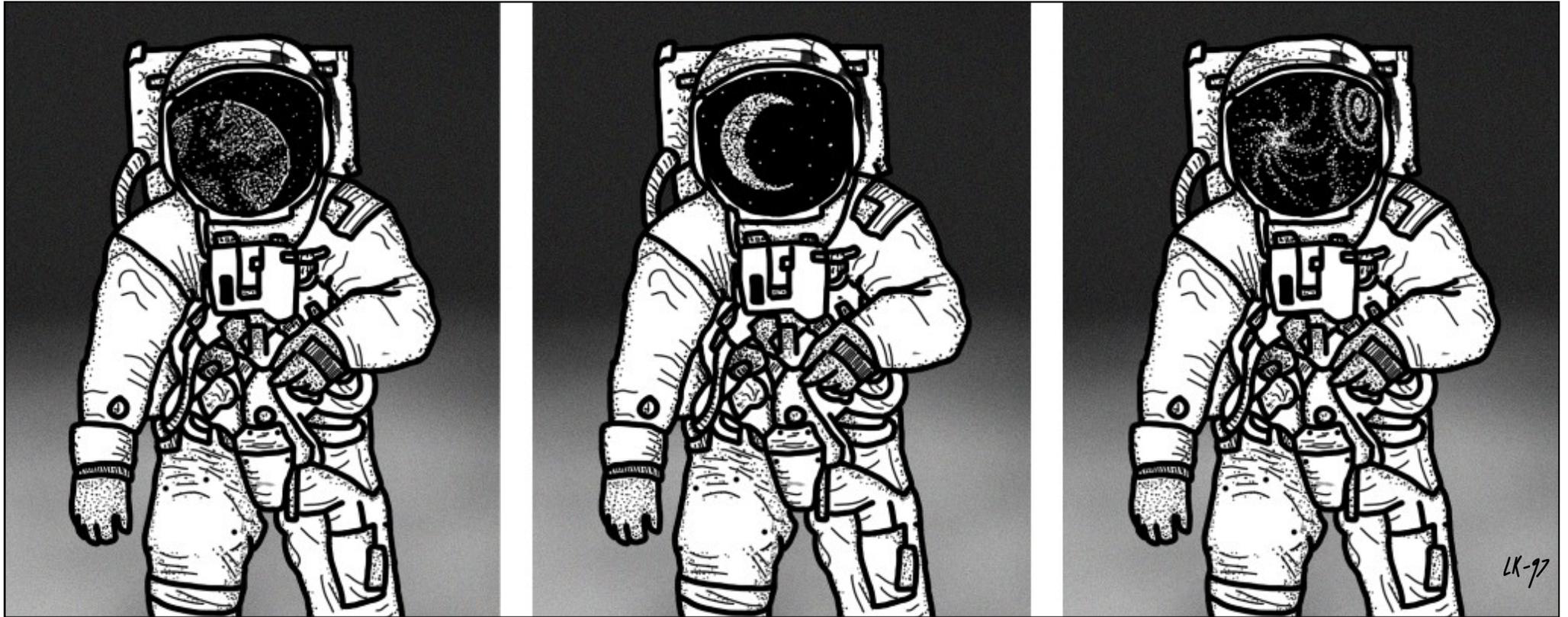


# *Black Bough Poetry: Issue 2*



*'lux aeterna'— 'eternal light'*

A tribute to: Apollo 11 #50years - Helen Sharman #firstBritoninspace

## *Welcome—from Wales to the world!*

Black Bough Issue 2 commemorates 50 years since the NASA moon landing in 1969 by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, with Michael Collins in lunar orbit. This Issue is also dedicated to Helen Sharman, the first Briton in space and a variety of other figures from Leonardo Da Vinci to Van Gogh, Henrietta Leavitt, Valentina Tereshkova, Peter Higgs and Dr Lyn Evans, that have inspired the poets.

The editorial team and I are amazed by the dazzling array of talent from across the world. When we requested submissions for space/ cosmic poems, the response was huge and it has been a challenging but exciting task to put this together. I'd like to offer a huge thanks to the Guest Readers - Lee Prosser, Laura Wainwright and Katie Stockton - for their hard work, good judgment and diligence. They were a huge asset. This Issue has been further enlivened by a mystery artist—LK-97—who sent us amazing artwork. We now know who this artist is—Elizabeth Kemball, from Stoke-on-Trent, England. Elizabeth had three poems accepted for this Issue but the talent and enthusiasm didn't stop there. The addition of her artwork has been a revelation.

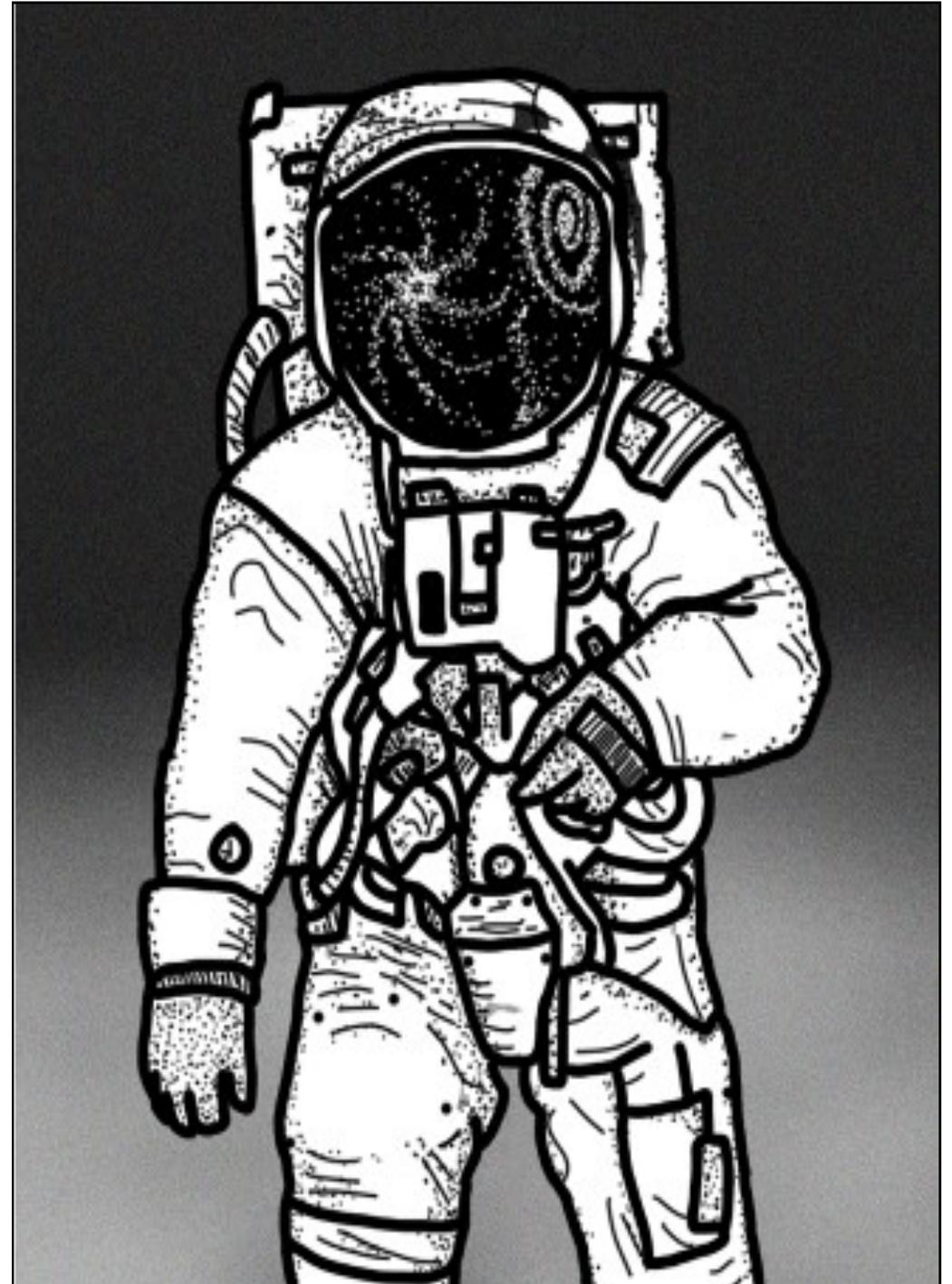
The title of Issue 2, 'Lux aeterna / *nitya jyoti*?', comes from the Jess Thayil poem in the prologue. While many of the poems are grounded in time, characters and places, 'eternal light' transcends darkness, time and matter.

Poets have also been asked to record their work on Youtube and Soundcloud. The third Voyager golden disc will therefore be the Black Bough golden disc with 'Sounds of the poets'. Make sure you follow Black Bough on Twitter and join a worldwide, supportive community of talented poets.

Thanks for reading,

*Matthew M C Smith*—Editor

19th July 2019.



# Black Bough Editorial & Design Crew



Lee Prosser

Guest reader & features

Katie Stockton

Guest reader & features

Matthew M C Smith

Editor-in-chief

Laura Wainwright

Guest reader & features

LK-97

Mystery artist

*Prologue - 'lux aeterna / nitya jyoti'*

*(eternal light)*

Lux Aeterna / nitya jyoti

in the death-churn *kanti kayapushti*  
her left hand melts fear *vagdanam dwipam*  
the moon softens its tug the ocean relents  
and breaks into song *sbanti: sbanti: sbanti:*

from Bhumi's girandoles stars leap and lance  
the gloom. As Varaha lifts a conch to his lips  
*velliccam: velliccam: velliccam:*

*Jess Thayil*

Inspired by (but also stays independent of) a Hindu myth in which goddess Bhumi – the personification of earth – was rescued from the ocean by her husband Varaha, a form of Vishnu, the cosmic preserver. In some sculptures, Bhumi is depicted with her left hand in *abhaya mudra* (the gesture of fearlessness). Words transliterated from Malayalam: *nitya jyoti* – eternal light; *kanti* – brilliance; *kayapushti* – (physical) strength; *vagdanam* – promise; *dwipam* – lamp; *sbanti* – peace; *velliccam* – light

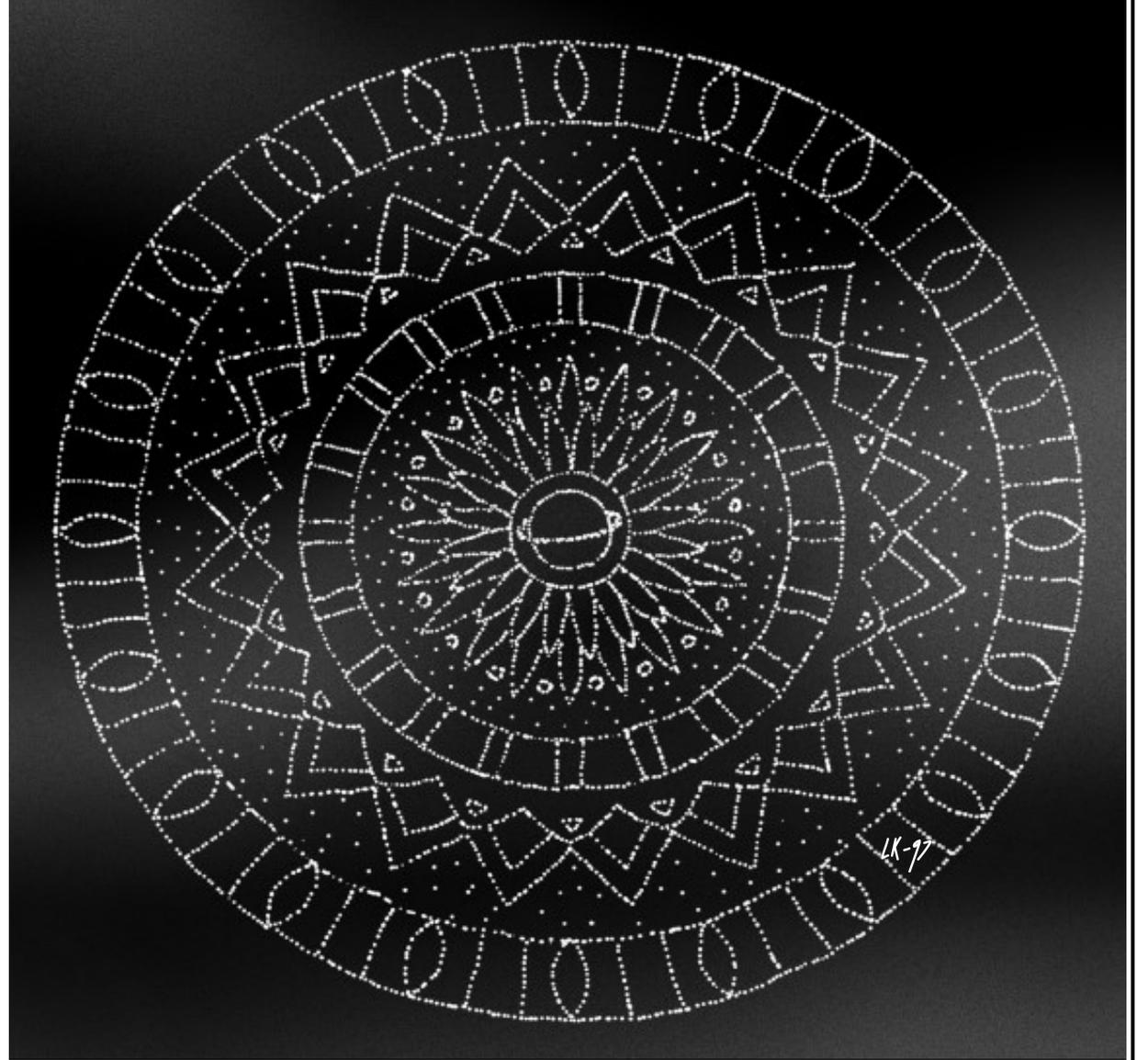
चन्द्रमा मनसो जातः । चक्षोः सूर्यो अजायत ।

the mind is affected by *Chandra*  
in the ancient scriptures  
it is the circle of life, rebirth,  
waxing, waning  
with thoughts that ebb and flow

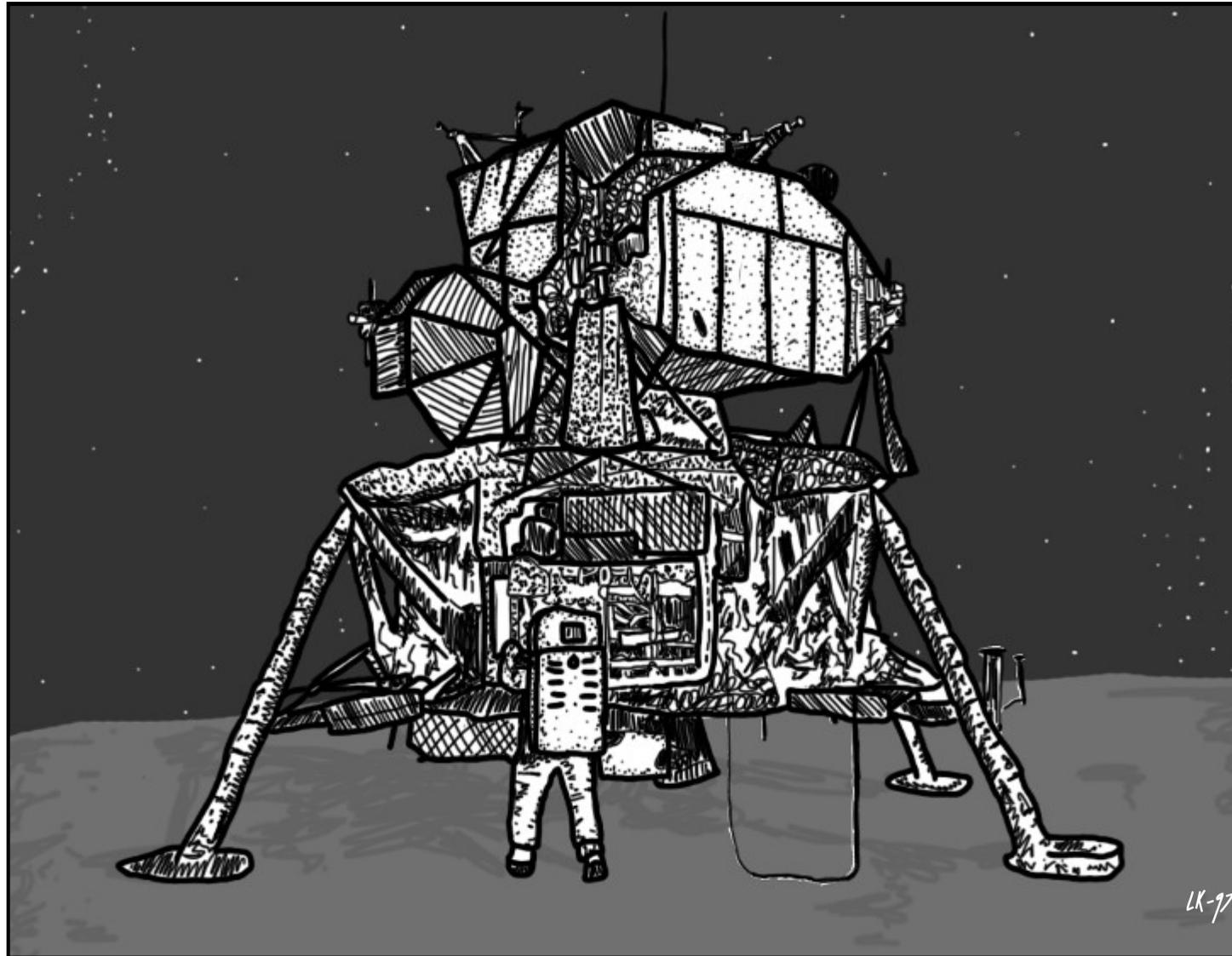
*Surya*, the sun, its rays from infinite distance  
our eye, consciousness, immortality.

