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MARY O'DONNELL
True Space

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE

MARCH 2019
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2010 - 2019

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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Mary O'Donnell is one of Ireland's best known contemporary authors. Her seven poetry collections include *Spiderwoman's Third Avenue Rhapsody* (1993) *Unlegendary Heroes* (1998) both with Salmon Poetry, and *Those April Fevers* (Ark Publications, 2015). Her poetry is available in Hungarian as *Csodak földje* with the publisher Irodalmi Jelen Könyvek. Four novels include *Where They Lie* (2014) and *The Elysium Testament*. A volume of essays, *Giving Shape to the Moment: the Art of Mary O'Donnell* appeared from Peter Lang last June, and her new fiction collection, *Empire*, was published by Arlen House in 2018. Her essay, "My Mother in Drumlin Country", published in *New Hibernia Review* during 2017, was listed among the Notable Essays and Literary Nonfiction of 2017 in *Best American Essays 2018* (Mariner). She is a member of Ireland's multi-disciplinary artists' organization, Aosdana.



TRUE SPACE

(After 'An Old Woman' by Giorgione)

Once, I was pure animal,
Safe with my secrets,
knew how to breeze
through the days, tugged,
hugged by sweet air.

I quietly smelt, touched, kissed
sad men, women who laboured,
women who danced, rooms of strangers;
fields of murmuring grass.

I held the power to provoke,
like the reins to a grey stallion,
free to squeeze or release:
every movement signaled to the watchers,
for whom I was subject.

Now flesh is my lament,
my beautiful animal stalls
against headwinds that erode.

I cannot kiss, or feel a kiss returned.
In time, even a blade of grass stings,
bones shrinking, hair undone
awaits a mutilating comb.

Such combings amount to nothing.
I tear away the faulty fabric
concealing a woman's raggedness
from such terrible desire.

Better to let my right hand point
to the true space between my breasts,
flesh exposed, offering this lament.

Nutmeg.

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THE HAIRDRESSER'S LAMENT

I never thought I'd have a private gig
like this: a plea for a house visit,
information leaked in whispers.
An infant. A Spanish swimming-pool.
Would I dress the mother's hair,
prior to the funeral?

I see her already, bent and white
over a kitchen sink, my fingertips pressing lightly
to her scalp, as with all my women's heads.
I'm told I give a good massage.
But never before like this. Her abundant hair:
already shorn of sanity.

On the phone, she whispered something
about hair loss – already – fistfuls losing grip.
But I'll shield her, I'll raise her roots
with back-combing, a gloss of coppery furls
cheek-brushing like the wings
of a safe casement against her dark.

The car chugs through November fog,
I'm chewing cigarettes as I squint
to check the details: the kid-skin bag –
my brushes, combs, colorants, conditioners –
whatever it takes to create a weave
of mourning hair, for her to look like a mother,
as her child might view her if he could.

As I tilt the steering-wheel to her high gates
and home, the years of women's heads
flash before me: upside-down as I rinse clear –
their smiling waxed eyebrows, wet temples,
closed eyes with centipede lashes
as necks relax, and hairs slip down to matt
in the plughole like drowning voles.

MY MOTHER AT 91.

Out of the sullen lake of the day or the depths
of a long car journey, from memories

of blue-smoke men in kitchens, where politics
and horse-racing were first rhythms; in your daily doings,

you still recite your childhood, crisp as yesterday.
You found time for music on war-time radio

with the Italian family up the street: *Il Duce's* anthem
by heart, in our grey-paced border town.

By the 60s you were into Acker Bilk,
the young Joan Sutherland. You gathered the notes

and scattered them with ease, taught me to hear
beyond the topography of cochlea and timpani.

I still veer off the beaten track,
crazed for new territories. Reckless.



© Mary O'Donnell

THE BLACKWATER AT BALLYALBANY BRIDGE.

On the shallow riverbank, water sucks
at tufts of moss and willow, branches throw
calligraphies of shade at passing water-hens.

From the low-arched bridge, tawny waters
I once imagined inscribe a journey
to Lough Neagh of the eels; I threw paper boats,

rushed to watch them from the other side,
white nibs scribbling upstream.
An un-noted river, but purposeful,

a slim brown god, slow-soaking Drumlin silt,
it caresses trout, then flicks at dipping fern.
The kind of place where myths are formed

by people set to punt on other waters,
away from quick speech, the parochial puddle.
I too wanted something else, and remember:

this river, scarcely deep enough to drown in,
floated dreams I could not then decipher.
They flickered on the surface of the shallows.

It took me years to write them into practice.

WINTER THIEF

I grope from bed to bathroom, perch
for a quick nocturnal pee, try not to fully waken.

Whiteness glows through frosted glass,
and there's been snow. I shiver in night air,

the shower curtain hovers with ghostly imprints,
a Turin Shroud, some weeping face.

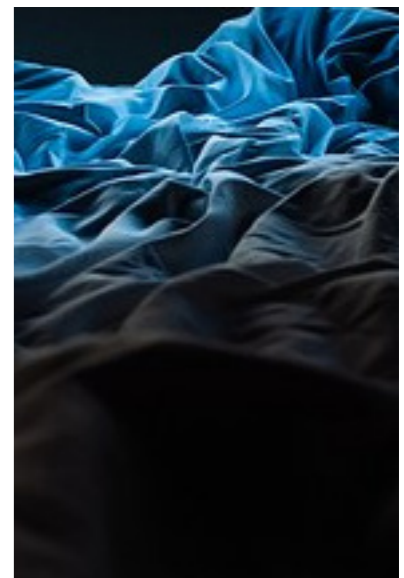
After the tang of night urine,
I pull striped t-shirt over thighs,

my toes retract on cold tiles. Back in bed
I'm heat-seeking, animal. Entwine myself

within your arms. At my cold touch,
a tremor runs through your body,

you kiss my head, mumble about cold feet,
roll away into sleep. I steal warmth

from the broad of your back,
thieving your heat, steady heartbeat, till dawn.



HOMEWARDS ACROSS THE BOG OF ALLEN

The same weekly trip, bypassing towns, quick tics of winking windows
from a distant village where the sun glints. You're distracted by etiolated clouds
in late afternoon, when sun breaks between one road sculpture and the next:

bog oak and six moon phases, all copper burnish, starkly lit. Your life
amounts to segments of waxing and waning, where even decline is growth,
and finds dignity. Behind the moons, the lipped bog, hickory brown, then stacked banks

where the *sleán* cuts deep. You'd stop the car if you could, tumble into a heartland
where no village or town can grow, the rapacious wind composing long notes
in winter's fret, the birch, the rowan – here a lament, there a reel.

Further out, the composition of ancient self continues – a blackened slurch of turf,
wild to the end. No grief here as some bog-imp digs up, wriggles out, lifts and tucks you
to itself, fondles your spirit in the sun's final flicker, ferries you, almost virgin,

like a gift to the planes of night.





Terry McDonagh, poet and dramatist, taught creative writing at Hamburg University and was Drama Director at the International School Hamburg. He's published ten poetry collections as well as letters, drama, prose and poetry for young people. His work has been translated into German and Indonesian. 2016: poetry collection, *Lady Cassie Peregrina* – Arlen House. 2017: included in *Fire and Ice 2*, Gill Education for Junior Cycle. 2017: poem, *UCG by Degrees*, included in Galway Poetry Trail on Galway University Campus. 2017: *Director of WestWords*, Irish literature festival in Hamburg. 2018: latest poetry collection, *Fourth Floor Flat – 44 Cantos*, published autumn 2018 by Arlen House.



THE CHANTING OF HOOFBEATS

Sour grapes are not enough to light up the mind
in the darkening buzz tattle buzz of
the Chapel of Clay Hotel bar under a black moon...
tick...

enter a flame of a dame, worn to the bone
by a history of wind, weed, fungus and
other bits and bobs knee-deep in tommyrot...
tock...

a gent in weary tweed fumes into a phone
as his children huddle next to Mummy
like unpicked potatoes in a sloppy wet field...
tick...

two buckoos lash into pints on an open tab
and the same again Lady, swearing they'd
tackle wild horses even if the sky turned upside down...
tock...

and there's that bony person cowering like an empty thing
ranting to shadows in the feckless light
hoping to cast off the pulse of hourless night...
tick...

not all good – an older gent in pinstripe and horn-rims
looks shy and shifty sharing a page with a young woman
who has one eye attached to her shoulder...
tock...

granted it's not early but I'd imagine the best is
yet to come if that couple sidling in sidelong
is anything to go by...
tick...

even an Ave Maria Full of Grapes is not enough
to light up the mind
in the bar room of the Chapel of Clay Hotel...
tock...

and God is not to be found in the small hours...
he needs his sleep to keep his legend alive...
stop clock stop.

All that's missing is the chanting of hoofbeats.

Photograph Pixabay.com

GIVE ME A FLAT ANY DAY

When all the suburban flowers and
 promises of streamlined sunshine
 have vanished into glum, drear
 or heavy red wine, I'm happy
 to be surrounded by bouquets
 of trusted noises in my city flat.
 I have no hedges or walkways
 to wallow in but I do have
 the music of urgent footsteps
 above me. I have a rich diet
 that includes a cactus in the corner,
 a bunch of cats on balconies
 and daydreams of lopsided ducks
 on leather feet that don't end up
 in postcards. There's the chanting
 of Sunday service and Tom Waits
 next door and I like it. I inhale
 symphonies in the tone and brick
 of these old walls. I pick up on
 the colour of hysteria with roots
 in war zones in another flat and
 I meet a man on the stairs with
 a turned up collar and hesitant eyes
 of blue glass – he hasn't got the
 swagger or language of here just yet.

Rows of suburban houses are designed
 by colour-blind men but I live in a flat
 where I don't have to share hedgerows
 with the Jones'.

FLYING HIGH

Any excuse and Mike was up there
 out of sight and sound in cloud nine.
 He'd whisper softly *I won't sign* and
another Merlot please. Down below
 on *terra firma*, there were traps and
 snares behind every smile. No escape.
 Two women arrived at Terminal Two
 to meet this one man. One woman
 was his wife – the other a lover.
 They stood next to each other
 both blonde and unaware but
 blonde is not unusual at airports.
 The man, Mike, looking forward
 to his lover before his next flight,
 floated through in American sweats
 waving a heart-shaped pink balloon
 he'd bought in Vegas. His wife,
 full of quirky surprises and jest,
 didn't visit her mother after all.
 Mike saw it all too late. There
 was no way back up. The women
 came at him from both sides and
 grabbed at the balloon. He ducked.
 The balloon burst. The women
 tugged at him for a bit, got fed up
 and rambled off for a cappuccino
 and two nice slices of carrot cake.

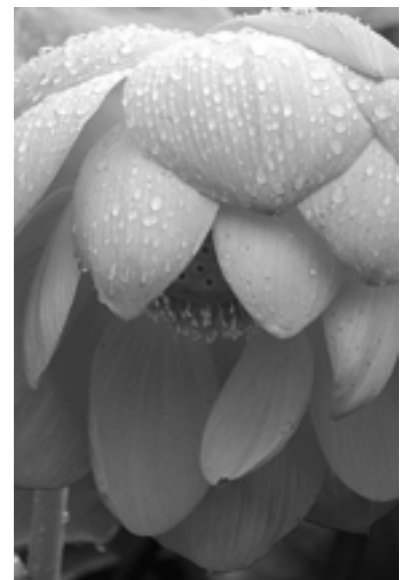


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LAMENT TO A LOST SUBURB

A dark wet evening
in a ruptured suburb
I find myself nowhere
astray – a rabbit
in headlights – helpless
in an illusion of toys
on tattered pavements
where children are cut off
from all caution as
frailer than frail
string over balconies
with no dreams
worth their salt
to indulge in with
air almost departed
and amen to a girl
beckoning my way
bouncing a ball
me inclined to think
behave or refugee
while birds and
living things stay away
in fear and nothing
to be had – little
to report in social media
or dot com – not even
an unsolved crime

and nobody cares
about trees here
about despair they do
as I cruise in circles
navigation kaput
hoping I don't run out
of juice but I dare not ask
as I wouldn't know
where to begin
in a lost suburb
of lament and grieving.





A journalist, magazine editor, media/communications director and legal author for 25+ years, Anne Casey is author of *where the lost things go* (Salmon Poetry 2017, 2nd ed 2018). She is Senior Poetry Editor of *Other Terrain* and *Backstory journals* (Swinburne University, Melbourne), and has won/shortlisted for poetry awards in Ireland, USA, UK, Canada and Australia. Poems in—*The Irish Times*, *Entropy*, *apt*, *Murmur House*, *Quiddity*, *The Incubator*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Stony Thursday Book*, *Into The Void*, *Autonomy* anthology, *Cordite* and *Burning House Press*, among others.



I WILL ARISE AND GO

(After William Butler Yeats)

My people are a migrant clan
 Prospering not by hook or crook or craft
 But by diligent labour and an easy charm
 Flung from one small corner
 Across every wind-tossed sea
 Mountaintop to valley floor
 To pave a thousand roadways
 Or stand on pavements grey
 To explore wild tropical outposts
 Hold fast to frozen plains

My people are an itinerant tribe
 A heathen spirit tamed
 Not by bonds or shackles or shekels
 But by music and by elegant words
 Though alongside our wanderlust
 Cohabits a want in us—
 That surges in each nomad breast—
 To journey back again, top the last crest
 To that first wide view
 Across a childhood shore

To feel the heart leap
 Like a salmon returned to familial waters
 If only—in our dreams

Note: “I will arise and go now” and “While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey” are lines from the poem ‘The Lake Isle of Innisfree’ by William Butler Yeats.

Photograph Pixabay.com

DRIVE-THROUGH NATION

I have seen every articulation
of a kangaroo's form

An ageing bloated rear-end staring me down
legs splayed from the parched margins

Stuck on the wrong side a muscle-bound buck
caught in the averaged-speed rush of an oncoming freight truck

Crumpled heaps piling up between
skeletal trees and bleached-out fields

A sidelined juvenile glazed-eyed forefingers joined
in quiet supplication to a silent sky

A crumpled mother sickening wrench
tumbled young flung from her emptied pouch

Swollen bellies bulging eyes stick legs
fenced in edged out run aground

I have seen every articulation
of a kangaroo's corpse

every one a sucker punch
a carcass for each solitary kilometre

every one a sucker punch
a carcass for each solitary kilometre

four hundred and thirty-seven kays
past the turn-off for Jerrabomberra

and pondered the visceral
response of

my entitled life gagging
behind glass on the unsmelt stench

The rotting bodies piling up by the
wayside of our stealing generations

Swarming clouds collecting crimson tails across the
boundless plains out here in the dying light



THREE HOURS TO MIDNIGHT

A man jogs past with three dogs—
 one carrying a frisbee,
 one a crumpled bottle,
 one a drooling grin.

A man and woman bear
 an inflatable between them,
 their toddler son trailing a cracked bucket—
 a yellow spade dropped in his too-long shadow.

A man calls “*Lily!*”, loping
 in the opposite direction,
 returns with a crestfallen spaniel
 straining against a red leash.

Winged will o’ the wisps
 ghost across glinting pools,
 archangels streaking over
 seven shades of blue.

Teenagers test reflective depths
 with a cast-off shred of fishing net;
 sand martins swoop and call to cluster
 in their nylon-lined cliff shelters.

A scorching orb slipping slowly
 towards the waiting sea,
 the burnished sand now cold underfoot,
 neon bits drift over the tidal imprint

to catch in the pied tidemark
 on this perfect evening after
 another record-breaking day
 towards the end of the earth.

IN THEIR SCORES, BY SIXES AND SEVENS

a reverse constellation
 an un- Milky Way
 backlights the day
 black—pointillist—pirouette
 perpetual-motion ink-strokes
 dissolve into silvery grey

 el em en dash
 stream volley vee
 cee es surge rush
 ripple roll swoop
 open—bracket/close—bracket
 swoosh curve loop
 ampersand arcing allez-oop

 allégro adagio brisé volé
 x & y aband oned
 in un- random feint ballet
 as a thousand clustered star
 -lings salute
 the dwindling day

Note: According to Young GF, Scardovi L, Cavagna A, Giardina I and Leonard NE (2013) in “Starling Flock Networks Manage Uncertainty in Consensus at Low Cost” PLOS Computational Biology Journal, “Flocks of starlings exhibit a remarkable ability to maintain cohesion as a group... when uncertainty in sensing is present, interacting with six or seven neighbors optimizes the balance between group cohesiveness and individual effort.”



VIVID DREAMING

Slivered silver slips amidst dusk-dark trees
As the coldest day of May for two decades
Takes its bitter leave

Bursting from the tunnel, psychedelic streaks
Neon lit-up faces stream
Between steel-lined streets

Over arching mainsails, coral feelers shimmer
Etched in swimming light, swirling up and into
Pre-tumescent night

Rushing with a cider past a smiling usher
Sipping effervescence, sliding softly into
The slowly rippling hush

Lips parting lushly among red velvet folds
Rising out of perfect pitch, sultry invocations spill over
The silent reverent below

Deft-defying fingers dancing in the dark
Palms cupping radiance picking out each movement
Plucking on strings

*This one goes out to Jasper and Jerry –
Off to Ireland in the morning to marry
And here's hoping they'll be able
To tie the knot back home here, real soon*

Floating in the pulsing swell, adrift, at swim, afloat
At sea in lyric opacity, soaking the luminous blue notes
Of this gypsy-fairy-queen

Washed out on the harbour-side beneath a brimming moon
Bewitching from a parapet, an almost naked dancer
Entombed in stone

Note: This poem is a recounting of Lisa Hannigan's last concert of her *Australia 2017 Tour* at Sydney Opera House. It occurred during *Vivid Festival of Lights*, an annual event when video images are projected on iconic city buildings and structures, including the 'sails' of the Opera House, and on the Harbour Bridge. The concert took place before the Australian gay marriage referendum.



PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN WALKING HOME

*“Every breath you take and every move you make
Every bond you break, every step you take, I’ll be watching you” — Sting*

I like the way the sinking sun slips a golden aureole around you on that last straight stretch of twilit street just before you round the corner falling suddenly under the towering penumbra of these deserted edifices so recently bustling with workers exiting—their veins visibly throbbing with concerns of the day—now soaring in silence stripped of activity as if subjected to the unexpected descent of some cataclysmic event while you were finishing up that last pile dropped off by your manager with such urgency it needed completing before his return tomorrow morning and though you held up your end now finding despite your own best instincts you are wandering halo-less—alone—down this dusk-lit street clutching your bag against a skateboarder shooting out from under a gaping facade like that time with the razor-blade-wielding trio you inexplicably chased and though you escaped unharmed there is always that scar of doubt lingering alongside the stomach-churning whispers and worse—the still-felt imprints—but there is no escaping the current situation and that really is such a nice pair of sheer

black stockings
perfectly paired with
those moderate heels showing
off your finely toned calves your hem
gliding just above the delicately curved backs
of your knees stirring in unison with the soft waves
around your raised but ever-so-slight shoulders and you
know though you do your prescribed daily workout with
just enough resistance you will never quite muster the power
you would need and it takes a certain set of eyes to realise on
your approach through the now-profound dusk to the welcome
arc of each lamppost that your silky blouse illuminates so precisely
from behind one can pick out the exact lines of your body moving so
fluidly within its satiny folds sashaying with the swing of your hips though
I know you are making extreme efforts to lessen the sway there is a certain gait
you cannot ameliorate in this corporate get-up—skirt over heels over female pelvis
and it is so obviously more-than-a-little inadvisable for you to have placed yourself in
this delicate position where you might be seen to provoke a certain reaction in an onlooker
of a particular disposition—it being late and you quite clearly under-dressed for the hour and
with every breath you take wondering why it is we have to watch

ourselves like this



Richard Krawiec's third novel, *Vulnerables*, was published in France (Tusitala Editions, paperback by Points Press) to widespread acclaim. He has published three books of poetry, most recently *Women Who Loved me Despite* (Second Edition). His work appears in *Drunken Boat*, *Shenandoah*, *sou'wester*, *Levure Litteraire*, *Dublin Review*, *Chautauqua Literary Journal*, etc. He has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the NC Arts Council (twice), and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. He is founder of Jacar Press, a Community Active publishing company.



WHAT LASTS

From the Shisa dog's mouth
a broad morning glory leaf
lolls groundward.

One angled stalk of crabgrass
slants past Buddha, as if waiting
for his folded hands
to open and reach.

The Celtic cross on a gray stump
offers perpetual benediction
to the sprouts rising
from spider leg roots.

Despite appearance,
stone is not ascendant;
what lasts isn't chiseled
but is like the green

emergent after drought
or cutting, the ever-struggle
from the cracking ground.

Stone relief on the walls of Bayon Temple, Angkor, Cambodia.



THE DARK

after Jane Kenyon

There is no accounting for sorrow, either,
the way it turns up like a runaway
begging in the dust stirred by 1000 passing feet
hurrying to horde away their own fortunes.

And how can you feel forgiven?
No feast in honor of what
you have lost, every thread unstitched from your
garments, nothing to save for a celebration
impossible to imagine. You weep night and day
to know you were abandoned,
that happiness saved its most common forms
for others, No, unhappiness is the father

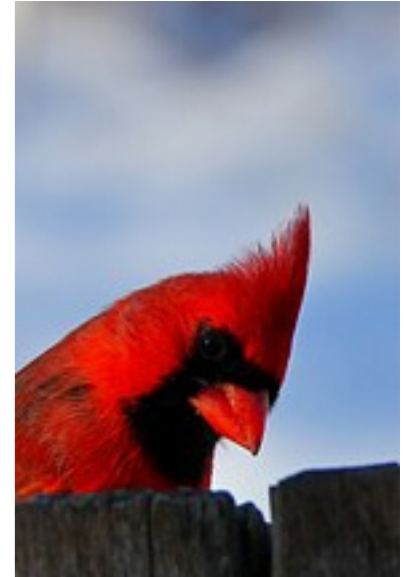
who leered at you over the back of the couch,
the lover who bogged an old jeep into the thick mud
of a torn-up meadow, left you there while she took a taxi
out of town, left you to inquire for her, for him,
at every door until you fell asleep midday
beneath the bushes in a public park,
as you so often do,
during the unmerciful hours of your despair.

It comes to the condemned man in his cell.
It comes to the woman weeping on the street,
beaten with a broom. It comes to the child
whose father has awoken still distant.
It comes to the lover abandoned like an infant
to a dog snarling safety from the room.

It is the needle

leaking blood before the plunge into vein or muscle,
and the man sliding cans of beans into the pockets
of his greasy coat before the store closes
for the night.

It even comes to the boulder
laced with explosives that will shatter the pine barrens,
to the acidic rain falling on a plastic-clogged sea,
to the broken wine bottle, it's forgetfulness spilled
to a blood puddle beneath the street light flickering out.



YOU EXPECT ME

Last night's war dream/ found me in a loft/ white walls, polished pine floorboards/
a fire escape, steps riveted/with holes, leading down/ to a suite of open rooms/empty
and full/of sunlight streaming/ in from the wall-length windows/showing that shiny
city outside/ glowing and distant/

/a helmeted soldier/in vest and fatigues cinched/by a grenade belt/ stood in the
sunlight./ He hefted an assault rifle/ methodically moved/ it left to right, back again,
/spraying bullets that bit/ and shredded the metal stairs/until only a knob/extended
below the rim.

And you expect me to tell you
what?

TEMPORARY STAY

Outside the inn's window
the tube of the bird feeder
flanked by TV satellite dish
and camelia bush, pink petals
shucked to the ground.

Inside, precious
painting of a hummingbird
in mid-seeking, never reaching
the mimosa. A mantel
timepiece that doesn't stop.

I want to think
the clock ticking
speaks for someone else,
it's not my house, after all,
just temporary, a stay,

like all stays, a passing
through what we never,
not really, own,
though we might
call it 'ours'.

The forward click,
irony of diminishment;
the bird unable
to reach what it seeks;
gray mouth of the dish,
awaiting signals
from the ever-present,
unseen gaseous-sphere.

Does the bush regret
shaking off its blossoms?
Maybe the cardinals
and blackbirds too
tire of fighting for all
that passes
through them.

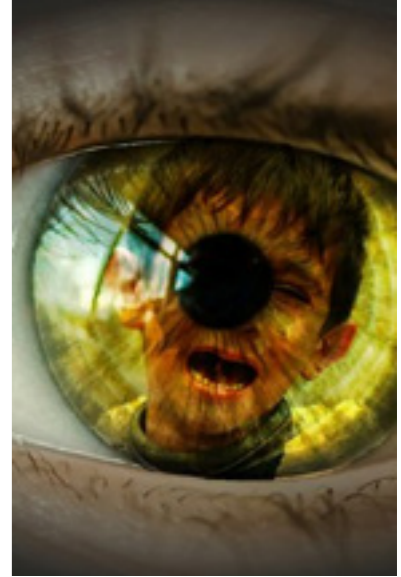


NEW YEAR'S EVE AT THE NURSING HOME

After they were all installed
at tables, bibbed for dinner,
one woman stuttered a birdcall syllable
that kept trying to crack into a word;
a wife lay slack, ungazing, in the drift
of her husband's departing current;
the half blind man trembled
a sippy cup to his fondling lips;
that merchant marine cursed, again,
three red soft spots atop his head
pulsing; in the corner, muttering
a language only she spoke
the woman who once twirled through
corridors sat medicated, unblinking;
another half dozen sunken in wheelchairs
awaiting the prodding spoon, signal
to open their mouths for pureed gray;
at the table closest to the doorway
the few who thought themselves less
damned, mobile in walkers, still
schooling like 7th graders -
block-faced woman with blunt-
cut black hair; matron dressed
in green sweater covered with glitter
and swirl; the leader, tongue
as nimble as a sword
fighter's fade, lunging her words
like a rapier to keep the darkness
of others backed up the stairs.

The last visitor remaining tapped
his cell phone to release tinny strains
of Auld Lang Syne. The song tendrilled
the dining room, and a mischief of voices
spread like mice foraging a winter room,
each singing their own remembered melody
and tempo, voices creaking, bleating,
whispering, croaking, worrying notes
like small found seeds; faces once
etched with scowls and frowns, opening
into capacious smiles.

When the song finished,
their heads nodded and swayed
and they drifted away, to whatever
internal seas might rock them
quietly into the new year.



DEEP SEQUENCING

One wetsuit washed ashore as a corporeal ghost,
flippers connected to legs by tibia; bones
the final body parts not devoured or dissolved
in the acidic surge between the North and Celtic Seas.

How much desperation is needed
to turn that frigid turge into promise of sunrise?
Mouaz al-Balkhi journeyed a cat's cradle
from Syria to Jordan then Turkey,

chasing universities whose closed doors
drove him further away than the sidewalk.
For two days he trudged the stinging desert
of Algeria to find on the Libyan shore a boat

sinking with migrants. Rescued
then expelled from Italy to Dunkirk,
where each time he crawled inside a lorry
a flashlight, a hand, found and dragged him out.

Finally Calais, last gateway of belief
that it might be possible to elude, to live
somewhere. England. A misty promise
offered in the distant chalky cliffs

across the Channel. That speck of land
seeming so close when standing
on the French shore. He traded his last pounds
for wet suit, mask, snorkel, fins then dove

towards the promise of white. White.
That seductive lie always seen as star-
gleam, not fang-glisten, even as it crashes
ship after ship on its gray, stony coast.

Mouaz walked into the sea not alone.
He plunged into the waters with Shadi Kataf
who'd fled a home in Yarmouk, Damascus,
bombed from 150 to 20 thousand

by a dictator we embrace now as ally.
Kataf's dream of a job dissolved into begging
on the streets of France. On Facebook
his profile floats in clear water. "Come back,"

a friend writes. Shadi replies he wants to live
in the sea. Dream come true. His body drifts,
freed to the bellies of crabs and fish in the icy water
where he, and Mouaz, wait for all of us to return.



Laura Foley's books are *WTF*, *Night Ringing*, *Joy Street*, *The Glass Tree*, *Syringa*, and *Mapping*. Her work has won the Common Good Books poetry contest, the Joe Gouveia Outermost Poetry Contest, The Atlanta Review Grand Prize, Foreword Review Poetry Prize and others. Her poems have appeared widely in journals and magazines. A palliative care volunteer in hospitals, with an M. Phil. in English Lit. from Columbia University, she lives with her wife and their two dogs among the hills of Vermont.



THE MIND OF A DAY

When you sit looking from a porch
 through the mind of a day,
 you see rain and sun bestowed by sky,
 on each leaf and tree,
 on the whole sea of living green,
 clouds massing and vanishing,
 breezes winging the scent of freshly-ripe lilacs,
 neon-green grass blades
 not yet cut this season.
 You hear raindrops begin again,
 each one separate from the other,
 as a sky turns silver-grey,
 radiant circles of light
 growing in a rain puddle,
 as a wind rises, rustling your hair,
 equally with new-budding leaves—
 the maple over your head, elm
 across the street, the whole small town
 among woods—so much to see,
 when everything else falls away
 and you're free to look
 through the mind of a day.

Photograph Pixabay.com

IN NEW YORK HARBOR

Though Catholic,
my father chose fire,
his ashes dispersed in saltwater—
no grave, no bones, no body
to lie beside his mother, father.

As the tide drove us seaward,
I didn't expect the shadow
of the bronze statue,
torched and barely visible,
rising through the waves—

nor the motion of the silent craft,
engine stopped, cross-currents
pulling us back through ashes,
as if we or they were a sieve—
sure I heard his laughter.

IN THE VILLAGE STORE

As a woman and I wait
in a snaking long line to pay,
a man cuts in front,
and she catches him, insists he retreat,
but he, angry, I assume,
from last week's election,
the President's drubbing,
snarls: *You're one of the damn Dems*,
and *Not a lady*, assuming, I presume,
that she wants to embody
such an antiquated state,
while my nose twitches like a rabbit,
caught napping in a coyote den,
wondering if I must choose
a side to leap to, as a chasm opens
between the chocolate aisle and the cheese,
as she points her finger like a light saber—
screeching *his ass is as big as Trump's*,
fat, I might judge,
from his eating too much beef,
as she displays her blue-jeaned posterior
like a peacock's tail, firm and toned,
I assume, as she pats it,
from dieting and yoga,
here in Vermont,
where he likely presumes
we all vote for Bernie the socialist—
New Age heathens in want of evangelical saving,
while we profess enlightenment,
but sometimes act like orangutans
squabbling over bananas
in the wilds of Borneo.



GRAVITY

When it's windy and the waves rise up,
 we kick our legs, as our arms,
 through splash of water, plunge deep,
 beating a steady rhythm
 toward a shore we cannot see,
 like sledding, but with less gravity,
 the swoosh of snow in our faces
 as its force speeds us downhill,
 as we shift our weight left or right,
 as we reach our gloved hands into snow,
 as the sled carries us careening
 around a steep hairpin descent we barely see,
 at night with our flashlight,
 a tiny beam leading us
 through Earthly darkness—
 how we enjoy it,
 even reaching the shallows,
 held by gravity again.

