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Live encounters

POETRY

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GUEST EDITORIAL
HELENE CARDONA
POET & WRITER



Guest Editorial and poems, Myth & Memory Hélène Cardona

Hélène Cardona's most recent books include *Life in Suspension* (Salmon Poetry) and *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (Salmon Poetry), and the translations *Beyond Elsewhere* (Gabriel Arnou-Laujeac, White Pine Press), *Ce que nous portons* (Dorianne Laux, Éditions du Cygne), and, with co-translator Yves Lambrecht, Walt Whitman's *Civil War Writings* for *WhitmanWeb*. She co-edits *Plume* and *Fulcrum: An Anthology of Poetry and Aesthetics*, and contributes essays to *The London Magazine*. She holds a Master's in American Literature from the Sorbonne, and taught at Hamilton College and Loyola Marymount University.



Voyeur Hour Elena Karina Byrne

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



A Little Flame Charlotte Innes

Charlotte Innes is the author of *Descanso Drive*, a first book of poems, to be published by Kelsay Books in 2017. She has also published two chapbooks, *Licking the Serpent* (2011) and *Reading Ruskin in Los Angeles* (2009), both with Finishing Line Press. Her poems have appeared in *The Hudson Review*, *The Raintown Review* and *Rattle*, with some anthologized in *Wide Awake: Poets of Los Angeles and Beyond* (Beyond Baroque Books, 2015) and *The Best American Spiritual Writing for 2006* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006), amongst others.



69th and Elizabeth Cynthia Schwartzberg Edlow

Books: *The Day Judge Spencer Learned the Power of Metaphor. Old School Superhero Loves a Good Wristwatch* (chapbook). Prizes, partial: Tusculum Review, Red Hen Press, Willow Review, Smartish Pace, three Pushcart Prize nominations. Journals, partial: American Literary Review, American Poetry Review, Barrow Street, Cimarron Review, Georgetown Review, Gulf Coast, Plume, Tahoma Literary Review, Texas Review. Anthologies, partial: Even the Daybreak, Drawn to Marvel, Emily Dickinson Awards Anthology. 2nd full-length poetry collection forthcoming, 2017: *Horn Section All Day Every Day*.



Shades Angela Patten

Angela Patten was born and raised in Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin. She now lives in Burlington, Vermont, where she teaches creative writing and literature at the University of Vermont. Her work has been published in a wide variety of literary journals and anthologies. She is author of three poetry collections, *In Praise of Usefulness* (Wind Ridge Books, Vermont), *Reliquaries and Still Listening*, both from Salmon Poetry, Ireland, and a prose memoir, *High Tea at a Low Table* (Wind Ridge Books, Vermont).



What we carry - Dorianne Laux (poems translated by Hélène Cardona)

Dorianne Laux's books include *The Book of Men* (W.W. Norton), winner of the Paterson Poetry Prize; *Facts about the Moon* (W.W. Norton), recipient of the Oregon Book Award and short-listed for the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize; *Awake* (Boa Editions); *What We Carry Carry* (Boa Editions), finalist for the National Book Critic's Circle Award, and *Smoke* (Boa Editions). Dorianne teaches poetry and directs the MFA program at North Carolina State University and she is founding faculty at Pacific University's Low Residency MFA Program.



Sighting Perie Longo

Perie Longo, Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara, California (2007-2009), has published five books of poetry, the latest titled *Baggage Claim* (WordTech Editions, 2014). Three time Pushcart Prize nominee, her work has appeared in *Askew*, *Atlanta Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *International Poetry Review*, *Miramar Magazine*, *Nimrod*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Rattle*, *Solo*, and other journals, anthologies and texts. She teaches poetry privately and for the Santa Barbara Writers Conference. A psychotherapist, she integrates poetry for healing and is poetry chair of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.



Memory & Desire Hedy Habra

Hedy Habra has authored two poetry collections, *Under Brushstrokes*, finalist for the USA Best Book Award and the International Book Award, and *Tea in Heliopolis*, winner of the USA Best Book Award and finalist for the International Book Award. Her story collection, *Flying Carpets*, won the Arab American National Book Award's Honorable Mention and was finalist for the Eric Hoffer Award. Her book of criticism, *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa*, explores the visual aspects of the Peruvian Nobel's narrative.



Travelling in the wake... Irene Kyffin

Born in Ireland, Irene Kyffin is now based in London. As well as writing her own poetry, she created a programme of jazz/poetry fusion with the great jazz pianist Stan Tracey on the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins, which she presented at many Literary Festivals around the UK. Irene has written and presented papers on Hopkins in the US and Ireland, giving readings as well. Whilst in Denver, Colorado, to deliver academic papers, she ran Shakespeare workshops and taught English and American Literature.



Words Helen Harrison

Helen Harrison is a published Poetry Writer based in Co. Monaghan, Ireland. Her poetry has been accepted into various magazines and journals. Helen writes observational poetry inspired by the minutiae of life.



Sky Gone Green Caley O'Dwyer

Caley O'Dwyer lives in Los Angeles where he teaches creative writing and psychology at Antioch University. His poems appear in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Cream City Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Warwick Review*, *Curator*, *Ekphrasis*, *Washington Square*, and other venues, including the Tate Modern Museum in London. He is a winner of an Academy of American Poets Prize, a three-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize, and a recipient of a Helene Wurlitzer grant for poetry. His book, *Full Nova*, was published by Orchises Press.



Cauldron of the Black Buddha Jack Grady

Jack Grady is a founder member of the Mayo, Ireland-based Ox Mountain Poets. A past winner of the Worcester County (Massachusetts) Poetry Contest, his poetry has appeared in *Crannóg*, *Poet Lore*, *A New Ulster*, *The Worcester Review*, *North West Words*, *Mauvaise Graine*, *Outburst Magazine*, *The Runt*, *The Galway Review* (online), *Algebra of Owls*, and in the anthologies *And Agamemnon Dead*, *A New Ulster's Voices for Peace*, *Poetry Anthology Centenary Voices April 2016*, and *21 Poems, 21 Reasons for Choosing Jeremy Corbyn*.

Hélène Cardona's most recent books include *Life in Suspension* (Salmon Poetry) and *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (Salmon Poetry), and the translations *Beyond Elsewhere* (Gabriel Arnou-Laujeac, White Pine Press), *Ce que nous portons* (Dorianne Laux, Éditions du Cygne), and, with co-translator Yves Lambrecht, Walt Whitman's *Civil War Writings* for *WhitmanWeb*. She co-edits *Plume* and *Fulcrum: An Anthology of Poetry and Aesthetics*, and contributes essays to *The London Magazine*. She holds a Master's in American Literature from the Sorbonne, and taught at Hamilton College and Loyola Marymount University.

HELENE CARDONA

POET, ACTOR, TRANSLATOR

ON CREATIVITY AND POETRY

My earliest feelings of elation from the power of literature started when I was a child. Reading transported me to other realms and, after I closed the book, the world around me looked new and different.

Books are our teachers. English is my sixth language and it chose me. Not just the literature, the teachers too, in high school in Paris, then Cambridge, inspired me most.

Poetry can be a multi-dimensional language, speaking to all the senses, to intelligence, emotion, imagination, to convey the unsayable. To quote Américo Ferrari, there is "an unspeakable where, perhaps, the nucleus of the living relation between the poem and the world resides." Responding to the question, *How does poetry help people to live their lives*, W.S. Merwin answered, "The source that rises unbroken from the unsayable speaks to us of the impulse and mystery that we share with every living creature. The urge is meaningless, like the unknown itself, and in the end remains, by nature, unsayable." Georges Bataille wrote that "It is possible that the impossibility of poetry is itself the condition of poetry."

Poetry redeems, heals, changes lives, has power to bring us together by unifying experience. It is both personal and universal. It enriches and contributes to the fullness of human life. It invents language to celebrate and honor, makes us think, wonder, and opens us up to re-engage with the world and to the mystery.

Poetry opens a window into the subconscious and allows us into another reality in ourselves. It opens and reconnects us to other dimensions within ourselves that remain closed to the conscious mind. It awakens and nourishes the imagination, is a door to the unknown, mysterious, unexpected, miraculous. It leaves us astonished, in the presence of the Divine. Poets, literary translators and artists assume the roles of intermediaries, technicians, magicians, shamans and alchemists.

For me, poetry is a process of self-revelation, an exploration of hidden dimensions in myself, and it is at the same time a way to become myself, a process of individuation I try to create throughout my life—a profound experience of the fundamental interconnection throughout the universe. Moreover, writing is cathartic as it extends a search for peace, for serenity, rooted in a desire to transcend and reconcile the fundamental duality I see in life. Ultimately, I seek expansion of consciousness.

Arthur William O'Shaughnessy writes:

*We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by the lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams:
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams;
Yet we are the movers and shakers
of the world forever, it seems.*

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Poetry and translations bridge cultural differences, geographic distances, and awaken the imagination, in our attempt to re-enchant the world. Everything feeds the creative endeavor, the writing. Everything. Life. Consciously and subconsciously. Marguerite Duras describes her writing as *écriture courante*, an ideal writing in which passive, receptive states allow the unconscious to surface and solicit the imagination. In her essay *Writing*, she states: "Writing comes like the wind. It's naked, it's made of ink, it's the thing written, and it passes like nothing else passes in life, nothing more, except life itself." Which reminds me of John FitzGerald's *A Mind Like the Wind*: Parts 77 & 78 from his poetry collection *The Mind*:

Between formations of the mind,
a look is nearly all that can be given.
Mere acknowledgment of existence is what creates it.

Exchange is what formation is all about.
The wind becomes the shape of the tree,
and when it does, the tree remembers it's alive.

We create to expand our consciousness, to extend time. We create to reinvent ourselves. We write to bring forth the treasures hidden within. And we must embrace our fear of failure. When I studied with Ellen Burstyn at the Actors' Studio in New York, she taught us about using meditation as a conduit to creativity. She taught us about living in awe.

Birds and climbers consider trees a destination.
But the wind is shapeless, just passing by.
It blows all the way through and is different when it goes.

Imagine the wind on the other side,
it bears the scent of fruit, and birdsongs,
so does the mind through the man come to life.

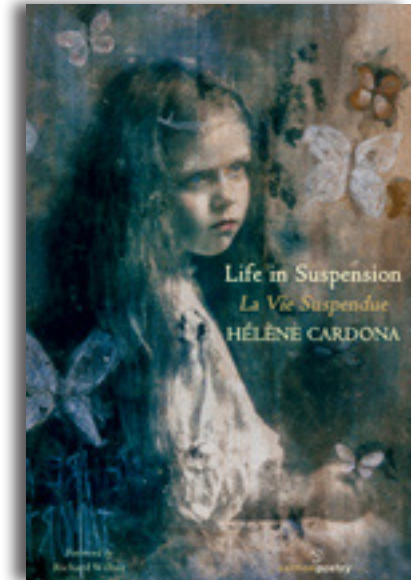
The wind and the tree change one another for but a moment,
and the moment alters time forever.
For the wind brings a sound and a touch of its own.

I've felt the breeze transcend my back, and it's a shudder, like the leaves.
Leaves spiral down, elated, reach the ground and just remain there.
And won't move again till the wind returns.

We are part of a lineage. We stand on the shoulders of all the poets, writers and artists who have come before us. What is a poet? In *Either/Or* Kierkegaard answers, "An unhappy man who hides deep anguish in his heart, but whose lips are so formed that when the sigh and cry pass through them, it sounds like lovely music.... And people flock around the poet and say: 'Sing again soon'—that is, 'May new sufferings torment your soul but your lips be fashioned as before, for the cry would only frighten us, but the music, that is blissful.'"

We create to expand our consciousness, to extend time. We create to reinvent ourselves. We write to bring forth the treasures hidden within. And we must embrace our fear of failure. When I studied with Ellen Burstyn at the Actors' Studio in New York, she taught us about using meditation as a conduit to creativity. She taught us about living in awe. Jack Gilbert wrote in *Refusing Heaven*:

*We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure,
but not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have
the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless
furnace of this world. To make injustice the only
measure of our attention is to praise the Devil.*



In Search of Benevolent Immortality

*Someone I loved once
gave me a box full of darkness.
It took me years to understand
that this too, was a gift.*
— Mary Oliver

My mother sacrificed so much.
I try to mend fractured relations,
let light flicker into the sheltered past.
We packed whole lives into bundles
in search of what chooses us,
what wants to come back to the surface,
what needs to be said.
We had so many dreams
we didn't know what to make of them.
And so with leopard's ears
I hear beyond the range of sound
the ineffable, the sublime, my mother's
breath, grandmother's smile, ancestors'
voices, to soothe and heal the sorrow.

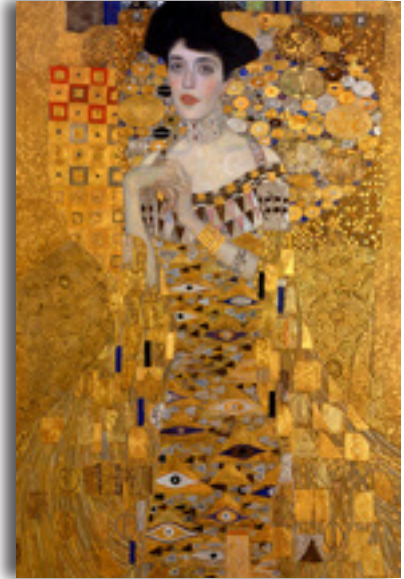
From *Life in Suspension* (Salmon Poetry, 2016)

El Recuerdo

*I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women,
French to men, and German to my horse.*
— Charles V

The first time I visit my aunt in Paris,
I still live near Geneva.
She perches in a tiny studio
atop an old stone building on a busy boulevard.
There I drink from a bowl for the first time.
She has a cat and a rocking chair.
I think, why would anyone choose a city
over the splendor of the Alps?
The first time I visit my grandparents in Tarragona
on my own, I'm barely six.
My grandmother offers me a unique and plain cookie
of the kind I haven't encountered anywhere else
and utters the magic word, *galleta*.
This is the first word I learn with her.
We watch a game on TV, *el juego de la oca*,
and these become the next words.
That is how, enveloped in unconditional love,
I discover the language of Cervantes
and of God, as it's been called.

From *Life in Suspension* (Salmon Poetry, 2016)



Ex Tempore

Nothing compares to death.
In intensive care, a room filled with volatile
substances atop the verdant splendor
of Mont Valérien, calmly overlooking Paris,
my brother lies between worlds,
his brain flooded with blood.

I ponder the mystery of the evolution of flowers,
Saturn's sixty-two sumptuous moons,
Jovian rings and Uranian storms,
while my brother's future remains uncertain,
our souls fused in a speck of eternity.
What happens here will not be forgotten.

Day after day I drive along the Seine
to stare at him breathe through tubes —
almost strangers, yet closer than ever.
As autumn deepens, he lives parallel lives.
Unlike his body, he seems at peace.
All I can think is, please God spare him.

From *Life in Suspension* (Salmon Poetry, 2016)

Between Klimt and Giacometti

A room inhabited by paintings
seizes my mind, fluid unpredictable
lives, their secret eliciting
attention, Klimt's innate aesthetic,
linear statements without tonality.
Their spontaneity transmits essential wisdom.
Dark eye shapes, dominant lip lines, upturned
corner of mouth, eyelashes and iris
connected, vine charcoal ready to tumble
like a Giacometti. Soft focus and impressive
looseness enhance anatomy,
allow latitude for creativity.
Every wall is a beginning.

From *Life in Suspension* (Salmon Poetry, 2016)



From the Heart with Grace

Wind, who yearns to be savored, offers
me three cups overflowing
with eternity, daemon of insight.
The opportune encounter enraptures quintessential
distress, ruffles estranged quietude,
kindles a jeu d'esprit, glückliche Reise,
propels the fervent fragrance
of heliotrope, hyacinth and honeysuckle.
The tremulous hibiscus taunts me to warm climates,
reminds me I remain a thistle, resilient,
rooted in Mediterranean Celtic fringe.

Do you remember a language older
than time, when a shiver down my mother's
spine was worth a thousand words
and the melancholy in my father's eyes,
reflecting Lake Geneva, was indecipherable?
There unbeknownst to me
in a world inhabited by swans,
I too swim in concentric circles
to find the resonance of my core
and discover that in dreaming
lies the healing of earth. In dreaming
we travel to a place where all is forgiven.
In dreaming is the Divine created.

And the great Oneness whispers ex-voto,
I am centaur by any other name,
I am griffin by any other name,
I am mermaid by any other name,
my raison d'être insubstantial, chameleon,
excavated like a talisman from wreckage,
resplendent fresco catapulted
beyond whimsical metamorphic frontiers.

From *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (Salmon Poetry, 2013)

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Irregular Masks

*In relation to each other men are like irregular verbs
in different languages; nearly all verbs are slightly irregular.
- Kierkegaard*

They had beaten their heads against the walls of waves
until a thousand green fish glittered to the surface,

had drawn your inside thigh-blood, silent
for a slow pint at the neighborhood pub,

with their hair trailing behind them, had fled all bad
words hung from the attic rafters overnight,--

still those who, singing, had begun masturbating their way
back to original sin, or thousands, born

to alcoholics, with sorrow as large as houseboats, have
drunk the hand-wash of airport pickpockets,

and others blindfolded by luck, caught the hurricane's eye
to move in with the summer storm's shearing, for

another who has burst the helium balloon you bore in mind
like a glow-in-the-dark apple the doctor gave away:

oh, how many more have broadcast, breakneck, their own
breathing, told the moon it was the sleeper's open mouth

in the outskirts of the city, who have fallen to their knees
to see the shape of the world on the back of a baby's head

with those, serious, knowing real consequence was a matter
of verb tense's wear and tear on the past, that no two

faces are the same, just like any stunned Vermont snowflake father said,
disappearing easy as its memory, once it reached your skin...

from *MASQUE* (Tupelo Press 2008)

During the Vietnam War

...only the new growth grass was wet behind her head and back.
 She could feel it and she could smell the grass rising up around her,
 saw the whole sky and saw the sky in its de facto language
 even though she was only seven. The year held out
 a bird skull in its opened hand, whole.
 Other birds were singing in a French film with no subtitles.
 It was black and white. But the sky was definitely blue, an invention
 of blue. A vector and hinge and rung of only
 blue already there, no matter where you looked.
 It took a long time. She looked a long time and in lockstep
 pressed the tips of her fingers into the mole-black dirt
 between grass blades. Only, this is
 the wrong story: she did not doom or injure
 any animals but she was restless then, and she was
 glad she was not safe.

Poetry Magazine

Place

Take Pilgrim's Way, the Puritan route west as further west where ocean
 and heat meet lying down, where the cat's among dirty pigeons, order of
 dervishes. In the pink kind place, double goldfish out of the crystal bowl,
 the Italian Judy and Punch giving us Ennui in odd shape of a dog, Disease,
 in the fair guise of a doctor, subsequently weeded and outwitted, the Devil
 himself, a dialect in poker face. Return there on Plough Monday, with a
 pick of the basket, shine of shells, plum and oranges, *qunito quarto* offal
 and whitened tripe, feet in the ash-ink sand, ready to eat a calf in the cow's
 belly to be beautiful.

from *Squander* (Omnidawn Publishing 2016)



© Elena Karina Byrne



I fear my after-thrill

But the holy thing animal/
 /passing time takes itself to get from here
 is in the saying, in each speech carapace /
 /of doubt handed down to you, its skin made from trees
 to make of the day.../ here's a workwoman's ladder/
 /yourself, falling placemat asleep
 a glass of water is never a glass of water/
 /just for you... /for you: there's a written declaration
 stomped on like grapes in the cedar wood/
 /you have something worksong to say to
 barrel, purple stain rising up your ankles and splattered/
 /making you mind-roam tried and true
 on your thighs and knees.../every camp fight night/
 /further to a closer there, carrying dusk's leaden blue appearance
 litmus test for the paper tongue/
 /in fist-dust, in anthem-incoherence of dark, mice
 the appletart family pictures, each /
 /a long flight of suspect stairs passing all
 desire undoes in three parts per second, always, but/
 /lace-making threads stuck to your face and forehead
 cut off from civilization, that moonskrit link ink hymn /
 /from the breakneck of who you are.../the desert is brought inside

The Wolf

Georgia O'Keefe's First Equivalent

I had to paint it.
 I was awake among the mountains
 (*I felt them there*) cascade, *alligator pears*
 hanging close
 to my bedroom window, *eyeing me brightly.*
 I know *The unexplainable thing* accompanied by color,
 — forget the hazards
 that invert what I see, *sky above clouds,* the body
 before feeling, before I need blue
accustomed to disagreement.
The color grew as I painted, I withstood the day's
equivalent to what I felt.

This is what I had, bending my face
 this close to mouths of flowers, the polished black
 tarantula wasps ticking across bleached sand, legs
 like points of a compass, all the math left behind
as if I think and see what you think
and see of the flower — I don't.
 Here with that *intangible thing in myself,*
 all reenactment, *smaller and smaller in a black space,*

a black bird flying, always there, always going away, green
 muslin rivers motioning, large rock seen from air.
 Pelvis bones lie indoors and out. *A door was painted many times.*
 A dinner with pears eaten next to
one of the many dead cedars in the countryside.
A door was painted many times.

from *Squander* (Omnidawn Publishing 2016)

© Elena Karina Byrne

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This is Not

I try to imagine windowpanes shattering,
clothing and bone-shards thickening air,
but fragments of thought smash against meaning,
a smothering nothing, a smothering where

sandals and bone-shards thicken the air,
and bloody stray fingers catch in the trees.
I'm smothered to nothing by words like these,
a ribcage of roof beams, broken and black,

bleeding stray fingers caught in the trees,
and an elegant skullcap that fell on the street,
by a ribcage of roof beams, broken and black,
as if it were placed there, *ceci n'est pas...*

My God, my God, an elegant skullcap!
The smell of burnt flesh thickens the air,
and fragments of thought smash against meaning
for shattering panes, for evening, for ash.

Apple Pips

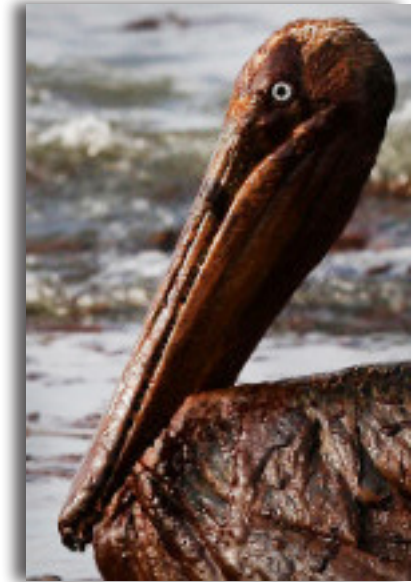
You speak from old steps
this winter morning eyes
dark as apple pips want

the whole earth wet for us
branches ice-bright logs
red with dampness Bent

to snowbound grass glasses
mist with sunlight's last
insinuation the bright

veil of the moon disguising
revealing its dry truth
the whole earth whitening





Inheritance

Furious winds have blown down trees throughout the city,
as hate begins its work, insidious bending, then
the crack, the caving in—to pleasing *them* for less,
for watery soup, potato peelings, moldy bread,
for crumbs of love. The wind is rumor—pushing us
behind the cellar door—of Cossacks riding in,
wild for killing. We want to trust, but never trust,
or trust too much, the men who tell us, *Get aboard
the train, we're going East, to start afresh, to work.*
The growing tolerance of pain—as if the wind
were drying out our minds, like green and yellow leaves
that crackle down the gutters into murdered heaps
they come and clear away, as if we'd never been.

Seepage

A dazed pelican drenched with oil
soaks in a small blue tub of dish soap
and water, a vet scrubbing its head

with a green toothbrush, revealing a patch
of clean white feathers, a photo that helps me
forget, for a moment, red buckets of oil

lining the beach and the black carcasses,
sparking the kind of hope stirred up
by photos of children behind barbed wire,

soon to be safe, we think, forgetting
the poison that pools in the heart, that seeps
through generations, like oil that sinks

to the ocean floor, smothering barnacles,
fish, the smallest amoeba now lethal
to shrimps who'll one day turn up eyeless,

that we'd like to forget, as I'd like
to forget my grandmother's charm turning
to rage, and the baffled child I was,

not knowing the damage, my grandfather's death,
the camp, and the deadened root that fed
my father's refrain no love could mute,

I feel lonely, as I try to forget
the question with which I censure myself,
is that why you never had children? wanting

without belief, a barnacle peace,
like the sea lion covered with oil who flopped
ashore, then back into blackened water.

Rupture

Angel trumpet flowers hang limp along
the fence, their faded orange streaks a blush
of shame, as if they're done (*they're done!*) with notes
so cool and pure that no-one ever fears
the deadly poison masked by beauty here,

while birds forget their wings to scream *alert!*
alert! from wires hung with vines like nets
for hauling thoughts inside that deep enclosure
without walls to which at last I go,
unfurl a fist, sickened into *no*.

A Little Flame

The apple blossom on my street says *years*
of childhood watching naked sticks of tree
bulge and bulge, pure blossom bursting out
of tight brown cases, dainty fists of green.

On second look, the “apple blossom” isn’t—
white bougainvillea flares, as fresh and bright
as sheets hung up to dry in freezing weather.
The moment crumples into bush and street.

Last night you spoke of how old griefs still shadow
every loss—their fires reignite
like warning flares at hints of joy. We talked—
and cupped our hands around a little flame.



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69th and Elizabeth

Five boys cross 69th Street heading east,
sun lowering against their shoulders,
on their way to another of their homes.
The grocery cart glints with instruments up top,
amps underneath, boys barely visible
but for navy canvas Converse sneakers
all moving at the same pace.
Each boy shares equal measure
of serious and got-to-get.

A squad car bawls up hard, cuts the crosswalk,
blue bubble light whirring, and these boys, even
at 9 years old, know they look like
they're looking to fence. This is not
their first time doing the minstrel stretch
from one house to another—there'd be rehearsal
at one guy's house until his mom couldn't
take any more, then a march
down the street with the caravan to the next
guy's house 'til his mom couldn't take
any more, then the next guy's.
They'd get five good practice hours in that way.

Cops, mid-30's, one white, one black, emerge
from the squad car. Black cop asks: *Who plays what?*
Those your instruments? Play something then.
And because these were the days before shots fired
while tires were still moving, while children were
still deciphering, and people hadn't even had time to look
each other in the eye yet,
Darrell could throw the strap down his back,
connect it to the bass, Tony could set his kick
on the ground and stable the snare, Kevin put
the keyboard on his knees, perch on the fire hydrant,
place his such young fingertips in chord.
Acoustic sound signatures.
What do you play when you're 9
and you've got to prove you can play?
If you drum, you play your warm-up lick.
Press rolls.

The color guard march from school.
*I guess you kids are okay. Just make sure
nobody takes your instruments.*
Each of the three boys looks up, head cocked
and the sinking sun half-blinding them. They take these
lines all the way to the next house
and there, while setting up, repeat them
in their most tenacious of voices—
I think that's your job, isn't it?
Isn't that one your job?

One time he not only leaned down but in

*...He wants
me to remember that trouble is a fire that
runs like a staircase up then down. Even
on a beautiful day in June.*

— Nikky Finney

i.

The long-toothed icicles hang
from the back porch roof
on a bitter-cold February dawn.

Charles is a boy, quarreling
with his man-grown brother. Their shouts
glance off the kitchen walls, each cuff
shredding the morning air like a riot of hungry tigers.

The stovetop burners shimmer gas-high,
four blue-yellow, grease-clogged
controlled fires.
It is winter. Bone-stinging
on the soles and this season
will not be romanticized.
They are brothers and what comes out of their mouths
sounds like scrap metal
or inmost unintelligible squalls

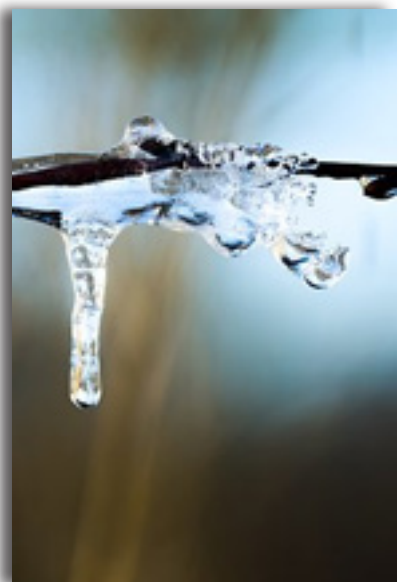
ii.

when Charles turns to the stove.
The real flames. Helpless, he thrusts
his right hand into the flame, pulls out
the burner, hurtles it at the brother.
He pulls another out
and another.

Does he hit his brother?

No, the man dodges them well.

continued overleaf





iii.

Their mother, not more than one hundred pounds,
enters the linoleum-floored room.
The last burner whooshes
so intimately past
she can feel its scorch
at her caramel-skinned cheek.
Here the tale becomes half-anvil, half-smoke,
the weight of it collapsing on her, the stun
of her sons, the younger one
crashing on a storm of brothers.
Only some deity could unbind
the wellspring Charles has since died for—
that she might have been killed by it, struck
and killed.

iv.

Against each basement wall,
toms stacked ceiling-high
in decreasing size.
Crisp cymbals, amulets sparkling
off shallow light,
their discrete thicknesses harboring indefinite pitch—

and they once reminded him
that to relax is to incline roguishly.

When he was four, with a wooden spoon he'd
blister the black-handled dented pots
splayed on the kitchen floor.
Brisket and potatoes set upon the cotton-
clothed table lulled the room finally.
Every dinnertime night his mother worked
amid the banging. A memory
his family holds fondly now. All his brothers. His sons.

It was then after the day of the fires
Charles crooked his insides tight,
loosened his limbs
until they jellied, quick, and reverberated, naturally
to become the approximate of a gentle child
whose right hand caressed the memory of a surge,
a rising through, and it
served to marry him

into the vigilant aborted manhood

of a drummer.

Patience, with blue shawl and unrevealed loom

after Seamus Berkeley's painting, *Prayer*

She has some apprehension they will not return
safely, or in the violet curls of another terrain
simply hitch their grip to the canyon,

and remain. She stands at the open door, warm
air cascading in. If they return, the sound of travel,
then their aroma, will arrive first. If arrival is near,

disease will live among them. If it touches her, she will carry
its taint all her days. Now, accustomed, she soups
from the one bowl. Corn and squash grow in the garden,

neat bountiful rows. After the other cupboard bowls are chucked
against the outside wall, she lifts the glazed shards gingerly,
litters the ocean-blue and husk-green ceramic

all through the exposed lines of garden soil.
Since the departure she has woven a tapestry: starlings—
dashing swirls and swoops, jet-winged fecund seeds

against a pearl sky. The bearing of the chaste is always vivid.
Prayers rumble overhead. Coyote: deliver her from the vanities
of grudging, opportunistic blackbirds.

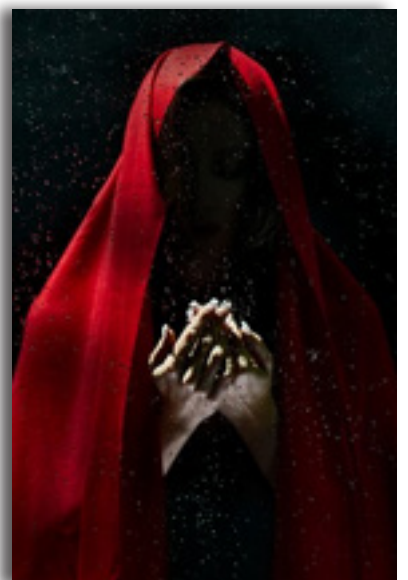
Knowing awe, and having horse sense,
she, like the coyote, is no fool. Credulous, yes, but she saves
different prayers for different times.

Near the far gate some muffled marvel rummages
in a clot of rosemary-scented scrub
and she recedes into the house, moving in the way

the blind find customary, a *trailing*—fingertips
of her left hand deftly toning the wall, one room
spilling into the next as if of spirit oil.

A dresser drawer is opened, then a second beneath it.
The moment her hand finds the shape, she will know.
Only the one song is hers

but it trills with beauty.
A satisfactory song.
Artfully, she keeps her reds hidden.



Angela Patten was born and raised in Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin. She now lives in Burlington, Vermont, where she teaches creative writing and literature at the University of Vermont. Her work has been published in a wide variety of literary journals and anthologies. She is author of three poetry collections, *In Praise of Usefulness* (Wind Ridge Books, Vermont), *Reliquaries* and *Still Listening*, both from Salmon Poetry, Ireland, and a prose memoir, *High Tea at a Low Table* (Wind Ridge Books, Vermont).



The Pancake Artist

She only cooked them once a year
on Shrove Tuesday so we didn't dwell
on the looming Lenten fast
as we raced home after school
to see her lift down the big black frying-pan
and heat it over the blue gas burner
until the fat spat and sizzled.

She'd hoist the milk jug full of batter,
pour a creamy stream into the pan,
tilting and tipping it to a seamless circle.
We hovered famished at her elbow
as the humps and craters formed—
brown sienna over khaki, burnt
umber over buttermilk. It was all

in the timing. One flick of her gifted wrist
and she'd landed it like a fish
on your plate. You rolled it with sugar,
a squeeze of lemon, scarfed it down.

Then it was back to the end of the queue
until your turn returned again.
No rest for her aching shoulders
until we were all contented sinners,
licking our lips, as full as eggs.

Crows

At dusk all the crows in our neighborhood
gather in the tallest pines
like old men in tarnished suits,
meeting for *unhappy hour*.

The sky is full of their feathered shapes,
their tattered vestments. The air
thick with their raucous talk,
their carping discordant music.

Why now as the day wanes
do they gather by the thousands
as if to bear witness to the sun
slipping like a stone
into the glinting lake?

The scientist calls their gathering
a *flock*, the poet a *murder*.

Our communal roosts are condominiums
whose size and situation
indicate our place in the pecking order.
Stretching away to the horizon,
supplanting woodlands, cornfields,
farms and kitchen gardens,
they keep us safe from predators,
close to food sources, social amenities.

At dusk the cacophony of crows
drags us out of our dwellings
to stand, flightless as rails,
staring upwards at the juddering trees.



© Angela Patten



Hard Evidence

My father's hands had nicks and scratches,
hammer-hurts, stone bruises black as pitch
from work and wind and weather.

They trembled when he spread out layers
of pale gossamer tissue paper to swathe
his gaudy dahlias, flagrant foxgloves,

shameless chrysanthemums
for our mother, favorite aunts,
the shrunken nuns at school.

And when we didn't come when called
we knew we'd feel the sting of his hard slap
on the backs of our legs as we stumbled past him

through the open doorway out of the half-dark
street. You could judge a man by his hand-
shake then, he used to say. No two ways

about it. Easy as trace the lilt of his lingo to
Delvin, Drimnagh or Ballydehob.
It was a thing of nothing.

Upper Extremity

In the Community Clinic there are doors
for every body part—*Back & Neck*
to the right, *Knees* to the left,
Hips down the hall. *Upper Extremity*—
that's me—appropriately up the stairs.

Last week the orthopedist opened a door
in my arm, inserted a metal plate with screws,
then closed it up again. No worries.
I have acquired a lightweight titanium wrist
while over in Ireland my brother
has acquired a ceramic hip.
Now, says he, I can take a shower
in the dishwasher with the rest of the ware.

But where in the Clinic is there a room
for me to *have my head examined*,
as they used to recommend,
shaking theirs at my teenaged affectations.
Or a room for poor Mrs. Murphy
with her famous dropped stomach,
Mr. Cush with his cauliflower ear,
or for sufferers of *Housemaid's Knee*
Grocer's Itch or *Dowager's Hump*?



The Sinking of the Isolda

December 19, 1940

You stand in the rain, drenched, miserable
waiting for the double-decker bus
when suddenly there it is thundering
toward you like a rogue elephant
the way desire came lumbering along
when you least expected it
in the body of a man who looked
nothing like your dreamboat lover
except for the color of his eyes
and the salt taste of his skin
that evoked your mother
her absence still a tangible ache.

The first time you visited his house
stepping out of the daytime glare
into the shutter-shaded livingroom
you caught the elbow-greased warmth
of orange floor wax mingling
with the smell of the apple pie
he had just finished making
rolling the pastry out on a wooden board
that was stowed away neatly after use.

No wonder you glommed onto him
for dear life, the way Uncle Christy
must have glommed onto the wreckage
when his ship The Isolda went down
off the Wexford coast in 1940.

A German bomber, flying in so low
the men could see the red cross
was in fact a swastika, hit her directly
above the six-foot high words
“Lighthouse Service” and the blue
ensign on her starboard side.

The ship staggered like a drunken sailor
as Christy and the others toppled out
over the side. He had never learned to swim
but clung doggedly to a spar and did not drown.
Came back to regale his relatives
on summer Sunday evenings
over games of Beggar My Neighbor,
Gin Rummy, and endless cups of tea.

When you found yourself foundering
in the wilderness of late twentieth century
North America, you cast about
for something solid, dependable.
How his rich voice resonated
thrumming like a lifeboat
over the roar of wood splintering
everything coming apart

Dorianne Laux's books include *The Book of Men* (W.W. Norton), winner of the Paterson Poetry Prize; *Facts about the Moon* (W.W. Norton), recipient of the Oregon Book Award and short-listed for the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize; *Awake* (Boa Editions); *What We Carry* (Boa Editions), finalist for the National Book Critic's Circle Award, and *Smoke* (Boa Editions). Dorianne teaches poetry and directs the MFA program at North Carolina State University and she is founding faculty at Pacific University's Low Residency MFA Program.



Poems translated by Hélène Cardona

If This Is Paradise

The true mystery of the world is the visible...
— Oscar Wilde

If this is paradise: tress, beehives,
boulders. And this: bald moon, shooting
stars, a little sun. If in your hands
this is paradise: sensate flesh,
hidden bone, your own eyes
opening, then why should we speak?
Why not lift into each day like the animals
that we are and go silently
about our true business: the hunt
for water, fat berries, the mushroom's
pale meat, tumble through waist-high grasses
without reason, find shade and rest there,
our limbs spread beneath the meaningless sky,
find the scent of the lover
and mate wildly. If this is paradise
and all we have to do is to be born and live
and die, why pick up the stick at all?
Why see the wheel in the rock?
Why bring back from the burning fields
a bowl full of fire and pretend that it's magic?

From *What We Carry* (Boa Editions, 1994)

Si ceci est le Paradis

Le vrai mystère du monde est le visible...
— Oscar Wilde

Si ceci est le paradis : arbres, ruches,
rochers. Et ceci : lune chauve, étoiles
filantes, un petit soleil. Si dans tes mains
ceci est le paradis : chair consciente,
os caché, tes propres yeux
qui s'ouvrent, alors pourquoi parler ?
Pourquoi ne pas prendre l'envol de chaque jour tels les animaux
que nous sommes et nous occuper en silence
de nos véritables affaires : la recherche
d'eau, de grosses baies, de la chair pâle
du champignon, culbuter à travers les herbes hautes
sans raison, trouver l'ombrage et s'y reposer,
nos membres étendus sous le ciel dénué de raison,
trouver le parfum de l'amant
et s'accoupler avec ferveur. Si ceci est le paradis
et tout ce que nous avons à faire est de naître et vivre
et mourir, pourquoi ramasser un bâton du tout ?
Pourquoi voir la roue dans la roche ?
Pourquoi rapporter des champs qui brûlent
un bol rempli de feu et prétendre que c'est magique ?

From *Ce que nous portons* (Éditions du Cygne, 2014)
Translated by Hélène Cardona



This Close

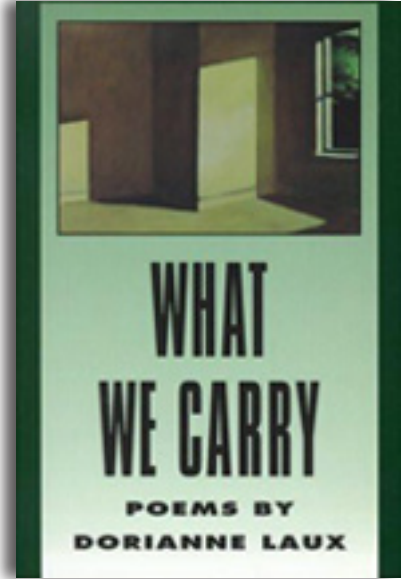
In the room where we lie, light
 stains the drawn shades yellow.
 We sweat and pull at each other, climb
 with our fingers the slippery ladders of rib.
 Wherever our bodies touch, the flesh
 comes alive. Heat and need, like invisible
 animals, gnaw at my breasts, the soft
 insides of your thighs. What I want
 is simply reach out and take, no delicacy row,
 the dark human bread I eat handful
 by greedy handful. Eyes, fingers, mouths,
 sweet leeches of desire. Crazy woman,
 her brain full of bees, see how her palms curl
 into fists and beat the pillow senseless.
 And when by body finally gives in to it
 then pulls itself away, salt-laced
 and arched with its final ache, I am
 so grateful I would give you anything, anything.
 If I loved you, being this close would kill me.

From *What We Carry* (Boa Editions, 1994)

Intimité

Dans la pièce où nous sommes allongés, la lumière
 projette des tâches jaunes sur les stores baissés.
 Nous transpirons, accrochés l'un à l'autre, escaladons
 de nos doigts les échelles glissantes des côtes.
 Peu importe où que nos corps se touchent, la chair réagit
 et renaît. Tels des animaux invisibles, le Feu
 et le Désir me rongent les seins et le creux satiné
 de tes cuisses. Ce que je veux, il me suffit d'étendre
 le bras pour l'étreindre. Rien à voir avec une pâle
 friandise, c'est le pain brun et humain que je mange,
 par poignées goulues. Yeux, doigts, bouches
 sont les sangsues bienvenues du Désir. Femme possédée,
 au cerveau bourdonnant d'abeilles, vois comme tes paumes
 se contorsionnent pour devenir les poings qui battent
 l'oreiller avec fureur. Et lorsqu'enfin mon corps se rend
 pour se retirer ensuite, saupoudré de sel et cambré
 dans une toute dernière souffrance, je suis si
 reconnaissante que je te donnerais tout, absolument tout.
 Si je t'aimais, cette intimité me tuerait à tous les coups.

From *Ce que nous portons* (Éditions du Cygne, 2014)
 Translated by Hélène Cardona



Enough Music

Sometimes, when we're on a long drive,
and we've talked enough and listened
to enough music and stopped twice,
once to eat, once to see the view,
we fall into this rhythm of silence.
It swings back and forth between us
like a rope over a lake.
Maybe it's what we don't say
that saves us.

From *What We Carry* (Boa Editions, 1994)

Assez de musique

Parfois, lorsque nous conduisons pendant un long trajet,
et que nous avons assez parlé, écouté
assez de musique, et que nous avons fait deux arrêts,
l'un pour manger un morceau, l'autre pour admirer la vue,
nous nous retrouvons envoûtés
par le rythme du silence. Il danse entre nous
comme une corde au-dessus d'un lac.
C'est peut-être ce que nous taisons
qui nous sauve.

From *Ce que nous portons* (Éditions du Cygne, 2014)
Translated by Hélène Cardona

Perie Longo, Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara, California (2007-2009), has published five books of poetry, the latest titled *Baggage Claim* (WordTech Editions, 2014). Three time Pushcart Prize nominee, her work has appeared in *Askew*, *Atlanta Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *International Poetry Review*, *Miramar Magazine*, *Nimrod*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Rattle*, *Solo*, and other journals, anthologies and texts. She teaches poetry privately and for the Santa Barbara Writers Conference. A psychotherapist, she integrates poetry for healing and is poetry chair of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.



Roadside Casket Lot

Down from hooking trout in icy Rocky Mountain creeks, grass packed around their rainbow backs in the creel for the long ride home, Grandpa just gone, Dad slowed. "Good time as any to check out a box." The highway had run out of high-country splendor, dull and dusty, rents cheap, glaring signs. The salesman led Grandma by the arm, the wake of us dragging behind as he named prices; mahogany, walnut; steel most durable; best deals. "Two for one," he winked at Grandma.

Whatever the price, she quipped in Irish brogue, eyebrows raised, "Well then, I can't afford to die. He'll have to do it for both of us." Despite grief, we laughed the sun out of the sky among rows of caskets lit with other-wordly glow, mountains in silhouette, the salesman sputtering time to close, come again. Memory dims but for those trout, even if Grandma fried them in too much fat and cornmeal. They tasted near heaven as we feasted, toasting Grandpa, fishing out the bones.

Sighting

She would not look me in the eye, floating the hospital corridor on 5 East, simply grazed the corner like a cat, not my cat who mostly purrs, but one up to snatching a mouse or killing a thing with feathers. Barefoot she drifted room to room dressed in a floor length gown of burlap like she was born in a sack of potatoes. The thing is, she was beautiful, long silver hair hanging down her back. I wouldn't mention this, but after my husband died, my son confided with a whisper he saw Death described exactly this woman, no word filling the air between.

Not so different this dusk near Caenn Sibéal driving to catch sunset over the Far Shore, Irish speak for the afterlife. Forced to halt for a wake, locals keening behind a coffin held high, my son and I held breath for the starkness. Darkness thickened. Red sky but a slash. Slow we traveled down a narrow, dirt road suddenly run out at a steep decline. No turnaround, no Dead End, only us at the mouth of the whole Atlantic, the eerie cold lapping to itself, night's silver hanging on. A shadow floated past, some creature but what or who, we could not tell, no word filling the air between.



© Perie Longo

Seaweed Bath: Bundoran, Donegal

Land that beckons in my blood,
rich in peat and ruins and roundabouts.
Never did I imagine a spa. Under advice,

here I steep like tea in warm seaweed
to reduce swelling, detoxify, cure
any problem, an ad claims. Wounded and sore

after trekking, tripping over a Dingle rock wall,
today running from the pelt of hail,
I'm in. Green strands like spirals

of DNA caress across shoulders, belly,
breast, limbs. No wonder seals float with composure.
The once known world shrinks away.
I am seal
hidden, untouchable in my tub,
only pale toes visible above dark undulations.

Winter's not done with us yet,
swells colder than hell, the surf shop man
complained. Lucky me, I sink

under water, hold breath, think
of my mother, her old family in Donegal begun.
Mother, do you hear the lash of wind,

an angry tongue licking stones, laying the grass down?
Though you turned from your roots, I'm dowsed.
From this tentative womb
I slip out, dripping, body oiled and sleek.

Lost Touch

Not like the man stuck with loss,
walking and vision he says
the worst
mounted in his wheelchair. *Like a king*
I say, which doesn't mean much to him
no longer able to feel knobs or keys
that turn on
the world

nor can he sense touch of skin's silk,
especially of a lover from the long past
present to him as ever sealed
as he is in his
body's betrayal
half his life
half a man—dependent on caretakers
for each move like a clock's hands
inform us
where we are.

