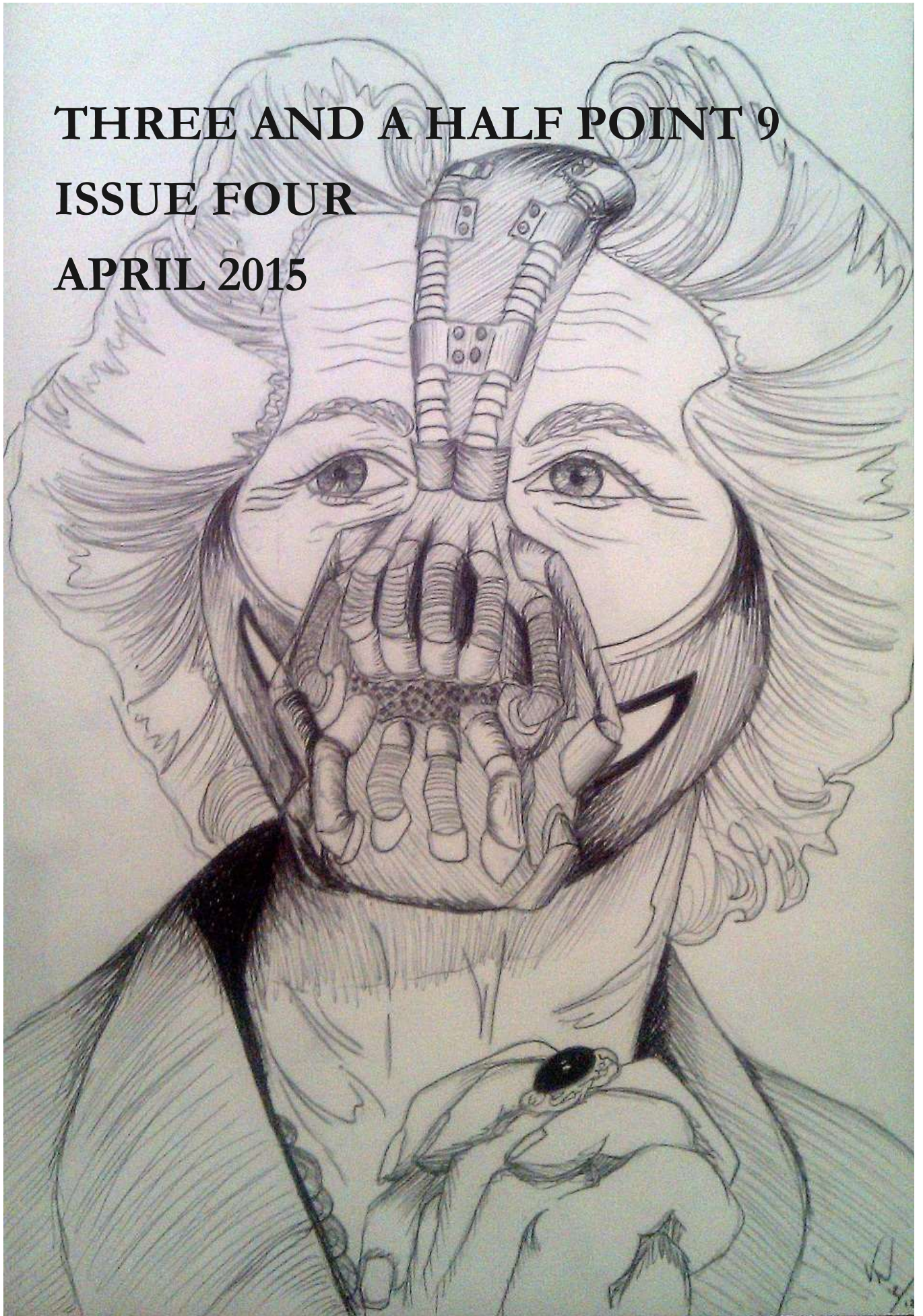


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Three And A Half Point 9

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Luke Thurogood

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Symbolism of Arithmetic Signs

Yuan Changming

+

Each addition to your life
May make you feel positive
But is actually another cross
Where your heart will be nailed

-

Keep subtracting
From your selfhood, and
You will become
Less and less negative
Until you join something
Or a blank with a hyphen

X

Just as anything
Multiplied by one
Is itself, anyone wearing
A mask is still oneself

So, this cross symbol stands for
The identity property of
An independent variable like me?

