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# Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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SHADAB ZEEST HASHMI  
*Qasida of the Stride in New York*

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



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Hmong girl at the Hmong New Year Festivities near Luang Prabang, Laos.



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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 2017 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.



**Shadab Zeest Hashmi**, a Pakistani-American poet and essayist, is the winner of the San Diego Book Award and the Nazim Hikmet Prize and has been nominated for the Pushcart multiple times. Her books include *Ghazal Cosmopolitan*, *Kohl and Chalk* and *Baker of Tarifa*.

[www.shadabhashmi.com](http://www.shadabhashmi.com)

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## SHADAB ZEEST HASHMI

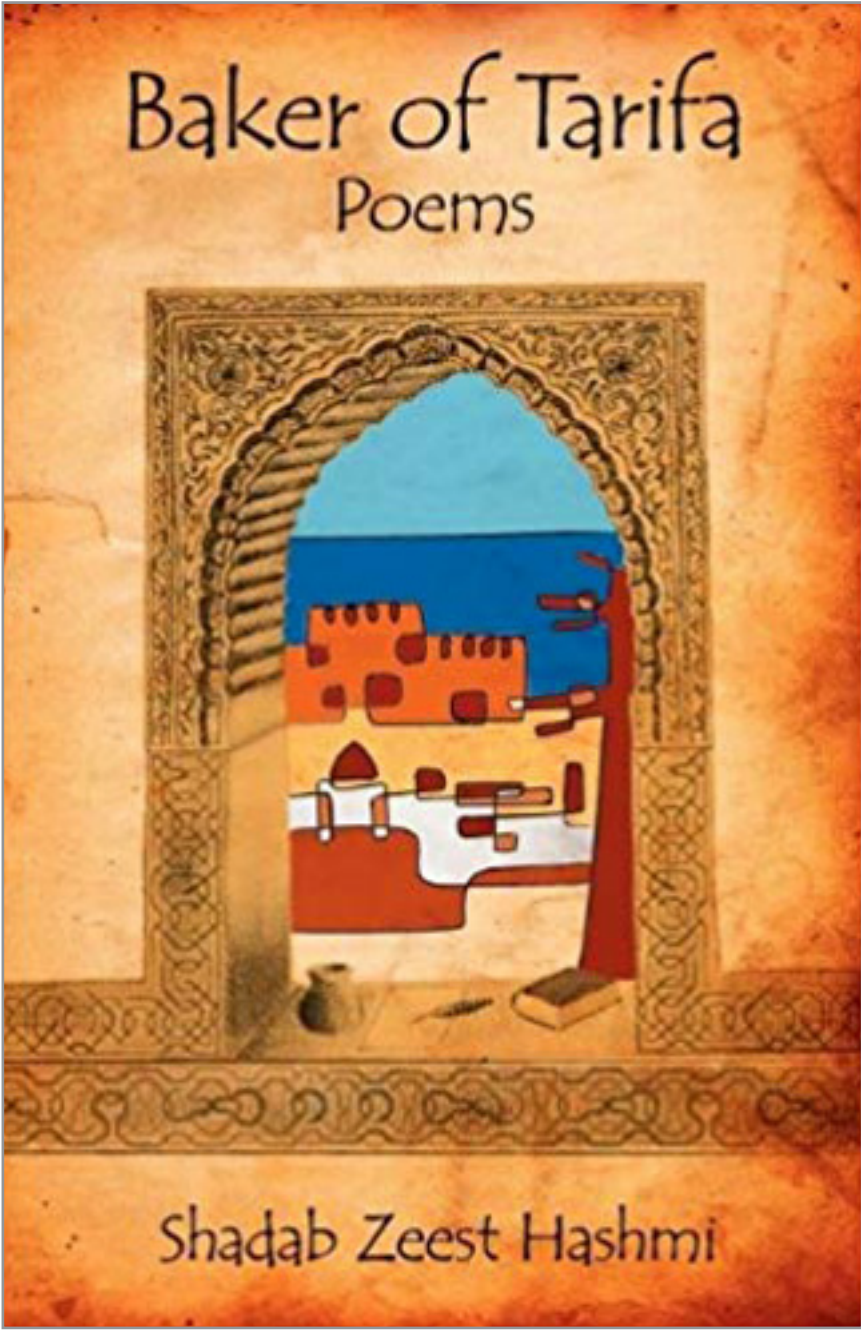
### 'WITH HALF THE HEART OF A TRADER'

#### AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION

#### BY PETER O'NEILL

It was only some weeks ago that the American poet and Editor Richard Krawiec got in touch with me, asking me if I would like to meet up with the Pakistani-American poet Shadab Zeest Hashmi. Being free, and a little intrigued, I immediately agreed. Shadab was interested in doing a public reading, it was to be her first time in Ireland. Notice was quite short, and the events I suggested to her where on nights when she was not able to attend, so I decided to invite her out to *The Gladstone Inn* in my home town of Skerries where I have held many public readings with other writers, usually the second Wednesday of each month. Shadab, to my surprise, immediately agreed. She would be out to see me that very night. I must confess, I had no idea what to expect. So, I went to the internet and typed in her name. The first book of hers which caught my eye was her debut collection *Baker of Tarifa* (Poetic Matrix Press, 2010).





The *Baker of Tarifa* is a collection set in Moorish Spain (711-1492), so a period of almost 800 years. The poems are richly atmospheric and as culturally diverse as you would expect, considering the history Hashmi wishes to inhabit. And inhabit she does. The first poem I should like to treat from this collection is a poem that I actually partly read with her and one of her sons, in *The Gladstone Inn* that fateful night. The poem is called *The Confectioner's District in Sevilla: Bakers Chant*.

<i>The river</i> Sweets in its spine	Sweets in its spine	Gold in its mouth
<i>The river</i>	Shivering before dawn	Honeycomb
	Shimmering alchemy	Gold's honey boiling
	Shivering	Shivering before dawn
<i>Before dawn</i> <i>The confectioners</i> <i>awaken</i> The confectioners awaken	To different gods	Same sugar
	From orange blossom Blossom	Dreams
	Figs Pomegranates	Cream
	Promises Honey became word	Of milk and honey
The river stirs	Word become vapour	Rises



The ovens heat up	The dough rises The dough rises	The dough rises The dough rises
<i>The sun rises</i>	Honey river boils over Heaven and Hell	Heaven and Hell
The sun rises	On the patisseries	The bakeries
Sugar dust rises	In places of worship Same God Different places	Same God Sugar dust settles
	All scores	

One of the things that immediately struck me about the reading, with Shadab’s family, was the amount of pleasure and fun the whole exercise was. Despite a healthy respect shown for the ‘linguistic game’, as Wittgenstein might refer to it, there was no brooding solemnity going. No reverential silence, as is so often the way at ‘Irish’ readings. And, one reason why I stay the hell away from so many!

The next thing I discovered was the incredible use of language, the natural sophistication of the choice of Hashmi’s lexicon, which of course was determined by the historic and so cultural context of the times. When I asked Shadab about the content of the poem, she went on to inform me that back in medieval Spain they shared communal ovens which the citizens of Sevilla would then go to, upon making their own dough, and while they waited for their bread to rise, they sang! Imagine Jews, Christians and Muslims all congregating together in the town squares, chanting songs together at dawn, while waiting for their bread to bake! This was before the Spanish inquisition, and all of the subsequent religious war and repression, which Shadab also treats in this wonderful book. But, while we sat there in my local pub, I remember looking at Shadab and her young family and thinking what an extraordinarily rich cultural heritage she brings with her, such a tonic for the often bleak, and often intolerant 21st century.

