Edi[t]fy #1

Joel Auterson
David Braziel
Laura Cameron
Tory Campbell
Alvy Carragher
Kelly Creighton
Colin Dardis
Emily Dedakis
'Forty Two'
Paula Matthews
Ellie Rose McKee
Christopher McLaughlin
Geraldine O'Kane
Amy Wyatt Rafferty
David Yates

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Editorial

Regards and happy reading,

Colin Dardis and Geraldine O'Kane,
Curators.

Poem #1
Christopher McLaughlin and Joel Auterson

'The Singer'

Original by Christopher McLaughlin

Red tuxedo blouse tucked in black high-waisted trousers
The presence of a male flamenco dancer, androgynous
In stiletto heels. Pale face, dark eyes, and curling
Vermilion lips. Blonde hair pulled tight as a closed fist
Punching me in the gut. She sings a siren song from deep
In her heaving breast, baring sharp teeth; again
Those dripping vermilion lips. She-wolf, me-boy,
They have heard it all before; ignore frantic shouts
For help. Not drowning but waving, spotlight shining
Drums beating me down. Held in complete subservience
to her sound. Nobody comes to save me. She holds
A Fender Telecaster guitar like a long-range rifle
Takes aim and discharges a bullet from the barrel
A piercing invitation to the land of the immortal

‘The Singer’

Editfied by Joel Auterson

A wolf, that’s what the boys in black said.
I entered the room like a man aflame, but she,
Always two steps and a heel click ahead of me,
Welcomed the heat into her lair.
She circled, less red planet around small star,
More slowly spinning, spiralling meteorite.
The drums pound extinction and guitars wail,
My earth is shattered by something more ancient.
We approach the point of impact
As the dancers stomp, Cretaceous,
And I am reminded that perhaps the dinosaurs
thought the shooting star was beautiful.

Joel’s thoughts:

“I really enjoyed taking part in Editfy - despite the relative stress caused by the utter terror of completely ruining somebody else's beloved poem. The poem I received, ‘The Singer’, had what I took to be quite a densely packed, frantic tone, so I thought I'd try and expand it out and give the words a bit more room to move about, purely to contrast the original. Then, just because I could, I added dinosaurs.”

Poem #2
Laura Cameron and Tory Campbell

'Slippery Slope'
Original by Laura Cameron

Got off train
musing on your mid-life crisis
also:
these leaves are lethal
bones break easily
must be careful!

Laughed about
that thing I read yesterday
'most women want a Mr Darcy,
but unfortunately, most men
have no idea who that is.'

Stuck key in car lock
noticed baby seat
where dog blanket should be
bib bunged in door pocket
where poop bags live...
Not my car then!

Careful on those leaves, dear
careful on those leaves!

‘Slippery Slope’

Editfied by Tory Campbell

The slide of the train
slows to a stop.
On the platform
your absence
wraps itself around me
like discarded newspapers –
headlines heavy as wet leaves.
Careful. Careful.
Snippets cling. And can derail.
I laugh
about that thing
I read yesterday
wander to the car
fumbling for
my keys and
peer into my Focus
to find
a baby seat
where my dog
should be

Careful on those leaves, dear.
Careful on those leaves.

Tory's thoughts:

"It is difficult to let go of the seed of a poem and give it to someone else to nurture, and I have been very aware of this. For me, the first draft has become a catalyst for a new poem as the mood and meaning have shifted somewhat during the editing process. I've tried to keep a skeleton of the original first draft within the poem so that both voices are present on the page; often when I edit my work the initial draft can disappear completely. I don't feel this is a finished poem yet, but is as far as I can take it within the time constraints of this project. The process has been a great learning experience for me. Thank you to the poet who has given me their words to play with."

Poem #3
David Braziel and Alvy Carragher

‘A slip of the tongue’
Original by David Braziel

My tongue was tied when I was a boy
troubled, twisted, tumbling it had to be
taught to behave, coaxed into sense.

