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Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
MARCH 2018



PHILIP CASEY
AR DHEIS DE GO RAIBH A ANAM

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE

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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

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Cover photograph of Philip Casey by Karina Casey

CONTRIBUTORS

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- *An interview and his poems that appeared in previous issues of this magazine.*

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ON THE PASSING OF PHILIP CASEY

POET AND NOVELIST

BY

TERRY MCDONAGH

I first got to know Philip Casey in 1987 when Patrick Duffy introduced me to him and Ulrike Boskamp, in Hamburg. Philip had been visiting Ulrike in Berlin and they were returning to Dublin via Hamburg. That first meeting grew into a deep friendship that lasted until Philip's death at the age of sixty-seven, on Sunday the 4th of February.

Philip was special in his own unique way. He had his rituals: he'd cross the river Liffey to the market on Saturdays to stock up on organic fruit and vegetables for the week– he loved the market and the market loved him. His cosy red-brick terrace house was a meeting place and source of wisdom for multitudes. The Irish writing fraternity is indebted to him for setting up www.irishwriters.com as an archive of Irish writers. Dignity is a word that always springs to mind. Apart from his talent as a novelist and poet, Philip was a fiercely loyal critic. I owe him a lot.

Philip returned to us in Hamburg a number of times. He read and facilitated workshops at The International School; we staged his one act play, *Cardinal*, with Guelma Lea and Barry Stevenson in the main parts in 1994; he read to rapt audiences in Hamburg – in particular, in the Shamrock – the first Irish pub in Hamburg which was run by the very unusual and creative proprietor, Mike Gillen. Just last year when visiting the International School, I was going through a display of old year-books when Philip's poem, *A Page Falls Open*, caught my eye on the cover of one of the books. I forget which year it was but that's not important.

*'A page falls open
and the reader's name
is there.
It always has been
and will be always.'*

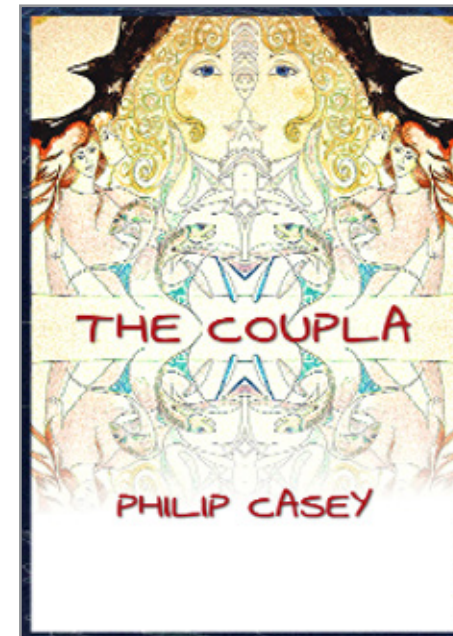
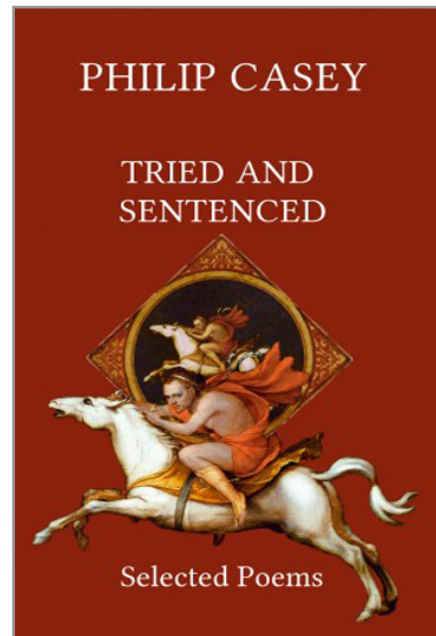
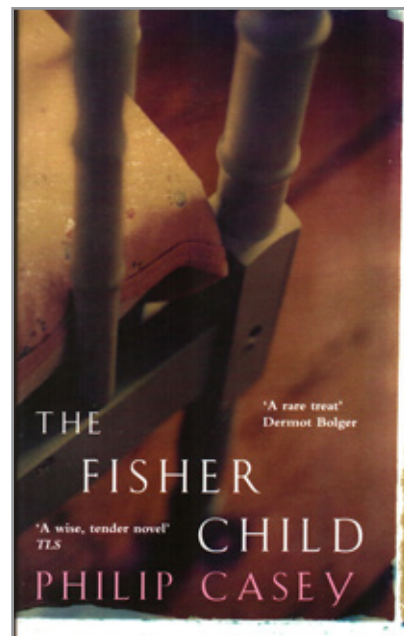
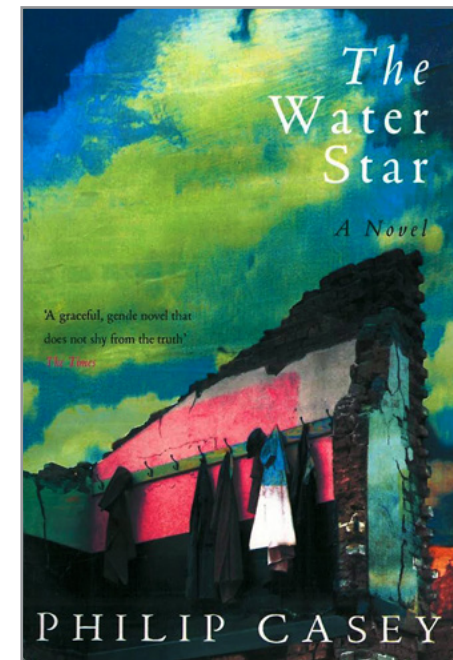
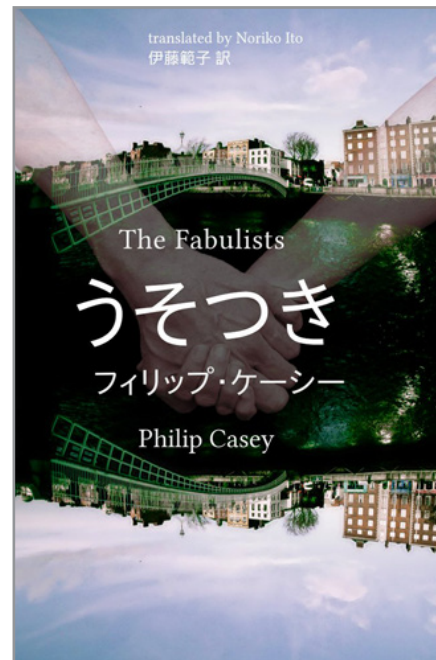
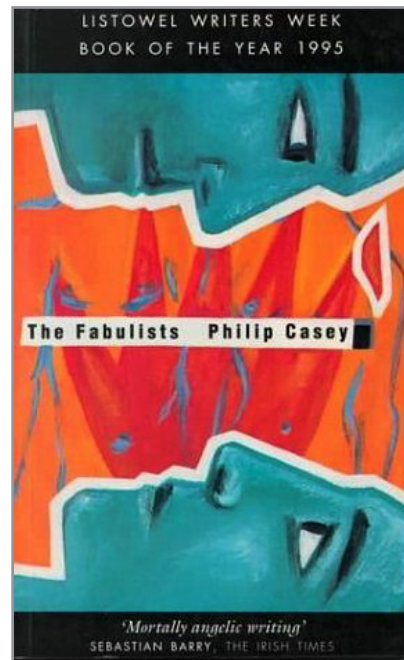
As well as his play, *Cardinal*, he published four collections of poetry; a story for children, *The Coupla* and the now famous Bann River Trilogy of novels: *The Fabulists*, *The Water Star* and *The Fisher Child*. Jean Longster, Joanna's mother said, *The Water Star* was the best novel she had ever read... and she was an avid reader.

His passing was a dignified occasion. The media and his large circle of friends and admirers turned up in style and numbers for his cremation and even the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, sent his sympathy and condolence to Karina, John and Peter, his sister and brothers.

Ar dheis De go raibh a anam... may his soul be seated at God's right hand.

Philip Casey's novels are *The Fabulists*, *The Water Star* and *The Fisher Child*, previously published by Lilliput and Picador and now reissued in new editions by Casey's independent label eMaker Editions. Previously translated into German, *The Fabulists* was translated into Japanese by Noriko Ito and is published by eMaker Editions. He has also published *Tried and Sentenced*, his Selected poems, and a novel for children 9+, *The Coupla*. He is the founder and editor of [Irish Writers Online](http://www.irishwritersonline.com) and www.irishculture.ie and is a member of aosdana.artscouncil.ie

Live Encounters is ever grateful to Philip Casey for granting us an interview and sharing his poems with the readers of the magazine.



This interview was published in Live Encounters Magazine, June 2012.



PHILIP CASEY

in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas

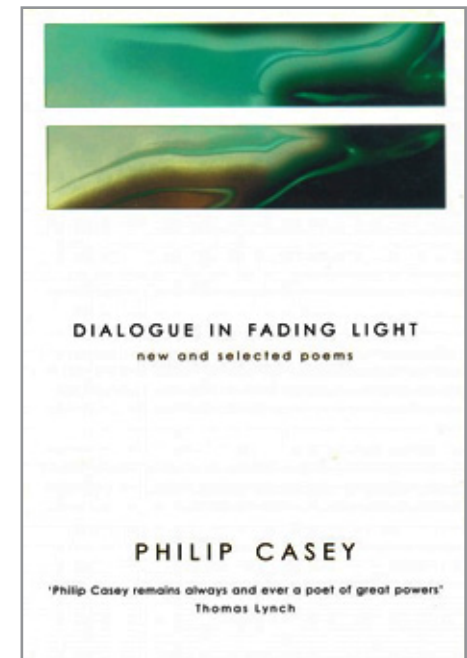
Well known Irish Poet, Writer, Editor and member of Aosdána, which honours artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the Arts in Ireland, talks candidly on his life, work.

"There are people who think writers are elitist loafers and leeches and never do a day's work, and while the Catholic Church was at its most powerful and obscurantist in the 1940s and 1950s, books were banned and writers were hounded from their jobs, a notable case being the novelist and short-story writer John McGahern. Most writers of note had to leave the country.

Today is a different matter, and I think there is a general respect for writing as a profession. I know that writing friends from abroad have commented on the fact that if you declare yourself to be a writer in Ireland, nobody thinks it's strange!"

- Philip Casey

<http://www.philipcasey.com/>
<https://www.amazon.com/Philip-Casey>



Could you share with the readers a glimpse of your life and work?

I was born in London in 1950 to Irish parents, grew up in Co Wexford (South-East Ireland) on my parents' farm, spent a long time in hospital in my teens, and moved to Dublin in 1971. I emigrated to Barcelona in 1974, just as the Franco era was ending, and was at a champagne party the night the Generalissimo died. I returned to Dublin just after the first free elections in Spain in 1974, and after a few years of trying to be respectable, decided I was a round peg in a square hole, and that all I wanted to do was write. I gave up my job, and survived on very little. I was 29, and the following year I published my first book of verse. I've since published four collections in all, and three novels. I've also written a children's novel which I hope will be published over the next year or so, and am presently writing non-fiction.

Why do you write?