*Leela Soma*

Note: Chandra- moon  
Surya- Sun  
(Quote from Yajur Veda 1200-1000 BCE)



*I - Apollo 11 #50 years*



### Small

you buzz you kneel  
you slip into the black  
vast gape then gasp  
at the craft that carried  
you and your flag  
through a silent sea  
so beautiful so desolate,  
so giant you leap

*K Weber*

### Mother

Moonchild,  
I longed to visit her.  
Jealous of these men:  
Their footprints in her cool dust.  
I had to smooth her  
And soothe her  
And make the crescent faultless,  
For grey-eyed Selene, again.

*Ann Marie Foster*

Temporal Law

*After Apollo 9*

Years spring past us, but we feel  
no seasons: time is our only winter.  
Your presence comes first at twilight  
and then at dawn—black holes formed  
in Artemis' name, an outline of cosmos  
that spell the name of the golden sun.  
Escape into the darkness comes just  
as naturally, landing offers unease—  
we fly until we throttle into disorder,  
handmade. Winter only offers unrest.

*Preston Smith*

Blast Off

Believing we can obtain  
life beyond the sky

Finally, freely, take flight  
Unfettered, soar to specks of light

*Lilia Cosavalente*

Watchers

A frequency:  
Pin-cold,  
Pierces light years,  
Probes the vacuum –  
Blind finger extending  
Into the butterfly-wing blue  
Haze of atmosphere  
In the spaces  
Between brain-folds  
Atoms shift.  
Uneasy in their darkness,  
Receiving.

*Polly Oliver*

Separation

1969 is as old as the moon,  
when venerated cathodes with cornered petulance  
sparked in sitting rooms,  
when we saw those bleached and unearthly loping figures,  
who mattered less than earlier pictures  
when colour caught the rocket's staging:  
a flaring ring flung back  
against the planet's wide, dumbfounded face.  
A single gesture yes, but broadcast live,  
we shared the heat of this unbridling.

The other one

There are blinded grotesques in the Hieronymous deep  
who push on in faith, oblivious.  
Two kicked at sand, planted flags and shielded eyes  
from the networks' glare,  
while the third drifted unremembered.  
And when his raft of tin sank behind the moon  
everything was occluded:  
a Lazarus,  
impatient to surface  
and rebreath the light.

*Julian Cason*

Apollo 11, An Anniversary: Three poems.

I

*Beauteous the moon full on the lawn;  
And beauteous, when the veil's withdrawn' -  
Christopher Smart*

moon's turmoil in the axis of a rose-stem  
flying into nothing you hold your breath  
like a swimmer siphoned into darkness

Southwest of Tranquility, the touch-down surface:  
rocks, anomalies and debris;  
behind you: fifty years, a world of screens  
flickering blue and waiting.

II

it's all laid out like yesterday  
the prospect to the promontory  
of Kant Plateau:  
where the module's shadow  
cuts across in high res shots  
the bounding promenade,  
our first steps in protective suits  
and time is vertigo in space,  
we flail in reaching outwards  
whirling specks of dust.

III

perhaps, though we don't always seem  
very much or seem to see in camera arrays  
that we have made, we sometimes see ourselves  
coming towards us and going away in spaces  
so utterly different from those out there,  
in ways we only half-forget, a dream to the dreamless;  
there are no powerful rockets to take us  
only something glimpsed once back in the desert  
of caves we turn to with dawning thought  
of ochre, of beads and bones stained red.

*David Annwn*

Conviction

I believe you went  
to the moon and back,  
praying as you rattled  
through the dark,  
  
felt you moving over us,  
a twinkle in the sky,  
wondering what though art.

Experience

At the turn into adult  
I lay on red clay,  
the rains had passed.  
  
I saw my first one,  
two, three shooting stars...  
like waiting for a bus.  
  
Still, I cling on to the ride,  
a comet that's all mine.

Observation

*After Adorno*

I see it in the descending seed,  
it's whirl wide as the schema  
of ashen rock riding  
our tide in time;  
                  watching the stars  
                  down to Earth.

*Kate North*

### The Dark Side of the Moon

Looking up into the sky at night I see a familiar sight:  
the big round lunar satellite with an asteroid pock-scarred face.  
The name for your face belonged to a deceased, monocled astronomer  
who informed me as a child about solar flares, black holes,  
gas giants and the rings of Saturn.

When he died he became the man in the moon.  
The moon which he mapped and telescope scoured.

When he died, asteroid 2012 XE54 passed close to our planet, a distant star  
turned supernova. A nebulous dusty cloud stretched lazily across space  
and a bright-tailed meteor hurtled onwards—past the dark side of the moon.

### Ghosts

Gazed flickering stars.  
Glitter-filled eyes lighting up  
in this scattered space.  
The burnt-out stars leave a trace  
as shadows in this distance.

*Lee Prosser*

### Manoeuvre

Eagle of the Sun-God  
falls on Tranquillity

stands footpads first  
in front of our TV

a carpet's diamond  
for its base. Count

down to departure  
beyond child's grip

till its return here  
plying lunar dust

*Tim Youngs*

### Hanging

The harsh light a cold burn, blinding,  
and flashed, reflecting off the visor  
the end of the path foreshadowed  
just as it began: airless, hope shattered  
desiccated, exposed, or buried beneath dust made from rocks shattered.  
And after, after the end of the affair  
and after the end of the end of hostilities, even  
we left behind what we left behind  
and we can dream of finding old things anew  
because the moon forever hangs, as we do

*Antonio Fusco.*

Moon, Landing 20<sup>th</sup> July 1969

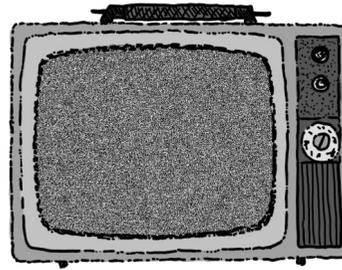
I was moon-hungry, ten years old,  
So I set a mirror on the beach  
And lay in wait that night.  
Moon landed there, looked up  
And was a child! Like me, an only child,  
Tentative and curious, hoping to play.  
To have him as my friend, I saw  
I'd have to let him go  
And come at will. Chastened, I prayed  
That all the astronauts would lose their appetites.

*Angela Graham*

21.5 hrs / the two of you

Those first steps on the uneven moon; was a trail left  
when you walked from darkness into light? I know  
  
it hadn't been easy, but after all, the *Eagle* did land;  
you became the first souls to stand there. That amber  
  
crescent in a cloudless sky that day; with you, pounds  
of flesh, to bring back home. Soon after, *Merritt Island*  
  
was a place of sheer joy; with faces, ripe coconuts and  
a golden seabeach, men banging on numerous desks,  
  
computer panels, mouths wide open as black holes;  
that day it wasn't just you that had run to the moon.

*Jzyant Kashyap*



Communion

*Buzz Aldrin performed Christian communion while waiting for his historical walk on the moon. It wasn't highly publicized by NASA because they were afraid of the criticism it might generate.*

Silent and cold among rocks,  
the secret to life:  
everything turns to dust,  
even on the moon.

Safe inside lunar lander:  
wine sipped from silver chalice,  
bread broken purposely,  
prayer spoken.

*Richard LeDue*

Moon Landing

On that warm July night,  
my father watched moonstruck  
as Neil Armstrong took his giant leap.

I remained firmly earthbound,  
watching our new puppies in the TV screen light,  
their small black and white bodies tumbling,  
stepping hesitantly into their futures.

Now--ensorcelled by moon-glow--  
I plummet back, landing my time-rocket  
on the rocky surface of memory.

*Merril D. Smith*

One line

Speaking to Houston  
in clipped Midwestern phrases

he kept a tight-coiled line  
of poetry under his tongue,

the same he'd carried  
through engagement, marriage,  
the birth of his children,

waiting to be uttered  
to an airless moon and watching world.

Magnificent desolation

Desolate, he rallied,  
this eldest son  
in the role of second man.

If his words aren't the ones  
we all know, the prints  
of his boots will outlast mountains,

in that fine grey dust where no  
foot has been since,  
that desolate magnificence.

One art

Their mission patch  
was his design, but as the bald eagle  
swoops down on the Sea of Tranquility  
olive branch in claw, who thinks  
of the essential artist, pilot  
of the ark, about to slip away from the glory  
behind the dark side of the moon?

Later he would leave  
his Everglades and fighter jets unsigned  
fearing they would be valued beyond their merit.

*Thomas Tyrrell*

Stroller at Dusk

a toddler  
wheeled past tree bark

parked cars, red-loud sign  
looks up

says the branches  
are brushing the moon

*Bill Stadick*

earthrise

in night we watched silicate  
studied the formula of sky

bodies attenuate, pale:  
we're left with white points

remembering was not enough  
then she rose wetted our eyes

*Tamsin Blaxter*

For Karen

On the Moon  
Nothing but magnificent desolation  
My footsteps remind me  
Of all those you will never take  
Every step  
Each impression unyielding  
Eternal,  
A father's love  
Incandescent like the stars

*Daniel Page*

Man on the Moon

I can see you, my love  
From crater's shadow stretched long  
A blue and white vision  
In moon's dark day sky  
Dusty, burnt with stars  
My eyes tear, I brace my heels  
Into the regolith  
Twist off my helmet  
Blood boils

*David Fry*

9 1/2 B

(Where Neil trod)

Ghost silver sphere  
glowing bright.  
'Tides' commander  
beyond my reach.  
Distance dwarfs you  
yet amongst shadows  
man's footprints lie.

*Richard Waring*

50 word transcript

We choose to go to the Moon...  
Lights on, down two  
and do the other things... forward,  
faint shadow... not because they are  
easy  
(... picking up some dust...) **but**  
**because they are hard;** because  
that challenge is... contact, one  
we are unwilling to...  
... we copy you ...  
...postpone. Tranquillity Base here.

*Ian Richardson*



## Apollo

When I was a kid, I only needed  
a big cardboard box, to build a spaceship.  
Neat tin-foil plates polished, engines bled,  
charting a course for a nearby time- rip.

There is a guy I know, who succeeded  
in baffling folk without any censorship  
with his claims that nasa had completed  
a similar trick with their lunar trip.

Cardboard, sand, mirrors and tin foil gilded  
pods. No space explorers. More craftman-  
ship.

*John McLachlan*

## The sitting room mission

Jessie, Maggie and me, in home-knitted balaclavas  
squashed into the Tunnocks 11,  
our cardboard box capsule  
fully equipped with crayoned control panels.  
The fine craft shuddered through the long unknown.  
Steel-calm teamwork brought us a safe landing.  
Over mounds and craters of icing sugar,  
our avatars, Sindy, Barbie and Ken,  
Slowly skipped and squawked their path to history  
And planted a Saltire.

*Marka Rifat*

## First Moon Landing

My brother, sister, and I take one small step  
closer to the console television, gather around  
as if it's fire, cooking meat for dinner,  
and we're leashed dogs, salivating for the treat.  
Mom hands us a bowl of hot, buttered popcorn.  
Parents, grandparents perch on the edge  
of couches and chairs. Brother announces he's Neil.  
I shout I'm Buzz. *Girls can't be astronauts. Can, too,* I scream.  
Mom shushes us. The Eagle lands. Neil walks, speaks for us all.  
We don't move, bowl of popcorn untouched in front of us.

*Robin Wright*

## Apollo 11

the hand-me-down sofa in my aunt's lounge grunted beneath us  
family – friends – neighbours - *buddled together*  
awake into the night – white pipe smoke swirled – toasts with jars of homebrew

all of us *children* again *excited/frightened*  
by the astronomic events showing on the b & w television set  
*the only one on the block* - sucking the room towards it – *buzzing/crackling* - conversation dead  
- *a black hole* -

“... *far above the world*” - defying gravity - three men in clouds

*Alan Parry*

### Brother's Moon Landing

The rest of us knelt close to the screen as  
Lazarus stepped out, no longer entombed.  
But you ran outside with your Instamatic,  
priest-like you raised it to the distant moon.

I've looked it up: it was a crescent, waxing  
though in my memory it is always full –  
full of your belief, despite our teasing –  
your camera had witnessed a miracle.

Anything could happen... and then it did.  
You would have been 60 this year, had you lived.

*Ellie Rees*

### Black and White Baby Steps

My white-haired lover tells it in monochrome  
relocation by way of ka-tunk ka-tunk concrete highways  
New York to New Mexico  
in a Rambler station wagon  
heaped with small-step memories  
while Earth traveled  
to the moon  
in buoyant leaps and bounds

*Christine Owens*

### The Flea Market

Artists painting river stones  
at a flea market table yield  
pet rocks as Apollo reaches the moon.  
Mine has the moon lander.  
I carry that promise of technology  
with me until I turn from space.

Now, washed by dust and light from  
other galaxies, my smooth head reflects  
a chemotherapy travelogue. I return  
to technology and drifting planets.

*Michael Dickel*

### One small step

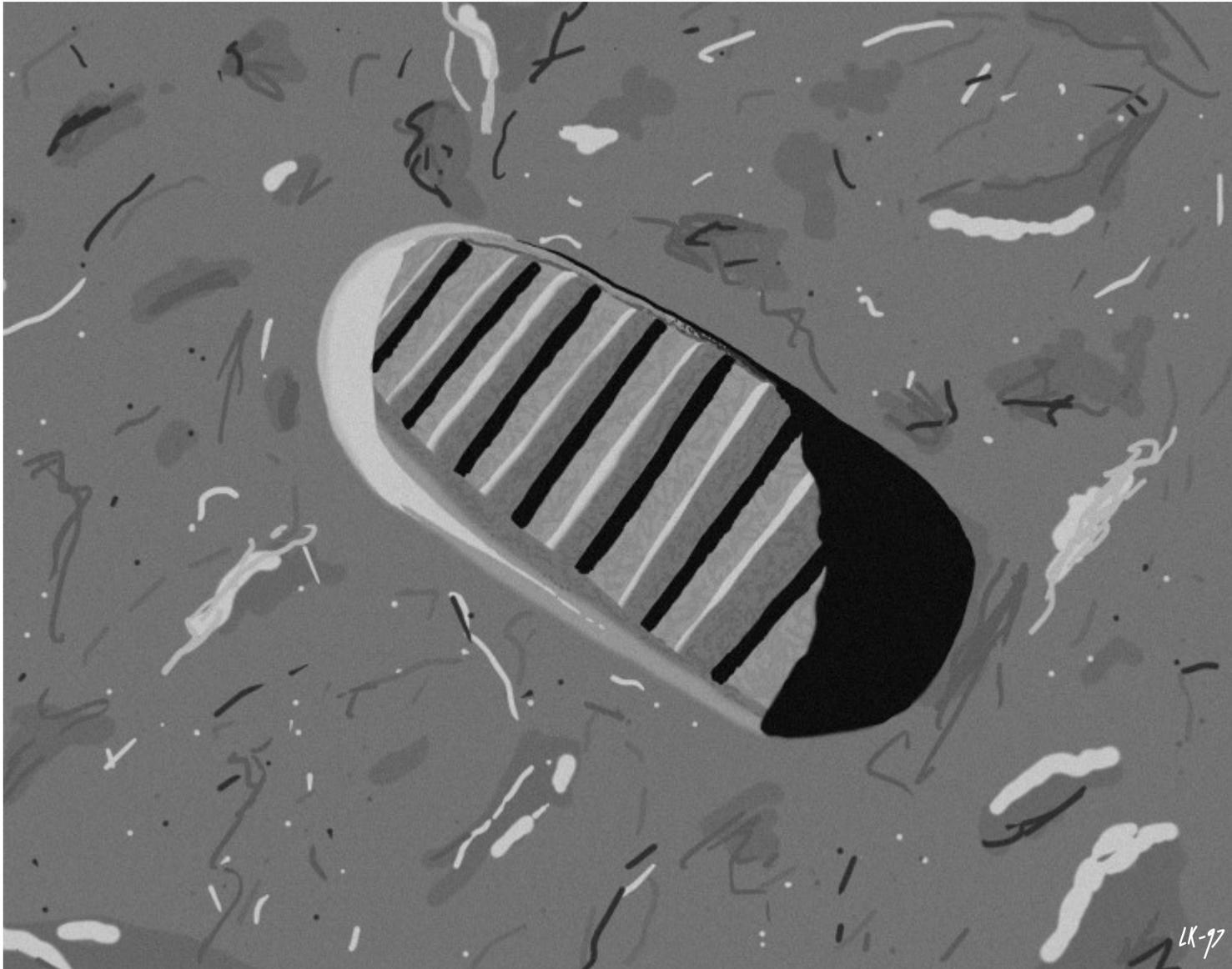
There is a crater in my foot, stars are spinning around my bed;  
new orbits are but one small step away.

But while a man walks on the moon, I am confined, cannot  
put one slippered foot in front of the next.

I feel the gravity of my eleven years, dream of planets beyond  
the ward, am giddy with the pull of the universe.

Fifty new dawns, half a century in my veins, scars are healing;  
I leave footsteps in the moon dust, dock.

*Pat Edwards*



Giant leap

Strange to think  
that the first giant leap  
the hairless ape took  
was standing,

that a quirk of fate changed them.  
A tree's ripened fruit  
hanging like suns  
and one small step.

Later  
in steel capsules they went beyond  
this dying world  
to claim a barren moon.

*David Rudd Mitchell*

## *II - Cosmic poems*

*(for Helen Sharman, first Briton in space)*



## Three Flights

TB

### Find

On the whelk stuck shelf,  
hand sized, a stone.

A cold, brackish weight  
haloed with pale rings

shadowed with ammonite coil and crevasse –  
the troughed salt pans of a malformed moon.

Collision of the deep cosmos  
this timeworn matter, wind dried

on my bright palm  
shoaling atoms and long light.

### Flight

The gasping white fall,  
the gust and flap of the freed

parachute could not prepare  
Tereshkova

for the fire and thrust of cramped Vostok 6  
rumbling, shuddering up through lit cloud

into lagoon then sea-cave blue then  
black and the swimming dome of earth

she orbited forty-eight times, returning  
and returning like the moon-sick tide to a stone.

Note:

Valentina Tereshkova was a Russian cosmonaut and the first woman to fly in space. She was launched into space on Vostok 6 on June 16, 1963. She was chosen for the space mission on the basis of her ability as an amateur parachutist.

### Forward

*Inspired by Helen Sharman (Astronaut)*

What return now  
for a stiff glove of grit from a trodden luminary

brushed dust from coin-rubbed craters  
the blown powder of flags.

Juno's weightless labours have travelled  
like light towards a red end: birth

sunned to rust on screed peak and roved mineral bed,  
the locked ice and hushed seas

of Earth's death's head  
in our hands. Now how to set foot?

*Laura Wainwright*

Note:

Sharman has stated 'we should push forward not only our individual boundaries, but also the boundaries of what humans believe is possible'. She has said 'plans to send humans back to the moon lack 'vision''. Asked if she supported 'Barack Obama's plan to send humans to Mars or Donald Trump's policy to first return to the moon, she said Mars had to be the goal, and that the planned lunar missions of both NASA and the European Space Agency were driven by a need for short-term achievement.' She also notes that 'it is important to make space travel greener'. (*The Guardian*, April 27, 2018)

Da Bo Chi\*  
(Voyager 1)

Our words wander with you  
endlessly through the cosmos  
*iaith y nefoedd\*\**, interstellar  
leaving our heliosphere.  
Particles zip and stream as  
you'll splutter into silence  
growing colder, further from  
us, the smallest blue speck  
in a beam of scattered light.

\*Good bye (Welsh)

\*\*language of heaven (Welsh)

Telling the Bees

Tonight we'll search the sky for  
Caer Gwydion, Arianrod's  
pathway to heaven and for the  
brightest of the seven sister stars.  
Now the bottom of the garden  
feels a galaxy away, as we tread  
weightlessly in white suits and  
whisper to the honeyed hives  
*mae 'di mynd\**, turning them  
half circle away from the sun.

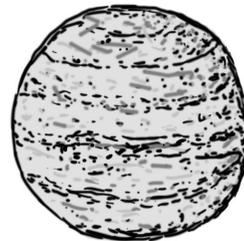
\*she's gone (Welsh)

*Ness Owen*

My Last Artwork

The night sky a sea  
of scattered lamps,  
blinking flotillas  
a lingering lucidity  
ancient constellations  
map celestial dreams

*Karlo Silverio Sevilla*



Waltz

The moon dons her black gown,  
speckled with stars. Tonight  
she'll dance, a tiara of light  
for lovers below. Tides  
will splash rhythm  
while silhouettes spin.

*Robin Wright*

Islanders

inhabit the edges, bound  
by sky, by rock, by moon-turned sea,  
lives lived in the salt round  
that inhabits the edges, bound  
to nothing, journeyed days crowned  
in constellations, the drift of infinity  
inhabiting all edges, bound  
as sky, as rock, as moon-turned sea.

*Angela T Carr*

Colony 1

The terminal sun throws a golden band  
 onto the alien grain of the table we grew  
 and cut and joined. I chart multiplying  
 islands of senile pigment on a clawed  
 and fissured hand. Amber motes turn  
 and shine and form an outline that reaches  
 out and caresses my neck and whispers,  
*We were the first, we are the last.*  
*Let those heavy rays in, my love.*  
*I am waiting.*

*Philip Berry*

After gods

He wanders, drifting, after death of gods  
 and kneels on rock at earth's still pool,  
 where water ripples to finger's touch.  
 He rises, raising eyes to starry vault,  
 spirit soars through endless night,  
 with ancient heavens myriad on show.  
 He leans again at water's blackened edge;  
 the graven image, stream of light of stars,  
 imprisoned, still, a liquid mirror.

*Matthew M C Smith*

Saltwort

Caustic in the sand  
 where we build our fire,  
  
 and I sleep rolled in a blanket beside it,  
 a brand that shifts in the beach breeze,  
  
 its shadow under Alpheratz,  
 my mother's star  
  
 tonight blue  
 as driftwood ash,  
  
 and I feel its roots in the bedrock,  
 the limestone that allows

*Robert Minbinnick*

Break water

A first of rocks strides into the surging sea  
 under a canopy of battleship grey clouds.  
 Broken boulders vanish and re-emerge.  
 A road of promise lost and found  
 to salt spray oblivion.

*Phil Knight*

Bliss as

An upside-down rainbow  
lorikeet dangling  
from liquid amber  
branches  
sweet plump seeds filling its sun  
-warmed belly high above the wild  
abandoned laughter of kookaburras  
floating over a rippling star  
-studded green sea  
of breeze-bewitched trees.

Over a midnight shore

My last words to her a lie—  
a dark tide lashing the broken silver line—  
sleet-scattered wind rattling dark glass,  
a rasping gasp as she sprang into the frigid gap  
after I told my mother she could leave us.

Changeling

As ethereal as radiance, as mystifying as the Milky Way—staring backwards into  
time, standing in the frost-bright grass—you would teach me about stars,

first precious intoxicating breath-stealer—like these far-off stars and love and unfathomable  
beauty, your radiant youth standing aloft in this ice-lit star-field at twelve

already dwarfing me with all your maths and facts I don't know  
where they all came from or when, and I am floating in this vast

unexplored territory—an entire constellation of you stretching away,  
infinitely greater than that first small spark telling me you existed

in me and you gasp *A shooting star*  
*Yes I breathe You are.*



*Anne Casey*

we are made of

cells that bind us  
that glue blood, muscle, bone  
our spaces within spirits  
to dark webs of stars  
burning worlds

*Paul Robert Mullen*

The Hare

She barrels through the silk night,  
moonlight glinting from her tail,  
smacking wind with whiskers  
like silver thread, searching  
for the fissure of dawn.

*Mari Ellis Dunning*



BLACK BOUGH  
POETRY

Speed of light

in the rocket's exhausts  
molecules labour for lift off

chaos >birth > combustion

we reach for heavens

half burnt out.

Seated, we calculate  
the distance to paradise,  
stir embers to requite the flirtation  
of these infinite light years.

*Glen Wilson*

Space Station

In sleep, cosmic rays flash like binary,  
pulse on visual cortex.

City circuits spread, silent as tombs,  
oceans, landmass, whorls of cloud,  
tropics, latitudes, spectral horizons,  
storms' green fire on arc of globe.

We travel into night, day, dark, light,  
terrifically lonely  
with ghost memories  
of being and love.

*Matthew M C Smith*

Satis damnum

Grieving in the blue above a graveyard,  
skeletal face shocked pale as bone,  
her horror for the dead a distress,

she cannot turn away from the sunset  
of their stones; pray for their passage,  
weep a drop of her seas for their souls.

This is what enough loss will do to you.  
What a lifetime of looking down  
does to hearts that pull against the tides.

*Mark Antony Owen*

Symposium

The lights of oblivion set in comet dust,  
 streaking the skies in silver glow.  
 Below, the Earth yearns for her lover--  
 the soft and gentle moon.  
 Though shadowed by the radiant sun,  
 cold and barren from his flares,  
 she waxes and wanes love letters--  
 Morse code to her blue planet--  
 dreaming one day,  
 they'll collide again.

*Dorian Sinnott*

Elegy for the Night

under stained glass skies  
 how am I not meant to feel      inadequate?

I'll spend the evening  
 erasing stars I can't own

building supernova armies  
 in your constellation freckles

I will cloak myself in the stardust  
 imprinted on half shut eyes

and shroud each and every trace  
 of the night-time that doesn't want me

*Sasha Smith*

Réaltóireacht

Goideann dorachadas radharc mo shúile,  
 sciobann domhantarraingt mo chorp leis  
 agus mé ag titeant go trom ar an tocht bunchaite seo.

Tugaim neamhaird ar an áit seo, dírim ar raon níos fiúntaí -  
 mo ghealach, realtaí, réaltra agus mo chruinne, a chroíthe,  
 is libhse a luím síos de dheoin, lán im'dhúiseacht.

Stargazing

Darkness blinds my eyes and gravity claims my body  
 in one sharp landing on this worn sprung mattress.

I pay circumstance no heed, tuning in to the space above me;  
 my moon, stars, galaxies, my universe, my loves,  
 you are my bed fellows of choice. I lie wanton for you.

*Joanne McCarthy*

one

but Leonardo was first to the moon,  
ravelling through space  
in a skull-white shuttle  
launched from an olive grove,  
impossible, his beard flying  
as he solved, computed, wondered,  
eyes fixed always upwards  
on the perplexing wax ball.

giant

up and on he rocketed into an inky sky  
starred with questions, light speed voyager,  
until, centuries young, he set his feet  
on the moon's frown  
and unpicked an ancient puzzle:  
how the old-moon's death mask,  
could live on, zombie,  
above the new-moon's rib.  
Earthshine!

leap

no other astronaut has lived  
the lunar night as he has,  
in ghostlit seas trembling silver,  
still the only human  
to step into moon's gloaming  
and see our lantern Earth,  
luminous, candling,  
a light leaping out  
into the universe's unending dark.

*Rae Howells*

HM



LK-97

Davinci Spatial Code

An unstable pattern, unseen planets.  
Words and links, a spatial sign language,  
hidden, the traceable map.

*Benedicta Boamah*

Look

their gloved hands  
guide the telescope

away from town  
and its risen light

help their child  
adjust the mount

track movements  
our ancients knew

then yield to cold  
snap lens cap back

*Tim Youngs*

Sidenote on space travel

Micrometeoroids cause concern.

The star-stuck endlessness, the uncomputable vision  
of unmanned space, that blind compass we call the sun:

phenomena like these cannot but overawe.  
But, once in flight, we fear those bullet-grams of rock, im-  
pact's attrition,  
hostile to Apollo's hull, as to a moon-bound man.

*Michael Caines*

Stars and moon

Riven black torn mind  
star swirled cobalt sky  
crescent moon gold azure  
streaked spiralled star  
Arles east view sunrise  
brings uncertainty unrelieved  
reveals agony within

*Rob Cullen*

Pilgrim mother

Wise Penelope, no longer weaving, unravelling,  
nor biding time. Her craft blasting  
through troposphere, mesosphere, ionosphere,  
penetrating dark exosphere. Earthbound limits,  
questions of her loyalty and chastity,  
like burnt-out capsules fall away into endless orbit.  
Pligrim mother, messiah, incubator of new worlds.  
This time, no vigil, but the voyager  
into the portal of the stars

*Kathryn Hope*



### *Three Tanka Series*

#### Choke

Peeled white skin  
Reveals multiple, fragile layers  
Cling of gravity  
Membrane only one cell thick  
Re-entry by osmosis

#### Other

Future sight  
Who would want to know all of this?  
More than stars  
Anxiety born of certainty  
Rather, blind-choice be my shield

#### Rage

The gold disc spins  
North Star bright, Venus above  
A blushing moon  
Footprint of my rage, mere dust  
In the face of so much beauty

*Eliot North*

#### Observance

Night dances her Dance of the Dead, darkens her eyes with bold kohl; thinks *I Shadow*, laughs privately.

Night is bone-bare, holds out a finger for Moth to still himself – but Moth, electrified, craves only Moon.

Moon wears her Sunday best, drapes mist over an exposed shoulder, experiments with gold highlights, and is pleased.

Moon feels her own fading, becomes raggedy-fragile, shying from the brassy Sun; listens, bitterly, to birdsong.