Later it felt like it was sulking
truculent and resentful, silently brooding
or waiting to trip me up
wrapped tight around my brain.

Now we have grown used to each other
I often find its silence comfortable
can sometimes persuade it to do tricks
to slip out of its shell.

‘Forget-Me-Not Blues’

Editfied by Alvy Carragher

as a boy I sat with a pot of blue mala
the teacher forced upon me
in corners looking at the others
this game of easy words they played
they stubbed mala with dough fingers
in colours grabbed from others pots
this unnatural giving and taking
I couldn’t find a way to say
blue was not my favourite colour

even later, the words never came
I built dreams on my pressed flower
of a tongue, folded between lips,
hoping for a hand to slip the covers
back and see that this blue-thing
soft and brooding had words to say
a forget-me-not of answers

when you traipsed in with your hands
full of weird tea bags, to tell me fortunes
pressed dry figs between your fingers
embroidered cushions with golden tails
of some dragon you dreamt up
this light you cast somewhere between
your jam-making and knotted hair,
against the curve of your soft back,
in the puckered lines of your frown,
as you said to me over and over
blue was not your favourite colour

Alvy's thoughts:

"I found it really strange and had to end up using the other poem as a thematic prompt as I felt almost too invasive picking it apart. I don't really mind the idea of someone ripping my work to shreds, but the thought of doing it to someone I don't know worries me. What if they are having a bad poetry month, what if they need a boost of confidence, what if they are insulted? Working this sort of thing in person might be easier, you could get a feel for the atmosphere, the general acceptance of these strangers to change. I know I more or less wrote a poem separate to the other as I felt I could not bring myself to destroy another poem. I also felt the other poem was powerful in its own right, and in a voice so different from my own, that it was like intruding. Stealing someone's secret and taking it as your own. A really interesting project."

Poem #4
‘Forty Two’ and Amy Wyatt Rafferty

‘Thoughts’
Original by ‘Forty Two’

I have a urge to get on a south bound freight and ride
a copy of catcher in the rye by my side
walk out in the streets of Laredo
or see Rosa’s cantina in El Paso
like Reacher walk between Hope and Despair
I’ll find an all-night coffee shop there
strangers will sit and tell me there story
and I will write there poems filled with glory
maybe go see the Tallahatchie bridge
or on horseback at dawn come up on a ridge
go walk about near Alice Springs
see what perspective a night in the desert brings
I can go to all those places
see a sea of unknown faces
run to the end of the earth
and then some more

'An Urge'
Editfied by Amy Wyatt Rafferty

I have an urge to get on a surging south bound freight
train, riding in the cabin with a copy of 'Catcher
in the Rye' by my side; spill onto the streets
of Laredo; slip by Rosa's Cantina in El Paso;
with Reacher walk amidst hope and despair.
Discovering a shop of strangers with cups
over-flowing with stories- I will
write poems to glorify their unknown faces-
so that even those on the Tallahatchie bridge; and men
on horsebacks at dawn, trek to the ends of the earth
to see what perspective a night in the desert brings.

Amy's thoughts:
"I found it initially frightening, however I started by changing it into a piece of prose and then I whittled away- using the phrases that I liked best- inserting them into some poetic structure. I left behind the phrases I was not so keen on and I changed some of the words to put my own voice to it, once I had it in a poem shape! Then I added punctuation to change the way it was read... eventually it began to feel like my own poem; very bizarre!"

Poem #5
Ellie Rose McKee and Christopher McLaughlin

'Escapism by Degrees'
Original by Ellie Rose McKee

You want to move to a bigger house
To have a better life
And solve all your problems
While I just want to move away
Far, far away

You think more money will make you happy
While I'm looking at a journey for joy

Our methods may be different
But our motives are the same
And yet, you criticize me?
I may be a dreamer
But so are you
I just wish you'd damn well admit it

'Escapism by Degrees'
Editfied by Christopher McLaughlin

We're the same you and I
Both born bare arsed under the same unrelenting sky
You've grown ashamed of your nakedness
out dressed like an empress
Ladders in your tights
from the snakes in your bed
Why won't you leave my head?
Life's a game and you're a winner
Sleep walking with your neighbours
In a centrally heated nightmare
You used to like the pinch of cold
The crunch of leaves
The autumn breeze
You're well insulated now
Cooped up in that new house
Cholesterol gathering round your heart

Christopher's thoughts:
"I thought the writer could do more to find the poetry... tone down that very matter-of-fact language a little bit, and give themselves permission to be a little freer with their use of language. A little more playful and exuberant. It seemed to be addressed to someone she cares about, but that wasn't evident in the language. I've tried to keep the stinging criticism, but with more tenderness thrown in as well. The title lead me to put in some subtle (hopefully) references to degrees."

Poem #6
David Yates and David Braziel

'all that's lovely'
Original by David Yates

all that is lovely is lost,
and all that had beauty has broken,
and every trial is nothing
if Everything's outcome is certain.

all that was gifted has gone,
made mute in this endless cascade,
and neither what's woven or wound can
from unravel be dissuaded.

everything yours is destroyed,
everything mine never was,
as Entropy's deed to existence
blocks any designs on First Cause.

so don't waste a breath on Repentance,
and don't ever reach for the dead, because
all that was lovely means nothing
when everything lovely is dead.

'All that is lovely'
Editfied by David Braziel

all that is lovely is lost
all that had beauty is broken
all I can count is the cost
while all that is left is a token

there is love to be found in the lost
and beauty in those that are broken
the things that will matter the most
are the words that remain
unspoken

David's thoughts:
"There's an old joke told about a tourist who stops a man in an Irish village to ask for directions to Dublin. The man replies: 'Well sir, if I was going to Dublin, I wouldn't start from here.'

"The great thing about this project was that it made you begin from a place you would never usually find yourself. The poem I was given was in a very different style from my own but that's where I had to start.

"I wanted to keep the feel of rhyme and rhythm that had been begun in the first draft - I just simplified it a little. I also didn't want to lose the basic theme of loss and a touch of despair but I couldn't resist trying to add hope and redemption at the end.

"In my experience first drafts always have a lot more lines than are needed in the final poem. We say the same thing several different ways to get our point across and we try to cram too many ideas in. I like my poems short and to the point so I'm afraid a lot of the first draft remained on the cutting room floor. There are probably at least another two poems in amongst those off-cuts.

“The worst bit about this project was giving away my own first draft. Firstly I don't get many poems coming to me so forcing out a draft to a schedule was difficult. Then giving it up felt like walking into a nursery and saying "Here, let's swap babies for a while and see what happens."

“Having said that I can't wait to see how my baby has grown (or shrunk) and what he's dressed in when he comes home.”

Poem #7
Paula Matthews and Kelly Creighton

'New'
Original by Paula Matthews

Trees I've known for thirty years audaciously the same,
frozen benediction fallen, baring bent branches.

Beacon at the crossing flashing through the black,
illuminates. Coldness smarts, shamelessly outlasts you.

New. New this world, reworked, disturbed and broken.
God-forsaken monuments to permanence insult it.

I am in every atom changed, life-sentenced,
trapped. I stare indignantly at the shocking sameness

of this road we walked down for our lifetime.
It guides me now to solitary searches,
to the hope of finding ways to travel on my own.

‘The Crossing’

Editfied by Kelly Creighton

Audaciously I've known, for thirty years,
the same frozen benediction - fallen,
bared branches; bowed beacon
at the crossing, flashes through the black.
Coldness smarts, shamelessly it
outlasts you. New - new this world:
reworked, disturbed and broken.
Indignantly I'm staring at a road
travelled all your lifetime
and shocked-still by its sameness.
God-forsaken monuments of permanence insult it.
I am, in every atom, changed -
trapped, life-sentenced.
Solitary searchlight guide me now,
illuminate new roads that I can walk alone.

Kelly’s thoughts:

“I thoroughly enjoyed the process and the poem in its previous form. My only concern was that, by changing it so much, the title no longer seemed to fit. There is no way of knowing if I have changed the meaning of the original. It was interesting to have the 'authority' to edit someone else's work so completely. I didn't look back at the original as I thought this might hold me back. I hope the poet is happy with the end result.”

Poem #8
Geraldine O'Kane and Laura Cameron

'Between Spaces'
Original by Geraldine O'Kane

When death comes
and it will;
even if you have experienced it before,
you will not have been through it with this person,
unless your loved one is a mythical cat.

Ready for it or not you will be shocked,
by how sudden it came in the end,
by how peaceful it was or
by the realisation that that one person
will never answer you in conversation,
will never pass you the butter,
will never rest their hand on the back of yours,
will never tell you: you make tea too weak.

This is ok, everyone feels that gasp of emotion,
the intake of a memory they never want to let go of.
Afterwards you may cry, you may not; both reactions
are rational, I will reassure you.

You may feel like you have moved to Alaska
for six months; go with it. I can help you remember;
some of your most vivid and passionate memories
you hold in life come from dark spaces;
I can guide you to find the light between those spaces.

‘Between Spaces’
Editfied by Laura Cameron

You have seen death before,
even so,
you are shocked when the end comes.
Feel it.
She will never pass the butter,
rest her hand on yours,
or say you make tea too weak
again.
Know it.
Some of your deepest emotions
come from dark spaces.
When you are ready,
seek the light between those spaces.
Write it.

Laura’s thoughts:
“I loved the poem as it was, and didn't feel qualified to 'better' it as I would with a first draft of my own. So all I could do was relate it to my own experience and slash it as I often do with my work. I wanted to remove the ambiguity of the 'I' in the original - the poet may have been talking as a parent, a partner or more likely it seemed to me, God. But writing has been a guide and healer in my life. So here ye go!”

Poem #9
Joel Auterson and Ellie Rose McKee

'untitled'
Original by Joel Auterson

The moon reared its head
When the explosions stopped.
We held hands under glass ceilings
And talked about life, death and Newton Faulkner.
Feet played syncopated rhythms on paving stones
As the great dome threw back our voices, smiling.
Meanwhile, the city licked its wounds
In the quiet behind ringing ears.
The rain filled the gutters with slow burning silence
And yet, too young to shout
Green to orange across a white expanse,
We asked ourselves where everyone had gone.
The taxi's tyres made no sound on the debris
As the driver hummed snatches of Abba hits.
Slow movement through lamp lit streets
As we carved ripples through overflowing drains.
My hair was plastered over my eyes,
But at least my feet were dry.
The storm's eye moved on the next day,
As I huddled, freezing, in a too large coat
On yet another slow train.
When the platform lurched into view
I walked home through the snow,
Wished my brother a happy birthday,
And threw my season ticket into the fire.

‘untitled’
Editfied by Ellie Rose McKee

It was the perfect contrast
Between normal life carrying on
And the world being irrevocably shattered, in places
Though that was ironic in itself: the contrast
It seemed wrong, in how perfect it was
Why did no-one tell the moon to stop shining,
When the explosions rang out?
Why did a broken city beneath us,
Not stop our hormones from running wild?
There was rain, and taxis, and jobs, and music
While the storm raged on - Despite it raging on
This is my memory of the protests
And the riots that followed
When my country fell apart
And I, growing up, ebbed out a normal existence within it

Ellie’s thoughts:

Poem #10
Tory Campbell and Colin Dardis

'We met in the park'
Original by Tory Campbell

[Put in the surroundings somehow. Where are they? A house / coffee shop? / park bench?]

You are the only Solomon I know.
Your obedient bush of curls
stands cloud high. Waterproof.
The weather slaps the window

You grip your shin
and I apologise again
for my feisty Pomeranian.
You show me a photo –
a picnic on the banks of
a lake somewhere, sunlight dripping.

Your mother's head is turbaned,
her swimsuit modest, sparkling damp.
Your dad, Mastiff bulked,
splashes out of the water.
It looks like she is calling him.

At the edge, you lie in shade
beneath a tree –
a twig of a boy
bone dry
goose-bumped blue.

Crack lipped, you tell me of
times you clung to the landing –
overhung the torrents
of your parents, knowing

he'd be sent to fetch you
and how you would play dead,
for fear of being
snapped in two.

'We Meet'
Editfied by Colin Dardis

Ormeau Park, flooded again.
Out without my Pomeranian
and so have no excuse against
the too easy move towards coffee.

There, you show me a photo: a picnic
on the banks of some nameless lake,
sunlight dripping. Your mother's head
turbaned, her swimsuit modest
yet sparkling. Your dad, Mastiff bulk,
splashing out of the water.
It looks like she is calling him.

At the edge, you lie in shade
beneath a lone tree:
twig of a boy, desert dry,
goosebumped sallow.
Your disobedient bush of curls
standing cloud high; waterproof.

Crack-lipped, you tell me
of times when water met your temple,
knowing the torrent of parents
sent to fetch you; and how you would
play dead, for fear of being
snapped in two.

The sea parted, and you could not cross.
Sipping my mocha, I think of swimming
beside you in the Dead Sea.

Colin's thoughts:

"I didn't have any qualms over the prospect of editing someone else's work, as I've done this frequently over the years in editorial roles. However, I did want to stay true to the original sentiment and aims of the piece. The starting notes of Tory's were the most problematic: where do they meet, how has it happened exactly, how do they move from the park to the coffee house? I finally decided to let that happen offstage, and only allow the briefest of explanations. Then I could jump into the real flesh of the piece.

"What I wanted to find out was, why does he have the photo on him? What is this motive for showing it? Perhaps she knew his parents. Perhaps they are now divorced, or one of them (even both of them) are deceased. I imagined the man and woman possibly had a brief dalliance in younger years, and more could have come or it; or perhaps there was an attractive there and nothing came of it. I'm not sure I've answered that, but I'm happy for the reader to speculate on it themselves.

"As a side note, with the mention of the Pomeranian and the Mastiff, I was tempted to create a canine motif throughout the whole piece. That was quickly dispensed with, as was the fact that the woman had their dog with her in the park meeting. It was easily to see them moving towards going for coffee without the presence of a pet hampering them. Ormeau Park was chosen simply as I had walked through there on the day I first started to edit the poem."

Poem #11
Alvy Carragher and 'Forty Two'

'Frying eggs'
Original by Alvy Carragher

do not whisper to me of the future
or ask in return the turnstile of secrets
I keep this pillow-safe space for sleeping
let your hands speak the minds breath
turn it over and over, until it folds
there is no need for your mother's song
as it fries eggs on a Saturday morning
keep those bastard thoughts to yourself
I hurt at the kindness of this nostalgia
you've grown accustomed to, it only
reminds me that I can't imagine
singing an egg to sunny-side-anything
and you with you soft, soft dreams
I want to smother them out of you

‘not frying eggs’
Editfied by ‘Forty Two’

those forever thoughts inside your head
must not reside upon my bed
this is a place for sleep or play
little boys should stay away
or learn to live just for today

those forever thoughts inside your head
must not reside upon my bed
when you sing songs of domestic bliss
and me cooking eggs in the abyss
of my needs you become remiss

you exist simply as my distraction
from real life, and for satisfaction
do not mistake that for attraction
those forever thoughts inside your head
must not reside upon my bed

Forty Two’s thoughts:
“I really enjoyed the process. I read the poem a number of times. Had a think about it and reread it. What it said to me was it was written by a woman (reference to mother by the person she was writing about) who was in a relationship of sorts with someone who was forming too much of a personal attachment for her liking. As the process was to change the poem, I decided to write it in a rhyming form with terrace as this was very unlike the original style of writing. I hope I have conveyed the same message in a different package and I managed to get the cooking egg reference in as well. However, as with all things in life, this is not finished.”