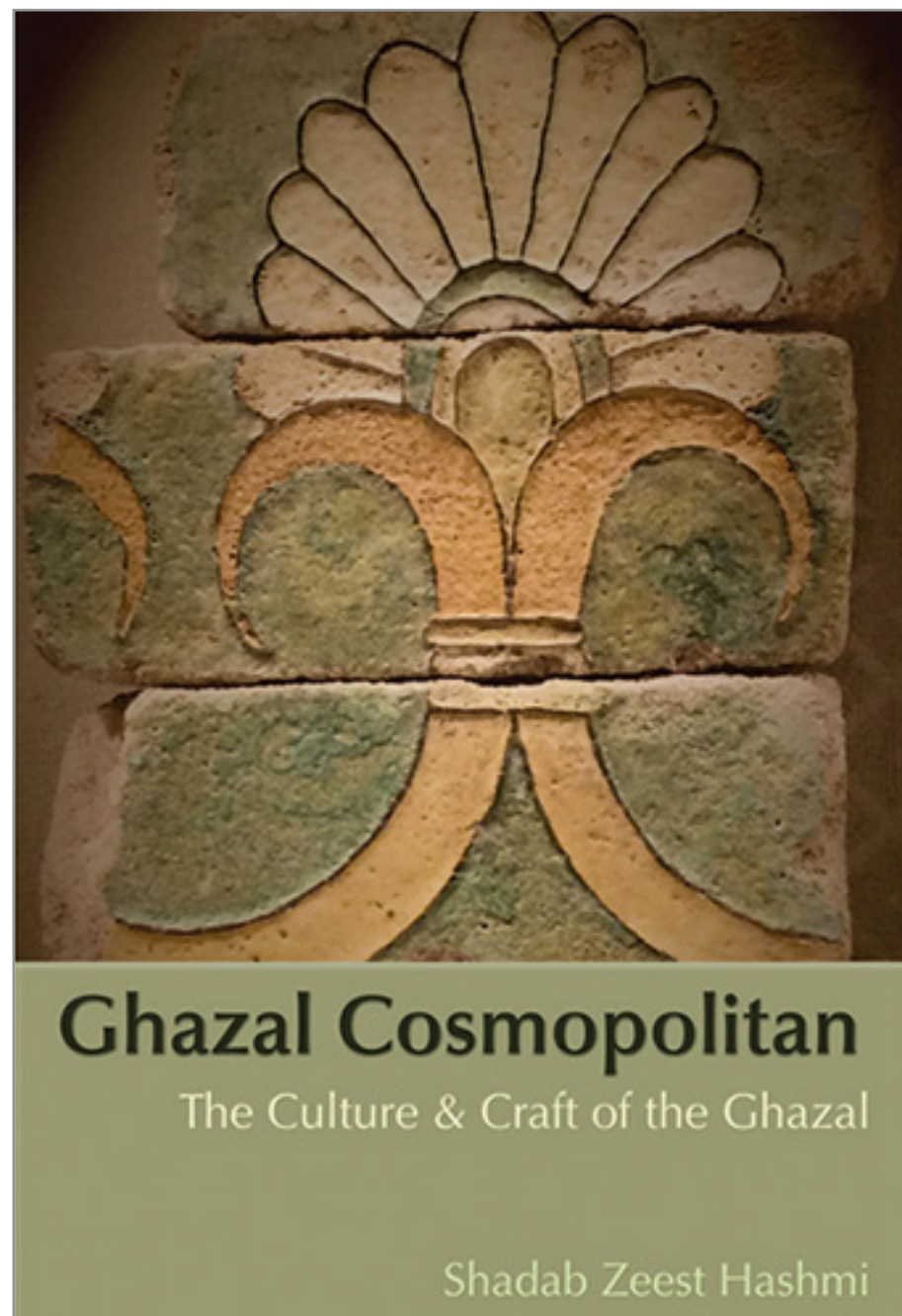
I teach English as a Foreign Language to students from all over the world, and have been doing so for more than ten years, and I brought the above poem by Shadab into the school where I currently teach; I teach Upper Intermediate + students in both the morning and the afternoon. Most of the students that I teach come from South American countries, so there first language is either Spanish or Portuguese, both Romance language with their roots in Latin.

Some of the students, particularly the Brazilian, have very pronounced accents which sometimes impede comprehension. I am always looking for new ways to help them with their pronunciation. I knew that the students, who are very conscientious, playful and very hard-working, would enjoy Shadab’s wonderfully instructive yet playful poetry. And so, I gave them hand- outs of the poem, organised the students into groups of threes and got them to each take a column and read it aloud. Because of the playful way in which the poem is structured, the students had great fun trying to keep their attention focused as they read while the apparent shift in syntax allowed the most beautiful and apparently random associations to flow into one another. This caused a lot of good humour in the class, and as a teacher, but also a poet, I felt rather good, that for once here was a classroom of students that were working with poetry yet in a subtle and playfully instructive way. I of course wrote a lot of the difficult lexical items up on the board, writing all the vowels in red marker, to high- light them, putting black strokes over each syllable count, to help them follow the rhythm. A note on this particular aspect, Latin languages have a fundamentally different rhythm to Anglo- Saxon English, which is basically a Germanic language. I often emphasise this with the students, as they tend to forget. A poem like *The Confectioners’ District in Sevilla: Bakers Chant* is both a teacher’s and student’s dream of a poem to work with in the classroom, so if you are a teacher reading this, go ahead and try it!

One of the other things that I am trying to get the students to work on is their vocabulary, getting them to memorise elevated collocations, in specific working contexts, so that they may themselves, in time, be able to employ a diverse range of elevated lexis, honing lexicons in core academic topic areas (such as crime, technology and the environment, typically), for exam purposes, but also just for their own personal development as English speakers. So, the next poem *Window Overlooking the Furn* is, once again, a fine example of Shadab Zeest Hashmi’s incredible ear for word pairings, which are not just symphonised notes for the ear, but are also grounded in the reality of the World in which we find ourselves in, in all its political and social complexity.

It is the summer  
Of barley white flour spiced honey lavender sourdough  
From the houses of Jewish leather merchants  
Christian boatmen singers  
Muslim botanists  
  
Held by a mother  
with Kohl-lined eyes  
  
Bread  
for apricot-skinned children





In her latest book, *Ghazal Cosmopolitan* (Jacar Press, 2017), a wonderful mixture of academic style presentation, poetry and personal recollection, Shadab presents her origins in an extraordinary passage.

The ancient Quissa Khawani Bazaar or “the Market of the Storytellers,” is the first fragment of the lengthy history of the Silk Roads I learn about- Peshawar, a gateway to India, an outpost of the famous trading route, remains the small city of my childhood with half the heart of a trader, the other half split into storyteller and warrior – due, perhaps to its geography and imperial past, a fierce restlessness in its air. My last home, a few miles away from the Khyber Pass, overlooks the Hindukush mountains through which Alexander the Great entered India.

It is, without any doubt, the most remarkable note on a living writer’s origins that I have ever come across in my lifetime, and I have met a few!

But, it should come as no surprise. As I told her in *The Gladstone*, Hashmi is one of those truly rare writers who simply records the utter mystery and magic with the historical and cultural awareness of a being that is used, since birth, to incredible cultural and linguistic diversity. So not only her ear, but all her senses are attuned to the absolute plenitude of mystery and sensation which abound.

#### Mughal Summer Sherbet:

Milk  
Saffron  
Almonds  
Cashews  
Pistachios  
Melon seeds  
Green cardamom  
Rose petals  
Cinnamon  
Black peppercorns  
Sugar



See-ing and Be-ing are intrinsically linked, and as a poet Shadab knows then that trafficking in words, as she does, she must sound out the extraordinary sights and tastes which she has experienced in her lifetime. I am sure that she is also a wonderful cook, as food is as essential to her poetry, coming from a major food nation as she does, as it is to her daily life. In truth, there should be more good cooks, like Shadab, who write poetry.

As the title of the book would suggest, *Ghazal Cosmopolitan* is a book primarily given over to the Ghazal, an Arabic-Persian poetic form which, like all poetic forms, crossed over into other cultures and so languages, such as Urdu in Pakistan, and became transformed. Shadab gives a brilliantly insightful exposé for the novice, like me, and introduces, in a highly readable and informative way, the reader to a range of diverse styles. The origin is elegiac, Ghazal coming from the gazelle, when it utters its death cry, evoking a sense of both mortality and desire. A courtly style, like the sonnet in renaissance Europe, the Ghazal has more ancient origins. Amir Khusrao (1253-1325), a Sufi poet, was among its greatest exponents, and apparent founder of Urdu, so rather like Dante, his contemporary, in Italy. Structurally a Ghazal is 'A minimum of 5 couplets, with no enjambment between them.' (p.27). A spoken form, normally with participation from the audience, the focus is placed on the running theme, or topic, of the poem which is always signalled in the last word of every second line. Here is one of Shadab's, which she read aloud in *The Gladstone*, much to the utter bewilderment of some of the locals, who were more interested in watching the match on the muted tele above our heads.

Fix your gaze on the swinging chandelier- every thing else is broken  
A subtle perfume bursts from the debris as my silence propels – broken

This was war and all I had for armor was an heirloom quilt of verses  
As it attacked my jugular, your huntsman's axe cried: *this gazelle's broken*

Look for the tapestries unravelling under the bed, the unspooled story  
Sweet, covered with ants: our unlived life yet (in a nutshell) is broken

Ghalib strung verses for the sly beloved, crumbling estate, leaking roof  
Keats sang to the elusive autumn of his life; a poet so baffles the broken

Economy: a dull house. Let's burn tangerine candles at both ends  
Let's be enflamed moths- you know, everything this market sells, is broken

There is one other form that I should just like to touch on in this book, which is the Qasida which the Spanish poet Lorca made popular again in Spain in the last century, after almost a silence on Qasidas due to the inquisition, as it was Muslim in origin. Here is Shadab's descriptor.