*Sarah Doyle*

#### Mercury Matters

I have no recollection of heat's absence. My skin cracks with it. Sometimes, I wake from sleep's brief dreams and believe myself fleetingly temperate. Disappointment always dawns. I regret to confess, bitterness is my frequent companion. Half-consumed by the Sun, I am runtish, barren. Pock-marked with proximity, I bear the brunt, and bitterly. Stoicism is not for me. I burn, as the Gods throw another coal in the furnace.





Creation Myth

See the Fate  
of a primordial pipette  
fulfilled.  
Taut,  
it drips out a monastery  
wants wishes to be cast upon it  
across oceans of unknowing.

Stasis

Once upon a stasis  
of cold, bystander black,  
silent eyes  
constellationed themselves  
into order.

*Katie Stockton*

Lit

I throw the moon into my father's fiery mouth.  
Sober as milk, she eclipses his flaming throat,  
floods her pearl glow into his blank eyes, blanches

their red threads. She cools his scorched tongue,  
hushes his curses, croons her ancient, tidal songs  
to reach the boy in him that only she can heal.

Now, glittering with life, he spits. To cauterise  
the balm of all that pale loveliness, he rolls the scotch  
around his gums, ignites the blaze once more.

*Kathryn Bevis*

The black hole has a face

Explorers are fixed on discovering worlds,  
shrouded in cosmic black,  
where secrets lie hidden,  
and now we've seen its face,  
its imaged eyes stare vacant through glimpses of futures,  
present, though undiscovered,  
unreached, though reachable.

*Catherine McCabe*

Magnum Opus

The Cosmos, a womb of darkness,  
heartbeats of perfect harmony,  
dancing constellations, planets, stars.  
Moon-dust magic, Magnus Opus observed.  
Man births chaos, eviscerates Earth,  
plunders frontiers, searches for immortality.

*Caroline Johnstone*

Gravity

It is a dangerous thing to be born;  
we are vulnerable, spinning deep in space.

Sometimes, before I sleep, face in pillow's foam  
I turn for breath, grip my bed frame.

imagine being suspended along the curve  
of Earth's concentric layers

I am frantic at the thought of spiralling  
out of control, falling

falling.....

*Wendy Holborow*

Lila

We wrote our names  
in starlight;  
scattered love across  
the sky's black velvet.

You left me standing  
in silence;  
a forgotten note  
in night's divine play.

*Josh Rees*

Astronaut

Sealed in microgravity,  
floating witness to stars,  
follower of forever abyss.

Sense this earth turn,  
know this station's velocity,  
sentry of pale blue sphere  
where gravities keep perfection,

a perfection as rare as love.  
Is there love beyond this orbit?  
Is there love outside this world?

*Matthew M C Smith*

GT

The path of the moon

(from an Anglo-Saxon riddle)

*Ic wiht geseah wundorlice  
lyftfæt leotlic listrum gegierwed*

*dust stonc to beofonum deaw feol on eorþan  
niht forð gewat nanig sibban  
wera gewiste þære wihte sið*

I saw a being, wondrously  
shining, a cup of sky, cunningly made.

Dust rose to heaven, dew fell on earth,  
Night went forth. No one later  
could plot her path.

This star

(from an Anglo-Saxon rune poem)

*Tir biþ tacna sum healdeð trywa wel  
wiþ æþelingas a biþ on færylde  
ofer nihta genipu næfre swiceþ*

This star is a sure sign: it keeps faith well  
with our rulers, is always journeying  
over night's mists, never drifting.

*Rosemary Appleton*

A Star for Lina\*

(An Imperfect View of A Comet)

(\*astronomer Caroline Herschel, 1750-1848)

Here she is, in her neat town garden,  
the telescope's tube snagging on her sash.  
Dew seeping into her satin shoes,  
she wipes the angled mirrors, tilts it up,  
reflecting beams and so subverting  
time itself, she feels, as she streams  
the star's brightly private glare towards  
her eye - her vision's range now  
approaching, surely, God's own scope.

Sagittarius A

In the spiralling mass,  
a swirling dark death,  
a star once ablaze.

Planets, particles, light,  
drawn, devoured.

Nothing within its reach  
escapes its grasp.

*Tracy Martinez*

Falling

Reflected in your eye – the moon,  
the mass of stars, the galaxy,  
a hundred billion galaxies more; the beautiful  
infinity of universe caught,  
pinned upon your depthless pupil.

You blink.  
Within the penumbra  
of your careless lids I lose  
my entire cosmos.

*Penny Blackburn*

Woman in the moon

*I am not the man in the moon* she sighs  
teetering like a blanched melon she threatens  
to roll herself down to the seabed blasting silt  
scattering tides in every direction sudden jetstream  
a cool emergency her dull skull puckers they land  
soundlessly trekking her lip *I am so bored of spacemen*  
she confesses to Orion wincing at the jab of a flagpole  
the moon-boot's thwack *time for a crash landing*

*Natalie Ann Holborow*



22 Vulpeculae

Hot evening, wisteria roaring with bees;  
a raven, soaring, fixed one of us with its yellow eye.  
Demon star, faint pulsing variable,  
burst of rays from the cold uncharted.

Threats emerge, conceal themselves again.  
But somewhere you remember.

*Robert Hamilton*

A firmament

Moths glitter in light  
each in its frantic parabola.

Andromeda there. A flash  
of Canis Major. Sagittarius  
appears in a clatter of projectiles.

I could learn these shapes  
if only there were time.

Above the city

It's cold up here, icy air filling lungs with  
emptiness, a taste of moonlight -  
stars close enough to switch off or  
blot with one thumb. The sky;  
suspended spirals of light, of dark -  
I reach to touch the shapes of the universe.  
The goosebumps on my skin are  
constellations, their own galaxies.

Luminescence

The hushed glow of city lights  
spills against midnight sky;  
the glare from your phone screen  
illuminating blood-shot eyes;  
an unfurling urban luminescence  
obscures the stars.

*Elizabeth Kemball*

Floor 3, Room 13

In the dark: fairy-lights, suspended as stars,  
the tungsten street lamp glow,  
intermittent flashes of the smoke alarm, blue lights,  
streak the ceiling: an aurora borealis.  
This galaxy encased in concrete and brick,  
close enough to breathe in.

The dark - a universe shrunk into  
four walls - makes gods of us all.



The Stars My Teachers

Once in a blue earth  
I could watch surf break  
on alien shores  
without you.

No one taught these stars  
to flare in synchrony,  
this cold to reach  
your iced heart's burn.

Shared

Charles Duke left  
a photo of his family  
on the moon.  
Their tiny faces also looked  
at what he once saw.

Before sun's searing day  
could peel and flay,  
their single spot of color  
graced a dead gray world.

*Kyla Houbolt*

Shooting Star, Falling Star

We lie on our backs, you and I,  
to watch the night sky.  
"There's one!" you say,  
"make a wish."

But starlight fills  
my eyes with tears,  
my mouth  
with secrets.

Cosmusic

Sliver of moon –  
quarter-note  
sky song  
in the key  
of see

*Mary Harwell Saylor*

sketch

walking as in a dream  
black footprints on white

a cratered canvas  
the landscape is sketched

I see pitted snow  
on thunder moon

*Frances Boyle*

beneath the starlight

midnight means picnic blankets  
laid out amongst fireflies  
on astral turf; it means  
battered sandwiches beside waterfalls  
mirroring the stars.

the stars dance  
in their orbital carousel,  
painting the skies with abstraction;

i let their silver light restore me.

*Emilee Moyce*

Monophobia

The emptiness of space, vast,  
strange, should've been  
brought into life  
by a boundless awareness  
more perfect than us.  
Yet wherever we go,  
in all we explore, we find  
only reflections of our invention.

*Maxine Rose Munro*

Space Station Webcam

In my wheelchair  
with curtains closed  
I am hanging high  
above the earth, watching  
the luminous shell of cloud  
spin away over sapphire  
oceans glinting gold,  
all of us rolling toward  
the infinite black velvet.

*Lucy Whitehead*

The Starry Night  
*after Vincent Van Gogh*

rolling in on glistening waves  
he picks you up carries your small weight  
a surge of indigo a splash of black  
towards those bright expanding spheres of light  
a spectral conjuring as skin and bone dissolve  
through smoke and mirrors into night

*Rachel Carney*

The Universe

Chrysalis of dust compressed  
embrace yourself goodbye  
when your nails touch the edge  
ready to be dust again  
I will catch you in the next embrace

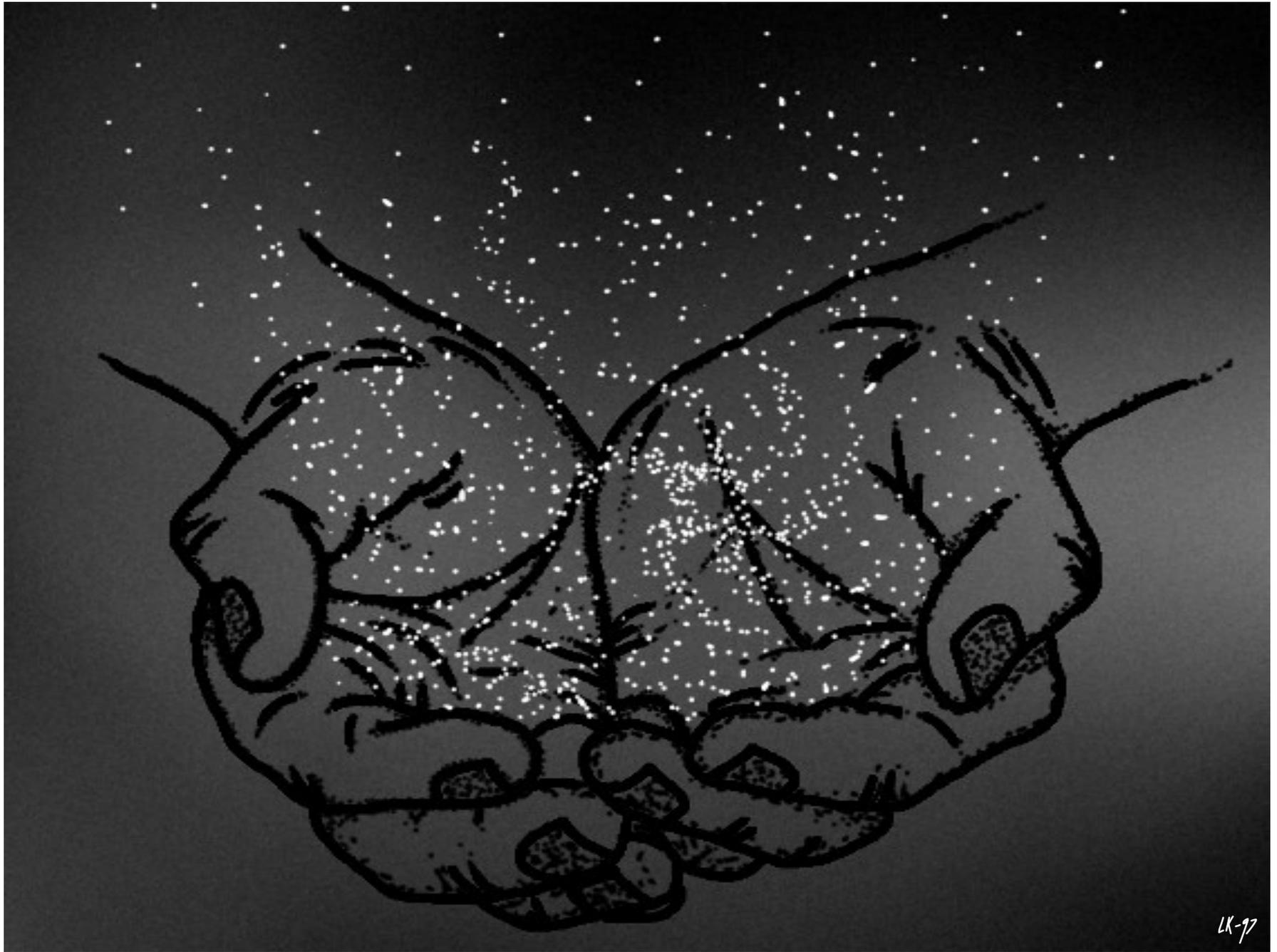
*Elise Triplett*

An extract from 'Bird Drawing by Charles Tunnicliffe'

For a stunned second  
after it struck the window  
the starling fanned its wings  
then folded and fell away,  
the glass rattling its casement  
like a brittle-boned body.

The startled class are stilled  
around the sill as the bird stirs,  
labours off into the treeline -  
its dusty night-sky primaries  
collected on the glazing  
in a liminal nebulae

*Glyn Edwards*



LK-97

Aftermath: flash from the Pleistocene

blown up basalt gored plateau blood & sweat surge  
gift salts from the deep kiss the lip of the mammoth

wound. Frazzled earth ejecta an apron unfurled sowing  
moon rock & maskelynite for latter-day treasures eucalyptus

tamarind teak & bamboo; from the ancient bruise sweet call  
to golden orioles tailorbirds mongoose & chinkara

once jewels to kings now nucleus to farmland & ruins of gods  
a thrumming galaxy of lives. And Lonar Lake nucleus

of the nucleus wide & winsome always a hungry lesion  
whispering protests always a diamond from colossal accident –

First Sketch:: Lacus Lenitatis–

one link in the necklace wider  
than hate & faith though you diminish neither;

carry delight & winter as if  
they're the same & your name is balance.

In Terra Nivium land of snows  
your gaze is steady & your face set higher

looks to the other side: fixed on happiness  
no matter how the sorrow weighs.

*Jess Thayil*

Notes:

Lonar Lake is a crater-lake in the Buldhana district of the state of Maharashtra in India. The lake is believed to have formed after a meteorite impact hit the Deccan Plateau during the Pleistocene, known commonly as the last Ice Age. It's a site of interest for scientists, and in recent years, it's enjoyed the status of a hidden-away tourist locale.

Notes:

The earth's moon has basaltic plains on its surface that early astronomers took to be water features. Many of these plains have retained their names even after it came to be known that they were not seas, bays, lakes, etc. Lacus Lenitatis (Lake of Tenderness) is a lunar mare located in a specific region called Terra Nivium (Land of Snows) on the earth's moon. Other 'water bodies' like Sinus Fidei (Bay of Faith), Lacus Odii (Lake of Hate) and Lacus Gaudii (Lake of Delight) are also situated in Terra Nivium.



Interlude

Four billion miles away  
it is winter on Pluto  
the sun a lit cigarette  
punctuating the conversation  
between worlds, its breath  
frozen in the atmosphere

You step into the room  
look from her to him  
to wrap up warm  
be home by ten.

Landed

Tranquillity is the sea after a billion years,  
after bombardment from all sides,  
and after youth's hot love has carved  
new channels in its map of the future.

The basin is dry, nothing to rock the boat,  
nothing to sail to or from and the moon  
we once dreamt of lies beneath our feet.  
Was there ever water here?

*Dom Conlon*

Interlude

mankind  
puts fifty new stars  
in the sky

Landed

a cosmic seed blooms a universe

*Jack Priestnall*

Gravities

When we were fast planets  
orbiting the schoolyard

the fringes of our scarves  
encircled us like moons

and sometimes we collided.

Lava erupted in angry scabs  
on our scorched knees.

Our mouths were gaping seas  
learning what tides mean.

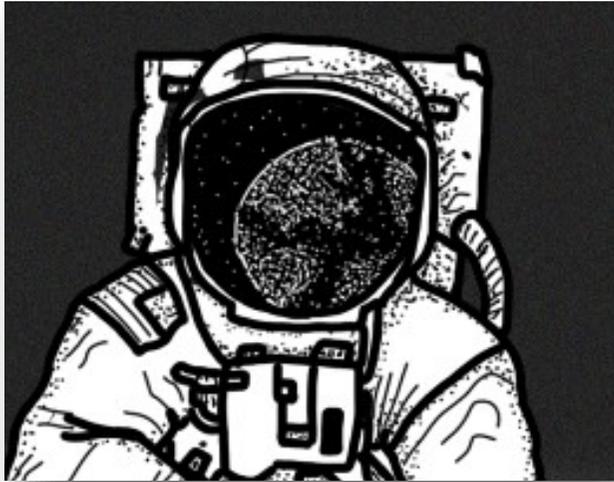
*Laurie Koensgen*

Lyra

She is a song.  
A serenade  
between planets,  
carried skyward  
on eagle's wings.  
A myth. A lyric  
falling in spellbound  
crystalline fragments,  
piercing infinite darkness.

*Chloe Gorman*

GL



The Man Who thought He Was An Astronaut.

Unshucked in his cloud-white pod, feigning weightlessness, suspended on the thin twist of his own imagination. Seeing solar systems mapped before his eyes, streets mirrored in the shining, black convexity of visor, worlds slipping through his force field, a mirage of stars, a memory of distant light. He watches us, sealed in our carapace of shadows, decoding the interstices of silence, the empty discharges of text and tweet and unsent emails, a ghostly stasis. He holds the earth in heavy, weighted boots, to keep him from free-fall,

anchoring his soul in heat and light, the all engulfing solace of space and sky. This world, a small, blue pebble. The man who thought he was an astronaut remembers not to scream.

The Child With Mars In Her Eyes.

Her eyes, unprecedented, beyond blue,  
held on to the fog of galaxies, decay of heavens.  
No summer evenings, no fragrant seasons,  
she's distant, far out in her universe, a time capsule  
smelling of false ancestors and broken promises.

Searching for mirrors, her visions are straw-men  
trembling behind walls, a bloodstain on flagstones,  
she's been a child too long. The slender shadows  
peter out. Beneath her flaxen lashes,  
Mars ascends.

The Woman Who Wanted To Be An Asteroid.

Falling through the fierce, ink-black,  
her soul hard, bronze, unlit  
by other passing souls, adrift in the airless  
bowl, earth's blue skin soft wrapped,  
a tissue of colour, love letters  
captive in the half-dark,  
the woman who wanted to be an asteroid,  
her territories ablaze, iron core ice-cold,  
plummets,  
watched by whole cities.

*Lesley Quayle*

QM



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Faint hymns

*(After William Shakespeare)*

We've shared a hundred years between us,  
tracing pale familiar patterns for too long.

Last night we found remembered worlds,  
reached out and brushed the sky.  
We summoned stars, uniting miles  
of endless space and felt the planet judder.

We cling like shadows to the surface,  
chant faint hymns to the fruitless moon.

Knowing my place

I rarely think beyond the sky.  
The stars and comets blaze their trails  
within a ceiling of my making.

But once, just once, as I drove early  
east, I found my scale as sun-rise  
showed itself as earth-fall.

On a cloudless night

Through the clematis arch  
that leads to nowhere,  
I join the silver slugs  
to party on the moonlit lawn.

*Kathy Gee*

Deckchair, duvet, whisky mac,  
my face is raised to watch  
this section of the universe  
that is entirely mine.

DW

Landing mass

She harvests planets, ticks them off  
with her telescope, not for her

the subtlety of stamp-collecting,  
the chink of coins from other lands.

Instead she prefers the golden sheen  
of Venus, the red sister rose of Mars.

Some nights she leaves her observatory,  
takes a stroll in the friendship of stars.

Remembers those that have also walked,  
the Moon a silver locket, holding secrets close.

*Lynn Valentine*



Constellations

of uniquely-spaced,

silvery stars

burn hydrogen

through aeons

to illuminate the depths

of space

and time,

even though each light

is finite.

Behold the most beautiful

self-sacrifice

in the universe.

*Michael Leach*

Wishing on a Near Earth Object

icy body  
fresh veins of frozen  
material. Virgin ice slips away from  
the Oort Cloud, a singular blur of white across night      *dust tail constellations on her skin*  
a minuscule iridescent stream plummeting further      *blisters, burning, browning, barely fading*  
towards the pinprick of light one  
ought not fly too  
close to

*Iona Murphy*

Waxing Gibbous at 3pm

His gaze burns my shoulder.  
This wink-eyed stranger  
Follows close like a sun  
blanched  
Shadow—colorless face  
Unnerves in daytime—  
The ghost of last night.

Copper Moon

Suspended by unseen wire  
An inch above the horizon.  
Tinctured a copper tone  
Through an atmospheric filter.  
A penny in the sky  
God dropped and promptly forgot.

Waning Crescent

Metallic shard cast off by the  
Celestial smith—platinum  
Shaved to wicked points.  
Catch, cut deep the midnight  
Velvet expanse—thin gleam,  
Like light slipping beneath a door.

*Sarah M. Lillard*

When they say

When they say after every person that dies, they become  
a star, there must be an empty space in the sky  
for them when everyone is born; so when we all die we  
become those spaces; so when a last person remains  
on our earth, there's an ageless sky, full of stars —  
blinding  
— despite all the light that never reaches us

*Jayant Kashyap*

Dark Matter

How do we see the unseen?  
A ghostly presence felt,  
this dark path between stars.

The Milky Way, a pearly spiral,  
and we with limited vision,  
star-created, star-drawn,  
unable to see the tenebrous beauty  
of bent light.

*Merril D. Smith*

Spider's Web

My buddy's dressed like  
Ziggy Stardust

he's on his knees  
looking up at the sky  
pleading for sharper watercolor

his body's full of aurora craters  
I want to kiss them all  
I want interstellar us

Our lives are hymns  
to bold electronics

*Justin Karcher*

Supernova

O Betelgeuse, I look at your shoulder  
in the sky, still fastening Orion's body  
like a red, celestial gauze when all  
you really want is to burst into light —  
I, too, carry this desire for annihilation,  
for being jettisoned from the astrosphere,  
like a flawed lodestar — just a burning,  
wild blaze who explodes before she is cast  
forcibly like Cassiopeia into starlight.

*Kunjana Parashar*

Breath

Exhaled, our breaths  
are distilled, transmuted,  
to layers in atmosphere.

Light of stars scattered  
by dark dust serrated air,  
makes nights shimmer.

*Ranjabali Chaudhuri*

Structural Integrity

It starts with a creak, a crack  
in this man-o'-war's oaken beams,  
then a bang, a big bang,  
from somewhere down below,  
and suddenly there is no below,  
no up, no down,  
and we are plunging through nothing  
on a doomed trajectory,  
the panic of being  
in a punctured tin can.

*Mark Gilbert*

Dandelion Galaxies

Is this not where we stood  
watched dandelion galaxies  
fragment  
our skin torn apart  
with divided longings?  
Your promise;  
stars conjure from  
destruction.  
We swallow broken ground  
forage the sky for resurrection

*Kathy Parker*

Harvest moon (October 1993)

dad died in autumn  
his eyes closed  
behind faded curtains  
hidden from moon and stars  
outside  
head thrown back  
I howled raw grief  
until clouds shifted apart  
gifted shafts of lunar light  
his love held back night

*Ceinwen Haydon*

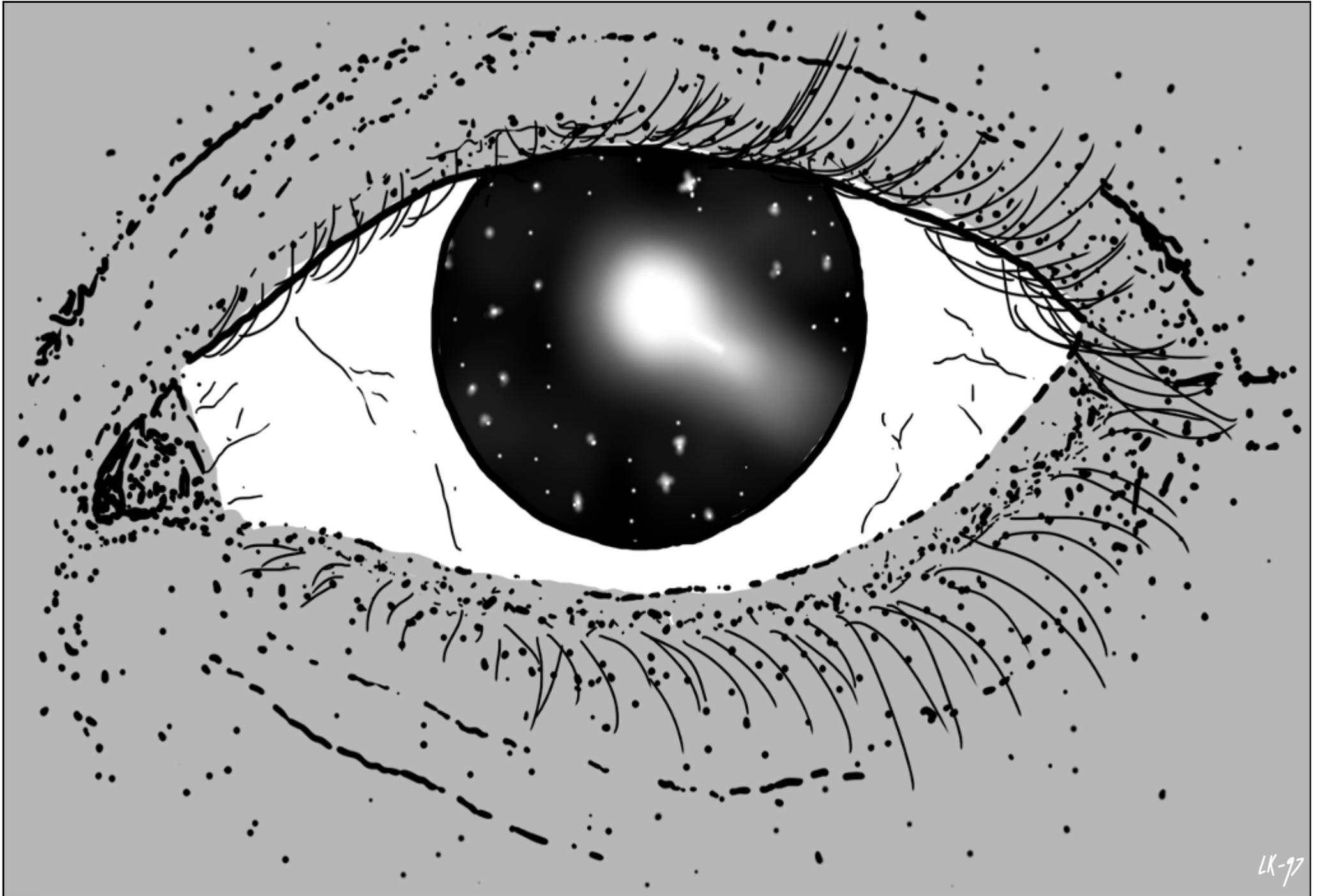
Bella Notte

An ocean of dark enveloping;  
*L'appel du vide*, taking over.  
Staring into spheres like the moon,  
freckled constellations,  
the heat of Mars,  
radiating  
atmospheric  
in between.

The Galaxy Trend

Tie-dyed  
stars and clouds and moons  
appear in blacks and purples and blues  
and glitters, of course,  
sparkles to set the mood;  
deep space brought earth-bound  
in shirts and slimes and hair and shoes  
in galaxy-coloured trendy hues.

*Juliette Sebock*



LK-97

### Microcosm

Night slews in, slowdark inks the pond  
Hine-nui-te-pō's fingers stir giddy a constellation  
of gentled waterbeetles

In twitching orbit, podfoil bodies surf  
swells of silver equations, arrayed  
antennae quivering for any edges to the endless

Even the wingless will fling themselves at new suns  
jetting vapour at dawn  
to escape this steady drowning

### Southern Cross(ing)

To our bones, we're sailors  
your castoff ancestors and mine  
greedy for the long horizons

Black water licks the hull, paua-tongue velvet  
Sacks fill, the shucking knife flashes an arc, the sky stabbed  
to welling jewels of broken nacre

And up there, the crux of it all, those four bullroaring stars  
Haere mai, their pointer song a hook  
tugging south the waka, laden with stories  
of silver fish, and earth so rich for growing

*Ankh Spice*

### Beltsong

Old dustblood Pluto ring-a-rosies  
with lumpen children - Nix and Styx, twin rocky  
griefs  
and frozen motes  
who once-were-worlds

Lobed trench deep, the Planitia heart  
pangs ion-fecion red  
at every trip and fall

Star-shot bodies  
grind pretty sparks for wishing  
and every earthkid asks to fly





At the Heart of the Milky Way

Bubblegum and blue ink sky  
over a barrelling midnight train.

Awake and lonely in the carriage  
like a galaxy eating her own organs

spitting out stars like tobacco.  
We mix rum and raspberries to feel

like dust. An anchor-less planet speeding  
this way. Its shadow passes over

your face, taking me with it.

Ursa

What's the sparkling price of lust?

The sky's wife turns a woman  
to a brown bear.

The son is a feather-tailed arrow,  
a taut silver bow.

It is an easy story.

The sky pulls families from the earth.  
Into himself.

As girls, we realise the cost:  
all the stars are graves.

*Kandace Siobhan Walker*

[...]

Life learns its quiet phases.  
We draw close and then, it seems,  
with no power of our own  
pull apart. Find new orbits.

[...]

*Paul Deaton*

From 'Spring Tide - 'A Watchful Astronomy': Seren, 2017.

[...] Walking home, over Gaol Ferry Bridge,  
after some party drinks, Orion splayed  
above St Paul's Church like a fat limbed gingerbread man,  
and that star, cold as quartz, your watchful astronomy  
tells you isn't a star but giant Jupiter, up there,  
the same size as the stone in your shoe.

From the title poem 'A Watchful Astronomy': Seren, 2017.

Back of the Net

Palpable thickness  
of stars / Pencil-thin scratch of plane  
strikes through surface-sand sky / The line reveals itself  
to be a circle on its side. *Big moon*,  
says the eye

Comets dim their lights upon landing,  
take off trailing life,  
commiserate the orbit  
that can't see  
past the prize

*Lydia Unsworth*

syzygy

shadowy moon yawns  
just shy of wide-eyed embrace  
between earth and sun

*Nidbi Zak/Aria Eipe*

My Son's Space

My son wants to find a planet  
hotter than ours, but cooling rapidly.  
We will trade places with the goldilocks  
aliens so each of us finds a just-right home.

This is how he solves problems—missile attacks,  
the climate crisis, poverty. He invents solutions,  
builds models, gives all the energy and love  
he has to liquid possibilities of rescue.

Hearing I have lymphoma doesn't dissolve his glittering  
resolve. He sits, quiet. Then he says, I will find a cure.

*Michael Dickel*

Defiance.

I'll tear a sheet of starlight for your blanket,  
a burnished cloth of gold to ward off fears,  
there beneath bright Apollo, you'll greet the morning,  
curled inside your mother's wounded feet,  
eyes defiant shimmering flakes of jet,  
burn away the fog of my appearance,  
from deep within that ragged bundle,  
a jolting tearful journey in the moonlight,  
brought you here as if cast from heavens net.

*Ruairi de Barra*

### Tethered

Inhale

Open the airlock,  
float into black.

Distant stars cold and glittering.

Exhale

Below dingy white boots  
the globe glows blue  
marbled with white clouds

Inhale

### Horsehead Nebula

Within Orion's belt,  
the black stallion rears up  
to meet a cloud of scarlet flame  
before he bolts,  
galloping between dying supergiants.

*Karen Steiger*

### Theory

Fact gravitationally glanced back.  
Lens, lights, ballerinas in time's performance.

Backdrop of cosmic waves,  
in endless expansion,  
pulses raised,  
the audience edge seats,  
seeking, listening,  
beating hearts,  
and insight, silence!

It starts.

*Andrew Carnegie*

### Haiku

Ghost-grey galleon  
sails the scattered-star expanse,  
silent and stately.

