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POETRY & WRITING

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PETER O'NEILL
Telemachus Cycle

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE

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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*.



THE MARTELLO

For Liam on his birthday

Rotund bastion of granite castling
Above the rocks alongside of the cove,
Mediterranean in origin;
Napoleonic sentinels of power
And observation far flung by Joyce
Into Ithaca and Torre des Corsari...
Telemachus lathered in the foamy spray,
His vigil all *pater familias*
As if staged by Freud, the phallic
Tower spumes up into the interzone,
Its robust bulwark breaking the dead.
And the son, lonely at his solitary
Station, waits beside his mother
Whom all this time seeks her own liberation.

05/2018

PALLAS ATHENA

For Laura

The original Glamazon, in gold-laced sandals,
Superb limbs rising skyward like columns,
She habit-crowned by the peaks of mountain
And whose same feet are sand, sea and sun-kissed

By two score decades and some years more.
Brought up beside the shores of Crete,
She has such a natural sense of human drama,
Being all too familiar with Attic backdrops.

Her head held high, her eyes limitless and clear,
So used to ascertaining quickly the possible
Merits or demerits in all passing phenomenon.

Knowing only too well when to dispatch,
And in a mere look, the life of any worthless creature,
Or to raise right up through the ranks the standards of a man.

PLAXIAS, SOUTH-WESTERN CRETE

For Michael Corrigan

The gentle roar of thousands of pulverised pebbles
 Upon the sandy shores, its eternal rhythm
 And washing, brings immediate relief
 To poor exhausted white-skinned city-

Workers like me and who come to the shores
 Of Mediterranean islands in search of some
 Comfort and solace, dreaming perhaps also
 Of Homer's partly forgotten goddesses and heroes

Half imagining old Poseidon appearing to them
 From among the rock and cliff faces
 With the rich Aegean spread out before them

Its rich array of azure blue cobalt diamond
 Waves rising and falling in an hallucinatory
 Cadence upon which float the flotillas of the Achaeans.

APERITIF

"No Odysseus are you!" you think, looking down
 Upon your skinny white body, all fifty years of it.
 "Did you ever think that you would make it here?"
 You ask yourself, slumped in the reclining chair.

On the island of Crete with an aperitif, history
 Book, and the fresh after- taste of olives on your
 Tongue. And from the swimming pool resound
 The voices of your wife and daughter. Summer

Voices to drown out the symphony of crickets
 Rehearsing in the wings for the next onslaught
 Of the summer winds...is that Sinatra playing

In the distance? With thoughts of mortality
 You have another sip of ouzo, breath deep,
 And think of the Chinese phrase... *these are the golden years!*



STANDING BEFORE THE ACHAEANS, SPEAR IN HAND

Standing before the Achaeans, spear in hand,
Athena charged so that the gathered assembly
No longer sees a mere boy, the son of a hero,
But a young man fashioned by a Goddess.

Standing before the assembled Achaeans,
The morning after her parting, his every limb
Noteworthy in their presence, sure in his way
Because her divinity passed through him.

So that his feet encased in the leather thongs
Feel nimble; where they his or hers? he wondered,
Sure only that she had passed through him.

Her divine words uttered into his ears alone
Entering his spirit stiffening his resolve,
Empowering him before the suitors.

IN THE IDIOM OF THE GODS

Godhead was so assured that when Telemachus
Returned to his room, after slipping out of his robe
Standing there like that in but his sandals
Feeling the Goddess, Pallas Athena,

Entering him, symbolised by the spear,
It was as if she was urging him to embrace
His newly found manhood, which in part
By her visiting him she had helped to create.

And so, standing there in his bedroom
Feeling her presence enter him again,
He held his virile member like a spear

Or so it throbbed, thinking now only of her.
And so Telemachus fell to his knees offering up to her
The sweetest devotions, thereby spilling his wine.



© Peter O'Neill

Jude Cowan Montague worked for Reuters Television Archive for ten years. Her album *The Leiden-frost Effect* (Folkwit Records 2015) reimagines quirky stories from the Reuters Life! feed. She produces 'The News Agents' on Resonance 104.4 FM and writes for The Quietus. She is an occasional creative writing tutor for the Oxford University Continuing Education Department. Her most recent book is *The Originals* (Hesterglock Press, 2017).



SURVEILLANCE LOOKS LIKE HAMSTER BEDDING

The paperwolves and the ripwolves smell the ink on you
and they're staring into your eyes.

Shouldn't they move in, fast, together?
– circling the black binders –

wolves have to live too, dissidents are their meat.
Take a professorship for informing, the agency said.
What's different about information? This is my kind of trouble.