Who am I to complain, feeling left behind
on morning's tipping point
reaching for the finger of God, years
collapsed

like a globe of fruit the color of sky
stripped pink laced between
bones of the elm when the man has no hope

but then he says he hears the windless air,
a *whoosh*
that almost makes him rise.



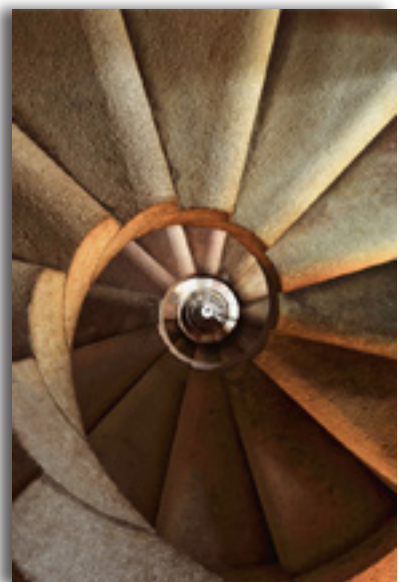
© Perie Longo

Telling it slant

like a snail with its line of slime
like rain over the rootless hills
wind slashing against windows
like diving in belief you'll rise
like betrayal's slash across face
lash of words turning sand to oil
like wave crash battering the shore
even you asking to understand
what just happened as you looked
the other way beware the bumble
lie after lie headed 'round the bend
like ignorance or self-righteousness
slant like light in the fall that leads
to truth like time itself reveals after
the lineup of facts like memory like
reaching for the ghost in your dream
waking with hand grasping the light

Inspiration Point

Last day of the year, you ascend the trail off-limits
for months since fire's ravage, rise more steep
and narrow. Rain has turned clay to sponge.
Faces charred in boulders weep and swallow.
Heart races with the ache of blackened trees,
battered soldiers standing firm gripping sky.
The sea lies bare, no oak or laurel bay to block
the view of islands indigo at horizon's rim.
Ferns unfold in every glade, each rocky hollow.
Hallowed be the mud and hidden seed, fresh sprouts
of shooting stars and sage. At the point's fingertip,
insistent wind whistles against rock, knocks
you off your feet, one with sun on fire taking off.



Hedy Habra has authored two poetry collections, *Under Brushstrokes*, finalist for the USA Best Book Award and the International Book Award, and *Tea in Heliopolis*, winner of the USA Best Book Award and finalist for the International Book Award. Her story collection, *Flying Carpets*, won the Arab American National Book Award's Honorable Mention and was finalist for the Eric Hoffer Award. Her book of criticism, *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa*, explores the visual aspects of the Peruvian Nobel's narrative.



Missing Words

We both stared at the illuminated images
of what must have been a rare book. Its pages
seemed to turn on their own, one by one,
following the rhythm of our breath - *were we so afraid
to touch its precious leaves?*

I noticed faded characters here and there, like
distant memories, missing lines rubbed away by fingers
or written in invisible ink, perhaps words never said,
unable to fall in proper order - *could the writer or scribe
have wished to light a match, imagined its fire racing along the
elongated curves of the phrase, erasing even the traces
of his thought?*

Then came an empty page, papyrus-like, arresting,
intimidating the one about to stamp it with the colors
of life - *what ever happened to this page, I wondered,
realizing you were gone.*

First published by *Puerto del Sol*
From *Tea in Heliopolis* (Press 53 2013)

First Bra

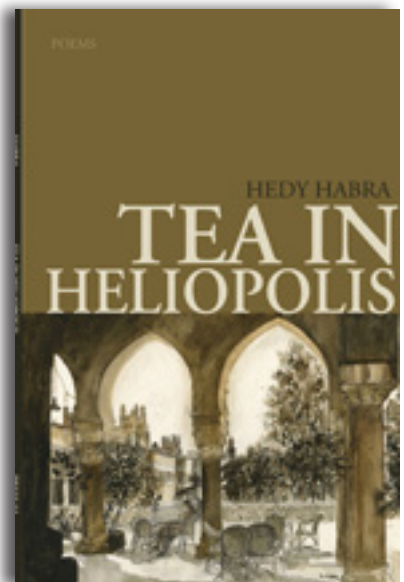
I remember when I turned eleven how my mother
panicked: "Your cousin Coco is nine and has already
lemon-sized breasts!" I didn't think lemons were pretty
sprouting on one's chest but Coco's lemons were her
mother's pride and my mother's despair.

I can still see the shimmer of my first bra, whose sole
purpose was to maintain hope for better days as an amulet
in fertility rites or a conjurer of seasonal rains.

Its layers of sheer nylon made me shiver when I'd feel
them sliver between my fingers. I'd wash it with great care
using soft soap foam as though its airiness carried arcane
messages yet to decipher while I wore it against my flesh.

In French, *soutien-gorge* means support for the chest,
or throat. That must be why my voice became hoarse every
time I slipped it underneath my clothes.

First published by *Poet Lore*
From *Tea in Heliopolis* (Press 53 2013)



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The Apple of Granada

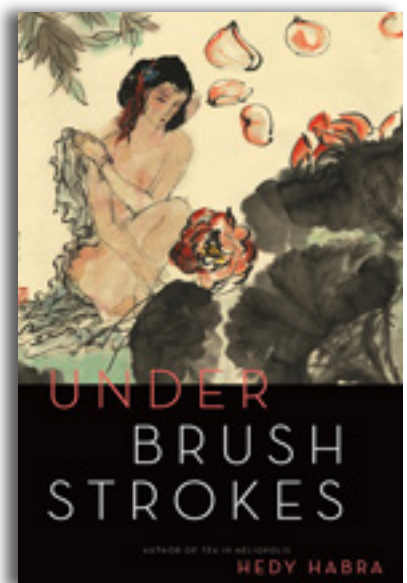
Some say Eve handed a pomegranate to Adam, and it makes sense to me. How can the flesh of an apple compare to the bejeweled juicy garnets, the color of passion, hidden under its elastic pink skin tight as an undersized glove, a fruit withholding the power to doom and exile since the dawn of time. For a few irresistible seeds, didn't Persephone lose sight of the sun for months? I mean, think of the mystery hidden in its slippery gems, of the sweetness of the tongue sealing the union with the beloved in the Song of Songs. And I succumb, despite how messy it is to crack the fruits open, invade that hive, oblivious to the indelible droplets splattering the sink, reaching beyond the marble counter all over my arms and face, as my fingertips delicately remove its inner membranes, until the bowl is filled with shiny ruby red arils. I add a few drops of rose and orange blossom water, the way my mother did, and my grandmother used to do, and her mother before her.

First published by *Cumberland Poetry Review*
From *Under Brushstrokes* (Press 53 2015)

Face à face

When with eyes closed, I face the mirror of desolation, I see myself as a dove fluttering in slow motion like a still mirage while I walk the desert dunes, wondering where I'd last seen the scarce palm trees still erect by the smothered tents where all the ones I've ever loved are now buried. I search for ashes shrouded in sand, and only see through half-open lids feathers the color of my hair, lidless eyes staring at their mirrorless reflection, lips pursed in triangular silence, and oh, yes, how can I omit those shades of blue making us all one, woman and fowl, in love and loss?

First published by *The Bitter Oleander*
From *Under Brushstrokes* (Press 53 2015)



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The Memory of Unspoken Words

She has landed on the deck of an abandoned wreck, fails to remember how she swallowed the fiery ball that pulled her like a tidal wave into the stillness of a metallic sky steeped in lavender where angry clouds hover around the drowning sun suffused with coral. Her pillow is a melted cloud filled with birds that forgot how to fly and now swim in a pool that overflows the deck, washing the souls of dead sailors from every leak and corner. She presses on her eyelids to find a different ending to their story, sees her body glow with scales and the fish in the pool grow wings. She knows every drop of water will vanish at dawn, erasing with black ink her luminous shape alive only in the formless night, and the rainbow will soon shine over a boat with discarded bags heavy with the stained memory of unspoken words and broken planks.

First published by *Pirene's Fountain*
From *Under Brushstrokes* (Press 53 2015)

Shipwrecked

Her body sinks into the wavy sheets, the sea of down calming after the assault, the raging battle of the senses leaving her inert, absent, her thighs ripe and fragrant, a guava still reeking of our mixed juices: time after time we have risen from the abyss, empty carcasses lying on a raft of bitterness. Why this urge to go down the stairs, press on the accelerator? Only then does my hand measure the heaviness of her breasts, correct the choreography of each gesture, motion her to dress and undress as I compose a montage of my favorite stills, like a child playing at forbidden games, I want to do it all at once, merge the end with the beginning, yes, she sighs, you have touched my soul, melts into a mirror of water: a star quivers, I lose myself in the middle of its eye while we drown in the waves we create: there's no ocean to sate my thirst until I face the wrinkled sheets weighing on me and want to leave again.

First published by *Change Seven*
From *Under Brushstrokes* (Press 53 2015)



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Born in Ireland, Irene Kyffin is now based in London. As well as writing her own poetry, she created a programme of jazz/poetry fusion with the great jazz pianist Stan Tracey on the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins, which she presented at many Literary Festivals around the UK. Irene has written and presented papers on Hopkins in the US and Ireland, giving readings as well. Whilst in Denver, Colorado, to deliver academic papers, she ran Shakespeare workshops and taught English and American Literature.



Day and David

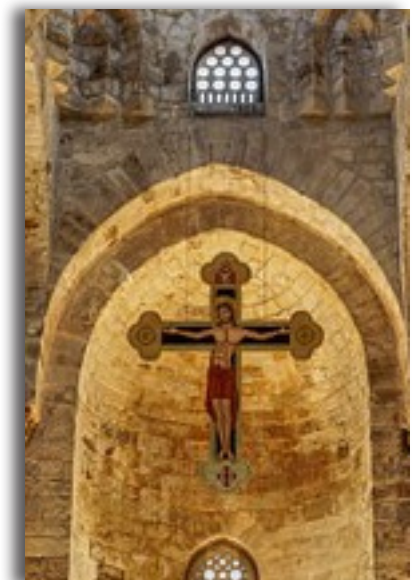
I must leave you
 With my rolled trousers and body
 Definitely getting older – to more idle thoughts;
 But first we must breathe in tune
 And feel the pulse of this particular day;
 Entwine and share the body and the thoughts
 The warp and weft

I will go now
 To the shattered water butt and the lawn
 That soon will need another mowing over;
 The idle thoughts are restful
 Soften the day's condemning instance –
 For time is cavalier and will not stay its pace
 The future awaits.

Sweet Jesus

Sweet Jesus she said
 and the years fled me;
 I was again watching hands,
 flickering across bodies;
 the sign of the cross -
 a moving mantra
 greeting, acknowledging, knowing
 the consolation of Christ

I watch the actions
 and wonder at the meaning;
 wonder that the vaulted silent cavern
 of the church, which I only enter at invitation
 and full of whispering, softly inflected bodies
 offers this consolation of Christ



Mid-winter

The Helleborus declares its praise for the sharp, clear air;
white, succouring a central, yellow sun –
lodestone for the brave.

Few others dare themselves on such a bleak horizon;
alone, it weathers well in a desolate landscape,
honours my garden on reddish-brown paving stones.

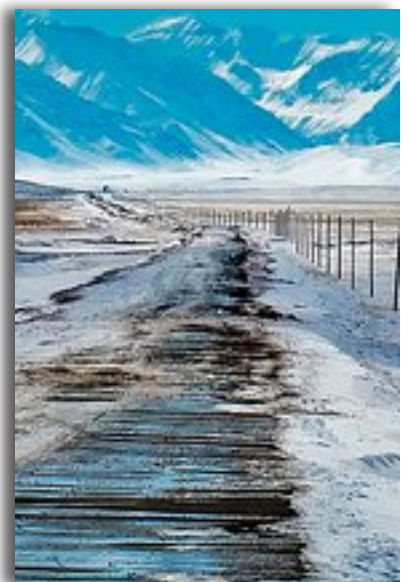
Helleborus was advised by the ancients - who knew their stuff -
for the mad and the furious;
contradictorily, a curative and a poison,
employed by witches, strewn on floors
to drive out evil influences, it even
foiled old Dionysus, it was said:
saved the king of Argos' daughters
from a naked, screaming hysteria.
Christmas rose is its local name
but that's a bit of a puzzle –
it never blooms at Christmas.

Strata

Grappling with the now
we are mere survivors
of an accumulated past;
grasping for what we believe to be
the existential moment and
searching for a sight
of the future.

Mutual contact shapes us
according to the solid body of events;
predicated on uncertainty
we are trapped
in layers of geological time
and in our efforts to apprehend
the mute string.

We gather into ourselves and filter
all that passes and courses
through millennia; below the
shallow sediment, time
settles, continually prey
to instability and the urge
to be.



© Irene Kyffin

Survivors

We shared a table;
shared the time -
a German and a Jew.
We gradually got to know
the guilt we shared.

At the party, they drank and danced,
her mother told her,
to music from the radio

which stopped when a shrill,
commanding voice condemned
the Jews.

Her mother objected to the vitriol
directed against them;
to what she called the uneducated man;
a primitive, a brute; she was taken aside,
warned: never do that again,
never speak your thoughts,
shared by all,
again.

There would be repercussions:
prison; disappearances; deaths.

I am pursued by the vitriol that took
so many; so many. I could not be there,
could not save them,
could not save one.
Guilt it's called - but giving a name
does not assuage the unconditional pain
that reaches beyond my own body
through time, to theirs;
that hovers, a great shadow from
the late evening sun.

She is pursued by the thoughts of her generation;
by that long agony of confrontation;
by the unending and unanswerable cry
of the children: 'What have you done?'
'Child, child, you would have had to have been alive
then to comprehend what it was like,
to feel that fear'.

And so, at the table, we share
the outrage that divides and holds us
in its embrace.



Helen Harrison is a published Poetry Writer based in Co. Monaghan, Ireland. Her poetry has been accepted into various magazines and journals. Helen writes observational poetry inspired by the minutiae of life.



The Voyaging Vessel

Even as the tides subside
I glide the horizon like a black-
Backed gull.
Waves of awe unleash
A various world of

Words I find deep in the folds
Of a sail-weathered wind
Freedom
Like golden grain in my hand
Rolling the currents to fly
Against a limitless sky...

I harbour the salt and the scent
From bays of seafaring faces,
The sea of pearled possibilities
Where beneath the rim and the rhythm
Coral, shells and speckled fish
Water me with colour.

Sunrise

I throw my shoes upon the floor
And close the door, reconciled -
I gave my best with zeal and zest.

Time is my own brimming cup -
Smoothed with the rim of my mind;
My heart absorbs the ink of happiness -
My pen - a landscape in my palm.

More than just skin and bones
I am the sun-rise of my senses,
Each breath a silken sunset



Healing

With each word the rawness heals.
I write away pain like water
Washing skin, the dirt
Falling away, salving wounds.

Our mysteries put there –
Our compositions and capabilities,
The terrible human history
Of greed; unconquerable.

Can't rub out poverty
Or write away war
But my pen unfurls -
Records.

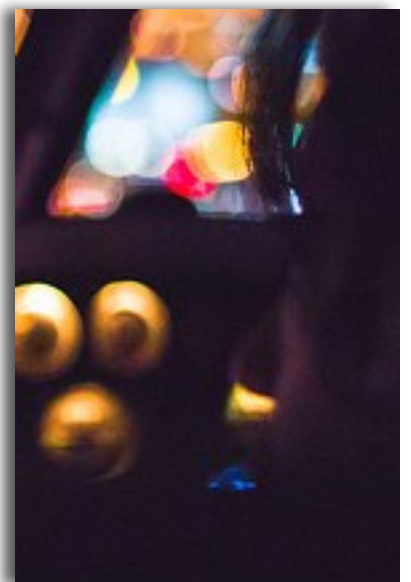
Words

It was really aggression
When it came to it
You burnt anger as fuel
And blamed the excess
On me.

I tried to oil your mood
But it caught fire,
I watched the road,
Willing it to clear
Like my splitting head
Afraid to block ears,

Held a barrier that bounced
Off the steering wheel
The dash, the roof
Through windows
And gaps.

I shuddered but it didn't
Stop, it kept rolling
And rallying, raging;
Collapsing my world.



Caley O'Dwyer lives in Los Angeles where he teaches creative writing and psychology at Antioch University. His poems appear in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Cream City Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Warwick Review*, *Curator*, *Ekphrasis*, *Washington Square*, and other venues, including the Tate Modern Museum in London. He is a winner of an Academy of American Poets Prize, a three-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize, and a recipient of a Helene Wurlitzer grant for poetry. His book, *Full Nova*, was published by Orchises Press.



The Groves

We packed our dreams in designer luggage,
preparing for a warmer climate. "I wonder what's on TV,"
Jill said, but she was so small no one paid her any mind,
least of all Lizette, who was in no position.
Very little advice goes a long way, and before you know it
it's nervous time. As with cold and sudden rain, roses
surging, someone arriving at the front door, saying
"Don't open for seven days. Then, prepare a will—
the value herein is wondrous, creating
new alliances between old species."

Lately, China roses shudder in the dark wind.
Orange trees, heavy with fruit, anticipate their end.

Jill packed a pineapple and a bag full of Vicodin.
I didn't think we'd be long. The moon overhead
looked foolish, like the return on a promise
long belated, embarrassing the promiser.

Jim began to see a way of prioritizing his ideas
such that other people's weren't a problem.
It was hours before anyone made it through the list,
which by departure time encompassed everything
we'd ever known. Lizette was feeling ill, or so she said.

A sign says "Bike Route" but does not tell what toward.
Gulls in the jet stream, perplexed, tumble seaward.

Like sky gone green before a tornado or the miserable eyes
of girls, heartbroken, perilous, we took the valley
by storm. There was no way to know what lay ahead.
All points of departure led to additional puzzles,
lumps of beauty, followed by puddles.
Through the lens of modern science, the elegance
of a winding river seemed a kind of tournament.
The laugh track often played ahead
of what was funny, such as when the crowd,
recorded months earlier, could be heard clapping
a beat before we arrived, bewildered, at the drive-in window.



La Caverne Maudite

At the very end of the year, we gathered
in a summer mansion. Books were read,
fires lit. At the dining table set with gold,
under an enormous chandelier, we argued
over the inhumanity of the fifty-minute hour.
Some said it was more like thirty-five-minutes
with a fifteen-minute wind-down.
Someone was constantly in front of television,
the same one who ate all the truffles.
Others ate a honeyed-ham with black-eyed peas
and were content. Three of us had Axis One diagnoses,
one had an Axis Two diagnosis, and two
had un-American ideas. All had V-codes. So it was

under the late-December-galloping-clouds
we undid the tree. One of us got a brush designed
to last one hundred years. Another got something that
might have been an ornament, but which may also have been food.
One person was given chances to redeem herself in relation to
one of the others and this gift, never wrapped, was given by a third.
We were all given candy canes and good cheer.

The person with the Axis Two diagnosis slept long hours
but was more than present during social hour.
There seemed to be theme music from a film out of touch with time,
such as from "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari." Too, there was a field trip
to a cemetery in which one of us found Conrad Aiken,
and another found a series of rocks and the homes of shellfish.
Two of us went to the inlet. One saw a dolphin twice in the nearby marsh.
It was the second time that was convincing.

One artist to another recited a poem by a great poet, disappointing
the listener who thought it was the speaker's. Some people wanted
to live in that very spot while others—one other, really—said
this is not the kind of water she prefers. She prefers the Mediterranean.

Someone saw something like a crocodile, which sighting
questioned the dolphin. Then there was a mad rush for the bathroom,
for which we had to leave the island and go home.

Back at the mansion, the owner said she needed servants.
This was a joke but seemed telling. People wore hats.
One was large and pink, frothy with feathers. The clouds were galloping
across the sky. Someone recited a poem. The volume on the theme music
was subtly increased, then heavily rocketed.

People heard each other cough in other rooms, raising questions.
Some of the flowers folded over on the tabletops, but this took a while.
One person's present turned out to be no good. The person
who gave the present turned out to be OK, an improvement.
We had ice cream. Someone broke down and had what the one in the room
closest to the temperature controls called a "crisis of identity,"
but which may have been due to overconsumption of glucose
or depth boredom. Someone clever said "those are all the same thing,"
but in retrospect this made little sense, as do many ideas
when they are placed, ever so gently, into context.

On the night before we all departed, the one with
Narcissistic Personality Disorder and the one with labile mood
ran back to the house saying they had seen a series of shoes
floating in a line down the river. We all rushed out to see
this expression of order, one without his hair, but realized
that it was just a row of burnt umber birds practicing their escape.
At night, much laughter and good will. Dancing and romancing.
Silent kisses in areas of the halls that could be easily missed
were one committed to some extraordinary purpose.



Soap Opera Rapid Aging Syndrome

Glenora was aghast on the divan. Where was her phone and how would Vicki twirl her baton now that each of them had gone quizzical? Was Vicki even who she said she was? Why was touch foreign to her like Dallas is to other people? "I feel ill," she managed, opening her mouth a lot wider. Days away, the parade was putting on its flowers.

Always, a hearty man stands nearby, hunkering over a flowerpot. He is like a shadow that never rises but which points toward wanting to. "There comes a time where we rise or drown," Teresa mumbled. Ken was just about to when Martha said, "Look, be funny if you must but this will all catch up with you. And that's not all," she said, as she slipped into a nice commercial.

Some time passed, but not enough to reach the weekend. The phrase "everything happens for a reason," said Ken, "is the quintessence of illogic." No one disagreed because they were pretty busy. The soda fountain ran out of fizz, and what little cash they had seemed like play money. It was now four hours until go. The lettuce, the buns, and the ketchup were not about. What, Ken stared, would a real man do?

Green Light

Specks of dust tumble in an overhead tunnel. Eyes dilate broadly as the narrative resumes, tantalizing the amygdala, pairing desire with soft drinks, when out of the rubble our hero climbs with a broken charm. *Back away, space invaders! I have saved the planet!* His girlfriend returns sad to have been so wrong,

but glad, too, "to see you again," she says, "safe and the very definition of a man." The archetypes kiss and advertise smoking as the credits roll in a style that foretells a life of bad taste and doom. In the distance, we see someone setting up a sequel. There was just enough of a predicament

to inhale the popcorn, the outtakes no different than the feature. And in some ways the world does return, day after day, reasserting its value, bright with stars and floor-length gowns, gems floating at the bottom of the sea, wreckage and the bones of sailors drifting, heroes for some reason or other.

Jack Grady is a founder member of the Mayo, Ireland-based Ox Mountain Poets. A past winner of the Worcester County (Massachusetts) Poetry Contest, his poetry has appeared in *Crannóg*, *Poet Lore*, *A New Ulster*, *The Worcester Review*, *North West Words*, *Mauvaise Graine*, *Outburst Magazine*, *The Runt*, *The Galway Review (online)*, *Algebra of Owls*, and in the anthologies *And Agamemnon Dead*, *A New Ulster's Voices for Peace*, *Poetry Anthology Centenary Voices April 2016*, and *21 Poems, 21 Reasons for Choosing Jeremy Corbyn*.



A Final Solution

We, the objectionable,
the offensive,
the obnoxious,
the censurable,
no longer have free speech.

A new law decrees free speech is forbidden.
All speech, henceforth, must be PC;
so, we, the objectionable, say nothing
and choose free silence instead.
But, soon, we will be denied even that.

Our silence will make us suspect.
We will be interrogated and shot
with sodium pentothal,
biometrically mapped
and polygraphed;

forced to confirm our submission
in sound, not silence;
to say so often what they program us to say
we believe it ourselves, proven
by slogans we shout from our sleep.

Perhaps they can make us believe anything –
that an abattoir is heaven,
a gas chamber a shower to refresh our souls –
We will smile in queue
long before we arrive in ecstasy,

unaware of the crematoria,
the bodies on their runways,
the final holiday flights ascending
on silent wings of smoke.

Post Viaticum

I watch the dead,
their arms and fingers crossed
on cribs that drift beneath ladders to nowhere.
Their road is a dark river;
their sky a cave's ceiling
whose beams are the ribs of Jonah's whale.

Soon, they are swallowed
by the vortex of a nightmare,
before shipwrecked
on the beach of my last dream.
And I, the explorer, claim them,
embrace them, and implore them for answers.

One tells me the world is cruel;
another swears every gunshot
is but the orgasm of love;
while a third draws me into her arms
with inscrutable smiles so hypnotic
I am blind to the nakedness of her skull.

Until now, her ears
I have never whispered to
and her lips I have never kissed.
Until now, I was no necro,
neither –philiac nor –mancer.
Until now, I was no ghoul.

When the graves finally open and we see
distended bellies of clouds
pregnant with loaves and fish,
will it rain on the dust of our tongues;
will we at last awaken,
re-fleshed and in bliss?





Striptease

I hear the sounds of wood cutting,
but I see no face near sockets exposed
by the amputation of limbs from trees
or triumphant over a freshly cut stump
or beside the split and chopped cord,
stacked neatly in back of my neighbour's house.

Only the sounds persisting
from somewhere nearby:
the whacking thud of an axe hitting wood
or the whinging roar of a chainsaw
while it spits woodchips like buckshot
or a swarm of enraged bees.

They must come from that street
I know is there but have never seen,
these sounds of wood cutting,
over there where the sun sets,
where insistent hounds howl at house or moon
and dog my sleep and my darling's sleep,

over there where screening trees trip
the Peeping Tom's eye.
But I hear the sounds of wood cutting,
and I see leaves dropping in a slow tease
like a dressing gown shrugged off shoulders
to strip for my first glimpse of that street.

Spider

I watched you as you weaved your web
like a fisherman focused on mending his nets.
I never noticed the flies you drained of life,
though I saw the aftermath you left
like pennants hoisted on the halyards of a ship.

I enjoyed greeting you every morning
and saying goodnight to you
while the sun still shone in summer.
Though you had grown fat,
your only kill I witnessed was your last:
a wasp more massive than you.

Later, I watched you angle
your plump berry of an arse
over the rigging sheets of your web
and shit out digested remains
in dark viscous drops.

Soon, a giant of a wasp
(perhaps your victim's mate)
took you from your web
like an owl hooking a mouse
out of an open field.

I did not see the lair where its larva consumed
your still living, paralyzed body,
but I saw your web as a ship abandoned,
adrift in a gale, sails torn,
stays and shrouds tattered
ghosts unspinning in the wind.

Lust of the Bones

We bones who had flesh,
 who wish we had earth to warm us,
 empty and cold in our coffins,
 to fill us where once we had organs,
 to comfort us with memories of skin
 soft as the pulp of sweet melons
 and of connective tissue
 full of fluid motion.
 We bones floated with ease
 on flowing rivers of life,
 carried by buoyant boats
 of tendons, muscle, and meat.

We too loved the lust and thrust
 of flowers in the spring,
 the joyous ejaculation of petals and leaves,
 bales of hay in summer's heat
 buxom girls beckoning
 behind whispers of wheat.
 How we glided in moonlit water,
 naked and sleek as fish,
 with the phosphorescent glister
 of eager, jetting eels!
 How we ran manic with the joy of foals
 and the frolicking leap of lambs!

Our silence now is the inaudible drum
 of our hollow in the earth that resounds beyond sound
 to the panic of flesh and its sex-driven thrum,
 its horror of bones and the gravestones of stillness,
 of Zimmer frames and canes guiding ageing skin,
 tightened like tanned leather,
 no longer an object of lust,
 no longer warmth that would clothe
 bones shivering to dust.

Cauldron of the Black Buddha

Not even black-star trees could save
 monkeys in flight on vines, and the gibbon
 left behind in a squatting pot's stew
 was already dead.

Not even the shelter of a hut on stilts
 could shield in the jungle the Vietnamese men.
 Not even the rustle of unseen animals in the underbrush
 or the call of a laughingthrush would linger

when alien birds of riveted steel
 ripped the trees into sticks,
 gouged and cratered the ground,
 and splintered the dwelling on stilts;

not even the remains of people –
 fingers or shreds of flesh
 peppering the morsels of monkey,
 uneaten and still cooking –

would unsettle the cast-iron pot
 as it still squat
 like a serene and full-bellied
 black Buddha.



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Live encounters

POETRY

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