



Live encounters

POETRY

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

12 Poets



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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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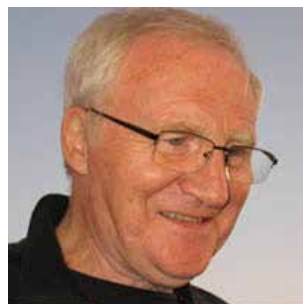
Photograph of newly married, Laos, by Mark Ulyseas

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CONTRIBUTORS

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Wi-Fi Poaching

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



Selected Poems

Eileen Sheehan

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



The Cold Moon's Ladders: New 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 *Strangers* 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.



Veiled Venus and Refugees

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.



Depositions

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.



Wheels within Wheels

Lynda Tavakoli

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

Celebrating 6 years 2010-2015



POETRY
MAY 2016



Damage

Eileen Casey

Eileen Casey is based in South Dublin. Widely published, Dedalus Press, Faber and Faber, New Island, are among recent inclusions. Her debut poetry collection *Drinking the Colour Blue* was published by New Island in 2008. Literary Awards include: A Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Poetry Fellowship, A Hennessy Award (Emerging Fiction), among others. A debut short story anthology *Snow Shoes* (Arlen House) appeared in 2012, followed by *A Fascination with Fabric* (Arlen House), 2014. She works as a creative writing facilitator, editor and publisher.



The Journey

Randhir Khare

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



Across Moon and Stars

Doreen Duffy

Doreen Duffy's studied the various forms of creative writing, at Oxford University online, at UCD and at NUI Maynooth. Her publications include The Ireland's Own Anthology, Circle and Square, The Woman's Way, The Irish Times, The Burning Bush 2 and Brilliant Flash Fiction online. She has received many awards including first place in the Jonathan Swift Poetry Competition and most recently she was awarded the Deirdre Purcell Cup at The Edgeworth Literary Festival. Doreen is working towards her first collection of poetry.



In Praise of Small Things

Ainé Lyons

Ainé Lyons is a native Dubliner, born in 1936 in a small village (Milltown) on the banks of the Dodder. *In Praise of Small Things* (Fiery Arrow Press) is published to celebrate her eightieth year. Her work has received many awards from literary competitions including, Francis Ledwidge, The Luas Literary Award, The Golden Pen and Jonathan Swift Awards. Carol Ann Duffy, while Poet Laureate in the United Kingdom, highly commended her writing.



Peace in the Neon

Courtney Lavender

Courtney Lavender is a native born Los Angeleno with deep roots in Ireland. She's spent the better part of her years working both as a performing musician and behind the scenes in travel, licensing, and as a staff writer for Rock Cellar Magazine. She has had additional written works published on TheRumpus.net, and is working toward her first poetry collection.



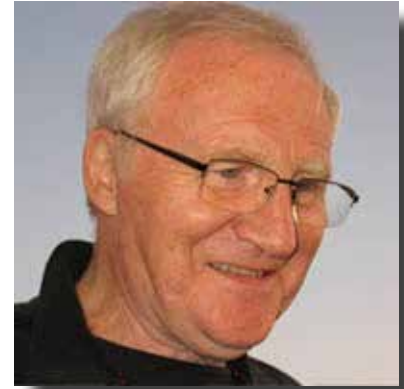
Openings

John Mullen

John Mullen was born in Dublin in 1968. He was brought up in Dun Laoghaire and currently lives in Wicklow. He studied Veterinary Medicine in UCD. He qualified in 1990 and spent 10 years in the UK in veterinary practice. Since 2001, he has been employed as a state veterinarian. John has a long standing interest in poetry but only started to write seriously in the last 5 months. This is the first time his work has been published in a public forum.

I wrote this poem, Wi-Fi Poaching, after I'd heard a story, in the west of Ireland, of a stranger who showed up in a village and immediately began accessing broadband while sitting outside peoples' homes and businesses. His antics became a source of amusement and topic of conversation in the pub. One woman found him sitting at her back door when she returned from shopping and sent him packing. I imagined him 'milking' the system for all he was worth. He left as quietly as he came but he won't be completely forgotten. At least he gave us a laugh.

Founding Contributor of Live Encounters. 2010
www.terry-mcdonagh.com



Wi-Fi Poaching

When you overhear a person in a Mac shop
 enquiring about offers on milking stools

and if you, later, see them perched
 outside a garage with a gadget or

looking shady in shrubbery, chances are
 they are Wi-Fi poachers, free-loaders,

backpacking piggy-backers, cuckoos
 relying on mother-goodness to hatch an egg.

Even worse, they might be tuning into matters
 intended for personal use or the confessional.

If only football or racing results were at stake,
 you could live with it. But no, these people

read in the light of a neighbour's window to
 save on electricity. Have binoculars to hand.

Solution: when sponger's expression builds
 like a transgression, pull the plug on the router

and listen for screams of rage. Put a sign up:
try morse, smoke signals, milk your own system,

*knock on my door and allow me to introduce you
 to my wireless parrot, Polly.*

And what does that tell us? Nothing except
 Polly is a parrot and it's unusual to see a person

milking a gadget in a dark corner next to a garage
 after witching hour and not a spider in sight.



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



On the Morning of My Mother's Passing

On that morning
 grey crows gathered
 on the bushes
 surrounding her house

and my father not there
 to clap his hands loudly
 and scatter them.

On that morning
 jackdaws encroached
 on my window sill
 jabbing for bread

and I too busy with breakfast
 to whoosh them away.

On that morning
 summoned too late
 to her bedside I saw

a blue-black crow
 rise off from her shoulder

three silver hairs from her head
 in its clenched beak.

an elegy of sorts

for want of an ash-tray
 I rest my cigarette
 on this grey plate,
 a remnant
 from some depleted set,
 now serving as candle-holder

the cigarette tip sizzles
 as it hits a pat of wax

I inhale and taste the tallow
 as red seeps down the paper
 stains the filter

a last molten drop
 from a crimson candle, lit
 as votive for an injured cat

the cat now buried
 in a sunny spot
 by the back wall

a favoured place of his
 for grooming

somewhere
 there was a point to all of this
 which now evades me

like that raw evening,
 placing his still-warm body
 in the grave, how everything
 but the weeping
 failed me



Above: Poem from *Down the Sunlit Hall*. Opposite: Poem from *Song of the Midnight Fox* (Doghouse Books)

Setting Out

The unsteady sway of the boat
 as it moved across grey water
 had me gripping, with both hands,
 to the wooden seat. I watched
 the castle growing smaller
 until it was only a dark smudge
 receding into a widening view
 of water, shoreline, trees. And the fear
 left me on that stretch of open lake
 as a light breeze drew back my hair
 and the spray's touch was gentle
 as your fingers tracing
 the contours of my face. The boatman
 joked that he had drowned no one
 so far that morning. I thought of bones
 embraced by water, caressed
 by weeds. Of swimmers who never
 made it home. Below me I saw
 a woman looking up
 from another world. I knew
 there were urgent stories
 she had come to tell and I
 was all attention. Her face
 flashing past the boat in a continuous reel
 as we neared the island. I smiled
 down at her. In the shallows
 she disappeared. With the engine cut
 there was only the idle slabber of water
 against the boat; the knock,
 knock of wood on stone. I stepped out
 onto the pier; like that first time
 stepping into your arms: safer
 than anything I had known.

Both poems from *Song of the Midnight Fox* (Doghouse Books)

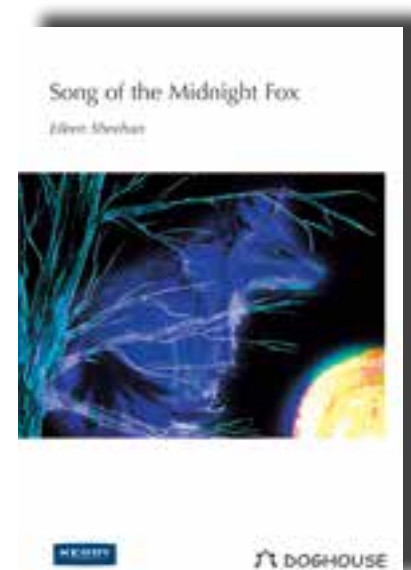
Angel

*He said, I am old and
 everything has a bitter
 taint and besides
 I have only these oddments
 to offer; things broken,
 unfinished, unused and I'm not even
 sure why it is that I've
 kept them so long.*

But she saw how his body
 radiated light and he carried
 not just a jumble of wheels,
 coils, springs but the very
 ones she'd been needing to
 mend the faltering
 mechanisms of her heart.

And his eyes were pure
 as a child's
 and she knew

from that moment on
 she was his
 entirely



All About Climbing

After he slaughtered her
he dumped her body
in the market square

where merchants and citizens
continued their trading

averting their eyes
from the sight of
her broken corpse;
the limbs skewed
at grotesque angles.

A fly alighted on her eyelid
its blue-green body
gleaming like a jewel.

A mouse
nibbled flour
from under a fingernail.

A goat strayed from its pen
sniffed at her body
lay down beside her.

Her house cat
navigated the alleyways
of the rural town
till he found her.

A rat curled to sleep
in her armpit.

Then the last slice of moon
slid down from the sky,
lodged in the small of her back.

From high in the hay loft
an owl let out
it's long note
across the dark

and that was the sound
she heard as she woke;
the sound that led her
to walk to the foot
of the mountain.

Now she carries
the moon on her back
and she climbs.

Her days are all about climbing;
all about purpose;

committed
to restore the moon
to the sky:
hang it aloft.

So she climbs
in her blood-red shoes,
her tattered garments:

there is no slipping back.

his former occupation

before my love
became my love
he was a housebreaker

dressed always in black
moving on the edge of
vision, the edges of gardens,
the narrow spaces between houses

a master of stealth,
of silence, climbing upwards
in search of treasure

occasionally women caught a glimpse of him
at their windows, imagined
they dreamed him, floated for days in
the clear green pool they made of him,
others woke to a musky scent in their rooms
objects displaced on their
bedside tables, trinkets gone missing

once a woman surprised him
as he poked his head above the sill
of her open window, with
a sideways kick from
her high-heeled boot she sent him
sprawling backwards,
downwards into shrubbery: this episode, she kept it
to recount at dinner parties with herself as the
heroine in her own story

and all the while he lay there
unconscious, wild goats came down from the
mountains and ate the grasses that
smothered him, the trees were kind
sending leaves to cover him, snows came and
his skin grew white

later, that's where I found him surrounded
by roses, honeybees exiting his mouth,
he walked home with me and didn't
stop talking as gold spilled from every
pocket in his coat: before my love

became my love, he was a housebreaker
and is not like other men.

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.



The Weasel

The weasel moves along an indiscernible path.
You may see it passing over the lawn or the meadow.

But when you go to inspect the grass
there is no residue of footfall.

The weasel pours itself forwards
in some trickery that passes for running.

The weasel steals the finch
that sings at your window.

Is there a store of finches' songs
somewhere in the weasel's den?

The weasel passes through your mind
in the form of a woman.

In that dream you had
she tied the moon with her hair.

You saw it fall slowly down the sky
until the moment you awoke.

A weasel passes over the lawn
as you look through the sunlight.

The path it moves along is as indiscernible
as when the shadows of clouds rupture the fields.

If your heart was a clock losing its time
it would be that weasel who stole it.

The Eighteenth Bell of the Angelus

Inflicted with each prod, she took as kicks
the child genuflecting in her womb. At nine weeks
it was far too fully-formed to be true. Under ultra-sound
the pale foetus showed three legs and a pair of folded wings.

She wanted to abort it, flush it away; but at merely twelve weeks
she was almost at full term. She screamed at the birth,
swore she'd give birth no more:

I'LL SEW MYSELF UP!

EMBROIDER IT SHUT WITH THE WORD NO!

The child that slipped out had neither nose nor ears,
but eyes dotted all around its head like a crown.
Two stunted arms budded from its breasts,
and two more at its shoulders.
Its wings, fluttering feebly on the delivery table,
were veined like the leaves of a cabbage.

Through the greasy hospital window she could see an oil truck –
CAMPUS OIL stamped on its sides.
With the baby sucking at her tit, she felt suddenly calm.
She'd burn it, she knew, once she got home.

