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Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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EXCLUSIVE
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BY IRISH ARTIST
EMMA BARONE

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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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Richard James Allen is an Australian born poet whose writing has appeared widely in journals, anthologies, and online over thirty years. Former Artistic Director of the Poets Union, Inc., he has written nine books of poetry, edited a national anthology, and combined a unique international career as a multi-award-winning writer, director, choreographer, and performer for stage and screen.

www.physicaltv.com.au



THE SEMBLANCES

There is no one left who knew you,
no one left who will understand,
but do not ask me to entertain in perpetuity
the lingering of your spirit.

Surely it is unreasonable
even for a ghost to expect the person
they are haunting
to want to go mad.

Yet I know that, until I walk out of
the four walls of this body,
you are my household familiar.
And perhaps even thereafter.

For I have not stopped falling
since the moment I first fell
into this reverie of you.
And I doubt that even death

will wake me from it.
As those who look
from the other side
see you now,

the shadow at my toes,
so those from this side
may one day locate
the contours of my form,

from that time on
– if it is possible,
under such circumstances,
even to speak of this cruel

collector and discarder
of the moments of our lives –
forever your shadow,
sleepwalking amongst

the unfortunates
who exist as semblances,
still anchored
to this world

by desires without beginning,
but adrift
in the dappled shadows
of thoughts without end.



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THE GREAT SILENT WITNESS WIND

My fear is my gift
My anxiety is my research
My vulnerability is what I have to give

That I feel the great emptiness
That I know the great cavity
That I am the great vacuum

Is the great silent witness wind
That allows me to understand
The terror of emptiness in others

*

*We are vast but feel small
Floating off the cliff of ourselves
We discover that space doesn't need to fly*

A SHAFT OF DARKNESS

I was settled in at my favorite café,
with a hot drink coming my way,
when the opposite of a welcoming shaft
of warming light fell over me.

A spirit had sat down
in the chair next to mine
and was leaning over towards me,
its eyes uninhabitable galaxies.

An icy rattle
shook my body
as I heard it say,
with regret in its windy voice,

"I used to be alive, once.
It might have felt good.
Sadly I don't remember.

"I wasn't paying attention,
even though I knew I should.
I could never really work out how

and I didn't know who to ask,
so I let the moment
slip away from me,

again and again and again."



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M. L. Williams is author of *Other Medicines* and co-editor of *How Much Earth: The Fresno Poets*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in many journals and anthologies, including most recently *Western Humanities Review*, *Miramar*, *The Journal of Florida Studies*, *The Cortland Review*, *Stone*, *River*, *Sky*, and *Clash by Night*. He teaches creative writing and contemporary literature at Valdosta State University.



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Behind St. John's, crude crosses
with numbered labels scatter
down the slope toward the creek,
interrupt a bike trail
into woods to the mill pond
past hollows where kids gather,
smoke, drink, try things they think
are grown up, their teen-aged
Via Dolorosa past this cheerless
Scout project untended, ignored,
except when kids push through on bikes
or when I look for chanterelles
among weeds under oaks. Once
a cottonmouth guarded station eight.
I watched for an hour, expectant
like Eve, for it to speak, to offer
passage to another world,
but it sulked, ignored me, slithered
finally back toward the brush
beside the damp creek bank, paradise.

BUG

Everyone's afraid of their own life. . . .
- Modest Mouse

Braising sun unsettles and curls tomato
leaves, wilts basil, past firefly season, whose light
we want to think sparks for us to smash
and smear on arms and faces lambent but other-
wise repulsed by anything bug or spider,
and into hurricane months and lightning-fraild
afternoons. You left me there to touch
each bloom with water's blessing against the sun,
to grow, to fruit, to feed us in salads and spicy
remoulades, but you left, and what grows
finds night more mild and moths fly up to moon,
eggs lain and rain these days enough to feed them.



SALT

"I turn to stone and my pain goes on." Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Philosophical Investigations, Proposition 288

Or you are hungry and need seasoning, so take a stone or chisel, brush the dust off, knock off a fist-sized rock, half my foot when it was a foot, for soup, for saving meats, for the long summer, and I would scream but remain as silent as when we fled the city. It was Lot who screamed once he had dropped behind the rise and could finally turn, and those vibrations still ring in these mineral atoms. I feel that pain still. So if you crack off a little piece, some of that pain perhaps goes away and I imagine some cooks enjoy the slight bitterness it adds to every dish. Perhaps you will say it tastes like nostalgia, but that is not why I looked back to spy the face of my husband's angry god, who was no child of Keto. I had stumbled slightly on a boulder, and, from the corner of my eye caught a note of light, a visual and perfect music. I could not stop myself from looking.

DESIRE

"But here it is an important fact that I imagined a deity in order to imagine this." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Proposition 346

Cuttlebone and seed, mirror and wooden perch, toy bells to peck and rattle, long wire frame of the cage, branch to the floor and the door open and Rati takes you out, kisses the bow of your beak and scratches your head while you say nothing and say nothing when Kamadeva calls her back to bed and she naked returns to him naked to kiss and embrace elaborately and awkwardly, cry of pain, cry of pleasure, bees at every blossom, and you know the words and fly to the curtain and stare with your black and gold eye, you know the words and fly to the book on the table and say nothing, parrot, you say nothing until he is made ash, until she, holding his sugarcane bow, his quiver of arrows, howls in grief and parrot you speak.



Hongri Yuan, born in China in 1962, is a poet and philosopher interested particularly in creation. Representative works include *Platinum City*, *Gold City*, *Golden Paradise*, *Gold Sun* and *Golden Giant*. His poetry has been published in the UK, USA, India, New Zealand, Canada and Nigeria.

Translation by Manu Mangattu



THE CITY OF GOLD

Ah! Into a pleasant hallway of gold
Thou did the crystal of the sky mould.
A shining City of Gold
Chanting unto me from far afield.
Into the golden gate I strode
A palace colossal to behold.
Without, a soaring Tower did dazzle
A towering wondrous Grand Castle.
It seemed to the past a billion years I travelled.
Perchance, a primal giant my eyes beheld;
In the breeze his sleeves fluttered.
A transparent golden Robe uncluttered;
The appearance was holy, hallowed.
With a sweet smile they bellowed
As tall as a mountain they loomed
But as light as birds they seemed.

Into a golden palace I sauntered
To regard the sacred giant
His body was like the Sun
Enveloped by a golden flame.

In the hall at the centre he sat
Where bloomed many a huge lotus
Some golden giants too were there
Sitting on the lotus flaunting a smile.

In that Grand Palace studded with gems
Hung an enormous mould of gold;
A mellifluous song lulled all along
Rumbling like thunder, causing concussion.

On the front wall I saw engraved
In a noble script, an impressive word;
Resplendent and magnificent, the whole palace
Was filled with fragrance – wonderful, intoxicating.

Clouds with golden wings
Were flying over: all a mirage
A blossoming thrice wonderful
Blooming in the garden outside the temple.

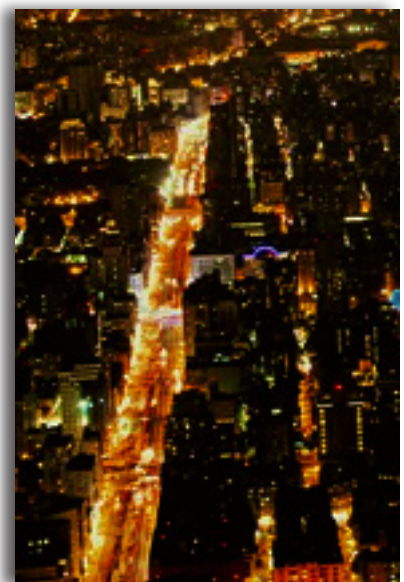
I saw a towering Castle
Like a mountain, upright in the sky
Brilliant design, gorgeous styling
As if God had built it Himself

Colourful gems shine like a mosaic,
A medley of all kinds of strange drawing;
A round gold tower
Like a forest stands in space.

A broad circular Gallery then I saw
Surrounded by the golden castle
Each column was as high as ten thousand meters
Carving out numerous exquisite images.

I walked into a great hall,
I saw some huge statues
Like a group of golden giants
Smiling unto me.

I crossed a huge arch
Into a golden hall
To see a huge picture
Hung on the hall wall.



Each portrait of a transparent flash
 Could draw a Golden Paradise
 As if a three-dimensional space
 Magically unfolded before thine eyes

I heard a mysterious music
 Which made my heart take wings
 A huge picture of the holy girl
 On a plucked instrument was manifest.

She sat in a huge palace
 A giant circle around the ring seat
 Every giant smiled and smiled
 Curling around a golden flame

This girl's elegant posture
 Wearing a golden dress
 Body shining like a huge halo
 Resembling the head of a golden sun.

A huge palace like a fortress
 Outside the temple was the endless Garden
 Flying golden feather bird
 The garden with its pavilions, terraces and open halls

A blossoming of the wondrous exotic
 Giving out an intoxicating fragrance
 Like a sweet girl
 With her model of elegant charm

A sparkling waterfall
 Circling along from the hill
 As a crystal emerald
 Haunting this amazing Garden.

A group of boys and girls:
 Dressed in bright and colourful clothes
 Some would sit and rest in the Pavilion
 Some would walk in the flowers, in the game.

I saw a huge old man
 Sitting in a red cloud.
 Only a crane flew around
 And there was a huge Phoenix.

Another city in the sky
 Far from the golden light
 At a grand chic
 The sky stood in layers

I seemed to hear the call of the divine
 The old man came leisurely.
 He lifted a huge golden book
 And a kind of novel language I heard spoken

I saw a great line of words
 Like a row of golden giants
 They turned into a ray of light, and,
 Suddenly flew into my chest.

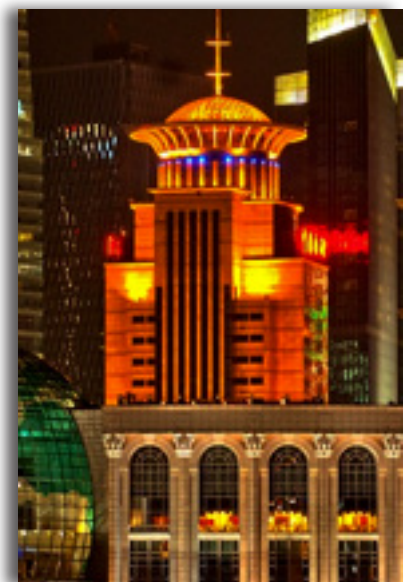
My body was sweet and happy
 The moment turned momentous
 The sacred old man stood beside me
 His smile filled the air of the city.

I became a golden giant
 Beckoned back to the golden castle
 Then came a giant
 Who smiled and called out my name

Our bodies were just as big
 We were like twin brothers
 And Lo! This huge golden castle
 Seemed to belong to us.

All on a sudden I saw a vision
 I too was a holy giant
 In every palace in the city of gold
 I too had left my glad imprints.

3.18.199



© Hongri Yuang

Amy Newlove Schroeder's book, *The Sleep Hotel*, received the Field Prize and was published by Oberlin College Press. Her work has recently appeared in *Boston Review*, *American Letters* and *Commentary*, and is forthcoming in *Rise Up Review*, a new journal of resistance. She teaches writing to engineers at the University of Southern California.



REASON CANNOT PROPOSE TO HERSELF ANY PROBLEM WHICH SHE IS UNABLE TO SOLVE

When the world turned hard and shrank,
 some fled, although there was nowhere to
 flee to. Skin and bone, tendon and muscle
 became cracked hardpan, an echo of what lay beneath the feet.
 From space, the earth looked like a peach stone.
 Plants no longer knew how to grow. It was time
 to eat the poisonous things of the land,
 to suck the scorpion's tail, to lick venom from the
 snake's white fangs. The ground buckled,
 great ridges standing where flat land had lain only
 days before. Some longed to say the word
calamity but the tongue failed long before
 the mind began to go. To survive you had to
 scuttle on fingers and toes. You could never look skyward.
 To live, you had to mimic the beetles,
 transform yourself into a crawling thing,
 so that life on an unknown planet could begin

TINDER

Everyone is alone. I call my friends, we speak, we hang
 up, we call other friends, the night grows long, the smell of jasmine
 hangs in the air along with exhaust and bad cooking.
 I walk to 7/11 to buy cat food and cigarettes. A car
 parked on Franklin is spray-painted with the words *Everything is*
Horrible. A store on Vermont begins selling T-Shirts
 with pictures of the car, proving that you can always make money
 from misery, which we knew already, but is proven every day over
 and over, when we turn on our little screens, and look into them,
 like a fortune teller reading her crystal ball. They say the screens are
 interrupting our sleep; I would not possibly know, I have never had
 an uninterrupted sleep. There it is: the self-pity. My closest ally,
 my dearest friend. She smells of jasmine, sweet, cloying. On the screen
 are the pictures of men, you swipe to the right for yes, you swipe
 to the left for no. There is nothing poetic about it, you worry
 that you may have missed out on your true love in your hurry
 to get through all the men. There are so many men, and when
 you meet them, they want to put their parts inside you, even
 if you do not want them to. It is the same battle, the same fight
 men and women have been fighting since the dawn of time, sex and
 refusal, loneliness and longing. The men leave before the night has even
 begun. We circle like gladiators in the ring, we know the stakes,
 we know the steps to the dance, and we revolve like automatons,
 little figures rolling along a track. The man and the woman
 play out their roles, it is historical, it is by rote. This night
 is no different, all the nights are the same, somewhere a fire
 of love many be burning, but there is no kindling here,
 no spark or tinder. So when the man whose name I have already forgotten
 leaves my apartment, I walk to 7/11 to buy cat food and cigarettes,
 the night smells of jasmine and yes, everything is horrible,
 but I walk back home, I light a cigarette, and inhale, and exhale,
 knowing that I will change the sheets and go to bed, and
 inside myself, I have not changed, I place my hand over my own heart,
 it is enough, I am enough, it is sufficient unto the day.

Dr Azril is a Peruvian Agricultural Engineer and Sociologist. He has published extensively on issues of education (2013, 2015), Cultural Diversity, Anti-Racism, Cultures of Peace and Citizenship. Amongst his publications - 'Citizenship and National Identity in Latin America: The Persisting Salience of Race and Ethnicity' in Oommen (ed.), *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism to Globalism*, 1997; *Ethnic Discrimination: Comparative Perspectives*, Uppsala Universitet: Research Report from the Department of Sociology, 1992; 2 ; *Ethnic Discrimination in Sweden: Basic Issues and Reflections*, Uppsala Universitet: Op. Cit. 1992: 53-69;

From Organism to Identity: The Road from Psychology to Social-Psychology. Towards an Epistemology of Self-Determination, University of Karlstad, Department of Social Sciences, Section of Communication, Working Paper 1994; 1. Ethnic Identity Responses of Mexican Americans to Ethnic Discrimination (Gothenburg, 1994), Quality of Working Life and Democratization in Latin America (EID, 1991). A poetry book "Refracciones Itinerantes" (Uppsala, 2010) - and currently in press with a second and enlarged edition, Fondo Editorial, UNALM, Perú (2017) In Press.



BEFORE?

Before, long before, I grew up to become an antisemite
and you into a Jew,
before, long before, we learned to distrust each other
- what were we?

Before, long before, I grew up to become a Jew
and you into an Arab,
before, long before, we learned to distrust each other
- what were we?

Before, long before, my parents grew up to become German
and yours into Jews
before, long before, we learned to distrust each other
- what were we?

Before, long before, we chose the womb
that gave us life,
before, long before, we learned to distrust each other
- what were we?

DAWN OF THE EMPIRE

Red and white
the roses of the empire
fertilized with peoples blood
red blood alright
white for grief
the red and white roses
of the Empire.

Counterfeit calm
rides on astride time
on the shoulders
of the People.

Roses
in spite of blood
blossom
in spite of mourning
beautiful
in spite of empire
fragrant
in spite of time.

Red and white roses
announce the white demise of the empire
with red and white roses.

People free at last
From Empire.





AUTUMN FADO

Embriagated with the aroma of autumn
cider, cinnamon and memories,
I stumble and slowly roll.

Under a flickering light
I fall and fall forever
for the rest of my life.

I roll down an abyss
rolling smoothly and slowly,
a wheel rolling down,
rolling without breaks,
rolling down slowly,
rolling without pain
rolling down in certain Fall.

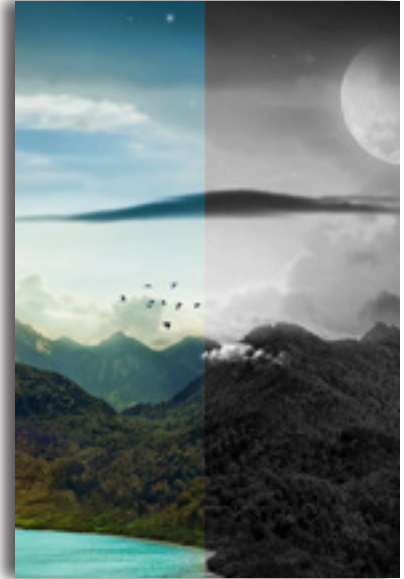
A carpet of lush green warmly
embraces me, as the evening arrives,
with her earthly and sensuous freshness,
and a throbbing bosom.

While lying flat, on the ground
I receive breath and warm cover
from a myriad fallen angels by my side
a symphony of color, agonizing leaves.

With gravity in their voices
so playful in bygone days
now turned into a complaining chorus
intoning a Fado
- and I join their autumn song
from my own fallen autumn.

A nostalgic autumn song
Sibelius's Vals Trist
muted into a murmur
a fallen twilight
a withered shadow
of a foregone Blue

The brown and violet hour looms
with no mercy
it catches up with us
the time is ripe
the time to reap
a harvest of farewells.



ARROGANT

Yes my friends,
They do exist for real!

Yes my friends,
They do exist for real!

They have so much and so little!

Yes my friends,
They do exist for real!
They are good at pretense

While oblivious to all,
They shamelessly hold
to their undeserved privileges.

NIGHT AND DAY

The future forms seek refuge
in the blackness of Night.
They vanish in the dark shadow
of the bygone days.

The discarded voices seek refuge
in the silence of Night.
They vanish in the dark shadow
of the bygone days.

In the darkness of every Night,
during the mysterious dance of Day and Night,
Night gets pregnant with the new Day

ECHOES

And one good day
Time was suspended in Space.
It was then when I heard for the very first time
Whispers, groans, moans, howls, laughter,
Lullabies from afar,
sang in alien tongues.

And one good day
Time was suspended in Space.
For the very first time in my life
I looked straight in the eye
at the umbilical cord of my soul,
glued as-it-were to antique wombs
to a long chain of grandmothers.

And one good day
Time was suspended in Space.
For the very first time in my life
I saw the ghostly faces of my ancestors.
It happened in the mist lit by a candle, before the time when
Time started to fly through Space.

TWILIGHT ATTRACTION

I like you
I have not even met you.
It is like today's Sunset
who greets the next unknown Dawn
expected to rise with the next Morning

Tobi Alfier is a multiple Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee. Current chapbooks are “The Coincidence of Castles” from Glass Lyre Press, Romance and Rust” from Blue Horse Press, and “Down Anstruther Way” (Scotland poems) from *FutureCycle Press*. She is co-editor of *San Pedro River Review* www.bluehorsepress.com.



“THE LAND OF TEARS”

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

The day begins without shame and simple enough.
Now he stands like a picture from “Le Petit Prince”,
a favorite book remembered from childhood.
His roughened elbow leans him against the opened window
of “Old Smokey”, the cooked-green truck
with column shift he’s had since high school.
He puzzles what happened to turn him into the grand
disappointment of a father never afraid to remind him
of it again and again and again.

Lots of reefer passed across that bench seat,
lots of remembrances of being second-rate—
grades, sports, failed affairs and failed marriages.
His curly-hair and thoughtful countenance stare up
at the pale candy-blue sky, only Venus and the moon
still barely visible in the early ascent of morning.
For a small second he feels himself the Golden Boy.

His sisters are perfect. His mother, invisible.
Even a succession of animals gained more kindness,
unconditional and unwavering. His great fear
is that the old man will die without once ever saying
I love you, son— over that he has no control.

And so he pauses into the oncoming day,
the Little Prince with no kingdom, a 60-day chip,
enviable paycheck, and steaming mug
of diner coffee. Deliberate, he turns away,
toward rivers and blossoming trees,
aims toward something only mercy will help him find.

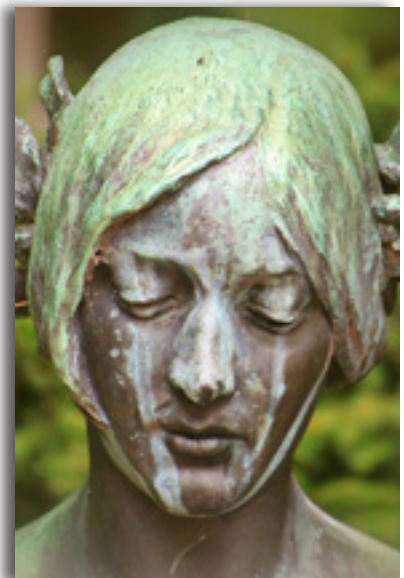
WHAT USED TO BE JOY

You are searching for angels, but alas, not very good at finding them
- Adam Zagajewski

Held hostage, you stay committed to what’s
already been lost. A bitter conversation,
you touch the shoulder of your last remaining friend.
There was a time you could’ve put consequence aside,
found your way home. Not any longer.

Now you come back with the anger you left with—
bitter, talked-out, jagged and jaundiced,
like dark streaks of igneous through granite.
All the mistakes you can dance to are now just handfuls of years
of memories, a Widow’s Walk of crushing disappointments.

You end the day in a surge of curses and indifference,
the ragged circuit of your life—
there are no diamonds here, only coal.





UMBRELLA'D

This much I know,
they are all love poems.
Deliberate, committed,
like the westerling sun firing
into the sky.

Like shots of fireball whiskey,
invented by angels, served
by wrestlers in tight t-shirts
and chaps, angling for tips
while focusing the sweetest
smiles on women who are worn
out from day after day
of constant, earsplitting din—

children, bosses, husbands,
lonesome parents wishing to make
everyone around them miserable,
vulnerable, angry as they get older.

But they are all love poems.
A walk on tracks umbrella'd by willows,
one ear listening for the whoosh
of the oncoming engine, or one
on the man beside you on a barstool,
squinting you into sharper focus as he
cants in a weirdly odd direction.

Without this Fellini-life, you'd
feed the dogs and put up supper,
maybe put on lipstick but likely not.
Fall asleep at 9:00, dream of this exact
passing of all your days,
wake with the sleepy smile
of a love poem anxious on your lips.

THREE-LAYER REDEMPTION AND LEMON CAKE

Isabella wrote her first ten songs on her daddy's rosewood guitar.
That, and a postcard from Miami dated 1962 was all he left when
he and momma split for good that last time.

Once it was the workman who chopped firewood and made her momma
feel beautiful, as if he were Botticelli and she was Venus, a painting Isabella
never learned about in school, cutting art class and smoking under the bleachers.

Momma'd bring him something cool to drink, check the time
until the kids came home, and flirt with the buttons
on her blouse until he got the message.

More than once it was the bartender down the block for daddy,
white tank top, no bra, tattoos of tarot cards from the back of her neck,
to the dimple at the top of her ass, oh it was tough to come home

for dinner after bourbon and watching her all day. But it was the new girl,
just off the train, who smelled like lemons in her sheer summer dress—
he could barely come home to say goodbye.

Isabella took her daddy's guitar and hid it before momma
could put it on the curb. She strummed it quietly,
sang hymns in a soft, breathy voice, tears betraying

her ambition until at last she forgave him. He never saw what she wrote
to get past the pain, but he heard the songs, half-smile on his face,
eyes full of the weight of warmed-over dreams.

Those ten songs were daddy's redemption, Isabella's new start,
and a cake on the table for momma's bridge ladies. Never again
would she have to know the sting, and salve, of pity.



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 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.

AN EMBLEM OF OUR TIME – 2017

This is where we live
in our time

January 2017 Hamburg
there's snow outside
ice caps are melting elsewhere
we fear global warming
the seas keep rising
druids don't make a difference.

A boy sits reading a book
a church bell rings
in the far distance
where his future waits
for him to catch up.

In two-hundred years
you will know our destiny
but not your own...

will a blade of grass
be a blade of grass?

Knowing the future
is like fixing fresh air.



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I'm in the process of writing a collection of poetry
for young people - **Emblems of our Time for 2217.**

I'm trying to imagine what a young person might think
if they stumbled on this collection in 200 years.

If you come upon this book
in two hundred years
will we seem strange to you?

AN EMBLEM OF OUR TIME – FOOD CHAIN

This is where we live
in our time

food chain's on everyone's lips
nutrients and energy
from creature to creature
plant-life to animal-life.

A baby carrot looks up
sees the rabbit coming
and shouts *oh oh oh no!*

The rabbit grows big and strong
the carrot keeps its head down
a farmer snares the rabbit
the farmer grows big and fat
gets old
joins the carrot and that's that.

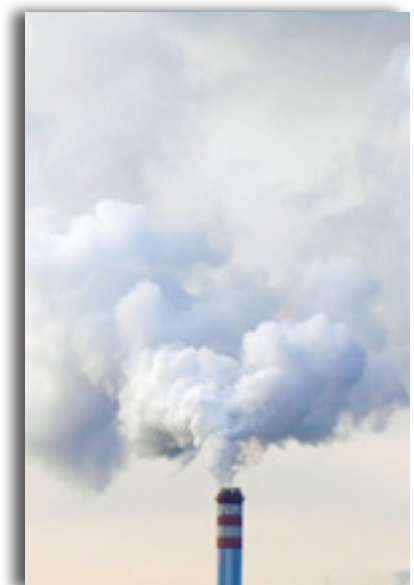
A little girl plucks daisies
to make a daisy chain
and all of nature looks on
waiting to join in the fun.

AN EMBLEM OF OUR TIME – FOSSIL FUELS

This is where we live
in our time

a little chunk of coal
when left alone
can lie happy and undisturbed
out of the sun
deep down in its dark bed
put there for keepsake
by nature floating past.

We can do most things.
We cannot raise the dead
but coal we can
and do and burn
to clog the flow
of the turning universe
to aggravate the sun.



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AN EMBLEM OF OUR TIME – TEACHERS

This is where we live
in our time

school can be a mixed bag
smart and small teachers
tailored and tall teachers
sometimes
put us on the spot
for what? – a tall tale
a few playground punches
a bit of muddle and shemozzle.

Some teachers are cool though
slim and sloppy teachers
lithe and lanky teachers
sometimes
let us play games in class
laugh at our silly jokes
follow our moonbeam trips
like us they have good and bad days.

A teacher who wouldn't say
boo to a goose
goes for swims all alone...

another has five kids
a few sheep
and looks tired all the time...

yet another is saving up
for a sports car – at least
that's what Mum was told.

You'd wonder what
they were like as kids.

AN EMBLEM OF OUR TIME – SMART BOARDS

This is where we live
in our time

smart boards in the classroom
are seen to be smart
not clever but smart
a must in our world
could almost replace
our teacher
the system says
but not our teacher
because she smiles
and the smart board
for all its smartness
hangs there like a long face
waiting to be switched on.

A smart board might be smart
but it doesn't smell nice
it's no shapeshifter
it couldn't kick a ball to save its life
and it's so plain
you couldn't take it home
to your grandma.



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Geraldine Mills has published three collections of short stories and four collections of poetry. She has been awarded many prizes and bursaries including the Hennessy/Tribune New Irish Writer Award, two Arts Council Bursaries and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. Her first children's novel titled *Gold* has just been released and is available at www.littleisland.ie/shop/gold/ www.kennys.ie/gold-2179.html www.geraldinemills.com



FEET FIRST

for Geneviève

You did not come feet first
but they arrived tiny, each toe counted,
perfect, miraculous.
Soles slapped to bring your first breath.

Kept warm all that first winter,
nesting in your father's arms or mine.
Learned early to kick clothes off, socks,
crawl, stand, find your step.

First shoes measured, gauged
no tiny bones crushed
– like Japanese girls–
but free to grow unbound,

to peddle through blue,
scale a cliff, underground cave,
dance along the road,
sound-tap across a stage.

Nails painted sparkling pink
they hold you gently to this earth,
to stand firm
and ever standing firm.

WAITING FOR BABY HYSTAD

for Lia

We are relearning lullabies,
take our old voices out of storage,
dusting off *angel, night-night, hush.*

Your first scan on our fridge
is held there by magnets, as you are
by the pull to your father's heart,

your mother's – who comes back to visit us,
gravid with you. Sleeps in her old bed
where she was first whispered,

slept then beneath my heart, as you within hers now,
your fingers fully formed, your lungs stronger,
your ear attuned to her voice.

Before she leaves she lets go
of all her childhood things,
takes the faded posters from the wall

of moments when she shone:
Carousel, My Fair Lady, Miss Saigon,
ready for this new stage to mother you,

while your father dreams,
in the too-long days of duty
of coming home soon,

of driving you both across
the wheat fields of North Dakota,
golden as the hair on his two darlings' heads.

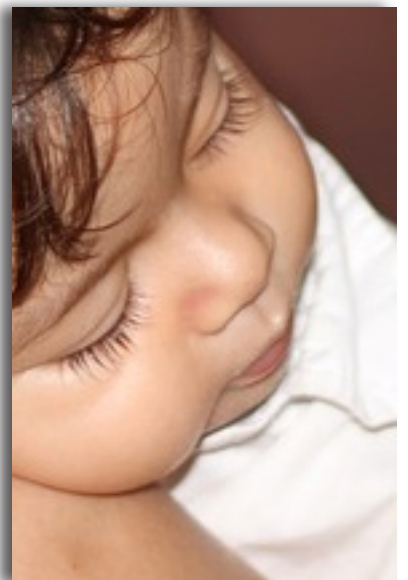
TO THE FATHER OF MY FIRST GRANDCHILD

for Jake

Nothing as beautiful as the picture of you
anchored by the small weight of your new child

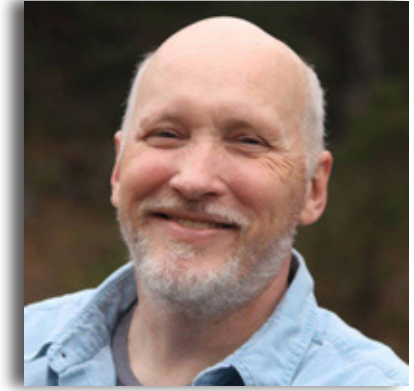
in the harbour of your arms
where she now safely sleeps,

Neptune protecting you both,
her tiny breath rhyming yours.



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Stephen Haven is the author of *The Last Sacred Place in North America* (2012), selected by T.R. Hummer as winner of the New American Press Poetry Prize. He has published two previous collections of poetry, *Dust and Bread* (Turning Point, 2008), for which he was named 2009 Ohio Poet of the Year, and *The Long Silence of the Mohawk Carpet Smokestacks* (University of New Mexico/West End Press, 2004). He is Director of the Lesley University MFA Program in Creative Writing, in Cambridge, MA.



TALISMAN

The Funeral Director said *Turn at the Purple Gorilla*.
His suit was one size too big, the gorilla
The only landmark he offered. *You can't miss it*.

We thought he referred to a lounge of some kind
And kept our eyes sharp for the sign.
Good, we thought, afterward we might need a drink.

Some thirty miles off the West Virginia border,
Half-way to another state of mind,
We knew we missed the mark.

The FD helped us when we celled back in
And found our way again, and then we saw them,
A polka-dotted giraffe, a pink and yellow zebra,

Monkeys of all sizes, a regular ceramic zoo
On the highway's side, and the tell-tale gorilla,
Our talisman, our ringmaster.

We knew we had arrived when we drew past
That indigenous ark into the more
Dirt than gravel drive, the tight rope of a plank

Bending toward a puddle as we crossed from lot
To porch. *Forgive our Progress*, the FD said,
Thin as the smoke from his *Lucky Strike*.

My brother and our wives closed in,
Held hands, the rest of the family outside
In my father's van. They waited beside

The dumpster, its mouth open like a shovel.
Behind the window we could see him,
Wrapped in his final dignity.

My mother had dressed him in his last vestments,
An old maroon pair of pajamas, white robe,
Slippers we picked up in some Blue Light Special.

The odds were with him this time as he maintained
Amidst the chaos some deep inner peace.
When the FD's assistant closed him up

And hit him twice in the face, my father never flinched.
Then they lifted the ossuary of his cardboard coffin.
Then the floodwaters of the oven took him.

I did not forgive them, neither did I blame
The Appalachian edge of where I live.
This was America, after all, this was Boston,

New York City, Omaha... Anywhere
My father ever lived, the unornamented dead
Kept their own counsel as these purple fists,

Half hidden in a continent of grass,
Marked in the service of their salute
Our errand into the wilderness...



