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# Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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## CONTRIBUTORS

### POETRY

MICHAEL J WHELAN  
*Truth*

CATHY COLMAN  
*Jewish Party*

RICHARD JAMES ALLEN  
*Karma Inquiry*

DAVID MORGAN  
*Our Fate and Fortune*

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*All Day*

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### SHORT SHORT STORY

JIM MEIROSE  
*Experiment in space 91*

Michael J. Whelan lives in South Dublin. He served as a UN Peacekeeper in Lebanon and Kosovo with the Irish Army and is a historian and keeper of the Air Corps Military Museum. He was 2nd Place in the Patrick Kavanagh & 3rd in the Jonathan Swift Awards. He is widely published and read for the Poetry Ireland Introductions series and his debut collection 'Peacekeeper' was published in 2016 by Doire Press.



## CRUSADER'S KEEP

There is a fire sky hanging  
over *Tibnine*,  
a blood sky, drowning  
the ramparts of the *Lionheart's* keep,  
transforming white walls to red.  
And I wonder if the Christian king  
who built this castle saw skies like this,  
heard the echoes of Alexander the Great  
as he sacked Sidon and Tyre  
two thousand years before,  
like I hear the drums of Saracens  
and Crusaders in this disputed place.

*Richard The Lionheart* is said to have slept in *Tibnine* Castle.  
The castle, built during the Crusades, is currently  
situated within the Irish battalion area of peacekeeping  
operations in South Lebanon.

## TRUTH

Sometimes a muzzle flash  
follows the bark of a gun barrel.

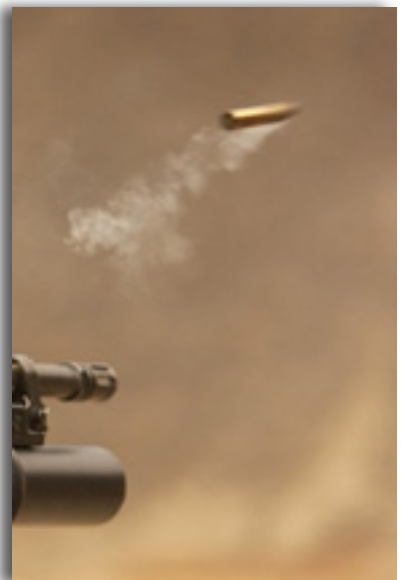
Sometimes the ground erupts  
before one hears the screaming shell.

Sometimes a house disappears in the silent distance  
all that echoes is a mother's tears.

Sometimes a peacekeeper hears belligerents say  
war is ended, there is no enemy

But they would kill him  
those enemies of truth,

he being a witness  
and standing in their way.



## ASYLUM

Kosovo

Winter; at the great gates,  
numb peacekeepers stop for a moment  
at the edge of a journey home,  
snow falling heavily on the asylum,  
like ash on a map.

Inside, half-dressed, inmates hover like insects  
around burning tar barrels,  
warm their limbs over naked flames that lick at their faces.  
They gather by the iron cage,  
heavy eyes, skinny necks and runny noses.

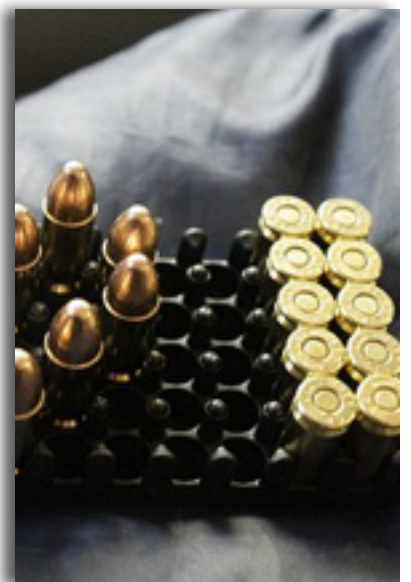
They watch the soldiers light cigarettes to the cold,  
push their hands through as though offering peace  
but reaching for a long remembered taste.  
Whole packs are surrendered, thrown over the coiled wire,  
sweets and chocolates too.

Faces transform, all are prisoners,  
no conversations, none needed.

## FOUNDATIONS

Kosovo

There are times  
when you question the truth,  
the wisdom of being in this place,  
and if what you're doing helps  
when the digger sits dejected  
gleaming yellow  
in a bitter winter sun,  
'cause the C.O. wants his inspection done,  
while the homeless need foundations dug.



C.O. = Commanding Officer



## DUST

Kosovo

Returning to base each night  
 covered in a layer of grimy dust  
 that fell from the sky,  
 thick and slimy when wet,  
 I was always reminded of extermination camps,  
 (people were still missing from the war's  
 ethnic cleansing),  
 but we were told by our superiors  
 that we had nothing to worry about,  
 the dust was from the chimneys in *Obilic*.

## HAUNTING FLIGHT

Irish U.N. post coming under attack,  
 South Lebanon 1990s

Vibrating rings expand to edge of cup,  
 if I close my eyes it will be gone.  
 The *one o fives* and *one five fives* are curving through the night,  
 my ears pick out the distant crump, crump, crump.

A tank-round bursts the silence,  
 transforming blast-walls in a multitude of sparkles,  
 lit up by a million flechettes puncturing concrete slabs.  
 The dancing shrapnel illuminates our billets to the violent night,  
 the echoes search, as red flares pop into haunting flight.

Then our radios whine up, their fans belch out a constant drone  
 of *shoot reps* and a *Firing Close* in response to RPGs,  
 panicked non-human voices fill the sweating room,  
 the carnival is back again but much too soon.

My chest rotates in anxious sickening trip,  
 it's nights like this I feel that I could quit  
 the arc of noise and traffic through my sleep.

RPG = Rocket Propelled Grenade

Flechette = Israeli anti-personnel shell filled with long shards of metal

One o fives and one five fives = Artillery shells

Cathy Colman's first poetry collection, *Borrowed Dress*, won The Felix Pollak Award from the University of Wisconsin and was on The Los Angeles Times Bestseller list. Her second book *Beauty's Tattoo* was published by Tebot Bach. Her poems have appeared in The Gettysburg Review, Ploughshares, Barrow Street, The Colorado Review, The Journal, The Huffington Post, Prairie Schooner and elsewhere.



## DIORAMA WITH ICICLE

There is a problem in all this.

The fact that, if nothing else,  
as Proust says,  
we still have our childhoods to write about.  
Many words and passages have been redacted  
or quick-frozen from mine.  
My obsession with homunculi.

I owned a fully adult woman and man.  
They taught me about frisson and sex. About  
enjoying the power I had over them  
because they were small  
and I could make them do anything.  
Of course, I did.

Who set our garage on fire?  
The two Ford Valiants, brave ones, burned to skeletons  
didn't know that Henry Ford in 1920, made  
his personal newspaper *The Dearborn Independent*,  
chronicle "The Jewish Menace."

All our neighbors stood  
around the fire, everyone weeping  
in their night clothes like it was a zombie funeral.  
Though there was a lullaby aftermath  
that filled the rooms  
with a smell of waxy gardenias. And what about  
the aquarium with its miniature Atlantis, a castle

I believed I would find and live in  
some day? There was always  
a little gloom painted into the corners  
so we didn't forget ourselves.  
And we had that soupçon of belladonna on  
our tongues when the lights flickered out  
and the moon was a disappearing communion wafer.

Somewhere in that house was a vortex  
that ghosted us and opened eyes  
in the knotty pine. Eyes everywhere.  
My father asked,  
*What is the perfect murder weapon?*

Draw your own conclusions, but we couldn't  
because we didn't have No.2 pencils.  
We used dirt.  
There were no final exams because every day  
brought a new exam. Yes.  
Fresh as sheets laundered on the line.  
That hexagon merry-go-round with  
wooden clothespins:  
each blouse, each work shirt and pair of  
striped pajamas pinned  
between earth and sky,  
empty as light.





## JEWISH PARTY

Whatever we spoke of, when we first spoke  
in a desert sirocco, as if fresh from the kiln,  
what we spoke of has changed, changed  
us, into another subject.  
Each pill in its plastic case, each scar  
in its flesh-longitude, those old stills—  
thick with spit-shined razor wire, with the dead  
in piles like twisted reams of fabric, all  
remind us of how good time can be:  
It can stop. We see  
the photograph, only a moment, words  
stoppered inside the bodies  
that made them the bodies  
inside the images--  
invisible elision, silent, as they  
cross from being, to become  
seen and not heard. Like children  
among them. We saw the  
piles of shoes, eyeglasses, skulls and bones  
made into lovely chandeliers  
and sconces. We, who have always hidden  
in the tacit of now, we are not  
them, never them. We  
wanted to live in the in-between  
because we thought we would not suffer  
there. But suffering is free  
to see anyone it wants, any time,

like imperfections in old wood on the ceiling  
that make trapped, psychotic  
faces--a whole party clinking ice cubes  
in tall bar glasses that I heard  
from my bedroom when  
my parents had guests in our tract home  
where every house was the same  
so, when you dreamed, you  
dreamt of another house  
exactly like yours  
but with very different signs of life.





## TWO MIRRORS FACING EACH OTHER

*Rusty hinge that was her wrist,  
fast ticking clock, bright  
lexicon of her fingers on the keys,  
slow ticking clock with its stranger's hands...*

Sometimes I get infinity and eternity confused,  
I looked at the sun, her face, too long.

She was dressed in her best outfit. The Armani  
suit with the black shiny beads, the one  
she wore on her birthday last year, seven years now.

Silence poured from her as if funneled  
from a well at the center of the earth.  
I cannot describe how loud it was.

I asked the man in blue-striped  
coveralls for scissors. Earlier, he had worn a suit and tie  
when my brother and I picked out the coffin  
from a thick, glossy catalogue. What would Mom like?  
We passed on the "Elvis" coffin, all silver-shot and pearlescent  
and went with traditional New England.  
The man gave us "Dignity" water, a green canvas  
"Dignity" tote bag, and funeral home vault brochures.  
*There's one open next to your mother's,* he said looking at me.

He walked over and noiselessly handed me the scissors.  
I took out a "Dignity" tissue from the pack.  
Cut a lock of her soft, sparrow-colored hair, folded it in for later.  
It smelled sickly sweet, like when I had  
dissected a frog in physiology.

I wanted to kiss her  
but I was too short to reach into the coffin.

He watched me as if he were guarding my mother's corpse.  
Did he think I'd lift her and dance wildly  
across the linoleum, her head on my shoulder?

A few weeks ago, I took the hair  
that I had tied  
with black ribbon from its envelope.  
Her hair soft and glossy as a baby's.  
It smelled like nothing.



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](http://www.physicaltv.com.au)   [Fixing the Broken Nightingal](#)   [The Kamikaze Mind](#)



## IN ANSWER TO YOUR KARMA INQUIRY

In Memoriam Kyle Powderly

in answer to your  
karma inquiry  
as much as anybody is anyone

you were someone  
as much as anyone is whole  
you were perfect

but your secret plans for happiness  
seemed to stop  
bringing you much happiness

you worked in  
the solutions factory  
but when the production line inevitably

wound to a halt  
and everyone had gone home with their new-found happiness  
enigma was your only companion

past lives are catching  
I hope to catch up  
with yours one day

but sleep now  
my sad friend  
after all

who wants to wake up  
who wants to be awake  
who would rather

be dreaming  
who knows  
that we never stop

I know where you have gone to  
I know where you are  
gone to where the music is







## A NEW POEM FOR AN OLD WORLD

as birds of the day  
surrender the sky  
to birds of the night

so no one can guide you  
to the source  
of your own illness

*What are the words that last beyond monuments,  
the invisible reverberations that enable us  
to see more than is apparently there?*

eventually after many attempts  
many false starts  
diversions sleights of hand

psychological garbage collections  
that fill backs of trucks  
and still protrude from skiffs

after experiments of every  
(oh yes  
every) kind

it hits you that  
nothing can fill up or paper over  
the yawning chasm inside you

*What are the mantras whose murmurs  
reveal the spaces behind inner doors  
so seamlessly shut we fail to conceive of their existence?*

nothing that is past  
can fill the hole  
in the present

only being in the moment  
can heal the moment  
but only for a moment

there is nowhere to go  
but deeper down  
into the crevasse

to clamber into its uncharted valleys  
to squeeze into its unlit chambers  
to experience its hollows its gaps its cavities

*What are the incantations that so immediately imprint themselves  
into the foundations of our consciousness  
it's as if we have heard them before?*

perhaps  
this is what  
pilgrimages are for

but it is clear now  
that everything up to this moment  
has already been a pilgrimage

to the altar of knowledge  
that has always  
been there

*continued overleaf*

© Richard James Allen



perhaps  
this is what  
odysseys are for

though yours  
has been  
nothing like Odysseus'

at best you thought you were  
crawling your way home  
to your creator

when you have actually been  
dragged by the collar  
like a runaway slave

back to its master  
back to a memory  
back to this memory

*What are the majesties  
that echo  
beyond memory?*

*What is this rising gorge,  
this stranglehold of nausea,  
always a choker around your throat?*

*What are the utterances by which  
we can finally hear ourselves speak,  
even though we have not yet breathed a word?*

something uncomfortable  
hugging  
the back of your neck

the knobbly hand  
of a unexpected conductor  
of strange secrets

forcing your face  
in unfamiliar rhythms  
onto swollen flesh

now you know what lives  
that never lose a bitter taste  
are for

*In our quiet moments ,  
do we experience the mystery of ourselves,  
or are we being swallowed up in symphonies of dreadful silence?*

*We are the magic, we are the words.  
In the nooks and crannies, the boughs and rafters,  
of our majesterium, let our golden birds sing.*



David has been a professional editor and journalist for over thirty years beginning his career on the subs desk of the *Morning Star* newspaper. He is editor of numerous historical publications under the Socialist History Society imprint. David's interests and research include Turkey and the Kurds, literary figures like George Orwell, Edward Upward and William Morris, British anarchism, the 17th century English revolutionary era and the history of psychoanalysis. He has contributed towards many different publications and writes review articles, commentaries, opinion pieces, polemics and poetry.



## CLASPING TO THE ROCKS

Clasping to the sharp slippery rocks  
 As the waves ever fiercer swirl about my feet  
 Grasping, desperately grasping, for dear life  
 As the winds rasp and the pelting rain strikes and beats  
 Falling, ever falling, white-knuckled fingers slip and slide  
 Downwards, down, deeper downwards,  
 The world weary soul admits its last defeat  
 Quit this alien land in whose place is no retreat  
 In this place no light, no peace

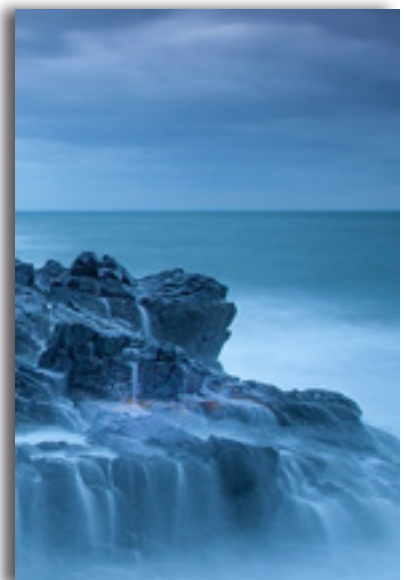
## A PASSER-BY SNAPS A PHOTO

A commuter, elderly, confused  
 Hit head on by a cyclist makes the news  
 Onlookers stop and look aghast  
 A woman screams as if her last  
 Another waves and shakes her arms  
 Arms bedecked with ghouls and charms  
 Tattoos, the artistry of modern day fools

The ambulance arrives in good time  
 A passer-by takes a photo  
 The mangled bike lies on the kerbside  
 While the stretcher bears the lady inside  
 As the ambulance quickly speeds away  
 A passer-by takes a photo

And a passer-by snaps another photo  
 A silent snap from his oh so smart phone  
 The all-seeing eye of the mighty i-phone

No mercy or empathy was spared  
 As the snaps all cheerfully shared  
 Then simply deleted from each phone  
 While the poor victim later dies alone



## POORLY

*"Your loved one is poorly  
Very poorly, please can you  
Get here right away?  
She's very poorly  
Took a turn for the worst"*  
Such a small, innocuous word  
Almost an expression of innocence  
Smooth on the tongue  
With no sharp edges  
"Poorly", "poorly"  
Echoes of poor, yes  
Meaning "not very well"  
Sick, but sure to recover  
Surely, certain to recover?  
Not when it falls from the mouth of a medic, a doctor, a ward sister  
Each professionally obliged to coldly tell the truth  
Uttered over the phone  
Expressed emphatically  
In an early morning call  
So unexpectedly,  
*"Your loved one is poorly  
Very poorly, please can you  
Get here right away?  
She's very poorly  
Took a turn for the worst"*

Poorly, standing at death's door  
Knocking at that same door  
It opens, one's beloved walks right in  
The door shuts firmly in your face  
Shuts on you forever  
Or till it's your turn

"Poorly", the worst word in the world  
One that stains every dictionary  
Do the French have a word for it?  
Do the Germans? Do the Russians?  
Poorly, the same in any language  
It blights all our lives equally  
Poorly, the doctor's curse





Colette is an award winning poet who resides in Galway in the West of Ireland. She writes in both Irish and English. She has fourteen publications which include a volume of short stories, *Ádh Mór*, as well as an academic study of the blind poet Anthony Raftery, an 18th century bard whose songs and poems are still recited and sung today. She has one volume of English poetry, *Sundial*, which was published by Arlen House Press, She also has two dual language collections of poetry by the same publisher; *Between Curses: Baine Géar*, and *In Castlewood: An Ghaoth Aduaidh*. Her work is on the syllabus in Primary, Secondary and Third Level colleges. Colette's latest collection (bilingual) is titled *Baine Géar: Sour Milk*, which is available in hardback and softback, published by Arlen House, 2016. : Colette is pursuing postgraduate studies in the English department of NUI Galway; she also has a master's degree in modern Irish. *'Mag-yar Dancer'* is her forthcoming collection of English poetry.



## DEDICATION

This poem is for you  
but I really cannot commit  
to writing your name  
in black newsprint  
to disguise the fact  
that this poem  
is for you.

Perhaps if I had a clear  
notion, as it were,  
that you might have  
even a slight inclination  
towards this poem,  
not to mention this poet,  
I would shout from  
the top of the tallest horse chestnut,  
a tree endowed with magic power,

but as it stands  
there are no leads  
as to where your heart rests  
on this matter.  
So just act  
as if this never happened,  
because there is little chance  
of you ever uncovering  
this most heartfelt dedication.

## SKYWATCHING

About the time that I found out the exact nature of muscadine,  
a periwinkle of desire began to germinate  
beneath the throbbing sensation in my left wrist,  
crimson flame this invisible birth mark  
that gives a belly texture to our recent encounter;  
enthralled by the manner of your close reading  
of that night's skymap; our crossed constellations, full corn moon.

Trying to recalibrate the flux of the moment,  
wanderings of your song; each one a new quest,  
shifting light that disguises temptation  
to lead you to the hazelwood by the weir,  
silver some fish by the bridge,  
beguile you with echoes of motile water,  
knowing that my first berry must snag your kiss.



Margaret O'Driscoll is a poetry writer based in County Cork, Ireland. Her work has been published in various journals and anthologies internationally.



## NO SPARKLE

Bluebells in the wood lack depth of colour  
Grasses in the breeze don't seem to wave  
Freshly unfurled leaves aren't fluttering  
All because I see them as a slave

Sparrows don't frolic in the dust much  
Swallows don't seem to swoop no more  
Starlings feathers have lost all their sparkle  
I wish I could see them as before

All is different when our hearts are heavy  
Even our smiles lack a ray of sun  
Experiences are best when we can share them  
I wish I could share mine with someone

## WERE YOU THERE?

Were you there when they needed  
Reassurance day or night  
When trials and terrors came  
Did you dry their tears, hug them tight?

Were you there when bullies hurt  
Did you show care and concern  
Were you there when they felt failures  
When they lost the will to learn?

Were you there when they had doubts  
When their self esteem was low  
Did you try to lift them them up  
Did you try to help them grow?

Were you there when no one was  
Were you still a faithful friend  
Were you there when darkness fell  
When they wanted it to end?

Were you there when choices made  
Were to you, crass, unwise  
Did you help pick up the pieces  
When it started it's demise?

Were you there best as you could  
Through the years of dark despair?  
Even though my heart was breaking -  
I was there!



## I'LL WAIT NO MORE AT WINDOWS

I'll wait no more at windows  
Wondering if he's coming home  
Too many nights spent worrying  
Feeling gutted, all alone

I'll wait no more at windows  
Darkness in my heart and street  
I won't trawl through lonely hours  
For any man that I may meet

I'll wait no more at windows  
Pacing pointlessly, pounding head  
I won't sell myself short ever  
Better to be alone instead

I'll wait no more at windows  
My mind driven to despair  
I won't need to phone pubs or clubs  
To check if he is there

I'll wait no more at windows  
Losing sleep, losing my mind  
I've risen the bar very high  
For the next man that I'll find

## A RESERVOIR OF TEARS

This street I passed just days before  
Above the ground afloat  
A smile lit my upturned face  
Life was a sailing boat

Today I tread with feet of clay  
Each step is pondered, slow  
My eyes a reservoir of tears  
Your words eclipsed my glow

My heart crystallised in ice  
Is set in fast freeze mode  
I'm faced with a cul-de-sac  
Where once was open road



© Margaret O'Driscoll



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 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*.



## BINDU

At the start—  
a condition of chaotic  
    changelessness: the summation of zero  
time, zero space—

a state of silent vibrancy  
and radiant darkness.

And then?  
The vast black sea drew  
itself together into a single embryonic point—  
    all matter and energy compressed  
into potential:

the bud of galaxies, stars  
planets—  
    clouds, the dandelion  
and kingfisher

stag, seahorse  
human.

Why then—the drawing together?  
    Perhaps the seed wanted to know itself,  
        to see and be seen—  
wanted to know  
if plenitude and void are one.

## SMALL ODE TO ILLNESS

You, I've carried twenty years—  
first I named you ghost, then a faithful  
companion of sorts.

Now—sometimes—I call you teacher.  
But I will tell you this: The cost  
of your lessons  
teacher, has been high.

What hollow created you? You won  
swift possession of a body I thought  
my own—took me down  
to hands and knees. I split  
along an inner rift  
and your strange rhythms  
came rushing, raging in  
like hungry rivers.  
Sometimes you shook me into dread,  
at others into stasis.

Dailiness beyond continued  
unbroken—did not stop for me.  
I heard the hum of cars  
along a nearby street,  
the purposeful steps  
of my neighbor. Magpies  
continued their fluttering,  
from grass to treetop perches—  
flashes of black and white  
and iridescent blue—  
while I stayed still.



© Laura J Braverman

# DIGITS

Ten toes in my hands,  
plump paw pads stained  
with city's dust  
though bits of pink  
peek through.

I move my hands—  
ten toes become two feet,  
each foot the length  
of my outstretched hand  
wrist line  
to tip of middle finger.

Ten toes curl, unfurl—  
little feet tilt out, then in  
dance the movements of a mind  
riveted by bright creatures  
jumping on a screen.

I read crosshatchings  
of dust-grey on pink:  
the folds of a new map.  
I study the shape of big toe,  
a small imitation  
of a bigger toe I know—  
the things passed on.

## UNION

Insight and darkness—  
darkness  
and womb  
womb and seed  
seed  
and stillness—stillness  
and action  
action  
and choice—choice and  
awareness  
awareness  
and distraction  
distraction and dullness  
dullness  
and illness  
illness and inwardness  
inwardness and shadow  
shadow—  
and radiance  
radiance and flame  
flame  
and wick  
wick and transformation  
transformation and fear  
fear  
and hesitation—  
hesitation and trust  
trust and flying  
flying  
and falling  
falling  
and faith—

faith and searching  
 searching and finding  
 finding  
 and freedom—freedom  
 and kindness—kindness and  
 vision  
 vision and misgiving  
 misgiving and  
 darkness  
 darkness and insight



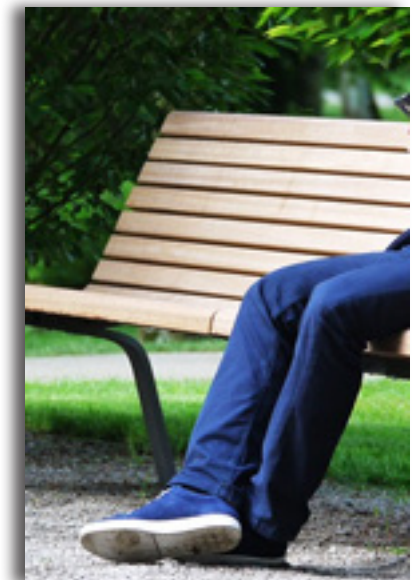
Caley O'Dwyer lives in Los Angeles where he teaches creative writing and psychology at Antioch University. His poems appear in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Cream City Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Warwick Review*, *Curator*, *Ekphrasis*, *Washington Square*, and other venues,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



## ALL DAY

I get a little nervous. Do you?  
 Things that make me nervous:  
 the end of the world makes me nervous.  
 Some of my friends want to go out.  
 I do go out. Going out makes me nervous.  
 I'm the kind of person that feels  
 intense emotions when laying in the grass  
 looking up at frayed power lines, the lost spider  
 tiptoeing between them, the leaves in the trees—  
 there are so many! If the sky happens to present  
 a stray cloud or the afterthought of an airplane,  
 I'm all tears and memories, even, and I hate to admit this,  
 a small cement playground bench can make me weep on site.  
 I have wept in Salzburg and Vienna. I have wept in East LA.  
 Stray joggers make me cry and finding lost iPhones  
 can be crushing. The phone must miss its owner, the human hand  
 that listened to every word it had to say, that loved all of its songs  
 before they grew boring. As you can imagine, I cannot hold a job.  
 I'm known as useless ("bonkers") in several industries  
 and I no longer have plans to change people's minds.

Being me isn't for everyone and I wouldn't be so clever  
 as to recommend it. However, should you find yourself  
 lost in wonder over the seven days of the week, on the verge of love  
 at the opening of a garage door, or weeping over a can of soda,  
 all the calories, the meaningfulness, the hordes of liquefied sugar,  
 the fizzy, short life of bubbles, cold, ultra-thin American tin  
 in your hand, then you know that Coke really is it, and so is  
 everything else. I once bumped into a coffee table on the way  
 to cry, literally, over some milk I spilt on a book by Freud.  
 A great bruise grew on my leg. Freud makes me nervous  
 and somewhat tearful. Obviously I didn't get  
 anything done that day even though my list  
 was very short. The floorboards in my house are crooked.  
 I have a small, inexpensive water fountain that twirls  
 an egg-colored ball on top. I've got a great many  
 packages of food. I have zip-lock bags in every size  
 and only a few of them are full. Most are not full.  
 I can stare out the window and get a lot out of it.  
 To me, breakfast is enough. All day  
 I'm interested / frightened.





## IN A HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM

Wading through the green light,  
filling out forms, I'm approached  
by Mark Rothko, sporting a white coat

and dangling stethoscope.  
How bad is it, I ask?  
Pretty bad, he says, I'll be back in a minute.

When he returns, he's got William Bronk  
Wallace Stevens, and Emily Dickinson.  
They're carrying charts with steely blue graphs.

You're confused, Bronk says.  
Rothko concedes but looks  
notably less amused.

This is followed by something  
syntactically bizarre and portentous  
from Stevens, which I think is good news

about some travel I'll be doing.  
Dickinson keeps looking at her watch.  
Please undress, says Bill.

I'm offered coffee with a piece of pie  
and spoon-shaped Spork,  
followed by a series of tests

each of which I flunk.  
A backlit screen displays how badly.  
Hand over the poems, Stevens says.

I pull several sheets of paper  
out of a slim leather sheaf.  
Bill looks at them and says, They're blank.

Dickinson says: Delusions of grandeur.  
Later, drugged and saturated,  
I'm feeling bemused, compressed.

A vase of short-stemmed roses  
hovers over a nurse.  
I am to follow a path of green arrows to Billing.

A woman behind an enormous desk  
passes me a pink slip.  
Co-pay: eternal doubt.



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.



## FLIGHT

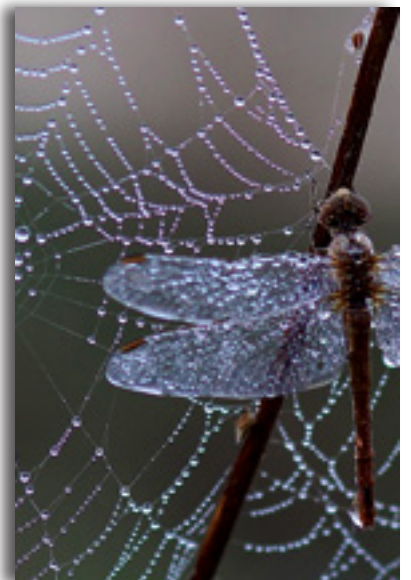
But not even the whole story was my evidence for saying “For a moment . . .”  
—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (638)

Too late to veer  
the front tire  
of my Free Spirit  
crunches into  
a telephone pole  
the frame cracks  
I let go over  
hot asphalt  
into summer  
traffic losing  
the race to the light  
I was winning  
till I took flight

## DECEMBER MORNING, GEORGIA

Dew glistens on cheat grass  
and gooseweed, lovegrass  
already tall in the sun, drying  
into December damp  
and the sow thistle blooms  
gold for winter question marks  
and mourning cloaks, bright  
wings bearing these brief,  
warm days, that I, too,  
may bear them.

*Note: question marks and mourning cloaks are butterflies*



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.



## KING OF GIANTS IN PREHISTORIC KINGDOM

When you are no more fragrant like a fresh red apple but faithful pure ruby,  
you will see the back of time, the incredible kingdom of the sweet light.  
the palace of stars in which the soul lives,  
and the golden tree in the garden of heaven.  
You will be like a teenager--the king of giants in prehistoric kingdom.

## THE SOVEREIGN GODS ARE ALL MY OWN

I'm not Wukong and I don't want to be Celestial Ruler Supreme God,  
but I want to be myself in the beginning.  
There was no the heaven and earth at that time  
and the universe was the paradise of the soul,  
in which were a great many flowers full bloom, from paradise in the galaxy.  
Neither I knew what was up and down, east and west, nor gentle and simple.  
I was both a teenager and an old man,  
the great many numbers of mine had a great many kingdoms, the sovereign gods  
were all my own.





## GIANT'S POEM

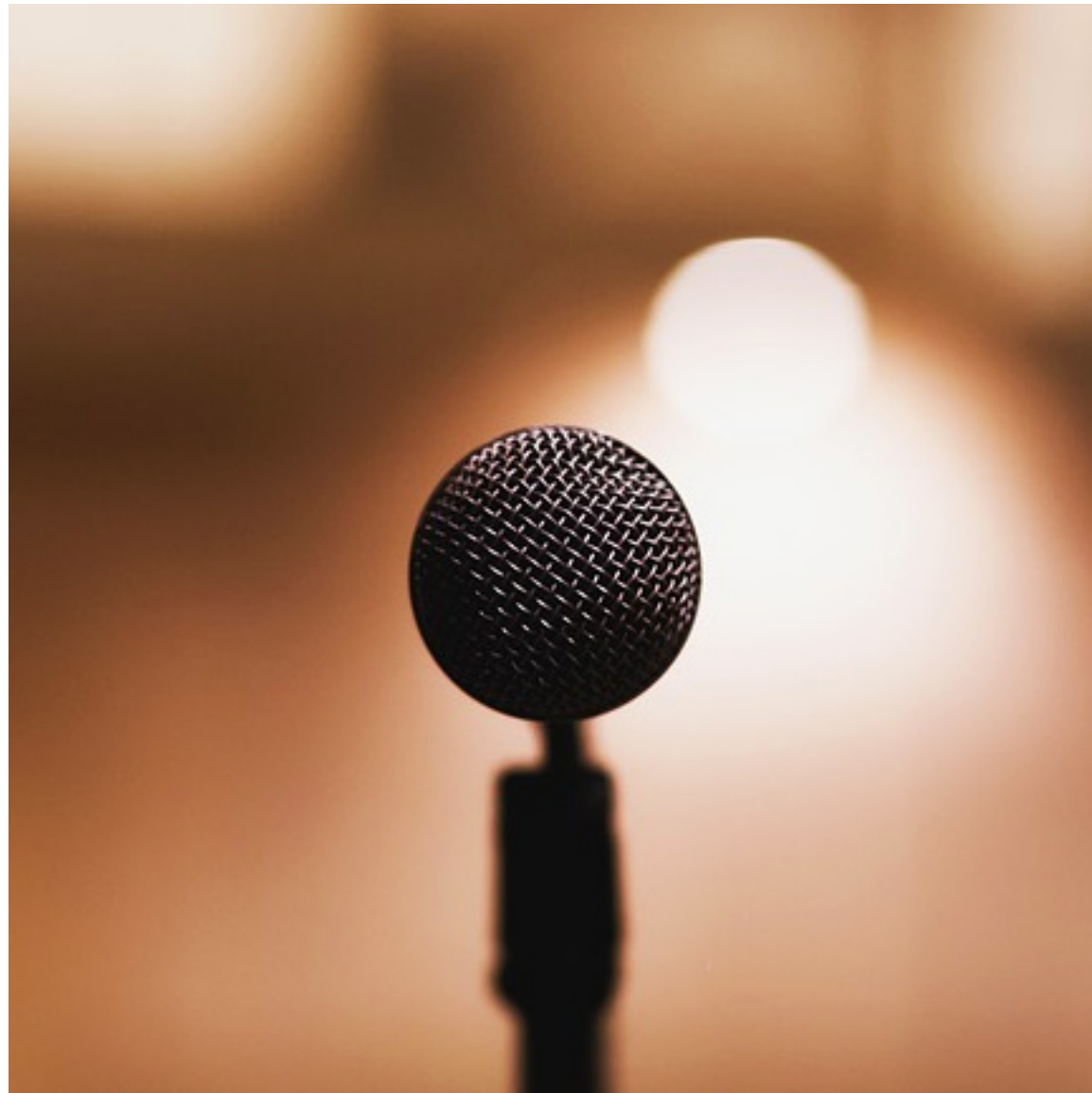
The body is just a dress of your soul and the world is a picture of time.  
You can't find yourself even if you go all over the world,  
because the temple of the soul is in a garden beyond time.  
Those smiles of the prehistoric giants is in a bright mirror of the quiet spirit  
and the interstellar words are the giant 's poem.

## NEST OF TIME

When the lightning of heaven flashes across the head of night  
and turns the earth transparent, like honey gold,  
the angel's song like the dance of the swan  
will illuminate the nest of time--the giant labyrinth of stars;  
Then the golden car of dragon and phoenix  
will carry the mountains of prehistoric gods  
And turn the giant ship of platinum into an outer paradise.



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](http://www.jimmeirose.com)



## EXPERIMENT IN SPACE 91

Three a.m. rain pounded the tent all full of pitch black. The sheets of rain sweeping across the canvas, and the wind roaring over past the canvas, made going out impossible. They decided hours ago they would stay in the tent and stick it out, until morning; stick it out.

The singing started at one a.m. soft at first, then louder, louder—

Ra da da da da, Chanson, Chanson, D'Amour—

Pal! Shut up and let us get some sleep. Lord, I wish I could see you, it's so damned dark. If I could see you I'd poke you good—

Pounding rain pummeling canvas the pitch dark gale wind pierced a reply.

Fuck this experiment! I hope it never stops raining! I hope it never gets light! All I can say is—Ra da da da da, Chanson, Chanson, D'Amour. Did you know this song was written by Shanklin, who gave it to the Todds?

No. I didn't know that. That's a lousy old song nobody sings or plays today. Shanklin died in 1970. Imagine him now, here—

Yeah, Chanson d'amour, ra da da da da, play encore. Imagine how he'd look sitting here, dead 45 years? All shriveled, sunken, toothy, gone. Old mudpie face ha, fresh from the casket!

Wait a minute. Don't laugh at a guy for how they look—

Todd's eight years dead now. Dotty his wife's dead 15 years—all skinny and lumpy and dead. Art looks almost alive—his tongue sticks out a little, but he doesn't really care. He drooled when alive too, near the end. Each time I hear, ra da da da da, Chanson, chanson, d'amour, I think of their corpses and how they must look. They played the Chapman Park Hotel—I can just hear the smoky sax solo; Ra da da da da, the smoky sax solo smokes on winding about that old moldy lounge.

© Jim Meirose

Then ERA records picked up the song 1958, it was #6—

Oh yeah, a number? Hey, I got a number. Teatime for Moskvín, and 28 dug up dried out little dead girls. In interviews with police, Moskvín gave various explanations of his actions. All his actions to get his little pretty mummies, with plastic mask faces, with black holes for eyes, all rotten inside. Funny!

Say wait—how come you gave me hell about making fun of the dead? You hypocrite! But, listen; that song is great. Chanson d’amour, ra da da da da, play encore. Forget the dead girls. Imagine the lounge circuit, the heavy smelly moldy curtains, and the wonderful dreadful rainy and windy dark days? All full of Here in my heart, ra da da da da, on and on—

Listen—back up. I talk about Moskvín, because I can talk about anything I want. Songs are nothing. Things like pasty faced propped up dead girls around the table, now; that’s something. They had tea every day and watched and waited for science to find ways for these girls to live again. Death’s not unlike sleeping. The morning always comes, you know?

Hey, that might be cool, but wait; listen—you know Manhattan transfer? That awful whiny glittery group named for Dos Passos’ book? Well, the Transfer singer sounded just like Piaf. Chanson d’amour, ra da da da da, play encore. Heavenly, just heavenly. Piaf’s 52 years dead now, dead and rotting in the ground. All the old dead people in the ground, that song all around winding them more and more, creepy; but that song got to #16 on billboard, see; how long they’ve been dead is a number, where their song got to is a number, everything always starts with numbers, one fuck, one egg, one sperm, one baby—babies come from numbers. Hah!

What are you fucking talking about? Babies? Numbers? We’re in a God damned pitch black roaring windy pounding rainy tent, there’s no babies or numbers here.

I know, I know, but you know what else? I once saw a poster on a pole. Il Novo, live from Pompeii, it said. Book tickets now, book tickets now. Now, who the fuck does this poster think is going to go all the way to Pompeii, because they see one little black and white poster? Like, who goes and buys Coke because they see a commercial? That’s something too! Everybody in the world drinks Coke anyway! They don’t need commercials at all! What a waste.

Yeah, right, tell me about it. The money gets pissed into the TV, but, anyway, let me get to the point. That great old song even got sung in the Fillmore East; it started as the Yiddish theatre in 1925; then became the Commodore Theatre; then became Leows Commodore—then, in 1968, the Fillmore East. Haw! Chanson d’amour, ra da da da da, play encore. Amazing isn’t it, the song, the labels, the singers, the venue all converged together unknowing until the moment the Transfer sang Shanklin’s great song at the Fillmore in May 1971? Some damned rotting corpse in the ground wrote it, and they sang it there! Everybody had lived and died but the song went on and everything collided at the Fillmore. Funny! Chanson d’amour, ra da da da da, play encore.

But, it never made Pompeii. In Pompeii, there’s just casts of dead people all over the place. They don’t play music there. They’ve respect for the dead.

Oh, yeah, I’ve seen those bodies, they all died suffering, but they’re not real mummies. They’re just plaster casts. Now, Moskvín wanted to make real mummies. How long dead they looked, one day, more longer, every day deader, and he just sat there waiting. Imagine it?

No, not really but; Chanson d’amour, ra da da da da, play encore; I don’t just imagine, but I know that the Fillmore East closed in 1971, became the New Fillmore east, then the Village East, then in 1980 became the Saint; that great gay swinging place. I bet they played the song once in a while, too; Chanson d’amour, ra da da da da, play encore. But—you know what I’m thinking? It might just rain forever. Maybe we’re dead. Maybe that’s what it feels like to be dead. You get rained on until the end of time when you’re dead.

No, no, we’re not dead and it can’t rain forever. It’s got to stop by morning. Then we got to see what’s what. Now, Moskvín’s girls, they were dead. Why can’t you keep track of this conversation, it’s about Moskvín, his girls, tea parties, Pompeii—he told the police how he carefully selected which girl to take from the cemetery.

I lay on the grave and tried to get in touch with her, he told them.

I listened to what she said.

Often they asked me to take them out for a walk—so I—

Stop! Stop all this Moskvín talk. You bore me; don’t say the rest, because I know the rest; it all happened in his parent’s house while they were away all one summer, imagine the parents when then came home and saw where their balloon boy’s head was to think he could get away with all these propped up dead girls in the house when they got home?

Okay, okay. Now you say you don’t have the experiment. Then I’ll give you some shade, some eternal shade. I’ve had it with you. I will kill you now then.

God!

Some door opened; Some switch was flipped; the wind and rain stopped; and the sunlight lit! And the sun sang out; Non farmi aspettare, sang the sudden kindly round sunface peering in. It reached a hand into the tent, saying, Never mind all that now. Come on out, come on. Nobody’s going to kill anybody. Drug experiment 91 is over. You can sleep it off now. You might feel dead, but no way will you die. Plus, hey listen; thanks so much for participating in our experiment. You have a nice day now, hear? Here’s your twenty bucks. Bundle up, it’s cold out there. Even in the sun. Bye now, hear that sax fading? I am the sun. Fear me. Ra da da da da. Chanson d’amour.



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# Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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JANUARY 2018

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