

# Live encounters

## POETRY

Celebrating six years 2010 - 2015

Free online magazine from village earth

June 2016



Guest Editorial  
**Ian Watson**

Irish Poet, Editor, Essayist, Teacher





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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

Ian Watson

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



## 24th National Student Poetry Awards

Heather Brett

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



## Litany

Noel Monahan

Monahan has published seven collections of poetry. His most recent collection: *Where The Wind Sleeps*, New & Selected Poems, was published by Salmon in May 2014. He has won numerous awards for his poetry and drama. His work has been translated into Italian, French, Romanian and Russian. His most recent plays include: "The Children of Lir" performed by Livin' Dred Theatre. His poetry was prescribed text for the Leaving Certificate English Course 2011 and 2012. His 7th. collection of poetry: "Cellui Qui Porte Un Veau" a French translation of his work was published by Allidades, France in October 2014.



## Written In Sand

Radhir 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. [www.randhirkhare.in](http://www.randhirkhare.in)



## Harbingers: Selected Poems

John W Sexton

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



## Peacekeeper

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.

## Celebrating 6 years 2010-2015

Live  
encounters

POETRY  
JUNE 2016



## Lady Cassie Peregrina

Terry McDonagh

Irish poet and dramatist, Terry McDonagh, taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and was Drama Director at the Int. School Hamburg for 15 years. He now works freelance; has been writer in residence in Europe, Asia, Australia; published 7 poetry collections, book of letters, prose and poetry for young people translated into Indonesian and German, distributed internationally by Syracuse Uni. Press; latest poetry collection *Ripple Effect*/Arlen House; children's story, *Michel the Merman*, illustrated by Marc Barnes (NZ). He lives in Hamburg and Ireland. [www.terry-mcdonagh.com](http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com)



## Topographia

Anton Floyd

Anton Floyd was born in Egypt of Irish, Maltese, English and French Lebanese parentage. He studied English at Trinity College Dublin and University College Cork. He has lived and worked in the Eastern Mediterranean. He is now teaching in Cork city and lives in West Cork. Poems published in *The Stony Thursday Book* and haiku in *Shamrock*. He won the IHS International Competition (2014), honourable mention (2015) and was runner up in the Snapshot Press (UK) Haiku Calendar 2016 Competition. He is a member of Irish Haiku Society.



## Cursed

Brian Kirk

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



## Our Lady of the Wayside

Michael Durack

Durack grew up on a farm near Birdhill in County Tipperary. He was a founder member of *Killaloe Writers Group* and his poetry has been published in a wide range of literary journals in Ireland and abroad, as well as airing on local and national radio. He is the author of a chapbook, *Nothing To Write Home About* (Derg House), a comic narrative in verse, *A Hairy Tale Of Clare* (East Clare Telecottage) and a memoir in prose and poems, *Saved To Memory: Lost To View* (Limerick Writers Centre.) He has collaborated with his brother, Austin on a programme of poetry and music, and together they have produced two albums, *The Secret Chord* (2013) and *Going Gone* (2015.)



## New Horizons

Mike Gallagher

Mike Gallagher was born on Achill Island and worked in London for forty years before retiring to Kerry. His prose, poetry, haiku and songs have been published worldwide. His writing has been translated into Croatian, Japanese, Dutch, German and Chinese. He won the Michael Hartnett Viva Voce competition in 2010 and 2016; he was shortlisted for the Hennessy Award in 2011 and won the Desmond O'Grady International Poetry Contest in 2012. His collection *Stick on Stone* was published by Revival Press in 2013.



## Freedom

David Morgan

David Morgan is a London based journalist with interests in politics, human rights, international relations, history and cultural issues. He has been working in journalism as an editor and writer for three decades after he studied literature and history at university. He has edited several titles from the Socialist History Society (SHS) of which he is the Secretary. He writes regularly for the SHS Newsletter, occasionally for the Morning Star newspaper and for a range of other online and printed publications.





## IAN WATSON

IRISH POET, EDITOR, ESSAYIST AND TEACHER

### WANDERING, BUT FAR FROM LONELY - IN THE CLOUD

In his editorial for the March 2016 issue, Terry McDonagh quoted Michael Longley's *If I knew where poetry came from, I'd go there*. When I was recently invited to give a talk in Bremen on the question: "Where do poems come from?" I asked my audience to consider the follow-up questions: "Where do poems go to?" and "Why do they often not get there?" While the answers I proposed to the first and third questions can be filed under *That's Another Story*, it is the second that is relevant here. The 'small' poetry magazines are our first port of call as both poets and readers; they should be cherished like plantlings.

For twenty years I taught Creative Writing (we called it Literary Writing) and for eighteen years I co-edited a literary print magazine of poetry and short fiction. *newleaf* grew from an outlet for my students' work to being an international platform for poets from the whole world map, from left to right, from the western Pacific coast to the eastern Pacific coast: <http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/newleaf/> We nurtured many poets who have made it on to the established published page, not just in magazines but with books of their own. (I'm seriously considering starting a series on our Facebook page entitled *You Read Them First in newleaf*. Many of our authors have praised the magazine on their websites and blogs as the place it all started for them. And then in 2012, after 28 issues, we went bankrupt, just like that. There were various reasons, none of which had to do with the quality of the contributions or the look of the mag. Some had to do with the cost of paper and printing, so I have come to realise that at least one future for good poetry is up in the Cloud, where we can pluck stanzas out of the air. *Live Encounters'* brave quantum leap into verse means translating the magazine's humanist philosophy into the language of poetry, and in this fourth issue, *Live Encounters Poetry* shows itself to be going from strength to strength.

As I know to my cost, magazines can only live for so long on energy and love. So support this one in any way you can afford, and you will help keep alive not only a platform for good poetry you can write but also a comfortable place where you can read it with enjoyment.

I wrote these poems about my writing classes. I miss the students terribly, but some are now friends, and I proudly read their poems and short stories elsewhere. What I miss most, though, is the growth – watching them develop, first finding their own voice, then many, but each of the many their own. They start out as I did. Having not read enough poems, we begin with the voice of cliché and of school poetry: usually ABAB. Or it might be what we think is free verse but is just stumbly prose. We produce fake jewellery based on either ‘Daffodils’ or ‘Howl’. And then we start to read and soak up voices. First I was Shelley, then Roger McGough, then Seamus Heaney. The way to ‘me’ is long and slow but never painful. So I gave them stuff to read and to read aloud. Find your first rhythm, I’d say, and you’ve found your first voice.

## Nice Work

We write, we re-write  
We are re-writing re-writes  
till it gets us right.

I have been workshopped  
to within an inch of my life;  
I have juggled Memory cards;  
I have rebuilt sonnets with sticky tape,  
flashed haikus on a thousand screens.