Shreds, the light snow thrown by a stagehand
in romantic silence, never amounted to 600 million.
I'm getting rid of the evidence, says the grey mouse, nibbling.

The motors burn, stuttering out,
so let the ripping start by hand. Muscles overworked,
destroying my past, my father's journey
across the border, his post-war education in persecution.
Films we can never watch again, even rejected by the rats.

Each ripped word shakes against each other
impressed with its own value
rustling together in the copper kettle
nervous - today the fire is coming.

The torn-up world has already changed
away from paper stock and typewriter fonts,
it's resuscitated crudely by manual puzzlers,
the future relies on informants.

Know scraps, how your value improves
with every word lost, with every scrap set ablaz-o-9.

12.45 Ulrike goes into her bathroom with Klara
12.46 Klara brushing her teeth
12.47 *Stasi get out, the files belong to us.*

VAULTS

By the Russian post-revolution you can find Maoist China
or Rhodesia, as was, *de facto*
in the nations of tins, colonies of bobbins and unilateral beta
with the despicable and the genocidal,
beside the rise of independence and the white-run resistance
to decolonialisation, talks, guns, allies and forays,
territories of Reuters, Pathé, and London Weekend Television,
where Amílcar Cabral still alive in Conakry,
wields his fatal peaceful resistance,
squashed in stapled tins, rolled into round tapes.
Take me to your leader to sync the sound
and clean the dust from the face of Henry kissing
goodbye to guerrillas, manoeuvring the majority.

I'm looking desperately to make some impact
in between the falling cats and the sick parrots,
a provocative piece of footage
escaped a million researchers before me.
Policeman surround me, their tall red canisters
ready to spray with cooling water and dry powder
should a critical situation present ready to threaten history.
One foot on each shelf I forgo the ladder
in my quest to reach the top,
lifting myself up on tincan shoulders,
arm outstretched for Tape 15023,
2005, yes, that's the one with the missing dopesheet.

THE SUN WENT DOWN ON BEACON HILL PARK LEAVING SOLDIERS IN THE DARK

They have been digging trenches for over a hundred years
disturbing the crust in this warm-up manoeuvre, practising
for when Canadians come to Europe.

The deep channels in the soil are an obstacle course
for hide and seek with friends,
jumping in and out in their brand army boots, proving gravity.

Whistling popular tunes, what a long way it is from here to there!
Singing a dirty ditty will help on the sea route,
songweave a spell to make time go quicker and get through the worst.

But Tipperary and Harvest-Moon won't help when the bullet hits the brain
or the legs rip away, and the heart stops singing
when a brother gets it in the eye, so hide in the mud,

cover up with the earth and try and get to the earth's centre
quickly, flinging the body into the ball that spins round the sun.

TAPE

This is the last tape I've looked at today
and it's singing to me inside its plastic case.
Humming with the story of blood, the last
walk of bare feet through the orange dust,
all told in black-and-white, flickering with
late technology. This is the tale of murder
of eyes that look at me, that say, *why, can
you see me on the other side of that camera?*
Do you care about me? The camera went
with those feet through the jungle and picked
out the prints which made a path that led
to a destination where we cannot follow
however expressive the eyes and the bells
that ring in the song of the feet that walk
where we do not go, and yet there is nothing
for me here, no drama, not shooting, only
knowledge and the communicated message
through the eyes, *We are going to die, now.*



© Jude Cowan Montague

STEENBECK HERO

Someone told me to look for the story that never gets told. It was lost in the forest of cans. A missing tale, stuck inside a can with a label that indicated something quite different. A story told by a man, who two or three countries fell in love with. Nations were entranced by his allure! By his kind face, his sweet teeth and his imposing eyebrows. He had the delicious mouth, one that could bite through an idea clean, splitting the atoms of plummy English with his ferocious lips. A man who made his mark in a different world, one permanently closed to us. If we wished to re-enter that world we could not. And I do not. But I want a window. I want to learn more. Hence I spent that weekend looking at every face for a way to get inside. For a doorkeeper, of a sort. But my excitement would soon fade. I heard all around me those elderly upper-class accents that were fading into the background at this time that these tins were filled. My hero wiggled like a snake through the tins, striding through the frames past the mosques and over the fields, and waved at me through the Steenbeck. Finally. We were face to face. He whispered silently, *this is me. You are looking at who I was, remember me in your booth.* I thought I heard him say my people have guns, your people gave them the guns, your people gave them the motive and I thought I understood why.

APPOINTMENT

We were booked at three to go into the war.
Your spot was on the top of the hill
and I was at the bottom.
When the flag was lowered
we started firing.

The problem was, we couldn't see
the signal for stop.

