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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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Live Encounters Allows us a New Platform
Terry McDonagh, Founding Member of Live Encounters
Irish poet and dramatist, Terry McDonagh, taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and was Drama Director at the Int. School Hamburg for 15 years. He now works freelance; has been writer in residence in Europe, Asia, Australia; published 7 poetry collections, book of letters, prose and poetry for young people translated into Indonesian and German, distributed internationally by Syracuse Uni. Press; latest poetry collection Ripple Effect/Arlen House; children’s story, Michel the Merman, illustrated by Marc Barnes (NZ). He lives in Hamburg and Ireland.  www.terry-mcdonagh.com

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

Selected Poems
Nasrin Parvaz
Nasrin Parvaz became a civil rights activist when the Islamic regime took power in 1979. She was arrested in 1982, tortured and spent eight years in prison.Shortly after her release she fled to England where she claimed asylum in 1993. Her prison memoir was published in Farsi in 2003 and in Italian in 2006. A novel, Temptation, based on the true stories of some male prisoners who survived the 1988 massacre of Iranian prisoners was published in Farsi in 2008.  www.nasrinparvaz.wix.com

Selected Poems
Ingrid Storholmen
Storholmen was born i Verdal, Norway in 1976. She has been studying Literature at the University of Bergen, and spent one year at a Creative writing school. She was for five years writer in residents at "Adrianstua", a writers house in Trondheim and started Trondheim International Literature Festival while living there, and also founded the Literature magazine ULJ together with two colleagues. She has published 6 books: The low of the Poacher, 2001. Shamespeasch. Graceland 2005. Siri`s book, 2007. The voices of Chernobyl 2009, in English, and published in Farsi in 2008. Asylum in 2003. Her prison memoir was published in Farsi in 2003 and in Italian in 2006. A novel, Temptation, based on the true stories of some male prisoners who survived the 1988 massacre of Iranian prisoners was published in Farsi in 2008. www.nasrinparvaz.wix.com

Alchemy
Michael Durack
Durack grew up on a farm near Birdhill in County Tipperary. He was anfounder member of Killkale 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 (Dark House), a comic narrative in verse, A Hairy Tale Of Clare (East Clare Telecottage) and a memoir in prose and poems, Saved To Memory: Lost To View (Limerick Writers Centre.) He has collaborated with his brother, Austin on a programme of poetry and music, and together they have produced two albums, The Secret Chord (2013) and Going Gone (2015.)

Poems on War and Peace
Greta Sykes
The poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of the London Voices Poetry Group and also produces art work for them. One of her own volumes entitled The Intimacy of the Observer focuses on the environment. She is a member of the Exiled Writers Ink group. She is a leading member of the Socialist History Society and organises joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Cafe. Greta is a trained child psychologist and has taught at University College London, where she is now an associate researcher. The present focus of her research is women’s emancipation and anti-foreign policy activism.  www.gretasykes.com

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

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

Urban Anxieties
David Morgan
David Morgan in a London based journalist with interests in politics, human rights, international relations, history and cultural issues. He has been working in journalism as an editor and writer for three decades after he studied literature and history at university. He has edited several titles from the Socialist History Society (SHS) of which he is the Secretary. He writes regularly for the SHS Newsletter, occasionally for the Morning Star newspaper and for a range of other online and printed publications.

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

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

Beggar of the World
David Almaleck Wolinsky
Wolinsky struggles and thrives in central Maryland with his wife, two very old mothers, and a rocky hillside. He also helps care for 3 non-biological grandchildren. In between he writes and listens listens to music exorbitantly, and shows up to help with peace and climate work. He adopted ‘Almaleck’ to honor his Jewish grandmother and Al-Andalus (Muslim-ruled Spain). His first book The Crane is Flying will be published by Dos Madres Press in 2016.
In its six years, Live Encounters has never been mainstream. It has been political, social, a little economic and always critical and left of centre. This time, it’s delving into the rarefied world of poetry which might seem a little strange at first, but, on second thoughts, it makes sense. The Irish poet, Patrick Kavanagh said, *Poetry made me a sort of outcast and I became abnormally normal.* Live Encounters is *abnormally normal* – it deals with issues that really matter – with people who look to mystery and strange words beyond the everyday for guidance. Michael Longley said, *if I knew where poetry came from, I’d go there.*

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

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

Just look at The Divine Comedy. Under the guidance of Virgil, Dante took us on a journey into layers of underworld. Yeats, in the face of his new, unaccustomed Ireland, sought identification and spiritual refuge in the dreams of a rich life among artisans in Constantinople. Dylan Thomas will remain immortal in his tribute to his dead father in *Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night.*
My own poetic journey has taken me on journeys to at least twenty-five countries but the real journey has taken place in my mind. It has been a contemplation on the nature of what it means to be human; to be an observer. One evening, with an hour to spare at the main station in Berlin, I watched a man, looking troubled and seemingly lost in his own world. *(This poem was recently shortlisted for the Gregory O’Donoghue poetry prize).*

**From a Hauptbahnhof Café in Berlin**

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

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

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

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

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

he’s a pale shadow of a ballet dancer retreating to a pale other world or his wife’s a pilgrim mother in a Berlin flat waiting for pallid widowhood.

She texts her dark daughter – recently made flesh and wearing that grim grin: *I’ve got a lover, my prince in training for perpetual isolation.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

After meeting him in a café in Bratislava

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

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

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

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

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

In-Between

For the unofficial poets of the former Czechoslovakia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Witness

Standing on Charles Bridge, Prague

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I see you in that final moment endlessly.

Farewell in spring

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

He said farewell to each of his guests.

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

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

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

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

Nasrin Parvaz became a civil rights activist when the Islamic regime took power in 1979. She was arrested in 1982, tortured and spent eight years in prison. After her release in 1990, Nasrin resumed her activities and once again she found herself being followed by Islamic guards. She realised she could no longer stay in Iran and she fled here to England, where she claimed asylum in 1993. Nasrin’s prison memoir was published in Farsi in 2002. A summary of her memoir was published in Feminist Review (number 73) in 2003; and it was published in Italian in 2006 by Effedue Edizioni. Nasrin’s stories appeared in Exiled Writers Ink, and two of her poems were published in Over Land, Over Sea, Poems for those seeking refuge, published by Five Leaves, in 2015.

http://nparvaz.wix.com/nasrinparvaz

The Unwanted Grave – a prison memoir in Farsi
“A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing”

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

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

His mutilated body was found soon afterwards.

Peace treaty

I called my mother
she was happy like a young girl
pleased about the treaty
believing America wouldn't attack Iran
and people wouldn't be maimed and killed
and the country wouldn't be ruined like Iraq.
Even though she was very happy, she was also upset
about the husband of a poor cleaning woman she knew
her husband’s right hand
and left leg had been amputated
on the same day
the peace treaty
was signed.
He had been caught
stealing food.
My shame has a problem with me
I don't want to be ashamed, says the writing
I want to write your dick into me
I shall be celebrated on the Day of Shame
I feel what is written
Imicreative shame
everybody is leaving
are you coping with your life
shame's slave
Even the betrayal betrays you then
Descendant of someone that somebody was ashamed of
Left by someone left, oneself a leaver

Blood-shame; because the word exists
(no)

Ingrid Storholmen was born in Verdal, Norway, on 22 May 1976. She studied literature at the University of Bergen, and spent one year at a creative writing school. She was the literature editor of Morgenbladet, a culture newspaper in Norway. For five years, she was the writer-in-residence at 'Adrianstua', a writer’s house in Trondheim. She started the Trondheim International Literature Festival during her stay there, and also founded the literary magazine LIJ with two colleagues. She has published six books: 2014 Here Lies Tirpitz, 2012 The Mother who Forgot it was Night Time, 2011 The Price of Love, 2009 Chernobyl Stories, 2005 Shameful Discourse. Graceland, 2001 The Poacher's Law.
Are you a dog?
No.
Yes.
A bitch in the heat, with large protruding teats for you to lick
Bite off my teats and swallow!

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

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

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

Cleansing the eyes
Cryptobiotic state. Overgrown incubator

I don’t want you, because you want me (erase phrases – erase emotions)
LET THE PROOFS SHOW
It is no PROCESS, I don’t want to edit myself. “I am” Grace

(Preserve your defence mechanisms)

No

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

No!
Prowling on two feet and one hand, a stinking bastard

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

Burning myself to get warm enough to live

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

Medically silent/quiet, after the tablet
rain:

Orfirl,
stilnokt,
imovane
remeron,
tolvon,
zyprexa, ZYPREXA,
lithium (Li)
lamictal, cipramil
alcohol

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

White is a sound (that I associate with you
What is white to you?
From “Krypskyttarloven” 2001
English translation by May-Brit Akerholt

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

Covered by winter without betraying a single colour

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

Dekt av vinter utan å røpe ein einaste farge

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

He who has no dreaming is lost

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

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

PROTHALAMION

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

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

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

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

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

CHOMOLUNGMA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AND THE BEAT GOES ON

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

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

JUNCTION 27

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bound feet

Bound feet, cracked toes
Numb pain, impass.

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

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

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

Bound feet, cracked toes,
Numb pain, numb woman,
Dumb woman, freedom foiled.
Exile: The streets in which I lived

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

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

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

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

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

Money laundering homes

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

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

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

Tack a tack chack chack
City Road, Marchmont Street,
London streets,
Luxury flats
Five Star hotel,
The families gone
Their homes destroyed
Demolition gangs roam
barbed wire fence
The money rolls in
The launderers rub their hands.
The Centre Cannot Hold

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

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

A man once told me about the wind in Oklahoma.
It flung their screen door into Sam Weller's garden,
whipped one blade of straw from the barn
and drilled it right through the glass
of their kitchen window.

It held there, needle-straight, the pane intact,
the lights blown, food in the icebox melting.

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

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

When the Time Comes

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

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

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

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

Rushing under the bridge to a neighbour's field
down through bog tannin, it carries into the lake
before it takes itself to the river that flows
around the oarsmen, past the tea house at Menlo
under the Salmon Weir Bridge,
by the cathedral that still reels in the faithful.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Side Fold Dress at the Peabody Museum

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

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

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

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

from the pain meted out on building sites
and life was a challenge of rattlesnake
around a bunch of arrows.
Politics in St Pancras Gardens

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

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

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

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

The Polite Vulture

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Dying Aunt

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

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

Evening Classes

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

She sits to one side
She is smartly dressed in dirty clothes
Spreading her pens and papers wide
Small little girl hands in her thin lap.

From time to time she cracks a joke
That no-one understands
An aging woman, on the edge, about to snap.

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

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

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

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

The Other September 11th

Do you remember September the eleventh
1973?

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

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

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

Who could ever forget September the eleventh 1973?
Kowtow Nation

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

A Marked Man

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

Ditch the Geography

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

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

Try reading while balancing on a rattling Tube
Grasping on to a rail too high
Who says that Hell doesn't exist?
It's there Monday to Friday 8am
It's there Monday to Friday 5pm
Hell is scuttling up and down
The Northern line unable to read,
Among nameless other people
Standing up close, impersonal,
On until we are all too old to read.
Too old to care whatever we need.
TFL give me a badge that reads,
"This is my own precious time and I want to read."
I'm older than you, a seat please!
Deirdre Grimes is a graduate of Limerick school of art and design and a mother. Her work includes poetry and painting and some sculpture. Her poetry has been published nationally and internationally in many journals including Crannog, The creel, Electric Acorn and Haiku Harvest. Her first collection The chaos within is due out in April 2016. https://www.facebook.com/deirdregrimespoet/

I let you go

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

Together

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The examination

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

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small town

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

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

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

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

‘slut’s strong stuff, try affectionate friend.’

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

growing up

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

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

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

in the morning, the air seems shinier
and purer than I’ve ever seen it,
you stumble downstairs, wordless,
your eyes still in the grip of night
I smile and time takes a break.
days like this
it is as if every day
the sun gains slightly more mass,
the air above the palm trees
near my favorite café
are snowstorms of birds,
swirling over rooftops
like schools of reef fish –
people are sitting outside again
like adolescent summer campers,
sunlight pounding them
as I walk back to work –
the staffroom smells of burned toast
and the perpetual trickle
of gossip and intrigue,
the hanging mists of rumour
cloud the smitten sun
I want to go home.

bells will toll
my mother looks at me
through the silence in our
long distance call,
whirlpools of suffering
turning in her eyes,
death lives in the crackles
the phone breathes back at me
I live now,
as sweetly as I can,
she seems to have given up
I want to fill my clothes with wind,
my eyes with light,
darkness harbors hers and
in the end those eyes
will burn right out of her face
and rise up into sunlight
I hope the weather will be fine,
the apples flowering,
the sky depthless, flawless
I hope bells will toll
and she will go quietly.
Beggar of the World (My Christmas Letter)
for ElizGris, SMurphy, & LMacF

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

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

So many unknowns!
What's up with us?
What is it with us entangled
in the word, the image, the world?
In strangers drowning
like in another book?

Ancient bummer
like Mother Teresa.

Readers, drowning.

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

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

We need not go there,
where the rocks might cut our boots,
where men might beat our daughters,
where mothertrekkers encounter
landays -- poems
not easy to find, nor the women
who make them, not in Afganistan,
where their words touch the beating
heart of the matter,

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

who never said any good
would come of them.

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

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

Benedictus, women
whose book is like a gun
pointing at the heart of the world.
I bless the bruised fingers
and veiled eyes
that sign such malédiction
in our direction.
Systems History 1

Glitch.
Scratch.
Crotch.
Weekly patch.

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

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

The glitch
might be a systems issue,
which could be almost anything:
root flaw
zero day
IED
work of a moron
whom you rely upon.

Nonstop. Ripstop.
Ripped moral tissue issue.

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

Old Man’s Coffeesong

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

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

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