What I get is electricity  
that hums and heats between us as we work.  
We stare out a window at the street  
or pluck a smileblink from the room.

Each time is new;  
each text is born anew;  
like when the ball hits  
the back of the net or  
the last piece of the jigsaw sits.

## Flash Writing

Pens whisper on paper.  
A sleeve swishes.  
Sheets skate on tables.  
Gums suck on pencils.  
Eyes flit like butterflies.  
Shoes scrape on lino.

Brows wrinkle frowns.  
Teeth chew on lower lips.  
One writes his lungs out,  
scrawling and scribbling as if nothing can stop him, not even the edge of the page.  
One smiles but does no writing.  
Better that, I think, than the other way around.



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## Work Station

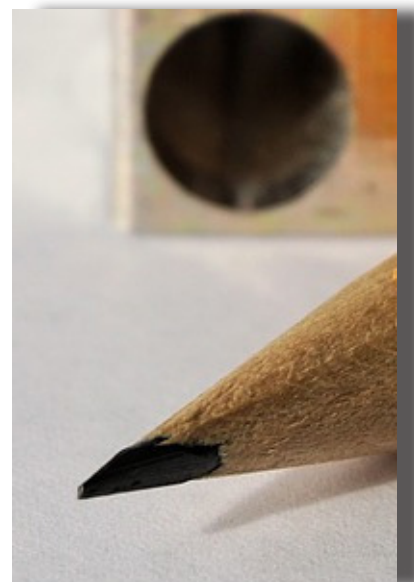
1  
Like the snail,  
I trail my workstation  
round with me, but  
stuck behind my ear.

2  
Write into the block,  
chipping away at the granite  
with a fine chisel.

2  
Sharpen the pencil,  
unscrew the pen,  
dust off the keyboard  
and just write - right?

## Untitled

He had always wanted to  
write a poem with no title,  
like all real poets do;  
but could never think  
of a decent topic.





## Workshop Farewell Haiku

One loves narrative  
and smuggles in short stories  
she dresses as songs.

One never wanted  
melopoeia. So now she  
knows her pen is prose.

One grinds my language,  
bending it like a blacksmith,  
inventing joinedwords.

This one surprised me  
with sporadic snapshots that  
whisper gentleness.

One plays mean blues on  
an ironic saxophone:  
light-fingered songwriter.

One brought melodies  
from song stage to square tables:  
musical wordsmith.

One was a player  
who dreamed thunder and mirrors -  
Look! I'm an author.

The workshop breathes out.  
It is the group that writes me.  
The horseshoe closes.

## Squaring the Circle

They are like a huddled circle touching hands  
and bending forward to feel their common strength.  
But this circle is square.

I know it is the way they bend I'll miss:  
not hunched but hushed;  
no furrowed brows, no staring into space  
the way that actors do, dipping feathers into ink  
in re-runs of that *Bright Star* movie.  
Some have two elbows on the table,  
others hold their brows, cupping  
the weight of couplets ripening for the page.

One, though, holds four fingers to his brow  
like Shelley waiting for the Muse;  
one writes on knee instead of table,  
tipping the chair to the edge of topple.  
Every so often someone sucks a pen, as if to pull  
iambics into air, like a hanky from a sleeve.

It is a special silence I will miss.



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Heather Brett of Windows Publications  
presents the 24th National Student Poetry Awards.

**Dearbhla O'Keefe**, aged 11, Convent of Mercy NS Belturbet Cavan  
1st place in the Irish Category

## Éirigí

An ceathrú lá is fiche de mhí Áibreáin  
Dhúisigh mé go tobann  
Chuala mé torann,  
Rith mé go dtí an fhuinneog agus d'fhéach mé amach  
Agus cé a chonaic mé?  
Ach na saighdiúirí ag troid,  
Thosaigh mé ag crith le heagla,  
Go tobann, bhuail buama an balla.  
Bhí coincreít i ngach áit.  
I bpream na súl, chuala mé mo Mhamaí ag glaoch.  
Thosaigh me ag crágshnamh go dtí mo Mhamaí,  
Nuair a chonaic mé mo Mhamaí, bhí dath an bháis uirthi.  
Chuir mo Mhamaí a lámha timpeall mise,  
Nuair a chonaic mé mo Dhadaí, thosaigh mé ag caoineadh,  
Mar fuair sé bás ...

**Isabelle Guerin**, aged 10, St Fergals NS Killeagh, Co. Cork  
1st place in the Junior Category

## The Lonely Whale

Have you ever wondered what that sound may be  
That long eerie whistle coming from the sea?  
So piercing and loud, an unusual sound,  
Coming from nothing you can see.  
As loud as thunder, so full of wonder.  
How the tune goes, nobody knows.  
Is it the boiling of the kettle, the rocking of the chair?  
What is this sound and where did it come from, where?  
I think this aloud as I listen to the sound, fading slowly away.  
I look down from the cliff and onto the beach,  
Just an old crisp packet far out of reach.  
I go to bed with that song in my head,  
Wondering what it could be.  
Little did I know it was the lonely whale, far far out in the sea.



**Katie Soden**, aged 17, Virgina College, Virgina, Cavan  
1st place in the Senior Category

## My Blue Prince

Some days I want to dance with the rain.

Let him streak my mascara and dampen my hair.

Let my dress turn from royal blue to midnight and my skin shiver with delight  
in his cool embrace.

I would lay my head on his chest and listen to the waterfall thrum of his  
sapphire heart.

I would march my heels through murky puddles and he would lead as we waltz  
over cobblestone streets.

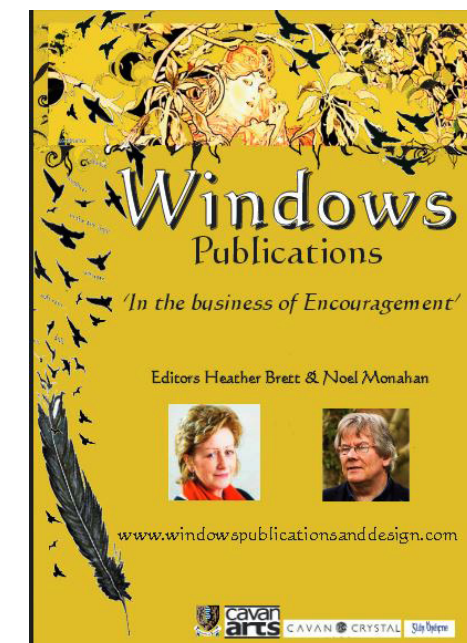
At one point he would twirl me and drops would scatter from my dress like  
liquid diamonds.

The clouds would part as a spotlight of sunshine bears down and he would float  
away to his kingdom in the clouds.

But later on I would see the grey sky split open and the wind would roar with  
thunderous applause.

I would never hesitate as I stepped out the door to once again dance with my  
blue prince in the rain.

Windows Publications will be 25 years old in 2017. We will be concentrating on adults this year with an adult competition and a publication...and also hope to publish at least one emerging writer (over 18 and who has not had a book of poetry published) and a visual artist (who preferably has not had a major solo exhibition- a minimum of 10 poems and 8 artwork). These will be published as part of our Authors & Artists Series along with the top winning poems from the poetry competition. The competition will begin in December and close at the end of February (dates TBC) and entries will be 5 poems for €20. (We don't believe in fleecing poets and charging exorbitant entry fees). The top prize will be around €500 – as we rely on sponsorship. This is an international competition and we have published poets from many counties in the past. Details will be on the website - [windowspublicationsanddesign.com](http://windowspublicationsanddesign.com) - nearer the time.



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



LITANY OF THE BULL

Primordial Bull,  
The twelve Bulls of Solomon’s Temple,  
Celestial Bull, Chthonian Bull,  
The Bull at the bottom of the lake,  
The Brown Bull of Cooley,  
Hieroglyphic Bull, Hermeneutic Bull from the Bible,  
Laudabiliter --- The Papal Bull,

The Bull in search of a father,  
The Bull in love with his mother,  
Conjugal Bull,  
Bull undoing his buttons,  
The Bull with the long crosier,  
The Bull as nightmare,  
Crazy diseased Bull,  
Horny Bull, Humpy Bull,  
Sperm Bank Bull,  
Europe’s Bull, Uncle Sam’s Bull,  
John Bull.

Uncontrolled Bull, Brute Bull,  
The Minotaur,  
The Bull with the official bellow,  
The Bull with the Caighdeán Gaelge  
Not knowing B from a bull’s foot.  
The Bull to drive us out,  
Racist Bull, Sectarian Bull,  
Bull of the masses, Bull of the classes,  
The Bully Bull, The Parish Bull,  
The Bull with the woman’s face,  
The Bull in the Golf Club,  
The Bull in the County Museum,  
The Little Brown Bull bellowing down the school corridor,  
The Little Brown Bull pulling rings from noses and ears,

The Bull in the County Lunatic Asylum,  
The Bull on the mobile phone,  
The best of the Bull in Bovril,  
The Bull with the recipe for turnip soup,  
*The Best Little Bull In Spain*

<i>All Ye Holy</i>	Deliver the Bull into the Bull-Ring
<i>All Ye Hermits</i>	Pray for the Bull
<i>All Ye Brave</i>	Charge the Bull
<i>All Ye Dancers</i>	River Dance the Bull
<i>All Ye Alleluias</i>	Sound the Bull-Roarers.

Taurine Blood, Taurine Clay,  
Taurine Sky, Taurine Father,  
Taurobolium , Natalis Solis,

Primordial Bull	<i>Deliver Us From Bullying</i>
Ethereal Bull	<i>Deliver Us From Bullying.</i>

Amen.

NOTRE DAME

Hail Mary,  
Queen of heaven and aware of hell,  
Prayed to throughout the world,  
Throughout the ages,  
Mother of many names  
Mother of all tongues  
Mother of all things,  
Mother of a dead and resurrected son,  
The mother who keeps coming back,  
Our mother, mother earth, in the name of:  
IS, WAS and WILL BE, Amen.



Randhir Khare, award winning Indian Writer, Artist, Teacher,  
 Founding Contributor of Live Encounters Magazine. 2010 [www.randhirkhare.in](http://www.randhirkhare.in)



## Written In Sand

Sand doesn't go away,  
 It remains  
 Lining the body's folds,  
 Invisible waves carry  
 Life ground fine.

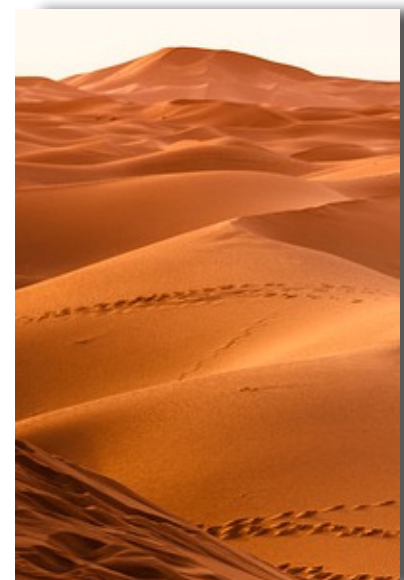
You can't tell the difference  
 Between souls  
 Stones and shells,  
 Dreams and spring-kissed carp  
 From wombs of lost rivers.

Sand doesn't go away,  
 It remains,  
 Here in this palm of grains  
 That scatter in the wind  
 You can hear the rustle  
 Of desert skirts  
 Trailing over rooftops  
 Of dying cities,  
 Washing them in camel bells.

## Burning

Trees burn with evening,  
 Silence settles in my ears  
 As sand does –  
 Folding and unfolding,  
 Pushing into me,  
 Deep in, clogging my lungs,  
 Encircling my heart –  
 An oasis of blood, meat, muscle  
 And the will to go on –  
 Peopling itself with camels,  
 Tents, travellers  
 And stories of forgotten times  
 Ripening like dates.

Between silence and the word  
 Settles the ash of burnt trees,  
 First snow –  
 I wait for morning thaw  
 And the feather breeze  
 Of light;  
 Till then – here,  
 These are my fingertips,  
 Take them, use them as you wish;  
 These are my arms,  
 My legs, my thighs,  
 My lips, my tongue -  
 Succulent as harvest time.



## Where Memory Goes To Die

*(For my grandmother Helen O'Brien Yates from Tipperary  
who sold her necklace of gold beads to feed hungry neighbours)*

Trees outside the window  
Shivered cold and stark  
And a rusty moon  
Fell flake by flake  
Into a neon dark.

Flowers in my hands  
Turned wax, melted into a stream,  
I closed my eyes  
And wandered  
Into a broken dream.

I walked from empty room to room  
With crystal water floors -  
Alive with eyes of fish  
That swirled  
And vanished through seven doors.

Then deep down in the basement  
Where memory goes to die -  
I saw you stringing  
A necklace of birds -  
Then tossed them away to fly.

The dust in the basement was silver,  
Someone was singing a psalm,  
I watched you dissolve  
Into darkness,  
Dampness licked at a palm.

## Finally

Yes we finally become  
What we never want to be -  
Like our mothers and fathers  
And their mothers and fathers,  
Fighting hard, struggling hard,  
Living hard,  
Wearing masks,  
Dreaming secret dreams  
And dying with our families  
Gathered around our beds  
Like clusters of fireflies  
On the edges of a pool faintly rippling  
Then still -  
Wondering what secret beings  
Lie hidden in our depths;

One summer when the water's dry  
The bed lies bare,  
Beneath -  
A dead frog a hook and line  
Some hopeful angler threw,  
A plastic toy,  
A headless ring slipped from the finger  
Of an aging bride,  
That's all.

The empty socket stares  
At the crow-beaked sun.





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

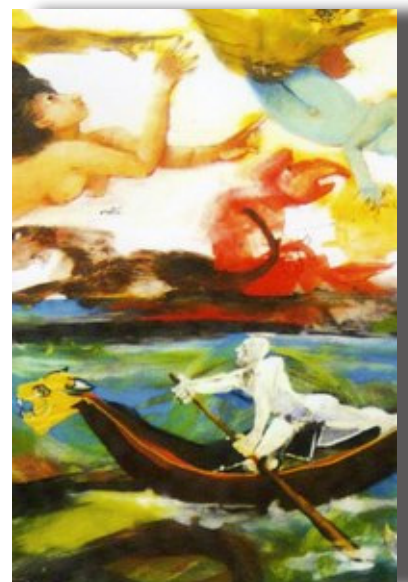


## Junior Infants and the Concept of Entropy

The Devil, Mrs. Hickey told the class,  
had a name that meant *The Prince of Light*. But  
because he had ideas of who he was,  
God saw a problem and that light was snuffed.  
Perhaps this subject roused inside my son  
a child's first rough grasp of infinity;  
he asked, "Dad, is God really Number One,  
and is the Devil in the Trinity?"  
I'd like to tell him that God is Not; or  
darkness is the instrument of light; nought  
is the origin of substance; error  
the catalyst of right. But fear I'm caught.  
When I was a kid ignorance was bliss;  
I haven't travelled far to get to this.

## Night

The thin moon squeezes its light  
into the darkness of the garden.  
Limp blades of montbretia-grass  
dream of the burning flowers  
that are yet to come.  
On the gravelled path snails expand  
from the muted trumpet of their shells.  
Earwigs unbed themselves  
from the tight petals of a rose.  
Flies enter the purple vaginas  
of digitalis. But she is aware  
of none of this, does not know  
the names of the flowers, cannot guess  
at the urgency of insects,  
or indeed that they are urgent,  
as she cowers on the wardrobe floor,  
her feet half out of the opened  
door, her father's drunken kiss  
still on her tongue.



Both poems from the collection *Petit Mal* (Revival Press, 2009)

## Daddy-Long-Legs

We're those lopsided puppets awkward  
in motion through the air. Our wings  
are fractured windows of pale glass looking  
out, looking in, to nothing. Our hinged  
and fragile stilts still work long after  
we've miscarried them. You'll see them  
kicking in a young child's hair. You call us  
Ghost Needles. See us hovering over  
the threshold of the porch. We're the tailors  
of the clothes you wear in your dreams,  
the ones that fade on you the very moment  
that morning's light breaches the join  
in the curtain. In the damaged rigging  
of spiders' webs we are discarded part,  
spent fuselage; the subtle remains of night.  
Then we rise again from the slumbering  
grass, linger lazily at your door, silently  
awaiting entry. We carry the dusk of autumn.

## The Battlefield's Premonition

A blond-haired boy in a suit of red sewn  
handkerchiefs stepped into sunlight and blazed  
like a fire of burning silk. When he laughed  
all the leaves spiralled down towards his crown  
and the grass ran with the wind through the hills.  
In his hand he had a salt-shaker which  
he shook at the golden sparrows that twitched  
amongst the fallen leaves. Grains of salt stilled  
the snails in their quilts of mulch, shrivelling  
them back to their ewers. Feathers of gold  
floated free in the trembling air, foretold  
that birds, even of gold and twittering  
gaily without a care, should learn to dread  
a blond-haired boy shaking salt, dressed in red.



*Both poems from the collection **The Offspring of the Moon** (Salmon Poetry, 2013)*



The following poems are from Micheal's published collection titled 'Peacekeeper' (Doire Press) and were inspired by his tours of duty as an Irish soldier with the United Nations Peacekeeping forces in Lebanon in the early 1990s and later with the peace enforcement mission to Kosovo in 2000.

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.



## Grapes of Wrath

It happens on a Thursday, just after 2pm,  
when ancient cultures and beliefs conspire  
and vultures spiral above a peacekeepers' camp,  
where cedars age slowly and the *Litani* River  
caresses the ground where Jesus turned water  
into wine, where artillery salvos rip the air  
on their long flight and bite deep, deep into  
that place of safety vaporizing its concrete  
walls and burning and blistering and tearing  
apart the mass of terrified flesh and innocent blood  
seeking refuge from the hate of man.

A soldier climbs from the rubble limbs  
and discarded faces, his eyes caked black with tears,  
his hands at arm's length clutching the newborn baby  
that looks like a headless doll.

*(Qana Massacre April 18th 1996)  
During 'Operation Grapes of Wrath' Israeli Defence Force artillery shells  
struck a Fijian UN compound in South Lebanon protecting 800 civilians  
fleeing the fighting, approximately 120 died.*

## Deliverance

### *South Lebanon*

In the orphanage a child  
cowers from cursing men outside.  
She wants to climb back into  
her dead mother's womb  
and hide inside its warm, soft,  
un-edged safety,  
where no explanation is needed  
or reason to hide under splintered  
staircases or run the gauntlet to basement  
bomb shelters, existing minute to minute  
with strangers until the dawn arrives with her  
deliverance and she refuses to be born.



© Michael J Whelan

## Broken Spade

### *Kosovo*

You lay in your frozen field, slack-jawed at how you  
came to be there, your mouth caked in last year's mud,  
limbs twisted about your body as if in the midst of some  
remembered dance or tempered at your rotting crops,  
bent over in disgust, yielding in the half light and startled  
at the cold - they have never felt.

This harvest, un-reaped and yet reaped upon you  
hides the stale shoe and crushed spectacles,  
the broken spade that hastily covered you in the soft  
clay you loved, now steeled hard against the sharp sky.

I imagine the fears of your kin as they searched the high  
golden horizon that summer day.  
They might have felt the distant calamity that took you  
following the bullet casings along the beaten track,  
and I wonder if they found you?  
Then I see the scars of cluster bombs and scorched  
stalks of your petrified labours and there, there in the shrapnel  
of this bitter harvest I behold your seed,  
torn apart but reaching out to the one who bore them.

## The Family

### *Kosovo*

There were nine of them.  
Eight children under the age of ten,  
existing- in the rough shell  
of a house with a hole in its roof  
and a young mother, whose  
sanity had run out.

I stood there in the bowel of  
her existence,  
slack-jawed in the middle  
of that frozen room,  
rifle under my arm.  
It was Christmas time at home.

How do I sort this out?  
No one can threaten hunger with bullets.

Tiny hands were in my pockets.  
I gave her my watch.



© Michael J Whelan



*Lady Cassie Peregrina* is a collection of poetry that deals with Cassie, our border collie we got from an ISPCA centre in Ireland. It is also the title of the collection due for publication in September 2016. I have already published a few Cassie poems in *Live Encounters*. These are the first two in the collection. The book is really just one poem in six sections – three allocated to Cassie and three to me. These two are written from Cassie's point of view.

Founding Contributor of Live Encounters. 2010  
[www.terry-mcdonagh.com](http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com)



## I am Cassie

It seems like only yesterday  
 a dark beast lurked  
 under my skin, but now  
 that I've found a family  
 I don't have to be afraid anymore.  
 They wait by the gate  
 looking puzzled when panic  
 hidden in my bones  
 twitches like forgotten history.

I am a dog – only a dog and know  
 that's what they want me to be.  
 I don't have to write, juggle words  
 or read fairy tales to young ones.

They're not scared of me – don't  
 have to be. I learned not to bark  
 in my previous home where I was  
 beaten for being dog and dumped.  
 Sometimes when I wake in a mess of sweat,  
 I imagine I have another name – not Cassie.  
 I try not to peep over my shoulder into the past.

## Mornings

Mornings about eleven we go walking,  
 languishing along lanes  
 saturated in marvels – mainly  
 but it can be testing when  
 walkers wallow in wind-chill-chat,  
 sources of sciatica, or central heating oil.

I try never to grumble, be contrary  
 or get above my station. Maybe  
 that's just me but, by the same token,  
 dreaming of rounding up sheep  
 is one thing.  
 Singing for supper – that's another.

During these challenging gossip-stops  
 I duck and secrete in the long grass  
 to avoid clashes with canine cousin and kin  
 who seem to know little of phantom fears.

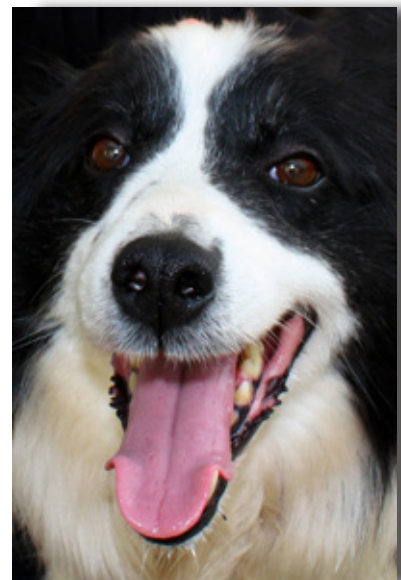
It makes me sick having to listen  
 to fellow-dogs rabbiting on  
 about table-leg pickings and crumbs  
 as their keepers pamper in tea and plenty.

Given all that, in a far distance  
 I still hear, taste and shrink  
 from the malice of gore  
 no creature should have to endure.

These days I indulge in the sound  
 of food on my plate – in  
 the flavour and twinkle of candles –  
 as I ride out to sleep.

I have a blanket  
 in one corner and a rug in another  
 where I can sink into miles of dog saga.

My head is up and trained on the horizon.  
 The past with its clanking chains is past.



© Terry McDonagh

Anton Floyd was born in Egypt of Irish, Maltese, English and French Lebanese parentage. Raised in Cyprus he lived through the Cypriot struggle for independence. With the outbreak of intercommunal hostilities in 1963, the family was evicted at gunpoint from their Nicosia home by Turkish Cypriot militiamen, making them refugees in a divided capital. He studied English at Trinity College Dublin and University College Cork. He has lived and worked in the Eastern Mediterranean. He is now teaching in Cork city and lives in West Cork. Poems published in The Stony Thursday Book and haiku in Shamrock. He won the IHS International Competition (2014), honourable mention (2015) and was runner up in the Snapshot Press (UK) Haiku Calendar 2016 Competition. He is a member of Irish Haiku Society. A number of his haiku are to be included in the forthcoming anthology of Irish haiku. His longer poems are looking for a home.



## at lough allua

at lough allua  
you dipped gently  
your hand into the lake  
to test the colour  
of the lapping water

it was the purest blue  
an intense ultramarine  
as if time had processed  
the world's store of lapis  
and had lavished this gift  
this mesmerising pigment  
remaking this place  
as all encompassing  
as the frescoes adorning  
the scrovegni chapel walls

whatever it was -  
the angle of the sun  
the blue vault of sky  
the surface tension  
rippling outwards  
its mercurial mirrors -

I was standing  
behind and above you  
holding your shoulders  
to keep you from slipping  
when it appeared  
your head radiated  
such pulses of light  
for all the world  
you more than ever  
were my own angel  
seen through giotto's eyes

## george towshend - in commemoration

today I was in castletownshend  
the wind cut deeply from the east  
it is cold and tastes of salt

the jetty is empty  
did you remember this place then  
you who took the measure of this wind

the sea is an agitation of waves  
a wary seafarer would seek for signs  
in the signature of water

in the dip and swirl of the seabirds  
pronouncing the currents of the air  
readiness is everything

patience fits easily in this place  
each grain of sand sifted by the insistent tide  
its shape is the headlands of castle haven

I breathe in - the air is cold  
it smells of sea-wrack and of distances  
it impresses like a waking conscience

so you who could wear with ease  
the expectations of your breed -  
the big house - the hail of reputation

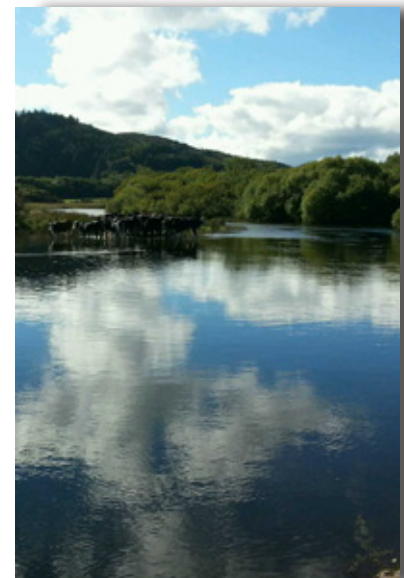
and the promptings of a charitable thought  
no doubt with all that dublin talk and politics  
how is it you left that easy peace?

perhaps the voice  
that whispered in your ear  
and set you voyaging

is here now compelling these winter seas  
I spread my arms into the wind  
and imagine your presence

what I hear belongs to you  
the syllables and sounds  
of elemental forces

it's as if in the hush and rushes of weather  
your keel passes and I see clearly  
how it slices through tradition



© Anton Floyd



## her wandering voice

*for máire ní chéileachair*

because her wandering voice  
reseeds the fields with songs

she sings múscaí into a dream  
her grace notes like silver waters  
sliding over dark stones

because she surrenders  
to time a yearning heart  
time returns to her breath  
the sean nós tuning  
to sing her people's hurt

because in her voice she gathers  
the cadence of her mother tongue

the lines she sings scale the old hungers  
clamped to the múscaí hillsides  
the lonely dream of love

and time through her  
surrenders to sorrow's art  
and her dream of home  
at her song's ending  
renews our yearning heart

## moon and the oak - 19 september

for Ali and Mehran Nakhjavani

that oak tree  
cradled by time  
harboured under the lee  
of the sloping hill  
runs rings round  
the span of human lives

our mothers who  
so admired that tree  
so much a part of us  
have since died  
and others too  
we have known and loved

yet there it stands  
in the field  
sparring the september winds  
a leafy canopy turning gold  
an earthly twin mirroring  
the rising equinoctial moon

from here it looks  
to be a laden carrack  
hankering  
to put to sea  
to pilot the heavens  
with her sister the moon

perhaps it is we  
who are restless  
mariners who yearn again  
to chart a course  
through a sea of storms  
to find tranquility



© Anton Floyd

## kites nicosia 1962

*im dizzy gillespie*

**i**  
they come these sister memories

a field of asphodels  
spreading a patina  
on the copper ground

and the coptic winds  
the el hossum and el kabira  
trumpeting the spring

a clarion call for us boys  
to pitch ourselves skywards  
in an improvisation of kites

to scale the scudding air  
a handful of bamboo canes  
split with hammer and knife

hemp string to bind them  
plain flour and water for glue  
and a paper sail for flight

the skin taut as a snare drum  
ad libbing to the tugs of air  
and then as if on an upbeat

the sky fills with kites  
wafer-thin moons  
a sudden flotilla

a jazz of sails and rigging  
trimmed in the reach  
of beckoning winds

I loved the haul and strain  
the soaring climb  
on the arc of a single line

the imprint and burn  
on the pads of my fingers  
at each turn of the riffing kite

and when the wind drops  
the dizzy tumble and spin  
the rush to reel the slack line in

then to feel again the wind's pull  
like a restive thoroughbred  
racing on and off the bridle

only when the line's played out  
and the kite sits a tethered god  
a detached stillness

in the streaming air  
above the minarets and spires  
was it time to offer up a prayer

a card notched like a key hole  
hooked onto the steady line  
is coaxed upwards to the kite

my arms levering to and fro  
gestures of suplication  
flex to the will of the wind

**ii**  
freed from the silt of the world  
its dark enclosure  
by ptolemy his geographic guide

berlinghieri\* the florentine said  
he was lifted skywards  
the odyssey lasted seven days

*this is a view nothing can hide  
look right and then look left  
ptolemy said and direct your gaze*

*over the curving earth  
see people beyond count  
the places you can measure*

above ptolemy's known world  
in the berlinghieri atlas  
there are windheads in the skies

their cheeks are pouched like globes  
trumpeting a fanfare  
at the wonders of the earth below

**iii**  
now I imagine  
every high flying kite  
mastering the winds

to be john birks dizzy gillespie  
bebopping round the world  
his skywards pointing trumpet

reaching for the high note  
a prayer for the heyday  
a world without passports\*

\* Francesco Berlinghieri's  
*Geographia* (Florence, 1482)

\*Three Wishes  
*An Intimate Look at Jazz Greats*  
Pannonica de Koenigswarter



© Anton Floyd



Brian Kirk is a poet from Clondalkin in Dublin. His poetry has been published widely in journals and anthologies. He won the Jonathan Swift Poetry Award in 2014, the Bailieborough Poetry Prize in 2015 and the Galway RCC Poetry Award in 2016. He was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions Series in 2013 and was highly commended in the Patrick Kavanagh Award in 2014 and 2015. His first collection is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry in early 2017. He is a member of the Hibernian Writers Workshop and he blogs at [www.briankirkwriter.com](http://www.briankirkwriter.com)



## First Born

My father was foolish, my mother keen.  
I was born into a deprivation  
that was their choice, not mine.  
I did not ask to exist; it was a mistake,  
the spit of an unsheathed serpent,  
rotten fruit of an unhappy union.

My brother is younger than me,  
but regarded more highly because  
of his nature. I am given to dark thoughts  
or they were given to me – either way,  
I'm not one to kowtow, not like him,  
who is shallow, sanctimonious.

I would have my inheritance,  
but I know that I can't alter fate,  
can't change what I am.  
We are products of greed and ambition,  
exposing an innocent yearning  
for things we lost before we were born.

My life is a drudge with the heat of the sun  
on my back, the burnt taste of dust  
in my mouth. I don't blame my parents,  
but resent what I have become:  
the black sheep, the bad son, the one cursed  
by all men for things I haven't yet done.

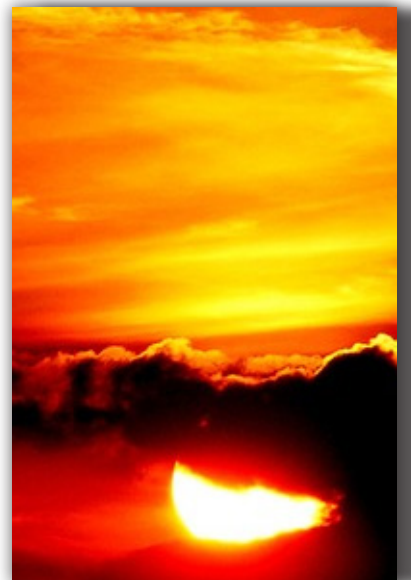
## Resurrection

Once a year  
we hold back time  
to brighten the morning,  
we succumb to night  
in the afternoon  
at a price.

The sun slides  
from the sky,  
plays dead in twilight,  
and for a moment we are  
mute savages again,  
doubting reason.

We tend to flickering  
gods and demons,  
afraid of our own shadows  
hunched and awful  
stalking us all winter.  
We sustain the body

with roasted meat  
and sticky sweets,  
the soul with stories  
half-hoped or half-believed in;  
promises of new life  
when the sun comes up.



## Goldfish Autobiography

I believe there is a way to go  
 an inverted map delineating  
 the toponymy and topography of lies  
 that lead to truth.  
 I used to say  
 someday I'll write a poem that says it all  
 but plain.  
 I'm not sure what I meant by that  
 not sure who I was back then  
 no more than I am now  
 so I'll scrape about the edges of the truth.  
 Where to begin this time?  
 Gormless, lobotomised, half-drunk, foolish –  
 that's me beside the looker in pale pink.  
 Absurd how easy I can blot her out  
 and focus on my death-pale skin  
 and frosted hair, still pitifully vain  
 (I only see myself in photos now)  
 mind measuring the time it took to get from there to here.  
 I can't go back, I think, to what I was  
 even if I could be sure of who I am or was or...  
 never mind.  
 Better to start again from scratch  
 (I think this must be what I meant by plain)  
 and take the direct route.  
 It has to do with time and age  
 and other things I never understood  
 and how that understanding comes  
 in time with age and waste and sorrow  
 fear also:  
 foul abstractions piled up at my door.

Better to be the virgin page  
 or the pen perhaps the ink  
 or even the empty cartridge  
 discarded by the warm remains  
 than be the owner of the hand  
 that's guided by a mind  
 that does not know itself.  
 I believe there is a way to go.  
 I used to say  
 someday I'll write a poem that says it all  
 but plain.

## Listening in the Dark

The secret lover counts the rising cost  
 of painful nights spent listening in the dark  
 for a phone to ring. Hours of life are lost  
 while he waits for the call to embark  
 on the life he fantasized; doubt sneaks  
 into his shoes each morning when he wakes.  
 He walks the floor in pain while his love sleeps,  
 indifferent so it seems. His body aches  
 for the woman who does not lie with him,  
 shamed that he cannot love her every day,  
 that her apparent love is just a whim  
 and he a toy that soon is thrown away.  
 The secret lover listens in the dark,  
 red-eyed, while cars drive by and stray dogs bark.



© Brian Kirk



Michael Durack grew up on a farm near Birdhill in County Tipperary. He was a founder member of Killaloe Writers Group and his poetry has been published in a wide range of literary journals in Ireland and abroad, as well as airing on local and national radio. He is the author of a chapbook, *Nothing To Write Home About* (Derg House), a comic narrative in verse, *A Hairy Tale Of Clare* (East Clare Telecottage) and a memoir in prose and poems, *Saved To Memory: Lost To View* (Limerick Writers Centre.) He has collaborated with his brother, Austin on a programme of poetry and music, and together they have produced two albums, *The Secret Chord* (2013) and *Going Gone* (2015.)

<https://www.facebook.com/michael.durack>



## Our Lady Of The Wayside

In Our Lady of the Wayside  
we donned surplices and black soutanes,  
and amid the candles, water and wine  
learned the altar-server's trade,  
mumbling the *confiteor* and *ad Deum*  
*qui laetificat iuventutem meam*;  
while from the altar Father Mul  
lectured his *dear people*,  
ranged supine in the chapel,  
on the obscenities of rock 'n' roll.  
First Fridays, requiems,  
at Yuletide and Eastertide,  
through plainchant and dulcet hymn,  
we knelt, demure and sanctified,  
like shepherds come to Bethlehem,  
in Our Lady of the Wayside.

At Birdhill National School we gathered  
from village, cottage and farm yard,  
out of Annaholty and Ballyard,  
to sit at desks, engaged or bothered  
by inkwells, out-back latrines,  
bold corners, plasticine.  
In The Master's room Mikey Maher  
taught the *aimsir láithreach*  
and the song *Beidh Aonach Amárach*  
to kids unpraised, unflattered  
by his uncompromising ferule:  
labelled *pups of blazes*, qualified  
only to ruin his *fine school*,  
more often offside than onside,  
destined for the fate of the fool,  
To fall by the wayside.

A white Ford Anglia ( the very thing)  
to take us to Jetland or Dromkeen  
to chat up Marys and Josephines  
and score (maybe) a one-night fling  
after the noise and foetid swelter,  
in the dance floor's helter-skelter.  
Once we finessed The Seapoint out west  
on a whim (call it idiotic  
or a brave leap towards the exotic),  
all dickied out in our Sunday best.  
Cruising home in the wee, small  
hours, tired, preoccupied,  
the White Machine shot cannonball  
off-track, undignified,  
into a Kilcolgan dry stone wall,  
miles from Our Lady of the Wayside.

But we survived, being survivors,  
progressed to gainful employments  
and post-adolescent enjoyments,  
exchanging youth's restless fevers  
for gravitas, acquired wives  
and children who'd reshape our lives.  
In the course of our growing up  
we came to resemble the philosopher  
who having travelled far  
must wait for his soul to catch up.  
So, balanced between God and Mammon  
in the slipstream of impatient time and tide  
we hung our hats by lordly Shannon  
and counted ourselves satisfied  
to substitute St Lua and St Flannan  
for Our Lady of the Wayside.

Our *aimsir láithreach's aimsir chaite*  
now, our surplices surplus to require-  
ments, our school mates in retire-  
ment, grandchildren installed in what you  
might call top-of-the-range,  
state-of-the-art schools. All changed  
from chalk sticks to data projectors,  
from alphabetics to phonetics  
tag and chase replaced by gymnastics,  
ex-dunces deemed X-Factor.  
Meanwhile, in the deep wells  
where our long memories reside  
we savour chancel incense smells,  
and heavenly airs, our hearing applied  
to choir song and steeple bells  
echoing from Our Lady of the Wayside.



© Michael Durack

## Reno

We fasted and abstained, not free to enjoy  
the pleasures of a dancehall during Lent;  
played cards (Progressive 45) or went  
to picture shows in Lyric or Savoy,  
or variety concerts down Chapel Lanes,  
haunted by fiddles and accordions,  
or one-act plays and sketches badly done  
that bored our pants off, numbed our brains;  
while we hankered for a blast of pop or soul,  
bop-showaddy-waddy, rock 'n roll.

Once in a had-been church, turned parish hall  
the curtains opened on The Reno 5;  
speakers and amps gone into overdrive;  
the room vibrating to the rise and fall  
of Rodgers's drums, Collins's rocky Fender,  
Austin's bass threatening to walk *these boots*  
*all over you* and Barry's staccato blitz  
of *Buck's Polka*, tearing the air asunder;  
with centre stage Mulcahy, dark and lean,  
Joe Dolan in another guise or Derek Dean.

The evening of my final day at school:  
the Reno boys in heat-haze, Cooleen Cross,  
lined up for a photo shoot against the bus;  
then on to Pallasgreen, ramshackle hall  
(converted church again), the band upstairs  
while twisting and shaking on the dancehall floor  
I eyed up girls from Oola and Cappamore,  
oblivious of my future, immune to cares.  
*The Summer of Love*, the music had my soul,  
and The Reno from the loft played Rock 'n' Roll.

## Canada

We had a Canada of our own,  
Without St. Lawrence Seaway, Great Bear Lake;  
But turloughs swam in rushy hollows  
And, hugging the ditches, bogwater streams.

We had our private Canada  
Without Labrador current, Chinook wind:  
Ours was a stretch of road - one mile -  
From Carrigeen to Cooleen.

We had our very own Canada,  
Shorn of its middle a (we called it Can'da),  
Without Maritime Provinces, Pacific Rail,  
But horse hooves clattered under arching trees.

We had our local Canada  
Without Prairies, Yukon, Hudson Bay;  
But mowers, rakes and tumbling jacks  
Clattered and bucked through scented meadows.

We had our micro Canada,  
Without British, French, Métis, Inuit;  
But Wixteds, Ryans, Kennas and Hewitts  
Raised tousled, grassy pyramids to the blue.

No maple flag, no Rocky range,  
No Winnipeg, Vancouver, Montreal;  
But out of a sugar-sprinkled lampblack sky  
My first, amazing shooting star, in Canada.



© Michael Durack



Mike Gallagher was born on Achill Island and worked in London for forty years before retiring to Kerry. His prose, poetry, haiku and songs have been published worldwide. His writing has been translated into Croatian, Japanese, Dutch, German and Chinese. He won the Michael Hartnett Viva Voce competition in 2010 and 2016; he was shortlisted for the Hennessy Award in 2011 and won the Desmond O'Grady International Poetry Contest in 2012. His collection *Stick on Stone* was published by Revival Press in 2013.



## Willow Warbler

A busy bobbing, scarce noted, half heeded,  
mid-distant in the dahlia bed; a wagtail,  
donning camouflage of cast-out ash,  
a greyer rouge, perhaps? Next day I grew  
curious, questioned its persistence,  
reached for binoculars, marked the  
primrose yellow of a willow warbler.

She scratched, not ash but hoovered thrash,  
had found, indeed, therein, a vein  
rich in moulted terrier hair; ideal  
for her hidden lair by Smerlagh's stream.  
I focused in; her nib agape  
with glinting fibres, no tangled tousle here,  
but, aligned and paralleled, tanned sheaves  
drawn and stranded by beak alone.

A Kalahari visitor, alights, by chance,  
on Kerry's far-off field; affirms  
awesome Nature's happy happenstance

## The Lost Field

Abandoned this ten years, a garden  
that once fed a dozen, its gap  
clogged by hawthorn, cluttered by briar.  
I hacked and chopped and slashed  
for an hour or more, heedless  
of blood and scratch and gash, blind  
to blister and tear and thorn, eager  
as Livingstone – a venturesome child,  
breathless in pursuit of the new.  
And now, with final slash of hook  
the lost field is revealed,  
its grasses regenerated, again  
and again, matted and tangled  
and layered; its blackberry strings  
stitched through wild whitethorn,  
holding in, keeping out. A pheasant  
explodes from her lair,  
cracks a decade's silence  
and guides the eye to new horizons.



© Mike Gallagher

## Dissonance

A host of starlings  
 Converge on Casey's Field.  
 The laurel, the holly,  
 Telephone wires shimmer  
 In speckled luminance.  
 From the whitethorn hedge  
 Emerge settled tribes.  
 Robins, thrushes, blackbirds  
 Scurry en masse  
 To bare-branched battlements.  
 Across Derra's scrawny bog  
 Echo the taunts, the gibes,  
 The mocking mimicry:  
 'Tis mine! It's not! 'Tis mine! It's not!

I retreat indoors to scenes  
 From Mesopotamia and Iraq;  
 Across its ditches and deserts  
 Re-echo the taunts, the gibes,  
 The mocking mimicry:  
 'It's mine! 'Tis not! It's mine! 'Tis not!

Ancient chants beguile  
 The common instinct  
 Of bird and man;  
 Our past, once more, becomes our present,  
 But man learns nothing:  
 There is no death in Derra.

## Fern

Dromáda,  
 Day of the Wren.  
 I pick a hart's- tongue fern  
 On its leaf are hieroglyphs  
 Dark brown gnarls that bear  
 A message more ancient  
 Than script or scripture  
 Than language or dialect  
 Than ogham or rune.  
 Etched before  
 Stone-age drawings  
 Before Torah or Toath  
 Before religion or writing  
 Before Greece or Rome  
 Before philosophy  
 Before theology.  
 Before Adam.  
 It tells of  
 Survival, of renewal  
 Of harmony, of balance  
 Of beauty, of tolerance.  
 Writ by nature,  
 It asks  
 When will Man  
 Learn to read?



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David Morgan is a London based journalist with interests in politics, human rights, international relations, history and cultural issues. He has been working in journalism as an editor and writer for three decades after he studied literature and history at university. He has edited several titles from the Socialist History Society (SHS) of which he is the Secretary. He writes regularly for the SHS Newsletter, occasionally for the Morning Star newspaper and for a range of other online and printed publications. <https://www.facebook.com/david.morgan.1232760?pnref=lhc.friends>



## The Meaning of Freedom

Like that girl in the old Bond movie, not 'Dr No',  
Painted in gold from top to toe  
The British wage slave dreams of an all-over tan  
Bronzed every woman and bronzed every man  
Sweating their daily shift on the factory floor  
(Poetic license as such factories are no more)  
Braving intermittent rain and hazards more  
What means freedom to the downtrodden poor?  
A dream that others might find to be deplored  
The burden of toil finally lifted from their backs  
Now flat on their backs in some distant land  
Smart phone in hand, towel spread out on the sand  
Is this their Utopia and ambition bold  
To escape the biting cold when they grow old?  
Sipping iced cocktails on a golden beach  
For most that dream remains far out of reach  
Their search for freedom an elusive quest  
A desperate search for a place of rest  
While in the grip of such pathetic illusions  
Their existence remains mired in profound confusions  
They need to dream so need we even ask  
Why such cartoon dreams persist and last

My own dream of freedom greatly differs  
I'd be a bird soaring up high above rivers  
Well above Grosvenor Square somewhere  
Leaving distinctive messages here and there  
While down below Ronnie Reagan stands erect  
Master of the universe, a stare so circumspect  
Lording it over all that he surveys  
Luxury real estate catches the gaze  
Snapped up by drug barons and tyrants' whores  
Bought with laundered cash we can but infer  
It's a scene that's so profoundly unfair  
Beneficiaries of the neo-liberal dream  
That's what Ronnie Reagan brought into being  
Now seven feet tall with his ramrod back  
Such proud dignity that the real guy lacked  
I'd land squarely on his stiff bronze hair  
Then let the world know I'd been perching up there.  
The bird tastes a freedom of which man merely dreams  
But we can all now be master of our universe, it seems  
Sadly in our dreams, only in our dreams  
And all the while the world burns and screams  
At least the birds get to live out their own dreams



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# Live encounters

POETRY

Celebrating six years 2010 - 2015  
Free online magazine from village earth  
June 2016



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas