



CONVERSATION
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EDITORIAL

If we were to be as bold as brass and as cocky as hell, we might venture to concoct a definition of poetry. Bound by a language's laws of signifier and signified (the one relationship a writer cannot escape without becoming something other than a writer) we must admit that poetry is distinct from prose. It is also distinct from the song lyric and the shopping list. So what is it, exactly?

Happily the answer is simple, providing that the artist can resist the urge to appear clever at all times. Poetry is contrived language. Baudelaire defended the inversion at the end of a line – such as William Blake's ye olde 'stained the water clear' as opposed to the hard and modern 'stained the clear water' – on account of poetry's need to be different to prose in order to be poetry; its need for gimmicks and contrivance, for its own bizarre landscapes over which its wheels can go. We might balk from this particular device now, but there are an astonishing number of alternative tricks today's poets use.

The craft of poetry is not a breaking of rules, but an adherence to different ones; these rules are not arbitrary in good poetry, but they are not always laid out before the game begins. The pleasure of editing a poetry publication like CPQ is in discovering not how each individual uses their language of choice, but how they create their own language out of the bag of building blocks available. The craft is not always in the choice of word (the mot juste as indicator of genius) but in the choice of relationships between words, and the construction of a world in which Anick Roschi's orchid can languish the day.

Christopher Hobday

ANICK ROSCHI

Homage to Aung San Suu Kyi :

ORCHID

At the seat of the Kings
An orchid
Dances its night

In the street the voices
Of the cuckoo of the crane
And the peacock
Are tinkling

Charged with emotion
The harp disguises
The goat, the cow, the horse
And the elephant

At the bestiary of the Kings
An orchid
Languishes the day

GEORGE MOORE

THE INEFFABLE

It is what cannot be expressed
but that wants most to be spoken,
the word you cannot say to comfort
someone who is dying, the word
love, for some, who find it rather
clichéd, used up by television
soaps, by the comics, by the God
industry. It is the absence of a true
silence, and the names we give it:
hatred, fear, remorse, redemption.
We see it in the news footage,
anything we love can be corrupted,
even a word. The silence was once
the contradiction, no voice, no
chance to make a people heard.
Now silence screams the names
that take on flesh and bone
and cannot be burnt or buried.
Silence is now a paradox of cities,
a voice that does not form to words
but sings out in blood and bone.

WIRNDZEREM G. BARFEE

HE VISITS MY FIREPLACE

Captive in pens of patriarchs and chameleons, here now I am
Freed by the mat on the streets of shadows and dim lamps
Where on my doorstep stall,
I'm your fruit of irresistible passions,
Veiled bundle of joy that sits waiting for your furtive feet.

You, shade in the anonymous file of buyers
You have seen the dim lamp on my door,
And the moth flies to my illuminated globe searching promises;
I'll take you in my palm and fold you up,
What warmth, what new incarcerations will you live?

What did you come searching after? Warm baths?
Do you recognize these eyes, these breasts?
Are you saved by the warmth of my darkness?
Don't you recognize these hands, these hips?
My husband, these hills, these valleys, these plains
Don't they re-carve the topography of your past pastime?

Dip your body into the sources of my rivers
Dip your fingers into the pots of my broth-and tell-
Don't you remember the taste of my treat?
What warmth do you feel around the stones of your rejected hearth?

You've come crawling home, a lizard safe
In the in the interstices of my breast and hips;
I, helot and odalisque of your seraglio,
Whom you lapidated fixed, a still intaglio
Minted on the heels of your man-boots

Tonight I levitate, leviathan from deep and heavy seas.
Will I, with my body, like python mangle my prey?
Or will I, with my jaws, like shark, maim mine?
Or will I, with my teats, like whale, suckle him?

Husband, night has brought you to my stall, to my hearth.
What would you want, me to parcel for you at dawn
When my veil would've fallen with the night's smoke?
What will our children ask when they learn of the offerer of these gifts?

SITUATIONS OF ALCHEMY

(Or the Products of Love)

And time was watching us
As I curled, a whorl of accrued love,
A very cherished foetal clock
Ticking, kicking softly, cuddled – marsupial –
In the cage of your left rib bone un-envious of birth;
Only waiting to be borne, a cherished,
Fetished albatross around your tireless sac of love.

Because of the music of pillow-whispers
Murmured, sighed, those many nights
About gods' passion for ribs in times of solitude;
You let my fertile saliva lick, many such times,
Around the bone-bars of this cosy refuge;
While you tenderly tickled the tendrils
Of our umbilical cord with your sun-song lullaby.

Because of more, you sang me rivers of love-songs,
As two sole obsessions, like sorcery, possessed you:
I and time intertwined in you, cosmic cradles,
Exquisitely crafted organic watches watching you-
And they have become one sumptuous glass iris,
Each, a delirious mirror on eyes of desire,
Their hands my fingers caressing mother-bones
Turning time in this prison of choice, of love,
Into wombs of poetic passions and painting wider
Our dot in the heart of this circle.

PATRICK GREEN

LEFT BEHIND

No visible scars
or aftermath condition,
only a chemical diagonal
boat caught on a wave.

Feed the blood cycle
week in nurse week out.
A sad smile understanding,
sails pushing under.

Colourful sweets arranged,
look back they've turned grey.
Quack draining bath water
safety oars are lost.

Fill out the doodle form
and insert living advice.
Only a mind blip,
the storm is now calm.

Easy reality remembrance day.
Small crash relapse prepared polar bear needle.
Land and the sea front,
a view from the well cliffs.

GARY STUDLEY

WHERE I KNEW

It is held in the plain of grey matter
beyond my salt and pepper scrub,
more than memory.

Afternoons at the junction
of fence-lines between
us,
Jack's
and 44.
Behind the corner oak,
sunk to moss and root
beneath the tyre swing
pushed absently by heel and toe,
shadow grass cooled my face
as pauses stretched to stop

and hover.

The World hummed through my chest,
cogs and core
harking back
clocking forward.
Everything going with
or without me -
moving on.

APRIL A.

THE VOICE OF DESPAIR

Triangles of half-open doors
Reveal all the truth that is hidden:
Just condoms and cans on the floor,
Black papers with verses, forbidden -
Unfinished remakes of the song,
Deprived of the right to speak loud
Of wicked intentions gone wrong -
Erasers have muffled the shout.

The only illusion-proof mind -
A poet, the voice of despair,
Sincere, the one of this kind
Throws verses far into the air
Right there, in a dirty old flat
Among once great talents, now rotten.
They all have deserved more than that,
But even their names are forgotten.

EVERY SINGLE EVENING'S PLOT

I closed the door of my dirty old flat,
I went outside for a short evening stroll.
I bought some cheap hooch and a condom instead.
I'd only arrived when I heard a phone call.
It was so persistent, so deafening loud.
Who failed to forget me? I wanted to know.
I took a deep breath for a desperate shout,
Picked up the receiver: "Hello! Hello?"
Just silence. An error? Wrong number? Or what?
A quick thought of you. Stupid me! Would you care?
I started to feel all the spirits I'd bought
Dissolve in my blood, neutralizing despair.
In less than an hour my neighbours arrived
And asked me for something they needed. Okay.
I gave them a condom and bade them hot night -
I wouldn't have sex for some number more days.
I spent the next hour listening to moans,
But envy and anger were still neutralized.
I'd made through the day, and I'd done it alone.
The neighbours calmed down. I closed my eyes.

NANCY CHARLEY

ORIENTATION

I

Bringing me to rock
its locked-in stories

I climb
breath resonating
with swishing grass whispers
crickets chitter

myriad creatures dart
from footfall
flatten and rise

At an outcrop I pause

let fingertips frame
pattern and edge feel firmness
find focus

II

rock
ambiguous name

we chisel meanings
chalk, sandstone

cement semantic connections
igneous, glacial
granite

state properties
sedimentary, permeable

hint at histories
limestone, marble
slate

gauge usefulness
metamorphic

pressure change

III

preferring anthropomorphism

strong, silent sentry
resolute protector
ancient secret-keeper
unchanging custodian

ignoring wind, wave and rain's erosion
human's destruction

believing in firm foundations

SIGNS

There is no sustenance in nature:
I pace with sea-shore's pound and ebb,
footprints puddling, disappearing,
stride through sun-shaft dappled trees
dewdrops mottling canvas shoes,
watch swallows nest, migrate,
poppies flourish, fade,
seed, grain, days, seasons.
Lost - so insignificant.

Give me applause, cheers, hugs, a gentle
push forward, conviction
that the path I've chosen
is, for me, the right direction.

COLIN DARDIS

THE WORLD IS A FLOWER AND THE MIND IS THE WEED

Hang the concrete jungle:
there's enough wilderness in my head
with the vines of insanity
choking around each flower;
a madman in the undergrowth
harvesting the rainforest from within

M.V. MONTGOMERY

**ST. CHRISTINA THE ASTONISHING
1150-1224**

I.

Hey, ho, and up she rises,
not too dour to levitate,
back from heaven and hell
she said, before donning
her suit of skin again.

Poor Christina, orphaned
at three, and dead so young
at twenty-one. Astonishing
Christina, who performed
a miraculous encore.

She told the priest she'd been
called back to pray for others,
lead a second life on earth,
while her corpse descended
from the church ceiling.

And yet she remained alone,
a true agoraphobe, squeezing
herself into an oven to hide,
or fleeing to the tops of trees.
Among all saints, a Garbo.

Fifty years later, she was
returned to the ground. She
rests there still, at Saint-Trond.

II.

It's common enough to riff on Christina's name,
or to write a poem wryly celebrating her miracles.
I have one in the Recycle Bin at the moment: it's a bit
like "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite."

Of all saints' lives, hers is said to be the only one
not to be taken as a pattern to follow. Repressed, scorned,
often socially disruptive, she resembles a Pythia
or a *sadhu* rather than a tamable saint.

It's not difficult to explain her return from the dead.
Possibly epileptic, she experienced a cataleptic seizure.
Then at the requiem, floated to the ceiling: archetypal
description of an out-of-body experience.

There, until she was called down by the priest, she
perched like a bird on the church rafters. Probably a
copyist's conflation of another account of climbing
a tree, with an obvious bird association.

Her mission was widely understood: to share sinners'
punishments on earth in order to lessen their sufferings
in Purgatory. By all accounts, she faced up to the task.
For this, she deserves to be called *Blessed*.

It meant self-imposed tortures like rolling in fire and
near-drowning. Suffering freezing water, dogs, thorns,
and prolonged isolation. Her vision of Purgatory
demanded an almost superhuman sin-eater.

One wonders at the *contrapassi*: did she associate fire with lust, ravenous dogs with gluttony, frost with benign neglect? So many sins of her time were sins of luxury (associated with food, or consumption), hence expiated only through the body.

There are stories of her interrupting a rich man's feast, or hearing the confession of the epicurean Count Louis and afterwards suffering fire and ice. As for her ability to "smell" sin: well, not so remarkable.

Yet she was no pinched-nose nun. Or misanthrope, which is out of character. There must be periods in every spiritual life when a retreat from suffering becomes almost a matter of self-preservation.

At such times, she might have crawled into a cupboard to avoid others. Or run into the streets, or leaped into the Meuse. She moved place to place, slept on rocks. An ascetic's teaching: *Do as I do, or repent*.

Call her schizophrenic, masochistic, an agoraphobe: patron of therapists. Or holy, compassionate, a mystic: *Christina Mirabilis*. Only when the veil lifts can we glimpse how astonishing she may have been.

LECTURE ON THE ANIMA

We had marched on and taken a beachhead at the sea, blue.
At last, it was time for an immersion. Time to shed my
soldier's uniform and take the plunge! Just below the surface,
a school of yellow fish passed. Then a diver's lost bell-jar
of a helmet, half-buried in sand. I swam out deeper,
past the point where a safe return seemed likely. All at once,
my vision began to clear. I sensed that I must be in holy water.
I could see all the way down, to a sunken shrine of a lost
Minoan goddess. That expression carved in white marble—
it might have been a smile or a sneer. Her gaze was gold.
Unconsciously, I kicked my legs and swam even deeper.
I could just touch a trident that flashed in a half-closed hand.

MARTIN BURKE

XXXV: DANTE'S ANTWERP

If I saw them as living
I saw them as not living;
Orchestra & choir
A semblance of themselves;
Bone kettle-drums & thin bone flutes,
 (or something that passed for them)
A hollow tympani in weird tuning;
And I thought: the doubting, the damned,
Know only the passive music of time;
Not that I considered myself far from them
For even if they were dead
They were still my brothers;
Who did not sing but that I sang
In the uneven tempo of a dirge.
Brothers,
I wanted to call out,
Brothers, out of what state then into what state
Do you now struggle?
Is history stirring the dregs of a pot
Left too long in the fire?
But there was no reply,
No excuse of theirs or mine.
I also choose the silence of this people.
I also have been coward to my kind.

PAVEL BARAKHVOSTOV

LATVIAN HAIKU

Dusk in a wheat field
road seems interminable
heads for the future

Flowers of summer
smell the sweetness of blooming
temporary kings

Outskirts of Riga
Baltic waves caress the shore
They have seen a lot

Deserted castle
ruined walls dream of the past
the glory has gone

YAHIA LABABIDI

AFTERTHOUGHT

and, when we pass, are we caught
in the pockets of afterlife
- the sorted and unsorted -

or, do we continue slipping
through a fault in the lining
through the gaps in space?

SHUTTERED WINDOWS

To speak of the smell and feel
of books, the erotics of the text,
has begun to sound perverse

One by one, the old places of worship
churches, bookstores, Nature herself
become quaint and are vacated

In their stead a gleaming, ambitious screen
part shuttered window, part distorting mirror
full of wandering, restless spirits

Like so many ghosts in limbo -
free of the tyranny of bodies,
yet aching for their phantom limbs.

CONTRIBUTORS

Anick Roschi has the dual nationality Swiss and French. After secondary studies started in France, he registered at the school of *Engineer de Genève* and obtained a diploma in applied physics. Leaving Paris for voyages in several Europe countries, the Middle East and North Africa, on his return he undertook sociocultural work at the Genevese Institute of Social Studies and worked for many years for the children of the peripheral districts of the city. Parallel to his professional investment, he has presented his poetry at several international contests winning first prize at Fiele Filiochta in Ireland. His poems have been published in several anthologies in Belgium, Spain and Italy.

George Moore has just returned from an artist residency in Portugal, where he was working with an Austrian painter, Helga Elbl, on a book collaboration. This follows on from a showing of poetry and concept art with the French Canadian artist, Mireille Perron, at Can Serrat, Spain, in 2007; and another with the Scandinavian textile artist, Hrafnhildur Sigurðardóttir, for an exhibition in Iceland next year. The Icelandic collaboration is now turning into a major project on the engagement of art with the question of global climatic change. The working title is “Fish Eye,” and he hopes to complete much of it on a working residency in Italy this next year. He has also published poetry with *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Poetry*, *North American Review*, *Orion*, *Colorado Review*, *Nimrod*, *Meridian*, *Chelsea*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Chariton Review*, as well as recently in journals in France, Spain, Australia, Canada, Ireland, England and Iceland. He has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize four times, and in 2007 was a finalist for the Richard Snyder Memorial Prize, from Ashland Poetry Press. Manuscripts have also been finalists for The National Poetry Series, The Brittingham Poetry Award, and the Anhinga Poetry Prize. His most recent collections are *Head-hunting* (Edwin Mellen, 2002), and an e-Book, *All Night Card Game in the Back Room of Time* (Pulpbits, 2007). He teaches literature and writing with the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Wirndzerem G. Barfee was born on August 1, 1975 in Kumbo, Bui Divi-

sion, North West Province of Cameroon. He read Mass Communication at the University of Jos, Nigeria, holds a BA in Linguistics and MA in American Literature from the University of Yaoundé I where he is currently doing his pre-doctoral DEA with critical interests in eco-criticism and feminism. A two-time participant of the British Council/Lancaster University CROSSING BORDERS pan-African creative writing program (2004/2006), he had earlier been a selected participant in the BBC /BRITISH COUNCIL Environmental Writing Workshop in 1996. He recently, with a national grant, published a poetry collection, *Bird of the Oracular Verb* (Iroko Publishers, 2008) and is awaiting in July 2009, the publication of his short story, 'Jury of the Corrupt', which has been included in the *Anthology of Anglophone Cameroonian Short Stories* (CCCPress, UK).

Patrick Green is a young poet originally from Manchester. He currently works in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in a number of areas alongside poetry including painting, photography, and music. His poems are varied in subject matter. Flitting from issues of mental health to religion, and observational poetry.

Gary Studley, founder of CornerStone Writers, has been published many times online and in hard copy. Working in the South of England, he performs on-the-spot improvisations and new work, as well as old favourites from the two collections, *Stubborn Mule Orchestra* and *Between The Lines*.

As an active member of the local live-lit community, Gary has recently led a number of community writing events including work-shopping and co-ordinating a children's poetry collection with the pupils of fifteen Kent schools, to be published this winter, and a cross-age and community writing project called *Dots&Dashes*. Alongside writing and performing colleagues, Luigi Marchini and Christopher Hobday, Gary runs workshops, open mics and guest launches at their monthly poetry evenings at Orange Street Music Club in Canterbury. His current long term project is as a member of the Canterbury Festival's Laureate Squad, promoting and facilitating live-lit events like Pavement Poems, The Little Blue Hut, Write on Time and the Canterbury Tells scheme. For more about his work, performances or the projects above, contact him on gary.studley@hotmail.com

April A.: “If I am to describe my life story in several words, I usually give a quote of my own:

I’m a statue that just seems broken,
I’m the truth that’s still unspoken,
I’m an arrow of love... What’s love? - You’ve never known...
I’m your fear, so deeply hidden,
I’m the myth you don’t believe in,
And you never will - you cannot understand a word.

And, I guess, this side of me is revealed mostly in my works, written with the purpose to tell people more about me and my life experience, to share and spread my ideas and thoughts, to help people with my creativity somehow, showing them that they are not alone.

I’ve been writing for almost five years now. But it took me five years to become not only a poet, but a songwriter, mostly a lyricist. And I want my future to be connected with this all somehow, as there is nothing better than to do what you truly love to do.”

Nancy Charley loves the challenge and joy of poetry-writing. She has recently diversified into play-wrighting and was pleased recently to have her first short play stage-read and critiqued in Cambridge.

Colin Dardis is a writer and artist based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He helps run a monthly open mic poetry night called *Make Yourself Heard*, and edits a small poetry journal called *Speech Therapy*.

M.V. Montgomery: *Joshu Holds a Press Conference*, a pamphlet of M.V. Montgomery’s historical poems, is a forthcoming publication of The Conversation Paperpress. His first full-length book of poems, *Strange Conveyances*, will be published in 2010 by Plain View Press.

Martin Burke was born in Ireland and now lives in Belgium. His publications include *The Other Life* (FootHills Publishing, USA), *The Weave That Binds Us* (Inner Circle Publishing, USA), *Into History* (Arabesques Editions,

Algeria/USA), *Psalms* (Default press, Ireland), *Kings (five poems for the theatre)* (World Audience Publishers, USA), *The Easter Ballad* (Wordsonthestreet Press, Ireland), *Jerusalem* (Mighty Erudite Press, UK), *Solstice Song* (Lapwing Press, UK), *Ithaca* (Lapwing Press UK) and the forthcoming *Beowulf Revisited* (Cervena Barva Press, N.Y.) and *Exiles & Redemptions* (Utter Press, Ireland). He has also produced a number of e-books and has had plays produced and published in the USA and Belgium.

“Burke is the eloquent essayist of the sublime” *Projected Letters*

“His style is far ahead in terms of imaginative inventiveness:.... startling, original work” *Kiosque Review*

Pavel Barakhvostov is a young poet from Minsk, Belarus whose poems have been published in the leading magazines of Belarus: “Polymia” and “Maladosc”, this year English verse in “Barnwood International Poetry Magazine” (Seattle).

Yahia Lababidi is author of ‘Signposts to Elsewhere’, selected for Book of the Year in the UK and US (in 2008 and 2007, respectively, by The Independent and The Sun Sentinel). To date, *Signposts* has been translated into Arabic, with selections also available in Slovak. Yahia is the only contemporary Arab writer to be included in the acclaimed encyclopedia of “The World’s Great Aphorists” by James Geary (Bloomsbury, 2007), with poetry and prose having appeared in anthologies and publications throughout the UK, US, as well as the Middle East.

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