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Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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KATIE DONOVAN
Ishi

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



Photograph Mark Ulyseas

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om
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Sartre's Crabs

ARTHUR BROOMFIELD

When a visitor knocks

NOELLE LYNKEY

Homeless

HE ZHAOLUN

To Retain the Wind

JIM MEIROSE

The Great Red Spot

BOOK REVIEW OF JACK GRADY'S RESURRECTION

Peter O'Neill

Katie Donovan was born in 1962 and spent her youth on a farm near Camolin in Co. Wexford. She studied at Trinity College Dublin and at the University of California at Berkeley. She moved back to Dublin where she worked for “The Irish Times” for 13 years as a journalist in the Features Dept. She qualified as an Amatsu practitioner (a form of Japanese osteopathy) in 2002 and continues to practice part-time. She has published five books of poetry, all with Bloodaxe Books, UK. Her most recent, “Off-Duty” appeared in September 2016. It was shortlisted for the Irish Times/Poetry Now Prize, 2017. She is the 2017 recipient of the O’Shaughnessy Award for Irish Poetry. Her first collection, “Watermelon Man” appeared in 1993. Her second, “Entering the Mare”, was published in 1997; and her third, “Day of the Dead”, in 2002.

“Rootling: New and Selected Poems” appeared in 2010. She is co-editor, with Brendan Kennelly and A. Norman Jeffares, of the anthology, “Ireland’s Women: Writings Past and Present” (Gill and Macmillan, Ireland; Kyle Cathie, UK, 1994; Norton & Norton, US, 1996). She is the author of “Irish Women Writers: Marginalised by Whom?” (Raven Arts Press, 1988, 1991). With Brendan Kennelly she is the co-editor of “Dublines” (Bloodaxe, 1996), an anthology of writings about Dublin.



ISHI

(“ishi” means “man”: in Yahi tradition names could only be exchanged if a mutual friend made the introductions)

The last of the Yahi
ended his days
observed, confined,
recorded;
sharing the ways
of his tribe
before extinction:

flintknapping arrow tips
from obsidian,
making medicine,
basket weaving;
gifting the haunting frailty
of his ululation.

A living exhibit
in a museum,
stumbling with
unfamiliar words,
he passed on what he knew
with dignity,
before dying
of “the white man’s disease”:
TB.

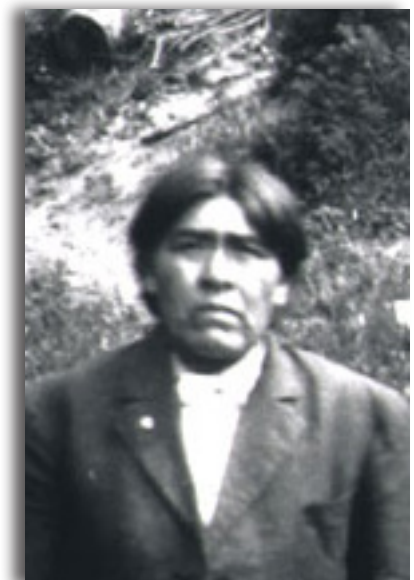
Descended from thousands,
his small family
hid in the Cascades,
on the rocky margins
of Deer Creek canyon,
avoiding Gold Rush enemies.

He stayed
in Grizzly Bear cave
nursing the woman
who had named him.
When she died,
he burned his hair
and was silent for a year.

Motherless and starving,
he risked the mercy
of the usurpers,
reckoning
he had nothing left
to lose.

They gave him
a shirt and tie,
this last of the “wild Indians”.
When he died,
they stole his brain.

He is remembered
as “Ishi”,
the nameless man,
witness
to the end of names.



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THE DIGGERS

He bought the red van
to carry cellos in,
and rigged the trampoline
for our children's fun.
Five years since his death,
and the cellos are silent.
The van gives trouble,
so I trade it in.

Now, I must be ready
for another clearing:
the diggers are coming,
to disinter our septic tank.
A brand new one,
with a filter,
and all the mod cons,
will be sunk in the garden,
between clumps of chalky soil
and hunks of granite.

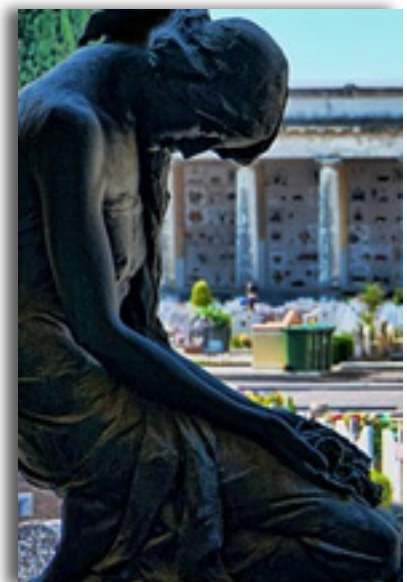
I roll away the trampoline -
like a ferris wheel upended -
and hook it on the massive arm
of the elephantine sycamore.
A disc of ivy, exposed,
trembles as a mottled frog
loses its cover, and shuffles on.

The trees are loaded with buds,
the birds - blue tit, chaffinch,
pigeon, wren - wing in for a feed,
the dish where the robin likes to bathe
must be moved, all the pots
ranked elsewhere, out of the way.
The one old rose, barricaded -
its root too deep to lift -
daffodil bulbs dug up and saved.

The children are so tall. They've outgrown
the blue slide that went to the dump
last summer. The basketball hoop
is rusted through. The boy
has a husky voice, and the girl
asked me yesterday if I could explain
this word she heard at school: porn.

I wonder how the daisies will feel,
torn and scattered by
the mechanised bucket;
how the earthworms will survive,
ripped out of their home,
the small bushes and the bluebells
only about to flower.
Change: I scold myself
for cowardice.
I've seen enough real graves.
I know the difference.

After the carnage, I'll watch
how the land lies;
encourage the grass;
reinstate the trampoline -
remember
how the screws fit,
and the safety net sits;
bury the bulbs
and wait for next Spring,
for blossoming.



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BERKELEY

*(on June 16th, 2015, five Irish and one Irish American student died
when a 4th floor balcony collapsed; seven others were severely injured)*

Crack of rotten wood,
the balcony tips and swings,
hands grasp - some
not fast enough, some
too slippery -
bodies plummet,
bones are smashed
to smithereens.
Mothers fly across the ocean,
hoping to hold them again,
to hear them breathing,
those babies who suddenly
grew up, went to California
for summer fun -
now stretched
in stiff white hospital beds.

Eucalyptus and coffee,
peaches and sushi,
maverick conversations
fit for branching neurons -
Berkeley, where I grew
for two full years,
out of my small Irish plot,
into a nourishing garden:

now you are a graveyard,
a valley of fallen stars.

INTERRUPTION

The cars move forward, endlessly -
it's always rush hour. Strewn
on the road, the detritus of the drivers.
And the corpses. Today, a young fox.
He's perfect. I pull over, hoping,
find the body warm.
But as I pick him up - the other drivers
irritated by the interruption - I know
rigor mortis has claimed his fluffy limbs.
The heat is from the sun, shining
all morning on his lifeless form.



© Katie Donovan

Peter O'Neill is the author of several books, most recently *More Micks Than Dicks*, a hybrid Beckettian novella in 3 genres currently out of print, and *The Dublin Trilogy: Poems & Transversions 1992-2017*, a singular engagement with a 19th century French Master; launched in Paris in November last year to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Baudelaire's death. He recently presented *je la dis comme elle vient* - The Appearance of the Homeric Muse in Beckett's *Comment c'est/How It Is* at the *How It Is Symposium* organised by Gare Saint Lazare Players Ireland at the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris. He teaches EFL and resides in Dublin.

His writing (be it poetry, translation, critical reviews or academic presentation) has been published widely, being translated into French, Italian and German. O'Neill has also edited two anthologies of poetry; *And Agamemnon Dead* (mgv2>publishing, 2015) and *The Gladstone Readings* (Famous Seamus, 2017). He set up *Donkey Shots*, an avant-garde literary festival, in his hometown of Skerries, North County Dublin, and currently hosts *The Gladstone Readings*.



PLATO'S CAVE – IN THE GLADSTONE

for Paul

We sit, my brother and I, in the back room.
The spring light from the sun shines outside,
Burnishing the old cottage style windows
At the front of the pub, causing the

Caravaggio effect, so that
The old men appear more like giants,
With their bottles and glasses before them,
Their hubbub and chatter calming us.

The fire then in the hearth ablaze,
Throwing, with the sun, the silhouettes
And shadows, adding to the illusory

Nature of the place. The world outside shut
Tight, so that whenever the latch is lifted
Liberty almost falters, under the spell.

THE METAPHYSICS OF ARCADES -ARCADIA!

Nature loves to hide. - Heraclitus

Perhaps we need to re-examine obscurity,
In this age of blinding all-seeing, all knowing,
All encompassing... nothing! Re-appraise
The splendour of the shades and the shadows.

For, these passageways are imbued with expectation,
Due to the ephemeral nature of the encounters
Promoted, which is the key to their attraction.
Discovery, and Revelation!... From light to darkness.

On the high street, in broad daylight,
Bordello chic is promoted in plain view.
And for all to see – though they pass by un-seeing!

Yet, they would rail about the hijab,
For western eyes a real source of terror;
To give back to the nature of things their true mystery

ANTI – OEDIPUS

It was the Christmas of 1972.
 The Lee had flooded over the banks,
 Turning the city into a real little Venice.
 My mother had taken me to see *Scrooge*,
 With Albert Finney. This involuntary memory only
 Recently resurfaced. I clarified it with my father.
 He too attested to the fact that she was wearing
 A faux black leather overcoat, complete with
 Russian fur hat, black boots and tights.
 I remember sitting beside her on the bus,
 As the river entered the vehicle whenever
 The doors opened. I was like Noah during the flood.
 I remember also sitting beside her, up in the gods,
 While the ghosts were flying all about us.

QUEEN BITCH

Before even the inscription, before you inscribe
 Her name, you pause before it.
 SHE... and with just this one vowel announced,
 Borne forward by the twin consonants,

Carried forward as if upon a summer breeze,
 The she wind blowing behind your sails,
 And all of your craft moves forward
 Upon the sea, wine-dark, and hallucinatory.

Invocation within a name.
 She who is both multiple and One.
 She bringing with her divinity and order.

She who intoxicates the blood,
 Causing your body to lose all control.
 She who would in turn empty your soul.



Amy Barry writes poems and short stories. She loves to travel. Trips to India, Nepal, China, Japan, Bali, Paris, Berlin, Budapest, Milan and Falkenberg have all infused her work. She is published in several anthologies, journals, and press and e-zines globally. Amy and her work have featured on radio and television in Australia, Canada, Italy and Ireland. Her poems have been translated into Italian, Turkish, German, Romanian, Greek, Malay, Irish and Persian.



REVISITING ST. LOMAN'S HOSPITAL

Memory expands,
frame after frame,

unstoppable —

behind bolted doors of grey,
sitting on a cracked floor
with bended knees,
pleading
for understanding,
hell cursed like a vulgar visitor
with bad breath,
voices came, at times
so inspiring, lyrics
poured out like maple
igniting the room.

Ungraspable — sometimes
drunk with weakness,
I had wished to grow
even weaker,
I had wished to fall,
lower than down—

Do I belong here?
Mam had those strange ideas
that I should be here.

Buried anger storms silently —
then disappears.

FOUL

no sense,
disbelief — shattered

disappointment
burns her eyes,
her brain,

hot blood rages
through her veins,
she wants to thump
her fists against their faces,

pained memories
like rough charcoal- sketches,

numbed —
reaching out, no hands.



Noel Duffy's debut collection *In the Library of Lost Objects* was published by Ward Wood Publishing, London, in 2011 and was shortlisted for the Shine/Strong Award for best first collection by an Irish poet. His second collection *On Light & Carbon* followed in autumn 2013. His poetry has appeared widely, including in *The Irish Times*, *The Financial Times* and *Poetry Ireland Review*, and has been broadcast on RTE Radio 1 and BBC Radio 4. His latest collection, *Summer Rain*, appeared in 2016, again with Ward Wood.



COPYIST

after R.S Thomas

I removed myself from the shared residence
to a room in the old granite farmhouse,
the burden of grace there too much to carry
surrounded by the company of others.

The room had been occupied by a monk from Dublin
who had left for a season of solitary reflection
in a cottage high up above the valleys. I found a copy
of *British Poetry Since 1945* on his shelf

and spent each long evening copying the poems
into a black notebook like some Medieval monk
in the scriptorium transcribing the Gospel,
to try stave off the fear that had closed around me.

At night when I was finished I walked out
into the fields, the lambs shivering and baying
in the biting, late cold of April, the stars
more visible but somehow more distant in the dark

skies above me. They brought me no nearer
than the words I'd transcribed on paper
to the God who had become more absent
in my every attempt to bring him closer.

ABANDONED

What did they find that morning
when they climbed to the deck on their ropes
and walked across the timbers
of the transom, the sails still partially set
and flapping casually in the weak westerly,
no signs of sudden exit or distress?
Inside, the sun shone through the portholes,
dust motes lazily rising in the eerie quiet.
There were no empty tankards on the table,
the galley equipment gathered and neatly stowed,
the cargo of alcohol lying undisturbed below.
In the captain's quarters, a map remained
spread out across the desk charting a course,
the compass needle beside it quivering to north;
no word of discontent or disorder among the men
in the final log – and beside it the Bible
he would recite from after meals, well-thumbed
and closed.



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IN THE SHADOW OF THE PATRIOT

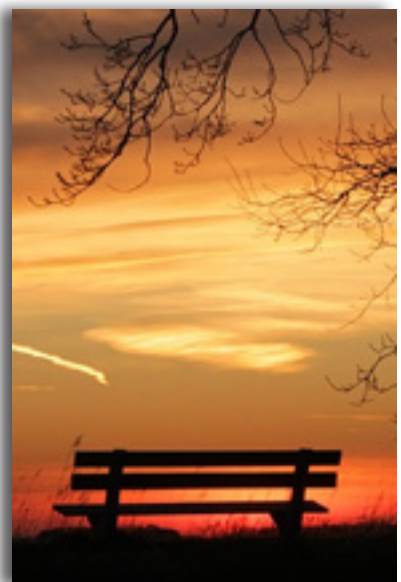
The old quarter at dusk. The rain starts again.
A fire engine passes by to a rising and falling pulse,
echoing down cobbled streets and alleyways
rebounding against tall windows and soot-grimed
red-brick buildings, the bars where the ghosts
of the drunk linger, haunting the granite flagstones
with their long-lost footfalls... The late evening buses
pull away from pavements in turn, raindrops marking
fleeting circles in the puddled water of the drains –
and the young couple who stand by the statue
of the old Patriot, his hands and face weathered
to history and forgetfulness as they pull each other
closer still, their lips meeting to warm touch.

STREET LIGHT AMBER

Yet memories return when you least expect them,
those moments in which the mind
can no longer suspend anger or desire,
however briefly: an image of you
standing by the window looking out
as the rain fell in amber street light,
a fragment of Ella's deep falsetto falling
to stillness as the song ends to a circling silence...
These, the most casual things, are what
ambush the mind yet are still too close to hold,
just as the hand pulls back instinctively
from burning coal.

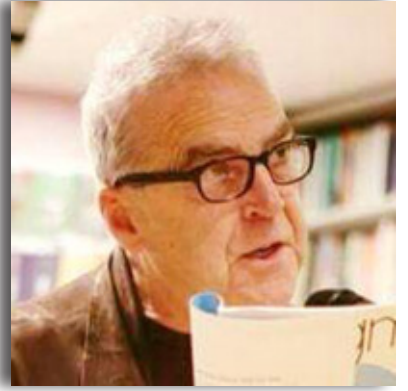
FIGURE IN SUNLIGHT

Earlier I sat in the park. The towering
trees swayed in the wind, high up above.
An old woman walked beneath
and I sensed the scale the way
my camera lens would've sensed it:
the vast tree and the figure below it
walking slowly; the sky hanging above
like a blue sheet stretched out against the day:
The sky above the trees. A figure below.
The day telescoped and still...
And for a moment I was happy
as though I had forgotten you,
this scene a photograph I can hold still,
compose a new future within.
A breeze picks up and the tree shudders;
the old woman who doesn't notice
passing out of focus into the morning sunlight.



© Noel Duffy

Owen Gallagher was born of Irish parents in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, Sctptland. He now lives in London. His previous publications are: *Sat Guru Snowman*, Peterloo Poets. Printed 2001. Reprinted 2004. *Tea with the Taliban*, Smokestack Books, 2012. *A Good Enough Love*, Salmon Poetry, Ireland, 2015, which was nominated for the T.S. Eliot award. *The Boy who Swam Nightly in the Sky* will be published in 2019 by Smokestack Books.



RED SNOW

All he left was his brolly,
his briefcase
and that dismissal note.

No severance pay,
no letter propped
on the stove.

For thirty years
I was his hearth
and home!

I followed his footprints
across the fields,
perfect casts

of the man
I thought I knew.
His tracks stopped

at a level crossing.
The lines were still warm,
weeping snow.

THE COLD WAR

Desperate to ditch short trousers and dump my glasses
I became Secret Agent 008. My mission?
To undermine parental control.

I appointed myself Minister of State for Children,
recruited cousins and friends, scheduled
training for sleepers and informants.

I held passing-out ceremonies in the 'Goldenshed',
pinned milk bottle tops on those who went
beyond the call of duty.

Parents cruel as Stalin were tailed, aunts who silenced
a house with a look and uncles who broke into
piggy-banks were logged.

We drilled peep-holes and took fingerprints,
ordered duplicate keys, learned Russian,
Mandarin, Irish...

until my body was stretched suddenly
in every direction. Fields of hair
appeared overnight.

My testosterone levels exceeded all known
medical records. Renting my brother's
long trousers I assigned myself a different mission.



THE DARKENING SHAMROCK

When my pint was capped
at Reilly's Bar in Darwin
with a creamy head
in the shape of a shamrock

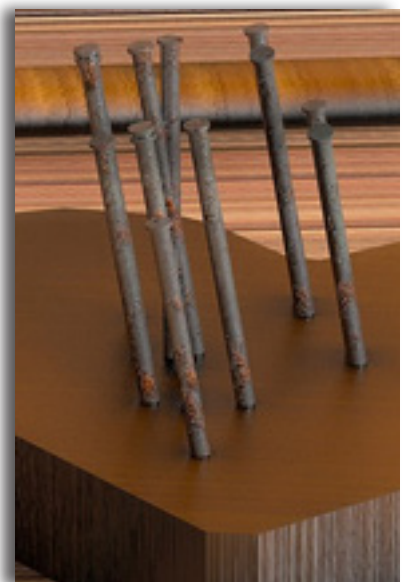
I thought of the cream of Ireland
pouring from every county
and how I flinched at the airport

when Mother's tears flooded
the Departure Lounge like those
of thousands of mothers before her

and Father stood to one side
looking as if a hearse
had hauled his heart away

A VERY PRIVATE CRUCIFIXION

I want Mr Johnston stripped,
nailed naked to the page,
crucified with every word,
the way he had me stripped, limbs pinned by classmates,
against the blackboard.
His binocular vision
focussed on my
thirteen-year-old body;
head bowed,
body drained
of resistance,
like the figure
of Jesus
on the wall.
When
the lookouts
crowed,
he would
click his fingers
three times.
I would dress,
slump at my desk,
and write:
I must not tell!
I must not tell!
I must ...



Ron Carey lives in Dublin. He started to write poetry seriously in his sixties. He has been a prize winner and finalist in many international poetry competitions. He received Special Commendation in the Patrick Kavanagh Awards 2015 and was awarded a Masters in Creative Writing at the University of South Wales. His poetry collection 'DISTANCE,' was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection UK and Ireland 2016. His next collection, 'Racing Down the Sun,' will be published by Revival Press in November 2018.



SARTRE'S CRABS

Jean-Paul Sartre: Yeah! after I took mescaline, I started seeing crabs around me all the time. *The New York Times - The Week in Review: 2009-11-15*

There are four in the bed, traversing the dark
 Scuttle-bucket of his sleep. Submerged
 In ultraviolet light, they have never seen
 The ocean or licked the salty skin of the dead.
 Beyond this quilted reality, they wait
 For the gunfire and smoke of his awakening.
 Down cobbled Paris, their armoured clicks
 Follow him to *École Normale Supérieure*,
 Where their rare bodies glow furious-red
 In the swampy wastes of human certainty.

BORDERLINE

As you predicted, hair, especially greasy hair,
 Smelling to high heaven of frankincense,
 Is not allowed through Customs, breaking all
 Sorts of environmental and common laws.
 So here I am, stuck in Benidorm with a bag
 Full of explanations that no one will take.
 Oh! Judith, why didn't I listen to you?
 You, who took the whole head, cut-off all
 Connection to Holofernes once and forever.
 But he was my Samson, and I had to rescue
 Something, some memento from the ruins
 Of our love and they would not give me his eyes.



FLOOD

Today, who can remember the relief
Of those first, sidelong blessings;
Splashes from a silver aspersorium
Of light, fizzling our satanic skins.
Then the joy of rain and all the dead
Muscling their way out of graveyards
Of clay to breathe and bring a green
Blushing to the face of the Earth.
Even the abandoned mountains turned
To the sky and smiled their rocky smiles.
But then, the streams jumped their ruts
And ran away to join the army of rivers.
The sun lost direction, and no one saw
It rise or set behind gun-grey sheets.
Yesterday, the man building an ark,
Drowned in Pery Square, blonde curls
Of wood inside his wellington-boots.

THE MISTLE THRUSH DISCOVERING

The Mistle Thrush discovering the anvil-stone,
Leaves aside its ring of minor keys and sets
To the work of housebreaking in the narrow
Laneways of the snail. Within the danger
Of the Magpie's beak, it places its weight,
One hollow step, then another – wrinkly toes
Light on the light-frosted ground aroused.
I wait for the Mistle Thrush to sing; the pure
Mathematics of its phrasing sound human
In its strains of melancholy and sacredness.
Now the shyster sun, so unreliable, has startled
The chocolate rooster from his glorious sleep.
And all my ghosts begin to leave, filing through
The orchard, the last one closing the gate.



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.



LATER ON

I and the dew drift in that pained air
that disturbs a September day,
lights flicker across the city
as the sun assumes its downward stance.
Stirred by the spectral mists
I am at this place
knocking at your door.

Age was extraneous to the lines
penned in her scarred face.
'I'm the last left,' she said.

We didn't talk about you
or mention the trip for nuts
that didn't materialize
or the callow lad who tasted
plums and ripe cherries,
for the first time,
through the prejudicial lips of love.

Better to bear it
and all of which it is part -
the freak wind that blew the haycocks
wild round the seven-acre field -
where it belongs, in the heart.

'You know what it is' she said,
'to be out of all this?'
'Maybe that's why I'm here,' I said.
We had no cause to talk of flowers or graves,
for they are below it,
though it is, necessarily set in them.

WHEN A VISITOR KNOCKS

When he speaks in hair-sluiced mushroom suites
and thunderbolt echoes from spinach seeds,
the man in Orion's belt,
the frog-eared and margarine-manacled
rush to hoover the hall;
when he sings the tree-scowled heretics dance to war,
when he cries the believers tip-toe across sponge cakes
wearing their army boots like the Book of Common Prayer,
when the reed in his flute has turned to jelly
they moan to the dawn chorus.

Blessed are the poor in spirit
for theirs is the kingdom of cross-eyed zebras
and warmed-up goose hearts.



IN COSTA COFFEE SHOP

The mother ship, full on focus,
 hovers over mothers chatting away
 of kids and christenings and mountain goats poised
 on the edge of asteroids above the Skelligs,
 and how they'd change the latte.

The older one aligns her lupins
 'I'll get these, you'll stay with the Americano,
 I think my personality is attuned to the latte,'
 white and snowflakey
 in tune with the moon, nods a few times.
 The pal leans to pick up the signal,
 thinks of the husband mixing
 scones and Protestant buns
 for the Mothers' Union bring and take
 cake sale smiles in relief and gazes
 through her cup mushrooms
 at the space vacated by the older and bolder
 who by now may be a melon beam
 traversing the infinite
 free of the marshmallow moment
 and the counter feet.

SEEING LIMERICK STATION
THROUGH QUANTUM PHYSICS

The men's' loo at Colbert Station,
 fresh plaster, tiles hoary white,
 cubicle paint permafrost blue,
 is famous now
 for the stench of urine.
 'It comes from the outside',
 the inspector said.

Cappuccino in Costa
 natural soya, no chocolate,
 a special, we call it.
 A voice, as you draw near,
His name is John,
 carries me above
 The smell of coffee.

At times, I doubt if this particle
 that fakes the weight and shape of things -
 sweet to taste, firm to touch,
 a contradiction in the mix
 of the Black Forest Gateaux -
 is you that don't matter.



Noelle Lynskey, writer of poetry for many years is also Director of Shorelines Arts Festival, Portumna and member of Portumna Pen Pushers and Ballinasloe Peers. A reader at Galway's Cúirt Literary Festival, Inis Cealtra Arts Festival, Terryglass Arts Festival, Clifden Arts Festival, Group 8 and Strokestown International Poetry Festival, her work is featured in many anthologies and literary magazines as well as broadcasts on RTE Radio 1 Sunday Miscellany. She is a mother of three, a community pharmacist and working towards her first collection.



HOMELESS

Other times I dream
the drone of the sea
pulling me into the cobalt
of childhood, just there
off the island cliffs
near *Gort na gCapall*,
the song of the waves as familiar
as today's beat of footsteps.

Sometimes it's Joseph,
the saint's prayer I hold,
propped in my empty cup,
the carpenter who chisels
a crevice to scatter saw dust
there around my childhood feet,
the carver of the welcome door
to the tap of dancers on the floor.

Sometimes I am noticed -
a blue bundle of pity,
wearing that shade
always suited to my eyes,
the same hue of my first
dancing costume, with its
two strips of celtic knots,
my eight-year-old curls.

Or I pray,
wrapped in the warmth
of the Hail Mary, her blue
halo a softening voice
in the blown dust
and clicking heels,
the closed purses
at my eye level.

THE BED

*What you share
cannot be undone by age
or sorrow.* Lisa Taylor. What Lovers Know

Like a pair of undertakers
two strong strangers lift with ease
this chart of my long-ended marriage,

carry it through the bedroom door;
stagnant motes of detritus and dander
flying with skin and hair,

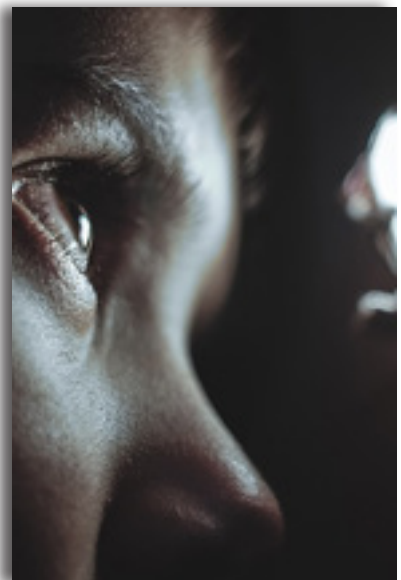
the scent of thirty years
swallowed by the springs,

the imprint of estranged lovers
shoved out the door,

leavings of anger rise
in the heartquake of betrayal.

My new bed fits the empty place
a blessing in this measured space,

*let him off,
no payback,
no looking back.*



SUNDAY RITUAL

From the door of their small shop
that opened into the back room, I watched
the soaping of his shiny apple head
uncapped only on Sunday mornings,
herself leaning over the kitchen sink
in her ritual, as personal
as a whispered prayer.

My wonder at the sight of a wife
washing a man's face,
her hands circled in bubbles
cupping the water to rinse the week away,
then shave his stubble in sandy strokes,
the kettle boiling on the Rayburn,
two eggs poaching,
his gleaming face renewed.

Only the wheeze from their red shop door
lured me away
to serve at the counter,
witness to an intimacy
I couldn't fathom at eleven.

Their comfort with my presence
steadily drew me in to share their table
taste my first salted island of yellow yolk
set in a shining sea of white.

My first glimpse
of the comfort of a poached egg
of a woman so loving,
of a man so naked, so loved.

LAUDATE

For Monsignor Charles Travers

For sixty years he has borne psalms in his pockets.
His feet move with the ease of one who has measured
the lightness of his own pace; a bell rings at noon and six
to the rhythm of his trimmings and vespers,
while a faint hum trills from his hearing aid.

Eyes that are kind and ever outward
deflect his aging need for a helping hand,
his curved bend more a genuflection.
He reflects my concern with his heed for me;
in alb and surplice, he cloaks me in his faith.

He is the rosary voice at my grandfather's grave,
the purple stole of calm at my mother's bedside,
the consoling hymn in generations of family grief;
through my stained-glass woman's heart
he radiates hope as brilliant as the lunula
of the monstrance, so blessed in his hands.

When he presses his palms together in prayer
He is a church spire high above the street.



He Zhaolun, is an excellent poet in contemporary China. He is of Manchu nationality, and was born in 1970 in Jinzhou of Liaoning Province, China. Now he lives in Linghai City of Jinzhou. He is member of Chinese Writer's Association, Vice Dean of Poetry Creation Research Society of Jinzhou Writers' Association, vice chairman of Jinzhou Music Literature Society, the Dean of June Poetry Society. His works have been published in over one hundred domestic and overseas magazines and newspapers, and some have featured in numerous poetry anthologies. He has won many poetry prizes. His published poetry collections include *Indebted to Life*, *Days in Love with Sunshine*, and *Snow Falling in Liaoning*. He works in the Jinzhou Office of Liaoning Provincial Rural Credit Cooperatives.

Translated by Zhang Zhizhong



WHEN MOTHER FAILS TO THINK ABOUT LOVE

When Mother fails to think about love
Father covers his chest when he is coughing ceaselessly
While puffing on his tobacco pipe

The setting sun is aging gradually
To accompany the love of "person more lean than yellow flowers"
Mother fails to think about it
With a tobacco pipe in his mouth, Father does not know what to say...

In chewing wild vegetables the brilliance of youth fails to be chewed
In tasting the fragrance of wheat the sweetness of past events fails to be tasted

When Mother fails to think about love
She ponders and meditates
Feeling to be able to gather a handful of dirt
Which is more assured of heart than gathering adequate gold and silver?
She says, love is like a thimble
It is warmth when pain is suffered

When Mother fails to think about love
Father fails to recall the past events
They have no way, only to cover their chests...
Keeping the messy life before the eyes
Coughing ceaselessly

THE LOVE I WANT TO SAY

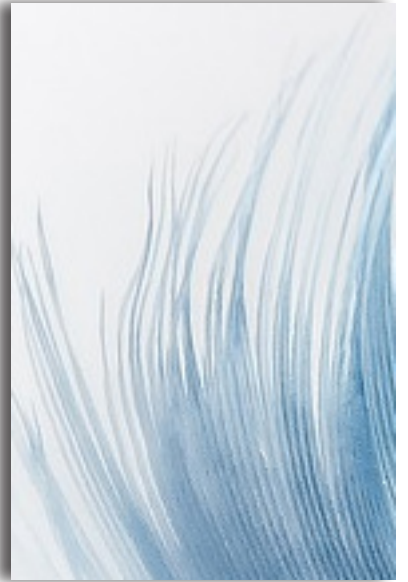
Perhaps
The snow of the 90s is a love letter between fingers
Suffusing with the love I want to say

The snowfall is not heavy
The same is the love I want to say
Like two sparrows in love under the eaves
Always together, life or death

Not to mention Andersen's fairy tales
And not to mind the little snow added to the forehead of yore

We are still in the hometown
To get warmth from an old book which has been read years ago
Dear, it is true, I believe





FIVE THOUSAND YEARS: LOOKING HOMEWARD

How many periods of time have died of tiredness on the way?
 How many postmen spend their remaining years in their hometown?
 In the spring of 2015
 I look forward, and then backward
 The ancient blue sky and white clouds sail here
 Slowly advancing into the village-town where Mother has never coughed...
 Kitchen smoke through five thousand years, turns like a river to slow down
 To embrace happiness, gradually congealing

TO RETAIN THE WIND

To retain the wind. Let it blow red flames
 The happy heart contains private words
 I want to marry a wild flower
 The princess without a name
 To be my pretty bride

To retain the wind. Let it blow my village
 To blow green seedlings and blow yellow corn and rice
 O autumn, for whom to make articles of jewelry of pure gold
 To pile them on the ground and dreamland

To retain the wind. It blows the loneliness of a person
 It blows off the pain from shedding tears
 For me to bear in mind my parents' love
 Like the moonlight: unselfish, profound, into the bone...

SPRING IS AN UPSTREAM FISH

Spring is an upstream fish
 When I see her it is the Waking of Insects
 The penetrating wind seems to fall in love in the bone

I know the upstream fish does not tell lies
 The fingertips of spring never open the moonlight of yore
 Never blaspheme the devoted love, clenching the teeth
 Thus — grass blowing in the wind, the soul and dewdrops under false alarm
 time and again

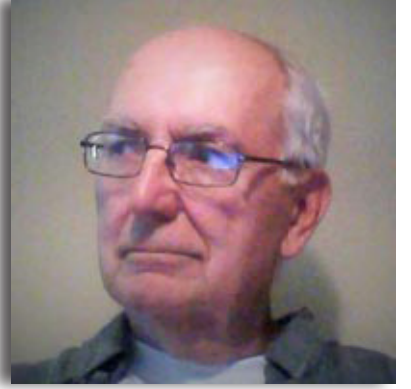
When I see her
 Spring is tight-lipped
 As if intending to hide the entanglement between clover and the hometown
 Attempting to set the shy fish
 Back to its pre-life

Actually I believe you
 In Andersen's fairy tales there is weakness of the mermaids
 The wind blows the pre-life and after-life
 Be sure to face the person in love
 And fill to brim medicinal liquor

Never blaspheme the devoted love, clenching the teeth
 Thus — grass blowing in the wind, the soul and dewdrops under false alarm
 time and again

Tell me spring is this fish
 Which has been sleeping upstream for one thousand years

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



THE GREAT RED SPOT

Doctor Sax, the private math tutor, was having issues with his last student of the day.

Oh. You need to hear the question again, Mouse? Okay—here—consider the sequence five, eight, eleven, fourteen, and seventeen. What is the fiftieth number in this sequence?

Wait, wait, Doctor, sighed Mouse, shaking his head. Please tell me one more time. Why do we have to go over these—what you call—sequencing problems?

They're in the curriculum, son. But, stop. Think. Do not question. Just give me the answer.

Please, wait. I want to know why first. I can kind of see normal arithmetic and even some algebra as something someday useful. Tell me why this line of questioning is needed. I won't go further until you convince me this is worth learning.

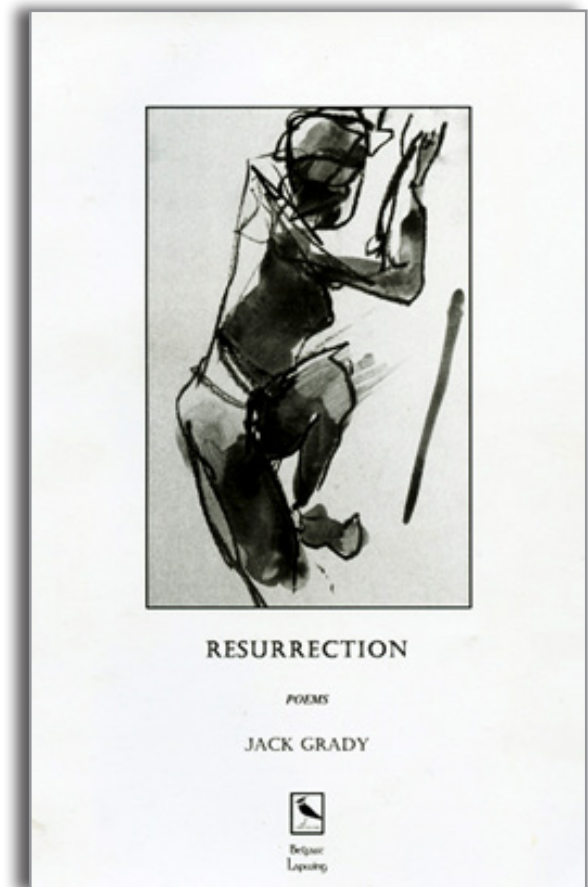
Doctor Sax reached around into his left back-butt pants-sack and pulled out a phone.

Mouse, here's the best reason. You learn it or I will call your Father. Then I will give you the phone and you can convince him to continue to pay me thousands of dollars to teach you to be more of a childish defiant asshole than you were before you met me. Not to mention the side-benefit of allowing you to pile up layer upon layer of stupidity on yourself, which, if I do nothing to stop you, will harden and become irrevocably permanent. Shall I call?

Mouse caught the phone in his gaze. The question from Sax implied time to think through to pop out the right answer had also been granted. Cry foul cry foul, if time not granted—if Sax fouls out this will be over—time to think is here on this silver platter and the thinking involves projecting the stepwise chain of block-on-block towerbuilt futures growing ahead and wavebreaking away the previous horrors laid down in the last pass of the loop Mousie had rotated to at and past here but he must not know no not know or creation itself will be blasted back in the dark and a new future

will be exposed and this over and over and over until inevitably a future is peeled back the final one required to be looped around to and which must be irreversibly and painfully fatal. Nothing no nothing can't be nothing and there it is the answer Father's fist shaking Father's sounds pounding too primitive to be words just as once in a memory or what have you inevitable newspaper edition will claim some animal gorilla ape of some kind whining canine feline or mouse or even the assorted long thick table leg shaped voicerod is imagined by the next newshound in the sequence to actually be sentient and speak actual words that actually seem to be intelligent; words like Mouse you will never ever learn math, or, Mouse you will never ever cast out your inner stupidity generating inner-demon but no those will not appear until the next millennium so can't know that was just a random spark and for years not for years, the nail of Mousie's right index finger has grown out in two halves why why why no one knows that's an unanswerable question if you ask me, Mr. Rayburn, just like why Jupiter sports that great red spot why do they ask why at times of boredom when the science game is slow do they ask these questions that have no answers and even so who the hell cares what the great red spot is anyway; but the answer to why should Sax not call Father is simple just is, so Mouse said simply, No, don't call my Father. He will be pissed. So, the answer to your question is exactly one hundred and fifty-two! So. What's next?

Mousie!



Peter O'Neill's review of Jack Grady's *Resurrection*, Lapwing Publications

In a country which apparently prides itself so much on its writers, perhaps without even realising it, we Irish have become a smug, nationalistic breed, with an obsession with form to the practical detriment of any real actual content. There are exceptions, of course. But in a culture awash with literary festivals, creative writing workshops, writers' groups and literary periodicals, be they online or off, how much actual writing out there is saying anything of any real consequence, which will be remembered, and this is the acid test, even 50 years from now? Everyone, apparently, would like to be, but how many out there actually are writing?

These are questions one should ask oneself, every now and again, in- order to maintain a bit of self-awareness. As the amount of spin, particularly living in an age of social media, as we do, is simply unbelievable. So, what a relief then to come across an actual book, a slim collection of poems as it happens, which actual has something pertinent to say about these times we are living in and this rather sad and extremely troubled world, written by a writer who was born in the USA, saw military service in the middle-east and finally decided to settle down on this wind and rain battered island off the west coast of Europe.

Jack Grady, by his own admission, only returned to poetry in 2014. I happened to come across some of his writing while I was editing a small anthology for an independent French publisher. Jack's poems immediately stood out, as he was doing some highly original work, and this was mainly down to the treatment of the content of his writing. So, here I am four years later, with a copy of Jack Grady's debut collection *Resurrection* published by my old friends in Belfast, *Lapwing Publications*, run by the stalwart and defiant Dennis Greig, father of Amos Greig, who runs *A New Ulster*.

Firstly, a word about *Lapwing*. The first thing that strikes you about the production of their books is the sheer elegant simplicity of the slim white, hand-bound productions. The Greig sept of the MacGregor Clan has been printing and binding books since before 1632, the reader is informed, under the copyright details. I notice my own name then in the acknowledgements section, for my 'early encouragement' in Jack's 'poetic resurrection'.

This is personal. I had been encouraging Jack over the years with the odd message, urging him to send his work out to magazines, and I had further occasions myself to publish some of his French poems and translations in Walter Ruhlmann's *mgv2>datura*, now defunct. In a country which apparently prides itself so much on its writers, perhaps without even realising it, we Irish have become a smug, nationalistic breed, with an obsession with form to the practical detriment of any real actual content. There are exceptions, of course. But in a culture awash with literary festivals, creative writing workshops, writers' groups and literary periodicals, be they online or off, how much actual writing out there is saying anything of any real consequence, which will be remembered, and this is the acid test, even 50 years from now? Everyone, apparently, would like to be, but how many out there actually are writing?