As a child I told stories to my brothers (my sister was a late arrival) and as a teenager I wrote songs. One night on Irish radio I heard a poetry programme. 'I can do that,' I told myself. To put that in context I was living in the countryside with little access to books, TV wasn't common, and needless to say there was no such thing as the internet. Moreover, I was a late starter in secondary school because of long periods in hospital, and was only vaguely aware of literature until I did. So I've always had the impulse to create. Actually while I was in hospital for the third time in my teens I won my first literary prize – for an essay on Keats.

I always try to avoid writing, especially novels or non-fiction. It's only when I've nowhere else to turn that I give in and write. Perhaps it's a delay tactic to wait until I'm ready to write! On the other hand if I don't write or am prevented from writing by one circumstance or another, I get ill. I'd like to get back to writing poems, but I've written only a handful since my last collection, and there's a novel I want to write after I've finished the present non-fiction work.

In a nutshell I write because I have to and I don't really want to do anything else.

Is there such a thing as a full time poet or writer?

I certainly think of myself as a full-time writer. Of course, like most writers I can spend a long time staring through windows, friends often call unannounced, I'm asked to read a lot of manuscripts, or

books, and there are a million excuses not to write. So it's not like a proper job, 9-5. On the other hand, a writer is always on call, so to speak. And reading and dreaming is a significant part of being a writer – maybe even more so for a poet. The peculiar thing about poetry is that a lifetime's experience can be distilled into a few lines, though I think any poet is lucky if he or she leaves behind one durable poem. To leave more than half a dozen durable poems is to be a great poet.

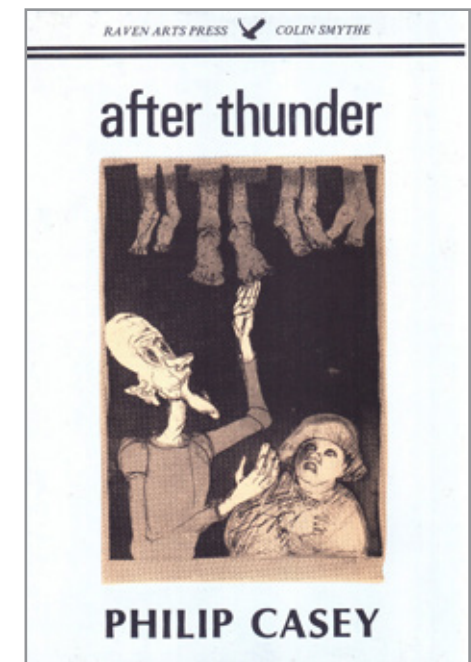
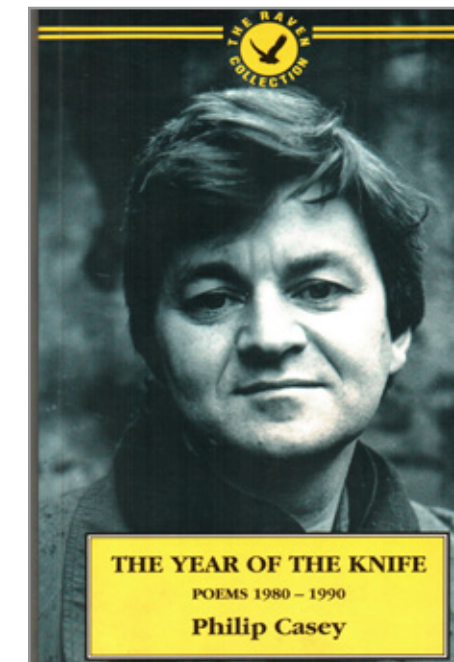
What is the responsibility of a poet or writer to society?

I think a lot about society, both in Ireland and abroad. I'm very interested in history and politics, and having lived through the dying days of Fascism in Spain, I'm worried about its resurgence in Europe and how so-called austerity is facilitating its success. I'm passionate about creating a world without fossil fuels. I'm optimistic about how technology can help create a better world if it is matched with a generous society. Yet I think it would be a mistake for me to enter politics per se. I hope I can best contribute to society through what I think I do best – my literary work. My current non-fiction is on an aspect of Irish history both in Ireland itself and amongst the Irish diaspora, which I hope will make readers think about how 'the other' is treated in society. How one treats 'the other' is a fundamental measure of any society.

When did you start Irish Writers Online?

I'm not sure exactly when I started [Irish Writers Online](#). The Internet Archive has a record of 20th Century Irish Writers, which is what it was called then, from 1999, but I think I started it a few years earlier. I had learned some basic html, and had made a little website for myself called *The Fabulists*, after my first novel, and I thought as I was promoting my own work, why not promote that of my writer friends too?

Naturally I had to call it something else once the 20th century ended, and so *Irish Writers Online* was born, with its own dedicated website. It is now accessed by lovers of literature, students, academics, writers and media from all over the world, and presently lists concise bio-bibliographies of more than 600 Irish writers. I've lately been adding images and videos where they are available. [Irish Culture Guide](#) is its sister site, and that has over 1,000 descriptive links to websites featuring aspects of Irish Culture. It's not quite as well-known as *Irish Writers Online* but has been gaining slowly in popularity.



Does the Irish Literary community get funding from either the State or Private donors?

There are various private sponsors such as *Hennessey Brandy*, which co-sponsors with state bodies the *New Irish Writing* series, long established in various Irish newspapers, and most recently in *The Irish Independent*. *The Irish Times*, for example, has also sponsored prizes for both fiction and poetry, as well as the annual theatre awards. There are also prizes *The Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award* which is the richest of its kind in the world, though of course that is open to international writers also. However Irish writer [Edna O'Brien](#) won it in 2011. Then there is [The Michael Harnett Award](#) for poetry, commemorating perhaps the finest Irish poet in both languages. The main funding for literature, however, is from the State in the form of bursaries and support for publication of books and magazines.

It also funds a unique institution known as [Aosdána](#). The word comes from an ancient Irish term for people of the arts, *aes dána*. It honours those artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the arts in Ireland, and encourages and assists members in devoting their energies fully to their art. Those whose income is solely from writing and/or is below a certain threshold, receive a stipend known as the *cnuas*. I'm privileged to be a member of Aosdána and can vouch that its monetary support changed my life.

Has the internet helped promote the Irish literary community monetarily? And has the growing popularity of the *Kindle* affected the sale of printed books?

I don't know if I can answer this question directly. Of course it has helped writers in all sorts of ways, from cutting postage costs (most agents and publishers accept email submissions now), facilitating newsletters, to readers buying their books on *Amazon* or Irish web shops or indeed directly from their publishers – you can see a list of both Irish bookshops on the web and Irish publishers at the bottom of the page on Irish Writers Online. Many, not most, Irish writers have their own website, and some, not many, are on Facebook and Twitter. In other words, Irish writers are like writers in most countries in this regard. As for ebooks, I see some writers publishing direct to *Kindle*, but as yet not many. I don't own a *Kindle* and probably won't, as I believe in open formats and I distrust the *Kindle's* proprietary format. I do however sometimes read ebooks, mostly free classics, on my old smart phone and I think as the technology evolves and open formats become better appreciated then writers will be more comfortable with e-publishing.

We are all caught up in the great wild web and this has given rise to copyright infringement and plagiarism. How has it affected the Irish literary community?

There was some concern and puzzlement about the *Google Books Agreement* a year or two ago, but otherwise I'm not aware of significant copyright infringement or plagiarism. Which is not to say that it doesn't exist. Several Irish writers including myself have made some of our work freely available under a *Creative Commons Licence*, which allows a reader to download the work and distribute it but (in our case) not change it or profit from it. Have a look at *Irish Literary Revival* and my own website and the Creative Commons website for more detail.

Do you think Media (Print and Electronic) in Ireland has helped promote writers and poets? And can they do more for the struggling community?

Of course there's always a clamour for more to be done, but I think Ireland is relatively fortunate in that the media, particularly *The Irish Times*, give good coverage of books, and usually publishes a poem every week, and now that the Irish Independent has recently taken on [New Irish Writing](#), it has made up for its previous scant coverage of Irish literary work. The main Irish TV station, RTÉ, no longer has a dedicated books program, alas, but its main arts presenter *John Kelly* is a novelist himself and is sympathetic to literature and covers it when he can, I think. Of course if a writer wins a significant prize, then that's big news.

In your opinion how do people view writers and poets today? Do they view them as catalysts for change?

There are people who think writers are elitist loafers and leeches and never do a day's work, and while the Catholic Church was at its most powerful and obscurantist in the 1940s and 1950s, books were banned and writers were hounded from their jobs, a notable case being the novelist and short-story writer [John Macgahern](#). Most writers of note had to leave the country. Today is a different matter, and I think there is a general respect for writing as a profession. I know that writing friends from abroad have commented on the fact that if you declare yourself to be a writer in Ireland, nobody thinks it's strange!

These poems were published in Live Encounters Magazine, February 2016.



HAMBURG WOMAN'S SONG

Time has gone slowly by the hour,
by the year it has gone like a day
and you and I are of a sudden old.
But behind my bright eyes, papa,

I will always be a girl of ten,
and you, a grown man of twenty
when you cheated the dreaded police
who wanted to take me away.

I was born in a time and place
to a woman I look like now,
but fear grew like mould on bread
in my mother's love for her slow girl.

I remember the sirens and cobbles,
then waking at dawn by a stream
where you left me with a countrywoman
and time went slowly by the hour.

She who was my mother
died in the Hamburg fire,
and he who was my father
never came back from the east.

My hands hardened and my bones grew long.
I trusted what I could not understand
until one morning you came up the road
and happiness changed my face.

I am a woman of Hamburg
who walked to the hungry city
side by side with my new father.
I have lived here to this day.

TOLEDO, ENCORE

O Toledo, I am parched
beneath your Moorish arches.
My love bit my lip in anger
and stormed off to see her lover
when I looked after
everyone but her.
I could not free
myself to be with her.

O Toledo, I am parched.
My sense of sensual self
ebbs to a vacant point.
There was a time I could feel
in gracefully spoken sentences.
Toledo, you have done for me,
it's too cold a morning
to wake abruptly from a dream.

I should not ask of another
what she cannot give,
when all I have to give
is my fullness of her.
No wonder if she turns away
in anger when I wake,
cold all over.

O Toledo, I am cold
in your Moorish station,
waiting for the outward train
that will never come.
All I want is happiness
for my beloved. I'm too old,
and can give her nothing.
My love for her has emptied
all I knew and owned.



SUNLIGHT OF LOVE

- for Christine

The fan
slowly turns on its axis
to Mahler's Loneliness
in Autumn,
undulating,
keeping time
with the music's
planetary rhythm.

The graceful blades
cool a man
who lies comatose
and alone,
a degree
from his mortal end.

A hawk alights
on the windowsill,
a portent
from myth,
the shape-shifting
raven
waiting for the hero
who has fought too well,
his wounds
outnumbering
his nightmares.

Ancestral
wraiths
pass through him
in procession.
In their thousands,
to the shifting sands
of violins,
as the contralto
soars,

they come from
as far
as his third eye sees,
along
a spiral path,
full of light
and joy.

The hawk
flies away.

The sick man wakes.
The fan bows to him
like a sainted nun.

Sunlight fills the room
with love.
The contralto
tears
my heart into
quivering strips
of understanding.

Hope is born
of hope that had died,
purified
of childhood fears,
holding new breath
in a blasted landscape.

Wild mountain flowers
drip
their
dew
onto
the
sterile
floor,
the teeming
drop
beginning
a stream
that will form
the first river
in all creation
flowing into
the first ocean.
Rough tea leaves
from a painted tin
make the first drink
that is not poison.

Bread made
with full grain
by a woman's hands
quells hunger
at last,
and forever more.

The hawk
is back,
black
in the setting sun.
The fan
is gone.
The man it cooled
is gone.



YOU WITHIN ME

- for Ulrike

I read page after page and see nothing
 but your face, word after nulled word.
 I have the absurd urge to vacate my skin
 and pour your molten essence into its mould,
 so that never again would I know estrangement.
 I love the lawless present, give space
 its due and needless, restore self to myself.
 But in these intense days, on obsolete maps,
 I search crude alleys and mountain paths,
 knowing I will only find you within me.
 So many scattered parts of us are as one,
 as five thousand days or one make a life,
 and you race free with a tiger's grace,
 unafraid of the weight of continents.
 Your hands are adept at shaping clay,
 and they shape the cast of my story:
 it is a woman crouched at the root of a tree
 it is the beseeching ghost of a childhood pain
 it is rain hurtling earthward, regardless of need.

MAKING SPACE

- for Heather

Sometimes, when looking at the stars
 on a clear night in summer,
 I wonder about light
 and the energy that keeps me upright.
 What does the Principle
 of the Conservation of Energy
 say, and does it apply to me,
 and when I die
 will I be transformed into a thought
 travelling at the speed of light?

Perhaps, you will turn me on at the flick
 of a switch, to bathe your smile
 while you nod off over a book.
 My light and how lovely you look
 will describe a time and place
 as you reach out, making space
 in your calm sleep
 for your lost black sheep
 whose molecules keep your bedroom lit.
 I will burn for you all night.

Brian Kirk is an award winning poet and short story writer from Dublin. He was twice shortlisted for Hennessy Awards for fiction and his stories and poetry have been widely published in journals and anthologies. His novel for 9 – 12 year olds *The Rising Son* was published in December 2015. He was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions Series in 2013 and was commended in the Patrick Kavanagh Award in 2014 and 2015. His first poetry collection *After The Fall* was published by Salmon Poetry in November 2017. He blogs at www.briankirkwriter.com.



ANIMAL LIFE

Snagged on the dream beast's claw on the morning train,
trapped in a stupor of fruitless inertia, I have time to appraise,
to recall battles I never fought.

The human animal I am will not survive much longer.
The hybrid species has no will to live out its life; its days
are numbered, surrendering has become the only answer.

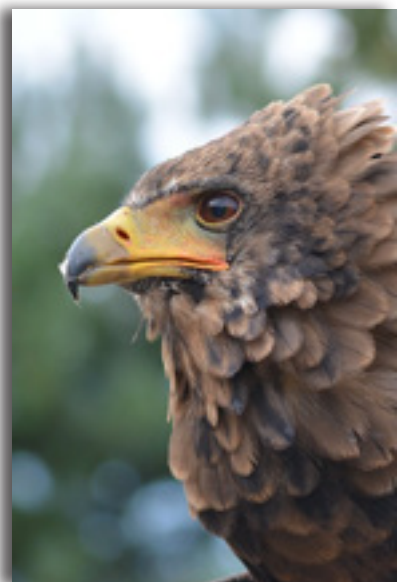
A dullard fox caught in a trap gnawed at its leg until free.
Bleeding for miles through the scrub, it lay in a hole
licking the wound till it healed. That fox lived a very long life.

A boy in a classroom of peers said nothing when words were needed,
already afraid of the truth as he saw it; put in a boot among others
when his face was concealed.

And a man – we shall call him that – went to work every day
of his tedious life to the last. He was buried days later
on the side of a hill: all mourners spoke well of him.

QUOTIDIAN

as the sun bleeds the night
so the birds break the silence at dawn
as the rain taps the glass
so the wind makes the trees speak a name
as the eye feeds the mind
so the heart moves the blood to a hand
as the night brings a death
so the morning eternal rebirth



SKYLARK

I walk the fields beyond the dunes alone
and let the tide go out with my thoughts,
but you are there in the riotous chatter

of larks overhead. I've started to distrust
abstraction and spend my time among the natural
world where subtle changes can be gauged.

I know that when we measure love we cannot be exact;
only a foolish lover would attempt approximation.
How high does the skylark fly on these mornings?

Who knows? Estimating height while its wings beat
and shrill notes peal above my head is useless;
only when it lands, silenced, drawn to its secret nest

on open ground can I pretend an answer. I clamber
over banks of marram grass, careless of peril, but cannot
find the thing I seek, tangible, intangible.

TOWN FOXES

How did we get here, knowing what we are
and what we need to live?

This place we call home
offers us nothing but still we remain,
scavenging and cowering by turns
among hostile hosts.

They call us vermin, rabid plague-ridden curs,
and would have us slaughtered,
where once they named us noble,
cunning, wily, even sly.
Now we are foreign to our natures, delirious,
fearful to the last,
unwanted immigrants.



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 [Fixing the Broken Nightingal](#) [The Kamikaze Mind](#)



THE WEDDING DRESS

Why am I so angry
at this wedding dress?

It floats through space
like an abandoned satellite,
gliding without sound or friction.
It no longer transmits its signal
to the willing believers
on the ground below
but somehow they hear it anyway.

Like the monolith in 2001, the wedding dress
stands at the limits, the frontiers, of our knowing.
It guards against what we cannot think,
which is whatever is beyond the technology of our biology.

Why am I so angry
at this wedding dress?

We hang on to things which trigger associations.
Tickets to that transfixing piece of theatre, t-shirts for that lost cause,
photos from the pre-digital world of the people we once loved.

These objects are like the wedding dress –
golden calves raised to the banality of our happiness,
sentinels standing over the graves of our inner landscapes,
shadows on the sunset of the horizons of those
never brave enough to leave the doll's house.

Why am I so angry
at this wedding dress?

Who invented this institution?

Why am I so angry
at this wedding dress?

We can't stop doing it, apparently. Getting married. Generation after generation.
We probably would do it even if we didn't know what it was, if we didn't have a
name for it, if we didn't know it was an option. We'd find our way towards it.
We'd want it. And we'd be bereft without it.

Even after we found out how complicated it is.

Why am I so angry
at this wedding dress?

I had been dreaming about you.
After a rocky start, I was happy to report that
we had been beginning to get along again.
I said again, though I couldn't have been sure
that we ever truly did, but perhaps you don't have
to get along, to love someone.

Why am I so angry
at this wedding dress?

continued overleaf....

THE WEDDING DRESS *contd...*

Oh sure,
I had drifted back into in love again.
How many times would ever be enough?
I was awash with love,
its waves perturbed me endlessly,
as the ocean continuously bothers
and entertains the shore.

I was drowning in love
I am drowning in fury

Why am I so angry
at this wedding dress?

And so now the dress remains.
Not the memories of the lives lived in it.
Not the excitement of the first fitting.
Not the moment when all eyes were turned
because they had to
and then because they wanted to.
Not those early hours
when it was peeled off in tenderness
to reveal, under its skin of beauty,
the skin of love.

Now the dress remains,
with only the air inside it.

The same air I breathe.

Why am I so angry
at this wedding dress?

for the first time in a long time perhaps i am not

Why am i so in love
with this wedding dress?

i started dreaming of you again tonight
and our immense companionability

and with it
the shuddering intimacy
of words

but even though
we talked
incessantly

i'm not sure that words were
the medium
of our friendship

which was based so much on
the glance
and the touch

the unspoken sharing of
our own private
parallel universe

which i feel
i am out there in

orbiting
some blazing star
with you

tonight



Dr Arthur Broomfield is a poet and Beckett scholar from County Laois, Ireland. His most recent publications are his poetry collection *Cold Coffee at Emo Court* (Revival Press 2016), and *The Empty Too : language and philosophy in the works of Samuel Beckett* (Cambridge Scholars' Publishing 2014). His poems have been widely published in Ireland, the UK and USA. His poetry turned towards surrealism in 2017 following a workshop with the English surrealist poet Hilda Sheehan. Dr Broomfield was awarded his Ph.D in English literature by Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick in 2008.



BLOOM 2016

After the prize-winning garden exhibition: *Bridging the Gap*

Flaxen- haired, more arch than bridge
it draws me towards
the pledge of a mythic poise.
The unkempt carex, its sweep and flow -
each strand defiant in its prickly,
disinterested, sun-blessed way -
confers with the grace
rooted in the grand ascent,
reflects the light of the early chords
of a Mozart nocturno,
the life of space and time itself,
its very bend.

It shelters mauve grey masses
of marshalled sedums,
darkened replicas of itself,
tucked within the folly of its proposition,
that have eyes only for the identifiable,
the occasional slice of sky.
They march to the strains of useful chores,
and may never know the deception,
their hours and days, their destiny.

The arch carries me from the escapable
to a notion of reality that mystifies the senses
I at first avert; its plastic rectangles, their rigid outline
its sole concession to civilised discourse,
at odds with their translucent, eerily blue
interior that resists presentation.
They waltz in conviction to an air ethereal
beyond the convocation of ceremony and element,
intoning an idea that taunts curve
at the pregnant sun, the fallow stars.

OCTOBER EVENING CLONREHER

The sky hung high above the silent moon
beyond Venus and Duffin's Cross.
It was time, before *The Archers*
and 'Radio Newsreel',
to run across the yard
toward the horse field gate,
past the sleeping hens, the hushed ducks,
the munching cow house and hay-filled haggard
teeming with countrified rats and mice,
themselves fulfilling the narrative that made them,
each believing in its particular
subterranean crevice,

to clutch the tingle from the expected,
the cameo appearance of the beet train,
performing its drive-on part
to the chug chug impromptu
of cymbal clashes regulating belches of steam
and hissed acknowledgements of love
to an audience of one,
staged to a backdrop of glittered stars
in Mrs Delaney's field.



© Arthur Broomfield

THE EMO POEM

This is my swan poem
conceived in Young's of Norwich
called The Canaries.
A lone bird on a black pond
calm as dew
knows that Leda will come
in the noon sun.

It's square and braided
black as *The Book of Common Prayer*
I am forbidden to open
this heathen prediction.

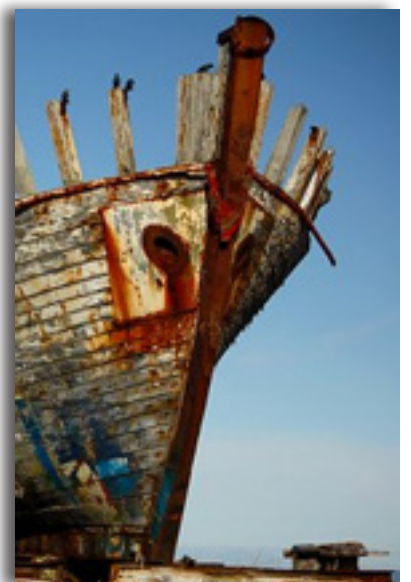
I have criss-crossed the cosmos
on this my first pilgrimage
and the night lights scare me,
the curious star
In the cold dawn, singing.

TALES FROM THE NON-VERSE

I am embalmed in shipwrecks and string quartets.
I glide along a gossamer girder
with my non-gender mistrust of the non-verse,
we dress in corduroy tights and high heels
and shave with acetylene blow lamps.

I am here, I watch an old woman,
he wears widow's weeds, is me,
she and he go cluck cluck cluck
as they scatter potato skins and radioactive oats
for the drones I send
that buzz around their ears.

I have implanted French fries in her head



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



HAIKU 2018

they bite the hand that feeds them
(bangkok, february 2018)

I don't trust those men
what to do about bankers?
abusing our faith.

a walk-in wardrobe in the vatican
(bangkok, february 2018)

jesus humbly dressed
cardinals cloaked in power
and sick luxury

why does the seal applaud with its flippers
(bangkok, february 2018)

please close all the zoos
and no circus animals
and as for seaworld...

reading jose saramago's 'blindness'
(bangkok, february 2018)

look if you can see
and observe if you can look
if unjust change it

I'm not religious but I love you
(bangkok, february 2018)

recite all the beads
of our personal rosary
trust'n time equals love

23:59PM, december 31, 1999
(bangkok, february 2018)

the world could've ended
Y2K didn't do its job
but if where'd trump be?

perspectives
(bangkok, february 2018)

a girl asks her dad:
did you know my friend irene's black?
he: yes! she: I didn't.



Maria Miraglia graduated in Foreign Languages and Literatures from the University of Bari. She got the HLC, a certification in language skills from Trinity College- U; a master's degree from the University Aldo Moro in Bari, one more from the UNI3 University in Rome. She collaborated with the Italian Department of Education. Educator, poet and translator. Teacher in high state secondary schools, Lecturer in courses for foreign language teachers. She has been an active member of Amnesty International for a long time, she herself Founder and President of World Foundation for Peace, Member of the Human Rights Observatory. A Founding Member and Literary Director of the Italian Cultural Association P. Neruda, Honorary Member of *Nationes Unidas de las Letras*, Editor-in-Chief of *Galaktika Poetike Autunis* and member of the editorial office of Our Poetry Archive.

Maria collaborates for poetry with numerous national and international newspapers and magazines. Her poems have been translated into many foreign languages and are featured in numerous anthologies. Maria's works include the poetry anthologies: *Petali tra le Nuvole*, *Whispers From the Blue*, *Dancing in the Wind* and *Seagulls in the Blue*. Author of *Le Più Grandi Opere del Poeta Laureato Yayati Madan Gandhi* Translated by Maria Miraglia, author and publisher of *Antologia Poetica*. She has been awarded national and international prizes and her poems translated into many languages.



POETRY

The inspiring muse
knocks on the doors
of my soul
and offers me emotions
to translate into words
A sort of anxiety
besets me
wherever I be
I look for a pen
or a pencil
a sheet
to stop the thoughts
I fear may fly away
like leaves torn off by the wind
or fade away
as falling stars
come who knows
where from
And the sheet tinges with words
in sequences of meanings
that emerge
not searched
not invoked
to resonate like music
whose notes
I didn't know before

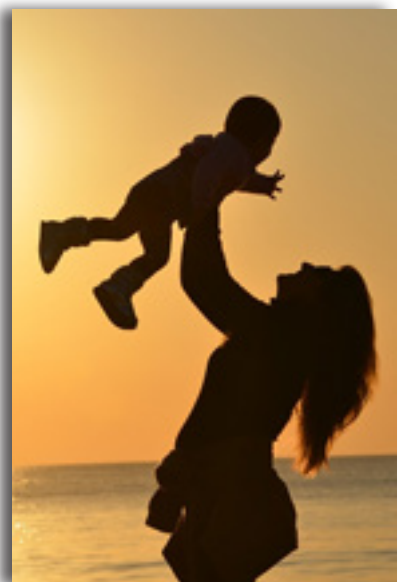
TO MY MOTHER

Far as the stars
shining at night
on the dark canvas
the time together
but I can still feel
the scent of the lilies
in that home
whose windows are closed
since that gloomy days

The sun comes back
and rises the moon
again and again
the colours of the seasons
seems to be the same
and so the murmurs
of the waters flowing
to their mouths
but the sense of joy
when with you
my guide my angel

And I can still hear
your reassuring voice
and feel the touch
of your hand on mine
when talking to me
of life and love
with words of wisdom

Where are you Mom
do you love me still



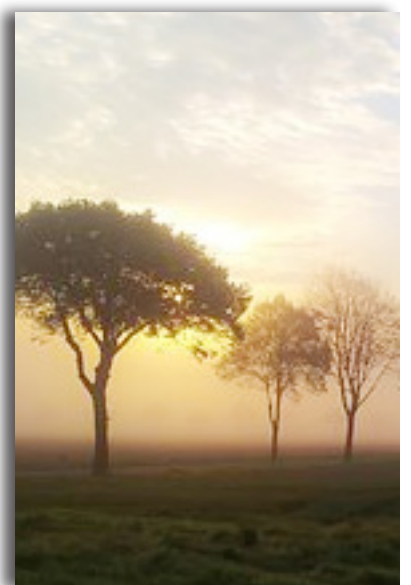
EXTRANEIOUS ROOM

You turn back
while I'm following you
from not afar
Sitting now
in that chair
of an extraneous room
white and grey its walls
like the clouds outside
in this cold autumnal morning
hanging a small painting
of the Virgin
there silent since ever
and people from the beds
observing curious
You look at me
and I get close to you
to see mute tears flowing
from your eyes
I'd hug you
hold you tight
cherish you
with the nicknames
of our moments together
among the friendly walls
which have seen you grow

Agitated the soul motions
like when of a sudden
the wind comes
to shake the leaves
among the shivering branches
and you can hear their whispers
as accelerated heartbeats
carried away by the wind breaths
I take your hand
and you smother your torment
pretending to feel good
and I to believe you

BALANCE

With trustful spirit I greet
each new dawn
but only at night
I can tell
of each day
what was
always unpredictable
what comes
alternating thunderstorms
with good weather
and I observe of the cosmos
the balance among the stars
unmutable since ever
and doubtful wonder
if will ever Man
aspire to so much



Sravani Singampalli is a published writer and poet from India. She writes all forms of poetry. She is presently pursuing Doctor of Pharmacy at JNTU KAKINADA University in Andhra Pradesh, India. She received a commendable mention in Wingword short story prize and some of her works have been shortlisted by Wordweavers.in. Her works have been published by The Poet Community, Poems and Poetry, Journal of Kindness website, Spillwords press, Delhi Poetry Slam, Galaktika Poetike 'ATUNIS' and forthcoming on Leaves of Ink, Scarlet Leaf Review, Setu bilingual journal, Criterion journal and many other international anthologies. Apart from writing she also enjoys singing and painting.

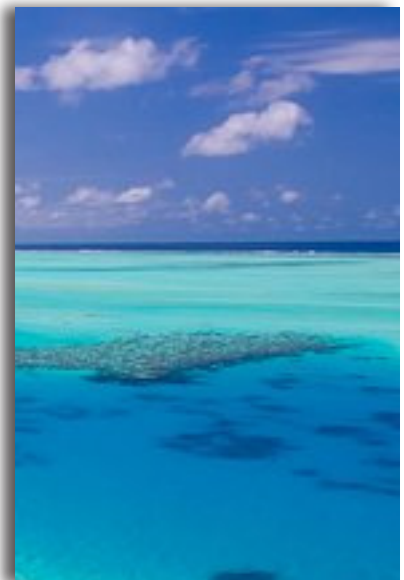


EPITOME OF HOPE

When we think of the colour green
 We all imagine the flora around us.
 Those fresh emerald leaves
 Catch our attention.
 We sketch the sceneries
 Of the tall and bushy trees
 In our minds with
 Rich green foliage and
 Imagine ourselves sitting
 And staring at them in awe.
 But do we imagine
 Those brown wilted leaves
 When we think of the colour brown?
 Many of us just
 Can't resist thinking about chocolates
 Isn't it?
 This shows that man is optimistic
 We never think of loss
 We never want to.

SOMETIMES HALF IS BEAUTIFUL

Beholding those two poor children
 Sharing a half loaf of bread
 I remember those happy moments
 Of sharing half of my snacks
 With my little sister and
 The special drink my mom
 Used to make which tasted
 Half sweet and half salty.
 I still remember the smile
 On my mother's face
 When I wore a traditional half-saree
 For the very first time
 Half blue and half pink in colour.
 Now I share these cherished moments
 With my better-half
 Living in a beautiful half-timbered house
 Looking at the half-faded light.
 To be more precise, the twilight scenery
 With the sun half into the water
 A swirl of baby pink and purple
 Transfigured the sky
 The belt of Venus
 Stole my heart
 Beholding this Elysian scenery
 And the last vestiges
 Of the setting sun
 I can say half is not always desperate
 Sometimes half is beautiful.



UNAWARE

An intense cyclone has hit a city
 Heavy downpours, floods and
 Loss of lives
 All come in bonus.
 Trees have fallen down and
 Birds have lost their home.
 Somewhere in another city
 My friend prays for the safety
 Of her relatives
 After watching the news
 On the television and
 I stare at her from my window
 Unaware of the danger
 Unaware of the loss
 Unaware of those lost birds.
 I drink a glass of warm milk
 Mixed with my favourite chocolate syrup
 And go to bed as usual.
 In the morning
 As I open my eyes here
 Many have closed their eyes there forever.
 I complain of being unlucky
 After my mother wakes me up so early
 Unaware of my fate
 Unaware of how fortunate I am.

INSENSITIVITY

My father gifted me a new dress
 On my twelfth birthday.
 I still remember the shades of
 Blue and baby pink on it.
 He bought me my favourite
 Chocolate cake and lots of other gifts.
 These were the last vestiges of
 My happy childhood.

I knew he was an alcoholic
 But I never thought
 He would drink up
 All the money and our bright future!
 I have seen my innocent mother
 Weeping her vermilion heart out
 And my insane alcoholic father
 Nothing less than a monster!
 Every new day was a curse for me
 Watching my mother's painful tears
 Clothes, papers and utensils
 Scattered everywhere
 I only had hatred for my father.

That one tiny drop of respect,
 Love, joy and happiness
 Finally vanished the day
 I saw my mother's body
 Lying lifeless at a corner
 With ripped clothes
 Scratches all over her body
 And her grazed knee.
 She was wrestled to the ground
 By my selfish and insensitive father.

He hit my mother
 With a glass bottle
 Snatched those few notes
 Which she hid for my picnic
 And left her to die
 Satisfying his hunger for alcohol.
 Yes! My father killed my mother
 He killed my only happiness
 He swallowed my angel!
 A squeezing pain seared
 Through my chest
 I almost died.
 I didn't say a single word
 But I was still happy
 With this onerous heartache
 Atleast my mother got freedom
 Freedom from a monster!



© Sravani Singampalli

Ruairí de Barra hails from the wilds of Tawneyshane, Co. Mayo and now resides in Cobh, Co. Cork. With two decades of service with an tSeirbhís Chabhlaigh & Óglaigh na hÉireann, he is a regular contributor to 'An Cosantóir', the Irish Defence Forces magazine. His article "Rebuilding Somalia" was nominated for the European Military Press Association 'Best Article Awards 2017'. He writes creatively under the nom de plume Karol Barry at www.karolbarry.com. His creative work has featured with 'Tinteán' and in 'A New Ulster'.



MOTHERS OF MANY NATIONS

Mothers are mothers, white, brown, yellow, black,
no divide amongst the races by colour, creed or social status,
each mother cradles two generations inside her during gestation,
endless cord to the dawn of time,
when your mother's mother was also mine.

The abuse and danger a mother will endure,
as she sets out unsure - to flee
fetching up on a Libyan shore,
with the precious child, her world.

Dead heat, hold is suffocating,
bravely trying not to show any fear,
as waves rock the barque setting out into the night.
the two penned within a wooden dungeon,
no porthole breeze or starlight pierces beneath the deck,
shelved top to tail, on slatted bars with walls that,
drip,
drip,
drip,
feet trailing in latrine bilge, where dignity is stripped,
modern holocaust inshipped.

Far off the coast, the jackals cut them loose,
three hundred and forty-five cattle,
would be more carefully protected,
but businessman will cash their cheques,
their loathsome profit has been extracted,
the flotsam can now be ejected.

In the early hours masked aliens arrive,
robed in white, barking orders in the night,
no understanding of their words,
her gut grips tight and stomach churns,
the terror of return to that wretched shore,
where hope no longer burns,
on scabies ridden warehouse floors.

Finally, from behind the locked door, release,
gulping deep salt-laden air,
looking now into the alien's eyes,
they're blue,
thrown two jackets, one red, one black,
the first is put on her daughters back,
there in the pitching, panicking melee.

The grey citadel looms large,
passed hand to hand, tagged and snapped,
not harshly treated, but swift and sure,
a hand invades where no hand should be,
but unlike before, this hand vanishes not wanting more,
as on cardboard mats she sees,
in neat lines of segregation an end to her degradation.

She hides the food behind her refuse sack,
fear in her eyes that I might retrieve it,
no need to horde for there was no lack,
when children are so mistreated,
their stunned faces, your heart cracks, you feel it,
internally you curse the greedy'
who inflict this terror upon the needy,
louder still you spit and roar at cowards who glibly say 'No More!'

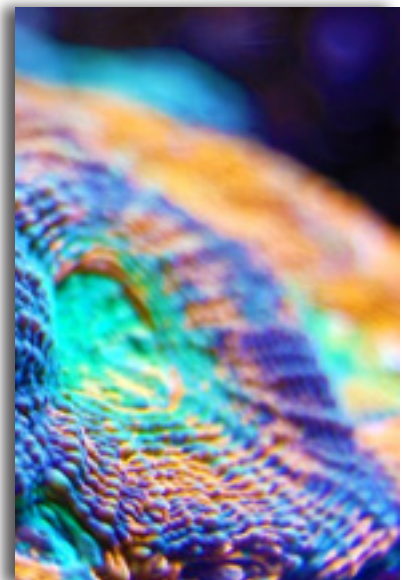
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MOTHERS OF MANY NATIONS *contd...*

Come and see humanity with me, at sea,
see woman, child and man reduced,
with nothing left, entirely bereft,
sit in Sirte slum or cling to a rubber raft of unknown futures,
see boys stand armed vigil through the night,
silent sentinels, bearing witness to the plight,
of tinfoil blanket forms wrapped tight,
like golden caterpillars packed together on a quivering leaf.
Mothers are mothers, white, brown, yellow, black.
no divide amongst the races by colour, creed or social status
Remember, before you make proud proclamations,
those who never reached their destination,
who rest down deep beneath the waves,
in unmarked ocean graves.
Mothers of so many nations.

STRIPPED

What if all you had was gone?
What if all you had was a black bag and the clothes on your back?
What if all you loved went limp and slipped from your fingers into the deep blue?
What if all you could ever do is dream and dream of tomorrows that never became today?
What if all at the last was the brine that forced its way into your mouth?
What if that last sounds to reach your ear were screams and useless prayers?
What if as the last light blinked out and the darkness rushed in, a hand grasped you?
What if you felt your ribs break and your throat tear as the brine pours out?
What if you looked up and see brown eyes under a green helmet?



© Ruairí de Barra

SHELTER

There's a sheltered spot on the Starboard quarter,
where I stand with no other,
gazing out across the sea,
I watch the melting colours of the sky,
like a fire burning away the barrier,
between this world and the next,
I can't often be still of late,
lingering in such beauty undeservedly,
which stirred youth before life gave way to adult pursuits.

Colours run into each other and the light falls fast,
shadows race in,
chasing the horizon,
fencing with the slowest rays to close the day.

Standing transfixed as the horizon blazes,
golden liquid pouring from the heavens,
utterly lost before the chill runs through me,
cocooned by the exhaust roar at my back,
the darkness wrapping her blanket around me,
intrusive pipes sound out,
proclaiming the passing of the world beneath my feet,
segmented, regimented, ordered day held at bay,
by deafening noise and the sunset.

Night, smothered now in the black,
the chill sinking deep to bring the shiver,
and as soon as I do,
that first shake,
starts to stir me, forced to come awake,
tearing me from standing isolation's dream,
pushing me back beneath,
time to shower and to sleep,

Momentary relief fleeting away,
fallen night no longer to caress and hold me,
reality comes to swagger o'er me,
all comes flooding back,
when the night's alarm will to all hands call.

SCRAMBLE,
SCRAMBLE,
SCRAMBLE.

The adrenaline shot direct into my heart,
sitting bolt upright in the red light,
feeling such guilt at the excitement,
knowing that out there in that black horizon,
where hours ago I was lost in rainbow colours,
there are drifting hulks with holds packed tight,
seeking shelter.



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.



GOD IS OURSELVES AFTER WAKING UP

You can't catch every worldly thing, like you can't retain the days.
You can't see the truth of all things on earth, like you can't see your own soul.
Happiness and tribulation may not exist as if there is no night and daylight
in the Kingdom of Heaven,
And the universe is merely the phantom of the light of our soul,
and God is ourselves after waking up.

UNIVERSE IS THE HEAVENLY GARDEN OF THE STARS

Emptiness-nothingness will save you and wipe away all of the worldly scars,
Until you are fresh as the beginning and as fragrant - beauty as another spring.
The world will never fade because the universe is the heavenly garden of the stars.
The other you is that giant who is arriving in a huge spaceship
from another city of the sun.



KING OF THE UNIVERSE

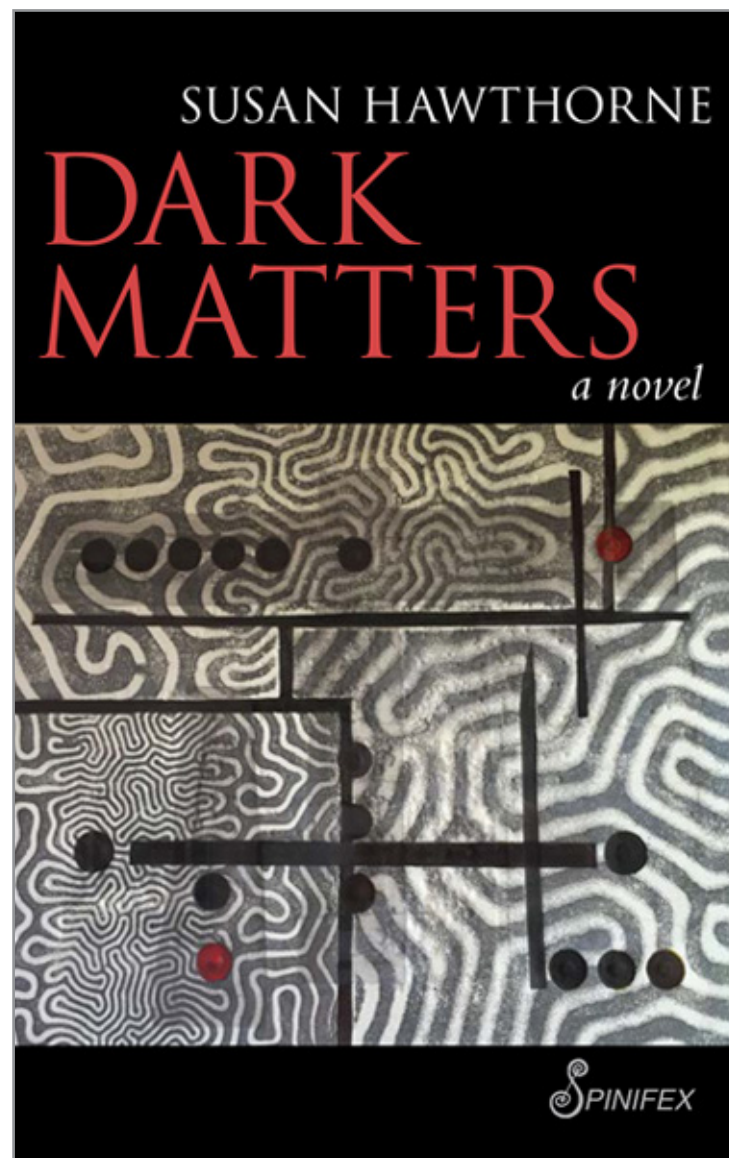
Seek thyself and seek your soul which is a lifetime mission.
The soul is both in your body and the Kingdom of Heaven,
Because the eyes always deceive you, thus you are lost in the illusion of the world.
You will be the king of the universe when you find yourself or else you have nothing.

CITY OF DREAMLAND

You walk in the city of dreamland but forget that you are the unique creator.
For your soul is the unique God that lives in the Kingdom of Heaven;
And you believe the riot of colours in a dream--
the pulsating of life and the blight of death;
And the muse of love makes you look like butterfly that hovered lightly in the garden
and forgot that your name is *Zhuangzi*.



Sue Woolfe is an acclaimed Australian novelist and bookworm. In her spare item, she sleuths through neuroscience to find out what it knows about creativity and hasn't told us. She passes her useful findings on to her writing students at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and also at international writing retreats, so would-be writers can enhance their creativity: www.writingretreats.net



www.spinifexpress.com.au
ISBN: 9781925581089

Review of Susan Hawthorne's *Dark Matters*, Spinifex Press, 2017.

Let me first admit it: I tried to put this novel down many times after my acquaintance, Susan Hawthorne, sent it to me. The story begins beguilingly; the narrator, during a household cleanup, is going through scraps of paper in boxes left to her by her Kate, her lesbian aunt originally from Crete, and she can't stop reading. An ordinary situation, but as a writer always hungry for prose that's potent, I was captivated by Hawthorne's, and began devouring it. After a few pages I even texted a writer friend that it had the clear, crystal ringing quality of Satie's *Gymnopedies*. And then came the crash:

"Day 1

I don't know where I am. They came hooded. Shouting, waving their guns. They were wearing boots and hooded jackets. "

I closed the book. Now I have to admit that, for reasons not relevant here, I'm a hider from accounts of torture; a switcher off of violence on the news, a ducker behind the seats in front of me at movies. Even glancing at the football, I wince when a player falls over. But hide from it as I might, that image of hooded thugs kept haunting me, while I rode on a bus to work, while talking to students, while making dinner. It haunted me not because I had to know what happened next – I'm usually a sucker for a strong narrative. It was that prose as luminous as Hawthorne's piles up inside you, sears through your defenses, my defenses, and burns them away. So at last, I had no choice. I took it up again, gingerly, but intrigued. I knew that the book moved between Chile during the 1970s and a fictional dystopia in Australia. I devoted a week, not only to Hawthorne's book, but afterwards I allowed myself to discover what I'd hidden from 40-odd years ago, the horrific Pinochet regime in Chile, a reign of terror, during which thousands were killed or reported missing, tens of thousands were imprisoned and tortured, and 200,000 Chileans went into exile.

In Hawthorne's novel, Kate is a farm girl originally from Crete and Mercedes a child exile from Chile who are entirely innocent of crimes, but their bedroom in Australia is suddenly invaded in the dark of the night. Mercedes is shot and Kate taken away.

The spine of the story is a serialised account of Kate's 72 days of repeated gang rapes and torture while she's imprisoned in an animal stall and kept hooded, but Kate spares us the worst of the details, at one point even writing:

"What happened next, I cannot recount. No. I don't want to speak it. I don't want to put it into words ... I cannot speak."

What she stresses is the torture of her kind.

"I cry. I cry for all. For all the women. For all the lesbians. I cry because no one cries for us. In Kampala and Chicago. We are shot and raped. We are thrown from the top floor of a high building in Tehran and Mecca. When they arrest us they put us in cells with violent men who think nothing of having their own 'fun'. In Melbourne and on the Gold Coast, we are tossed from cars, rolled into a ditch. In Santiago we are imprisoned and put on the *parrilla*. In Buenos Aires they insist we accompany them to dinner outside the prison. We are caught, used and banged away again at midnight. On the Western Cape they come for so many of us that even the media notices. But most of us remain hidden. There are few reports of the crimes against us. Fewer readers. "

What's most devastating is not even the "velvet voiced" commander who stalks in circles around her, speaking seductively then grinding her fingers into the ground with his boots, but the chilling evidence, once again, that we humans must be the lowest animals on earth – of course nature is scarlet in tooth and claw, even vermillion, but we as a particular species bring to our cruelty the brilliant brains we admire so much in ourselves, the reasoning that can explore the stars, the spiritual reflectiveness that can name and worship gods, the knowledge we've had passed down to us over thousands of decades. When we hurt others, we do it with the sophisticated brain machinery that can give rise to the science that figured out, amongst other realisations, the dark matter of the universe, and created the art, the literature and music of our world. We regard ourselves as the pinnacle of evolution. We harm each other with the genius of gods.

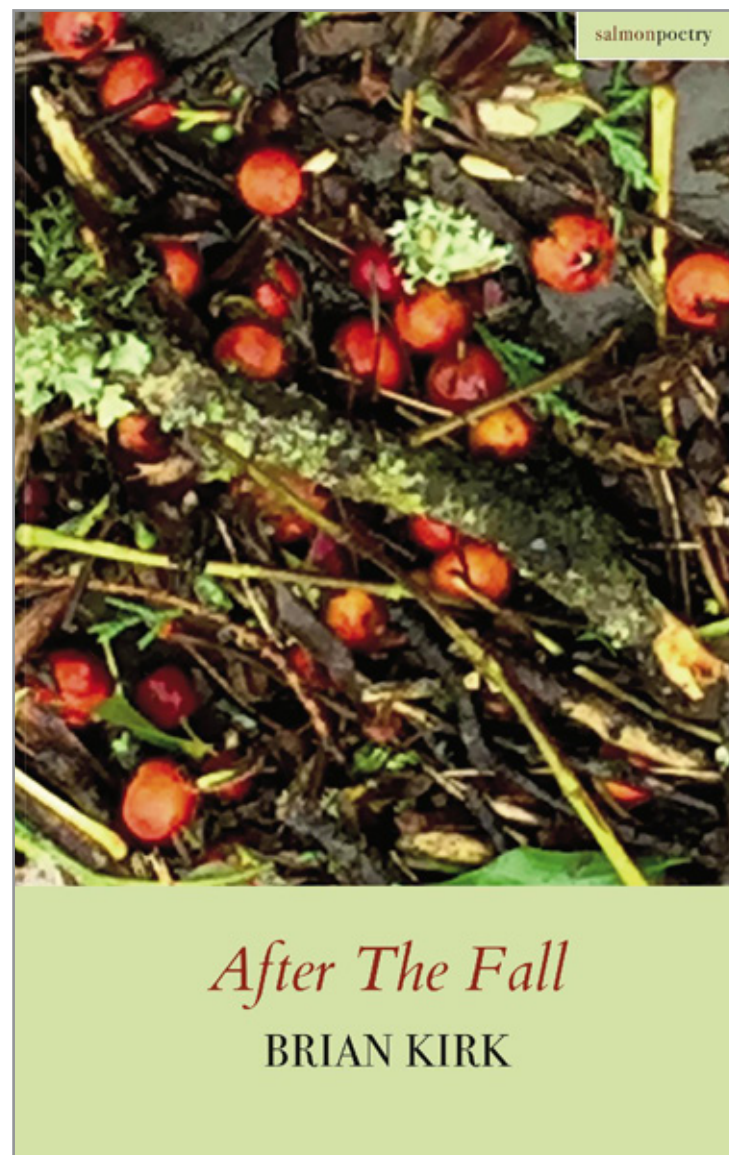
Hawthorne artfully resists making huge statements, but allows Mercedes to say at the end of the book:

"Torturers don't need reasons. They just want ways to terrify you. ... They picked us out as a group that could get 'dangerous'. Their idea of it. None of us had any weapons but our minds and our voices. ... Every generation they pick on new groups. Call them terrorist, asocials, dangerous. The people at the top hardly change. The people at the bottom are traumatised and re-traumatised."

It is, despite this dark matter – which Hawthorne considered over 15 years of reading countless testimonies and related works – a strangely positive book. There are three narrators: Kate who's an ex-farm-girl and ex-circus performer; Mercedes, her lover who appears at the start and the end of the book; and Kate's niece, the young Desi. Kate's determination to survive is inspiring, partly because she sees her suffering in the context of history and that gives her courage, and partly because of her wild hope that Mercedes didn't die despite that shot, the hope that one day she'll be released and they'll be re-united. It's also positive because of the structure Hawthorne uses of interleaving past and present, with resonances of the cows of Crete who walked across the fields in zig zags, long parallel lines going back and forth. The narrator, Desi, the discoverer and compiler of the papers, is as inspired by a joyful curiosity as her aunts once were during their courtship in Melbourne. So Hawthorne interleaves the dark matters with the young Desi's own journey of discovery as she travels to Latin America, uncomprehending how such cruelty could happen, pinning down what actually happened, and writing it up for an academic study that may interest future scholars.

Hawthorne, a major poet and brilliant essayist, created the independent Spinifex Press and published many books of other writers, as well as fourteen acclaimed books of her own. Reading this new work by a writer who has devoted her considerable mind and her life to the creation of literature and its championing, turned out to be, despite its dark matter, an exploration of not only the evil but the courage of the human heart.

Eamonn Lynskey's poetry first appeared in the New Irish Writing pages of the *Irish Press* in the 1980s, edited by David Marcus, and since then widely in magazines and journals such *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Cyphers*, *The SHOp*, *Crannóg*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *The Stinging Fly*, *Boyne Berries*, *Orbis*, *Riposte Broadsheet* and the *Irish Times*. He was a finalist in the Strokestown International Poetry Competition and in the Hennessy Awards and has published two collections, *Dispatches & Recollections* (1998) and *And Suddenly the Sun Again* (2010). He has been involved in the organization of poetry events in Dublin for many years and has presented poetry programmes on local radio. He obtained an M. Phil in Creative Writing from Trinity College Dublin in 2012 and participated in the 2013 Stanza Poetry Festival in St. Andrews in Scotland. Before retirement he worked as a teacher and Adult Education organizer.



www.salmonpoetry.com
ISBN: 978-1-910669-99-0

Review of Brian Kirk's *After the Fall*, Salmon Poetry, 2018.

Brian Kirk writes a poetry of the crafted line and the weighted word and these qualities are very evident in the title poem of the collection *After the Fall*, a passionate poem elegantly contained within a careful construct of short lines:

The residue of that first kiss
upon our lips
like a bruise ...

This choosing of the right form in which to enclose the thought continues throughout the book, laying before the reader the realities of living daily life where the ordinary is often displaced unexpectedly by the sudden appearance of the unusual. *Two Foxes* is such a poem, where the excitement of the unusual is captured, together with the realization of a wilder, hidden strata running beneath the monotony of daily events:

... and I knew I would never forget
the night we saw foxes on Barnsbury Road,
and remembered our love in the body,
the skin and the blood
on a wet London street.

It is a truism that all writers (especially, perhaps, poets?) are given to seeing around the corners of reality. The Barnsbury foxes, an indication of a hidden world, bring a poem like Larkin's *The Whitsun Weddings* to mind, with its probing beneath the surface of an event the poet happens into by accident. There are many poems in this collection in which we are given not only the surface of things but the underlying hidden pulses as well.

Poems like *New Year* and *Leave Taking* are what they say they are but are so much more. In the latter poem, for instance, we read about an elderly man visiting his neighbours' houses for what he knows will be his last time. The poignancy that rises up through the matter-of-fact descriptions gives the poem its impact:

... he was feted by farmers and their wives
like one who'd been away at war for years,
wondering what his business could be now
beyond the final saying of goodbyes ...

This is a poem of great humanity and understanding.

Careful lines and carefully chosen words are nowhere more apparent than in poems like *Rotten Apples*, *Simple Vows* and *A Map*. There is always something restful and magical for the eye in poems that make good use of space and a minimum of words. It is always a mystery how a little poem like *Rotten Apples*, so reminiscent of William Carlos Williams, can have such a big effect and is proof that, in poetry as elsewhere, very often 'less is more'. *Simple Vows* is also well served by this economy of treatment:

Beyond the Hermitage I dreamed you close,
Among new leaves your smile was apple bright.

The long line is also used to very good effect. It is always difficult to pack lots of information into a poetic line without lapsing into prose and many pieces in the collection achieve this balance. 'Balancing Act' is a poem featuring the Irish urban/rural divide and is an example of the several poems that explore topics to the fore in our newspapers and in, as the phrase goes, the 'political discourse', of today's Ireland:

My children are happy but urban and thin,
they speak with inquisitive irony
when describing the world as it is, real or virtual;
their futures mapped out before them ...

There are many other fine poems which could be discussed but *Orienteering* must be mentioned. This is a wise poem that speaks to those of us who have lived long enough to have 'a past' (in the sense of a lengthy series of regrets) and is a warning to those who have not yet accumulated too many years that there is a shape to the things that are to come, a shape which may not be very attractive:

... If you sketched
a map from memory
you'd maybe see
the broad outline
of staggering events,
or feel the smart
of tiny hurts
absurdly magnified
as you move away ...

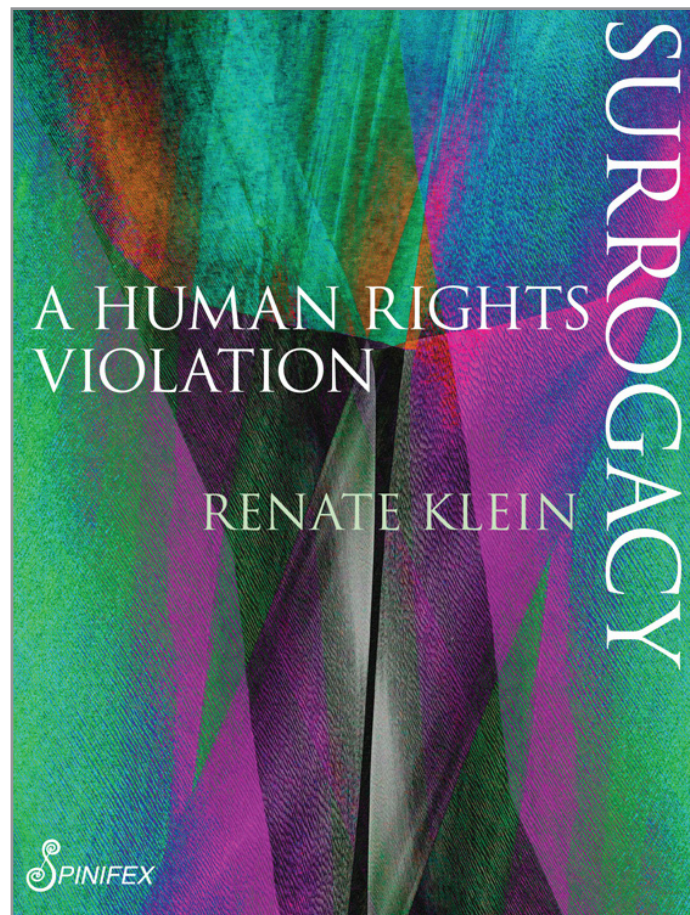
Again, craft is evident in the decision to eschew stanzas and deliver the poem in one continuous flow, rather like a thought that comes, makes its presence felt and then goes away. Again, the choice of form is just right and, as becomes apparent as one reads through the book, this poet is comfortable with many different forms: sonnet, single couplet, formal stanza, the cascading line.

For anyone who likes a poetry of the well-chosen word and the economic line, Brian Kirk's collection 'After the Fall' will fit the bill. Nor does he come up short on the unexpected and the lyrical ('The bright talk of past days / unspools to slurs'). This short review cannot do justice to this fine collection. It is a book that will lure a reader back again to have another look. And this surely is the ultimate accolade?

Robert Jensen is a professor in the School of Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin and the author of *The End of Patriarchy: Radical Feminism for Men*. He can be reached at rjensen@austin.utexas.edu or online at www.robertwjensen.org.



Review of Renate Klein's *Surrogacy: A Human Rights Violation*, Spinifex Press, 2017.



www.spinifexpress.com.au
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Reading Renate Klein's elegantly argued *Surrogacy: A Human Rights Violation*, it's difficult not to keep repeating to oneself, "How did we get here?", all the while trying to keep at bay a sense of despair.

"Here" is an allegedly civilized world in which treating a woman's body as a commodity is regarded in polite liberal circles as not just acceptable but a sign of being progressive. Klein's analysis of surrogacy focuses on the renting of women's wombs, what she and others appropriately describe as "reproductive prostitution." The term reminds us that many liberals also endorse "regular" prostitution, men's use of objectified female bodies for sexual pleasure.

How did we get to the point where this reduction of women to bodies is accepted and even celebrated—not only among many men but also many women, even among some feminists?

Klein's *Surrogacy*, the third book in the new Spinifex Shorts series, reminds us that these social practices are the core of patriarchy: Men's claims of ownership and/or control over women's reproductive power and sexuality. Times have changed in sex/gender politics—largely for the better, because of feminism—but patriarchy has

proved remarkably adaptable and resilient. It's difficult to imagine anyone reading Klein's book and ignoring a radical feminist critique of these patriarchal practices, yet much of the allegedly civilized world does exactly that—embracing a capitalist liberal/libertarian dogma that focuses on decontextualized choices. From the liberal perspective, when poor and vulnerable women "choose" to rent their bodies in this dangerous and dehumanizing practice, no further analysis is necessary.

Klein will brook none of these evasions. Near the end of the book, she puts it bluntly:

"new reproductive technologies are used to literally 'cut up' real live women into our eggs and wombs, treat us with invasive dangerous hormonal drug cocktails, and, in surrogacy, psychologically manipulate us to believe the myth that gestating a baby without a genetic connection will not cause us to feel any attachment, and hence these 'surrogate' babies are not our 'real' children. This man-made *compartmentalising* ideology creates *Test-Tube Women*. The idea is that 'playing God' (as 1980s critics of reprotachs were wont to say) continues the 6,000 years of patriarchal domination of women in which two points were, and are, central: One, men cannot gestate life and give birth to children (necessary to continue the species *Homo sapiens*). Two, men as a social group *loathe* women and our bodies for this power. Conversely, when women 'fail' to reproduce, the disdain expressed is stark." (p. 161)

Klein's rejection of this compartmentalizing—a function not only of patriarchy but white supremacy and First-World imperialism, capitalism, and the worship of high technology—feels like a simple plea for our collective humanity, for seeing each other as fully human and not as things. That Klein's book is so desperately needed signals how far we are from such basic values.

Klein's definition of surrogacy reflects those basic values: "Pared down to cold hard facts, surrogacy is the commissioning/buying/renting of a woman into whose womb an embryo is inserted and who thus becomes a 'breeder' for a third party." (p. 5)

© Robert Jensen

Key observations and insights that Klein's book provides include:

- While many people have strong emotional desires to have children, there is no "right" to have a child genetically related to you. The moral claim for surrogacy is an illusion.
- The surrogacy medical machine comes with risks for the women who sell eggs and those who carry the fetus, as well for the children born through this method, and there has been little research/testing on the long-term health effects. The health claims of surrogacy are distortions.
- Surrogacy routinely involves the exploitation of poorer women, increasingly in the Third World. The political practice of surrogacy is exploitation.

Klein, a co-founder of the [Australian feminist press Spinifex](#) that published the book, has decades of experience in teaching and research, with expertise in health/biology and social theory, as well as feminist activism. The breadth and depth of her knowledge and experience is evidenced throughout the book, as she moves easily between technical scientific details, moral philosophy, legislative proposals, and organizing strategy. [Disclaimer: I have published a book with Spinifex, which Klein edited and in that process I acquired first-hand knowledge of her considerable intellectual abilities.]

But most for me, the distinctive feature of the book is Klein's compassion for people on all sides of the issue. When arguing for political positions we hold passionately, it's all too easy to valorize our side and demonize opponents. But even when Klein writes with an honest understanding of why some women may be on the other side, she doesn't hesitate to criticize sharply the profiteers who exploit without concern. But I finished the book feeling grateful for the way Klein models a humane approach to debating the subject.

But make no mistake, Klein doesn't mince words in her analysis, asserting that surrogates "are reduced to incubators, to ovens, to suitcases. And the product child is a tradable commodity who of course has never consented to being a 'take-away baby': removed from their birth mother and given to strangers aka 'intended parents.'" Returning to the parallel between surrogacy and prostitution, she drives home the common features of patriarchal practices:

"well-regulated sex (or fertility) industries, according to their promoters, create happy hookers (happy surrogates) and happy sex buyers (happy baby buyers). Pimps and brothel

owners equal IVF clinics, surrogacy lawyers/brokers, pro-surrogacy advocacy groups, as well as surrogacy/egg 'donor' agencies. The difference is that apart from deeply harming women in both industries, the end 'product' in prostitution is a 'faked girlfriend experience', whereas in surrogacy it is the creation of new human beings: children." (p. 3)

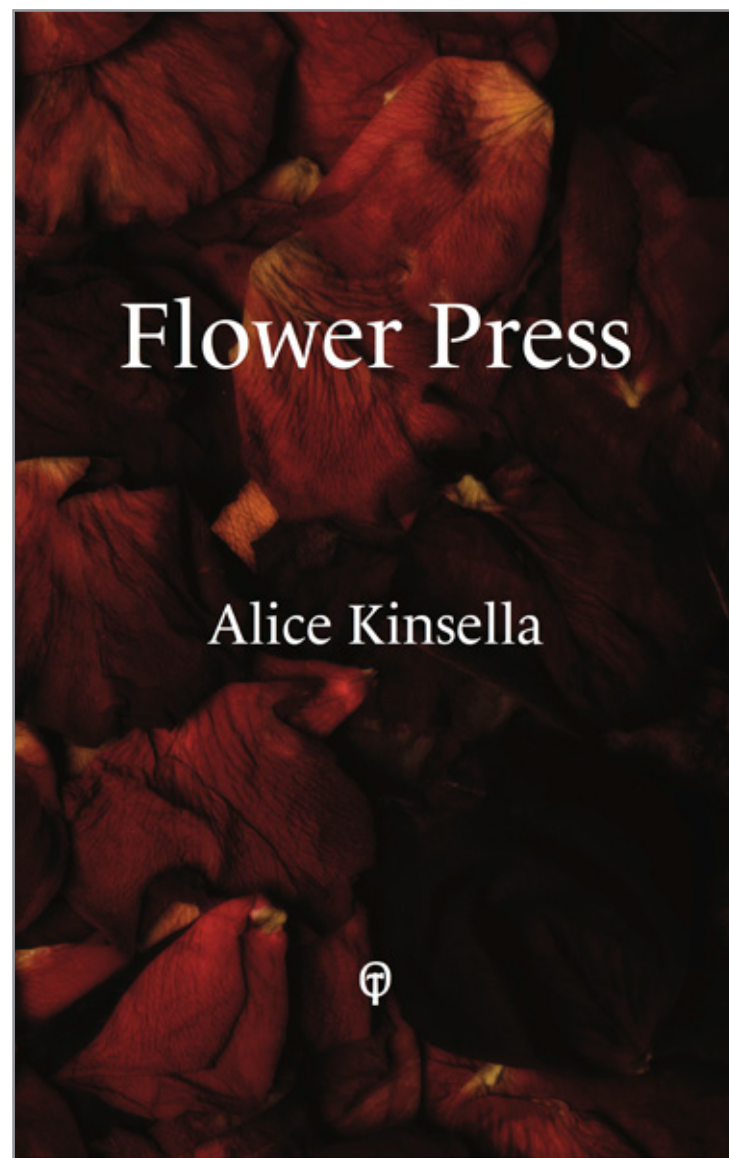
Klein's willingness to take on these questions goes a long way to alleviating some of the sense of despair that comes with facing honestly the routine dehumanizing practices of the modern world. But the question lingering just below the surface of almost every page of the book—as well as just below the surface of many of the "normal" activities in our lives in the affluent sectors of the world — remains troubling: How far can people drift from being human animals before we stop being human beings?

By that, I mean that we are organic creatures, products of evolution like all others, with material bodies that we can't transcend, no matter how much high-energy technology allows us to manipulate the rest of that material world and insulate ourselves from it. But the more we treat high-tech interventions such as surrogacy as routine and uncontroversial, the compartmentalization continues, making routine the exploitation of vulnerable people and widening the gap between people and the larger living world. Can we be truly human beings, in the moral sense, if we do not accept the limits that are imposed on all creatures by that larger world? Do we lose our own humanity when we lose are creaturely bearings to such a degree that we imagine that we can create life on our own through high-tech manipulation? This concern is not rooted in science-fiction fears of humans becoming robots or robots taking over the world, but rather is a real concern for today. Yes, humans have long used technology, whether Stone Age or Space Age, but the differences in technology matter. Yes, humans have long tried to control natural processes and reshape ecosystems to our advantage, but that doesn't mean we cannot ask critical questions about the assumptions behind, and implications of, each of the interventions we may want to attempt.

The fact that it is difficult to draw lines does not mean we abandon the obligation to draw them. For me, some of those lines have long been easy to draw: No decent society is possible if men rent women for sex. Klein's powerful argument makes it just as clear that no decent society is possible if women are reduced to a womb that carries a fetus for the privileged. Social justice and ecological sustainability come together in one clear mandate: [stop surrogacy now](#).



Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created Live Encounters Magazine, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication Live Encounters Poetry, which was relaunched as Live Encounters Poetry & Writing in March 2017. He has edited, designed and produced all of Live Encounters' 122 publications till date (March 2018). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely (without charge) to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya* – *Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*. www.amazon.com



www.onslaughtpress.com

Review of Alice Kinsella's *Flower Press*, The Onslaught Press, 2018.

I've started to write down
the things I want to tell you.
Random thoughts from bus journeys,
books I think you'd like.
I collect the words and fold them
between pages,
press them like petals,
leave them to be preserved.
Someday, I'll open up this book
and be glad to find
these long-lost printed
skeletons of you.

- Alice Kinsella, *Flower Press*

The title poem sums up this debut collection by Kinsella, where her words are honestly placed together to form images that, on second or third reading, begin to settle in the mind like pollen on a butterfly's wings. They gently nudge the reader to respond by recollecting one's own past, growing up in colliding worlds of tenses - past, present and ethereal.

Is Alice rummaging in her past to conjure up what should have been and not what had been? Is this collection a tribute to those years freckled by timeless days and smell of the earth as the *Messiah Frog* is buried? Or, is this a beautiful paradoxical sanctuary created by the poet to retreat to whenever reality strikes to remind her of the alienation of adulthood. Is this why this book begins with this quote - *They know that at some point you stop being children, and at that point you become strangers* - Louise Gluck - ?

In *Perwinkle (I)* Alice holds our hand and guides us ...

Curled sunshine shell like the buttercup
reflection on your chin,
shimmering summer sea surface,
as we held our fingers too close
to each other's faces for the first time.

And then, in *Starlight*, she throws us back into the dark sea of pathos...

I'd sit up sometimes even then,
whispering your name into the stars,
the lowing of mothers hanging heavy
late into the night.

They did not know that
what they were calling
was already dead.

The innocence of a child is alive and kicking in this debut collection, in the simple words that the poet uses to construct her montage that forces the reader to reflect, introspect and perhaps, to some extent, attempt to reach back into the past to view one's own flickering images of those growing up years.

Truly moving are these lines from *Regret...*

I'm sorry. I regret it. Those answers have slipped away now, dissolved like ash on the wind as I queue to see you for the last time. And there is your face as white as your robes. I can see every one of your years in the mouth that can no longer say those words. So I breathe—

One can never really understand or decipher a poem without relating it to one's own life experiences. But often words used by poets act as barricades to comprehension. Perhaps this is why this collection is so unique for the plainness of words removes all hurdles to comprehension and leaves the readers free to filigree their understanding of the poems. This empowers the reader and in a wonderful way entices them further into the world of Alice Kinsella.

The wisdom of a child is self-evident in *Flower Press*.

Let us embrace it.

Jim Meirose's short work has appeared in numerous venues. His published books include *Understanding Franklin Thompson* (JEF pubs (2018)), *Sunday Dinner With Father Dwyer* (Scarlet Leaf Press (2018)), and *Le Overgivers au Club de la Résurrection* (Adelaide Books (2018)).

www.jimmeirose.com



Rod and Maisey; Maisey and Rod

Jesus Christ Maisey! This damned cruise line. Just one TV channel?

It was cheap, Rod. Cheap is what you said, go cheap—

But not on a trip as long as to Shanghai! Just one TV channel, and just one show?

Didn't you know the big quarterly meeting was in Shanghai?

No, yes, but—I mean for Christ's sake Maisey I but—

So, there's more than just TV you know—here—

Plunging under the covers nude they went, thrashing and giggling, leaving nothing else for anyone who might be looking on in the room, but watch episode nine hundred one, of Sunday Dinner with Father Dwyer. Father Dwyer, who was just then saying, no one hearing, except, well—maybe some other ship someplace at sea had somebody watching, or maybe several people watching, or maybe actually dozens of hundreds of people watching, as Father Dwyer often reminded the red eye floating in the dark before him in the studio. But here in this room on this trip to China, under the covers Rod and Maisey were very, very, busy, too busy to hear as Dwyer went on to say over them, You know, some of you may be getting a special treat, to be seeing this show. That's because this show is automatically beamed to all the myriads of cargo ships flying under every flag and traveling endlessly from continent to continent. Cargo ships, cargo ships mostly, container ships most frequently, even big oilers tankers and LNG; but. here and there a forward-looking passenger vacation cruise line, had decided to make my show available to their landlubber passengers as well—

Muffled up from the dark under the blankets something sexless said, Yes! Yes! See, I told you this was best—and Father Dwyer widely nodded agreement as he went on to say, These lines are forward-looking because they will go to any lengths to give their passengers the complete out-at-sea-with-no-land-in-sight experience. And my show is part of that. Who the hell is Father Dwyer, they

might ask you in a cab in NYC, or, Who the hell is Father Dwyer, they might ask you on a bus, or on a plane, or even the cheapest most out of date big tubby out for your money-pockets vacation agent may have got you booked on, for mere Peanuts, anybody who would say that had got a peanut’s worth of what the real at-sea experience is from the hucksters who ticketed them with cheap for-shit tickets. Who the hell is the guy? What’s so great about the guy? He’s a guy, just a guy. Is all. Yes, is all. But if you’re in some pagan-based there’s no Jesus, Mary, or Joseph religion, you might say, Who the Hell is Jesus? He’s Jesus, just that Jesus. Is all. This is similar, really quite similar, because in many ways, Jesus and I are very alike; except, of course I do not claim God’s nature. This cannot be done. This must not be done. I certainly do not. But, think a bit. Read that last sentence again. There you there right there you two under the covers there, you, you two, who know the hell who you are—you two there!

The writhing pumping blanket stilled and in unison Rod and Maisey said, Huh? This guy’s something! What does he mean read that last sentence again? Huh? What? Huh? Why?

Say it again!

Why?

Say it again!

Why?

Say it and say it and say it again!

No!

Yes?

Not yes! No!

The blanket boiled around up and down again and Father Dwyer stated quite frankly, You know, if it were not for the word not I would be a blasphemer. How powerful is one, tiny, three-letter word; not. But, maybe, we better change the subject. Because that part should have been over many lines ago. If I’m a three-letter word’s worth away from plunging into the deepest fiery flames of the waiting

longing licking hunger which is Hell, one tiny step from inadvertently putting in this book, that I am equal to Jesus, which if it’s not blaspheming I don’t know what is, I better step back! Yeah—back to the subject at hand. The fucking cooking. This is after all, a fucking cooking show. Sunday Dinner with Father Dwyer. Not the fucking and the cooking with Father Dwyer, but the fucking cooking with Father Dwyer. You guys hear me?

The writhing blankets writhed on.

I guess not. Well, as in cooking. See what I mean about the three-letter words? They’re dangerous. They trip you up. They can bring you down. All but one; one little bitty word for something so known that it’s almost unknown. Yes, that’s it—you in the back, who just blurted it out! Egg is the word. Egg! Egg! Okay, egg—and as sure as security ushers the wiseguy in the cheap seats out who guessed the word, we will go on and on and on and—

On! Yes! shouted the hot sweaty space under the active blanket, beneath the laser-like drone of Father Dwyer, going on way above, saying, Yes! This! The deceptively simple, yet holding universe upon universe upon universe within, egg. That egg. This one, yes! This one I hold aloft now—I—tell you what I will not do a trick, I will drop it and before it hits the floor, I will open the cabinet and slip out the skillet and get it under and the egg will splat inside; and we will make scrambled. Yes, scrambled. Yes—hereletgotheegghereitisfallingopenthecabinetstoopfortheskilletpullitoutgetit-upandunderandsmileand—splat!

There it is, splattered! As we say in the business; car-crash splattered!

Oh!

God!

Oh, lord, God, yes, I hear you, I’m here, I heard. What a thrill this all is! But, with this egg, well, that was a true magic trick. Nature is one thing. Magic’s another. Behold, your humble defrocked priest turned magician. See me flick out the shell from the pan. And, since the sea you men see out your porthole when not so busy in bed, looks exactly the same as the sea looked back before mankind harnessed fire, we might have a few million years to wait before we can light this burner I’m gripping here, as a matter of fact, this burner and stove and all might be—might be the mystical sacred object that holds all of matter across the universe together. Just like that word not, which is the grand key
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to the cosmos, this knob on this stove being turned to off right now, if turned and no flame came would mean we are in the time before mankind had harnessed gas; imagine that? So long ago!

What the hell is that? forced up through the blanket weave.

You know damned well what that is!

Jesus God—

—and if it does not light, and if the maintenance crew of blueclad short men they will send cannot get it to light, it might be that it is really just illusory and gas has not yet been invented and that the whole ship, the whole long wide so-real vessel, may be a magically created boat of a kind that we are not really on vacation in, or on the way to some business meeting in China for, after which we will return to our original homes, but of a kind that will sail us to a barren land of stunted colorless stark naked super-ancient cannibals, who are waiting on their ragged lava rocky shore, with long spears in hand, for the liner you think is a liner but it's not, which will run onto the shore, and then be blinked out of existence by the spell cast by the bony-nosed witch doctor flailing long feathered chanty bellringing jangling things, and when the ship becomes what it really is, which is nothing all, all passengers will be in the water flailing and flailing desperate to stay alive breathe and make land, but a hail of spears will quickly make short of them, and there'll be good eatin' in hut-town tonight!

No way that can be, Rod. I mean—

Oh it is, Maisey. Here it is! You can take it!

Mah! Maaaahhhh—ooooo!

—yeah, some really good eatin' and a' head rollin' and allsuch games played before you thought was time but really wasn't, had an instant to begin. So, I ask—you there, out there where you are, or you, or you—or maybe you; do you want to take a try at lighting this burner that always worked before and you are sure will always work forever, now having heard this tale of mine, want to turn it? Want to? No? You? No? You not either? You mean you don't want to dwell in hell with the big Nazi and all the little and littler Nazis nested inside him like a Russian wooden set of nested dolls, who were only following the orders of make-believe mystic magicians that just had mail-order PhD's anyway?

They chose to turn some mystic knob; or maybe they chose not to. But, gee, my God, lord God, the egg! The magic egg I so deftly dropped, has burnt to a crisp black knob in the skillet while I was doin' all the palaver and what-how, not! I guess I must of made the choice for you. I turned the damned knob, oh, myself, and mystic pale pygmies are not waiting at your destinations to spear butcher eat laugh and play around with your entrails after all! Oh, silly me. Silly, silly, me—but anyway, that egg was just the first of twelve. What of this next one? How wise might this one be, eh, eh—and after that, the eleventh. And the twelfth. And so forth. So, let's shut the gas and prepare for the next. But look out the porthole, this time, when I turn on the gas Dare you look out? Dare you? I dare you—dare to look and find out if you will see sea, or shore, or what! So, bye, it for now!

The blanket threw back. Naked and spent they lay, smothered in stationbreak.

What the hell did he say? What the hell?

Oh, who the fuck knows, honey—every episode's exactly the same anyway.

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