

01. Bristol

2011

We sat in Bristol
You said you thought I had synaesthesia
The sky was crystal
We let people assume that we were lovers
It was easier

And I see Tuesdays as green
You'd say they were blue though you'd not
considered their hue before
I don't speculate too much
On what might have been had you seen them as
green
But I hold this summer scene
In a snowglobe behind the wardrobe door
My Wednesday warms like the leaves on the late
August trees
With their soaked summer chlorophyll dreaming
But I'm not really a synaesthete
Must be the heat
And the carriage wheels screaming

Our minds exerted
Inventing card games with used-up train tickets
As we diverted
Through the valleys and consonants
And crickets

Soft slow summer delays
What's a smile and the accidental brush of our hands
worth?
You missed your station and I missed you
When you alighted one stop later at Tamworth

Helen Bell – vocal, synths, viola

02. Tea Song

2012

Running out among the jackdaws in the unrepentant
mist
Until the city sounds as distant as your transient kiss
Through deadlines and river mud
And open-ended dreams with no momentum
And shoelaces undoing
Shrugging off February
In the hope that some kind of spring is brewing

And by turns

Each of us would fill a cup

Draw a circle through the spiralling tea

*With our chances and collisions and our fears stirred
in*

By turns

Sometimes you turn to me

I know that you won't love me
You say you can't love anyone
And I will love too much
As I already love too many
Handing out my precarious heart
To all of my beloved melancholics
And you, just as each of them,
Could crumple it like paper
With your name still freshly inked on it

There is room for more than two cups in the pot
And I intend to pour out six at once and drink them
all hot
And you intend to keep all of yours warm
Just for one and one
I guess it saves on cleaning up
And though we don't buy each other's paradigms,
perhaps
I'll half-delude myself a while that our convictions
overlap
Though we both know that really we're just filling in
the gaps
But meanwhile, why not pour another cup?

I got up this morning, since you've given me those
back

Made the tea and lifted letters from the mat
There's a postcard from Persephone
The Acheron by night, it says she's packing
She'll be back for us to see soon
I'll keep shrugging off this desolation
Rowing through the flood using just a teaspoon

Helen Bell – vocal, clavinet, viola, violin, bass guitar
Tom Drinkwater - drums

03. Broken Town

2001

I can't stay in this broken town
That rests beside a sullen sea
Standing in the dull, sad rain
This town is killing me
It's not the kind of breathless rain
For laughing in and running through
But quiet and grey in empty streets
With nothing left to do.

This town is like a broken heart
That once was bright and young and strong
And when an old love burnt it out
It tried to carry on
But now there's no-one left to buy
The shops are closing day by day
They're boarding up a broken town
With nothing more to say.

If you were in this broken town
You'd fade into the aching grey
Like all the years of dried up tears
That still get in my way
This town can never be the same
And nor can I and nor can you
The cracks run far below the ground
There's nothing we can do.

*If we could mend this broken town
We'd have to let the walls fall down
Strip the buildings to their bones
So we could see the strongest stones
On them we could build a wall
Could build a new town up again
But would the strongest stones survive
Or crack beneath the strain?*

I can't stay in this broken town
And watch it crumble to the sea
As every rock that breaks away
Just takes a part of me
If I stay here I'll turn to stone
So I will leave this broken town
And find a place where we might build
Anew on solid ground.

Helen Bell – vocal, synths, electric piano, recorders, bass
guitar, accordion

04. Scent of April

2011

Scent of April
Sound of Friday
Out in the street the wine is rising with the moon
We are cultivating thickets of words
Grown up inside this room.

I want to walk with you beyond the bypass
Walk far enough to get away from ourselves
If we walk far enough
In the dark we might dissolve
The night will paint over in black
Those loops we cannot close
The river will flow in
The river will flow in and fill the holes
But you know we'll have to walk back sometime
To where the streetlights graze our skin
Back
Painted over in black
Where do we begin?

Quiet autumn
Starry leaf-fall
Out by the tide I watched you turning like a sail
We are cautious with these values of ours
Aching raw without their veils

I want to walk with you beyond the bypass
Walk far enough that we might meet ourselves
If we walk far enough
In the dark we might evolve
And we will grow into the black
And open out the sky
The river will erode
The river will erode the last small lies
But you know we'll have to walk back sometime
To where the streetlights graze our skin
Back
Walking out of the black
Here we begin

Helen Bell – vocal, electric piano, synth, violin
Tom Drinkwater – bass guitar

05. Night til Morn

2011

Pinned onto your walls were abstracts of old wisdom
Copied out and stuck there by your hand
Like an ink and paper exoskeleton
That I tried, but could not reach beyond
The way I thought I used to.

Boxed up in the city with your books and saucepans
Listlessly in love with one so far away
You called me over, ceilidh calling
There's a dance hall calling us to play
The way we always used to.

*Those old nights when we were driving out the beat
Minds entangled, gin-soaked, tongue-tied, shy to
speak*

But I let my sound slide into yours

*And an ache was catching in my throat with every
chord*

*But the buttons and the bellows and the wood and
the winding*

Demand no bond

Demand no bond of words.

Nothing I could prove, still everything to lose
But what we may have lost is still unnamed
For our mouths have never sealed a promise
That might run the risk of being torn

But if I lost you I know it's only to
All the things you always said you sought
Tied a tag on this belated promise
And it says I know you can't be bought
Just stay warm
From night til morn

So you count the days, then join her where she waits
Meanwhile here's a tune to spark the dusk
By cider-moon and shadowed garden
We uncovered what was overgrown

Caught your old harmonic glossing through my
fingers
Caught your eye and caught your sound in mine
And I'll never tell of this if you won't
For this is ours and ours alone

Helen Bell – vocal, clavinet, viola, accordion

Tom Drinkwater – drums, bass guitar

06. Beetle Shell

2009

There is a cobalt beetle shell mirror
Where my eyes grow young
Where dragonflies rattle around my brain
And I can't tell if I've been stung
The air hangs yellow round the horses
The sloes grow ripe lethargically
And threads of blue fade in like vapour trails
Falling behind you as you speed from me

And you'd say cobalt beetle shell mirrors
Are not for weeping in
But for the sandstone and the sun
Such things for keeping in
Still my lungs howled hollow round the mountain
Old ragged leaves blew in to tamp my breath
But threads of green push in like willow shoots
Itching and heightening back to hungriness

Helen Bell – vocal, pianet, synth, recorder

07. We Had Our Time

2012

I tried to reach you; did you try to reach me?
Did you think that I might teach you as I thought you
might teach me?
You taught me of my minority
When I cast my love wide and my faultlines bare
And of getting up early to catch the hope
Before the afternoon's despair

*We had our time
And it chimed and it rang
And it never quite rhymed
But we sang anyway
We had our time
And it chimed and it rang
And it never quite rhymed
But at least we sang*

I tried to find you; did you try to find me?
Were you afraid that I might blind you? I guess you
blinded me
But I snapped off the light from this projection bright
An after-image glazed my sight
But when it cleared you reappeared
And you still looked all right

Maybe some songs are better left unsung
But that would mean lessons left unlearned
I'd rather be heart-splintered and wiser than
left to fade unresolved
Beneath the waning, bat-bitten moon as all
the leaves turn brown.
When your easy, illegible eyes turn steely and
mocking
Now I know it's when you're locking yourself
down

I tried to know you but you wouldn't know me
And I can't grow you into some other tree
But you taught me to seek the minority
Who would cast their love wide and their faultlines
bare
And of getting up early to catch the hope
Before the afternoon's despair.

Helen Bell – vocal, piano, organ, recorders
Tom Drinkwater - drums

08. Star Shaped

2015

I never meant that I wanted to leave you
Only that I was going there
These skylines are etched all over my eyes
I need to rinse them in cool blue air
We say all the things round the edges of questions
Whose answers we'd rather not know
Do you hear me not-saying 'I'll miss you'
As loudly as you are not-saying 'Don't go'?

I am from one thousand nights in the yellow glow
Ringing with loves and papered with laughter
Starlight and pavements to carry me home
Into their one thousand mornings after
But I am from under the arc of the curlew
And shouting at mountains that call a refrain
And silence that stands like a pool in the darkness
And pine forests taking the edge off the rain

*I want to turn star-shaped and large
And fold up all kinds of you into my arms
Roll as a hexagon down to the beach
Float as a coracle over the sea
And while I'm away, hold you close and
invisible
Like the bones of a song
Dismantling notions of home being nowhere
But quietly gone*

There are no questions or promises
Our feet are our own, and the paths that we
walk
Each inscribe a peculiar curve
I keep an ember, quietly
Inside a small jar of what might be
A glow that will show when our rangy
trajectories
Spiral around to converge

I am from ships that arrive in the morning
Loneliness lulled by the sound of the tracks
And missing my stop where I don't speak the
language
Feeling the twinges of want-to-go-back
And I am from back when I didn't quite know you
When I was all edges and trying too hard
And meeting by chance when I needed some
kindness
And all of this starting to catch me off-guard

Helen Bell – vocal, electric pianos, violin, viola, bass guitar

09. Mycelium

2017

Inside the bubble the world is ending over and over
and over on a screen

While outside the morning after still looks the same
as it's recently been

The light still falls golden over the south

The words still fall tired and loving from your mouth

And we can soothe each other over the end of
another day

And everything will not be okay

And in a year or five we'll see the upshot of what
went down today

And there will be pseudo-news insisting something
else is to blame

The light falls crisp and blue on the hills

On hands in hands, and the air is still

And soon the moon will loom over dusk's soft grey

And everything will not be okay

*We must pass around our small hopes to nibble on
It's the only way to avoid the void*

Might we become threads of mycelium?

Transporting quiet nutrients below the noise

Below the structures so vast and wrong

Our small dark corners were never safe and warm

But push a tendril within a hairline crack

Everything will not be okay

But still we'll try to grow some of this back

Helen Bell – vocal, synths, violin, recorder

10. Days Like Today

2016

On days like today

I don't find any words

There are plenty of them out there

But none of those are mine

And none of those are yours

The words you need to hear from me cannot be

On days like today

All poetry and otherwise

Runs dry

There are verbal procedures

For days like today

The right words to say

In the worst of times

And I can't hold you across an ocean

So I have told you those same old inadequate lines

But what I wish is that the cities to the coastlines
would fall silent

For a moment

For you

As if none of it all would ever sound any more

Then start up again together in a furious roar

That might cushion your cries as you let them outside

A unity howl for your rage to ride

But most of all I wish that I could make this stop

Most of all I wish that I could make this not.

Helen Bell – vocal, electric piano, synths, viola, recorder,
accordion

'jackdaws fleeing after fireworks' by

freesound.org.uk/people/uair01

'Curlew' by freesound.org.uk/people/Benboncan

'Static' by freesound.org.uk/people/AlienXXX

11. Vignette

2012

Last chance icecream van punches holes in November's
decay
But we revel in the drizzle, and try to remember the
way
Back to those smoke-filled chimeras that screech
through our heads
At night, when our bodies lie prone in our beds
Now that the dark and the rain are upon us
We clutch at their threads
They transport me from odious polish and shine
The shame of this privilege so easily mine
But all of this gold, we exchange it for plastic
And daily disposable highs
While the dreams and ideals of the possible
Are steamed flat by the market's designs

Helen Bell – vocal, violins, piano, field recording (St.
Sampson's Square, York)

12. Old Enough to Know Better

2017

This room holds ghosts
The ghosts of what we didn't do that night
Watch them moving through the echo of an anecdote

I might not be here
Standing with you tonight
If we had back then
Watch them moving through until we are ready to
begin
Do you trace the threads of what might have been
From the safety of now?

*We're old enough to know better by now
We're old enough to know better now
Better now
Aren't we?
Now we're old enough to know better by now
We're old enough to know better now
Better now
Aren't we?*

And I wonder about all those
With whom it all went wrong
Just because we collided when we were too young
When their losses and their curses
Slip quietly through
My sense of relief that none of them were you
And which of my whispers were their butterfly
wingbeats?
How many days have I lived by their long-forgotten,
incomplete
Unintended throwaway details?
Singing 'May we never prosper and may we always fail'

This room holds ghosts
The ghosts of what we didn't do that night
Watch them moving through the echo of an anecdote

I've cautiously grown to flourish in your company
Though we mostly take our melancholia separately
But we're old enough to know better after all this time
You show me yours, and I'll show you mine

Helen Bell – vocal, piano, synth arrangement
Tom Drinkwater – synth sound design