Poem #12
Amy Wyatt Rafferty and Emily Dedakis

'We get better'
Original by Amy Wyatt Rafferty

In the end we're mass,
stringy bits and bones,
Bags overflowing with air,
Released; refilled, Water-full.

Red inside, sometimes black;
You cannot tell until you slice;
Doctors discover disease with
Ease through scans and knives.

We get better at discovering
What is rotten inside and better at
Covering it up, collagen and fillers
Make death masks of malignancy.

Oh me, oh my

Editfied by Emily DeDakis

In the end, say me like a mass.

Bow your head when they slice me open,
keep yourself innocent of my red or pink or white or grey or brown or black secrets.

Pray my chewy tendons and hollow bones,
recite my collagen and oestrogen, my mercury fillings and Botox,
count the beads of my better muscles.
Absolve me of all my malignancy.
Release my lungs in holy-rolling sighs
and fill the boat of me with danced-for rain.

Emily's thoughts:

"Whenever I see dead umbrellas left on the side of the street, I think of writers and their half-finished scribbles in notebooks. So much decent raw material chucked away, maybe never used. Edi[t]fy felt like a relief, actually. It's gorgeous to be handed a ball of clay, and to hand one over too. Writers don't get that luxury too often. Usually we blatantly pilfer, or chew our own cud again and again.

"I edi[t]fied this draft in 20 minutes, after 6 hours sleep and 30 hours work over the last 2 days. The only really conscious decision I made was to use 'me' or 'my' on every line, because I had the song "Ain't She Sweet" in my head, really just the line "Oh me, oh my, ain't that perfection." Even in that un-ideal, haphazard and slapdash process, I lost track of where the rhythm and images came from. I definitely wrote it, but I love that it doesn't sound like me."

Poem #13
Kelly Creighton and Geraldine O'Kane

'Business'
Original by Kelly Creighton

Falling. Still words hang on molecular chimes
and are connecting all that is split and bordered.

Specks of gold dust are laid for fools to tread
from the stutter of a river's mouth and glister,

little platinum heads with pale hands.
Oystercatchers? Brunette mothers try to

dodge: caught in each other like cobwebs
and all their fibres . In control and controlling,

catching words and scooping air like medicinal
tincture that has no evidence of really working.

Ham-handed elements pack bags, from water,
leather, to the synthetics desensitised.

Who is this beautiful business bruising?
You, mourning the leaving of one already.

‘Business’
Editfied by Geraldine O’Kane

No longer connecting boarders
as myth would have us believe.

Failing words hang still,
monotone chimes frozen; while
glistening river mouths stutter,

where mothers’ cobweb tongues control;
sieve out truth, silk up the air,
ignite you – a firework let loose
and burning on society,
innocent and betrayed.

Who is this business bruising?
the mothers losing control
of what they have preciously sown.

Geraldine’s thoughts:

Poem #14
Emily Dedakis and David Yates

'Locals vs. Natives'
Original by Emily Dedakis

Gum dispenser in the mensroom's run empty, so no one can prove their mettle at bubble-blowing. Everyone is dead even on tequila knock-backs, and only the lonely over-eater straining his buttondown is willing to risk the pickled eggs. Los cucarachas scamper the tiles, waiting for the surface tension to pop over the lip of someone's bubbly draught. Anyone's.
Born.
Raised.
Kept.
Fed.
Found.
Verbal tennis till the wee hours, then. The prize doubled last three evenings running. I created them all in the same bathtub of pink gin. Now I can only watch while they fumble at the natives' buttons with their hot-dog fingers and press the locals' heads safely below the surface.

‘locals vs. natives (din)’
Editfied by David Yates

gum dispenser in the mensroom's gone
desolate as the street outside or the tables inside.
bubble-blowing battle royale is off.

born.

tequila wrought a wasteland.
drunken zombies staggering,
las cucarachas corren los azulejos, esperando
o simplemente demacrando.

bred.

wrought.

verbal tennis 'til the wee hours,
the ping and pong of phrases
peppered with laughter,
punctuated by the clink of glass
and clatter of chairs.

fed.

found.

kept.

the prize doubled
and doubled again,
its claimants adrift
in their nonlocality.

discarded.

David's thoughts:

"The environment of this poem evoked a desolate non-space, a place rich with character and history but fallen into disuse. The sparseness of the pub is a synecdoche for the same empty space inside its denizens. It is an ambience not dissimilar from that described in Greg Puciato's work in "Farewell, Mona Lisa":

"there's no feeling in this place.
the echoes of the past speak louder than
any voice i hear right now."

"The draft poem separated two short paragraphs of prose with short (five monosyllabic) words. The separation of the two descriptive segments with a section with a regular, staccato meter allows the echo of the first to reverberate in the space created between words separated by full stops and line breaks. This concept was adapted, and the descriptive text was abstracted into four stanzas. Each was allowed to find its own meter, and the superpositions create a din of counter-rhythms as the different sections echo behind one another, hanging upon a chaotic triple.

Poem #15
Colin Dardis and Paula Matthews

'First Light'
Original by Colin Dardis

There must be a cut-off point:
midnight, or else,
one relies on the sun,
the start of day coming
with the inception of sky
by first light.

Yet, what of cloud,
of eclipse, of false horizon
and gravity bending light
as we may bend truths?
Light is as variable
and inconsistent as we are.

Time is relative
and we are always moving position.
There are days where the sun feels within reach
and I can pluck it down and bring its shine to all corners.
Other times, God places it on a mountaintop
and sleek each face with the oil of my anxieties.

'First Light'
Editfied by Paula Matthews

What is the starting point? Sunrise?
Does one rely on the sky? Day coming,
dawn's illumination, first light.

But think of cloud, eclipse, false horizon,
gravity bending light. We bend truth.
Is it inconsistent, like us?

Light is variable.
I am shifting positions.
Some days I stretch to the sun,
pluck it down, share its shine.
Some days, a dim source of light,
from each face slicked with the oil of my anxiety.

Paula's thoughts:
"This was an interesting experience. Had I come across the poem I was given in a book I would never have imagined changing it. I would have just enjoyed reading it. It was a good poem. To try to edit it, I asked myself what the core essence of the poem was and I thought it was the idea that truth can be bent like light. I tried to highlight the image of bending light and the persona's changing position to reflect this. I like the finished result and the question it asks, but am sad that I ended up taking the mention of God out of it. The original poet was able to bring in ideas of truth, science and spirituality. I struggled to make a balanced representation of God in mine and then gave up on capturing that. In tightening the image, I made a bit of a sacrifice."

Concluding Thoughts

It's been fascinating to see the range of reaction from poets handing over their work, from eagerness and excitement to fear and caution. What is wonder is that no one gave any sense of preciousness; that there was a mutual trust and willingness to join in the process and just let whatever happens occur.

When one sits down to edit their poems, it is almost always a singular exercise: one poet, in complete control from start to finish, from genesis to either completion, or at times, abandonment. The original writer is fully in control, as much as his or her abilities will allow. What Geraldine and I really wanted to explore was that scary moment of letting go, of initially creating something, and then leaving it to others to do what they want to it.

It's intriguing, reading the comments, to hear that some poets held back, out of respect and admiration for the original work. Others followed tangents, using their received piece as a jumping off point for their imagination. Some attempted to look for another voice, some moulded the poem into their own. As Emily said, "*I definitely wrote it, but I love that it doesn't sound like me.*"

The field of collaboration is one that's under-explored in poetry, although this project did introduce a degree of separation to that collaboration: in that no one knew who was getting their poem, and no one knew whose poem their received in return. However, I hope that the process inspired people to try out more collaborative writing; not just through editing each other's poems, but taking the step to sit down and create from scratch something together, two (or more!) voices as one.

-Colin Dardis