



The Crank

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Set in Goudy Old Style.

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the CRANK.

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MATT BRYDEN

Sara

She can't coat her nails to stop biting them
because she washes her hands to pray.

Sweden via Eritrea; fingers dappled
as if the pigment were stripped by acid.

Of any animal: a bird
winging its way to the Pole.

Lines closed, the tracks are scoured
for damage and storm debris by a proving train.

It goes by tooth and silk and touch,
a searchlight scanning moth-dark rails.

Proving train: one which goes ahead and clears debris to make the line navigable after a storm.

Corsair

I can taste silver in bright champagne
rust in the scarring that spans my hand

blue in a sparkler that holds to its light
juice on a slip that is clean to the eye

and mean to see it through.

This is the soak of brandy-buttered spoons
blade of the knife in the cream tea noon

windows that break on the tumbling sea -
salt scars the views and the doors come free

and nobody knows what they'll do.

CHRIS BULLARD

Jonah

The best escape route from being a prophet
is stealing a car and high-tailing it into the desert.
Off a hairpin in the High Sierra I'm halfway
to getting normal fast. With banknotes
in the trunk I can leave the lame to dance
with their lovers. But on a slow news day
the public is looking for something like justice.
On the open ledge, I'm as unredeemable
as a pasted-over billboard. The sharpshooter
the authorities planted has my buzz cut
nailed in his cross hairs. When a gunshot
hosannas my name I crash out in the hot ash
like a fallen cartridge. Maybe, in heaven
they'll get around to telling me whose side I was on.

CLARENCE CADDELL

After Life

What is it like? The sun that breaks upon
The dewy grass after a cold, dark morning?
Assuming God not guilty of suborning
His messengers, who tell us that they won,
But hardly what, might we not question whether
The prize stays fresh by noon of the first day?
If heavenly blue does not degrade to grey,
Or the divine sun cause the soul to wither?
Then what to do? Does one sit and tell stories
Of how it was before things stopped happening,
When actions might attract their shames and glories?
Does one recall Achilles, for example,
Eternally deceased and famous, sing
Of those for whom a name's reward was ample?

Youthful Idealism

Between the top and bottom step
Of adolescence's threshold, I
Fell straight though concrete at the thought
That all this world could be a lie.

Then when I came to love at first
It seemed I could be dreaming out
Of body, pure desire fed
By three-dimensional, dazzling doubt.

And though the refutation is
Imperfect as to kick a stone,
It seemed that they were dressed, made up
For someone—someone else, each one.

And while it can be some relief,
These days, to find some deviation
From what I might imagine there,
As often it augments my passion

For reasons hard to say: a nose
Or mouth too gross, a heavy load
Unevenly distributed—
And then reality has crowed,

And I wake up, my stiffness yet
Predominantly in the place
Where it belongs. But all relief
Is temporary, and my gaze

Goes searching once again, so that

If beauty's ideality
Be practically refuted—what's
The difference to poor old me?

HAYDEN CHURCH

Jackson County War 2

Art bloats life.

Art is cottonfields,
the art of beatings

& no mercy. & all art is indebted
this violence: it is a god against love,
& love redeems all
violence, (oh does it?) but this
is syphilis on our necks—
this is violence we must bear, for now, Satan,
devil of our memory fading.

One thing

our here-ness a river ancient
-ness an error leagues of red
memories flowing of trees

root vessels inside-
ness an error a river
of memories

Being a great mistake we had dreamt it
here dreams go / we go unbounded in
that night of objects

human and not
where space is another big thing
among other things

DUSTIN COLE

Outing

I.

my dad and I in a cutline in fall
near the Chinchaga

hoping to shoot a deer
we see partridge instead

my dad blows the head off one with a .22
it runs round anyway

the funniest thing I have seen up till then
and the most unnatural

he shows me how to gut it by stepping on the wings
and pulling out the meat by the feet

the mud wears a skin of fallen leaves and the sun
mixes with sharp blue air

II.

gumbo roostertails
from back of the stuck truck

we jump out
to lock the hubs

the 4x4 transmission is

a kind of magic hand

and always the Chinchaga out of sight in the background
and something beyond the background

gradual
shifting course

sieves of
treelight

III.

empty beercans
measure the day

we make our way down
to the river

out of the mud
descending a switchback

I reload the semiautomatic .22
the Ruger with a Leupold scope

river spangles like a long liquid diamond
river spangles like a blue sequin belt

little jets surround the diminishing beercan
the perforated beercan sinking beercan

IV.

on the drive home I choose

a Steve Earle cassette

Guitar Town is the best song
I have ever heard

Steve Earle is the first outlaw poet
the first intransigent bard

the first criminal
I admire

I fail to imagine the endless circuit of garish honkytonks
or the predicament of being destitute on the road

as pumpjacks dip their sullen heads
to dying autumn ground

V.

surflike wave
of tarmacadam

mud and stones
rapping the wheel well

sky purples
ballad lulls

I perch
in the iron framework of a bridge

spanning the river
like outstretched wings

and the lowing of a lower gear
pulls me out of this bird

VI.

after we're washed and the guns
are put away

and some frozen peas are heated
and some potatoes boiled

we sit down with mom and eat
the tough startled meat

I chew and chew on
that headless image

of distressed
reflex

footing
a tightening circle

HARRIS COVERLEY

Shuttered

ethereal doom
crouched in the corner
on his haunches
watching me like a crow watches a blind rat
in a night-time meadow

the woman
that great figure of lust
with hands of silk
who demands too much
and who talks too much
and who drains all the energy from the brains
and the loins
and the jaw

the television gnawing
doom pokes me in the stomach
with a sharpened thumbnail
and says:
 “soon”

maybe it could be sooner

all I have left now is the mint I'm sucking

and the fire burning in a flutter
as the great Dnieper runs red
with Russian blood

and the frost falls in rude splatter
upon the eastward windowpane

ROBERT DUNSDON

Blossom

Lipari was a shock:
its dead in safety deposit boxes looking out to sea;
inviolable,
in from the fields – the slights, the compromises,
the erosions of an identity surrendered in an act of faith.

An idea for a life photographed and displayed
on clean white stone:
an old, uncomfortable man;
a wife beaten down, handsome, defiant;
the carefully groomed soldier under ‘Dulce et Decorum est...’
A shy girl.

Lipari was a shock:
its dead imperturbable in the teeth of a fierce
and beautiful wind;
rid of the distractions –
the thorns deflecting blossom falling by degrees
to an exalted anonymity.

ALEXANDRA FÖSSINGER

Violet dreams

A month before I conceived you
I dreamed of holding a baby girl,
she was looking at me in serious silence,

and when you came, it was from far away,
carrying knowledge of yourself,
in exchange for a purpose,
and a ban on anyone's attempt to spoil you.

Sometimes, seven months old, you look
like a grown-up woman,
a queasy reminder of how I used to see.

See: you will speak
the language of birds, know
that restlessness is a wave
that folds, evens out, passes by.

Its undercurrents will be emerald and gold to you.

There are no traces on your tiny
face of the recurrent dreams
that were passed down to me.

You are aflame,
will perhaps blow out
the curse that interrupted me.

The amount of love we deserve

is written in our bones
by somebody else.

Hold it at bay.

GREG HUTESON

Green Curtain

For now the lush green curtain hangs
beside the silent yellow paint.
It's set or deftly wedged quite near
the corner of these cautious walls.

The claim, it's said, is that it's dusk
and night now hunkers in the wings.
But true or not the curtain's green
is shut against the alley's wrack.

It hides the windowsill's odd flecks
of paint, its dirt and insect husks.
It blocks and dams the meagre lines
that trickle from the hissing bulb.

The curtain's edges hardly twitch
from paltry gusts tossed by the fan
that turns beside the quilted bed,
but dark may tread beyond the glass.

SEAN KILPATRICK

1890s - Ola Hansson, aged, but younger than Strindberg, peering out a window.

HANSSON

Hide yourself, Laura. Herr Strindberg approaches.

I fear he'll either critique dinner as offered,
or us, outright, if we skip an invite.

Don't engage, my beloved, or he'll erase us by our very nature,
as he did my story onstage.

Try to eschew the sight of me this uniquely weak,
a decline only anchored to the presence of...(Jumps)

Strindberg, becaped, eyes miscolored.

STRINDBERG

...an alienist made doubly worse by marrying another,
shackled earthbound to a wife with an untallied surname.

