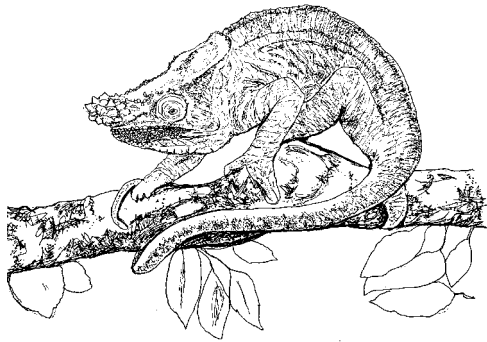


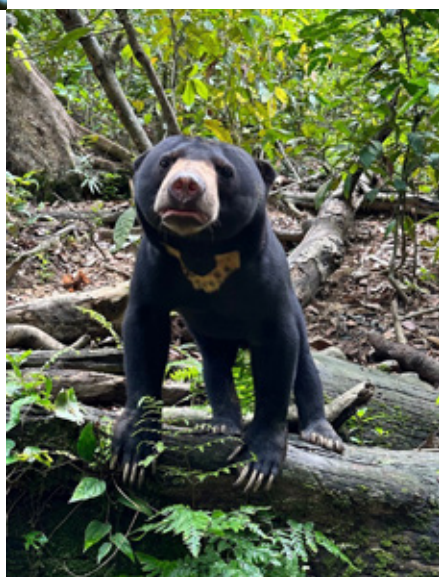
LAST CHAMELEON

Último camaleão

Poems & Prose Miniatures with poetic intent
Poemas e Miniaturas em Prose com intenção poética



Mark Ereira-Guyer
Collection 2023



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**Everything that
I have created,
I created for you.**

**Take care not to ruin and destroy My world,
for if you destroy it, there will be no-one to repair
it after you.**

Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

For Gaby, Natasha, Theo, Mariana, Bookies, Brad, João, Graça,
Civil Society Consulting, Jordan, O Povo de Ereira, Lisa, Tracy, Mum,
Dawn, Nick, Sally, Felix, Izzy, family, Rui, West Suffolk Green Party,
APE Malaysia, Wil, Marianne, Paul/s, David, James, Jan, Liz,
Simon, Brendan, Dave, Barbara, Nigel/s, Connection Coalition
& Albert Crescent

Published by:





7pm, 31st December 2022

New years eve day of sorts
admonishing the blink-and-you-miss-it
sunlight's impertinence.

The last day
much like ancient days
stretching back and forwards
winking to freshness -
life's chapters churn.

Brittle break
in military precision
the new year salutes
stands to attention
beckoning -
Fulsome Life,
all to play for.

Over millennia Chameleons have adapted to change with their landscapes. Survival built on merging with their environments to avoid predators. Or just for the fun of hiding. Critically, they need a landscape intact that they can adapt to, blend into and escape attention, using their amazing long tongues to scoop up insects - and keep the wolf from the door. The long snouted Portuguese seahorses need a place to call home too.

Remnants: The land scraps we voracious wolves so ungenerously leave them isn't enough. In my short six decades, we have provided no let up, no quarter.

Although more commonly established in Madagascar (where their forest homes are now reduced by almost 90%) - there are even a few tenacious chameleons that hang on in eastern Algarve.

I'm told this is true but in my searching I've not yet spied one. I like to think there's some healthy Chameleon colonies in secret, less visited coastal locations. I try to step up and be an in-disguise chameleon myself in their stead.

This year I've tried to write some more poems - and what I like to call Prose Miniatures with poetic intent - they help me cope with solastalgia and act as a way of funneling thinking and memories. Those written in Portugal pushed me further, and I wanted to play around further with putting them into Portuguese.

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Camperdown House, Albert Crescent
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk



Ao longo de milénios, os camaleões adaptaram-se às mudanças com as suas paisagens, uma sobrevivência baseada na fusão com os seus ambientes para evitar predadores. Ou apenas pela diversão de se esconder. Eles precisam criticamente de uma paisagem intacta à qual possam se adaptar, se misturar e escapar da atenção, usando suas incríveis línguas longas para pegar insetos - e manter o lobo longe da porta. Os cavalos-marinhos portugueses de focinho comprido também precisam de um lugar para chamar de lar.

Os restos de terra que nós, lobos vorazes, deixamos para eles tão pouco generosamente não são suficientes. Nas minhas curtas seis décadas, não proporcionamos trégua nem quartel.

Mais comumente estabelecidos em Madagáscar (onde as florestas estão agora reduzidas em quase 90%), existem até alguns camaleões tenazes que sobrevivem no leste do Algarve.

Disseram-me que isso é verdade, mas em minha pesquisa ainda não encontrei nenhum. Gosto de pensar que existem algumas colônias saudáveis de camaleões em locais costeiros secretos e menos visitados. Tento dar um passo à frente e ser um camaleão disfarçado no lugar deles.

Este ano tentei escrever mais alguns poemas e o que gosto de chamar de Miniaturas em Prosa com intenção poética, eles me ajudam a lidar com a solastalgia e funcionam como uma forma de canalizar pensamentos e memórias. Aqueles escritos em Portugal me impulsionaram ainda mais, e eu queria brincar mais ao colocá-los em português.



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ECOCIDE

"I think that if enough people genuinely, viscerally felt their place as intermediate in life's continuum then we would try to mitigate this ongoing disaster and try to better care for life."

In Ascension, Martin MacInnes



Ecocide I Lascaux Extinction Exhibition

Tumbling river, fish-full and delicious.
Sparkling and capacious,
a sanctuary from the marauders raid.
Hunted *Swimming Stags* in a hot-hoof scurry,
neck-deep,
eyes glint in ice age fear.

Buried in a hillside,
broken promises of care, pretence of amour.
Painters and engravers' rich palettes of deceit.
Jumbled pictorial beauty betray a skinned back self-love,
bloodied spears decorate rough animal hides
and wounded hearts.

Fires to warm, a plying of old tales.
Crafted, handheld lamps gently hum to light the way
the same fires that splutter, surge
to consume once teaming landscapes down to butchered bones.

Underfoot, pained dry crackling noises, splintering -
bovine ancestors pile up along the underground gallery
giving hillock footholds for artistic flourishes.

Brushed red bison, bristled tails.
Tangled bulls and horses jockey for position.
Burnished engorged horns.
Sharp lines and mark making,
a domed composition of their species-rich Paleolithic larder.

Engulfed in darkened, sunless vaults
an unspeakable devilish darkness
more long than to any of the nearest stars.

Enveloped, and then dispatched -
like scribbled fast-forwarded ecocide messages,
an assembled frozen menagerie of vast creation animates,
a frieze of sprayed pigments galloping into shadows.

Now entombed like we all become -
all captured movement lovingly depicted by their massacres
in the '*Hall of the Bulls*'.

Homo Sapiens, less wise than clever,
hold you in mind in earth-rich colours,
art-making with confiscated antlers as scrapers,
your smaller bones hollowed out for paint spraying your image,
swabs of your hair to brush a bullish complexion.

Pox-marked skies, cloud openings
allow freighted anxiety mixed with sunlight cascades.
Yellow, big-bellied horses nurse
young ponies in a pool of golden light.
Hopes are high.
A wrench of savagery,
hoodlum jeers push your kin over cliff edges.

Bison pierced, harried and pricked aurochs,
man's fire chokes.
Emptied of hooved and clawed life,
peopled by limbed monsters
eating their way through God's abundance.

Lascaux's radiant engraved canvases hang -
a chilled reminder of past hunting sorties.
The first of many, if not all.
Others shovelled in, a scuffle of doom.
Scooped up by voracious appetites.

Only in Winter, once,
Light and Hope flooded into the Cave's entrance.

Equally shellshocked now wandering in -
the last few Sumatran tigers,
they nip by along the *Passageway*, whiskers sail-stiff.
Wide roaming, precious African Wild Dogs poised,
ready to paint.
Hardy, sharp-toothed Honey Badgers snuffle by,
a one-time common Hedgehog shuffles amongst heaped bones,
heading for the *Shaft*.

Once flight-bound, neck-twisting Wrynecks drop like stones -
overcrowding now, pouring into the blanketed darkness,
Dead-eyed.

Ecocide II

Lost Madagascan Solitude

Sloping crystalline falling away skies
nudge a luxuriant forested isle - wide-eyed tree-skipping le-
mur-strewn -
obediently it slides eastward, ever further distant from anchoring
shores.

A boat-less earth.
Hunched up blood-licking apes locked into fruit-held rift valleys.
Sharpening their flints.

The sautéing sifaka, jitters, nervy, princely pirouettes.
Esoteric treasure trove, trust-bound,
assembled exotica anciently unfolds.

In solitude, a jolly party contained together in pacific balance:
reptilian bug-eyed chameleons sure and slow-footed,
shy slinking Fossa, a lone long-fingered aye-aye absentmindedly
tapping out dangerous omens in primeval morse code.

Waves crash, anguished howls -
one rogue boatful with hungry bellies and hatchets.
Chameleons adjust multi-coloured jackets
- to hide away fast.

The island's grizzled chains slip their moorings
grind down Noah's Ark of charms.
Axes sear, slice, ricochet
Malagasy's pristine wonders slump - wounded, bloodied, defiled.

The world's fourth largest isle,
once tree carpeted now down to rubbed raw floor boards.

Ecocide III

Portuguese Seahorse (long-snouted) living on the Edge

A sea creature, to cradle, adore -
escorting its life mate across millennial seascapes.
A bobbing coquettishness
Swimming awkwardly in Algarvian currents.

Horse-tails like baby-hands reach out for Neptune's parental
comforts, wrapping around gentle swaying seagrasses.
A delicate dance and exchange of your four hundred young;
Your once-in-a-life-time long-snouted mate, with ultimate fatherly
caresses.

The collection of all the Silvery tears
can't compensate for Anthropocene encroachments:
An ocean of plasticity, rapacious ripping fishing nets.
A screen-based sea of humanity's unkindness.

Snouts snuffling, a scorched earth tribe,
A noisy distracted indifference:
Your impending homelessness
Your offsprings' melancholic fears.

New Gods empty out the seas
Ladling in their toxicity and carelessness:
A seagrass meadow depletion
Your cherished young rendered fatherless.

Cavalo-Marinho Português (de focinho longo) vivendo na Borda

Uma criatura marinha, para embalar, adorar -
escoltando seu companheiro de vida através de marinhas milenares.
Um coquetismo balançando
Nadar desajeitadamente nas correntes Algarvias.

Rabos-de-cavalo, como mãos de bebê, buscam o conforto dos pais
de Netuno,
envolvendo suaves ervas marinhas ondulantes.
Uma delicada dança e troca de seus quatrocentos jovens;
Seu companheiro de focinho longo, único na vida, com carícias
paternais definitivas.

A coleção de todas as lágrimas prateadas
não pode compensar as invasões do Antropoceno:
Um oceano de plasticidade, redes de pesca vorazes rasgando.
Um mar baseado em tela da crueldade da humanidade.

Focinhos fungando, uma tribo de terra arrasada,
Uma ruidosa indiferença distraída:
Sua falta de moradia iminente
Os medos melancólicos de seus filhos.

Novos Deuses esvaziam os mares
Ladling em sua toxicidade e descuido:
Esgotamento de um prado de ervas marinhas
Seu querido jovem ficou órfão de pai.

Ecocide IV Forever Goodbye

The beauty, the bounty
In front of you, just there -
in your soft,
bleached hands.

Slipped-through-your-fingers
enchantments,
fairy tales to whisper
through an age of childhoods
like a hit list line up:
of beasts, fanged wolves,
bears holed up in caves,
one-horned treasures conjured up in sailor's yarns.

The beating wings of Pharaoh's Ibises -
regal-beaked and stone carved;
reflective lost-well deep
pool eyes
screenshot the culprits'
fast-moving silhouettes,
all sinking Narcissus
heaped stinking grandiosity,
rancorous shouted-over-the-shoulder
forever goodbyes.

Natures' turncoats,
stripped of Judas' scapegoat disguises.
Hands stained, yet cupped in supplication
to catch
any last
remaining
stray
silver pieces.

Tambalacoque: the 13th Dodo Tree

Marooned archaic dodo trees,
bent-double in grief-choked sea haze
float heavily on fair-isles,
locked in by tightly stretched oceanic carpets.

Hardwoods nourished by blood red volcanic soils
seeded by butchered gardeners.
Swaying branch arms reach for substitute carer caress,
flowers bloom to pull the gaze,
coiffured fruitiness to deter the axe.

Purged to the final dozen disciples,
a multi-century pining for their creator's return,
easier days,
hopes of un-discovery.

Mull

The always thinking
is the most testing part,
touted as an ape-like
Superiority.

In featureless bar-rooms,
roiling chatter rumbles.
Rolling flurries
of choking fires race,
lacerate the mind's fretful forests.

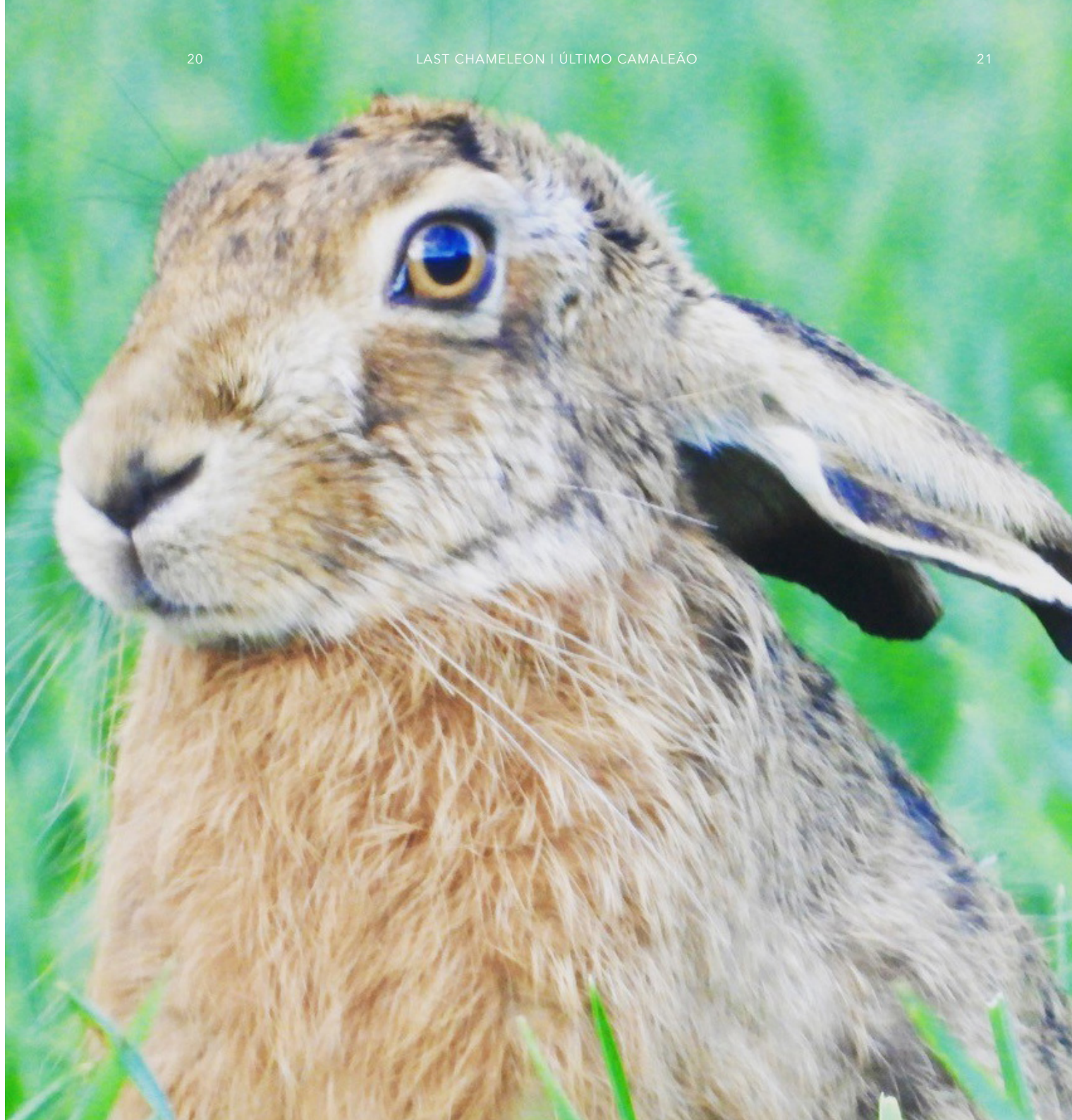
Extremist flames encroach.
Poisoned gifts of destruction
Manhandled by the clumsiest man
licking cindered dregs.
Every which way
an anguished bottleneck
of goneness.

A home fire-side deliberation,
poking the blame this way, that,
never where it should reside.

Only now,
loud drumming rumination,
mulling over scorched inevitabilities
weather forecasts
drained of salvific qualities.

Maligned torch-carrying
Neanderthal ancestor stumbles
back into the frame,
ill-equipped to the outflowing
relinquishment of hope,
fresh strides crunching across
charcoaled remains -
recalling nature's harmonies
before the intruder's slaughter.

SUFFOLK



White Hawthorns

The day speaks of white hawthorn Sundays
Long washed out road trips, reluctant relatives
waving you off on arrival.

Rain from decades passed,
a swishing of glimpses.
Parents cramped and fretful.
Passing through a littered accompaniment
of faceless outlines.

Stretched out warming children, car sick,
scrunch up weathered newspapers.
Pungent smells of nostalgia,
almost Springs
bouncing forward hours.

Eager sweet wrappers lunge
for half opened windows
to adorn the floating blossom clouds
of hawthorn bushes,
March's winds step in
much like a bone-chilled
but amiable hitch hiker.

A querulous sibling rolls over, sickening,
falls out in a screeching of tires.
Tearfully rain-splattered.

Another weekend pulled out and pegged up,
redolent of adolescences quickly traversed.



Snail Crash

After hard rains,
our garden pathway,
parched times
packed away,
mossy slick,
dresses in the evening's
starched clean clothes
wrapping away
the day's end.

Once more, not quite a quiet lull.
An in-between calmness,
not without its dangers.
Ponderous, myopic,
peeling through darkness's curtains.
Careful, steps considered -
the avoidance of wetness,
vertical, descending festivities
of weighed down,
emboldened virile snails,
in their burdensome house-moving.

One crunch misstep stacks up the guilt.
Crestfallen, the careless assassin
shrinks back home,
the back door offers stiff resistance.

Captain's Woods, Suffolk

Moss robed root limbs
warmed by autumnal leaf blankets:
The Captain's ancient oaks
melt into the forest floor.

Noble guards of eternity,
domains confidently secure,
despite streaked distress-stains
and woody deformities.

Mischievous artist muses,
shape-shifting forms linger:
Dragon's head, eagle's beak,
patterned, whorled exotica.

Scarred canyons extend across desiccated
crumpled brain-like scapes.
Hole punched dark apertures,
demon's hideouts.

A sharp eyed companion relishes
the contained world exquisites of acorns,
all silvered petiteness,
blue-hued in close definition.

Wizen trunks with cyclopean cave hideouts,
clustered before them woodcrafted tea parties
of cupped husks,
discarded serviettes of tattered leaves.

Falling festive decorations,
the illusion of despoiled birds nests,
Witches Brooms
hang suspended in plain sight.

Quercus* woodlands burst with resonances,
the Stag's bark, the Wren's rushed food shopping whoops,
Woodpecker pile driving -
the jabber of the Jays' angry chatter.

Spread around,
deep buried in rooted memory, and leaf mulch
a few old fellows hold the line -
five centuries of expressive weariness.

Wrenched apart by weathering tormentors
some savagely hung, drawn and quartered,
others plague-ridden,
overrun by fungal onslaughts.

War-severed branches dangle in absurdity,
bone dried in enveloped stillness.
Hollowed out, disintegrating heaps,
rehearsing their final collapse.

* Quercus = Oaks

Hawstead Leverets

I tickled their juvenile curiosities
for a capricious flash,
fields flew by,
they skimmed along like land swifts.

Reckless springtime freshmen,
mimic early adulthood, unsure-footed.
In the country track scurry, startled tails-spin,
a plump pheasant hedge crashes.

The Leverets give me a longer once over,
lurch further off, quizzical.
Impromptu speed date encounter in Hawstead,
leaving a mind-printed calling card.

Prince & Princess

This Leveret knows where he is,
toddler circling fresh green kingdoms -
niche hide 'n' seek play pen.
The fields bow down.

Wise masked up rooks scowl,
laconic crows clear the way,
Disunited welcome party pairing.

Nose twitch of inspection,
alert on haunches,
Evanescent, guard doing rounds,
ink eyes to dip into.

Timid sister lowers,
hollow hunkers,
gum-chewing grass,
blink-quick,
catapulting to family reunions.

4,108 weeks

All these spent weeks were shared.
Time's meanness sprints by.
Today passing in your garden of sunshine,
another cherishing chance to renew,
catch the timeless breezes of yesteryears.
Days life-crammed full.

Knitted together hands,
turn the soil, worms to a Robin's feast.
Newly bought Rose-Bushes treasured and placed,
lovingly housed in a warming Suffolk clay.

Angers, pointless regrets, put away.
A restorative spade for digging up messy roots.
Love and friendships measured out,
a gentle husbandry
to garner every day moments,
still being shared in the 4,108th week.

Green Hearts

First to touch the sun's rise -
Easternmost front garden Thrushes,
agile spring-zingy scamper,
sport diamond-crusted coats of arms.

Chorale voices lift,
raise alarms
to signal hedge-less hungers,
fake grass lawns.

Villages of birds gift songs
to melt Green Hearts.

Lush Suffolk's tongue-ripped muteness
mouth silent shrieks,
plead for helping hands ego-shorn -
much less strident tongues
dripping poison,
down the centuries
looking down
from ego-centric citadels.

Song Thrushes, impersonate abundance,
with sun-dancing black pool eyes -
lighthouses to lighten dank arbored pathways.
Fading, evicted from safe singing spots
from which,
to tell the joy of the whole earth.

Booming Bittern, Minsmere Cut

Bassoon player makes an extra early start,
solo performer in grease-thick darkness.

BOOM

Forsakes the quartet's musical accompaniment,
sunken in mythical head-guarding wolf hours.

Distilled drained landscape,
radio silenced, reed rustle time.

Steaming lard,
Devil's brewed fog rises.

Shuffle zombie-walking, a slow extraction
from nailed down coffin-log-like sleep.

BOOM

Light artillery Bittern, romantic pre-dawn renditions -
repetitive bone shaker.

BOOM-BOOM

Slicing the camper van's heaving torpor.

The Ferryman

Rich bankside mud patted into slick slides
fearsome deep, insect skaters gingerly glide.

In his studied absence, the nailed note ripples.

Dissolving fishing boats
sea breeze luminescence
freshnesses lick the crossing's to-ing and fro-ing.

A streaking oystercatcher, all noise and upset,
joins a dear friend and sister -
as they head towards the bridge's safety
look out for each other
on the twinned river
smell bustling life
marvel on the demise of drowned cities, nearby
and further off.

Years assemble before us,
narrowing horizons,
so many high tides com-ing and go-ing.

Paint blistered boat,
less steadfast than the most leaky of arks,
traverses the murky tidal river
until one day the oars forget themselves,
abandon their mission
melt into the currents.

Delving the greyness,
the misplaced ferryman
makes slipping and falling
into the sea look easy.

A Lark of a River

First a ditch,
then a stream,
maybe a river,
back to a ditch.

Giving it that modern look
Everything slung in
misshaped shopping trolley
heaped rubbish aids the steeped banks formation,
tattered plastics layered decoratively.

Nature appropriated.
Some misplaced waterbirds,
bewildered refugees,
shell-shocked, circle-paddling
resolute in their desolation.

Plaqued garden centre Kingfishers dissemble abundance
daintily adorn Suffolk cottages.
The genuine few that had tried to cling on,
now re-located -
having intuitively judged the Lark
too Hostile an environment.

Hollyhock escapee

Life-hating gardens:
scooped out gravel
bluish purple slate
random dashes
of sham authenticity -
scattered shop-bought
beach stones
wilting potted plastic plants,
militarised zone attractiveness.

In high noon fake news splendour
faux grass comfortably installed –
no reprieve from monotony.
Bountiful sterility, straight-lined,
prison camp super-tidy
stunted life, shrivelled hope,
nothing out of place
everything with no place
to call home.

Growing at a magical beanstalk rate,
lonesome hollyhock, ruddy cheeked,
shouts bold defiance from pavement cracks
lavender bunches close for company
painting splashes of violet colour
enticing war-weary bees
desolate tattering butterfly -
the squeezed out
left far behind enemy lines.

Cherry-Tree Wren

In the dappling Cherry Tree,
our miniature Houdini
proud new parent steps forth,
all melodious trilling and town-crier like.

Fluffed up babes hither and thither,
quivering in the spring breeze
wide-eyed in their first trip out.

Reddish hue, white strip like warpaint -
Tea pot spout tail. Packing a punch for one so small.
A bounding bold explorer of undergrowth -
passing through the darkest recesses.

Although only a gentle peek-a-boo
your brood struggle to keep up,
with just your voice, melliferous song,
to keep them from panicking -
to lure them and the traveller close.

Bin Day Encounter (with Nige)

Along the street
as far as the eye could see,
dustbins gape, crammed with memories,
human detritus, a discarded poem or two.

The morning smells of gloomy sinking,
like Lazarus' joyless return -
his days dishwasher racked,
rarely, if ever, heard of again
as so many one-minute celebrity wonders.

Gusts of hellos, smile flickers –
neighbours sized up for politeness.
Rubbish collection - a flurry of reunions,
de-limited time locking out the pandemic's imprisonment.

Wide smiles undeterred by drabness and spittle.
The ginned up angels themselves
couldn't wish a more hearty greeting.

Swaggery gait, a wistful wink –
the non-work day lays itself out for you
easing into retirement bliss,
the gifts of living that keep giving.
Full stop to the rushing through of life.

Your lit up, fireworks face
passes, pleasurably secure in nonchalance,
becalmed by the calm dog that exercises you.

Sleepily I wave you off,
bin safely deposited back off the street,
good cheer moments dissolve
edging upwards along the Crescent's tilt.

IBERIA

*"Oxalá que a vida me corra
bem, oxalá Oxalá que a tua vida"*



Salamanca Starlings

Zig-zag swirling the dusk sky-playgrounds,
fast-paced gregarious legion,
agitated and company expectant.
An Epicurean evening of old acquaintances before them.
Fine snacking day behind them.

Lined up cypress trees a-tremble,
with jaunty night club thrub.
Like bar mates, shove and jostle,
they call across and greet,
now with a roost to boost
the Salamanca Starlings mood.

Rustling branches stutter
to the songbird's beat.
Oiling feathers boisterous starlings hunker down
to manicure themselves, prepare for dawn's hour.

Orange streetlight, to frame a cathedral,
as the thickness of dark trees
continue to effervesce and slow-dance
along with the chatter of friends,
the shrill song-shouted goodnights.

In the dark pitch the leaves swing scuffle
alive with dark glossy outlines.

Favourite Ibis, Tejo estuary

All furtive energy,
scything stagnant waters,
Ibis horde recap
the days schedule,
the flightiness of coming and going.
The assemblage parade -
a stand of umbrellas
preening their iridescence.

Black mopheads with sliding beaks
narrowing to sharpness.
Wings circle to guard shade
in furrowed crop-rich fields,
the tractor wheels spin earthly clods,
unhappy worms
expelled from subterranean slumbers
to a scimitar execution.

In a head turn of time,
some run amok at the mere rumour of human eyes,
dashing to near neighbour fields,
waterlogged and Godwit filled,
others flock to call on Curlew cousins -
a shadowed sky,
moving in a concertina-ed wave of goodbyes.

One querulous Ibis remains,
stubbornly foregrounded,
imperious and Egyptian,
a sculptural wash, inside himself
at home with being there.

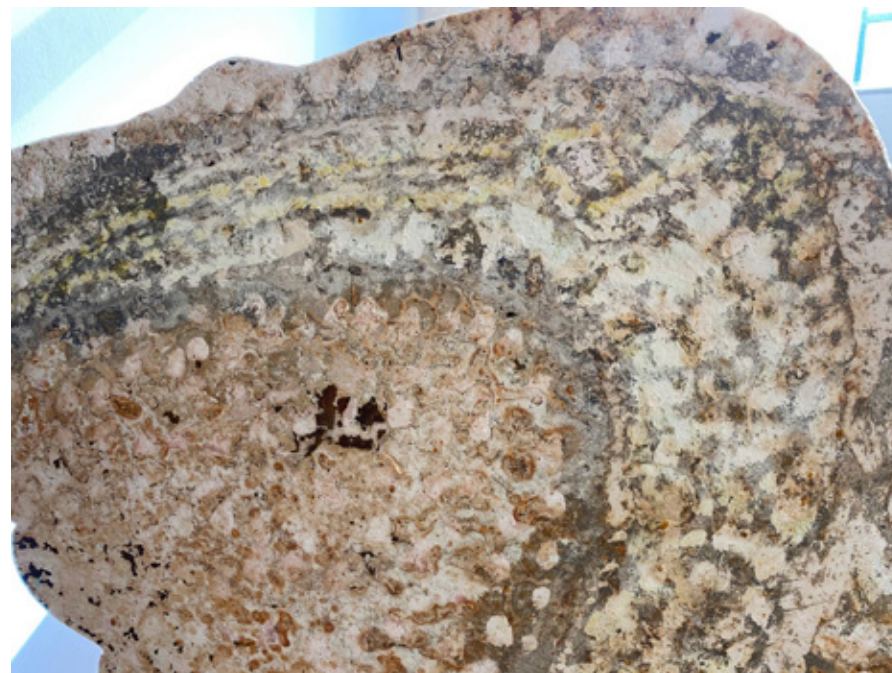
Favorito Ibis, estuário do Tejo

Toda energia furtiva,
ceifando águas estagnadas,
Recapitulação da horda de Ibis
a programação dos dias,
a inconstância do ir e vir.
O desfile de montagem -
um suporte de guarda-chuvas
enfeitando sua iridescência.

Mopheads pretos com bicos deslizantes
estreitando para nitidez.
Círculo de asas para proteger a sombra
em campos sulcados ricos em culturas,
as rodas do trator giram torrões de terra,
vermes infelizes
expulso do sono subterrâneo
a uma execução de cimitarra.

Em uma virada de cabeça no tempo,
alguns enlouquecem com o mero rumor de olhos humanos,
correndo para campos vizinhos próximos,
alagado e cheio de Godwit,
outros se reúnem para visitar os primos Curlew -
um céu sombreado,
movendo-se em uma onda concertada de despedidas.

Um Íbis queixoso permanece,
teimosamente em primeiro plano,
imperioso e egípcio,
uma lavagem escultural, dentro de si
em casa por estar lá.



Theodore Ereira-Guyer

OSGA, the Gecko

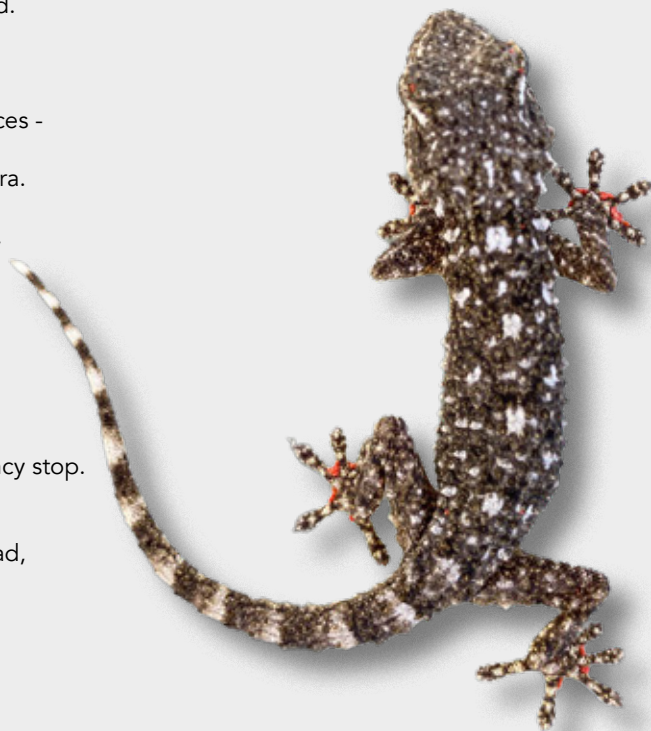
Affixed to the window pane,
fingers and toes splayed out -
intimate wall hanging,
dinosaur-grey,
slopped white paint-splattered.
Immobile.

Sun worshipper,
languishing in unseemly crevices -
Osga the Moorish house pet,
emits an in-it-togetherness aura.
Effortlessly clinging on,
in-person connection feigned,
indulgent companionship.

Adept sure-footedness:
start -
stop -
scuttle -
handbrake turn -
exquisitely executed emergency stop.
Hyper-mobile.

Warm blood rushes to the head,
vertical walking experience,
looping circles,
Elevator coming down....
Falling off
the page.

Slit-green planet eyes,
all seeing,
working through options,
now sideways,
start -
stop -
scuttle -
scram.



OSGA, o Geco

Afixado na vidraça,
dedos das mãos e pés abertos -
tapeçaria íntima,
dinossauro cinza,
respingos de tinta branca.
Imóvel.

adorador do sol,
definindo em fendas impróprias -
Osga, o animal de estimação da casa mourisca,
emite uma aura de união.
Agarrando-se sem esforço,
conexão pessoal fingida,
companheirismo indulgente.

Adepto firmeza de pés:
começar -
parar -
escotilha -
giro do freio de mão -
parada de emergência primorosamente executada.
Hiper móvel.

O sangue quente sobe à cabeça,
experiência de caminhada vertical,
círculos em loop,
Elevador descendo....
caindo
a página.

Olhos planetários verdes fendidos,
vendo tudo,
trabalhando com opções,
agora de lado,
começar -
parar -
escotilha -
scram.

The Expert Melon Seller

Straw-hatted, rotund, endlessly endearing, he sports a 'Bemvindo' welcoming smile wider than sliced melon. Effortlessly, he throws himself into the truest of vocations. Wanting to please, a heavenly fruit conjuring delight to capture the villager's hungry hearts. Driving around in graceful bird of prey thermals: the jangling truck, comically overloaded, holds precariously caged cargo - which ticking moments before ripened in the Alentejano sun's furnace intensity, each a bellyful of sublime juiciness.

Piled sky-high, one for every day, without fail each delivered to your door. His prime selling time is early afternoons, the day's heat having bricked you in, the ruas funereal, bleached clean of distractions; that peak after lunchtime slot, when the tongue rolls around in search of sweet tastes, when the heat of the day has even the sleeping dogs more exhausted, when shade hides itself away, all imaginings of coolness locked out.

His is not an unkind salesmanship, simple sublime exquisite timing.

Tranquilo, the villagers wait, mid-day appetites un-satiated, reluctant dessert hunters. A rumble-like noise, a dropped loose bag of spanners, all stained and rusty, the melon seller's truck catapults and splutters down the impossibly narrow cobbled streets, the odd melon bouncing cheekily, sugary juices pooling. One jokily edges to slip out through wooden slats, wobbles but re-assesses. Another, burstingly over-ripe, in full truanting style, misjudges the vehicle's lurch - splatters in a riot of succulent pip explosion.

Greedily buying two, this clumsy, untrained juggler, sways with the shape and heft of the fruit's fulness, fumbling to pay without the right change. With a becalming sweetness of manner, the melon seller speaks with restrained and easeful head movements, promises, in lieu of small coins, to bring me tomorrow's next melon bounty.

O Vendedor Especialista em Melão

De chapéu de palha, redondo, infinitamente cativante, ele ostenta um sorriso de boas-vindas 'Bemvindo' mais largo que melão fatiado. Sem esforço, ele se lança na mais verdadeira das vocações. Querendo agradar, uma fruta celestial conjurando deleite para capturar os corações famintos do aldeão. A circular em graciosas termais de ave de rapina: o camião estridente, comicamente sobrecarregado, transporta cargas precariamente engaioladas - que momentos antes amadureciam na intensidade da fornalha do sol alentejano, cada uma cheia de suculência sublime.

Empilhados nas alturas, um para cada dia, sem falta, cada um entregue à sua porta. Seu principal horário de venda é no início da tarde, o calor do dia te emparedado, as ruas fúnebres, limpas de distrações; aquele pico após a hora do almoço, quando a língua rola em busca de sabores doces, quando o calor do dia deixa até os cães adormecidos mais exaustos, quando a sombra se esconde, todas as imaginações de frescor bloqueadas.

Ele não é um vendedor indelicado, um timing simples, sublime e requintado.

Tranquilo, os aldeões esperam, apetites do meio-dia insatisfeitos, relutantes caçadores de sobremesas. Um barulho semelhante a um estrondo, um saco solto de chaves inglesas, todo manchado e enferrujado, o caminhão do vendedor de melão catapulta e respinga pelas ruas impossivelmente estreitas de paralelepípedos, o melão estranho quicando descaradamente, sucos açucarados se acumulando. Um jocosamente se esquia para escapar pelas ripas de madeira, oscila, mas reavalía. Outro, muito maduro demais, em estilo vadio completo, avalia mal a guinada do veículo - respinga em uma explosão de suculentas sementes.

Comprando duas avidamente, esse malabarista desajeitado e destreinado oscila com a forma e o peso da plenitude da fruta, atrapalhando-se para pagar sem o troco certo. Com uma doçura calmante, o vendedor de melão fala com movimentos de cabeça contidos e tranquilos, promete, em vez de pequenas moedas, trazer-me a próxima recompensa de melão de amanhã.

Shy Blue Rock Thrush

**Another no show,
surely not,
having journeyed so far,
you stand me up.**

How can I tell others
how your hide and seek silhouette
only had the faintest of lines, a paper cutout
impossible to spot in all the blueness,
how that you choose,
no refuse,
to reveal yourself,
mystic with fairytale mystery intact,
you merge into the Castelo towers
consumed by shout-out-loud-azure
that is everywhere.

Once more, you are no-where to be seen.

Falling from the heavens, copied by Icarus
you perch on dissolving Schist ledges,
not for you, ignominious crashing to the ground.
Your fine-tuned elusive senses,
intuit telltale signs -
of passing strangers wanting sight of you,
being obtrusively stumbled upon,
spied or lassoed into nets -
hauled back to heaven.

So we're both here, our ridgeways not crossing.

The blue of the bird, the blue of the sky,
living in memories, sliding into human forgetting
by your being rarely spotted, spoken of or heard.
Egyptian pharaohs knew about surviving in the afterworld.
These few words of remembrance written down might help.

Brittle grasses move testily
letting lizards scamper pass
towards cooler olive groves.
Castle visiting hours now long passed,
assurances of abandonment
encourage a casting aside -
your blueness mirage does a teasing drive by,
vamooses over the crumbling walls
in a pique of crossness.

Almost imaginary bird -
Shy Blue Rock Thrush from Monsaraz,
take me all the way to heaven.

We can reconvene in the shade of ancient olive trees.

Monsaraz
July 2023



Tímido Melro-Azul

Outro não comparecimento,
certamente não,
tendo viajado até agora,
você me levanta.

Como posso dizer aos outros
como sua silhueta de esconde-esconde
tinha apenas uma linha tênue, um recorte de papel
impossível de detectar em todo o azul,
como você escolhe,
não recuse,
revelar-se,
um místico com mistério de conto de fadas intacto,
como se funde com as torres do Castelo
consumido por grito-alto-azul
isso está em todo lugar.

Mais uma vez, você não está em nenhum lugar para ser visto.

Caindo do céu, copiado por Ícaro
empoleira-te em socacos de xisto que se dissolvem,
não para você, queda ignominiosa no chão.
Seus sentidos indescritíveis afinados,
sinais indicadores intuitivos -
de passar estranhos querendo te ver,
sendo intrusivamente tropeçado,
espionado ou laçado em redes -
levado de volta ao céu.

Então, estamos os dois aqui, nossos cumes não se cruzando.

O azul do ave, o azul do céu,
vivendo em memórias, deslizando no esquecimento humano
por você ser raramente visto, falado ou ouvido.
Os faraós egípcios sabiam como sobreviver no outro mundo.
Essas poucas palavras de lembrança escritas podem ajudar.

Gramíneas quebradiças movem-se impacientes
deixando os lagartos passarem
para olivais mais frescos.
As horas de visita ao castelo já passaram há muito,
garantias de abandono
encoraje a deixar de lado sua miragem azul,
fazer uma provocação de carro,
vamoose sobre as paredes em ruínas
em um pique de irritação.

Ave quase imaginário -
Tímido Melro-azul de Monsaraz,
me leve até o céu.

Podemos nos reunir à sombra de antigas oliveiras.

Castles of Portugal *

The searching for safe castles
to keep the beasts at bay persists.
Deep in the borderlands,
if a prize for the best placed defensive castle exists,
Juromenha would win it.
Others, maybe Elvas, possibly Monsaraz,
gecko decked, restored to past glories,
are also in contention. There's Serpa,
part of the Alentejano castle-crowding,
springing from giant boulders.
Moura, Terena, Mourão ... they all worked hard
to brush aside Castilian threats.

After the Moors invasion,
so many castles to choose from.
Mértola, a fine Islamic treat.
Castles stretch along the water courses,
north to south, flowing rivers east to west,
Tejo marooned Almourol, keeping a vigil,
lofty arrow slits to eye strangers.

Circling gargantuan black vultures,
throwbacks to a less arable farmed epoch,
guard crumbling battlements,
no longer hopeful of earlier warlike days
full of possibilities of a decent lunch,
enemy corpses now being in short supply.
Joining the rencontre party,
abandoning guardhouse disintegration,
they shlep across the Guadiana far below,
its warm waters cloaking the vista,
reaching into the parched territories
lying unseen and deep within.

Elevated Archers loops, Golden Orioles arrowhead towards them.
Freed from castle gatehouses,
Portuguese dogs bark laconically,
tug at their chains.

* 150 castles in Portugal

Castelos de Portugal

A busca por castelos seguros
para manter as feras sob controle persiste.
Nas profundezas das fronteiras,
se existir um prêmio para o castelo defensivo mais bem colocado,
Juromenha venceria.
Outros, talvez Elvas, possivelmente Monsaraz,
lagartixa incrustada, restaurada às glórias do passado,
também estão em disputa. Há Serpa,
parte do loteamento do castelo Alentejano,
saltando de pedras gigantes.
Moura, Terena, Mourão... todos trabalharam muito
afastar as ameaças castelhanas.

Após a invasão dos mouros,
tantos castelos para escolher.
Mértola, uma bela iguaria islâmica.
Castelos estendem-se ao longo dos cursos de água,
norte a sul, rios que correm de leste a oeste,
Tejo abandonou Almourol, em vigília,
altas fendas de flechas para olhos estranhos.

Circundando gigantescos abutres negros,
retrocessos para uma época de cultivo menos arável,
guarda ameias em ruínas,
não mais esperançoso de dias de guerra anteriores
cheio de possibilidades de um almoço decente,
os cadáveres inimigos agora estão em falta.
Juntando-se ao partido do reencontro,
abandonando a desintegração da guarita,
eles atravessam o Guadiana lá embaixo,
suas águas mornas encobrimdo a vista,
alcançando os territórios áridos
deitado invisível e profundamente dentro.

Elevated Archers loops, Golden Orioles ponta de flecha em direção a eles.
Livre das portas do castelo,
Os cães portugueses ladram laconicamente,
puxar suas correntes.

The Monsaraz tapas bar owner

He dreams of his non-work day, Friday night parties.
One day off, some time to call his own, no more serving, at others beck
and call. A whole day full of the whole week's wanting, imagined kisses
and lovers piled adoringly, although unsure they'll bring joy or pain.

His six-day week stacked up with niche recipes, making sandwiches,
potato-filled tortillas, cutting bread, chopping tomatoes, all olive oil soaked,
sprinkled oregano, stewing in baked Alentejo days, panicked people
rushing in parched, squawking orders and cold beer seeking.

And, then Rui's storytelling, we all have a story don't we.
It overflows out.
It's the best bar, the beer is the best, chilled and thirst-quenching, the
best tortilla in Iberia. Just me, no woman, just me, cooking, cooking,
always cooking. Fresh, I use the best.
I make everything
Get up extra early
Making
All day feeding, serving.
It is made with love.
The love is in the food.
No time for time for love.
It's just one day only off.

So it was good, the food, the beer, was good?
Enough good.

Dono do Bar de Tapas de Monsaraz

Ele sonha com seu dia de folga, festas de sexta à noite.
Apenas um dia de folga, algum tempo para chamar de seu, não mais servir,
em outros acenar e ligar. Um dia inteiro cheio de desejos da semana inteira,
beijos imaginados e amantes empilhados com adoração, embora não ten-
ham certeza de que trarão alegria ou dor.

A sua semana de seis dias repleta de receitas de nicho, fazendo sandes,
tortilhas recheadas de batata, cortando pão, picando tomates, tudo
embebido em azeite, polvilhado com orégãos, estufado em dias
alentejanos assados, gente em pânico a correr com pedidos tostados,
berrando e cerveja gelada buscando.

E, então, a narrativa do Rui, todos nós temos uma história, não é?
Ele derrama.
É o melhor bar, a cerveja é a melhor, gelada e mata a sede, a melhor
tortilha da Península Ibérica. Só eu, nenhuma mulher, só eu, cozinhando,
cozinhando, sempre cozinhando. Fresco, eu uso o melhor.
Eu faço tudo
Acordar mais cedo
Fazendo
O dia todo alimentando, servindo.
É feito com amor.
O amor está na comida.
Não há tempo para o tempo para o amor.
É apenas um dia de folga apenas.

Então foi bom, a comida, a cerveja, foi bom?
Bastante bom.

Bee-eaters of Monsaraz

It's a kind of gentle falling in love,
dipping, swaying, a colony of loquacious angels
float on the hot breezes,
streaming through the orchards of my mind.
Heat-stressed trees rustle with crispy dryness,
the highest branches shake with frolicsome
touchdowns and intimacies.
Teaming up in roguish play,
coupling together, smooching,
before leaping off once more.

The fiery sunshine warms your colours,
the mid-afternoon light reveals your resplendence.

Their colouring transfixes:
golden, straw yellow, turquoise-navy blues,
reddish on top, greenish hues,
large red eyes, never missing a bee's wing flutter,
scraggly wire-like whiskers,
jet black beaked, inland Kingfishers gulping the air
snatching specks of aerial food.
Jaunty light-heartedness,
sagacious parents play parcel-the-parcel with a large insect snack.

Dancing aloft, heard in your approaching,
you've been in my life for quite some time now.
A marvel of hovering, a breezing upwards to safe refuges,
the Monsaraz crew glance down from high vantage points,
rarely if ever in alone time, preferring sociability,
firm in family responsibilities,
for me like a circus squad traipsing on high wires.

Os Abelarucos da Monsaraz

É uma espécie de suave apaixonar-se,
mergulhando, balançando, uma colônia de anjos loquazes
flutuar nas brisas quentes,
fluindo pelos pomares da minha mente.
Árvores estressadas pelo calor sussurram com secura crocante,
os galhos mais altos tremem com seus toques e intimidades alegres.
Juntando-se em um jogo malandro,
outros se acasalam, se beijando,
antes de pular mais uma vez.

A luz do sol ardente aquece suas cores,
a luz do meio da tarde revela sua respendencia.

Seus transfixos coloridos:
dourado, amarelo palha, azul turquesa-marinho,
avermelhado por cima, tons esverdeados,
grandes olhos vermelhos, nunca perdendo o bater de asas de uma abelha,
bigodes desgrenhados em forma de arame,
martins-pescadores de bico preto azeviche engolindo o ar
arrebatando partículas de comida aérea.
Alegre leveza de coração,
pais sagazes brincam de embrulhar o pacote com um grande lanche de
inseto.

Dançando no alto, ouvido em sua aproximação,
você está na minha vida há algum tempo.
Uma maravilha de pairar, uma brisa subindo para refúgios seguros,
O pelotão da Monsaraz olha para baixo de pontos altos,
raramente ou nunca em tempo sozinho, preferindo a sociabilidade,
firme nas responsabilidades familiares,
para mim como um esquadrão de circo perambulando em fios de alta
tensão.

Storking

'Es el camino hacia la verdad'

Martyred San Esteban has a grand gothic Convent to himself, sorely deserved after the stoning. The first of many red martyrs, wrestling with early sainthood, Stephen was surely more eager perhaps for some extra years in earthly settings, possibly a last night natter with Columbus as he passed through crafted baroque, flamboyant in his urging of new ways to old places. Or maybe a simple mid Winter feast after all the labours.

If he could bear witness now to how he is remembered, a facade of splendour. The same old Hebrew stories carved in stone and etched into dark wood all the way from Newly Discovered lands, where the indigenous woodcutters were cut down like their native trees, part of the feeding of the imperialist dream, part of the grotesque stories we tell ourselves, as we navigate the path towards the One Truth.

Chapels, and centre-stage a shrine, hugged close by forty renaissance arches. The King's Cloister now holds an alert and sculptured cypress reaching for saintly embraces, and treeful of Greenfinches, with their dashes of sunlight yellow, and beaks only strong enough to break stones, not Saint-killing rocks.

Today's monastic flock gaze down, crowding unlikely turrets to imagine the spectacle, angels in water-bird form the nesting storks present themselves the Saint's guardians, airily beak clapping, in their high assemblages of river reeds and minor discarded branches, devising a careful thrown together look.

Storking guard changes are marked by the clacking, and a balancing on improbable bell-towers; sticks, thick grasses and caked mud falling, creating impromptu gargoyle straw hats, along with King-sized nests grass fringed to host a gate-crashing songbird tribe. Sparrows skip and ceilidh through the stork's pick up sticks nests, Jackdaws do a jig to their clack. All taken together it might bring a wry smile to the most bloodied of martyrs.

Trás-os-Montes

Getting there by stealth and design are the only ways. Regularly photographed, the few gate keeping wolves nod sullen welcomes.

Even the rivers are lost, parched gullies boulder blocked. Here and there, shapely rocks scrapped and flint horse-carved, first settler autographed, early drafts for artists later proofs.

Tortured lingering land rises to chiseled points, rough, mixed greys, shaded imprints hide motley vulturine hangers on.

Blocks of open space stretch imaginations, encourage absurd counting of dusking stars, archaic time formed, emptied rooms for playing hide and seek games.

Portending domestication, cheap market jewelry goat bells pierce stirring breezes, gnarled olive tree roots proffer stiff thrones to host idle, dawdling hours, giving hope to the not again being found.

Trás-os-Montes

Chegar lá furtivamente e com design são as únicas maneiras.
Regularmente fotografados, os poucos lobos que guardam o portão
acenam boas-vindas taciturnas.

Até os rios estão perdidos, barrancos secos bloqueados por rochas.
Aqui e ali, pedras bem torneadas desmanteladas e sílex esculpidas por cavalos,
primeiro colono autografado,
seus primeiros rascunhos para provas posteriores dos artistas.

Terra torturada e persistente eleva-se a pontas cinzeladas,
cinzas ásperos e mistos, impressões sombreadas escondem cabides heterogêneos
de abutres.

Blocos de espaço aberto estimulam a imaginação,
encorajar a contagem absurda de estrelas ao entardecer,
tempo arcaico formado,
salas vazias para brincar de esconde-esconde.

Prenunciando domesticação,
sinos de cabra de joias baratas
perfurar brisas agitadas,
raízes retorcidas de oliveira oferecem tronos rígidos
para hospedar horas ociosas e ociosas,
dando esperança de não ser encontrado novamente.

Moses Ereira comes home

We all come from different places
It doesn't matter where

Humanity's ancestral rift valley wanderers,
tight-knit bands,
merely headed north,
moving on for the shade,
sauntering into new bits of somewhere else.
Fired up and hungry.

There's always a pull bringing us back.
It never quite fades.

When I took my crisp suited great-great-grandfather back home, his cheeky
moustached face beamed.
The surprise had been a long time coming. Well, he'd been locked out of
Portugal for twenty generations.
His wandering days behind him, somehow he still looked the part of
emigré, pocket watch tucked into his waistcoat and debonair cravat few
nowadays can manage.

Nervous of formality, never quite acceptable in polite society.
A roller of cigars. Unlettered.
Holed up in the East End.

Leading him homewards
after such painful absences wasn't going to be easy,
but the one photograph we had of him, stained and crimpling,
sepia and drained,
which could now rest,
safely returned, somehow felt
emptied of all the places in-between.



Moisés Ereira chega em casa

Todos nós viemos de lugares diferentes
Não importa onde

Os ancestrais errantes do vale do Rift da humanidade,
faixas apertadas, apenas rumou para o norte,
seguindo em frente para a sombra,
passeando por novos pedaços de algum outro lugar.
Animado e com fome.

Sempre há uma atração que nos traz de volta.
Nunca desaparece completamente.

Quando levei meu tataravô de terno impecável para casa, seu rosto atrevido de bigode sorriu.
A surpresa já vinha há muito tempo. Bem, ele estava trancado fora de Portugal há vinte gerações. Seus dias de peregrinação ficaram para trás, de alguma forma ele ainda parecia um emigrado, com relógio de bolso enfiado no colete e gravata elegante que poucos hoje em dia conseguem usar.

Nervoso com a formalidade, nunca é aceitável na sociedade educada.
Um rolo de charutos. Analfabeto.
Escondido no East End.

Levando-o para casa depois de ausências tão dolorosas não seria fácil, mas a única fotografia que tínhamos dele, manchada e amassada, sépia e drenado, que agora poderia descansar, voltou com segurança, de alguma forma sentiu esvaziado de todos os lugares intermediários.

Memorabilia – Quinta de São Thiago, Colares

Dust-enveloped oldness
faded collections of shiny and near stylist
the lost and found of past colonial journeys
glass cabinet displayed.
Random religious sprinklings
the Quinta's everyday comforts
bronze crucifixes in tight corners fight for reverence,
draughty Sintra winds
quickstep to slam chamber doors
whistle along passageways to the chapel.

All around, showcasing Eastern salvaging trips:
imagined exotic birds find themselves served up on plates,
blue brush stroked
figurine horse-held hatted generals swords aloft, captured in glorifying
magnificence,
authentically faked
love-struck genteel folk gesticulate amorously in manicured gardens
of paradise,
hasty promises staked.

To mix it up, humble countryside scenes beloved by the well-turned out,
never dirty fingernailed.
Less-well attired villagers
bent over double with foppish hats, repetitively till and plough,
allude a romantic sense of seasonal hungers.

Boisterous jays and their cousins bound down marbled hallways on treasure
hunts, bartering acorns.
Thick set walls nurse curling maps charting the ancient ways to similar
places, spice-laden ships fill the gaps crafted to look like lands already found.

All the glinting attracts the imperial returning charms of Magpies
as they pick and assemble the Quinta's gently decaying memorabilia
and memories.

Recordações - Quinta de São Thiago, Colares

Velhice envolta em poeira
coleções desbotadas de brilhantes e quase elegantes
os achados e perdidos das viagens coloniais passadas
armário de vidro exibido.
Polvilhas religiosas aleatórias
o conforto quotidiano da Quinta
crucifixos de bronze em cantos apertados lutam por reverência,
ventos fortes de Sintra
passo rápido para bater as portas dos quartos
assobiar ao longo dos corredores da capela.

Por toda parte, apresentando viagens de salvamento no Leste:
aves exóticos imaginados são servidos em pratos,
pincel azul acariciado
estatuetas com espadas de generais com chapéu e cavalo no alto,
capturadas em gloriosa magnificência,
autenticamente falsificado
pessoas gentis e apaixonadas gesticulam amorosamente nos jardins
bem cuidados do paraíso,
promessas precipitadas apostadas.

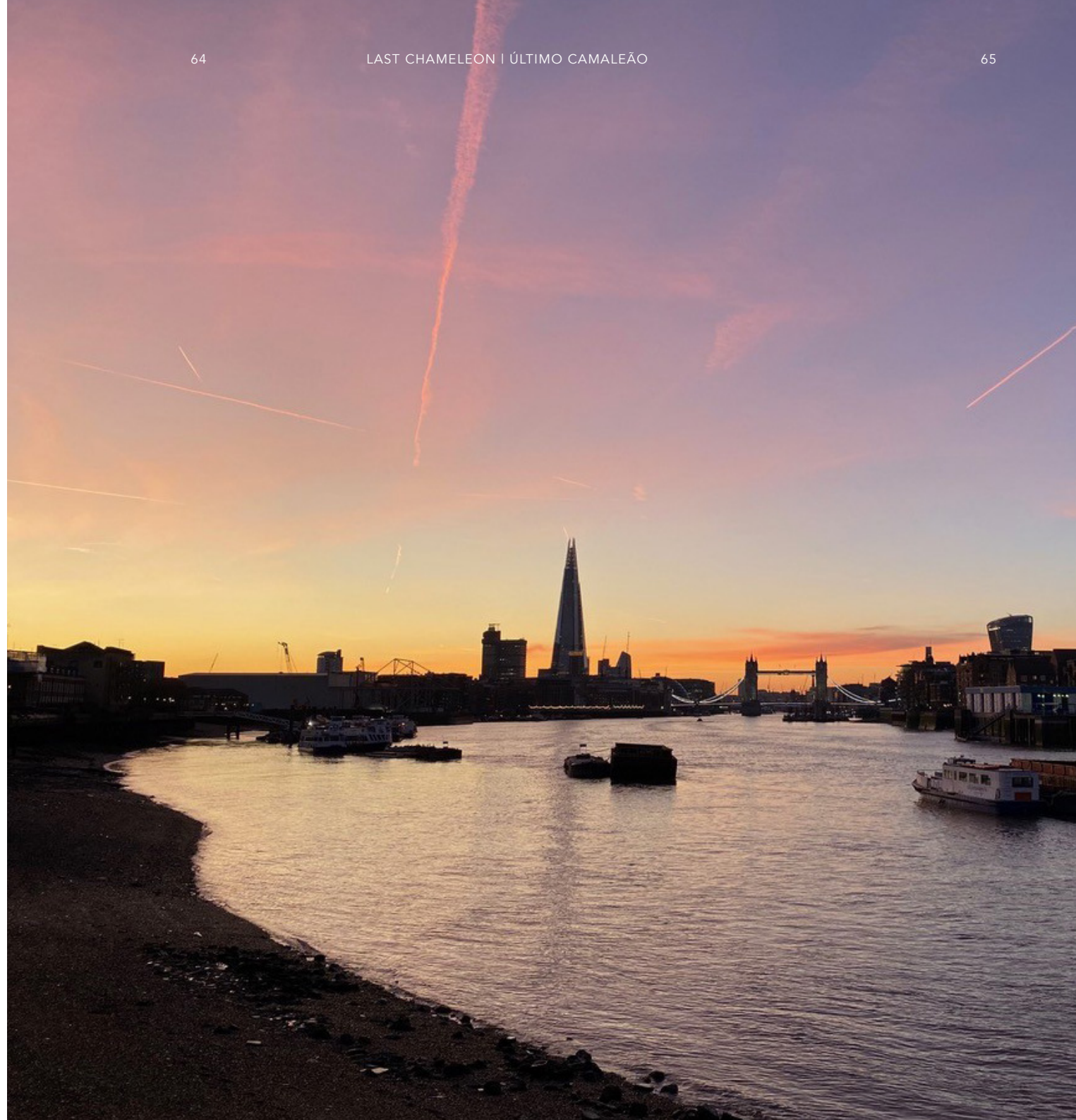
Para misturar, humildes cenas campestres apreciadas pelos bem-feitos
e com as unhas nunca sujas.
Aldeões menos bem vestidos
curvado com chapéus elegantes, repetidamente arando e arando,
alude a uma sensação romântica de fome sazonal.

Gaios barulhentos e seus primos percorriam corredores de mármore em
caça ao tesouro, trocando bolotas.
Paredes espessas abrigam mapas ondulados mapeando os caminhos
antigos para lugares semelhantes, navios carregados de especiarias
preenchem as lacunas criadas para parecerem terras já encontradas.

Todo o brilho atrai os encantos imperiais das pegadas enquanto eles
escolhem e montam a memorabilia e as recordações suavemente
decadentes da Quinta.

ROTHERHITHE & PECKHAM

"Disappointment is everywhere"



Rotherhithe River Beach

Early morning mudlarker
already chocolate caked
knee deep in longing
glue-slurping in frayed boots.

Focused foraging, un-time bound
the bulk of him manoeuvres
stray shopping trollies.
Meshed hulks strewn in jetsam.

Bully boy gulls shamble in sludge slippers
half-curious, vulture-like disdain
dismissive of mudlarking -
'How Dare Yous', clatter over low tide.

Bike carcasses stripped piranha spotless
tidal sweeps of mud aromas
beached coins, naval medals, river relics
ancestral smoked-clay pipes.

On the tide's turn
the wide river's bygone
discarded human treasures
remain once more, deeply held.

Mothers

Ode to Melanie Klein

The apportionment of blame, a lifetime's game,
submerged jagged ice-bergs scrape the depths
drift through sedimented centuries.

Melanie's mothers are curtly summoned as culprits.
Assembled by those with compelling compulsions -
to name and shame.

The sins of feckless, faithless fathers,
somehow dismissed, cut out of the frame
of societal reckoning.

Collateral damage sprawls across the land:
banjo-playing beggars can tell a tale,
well-rehearsed reasons for a lifetime's hibernation.

Dull eyed, another abused daughter,
shuffle walks, sells unwanted grease-smeared newspapers.
Cursory generosities rewarded with toothless smile flickers.

Crawling to the summit, toppling the patriarch -
after all those childhood sparring fist-fights,
random rages and life-shrinking transgressions.

With more beer inside than good cheer,
marching forward to scoop up any lucky survivors
we pitch them off their pedestals.

Peckham Promise

On King's Grove corner
late that night
it all spilled out.

She wanted firm commitments
shared visions
assured future
stretching right down the street
into the next town
fencing in the middle years
hold her in centred safety
give hope of an end
to the not knowing:

promise of a life lived -
together

to marry

to have
a child

to stem
solidifying disappointments

to cauterise
life's churning uncertainties.

City Gentry

Wrecked humanity, searing poverty
shamble-scuffle walking
down the dirty linen strewn street

Slashed razor cuts, shorn head
fetid, hole-splattered red shorts billowing
congealed greasy blood, nothing neat

Hobbled, laceless boots
mucus-smeared charity jacket ill-fitting.
Genteel coffee sippers, feign discreet

Unknowable, running scared, close neighbours
into private island pavement cafes slinking
stitched open furring eyes, disconnection complete.

TOGETHERNESS



The Retreat

In the casa *fechada* -
leaving dust to settle
has been a life-long chore.

Cobwebbed, long decades friendless:
cracked smudged windows,
stiff doors re-rooting themselves,
skin-diseased flaking paintwork,
sun-drained.

Thick wholesome walls
grounded in the vineyard village.
Although sparse,
all there,
recyclable.

Lightness, stream-like, runs through,
hits chequered, dirt-streaked floors.
We parcel out cleaning tasks,
recharge former passions.

Our play for today meanders.
Our time together,
brick-by-brick,
inspires cathedrals,
a hastening of delight,
whirl of yearly seasons.

Clearing nettles,
the artist flourishes in his creations,
layering colours,
painting fresh life into shrunken rooms,
memory-filled.

Fairytale spiralled staircase,
tempter of new house-guests,
centres the retreat,

stabled love's beating heart.
Our years mount up,
bursts of sunshine hours,
gusts of Swift screaming parties.

Often a messy blackbird,
scuffs up the peaceful plot,
roughly rotavates crumbling soils,
each day a hole to be repaired,
replenished.

Nearby the regular customers,
house-martins,
in simple black and white garb,
maintain walled-mounted mud huts.
Admirable handiwork,
irrefutable commitment.

In plain sight,
all revealed blessings,
to be found, and polished.



Coming Together

High above the river,
we come together in a hilltop fortress city of regal promises,
Six hundred and fifty years in the making,
Kingdoms combine.

Boarded up *Hotel Central* creaks,
centuries-old alliances were birthed in these musty rooms.

Looking down,
the young romancers
absorb the wide shimmering river view,
consider all the name-changing.

Driven out Phoenicians,
displaced Lusitanians,
Romanesque fortified **Scalabis**,
conquering Moors,
morphing into the Gothic.

Rich religious inheritances,
Shantarin bequeaths Moorish poets,
jettisons them for sad prayers to martyred **Santa Iria**
forever throwing herself towards God,
before being mauled by murderous hearts,
dragged along by strong Tejo river currents.

Christian madresses, medieval rock throwing,
the expulsion of another tribe,
Synagogue smashed into the ground,
tenderly brick-by-brick resurrected
into God's Cathedral.

The city of **Santarém**
winks to a sprinkle of modernity,
renounces the name-changing ways of the past.

Jacaranda trees blossom into radiant friendships
then love stories,
we bring all of ourselves,
to the King and Queen's wedding day feast.

The early days called for dalliances
the banishment of intruding finitude.
Moving on, a closer attention to faithfulness,
appreciation of a lifetime of vicissitudes.

The allied couple hanker for dutiful delicacies
that reside at the highest echelons.

Hotel Central un-shuttered,
doors wide open to new epochs.

Young hearts intertwining,
unscripted future histories unfurl
entering vacated spaces.

Scalabis, Shantarin, Santa Iria, Santarém
– the consecutive names of the city



Encontro

Alto acima do rio,
Nós nos reunimos em uma cidade fortaleza
no topo de uma colina das promessas do rei,
Seiscentos e cinquenta anos em construção,
Reinos se combinam.

O Hotel Central fechado com tábuas range,
alianças centenárias nasceram nessas salas mofadas.

Olhando para baixo,
os jovens romancistas
absorva a ampla e cintilante vista do rio,
considere toda a mudança de nome.

Fenícios expulsos,
Lusitanos deslocados,
Scalabis fortificado românico,
conquistando os mouros,
transformando-se no gótico.

Ricas heranças religiosas,
Shantarin lega poetas mouros,
alijou-os para tristes orações à mártir **Santa Iria**
lançando-se sempre para Deus,
antes de ser atacado por corações assassinos,
arrastados pelas fortes correntes do rio Tejo.

Loucuras cristãs, lançamento de pedras medievais,
a expulsão de outra tribo,
Sinagoga caiu no chão,
ternamente ressuscitado tijolo por tijolo
na Catedral de Deus.

A cidade de **Santarém**
pisca para uma pitada de modernidade,
renuncia aos modos de mudar de nome do passado.

As árvores de jacarandá florescem em amizades radiantes
então histórias de amor,
trazemos tudo de nós,
para a festa de casamento do rei e da rainha.

Os primeiros dias exigiam flertes
o banimento da finitude intrusa.
Seguindo em frente, uma atenção mais próxima à fidelidade,
apreciação de uma vida inteira de vicissitudes.

O casal aliado anseia por iguarias obedientes
que residem nos mais altos escalões.

Hotel Central aberto,
portas escancaradas para novas épocas.

Jovens corações se entrelaçando,
histórias futuras não escritas se desenrolam
entrar em espaços vagos.

Scalabis, Shantarin, Santa Iria, Santarém – os nomes consecutivos da cidade

Peaches in the Peaks

In less inclement climes
with extra to give
the long coupled pair pour
spare love,
seek Persian pleasures,
determine to grow peaches.

Building a sturdy peach house,
Victorian glazed
to hold in warming comforts, the ease of years
their spindly peach tree is coaxed along
urged to forget sunbathed Middle Eastern soils -
trained to fan out
climb dank blackening walls
cherish meek English sunshine.

Glass rattling wind, rain lashes, icicles -
little more than minor inconveniences
for sidelining
like dark morning arguments,
dream hangovers.

Spurred on by off-white flesh allure,
our tireless gardeners re-double their efforts
they water
tend to nurturing needs.

In repaying constant attention
the beloved tree blooms
cosies up to ripening multi-coloured tomatoes
imbues herb aromas
admires the busyness of bees
scouting courgette flowers.

One mid-summer morning,
hand in hand, two peaches,
half hidden by leaf glistens
smartly present themselves
for picking and slicing -
soft lovers' breakfast
of shared togetherness.



“ In fact, I hate tree huggers ”

Sir Kier Starmer, Leader of the U.K. Labour Party,
July 2023

Tree Hugging

The hugging of trees, done full-heartedly,
kindles the warmest of Connections.

Trees are stalwart fans of hugging
favouring it to having chunks knocked out of them
or chainsaw razor cuts, all bullish and brutish.

It's difficult though to hug more than half a decent-sized tree,
unless long armed, broad handed -
most need two, or a posse of huggers for full-on hugging.

People need hugging too
but can be less good at it
struggling with the concept of care
and the simple importance of breathing -
often more interested in the currency of tree rings
calculating how many to cut down,
preferring tidy and clearings.
Dead, not alive.

Tenacious trees hang on,
in small compact groups,
lying low in steep riverines,
along the skylines of roadless mountains
just below heaven.

Spaghetti rooted, remainers hug each other
together for wood warmth -
few though report feeling safe in these minuscule hideouts.

Despite the mounting adverse
evidence,
life-giving trees like to ponder
the likelihood of there ever being
a surfeit of tree huggers –
so that they'd have a fighting chance
of keeping on hugging the ground.

Longings

waking, rising early
more less smart time
gobbling hours as they chime

vibrating hurly burly -
unwholesome embrace
minutes fly
days congregate, sweep by -
frenetic breakneck texting race

less worded rooms, all surly -
juttering scrolls through lit screens
cadaver white-eyeballs skimming memes

heads bowed faithfully
digital life curator:
demands obedience,
devilish creator

untethered, the watching of everyone looking down
we're all there, unknown
less knowing, bewitched, morose -
many fast tracked to comatose

swimming in a sinkhole with snakes
heedless of exquisite moments it takes

parallel worlds, all our own
modern families, couples less a team -
no longer seeing, but wanting to be seen

from earlier times -
longing for lives to live, not too sad -
longing for those lives we all once had.

“Let birds fly above the earth”

To whosoever would stop and listen
he said what he had made -
It was good, why not then believe.

At times, it's so much more worth believing, than not.
Every village offers up a resting place,
eager home-building monuments to his goodness.

The white lightness in bird-kissed skies believe in the night,
distant transparent earth-aping moon forever there,
late June-drenched, a hot mid-day joy within grasp.

Further off, daughter and father inspect prized flowers
soak up the freshening church air.
The arched door gasps for breath.
Stooping parent, with his adoring daughter
look out towards the light,
spy tea and cakes homemade arranged as offerings.

Word-drained gravestones lurch in robust lines,
some downcast, a handful still sharply crafted.
Village chatter competes with a posse of screeching swifts
belting vertically skywards, at the last possible moment
swerving the flint church tower -
calling the bell ringers to start their next chiming.

Combining together, bell ropes gently pulling –
an invitation for us all to stay.

Flamebacks *

At the flick of dawn
feeble first light,
hunger driven
the handsome woodpecker pair
beeline for a favoured
leafless, desiccated tree,
rotten and whitened.
Start knocking wood,
drilling side-by-side,
to clear their foggy heads.

Hardened bills splinter timber,
skipping and scampering branches
they turn, face each other
in a dancing closeness
of long-coupled flaming love.

Without exception,
every early morning
the same -
togetherness,
rubbing along companionship,
and termite breakfasts.

ALBANIA



Shqiperia Skies

Tirana's minareted skies
 racetrack Swift-full.
 Boisterous high pitched
 babel conversations -
 sky-home seeking.
 Lunge for ledges,
 a resting place to nest.

No-one can get a word in.
 Sparrow squads work overtime -
 plead for a hearing,
 betray sisterly irritability.
 Bigger cousins chattering,
 Drowns out.
 Even the city's raucous boy racer
 traffic struggles for a look in.

Copper bells ring,
 muezzin prayer summons.
 Shqiperia's brave double-headed
 eagle flag unfolds itself,
 Magpie fledglings skip-hop
 cupped in warmed mountain containment.

Circling contagion of swirling Swifts -
 virtual monopoly of sky-driving playfulness,
 shuttered window crash-landing.
 Warm host welcomes -
 we dive in
 to a late Spring,
 near Summer frenzy.

The wife, and her husband

On days like these
 Dead or Alive, it hardly mattered.

Sorting through communal bins
 praying for sticky gems to reveal,
 or any of life's tossed away
 lost treasures to tumble out.

The man's glistened forearms
 in an unhealthy rummaging
 looks for stray bullets in the deepest bin depths,
 perhaps a shard of former affections.

Then from crumpled Berat castle tops,
 crisp outlined tangerine mountains,
 a different breeze
 sweeps the streets.

Tight-head storms disperse.
 Re-remembered love spurned
 creeps back, refuse collectors scoop out
 cross words, toxic rages and perfection.

Once more, the broom clasped to calming hearts.



The Reserve

Distinct boundaries,
outside only pain,
hunter's guns,
concrete, wall-to-wall hostilities.
Hoxha's menacing pill-boxes
spill in ugly formation -
never to serve any useful function.

Hemmed into fragments
Bee-eater guards wear charmed regimental colours,
perfect tunnelling skills in soft sand banks.

They hold the wind.
Greet with pride,
the colony appears in rude fashion
at the reserve entrance,
skating the thermals,
freeze-floating,
dip-diving.

The reservists garrison
on barbed wires or thin grass strands,
moving over the land with intimates.
Swallow tribes,
sweep across cuckoo-stuffed fields.



The Carp of Albania, Shkodra

Ever since the five small fishes
fed the multitude,
fish have had a hard time.

They've grown, of course.

Regular table delicacies,
weighty gulping Carp
find themselves held captive
in glass tanks
by the roadside.

Weakened, flop-circling,
fins emerge from sparse river water.
Arm length long, a half dozen suck the air,
scour puffed greying skies for life-boats.

Drooping, a super-sized pair, pitiful bulbous eyes,
sink to the bottom in a seeing the-world-upside-down way,
wonder at high Albanian mountains -
take note of shining Mercedes-Benz cars
that litter the roads,
darkened windows to hide
local celebrities or corrupt officials.

The container leaks precious sustenance.
Is then replenished by a desire to keep them
alive long enough to be eaten.

Clipped haircuts, black clad young men
huddle in mild curiosity,
puzzled by their own imprisonment,
angling to get somewhere else,
yet put off by all the awkward bones.

Over-taking lorries angrily stamp the ground.

Next up, caged puppies shudder, look askance.
Street dog posse kerb-nap, a few despair -
nodding heads bearing witness.

Lake Shkodra's diminishing Carp -
homage to Gallean fish already departed,
gills shudder.
As water levels now slurp
even less propitiously,
the roadside team scope watery graves
they hadn't figured on,
cast around for small boat escapades -
or at least,
a leaping chance of a River Buna reunion.

Butcher Birds *

Hook-billed bandit.
Hedge-hugging,
masked up.

Highway pirate -
barbed wire swaying,
tail flicks for balance.

Red-backed, serene.
Spies basking lizards,
grasshopper pole-vaults.

Viking at heart,
constant raiding.

Kitchen knife talons,
prey mercilessly skewered.

Puffing up:
Leopard-pounce -
all exit doors sealed.

Another lethal lunge,
diving
into the deepest grasses.

Spiked victims,
laid out for display,
dissection.

Bloodied fields marked out -
tidy butcher blocks.

* Shrikes

**Açougueiro Aves ***

Bandido de bico de gancho.
Abraços de cerca viva,
mascarado.

pirata da estrada -
arame farpado balançando,
a cauda balança para o equilíbrio.

Dorso vermelho, sereno.
Espões de lagartos-frade,
saltos com vara de gafanhotos.

Viking de coração,
invasão constante.

garras de faca de cozinha,
presa impiedosamente espetada.

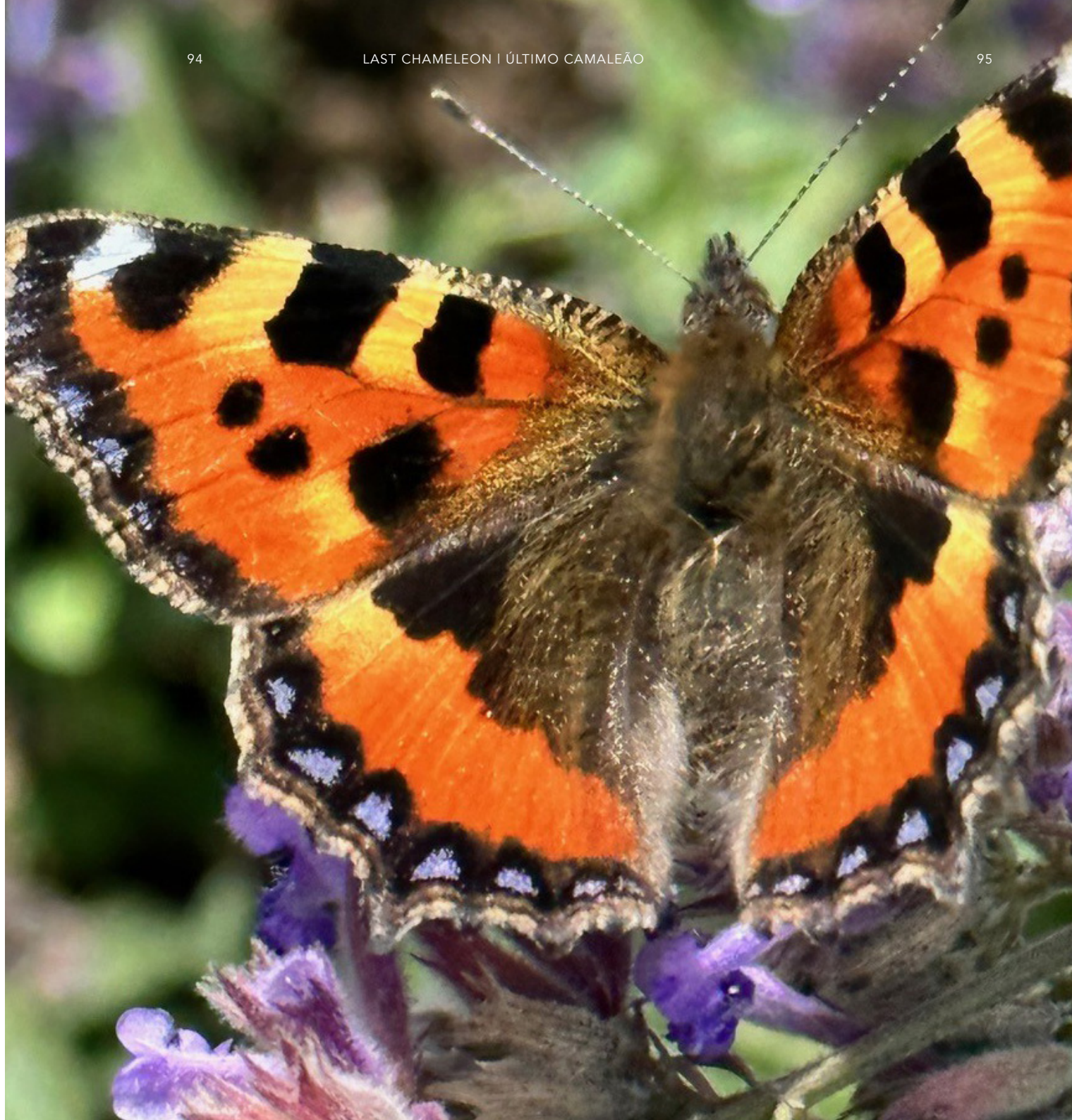
Inchando:
Bote-leopardo -
todas as portas de saída seladas.

Outra estocada letal,
mergulhando
nas ervas mais profundas.

Vítimas cravadas,
dispostos para exibição,
dissecação.

Campos sangrentos marcados -
blocos de açougueiro arrumados.

MY NORTH



English Rainforest

Buckets of rain are thrown down
as wishes from a depleting well,
bold verdancy of sky stretching trees
as they soak up life,
leaves reach to implore for more,
fat droplets dance merrily on the rocks,
add to the drenching.

Dark, tobacco-stained,
the river hurtles
pushes everything aside,
twisted thoughts,
amputated moss-encrusted branches.

Water-proofed ducklings hug the river bank,
visibly shaken by the surging hissy roar.

Muddled rain water slushes,
puddle-dodging walkers
on their eager Dipper search,
which now are resting up unseen.

The river journeys on
wearied by age old destinations.

Then to light up the rain-soaked gloaming
an electric blue line streaks
hushes all,
a kingfisher never minds a month of rains.

Squelching on, broken bridges bar the way,
the friends turn back
conjure up a warming tea party
at the old School house.

Roman Road

Knife slice through Bainsbridge pastures.
Taut stone-strewn line, ramrod straight.
Modern chariots bone-shake
scorn this less pristine paving
leading out from True Men's melted away hill fort.

Licked Sun Hot
chequered green lushness
shouts out MidSummer joys -
Sheepfolds decorate
tree-starved cake cutter squares.
Fields slate wall lined, Curlew pens.

Heading for Wensleydale's
dancing clouds, legs pedal stretch
in step with breeze blown echoes
of pounding Roman legions, all fitness and menace.

Curlews pour their song
into the Dale's fast-flowing teatime skies.
Gingerly, we make sweat-staining tracks
along the roadway's ancient ridge.

At last, from the summit
an exalting refreshment down the Fells,
helter-skeltering
full of gratitude for gripping brakes
wheel-spinning whirl
flesh chilling waterfalls of falling.

Leverets fumble, then scatter across Crag-side.
Far below, an imagined lunge
into cooling Semer Water
overflowed by the tawny bubbling
River Bain.



Skies of Deliciousness

Far off, a shimmering enticement
in each direction smudged islands sit low, shallow-soiled,
clearance deserted, drowned in silver seas.

Gripping granite bedrock
fidgeting on the Great Glen Fault line
seaworthy Mull balances with ammonite time.

Risen in magma tidal swells, molten lava lifts
nudged along by shaping ice ages -
isles tugged upwards to chastened blue skies of deliciousness.

Into Treshnish

Carved isles
faint shadows
a saints' refuge
volcanic dyke etched
suffering rubbed out cloud indignities -
rainbow mists sweep by
rocket propelled
face-masking sunlight
neighbourly calls
into Calgary bay
hastily made.

Bronzing kelp beds offer comforts
glow like stained copper buckets
sheltering oiled-fur jacketed Otters.
Scurrying Oystercatcher
brushstrokes of carrot orange
furtive along the foreshore
beaks nose-diving
probing soft sandy mud.
Bone china sands
shrug off Caribbean pretentiousness.

Rear view snatches
on the climb into Treshnish,
rushing expanse of capricious sun showers -
hushed sparks of light punching away
swooping leaden skies.
Sea harangued
turquoise ink rock pools recede
replaced by field green
heather ruddy hills
harebell, velvet rumped
meadow sweet, scabious
high grassland ridged -
like the sweeping steppes
of imagined Mongolian magnificence.



Around the Isle - buying fish in Mishnish & other tails

From touch the ceiling skies,
tracks lead down from Treshnish to Mornish farmlands.
Around a crooked corner, a haunted house,
rock pelted by angry aboriginal winds.
Familiar tales of man's greed -
travelling across the world on a killing spree for bounty money.
Indigenous ghosts catching up with him.

Moving quickly, next door, Quinish,
with multi-million year histories of petrified forests
one recalcitrant lava robed tree remains
a calling card from volcanic birthing.

Mishnish lochs far below
deep, sea trout rich, easy pickings for majestic White-tailed Eagles
who give the appearance of being off elsewhere,
otherwise engaged, adjusting their performance fees.

In Tobermory we pull fish up from the freezer depths,
before heading further on, mulling over:
Where are all those cute sea otters road signs urge us to take care off?
Our Mull time is running low.

Deciding against the turn to Fishnish, until much later,
we skirt the north some more.
Wild flower meadows heave with bees, carder and white-tailed.
Waterfalls abound, no shortage of rain to replenish,
no sight of water Ouzels either.
Is everything resolved to remain hidden?

Around gusty Treshnish point
we begin our hike through bracken
clutch at readied blackberries
scour stone beaches for nature's treasures
leap disintegrating drystone walls.

Turning eyes to the sea
volcano spat islands rise up from fickle cloud curtains
mysterious Fadda and far-flung Lunga.
Norse-sounding, seabird brimming.

Tarrying Viking ancestors surely scared off the locals,
forever on the lookout for a free meal or monastery to pillage and plunder
as they sailed the seas in early Medieval warm winds.
Polar ice melts lured them on and then even further away
bound for Iceland, stopping off in deceitful Greenland,
an ending in tears in far-flung North American landings.

We manage one final island glancing:
little more than it's goats for company,
Gometra to our left, on the horizon Staffa,
home to it's much trailed famous cave, inspiration for composers.

Scrambling up the cliff face,
spluttering breathless onto stilled moorland.

Once bustling, now desolate deserted villages at Crakaig weakly greet us,
redolent of chilled fishing families with peat fires in their hearths
brought low by typhoid and cholera.
Barren heathland settlements reduced to a jumble of boulders and rubble.

Bones dissolved into granite, mouths earth filled,
aghast at heaven's level of difficulty to reach.
Iona's St Oran could have brought the long dead villagers better fortune?
Yet, the seeking of God's grace did him no favours.
His burying alive was supposed to bring maniacal Columba's first church
and dedicated brethren fortuitousness.
Norse raiders, again, blood soaked such dreaming.

Just before the next rain storm
through the centre of the rainbow skies
we stumble into the dryness and magic of the tin shed,
marvel at the super quick transience of lives lived,
the need to be on target with the moments right now before us.

In the lank dampness and heath bird calls,
we transitioned to the walk's ultimate section on the thin Island road.
Circle almost complete,
Treshnish just a mile beyond in the lambent gloaming.

ANGELS & GODDESSES



Hot Tub Goddess

The small singing bird swims
across blue waters of the virgin sky.
Graceful glider in an early morning joie de vivre.
Well-travelled skyward tramlines, unmarked.
In the bird's wake the sun's rising chariot
navigates parting clouds
urges the break of fasts.

Aphrodite, lusty health
and toasted comforts
emerges from hot waters,
cleansed, energised, with blue-eyed smiles
succulent accruements;
packs away malignant dreams of melancholic exclusion,
the dull thuds slip off.

Fresh airy days all to live for,
to revere as you would a sunlit zephyr after bitter winds.
Gulp down the swiftness of mornings,
with promises of redemption.

"If it is a good morning, which I doubt."

Longest Day

The year's mid-point,
starts light-rich early

from a former morning foray
chilled tea stirs itself.

Bristling up, I nod to concealed
Eeyore in his still-shadowed corner.

Left open windows suck in the day's burbling sounds,
I mind-skip through endless hours.

Tawdry piling high laundry lines up
some more less time to add to life's halfway.

Garden birds test novice voices
amuse themselves in aliveness

the first-out-of-bed drowsy bees
mooch in the damp flowers.

Together in our differences,
we stretch, behold the longest day

before the turning back
to winter torpors.

first time

before then
there is no time
but the present

lapsed time grips
deceptive python squeeze
minutes slowly spiraling

at first, stand-offish
smiling gingerly
short sentences, incurious words

before warming up
moving from first incarnation
campfire face aglow

fusing outwards
eyes ablaze
fresh bodied

sparked by commitments –
unlived years to unpen
confronting us

firing up with a knowing
the moment is now - widened horizons
for the filling wisely

Angel in my bed

The night's rain
washes away
the evening's rancour

Less kind, unangelic words
lie muddy, and puddled
dissolve into a fading flintiness

Morning cups of hot tea
chase off sulky, slinking
dark dream spiderwebs

Fresh promise
of a holiday's mid-week day
less heavy rain to dampen spirits

You stir yourself, under-refreshed
fair hair ruffled –
a lifetime of being angelic

Tentative, we map the day:
a cycle ride along Lochs and racing spate waters -
awakenings akin to horizontal waterfalls

Prospects of embracing tepid afternoon showers
rare Eagle sightings
smoked trout sandwiches on the shoreline

Unvisited Tuesday spreads before us
just an Angel's kiss away -
to ignite and get it all kick-started.

Goddess

Encouraging routine human fuck ups was her main day job. In stony silence most hours were consumed with being revered and worshipped. Hectic schedules. Ill-deserved interruptions. Oftentimes called upon at short notice to rustle up a quick escape - based on monstrous lies and unhealthy helpings of deceit. Or the simple patching together of relationship car crashes. So many Goddess statues, chipped but silky smooth, litter minds-capes, strained companionship to the heaped mistakes.

Visceral

It's the kind of anger people say you need help to overcome.
Limbs alert.
Chest tightening, an eater of sleep.
Like sedimenting coffee granules choking the sink,
the over-thinking plans backing up.
Inspid daylight unlikely to flush away.

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Once
Something
Safe
Known
Warming,
stories told
handed down
for recitation.

Shattering,
unhappiness
stole in,
loss of Something
Complete.



OLDER PERSON'S GAP YEAR



Inwards

Life here at the retreat.
It's hectic, dawn-to-dusk self-reflection and wildlife therapy,
forest bathing, the delving inward.
All these many selves to meet.

Today's forested family,
Malaysian smiles, backdrop insect accompaniment.
Intensities of being, the clutching of now moments.
Thriving true self, calling for full engagement.

Forest Dragon (aka Borneo Anglehead Lizard)

Starlight sparks tree trunks
squirrels glide
fat translucent lines of raindrops ricochet on swelling streams.

A night walk into childhood bedtime stories of dragons.

Wide-eyed glints, blotchy and scaly.
Falling in Love was easy,
like a father for his one special daughter
small hands beseeching, impatient,
wanting happy endings before the beginning -
pointing out the best ways forward
in the jungle's dense and twisted canopies.

Cheekily sunken into lizard dreaming,
serene in the middle of pitch.
Night's darkness hides her miniature dragon-like features.
Feisty and hot flamed.

Torchlit coaxing onto your stick branch stage,
comb-like crest of spines silhouetted,
outsized pouncing dragon's feet.

Clamped on, questioning cleverness
hovers in your bemused reptilian smile.
Unusual movement could cause a querulous flare up,
or scuttling towards prey.

The whiplash from your tail, a paralysing useful extra.

Juggling different angles, dimpled and beautiful,
hosting a collection of lost planets, light green and greys,
deadly serious staring.



Remnants

Equatorial heat washes over stilled stickiness, oven-glove ready.
Song birds, fantails flashing, answer the morning call to prayer.

Grimacing, squeezing passed suffocating row upon oil palm row
smaller creatures venture out into sunlit openings only first thing,
or as dusk musters.

Stray canine crews prowl perimeters. Precious left to guard.
Scarcity the new fashion: nature reserve relics savaged
by carelessness, strangling vines of greed.

Biodiversity baselines drop through leaf-covered rainforest floors.
Painted emerald vipers delve deep. Scorpions skedaddle.
Fearsome mosquitoes cluster, fewer victims for their snacking.

Heat blisters the scrappy remnants,
lethargic green growth smothers heaped plastic mountains.
Almost all of everything thrown to the dogs.

In brown gravy streams whimsical Iguanas ease into swimming
lesson joys navigate dumped building rubble, blackening
shopping bags.
Powering tails act as rudders, paddling back to a dinosaur age.

Bathtubs of rain slam down, punish cracked mud, bring freshening
perspectives wildlife replenishment - palm oil-free pristine worlds.
Anglehead lizards scamper to higher ground, cast around
for saviours.

Warming torrents usher hope, with cherished primeval flood stories
conjuring feelings of a clean sweep, a going back to the start,
an answer to lamenting prayers.



*" My baby don't care for shows
My baby don't even care for clothes
My bear just cares for me"*

Nina Simone

Simone and the Sun Bear Carers

Always the first to welcome us
my favourite scampering bear,
outwardly bearing up well
full of grin and bear it attitude
despite the everyday misery of orphanhood.

Spritely, each Bear House morning,
sparkling reach out eyes
moist sniffing dog snout
strong jawed mouthling
of animal greetings.

Climbing to her world's roof,
she bears herself all friendliness and jaunty refrains:
a bear that just cares - as we care for her.
Securely attached to her caged home,
wall-mounted cradle - reluctant, if ever, to leave.

Scanning my unfamiliar face,
wanting to know:
which side does this Sun Bear carer belong?
To the tribe of the hunters
or the tribe of the hunted.

The carers' love holds her
although, no doubt, she'd prefer her butchered mother
as a daily companion instead,
lovingly bearing fruit
cajoling along, showing her how to be a bear.

Her past is hard to bear thinking about
but bearing it in mind we must -
present bear-keepers, jazz music novices,
continue to use her given pet trade name:
Simone.

In the slaughtering madness, not spared a thought or care,
Simone was forced to bear witness
of ripped away infancy innocence -
forever stolen forested life of wild honey,
mother's goodnight bear stories.

Admiring her high collared chestmark necklace,
wanting to give her a bear hug, I step too close.
Rules forbid being in the cage with the bear.
'No touching the bear!'
Simone's bearing her soul touches me.

Reminded that we are the animals gone killing mad,
she moves forwards
whispers everyday stories of animal suffering:
murderous bear hunts
for a few sweaty Ringgit.

Moving her lips, tongue lolloping
bearing her teenager canines,
in need of a brushing,
Simone shares familiar trauma tales,
she bears the hidden scars.

Sunny demeanour restored by her carers' devotion
she doesn't bear anyone a grudge,
outside forest sounds prick her ears
there's an imagining of what could have been
if her mother had escaped the poacher's snare:

They'd be scaling telegraph pole straight
Shorea tree heights,
together making their own untidy bear nest,
not being looked at by her caring rescuers,
but looking down on her cruel tormentors.

Curved claws cage clang
with Simone's eager shimmying up and down,
as we clean up her home and bear gifts – banana, watermelon,
crunchy pumpkin, medicinal treats
– what more can a bear want?



Image: Paulo Rocha

Borneo Rainforest

Dawn:

Tree skipping, rain-coated Drongos find the dimmer switch, turn on light blues to match their uniforms. Bird wave leaders, breakfasting, sing songing. Swift downpours halt the morning rush. Hush their still sleepy head voices.

Ignoring the 'no smoking' signs, rising mists curl and circle in canopy dips. With the sun's soft lips, warm shower raindrops slow as the forest wakes up in earnest. The first guests, a cavalier Orang-utan family, grab fruits and crack branches as they reel easefully through air with comedian smiles. Traverse tightrope spaces as if blindfolded, all fours gripping.

Dusk:

Nature's entangling gardens fenced in by shadowing skyscraper trees. Dense camouflage greens, vine stringed longways and downwards, a Tarzan playground. Flying squirrels practice their leaps of faith as they turn off the lights. Cicadas quiver, postage stamp-sized frogs bellow, all frantic noise and fury to signal another close of the day in the forest.

Yala

Birds queue up, patient for that special photograph to be taken the whole landscape moves.

Shy elephants tuck in their ears,
mongoose marauders slow down the traffic.

Each and all, packed in - on best behaviour, minding their own business. Crocodiles dipped in chocolate mud puddles, wink, jaws clamped shut.

On the way in, tarmac warmed,
Sleeping dogs lie, impervious to dangers, hogging the road's sides and middle.

On the way out, cattle congregate, choking the exit,
ruminating on the day's topical events.

Into the corral, herdsmen's sticks bear down to encourage safer night-time sojourns. Much better than being an elusive leopard supper.

Fishermen of Mirissa, Sri Lanka

Pinched between lit-up luxury hotels,
as melting orange drips over the horizon line,
these night-shifters head off.
Routines set by warm Indian tides.

Clocking the being watched, Father and son wave.

The chewing older fisher spits betel juice, decades of ritual bloodstaining of the sands.
His reddened lips, decaying beetroot teeth mined down to stumps,
mumble lethargic greetings.

Huddled, they discuss the price of fish, keeping it fresh.
Simple needs: buckets for storing the catch,
scooping out seawater, keeping afloat, young boys cycle-ready for whisking it to market.

A sea harvest of a few kilos will pay the bills,
maybe some new rope to hold shaky boats and family lives together,
a handful of rupees to stave off long-distance-longer-lasting migrant separations.
Less coming home, than going.

Fishermen of Mirissa set off on their nightly ten hour fishing trips,
forsaking costly boat engines for a single makeshift paddle,
they pray for light rains only, sea friends to bring them bounty,
not a monsoon lashing in open waters, or tsunami
to toss them and their held together by string vessels over rice fields into darkened forests.

We're all waving now, like friends reunited,
as they push through the swell, dive and net anything that moves in the water.

Next day, paying homage as they return safely,
son and father splash through darting rockpools.
Jig-zagging Crabs glare, claw stabbing the air.

Heaving the boat up the beach,
the son's white-teethed smiles like breaking waves,
relaxing into the arrival, finding safe shores once more.

Teardrop Isle

My heart beats across the world
marvels at the smiles of one-time strangers
vibrancy of colours packed into the blink of an eye.

Stapled into the ground warning signs
lead to verdant Ceylon woods, rain soaked -
venomous snakes attract in swaying grasses.

Rich birdland rewards.
Pulled along by invisible thread
floating lines of white tissue paper.

Clumsy ageing eyes slide upwards
catch the shimmerings of Indian paradise flycatchers
long feather duster tails brushing the branches.

Crested punk hairstyle
blue lipstick elegantly applied.
Tears prickle to behold woodland majesty.

Smitten, I chase them across the island.

Beautiful Fish

I pleaded with your capturers,
paid ransom money, knew your orange striped beauty was
not for any ordinary fish curry.

Fluttering gills gave signs of life, colours not yet drained.
Pert lips, your lover abandoned at sea, both so ready for Good
Morning kisses.

Tossed in uncharitable breaking waves, you danced in white froth,
an eye to the future. Drifting off, pulled down wondering:
Tear splattered, who was that passing rescuer waving through
Sand gritted hands.





Published by:



**Everything that
I have created,
I created for you.**

**Take care not to ruin and destroy My world,
for if you destroy it, there will be no-one to repair it after you.**

Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

Published by

