



# Live encounters

POETRY

Celebrating six years 2010 - 2015

Free online magazine from village earth

March 2016

Inaugural Issue Guest Editorial  
**TERRY MCDONAGH**  
Irish Poet, Playwright, Writer



**Support Live Encounters.  
Donate Now and keep the Magazine alive in 2016!**

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.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount that you feel you want to give for this just cause.

**BANK DETAILS****Sarita Kaul****A/C : 0148748640****Swift Code : BNINIDJAXXX****PT Bank Negara Indonesia ( Persero ) Tbk****Kantor Cabang Utama Denpasar****Jl. Gajah Mada****Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia****Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om****[markulyseas@liveencounters.net](mailto:markulyseas@liveencounters.net)**

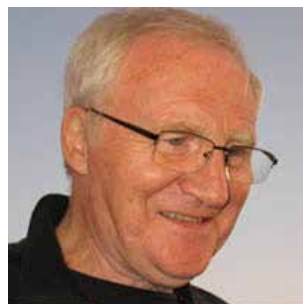
**All articles and photographs are the copyright of [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net) and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net). Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.**

Cover photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



# CONTRIBUTORS

Click on title of article to go to page



## Live Encounters Allows us a New Platform

**Terry McDonagh**, Founding Member of Live Encounters

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)



## In Prague Before The Velvet Revolution

**Randhir Khare**, Founding Member of Live Encounters

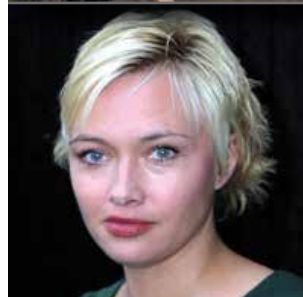
Khare is an award winning author of twenty one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation and poetry. Executive Editor of Heritage India, the International Culture Journal, a Director of The Rewachand Bhojwani Academy and Visiting Professor to the Dept Of English, Pune University. Recently he was given 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)



## Selected Poems

**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](http://www.nparvaz.wix.com)



## Selected Poems

**Ingrid Storholmen**

Storholmen was born in Verdal, Norway in 1976. She has been studying Literature at the University of Bergen, and spent one year at a Creative writing school. She was for five years writer in residents at "Adrianstua", a writers house in Trondheim and started Trondheim International Literature Festival while living there, and also founded the Literature magazine LUJ together with two colleagues. She has published 6 books: The low of the Poacher, 2001. Shamespeasch. Graceland 2005. Siri's book, 2007. The voices of Chernobyl 2009, in English, 2012, Harper Collins, India, and in Hindi, 2014, Vani Prakashan, among others.



## Alchemy

**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.)



## Poems on War and Peace

**Greta Sykes**

The poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of the London Voices Poetry Group and also produces art work for them. One of her own volumes entitled *The Intimacy of the Universe* focuses on the environment. She is a member of the Exiled Writers Ink group. She is a leading member of the Socialist History Society and organises joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Café. Greta is a trained child psychologist and has taught at University College London, where she is now an associate researcher. The present focus of her research is women's emancipation and antiquity.

## Celebrating 6 years 2010-2015



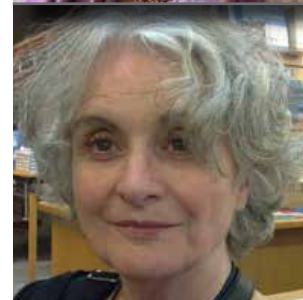
POETRY  
MARCH 2016



## The Other Side of Longing

**Geraldine Mills**

Geraldine Mills has published three collections of short stories and four collections of poetry. She has been awarded many prizes and bursaries including the Hennessy/Tribune New Irish Writer Award, two Arts Council Bursaries and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. Her fiction and poetry is taught in universities in Connecticut, U.S.A. She is a tutor with NUI Galway and an online mentor with Creative Writing Ink. Her first children's novel titled *Gold* is forthcoming from Little Island in 2016. [www.geraldinemills.com](http://www.geraldinemills.com)



## Sharp Memories

**Deborah Lavin**

Deborah Lavin is an active member of London Voices and the Socialist History Society, which has published her *Bradlaugh Contra Marx, the Radicalism vs. Socialism in the First International*. She was an actress and has written plays, including *The Body Trade* (Stukke Theatre, Berlin and Grenzlandtheatre, Aachen) and *Happy Families* (Studio-Life Theatre and Atelier Theatre, Tokyo). She is presently writing the first full length biography of the miscreant Dr Edward Aveling, but she is available for chairing, talking and reading out her poetry.



## Urban Anxieties

**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.



## It will come

**Deirdre Grimes**

Deirdre Grimes is a graduate of Limerick school of art and design and a mother. Her work includes poetry and painting and some sculpture. Her poetry has been published nationally and internationally in many journals including Crannog, The Creel, Electric Acorn and Haiku Harvest. Her first collection *The chaos within* is due out in April 2016. [www.facebook.com/deidregrimes](https://www.facebook.com/deidregrimes)



## Thinking in Fragments

**Joachim Matschoss**

Joachim Matschoss was born in Germany and now lives in Melbourne/Australia. He is a playwright, poet and Theatre-maker. His Theatre Company, 'Backyard Theatre Ensemble (BYTE)' presents diverse pieces of theatre all across Melbourne/Australia and internationally, both Youth Arts and for adults. Joachim has created theatre in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, India, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, HongKong, Hungary, Taiwan, Switzerland and China. Joachim's poetry is published in Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA. [www.byteensemble.com](http://www.byteensemble.com)



## Beggar of the World

**David Almaleck Wolinsky**

Wolinsky struggles and thrives in central Maryland with his wife, two very old mothers, and a rocky hillside. He also helps care for 3 non-biological grandchildren. In between he writes and listens to music exorbitantly, and shows up to help with peace and climate work. He adopted 'Almaleck' to honor his Jewish grandmother and Al-Andalus (Muslim-ruled Spain). His first book *The Crane is Flying* will be published by Dos Madres Press in 2016.



FOUNDING CONTRIBUTOR OF LIVE ENCOUNTERS. 2010



TERRY MCDONAGH

CELEBRATED IRISH POET, PLAYWRIGHT, WRITER

## Live Encounters Allows us a New Platform

In its six years, Live Encounters has never been mainstream. It has been political, social, a little economic and always critical and left of centre. This time, it's delving into the rarefied world of poetry which might seem a little strange at first, but, on second thoughts, it makes sense. The Irish poet, Patrick Kavanagh said, *Poetry made me a sort of outcast and I became abnormally normal*. Live Encounters is *abnormally normal* – it deals with issues that really matter – with people who look to mystery and strange words beyond the *everyday* for guidance. Michael Longley said, *if I knew where poetry came from, I'd go there*.

The story of poetry in its many versions is at its best in life-affirming moments such as birth, romance and in the many facets of coming and going. It is a celebration of everyday miracles. It blossoms in epic journeys, heroic battles, ancestral memories and in character, narrative and landscape. It lives and breathes in stingy uncles and inheritance tax; in black wind and refugees struggling to be polite in a new language. I remember hanging on to every morsel when my friend's grandfather told tall tales of a runaway nun in the company of happy liars singing hymns of romance to benign demons.

Poetry doesn't always make sense but it is uplifting, important, remarkable and unremarkable. It needs poets and the wisdom of a child to keep it vibrant and tuned to the sun's golden rays pouring down on innocent figures. It takes us through days, hardship, weeks, seasons, mixed parties and first nights. But it needs a platform if its journey has any chance of reaching the colourful reality of the dreams hidden between lines. Such is poetry.

Just look at The Divine Comedy. Under the guidance of Virgil, Dante took us on a journey into layers of underworld. Yeats, in the face of his new, unaccustomed Ireland, sought identification and spiritual refuge in the dreams of a rich life among artisans in Constantinople. Dylan Thomas will remain immortal in his tribute to his dead father in *Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night*.

© Terry McDonagh

2016 POETRY march © www.liveencounters.net



My own poetic journey has taken me on journeys to at least twenty-five countries but the real journey has taken place in my mind. It has been a contemplation on the nature of what it means to be human; to be an observer. One evening, with an hour to spare at the main station in Berlin, I watched a man, looking troubled and seemingly lost in his own world. (*This poem was recently shortlisted for the Gregory O'Donoghue poetry prize*).

## From a Hauptbahnhof Café in Berlin

Here in a *Hauptbahnhof* café in Berlin, a tall bony man  
struggles at being present with *Becks und Bismarck Herring*.

He's not a drunk, more a like man cut off from fantasy,  
waiting for a train to elsewhere or a threadbare nowhere.

Did he ever stroke a cat or run away from loyalty?  
His dark glasses rest like temple veils covering up.

If he's a dreamer, I must forgive but his mouth  
seems lost to lonely hearts research in a single room.

Perhaps he's a dark horse with a mighty *Bundestag* wife  
choking on words that are almost her own and

he's a pale shadow of a ballet dancer retreating  
to a pale other world or his wife's a pilgrim mother

in a Berlin flat waiting for pallid widowhood.  
She texts her dark daughter – recently made flesh

and wearing that grim grin: *I've got a lover,  
my prince in training for perpetual isolation*.

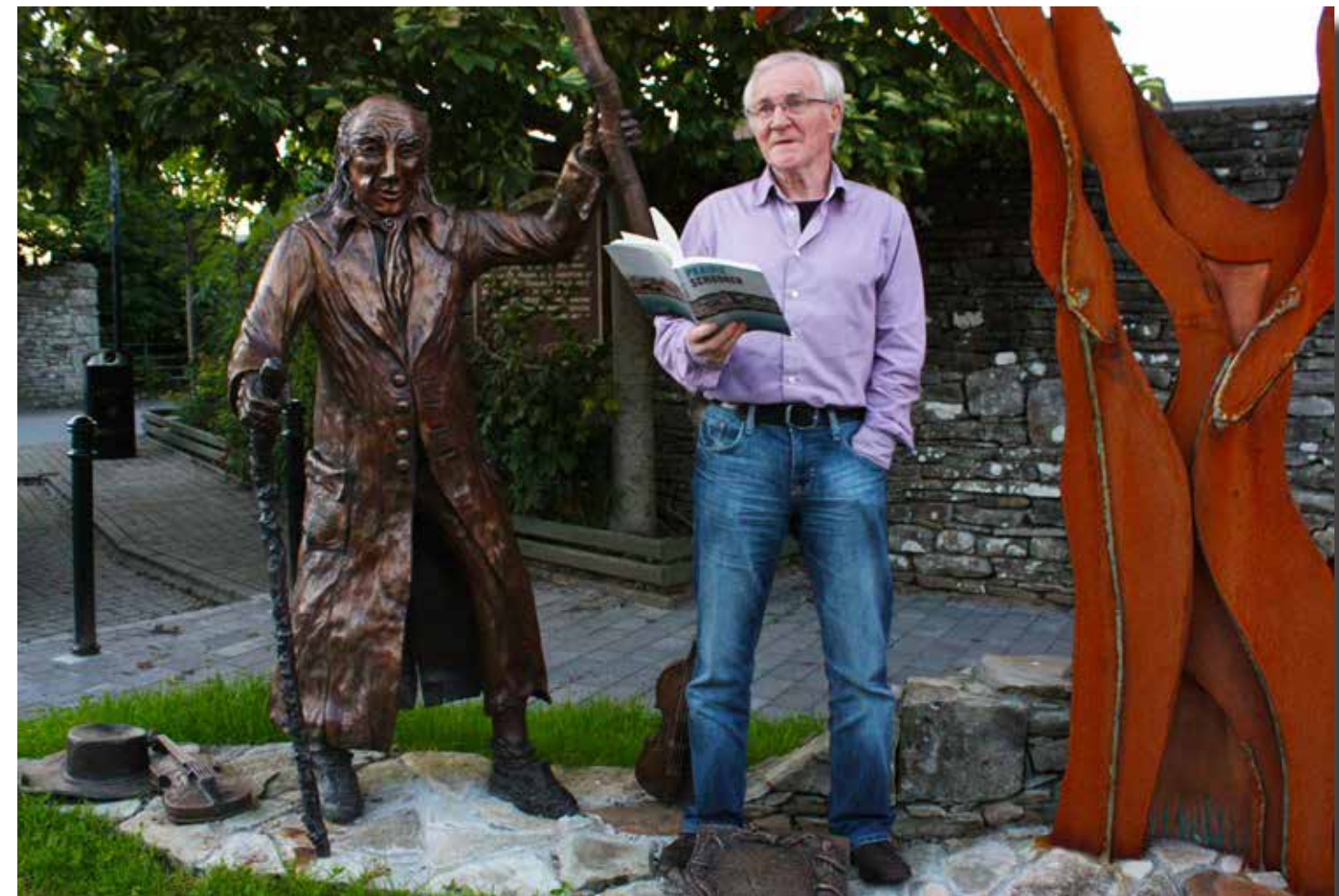
Her husband will be on a train to their address.  
When one door closes, abstinence takes over.

He has credit card bonus points offering tips  
on how to save a heart-never-to-die-young

Their daughter is recording the perfect sound  
of constant silence – reconciled to hurt well done.

All three are absorbed in giving little out but  
they cannot blame Berlin for the why and the where.

That man over there wearing the widow's face  
set me thinking in a *Hauptbahnhof* café in Berlin.



And, now, thanks to *Live Encounters*, we can rejoice in the opportunity to send our work on a journey to a broader audience. Let's stand on any old rooftop and shout out cool things to each other. Perhaps one day we will get a glimpse of *where poetry comes from*. This is a unique chance to go there.

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



## Miroslav, The Music Maker

*After meeting him in a café in Bratislava*

Miro plays his music  
 To a sky that rains all day,  
 He plays his music to a crowd,  
 But they walk away.

I remember, my friend,  
 The evening and the café,  
 Your torrent of words,  
 Your helplessness;

I watched you as you spoke  
 And felt your hurt,  
 The room became a cell,  
 I heard your chains,  
 Rattling till my stomach wrenched.

Dreamer, lover, music-maker, man,  
 You wring each melody  
 Out of a shrinking heart  
 That will not die.

Miro plays his music  
 To a sky that rains all day,  
 He plays his music to a crowd,  
 But they walk away.

## In-Between

*For the unofficial poets of the former Czechoslovakia*

What does it feel like to be in-between?  
 What does it mean?  
 Feet cut by the blade you walk on,  
 Eyes strained by the dark between,  
 What does it mean?

The world cut into pieces,  
 You swim in the void between  
 What does it mean?  
 Chunks floating out,  
 You drowning between.

Dear friend, dear dreamer, dear in-between,  
 Watching this age collapse and crumble  
 Around you like dried mud,  
 Time's sparrows worm-searching;  
 What does it mean?

Lonely friend in a world of sides,  
 Groping the inner depth, the tunnel deep,  
 A pin-point light, a single star,  
 Waiting for your aching eyes to close,  
 What does it mean to be in-between?





## Rain Over Prague

City, I watch rain moving across  
 Streets and rooftops –  
 Wild white horses of freedom,  
 Hooves drumming the beat of hearts,  
 Cool underbellies scraping spires,  
 Tangled mane sweeping bells till they ring...  
 And in their tumultuous joy  
 I feel your soul for once burst out  
 And cut this afternoon grey  
 Till from its womb the blue shows through.

Suddenly they are gone,  
 Damp hoof-prints dry and vanish,  
 Bells are silent  
 And in the evening light  
 Melancholy makes magic in the streets;  
 The Blatava flows into the distance,  
 Far away, sadness remains.

City of spires and bells,  
 City of Nezval, poet with fingers  
 Of rain; city of time held still  
 Under the aching blue sky;  
 Prague, when will your people  
 Saddle the white horses of rain  
 And ring in the age of bells?  
 When will lovers be winners?

## The Witness

*Standing on Charles Bridge, Prague*

Flowing under the bridges of Prague,  
 Blatava, you go on;  
 Dream-filled, death-filled,  
 Floating with geese and swans,  
 Ducks carrying the faraway fragrance  
 Of wilderness, of peaceful lakes  
 In peaceful lands  
 Where dreamers gather wild flowers,  
 And evening as gentle as Sabbath  
 Drops like water on shells of ears.

River, you have witnessed  
 The first man, the first spade,  
 The first sheaf of grain,  
 The first spear, the first shield,  
 The first love, the first hate;  
 River, you saw bridges and castles built,  
 You saw the coming and going of history;  
 You have witnessed and you are silent.

Speak to me of the severed tongue,  
 Of the man with no hands,  
 Of the silent music makers,  
 Of real gods who live in your real homes,  
 Of the real dream, of the real song.

Speak to me in the language of Holan  
 And the condemned Bartusek,  
 Speak to me in simple words,  
 Words that aren't trapped in indifference...  
 Those that are full-fleshed and truthful.

Blatava, flowing under the bridges of Prague,  
 Witness of history, speak.





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. After her release in 1990, Nasrin resumed her activities and once again she found herself being followed by Islamic guards. She realised she could no longer stay in Iran and she fled here to England, where she claimed asylum in 1993. Nasrin's prison memoir was published in Farsi in 2002. A summary of her memoir was published in Feminist Review (number 73) in 2003; and it was published in Italian in 2006 by Effedue Edizioni. Nasrin's stories appeared in Exiled Writers Ink, and two of her poems were published in Over Land, Over Sea, Poems for those seeking refuge, published by Five Leaves, in 2015. <http://nparvaz.wix.com/nasrinparvaz>

## Love

You were the finest man I'd ever known  
but I was in love with someone else.  
That day you told me you loved me  
my heart sank  
I stayed silent, I felt miserable.

How did I know  
two days later you would be arrested  
for organising workers?  
And in a month the crack of gunfire  
would stop your loving heart?

How could you know  
thirty years on  
in my mind's eye  
you're still the same fine young man  
being shot again and again?

I see you in that final moment endlessly.

## Farewell in spring

They came to his wedding  
to ask him to come with them to help with their enquiries.

He said farewell to each of his guests.

Kissing his bride  
he said, 'Be brave. Don't cry.'

Then they took him away.  
'He'll be back in two hours,' they said.

The guests stayed with the bride  
waiting.  
The sun set and night came  
but he didn't come back.

Next day  
his name was on the list  
of the executed in the daily *information*.



The Unwanted Grave – a prison memoir in Farsi

© Nasrin Parvaz



## “A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing”

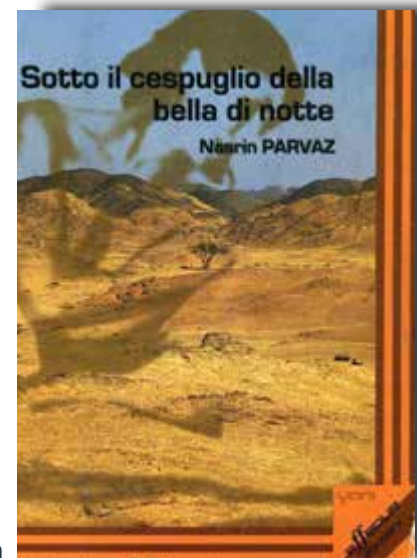
You could say Chelsea Manning is lucky  
to be in solitary confinement.

Asghar Pirzadeh solved the mystery  
of why half the people in Ardabil  
were getting cancer.  
The local water  
had been contaminated and was radioactive.

His mutilated body was found soon afterwards.

## Peace treaty

I called my mother  
she was happy like a young girl  
pleased about the treaty  
believing America wouldn't attack Iran  
and people wouldn't be maimed and killed  
and the country wouldn't be ruined like Iraq.  
Even though she was very happy, she was also upset  
about the husband of a poor cleaning woman she knew  
her husband's right hand  
and left leg had been amputated  
on the same day  
the peace treaty  
was signed.  
He had been caught  
stealing food.



The Unwanted Grave – a prison memoir in Italian



Ingrid Storholmen was born in Verdal, Norway, on 22 May 1976. She studied literature at the University of Bergen, and spent one year at a creative writing school. She was the literature editor of Morgenbladet, a culture newspaper in Norway. For five years, she was the writer-in-residence at ‘Adrianstua’, a writer’s house in Trondheim. She started the Trondheim International Literature Festival during her stay there, and also founded the literary magazine LUJ with two colleagues. She has published six books: 2014 *Here Lies Tirpitz*, 2012 *The Mother who Forgot it was Night Time*, 2011 *The Price of Love*, 2009 *Chernobyl Stories*, 2005 *Shameful Discourse. Graceland*, 2001 *The Poacher’s Law*.



From Shamespeasch.Graceland 2005.

English translation by May-Brit Akerholt

My shame has a problem with me  
I don’t want to be ashamed, says the writing  
**I want to write your dick into me**

I shall be celebrated on the Day of Shame

I feel what is written                      imicreative shame  
everybody is leaving  
are you coping with your life  
shame’s slave  
Even the betrayal betrays you then

Descendant of someone that somebody was ashamed of

Left by someone left, oneself a leaver

re  
mem  
ber  
re  
mem  
ber  
I am me mother the memoriam

Blood-shame; because the word exists

(no)

Many  
mouths. Sore,

green,  
aching. Gaping and  
shut, F  
i  
lth and remains:

Traces of phrases, claims, degree of reliability

Cold sweat spit , it once was like this

Is it interchangeable? Phantom shame?

Beshamed probably Self-hatred What is it?

Be unfaithful to me! with me

You let me inhale you; suuuuuuuuucking  
I hooooooooooooot

Phrases in rolls around my belly

Someone might have laughed, they laughed, so laughable to believe, to imagine

The couple isn’t complete. One is missing. You. I?

That’s how it must be  
That’s close to how it was  
Like this, maybe  
I cannot possibly describe it

Why am I lying?

Because I am ashamed As if!



Shamespeasch.Graceland 2005. Aschehoug

Ingrid Storholmen  
Skamtalen, graceland



Are you a dog?  
No.  
Yes.  
A bitch in the heat, with large protruding teats for you to lick  
Bite off my teats and swallow!

Are you fantasizing of fucking a dog?  
Here I am with a smelly tongue and hole                      Slurp!  
Here I come to savage you with my shame                  growl!

Later on:  
The carcass of a dog far off the road, where it hid away to die  
only the row of teeth to tell of the predator  
boiling eyes

Are you still here, voyeur?  
I thought I had chased you by now                      Go!

Cleansing the eyes  
Cryptobiotic state. Overgrown incubator

I don't want you, because you want me (erase phrases – erase emotions)  
LET THE PROOFS SHOW  
It is no PROCESS, I don't want to edit myself. "I am" Grace  
(Preserve your defence mechanisms)

No

When she was shameless I was ashamed to be ashamed  
conjuring the shame (this is running idle)

No!

Prowling on two feet and one hand, a stinking bastard

Had I had a little shame I would never have written (bad)  
 Everybody has seen me by now  
 it is way too late to be human  
 too late to get quiet  
 Burning myself to get warm enough to live

I meet you again and continue to rage  
You rip me apart at the very same place  
I cut myself up: my mouth,  
what I am and the silence I lost

Medically silent/quiet, after the tablet rain:

Orfiril,  
stilnokt,

imovane

remeron,

tolvon,  
ZYPREXA,

lamictal, lithium (Li)  
cipramil

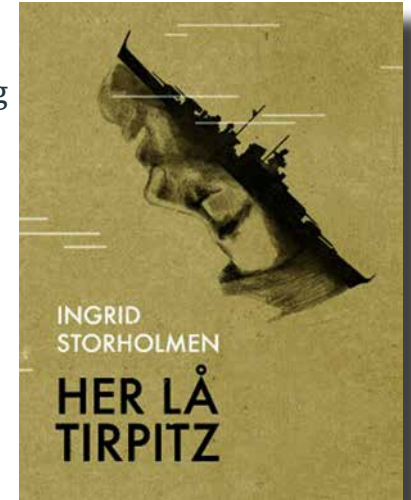
alcohol

White. Anaesthesia. Water. Tablets floating. Pearls.  
White chains. Plastic.  
Must shine not speak. Posit myself as my own sculpture.  
To say is not to say, kiss me, lip.  
“Fade away, within”