I dodged through the lines
to find the captain
and he found the colonel
who found the president of the universe.
He lifted his face from his space-lobster,
dabbing his lips with his spun-silk napkin
and said in a tone of intense wonder,
What incredible fireworks!



© Jude Cowan Montague

NOSTRILS SNUFFLING FOR CONES

From Bialystok,
the marine Martin,
via Denmark, Kiel
running across the water,
he found Montrose acceptable.

Never fitting in
with the Scots, never.
Always the Kraut, we heard,
never liked, always the German –
WW1 didn't help with that.

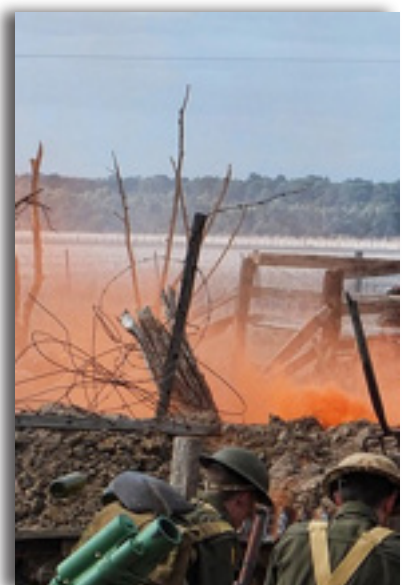
My aunt wants to smell those famous pine trees
before she dies.
She wants to see where you lived
and know why you left,
she clutches her papers, in biro and photocopy

her family tree,
spider hand, leaning hard left
on all those Thomases
Daniels, Brands and Martins
with you the odd one, the night star.

You, you made us odd in our kilted tribe,
and my aunt, she says, you know,
we weren't allowed for so long
to go and see where we came from.
Things are different now.

It has been in her mind at night.
Was it the nose we both sniff the air with
that never quite suited tartan
they said, our Brand nose,
that droopy nose?

Was that why
she wants to smell
the pine resin even when death
is knocking at the door, *yes we're coming!*
– *just one minute!*



© Jude Cowan Montague

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



At the Zoological Gardens, Melbourne.

WOMPOO FRUIT-DOVES

Blow-ins from the North
who've ventured down the east coast's
dwindling rainforests...
Picture-book bright, they beguile
in yellow, plum-purple, green.

BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE

Eyes, blackly brilliant.
Its true habitat, alas,
is open woodland.
It speeds through a leafy maze,
back and forth, again, again.



IN THE PARROT PRECINCT

Patagonian
parrots wear landscape colours:
earth, clay, rock. Conures
celebrate high noon; the rest,
bright fruits, leaves, the bluest skies.

TAWNY FROGMOUTHS

Almost nose to beak
you can watch furred clumps, cute as
kittens, on a bough –
incognito dreamers, eyes
clamped against light, this cage, you.



© Diane Fahey

Gordon Meade is a Scottish poet based in Fife. He divides his time between his own writing and developing creative writing workshops for vulnerable people in a variety of settings. He is also a Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow, working at present on the Bridge Project in Scottish schools. His most recent collection, *The Year of the Crab*, a poetic exploration of the diagnosis and early treatment of cancer, was published in 2017 by Cultured Llama Publishing.



BURMESE PYTHON, CANADA, 2008

This is a fantastic set up and I am
so very proud to be a part of it. In fact, I am
the only living thing in this scenario

This is a fantastic set up and I am
so very proud to be a part of it. In fact, I am
the only living thing in this scenario
that the camera has managed to capture.

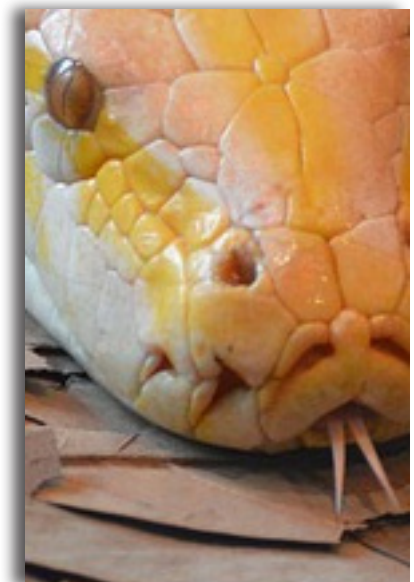
This is a fantastic set up and I am
so very proud to be a part of it. In fact, I am
the only living thing in this scenario
that the camera has managed to capture.
I may look still but I am still alive. I am a circle.

This is a fantastic set up and I am
so very proud to be a part of it. In fact, I am
the only living thing in this scenario
that the camera has managed to capture.
I may look still but I am still alive. I am a circle
of flesh and blood set against a backdrop of straw.

