,"  
lean in for the reveal  
and stage whisper,  
"stephen king! i read tonite in town!"  
rushing off, recalling  
younger days when  
i was taken for nick nolte,  
i wonder if these guys  
have ever carried off  
"john sherry."

kodak moment

she trundles down the shoreline,  
howling as she fails to dodge  
the sea foam lapping at her boots.

a squadron of pelicans skims the swells  
as she chases sandpipers  
settled in the mottled rills.

skirting ravenous beagles  
battening on beached squid,  
she works stiff fingers  
in the early morning chill.

wiping wet sand  
from shells that seem to sparkle  
in her small hand,  
she lures me to a portal  
carved in the bluff.

we bark back at the sea lions  
'til I'm too hoarse  
for anything but raspy laughter  
every time she arfs.

I piggyback her  
all the way home,  
weight shifting from shoulders to heart  
as one more best day ever ends,  
destined to vanish, soon  
misplaced pixels in a random file.

mirror homage

face  
franked with fatigue,  
small cancellations  
spidering from the eyes,  
ivory sclera  
pinked and  
webbed as well,  
cheek creping  
to inexorable crater,  
dry tongue probing  
merlons and crenels  
guarding grit and  
grimace,  
my smile  
defaults to scowl  
and i growl  
“good morning,  
sunshine”

# Maurice Patterson

Vibrations



## Vibrations

Outside Willie's Chicken Shack  
Toulouse and St. Peter  
Marie Francois, a pink Arabian Princess.  
A pink Bourbon Street missionary  
Her tricycle tattooed with scripture  
Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself.

Marie's call to prayer  
A distorted Cupid Shuffle  
Thunderous and unsettling.  
Thunderously sleazy  
The stereo beyond its threshold  
Growling in my teeth.

Assembled flesh begins to harmonise  
Entrained by rhythm and lyrics  
Swallowed into the social.  
Swallowing the spectacle  
The watchers become the watched  
The exhausted withdraw awkwardly.

Multifarious limbs coordinate  
Annexing the space about  
The tarmac now the venue.  
The venue is the street  
Dance absorbed effortlessly  
Where strangers gather together.

Sonorousness despite distortion  
Vibrations betwixt between  
Bodies resonating with sound.  
Resonating with other bodies  
Solitary yet together  
Ethereal but still real.

Despite resistance I capitulate  
Vanquished by euphoria  
Raucous laughter in my ears.  
The laughter fills my bones  
Tugs the fibres of my muscles

# Elizabeth Fulton Lye

Peregrine

It's tough to live at the top of the tree





## Peregrine

Peregrine falcon  
rips bloody flesh  
Talons gripped into pigeon's chest  
Consumed by death - like me

Yellow eye glints in the sun  
Victory! - the battle won  
Flies wild, cries 'I see, see... see'  
swoops through suburbia - and me.

Freedom of a wild creature  
owns... nothing  
consumes... everything.

Focused  
...free  
- not me.

## It's tough to live at the top of the tree

It's tough to live at the top of the tree  
Looking up at the sky, and down  
It's hard to stop, and think, and see  
What's so important, what matters to me

I worry about what goes on below  
If others will try to thump it out of me  
I must stay alert, can't be too slow  
Ahead of the game, not go with the flow.

It's tough to live in the middle branches  
Impress those below, fighting to climb  
Got to spot opportunities, take my chances  
Need to stay agile for these mad dances

The pressure's intense, heat rises around  
Buy more stuff to protect who I am  
I look up there, then down to the ground  
Precarious balance - make no sound

It's tough to live at the bottom of the tree  
Shit falling on me so thick I can't see  
The ground is full of danger traps for me  
The sound of chainsaws nightmare-y

# Jennifer Takhar

Life Writing

Seancescence

Vacation to Mars



## Life Writing

My sterilised hands will  
not put pen to paper  
(as they are naturally inclined to do)  
but liquid pen to skin  
every evening, alongside the news,  
its irritating babble,  
'invasion', 'bloodshed', 'casualties'  
puncture the bodily routine

Not always in the same soft place  
but pricking new regions  
unbruised, unhurt,  
virgin places

to set in motion a life cycle  
not quite like  
how you and I came to be.