The classic Arabic qasida has fifty to a hundred lines with a fixed rhyming pattern. It is divided into three main thematic components and further divided into smaller units of certain fixed metaphors, which find nuances in the hands of the particular poet using the form. The primary metaphor that constitutes the qasida is that of being in sojourn, lost in the desert, in the pursuit of the loved one whose caravan always eludes the speaker. The journey, a figurative and literal subject of the qasida, may stand for desire. (p.81)

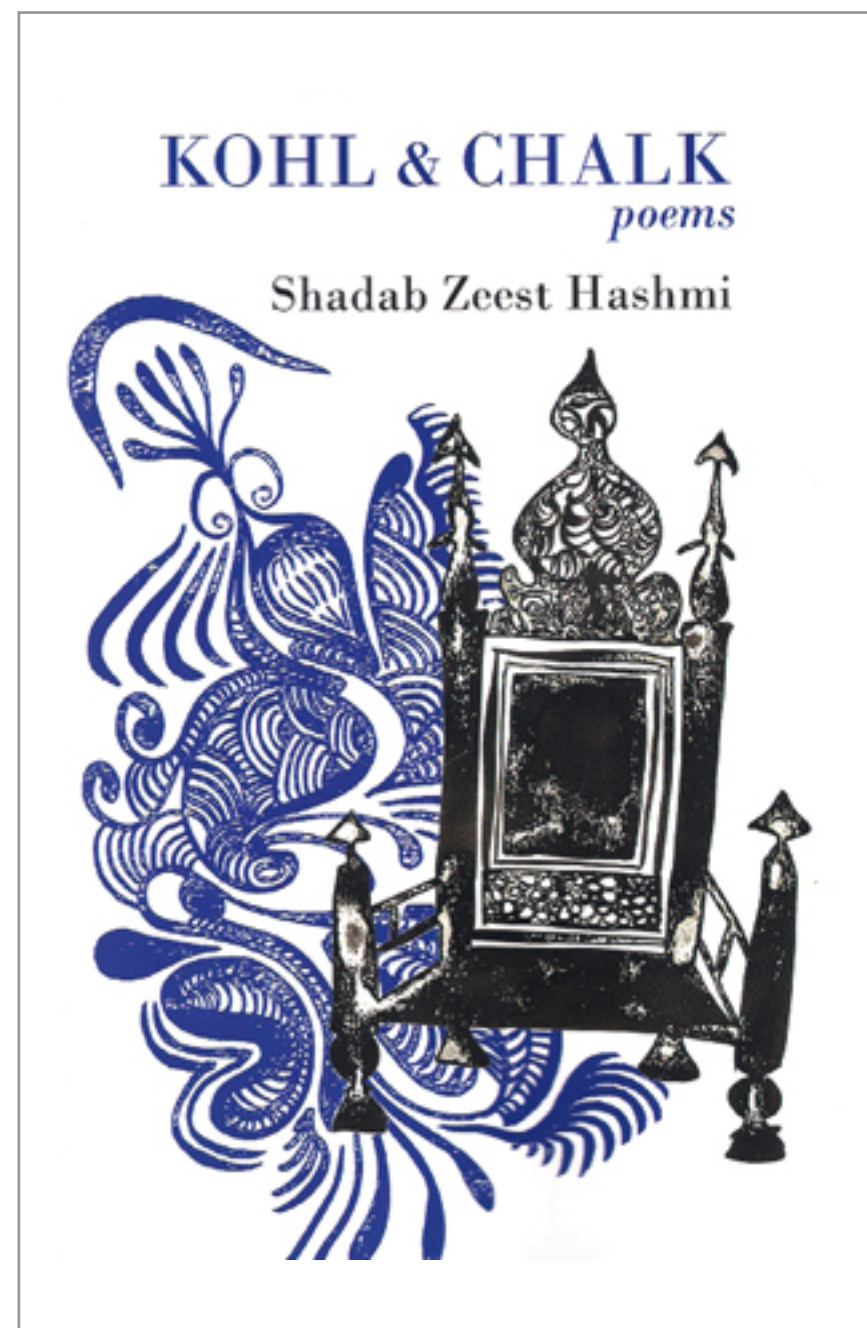
Here is my favourite qasida by Shadab Zeest Hashmi, at least from this particular collection. What I love about it is that it is set in modern day New York, and the subject matter concerns mainly women's fashion; an almost *Sex and the City* qasida. Listen up!

### Qasida of the Stride in New York

Windows, their yawn, their early morning blush  
Glances falling into lit trapdoors split  
the here and now, split sweet New York striding  
Eleven ginko hand fans, cigarette  
butts, down of eleven dandelions  
in every stride. Eleven, gossamer  
hour; hour of boots, mink, military coats,  
hour of holding hands across and beyond  
ash, smashed crystal, the cold between windows.

In *Wicked Cakes and Tea*, Shadab Zeest Hashmi, and what will be her fourth and latest collection, confirms her reputation as a miracle worker in poems. A reputation which started with her debut collection *Baker of Tarifa* (2010), followed by *Kohl & Chalk* (2013) both published by Poetic Matrix Press, and followed by *Ghazal Cosmopolitan* published last year by Jacar Press. What all books contain is Shadab's cultural diversity, born in Pakistan before moving to the States, yet bringing her multi-faceted lineage with her, mercifully. So, she is a poet with a unique geographic worldview, easefully stepping from the US to Asia, but also temporally Shadab is extremely well versed in other worlds. All of which brings a metaphysical quality to everything that she does, as it should be with a poet, you would think. And yet, how rarely it is so.





In *Wicked Cakes and Tea*, Shadab treats us to a short ekphrastic poem cycle, of which the following verse is taken from one of the pieces.

A man, golden as goat,  
beast of meadows, a climber who shears  
Innocence to fabric innocence,  
Goes on crowning himself, girdling his dream.

The title of this short poem is *Four Horns in the Afternoon with a Faun*, and it concerns the ballet *L'après midi d'un faune* which Nijinsky made so famous through his dance, to music by Debussy, all inspired by the poem by Mallarmé. The piece just so happens to be one of my favourites, and here Shadab, in but a verse, encapsulates the bold content, getting to its essence. What one expects from a poem, and a poet, and yet so rarely sees. In this, she is a visionary, and by this I do not mean in any esoteric sense, so let me be clear. I mean in the sense that her vision is unclouded by all artifice. Shadab says what she sees, as she did in *Baker of Tarifa*, so wondrously recreating life in Moorish Spain. Here, by merely recording with astute circumspection what she sees, demarcating the subject, whatsoever it might be, with the exact word. The gerund girdling, for example, corresponding to the faun's dream. The lecherous satyr, rather. His innate narcissism and all-consuming needs, heedless to those of any other. From generation to generation, the mythic beast arises again and again, in the guise of the everyman. And this she plucks from the papered dream, the doom poppy in the hemlock. Girdling is *le mot juste* as it effeminises the satyr, being a moral judgement; chasteness being designated far more masculine a feature than proliferation. Such is Hashmi's double-bladed sword; a keen ear for the right word, and the moral compass allied with it. Shadab's Qasida's in *Wicked Cakes and Tea* are short ten-line meditations, on subjects as diverse as Plato, divans and black coats! And, they are delightful, every cup full. Here she is on Plato. I give the poem in its entirety, so that the reader may appreciate themselves a taste of the beauty which in store for them.

#### Qasida of the Bridge of Teacups

The soul cleaves into two somewhere along the birth canal,  
didn't you say, Plato? I send your echo back to Athens  
from my rug of locked antlers in Peshawar  
where I fill a teacup with the question of half my soul  
(as I watercolor a whitewashed village I've yet to see). In  
the torpor of the mango season, I am closer to the heady basil  
that fishermen of the Black Sea put in their boats for luck, to Chinese  
lemongrass—Will I know my soul by the musk of tannin ink, sugarcane  
pulp, sweat of a calligrapher's palm? The antlers are fading. From teacups  
of clay, bison-bone, crystal, bamboo, I build a bridge to the other half.

© Peter O'Neill





### Tea Fetish

Fetish (from the Portuguese *feitiço*)  
 is “a human-made object that has power  
 over others.” Fold the faces of the dead  
 in newsprint: It’s half past three, everything  
 stops for tea. A homesick princess had a  
 sinking feeling once—it stopped all the  
 clocks from Bath to Bengal. Look how a woman  
 belongs to power, her fetish hangs everywhere:  
 wedding patios, walled asylums, office  
 deals, marbled parlors, memory-dribbling deathbeds

The next time Shadab comes to Ireland, I must get her to have a pint with me. I’d love to read the results of how such an experience might leave a trace upon her world. For she is a poet of the ordinary world, taking the mixed ingredients of her poems, be they the many different breads of medieval Spain, or the teas of the world. Yet with them, as all true poets do, she renders them extra-ordinary again. So that we, the readers, are sent back, by her books, to the world anew, as if we have been given fresher eyes in which to eat, drink and in a word... to delight in life once again. I can give no higher praise than this. I raise my cup!



The poet uses each poem as an opportunity to let speak each artefact, or phenomenon. And it is her skill, and desire, which allows us, the readers, to enter into each world, momentarily, becoming, or at least given privileged access to it. Such multiplicity is unusual in itself, and a welcome boon to the reader who feels each time refreshingly renewed with each passing item. But, what is wholly rejuvenating is the singularity of the voice behind each visitation itself. While in such plurality it remains strictly singular, so fidelity is shown; one could even say it is the single most register which animates this astonishingly proliferate poetic venture. Behind the multiplicity of worlds on offer, the overall singularity of the poet’s voice endures, and this has profoundly meaningful resonance. As it involves “Be-ING”. And here we have the visionary, again.

For an Irish reader, also a tea and literary obsessed nation, there is much to ponder upon here. Having tea with Marcel Proust, *sans Madeline*! I particularly enjoyed the *Gun Powder Tea* section; the book is divided up into a series of parts, each one denoted by tea varietals, rendering each section as diversely flavoured as the individual tea plants themselves, a delightful conceit.

The ship is now a salty ghost  
 as is the captain and the subaltern  
 They rise uncontrollably to the swell  
 under the empire’s ivory plectrum  
 Fistful of opium newsprint  
 Scalloped sugar spoon and syrup doused bayonet  
 The moment of docking has fortune’s flickers  
 Keeps arriving  
 Boxes of rolled tea leaves  
 still mistaken for ammunition

For in this section I also came upon the Mad Hatter, from Lewis Carroll. Shadab’s love of literature, irrespective of culture, for India, Pakistan, Persia and the Middle-East all vie with Europe, as well as the United States. Shadab Zeest Hashmi is truly a universal poet, with a keen eye observing each individual tea-filled world. This poem is taken from the *Devils and Dervishes at the Tea Party* section.



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, Hong Kong, 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](http://www.amazon.com) [www.byteensemble.com](http://www.byteensemble.com)



## COFFEE FUGUE

1  
*prologue*  
(melbourne, may 2018)

I like a coffee  
okay. what kind of coffee  
what? just a coffee.

2  
*americano*  
(melbourne, may 2018)

we are from Houston  
want a coffee like at home  
sweet and strong and hot

3  
*babyccino*  
(melbourne, may 2018)

she's maybe three  
turns the spoon like her mother  
comes from camberwell

4  
*skinny latte*  
(melbourne, may 2018)

had liposuction  
cut down on anything fat  
coffee's her only vice

5  
*short black*  
(melbourne, may 2018)

she's into design  
graphic but also landscape  
a soulful hipster

6  
*long black – extra hot*  
(melbourne, may 2018)

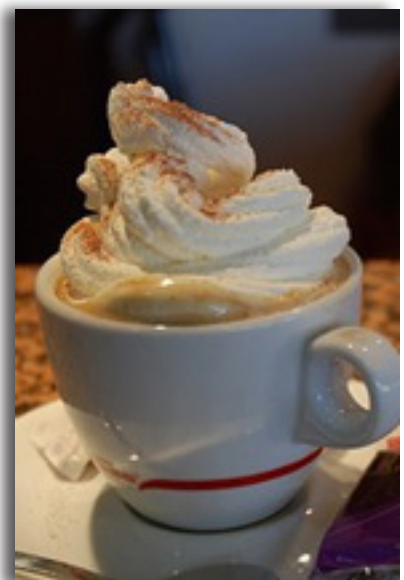
tight black jeans, fitted  
iphone 8, vutton handbag  
ray ban sun glasses

7  
*flat white*  
(melbourne, may 2018)

just bought a new ute  
a ladder for the high stuff  
barracks for the pies

8  
*cappuccino*  
(melbourne, may 2018)

real estate, that's her  
pencil skirt and stark white blouse  
fake lashes and tan





COFFEE FUGUE *contd....*

9

*mocha*

(melbourne, may 2018)

financial advice  
numbers and the bottom line  
make him so horny

10

*soi latte*

(melbourne, may 2018)

she is voting green  
wears a high fashion black dress  
and a knitted scarf

11

*green tea*

(melbourne, may 2018)

she loves almonds  
yoga-mat under one arm  
she checks her fit bit

12

*piccolo latte*

(melbourne, may 2018)

it's coffee and froth  
just the right fix that I need  
to attack the day

13

*affogato*

(melbourne, may 2018)

I just love the word  
and I love the icecream too  
and frangelico

14

*irish coffee*

(melbourne, may 2018)

what's wrong with whiskey?  
9 am in the morning?  
you know I'm irish.

15

*chai latte*

(melbourne, may 2018)

because of my health  
I'm dairy intolerant  
and think of the cows!



© Joachim Matschoss



Maria Wallace was born in Catalonia, lived in Chile for ten years and later settled in Dublin. She has won many national and international poetry prizes, amongst them The Sunday Tribune Hennessy Literary Awards, 2006. Her work has been published in Ireland, England Italy, Australia and Catalonia. In 1996 she founded Virginia House Creative Writers and has edited four anthologies of their work. She has published two bilingual poetry collections (English - Catalan). She judges The Jonathan Swift Awards.



## IN CONNACHT

*(Cromwell's time)*

He planted the spade in the ground,  
said: 'This is mine,  
mine is this stony mountain slope.  
I swear I'll turn  
this unforgiving wild place  
to fruitful fields.  
Here I'll plant the seeds  
of my future,  
will work from sunrise to sunset,  
till my days are done.'

He planted the spade in the ground,  
said nothing, a photograph  
speaks no words:  
I have given him mine,  
which I read from his rigid stance,  
from the fierce look in his eyes.

## SOUNDS OF A COUNTRY TRACK

The afternoon brims with word sounds:  
on one side of this track sun-baked wild oats play  
faint maraca music at wind's whim,

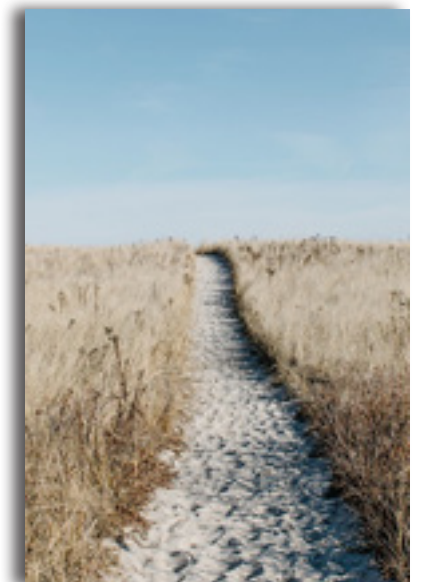
on the other, canes whisper by a dried up stream,  
old mysteries resonate in their reedy throats;  
rain prayer murmurs bounce

from tree to tree. Scurrying lizards' feet  
crunch over dry grass,  
the whirl of a metal sunflower windmill

cuts the sky's shimmer, wills water for thirsty fields.  
Above the swallows' chirping, cicadas  
deafen the air. Bees hum a pollen-laden effort.

Dusty tracks under my feet;  
on them lines shape themselves,  
fill their own spaces, become afternoon.

My word sounds are those  
of the ordinary; this moment is not,  
and I hold it tight.



© Maria Wallace



## PERSIST

No one can cage feelings,  
forever,  
drive upriver a tide,  
stop rain,  
sleet or snow from falling.

Impossible to stop  
the perpetual spin of seasons,  
the day and night battle  
of death, birth and rebirth.

No one can count  
the desert's sand, expect  
a reasonable response  
from birdsong.

All we know is that bells peal  
in a clamour of clashing,  
that the sea's answer  
will invariably be: persist.

## BEYOND VEILS AND MATTER

What lies beyond the beyond  
of all that is?  
If it be the truth,  
is that not a concept shifting  
according to individual,  
place and time?

Is there a universal truth  
existing beyond that impenetrable  
gossamer veil which allows  
only death to go through it?

Perhaps beyond veils and matter  
one may solely find  
unspoken words waiting  
to be given a sound.

## RATTLE DANCE

Because she has forgotten her summers  
and grey skies only drizzle  
wet greetings, she withdraws  
from the window, sits for hours  
with the squalid and the familiar.

Nothing stirs except her cigarette hand  
and smoke ghosts who play  
a rattle dance with her lungs.





Anni Wilton-Jones, a resident of Co Mayo, has also lived in Wales, England and Saudi Arabia. Having experienced a varied range of careers she is now semi-retired, working part-time in supporting voluntary dyslexia groups. A writer of poetry and, occasionally, prose, she has read in Wales, England, the USA and Ireland. Her collections include *Bridges*, *Winter Whiting* and, written under the pen-name Victoria Tims, a chapbook of poems about abuse, entitled *Moth*.



## INVERSION

His life had always been  
upside down

he had seen things  
from a unique perspective  
and no-one had ever  
understood him

so now he sees trees  
below him  
their tops pointing  
down, down

and knows the time has come  
on this bright day  
to make his greatest move  
one glorious leap

and the branches ripple  
and disappear  
but return  
as the surface settles

and all is serene again  
as if he had never existed.

## TWISTED

*(Brian Tolle's sculpture, Twisted Chimney, at Rhymney, S Wales)*

Your domination  
of raddled beauty  
sets you apart

but your magnificence  
cannot mask  
your monumental folly

heated by no fires  
since those that formed you  
there is no warmth  
beneath that ruddy  
hard façade

inflexibly warped  
your twisted logic  
circles back  
to where you started  
no progression  
no change.





## NEGATION

Closer  
come closer

the wind is harsh  
snow-laden  
and I  
am so alone

though you  
are beside me

I touch you  
feel your warmth  
yet shiver

ice  
colder than the storm  
falls  
silently  
from your lips

bites at my brain  
frosts my fingers

your rejection  
eating away  
their questing tips.

## PAUSE

We do not move  
your empty chair  
nor clear the cupboard  
of favoured food

not whilst  
we see you  
still  
in all your haunts

turn  
as always  
to that soft tap-touch  
that we will never again feel

adjustment takes time  
and the will power  
not to forget  
but to remember – without pain.



## MAGISTER

Power is your core; yet even more intense, more  
brilliant, is the face you show to the world. I  
cannot comprehend a force so great and cannot

hide in your shade since you illuminate all in  
your orbit. Though you give life and meaning to my  
existence, when exposed too long to your heat I

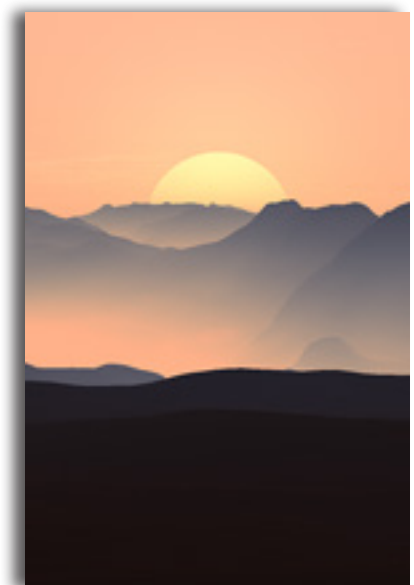
sear. In time, you will grow too great for your own good,  
then burn out, collapse, fade away; too late for me  
to be free. Your growth will have been my extinction.

I will not see you decay.

## SUNSET

He will remember her here  
where he brings all his joys and  
his sorrows – exam results  
and the scholarship offer  
the keys of his first car and  
the wing mirror from the crash  
his first pay cheque and his last  
for the years have speeded by

this is a time for farewells  
so he is back at his place  
alone as he always comes  
but bringing her as she was  
not as now in the hospice  
here he will remember her.





Donna Prinzmetal is a poet, psychotherapist and teacher. She has taught poetry and creative writing for more than 25 years to adults and children. Donna often uses writing to facilitate restoration and healing in her psychotherapy practice. Her poems have appeared in many magazines including *Prairie Schooner*, *The Comstock Review*, and *The Journal*. Her first book, *Snow White, When No One Was Looking*, was published with CW Books in May of 2014. [www.amazon.com/Snow-White-When-One-Looking](http://www.amazon.com/Snow-White-When-One-Looking)



## NEWLY DISCOVERED PORTRAIT OF MY MOTHER WITH OCTOTILLO AND GRAPEFRUIT

In the desert  
my young mother stands in profile  
next to her own shadow--  
porcelain neck, dark glamorous hair,  
red blossoms on the tips of ocotillo.

Last night I was a barn owl,  
those long diagonal eye slits chiseled  
into my heart-shaped face.

After years of collecting  
the soft moans of strangers,  
my mouth is hollow  
possessed by all the lost words.

From the white wall, my mother's hair  
blinks back the blinding light.  
She is looking away from me.

Before my body froze  
I was always smoldering  
in the astonished sunlight  
where grapefruits thump  
from their lofty perches,  
yellow skin rising about the grass.

In another picture, my young mother  
is laughing from a porch swing. Even in black  
and white, I can see the plump red lips,  
the hibiscus in her hair.

## REPAST

*for my mother*

After your long love affair with food  
you had lost your appetite.  
I could hardly stand it.

We both knew it wouldn't be long.  
Then you came home from the hospital  
finally hungry, even starving even, your gift to me.

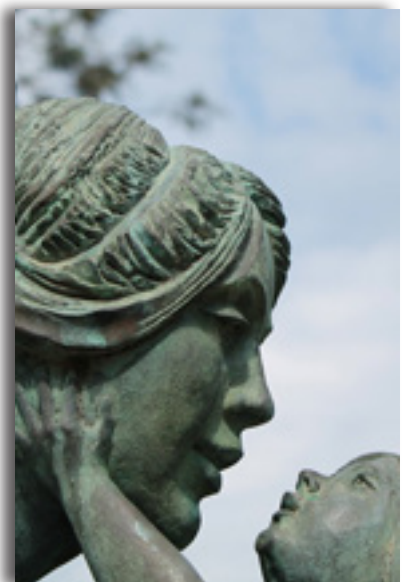
It was my birthday week.  
I would have fixed anything you wanted  
to see your mouth form a dark O,

your eyes crinkling with delight: tuna  
and cottage cheese with lemon.  
I so wanted you to eat and you did,

the first time all week. I was so glad  
to fix you another portion. The air  
was warm for December. Your hands

shook a little but you seemed grateful for  
breathing, though hard, grateful for the food,  
and the sun. When you finished eating,

I held your hand.



© Donna Prinzmetal

John Pinschmidt, born in Denver in 1947, is a retired high school English and drama teacher. He lives in Herbertstown, Co. Limerick, Ireland with his Irish wife in her family's ancestral stone farmhouse. Although he has written poetry for over 40 years, he only seriously pursued publication since unexpectedly taking first runner up in Limerick City's October 2009 *Cuisle International Poetry Festival Slam*. It opened doors to a performance poet who writes accessibly about what moves him, capturing and celebrating current and past lives. His first collection, *Maiden Voyage*, was published by Revival Press in February, 2014. He plans to have a second collection published in 2019. *Maiden Voyage* is sold at [www.limerickwriterscentre.com](http://www.limerickwriterscentre.com) and [www.omahonys.ie](http://www.omahonys.ie).



## A PICTURE BEFORE LEAVING

*To Robert Falcon Scott  
Read at Limerick's White House Bar Open Mic January 18, 2012*

Frozen wastes at the bottom of the world.  
Five men pulling sledges for three months  
finally reach their goal, the South Pole,  
on January 17, 1912. But not first.  
There was the nearly snow-covered tent,  
the Norwegian flag above shredded by fierce winds.  
Skied and dog-sledded Amundson  
took the prize a month before,  
he and his four fur-dressed men, all smiles,  
their white breath smelling of the dogs they ate.

Next day, a picture before leaving. Englishman Scott  
and his men: Oates, Bowers, Wilson and Evans,  
in dirty woolens, eyes near shut, defeated, face the lens  
and their long trek back to civilization.  
The elements too overcame them,  
and their frozen bodies lie silent, under ice.

But a mighty epitaph, beyond all warm-breathed living words,  
transformed their epic defeat. Arms thrown back,  
under his shoulders in his last tent, were Scott's Diaries,  
giving heart to those who brave unknown elements  
without and within, man-hauling into Eternity,  
with his last lines: "It seems a pity, but I do not think  
I can write more. For God's sake look after our people."

## MY HALLOWEEN JACK O' LANTERN

Three days before my second hip replacement surgery  
on Halloween I carved and perched you  
above the front door on the window ledge  
in all your hollow orange pumpkin glory,  
triangle eyes and nose, big three-toothed smile  
for the little trick or treaters below after dark that night.

The night before I went for my op I perched you on the stone wall  
Near the old pump in the back yard and I lit you up again.  
And weeks later now your eyes watch me as I daily walk  
the circuit of the back-yard flagstones and pavers  
on crutches time and time again, slowly getting better each day  
as you collapse, barely smiling now, watching me.

The rain falls on you this morning and there is mould  
inside where the candles brightly laughed.  
Soon I'll gently carry you to the compost heap  
but I'll always remember your handsomeness declining  
as I slowly inclined towards smiling, walking without pain  
on flagstones, pavers, and in the garden where you were born.



## OBJECT SACRÉE

Before me is the bookless front cover of a paperback  
marked above in tiny print A SIGNET CLASSIC 151-CJ1239-\$1.95  
worn tissue thin at the edges,  
deeply creased from years of student hands.  
This seven-by-four-inch monument is not to Bulkington,  
but Melville, Ahab, Moby Dick, scores of students, and me.

Green frames Ahab who is down center,  
the raging blue and red sea behind,  
the iron in his right hand pointing to the title just above.  
He is wind-swept, craggy, thin, as angular as Lincoln,  
and Moby Dick's tail is below his harpoon-clenched hand.  
What crowns all is the wear, encroaching white  
under the printed colors, the real thing unlike the artist's  
nervous lines around the title, meant to give it the  
movement and tension that time and use actually achieved.

The ones in my charge looked up at me  
like the congregation to Father Mapple in the Seamen's Bethel,  
the crew to Ahab next to the Pequod's mast.  
This ex-teacher can only hope the story is still in their minds,  
whatever about its shipload of metaphors and symbols.  
Oh, that they could see this old cover that says everything soundlessly,  
the white whale, the crag of a man, his Arrowhead pointing up  
to the masterpiece title, its author's name above.

## AUTUMN LADY

to the painting *Sunshine in the Beguinage* by Norman Garstin, 1908

Oh, black-capped, black-cloaked Autumn Lady of the trees' shade,  
the blond-haired, white-dressed little girl before you  
clumsily rakes amber leaves on the flagstones and cobbles,  
their flat and rounded textures echoing the glorious building behind you

What about that amber front wall, the cream door arches  
and window surrounds at your back, better than in full bright,  
the tree-filtered speckled sunshine making a sparkling tableau  
of rich dappled color?

Yet, before such splendor you only look down on the little one,  
lost in her leaf-raking world,  
like you



© John Pinschmidt

M. L. Williams is author of *Other Medicines* and co-editor of *How Much Earth: The Fresno Poets*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in many journals and anthologies, including most recently *Western Humanities Review*, *Miramar*, *The Journal of Florida Studies*, *The Cortland Review*, *Stone*, *River*, *Sky*, and *Clash by Night*. He teaches creative writing and contemporary literature at Valdosta State University.



## CIRCUIT

*the rest is dark.*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 635

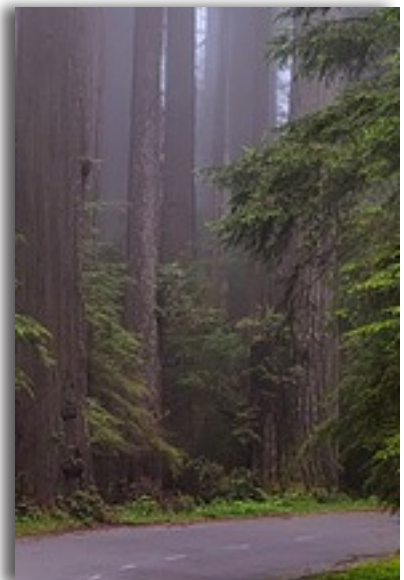
Vacant lot under a few stars and no moon and dead streetlamps, power out and rain thinned to mist rising from asphalt and windows flickering with candlelight or nothing. To walk the wet road looking up, line of pines a dark wave breaking, *the way it must have been before*, I want to think, but a car hisses past shining a river on the road and no owls hunt from the pecan tree, this pause in the usual city, this walk a kind of hope for fraying till at the end of the street the trucks grind down the way and gold lights whirl and spots glam on lines and a crane lifts someone in a hardhat up, hand raised to all that power. To turn around and walk back through the damp air slowly. To wait for it.

## SUWANEE WATERSHED

*Look at the blue of the sky and say to yourself 'How blue the sky is!'*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 275

Tricking notes in the late morning sky, first a false cool the heat rises through into late cumulus, vultures banking in wide arcs and hawks soaring low, ready, while mockingbirds press their wars a song at a time, and one frozen heron stares quietly down into the creek where the box turtle bumpingly navigates, cicada choirs in the stained glass of a sky always falling, light sifting through branches lifted and fallen sweetgums and longleafs and pond cypresses ransacked by oyster mushrooms and angel-wings, and here the silent ones with one leg keeping land from sliding into water as the Timucua who didn't survive us believed when they had lived here, and blue before and after rains after mist rises blue-white, only then will cats uncouple from wheel wells to furl their bodies on concrete and lick and lick and no one steps off a porch and looks up without a hand to hide the sun, no one but the green anole pumping its red neck for what we call love.





## GECKO

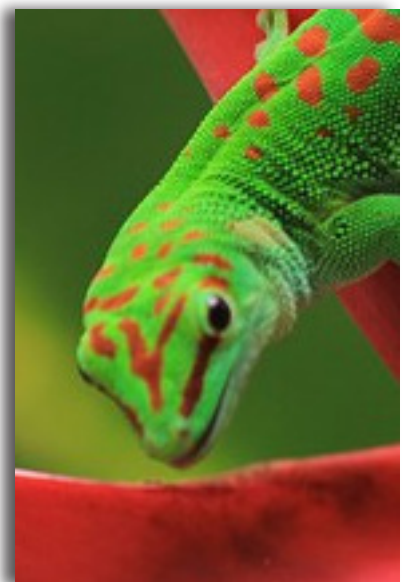
*"The essence is hidden from us"*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 92

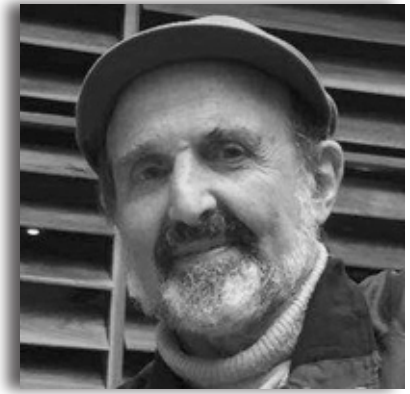
Lucent pink clings  
to the backlit  
(to it) window,  
its tool, its trap,  
my light  
drawing June  
bugs, night  
flies, gnats,  
moths, and it  
circles, lunges,  
bites, swallows  
whole or snaps  
until it pulls  
wings deep in  
till a circle  
in its gut  
darkens  
with bodies  
and what it  
knows is how  
to step on  
nothing  
and stick.

## WALK

Back late from work  
and I'm trying to write  
but the dog barks and nudges,  
pesters for a walk or play.  
She's tougher than the cat  
bought off easily with a fist  
of food clattering in his  
metal bowl. How to explain  
to her my need to fill  
this space with words  
when all the day's odors  
settle out onto night's  
cooling turf like a blank  
and beckoning page.



Azril is a Peruvian Agricultural Engineer and Sociologist. He has published extensively on issues of education (2013, 2015), Cultural Diversity, Anti-Racism, Cultures of Peace and Citizenship. Amongst his publications - 'Citizenship and National Identity in Latin America: The Persisting Salience of Race and Ethnicity' in Oommen (ed.), *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism to Globalism*, 1997; *Ethnic Discrimination: Comparative Perspectives*, Uppsala Universitet: Research Report from the Department of Sociology, 1992; 2 ; *Ethnic Discrimination in Sweden: Basic Issues and Reflections*, Uppsala Universitet: Op. Cit. 1992: 53-69;



## THREE TANKAS

### Filigrana del Invierno sueco

Con filigrana  
de plata fulgurante  
nos deslumbra el  
invierno sueco en  
los árboles colgada

### Filigrane of the Swedish Winter

Bright filigrane  
Glittering shining gloss  
Blinds us with its light  
It hangs from the branches in  
the Swedish darkest nights

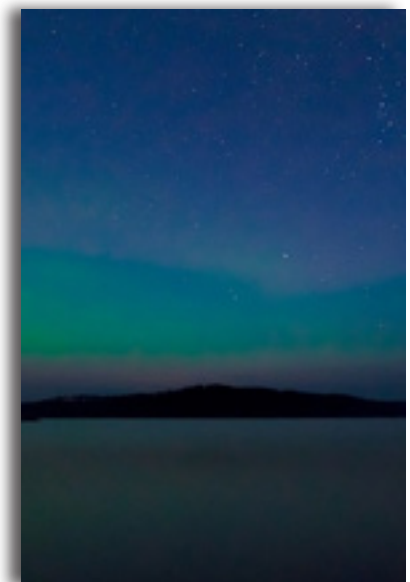
Hoy me agaché  
para recoger perlas  
que fulguraban  
en la blanca alfombra  
regalos de la luna

-----

Bent over this  
morning and plocked pearls  
sprinkling all over  
the silvery carpet both  
winter presents of the moon

### (To J.A. Garbino)

After an endless  
search he found the treasure  
hidden in a chest  
filled with poems and memories  
- opened Pandora's box





Laura J. Braverman is a writer and artist. She received her BFA from Rhode Island School of Design, and studied poetry and essay with Stanford University, Bennington College and the New School. Her poetry has appeared in *Levure Litteraire*, *Live Encounters*, *The BeZINE*, *California Quarterly* and *Mediterranean Poetry*. She lives in Lebanon and Austria with her family.



## DELIVERANCE, IN FOOTFALLS

- I. From the bench where I sit, I hear glad shrieks of children playing and intermittent canine yaps, hear gravel crunching underfoot as two *Omas* walk the path. I see teenagers slouch and smoke near netless Ping-Pong tables—darkly clad figures backlit by the late September glow. I'm a witness, not a player, of the everyday, keep company, instead, with the phantom rhythms of my illness in a twilight hinterland. From my perch, I watch, listen. And when body's vagaries permit, I walk slow circles round the park, a sanctuary to my growing up.
- II. Today I rise from the bench, cut through the park's back tree-border; walk the narrow street with its house of Hapsburg colors: gold and hunter green. I cross the field—once a wild shelter for arnica, monkshood and white lace, and the trail my sister and I tramped to school—now filled with pale cookie-cutter houses.  
  
At meadow's end, a narrow gravel pathway takes me to farmland where cows idle, sturdy flecked bodies before a backdrop of *Watzmann's* toothy peak edges. Tractor blades turn, cut grass in emerald ribbons.
- III. The path mounts now and I'm in humid shade, cloaked in scents of moist earth and fermented leaves. But I've not yet reached my forest—not yet. Not yet. I descend to meet a quiet street, pass a school—walk up, towards the baroque church where Mozart's parents traded vows—and there: the stone memorial for fallen soldiers of both wars; and there: *Schloss Aigen* with its long-shuttered eyes.

- IV. A few more steps, I reach my forest at *Gaisberg's* edge. The silence reaches out, two open arms. Stray thoughts dissolve to leaves—chestnut, linden, locust,

beech. I approach the linden with its papery, dark dress and wrap my arms round rough bark, meet ridge with cheek. The linden, it is said, takes illness in. I while in my sylvan embrace, beseech the tree: *Pull—please pull; take what I don't need.*

- V. I continue then, pass the mill house pond and river, to the forest chapel. Today the bronze door stands ajar. I've never seen it so before. Grateful for the call, I cross the threshold—venture in. Four rustic wooden benches rest on a stone slab floor. Branches scrape against the windows. And above the altar, a vision forms in dusky light: the sacred hart of St. Hubertus.

Between its antlers, a painted aureole surrounds a golden cross. Now, I am not religious, but I reach forward to touch that hallowed mark of resurrection and redemption with my fingers, as if it contained all secrets of forest, rock and river—as if towards healing.

## WONDERLAND

Always remember:  
 you can draw water from the well.  
 What's beneath will serve you—  
 if you're not bent on answers.  
 If you're ready to drink,  
 She will slake your thirst  
 for answers.

And remember: Time  
 is not an It to be wasted.  
 Time is your father; He doesn't like  
 to be beaten. If you keep on good terms,  
 He'll do almost anything you wish  
 with your clock.

Look back once or twice  
 when you hear Time say: go—  
 go. You may be called back,  
 or maybe not.

## 337, 26TH STREET

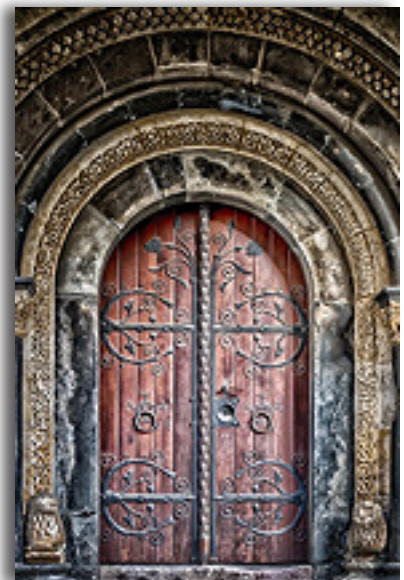
Billie Burke lived in our house  
 before we did. I was a girl with certain  
 rights to the Good Witch of the North. In tulle  
 and crown she helped Dorothy return  
 home. All silver shimmers, that was Billie.

And the house, too, shimmers—  
 in memories of red clay roof shingles, umber  
 glazed tiles under bare feet, and the steady ticks  
 of the Grandfather clock my father wound  
 with white garden gloves, I think;

of cool morning air rolling in  
 off the broad back of the Pacific, mingling  
 with the scent of my mother's  
 coffee, and the pepper-lime of magnolia,  
 honey-mint of eucalyptus;

and of that afternoon apparition.  
 I thought it was my friend up there, awake  
 from her nap. She stood at the open window  
 of my father's study. I called her name  
 from where our small group  
 of high school girls sat in the garden.

No answer. Didn't the others  
 see her? Was it the sun in my eyes?  
 Or Billie, come back from some silvery  
 borderland. Maybe it was the part  
 of me that floated, disembodied—  
 attached only by a fragile,  
 unseen thread.



© Laura J Braverman



ANDRONIKOS, BELOVED; SÔSANNÈ, EXCELLENT

On my last visit to Beirut’s National Museum,  
I come across a new word—*cippi*,  
plural of the Latin *cippus*: a post, a stake

Julianus, excellent, and did not cause  
sorrow, farewell! Has lived 77 years

Alexandra, the beautiful. Farewell!  
Has lived 19 years

Irènaïos, excellent, and who did not cause  
sorrow, farewell dear! Has lived 52 years!

*Cippi* is pronounced, I learn, not with the soft “s”  
sound I first imagine, but with a hard “k”

Aurélius Philon, excellent, farewell!  
Has lived 60 years

Andronikos, beloved, farewell!

Hérennius, excellent, and who did not cause  
sorrow, farewell!

A glass case displays three tiers of short  
limestone pillars of varying heights, crowned  
with engraved blossoms and leaves

Patrôn, excellent, and who did not  
cause sorrow, farewell! Has lived 100 years

Aurélius Hestiaios, veteran; has lived 58 years

Claudia, excellent, and who did not cause  
sorrow, has lived 32 years

To the right of the display, a flat screen scrolls  
through translations of the sepulchral  
inscriptions for Roman citizens of Sidon

Héliodôrus, excellent, dear, and who did not cause  
sorrow, farewell! Has lived 51 years

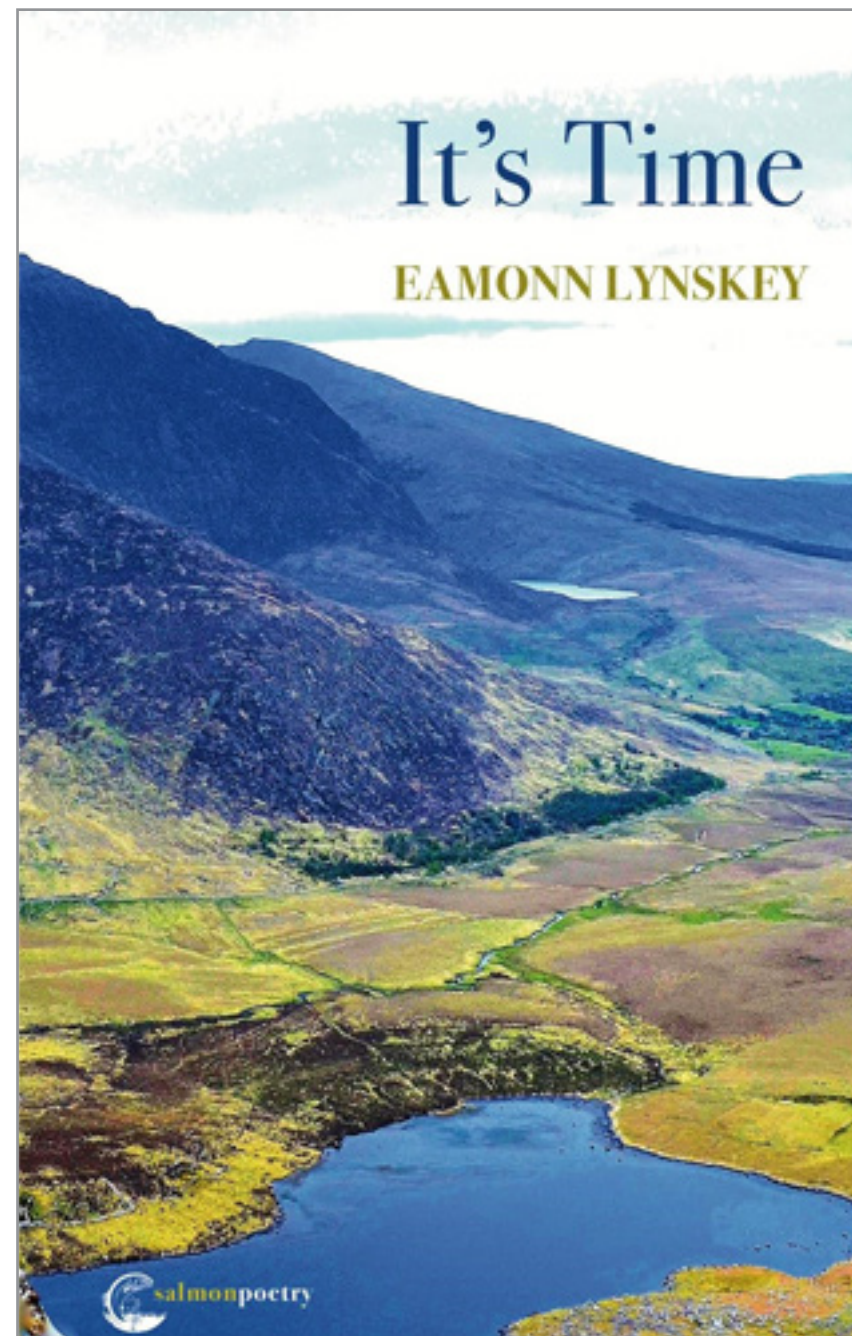
Sôsannè, excellent, and who did not cause  
sorrow, farewell! Has lived 51 years

Apollodôros, excellent, prematurely deceased,  
farewell!

The square bases are inscribed  
with lines of Greek



Sue Norton is a lecturer of English in The Dublin Institute of Technology. She writes essays, reviews, and literary criticism.



<https://www.salmonpoetry.com/details.php?ID=430&a=305>

## Review of Eamonn Lynskey's *It's Time* *Salmon Poetry, 2017.*

by Sue Norton, Dublin Institute of Technology

Irish poet Eamonn Lynskey's volume of verse called *It's Time*, published by Salmon Poetry (2017), is self-conscious in literal and beautiful ways -- literal in its articulations, beautiful in its aspirations. "All Those Thousand Souls" (25) begins, "This poet never had a lump of shrapnel wedged inside his head or sat bewildered in the bombed-out wreckage of his home--". It then guides the reader through the devastating violence and loss suffered by families in Bangladesh to conclude that the poet can and should continue to do what little and whatever he can to assuage suffering, including "check High Street labels carefully, choose Fairtrade products," and yes, "compose angry poems."

Such incantation to power over powerlessness typifies Lynskey's tone throughout the collection. He is highly attuned to pain and injustice in life, but not at all overcome by it. His poems ask us to ask ourselves questions and thus insist that change is not only worthy of us, but incumbent upon us too. In "Deposition" (24), for instance, an unidentified body is found in the night, possibly hanged, yet the women who come upon it in the morning do not look away. They pray over it and leave behind flowers, human compassion once again lighting the way toward tomorrow.

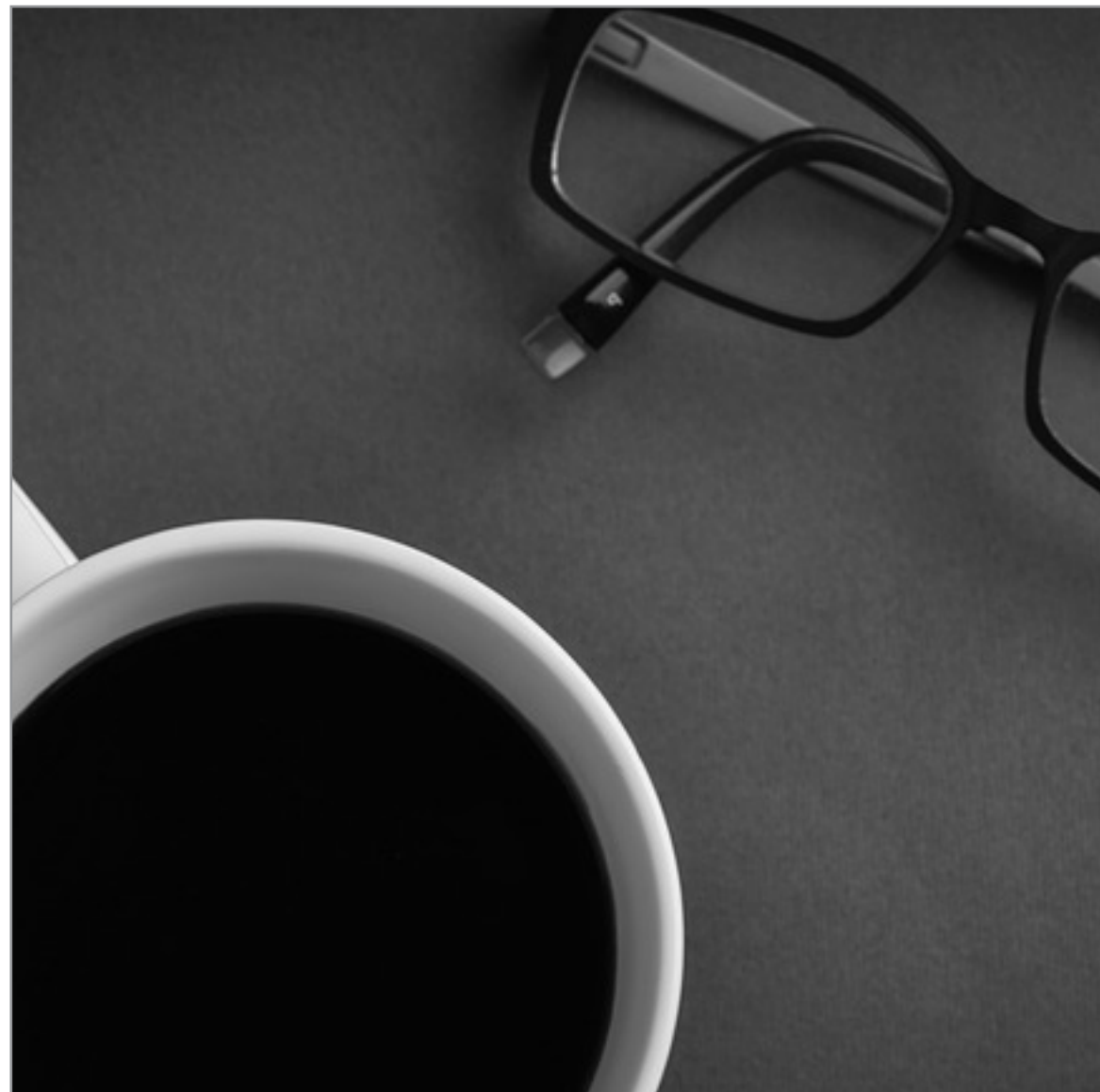
In "Listening to My Elders" (19), the first person speaker identifies with those in recent history who have "just followed orders" in carrying out atrocities. By accepting the probability of obedience to maniacal power in times of genocide or brutal colonial expansion, the narrating voice self-incriminates for crimes committed while also rhetorically suggesting the likelihood that many of us would protect ourselves through collusion with evil too. The message? We must guard society against the rise to power of corrupting forces so that none of us will ever find we are about to "machete severed limb from torso."

Such up-close, at times unflinching and always highly specific language of both ordinary and extraordinary human experience is characteristic of Lynskey's composition. Read aloud, his lines trip easily off the tongue because his lexicon is so common to the words we use with each other every day. His syntax, while never convoluted, still achieves a lyrical quality. Lynskey's touch is light, his syllabication deft, and his verse thematically inviting for readers of all kinds who wish to ruminate on life as we know it, in the here and now, because every "going forth" is "a risk," every "safe return" a victory. And until our "Final Notice" (66), there is still time to achieve a higher purpose.

© Susan Norton



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



## First Morning Coffee After Math Final Day

Mouse, here's something to consider; now that the big math final's behind you; you ought to be thanking God you don't need to be bothered with horridly torturous logically intertangled mathematical word problems no more no more. You know? You ought to be glad as shit. Yah as shit; sheeeit! I sip.

This is so, Rat. Like, here's one so wild I had to carve it out on my thigh to be able to throw it in your face when we got together after the horrible day was done; here—let me drop my pants and read to you, thusly; here's the kind of brainpoop I don't got to tussle wit' no mo'; Hey good looking nimble jointed sub-cretinistic Summa-cum-Francine has a spiny sticky time wasting silly-spinner with countless over even more so multiplicable quasi-segmented silly sections which we take it's because the officially sanctioned test manual verifies that exactly three but no less than five its most remote and thus most frigid and far-out rocky dead sections are completely unlike and totally separate but actually pseudo-combinatorially invalid and illogical but perfectly formed textbook classic examples of perfect sections that at the same time are equal and unequal in area from every known similarly cut out sections sentiently having dominion over their own granted and certified wasteland-like killing field acrewide land plots, all totally lifeless and barren, as shown. The sections are loudly labeled with fat blasts of letterhorn soundies tones of which all differ from the bureau of standards pedestaled classically perfect standard samples tagged off sequentially with the letters G, I, and P. The nearest lady of the night just pardoned from prison and whose grabbed off her striding from the big house main exitgate is commanded to spin the spinner three times and to write down the chosen letter each time, with the handicap given that this is to be done both with no hands and with no paper and pencil or nothing like that at all while looking up up and away elsewhere perhaps at some random bouncyballed clusters of beautifully windblown balloons. If this is done properly as she was commanded, the arrow is equally likely to land on any one of the three letters for any given spin. If not, she is to be marched back through the prison gate immediately and begin serving the first of ten consecutive sentences of life in solitary confinement without possibility of parole, unless she can recite, with no prior study, the probability that she writes the word PIG? chord endpoints P G I correctly without prejudice without saying in exasperation, How the hell am I supposed to be able to do that?

That it Mousie? That all? Or is that just half and you ran out of thigh?

Hah! Out of thigh—indeed. Rat, Rat, Rat—I swear to God, I don’t think there’s been a richer lode of enharmonic relationships any place between Gesualdo and Wagner. Do you?

Hell no. As a matter of fact, while you were reading off that big slice of words I was thinking that, looked at rationally, and looking at as we are, over these multiple fast-cooling sixteen ounce cheaper than shit fastfoodjoint morningcoffees, the whole thing starts to gel together into something like a total counter-exposition—you know; like a secondary exposition of a musical fugue with the subject and answer usually in reverse order, but in this case mashed up into the verbal prosidy-dactylal space.

Hey, said the waitress swishing up—what are you two mental buffoons planning on ordering further sometime within the next ten moon-cycles?

I—we, ut oh we I don’t think are quite sure, Graceahol.

That’s not my name bub. Try Ginny.

Okay Ginny. But we don’t want no more. As in Sir Thomas.

At that gales of laughter from the imaginary studio audience boiled roiling upward around and down in scarlet bloody billows equaling the volume of all the world’s blood-test tubes in just a five minute window all gathered into a single black cast iron hundred-ton stadium-sized single-use bucket and splashed over Mouse Rat and Ginny by Mister Jolly Green big-guy yah the big-guy all come to his night job after the green valley his day job’s within is daily locked tight-shut from twilight to twidark, whose laughter turns out to be more effective than that of a dozen fully staffed beered-up jolly cheap crime scene cleanup toxi-slopcrews mopsloshing disinfecting and dumpsterizing the resultant overly-giddy display of pseudo-hilarity, returning the earlier calm Mouse and Rat pre-dawn coffee sipping scenario where Ginny the blaze waitress is still waiting to know if they need more of her

pricetagged consumables which she can provide them if the menu so prescribes, or if they just want the whitewad of a price-slip to be slid out before them, which when paid will signal them to promptly clear their present space; the answer comes; came; was; will be, and—circling and circling and settling down by some force called gravity, down soft dead into the center of the now, which is; is; is, this; more coffee please, Ginny. More coffee café joe hot-juice wakey-wakey drinque, or what you want to call it please big-gingal, as long as it is what we want which was plainly told to you out back in the middle of this at last complete, over the top, top top top, superhot dump of a prose-flow.



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