This is a fantastic set up and I am
so very proud to be a part of it. In fact, I am
the only living thing in this scenario
that the camera has managed to capture.
I may look still but I am still alive. I am a circle
of flesh and blood set against a backdrop of straw.
You cannot see it, but I am still breathing.

This is a fantastic set up and I am
so very proud to be a part of it. In fact, I am
the only living thing in this scenario
that the camera has managed to capture.
I may look still but I am still alive. I am a circle
of flesh and blood set against a backdrop of straw.
You cannot see it, but I am still breathing.
You cannot hear it, but the straw is rustling.

This is a fantastic set up and I am
so very proud to be a part of it. In fact, I am
the only living thing in this scenario
that the camera has managed to capture.
I may look still but I am still alive. I am a circle
of flesh and blood set against a backdrop of straw.
You cannot see it, but I am still breathing.
You cannot hear it, but the straw is rustling
underneath the weight of my coils.



SNOW LEOPARD, LITHUANIA, 2016

No snow, hardly
any leopard left,
and very little idea.

No snow, hardly
any leopard left,
and very little idea
as to where I might be.

No snow, hardly
any leopard left,
and very little idea
as to where I might be;
lots of metal and wood.

No snow, hardly
any leopard left,
and very little idea
as to where I might be;
lots of metal and wood
but not much else.

No snow, hardly
any leopard left,
and very little idea
as to where I might be;
lots of metal and wood
but not much else;
a pair of eyes staring.

No snow, hardly
any leopard left,
and very little idea
as to where I might be;
lots of metal and wood
but not much else;
a pair of eyes staring
at you through iron bars.

No snow, hardly
any leopard left,
and very little idea
as to where I might be;
lots of metal and wood
but not much else;
a pair of eyes staring
at you through iron bars;
reflecting nothing.

MATA MATA TURTLE, THAILAND, 2008

I am trying to hide
at the bottom of a pool of water
but the water is clear.

I am trying to hide
at the bottom of a pool of water
but the water is clear
so that the people can see.

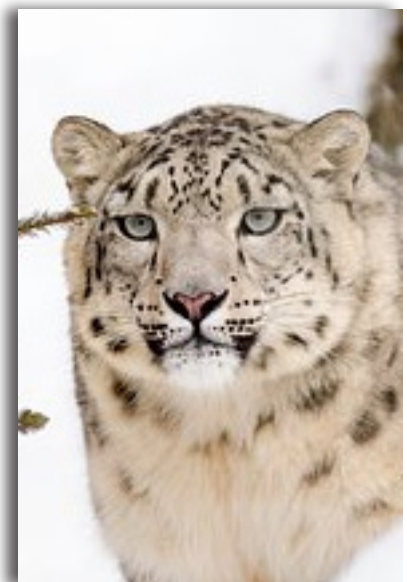
I am trying to hide
at the bottom of a pool of water
but the water is clear
so that the people can see
both myself and the money.

I am trying to hide
at the bottom of a pool of water
but the water is clear
so that the people can see
both myself and the money
they are throwing into it.

I am trying to hide
at the bottom of a pool of water
but the water is clear
so that the people can see
both myself and the money
they are throwing into it
in order to make wishes.

I am trying to hide
at the bottom of a pool of water
but the water is clear
so that the people can see
both myself and the money
they are throwing into it
in order to make wishes.
Once they are made they leave.

I am trying to hide
at the bottom of a pool of water
but the water is clear
so that the people can see
both myself and the money
they are throwing into it
in order to make wishes.
Once they are made they leave,
with none of them for me.



© Gordon Meade

Serafimova was shortlisted for Montreal International Poetry Prize 2017 and Summer Literary Seminars 2018 Poetry Contest, and long-listed for Erbacce Poetry Prize 2018. She has three collections in Bulgarian. Her work appears in Agenda Poetry, London Grip, Trafika Europe, European Literature Network, Journal, A-Minor, Waxwing, Nixes Mate Review, StepAway, Ink, Sweat and Tears, HeadStuff, Minor Literatures, Writing Disorder, The Birds We Piled Loosely, Noble/ Gas Quarterly, Origins, miller's pond, Obra/ Artifact, TAYO, Opiate, Poetic Diversity, Novelty, Pure Slush, Harbinger Asylum, Punch, Tuck, Ginosko, etc.



You smell like my life,
you breathed out
as you lightly bit me.

I was forty-two, and thinking of you.
There was a green blade of grass
lost in spring.

The great sea was letting the clouds pass over it.
Both the dark, and the light reflected its inexhaustible,
exquisite beauty.

Let's leave, our future is waiting,
said the glorious palm tree to the sun
one afternoon after three.



© Margarita Serafimova

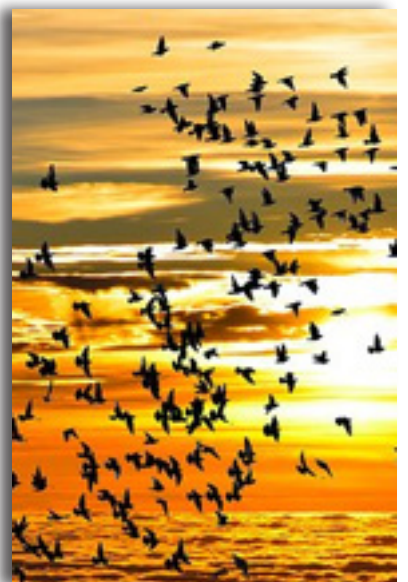
Cycladic architecture in deep dusk
was revealing what it means
to believe in the present.

Of the colour of the light of the stones,
with an imperceptible movement of zephyr underwater,
fish stand, and pass from the present to the other.

One lies down, and becomes a leaf of silver.
A revelation.

Every night about the time of sunset, I go out to stroll,
while the heart flames, the heart eclipsed,
I stroll alongside cool, collected waves.

Birds of passage were passing
through the stars, passing,
staying.



© Margarita Serafimova

Caterina Bacal Titus is from an international family and her goal is to create films that address the issue of globalization. She has a great love of cultures and has studied Sanskrit, Hindi, French, and Spanish and performs Indian dances regularly; her current dance interests are salsa and bachata. She holds a Master's in Professional Writing from Maharishi University of Management, and a BA in Philosophy. As the daughter of peace activists, she was exposed at a young age to the role of the individual in helping society. Her hope is to create progressive and poignant films which ultimately reflect our universality in spite of our differences.



CHILDREN OF THE BORDER

In that country across the seas
land of the brave, home of the free
they're just talking about you, they're not talking about me.

And in this country founded on *Vasudhaiva Katumbakam**
we're one race, we're undivided,
...the fear of disunity is greater than love.

Lady Liberty holds her torch
her extended arms, beneath her they march.
...underneath her robes are those who flee,
from oppression, war, violence and greed.

Michael says, "We are the world, we are the children"
... a plea,
to all those falsely praying on their knees.

What are borders but gateways to fear?
What are walls but a reminder that here
we are a symbol of all we're taught in schools
...an illusion...a white wash... clear

We have water, we have nourishment
to care for you all,
but we suppress greatness behind a great wall.

A lifeline, a artery between good and evil
lie abandoned children,
orphaned...

A great prayer of forgiveness we'll owe the world
this corner of soil, this heart, a string of pearls.
An artery pumping blood, severed arms of a child
under nourished...
In this web of war from time immemorial.

The story of *us and them* is one to engage
dialogue of a diaspora... a time without disgrace.

Sink to the earth, let the soil of time create roots in our fate
May the ancient beings of love vanquish hate
And take us to a higher realm and place
call our guides to help us halt
the forces of fear as they migrate
from one location to another
on a planet, we sedate.

Calm the rage, the out casting we create -
your wall, your child, we negate.

We are higher than this, these souls from above
Please help us, guide us, in this peril we grudge.
Be the beacon on our journey,
be the candle in our song
be the child we are rescuing from the
bars of Carl Jung.

Open the doors, set them free,
You're the ancient gate keeper of this timely need.
Thank you... the free and the brave.
We're looking to you as we unlock this cage.



* Vasudhaiva Katumbakam means The World is my Family

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.

Translation / Zhangzaoyun
Revision/Carole(English)



WHEN MOTHER COULDN'T REMEMBER LOVE

When mother couldn't remember love,
Father pressed his chest, coughing day and night,
Smoking a cigarette.

The setting sun was fading out,
"Lover thinner than daisy flower", feeling of love.
Mother couldn't remember more,
Cigarette bag dangling from father's lips, without words—

Chewing the potherb, bitter taste of youth,
Wheat fragrance, sucking up a rich past.

When mother couldn't remember love,
She thought the matter over,
Always felt that it was better to labor,
Soil is more peaceful than gold and silver,
She said, love is like a thimble,
Who endures pains, who is warmer.

Mother really couldn't remember love,
And father couldn't recall the past.
They had to stay in front of each other,
A life living together.
From time to time they pressed their chests—
Constantly coughing together.

IF SUDDENLY MET

Remembering mother, if suddenly met,
Cuckoo chirping three times, tomb grass three inches taller—

Qingming rain, drizzling,
Wheat, growing fast.
There must be some tears to break stars,
Falling down in drops.

If suddenly met,
I don't want to say the country words.

As mother heard,
She would hide, crying in the earth.



Ian C Smith's work has been published in twenty-three countries, one more than he has visited, appearing in, *Antipodes*, *Australian Book Review*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Critical Survey*, *Prole*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, and *Two Thirds North*, among many other journals. His most recent of seven books is *wonder sadness madness joy*, Ginninderra (Port Adelaide). He writes, and also counts things obsessively, in the Gippsland Lakes area of Victoria, and on Flinders Island, Tasmania.



A CHRISTMAS CARILLON

Imagine this old man an insignificant narrator might call Grouchy, alone with idiosyncrasies, yet another Christmas nearing, memory the hot topic. Bah! Humbug! he thinks, leading to ironizing about lost names. Dickens put the kibosh on Ebenezer for boys, he muses, but darling Tim shall always be a favourite.

In the small, hot antipodean hours – Grouchy's parents breeched his boyhood by emigrating– awake as usual, Google-doodling, he finds a photo of his first best friend, Tim, an echo of his little boy's face from an inviolable time of frisking through horse-chestnut leaves across a frosty common after jumping off a red double-decker bus to be first to climb a coke-heap against their school fence in post-war Twickenham.

Clicking, heart quickening, Grouchy discovers tantalising tidbits. Tim, prominent in high-end business, lives on the Continent, provides contact details. Grouchy considers the word, gobsmacked, thinks Dickens would have grabbed it. Self-doubt about reaching out stabs. Foolishness? Or regret, added to a fat list? An electronic correspondence begins, a contemporary version of a writerly device from decades before their original friendship, itself decades ago.

Cautious about miracles, aware of thinking in tropes, Grouchy, who usually survives Christmas overkill comforted by characters' triumphs and heartbreak as they head into the unknown, keeps laying aside his current solace, a trilogy of kinship by a Pulitzer prizewinner, a web connected by short chapters, one per year, as forgotten events teem back, a rejuvenation. Tim has googled him, both now stunned by what became of those impish boys, their primal choreography, conkers crammed in pockets, capering, then racing across common ground, late, the bell sounding, ever louder.

HIS LANDLADY

Fleeing his severe family the boy, abetted by his older sister who had escaped earlier, entered the life of Miss Ferguson by coming to live in her narrow house where before dusk fell golden shafts of light penetrated the interior, silent but for a large clock, everything perfectly still excepting dust motes dancing.

Dancing was graceful, formal, in the youth of Miss Ferguson, now a retired clerical assistant whose voice quavered, her denture moving. She had advertised for a young woman or girl to rent a room. The boy's sister, a trainee cook, talked a doubtful Miss Ferguson into accepting him, bumping her brother's age up from fourteen and praising his culinary skill, keeping mum about his plat de jour, tomato sauce on toast.

Irking Miss Ferguson, he vetoed vegetables, never wanted to engage with her, brusque but not impolite, using the kitchen, bathroom, indifferent to her rules, her routine. At night he bypassed the privy in the rear porch, urinating on her grass, killing it. A child who prowled the city streets, he did manage to regularly attend work, and was far too immature for girlfriends, both saving graces.

One day instead of hurrying past he asked if she would go guarantor for a hire purchase agreement, a leather jacket a character strutting through an exaggerated American film might wear. Because he always paid his rent she agreed, and by the time he made his final repayment she had begun to grow fond of him despite how his surly expression spoiled his looks.

To Miss Ferguson's dismay he eventually met a girl so she warned of a 'no girls in the room' rule, bringing a rare grin to his face as he closed his door. There were more girls, florid girls who dressed like tarts, who seemed to have a good time behind that door where they played his infernal rock'roll. She preferred the earlier days of his surly look, days without girls. In her dim passageway, still as a mouse when the music stopped, heart a trapped bird's wings, she strained to hear a muffled throb she had never known.

THE HOUDINI OF DISAPPOINTMENT

My sister lives alone, her décor camera-fed, some photographs gallery-sized. We share mostly our fraught childhood these autumn days. I tell her I ghosted away from her traditional wedding group. Though she is beyond surprises my confession triggers a search through her pictorial archive. She finds a boy, then a man, who seems to have almost always never been there.

She remembers my attempts at thirteen to flee from home, the clapperclawing chaos of our parents' cruelty. Those damaged post-war immigrants' DNA carried the blueprint for distress, their bid for a spangled rebirth stifled because their psycho-baggage crushed them, all of us.

Scrutinizing my sister's wedding party, that rictus of gathered grins presaging a ghastly union, I see a blur skeddaddling for the shade of conifers in the church grounds embarrassed in an older man's occasion-bought pin-striped double-breasted suit when my preferred look was *The Wild One*. I smoke unobserved, longing for love, thinking of a wedding guest I have initially just seen, a girl I shall call when I finally leave home with no police alert to haul me back.

That girl, whose sweet kisses are suspended in time, would have wondered what went wrong when I stopped calling, a weakness repeated, heart a fist, a turbulent refugee slipping into grey backgrounds, early life slaving at my heels, love's derelict, singular despite women, wives, children, ever seeking cool solace, the protection of shade, of silence, like a crying child.

YOUNG STREET

This street replays in his mind, a street at the terminus of a city railway line in Australia where a platform ramp emptied into a bus station and taxi rank, where scenes in a movie about the world's end would be shot, where a glamorous actor and actress guided by an acclaimed director would then vanish into movie history, phantasms on celluloid, with the cameramen, crew, extras, leaving the bright light of one day in the past captured on a reel, a street where a boy lugged holiday travellers' bulging bags for tips, smoked cigarettes between train arrivals, plotting his escape from a home stained by unhappiness, his thoughts of the glittering city fizzing with speculation about obsessed novelists tapping at typewriters, gangsters swaggering, noirish women shimmying in black lingerie, a demi-monde of whisky-drinking musicians, gesticulating artists silhouetted in wood-panelled bars, before believing nobody could step back into this street the way it was, this relic that, so many trains, so many movies, so many whiskies later, wafts into view when he is alone, won't be erased.



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John W. Sexton was born in 1958 and is the author of five previous poetry collections: *The Prince's Brief Career*, Foreword by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, (Cairn Mountain Press, 1995), *Shadows Bloom / Scáthanna Faoi Bhláth*, a book of haiku with translations into Irish by Gabriel Rosenstock (Doghouse, 2004), *Vortex* (Doghouse, 2005), *Petit Mal* (Revival Press 2009), and *The Offspring of the Moon* (Salmon Poetry 2013). He is a past nominee for *The Hennessy Literary Award* and his poem *The Green Owl* won the Listowel Poetry Prize 2007. In 2007 he was awarded a *Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry*. His poem "In and Out of Their Heads", from *The Offspring of the Moon*, was selected for *The Forward Book of Poetry* 2014.



<https://www.salmonpoetry.com/details.php?ID=472&a=244>

Futures Pass by John W. Sexton published by Salmon Poetry with support of The Arts Council, Ireland – Review by Mark Ulyseas

Just the other day I awoke from a dream wherein St. Thomas Aquinas was speaking to me. I wrote to a dear friend in the Vatican and asked for some guidance so that I could begin the journey on discovering his works. And as I embarked on a new path in search of Aquinas' works, a book arrived in the post – *Futures Pass* by John W Sexton, and in it I discovered a poem *Final Moments of Thomas Aquinas, March 7th 1274*.

Coincidence or a message for me, the reader? I cannot tell. But the words of the poet are indeed *semina verbi**. Truly the *Word* is *Maya*** and from *Maya* comes life. And the pathfinders of this Life are the poets for they see, hear and feel outside the senses, and without them we are all *sense less* to the beauty around us.

In *Futures Pass* time flits from poem to poem and yet returns to a *present tense* as if there is an unseen thread that ties all together. A word here, a phrase there and a thought deliberately misplaced ricochet in the reader's mind and urges one to venture further into the engaging verse.

*Semina Verbi, Seeds of the Word

**Maya, Sanskrit for illusion.



In *A Song While Dreaming* the poet opens a door onto a path to the self...

I was wearing a coat of rain and feathers
that I'd bought from the clouds before money was dry;
my pockets were full of almonds and birdsong
and my name was the answer *I don't know why*;
the lane that I walked was a ribbon of moonlight
and my shadow was blue as a summer's sky

My mind was not heavy or burdened with worry
I carried no troubles to make me cry;
my heart was full of rivers and laughter
and my name was the answer *I don't know why*;
the lane that walked was a ribbon of moonlight
deep as the ocean when the ocean is high

And as we weave our way through the book it becomes evident that we are in a gallery of graffiti of thoughts and images jostling for space, comprehension and attention. Patience is all that is essential to flip from *Michael Jackson*, *Neda Agha-Soltan's piano*, *Famous Mice* to *Harold Norse at the Purple-Loosestrife Hotel*.

The poet's deft handling of word and verse is evident in this excerpt from *The Troubled Nights of Li Po*.

Lately the dead have been haunting the clouds
of his sleep, forming like a fog in the chipped
jar of his head. There's a pattern of owls
on his porcelain skin as he sleeps. Sky
is the thing he breathes out. On his head pines
are his scented hair.

The wretchedness of the artist, Gauguin, in Tahitian environs is brutally exposed in *Hidden Beneath the Paint Since 1892*. The feelings of grotesqueness is sliced like salami into words and served in a manner that leaves no room for kind thought. It forces one to contemplate the question of morality and the artist. The demarcation of beauty and a compelling sadism.

Too much arsenic just made him cough
so he gave it up to syphilis:
the spirit of the dead keeps watch...

His thirteen-year-old bride pissing
herself in fear, sheets in the catch...

of her fist...

Gauguin: stark genius and arch
paedophile.

Futures Pass by John W. Sexton is a seminal book of verse with flickers of pure madness for it touches the nerve ends of one's thoughts.

A must buy. A must read.



Eileen Sheehan lives in Killarney and is originally from Scartaglen, in the Sliabh Luachra area of County Kerry. She has read at festivals in Ireland and abroad including The Shanghai Literary Festival; the ACIS Conference in Davenport, Iowa and The Cork International Poetry Festival. Anthology publications include *The Watchful Heart: A New Generation of Irish Poets* (editor Joan McBreen/ Salmon Poetry); *Best Loved Poems: Favourite Poems from the South of Ireland* (editor Gabriel Fitzmaurice with photographs by John Reidy/ Curragh Press) and *The Deep Heart's Core: Irish Poets Revisit a Touchstone Poem* (editors Eugene O'Connell & Pat Boran/ Dedalus Press). Her third collection, *The Narrow Way of Souls* (Salmon Poetry) was launched in May 2018.



The Narrow Way of Souls by Eileen Sheehan
published by [Salmon Poetry](#)
with support of The Arts Council, Ireland
– Review by Mark Ulyseas

There appears to be a trend on social media – poets churning out a poem a day like a fast food outlet. The subjects vary, the accompanying images striking and the mood “read my latest poem”. Much posing but lacking in substance, in spirit...perhaps reflecting an attempt *to be*, but not hitting the right spot.

*Poeta nascitur, non fit**? Yes, poets are born like everyone else except that they possess a sense of the Divine and hence mould themselves into messengers. Eileen Sheehan is one of these messengers. She has worked tirelessly, traversing the lexicon and gathering words from the forests of happiness and sorrow, from the streams of thought running through her dreams, with an urgency... for all life fades fast. Capturing the moment like a firefly in cupped hands is the essence of her creations... momentary beauty and then lost forever in death.

<https://www.salmonpoetry.com/details.php?ID=471&a=326>

*Poet is born, not made.



The Narrow Way of Souls is a mosaic pathway to many worlds. The poet has carefully placed each piece of broken thought to make a delightful pattern for the reader to navigate, to experience, to awaken the inner being.

starlight
only this distance
Between us

And this follows, *Where Are You...*

...The night
Holds you in sleep you are stilled by its comforts;
By the fabrics absorbing the sweat you expel.
My cries go unheeded s I stand at the gate
Pleading admittance. There is no one to turn to
As you shed a layer of your skin while you lie there,
Dead to the world; my one reliable witness.

Death appears in a few poems. Perhaps the poet is reminding us of the balance that exists between light and dark and why we need to be aware that without death, life as we know it ceases to exist. There would be no arrival and departure gates. Nor places to rest from a weary life except in a graveyard.

home village
nowhere to visit
but the graveyard

Faith and fate are twisted into twine that wraps around the stanzas in *Trending on Twitter...*

The Blessed Virgin Mary was due to appear
At eight pm, above the roadside grotto...

...Their spokesman was careful to avoid any questions

concerning Magdalene Laundries or the Tuam Babies,
and they couldn't have The Ferns Report dug up again.
Virginity had always caused them so much bother.

Eileen tells us that religion and goodness are unrelated because the sanctimonious decide what is right and wrong, anyway. The opera of the absurd plays on the hour, every hour, to mimic our own shortcomings so as to camouflage the Truth... to refract the Light that shines through to our souls, *The Narrow Way of Souls*.

mother, do you like this calmness?

do you like these yellow petals I hold
up here in a world that never loved you enough,
the world you would never
allow to love you enough

I slip through the v in the wall

earth, be kind to my mother
earth, hold her gently

The poet, Eileen Sheehan, draws a fabulous montage of words and weaves them into a beautiful enchanted forest where one can roam free of the mendacities of life.

This is a book of poems that I would recommend to all those seeking to be *real* poets.
And to the readers of poetry – buy this book!

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