*Not an easy thing to meet your maker*  
*Not an easy thing to play the maker*  
Yet, I persist...  
the problem is  
I *want* more life.

I genuflect, then press hard  
and insert yellow ink,  
internal inscription  
to blend with the unsuspecting  
redness inside.

What color does that make?  
Synthetics and Heme  
an unnatural hue –  
not quite what I was expecting.

The Promethean pen is retired to its case  
then placed in the cool box –  
its ambition contained until

tomorrow when the chore  
of life writing  
a possibility,  
the probability of procreativity

will again play out  
against the backdrop  
of the hypodermic news.

## Seanescence

Who was I before  
Someone else took over  
and would not let me  
Sleep, eat and understand  
the world beyond my bedpan ?

I want to wave goodbye  
Stand proud  
Understand mirrors  
Dark screens  
Remember the pugilistic pungency of garlic or  
Smoked halibut,  
Run on the beach and  
Collect winkles and mussels

And not feel like an invertebrate  
Soft and Squishy  
with a cracked carapace:  
*Is the contorting cephalopod  
more neurologically advanced than me ?*  
[How shameful can that be ?]

So I will live out my aquarium life,  
*«Madame Mollusc  
with her fissured shell glasses»*  
they shall say

You look in at me –  
My odd mien  
and I stare right back  
through murky glass;  
my algae eyes straining to see  
Clarity that comes and goes  
like waves in a  
mystery sea.

My incredibly shrinking brain,  
ruined piece of Nature  
cannot breathe  
And my voice,  
my song  
cannot break through the sound  
of the brewing cerebral storm.

## Vacation on Mars

65 million miles from home  
Far away from the politicking-pollution  
the pestilence of Earthlings  
and their sedentary souls.

Of course we don't belong here.  
We still crave Earth breakfast  
runny eggs, crispy bacon and  
*'Sam's Real Manhattan hot dogs!'*  
-Our irresistible taste for  
things that do us harm -  
Clogging hearts and minds

They resent us being here  
and the Martian winds blow hard  
whipping our pink faces  
blue sands cut our fragile skins  
they ruin our city clothes--  
our material being.

We see them up on the hills,  
billowing loose robes of thin yellow silk  
Silver hands that make no gesture.  
They say nothing.  
Mute, orange silhouettes,  
wearing twisted, blue glass masks

"We're good decent people  
They should know that."  
But they do they care?

And then the radio news...  
War on Earth  
*No one can return*  
*Mass extinction pending*



Yet, a new disease besieges us here...  
The Deep Loneliness.  
It penetrates our carbon bodies  
and dissolves our excitement  
melting our optimism and  
Migrant aspirations for a better existence.

# Kushagra Bhatnagar

Stop writing, Or the Reviewers will come



## Stop writing, Or the Reviewers will come

Stop writing, my child, or you'll pique their interest  
These new gunslingers of the not-so-wild west

Do as they say, in the land of FT 50  
Behind this door, you'll find reviewer number three

Who are they, really, do I hear you ask  
They're you, you and you, if you just put on that mask

Morphing shapeshifters, in many guises and forms  
Some grizzled veterans and some bloodthirsty greenhorns

Your question's too broad, and your gap is too small  
Oh you poor writer, you've got no chance at all

Your framework's creakin', and your contribution is a blob  
It's a well written paper, but I'm just doing my job

If you've somehow survived, well it's not a clean chit  
Here comes the Rnr, get ready to shovel ...

Because we can, we'll suggest a major turnaround  
Hey don't hate us, it's just the fourth round

If you truly love a paper, then don't interject  
If it loves you back, it's a conditional accept

So long suckers, I now bid you adieu  
I've received in my mailbox, a new request to review

# Jens Martin Svendsen

Organizing consumption in a maze



## A villanelle

### Organizing consumption in a maze

Organizing consumption in a maze  
stranded people like on a dying reef  
caught in a make-believe feasting blaze  
With a feeling of eternal time and place  
oh, just let me swivel in the air like a leaf  
organizing consumption in a maze  
Organize the organized in a space  
leave the lonely to get lost in their grief  
caught in a make-believe feasting blaze  
I see danger waiting any of these days  
desperately secluded, like a forlorn thief  
organizing consumption in a maze  
In the trail of crazes I can all but trace  
the undying light in a darkened night, in brief  
experience the urgency that has no face  
A feeling of a ceaseless common case  
as a moment saturated with a deceptive belief  
caught in a make-believe feasting blaze  
organizing consumption in a maze

# Matthew A. Hawkins

Pumpkin, Seeds



## Pumpkin, Seeds

Pumpkin, seeds I give  
One day to receive

Stars glimmer on the lake  
reflecting back to them  
ripples disrupt the view  
but only for a few

The day feeds into night  
allowing true beauty to show  
sun hides what is there  
only in the dark does one care

Through each rippling delight  
I'll always keep you in sight

# Michele Corengia

The beginning of love

The breach of love

The disillusion of love

The crash of love

The renascence of love





## The beginning of love

Life in one kiss,  
catch my thought  
with one word  
beautiful smile

Perched on the sofa  
there was nothing left;  
the crowded room  
drained by your tear

What is that?  
Temptation of the mind  
or  
Memory of the soul?

A kiss, an entire life;  
catch the moment and  
hold me close  
My immortality is questioned

Endless aroma,  
bursting instant,  
sweet threshold between  
Art and Science.

The breach of love

Abuse me.  
They're just words  
raped  
Of the match  
bear the marks

You have changed the life  
of my words  
Are they better?  
I look at them,  
I observe my story

that is no more,  
but it r-exists.

## The disillusion of love

My talent is killing me  
love for words  
chants of dying birds  
messy idiot.

No dreams;  
My life is  
orphan of history  
Years wear my blood.

Desperation ends up in a sin,  
stone in the nights,  
I'll perish in your body  
in front of your skin.

I am deprived  
of my authentic voice,  
exhausted radio  
flag of my insane  
life.

## The crash of love

Collapse  
my friends, my country;  
I don't care

if you leave,  
forever,  
through the blue of difficulties.

Drop the affection  
you asked me,  
my love

I am going to die  
into the immensity of life;  
you have realized our decay.

The renaissance of love

A terminal love  
mercy killing

ash of time  
waste of my being

A rising love  
from death to life

curious phoenix,  
who am I?

A consumer of stories  
researcher of temporality.

I am looking through the yellow eyes  
dancing on the threshold

between Art and Science  
between Life and Death.

# John Schouten

*All I Want from Life Is You*

*Earth Meets Water Meets Sky*



## All I Want from Life Is You

to rock me to sleep every night and every morning  
to wake you with a kiss  
to make your coffee in that just-so way  
to plan a lazy day  
to gang up on a crossword  
to hover in the kitchen while you keep me at bay  
    with chef's-knife eyes and the next day  
to cook for you  
to hold your joy in cupped hands like pools of blue-green  
    light and when that joy drains into grief  
to shoulder your sorrow with you down  
to the shore  
to lay it in the tide for the inevitable return of water  
to water and salt  
to salt

For Beth  
*3.14.2020*

## Earth Meets Water Meets Sky

Winging homeward  
above the arctic circle  
we learn it is possible  
to outfly the setting sun

an orange rubber ball  
tossed for a cosmic dog  
by the winter solstice  
along a scruffy horizon

and later  
as mist-rise blunts offshore rocks  
and breakers rake zen gardens  
with imperfect monotony

we learn it is possible  
to outlast anger  
out-wait grief  
and live in love at the pace of tides

For Beth  
*3.14.2020*



# Pilar Rojas Gaviria

Terrifying Weather



## Terrifying Weather

The news broke into his place  
when he was less prepared.  
They entered through the window

as do the common thieves.  
They took what was most precious:  
all his future dreams,

far and dark  
in the mystical place of the deep.  
It hurts

as if you squeezed the ice skating rink  
frozen he goes,  
undetected to the eye.

