

# LUDD GANG



slug pellets shins  
on our moonliyt raid  
as we break into membrane surface

and refix the whole thing  
(music  
pranks  
the feathers

the actual blackbird  
out on  
the sharp chrome rim

cast in the battered red light  
of horizons skimpitch

the whole thing silent  
it was midnight  
of demolitions, passengers  
it was midnight  
of the pressure to say

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM CROMPTON (2024)

MARCH 2024

# LUDD GANG

19

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# FRED SPOLIAR

*from* Community Building

{ what

is kept, what we keep, what keeps on; third place; work of amateurs; stretching  
to tools and seeds}

inadequate refrigerators  
where the hardened rind of everything grows  
sylvish  
pricing Shelter in the price of  
tulle for a song: you, my shit life pouring  
out The history of western embroidery  
on Etsy  
and Vimeo  
you,  
walked towards in the dusk looking  
evident as art,  
Keep  
the glue binding  
airborne to subterrains  
as if dis  
solving The  
thousand-year expertise not found in any store

Why {

*write* } / collective love-thing

**You**

as multiple bathhouse

as the morning lights **Our** issues Formed  
amorous wish-lists Out of origins in loneliness,

(A little la

-ophone

carrels)

like asking for a friend -

where is my shed

and where is your cognate shed

refusing to exist

or as indigo titration Nocturne

with impressions of an only harbour Where  
world sheds

our study

slouching into the allostatic manifold

**we** vermin to a purchase

All right skull, all right book

All right Seeping and leaping in public

Shelf routine wheres the A go & do I put it

Extreme like a bee in the Kinder mouth  
of hunger can't or don't want to think  
I'm thinking of inventing a ninth colour to see  
I'll sneak into the library with diagrams

Like duh – bucket – UK public  
Tongues, normally 1 – pinger sistren  
Lick it off the page then,  
Tom Random f-bomb on page 13–

Adherents have long called this  
obscure process towards scientific grace  
the Great Work

This is a preview. Log in through your library  
in which I looked for you Scampering  
impassioned beads of molten dye, radially  
wanting your announcement to the world  
condensed on cooler surfaces circumstance  
hardens: what then conduces softening  
Hazard; delighting to be unrecognised  
we are not isotropic,  
design must be revised by the human grain



# LYDIA UNSWORTH

## Agency

three women sit opposite me  
or two women and one man

they make me feel safe  
talk to me about my impeccable eye contact

sometimes they send me the questions beforehand  
framing that as an act of kindness

but still they are doing it

taking notes and ticking boxes  
either in place of or as well as thinking

I respond to the signs they give  
I hear when they like something

they take information from you  
where you heard about the job  
how their brand is perceived, etc  
but when you ask which tell-all book about publishing  
they've just finished, they say no, won't return the favour  
at all

in four interviews now, people have said *aw*

I can reduce a person to tears  
but I cannot pack a box with books  
especially not over the Christmas period  
when I have two children and cannot be on call

one prospective employer kept ringing me  
just kept on phoning to arrange this interview  
for a zero-hour contract

*if the client cancels less than 24 hours before  
we will pay you, or, if you are already on the way  
before that, we may consider it*

in the interview they asked why I wanted to work  
for them rather than for their competitors  
who I hadn't researched

I said *you called me*

they asked why I had a gap in my employment  
could I explain it  
I said I was looking for work  
obviously

because there is nothing else

the job centre bring my appointment forward  
without warning, stick it on a Saturday

I must always be available  
they say, we'll be in touch and no  
you cannot sit down and can you  
wait while I take this call?

in the job centre you cannot be late and you cannot  
be early           there are many chairs, though  
this is not a waiting area and they cannot be sat on

I said you've got ten minutes

my six-year-old says she will marry a man  
says maybe she will buy my house from me  
... *alright* ...  
or maybe her husband will