÷

Let feelings be the denominator
And negativities be the divider
If the number remains the same
As you would like to fake or make
Then, the larger the denominator
The larger the fractional value

Thought Surfing

as if on a huge herd
of water buffaloes
stampeding, surging
against the horizon, he
kept surfing towards
the rising sun, lightly
on a bluish idea
more naked
than his body and soul

Self-Expressing

from glaciers
of the arctic syntax
words keep melting, trickling
into a stream, constantly
trying to express themselves
through the ebbs
in a lake, or a river
as they flow down the valley
to join the sea

Valhalla

S. J. Fowler

bloody stumps, imagine the battles! how
unreachable, so much like beautiful
girls who were babies whose fathers had to
let go, to find inspiration elsewhere
beauty is beauty no one matters where from
it comes, its there to be nosed, she runs
where she once crawled, I swing a plastic
mace on a freshly minted whitewashed wall
to crush daddy long legs where I once would
ve utterly destroyed a human skull with an axe
+ celebrated for it, things have changed so
I've done alright considered the size of the transition

Night shift

there are late nights...then there are late night things
welcome to turkey and its beach and its pretty
+ remember to bring toilet paper with you
hope I didn't get you in trouble baby, with my fang!
step twice back, ache not as much as you thought
& understand you stroke gold with asturias, in spain
understand the crispy one, just the french duck
that leave us speakless – a baby being made in the oven
let's pretend this never happened

On a Country Lane

Natasha Borton

I am affected by
the death; of animals
of rabbits with glass eyes;
of wingless magpies;
of;
the scars beneath the serpents scales;
that read.

Mud rag rabbit.
Staring at the blood red
black tread
of tyres.

Milk bottle cat
caught in the blind spot of the sun.
Turning back
like whiplash.

Maggot riddled fox,
with the glass of bottle tops
stuck
in the scream-throat.

Magpie blind
by the glint of silver.
Revolving
in the crack of a shotgun sun

they do not earn their deaths.

The Tulip

held to the light
an ice cube
mimics
the white tide.

The crack of sunlight
stretching through

frozen petals of a
white

tulip.

Suspended

Birth. Day.

Tsunami

in a champagne flute
whistles across the deck.

Cutting the stem laughter at eighteen,
wrapped in folds sewn from galaxies.

I jump,
with that breath stealing, gasping.
Heart stopping, throbbing,
fall as tumbling in and
falling out of sleep.

The tide blocks up my
ears,
filling them with
the
sound of crushing whiteness.

As the bath water fills with my broken-glass blackness.
Scratch. Metal against plastic,
screech, the treble to the bass of sobbing.
A bass of breath, breath. Breathe. Bass

Looking up to to stars the
the ground begins to thunder.

My last breath sounds more like laughter.

from *MOVING*

for Kyoo Lee

Scott Thurston

I loiter too much in this court for the deeper sense
to register intelligibly. I commit to find value but not
deny it where it lights in someone else's vision. Having your
shiny bright thing and polishing it until the capacity reflects
back on you to accept being valued. Loving the

spacetime in which meaning, no value, no meaning, no value
takes place, the vulnerability of the grand system. In the
event is always movement, remaking it over again. I didn't say
but she brought this up, I didn't address it even if it
wasn't a habitable space. The self that shifts out

from its seat becomes utopia recollecting itself. With you
by my side, asked to create yourself in movement
or resistance: we need to be a fixed sensation.
Outsourcing anger, a technique to interfere with what
I could predict. Expressions of emotion,

non-signifying gestures, presence: held in the trance of
sounded verse. Does the detour deny us access
to our good? Release the muscle to free the constraint
of the emotion. You thought that where your soul dallied
dividends could be reaped: movement and resistance.

Not necessarily making words distinct but fighting back
into movement. The second go at it broke through to a lower
layer, pushing out attention from the inside and moving from there.
Felt like wearing a wooden helmet of jagged pieces of wood roughly
nailed together, reaching completion in a view of itself which is thought

unfolded and unfolding.

We Keep a Tooth in Case She Leaves

for Emily

Adam Hampton

In a tray marked 'tooth' we save
The first thing she shed away.

In a garden spot our growing baby sat
To split her full gum like a bulb.

The kernel grew then fell,
Grabbed up by us and left below

Her pillowed head. For one gold coin
We procured the white stone back

For another day, when in the mourn
We'll wake to wave her off. Retreat

To plant the pip in our saved spot.
In March another her might peep,

A ripe red lily. By May we'll pluck her up again,
Inhale her face in the morning sun.

Your Skin is the Sand
Gereshk, Afghanistan

i'm coveting
Your skin

On my tongue

It was settled against the cambers of your belly
Till spades dug fingers in your throat
Drew spewing from ancient pools fire

Chew the cobblestoned sand
Swallow a metallic Russian legacy

Flesh is yeast
To bombs of salt

The blast escapes through your skin

Churns the ancient flesh to a mess

Diversity

A Redshank drops onto the saltmarsh tucks
In its wings and wades sifting for things

Across the sands a Canada goose
Displays against Bewick's swan

A Mediterranean the full orange of the sun
In its bill blends with the black-headed gulls

A Mallard a great drake and a Mandarin
Swim side by side across the salt lake

The Great White Egret lets slip a big fish
Down its silky gullet the Bittern observes

Unaware it isn't an Egret itself
Innocent to the difference of its feathers

Ignorant to the change seen between
Two horizons on opposite sides of the world

from *Spruce*
Tom Jenks

cracked jewel hair curtain white winter face
pale and cloudburst muffled birdsong
over there by the fax machine

there are books that are yellow but I haven't read them
barking fox in the lunar module
undercut by bathos in the rhubarb patch

she lays her perfect head on the sideboard
I entertain her with my phantom finger
we raise our flags where the squirrels live

candied peel in the bivouac
the hams laid out and lavender
itemised passions and Lucozade Sport

stranded at the bake off branded a fool
all along the gangplank the heritage plaques
big Jim rings the devil's doorbell

white funk like a dog on wheels
they didn't do this at Studio 54
slowly with an addled milk shake

look there are no nettles here
in a stranglehold with a tame koala
in a tracksuit with a cucumber portion

set the controls to maximum cherry
sundown over the smoking shelter
lost hope on the shuttle bus

there are blue lights on the rim of the universe
roundabout route through the badminton community
a metaphor for a chastised goatherd

SEXY LITTLE ALTOIDS

Sea Sharp

12 little ALTOIDS rubbing beneath paper thin bedsheets halting my oral burdens
with salivation anticipation for so many gritty curves flaunting their pristine
powdered bodies and rattling their shapes around in a tiny-tin-bed as they moan in
delight as they moan my name and they are ready to undress my hygiene problem
to tickle wet feelers at the
tip-my-tongue
one-by-one by three to twelve

i want to taste you all with that greedy little way i've got i think: i should *maybe*.
i think: well perhaps i should *maybe*. i will *maybe*. but they are so damn tempting
i think: perhaps when i have finished i should cover them up. i think: should i
cover them up now? cover them up i think: should i cover them up now? *maybe*.

s i n u s e s c l e a r e r m i n d u n f o g g e d
t e e t h c l i n k i n g f e e l i n g k i n k y
t h r o a t c h o k e d e y e s s t i n g i n g d o n ' t - b l i n k - t h e - f u m e s !

Don't Blink The Fumes

i really want to drown you
dissolve you sexy little ALTOIDS
but you are so

c u r i o u s l y s t r o n g

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Should you catch me
before I face-plant,
before my teeth gnash,
pulverize into powdered
chalky fragments, mopping up
my plasma puddles...

Should you catch me
before my ego grows swollen
and bruised and puffy with ache...

Should you catch me
before the pain, before
the electric shock of my impediments...

Should you catch me
before the plight of my social demise,
then certainly, I should owe you
this very dedication.

OBITUARY OF MILES DAVIS

just a “boy”
approximately thirty-one years
a Negro five shades darker than
Afrika, 6’1” maybe more
(probably less)
trumpet playing
son of a bitch

self-loathing ego-
maniac fist pumping
faces of lucky females
pinned punched stuffed
until the legend’s brew falls blasé
and dumping his bitches
into the hallway for the maids
to toss out is the only way
to “finally get some fucking
work done”

just the “blues”
sixty-five years
an Afrikan Ameri-can’t
stop a brotha this black
5’9” maybe less
(not more)
trumpet playing
son of a bitch

Lies Sustain

Sonya Groves

Don't tell me the truth.
I don't want to know.
I don't want the freedom
that comes with it.