SPLASHDOWN: APOLLO 13

Though they failed to show it on the evening news
The taut sail of the *Rachel* leaned to gather
The *Odyssey's* tossed crew. In the corked bottle

Of the command module, the folded message of astronauts
Like something about to bloom.
Small explosives popped the hatch, then out

Of some vast place they were themselves again,
Bobbing in rubber rafts, waiting for their restoration
To women, children, though now they carried with them

The blue planet shot from the moon,
Floating like a hologram, or some glassed jewel.
They weighed things black and blue,

The sheer stretch of where they were delivered
From and to, now a horizon
That would not keep still, the small company of men

More at home with each other now
In a blank expanse that cupped and cradled them.
Yes, it was the *Rachel*, and the web

Of that inhuman view, the Earth's crescent
Rising from behind the moon, and clear in the ear,
The whole ride home, something softer,

Darker than any dissonance,
Calling from an absence of children:
Joseph long gone by now, Benjamin missing,

And their long progeny dreaming of milk and honey
In the desert of our own century. *O Egypt, O exile,*
O voice from the fire of our own mast tops, O Ariel,

Speak to us again, beyond the last candle,
Of the New World naked, of the West hanging
Somewhere above us, always in the balance,

The planet riding the bronco
Of Hubble's peephole, and rising with each swell,
Ishmael hugging the lifeboat of his coffin,

The light so barren it was only before imagined,
The spread skirt of a ship approaching,
Abraham, Hagar, even Sarah waiting

In the wings of a wound that might heal them....
The *Rachel* tacked to gather them,
Then helicopters dropped their spun strands,

Lifted them into a world they once knew.
In the understory of that new aerial view
A still, small voice absent of its womb.



© Stephen Haven

Born in Italy, Maria Miraglia graduated in Foreign Languages and Literatures, got a Master's degree in Evaluation and Assessment, in Teaching of Modern Languages; an HLC from Trinity College UK. She taught in public schools, was lecturer for post-graduated students, for foreign languages teachers and collaborated with the Italian Department of Education. Poetess and translator. She is the *Literary Director of the Italian Association Pablo Neruda*, *General Secretary of Writers Capital International*, *Honorary member of Nations Unidas de las Lettras*. *Founder of World Foundation for Peace*. Her poems can be found in national and international magazines. Author of *Petali tra le Nuvole*, *Le grandi Opere di Yayati Madan Gandhi*, *Whisper from the Blue*, *Dancing Winds*. Author and editor of *Anthology Poetica*. Some of her poems have been translated into Turkish, Spanish, Macedonian, Azerbaijani and Albanian. She was bestowed national and international awards and recognition for poetry.



BROKEN WINGS

Let me share your pain
 tear it off from you
 and make it mine
 See you once again
 merry as a butterfly
 proud of her beauty
 (and freshness)
 capturing (all around)
 admiration and wonder
 Broken your heart
 by poisoned arrows
 (shot by a loveless heart
 merciless his hands)
 Lost have your wings
 their bright colors
 sorrowful tilt their corollas
 the primroses and daisies
 crying are the birds
 in their nests and
 silent the winds
 But, lovingly
 I'll care your wounds
 caress your soul
 to give you back
 the longing to fly
 again

GIVE YOUR THOUGHTS WINGS

Build my dear
 a medieval fortress
 with thick walls around
 and drawbridges
 to stay in solitude
 with your beliefs your passions
 all your acquired convictions
 and from a window
 on the top of a tower
 look at the sky
 to give your thoughts wings
 extricating your Self
 from laces and chains
 that like lianas
 keep you tied
 to people unaware
 of the good and goodness
 so you can find
 at night
 watching the white moon and
 the glittering stars to her around
 what you long for
 listen to the whispers of the silences and
 seize fragments of the mystery of life



Glen Wilson lives and works in Portadown, Co Armagh. He has been widely published having work in *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Foliate Oak*, *Iota*, *Southword* and *The Incubator Journal* amongst others. In 2014 he won the Poetry Space competition and was shortlisted for the Wasafiri New Writing Prize. He was short-listed for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2016. He is currently working on his first collection of poetry.



PASSENGER ON THE NEKYIA

The train moves,
sounding like many axes
grinding against stone.
I lean my arm on the windowsill,
a book with a bookmark wound
lies eagerly in my lap.
Gathering speed, the world quickens,
definitives blur until all is
connected in a shapeless mesh
of colour and mass.

I see Lough Neagh stretch past,
imagine myself dangled
over its edge, watching my watery ego
adjust with each wave,
I reach for the abandoned islands out there,
fought over by all the absolute beliefs.

I try to read my book,
A Very Short Introduction to Jung.
But my profane eye finds the technicolour zoetrope
more profound in its motion.

The first stop jerks the watercolour into focus,
'Finaghy'.
The conductor sticks his head out
the window, making sure no one
is caught between off and on.

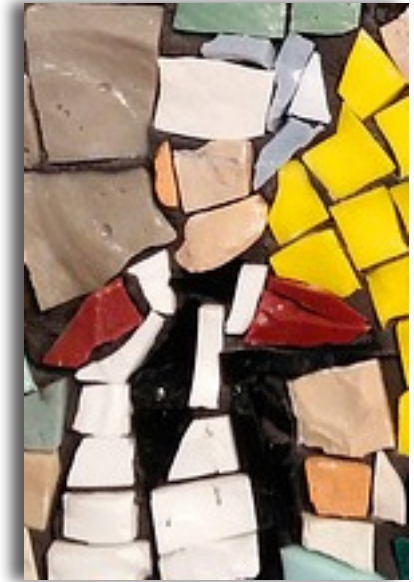
I flick through the contents page,
searching for definition and depth,
but it only shows me black and white
line after line after line.

THE FOUNDS

The walls were thick because they had to be,
only the brick to keep out the cold,
rooms darkened by the small windows,
low ceilings, the smoke that talked
from a long slacked fire.
I touch the tilly lamp as if it could summon stars
with its night jacket of dust and its lack of fuel.
My breaths halo like the smoke rings
my grandfather spun from pursed lips
as he sat in the new house where my mother was born,
just across the yard from this place.
Old tins, cans, oxidised brown
clutter this old mantel,
a draft excluder once a patterned snake is torn by vermin,
the white stuffing wounds threaded thin on the floor,
things that were left to be forgot.
My Grandfather grew up here;
a hallway too low for him to draw his full height,
no separate bedrooms, no corners to hide in,
if you kept secrets you kept them a long time.
He tilled the fields and the open sky,
knew every inch of earth,
claimed and reclaimed with each pre dawn step
what had been passed from his father,
without ceremony but not without weight.
I try to imagine him at night,
folding into his place in that small bed,
happy to be tired from the day,
quickly falling asleep, sparks
spitting out from the hearth
cooling on his dreams.



© Glen Wilson



BOOK OF KIN

I feel the parched page, a grandfather's skin
 weary but glad with the past, stir back
 into supple life as I turn the leaves.
 I free the words of the weight
 of their leather covers, the bound bookmark
 waking from its sleep with a slither,
 dried ink on yellow fade speaks out the names;

Williamson, Wilson, James,
 Jameson, O'Neill, Neill.
 Every maiden née given but a bracket,
 a small dowry of beginning, of sacrifice,
 heartache indents the margins,
 lines end in the stampede of footnotes.

I note birthdates and funerals,
 measure the span of days, impressed
 by Old John straddling centuries
 with time to spare and so ever young Lily
 with her handful of august weeks.
 Born eleven months apart,
 the younger becoming the older.

They would never know me,
 I'm well past their vanishing point,
 their line of vision, as others will be
 for me. I trace the signature, know
 the willingness to carry on the name
 that returns again and again to draw
 from the inkwell.

THE SONG

The evening headlines resonate like gongs – Terror! Scandal!
 Cat Skateboards! We choose the key to tune to.

I turn the television off and holster the remote down the side
 of a well worn settee, children's socks lie noisily on the floor.

I lock up the front and back doors then slowly ascend
 the stairs turning lights off with soft plastic clicks as I go.

I brush my teeth as routine, gargle some mouthwash,
 stare at the whistling gap where my molar used to be.

I check in on my daughter, watch her chest rise and fall and rise...
 kiss her forehead and pull the blanket up to her chin.

My wife and son are already asleep in the bed and Moses basket,
 I creak in and read a little crime fiction then flick off the light.

I sink down and listen; mother and son breathe in unison,
 my daughter harmonises through the monitor,

I close my eyes to join in on this thankful chorus.

Bob shakespeare is a regular reader on the Dublin open – mic scene since 2004. Bobs poems have appeared in *Census Anthologies* 2009/2010. Also in *Agamemnon dead* 2014 an anthology edited by Peter O’ Neill [poet] and Walter Ruhlmann. Bob’s poems appear in the *New Ulster* 40th. Edition. Several of his poems appeared in the *Riposte*, edited by Michael O’Flanagan [poet]. Bob has read at Skerries Soundwaves Festival. Also on Radio KFM. Liffey FM. And Dublin South Radio. Bob is a member of the Ardgillan writers group.



AWAKE

I am asleep at your grave, would that I could lie here forever,
With my hand in your smallness, I am sure we’d not sever.

My grief is for you, girl, and woman, you left me behind.

My cherry blossom, my blazing bright brightness,
Surely it’s time to be twinned in ripeness.

I smell of life and earth has worn and torn me well.

When the world thinks that I am safe in my bed, till night is morning,
I am stretched by your side, waiting, hoping for your sweet calling.

My grief is for you, girl, and woman, you left me behind

Remember the dark nights we were lost in our thoughts,
We had angered each other, the nonsense turned frost.

I smell of life and the earth has worn and torn me well.

Because I still love you my love, even though you’re dead.
I cannot belie sleep, warm, in this bleak lonely bed.

My grief is for you, girl, and woman, you left me behind.
I smell of life and the earth has worn and torn me well.

BURTHENS

there you are
all bent over
with curvature
like an old coat rack
beaten down with age
nothing seems to fi
the unsure shuffle
trips in confusion
thoughts are burthen
like your grand age
one hardly seeing
blind eye testimony
to muffled sounds
that baffle reason
to repeat what’s said
in the frustrated hope
not understanding
but nodding as if
to seem she does
only adding to
a fractured moment
of fragile living



DISCHARGED

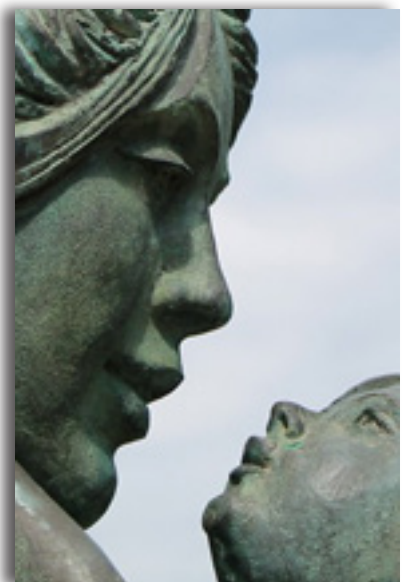
Dead woman walking
No more
Can be done
But wait
Till life spills
Into box
Fired to ashes

No words
Comfort
Numbed
Tomorrow
Perhaps
Begin
Anew

Feeling
Rising
Grey
Hope
Beacons
Future

SOLILOQUISE

You are dead tissue
That won't decompose
You shred my heart
And my mind
Without care or
Any feeling and
Yet I go back
Time and time
Hoping to see
A glimmer of love
Knowing it's hopeless
For you are without
Maternalistic joy
I think...
Perhaps not
Your falall
Brought my conception
Before respectability
In the churches eyes
By god
Priests on high
Did not know
I never felt loved
Perhaps you blamed
My innocence and
Still ...
Could we be strangers again?



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

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



RUBY IN PINK

A hi-tech heralding
Of your net-age nativity.
Text bleeps in the night;
Ring tones at morning;
The image of your birth-day face
Hot mailed from a picture phone.
Dark eyes that browse the world
For the light and the love source.
More precious than gemstone,
Ruby in pink.

CROSSINGS

Crossing the Irish Sea, Bristol, Ryanair,
To slide beneath the Severn into Wales
Railwards to Cardiff, a bus up City Road;
Last crossing to Cyfarthfa Street, a stroll,
To where you snoozed, snug in a Moses cot,
Indifferent to the many lines I'd crossed
(Not counting Juan Smith on ITV
Crossing the English line at St. Denis.)

A fortnight on, through autumn skies you cruised
Westwards to ford the Shannon at Killaloe.
Jauzion in Cardiff was straddling the All-Black line,
And Bobo the Springbok whitewash in Marseilles;
While you wrought your magic, flickered a crooked smile,
And stared down phantoms on the kitchen wall.
Titans on TV; for us the gleaming prize
Was Evie, the golden apple of our eyes.

THE SUN THE MOON AND HARRY

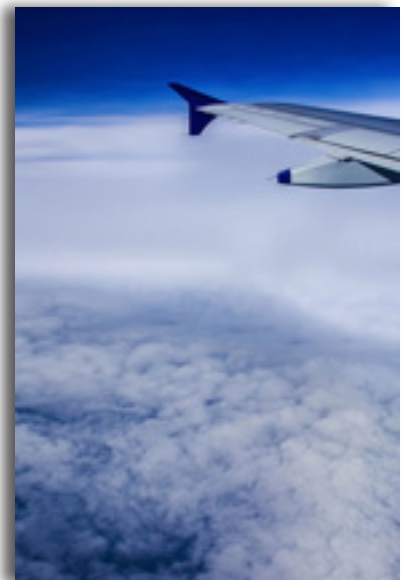
Melbourne, the sun a gold balloon
in the blue of the last sky of summer,
At the Rod Laver Arena, Federer and Murray
bludgeon saffron balls to raucous acclaim.

London, the last frost of January
over Spire Court and Moon-Under-Water.
The air about Drayton Park pulses
to Arsenal groans, United cheers.

Westward, the eve of St Bridget,
An lá dul cun síne, the sails unfurling,
Hurlers are flexing muscles and ash,
the earth astir at the promise of Spring.

Pre-dawn, the labour ward of the North Mid,
A new-born strains each facial muscle
to test-trial his overture of vowels.
In my head a familiar melody:

The sun, the moon and Harry,
Tomorrow now and Harry,
The sun, the moon and Harry,
It's a brand new song.



© Michael Durack

THE LION SLEEPS TONIGHT

Under an attic window, tucked in tight,
The flame-haired boy, the one who calls me Poff,
Leo, the little lion, sleeps tonight.

Moon and a million stars portend frostbite:
Will sheets and duvet keep him warm enough
Under an attic window, tucked in tight?

Noon, out of play school, perky, high as a kite,
He sheds his hooded winter coat and scarf;
But Leo, the little lion, sleeps tonight.

He trips, falls over, assures us: *I'm alright*;
Back on his feet, down-dusted, shatterproof;
Now in this attic bedroom, tucked in tight.

After the day's high drama he takes flight
From snakes and ladders, dinky cars and stuff:
Leo, the little lion, sleeps tonight.

Come morning, jets will scrawl long lines of white
Across the blue; for now art class is off.
Under an attic window, tucked in tight,
Leo, the little lion, sleeps tonight.

TILLY AND DAISY

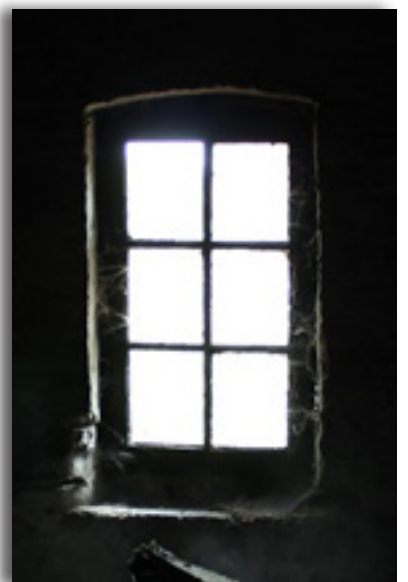
Tilly's not crazy
nor clumsy, nor silly;
and Daisy's not lazy,
nor a dizzy hillbilly.

When the weather is chilly,
or misty or hazy,
I hanker for Tilly
and dream about Daisy.

Though the roadways be hilly
and the woodland paths mazy,
I'd trudge them with Tilly
and ramble with Daisy.

I'd swim the Zambesi
for an eyeful of Tilly
and for one smile from Daisy
I'd hitch-hike to Chile.

Now Daisy's all frilly
and Tilly's dressed snazzy,
both a teeny bit silly
and a tiny bit crazy.



Laura J. Braverman studied fine art and apparel design at Rhode Island School of Design, and worked internationally in apparel for many years. In addition to painting, she now focuses on writing, having completed a writer's certificate in creative nonfiction with Stanford University; taken numerous courses in poetry and essay at the New School Continuing Education Program; and, participated in workshops with poet James Arthur, and with nonfiction writer Sven Birkerts at Bennington College graduate writing seminars. Her work has appeared in the prose anthology *Mountain Stories*, and the poetry journals *Live Encounters*, *The BeZINE*, and *Mediterranean Poetry*, and will soon appear in *California Quarterly* and *Levure Litteraire*.



FEAR NOT

We make our way along the coast; our two sons sleep
in the back. We are heading towards the mountain village
of Deir-el-Qamar. To pronounce that Q, you must use
the Kaph of the Arabic alphabet. When you hear the throaty
Kaph, it sounds as deep as an unplumbed well, as old
as biblical olive groves, as old as the moon Qamar stands for.

Deir-el-Qamar, Convent of the Moon, rests in the south,
on the Mount Lebanon chain in the Chouf, home to the Druze,
believers in life's cyclic renewals. Look for their timeworn
uniform—baggy *sherwal* pants, black tunic, white skullcap.

We make our way to the Druze village of the moon.
I look out the window as my husband drives. The sea's
azure flashes between slipshod concrete structures,
pasted together during the war. Some stand half-finished.

The road edge is mottled by garbage: old aluminum cans,
printed grocery bags, Kleenex melted like white moss
over rocks, over the scatterings of discarded scrap metal.

On our neighborhood street the green metal bins cannot
contain the waste. Fat bags sprawl along the sidewalk,
framed by white powder lines: sprinkled confectioner's
sugar, poison to keep the rats from a banquet of decay.

All is quiet within the car's interior, save for the strains
of a baroque guitar. Our sons still sleep. Near a eucalyptus
grove, we turn off the coastal road, bend away from the sea.

We enter a valley and the garbage thins. I look at the green
spread out beneath me—fields of banana trees. The road,
now narrow, curves and climbs along the ridge. To my left,
silvery verdigris leaves of laurel, olive, oak—but down
below the valley flourishes tropical—lush and ripe.

The shades of green replace the recent sea of waste.
Then—I don't know why—a word makes its presence
felt: Praise. Praise. And in its wake, comes another: Kālī.
Why Praise, why Kālī, on our way up the narrow road?

Kālī was born of rage, of Goddess Durga's rage. Faraway
in an ancient field, out the Dark One sprang from Durga's
brow—skin the deepest indigo of a moonless night, hair
untamed and black, around Her neck a garland of severed
human heads. She slew the demons facing Durga one by one,
then swayed and stamped a wild dance on their fresh graves.

Kālī destroys. Kālī devours, but also creates and protects,
is loved as a mother of many faces, many hands. One hand
forms abhaya mudrā: Fear not. Another clasps a red sword.

Why Praise, why Kālī, on our way up the narrow road?
I don't know. But even as I feel Her fury, I see: She touched
the fertile fields, coaxed leaves from trees, conjured shades
of green. She is the dark void of that early night from which
all comes—to which all goes.

Praise Kālī. Praise the green fields, valleys, trees, groves.
Praise the sea, the Levantine Mountains, the moon. Praise
the dark Mother. And in praising Her, must we not also
praise destruction, decay—death?



HIS GRANDMOTHER'S GARDEN

Sandstone walls of the neglected house hide
a garden from the empty village street. Weeds
overtake the grass, vines cling to the garden
gate. Branches of trees bend under the weight
of lemons, pomegranates. He tells me he learned

to ride his first bicycle here. The crushed, wet
leaves smell of childhood—of digging in damp
soil, staying out till dusk. Even now, the parasol
pines beyond darken against a rose-violet sky, turn
skinny and black. This, he says, is the lonely hour.

From a low-hanging bow, he plucks a round, red
fruit—*remman*, they call it here. Leathery skin
glistens wet with recent rain. He splits it open
on a stone—the seeds glow garnet in their white
webbing. Or the magic hour, I say. He picks out

the seeds and eats, holds out half the fruit to me.
Does he know of Persephone? A girl seized from
a field by her uncle. The earth split. Black horses
drew the chariot down to her chthonic throne. Her
dark king offered garnet seeds. She ate, unwitting.

Demeter bargained for her daughter's return: without
Persephone, only winter's sleep on earth. But for those
seeds could she come back. Six seeds to hold her
underground—six months to mourn the light above.

MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA

I grew up with a tree—a tree adorned
with moon blossoms. During Santa
Monica summer months, the tree shaded
our garden, kept it cool and secret under
a generous maternal guard. Scaly ridges

covered her muscular roots—rough to
touch for small palms. With bulky twists,
the roots made little caves of hidden worlds
full with busy creatures—like the dark life
under a stone. Once exposed, it dashes

in confused directions at the shock of light.
I did not often lift stones. I treasured secret
places, sought them out for my own cloistered
drawing in. The tree's waxy, white blooms
infused our garden with a mix of heady scents:

honey, pepper, citrus spice. A Dutch master
painted the leaves—rich oil coats of evergreen
and burnt ochre. With sharp edges of thick skin,
felled leaves made sturdy hulls for sailing
the sea of milky flowers at summer's end.

The petals curled in, turned to brittle caramel—
offering up their ardent last scent before Earth
extended out Her hand to take them back.
To pull the spent petals down into the deep—
the quiet territory of measured transformation.

A little-known true story, **Dr Felix Kersten** was masseur to **Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler** (head of the SS & Gestapo) during the Second World War. Despite threats to his life, he used his influence over the Reichsführer to secure the release of tens, possibly hundreds of thousands, of prisoners. Accused of collaboration after the war, his name was largely cleared and he received high honours from several European countries.

Anne M Carson's poetry has been published internationally and widely in Australia. *Removing the Kimono*, was published in 2013 and amongst other awards, she was shortlisted for the 2015 Ron Pretty Poetry Prize. She serves as Director Arts on the Board of Ondru and is seeking publication for *Massaging Himmler: A poetic biography of Dr Felix Kersten*. She and her partner, the pianist Julian Bailey, present a concert version of this work with the whole set of Rachmaninov Preludes Op 23.



SCHELLENBERG WARNS FELIX

Chancellery, Berlin, 1 August 1944

I send my warnings to Hartzwalde by motorcycle courier. I just hope Felix receives them before he sets out for Chancellery. 'Watch out. Kaltenbrunner has arranged to have you assassinated. Be extremely prudent. The danger is imminent. In spite of all the protection Himmler gives you, Kaltenbrunner has decided to kill you. Don't follow your usual route through Oranienburg ... Take the other road.'¹

FELIX SHAKES FOR HOURS

Gut Hartzwalde, 1 August 1944

I am still trembling with how close
I came to death and the horror of

not knowing who – or what – to trust.
When the message comes I am not

sure if it really is from Schellenberg
from Kaltenbrunner pretending

to be Schellenberg! I retrieve the revolver
H has given me special authorisation

to carry. I have some sticky moments
thinking it through but decide in the end

to trust Schellenberg. I order the driver
to take the alternative Templin route.

Assassination attempts, it seems, à la mode
this month. Luckily I am able to protect

Irm from gleaning any of the danger
and she knows nothing of my ordeal.



¹ Kessel J. (Translated by Denise Folliot), *The Magic Touch*. Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1961, p 194.

Above and right - poems from *Massaging Himmler: A poetic biography of Dr Felix Kersten*

PORFIRY PETROVICH RAZUMIKHIN AND TOBACCO

Investigating Magistrate, Haymarket District Police Bureau, St Petersburg, Russia

He takes a long slow toke, drawing chemical balm into his being.
Inside the lung, alveoli – permeable, grape-like – open to osmosis.
His eyelids quiver closed while he savours the fleeting ecstatic moment,
floating on waves of wellbeing. As the drug reaches his brain, his mind
ratchets up a gear, honing in on the current crime. He tracks the facts
to find the missing link, the new angle that will open the case like a packed
portmanteau. Never just smoking, but sacred ritual, hourly titration.
Sometimes only cravings save him from the total lethargy induced
by blood, gore, and betrayal. Puff by puff he is invigorated, resumes
his curiosity, élan. He just can't think clearly without a certain dosage
on board. To himself he is deeply absurd – un-nictonined, he is convinced
he would be even more absurd.

from *The detective's chair*

HEAVEN BACKWARDS

*Waiting neighbours catch little Nevaeh, whose name
is "heaven" spelled backwards, with a blanket. Channel 9 News*

Everything happens so fast. No
time to think about how flames cut
the sky to shreds like a machete or
how hope balances fear on its blade.

The world shrinks into my neighbour's
shrieks – the baby bundled in her arms,
her face scrunched with terror.

A blanket appears in my hands before
I realise how it got there, before
I register how high the stakes are.

The baby zooms out of the woman's
hands like a football off the boot, no
time to think or judge, arms readied
towards her, ready to catch, to clutch
it to my chest, desperate to be worthy
of this mark.

Later I can't stop seeing the baby
plunge out of the sky. Again and
again a hundred babies, one after
the other, on crazy replay, perpetual
footy practice session. Catch, clutch,
catch, clutch. All thud into me with
the same almost-winding thwack.
When you know you've got it, a ball
fits into you like it knows its place,
sticks. I never marked so sweet.



© Anne M Carson

Anni Wilton-Jones, a resident of Co Mayo, has also lived in Wales, England and Saudi Arabia. Having experienced a varied range of careers she is now semi-retired, working part-time in supporting voluntary dyslexia groups. A writer of poetry and, occasionally, prose, she has read in Wales, England, the USA and Ireland. Her collections include *Winter Whiting* and, written under the pen-name Victoria Tims, a chapbook of poems about abuse, entitled *Moth*.



DISCARDED

She had been dropped
like a frightened lizard's tail
but could not understand
what had threatened them.
They had chosen to replace her
with a new tail
different but still theirs
whilst she would flail –
a temporary distraction –
then slowly rot
till merely the bones
of her former self

PENNYROYAL

Unpleasant,
overpowering
its promised mildness
a lie
it stayed
on the spice rack
under his photo

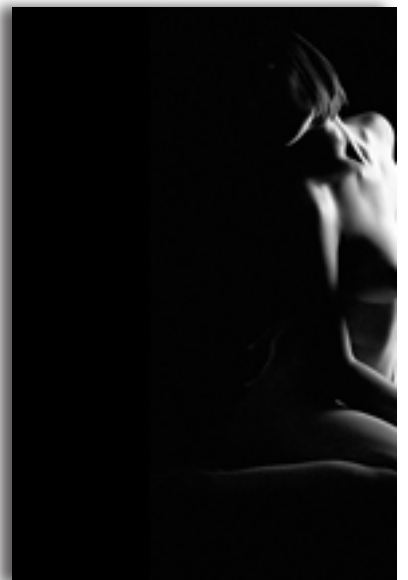
but when you asked
to savour it
I found it gone
replaced
like his picture
with a gentler essence
more to my taste.

EXODUS

Come closer
be my comfort
my warmth
in the ice
of this unshared bed

touch me
fleetinglly
if no more
as you pass
through my mind

you are edging yourself
out of my memory
leaving me wretched
reaching out
for your wraith



NEVER-NEVER-TIME

Snow in June was
their Blue Moon Time
the day when
pigs would fly
and donkeys sing
the day when she
would leave him.

A white carpet melted
under her jittery feet
and icy flecks feathered
her bruised arms
as she left at last
when snow fell
that Blue Moon June.

SEASHORE

Wet sand
sun-rippled
stretches
along the low-tide sea

bare-foot
I walk
sand-ridges pressing
into my shoe-softened soles

and I remember
lying on this strand
welcoming the weight of you
my back forced down
onto the ridges
forming furrows in my flesh
for your fingers to explore
when
too soon
we stood up
and moved on

towards today
and separation

PASSENGER

White-knuckled
she awaits
the next skirmish

her clamped jaw resists
every conscious effort
at relaxation

her teeth ache
until slowly
she welcomes the dark

there is safety
in blackness
no car-lights

no aggravation
no blinding reflections
no wrathful responses

she lets out
a stretched sigh
leans back, eyes closed

tries to prepare
for the next set of headlights
to flood from the rear

and for expletives
to signal
another over-reaction.



Ian Watson was born in Belfast and lives in Bremen, Northern Germany. He writes and publishes in both German (mostly prose) and English (mostly poetry). His recent publications include two books of poetry and short prose - *Kurzpassspiel* (German) and *Riverbank City: A Bremen Canvas*, and his collection *Granny's Interpreter* was published in March 2016 by Salmon Poetry in Ireland. He wrote this poem for a celebration of the life of the Bremen translator, reciter, reviewer, broadcaster and *homme de lettres*, Jürgen Dierking, who died unexpectedly in June 2016. Dierking translated many writers into German, including Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, Raymond Carver, Sujata Bhatt and Charles Baxter. <http://www.irishwriters-online.com/watson-ian/>



HAND LUGGAGE

Neither tea nor coffee. In England, the former simply wasn't and the latter only just. He smiled his No thank you apologetically to the stewardess and thought of what he would drink this evening at Auntie Miri's. Only ever First Flush. He could still nearly taste it after fifteen years. Would she be getting old by now, shrinking like her older sister? Or would England have taken a load off her and allowed her to walk taller than his mother? Damn it, he must remember not to call it England. Uncle Jim was so proud of his Burns Night and his tartan scarf and his football. At ten, Ravi had been able to name all the members of the Glasgow Rangers team even though he had never seen a professional football match and couldn't imagine exactly where Scotland was. Uncle Jim and he had been the founding - and only - members of the Lucknow Rangers Club, collecting cigarette cards from the Great Scottish Footballers series that his uncle's kid brother Rob had sent from Glasgow. Now Rob was dead, killed ten years ago by a Belfast sniper. And Uncle Jim had become bitter and withdrawn, seeing criminals and terrorists under every bed. Auntie Miri's letters had got shorter, sadder and less frequent; but when Ravi had written to say he was coming to Britain on business she had scribbled an ecstatic little card, listing all the small things he must bring, things she had to travel down to Bradford in England to buy. He was all anticipation of the meeting and gave no thought to the business of the next day; Scottish stainless steel ball-bearings for bikes built in India meant nothing compared to Auntie Miri's cooking and Uncle Jim's firm handshake.

It began as a kind of low-level hiss, like a kettle starting to boil. Then Ravi realised it was the tall young woman in the aisle seat beside him; she was kissing her teeth and - yes - muttering. Bastard; he clearly heard the word Bastard. Her right hand was twisted tense and tight round the handle of the plastic knife and her snack was untouched; her knuckles were white. It was then that Ravi realised that she too had refused both tea and coffee.

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



VICO ROAD

Gina couldn't believe she was still sitting there. The rain hadn't let up; it was spilling onto the windscreen. She flicked the wipers but the scene in front of her made her feel sick. The orange glow of the clock said 12:08. She thought she heard thunder or was it the sound of the other car moving away from the tree it had been rammed against. She turned quickly almost wrenching her neck, checking the blurry view, straining her eyes trying to make sure there was still nobody around.

She needed time to think. Should she drive her car just that tiny bit more, into the back of Sophie's white Ford Focus? It would only take the smallest nudge to push that selfish bitch over the edge, out of their lives, out of her son's life.

Gina closed her eyes for a moment; she could never have dreamt she was capable of this. The slotted pictures of the day flickered frantically in her mind.

Sophie, Chris's girlfriend, had sat across from her, tears spilling onto reddened cheeks, scrubbing at her eyes with a balled up tissue. Gina had felt everything slide and jar to a stop when Sophie in a childlike whingeing voice explained that she couldn't go through with donating a kidney to Chris.

"I hadn't thought it all through properly and now the whole idea of donating, well, it doesn't bear thinking about. I'm scared; I can't cope with the thought of being ill and in pain. You have to understand Gina; you have to help me tell Chris."

Gina had clutched the back of the kitchen chair her knuckles white.

"But it's all set up, everything's in place, you're his only hope."

Gina looked at Sophie. She wasn't going to change her mind. She was still talking head tilted to one side, that pathetic expression on her face.

Sophie lowered her eyes and bit her lip. She begged Gina to see it from her point of view, but Gina couldn't see anything. She could no longer hear her words. All she could think of was her son. She turned away from her, moved over to the sink still filled with dishes. The tap dripped clean drops into the cold greasy water. A vile mess was starting to form on top. She stared out through the kitchen window. Rain was falling, the sky heavy and grey. Even the leaves on the trees had given up, lost their grip.

She ignored Sophie calling her name as she walked past her picked up her car keys and left. She had driven for hours all along the coast road. She had stopped and stared out over the bay watching the tide beat the island with relentless waves.

Everything had changed when Sophie had agreed to have the tests and discovered she was a match. Gina thanked God they'd met, decided she would ignore all her little flaws. Sophie came home with Chris often; she'd have dinner with the two of them but the last time she came she'd drawled at Chris to hurry up and finish his meal as she wanted to get out of there, go somewhere fun. Chris looked embarrassed. Gina picked up on his discomfort and to break the tension she asked Sophie about her computer course.

She'd said she got her Dad to pay for the course. She told him she'd get a job with much better pay if she could get a degree. Her Dad bought her a car when she passed her first year exams and she put Chris's name on her insurance.



“You can drive when I’ve had a few drinks”, she’d said laughing.

Gina remembered Chris talking about taking Sophie on the drive down along the coast. He laughed telling Gina how terrified Sophie was driving the narrow cliffside roads between Dalkey and Killiney.

“She was squealing Mam, hiding her eyes with her hands.”

Gina had tried to pull herself together; she knew these roads could be treacherous. The rain was so heavy, hopping off the ground, wipers swishing back and forth, it was like watching a film on fast forward, she tried to concentrate on her driving and then she’d seen it. Coming out of Sorrento Terrace, Sophie’s white Ford Focus the only other car on the road, teetering nervously along the narrow road in front of her, brake lights bouncing on and off through the thick grey night, her driving erratic.

“You stupid selfish bitch”, Gina heard herself hiss.

Gina couldn’t form any clear thoughts. There were just waves of emotion, flashes of thought. She knocked the headlights on to full beam and sped up behind her until with a thump she made contact. The holy medal hanging from Gina’s rear view mirror with the Madonna holding her child swung violently. Revving madly she shoved the car along faster towards the sharp turn on Vico Road. Her veins pumped with blood until she could barely hear the metal as Sophie’s car grazed along the grassy wall on the right, scraping, whining like a woman screeching until it careered off the road and slammed bluntly against the tree.

The tree was the only thing between Sophie’s car and the steep drop over the bay. Silence, stillness, Gina didn’t know what to do next she switched off the engine. She sat staring at the wreckage in front of her. Lights flashed and Gina’s body almost left the car seat with fright but it was just another car taking the bend at speed.

The fact that Sophie hadn’t gotten out of the car after it hit the tree might have meant that she was dead already or unconscious or scared to move, just like she was too scared to go through with what she’d promised Chris.

She made the emergency call. Gina knew that Sophie’s organs had to be taken as soon as possible. She started up her car reversed a little way back and then slammed her foot on the accelerator and lunged forward dislodging the car. She rammed her foot on the brake as she watched the Ford Focus almost fly for a second before it bounced like a toy, weightless down against the bank until it landed cradled on the rocks.

She reversed feeling strangely calm and drove her own battered car home. It didn’t matter now what happened to her. The paperwork was done they couldn’t refuse Chris Sophie’s kidney now.

Gina turned her car into her driveway; her stomach lurched violently at the sight before her. Sophie, her face white under the light, hopped from one foot to the other wringing her hands. Mascara mixed with tears and rain made trails like roads on a map. She ran over and pulled open Gina’s car door.

“Chris took my car. He was so upset. I told him I couldn’t go through with it. He stormed out. I couldn’t stop him.”

Gina squeezed her eyes tightly shut and tried to block out Sophie’s words. She put her arms around herself and rocked back and forth remembering the heat of happiness when she had held her baby boy for the very first time.



Susan Condon, a native of Dublin, is currently working on her second novel. She was awarded a Certificate in Creative Writing from NUI Maynooth while her short stories have won numerous awards including first prize in the Jonathan Swift Creative Writing Award. Publications include *My Weekly*, *Ireland's Own Anthology*, *Flash Flood Journal*, *Spelk* and *Flash Fiction Magazine*. Susan blogs at: www.susancondon.wordpress.com or you can find her on Twitter: @SusanCondon



THE VISIT

Bridie looked out the window of her terraced house. She smiled as she watched Sam pottering around in the garden, stopping to sniff the carnations.

He may not be very talkative but he never moaned at her for the occasional cigarette she enjoyed with her cup of tea. Opening the back door she called out to him. He didn't even turn his head. It was hard to know whether he was ignoring her or going deaf. She called again and as he walked past her she looked at the sky tutting.

"It would have to rain today, Sam. I'll be drenched by the time I get to the hospital – like a drowned rat."

Sam just looked at her.

"Well I won't be long," she said, bending to kiss him on the head. She finished fastening the buttons on her shabby coat, tucked her scarf around her collar and pulled on her faded leather gloves. She gave herself a final look in the hall mirror, patted her grey hair into place, glided the end of her pink lipstick across her lips and frowned at the dark circles beneath her brown eyes. Taking an umbrella from the stand, she draped her handbag across her thin frame and pulled the front door closed, giving it a final tug.

Although it was raining she was glad to be outside. *A soft day*, her parents would have said, back in her native Donegal. The sky was blue, the sun was fighting to appear and there was even a hint of a rainbow.

Bridie opened the door into Cunningham's Newsagent and queued at the counter. While everyone was talking excitedly about the millions to be won on the lotto this week, her mind wandered, thinking about what she'd cook for dinner later. Maybe as a treat she'd pick up sausages and white pudding and maybe a turnover that she could slice, toast and smother in Kerrygold butter finished off with a steaming mug

of tea – something to look forward to. There were three more people in the queue in front of her.

A flash of green caught her eye, as something fell to the floor in front of her.

"I'll get that," she said, bending to pick it up. It was a stump of emerald green pencil with a piece of twine attached to the end.

"I'm finished with it now, love. Hold onto it for your own ticket. Bring you a bit of luck," said the old lady turning from the counter and fixing her scarf securely on her head.

Bridie looked at the pencil in her gloved hand. *Why not? Maybe it's a lucky omen – and on my birthday too!*

She was usually bored to distraction when her friends went on about the numbers they chose and why they chose them. Although, she always enjoyed the chats about what they would do if they won - at least they were interesting, gave her friends an added dimension, showing a side of them that she would never have guessed. Rose planned a year in Paris to really take up her oil painting, Margaret wanted to buy a yacht and take up sailing and Eileen wanted . . .

"Bridie, how are you today? And himself?" smiled Mary.

Bridie, broken from her reverie, smiled back.

"All grand Mary, not a bother. And you?"

"Well to be honest, my back is at me again, I've been popping pills like Smarties since last week, but sure, you have to keep going. The usual?" she asked.

Bridie nodded and took her purse from her bag. Mary pulled a jar from the shelf, weighed out the usual 1/4lb on the scales, then poured the contents into a brown paper bag. Holding the bag by the top edges, she made her usual show of swinging it around three times to seal it.

As she counted out coins, Bridie spotted the €5 note she always kept folded into the small compartment of her purse – her just in case money. Feeling spontaneous, she asked for a lotto ticket. Mary arched an eyebrow.

“What numbers?” she asked.

Bridie looked flustered.

“I’ve never actually bought a lotto ticket before,” she mumbled.

Mary laughed. “You must be the only person in Ireland who can say that! Two panels, six numbers in each – your lucky numbers, birthdays, the number of your front door – whatever you like.”

“Okay, let me see,” said Bridie, taking her time. She smiled, as she carefully marked her chosen numbers, exactly as Mary showed her, with the green pencil.

She placed the paper bag into her handbag and folded the ticket, placing it carefully into the small compartment of her purse along with her change. “See you next week, Mary,” she called, as she made her way out the door and up the hill towards the hospital.

“Hello, Robert,” she said, kissing him on the lips. He was freshly shaved and smelled of Old Spice. His grey hair was combed neatly to the side. He looked, she thought, as handsome as the day they had first met. He turned his pale blue eyes towards her and held out his hands.

Bridie took the paper bag from her handbag, removing a cellophane wrapper. She pulled the two ends, releasing a white iced caramel and put it in his hand. He looked at it with wonder, turning it over before holding it to his nose. He sniffed, then, looked around furtively while he darted his tongue out and licked it.

“Put it in your mouth, sweetheart,” said Bridie, plucking it from his hand and popping it into his open mouth.

After shrugging off her damp coat she settled herself in the chair at the side of the bed and picked a pink sweet from the bag for herself. The icing melted and the caramel became sticky and chewy as they sat in companionable silence until the brown bag contained only the empty cellophane wrappers.

At three o’clock a porter came into the ward waving a brass bell - the clanging sound announcing the end of visiting time. It reminded Bridie of her first days at school when the teacher would ring an identical bell so that they would all stop playing in the yard and form orderly lines for each class. She wiped a tear from her eye. That

was a long time ago now. She set about putting her damp coat back on, her scarf and finally her gloves.

“Goodbye, Robert,” she whispered, as she kissed him.

She was walking up the corridor when she remembered her umbrella which she had left beside Robert’s locker. Returning to his bedside she retrieved the umbrella. He turned his pale blue eyes towards her and held out his hands.

She kissed him once again and left.

Turning the key in her front door she was glad that Sam was there to greet her. She relied so much on him these days, she didn’t know how she could survive without him.

It was not until later, that Bridie remembered the lottery ticket. With a cup of tea and a slice of buttered turnover on the little table beside her, Bridie put down the Mills and Boon she’d borrowed from the library and rummaged through her handbag.

“Well Sam, you never know, this could be our lucky day,” she said, as she turned on the television. It was just gone eight o’clock and the fuss of pulling the numbers from the drum had finished. The winning numbers were on the screen:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

“Oh My God, Sam, we’ve won, we’ve won!” She double-checked her numbers:

142 was the number of their house

3 was always her lucky number

And 7 and 5 were today’s date – the 7th of May – her birthday – and the only reason that she had gone a little crazy and bought the lotto ticket . . .

“It may be great to win the lotto Sam, but what use is it now? All the plans Robert and I made over the years; if we ever came into money we’d travel more, visit the kids in Australia, but . . .” As tears rolled down her face Sam walked across the room and, with a sigh, rested his golden head on his paws in front of her. He licked her slippered foot and waited for her to scratch his ears.

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



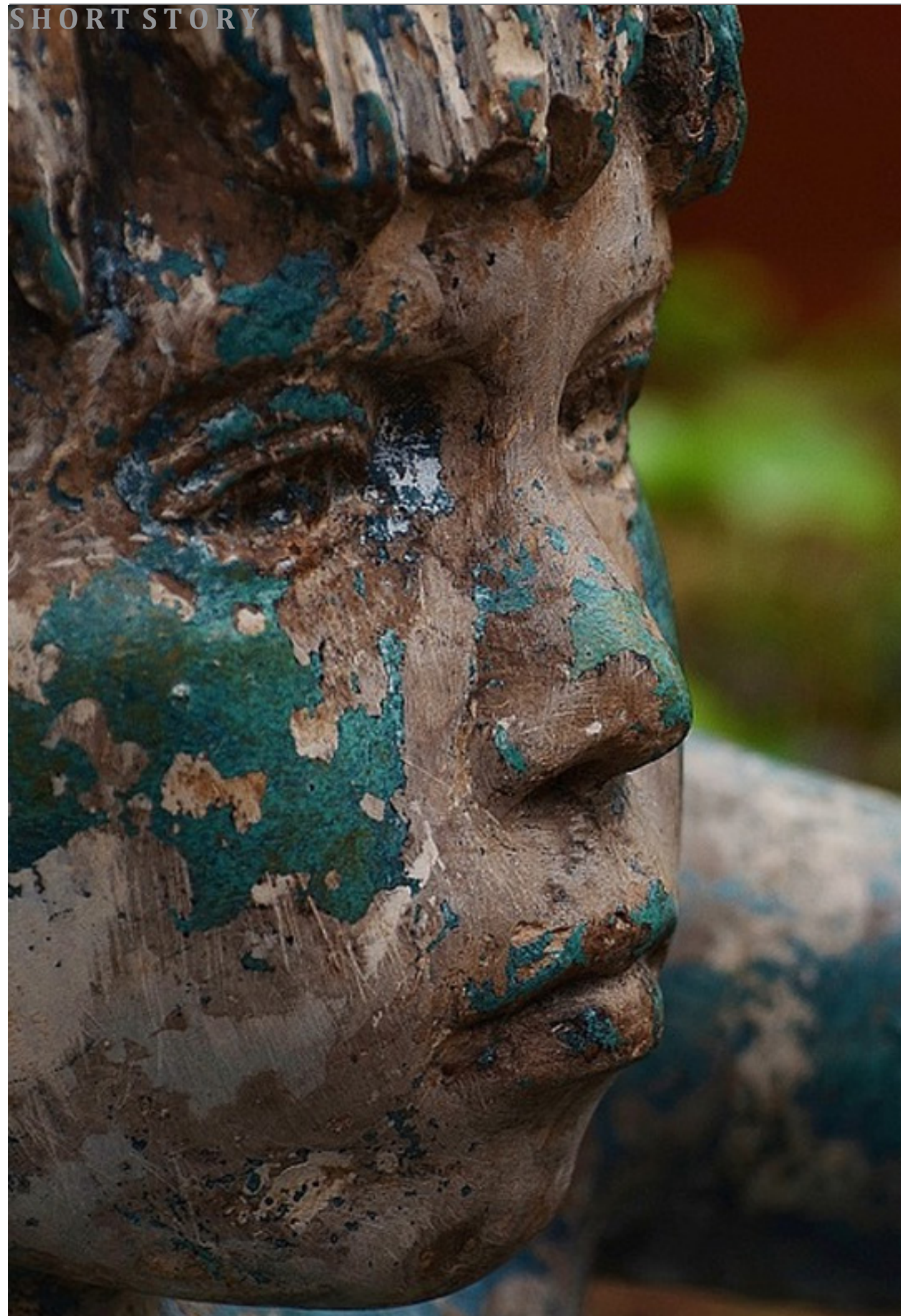
BOY AND MAN

When he was a boy he never liked the place. His mother took him there from time to time to shop or visit the cinema or the zoo. They took the train that crossed the viaduct over the estuary near the back of their house. Soon they left the fields and farms behind. The pleasant country light drained from the windows of the train as they travelled, and was replaced by a kind of dead grey light he came to recognise as the city's damaged light.

Trees and hedgerows gave way to concrete walls and iron railings. They passed the backs of red-brick terraces, their impossibly tiny back gardens packed with junk of all sorts. Finally, the houses gave way too, replaced by buses, taxis, cars and large old buildings full of faceless ant-like people. They shunted slowly into the city proper and across the dirty river that flowed through its heart.

Even at Christmas, under the gaudy lights, holding on to his mother's hand, he felt no excitement at all, only a sickening dread. It was an awful place compared to his home. There was no space, no sky, no air to breathe, no room to play, no time to dream, no silence. No animals lived there that he knew of, except for rats – which he had seen himself in broad daylight scavenging at rubbish bags down a laneway beside the service entrance to a hotel – and those broken, charred pigeons that clapped their wings noisily, uselessly, under the railway bridges.

Some nights he dreamt of being lost there, of trying and failing to hold onto the rough tweed of his mother's coat as she moved among the throng of shoppers in the department stores. He pictured himself all alone on the pavement outside as the sky darkened and fell, while hundreds of zombie faces passed him blindly.





When he was a young man he moved to the city. He could not wait to leave behind his siblings and parents in that rural backwater where nothing ever happened. He rented a flat with two friends who worked with him in a huge office, a government department, where nobody understood the work beyond their own dull and repetitive duties. For the first time in his life he had money in his pocket, however, and he and his friends frequented the bars and sampled the night life the city had to offer. He spent whole Saturdays in bed recovering from nights where he had physically pushed his body to its limits with alcohol and drugs.

The city was still drab by day, but at night it came alive under the street lights, enhanced by the power of youthful expectation. The days dragged then and the nights were endless, moving from pub to club to gig to party. And yet there was no time to rest. He had to be at every party, he couldn't take the chance of not attending; that night could be *the* night, the moment when he would meet the girl he yearned for. He never admitted it then, but he was scared really. Not scared of the city, no, but scared for himself, for his future whatever that might be. So he and his friends stayed together at all times – a comfort in numbers perhaps – each one encouraging the others that, yes, they were really living now, that this was what it meant to live: to be abroad at all hours in the belly of the city, fleeing from the niggling fear, the paranoia of heavy drinking, only to be overtaken by the unrelenting loneliness and recurring hang-overs.

By middle age he had already left the city for the suburbs, in search of a house with a garden and a good local school. The kids grew up so quickly. After the initial struggle of their early married life, he and his wife experienced some contentedness at last. He could be in the city every day at work now and not feel sullied or intimidated by it. There was more money around generally, and new buildings and sculptures were popping up all over the place changing the face of the city again, making it appear new and modern.

In the newspapers journalists wrote about what the city might be like in ten, twenty or thirty years' time, and he thought he understood at last what a city was all about. It had to do with creating something noble in the face of chaos; it was man's attempt to put a formal structure on the way he lived. And the man knew that the basis of every city was a fundamental fear of darkness and the unknowable forces of nature. Hundreds of years ago people cleared away the trees and forests on the coast beside the river, and began to build without any real plan. And they are building still: houses, office blocks, car parks, cinemas, hotels; levelling roads and paths with concrete and macadam, laying railways, and excavating tunnels through the earth and under the river to carry the foulness of our own waste away from us.

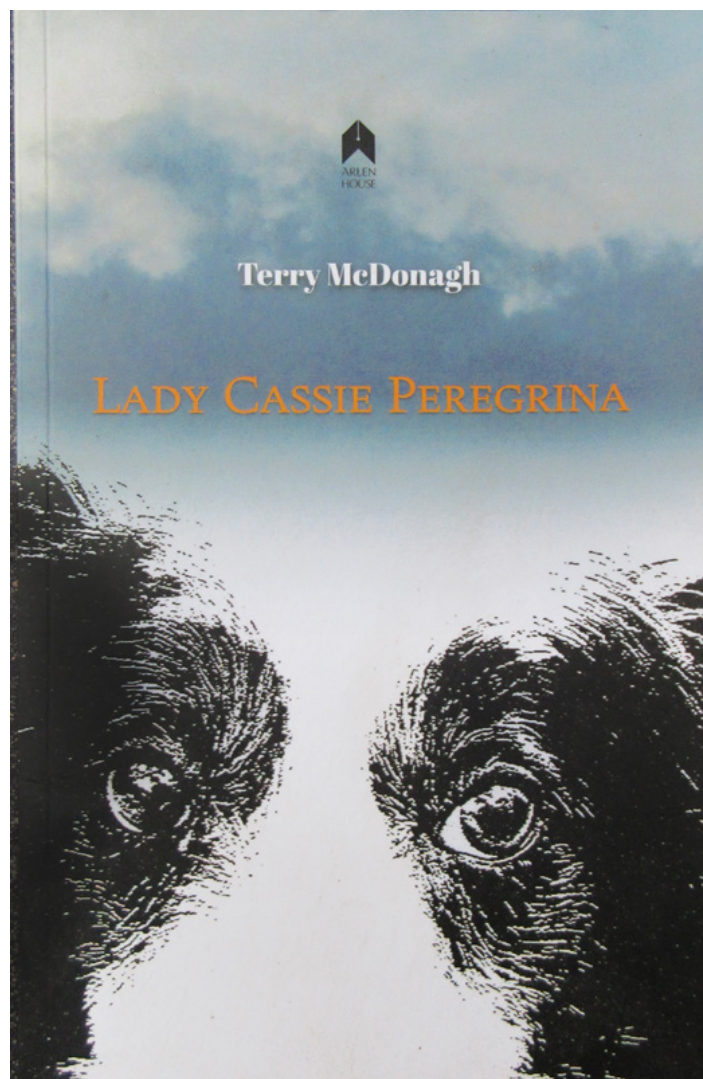
Now he is an old man he wants to be in the city again. He thinks of his children growing up so quickly and running away, as he did, to live there where life's flavours are sharpest. He forgets the fear he felt back then, the pretence he made of living when he was actually lost, and simply killing time waiting for his life to start.

He no longer fears life, on his own or his children's behalf – it is really nothing when viewed from under the shadow of death. In rare moments he sees the city clearly. It is no different from a man he thinks: an odd amalgam of hope, desire, love and fear, constantly changing, but crumbling slowly also. A genuine glorious failure.

www.kennys.ie ships signed copies worldwide free of charge.
You may also contact the author - terry-mcdonagh@t-online.de



BOOK REVIEW: LADY CASSIE PEREGRINA



Lady Cassie Peregrina by Terry McDonagh, Irish Poet, Playwright and Writer arrived in the post many months ago. But it was just last month that I got down to reading it. The brush stroke of words paints a montage of familial images, of church yards, of grave stones and of filigree images of dog and man thoughts playing hide and seek between stanzas.

Is this book of poems really about *Cassie* the Border collie? Or is *Cassie* a metaphor for a lost childhood...the wonders of Nature, of fishing and running barefoot in a meadow with wind eddies playing with the mind of a young boy tuned in to the rhythms of the elements? Or is there something darker, lurking, waiting to ambush the reader when the book is put down?

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

Who is speaking? The dog or the poet as an eight year old? Is this abandoned dog, retrieved from hell and brought home by the poet and his family an attempt to assuage the memories of those innocent years? The longing to return *home*...

*but here are the fields with words waiting to be tilled.
We're on a slope upwards. The further I get from home
the closer I get to it. Here is the womb that bore me
and might be the tomb I will return to. Why do I say this?*
- *Resuming*

Perhaps *Cassie* is the link between the tenses – Past of the poet, the Present with his beloved wife and son living in no man's land, and the Future - the hope of returning to a place that was once his home to rest his weary soul.

*This morning, on foot, I circled the Alster
with a friend – marvelling at water –
wondering if home was a matter of the heart
in a no man's land of weeping or
not weeping in everyman's land of spring.*
- *The Full Circle*

Lady Cassie Peregrina is a glimpse of the lifepath of Terry McDonagh. He has cleverly woven his own childhood with that of *Cassie* and created a beautiful narration that forces the reader to acknowledge the sanctity and pathos of childhood memories, and to seek redemption from the vagaries of adulthood by returning to the wonders of the *womb*, a euphemism for the innocence of childhood. Truly an inspiring collection of poems for those that have become jaded by the ebb and flow of daily modern life and who are in need of an elixir to rejuvenate a numb life.

For the poet, *Cassie* in a way has brought him full circle.
Face to face with himself and a chance to *balance the sheets*.

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