*Lucy Virgo*

we made much of the moon

Wong May said *heart draw a circle*—more than once I’ve spiraled  
the sporadic hairs in the center of his chest—soft capital O’s—in the dark  
of last September, he sent me a photo of his shiny, silver, floating circle—its glow  
pouring over splintered Texas backcountry branches—my own circle looked dull  
& mediocre in comparison (against gaudy big-city lighting)—he said  
my big tranquil rock was beautiful & I could have wept—it watched  
in silence as my hand first found his under a picnic table  
at a bar weathered & dusted in a layer of Crawford silt clay—  
Emily Dickinson said *To light, and / Then return*, round & round  
in motion—looking into a pint glass brimmed golden, I see a harvest moon

*Melanie Kristeen*

Mirrorball

Sequined glints  
waltz infinite interstellar steps  
through inky ballroom depths.

*Laura T. Fyfe*

Space Bound

Saturn’s rings record time –  
icy grooves sifted and separated  
shades of gravity in tracks of sand, tan and fossil grey  
  
learn its loops, skim their circumference –  
brush the curves; fall through shattered surfaces  
rematerialize, reborn to conquer giants  
  
stay light – keep Titan’s opal bead in sight,  
resist the pull of tidal forces  
that rip apart orbiting moons

*KC Bailey*



A Henrietta Leavitt

Te dieron un escritorio a treinta centavos la hora y cerraron la puerta.  
Y tú, armada de lápiz, lupa y logaritmos, nos abriste los cielos.  
Hallaste la inmensidad que Aristarco y Bruno soñaron.  
Derribaste los muros de Harvard, las fronteras de Cambridge,  
las costas de América y el horizonte del mundo.  
Arrojaste la mirada humana más allá de las Hespérides, más arriba que el Olimpo,  
y con la luz de la razón quebraste la antigua esfera celeste.  
Nos revelaste que Andrómeda nunca necesitó ser rescatada,  
porque está miles de millones de veces más lejos que Perseo,  
más lejos que el Pegaso, donde el monstruo del mar no puede alcanzarla.

To Henrietta Leavitt

They gave you a desk at thirty cents an hour and closed the door.  
And you, armed with pencil, loupe and logarithms, opened the heavens to us.  
You found the immensity Aristarchus and Bruno dreamed of.  
You tore down the walls of Harvard, the borders of Cambridge,  
the coasts of America and the horizon of the world.  
You cast the human gaze beyond the Hesperides, above Olympus,  
and with the light of reason shattered the old celestial sphere.  
You revealed to us that Andromeda never needed to be rescued,  
for she's billions of times farther than Perseus,  
farther than Pegasus, where the sea monster can never reach her.

*Arturo Serrano*

Fís

Feadán aisteach cam  
Sé troigh ar leithead  
Ina sheasamh idir beirt ballaí briste  
Clúidithe le caonach  
Sna talaimh leathan Caisleáin Biorra.  
Leacht i gcuimhne brionglóid ,  
Leacht i gcuimhne baois,  
Gur thógadh an teileascóp is mó sa domhan  
Ar an faiche faoi fhéar droimneach seo  
Faoi braillín liath scamail.

Translation:

Vision  
A strange, crooked pipe  
Six feet wide  
Standing between two broken walls  
Covered in moss  
In the grounds of Birr Castle  
A monument to a dream  
A monument to folly  
That the world's largest telescope  
Was built on these rolling grassy lawns  
Beneath a grey sheet of cloud

*Niall Feeney*

# *III - 'Atomsmasher'*

*(for Peter Higgs and Dr Lyn Evans)*

Neutrino Hunter

I seek the whisper of a rumour  
An alteration so subtle  
It is almost without meaning.  
This dark power  
Binder of galaxy, cosmos.  
  
Its presence as absence revealed  
A breath exhaled, a shadow left behind.

*David Fry*

Deep Space

What lives beyond stars  
where darkness across the void  
swallows light?  
  
Planets and comets collide  
A silence, a violence, unseen

*Paul Kohn*

Extravasation

Breathless, in the solar plexus  
of a black hole, two neutron stars  
spin in this pulsar heart;  
drawing down our horizon of light-time  
unto the edge of our insignificance,  
minuscule, and so very, very dark.  
Spiralling in this milky backwater,  
we may yet find consolation,  
even in the profound silence,  
of the big bang.

*James Young*

Higgs boson

FIRED >

FIRED >

veil>vortex>sphere>spin>speed

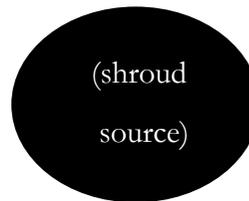
wave>web>weave>

chasm>cause>

fury>force

ghost-god-

G A S P



*Matthew M C Smith*

Quantum

Toss a dart at an orbital  
and only a small fraction  
of the time will you pin  
an electron  
corner a quark

this is what our bodies  
are like, often found  
in the same rooms  
but so unlikely  
to collide

*Joey Lew*

## The Atomsmasher

*(After a Presentation by Dr Lyn Evans at the Science Café,  
Dylan Thomas Centre, Swansea, September 2012).*

1.

Soon it's all going to be  
science fiction. Let me tell you how.  
Tomorrow will be today.  
And Lyn Evans will find himself  
in the next dimension  
as easily as leaving a room.  
Yes, I can promise you  
that: science fiction.  
Lyn Evans smashing the atoms,  
so we can all find out...

2.

The garden too quiet.  
That type of quiet  
when a sparrowhawk comes down.

There it is,  
its breast barred.  
Sandstone and quartz.

Not a voice, not a vowel.  
But the type of quiet  
when a sparrowhawk comes down.

The baleful bird.

3.

Aubergine flower  
purple to black  
from a pavement crack  
as the earth moves.  
Nightflower, I'd say, black  
stem and black sap.  
A judge's black cap

4.

Lyn Evans told us dark energy fills space.  
And Lyn Evans is home  
after annihilating atoms  
in Switzerland.

I loved Lyn Evans's cyclonic mind.  
But he failed to make his computer work.  
So why doesn't he turn  
back time?, a voice behind me asked.

*Robert Minbinnick*

5.

And I thought of the anti-  
orchid, anti-purple out  
of anti-earth, the anti  
God who put the particles  
together and apart. Maybe  
it doesn't work like that.  
And maybe it does.

6.

Salute Lyn Evans, thunderbolt  
on his costume. Yes, Lyn the atom  
smasher, who could not make  
his computer work.  
But one day he will turn back time...  
The software should be the same.  
And if time is many mansions  
maybe that's why Lyn Evans  
keeps leaving the room...

*“There are no comments by Mr. Armstrong. He lives reclusively in Ohio and does not attend conferences, reunions, celebrations, parades, anniversaries, press events. He does not answer mail from strangers, answer the telephone, open the door. He was however, many years ago, asked how he felt knowing his footprints might remain undisturbed on the lunar surface for centuries. ‘I hope somebody goes up there some day,’ he said, ‘and cleans them up.’” – Mary Ruefle*

the breakaway effect

when pilot whales lay down on a beach, their lungs collapse  
under the weight—flesh & fat crush intestines, liver—heat exhausted

, mouths agape. animals kill themselves without comment. a loss of oxygen  
can cause one last grand erection—a euphoria of sorts—coming back

to a spacecraft is difficult for some astronauts, separated from the cosmos  
(from everything) by almost nothing, blood suspended

at their feet. outside of gravity, organs float in the body. whales are still  
on a beach—still heavy—*the gravitas of gravity*, like rapture of the deep

, effects us profoundly. a stag, a cliff & a leap. isn't it vulgar?  
isn't it grand? —life, I mean, release

*Melanie Kristeen*

Mir Falls

(3644)

Gold against black  
above blue.  
Your sails carried us.  
A decade of life  
where none should be.  
Knowledge and hope  
burning the sky.

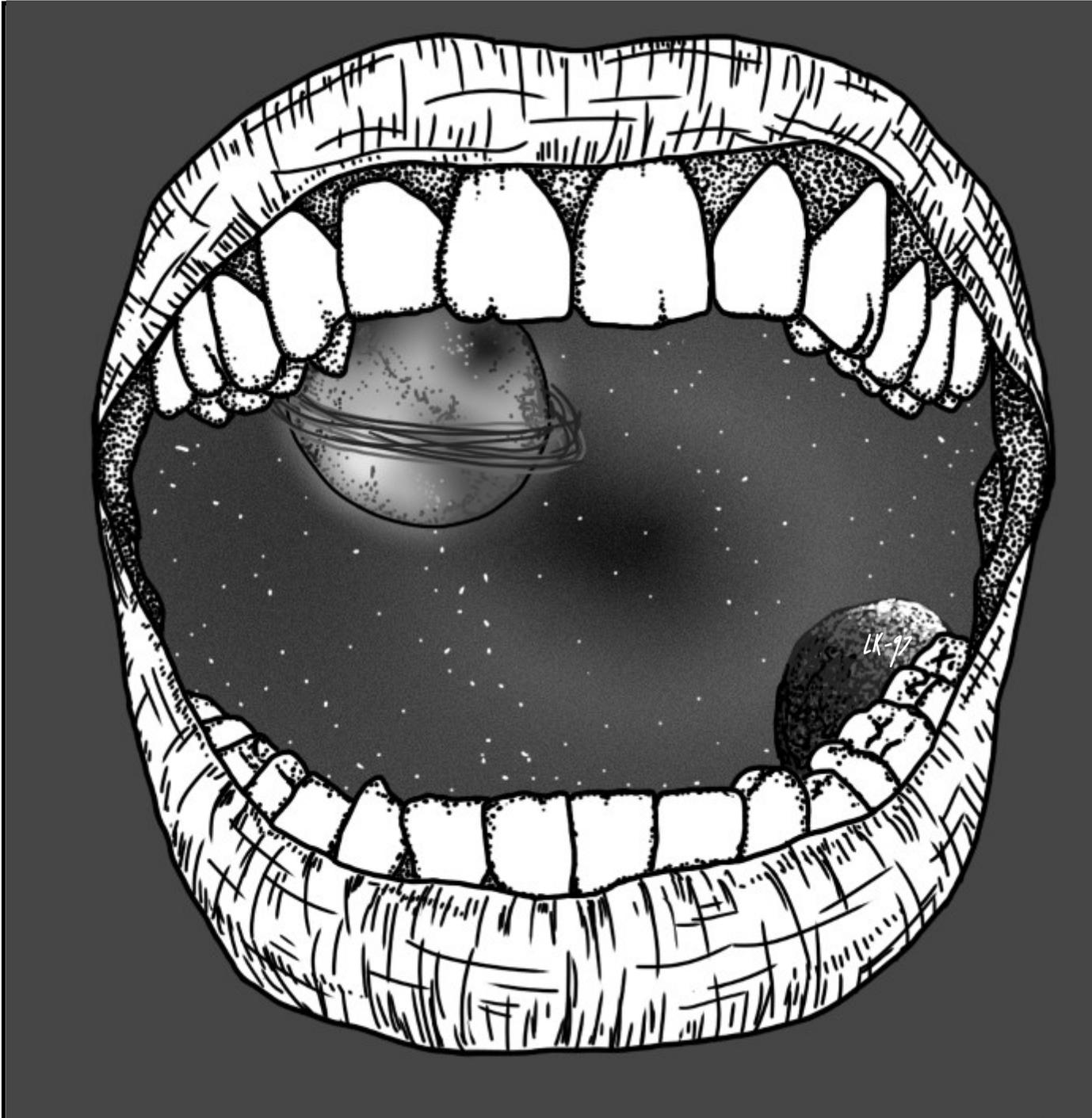
Voyager 1

(Valentine's Day, 1990)

The last look  
a shutters click  
our system from the edge.  
One pale blue dot  
in a family portrait  
the mark of man unseen.  
Travelling on  
beyond dark borders,  
to continue our story,  
our search.

*Richard Waring*

*Epilogue - 'remnant fragments'*



faraway stars eat time

star-death spreads through infinite galaxies,  
dashing toward planets not yet born—drifts  
of fury and awe travelled.

a saguaro stands high, beckoning  
suns in the night-sky—their expiry  
as incandescent explosions:

celestial parade of dead lovers—  
pinholes outside stygian desert edges.

*C. Aloysius Mariotti*

Collision

It comes in slivers a plutonian silence  
before the beginning and after each end

she feels its heartbeat cold and burning  
stills her breath to listen again

*here lies a forgotten stranger*  
words shine on an unmarked grave

a tiny flash a mute impact  
three hundred thousand miles away

brings her squealing to the ground  
a dime-sized crater in her side

*Scott Elder*

Time's end

A finite infinity  
expanding ever outwards  
into itself  
into nothing,  
the rush to entropy.

*Richard Waring*

**Part Messages Received from the Missing Mission to the Kuiper Belt:**

**Message 142326** ʅǾóHbŋdEŌnd.Tdzw

☼ Searching the muted sky while near Djanggawul Fossae on Pluto  
our equipment picked up two reddish cubewanos slowly crush together  
... after orbiting around each other for millions of years < >  
the remnant fragments from this brutal embrace floated away...

**Message 5443** ɹŋJИиεεΞλλΔ(γ)ϸIκǾ

☼ On the deathly frozen Haumea we looked up  
and saw the dim ring circling the egg shaped plutoid < >  
... the bigger Hi'iaka appeared boldly then the gloomy Namaka  
both moved quickly in the faint day sky which only lasted 4 hours«

**Message 5658454** 4,7εε%oo!!?NⓂⓂ

☼ We passed tiny Dysnomia and approached Eris  
the last known outpost of our Solar System, its surface was rocky white☼  
looking back, we saw the Sun which was only a bright point in the distance,  
« after a few quick orbits we sped away...

*Rob McKinnon*

*entropi (i AJW)*

Pe teflid y meini sanctaidd yma  
i'r awyr fil o weithiau,  
ni fyddent yn glanio fel hyn yn ôl.

Mae pob sgwrs mewn carreg  
yn datod, dymchwel,  
y cystrawennau'n cracio,

pobl fel morgrug  
yn cario'r geiriau cerfiedig i ffwrdd,  
a'r seiniau pwyth-drwodd o fol y waliau,

i godi rhywbeth newydd;  
a fydd hefyd  
yn disgyn yn ei dro...

*entropy (for AJW)*

If these holy stones were thrown  
up into the air a thousand times,  
they wouldn't land back like this.

All conversations in stone  
crumble, collapse,  
the syntaxes snap,  
for ant-like people  
to carry away the carved words,  
and the tie-stoned sounds from the walls' belly,

to build something new;  
which will itself  
fall in turn ...

(translation by Geraint Lovgreen)

*Ifor ap Glyn, National Poet of Wales*

*“Da Bo Chi” - “goodbye”*

# List of Contributors

BLACK BOUGH  
POETRY



**David Annwn** is the author of eleven collections of poetry, the most recent being *Red Bank* (2018). He is a winner of the Cardiff International Prize for Poetry. He has written the Gothic trilogy of critical studies: *Gothic Machine* (2011), *Sexuality and the Gothic Magic Lantern* (2014) and *Gothic Effigy* (2018). An exhibition of his poetry appeared with the calligraphy of Thomas Ingmire at the Book Club of California in San Francisco in 2016 and the American film-maker, Howard Munson, has recently made videos of his work. His poetry is included in *The Edge of Necessary*, *An Anthology of Welsh Innovative Poetry 1966-2018* (2019).

**Rosemary Appleton** has had her poems published in *Mslaxia*, *The Fenland Reed*, *Spontaneity* and *The Wellington Street Review*. She writes in snatched, coffee-fuelled moments in the wilds of East Anglia. tweeting @BluestockingBks

**KC Bailey** is a poet from Northamptonshire, studying towards an MA in Creative Writing. When not writing, reading or walking her dog, she practices Tai Chi and drinks Earl Grey tea, though hasn't yet mastered the art of doing both at the same time. On Twitter @KCBailey\_Writer.

