A BIRTH

The first breath taken

in:
   a blade of air
as if stolen from
light.
          Far off,

a horizon is cut.
NETI NETI

If it is not this, 
or this, or that, 
not what you think, 
not what you want or dream, 
nothing you can 
point to or name 
then why a poem 
unless 
it is exquisite- 
ly to say 
something new 
it is not.
WALL

for John Phillips

Here is a wall. No way around, or over, or through. There are words on the other side. The words on this side say so.

Peter Yovu
If you insist on being here at least say something
Silence in the hand
is a bird
in a mouth
of leaves
Sometimes
the room we’re in is
inside another room
there’s no way
to enter. This is the room
in which everything
happens to us,
even if we’re elsewhere
when it happens,
which we often are.
Outside this room,
nothing is real.

John Phillips
the mystical practice of control-alt-delete
rebooting the past one nail clipping at a time
This year I gave up hope for Lent.

The otherworldly pallor of the sky – shall we say it’s greige?

Consciousness bobs – a misty blob – between optimism and nihilism.

We are under siege. We are short of sages.

It’s hard to be an atheist in such an age, so why not make up your own theology?

Here, see: Before they grow up, angels are angelets, like pink piglets except with wings.

Can a fasting period make time pass faster?

Sign of the cross, sign of the times.

Sing of lying down, sing of rising.

The crux of the matter? The matter sucks.

You won’t believe how saintly I’ve become. Big halo energy.

And Easter’s still a full eighteen days away.

_Kathleen Rooney_
from KEEP SENDING THE TAXI OF THE ROBIN’S EGG BLUE AWAY: A CURRICULUM VITAE IN THE FORM OF A MAGIC 8 BALL READING

cannot predict now

the weight of nouns.
love, angel, ice cream, retribution. suitcase,
sneakers, the curve of the road. & the ones that trigger. just by their objective existence. oranges, for example, babies, kittens.

as I see it, yes

the best thing for you might be happening because I’m not there—
my sources say no

there are always for example
two deaths the real one & the one people
know about

outlook good

& as for the slightly glazed smile
of someone who has found a single solution

for everything—

my reply is no

do we have plans for the Earth. no
the Earth has plans for us.

Emily Carr
WHAT’S NEXT

I don’t know what’s next, 
light at tunnel’s end 
or an ordinary evening.

I’ve draped bedsheets 
over the furniture 
as in an old movie 

where one’s afraid of dust 
not the spirits.
holes in my sweater
the dogwood
drops a few leaves

trying to find
the needle’s eye
what I’ve been up to

John Martone
eyesight dims
threading a needle
on camelback
enter time, a chorus of wasp waistd silhouettes
imagine
between
the worlds
there exists
a runway
where arachnids
sashay

Kit Kennedy
I am traveling through time dressed up as an ocarina. Someone is playing me – their breath smells like snowshoes.
ELSEWHEN

In an-
other place the
clouds

might hint
at snow;

but

here
calligraphy
hasn’t been

in-
vented.
WHITES

Between the two whites
of robe and shroud, the off-white:
a circling of gulls.
SKY

Too many evenings taking in the distance and getting nowhere.
The sky’s a beautiful and wondrous thing but nothing grows there.
beach
combing
looking
for
glass
smoothed
by
time
still
spitting
out
the
seeds
Plan B

Lee Gurga
Day sky’s pewter afternoon, an Indiana void of plump tomatoes
Niche, capiche, a blender full of salt

Posse, verbiage, a tiny cow, field theory

Sheila E. Murphy
a note
that
releases
the
white
deer
between
things

Michelle Tennison
the rhythm
of mourning doves
a student conducts
math equations
in the air

Agnes Eva Savich
CAN A SOUND FRAME ANOTHER SOUND?

The chatter of a thousand crickets frames the intermittent thrum of one woman’s breathing framed by the chatter of a thousand crickets.
MODERATO (POUR LA MAIN GAUCHE)

In this prelude the left hand expresses its lonely ache for the right and lets abandoned notes stray at large through the starry chill of the night.

Barry Schwabsky
Strings vibrate in the hall, a spirit
with eyes squeezed shut and head bobbing
might be the strike of fingernails
through a backward telescope, pear-body
to belly as rings of colour float
restless in blackfaced night. A cockney always
between the power station and the dogs home
plucks for cash – it’s done for yourself
even against the score and that’s the way
to reach others. Cell to cell a smallish voice
breaks to put back winding figures
which wake in sleep and breathe in death
tubed in narcotic joy.

Gavin Selerie
world news . . .
my fingers
on the fretboard

Christopher Patchel
fingering the sharp notes behind his eyes
COUPER

No part will ever repeat – Mark Hollis

Drawn to white canvas
detail
& silence
tape exists to be cut
avoid repetition
no way to rephrase
locate the field
its horizontal shift
a red rose posy
from Michou
in a slender vase
Francoise is near the river
in her black & white world
THE AZURE ROAD TO MATISSE

winds down the sparkling hill.
    Fluid colours bleed
and brush the shore. Tame
    non-binary birds of Nice
flock to La Petite Maison,
    dining chic to chic, sharing
contours in a window frame.
    The sky pretends to rain.
Everything is as it seems.
WALK AWAY, RENÉ  
after Magritte’s *The Red Model*

Feeling empathy  
with the shoes,  
the feet choose  
to embody  
the shoes.

Feeling nothing,  
the shoes  
desire nothing  
and are left  
on the Left Bank.

Joel Allegretti
ARTEFACTUAL
for Andrew McDonald

The artist has come like a shaman of shame
draping his body in sackcloth, a smock
or – for heaven’s sake – hospital robe.

He’s daubing his torso in a tattoo performance
to act out abjection compacted of ash-dust
smeared on a face, and foetal in corners
of industrial brick or, descending a staircase,
puts fashionable chic in our and its place.

You see, self-recovery requires the displacement,
us moved not to shun this shaman of shame.
No, no, we face up to the very thing done.
NO REGRETS

Just when I thought poetry was a service dog, it gave back my sight. It soon managed to chew its leash to bits. Its collar and harness disintegrated. It was about to run off, but I had already fastened new lines around its chest and attached a new collar and leash. Then poetry thought I was the service dog, but I had no teeth. The fair thing to do was to exchange places. So I removed its harness, collar and leash, and put them all on me. No way out of this harness now, but at least I can see, and my hearing has improved. I am growing teeth. I am the dog of poetry. But now who or what holds the leash? I am going to chew on that a while.
AN INTUITION OF TIME

Rubber band around the book so often read

through decades, read and held against
destructions of glue and pages, falls apart in
my hands – child holding words his father
once held, Tagore’s *The Gardener*, and my
once-thinner arms wrapped around my
thinning father at his last. The skin of my own
life still snaps back, but in its volume I no
longer feel comprehended. I sense my own
unity surrendering to its dispersal, covers-and-
text, motes in place of the book once read.

David Giannini
form filled to the top with powdery amnesia
patience rewards the purely psychological body
estranged glove becomes a body of work
now colour it in

the word *lapidary* is certainly not onomatopoeic
lucky octopus likes his Letterland tank-top lots thanks
the whole cottage hospital is left blank
Prefab Beatles

florid pill dispenser drops names on lino
haunted gardens blended with antiseptic narcissism
turret lid toffee faggot left bank addenda flood
an orgasm of correction fluid
bailed out in time to get some insomnia
showing up later with a local newspaper
you’re a poor excuse for a female impersonator
duellng with rusty ski stick and aluminium imago

let’s take the same narrow road to a different deep north
rudely ungrateful for the identity bracelet
i don’t know why they call it the little death
try to imagine how a blood cell is a platelet

sorbet to the left of me sherbet to the right
sorbet in front of me isn’t remotely buzzing
cauterised spindrift sails with sieved snails
cyst exits party hat and heads for the stag

Tim Allen
not making cocoa
for Kingsley Amis

of course not
but

making fondue
for Benjamin Fondane

in some strange afterlife

David Miller
FRUIT PUNCH

She was stealing a peach.
She liked the aroma.
There was freedom in thievery.
Freedom and anxiety.
The anxiety of her smirk.
It was work
to pretend she was smelling the peaches
and not hurting the design.
HATE ACHE

You know you’re angry if it makes you angry that they call you angry. You know you’re less angry when the imputations roll right off, make you laugh in fact though there are still residual and freshly harvested anger tomatoes eager to be sliced.

Daniel Meltz
SPECIAL

Unique, extra-special rage
about lost time, you kick a stone,
and a grasshopper jumps, shreds air.
Fist-sized, the spotted Cactus Wren,
at eye level, perched in thousands
of yellow needles, unmoving, quiet.
Walk away, its crackly, raw voice sings.

George Shelton
OBTRUDER

I was the strong one. With cant, with choler with opting out and illusions.

But you haven’t let go of the whip hand. Just like that: snips of you punctuate my pulpit.
THE EXCHANGE

Verbs within me
are smitten by your nouns.
Our grammar funnels
greater fluidity by streaming
new regimes of oneness.
All of the actual people contained herein are based entirely on fictional characters.
Prior to recreation please confirm the uncreation of all existing creations.
milk / ether
NORTH AND NORTH AND MORE NORTH

broomhandled,
the boathouse lock snaps

The moonlit river. Red cig tips

We dump the rowboat on a grassy bank where ducks are tucked in themselves

Onwards!

Sam Wilson Fletcher
firefly squid
our fifteen minutes
of shoreline

Roland Packer
you made up
an ocean

leading the
sky on

Elmedin Kadric
painting the ocean she disappears

Stephen Toft
The sea knows
where nowhere is
& will take you
if you let it

Stephen Lindow
quickly inside
out of the storm
we hardly knew

Mike Dillon
in the massive ocean beach, a small pair of sandals
mur
muration of starlings
forming an orca breaching
the sky

Michael Dudley
Writing this in an old pond notebook:
frog jumps in sound of water
a line of pelicans winging east
the river links
art & life in a
dry dark the whispers
from frog splash circling
ripples of pond but
the river teaches drift

Rebecca Lilly
FLOODED

observable world

redacted  night sky

all clouds

then

the imagined world

recedes

receive,  now  like bread

this tenuous offering

this hidden river
my reflection deleted
by an artificial lake

invisible data
treated as bacteria
inside feedback loop

feedlot

empty
June 27
121
whereas nine out of ten common offenders their cheeks suffused with grey jute sacking find some degree of fulfillment in hurting harmless animals only history can decide among the proceeds which are spread out as in a game of chance abandoned in haste
some degree of forcing is inevitable given the subservience on display in even their first activities arousing envy in the space between the rungs of a ladder and the sickly sweet attempts at piety which may still be sensed long after the abuse has ceased
tremendous progress
in how words
are employed
on low-skilled labour
lovingly performed
by papier maché
marionettes are a
very good likeness
of interference in
the otherwise continuous
presence of a low hum
just out of earshot.
the breeze then
just the thought
hymn hummed
self exchanged
forward to be
blind to particulars
for comparatives
ring and all
the business
until unhanded
in any window
an escape clause
sings

Paul Pfleuger, Jr.
ACCENT

snapped his fingers

didn't linger

with the singer
from THE JAZZ AGE

We’ll always have Paris

Alive as if for the first time with the occasion of her first adultery, Dusty Springfield walks home in the pre-dawn, marvelling at the echoing of her footsteps in the deserted streets, the way the moonlight shines on the rooftops. She feels her heart will always be full of the pictures on Courbet’s walls, the unexpected pallor of his bared torso.
Flight 714 to Sydney

Face almost pressed to the window, Katherine Mansfield looks out on Alpine, Levant, then Asian landscapes, trying to match the outlines with her recollection of the maps. After dark rises over the edge of the world, she has to push away from her shoulder the drooping head of the portly stranger spilling over from the next seat. As the paperback slips from his fingers onto her lap she sees the photo on the back cover is a more youthful portrait of himself. Sam Pepys has been reading one of his own fat novels.

Aidan Semmens
from SUBWAY POEMS

4-19-16

I saw Louis Zukofsky
crossing the street at 3:30 this afternoon
on 7th Ave. and 7th St.
wearign a business suit
and dark wraparound sunglasses –
and bright white running shoes!
If Zuk were still alive,
still walking the streets of Brooklyn,
he would wear bright white running shoes,
I feel sure of it.
Everyone seems recognizable today. I wonder if there’s a brain malady where everyone seems recognizable. There’s one where no one is recognizable.
EAVESDROPPING ON THE CITY BUS

I think she said “loneliness” and you whisper
“no, she said only miss.” I wish we knew sign language
so no one would hear us. The passenger behind us
says into her phone “what an ocean!”
as we all drive through Tucson
you mutter something I don't understand and
now the person in front of us DOES
say “loneliness” and you shrug, as if that
were
inevitable
A thin woman, 33. She is in jail again for crack cocaine. Has already been in prison three times. On her forearm, near and under her elbow, two sets of horizontal lines. Like this, but wider lines:

____________________  __________________
____________________  __________________
____________________  __________________
____________________  __________________
____________________  __________________
____________________  __________________

For a moment I think the lines are a tattoo, maybe with religious significance. I ask. She says she worked at a fast food place with a grill. That's it. As if everyone who worked there has the scar.
openings
in clouds
above the cemetery
the stone looks into itself
looking for its nest

John Levy
among the insects and seeds in the dry soil
I found the remains of old conversations
and the mouths that formed them
during that part of the day
which has only one color we undressed
each other in the shadowed room

Michael Battisto
It’s usually around now she asks *did any of us ever not wear masks?*
FROM WHICH AS YOU KNOW

Aurochs and narwhal and rhinoceros
from which as you know
the unicorn was composed

The Pacific oarfish,
from which as you know
the sea-serpent legend arose

Toxic sago palm,
from the ashes of which, as you know
the phoenix rose

Mass extinction events
from which as you know
came the rose
SUNSET AT TOMORI BEACH

where
the mahogany surfer

lights an acrid cigarette
and steps
    into the shower

C.E.J. Simons
EN ROUTE

AT NARITA

airport hotel room:
a blank through which purposes
pass without friction

THE NORWEGIAN JAZZ WARS

as the banjo said
to the alto saxophone:
PARKERING FORBUDT

CHURCH-GOING IN SCOTLAND

plain white walls bespeak
a thirst for the more inward
forms of martyrdom

Paul Rossiter
awaiting absolution –

sitting on my hands

for warmth
sundown
for an instant we see
far
SUMMER NIGHT

thunderstorm
thunderstorm
thunderstorm
thunderstorm
thunderstorm
thunderstorm
thunderstorm
thunderstorm
thunderstorm
thunderstorm
t'ndrst'r

t'ndrst'r

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t'ndrst'r

lightning bug
lightning bug
lightning bug
lightning bug
lightning bug

Jim Kacian
under august sun algal blooms gone neon
name
by name  dusk

disassembles

the street
wait,
the wind
will untangle
the pond
from the sky

Joseph Massey
moonset
my insomnia written
for red piano
long afternoon
I wait like a criminal
among daylilies
nuthatches never an arbitrary verb
Tiger swallowtails are bright filaments lively in the vertical axis of redwoods – evergreens unaccustomed to fanfare. With a looping flight that’s dizzily unpredictable, these butterflies arrive on their own timetable like joy. We hardly recognize them as little pioneers and confuse nimbleness for listlessness. The wing rustle of crows flying through the canopy overhead corroborates our suspicions. We come welded to shadow that familiar ache of an anchor. What will it take to swap out dark for light? Yellow sets us in motion.

YELLOW
What is hard, softens, and what is soft, hardens. Worn out gears disconnect.

I’ve already mentioned the raw wiring but I’ll mention it again.

This month’s wet guise interrogates without the sun. There’s a role for yellow in the history of bruises.

Grief isn’t some fixture to fixate on, but more like a tidal island, or darkened sandbar. The retro decor should look familiar.

We’re here to build muscles for the sweetness out of reach.
RUSE OPPENESQUE

In this great
Lack of right

Clear air, the small
Broken spirit

Living and breathing in
This in which we seek

To find it still nuzzling
Our outstretched palms,

No amount of comforting
Artifice suffices to lure it

Out into the open any more.
CLASSIC TRAGICOMICAL PRETEXT

The deus ex machina
Driving the next

Poem you are breathlessly
Anticipating is waiting

In the wings disguised
As a winged Trojan beating

A dead and falling horse.

Vassilis Zambaras
for whom the sniper trolls

LeRoy Gorman
to whom the Muses grant spite –
if you don’t already know this,
Acerba, take notice –
they deny all respite –

(attrib. Mercurialis the Younger)
That list you keep of our misdemeanours is a health-risk. It so enrages you, neighbour, that you take revenge on a hanging basket. We pray you’ll die soon if not before although you’ve rage enough to bore a way out of a lead-lined casket.

Alan Halsey
KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Wrestling with dark thoughts makes me prone to
being moved along, stopped and searched at night.

Let’s exchange meaningful looks and take deep breaths.

I’ve done what I can, think everything’s a great idea.
THE FIGHT

tired words sag
book pages
flop closed

time to take my pills
close the blinds
turn off lights
this is all so boring

I like boring
I have fought hard for boring

Mary Wemple
MEDICAMENTS

before breakfast
two Mark Ford poems
a passage or two
of Sei Shōnagon

then the palm full
of pink or white
tablets for this and that
and an oil capsule

after which Weetbix
chopped banana
and coffee are
purely recreational

Tony Beyer
looking through a glass half spilled
while we negotiate terms for roasting snow
because you were always right at the edge of night
Ginsberg’s goodbye call and ten other words for snow
HAIKU

Paris, New York, or Managua
On which cities, dear clouds
Do you most love to rain?
TO DO LIST

Refill bathtub with ice
Floss teeth with flowers
Plant flowers with teeth
Ride bike in floss thong
Refill aces up sleeve
Plant plovers in cheeks
Floss another’s teeth
Learn to ride brick
Plant teeth in ice trays
Refill bathtub with stingrays

Loren Goodman
TO

travel as a follicle mite in
Johnny Appleseed’s mustache, a snail

in the gut of a goose, migrant star-
light or sunlight, which is sunlight

onto a row of trees, the wings of
beetles obviating pesticides not pests, bacteria

making new the roots and leaves, the broad
palette or garden arrived at in a fig-

ment or fragment. We contain poetry
as the cattle trucks of the world

carry cattle.* And the cattle carry
bells, to keep us

singing.

* John Berger
RUNNERS

The purple yam bleeds white beads, the string beans sweat like guilty fingers, the apple seeds like lacquered cider flasks drink in the kitchen glow, the rain-like night, night-like rain falls between keys, on pine cones, burnt houses, radio waves, radishes diving, slick recycling vessels, boxes of lost shape, pumpkin hatches, dead-headed cyclamen, the purple stained fingers vegetable ink darkened by rain

Sabine Miller
at the edges
the dung
& stony moon
worn wind
what we
eclipse
the cut-
out of
a back-
drop of
stars
SUDDENLY

holding it
up

your dead mother’s
comb

becomes
infinitely more
DONNA

She sat awhile
looking at a speck of dust on her pantyhose.

Then she thought about heads
rotting on spikes.

David Romanda
GOLF COURSE

On the fairway, puddles wink at passing clouds.

Bunkers flash their depilated armpits.

‘How about this?’ she says, opening her raincoat.

*Alan Ireland*
the way he cups my breast venus is only a star

Sandra Simpson
the ever widening sky
   blue transparencies
       grey  black moilings

& far beyond that threshold
   stars slowly drift
       ever further apart

in how many universes
   does someone have that thought
       at just this instant

Douglas Barbour
BURIED ALIVE

To keep up
with the news
of a world as
distant to him

now as the day
he was born

he removes
his hat and
presses an ear
to the ground.

Brian Beatty
WEATHER

The weather shifts daily
the whether or not
the should we or shouldn’t we
watching for storm clouds
countings our eggs.
NOW MINE

What to do with these stories of yours laid out in my palms

– an injured bird
I can neither set down nor heal

– a gift of honey
in a cracked pot.

Deborah Davidovits
SESSION

Everyone brings a chair and forms a circle under the redbuds.

(The redbuds are not important.)

He has five minutes to convince them. If he fails, they will not speak to him again. If he succeeds, they will take their chairs and go home, and will not speak to him again.
ABSOLUTION

My kitchen floor is very forgiving she tells me. For what do I need forgiveness? I ask myself. What can I have done that calls for Jerusalem limestone and those fossilised foetuses trapped forever inside to show clemency?

Lorna Dowell
Call that man out
and he’ll flop and wriggle

as when you upturn an old log

and despite the worm’s writhe
you can see its every ring
ANOTHER OWL

A king’s heavy robes are not as stately as this owl’s thickly feathered wings.

The curves of its beak hook in an elegant and deadly point. It crunches,

with abandon, on the skull of a small-boned animal, or a crooked politician.
Covid-19 summer:
long tufts of grass grown over
the pitcher’s mound

Wally Swist
July 4th impatiens in the dock

Jo Balistreri
plague lockdown arguments accent the wallpaper
a tear of
embalming fluid from
my brother’s eye
the forever chemicals found
in the old swimming hole
rain on the window
a friend’s life support
disconnected

waiting patiently . . .
thunder over
the fan’s hum

rejection letter
snow writing its way
down my window

Edward J. Rielly
recent test results
the tree drops an apple
at my feet

the sound fog brings
her phone taking
my message

thrift shop drop off
plastic bags filled with her life
on earth

Gary Hotham
Hart Island
rows of neatly stacked
white coffins

Jay Friedenberg
WHITEHALL
HOME OF ICE
F

Helen Buckingham
razor wire
glistens in the sun
land of the free

the girl across the street
has a picnic with her dolls
six feet apart

Marc Thompson
we’ve eaten all the mushrooms that chose us all souls’ day
a new
god’s
logo
al
ready altered
summer
winds

Scott Metz
had my death never happened :: who would listen to the rain
falling rain the rose
a puzzle to be solved
THE ALLEY IN THE ABBEY

Your anchoress birthday

Sawdust harp-shafts

Attention’s truer present
THE VITREOUS BODY

Live Nude Dancers

Ludic Agamemnon

Mastic backpages.com
THE PARKINSON’S DANCE (a haiku sequence)

parkinson’s
the skittering
of autumn leaves

parkinson’s the street dog also tethered

parkinson’s
a walking stick stirs
the silence

parkinson’s sifting sands the flyswatter

parkinson’s
the weight of words
unsaid

parkinson’s pausing the pushchair to hear the rain
mind the gap
green gloves grip
what’s left
DAUGHTER

for Maura

Your small hand
in my hand
keeps looking for my hand

Robert Hirschfield
The many names of the ants
the many childish haiku
of an old man
I stick my head
in the lilac bush

Ronald Baatz
New lupins
in a new garden
in a new land,
unfamiliar peonies
and strange black
hollyhocks
waving stiffly,
welcoming us
perhaps
Under a canopy of flowering linden in the shadow of the trees in the park, cobwebs touch your face, bringing out its contours.
XII

Hanging
the washing
in spring sunlight
I see reflected
shadows of frail
wood anemones
on the white sheets
stretched large
as trees
Sicilian green
colours the words
this drunken forest

bell heather
& small grey shapes
porridge waiting for the coffee

Lee Duggan
A SCENE OR TWO

In the mornings after
and some long nights
the bulb comes on
and there is your brother
placing his ponytail
in the coffin.
BECOMING CLAIRE


Her command of a room – sucking out all insignificance. Her refusal to dwell. No apologies. A metal Mona Lisa; the carriage of a Valkyrie. To slip behind the eyes of Medusa.
A HOle IN THE wALL OF A ROOM I LIVED IN

A hole of mystery.
A greedy hole where no bird sings –
cut through the torso
in a surrealist painting;
hollow with no blood.
The way the surrealists
smoothed over the rubble of dreams
and made this clean
but terrible world.
A POEM IN WHICH I WANTED TO FIND THOSE GOLDFISH

I never really came to grips
with the way they batted at the plastic bag
with their slimy lips
and never stopped
unlearning –
battling right until the end when the oxygen
ran out before I got them home
from the fair.

Wes Lee
fish
breaking the barrier
between us
Silence asks questions that your ears in hearing answers give shape to.
I subscribe to the truth.
It arrives every morning
at my doorstep, somewhere
between sleeping and waking.
WRITING IX

an echo
before the movement
achieved

in the capillary of the eye
remnants
of a bird
in the place of fire

mirror
with eyes closed
WRITING XXXIX

to put a tongue
to the distance of things

sky collapsing
in my heart

language hatching
the world inside me

floods the air
memory of birds

David Rushmer