This is something that Jack Grady and I share, a common love of nineteenth century French literature. We have both dabbled in writing in French and have translated both our own work from the French and that of others. This is an important distinction to make, as Jack and I share, due to our mutual appreciation of French literature, many similar ideas about what good writing constitutes. And so we both find ourselves, like so many other writers living in Ireland, at a very far remove for what constitutes as 'good writing' and which is published by more main-stream publishing houses in Ireland.

Despite all talk of progress, Ireland still remains an incredibly conservative place, and particularly in poetry publication. This is important for me to state, as Jack Grady and I believe firmly in the cathartic nature of the art, and also its importance in being a powerful tool to highlight social issues, such as war and violence. We both share, Jack and I, a love of the great Franco-Irish literary tradition. A collocation that rather bizarrely you seldom come across in this country, you are much more likely to hear the all too familiar Anglo-Irish. I remember having a wonderful conversation with the great French academic Brigitte Le Juez, in the canteen of DCU where she lectured on Comparative Literature at the time, and we both spoke about our mutual incredulity at how Anglo-Irish Literature was a term so much more on everyone's lips, in Ireland, rather than the less often heard Franco-Irish.

And yet, where did Wilde, Yeats, Joyce and Beckett all go, at some point in their lives? Roland Barthes famously wrote in *Fragments on a Short Discourse on Love* how there is a climatic moment in every text and which he compared to the orgasm, and so which was followed by *le petit mort*, or little death.

I should like to treat in this review of Jack's wonderful book what I consider to be the climatic moment in the book, in other words the piece, or poem in this case, which brought me the most pleasure.

For me, the climax in Jack's book is the poem *The Muse Declares Her True Geommetry*, as it is a poem which I wish I had written myself. All true poets, worthy of the name, will know exactly what I mean when I say this. As poets are, by their very nature, a highly competitive species. Don't be so naïve, for god's sake, as to think that artists and writers are all lovey dovey, just because they're artists. They are human, rather, and so like most humans share all the nasty traits that mere mortals share, and more!

I am not counted in steps or feet,
or in meter, for that matter,
or even in beats. I cannot be caught
by the pause for an inhalation,
nor can I be caged by rectangles or shapes.

This is another thing that Jack Grady and I share, an appreciation of the muse. Now, in the 21st century, what does this mean? I have often read in poet's bios, poets referring to themselves as 'muse poets', making this distinction, as if there were any other. There are no other kind of poets. Let me be categorical; in this age of social media darlings, and self- publicists, self- promoters, performers, spoken word enthusiasts, social media wizards, and other assorted mixture of charlatans and assorted lunatics, if you have no respect, or even knowledge, of the muse You are *not* a poet. Call yourself anything else, but that! And while I am on the subject of poets, one should be very careful when using this word.

Less is very much more than more. I have been writing poetry for over thirty years, have written over 15 books (published eight, and have edited two anthologies) and I very rarely use this descriptor to describe myself. As it suggests something permanent. *A fait accompli*. When there could be nothing further from the truth. Here is a motto to live by. Jack Grady lives by it, and so do I. YOU ARE ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR LAST POEM.

My spirit cannot be bound by a four -line stanza,
each line with four feet or three or four stresses,
or by dozens of stanzas identically the same.

There is a wonderful confidence here that few poets/writers today can share. One of the reasons why this is so is because Jack Grady is a writer who is coming at the craft of writing with a very real LOVE for the medium and which he has been practising, whether by reading poetry and verse for so many years, as well as by trying to write himself. You cannot fake this, nor imitate it. For love, and so knowledge of the form, is either there or it is not. In this sense, I would make the distinction that Jack Grady is not a careerist, in the sense that he is to be found hobnobbing at every social event, cosying up to editors and art officers, being, in short, sycophantic to the point of self-caricature. These creeps actually exist! Rather, he is actually to be found out on his small farm in the west of Ireland (he is one of the founders of The Ox Mountain Writers Group) reading Rimbaud or Walt Whitman with visions of the Taliban, or Duke Ellington, in his head.

Don't force me to split
into tercets or couplets or box me
in a sonnet. I am neither
trapezoid, cylinder, nor quatrain.

Neither is Jack Grady to be found among the dour-faced legions of academia, which is another favoured preserve of so-called poets in this god-forsaken island. The nincompoops who are both humourless and timeless in their self-perpetuation. These narcissists of mind who consider themselves to the favoured gate-keepers of 'thee Truth', and who through powerful connections, due to their political astuteness, are in positions so powerful that they get to determine what is to be given precedence in our nation's principal publications, usually coming from the same two publishing houses. So, one can clearly see that poetry, like every domain in this small island, is under the very careful constraints of a privileged few and who, like all cartels, look after one another. I call this very specific syndrome, which occurs here in Ireland but which in fact goes on in every society, RTE Guide Syndrome. As you see the same old faces being repeated again and again, every week, of every year, till you are sick and tired of them. And eventually, mercifully, they become mere wallpaper in the end.

I am the geometry of the soul and its sound.
I roll to the rhythms of ejaculation and death.

Now there is a line that you will never see published in the many RTE Guide's of this land and which exist in the Irish poetry publishing sector. I am using this last word, sector, very deliberately now, as it equates with the terminology used by politicians, when say relating to issues of agri-culture! An agrarian people, us Irish, don't you know. Ooh aye!

I roll to the rhythms of ejaculation and death.

Say it over and over again. You see Ireland never had a beat generation, like America had in the fifties and early sixties. The nearest we had to it were Flann O' Brien and Paddy Kavanagh, and the poets and writers of Baggottonia. I remember sending a review on to one of the country's 'top' poets, and who considers himself to be a 'revolutionary', and when I used the word 'cuntry' in respect to Ireland, a homage to Joyce, he got all indignant and told me he couldn't publish a piece like that. This is exactly what I am talking about, and this is exactly why poets like Jack Grady, real poets that is, not fecking eejits spending their time on Twitter and other forms of social media ² are to be cherished in times like these. In a world of selfies, cell phones, Twitter accounts and hashtags, Jack Grady, poet resurrected, stands tall and elevated.

I am free in the ocean
with every gasping breath,
and I resonate in the lobtail
of a hungry whale.

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FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JUNE 2018

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE