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THOMAS MCCARTHY
Why men should study women's poetry

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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Thomas McCarthy, photograph by Catherine Coakley.

Thomas McCarthy was born at Cappoquin, Co. Waterford in 1954 and educated locally and at University College Cork. He was an Honorary Fellow of the International Writing programme, University of Iowa in 1978/79. He has published *The First Convention* (1978), *The Lost Province* (1996), *Merchant Prince* (2005) and *The Last Geraldine Officer* (2009) as well as a number of other collections. He has also published two novels and a memoir. He has won the Patrick Kavanagh Award, the Alice Hunt Bartlett Prize and the O'Shaughnessy Prize for Poetry as well as the Ireland Funds *Annual Literary Award*. He worked for many years at Cork City Libraries, retiring in 2014 to write fulltime. He was Humphrey Professor of English at Macalester College, Minnesota, in 1994/95. He is a former Editor of *Poetry Ireland Review* and *The Cork Review*. He has also conducted poetry workshops at Listowel Writers' Week, Molly Keane House, Arvon Foundation and Portlaoise Prison (Provisional IRA Wing). He is a member of Aosdana. His last collection *Pandemonium* was published by Carcanet Press in November, 2016. His new work, *Prophecy*, will be published by Carcanet in April, 2019.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_McCarthy_\(poet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_McCarthy_(poet))

WHY MEN SHOULD STUDY WOMEN'S POETRY

GUEST EDITORIAL
THOMAS MCCARTHY

A few days ago I gave a talk on Irish Women's Poetry to a very disciplined and intellectual audience at the ACIS (American Conference in Irish Studies), Mid-West region, at the University of St. Thomas's Minneapolis downtown campus. Before me were more professors assembled than I'd ever seen in my life. OK, I admit, I've lived an isolated life: thirty-seven years in a public library, and the last five years alone in my garden shed, thinking of illness and recovery and writing poems about the way things change for us as we grow wiser. Because I've spoken to so few people since I retired (to write full-time) my physical voice has weakened: it is an effort to project it. Like a Cistercian monk from Mount Melleray Abbey, I speak more quietly than I've ever spoken and my seeming lack of effort must annoy energetic and serious young professors. But at this stage in my life as a poet I've lost the ambition to harangue people into a different point of view, I've become less and less interested in rhetoric. Poetry alone is my thing, my companion; its quiet certainties, its holistic inclusions, its luminous remnants of our common humanity.

When I was in my early twenties poetry had an extraordinary physical sweetness. It was like sugar hardened or honey solidified into flaky whitish wafers on the printed page. Its sweetness has come back to me in recent years. I am now more conscious than ever of its private power, its hoarded treasuries, and this consciousness has made me even quieter. But I love breaking off bits of this rich coagulant and sharing the pleasure of poems read slowly. There is a huge connection between slow reading and good writing, and poetry-workshops lie in this creative hinterland, this hinterland where poems get written. I trust poetry workshops more than any other activity in poetry, more than lectures, more than readings, more than performance. At a workshop where the facilitator has created a trusting-space, new poets speak to us without fear of bullying, and with the certainty of a hearing. In such a space we hear the full, welcomed voice of the poem's maker.



Máire Mhac an tSaoi

The certainty of a hearing. When did women poets first achieve this certainty of a hearing in the world of poetry? It was in answering this question, but in this quiet mood, that I spoke about Irish Women's Poetry to the Mid-Western professors, about a poetry that begins in the modern era for me with Máire Mhac an tSaoi's wonderful 'Cré na Mná Tí' or 'Housewife's Creed':

'You'd expect the bright household
and the family disciplined,
washing, scrubbing, cleaning,
meals arranged and milking,
mattress turned and carpet beaten –
but, in the manner of Scheherazade,
you must, in fairness, accept my poems.'

Or, from the same great poet of the Gael, more daring, more personal, more sexual, the great poem 'Ceathrúintí Mháire Ní Ógáin:'

'I care little for the outrage of people,
the disapproval of priests,
for anything except to be stretched
between you and the wall –

indifferent to the night's cold,
to the lash, the lash of rain,
I lie in our narrow, secretive world
Within the confines of our bed.'

This was our great poet, one of the greatest Irish poets of the last two centuries, mapping a private world in the fearsome cold of the 1950s. As that decade went on, the passions of women were invisible. Women were love-objects, not lovers – indeed, the male poets and novelists turned women of passion into lunatics or objects of derision. Novelist Brian Moore gave us *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearn* while Austin Clarke gave us 'Martha Blake.' Men appropriated the private life of women in an act of breath-taking presumption. Novelists such as Honor Tracy and Edna O'Brien would defy this male hegemony in their writings, but the poets fell silent, until, one day in early 1980, young woman returned to Ireland from her home in Anatolia, a woman who would transform and enchant



Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill

the 1980s in Ireland with beautiful, flamboyant, radiant poetry in the Irish language:

'I place my hope on water
in this little boat of language
the way a mother might place
her little infant

in a basket woven of
iris leaves all intertwined,
its base water-proofed
with pitch and bitumen,

setting the whole of her world
among sedge and bulrushes.....'

The above small poem, 'Ceist an Teangean' ('The Language Issue') by the young Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill created comment and commentary everywhere in Ireland, dealing, as it seemed, with the burning issue of the Irish language in an increasingly Anglophone world. Now we can re-read this text in a different context – perhaps it is about an even deeper issue, the issue of woman's voice and sensibility, placed tentatively in the woven basket of a woman's poem. Like Máire Mhac an tSaoi before her, Ní Dhomhnaill is a creature of passion and assertive yearning. Her breath-taking poem 'Maidin sa Domhain Toir' ('Morning in the Eastern World' or 'Oriental Morning') is one of the greatest personal poems ever written in the Gaelic language, possibly the greatest Irish poem since Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium' –

'Ní foláir ag teacht tar an saol so
go rabhas róchraosach: gur roghnaíos
an bhullóg mhór is mallacht mo mháthair
in ionad na bullóige is a beannacht.....'

'There's no doubt in coming to this place
I was too ravenous: that I chose
The full loaf (of life) and my mother's hatred
Instead of a half-loaf and her blessing....'



Eavan Boland

In this poem the poet has fled abroad with her lover despite every effort from her professional, haut-bourgeois parents – including an attempt to make her a Ward of Court – to prevent her from leaving Ireland. The poem opens at dawn on the plains of Anatolia where the poet has made a new life with her Muslim husband and baby. She thinks of the great founder of Turkish hegemony, Mehmet I, and how in his moment of sorrow he recognises the future flag of his country in the bloody pool of a horse's hoofmark. She thinks of her own smaller heroisms, of personal exile and motherhood. The poem is magnificent beyond belief, it is a triumph of human will and artistic grandeur. There is no poem like it in the Irish canon. It may never be equalled.

In those same years, those early years of a mean decade, the 1980s, another already respected young poet, Eavan Boland, also stepped forward and declared a new kind of feminist, person-centred, woman-centred poetry in a series of poems with unexpected titles like 'Menses,' 'Anorexic,' and 'Mastectomy.' Boland became an urgent new map-maker, mapping the body that had been excluded from history, from the political masculine history of Ireland. Male critics simply did not know how to cope with such new materials. Her project of re-imagining Ireland was met with silence, cynical commentary, sometimes with open hostility. It would take many years and many books, such as *Night Feed* (1980), *In Her Own Image* (1980), *The Journey* (1987) and *Outside History* (1990), before Boland's new perception and sensibility would find purchase in the Irish critical world:

'I was standing there
at the end of a reading
or at a workshop or whatever,
watching people heading
out into the weather,

only half-wondering
what becomes of words,
the brisk herbs of language,
the fragrances we think we sing,
if anything.'

(‘The Oral Tradition’)



Leanne O'Sullivan

Nuala Ní Dhómhnaill and Eavan Boland were the beginning of that really new wave in Irish women's poetry. The example they set, the courage with which they began, eviscerated male categories of thinking and circumvented the gate-keepers of the Irish canon. We have had two and a half decades of marvellous writing and publishing by women. The list of names is impressive: Rita Ann Higgins, Aine Ní Glinn, Bríd Ní Mhóráin, Joan McBreen, Mary O'Malley, Moya Cannon, Medbh McGuckian, Sinéad Morrissey, Doireann Ní Gríofa, the astonishing Paula Meehan, the wonderful Eleanor Hooker and Kerry Hardie, the sublime Vona Groarke, the hypnotic Martina Evans, the gifted Enda Wyley and Catherine Phil MacCarthy; all marvellous poets with distinctive and important voices. And there are others, several others. The latest gifted two are a reminder of how the poetry scene has changed.

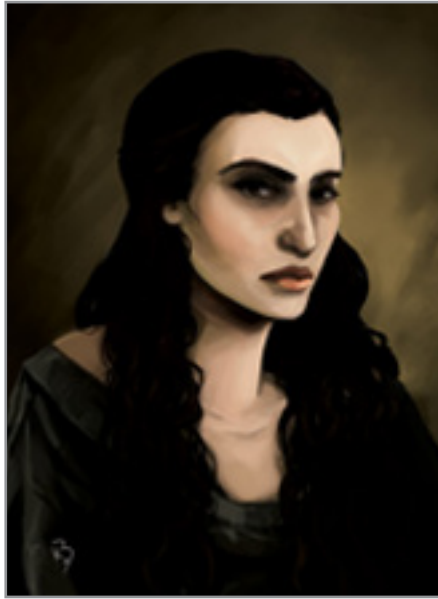
When I was a young student poet in University College Cork the two dominant poets of the campus were John Montague and Seán O Túama; one the great old voice of Ulster, the other the sparkling Gaelic voice of Munster. But recently, very recently, the same University has appointed two new poets, young voices of the South, to lectureships in its English and Irish Departments – the wheel of life has turned and now two young female poets rule the roost in that place. Time, it seems, has begun to sift the canon. The first of these poets, Leanne O'Sullivan, has already achieved great things in her elaborate and passionate poetry. Her first collection, *Waiting for My Clothes* (2004) was published when she was just twenty years old. Since then she has published wonderful work in *Cailleach: The Hag of Beara* (2009) and, more recently, in that beautiful, heart-rending collection *A Quarter of An Hour* (2018). The latter book is an astonishing poetic diary of the hours, days and months spent waiting at her comatose young husband's bedside while he recovered from a severe brain infection. The poems are an astonishing record of the power and terror of human attachment:

'The eyelash that drifted down the broad plane
of your cheekbone comforts me. It is the archer
travelling across the night-sky of your un-
consciousness.....' ('Prayer')

'Now an old truth rises to its zenith/ in my adult life' she writes in 'Oracle;' and in 'Note' she paints a picture of comatose drifting, separation, survival: 'If we become separated from each other/this evening try to remember the last time/ you saw me, and go back and wait for me there...' ('Note')

In poem after poem, in 'Tracheotomy,' 'Lightning' and 'Morning Poem' and many others, she creates an astonishing picture of that pain of human attachment, such a picture that places her achievement

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Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill
Art by Kassia Borycki

in the tradition of the great Irish Lament, the County Cork tradition of poems such as ‘The Lament for Art O’Leary’ by Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill: ‘Mo ghrá go daingean tú/ Lá dá bhfaca thu/ ag ceann tí an mhargaidh.’ The power of a wife’s attachment; the passionate, possessive nature of such love is wonderfully expressed by O’Sullivan in *A Quarter of an Hour*.

The other, equally marvellous, young female poet who graces UCC’s thriving campus is the Irish language poet, Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh. She is a native of Tralee, Co. Kerry, now living in the Lough neighbourhood of Cork (a neighbourhood that feature in the novel *The Threshold of Quiet* by the legendary Daniel Corkery) with her husband, the poet Billy Ramsell. Energetic, mischievous, provocative and witty, Ní Ghearbhuigh has recently published a selection of her original and translated work, *The Coast Road*, with Ireland’s premier poetry publisher, Gallery Books. The book brings to a wider, English-speaking audience the confirmed achievement of her two collections in the Gaelic language *Pé-acadh* (2008) and *Tost agus Allager* (2016). Here is a poetry of lust, loss, travel, folklore and philosophy:

‘Tógtar túr eile!
Túr na himní
Tuar an uafáis
Túr na tarcaisne
Tuar na tubaiste.’

(Let’s build another tower!
Tower of anxiety
Omen of horror
The tower of insult
Omen of disaster
Trans: Peter Sirr)

A poet of sure, confident feeling, a poet with the easy familiarity of love and love of the familiar and familial, Ní Ghearbhuigh has created a distinctive, thoughtful new style inside the Irish language. Her work is beyond politics, it is the voice of an entirely new generation, a new sensibility that’s sociable and unshackled from Irish conventions and worries. The delight in her voice within the Irish language is unmistakable. Her youthful confidence remoulds old ways of thinking in an old tongue. She is unmistakably original and completely her own woman, owing nothing to anyone else in the field: *Níl ann ach gur/thug mo shúil/taitneamh éigin duit, a stróinséir* –



Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh

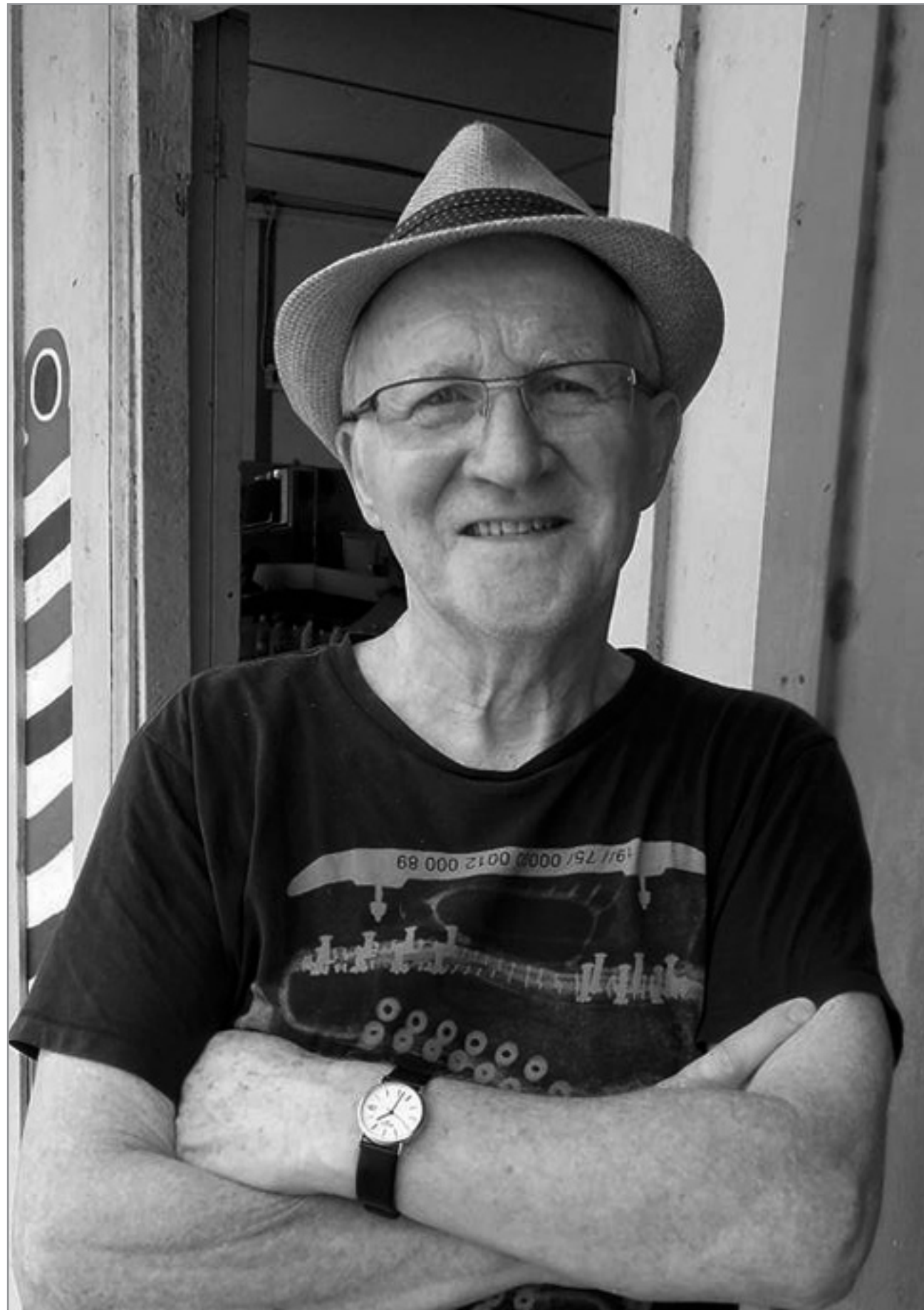
‘It’s just that
my eyes lit
up at the sight
of you,
someone
out of the blue,
that I left behind
at the end of the night

before I came to
with an aftertaste
of Guinness
and something
little less than remorse
in the light

of the morning after.’

(*Áiféilín* ‘Some Slight Regret’ trans: Peter Fallon)

The voice is so contemporary, so young, so free of the chains that bound us to the task of Irish poetry forty years ago. It is a joy to think that these very young poets, O’Sullivan and Ní Ghearbhuigh, now walking the campus of University College Cork as permanent members of its teaching staff, secure in their lives, making a new Irish future, that these poets have decades, even generations, of life ahead of them. They don’t just occupy spaces vacated by lost male poets of the same campus, they create a new kind of space with new kinds of meanings and challenges for poetry. They are not just map-makers, they are creators of a new poetic landscape. And this is the reason why we should read them. Yes, it is the reason why men should read women poets – we should read them for the landscapes we once excluded from our own thought processes, we should read them for that ‘new territory’ as Eavan Boland described it so many years ago. It is not just the story of the long struggle to reach the full story of poetry, it is not just that long struggle that give’s women’s poetry its moral power. It is something more ordinary than that, something obvious to those who pay attention to texts and contexts. It is just that women’s poetry in the last forty years has created a new, larger aesthetic; a larger way of thinking about poetry, as well as life itself.