I ask her what she means by that  
and she says maybe she will earn *most* of the money  
and her husband will earn just a bit  
but that she might need that bit to buy the house  
and so they will have to share some things

I told her to make sure she has a thing she loves  
outside of that person, which no one can ever take away  
and that she can use that thing to express herself  
whenever and however she feels like

I told her the safety provided by money  
is one of the most important things in this world  
we have allowed be built

I told her to make sure he cleans the bathroom for her  
because she has already expressed her desire for that  
and I didn't want her to forget about it

in the job interviews  
they keep telling me how interesting I am  
and then not wanting me

they say *first I'll ask two questions, then she'll ask three*  
*and this will help you know who to look at*  
as if I lack interpersonal skills

then they say *why should we want you*  
*what can you bring to the table*  
*here's your chance to shine*, and so on

but my dad threatened to put me in care  
every time I spoke out of line or wanted to play  
a 2-player game on my little brother's PlayStation  
so I'm never sure how to answer questions of this genre

they said *why should we choose you*  
*over the other candidates*  
I said if you show me who they are I can tell you

it wasn't my fault, I told my daughter, defensively  
    he doesn't speak to anyone  
I said there's a lesson here about stubbornness  
anger, and a correlative lack of friends or family

and to me it's obvious how everything I know is obvious

I know how help people, and be helped, to ask for help  
of course, it's obvious

*why do you want to work here?*  
because you had a vacancy  
it looked like you needed something

# DHANVEER SINGH BRAR

## Pieces

*But she didn't know what she was doing  
She could hardly understand  
That she was really sweeping up  
Pieces of a man*

It was in 1973 that Donny Hathaway put it to us: in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination hope lay in extension. Hold on tight and last, Hathaway implored, because someday we'll all be free. But two years prior Gil Scott-Heron had already gone down another path. For him, it was all about going to pieces.

So it was that when in 1967 Gil left for Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, he really went there looking for Langston Hughes. Sadly, the poet laureate of the Harlem Renaissance was nowhere to be found. Instead, on the Lincoln assembly line he came across a host of fellow conspirators: Brian Jackson, Charlie Saunders, Eddie Knowles, David Barnes, Victor Brown, and Jackie Brown.

Together they went about building their own roving university using the pieces they found around them. The only degree awarding power this institution had was in bluesology: the science of the blues. It began with Small Talk at 125th and Lenox, but then on their way to Detroit the city almost lost itself. Soon we hear from Gil that they can be found kicking

up dust on a racetrack just outside Marseille. All the time, they are listening out for the word coming in from Johannesburg.

It's hard to say if Gil had a home. Sometimes it was where all the hatred was, the problems of city living and its false promises. On another day, he could see home coming over the horizon at dawn, a place where he can find his people, someday, someday.

The medium he chose was the Survival Kit on Wax. Shiny volatile arrangements of pieces looped together in extension; a circuitous groove cut into vinyl and broken up into discrete parts, it was the simplest and most complex form available. Easy to pick up, repeatable, yet unyielding when it comes to refusing to provide easy answers. Spirituals is what he chose to call them.

# JOE LUNA

## No Acknowledgements

As poets get better and better at securing funding, they increasingly run the risk of believing their own funding applications, mistaking their capacity for diverting public money into the hands and pages of poets for an actual coincidence of aims and intentions with the state-sanctioned rubrics of the funding bodies. At stake here is the measure and essence of gratitude and its objects – of what there is to be thankful for. Gratitude in poetic community must betray and outlive its ersatz imitation in the fields of application and due diligence lest it mutate into positivist delusion, an umbilical tithe to the state of things. Only a healthy dose of communal cynicism and adolescent, militant petulance prevents just acknowledgement festering into appeasement. As Tom Raworth memorably put it, 'Just give us the money and fuck off'.

## Political Economy

The only thing harder to care less about than eco-poetics is regular-sized poetics.



## No Prizes

Any poet who accepts a prize has shat it. Prize-winning poems are the acceptable face of cultural investment required by philistines to justify their experience of the quantitatively useless, which they both hate and guiltily consume, seething with a self-effacing diffidence and cultivated indifference they openly celebrate as a productive use of what little leisure time they have left. Those complicit in prize culture prop-up with self-interest the lamentable orgy of mediocrity that constitutes the sphere of mainstream critical appreciation. This appreciation always groans with the desperation of a clumsily projected, possessive similitude: the payoff is always the 'discovery' of something in the poem that reminds you of what you already felt and knew beforehand, only more so. The poet is to be thanked and venerated for this affirmation, which makes it understandable that young poets seeking the attention of readers would also seek out prizes: in doing so, however, they inevitably sacrifice readers for a temporary skein of undifferentiated attention that surrounds their work like a mucoid social lubricant. It may yet be possible to accept a prize as a well-planned joke, or as part of some elaborate, cartoonish heist, but the violence required to pull-off successfully such an anti-recuperative gesture would, in all likelihood, generate more of a shitshow than quietly refusing the invitation to be publicly prize-worthy in the first place. Perhaps the only hope for those nominated is to immediately counterattack in the vein of Benjamin Zephaniah's glorious pre-emptive antistrophe to the Laureateship: 'No money. Freedom or death'.

## Environmental Issues

In the face of the Prevent programme, it is every poet's duty to help foster an 'environment conducive to terrorism'.

# JESSICA WIDNER

## Revolutionary Triptych

1905.

Yasha was late to the meeting.

The room was humid and crowded. He took a spot in the back corner, pressing his body against the damp wall; hardly anyone noticed him and those who did didn't care. He was a small man who never said very much. When he'd first joined some comrades had suggested he was a spy but his uncle, who had been in the party nearly since its inception, had vouched for him. Now everyone mostly ignored him which suited him fine.

Gavrilov was speaking: "The strikes will continue as they must. They continue not only because of the will of the workers but because of the force of history's contradictions – they are an inevitability." Yasha smiled to himself. Gavrilov liked to tell the workers what they already knew.

"The question was," Yevseyev said, "about how many of us will go to St Petersburg."

"I should think all of us would go," said Vitsin, "Come now, they will never give us what we want. It's high time to take it ourselves."

Afterwards Yasha sat outside with his uncle, Grisha, and Lev around the fire. Grisha was quiet, his deeply lined face illuminated by the embers in his pipe. "I'm not going," Lev said. He had a thin, drawn face and stared resolutely at the flames. "I couldn't even buy bread last week. Anoushka's so hungry she's stopped crying – what makes them think we can all just get on a train?"

All of them thought about this for a while before Grisha said

“But Lev – how much longer can you live like this? I’ll buy your ticket for you.”

Lev just shook his head, looking away from the fire.

“Think of what it will cost you,” Grisha said, studying the young man’s face, “to not take that step.”

1919.

Dong-yul was late to the meeting.

The room was quiet. Everyone sat shoulder-to-shoulder but no one was looking at one another. Dong-yul shut the door noisily behind him but no one greeted him. At the head of the table, Jae-yong, his papers arranged in front of him, read under his breath.

“Have I come to a funeral?” Dong-yul said, but no one turned their head towards him. He took a seat in the only space left, which was right next to Jae-yong. The floor creaked as he sat but once the sound faded into silence he could just make out what the young man was saying.

*“...we regard as the first imperative the regaining of our national independence. We entertain no spirit of vengeance towards Japan...”*

“Speak for yourself!” Dong-yul said and this time received at least a couple of smirks in response. But Jae-yong stopped reading and turned his face towards Dong-yul, wearing an expression of cryptic calm.

“Forgive me, *hyung*, but this is not the time for jokes.” Jae-yong smiled as he said it, the way one would at a naughty child.

“Of course,” Dong-yul said, “The time for joking is over – now is the time to contemplate the suffering to come. Oh, that it could be both at once.”

“Brother Dong-yul will go laughing to his death,” another man said and there was some laughter. The atmosphere of the room let go a little; Dong-yul felt his shoulders loosen.

Afterwards he stood outside with Seong-ho and smoked a cigarette.

“*Hyung*,” said Seong-ho, “You know it’s very possible we will die

tomorrow.”

Dong-yul thought of Seo-yeon and the way her eyes crinkled at the corner when she smiled. He thought of the feel of her fingertips against the thin skin on the underside of his wrist, and the scent of roasted barley that she wore like perfume. He thought of the Japanese policeman who had stopped him on his way to the meeting and pushed him down, kicking dirt in his face before he let him go.

“Didn’t you hear them?” he said, smiling, showing the gap in his front teeth, “I will go laughing to my death.”

2024.

Helena was late to the meeting.

She sat in the seat closest to the door, mouthing an apology. Eric was giving a lead-in on historical materialism. He was a better speaker than most and had printed off his notes which she appreciated – she found it visually distracting when people read off their phones.

“In each step forward it takes, capitalism continues to facilitate its own eventual downfall,” he read, “each step forward forms the proletariat further, into the revolutionary class that they will eventually become.” When he was finished speaking he placed his papers down and looked up with a smile, pleased with himself, or maybe just pleased it was over. As she listened to the discussion that followed she thought, but when will some of these people be relieved of their incredible love for the sound of their own voice? That was what they all needed first – a revolution of shutting up. A revolution of reading the room.

Afterwards most people stood outside and talked. Helena wasn’t sticking around; she quickly made her good-byes and headed out into the night. She took the bus home and then went to the gym, where she sat in the steam room alone, shutting her eyes and leaning her head back against the damp plastic wall. She took deep breaths in of the humid, lavender-scented air. But there are children who have died of the cold in Gaza, she thought. How can I live with myself?

# *SIOBHAN DUNLOP*

## The Tenant's Nightmare: A love story

There's a hole in the wall of your new apartment and you don't know what's inside.

There's a hole in the wall of your new apartment and you can't say anything about it because the landlord chose you over hundreds of other people.

There's a hole in the wall of your new apartment and you've placed your things around it so you never forget about the hole.

There's a hole in the wall of your apartment and people mention it when they come over and you tell them you never notice it actually but this is a lie.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and during the day you wonder if you should look inside it.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and late at night you wonder if you should stick your arm inside it.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and even later at night you wonder if you should caress its edges.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and you can't stop thinking about it even when you're not in the apartment.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and it's getting bigger because you keep picking away at its edges.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and you've stopped inviting people over as they always stare into it and get freaked out.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and you no longer sleep in your bed but on cushions piled next to the hole.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and sometimes you whisper sweet nothings into the hole whilst you pull away at its edges.

There is a hole in the wall of your apartment and you've stopped returning your landlord's Whatsapp messages because the hole told you to.

There is an apartment on the edges of your hole.

# LUKE ROBERTS

## More Awkward Sleep

*For Mark Roberts (1950-2023)*

Starlings fly towards the setting sun  
and don't return. I was listening to the way  
it felt like to go, I was listening out for how  
it felt like to go on. My dad died so gracefully,  
like a fern. Dismal spring you make the journey  
home to split in two. The huge inward shift,  
strange figures almost out of sight on the horizon.  
You could settle on almost any image. Purple light  
trades places through the iris, I'm sure of it.  
That's how the premise of our life works.  
More giant days pummel you in tandem, break  
open questions you were the answer to.  
What you need in the end is mysterious and simple:  
water and skin brushing skin. The desire for what  
isn't precise just falls apart. Any broken  
picture of the human body, dying slowly at first  
then all at once. I just needed to be brave, walk past  
mock orange circle back. But I love any flat surface  
when it's slipping away, pink seam in the yellow  
of the yew. And if I'm not confused, then no-one  
here is confused. My fatalism is greater  
than any dull promise followed through, dome  
for salt grit shining at the precipice, sheep  
all sleeping in the shade. I had to go and make it real,



and it was real. And maybe now I'm imperfect  
in some new and brilliant way. A different person  
love saved to come back later, dipping rose stems  
in boiling water. And the water here is so good,  
it makes the loneliness almost rewarding.  
The landline rings and fills with feeling. There is  
a function even you don't understand. Aloe vera  
on the wind sill still in flower. Carl Reinecke's  
bullshit flute concerto and everything on the radio  
makes me sick. Night-scented stocks or sweet  
something-or-other, curled up in six types  
of honeysuckle. But all I could see was the outside  
up in smoke, mist curled round the last  
stalks of wheat, weeks of grass so dry  
it might shatter. And to sleep what I need is  
electrical hum, I washed the doorways  
and the windows and the step. My mother  
in her corner making parts from the whole,  
and my sister with her baby to the side.  
There are sheets of glass in folders and boxes.  
There are things to replace and improve.  
We see so many owls out here we make jokes:  
oh it was nothing, just a shitty little barn owl,  
springing from a gatepost with some protein  
in its claws. Other objects come sprawling into  
view behind my back. Crouched in holly canopy  
to shelter from the rain as it developed into more  
it was like I'd never needed anything at all.  
I lost my place. I lost some more. I watched  
how much it took for you to give up breathing.  
Grief timezone clumsy like some wounded faun.  
I can say what I want. Except for this and that  
and here and there. Sky twists with outrageous  
sentinels, cloaks of burning paper do the sound

I could desire. The impossible fucked-up  
structure of the social dissolution. What I loved  
was a string losing tension: slow mortal music  
of the drip, all the body data of our voices  
in the air above his mouth. And then I felt very  
quiet. And then felt very quiet information. What  
love means, to do this thing. Like standing at the edge  
of a beautiful scene, unable to sleep, covered in light,  
dry leaves, and the wide curlew whooping  
flung wildly away. Some life in the orange  
on the countertop. Some life in the lapwing  
banging around in the field. Yesterday you heard it,  
now it's gone.

## On the Surface

Stuck together in the present tense lucid  
earth leaning on its axis, loose tooth aimless  
like a dazed mourning dove. The outskirts  
of London rush in summer dusk: bees in the lavender  
and sunflower. You should be ashamed. It's like  
a frame with one side kicked sharply away,  
and you're the shape that it holds, carrying water  
in your hands like it's a trick you just learned:  
string & paper, hat & rabbit, show & tell. My hands  
have hurt. Fields begin where you end.  
How each of these comparisons can be abandoned  
or achieved: moon without symmetry,  
dust on the leaf.

## Helm Bar

Somewhere in the clean fields running from  
the country's furthest edge. White birch speaks  
and flickers outside me, red birch stuck  
says it's time to come home. If I could carry  
the whole event without dissolving. Perfect  
ambient distinction lying flat. Rust flakes through  
my throat are part of you, but now you're not  
not nothing, rearranged in days of incompleteness,  
held by new abrasive clutter of what isn't  
coming back. To discover what's missing  
by breathing. Desperate I could see it folding,  
take it if I craned my neck and stayed in beat.  
The garland of the body as it leaves itself for good.  
Private jokes. Love fluent in my speech.

Review:  
Doug Jones's *From Posts*

*From Posts*, published in 2023 by the Loxham Press (<https://www.facebook.com/the.loxham.press>), covers a period from 11 April 2018 to 8 September 2022 in poems ordered by date. They continue a series; the earliest 'post' in Jones's collected *London and Norfolk Poems* (Veer Books, 2015) is dated to 24 January 2013.