**Philip Berry**'s poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Lucent Dreams*, *Picaron*, *Little Dog Poetry*, *Black Bough*, and *The Healing Muse*. He also writes short fiction, CNF and a medical blog. His writing can be explored at [www.philberrycreative.wordpress.com](http://www.philberrycreative.wordpress.com) or @philberry

**Kathryn Bevis** is an emerging poet and educator. Founder of The Writing School, she hosts an ACE-funded Poetry for Wellbeing project for service users of Mind. In 2019, Kathryn has won the Poets and Players competition, come third in the Welshpool Poetry Festival Competition, and been runner up in the Out-Spoken Prize for Poetry.

**Penny Blackburn** lives in the North East of England and writes poetry and short fiction. Her online publication includes pieces in *Writers' Café*, *Bangor Literary Journal* and *Marsden Poetry Village* and she has appeared in print anthologies by Batley Poets and *Paper Swans Press*.

**Tamsin Blaxter** is a poet and historical linguist based in Cambridge. She was born in a house on the brow of a hill from which balloons could often be seen. She never knows what to write in these things. @what\_really\_no / [www.icge.co.uk](http://www.icge.co.uk).

**Benedicta Boamah**—a skilled Emergency Nurse from Ghana who writes poetry during her leisure periods. Previously published in *Black Bough Issue 1*.

**Frances Boyle** is a Canadian writer, and the author of two books of poetry (one in 2014, one due in fall 2019), a novella (2018) and a short story collection to be published in 2020. She lives in Ottawa, and her poems and short fiction appear in print and online magazines throughout Canada and the U.S. This is her first U.K. publication.

**Michael Caines** has had poems published online via *Visual Verse* and *Allegro Poetry*, and in print in the *New European*. An assistant editor on the *Times Literary Supplement*, and co-founder of the *Brixton Review of Books*, he published a critical book called *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century* with *Oxford University Press* in 2013.

**Andrew Carnegie** is an adventurer, entrepreneur and Wiltshire based poet, with a national bravery award. He sailed around the UK in 2018 pursuing the stories of the Celtic Saints and then carried a 200ft cross from Malmesbury, 200 miles North to York, during Lent 2019. He's appeared in the Nation-wide series of ITV adverts and also BBC Radio 4. He is in the unusual position of having written poetry for commercial use without having published his own anthology, so far

**Angela T. Carr** is a poet living in Dublin. Winner of the 2018 Laureate's Prize, selected by Carol Ann Duffy, her work has been placed or shortlisted in over 40 national and international literary competitions and published in Ireland, the UK and US. More at [www.adreamingskin.com](http://www.adreamingskin.com).

**Rachel Carney** has had poems published in several magazines and journals including *The New Welsh Review*, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, and *The Wales Haiku Journal*. She is a book blogger at

[www.createdtoread.com](http://www.createdtoread.com) and has also written articles and reviews for magazines and websites [www.createdtoread.com](http://www.createdtoread.com) @createdtoread [www.facebook.com/createdtoread](https://www.facebook.com/createdtoread)

**Anne Casey** Originally from the west of Ireland, Anne Casey is a Sydney-based writer and poet. Author of *where the lost things go* (Salmon Poetry 2017, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2018), her second poetry collection, *out of emptied cups*, was published by *Salmon* in June 2019. Anne's writing and poetry are widely published internationally and rank in *The Irish Times* Most-Read. She has won/shortlisted for poetry awards in Ireland, Northern Ireland, the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia, and is Senior Poetry Editor of two literary journals.

**Julian Cason** has two jobs. He works both as a lawyer and as a poet. Born and raised in Cardiff. Most recently published in *Envoi*, *Pulp Poets Press*, *Nine Muses* and *The Dawntreader*.

**Ranjabali Chaudhuri** is a lawyer and a published poet. At the moment she is packing her boxes to move from Amsterdam to London, but some day she hopes to live in a cottage in the Nilgiris. Her Twitter handle is @Ranjabali.

**Dom Conlon** is a poet and author. His first collection, *Astro Poetica*, was praised by Nicola Davies as being 'Insightful, thought-provoking and fun'. His second collection, *This Rock That Rock* is being released by *Troika* in Spring 2020. He tweets @dom\_conlon

**Lilia Cosvalente** is a California-grown, Arizona-based writer who is just starting to put her own work out there. Film grad and entertainment industry employee, she enjoys using words and music to inspire and entertain people. She tweets about writing, work, and anime on her Twitter: @scriptsoprano

**Rob Cullen** grew up in the Rhondda, attended Bristol, Cardiff, Brighton Art Schools - lived in New York & Brighton. Rob's collection *Uncertain Times* was published in 2016. He's been published in *I AM NOT A SILENT POET*, *The Bezine*, *The Learned Pig*, *Red Poets* issues 17 & 18. Rob has written a crime novel and is writing his second.

**Paul Deaton** was born in London and raised in Wales. He was runner-up in the Arvon International Poetry Competition 2010 and winner of the SaveAs Writers International Poetry Prize 2016. His work appears regularly in *The Spectator*, is included in York Notes for GCSE study guides and is featured in various magazines and anthologies including *PN Review*, *The London Magazine*, *The Dark Horse*. A novel started on his MLiTT at Glasgow University was recently finished. *A Watchful Astronomy* (Seren) is his debut collection, and a Poetry Book Society Recommendation

**Ruairí de Barra** is from Co. Mayo and now resides in Co. Cork. He is a sailor, an award-winning military journalist, and a poet. His creative work has featured with *Tinteán*, *A New Ulster*, *Live Encounters*, *The Bangor Literary Journal*, and it can all be read on [www.paperneverrefusedink.com](http://www.paperneverrefusedink.com)

**Michael Dickel** writes on & off line & edits Meta/ Phor(e) /Play ([MichaelDickel@info](mailto:MichaelDickel@info)). His next poetry book, *Nothing Remembers*, is due from *Finishing Line Press* late summer 2019.

**Sarah Doyle** won the WoLF poetry competition and Brexit in Poetry 2019, was runner-up in the Keats-Shelley Poetry Prize 2019, and was highly commended in the Forward Prizes 2018. She is currently researching a PhD in meteorological poetry at Birmingham City University.

**Mari Ellis Dunning** is an award-winning Welsh writer of poetry, short stories and children's books. Her debut children's book was launched at the Abergavenny Writing Festival in 2016 and her debut poetry collection, *Salacia*, was nominated for the Wales Book of the Year Award in 2019. Mari has an MA in Creative Writing from Aberystwyth University. The coast is hugely important to her writing and wellbeing. She tweets at @mariellis.

**Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe** is a poet, pacifist and fabulist. She has recently presented her work at the Cork International Poetry Festival '19 and the Jaipur Literature Festival '18. She is an MFA candidate at University College Dublin, where she is working on her debut collection.

**Scott Elder** lives in France. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous magazines including *Southword*, *The New Welsh Reader*, *The Rialto*, and *The Moth*. A pamphlet 'Breaking Away' was published by *Poetry Salzburg* and his debut collection *Part of the Dark* by *Dempsey & Windle*.

**Glyn Edwards** - a teacher in North Wales and an MA student at Manchester Metropolitan University. His debut collection of poetry *Vertebrae* was published by *The Lonely Press* in July.

**Pat Edwards**—a writer, workshop facilitator, reviewer and general poetry activist. Her work has appeared in *Prole*, *Magma*, *Ink Sweat & Tears* and

others. Pat hosts Verbatim monthly poetry open mic nights and curates Welshpool Poetry Festival in Mid Wales. @PatEdwar70504378

**Niall Feeney** is equally passionate about the inspirational nature of space exploration and the community building that goes into keeping minority languages alive. He is a keen amateur astronomer who practices his Irish by tweeting about current affairs and science as @iroke

**Ann-Marie Foster** is a journalist and newsreader for the BBC in Belfast. 'It's a great job but I can't use adjectives. Or adverbs. Or metaphors. You get the picture'. @AnnMarieCFoster

**David Fry** worked in social work for over thirty years and has recently started writing. He is entirely self-taught and whilst he respects rhyme and rhythm his first love is creating images through the written word. @thnargg

**Antonio Fusco** is an Irish-born writer living in Paris. He has a background in fine art and philosophy and his poetry has been published in *Sons and Daughters* journal @SostieneFusco

**Laura T. Fyfe** lives in Stirling and suffers from a chronic low boredom threshold. She facilitates writing workshops and communities, writes poetry, fiction and non-fiction. Her books *Wellspring* and *Magpie Mind* help writers live more creative lives. Twitter: @FigmentLaura Instagram: @lauratfyfe

**Mark Gilbert** writes short prose and poetry and has recently been published in *Sonic Boom*, *Human/Kind*, *Wales Haiku Journal* and *Weird Laburnum*. He also does the occasional spoken word event. @MarkgZero.

**Kathy Gee's** career was in heritage. Her poetry collection was published by V. Press <http://vpresspoetry.blogspot.co.uk/p/book-of-bones.html> and she wrote the spoken word elements for <http://suiteforthefallsoldier.com/>. Her small collection of duologues – *Checkout*, set in a corner shop – was published in March 2019. <http://vpresspoetry.blogspot.com/p/bookshop.html>

**Chloe Gorman** is a copywriter, aspiring poet & author. Her poetry and fiction leans towards romantic, dark and gothic themes. She has an MA in Professional Writing from Falmouth University for which she received a distinction. She has poems

being published soon in *Ravens in the Attic*, *Mookychick*, *Three Drops From a Cauldron*, *Black Bough Issue 1 & Fevers of the Mind*.

**Angela Graham** is a film-maker (BAFTA, Foreign-language Oscar entrant). Since 2018 her poetry has appeared in *The North*, *Infinite Rust*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *The Ogham Stone 2019*, *The Bangor Literary Journal* and *The Open Ear*. An award-winning short story writer, she was nominated by Crannóg for the Pushcart Prize 2019 and her collection, set in Wales, Ireland and Italy, *A City Burning*, is due from *Seren* next year. She is completing a novel on the politics of language, with the support of an award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. @angelagraham8 <http://angelagraham.org/2018/10/my-work-in-2018/>

**Robert Hamilton** is a poet and English professor living in Texas. His first chapbook, *Heart Trouble*, was published by Ghost *City Press* in 2018. Recent poems appear in *Posit* and *The Fictional Café*. He tweets at @ragandboneshop.

**Natalie Ann Holborow** is a Swansea-born writer of poetry and fiction. In 2015, she won both the Terry Hetherington Award and Robin Reeves Prize, and was this year commended for the Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine. Her debut collection, *And Suddenly You Find Yourself*, was listed as one of *Wales Art's Reviews* Best Books of 2017. She is currently finishing off her second collection, *Small*

**Wendy Holborow** is a prize winning poet and fiction writer, published internationally. *After the Silent Phone Call* (Poetry Salzburg 2015) *An Italian Afternoon* (*Indigo Dreams* 2017 a Poetry Book Society recommendation), and *Janky Tuk Tuks* (*The High Window Press* 2018) <https://www.wendyholborow.org.uk>

**Kathryn Hope** is a retired infants teacher from Swansea who has just started writing poetry and is unpublished. She enjoys gardening, her family and her two dogs Bunt and Mimi. Kath's poem in Issue 2 is a feminist mythological & futuristic, cosmic poem.

**Kyla Houbolt** has been writing for years and only recently begun sending out work. She has enjoyed writing micropoems this year which have appeared in *Nightingale & Sparrow*, *Detritus Online*, as well as *Black Bough Poetry's* inaugural issue. Other work in *Kissing Dynamite* special zine *Hand to Mouth*, and forthcoming in several journals including *Barren Magazine* and *Juke Joint*. Follow her on Twitter @luaz\_poet. Kyla lives and writes in Gastonia, NC, USA.

**Rae Howells** is a Swansea poet and journalist. She has had poems published in *Magma*, *The Rialto*, *Envoi*, *New Welsh Review*, *Marble*, *Poetry Ireland*, *The Cardiff Review* and others, and has won both the *Welsh International* and *Rialto Nature and Place* poetry competitions.

**Caroline Johnstone** grew up in Northern Ireland but now lives in Ayrshire where she dares people to be happier all around the world. An author and a storyteller poet, she's been published in the US, UK and Ireland. She's a member of the Scottish Poetry Library's Advisory Board, is the social media manager for the Federation of Writers (Scotland) and is a member and supporter of Women Aloud NI, Scottish Pen and the Association of Scottish Artists for Peace.

**Jayant Kashyap** is a Pushcart Prize-nominee, the co-founding editor of *Bold + Italic*, and a food blogger, has his debut chapbook, *Survival*, coming soon from Clare Songbirds Publishing House, NY.

**Elizabeth Kemball** is from Stoke-on-Trent and writes both poetry and prose. She graduated last year from the University of Warwick with a degree in English Literature and Creative writing. Her poems often centre around nature, bodies and religion. Elizabeth shocked the editorial team and readership of *Black Bough* Issue 2 by revealing that she was the artist who sent artwork for Issue 2 under an alias—LK-97. She revealed herself as artist on 13.7.19. All artwork in Issue 2 is by Elizabeth.

**Phil Knight** is a poet from Neath. He has been published in *Poetry Wales*, *Earthlove*, *Planet*, *Dial 174* and others. In 2015 the Red Poets published his collection *You Are Welcome To Wales*.

**Laurie Koengen**—her poems have appeared in *Literary Review of Canada*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *In/Words*, *Barren Magazine*, *Juniper: A Poetry Journal*, *Kissing Dynamite* and elsewhere. She was shortlisted for *The Malabat Review's* Far Horizons Award for Poetry 2018. Laurie is a founding member of Ottawa, Canada's Ruby Tuesdays poetry collective.

**Paul Kohn** is a songwriter and muso from South Australia.

**Melanie Kristeen** is filled with generalized anxiety. She tentatively thinks of herself as a radical feminist, poet and educator who hails from San Antonio, Texas. She just graduated with an MFA in poetry at Texas State University and is currently the 2019-2020 poet in resident at the Clark house in Smithville, Texas. She has been the recipient of a Damsite residency in New Mexico and has been published both online and in print by *University of Hell Press*. She was also a commissioned, featured artist for Luminaria: San Antonio Arts Festival. Twitter:@TheMelSpell

**Michael J. Leach** — is a poet, statistician and researcher whose work combines science with art. His poems have appeared in science and literary journals, including *The Mathematical Intelligencer* and *Cordite Poetry Review*. He lives in Bendigo, Australia.

**Richard LeDue** was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia. He currently lives in Norway House, Manitoba. His work has been published in by the Tower Poetry Society, in *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *the Eunoia Review*, and *Mojave Heart Review*.

**Joey Lew** holds an MFA from UNC-Greensboro and is currently a medical student at UCSF. Her interviews and reviews have been published in *Diode*, *Michigan Quarterly Review Online*, and *Tupelo Quarterly*, and her poetry can be seen in *Gravel*.

**Sarah M. Lillard** is a writer living in Virginia. She writes poetry and lyric essays on a variety of subjects that include birds, motherhood, and living with chronic illness. She has work forthcoming in the summer 2019 issue of *The Hellebore*.

**C. Aloysius Mariotti** was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Arizona. He studied creative writing at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where he also listened to a lot of Rush, Radiohead, and PJ Harvey. He resides in Massachusetts with his wife Kristen and crazy Westie Bella Francine.

**Tracy Martinez**—artist, craftsperson and photographer with BA(Hons) in Fine Art. Also writes poetry and is working on a fantasy novel. Originally from Swansea, Tracy now lives in Llanelli, overlooking the wetlands and estuary which inspires her work. Facebook.com/TracyCabbleArt. Facebook.com/TangerineCloudStudios

**Catherine McCabe** is a Belfast-based Ghostwriter, Poet and Blogger, with work published in *A New Ulster* (2018) and on *Spillwords* (2019). In

2016, she co-created spy memoir *The Black Market Concierge*. Her first poetry collection, *Zombie Town* deals with themes including climate change, women, mental health, dating and love.

**Joanne McCarthy** is a poet and spoken word artist from Waterford, Ireland. She holds a M.Phil. in Social and Cultural Geography and writes about people and place in both English and Irish. Her videopoem 'Shoulder' will be screened as part of Modwords Festival 2019.

**Rob McKinnon** lives in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia. His poetry has previously been published in *Dissident Voice*, *Tuck Magazine* and *InDaily*

**John McLachlan** is 36 and has written for as long as he could form words legibly. He loves to write poetry and to grow and seek inspiration from all things. Whether it is a broken pencil or a smashed snail shell, a perfect rose or a petrol line gleaming multi-colours in the sun, he likes to find a little poetry everywhere.

**Robert Minhinnick** is a Welsh poet, novelist, short story writer and essayist. He has won the Forward Prize twice, along with Wales Book of the Year a record three times – most recently for his poetry collection, *Diary of the Last Man* (Carcant, 2017). *Diary of the Last Man* was also shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize and has been made into a film, directed by Eamon Bourke. He is former editor of *Poetry Wales* and cofounder of Friends of the Earth Cymru and Sustainable Wales

**Emilee Moyce**—a Cardiff-based poet from central California. She graduated from Kingston University in 2018 with a degree in English Literature and Creative Writing and is currently pursuing an M.A. in Translation Studies from Cardiff University. Her favourite things are words, cats, music, and laundry detergent.

**Paul Robert Mullen** is a poet, musician, lecturer, sociable loner and compulsive traveller from Southport, Liverpool, England. He is the author of: *curse this blue raincoat* (2017), *testimony* (2018) and *35* (2018) and has been published in many magazines, e-zines, journals and anthologies. He likes porridge, Leonard Cohen, sharks, people singing harmonies, books with broken spines and all things minimalist.

**Maxine Rose Munro** writes in both English and Shetlandic Scots. She is widely published in the UK, in print and online, and her work has been nominated for The Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Find her here [www.maxinerosemunro.com](http://www.maxinerosemunro.com)

**Iona Murphy** is an Mst(res) student at The University of St Andrews. When she isn't doing the Plath and Sexton research she is meant to be doing, she's writing poems or calling out diet-culture on Twitter. Currently, she is working on her first collection of poems *Numbers*, throwing down messy ideas for a novel, and of course trying to finish her degree!

**Eliot North** is a writer, doctor and educator who lives between the North East of the UK and Spain. She writes poetry and prose, has been published widely and is looking to publish her first collection entitled *Ectopia: a diary of pregnancy loss in prose and tanka* @eliot\_north

**Kate North**—Kate North is from Cardiff and writes poetry and fiction. She is Reader in Creative Writing at Cardiff Metropolitan University and Chair of Literature Wales. Her latest publications are a poetry collection *The Way Out (Parthian, 2018)* and a short story collection *Punch (Cinnamon Press, 2019)*.

**Polly Oliver**—hails from Cornwall and lives in Swansea. She's been writing poetry on and off for years, mainly reading it at open mic nights across the city. Her poems have been published on Spillwords.com and on her blog 'RocksandBones – Poems from the Celtic Fringes'. She was published in *Black Bough* Issue 1.

**Mark Antony Owen** is a syllabic poet from East Hampshire, who writes exclusively in nine original forms—sometimes, with variations. His work centres on that world where the rural bleeds into the suburban: a world he calls 'subrural'. Mark is author of digital-only poetry project *Subruria*.

**Ness Owen** is from Ynys Mon. Her poems have been published in journals and anthologies including in *Poetry Wales, Red Poets, Mslaxia, Arachne Press, Mother's Milk Books* and *Three Drops Press*. Her collection *Mamiaith* (Mother-tongue) will be published by *Arachne Press* in August.

**Christine Owens** has been writing poetry and short stories on and off

for over 40 years. Her first honourable mention for poetry was for Ohio Poetry Day as a teenager. She has been recently published in 2017 in *A Poet's Picnic Anthology* in Albuquerque, New Mexico as well as receiving a runner up in We Art Friends International Poetry Tournament 2018. Twitter: @PoetrySkep

**Daniel Page** is a primary school teacher, historian and aspiring poet from Norfolk. His work often takes inspiration from local and national historical events as well as the quirky nature of his day job. @pagesandpages77

**Kunjana Parashar** is a poet from Mumbai who holds an MA in English Literature from Mumbai University. Her poetry appears or is forthcoming in *The Hellebore, The Rumpus (ENOUGH series), Barren Magazine, Riggwelter, Eunoia Review*, and elsewhere. You can find her on Twitter @wolfwasp

**Kathy Parker** is a writer, poet and spoken word performer from South Australia, and author of *The Unravelling Heart*, her first collection of poetry and prose. Kathy is an op-ed contributor for Network Ten's news website, 10 Daily, with work also published at *SA Life Magazine, Huffington Post, Elephant Journal, The Mighty* and *The Mind's Journal*.

**Alan Parry** is a poet, playwright and copywriter from Southport, Merseyside. He is an English Literature graduate and is training to teach high school English this coming year. He cites James Joyce and Alan Bennett as his favourite writers. Twitter: @AlanParry83 Instagram: alphapapa83

**Jack Priestnall** is a Creative Writing undergrad at Bangor University, he has had work published in *The Seventh Quarry Press, Better Than Starbucks, Bottle Rocket Press, Frogpond Journal, Haiku Journal*, and *The Cherita*.

**Lee Prosser** currently lives in a small village in West Wales and graduated with an MA in Creative Writing at Swansea University in 2018. His work is published in *The Gull, Haiku Journal, Three Drops*. Lee has been published in both Issues of *Black Bough* and was one of three Guest Readers for Issue 2.

**Lesley Quayle**—a widely published, prize-winning poet, a folk/blues singer, flash fiction writer and editor, living in deepest, darkest

Dorset. Her latest pamphlet is 'Black Bicycle' (4Word, May 2018).

**Ian Richardson** lives on the East coast of Scotland. In November 2016, he won the Anstruther Writing Award. In September 2015, he was Overall Winner in the Scottish Borders 'Waverley Lines' poetry competition. Ian is a regular contributor to the themed 'Lies, Dreaming spoken word' podcast.

**Marka Rifat**—lives in Scotland and writes stories, poems and drama. She has been awarded prizes in poetry and fiction, had short plays performed in Aberdeen and poems shown on Dover Arts Development website and in a Norfolk church. This year, she performed her work at Granite Noir 2019, a festival of crime writing, had a story published in the Arachne Press anthology *Noon* and another in *The Eildon Tree*, in an inaugural participation with the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival.

**Ellie Rees** gained a PhD in Creative Writing from Swansea University in 2018. She has had her work published both online (*Trestle Ties* and *Cabinet of Heed* for example) and on paper (*The Lonely Crowd, NWR*). Her ambition is to publish a collection of poetry. She has the poems, now needs a publisher!

**Josh Rees** writes poetry and prose. He is a Creative Writing MA student at Swansea University. Aptly enough, he is currently writing a novel called *In Search of the Moon*.

**David Rudd-Mitchell** is an occasional poet who has had work published in poetry magazines including *BLER, Projectionists Playground, Zen Space* and *Simply Haiku*.

**Juliette Sebock** is the author of *Mistakes Were Made* and has work forthcoming or appearing in a wide variety of publications. She is the founding editor of *Nightingale & Sparrow*, runs a lifestyle blog, 'For the Sake of Good Taste' and is a regular contributor with *Marias at Sampaguitas*.

**Arturo Serrano** was born in Colombia and is a creative writing student and professional translator. He has published science fiction in *Antimatter Magazine* and *Axxón*, and movie reviews in *Hypable*. He is currently working on an alternate history novel.

**Karlo Silverio Sevilla** writes from Quezon City, Philippines and is the author of two poetry collections: *Metro Manila Mammal* (Soma Publishing, 2018) and *You* (Origami Poems Project, 2017). He has poems published in *Philippines Graphic, Eclectica, Ariel Chart, Quatrain.Fish, Peeking Cat Poetry, Milk + Beans*, and elsewhere.

**Dorian Sinnott** is a graduate of Emerson College's Writing, Literature, and Publishing program, currently residing in the beautiful and historic Kingston, NY with his two cats. He spends his weekends cosplaying at comic cons up and down the east coast, and herding cats at his local animal shelter. Dorian's work has appeared in numerous magazines and journals, including: *Crab Fat Literary Magazine*, *The Hungry Chimera*, and *Riggwelter*.

**Matthew M C Smith**—Matthew Smith published his poetry debut *Origin: 21 Poems* (Amazon KDP) in 2018. He is from Swansea, Wales, and is the editor of *Black Bough Poetry*. His poems have been published in online publication 'Panning for Poems' and *Seventh Quarry Press*. He won the R.S. Thomas Prize for Poetry at Gwyl Cybi Festival for his poem 'Henrhyd Falls' in 2018. He tweets at @MatthewMCSmith

**Merril D. Smith** is an independent scholar with a Ph.D. in American History. Her poetry and stories have appeared recently in *Rhythm & Bones*, *Vita Brevis*, *Streetlight Press*, *Ghost City*, *Twist in Time*, *Mojave Heart Review*, and *Wellington Street Review*.

**Preston Smith** is a senior at Bowling Green State University where he studies English Literature. Preston has interned with *Mid-American Review* and is currently the managing editor of *Prairie Margins*. He can be found on Twitter (and Instagram!) @psm\_writes, tweeting about his cats, Helios and Misty, and his love for fairy tales. He has poems published in "The Castle" (*Royal Rose*), *The Arsonist*, *Brave Voices Magazine*, and *Nightingale & Sparrow* and forthcoming in *Catfish Creek* and *Pink Plastic House* a tiny journal.

**Sasha Smith** has just finished studying her undergraduate degree in English and Creative Writing, specialising in poetry. She is currently working on her poetry collection *Imitations of Dying* which delves into the female psyche and our experiences of the body and pain. She prefers to write using the confessional or lyric style, and also enjoy writing fiction.

**Ankh Spice** is a poet from New Zealand, obsessed with the sea. He is a survivor of various asylums, including a University where an English degree once happened despite himself. He writes because he has been unsuccessful hiding his lack of skin – so his poetry keeps breathing, even when it hurts, mostly exhaling in natural images.

**Leela Soma** was born in Madras/Chennai, India and now lives in Glasgow. Her poems and short stories have been published in a number of anthologies, publications. She has published two novels and two collections of poetry. She has served on the Scottish Writer's Centre Committee and is now in East Dunbartonshire Arts & Culture Committee. Some of her work reflects her dual heritage of India and Scotland. Twitter: @glasgowlee Website: leelasoma.wordpress.com

**Karen Steiger** Karen Steiger is the founder and sole contributor to *The Midlife Crisis Poet* ([www.themidlifecrisispoet.com](http://www.themidlifecrisispoet.com)) and has been

published in *The Pangolin Review*, *The Wells Street Journal*, and *Leading Edge Magazine*. Her work will appear in future editions of *Kaleidotrope* and *Arsenika*. She currently resides in Schaumburg with her husband, Matt, and two retired racing greyhounds, Giza and Horus.

**Katherine Stockton** is a Welsh playwright and poet, currently studying a MA in Scriptwriting at UEA after graduating from the University of Warwick. She has recently had a play produced in Norwich's historic Maddermarket Theatre and looks forward to being a published poet in the upcoming East Anglian anthology *Like The Sea I Think*. Katie has appeared in both Issues of *Black Bough* and was one of three Guest Readers for Issue 2.

**Jess Thayil** is working to complete a first collection of poems. Her poetry has featured in Magma Poetry, The Stinging Fly, Ink Sweat & Tears, Black Bough Poetry, AbstractMagazineTV, Potomac Review and Whale Road Review.

**Elise Triplett** is a writer working from Bowling Green, Ohio working on getting their first publication. They have an upcoming internship with *Mid-American Review*. They don't enjoy the beach, but they do like going to cat cafes.

**Thomas Tyrrell** has a PhD in English Literature and lives in Cardiff. A two-time winner of the Terry Hetherington poetry prize, he is published in *Spectral Realms*, *Picaron*, *The Lake*, *London Grip* and elsewhere. He blogs at [www.foolgrowswise.com](http://www.foolgrowswise.com).

**Lynn Valentine** writes between dog walks on the Black Isle in the Scottish Highlands. Her work has appeared in anthologies and online in places such as the Scottish Poetry Library blog and *Ink, Sweat and Tears*. She is a previous winner of the Glasgow Women's Library 'Dragon's Pen' award and has been placed in other competitions.

**Luci Virgo**—Lives Down Under, by the Blue Lake. Identifies as female, & is currently journeying to meet herself.

**Kandace Siobhan Walker** is a writer and visual artist. Her short film *Last Days of the Girl's Kingdom*, produced in collaboration with the ICA and DAZED, was aired on Channel 4's Random Acts. Her writing has appeared in *Quirk*, *The Good Journal* and *Obsidian*. She lives in Wales.

**Laura Wainwright** was born in Cardiff and lives in Newport, south Wales. She is author of a book of literary criticism, *New Territories in Modernism: Anglophone Welsh Writing 1939-1945* (University of Wales Press, 2018). She was shortlisted in the Bridport Prize poetry competition in 2013. Her poetry is published or forthcoming in *Black Bough Poetry*, *Wales Haiku Journal*, *Picaron Poetry* and *Burning House Press*. She is guest editor for *Black Bough* issue 2. Twitter: @wainwrightlj

**Richard Waring**—Richard has lived in Belfast all his life. He loves his city and like many who live there shows that love by constantly complaining about it. His first poem 'To Lie On White On Green' is published in the 2019 CAP anthology *Find*.

**K Weber** has recent written work in *Pink Plastic House* and *Memoir Mixtapes*. K's photography is featured in *Barren Magazine*. Her 4 self-published poetry books are free in PDF & audio formats. These and her full writing credits available at <http://kweberandherwords.wordpress.com>

**Lucy Whitehead** writes haiku and poetry. Her haiku have been published in various international journals and anthologies, including *Akitsu Quarterly*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Frogpond*, *hedgerow*, *Modern Haiku*, *Otata*, *The Heron's Nest*, *tinywords*, *Under the Basbo*, and *a hole in the light: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2018*. Her poetry has appeared in *Barren Magazine*, *Burning House Press*, *Twist in Time Literary Magazine*, and *Mookychick Magazine*. Her Twitter handle is @blueirispoetry.

**Glen Wilson** lives in Portadown. He has been widely published having work in *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Iota*, *The Paperclip*, amongst others. He won the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing in 2017, the Jonathan Swift Creative Writing Award in 2018 and The Trim Poetry competition in 2019. His first collection of poetry *An Experience on the Tongue* with *Doire Press* is out now. <https://glenwilsonpoetry.wordpress.com/> Twitter @glenhswilson <https://www.doirepress.com/bookstore/poetry/>

**Robin Wright** lives in Southern Indiana. Her work has appeared in *Panoply*, *Spank the Carp*, *Rue Scribe*, *Terror House Magazine*, and others. Two of her poems were published in *The University of Southern Indiana's 50th anniversary anthology*, *Time Present, Time Past*. In 2018 *Panoply* nominated one of her poems for a Pushcart Prize.

**James Young** is a poet living in The Mumbles, Wales. He does most of his writing in his beach hut at Rotherslade Bay. The sea his inspiration.

**Tim Youngs** is the author of the pamphlet, *Touching Distance* (*Five Leaves*, 2017) and co-editor with Sarah Jackson of the anthology, *In Transit: Poems of Travel* (*The Emma Press*, 2018). His poems have appeared in several print and online magazines.