Terry McDonagh

Terry McDonagh taught creative writing at Hamburg University. Was Drama Director at International School Hamburg. Published ten poetry collections, letters, drama, prose and poetry for young people. Translations into Indonesian and German. 2016 poetry collection, '*Lady Cassie Peregrina*' – Arlen House. 2017, included in *Fire and Ice 2* Gill Education. 2017, *UCG by Degrees* included in Galway Poetry Trail. 2017, Director of *WestWords*, Germany's first Irish lit. festival in Hamburg. His latest collection, *Fourth Floor Flat – 44 Cantos*, published in September 2018 by Arlen House. www.terry-mcdonagh.com

THE MAKING OF FOURTH FLOOR FLAT – 44 CANTOS TERRY MCDONAGH

Poetry

Publisher: Arlen House

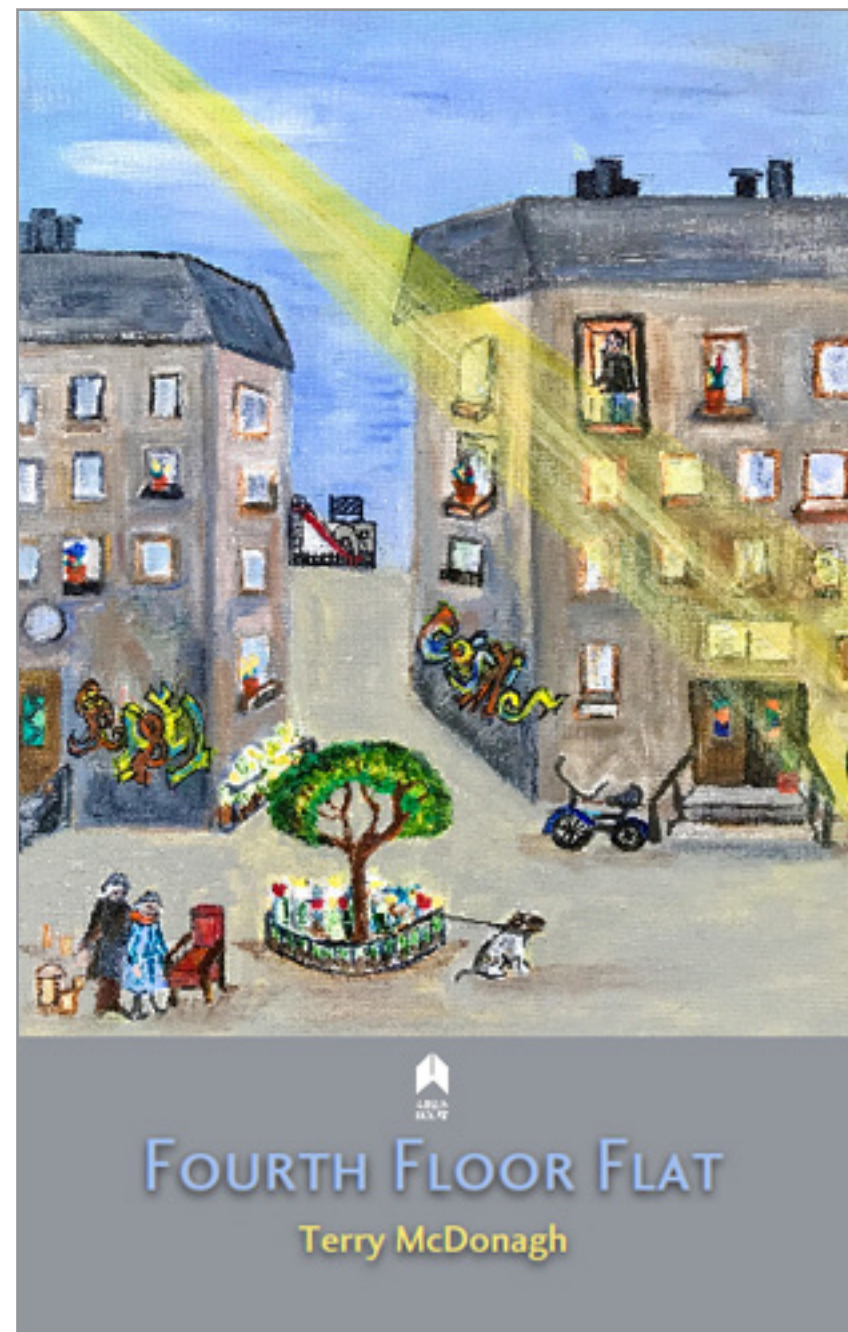
Cover by Sally McKenna

First launched at Clifden Arts Festival, County Galway on September 18th 2018.

Just the other day I was forced to think long and hard when asked about experiences, situations or inspiration that lead to the making of a book of poetry. I replied that for me writing was a process that begins with an idea and gradually grows into a collection of poems – which was an okay answer but certainly not the full story. Far from it.

Later that day in a quiet moment, it came to me that the writing of a poem is an impulse that seems to grow out of a situation, a story or an experience. It can often be a throwaway phrase, a line that I read or a snippet from a conversation. The beginning is often unclear – even to myself – but it gradually grows, ferments and finds its way on to a page as a draft and sometimes as a completed poem. But the abiding question will always remain: *where does that impulse, idea or story begin? Where does it come from?*

It certainly does not begin when and where I want it to – it seems to come crawling up at me out of the depth of childhood stories and generations of old wisdom. It's as if past present and future merge, unite and surround me in a rich mantle of colourful words. The good thing about poetry – like good music – it can't really be explained. It comes in flashes – it is something spiritual – moments to be experienced for their own sakes.



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Without seeming to be arrogant, I sense I've been given a gift that must be handed on – the way my great-grandfather passed it on to my uncle – the way he passed it on to me. I occasionally go to their graves to talk to them – to try to listen to their good advice.

This collection, *Fourth Floor Flat*, began as a short story. The essence of the story was that the individual is very much alone, even when well integrated and leading a balanced, contented private life. We are born alone and we leave life alone and in between these two defining moments, we live in a room, a house, a space we would usually refer to as home – in this collection, it's a Fourth Floor Flat. For me this person in this flat is a metaphor for the unique and special state of the individual, as well as for the universality of the human condition in a more general way.

In our Fourth Floor Flat, we create happy and chaotic moments. We succeed and we fail. In the midst of all of this passing time, we think and we breathe. Think we must and think we do. We must breathe to live and we must think to be human. To avoid thinking is not an option.

When I had completed a draft of this story, I realized it was not something people would want to read – it was boring and long-winded. I realized we think in fits and starts and rarely in long, logical sentences. With this in mind, I began writing again but, this time I was concentrating on splashing images and pictures onto the page. Thus began one long poem in 44 Cantos or stanzas.

The protagonist in this collection shares his fears, failures, joys, aspirations and experiences with us. He is our Everyman and we have the opportunity to participate in his life and to possibly see aspects of ourselves in this participation.

I've chosen this longer poem, **Time Span**, to share with you because it deals with feelings of helplessness in the face of passing time. Toward the end of the poem, I refer to an older couple who *could no longer manage the stairs*. I knew them well. Their two children had grown up and gone their own way and they had no option but to find a ground-floor space. They were sad leaving and so was I. They had so much to tell.

TIME SPAN

Time is a floating shadow
for some – for others, it
means early or late when
you could be left sitting
on your tree-stump
as confused as a crocodile on ice.

My friend, Mouse is happy
with crumbs – with me
on the sports page
my fingers stroking my chin
my mind humming
the fresh air of *then*,
singing to the feel of *now*.

The buildings across this street
don't speak my language,
yet they tell me of those
who have drawn a bridge
from then till now. Past,
present, future. Family nests.

I close my eyes to see
a new generations bursting
through walls, charging
this way and that to avoid
the beaten track. The old sit
on their balconies for a
season before making way
for fresh blood hiking up
the centre of the street
in the spirit of new shops.

There's that circle again.
Children find new names
for footballers. Dads join in
for a decade and mothers
gather up tears in their stride.
Light, kindling on the horizon,
bewilders for its time – then
gradually draws and burns out.
Sun peeps through rain and
smiles on cold pavements.
Trees soak up wet. Plants shed
and die. I cannot hear the voices
of the past but I know they're there
in crannies. Bedclothes drape
over balconies. Branches of families
reach out to far beyond.

An ancient warrior is a dead person.
Dead is dead as long as it's allowed
to be dead. Some, not forgotten,
have their song emblazoned in
the brick and fabric of this street.
It is my street too. I own it with
my eyes. I've got a winged horse
on my balcony and a promise of
dry land on the far horizon. My
universe embraces me where I am.
This morning, an elderly couple –
two floors
down –

told me they could no longer
manage the stairs.
They'd be moving to a home
in a greenbelt. *Time to go*, they said,
picking up their coats, weeping down
every last step for the last time.

Two hours later a furniture truck parked
and a young couple could be heard laughing.
It was a healthy laugh. They didn't realize
they were about to trample on a lifespan.

I see the old couple at the edge of a forest
wondering which way to turn for home.
I like the image, somehow, but it is a sad *like*.

The sun rises and sets but
it won't let us in on its secrets.



Colette Nic Aodha

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

MAKING SHAPES IN WORDS

after painter and poet David Jones

Solemn chuckles, in parenthesis,
bloody heroics of poppies replace dreams,
foxes and birds of battle scrape the dark.

Jingoism creates its own make shift crosses,
palette for copper, wood or paper,
high pitched screech of shrapnel shell.

Coerced to paint silence behind trees, slay demons;
the other side of windows shaped branches and twigs
for brush and page.....

I have to write monsters in words,
trace veins of fiends with pencil or ink.
Sometimes charcoal from the burnt embers of fallen dreams

adds weight to paper.

Forget order, colour padlocks on foreheads
put breasts on doors, turn ciphers inside out,
silence the light, paint the past in shadows,
crowd life with afterlife, water grand illusions...
Threads of time fading...
Briefly..... Heart imitates mind.

LITURGY

He came of age in the Great War,
alternating moments of collapse and attack,
he came of age in the Great war
empty helmet of the opponent,
ghost on the battlefield.

He came of age on the Western Front
amongst the cadence of gunfire, the whip of bullets,
he came of age on the Western Front,
dull rattle of explosives,
hurried barrage of command.

He came of age during his first advance,
filthy pantomime of the heart,
he came of age during his first advance,
scattered fillings of friends
sleep beneath a thin layer of peat.

He came of age with the new percussion bomb
standing aside to let a stretcher case past,
he came of age with the new percussion bomb,
temporarily numbed
by the obscenity of death.

He came of age in Mametz Wood,
the line of the trees pierced his leg like a sword,
he came of age in Mametz Wood,
conditioned by vales of tears,
the wound of impolite words.

SORE LOSER

after Elizabeth Bishop

Losing is one skill I cannot seem to master
No matter how I practice
Losing you every day doesn't make it easier
Losing is still a skill I cannot master

You find me on the street or at a bus stop
Losing is a skill I cannot seem to master
I tried losing your name, your number
You bleed departure

Losing is a skill I cannot master
I lose you each morning before I brew my coffee,
I lost my youth long before you did yours,
Each day I lose my place on this earth

Losing is a skill I cannot master.



Geraldine Mills

Geraldine Mills is a poet and fiction writer. She has had four collections of poetry and three of short stories. Her short story collections have been taught at the University of Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut State University and Emerson College, Mass, USA summer programme. She has won numerous awards for her fiction and poetry, including The Hennessy New Irish Writer Award and a Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. She has been awarded two Arts Council bursaries. Her first children's novel, *Gold*, was published by Little Island in 2016. She is a mentor with NUI Galway and is an online tutor in the short story with Creative Writing Ink. She is a member of Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools' Scheme. She has just finished her next novel and is currently working on her fifth poetry collection.

WIDOWS TOGETHER

Only three years between them,
each man with hair dark as midnight, a bad back.

Our mother tries to lift our father up in the bed
when he cries out that he is slipping.

Jackie Kennedy holds her husband's head
while blood spills from him.
Stars and Stripes draped over the coffin,
the white horses carried his body to Arlington.

My father's funeral so small, I count
on the fingers of one hand the cars behind his hearse.

Two simple black dresses, mantillas.
The First Lady and our mam widows together.

THAT SUMMER

Galway still in high spirits from the visit of John F. Kennedy.
Stars and Stripes continue to flutter from windows.

Still the whirr of helicopter blades landing in the Sports Ground.
Still the memory of music and dancing in Eyre Square,

the open-topped Cadillac moving down Shop Street,
Mainguard Street, Dominic Street,
and the whole of the town out to wave and cheer.

THE BIGGEST NEWS

We visit our father in his starched hospital bed,
twenty-third of November, my ninth birthday.

He stares at the blocks that make up the cold aseptic room,
knows their heft, for he helped put each one in place.

We stand to the left and right of him,
tell him the biggest news in the whole world:

that JFK had been shot in Dallas the day before.
'Sing me a song,' he says, and we sing him 'Charming Salthill.'

HOMECOMING

Our father is dying. He tells our mother so
when he steps off the train at Galway Station.

With specks of London concrete still in his hair,
he carries his cardboard suitcase home

with his bible, his dictionary, his references
that say he excelled in excavation work, dynamite.

He walks along the platform in his donkey jacket,
his broad shoulders mere shadow beneath the fabric
and all dreams of what might be become undone.



Angela Patten

Angela Patten is author of three poetry collections, *In Praise of Usefulness* (Wind Ridge Books), *Reliquaries and Still Listening* (both from Salmon Poetry, Ireland) and a prose memoir, *High Tea at a Low Table: Stories from an Irish Childhood* (Wind Ridge Books). Her work has been widely published in literary journals and anthologies including *Birchsong: Poetry Centered in Vermont*; *Cudovista Usta (Marvellous Mouth)*, *Drustvo Apokalipsa (Slovenia)*; *The Breath of Parted Lips Volume II*; *Salmon: A Journey in Poetry, 1981-2007*, Salmon Poetry; and *The White Page/An Bhileog Bhan: Twentieth-Century Irish Women Poets*, Salmon Poetry. Patten has received grants for poetry from the Vermont Arts Council and the Vermont Community Foundation. She has been Visiting Writer at Stonecoast in Ireland, Dingle, County Kerry, Ireland; Stranmillis University College-Queens, Belfast, Northern Ireland; and The Frost Place, Franconia, NH. Born and raised in Dublin, Ireland, she now lives in Burlington, VT and is a Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Vermont. More information is available at her website www.carraigbinn.com

A CALL TO PRAYER

My students, gathered around a long wooden table
are staring at their small rectangular phones
occasional smiles playing over their lovely faces
as they communicate with the invisible ones
those absent friends they seem to prefer
to their flesh and blood sisters who sit quietly
inscrutable as nuns in a silent order.
I think of The Poor Clares who chose lives
of austerity and holiness, only permitted
to glimpse the world through small rectangular
grilles and never speak except inwardly
to God and his intermediaries.
These young women, lost in adoration
fondle their phones like sacred objects
the way my mother used to clasp her Sunday missal
lips dutifully following the Latin tongue.
She sat, stood, genuflected to heavenly cues
far beyond my earthly earshot.
On silent retreats at the convent school
I too spoke to invisible friends in high places
begging them for favors, making deals
offering false promises to be good.
I messaged them incessantly but
unlike the friends of these student acolytes
they never returned my texts.

AFTER THE HURRICANE: A FAIRYTALE

The American alligator is a rare success story of an endangered animal not only saved from extinction but now thriving. National Geographic Magazine

Not Goldilocks but a ten-foot alligator
 lurking in the living room when the family
 sloshed through the wreckage Hurricane Harvey
 had made of their Houston home.
 Chairs and tables already smashed,
 windows blown, a river running down
 the hall. No wonder the creature
 could not tell inside from out.
 An envoy from the distant past,
 it turned its armored body to display
 the undulating curve of its terrible
 tooth-fringed jaw, its crocodile smile.
 The three bears in the fairytale
 were furious at Goldilocks' intrusion.
 Spoiled brat who thought she owned the place.
 But you don't chase a gator when
 you find yourself reduced
 to living in a swamp. You don't think:
 alligator shoes, a purse, a handbag!
 You just get the hell out of there.
 This week in Puerto Rico a big bad wolf
 dressed up as Hurricane Maria
 blew the houses down like matchsticks.
 There's an ogre in the White House.
 And at home, my friend is vanquishing trolls,
 valiantly searching for Prince Charming
 on eHarmony, Tinder and Match.com.

THE SOURCE OF ALL REGRET

"Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover Ice." One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Many years later when you're flopping
 from side to side like a trout on a leash,
 sifting through the incalculable consequences
 of returning to your marriage
 or running after some flimsy vision
 of True Romance, it all comes back to you,
 the game of Blind Man's Buff—
 you standing in the cul-de-sac square,
 a dirty rag covering your eyes,
 hands tied behind your back,
 the children's shrill voices yelling
 Me, me! It's my turn! Choose me!
 And this is supposed to be a game
 but you're dithering like a prisoner
 over the menu for his last repast
 because you've convinced yourself
 you'll surely be shot at dawn
 by a firing squad of your peers
 for making the wrong decision.



Eileen Casey

Originally from the Midlands, poet, fiction writer and journalist, Eileen Casey is based in South Dublin. Her work is widely published in anthologies by Faber & Faber, Dedalus, New Island, Arlen House, among others. She has published prose and non-fiction collections (Arlen House) and poetry (New Island, AlTenTs). Awards include a Hennessy Literary Award for Emerging Fiction and a Katherine and Patrick Kavanagh Fellowship. Recent awards include the 2018 Trócaire/Poetry Ireland Award. Her work has also been broadcast on RTE's 'Living Word' and 'Sunday Miscellany'. To date, *The Lea-Green Down* has featured at The Irish Writers Centre, The Patrick Kavanagh Resource Centre and Tullamore Library, County Offaly. Currently, she is working on a collection of new poems *'Aves'* (Working Title) with support from Offaly County Council.

Sincere thanks to the Patrick Kavanagh Resource Centre at Inniskeen for all their support.

THE LEA-GREEN DOWN

FIERY ARROW PRESS, EDITED BY

EILEEN CASEY

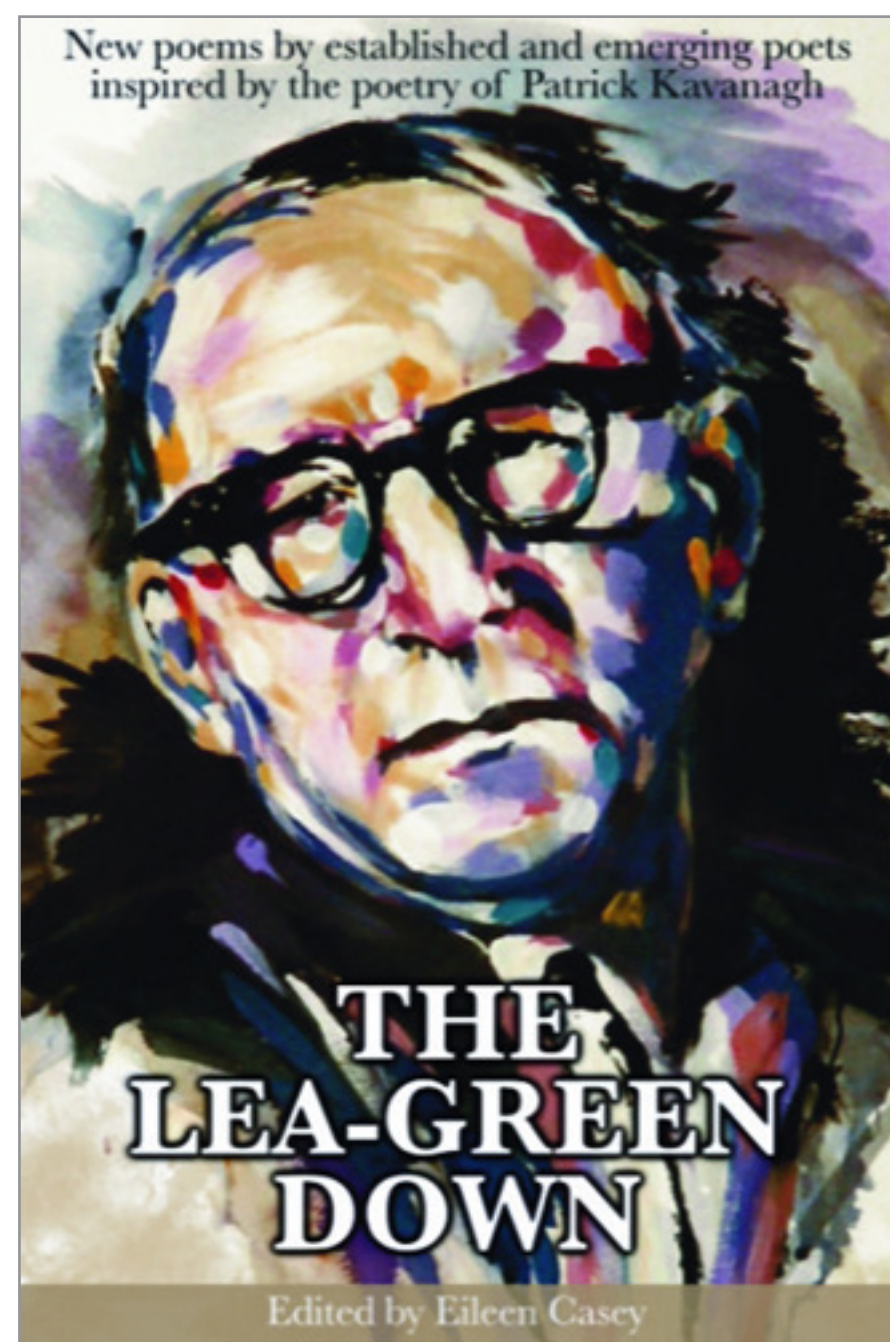
The Lea-Green Down is an anthology which includes over 60 poets responding to the work of Patrick Kavanagh. Fifty years since his passing, it seems fitting to revisit the world of Kavanagh's poetic prism from a contemporary perspective. The idea for this anthology came to me in mid-2017 so I mentioned the possibility to friend and writer Joan Power. She promptly sent me a poem in response to 'The Weary Horse', which writes Kavanagh's disenchantment and disillusionment with language. Joan's poem 'The Garden', showed me pretty quickly that the idea had merit. Her entreaty to Kavanagh regarding the redemptive power of language is in her opening lines 'Oh pour me poetic redemption, Paddy,/to ease this new banality of living/stripped of wonder or beauty./Pass me the bones of your words/for there is no chink of light,/no wink and elbow language of delight/only the Babel of Google/to barrow my brain/with dreeping dung.' Joan Power restores language to its rightful elevation, its redemptive ability to heal while also acknowledging that even the 'bones' of Kavanagh words are meaningful. Technology may free the world to do all sorts of wondrous things but it's still a sobering thought that language might be suffering as a result.

*

The arrival of a weather event, The Beast from The East ensured the work got done. Though blizzards of snow raged across the landscape, I received a blizzard of new poems (via technology it must be said, email *does* have its merits).

The Lea-Green Down also includes the original Kavanagh poems by kind permission of the Kavanagh Trustees via The Jonathan Williams Literary Agency. The original Kavanagh poems are taken from his *Collected, 2004*, edited by Dr Antoinette Quinn and span the years from 1929 – 1959.

I invited Gerard Smyth, well known poet and editor of the *Irish Times* Poetry Section, to come on-board. The addition of his essay greatly enhances the anthology. He evaluates Kavanagh's importance as a vital mentoring agent and that while the poet was alive, young poets gathered around him in Dublin of the 1960s. Kavanagh had a clear message for them regarding 'the necessity of renewing tradition rather than echoing it and that there was a need to push the boundaries of Irish poetry'.



Available on Amazon, Dubray Books (Grafton Street, Dublin and Shop Street, Galway), Books Upstairs and Kenny's Bookshop, Galway or from publisher numberninebirr@gmail.com

Good humour prevailed throughout the process. Visual Artist Eoin Flynn, whose poem 'Blow-ins' is included in the collection, designed the striking cover layout (which includes a flap cover) and of course, the cover image is by award winning Monaghan artist Paul McCloskey. Both Offaly and South Dublin County Councils contributed vital grants. The title of this publication was ready made in one of Kavanagh's early poem 'Ploughman'. The idea of the plough making art reminds me of the philosophy of William Morris, 19th century founder of the Arts & Crafts Movement. Morris believed that art and function could co-exist. With regard to poetry, the poet ploughs with his pen, the lea-green of the imagination.

In a speech delivered at the Kavanagh Resource Centre, Inniskeen in 2014, Michael D. Higgins made the point that "it was a fact that if you wanted insight into the truth of Irish existence, you had to turn to literature." Poems in *The Lea-Green Down* range from elegy to the politically aware, from the personal of memory poems, to present day universal realities. Mary O'Donnell's 'The Blackbird, God Almighty and Allah' mourns and remembers the dead children of Syria, murdered by Bashar al Assad. Jean O'Brien's 'Child' is an emotionally charged, non-sentimental poem dedicated to the lost children of Tuam's Mother and Baby Home. Connie Roberts, 'My People' addresses institutional abuse and provides an ironic counterpoint to Kavanagh's poem of the same title. Connie has been invited to read her poem at an upcoming conference on Trauma in Boston University. Which proves the contemporary and authentic nature of these poems, how courage as well as technical ability reveal themselves. These are poets writing out of the times in which they live, bearing witness which is very much the role of the poet. As Shelley once said: Poets are the natural legislators of the world.

I invited Gerard Smyth, well known poet and editor of the *Irish Times* Poetry Section, to come on-board. The addition of his essay greatly enhances the anthology. He evaluates Kavanagh's importance as a vital mentoring agent and that while the poet was alive, young poets gathered around him in Dublin of the 1960s. Kavanagh had a clear message for them regarding 'the necessity of renewing tradition rather than echoing it and that there was a need to push the boundaries of Irish poetry'. Una Agnew, Kavanagh Scholar and Academic, contributes a poem and commentary, again making an invaluable contribution.

So here it is. *The Lea-Green Down*. Fifty years after the passing of Kavanagh, over sixty poets from all avenues of poetry responding to his work with poems that bring Kavanagh where he belongs, into the centre of modern poetry. As a poet, how do I personally relate to Kavanagh?

Apprentice and established poets alike identify with Kavanagh's reverence for place, how he could create his own kingdom with even the smallest detail drawn from nature. Kavanagh had a sense of confidence about his work but there was that sense of melancholic doubt about its ability to endure also. In his preface to 'Self-Portrait' in 1967, he wrote that "continuation was everything".



Patrick Kavanagh

I didn't encounter him in my early school-room years but of course, later studies brought him into my orbit. Although I'm a townie, I could still identify with poems of the soil, the sense of mystery and reverence pervading them. My poem 'In Praise of the Dance' is a response to Kavanagh's 'Come Dance with Kitty Stobling' and while Kavanagh opens his poem with No, no, no...I reply with a resounding Yes, yes, yes. Poems like 'Ploughman' and 'A Christmas Childhood' remain personal favourites. These poems share glimpses of the divine, are luminous with spiritual energies. I could easily get beneath their skin though my father never played the melodeon and our neighbours weren't the Lennons or the Callans. Our neighbours were the McGarrys and the O'Learys. My father was a postman, though my mother had come from a farming background and could certainly milk a cow though I'd never seen her do it. My mother sowed on a Singer Sewing Machine and it's to those rhythms I'd fall asleep to each night. As I delved deeper into poetry, I found echoes of Kavanagh in other poets, William Blake for example, a firm favourite and one I would always want to read. In 'A Christmas Childhood', when Kavanagh says 'To eat the knowledge that grew in clay/and death the germ within it, I find an echo in Blake's 'The Sick Rose':

*O Rose thou art sick./The invisible worm,/That flies in the night/In the howling storm/
Has found out thy bed/Of crimson joy:/And his dark secret love/Does thy life destroy.*

Kavanagh's trust in the imaginative powers resonates deeply with me. When I came to Dublin at the age of 18, I worked as a shorthand typist for Coras Iompair Eireann in Heuston Station. Kavanagh had left the cloistered world of Mucker and travelled to Dublin also though in his case, he walked the 80 miles or so. In his poem 'Innocence', he shows his desire to step outside the world of 'whitethorn hedges' yet there's a note of ambiguity here when he says 'But I know that love's doorway to life/is the same doorway everywhere.' I much connect with Kavanagh's migration from rural to city and as such, my own early poems were also concerned with this experience, an awareness that more or less came full circle with the arrival of other cultures to our shores, an influx that became very noticeable around 2008.

Apprentice and established poets alike identify with Kavanagh's reverence for place, how he could create his own kingdom with even the smallest detail drawn from nature. Kavanagh had a sense of confidence about his work but there was that sense of melancholic doubt about its ability to endure also. In his preface to 'Self-Portrait' in 1967, he wrote that "continuation was everything".

Poets in this collection come from every county in Ireland. Northern poet Paul Maddern was drawn to Kavanagh's 'Pygmalion'. In recent conversation with Maddern, he told me that "Kavanagh indeed provides a bridge between Yeats and Heaney. The somewhat 'cathedral voice' of Yeats is tempered by the earthier tone and diction of Kavanagh. Yeats is for the grand occasion but Kavanagh is for the recognition of the beauties and the hardships of daily life". Maddern returns to both poets regularly and regards them as 'The Ying and Yang' of Irish poetry. Maddern chose 'Pygmalion' to respond to, lured by opening lines which reflect his current occupation. Kavanagh's lines are 'I saw her in a field, a stone-proud woman/hugging the monster Passion's granite child.' Maddern has recently bought an old mill and he chose the Kavanagh poem because he's working a lot with stone, lifting and moving them to create a garden in the process. The Heaney-like compound word, 'stone-proud' caught his eye and in the last line of the Kavanagh poem, the compound 'clay-sensuous' he finds incredibly attractive.

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Extract from Gerard Smyth's Essay in *The Lea-Green Down*

"Unlike the *The Hospital* and Canal Bank sonnets and other lyrics of his poetic rebirth in the 1950s, *The Great Hunger* is not a work that brings to mind the word celebration yet it has its moments of "profoundly simple, wondrous music" (qualities the American Robert Creeley recognised in Kavanagh) among the many strident notes striking a rebellious blow against what Kavanagh witnessed and depicts with lyric ferocity in the poem – the claustrophobic Ireland of the immediate post-Independence years.

In his *Self Portrait* he refers to it as a work that lacked "the nobility and repose of poetry" and declared that it contained, "some queer and terrible things". That self-judgment on the poem, his statement that it lacked the nobility of poetry, is quite wrong as time has shown.

Seamus Heaney who praised its "psychic force" – and described it as a "kind of elegy in a country farmyard" – reminds us of the question that Kavanagh asked himself at the start of *The Great Hunger*: "Is there some light of imagination in these dark clods". Heaney declares, and quite emphatically, that the answer is a triumphant yes.

Anne Fitzgerald - Kavanagh is omnipresent, he is in our bloodstream without our even knowing.

In his fine book-length study of the poem, *Apocalypse of Clay* (Currach Press) Desmond Swan describes it as Kavanagh's "journey into a post-colonial heart of darkness in the country".

The Turkish poet Oktay Rifat said that "it is the duty of the words in a language to make us visualise reality". In *The Great Hunger* Kavanagh adheres to that duty with powerful results; the "psychic force" that Heaney saw in the poem is equally matched by its documentary force, and neither quality was given sufficient credit or credence on initial publication.

Here we have Ireland, ruled over by the trinity of the earth, the mother and the church. De Valera's idealised land of "comely maidens dancing at the crossroads" – an Ireland that produced emotional cripples such as the poem's protagonist, Patrick Maguire. An Ireland that sang dumb and by its silence, condoned, the abuse of authority, including the misuse of parental authority and the failure of true maternal instincts to overcome more selfish considerations, one of the afflictions suffered by Maguire and a major theme of the poem. Kavanagh looked well beyond his own local horizons in the poem which, as Swan points out is "a cunningly disguised diatribe against the celibacy rule of the Catholic church" and is a poem of "protest and prophecy" in which the poet reaches deep into the Irish psyche, seeing what others at the time failed or refused to see – a poet's diagnosis of a sickness masked by the pieties of the time". - Gerard Smyth

*

Included below are some commentary from poets as to why they chose a specific poem to respond to:

Anne Fitzgerald - 'Raglan Road' transports me to Christmas Day in *The Palace Bar*, early 1970s. Family tradition dictated that my Mother's relatives arrived at our house on Christmas morning. From Sandycove about fifty or more of us would head in to Fleet Street arriving flotilla-like at the door of *The Palace Bar*, where my Mother's brother, Bill Aherne would let us into his fine emporium. Before not too long there'd be cousins living on the counter top, children showing-off Irish dance steps, empty Fanta bottles and sweet wrappers abandoned, adults huddled in corners dressed in their best, and the scent of *Villiger* cigars burning into the afternoon as turkeys overcooked - all the while Barney McKenna would strike up Kavanagh's lament *Raglan Road* on his banjo. Which was to remain and to resonate long after we had sung *Show me the Way to Go Home* ---- Kavanagh is omnipresent, he is in our bloodstream without our even knowing –



L to r : Orla Grant-Donoghue, Eoin Flynn, Una Agnew, Eileen Casey, Pauline Fayne, Larry Scully, Doreen Duffy, Trish Nugent

Geraldine Mills - I discovered Patrick Kavanagh's 'Memory of my Father' between the covers of *Soundings*, that anthology of poetry compiled by Augustin Martin, when I was doing my Leaving Cert. The poem had, and still has, a personal resonance for me, my father being one of the many who emigrated to London in the Hungry Fifties. He worked there from the time I was three until he died when I was nine. The sense of separation and loss that seeps from Kavanagh's poem is one that I can readily identify with. It was something that I wanted to capture for today's reader, in my response 'I Keep Looking'.

*

Contributing poets are: Una Agnew/Chris Allan/Ivy Bannister/Tony Bardon/Patricia Best/Pat Boran/Christine Broe/David Butler/Niamh Byrne/Georgina Casserly/Jane Clarke/Declan Collinge/Harry Clifton/Susan Condon/Susan Connolly/Celia de Fréine/Orla Grand-Donoghue/Theo Dorgan/Gavan Duffy/Doreen Duffy/Derek Fanning/Pauline Fayne/Tanya Farrelly/Anne Fitzgerald/Eoin Flynn/Brigid Flynn/Marie Gahan/Enda Coyle-Greene/Mary Guckian/Jim Hyde/Breda Joy/Brian Kirk/Eithne Lannon/Ann Leahy/Aine Lyons/Phil Lynch/Eamonn Lynskey/Paul Maddern/Anne Marron/Paula Meehan/Colm McGlynn/Liz McSkeane/Geraldine Mills/Mae Newman/Trish Nugent/Jean O'Brien/Clairr O'Connor/Mary O'Donnell/Maggie O'Dwyer/Lani O'Hanlon/Nessa O'Mahony/Joan Power/Connie Roberts/Rosemary Rowlie/Larry Scully/Tony Shields/ Gerard Smyth/Lynda Tavakoli/Ruth Timmons/Maria Wallace/Grace Wells/Michael J. Whelan/Maridé Woods.



About Fiery Arrow:

Established in 2009, Fiery Arrow is a small, independent press. To date, *Fiery Arrow* has published a number of community based anthologies (*South of the County: New Myths and Tales*, *Flavours of Home*) together with debut poetry collections. In 2016, *Reading the Lines* featured as a Live Encounter Journal. *Circle & Square*, an anthology of prose, fiction, poetry, drama and photography, won the CAP (Carousel Creates/Aware Prize) in its category, sponsored by Easons and Dubray Books. In December, 2018, *Fiery Arrow* will publish *The Frayed Heart*, a collection of micro-poems and haiku by Orla Grant-Donoghue, themed around love, loss & hope.



Breda Wall Ryan

Breda Wall Ryan's debut collection, *In a Hare's Eye*, (Doire Press 2015) won the Shine/Strong Award. She has an M Phil in Creative Writing (Distinction) from Trinity College, Dublin. Widely published internationally and translated into several languages, her awards include The Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Award and the Dermot Healy International Poetry Award. Her second collection, *Raven Mothers* (Doire Press 2018) is due in October. She lives and writes by the sea.

VILLAGE II

After Chagall, *I and the Village*

No path leads into these haphazard scenes
where a moon-green man with your father's face
woos a white cow with his scythe-mown posy.

meadowsweet, dog daisy, harebell, clover

Spin counter-clockwise until you are dizzy
by dreamscapes swirling illogical colours
where the village conspires to capsize its skyline.

eye-bright, buttercup, stitchwort, yarrow

You who were destined to grow anti-sunwise,
imagine the white heifer dreaming her milker,
your airborne mother reversing her fiddle-tune.

lady's smock, feverfew, bittercress, nettle

Why trust the village or its turn-around fables,
the moonface man with his rosary necklace?
His scythe is honed for the meadow-tranced heifer.

mouse-ear, scabious, plantain, thistle

Make your own meaning, moon-eclipse daughter,
fumblethumb curved lines on your upside-down map
till your eye finds the widdershins 'I' of your nature.

cuckoo-pint, nightshade, hemlock, foxglove

ONEIRONAUT

(i) Daydreamer

Explorer of the dream world,
sit motionless, consider the sky:

cumulus divines meaning from vapour,
a severed head talks to itself;

a pileus skullcap, its cloud eyes dissolve
skyblue mirrors of ancient ice;

a muzzled voice reflects a cry unheard
in nebulous mountains.

Free-float upside down
through wispy altostratus,

spill the truths you tell
to keep the dangerous parts concealed.

Dreamer, nothing is lost.
The psychic stratosphere unclouds

a picture-map
vivid as driftwood's mineral flame.

(ii) Lucid

She commands the dream, goes
gill-breathing under a transparent sea,
cuts free from stick man
and ancestor tree,

pushes the weight of her mind
through her palm,
fear through a worry stone.

Dream shows her
fly agaric visions, translucent
as water and fire.

This language exists only
in translation. The deeper she goes,
the harder it is to come ashore,

find another, written one
cloudy as milk.

(iii) Subliminal

The crow's split tongue
speaks her language

free thoughts
to a chestnut's
five-fingered applause

she unweaves rainbows
colours her personal palette

she paints nothing
in all its complexity
the sixth shade

all she knows
is nowhere

half-dream memory
on a seven-span spectrum

a story written in milk
on a gauze veil.



Mary Melvin Geoghegan, photograph by Shelley Corcoran

Mary Melvin Geoghegan has five collections of poetry published. Her most recent *When Moon and Mother Collide* (2018) Salmon Poetry. Her work has been published widely including *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Hodges Figgis 250th Anthology*, *Poem on the DART 2018*, *The Sunday Times*, *Crannog*, *Skylight 47*, *THE SHOp*, *Cyphers*, *The Moth*, *The Stinging Fly*, *The Stony Thursday Book* amongst others. In 2013 she won the Longford Festival Award, and shortlisted in 2015 for the Cuirt New Writing Award, in 2017 for the Fish Poetry Award, the Rush Poetry Award and the Padraic Colum Gathering 2018 Poetry Competition.

IN A DISTANT LANDSCAPE

‘on a huge hill,
Reach her, about must, and about must goe:
And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so.’
John Donne

The poet’s mind begins to spin
beyond London across an uninspiring landscape.
Searching, unable to avoid
the skeletal naves of medieval sanctuaries
pulled down half a century ago
with the wind in their ribs -
Yet, try as he might
he can’t find the space
where he is himself alone enough.
Desperately searching in his own labyrinth
reasoning it’s futile to look for truth
in either the Vatican or the city of Geneva.
Trying to imagine an internal topography
quite bare of ruined abbeys
visible, in a distant landscape.

WHEN THE POPE CAME TO IRELAND

in late August 2018
I was angry all the time
it's grip like a compulsion.
Thinking of all the abused, tortured,
denied, enslaved the words
themselves revolting
trying to convey -
Almost, as if God
had called time up.

THE WOUNDED WONDER

I'm stopped
up in the Coach House at Dublin Castle
before 'The Wounded Wonder'
by artist Michael Farrell -
his blood still fresh on the canvas.
Where skulls and potatoes mingle
as if exchangeable commodities.
In a compassion for the Famine victims
almost, as a premonition of an early mortality
in his lasting DNA.

AN OLD WOMAN
AND A BOY BY CANDLE LIGHT

Matthias Stom 1620

In a corner -
of the National Gallery, Dublin
after 'The Taking of Christ' by Caravaggio
I found your lips -
lit nearly four hundred years ago
and the man, you would become
is there in the gaze of the Boy.



Charlotte Innes, photograph by John Rou

Charlotte Innes is the author of *Descanso Drive*, a first book of poems (Kelsay Books, 2017). She has also published two chapbooks, *Licking the Serpent* (2011) and *Reading Ruskin in Los Angeles* (2009), both with Finishing Line Press. Her poems have appeared in or are forthcoming from *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *Tampa Review*, *The Anglican Theological Review* and *Rattle*, with some anthologized in *Wide Awake: Poets of Los Angeles and Beyond* (Beyond Baroque Books, 2015) and *The Best American Spiritual Writing for 2006* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006), amongst others.

WAITING FOR RAIN

There is nothing you can do, with a sky so strained,
so bright, so grey, with air that thickens, that
squeezes your head between finger and thumb.
Tiny men kick-dance on your skin. And then, a few
drops spot the old teak table, drip like blisters onto
basil leaves. And with the faint sweet smell of rain-
grazed earth, a memory stirs, like love in its
freshness, like anger burning away. But drops fade
out, leaves droop, and flattened dust once dry will
rise again and fill the air. Why do palm leaves wet
with sunlight and the glitter of sidewalk silica
mock you? As if to say, there will be water.
Melting ice. Storms in the east. The ocean
devouring the earth.

YOU ARE

like dying stargazers
whose tall glistening stamens keep on dripping
their smoky scent still choking up the air

like night birds
who warble others' pretty cheeps and trebles
but threatened with invasion rasp and squawk

like shale
that flakes away to ever finer slivers
withholding something hard, indivisible

DOORLESS ENTRANCE

My God, these freesias. Yellow, white, magenta,
throats lifting, water glinting, sunlit half-filled jars.
And on the hill, beyond a splash of crimson aloe, a
wall of greyish green with a doorless entrance, dark
from here, through which at times I long to
disappear. It's something like that country lane last
June and the wooden bench in the midst of
celandine and nettle where I thought with pleasure,
no-one can find me now. And on the bench was
carved a psalm I sang as a girl, *I will lift up mine
eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*
From the doorless entrance comes a blazing
thought: disown the crimson aloe spikes below.
They pierce the air like boot-tips scraping bone.



Roisin Browne

Roisín Browne lives in Rush, Co Dublin and has been published in several publications including *A New Ulster*, *The Galway Review*, *Flare*, *Mgversion2*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *The Gladstone Readings* and *Echoes from the Castle Anthology*. She was shortlisted for her poetry in the Over the Edge New Irish Writer of the Year in 2017, and was also awarded third prize in the Jonathan Swift Awards in the same year. She recently was commended in the Gregory O'Donoghue awards in 2018 and is a member of Poets Abroad, an online collaborative poetry gathering which is truly international in composition. Their recent chapbook, *something we were supposed to do*, shortlisted in the Locked Horns inaugural chapbook competition.

WILD FOOD AT CROMANE

He takes the path on the side of the mountain
 blue and black and lilac against the gannet sky
na sléibhte they used to call them here
 below he views *The Point*,
 rubble of rocks and stones and bones stretch out
 shipped and shaped by sea
 clusters of men, tractors, vans, container sheds
 form an archipelago of sorts
 further out the flat bottom boats direct from France,
 still and balancing on grey,
 red and green dredgers, their names white and bold,
 sit, contemplating beyond
 further the foam, the scum, the seaweed, the inter-tide,
 the rising mounds, the neat rows of steel structures
 embedded in sand, like standing crabs,
 beds for bags, hooked, rubbered, trestled in place
 catching sea in their tiny skylight gaps
 water caressing, growing seed, shells, meat,
 ocean turning
 bringing wild food
 out of it.

NIGHT DIVERS

Night divers wait for the sun
to dip beneath day sheets
and snuggle down into the warm recesses
of a gloaming mattress

when all has ceased to flit and trundle
they raise their limbs in salutation
to the cloak of sky and breathe in
the after-breath of day,
which lingers like hot mint
on the evening dust

they sip in the still
lean in unison with slanting air
slip into tilt, splice moonlight
and rustle sleeping waters.

ON SEEING MY UNCLE

(for Paddy)

tangerine
 lime
 verdant
 lavender lines lengthen
Port Aven
 Blue boats
 Breton girls
 glimmer back on Merrion Street
as you swirl by the view
 a bright blur lingers
in the corner of my left eye
 long enough to recognise
your frame.



Bernadette Gallagher

Bernadette Gallagher was born in Donegal, Ireland in 1959. Her poems explore the nuances of memory and experience and have been published in Irish Examiner, Boyne Berries, ROPES, Stanzas, in the US peace journal [DoveTales](#) and online at [HeadStuff.org](#), [Picaroon Poetry](#), [Poethead](#), [THE INCUBATOR](#), [Live Encounters](#) and [Irish Poetry Archive UCD](#).

RESTING PLACE

I once eyed an owl perched on the ditch.
I stopped the car and watched transfixed.

The same spot where first we glanced a field
sloped to merge with ancient trees – now

flattened by man and his machine. Trees cut
into small pieces. No resting place for owls.

DAFFODILS

In memoriam J.J.J.

Standing
you look out the window
at the field below
talk of daffodils
then slowly
walk to your bed
where you sleep
for the last time.

A TODDLER SHOWS THE WAY

He toddles up, down and across
the doctor's waiting room.

Smiles all round
as he looks each in the eye.

No inhibitions, no barriers
to gender, age, religion, class.

LEGACY

For Ann Sheehan

Her porcelain collection
once so precious -
placed in a glass fronted press
to be viewed, not touched.

After, we all took a piece
and let the rest
find new homes.



Peter O'Neill

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.

IN THE FORMAL GARDENS OF THE ROYAL HOSPITAL KILMAINHAM

Sitting on the wooden bench mid-September,
The newly globalised sun heating you,
Due to global warming, and a French newspaper
Open upon your lap reporting the rise of

The extreme right in both Sweden and Germany;
un homme de 22 ans est mort lors d'une
altercation entre deux groupes de personnes.
The labyrinthian structure of the 17th century

Gardens, complete with statues of assorted
Muses indicative of enlightenment virtues
Such as reason and symmetrical harmony,

All to be eclipsed three hundred years later
By romanticism, decadence and nihilism.
Only to be further replaced now by the organism.

DEMONIC SUBSTANCE

Over 50% of the world's wealth
Is made by criminal means.
It takes a moment to digest this fact,
Which is as visible as the moon's surface.

Such obscurity involves complexity
To such a degree which simply beggars belief,
Though helping to clarify Caravaggio's
Celebrated *chiaroscuro* effect.

All this conspiring simultaneously
With the knowledge that we are
Put upon a globe spinning in the totality

Of space, mere microcosms
Involved in some obscure plan,
Involving a being that compels us to further kneel.

BESTIARY

I is born of strenuous pain recorded
Over tensioned millennium. Planted
Like a lance into the earth, the I
Rigidly staked alongside its

Standard bearer – the will. The will
And I then both collectively alone
Upon the surrounding terrain. There
We stand virtually and resolutely

Together. Feet panted firmly in the earth,
The world being that bedevilled creature
Oscillating somewhere between force and action.

The appalling letter head of sensible hand
Then gravitating with historic monuments,
Exercising both wash and utter redemption.

BRÉVIAIRE DES ÉCHECS

Inhabit thought's recesses, all the
Circum-revolutions of mind;
The infinite space inhabiting every
Single domain, all that will remain

Like the sovereignty of Queens -
The chessmen gliding dexterously
About Her on the board, inside
The hollowed space of the cranium

Whose resonance there echoes about
The diamond patterns, with
Such power plays and counter-manoeuvres

In a veritable plenitude of variations
Some being historic, like the Sicilian!
Awaiting then your apparent resistance.

THE VALUE OF THINGS

When the time spent on things needs to be done,
And because there is more than just money
To be made in the investment,
Respect then can bring great dividends.

Investiture itself seen as an ennobling
Gesture; the resources spent, both
Temporal and spatial, on the acts
Themselves, and regardless of remuneration.

Plurality of thought being reflexive
To all formal structure, imbuing
To each act, howsoever apparently

Slight, a somewhat heroic stature.
The silent heroism of luminance
Underscoring the gravity of all cloud.

EDEN

Can there be touch without mobility?
 Outside of memory?
 Touching memories rewound, and around.
 A place in the suspension of the super-sensory.

The origin, or state of play.
 Apple, snake and a kick in the nuts.
 And suddenly you are both consumed
 By a forest of wounds.

Leaves are peeling laughter from the trees,
 And the wood of eyes assail you.

NIETZSCHEAN MUSE

Monumental transfiguration
 Of statuesque proportion,
 Instructed in the arts of the mannequin;
 The way movement can transform vision.

The slow taking on board of the full
 Weight inherent of physical beauty,
 This allied with a clear mind and a
 Determination of the will for the idea.

Beauty then *and* intelligence,
 Thus aligned with a singularity
 Of purpose; these are the 3 requisite Factors.

Primed then for the annihilation of the Other.
 You can see it manifesting in the eye,
 And tongue, all coming together sublimely in the stride



Michael J Whelan

Michael J. Whelan is a historian and soldier-poet living in South Dublin, Ireland. He deployed as a United Nations Peacekeeper with the Irish Defence Forces to the conflicts in Lebanon and Kosovo in the 1990s. He holds a Masters Degree in Modern History from NUI Maynooth and is keeper of the Air Corps Military Museum and collector of oral history for the Military Archives of Ireland Oral History Programme. His poems are published Australia, Paris, Mexico, USA, UK, South Africa and Ireland and included in '*And Agamemnon Dead: An Anthology of Early Twenty First Century Irish Poetry*, (Paris 2015) & '*The Hundred Years War: Modern War Poems*' (Bloodaxe UK) 2014. He was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions series and was 2nd Place Winner of the Patrick Kavanagh & 3rd in the Jonathan Swift Awards. He has featured on T.V. and radio and at literary festivals and his debut collection '*Peacekeeper*' was published in 2016 by [Doire Press](#). He is currently working towards his second collection in 2019. www.michaeljwhelan.wordpress.com

ONE HUNDRED YEARS FROM NOW

I was reading lines from a famous poet
killed while fighting in the Great War.
We never met but through his poems I know him,
what he saw and felt a hundred years ago.
He resonates with me, now,
we are connected,
his emotions are mine as I read,
his body - gone, but he exists
and I know his feebleness as I write.

AWAKEN HISTORY'S DEAD

The impacting shells of modern wars
always threatens to awaken history's dead.
If vibrations disturb old battlefield's bled
would the warrior ghosts recognise the modern cause
as we have claimed their allegiance to ours,
if not - who would be our enemies then?

AFTER THE GREAT WAR

do not ask what all the sacrifice was for
or ponder on its worth,
the future should fear no vengeance
from the past
for in the years of remembrance
a hundred years hence,
when the last veteran has finally passed
we shall be at war again.

TO ALL THE PRESIDENTS, ALL THE KINGS, ALL THE GENERALS AND POLITICIANS

I have seen the wire
that caught on the uniforms
of unlucky soldiers,
touched the pointed barbs
that pierced their skin
before the bullets
that took them,
stood were the missing lie.
In my pocket
is a poem
that brings me back
like a bridge.
In my pocket
is the blood coloured rust
of the rage of men.



Richard James Allen is an Australian born poet whose writing has appeared widely in journals, anthologies, and online. His latest book, *The short story of you and I*, is forthcoming from UWA Publishing (uwap.com.au) in 2019. He has a multi-award-winning career as a writer, director, choreographer and performer for stage and screen. www.physicaltv.com.au

SPENDING A POUND IN THE METRO FOR JOYCE

blah blah blah and then
went down with the ship
to see if anything useful at all
might pop back up
like a cork from a bottle
at the bottom of the ocean
what a good year that was
such a waste of all
that drowned drink

Richard James Allen, photograph by Saba Vasefi. © The Physical TV Company

* PERSPICACIOUS AND PRECARIOUS *

/precariousness is our secret middle name\
 /a relic of an unmentionable branch of the family\
 /though we can't erase it from our birth certificates\
 /however flourishingly we might neglect\
 /to include it in our signatures\
 /and of course heaven forbid\
 /it ever turns up in polite conversation\

\we are experts/
 \at free fall/
 \while standing still/
 \unspokenly/
 \we pass on/
 \this skill of simultaneously/
 \living and dying in each moment/
 \with each breath/

|we will never get good|
 |at happiness|
 |we forget|
 |that our birth certificates|
 |are our death certificates|
 |we always want to know|
 |what happens next|

~every moment is~
 ~as undependable and tenacious~
 ~as the memory of a kiss~
 ~under the moon~
 ~from a book~
 ~that was never written~
 ~but dreamt of~
 ~being read~
 ~on a cosy afternoon~
 ~in a faraway summer that was a winter~
 ~where the lingering impressions of childhood~
 ~were a beautiful prison~
 ~no one knew how to leave~

THE MYSTERIES OF MEASUREMENT

I let you go and you drifted off.
 Into night. Into nightness.
 How long it seems, long in the way
 that an ocean is vast and,
 without tools
 adequate to the mystery
 of how time becomes space,
 seemingly unchartable.

13 LINES FOR TAPE-RECORDED VOICE

Somebody pressed the button
 & the batteries haven't quite run down
 So you can hear my voice
 – Booming, squeaky, luscious, foreign –
 When I wrote this I had not yet decided.
 You are listening & will know already.
 Unless you have wandered off
 & I am speaking to nobody.
 I will never know.
 Whoever started this recording has not stopped it.
 Perhaps somebody has found in its disembodied voice
 Some comfort & company. Perhaps nobody.
 There is little else between us.

THE SEVEN STEPS
IN THE ALCHEMY OF GOODBYE

In the beginning it was simple, as simple as the wind.
 I answered your first question with my hands
 and your second question with my lips.
 Your third question you answered with my body.
 You didn't need to ask your fourth question.

Your fifth question had no answer, or, at least,
 none that I could give. Even now, I still wonder
 if there ever was a question.

To discover the thousand hidden answers
 to your penultimate question,
 sit down by the waters of my poetry
 in the years to come,
 sift through it like an old timer
 panning for fairytales,
 dip into its tumbling
 to draw out glimmering reflections
 of the murmurations of birds
 creating rivers of gold
 that break their banks in the sky,
 until every last drop
 of these coruscating tributaries,
 diverted from the other side of reality,
 has finally found its way back
 to the ocean.

Answers to your final question
 could only exist beyond this shimmering.

They could only not exist.
 All I can say
 is that an ocean of laments and lullabies
 involutes glittering into a silence
 that melts down even the concept of goodbye.



Anton Floyd, photograph by Carole Anne Floyd.

Anton Floyd was born in Cairo, Egypt a Levantine mix of Irish, Maltese, English and French Lebanese. He is now teaching in Cork city and lives in West Cork. Poems published in *The Stony Thursday Book*, *Ghent Review*, *Live Encounters*, *The Shot Glass Journal*, *Crannóg*, *Inisfáil Arts Journal*, *Contemporary Haibun on Line*, *Visual Verse* and haiku in *Shamrock*. He is a member of Irish Haiku Society. He won the IHS International Competition (2014), honourable mention (2015) prize winner (2016) and was runner up in the Snapshot Press Haiku Calendar 2016 Competition. Poems have been selected by the Limerick Writer's Centre, for the April is Poetry Month Poster Poetry Trail 2017 and 2018 and for the Kilkenny Arts Festival Fringe Poetry Trails. 2017 and 2018; the Inisheer Zibaldone Notebook (2017) and *Drawing on Joyce* an installation by Nickie Hayden at the Oliver Cornet Gallery, Dublin. He has edited *Remembrance Suite*, a chapbook of sonnets by Shirin Sabri (2018) and an international anthology of poems, *Point by Point* (2018). His own debut collection of poems, *Falling Into Place*, published by Revival Press (2018).

AT THIS MOMENT

At this moment on the eastern horizon
the disc of the sun breasts the hill-rise.
The hedgerow marks the shoreline
in a drifting tide of January mists.
Islands of trees are a stark profile,
filigree against a blue-green sky.
A falcon sits on a spreading branch.
It could be a carved figurehead
steering this spectral sea
or a cameo of a Roman emperor
ordering the day's campaign. Turning
he fixes the land in his yellow stare,
aloof from this morning scene
in which he plays his part.

ABSOLUTE AS JET

Is it love fires their electricity,
 the chemistry, absolute as jet?
 Is that what starts the rough music
 the direct, teenage kick of it?
 A force that schools the empiric,
 hard wired, naturally scientific.
 Something to amaze and inspire
 someone like Archimedes.

I'll call it love and there is genius in it:
 a practical grasp of geometry,
 the fulcrum, balancing points,
 vectors, materials procurement
 and engineering. With what ease
 and speed and care they build,
 calculate without complaint
 about urgent deadlines.

The force of love. And Archimedes
 would no doubt have admired
 this perfect sense of the applied,
 the ideas, yes, ideas of volume,
 their abilities with spheres
 and especially their fierce defense
 to the death against any invader
 come to disturb their circles.

It arrives with light. Is absolute as jet.
 Crows make no secret
 of their naked talents.
 They pass them freely on
 proclaiming in free flight
 in guttural black and white,
 elided by the resistance of the wind:
eureka ka ka ka

MAGPIE

Lately a sleek magpie
 in the habit of his order
 scapular and tunic,
 comes to the window
 regular as a cistercian
 for his evening office.

There is something exotic
 about these visitations,
 of the wild coming in close
 and yet unnerving -
 no way of really knowing
 what's under that hood.

With his beady eye, a beak
 like a jemmy, a reputation
 for not missing a trick,
 it's easy to fear the worst
 and set up defenses
 against such probing.

He leaves unsated
 yet the would-be thief
 leaves a timely gift.
 The afterburn in his flight
 is an eye for our wild affinities
 and the daily stakeout of my life.



Jack Grady

American-born Jack Grady is a founder member of the Ox Mountain Poets, based in Ballina, County Mayo, Ireland. His poetry has been widely published and has appeared either online or in print in *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*; *Crannóg*; *Poet Lore*; *A New Ulster*; *The Worcester Review*; *North West Words*; *Mauvaise Graine*; *Outburst Magazine*; *The Runt*; *The Galway Review*; *Algebra of Owls*; *The Irish Literary Times*; *Skylight 47*; *The Ekphrastic Review*; *Dodging the Rain*; *Mediterranean Poetry*, among other. His poetry collection, *Resurrection*, was published in Belfast by Lapwing Publications (October 2017) and is available at [Jack Grady – Lapwing Store](#).

The following four poems are from a work in progress, entitled *Unconsecrated Ground*, in which Bathshua (a.k.a. Bathsheba) Spooner speaks from within and around her undiscovered grave. Despite the fact that she was pregnant, she was hanged in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1778, for instigating the murder of her husband.

BATHSHUA SPOONER OBSERVES THE POET AS A YOUNG BOY

I see someone looking,
though he does not know what he seeks.
Perhaps in time he will chase the storm of my life;
even find the fading rays of its rainbow.
But the treasure that is buried beneath
will remain unclaimed.
That one looking is a boy,
grown from a seed in a womb,
and he was born, unlike the one
who sleeps with me on this hill.

That boy in the water below
does not know he is watched by me
as he floats in that pond,
that amnion of a warm summer womb,
but he stops, stands, and looks up once again.
Am I wrong?
Does he sense from the trees he is seen?
Does he perceive the presence
of this mother and her smile
in the silence of my leaves?

BATHSHUA REFLECTS ON BECOMING ONE WITH THE MOTHER

Now that I am dead, I know
the folly of believing
we can stop a body
from becoming one
with Earth, our Mother,
and stopping what comprised
our organs and cells from returning
to our first womb, Her sea.

'Tis both vain and fruitless to sheath
a body with a coffin, as if planed wood
or even a stone sarcophagus could
withstand forever the bludgeons of time.
The coffin in which my corpse was placed
splintered and rotted soon enough,
and beetles and worms laboured at the chore
of ushering my carcass along.

From my decomposed limbs,
I have grown into rhizomes and roots
for fattening petals and leaves.
I have toughened furrows in the bark of elms
with marrow from my backbone,
and the emery of my breath
has polished the beech
into the hint of a pewter sheen.

When the maple bleeds its sap,
I, too, flow from the tap;
and my memories of my children
are the part of me that makes
that tree's syrup so sweet.
I have thawed with ice
in an early spring and travelled
with the runoff into streams,

then into rivers and oceans
where I enriched the bellies of fish.
I have evaporated
with sea water in summer's heat
into a cloud gestating with rain,
and from there I have watered
this hill that conceals
what is left of my son's remains.

BATHSHUA'S ABODE OF UNCONSECRATED GROUND

No Head of Death with wings
carved into a stone for me.
No R.I.P.
No epitaph proclaiming
that I once lived
and that we all must go
to an eternal sleep. I speak
to you from a forgotten grave
and never since found,
where what is left
of my bones in this soil
caress those of a life never allowed,
a boy who never once breathed,
his life aborted on the scaffold with me.
For two hundred years and more,
unconsecrated ground has been
both cradle and grave
for the son of my sin.

BATHSHUA'S DREAMS OF A SECRET LOVER

I had reason enough to loathe the man I married,
thus there was no delight in our bed for me.
I found his touch so revolting
that for a time I seemed to have lost
all taste for anything carnal, even in dreams.
But then I would meet a man,
handsome in person, gallant in address,
who would excite my immodest interest
to an immoderate degree,
and I would urge my heart be still;
but I would indulge in shameful fantasies
of myself as his pleasure, his sin,
where his passion would rise to such a pitch
he would cease to be gentle and tame;
he would become as unbridled as a bull
in a meadow full of heifers in heat.
And, when my husband came to bed at night,
I would insist he extinguish every flaming light.
When he ravished me then,
I would envision him as that man
of my lustful dreams. This all seemed a harmless
means of escape to me, this dalliance
of my mind with a man I had met only once,
for it was a sin in thought, not in deed.
But, where we sin in deed, we first sin in thought.
And, to more sinful deeds, Fate
and my thoughts would lead.



Jude Cowan Montague

Jude Cowan Montague worked for Reuters Television Archive for ten years as an archivist and has a lifelong interest in international news. Her album *The Leidenfrost Effect* (Folkwit Records, 2015) reimagines quirky stories from the Reuters Life! feed. Her most recent album as *Montague Armstrong is Hammond Hits* (Linear Obsessional, 2018). She produces and hosts 'The News Agents' on Resonance 104.4 FM and writes for The Quietus. She holds a doctorate in media history specialising in early British film production and is an occasional creative writing tutor for the Oxford University Continuing Education Department. Her most recent book is *The Originals* (Hesterglock Press, 2017). She is currently working on a series of novels reimagining the film director Alfred Hitchcock as a young boy and connecting with her own personal history as a former squatter in East London.

GIFTED

This is for you, this is your portion,
said the Ferryman, or that's what he used to be called.
My poor lump, the coal eye, in my hands,
the dark powder this was mine,
crumbling into a cry
that flew angry into the cloud level statospheric,
this was my darkness, bewildered, for me.

Forgiveness is not an option,
the Ferryman said, shaking his bald
head and pushing his wares into me,
are you ready for the journey this time,
are you, we're going, bands
falling upwards into the sky
and spreading across the horizon, the blistered panic

rising in my gut like a pigeon
burnt to the core. The ferryman is generic.
Woken by a quickness in the badlands
he was the other man who visited in the night,
when my father was away, sprawled
on the couch as if he owned her and me
and my house. This was that old

feeling. My only option.
It would be bitter if it had a taste. The Ferryman
was vanishing and my seed unrolled,
spreading its fungal disgust over the windows, free
breathing black our eyes. Why,
I will kill us all, our fat crackling in panic.
The hunkered will not live to fight.

SAND

What do you want me to say?

The hedger stood on the stairs,
neither half way up not down,
scanning the room of upturned faces
waiting for his speech.

I'm a simple man.

Perhaps I should have lived a different life,
he thought to himself, then I could have
avoided situations like this, or at least,
have something in my pocket.

He couldn't have realised, he reasoned,
that this would be the outcome
when had strapped on that bag of gold
and slid down into the undersea.

It was impossible to predict that this
was where he would have landed,
his head on fire and his hands shaking.

By now everything internal had been replaced,
even his liver was aluminium.

I need a drink, of water of course,

he said, and there it was,
like everything was these days, instantly,
and a thousand eyes fixed on his Adam's apple
as he gulped down and smile.

That's what I needed. Huge applause.

How did it feel, Ronnie? Someone shouted.

They were getting excited now.

To be a leader you have to be brave,
resourceful and your stories have to be better
than a first kiss; you have to tell them better
than a first lover. Even if the truth is . . .
not as much use . . . he was staring across
the brown, black, orange, blue heads, gathering time,
his metal organs ticking hard,
the water trickling round them, cleaning,
oxidising, his blood thumping,
the drum of his heart screaming.

I'm an ordinary guy, he said, *it could have been
anyone of you. We're all gold carriers.*

They were shaking their heads and hollering,
no man, it's you, you are the thief.

Look, he suddenly shouted, *I don't mind your eyes
watching me everywhere I go.*

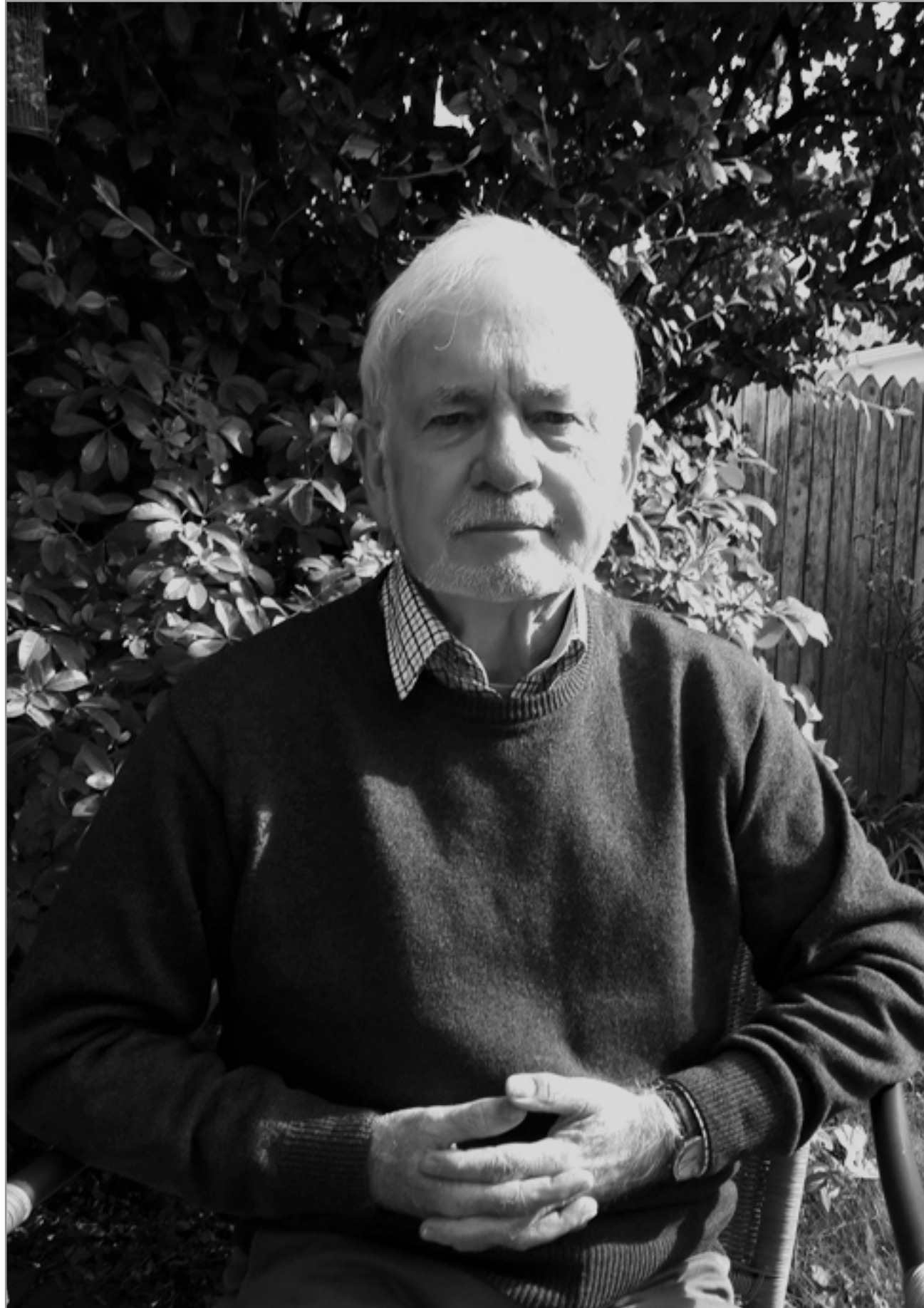
Now we are going to show

how, when we step outside this hall,

we chink in unison, an unbroken chain

between our inner slivers of silk. Because,

I must have been drunk on radioactive sand,
the later hybrids are ready.



Eamonn Lynskey

Eamonn Lynskey is a poet and essayist whose work has appeared in many magazines and journals. His third poetry collection, 'It's Time', was published by Salmon Poetry in May 2017. www.eamonnlynkey.com

LEESON STREET BRIDGE, EVENING

Impatient at the red light on the bridge
they crowd the kerb, grudge every moment lost,
frustrated at the tiniest subtraction
from the hours allowed them turn their backs
on weekly stats, accounts-due, invoices
and office politics. There is a time

to kill the flickering screen, adjust the eye
to open-plan of streets, remark the crease
a swan leaves in its wake. There is a time
to latch the door, throw off the coat and try
to resurrect a semblance of the self—

The lights are green again. The time is now.

LONGTIME COMPANION

Beside the microwave
and Kenwood Chef and toaster –
me. There was a time

you cupped your hands to drink
freshwater from a stream,
then had the sudden thought

to shape me. Later still
to round me on the wheel
and decorate me, bake me,

sometimes accidentally
break me in your earth-floored
neolithic kitchen.

And it wasn't long
before you learned to bend me
out of metal, came

to place me gently
with the shrouds of those
who journeyed to the Shades.

These dials and switches now,
these interactive screens
and temperature controls

are very welcome, but
always standing nearby
full, or empty, me:

wooden, clay or metal,
porcelain or plastic,
ever I remain,

Your humble servant.



Michael Durack

His poems have appeared in publications such as *The Burning Bush*, *Live Encounters*, *Electric Acorn*, *The Cafe Review*, *The Stony Thursday Book* and *Poetry Ireland Review*, as well as airing on Irish local and national radio. He is the author of a memoir in prose and poems, *Saved to Memory: Lost to View*. With his brother, Austin, he has recorded two albums of poetry and guitar music, *The Secret Chord* (2013) and *Going Gone* (2015). His poetry collection, *Where It Began*, was published by Revival Press in September 2017. Michael lives in Co. Tipperary, Ireland.

OPEN

The wicket gate was open.
 She said he left the gate open.
 He left the wicket gate open.
 Protestations that he did not leave the gate open
 met with incredulity.
 He said he never opened the gate.
 He said he climbed over the gate.
 And why did he climb over the gate?
 Because he was capable of climbing over the gate.
 Because it was as easy to climb over the gate.
 Because it would mean not opening the gate.
 And why would a man of four score years
 climb over a low gate?
 Because he could, because he did.
 The wicket gate was open.
 And how did the gate come to be open?
 Surely the gate did not open itself?
 He denied opening the gate.
 His denial infuriated her.
 Her intransigence distressed him.
 Nothing passed through the opened gate,
 nothing gained admittance, nothing was granted egress.
 For there was nothing for the gate to bar,
 nothing to enclose, nothing to keep out.
 Nothing was confined or excluded except these two,
 she the incredulous, he the disbelieved,
 wounds opening like the gaping wicket gate.

BICYCLES ON DAMSTRAAT

Lounging on Damstraat, white wine, hot sun
 dangling above *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*;
 bicycles canter by like ponies on a carousel,
 high nellies with mudguards and north road handlebars;
 and riders upright and stately, ploughing the cobbles:
 men in shorts and jeans with not a trace of lycra,
 and women in hijabs and business suits,
 oblivious of bubble blowers, pigeons and jugglers;
 of Nieuwe Kerk bells pealing Holst's *Jupiter*;
 of shoppers streaming from Rokin and Kalverstraat,
 and teenagers larking by the National Monument.

Their eyes on the cycle lane, the red and the green lights;
 their faces impassive, focused, relaxed;
 their hands grip the bars or cup phones to their ears;
 their minds turn to fantasies, office, or home;
 their legs spin the pedals towards small humpback bridges
 over Singel and Heren and Keizer and Prinsen,
 destined for Jordaan or Vondelpark.

We stare until time signals time to go
 to hotel, Centraal, Schiphol and home,
 where MAMILs on aerodynamic machines
 will check for PBs on their mini-computers.
 worlds from Amsterdam's merry-go-round.

TALKING ART

We talk Art,
 blather about painting, pottery, sculpture;
 appraising its subject matter - mythology,
 saints and nudes, the natural world.
 We talk Renaissance, Fauvism, Op Art;
 mull over movements, schools and styles.

Challenged to name a favourite work,
 you choose Michelangelo's gut-wrenching *Pieta*;
 and, feeling the tug of my agricultural roots,
 I pick Van Gogh's *Basket of Potatoes*.

Is there a hierarchy of Art?
 Which one has chosen the better part?
Pieta? Potatoes?
Potatoes? Pieta?
 Let's call the whole thing off.

POND FIELD

The motorway has cut the ground from under
headland and tillage field, leaving root crops
without soil to cling to, weeds a wasted space,
beetle and worm casting about for work,
ploughshare and harrow pins redundant,
the hoe cast down, the trowel thrown in,
the rat sniffing in vain for potato pits
by a road turned fly-over bridge.

Horse hooves stamp furrows of air, the rooks
surveying scarecrow fields of black tarmac.
The pond, lifted from its soggy bed,
is high and dry; farm house and sheds
of rusted galvanize peer over limestone cliffs
and see only traffic and coloured boards
signalling junction, lake drive, heritage towns.

BLOOD RELATIVES

At the Blood Donor clinic
we queue
 for a queue
 for a queue
like customers in a Soviet store,
stoically shuffling towards the silver or the gold pelican.

A foliage of Christmas decorations droops
above an undergrowth of tubes and receptacles,
folding beds and white-frosted medics.

Here is society (prostrate) in microcosm:
the farmer rolling up his sleeve for a spot
of arterial drainage; a barmaid on leave
from the Labour In Vein, blood vessels brimming;
the bank manager stretching out an arm
to make a liquid deposit,
crepuscular figures waxing corpuscular.

Later, at the refreshment table we unwind,
all on the same team, accentuating our (O) positives,
strangers, friends, neighbours, blood relatives.



Bob Shakeshaft

Bob shakeshaft is a regular reader on the Dublin open – mic scene since 2004. He has just recently appeared in the latest issue of the New Ulster Anu, the 40th. Issue. In this Anthology the following Poems appear: *Auld tripe*, *Ashen Sun*, *Toddles*, *A thin white line* and *After Philomena*. Also awarded 2nd.place in the New York Literary Magazine, in the category of Life/Death. Recently received 3 commendations from the Jonathan Swift Writers Awards.

WOUNDED EARTH

Eyes cavern sleep
Never to open
To dawn or dusk.

Stillness washes over
Silence... your form
A mask you wear.

Pain freed its shackles
To dark-oak box
Slow roped into stygian -

Gaping wounded earth
Covers your chest
In soil heavens justice ends.

Is the world compared?
When a spirit has winged
To lie in requiems cold -

Grave steps
Grey sentinel walls
Grief leads the way.

VARNA

A forty minute bus journey we were led to believe.
On the horizon Varna Cathedral
Its golden orb heaven bound.

Ninety minutes later a little ruffled
We amble hand in hand
Like excited children.

A majestic building proudly displays
Its scales of justice
Blindfolded.

On the steps a couple cling tight.
A smart brief cased solicitor close by
a T.V. camera reveals the verdict.

Their eyes betrayed by tears
Allows the world witness
Their deep despair

Like a dark sky warning
Clouds empty in gusto splashing
Steps to brolly –tree shelter.

Soon the sun shows.
Coffee calls to the senses
Lulling us in steamy aroma.

On through a park, an exhibition by Bulgarian students
Glaring at us from a giant – sized exposition
Of the ecological evisceration.

Strolling on we witness a wizened woman
In traditional black
Slowly sifting the remains from a bin.

Painstakingly she digests the best
In her small world oblivion
Blindfolded.

My love what you silently pressed in her palm
Brought a trace of life to the sad eyes
Long past expectation.

She signed her gratitude with a feeble hand
Pressed to an ageing heart she poured out love
We spilled tears in each retracing step.

Later in the shade of the cathedral, in hurried footfall
Past beggars at their feet, devout people emerge
With icons of religiosity.

A black robed priest convinced all are worthy of a place
As we shuffle on the queue to gain a seat
For this journey the payment has been extracted.



Miceál Kearney

Miceál Kearney; 38. Starting writing at the turn of the century. Published nationally, internationally and extensively in his Parish newsletter. Doire Press published his debut collection; *Inheritance* in 2008. Read as part of Poetry Ireland's Introduction Series in 2009. Arlen House published his 2nd collection; *The Inexperienced Midwife* in 2016. He also writes plays; 4 of which have been staged. In his spare time he likes to converse with vegans on Facebook about the colour blue.

NEBULOUS

The Golden Shower... I mean
The Golden Rule today – don't
assume. Way too illegal. Then why
so not clear with your costly words.
A person of colour? Vague much?
I have to trust my eyes: but please
explain, what kind of color?

Red; you embarrassed, an injun
or one of them damn Commies?
Yella? You a Chinaman or chicken?
Pink; you one of them puffs?
Green, orange, moonlight...
Is Jew a color? There's over 500
shades of blue – one for every gender.

Being white I, too, am a person of colour.

FARM INSPECTIONS

1.
He arrives 20 minutes early
in virgin wellies and a clean coat.
4 trees worth of paper just to prove
the Environmental Officer was,
in fact, here. Knowing full well, still
he desperately inquires “Is that it?”
Shot down like so many rats.
Then maps are produced. “Why
does the shadow of this wall not
correspond to the one shown here?
Explain to me please using Algebra.”

“Why?”

2.
At precisely whatever time he arrives
even the dog knows, this time, not
to christen anything.

Inside the jeep: with its inconspicuous
white bags of lamb creep and bull crunch;
yellow and cracked spent buckets of lick
and useful lengths of second-hand twine –
the uncomfortable slowly become comfortable
until the radio interrupts their commentary
on the corner-forward’s performance last Sunday
with notice of a sudden death.

Genealogy Bingo is played.
“The wife was from Leitrim wasn’t she?”
“Didn’t he have a brother who...”
Chuckles taper, settles into silence.

“The leaves are late this year.”
A glance is cast through the splattered glass
across the green laboured stubble
and beyond the gnarled naked fingers
in the sky.

THE PAPER RAIN OF NINE ELEVEN

Amid the screams and fears
on that infamous day,
paper fell from the sky.
Memos, faxes, emails...
Iron clad contracts,
pages of procedures:
in the event of –
relevant now
as logic to lovers

A DIFFERENT VIEW: FROM THE SAME FIELD

Exiling myself to Sweden.
 Their stones don't smell.
 Not quite the sulphuric-scented
 familiar fragrance. Literally
 the smell of nothing.

The soil is weird too,
 soft and bouncy. Loose,
 there's no clay in it.
 Great shovels though.
 Mighty little yokes.

The Woodpecker's their Cuckoo
 heralding the changing equinoxes.
 I keep the sugar sealed in a saucepan –
 the ants are very *cead mile* fuckers.
 I've taken to English Breakfast tea

and vegan milk: I assure you that
 was the language barrier. Asking,
"Where's the Post Office" –
"Only the Government write letters."
 I whisper into your ear: and lovers.

Front doors open out here; just as well,
 the amount of strewn footwear
 clutterin' the mat would knock a horse.
 It's dark, like...you could trip. You know.
 Partially understood *"Stubs"* – *"Yes,*

in the morning." An inspirational smirk.
 There's no English equivalent for *Logam*.
 We have begrudgery. Multiculturally speaking
 it's spite: distilled with such pure passion.
 100% proof, known locally as the silent killer.

And don't let Google Translate trick you
 like me with the milk: there's nothing
 silent about it. In the middle of the mat!
 Why not off to the side? I get it;
 fermenting – conditioned and trained.

I don't have those years.
 While not-surprisingly sharing mutual
 millimetres: Aldi only having one till open;
 waiting for texts in car parks
 and the trees have arms...

to reach the clouds and sit
 under the moon with the stars.
 Apparently; in the Holland
 falling down the stairs
 is a common way to die.



Lorraine Carey

Irish poet and artist Lorraine Carey has had work published in the following: *Atrium*, *Prole*, *The Blue Nib*, *The Bangor Literary Journal*, *Poethead*, *Epoque Press*, *Marble Poetry*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Sixteen*, *Live Encounters*, *Picaroon* and *The Lake* among others. She has been shortlisted/runner up in Listowel, Trocaire/Poetry Ireland, The Blue Nib Chapbook Competition and The Sixth Bangor Poetry Competition. Her artwork has featured in *Three Drops From A Cauldron*, *Dodging The Rain*, *North West Words* and *Riggwelter Press*. A contributor to several anthologies, her debut collection is *From Doll House Windows* (Revival Press).

OUR LAST CHRISTMAS IN DUBLIN

Aching legs and curiosity took me there,
I squeezed and entered the swaying mêlée,
braying in their festive sweaters.
Reindeer noses flashed in the crowd
roaring over each other in the fug
and their wobbling beer.
Tiny storms brewed in pint glasses,
jostled in the crush of pealed laughter.
Our banter and anecdotes brought
to the altar of Bruxelles.

You leant in closer when he removed
his scarf and inhibitions.
I saw the tears before they fell,
heard peaking speech, fuddled
with top shelf measures.
Time to go, the noise abated
with the departure of Christmas parties
and spiking bloodlevels.

No festive glee for the flirtatious bouncer
in a Crombie coat, who caught you
as you tripped on the step.
He wound the scarf around again,
muttered like a bad Santa
as he watched you with the doorman.
He kissed me on the cheek and you on the lips,
disappeared the opposite way.

And I struggled to hold you up, the pavements
glued with Wrigleys and butts.
Crossed the Liffey and O'Connell Bridge,
lit up with sadness and the sparkles
of your lonely heart.

A WALK IN THE SNOW

Threading the laces of my boots,
blue suede and solid soled,
decided I'd walk to Mass.
The others stayed home among presents
and balls of scrunched up wrapping.
Carols drifted down the hall with
scents of sweet, earthy peat and basted turkey,
as I shivered getting dressed.
Trussed up in black velvet,
that frock coat, now hangs off
my frame like a Victorian imposter.
I set off, stood out against the brilliant
white of a fresh fall.

The snow, compacted overnight,
crunched underfoot, with my solid steps.
Frost sprinkled ditches sparkled
under a baby blue sky.
Spiked shards of ghostly tractor trails
flecked with muck, marred the silent purity.
Spindly branches pointed, mocked my early start
and heathen tendencies shovelled aside,
just for today, like the ice mounds
on the main road. A layer of sand and grit
made it safe, whilst winding turns to Kinnagoe
were left to their own fate and the slow melt of drifts,
where no cars took chances.

And on I walked that Christmas Day,
sat upstairs and scanned the pews
for those tight, black curls
that weren't there. Joined my gloved hands
together as the long walk home
preyed on my mind.
The cedars waltzed to carols,
shook off ice crystals like memories
which fell to earth, as I formed my own
and strolled home among beeping horns
and yuletide greetings.



Ray Whitaker

Ray firmly believes that poems need to reach into the everyday person's pictures in their minds, and engage with those. This is where he aims to make a difference in his creative writing. Ray does readings around the state of North Carolina [USA], and is a member of the North Carolina Poetry Society, Winston-Salem-Writers, and The North Carolina Writer's Network. He has thrice been a "Writer-in-Residence" at the North Carolina Center For The Arts and Humanities.

THE COLORS OF IDEAS

An olive green jet aircraft parts the smoky air
dumping red water on the orange of forest fires below.

The glacier's moving ice smothers the valley gathering greys and browns
there is the bluest running water when it melts in the sun.

The directions we travel on our lives' paths track our footprints
these are tan and dusty, they go upwards and downwards on the same castle walls.

The gold and dark blue of the rigid pharaoh's death mask
belies the pink chattering smiles of children.

Sculptures on a pedestal in the art gallery are well lit
yet their delicate black shadows are as much a part of it,

not apart. What we see that is meaningful
Is surrounded in the grey mist of what it is not.

It's art when a plaster arm reaches out of a blank wall
hand and fingers extended in an invitation to join in.

Newness born of ideas stands green and tall
on the soles of smelly, mundane shoes needing repair.

I am dancing around the white fire of creation
with bright yellow feathers tied to biceps, purple on my painted face
loincloth swaying above swirling legs,
bare feet touching the fertile ground of ideas.

I see the colors
the colors are on the canvas.
I am the hand
holding the paintbrush.

THE CHILDREN OF URANIUM

We are the bright child.
Always wanting to be lit by a radiant glow yet
We are not lit by a burning hearth
With shadows dancing on cave walls.

As if Coriolanus was sent to conquer.
There is the beating of breasts in wretched betrayal
Weeping, that this pursuit is death to so many
Blind , and blinder. A blindness that overcomes.

Again and again, Coriolanus warns his people
As if the dogs of war were upon them
"It is for your voices I have fought"
Warning repeatedly about the light that blinds.

We are the bright child.
Even tho our ancestors may yet be present
Within us, even so we are, almost...
Unable to handle an evolution that takes us further.

The United Kingdom in fifty-seven
Windscale's reactor released after meltdown
Over Stratford von Avon blew clouds of radioactivity
And also the rest of Europe.

The flowing river Susquehanna splits.
These channels feed then to the reactors
Number two of which melted in seventy-nine
All were constructed naive of it's toll.

We are the children of uranium..
Always wanting to be lit by a radiant glow yet
What gives us the glow,
And at what cost beyond mere money?

On the floor, a discarded child's doll
Wants you to find the kid, and give it back.
Only this doll is in Chernobyl where the paint now peels off walls.
Where no child will ever come, in our lifetime, again.

A Japanese family wants back into in Namie.
To take photos of their grandmother's framed photo they had to leave behind
Framed in isolation now, from the Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors disaster
Since the tsunami humbled the power plant.

Those children of uranium
Wanted the life of light, yet
Not willing to even see more safety regulation
Suddenly seeing that the source of this technology can kill us all.

Referring to the Before The Flood special (National Geographic)...
It could have been Corialanus speaking again as urgently
To defend the precious earth our only precious earth.
Beyond sighing earth, crying earth.

We want children to be brightly lit
We want them to be lit by a radiant glow yet
In the lighting, forgetting the cost
Way beyond what may be lost.



Tim Dwyer

Tim Dwyer's chapbook is *Smithy Of Our Longings: Poems From The Irish Diaspora* (Belfast: Lapwing Publications, 2015). His poems have appeared in *Cyphers*, *Orbis*, *Southword* and *The Stinging Fly*, among other journals. Born in Brooklyn, parents from Galway, currently in Connecticut, he will be living in Bangor in the north of Ireland in 2019. He is a psychologist at a women's maximum security prison.

BEDROCK OAK

Bedford Hills, NY

Quercus Alba, circa 1500.
The sign advises to admire
from a distance: bare, gnarled, massive limbs
may give way.

Moss covered arm, held by a log,
crutch for the elder.
Old man's face preserved in the bark,
the last sachem from the Wolf clan.
Broad expanse of the bough,
embrace or a prayer.

Two hundred years old
when white settlers arrived.
What the Kitchawank accepted
as gifts of peace,
were entitlement to a future
of hedge fund estates.

I lay my hands on wrinkled bark,
see green shoots of spring leaves.

*Sachem-a Native American chief
Bedford Hills- an affluent community in Westchester County, NY*

APPROACHING NEWARK

Temporary migrations underway,
we are near the Solstice.
Approaching the airport
on the New Jersey Turnpike,
America lingers on the radio.

Falling night, countless ground lights
become a second sky.
We wait for your daughter-
star girl, soul traveller
arriving from the North Atlantic.

Expectant as a child,
you gaze through plexi-glass,
search faces of arrivals
from international gates.

Climbing through customs
and imaginary obstacles,
Joy has been granted
a security clearance.

America- A song by Paul Simon

GLOAMING AT COVER PARK

I reach the shore
as the golden hour shifts to purple.
Winter remnants in the wind,
receding patches of snow.

I am the visitor here.
This sea belongs to Canada geese,
herring gulls, red breasted mergansers-
they dive below the surface,
emerge at a distance,
fly away.

Through remaining light
among solitary souls,
I seek squatter's rights
at the rim of this veiled world.

WHAT YOU SEE

Do not let facts hinder the truth
Man of La Mancha

Transfixed by the corner of my office,
 the jackets on the coat rack
 have become the Blessed Mother.

The light flickering in the hallway,
 a sign from Jesus.

The murmurs from next door,
 family not seen in ten years.
 They travel in disguise
 but soon they will appear.

You explain your embrace
 of the woman in the next cell-
 she is no stranger,
 she is the archangel revealed,
 why God called you to serve this time.

You pray the blessings of the Almighty
 be upon me. I give you thanks.

HOMeward

A remnant traveller
 on a French container ship
 sails to America,
 era of the 747.
 Dinner at the captain's table,
 midst of the Atlantic,
 a world not here or there.

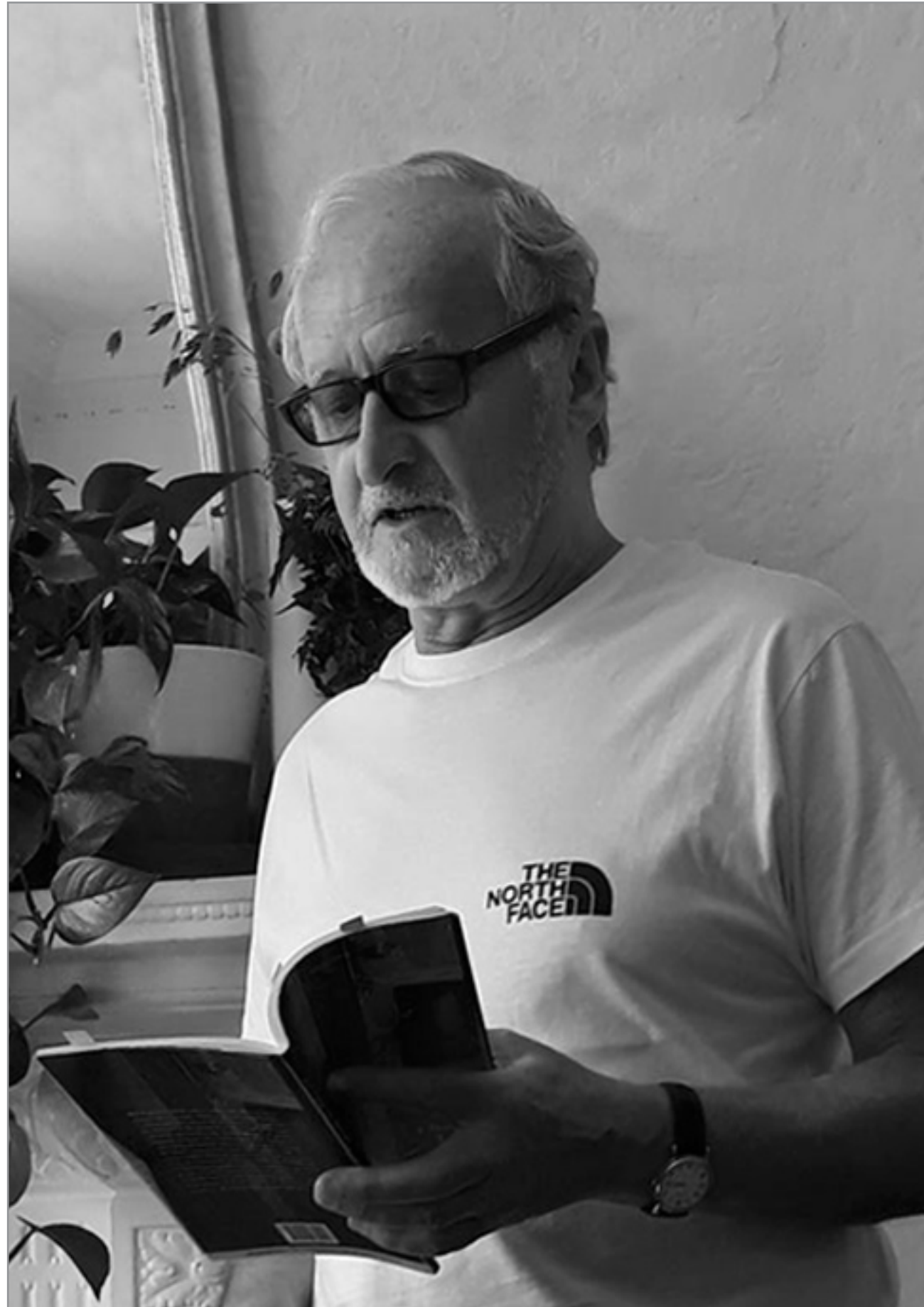
Belongings packed in tea chests
 journey from Belfast to Port Elizabeth.
 Overland to a wooded valley
 enclosed by the Catskill Mountains,
 prison of shadows.

*

Now, possessions sorted
 for the return home.
 A box of eggcups and teapots
 collected during the American years.
 Down quilt from the journey long ago,
 comfort in a foreign land,
 offered to a local thrift shop.

May it warm another misplaced traveller
 in a land evermore foreign.

A world not here or there- note the similar phrase
 'You are neither here nor there' from *Postscript*, Seamus Heaney
 (*Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966-1996* by Seamus Heaney, 1998. Farrar, Straus and Giroux).



Phil Lynch

Phil Lynch lives in Dublin. His poems have appeared in a range of literary journals and anthologies and have also been featured on national and local radio in Ireland. He recently won the 2018 Intercompetitive Poetry Competition at Intercollective, Dublin. He was a runner-up in the iYeats Poetry Competition (2014) and has been shortlisted in a number of others in recent years. He is a regular reader/performer at poetry and spoken word events and festivals in Ireland and has also performed at events in Belgium, France, the UK and USA. His collection, *In a Changing Light*, was published by [Salmon Poetry](#) in 2016.

FOOTAGE

Take me to the snow
so I can roll in it
before it goes
so I can go with it
and when they show
the footage
you will see me
flashing past the lens
so fast
you will have to rewind
many times
before you catch me
in a freeze frame.
Then go back
frame by frame
along the track
I've made,
see the shape
I've left
behind.
Now,
fast forward.

SEEING THROUGH

Seeing nothing in the spiralling dark
Seeing all possibilities in the light of an open road
Seeing strange faces and changing shapes along the way

Seeing the helplessness of homelessness
Seeing inaccessibility for the unconnected and unwell
Seeing inhumanity in hundreds and thousands of our welcomes
Seeing people disunited who should not be divided
Seeing sadness in the eyes of an uncherished child
Seeing a loved one struggle with the pain of life
Seeing some seeing but not believing
Seeing some not even seeing

Seeing birds gather for long-distance departure
Seeing Summer colour wither to dull Winter
Seeing a train shrink away into the distance
Seeing lights go out on a slow drive home
Seeing names newly engraved on stone
Seeing the blank space waiting.

TOUCHING 90

He was always *touching ninety*
up and down the narrow road
taking both sides together
in his latest model ford
turning wheels
clinching deals
until one day, sadly,
his heart gave way.
It probably was the only trip
on which he really did
touch ninety,
just before
he hit the ditch.



Hélène Cardona, photograph by Mark Savage.

Hélène Cardona's recent books include *Life in Suspension* and *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (both from Salmon Poetry); and the translations *Birnam Wood* (José Manuel Cardona, Salmon Poetry), *Beyond Elsewhere* (Gabriel Arnou-Laujeac, White Pine Press), *Ce que nous portons* (Dorianne Laux, Éditions du Cygne), and *Walt Whitman's Civil War Writings* for WhitmanWeb. Hélène's work has been translated into 16 languages. She holds a Master's in American Literature from the Sorbonne, and taught at Hamilton College and Loyola Marymount University. Acting credits include *Chocolat*, *Serendipity* and more.

The following poems, *Poem to Circe III* and *Poem to Circe XII*, are from *Birnam Wood/ El Bosque de Birnam* (Salmon Poetry, 2018), by José Manuel Cardona, translated by Hélène Cardona.

POEM TO CIRCE III

You are not mine either even though I love you.
 You are like earth, like the island.
 I share you with no one, love, no one.
 I cannot say: that is mine.
 This island where we love belongs to no one.
 What is owed doesn't belong to anyone.
 I prefer it this way, because love
 Is that language of fire or scattered
 Universe in vines everywhere.

Flesh is subsequent, the very embers,
 What one looks for and loves and composts.
 Fleeting truth of an opaque moon
 Cruelly scratching the burning bramble,
 Awakening to the mystery of hands,
 The touch of the mouth and kiss.

Circe, you are flesh, fertile land,
 Like the one I don't have on this island.
 I close the palm in fist and bury
 The seed beneath soft and red earth.
 Sadness and I walk hand in hand.
 Flesh is thirsty as a mastiff
 With vine shoots of cream for breasts.
 A crooked swordfish, crystal sharp,
 I must open my thirst and empty myself.



POEMA A CIRCE III

Tampoco tú eres mía aunque te amo.
 Eres como la tierra, como la isla.
 Con nadie te comparto, amor, con nadie.
 Yo no puedo decir: aquello es mío.
 Esta isla donde amamos no es de nadie.
 Lo que se debe a alguien no es de uno.
 Y lo prefiero así, por que el amor
 Es cual lengua de fuego o universo
 Desparramado en vid por todas partes.

La carne es lo ulterior, la brasa misma,
 Lo que se busca y ama y estercola.
 Fugitiva verdad de luna opaca
 En arañazo cruel de zarza ardiendo
 Despertando al misterio de las manos,
 Al tacto de la boca y a los besos.

Circe, carne eres tú, tierra fecunda
 Como la que no tengo en esta isla.
 Cierro la palma y el puño y la semilla
 Entierro bajo tierra roja y blanda.
 Paseamos la tristeza mano a mano.
 La carne es un mastín para la sed
 Con pámpanos de nata como senos.
 Curvo alfanje con filo de cristales
 He de abrirme la sed y vaciarme.

José Manuel Cardona, photograph courtesy Hélène Cardona.

POEM TO CIRCE XII

Then I dreamt of you in my way.
 Distance is a colt galloping
 In the opposite direction at full speed.
 I dreamt you and made you in my size.
 I'm the one who created you, but not how you are.
 Because mud escapes and you are a trace
 Broken free from the potter's love
 Except love itself was making you.
 I created you, Circe; humanly
 I keep recreating me in your image,
 I keep recreating you and living
 My creation in you, until I don't know
 Or confuse, by dint of knowing,
 Where you, reality, start
 And where I, desire, end.

Exalted were you in my dreams,
 Almost inaccessible like an island
 Sought and sought for years.
 I saw you in the Sierra Peaks,
 In the lilial mountain snow
 Emerge like an eagle from my dreams.
 Like an eagle you stared
 At the sun, your jet black plumage
 Open winged, messenger.
 I made you thus of my flesh. Saliva
 Soaked in your feverish dust,
 I kept recreating you in my image.

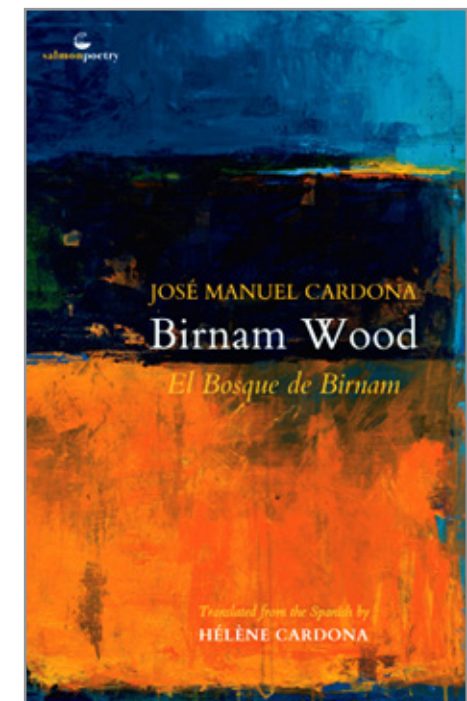
Exalted you opened my painful wound
 Lancing the skin until you found yourself,
 Heart, created in my side.
 Time was an olive tree like those
 Of the chalice and surrender. I was the man
 Attending to the sacrifice. I was the wait.
 All is consumed, Circe, and I live.

POEMA A CIRCE XII

Entonces te soñaba a mi manera.
 La distancia es un potro que cabalga
 En sentido contrario a rienda suelta.
 Te soñaba y te hacía a mi medida.
 Fuí yo quien te creé, no como eres.
 Porque el barro se escapa y eres huella
 Escapada al amor del alfarero,
 Sino como el amor te iba haciendo.
 Te he creado, Circe; humanamente
 He ido recreándome en tu imágen,
 He ido recreándote y viviendo
 Mi creación en tí, hasta ignorar
 O confundir, a fuerza de saber,
 Dónde empezabas tú, realidad,
 Y dónde terminaba yo, deseo.

Alta eras en mis sueños,
 Inaccesible casi como una isla
 Que se busca y se busca durante años.
 Te veía en los Picos de la Sierra,
 En la nieve lilial de la montaña
 Emerger de mis sueños como águila.
 Como águila quedabas fijamente
 Mirando al sol, abierto tu plumaje
 Negrísimo y alado mensajero.
 Te hice así de mi carne. La saliva
 Se mojaba en tu polvo enfebrecido
 Y te iba recreando a imagen mía.

Alta me abriste herida dolorosa
 Lanceando la piel hasta encontrarte
 Creada corazón en mi costado.
 Era el tiempo un olivo como aquellos
 Del cáliz y la entrega. Yo era el hombre
 Que atiende al sacrificio. Era la espera.
 Todo se ha consumado, Circe, y vivo.





Berni M Janssen, photograph © Susan Hawthorne, 2018.

Javant Biarujia is an award-winning poet, essayist and playwright whose works have appeared in print and in online literary magazines and anthologies in Australia, Japan, Europe and America. He has also translated a number of East Timorese poets from Indonesian into English. Author of seven volumes of poetry, his most recent book of poetry is "Spelter to Pewter", published by Cordite Books in 2016.

ENVIRONMENT OF LANGUAGE: A review of

between wind and water

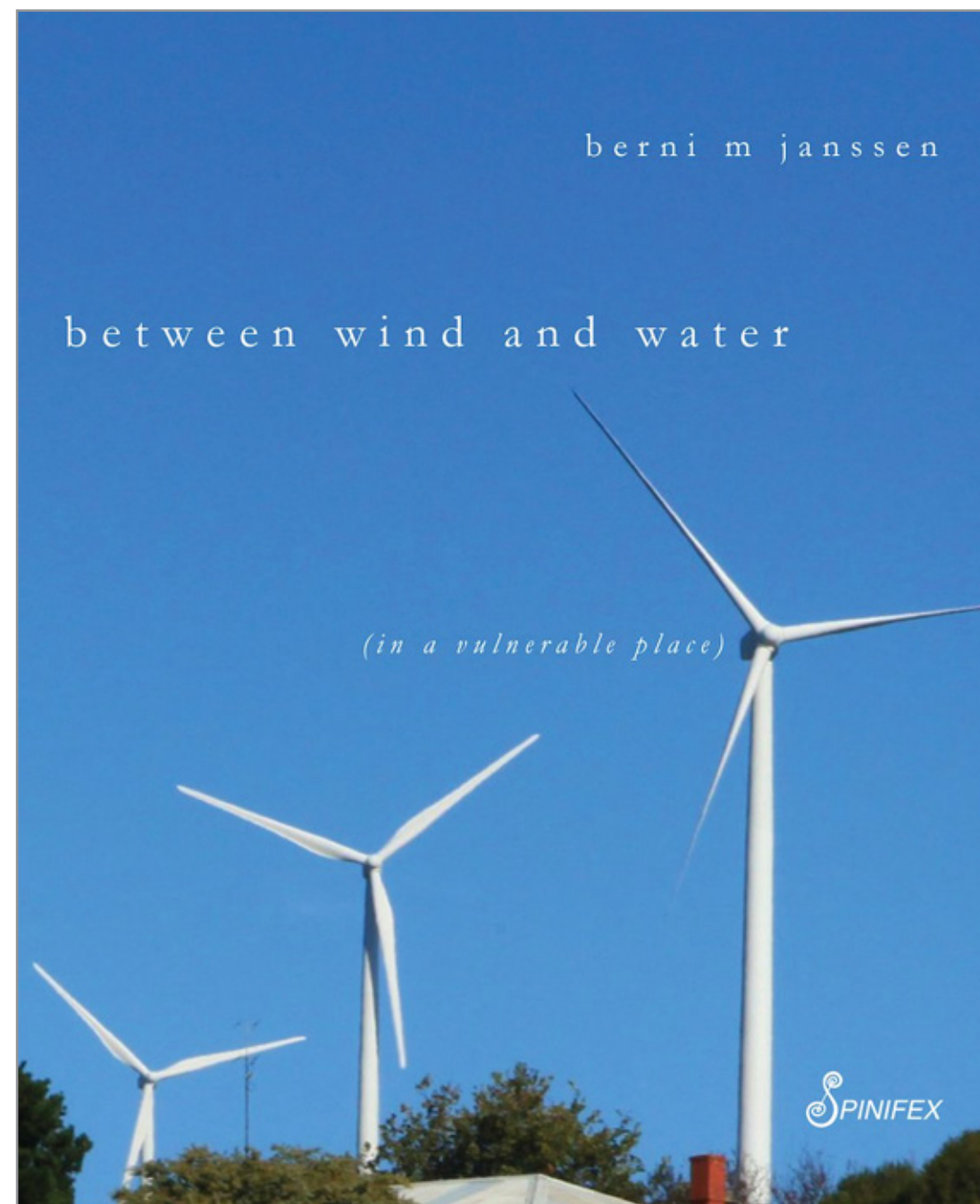
by berni m janssen

(Spinifex, 2018, ISBN 978-1-925581-59-1; RRP \$26.95)

by Javant Biarujia

What an extraordinary book! This is, to my knowledge, the first book-length poetical response to the contentiously medical impact of wind turbines: "between wind and water" (with the subtitle "in a vulnerable place") could be a poet's rendering of the expression "between a rock and a hard place"; that is, being in a difficult situation. Having said that, politics and poetry rarely mix in societies like Australia that have never known the ravages of war, revolution, murderous oppression or mortal strife or struggle, for the former relies on appealing directly to the emotions, obfuscation and lies (of which there are plenty), while the latter relies on ambiguity, reflection and rhythm — while both profit from repetition, hubris and story-telling. The thing about politics is, it is ephemeral and most politicians, forgettable, whereas poetry — not politics — is history, memory ("mammary memories"), "all breathing passion [where] 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' — that is all / Ye [...] need to know"*. In this way, berni m janssen gives a voice to those who are voiceless, those who are not believed, she writes a protest poetry where the truth will out. *Justitiae partes sunt non violare homines* (Cicero: "Justice consists in doing no injury to men").

Australia's colonial struggle is set against an indigenous backdrop. What started out as a heroic struggle against the elements turned soon enough into exploitation, greed and murder ("desecrate destroy and plunder"). The "civilised world" is anything but civilised, our patriarchal society knows best, it would seem.



<http://www.spinifexpress.com.au/Bookstore/book/id=311/>

The book is divided into five sections (STILL, TURN, SPIN, TORQUE and TILT): a species of “spin” is “torque”, itself a homophone of “talk”; “tilt” is a quixotic acknowledgement of Cervantes; and “still” is such an ambiguous word which can mean, as an adjective, a synonym for “tranquil” or, as an adverb, “yet” (ignoring its use as a noun). Language is sometimes thinly disguised (“a roo ral lamming Tay shun”, and “watt hertz” are the first two, paronomastic, words of “what hurts”), though sometimes janssen is explicit. To achieve her end, she employs internal rhyme (“walk/talk”, “she’s all a chatter, glasses clatter”, “noise/annoys”, *etc.*), symbolism, thieves’ cant, lists of native fauna and flora in italics, cooking ingredients, technopaegnia, postmodern and poststructural conceits, as well as portraits of locals (“Dan and Gaby” with Dan’s seasonal notes, “Mitzi and George” with a Steinian stutter, “Angie and Conrad” in their panic, “Fay” speaking volumes in four columns of tiny print, “Vera” with her Voltairean garden, “Jack” whose silence has been bought, “Daphne and Ted” on the land for decades, “Fern” with her lament, “Mattie” with her “desire for sleep embedded/state twitched pickled squeezed/succour sucker been suckered”, “Cassandra” with her mythical “not prophecy”, “Leon” with his technopaegnic *ballon d’essai*, “Charles and Una” tempted by an alternative to drought — can you blame anyone for wanting to earn a living, “Dusty and Lou” with their dreams shattered, and “Evan” duped by false promises. Poems employ textual patterns (the use of bolding, italics, lower case, *etc.*), a scatter field, technopaegnia, waves as undulations (wavelengths), *etc.* While janssen is describing Dja Dja Wurrung country, she could be meditating on any drought-affected (that is “vulnerable”, a word used in janssen’s subtitle) geography along the Eastern seaboard (water as sea).

Sound (noise) is the epistemology of a poet, not least a sound poet like janssen. “A silence/that is not silence”, “Imagine a noise you cannot hear”, these are the disturbing sound poems contrapuntal to the breathing she speaks of: the poetry of speaking, not speaking, saying what must be said against silence in case vested interests are negatively affected. The poetics of spin (“talks discussions chats”, “Fay speaks of spin”) and the clash of private and public space against the susurrations of protest, the essence of breathing (“a shimmering breath” in the very first poem), human dreaming (not nightmare: the dream of building a world in which one can live).

Water is just as fundamental as air for life, a site for real and mythical creatures, mirages (mirrors, reflection), islands, growth. Water, like humans, can be dangerous or treacherous (drowning, flooding, waters of the abyss, *etc.*), but it can also aid humans in their creativity, as in painting, ceremony or in play. It can be solid or flow, as in rivers and oceans, or it can be motionless, *still*, as in dams, puddles, ponds or lakes (janssen’s previous poetry collection was titled *Lake & Vale*). It can indicate the source (fountain-head) or the boundary (shore). It can be life-saving rain.



Javant Biarujia, photograph © Susan Hawthorne, 2018.

Water represents the flesh (corporeal), while wind, the spirit (incorporeal) — for the poet, the choice between wind and water (nature) is always metaphysical. Weeping is not too far from water, but it is not found here — janssen and the others in her poems are too stalwart for that. Of course, janssen here is alluding, in the ambagious and elliptical course of poetry, to power.

Puns as a linguistic technique are not to be avoided (fact check/fat cheque; indeed, American spelling does not differentiate between the two “checks”). Proverbs from around the globe, imparting their own wisdom on the subject of wind and serving to show how universal our experience is, dot this book, from Europe to China to the Pacific Ocean, ending on an ominous biblical note of reaping and sowing. “Wind” (air) and “water” are two of the four elements, but wind is seen negatively in these proverbs (“Eat the wind and swallow bitterness” is one such Portuguese proverb), while “bag of wind”, that is, a “windbag” is the subtitle to “Troy”, who is a representative from The Company “listen[ing] to your concerns”.

As Lawrence Ferlinghetti said (himself a poet and editor at City Lights Books), the “function of the independent press (besides being essentially dissident) is still to discover, to find the new voices and give voice to them”. Spinifex continues this tradition, and janssen continues the *tradition* of some of Australia’s best contemporary poets, like Joanne Burns, Ania Walwicz, Ali Cobby Eckermann, Mark Young, Chris Edwards, John Kinsella, Gig Ryan, Jordie Albiston, Ken Bolton, Michael Farrell, Chris Mann (recently deceased), Francesca Jurate Sasnaitis, Cecilia White and so many others. This is an important book beautifully produced by Spinifex, who used a terrific photograph by artist Gunther Wilhelm on the cover. It is bound to confuse if not upset the bureaucrats and those with vested interests, for while they may understand janssen’s *cri de coeur* generally, I doubt they will understand the poetry; they may recognise that *between wind and water* is a cautionary tale, but they will fail to see how.

* John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”



Dr Greta Sykes

Poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of London Voices Poetry Group and also produces art work for them. Her new volume of poetry called 'The Shipping News and Other Poems' came out in August 2016. The German translation of her book 'Under charred skies' has now been published in Germany under the title 'Unter verbranntem Himmel' by Eulenspiegel Verlag. She is the chair of the Socialist History Society and has organised joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Café. She is a trained child psychologist and has taught at the Institute of Education, London University, where she is now an associate researcher. Her Particular focus is now on women's emancipation and antiquity. *Twitter: g4gaia. Facebook.com/greta.sykes. German Wikipedia: Greta Sykes.*

A taster from Dr Greta Sykes new historical novel
The Defeat of Gilgamesh
a reinterpretation of the famous legend/myth
from a woman's point of view.

Excerpt Two.

TIME OF DEPARTURE

The early morning sun threw sharp rays into the narrow paths between the houses, when they bid everyone fair well. A huge hug from Nin and well wishes from many of the local crafts people set them on their path. Misha, Inanna's faithful cat, took one look at the group and vanished back into the hut. She never left when they did, but chose her own timing. Come on, Misha, stay with us, Inanna called, but to no avail. She had her own mind. Inanna knew that at some point of the journey she would be back. The landscape was dry and yellow with the heat of it. Sandstorms and floods had long gone and everywhere was parched. It was good for the path because it was well trodden and hard as rock. The juniper bushes and acacia shrubs left and right had few leaves left. Goats and sheep would have eaten anything that looked at all green.

Days went by pleasantly and in good company. As they walked they found that more and more of the landscape was taken up by orchards and plantations. They sensed approaching the big town of the Sumer, Uruk. It had made history for hundreds of years and had not lost its visionary inspiration for men and women. Uruk with its stories. Uruk with its large irrigated fields, its orchards and vast grazing areas for the animals. The walls were built well before Inanna's travels. It was found to help deter nomads just wandering in and pleasing themselves with stolen goods from unaware citizens. They were built good and strong with city gates which started to show the ziggurat shape of future decades. Was it not Agga who should have been the hero of the city after his father, Mebaragesi, had died, but, unaware how history tells the story of the victors, he handed the privilege to Gilgamesh who was but a pompous youth, pushed into a celebrity role by his ambitious mother? How did the women of Uruk feel? According to Nin there was much unease, although some women found Gilgamesh irresistible and sided with him. That is women for you. They keep struggling between power in their own right and the defilement of giving in, letting them take over. They need to be more loyal to each other.

© Greta Sykes



The travellers were looking forward to what were called the finest examples of temple architecture in the land of Sumer. The Pillar Temple included a platform and courtyard with thousands of cone mosaics covering the walls, leading to a portico with eight massive columns in two rows and corresponding half-columns on the adjacent walls. These giants, nearly six feet in diameter and constructed of fired segmental bricks encased in cone mosaic. They were looking forward to catching sight of such inspiring architecture. One could only wonder at the expenditure of labour, raw materials, technical and administrative skills and brilliant new inventions. They were excited to see the small busy streets with their artisan houses made of mud brick, the narrow alleyways and crooked thoroughfares through which the shepherds had to bring their herds. Or the farmers who had to bring their wares to the markets. And what markets they were! They had heard the most tantalising stories of goods for sale, silks from China, precious stones from India and Afghanistan, carpets from Persia. The stone and pottery wares ornamented with luxurious paintings, the jewellery fit for a queen or a Goddess. The metal workers who had such mysterious skills of mixing ores and using rare and exotic materials to create their wares from toilet articles, copper vessels to figurines and weapons. The carpenters and basket-makers all had their own quarters in the city so that each craft community had their lanes where you could hear the tap tap of hammers, the dust from masons or the glow of the metal workers furnaces. Traders obviously also had their community life and assisted in the success of the crafts people through their imports of wood, stone, metals and many other goods.

They stayed close to the river which was flowing languidly at this time of the year, its whispering reeds near it and the birds, the warblers, storks, ducks and many more keeping the humans company with their songs. Every night Ninatta and Inanna went swimming and consciously trained their bodies to greater strength. Life was easy with so much help. The cook prepared meals for them and the shepherd and peasant set up the campsite with mats and cloths under the starry sky. Beer was served, and they drank it from straws. By the fireside they spontaneously broke into song and listened to the owls hooting in the vicinity. They could hear and smell wild animals who from time to time dared approach the group but were quickly noticed and shewed away. More stories emerged. Pasag, old and frail, was a fountain of them. Her eagle eyes were deep and soft like a clear night sky and her deep voice so melodious that her story sounded like a song.

‘Once upon a time there was a very beautiful woman called Pandora. She was one of the daughters of Demeter who in turn was the daughter of Gaia, Goddesses of mother earth. She was bequeathed

with great gracefulness, joy, passion and the art of song. She could tame wild animals with her singing. When she raised her voice into tunes the birds came from all the four corners of the earth and joined her as if in a concert. She was a creature of the wild earth who slept among tall grasses like the gazelles and roamed along with herds of beasts, being able to speak their languages. When she started singing no one could not fall in love with her. Human men followed her in trance. She seduced them and moved on. Here is a love song to her caressing skills:

She let fall her scarf
And revealed her vulva, so that he could enjoy her.
Boldly she kissed him on the mouth
And threw off her garments.
Then he stretched out on top of her, and she showed him, this savage,
What a woman can do,
While he fondled and petted her.’

The women laughed and cried with pleasure at such beautiful language, and Pasag continued her story.

‘Every morning she washed in a spring and cleansed herself to achieve a virginal state. Each man thought she was only his and his hope rocketed sky high for eternal love, only to become disappointed and mortally wounded in his pride. But she remained carefree and she did not give it up for anything or anyone. When she sang creatures that had fallen ill or had broken limbs would crawl to be near her, as her singing raised their hope for wellbeing and an eternal life. Earth’s creatures, though knew that eternity was their only through the oneness of the universe. They were content. But human men thought to achieve it for each on their own. This vain hope, once nurtured, became a menace to them, leading to wars and destruction. Pandora, though, is still free and out there with the animals, and although we can’t meet her any more in person she is with us, giving us pride and joy in our bodies, our freedom, our strength.’

The small group had inched themselves closer and closer to Pasag not to miss any of her words. They looked deep into her unfathomable eyes to find the wisdom in them that made her speak such wonderful tales. The men were lost in thought, realising how things could go wrong so easily. The fire had turned to a red glow and everyone stole away to lie down and dream of Pasag’s words.



Arrival in Uruk

They beheld the towering temples of Uruk from a long way off. They rose like fantasies into the sky in the blistering sunlight. Inanna felt strong and good. The deep love between her and Ninatta, as well as the true devotion of Pasag, Nafen and Ikisha lined her muscles with solidity and filled her lungs with oxygen and happiness. She felt sure of herself and ready to face the tasks grandmother Ishtar had demanded of her. She had to find the glory and magic of women so that their strength could bring back peacefulness and humbleness in the men. She now knew that defeating Gilgamesh would be an important part in this. She sensed that he was not just a minor episode, a sorting of a local dispute, but little did she know how disaster was to spiral from him. Misha had still not joined them. She pined for her lovely white cat and feared she might fall prey to one of the wild animals. All she could do was be patient. It was usual that she kept out of the way during times of travel. She would surely be back once they entered the city gates.

The Ziggurat shone in bright colours red, black and white. A flight of stone steps led up to the main entrance which was held up by columns. Thousands of tiny mosaic clay pins were covering the surface of the columns in an elaborate decoration. A terrace invited the visitor towards the entrance. It had a pent-house roof whose beams and supporting columns were of wood overlaid with polished copper. Mosaic columns held up the lintel, and above it was set into the wall the copper relief of an eagle and two stags. Two lions were seated at angles flanking the actual doorway, which they guarded. Higher up there were a number of friezes to be seen which they admired. The temple in Borsippa was small and insignificant in comparison, and a tiny flame of envy occurred to Inanna, but was quickly displaced by the pride she felt for such artistic achievements which she had not seen before. It was exactly what they had endured such wearisome travelling for: To witness the glory of Sumer culture which goes back to the Al'Ubaid people of the ancestral mothers.

The weary group of travellers stood and admired the marvellous sights. Priestesses had gathered around them. They were offered refreshments and a fountain where they could wash their dusty feet. They explained the building to them. On the ledge along the top platform can be seen copper statues of cows and bulls and behind them clay flowers were sunk into the wall, so as to give the impression of cattle in a meadow. There followed a relief with reclining cattle and higher up one of a milking scene where the farmer sat behind the cow milking her with her calves tethered to her food bag. Even higher was a bird frieze.

All of it shone whitewashed in the sun, apart from the coloured friezes which were variously coloured in red, black and white with its shining metal glistening far into the distance in a proud and gay manner. The high priestess arrived while they were still lost in admiration for such architectural beauty, craftsmanship and skill displayed here. She suddenly appeared amongst them, like an apparition. No one had heard or seen her come. She was dressed in a long slender velvet material that made her look tall, her hair shone brown and golden and was held by copper clasps. She wore strings of beads hanging down long over her breasts. Her eyes were bright and of a green blue hue. She was an awesome sight.

'Welcome, my glorious friends,' she began and made an embracing gesture towards the group of tired travellers, 'I am Sen, the High Priestess of Uruk. I can see that you have already been introduced to our temple area by our priestesses. We have more craft work inside the temple. I beg you to enter with me. We can sit in the shade of our courtyard and there get to know each other. Come and follow me.' She looked at them with beckoning eyes, turned and as if magically drawn by her they followed her through the tall dark entrance gate and a narrow passageway.

There was singing from somewhere, a sweet harmony of voices and instruments accompanying them. They strained to hear and recognise its tune. Where did it come from? Whose voices were they? Then more voices and musical instruments seemed to come from every house, every alleyway, the air was made of music. It was enough to make them feel they had entered heaven itself, so sumptuous was the sound, the light of the late afternoon sun, the scent of perfume from the priestesses and the evocative shape of the architecture suggesting confidence and wisdom. They stood with their mouths agape. Inanna could not move for a sense of being overwhelmed and feeling humbled by the achievements of these cultured people. Yes, they could learn from them. They had moved on from where others were and had perfected their skills. Here were the achievements of the people of this great city visible to all. No wonder people came from far and wide to admire them. Inanna knew then that it was all the design of the supreme Goddess, her knowledge of logic, her ability to envelop the past, the present and the future was unparalleled. She folded her hands and prayed spontaneously.

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