White is a sound (that I associate with you)  
**What is white to you?**



Here Lies Tirpitz, 2014 . Aschehoug



## From “Krypskyttarloven” 2001

English translation by May-Brit Akerholt

Du skal finne namnet til snøen  
 eg går frå fonn til fonn, kva heiter du vesle hagl  
 eg har samla så mange namn, dei er vakre, slik som Tankamama  
 Lendale, Ormadatina, Finkalatala, Jutipanano, Shibbolet  
 Eg har skrive ned namna på lappar, små, kvite lappar  
 lappane lyt ut av lommene mine, eg ser dei dett ned i snøen  
 dei er vanskelege å sjå: kvitt i mot kvitt i mot auget mitt  
 Korleis skal eg skille lappen med namnet frå snøen  
 men plutseleg finn eg noko, noko som ikkje er namn, ikkje er snø

Dekt av vinter utan å røpe ein einaste farge

You shall find the name of the snow  
 I go from snowdrift to snowdrift: what is your name, little hailstone  
 I have gathered so many names, pretty names like Tankanama,  
 Lendale, Ormadatina, Finkalatala, Jutipanano, Shibboleth  
 I have written the names on small, white pieces of paper  
 that fall from my pocket; I can see them in the snow  
 they are hard to distinguish: white on white on my eye  
 How can I tell the paper with the name from the snow  
 but suddenly I find something: neither name nor snow

Covered by winter without betraying a single colour

Eg ser meg gjennom deg, det er kvitare enn narkose  
 eg vil likne di kvile  
 slik du let blikket kjenne over jordene og skogane her  
 over den nysterke, berre snøkamoflasjen  
 synkande utover mot isbarken  
 mannen som kryp bort, i skuggen, i vstns  
 dotter mi, eg sym rundt deg i ærleik  
 tek deg i mot som ei beslutning

I see myself through you – whiter than anaesthesia;  
 I want to be your rest  
 like you let your eyes sweep over these fields and woods  
 over the new, strong one, nothing but the camouflage of snow  
 sinking towards the ice-bark  
 the man creeping away in the shadow, in the waters  
 my daughter, I swim around you in loving honesty  
 receiving you like a decision

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>



## ALCHEMY

*He who has no dreaming is lost*

When the Bush came to Olympic Sydney  
water coursed down a luminous cascade,  
and the girl on the rim of a fantasy crater  
torched a cauldron and lit the sky.  
Here was the electric confluence  
of Dreaming and Space Age,  
of dispossession and self-possession  
of bondsman and freeman,  
Outback and Stadium Australia.

When the Bush came to Olympic Sydney  
thunder exploded about the oval track,  
white lightning flared and glimmered  
from ten thousand camera bulbs,  
and the girl in the aerodynamic suit  
was flowing, orbiting, sprinting for her life.  
Now is a twenty-first century Dreamtime -  
the flames, the lightning, the pulsing stands,  
and the black girl with the awe-struck face  
turning to burnished Australian gold.

## PROTHALAMION

Ceaseless sweep of big muddy water,  
carry the soul of Magnolia State,  
spirit of forest and cotton field,  
soul of Caucasian, Negro, Choctaw;  
spirit of Jackson, Natchez, Starkville,  
borne by dugout and paddle-steamer  
past bluff and levee and delta silt  
down to the Gulf of Mexico.

And, spirit of Shannon, wend and surge  
by long meadow and royal fort;  
glide underneath the white bird's hill,  
and carry a tale of Sí and Árd Rí,  
of Norse and Norman, of Gael and Gall  
with barge and cruiser and sailing skiff  
past Diarmuid and Gráinne's silken bed  
to the yawning sea by Lovers' Leap.

Beneath white horses of boundless ocean  
currents course, eddy and mingle -  
waters of Clare and cool Tipperary  
caressing the tide of warm Mississippi  
ferried by Gulf Stream and Atlantic Drift.



Saved To Memory: Lost To View (Limerick Writers Centre.)



## POEM IN OCTOBER

Misty October lies down with the first leaves,  
stretches his long frame by the river bank,  
turning the walls to ghosts.  
The staccato of her heels affrights the girl  
quick tapping by the godforsaken shrine.  
Out of the murk, orange lights  
excalibur in the quivering water.

The sooty flakes of night  
have hypnotised this room,  
and tired eyes labour to discern  
the merest fragment of a world.  
We turn to sleep, to dream maybe  
of love ascending like a blazing sword.

## CHOMOLUNGMA

We still can't tell if he was coming or going,  
Seventy-five years after his last month's salary,  
On a rock face hard by the edge of knowing.

A camera's shrouded in a blizzard's stowing,  
With pictures grudged from posterity's gallery.  
We still can't tell if he was coming or going.

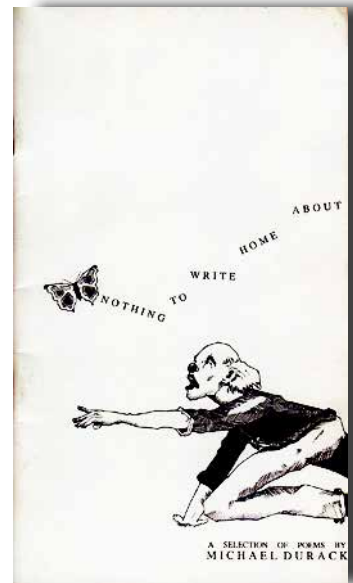
We can only imagine the toing and the froing  
That wastes the body down to its final calorie,  
On a rock face hard by the edge of knowing.

They commit his corpse, after its final showing,  
Without conclusion, inference or corollary.  
We still can't tell if he was coming or going.

Now, pseudo-climbers, with Sherpas' towing,  
Crave glory, every Tom, Dick and Valerie,  
On a rock face hard by the edge of knowing.

But the lamp of immortality's still glowing  
For Hillary, Tensing - and for Mallory.  
We still can't tell if he was coming or going,  
On a rock face hard by the edge of knowing.

Nothing To Write Home About (Derg House),



## REQUIEM FOR A HOUSEWIFE

The warmth that met you at her kitchen door  
 Came partly from the Stanley Number 8;  
 The scones she baked were worthy to share plates  
 With Bread of Heaven, while a music score  
 Of sibilants from pots and pans galore  
 Played, and you felt the pungent air vibrate.  
 Tonight the grieving heart can't recreate  
 That setting, nor its loving warmth restore.

Mary, immaculate Housewife of Paradise,  
 Put all your grace and know-how to the test,  
 A pot roast on; season and flavour well,  
 And serve a table fit to win a prize,  
 That she who knew the way to treat a guest  
 May sit at ease, at last, and have her fill.

## AND THE BEAT GOES ON

My head once filled with clean, electric sounds  
 from Hank B Marvin's red Fender guitar.  
 The Beatles poured in raucous harmonies  
 and far-out, echo-chamber-voice refrains.  
 Then came the Byrds with Dylan rhymes alighting,  
 all jangling twelve-strings, cymbals cascading;  
 the Beach Boys' sleek West Coast falsettos;  
 Simon and Garfunkel's cloister-euphonies.

Now it's the subtle, unplugged Muse who plucks  
 the big bass notes and sets the words at large  
 to swell and wail and chime and echo,  
 and images to float on purple waves.  
 Printed poems strum rhythms in my ear  
 insistent as the racy Mersey beat.

## JUNCTION 27

When the yellow earth movers  
 of the National Roads Authority  
 subsided in the Hades  
 of Annaholty's bottomless bog,  
 the apparatus of the M7 motorway  
 wreaked a merciless revenge  
 on Gardenhill, Toucknockane,  
 Cooleen and Ballyard.

Now as I surf the peaty brown,  
 motoring eastwards to Exit 27,  
 my birth-home (a home no longer) hangs  
 on the edge of a limestone terrace,  
 and quarried cliffs stand sentinel  
 to a virgin Lake Avernus.

I slide beneath the putative Pond Field,  
 beneath the rushy Well Field,  
 beneath the field Across-the-Road,  
 before surfacing, at sixes and sevens,  
 neither Charon touting for a dismal fare  
 nor Orpheus fingering his tuneless lyre;  
 a weary Oisín in a seat belt, maybe,  
 on a slip road in Coolderry.



The poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of the London Voices Poetry group and also produces art work for them. One of her own volumes entitled *The Intimacy of the Universe* focuses on the environment. She is a member of the Exiled Writers Ink group. She is a leading member of the Socialist History Society and organises joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Café. She is a trained child psychologist and has taught at the Institute of Education, London University, where she is now an associate researcher. Her writing includes academic work, such as essays and consultations. Her particular focus is now on women's emancipation and antiquity. <https://www.facebook.com/greta.sykes.3?fref=ts>



## On other beaches

Bolder like bottoms,  
Alabaster, rounded,  
Knees and shoulders,  
Marble faces,  
Thighs and breasts.

The pebbled beach is plastered  
With bodies curled, Stretched out,  
Alone in groups, in love embrace,  
Warm from the sun,  
Like sea lions, seals and seagulls,  
Together and yet lonely,  
Frightened,  
Our humanity questionable.

Alone we turn our eyes  
To the horizon and watch it,  
Lemon yellow light,  
A distant azure line, bright,  
It lies between us and the silent sea,  
Horizon, the unknowable place,  
Infinity, enigma, hope and fear.

It does not speak  
About the other bodies  
On other beaches,  
Huddled, cowering in blankets,  
Cloths of old, worn out, war weary,  
Unwilling victims, hostages  
Of other peoples' wars  
And power games.  
And power games.  
They're waiting.  
They're waiting for the lives  
To re-emerge,  
For justice to emerge.  
For peace.

## Bound feet

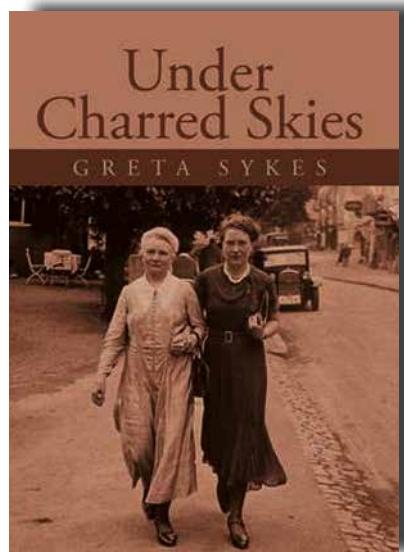
Bound feet, cracked toes  
Numb pain, impass.

Shrill pain, limping, flabby  
Needing assistance, helpless.  
pleading, impeded woman,  
Thwarted person,  
Stifled, stumbling, sting of fear,  
Numbness.

Stilted feet, stiletto pumps,  
High-heeled slipper,  
Platform boot, pencil sharp,  
Toe-breaking ache, crushing,  
Foundering, chafed woman,  
Passive.

Veiled face, hidden face  
Muzzled and gagged, staved off.  
Disowned eros, ensnared creature,  
Thwarted woman.  
Nipped in the bud, stymied, snagged  
Your freedom foiled.

Bound feet, cracked toes,  
Numb pain, numb woman,  
Dumb woman, freedom foiled.



*Under Charred Skies* [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

© Greta Sykes

## Exile: The streets in which I lived

The bleak street like a blindfold  
When the hospital is bombed the night we flee.  
Dusty grapes and ashes in the vineyard in 1945,  
wine to forget from  
fields reddened with blood.

I play in the burnt out city,  
Barbed wire fences,  
The smell of charredness in the air,  
holes instead of streets.  
When the tarmac was back  
the children and dogs stick to it  
in the summer heat.  
Long chases into the night  
Followed by nightmares.

In the fifties I live near the woods,  
peopled with trolls,  
hungry men,  
forgotten leftovers from war years,  
Crippled in body and soul,  
With one leg, blind, on crutches,  
In the dusk there is no escape from  
The road to the forest.

The streets in the burnt out town  
are relentless, they make me seek,  
Search, lead me astray like a labyrinth,  
the red thread nowhere,  
Round and round I am spinning like a top  
In extravagance of the existential,  
looking for meaning  
after the street names have all been singed.

In winter, snow,  
makes the street where I live sweet and kind,  
At dusk the snow sparkles in red, blue  
And gold, the lantern's soft light  
is warm, we glide on sleighs,  
We play hide and seek,  
We hug the snowman, there is peace in winter.

## Money laundering homes

Chack a chack  
Tuck tuck  
Home gone  
Family gone  
Despair, forlorn  
Soup kitchen  
Where?

Chack a chack tuck tuck  
Men with machines  
Capital in  
Investment safe  
People effaced.  
Home gone  
Family gone despair  
Soup kitchen where?

Tack a tack chack chack  
Pneumatic drills,  
Gangly cranes  
Skips engulf all  
Men in hard hats  
Men in top hats  
Shirt and tie  
Mind of lies  
Investment safe  
People effaced  
Home gone  
family gone  
Soup kitchen – where?

Tack a tack chack chack  
City Road, Marchmont Street,  
London streets,  
Luxury flats  
Five Star hotel,  
The families gone  
Their homes destroyed  
Demolition gangs roam  
barbed wire fence  
The money rolls in  
The launderers rub their hands.



*The Other Side of Longing* is a collaboration between award-winning poets, Geraldine Mills and Lisa C. Taylor from Connecticut, USA, who came to a little cottage on the west coast of Ireland in the summer of 2009 to forge a link between their lives. With the Atlantic Ocean as the central metaphor, the collection explores themes of culture, folklore, flora and fauna through a series of poems of call and response, weaving in and out of their own internal and external landscape while retaining the individual voice and lyrical honesty. [Available from www.amazon.com/Other-Side-Longing](http://www.amazon.com/Other-Side-Longing) and [www.kennys.ie](http://www.kennys.ie) These poems are taken from *The Other Side of Longing*, published by Arlen House, 2011.

Geraldine Mills has published three collections of short stories and four collections of poetry. She has been awarded many prizes and bursaries including the Hennessy/Tribune New Irish Writer Award, two Arts Council Bursaries and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. Her fiction and poetry is taught in universities in Connecticut, U.S.A. Her first children's novel titled *Gold* is forthcoming from Little Island in 2016. [www.geraldinemills.com](http://www.geraldinemills.com)



## The Centre Cannot Hold

All night the wind has fought with our cottage.  
It wakes and unnerves a part of me  
that is unsettled by such noise,  
as it is by all the colours of grey  
we must live with throughout these summer days.

But your country has weather big enough for both of us.  
It tumbles an outermost house into the sea  
to careen on a foreign beach in Chatham,  
or a tornado whips up Dorothy into another state.  
Hurricanes with names benign as dimpled grand-aunts  
come to tea and scones,  
but leave you stranded in their wake,  
flood you with their grief.

A man once told me about the wind in Oklahoma.  
It flung their screen door into Sam Weller's garden,  
whipped one blade of straw from the barn  
and drilled it right through the glass  
of their kitchen window.  
It held there, needle-straight, the pane intact,  
the lights blown, food in the icebox melting.

Before its contents folded onto the floor  
they were allowed eat all at once;  
pistachio, dark chocolate, black cherry,  
while the straw lodged tight in its place,  
breaking their mother's back.

Our lives are built on vagaries of weather,  
one well-aimed gust and the sandbars  
of memory crumble at our feet.

## When the Time Comes

What of the mountain ablaze beyond our window?  
Gorse, burning up the dark, so loud  
we fear its crackle, hear its heat.

It spits out seeds that defy flame,  
smuts of furze get washed into the stream's source  
that tumbles down, picking up along the way:

whirligigs, caddis fly larvae, turf scent  
the luteus light of lesser celandine,  
foxglove – that does the heart good just to look at.

It foams by the boundary of our land, so small,  
yet there is nothing to stop it from thinking big,  
from becoming ocean when the time comes.

Rushing under the bridge to a neighbour's field  
down through bog tannin, it carries into the lake  
before it takes itself to the river that flows

around the oarsmen, past the tea house at Menlo  
under the Salmon Weir Bridge,  
by the cathedral that still reels in the faithful.

It catches sight of the sea, boats by the Spanish Arch,  
lets go of its name, heads out into the Atlantic, reaches  
your coast with the memory of mountain, gorse, fire.

Available [www.amazon.com/Other-Side-Longing](http://www.amazon.com/Other-Side-Longing) and [www.kennys.ie](http://www.kennys.ie)



## To Name it Twice

My hotel room comes with free drinks  
fruit, the baggage of its number-911-  
and me looking out at skyscrapers  
a plane snailblazing the blue.

Down below is *iPod Touch* city,  
life that can trip on the slip of a fingertip.  
Traffic here is so slow it would never  
catch on as a video game.

There's breakfast at Roxy's Deli  
with towers of waffles, syrup.  
Trick or Treat couples  
are dancing at Suzy Woos.

Not the way I first saw this city, this city,  
in the sixties with my sisters, our mother,  
at the top of the Empire State –  
the tallest building even then,

where we squeezed into the swelter  
of its recording booth  
to sing damp and cold  
out of ourselves; the words of *Galway Bay*

spilling onto the black vinyl 78  
that circled round and round.  
It gathered each note into itself  
before it played us back,

our voices dancing across the rooftops,  
over East River, Brooklyn, the Bronx  
above the skyline of Manhattan  
where the blue held no fear of rain, no terror.

## Side Fold Dress at the Peabody Museum

As if it were once mine, lost  
and now found after years of searching.  
As if I remember the woman tanning the skin first,  
whether of elk or caribou I cannot recall.

Then stitching it with rows of porcupine quills  
having won the sacred right to dye each piece,  
moisten them in her mouth, flatten them,  
burrow holes in the hide with an awl, thread them in.

Adding glass beads from Europe, brass buttons,  
cowrie shells across the shoulder with little bunches  
of red cloth sewn into it, dyed with madder,  
all the way from somewhere near these shores,

used here too in the petticoats of women  
from Connemara, Inis Mór, Boffin,  
or as *swanskin* – that square of red flannel my mother  
placed to my father's back when he couldn't work

from the pain meted out on building sites  
and life was a challenge of rattlesnake  
around a bunch of arrows.



Deborah Lavin is an active member of London Voices and the Socialist History Society, which has published her *Bradlaugh Contra Marx, the Radicalism vs. Socialism in the First International*. She was an actress and has written plays, including *The Body Trade* (Stukke Theatre, Berlin and Grenzland-theatre, Aachen) and *Happy Families* (Studio-Life Theatre and Atelier Theatre, Tokyo). She is presently writing the first full length biography of the miscreant Dr Edward Aveling, but she is available for chairing, talking and reading out her poetry.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008710628024&fref=ts>



## Politics in St Pancras Gardens

Walking in the tiny cemetery park  
where Shelley and his Mary loved  
unwisely and too well  
An old, thin man  
with a hard, thin face,  
wets his lips  
And talks of the assault on Falluja.

He hopes all of them get killed,  
Or better still maimed,  
Though, if it was down to him,  
he'd shoot their arms and  
Legs off, one by one.  
Let them wriggle in agony,  
Or better still, he'd blind them  
And castrate them,  
Evil terrorist bastards.

What about the children?  
What about them?  
They'd only grow up  
To be terrorists too,  
And he was sick of them  
All coming over here,  
Taking our jobs and our houses.  
And he was glad Blair was standing up to them.  
He'd always been a Labour man himself, though  
He'd been thinking about voting BNP, till this Blair came along  
Blair was bloody marvellous! Wasn't frightened by suffering.  
Wasn't fazed when kids lost their limbs.....or faces  
Nothing weak about Blair, he could take it when other men died.

A few miles up the road, Karl Marx puked yet again in his grave.

## The Polite Vulture

You must have seen the photo, some child  
In Africa. Somalia perhaps, or Ethiopia  
Somewhere thirsty looking, arid, wild  
The kid is dying. Starvation  
Exhaustion. Dehydration  
No mother or other  
Adult about, Just a vulture,  
Waiting, quiet, patient polite  
It's a brilliant photo. Stark, a work of art  
Couldn't be bettered. Such perfect ideal light

You know. Funny. They say the guy who took the hot shot  
Killed himself --- when he got back to the real world  
Seems he grew sort of soul-sick  
People kept asking him why he didn't pick the kid up.  
Why he'd moved on  
Just "shot" the kid and gone  
Left it to the polite and patient vulture

It sort of says something or other about our culture  
Just post-modern life for you

It's difficult to know what to do at the time  
When morality is relative  
And you've got a creative  
Deadline

## Road to Gatwick

It called to me  
A closed South London Library  
Passed, driving out to Gatwick  
Unexpectedly

My father used to take me there.  
He'd find a Sci-Fi book  
And settle in some hard-backed chair  
While I'd browse about an look  
He used to say, I took forever  
The memory is Autumn, dark rainy weather.

Outside, sounds of banshee wind in waving trees  
Conkers thrown down on wet and squelchy leaves  
And smells! Beeswax-polished wood.  
Wet macs and Wellingtons. And such a quietness.

My childhood  
Such a long time gone  
That blinding strong  
Tears, burst in my eyes, when  
I came upon it  
Suddenly  
In traffic  
On the way to Gatwick  
Unexpectedly.

## A Dying Aunt

She wasn't taking that long to die, not really.  
Considering she was touching a hundred  
She was fading and getting weaker and having  
Her tea fed to her in a beaker, and sleeping after only a sip or two

But sometimes she'd suddenly get alert and she'd talk  
I'll be so glad to see my father and mother again"  
"In heaven" she added as she saw my confusion  
"I'll be so glad to see my father and mother again  
I wonder what they'll be wearing  
They wouldn't always like to be in their best clothes,  
but I suppose you couldn't go around all sloppy,  
if God could come round the corner any time."

## Evening Classes

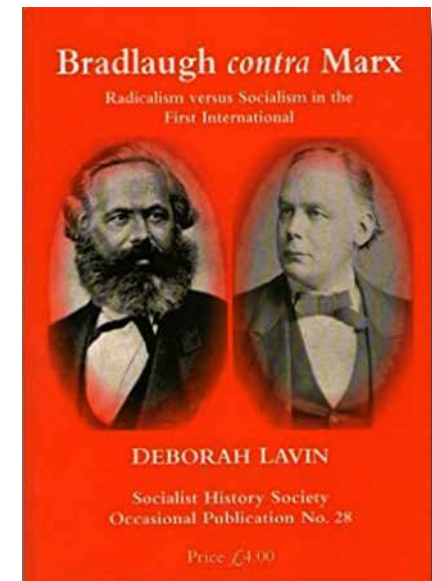
Always when she goes  
alone to her evening classes  
she is smartly dressed in dirty clothes  
and big Jackie O glasses

She sits to one side  
Spreading her pens and papers wide  
Small little girl hands in her thin lap.  
From time to time she cracks a joke  
That no-one understands  
An aging woman, on the edge, about to snap.

Her needs are palpable, sticky to the touch  
And at the coffee break  
No-one goes anywhere near her much



Bradlaugh Contra Marx:  
Radicalism Versus Socialism in the First International [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



## Barcelona August

We'd met, where we said we'd meet  
Away from the hazy, sucking heat  
In a shaded, unexpected little plaza.

Outside the hostel, the black-dressed *patrona*  
Sat watchful, as her young and laughing daughter  
Hosed down the red and purple bougainvillea  
Flooding the dry street and our dusty feet  
With ice cold and lovely water.

Inside we could still hear the muffled riot  
Of the baking city, the manic traffic  
But here within was cool and quiet.  
The quiet of the way things ought to be.  
How strong and sweet then, the bonds of you to me.  
As we lay together in that Spartan hotel room  
Where love held us perfect: in its womb.

## The Other September 11th

Do you remember September the eleventh  
1973?

The day the *Land of the Free* killed Allende  
The socialist, some even say Marxist, but anyway  
The democratically-elected *Presidente de la Republica de Chile*

*Muy buena gente* died along with Allende that day  
Half a world and now thirty, faded years away,  
Sober-talking Trades Unionists, fiery socialists,  
Chè-bearded sons and Hippie-bearded daughters,  
All talking of *el futuro*, Libertad, Justicia

The lucky were killed quickly. Other mothers' children,  
were rounded up in the football stadium of *Santiago de Chile*.  
And treated in evil, inhuman ways

*Who could ever forget September the eleventh 1973?*

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>



## Kowtow Nation

A nation of kow-towers  
 Yes-men one and all  
 Even the women  
 Britain's pride is but a beer  
 That's all we're here for  
 Bowing and scraping to the throng  
 Of wide-eyed dictators and bearded loons  
 Nonplussed where we truly belong  
 Selling someone's daughters for a few doubloons  
 To absurd little men in their pantaloons  
 Mayfair is no longer a top-shelf magazine  
 But its streets are equally teeming with filth

## A Marked Man

I'm not physically disadvantaged - as far as I'm aware  
 I'm white British but of that I don't really care  
 I'm of working class stock as far back as is recorded  
 I'm a Northern male for which I'm not applauded  
 On most positive discrimination counts I utterly fail  
 Picking up few points on the minority scale  
 I'm branded, blighted, slighted and benighted  
 Why oh God did you curse me so?

## Ditch the Geography

Don't judge me from where I stand,  
 From where you stand  
 Don't deliberately misunderstand  
 As I raise up my hands  
 In supplication

The backdrop to my existence  
 Is your history, my geography  
 The dusty landscape of who I am  
 The rain-soaked streets of who you are  
 Of what we share our deepest fears  
 Of who we are  
 Why and where we are  
 Movement that engenders change  
 What's outside is what's inside  
 Of what we intrinsically are  
 And by how far  
 We grow as we go on  
 Wishing how we'd been born  
 Under some distant sun  
 Where there's only smiles and warmth  
 Country folk at heart  
 Hearts beats to a different tune  
 Chameleons in the city  
 Kicking heels on the pavement  
 A 21st century predicament  
 A child's last scream, a mother's lament  
 Beached up in an urban setting  
 But not one of them regretting  
 Despite the scars and broken limbs  
 Your stars are our stars now  
 They shine on all cruelly  
 And indifference to all equally



## "Baby on Board"

'If I looked a bit older there'd be more time to read',  
 The ageing, but too young for respect, commuter pondered  
 As he grasped for a handle on the Tube  
 Blue and yellow - why such ghastly colours?  
 "Baby on board!" the big white badges declare  
 So big you are forced insistently to care  
 Worn by distressed-looking women  
 Of varying ages, shapes and sizes,  
 Some seeming far too old to need  
 Others dangerously ready to drop  
 But still apparently insufficiently gone  
 To take the maternity break  
 To stop renewing their Oysters.  
 Continuing the daily shuttle  
 Up and down the Northern Line,  
 Occupying all the vacant seats  
 Demanding our kind sympathies  
 With "Baby on board!"  
 Even the callous daren't ignore.  
 Dutifully half a dozen in executive suits,  
 Just past their teens, it seems, jump to attention  
 In close formation, "do have my seat".  
 Each beg with a resigned grimace.  
 Insincerity is a commuter giving up their seat,  
 While petrified to catch an eye  
 Of maturer folk, who simply want to read,  
 Left standing, while the young execs  
 Ignore us, plugging in to their smart phones,  
 Staring deep down into their tablets  
 Promptly evading our very existence,  
 With convenient hi-tech distractions on tap.

Try reading while balancing on a rattling Tube  
 Grasping on to a rail too high  
 Who says that Hell doesn't exist?  
 It's there Monday to Friday 8am  
 It's there Monday to Friday 5pm  
 Hell is scuttling up and down  
 The Northern line unable to read,  
 Among nameless other people  
 Standing up close, impersonal,  
 On until we are all too old to read.  
 Too old to care whatever we need.  
 TFL give me a badge that reads,  
 "This is my own precious time and I want to read."  
 I'm older than you, a seat please!



Deirdre Grimes is a graduate of Limerick school of art and design and a mother. Her work includes poetry and painting and some sculpture. Her poetry has been published nationally and internationally in many journals including *Crannog*, *The creel*, *Electric Acorn* and *Haiku Harvest*. Her first collection *The chaos within* is due out in April 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/deirdregrimespoet/>



## I let you go

The rosary passes through soft fingers  
 prints sanded off by the passage of glass beads  
 words mumbled in unison  
 voices rise and fall, almost song  
 a draft whispers around wet ankles  
 and we are by the shore  
 the voices echo still through waves crashing  
 you clasp my hand so tightly 'don't let go'  
 the wind picks up and you are gone  
 hair whips around my face and I turn to face into it  
 I look for you through the darkness  
 as the water breaks against my legs, my dress sticking to  
 them  
 sand caught between my toes builds tiny dwellings there  
 I let you go didn't I?

## Together

tiny raindrops seem not to fall  
 if they fall at all they fall slowly  
 sometimes travelling upward

you called just to check in  
 it is cold there you said  
 it is colder here I said  
 though not really knowing how cold cold really is

we beat about it  
 words not saying much of anything  
 you are home tomorrow

and I have made lists of words  
 we must do  
 all hopeful  
 for new beginnings

will your lips taste different now?  
 will I have to learn, relearn,  
 unlearn how to be?  
 together.





## The necklace

The nurse said 'you look so much like her'  
When I showed her the picture  
Of you and my father smiling  
Though their child had just entered  
A mental hospital again

It is the worst-  
Telling you  
I dread your face when you hear the news  
That I must go  
Into that place again  
Your brave almost tearful expression  
Rips out my heart

And my little one  
Looks like you too  
I miss the smell from the crown of her head  
When I kiss her goodnight  
Though she never kisses back

And she never says 'I love you'  
Have I hardened her?  
Raised her to not get too attached  
By my absences from her life

Yesterday I sent you a picture  
Of myself  
wearing the necklace I had made  
My head resting against the bars of the hospital bed  
I could not smile and apologised for this  
You told me 'it will come'

## The examination

I enter the sterile room  
and the sterile woman instructs me  
To strip from the waist down behind  
the little curtain she has pulled around  
I do as I am told  
once more feeling the pangs of childhood  
I get up on the sterile bed  
I do as I am told  
'Drop your knees out to the sides'  
I do as I am told  
And then  
Then the piercing coldness  
Of her cruel instrument  
With its mouth  
Which opens deep within me  
She scrapes and prods  
And I feel each stroke  
Three times she must  
Try for her mission  
She scolds and I feel  
That even my insides  
Will not behave  
Finally she is done  
I regain my clothes  
and with them little dignity

Joachim's poetry is published in Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA. He has created theatre in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, India, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, China, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Hungary, Taiwan and Switzerland.

[www.byteensemble.com](http://www.byteensemble.com) [www.penfolk.com.au](http://www.penfolk.com.au) [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



## small town

clouds stretch so thinly you can see through them  
a boisterous sun, dressed like a fairy  
dances on worn-out roofs of houses  
that harbour lives starved of occasions –

a wedding snorts a small laugh,  
it didn't happen –

factories clatter and wheeze  
asbestos rules their chimneys –  
they speak English here, I think  
the drunkards, uncouth and violent  
the single mothers, nothing but animals  
the choirmaster up the hill,  
away from everyone, buried in the belly of the church  
alone with the young boys of the neighbourhood,  
threading his belt.

she sighs, the girl  
livin at the back of the pub  
scratching the air with her black nails:

'slut's strong stuff, try affectionate friend.'

the bus drives off and the countryside folds  
like a dreadful topic does  
when god listens.

## growing up

when the children were young  
earth trundled along  
but sleep was hard to come by,  
I pressed my face into the pillow  
imagining migrant birds  
sweeping south to Italy,  
swallows and kingfishers,  
geese and storks mating  
across the alps, like Hannibal  
blackening the moon and teasing the sun  
with endless chatter –

winter tightens its grip  
and turning the pages of age  
I find an endearing sweetness  
in memory  
in knowing that fiction can never compete  
with reality –

it's nearly midnight, I climb the stairs  
and find you sleeping, my son  
a faint kiss printed on your forehead  
in your seventeenth year,  
sleep is still hard to come by,  
outside lightning lashes the houses  
and hail clutters the streets –

in the morning, the air seems shinier  
and purer than I've ever seen it,  
you stumble downstairs, wordless,  
your eyes still in the grip of night  
I smile and time takes a break.



## days like this

it is as if every day  
the sun gains slightly more mass,  
the air above the palm trees  
near my favorite café  
are snowstorms of birds,  
swirling over rooftops  
like schools of reef fish –

people are sitting outside again  
like adolescent summer campers,  
sunlight pounding them  
as I walk back to work –

the staffroom smells of burned toast  
and the perpetual trickle  
of gossip and intrigue,

the hanging mists of rumour  
cloud the smitten sun

I want to go home.

## bells will toll

my mother looks at me  
through the silence in our  
long distance call,  
whirlpools of suffering  
turning in her eyes,  
death lives in the crackles  
the phone breathes back at me

I live now,  
as sweetly as I can,  
she seems to have given up

I want to fill my clothes with wind,  
my eyes with light,  
darkness harbors hers and  
in the end those eyes  
will burn right out of her face  
and rise up into sunlight

I hope the weather will be fine,  
the apples flowering,  
the sky depthless, flawless

I hope bells will toll  
and she will go quietly.



Wolinsky struggles and thrives in central Maryland with his wife, two very old mothers, and a rocky hill-side. He also helps care for 3 non-biological grandchildren. In between (!) he writes and listens to music exorbitantly, and shows up to help with peace and climate work. He adopted 'Almaleck' to honor his Jewish grandmother and Al-Andalus (Muslim-ruled Spain). His first book *The Crane is Flying* will be published by Dos Madres Press in 2016.



## Beggar of the World (My Christmas Letter)

*for ElizGris, SMurphy, & LMacF*

Who? How? I do not know.

I'm just reading a book.  
It says *I dream I am the President.*  
*When I awake, I am the beggar of the world.*

So now  
I've burned my Christmas list like an old bra.  
Instead I wish to send you the book,  
but I do not have your address,  
or know: Will you read that,  
or this mess?

So many unknowns!  
What's up with us?

What is it with us entangled  
in the word, the image, the world?  
In *strangers drowning*  
like in another book?

Ancient bummer  
like Mother Teresa.

Readers, drowning.

To find that beggar,  
intrepid translator  
intrepid photographer  
trekked... well, there is  
a kind of writing  
a kindness of writing

that we need not  
go trek ourselves  
(or as software suggests  
*goat track* ourselves – which is,  
in this Pashtun case, accurate).

We need not *go there*,  
where the rocks might cut our boots,  
where men might beat our daughters,

where mothertrekkers encounter  
*landays* -- poems  
not easy to find, nor the women  
who make them, not in Afganistan,  
where their words touch the beating  
heart of the matter,

which is the heart of my letter  
or book review, words not pretty,  
beaconed to persons not amused,  
by followers of a muse

who never said any good  
would come of them.

*Dona nobis pacem.* Peace  
or non-violence at least  
on Earth. Goodwill to men  
and women of lesser income  
wherein we find treasure  
shipped back home, for example,  
in shipping containers  
by a Haitian woman I know.

Joy to Port-au-Prince, Nawlins,  
Kandahar, and the rest of the world.  
Send me your address  
while my hair is being curled  
by the news. In return, alas,  
you will only get as Netflix  
might say: *more like this.*

*Benedictus*, women  
whose book is like a gun  
pointing at the heart of the world.  
I bless the bruised fingers  
and veiled eyes  
that sign such malediction  
in our direction.



## Systems History 1

Glitch.  
Scratch.  
Crotch.  
Weekly patch.

The bad patch  
might need a workaround  
that becomes a detour;  
the detour might be life-changing  
or the death of you.

(The 48th Infantry Brigade,  
their patch and history:  
The Confederacy, 1861  
Iraqi Freedom III, 2006  
Enduring Freedom  
in Afghanistan, 2009  
Sic transit  
the Macon Volunteers.)

The glitch  
might be a systems issue,  
which could be almost anything:

root flaw  
zero day  
IED  
work of a moron  
whom you rely upon.

Nonstop. Ripstop.  
Ripped moral tissue issue.

Denial of service.  
Denial of truth.  
Deployment of friend or foe,  
their work these days  
could be the death of you.

## Old Man's Coffeesong

When you feel the drug coursing the veins  
you could believe you were young again,  
were you a fool. As it stands, though,  
the old rule stands still: time stands still  
for no man. Or woman either, as Hamlet quipped.  
So you take in hand what is yours, and try  
not to clutch at what is not, and venture forth  
for what it's worth. It is no adventure. It is  
the Earth, wounded and calling still, that you  
– clay that will be dust – must heed. Your need  
is only to do what you can, heal what you may, rest not  
when you will but whenever, because never soi-disant enough.  
And then, no Prince or King, be wiser if less intense  
than Hamlet, less clever than Mrs. MacBeth.

Will that, in Act Four or Five, set the stage  
for *enough*? Hardly. And will leave you  
with little enough: You will leave. A few will grieve.  
Precious children with little fortune will grow,  
with a little fortune, into women and men.  
What will they then heed? I cannot say. Such  
is not given, in my short stay.

### References:

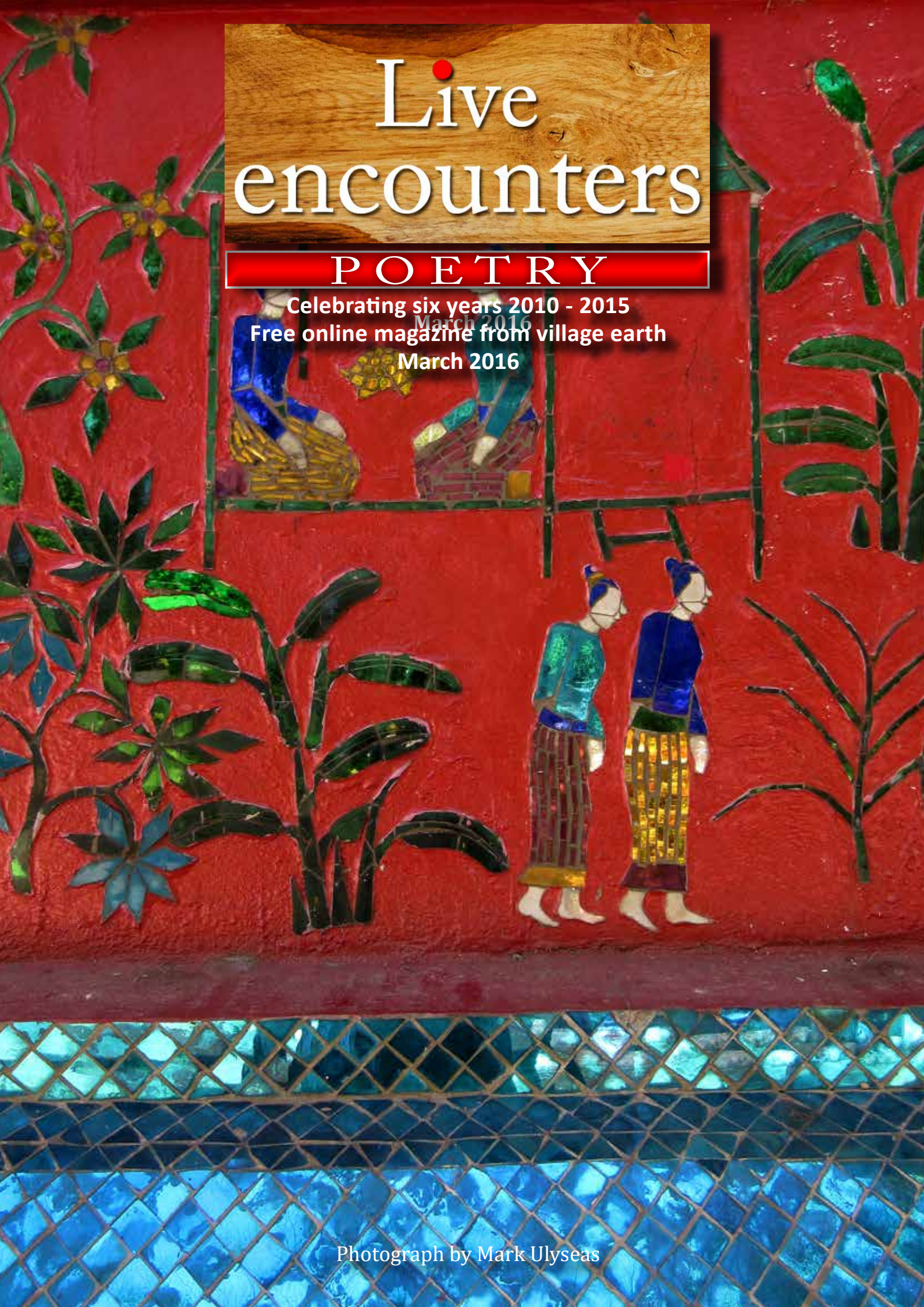
*I Am the Beggar of the World: Landays from Contemporary Afghanistan*  
by Seamus Murphy and Eliza Griswold  
*Strangers Drowning: Grappling with Impossible Idealism, Drastic Choices, and the Over-  
powering Urge to Help* by Larissa MacFarquhar



# Live encounters

## POETRY

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



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas