Smithereens
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contents

Editorial

Idea for Persimmons 5  Tessa Berring
At Times I Am Not At All Astonished 6  Dylan Brennan
Sokushinbutsu 7  Abigail Morley
Wrists 8  Possession 9  Daragh Breen
Bird Movement Above the Viaduct, N71 10
Crow with Rabbit 11
Domesticity 12  Jona Xhepa
Ye vales and woods! fair scenes of happier hours 15  Robert Sheppard
angelica 16  Blythe Zarozinia Aimson
ladybower 17
an undesire to meet anew 18  Jimmy Cummins
In Pencil 19
Room Temperature 20  Lorraine Carey
Forbidden Morning 21  Aidan Semmens
Sonnet in Appreciation of the Comma 24  Órla Fay
A Petrol Pump Attendant Reflects on his Redundancy 25  Richard Ball
Smoke 26  James O’Sullivan
When all the animals are dead 27  Daniel Marshall
A Call to Hearts Still Moving 28  Anastasia Arellano
The Great and Sober West 29  Leo Dunsker
Aubade 30  Elizabeth McIntosh

31  Contributors

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Editorial

Welcome to Smithereens Literary Magazine

And welcome to Issue #2, which features another selection of poems that did more than catch the eye. The shape has changed every so slightly from Issue #1, the poets have changed entirely, but the poetics presented here remain steadfastly diverse, the voices various, each one seeking the readership it deserves.

Thank you for being one of those readers.

Kenneth Keating
Tessa Berring

Idea for Persimmons

To run downstairs
you know,

still drizzled
with sex or soap

to quarter persimmons
and start to chew.
At Times I Am Not At All Astonished

The woman mops the red speckled floor
A man locates a hair on his tongue

The neat edged lawn is covered in buds
A slice of lemon illuminates itself

The air is violet in the morning, aubergine at night
A fish with press on hands is unexpected

The trees are full of broken eggs and jackdaws
A house is a space full of fingerprints and breath

A plant on a shelf hides cracks along the wall
The way things fade is wilderness.
Dylan Brennan

Sokushinbutsu

Millet, soybeans and rice are gradually eliminated from your diet—replaced by cold berries and nuts, bark shavings from the nearby forest and then some tea—an infusion made from the leaves of the urushi, our beloved lacquer tree. Induced vomiting eliminates fats from the body as it lines itself with the heat of an embalming fluid. Dehydrated, puckered organs begin to shrink, as your skin becomes a poisonous leather, too vile even for maggots to touch.

Now sit yourself down alone to chant and ring your bell at regular intervals that lengthen until the energy fails you, the bell clunks once and drops. In a hundred days they will check in on you to see if self-mummification and sainthood have been achieved or, indeed, if putrefaction of the corpse has occurred. If the former, you will be worshipped as a holy relic. If the latter, you’ll be walled back up. There are other possibilities. For example, the cadaver of your brother is now a hatchery for geckos.
Abegail Morley

Wrist

I wasn’t in The White Hart downing Holsten,
waiting for the juke box to play our song over
the moan of voices; I wasn’t in the back bar laughing
off what you said, or crying in the loos, mascara lashes
screeching up and down as I told of your threats.
I was at home making peace with the toaster
you knifed at breakfast. When the call came, jam
oozed like a wound from my fingers to the phone
and I bled myself dry before I entered the ward.
I wasn’t where I thought when you were admitted.
The doctor had thick biceps, a stethoscope
like an amulet hung with a commanding air,
and you, freeing yourself from this world,
were curled, foetal-tight, pebble-eyed.
Possession
*Bombyx mori*

I am the moment we met in moth-grey light,
not the wind, the lane
or rain in your hair;
I am that second, that release of breath,
a single wing-beat.

I lose my skin to your touch
over and over, leave it on your fingers
in the middle of the night, step from its dust
while you sleep. Do you wake
to my soft goodbye?

I left four times in all, but at each
hovered like a baby’s mouth at suckling time,
all pout and neediness.
Twilight is made for parting.
Twilight made me like this.

Decades later I’m conjured in silk
and see you dusted off, washed clean, follow you
the full-length of Holborn High Street,
hit your reflection
in the evening-lit windows of Waterstones
with regretful fists.

I remember elastics, skipping-ropes, mulberry bushes,
my awkward teenage body
and pursue you to the till, watch the muscles
in your hands loosen change.
Watch how I am your single daydream in the rain.
Daragh Breen

Bird Movement Above the Viaduct, N71

We usually come here once a week to clear-up the wings and things of all those that failed to fly, their ill-conceived wings, their wing-conceived ills, their plastic bag and Sellotape contraptions, their chicken wire and bed sheet fallacies, all those boys and young men that did not want to become those men who spend their Februarys tramping around the fields that surround us, hunting a fox in the sleet, their lives measured in the years of these dog days, their savage need for death on a Sunday afternoon.

Sometimes, on a cold winter morning, the light grows strange, and above the Viaduct, a flurry of seagulls begins to snow upwards.
Crow with Rabbit

At the side of the road
the crow has undone the corset
of the rabbit’s fur,
the river of its movements
having been stalled, made stagnant.
Its pond-life pilfered,
the small meat of the heart removed
as the crow shuffles away in his armour.

On the seashore
Mr. Punch hunts for the purse
of Judy’s heart as she lies sleeping
on the shelf of the booth.
The cold ocean is hushed to a
drowned calm as he makes away
with her stolen dowry, hunched in
his out-of-season loneliness.
Jona Xhepa

Domesticity

selfsame arranged
a man line
lines of man
men who laugh at walls
to cross and uncross a gaze
incipient brick
to reach each whistle
and altercations by wine bottles
tables overturned
cradles bird-unhorned

buttered rolls in the morning
ability outweighing
syncretic revelations
bits of domesticity piled into rain
heart pouring itself into other cavities

unlearned the memories savages
by results of flight
just or unjust each surprise
mustering each desire
* 
understandably unadorned
hen’s death astride the mesh

oral adumbrated dutifully
spliced dragging of the cow
arousing each stomach fold
desire goes beyond
a command again

unfolding folds of thunderstones
the hands
make only mounds
moments unrelated to the other
and sentences in front of words

lover of sounds
the table
held back
by mathematical
torrent
* 

clutching a pantomime uniform
moon cell unwrapping mounds
piles wound in training

so much sleep stains the bed
handy rise to grip the walls
Ye vales and woods! fair scenes of happier hours

Uplands and Downlands, those scenes of Cowboys
and Indians enacted behind fishbox barricades
in Father’s waistcoat and Mother’s high heels,
and gulls’ feathers, and beads, you bore and saw them all:

my first stirrings amid the furze, the stolen kiss
by the stile, you sniffing my stiffie like a dog: but
now you’re Dead! Or Alive! beyond the high horizon,
bitter, withered, incontinent on the Continent!

Do you remember that 78, Julie London’s Cry Me a River
echoing into crackly silence, like memory erasing its trace
of remembrance, empty as the urn that shall spill your ashes
upon the dark earth of a tannoid Tuscan vineyard,
to fructify the richest vintage that, in the 1970s,
we’d have sniffed once and poured down the sink?
Blythe Zarozinia Aimson

angelica
  angelica archangelica

archangelica has umbelliferous flowers
growing in moist shady situations

the fruit are angular
  oblong
  cremocarps
and cultivated for confectionary and distillation
it can also be used for exorcisms
by burning the dried leaves

being sudorific it stimulates
perspiration and what does all this
  seeing and knowing add up to

the essential oil containing phellandrene
and furocaumarin found in the roots
is used to flavour strega bitters gin

i have already sweated out
all the gin i’ve ever drunk
sobriety suits me better

and what does this add up to

one night all i ate for dinner was
candied angelica and cubes of marzipan

this is all oblong
and doesn’t add up
ladybower

my phone keeps sending me FLOOD ALERTS
    inaudible notifications appearing next to your texts

you sent me another house listing
in Ashopton, 1945

as though we could live in chorus    coeternal
under the surface
in a place where
    exposed church towers is drought
    top water level reservoir is drowning

and the prelude to drowning is being unable to call for help

you remove your shoes in preparation but
i am too scared of reaching breath-hold break point
i cannot live underwater    and refuse
to sink unconsciously to cobbled lanes
which would be
    quick and unspectacular