SALLY AND PAT

Sally lay in bed, refusing food,
 waiting to be taken, in her upstairs room,
 by the end she'd chosen.

The day before,
 she'd thrown her dirty clothing in the wash,
 exclaimed with glee: *My last load!*

A week later, Pat lay dying in a hospital room.
 I sat by her bed, held her hand, read a book
 to her and Mulberry, the man she loved,

the one she knew was a Roman chariot driver,
 come back to court her.
No wonder he likes Nascar.

A year later, I dream
 I hold a baby in my arms,
 still feel the baby's weight on waking,

understand it's Pat, come back.
 They say it takes a year or so.
 Now, I wait for Sally in my dreams.



Claudine Nash is a psychologist and award-winning poet whose collections include *The Wild Essential* (Aldrich Press: Kelsay Books, 2017), *Parts per Trillion* (Aldrich Press: Kelsay Books, 2016) and the chapbook *The Problem with Loving Ghosts* (Finishing Line Press, 2014). Her work has received Pushcart Prize nominations and has appeared in a wide range of magazines and anthologies including *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *BlazeVOX*, *Cloudbank*, *Haight Ashbury Literary Journal*, and *Dime Show Review*.

www.claudinenashpoetry.com



SOMEWHERE A STORM RISES

While you
were busy
withering

from the
business
of being

everything
but the thing
you were
meant to be,

a field was
breathing.

Somewhere
in you,

there was
a stream
rising,

there was
an ocean
and a lake

waiting
to flood
your heart
to life.

Meanwhile,
somewhere

the rain still
pounds a rhythm
strong enough
for you to hear

during your
driest hours.

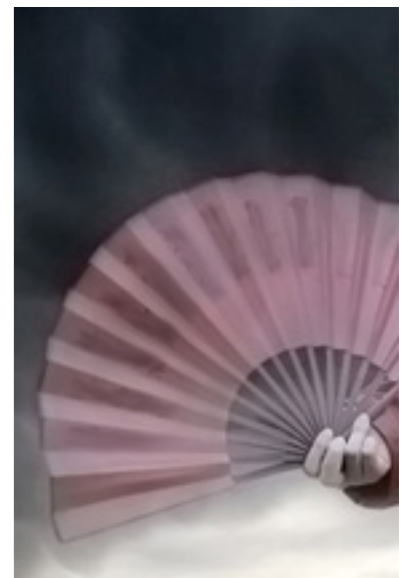
A storm is
moving and
you are starting
to think more
like sky.

Perhaps tomorrow
a downpour
will soak
the driest corners
of you and

you will
feel a marsh
swell,

somewhere
in you

some lush
notion will
thrive.



Eleanor Hooker has published two poetry collections with Dedalus Press: *A Tug of Blue* (2016); *The Shadow Owner's Companion* (2012). She is completing her third collection and working on a novel. Eleanor holds an MPhil (Distinction) in Creative Writing from Trinity College, Dublin, an MA (Hons) in Cultural History from the University of Northumbria, and a BA (Hons 1st) from the O.U. Eleanor is a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London. She's a helm for Lough Derg RNLI Lifeboat. www.eleanorhooker.com



FROM MY HAZEL WOOD

Because a fire was in my head
Yeats

I row *Kibihee* out of the boathouse –
I want to see my home from the other side.

February's sun is a trick of yellow and cold,
enough to offer no comfort to the day.

Sky stares at sky swimming in the lake –
its blue hums against my bow as sky-water jumps

the gunwale to rest at my feet, and repeat
the riddles of pike and gulls. An icy north wind raises

her hand against my starboard beam, but I've no time
for bullies who would dare to plot my course,

and pull against the push to port. Dromaan Harbour
is an open hollow that echoes only hush; the lake

that fills the concrete jetties here is sullen and grey.
I tuck *Kibihee* into the farthest pen, settle her alongside,

bow, stern and springs, then set out through
East Clare. I walk the country lanes until I reach

forest paths, climb untracked boglands to the rise
of Sliabh Aughty - a treeless topworld, whose earth

furniture is covered with snow-sheets and snow-lace
doilies. The blue above, dowsed in pure rimed air,

frosts my lungs. Buried deep beneath my feet are our restless
famine dead, and the courtly breeze that cuts through me,

is Lady Echtge of the *Tuatha dé Danann*,
for whom these hills are named.

I look back.

On the other side I see Devils Bit, Keeper, then lower
to Lough Derg I trace the curve of Youghal Bay,

locate the Mountaineer, Ryan's Point, Barrack Bay,
until I find a synapse in the Hazel wood, and there,

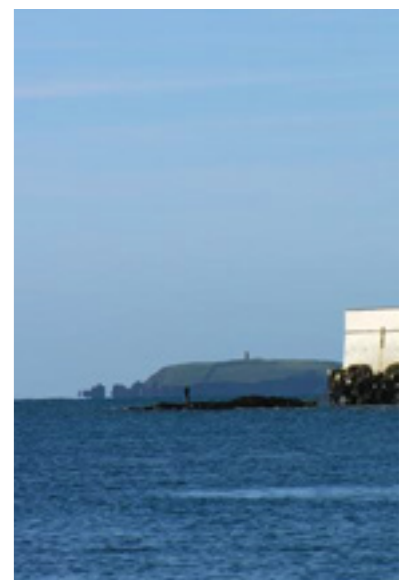
nestled in particular isolation, is my home, gilded
between two points, my lake-shore dwelling.

And may you be in this house
as the music is in the instrument.

I turn away, walk the bog-path south to Lough Hill.
In the shadow of Bohatch Dolmen, I picnic

on feta-bread and flaked coffee. A sea eagle hovers
into wind, yellow beaked, yellow booted, elemental

above this hushed landscape. I remain still –
attuned to the ancient grammar this day repeats





STITCHED TO A WITCH

With lead fastened to your ankles,
at the water's drowning edge
you know the art of falling –
shots down the double barrel
bang-bang

*I hit the ground, bang bang
That awful sound, bang bang
My baby shot me down*

In the barren curve,
deep in this velvet chamber of horror,
lucid and yellow with life,
you snag at the shrill edge,
in that cave-fall of loneliness,
inside the hard shell of a dream,
and stitched to a witch.

THE ABSENCE OF COLOUR.

We sleep in jam jars on
the top shelf in the scullery.
Well there are a lot of us,
and besides, it's the warmest room.
I like to squint through glass,
at Grandpa's rainbow head,
but not at Granny's prunes,
that sit like laughing slugs
on the yellow saucer on the sill.
They keep me regular, she says,
like clockwork. But I know that –
she owns one big, one small hand.
Her teeth have a jar of their own.
I like her tiny teeth –
at night they tell dark forest tales
in black and white, and during the day,
they speak from her mouth in colour.
Each morning, to reach my jar, I stand
on the back of the red chair
to let myself out. Sometimes I laugh,
that way they won't notice my other shadows
clambering down, and have *one less thing to worry about.*



Paul Bregazzi's poetry has appeared widely in print and online in Ireland, the U.K., Europe and the U.S. He has been awarded in the Goldsmith Prize, the Francis Ledwidge and Magma Editors' Prizes .Selected for Poetry Ireland's Introductions Series 2015 and Winner of the Cúirt New Writing Prize for Poetry 2017, his first collection, with Salmon Poetry, will appear in 2020.



THE CHERRY TREE

My hand moves along the snow ridge of your back
as the friday light moves into its evening.

Each time you stir and wake me
it has slid a little more to dark.

The cherry tree's blossoms shine out .
Soon they will rain snow petals and later

the crows' bombardment of slippings
will thump beak-marked onto the shed

or lie in wait under grass
for the passing feet of summer.

But now in the darkening friday,
my hand curves past your hip

as the cherry blossom begins to melt.

Photograph Pixabay.com

IN A CITY GARDEN

Lush of geranium cloy and leaf fuzz
and mother's scent of night stock.

Then the secrets to pass; the dragon that could gape,
the sour-bellied sorrel by the blue barred gate.

Rambling roses for the nuns' altar, arm hefts of lilac dust
dark after summer's evening fall.

One fence he built of greying boards.
One fence he pliered of coat hangers.

A plate cooling in balance on the sash window
above a long-cracked sill of granite.

Once a rabbit with the smell of a stable
Once a mouse kept, in the red boot of a tricycle.

I DESPISED MY FATHER THEN

for collecting me from school
standing with his old bike
amongst all the mothers
I have blackened the memory of him
putting me on the crossbar
me climbing or him lifting me
of weaving through a flotilla of prams
till I jumped off short of our house
before his lunchtime ran out.

I despaired for my father
folded up on the stairs
over our pile of shoes
brushing polishing buffing
till he was reflected in the shine
the shine we would then go
and scuff down
once we had turned away.



LAMBS

From the turning the lambs were promised.
The grass promised.
Cherry blossom fell in beds for them.
The muck of the lane glistened on oiled pools
they would soon sniff and dip a toe in,
the sleek scum slicking their demonic black olive toes.

The turf sprung in test of their leaping.
Light rains eased the grass through its sheaths.
The lower haggard gate crooned an easing for the first one,

And the sheen of breaking waters fell to the grass
and eased into the earth.

BREAKING BOTTLES AT THE OLD MEN'S SHELTER

Dennis bends over teachests of cullet
pick and throw pick and throw
his back broadened by his broadcoat
his grizzled head turtles from his collar

he is here in crud and old fear regardless
drink cakes the corner of his mouth
his lined hands pause in their picking
pinch tobacco threads from his lips

rummage in the depths of his shellcoat
surface with a cockle-paged notebook
he mooches in it with his bookies pencil
reburies it in his undergrowth

shambles down the yard now for tea
the yard end his terminus
some Greek hero in a long travail.



Anne Walsh Donnelly lives in the west of Ireland. Her work has appeared in many publications including *Hennessy New Irish Writing* in *The Irish Times*. She won *The Blue Nib Poetry chapbook competition* (spring, 2018) and the *OTE 2018 Fiction Slam*. Her poetry chapbook, *"The Woman With An Owl Tattoo"* will be published in May 2019 by Fly On The Wall Poetry Press. Her short story collection, *"Demise of the Undertaker's Wife"* will be published by Blue Nib in September 2019.



TO MY FIFTY-YEAR-OLD SELF

Unclasp your bra
let
it
fall.

Ease your comfy cotton knickers down your legs.

Look at your naked self
untouched
by another for seven years.

Hold your breasts.
Watch them spill out of your hands.

Run your thumbs along the curved waterslide of your spine.

Massage the hollow between your hips
smooth as a leaf in late summer.

Cradle your belly.

Admire the way it protrudes over greying hair
framed by the Y of your thighs.

Play a sonata on your skin
stiffen your nipples
close your eyes.

Dive into

The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife

HER HUG

stirs my bulb heart
in the same way
my ex-husband's did.

Her perfume Daisy
coaxes my foetal flower.
It pushes upwards
through a hair follicle
in my skin.

Her heat
unfolds the bud.
My Daisy blooms.

Through her lips
blows a breeze softer
than bog-cotton.

Pollen dusts my cheek
like dry mustard.

I let a sliver
of white petal
touch her forehead;
glide downwards
towards her mouth.

Her face buckles
as if slapped by
the bumper of a 4X4.

I swallow my kiss.
Burns my throat.
Petals wilt.
Retreat.



I HAVE LIVED

In his body
 Grazed my hand on his stubbly head
 Lost myself in his rainforest armpits
 Sheltered under the ledge of his chin
 Roamed the plains of his chest like a nomad
 Swirled his Jack Daniels in my mouth
 Ran with bulls through his fields of desire
 Oiled my iron walls to ease his entrance.

In her body
 Grasped her bleached marram grass
 Surfed her peaks and troughs
 Licked maple syrup from her lips
 Bathed naked in her volcanic springs
 Settled my cheek on the inside of her thigh
 Sipped her dry gin
 Let her light a candle in my cave.

What is there left to explore?

A LIGHT BULB MOMENT

Paul slobbers
 on the pure new wool carpet,
 under a dying light bulb.

His wife stands over him,
 sucks in Coco Mademoiselle
 air and kicks.

Her pointy Gabor shoes
 leave redcurrants on his skin.
 He disappears into his snail shell.

Lightbulb flickers, their son
 runs into the bedroom.
 "Stop, Mammy," he cries.

His teddy nudges her right flank.
 She takes the cuddly bear,
 sticks a nail scissors

in its chest. Paul's shell explodes
 he pulls her leg, she falls.
 The boy rescues his teddy, flees.

Paul sits on his wife's solar plexus,
 puts his hands on her throat
 she bucks,

he thinks of wringing wet socks,
 as he twists her neck.
 The lightbulb explodes

shattered glass rains
 on the pure new wool carpet.



WHAT SURPRISED HER THE MOST

she said, to the Guards
wasn't himself taking a heart attack
in the middle of a bridge game.

It was a week later.
She stood at the door of his precious shed
snapped the lock with a bolt cutter.

Pushed open the door, glared
at the crimson carpet on the floor.
(Much better quality than the one
he'd let her buy
for the sitting room last Christmas.)

She hit her head on the iron chains
dangling from the shed's ceiling.
Thought she was seeing things
when she spotted an assortment of handcuffs,
whips and leashes hanging from wall hooks.

She screamed and threw the bolt cutter
at a crotch-less leather pants
sprawled across a stool.

The smell of rotten semen
that rose from a heap of condoms
made her drop to her hands and knees,
haul her breakfast from her stomach
and shake like a poodle after a January walk.

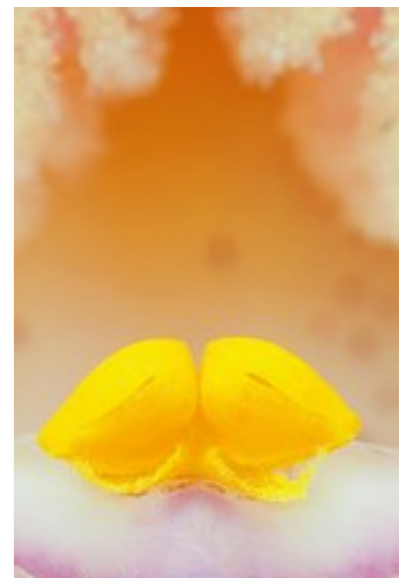
And there it was,
she said to the Guards,
as they put the bolt cutter into an evidence bag,
her sister's wedding ring peeking out
from under the decomposing sheaths.

ANGLE GRINDER

He puts the rusted blade of his axe
into the bench vice, winds the lever
to narrow its jaws until the head is secure,
rubs his cheek with the frayed cuff of his jumper.

Pulls safety goggles over his eyes
hits the power button on the angle grinder,
moves it over the surface of the axe blade,
in slow strokes, like his wife uses when ironing

his shirts. And massaging her lover.
He's blind to the sparks that fall to the floor,
deaf to the grinder's screeches,
and his wife's pleas - to stop





Scott Thomas Outlar hosts the site 17Numa.com where links to his published poetry, essays, interviews, live events, and books can be found. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Outlar was a recipient of the 2017 Setu Magazine Award for Excellence in the field of literature. Selections of his poetry have been translated into Afrikaans, Albanian, Dutch, Italian, French, Persian, and Serbian. His most recent book, *Abstract Visions of Light*, was released in 2018 through Alien Buddha Press.



VIOLINS WITH FALSETTO

There is only this dream of liquid crystal
melted porcelain wings, a breath of the cherub

Stalwart at the gates with a heavy heart
rings of fire, a smile molded with wax

Yours was the dance that never missed a step
long are the hours, a clock of ticking ribs

There is only this platter of flesh and blood
silver harps tuning, a feast for the choir

Stoic when the lions roar from their mountain
lakes of lava, a star set to the north

Yours was the voice resounding in echo
orbs painted of yellow, a prayer whispered in winter

There is only this shadow stained by the sun
twilight of the idols, a moment born in reprieve

Photograph Pixabay.com

OF SWEAT AND BLOOD

silver and sanguine

metallic

these spells are whetted

the last bead
of sweat

dripping through the ether
your cheek
my brow

our burdens have been laid down

the final drop
of blood

sacrificed at the altar
your knife
my flesh

fresh wounds won't seem to heal

FAULT LINES

I run my hand
across your skeleton key;

finger the wounds
where secrets are stored.

I hold your image high
during fits of ecstasy;

lose my balance
with each schism and tremor.

I carve your golden name
into tree bark with rust;

silence the palpitations
of an organ grown weary.

I lick what is left
after your cup runs dry;

lament in the night
over what never was born.





Chad Norman lives beside the high-tides of the Bay of Fundy, in what is known as the hub of Nova Scotia. He has given talks and readings in Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, U.S.A., and across Canada. His poems continue to appear in publications around the world, and have been translated into Danish, Albanian, and Romanian. His latest collections are *Selected & New Poems* (Mosaic Press, Oakville, Ontario, Canada), and *Waking Up On The Wrong Side Of the Sky* (Grant Block Press, Truro, N.S., Canada).



NO LONGER

for Whitewing II

I have
held you,
white eyes
death brought
cannot
see this--
it is the cold
I know
has left you
stiffened--
but what of
the ground,
where I threw
what I fed you,
where you
trusted me,
the earth
stiffened too--
I cannot
provide a burial
other than
to cover you
with the leaves
I have saved.

Photograph Pixabay.com

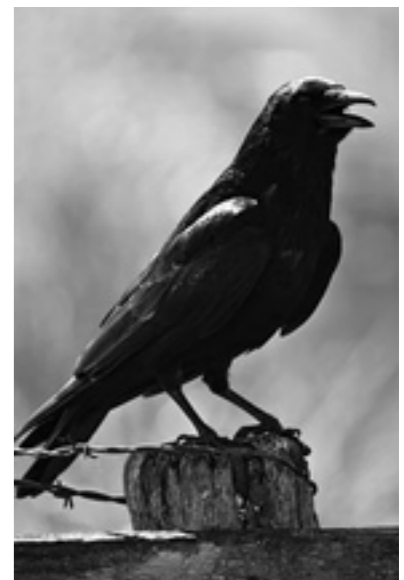
THE CROW HAS SPOKEN

for the one I found dead today,
white feathers under each wing.

Nothing more
needs to be said--
it wasn't ever
about words.
You sit in trees
on cold mornings
brilliant enough
to face the sun,
I stare up at you
with just the bread
I have broken,
in a way
we partake together,
but I hear you
loudly & clearly:
"Human
all the answers
to all your questions
can be found
in the sky."

THE EARLY ROOST

During the thunder
and attractive sheet lightening
not a crow to be seen
or oddly, not even heard,
all of it witnessed
sitting with a coffee
out on the front deck
until the rain and wind
die down to return a calm,
a break in the storm
as many believe it to be
when I notice the last
of the early roost,
in some way like a
daring private message,
telling me something
between the over-head flashes.
Are they just stragglers?
No. I am alone with them,
the crows smart enough
to make a move
to where I am not sure,
all I seem to know is
they are part of some
momentary, mysterious
intelligence.

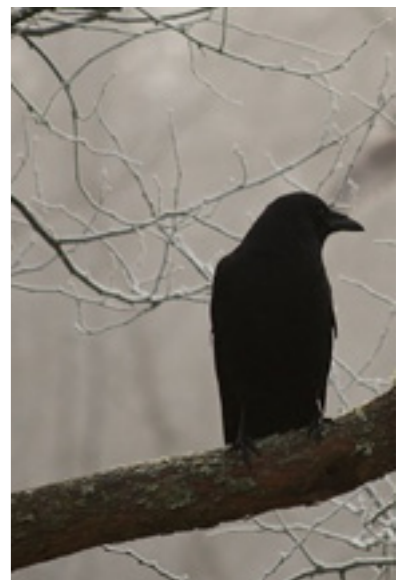


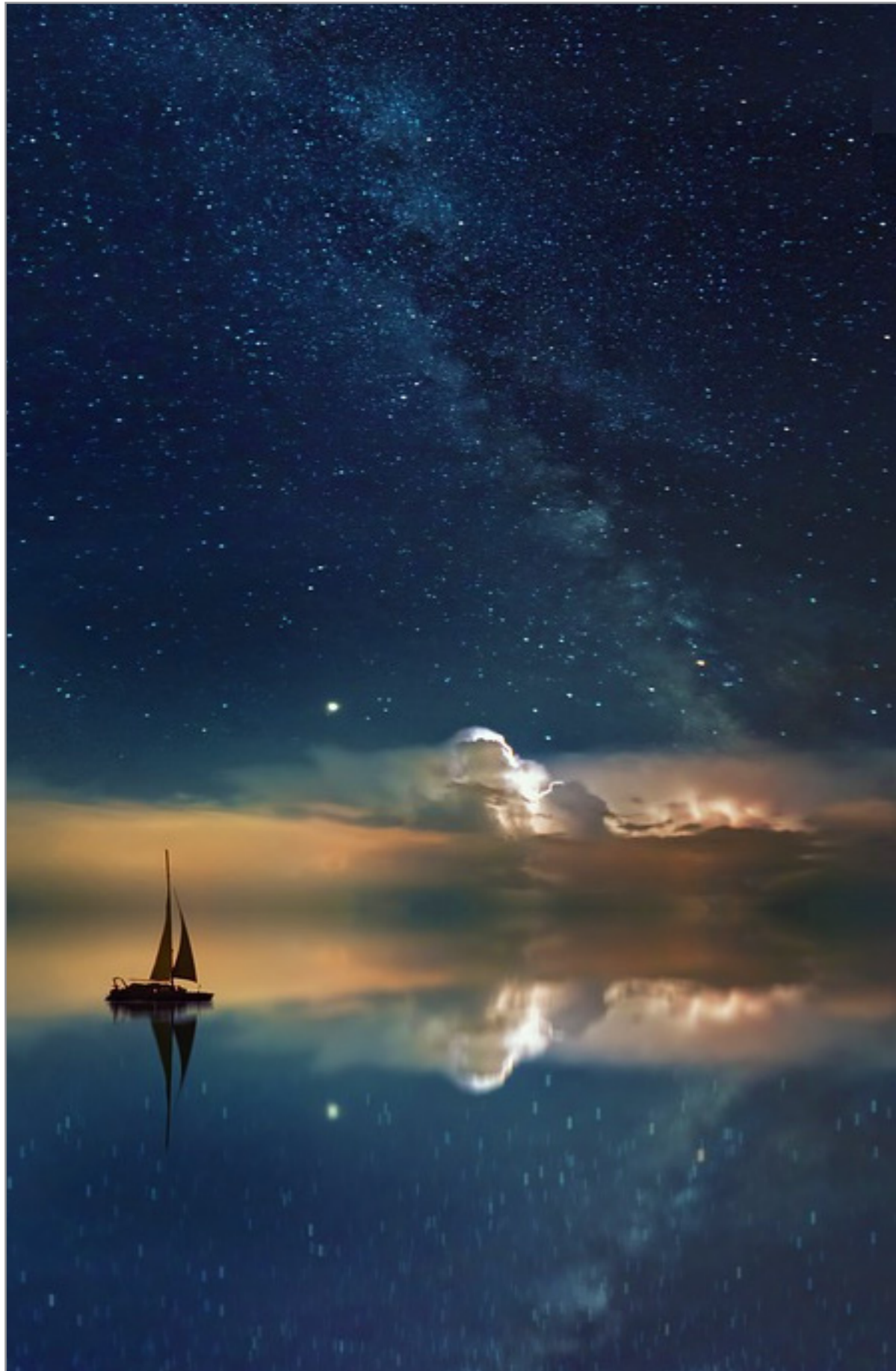
THREE DEAD CROWS

Two died in the back-yard.
Do I bury
them together,
or when the earth thaws
dig separate graves?
As for the third discovery
I picked her
off the icy street,
and looked into the trees
down an embankment
and gently tossed
the frozen, wounded body
into the morning shadows,
where I knew the Wild
would allow the snow's depth
to be a fitting reception.

AFTER SPEAKING WITH THE CROWS

I have been taught often
by the crows' silence...
today they teach
it is fine,
even necessary
to not want
to be with
my limited species,
so sometimes
I can feel
my aura enough
not to worry
what temporary colour
it is.





John W. Sexton was born in 1958 and lives in the Republic of Ireland. He is the author of six poetry collections, the most recent of which is *Futures Pass* (Salmon Poetry 2018). A chapbook of his surrealist poetry, *Inverted Night*, is forthcoming from SurVision Books early in 2019. In 2007 he was awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry. Most recently, his poem "The Snails" was shortlisted for the Irish 2018 An Post/Listowel Writers' Week Poem of the Year Award.



IN SPACE, SPACE

marvels bode ill
for our ignorance ... aghast
at the talking jennet

the mime mimes the heaviest
weight ...
in space, space fills itself in

hosanna bwaaaaaark bck ...
the chicken who pilfered
an angel's feathers

all elbow joints ...
one-armed newhumans designed
for life around the bend

a babe in its
cumulus cradle ... nine miles
of umbilical cord

a bloody business
but the milk divine ... leech-calves
devour their mothers

in this jar
the soul of a hedgehog ...
what is a hedge?

snagged on his tin beard ...
the penny ragwife watches
her own undoing

let us end at the start ...
standing by
the doorway at Nowhere

Photograph Pixabay.com

DIMINISHED RETURNS

fire-service reserve ...
the circus seal
takes its turn as the siren

bleached to brittleness
in the ocean gyres ...
badelynges of bath ducks

clink and rattle
at the bottle bank ... no one
heeds the ghosts of wine

the lampposts
reply to the last message ...
Lucky sends again

nine ninja nincompoops
sent to slay a snail ...
nine silver paths, each fail

untold parsecs
won't dull its fungal blossom ...
the gingerbread spaceship

chrysanthemum blight
petitions
the chrysanthemum ambassador

diminished returns ...
3 chimpangutans @
5 sents 1 come 2 goes

God self-infects
imperfection antibodies ...
sweats out the cosmos

THE SHAGGY DOG

the gentle pottery
of their casts ... oh, what culture
muck makes of muck

on examining
the shaggy dog ... railways service
the lice cities

Jigsaw Family Robinson ...
mama gives birth
to the missing piece

brass section
also doubles as percussion ...
Doorknocker Orchestra



THE GRAMMARIAN DUCT

piloting a buoyant mountain, engines large as grape seeds
Oldman Oaken, wasps budding through his skin
sinbad's spiral palace down the staircase of a seashell
in the grammarian duct the Duckbill Higgingson hunts ings
beefeater's pike opens palace doors in the prince's stomach

A LAST RESORT

LIGHTFALL?
our snooker table of suns to align?
but we're long eyeless!

weep!
not even the stains of love
left in the bedsheets of Babylon

two-hundred-eared Tommy ...
listen for the pin drop
before you are born

the monk's white cat
licks at sunlight ... above, cloudlets
from cat spittle take shape

chrysanthemum ghosts
loiter in the hallway ... the stairs
misses a step

a grass gas attack ...
we sprout verdantly
and take to the hill

THE STARS LIKE MUST ...
by Asimov via Ouija but a bit
lifeless

a last resort ...
in the utility belt
a single kiss goodbye



EASILY MADELAINE

whip and telepathy gone ...
the jockey tries
an old-school whinny

insert a zip
along the ninety teeth marks ...
my body's a wallet!

the Proust murders ...
how easily Madelaine
melts into the tea

sending woodlice
up in a bottle rocket
is sending them down

at the goldfish
lost and found ...
the goldfish



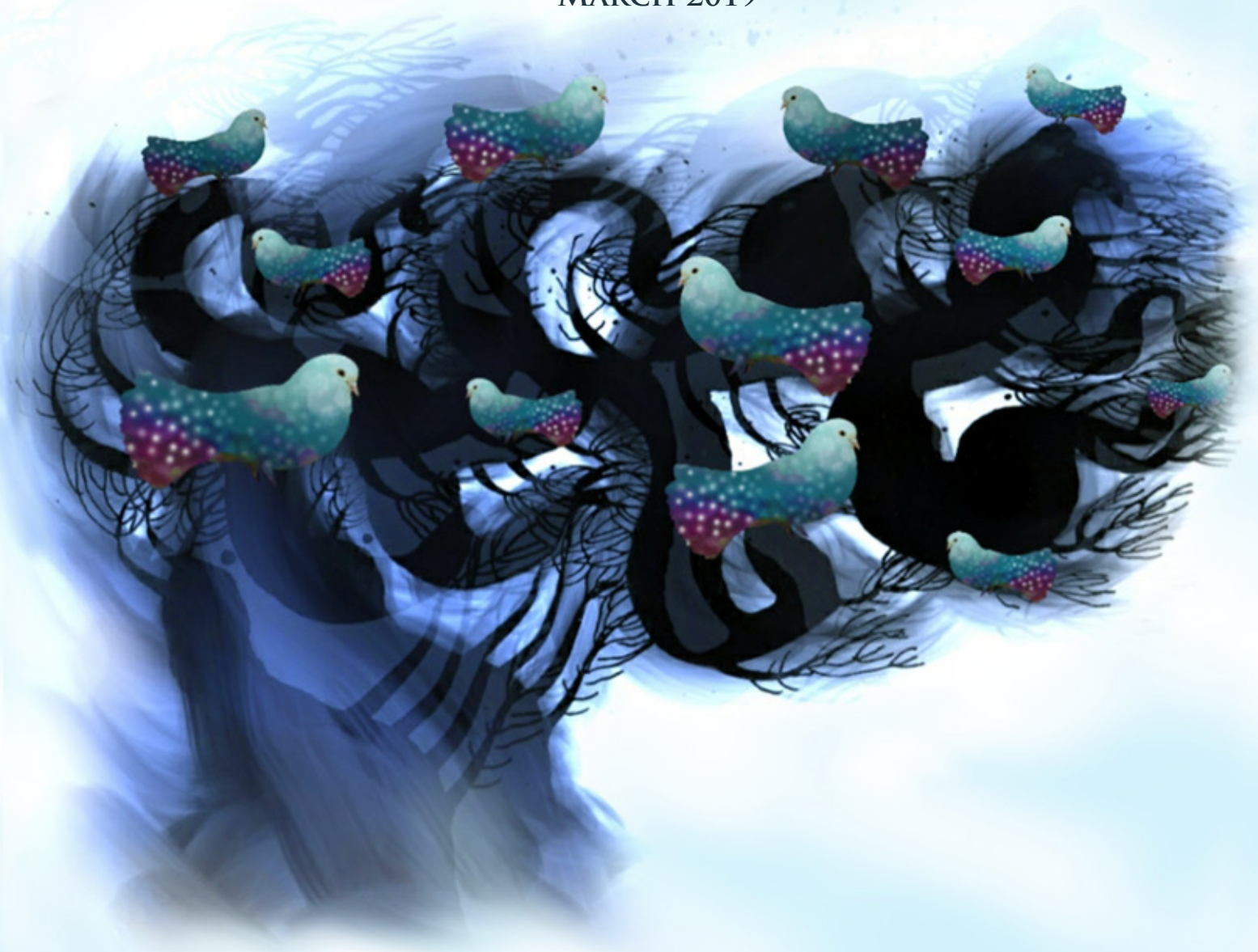
Photograph Pixabay.com

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MARCH 2019



COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE