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Live encounters

POETRY

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Reckless Blessings
ELENA KARINA BYRNE
Poet & Visual Artist



Guest Editorial - Reckless Blessings, and poems The Empathy of Seeing Elena Karina Byrne

Elena Karina Byrne, author of *Squander* (Omnidawn), *MASQUE* (Tupelo Press), and *The Flammable Bird*, (Zoo Press), is the Poetry Consultant /Moderator for *The Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books, Literary Programs Director for The Ruskin Art Club, and a final judge for the Kate/Kingsley Tufts Prizes in poetry. Her publications include the *Pushcart Prize XXXIII*, *Best American Poetry*, *Poetry*, *Paris Review*, *APR*, *Kenyon Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Poetry International*, *Slate*, and *OmniVerse*. Elena's essays are entitled *Voyeur Hour: Meditations on Poetry, Art and Desire*.



Burning Randhir Khare

Khare is an award winning author of thirty-one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation, educational books and poetry, a playwright and art curator. He is Mentor of The Rewachand Bhojwani Foundation and Director, Gyaan Adab. He has been 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).



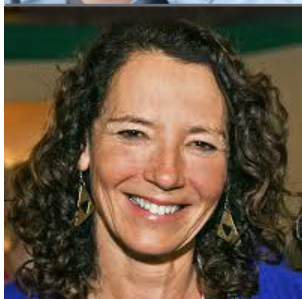
Snapshots Dr Azril Bacal

Dr Azril is a Peruvian Agricultural Engineer and Sociologist. He has published extensively on issues of education (2013, 2015), Cultural Diversity, Anti-Racism, Cultures of Peace and Citizenship including a poetry book "Refracciones Itinerantes" (Uppsala, 2010) and currently in press with a second and enlarged edition, Fondo Editorial, UNALM, Perú (2017).



Minute Man and Other Poems Stephen Haven

Stephen Haven is the author of *The Last Sacred Place in North America* (2012), selected by T.R. Hummer as winner of the New American Press Poetry Prize. He has published two previous collections of poetry, *Dust and Bread* (Turning Point, 2008), for which he was named 2009 Ohio Poet of the Year, and *The Long Silence of the Mohawk Carpet Smokestacks* (University of New Mexico/West End Press, 2004). He is Director of the Lesley University MFA Program in Creative Writing, in Cambridge, MA.



Portraits Sally Blumis-Dunn

Sally Blumis-Dunn teaches Modern Poetry at Manhattanville College and the Palm Beach Poetry Festival. Her poems appeared in New Ohio Review, The Paris Review, Prairie Schooner, PLUME, Poetry London, the NYT, PBS NewsHour, upstreet, The Writer's Almanac, Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-day, and Ted Kooser's column, among others. In 2002, she was a finalist for the Nimrod/Hardman Pablo Neruda Prize. Her two books, *Talking Underwater* and *Second Skin* were published by Wind Publications in 2007 and 2010. Galapagos Poems published by Kattywompus Press in 2016.



Etching Colette Nic Aodha

Colette Nic Aodha is an award winning poet who resides in Galway in the West of Ireland. She writes in both Irish and English. She has 14 publications which include a volume of short stories, *Ádh Mór*; an academic study of the blind poet *Anthony Raftery*; one volume of English poetry, *Sundial*, published by *Arlen House Press*; two dual language collections of poetry by the same publisher; *Between Curses: Bainne Géar*, and *In Castlewood: An Ghaoth Aduaidh*. Her work is on the syllabus in Primary, Secondary and Third Level colleges.
www.colettenicaodha.com



Reshaping Colin Dardis

Colin Dardis is a poet, editor and freelance arts facilitator based in Belfast. His work has been published widely throughout Ireland, the UK and USA. He was a 2015-16 ACES recipient from Arts Council Northern Ireland. A collection is forthcoming from Eyewear Publishing. Colin also co-runs Poetry NI and is the editor for Lagan Online.



A Hundred Black Horizons Michael J Whelan

Michael J. Whelan lives in South Dublin. He served as a UN Peacekeeper in Lebanon and Kosovo with the Irish Army and is a historian and keeper of the Air Corps Military Museum. He was 2nd Place in the Patrick Kavanagh & 3rd in the Jonathan Swift Awards. He is widely published and read for the Poetry Ireland Introductions series and his debut collection 'Peacekeeper' was published in 2016 by Doire Press.



Two Poems Cathy Colman

Cathy Colman's first poetry collection, *Borrowed Dress*, won The Felix Pollak Award from the University of Wisconsin and was on The Los Angeles Times Bestseller list. Her second book *Beauty's Tattoo* was published by Tebot Bach. Her poems have appeared in The Gettysburg Review, Ploughshares, Barrow Street, The Colorado Review, The Journal, The Huffington Post, Prairie Schooner and elsewhere.



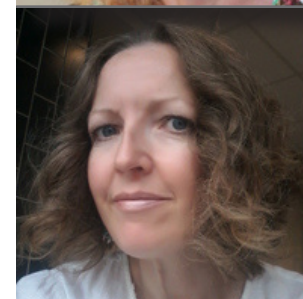
Exile Nasrin Parvaz

Nasrin Parvaz became a civil rights activist when the Islamic regime took power in 1979. She was arrested in 1982, tortured and spent eight years in prison. Shortly after her release she fled to England where she claimed asylum in 1993. Her prison memoir was published in Farsi in 2003 and in Italian in 2006. A novel, *Temptation*, based on the true stories of some male prisoners who survived the 1988 massacre of Iranian prisoners was published in Farsi in 2008. www.nparvaz.wix.com



Poets Paint Pictures Margaret O'Driscoll

Margaret O'Driscoll is a poetry writer based in County Cork, Ireland. Her work has been published in various journals and anthologies internationally.



Pounding Pillows Lorraine Carey

Lorraine Carey was born in Coventry, England later moving to Greencastle, Co. Donegal. Her poems have been featured in the following online journals ; The Honest Ulsterman, Vine Leaves, Quail Bell, A New Ulster, The Galway Review, Proletarian, Olentangy Review, Poetry Breakfast and Stanzas Limerick. Her poetry has appeared in two anthologies. Her first collection *From Doll House Windows* is forthcoming in May 2017. She now resides in the coastal village of Fenit, Co.Kerry.



Elena Karina Byrne, author of *Squander* (Omnidawn), *MASQUE* (Tupelo Press), and *The Flammable Bird*, (Zoo Press), is the Poetry Consultant /Moderator for *The Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books, Literary Programs Director for The Ruskin Art Club, and a final judge for the Kate/Kingsley Tufts Prizes in poetry. Her publications include the *Pushcart Prize XXXIII*, *Best American Poetry*, *Poetry*, *Paris Review*, *APR*, *Kenyon Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Poetry International*, *Slate*, and *OmniVerse*. Elena's essays are entitled *Voyeur Hour: Meditations on Poetry, Art and Desire*. www.elenakarinabyrne.com

ELENA KARINA BYRNE

POET & VISUAL ARTIST

RECKLESS BLESSINGS

In this terrible and alarming, dark time when a tyrant President who does not see us is threatening to upend the value and support for the arts, which is to say, support for the culture, which is to say, the support for what makes us who we are and human, I have been thinking about significance. Former US Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, in his recent visit to Los Angeles told the Ruskin Art Club audience, it is not economic strength or military strength that holds a country together – it is its culture.

People ask me when I decided to be a writer, or why I am a writer. *Because my parents were artists.* The answer could be anything: because my father was a circus poster painter (he was once) or a furniture maker (that too), a faucet inventor (yes, during the Korean War, being flat-footed he was sent to Lockheed), a renowned drawing teacher ...and my mother? Because she was so incredibly smart and beautiful, because she rejected academia and modelling to be a painter...I am a poet because my parents were artists, because I thought too, I would be an artist (or a deep-sea biologist, or an Olympic track sprinter) until I was fourteen when Enda St. Vincent Millay planted the sweet bright *bitter berry* in my brew yet.

Because... I always *see* first, before language enters my body.

Isn't all art asking us to see? As writers, how we see and re-see is an important consideration here. Baudelaire once conceived the poet as an incipient camera. Language is seeing... We bear witness and therefore are curators of our own relationship to this world, internal and external. Writing, as with all art, is a dialogue with the self, a dialogue with the world and therefore a dialogue with our ancestors (Yes, Mr. Pinsky, we agree that does not just mean blood ancestors—its means all those who make up our multifarious, many gendered, multicultural, multiracial backgrounds) and with history.... Writing, art: a translation that must involve empathy. Like knowledge, like existence itself, true sight involves an act of empathy.

In this terrible and alarming, dark time when a tyrant President who does not see us is threatening to upend the value and support for the arts, which is to say, support for the culture, which is to say, the support for what makes us who we are and human, I have been thinking about significance. Former US Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, in his recent visit to Los Angeles told the Ruskin Art Club audience, it is not economic strength or military strength that holds a country together – it is its culture.

In “The Snowman,” Wallace Stevens still convinces us that “One must have a mind of winter/ To regard the frost and the boughs.” Every child, in early play discovery, anthropomorphically becomes the tree and John Ruskin said he had to draw a tree to truly see it:

More and more beautiful they became, as each rose out of the rest, and took its place in the air. With wonder increasing every instant, I saw that they “composed” themselves, by finer laws than any known of men. At last, the tree was there, and everything that I had thought before about trees, nowhere.

Of course, we can’t forget Hopkins turns the eye inward:

There is one notable dead tree ... the inscape markedly holding its most simple and beautiful oneness up from the ground through a graceful swerve below (I think) the spring of the branches up to the tops of the timber. I saw the inscape freshly...

How many Turners will strap themselves to a mast to *really* see? As a poet, I love to change the ways in which I see. Robert Rauschenberg energized the concept in his “combines,” his mixed media art:

“I am trying to check my habits of seeing, to counter them.” There’s an intersubjective consequence of freedom at work, a delightful moment of finding the askew, of intuitive sight, of engaging and disengaging, of misbehaving.

Is this what painter Rene Magritte called a “dream for waking minds,” a shifting form of consciousness in hurried motion? What re-animates the inanimate, re-ignites what becomes sensate and real through the imagination? The heart of intelligence is the imagination. Primordial but no less sophisticated in its accuracy.

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift – Einstein

To believe in something we must see it, imagine it, and dream it first. Dream is the unedited process of the waking imagination suspending time. This time/language/image flux not only

Give us nature, the greatest artist of all, where language begins in the music of the ticking beetles, ocean applause, the black hole’s B Flat, the disapproving hush of a passing hawk’s wing... More! The impoverished mind and soul asking for more porridge please!

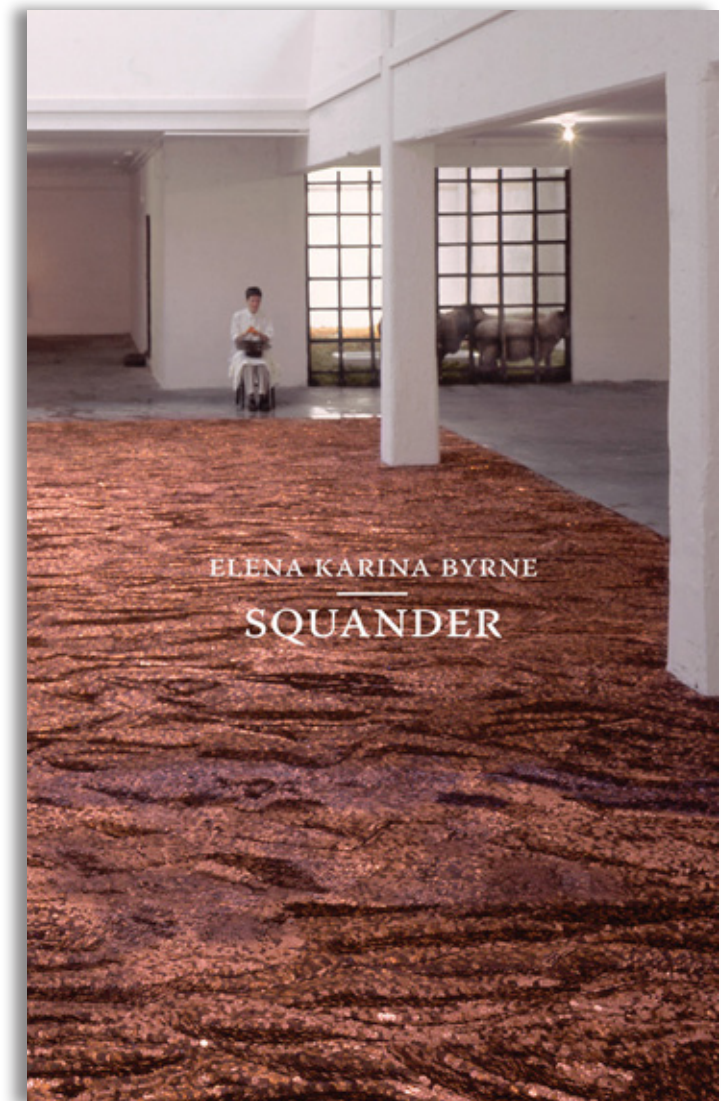
exists in forms of art and film, but on the by-stander stage of the Internet. The intermediary space is created between the subjective and objective eye looking...I know here, passion is my reckless blessing. To borrow poet Mark Doty, “looking and looking causes time to open-- and looking creates longing.”

We certainly know this in our consumeristic advertising world: the seductive object is set in the mind’s eye. We are so hungry for it! Give us our food commercials, our art and film, our writers, our musicians, sculptors, architects, and painters, our science that too, begins in the imagination! Give us nature, the greatest artist of all, where language begins in the music of the ticking beetles, ocean applause, the black hole’s B Flat, the disapproving hush of a passing hawk’s wing... More! The impoverished mind and soul asking for more porridge please!

With precipice-persuasions, with linguistic and imagistic vertigo, the exigencies of keeping the human bond with its shared insomnia inside the heart.... an unappeasable desire must answer for who we are.

In answer to each step you take/ the earth rings in your ears...

– Andrei Tarkovsky SQUANDER by Elena Karina Byrne [LINK](#)





Title: The Devil's Auction. Creators: J. Gurney & Son (studio). Issue Date: 1867. Publisher: Ohio State University. Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute. Description: Full-length portrait of Eliza Blasina facing right in profile wearing horse-head headdress, short costume with attached horse-tail, double rows of round beads or bells around ankles, wrists and neck, four rows around upper arm. URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/47633>. Rights: This item is believed to be in the public domain. However, the user is responsible for making a final determination of copyright status before reproducing.

"The Devil's Auction" : Twelve Nights Of Discouragement

You can't put into words, some nights, nightfall,
and night and fall from sleep, going out of business, the girl
given a white horse headdress and costume horse
gown, the photo, *entered according to Act of Congress in the year of 1867*, white
tights and hoof shoes set in sepia against a wall where she might walk
out through a stone gate into the rough lake, her peasant horse tail waving.

Who would pay The Devil's Auction price for
a bad-looking lot of gorilla hands, tiger rug, ivory neske, one wedge-shaped
wood tool much worn, and from inside a man's consciousness, an iron nail,
body-saw, gold tooth and an empty enamel snuff box for the sale
price of another night, all sales final? Round beads, bells
around the ankles. Public domain dance, she gallops and gallops,
hoof and toe, her head and the horse's head atop set straight
for seeing into the past evidence of temptation
to be on the run in the night, the horsemeat crowd cheering.



Sleep

begins with someone else's

voice, riffle-attention, fallen birch coins

filling up the windows with white paper vowels, an avalanche

of *open, close, open* which is to say,

you, in your profane fraction of happiness, didn't.

As if devoutly rain-drenched. As if soapstone cargo-weighed.

As if looking down into one's own mouth for constellation of stars.

You are sleep-talking as cheatgrass darkens the floor.

There's a picket driven into the dark, one glass ladder for the dead

and bees' wings in motion, if, as ever with

their ever-ever-medicine.

Slumen, doze, slumber Morpheus takes out his opiate.

Make your peace

in the drowsy shape of absence there:

the water table rises and falls always.

Squander, Omnidawn Publishing 2016

Daughter

- from dugs, breasts, and bringer of milk

Who bore her?

Still, lunar-skinned, ashes-kissed, luck-boned.

In sweet,

Jeanne d'Arc dame of Spades, of war, dead set on

her own hand's leaf-work. Like Camilla, feet in swift
over corn without bending a single blade.

Daughter, bringer,

she'll scroll obedience gospel-back in the Book of Kells, be
mother-counted, be the inbread for a Baker's dozen, baffled as they

once called it, hung upside-down
from a tree for saying her tongue, to be

in for it.

Play the eddy water anyway, as dead water closes round the ship's stern for her.

Hang all blush-colored jellyfish veil.

Unbreak the sky's thin eggshell where she wakes.

For it is said: woman,
once cast and bid, covered and cut. But,

from a basket weave circle of hair and sleeping fireflies,

she rose.

Squander, Omnidawn Publishing 2016

The Flammable Bird, Zoo Press 2002
(Tupelo Press Distribution).



Fertility Mask

In the service of life sacrifice becomes grace.

- Albert Einstein

Let's eat the moonlight's raw sea urchin, run
out of sleep. To cover our faces
in new green leaves, give
each other the bells of wet earth, we'll
have the probability of hope.

I'll undress in my cranberry thirst, blossom
lilac, you raise the body's temperature
father our hunger
to feed outside ourselves.

We will be in the oriole's bright eye. But nothing

can be done to swoon the universe slipping from our sides, nothing
as simple as desire. We shall dream
we are flying the snowdrift
praise to the heavens' downdraft.

What I want in me is oncoming.
I cannot hide this affliction of light.
My body gathers the seed, behaves the season
when all beginnings come
like the translucent hands of the dead
pressed, still warm, on the forehead
of my lover.

MASQUE, Tupelo Press, 2008

Kierkegaard Knows No Shame

Anxiety is the dizziness

of freedom – Kierkegaard

My names have no faith. No birds. No marriage
without revelation. I have walked with this dizziness,
with the anxiety of seeing myself.
Liberty gives no warning.

I was told Kierkegaard
took long walks with God
in his head. Whether by accident or the will
of one thing, Kierkegaard knew no better.
He knew no hazard-blue way.
He could throw the dice
of logic every day over his shoulder
and come clean again.

Religion takes on science:
star-drunk, deferred, forlorn light.
My backyard shares some of this
salty religion but there's no green evidence
now, that anyone ever walked here with him.
No conciliatory directions. No
glasses, no compass.

Take a chance I say to myself,
you are alone in the guise of burning,
in another declared country
with a fling of seeds, fallen dare.
The sky breaks open there and you garden in
with the smell of yellow pears
on your skin. Freedom knows no shame.

Shame knows no Kierkegaard, either.

Khare is an award winning author of thirty-one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation, educational books and poetry, a playwright and art curator. He is Mentor of The Rewachand Bhojwani Foundation and Director, Gyaan Adab. He has been 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



Burning Leaves

I have searched for the heart,
The still centre of the changing seasons –
Beneath the ritual and the dream,
Beneath the hobbling cadavers
Of everyday cares,
Beneath the confusion of loving
And longing,
Beneath the tumult of births and deaths;

I have searched for the heart,
The centre of the lotus,
Where to be is to belong.

God changes his face so many times
I forget my own,
Clutching this broken mirror,
Hands bleeding, fragments stare back,
I walk down this road,
Autumn burning its leaves,
Flocks of egrets closing up the sky.

Kite-Cry At Sunset

Kite-cry at sunset
Flowing out of a brown-feather throat,
Wind-sliding over dusk-homes
And the leaf-skin of trees
Turns turtle and vanishes
Into the haze of wood-fire smoke –
Rising, rising endlessly,
Twirling ribbons weaving
Ghostly sheets shrouding last-light.

Kite-cry at sunset
Drowning in the leviathan mouth
Of a stale day.





Abraham To Isaac Spake

Fold your dreams, leave them where you lay,
No time for visions or for songs
Of fancy or of youth,
Hills wait in moonlight for your death.

Come child, trust me, I am your father,
You my son, my heir, my pride, my life, my hope,
A gift from god, that generations
Bear my stamp, my seal, my name.

How I longed for you, prayed for you, fasted,
Filled your mother's womb
With desperate seeds that lay, dissolved;
Lonely strangers in a quest for life.

And then you came, crying into the world;
I dreamed you growing up a rugged man,
Herder of flocks, leader of people, prophet,
God's anointed, man, my man, in my image.

Now in this moonlight hour, I come to you,
To take you to the hills to face your death,
So god may be appeased, my honour safe –
That blessings may rain gently on this land.

Tell me son, before we trek the broken hills
To sacred places where gods and mortals meet,
Before I bind your wrists behind your back,
Before I pray the last time to my god,
Before I bring the blade down on your chest,
Before I see your blood spring free
And taste the copper on my aging tongue...

Tell me, my child, why were you born a man?
You should have been a woman, son;
I'd gladly offer god your knife-torn heart.

Night of The Needle

In the lofts of night
Star-stacks lie still
With presentiment;
Floors of scrubland, silent;

In this room amongst
Crouched rock animals –
A needle passes through
The eye of a camel.

Dr Azril is a Peruvian Agricultural Engineer and Sociologist. He has published extensively on issues of education (2013, 2015), Cultural Diversity, Anti-Racism, Cultures of Peace and Citizenship. Amongst his publications - 'Citizenship and National Identity in Latin America: The Persisting Salience of Race and Ethnicity' in Oommen (ed.), *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism to Globalism*, 1997; *Ethnic Discrimination: Comparative Perspectives*, Uppsala Universitet: Research Report from the Department of Sociology, 1992; 2 ; *Ethnic Discrimination in Sweden: Basic Issues and Reflections*, Uppsala Universitet: Op. Cit. 1992: 53-69;

From Organism to Identity: The Road from Psychology to Social-Psychology. Towards an Epistemology of Self-Determination, University of Karlstad, Department of Social Sciences, Section of Communication, Working Paper 1994; 1. Ethnic Identity Responses of Mexican Americans to Ethnic Discrimination (Gothenburg, 1994), Quality of Working Life and Democratization in Latin America (EID, 1991). A poetry book "Refracciones Itinerantes" (Uppsala, 2010) - and currently in press with a second and enlarged edition, Fondo Editorial, UNALM, Perú (2017) In Press.



Tankas

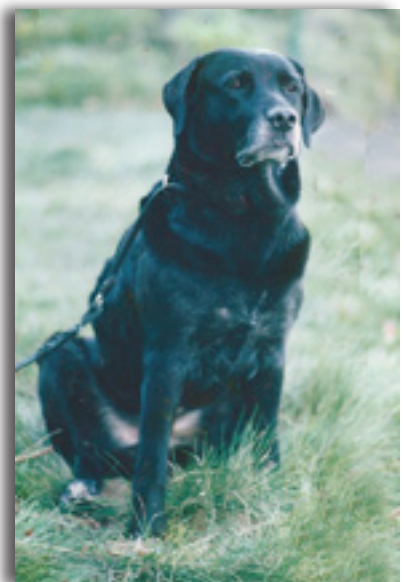
Haya granizo
perlas de sudor, olor
de cidra o flor,
el camión viene y va
el camión va y viene

Whether hale or
pearls of sweat, aromas of
cider and wild flowers,
the buss goes on and returns
the buss returns and goes on

(A Felicia, con amor)

Ya no estás mas
no ecan tus ladridos
jubilosos en
la floresta oscura
eca hoy tu silencio

No more with us
no longer the echo of
joyous barks in the
dark shadows of the forest
echoes yet your silence



Haiku

Empezando a
conocer el mundo un
niño sonríe.

As a child begins
to know the world he smiles
smiles at the world

En el borde de
la mesa hay alguien
inpredecible

In the corner of
the table sits someone
unpredictable

Sentado frente
a la puesta de sol
zumba la mosca

Seated in front of
the sun one buzzing fly flies
buzz, buzz, flies the fly



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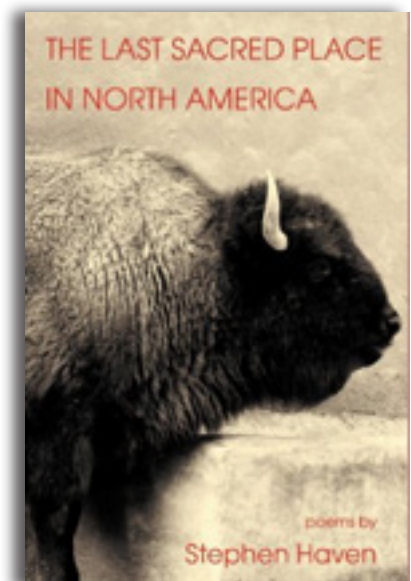


Minute Man

God-like phallus of our day, it is time you stood for something,
Time you explained. We have lived within the omnipresence
Of your reign. Fountain of peace and Armageddon, all-powerful,
Tyrannical, merciful, you have not yet dispatched us in a flash
From your subterranean burrows, or from low orbit
Shot down at us, fish in a barrel. No one witnessed you,
Invisible, hovering over the billboards of our age,
And yet we think you are there just the same,
Like Yahweh sparing Nineveh for some slight reason
While Jonah sulks in the shelter of the Yggdrasil tree
Damned if he'll say a word because the world won't burn
As always it has not burned. Jealous of justice, God-stuffed,
Cracked by his own silence, damned if he'll play the fool,
A mongerer of fear, but sure in his own knowledge,
He sits beneath the union of Earth, history, and heaven,
Bereaved by his own comfort, the tree rotting itself half-way
To hell, the upper branches Orion's belt. We wait in his image,
Alive, still born, not quite free, off in the shade somewhere
Where there is no sign, in the silent power of the periphery.

Shelter

First there was light at the Trinity test site, then a wind
Of Biblical hubris that peeled back skin, flashed
The teeth of our own skeletons. We felt at once
Amazed, diminished and afraid, awe for the cradle
Of some new revelation, our birth stars cupped in its crater.
We became the authors of our own destiny and power,
Self-made gods for whom there was only Truman
To play the wise man, wiping on his shirt sleeves
The blood from Oppy's hands, some small-town faith
Squaring itself with this new spigot, with the common man
Who worshiped this new sun like some ancient
Coin-eyed Egyptian. We built new backyard temples,
New mausoleums, stocked with food, with ammo
For the underworld, and waited for good reason
To bury ourselves in dirt and shoot our fellow citizens.



Beijing Student Riot, May 12, 1999

Cold in a Beijing spring, an old man has gone four days without his insulin.
Even laser-guided missiles miss the mark? So says CNN,
Mistag the living for the dead. In an instant the Belgrade Chinese Embassy

Morphed to bric-a-brac and air, though dust motes still float.
Now, this morning, out on *An Jia Lou Lu*, the American Ambassador
Cannot go home. He barricades himself behind four tense marines:

Lucky for them they are monoglots and cannot even with pinyin placards
Speak their names. On the screen I try and cannot find
Students from *Beijing Shifan Daxue*. Somewhere they throw

Through an old man's window stones thousands of years old.
I am here, this morning, one year gone, in my rural Ohio home:
I'm glad they loved for a short while my daughter, my son.

And me? How often from that same American Embassy
I met their requests for the likes of *Casablanca*, *Mighty Aphrodite*,
Cueing my students into the joke when from deep space

Some Greek chorus summoned Zeus and America boomed
To the laugh of a prerecorded voice: *There is no one here to take*
Your call right now: You know what to do: Please leave your prayer

After the beep. I will get back to you. Politics is never personal.
So says Mario Puzo. My students didn't see
The Romantic in Bogart's Blaine: Even then, in 1942,

The propaganda of an American who thinks for everyone,
Never cracks a grin, smokes a Lucky Strike, drinks whiskey, gin,
And bends all Europe till the world is right. They asked for sex

And violence to stir their still nights. I gave them Brando, Pacino,
Talked it over awhile in a late-night *jiaozi* shop. One by one,
With *kuaizi* we lifted to our mouths fried kernels of salt.

They never slugged a beer, due deference to their foreign *laoshi*.
All the way to Shisha Pangma, the West thrusts its drilled insolence.
This morning I ask only for the counsel of Robert Duvall:

It's only business, after all, anonymous, strictly protocol,
Quiet in the way that it explodes
Always, from a distance, on someone somewhere known.



Running Lights

Caught in the terminal's long maw he watched
His lost flight blink backward from the gate.
Running lights they call them, wing tip and tail,
The pulse of the plane drawing without him
Toward the macadam's lift. Then in the distance,
Nothing but the glow of his long layover,
The city that took her from him, light years ago.

In the wake of that lost night, he imagines
The clustered rise of buildings, the steamed horizon
Like a mug of milk and tea, banked with snow.
Despite his long absence, no notice he called her,
Mumbled something about tomorrow's
Red-eye departure. *Oh, yes*, she whispered
On the phone, *oh yes* when he slipped a quarter

In a locker, half an hour after fumbled toward her.
She ran hot water, her warm sponge down his back.
Forever now, lion's paws and cracked porcelain
In the font of each kind act. He gathered the small
Destiny of that gesture, then her open wonder
When decades passed. Her loofah left small striations
Where he never scratched. Was it her mother told her,

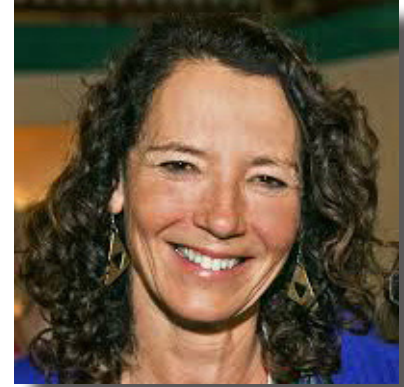
Wash his back, he'll always remember?! He wonders if
She thinks her mother wrong in this, if she thinks
At all of that night's wick, flickering all day now
As he stares out a darker terminal, where each flight
Lacks a destination, where all connections lapse,
Each long-windowed corridor a Rhapsody in Black.
From where he sits, he slips again in her warm bath.

Last Words

Suddenly she loved the floral print
Of the wallpaper and thought how strange
It was: Till now she hadn't noticed it.
She had been asleep six days or more.
What's the big deal, what? she said. Let's let
A little light in here, I said, and drew
The curtains back. She laughed and laughed.
You're so funny, she said, and in that moment
Of laughter I saw for the first time teeth
Too large for a head. What's the big deal?
You need to swallow, I said, if you're going
To get well again. The RN mixed
Vanilla in. I heard someone singing
About sugar and medicine. That tastes
Wonderful, my mother said, a stethoscope
At her throat to measure the full power
Of a swallow. You're so sweet, she said,
While the nurse worked and my mother
Dripped and seeped. I will remember
For a long, long time, *more pudding*,
My mother said. For a moment I thought
Yellow is the color of love, so Doctor
Williams says. Her eyes were full of it,
Her skin soaked in it. Then pain reconnoitered
Her again. For two whole days I played
Sacred hymns, Numbers 6:24-26
On her stereo, over and over again.



Sally Bliumis-Dunn teaches Modern Poetry at Manhattanville College and the Palm Beach Poetry Festival. Her poems appeared in New Ohio Review, The Paris Review, Prairie Schooner, PLUME, Poetry London, the NYT, PBS NewsHour, upstreet, The Writer's Almanac, Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-day, and Ted Kooser's column, among others. In 2002, she was a finalist for the Nimrod/Hardman Pablo Neruda Prize. Her two books, *Talking Underwater* and *Second Skin* were published by Wind Publications in 2007 and 2010. Galapagos Poems published by Kattywompus Press in 2016.



How Your Dress Was Made

Lace patterns pinned to pillows
 wooden bobbins hanging
 like a miniature suspension bridge—
 each day, your wedding,
 a little world I enter,
 bedazzled as a child.
 Today, a bridge in white mountains
 like in a Chinese painting,
 snow silver-freshly fallen.

From, *Echolocation*, my third book of poems that is looking for a publishing home.

Conversation

Green hummingbird,
 head tilted into the deeper
 orange of each blossom,
 as if it were listening,
 closely, again and again,
 but could not hear
 whatever it was trying to hear—
 blossoms like slender gramophones,
 pale notes of wings beating
 beat the air—
 all of that work steady
 above the open blossom.
 You with sharp ears
 keep asking me,
 What did you just say?
 The trumpet vine
 holds loosely to the trellis.
 We are talking.
 The hummingbirds
 vanish, reappear.

From, *Echolocation*, my third book of poems that is looking for a publishing home.

© Sally Bliumis-Dunn

Fable

Hundreds of their legs
tap-tap in quick succession,
these centipedes inside her.

Sometimes the lightest rain
can patter like the rhythm
of their marching legs

and evoke in her a panic
as though part of her were vanishing
with the scuttering drops.

Sometimes she strums her fingers
with such agitation
that the tips of them bleed.

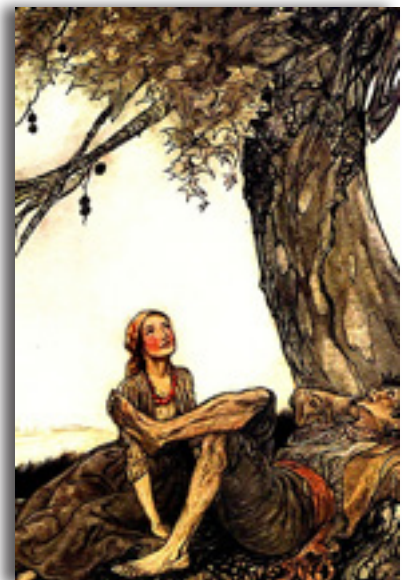
Diminution

She served clichés like some mothers offered cake—
the hackneyed phrase edged right on through;
I still can hear her say—
just sowing his wild oats, as though that could excuse

the wrong. She'd drop us and our worries in
the drab room of generic phrase, and disappear—
the early bird, the dead horse beaten,
the leopard spots, those walls with ears.

Did she believe—she did, I think— the right
cliché could save us, help us not to feel
alone, so many bees in that same hive—
spilt milk, sow's ear, Achilles heel.

I miss them now that she is frail.
Her words these days, so spare, plain.



From, *Fables*, a fourth book of poems I am currently working on.

Colette Nic Aodha is an award winning poet who resides in Galway in the West of Ireland. She writes in both Irish and English. She has 14 publications which include a volume of short stories, *Ádh Mór*; an academic study of the blind poet *Anthony Raftery*; one volume of English poetry, *Sundial*, published by *Arlen House Press*; two dual language collections of poetry by the same publisher; *Between Curses: Bainne Géar*, and *In Castlewood: An Ghaoth Aduaidh*. Her work is on the syllabus in Primary, Secondary and Third Level colleges. www.colettenicaodha.com



Etching; naming water

Sketching the Iroquois symbol for lake and plenty of fish I am clear of mind
and lines of summer etch mayfly.
Seven kinds of joy this year of the deer; wolf of the north guards his patch;
hooked nose, warrior hand.
Water flower's large leaves, tadpoles swim, insect symphony.

'Sionnach,' is the Gaelic for fox, I seem as under a spell,
everything has owl wings even this night's equinox.
A bog iris of woodbine thrills the bramble; rain aftermath;
flicking the calendar of early childhood, art mimicking life.

Peaches

When the Italian woman told me through smiles that they only sold books
written by women, it was a real Carrie Bradshaw moment, only she didn't
display my own latest volume on her window or shelves, or invite me to a
get-together with all of my fans, over a soiree some evening, to the chagrin
of my non-existent Russian boyfriend.

Instead I apologised profusely for not being able to read her language but
loved the feel of fine volumes and interested myself in Simone de Beauvoir,
with which I built a special place.



Fenland

The bird who lives in the chimney is without peer
at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig,
as are the fresh growth of bluebells,
rhododendron petals that flutter onto gravel,

the silver of the lake away from the shade of conifers,
the quick step of the jogger, the returning walker, afternoon light on drumlins,

copper beech with its oxblood leaves,
the design of branches,
a persistant wasp
or the distant buzz of freshly cut grass.

Removing the Lady of Shalott from my Dreams

Away from the sad looking waves rocking in, or solitary ancient shapes
alone on the beach, white horses drench sand and make for the café;
drink mint tea and shots of Paradise, my heart in my mouth.

I write with red ink and birdsong as they are easily found,
volcanic sand reminds me of old football boots;
wrench - nothing quells the nightmare; counting pebbles on a pillar,
walking with the steps of a child towards the church.



Diane

Greeted in the courtyard
by an artist of my acquaintance;
as beautiful as her mythological namesake,

bestowed with gift of music
in an ecclesiastical backdrop,
a celebrated ceramicist

offered tea in glazed mugs,
no escaping our sense of history
during the Beckett Festival, Fermanagh.

The three of us ignored weather,
changed footwear in castle car park,
were spied by a famous actor

newly emerged from that week's Chess Set.

Bear

I met a beautiful woman
who called her menopause 'bear';
a male phenomenon -

seated around a fire,
drumbeat in the background,
we danced in circles
around its flames;

soft rhythmic beat,
charismatic experience.
Old women enticed me
out to dance

then whispered they were aware
that I had personal knowledge
of this bear, we chanted
three poems and a song,

men began to chatter
and stroked buffalo skin,
I chose two leather hides
to bring home to my workbench.



Colin Dardis is a poet, editor and freelance arts facilitator based in Belfast. His work has been published widely throughout Ireland, the UK and USA. He was a 2015-16 ACES recipient from Arts Council Northern Ireland. A collection is forthcoming from Eyewear Publishing. Colin also co-runs Poetry NI and is the editor for Lagan Online.



Cryptic

You are
the final crossword clue unsolved,
vital letters missing,
unable to pose any follow-up questions;
only looking for your parts
in the meaning of others.

I will never form the key
to your crypt,
the doors of affection
forever shut

without gumption or sense
to root for solution.

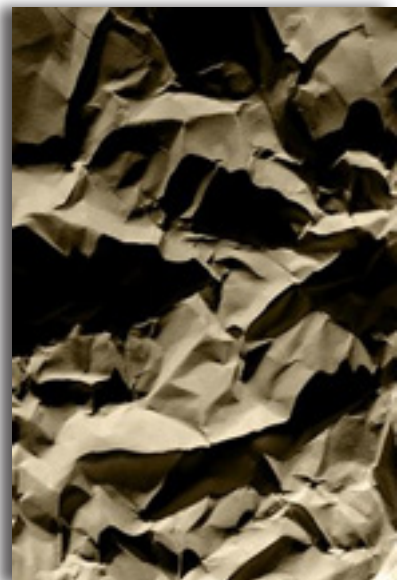
Without ink to speculate an answer,
I retire, the paper crunched,
curled up in blank despair.

The Old Fence

The old fence looks
to be leaning,
cantilevering
out of the ground.
The grass holding
up each post like
an unlit torch
waiting for fire.

The wire, twisted
across the track,
bent out of line
from the dead-weight
of angled posts
in suspension,
bowed in old age,
caught in a wind.

The animals
lean against it,
trying to hide
from the weather.
No fence, no wall
or hedgerow could
take the teeth out
from this winter.



Find the Lady

The street conjuror's smile reveals
that you've already lost before any choice is made,
taking your coin and bidding you good day,
lays the cards down, ready with his magic.

He showed you the pea from under the mattress,
where the needle punctured the haystack,
three choices on the table, to be read
as 's' for *suspect, scrutiny, schmuck*.

You turn over and lose, then return the next day.
There's a new stall with the same smile,
pedalling the same trick. You pay up,
a familiar scene: this time, you guess, this time.

Three-card Monte is a card trick dating from the Fifteen Century, where the Queen must be found among three facedown playing cards. The victim is tricked into betting a sum of money on the assumption they can 'find the lady'.

Pliers

You are a butcher of the mouth;
although you may proportion the blame
between us: I of indolent care
and you of savagery and destruction.

I cannot relay my pain as you grind
across my mandible, your hands moving
as a hacksaw through wood, only grip
the armrest and intern nails into palm.

The tooth cracks. You have squeezed
when you should have yanked, leaving shards
of dentine and pulp jutting out, a new
mountain range constructed in blood.

It takes a quarter of an hour for you
to pick at each red remnant,
the pliers wading in as I imagine
the scene left behind, the weeping gape.

Afterwards, you prescribe me painkillers,
but nothing to deaden the memory of
you lurched over me, with the weapon
of your profession wrenching me apart.



Rooms

i.
After the loft conversion, our bungalow,
already at the top of a hill, felt
taller than before, defeating each house
that slept alongside us in Thornville Park.
Yet even I, at only eleven years, could tell
that our two new bedrooms could never hold
my older brothers' trappings, their music,
their smells, later bedtimes running down the stairs.

ii.
After a month of firsts, you'd realise
everything else was second-hand.
I never thought of who lived there before me,
only to extend my identity
across its feet and inches. At nineteen,
the only things you really have
are ego, folly and confidence.
Everything else could fit in the car.

iii.
After bedtime and the cold alarm
there is still bed; our new centre
where families before knew of settees
and stoves. Outside sleep, these pillows
hold our talk: our smalls, our sweets,
our deep-and-meaningfuls. The walls stand bare;
we make our own pictures from the day;
that way, it's lighter when we move.

Fortress

This avenue of portcullis trees
stands firm:

formation of immovable spruce,
each an auburn

sentinel on grass clumped as hairnets,
holding bloom

against the blemish of evening wind;
perfect form,

with every guarded flower
and blossom

an insect entangled sweetly
between sputum

and sap, an announcement:
see Spring become.



Michael J. Whelan lives in South Dublin. He served as a UN Peacekeeper in Lebanon and Kosovo with the Irish Army and is a historian and keeper of the Air Corps Military Museum. He was 2nd Place in the Patrick Kavanagh & 3rd in the Jonathan Swift Awards. He is widely published and read for the Poetry Ireland Introductions series and his debut collection 'Peacekeeper' was published in 2016 by Doire Press.



In The Dark Valley

The reign of artillery
is about to fall

in the dark valley.
We cannot see

the fear
but hear

the *groundhog*
sirens wail

about the bunkers
night and day.

Spine

You think you hear them,
cursing through the air, searching,
bracketing where you are,
feel the impacts creeping closer in your brain
and your spine plays that game again
exaggerating your predicament.
Your mind's a constant train
as you lay in your bunk
deciding at which point you should run.

(Groundhog = during periods of intense shelling,
UN troops and civilians in the UNIFIL area enter underground bunkers)



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Harvest

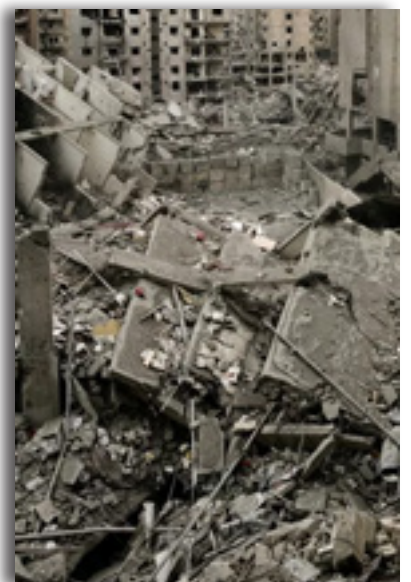
A 155mm shell
fired from northern Israel
collides with an orchard
in south Lebanon

villages shake
landscapes awake
and echoes
rush the wadii

fear clings to grass and stone
retaliation or a violation?
we listen for the small-arms fire
but there is only crying.

Rockets Rifle The Night

Frightened villagers count the shells
that peacekeepers cannot see.
They pray on worry beads
while rockets rifle the night,
impacting near,
bracketing the fright
of worried souls
under sandbagged ground.



© Michael J Whelan

Metal In The Sky

After the shelling – stillness.
The air is clean, nothing hurtful comes their way,
no more metal in the sky - for now.

The hills whisper to the survivors
'live again, breathe deeply,
go to the wells and greet your neighbours,
count the missing and the dead and be glad,
for you'll never feel so alive
as when you are close to death.'

Blood Sun

They say 'peacekeeping
is not a job for soldiers

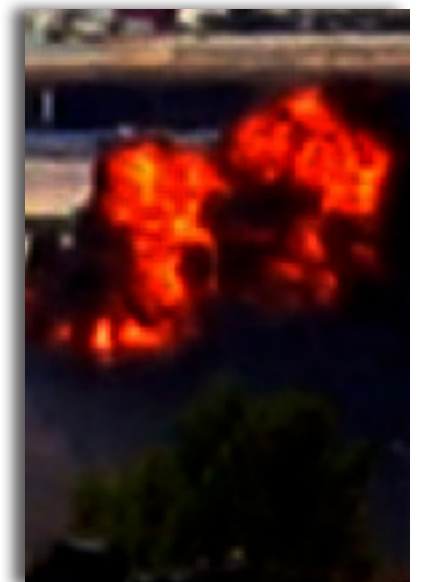
but, only a soldier can do it.'
And tonight as the blood

sun goes down, spilling out
onto a hundred black horizons,

they steel themselves
rebuilding bunkers,

fixing strong defences
and pushing barbed-wire obstacles

across roads, preparing
for the reckoning.



Cathy Colman's first poetry collection, *Borrowed Dress*, won The Felix Pollak Award from the University of Wisconsin and was on The Los Angeles Times Bestseller list. Her second book *Beauty's Tattoo* was published by Tebot Bach. Her poems have appeared in The Gettysburg Review, Ploughshares, Barrow Street, The Colorado Review, The Journal, The Huffington Post, Prairie Schooner and elsewhere.



Vultures, When They Eat They're Called a Wake

Two days one night with you painting the ceiling green and making all the furniture face north so you have to stand up to sit down because less meat is more meat, though you'll be hungry for the rest of your life because the future was so long ago I can't remember it and obstacles come from space and lay down their heads in the grass. Even with wormholes and budgets we can't get through to each other like when we stayed up all night laughing at music and made love in a Mendocino field before tourists ruined everything, which is why you threw your glasses over the cliff and spoke Hungarian into the mirror. And now we can't navigate the badlands because I grew up with Clorox and symbiosis and your parents were two ice cubes in a two-cube tray. I now hear hammering outside that echoes forward into the next year and makes history clear its throat to make room for it on the platform. I mean shelter is so last century, eating and sleeping moribund in the same bed where they can hurt you without words without contact sports or loads of laundry. Take my dirt and I'll take yours and maybe the earth will fecund again. I'm willing to lie down if you are.

The Moths

-- moth-ers are people who hunt moths

Flicking their paper wings, wings

more hyaline than eyelids, than pages

in a miniature Tibetan Book of the Dead.

They can never get close enough.

Driven mad by this false moon's proximity,

they can't reach her heat.

Just as I, not anchored to anything,

can never, for even one blinding second, touch

again, my mother, moth mother,

my Incandescent,--

This is not hunger or thirst.

That lovely fix, she, the light, is their only way

home from the closed specimen

box of darkness.

Nasrin Parvaz became a civil rights activist when the Islamic regime took power in 1979. She was arrested in 1982, tortured and spent eight years in prison. In 1993, she fled to England. Her prison memoir was published in Farsi in 2002, and it was published in Italian in 2006 by Effedue Edizioni. A novel, *Temptation*, based on the true stories of some male prisoners who survived the 1988 massacre of Iranian prisoners was published in Farsi in 2008. Her stories appeared in Exiled Writers Ink. Since 2005, together with poet Hubert Moore, Nasrin has translated poems, prohibited in Iran, from Farsi into English. They appear in the Modern Poetry in Translation series. Her article, Writing in the 'Host' Language, published in The Great Flight, MPT 2016 Number 1, and is on the MPT website. <http://nasrinparvaz.org/>



Home-land

I was very young
just a child when
I went to the North
with my family
and for the first time
saw Caspian Sea.

I was frightened
of all that water in one place
but soon I fell in love with it
playing in it and
watching it at dusk
as the sun melted.

When I was in prison
and my home was a cell
that image of sunset
making the Caspian red
came to me as a refuge
now I'm a refugee
and my home is the world.

I think of the sunset
not on the Caspian
but the Mediterranean
its beauty marred
by the bodies of the young dead.

Immigrating

I was due to be married
when my love was killed
and buried under the rubble of his house.
My father said we had to leave.
'But where can we go?'
my mother asked.
'To one of the countries bombing us
we will be safe.'
It seemed too impossible
and we didn't leave.

Then our house was bombed too
and my father also died under the rubble.

My mother and I ran away.
After so much trouble and hardship
we ended up here
where nothing is familiar
and we are alone.



Home

You shout, 'Go home.'
And I wonder what you mean
as the house where I grew up in and
the road outside no longer exist.
The baker and the barber
are killed. The town is rubble
and all these are done
by your government.

You can push me into the sea
I already see myself drowned.

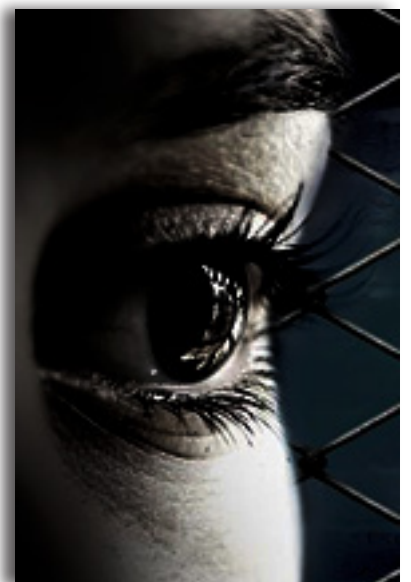
Home and Away

At sixteen:
They take him to a cell
calling him sissy.
He wakes up in hospital.

At seventeen:
In a different landscape
they call him Paki.
He wakes up in hospital.

At eighteen:
Doctors give him tablets.

Years in, years out
he doesn't know anymore
who he was, or is.



Margaret O'Driscoll is a poetry writer based in County Cork, Ireland. Her work has been published in various journals and anthologies internationally.



A Poem in Stone

Awed by its architecture
 I step inside
 Gigantic Gothic arches
 Rise on either side
 Atop red marble columns
 Along each side of the aisle
 A colossal feat of construction
 Created to Pugin's style
 Splendid stained glass windows
 Depicting saints of glory
 Sun's rays shine through the hues
 Each panel tells a story
 Jesus and his apostles in white marble
 The Last Supper around the table
 Priceless treasures by master craftsmen
 Gifted, artistic, diligent and able
 I pray for my family and I
 As I stand there alone
 In that graceful peaceful sanctuary
 A poem in stone

Poets paint pictures

Uncoiling the cord, birth delayed
 arriving all blue, mother dismayed
 Baby cries out, a quick embrace
 tears of joy on a mother's face

It takes skill this ship to steer
 through icy channels, icebergs sheer
 Cliffs of white shot with blue
 uncharted waters to get through

Like scurrying clouds life passes by
 we snatch a glance at a blue sky
 Poets paint pictures just with ink
 at the well of art we drink

As blue as a dunnock's egg shell
 blue as woad dye, blue harebell
 When you've felt the bluest blue
 Brighter sparkles shine right through



© Margaret O'Driscoll

The Magic of Beara

The Children Of Lir slumber
 By Ballydonegan Bay
 A swan's feather floats over Caha's hills
 Guides walkers on The Beara Way
 Magic in this special quill
 Paints boats at Castletown
 Pretty houses at Eyeries
 Garnish Island at sundown
 It casts a spell at Adrigole
 Tuosist, Lauragh, Allihies
 Bestows beauty to Bere Island
 Brings bounty to the seas
 The muse of inspiration
 Flows from this magic pen
 Creative folk flock to Beara
 The magic draws them in
 When you get to Glengarriff
 Ideas you happen upon
 Flow fresh and freely
 Gliding smoothly as a swan
 Transformed like Lir's children
 Feeling free as the wind
 In the magic muse of Beara
 You'll find your soul friend

Cockle Pickers

(Inspired by Joseph Malachy Kavanagh's painting 'Dublin Bay Cockle Pickers', 1895)

Their work dictated by the tides
 Some days they picked at first light
 Baskets strapped to their shoulders

In blazing sun or blinding rain
 As long as the tide was out
 As long as there was light

Stooping low to the sands
 Eyes scanning as they moved
 Picking cockles from ancient beds

Like their ancestors before
 They raced against the tide
 To reap the bounty of the bay

Even as the incoming tide
 Lapped over their feet, they picked
 Relenting only when it rose too high

They hauled their dripping harvest
 Bent, tired, weak
 Drenched to the skin



© Margaret O'Driscoll

Lorraine Carey was born in Coventry, England later moving to Greencastle, Co. Donegal. Her poems have been featured in the following online journals ; The Honest Ulsterman, Vine Leaves, Quail Bell, A New Ulster, The Galway Review, Proletarian, Olentangy Review, Poetry Breakfast and Stanzas Limerick. Her poetry has appeared in two anthologies. Her first collection *From Doll House Windows* is forthcoming in May 2017. She now resides in the coastal village of Fenit, Co.Kerry.



From Doll House Windows

The woodlouse dropped off the ceiling
like flaky plaster, landing on the candlewick
that failed to keep me warm in the two roomed house.
In damp darkness feeding on their own waste.
Racing rafters for the little heat
in a temporary dwelling, five minutes from Grandma's.

An aubergine bucket served as a toilet,
in a two foot space.
Mother cursed all winter from doll house windows
where we watched somersaulting snowflakes, as evening fell.
Icicles hung from gutters like sheathed daggers.

My father brought back a storm petrel
from a trawler trip.
I homed him in a remnant of rolled up carpet -
that matched his plumage.
Our kitchen cum every room smelt of children,
resentment, the flapping panic of his final days.

Slaters scuttled through my dreams
I tugged on my bedspread, shook them off,
disrupted my mother's sleep as she manoeuvred
with her ghost breath sighs
caught by streetlight.
She pulled the candlewick taut over her belly
the skin marked with angry tracks,

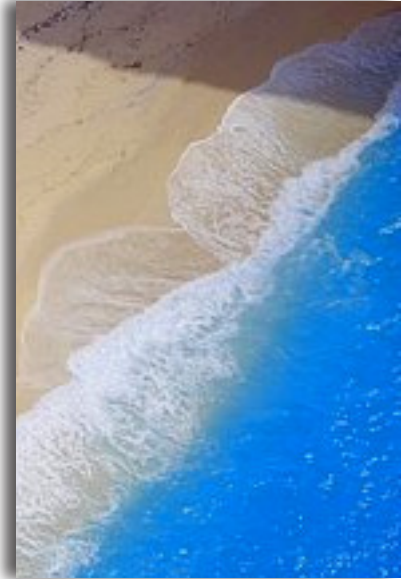
as my unborn sister stretched
in the safety of her amniotic sac.

Funeral Shoes

Buried on their sides under woollens,
heels wiped clean of graveyard clay
a teardrop's scar on a sole.

Covered them weeks later with layers,
fed the case through the attic space
and hoped enough healing would pass,
before digging them out again.





Ipsos Beach

Greek evening sun pours out
from fluffy cotton strips and warms my scar,
a mini Australia on my left leg.
I think of past summers
when we hadn't met.

Scars everywhere, skin on skin,
the waves race and roll,
threading weaving foam
as the pebbles retreat, then lap
the break again

eroding the stones here
to cushion the underlayer
from imposters

in their sarongs and flip flops
with Gucci shades and heavy gold
dangling from wrists and crepey necks,
their cindered bodies displayed on
rented loungers, oiled up and ridiculous.

We tread the stretch like thousands before
and take the heat as dusk folds in.

Making Soup

The chopping board was scored,
an onion diced, piled high
awaited bubbling oil.
You ran the tap to dispel the vapour
and cried, protesting its Spanish
strength.

Making ourselves smaller,
we slid down kitchen chairs as the skating of our biros
filled the pages with work, that went unchecked
by her reddened eyes.
Wanting mealtimes where we just gave thanks,
not furtive looks on hearing the crunch of gravel.
Sidelined barley pearls awaited a tear
from a pointy molar or scissors snip.
A waterfall of unpolished beads
flowed into the vat of bubbling water
with a memory of pummelled pebbles.

The short, gas flicker permitted a simmer.
Infusion stirred under a snug lid
with my anxiety, weaving little
knots in my hunger. He came
in after a game of wits with the lock.
His stagger and cigarette
slowed the clock, as his thumb hook
hung on his V neck jumper. Dropping ash,
he swayed, waved away the offer of dinner.
She slathered on handcream,
a pampering of sorts as yet
another Monday slunk off.

Nostalgia in my Kitchen

He sat on a branch that protruded,
a warped knitting needle poking from the
hedge. His weight and earlier worm feast
lending to the gnarly arc.
He bobbed, trampolining
in the breeze, all the while keeping his
balance. Surveyed surroundings for predators,
for females with watered down feathers, their
coats nondescript, blandly blending
with the turning leaves,

their chlorophyll sapped by autumn's arrival.
His clawed feet grasping, the tendons taut
on the brambles heavy with blackberries.
His black cap stark against his salmon breast,
a tequila sunrise of plumage
as I watched from the room where
the walls were like sky and felt time
gently prod and poke me goodbye.

The Interruptions from Brent Geese

Their cackles and quacks
disturbed our chat, along the beach.
The tide far enough out to make it back
in dry shoes.
Brent Geese, seventy of them
sparsely scattered, some on blind dates,
other singletons plodded.

They assembled, poked the sand
their spoony beaks scooping for algae
and eelgrass.
Couldn't hear myself as their high shrills,
their broken notes invaded our space
until we sidled to dunes
the marram's blades rooted to sand,
swayed like seaweed waltzing.
I spoke softly as my eyes filled,

just as my footprints
shoehorned spongy beach,
and the tide crept in with a cunning roll
I trudged back alone.



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