I recommend a more accurate naturalism than female submission.

Zola combing his gutter for pearls.

Christ rides atop his spear.

Felled regnant piloting cloud grit, privates just as big.

This is what happens when kings recoup religion.

They get stung in the udders by underlings.

Plow and cross trade places.

They wipe a nation on their faces.

HANSSON

How much do you owe your hotel?

STRINDBERG

The man a room over mimics my movement.

Pollux the twin will be orphaned in his pigpen,
heartlessness kenned like my aphotic upbringing.
I hex his sons, as I did cloud-brained Przybyszewski,
to be force fed coals by the visage of Zeus emblazoned on my pillow...
Through the wall partitioning us, sonic recreations
of my every twitch are so intricately crafted.

HANSSON

Why follow spot the stars?
To etch them from their canvas, or shore up their number?
Similarly...marriage makes the wallpaper match your constipation.
I study nothing but paired blood flow,
the prioritized vessel hemmed in its slop.
A woman hates you less if you freeze her
beneath the lens in stages, over time,
meanwhile providing compensation for the expensive view.

STRINDBERG

Ever sniff a city? The opaque pangs of its reach?
(Bandaged, chemical stained, bleeding hands)
It's all one design, digestion finito.
No gold will come of us. I tried.

HANSSON

What happens when you defecate the wafer? A sin?
Christ put back in the world he once knew.
Here I genuflect with you.
Did our play help wrest Paris from Ibsen?
Did he yank the staples out of his doll yet and lay them,
stinking strands of treated wool, along the table?

STRINDBERG

Ours was one of my lessers, I'm afraid.

Ibsenite sentiment, sayso of the emancipated rabble,
is a hoax so big we'll end up its whipped footnote a hundred years hence.
The idealist only gets to go to heaven in his head.
In my dumb group of friends when young
we ran through a church and broke the lectern off a pulpit.
They fled while I stayed and prayed forgiveness. No response.
I rose and hammered the plaque back with my shoe.
God has been returning the favor ever since.
I'm his favorite bug to step on.

HANSSON

We'll see what we're part of once we're passed.
Boarding-house to boarding-house you move,
till the bills accrue one unpayable debt,
another fetter on life's big rent,
your own child scared to touch your hand,
clutching Swedenborg instead, staggeringly misread.
His angels spoke in a mixed morphogenetic stimmung
cast across the strata, a thousand flocks per paragraph,
but you're tyrannized by a preformationist recurrence
of your own vintage womb juice, mother earth's accidental birth,
swooping from church to socialism to Parmenides of Elea
and his atomized materialist smattering of dead units
obtained in vain, chemistry finally shot back to god,
deeply embedded, mysticism unedited.
Please leave. I am tired and in pain.

STRINDBERG

Pain compounds without relief.
You may momentarily ignore torment from its fixed point within,
yet the thermogenic affect awaits.
Constant pain, nothing's in better taste.

JOHN MCKEOWN

Airbrushed

The something in the air
fills me with hunger,
the watching the crows hop
between their nests against the clouded sun,
the bare branches muscling
into green suits of flesh,
the lengthening light of afternoon,
my own lengthening years;
stretches of shadow increasingly
uninterrupted by anything.

Gratitude

With a handful of faces
A handful of bodies
You are all mine, flush
With my loneliness.

It would be nothing without you.
Bridges, towers, apartments, the streets
All dead. Not this dense
Vascular system, glittering, heartless.

PAUL MURGATROYD

The Happy Couple

After her op I visited mum
in a ward where the ladies all had a good laugh
(to stop themselves getting worried or glum)
and she enjoyed the jokes and the chaff.
When old Jean was brought in, she ended the quips
as she spread through the ward a gloomy unease
with those skittering eyes and those muttering lips –
'Can you help me please, can you help me please?'
I tried to help, asked her what I could do
for her. But her mind was muddle and night.
There was something seriously wrong, she knew,
but not what it was, what would put it right.
The following day her husband was there –
that Auschwitz face, so set and pale.
But all he did was sit and stare,
senile himself and just as frail.
I spoke to him. He'd nothing to say,
just gazed and gazed at his fading Jean.
He was there beside her day after day,
and I kept on seeing the same grim scene:
her desperate fingers clawing her gown,
as her pleas for help went on and on,
her ruined husband, his desolate frown.
Then one day both of them were gone.

DIARMUID Ó MAOLALÁI

What the fuck

he took her
for ice-cream
and later a walk
through the park -
he had said
that there was
something they
needed to get -
it was over on leeson
st way, through the park.

and there was going
to be nothing
there over
on leeson st
there was nothing
there ever
on leeson st
but she trusted him
all the same
instinctually
like a bird
which returns
to a wrist
and didn't suspect
anything, not even
when they detoured

to sit on the bench

where they'd sat
on that date
their first date
2 years ago
and she was wearing
a blue coat
cracked polish
bad shoes
he hadn't said anything
about doing her polish
give the game away
too easy,
like a bird
again on a wrist and

she talked
about autumn, and
he didn't listen, and
talked about her family
and he didn't listen, and
when he gave her
the ring finally
it was like the end
of Ulysses,
except instead of
yes, she cursed
at him a full minute
laughing saying

what the fuck
what the fuck
and then yes
I suppose so

what the fuck
yeah why not

ERIC T. RACHER

A Rational Animal

1.

Speak such that none divine
the void that kernels us,
our apophatic impotence—
its own tautology.

The measure of the mask
bespeaks a limit on the tongue.
Yet from the splendor of the sphere—
a cedar, a tent, a task:

the speaking wind of Onkelos,
a spirit steeped in words,
discord of dust, de'ah ve-dibbur,
the clash of loam and logos.

2.

It bores through disjointed
us, cognate to the unsheathed
nerve, this question in finitude
implied, this saturation

slow of mud with meaning,
envoiced to our deciduous days.
We endure a rhymeless
wound along roads of ink.

3.

Lessons in the heartframed

grammar of pain. We lessen,
blessed by this sinspilt syntax.
His.

4.
Grafted to a harsh
rootstock in a strange
climature, even this
cambium should heal:

rough coherence
of the brain's brittle
distinctions.

5.
Judgement spilt,
circumferenceless,
upon a split world.
Let the bone-deep word
descend, emblem
of a tabernacle.

6.
Insatiate pain gnaws
a shattered rib, licks
clean a scapula, then,
back into the heartclef,
its den, engnarls itself
into the hard muscle
and waits.

7.
To the Selah whispered

at arrival: no more
exile.

Dragged, screaming, we,
into the heart's
rumor, cohere no
longer.

The cervix dilates:
we are wrested
from order, ordered

into dissonance.

ANDREW SENIOR

Silver Lines

She went to the kitchen sink
and dropped:
a deadweight.
From the lounge

he heard it,
a sound like something and nothing
he'd heard before.

All his life he'd sped the silver lines
accompanied by hawks in flight
and always satisfied
by the roar, by early mornings,
by night shifts, by solitary cabs,
slipping in the small hours,
sandboxes clogged with dampness.

Sped the silver lines
to where they went but always
they were going to lead here.

Now we keep him company
in this stillest of moments,
no messroom camaraderie,
in turn throwing glances
where the transition from carpet
to linoleum is marked
by a silver chrome trim,
where she lies

beneath a blanket,
graphically silent.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Matt Bryden is a poet and teacher living in Somerset, England. He has a pamphlet, *Night Porter* (Templar), a first collection, *Boxing the Compass* (Templar), and a book of translation, *The Desire to Sing after Sunset* (Showwe). In 2018 he won a Literature Matters award from the Royal Society of Literature and in 2019 won the William Soutar Prize and the Charroux Memoir Prize. www.mattbryden.co.uk

Chris Bullard is a retired judge who lives in Philadelphia, PA. He received his BA in English from the University of Pennsylvania and his MFA from Wilkes University. Grey Book Press published *Continued*, a poetry chapbook, in 2020 and Moonstone Press published *Going Peaceably to the Obsidian Knife*, a chapbook of environmentally themed poetry, in 2021. Main Street Rag released his poetry chapbook, *Florida Man*, this year.

Clarence Caddell lives with his wife and kids in rural Victoria, Australia, where he teaches high school English and History. His first collection is out soon from Bonfire Books.

Hayden Church is a poet from Florida. His poetry has been published by *Apocalypse Confidential*, *Safety Propaganda*, *Don't Submit!*, *Tragickal*, and several others. He published his first collection of poetry, *A Question of Refinement*, in 2021. He is the editor of [Maximus Magazine](#).

Dustin Cole is the author of the novel *Notice* (Nightwood Editions) and the poetry chapbook *Dream Peripheries* (General Delivery). He has also contributed poems to *Apocalypse Confidential*, *Maximus Magazine*, and *Safety Propaganda*. [Twitter](#)

Along with previously in *The Crank*, **Harris Coverley** has had verse published in *Polu Texni*, *California Quarterly*, *Star*Line*, *Spectral Realms*, *Scifaikuest*, *Silver Blade*, *The Five-Two*, *Songs of Eretz Poetry Review*, *Altered Reality Magazine*, *Apocalypse Confidential*, *Tigershark*, *Yellow Mama*, *View from Atlantis*, and many others. He lives in Manchester, England.

Robert Dunsdon's poetry and reviews have been published in both the UK and in America. He is poetry editor with Between These Shores Books.

Alexandra Fössinger is a German/Italian native speaker from Italy. Her work is published or forthcoming in *Tears in the Fence*, *Frogmore Papers*, *Wild Court*, *High Window*, *Oyster River Pages*, *The Gentian Journal*, *Reliquiae*, and *Apocalypse Confidential*, among others. Her first poetry collection is published this year by Cephalopress.

Greg Hutesson is an American non-profit administrator living in Taiwan. His poems have recently appeared in *The Honest Ulsterman*, *THINK*, *Alabama Literary Review*, *Macqueen's Quinterly*, and *The Literary Bohemian*; his chapbook, *These Unblessed Days*, will be published this fall by Kelsay Books.

Sean Kilpatrick studied forensic photography, holds a Master's in writing, and is published or forthcoming in *Boston Review*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *evergreen review*, *NERVE*, *FENCE*, *LIT*, *VICE*, *BOMB*, *DIAGRAM*, *New York Tyrant*, *Sleepingfish*, *Obsidian*, Vol. 1 *Brooklyn*, *Hobart*, *young mag*, *forever mag*, *La Petite Zine*, *Pindeldybox*, *Expat Press*, *tragickal*, *fluland*, *Terror House*, *Maximus*, *elimae*, *Alpha Beat Soup*, *Safety Propaganda*, and *Countere*. He is the author of several books.

Paul McDonald taught at the University of Wolverhampton, England for 25 years, where he ran the Creative Writing Programme. He took early retirement in 2019 to write and research full-time. He is the author of over 20 books, covering fiction, poetry, and scholarship. His most recent book is *Allen Ginsberg: Cosmopolitan Comic* (2020).

John McKeown is a former theatre critic (*The Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Daily Mail*) currently living in Prague. As poet, he is the author of *Night Walk* (Salmon Press 2011), *Sea of Leaves* (Waterloo Press, 2009), *Looking Toward Inis Oirr* (South Tipperary Arts, 2003) and the self-published *Amour Improper* (Hub Editions, 2004). As an erotic writer, he is the author of *Faustina and the Barbarians* (A Hotter State, 2013),

Vampire Abbey and *Battle for Vampire Abbey* (Xcite Books, 2013), and *Aphrodisia* (2014). His latest volume of poetry will be published by Mica Press in October 2022.

After a long career as a professor of Classics, specializing in Latin and Greek literature, **Paul Murgatroyd** retired six years ago and took up creative writing. So far, he has had published/accepted for publication 44 short stories, 7 poems in English, over 60 Latin poems, and performance versions of 2 Roman tragedies.

D. S. Maolalai has received nine nominations for Best of the Net and seven for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in three collections: *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden* (Encircle Press, 2016), *Sad Havoc Among the Birds* (Turas Press, 2019), and *Noble Rot* (Turas Press, 2022).

Eric T. Racher lives and works in Riga, Latvia. He is the author of a pamphlet of poetry, *Five Functions Defined on Experience: For Jay Wright* (2021).

Andrew Senior is a writer of poetry and short fiction based in Sheffield, UK. He has recently had worked featured in *Abridged*, *Gutter Magazine*, *The Honest Ulsterman* and *Flash Fiction Magazine*. You can see more of his published work at www.andrewseniorwriting.weebly.com.

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