would rather keep loud bells in quiet water
figmental    than be engulfed by you

than look at house listings in a village
that doesn’t exist anhydrous    anymore

am i in danger of flooding    over    still
Jimmy Cummins

an undesire to meet anew

i return to you
in the absence of knowledge
and everything.
‘in truth’
as left hung
mid variation
the vibration of voice
timely felt.
The feed
scattered among the external stimuli
enroute
we lie
turned apart
upon the dawn
the whisp wished and returned
the new boundless
insistent of a shared state.
In pencil

and in that moment
we danced and howled
from inside the voice
we configured the space
to meet our needs

spoke mirrors
to be unveiled
turn
turn
turn
i can hear the formation of wind and history
laid among the tracks
holding four mirrors accountable
we brought them back
and fed them
clothed them
plied them with wine and beer

as we laughed
and danced
and spoke
and sang songs
of our lives
the world outside ended
and we had not noticed
we passed beyond
each pane of reality
the songs continued into chants
and into light

the night fell

the trees on the horizon were no more
mere stumps
cutting blocks
violent visions fly over head

in the morning there was silence
bearing north by north west
we sat and watched the intensity
of our new friendship
Room Temperature

I drank rosé from a glass,
polished with a tea towel
whose ten year old threads
mimicked my own unravelling,
sipped the warm wine
on a kitchen chair
in the wrong place.

Its chill lost, seven hours
in transit. I drove myself home,
oblivious to country roads and signs,
ditches laden with golden gorse
and the grey fade of motorways.
It all blurred into a nothing
of tears and intrusive sunshine.

I blew into smoothed out tissues,
two ply and utterly useless,
sponging my sadness, my shock
and as we clocked up more miles,
home loomed closer.
The bottle lay in my bag like teenage loot,
until I rooted for photos, dug them out.

Notes and receipts soaked
up the journey’s chill.
I couldn’t cry when I saw my sister,
still and cold in a satin lined box,
satin with a blue-white tinge.
The sides puckered
with stiff little pleats,
like a curtain from a pane,
our bond neatly stitched
to the sanctuary of memory.
Forbidden Morning

Words from my mother’s last weeks

I

for days after day
from Wednesday through afterloonish
I cline the meckavercally
swiffle and wishy cline and cline

feathermost blufle-flargent
blastle fothergit to the high, high
and then
blern or burble
cly and cly to
did it and got
gliffle the blufle-furger
and I so proun of yourself
as you may imagine

alvin to the felginstagle
trine and trine
cly and cly
cline in drene-tine
all in drene

days in Dayswater
blifflespurgen to the albenmeissen
droffe muster glingenmester
can you?

glorgle-musten
can you? can you?
I could sprifflermerstenhangenshunk
and so
to be honest with you
he glindle wandle handle bindle lendle
and so glindermandel metalfellickly
oh the rattle-poppenen, can you?

der meistersinger and some tessellin
smurile-heissichheit
but may and may not
keep clinin in drine
can you?
get you?
can you?
oh smelly spelly
some balderridge flashipus, yes?

II

bad tongue collapses klimmer-klammer till November
just wait till your father gets hope
she’ll want to tessel the grave vondiheap
till the cowcomes
as courting of parrents tellifies
language dommage jessifies in brain
as well you know

III

I am too old
tomorrow
I might be gone

I may
tomorrow

how is possible
for a person to forget
their dearest names?

it should be time
for finish

I feel
I often feel

if someone
would be so kind
Órla Fay

Sonnet in Appreciation of the Comma

Amid the sweeping of the room began
the kindling of composition finished
in the drive and angst to be done with it,
in having the work complete, racing on
to the washing of the floor and those poems
that called to be written – one of the sea,
one about diving and pearls from oceans,
another of a door, its lock, and key –

The comma, of course, made me pause and sit,
to see the dead geranium petals
I brushed towards a centre of ground fit,
to recognise underfoot the crackles
sounded the same as autumn leaves scattered,
that without a taken breath,

what mattered?
Richard Ball

A Petrol Pump Attendant Reflects on his Redundancy

I am no more a painter
Than I am
A teacher
A writer
A lover
A maker of plays
Counter of days
A card packer-into-boxes on a night time assembly line
A linen porter
A nail bar and hammer man
I am
A dogsbody without a dog
No bark
Stark
Not particularly singular angular
A little soft at the edges
Not so much gambler
As hedger
This is my ledger
Paper
Thin
Smoke

There is smoke
in the air,
it signals life—
you can smell them,
families gathered
in their terraces,
three bent
over some board,
the others
strewn across leather,
lower backs
growing numb
on the floor.
The smoke is welcome,
it warms the cold,
dancing before
luminous blue,
fading
to a darker shade
as the sky
gives up the odd wink.
There are no birds
or barks
or muffled fumes—
this world is still
now, settled, calm.
Daniel Marshall

When all the animals are dead

Children leafing through yellowed photographs of animals—long deceased... long past extinct & long out the shot of human memory though we feel them bustle under our skin. The common sight of cattle | domestic pets | trees heavy with the throated-body of birds—forgotten | only descriptive remains | analogy—error. This is a vegan culture by necessity not choice. Nutritionists & scientists read historical reports to manufacture palatable meat substitutes. Food lost its decadence | celebrity chefs a laughing stock—food got its reasons back. Breakthroughs | the perennial eureka we banked on remain common if not increased in frequency.

Most diseases cured | life span lengthened | work ethic improved | value altered | meaning loud—less taken for granted | a sense of pride as sapiens finally got bright with themselves. Total extinction taught us to improve in step with the long gambit of improvisation—catastrophe sadly paved the way. It took decades | close to a century for people to stop questioning if the trade-off was worth millennia of mistakes. No one questions anymore: they look outside | in the face of their neighbor the stranger. All the protests | warnings | the bullshit—nothing! Only after the animals died in droves & the stink of carcasses | unavoidable—worried we were next in line (fate taking top of the food chain)

we pulled our socks up—slow amelioration began.

Desperate times: desperate measures. The heavy shame. Shock.
Anastasia Arellano

A Call to Hearts Still Moving

In darkness,

(when nightfall and empty beds cast shadows
upon dismal words and broken promises)

Love stands to guide the lost,
calling out to hearts still moving.
Leo Dunsker

The Great and Sober West

definition of embarrassment
or its opposite taking hold
sometimes it leaves you, fast as cars
you only said you didn’t try
but in the giving one cannot
“it never entered my mind”
Elizabeth McIntosh

Aubade

Shut the swollen door;
step into a pool of light,
disturbing the gulls
on the neighboring lawn.

They scatter like dust,
swept up, swirling
in cool sky until
at last they settle,
white specks in vibrant green,
the afterimage of pain.
Contributors

Blythe Zarozinia Aimson is a poet from the Peak District, currently studying for an MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. Their poetry uses the lyric voice to explore queerness, the uncanny, and natural phenomena, and at present they are exploring the language and significance of herbalism and florigraphy. Their work can be found in Volta: An Obscurity of Poets, Occulum Journal, and HVTN.

Anastasia Arellano is originally from California but now lives in Dublin, Ireland with her wife. She is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, where she completed her Master’s in Creative Writing. She’s had a short story published in the online journal, McStorytellers. She has recently completed her first YA novel. When she’s not writing, she’s busy cooking, plastering her bedroom walls in elaborate storyboards, or seeking inspiration from the Irish landscape. You can follow her on Instagram: latingurl26

Richard Ball’s story ‘The Chamber Pot’ was awarded second place in the Francis MacManus Short Story Competition 2014 and Couplings, a selection of his dramatic works, was staged in the Solstice Theatre in 2015. Recent work includes the non-fiction prose ‘Rathfarnham to Janeville: In the Poet’s Footsteps’, published in A Bittern Cry: In honour of Francis Ledwidge (2017), edited by Tom French.

Tessa Berring is based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her work has been published in a number of online and print journals. These include Datableedzine, Adjacent Pineapple, The Rialto, and Gutter Magazine. She also has a chapbook, Cut Glass and No Flowers, published by Dancing Girl Press.

Daragh Breen’s most recent collection is What the Wolf Heard (Shearsman Books, 2016). His chapbook The Lighthouses is published by Smithereens Press. His poetry has appeared extensively in Irish literary journals, and more recently in Blackbox Manifold, Tears in the Fence, and Shearsman magazine.
Dylan Brennan is currently based in Mexico City, Dylan writes poetry and prose. His most recent publication is GUADALUPE & other hallucinations (The Dreadful Press, 2017), a short collection of prose chronicles accompanied by linocut prints made by Belfast-based artist Jonathan Brennan. His debut poetry collection, Blood Oranges, was published by The Dreadful Press in 2014 and was awarded the Patrick Kavanagh Award runner-up prize. In 2014 he published Atoll (Smithereens Press), a free e-chapbook of twelve poems. In 2016 he co-edited Rethinking Juan Rulfo’s Creative World: Prose, Photography, Film with Prof. Nuala Finnegan (UCC), a volume of academic essays on the work of Mexican writer/photographer Juan Rulfo. He contributes regularly, in English and Spanish, to online literary site Portal de Letras (Mexico). He has been invited to read at festivals in Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, Italy, Ireland and USA and has twice been recipient of a Culture Ireland Travel Grant.

Lorraine Carey is a poet and artist from Donegal. Her poetry has been widely published in The Honest Ulsterman, Prole, Live Encounters, Atrium, Poethead, The Blue Nib and in several anthologies. In 2017 she was a runner up in the Trocaire / Poetry Ireland Poetry Competition and The Blue Nib Chapbook Competition. Her first collection, From Doll House Windows is published by Revival Press. She has poems forthcoming in Poetry Ireland Review and The Curlew.

Jimmy Cummins used to publish under the name James Cummins, which he always felt was the fancy version of his name. Despite this everyone knew him as Jimmy. The poems are the same. He is now based in London.

Leo Dunsker is a second-year Ph.D. student in English at UC Berkeley. He received his B.A. from Trinity College Dublin, where he edited Icarus Magazine (volume 67). His poetry and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in Foundlings and 3AM Magazine.

Órla Fay is the editor of Boyne Berries since issue 16. Recently her work has appeared in Honest Ulsterman, Crannóg, Skylight 47, Quarryman, Cyphers, Poethead and is forthcoming in Poetry Ireland Review. Her poem “North” has been long listed in the OTE New Writer of the Year Competition, 2018. She has just completed the MA in Digital Arts and Humanities at UCC for which she made http://digitalagepoetry.com. She blogs at http://orlafay.blogspot.ie
Daniel Marshall feeds & shelters tourists on the Island of Jeju. He write poems while he cleans toilets & hoovers. No other way for it. He’s had poems published at Poethead, ContemporaryHaibunOnline, The High Window, Isacoustic The Wagon Magazine, elsewhere & always grateful. He has poems forthcoming at Riggwelter Press & Picaroon Poetry. His first chapbook, a collaboration with Bob Okaji, is out October from Dink Press. His website is danielpaulmarshall.com.

Elizabeth McIntosh is a writer from Southern California. She holds a Masters in Irish Writing from Trinity College, Dublin. Her work has been featured in HCE Review and The Wildean.

Abegail Morley’s fourth collection, The Skin Diary is published by Nine Arches Press (2016). Her debut collection, How to Pour Madness into a Teacup (2010) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize Best First Collection. She has two pamphlets published by Indigo Dreams and is co-editor of Against the Grain Press and editor of The Poetry Shed.

James O’Sullivan (@jamescosullivan) has been published in numerous literary journals and anthologies, including The SHOp, Southword, Cyphers, Crannóg, and Revival. James includes third-place in the Gregory O’Donoghue International Poetry Prize 2016 among his honours. James, who lectures at University College Cork, is the Founding Editor of New Binary Press. Further information on his work can be found at josullivan.org.

Aidan Semmens is a freelance journalist based in eastern England, editor of the online magazine Molly Bloom, and author of four poetry collections: A Stone Dog (Shearsman Books 2011), The Book of Isaac (Parlor Press / Free Verse 2013), Uncertain Measures (Shearsman 2014) and Life Has Become More Cheerful (Shearsman 2017).

Robert Sheppard’s next book will be Hap: Understudies of Thomas Wyatt’s Petrarch from Knives Forks and Spoons. This is part of a project, ‘The English Strain’, of which the versions of his fellow-Sussex poet Charlotte Smith form a later part. Petrarch 3 is available from Crater. History or Sleep, Sheppard’s selected poems is available from Shearsman Books, who also are to publish an edited volume on his poetry and other writings. He lives in Liverpool, which voted Remain.

Jona Xhepa Based in Ireland for a number of years, Jona writes mostly short stories and longer fiction, and has curated a number of cabaret nights in Dublin. She is currently working on a longer piece dealing with trees, and writing a music album.