

Live Encounters celebrates 7 years 2010-2016

Live encounters

POETRY

OFFERING

Free online magazine from village earth
Volume Two December 2016

GUEST EDITORIAL
JOHN FITZGERALD
POET & WRITER

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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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CONTRIBUTORS

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Guest Editorial and poems, Rules and Beauty

John Fitzgerald

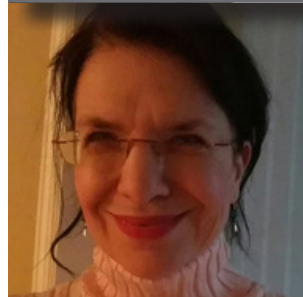
John FitzGerald is a poet, writer, editor, and attorney for the disabled. He is author of four books, most recently *Favorite Bedtime Stories* and *The Mind* (Salmon Poetry). Other works include *Primate*, a novel and screenplay, and the non-fiction *For All I Know*. Other publications include *Human and Inhuman Monstrous Poems* (Everyman), *Poetry: Reading it, Writing it, Publishing it* (Salmon Poetry), *Dogs Singing: A Tribute Anthology* (Salmon Poetry), *From the Four-Chambered Heart: In Tribute to Anais Nin* (Sybaritic Press), *The Warwick Review*, and *World Literature Today*.



Three Poems Inspired by Women

Terry McDonagh

Terry McDonagh poet, translator, dramatist, taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and Drama Director at the International School. Residencies in Europe, Asia and Australia. Publications: 9 poetry collections, letters and prose. Translated into Indonesian and German. 2015 *Out of the Dying Pan into the Pyre*, was long-listed for Poetry Society Poetry Prize. 2016, highly commended in Gregory O'Donoghue poetry comp. Included in Gill & McMillan poetry anthology for young people 2016. *Lady Cassie Peregrina* – his latest poetry collection has just been published by Arlen House.



As Always, Indiscreet

Lee Upton

Lee Upton's sixth book of poetry, *Bottle the Bottles the Bottles the Bottles*, appeared from the Cleveland State University Poetry Center. Her collection *The Tao of Humiliation: Stories* was named one of the "Best Books of 2014" by *Kirkus Reviews*. A new collection of short stories, *Visitations*, is forthcoming in Fall 2017 in the Yellow Shoe Fiction Series (LSU).



From Domestic Garden

John Hoppenthaler

John Hoppenthaler's books of poetry are *Lives of Water* (2003), *Anticipate the Coming Reservoir* (2008), and *Domestic Garden* (2015), all with Carnegie Mellon University Press. With Kazim Ali, he has co-edited a volume of essays and interviews on the poetry of Jean Valentine, *This-World Company* (U Michigan P, 2012). For the cultural journal *Connotation Press: An Online Artifact*, he edits A Poetry Congeries. For nine years he served as Personal Assistant to Toni Morrison. He is a Professor of English at East Carolina University.



Replies to Ch'ü Yüan

Richard Jarrette

Richard Jarrette is author of *Beso the Donkey* (MSU Press 2010) Gold Medal Poetry Midwest Independent Publishers Association 2011, *A Hundred Million Years of Nectar Dances* (Green Writers Press 2015). *The Pond and The Beatitudes of Ekaterina*, also poetry, will be published in 2017 by Green Writers Press. He lives in the Central Coast area of California.



Whale Breath Days

Rachel Brownlow

Rachel Brownlow is a 22 year old graduate of Creative Writing from NUI Galway. Born and raised in Cork she now lives in Galway while completing a masters in applied behaviour analysis. She writes fiction and poetry and previous publications include online publications such as Words Dance Magazine, Red Flag poetry express and Dead flowers poetry rag. She has been published in hardcopy publications the Crannóg magazine, Persephone's Daughters, Ropes literary review and Z-publishing's anthology. She is also a guest writer for Z-publishing.

Celebrating 7 years 2010-2016

Live
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POETRY
VOLUME TWO
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The Sound of the Andes

Claudia Serea

Claudia Serea's poems and translations have appeared in *Field*, *New Letters*, *5 a.m.*, *Meridian*, *Word Riot*, *Apple Valley Review*, among others. She is the author of *Angels & Beasts* (Phoenicia Publishing, Canada, 2012), *A Dirt Road Hangs From the Sky* (8th House Publishing, Canada, 2013), *To Part Is to Die a Little* (Cervena Barva Press, 2015) and *Nothing Important Happened Today* (Broadstone Books, 2016). Serea co-hosts The Williams Readings poetry series in Rutherford, NJ, and she is a founding editor of *National Translation Month*.



Voices in the Dark

Randhir Khare

Khare is an award winning author of twenty one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation and poetry. Executive Editor of Heritage India, the International Culture Journal, a Director of The Rewachand Bhojwani Academy and Visiting Professor to the Dept Of English, Pune University. Recently he was given The Residency Award by The Sahitya Akademi (India's National Academy of Letters) for his contribution to Indian Literature and the Human Rights Award for his efforts to preserve and celebrate marginal and minority cultures.



Mythopoesis

Alessandra Bava

When she is not translating, Alessandra Bava is writing the biography of a contemporary American poet. Her poems and translations have appeared in journals such as Gargoyle, Plath Profiles, THRUSH Poetry Journal, and Waxwing. Two of her chapbooks have been published in the States: *They Talk About Death* and *Diagnosis*. She has edited and translated into Italian a New Anthology of American Poets. She has received two Best of the Net nominations.



Pitiable Love

Patrick Cotter

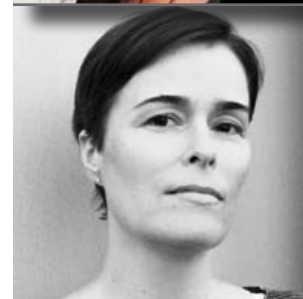
Patrick Cotter was born in Cork in 1963 where he still lives. He spent periods living in Germany in the 1980s and in San Francisco during the naughties. He has published a verse novella and two full-length collections of poetry as well as a number of chapbooks. His poetry has been translated into fifteen languages with substantial selections in Croatian and Estonian and a full volume in Macedonian (*No One Knows*, Velstovo Poetry Nights Publications 2014). He received the Keats-Shelley Poetry Prize in 2013.



In the Absence of Boundaries

Linda Ibbotson

Linda Ibbotson is a poet, artist and photographer from the UK now residing in Co. Cork, Ireland. A former writer for Musicians Together her poetry has been published internationally, read on radio in Ireland, Australia, Venezuela, read and performed in France by Irish musician and actor Davog Rynne. Her painting 'Cascade' featured as a cd cover. She was invited to read at the *Abroad Writers Conference*, Lismore Castle and in Butlers Townhouse, Dublin, Ireland and was one of the judges for *Rabindranath Tagore Award International*.



Solace

Laura J. Braverman

Laura J. Braverman studied fine art and design at Rhode Island School of Design, and worked many years in this field internationally. Since 2007, she has largely focused on writing, completing a writer's certificate in creative nonfiction at Stanford University; taking courses in poetry and essay at the New School Continuing Education Program; and, participating in workshops with poet James Arthur, and at Bennington College graduate writing seminars with nonfiction writer Sven Birkerts.

John FitzGerald is a poet, writer, editor, and attorney for the disabled. He is author of four books, most recently *Favorite Bedtime Stories* and *The Mind* (Salmon Poetry). Other works include *Primate*, a novel and screenplay, and the non-fiction *For All I Know*. Other publications include *Human and Inhuman Monstrous Poems* (Everyman), *Poetry: Reading it, Writing it, Publishing it* (Salmon Poetry), *Dogs Singing: A Tribute Anthology* (Salmon Poetry), *From the Four-Chambered Heart: In Tribute to Anais Nin* (Sybaritic Press), *The Warwick Review*, and *World Literature Today*. www.pen.org/john-fitzgerald



JOHN FITZGERALD
POET, WRITER, EDITOR
ON LOVE AND POETRY

I pondered whether to call this On Poetry and Love. I have questions about both. How, if at all, they intertwine. Which matters most, deserves first billing?

I have heard of poetic license but never got mine. I confess I've not taken time to figure out what makes a poem a poem, so will not describe it. It is fleeting as a quark.

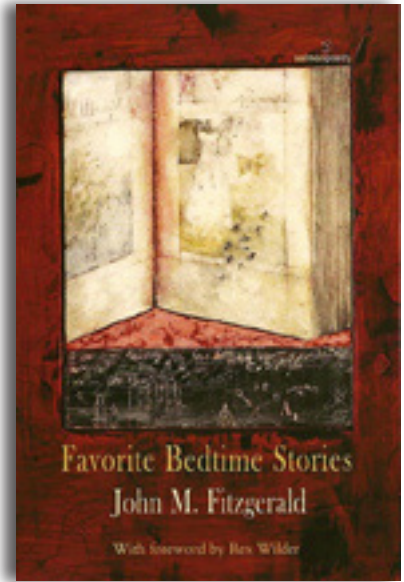
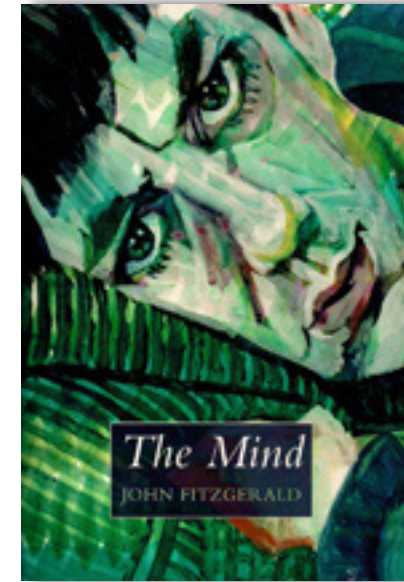
It depends on how you look at it, or if you don't. I only know I know it when I see it, so, to ask me what a prose poem is is even worse. I've written prose poems only because I say I have, otherwise, who knows? This could be a prose poem, I don't know.

It's the same with creative non-fiction. If it's non-fiction—which is to say, reality—what is creative about it? It's like, let's make a Sonnet in only six lines, or a Haiku of thirteen syllables, because I'm concise.

I'm not sure if that's breaking the rules, or not abiding by them at all and thus disqualifying. Because it's important how words are placed upon a page. If you're no Haiku you're no Haiku, if you're not a Sonnet, you're not a Sonnet.

The whole point is to fit into the frame, like your carry-on at the airport. If it don't fit in the box it won't fit in the bin, and you'll have to stow it. You're no Haiku, slamming the lid twenty times. Get outta here. The door's not closing!

When a poet falls in love, or, when a person falls in love and becomes a poet, they tend to list their loved ones' body parts and compare them to their own sense of perfection until eyes become green as pools of Benjamins; lips lure like whiskey and cocaine; hair dangles fourteen karat chains; and the new car smell of supple Corinthian leather with cognac stains and blood.



You can still be a poem though, of some other kind. Not a Limerick, for certain, but at least free verse. I can tell because the words don't fill the page and are broken up into lines.

The poet needn't think great thoughts. The object is to express even simple observation elegantly, according to known rules. Or made up rules. The line is the rule. Say 32 lines in 4 parts of 8, no more than 65 characters per line, like Spring Water. Three parts of three, like The Mind, and so forth. I can't help but make up rules as I move along.

Rhyme schemes seem so exhausted by now, there are no new rhymes, we've got them all listed in a dictionary somewhere. To rhyme with Nantucket, is it? Let me think.

I nonetheless respect certain sonneteers. So, is poetry my everything, or just a tool of love? A device for demonstrating desirability, like peacock plumage? In the end, I'll settle on alphabetical order. Love and Poetry it is.

When a poet falls in love, or, when a person falls in love and becomes a poet, they tend to list their loved ones' body parts and compare them to their own sense of perfection until eyes become green as pools of Benjamins; lips lure like whiskey and cocaine; hair dangles fourteen karat chains; and the new car smell of supple Corinthian leather with cognac stains and blood.

Shakespeare compared thee to a summer's day. In fact he asked first if he should but didn't wait for or expect an answer. Shall I? What if thee responded, "I'd prefer you didn't?"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning also asked how she loved thee, but immediately interrupted herself before thee could answer and began to count the ways. There were seven, not including one after the poet's death. They were all rather boring to me, like, yeah, you love me in several different ways I don't care about.

The thing I really seem to love is this constant sense-stream running through my head and body. The only time it stops is when I sleep, and even then it assumes phantasmic shapes and takes interpersonal leaps. I am the only human on earth who knows what it is to be me.

I further conclude that other humans know similar sense-streams of their own, but still unknown to me, and we each expend a great deal of energy trying to make our unique sensations known to one another.

When one expresses in words one's unique inner world as clearly and concisely as the real experience, that is poetry to me. A record of oneself, in its uniqueness. All I've done is make a record of myself.

Every human has self-love. That was a problem for James Madison contemplating the Constitution of the United States. Humans love themselves, so they acquire things, resulting in "different degrees and kinds of property" and inequality among the citizenry. One job of government is to protect property rights, I guess thereby protecting inequality as well.

Self-love, whether particle or wave, seems innate to poetry. It is not fiction. It is not non-fiction. But is broken into lines about me and my observations. That's why I lie in all my poems, to keep people on their toes. I am always withholding information, but I tell you that, to seem honest.

Selflessness is the opposite. I put your interests before mine because I adore you, and want you to excel. I would stand between you and a lion, set loose my mind for you, dive into ice. My genes order me to do it. I have only good will when it comes to you and would rather you survive than me.

There is probably no purer love than that of a mother for her children. Every mammal mother seems to possess this trait. Male mammals seem to understand that females protecting their offspring are much more dangerous, because now she is coming to kill me, not just scare me away.

It's like the difference between a dog chasing a cat, and a coyote chasing a cat. The dog doesn't really want to catch the cat, the coyote wants to eat it. A mother's coming at you with a butcher knife, you'd better run.

The many types of love are on the bookshelf way up there, the agape and the like, in the history of ideas. The greatest advice my parents ever gave me was "look it up," and so I have, and so I do. I look things up. I write things down. I'm not sure why it's never the other way around.



RULES

One

Rule one is dreams, like everything, grow.
What? Did you think the rules never changed?
Well, I might bend them before your eyes.

Rules are something that I can get into.
Collections of words are my forte.
Some might come up again a little later.

But for now, by choice, I still abide.
Choice is also easily numbered.
The two choices here are delete or revise.

Two

Then again, there is a third choice,
which is to leave things as they are. The status quo,
adoring words, and other tricks it may remember.

I listen in, and keep going over
my earlier suggestions of freckles on the Mona Lisa,
or Blue Boy in maroon.

And maybe Shakespeare should have cursed more,
mentioned it if he rented a room,
got caught with his hands full, waxing the wounds

Three

We could wonder if it were true.
After, he added punctuation,
recounted the number of lines per verse.

And that beginning which couldn't be found
because it hadn't yet occurred
wouldn't appear until line thirty-five,

determining all before could be deleted.
Truth only lives for an instant, there's no point in
going back over it – another idea I'll just throw out.

Four

Not all rules are man-made.
Many exist in nature.
In degrees of either on or off, with nothing in between.

Any time a person takes too strong a stance for good,
he's bound to end up being the bad guy –
That's rule two.

I mean, things either fall or they don't,
depending upon the jurisdiction.
Who knew about the moon, for instance?



RULES

Five

Rules of one place are broken in another.
You might do what you never could, like float.
Or take an old beginning and replace it.

Apples fell, and Jesus drank,
but what if it were so much he missed his calling?
And were rendered, say, a poet.

The poems would all be miracles, sure.
Lips to red from cyanotic blue,
water to wine, then back again, before anybody noticed.

Six

So much for sacred too.
Rule three is write what the mind provides.
Not to do so is violation, the punishment for which is silence.

I strive to remember what is normal, or in other words, the errors.
And if there weren't any I would have to make them up.
Don't get me wrong, I'm a firm believer that perfection is attainable.

It's just that it only lasts a moment,
because rule four is all things change, and then a lot of time
is wasted trying to put things back the way they were.

Seven

The mind travels in waves.
It moves in frequencies detected by the brain.
But here is the difference between thinking and thought:

Scientists know the brain contains memories.
They've already probed into just the right places,
made electric currents rise to the level of moronic.

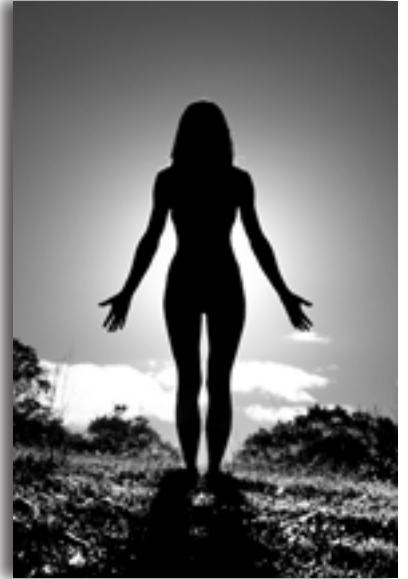
Picture wind as it blows through a tree,
or a river dipped into a cup. A river, by every other sense,
a blind man can't confuse with the gutter.

Eight

Oh, the mind comes in waves, believe me.
Perfection disguises itself as surrender,
and the funny thing is, it's flawed.

Plainness makes perfection seem peculiar.
But the universe runs on tiny laws that anyone can break.
Rule five is contradiction – change always remains the same.

Once, I received a compliment.
It was, after hearing you, I don't feel so screwed up.
And I said thanks.



RULES

Nine

A step into emptiness proves the point.
I bear enough weight to crush myself,
But it takes two puffs to blow an ant away.

Did you know if you drop an ant from the Empire State Building,
within sixty seconds it learns about wings?
Feathers without birds nonetheless know how to float.

Those with minds of their own, I know, could take this the wrong way.
But with gravity as rules six through nine,
a minute's a fucking long time to fly.

BEAUTY

Beauty never wanted to be noticed.
Even in broad daylight, she can't help it,
she sees herself in others.

Beauty is a muse of another sort.
She who wonders is the one who makes me want to try again.
She wishes she would have cried when she had the chance.

The whereabouts of beauty is an object of the mind.
None believe they are good enough and they are right.
In her hurry to see truth, beauty left her shoes behind

Terry McDonagh www.terry-mcdonagh.com poet, translator, dramatist, taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and Drama Director at the International School. Residencies in Europe, Asia and Australia. Publications: 9 poetry collections, letters and prose. Translated into Indonesian and German. 2015 *Out of the Dying Pan into the Pyre*, was long-listed for Poetry Society Poetry Prize. 2016, highly commended in Gregory O'Donoghue poetry comp. Included in Gill & McMillan poetry anthology for young people 2016. *Lady Cassie Peregrina* – his latest poetry collection has just been published by Arlen House with beautiful cover design by South Korean artist, Mikyoung Cha. Founding Contributor of Live Encounters (2010) www.terry-mcdonagh.com

Lady Cassie Peregrina is based on our experiences with Cassie, a border collie we got from an ISPCA centre in Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo in Ireland. We, Joanna, Matthew, Cassie and I, shared life for nine months in County Mayo, then headed for Hamburg by car via Belfast, Scotland, Newcastle, Amsterdam and, finally, Hamburg. The whole collection is really just one poem in six sections – three allocated to Cassie's point of view and three to mine.



Three poems inspired by women:

My good friend, artist **Sally McKenna**, and I have worked together on a number of projects. As well as designing the covers of two of my poetry books, she illustrated my valued collection, *Cill Aodáin & Nowhere Else*.

My sister, **Patricia**, often talks about three rare-looking women she met in the street one afternoon after school. They seemed familiar, yet sinister...perhaps they might have been three great-aunts – now long dead. It is said, they had unusual ways of communicating with each other.

Sabrina Goerlitz, from Schleswig Holstein in north Germany, is a good friend, author, editor and copywriter. We've worked together on several projects. She's translated some of my poetry into German and co-edited my children's tale, Michel the Merman.

Glore River Woman

for Sally McKenna

Woman without origin, here,
you carve and quilt
by the Glore river
like a joyful feature glowing
in the spirit of water and wood.

Woman without root, here,
look back upriver
to the source of wild currents
raging into tributaries of dust,
questions that cannot be answered.

Child of canvas and stone, here,
come out
into to the landscape you have created,
into your chanting colours,
into the exile you left by a lake in Illinois.



© Terry McDonagh

Three Ladies

for my sister, Patricia

My sister saw three elderly ladies
dressed in black
emerge from a public house
late one afternoon
many years ago
and to her surprise
they approached her
smiling asking her
to pass on their regards
to her parents – flabbergasted
she said nothing but
to this day she wonders
who they might have been.

Sabrina Said...

for Sabrina Goerlitz

seeing the word
Schleswig Holstein
in an English poem
makes me think

its heart is romantic
and poetic
a little continent
embraced by the sea

different from
the rest of Germany:
windy, flat and rough
a bit like parts of Ireland.



© Terry McDonagh

Lee Upton's sixth book of poetry, *Bottle the Bottles the Bottles the Bottles*, appeared from the Cleveland State University Poetry Center. Her collection *The Tao of Humiliation: Stories* was named one of the "Best Books of 2014" by *Kirkus Reviews*. A new collection of short stories, *Visitations*, is forthcoming in Fall 2017 in the Yellow Shoe Fiction Series (LSU). www.sites.lafayette.edu/uptonlee/



Scenes from Romantic Movies

In those old movies
so often a woman falls into
a lake, an ocean, a river,
and a man fishes her out
and carries her
(she's unconscious)
to a cabin, an apartment,
a mansion,
and when the woman wakes up
she discovers she's undressed
under the covers,
and only the man who rescued her
could have undressed her.
It sounds criminal.
But in those scenes
it was probably
supposed to be mainly romantic.
The man didn't take
advantage of the woman, did he?
It was a duty,
part of a life-saving regimen.
Her clothes were wet.
Of course she must be
undressed
and tucked under blankets
like a big
dopey baby.

You didn't see
the reverse situation
quite as often:
a woman pulling a man out
of the ocean, a pond,
a river,
and undressing him
while he's unconscious,
although it happened.
Usually the man was wounded
and the woman pressed
a bandage to his chest.
Or sometimes a group
of women tended the man
and things got strange—
like maybe they'd poison him.
But in so many of those movies
it was like
a woman had to be nearly
dead--drowned
or frozen,
certainly unconscious,
or otherwise fainting
to be readied for what
was then called romance.

Do you remember how
in some of those movies
when a man kissed
a woman for the first time
she slapped him—
because she wasn't unconscious
and her clothes were dry?
We're fortunate there are theories
to explain so much of this,
for instance, why
women were unconscious
and when they weren't
entirely unconscious
why they were nearly fainting
and why women were always
being hauled out of the water
like dead fish.
Do you remember those
other scenes
that occurred in so many
of those movies,
the scenes where it's
raining and storming
and two people must
seek shelter
and somehow they discover
a hut in the woods?
And the door in the hut
is never locked?

And there's firewood
inside the hut
and the storm rages outside
and the two people make
a fire together,
and the fire lights their faces
in the darkness
and they dry off naturally?
And those two people know
they're in love,
because no one knows
where they are
and they can forget their
terrible repressed lives,
their cruel families for instance.
The world draws back.
Maybe at most a dog
joins them in the hut.
It's as if for a while
a tiny pocket of freedom opens
inside the movie.
There must be theories
that explain
those scenes in the hut,
but that is unfortunate.

After *The Winter's Tale*

The king determines immediately:
 the statue's likeness to his wife has aged.
 Shortly earlier, he was aroused by the daughter
 he demanded dead as an infant. That's
 before he learns her identity.
 The statue's hand is moist, living, clearly not a dead thing.
 In the end his wife and daughter are once
 again the king's. But how can
 the mother and her daughter forget
 who wanted them murdered,
 and that the little boy, the son and brother, remains dead?
 And won't the king eventually wish his wife
 were a statue after all?
 Time is always the worst collaborator.
 The king's penance rings, I think, false.
 Although a good actor can carry it off.
 After the last act, another tragedy.
 To stretch forgiveness this far?
 Only when all of us are made into things.

No More Monkeys

"No more monkeys jumping on the bed"
 - children's song

"Poppies will put them to sleep."
 - *The Wizard of Oz*

No more monkeys
 ripping stuffing out of chests.

No more flunkies
 puttering in a shed.

No more aunties
 crying in their hems.

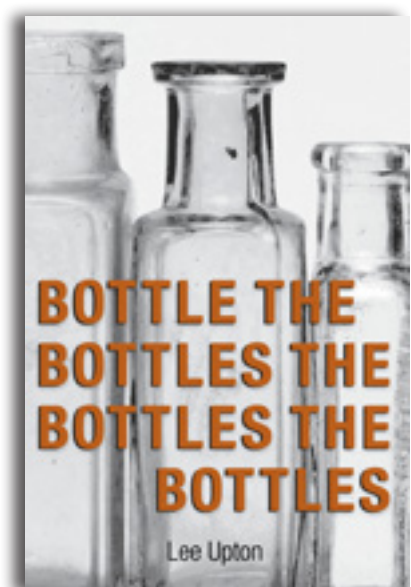
No more fakers
 clinging to their threads.

No more poppies
 turning veins to shreds.

No more electrodes
 in a monkey's head.

No fewer fanatics
 charging for clicks.

No more money
 knocked out of politics.

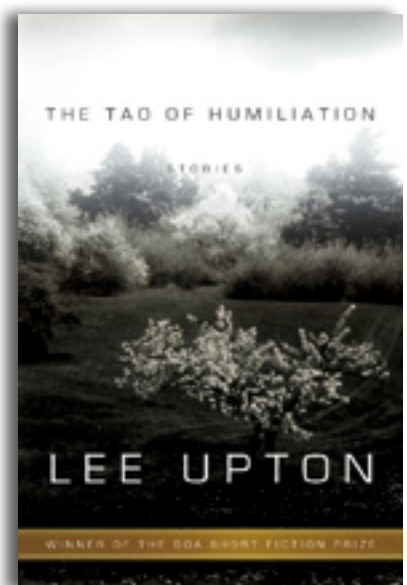


Art

I picked this painting out of a litter.
It squirmed like it wanted to be carried.
What could I do ?
The painting crawled all over me
like a dog kept too long in a kennel.
It couldn't get enough of being seen.
I could have been its revolving globe, its own eyes.
Thus love was born, as always, indiscreet.

A Defense of Poetry

How gentle their sharks are
isn't in question.
They circle us day in and day out
spreading their dainties. They spend
quiet afternoons on the tidal shelf.
They file down their teeth to nubs, those sharks,
and rub up against one another with gloves.
Unlike our sharks.
Our sharks are cunning and wily and perverse.
Most dangerous when least deep.



John Hoppenthaler's books of poetry are *Lives of Water* (2003), *Anticipate the Coming Reservoir* (2008), and *Domestic Garden* (2015), all with Carnegie Mellon University Press. With Kazim Ali, he has co-edited a volume of essays and interviews on the poetry of Jean Valentine, *This-World Company* (U Michigan P, 2012). For the cultural journal *Connotation Press: An Online Artifact*, he edits A Poetry Congeries. For nine years he served as Personal Assistant to Toni Morrison. He is a Professor of English at East Carolina University.



Domestic Garden

A ghost has disarranged these roses
lining the walkway. Some greenhouse
jokester must have switched

Jackson & Perkins packaging—*Heaven*
On Earth for Change of Heart, Black

Magic with Beloved. I'll name them
rancor lilies in your absence, though
I don't hate you, & they're not lilies,

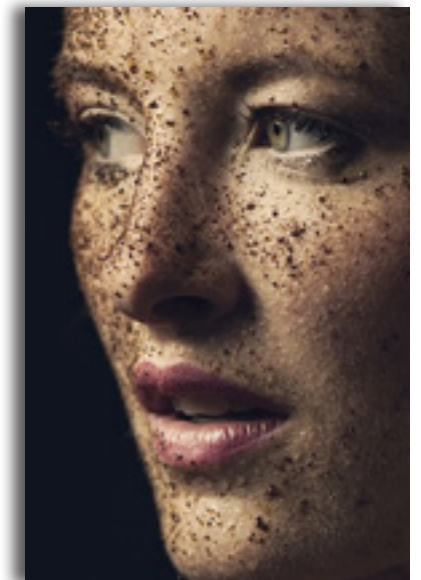
& you aren't really gone, except in the way
presence sometimes contradicts itself.

Should they grow on me—fugitive varietals
I never thought to plant—will they lure
your bouquet any closer, spirit

away weeds I'll name neglect, aphids
who'll stay aphids, sucking at the stalk?

Faith

She stares at the lineup of men
who all look like Jesus
and finally points out the one
who most resembles Him,
swarthy and bearded,
a lot like Cat Stevens,
so angelic she wants to kiss Him
like a lover on the lips.
He is the only one who seems
at ease. Should He wink at her,
it would mean more than conspiracy;
it would mean that she'd gone beyond
the call of duty to finger Jesus
for his crimes and to love Him
just the same.



Immigrant Song

"Das ist kein Amerika," my mother told me
Uncle Eddie would say after just a few weeks

in Jersey, *"Das ist Fehlerika!"* *Ein Fehler*—mistake—
land of mistake. Bad decision. Error. Misstep.

Wrong turn. Dead end. Comma
splice. Run on sentence. Fumble

words—the ball. Drop the ball;
drop the night class. Wrong bus. Wrong

stop. Wrong neighborhood. Wrong country.
Failure. *Ein Fehler.* *"Das ist kein Amerika."*

My uncle died young, a mistake.
He made an error and he died.

Triolet for Joseph

Joseph's mere presence confuses the gospel.
See how he haunts the nativity scene?
He is weighing the lines of an angel.
Joseph's mere presence confuses the gospel;
before Jesus turns twelve, Joseph's bidden farewell.
Stepfather met birthFather most take this to mean. Still,
Joseph's mere presence confuses the gospel.
See how he haunts the nativity scene?



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Sleeping in Elizabeth Bishop's Bedroom

—*Great Village, Nova Scotia*

In the room that used to be hers,
next to the room of her mother's
scream, I'm staring at the ceiling.
My dream had begun on a wing

of moonlight, shadows in the room.
Across the road a car door slams.
All I hear from my wife and son
asleep next door is the box fan

whirring softly as a whisper.
But I'd heard the church bell clanging,
and I had awakened to fire.
I'd heard someone's urgent hushing

from the kitchen below. Mother
I could see in white flames. Other
than that, nothing is the matter.

A Walk by the Old House before Visiting the Nursing Home

The crape myrtle & how it got there.
It's blooming seemed to take forever.

Keep an eye on every crack
in the sidewalk. The rosemary

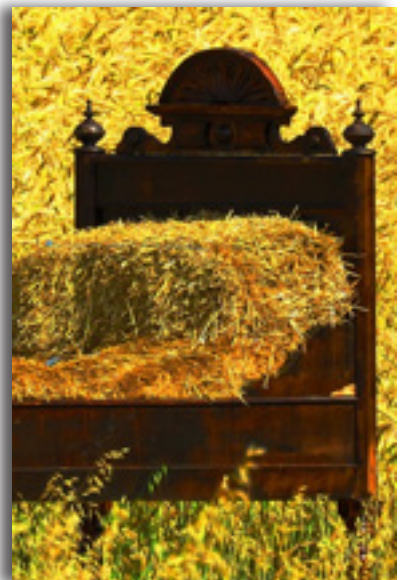
has grown enormous. One might grind
a sprig under one's sneaker; later it laces

the common room's stale afternoon air.
Your other eye is, of course,

focused on a Godforsaken prize.
You'll break your mother's back & then some.

See how awfully she wants to go home?
She envies you the ratty sneakers,

how just now you seemed capable of anything.



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Richard Jarrette is author of *Beso the Donkey* (MSU Press 2010) Gold Medal Poetry Midwest Independent Publishers Association 2011, *A Hundred Million Years of Nectar Dances* (Green Writers Press 2015). *The Pond and The Beatitudes of Ekaterina*, also poetry, will be published in 2017 by Green Writers Press. He lives in the Central Coast area of California.



Replies to Ch'ü Yüan (340-278 B.C.E) The Question of Heaven

How were sun and moon joined together?

Visions of Ekaterina

Tu Mu asks,
Who can manage such distances of the heart?

The patio table joined by one thread
of spider silk to a branch of autumn sage.

Southern Mexico—joined to the central California
coast by a hummingbird's tongue in the white blossom.

Li Po joined himself to the moon with wine.

We were captured in a web of sorrow and need
by that tango under our first moon,

like Rilke's dog with a thorn in its paw—
And everywhere he goes he is no longer a dog,

*but rather a thorn, something he does not
understand and that cannot be understood.*

It was you who opened your pores to listen—you were
brushing Coco the Cat in the sun—

when I said, *The volume of a gnat's blood
is equal to the Sea of Tranquillity.*

*And all their meanders back and forth,
who knows how many there might be?*

Two Marys

I love the way you said, *There should be two Marys—
the Virgin, and the other one with her infinite promise*

and, *I can go there.* But that page we couldn't quite hold
down long enough—our psycho-historical demons busy.

O mournful bedtimes—your odd comfort with the nightmares,
the hot humid countries you called them, and the winds

ever too fierce for other stars and other god, the happy one.
I loved coming home to your contortion practice, your single-

piece python-pattern leotard, Coco the Cat ignoring *whatever*—
riderless black horses in the kitchen, dust devils in the dojo.

If not Schönberg, we turned ourselves on Lizst's spiritual lathe—
Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude, or Pensée des morts.

I love how you tore through my closet saying, *You never wear
this, or this—you're never going to lose enough weight for that*

and took half my things to the hospital for the homeless who
haunted and scavenged out there in the night. How tender

the mornings with your *sweetbitter* coffee, eyes deep, the little
grin, regaling me with the shanghai of the filthiest schizoid

character you could gather in for bath, food, thorough physical,
delousing, the manicure, pedicure, haircut, new clothes, vitamins,

bottles of water, a bit of cash—*And then they look like farolitos,
luminarias, drifting off on the river of shadows,* you said.

*Star Mother never mated—so how is it
she gave birth to nine star-children?*

Certainty

The patients leaning into you
for the portrait laugh—faces skewed
though repaired after torture
and mutilation.

Your face shines, sweaty, makeup
not possible but the eyebrows shaped
for endless amusement—

smiled as you plucked, smiled
as you cut your thighs in the bathroom
with scalpel, smiled and stitched
before we'd go dancing.

I ponder your request to just once
trace scars with my fingertip
as you translated.

The hysterectomy—so young,
dead certain—made way for the joyful
ladies in the photograph.

And why is the southeast tilting down?

The Last Poem Before A Thousand Years of Peace

What inspires? asks Ekaterina, just now it seems.
Could be anything, I say. *A handful of gravel—*

mixed forest on the mountain hisses, clouds close—you
*ever near. Sound—*after a hawk screams—the liminal roar.

Numberless voices cross its threshold keening—baffled wasp,
cries of the lost migrants and refugees, wind cut by wires.

The world is the disfigured women writhing at your feet
and we're all forced to watch working out the triage.

Thelonious Sphere Monk lays down a nest of chords
for the demons of this angels. Nina Simone sings, *Freedom*.



© Richard Jarrette

Where does great Elder Wind-Star live?

More Elusive Than The Great White Whale

The floor of our house seemed to slant south Monday, northeast by Friday, or southwest—where does great Elder Wind-Star live?

You laughed when a king snake slithered in—I stabbed shadows with a stick—was that great Elder Wind-Star in its obsidian eye?

It was always 3 a.m.—the clocks lied—we asked Coco the Cat to explain because wasn't he in on it with Great Elder Wind-Star?

The puzzled marriage, tricky equation—making love was like dissecting a frog—where was Great Elder Wind-Star to guide us?

We followed a ravine to the sea—oil tankers vanishing west with our dusk—surely the great Elder Wind-Star just beyond?

Unsure, amused, the thorny climb up appeared far too steep, but wouldn't great Elder Wind-Star be there? Seals barked.

We jumped over the cosmos in a puddle holding hands searching for great Elder Wind-Star—an answer superior to the question.

What opens out to bring morning light?

What Brings

The wonder with which you touched snow after Nigeria...

Our one moment on religion you said, *The blind beggar on the church porch cold mornings in the Machado poem—*

Mas vieja que la iglesia tiene alma. I loved your gift for waking languages with your tongue and with your eyes, and sometimes

with your hips and breasts—*He has a soul older than the church.* And then you took Coco's face in your hands, careful

with the whiskers, *He has seen las blancas sombras de las horas santas—the white shadows of the holy hours.*

The cat slipped away, your eyes followed to his lookout above the fields and the long light, killdeer, and plowing.

The reverence with which you touched snow before dying...



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Rachel Brownlow is a 22 year old graduate of Creative Writing from NUI Galway. Born and raised in Cork she now lives in Galway while completing a masters in applied behaviour analysis. She writes fiction and poetry and previous publications include online publications such as Words Dance Magazine, Red Flag poetry express and Dead flowers poetry rag. She has been published in hardcopy publications the Crannóg magazine, Persephone's Daughters, Ropes literary review and Z-publishing's anthology. She is also a guest writer for Z-publishing.



Whale Breath Days

Our skin is deciduous,
last summer flaking away.
Autumn leaves me comprised entirely of crystallised ginger;
the burn and the spice
and sugar sweets fizzing between my teeth.
Empty coffee cups stack like a backbone over tables
Our organs; fairy lights strung through phone lines.
Separation makes us tender.
Time leaves us desperate,
even our legs choke with need.

Washing line hopes and fearless hands,
I set my alarm hours before we need to wake
just to have time to prepare for your departure.
The language of leaving is fast learned
yet still I shrivel as if the unfurling of your arms
from my body was not as routine as the slow
rusting of the sun.

Tell me our arms won't set in this position.
Tell me our dreams can keep up with each other.

Alone I can't sleep still
but when you're here we clutch on tight,
in case we lose each other by morning.

It always dawns too quickly,
Our bodies drenched in this shaking light.

White Wine

Summer of grey skies and skin like honey.
Too many bus journeys and hours that arc backwards
until it feels like morning is swallowed in the slow blink of your eye.
This is the sound of our leaving,
the sound of our waking in empty beds,
of quiet voices and unlocked doors.
Night dances around our drinks and we fill the pub benches
accompanied by the cacophony of falling jenga blocks.
Too many breakfasts in cafes and still we love this city,
still our hands cling to the brickwork.
This is the sound of our home,
the sound of our coffee stained arms
and laughter seeped walls.
This is the summer we search for a map of our lives
and once again the path leads us to the heart of these cobbled streets.
Once again we grow together under this same moon,
these same heavy hands,
this same twisting city that taught us how to breathe.



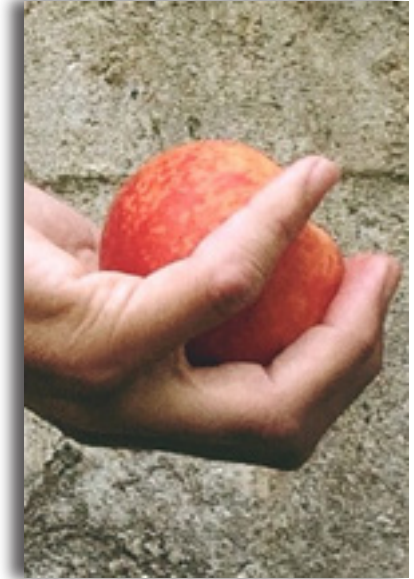


After

Your loss is the greatest blow my flint heart has ever received,
 it is still reeling from the ache of it.
 The howl of my mouth fits around the word Grampa
 and I no longer have anyone to hand it to.
 This afternoon I read an article about El Salvador refugees
 and pondered the conversation we would have had.
 I'm not quite sure what to do with myself anymore,
 my silent feet wandering the house,
 fingers tracing your photographed face
 as if touch memories could bring you back.
 I told you to let go,
 I said it would be okay and I meant it,
 but oh god at the same time I never meant it.
 You were the moon to my world
 and sometimes the tide forgets how to rise without your steady breaths.
 There was a fine rain today.
 You are still gone.
 It will take me years to accept the truth of this.

Slipping

What is this if not an afterthought?
 Outside the ground is covered in burning leaves
 and the smell of soft rain.
 This impermanence swells in the air,
 not only that it is autumn
 not only that growing pains still lace your veins
 even though your height hasn't changed in ten years.
 It is the way your body curls away from home
 like damp paper that once wet can never again
 be persuaded to lean quite as it used to.
 Clots of blackberries fill the brambles
 and the cobwebs swarm with dew.
 It is still beautiful but now everything comes with an afterthought.
 It is a Sunday evening in autumn
 and the air is bright and cold.
 The dog walks and walks,
 stumbles.
 It is autumn once again but this time nothing is the same.
 The dog is dying,
 age crumbled across his black coat.
 The banality of death remains a surprise,
 we can taste it in the air
 and still nothing can be changed.
 The evening sky swallowing words back into your throat
 and the footsteps of the dog like an afterthought
 as he walks, walks, stumbles
 across the darkening grass.



The peach after the pit has been removed

This ache is raw like the stomach of a calf.
 Tsunamis ripple throughout my body
 collecting like the paint on the edges of your brush.
 I cannot comprehend this world in which you do not exist,
 or at least I do not want to.
 You are the space that all the bright light is attracted to.
 Without you,
 the blossoms will still fall
 but this year even they will shiver
 under the weight of your loss.

Soft Rot

Something about September,
 about the tug and the bloom.
 The taut flesh, swollen darkness.
 The air crisp and full
 and this is both the start
 and already the end.
 Night spinning between the clasp of my hands,
 all is gold and soft.
 The morning is too bright
 and still you hold me.
 Who knows what this is
 or where we are going,
 but the leaves are flickering once more.
 In this we can trust,
 this kaleidoscope of green
 and red and burning orange.
 This ritual that is both
 a source of comfort and a type of decay.

Claudia Serea's poems and translations have appeared in *Field*, *New Letters*, *5 a.m.*, *Meridian*, *Word Riot*, *Apple Valley Review*, among others. She is the author of *Angels & Beasts* (Phoenicia Publishing, Canada, 2012), *A Dirt Road Hangs From the Sky* (8th House Publishing, Canada, 2013), *To Part Is to Die a Little* (Cervena Barva Press, 2015) and *Nothing Important Happened Today* (Broadstone Books, 2016). Serea co-hosts The Williams Readings poetry series in Rutherford, NJ, and she is a founding editor of [National Translation Month](#).



The sound of the Andes

After the interview,
I take a walk in the sun
by the East River
and look at the waters carrying away
debris, barges, boats.

I breathe in the light, the wind,
the sound of the river aging.

I step into the next movie
in the tunnel to Port Authority
where the walls are lined with large photos
shot on an iPhone 6:

the coolness of dew droplets

*sunlight in a forest, slanted
like a message from God*

*a girl in a red dress
against basalt columns*

heavy snow on pines

*sunset, orange and black,
with a family far away*

And there is a guy with a long ponytail
hunched over his guitar, playing
the sound of the Andes.

Around me, kids, adults, long lines,
someone sweeping the floor,
and two Chinese women
chatting like birds.

A man walks by with a cane.

The movie of my life goes on
with the soundtrack of the Andes.



High wire

So life sets out for me
a high wire
strung between the Chrysler building
and the Empire State,
and tells me, *Walk*.

Not only walk,
but do a cartwheel,
a back flip,
and a split,
blindfolded.

And I do all that,
and hang up here, baby,

a sharp note
on a guitar string,

sparkling on an eyelash
like a tear.

Will you catch me
when I fall?

On a windy night

All the windows are open.

Night flows into the house
and layers cold strips of air
up to the ceiling.

Invisible feet run,
leap.

The curtains move.
The chandelier clinks.

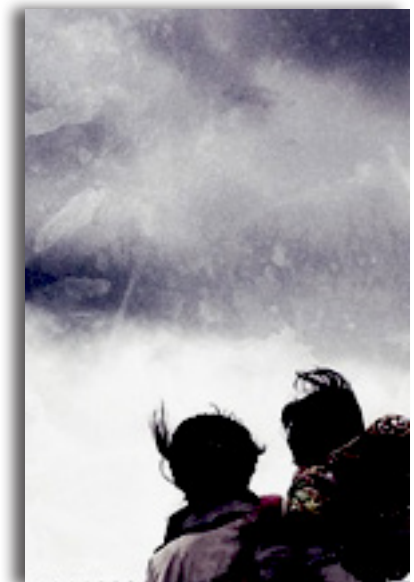
Who's passing through
the dining room?

The draft rolls up
between the first floor and the attic,

and the swinging kitchen door creaks
as if someone pushed it.

Heavy heads,
tangled legs,
we're sleeping on the couch,
TV on.

And the house sways in the wind,
hanging by a thread
from the moon.



Red mountain, blue hill

This is goddess country,
the red mountain,
blue hill,
and the snowy valley
between them.

In front of it, love,
you're a child, a lover,
and a friend.

The child hides his fears
in the red mountain
and suckles at the blue hill breast.

The cartographer lover measures
the roundness of the blue hill,
the angles of the red mountain,
and carefully traces the map
of this woman land.

And the friend listens
to the blue hill breathing
and the heartbeat
under the red mountain:

*Hear me, love.
I'm here.
I'm alive.*

On 7th Avenue

Eyes closed,
bandana on his head,
the beggar eats grapes.

Red and green,
seedless, juicy,
sweet.

They must be
sweet.

I'm sure
they're sweet.



Khare is an award winning author of twenty one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation and poetry. Executive Editor of Heritage India, the International Culture Journal, a Director of The Rewachand Bhojwani Academy and Visiting Professor to the Dept Of English, Pune University. Recently he was given The Residency Award by The Sahitya Akademi (India's National Academy of Letters) for his contribution to Indian Literature and the Human Rights Award for his efforts to preserve and celebrate marginal and minority cultures. Founding Contributor of Live Encounters Magazine (2010).

www.randhirkhare.in



The Glowing Ones

Water once lay deep in the broken belly of the river
 There - where three boys on haunches
 Free unwanted loads
 Beside a pool of green, some rotting reeds,
 There - where a flock of jungle crows descend,
 It was the river's womb they said,
 The magic place
 Where fish taller than men
 Slept and fed and bred and multiplied,
 Where at night the water heaved and swirled
 As they danced
 Blue finned, tails glowing in the dark,
 Shone like the moon.
 No nets withstood their force,
 So they remained -
 Burning the night and resting through the day
 Deep down below
 Bubbling in dream, they said;
 Some bubbles did not burst, they rose
 And flew;

I saw them as a boy when out with goats,
 They drifted through the trees
 Out, out where now a tar faced road
 Climbs the hips of that hill
 And burns its way to the city choked with light;
 There was a path that time
 As simple as a Pimpri girl going off to bathe
 At dusk.

One summer when the river sank
 So low we saw her skeleton show through,
 Carp and catfish, mulley, murrel, shrimp,
 Moved on down stream
 The glowing womb remained,
 The dancing fish,
 Moon-bodies in the night;
 My father offered prayers, a cockerel,
 Smeared red on the devi's face
 Then went out with his rod and line
 And cast his baited hook
 And found a mouth;
 A raw mouth rough and hard
 It yanked and moaned,
 My father fought it well then hauled it in.
 Four villages were there beside the river's womb,
 Out on that rock slab there my father stood,
 The dead fish at his feet,
 He was the hero of the time
 They blessed him well.

He used his sickle, opened up its world,
 Let loose its glowing guts
 They watched it spill - along the burning rocks
 Then slide into the swirling deep,
 Silence fell -
 A palm slapping a fly and crushing it -
 And everyone could feel a cold wind rise
 Then fall and once again
 It was a summer afternoon in heat.

continued overleaf

The Glowing Ones *continued*

We dried and ate and stored and sold the flesh,
And life was like it never was before,
Drums in the evening, flutes and bells and feet;
We did not want until the monsoon came –
Swelled the river to its topmost banks
Then over that and into fields;
We watched the rain and wind wash us away;
The end, some said, and left,
Others remained,
On rooftops floating with the swirl;
We sat on planks high on a hardoun tree
Until the waters ebbed;

Down once again
We walked the marshy land
With fences gone we did not know our own
Frogs and snakes and all that swam and crawled
Were residents,
We staked our claim again;
Then others came,
And life went on in its own familiar way;
The river shrank back to its broken bones
When summer came,
The womb was empty, water ankle deep;

My father wasn't anymore the same,
He'd aged; years had fallen from him
Like leaves of the sal
Till only trunk and branches remained
And time as white ants do
Made him a shell;
We turned him ash by the river,
His bones crackled, skull burst
And I can swear I saw his memories
In a wisp of blue smoke float into the hills,
And he was gone.
Now head of family, village, clan,
I offer prayers as I am meant to do
Just as the sun is meant to rise, and does,
And seasons come and go;

Sometimes walking with my son and herd
I stop a while beside the empty womb,
He knows too well to ask me why,
And leaves me in the shadow of a rock,
To dream my dream as I am meant to do.



A Kunbi Shaman Speaks

Where will the devis go when these trees are gone?
 Sacred companions in the groves of the holy ones
 Who stretch their arms to shade,
 Their trunks to rest,
 Cool earth beneath them soft with belonging;
 Every day some disappear, not even their roots remain –
 The imli, hardoun, katore,

When time was a newborn,
 The great forefathers of these trees were here,
 Calling with voices of flowers and fruits
 The holy ones;
 They came, each to a home, a prayer,
 A space, a stone,
 Each to a river, stream and hill,
 Each to a mantra chanting her new name.

Now, with every clearing a field appears
 A new god to guard it,
 A new prayer, a new mantra,
 A new need, a new sacrifice;
 Where will the devis go when these trees are gone?

Back to the heart of their beginning
 In the great cave of the faithful
 Where time is still to be born
 And the hum of their breathing pulses in the dark
 Where the seed of tomorrow
 Floats in the warm ooze of faith?

Standing here in the light of morning
 Where field and wood meet indifferently,
 I raise my hand and say –
 Peace be to you,
 Don't go to war on what the axe has done
 It's not your fault, nor his,
 Nor the one that made him a weapon,
 Nor the one who enslaved the one who made him a weapon
 Nor the god he prays to faithfully;
 Such is the way of blood and mud,
 They meet sometimes as friends
 And sometimes foes.



When she is not translating, Alessandra Bava is writing the biography of a contemporary American poet. Her poems and translations have appeared in journals such as Gargoyle, Plath Profiles, THRUSH Poetry Journal, and Waxwing. Two of her chapbooks have been published in the States: *They Talk About Death* and *Diagnosis*. She has edited and translated into Italian a New Anthology of American Poets. She has received two Best of the Net nominations.



Calypso Abandoned

I've laid the table with meticulous grace,
I sit here waiting for you to show up
and you don't. Suddenly Hermes appears
with orders from the Boss. I must let you go.
I don't want to. I want to hold love in my
hands with savage force. The order ruffles
the table, Eolus's wind works its way through
my pain. Someone brings me a basin full of
sea-water. In the reflection, I see you leave.
I drown my tears in the basin, my water
scream shakes me to the core.

Call Me Mermaid

I was born with a terrible power.
My fate is to make all men mad with my voice and lure them into the
abyss with my liquid words. I roam the seas. My tail knows many tales
of the depths. Red coral and shells adorn it. I wear blue grass in my
hair. My green eyes shine like marbles. Poseidon and all fish fall asleep
to my lullabies. I am mighty, but I cannot fall in love. I sleep with the
most beautiful men stranded on the Mediterranean coasts, with wet
eyelashes, scales surrendering to the warmth
and a song stuck in my throat.



Cassandra Speaks

They think my house
is the temple, but
my abode is unpretentious.
The bed is plain,
the furniture sober.
A vase of wild
blue irises
only brightens
the barren table.

Visions is
what I feed
my restless soul on.
At night they
inhabit these rooms.
I see words
clash and bleed,

I feel my tongue
battle the sinew,
I wage war with
my disquietude.
My famished pen,
and ravenous Pan--in
my dreams--
feed on the flesh
of my own Mythology.

Slaughterhouse (Cassandra Speaks #2)

Every of my word is
a slaughterhouse--
that's why they have
nicknamed me the
"terrible one."

They want to tame
the wild beast in
me, the horrible
freak in me.
Nobody loves Truth,

but I won't conform.
I reject my father's
society every single
day. Between living
and dying my raging
Voice was born.

I won't stop using it.
I am a seeress,
I am a poet,
I'm a dissident
of the Word.



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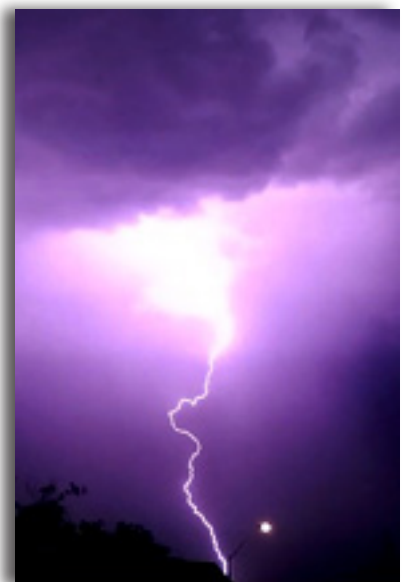
My Pen (Cassandra Speaks #3)

When his blond lips cursed me
I held on to my pen as to dear life.
He wanted my body only, while I dreamt his
lyre. I hated him but I loved his song.
He turned me into a prophetess, when all I
ever wanted was to be a poetess.

At night, as the torch flickers and the
moon hovers red above the horizon, I fill these
wax tablets with words and prophecies
nobody will read. Sweet singe. When
poetry stings my deepest voice stirs.
I am the wrathful one.

Prophecy (Cassandra Speaks #4)

And you shall pen your lines
with the force of thunder
and the fire of the bolt of lightning
and they will be thick skinned
and they will exude
your mighty voice



Patrick Cotter was born in Cork in 1963 where he still lives. He spent periods living in Germany in the 1980s and in San Francisco during the naughties. He has published a verse novella and two full-length collections of poetry as well as a number of chapbooks. His poetry has been translated into fifteen languages with substantial selections in Croatian and Estonian and a full volume in Macedonian (*No One Knows*, Velstovo Poetry Nights Publications 2014). He received the Keats-Shelley Poetry Prize in 2013



Journey

She's strap-holding, swaying, a ghostly sheen in the tram's centre.
Everyone else around shaded as if a beam had dodged
a dozen obstacles, leaving them in darkness, so to smear
her face with sovereign light. Carnation in her buttonhole
scentless. An invisible symphony hums in her head.
Her fingers, without moving, feel the viola's frets. Her last dance
is a memory of her motionless feet. She forgets the men standing
round her, to muse on the one who sauntered away; a player
of accordions on boulevard corners, an accompanist to cathedral
bells. At home, a flower too long unwatered, awaits her.

Anthracite Love

How blond still the young coal miner's hair.
Of his skin, only his lips and nipples resist the dust.
His lover is thrilled to see him thus while youth
still shapes the contours of his arms. The fine grit
transfers between them. He loves marking

the whiteness of her skin, she loves the streaks
where she has ground him clean. As a boy he played
at being preacher; lecturing stones and fallen leaves
as his peers tusseled around him. Of women
he was more used to seeing their backs, kneeling in church.

Now he mumbles prayers in her armpits, vespers
to the down of her aureoles. She reflects one can tongue
only so much of culm. She would like him to make toys.
A man who sells dolls could never dig underground.
After her first baby she will have eaten enough of coal.



Malagasy Aubade

You, who are au fait with so much:
yoga, the Amazon, the tart flavour
of well-made tagines.... you are

the medium some ghost talks through.
For me, diving upright into cold air
is keen pain, as is fleeing the gazelle's

form you impressed in my bed. Hell
is the absence of your heat warming
me. Hellish the ghostly chill. Morning,

shedding covers is like stripping skin.
Last night when you rose to leave, the stars
had barely risen. My thrusts had ousted

a benevolent fiendkin from between your teeth;
a rasping in French as we wrestled on. You
were like a sleepwalker I dared not rouse.

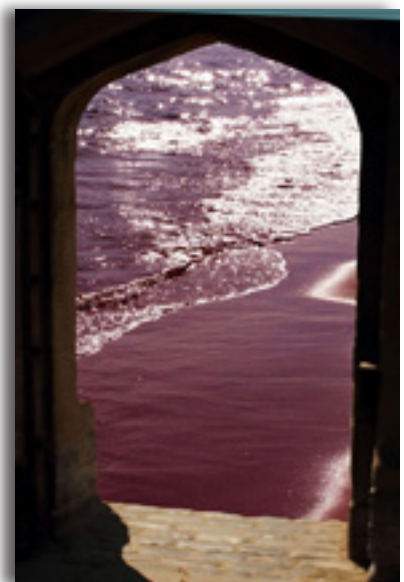
Your skin's jet, my flint, our different colors
writhing in a zebra meld, I see again and again;
your absconding back, reflecting the lunar sheen.

The Door into the Light is also the Door into the Cold

How blond still the young coal miner's hair.
Of his skin, only his lips and nipples resist the dust.
His lover is thrilled to see him thus while youth
still shapes the contours of his arms. The fine grit
transfers between them. He loves marking

the whiteness of her skin, she loves the streaks
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Now he mumbles prayers in her armpits, vespers
to the down of her aureoles. She reflects one can tongue
only so much of culm. She would like him to make toys.
A man who sells dolls could never dig underground.
After her first baby she will have eaten enough of coal.



Linda Ibbotson is a poet, artist and photographer from the UK now residing in Co. Cork, Ireland. A former writer for Musicians Together her poetry has been published internationally, read on radio in Ireland, Australia, Venezuela, read and performed in France by Irish musician and actor Davog Rynne. Her painting 'Cascade' featured as a cd cover. She was invited to read at the *Abroad Writers Conference*, Lismore Castle and in Butlers Townhouse, Dublin, Ireland and was one of the judges for *Rabindranath Tagore Award International*.



Prelude

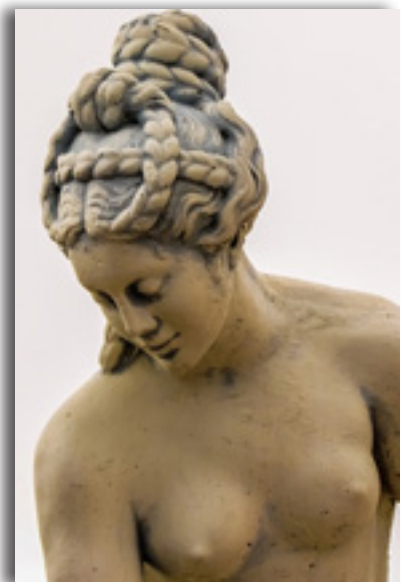
Born on the cusp of the Western wind
Persephone emerged from tips of whitethorn,
tight buds unfurling from winter silence.
She awakens, stretches the ocean's hem
as if searching for a new boundary.
Above, a swan paints the sky with its wing.
A cathedral cannot hold such beauty within its walls,
nor Aphrodite in her flesh.
Red sails pierce the sun, waves enter and leave,
reconnoitre as unwanted guests.
I long to be nameless,
to scatter reason with my ashes,
to touch and untouch without explanation or remorse.
I long to sleep in your eyes,
watch flowers grow in your palms,
taste your lost words that drift, unread, in every direction.

In the distance a clock transcends beyond the periphery of existence,
Its' fingers play the second movement of an afterlife.

And I began to listen.

Homage to Kinsale

As nights obsidian curtain lifted,
the skylark heralds the dawn chorus
in my demesne of duck egg blue.
From my balcony,
a mirage of matchstick masts
navigate the thirsty mouth of the harbour,
and my skin drinks it all in.
Sometimes, when I bury myself, in myself,
never quite reaching the point when thinking stops,
I unlatch the door, drink tea, and savour wild berry tart
at Poets Corner,
or stroll to the Spaniard
where the swans dance to Francesca's mandolin,
and in my solitude I feel quietly content.
I look at life in black and white at The Gallery,
buy a chiffon scarf from Stone Mad,
peacock feathers with hand stitched beads
and fly it like a kite on the beach.
After sundown you'll find me in The Black Pig
sipping a glass of red,
satisfied with the feeling that finally,
I have arrived.



Jazz

White noise enters this city
when you are not looking.
A stolen moment
as you observe the street lamps
bend and twist to the light
like giant tuning forks.

You tune into jazz
where a point on an uncertain coil
improvises with Mingus,
and unrelenting November rain.
Bass notes fall through pavement cracks
and weave between shadows
as the night wraps you in black.

This city is art,
visual art,
jazz art,
word art.

A fusion of colour and form
that seduces expectation,
and plays with your senses.

On French Church Street,
words dance
across the tongue of the unknown,
rhythms choreographed
in blue and red
as tangible as the grey of silence
at the edge of your breath.

Abstraction collides with realism,
minimalism entices solitude.
At the Quays
impressionism needs no canvas
as dawn's magenta, orange and violet
bleed into each other,
waiting for the girl
with music in her eyes.

Glimpse of the Surreal

My face stretched like a Dali clock
that dripped minutes
onto Nevada red dust
where pick axe and guitar resonate
along steel arteries
and wheals from under scorched skin
bled into rusty cans
of the only southern comfort
to be found as Kerouac
collected words and cleaved to paper
in some godforsaken gin joint
to be spined for a few dollars
and placed next to a Dali clock
that dripped minutes
onto my stretched face.



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Laura J. Braverman studied fine art and design at Rhode Island School of Design, and worked many years in this field internationally. Since 2007, she has largely focused on writing, completing a writer's certificate in creative nonfiction at Stanford University; taking courses in poetry and essay at the New School Continuing Education Program; and, participating in workshops with poet James Arthur, and at Bennington College graduate writing seminars with nonfiction writer Sven Birkerts.



Pilgrim

Larch pines sway with wind—
the larch pines sway and wind's
sighs shift through needles of pine
to sound a chant-like hum.
The tall choir surrounds the path,
unfolds over valleys, climbs
mountains—whispers hush. Hush,
the choir intones, over and over,
hush—be still and know our breath.

Walk along the twig-strewn path.
See a shaft of sun ignite silvery
specks in rock shards hidden
between roots—stardust ensconced
in mud and dry needles, crushed
cones. See fingertips of branches
glow a bright spring lime; newborn
needles tender to touch. Wind falls,
birdsong clamors for its aural turn,
and cowbells clang from higher up.
Wind rises, trees intone: Keep on—
keep on—along the path; summon
what's beneath, beyond.

Keep on along the path. Shade yields
to light—the tunnel of pine opens out
to alpine pasture. In the far distance
snow-capped crags cut jagged edges
against a cornflower sky. At your feet,
wild grasses ripple, and there—look—
above blue gentian and buttercup, a black
butterfly flutters by—each wing daubed
with one red spot. Below one flight, shadow
double darts with second life

The City That Used To Be Mine

I have traveled to this city that used to be mine.
The hotel at 33 Roland Gardens is painted black—
black in the midst of white-fronted homes
with their orderly metal address plates—
with low wrought-iron gates and grates,
neat entry-way terraces. My room is a cold, grey
cave at the back of the hotel, down the angle
of stained sisal-covered steps. Last night, the man
at the desk brought a heater down at 2:00 a.m.

I left for the city that used to be mine in scattered
state: packed while my sons' little legs and arms
overturned pillows from the bed with battle cries,
entwined folded piles of clothes with dislodged
blankets. I've flown from home to grieve, four
days to grieve in a city that used to be mine.

My father's death four years ago, is now as real
as the ginger tea in the gold-rimmed teacup
by the bed. I have come because I could no longer
bring myself to squeeze the iridescent soap
onto the yellow sponge at bath-time, or brush
my children's teeth. My sorrow watched—
could see the plump arc of my younger son's cheek,
could see the delicate line of backbone as my older
son stepped over the porcelain edge of the bath.



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Eggshells

The water bubbles and rolls in the red, pitcher-shaped vessel
above licks of orange flame.
One more step before a brown egg slips into the hot bath.

I need that gadget—there it is:
sits flipped
in the kitchen utensil drawer, the curved metal spring
of its underbelly exposed. I turn the object in my hand; place
the egg on the concave half-circle of its face, and press
a small, ridged lever. First, the little machine resists,
then gives in to a high-pitched click,
as a needle pops up to prick
the brown shell.

What's this thing called? An egg-clicker?
Pricker? Does it even exist outside the Austrian kitchens I know?
Outside of Tante Hannerl's old kitchen on Enigl Strasse,
where she prepared
our breakfast when we were small.

And I can hardly remember
that kitchen. But I do remember her raspy breathing
and the way she circled her veined hands
over her stalwart knees as she sat
on her stool, watchful while we ate.
I remember heart-shaped cookie cutters, and red porcelain
with white polka-dots, the way the summer light there
was softer somehow, and older—older
than the California light of our daily life,
the light my mother adopted, leaving her own mother,
the ghost of her father, history,
behind her.

In Memorium

A line of Tuscan Cypress skirts one end of Gamma's garden.
Sometimes the spiked tips sway softly as I float on my back.
The green fleece turns hazy in the amber-colored afternoon.

We play—my sister and I—with Gamma's grandkids. Shout
Marco! And Polo! across the bean-shaped Los Angeles pool.

Gamma speaks with an old world accent, but leaves new world
powdered doughnuts on the garden table. She wears a sleeveless
house dress over her stout frame. Her hair seems made of white

cotton candy; and when she smiles deep dimples appear in her
ruddy cheeks. Gamma moves her head slowly side to side,
as we kids sit below her, our faces turned towards "The Sound
of Music" on a small screen. Ach, what kitsch, she says. But

aren't we hooked? The dirndls, the mountains, the songs!
"Edelweiss" makes Gamma cringe. But before she was Gamma,

she was Gertrud: Viennese citizen, lawyer, thinker, composer's wife.
At thirty-two, a Wednesday forced a narrow escape—a Wednesday

named Kristallnacht: Night of Broken Glass. Across cities and towns,
sledgehammers swung—at homes, hospitals, sacred places, schools,
shops, tombstones. Bonfires devoured holy books. Thousands of souls
rounded up, packed in closed Reichsbahn trains. What did I—a girl

shouting Marco! and Polo! know of a Wednesday night? What did I—
a girl floating, floating on her back—know of Tuscan Cypress?
Tree of the underworld, funeral wreaths. Tree of death, of sorrow.



To a Color

Between blue and green, glacier-lake changes
as the light shifts, as the sun slips
behind afternoon clouds—the valley darkened,
shadow cascades down sheer
faces of alpine mountains to the lake below.

When it's aquamarine or turquoise, it's public
pool tiles or toothpaste, or faded
doctor's scrubs. But when it's glacier-lake—
it's me and my sister with dirndl
dresses, and Mami too: three of us in a photo,
standing by cows with deep lake
brown eyes and fawn brown fur, and a milky,
snow-edged mountain lake;

it's the sudden charge at the first bell chimes
of Papageno's lilting lament
for a love of his own, implausible over stereo
speakers of a busy Lebanese
eatery in a Beirut mall. When it's glacier-lake,
it's the crunch of park gravel
underfoot, and wide chestnut trees above; bitter
comfort of Kaffee, brought out
on a small, silver tray; Oma and Tante Hannerl,
and then the four of us when
we were still complete. It's reading The Magic
Mountain the first time under
Papa's watchful eye—Hans Castorp with fur on
his knees, breathing in the sharp
air of the altitude cure; and Hans getting better;
the old, old lake in my chest.

Mourner's Pass

We're above the tree line now—
beyond the pastures of grazing cows,
the long lines of silvery beech,
beyond the bands of mountain pine.
We reach the alpine tundra—
jutting rocks, brittle shrubs,
and grey grass—the windshield
dusted by fine beads of rain.
As we climb, mist alters to wet snow,
and higher still, to powder—dry and
white and sifted over the high crest
of the journey's path, where we stop
in a fairy world. Fog embraces
the reach of the sharp-edged peaks.
With wind and snowfall blowing,
the air is brisk—as bracing as waking up—
but waking up to everything.

Through the road's tunnels, the pallid
light skips at each passing concrete
beam: views of chiseled silver ledges
and white ascents clipped by two-beat
rhythm. Our rented car moves along
the Brenner Pass—Italy into Austria—
on mourner's path, towards my mother's
city where we will root my father's dust—
remains of his unhurried hands;
and his love of courtesy, scientific proof,
a bargain, a waltz, Moby Dick, things
patched up. Come tomorrow, we will
stand in a cemetery called Friedhof,
Court of Peace. I will offer to speak—
few words will come.

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