Featured Poet: Moira Egan

Moira Egan’s latest collection, *Synesthesium*, won The New Criterion Poetry Prize and will be published in 2017. She writes a lot of sonnets and lives in Rome.

Egan and Gregory Dowling will lead a critical seminar on *The Achievement of Stevie Smith*.

Description: Stevie Smith (1902-1971) was one of the most popular poets of the 20th century. Her work was known for its “variety and inventiveness, much humour and understanding, and a constant poignancy” (Seamus Heaney). A new Collected volume, edited by Will May, gathers Smith’s poems and drawings to celebrate her decades-long career, which was honoured with the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. In this critical seminar, each participant will give a 10-minute presentation on a chosen poem by Stevie Smith, with discussion to follow.

Below is one of Egan’s poems:

Lampblack

*for Cynthia Macdonald*

A hurricane knocked out our power once.
Those weeks I read by oil lamp, wrote till late,
and dreamed of Mary Wroth and Dickinson.
The smoke curled up and left a smear of soot.

(She’d told me that the poets who are blocked
are those who could not play as children: maimed.
Too well I know, you can’t turn back the clock;
ergo, adulthood full of tricks and games:
stiletto-skipping down Manhattan’s walks
[no crack; no break no back]; encased in latex,
that orchidaceous, rubbery bouquet;
the glitter of the night street, glass in asphalt.)

Tonight the sky is black and pepper-crisp.
The moon has never seemed so spherical,
blood-orange or rufous grapefruit, which the eclipse
dissevers, slice by slice, methodical.

Credits: “Lampblack” first appeared in The Hopkins Review (Summer, 2016), then on
Poetry Daily (23 September, 2016), and is forthcoming in 2017 in Synæsthesium, which won
The New Criterion Prize.