

# OFF THE DEEP END



ERIC SHANFIELD



## OFF THE DEEP END

Eric Shanfield | ENS.2006.8b | 2006 | 26'

Poems by Matthea Harvey

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### Voice and Piano

Matthea Harvey's poem *Everything Must Go*, first published in *The New Yorker* many years ago, impressed me so much I set it (badly!) in my first-ever song cycle (*Late Sun*) before immediately setting out in search of more. Her book *Sad Little Breathing Machine* was a revelation, and lent its title to an instrumental piece even before I set this selection from its pages.

In October 2006 I got sick, as I often do around that time of year, and instead of moping I spent my convalescence setting a variety of Harvey's poems. I chose thirteen favorites, all of which share brief two-line stanzas, and arranged them in an order that begins energetically before gradually subsiding into languor over the half-hour length of the work. Simultaneously, the songs make their way through every chromatic scale degree, beginning in C, moving down to B, and so on until they reach C-level.

I would like to thank Matthea for her enthusiasm for this project, and the cycle is dedicated to her.

OFF THE DEEP END  
poems by Matthea Harvey from *Sad Little Breathing Machine*

*1. Introduction to the World*

For the time being  
call me Home.

All the ingenues do.

Units are the engines  
I understand best.

One betrayal, two.  
Merrily, merrily, merrily.

Define hope. Machine.  
Define machine.      Nope.

Like thoughts,  
the geniuses race through.

If you're lucky

after a number of  
revolutions, you'll

feel something catch.

*2. Not So Much Miniature As Far Away*

Little was left of the forest.  
Large was ten miles ahead.

The song on the radio  
was early 80s in a nutshell,

the sun in the rearview  
mirror, a peach pit of light.

Make much of me why don't you.  
All sorts land at the airfield.

Be silverfish, be blimp.

*3. The Unconsciousness Of Feelings*

Praying mantises patrolled the peepholes,  
tilting their triangular heads. The lookout

rode the Ferris wheel—ground/tree/bird/  
sky/bird/tree/ground—& in the confusion

caused by a sudden profusion of posies,  
the train tracks slid through.

Lo, the electrical boxes stopped  
clicking as we walked past. The richest man

in the world traded his yell for a smile.  
Someone in a red shirt began to run

behind the trees each night in a poor  
imitation  
of sunset. She was thrilled & unwell.

I suppose I can say it—she was me.  
I missed the mother bird who dropped

her babies on my glass ceiling, missed  
their tiny pterodactyl shadows on my floor.

They were so beautiful projected there.

*4. Machine for Jean Rhys*

It's all lit up with handfuls  
& eyefuls & it doesn't want you

because that's what you want.  
Flicker, the land shrugs off

its scape, flicker, the trees fall  
away. If la lumiere is stoppered

in bottles what is the light  
over there? What in the world

do you want in the world?  
If the cafe had stayed,

the waiter would know.  
If those eyes were  
your own, you might also.

### 5. Color By Number

At eight the gate clicks open.  
The shrubs indent themselves just so.

Behind us pebbles rise up  
through the paths. Bird machines  
trouble the foliage. A valve  
hisses & the violets *bloom*.

Then according to plan, we hijack  
a pram & trap a portable puddle.

It is anxious & looks like us.  
We almost take it home.

Instead, we hide in the hedge  
& wait to throw it. We've a mind  
to change the weather.

### 6. To Zanzibar By Motorcar

In Regensberg, the cloud  
left the mountain. In vain

I crumpled my crinolines,  
scuffed the sand outside the temple.

My eyes took in only eye-shaped  
things—mouseface flickering

in the mousehole, pansies  
twitching with palsy. Where

the squint & the kiss are common,  
there are no rebels lurking

between the 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> parallel.  
Children are symmetrical

& zebras fingerprint the plains.  
Ask me if I'm pretending

& I will freeze to delineate  
my non-nod from my nod.

### 7. Snowglobe Hypothesis

By way of the elevator the smell  
traveled from floor to floor—

Argument For, as in the new blender  
snug in its casement of foam,

or the stewardess on her roof garden,  
breeding those mini-suns,

chrysanthemums, for the light-starved  
below. These & other thoughts rattled

around the astronaut's helmeted head.  
His breath fogged the moonscape.

Aladdin, poor lad, wanted out,  
not in. We closed our eyes & still

we could see him, which meant  
Argument Against, which meant

if oilspill, if imperfect pancake, then  
tupperware, terrarium, gumball machine.

### 8. Life-Size Is What We Are (A New History of Photography)

Selflessly the self gave it all away.  
Pin all yr hopes, lay all yr love, etc.

Which means the fish that live  
in a plastic bag think the edges

of the world pucker. It's one thing to  
make an image. It's two things to find one.

Why weren't we mindful of the lady  
behind the makeup counter, calling,

"Come here honey, let me give you  
some eyes?" The laws were sunsetting.

One puff of smoke rose in the minefield.  
People dragged their shadows along.

I'm here to tell you that you're not.  
Surprise, darling, surprise.

### *9. Bird Transfer*

Unfasten the crows & the clouds  
come crashing down. It's a window  
  
into the lightning-struck ago:  
diamond sunspots on the videotape,  
  
coins hitting the fountain floor.  
Invent the sun & edition the trees.

Center your swan on the pond.

### *10. Can We See*

What I thought was  
the wind was a bicycle & lo

my head was halved again.  
Red buds measled the ground.

Jealous Narcissus bit the river.  
The sky was a memoir of blue.

In between the blades of grass hosanna  
there was much greener grass.

### *11. A Ruffle, A Rendezvous*

Goggles against the windowpane.  
Playing chess in gingham.

Split-second snow chandelier.  
Underwater constellation of scallops.

A skate frills along the ocean floor—  
I don't think it's what I'm looking for.

Equestrian galloping through the rain,  
glorious movie-set moon, it isn't

chance if you're waiting for it.

### *12. Our Square Of Lawn*

From the parrot's perch  
the view is always Hello.

We try not to greet one  
another. When the boys come

after school I shout  
"You are not cameras"

at them & they run away.  
Fact will muzzle anything.

I look at myself in  
a spoon & I am just

a head. Never learned  
how to make ringlets—

was always too literal.  
The trees are covered  
  
with tiny dead bouquets.  
The ducks have been eating  
  
grass with chemicals on it,  
ignoring the signs. At night  
  
from our glass-fronted box  
we watch them glow.

It is the closest we come  
to dreaming.

### *13. Going Off The Deep End Into Confectionery*

We're the anemones guarding  
the gates of infinity,

the boats squidding in the bay.  
In the flooded fish market,

dead fish, live fish—who took you  
to the Tuileries for a rose-

scented swim? Turn the world  
& the page is pink.

Frond-fond & pond-proud,  
we sugar the obstacle dark.

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*J=112*

*8va*

*mf*

For the time be - ing call me Home.

*Ped.*

5

All the in - ge - nues do.

(8)

9

U - nits are the en - gines I un - der-stand

(8)

13

best. One be - tray - al, two.

(8)

The musical score consists of three staves of music. The top staff features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a tempo of J=112. It includes lyrics: 'For the time be - ing call me Home.' The middle staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp, with dynamics 'mf' and '8va'. It includes lyrics: 'All the in - ge - nues do.' The bottom staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp, with a dynamic 'Ped.'. The score continues with more staves, each containing a different section of the song with its own unique musical patterns and lyrics. The lyrics are integrated directly into the vocal line, often appearing below the staff or aligned with specific notes.

## OFF THE DEEP END - 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD

17 *mp*

Mer - ri - ly, mer - ri - ly, mer - ri - - ly.

(8)

*mp*

21 *f*

De-fine hope. De-fine ma-chine.

(Spoken) Ma-chine.

Nope.

*f*

*mf*

*p*

27 *mf*

Like thoughts the gen - ius - es race through. If you're luc - ky

(8)

31

af - ter a num - ber of re - vo - lu - tions, you'll feel some - thing catch.

(8)

OFF THE DEEP END

## 2. NOT SO MUCH MINIATURE AS FAR AWAY

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*J=96*

Lit - tle was left of the for - est.

7

Large was ten miles a - way. The song on the ra-

13

- dio was ear - ly 80s in a nut - shell, the sun in the

19

rear - view mir - ror, a peach pit of light.

## OFF THE DEEP END - 2. NOT SO MUCH MINIATURE AS FAR AWAY

25

Make much of me

31

why don't you. All sorts land at the air-

36

- field. Be sil - ver fish,

42

be blimp.

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 3. THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF FEELINGS

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

♩=176

6

*mf*

Pray - ing man - tis - es pa - trolled the peep

12

*f*

- holes, tilt - ing their tri-an - gu-lar heads. The look - out

18

rode the Fer - ris wheel

24

29 *hold back slightly*  
*mp*

ground/ tree/ bird/ sky/

*mp sub.*

*mf*

33

bird/ tree/ ground/ &

*mp*

*mf*

38 *a tempo*

in the con - fu - sion caused by a sud - den pro - fu -

43

sion of po - sies, \_\_\_\_\_ the train tracks slid through.

48  $\text{♩} = 88$

*f*

Lo, the e - lec - tri - cal box - es stopped click - ing \_\_\_\_\_ as we walked past. The

take time

*f*

53  $\text{♩} = 120$

rich - est man in the world trad - ed his yell for a smi - le.

60  $\text{♩} = 176$

*f*

## OFF THE DEEP END - 3. THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF FEELINGS

*opt. 8vb through 77*

65

Some - one in a red

70

shirt be - gan to run - be - hind the trees each night in a poor im - i - ta - tion of

76

*ff.*

sun - set.

81

86 ***ff***

She was thrilled & un - well.

92 ***mf***

I sup - pose I can say it

98 ***mp***

She was me. I missed the mo - ther bird who dropped her

104

ba - bies on my glass ceil - ing, missed the

109

ti - ny pte - ro - dac - tyl sha - dows on my floor.

114

*p*

They were so beau - ti - ful pro - jec - ted there.

*p sub.*

119

*ff*

123

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 4. MACHINE FOR JEAN RHYS

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 100$

Musical score for measures 1-6. The score consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The middle staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a bass clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. Measure 1: The top staff is silent. The middle staff has eighth-note pairs (one note up, one note down) with a dynamic of *mf*. The bottom staff has eighth-note pairs. Measure 2: The top staff is silent. The middle staff has eighth-note pairs with a dynamic of *mf*. The bottom staff has eighth-note pairs. Measure 3: The top staff is silent. The middle staff has eighth-note pairs with a dynamic of *mf*. The bottom staff has eighth-note pairs. Measure 4: The top staff is silent. The middle staff has eighth-note pairs with a dynamic of *mf*. The bottom staff has eighth-note pairs. Measure 5: The top staff is silent. The middle staff has eighth-note pairs with a dynamic of *mf*. The bottom staff has eighth-note pairs. Measure 6: The top staff is silent. The middle staff has eighth-note pairs with a dynamic of *mf*. The bottom staff has eighth-note pairs.

Musical score for measure 7. The score consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The middle staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a bass clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The vocal line begins with "It's all lit". The dynamic is *mf*.

Musical score for measures 8-12. The score consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The middle staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a bass clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The vocal line continues from the previous measure.

Musical score for measures 13-17. The score consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The middle staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a bass clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The vocal line includes lyrics: "up with hand - fuls & eye - fuls". The dynamic is *mf*.

Musical score for measures 18-22. The score consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The middle staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a bass clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The vocal line continues from the previous measure.

Musical score for measures 23-27. The score consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The middle staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a bass clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The vocal line includes lyrics: "& it does - n't want you be - cause that's what you". The dynamic is *mf*.

Musical score for measures 28-32. The score consists of three staves. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The middle staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a bass clef, a key signature of two sharps, and a common time signature. The vocal line continues from the previous measure.

## OFF THE DEEP END - 4. MACHINE FOR JEAN RHYS

25

want. Flick - er,

34

the land shrugs off its scape, flick - er, the

43

trees fall a - way. If la lu - mi -

51

ere is stop - pered in bot - - tles

57 *mf*

what is the light over there?  
What in the world do you

64 *ff*

want in the world? If the ca - fe had

70

stayed, the wai - ter would know.  
If those

76

eyes were your own,  
you might al - so—

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 5. COLOR BY NUMBER

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*d=176*

6

11

15

19

Bird ma - chines trou - ble the fo - liage.

23

*This line played by the singer*

27

*Ped.*

32

*f*

A

## OFF THE DEEP END - 5. COLOR BY NUMBER

37

valve hiss - es & the vio - lets bloom. Then, ac-cord-ing to plan,

Pianist hisses!

*sss*

*f*

*ff*

*pianist hisses!*

*20.*

42

we hi - jack a pram & trap a port - a ble pud-dle.

47

It is

*mf*

52

anx - ious & looks like us. We al - most take it home.

*f*

57

In - stead, we hide\_ in the hedge &  
v.

62

wait to throw it. We've a mind to change the wea - ther.

67

72

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 6. TO ZANZIBAR BY MOTORCAR

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*d=144*

6

*mf*

In Re - gens - berg. the cloud left the moun-tain. In

*sim. al fine*

11

vain I crump-led my cri - no-lines, scuffed the sand out - side the tem-ple. My

16

eyes took in on - ly eye - shaped things mouse - face flick-er - ing in the mouse-hole, pan-sies

21

twitch - ing with pal-sy.

27

Where the squint & kiss are com-mon,

32

lurk - ing be-tween the 15th & 16th par - all - el.

37

Chil - dren are sym - me - tri - cal

## OFF THE DEEP END - 6. TO ZANZIBAR BY MOTORCAR

42

& ze - bras fin - ger-print the plains.

47

Ask me if I'm pre - ten - ding

52

& I will freeze to de - li - ne - ate

56

my non - nod from my nod.

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 7. SNOWGLOBE HYPOTHESIS

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*J=120*

*mp*

By way of the ele - le - va - tor

*mp*

*Ped. when pattern changes*

7

the smell tra - - - velled. from floor

12

*mf*

— to floor — Ar - gu - ment for,

*mf*

17

— as in the new blen - der, snug in its case - ment of

## OFF THE DEEP END - 7. SNOWGLOBE HYPOTHESIS

22

foam,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ the stew - ar - dess\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ her

27

— roof gar - den, breed - ing those mi - ni

32

suns, chrys - an - the-mums for the

37

light - starved be - low. These & o - ther

42

thoughts rat-tled a-round the as - tro-naut's hel-me - ted head.

*Ped. when pattern changes al fine*

47

His breath fogged the moon-scape. A - .

51

lad - din, \_\_\_\_\_ poor lad, \_\_\_\_\_ want - ed out, not in. \_\_\_\_\_

55

we closed our eyes \_\_\_\_\_ & still we could see

## OFF THE DEEP END - 7. SNOWGLOBE HYPOTHESIS

60

him, \_\_\_\_\_ which meant Ar - gu -

66

ment A - gainst, \_\_\_\_\_ which meant, if oil - spill, \_\_\_\_\_

72

if im - per - fect pan - cake, \_\_\_\_\_ then tup - - per-

78

ware, ter - ra - ri - um, gum - ball ma - chine.

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 8. LIFE-SIZE IS WHAT WE ARE

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*d=108*

Self - less - ly the

Pd. when pattern changes

6

self gave it all a-way. Pin all yr hopes, lay all yr

11

love et ce - ter - a.

Which means the fish that

*mp*

mp

16

live in a plas - tic bag think the ed - ges of the world

mp

## OFF THE DEEP END - 8. LIFE-SIZE IS WHAT WE ARE

21

puc-ker.  
It's one thing to make an im-age.

27

It's two things to find one.  
Why were n't we mind-ful of the

33

la-dy be-hind the make-up coun-ter,  
nasal  
cal-ling "Come here hon-ey, let me give you some

38

normal  
eyes?" The laws were sun-set-ting.  
One puff of smoke

43

— rose in the mine-field. Peo - ple

48

dragged their sha - dows a - long. I'm here to tell.

53

— you — that you're not.

58

*norm.*

Sur -prise, dar - ling, sur - -prise.

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 9. BIRD TRANSFER

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*mp*

Un - fas-ten the crows & the clouds

*mp*

Ped.

*sim.*

7

come crash - ing down. It's a

14

win - dow - in - to - the light - ning struck - a -

*sim.*

18

go: dia-mond sun-spots on the vi - de-o - tape,

Ped. ^ ^sim.

25

coins hit - ting the foun - tain floor, In - vent the sun & e - di-tion the trees.

Ped. ^ ^sim.

30

Cen - ter your swan\_\_\_\_ on the pond.

Ped. ^ ^sim.

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 10. CAN WE SEE

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*d=96*

What I thought

*Ped.* *sim.*

8

— was the wind — was a bi - cy - cle & lo —

14

my head was halved a - gain. Red buds —

20

mea-sled the ground. Jea - lous Nar - cis - sus

26

— bit the ri - ver. — The sky —

32

— was a mem - oir — of blue. —

*1/2 Ped.*

39

In be - tween the blades of grass\_ ho - san - na. — ho -

*Ped.* — *sim.*

45

san - na. — there was. — much green - er grass. —

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 11. A RUFFLE, A RENDEZVOUS

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*f*

Gog-gles a - gainst the win - dow-pane..

*f*

*Ped.* *Ped.* *sim. al fine*

6

Play-ing chess\_ in ging-ham.

*f*

Split - se - cond snow chan - de - lier.\_

*mf* ————— *f*

Un - der - wa - ter con - stel - la - tion of scal-lops.

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23

A skate frills a-long the o-cean floor - I don't think it's what I'm look - ing for.

27

E - ques - tri - an gal - lop - ing through the rain,

32

glo - ri - ous mo - vie - set moon,\_\_\_\_ it is - n't

37

chance if you're wait - ing for it.

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 12. OUR SQUARE OF LAWN

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

*J=104*

From the parrot's perch\_\_\_\_ the view is al - ways\_\_\_\_ Hel -

*p*

*Ado.* \_\_\_\_\_ *sim.*

*una corda al fine*

8

lo.\_\_\_\_\_ We try not to greet one a-no-ther.\_\_\_\_

15

When the boys come af-ter school I shout "You are not cam - eras"

22

at them and they run a - way.\_\_\_\_ Fact will

29

muz - zle a - ny - thing. I look at my - self in a

36

spoon & I am just a head. Ne-verlearned how to make

43

ring - lets was al - ways too li - ter - al. The

*mp*

51

trees are co - vered with ti - ny dead bou - quets.

58

The ducks have been eat - ing grass with che - mi - cals on it, ig -

65

no - ring the signs. At night from our glass front-ed box we

72

watch them glow. It is the clos - est we

79

come \_\_\_\_\_ to dream - ing. \_\_\_\_\_

# OFF THE DEEP END

## 13. GOING OVER THE DEEP END INTO CONFECTIONERY

Matthea Harvey

Eric Shanfield

=80 languorous

*mp*

We're the a - ne - mo-nes

A musical score for two voices (Soprano and Bass) and piano. The vocal parts are in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp. The piano part provides harmonic support with sustained notes and eighth-note chords. Measure 1 starts with a piano introduction followed by the vocal entry. Measure 2 begins with a piano accompaniment. Measures 3-5 show a repeating pattern of piano chords and vocal entries.

6

guar - ding the gates of in - fi - ni - ty,

A continuation of the musical score. The vocal parts continue their rhythmic patterns over the piano accompaniment. The piano part maintains a steady harmonic foundation with sustained notes and eighth-note chords.

11

*mf*

the boats squid-ding in the bay.

A continuation of the musical score. The vocal parts continue their rhythmic patterns over the piano accompaniment. The piano part maintains a steady harmonic foundation with sustained notes and eighth-note chords.

17

In the flood - ed fish mark - et, dead fish, live fish

A continuation of the musical score. The vocal parts continue their rhythmic patterns over the piano accompaniment. The piano part maintains a steady harmonic foundation with sustained notes and eighth-note chords. The vocal line includes a melodic line with eighth-note pairs.

23

mp

who took you to the Tui-ler-ies

*mp*

*sim.*

28

mf

for a rose scent-ed swim?

Turn the world and the page is

*mf*

*Ped.* *sim.*

34

mp

mf

pink.

Frond-fond and pond-proud, we su-gar

the ob sta-cle

*mp*

*Ped.*

40

rit.

dark.

*sim.*