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Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE

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Diane Fahey is the author of twelve poetry collections, most recently *A House by the River*. A new collection, *November Journal*, is forthcoming from Whitmore Press in late 2017. She has received various awards and fellowships for her poetry, and has undertaken residencies in Venice and at Hawthornden Castle, the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Cill Rialaig, Varuna and Bundanon. She holds a PhD in Creative Writing from UWS. Her website: <http://dianefaheypoet.com/>



SOJOURN AT BUNDANON

At Bundanon Artists' and Writers' Retreat, NSW

Arrival

Galahs by the path
to meet me; the spiked welcome
of friarbirds in
silky oaks circling the house.
River, stone hills, bush, waiting.

The Writer's Cottage

Swallows at my door.
From the tin roof's finial
a songbird taking
the long view. A dung carpet
leads to the wombat's cellar.

Midnight visit

The wombat, quashing
a would-be suitor, wallops
her ceiling, my floor.
The house rocks; night birds scream.
Fun, or scary? I check the boards.

#



At 5 a.m.

Two kangaroos graze
my lawn. The fields are swathes of
moss. The hills lie in
the oneness of darkness, still.
Only the birds' voices shine.

Eucalypt, early morning

I walk down the trunk's
shadow, in which mine is lost,
out through branches, crown:
my shape travels the lit stones;
the road curves back into dusk.

Hillside sun

Its full glare finds you
through the scatter of bloodwoods,
ironbarks; lanterns
high crowns. Starbursts of copper,
taupe, new green, glint from dead fronds.

Hilltops

Boulders sit high on
hills – plinths for offerings to
gods; god-presences
themselves, coded with grey scale,
sprigs, seed-pockets, ivied lips.

Sunset

I fear a bushfire;
then, above the tree-feathered
ridges, livid red
yields to life-colours – saffron,
peach, blood orange: day's last gift.

Silence

even here, can be
something you have to search out.
Or it comes at you
like heat from the plain; coolness
blowing down from dusk gullies.

#

6 a.m.

It moves – yes, bear-like –
grazes the cattle-cropped field,
scratches killer-flanks
touched by sun, retires into
its cool maze through an earth-scar.

Wombats

Dotted like smooth rocks
over the plain, they chew moss,
dig roots with steel claws.
One sinks through a gap, trailing
a puff of smoke, its brown ghost.

The slithering ones

have so far not crossed
my path. This forked staff tapping
the hard earth, feels like
a divining rod; heat lifts
from the road. *It's time we met.*

Hot Walk

The bullocks slurping,
cold-eyed; a lagoon of cows
in shade; the tree snake
and bower bird out of sight – but
the small flies love me, love me.



© Diane Fahey

Hedy Habra has authored two poetry collections, *Under Brushstrokes*, finalist for the USA Best Book Award and the International Poetry Book Award, and *Tea in Heliopolis*, winner of the USA Best Book Award and finalist for the International Poetry Book Award. Her story collection, *Flying Carpets*, won the Arab American National Book Award's Honorable Mention and was finalist for the Eric Hoffer Award. A six-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, her work appears in *Cimarron Review*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *Cider Press Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Gargoyle*, *Nimrod*, *Poet Lore*, *World Literature Today* and *Verse Daily*. Her website is www.hedyhabra.com



DEFYING THE BLANK PAGE

They seem sketched at dawn with sepia colors: a herd of deer followed by a trembling fawn appears in the whitened landscape. Disoriented, they roam around unable to distinguish what was once inert or throbbing under the thick layers of immaculate snow. Head bent, they fumble, in search of a blade of grass, a twig or a dried leaf to munch on. They know they must keep digging deeper and deeper, farther and farther, until they stumble upon a forgotten nut or an acorn, the remainder of a bush, softened fallen bark still covered with moss, any meager sustenance to help resist the bitter cold. Are they even aware they instill hope in my daily struggle?

They gather at noon
warm a bed of fallen leaves
under the spruces

DISPOSSESSED

I return from a trip, eager to find solace in my estate, but can't get past my garden gate: two masked men are spraying insecticides, turning my premises into chemical warfare while a big white dog runs towards me, menacing. Panting, I reach the back door, climb winding stairs, take refuge in convoluted coils as in a huge nautilus shell, fumble to find the lock that will lead me inside, only to stumble into the maid, an automaton vacuuming with a deafening sound. How did she enter, I wonder? I have become a stranger in my own home.



OR WHY DOES SHE PAINT A VIRTUAL SPACE FOR SILENT WORDS?

Sometimes she slips into folds of lavender hues, curls into daydreams;
her open palm holds ashes of words unsaid, their symphony in gray minor
fades away with every brushstroke dipped in desert sand, awakening dunes
pregnant with gypsum roses now piled up on rice paper steeped in sunshine
to color her ochre song. Sepias warm her heart as she carefully adds a drop
of dew to fill its invisible holes, soften the contours of rebellious shapes
and desires.

Oblivious of the passing of time, she enters a virtual space filled with silent words,
watches the reflection of shadows dance over the walls of a resounding cavern
while words break into syllables, phonemes morph into motes floating in the
void, yes, her brush acquiesces, moving faster, yes, here lies the source of forgotten
signs melting into shades speaking only to her as she witnesses the birth of a new
language.

SHELTER

The patient's black leather jacket was thrown on a chair. When I hung it in the
closet, I found, bulging in one of the pockets, more than a thousand dollars he
must have forgotten about because when I handed them to him he acted as
though I was giving him a gift. And why would I ever do that, I wondered,
but had no time to reflect since he was getting ready for surgery and became
my elderly neighbor to whom I had been a source of solace in the East wing
of that hospital that looked like an underground shelter.

MANDALA

Frame your lover's smile
hang it on a wall

or over the mantle
light the fireplace

stare at the empty spaces
left by dancing shadows

see them rise in a mural
in monochrome rainbows

with dissonant colors



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.



HAIKU

Busca botellas
y halla azucenas
en el basural

While looking for
bottles she found daisies
in the garbage

A las flores que
me distraen las llamo
de pensamientos

To the flowers that
distract my attention I
call "pensamientos"

Te ví amarilla
y quise ser tu verde
y protegerte

Your yellowness
struck me, made me wish to
be green and guard you

TANKAS

Son la risa y
el llanto la savia que
se hacen verso
las voces que se oyen
en los tonos del poema

Laughter and tears
are sap turned into
music and poems
in voices whose tones
we listen to in poems

Siguen cantando
las vocales en noches
de plenilunio
grillos del aleph-bets en
noches alfabetales

Some vowels keep
singing under the full moon
they are crickets
disguised aleph-bets in
the alphabetal darkness

Llegas Otoño
este año prematuro
sin permitirnos
saborear las fresas
del verano ausente

This Fall has fallen
in haste it has stolen
the taste from us
of the summer's wild berries
of a summer that was not



Poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of London Voices Poetry Group and also produces art work for them. Her new volume of poetry called 'The Shipping News and Other Poems' came out in August 2016. The German translation of her book 'Under charred skies' has now been published in Germany under the title 'Unter verbranntem Himmel' by Eulenspiegel Verlag. She is the chair of the Socialist History Society and has organised joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Café. She is a trained child psychologist and has taught at the Institute of Education, London University, where she is now an associate researcher. Her Particular focus is now on women's emancipation and antiquity. *Twitter: g4gaia. Facebook.com/greta.sykes. German Wikipedia: Greta Sykes.*



PORTOFINO

St. Peter Port, Guernsey,
The night of the blinding fog
And the endless grey rain
Of Noah's flood.
They sipped their tea
With rounded backs in 'Portofino',
The café on the beach.
Guernsey, in the cold night. She had the idea.
Her dream, she wanted her café to be called
'Portofino', a fantasy maybe, but to her
It was what made her stay and work for it,
Until it became real. The 'Portofino'.
Had she been there? To Italy? No, but she had
Thoughts and pictures on her mind,
They needed no journey.

In the brilliance of the morning she saw
Venus' birth out of a shell,
Promising love and justice on earth.
She saw redemption, the Samaritan sharing his coat.
She saw giving and kindness in
The heat of the day like vanilla,
The azure sun in the sky,
The red wine in the glass and carefree laughter
An embrace at sunset, intoxication like cinnamon
On the tongue, lovers diving into
The midnight sea.
She heard the songs of poets,
the joyful music created in a Venetian orphanage.
She saw no bankers or lawyers,
Just poets, artists and peasants
Who knew how to care for the fertile land,
And mothers who wanted their children to learn
About growing up in Portofino, my children too,
She thought.

Portofino, Liguria,
A small place on earth,
Fifty tall, slender houses in ochre and vermillion
Crowded tightly into the narrow rock face
Rising above the harbour of boats,
The fishes waiting in shoals patiently, almost tame
For the after dinner feast.
There is light and shadow, where the cypress,
Olive and chestnut woods
Ascend in a gentle tangle,
Holding the built up cove so close,
So intimate, like an embrace.
Culture becoming nature.
When you study the rock, you gaze back in time,
An ancient beach of millions of years ago,
Compressed under the sea
That now holds this town in a fractal geometry,
Trees welded into its face like angels' runes.

Yes, 'Portofino', she thought, and
Saved her money each week, each month,
To buy the small shop to have a café, the small dream on her mind
Becoming a deed.

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 *Bridges*, *Winter Whiting* and, written under the pen-name Victoria Tims, a chapbook of poems about abuse, entitled *Moth*.



ATTENTION SPAN

A quarter of an hour
is a quarter of eternity
to a child.

My silence is sustained
by a surreptitious sweet
and reciting times tables
in my head
as my attention fails
the test of the first two minutes

of the hum of the homily
the drone of the discourse
the prattle of the poem.

Now I'm mature
I can reach that time-marker
before the glaze
glides over my eyes

that good-mannered glaze
I watch out for
in my own audience
a couple of minutes
into any long piece.

DECEIVING THE ENEMY

Each night, under candlewick,
tented along the ridge-pole
of my forearm,
blinker from the killer clock-face,
I fear only fading torchlight,
creeping daylight,
sudden sleep
and the treacherous, soft-footed foe
who pauses and calls
Are you still awake?
straining her eyes and ears
for a sliver of light,
the turn of a leaf,
then moves on.

When age brings a truce
and I am no longer under covers
with Haggard, Stevenson, Buchan,
will I still feel that classic relish
without a war in my world?



DEPUTATION

They waited until the day
we lost every bird
before they came to us

believing that now
we blow-ins from the town
would understand

would welcome
their mounted invasion
of our fields

but they were foxed
by the forcefulness
of our noes and nevers

how could they comprehend?
they had not watched
as our children had

the tearing apart
of each of our hens
by village dogs hunting as a pack

ACROSS YEARS, ACROSS MILES

She looks back a lifetime
the recall closer now
than that of yesterday

and she sees
again

a whole class
 under threat
 of confinement

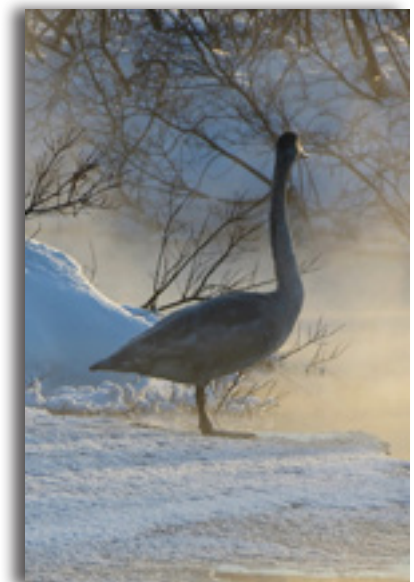
a self-confessed culprit
 alone
 and lonesome

an irate teacher
 determined to find
 a further malefactor

and herself
 on her feet
 claiming guilt

the shared sentence
worth
the unexpected rewards
 an ally and accessory
 a support through
 the scourges of schooldays
 a friend

that fellowship
long lost
to chance and change
survives now
in mutual memories.



© Anni Wilton-Jones

REUNION

Together for a decade
Then apart for four;
so long for *so long*.

How can the passing
of all those years be told
in one short space?

Two rivers flowing
to the same sea
by different courses.

The meanders sometimes close:
the children, their children,
drama, teaching, poetry.

That's where to start,
where waters follow
well-matched routes – less to explain.

Then, comfortable again
with what is shared,
explore the unfamiliar –

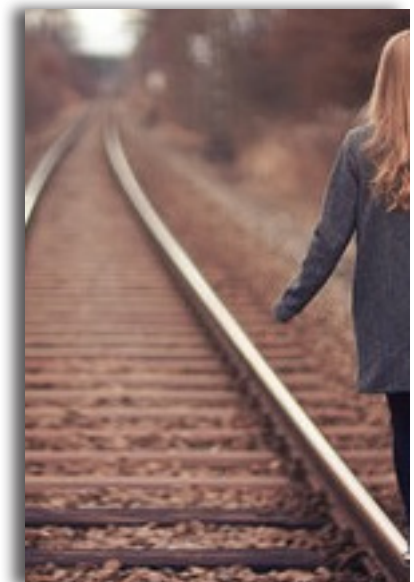
where hidden rocks
and unexpected eddies
may call upon the re-found trust.

IN MEMORY

Here by the railway
a quiet skein of river
under the footbridge
this is our place
for burying
pet fish at sea

I tip the guppy
out of the tablet pot
watch it float
away downstream

as I try not to remember
my last visit
when the railing held wreaths
of love for a *Dad*
who chose this same bridge
as his point of departure.



Lynda Tavakoli's poems and prose have been broadcast on the BBC and RTE and included in a range of publications including Templar Poets' Anthology *Skein*, Abridged, The Incubator Journal, Panning for Poems, Circle and Square, The Honest Ulsterman, A New Ulster and Corncrake magazine. Lynda has won both short story and poetry prizes at Listowel and featured as The Irish Times, Hennessy poet of the month in October 2015.



A WEIGHT OF DUST

She perches on our parents' bed
dusting words from books
when she should be
dusting.
Green eyes flit
saccades across pages,
hoarding books on shelves
in the attic of her brain
while ornaments hold court
to words leaking their
meanings
through the
movement of her lips.
Years later I
would wonder at
the weight of knowledge
magicked from my sister's
weekly chore,
remembering only
the emergence of her Sunday smile
and those dusty rooms where
stories shed their skins
in settled particles
on listening window sills.

LIBRARY FORMALDEHYDE

Library shelves, book bloated,
the smell of oldness
without a ticking clock
and a back room waiting.

Better than all the words
on every musty page
a wall of specimens
are glassed in sleep.

Floating eyeballs, warted toads,
a chevron snake
my brother said was found
in someone's bed.

I never slept the same again.



SHOESHINE

My father used to shine our shoes
mainly at night
when his working day was stowed away
and out of sight.
At the kitchen table, newspaper spread
with monochrome tidiness
I'd find him hunch-backed,
taking pleasure in the rub
and polishing his undemonstrative love
in an act of simple practicality.

I never saw him spit to seal the shine-
he was not the military type but later on
his rowed recruits would stand with silent pride
lining the cream linoleum.

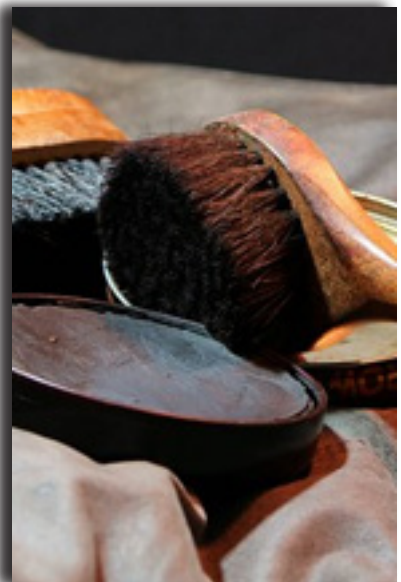
These days my shoes remain unbuffed and dull
disgraced from lack of care
I sense their outraged
stamp of soles on gloomy shelves.

Do not forget, they say,
the dance that glued the two of you
to move as one across a kitchen floor
cheek to belly, palm to palm
the glisten of your polished shoes
that weighted down on his
and later on the promise
of an empty hopscotch tin
scuffing the chalked pavement.

LETTERS

Today I read the past
still inked on pages
of a love's young dream
and you were in
the rhythm of the words
your presence pulsing
soft between the lines
of lonely notes
that hum upon a stave
still waiting for the chord
to make them whole.

How beautiful then
the heart that aches
for absence sake
as once it did for you and me
and tucked away
inside those envelopes of time
your letters undisturbed from sleep
for such a while
have wakened now the
memories of what we had
and what was yet to be.



INITIATION BY FIRE

I'd been smoking proper cigarettes
behind our garage for years
before persuading her to succumb;
until now my sister's
goody-two-shoes veneer
always a deterrent against
my naïve blatancy.

So we waited for an empty house,
where evidence of her sin might
permeate a smoke-choked hearth
and like our Santa letters
from the past, fly the chimney,
spattering cancer dust upon
our unsuspecting red tiled roof.

The newspaper spooled itself
sausage-fat between my fingers,
the day's headline briefly
inked within the rollup layers
of a virgin cigarette.
My spit secured the sides
and sealed the deal.

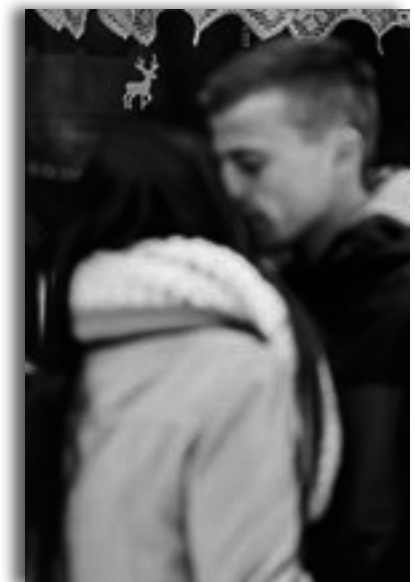
I let the match lick
over the sheared tip,
an ochre flame chewing
into airless layers of
yesterday's news,
grasping for words
to ignite its unforgiving grip.

It's like jumping into
a cold swimming pool, I said,
you have to do it all at once,
and when the smoke sampled
that first sweet taste of lung
I watched my sister drown
in the smouldering ash of my deceit.

KISSED

I am fifteen,
smoking in a hay barn
with a boy I hardly know,
the day stretched behind us,
the fall of evening
passing shadows through gaps
in corrugated tin.

It is madness,
this risk too far,
as I taste the smoke-spill
on his mouth and wonder
at the old man's dog
outside on the concrete,
untroubled by the fading light.



© Lynda Tavakoli

Breda Wall Ryan's poetry is widely published in Irish and international journals and has won the iYeats Poetry Competition, Poets Meet Painters, Dromineer Poetry Competition, Over the Edge New Writer of the Year and The Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Prize. She has an M. Phil in Creative Writing from Trinity College, Dublin. She was selected for Poetry Ireland Introductions Series 2014. *In a Hare's Eye* (Doire Press 2015) won the Shine/Strong Award for a first collection.



PRAYER

This sunbaked afternoon, stretch
in a tractor-rutted suntrap in the golden field
where stuffed-crop pigeons glean ripe grain

drizzled between brittle stubble rows.
A wren flirts on a hazel branch,
the robin shrills his muezzin's call.

Blackbird and thrush trill
a litany of bird-praise to the glory
of this Indian Summer day, a dunnock

on a blackthorn perch answers
tseep-tseep-tseep! Midges gyre
in cloudy shade while, almost motionless

against the sun, red kites glide on thermals,
throw slow loops of shadow on the ground,
their mewling cries trembling the air.

Purpled fingers pluck plump berries
from the swollen hedge.
This day, this sun, this lush Septembering:

this is enough.

RAIN OVER BOSTON

Circling Logan, I imagine you
at your desk in John Hancock Tower.
You glance at your watch, lift the phone,
peer up into the grey sponge of sky
through the Tower's glazed façade
where Trinity Church is mirrored, sombre
as the rain-black stone of Copley Square.

Incessant rain, every bloated drop
a separation, slides across the porthole,
down the fuselage, along the wing,
then hurtles to the city below, where
you wait on the 13th floor. I send raindrops
spinning between us, a descending prayer
to keep us in holding pattern.



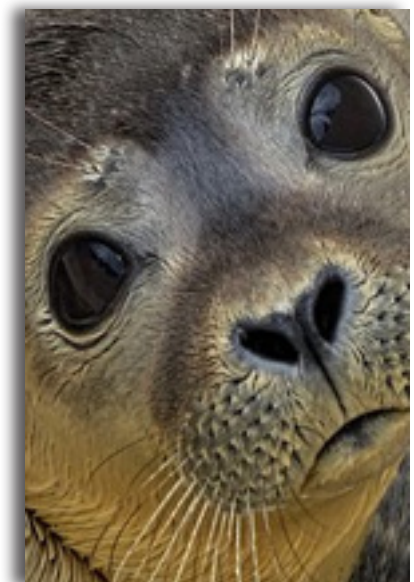
TO ALL MY FACEBOOK FRIENDS

I took this photo at the far end of the beach.
 I had just reached my FitBit goal: 10,000 steps.
 The sea had calmed again after last night,
 light seeped from a milkwhite sky. The Labrador,
 up to his usual tricks, raced through the waves,
 then found a buried rope and tugged it free.
 Blue polyprop, heavy gauge, one end wound
 round and round a harbour seal who spun
 himself for fun until, flippers pinioned
 to his sides, he drowned—let's hope before
 the gulls pecked out those eyes. Let's put an end
 to ocean litter. Sign my Save the Seals petition.
 Like. Comment. Share. Let's make this go viral.

TO MY THIRTIES, AND A CERTAIN WWOOFER*

Oh year of my thirtieth birthday,
 had I known I would never feel older
 or that organic gardening would lose
 its mud-under-the-fingernails glamour,
 I would have paid more heed
 to that young man of twenty
 who offered to do my spring sowing
 in exchange for bed and board.
 Oh thirtieth birthday, the swing
 of his Blackwatch kilt fanned the silky
 backs of his knees, but I wondered
 where he would be when his seed
 put up its first leaves, and insisted
 my garden didn't need his green-
 fingered tending. But now it does.

*WWOOFer International volunteer exchange
 on sustainable and organic farms and properties.



© Breda Wall Ryan

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. In 1993, she fled to England. Her prison memoir is being crowdfunded by Unbound publisher. Nasrin's stories, poems, articles and translations appeared in Exiled Writers Ink; Modern Poetry in Translation series; *Write to be Counted*, *Resistance Anthology 2017*, *Words And Women 2017*, *100 poems for human rights 2009*, *Hafiz*, *Goethe and the Gingko 2015*, *Over Land, Over Sea, Poems for those seeking refuge 2015*, 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. <https://unbound.com/books/womans-struggle-in-iran>
<http://nasrinparvaz.org/>



HOMELESSNESS

Twilight, walking down Camden high street
 past the bright open shops
 and the full up pubs
 I see him through a forest of legs
 sitting by a lamp post
 his hands on his young ears
 in the midst of the high noise.
 His back hunched
 his legs drawn up
 making space for the passers-by.
 Men and women are all around him
 talking and laughing
 as if he is not there.

GOD

When she heard she had given birth to a boy
 all the pain lifted from her body
 God had listened to her prayers
 and was sending her a copy of himself
 hopefully he would look like her husband.



Joachim Matschoss 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. Joachim's latest book, *Rain Overnight: Travels in Asia*, is available directly from him or from good bookshops in Melbourne and on www.amazon.com www.byteensemble.com



THROUGH MY WINDOW

(eltham, july 2017)

right outside my window
 there in the rain he stands
 motionless
 in his white tank top
 revealing each pac and every ab muscle
 one strong rabbit he is
 a day later he dashes fog-deep
 into the folded valley behind the fence
 nearby a dog runs circles
 not knowing what to think or where to run
 he is smart
 he is quick
 the laws of geometry don't apply to him
 circles became right angles
 and what I presumed to be the end of what I could see
 from my window
 was the beginning for him
 a paddock stretching from diamond creek
 to the downs of yarra glen
 but this morning
 stepping outside to pick up the paper
 wrapped in its known sterility
 I noticed him
 without his head
 lying bloodless on the lawn
 outfoxed by someone who I never spotted
 through my window.

DESCENDING

(eltham, september 2017)

somehow my dreams had been invaded
 as reality around me gently faded
 I found myself climbing down steep steps
 somehow towards hell, perhaps

startled, inside my throat a great big lump
 there, in front of my stood a naked dj trump
 and next to him stephen fuckin' bannon
 lusciously licking a north korean cannon

a choir sang something about fake news
 it sounded more like dirty rotten blues
 more devils started to surround me
 and it was high time to bolt and flee

kim yong-un and dj trump were now elopin'
 me storming up steep steps with eyes wide open
 out of breath and eaten alive by nuclear fear
 I escaped the wedding of the year

waking up
 hearing the first birds announce a new day
 I smiled at the simplicity



© Joachim Matschoss

HAIKU

rich pastures

in diamond creek
pearls of wisdom come in spades
under a golden sun

kangaroo at the back fence

steely-eyed it stared
I pull'd the blanket tighter
my city brain froze

blowing bubbles

a child chases soap
breeze took it up the valley
disguised as a ball

red light district

(amsterdam, april 2016)

curtain's pulled right back
but she just smiles, near naked
waiting for drunk men

woman in pub

(amsterdam, april 2016)

she's just wearing jeans
to him she looks amazing
a kiss and he'd melt

hope for unity

(amsterdam, april 2016)

surely a christmas
where candles burn at both ends
and cards sound hollow



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.

Translated by Yuanbing Zhang.



FLYING WINGS OF LIGHT

Put the lightning on and I am a sun of soul,
Let the night dissolve, the flowers of dawn bloom
when the mysterious interstellar ship arrives at village earth.
boys and girls on earth dream of the gold and silver Kingdom of Heaven,
Stars growing in their bodies as the light gives them wings of flight.

FACE OF FRESH WIND

Tonight I sit on the eastern primeval mountain,
And see the prehistoric gods riding in golden chariots in the clouds
their happy faces like fresh wind,
Above my head the heavens are resplendent with the Giants' paradise
composed of billions of constellations
In this instant the flowers of my soul shine,
which makes a song of the soul return from the heaven.

ROSY CLOUDS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Place the crystal ball above your palm,
Let the sleeping eyes of the soul of a thousand years
wake up to the chant of an ancient spell.
You'll see the smiles of prehistoric giants,
brilliant flowers of gold and iridescent words of gems
The music of the stars are the wings which make the soul fly,
shining eternally like the rosy clouds from the Kingdom of heaven.



Colin Dardis is a poet, editor and freelance arts facilitator from Northern Ireland. A past recipient of the Artist Career Enhancement Scheme from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, his work has been widely published throughout Ireland, UK and USA. One of Eyewear Publishing's Best New British and Irish Poets 2016, a collection with Eyewear, *the x of y*, is forthcoming in 2018.

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ICE CREAM DREAM

This memory keeps coming back to me, which gives me a daunting sense of guilt every time. I'm nine, maybe ten, and back at my childhood home in Omagh. My mother use to watch these two kids after school, until their parents could come and pick them up. One of them was a guy called Harrison, one of my closest friends through primary and secondary school, until I moved away to Cookstown. He was a car fanatic, and even at a young age, had more knowledge about motors and machinery than I will ever accumulate in my lifetime.

The other child was Jay, Harrison's younger brother. I remember him as rather quiet; in fact both of them were in their own way. Yet they were always keen to play and mess about. And at times, and in quite a selfish way as children are capable of being, I resented their presence.

Occasionally, after school was over, I just wanted a bit of time alone: a moment to relax, contemplate the many musings of life children carry, or generally just sloth about the house: I didn't realise back then that I had my whole teen years to do exactly that. Mostly, due to my mother's inclination, we got on with whatever our homework assignments were. The majority of the time, things ran smoothly, and I was actually sorry to see them leave when their mum or dad came to collect them.

We use to play Ghostbusters, with these little backpacks I made out of old files, with discarded school ties for straps and odd hoses attached to wooden rulers for the ray-guns. For two weeks we would run around, blast our devices at the air, and imagine capturing whatever spectres haunted our back garden. However, I kept getting annoyed that the packs would be left outside after Harrison and Jay went home, and I would have to be the one to clean everything up. So I dismantled the backs and refused to continue the game.

At guilty as I feel about that now, this is not the memory that riles me so much. Instead, one time, the ice cream van came up around our park. Everyone, included my twin sister, wanted to get ice creams or lollies. My mum didn't have enough money in her purse to get them, but I still had some of my pocket money left. I can't remember the maths exactly, but mum reckoned I had enough to buy ice creams for everyone, but I had other ideas. I wanted a big 99 cone, with a chocolate flake, and the runny red syrup. So I went ahead and got one for myself. Just myself and no one else.

I don't know why this one particular memory should recur in my mind over and over again. Yet it still fills me with a sense of unease, despite the time lapsed and the distance travelled. Greed stings. I'm no longer in touch with Harrison and Jay now, just a few half-hearted phone calls and e-mails over the years. Perhaps they don't even remember this event. I hope not.

Jim Meirose's work has appeared in numerous magazines and journals, including *Calliope*, *Off-beat/Quirky (Journal of Exp. Fiction pub.)*, *Permafrost*, *North Atlantic Review*, *Blueline*, *Witness*, and *Xavier Review*, and has been nominated for several awards. His E-book "*Inferno*" is available from Amazon. *Underground Voices*. His novels, "*Mount Everest*" and "*Eli the Rat*", are available from Amazon. "*Mount Everest*" has been adapted to a play by a leading west coast playwright. www.jimmeirose.com



THE BURNING BUSH

Father Dwyer boomed out from behind his bright lit kitchen worktable, sending words swarming in every direction, shouting, All right, there you are, seamen! Welcome aboard, yes, right now, for episode one thousand, of The Sunday Dinner with Father Dwyer Cooking Show—an achievement we will celebrate, by allowing the Lord my God to speak to us wisdom, from this downsized burning bush set on the cold stainless steel here before me!

Then, the smiling Father Dwyer spread his vast arms, guiding the camera to pan down to a little Christmas tree style bush, live, or fake, didn't really matter; because here comes, comes, comes the Lord Thy God! shouted Dwyer—and at once, The Lord boomed from the small pretty fire back at him saying, Father Dwyer, Know thee this! Supper is smaller, but is otherwise similar to lunch! What else do you need to know, hey there, Father? What else? Uh?

Father Dwyer answered the bush, through the short fat flushed fingers come up to his lip, saying, I thought you were going to run the show today, My Lord. We talked last night! I knelt before the main altar of the great church at nine in the evening in this here January, all dark around, heat turned down, silent, silent; as befits great holiness—I prayed, Lord, come do show one thousand tomorrow. I will prepare the bush!

When Father Dwyer asked that question, a great voice boomed forth from the sanctuary, saying, What bush? Tell me now! I want to know right now! Blowing great cold winds down across Father Dwyer, saying it again and again, demanding an answer, What bush what bush what bush what? And, said Father Dwyer here and now, And Lord, in the gale I screamed at the top of my squeezed-out lungs, The burning bush! From the bible, my God! And the wind stopped instantly. It was like, like, I don't know, like—

Like what? said God, impatiently from the little bush. What? Hurry, man, hurry, stop blubbering, my time is precious you know I am important I am the boss I run all 'round heaven all meetings day and night I have no time spit it out my next conference call's already begun!

Oh, sure, yes, my Lord, I—yes it was like one day long ago, Lord, when I lay in the back seat of a moldy damp 1950 Ford, watching pounding blinding rain which someone I never will see again, was driving through toward home from his weekly trip to visit Grandma, so mundane, you know, so mundane it sounds yes, I know it does, I know, but, it's, like, uh—

What's it like? cried God shrilly.

It's uh, the rain, Spat Father Dwyer—yes, the rain it was, it was the rain, that's all, just another rain but during this rain, whoever was running the clouds shut them off, and in less than a snap, we were sailing along through a bright sunshiny day! My Lord, God, my Lord, I had never ever been woken up so fast, hard, and completely! All the raindrops instantly came together into wires running dipping and rising from pole to pole as the car pushed faster now toward, home, now that the weather is clear! Do you get it?

Yes I do!

Are you sure?

Yes, I am!

Say it again!

I am.

Then, thunder—yes, and when you shut off the clouds that day was the first I woke up to your tremendous power! But, huh, I, uh, whut? And Father Dwyer shot up from dozing senseless, asleep on his feet in the bright lit battleship-sized cooking show sound stage, embarrassed, yes very, yes more than even all the husbands who've ever fallen asleep to embarrass the many wives next to them, in many bright lit churches of all sizes, 'round the world just before it's time to get up to stand at the start of another seven thirty a.m. Sunday mass.

Falling asleep even as God himself speaks; my God what a sin no no no--Dwyer jumped, writhed, stood like a rod, and pounded the tabletop, which also had been snoozing, and which had already sucked away and absorbed the burning bush, God and all, down into through the stainless steel all gone toward dark places, so here was the start again. This time it's the real start again, oh God, thank God; I will get it right this time, guys! Yes, I will, so, yes, and he went on from there saying, All right, here you are, seamen! Episode one thousand, of The Sunday Dinner with Father Dwyer Cooking Show—an achievement we will celebrate, by allowing the Lord my God to come, yes, right here and speak to us wisdom, from this tiny burning bush! And his spreading flowing long-robed arms, again flamed it up, ready for the one thousandth new take of ninety-nine hundred previously completely flubbed attempts.

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