Slow Vortex

snail
disappearing up its own
slow vortex

mankind our cochineal ...
a million souls
outweighs sunshine

the deaf child
detonates
a box of noise

no up allowed ...
the cold moon's
ladders collapse

(abba) ttoir
your children born
in the sink

the river rich in fog
our voices
lavished with glass

cancers of skin
are starlight,
starlight

Pail of Voices

living the bucolic dream
... his woodlouse bride
nibbles the carpet clean

a "silver bobbin" she called it
... grandma tethers
the moon with her hair

six astronauts squeeze
into the three-seat sofa ...
nowhere straight ahead

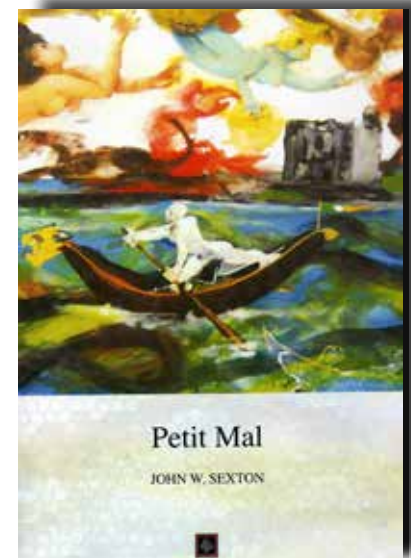
hollow Mercury ...
touch the stone sky
and no more nonsense-talk of space

our faces up against the walls ...
the lens spaceship
pulls the stars closer

stellar measurements
tempt us to the sky ...
dark o mine uranium

pail of voices
from the listening well ...
even the whisper of moonlight

five o'clock shadow
of penicillin ... gingerbread man
hosts our health



Grandma Whale

sea-lice niggling
their skin ... foreheads bright
with the moon

rode upon a shoal
of hake ... teased the Kraken's
son awake

internal seas ...
coral cities
inhabiting themselves

Leviathan ... in the grit
of his drying tears
mermaids flounder

rising from sea-mud
... the many-windowed
ship scrapers

we ate the lice
of Grandma Whale - eight were nice
and two were stale

in the foamy lace
of her sleeves ... seals bask
on sequins

A Dream Letter from Her Birth Mother

Your bladder-wrack hair
was dry as the air
the day I left you

From the steeple of the bridge
the river's green
was blue

Sunshine minted
a perfect coin
on the toe of my shoe

The sea fell up
as the sky fell down
and I followed it too

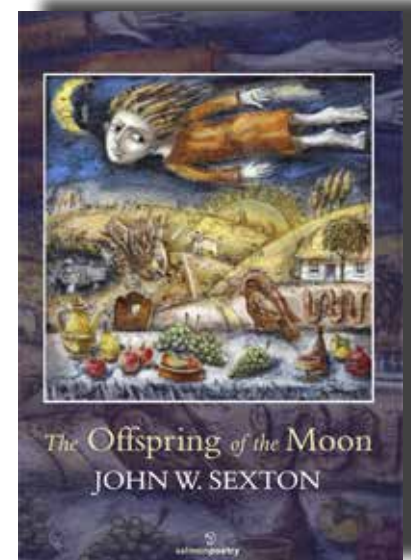
A garden of blood
grew in my brain
took all I knew

Under the sea
is an apricot-stone
from which the world grew

Step from the ledge
and the sea will rise up
a mist to haul you

And when you breathe
the salty sea
you'll begin to breathe true

Come down to me here
where the world began
and you'll begin too



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 in prison

The loving smile in his eyes
reminds me of our first kiss.

Now I hear the shout of the guard:
'Five minutes. No touching.'

A table separates us
yet I can hear his breath.

He breaks our silence:
'Listen. You'll be released soon.
I want you to forget me
do not think of me anymore.
Find a good man who will
treat our baby as his
and marry him.'

I cannot bear his words.
'I will never forget you.
our child will know everything about you.'

'No. I'm the past.
Don't live with our memories.
The child needs a future.
Live with the Future.'

'Times up.'

Quickly he arches his body over the table
and kisses my mouth.
Our child growing in my belly, kicks me
as the guard drags my husband away to be shot.

Veiled Venus

Nude Venus dating back to second century BC,
is no longer nude
she is veiled up
in a white washed box
to please the president
of the Islamic Regime of Iran.
Suddenly all the pride
Italy had for its arts
dropped like a penny
in a signing ceremony
of \$18 billion deal.



Beautiful Differences

He was four years old
when he escaped with his parents.
Every time they went out
his eyes filled with anxiety
he asked them
not to talk in Kurdish
so that people wouldn't realise
they were foreigners.
His parents told him
they can't speak English,
so he asked them not talk at all then
not in public.

Humans, Dogs and a Jungle

When Josef was run over
the refugees protested against the police
for not arresting the driver.
They cried out:
'Refugees are humans, not dogs.'
They hadn't learnt
that a driver in Europe
don't dare to run over a dog.

Black and White

He was seven years old
when he ran away with his parents.
He was put in a classroom
full of pale children.
A girl who might not have seen
a black boy before, asked him
where had he come from.
Looking into her sea green eyes
he said:
'From my mother's tummy.'



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.



seeking refuge 25 depositions

thunder rolls
dark rumours drifting
distant hills

fingertips
caress the walls of home
reading braille

summers once
a glass blue sky
without cracks

a staved in door
in the cement step
handprints and a date

thistledown
on the wind
a backward glance

down the path
following my father
without reason

we move in line
a satellite sees
a panic of ants

a childhood
shelved
out of reach

relocating
my childhood
my inner suburb

an ache delving
between syllables
cradle songs

spectral trees
keening the halfnight
winter winds

each step
a process
in the dark

we too
on bare hillsides
listen to the rain

over the border
hope is a sin
forgive us

on flyways
birds flee
tollfree

riding
the wave wash
siren calls

cries sinking
into the sea
emptied grip

a child
facedown in the shallows
line in the sand

a flip flop
a family photograph
some such flotsam

dispossessed
of all
but our shadows

only voices
unchecked
by razor wire

the skin of night
shivers with stars
refracted tears

of the dirt
under fingernails
paradise lost

the severed
never leave
ever returning



this the boy after reading elitis

for aodhán

this the boy
bare skinned
deeply tanned
tousled hair bleached
his radiating curls
like the rays of the sun
in a child's everyday
is summertime
drawing

these the days
when hayrick giants
cross barefoot fields
harvesting childhood
sunshine

this the country
the hillside vineyards
slur the summer haze
where the still air clings
to citric suns
ripening
and cicada trees
keen the overheat
in ever mesmerising
echodrones

this the land
dry as olive bark
parched as
powdered chalk
a scorpion is
a medallion of stone

and under
byzantine domes
shouldering the press
of noon
the golden icons
of the risen lord
glow
on white-washed walls
fringed by monkish pines

this the island
the moving seas
sails testing
the angle of the wind
desires pitching
like proud reefs
caught
in the reels of the sun

these the memories
like sea creatures
sifting the silences
like pliant sponges
wedded to the rocks
beyond the reach
of breathless divers

they're biting (*on a painting by paul klee*)

for gary and rosie villiers-stuart

the sun poised in midsky
rising or setting
he could while with his son
fishing on the shoreline
read the water
peer into its submarine world
the greens and yellows

here fabulous sea creatures
swim its translucency
and floating figures
voyage on invisible currents
carrying discrete cargoes
all these are fair game
for hook and line

and suspended in the middle
defining the marvel of this deep
waiting to be caught
is an exclamation mark
fluked and solid as an anchor
the ready accent on any fisher's story
in the telling and in the hearing



© Anton Floyd

the angel of history

after walter benjamin
on paul klee's painting

- *angelus novus*

see his angel of history
with wings out-spread
turn to face the past
and stare open-mouthed
at the single catastrophe

his world lies wrecked
before him all is ruin
though he looks fixedly
he sees memories fading
blown from view

that storm in paradise
that raged in the past
he sees it raging still
the angel cannot stop it
wants to but cannot stay

wants to redeem our state
from the mere mind
and the leaden heart
wants to make whole
what is dashed and lost

but his wings are caught
in the maelstrom
it propels him backwards
irresistably out of time
leaving us to progress

under the piling ash
that grows skywards
minute by minute
we sift from the debris
vestiges of hope

the kiss

(on seeing the painting
by gustav klimt in vienna)

before this kiss
I was one breath
away from death
I am now a new chloris
your warm breath
regenerates my world
this resurrecting kiss
transforms its monochrome
even as flowers
in their thousands
spread about us
opening a cold ground
a royal raiment
a cloth of gold
negotiating light

concealed within its folds
away from prying eyes
moving
is a healing unicorn
gently conferring
fecundity and peace

we could be
byzantine lovers
forever burning
a sacred fire
forever held
in gold mosaic
a palace icon

in our spiraling intimacy
we are mythic
king and queen
crowned in a golden age
our children will grow
in courtly graces
beauty - joy - charm

the energy of loving
we draw from the rising sun
in which sharp light
there is only truth
I can feel its heat
the impress of your body
the texture of your lips



© Anton Floyd

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



Full Frontal

I see you across the river,
blinded windows
staring over heron stacks
that shock like bizarre haircuts
in the shallows.

Your mouth bares
its bricked teeth
holed now in decay,
an abscess of innards
spitting rotted detritus
out onto the gravel.

What stories took you here?
Whose eyes observed
from ribboned sky-lights
in your slated hair?
Or worse, the windows
never seen in their
asylumed anonymity.

I want to comb your hair,
to soap your face
with tenderness,
to smooth the creases
of your desiccating skin
but I cannot.

For you have seen
in your unblinking stare
across the river's flow
this interloper of the past
and cry again, too late, too late.

Is this what I do?

On a corridor of fresh-painted magnolia
sunbeams stroke from velux windows
onto freckled carpets, while a television
talks too loudly to itself in someone's room.

I find you sleeping, head sagged
as on a mis-hung coat hanger, hair,
just brushed, still full of war-time curls,
a legacy that did not pass itself to me.

I say your name, see the reluctant
wakening of your eyes, the disappointment
you had not slept your way to heaven.
You have told me this before.

Today we talk of blue dresses and funerals
and how you love my coat, and how
you love my coat, the colour redolent
of something already scudding out of view.

You ask me now if this is what you do,
just sit and wait, and wait and sit,
the resignation in your voice
the hardest thing for me to bear.

For in this room, that thief of time
has measured out its false remembrance in
the ticking of a clock, as the past becomes the present
and the present loiters somewhere in the past.

Skunked

The Cowboy Mall
Stillwater, Oklahoma
Summer 1982
I am serving tables in The House of Greek.
Outside on the street
air stifles with a promise
while a tornado bides its time
across the Sooner Plains
and sirens smirk
on waiting intersections.
I take a smoke break,
watch the shoppers tramp
a central thoroughfare until
their Lowry-esque mutations
fossilize into the nostril twitching
canvas of the mall.
A skunk is trapped between
two entrance doors,
its leached mephitis perforating
orifice and pore as easily as smoke
and shoppers wane like ghosts
behind the slap of shop store shutters.
Yet I have smelt much worse back home
where cordite chewed an endless souvenir
through flesh and bone and blood
to leave its permanence tattooed
upon the skin.
No different then
this trespasser and I,
both stalked within our casings
and forever shackled
by the curse of our constraint
until we die.

Duck Egg Blues

My father roasted them,
their soft blue
smothered in the ashes
of a spent day
later buttered and salted
in mugs glaze- crackled
and chipped with the history
of generations.

The peat-smoke taste
waits on my tongue,
remembering -
a flush-faced girl
hunkered by the hearth
and a childhood's riches
stored within the promise
of a single shell.



Kitchen Comforts

Resistance hugs the small kitchen
hiding secrets amongst
gloomy cupboard space,
post-war austerity brooding
on strained shelves.

Empty jars wheedle their
glass weight into the wood,
its protest stifled only
by the hum of a fridge –
a magic fridge procreating
eggs by the dozen
their longevity evidenced only
by an absence of feathers.

Plastic bags like artificial flower heads
scrunch in hidden corners
anticipating usefulness –
receptacles for ashes and potato skins,
swarf from box hedges,
odd bits of wool waiting for the charity shop.

An Easter cactus prospers on a sill
heedless of the pills that leave
their tell tale tips above the parched soil
where she drove them in.

This is the place she planned her day,
where through a kitchen window
the dulled reminders of her life
still resonated in the ordinary –
a rose she'd slipped,
blushing the oil tank in summer,
the remnants of a forgotten meal,
animal fodder on the lawn.

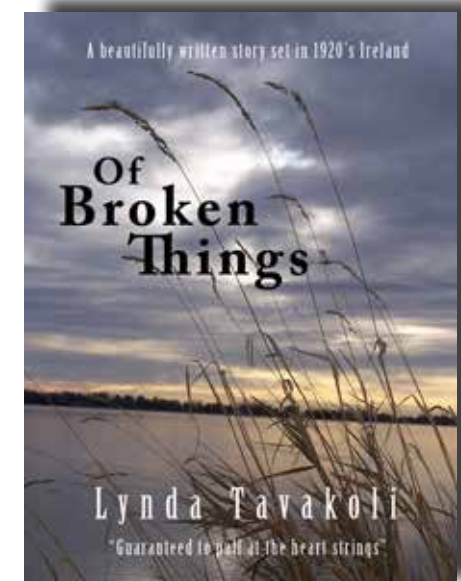
Nothing went to waste
not even the birdsong
wakening her at dawn
that somehow hummed upon her lips
for the remainder of the day.

Forty-three grams

Too early to name
you were too unfinished in the womb
for anyone to love but me.
At fourteen weeks
your stubbed appendages
denied you somehow proper meaning
to the world yet I imagined then
the promise of your touch
and flying fingers some day
glancing on piano keys
or toes that curled like leaves in winter
after frost.

Behind those swollen sockets
I would never know
the colour of your eyes -
if they were brown or blue
or hazel like my own.
But somewhere past a sea of years
I watch you dance beneath a saffron sky
on meadows crusted yellow
in a summer sun
or hear your footfall
whisper soft
on winter snow.

Yet now your nearly heartbeat
grieves in me
its pulse the baby miracle
I never knew.
Just three and forty grams -
a single letter's weight
of life unfinished in the womb.
Too early then to name
so I completed you
inside my head
and loved you
just the same.



Eileen Casey is based in South Dublin. Widely published, Dedalus Press, Faber and Faber, New Island, are among recent inclusions. Her debut poetry collection *Drinking the Colour Blue* was published by New Island in 2008. Literary Awards include: A Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Poetry Fellowship, A Hennessy Award (Emerging Fiction), among others. A debut short story anthology *Snow Shoes* (Arlen House) appeared in 2012, followed by *A Fascination with Fabric* (Arlen House), 2014. She works as a creative writing facilitator, editor and publisher. 'Damage' companion poems first appeared in Issue 17 of *Abridged* (a Northern Ireland Literary Journey) in response to 'Time' as theme.



Damage 1

Woken by sounds of blown out glass
a busted car horn bleating, under yellow streetlight
we were a confusion of limbs, pale hands fisting,
furry slippers, dressing gowns pulled tight.

Firemen came, unwinding news-reels
Miles of it hissing over scorched metal.

As we slept the moon split open – spilling
a million icy crystals over rooftops
glancing off smoke misted bricks
blackened daffodils
heavy enough to stick.

When things quietened down we went back to bed.

This unexpected fall sprouted stubble
on the sandpaper texture of the burnt out car
as if still the engine was ticking over
under its flipped up bonnet;
might any moment roar to life
skid across fresh laid track.

Damage 2

As we slept the moon split open – spilling.

Woken by sounds of blown out glass,
we were a confusion of limbs, pale hands fisting.
Firemen came, un-winding news-reels.

A million icy crystals over rooftops
on the sandpappy texture of the burnt out car
blackened daffodils –

miles of it hissing over scorched metal.
Heavy enough to stick.
Skid across fresh laid track.

This unexpected fall sprouted stubble,
under its flipped up bonnet;
any moment might roar to life
glancing off smoke misted bricks.

When things quietened down we went back to bed
furry slippers, dressing gowns pulled tight.
As if still the engine was ticking over
a busted car horn bleating, under yellow streetlight.



Trekking the Nilgiri mountains of Tamil Nadu, India, remembering the vanishing traditional communities of Todas, Kotas, Irulas, Kurumbas and Paniya - Randhir Khare, award winning Indian Writer, Artist, Teacher, Founding Contributor of Live Encounters Magazine. 2010 www.randhirkhare.in The drawings accompanying the poems are by Randhir Khare.



The Journey

I have brought nothing with me,
Only this pain
Which I hold as a pebble,
Turning it over and over
In the palms of my hands
Unable to throw it away.

I have brought nothing with me,
Only this pebble
Which I squeeze,
Hoping it will melt to water.
For I do not want wish to throw it away:
It may strike stone on stone ,
And spark.

I cannot bury it in this warm south mud,
For it may grow into a tree
And spread its seeds.
So I will raise my open palms
That wind and sun and rain
May wear it away.

Then I shall be free.
I have come as an empty hive,
So one day, your god,
Passing in the wind,
Brings me bees.

I Have Come

I have followed two white beetles
Across the worm-brown plateau,
Up into these hills,
To the sacred places
Where the plough parts folds of mud,
And the stories of your faraway fathers
Rise like mist;
In the groves of bamboo,
Branches scrape and cry,
A calf walks wet on smooth rocks
Following a buffalo bellow
Into the forests of Masinagudy.

I have walked through seasons
Of showers,
Passed cold mouths of streams
And the fire of flowers
And reached a buffalo newly calved,
Milk dripping down thighs,
Turning butter,
Lighting lamps
At the temple of Mariamma.

In frost-times, smoke rises
From Mount Koty,
Footprints of vanishing tribes
Spread out among the rhododendrons,
Ice-fruits melt to water on the grass.

I have come to see God dip his hand
Into empty hives
And make them full with honey;
I have come to eat puffed millet
In a brass bowl.



Agastya Muni

They say you were born from a pitcher,
Singer, sage, fighter, hunter,
That you journeyed
South of the Vindhya
To tame the howling wastes
Wrought by Bhargava;
They say each drop was a spear of glass
That tore the earth;
Along the wounds
Grass spread like blood;
The seasons wandered in
With forests and koels;
You were, they say,
The maker of new words,
The father of new tribes,
The messenger of God.

Who were you Agastya Muni?
Seed of Aryavarta, Journeyman,
Welder of people –
You who kept the Vindhya low
For the traffic of tribes.
Lost in the movement of stars,
Sage of Podiyil;
The past is humbled in this dust...
And yet, yet I feel the wind
Suddenly break and be still,
Waiting.

The Man

He was the father of three tribes,
They knew him well as the man
Who offered his lamp to all gods.
Who carried the crying child,
Who brought out the bellowing calf,
Who had made friends with death.

At the male death-ground of the Ka-s clan,
He danced like a tiger,
Trumpeted like an elephant;
The wind worked well with him,
Taking his song to the waters of the Paikara,
Sowing it like seeds in the earth.

He fasted at the temple of Pexton,
Sacrificed a young goat in Melkunda,
Offered its breath to the wind,
Its flesh to the wilderness,
Its hide to the people,
Keeping for himself, only the memory.

The messenger of death came to him as a bee,
He disappeared, taking with him
His sacred churning vessel,
Spear, buttermilk pots, horn-knife,
Black branding iron, axe, crowbar,
Leaving his history
Written on the parchments of wind.



From The Proud North

I am of the proud north,
 My ancestors grew from the steppes
 Beyond the snows;
 Cattle herders they were,
 Singers of grass and rain,
 Their hands smelling of milk,
 Their eyes filled
 With the silence of centuries.
 Tempered by wind and water
 They broke through dusty hills
 Of the north-west;
 Children of fire come to fulfil
 The prophecies of history.
 Grass grew sweet from blood-rich mud,
 Their cattle heavy with milk
 And child, multiplied;
 From the loins of my ancestors –
 Legions, like stars.

My ancestors built homes
 On the banks of rivers,
 Built empires,
 Wrote history with the blood
 Of broken black men.

I am of the proud north,
 I am milk, I am wheat, I am fire;
 I am the cattle herder,
 The invader, the conqueror,
 The builder of empires;
 Life and death meet in my eyes,
 Meet in the notes of my song;
 My children flow from my loins;
 I am your elder brother,
 The maker of history,
 The flaming seed in shara grass.

You know me well,
 By my nose, my skin, my voice,
 The life and death of my eyes;
 You know me well,
 But wonder why I'm here.

Sleep

Into the dark, hills recede, sleep;
 Three forests away
 Kotas play on plantain clarinets,
 Beat jacktree drums,
 Sing of the dead that have passed
 Like water from their lips,
 Sing of the dead
 Who have lived their lives like tigers,
 Snakes, white butterflies, buffaloes;
 Who knew the dialects of the hills,
 Who felt death come to them
 As an old relative, sleep.

I raise dust in my palm,
 Pour it into air and watch
 Which way the wind travels;
 I must follow the wind
 To high places where the living
 Watch the dead disappear to ash,
 And the night is kind.

I have forgotten what sleep is,
 When muscles melt
 And join the liquid motions of the heart;
 How will I know death?
 I will be a stranger
 In the high places of the wind,
 They will not know me.
 I have always looked forward, burning,
 I have never looked back;
 How would I know what peace is
 When my hands still smell of sweat
 And my eyes drag me to the horizon?
 How would I know what death is?
 I have forgotten I was born.

I am of the north,
 My history tells me
 That we tamed you, wild people,
 Gave you names, religions,
 New languages;
 I am ashamed.

Let me reach the high places of the wind,
 Teach me to sleep,
 Teach me to die;
 First man, first woman, first child,
 Dark as the earth,
 I have come to listen
 To plantain clarinets
 And jacktree drums
 And to your singing
 That makes peace with the stars.



© Randhir Khare

Doreen Duffy studied the various forms of creative writing, at Oxford University online, at UCD and at NUI Maynooth. Her publications include The Ireland's Own Anthology, Circle and Square, The Woman's Way, The Irish Times, The Burning Bush 2 and Brilliant Flash Fiction online. She has received many awards including first place in the Jonathan Swift Poetry Competition and most recently she was awarded the Deirdre Purcell Cup at The Edgeworth Literary Festival. Doreen is working towards her first collection of poetry. www.doreenduffy.blogspot.com



Across Moon and Stars

The lines on my father's face
mapped out a journey for me
across moon and stars
in a sequence of dreams
to shores of embroidered fields.

Guided by ghosts
clouds imitated
shapes of darkened trees
a full moon yielded
shards of light
petered through moist leaves

A hardened skin
protected the life within
thick wooded veins
that withstood great pain
twisted branches, aching limbs

dug down deep in soil
where new roots climb
and he laid my fragile soul
under this watchful sky

The Watchmaker

Hands sweep
over my face
five hours behind,
while you shake open
the pages of the
New York Times
Back home
I pace back and forth
check my watch
again
hands at ten to two
smile up at me
make me think of you

turning wheels
move slowly
grinding secrets
in my mind
like teeth
against a sheet
of precious metal
engraved by time.
Doubts
blown out of proportion
ticking
on the hour
retrace old conversations
press my thumb
along each line,

feel them
hear their rhythm
overlap and intertwine
sketch and shape
each future moment
form a pattern
reflect the light
gently cambered
I realise
like clockwork
in your hands
I come to life



Blue Willow

I saw you first
among those Japanese hills
washed beneath
the water falls blue
your shape drew me in
the coolness came later
the hard edges much later
still
your picture of life
flowers on a vine
intricate, involved
in too deep
I lifted the lid
on which there's no thread
to pick up, follow my sins
I can't close you
blue
seeped over the edge
I have become the secret
within.

Eastern Promise

Back and forth
these letters
more frequently at first,
kept me going
drip fed my heart
eased away the hurt.

So fragile,
like tissues with
red and blue edges,
Envelopes unfolded
a lens on a life line
within translucent pages.

I saw you in paddy fields
moist beneath
tired feet,
aching limbs
pressed footprints
where sallow soles had been.

Narrowed eyes
quietly stared
beneath a wide tilted brim,

while chimes tolled
of the last fires
against an orange sky.

Your language smothered
by long drawn out tails
of sentences in high pitched screams,
from throats of ghosts
where broken stones in temples
brought you to your knees.

I can't turn
the last page
your words are clouded
in my mind
racing thoughts mirror
my view on cold grey skies.

I know this is the day
this is the letter
I will not read to the end,
your heart has been recaptured
but mine will yours remain.

The Mind Fisher

Margarita was a great secret,
a pearl formed
by chance
when a parasite
clambered over the sea bed
penetrated her mother's mind.
Nurtured in mantle tissue
creation began,
thin layers formed slowly
over time.
Desire intensified
but he knew
a pearl harvested too soon
would have layers
that were flawed

he waited

The shadows mirrored
the surface of an orient moon,
perfectly round and smooth.
He followed silk roads
through which light must pass,
until a pearl within soft tissue
with overtones
of rainbow hues lay.
Set apart from others
so rarely touched
he pressed his teeth
lightly along skin,
felt the grit of an idea
release a brainstorm
that finally lashed
black salty water
onto an ocean of white.

Our Pergola

(After a painting by Sylvestro Lega 'The Pergola' 1868)

You romanced me with your language
brought me to this place
built me this pergola
layer on top of layer.

You hid me in the shadows
after a time
while you bathed in light
I no longer suited 'en plein air'

But you could not conceal your stroke
in the small of her back
her translucent lips do not hide your lie
still warm where you grazed hers, gently, sweetly
with unwashed hair that had
so recently caressed mine

Thorns creep ever closer
rambling, barely tied
until rose petals
flutter, abandon their silent vine.
Their scent overwhelms me, touches me
with whispers of their velvet skins
upon warm stones

You brought colour to her life
while your palette knife
undid mine
how cruel of you to close her eyes,
to spare her sight but not spare mine
where I sit between the lines
to watch while you soothe her with your oils

Can't you darken dusk to evening,
not only change the light
but release me from this prison of your mind
Please do not leave me
I will yours remain
If you take me from this
still life.



© Doreen Duffy

Ainé Lyons is a native Dubliner, born in 1936 in a small village (Milltown) on the banks of the Dodder. *In Praise of Small Things* (Fiery Arrow Press) is published to celebrate her eightieth year. Her work has received many awards from literary competitions including, Francis Ledwidge, The Luas Literary Award, The Golden Pen and Jonathan Swift Awards. Carol Ann Duffy, while Poet Laureate in the United Kingdom, highly commended her writing.



In the Slow Time

I dip my feet in garden green, the mellowing
of morning. Sun warms my bones, trees
a summer haze, the earth soft
from last night's rain. Sun is a shimmering
orb colouring my mood.

A gentle buzz of wingéd things whirl
glutinous, giddy. Drowsy from the aphrodisiac
of perfumed flower petals that open
as they nod and shake.
Greet the serenity of the new day.

I'm happy to watch a bee as he labours
from flower to flower, towards the sweet centre.
Yellow roses and peach holly-hocks entwine
like lovers across the ancient back wall.
Is this what happiness is?
My early morning garden is a glorious
mosaic, a stained glass window

in praise of small things.

Let No Teardrop Fall

Now the hour has come
let no teardrop fall.
If my parting leaves a void
fill it with remembered joy.

Think of me always in a garden,
wrestling weeds, planting flowers
to perfume spring.
Pink apple blossom drifts
with a light breeze.

Washing sways on the line
as cheeky sparrows pull
at the untidy weeds
I've left around
knowing at last,
there's no time to finish.



Courtney Lavender is a native born Los Angeleno with deep roots in Ireland. She's spent the better part of her years working both as a performing musician and behind the scenes in travel, licensing, and as a staff writer for Rock Cellar Magazine. She has had additional written works published on TheRumpus.net, and is working toward her first poetry collection. <http://courtneylavender.com>



the unseen silent

my father's fingers into flesh
 spindly spider legs,
 medieval
 clasped around my jaw
 and further into cheeks.
 the crushing sense of breathless
 but breath
 left unacknowledged.

it was my voice he wanted.

it was my charged-up challenge
 and youth in wisdom whispered.
 to remove the mirror.

so, secrets under pseudonym
 dreamt i,
 aged nine
 to make sense of all the senseless.
 the give voice back to the voiceless.

what we hold unseen is silent.
 do not carry a reliance
 that presence
 conveys
 nuance.
 write words to make it meaning.

 use your name.

what was and what might have been

you sang and the curtain billowed
 in a gust of warm spring wind
 that filled my lungs with los angeles dust
 and my head with dizzy lust
 for the moment
 in a light cloud room
 with a single candle dancing
 and your voice to haunt the air
 for years to come.
 and i thought,
 remember this.

all memory is sewn to song
 through a needle's eye
 on a tapestry of time.
 and your song is sewn to mine
 however silent,
 reticent.
 and i will
 remember this.



eire

she picked me up
by the breadth of a hair
and threw me into a wall.

i am dizzy,
intoxicated by
the voice of her people,
her song of the sea,
her whisper on the wind.

“you fit here,” i was told.
“you’re one of us.”

yet i’m a bony heap
tossed carelessly,
limp neck and
limbs akimbo,
tangled in a corner
5,000 miles from the
force of her throw.

i chronicle as loose-leaf
all vision and sound.
i remember the melody
lifted from the waves.
it does not belong to me
though i must
to it.

she carved it from fierce gales
into the cliffs of my
shoulder blades.
she breathed it into
my spine.

33 vertebrae,
singing.
twisted and contorted,
upside down and out of key
in the crook of
memory.

underside

you have to face the underside of everything you’ve loved,
adrienne rich said
and all i can think is how
by shunning you
in all your ignorance
in all your brash bravado
i must be shunning love itself
as if it could be worth less
from someone you dismiss
so is itself dismissed
and i’m safe to believe
that you’ve turned away



John Mullen was born in Dublin in 1968. He was brought up in Dun Laoghaire and currently lives in Wicklow. He studied Veterinary Medicine in UCD. He qualified in 1990 and spent 10 years in the UK in veterinary practice. Since 2001, he has been employed as a state veterinarian. John has a long standing interest in poetry but only started to write seriously in the last 5 months. This is the first time his work has been published in a public forum.



The Revenant

I hear they have recently discovered
One of your old scores buried in a drawer
At a Czech museum, music uncovered
After two hundred years, a solo for
A soprano on recovering her voice
After four months out of "Trafonio's Cave".
The evidence points to the Cantata being
A collaboration, perhaps from choice
With your great rival, before you drove
Him mad with envy and bad feeling.

How marvellous it must be to hear once more
Those melodious notes that rose and climbed
Like wild pollen from your ink pot, to soar
And then settle on the score, fat grapes on a vine.
With what rough magic can some skilfully till
Elemental soil? Or mine through deep fissures
Of pleasure and pain buried in our brains,
With what alchemy of mind can they distil
Out a liquor of truth from human nature?
Their gift, an everlasting harvest remains.

Is it that your genius is divinely
Inspired? This is not very scientific!
And I am a novice now cowed behind
Promethean shoulders, modern physics
Allows for many Mozarts, creating their art
In multiple universes, perhaps
Your verses are no more than a peacock's feather?
A million eyes to fan a yearning heart.

But science is all ice and stone and collapse
Music is the force that ties it all together.

Harvest

That August in Alsace,
worshipping wine,
You performed your sacred sipping rites,
Sluicing the juicy reds and steely whites
In your plummy mouth,
a liturgy of the vine;

Gewurtztraminer,
Riesling,
Sylvaner,
Pinot Noir.

Your thirsty blood was turned to wine,
And that wild blood was mine,
For I was the son of Dionysus.

You were crucified on your vine,
I tied myself to mine,
And began the slow declining rot
Of a blind acolyte.

And then that vision of you
Looking at me over your shoulder,
A ghoulish self portrait
In a bar room mirror.

The same sickened red eyes,
The same thickened layers of decay,
Holding the excavated chalice,
Painted by the same anonymous artist.



Cú Chulainn

When you were angry,
You grew as big as the house,
Huge as Cú Chulainn in my story,
Whilst I turned into a mouse.

Your face was as red and fat,
As one of grannies best tomatoes,
One eye wide as the wild cat,
The other an eye in the potatoes.

I could see half the way
Into the black hole of your belly,
As you sucked all the air away,
And roared my skinny legs to jelly.

When you keeled over and died,
The barometer hit zero,
And I cried when I finally realised,
After you there'd be no more heroes.

The 7am Girl

For Julia

Little pink alarm, sounding in your room
A gentle intrusion upon my sleep,
In the garden another winter storm
Is moaning unheeded, as you sweep
Around the silent house, a friendly ghost
Mending the world to order for a day.
Soon you will cast your spells on burning toast,
Leave behind you a kitchen in disarray,
But fathers' eyes fall light on daughter's faults.
And these ordinary days are forgotten
Like mortar holding up a home; yet false
Memory won't deny this morning benediction.
In the long days to come when I am gone
May you be the life that quietly carries on.

Dystocia

It snowed heavily through the night,
They couldn't give her enough attention.
It was already after dawn,
When the two men returned.
She was down in her box,
With her foal breeched
In the birth canal.

Locked into her hips,
Its triangular hocks stuck
Out behind her,
A pair of rabbit ears
On mannequin limbs,
Feet flexed towards the sky.

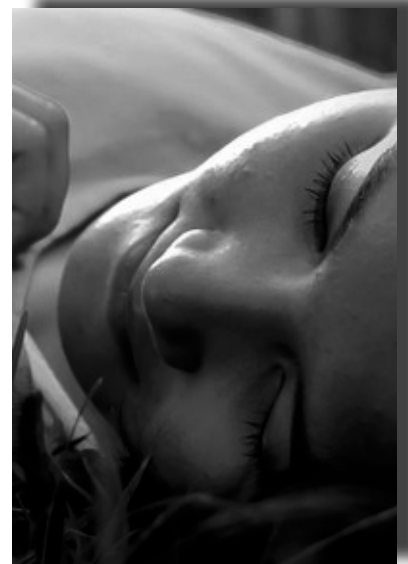
She had finally given up,
Exhausted from frustrated strain,
She lay on the frozen hay
In a cold sweat,
A cold cauldron.

*I knew she'd be a bad mother,
Has notions of herself,
Too haughty by half.
Save some beestings
For the others,
Need to cut this one out.*

Inside her, curled up like a kidney
Another one clung
To the edge of existence.

An Extra

I wait in the wings,
Wait for the show
to end so I
can have my go
in front of an
empty theatre.



Einsatzgruppen

"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"
Exodus 23:2

There was no use for poetry,
No time for weakness,
No time to reflect.
Merciless hours,
Ran away like shells through a machine gun.
We worked night and day, and soon
The dawn and dusk bled
The same shade of red.

There were men in the village asking after me.....

We were all so young then,
Even the older men recovered
Something of their arrested boyhood.
There was family and camaraderie
In our flea infested dormitories.
And everywhere there was hierarchy,
And we were the strong, we got to choose
Who would win and who would lose.

This was our season,
This was our time to turn the tide,
This was our time to re-write,
This was our time to re-align,
This was our time to retrieve,
This was our time to believe,
A time to throw away the past
Like a pair of broken glasses.

Our fathers were hard men,
And duty followed us everywhere,
There was duty in the wet meadows,
And duty lived in the dark forests,
There was duty in the dug out ditches,
And duty flew with the eagles,
There was duty in the shovels,
And duty howled with the wolves.

There were men in the village asking after me.....

Yes, maybe there was tyranny
In our oaths of obedience,
And yes, they were dissonant days;
Days when the strong shot their own dogs,
Days when the weak dug their own graves,

Days that tried to revive our old conscience.
But our will was wrung in wrought iron,
And our hearts cast in forged brass.

There was sleight of hand,
We knew the future generations would not
Understand what we were trying to do.
And there was denial.
Those nearby closed up their windows,
Easier to look the other way than die.
There was complicity.
A vain oak leafed philosopher incinerated our thoughts
And we scraped the cruel simplicity of action from the ashes.

Old age has taken any certainty,
Was I an actor in a travelling troupe?
History seems a staged production,
One I can still see on satellite TV.

I have only the birds in the trees to value me,
I am an old stray hound pining for his master,
I see the veins, break across my face,
A rotting corpse in the shaving mirror.

There were men in the village asking after me.....

There are days of late,
When half drunk
On the veranda
I can convince myself
I wasn't there,
And then the children come,
Running past my gate.





Live encounters

POETRY

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

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas