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POETRY

GATHERING

Free online magazine from village earth

Volume One December 2016

GUEST EDITORIAL
NOEL MONAHAN
CELEBRATED IRISH POET



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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

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Cover photograph of nutmeg from Palasari, Bali by Mark Ulyseas.

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Guest Editorial - Finding a Way Home for Christmas Noel Monahan

Monahan has published five collections of poetry. His next collection: *Where The Wind Sleeps*, New & Selected Poems, will be published by Salmon in May 2014. Literary awards include: The SeaCat National Award organised by Poetry Ireland, The Hiberno-English Poetry Award, The Irish Writers' Union Poetry Award, The William Allingham Poetry Award and The Kilkenny Poetry Prize for Poetry. Most recent plays include: *"The Children of Lir"* performed by Livin' Dred Theatre and *"Lovely Husbands"*, a drama based on Henry James' work performed at the inaugural Henry James Literary Festival, 2010.



Other Worlds Hélène Cardona

Hélène Cardona's most recent books include *Life in Suspension* (Salmon Poetry) and *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (Salmon Poetry), and the translations *Beyond Elsewhere* (Gabriel Arnou-Laujeac, White Pine Press), *Ce que nous portons* (Dorianne Laux, Éditions du Cygne), and Walt Whitman's *Civil War Writings* for *WhitmanWeb*. She co-edits *Plume* and *Fulcrum: An Anthology of Poetry and Aesthetics*, and contributes essays to *The London Magazine*. She holds a Master's in American Literature from the Sorbonne, and taught at Hamilton College and Loyola Marymount University.



Two Poems Geraldine Mills

Geraldine Mills has published three collections of short stories and four collections of poetry. She has been awarded many prizes and bursaries including the Hennessy/Tribune New Irish Writer Award, two Arts Council Bursaries and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. Her first children's novel titled *Gold* is forthcoming from Little Island in 2016.



Windows Publications - Call for Submissions Heather Brett

Heather Brett born Newfoundland, raised Northern Ireland, lives in Cavan Ireland. Poet and artist, she has been Writer-in-Residence & Arts facilitator for Cavan, Drogheda and The Midlands Collaboration of Longford, Westmeath, Laois & Offaly. Four collections to date, the first of which 'Abigail Brown' (Salmon Publishing) won The Brendan Behan Memorial Prize. Bluechrome Poet of the Year in 2006. Editor of Windows Publications since 1992, and has edited over 40 books of poetry and art, children's and adults.



Channelling the Dead: Six Transversions John W. Sexton

John lives on the south-west coast of Ireland and is the author of five poetry collections, the most recent being *Petit Mal* (Revival Press, 2009) and *The Offspring of the Moon* (Salmon Poetry 2013). His sixth collection, *Futures Pass*, is also forthcoming from Salmon. Under the ironic pseudonym of Sex W. Johnston he has recorded an album with legendary *Stranglers* frontman, Hugh Cornwell, entitled *Sons Of Shiva*, which has been released on Track Records. He is a past nominee for The Hennessy Literary Award and his poem *The Green Owl* won the Listowel Poetry Prize 2007. In 2007 he was awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry.



Gifts Brian Kirk

Brian Kirk is a poet from Clondalkin in Dublin. His poetry has been published widely in journals and anthologies. He won the Jonathan Swift Poetry Award in 2014, the Bailieborough Poetry Prize in 2015 and the Galway RCC Poetry Award in 2016. He was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions Series in 2013 and was highly commended in the Patrick Kavanagh Award in 2014 and 2015. He is a member of the Hibernian Writers Workshop and blogs at www.briankirkwriter.com



Chopping Wood (2) John Walsh

John Walsh was born in Derry. His first poetry collection *Johnny tell Them* was published in October 2006 (Guildhall Press, Derry). In 2007 he received a Publication Award for his second collection *Love's Enterprise Zone* (Doire Press, Connemara). In 2010 Salmon Poetry published his third collection *Chopping Wood with T.S. Eliot*. His debut short story collection *Border Lines*, was published in April 2012. He is now co-director at Doire Press, which he founded with his American partner, Lisa Frank. More at www.doirepress.com



Elements from the Liminal Eileen Sheehan

Sheehan is from Scartaglin, now living in Killarney, County Kerry. Her collections are *Song of the Midnight Fox* and *Down the Sunlit Hall* (Doghouse Books). Anthology publications include *The Watchful Heart: A New Generation of Irish Poets* (Ed Joan McBreen/Salmon Poetry), *TEXT: A Transition Year English Reader* (Ed Niall MacMonagle/Celtic Press) and *Winter Blessings* by Patricia Scanlan (Hodder Headline Ireland). Her senryu and haiku are published in many journals including *The Heron's Nest*, *Frogpond*, *Acorn*, *Paper Wasp* and *Shamrock*. Her work is featured on Poetry International Web's Irish section. Her third collection, *The Narrow Place of Souls*, is forthcoming.



Shadow and Light Lynda Tavakoli

Recently returned from the Middle East where she has been working towards her first poetry collection Lynda Tavakoli is now based back in her native Northern Ireland. Her poems and prose have been broadcast on the BBC and RTE and included in a range of publications such as *Templar Poets' Anthology Skein*, *Abridged*, *The Incubator Journal*, *Panning for Poems* and *Circle and Square*. Lynda has won short story and poetry prizes at Listowel and featured as *The Irish Times*, *Hennessy*, *Poet of the month* in 2015.



A Rib from a Stone Vault Mary Melvin Geoghegan

Mary has four collections of poetry published her last *Say it Like a Paragraph* with Bradshaw Books, Cork (2012). Her work has been widely published including *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Stinging Fly*, *The Shop*, *The Moth*, *Cyphers*, *Studies*, *The Sunday Times*, *Skylight 47*, *Crannog*, *Boyne Berries*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *The Oxfam Calendar* amongst others. In 2013 she won The Longford Festival Award for Poetry and in 2015 was shortlisted for the Cuirt New Writing Award. She has edited several anthologies of children's poetry and is a member of the Writers in Schools Scheme with Poetry Ireland. Her next collection *When Moon and Mother Collide* will be published with Salmon Poetry in 2017.



The Voice of German - Übergesetzt Ian Watson

Ian Watson was born in Belfast but has now spent most of his life in Bremen, Northern Germany, where he worked as a senior lecturer in British and Irish Literature and Creative Writing. He has published poems, articles and literary translations widely and also worked for radio and television in Germany. From 1994 to 2012 he edited *newleaf* magazine and ran *newleaf* press. His recent publications include two books of poetry and short prose - *Kurzpassspiel* (German) and *Riverbank City | A Bremen Canvas*, and his collection *Granny's Interpreter* was published in March 2016 by Salmon Poetry in Ireland.



Phoenix Anni Wilton-Jones

Anni Wilton-Jones, a resident of Co Mayo, has also lived in Wales, England and Saudi Arabia. Having experienced a varied range of careers she is now semi-retired, working part-time in supporting voluntary dyslexia groups. A writer of poetry and, occasionally, prose, she has read in Wales, England, the USA and Ireland. Her collections include *Winter Whiting* and, written under the pen-name Victoria Tims, a chapbook of poems about abuse, entitled *Moth*.

Noel Monahan has published seven collections of poetry. His most recent collection: *Where The Wind Sleeps, New & Selected Poems*, was published by Salmon in May 2014. He has won numerous awards for his poetry and drama. His work has been translated into Italian, French, Romanian and Russian. His most recent plays include: "The Children of Lir" performed by Livin' Dred Theatre. His poetry was prescribed text for the Leaving Certificate English Course 2011 and 2012. His 7th. collection of poetry: "Cellui Qui Porte Un Veau" a French translation of his work was published by Allidades, France in October 2014. An Italian selection of his work was published in "Tra Una Vita E L'Altra", published by Guanda, 2015. His work appears in the recent Anthology of Poetry "Windharp" Poems of Ireland Since 1916, edited by Niall MacMonagle and published by Penguin, 2015.



NOEL MONAHAN

CELEBRATED IRISH POET & WRITER

FINDING A WAY HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

Christmas is about finding a way home through the darkness of winter. It's a journey we take every year. We travel inwardly to a land of holly, ivy and snowfall. Winter sits in the arms of the trees. Frost grows on the branches. We are lured by the beacons of candle flame in every winter window. We hear the creak of a swinging yard-gate. We sit in the glow of a log fire listening to half-forgotten conversations. We find time to have a look at ourselves.

Christmas creates a magical bridge in our lives. It gives wings to our memory and we journey back to childhood. We remember Aunt Annie coming down on the bus from Dublin to Granard and how the bus was late because the roads were covered in ice and snow. And Aunt Annie loved to tell us stories about Christmas in America because she worked there as a nanny for twenty years. She loved to tell us the story of a Christmas snowman with a moon face, bitumen eyes, big red braces and how he'd hobble past the window with a wheelbarrow full of presents for all the children. And then she'd interrupt her story several times, to say she had to be back in Dublin by St. Stephen's Day to feed the cat.

We are all looking into the crib and looking into our own lives. It helps to heal our hearts. Old beliefs and mindsets return. The farmers pray for better crops, better prices for cattle, shopkeepers pray for new customers. It's a way of expressing our soul's longing for peace and hope and confronting our struggles with life.



Gerard van Honthorst - Adoration of the Shepherds (1622)

Christmas highlights unexplored places like chimneys and stables. We are drawn into the illusion of Santa coming down the chimney and a virgin giving birth in a stable. A visit to the crib is another way of finding a way home. It is part of the creative journey of Christmas. We are given an opportunity to open ourselves to an inner experience. Throughout the year we can feel cut off, wounded and need to be rescued. As a child I remember the adults standing about the crib. They seemed stiff and tense at first and wore their overcoats like some armour of protection. And maybe it was the wide-eyed innocence of ourselves as children that warmed their hearts, softened their stare.

The crib is a form of story-telling. The figures connect us to the story. We hear the angels sing. We see Joseph and Mary stand over the Infant in a manger of golden straw. We see the ox, the ass and the shepherds and the three wise men are outside and about to enter with rare presents.

We are all looking into the crib and looking into our own lives. It helps to heal our hearts. Old beliefs and mindsets return. The farmers pray for better crops, better prices for cattle, shopkeepers pray for new customers. It's a way of expressing our soul's longing for peace and hope and confronting our struggles with life.

Christmas always returns home to a state of childhood. It is the enduring vitality of childhood that comes alive each year. It creates wonderment and rescues us from the darkness of winter. Christmas offers light, hope and peace of mind. It is a homecoming to a deeper sense of ourselves.

But don't get carried away. Invisible forces are at play at Christmas. Even the very first Christmas had its dark side. The Coventry Carol reminds us of King Herod and his raging anger at the birth of Baby Jesus.

And there are those who cannot find a way home. Those for whom every Christmas candle offers no flame. Those who struggle with life in their separate worlds and who have forgotten what it feels like to be warm. Christmas can be miserable and sadly some sleep with their fears in doorways, wrap themselves in cardboard boxes and want to forget Christmas.

And we can find our way home at Christmas with literature when we recall some of our poets and writers. We are humbled by Christmas stories and the simplicity and magic of it all. William Carleton's Christmas connects our souls with mother earth.

Carleton paints a haunting description of Midnight Mass in the Clogher valley, Co. Tyrone in the early 19th. century. In his famous book: *Traits And Stories of The Irish Peasantry*; he writes about a myriad of blazing torches all converging to one point. The Mass was celebrated in the open air. The lighted bog-firs all streaming down the mountain side, along the roads or across the fields and settling at last into a broad sheet of fire. The light lit the peoples' faces and gave an unearthly character that resembled a meeting with the dead.

And the rural wonder of Christmas takes us home to Inniskeen, Co. Monaghan in the 20th. century when Patrick Kavanagh's father plays the melodeon:

*Across the wild bog his melodeon called
To Lennons and Callons.
As I pulled on my trousers in a hurry
I knew some strange thing had happened.*

Christmas always returns home to a state of childhood. It is the enduring vitality of childhood that comes alive each year. It creates wonderment and rescues us from the darkness of winter. Christmas offers light, hope and peace of mind. It is a homecoming to a deeper sense of ourselves.

Hélène Cardona's most recent books include *Life in Suspension* (Salmon Poetry) and *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (Salmon Poetry), and the translations *Beyond Elsewhere* (Gabriel Arnou-Laujeac, White Pine Press), *Ce que nous portons* (Dorianne Laux, Éditions du Cygne), and Walt Whitman's *Civil War Writings* for *WhitmanWeb*. She co-edits *Plume* and *Fulcrum: An Anthology of Poetry and Aesthetics*, and contributes essays to *The London Magazine*. She holds a Master's in American Literature from the Sorbonne, and taught at Hamilton College and Loyola Marymount University.



Peripatetic Gremlin

*Some days a shadow through
The high window shares my Prison.*
- Geoffrey Hill

My life is a slide show
projecting the same image
again and again,
a glimpse into a world full of light
from behind bars,
a world that escapes North and South
as I stare at the Angel,
transfixed,
blinded by whiteness of time.

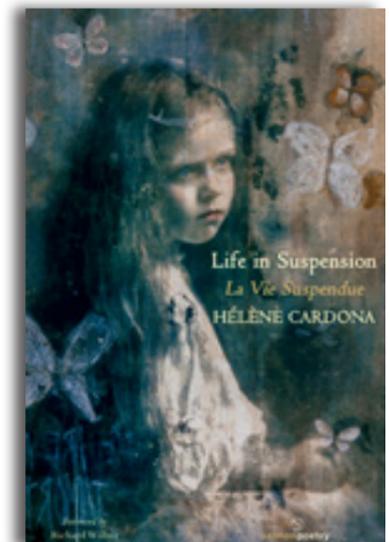
From **Life in Suspension** (Salmon Poetry, 2016)

At My Funeral

*Nothing is born or perishes, but already
existing things combine, then separate anew.*
- Anaxagoras

Somebody speaks at my funeral
but I am not dead.
People love the eulogy,
can't get enough.
It isn't sad.
Water floods out of
nowhere, mingles with air
and the fluidity converts me from solid
to liquid to ether and back.
Cats saunter in the condensation.
I see myself looking for them.
Finding all the cats means
there is no death.

From **Life in Suspension** (Salmon Poetry, 2016)



© Helene Cardona

A House Like a Ship

I live in a house like a ship
at times on land, at times on ocean.
I will myself into existence
surrender, invite grace in.
I heed the call of the siren.
On the phantom ship
I don't know if I'm wave
or cloud, undine or seagull.
Lashed by winds, I cling tight to the mast.
Few return from the journey.
I now wear the memory of nothingness
a piece of white sail wrapped like second skin.

From **Life in Suspension** (Salmon Poetry, 2016)

Tricksters

There once lived a witch
who possessed two stones.
The first revealed whether a person
or situation was beneficial,
the second made you sleepy.
She gave me the stone of unknowing
and an appointment.
But I discovered her ploy.
For I saw the stone's spirit
as it too saw my spirit and offered
me the choice to acquire its counterpart.
So when I encountered the lady again
I switched them unbeknownst to her
and kept the stone of discerning
for its gifts of protection and clarity.

From **Life in Suspension** (Salmon Poetry, 2016)



© Helene Cardona

Peregrine Pantoum

Begin with a dream,
snowcapped mountains and rivers of salmon.
Green rays cleave the heart of winter
dancing at the edge of the lake.

Snowcapped mountains and rivers of salmon
echo laughter and lilac sonatas
dancing at the edge of the lake.
Fairy tales beckoning days on end

echo laughter and lilac sonatas,
my grandmother's exquisite designs.
Fairy tales beckoning days on end,
wisdom and melancholy build fires,

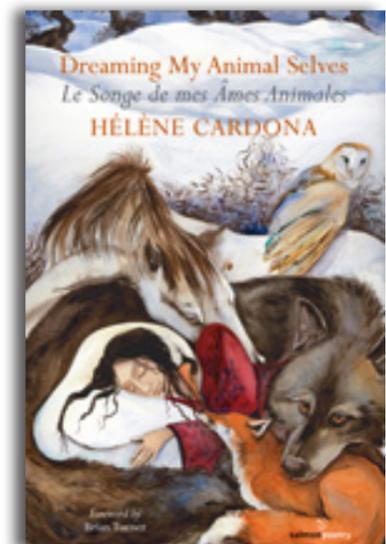
my grandmother's exquisite designs
engineered by elves. I sleep with fervor.
Wisdom and melancholy build fires,
myriad books and soulful dwellings

engineered by elves. I sleep with fervor
on slippery roads, frozen paths.
Myriad books, soulful dwellings,
enchanted forests ripen with children's riddles.

Slippery roads, frozen paths
drive mazes of mind.
Enchanted forests ripen with children's riddles,
exiles and travels, forced and chosen.

Driving mazes of mind,
tales of torture ring from the land of gods,
exiles and travels, forced and chosen.
Sirens and magic flutes ablaze,

Tales of torture ring from the land of gods.
Green rays cleave the heart of winter,
Sirens and magic flutes ablaze.
Begin with a dream.



From **Dreaming My Animal Selves** (Salmon Poetry, 2013)

Geraldine Mills has published three collections of short stories and four collections of poetry. She has been awarded many prizes and bursaries including the Hennessy/Tribune New Irish Writer Award, two Arts Council Bursaries and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. Her first children's novel titled *Gold* has just been released and is available at www.littleisland.ie/shop/gold/ www.kennys.ie/gold-2179.html www.geraldinemills.com



Poem as Haw Chutney

i.m. Gerry Galvin

First, scour the hedges for word fruit,
vessels crammed to overspill
with scarlet letters, blazing vowels.

Dump all you've plucked into the pot of possibility
with tart of vinegar, the wages of salt,
raisins dried down to size.

Add spices that blood was spilt for:
clove, ginger, nutmeg
and simmer in liquids, mutes,

until the kitchen steams
with hissing fricatives
and each thing loses all semblance of itself.

Press the boiling mess through the waiting sieve,
the pulp that's left behind – metaphor, enjamb
ment – is only fit for compost worms.

Bitter-sweeten the paltry trickle
that finds its way
through the pinhole of mesh

and pour into a clean jar of page
before hiding it in the dark larder of promise,
to mellow, settle, become its own name.

What the Dark Becomes

Injured, the young barn owl pushed its head
into the wall, trying to hollow out some darkness for itself.

Brightness blinding, its knitting-needle beak clicked away
until I put it in a shoebox under the refuge of hedge.

All day it ate nothing, drank nothing
just blinked its yoke-yellow eye at me.

Listening for the slow sounding of dusk,
I carried the box to the hill, turned it on its side.

The fledging bird, dazed, flopped out, stumbled
across the grass, up, then down again.

And maybe its instinct measured the leaving of light
or wisdom to some silent homing call

because it gave a little run, a flap of wing,
flew back into the dark it swept out of me.



© Geraldine Mills

Heather Brett born Newfoundland, raised Northern Ireland, lives in Cavan Ireland. Poet and artist, she has been Writer-in- Residence & Arts facilitator for Cavan, Drogheda and The Midlands Collaboration of Longford, Westmeath, Laois & Offaly. Four collections to date, the first of which 'Abigail Brown' (Salmon Publishing) won The Brendan Behan Memorial Prize. Bluechrome Poet of the Year in 2006. Editor of Windows Publications since 1992, and has edited over 40 books of poetry and art, children's and adults.

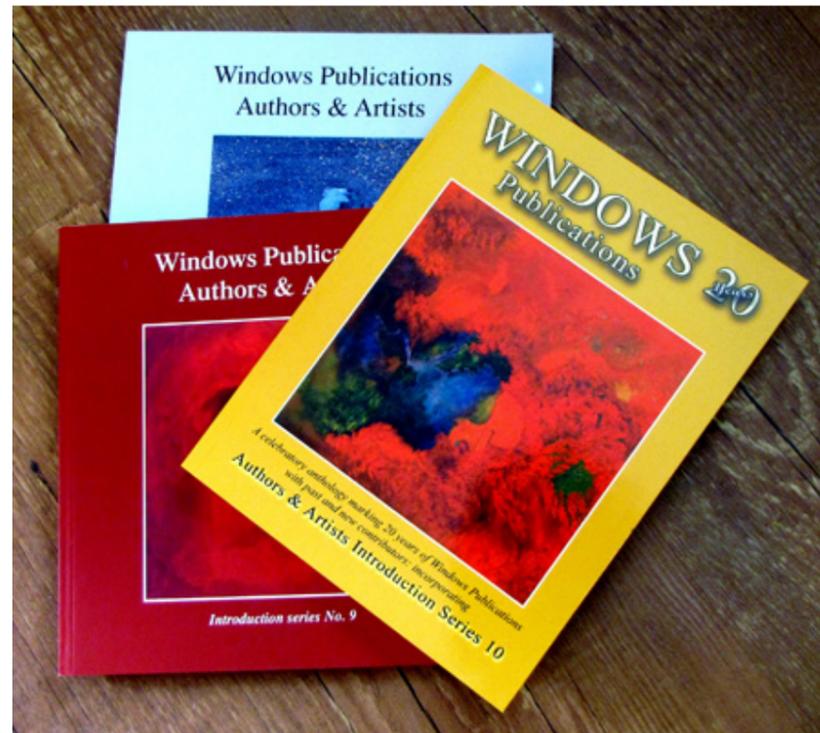


Call for Submissions

Windows Publications Celebrates 25 years Author's & Artist's Introduction Series 11

Windows is a publishing concern with over 20 titles and 10 anthologies. We welcome unsolicited submissions from writers and artists anywhere - in English or Irish (and other languages if accompanied with the English translation) - of poems, short stories, play extracts and the work of visual artists.

We intend to publish this celebratory anthology in May 2017.



Guidelines for Submissions

01. Please send a maximum of **seven** poems *or* **two** pieces of prose *or* short stories up to a maximum of 2000 words *or* up to **seven** visual images.
02. Work should be **original**, and preferably previously **unpublished** – we are looking for the newer voice who would benefit from the publication of their work.
03. Work should be **typed in 12pt with single/adequate line spacing**, with a cover note containing **contact details**.
04. The preferred method of submission is **by email to:**
Heatherbrett22@hotmail.com
05. By post to Heather Brett 2 Loreto Wood, Cavan, Co Cavan. Ireland
06. Please keep a copy as work will **not** be returned.
07. Contributors will receive copies of the anthology and have a platform to read/show their work in public.
08. Submissions are accepted from 10th October 2016 until the closing date of 16th December to facilitate editing and publishing.
09. The editors are Noel Monahan & Heather Brett.
10. www.windowspublicationsanddesign.com

Woolgathering

I came from a family
that did not hug.
Touch was smacking
and kisses for the dead,
the old dead.

I came from a family
that did not listen,
would not read between the lines,
and talk was for gossip
or ordering groceries.

I came from a family
that believed in face values,
where priests and doctors and teachers
were right beyond question,
and money was all or nothing.

I came from a family
of solid people,
Northern stock, roots planted in *terra firma*,
no heads in the clouds,
no tolerance for dreamers.

I see the end of that generation
stout skeins of yarn, snapping and breaking,
feel the tug of a life made feeble,
feel myself never so brittle,
spoilt for choice in a world of wanting, and

hearing only the simple word Home.

Love Song

Ours
is a seldom frequented skin.
It hangs alone
out there, waiting
where the unfulfilled come to water,
where a peach sun squats
and tints a sallow landscape
a Spanish rosé.

I'll be your pear
In a flask of sweet wine
You be an orchard
on a summer hillside
and time
will just waste away.

And
on normal days
we'll dance the polyglide
with inherited patience,
left over symptoms
from some raw deal,
and we'll leave no shadow,
no imprint, no clue
as to who I am, as to who are you.

And I'll be your pear
in a flask of sweet wine,
You be my orchard
on a sunny hillside
and time,
time will just waste away.



John W. Sexton lives on the south-west coast of Ireland and is the author of five poetry collections, the most recent being *Petit Mal* (Revival Press, 2009) and *The Offspring of the Moon* (Salmon Poetry 2013). His sixth collection, *Futures Pass*, is also forthcoming from Salmon. Under the ironic pseudonym of Sex W. Johnston he has recorded an album with legendary Stranglers frontman, Hugh Cornwell, entitled *Sons Of Shiva*, which has been released on Track Records. He is a past nominee for The Hennessy Literary Award and his poem *The Green Owl* won the Listowel Poetry Prize 2007. In 2007 he was awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry.



Alpine Morning

after Giosuè Carducci (1835-1907)

In the aureole of the alps, upon the bloodless
grey granite, upon the lit glaciers, noon
takes its kingdom; intense in stillness,
infinite in its sounding of nil.

The wind is petrified in the weave of firs,
in the pines pointing at penetrative sunlight;
only the water, threaded thin between stones,
argues in the loosening strings of a lute.

Earth Rich in Rotted Blossom

after Li Ch'ing-Chao, on the death of her husband

The wind ceases; earth is rich in rotted blossom.
At this day's end I am too weary to braid my hair;
What remains now that he is gone? Nothing remains.
I try eloquence but manage only the flowing tear.

I hear that at the Two-Way Stream the water is fair;
Thus I long, also, to float in a boat of petals.
I fear though that the peony boats of the Two-Way Stream
Will never sustain my freight of anguish.



© John W Sexton

The Gilded Gate Was Sprung

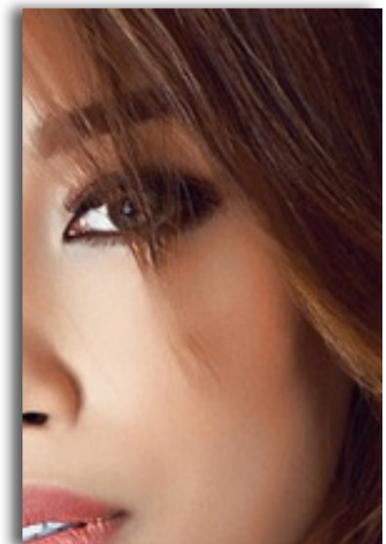
(Traditional, from the Italian)

The gilded gate was sprung; • thus fled the nightingale.
 An infant's heart was wrung; • the child began to wail:
My shining cage - no nightingale! • From his heart, a pang;
 He sang: • *who let you out of jail?*
 His heart a pang, he sang: • who let you out of jail?
 He followed a woodland trail • as the fledgling sang;
 Its sweet song a bell; • hence the trees rang.
O lovely nightingale: • to my garden, take wing.
O lovely nightingale: • in my garden, sing

The Heavenly Woman at Penlai

after Li Yu

An angel is held in the Penlai dungeon;
 And while she sleeps all tongues are stilled.
 Her shining hair is a cloud of lightning;
 Her embroidered robes breathe the peony's will.
 Illicitly I slip the pearl latch of her chamber
 And she wakes from her dream in that room of silver;
 Her face overflows with a light beyond reason
 As our eyes are locked in love's limitless prison.



© John W Sexton

Yellow Crane Tower

after Cui Hao

The yellow crane has long flown over
and all that's left is its roosting-tower.
Once gone the yellow crane is surely gone
and for a thousand years the clouds drift on.
At Hanyang, water flows clear to the grove;
meadows waft perfume to an isle of birds.
Dusk falls with no hint of my tomorrow;
in the river's fog I become sorrow.

Swans like Snow

after Karacaoğlan, sixteenth-century Turkish minstrel

Swans like snow had wandered out
while restless youths in dreams gave shout
as at the dawn from the mountain's gate
I spied six maidens at the brook

Three had hair exceeding bright
three sprung tall like deer in flight
scattering herds with their dazzling light
and the wildfowl flew down to the brook

This poet slid through skittering stones
to kneel before the maidens' thrones
but the six had fled despite my groans
and bereft I was by the salty brook



© John W Sexton

Brian Kirk is a poet and writer from Clondalkin in Dublin. He was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions Series in 2013 and was highly commended in the Patrick Kavanagh Award in 2014 and 2015. His first poetry collection *After The Fall* is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry in early 2017. His novel for children *The Rising Son* was published in December 2015. He is a member of the Hibernian Writers Workshop and he blogs at www.briankirkwriter.com.



Birthday

for Laura

You ask if there's a gift I'd like to mark the passing year,
but how can I demand – no more than you can give –
the turning back of time to when I knew you first?

Not back to the doorway of the Red Cow Inn, when drunk
I pecked you on the cheek and mumbled happy birthday;
not, one year later, when we sat with friends in the Green Man

on St. Martin's Lane and I stayed quiet, sober. Not back
to when you met me from the train at Euston after my father died,
or sometime after that, when we moved to Highbury on our own;

when we began to drop our masks and make our true selves known.
I think of how we wallowed in our love for years
before the kids arrived and stole our time but gave us

so much more. I was always stealing things,
books from shops, kisses in the backs of taxis,
always wanting something more when I had plenty.

I feared love then, considered it a failing, a retreat, until
I felt it. Though it was buried deep you disinterred
it, breathed life into its musty lungs and made it sing.

I see you as Prometheus, a kind of Doctor Frankenstein
to my ignoble monster, but you did not abandon me when
I reverted to base nature, when others bayed for blood.

You took me back to Dublin and the children came;
they taught me over time to do new things,
to stay up nights and cool a fever, heat a bottle

or simply sit and let the long hours shorten into day.
I want the long hours back but you can't give me that.
Sometimes I yearn to go back even further,

to a world defined by family, fields and railway tracks,
the sham abandon of the long school holidays.
I want the days to be mid-summer all year long,

those childhood games that lasted until darkness fell
and twilight was a midnight walk back home with
a ball at my feet and my head completely empty.

Each night I close my eyes and we are young again, before time
dragged us down its hungry maw. On waking I can feel I'm falling,
but reaching out into the dark I find you, hold on tight.

The Lights

When will they light the lights again?
We've shivered in the dark for long enough,
we want to see ourselves in others' eyes

and know that we are not alone
or stranded in a foreign place.
When will they light the lights again?

We fill the darkness with our words
and failing hopes that things might change.
We want to see ourselves in others' eyes

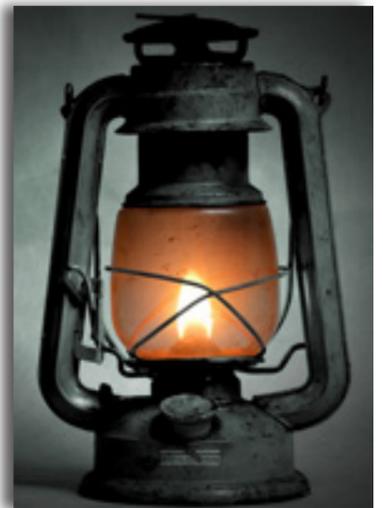
because we only know ourselves
through other's looks or smiles.
When will they light the lights again?

From childhood we were told to hide,
to never seek attention and now
we want to see ourselves in others' eyes.

One thing we've learned in our dim world:
there is no life unless there is some light.
When will they light the lights again?
We want to see ourselves in others' eyes.

Singing

Remember the hours spent sitting around
on floors in bedsits or in smoky bars,
singing but saying nothing much. We are
the same we tell ourselves, but now confound
pale memory when we sing. What is that sound
we make, between the strum of the guitar,
sharp inhalation and the abridged bar?
After a life of choice we've run aground
on obligation's stony beach, drowned
in forgotten chord sequences that jar.
To bridge the gap to beauty seems too far,
considering the pipes are old, untuned.
There is a song at last; we hum the start,
the words come slowly, then are known by heart.



© Brian Kirk

John Walsh was born in Derry. His first poetry collection *Johnny tell Them* was published in October 2006 (Guildhall Press, Derry). In 2007 he received a Publication Award for his second collection *Love's Enterprise Zone* (Doire Press, Connemara). In 2010 Salmon Poetry published his third collection *Chopping Wood with T.S. Eliot*. His debut short story collection *Border Lines*, was published in April 2012. He is now co-director at Doire Press, which he founded with his American partner, Lisa Frank. More at www.doirepress.com



Interlock

Maria D'Antuono, ninety-eight years old, who was trapped beneath the ruins of her house after the earthquake in L'Aquila, told reporters she had spent the thirty hours, while she waited to be rescued, knitting.

When they carried this skinny, little lady out, a ghost from the dust and rubble raised on high, she smiled for the world press and mimed with shaky hands two needles clicking.

Since then I have decided to take up knitting. When they carry me out after my trauma in the ruins, I will have my handknit Aran sweater mended, the one my girlfriend always borrows. My hair matted, contrite with quake ash, I will brave the international media to show I am a survivor, following in the tradition of Signora D'Antuono.

Del Pinto

For me he was only a name
but my sister says she'd
heard of him also. He was
something my father held onto,
a dream for another lifetime maybe,
not this one.

I think my father prayed for him
at night on his knees,
bent over the settee,
his back to the dying fire.

I imagine he thought of him at times
when his heart wasn't in his job;
allowed himself a fleeting visit
from an old friend who was part of him,
the way other things weren't.

Maybe he was my father's Kerouac,
the alter ego of a man
who never touched a drink,
who put his wife and family
before everything, and himself
too far down life's scale to ever
stand a chance of making that trip,
of hitting the road or working his passage
on that ship, the way Del Pinto did.

My father was three years older than Kerouac.
He cursed when a watch spring broke,
mumbled under his breath when my mother
got on his nerves. He told me Kerouac was a bum.
No real man would rat on his friends,
name names just to sell his book.

Del Pinto was above all that.
My father's prayers brought him
safely to whatever harbour his ship docked,
where he drank whiskey highballs
behind my father's back, just like Jack.



Gash

I am the stone on the second of impact.
I am the fear reflected in the eyes of my sister.
I am the whimpering of my father,
an old man who wouldn't hurt a fly.
I am the crunch of my brother's skull.

I am the blood spattered on shivering faces.
I am the thud of hungry clay.
I am the gash in the earth, stuffed with bodies.

I am the breath deserting the forsaken.
I am the fading echo of consciousness.
I am the panicking of the undead.

I am the Reuters bulletin on the international news market.
I am the twenty-seven words in the 'World News' section.
I am the smudge of fresh ink on fingertips.

'Guwahati. Villagers in India's northeast
stoned four members of a family,
including two women, and then buried them
alive on suspicion of practising witchcraft,
police have reported.' (Reuters June 14, 2008)

'Gash' has never been published before.

Big Blue Towel

This big blue towel is mine.
I never had as big a towel before.
My sister-in-law, who gave it to me,
always gives me very useful presents.

I can wrap myself in it, snuggle
into its soft touch and reminisce
on my childhood, when I never
had my own towel like this.
As if it were the only thing
I ever wanted to have.

But there were other things I had.
My flashy red sports car that I sat into
and pedalled down the street under
the noses of the other kids who all
wanted one just like it. My green
racer, the latest Raleigh, that I sailed
to school on and back, feeling elite.
Probably things too I don't remember.

You know when I think back on it,
I really didn't do too badly.

However, my therapist gets me to drag up
all kinds of things that might not even be there.
He says when I dig down deep enough, that is
the way I will pull myself out of it.

I'm not so sure. He might just be jealous
of my big blue towel. I'm pretty certain
he doesn't own one. He's got a wife and
six kids, two of them going through college.
Lives right in the middle of town, near a busy
roundabout. I think he could use a holiday.
I'd be alright till he gets back. I'd just
take lots more showers until he does.



Indreabhán

This beach is clear now, ready again for wrecking.
Waves rally around the rocks, reclaim lost ground.
A fishing boat idles out of context near Inis Oírr.
A sailing boat skims Blackhead,

passes cursor-like across the Burren.
Those Burren eyesores, nothing
has moved on them since I came here.

At the pier a van drives up,
two figures check on moorings,
then disappear.

There is nothing special to report.
The wind repeats itself, gears up in defiance.
The clouds are locked in an alliance,
a solid web of grey drifts in.

Tipping Point

A bird just hit the kitchen window.
A dull thud. Maybe not too hard.

I don't like when this happens. I get
the feeling the energy is wrong.

I go out and check but there's nothing
lying around. Just the cut-off twigs
that I haven't yet cleared away.

Maybe this won't happen for a whole year.
Then within the space of a few days
small birds start straying off course,
nose-diving into these big window panes.

That's what makes it so worrying, so strange.

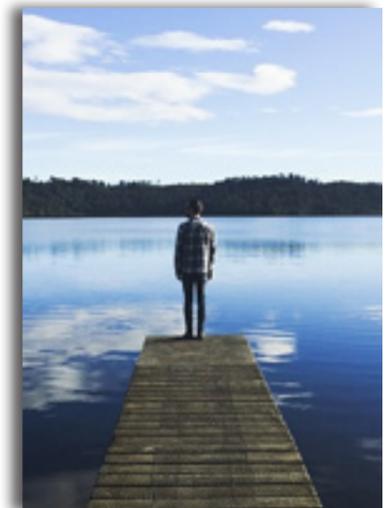
I feel sorry for them. Maybe I should
put up stickers, the ones you see in libraries,
hospitals and big office blocks.

But I think that would look weird.
This is my home. I live here.

I am the one who planted the trees.
I remember the early years.
Not a thrush, a blackbird to be heard.

Then one day hearing the first notes,
how expectations changed.

So it disquiets when like today
the pattern is broken and something
creeps in to make one think
how finely the balance is poised,
how easily it could tip the other way.



© John Walsh

Eileen Sheehan is from Scartaglin, now living in Killarney, County Kerry. Her collections are *Song of the Midnight Fox* and *Down the Sunlit Hall* (Doghouse Books). Anthology publications include *The Watchful Heart: A New Generation of Irish Poets* (Ed Joan McBreen/Salmon Poetry), *TEXT: A Transition Year English Reader* (Ed Niall MacMonagle/ Celtic Press) and *Winter Blessings* by Patricia Scanlan (Hodder Headline Ireland). Her senryu and haiku are published in many journals including *The Heron's Nest*, *Frogpond*, *Acorn*, *Paper Wasp* and *Shamrock*. Her work is featured on Poetry International Web's Irish section. Her third collection, *The Narrow Place of Souls*, is forthcoming.
<http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/23096/Eileen-Sheehan>



Fire

I fell asleep and dreamt
 that as I slept
 one glowing spark ignited
 in a room downstairs
 and instantly
 my whole house
 was licked by flame.

I woke up naked

the covers tossed aside,
 my skin adorned
 with shining jewels of sweat;

my house, my room, my bed
 apparently unscorched:
 my whole body
 yearning, yearning.

First published in **The Cork Literary Review** (ed Sheila O'Hagan).
 From **Song of the Midnight Fox** (Doghouse Books)

Thoughts Procured by Twilight

The day is pulling away from me,
 gathering into itself, bright-cloaked
 and showing me its diminishing back

and something in the tinge of light remaining
 recalls a dream I had
 of drawing you to me
 and you resisting my kiss. You opened
 your dream mouth to show me why
 and I saw slimy pustules
 sprouting from the insides of your cheeks,
 your gums, your tongue. I watched them
 multiply and blacken till suddenly
 your dream mouth shut and you were
 wholly yourself again, and smiling.

As I am smiling now
 at the thoughts procured by twilight;
 the absurdities produced by our dreaming heads;
 while I sit here
 with night happening all around me,
 my calm blood still craving
 your infectious kiss.

From **Song of the Midnight Fox** (Doghouse Books)



© Eileen Sheehan

Dreaming Snow White

If, while journeying through darkened woods
you stepped into a clearing
and found me stretched there dead
with all my hair spread out
my body white as camphor

would you raise the lid that held me
would you kiss me on the mouth
would your velvet tongue dislodge
the bite of poisoned apple from my throat

and would there be a white horse
his golden bridle gleaming
his breath like surging water

impatient to spirit us away
to some Happy-Ever-After.

From **Song of the Midnight Fox** (Doghouse Books)

New Year's Eve

I have been too long with the addled
too long with the dying
too long concerned
with the niceties of death

if I sent word
would you come to me by midnight
under the chiming bells

let your warm breath sweeten
the fetid air around me

let your kisses thaw
my pallid skin

would you thrust
this black grip
from my body

impress on my tongue
a song to greet the year with

a beginning song

From **Down the Sunlit Hall** (Doghouse Books)



© Eileen Sheehan

Lynda Tavakoli's poems and prose have been broadcast on the BBC and RTE and included in a range of publications including Templar Poets' Anthology *Skein*, Abridged, The Incubator Journal, Panning for Poems, Circle and Square, The Honest Ulsterman, A New Ulster and Corncrake magazine. Lynda has won both short story and poetry prizes at Listowel and featured as The Irish Times, Hennessy poet of the month in October 2015.



Watermark

for Seamus Heaney

So the sleán has ceased its cut
and the soft bogs of Ireland
soak in tears from some impenetrable loss.

Out of the land they seep
their salted wetness surfacing
like moisture pearls

to merge and hold, and merge again;
a river coursing free
from source to open sea

and on its tide
a legacy of words
diminishing the keening in their wake

as the imprint of your watermark endures -
remembered, loved and missed,
for us; the Lover's stamp,

your final kiss.

Done

Death bleaches into bone
the smell of oldness
secreting in the folds
of laundered sheets.

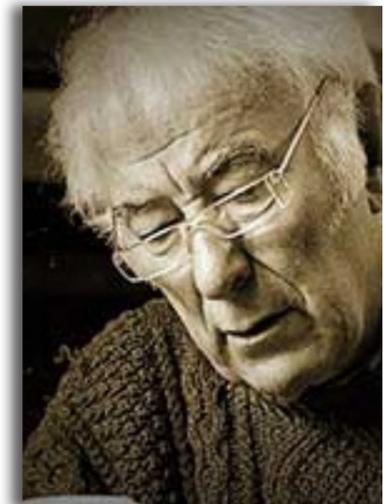
Old Old Old

Your face reflected
in the greying wood of trees
and origami limbs
a plicature of
skeleton and skin.

You ask,
'Is someone dying here?'
and to the silence add,
'You're good. I'll keep you,'

the words
your parting gift -

the love you left.



© Lynda Tavakoli

Backward Glancing on a Tehran Street

Turquoise, my colour-coat of choice
and yours the emerald green
of half your roots;
the other half a chadored
shadow stretched to fit
a flat screen back at home.

Here on this Tehran Street -
Khomeini Street,
the black crows
softly trip the light fandango
through a sea of cars
shoaling the three-lane surf
forever six lanes deep.

On pavements walk
the kohl-eyed beauty
of the young
loose slung roosari draped
high on bee hives, nose jobs
sticking - plastered for perfection
(at a western price).

We walk rebellious in
our coloured coats,
the mother, daughter oddity
of us no longer meriting
that whispered backward glance,
for underneath our feet
awakening slowly from its sleep
the Persian tiger stirs.

Hare

What is there here yet
but sounds of stillness
and the echoed laughter
of our childhood
blazing the bog?

For in this place
we stand now in adulthood
our soft chatter breaking only
the fragmented birdsong
concealed in trees
where once my brother
waisted me with twine
to climb the greened Everest
of a nearest beech
or scale the Eigered barn beside.

But even as our voices
course like rivers through the fields
you visit us – your hare eyes startled only
by our sudden trespass on your passage home
and like a boxer boring of the fight
you leave the ring with kick and twist
the pads of your feet
indented where you briefly stood

on the dust of the past.



© Lynda Tavakoli

Between Two Hearts

The distance between two hearts
is measured not in words of creed
where God and Allah
vie to take the upper hand.

Nor is it measured by a debt of culture
when the rhythms of its beat
are swallowed up by ritual
and obligation.

The distance between two hearts
is measured always in our love
where every bridge we cross
becomes a treasured memory
of what we gave and gained
together through our lives.

And if we listen closely
we will hear its echo
touch another's heart
as you touched mine

and always let me fly.

Haiku

Soft wind of summer
Blowing kisses through the trees
Halting autumn's call



© Lynda Tavakoli

Mary Melvin Geoghegan has four collections of poetry published her last *Say it Like a Paragraph* with Bradshaw Books, Cork (2012). Her work has been widely published including Poetry Ireland Review, The Stinging Fly, The Shop, The Moth, Cyphers, Studies, The Sunday Times, Skylight 47, Crannog, Boyne Berries, The Stony Thursday Book, The Oxfam Calendar amongst others. In 2013 she won The Longford Festival Award for Poetry and in 2015 was shortlisted for the Cuirt New Writing Award. She has edited several anthologies of children's poetry and is a member of the Writers in Schools Scheme with Poetry Ireland. Her next collection *When Moon and Mother Collide* will be published with Salmon Poetry in 2017. www.amazon.com



A Rib from a Stone Vault

a rib from a stone vault
rests against the east wall down
in the crept of Glasgow Cathedral.
I run a finger along the stone groove
and feel the comfort of centuries.
That certainty of endurance
grips me again in the nave
in front of the Millennium Window
created by John K Clark.

Outside towards the Necropolis
I'm escorted up the hill by my rib -
and introduced to Glasgow's founding fathers
with John Knox towering above the wind
still holding forth.

In a Curve of Hope

the day heats up
sitting under the white birch
in the July of the garden.
The firetail creeps closer
and the wedding cake tree
despite the brambles
is trying to be visible.
There's work to be done -
but, sitting near you
there's a clearing.



© Mary Melvin Geoghegan

The Clock

for Peter

a gift from his mother.
Brings him up the steps
of St.Mel's Cathedral in Longford.
Taking off the cellophane
inside, running up the aisle
as on so many Sundays.
Now, finds the batteries
and adjusts the hands
to his own time.

At The Thiepval Monument

1st July 2016

Near the river Somme
a hundred years to the day
the rain drops down
in amongst the white birch trees.
the illusion of time
as darkness falls
almost, complete.



© Mary Melvin Geoghegan

Out of the Skies Over Kazakhstan

i.m. Jo Cox MP

Astronaut Tim Peake parachutes
from the Soyuz capsule along
with two colleagues, as a young woman
walks behind and stitched to her shirt
a white, blue and red tricolour
the flag of the Russian Federation.
With a broad smile -
she comes to assist
their first moments back on earth.

The day before the landing
in the town of Birstall, England
all gathered to honour -
a force of nature, a five-foot-bundle
of Yorkshire grit and determination.
Who never knew out of the skies
of a home town, her last moments
were coming.

Airstrike

Omran Daqneesh
is beamed across the world.
The five year old boy from Aleppo
sitting on an orange ambulance seat
plucked from the rubble of his home.
His hands caught in his lap
feet stretched out, blood and dust
screening his face yet, it's the innocence
in his eyes that burns the retina.



© Mary Melvin Geoghegan

Ian Watson was born in Belfast and lives in Bremen, Northern Germany. He writes and publishes in both German (mostly prose) and English (mostly poetry). His recent publications include two books of poetry and short prose - *Kurzpassspiel* (German) and *Riverbank City: A Bremen Canvas*, and his collection *Granny's Interpreter* was published in March 2016 by Salmon Poetry in Ireland. He wrote this poem for a celebration of the life of the Bremen translator, reciter, reviewer, broadcaster and *homme de lettres*, Jürgen Dierking, who died unexpectedly in June 2016. Dierking translated many writers into German, including Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, Raymond Carver, Sujata Bhatt and Charles Baxter. <http://www.irishwriters-online.com/watson-ian/>



The Voice of German – *Übergesetzt*

Jürgen Dierking, 1946 - 2016

You were an echo in the stillness then,
the day I lay and listened for your voice
like somewhere, far away, a radio.

Our final conversation was a glance
and smile, as I was signing books. You look
across and raise one eyebrow, tip your head
and murmur, 'Brommy?' 'Brommy?' – yep, I nod.

It was an evening that will never be.
The best-pulled Guinness in the Viertel and
the wine I never tried in all those years
must wait. At least the Guinness waits for me.

Just down the road from where you used to live,
you taught me Anderson's America,
donated authors from my second home,
translated me into your native tongue.

And now I hear your smoker's baritone:
in rumbling trams outside the concert hall;
the grumble of the kettle as it boils;
the hum of tyres on patient cobblestones;

the rolling of the goods trains in the night;
the surf of Friday voices in a bar;
the mumble of my keyboard as I write;
my texts you launched into a second life.

And now you too have been translated,
never can convey this poem now.
For friends who sit and listen to my song,
the *sotto voce* ferryman is gone.
Like somewhere, far away, a radio
heard faintly off the other riverbank,
you are an echo in the stillness still.

Note: The Brommy Kneipe is an old-fashioned pub
in the Viertel, our neighbourhood in Bremen.

Photograph of Jürgen Dierking reading in Bremen
by Hans-Jürgen Hübner www.commons.wikimedia.org



Anni Wilton-Jones, a resident of Co Mayo, has also lived in Wales, England and Saudi Arabia. Having experienced a varied range of careers she is now semi-retired, working part-time in supporting voluntary dyslexia groups. A writer of poetry and, occasionally, prose, she has read in Wales, England, the USA and Ireland. Her collections include *Winter Whiting* and, written under the pen-name Victoria Tims, a chapbook of poems about abuse, entitled *Moth*.



Addiction

I have tried
to exorcise that smile
from my memory

its silence
speaks too loudly
of what it could not hide

behind it
his body fought
and failed

the damage too great
to allow him
more than half a lifetime

and now
there is only
the haunt of a smile

Adrift

Distanced
from the security
of firm ground

scarcely aware
of waves
too gentle
to rock him

he absorbs
the smell
of his solitary world

rejects
the dangers
of safety
on a shore
he no longer knows
as home

he has come
this far
with no effort
a few strokes
then floating free

has taken him
to where
he can see
a new course

has given him
a reason
to use the power
he has available

open the throttle
go.



© Anni Wilton-Jones

Citadel

I was not there
 when he reached out and stroked me
 for his fingers' gentle touch
 was more disturbing than his blows
 and in defence my sinews tensed and tightened
 a token action - all they dared to do
 yet though he read the message
 in my softly rigid flesh
 he choose again, again, to over-ride it
 but throughout his lonely pyrrhic exultation
 I was not there

Derelict Dwellings

This is a land where the dead rest amongst the living.
 Where Tiger-spawned miscarriages and still-births,
 early deaths and venerable passings,
 of those no longer fit to satisfy the needs
 of this enlightened age, elicit no ovations.
 Bare-bones of what they were or might have been,
 these rotting limbs and mouldering frames are now
 their own memorials, untended, overgrown.
 A few, a very few, may sometime Phoenix up
 from ashes of their doused or never-kindled fires;
 re-awakened, re-established, valued, loved.
 No after-life for most, the prospect only to become
 one with the land that raised them and left them,
 this land where the living rest amongst the dead.

Life on a shoe-string

It's been string
 always string
 all his life

third-hand shorts
 bunched about
 his penny-pinched waist
 tenuously twined
 and granny-knotted

fast-peddalling shiny-kneed
 Sunday and dance-night suit-legs
 tight-tied above frayed turn-ups
 kept godly clean and safe
 from chain-fouled damnation

work-day worsted
 bound at the knees
 to bag on labouring thighs
 and hang just clear
 of the mire of mud

now jobless and homeless
 sitting on his park-bench bed
 a dirt-grimed hank wound
 round his charity-shop-rejected coat
 he strains to tie his string-laced shoes.



© Anni Wilton-Jones

Overgrown

Unlatched in limbo
the gate leans
into tomorrow

while he is back
in yesterday

walking the rutted road
pail swinging
to bring the milk home

through this gate
was his beginning

now
so near his end
he cannot go further
cannot dip his memories
in the truth of today

turning away
he leaves the gate
unlatched.

Middle East

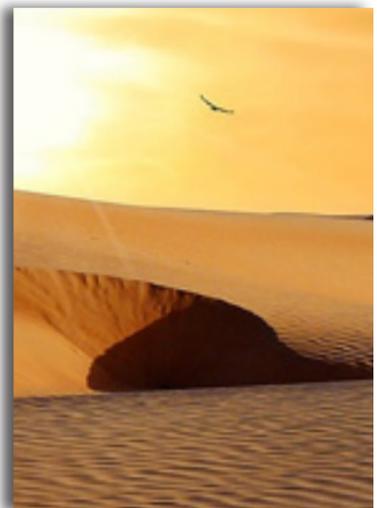
Each day you leave me
walled up in a world
where women are within
and men without
and you believe
I suffer

but consider this
there is nothing missed
in this culture
by staying inside
no pubs, no parties
no cinemas, no clubs
no companions

the sandstorm swirls
at the windows
hot grains in hotter air
but I am cool, calm
comfortable in solitude

no-one can censor
or censure
the thoughts I think
the words I speak
in an empty house
I can be me

liberty
is your prison
incarceration
my freedom



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Live Encounters celebrates 7 years 2010-2016

Live encounters

POETRY

GATHERING

Free online magazine from village earth

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