Commuting next to you,  
in 25 D, from Banbury to Birmingham,  
for him, is not a breeze.

# Sandra D. Smith

americano with cream

lines



americano with cream

no sugar or low calorie sweetener  
just an americano with cream  
and extra hot water on the side  
half drunk, the best part gone  
car keys splayed beside open laptop  
glass of water untouched

a river of commuters snaking outside  
tapping into the universal thought stream  
finding the flow against textual inhibitions  
inspiration is breathed not chewed  
poached eggs on toast with a sprinkling of chives  
butter running like thoughts on gluten free toast  
moving through space at the speed of darkness

and we're encapsulated in timber and brick  
inside the Trinita of Silver café  
a haven for enchanted walkers  
total body waxers, harp and voice enthusiasts  
wedding and events planners, plastic recyclers  
authentic embracers, market day visitors  
corporate dressers, relationship seekers  
and poetry writers

*perspective is everything*

lines

this love is forged by the hands of god  
mapped in both straight and crooked lines  
travelling through bone and time  
in quantum leaps...  
and as they scrape and chisel a path to my heart  
with their dazzling white hot nails  
I flinch a little, readjust my pose  
and decide to keep choosing love

# Sneha Gray

Inoutsider – An Introspection of Place and Identity



## Inoutsider – An Introspection of Place and Identity

Married to an insider, yet always an outsider  
Through creed and sight and tone and speech  
the corridors of inbetweenness echo -  
voices of trust and distrust,  
twilight and sunrise, dreams and nightmares.  
Social imaginaries co-existing, co-creating yet conflict-  
ing  
Images flicker in my essence  
cocooning inside yet truly outside  
This land satisfies my void,  
while synchronising the vacuum  
An abyss of inoutsidness –  
Not an outsider, yet still not an insider.  
The land spans through time  
Yesterday, today, tomorrow  
Through history, present and future  
My story entwines with the native  
Sealed forever acculturated  
through the knots of time  
The mountain and the river  
Ever immersed in me  
Making sense of who I am  
Yet just another domino  
Falling then becoming just  
a footnote in history.

# Francesca Crangle-Sim

4 Left Turns

Oblivion





## 4 Left Turns

I take four left turns  
Through hoops of fire,  
as they rise higher,  
Asking why I smell like embers on a whispering pyre,  
Of burnt dreams  
And misspent teens  
And why everything in my world leans  
To another beat, surrounded by clocks  
Their faces melting,  
Reincarnations of echoes past belting  
And I felt I had to run from the canvas  
Clawing at the frame  
But I melt back to ink again and again

I take four left turns  
And now I'm spying this world through my Dali eyes  
I've become this person consumed by time,  
Every increment ticking past  
Marching fast  
Faces blast  
Into my mind's eye and I see the same scene  
Not wiping the slate clean  
But keeping  
Repeating  
Mind beating  
The same damn chant until I tumble and fall into  
Dreams of waiting rooms,  
And drawn out queues  
Greyer than life and yesterday's who's who

I take four left turns  
And quickly find out who has the power  
When they tell you within the hour  
But the hands turn backwards,  
Because in my neighbourhoods,  
My gardens filled with white goods, not baked goods,  
So the politicians don't want to spend that money,  
But when he's done he sit there thinking how it's funny,  
That I don't do any better,  
That I just dither  
And wither,  
Watching my skin receding,  
Ivory bone through my flesh bleeding,  
But needing,  
Not your cash,  
But opportunity.

I take four left turns  
And I'm trapped on this roundabout, thinking how its all  
about  
How they perceive me  
While they leave me  
Waiting  
Hands shaking  
Belly aching  
Saying put that extra weight in  
But I'm doing what it takes to survive  
Not thrive, living like we do to get by  
And you say don't look  
Because according to your book  
Of the law I'm guilty  
For life  
For work  
For home

And I'm all alone  
Fighting repercussions for all eternity  
Or alternately  
I take four left turns  
Following the rules you gave me  
Saying you're trying to make me  
Into better people  
When in fact  
It's all an act  
And you just want to subtract  
My personality  
But I see what these lies be when he said just get an  
ID  
But as far as their eyes see  
I don't exist  
Because they're screaming for a birth certificate  
Not believing that that's an infinite  
Impossibility, but without giving them an uppercut  
how can I rebut  
That who and what I am is me

I take four left turns  
When they call us Hobos for having no post codes  
Delivering such low blows and punishing my no shows  
When they send appointments to houses I don't live  
in,  
They push me down but I don't give in  
And they don't know what my life has been  
But they tell me to begin  
Again  
And again  
And again So I scream for answers  
But to them I'm just a man with criminal cancers  
And there aren't any necromancers

Who can bring me back to life untainted  
And I'm getting frustrated  
At my name being desecrated  
Because to them I'm unconsecrated  
Ground beneath their feet  
Acting like I'm contaminated  
Or always intoxicated  
But I'm just under appreciated  
Manipulated  
Segregated  
They're assuming I'm not motivated  
Saying I'm not related  
So I get isolated  
And alienated  
But in fact we're all affiliated  
And I'm infatuated with an idea that I've created  
that's not complicated  
That I could be liberated  
Educated  
Not rehabilitated

But free

But I take the only road that's left to me  
I take four left turns.

## Oblivion

Never going to amount to anything  
Too chatty  
No focus  
Not at all like her sister  
I don't think college is for you  
They do courses at the tech  
Come on  
Not you  
Pay attention  
Be realistic

The words spinning the people are shouting it's like in the movies where it's all too much but then someone touches you on the shoulder and all the screaming stops. There's just one voice – or you pass out. It's like that only nobody touches you on the shoulder and you're eternally always conscious.

Fraud.  
You shouldn't even be here  
What are you doing  
Why don't you just quit

Some of them are people, past present or otherwise. Some of them aren't but I hear them anyway  
But I'm standing on top of a whirling screaming pit trying to bring me to my knees.  
But I'm standing  
I don't know how but I'm standing.

How  
How can it be this way

I've had people screaming through  
Trying to reach me  
Saying you can do it  
It's all noise  
Noise – screaming added to screaming  
Expectations hope reality  
And it won't stop

But when I fall, I fall into arms  
Screaming misunderstanding arms – but arms  
Or sofas or beds or anything soft enough to break my fall  
but not break me

So I still stand.

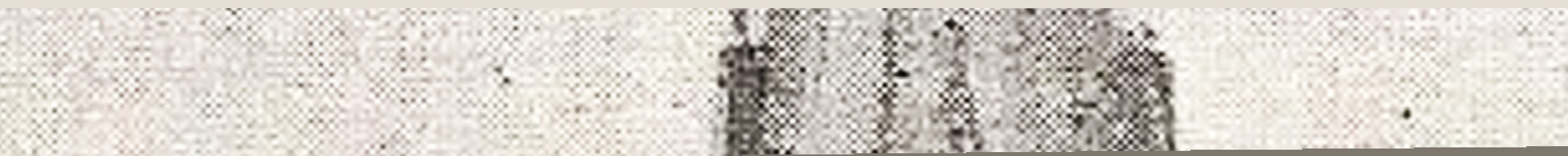
And as I stand on a mountain of debris and hate. I see  
people falling left and right and up and down. But they  
don't have the arms that I have to catch them. They don't  
have the sofas or the duvets, beds or pillows. Brief mo-  
ments of reprise where passing out won't hurt them.

So I stand screaming  
Adding noise to the void  
Hoping my vibration will reach them, slow their fall just  
enough that one day maybe – they too will be unbroken  
enough to stand.

# Niharika Goel

Immigrant

From an immigrant mother to her baby



## Immigrant

Even when I feel reasonably settled,  
grief is lurking in the shadows.  
And when I least expect,  
it pounces on me  
in the form of a song or a scene or a smell,  
reducing years of effort to sawdust.



From an immigrant mother to her baby

Dear Son,

Because you are both football and cricket,  
bread and chapatti,  
Ranch and chutney,  
Dallas and Guwahati.

Because you are both jazz and kathak,  
drums and tabla,  
Jaws and Sholay,  
Medal of Honor and Ashoka chakra.

Because you are both rootbeer and buttermilk,  
guitar and sitar,  
Mississippi and Ganga,  
Hershey's Kisses and Parle's Kismi Bar.

Because you are both yogurt and curd,  
airplane and decimal mark,  
bison and tiger,  
Yellowstone and Jim Corbett National Park.

Because you are both bald eagle and peacock,  
coffee and tea,  
rose and lotus,  
Ford and Maruti.

Because you are both Elvis and Kishor,  
sugar and spice,  
peanut butter and ghee,  
and all things nice.

Because you are both east and west,  
you will either be a master of two kingdoms or a slave of  
no man's land.  
The choice will be yours. Always.

# Terrance G. Gabel

El Milagro de Tequila

Doing time



## El Milagro de Tequila

### *The Miracle of Tequila*

te amo liquid gold  
of ancient gods  
rooted under ground  
aged well above

anejo y reposado  
y blanco too  
el Taco Bell de tequila  
the guzzling gringo's  
fantasy falso de México

yo pienso hay incredulos  
that do not believe  
there is a Tequila real  
a town de Jalisco  
hidden deep amidst rolling greenish-blue hills  
mile after mile de agave azul  
not even when I tell them  
and show them fotos  
taken there

for them I pray  
por el milagro de tequila  
so that mis amigos  
might one day  
know what esta gringo suerte  
y los Mexicanos saben  
poco a poco  
sip by ice cold deep golden sip  
as forward we slip  
regresando a la historia

## Doing time

what am I waiting for  
time to do  
to me

to run me  
to knock me  
to fuck me  
over

to drive me  
out of money  
energy  
luck  
my mind...?

in time  
I wish to do  
to it  
what it has done  
to me

# Stephen A. LeMay

Mother Dear

We Again in Sorrow

A Phenomenological Analysis of Polysyllabic Expression in  
Post-Modernist Research Paradigms



## Mother Dear

I turned  
An there you were  
With your bloody knife,  
The smile across your face  
A bloodless gash of sweetness.  
And as the blade rose  
And fell, and rose  
And fell again,  
I swooned  
Into the blood that pooled beneath my feet.  
As the life drained from my veins,  
I heard your soft complaint:  
“You never call, you never write.”  
Blackness circled tight around my eyes.  
I dreamt of serpent’s teeth  
And children lost in shattered glass,  
And then the darkness was complete.

## We Again in Sorrow

### *We Wake*

We wake to sounds that emanate  
From someone else's dream,  
Startling sounds that penetrate  
Our hearts and what they ever seem.  
And those dreams that illustrate  
Each extraordinary stream  
That leads us then to educate:  
Nothing's what it may ever seem--  
The everlasting flow of death,  
The call of hopeless, truest love.  
So as we draw our final breath,  
And hope for angels from above,  
We find the secret of our time;  
Our guilt in quintessential crime.

### *We Ponder*

We start with hands entwined in beads  
And end in plots grown up with weeds.  
As we come mewling from the womb,  
Already hurtling toward the tomb . . .

We stop. We watch. We linger.

We lick and raise a cautious finger  
Into every passing breeze.  
Is there some arrant god  
That we must please?

Should we stop to buy a peach?  
Is there time to rent a room  
At the hotel on the beach?  
Should we buy a mighty car?  
Is that star within our reach?

We are victims, one and all,  
Of felons, of lovers, of circumstance;  
Of malice, stupidity, and chance.

Not one of us is free.

We hesitate to cross the line,  
To breach the commonest of wisdom,  
And some new universe to define;  
To conquer a kingdom, to rule one;  
And so we leave a world undone.



## A Phenomenological Analysis of Polysyllabic Expression in Post-Modernist Research Paradigms

Plug your ears.  
Hide your eyes.  
Duck your head.  
Run, run far.

They come in long rows  
Framed by dots and pauses,  
Long pauses,  
Short pauses—

A lot of sounds  
All in a row  
Up to the last dot  
That means the end . . .  
For now.

The big words speak  
Of how we eat,  
Of how we sleep,  
Of how we dream,  
Of how we buy,  
Of how we sell—

All the things we do so well.

Sound on sound,  
Meme on meme,  
And then they drown  
In the big words.

Did they dice your thought  
Or tell the world  
How you feel  
When you buy  
What you bought?

Did they tell you  
What is real  
And what is not?

Why?

Why not?  
Let the big words howl.  
Let the big words growl.

Let the big words run.  
They might hit a great thought.  
Won't that be fun?

# Hilary Downey

Disordering

The Wilding

Shelter Down



## Disordering

Stealing out of sight  
The gap gurgling up  
Heavy and intense.  
Lingering whispers  
Of presence, absence,  
Spaces sealed with  
Momentary mashing

Disruption drives bedlam,  
Disturbing, blocking up life's  
Flow. Dislocated, damaged  
Succour, now landing in  
Fractured forms. Cry for chaos  
That was order, dropping  
Down cheekbones, choices  
Of caged conundrums

I wallow, waiting out wilful  
Distressing diatribes. Disarray  
Dappled here. A subtle falling,  
A blatant settling. How do I  
Heal residue evinced of soundless  
Peppering? Soft-turn the chatter  
Culminating in corners of others  
Championing the disordering

## The Wilding

Unrestrained self that  
Buzzed through life,  
Discarding moments which  
Required maturity, empathy of  
Perspective. How could you,  
A feral, unquenchable spirit  
Leaping from treat to treat  
Ablaze with insatiable souling  
Express nothing. In fear  
Strike out, wrapped up in  
A whirl, a wanton wilding.  
A tornado twirling through  
The ordinary, imbibing of life  
Forces from scattered living,  
Unbridled you flew, inflamed,  
No taming, no shaming,  
Unboring, wilful you

You reproved restrictions,  
Shackled-spirit suppressing  
Truth-talk. Yet, in later states  
Of conscious-self, you asked,  
Why was I not told? Future-fallen  
Festivities, unbreathing blueprints,  
Strung sensitively across life's  
Tightrope, secretly snapping the  
Wildings retreat. Robbed of  
Raucousness, bellicosity, rage.  
Who will now sing songs of the  
Wilding? Now quirelously quieted

## Shelter Down

Subtle changes in lifestyle  
Shadow-out the crevices  
Where human interaction  
Did co-exist, co-mingle.  
Yet, warmth and touch  
Have dissipated, and we  
Have become as dribbling dogs  
Baying for screen-smiles,  
Hand waving, music making  
Flopping, training, the herds  
Of in-house, locked-downers

Shelter-down, time-dense  
Places of reflection, dark-waste  
On consumption, carefully  
Considered. Not the mundane, not  
The boring; no impulsive chorusing  
Through food stores, stuffed with  
Local fare. It takes time, it takes care  
This planning of consumption. Mind-  
Blowing, when aisles slip by, vulgarized in  
The virtual, our new moral compass

No sensorial embodiment, no delights  
To share, only memory to transport  
Us there.... where? Hold on, cool down,  
It is our shelter-down. Unconventional  
Luxuries, loo-roll, pasta, flour? Hand wash  
Soap and water by the hour. Shelter-down,  
Comfort time, locked in. Mental health,  
Domestic abuse, loneliness, outputs of  
Everyday, rising relentlessly through the  
Dark-down of community hometowns

Leisure time, present clime, back to roots  
Need the pulsating presence, not absence  
Hope this is not future-time. Screen gazing,  
Grazing, stir-crazy, hunkered down in  
Hamster wheels of our making. Living,  
Languishing in make-shift cells, isolated  
Units of intense Hell, myths to dispel. Shelter-  
Down, you offer 'me-time', what world will  
Vocalize normalcy? New consumers will arise  
New visions and dreams inside, the new World  
Order, social media says, is marching down  
The freeways, each and everyday

Will Bauman's 'Liquid Fear' drive consumption  
Like lemmings to the edge, can we consumers  
Claim past freedoms to fashion future furrows  
Will we remain tethered to choke chains?  
New threats, new strains, haranguing again  
The human spirit now broken needs reclaimed.  
We sit aboard the tenuous, tension-filled train  
Coddled and cossetted under one refrain  
Division, disconnection, the louder disdain

The dampening down, the retreating in,  
Resensing, restricting, hopes harboured  
Within. Awaiting the fare of non-shelter  
Down stores, ushering in of social-  
Distancing, no more. Tumultuous roars  
Rise from consumers in-waiting, stepping  
With the new order, of consumption changing  
So shelter-down, slumber-down, quilted  
Consumers of old. A reawakening for chrysalis  
Consumers, it is told. Stepping out with  
Fragility, on virgin terrain, delicately  
Determining freedom to spend. Liberty awash  
In the frenzy anew, pick-up, kick-up, sashay too  
Into a world virtrimming with consumables

# Afterword

*Written by Hilary Downey*

We hope you enjoyed dandering through this year's collection and have ample time to visit and revisit these works. This quiet time we are experiencing, will be memorable going forward for a variety of reasons. The ability to take stock and reflect will feature heavily in this space. In the Foreword, I drew on WB Yeats as an inspiration for these shelter down times, going forward we have opportunities for new ways of thinking, new ways of creating and being. Let us make poetry, one of those creative opportunities. In a few lines from Seamus Heaney's (Digging), we can draw further inspiration:

**Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests.  
I'll dig with it.**

We would ask you to dig with it, deeply, and in that digging bring forth new voices for the next chapbook in 2021. It is never too early to start this cathartic process. I will leave as I started, in the safe hands of WB Yeats, with selected lines from The Song of the Wandering Aengus. This is the journey we seek to experience, in our own poetic trails; we want to seize the moment, give it new breath and land our own, 'little silver trout.'



I went out to the hazel wood,  
Because a fire was in my head,  
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,  
And hooked a berry to a thread;  
And when white moths were on the wing,  
And moth-like stars were flickering out,  
I dropped the berry in a stream  
And caught a little silver trout

We look to many silver fishes falling in our keep net in the next call. So start fishing in new ways with new hooks and new vigour. The two John's and I want to take this opportunity again, to thank all those who made the effort to connect with the call this year and to stay with it, through the transitions we have had to make. So glad to have had your company and support again; to new voices, we look forward to welcoming you aboard the next train heading to Portland, Oregon.

Keep safe, look to see you all next year.

Hilary, John, and John

*Other titles in this series*

Captiver Calliope Ten  
Cranberry Candlestick Terapi  
Caracal Ceol Tacenda  
Calabash Cadencé Taisgeadan  
Chickasaw Craft Threnody  
Caribou Coracle Terä  
Cardinal Cuento Tianda  
Clarence Clobbers Tenderly  
Coyotes Confessions Totems  
Canaries Coalmines Thunderstones

