

PROSE SCULPTURE POEMS

In collaboration with a group of European journals led by *La Traductière*, *Poetry Review* invited some of this issue's contributors to produce a "prose sculpture poem": using only words taken, in the order in which they appear, from two consecutive pages of a book published in this century...

Tim Liardet
Winged Life

Slowly falling snow takes fright
in a corner of his mind:

Old ideas, luckless and inflated,
a device in so many pieces –

the throng, the mail-bomb, the green light
of the six-pronged snowflake.

Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*, Faber 2004, pp.305–6

Tom Lowenstein
Untitled

One reads or one listens. Disturbing,
complex ritual! Walking in the park,
talking of life, views on meaning,
reminiscences... often on walks
we are unsettled.

Alone and
reticent, she survived in the back room:
a strong, disturbed woman.
She preferred her inhibitions.
These restrictions were monastic.
Daring or dancing: both were prohibited.

Emma Gerstein, *Moscow Memoirs*, Harvill Press 2004, p.5

Conor O'Callaghan
The Port

We shouted,
were known
to wing
everything,
and the dark glow
several came
to believe
and told us of,
began descending.
This pretty black.

Others jammed
in the 70s,
were well-lit.
In the 90s
and shortly before
several areas
remained passable.

One civilian
evacuating the heart
stopped to call
when I passed,
asked for something,
said "You gotta talk"

– and suddenly
it happened,
the story
I am only
telling you.
I am here,
write it, do.

The 9/11 Commission Report, W.W. Norton & Co. 2004, pp.294-5

Andrea Dow
Lanugo

*They grow a fine hair on their bodies,
It's called lanugo. A fine downy hair.*

Her diary: the adolescent note,
an undertone. His daughter
liked to polish silver, take out boxes,
memorise old wrongs.

An illness that she has.

Always highly strung. No make up,
no small familiar objects
on the carefully made bed.

He lay in darkness.
Smell of hidden spaces.
Documents. Light fading
across the lough. He would wait there
for his daughter to come home.

Eoin McNamee, *The Ultras*, Faber & Faber 2004, pp.109–10

Jane Holland
In Mourning

There in the dark country
in the street

he clenched his mind

going back to her voice
her delicate hands

to the love
that looked right through him

piercing, undeceived.

Ursula Le Guin, *The Other Wind*, Orion 2003, p.81

Ros Barber

Round Behind The Silence

dinosaurs
reduced to the imprints of their own vertebrae
woolly mammoths big as houses matted and frozen deep
tigers shot and skinned beheaded stags
 in drawing rooms and restaurants
the dead pheasants rotting for better taste
 horses dogs and cats
(their gone warm muzzles
hoofs and clawy paws
the lit liquid of their eyes
horses bumping
dogs jumping and rolling and yelping hello
the cats' tails in the air vanishing ahead of her along the polished corridors)
chickens and their eggs cows and their calves
the different kinds of fish the pig sheep and lambs
the hundreds of creatures that she
had eaten over this half-lifetime

 ghostly chirruping
all the birds flown across her vision
mice garrotted in traps rats and foxes poisoned
dead on their sides with their tongues hung out
 the one-day-long butterflies
the moths charring themselves on light-bulbs
the bluebottles swatted burst
all the small fruit-flies which had grazed her life on uneven flight-paths

the tiny hardback beetles in roof beams
she sometimes found in her bed
and crushed between finger and thumb
the airborne germs that lived and died in her

all of them all of them all of them

battering the walls she couldn't see
with invisible fists and paws and hoofs
antennae and amoebic thready stem-things
yawling and hooing barking and squawking
snorting and mewing mooing and braying

squealing and squeaking and humming and hissing
Hey You! We're not dead!
Don't call us dead!

Ali Smith, *Hotel World*, Penguin 2002, pp.128–9

Pascale Petit
Osprey Nests

Sticks, seaweed, crosshatchings and slashes.
Toy sailboats, doormats, discarded rubber teat holders
from milking machines, TV antennas,
hula hoops, fish nets, rubber boots,
a broken bicycle tyre – worthless
unless put to use the birds agree.
A book called *Lucille, Bringer of Joy*;
various dried carcasses, derelict clothing.
A fondness for the shiny and artificial:
the fluorescent stuffing of an Easter basket
and large green garbage bags
that fly like flags off pirate ships.
Prize to the pair at Chapin Beach
who added a naked Barbie doll to their northeast wall.
At least a half dozen elaborate tunnels.
Sheer mass, dainty perfectionism.
More tall than wide,
weighing close to a ton.
Sanctuary word aeries
built higher each passing year.
Climb up into one for the winter – they support a man.

David Gessner, *Return of the Osprey*, Ballantine Books 2001, pp.35–6

Linda Chase
Commotion

Brace yourself.
He was going back to Ohio
to take down the storm widows,
and put up the screens.

What to make of him?
A renaissance man, a bulldog
a jukebox, a bumble bee.
I dropped a coin into the slot
way before my time.

The man that got away –
stormy, emotional, bittersweet.
I dreamed my script –
the future, a solid wall.

Bob Dylan, *Chronicles: Volume One*, Pocket Books 2005, pp.48–9

Neetha Kunaratnam
(Immigrant Version)

I like work checkout.
Stumbled upon Tesco, brass taste on floor.

Big Welcome trained staff, short and corny:
Be nice to impress. Nudge tick list,
Utter prompt: help, hello, goodbye...

Script lasted hours.
Break time, I walked drunk,
Made whizz.

Bad time began to drag. Chirrup *club-card* in my sleep.
Charm snatched chats, lit up banter, but monotony

Became stabbing customers, scanning wrists,
Struggling with beer, sore back, tired legs.

Wasn't surprised discover Health and Safety complaints.
Jaded, under strip lights, air clicked symphony:
Beeping fans left me shivery.

Urge to cheery blankness began. Spaced out,
Drugs soon sapped willingness.

Quieter moments, I thinking of water,
Amble to lavatory or airport.

Professionally charming for £4.94 an hour?
Yes? I knew stick it by Saturday,

Brain dead, fit for collapsing,
TV women beam back at you.

Joanna Blythman, *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets*, Fourth Estate 2004,
extracted in *The Ecologist*, September 2004, pp.58–9