A decade's work, or thereabouts, and a 'poem including history', but a history that is diaristic in the best sense — not being held to the task of a synthesis of events and their meaning, events can swell or recede according to different laws. The poems are driven by a lyric voice that moves between the conversational, tense, accusatory, elegiac. They ask:

*Who is Brandon Lewis + where's he put my human heart?*

The answer 'Brandon Lewis is Tory MP for Great Yarmouth' is beside the point. It doesn't enter the poem. Instead, 'he is a fisher of men', the epithet hitting (like Sannazaro before) at what's predatory in the 'charitable', while the 'fissure' pun points to Lewis's role (socially, poetically) as cipher. An apostle and functionary of austerity, Lewis is individually empty and socially disastrous. Lewis enters the poem surrounded by the food banks that now stock the poet's heart although 'there's bean tins better'. *From Posts* shows that we might best be able to access the history of the recent years under the aspect of nightmare. Violence, from military attacks to duels, from the systemic to the individual, runs through the poems. So does suffering — in the doctor's office and in the streets. The poems are Blakean in the condensation of these levels, and the interpenetration of mundane and mythic, but they refuse the task of creat-

ing a new cosmology. In place of grand narratives, there is an opportunistic manipulation of symbols, words, grammars: one poem addresses 'O Freyr', another 'O rice'.

That opportunism, which is felt on the level of syntax as well as subject matter, shapes the sort of history we find in the poems. Their language is too twisting and self-responsive to yield a mirror of an age, even a fun-house one. Mutations and adjustments are persistently going on at multiple levels in the poems. An image of a girl drowned shifts to clothes to fabrics to sail boats to the transatlantic slave trade to a discarded coat. There is slippage and evolution of meaning within a line ('Brain's a course, of course') and across poems. Witches, islands, beans, Japan.

*Ah, patient x, you're back – but this time in the form like a big / wheat field – full of grain in the breeze. We all win.*

Alex Grafen

## SPACE IS A TRIP...

Check out the **Leeds Poetry Studio** for readings and workshops, or to use its library of pamphlets and poetry books as a study space. It's 'a free resource for anyone interested in reading, studying or writing poetry, regardless of experience, past publications or institutional affiliation.' Shire Oak Studios, Leeds, LS6 2TN. See [www.leedspoeetrystudio.co.uk](http://www.leedspoeetrystudio.co.uk) for info on how to book it and get involved.

Dale Holmes's *Bruce Ch(b)atwin(g)* is out now from **Gong Farm**. A new book from Jonathan Skinner is coming soon. Head to [gongfarm.cargo.site](http://gongfarm.cargo.site) for these and others.

Peter Manson's *self-avoiding space-filling curve* is now out from **Just Not**. Tom Betteridge's *Dog Shades* is also available, alongside a second run of Nell Osborne's *The Canine Redeemer has Entered the Bungalow*: [justnotprints.wordpress.com](http://justnotprints.wordpress.com).

New books from Iliassa Sequin, André du Bouchet, Dom Hale and Christina Chalmers are available from **Distance No Object** at [distancenooobject.cargo.site](http://distancenooobject.cargo.site).

Mira Mattar and Sam Weselowski have new pamphlets out now from **Veer2** at [veer2.org/Authors](http://veer2.org/Authors) with lots of other gooduns.

Joe Luna's *Old News*, excerpted in this issue, is out from **Slub Press** at [slub.press.cargo.site](http://slub.press.cargo.site)

**The87press** have recently published new books from David Grundy, Sabeen Chaudhry, and others, check em out at [www.the87press.co.uk](http://www.the87press.co.uk).

**REPORTS** ([communityofgoods.blogspot.com](http://communityofgoods.blogspot.com)) is 'a regular bulletin for the exploration of inarticulate social and artistic experience ... Send contributions to: [pxxtry@gmail.com](mailto:pxxtry@gmail.com)'. See [pxxtry.com](http://pxxtry.com) for pdfs of a bunch of rescued classics.

Free Palestine.

