

Live Encounters celebrates 7 years 2010-2016

# Live encounters

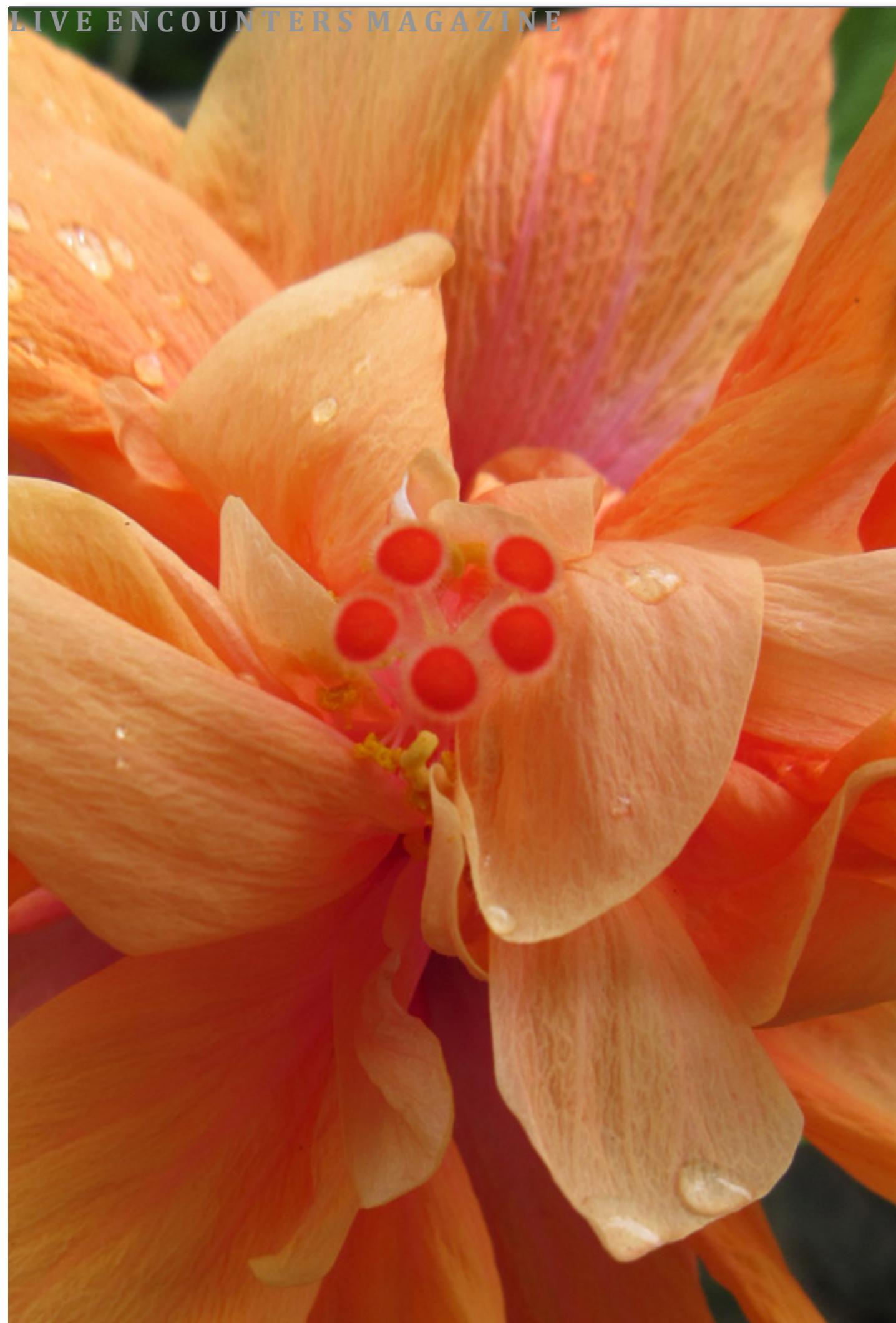
POETRY

OFFERING

Free online magazine from village earth

Volume Two December 2016

GUEST EDITORIAL  
**JOHN FITZGERALD**  
POET & WRITER



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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

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Cover photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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## Guest Editorial and poems, Rules and Beauty

John Fitzgerald

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



## Three Poems Inspired by Women

Terry McDonagh

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



## As Always, Indiscreet

Lee Upton

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



## From Domestic Garden

John Hoppenthaler

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



## Replies to Ch'ü Yüan

Richard Jarrette

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



## Whale Breath Days

Rachel Brownlow

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

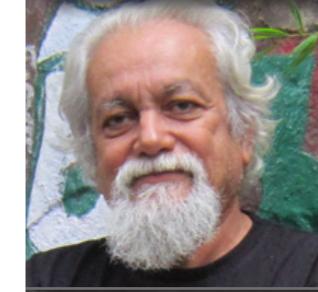
Celebrating 7 years 2010-2016



## The Sound of the Andes

Claudia Serea

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



## Voices in the Dark

Randhir Khare

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



## Mythopoesis

Alessandra Bava

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



## Pitiable Love

Patrick Cotter

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



## In the Absence of Boundaries

Linda Ibbotson

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



## Solace

Laura J. Braverman

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



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

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



**JOHN FITZGERALD**  
POET, WRITER, EDITOR  
**ON LOVE AND POETRY**

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

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

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

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

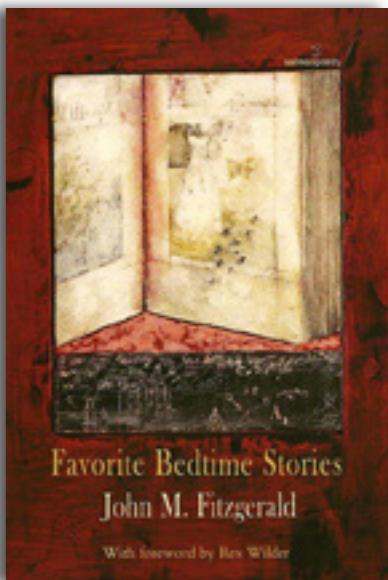
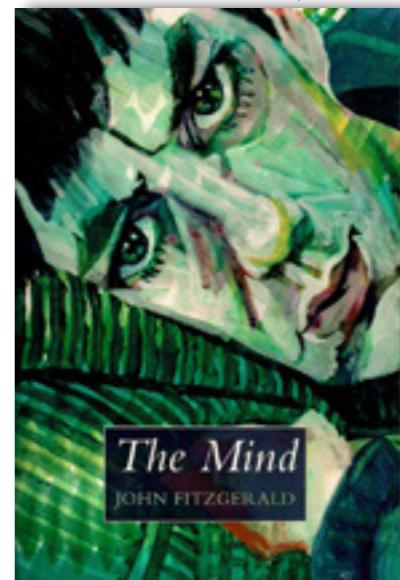
I'm not sure if that's breaking the rules, or not abiding by them at all and thus disqualifying. Because it's important how words are placed upon a page. If you're no Haiku you're no Haiku, if you're not a Sonnet, you're not a Sonnet.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## RULES

### One

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

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

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

### Two

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

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

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

### Three

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

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

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

### Four

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

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

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



## RULES

### Five

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

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

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

### Six

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

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

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

### Seven

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

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

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

### Eight

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

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

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



## RULES

### Nine

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

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

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

### BEAUTY

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

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

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

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

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



## Three poems inspired by women:

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

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

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

## Glore River Woman

for Sally McKenna

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

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

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



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## Three Ladies

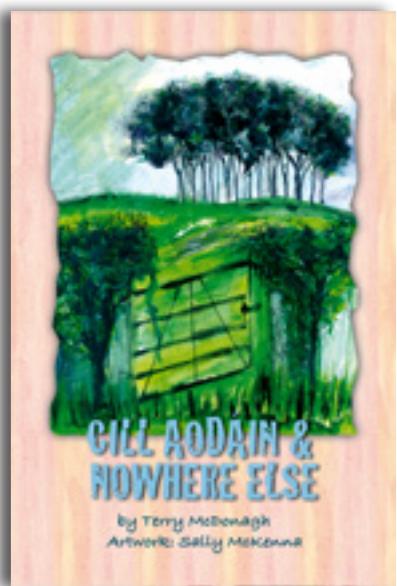
*for my sister, Patricia*

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

## Sabrina Said...

*for Sabrina Goerlitz*

seeing the word  
Schleswig Holstein  
in an English poem  
makes me think  
  
its heart is romantic  
and poetic  
a little continent  
embraced by the sea  
  
different from  
the rest of Germany:  
windy, flat and rough  
a bit like parts of Ireland.



© Terry McDonagh

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



## Scenes from Romantic Movies

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

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

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

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

## After *The Winter's Tale*

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

## No More Monkeys

*"No more monkeys jumping on the bed"*  
 - children's song  
*"Poppies will put them to sleep."*  
 - *The Wizard of Oz*

No more monkeys  
 ripping stuffing out of chests.

No more flunkies  
 puttingter in a shed.

No more aunties  
 crying in their hemms.

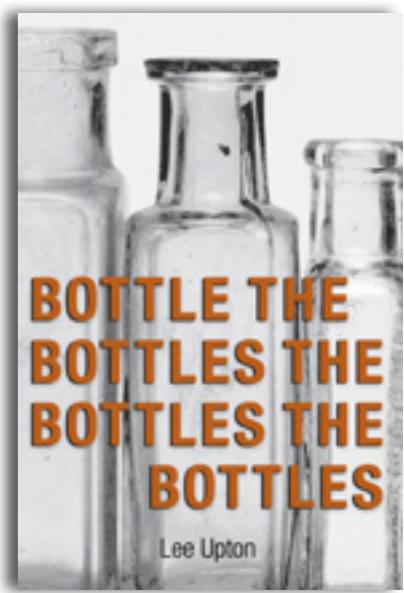
No more fakers  
 clinging to their threads.

No more poppies  
 turning veins to shreds.

No more electrodes  
 in a monkey's head.

No fewer fanatics  
 charging for clicks.

No more money  
 knocked out of politics.



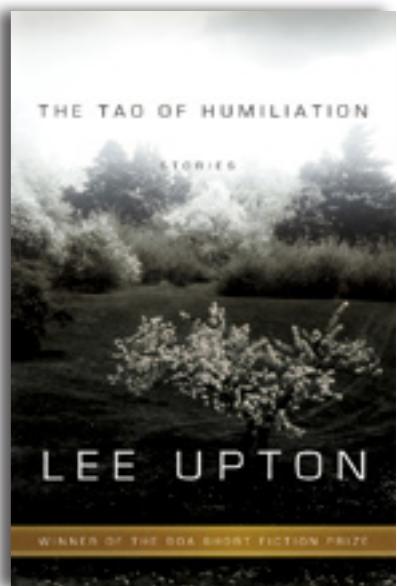
© Lee Upton

## Art

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

## A Defense of Poetry

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



© Lee Upton

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



## Domestic Garden

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

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

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

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

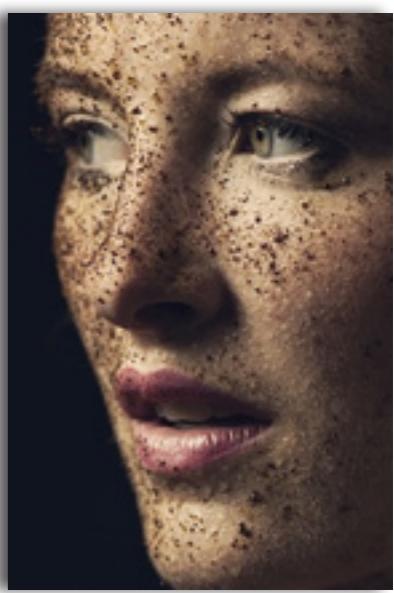
Should they grow on me—fugitive varietals  
I never thought to plant—will they lure  
your bouquet any closer, spirit

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

## Faith

She stares at the lineup of men  
who all look like Jesus  
and finally points out the one  
who most resembles Him,  
swarthy and bearded,  
a lot like Cat Stevens,  
so angelic she wants to kiss Him  
like a lover on the lips.

He is the only one who seems  
at ease. Should He wink at her,  
it would mean more than conspiracy;  
it would mean that she'd gone beyond  
the call of duty to finger Jesus  
for his crimes and to love Him  
just the same.



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## Immigrant Song

"Das ist kein Amerika," my mother told me  
Uncle Eddie would say after just a few weeks  
  
in Jersey, "Das ist Fehlerika!" Ein Fehler—mistake—  
land of mistake. Bad decision. Error. Misstep.  
  
Wrong turn. Dead end. Comma  
splice. Run on sentence. Fumble  
  
words—the ball. Drop the ball;  
drop the night class. Wrong bus. Wrong  
  
stop. Wrong neighborhood. Wrong country.  
Failure. Ein Fehler. "Das ist kein Amerika."  
  
My uncle died young, a mistake.  
He made an error and he died.

## Triolet for Joseph

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



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## Sleeping in Elizabeth Bishop's Bedroom

—Great Village, Nova Scotia

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

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

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

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

## A Walk by the Old House before Visiting the Nursing Home

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

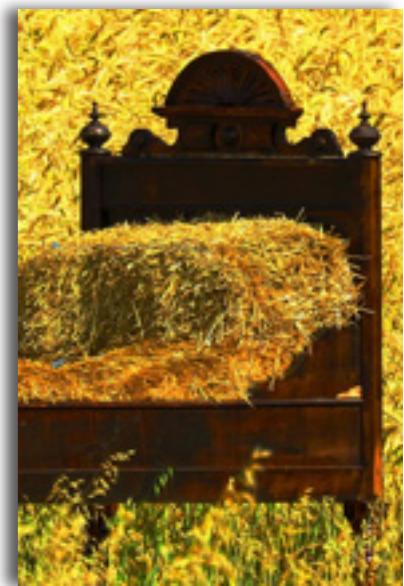
Keep an eye on every crack  
in the sidewalk. The rosemary

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

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

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

See how awfully she wants to go home?  
She envies you the ratty sneakers,  
how just now you seemed capable of anything.



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



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

*How were sun and moon joined together?*

### Visions of Ekaterina

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

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

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

Li Po joined himself to the moon with wine.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Two Marys

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

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

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

ever too fierce for other stars and other god, the happy one.  
I loved coming home to your contortion practice, your single-piece python-pattern leotard, Coco the Cat ignoring whatever—riderless black horses in the kitchen, dust devils in the dojo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Certainty

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

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

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

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

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

*And why is the southeast tilting down?*

## The Last Poem Before A Thousand Years of Peace

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

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

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

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

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



© Richard Jarrette

*Where does great Elder Wind-Star live?*

## More Elusive Than The Great White Whale

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*What opens out to bring morning light?*

## What Brings

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

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

*Mas vieja que la iglesia tiene alma.* I loved your gift for waking languages with your tongue and with your eyes, and sometimes with your hips and breasts—*He has a soul older than the church.* And then you took Coco's face in your hands, careful

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

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

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



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



## Whale Breath Days

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

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

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

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

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

## White Wine

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



© Rachel Brownlow



## After

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

## Slipping

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



## The peach after the pit has been removed

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

## Soft Rot

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

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



## The sound of the Andes

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

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

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

*the coolness of dew droplets*

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

*a girl in a red dress  
against basalt columns*

*heavy snow on pines*

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

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

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

A man walks by with a cane.

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



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## High wire

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

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

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

a sharp note  
on a guitar string,

sparkling on an eyelash  
like a tear.

Will you catch me  
when I fall?

## On a windy night

All the windows are open.

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

Invisible feet run,  
leap.

The curtains move.  
The chandelier clinks.

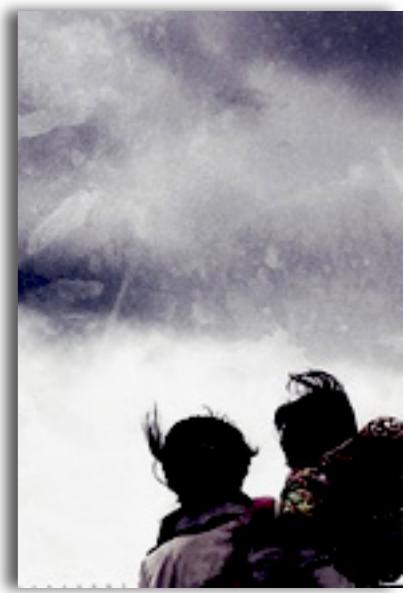
Who's passing through  
the dining room?

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

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

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

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



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## Red mountain, blue hill

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

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

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

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

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

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

## On 7th Avenue

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

Red and green,  
seedless, juicy,  
sweet.

They must be  
sweet.

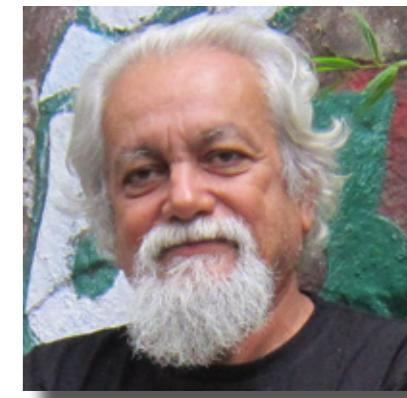
I'm sure  
they're sweet.



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

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



## The Glowing Ones

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

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

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

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

*continued overleaf*

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## The Glowing Ones *continued*

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

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

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

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



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## A Kunbi Shaman Speaks

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

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

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

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

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



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



## Calypso Abandoned

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

## Call Me Mermaid

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



© Alessandra Bava

## Cassandra Speaks

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

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

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

## Slaughterhouse (Cassandra Speaks #2)

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

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

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

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



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### My Pen (Cassandra Speaks #3)

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

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

### Prophecy (Cassandra Speaks #4)

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



© Alessandra Bava

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



## Journey

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

## Anthracite Love

How blond still the young coal miner's hair.  
 Of his skin, only his lips and nipples resist the dust.  
 His lover is thrilled to see him thus while youth  
 still shapes the contours of his arms. The fine grit  
 transfers between them. He loves marking  
 the whiteness of her skin, she loves the streaks  
 where she has ground him clean. As a boy he played  
 at being preacher; lecturing stones and fallen leaves  
 as his peers tusseled around him. Of women  
 he was more used to seeing their backs, kneeling in church.

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



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## Malagasy Aubade

You, who are au fait with so much:  
yoga, the Amazon, the tart flavour  
of well-made tagines.... you are  
  
the medium some ghost talks through.  
For me, diving upright into cold air  
is keen pain, as is fleeing the gazelle's  
  
form you impressed in my bed. Hell  
is the absence of your heat warming  
me. Hellish the ghostly chill. Morning,  
  
shedding covers is like stripping skin.  
Last night when you rose to leave, the stars  
had barely risen. My thrusts had ousted  
  
a benevolent fiendkin from between your teeth;  
a rasping in French as we wrestled on. You  
were like a sleepwalker I dared not rouse.  
  
Your skin's jet, my flint, our different colors  
writhing in a zebra meld, I see again and again;  
your absconding back, reflecting the lunar sheen.

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

How blond still the young coal miner's hair.  
Of his skin, only his lips and nipples resist the dust.  
His lover is thrilled to see him thus while youth  
still shapes the contours of his arms. The fine grit  
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A man who sells dolls could never dig underground.  
After her first baby she will have eaten enough of coal.



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



## Prelude

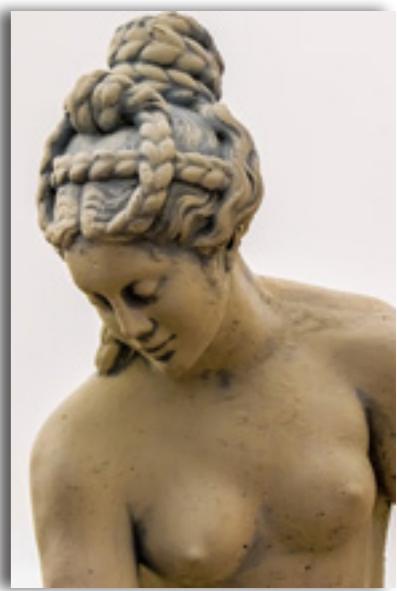
Born on the cusp of the Western wind  
Persephone emerged from tips of whitethorn,  
tight buds unfurling from winter silence.  
She awakens, stretches the ocean's hem  
as if searching for a new boundary.  
Above, a swan paints the sky with its wing.  
A cathedral cannot hold such beauty within its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

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

And I began to listen.

## Homage to Kinsale

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



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## Jazz

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Glimpse of the Surreal

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



© Linda Ibbotson

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



## Pilgrim

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

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

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

## The City That Used To Be Mine

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

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

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



© Laura J. Braverman



## Eggshells

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

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

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

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

## In Memorium

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## To a Color

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

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

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

## Mourner's Pass

We're above the tree line now—  
beyond the pastures of grazing cows,  
the long lines of silvery beech,  
beyond the bands of mountain pine.

We reach the alpine tundra—  
jutting rocks, brittle shrubs,  
and grey grass—the windshield  
dusted by fine beads of rain.

As we climb, mist alters to wet snow,  
and higher still, to powder—dry and  
white and sifted over the high crest  
of the journey's path, where we stop  
in a fairy world. Fog embraces  
the reach of the sharp-edged peaks.  
With wind and snowfall blowing,  
the air is brisk—as bracing as waking up—  
but waking up to everything.

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

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