I'll take the lies,
lies sustain me.

Lies tell me
that I'm not fat,
that my husband doesn't cheat,
and that I can write.

Lies get me up
in the morning
after the nightmare
of truth has plagued
my sleep.

Kumquat Tree

There's a kumquat tree behind my house.
Lightning struck it, sawing a large limb away.
The stump smoked and burned, but no fire
to flame the leaves and fruit.

I thought for sure the tree would die
from such shock. The amputee
showed a blackened charred hole
for the world to see.

I touched the hole, felt the heat
from the cauterized wound and shook
my head. The injury was deep and wide,
perhaps unrecoverable.

I forget how resilient trees are – they are
much like people in that regard.
Great tragedy and shock give way
to rejuvenation and rebirth.

I thought no kumquats would ever grow
from the stump again, but the stump bore
fruit within a year in a swallow's nest,
muddied hole filled with chicks.

There's a kumquat tree behind my house.
Scarred and battle hardened, nature's
survivor like its human counterparts,
New form, new jobs to do.

Last Wrongs

[Published in Rialto 78, Autumn 2013]

Tim Harker

If the nurse hadn't been busy writing,

It might have been different.

When I asked: "Are we only supposed to wet the lips?"

(After I'd taken the damp sponge

Out of reach of your stretching,

Twisting, searching tongue),

She said "Yes".

After the cock-ups

And the callousness

Of those last years:

Sometimes (only sometimes)

I wonder

If it was just stupidity

That made me hurt you

That one last time.

Moonlight Berocca

Elio Lomas

Hear the remedy— sounding in dissolve

there's a music— dance to it!

Let it settle, like moonlight, let it settle

CONTRIBUTORS

Yuan Changming, 8-time Pushcart nominee and author of 4 chapbooks (including *Mindscaping* [2014]), grew up in rural China, started to learn English at 19 and published several monographs on translation before moving to Canada. With a PhD in English, Yuan currently co-edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver, Changming's poetry appears in 1009 literary publications across 31 countries, including *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Three and a Half Point 9* and *Threepenny Review*.

SJ Fowler is a poet, artist, martial artist & vanguardist. He works in the modernist and avant garde traditions, across poetry, fiction, sonic art, visual art, installation and performance. He has published six collections of poetry and been commissioned by the Tate, Highlight Arts, Mercy, Penned in the Margins and the London Sinfonietta. He has been translated into 13 languages and performed at venues across the world, from Mexico city to Erbil, Iraq. He is the poetry editor of 3am magazine and is the curator of the Enemies project.

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Scott Thurston's most recent book is *Figure Detached Figure Impermanent* (Oystercatcher, 2014). He co-organises The Other Room reading series in Manchester and co-edits the *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*. Scott lectures at the University of Salford and has published widely on innovative poetry, including a book of interviews entitled *Talking Poetics* (Shearsman, 2011). See his pages at www.archiveofthenow.com/

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Sea Sharp is a vegan and American expatriate residing in England, whose work has appeared in *Storm Cellar*, *The Wild Ones*, *The Great American Literary Magazine*, *Coe Review*, *Three And A Half Point 9* and elsewhere. Sharp is a runner and a "decent" hula hoop dancer. // Twitter: [@SeaThePoet](https://twitter.com/SeaThePoet) & Instagram: [@Sea.The.Poet](https://www.instagram.com/Sea.The.Poet)

Sonya Groves is a teacher of English in San Antonio. She has poetry publications in over 20 journals, the latest including *Fish Food Magazine*, *The Voices Project*, *Aries*, *Cliterature*, and *FLARE: The Flagler Review*. Currently she is pursuing her Master's degree in English at Our Lady of the Lake University.

Tim Harker a former technical author, in his 50s, living in North West England. He looked after his mother - who suffered from Alzheimer's - in her last years, and his poem is about something that happened in the last hour of her life.

Elio Lomas is a writer, musician and amateur caricaturist. His work has been published by *erbacce*, *Poetry Pacific* and has appeared upon Robert Sheppard's poetry blog *Pages*.