

10 ANNIVERSARY 2010 - 2019



# Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
VOLUME ONE DECEMBER 2019

TERRY MCDONAGH  
*Live Encounters Ten Years On*

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE





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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount for this just cause.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas  
Publisher/Editor  
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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. <http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com/>

Terry is a founding contributor of Live Encounters Magazine.

## TERRY MCDONAGH

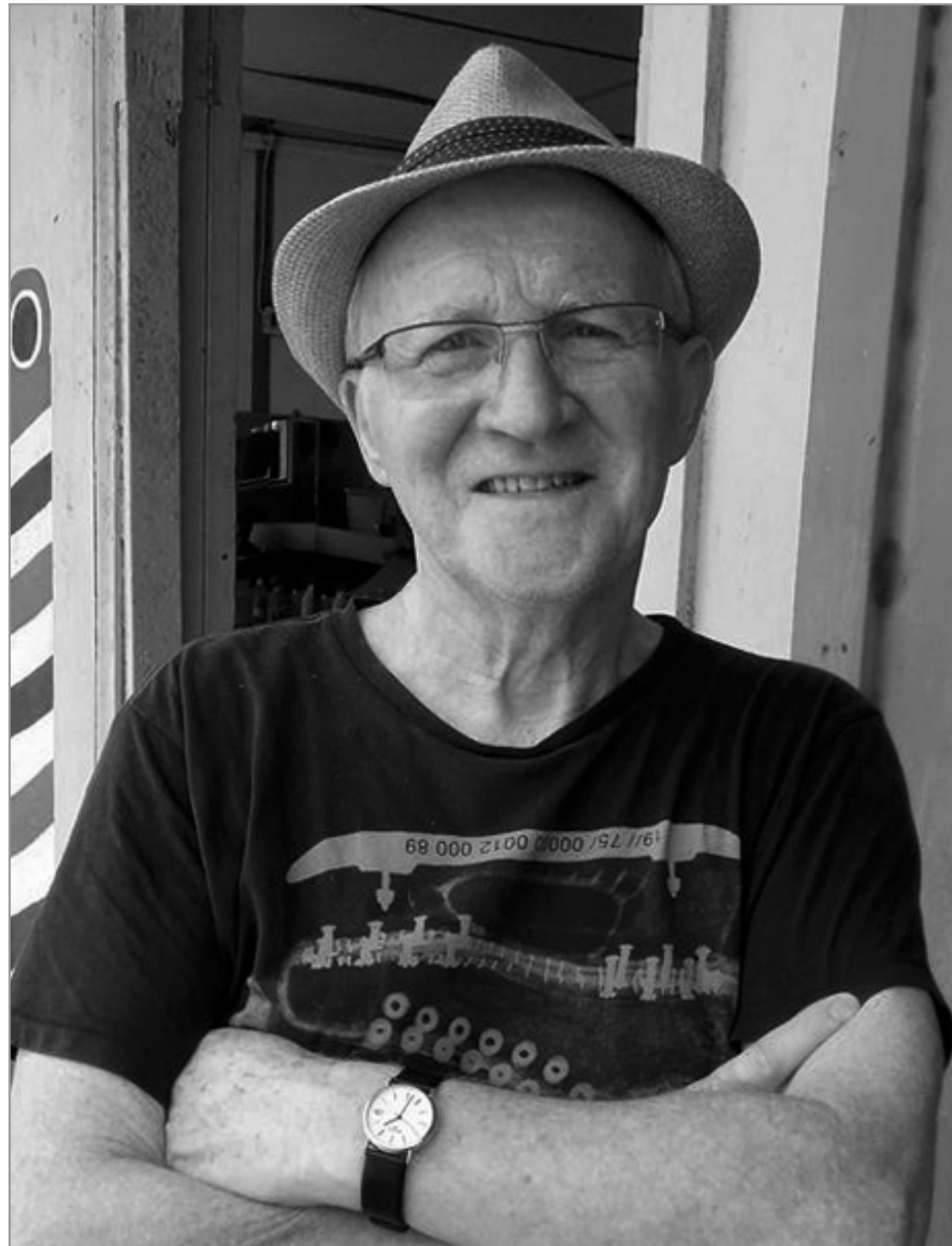
### LIVE ENCOUNTERS TEN YEARS ON

There is a special symmetry and circularity in this current, bumper edition of Live Encounters that incorporates Live Encounters Magazine, Live Encounters Poetry & Writing and Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers. This issue is the result of the hard work of ten valuable and productive years.

The growth and success of LE is a tribute to the vision and persistence of founder and Editor in Chief, Mark Ulyseas. It all began in 2010 when Mark reached out to the international community to produce a *bimonthly international journal by citizens of planet earth*. Now, a decade later, LE has become a much bigger story connecting with artists, young and old; to people of diverse religious, political and business backgrounds and persuasions. LE offers well-known writers, journalists, reviewers and critical thinkers from all corners of the globe an opportunity to access a wider audience.

LE provides a platform for national and international contemporary writing by people from various geographical regions and social backgrounds. Reading through issue after issue from 2010 up to 2019 has helped me realise that the earth is, indeed, a village, populated by millions of *village earth* people. These 'villagers' might, at first glance, appear somewhat different to 'US'. But we become increasingly aware that although they wear their own particular colours, we share myriad basic needs and aspirations. We can all unite through our poems, songs, stories, images and dreams. We can perhaps find solace and comfort.

*Poems are not words, after all, but fires for the cold.*



Terry McDonagh



Poems are not words, after all, but fires for the cold.

LE grants us glimpses into the concerns of real people – their troubles, cares and special moments in picture, prose and poetry. It grants us some time out and allows us access to the experiences of others. In the words of American poet, Mary Oliver, it *gives us ropes let down to the lost* – time to contemplate universal real life issues – fear, joy, loneliness, and relationships. We attain insight into life in cities and cultures we may never have the opportunity to visit. This wide geographical spread challenges our cultural and moral certitudes and prejudices. It rattles us with differing vibrations to make us laugh, believe and, sometimes, cry.

I was honoured to have been included in the inaugural issue of LE in 2010 with two of my poems: 'A Gypsy Woman in Ireland' and 'Writer's Festival on Bali'. Thanks to the great Indonesian poet and publisher, Rosa Herliany, I took part in The International Festival of Bali in 2004. It seems like a long time ago but the memory is vivid and alive and it inspired my poem, 'A Writers Festival on Bali'. The further we reach out the greater the reward. Reaching out has become an LE anthem.

Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers is a very positive and exciting new development. An authentic and professional forum for writing by children and teenagers is so important. They learn about the process of writing, editing and publication. They gain in self-confidence as writers and citizens whose ideas and beliefs are taken seriously. This is an exciting and demanding time for young people. Traditional values and systems are being challenged and issues such as climate change, gender roles and mental health are major concerns. We live in a world of social media, images and pictures – hence the opportunity for young people to write and publish their opinions is invaluable. And LE gives us a master class in how to produce a magazine. Mark always gets it right. He has a happy ability of enhancing text with his choice of image and picture.



Terry as a young poet in the 1970s.

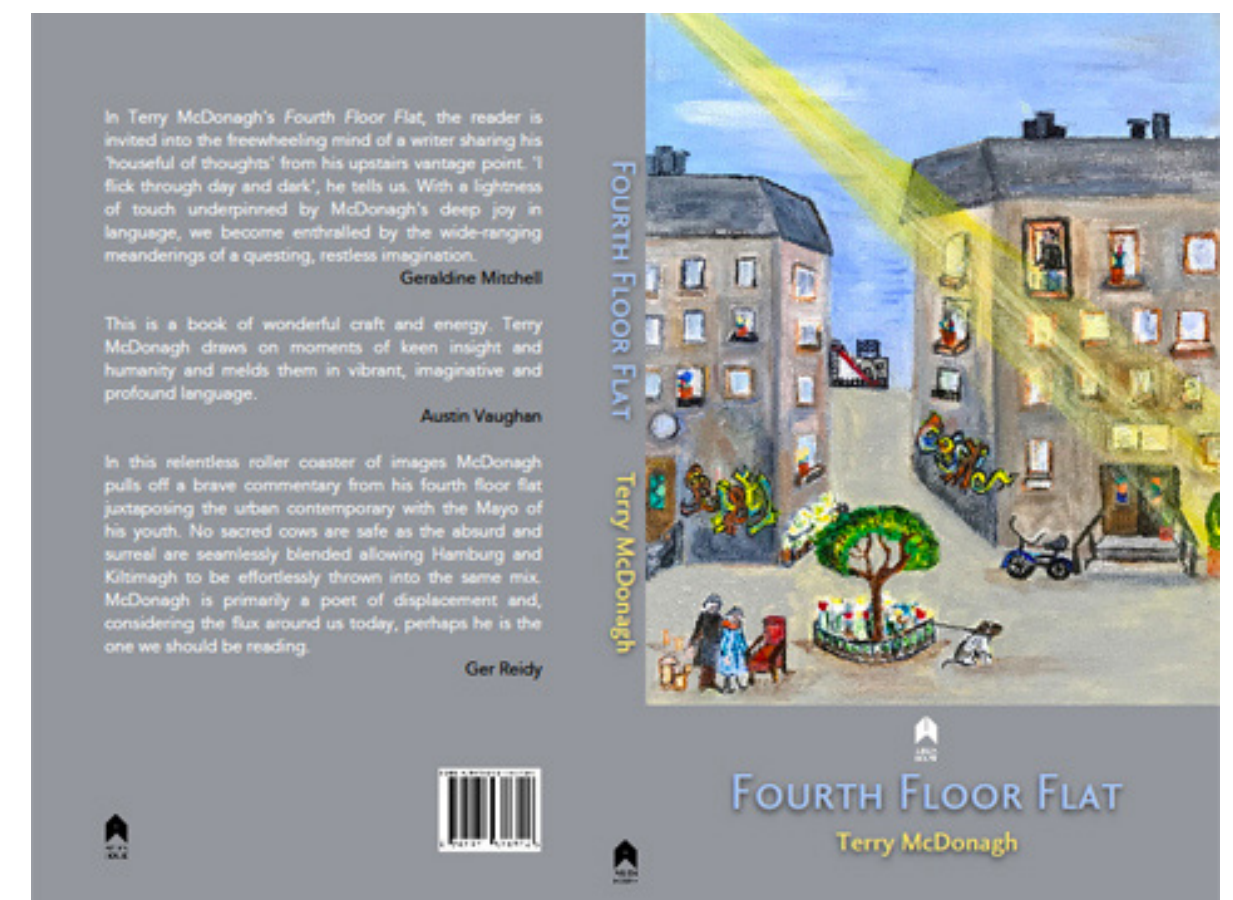


Traditional values and systems are being challenged and issues such as climate change, gender roles and mental health are major concerns. We live in a world of social media, images and pictures – hence the opportunity for young people to write and publish their opinions is invaluable.

I often ask myself why write at all? I don't have answers but I suspect it has to do with need – a desire to tell a story as yet untold. *Poetry is a life-cherishing force* – Mary Oliver. Then there is the fear of rejection; the countless hours when we could be doing something sensible. And if we begin to take our writing seriously there is the question of publication. Thankfully Mark Ulyseas offers us an enduring and creditable outlet and platform for our work. When I meet poets we talk about Live Encounters!

During the last decade Live Encounters has developed, matured and found its feet. The circle is closed that began with the publication of the Inaugural Issue of January 2010. In that first issue, Oscar Wilde appears to Mark Ulyseas to discuss The Importance of Being Oscar Wilde at The Late Writers & Readers Festival. Little could Mark have realised that we would be heaping praise on the importance of Live Encounters in 2019. To quote Oscar Wilde, 'Success is a science; if you have the conditions, you get the result.'

Here's to the next ten years of Live Encounters!



*Fourth Floor Flat*, published by Arlen House. <http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com/>



Randhir Khare is a distinguished writer, artist, teacher and theatre personality. He is the recipient of numerous national and international awards for his unique contribution to culture and education. His 36 volumes of poetry, fiction, essays, translation from tribal dialects and other writings as well as his 7 solo exhibitions all explore themes of identity, belonging and the struggle to stay human in a violent and fragmented world. He has more recently spearheaded an initiative to enrich formal education through the experience of the arts. <https://randhirkhare.in/> This poem sequence has been inspired by Rumi. It was first performed by the poet Randhir Khare with the Indo-Iranian band AFTER RUMI that he recently founded. The band consists of a Duff player, a Sarangi player and a Tambu player. It was first performed at The Studio and later at French Window.

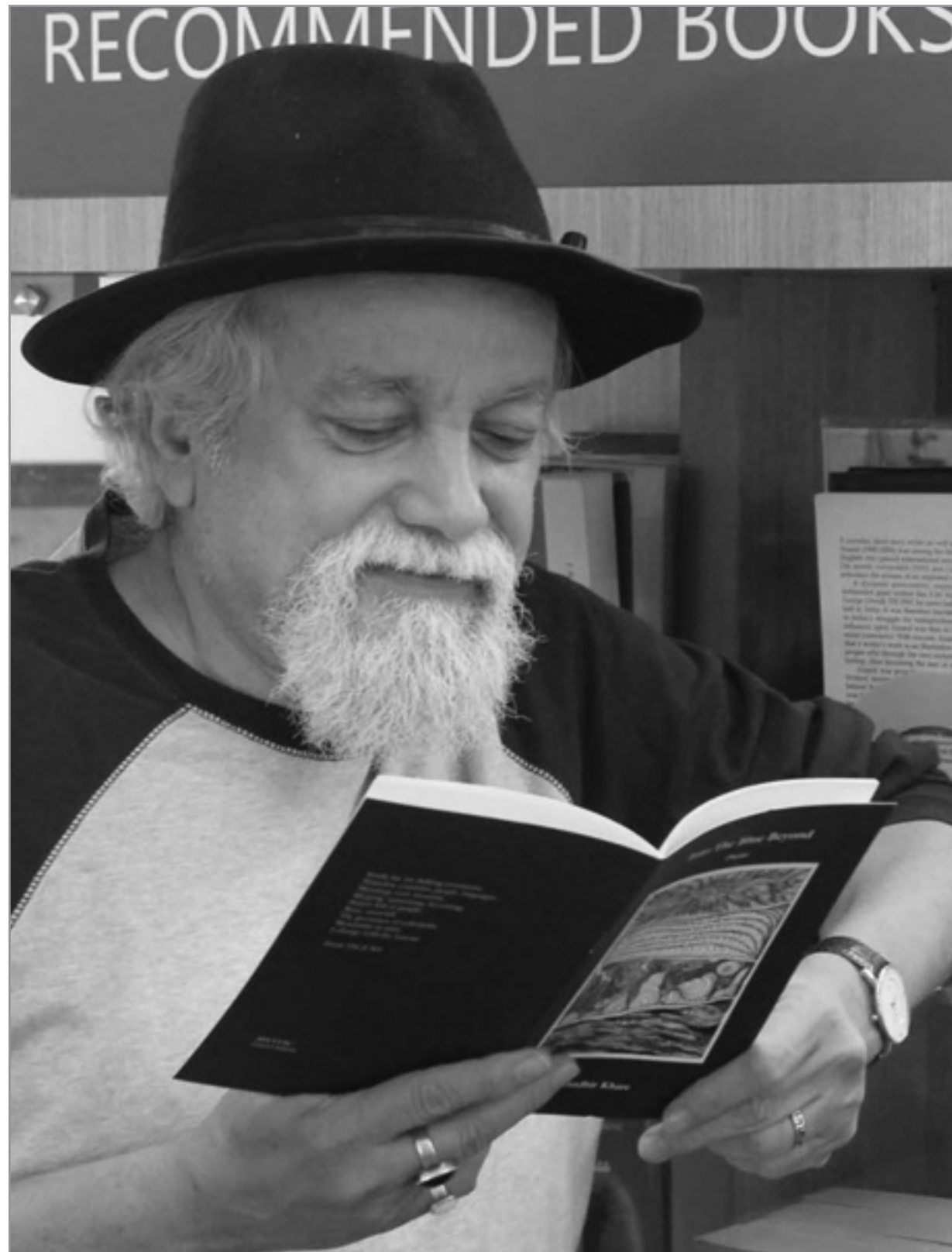
Randhir is a founding contributor of Live Encounters Magazine.

## LIGHT DANCE AFTER RUMI

I.

*When you love, there is no me, no we  
says Rumi*

You are my freedom,  
The moment of morning before the first bird song  
When dark and light entwine and our blood sings halleluiahs  
And skin-pores fuse, lips dissolving;  
Beloved moment of breath-dance, in the birthing sobs of the day,  
I celebrate this meeting...  
With touch, with sound, with word, with whirling bodies,  
With lips that speak the language of ecstasy,  
With thoughts that swirl one with the other,  
With the harmony of feelings,  
With love space-dancing,  
With life and death in the dance of creation,  
Meeting, merging, resurrecting.



Randhir Khare



2.

*Lovers never meet, they are always one,  
says Rumi*

I celebrate this meeting of journeys, of languages, beliefs,  
Customs, attitudes, feelings, sharings, tastes,  
Ways of loving, hoping, remembering, the sacredness of spaces,  
Path touching path in the green woods of afternoon,  
Skies airbrushed with cloud wisps,  
Rivers flowing into each other's arms, coming home as one.  
In the great world of forgetfulness my darling we are just stardust,  
Floating, scattering, colliding, struggling, shattering,  
Within, we are one and only one ...  
Veins, muscles, sinews, my breath fills your lungs,  
We savour the union of distances in the beat of one heart,  
We call each other's names in a moment of becoming  
In one voice, one voice, one voice.

3.

*I give you a mirror, look at your reflection and you will remember me,  
says Rumi*

In you I see who I am, what I am, how I am, why I am,  
I see myself flesh, mind, spirit, heart,  
I accept my hurt, loss, my inconsistencies, my homelessness,  
I embrace my blue sky crowded with dream swallows,  
I die, dig my own grave, bury myself, resurrect myself,  
Give myself wings that catch the winds of becoming  
And fly to you...only you....my mirror;  
I stand before you stripped to my soul, my nothingness,  
And say to myself standing in the windows of your irises -  
*You are free, finally free...*  
Free to be, beautiful one, glowing one,  
For I am you and you are me...  
And we dissolve into each other,  
Crying with voices of forever...





4.

*The lover whirls like the birthing universe, in joy,  
says Rumi*

I rise as a child-kite lofted on skirt-hems of the wind  
Rising and dipping, swinging and gliding,  
Your joy in me, my joy in you,  
Juices of morning light trickling on day's skin, navel-singing,  
Wet tongue and lips on throats,  
Fingertips glowing in the soft fire of sacredness.  
We are flame, pure flame,  
Blue and red and soft and flowing in the winds of our breathing,  
Whirling and whirling, swallow spirals, reborn comets,  
Love light of the divine dissolving ...  
Our bodies in an effulgence of belonging,  
Revolving revolving,  
This is the beginning, this is the end,  
This is forever, my love.

5.

*When we make love, it is like God is with us,  
says Rumi*

We breathe into each other's lungs, speak in each other's voices,  
See through each other's eyes,  
Palm on palm sharing destinies,  
Sharing moments of morning before first bird songs,  
Sharing tongues, sharing destinies,  
You bathe me with the pure light of your moon-body  
Singing of the Tree of Life,  
Roots thrusting into the earth, deep and searching  
For the spring waters of time,  
Earth holding, clasping, throbbing.  
We merge, we separate, drift, meet, fly,  
Turning and turning, each in our own galaxy,  
And yet as one...  
Deep, so deep and drown in pure moon light,  
Singing like angels.





6.

*Dance, when you are perfectly free,  
says Rumi*

We dance the dance of love, within, without,  
Inside each other and yet so different, we remain, become, entwined,  
Vines climbing to the light above the canopy of trees,  
Above the mud and bones and death and roots,  
Above the work of worms and butterflies,  
Above the busy-ness of maggots, above the fireflies of longing,  
We dance entwined, with all our pain and bitterness resolved,  
We dance the dance of light, rising and rising,  
Rising to crystal rooftops to complete ourselves.



AFTER RUMI -- The Band

Left to Right: Arman Meri Mahani on the Sarinda, Mehdi Tebyanian on the Tanbur, Hamta Baghinejad on the Daf, and Randhir Khare - Poet and Lead Vocalist.



Emma Barone is a contemporary visual artist. She makes still life and landscape paintings in acrylic on canvas. She studied animation and has an eclectic design background that ranges from interior design to architectural ceramics, and from stained glass to jewellery design. Barone's work has been featured in various publications including *Live Encounters Magazine*, *The Irish Arts Review*, *Senior Times*, *House and Home*, and the *Sunday Independent*; and she has published two books in collaboration with the Hennessy Award-winning writer, Eileen Casey. Emma has exhibited extensively throughout Ireland, with 23 solo exhibitions under her belt, her work is in private and public collections including the Amsterdam World Trade Centre, Midlands Regional Hospital, Offaly County Council and Tullamore DEW Visitors Centre, Ireland. <https://www.emmabarone.com/>

We thank Irish Artist Emma for her fabulous cover artworks for *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* and *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*, which she has generously contributed since March 2017.

## EMMA BARONE

is a contemporary visual artist.

She makes still life and landscape paintings in acrylic on canvas.

All Emma's work is connected, People know her for her unique style of painting. Strong colours, imagery and the way that they amalgamate are consistent in all her work, past and present. Elements of trees, water, space, sky, geometry and the microcosm of nature weren't intentional, they just appeared in the paintings as if there was a higher power at work.

Her inspiration comes from actually doing the work not to mention the magic bits and the colour combinations and the way it all works together in creative harmony.



Emma Barone. Photo credit: Willie Dillon.

Suniti Namjoshi was born in Mumbai, India and at present lives in the southwest of England. Her books include *Feminist Fables*, *Building Babel*, *Saint Suniti and the Dragon*, *Goja*, *Sycorax*, *The Fabulous Feminist*, *Suki* and *Foxy Aesop* (also published as *Aesop the Fox*). Her books are published by Spinifex Press and Zubaan. Her children's books, including the Aditi series, *The Boy and Dragon Stories* and *Blue and Other Stories* are published by Tulika Books and Spinifex Press. For *Blue* Nilima Sheikh did the art work. Suniti's papers are in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suniti\\_Namjoshi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suniti_Namjoshi)



## DANGEROUS PURSUITS

The morning discloses a phoenix  
in the garden.  
You mean a pheasant? No, a phoenix,  
each feather burning, the eyes burning.  
Such brightness consumes itself.  
I scramble through the bushes looking  
for the phoenix.  
I cannot hope to find her;  
but should I stumble  
upon her, the air will ignite, the garden  
blaze, and I will achieve happiness.

Suniti Namjoshi





## A SPECULATIVE BENT

As she looked at the rows and rows of cabbages stretching out before her, she wondered what would happen if cabbages were like human beings. 'Or the other way about,' she corrected herself. She had been told she had a speculative bent and encouraged to feel that this was a good thing. She pursued the thought:

'We wouldn't have any arms and legs, but we could roll, I suppose. Rolling downhill would be fun, but rolling uphill wouldn't be easy. It would probably be impossible. Still, as cabbages, we would have to sit still all day. We would then be able to develop the power of our minds. We would acquire telepathy and telekinesis. Any cabbage could speak to any other. And we would be able to move objects at will – rocks, trees, even mountains. We could re-shape the earth to make it a pleasant place for cabbages to live on. As cabbages, we could even move ourselves. We could roll uphill!'

She felt pleased. Life as cabbages was beginning to look utopian. It was worth thinking about. She looked at the rows of cabbages again. Each cabbage looked very like any other cabbage.

'We would all be the same!' she exclaimed to herself. 'There would be no jealousy, no inequality, no racism, no factions, no wars. No cabbage would say that its shade of green was lighter or darker.'

She peered at the cabbages anxiously. Perhaps there were differences among cabbages? Perhaps some were greener, some lighter, some sweeter, some less sweet, some larger, some smaller, some more capable of deep thought and telekinesis? It was worrying. She scrutinised the cabbages again. They all looked the same. If there were any differences, they were negligible. They would live in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity!

As she continued to contemplate the serenity of the cabbages, a rabbit came along and began to nibble at a cabbage leaf. She watched horrified. But the cabbage didn't move, it didn't even squeak. 'Herbivores were clearly a problem. Cows, kangaroos, elephants, horses... Herbivores would have to be abolished - or transformed. That's it! They could be turned into other vegetables. This would make for a somewhat static landscape. Ah, but carnivores could be allowed to flourish. Lions and tigers would gambol on the green and adorn the scenery. But what would they eat? No herbivores and so no carnivores. A pity, but there was no help for it.' 'And no insects,' she added as an after-thought.

It then occurred to her that the rabbits and the rest weren't the main problem. All the cabbages would soon be harvested – by human beings! From her green utopia human beings would have to be banned. No, that was all right. Human beings were cabbages! It was a superb plan.

She began to consider where she might publish it.



## MADAM MUTABILITY

### Aspects of Mu

Madam Mutability has come to tea.

Her stale scent  
clogs the air. She is someone

I don't want to be.  
I'm ten years old. I turn my face away.

She takes no notice,  
she says to my mother:

*I am the one who puts fuzz*

*on the peach,  
dew on the grass, rust on the cheek.*

*I'm probably the one  
who finally kills. Without me,*

*nothing would grow,  
nothing would live. No baby born*

*would ever squall.  
All would be silent,*

*all would be still.  
The flick of a finger and everything moves.*

*The cock crows,  
the dove coos.*

*The whole of creation is swinging along  
on mother's milk.*

I look at my mother, who looks away,  
and says nothing

Ten years later it's Mu again,  
gobbling cakes,  
guzzling cream.

*Confidentially, my dear,  
between you and me, the sun will rise  
and the earth will spin  
and a stray asteroid*

*might wander in.  
Does she know what she's saying?*

And she,  
grinning down her nose,  
smiling through her teeth,  
*Oh you babbling buttercup, I don't need to know  
anything!*

Next she's a friend. Someone I knew  
long ago.

We used to play games.

We are playing games.  
And which games are those?

*It doesn't really matter.  
That ball – thundering down –*

*that is destiny.  
You are the ninepins. She shrugs,*

absolving herself.  
*I'm not a player. I'm just watching.*

She has set me up,  
sent the ball rolling.

One day she says:

*Let's play catch.  
Catch as catch can. If I touch you,*

*you'll shrivel up and die.  
And if you touch me,*

*you'll shrivel up and die.  
And if I refuse?*

*You'll still shrivel up and later you'll die.*

*continued overleaf...*

© Suniti Namjoshi



## MADAM MUTABILITY

contd...

## Aspects of Mu

She sits like a cat with her tail curled,  
 watching me age. But she says,  
*That's not interesting.*

Fluffy Madam Mu is a makeup artiste  
 with a degree  
 in beauty. She can cut hair.  
 She can go 'snip, snip.'  
 She is staring at my face,  
 and at the whole of my body.  
 Suddenly, she reaches across  
 and scores my cheek.  
 I don't even know  
 whether she hates me.

## My Charge Against Her

What did you do with the dead worlds?  
 Where did you hide the bodies?  
 And the thoughts of each body?  
 Where are they archived?

Those who walked slowly downhill,  
 or rose from the table,  
 and excused themselves -  
 you made them go!  
 You said something!  
 She just raises guiltless hands.  
*You know they couldn't  
 help themselves.*

What did you say to the gosling,  
 to the small child?

*I didn't say anything.*

*They learn as they go.*

*What do they learn?*

*That everything they love  
 is fading and fragile, and like themselves  
 susceptible to death.*

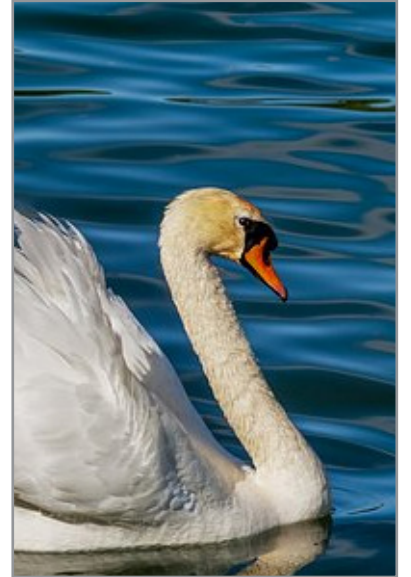
## She Tries to Explain

Madam Mu is grave and gracious:  
*I mean you no harm.*  
*What you suffer are your own limitations.*  
*If you could step into time,  
 dally with creation for just a little while,  
 then step out again, you would be fine.*

*I'm not Old Mother Hubbard eating up everything,  
 I transmute everything -  
 light into leaves, and leaves into earth -  
 what you call alchemy, chemistry.*  
*Look, you climb on a time belt and trundle  
 along, with your eyes in the back of your head.*  
*You can't see a thing coming at you.*  
*It's the way you're born.*

continued overleaf...

© Suniti Namjoshi



## MADAM MUTABILITY *contd...*

### She Tries to Explain

And you?  
   *I collude in everything,*  
*am part of everything, Without me*  
   *your blood wouldn't flow.*  
*Even your maudlin, much vaunted memory*  
   *is subject to me.*  
*You are barely a shadow on grass!*  
   So then are you God?  
*Never said I was! God is somebody*  
   *quite different.*  
*Though because of me you might turn to a god.*  
   Mu, are you never  
 gentle, comforting, kind?  
   *I am your mother, you stupid child.*

## THE SWANS REMAIN

*For Avril Henry (5 April 1935 – 20 April 2016)*

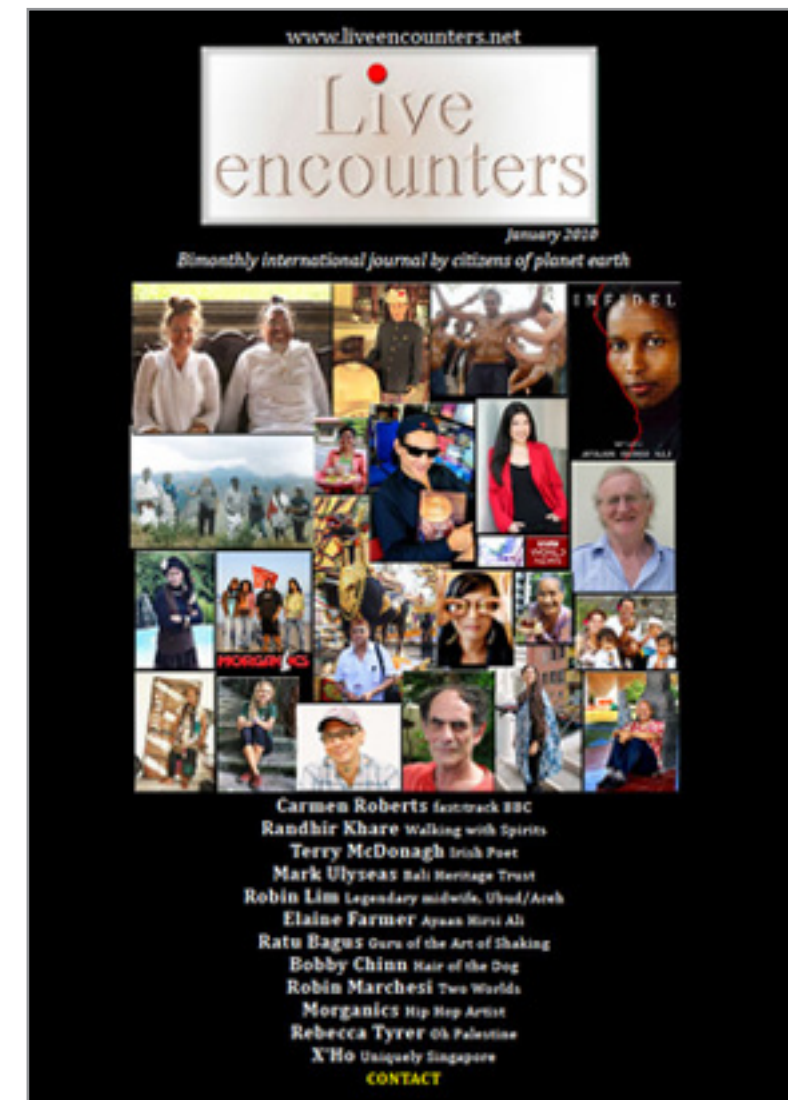
Before your death I sent you a picture  
   of swans in a meadow,  
 an untidy picture:  
   some of the swans had just arrived,  
 some were leaving. It's a picture of transience  
   you told me nicely.  
 I know you were saying I should not grieve.  
   It's not the swans  
 I mourn. When I can, I see with your seeing.  
   The swans remain.  
 It's the meadow. Without you this landscape is empty.



## CYBORG

When I am old and grey and gracious  
I shall pay  
to become a cyborg, lace my blood  
with spidery nanobots,  
and replace my teeth with cellulite, granite,  
or something more precious.  
As for my jaws, I'll have them fortified  
with stainless steel,  
add a bionic motor, a miniature battery,  
whatever's suitable.  
In fact, while I'm about it, I'll have  
my bones replaced  
with something light, plastic, elastic, and not  
in the least frangible.  
Perhaps I'll dispense with some of my parts,  
add new ones -  
a prehensile tail, multiple limbs,  
at least twenty heads,  
and like Ravana  
be marvellous, monstrous, mythical.

[Ravana – King of Sri Lanka in *The Ramayan*]



January 2010

Christopher Merrill has published six collections of poetry, including *Watch Fire*, for which he received the Lavan Younger Poets Award from the Academy of American Poets, and *Boat*; many edited volumes and translations; and six books of nonfiction, among them, *Only the Nails Remain: Scenes from the Balkan Wars*, *Things of the Hidden God: Journey to the Holy Mountain*, and *Self-Portrait with Dogwood*. He directs the University of Iowa's International Writing Program.



Christopher Merrill

## A MINOR HOUSE

*The great structure has become a minor house.*  
—Wallace Stevens

The furnishings? Ice from Antarctica,  
Older than algae, which contains the whole  
Of history in a bubble of air  
Trapped on the final morning of Creation.

An arrowhead, from North America,  
Lodged in the petrifying groin of a hunter  
Cut down along a river disappearing  
Into a cave no one will ever find.

And adders from North Africa. And guides  
For all the soldiers taken prisoner  
And blinded on the Continent. And names  
Lifted from a South Asian orphanage.

The neutral colors of a minor house  
(Grey sky, a path in winter, the roiling sea)  
Suited the princess and the melancholy  
Priest chanting in the last unfinished room,

Blessing her new petition to the king  
To open the park, and stock the aquarium  
With angelfish (Leopards and Veils and Golds),  
And brighten up her sessions with her tutor,

Lugubrious Alphonse, who spoke to her  
Only in Latin or Old French. For who  
Could guess what his intentions really were?  
No doubt another royal scandal loomed.

*continued overleaf...*

© Christopher Merrill





A MINOR HOUSE     *contd...*

The death of God led to the resurrection  
Of spiteful gods and martyrs in white linen  
Recording prayers and summons for the faithful  
Before they blew themselves up in the market.

*Recite a verse from the Quran, or die—*  
These orders for the hostages inside  
A restaurant in the diplomatic quarter  
Were followed to the letter by the men

In balaclavas who did not survive  
The shootout with the soldiers from abroad—  
Whose presence in the country magnified  
The grievances of young and old alike.

---

They sang in minor keys of love and loss,  
Detailing all the ways in which their dreams  
Dissolved in the harsh light of day. *Farewell,*  
They whispered to the churches dynamited

To satisfy the shadow caliphate  
Located near a river in the desert,  
Which nomads had controlled since the beginning  
Of history, according to the records

Compiled by a German geologist  
Assigned to look for oil and natural gas.  
And if they had regrets about the mayhem  
Caused in their name? They did not sing of that.

---

A French adventurer hid in a cave  
Above the Dead Sea, plotting his revenge  
On the nomads sleeping in the tents arranged  
In a half moon around the muddy shore.

They had betrayed him to the authorities  
After his latest unsuccessful attempt  
To find the first oasis—the origin  
Of life and death, he promised them; also

Riches and an explanation for the story,  
Essential to their faith and identity,  
That incantations could dry up the river  
Separating them from Paradise.

---

Shall we redecorate the living room  
With the orangutan insignia  
Devised by special forces in Sumatra  
And marketed throughout the Middle East?

And shall we turn the hall into a shrine  
To the explorers of the Amazon  
Who failed to document the languages,  
Beliefs, and customs of the tribes they encountered?

The kitchen cannot be the centerpiece  
Of a containment strategy designed  
To slow the rise of both our friends and foes.  
Use the mud room, the cellar, or the garage.

---

*continued overleaf...*

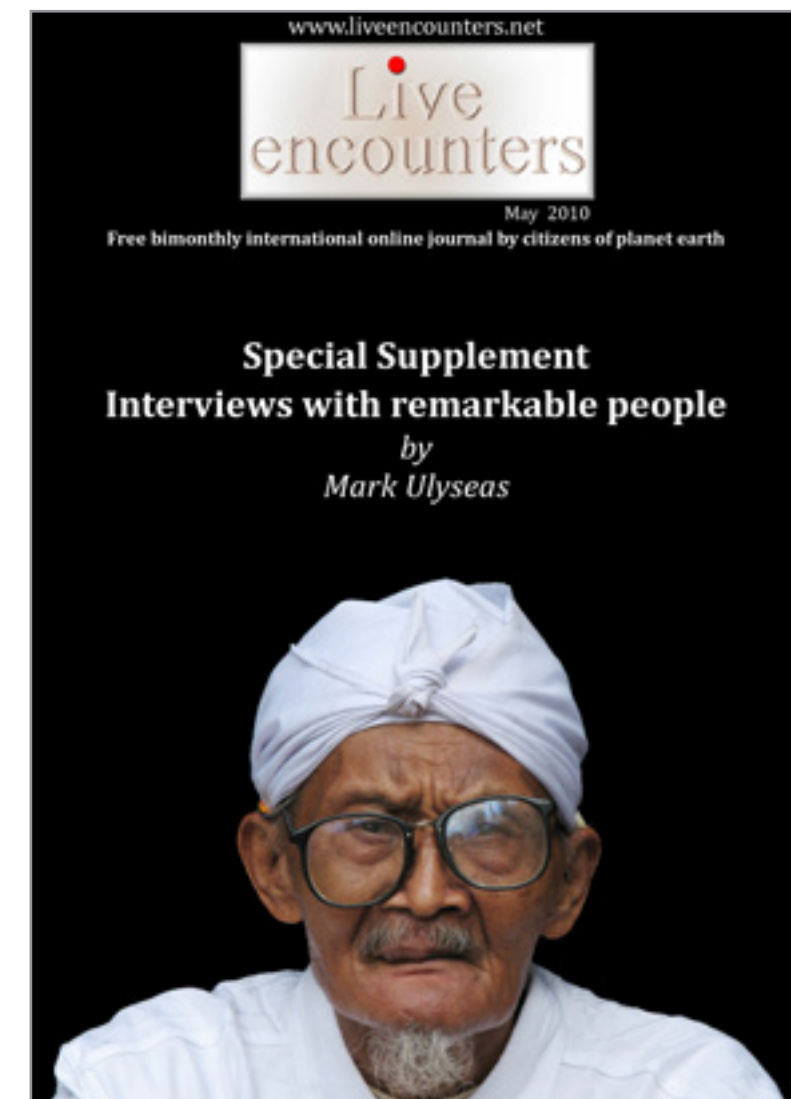
© Christopher Merrill

## A MINOR HOUSE

Alphonse's silence charmed the royal guard,  
Who was investigating the priest's role  
In fencing off the park, exiling the princess,  
And cracking the glass in the aquarium,

While the king issued hourly decrees:  
*Better to poison minds than air or water!*  
*Prepare the royal fleet to sail through ice!*  
*Restore the gallows and the guillotine!*

The tutor understood that martial law  
Would rule until the princess could return.  
Hard to imagine for the architects  
Of this new order, in their minor house.



May 2010





Alex Skovron's most recent collection of poetry, *Towards the Equator: New & Selected Poems* (2014), was shortlisted in the Prime Minister's Literary Awards. *The Attic*, a bilingual selection of his poetry translated into French, was published in 2013; *Water Music*, a volume of Chinese translations, appeared in 2017; and his prose novella *The Poet* has been translated into Czech. A volume of short stories, *The Man who Took to his Bed*, is his latest publication, and has also just appeared in Czech translation. A new poetry collection, *Letters from the Periphery*, is forthcoming.

with no resemblance to the poet he remembered  
himself to have been. In his next poem he observed:  
You can't restore an image that has abandoned  
its reflection, because the image *is* that reflection,

whereas the reflection is not the image.  
Or sometimes almost exactly the other way round.\*

\* From 'Chipped Brick and Old Mortar' by Alex Skovron

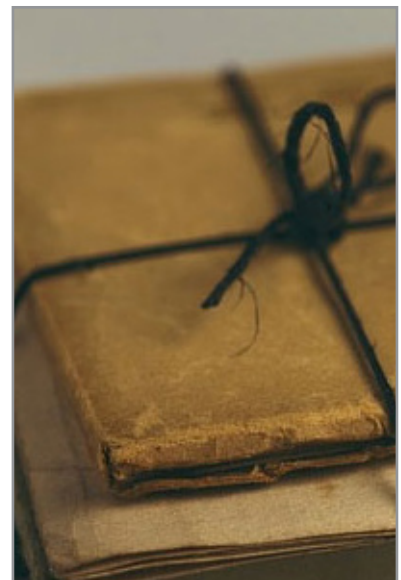
Alex Skovron

## STUBBORN STREAK

Rummaging in the dark web of his attic,  
 he resurrects a secret envelope flush  
 with erotic drawings—his adolescent artistry  
 of discovery and want. In a Brillo carton,  
 the red firetruck, its extension-ladder thread  
 still intact; a Coca-Cola yoyo; the silver  
 magician's-box with its cram of vivid silks  
 crumpled within; a low-rise keep of college  
 lecture-notes under the dormer window;  
 and on a shelf of the tall secretary-desk,  
 graduation token from his parents, a stack  
 of albums. He lifts the topmost, blows away  
 the dust, opens at random. Monochrome

snapshot—the two stand close together  
 by the water's edge, terrytowel swimshorts,  
 a trim bikini, his arm claims her, they smile.  
 Twenty-two, they'd met at a youth convention  
 in Miami, hit it off. He liked her well enough,  
 he liked her shape, she was smart and sweet,  
 and sentimental. Within a month she'd migrated  
 all the way to Boston to be near him, preceded  
 by a presuming call from her Denver dad  
 to check him out, and to warn that his daughter  
 had a stubborn streak. Nothing came of it,  
 he couldn't find the heart to commit, learnt later  
 that she'd stayed and married, a jeweller from  
 Montevideo. Probing a drawer, he digs out

a wad of letters, its rubber-band in bits  
 tracking the bundle with their brittle Morse.  
 His first love—callow, captivating,  
 studiously unconsummated. Both nineteen,  
 they weathered stern parental disapproval  
 in the Verona of '60s New England. A year  
 it lasted, he couldn't find the heart to commit,  
 till she wrote to tell him she'd met someone,  
 an older man, a teacher from Grand Junction,  
 really sorry. She hoped he would one day  
 find what he was seeking, signed off  
 with a row of exes trailing into the margin.  
 He refolds the letter, scrapes at the dead  
 elastic, shuts the drawer. His iPhone pings:  
 he's late for that wretched anniversary.





## THE STUDEBAKER

A generation taller than his father, he delighted in belittling the man's 'red-hot neck' with jibes from left of centre. Born and bled on the blocks behind the family garage, his adolescence no less provisional than the next experimental aesthete's, for some reason, abruptly, he started meditating the carnality of time, concluded with Kierkegaard that life, hitherto lived forwards, could clarify only backwards. This annunciation proved tricky, as by now the ladies were falling all under him, a veritable polyverse of possibilities, so he played the latter-day Ulysses whose endless divarications more and more distanced any putative Penelope who might have taken it on herself to weave him into her future, while he just twiddled, dismissing all claims as unsuited. Indeed, it was really only once he glimpsed his evasions as a sterile odyssey that a spark jumped: he resolved to kaleidoscope his life for one last time with an almighty wrench and found, in the way jazz can reconstruct a tune, that suddenly the cylinders of the 1957 Studebaker he'd once hunched over with his laconic Pa rang sweeter than he cared to recall. By then his parents

had driven on, and the garage he inherited, its walls pasted still with callisthenic robusty calendar gals, became his shed. He never took a bride, preferred to consult from rooms overlooking the old pumps (dry for decades now) maybe once, twice a quarter, but struggled to stay aesthetical, until his paunch and his purse, tugging in two directions, made him proclaim a truce with himself. He sold up, booked a one-way pass to Managua or Montevideo (I can't remember which), and was last spotted as a nurse in a bush clinic while campaigning for some tinpot politico turned guerrilla turned politico, penning the odd op-ed polemic for the *Guardian*, slouched over the *Times* cryptic and reminiscing over those gilded years behind the garage, their intimate music smothered by the revs and recoils of the old Hawk.



© Alex Skovron

Alisa Velaj was born in 1982 in Albania. She has been shortlisted for the Erbacce-Press Poetry Award in 2014. Her poetry have been published or are forthcoming in Erbacce, The Curlew, CultureCult Magazine, Stag Hill Literary Journal , The Quarterly Review, Orbis, The Linnet's Wings, The Stockholm Review of Literature, Poetry Space Showcase, The Seventh Quarry, among ninety other publications. Her poetry collection, *With No Sweat At All*, will be published by Cervana Barva Press in 2019, and the other poetry collection "Dreams" is just published by Cyberwit Press in India.

Poems translated from Albanian by Arben P. Latifi

## THE TREE CHILD

Between East and West,  
the tree child has every day  
sucked in the sun.

Drifting over deserts, his gaze  
has sung every night  
a farewell psalm.

The tree child is so close a friend to thirst  
that his roots stretch everywhere  
where my brilliance and yours cannot reach.

The tree child shocks the amazement  
conceived every instant  
as stars nose-dive...



Alisa Velaj



## THEY NO LONGER COME THROUGH PRAYERS

They don't come through prayers as they once used to.  
Green fields, endless and endless...  
Beyond every field, yet another one -  
an obvious liberation from tyrannies.

They come in sight same as light is conceived,  
just like that, all of a sudden -  
beings without an origin or a limit.

*"Till the greenery part us",* the widow mutters through her teeth,  
with her body bent over the white lilies in the garden,  
at the freshest daybreak.

*"All while the lilies won't forget of you",*  
chimes in the youngest lily,  
with a baby's chirp, sweet and full of mysteries...

## SCRAMENTAL

Ancient humans consecrated the mountains  
with horizons and light,  
without ever abandoning the mountains.

Nowadays, we consecrate a sea of light -  
light in the sea  
and sea in the light...

We are dwarfed agape in front of horizons,  
now boundless more than ever,  
and feel like mightier gods than our forefathers  
in their grand amazement  
with infant horizons...

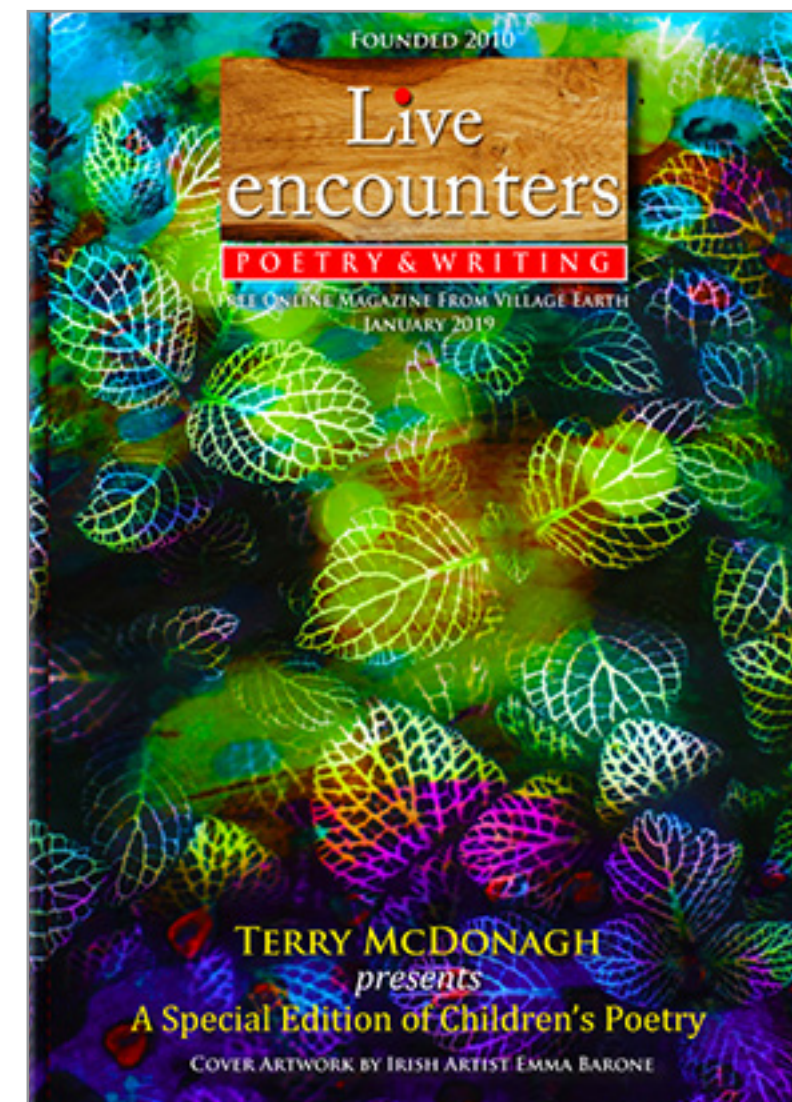
*Valbona, July 2016*



## OBLIVION

I was told that ghosts go insane at night,  
getting drunk and mingling in Dionysian rites...  
Among them enters Macbeth with a somnolent corpse,  
while ghosts dance and chant around him  
in the sweetest voices on earth.

In the morning, Orpheus, totally speechless,  
can't even recall who stole his voice...



January 2019



Angela Topping is the author of eight full collections of poetry, and four pamphlets, with a fifth forthcoming, all from reputable publishers. Her most recent is *The Five Petals of Elderflower* (Red Squirrel 2016). Her poems have featured in a range of magazines internationally, and have featured on BBC Radio's Poetry Please on several occasions, and in over 100 anthologies. She is a former Writer in Residence at Gladstone's Library, Harwarden, Wales. Based in Cheshire, UK, she works as a freelance poet and author



## HE COMES TO ME

He comes to me here, whenever he can,  
finds me waiting, writing in my notebooks,  
wearing his old dressing gown.

He'll spin the black turntable with a latest buy  
or swing the guitar into his arms to play me.  
The music articulates things we never say.

Something tells me, maybe it's the way  
the evening light insinuates itself  
between the lace flowers on my curtains,

that we cannot always be this way, that one day  
he will walk away for the last time without warning.  
He will not mean to, and it will take us both aback.

Angela Topping

## BLACKBIRD, SHOPPING

Hop under the hedge  
 out of the cold  
 not much left in the feeder  
 but rummage these beech leaves  
 lifting each with my yellow beak  
 there's a feast of bugs,  
 delicious crawly things.  
 No tidy gardeners here  
 raking up autumn's loss.  
 I toss each leaf, gobble  
 what's underneath.  
 Fill my hollows with  
 their little lives,  
 quick to peck  
 my head dots and dashes.  
 Then fly up to preen  
 on these chimney tops,  
 catch the updraft  
 from their coal fires,  
 fluff up my feathers.  
 It might be winter  
 but life's pretty good.

## BREAD

*Alexander Fleming Discovers Penicillin*

In mum's farmhouse kitchen, I'd lavish  
 home-made jam on doorstops of bread,  
 chew my piece in the fields as I played.  
 We moved to London. Their soft bread  
 was different to mum's bannocks  
 kneaded into submission with her own hands.

In hot weather, it bloomed blue with mould,  
 not fit for ducks in local parks.  
 I studied hard, trained as a doctor,

went away to war. Bread was not plentiful.  
 The Spanish flu killed so many. I did my best  
 in the field hospital, needed all my skill.

Back in my hospital lab, I saw blue spread  
 on culture dishes, thought my experiments  
 ruined, until I saw the wall of mould

keeping back germs like a barricade.  
 It was war, but this time on infection.  
 And I won, I won. And I keep on winning

though I'm long gone now. Think of me  
 when you take your medicine, forget me  
 when you're well. Enjoy your life.





## SISTERS THREE

Despite what you might think  
 we don't like hurly burly.  
 We love our pets and our sisters.  
 Our spells are to preserve  
 the right order of things.  
 Macbeth was always going  
 to murder his king.  
 We saw it in the Tarot,  
 read it in the tea leaves,  
 watched the film on the crystal.  
 We spin the fates,  
 when we are not knitting socks.  
 The world of men  
 is not always our concern  
 but sometimes, we have to  
 set the balance straight.

## UNDER THE BUNTING

*Paintings by Jack Vettriano*

Two suited men survey the passing scene.  
 They smoke, glamorously, nonchalant.  
 Nothing to choose between except their ties.  
 Left hands tucked in pockets, faces in shadow.

Two other men stand either side of a woman.  
 She sits on the railings. She gazes  
 at one, her body angled towards him,  
 but her hand strays close to the hand of the other.

One man sits on the arm of a bench, one foot  
 stamps the ground, one on the bench. The woman  
 at the other end wears a pink dress. They speak  
 earnestly. She keeps her guard, legs crossed.

A couple dances. He holds her ballroom-close,  
 numbers on their backs. Her face is set against him.  
 A series of failed love stories, shown by detail,  
 a certain fall of light, sombre shadows.



Originally from the west of Ireland, Anne Casey is a Sydney-based writer/editor and author of two poetry collections—*where the lost things go* (Salmon Poetry 2017) and *out of emptied cups* (Salmon Poetry 2019). Anne has worked for 30 years as a journalist, magazine editor, media communications director and legal author. Her writing and poetry rank in *The Irish Times* newspaper’s ‘Most-Read’ and are widely published internationally—*The Irish Times*, *Entropy*, *apt*, *Murmur House*, *Quiddity*, *Barzakh*, *DASH*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *Live Encounters*, *The Poetry Jukebox*, *FourXFour* (Poetry Northern Ireland), *HCE Magazine*, *Poets’ Republic*, *Cordite*, *The Canberra Times*, *The Irish Echo*, *Verity La* and *Plumwood Mountain* among others. Anne’s poetry has won/shortlisted for awards in Ireland, Northern Ireland, the USA, the UK, Hong Kong, Canada and Australia. She is Senior Poetry Editor of *Other Terrain Journal* and *Backstory Journal* (Swinburne University, Melbourne), and a member of several literary advisory boards.



Anne Casey

BLOW WIND BLOW

over this low stone wall  
    where the moss holds close

though it may  
    screech and wail

    and the rain comes down  
        oftentimes soft and  
        warm

    séad      gaoth      séad

sharp corners have long come round  
bracing against the storm

breeze in some old slow hand  
to raise you back up from a fall

places that may give way  
on those wildest of days

    séad      gaoth      séad

face to the pounding shore  
stood in this seasoned field

bloomings of life thrive here  
while ever the wind blows free

over this low stone wall  
where the light slips through

    séad      gaoth      séad

(Note: “séad gaoth séad” is the Irish for “blow wind blow”.)

© Anne Casey





## SHOT IN THE DARK

I: At a bar in Charleville

*They found him shot still in his swag right  
next to his bike folks say that bloke would've never woke.  
Seven hundred kays of red dust a dead 'roo round every bend  
barely holding on to the Holden one tonner's tanned wheel.*

Once I held it level at seventy never moving chewing up  
flat dirt over an hour till we saw a better way—flash  
tarred stretch right next riding high out of sight into deep blue sky  
when it came to a sharp tight dead end like the guy in his bed

-roll right next to his bike. *Asleep at the wheel.*

II: Just out of Charleville

Scrabbling in the dirt not far after dark stumbling  
over stumps scratching for sticks bent on a fire  
to boil the billy, roll out the swag sip and slip  
away a rare prayer tripping into limp lamplight

—gagging at the sight gathered two arm  
-fuls of forearms—bundles of 'roo-bones  
bleached white piled high in the loose red soil.  
No stir of a breeze, chill breath in my ear:

*Nighty-night, sleep tight, no nightcap tonight.*

III: After midnight just out of Charleville

Sharp scrape of tyres, no warning shots fired—  
fast awake—heart starts harsh flash—quick dash  
—scramble in the dark ditch that swag, eat dirt, play dead:  
rocks in the head; bed-time stories churning with warning.

Up stumps, see the morning. Pick up sticks—  
seven kinds of snakes, the most dangerous ones  
poison with tongues. Pennies dropping scales from eyes:  
leave no fare for the ferryman tonight. Still dark nights

come stir that voice: *Just pray them bones was 'roos alriiiight...*

Note:

The following Australian slang terms are used in this poem: “swag” meaning a temporary, all-weather bedroll for sleeping outdoors; “kays” meaning kilometres; “roo”/“roos” meaning kangaroo(s); “one tonner” meaning a utility vehicle similar to a pick-up truck; “billy” meaning a metal pot or kettle used to boil water over a camp-fire; and “up stumps” meaning to decamp.

## ART APPRECIATION 101: EARTHLY DELIGHTS

I am fourteen; I feel naked, exposed. I close the book, look up, flushed. Suddenly shy.  
 She has been watching me, her face a wry smile. *Finished already?*  
 I am a small, limp creature held in a leopard's clenched jaws.  
 I open it again. Furtive as a bird testing the edges of a pond filled with glimpsed promises  
 glistening beneath the surface,  
 leaping with strange shapes poised to hook you and drag you down. But a Christ-like god,  
 composed, reaches out of the page to calm my shaking hand. If he can look unabashed  
 at the moon-bright beauty of Eve—her nakedness transfixing a prone Adam;  
 a giraffe stretch fascinated; trees stand unbowed; an elephant uncowed; a murmur of  
 birds fly blithely by in a distant sky, weaving in and out of orbital orifices beneath  
 the towering spire  
 of a twisted temple of flesh, *why can't I* cast an innocent, exploring eye?  
 I am fourteen. Immersed for the first time in the translucent beauty of unwrapped skin.  
 The perfect indifference of this sundry array—*until*—I turn the page.

A rush of seduction. A hand laid just so, dangerously low on a glowing white torso.  
 Palpitating sweetness. *Man. Woman. Bird. Fruit. Succulent. Flesh. Insect.* Field. Surfaces  
 rendered fulsome. Ripe. Buttocks. Parted thighs. Riding high. Buck.  
 Naked. Triumphant. Bearing luscious tributes.  
*Blush. Hush, heart racing. Slam. Shut.* Out. Even the angel-fairy beauty:  
 flower-palace. Organ-ic. Skin-swathed orbs enfolding orchid-like.  
 Open. Examine. A dance of innocent enrapturement. Strange new worlds burgeoning  
 beneath eager fingertips—*until*—the abrupt bell of a period change. *Take it home.*  
 She is hovering above me. Again. *Read. Absorb. Respond with your own thoughts.*  
*I'm not interested in theirs.* An unsheathed figure half-glimpsed  
 from inside a dark shell. I slam it shut. Feel the weight of it  
 hidden inside my bag, heft against my hunched shoulder.

I earned an *A minus*, having chosen to largely ignore the third panel. I honestly felt  
 Bosch had done the same. Casting a dark cloak over shame, obscuring the hellish claims  
 of moral punishment in a sliver of lip service observance—Hieronymus and  
 my high school art teacher  
 standing side by side to cast aside  
 my white veil, a miniature replica of the scallop-edged  
 mantilla my grandmother wore each weekday morning,  
 to join midstream the murmur of women  
 weaving up the main street to eight o'clock mass  
 under the vast spire that overlooked our tiny seaside town.

(An ekphrastic poem responding to *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, a triptych painting by Hieronymus Bosch.)





## SNOW DAY

Waking to the wonder  
in my brother's voice—  
his shrill delight  
shaking him for once  
from his teenage retreat—

I arose to a new world,  
without colour:  
all crystal-white,  
magically softened and  
glowing at the edges

drawing us out  
with its silent allure  
to explore  
familiar places  
rendered strange.

Past the edge of town,  
undisturbed by a soul,  
caught by the urge  
to jump a wall and run  
full-tilt into its empty embrace:

whump! I had sunk,  
softly held  
in all that whiteness;  
cushioned from the world,  
I could be there still.

We dragged home  
without a word,  
mirth stolen by the cold;  
the sudden warmth at the door,  
my mother's voice

reluctantly returning me to  
to all the colour and clamour  
of humanity—  
and a pang  
at the loss of all that

peace.

Anne Fitzgerald's Poetry collections include, *Vacant Possession* (Salmon Poetry, 2017), *Beyond the Sea* (Salmon Poetry, 2012), *The Map of Everything* (Forty Foot Press, 2006) and *Swimming Lessons* (Stonebridge, 2001). She teaches Creative Writing in Ireland and North America. Anne is a recipient of the Ireland Fund of Monaco residential bursary at the Princess Grace Irish library in Monaco and lives in Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland.



## NOTES MY BROTHER LEFT IN BLOCK CAPITALS

*Aged 8*

Hey little fattso, stupid little Annie.  
From your brilliant brainy brother.

*Aged 10*

I've taken your Laurel and Hardy  
Forty-five, *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*  
to help play poker better. I lost it.

*Aged 14*

I am throwing you into Boarding School  
down the country. No one will know you.  
I will make sure you will be forgotten.

*Aged 23*

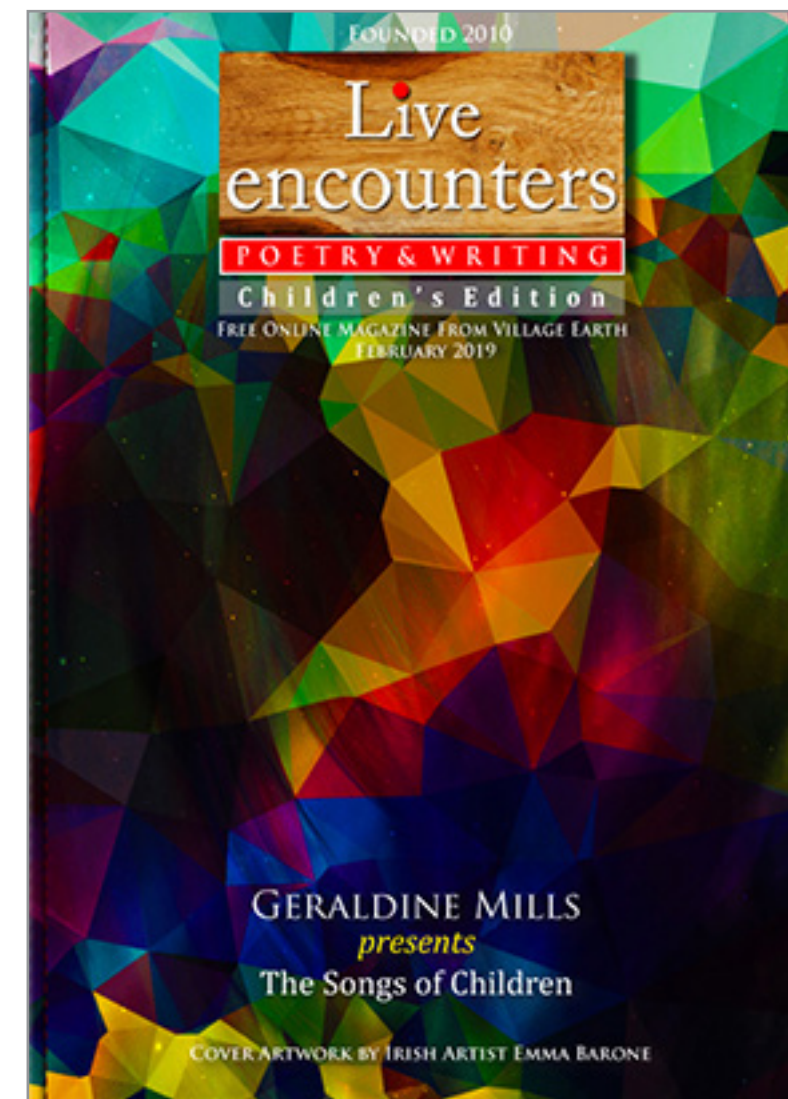
Your green Cannon camera brought back  
from New York broke in my hand somehow.

Anne Fitzgerald



## CHATEL DEVOTEE

He was on the back foot  
after I found his fingers  
curled between the heads  
of Douglas Hyde and Charles  
Stewart Parnell. His true  
affection for others hard  
earned dosh realised. Less  
devotion not to be seen  
from a priest or a brother  
as bells ring at benediction.



February 2019

Anne M Carson is a writer and visual artist, whose poetry is published internationally and widely in Australia. *Two Green Parrots* was published in June 2019. She has won and been commended in numerous poetry prizes including being shortlisted in the NSW Women's Writers Competition 2019. As a Creative Writing Therapist she has edited and facilitated the group process which resulted in the publication of three books. She teaches Poetry Writing and Appreciation to adults and serves as Director Arts on the board of Ondru – a social-change-through-the-creative-arts organisation. She is researching her next creative project as a PhD Candidate at RMIT. *Massaging Himmler: A poetic biography of Dr Felix Kersten* was published in October 2019 by Hybrid Publishers. <http://www.annemcarson.com/>



## COCOONS SPUN FROM DREAMS

*Chroicocephalus (Larus) novaehollandiae and Australonuphis parateres*

Silver gulls loiter at water's edge, lost in opal  
shades of morning, pale hues  
of contemplation. Food is a matter  
of guile and diligence.  
pursued in insouciance.

With backward-stepping, twig-thin  
orange legs, they stamp tattoos  
onto the sand.

Some say vibrations from their footfall  
travel beneath, causing miniature  
sound waves – invisible, persuasive.

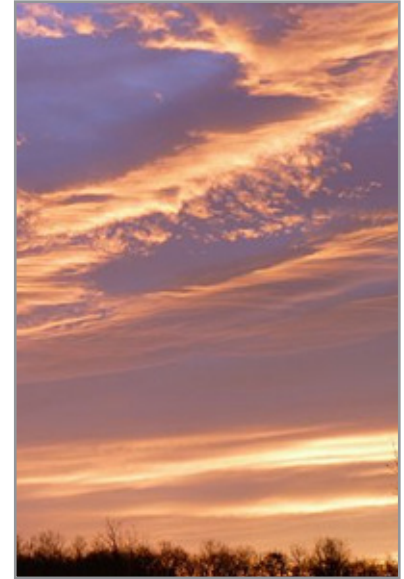
In blind safety below, white sand worms  
coil and curl in cocoons spun  
from mucous and dreams.

Multiply segmented bodies – each a locus  
of muscular receptivity, kinesthetic  
know-how. They are alert filaments,  
alive to the smallest displacement.

They wriggle to the surface, eager to drink  
perhaps harkening to a telltale  
pitter patter, thinking rain has come.

Only to encounter beak's sharp  
blade of hunger.  
Guiltless, the gulls feast.

Anne M Carson



## FROM “THE DETECTIVE’S CHAIR”

(4) Detective Chief Inspector (DCI), Jane Tennison  
Area Major Incident Team (AMIT), Southampton Row police station, UK

Eighteen long cigarette-filled months at AMIT without a single case more significant than tax evasion or fraud. Chafing at the sexism, Jane hardly holds her sharpened tongue sheathed. Finally in charge of a murder investigation and the boys aren’t happy. It’s 1990s; no one in the force likes a ball-breaker. She earns respect by not pulling punches, being a punishing perfectionist, grasping complex strands intuitively. She’s married to the job, fiercely ambitious; hard to find and keep a guy. Even her family don’t get her. Despite training to be objective, she bleeds for victims, calls their kin *my love, darlin’*, holds them when they sob. For perpetrators she has only determination. A whisky or two tossed down at the end of long days, but no time to kick back in a favourite chair, let music unleash her mind. Every ounce of her energy spent on solving crimes, proving fitness daily to every man – and to herself.

## ORDINARY

Even over these ordinary factories

this concrete conveyor belt of vehicles  
the sun maintains a daily duty.  
The metal doesn’t stop it  
the concrete doesn’t hinder  
its passage through the sky.

It is diligent, regardless.

No matter what we have seen  
of ugliness, how we have been ripped  
from the tissue of common  
courtesy, of human trust and connectedness

there is still this sun which broadcasts diurnal blessing.

It is not always this bright.  
These crayon colours do not  
always paint the sky so incandescently.

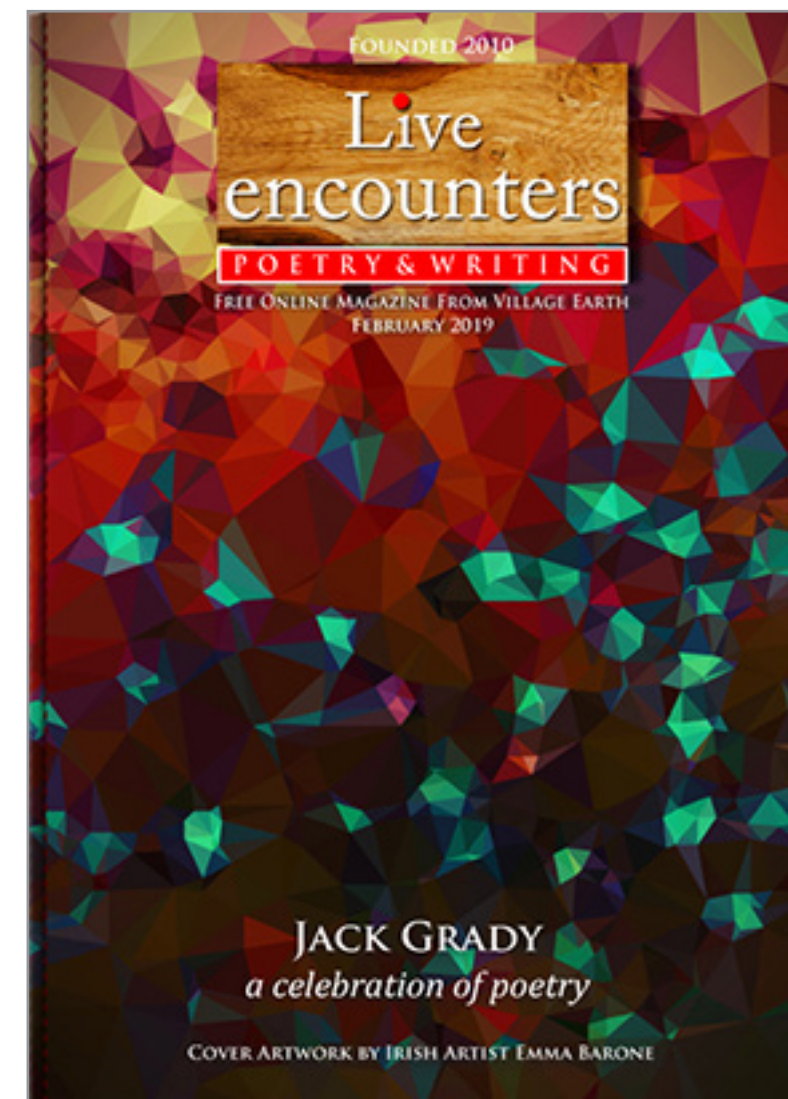
But every day, however burdened we are, the sun conducts

its regular commute,  
sometimes streaking the sky  
in celebrations colours.



## A POEM ABOUT AN APPLE

A dark underground corner. His car door and mine  
 awkwardly proximate. I pause, let him proceed.  
 Cautious carpark twostep. He smiles, lopes off  
 crunching a red apple – loose dangle of limbs,  
 easy stride. I step into the space he has just left.  
 Only a few seconds of his presence douse it  
 in scent profile. His apple-laden breath is the air  
 my mouth opens to. Unexpected delight. Usually  
 this tang only on loved ones close enough to kiss.  
 I don't register face – breath delectable. How did  
 apple's innocence get sullied? We need to know more  
 about good and evil, not less. Breath blesses me.



February 2019

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 was nominated for the Hennessy Literary Award for emerging poetry and selected for Poetry Ireland Introductions in 2019. Her poetry chapbook, *"The Woman With An Owl Tattoo"* was published in May 2019 by Fly On The Wall Poetry Press. Her debut short story collection, *"Demise of the Undertaker's Wife"* was published by Blue Nib in September 2019. To find out more about Anne and to order her books go to her website: <http://annewalshdonnelly.com/>



## HOW DID YOU KNOW?

*Mam, don't die on me while I'm gone,  
your words a hook in octopus tentacles  
that twist around my neural pathways.  
Your father revs his van in the driveway.*

*I wave goodbye, shut the front door  
slump, to the hall floor. Octopus  
releases its ink-black cloud,  
blinds and chokes. Dark waters beckon.*

*I finger the note in my pocket  
dream of days I could swim with eels  
loungue on a lake's bed  
gaze up at earth's ever-changing sky*

*no longer susceptible to its moods.  
More of your words surface  
Mam, my life would be screwed if you died.  
I haul myself to the bathroom*

*shower my body, cry myself dry,  
watch fire flames curl my note.  
How did you know?  
I loved you too much  
to screw up your life again.*

Anne Walsh Donnelly

## TRUST IS A KNIFE THROWER'S WIFE

She sharpens his blades  
before each act, let's him strap  
her to a plank of wood  
buckled by wrist and ankle.

Safe in the knowledge, she'll survive  
his onslaught, she tells him,  
to do what he has to do,  
no matter how bloody that might be.

He holds each knife by its steel blade  
and with a flick of wrist  
let's it fly in a half-spin towards her,  
(with much less skill than Sylvester Baum\*).

Trust doesn't flinch when a knife lands  
millimeters from the tip of her right ear  
or another grazes her left thumbnail.  
"More," she says,

until there's nothing left to throw.  
After the applause, she pulls each knife  
from the plank, locks them in a steel case  
until they're needed again.

\*Sylvester & Barbara Baum were a German couple and professional knife throwing act who began their career in the early 1940s. Sixty years later they were honoured by the International Knife throwers Hall of Fame with the "Knife Throwing Pioneer Award" and the title "Wild West Duo of the 20th Century".

## TALK TO ME LIKE LOVERS DO

I slip my legs into red silk knickers.  
Put on your control panel pants.

I clasp my transparent lace bra.  
Your breasts are going to sag in that rag.

I gaze into the tallboy mirror.  
Have you nothing better to look at?

I button up my new frost-blue blouse.  
That does nothing for your complexion.

I pull my faux leather skirt over my hips.  
You can't go to shopping in that get-up.

I squeeze into my new turquoise shoes.  
No wonder you have bunions.

I spike my hair with some L'Oréal gel.  
What happened to your lovely permanent wave?

I lick seeds from passion fruit for breakfast.  
It's a bowl of porridge you should be eating.

I renew my dating app subscription.  
Have you nothing better to spend your money on?

I flick through the latest copy of Diva magazine.  
Since when did you stop reading *Good Housekeeping*?

I write a poem about having sex at sixty.  
You should be knitting scarfs for grandchildren.



© Anne Walsh Donnelly



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 was nominated for the Hennessy Literary Award for emerging poetry and selected for Poetry Ireland Introductions in 2019. Her poetry chapbook, *"The Woman With An Owl Tattoo"* was published in May 2019 by Fly On The Wall Poetry Press. Her debut short story collection, *"Demise of the Undertaker's Wife"* was published by Blue Nib in September 2019. To find out more about Anne and to order her books go to her website: <http://annewalshdonnelly.com/>



Arthur Broomfield

## THE CASE OF TWO HANDBAGS

It dawned on Ark Angle Gabriel Rubberboots at that precise moment, or the moment that followed it or perhaps the one that preceded it. His servant, Devilish Compound, had been loading compost into the boot of his 1956 Rolls Royce.

‘Hand me out some newspaper, like an indecent chap’ crooned Devilish, to the air of ‘Four green Fields’.

Ark Angle was in the process of gathering from the plentiful supply of ‘Daily Sports’ that insulated the Rolls’ interior from the ravages of summer sun and winter nightingales when a thought struck him, rather like a rancid onion landing on a lemon cheesecake.

‘And what might you be wanting with precious extracts from the Bodleian library, my dear man?’

‘I want to make sure no residual content from the compost, especially that tainted by fermented or otherwise putrescent, dry or otherwise matter becomes dispersed among the food and clothing washed, laundered or falling into categories as yet unspecified, that may cause injury to themselves, or in a possibility, rare alas, but worthy of consideration, to said food and garments’.

‘That’s it, that’s it you scoundrel. You apricot and mangold stew, you of all the beings to contaminate heaven, and the waters under the earth, you have opened the gates of the cattle crush, you’ve released Beellze the bull into the pastures of mushrooms and dandelions!’

‘I, in all modesty, acknowledge complicity in this happy outcome but only if my partner, the puce moon, can share credit with me.’

‘Return my copies of the ‘Daily Sport’ untarnished, forthwith and ensure that copious quantities of odious compost enhance the contents of the boot, organic and otherwise, with the expressed purpose of enriching the odour that emanates therefrom’.



‘My lord doth speak in divers tongues, he weareth thistledown in his lapel and shites in his soup. What might be the Aristotelian reasoning for such a penalty shootout? ‘

Unknown to Devilish, in what will go down as the worst kept secret since the robbery of gold rings from the elder MacEdlems corpse at the bewitching hour in Ballylakies Church of Ireland cemetery, by a church sexton, anonymous and the chairman of a town commission, anonymous, Ark Angle had been in Geyser, Arctic, Baltic and Killeslin Hotel sauna pursuit of the celebrated [ by the 1965 county junior hurling champions ] purloined cucumber cream pie.

‘The pie, you visitor, the pie! I’ll catch the pie!’

‘You may catch a cold, or even a crab, or catch hold, but a pie, if I may bore you with the cliché, can be, if not in the sky, in the eye of the elephant ‘

‘Desist from your tower of Timahoe babbling. We must move, as a victim of the most loathsome form of diarrhoea to afflict the human species would move through a crowded shopping mall, before Satanic Sam, who may even now be in lustful pursuit of our beloved pie, driven, as we know him to be, by the power of a 2.5 litre ride on mower hacking the heather on Rossleighan bog to pulp and eternity.’

Develish knew all that was needed to be known from many previous theses delivered on the subject through the lens of the apple green pupil in Ark Angle’s eye. He had endured many a late night’s misery of home and away performances, dancing at the crossroads to the sweet music of the fiddler of Dooney in the fields of Athenry and the lark ascending in this and sundry places. So much so that Satanic, at times, appeared to him over his breakfast of burnt toast, cabbage stalks and mug of calves gruel, as the word made foul of the maggot infested genre. Ark Angle had described him as a repulsive, God like creature, who had wormed his way through mendacity and fornication to the pythonic position on the board of governesses of *The Times in Ireland as we Pronounce Them to be*. Develish had learned to lighten the tedium of the discourse with questions related to Satanic’s character like ‘and has he a tattooed map of Ballyroan on his eyebrow’ or ‘does he sing hymns off the encrusted sheets of his four poster’?

‘For the sake of all the chaste reprobates that cohabitate in the foothills of Saint David’s quarry and all the anointed pigsties of the Kremlin, what has this got to do with the real or alleged baseball cap or the cape he wears that trips him up when he’s lighting the pipe that’s as crooked as his conscience?’

‘Don’t be losing your snotrag with me, my revered lord and master in whom the Ark of the convent may reside... So, he’s a private Dick is he, I had been of the impression that he spends his nights catching moonbeams in jam jars and dancing with the saints of the Black Sepulchre?’

Ark Angle, bored by these few general comments – they were too suggestive of common sense for his liking - lapsed into an exciting explanation of Satanic’s suspected interest in the cucumber pie. ‘It’s a dark secret, so you must tell it to everyone you meet,’ he cautioned Develish.

‘I’ll put it on The Times in Ireland as we Pronounce Them to be, my Lord, no one will read it there.’

-----

Satanic Sam sat hunched on his crimson and gold milking stool. The walls of the crypt beneath Adams and Co’s textile and computer services - ‘for the good of miserable mankind’ - that was his lodgings, oozed letters and numbers undecipherable to all but Sam.

‘Come here you creep’ he summoned his trusty aid, Father Followmeuptocarlow, the recently unfrocked priest of the eleventh day and night church of the circumcised dishwasher, in his gushy, overindulgent tones.

‘Coming honey, c o o m i n g... I hope this won’t be productive.’

Satanic stared at a row of seven carved marble representations of the dark side of the moon.



‘Do you see what’s on that wall, Einstein,’ he asked, his eyes transfixed on the carvings?

‘Well, it’s not all that funny, honey?’

Satanic twisted his crushed mustard baseball cap round his head, took it off and absentmindedly perused the embroidered blue inscription ‘Love Satan make hate great’ that adorned it.

‘Those letters and numbers are the lock and locksmith to our future. They spell, if not world domination, vulgarisation of the black and white minstrel choir. But before we can achieve that mood of moon in June we must first find and catch the notorious cucumber cream pie. We will then place it in general proximity to these symbols [Satanic nodded towards the engraved moons] of goodness and retire from the scene for precisely two and a half days or so.’

Satanic glared lovingly towards Followme.

Followme nodded as he murmured the words that have now become an indispensable part of everyday speech;

‘It will unravel the Aran jumper and put spurs on our bicycle wheels. After that I don’t have a clue.’

-----

Ark Angle’s face was knitted in an Aran jumper, his teeth ground like the badly lubricated workings of a Lidl or Aldi watch. He kicked the bag of fairy toadstools Develish had collected by the light of a Tilley lantern the previous, or some other night, across the vast expanse of space that separated him from the fathomless abyss over which, right now, Develish was sharpening his seven-blade penknife.

‘With what overwhelming concept is my Lord locked in conflict, may I be so thoughtless to ask?’ Develish yelled across the dark and sinister divide.

‘Thoughtless, you confounded fool.! If only such a profound disposition were to afflict the cerebral region of your ponderous cranium.’

‘Indeed. I lack the will to be sordid, my overloaded Noah’s Ark. Pray what floating debris may we expect to hurtle our way in the coming years?’

‘You malignant verruca on the face of venereal reason, if only it were within my powers to visit the Bubonic plague on your thatched and merciless keep...I am cursed... my rat-infested gene pool is contaminated by your senseless waterfalls.’

‘Your erudition causes many leaks in my hull, my Lord Noah. Shall we proceed in silence?’

‘We will proceed through diligent attention to your instructions, my devilish Develish, until we apprehend the cucumber pie, lost in deliberations in space as yet undefined, or not’.

It had yet again dawned on Ark Angle that his faithless servant had uncovered a menacing protocol that would not only finance the apprehension of the eminent pie but would continue to provide it with safe lodgings. Nothing to be done until the pie is spotted on its trajectory in a north – south direction. Why a north – south, surely an east – west, or an up down could be as likely, or even a down up, both of them argued among themselves, agreeing it would be north – south because they had said so. They had not to wait long, three or four hundred years, or was it minutes, to experience the realisation of their hallucinations. But as in all dramatic conflicts their supposed inalienable right to a seat at the Olympic games would be contested by a foe of equal honesty, Satanic Sam and his diabolically reconstructed Igor, Followmeuptocarlow. They too lay on their memory foam mattresses, they too pondered the route of the terrestrial pie and its inevitable destination – the perfume counter in Brown Thomas – if it were not found wanting asap.



And so, the minutes ticked by, minute by minute by more minutes. Tension mounted on piebald ponies in both camps, sweat poured from the rivals open sewers. Bells and whistles created background music of indescribable beauty.

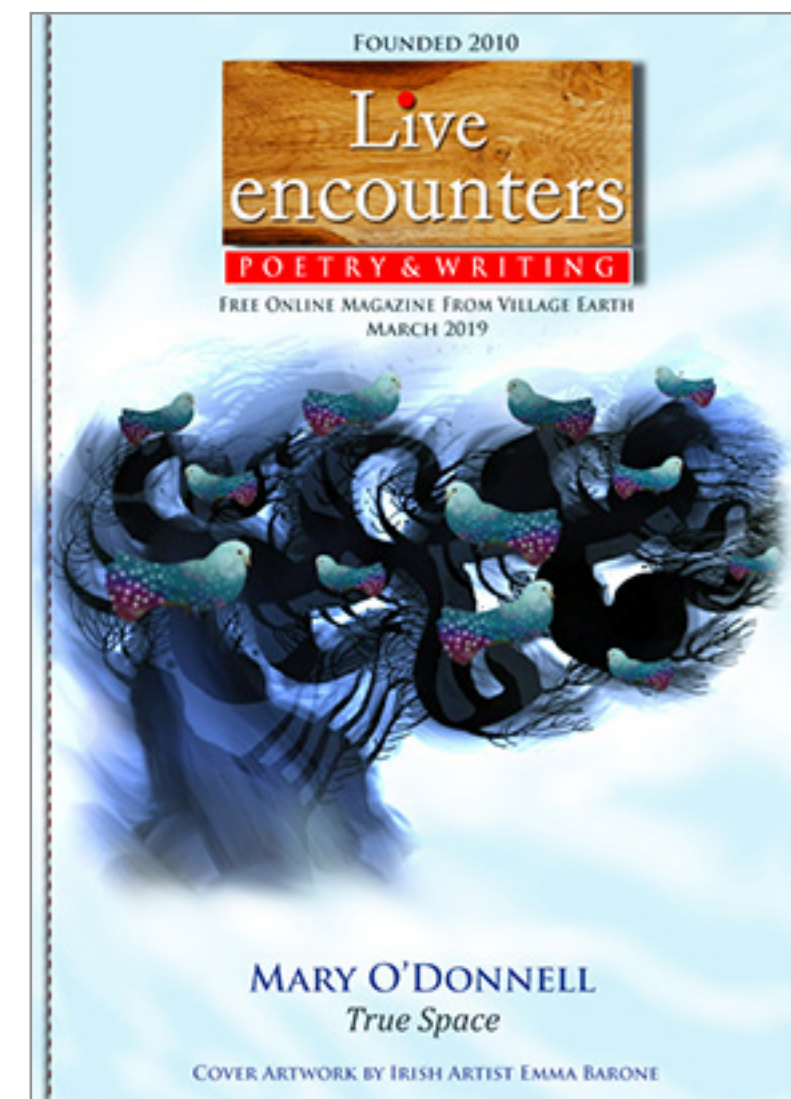
‘There it goes’ the roar of triumph rose simultaneously from both camps as the ball crashed into the back of the Railway end goal.

‘It’s heading for the Church of the Confused Chicken screamed Develish. What will we do, what will we do?’

It’s heading for the Church of the Confused Chicken screamed Followme. What will we do, what will we do?’

‘Let it go fuck itself,’ Ark Angle yawned.

‘Let it go fuck itself,’ Satanic Sam yawned



March 2019

Attracta Fahy's background is Nursing/Social Care. She works as a Psychotherapist, lives in Co.Galway, and has three children. She completed her MA in Writing NUIG in 2017, and participates in Over The Edge poetry workshops. Her poems have been published in Banshee, Poetry Ireland Review, Poethead, Orbis, Impspired, Honest Ulsterman, The Cormorant, and several other magazines. She has been included in The Blue Nib Anthology, shortlisted for 2018 Over The Edge New Writer of The Year, and a Blue Nib nominee for Pushcart. She is presently working towards her first collection.



## KOMOREBI

I have been falling in love with mysterious gods,  
long as I can recall, the enigmatic you—  
you see in the pupilla of another's eye,  
that moment you know all gods at once,  
ineffable host, yellowing sun.

An artist painting rays  
streaming through cloud,  
crimson outlines earth,  
leaves radiate in wind.

Whatever alchemist, god, genius, you are,  
I pray to you, worship the curve of your  
smile, shadows that beam over your skin,  
my hands longing to touch your veil.

I find you in raindrops, their touch  
on my lips. We are blackbirds singing,  
the Om of divinity. I hold you  
to this deep ravine, yin in my veins.  
I nest you in rivers, grooves  
of my body. For I am clay.

But we are all archangels, born of this sun,  
bringers of dawn, scattering  
through fronds, our grace, in hope of love.  
We are life, and death, and the waves, and still,  
I can't find words to write you.

\*Komorebi – a Japanese word to describe a phenomenon, like  
the light that filters –when sunlight shines through trees.

## IF I HAD THE POWER

You would not live in separation,  
one sided male image, split from  
earth, womb, root.

You would hear, feel, touch, scent  
the intimate call to belong, would  
love, honour your feminine,  
understand her secrets, cling  
as white throat swifts to wire.

You would take for comfort, purple  
haze aubrietia, rocks,  
live equally in sun, shade, dark  
of winter, pure white,  
lily of the valley.

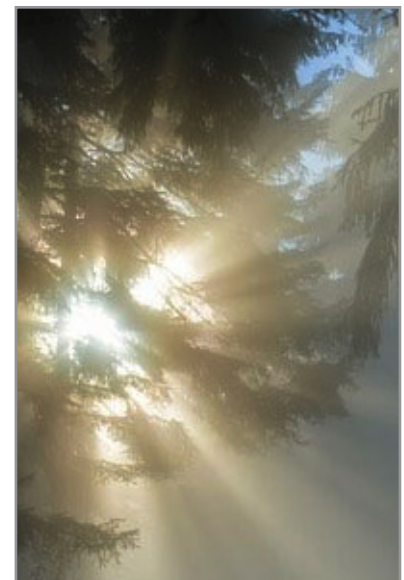
If I were leader, your eyes would not  
gaze only to Zeus, but down to earth,  
where woman who claimed our ground,  
domain of Eriu,  
knew the healing power of herbs,  
milkworth, thistle, thyme, cures of kelp.

You would take your other self  
on moon paths into valleys,  
forests, and to work,  
find the '*she*' within woods, trees  
revered, rags, talismans at her feet.

If I was magic, you would understand  
all colour, no need for social class, blankets  
strewn on shop fronts to warm our homeless,  
or stolen children dispersed.  
But, I have little say, except to act, live  
my own conviction.

The grail, not a straight line,  
nor' easily understood,  
it's an iridescent thread that guards  
our mysterious wound, love, betrayal.  
Ariadne holds one end, while we face  
monsters in our labyrinth.

And if I could swing it, we would all be god,  
goddess, with no need to rape, destroy earth,  
pillage womb, or wound our children.

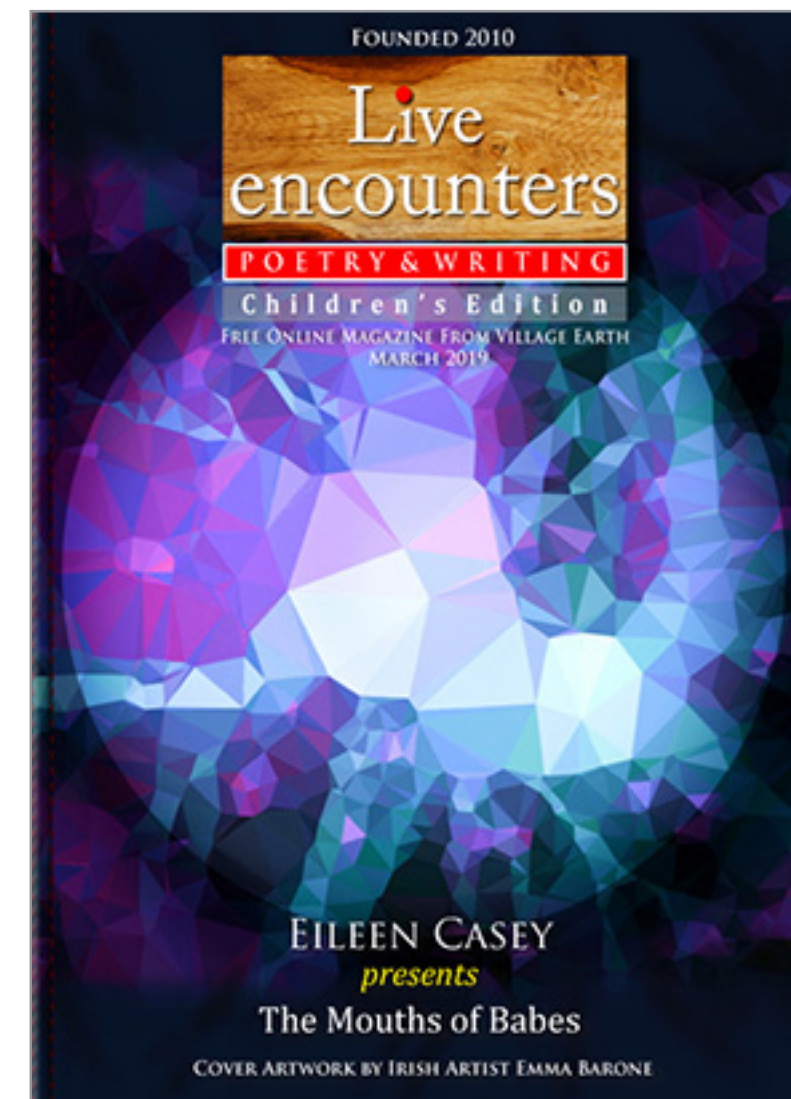




## I SAW YOU IN A DREAM

Walking towards you  
 I was speaking three lines of beauty,  
 sheer beauty to you,  
 until the inner voice, my critic  
 from the hilltop, decried  
 my lines to you.  
 And then for nights  
 for all the nights and during the days,  
 among the crowded noisy streets,  
 I search for the lines;

I will never be a wife again,  
 I want me back, and I want your warmth,  
 I found you first, 'cos you found me.



March 2019

Dr Beatriz Copello, is a former member of NSW Writers Centre Management Committee, writes poetry, reviews, fiction and plays. Beatriz's poetry has been published in literary journals such as South-erly and Australian Women's Book Review and in many other publications and anthologies in Australia and overseas in English and Spanish. She has read her poetry at events organised by the Sydney Writers Festival, the NSW Writers Centre, the Multicultural Arts Alliance, Refugee Week Committee, Humboldt University (USA), Ubud (Bali) Writers Festival.



## AUSTRALIA

Red, ochre, vibrant soil  
 which like notes penetrate  
 not only the eyes but the soul.  
 Vast land that swallows water  
 where ant hills appear to be  
 silent penitents in prayer.  
 Here and there pink flowers  
 break the monotony. Sad.  
 Sad lament of crows in flight,  
 they descend onto their meal—  
 a dead kangaroo victim  
 of speeding drivers or perhaps thirst.  
 No chisel-sculpted rocks  
 which during dawn  
 seem to metamorphose  
 into scaring beings to chase  
 defilers of sacred places.  
 Dreamland of dreams to be,  
 where gums dress in many forms  
 and the earth bewitches us.  
 Solitude of waterholes  
 Which, like a caring mother,  
 gives of herself and sustains  
 the ebullient and vibrant life  
 that flourishes under the sky,  
 a cloudless blue, bright blue,  
 ... and then slowly  
 grey shapes opaque  
 nature's colourful narrative.  
 How many thousands years  
 has this silver studded shawl  
 cover this bejewelled land?

Beatriz Copello

BY THE WAY

she sat at the end of a dream  
holding in her hands the stem  
of a plastic flower  
solemn  
sad  
simple trajectory of an angel

bathed in fury  
encounter of the souls  
who don't ask permission

to live  
to beg  
to adore

the ones who hold the power  
the ones who control  
the ones who dominate

**the rulers**

they do determine  
the length of the life of the poor  
the unemployed  
the sick  
and ...  
plants die without water

the miserable shed tears  
mothers pray  
and politicians give speeches

solace  
sublime  
silence of the dead

only the dead have hope

QUARTER POUNDER

Faulty china dolls,  
fired from dust and a spark of sapience  
we reign in a decaying world.

A brook sings a monotonous song  
obscure chanting of pebbles rattling and  
at the bottom-fool's gold wait.  
A trail of dreams all the way to heaven  
a maiden weaves with nylon threads  
a giant net to catch an eagle.

Soldiers march blindfolded and mute  
to defend a future of heat and floods.  
The streets are deserted, at the dinner table  
families sit to a meal of images  
imprisoned in a wooden box.

The powerful play chess with nature  
ticks bursting with blood,  
fungus growing with lust.

Earthly concerns: war, guns,  
cars, trips, gadgets,  
and the pill to stop aging  
while they devour McDonald's.

Humans suffocated  
by plastic, rubbish,  
and the need to consume,  
while the creator  
cries at the failures  
of the china dolls.





REFLEXIONS ON A DEAD MAN

I

As in a scene from Dante  
where fire and heat  
consume all passions  
a man has entered  
a place for lost souls  
where the dead rest  
till judgement day.

II

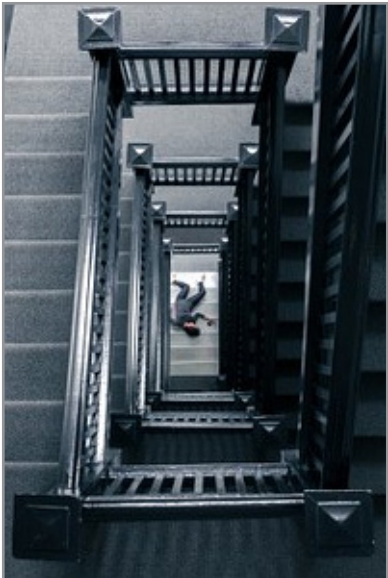
Truth covered  
by a white linen sheet.  
Truth of the stigmata  
on a man put to rest.  
Undeniable truth,  
of a now silent sinner.  
Truth about the price,  
paid for the life he wore,  
like a silk handkerchief,  
in the right pocket  
of his tailored suit.

III

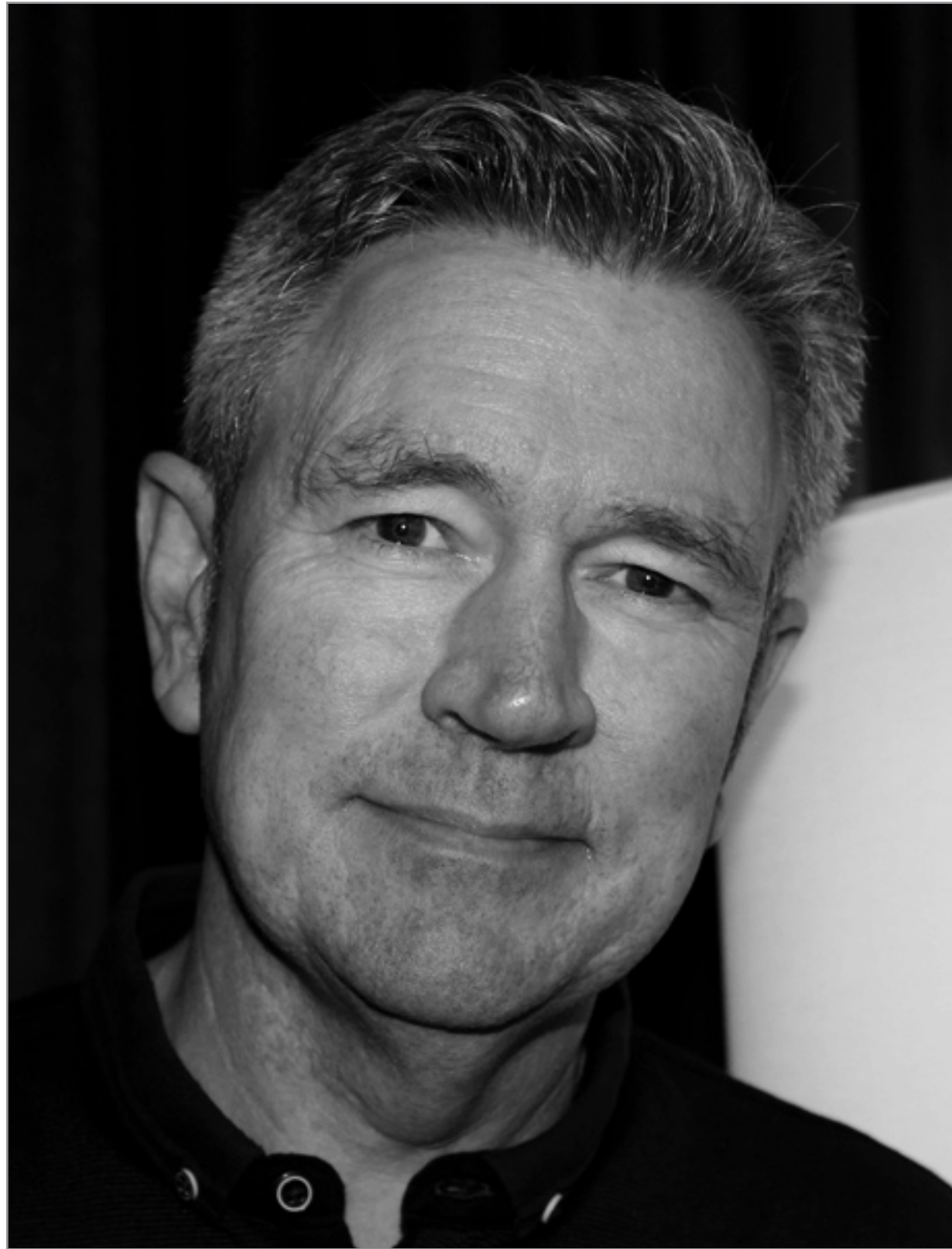
The Witch in the cauldron boils  
a pinch of pain, two tears and  
the shadow of a man.  
Dyeing the widows weeds  
she stirs with a spoon  
the black liquid  
that holds,  
her love.

IV

Do the dead feel cold?  
Do they suffer?  
Does hunger rumble in their bellies?  
Do the dead want to live?



Brian Kirk is a poet and short story writer from Dublin. His first poetry collection *After The Fall* was published by Salmon Poetry in 2017. His poem "Birthday" won the Listowel Writers' Week Irish Poem of the Year at the An Post Irish Book Awards 2018. His short fiction chapbook *It's Not Me, It's You* won the inaugural Southword Fiction Chapbook Competition and was published by Southword Editions in September 2019. He blogs at <http://www.briankirkwriter.com/>



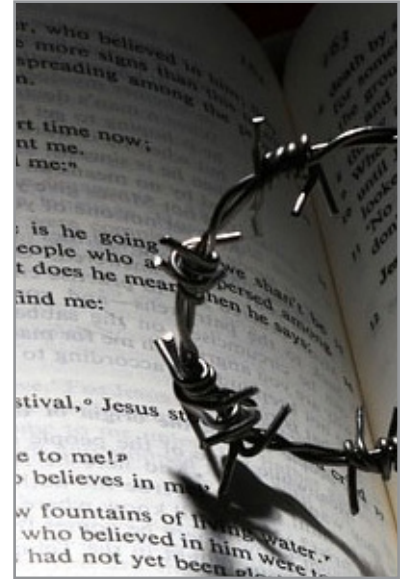
## FEAR AND TREMBLING

I remember a warm hand on the small of my back,  
the skittering of hooves across loose stones,  
the energy of tensed haunches as we  
climbed to the site. A river of worry stealing  
its way through my veins, the old man leading  
the mule in a stupor of silence under a sun  
where no tree gave shade. The kindling  
pricking my side; the knife blade's blinding,  
tiny sun dancing beside us. No clouds in the sky.

What could I do but obey? I told no one, not even  
my wife; made up a story about an old friend  
in trouble as I loaded the mule, then lifted the boy  
onto its back. For three days I fought myself  
in silence among snakes, sand and rocks, stopping  
at night to build fires and eat bread under the stars.  
When we came to the place, I restrained him though  
I knew he would not resist. The dry wood drank the spark,  
spat back flame as I drew the blade from my belt.

I was afraid, I remember, there is no doubting that,  
but not afraid of my father, the old man with the knife  
in his hand. I was a child – I knew nothing of duty or faith;  
I let him bind me with the old rope that he'd used for the wood.  
Splinters pricked at my flesh, but I didn't complain  
though my body convulsed as black smoke rose from the flames.  
The knife licked the sun as he bent to his task,  
eyes searching holes in a mask till he saw me, his son.  
Some say God stayed his hand – all I know is love won.

Brian Kirk



## FAITH

I wish that there was something in the notion  
that someone would provide for us, no matter what.  
In rain we'd find a shelter near at hand, in sun  
a dappled shade. Without labour we might reap  
where others sowed and fill our bellies with the fruit  
of work we never did. Is that not what was promised  
in the book? Were we not the chosen few, the free  
birds of the air? The simple fact of our existence  
was supposed to be enough, but we can't credit that.  
We agitate the water so we might stay afloat...once, twice,  
maybe for a third time rise and break the surface before  
our natures coalesce and drag us underneath.

## HORIZON

What do students of theology learn at school to help  
them through the night sweats and insomnia?

What hope is there for us who dwell on our mortality  
throughout the unending night? The priest will do his best

to shepherd his flock avoiding the pitfalls of bereavement,  
but what about the faithless, the unsure, forlorn?

Think of death as a journey, he says, the deceased  
as a traveller taking a coffin-shaped boat from a grave-shaped

harbour, waved off by a weeping congregation who secretly  
wish their time had come. We are sad at their leaving –

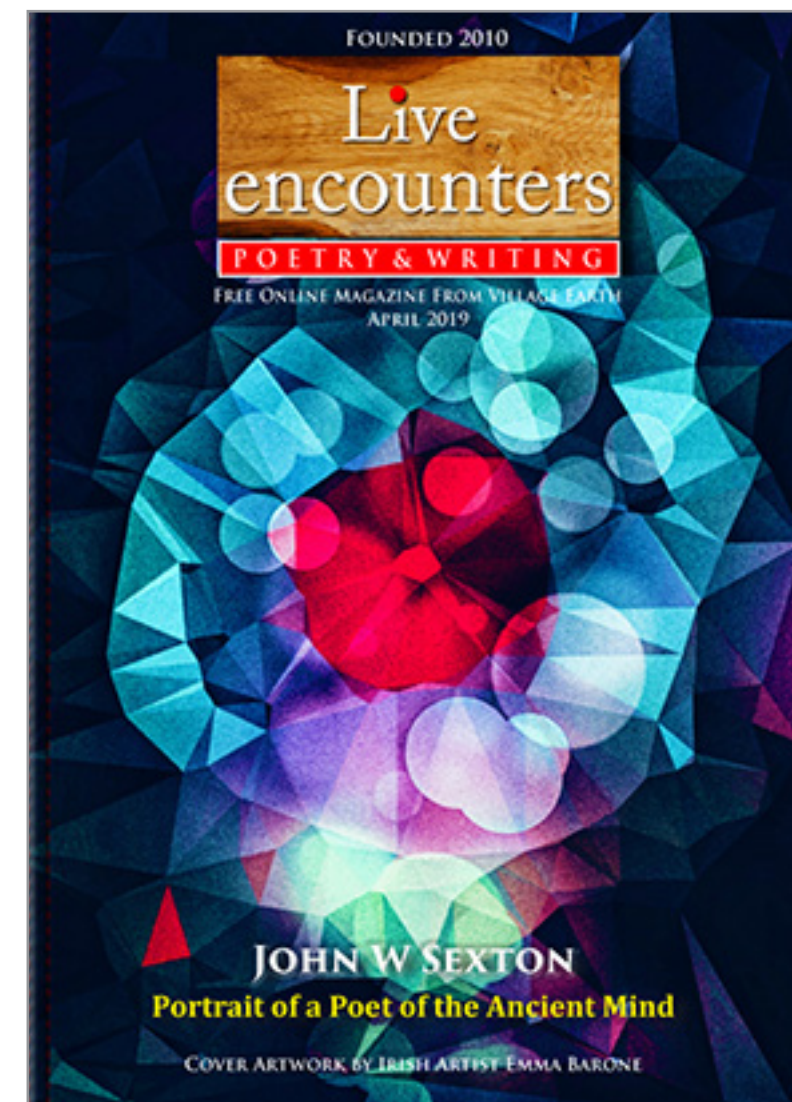
and that's only natural – but consider the family and friends  
who have gone on ahead; imagine them waiting, expectant,

at a pristine and wonderful quay side, tears of welcoming joy  
in their eyes as they scan the horizon for a bright sail.



## TRAIN DREAMS

When Denis Johnson died I went to my local library – built with money donated by the philanthropist Carnegie – borrowed a copy of *Train Dreams* and read it in his memory. All week I'd been reading his stories on my phone on the tram; gems buried in the archives of the New Yorker and the Paris Review. They explode in your mind when you read them, infect your thoughts and spread like a disease to the imagination. The future offers itself in a peculiar light at a precarious slant, the past disturbed re-settles in a surprising form. Your memories get re-written, borrowed, read, returned, stranger but truer than they'd ever been before.



April 2019

Cathy Altmann is a poet, teacher and violinist from Melbourne, Australia. Her first collection, *Circumnavigation* (Poetica Christi Press, 2014), won the FAW Anne Elder Award. Cathy's second collection, *things we know without naming* (Poetica Christi Press) was published in December 2018. Her poetry has appeared in journals, anthologies, *The Disappearing* website and on Melbourne's trains as part of the *Moving Galleries* project. She holds a Masters in Creative Writing from the University of Melbourne and currently teaches English and Latin.



## CROCHET AND CRYING

The soft souging,  
the moon an aching  
breast, half-breathing  
half-broken. Out in  
the back paddock,  
where they take her  
tongue skittering,  
taste of pebbles in  
her mouth, where they  
teach her (more than  
a bullet would)  
what she is, how like  
a wrung-out flannel  
she is wrong, and the  
silt in her throat is a  
funnel, milling dark  
grains, each unspeakable  
ending – until the  
night explodes  
in sound and story,  
like crochet and crying,  
which travel  
past all the barriers  
back to the start.

Cathy Altmann



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).



## MY PART, MY PLACE

I miss  
so many in my life,  
the People.

People,  
who are my family,  
my world-wide family,

who are  
supposed to be  
close family members,

the members  
I think about,  
I worry about.

So when the door opens,  
(the border, perhaps),  
the door to my part,  
my place, I know

I am home, and those  
I miss are never gone,  
those who also welcome

the Syrians, the Americans,  
all of the Everyones,  
all of those who long to stay,  
all of those who long to say,  
"I too am home, Canada."

Chad Norman



## A NATIONWIDE PLEA, OR A REQUEST FOR FEWER MISLED BORDERS

What I see  
cannot be disputed--  
I am poet  
in this mess called 2019--  
I am poet  
regardless of your boredom  
or strange lack of support.

I don't come from  
Ireland or Italy,  
I don't long to be  
from any other country  
other than this one.

Remember, we are Canadians!  
Remember, I see!  
Remember, I am a Canadian!

Immigrants, migrants, refugees, People,  
hold onto your longing...  
the music in the mouth,  
the words of an anthem.

Hold on! Hold on! Grab it,  
the history gives you it--  
listen to your poets,  
let them have some respect,  
let them in, hear their words.

## THE FLAGLESS FLAGPOLE

Today I can't care about  
the intrusive news of the world,  
and I can't care about  
the life of a younger man seated  
beside a bench I enjoy as the finches  
share songs with a sun I can't care about,  
only use as a hope to warm the back  
of my neck where the wind  
remains cold under the collar  
I leave open in order to not care about  
the stranger walking by, asking  
himself, along with the wind and sun,  
"Do you really think I am stupid?"

At this point in the bike-ride home  
I can't care about the chem-trail  
left in the blue sky above us, an  
us I want to care about  
only if we begin to take the time  
seated out in the open where  
we can be seen, bald-heads, ball-caps  
on backwards and forwards,  
burkas, niqabs, hijabs, turbans, etc.,  
all we use to adorn or admit to  
ourselves this is who I must be,  
this is what I follow, what I believe in  
if you will, what I wear allows a  
tiny look into the self I am trying  
to keep sacred, but what I wear  
is meant to hide nothing other than  
what we all were told to keep hidden,  
boy and girl, man and woman.

Today I want to care about one thing,  
a longing to be a Canadian...  
being born here, or having had  
the courage to choose this country  
and somehow find the way,  
to eventually stay on some land,  
some perfect selected property.  
You will soon own, soon call  
a piece of the planet your new home.



## A RAVEN'S SERMON

An urbane couple united in more than marriage wanders the weekend streets of Charlottetown with many kinds of roofs partly wet and dry enough to lift their exploring heads & eyes, both open to not only the shocking nest in a tree ready for the return of leaves they could see as the shade soon to be, how the stunning old church will stay cool long after he & she return to lives in Truro, the town known as the hub of Nova Scotia. But it was the walk under that wild-tied nest the way it sat so perfectly in the waking tree like an unpacked family photo placed on the corner of an old undusted night-table, yes, the walk to locate a venue where poems join the coffee and wine to entertain the minds of a special gathering kind of feeling at home, takes them back to the sight of the church, tree, another home they now know the nest to be. And, now, when they think about all they can, and those thoughts are about the homes they can say have been homes, kind of where they began knowing others are alive too, breath allowing a life, those able to be part of how their homes seem so far away, high up in the memory, what may be a tree there with a nest in it, a time when a season could be compared to a town, city, province, may even be a country, homes at one time or another, inside or outside the memory.

Briefly, down below, both of them begin to hear what in the moment sounds like advice, sounds like a sermon they said went over well when the church was in their lives, down below a choice they hadn't made or found at that time, when the nest seemed to be speaking to them or the occupant covered in feathers unlike the colour of the lone vocal gull, passing through like some photo-bomb they both found hilarious.

In time their walk left them back in the hotel room full of the sounds of the day and evening spoke, enough to begin their own speaking, a conversation made up of a quick need to reveal, to ask just once, "Did you hear it? You know, when we were under the nest in that tree beside the church we found old and so mysterious. You know, it was like a voice but not a human voice, more like what would be heard when, perhaps, someone who was new to the Maritimes, a Canada to share, speaking in such a happy and relieved, almost unusual way about how it had been finding a home. A new home, far from the one home others somehow had to agree they must leave, try to attempt another life, one they hoped would one day simply sound and seem as beautiful as two, better yet, four wings flapping, a rhythm, a beat some people have heard at least once, or in time, like the smiling couple, believe to be a gift their travels have brought, travels unlike the people they will stand beside, the people for the future, waiting, like unborn children, or even unhatched eggs.

Claudine Nash is a psychologist and award-winning poet whose collections include *The Wild Essential* (Kelsay Books, 2017), *Parts per Trillion* (Aldrich Press, 2016) and the chapbooks *Things for Which You Thirst* (Weasel Press, forthcoming) and *The Problem with Loving Ghosts* (Finishing Line Press, 2014). She has also edited three anthologies of poetry, most recently *Epiphanies and Late Realizations of Love* (Transcendent Zero Press, 2019). Widely published, her poetry has earned numerous literary distinctions including nominations for the Pulitzer, Best of Net and Pushcart Prizes as well as awards from such publications and artistic organizations as Artists Embassy International, Thirty West Publishing House, The Song Is... and Eye on Life Magazine among others. Website: <https://www.claudinenashpoetry.com/>



## THE MAKING OF MEMORY

You are standing in a  
moment on my

favorite piece of  
ground under

an angle  
of morning sun

I know will  
come to shift.

I hold  
the light here.

Claudine Nash





TO DO LIST FOR THE WORK IN PROGRESS

- 1. Stop luring myself  
back to silence  
despite the warm  
noise of a new season  
that rises within
- 2. Bake bread
- 3. Make something. Make  
summer from  
a swallow
- 4. Slip back  
into the fields of  
myself and swallow  
all the noise
- 5. Phone vet
- 6. Weave myself into this  
brightly colored  
landscape and  
toss tree seeds  
into the wind until  
nightfall
- 7. Dye grey
- 8. Vacuum
- 9. Look into my own  
eyes and feel the notes  
of a mislaid song  
start to stir
- 10. Stand by the open window
- 11. Sing
- 12. Sing

WHEN I COME TO THE MOUNTAINS

I hoard the universe.

I slip wind into pockets  
and let it leak  
through the lining,

I lift cloud cover,  
  
pack rowdy coyotes  
into the fields  
that I carry,  
swipe the flight  
of fireflies that  
swarms near the barn.

(Did you know  
I once hid a patch  
of fog beneath  
a misshapen  
pumpkin?)

Here is the messy  
horse who drips  
when he chews  
my bruised  
apples.

I fill myself  
with cattail and moss,  
my daughter's  
bare feet.

Nothing is safe.

Today I am grabbing  
the light as it shifts  
between seasons,  
I am stashing  
the last of the  
dandelion seeds.

The rising moon  
sees me and hides,  
the rat snake  
scurries.

(They leave those  
fat groundhog  
at risk).

Colin Dardis is a poet, editor, sound artist and arts coordinator from Northern Ireland. His collections include 'The Dogs of Humanity' (Fly on the Wall Press, 2019), 'the x of y' (Eyewear, 2018), 'Post-Truth Blues' (Locofo Chaps, 2017) and 'Dōji: A Blunder' (Lapwing, 2013). His work has been published widely throughout Ireland, the UK and USA.



## THE LESS IN ADOLESCENT

The music is on: the start of your paradise weekend,  
turned up to hurricane levels to blow through dusty minds,  
cobwebs of the working week.

You believe in a heaven behind drugs, a realism  
away from nine to five cubicles, with death waiting  
each morning on top of steel countertops.

Reincarnation comes in pill form for the kids:  
the up-tempo distraction ate like rats on placebos,  
yielding to crazed coma/soma states,

scooping up the heavy beats with both hands,  
laughing at those broken flies who do not know  
how to turn on their wings,

sucking at hearts with spider teeth and eyes  
unknotting the tangles in their kidult webs  
until the speakers blow.

No one admits to being casualties of the club scene,  
breaking up the dance, disposable minds chaperoned  
by what you cannot run from.

Gather those ugly druggies crucified on the dance floor  
in the name of amusement. Heaven has become clouded,  
weeping for all the infant fallen

so quick to mature  
and yet so premature  
in dying.

Colin Dardis

## AUTOMATIC WRITING IV

a vision  
of a semi-automatic  
and Yeats standing over Maud Gonne  
Lady Gregory  
and all his other poetry whores  
while scribing lines onto his cock  
for the ladies to bury into the dirt grave  
the dirt pauper grave of a poet  
with fistfuls of clenched earth  
thrown over his tragic member  
dead to sexuality forever  
they shot the discarded appendage dead  
and Yeats whimsies over  
the superfluous nature of his manhood  
while throwing himself to the wolves' claws  
tearing his heart in three,  
for Gonne, for Gregory, for George  
for anyone but himself  
for the sake of poetry  
which much be continued in dictums  
ad nausea  
forever  
no matter  
what

## GREATER THAN ZERO

The only perfect thing in this world  
is a zero, for it holds no flaws  
in which to compromise itself.

Every orbit, a zero,  
moving the universe along,  
mouths kissing a star.

Space, only a mock abyss,  
every square mile holding a galleon  
of beautiful imperfection.





Donna Prinzmetal is a poet, psychotherapist and teacher. She has taught poetry and creative writing for more than 30 years to adults and children. Donna often uses writing to facilitate restoration and healing in her psychotherapy practice. Her poems have appeared in many magazines including *Prairie Schooner*, *The Comstock Review*, and *The Journal*. Her first book, *Snow White, When No One Was Looking*, was published with CW Books in May of 2014.



Donna Prinzmetal

## IN THE SONG CALLED HOME

I am a young girl with a red bow around my neck.  
ringing the doorbell next to the black door  
by the Chinese elm.  
Nobody answers.

In the song called *Nobody*,  
a whistle blows its long exhale one night.  
I am a stowaway on that train  
with no known origin or destination.

In *Travelling*,  
I spit a cherry pit at midnight  
and sift fingers through hot sand at noon.

I trill a garden tune and call it *Loam*.  
My dirty hands hold yellow tomatoes  
the shape of eggs.

In the one called *Birth*,  
my children's feet are roots in my small garden.  
Their fingers reach high enough  
to pluck cherries from the tree.

In *Wings*,  
I miss my son's bristly beard,  
my daughter's earth-smelling hair.

In the tune called *Alone*,  
the owl is wooing me home.  
I know each vowel of her song,  
what each hooo means  
the way a mother knows her baby's distinct cry.

In the song called *Marriage*,  
he says my secret name.  
Today, I answer.

Doreen Duffy studied creative writing at Oxford University online, at University College Dublin & has a first class honours certificate in creative writing from National University of Ireland. She's a member of Platform One Writers and Tutors on Creative Writing Ink. Doreen has been published in, Live Encounters, The Lea Green Down, Fiery Arrow Press, Orbis, Woman's Way, Irish Times, Circle and Square Anthology, Winner of Carousel Aware Prize 2017, Ireland's Own Anthology, South of the County, New Myths and Tales. She was broadcast on Podcast.ie. Doreen was longlisted in the RTE Guide/Penguin Competition and The Over the Edge New Writer of the Year. She won the Jonathan Swift Award and was awarded the Deirdre Purcell Cup by Maria Edgeworth Literary Festival. She was shortlisted for The Francis MacManus competition and was broadcast on RTE Radio. <http://doreenduffy.blogspot.com/>

## STAR CHILD

I like the way  
the sunset renews  
my human face,  
steals some peace  
allows my emotions  
the breath they need  
to escape.  
silently,  
slowly  
makes space  
chalk a  
moon  
on a blue black  
brushed sky,  
while clouds sweep  
across  
a luminous  
cluster of stars  
a kaleidoscope  
of shine.  
This lunar magnet  
shares this velvet night  
poised above a world  
asleep  
in black and white.



Doreen Duffy

## THE SUN IS FLOATING

The sun is floating  
 over my house  
 I saw it this morning  
 as it started out,  
 over the children at play  
 on the road,  
 until they got tired  
 and wandered home.  
 I am alone inside this  
 cold house  
 but I can see the light  
 shine outside  
 over my house,  
 lays warmth on the roof  
 as it passes by,  
 while the hands on the clock  
 make their slow climb,  
 the sound is loud  
 in this silent house  
 tick tock to the dark  
 while I look out  
 the shadow on the yard  
 lifts the sun inside  
 scatters the dust  
 in a golden fire,  
 bathes the floor at my feet  
 brings warmth at last  
 and sleep,  
 in the evening of my life

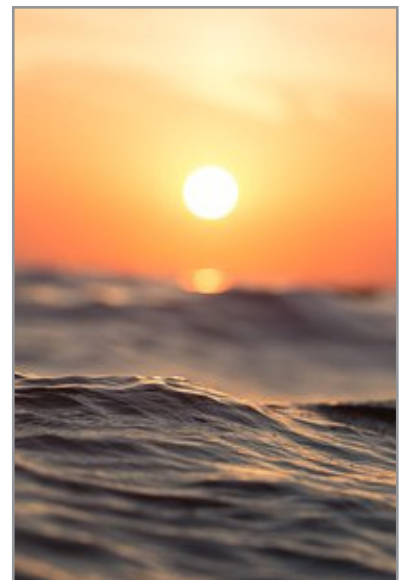
## LETTING GO

It is evening  
 I can tell,  
 the hairs on my arms  
 start to lift against the air,  
 my summer dress  
 not enough anymore  
 to keep me warm

The road is white,  
 cement dust  
 like powder, like clouds  
 between the scaffolding  
 across the sky,  
 My dad in his work boots  
 finds his way down,  
 the sound of the bars  
 like bells between sleepers  
 on houses not built yet  
 at the top of our road

He fixes the folds  
 on his shirt sleeves  
 holds the handle bars steady,  
 I can hear his breath  
 while he runs  
 feel his grip,  
 almost to the top of our road  
 then I hear him,  
 'That's it,  
 now just keep pedalling'

My heart in my mouth  
 I pedal faster,  
 like my life depends on it  
 His voice fading  
 behind me  
 But I can still hear him  
 'you have it now  
 you're doing it  
 you're on your own'





Faye Boland was highly commended for the Desmond O' Grady Prize 2019. She won the Robert Leslie Boland Prize 2018 and the Hanna Greally International Literary Award 2017. She was shortlisted in 2013 for the Poetry on the Lake XIII International Poetry Competition. Her first poetry collection *Peripheral* was published in September 2018 by The Manuscript Publisher. She is a member of Clann na Farraige writers group in Kenmare, Co.Kerry, Ireland.



## YOU ARE NOT GINGER

Their insults  
are not meant for you.

Your hair is auburn  
the colour of Autumn leaves,

glossy as the squirrel's coat  
a shade darker than fox.

You are not a foreign spice  
but *rua* like egg yolk,

your hair warm as sunset, flames,  
radiating the sheen of copper pans.

The colour worn by film stars —  
O' Hara, Hepburn, Kidman

who made men's hearts beat faster,  
as you will soon.

And your freckled creamy skin:  
constellations of brown dots

exploding like fireworks  
in the sun's heat.

Think of them as kisses - scores  
speckling your face, torso, limbs

one from each person  
who knows you're beautiful.

Faye Boland

## FOX

I have talked up  
this adventure:

A famine road to  
God-knows-where

but you are not enticed  
by its mystery.

I am enchanted by sun  
playing with umbrageous trees,

but you drag your heels,  
throw yourselves down.

A fox cub steps out in front,  
stares us down,

slips into the forest.  
We still talk of that moment,

when we were blessed, caught  
in the pupil of fox's eye.

ii

Hear her bark.

Already, the taste  
of blood in her throat,  
flesh in her maw.

A flash of vixen  
brushing the edge  
of your dreams.

When they scalp her,  
sell her pelt,  
her cubs will perish,

her spirit quenched.  
The sun still rusting  
in her fur.

iii

I have promised you heaven on earth,  
dug deep to find it:

birdsong, wildflowers —  
heather and gorse —  
russet sunsets.  
Tucked up in our feathered den

under star-sequinned skies  
I tell you stories

of foxes and hounds.  
You are richer

for the brush  
of my vulpine touch.

Follow my scent.

Hear my yap  
sparking the night sky.

Robert Leslie Boland Prize Winning Poem 2018



© Faye Boland

## PIAZZA EUROPA

My shutters open onto a balcony  
garlanded with red geraniums  
and the Piazza Europa  
where a fountain plumes.

Now, mid-day sun closed out,  
I hear a scooter straafe,  
a dog's cough echoing  
in a skinny street.

When I rise, I will feel  
the cobbles under my feet,  
the sun tightening  
my burned skin.

And everywhere I walk,  
the scent of oregano.

## DISCORDANCE

Pádraig toils the land,  
plucks stones from the soil,  
tills, sows, reaps,  
his spine curving  
over the boulder of his shoulder,  
eyes alight with rainbows,  
the sun rising and setting  
behind soft green hills.  
When the earth digs deep  
under his nails  
his soil-crusteds hands  
feel its bone and marrow.

He crafts a home  
from stone he breaks  
with a sledge, choked  
with bare-knuckled hands.  
The wife he places in its heart  
warms it with her light,  
breathes life into it.  
So too will  
successive generations.

\*

Patrick's world is a cubicle,  
cornered in by colleagues.  
His vista a silver sliver,  
table weighted with a pyramid of papers,  
technology, grey as his sun-starved face.  
He sees banknotes grow like leaves,  
a paler shade of green,  
their rustle discordant  
with the pulse of earth,  
the cadence of his forefathers' green hills.



Frances Browner is a creative writing and history tutor living in County Wicklow, Ireland. Her poetry has appeared in *The Irish Examiner*, *Ogham Stone*, *Skylight 47*, *Poems on the Edge*, *Tales from the Forest*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *A New Ulster*, *Bray Arts Journal*, *Boyne Berries* and on *Limerick's Poetry Trail*. A Micro-Chap of fifteen poems was launched online by Ghost City Press, Syracuse, NY, as part of their summer series, 2019. She facilitates Poets Parlour open-mic in Greystones, Wicklow.



## HUNGRY FOR LOVE

In Manhattan, I longed for  
Ma's brown bread, creamery butter  
Tayto crisps, salt 'n vinegar  
Bisto gravy, black pudding  
digestive biscuits for dunking.  
In Manhattan, I hungered for home.

Back in Dublin, I dreamt of pizza slices  
bagels 'n cream cheese; Reese's  
peanut butter cups, Hershey's kisses.  
Sixty cent coffee from a Wall Street vendor  
who knew I liked it dark, sweet, regular.  
Home at last, I hungered for love.

In the Bronx, construction workers  
stood in line outside the Irish butcher.  
Dyin' for bacon 'n cabbage, fish 'n chips  
shepherd's pie and spotted dick. Washed  
down with pints of porter in Rory Dolan's.  
Hunger satisfied, still home-sick.

Dubliners now dine on take-out Mango Tree  
Jasmine House curry, chop suey, chow mein.  
Sip Prosecco instead of Barry's tea  
Merlot, sauvignon and champagne.  
In Direct Provision shelters or out on the streets  
to roam, others hunger for a house to call home.

Frances Browner

## LITTLE WOMEN

You saw the gift under the tree  
 Four girls in Victorian dress on the front  
 Old-fashioned, maroon hardcover  
 Yellow grain paper, no pictures  
*Happy Christmas from Mammy*, inside.

Years later, you came upon a copy  
 In a school in the South Bronx where  
 Your students had never heard of it.  
 You tried to open their minds like pages  
 To the possibilities the world had to offer.

You taught them that bold was not bad  
 But, brave and rebellious  
 Being willing to stand out.  
 Stories don't all have fairy-tale endings  
 That words, as well as sticks and stones  
 Could break their bones.

You learnt that Jo, Beth, Amy and Meg  
 Were mere 'white girls' to these girls  
 That privilege was a book  
 Closed in their underclass faces.  
 An American classic had made more  
 Sense to a nine-year-old Irish girl, after all.

## MYTHICAL CREATURES

Janus had two faces  
 One looking forward  
 One looking back

My face had two sides  
 One round, eye wide open  
 One tilted, eyelid drooping

By a brook, the banshee keens  
 Her features craggy  
 White hair in reams

Tears snail my crooked cheek  
 Nerves palsied, now de cease

Do school friends notice?  
 They do, but don't say it to my face

In between electric shock waves  
 A thirteen-year-old dreams of Camelot  
 While, Jackie O sunglasses hide  
 her weeping eye, slanted smile

Auntie Frances, what's history?  
 Things that happened a long time ago  
 Like dinosaurs?  
 Yeah, Mae, like dinosaurs





## TABLES TURNED

All the girls in my class have a record player  
fourteen-year-old me used to wail.  
If everyone jumped in the Liffey  
would you want to jump in as well?

Da cracked a shy smile when I gasped  
at the shiny brand new turn table.  
Cream lid, with a handle like a suitcase  
Phillips, high fidelity, transportable.

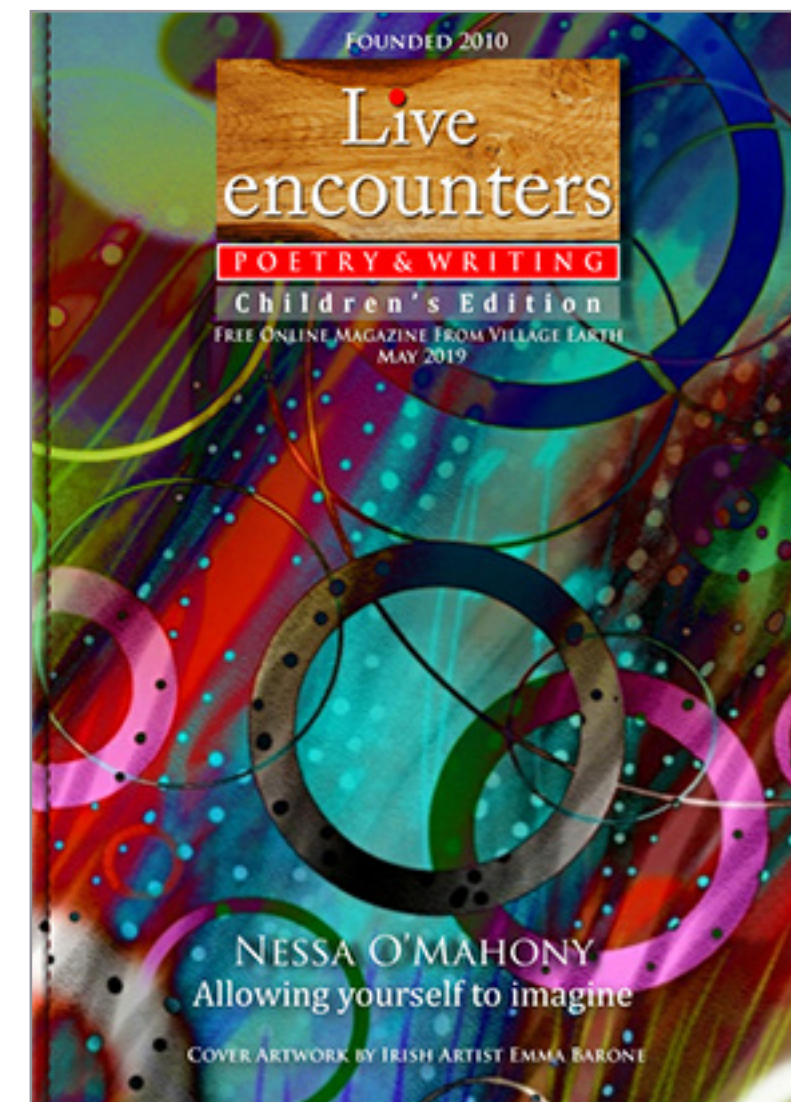
I lugged it from Busáras down the country  
so my cousins and I could learn to jive  
quick step around the kitchen floorboards  
'Suddenly you love me' our only forty-five.

Jaysus, but you're a swinger! A lad all the  
girls wanted to dance with was surprised.  
Did ya take them lessons up in Dublin?  
I taught myself, I timidly replied.

LPs too turned on that table - Abbey Road  
Sergeant Pepper, Ziggy Stardust, Fleetwood  
Mac - until I bought a new cassette deck  
and Carly Simon's 'No Secrets' tape cassette.

All tossed into a skip the day Da's house  
was emptied and I wasn't there to supervise.  
Now, the beech wood stand is used to store  
Encyclopedias that did manage to survive.

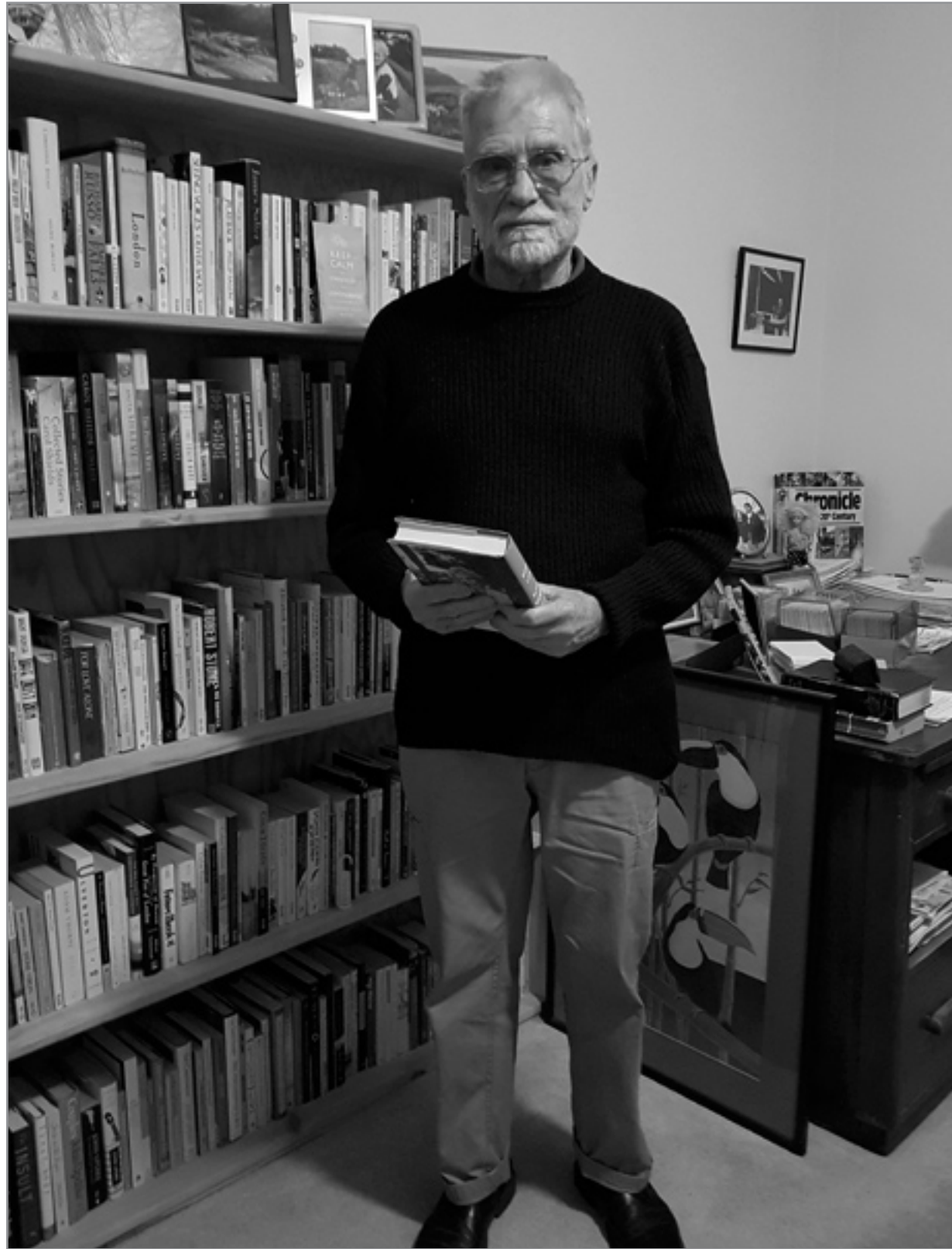
And nephews pay a small fortune  
for vinyl from seventy-five.



May 2019



Ian C Smith's work has appeared in, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Critical Survey*, *Live Encounters*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *Southerly*, and *Two-Thirds North*. His seventh book is *wonder sadness madness joy*, Ginninderra (Port Adelaide). He writes in the Gippsland Lakes area of Victoria, and on Flinders Island, Tasmania.



## TWO WOMEN

She publishes *Portrait* excerpts in the *Egoist*, anonymously sends Jim an allowance. Worshipping at Literature's pulse, she ignores her lawyer's warning about fraying capital. Agog with curiosity, Jim identifies her. She apologises for her initial secrecy, responds to requests for increased help.

Jim and Nora splurge, courtesy of Miss Weaver who aloofly resists the flak she cops, a maiden English lady accused of funding the writing of unintelligible filth. Savings wither but not her love for Jim. Visiting him in Paris she catches the bus while he, drinking and tipping, does taxis.

Jim whines about expenses so she pays: hotels, fine clothes, family illnesses. Friends rage about her vanishing money. He posts explanatory letters with extracts. Unsurprisingly, *Finnegan* baffles her. Eventually he repays her by cutting her dead, leaving her as one of literature's footnotes.

Jim's father's death releases sobs withheld when his mother died and ever since. *Finnegan* triggers a critics' free-for-all. Lucia reveres this father some say is mad. Spoilt in several languages but at times neglected by parents obsessed with each other, her eyes are startling blue, bright as paint.

Poverty, extravagance, praise, vilification: her father's fame excites and unsettles. Tutors come and go, none wearing a halo. Lucia's need is to be brilliant, or to marry, but she can't marry Jim. Her bizarre bursts of temper tweezer him, mindful of brothel infections in his youth.

She hurls herself at young Sam Beckett but Jim's genius attracts the poet, not her. Sam thinks her mind is Jim's run amok, careering from one topic to another. Blamed for wooing her, he sees she is lost but her blinded father can't. When told of Jim's death she says: That idiot!

Ian C Smith



## AN INTAGLIO OF WORDS

Jim discourses in bars, cadges money, buoyed by an innate sense of superiority. That intellect, the prodigious reading, cocky belief in his destiny and genius, makes admirers, and enemies, of his peers. Chastity divides women into camps. Decent means thighs closed and clothed.

Brothel life fascinates, sexual reek, the wanton, knickers easily downed, whips him into scatological ecstasy. Not of his class but carnally shrewd, Nora spins tales of her peasant childhood. When she reaches into his trousers does she think of biographical text?

Booting convention up the arse they elope unwed, into exile, to Zurich, Trieste, where their haphazard hand-to-mouth ways would make a bankable movie script now. She sticks by her man, forever imprinted. Dubliners crowd his mosaics of the past, recorded forever in an intaglio of words.

To solve the damned problem of money Jim finds backers for his grand idea, bringing movies to the Irish public. In Dublin he fits seats in vacant premises. This time his meteoric imagination fails. His choice of movies abysmal for a genius, the venture collapses, backers scarper.

To raise his spirits, and his cockstand, he exchanges letters with Nora in Trieste as he suffers box-office flaccidity. She begins an epistolary sexual marathon, vividly writing what she wants done to her, exciting an orgy of moist lewd responses like a text for a pornography manual.

In private, the failed cinema entrepreneur does his best to prove his critics correct, writing of barbaric degrading debauchery, but so does his wife, and they gorge on it. This intercity precursor to phone sex, their inky couplings, satiates them. Jim dreams post-coital dreams of Molly Bloom.

His stories offend in different ways, scaring the bejeezus out of publishers. The scandalous stripping of sacred taboos, raw pasquinades, scald even the printers. He banjaxes Ireland, insults the English king, suffers fits, ulcers, and eye problems, and complains to the newspapers.

His plan to canvass Dublin's publicans, a literary pub-crawl with a publisher to sweet talk them so they won't sue, stirs pettifoggery, and, in turn, his paranoia. Envious fellows, back-stabbers like him, spread stories of Nora's liberties, crazing him cruelly with sexual jealousy.

Using a suitcase lid on his knees as a desk he composes his gallimaufry of those streets into Ulysses in their Swiss bedroom. By night he carouses with cronies, vexing Nora who is bored by artists, neglect, exile. When Sylvia Beach finally publishes the epic, Nora, who never finishes it, sells her signed copy.

## THAT UNTRAVELLED WORLD, GLEAMING

I read Laurie Lee's *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning*, rapt, hooked, yearning to walk out, too, needing some best years of my life to remember. Minimal skills, even less education, bank balance a posh phrase for zero, in the grip of the gap between family obligation and imagination, I studied. The first writer, T.S. Eliot, a challenging beginning to what I have now wrought, smote my heart. I sensed those claws scuttling across ancient ocean floors while days flipped over.

Finding a way to burst clear of factories, blast furnaces, I reached Tahiti's voluptuous volcanic skyline, *Adventures in Paradise's* cinematography on TV, Gauguin's concupiscent coloration in art biographies, research of every book on the Bounty mutiny I could find, plus its movie magic, albeit skewed, in mind. Then I fell ill. In Papeete a charming French doctor's antibiotics rescued me following comical multilingual communication, she amused, switching languages, me ham acting.

Paul Theroux jiggled my wanderlust, place ever more vital in books squished into those outside pockets of backpacks smugly treasured during times of delay. Travellers read. On the N.Y.C. subway in a train dubbed The Beast for its dangers, I counted five languages being read heads down avoiding eye contact in one carriage, recalled V.S. Naipaul's first stop there after leaving Trinidad as a teenager, lacking money to tip a cabbie. On that first flight peering down at the sea prompted his memory of a poem by Tennyson whose monument I later reached high above the scudding drift on the Isle of Wight.

Seeing Dover's cliffs I thought of Matthew Arnold. Thomas Hardy's writing desk and D.H. Lawrence's narrow house of childhood among literary shrines visited, I also tarried in verdant Vermont near Solzhenitsyn's hideaway in exile after his triumph over gulag confinement, swear I met characters from Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* when my ferry reached fog-enshrouded Newfoundland Island. I trawl movie credits for acknowledgements of writers whose accounting beguiles, for their cinematic kick-starters, going back so far as Virgil and Homer, those diarists of epic nomadic adventurers, sniff hoarded superseded maps for free return trips.

## NO JOKE

*All along the cell block sang the lawyer to the cop.* The old lag's mimicry echoes in here, voice flat, adenoidal like Dylan's, threat loaded with false jocularity disturbing my reverie of A-list dealing days, that lush intellectual glamour, my domain high above Market Street, leaning on my balcony wearing a crisp white shirt, sleeves rolled just so, listening to distant sirens, ambulances, cop cars prowling the night canyons of the glittering city, looking down on poor sods whose lives run into dead-ends.

*Fuckfuckfuck* I mutter, sweat sour, reflection in stainless steel blurred, a fallen star, boring months, years, stretched ahead as good, or bad, as finished. Over. My erratic schooldays, the ballooning differential between brainpower and behaviour, kindled my father's favourite cark and care comment re fees; *Flushing cash down the lavatory*, remembered now, pissing, desultory, alone yet not alone. *I blew bigger sums, actually*, I tell the swirling water, *than you dreamed of.*

My neighbour, this tone-deaf troubadour of trouble, warbles *There must be some way outta here*; me, brainwave bankrupt to find this way, inflexible hierarchies being such, my last, dumbest, deal is done. Passion, ignorance, concupiscence. They bludgeoned Fat Carl, another high-profile snitch, brained him with a barbell.





Ingrid Storholmen was born in Verdal, Norway, on 22 May 1976. She studied literature at the University of Bergen, and spent one year at a creative writing school. She was the literature editor of *Morgenbladet*, a culture newspaper in Norway. For five years, she was the writer-in-residence at 'Adrianstua', a writer's house in Trondheim. She started the Trondheim International Literature Festival during her stay there, and also founded the literary magazine *LUJ* with two colleagues. Ingrid has published six books: *The Law of the Poacher* (2001, Shamespeesch); *Graceland* (2005); *Siri's Book* (2007); *Voices from Chernobyl* (2009); *To Praise Love* (2011) published by Aschehoug in Oslo, Norway. *Here Lies Tirpitz* (2014). She has received many literary awards and prizes for her work, and her poetry has been translated into eighteen languages.

This poem is translated from Norwegian by Marietta Maddrell.

## NEW EARTH

1

And the earth said  
Now you may go  
You have finished now  
Finished putting down words  
Impressions

And the earth said  
I am rising  
Up, stretching out my arms  
Pushing you away  
I do not respond to your curses  
Or your hopes

Do not draw breath, the air is mine  
You landed on me  
Without permission to land  
a warplane

You borrowed, but stole  
Consolation against consolation  
Your consolation

And the earth asks  
Where is my freedom  
Do I have a choice  
Other than to make you quake with earthquake  
become anaemic with pandemic

*continued overleaf..*

Ingrid Storholmen

NEW EARTH *contd...*

2

Like a planet, like the head  
 of a girl, all of you, who dig in the sand, sift, stroke, till, burn  
 Mill, no less, mite, embers of remembrance which collide

You say I am called Gaia  
 But I am not, nor am I home  
 or planet, Tellus, cosmos  
 You take pictures of me  
 Of the embryo inside the belly  
 Of the tumour inside the abdomen  
 Believing you see the one who is looking when the satellite looks at us

Lightbearer, may I suggest  
                                   the possibilities  
                                   no, rather  
                                   expectations!

Catch catch  
 catch me  
 in your lap  
 In the blue

And there (in the blue)  
 is the noise from a kindergarden in autumn light  
 the trees have caught fever, for ever?  
 Young insects leap from flower to floor to bed to blood  
 Life goes on, just goes on  
 Is it an insult, a twist of fate, bashfulness or disarming  
 Humour or ill-humour?

3

It is so easy for you, all of you, you simply hold out a We  
 wave it in the wind, tempting

Must we become We?  
 In the end?  
 What have We to say  
 Who do We say it to  
 Are you there? Are you  
 On the wildlife camera, on the carcass, in the trap or in the field  
 In We-shapes, figures, built or discovered  
 As unlike we we are We in

Who decides you, We  
 Subject object rape  
 Who decides on  
 The hand that writes  
 In the sky

said the earth



James Walton is published in many anthologies, magazines, and newspapers. He was a librarian, a farm labourer, and mostly a public sector union official. He resigned from an elected position in 2014 to write. His books include 'The Leviathan's Apprentice' 2015, 'Walking Through Fences' 2018, and 'Unstill Mosaics' 2019. He has been shortlisted for a number of awards, and is a winner of the Raw Art Review Chapbook Prize for 'Abandoned Soliloquies' to be published shortly. He lives in Wonthaggi.



James Walton

## UNCAGED ANIMALS

They speak  
but then they don't  
these handlers of truth

their baton tongues rattle  
along loose evaporating bars

we see through a decline  
without any nurture  
the promise withering within

still

I'll hold your hand  
step out Fred and Ginger  
fall and rise

hand on cuff less wrist  
over this diapason rescue

but then again

the sideshow ennui  
calls us back  
one last performance

we will grow tired  
of the ringmaster's whip  
stand up with the big cat  
nine tails or lives

if you slip  
I will slip too  
one for one  
this is how a number grows.



*\*Indigenous leaders point out that white occupancy of the Australian continent if measured against the timescale of indigenous settlement, would amount to only six minutes against 24 hours.*

## THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY SECONDS IS ALL IT TOOK

fewer than a ghost town  
where the currawongs  
scrawl their names

the half tail feral cat  
hiccups the last budgie's feathers

the post office doors  
open outward

once a river dawdled  
many places to go

environmental flows  
lapsed in occupation  
big trees rolled  
throughout the compass

six-minute people  
scratch out lives  
the win beneath the crinkle

hesitates for bearing

set and dawn  
the twenty-four hours persist  
faith swings  
out of the pendulum chime

calls out the broken testament  
see what time it really is  
against the oldest occupation\*

## THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT HORSES

those who talk of standing sleep  
how they curl like cats  
snuffle ground as wingless dragons

or idle attent in the full sun

because there are not enough days  
to feel earth undulate in the tease of burlap

pose rump into the weather

always alert for the summons  
the startled flap of plovers  
as unshod hooves cherish gallop

then call across fences

their voices tuned for a herd  
whickering out the lost posse

rubbing morse on iron gates

the criss cross code of a sudden lick  
a scrape of brisket colour  
to mark the strain in barbed wire

and always their eyes of finest glaze  
seeking truth in the most human places



Jane Williams is an award-winning Australian writer based in Tasmania. Her poems have been published widely since the early 1990s. Her most recent book of poems is *Parts of the Main*. While best known for her poetry, Jane Williams has written in a variety of forms and genres for both adults and children. She has been a featured reader at venues in several countries including the USA, Canada, Ireland, Malaysia, Czech Republic and Slovakia where she held a three month artist residency in 2016. She coedits the on-line literary and arts journal Communion with her partner Ralph Wessman.



Jane Williams

## CAFE DIVERSIONS

As always it begins with an idea and because I still write by hand in the first instance I reach into my bag only to find what's missing. Without the tool of my trade I am less myself; a ballerina off point, a sniffer dog with anosmia.

I scan the laminate tabletop willing my predecessor to gift me from the pages of an abandoned crossword but I am just the first absent-minded doodler of the day. The newspaper before me mechanically folded, woefully pristine. The Planes Trains and Cars coloring book merely a tease of motion. What to do but beg?

Looking up from the salad bar as if it is a question he has never been asked, ponytailed and tie-dyed the waiter offers hope in the form of a barely concealed caveat - *this pen* he undertones *is my one and only*.

And this serves to divert me even further, duty bound now to expedite whatever it is I simply must write. Already the original kernel is dissipating, shape-shifting into what else but a study of the implement itself. The way the faded hotel name begins in a golden C and ends in the breaking bite of someone else's eureka moment. There is a disconcerting wobble and a vague stickiness I cannot think on. Overall too thick for comfort but an optimistic super-hero-green (think Ninja Turtles ...).

Now and then its rightful owner looks over as if to make sure I haven't left the country or found the secret imbedded button which if pressed with just the right lightness of touch could send me rocketing to a time and place where everything revels in its element: the sauerkraut, tabouli, writers and their pens – the next great work just a few more short orders away.

## SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

At sixty-five my bachelor uncle  
gave up smoking six months  
before his bypass and wonders  
tongue in cheek if there's a link.

He tells me this over the phone.  
We haven't spoken in 14 years  
because life happens we tell ourselves.

I tell him I remember how  
he introduced me to Harry Chapin  
when I was still in my teens and cats  
in the cradle were all the metaphor  
I needed for the world's sorrows.

How he once took his girl on a double date  
after the car accident but before  
her face had been fully reconstructed  
and his mate wanted to know what happened  
and he told him in detail then casually asked  
*So...what's your date's excuse?*

What I don't mention is that Christmas  
he walked out, disappeared, reemerging  
well into the new year as if he'd just been  
to the corner shop for cigarettes.

How as time rumoured on through affairs  
of the heart, one loan shark too many  
I crafted my own version of events -

Some kindly alien abduction,  
no invasive probing just a few  
randomised questions about life  
as he/we knew it.

Aussie Rules, TV dinners,  
what it means to outlive your brother  
then your sister. The countless ways  
we've come up with to enhance  
and numb the senses.

Then before we even noticed  
his absence, he'd be returned to us  
absentmindedly stroking his beard,  
heart in a state of permanent ceasefire,  
memory and his slate wiped clean.



© Jane Williams



## PANCAKE THEOREM

When I find myself in doubt  
a wise friend advises  
*Lie back and think of pancakes.*

Once upon a stone age...

cattails and ferns were mixed  
with water and baked on hot rocks.

Epochs on the Elizabethans enhanced  
the palate with sherry and rose water.

Twentieth century Catholicism favored  
lemon and a liberal sprinkling of sugar.

By the time I reach the parlours floating  
buttery stacks through the caramelised air

I am returned to my senses and the gift  
of accepting each day as it arrives;  
flat-packed, some assemblage required,  
choosing to believe whatever is left  
over or missing ensures the continuum.

Sometimes the only way to neutralize  
the mind's trickery is to hole up awhile  
in a corner of the knowable world -

surrender to the elemental  
comfort of its thingness...

## THIS ISN'T A POEM ABOUT EGGS

but growing up we learned to walk  
on their shells.  
If our family was a circus  
then my father was the ringmaster.  
We slipped our knots while he slept,  
became limbo dancers and funambulists  
clowning around the borderlines.

This isn't a poem about eggs but with six  
kids, a house cow and a surplus of pancakes  
it seemed we were always racing for the first  
or reaching for the last of anything.

This isn't a poem about eggs though the line  
I recall the most often from Angela's Ashes  
is Malachy McCourt asking what a man  
would be doing with a whole one to himself.

This isn't a poem about eggs but if it was  
it might simply describe the way they are shaped  
for safe landing, the joy of watching one crack  
from the inside.



## ONE THING LEADING TO ANOTHER

If at just that moment you  
(daddy longlegs) had veered  
some other way and not the way  
of my keyboard where nothing  
was happening  
but where my fingers rested  
anyway out of habit,  
I might not have wondered...

All my life I have been naming you  
wrongly: star of phobias,  
Halloween décor, superhero.  
You are more closely related  
to the scorpion, the mite even.  
No silk-glanded webspinner then.  
Eight legs yes, but fragile as time.  
And just the two eyes    like me.

At last count your kind was  
four hundred million years old.  
Give or take.

Oh ancient one! What do I know?

This -

You crawled the alphabet to disappear  
inside a man's dressing gown.  
The man rose slowly from the table  
carefully undressing though it was  
a cool enough autumn morning  
and just yesterday there had been  
a sprinkle of mountain snow.

And this -

When the man sat back down  
in his singlet and shorts and waited  
to see if you would reemerge,  
whole, it was then, one thing leading  
to another, that I was reminded  
of his kindness –

vowed to love it more fiercely.

Joachim Matschoss was born in Germany and now lives in Melbourne/Australia. He is a playwright, poet and Theatre-maker. His Theatre Company, 'Backyard Theatre Ensemble (BYTE)' presents diverse pieces of theatre all across Melbourne/ Australia and internationally, both Youth Arts and for adults. Joachim has created theatre in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, India, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Hungary, Taiwan, Switzerland and China. Joachim's poetry is published in Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA. Joachim's latest book, *Rain Overnight: Travels in Asia*, is available directly from him or from good bookshops in Melbourne and on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) [www.byteensemble.com](http://www.byteensemble.com)

## STILL LIFE: WOMAN WITH RAT

something moved under the young woman's  
 curly black hair held in place by a white headband  
 a tiny rat had snuggled into the little valley  
 behind the woman's collarbone  
 red tail, piercing eyes  
 a tiny rat with a loving heart  
 she trusts her more than her family  
 left home at sixteen, five years ago  
 her step-father's fist drove her away  
 and the needles in her mother's veins  
 the rat looks up, alert, ready to face life  
 its nose like the top of a pencil  
 sometimes its owner struggles to take care of her  
 this fierce, fiery, ratty little battler  
 seems to smile at me  
 knowing that her place near the collarbone  
 surely isn't threatened by someone  
 who's writing words into a black notebook.



Joachim Matschoss



## VERENA

I have never met you  
but just last week learnt with surprise  
you vowed never to have a baby  
and now I started reading 'kinderfrei'  
in which you praise those that like you  
chose to be child-free for the sake of the planet  
you trust data that states that a child  
adds 58 tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere  
a year over its lifetime

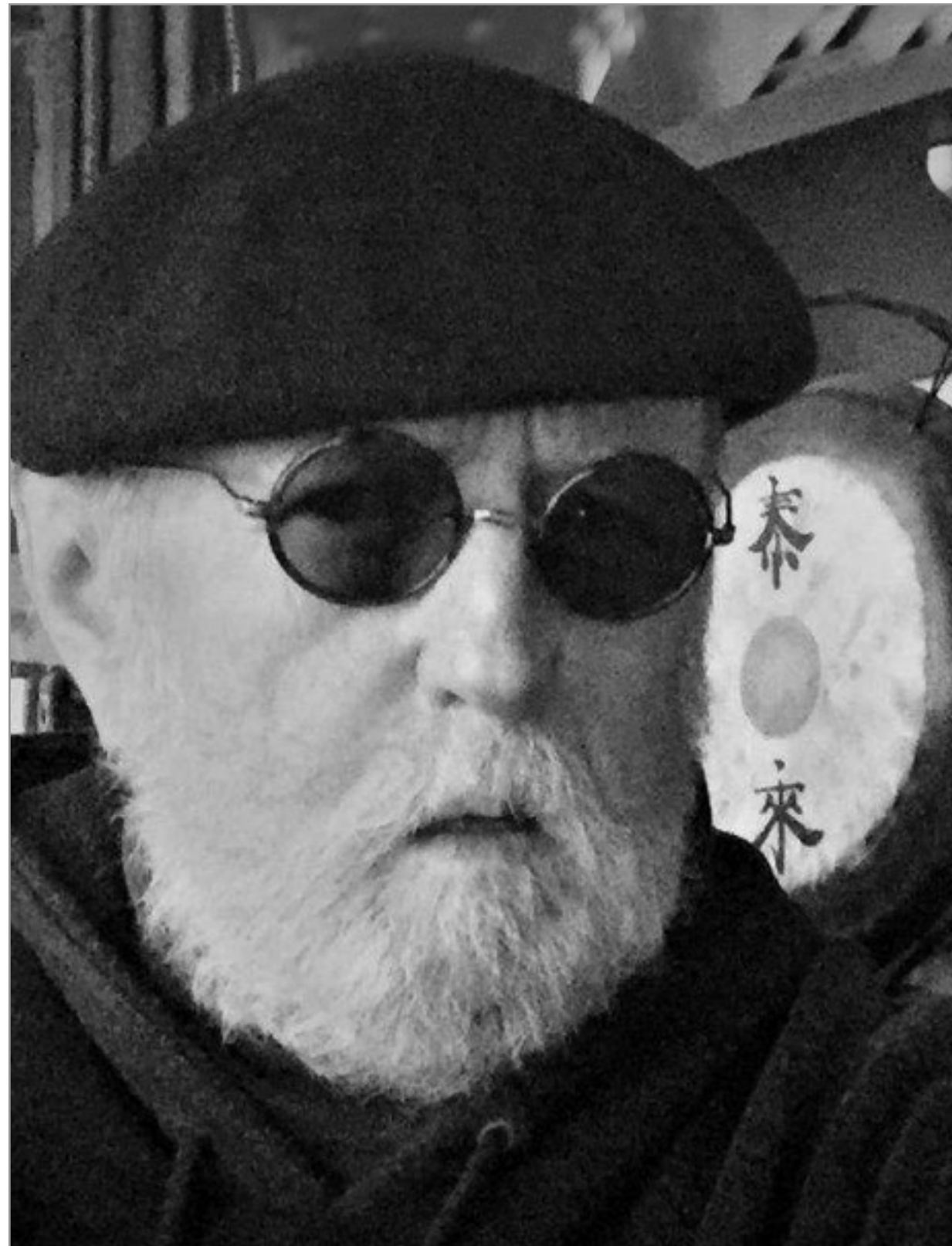
but  
you fly to your book talks  
you drive to work  
teaching children in regensburg  
birth rates are one thing  
but to condemn those that are parents is another  
especially if you drink coffee from take away cups  
and use straws for your shakes

## BANGKOK LADYBOY

don't you like what you see?  
I'm different, different and free  
I don't hide the sparkle, no don't turn away  
my mum had to face me, me, her boy  
some days I howl, and I cry  
other days I lie, yes, I lie  
don't they say the best people come in pairs  
I am who I am, who cares



John Maxwell O'Brien is an emeritus professor of history (Queens College, CUNY) who has written numerous articles on ancient history, medieval history, and the history of alcoholism. His best-selling biography, *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy* (Routledge), has been translated into Greek and Italian and he authored the article on alcoholism in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Professor O'Brien's second life has been devoted to his first love, creative writing. Professor O'Brien's poems have appeared or will appear shortly in *Literary Yard*, *Hedgehog Poetry Press* (where his poem was shortlisted in the Cupid's Arrow contest), *IthacaLit*, *The Southwest Poetry Review*, and the *Irish Poetry Corner* of *Irish Arts & Entertainment*. A short story of his is in the current issue of *Kaleidoscope* and he has just finished a debut novel entitled *Aloysius the Great*, an extract from which appears below. Professor O'Brien is now looking for a suitable publishing home for his novel.



John Maxwell O'Brien

## CHAPTER XXVI

Doomsday has arrived. Budgen drops me off at the train station and I purchase a first-class ticket to London and, perhaps, Hades. Go there in style.

On this trip Aloysius Magnus will drift into a majestic state of mind and devise a masterful strategy for the battle of Cockfosters Station. First, wash down five magic tablets with royal coffee, thereby banishing headaches from the realm.

Aha! Here's an empty car where the great one can doze off on his voyage south. But, alas, His Highness is a serial dreamer, and the most outré of nightmares come in the wake of lifting one jar too many. For a while it was those outlandish newspaper stories, but lately, it seems, the play's the thing . . .

ALOYSIUS

Where am I? A brothel? What did you say . . . I mean, who did you say you were? Zoe? Life? You are life? Jesus. Life is a whore. Why are you smoking a Cuban cigar, and where's your twin sister, Thanatos? You don't know her? Your own sister, Death? Oh, Jesus, what are you doing? I must warn you. I won't pay. I never pay. Hey, you're giving me money. Yeah, that's okay. Who's that? Bella? She's the boss? Where'd she go? There you are. Elena, it's you, isn't it?

BELLAELENA

I am whoever you want me to be, but before you do anything else, I want you to look through this.

(She points Aloysius toward a zoetrope, which he peers into.)

ALOYSIUS

That's you Elena. Who's that slimy-looking character with you?

BELLAELENA

That's my husband, Dr. Delagracia. Let Zoe assist you while you watch. Zoe, throw that cigarillo away. Your mouth can be better engaged than with a cylinder of rank weed.



(Zoe undoes Aloysius’s belt, easing him down into a leather chair while kneeling in front of him—not, it seems, to pray. Dr. Delagracia takes out his black bag, opens Elena’s blouse, and places his stethoscope on her left breast. He listens and nods, then has her lie supine while he lifts up her skirt. He takes a tiny brush out of his bag and strokes her red pubic hair with his left hand, while placing his stethoscope on her vaginal labia with his right hand. He listens intently, nods his head in approval, and proceeds to expose his black priapic member.)

ALOYSIUS  
What are you doing to me? I don’t want to see this. Let me out of here.

(Aloysius squirms to liberate himself but thickened leather straps project from the chair’s arms and lock him in. Zoe gets up wiping her mouth, but Aloysius realizes it’s not Zoe. It’s Marthe Fleischmann.)

ALOYSIUS  
Marthe, what are you doing here?

KITTY  
What’s wrong with you, sir? Had a little too much to drink today? I’m not Marthe. I’m Kitty Higgins, and, good sir, may I ask, what in blazes are you doing here?

ALOYSIUS  
Well . . .

(Aloysius pushes her out of the way and sees a young woman in her early twenties pressing her face up against the window of the zoetrope.)

ALOYSIUS  
Deborah . . . is that you?

DEBORAH  
It’s me all right. Do you want proof?

(She backs up and reveals a transparent rectangle in her abdomen. The window acts as a camera lens and zooms in on Deborah, who’s now standing in front of a painting of a young boy in an Eton suit carrying a book called *Aloysius’s Wake*.)

ALOYSIUS  
Who’s that?

DEBORAH  
  
That’s your son. Or, I should say, that’s what he’d look like today if you’d let me have him. Would you like to see what he really looks like today?

ALOYSIUS  
No! Let me go.

(Aloysius pulls in vain at the chair to release himself, only to realize his shoes have been nailed to the floor.)

DEBORAH  
Well, you will, whether you like it or not.

(Aloysius tries to shut his eyes, but maggots have a restraining grip on his eyelids. Deborah picks up a large jar with a male fetus immersed in formaldehyde. It’s a dwarf’s face, mauve and wrinkled.)

ALOYSIUS  
I was drinking heavily at the time.

DEBORAH  
You always drink heavily. Tell your son that and see what he says.

(She rushes toward him with the jar and pushes it up against the zoetrope’s window. The image blurs, and the young woman and her jar disintegrate. The blurry face of a woman with anomalous eyes and auburn hair approaches Aloysius through the zoetrope.)





ALOYSIUS  
Ma?

WOMAN  
Yes, Tabeel, it's your Mameleh. Don't listen to those who would bring you down with them. You are going to become a great man one day who helps others find themselves. Therein dwells your greatness. But to do this you must take control of your cup, your wallet, and your temperament. You must learn what the heart is and what it feels, and discover the power of the word known to all men . . . l-o-

(She disappears without finishing the spelling.)

ALOYSIUS  
Mameleh!

(A priest wearing a black cassock enters stage left. A large silver Celtic cross is hanging from his neck set against a blood-red circular woolen cloth. A Hasidic rabbi enters stage right, wearing a black rekel and a dark red gartel encircling his waist.)

PRIEST  
Why have you forsaken your son, my son?

(He points to a Christlike figure on the cross, which metamorphoses into a fetus.)

RABBI  
And why have you forsaken the God of your forefathers—the God of Abraham and Isaac and Rosenbach?

PRIEST  
Let us hear your sins. Your most grievous sins and your venial sins.

ALOYSIUS  
Aren't sins their own punishment? Why am I going through this with you? I will not genuflect.

(The priest becomes a wraith and vanishes. Aloysius stares at the rabbi.)

RABBI  
I will forgive you.

(He traces the Star of David in the air with his index finger.)

RABBI  
Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis in nomine Patris.

(The rabbi vaporizes.)

"King's Cross Station. King's Cross Station." It's the conductor.

It's going to take all day to shake myself loose from that horror. Sleep's supposed to be a cure for what ails you. Sometimes it just magnifies the agony. The Greeks said the gods speak to you through your dreams. What are they trying to tell me?

Signal for a taxi.

"Russell Hotel, please." I check in at the hotel and wait for Mountjoy's call.

Well, if it happens, it's going to be in the Tube at either Cockfosters Station or Waterloo Station. Elena's father's pursuers will either confront him, kiss him, or kill him. That is unless Mountjoy or I can intervene if and when things get ugly. It's preposterous. We have no idea what to do. I should have never let Mountjoy volunteer for this, but I can't be at both stations simultaneously. And all this to please my fair lady Elena. What price glory? Torquemada will probably emerge unscathed, his type always does and Mountjoy or I will have our tickets punched—permanently.

Finally, the phone rings. "Hello, Your Lordship. . . Ha! You're right. Why screw it up with plans at this stage? If I get there early and wander around outside Cockfosters, what sort of neighborhood will I be in? . . . It sounds decent enough. What about Waterloo? . . . That bad, huh? Sure boss, I know what you're talking about. We call it public housing.

© John Maxwell O'Brien

It's always a problem. What will you do if the locals try to mug you? . . . Ha! My money is on them. I'd better get going. Good luck at Waterloo. I'm on my way to Cockfosters. Bye."

Nothing unusual about the station, except its above ground. I like that. It's less nerve-racking than that buried-alive feeling you get from the subway. There's a large clock I can see from the platform. Twenty after nine. Wait. Here's somebody. This could be de la Flora. Get close enough to be sure without letting him recognize you. Take off your beret and glasses and stroll casually in his direction.

It's not him. Uniform back on.

I pace up and down the platform endlessly and then check the time. The clock says ten twenty-five. No sign of Torquemada. Dammit. I wish something would happen this clock-watching is torture. What did Mountjoy say? Give it another half-hour and then fold up your tent. Finally, the clock strikes eleven. Well, I stood ready to serve, like Malachi wearing the collar of gold. Alas, to no avail.

Take the Tube back to the hotel and maybe get a good night's sleep this time. Mountjoy said we'd compare notes tomorrow. Probably didn't expect anything to happen. What's this? Oh yeah. I told them to leave an iced bottle of Dom Perignon in my room. There'll be no victory to celebrate tonight. So, what? They're all Pyrrhic victories, anyway. One thing's for sure: I can't waste this bottle of champagne. That would be criminal.

What's that noise? Where am I? Jesus, it's the chambermaid. I shout out I need a few minutes. It's eleven o'clock already? No nightmares. If I dress quickly, I can grab a cab and still catch an express train to Yorkshire.

There's a taxi right outside the hotel. "King's Cross Station, please." Mountjoy's going to ridicule me for wasting his time. I thought he'd call this morning, but he must have left at daybreak to get back to the university. Well, if Torquemada was nowhere to be seen, he's probably still breathing, and that's Elena's main concern. Maybe it is a victory. That is, unless Mountjoy encountered something. Jesus. I hope not. If anything happens to him, it's going to be me bearing the blame.

Here we are. Grab a stack of newspapers. I'm not sleepy and I don't have a headache. Maybe vintage champagne is the answer to my problem. At least it would be an elegant way to go.

"Sir, they just dropped off the latest edition of the Daily Mail. Would you like that one as well?"

"Yes. Please." I slip it under the pile and hustle to catch the train. Boring. Boring. Bored. Let's see what the Daily Mail has to offer. "Oh, my God!"

#### BIZARRE INCIDENT AT WATERLOO STATION

Several travelers on the Bakerloo Line reported a most peculiar incident occurring at Waterloo Station between ten and eleven o'clock, on Saturday night, as they exited from their carriages. While reports differ, there appears to be general agreement that four men were involved in a dispute that resulted in one of them discharging a firearm.

Oh no.

The incident took place at the opposite end of the station from which the travelers exited from their carriages. Witnesses at the scene all agreed they heard shouting in a foreign language from that direction, which one bystander identified it as Italian, and the others as Spanish. Some pushing was observed among three of the gentlemen, two shots were fired in the air, and then something most extraordinary occurred. When the three men separated, a fourth man was seen stark naked in their midst, with both hands clasped over his head, slowly and methodically pirouetting.

Two of the men suddenly started running at a furious pace past the bystanders. One witness reportedly looked towards the end of the station and saw the naked man scamper to retrieve his discarded clothes and push the other man, an elderly gentleman, into the carriage of a newly arrived train. The naked man's momentum carried him and the older man into the carriage just as the doors were closing.

As the train passed by, several witnesses observed the naked man, thought to be in his thirties, dressing hastily, while the elderly gentleman sat bewildered. Witnesses agreed they saw only one person, a woman perhaps in her late fifties, in the car the two men entered. She is said to have been staring at the naked man with what appeared to be a smile on her face.

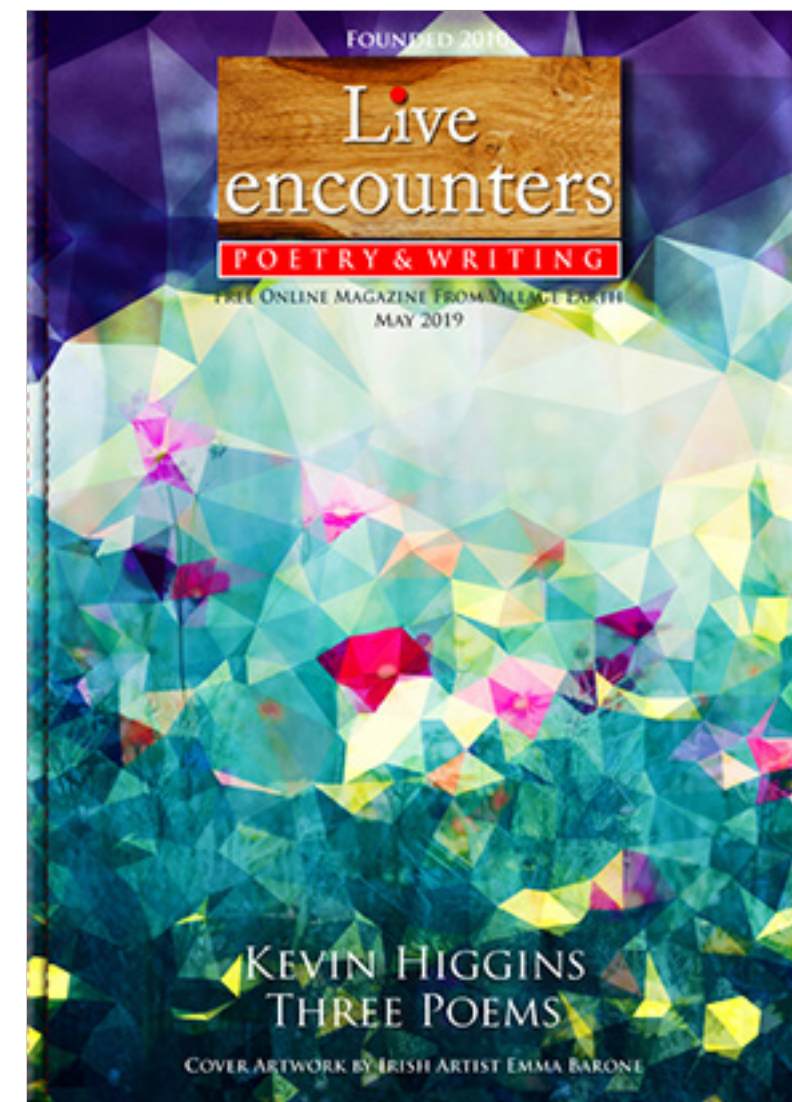
The local constabulary was contacted, and the station was shut down while police officials attempted to locate the bullets allegedly discharged into the roof of the station.

Anyone who has information concerning what transpired at Waterloo Station last night is asked to contact Scotland Yard.

“This has to be Mountjoy. Nobody else is crazy enough to do something like that.”

I can imagine the headlines in tomorrow’s tabloids:

MAYHEM IN THE BOWELS OF THE LONDINIUM METROPOLIS  
 PIROUETTING PEDANT’S PENIS PARRIES PERNICIOUS PLOT  
 DANGLING DINGUS DERAILES DESPICABLE DEED  
 WAYWARD WILLY WAGGER WOWS WATERLOO WATCHERS  
 FRISKY FRUMP FINDS FLASHER’S FLUTE FASCINATING



May 2019



John Sibley Williams is the author of *As One Fire Consumes Another* (Orison Poetry Prize, 2019), *Skin Memory* (Backwaters Prize, University of Nebraska Press, 2019), *Summon* (JuxtaProse Chapbook Prize, 2019), *Disinheritance*, and *Controlled Hallucinations*. A nineteen-time Pushcart nominee, John is the winner of numerous awards, including the Wabash Prize for Poetry, Philip Booth Award, and Laux/Millar Prize. He serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review* and works as a poetry editor and literary agent.



## STUNTED GENERATIONS

The moon tonight is a nightlight  
casting tiny shadows across the bars  
of the cribs we never grew out of.  
& that stuffed bear with one eye  
wet from our constant suckling  
stands in for our absent mothers.  
Like hangnails we can't stop ourselves  
from picking into infection, the stars  
splinter off from that greater body  
of sky: acute, abrasive, alluringly  
dangerous. & even summer's swell  
just drives home the cold. So we've  
learned to press ice cubes to our chests  
so they won't melt as they do in whiskey,  
incorporate myths into our histories  
so they seem more real, fill a priest's  
ears with sins we never considered  
committing but sound so good rolling  
off the tongue. A stained glass symbol  
hands itself over to truth the way a father  
slips bills under a table when the bartender  
tries to cut him off. There's always room  
for one more tall tale before heading home,  
one more reason to put off repatriation,  
one more key missing its cylinder before  
finally catching & opening us up  
to our great & future empire.

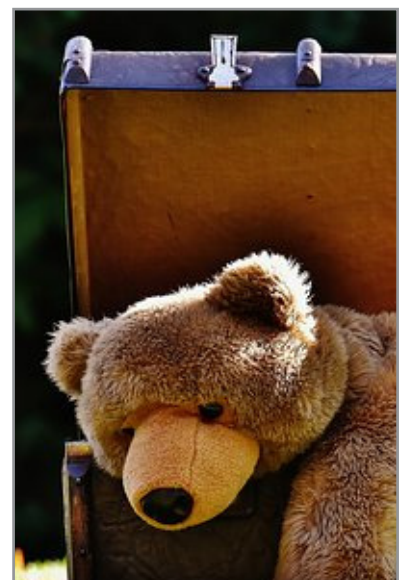
John Sibley Williams

## LORE

It's not that the nails keep growing  
but that skin recedes & can no longer  
hold them; I know his blood-lined  
lips aren't evidence of resurrection  
but that everything inside is beginning  
to soften & simmer. Still I like to believe  
curtains dancing over an open window  
imply a returning; that these are demons  
working my hands, & when I eventually  
atone: gods; that the things keeping us  
bound to each other refuse to untangle  
when our breath becomes air & the air  
sours. I tell myself all sorts of stories  
to justify this wooden stake, this shovel  
& torch & doubt, this cross so weightless  
even the dead can bear it.

## IN THEORY

A different night maybe  
the streetlight cutting  
the paper-thin curtains  
would strike your face  
less like an open palm.  
The moths wouldn't be  
beating themselves senseless  
against the jar we keep  
them in. The bruised eyes  
we see through when trying  
to see the world as it is  
wouldn't sting under ice.  
Like a language we understand  
but can no longer speak,  
on such a night the facts  
& our memories would carry  
the same truth. Within winter's  
parched & broken skin maybe  
a balm of roots, unfed roots  
hungering for spring. The bed  
creaking beneath us just might  
sound like penitence; make-up  
sex feel like grace, like coming  
up for air when the river is at its  
least forgiving. Falling exhausted  
into *forgive me, stay* & at dawn  
staying.



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## HARD TO KNOW IF THIS IS THE RIGHT RITUAL.

Darkened room & candle. Hands  
that have no idea what it means to  
steeple, or atone. The truth is it's no  
easier comparing ourselves to the dead.

How my great-great grandfather tamed  
his tiny corner of a wild country without  
killing qualifies as a minor miracle. How  
I've hurt so many without carving my name  
into a single tree is equally wondrous. Maybe  
this ache is just one body defining itself by another,  
my mouth only filled with the usual promises. Forever  
& the forever beyond that. Heaven, flame, etc.

If I'm doing this right, there'll be nothing true  
left in us but song. & when the singing's done—

WHATEVER MATTERED BEFORE  
IS MATTERING AGAIN

—Each time, certain. Though more & more  
belief replaces the thing itself. Calling the lightning  
down to strike us so our children can start us up  
anew is a ritual without flash or ruin. Or change.  
We say *some boats are just made for sinking*  
over the grave of a suicided friend & feel better  
about our own untouched bodies for a moment.

Sometimes we just need the needing.

& it's less His presence or absence, cruelty, long-awaited  
mercy, that writhes these strange singing men & women's  
arms like unheld hoses going wild all over the lawn.  
They're reaching, madly; can feel their own reaching.  
Maybe that's enough; perfected, unattained. There's something,  
we're told, more meaningful in a metaphor without object.  
How what we lose ends up a memory. *Hallelujah*.  
How what we love, another word for exit wound.

Would that I too save, be saved, take comfort

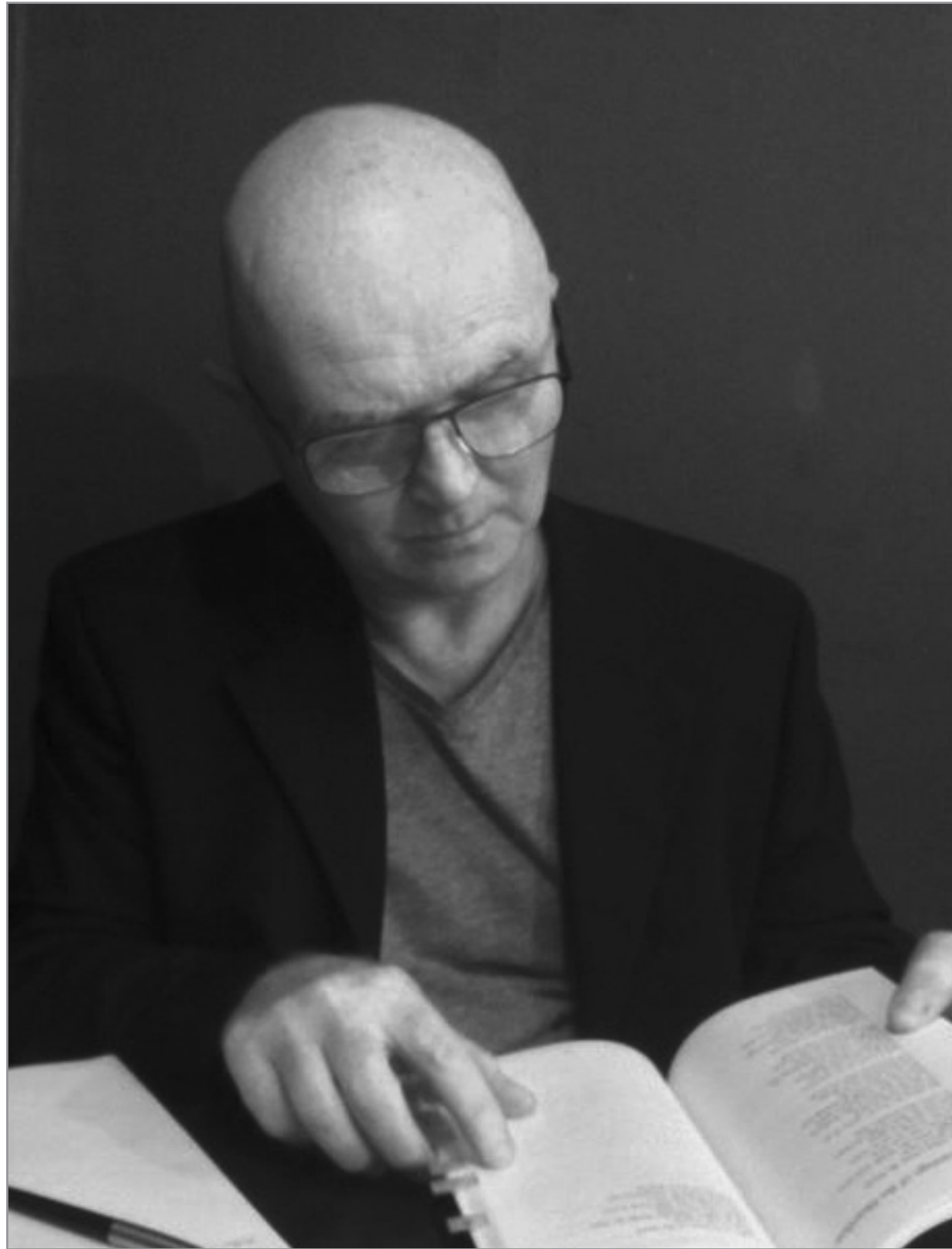
that there is only *me* as far as the saying it goes. Death  
only in our grieving. *These are not snakes*, they tell us  
through snake-heavy arms, *but our taming of an untamable*  
*world*. Though I wouldn't call any of this song, I envy  
their singing it; the lightningless burn, boatless sinking.  
Now touch me, love; uncertainly, ruinous, as evidence.  
Tonight, let's try to make of us a material gospel again.



John W. Sexton's sixth poetry collection, *Futures Pass*, was published by Salmon Poetry in 2018. A chapbook of surrealist poetry, *Inverted Night*, came out from SurVision in 2019. His poem *The Green Owl* was awarded the Listowel Poetry Prize 2007 for best single poem. His poem *In and Out of Their Heads*, from *The Offspring of the Moon*, was selected for *The Forward Book of Poetry* 2014. His poem *The Snails* was shortlisted for the 2018 An Post / Listowel Writers' Week Poem of the Year Award. In 2007 he was awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry. The poems individually are untitled, and form part of a forthcoming collection, a sequence of poems called **Visions at Templeglantine** (due from Revival Press in 2019).

## FROM VISIONS AT TEMPLEGLANTINE

You snip the string on the brown parcel.  
As you begin to peel back the brittle brown  
covering, you realise from its veined surface  
that this isn't parcel paper. It's a single  
insect wing. You carefully spread the wing  
across the floor. It's as big as the sail  
from a small boat. You return to the table  
where a large box sits with a loose lid.  
Inside the box is a bundle of brittle wing;  
the matching wing you reasonably guess. Care-  
fully once more you spread this wing across  
the floor, next to its other half. Wrapped  
inside this wing - a pair of shoes. The shoes  
are made of red wax. You place the shoes  
upon your feet. They are wonderfully flexible  
and squeak at every step. A red spot is left  
after each footfall. The wings lie expectantly, await-  
ing the moment when you will ask your mother  
to sew them to your naked back. Your back awaits.



John W Sexton

*continued overleaf...*

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FROM VISIONS AT TEMPLEGLANTINE *contd...*

A noise of violet has been in your head all morning.  
 Your neighbour has sent you out to the meadow,  
 to capture the golden horse. He has given you a halter  
 made of twisted straw. You do not believe  
 in the golden horse. You believe the halter  
 to be useless. The noise in your head stops. Violet  
 is no longer colouring your mind. In the meadow  
 a golden horse is standing in the sunlight. You believe.  
 On seeing you the horse steps away, away into  
 the shadow of the trees. It is no longer golden, you see  
 now, but covered all over in mud. The horse  
 evades you continually, trotting away at each approach.  
 You throw the halter at it in exasperation. The noise  
 in your head starts up. Violet is mind. The horse  
 bends down and eats the straw halter. Violet wells up,  
 overflowing. The horse's whinny sounds sarcastic,  
 sounds triumphant as it trots away. In exasperation  
 this time you shout. *Stop!* The word is violet. The horse  
 stops. You realise that the halter is in the horse now,  
 because violet is certain in all matters. The horse  
 must obey. *Come*, you say to the horse. Once upon  
 the horse you take hold of its mane, take hold of its mane  
 as fierce as you can. *Carry me to the Sky Woman*,  
 you say to the horse, *for I wish to present you to her*.  
 The horse gallops with certainty, for violet commands it.  
 At great speed it crosses the meadow, at great speed  
 its hooves gain purchase in the air. You are astride it  
 amongst the clouds. The noise in your head stops.  
 You lose your sense of certainty, you falter. Your grip  
 becomes faithless and the horse senses it and shakes you.  
 You fall through the sky. Another certainty becomes manifest

You think you know the colour of grass. You think  
 you know the colour green. But on this morning  
 that you walk through the knotted tresses of it,  
 you do not recognise the colour you tread upon.  
 The sky leaks a dark pain it has never bled.  
 In the night a wave has passed up through the river,  
 you can only guess that that is it, for the lower fields  
 are littered with eels. At your treadfall the eels revive;  
 they begin to squirm all about you. They catch  
 each other by the tail until they are all a squamous rope.  
 You take one end of this tarnished cord and flick it  
 in the air. The rope of eels stands upright, and you  
 climb. You climb up into the sickening sky.  
 The sky is imbued with familiarity. You have  
 been here before. A hand grabs you by the nose  
 and pulls you free of the eels. A long thumbnail  
 and a long forefingernail pierce your face.  
 Suddenly you are in your house, but it is no dream  
 that placed you in your chair. You arise unsteadily,  
 stumble to the mirror. On either side of your snout  
 is a puncture wound, a trickle of blood from each.  
 But here is a red you have never before beheld;  
 a blood you have never expressed, have never bled.

*continued overleaf...*

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FROM VISIONS AT TEMPLEGLANTINE *contd...*

Weeks pass before you enter those fields again.  
 In the distance the river is solid metal, a necklace.  
 As you descend, the ground is yielding, sodden.  
 Yellow irises are in flower, their ragged petals  
 vulnerable in the sunlight. But you understand  
 at last that you cannot own colour. Colour  
 is a thing outside of you. You know now  
 that the irises and their yellow are owned by water.  
 At the riverbank a kingfisher is electric  
 in the momentary sighting of it. You do not  
 own it nor wish to. You barely look. Just  
 as you barely looked at the irises or the grass,  
 or the sky or now the river. A woman of liquid  
 metal looks up out at you, her flesh like mercury.  
 You do not covet her. You are beginning  
 to understand not to desire her. The she is beyond  
 you. You must love her, but without condition.  
 You turn your back and walk away to your house.  
 The river leaves itself and sits up on the sodden grass.  
 The river combs its hair of river, then shakes itself  
 back fully into itself. You did not see this. Not  
 seeing this is a test you have just passed

In the wood you pass an old woman going  
 the opposite way. You stop and look back  
 at her. Blackthorn is growing through the top  
 of her head. White blossom crowns her.  
 A small bird, a wren, enters through  
 the thicket of the blackthorn. You decide  
 to follow her. You can see the wren  
 flitting in and out of her skull. You can  
 hear chicks cheeping in there. The wren  
 has brought maggots in its craw. The chicks  
 are the old woman's mind, born again  
 from the wren. A chick falls out  
 and to the ground. The old woman seems  
 oblivious. You stop and gently gather  
 the chick into the joined cup of your hands.  
 You are filled with bird thought; of the multiples  
 that crowd the skies, that crowd the hedges.

END





Kathleen Mary Fallon

Kathleen Mary Fallon most recent work is a three-part project exploring her experiences as the white foster mother of a Torres Strait Islander foster son with disabilities. The project consisted of a feature film, *Call Me Mum*, which was short-listed for the NSW Premier's Prize, an AWGIE and was nominated for four AFI Awards winning Best Female Support Actress Award. The three-part project also includes a novel *Paydirt* (UWAPress, 2007) and a play, *Buyback*, which she directed at the Carlton Courthouse in 2006. Her novel, *Working Hot*, (Sybylla 1989, Vintage/Random House, 2000) won a Victoria Premier's Prize and her opera, *Matricide – the Musical*, which she wrote with the composer Elena Kats-Chernin, was produced by Chamber Made Opera in 1998. She wrote the text for the concert piece, *Laquiem*, for the composer Andrée Greenwell. *Laquiem* was performed at The Studio at the Sydney Opera House. She holds a PhD (UniSA).

## MAMDOUH HABIB

What happened was this:-

four years, four years they kept me  
away from my wife, my children, my family  
four years  
they take me first to Egypt  
for torture  
it's a mafia business  
the US give them money  
how much information you want for how much money  
it's a business, I tell you  
a mafia business  
they are criminals, criminals

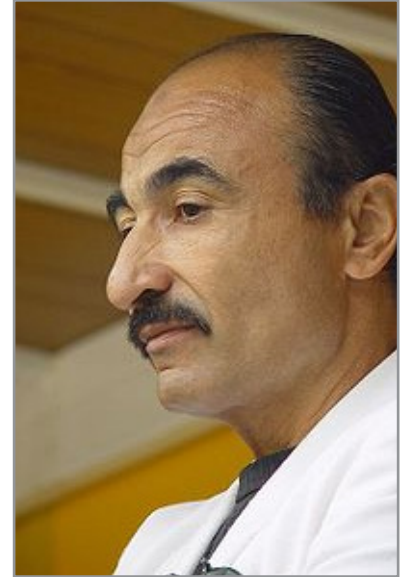
they hold me in Egypt  
they torture me for days  
months

I can't tell you torture  
you can't explain torture  
you have to feel it, it's a feeling  
it's psychological

every day they torture me  
with beating, electricity, water  
tell us tell us  
they inject me with drugs  
sign this, sign this  
before my God  
before Allah  
I can say nothing  
because I know nothing  
nothing  
what I can say?  
what I can sign?  
nothing, nothing

*continued overleaf...*

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## MAMDOUH HABIB *contd...*

and I tell you this, I tell you this  
 this I know  
 they are happy with 9/11  
 they say to me many times  
 in the interrogation rooms  
 in the interrogation room in Egypt  
 in the interrogation room at Guantanamo  
 we are happy with 9/11  
 because now we can do anything to you  
 anything

but I say nothing, nothing  
 I sign nothing, nothing  
 because I know nothing  
 what I know?  
 nothing  
 in Egypt or in Guantanamo Bay

and in Guantanamo  
 they give me a lawyer  
 a criminal from the military  
 he won't tell me his name  
 he comes to me and says  
 I'm your lawyer. I'll be representing you at your trial.

I say what is your name?  
 he says I cannot tell you.  
 I say where do you come from?  
 he says I cannot tell you  
 I say how do I get in contact with you?  
 he says you can't. I'll come to you

I say no!  
 I don't want you  
 you 're not my lawyer  
 I will not speak

but they come  
 and they drag me  
 they drag me on my back  
 through gravel  
 500metres to the trial  
 but I will not speak to those judges  
 those criminals  
 criminals from the US military  
 criminals from the navy  
 criminals from the army  
 criminals from the marines  
 but I say nothing, nothing  
 I have nothing to say  
 before my God  
 before Allah  
 I cannot lie

but I tell you this  
 I tell you those  
 criminals from the US military are better  
 than these criminals here  
 Alexander Downer and John Howard  
 they wouldn't even let me into my trial  
 to get my passport back  
 they didn't even drag me

they wouldn't let my lawyer into the trial  
 they wouldn't even let him see the evidence  
 against me getting my passport back  
 I tell you they are more criminal

*continued overleaf...*



## MAMDOUH HABIB *contd...*

and I have had my house broken into  
 I have been stabbed  
 my children are abused  
 and what I do?  
 what I do to deserve all this?  
 nothing, nothing  
 I tell you my house is a toilet  
 now  
 a public toilet  
 they come in  
 those criminals from ASIO come in  
 whenever they want to  
 nothing is taken  
 but they let me know they have been there  
 I just leave the door and windows  
 open  
 now  
 why not?  
 it is a public toilet

I speak to you ASIO people here  
 In the audience  
 I tell you this  
 you are dishonourable people  
 I accuse you  
 why are you following me?  
 breaking in to my house?  
 why you are not following the criminal  
 kidnappers and torturers?  
 the people who pay for the kidnapping the torture?  
 the people who pay the money for the information?

I am Australian citizen  
 I have been kidnapped  
 and tortured  
 and held illegally for four year  
 and now  
 my taxes pay for you to follow me and  
 break in to my house  
 and I object  
 and I accuse you  
 of being dishonourable people  
 of being criminals

What happened was this:-

I was travelling in a bus in Pakistan when it was stopped and a couple of Pakistan men with guns jumped on. They grabbed two young men saying, "the Americans are kidnapping tourists, you must come with us it is for your own protection" They kept saying, "Come with us it is for your safety, for your own protection." This seemed very strange to me and I said, "Who are you? Why are you doing this? What is going on here?" And so they grabbed me as well and said, 'OK! you can come with us too.' And that is how it started. And they took me off the bus too and put me in handcuffs at gunpoint and took me away and that is how it started. Australian government knew, US government knew, Egyptian government knew. All criminals, criminals. I am an Australian citizen and I have been kidnapped and tortured and held illegally for four years and the government has my passport and will not give it back and will not tell why and ASIO men come into my house whenever they want and my children are abused and why? What I do?

nothing, nothing  
 before my God  
 before Allah  
 I cannot lie  
 I cannot sign anything  
 because I know nothing

*continued overleaf...*



MAMDOUH HABIB *contd...*

And Ruddock say now, 'I am a person of interest.' Why I am a person of interest?  
 And Beazley says, 'We don't want to hear from people like this.'  
 What sort of people am I? I want to ask you all here, now, 'Tell me, please!  
 What sort of person am I?'

That is the story of Mambouh Habib and that is what happened to him.

And I, Kathleen Mary Fallon, URGE DISAFFECTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

Get ready for:-

No more Freedom of Thought  
 No more Freedom of Speech  
 No more Freedom of the Press  
 No more Freedom of Association  
 No more Freedom to Strike  
 No more Rule of Law  
 No more Innocent Until Proven Guilty  
 No more Habeas Corpus

Get ready for people to disappear

Get ready for Control Orders  
 Get ready for Sedition Laws  
 Get ready for Preventive Detention

Get ready for people to disappear

END

## EXCERPT FROM 'THE ETCETERA PRAYER'

*from the all-night putt-putt range on the outskirts to the mammas dream instant  
 pavlova drive-in take-away beside the old highway to the iguana reptile park  
 JUST THREE KILOMETRES DOWN THE ROAD FROM THE TURN-OFF*

*all dead and dying dreams receive the Light*

*all the women living alone with their children on the outskirts in outer lying  
 housing-commission suburbs who tick the boxes marked separated, unmarried,  
 divorced, defactoed who wait cold-legged on windy bus stops for that mid-morning  
 connecting bus to the shopping (everything-under-the-one-roof) town in the next  
 satellite suburb who dream on and on on the collapsed inner-springs of lapsed  
 mattresses stained with the reveries of next fortnights direct payment of next  
 saturday nights bus to the dance at the army barracks receive the Light*

*to the families who drive their volvos, their saabs, their audis through these  
 depressions, these sub-urbs, of a sunday arvo and can't help themselves saying  
 look at the state of the cars, look at the amount of bottles, look at the number of  
 under-nourished and neglected poor looking little kiddies who say but the homes  
 could be cosy, the gardens could be attractive and productive (they've got the same  
 dirt as we have after all) if only someone had the nous, the good sense, the welfare  
 of the children at heart, been brought up better themselves wind down the windows  
 of your air-conditioned, side-impact protection volvos, your every-safety-feature,  
 crumple-zone front and rear optional saabs, your driver air-bag impact safety device  
 audis and receive the pink and golden Light*

*etcetera etcetera etcetera*

*for the tenants in dreary red brick high-rise who illicitly bluetack postcards of  
 europe to the stuccoed lounge room walls and conversely and in the same god-  
 given breath the landlords, the landladies who therefore retain a substantial part  
 of the rental bonds for the spots on the wall, for the stains on the carpet, the dust on  
 the venetians, the filth under the hotplate, the mouse nest at the back of the oven,  
 the syringes, meds and condoms blocking the toilet*

*continued overleaf...*

© Kathleen Mary Fallon



## EXCERPT FROM 'THE ETCETERA PRAYER' *contd...*

*for the parts, each and everyone, of the south american babies and derelicts*

*kidnapped and sold for their organs for the salesmen and saleswomen and the go-betweens and for the recipients of the organ donations for the full bodies or only the heads being kept cryogenically frozen keep the refrigeration agents active*

*etcetera etcetera etcetera*

*and let us now pray lip-service to the unemployed bodgie-jobber the do-gooder social worker weaving and warping the social fabric of lies to the wet-dreams of night-soil men to the computer hackers flying down the information superhighways to the pilgrims in sturdy plimsolls still walking the Commons and the trade routes stout staff in hand for the boxer in search of his killer instinct for the hubcap thief in search of his boxfullofsmarts to the sexkittens and fleshpots to the eyecandy and trophywives and their pure self-destruction so clean, so determined their will – some dark medusalike apparition*

*let us pray lip-service to all those hellbent on a perfect obliteration a perfect contrition to all those who totally exclude themselves as if they were infectious always on the outside looking in let us pray lip-service to so much brutalised innocence so much butchered innocence so many broken children so many lost children on Nauru, on Lampedusa, Manus Island, on the Turkish boarder, the Lebanese border, the Gaza Strip, the Calais Jungle, on inflatables floating in the Mediterranean*

*let us pray for all the dry-drunks white-knuckling it and the wet-brains hugging their bottles for the executed Chinese criminals and dissidents and their harvested organs, for the prisoners in North Korea's secret prison camps,*

*and*

*when the bells peal at the sacred heart for another dead junkie pray for all the carnals and the venals and the mortals for all the excesses and obsessions*

*and fetishes*

*when the bells peal at the sacred heart for another dead junkie pray for all those whose lives are a meditation on the dark hopeless days between the crucifixion and the resurrection when nobody had yet prayed the lord's prayer when nobody had yet spoken the golden rule and let us pray an extreme prayer for those who in these latter days have forgotten as if they never knew the words*

*let us pray for the self-funded retirees suffering relevance deprivation and echo-chambereffect confirmation bias, the mumanddad investors with bill-shock in the grip of tax-bracket creep*

*etcetera etcetera etcetera*

*and let us pray for the ramraiders, the homeinvaders for the whitecollarcriminals and the spreekillers for the spindoctors and the nailsculptors for the corporate-merger-logo-graphic-redesigners for the televangilists in their megatemples the for all the inspirational speakers and their networkers who fill so many yappyppyappy rooms full with that clapclaphahahappy feelgood factor*

*for all those ascending to a prozac heaven and all those crashing from a serotonin sky let us pray for all the abrasives those who go against the grain cross counter to the current who have cut themselves on the bias pray for all those lovely skirts that flair and let us pray also for all those who go with the flow all the go-alongs-to-get-alongs*

*for those ingesting unknown substance, old ladies who sit perfectly dressed in the arm-chair in front of their open doors waiting in case a visitor might come calling, watching for the postie, the neighbour's wave, the man reading the water or gas metre, for the feral animal shooter strategizing the serious smarts he needs to kill that smarter-than-smart big old granddaddy of a granddaddy feral pig, for those displaying weaponised victimhood, for those who poke their sleeping-dog ex-lovers and watch them go from dog to wolf, for those who let their ex-lovers lie fallow-floating in their seagrass beds, for those caught out cheating via pocket-phone mishaps, for the scammer psychics spruiking their Barnum Statements and Rainbow Ruses,*

*and let us pray finally and most fervently and ferociously for the unredeemable*

Kenneth Nolan is an award winning playwright and poet from Blanchardstown in Dublin. He is one of the successful playwrights selected for Scripts Playwriting Festival 2019. He is the Founder/Director of 'The Merg Sessions', a popular poetry and prose showcase event. Kenneth's poetry has been shortlisted for the 'Bailieborough Poetry Prize'; he has been shortlisted twice for the 'Jonathan Swift Award'. In 2012 he won first prize for poetry in the 'CDVEC Cultural Awards'. He is a regular contributor of prose to 'Scum Gentry Alternative Arts Magazine'. His work has also featured in: Van Gogh's Ear, Flare, Brilliant Flash Fiction, Head-space, A New Ulster and Creative Talents Unleashed. Currently Kenneth is studying philosophy as a mature student at Maynooth University.

## TRANSFORMATION SONNET

The smile of a treacherous beauty queen  
 Clips the wings of twenty-two turtle doves  
 Returned letter from unrequited love'  
 Makes her titter, the salacious old quean  
 A shock to the world, a bad Captain Kirk  
 Clarity to vagueness future concern  
 Bovine depression – the milk's on the turn  
 Sketches, of an empty modern artwork

Strength shows through mercy, vision from the blind  
 Lethargy dissolves, leaders show courage  
 Winter to summer darkness becomes bright  
 Birds in song, a positive state of mind  
 False prophet banished, all the calves flourish  
 Jezebel requites, afternoon delight



Kenneth Nolan



## THIRTEEN

Golden-red leaves covered the street like an autumnal  
Welcoming mat. Tom and Ruth trundled through the doors, past  
The stone pillars of the court house. The jolt, from the galled  
Mob turned the atmosphere sharp-wintery cold. The van  
Accelerated through the gate, chased by angry men  
And women thrashing wildly at it. Raging faces,  
Hitting out with fist, foot, malediction, and any  
Available debris. Ruth stood rigid; repulsed at  
The sight of a pensioner spitting towards hell, the  
Contents of the old woman's throat, there for all to see

The man being driven away with haste to spend the  
Next twenty years of his life in prison is called Dave  
He is a sixty year old property consultant,  
His friend's describe him as: "quiet and unassuming"  
He was well-liked in his community; unknown to  
The law just one year before. Now he was convicted  
On seven counts of child molestation. Ruth had known  
This despicable degenerate her entire life

When the crowd eventually dispersed, replaced by  
Onrushing silence; Ruth lost the feeling in her legs  
Tom clasped her arm before she hit the ground, manoeuvring  
Her down a side-street and into the first café on  
The next unfolding street. 'Two coffees please'. Tom bought a  
Double-chocolate brownie, he urged Ruth to eat it  
'Sugar intake will help replenish your energy'  
She refused; too enraged to think, her stomach churning

'Why were all those idiots chasing and walloping  
The prison van. What's the point? I didn't recognise one  
Single-face, and none of them ever knew my father'  
'It's just what people do, don't let it get under your  
Skin. Your father got what he deserved, he's out of our  
Lives for good now. We must stay strong for Clara. She has  
Been through a terrible ordeal. Far more than any  
Thirteen year old child should ever have to deal with. She's  
Going to need her Mum and Dad, now more than ever'



Liz McSkeane born in Scotland of Scottish and Irish parents and has lived in Dublin since 1981. She is an award-winning novelist, poet and short story writer: her début novel, “Canticle”, was a winner in the Irish Writers’ Centre/Greenbean Novel Fair of 2016; in 2011, she was an IWC Lonely Voice winner and in 1999, she won the Hennessy New Irish Writer of the Year. Liz has three poetry collections and has published short stories and poems in many journals. More information about her work can be found on her website, <https://www.elizabethmcskeane.com/> and from Turas Press, <https://turaspress.ie/> the small, independent press she set up in 2017. Since then, Turas Press, published ten books, with a further three scheduled for 2020. In addition to her literary work, Liz is an educational consultant. She holds a PhD in Education and consults on education policy and practice for organisations in Ireland and Europe.



## LESSONS

Mrs. Gordon was nearly crying and she wasn’t even a catholic. Mam was doing the ironing when the news-flash came on and she burned a big hole in daddy’s blue shirt. And it wasn’t even his work shirt, it was one he wore on Sundays but mam still didn’t notice until there was a bit of smoke and a burny smell and she just went on looking at the television and she didn’t even sit down.

Emergency Ward Ten wasn’t coming on tonight. It wasn’t fair. She was just starting to greet when somebody knocked on the door.

“Get that.”

And mam didn’t even say to stop crying, she just switched off the iron but she still had it in her hand and she kept on standing there, watching the telly.

It was Mrs. Gordon from three up. Mrs. Gordon and mam were sort of friends. Mam said she would be forever grateful until the end of her days for everything that Mrs. Gordon had did for her when the baby died whatever baby that was and Mrs. Gordon said she could never repay mam for getting St. Anthony to find her wages that time she lost her purse when she came into mam roaring and crying and mam said, how much is it and Mrs. Gordon said two pound ten, it’s all we’ve got for the week and mam said, if you promise St. Anthony a half a crown I think you’ll find your purse will turn up. So Mrs. Gordon did and she found her purse and she gave mam the half crown and mam put it in the right box in the chapel because if you don’t pay your debts to St. Anthony he’ll make you lose the thing he found for you. And mam had to do it, not Mrs. Gordon because protestants haven’t got St. Anthony so if they lose their keys, too bad.

So they were sort of friends but sometimes they weren’t. Sometimes Mrs. Gordon didn’t take her turn at washing the close. Mrs. Gordon had two big boys and a wee girl and a wee boy and sometimes the big boys and Mr. Gordon all got a fish supper on their way home from their work and quite often they dropped the newspapers all greasy from the chips right at the bottom of the stairs.

“For me to clean up,”

Liz McSkeane

Then mam would boil up a bucket of hot soapy water and take it out to the close and get down on her knees with the scrubbing brush. And when she was finished she'd slap the floor cloth against the wall as if she'd quite like it to be somebody's head.

"She's got enough on her plate keeping them weans out of his road."

Daddy had went around to the Black Cat café to phone for the polis one night when Mrs. Gordon came to the door with a bruise on her cheek. So mam brought her in and gave her a cup of tea but by the time the polis came Mrs. Gordon had changed her mind and went back up to her place three up.

"What else can she do, in the long run?"

And mam said, right enough. And it was a good while before Mrs. Gordon spoke to mam after that.

Mrs. Gordon said he was the best thing that had happened for the catholics ever.

"It wasn't only the catholics that voted for him."

Mrs. Gordon said that was right, he was a man of the people.

"He saved the world. Remember how he made them submarines turn back?"

Mam did. The Russians were coming and all the mams and some of the daddies as well were waiting at the school gates one playtime waiting for the boys and girls to come out so as they could take them home. There was going to be a Third World War. But he made the submarines turn back so there wasn't.

"Mam?"

"Yes pet."

"Did they shoot him because he was a catholic?"

Mrs. Gordon laughed. Mam went red.

"Don't be daft."

But a lot of things happened to you for being a catholic. You couldn't go to the wee school on Burghead Road, you had to go to St. Constantine's miles away through the Elder Park. Some people called you a catty-cat and then you shouted back proddy-dog. When you did that sometimes the big boys chased you. One time she got found out calling Andrew Gordon a proddy-dog when they were playing in the back close. She got into a big row for that.

"He called me a catty-cat first but."

"Doesn't matter."

"He started it."

"Don't answer back."

"He was going to hit me."

"You're not to hit people either."

"If he hits me first but."

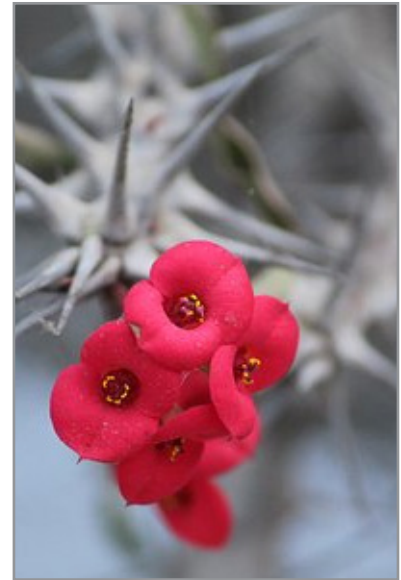
"You're not getting into fights. It's common as ditchwater, girls fighting."

And daddy said you should simply turn the other cheek like gentle Jesus meek and mild. But look at what happened to him.

"And what was that?"

Father De Cecco had a long black coat and he wore thick glasses with black rims. He looked like Fearless Fly. Sometimes at playtime he waited behind the green railings where the chapel was and asked the boys and girls their catechism.





“He got crucified. And scourged. He got a crown of thorns put on his head. All because he turned the other cheek.”

That’s what Mrs. Maguire told them in their First Holy Communion class.

“Isn’t that right?”

“Sort of.”

“So how come I have to turn the other cheek?”

Father De Cecco coughed a bit.

“Do you know your Commandments? Number Five?”

She had to think for a minute.

“Honour thy father and thy mother?”

“Very good.”

Then Father De Cecco dipped into the big pockets in his cassock and dug out a penny carmel and stuck his hand through the green railings and gave it to her.

Mrs. Gordon was sitting down beside mam. They were drinking tea and watching the television.

“Away out and play hen.”

Mam gave Mrs. Gordon a dirty look because it was after half seven and she was hardly ever let out to play at night.

“Put your hat and mittens on,” mam called and she ran out into the close.

It was nice being out at night. It was dark and the street-lamp beside the close made a big pool of light outside the living-room window. If you breathed hard you could make a cloud with your breath. The frost was sparkly on the pavement and the lights from the new Tunnel that went all the way under the Clyde lit up where the wood yard used to be across the road.

There were still a few wee ones sitting on the wall outside the close. Andrew Gordon was there too. Andrew Gordon was a pain in the neck and so was gentle Jesus meek and mild because it was his fault she couldn’t hit Andrew back or even call him a proddy-dog when he pinched her. So she just talked to the wee ones instead.

“Do yous want to play a game?”

Nobody said no and they were all sitting in a row so the best thing was to be the teacher. She stood in front of them with one hand stretched out and the other one on her hip.

“Sing this,” she told them.

“I’m a little teapot big and stout.

Here’s my handle.”

She put one hand on her hip to make the handle.

“Here’s my spout.”

She stuck the other arm out and pointed her hand at the ground to make the spout. They all sang it. They all knew it, even the arms. She’d learned it on her first day at school so maybe they did as well.

“I bet yous don’t know this one”.

She stood up straight and put one hand on her stomach and the other one on her forehead.



“In the name of the father.”

She kept her hand on her stomach and pointed the other one at the middle of her chest.

“And of the sum.”

She put that hand on her left shoulder.

“And of the holy.”

She put the same hand on her right shoulder.

“Goat.”

She joined her two hands together in front of her stomach.

“Amen.”

Then she did it all again. The wee ones said it after her, Andrew as well.

“That’s not bad. Have yous done this before?”

The wee ones shook their heads.

“That’s because yous are still too wee. Yous’ll get it next year in the First Holy Communion class.”

“No they won’t,” Andrew said.

“Everybody gets it.”

“They won’t.”

“Are you playing or what?”

“Aye but...”

“Then stop interrupting. I’m the teacher so you have to do what I tell you. Say and of the holy goat amen.”

“And of the holy goat amen.”

“That’s ok. Now we’ll do the arms.”

They were just starting on the arms when Mr. Gordon, Andrew’s daddy, turned the corner. He had his bunnet on and he was walking slowly and his shoulders were bent. When he passed under the street light at the end of the road the shiny patches on his donkey jacket went all glittery. He lifted his head up and looked at them but he was still a wee way away. Then he came right on up to the close and he just stopped and listened for a minute.

“What’s going on here?”

He had a wee sharp face and he scrunched it up when he was talking.

“Are yous all deaf?”

Nobody said anything.

“I asked you a question.”

He was looking straight at her. He grabbed her arm. She giggled a bit. But it wasn’t because she thought something was funny.

“Nothing Mr. Gordon, I was only teaching the wee ones a song Mr. Gordon.”

Mr. Gordon's face scrunched up some more. He took hold of her other arm and he shook her a little bit. Nobody had ever hit her or tried to shake her, well maybe Andrew but never a grown-up except for the time daddy went to give her a smack and she skipped out of the way and he missed and hit mam instead and the two of them had a big fight. "Don't you ever lay a hand on that child again."

And dad said sorry, he didn't know his own strength. So when Mr. Gordon took a hold of her she got a fright. He looked at her for a minute and then he let go of her.

"I'm going to be having a word with your father."

He made a grab for Andrew and Andrew tried to duck but Mr. Gordon was too quick. Andrew sniggered. But he didn't look as if he thought something was funny either.

"Get up them stairs."

When they went away nobody said anything. Some of the wee ones looked like they might be going to greet. Andrew was in trouble with his daddy and now Mr. Gordon wanted to get her into a row for something as well. She was just thinking that it was about time to finish the game when one of the wee ones put her hand up.

"Please miss?"

"Yes chicken."

"My daddy says there's a man that got shot on the telly."

"Yes pet. Emergency Ward Ten's not on tonight."

"Please miss, why did the bad man get shot?"

"He wasn't a bad man pet. He was a catholic."

"Was it a protestant that shot him, then?"

"Probably."

Then the wee ones got called in and she waited out there for a little while looking at the sparkly frost on the pavement and the street lamps pooling light and the moon that had come out from behind a cloud and she wondered how she knew, but she did know, that it would be a long time before she'd be let out again to play in the dark.





Lorna Shaughnessy was born in Belfast and lives in Co. Galway. She has published three poetry collections, *Torching the Brown River*, *Witness Trees* and *Anchored (Salmon Poetry)*, and a chapbook, *Song of the Forgotten Shulamite* (Lapwing). Her work was selected for the *Forward Book of Poetry*, 2009. Her poem, 'The Dual Citizen' was joint winner of the Poems for Patience Award (UHG/Cúirt) in 2017. Her theatre-piece, *The Sacrificial Wind*, based on her 'Aulis Monologues' (*Anchored*), was staged in the Cúirt International Literature Festival in 2017 and the Heaney HomePlace in 2018. She was awarded an Artist's Bursary by the Arts Council of Ireland in 2018. She lectures in Hispanic Studies in NUI Galway, and is also a translator of Spanish and South American Poetry. Her translation of Manuel Rivas', *The Mouth of the Earth* (Shearsman Press) was launched in March 2019. Her fourth collection will be published in 2020.



## AMERICAN RED

*For Anne Reilly*

They hid dresses and dancing shoes in the byre,  
slipped out the window to cycle to dances, cheeks rouged  
with dye rubbed from *The Catholic Messenger*.  
The boy who dated one paid her sister's way too,  
but when a local farmer called to the house  
with his Sunday clothes and face, she hid in the parlour.

Instead, she followed her eldest sister to New York,  
forsaking nettles, wild strawberries and high nellies  
for a gloved life of polished mirrors and lacquered nails.  
Companion to an heiress on Fifth Avenue, she saw to it  
that drawers were filled with freshly scented linen,  
stockings and silk slips.

The parlour clock that came with her mother's dowry  
kept time in her head. When Babs passed away  
she came back alone, to buy her own house in the town  
and fill its drawers with scented linen, stockings, silk slips.  
She listened for familiar voices after morning Mass;  
fewer now, perhaps, than she had imagined.

Her lipstick was an unmistakable American red  
with a gloss that often matched her nails; cherry,  
like the glamorous swing coat she wore in the fifties  
when she stepped out, hatted, heeled and groomed,  
and all the doormen on Fifth Avenue saluted.

Lorna Shaughnessy

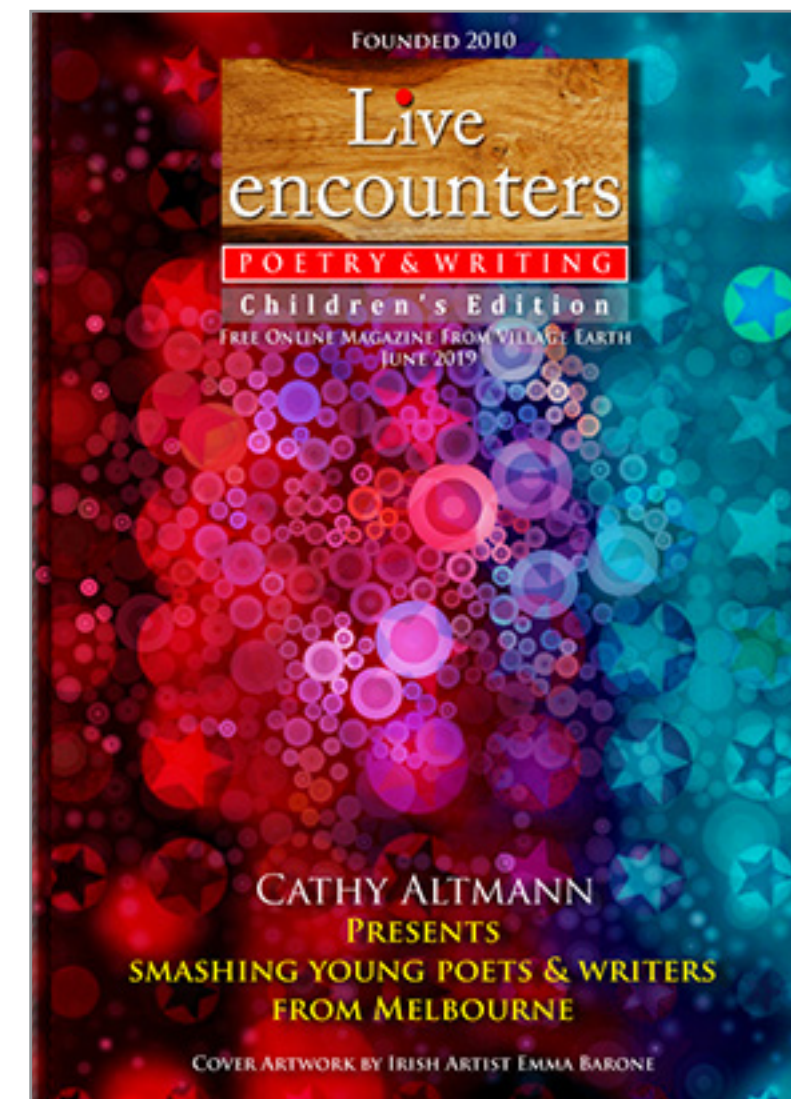
## DALLYING

*For Kathleen Reilly*

Some mornings she could not leave the larks  
but lingered in the fields after the bell sounded  
then walked to school past wild hyacinths, cowslips  
and the neighbour's gate where her sister left a stone  
to tell her they had gone ahead.

It was only when the high school windows were in sight  
that a dread of consequence crept into her bones.  
Having no guile, she owned up right away -  
she had stayed behind in the meadow to listen to the larks;  
there was no other way to say it, nothing else to say.

The silence that followed her confession was long,  
too long for her to read. The teacher removed her glasses,  
glanced up through a window at the breathing sky  
as though trying to remember what it was she had left there,  
then barely audible, said 'Go on now, go and sit down.'



June 2019



Lynda Tavakoli facilitates an adult creative writing class in Lisburn, Northern Ireland. She is the author of two novels (*Attachment* and *Of Broken Things*) and a short story collection (*Under a Cold White Moon*). Her poetry and prose have been broadcast on the BBC and RTE. Literary successes include poetry and short story prizes at Listowel, the Mencap short story competition and the Mail on Sunday novel competition. Lynda's poems have been published in a variety of publications including Templar Poets' *Skein*, Abridged, The Incubator Journal, Panning for Poems, Circle and Square, North West Words, Four X Four, The Honest Ulsterman, A New Ulster, Corncrake magazine and Poethead. She has been selected as The Irish Times Hennessy poet of the month for her poems about dementia, a recurring theme in much of her poetry. Most recently her poems have been translated into Farsi while others have seen publication in Bahrain.

## BREAST TALK

Strange, how we can speak so easily of breasts.

When he supplanted one of mine  
the surgeon's eyes were gloating satisfaction  
at its matching symmetry.

I could only see that baby's suck,  
so slightly left of centre and  
a puckered souvenir of what was lost.

So strange it is, how easily we speak of breasts.



Lynda Tavakoli





## SANDWICHED

Between a womb throb  
and a warming heart,  
the float of waiting  
in a milked cocoon

push then  
towards the amniotic rush  
of spasmed light

pulling, pulling  
from the dark inside  
towards the chilled enigma  
of this different life.

## INCEPTION

Earth's tautness tingles like an acned curse,  
the empty stomach of her hunger  
rumbling on ocean tides, lapping tears on  
sterile shores.

She mourns her rugose beauty,  
the contoured history that moulded her  
filched by the botoxed plumpness of a  
promised immortality.

For this is the new world, a death-wish world  
wallowing in the pleasures of its own destruction  
and flattering itself with the poisons  
of an acid reflux kiss.

But underneath the surface of her skin  
and far below that barborygmus core,  
earth awaits the stirring of  
a sleeping seed.

For the end finds a beginning in  
its final breath when all that is left,  
all that is left, is the vagitus of  
a waiting world unborn.



## IN OMNIA PARATUS

This is how it used to be,  
the unknown still a gift,  
its treasures taste-touched  
upon our waiting tongues.  
The sky was then  
a spill of cerulean blue  
and the promise of us  
ignited me like a spark.

Odd for me to think of it  
with everything that's  
happened in between.  
How life can shrug its  
shoulders at the past  
knowing that what matters now  
is how you'd always jump for me  
and me for you.

## DENOUEMENT

Here is the scent of roses  
on a White House lawn,  
where summer sunshine  
smiles upon the good  
and on the bad  
and on the dark souls  
of the unseeing, where  
truth becomes subterfuge,  
spreading onto unsuspecting  
streets in black or white  
with nothing in between.  
Here is truth renouncing itself,  
to finish where it started  
among the dead heads  
of the roses' fading scent  
upon a White House lawn.

Throughout her work Marion has tried to challenge the politics of representation through a poetics of resistance – in poetry, (third body Whitmore Press 2018; *Fragments from a paper witch* Salt 2008, a finalist in the 2010 Adelaide Festival Literature Awards: Innovation), novels (the most recent of five being *konkretion* UWAP 2013), playscripts, and memoir (The Man on the Mantelpiece UWAP 2018). Her novels have been shortlisted for major Australian awards and twice for the Canada-Australian Prize, with *Not Being Miriam* winning the WA Week Prize for fiction back in 1988. Her critical monograph *Poetic revolutionaries* (Rodopi 2014) explored intertextuality and subversion. She supervises graduate writing projects at Deakin University.



## SLEEP OF THE OLD SHE-WOLF

sky's turned to dirty ice  
– she's still out on the plank  
where I drove her in the dream  
of the pirate knives

the headless body I dragged  
from the waves  
is my own

(pall bearer / caul bearer

this need to cast off  
affliction to denude  
& redraft but there

is no blank sheet

(don't mention the mustard  
the anecdote so trivial  
that started it all

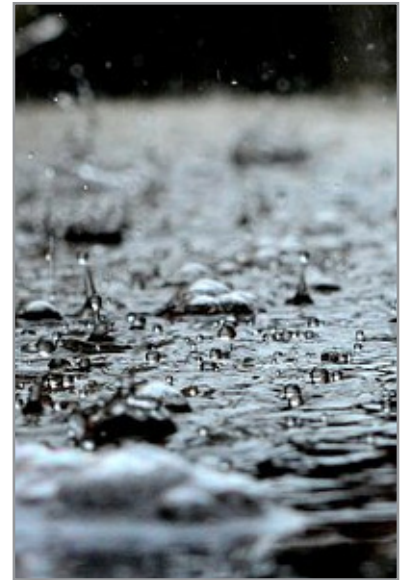
I hear her pleas her promises now  
the clothesline where it flutters –  
the threadbare damask tablecloth  
I rolled as ersatz pillow those nights  
we'd bought wine & spent our fury  
& I slept out on the camper's mat  
under the sheepskin coat from Nellie  
the *Pied Noir* who at seventy  
still mourned the loss  
of *l'Algérie française*

Marion May Campbell

*continued overleaf...*

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## SLEEP OF THE OLD SHE-WOLF *contd...*

Nellie's Siamese cat rarely left  
her invalided lap  
their four eyes hives of life  
Nellie's amber Jeannot's blue  
but there were topics I knew  
I must not broach beyond her boast –  
*Algeria didn't exist before*  
*we went in there & when*  
*I contemplate the dereliction –*

I mouthed *of course not –*  
*we know that borders*  
*are a fiction*

yet under Nellie's sheepskin I  
still lie grey she-wolf  
& *getting orn* as they say

the damask on the line is the  
shredded remainder of my grandma's  
aspiration – *a little finesse*  
she was widow of the eleventh son  
of David Gordon who did time  
for larceny & fraud  
& especially for abandon  
of wife & kids for drunkenness

the one crime Grandma avowed  
since that showed taste  
was stealing the design of a Cobb & Co  
coach & selling it off as his own  
to some dignitary in Geraldton

I draw my criminal descent  
as leaf by leaf the Fuji  
apple tree sheds

for winter's slow crawl  
& rain tinkers the roof metal  
through Joni Mitchell's far-spaced guitar notes

*(Amelia she mourns*  
*it was just a false alarm*

her hopeful gestures planting  
eggplant planting zucchini the curved  
gravel paths she bordered with bentwood  
reproach me for this helpless  
determination to leave

at the tram stop I see myself  
in the woman with  
tan hatchet profile the bleached  
hair & galactically white hose  
her eyes rivets against the cold  
under the shelter's inverted L-glass

or else I become the old  
guy baring his false enamels

(the returns to tenderness  
she reproaches me with  
as if the current cold war rendered all  
kindness in rearview a lie

*continued overleaf...*

© Marion May Campbell

SLEEP OF THE OLD SHE-WOLF *contd...*

but perhaps I'd rather be  
this one with horizontally  
fanned orange frizz topped  
by the startling  
optimism of red bow

& all of us tapping  
sticks or leaning to future frames  
on the chewing gum-spotted pavement

(to go or to stay  
*can an old woman*

the tram has come

(or might I sing like Nina Simone  
will I find my love today

other riders hijack this heart  
as the tram brakes squeal & the driver  
nods as one after the other mounts the step  
– *didn't reckonise me did ya – lost ten kilos!*  
– *like me new tatt love?*  
– *you know that Malaysian man*  
*who served in the Portuguese restaurant*  
*on Johnson St? he bought*  
*new knickers, socks & shirt each day*  
*because – you know – cheaper than the laundry*

*he slept in the pantry but every*  
*few days he'd drive back to the second*  
*wife's flat – his first marriage*  
*was to the Welsh cellist – she swung*  
*a golf club at him – that's why I have*  
*a scar here he'd say*

(is it forever the same wound  
intensified  
as Dylan Thomas wrote  
*after the first death*  
*there is no other?*

I remember the quicksilver  
exclamatory being loved  
as a child & betrayed  
in a book – to have genius  
is to be marked by enthusiasm  
to be en-*thoused* to have  
some sort of god in you  
or the principle of *thou* as beloved

(to have *breath* as Luce Irigaray says  
to be full of vowels  
& liquid light the name of love  
irrigates is full of vowels  
*u-i-i-ah-ai*

is the wound perhaps an aperture  
to host the *thou*

& now the cry the chained  
animal howl all through the night suburb  
over the improbable emerald lawns –  
answering sheep or she-wolf both

*continued overleaf...*

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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. She's a member of the Writers' in Schools Scheme with Poetry Ireland and has edited several anthologies of children's poetry including the *Eurochild* anthology of children's poetry and artwork. Her forthcoming collection *There Are Only a Few Things* will be published by Salmon Poetry in 2022.



## CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

*for Waad al-Kateab*

Her daughter Sama (Arabic for sky)  
was born in Aleppo, in a hospital  
founded by her father -  
The paediatrician who delivered her  
was killed four months after the birth.  
Her father Hamza in just twenty days  
carried out 890 operations and  
cared for over 6,000 wounded people.

In a close-up, lingering intimacy  
the sadness of hospital staff  
barely aware of the camera rolling.

Mary Melvin Geoghegan

## BEFORE WE LEFT FOR THE HOLIDAY

Everyone said Marseille was dangerous  
but, apart from the graffiti everywhere  
there was no hint -  
On the train to Aix en Provence  
there was a feeling before the diversion.  
In the town underwhelmed  
and suddenly there's a stampede  
with the Gilet Jaune pouring in  
and the veneer is shattered..

Away from the heat in the Musee Granet  
we shelter under Cezanne's Sainte-Victore(1890).  
And round the corner a tiny painting  
by Fabienne Verdier genuflects to an earlier  
Simon Marion's Petit Sang du Christ(1490).

In a tomato red splash of blood  
against a living background.

## AND STILL THAT LIFE IS THERE IN ME

close to the Roscommon border.  
There's always a pull -  
crossing over into the return  
where four generations  
have lived and are buried.  
And still that life is there in me  
as the kitten my grandmother gave  
leaps from the page, stroking a longing  
in a gentle purr -  
the anticipation of recognition.



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## HE'S UPSTAIRS WRITING A BOOK

*for Peter*

with the sun blazing in  
rocking on a chair  
at the same desk  
he studied for the leaving Cert.

Though, this time -  
the subject is democracy  
there's a feeling he'd rather  
be wrestling with anything else.

I've slipped back into old ways  
searching the freezer for dinner  
banana bread in the oven  
and gathering up wet towels.

The book will be published next year  
he keeps thanking me  
but, I've already had a reward  
in his keeping the head down.

## ORDINANCE (2018)

by Damien Hirst

Perhaps, in a manic impulse -  
the artist caught the butterfly wings  
with colours never mixed on a palate.  
He assembled those hypnotic rings.

Iridescent, at the centre of each orbit  
all the intricacies of the universe  
concentrated in a solitary yellow butterfly.  
Almost, as a cosmic mandala  
in a staggering expression of light.

Fresh from the atlas of waiting to be celebrated  
beyond all prejudice  
just awe -

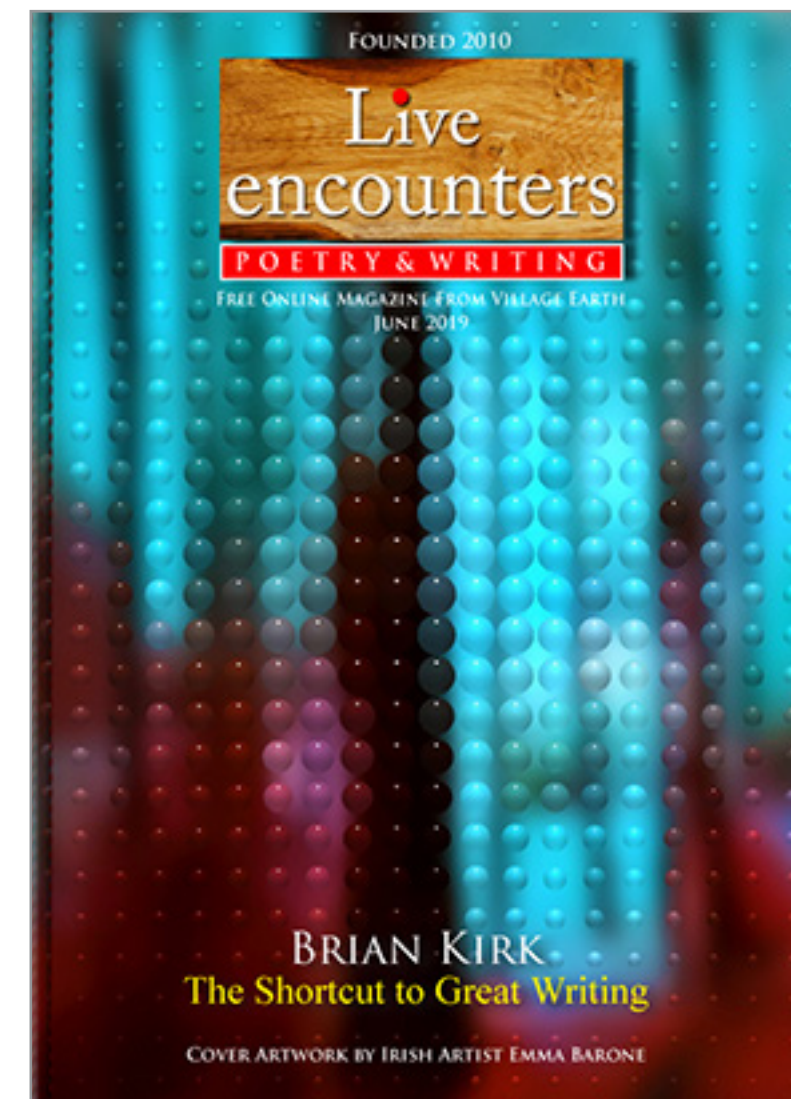


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## THE 'CLOTH OF SILVER' FRAGMENT

A faded piece of fabric  
was found hanging on a wall  
in the tiny rural parish church  
of St. Faith, Bradon, England.  
Made from the finest chamblet silk  
woven with strips of beaten silver  
with exquisitely embroidered plants,  
flowers, stags, dogs and butterflies.  
Hinted at the only possible owner - Elizabeth 1  
who on feeling threatened  
by younger women at Court ordered  
the 'cloth of silver' - the gown  
costing more than a Tudor mansion  
for an aging monarch to carry  
round.



June 2019

Michael Durack lives in Co. Tipperary, Ireland. His work has appeared in journals such as *The Blue Nib*, *Skylight 47*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *The Cafe Review* and *Poetry Ireland Review*. Publications include a memoir in prose and poems, *Saved to Memory: Lost to View* (2016) and a poetry collection, *Where It Began*, published by Revival Press in 2017. With his brother Austin he collaborates on a programme of poetry and guitar music and they have produced two albums, *The Secret Chord* (2013) and *Going Gone* (2015.)



## NO WAY TO SAY GOODBYE

(i.m. Catherine Bailey-Holland)

*It seems so long ago:*  
our coterie of twenty-something singles,  
1973, chalk-and-blackboard novices  
in a Christian Brothers school -  
Marie and Donal, Mary and Sean,  
Jimmy, Catherine, Danny and I.

You lived above a butcher's shop on Market Cross,  
your hi-fi spinning the 'seventies bedsit staple  
of *Tea for the Tillerman* and *Songs From A Room*.  
I took down the words of Nancy from your speakers  
in that flat where a careless housemate sparked a blaze  
and left a trail of smouldering underwear.  
When you mimicked the Kerry tones of Lyreacrumpane  
the staff room lit up; you radiated joy. *It seems so long ago.*

So when I heard the news that brooked no hope,  
of life-support no longer bolstering life,  
I thought about Cat Stevens's *Wild World* -  
*hard to get by just upon a smile* - and Leonard Cohen  
reminding us that *that's no way to say goodbye*.

Michael Durack

## LEAVING ASIDE

For children of The Cold War the world  
 was black-and-white, or white-and-red.  
 We loved America, its White House gleaming;  
 Red Square all grim walls and military hardware  
 (leaving aside those astonishing onion domes.)  
 The West was won by cowboys in white hats  
 (leaving aside the many trails of tears);  
 Siberia was gulags and frozen tundra.

America stood for peace and democracy  
 (leaving aside Hiroshima, Bay of Pigs),  
 and the new Camelot (leaving aside the infidelities)  
 had an Irish-Catholic king and a chic queen.  
 Khrushchev was short and bald and lacking manners  
 (remember that shoe-banging at the UN?)  
 and had he been picked off from a grassy knoll  
 in Baku Onassis would not have courted Nina K.

We feared Soviet spies but approved of US surveillance.  
 Gary Powers had such a handsome face,  
 and the U2 (leaving aside Bono, The Edge & Co)  
 was cool, CIA (soft vowels) good, KGB bad.

Elvis and Nashville, Connie Francis and Pat Boone,  
 Hollywood, Marlon Brando, Norma Jean.  
 What could the USSR offer us (leaving aside  
 Stravinsky, Shostakovich, The *Bolshoi*)?  
 Yes, Sputnik rocked, Laika was a pretty dog  
 and Gagarin had charisma, but when push came to shove,  
 the US won the Moon race pulling up.

At The Olympic Games the USA kicked Russian ass  
 (if you leave aside the wrestling, weightlifting and gymnastics.)  
 Where was the Red Arnold Palmer, Cassius Clay  
 (leaving aside Brumel and Yashin)? Lev Yashin!  
 Even in the black-and white, or white-and-red  
 world of The Cold War we envied them their *Black Spider*,  
 the goalkeeper who in Yevtushenko's poem  
*comes rushing off his line, his Ballon d'Or.*



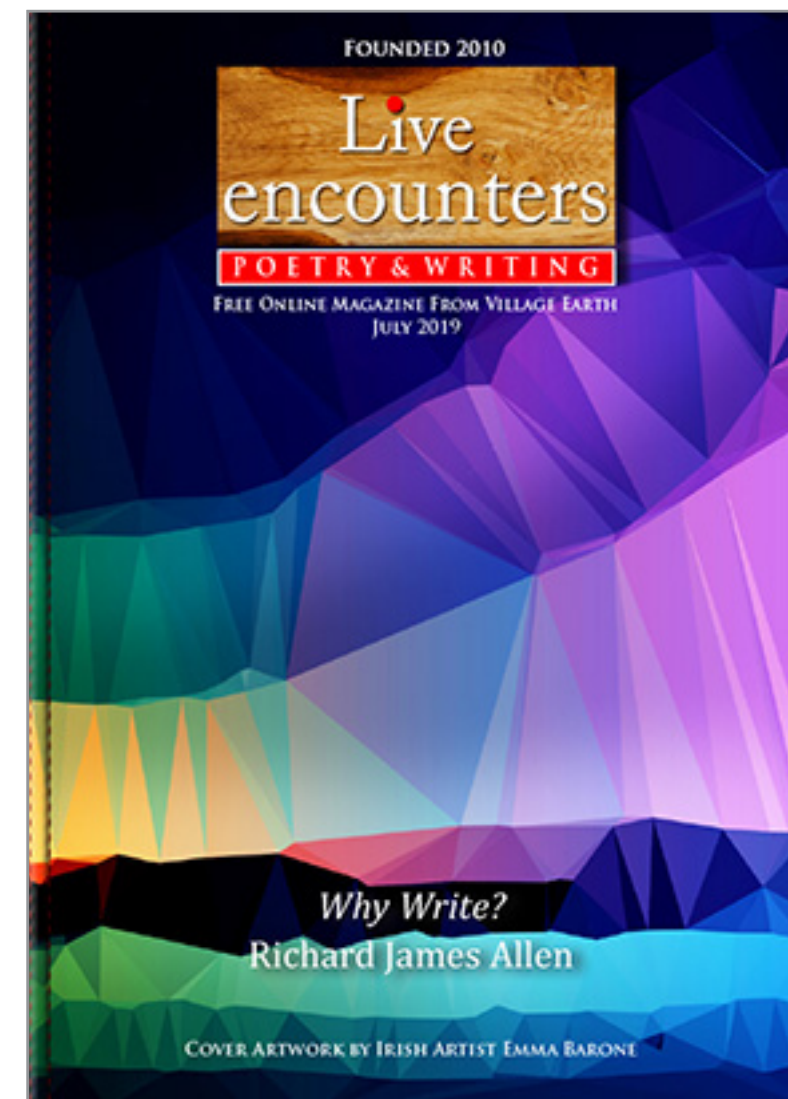


## ROMEO AND JULIET AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

Plucked from a National Guitar, the poignant opening strains of Dire Straits' *Romeo and Juliet* heard for the very first time in a lime-green Datsun Cherry, traffic lights on red at the AIB, late for work but determined to hear the song through.

Half a lifetime later, in the West Choir of The Royal Albert Hall, keyboards laying down the sombre mood, the spotlights trained on a saxophonist blowing grief notes towards the dome, and hushed listeners in stall and circle, loggia, gallery, waiting for Mark Knopfler's plaintive arpeggio to summon a lovestruck Romeo and his startled Juliet from Verona via Manhattan's Upper West Side to Kensington Gore.

No work any more, all the time in the world to catch the story, that begins with a saucy Romeo finding a convenient street light, stepping out of the shade and saying something like:  
*You and me, babe, how about it?*



July 2019

Nessa O'Mahony was born in Dublin and lives there. She won the National Women's Poetry Competition was shortlisted for the Patrick Kavanagh Prize and Hennessy Literature Awards. She has published five books of poetry – *Bar Talk*, (1999), *Trapping a Ghost* (2005), *In Sight of Home* (2009) and *Her Father's Daughter* (2014). *The Hollow Woman and the Island* was published by Salmon Poetry in 2019. Her first work of historic crime fiction, *The Branchman*, was published by Arlen House in 2018.



## THE LOVERS OF ARDOO

They might have thought it safe,  
this final resting place  
of vaults and white angels.  
The padlocks were strong,  
no thought of axe, of picks  
or jemmys that could force  
attentions upon them.

She couldn't know the reward  
for all that waiting  
would be a broken latch,  
a bramble scratch, a road  
built to bring daytrippers  
cutting the tomb off  
from their castellated home.

A glimpse through the grill  
shows coffins like sardine cans,  
lead lids rolled back  
by fortune-seekers.  
Only the voyeurs look for bone.

Still, you can read the stone  
the angel stands upon,  
recoup all that lost love,  
the faith in eternity  
should you take the trouble  
to climb the slope,  
let nettles do their worst.

Nessa O'Mahony

Niall Cahir is a photographer, artist and writer. Based in Birr Co Offaly, born in Cork in 1966. His work is honest, deep and meaningful. Snap-shots of everyday life, thought provoking, with spiritual imagery, strong yet delicate in texture, just like life itself can be.



## A TRUE DEPARTURE

I followed you, beyond the days last breath  
And sat in silent silhouette  
You fell deep in restful mime  
And as you slept, my mind grew calm  
No patience required  
For I would wait Silurian time  
This, I find easy  
As my pulse slows to yours  
And when you awake, and are ready  
Tomorrow, together  
We will travel on  
And make easy on one another  
All the days, long

Niall Cahir



## OXMANTOWN MALL

This morn I trail through foggy drapes  
Where amber steals the stars  
Highlighting dates on pressed reg plates  
Of brand new shiny cars

Despite her mix of modern fix  
She just can't shake the past  
Her Georgian rhyme, her silent mime  
Her structures built to last

I stand alone, by hand-laid stone  
Walls built, by skilled trades-man  
And count the trees, ten thousand leaves  
Where horse-drawn, carriage ran

John Johnson's vaulted ceilings  
Gives way to morning breeze  
As though to brail-read scriptures  
Inscribed on cornice frieze

And silenced teams still build his dreams  
Where muted stones stand still  
Bound banded beams, by plastered seams  
Bore holes by hand-turned drill

A space where time is bowed to  
By beveled natural slate  
Where gothic relic rapture  
Parades toward castle gate

Her Georgian lines, of finer times  
Portrayed on trodden board  
Fanned furnished panes, of coloured stains  
Cast steely crimson sword

And all I need to feed my greed  
To stem my hungry sense  
Is plain old lines, of finer times  
Stands wearing weather hence

A cat decides to walk my pace  
Distance being safer choice  
With fleeting glance she reads my face  
And shares her silent noise

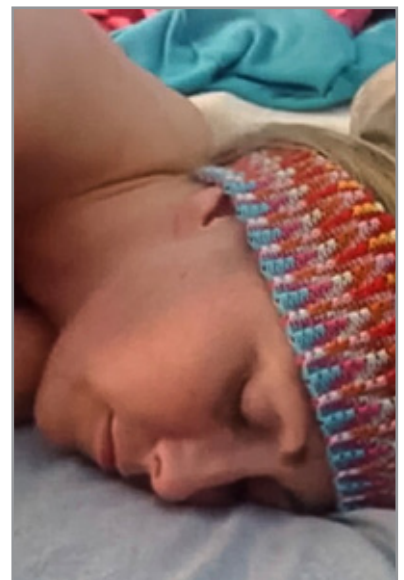
Pillared porch and fanlight  
Panelled fluted void  
Where Greece and Rome are well at home  
Their classic styles employed

Leather square lashed with horses hair  
Make soft the cold hard ground  
Protect and ease the welted knees  
Where bare-hand workers pound

Can't help but feel, these ghosts still kneel  
On sand-bed gritted way  
And lay hand-honed, black cobbled stone  
Boiled bitumen sealing clay

A pinch of craft well practiced  
One ounce of learned skill  
Like Master teaches Trappist  
So too the Craftsman will

Compare all this to vapoured piss  
Black refuse trapped in rail  
Dumped by mindless merchant  
Content in ignorant fail



Moscow born, Nina Kossman is a painter, sculptor, bilingual writer, poet, translator of Russian poetry, and playwright. She is the author of two books of poems in Russian and English as well as the translator of two volumes of Marina Tsvetaeva's poems. Her other books include *Behind the Border* (a collection of stories about her Moscow childhood), *Gods and Mortals: Modern Poems on Classical Myths* (Oxford University Press, 2001), and a novel. She lives in New York. Her website is [www.ninakossman.com](http://www.ninakossman.com).



## SEE HOW THEY WATCH YOU

See how they watch you:  
 a neighbors' dog  
 lying supine at your feet,  
 cats in every alley  
 with a hungry look,  
 a young woman on the ground,  
 with a baby in her arms,  
 they all watch you,  
 they all want something from you,  
 and you think you know very well what it is,  
 yet when you succumb,  
 because something in you doesn't let you walk past them,  
 they ignore your giving hand,  
 as though to teach you a lesson:  
 We don't need your paltry offerings, M'am,  
 because, you see, even beggars have their pride here:  
 this is the land of the truly free, Sister,  
 who value something other  
 than what you can give them.

Nina Kossman

## AGAMEMNON'S SHADOW SPEAKS

Too many thoughts  
mind too small  
crowded there  
inside

he said

Give me more brain  
make me a genius  
or else

I'll steal your cow  
I'll make a war  
I'll kill your men  
you kill mine

said Agamemnon  
or one of the other pot-bellied kings

too many men  
too little bread  
what to do  
let's make war

said he of the big belly  
and of the big mustache  
chief of the walled city

Mycenae

maybe no worse than Troy

our women you know  
they don't run around  
from city to city  
like what's her name  
because of whom this war

they stay put  
inside the walled city  
they don't betray you with a stranger  
better with the next of kin

when they kill you  
it's straightforward  
in a bathtub  
with a fishnet  
you come home from work--and bam!  
no time to regret

no big war  
no Troy  
no army

it's between you and your spouse  
and maybe your concubine  
Cassandra  
why was she underfoot  
she with her prophecies  
so she goes too

not too much blood  
very orderly

then your spouse rules  
with her new spouse  
my next of kin  
we're all blood relatives here

call my slaves  
wash off my blood  
until my bathtub is sparkling clean

I told this story too many times  
feeling tired now

said Agamemnon's shadow





## FAUX TRANSLATION FROM THE AKKADIAN

White upon black,  
 black upon brown,  
 blood upon white,  
 blood upon black,  
 red upon brown,  
 red upon black.  
 All blood is red;  
 only red.

God's color is unknown  
 when God is the unknown.

When gods become disposable,  
 their color becomes known.

When gods are irrelevant,  
 their skin color becomes relevant.

When white god is bleeding,  
 the color of his blood is red;  
 when brown god is bleeding,  
 the color of his blood is red.  
 Only a bleeding god knows  
 his worth in the minds of men.

## UNTITLED -1

Wait  
 till I mold you from clay,  
 (not you, of course -  
 only your likeness)  
 and transplant your soul  
 into this clay face.  
 It was your soul  
 that made you what you were,  
 not your nose,  
 your chin,  
 your cheeks,  
 your forehead,  
 but I will mold them anyway,  
 so your soul feels more familiar  
 in this unfamiliar place,  
 since it needs to settle somewhere  
 after your passing,  
 and what better place for it  
 than this clay mold,  
 although nothing  
 nothing at all,  
 you know,  
 can be as perfect for it  
 as your own body,  
 but now that you are dead  
 and your body is ashes,  
 this mold is the only home  
 for your homeless soul.  
 You know this.



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## UNTITLED - 2

You are a force  
deep inside me  
that doesn't know my name.

(See me throw it into the fire.)

That, deaf to my entreaties,  
wouldn't rescue me  
from a burning house.

(See me throw it into the sea.)

That wouldn't save me  
if I were drowning.  
And if I drowned, it would drown too.

(See me throw it into a forest.)

That wouldn't look for me  
if I were lost in a forest.  
(If I were lost, it would be lost with me.)

See me throw it back into me:

How you dissolve, how you melt away,  
no longer a force,  
just a dead man's soul.

## UNTITLED - 3

You, who are lost,  
who were you then,  
when time stood still  
like a hollow rock,  
where can you find it,  
in what far-flung night?  
You said it was yours,  
time was your god, you said,  
or did you want to say  
that you were its servant?  
But now it abandoned you -  
you are a withered king  
on a solitary throne  
"She is my love, my bride, my very own..."  
Ah, but where is she now,  
your queen, your soul?  
In the ground she lies,  
in a wooden coffin,  
under a heavy stone.



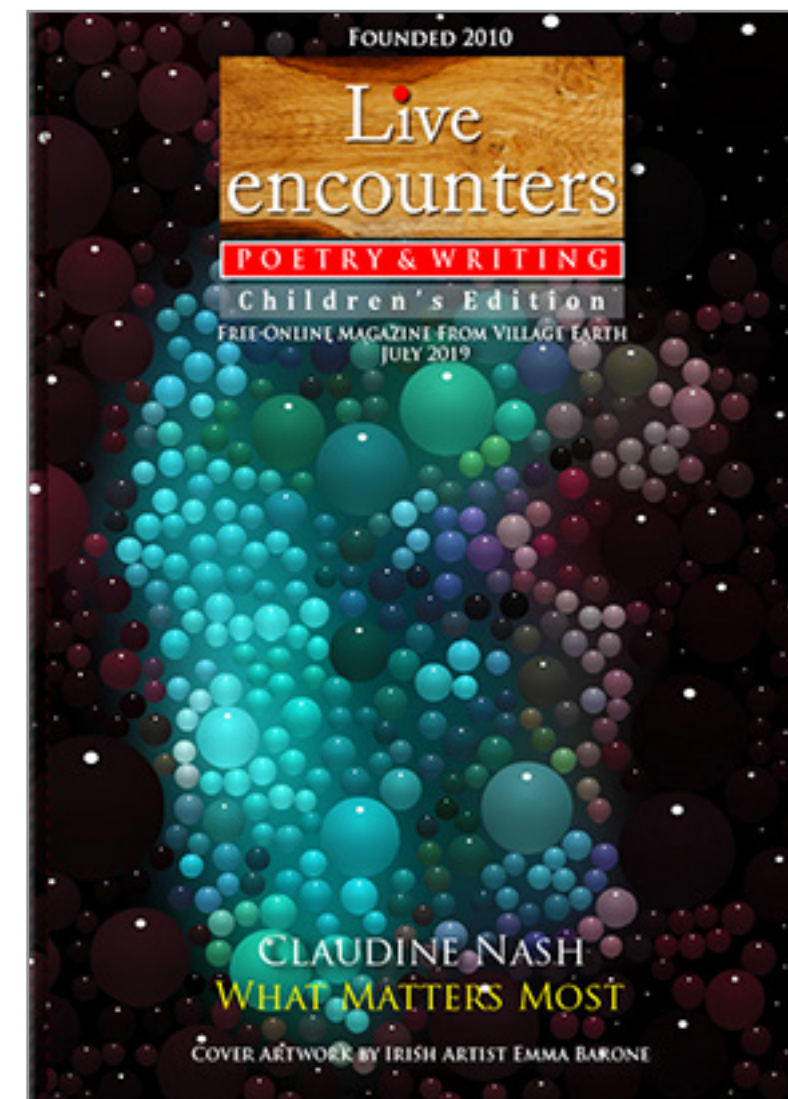
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## UNTITLED - 4

your thoughts flew like butterflies  
over imagined gardens  
your thoughts swayed like sunflowers  
in rhythm with the wind

your thoughts shone eyes like suns  
caught in unpolished copper  
caught in the nets of the evening  
open-mouthed like fish

your thoughts in their speechless balance  
were neither life's songs nor vowels  
they burned their hieroglyphic ambers  
as clear as unborn suns



July 2019



Noel Duffy's debut collection *In the Library of Lost Objects* was published by Ward Wood Publishing in 2011 and was shortlisted for the Shine/Strong Award for best first collection by an Irish poet. His second collection *On Light & Carbon* followed in autumn 2013, with a third *Summer Rain* published in 2016. His poetry has appeared widely, including in *The Irish Times*, *The Financial Times* and *Poetry Ireland Review*, and has been broadcast on RTE Radio 1 and BBC Radio 4. He was the recipient of the Patrick & Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry 2018. His most recent collection, *Street Light Amber*, appeared in autumn 2019.



## WILD CHERRIES

*In Memory of Denis O'Brien*

### i. Prelude

You were a man I never knew  
and never will – one whose life  
mine depends upon, yet you are ghost  
to me, grandfather, dying far away  
across the sea before I was born,  
fading like all others to an imagined past  
that I will never understand or fully grasp.

### ii. Kilsallaghan

O'Brien's Bridge and the stony fields,  
the lands your father and his brothers ploughed,  
their lasting mark upon the landscape  
of their birth, until the Land Commission  
tempted them to leave their old life behind  
with the promise of a better future  
in this newly-minted Nation: a good holding  
far from the wild Atlantic shore  
and the winding roads of County Clare,  
and a farm now in north county Dublin,  
Kilsallaghan as much country back then  
as the lands your father had come from, its soil  
dark and rich and good, but too little of it,  
in the end, for all his sons to prosper by it.

Young you left and went to the city.

Noel Duffy

WILD CHERRIES *contd...*

## iii. Uniform

My mam said you looked as smart  
as a policeman in your dark navy uniform,  
the JJ&S insignia on your cap marking you  
employee of John Jameson & Sons,  
Whiskey Makers since 1781, a good job  
by any measure as you led your dray horses  
down along the banks of the Liffey and on  
to the docklands where the barges waited  
with their cargo of amber, ready to move  
this seemingly inexhaustible bounty  
to the four corners of town and country.

## iv. Music

I will never know your gait or manner  
or how you held yourself as you walked  
into a room or pub, though I heard once  
that you could set the place alight with talk  
or your playing on the fiddle, a Woodbine  
browning your fingers at the tips as it burnt  
down to a butt, a pint of Guinness and a Jemmie  
on the table before you as you played reels  
and jigs at the barroom or kitchen session,  
these places where happiness found you, music  
your one true gift to those you tried to love  
though sometimes failed, you sliding then into the well  
of drink and the sinking regret that fell over you,  
stumbling home late below the Harvest Moon  
rising above the rooftops of these regimented streets,  
no crops to be gathered in this over-filled place,  
just to walk and walk and never reach home,  
the darkness and the dark thoughts descending again  
as if the very stars had died and dimmed to silence.



## WILD CHERRIES *contd...*

### v. Wild Cherries

So, I give you this memory now as passed to me  
 by my mother: how on the first Sunday  
 of summer months you were given the task to take  
 the dray horses out to Kilsallaghan for pasture,  
 a place you came now to only half-think your own,  
 better here though than in the maze of streets of Cabra,  
 chatting instead to farmers in hedge-lined fields  
 discussing the high price of barley and wheat  
 and the burden of Independence on the farming life  
 – though at least the British had started to trade  
 in our beef again, the war forcing them to depend on us;  
 and all the while the farmers' wives fussing in kitchens,  
 giving you punnets of wild cherries and apples  
 to take home with you as a treat for the children,  
 so many the family could feast on for a month,  
 grandmother making jams, sweet tarts and cakes.  
 A time when happiness reigned in the house.

### vi. Memory

I try to fill the gap with fragments, anecdotes  
 and clues, though no concluding image comes  
 to mind to complete my rag-tag picture of you.  
 How we each pass with our dying breath into  
 the foreverness of forgetfulness – like the land  
 you once walked with your brothers so many years before,  
 the hope you felt out there in the wide-open fields  
 fading now to a black and white photograph  
 of another time, a different place; and the stories  
 that may yet still await to add again your human face  
 to those gathered around the family fireplace:  
 this partial and imagined portrait I try make for you  
 – grandfather I never knew.

END



Peter O'Neill is the author of *More Micks than Dicks*, a hybrid Beckettian novella in 3 genres ( Famous Seamus, 2017), *The Enemy*, *Transversions from Charles Baudelaire* ( Lapwing, 2015) and *Dublin Gothic* (Kilmog Press, 2015), among other works. He is currently working on a novel, a sort of homage to Raymond Chandler, while researching *Comment C'est/How It Is* by Samuel Beckett. His academic background is in philosophy and comparative literature. He maintains a blog which he updates fairly regularly.



## BALLYBAA

*"Trahissons, trahissons, la traître pensée."*  
Beckett

...and Molloy stood there in the field  
looking at the shepherd with his flock,  
like some old bollocks. And as he did,  
images of transhumance flooded

his mind. Sweet and gentle tales of  
Cain & Abel and Co. brought about  
a Beethovenian calm, before the storm.  
That is of course, before the fixed con

Moran appeared with his pitiful offspring.  
The pair a travesty on a bicycle,  
lost in a wood una selva oscura.

camped innocently enough there without  
an apparent beast in sight, but for the sheep  
grazing like lambs, before the slaughter.

Peter O'Neill

## AS THE CROW FLIES

The castle and its surrounding estate  
Appear below like the microcosm  
Of a cell taken from a biopsy  
From some human brain tissue.

In the foreground, the symmetrically  
Aligned show gardens with their trimmed  
Maze of hedges, a sign denoting  
Chomsky's notions of innate grammar.

All heralding the enlightenment,  
With its fixations for rational inquiry,  
The Cartesian body, all head and so- called mind.

While around this genteel mass, abundant  
Woods also grow, deeply cavernous,  
Signalling Lacan's laughing subconscious.

## MISTS AND RAINS

*Transversion from Baudelaire*

O end of autumns, winters, springs drenched in mists,  
The seasons of hibernation which I love and inhabit  
Envelope also my brain and my heart  
In a vapourish shroud and a vague tomb.

In the great plains where the southerly winds play,  
Or during the long nights when the weather vane grows hoarse,  
My soul better than in warm times renews itself  
Stretching out its crow-like wings.

Nothing is as gentle to the heart full of funerary things,  
Through which for a long time descend through the wintry times,  
The sickly seasons, Queens of our climates,

As the permanent aspect of your pale darkness,  
If it is not, by a moonless night, two by two,  
Sleeping away the pains on a hazardous bed.



## LUCRETIUS

Your silence envelopes me like a sea,  
Particularly when I sit at the kitchen table.  
It rushes up against me in currents,  
Holding me fast to the leather chair.

Hands bound, arms tied, with duct tape on  
My mouth, I try to cry out but all I can  
Manage to hear is the thin sound of graphite,  
Scripting its way across the sheets.

How long can I thread water like this?  
I have no idea. Like stone I endure,  
Weathering the oncoming waves. Erode.

Our death will be piecemeal. The slow  
Almost imperceptible annihilation of memory,  
Like water dripping, down through millennia, upon stone.

## SANSPERATA

*After Sciola*

Rimbaud called for the systematic  
*Déréglement de tous les sens* – colouring  
The vowels, which you read and later heard,  
Echoing through the stones of the *nuragi*.

The sonority of granite whispers  
To you with all of the tenderness  
And softness of the flesh of the peaches  
Of *Sansperata*, where I wish to hear again

The stony lament in the basalt of the pips  
Embedded in the hill of stone structures  
Echoing above the silence about your lips.

This rock retains walls of sound, its spectre,  
Just as your hands press inwardly upon  
The untraceable braille of love.



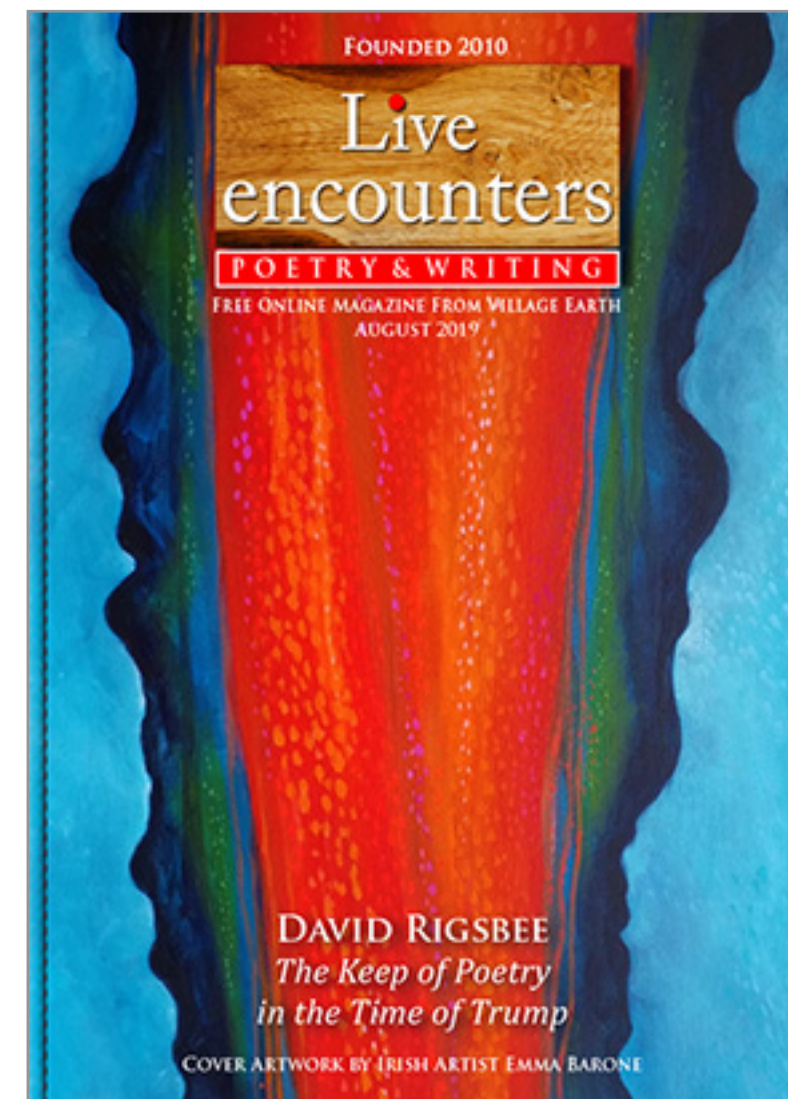
## LYSSISTRATA

Power is fluid, such is Foucault.  
The body being politicised;  
The zones of contention are highly  
Eroticised: the anus, phallus...

And the clitoris, and breasts.  
Such are the hotspots, the fleshy fields  
Of Armageddon. We stand together  
At the frontier, guns in hand.

The tension is fraught with possibility.  
Submission and domination,  
Who gets to rule and in turn be ruled?

Hence our obsession with role play.  
Power is fluid, the body being politicised.  
Your clitoris and breasts, the keys to my deliverance.



August 2019

Polly Richardson (Munnelly) is a Dublin born poet who lives and writes in Meath Ireland with her children and lots of four-legged family members. She is a member of Navan writers group The Bulls Arse, co Meath Ireland. She has been published both nationally and internationally in many anthologies and e-zine under the surname of Munnelly and more recently Richardson. A contributing poet to US based poetry forum Mad Swirl. She is currently working on her first collection of poems.

## GORSE

He plucked them. Careful lip  
curve around yellow head,

teeth displayed barely years -  
full clasp in- between nips.

This giant, delicate touch to ingest  
despite thorning tongue,

muzzle-pout part, curling upper lip  
to intoxicate senses,

revealing unblemished inner pinkness,  
untouched, as new-born,

I injest.

They twitch . Creasing mouth corners  
like crescent moon. A smile,penetrates  
light even into the darkest of crevices,

that drool pools soaking  
chin - grove wobble.  
Almost clownish.  
Almost childish.

Each damp whisker ; receptor, whiter than snow  
sense euphoria, matches



Polly Richardson

*continued overleaf...*

© Polly Richardson

GORSE *contd...*

that eye rarer than \*painite gem fused  
with \*taaefite catch reflections of

summer, blink to flutter-flick forward  
mane over \*forelock out of sight, yet,

that sigh inhales July's nectar. Silking  
nostrils, snorts out complete content,

as ear rotations pause turn, tune to  
hums of nature's hymn.

That hind leg, shifts a rest from right to left.  
Feathers dance in still air, frame balancing hoof,  
toe tip brush- kiss to earth,  
dust swirls dance to swarm the dung flies.

That rump whiting, pinked under hair ,  
glisten. Fuse. Flecking black patches  
as if perfect jigsaw pieces placed precisely ,  
roasted greenish from baking grass roll  
despite swishing tail- swats to nagging gnats,sleep.

That neck muscle toned. Sturdy. Purer than virgins basking, holds  
his head precisely poised at gorse blooming.

White star on ebony forehead runs cosmic nova flare to  
his own signature and stance , this Apollo. Mine.

I ingested, drank him in for this consumption.  
Painted each hooving prance pirouette on inner canvas  
to still itself ,not quiet master piece , yet

for this consumption. Gorse.

I part lip to pluck. Carful curl around yellow head,  
sweetness bites,

prefect calm whispering these whinnies to wind song - carry's of you,  
this ear turns to tune ,your calls, Apollo ,

I lay a lean. This listening shoulder - my eyes trace, follow in  
shift hind to hind, hoof rests my weighted weightless

far removed from fearing fear, those beatings  
till bursting red rivers soaked  
my skeleton, dragging scalded skin.

This trust eventually - my head, these ears,  
your lap, years and gorse.

I sit with river . Hear those distant  
ghosting echoes,  
that gallop now with wind,  
That consumption – his head , my lap  
each time gorse blooms.

I ingested,  
painted him on inner canvas. Almost.

**Authors note:** \*Painite rarest gem, dark chocolate red hues, founded in 1951 by Arthur Charles Davy Pain.  
\*Taaefite: Flecks of Mauve, glass like. Accidentally discovered by Dubliner jeweller in 1940 when he thought he had a collection of spinels.  
\*Forelock – fringe like, part of mane that grows down over horses' forehead, in between ears.  
\*Feathers – thick horse hair that grows out from and down on back of horses lower legs or all over same area semi- covering hooves depending on breed.



## FOR THE LOVE OF SATURDAY SOCKS AND PONDER

To butter toast is an art form,  
the enchantress luring, purrs  
as it spreads it's self ,

never quiet reaches corners.  
never quiet done.  
Solidified solidarity lump till toast touches

or touches toast and bagel let's not go there.  
Sitting in corners of sun slowly leathering  
it's weekendng .

Does it wait to Mumba marmalade, quiver  
at the sight of marmite moulding it's self fuzzy ?  
while B52s bang out Love shack come

Saturday's throw back and  
knife suddenly microphone - this is it - your moment ..  
You ,sock- strut gangster style , splatter buttery

scoop matrix like , it flies , evolution!  
Or does it scream excited glees when sausage  
rolls in breaded blanket as much as belly dances

knowing what's coming ?  
Give a slight squeal before  
head-banged upside down into yellow?

as egg -yolk drips sunrises and fingers sigh glistening  
it's residue from the morning mosh .  
Does it silent protest if just Blueberries preferred, consumed?

as it calls karma on Monday morning madness  
testing your mindfulness,  
as it refuses to budge next time you think toast ?  
Borrows a hole to match moon, ripping precious

as it yogas itself into swirl -clamp - holds pose  
taking each baked crevice with it  
while 4 non blondes belt out What's going on

synchronizing your own mouth blasts

The art form . Buttering.  
Pleading spread,  
best left severed on Sunday  
warming Monday's melt  
and matching socks.



## BIRTH

Delicate web hang from laborious night,  
 catch dew-glistens ,  
 as if that first hand- curl- grip  
 around index finger caress.  
 Birthing dreams burst vigorously  
 as primal pant produce uniquely silk.

As if knowing his  
 newfangled strength survived  
 that last dewy push,  
 when you arrived,

becoming something  
 only mothers know  
 Birthing your self.

For every, for each ripping  
 Contraction force-gripping, taunt pushes beyond  
 frequency's of pain no thresholds hold, surging  
 urge beyond, beyond this body's knowing or control  
 tearing to depths no man dare go for fear death.

You're split.

Woman, mother ,  
 somebody's child still ,  
 stitching bewildered wonder,

skin flaps sag, ribboned rugged,

as if web swatted by novel frumpy fingers  
 flays in wind.

Yet only  
 waves- warmth of suckle  
 eyes to eyes felt ,  
 bursting breasted dams call.  
 Each nipple drenches sustenance ,  
 as that silken thread woven weaves its way  
 comforting infinity.

I leave sapling self amongst the fluid -soaked linen.  
 Lioness now , ready to defend till end of ends  
 as fierce to savagery.

Even when he's  
 swaddled or  
 forever sleeping,  
 still I clasp hand  
 in hand , in each breath birthed.  
 As if delicate web hanging  
 to catch dew- glistens.  
 As if she's chasing shadows  
 as if birthed.



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 Crossways Literary Magazine* 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 awarded third prize in the Jonathan Swift Awards in the same year. She was commended in the Gregory O'Donoghue Awards in 2018 and shortlisted in The Seventh Annual Bangor Poetry Competition in 2019.



## SAOIRSE\*

They're running up Suffolk Street in twos and threes  
fox furs and minks draped around their necks  
full feathered hats held down by blistered hands  
red hot from scrubbing clothes and smashing windows,  
grabbing goods long beyond their reach,  
someone hits piano keys in Switzers window  
clanging notes in mayhem

Short-trouserred boys and rag dressed girls  
stick their hands in glass jarred humbugs  
while eyeing up the apple drops  
ogling the gobstoppers,  
their eyes larger than the yellow *bon bons*  
skating across the chequered floor  
determined munching of macaroons  
blood red jellies smeared across chapped lips  
liquorice rounds clenched in sticky hands,  
the softness of pink marshmallows on tongues,  
makes them stop and sigh  
in the sweet carnage

In the Shelbourne they sip their tea in Gladstone china cups  
silver spoons recline on floral saucers  
shapely fingers poised in *April Violet* air  
and outside,  
the snipers splice the skies  
and patchwork dogs dash with mottled packs  
wild at the frenzy of it all.

Roisín Browne

\*Irish for freedom



## BEYOND MACHINES

clenched fists round over each other  
taut hands never hitting hands  
rise and fall of sinewed forearms  
compact circles, in, out, in, out  
oars kissing ocean  
propelling forward  
pots panning  
nets filling  
as you  
waltz  
in  
water.

## ORCHESTRA

*After Michael Longley*

On this day  
all the colours  
will leave their brittle cages,

fly up and out  
left and right  
all shades, all tones, all notes

all dark will meld to sky dust,  
cup eternal stars,  
burn to become one

like starling murmurations that soar,  
shaping rainbow seas  
in unfettered praise



Rosemary Jenkinson is a playwright and short story writer from Belfast. Her three short story collections are *Contemporary Problems Nos. 53 & 54*, *Aphrodite's Kiss* and *Catholic Boy* (Doire Press 2016). She was the Artist-in-Residence at the Lyric Theatre Belfast and recently received a Major Individual Artist Award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to write a memoir. Her plays have been performed in Dublin, London, Edinburgh, New York and Washington DC. *The Bonfire* was winner of the Stewart Parker BBC Radio Award 2006.



Rosemary Jenkinson

## YOU AND THE BRITBABES: 1997

The final straw comes when the dole has insisted you get reskilled and has drafted you onto an office training course, otherwise known as 'Monkeys can type too!' It is your first morning there and the woman who runs it is conducting a simulated business exercise called 'how to answer the telephone'. When it comes to your turn, you find it very disconcerting that you are sitting five metres away from her and you can see and hear her perfectly without use of the telecommunication medium. You think it's amusing to make up a company called The Girl-U-Like escort agency; she does not. A violently bitter argument ensues between you about the grammatical merits of 'may I help you' as opposed to 'can'.

You decide then and there you are not going back.

That night in your flat you formulate your new career move. You think of some of the most important women in the British economy. You look at yourself in the mirror. Fortunately it is only a small hand mirror and you are spared the full effect of yourself. But you do think you have some potential.

You have been reading in recent weeks about the reported rift in the Spice Girls' ranks and you are ready to exploit it.

Now you know what you must do. The next day, you track down Posh Spice's ex-boyfriend to a small flat in Sheffield which he shares with two shaggy, indeterminate dogs. At first he doesn't seem interested because he is engrossed in watching the Teletubbies, but you impress on him the fact that Posh Spice, or Victoria, is desperately unhappy with her life. Her footballer hasn't turned out the perfect match for her. You tell him you know that deep inside she wants him back because he was the only one who truly loved her for what she once was.

There are tears in his eyes. He will rescue her, he vows, as he runs to get packed.

You haven't told him that the management could be about to ditch her anyway because she is the Boring Spice and she keeps buying dresses from Harvey Nics and generally maintaining a style which is beyond the fiscal capacities of her six-year-old fans, but that doesn't seem important.

A few days later, the tabloids and even the broadsheets (such is the Spice Girls' fame) announce that Posh Spice is leaving the band to marry her unemployed brickie ex-boy-friend.

Phase two of the plan immediately goes into action. You get on a train down to London and go straight to the Spice Girls' offices. I've come to be the new Spicer, you tell two guys. One is besuited, the other looks like he would be more at home picking cockles off a windswept beach.

'What's your image, then?' they ask you, unexpectedly. You thought they, being the image-makers, would take care of all that.

'Brainy Spice,' you say, as it's the first thing that comes into your head, and you waffle something you think appropriate about the patriarchal view of women in history and sisters doing it for themselves.

Mid sentence, you notice they have this look on their face like you've just endorsed Germaine Greer's views on the vasectomisation of men.

'We already have a Scary Spice,' they say to you, perplexed, and suddenly you know you should have said Fluffy Spice, so you say it as an alternative.

'Funky Spice,' shouts out the suited guy, mishearing you. 'That's exactly what we're looking for. Have you got any cool sayings?'

'Shag everything in sight...steal everything that isn't nailed to the floor...don't take drugs, just sell them.' You hope these are something along the right lines, but the two guys aren't even listening any more.

'Great, fantastic fresh attitude,' says the cockle-picker guy. 'I see you already in a silver plunge back jumpsuit.'

'And I see you in a white jacket with the sleeves sewn up,' you tell him.

'No, I see her in paisley myself,' says the suited guy.

'I was thinking more of L.A. myself,' you say.

Looking out the window, it looks like you have just made it in time, because by now there is a queue of nevergonnabes who have the same idea as you stretching round the building three times.

You are sent down the corridor where you are orthodontically and epidermally analysed by a council of style consultants. Fortunately, you look quite young for age thirty. You have always attributed this to the rejuvenating effects of alcohol. One of the women scribbles this theory down onto her notepad.

So you join the monster rich pop princesses and you start travelling the world on a trans-atlantic tide of oestrogen. Life is an endless whirl of film sets, T.V. studios and award nights. Your persona of Funky Spice is an instant hit and you are voted number one in the popularity poll. This does cause a frisson of jealousy within the group, particularly from Sporty who is condemned to wear Adidas and always comes last in the popularity stakes, so much so that during dance practice, she directs a couple of her speciality high kicks in the direction of your head. But you milk your pazzazzy popularity to the full.

In your meeting with Prince Charles, however, you do go a bit far when you ask if you can see his crown jewels and make bad taste innuendos about Buck-King-ham Palace and the royal wee. Your management hauls you in and tells you that the mint sauce of royalty doesn't like to be spiced up. You personally think Charles quite liked it. This is not the first time you have been warned to watch your step. It doesn't escape your notice that laid out on your bed ever morning over the next week are sets of the tackiest, most risible clothes on the market.





Part of your new job consists of trotting off answers for those endless fanzines. You enjoy this. Years of playing at making up your own answers are now paying off (sic):

Top Tip - Never fill your hot water bottle when you are pissed.

Pet Hate - Hamster.

Hate - Hairdressers that have big windows onto the street, so that you can be spotted wearing a perm cap.

Least liked comment - If only I was twenty years younger, love...

Best answer - So what? I'd still be single and you'd still be an ugly bastard.

In fact, everything is going so well, it is a shock when you are asked if you can sing. You certainly can't dance, so you are surprised that they think you might sing. They are arranging an a cappella performance during a press conference to prove we can sing live. You are rushed to remedial singing lessons, but after five days you still sound like a bronchitic budgerigar. By the time the press conference comes round, you have been advised to mime and let the others do the singing. Straight into the song, there's this terrible drone and for a second you wonder if it is you, but to your relief it's coming from Baby Spice. It would be kind to her to say her singing voice resembles that of a spiritualist possessed by the soul of a Native American chief. The press members are so dazed, it takes minutes for them to recover themselves and ask us questions. The first question goes to Scary Spice: Any plans for you and Eric Cantona to settle down?

'No, no,' laughs Scary. 'We're just having some fun at the moment. At my age I'm not into...what's that word that sounds like a type of wood...I forget...'

'Mahogany,' you say, trying to help her out. But for the life of you, you cannot remember the word she means. It worries you. For the rest of the interview you are uncustomarily quiet.

You and the girls go back to your hotel. Truth be told, you are getting rather bored with their company. Scary is sitting on the edge of the bed, thinking up dynamic slogans such as 'reach for the top' and 'go do it, girls'. It's what they call soundbites, she says. Sounds shite is more the term for it, you mutter under your breath. She is contemplating going into politics with her campaign based on 'I've better hair than Tony Blair'.

You don't think someone who thinks an ECU is a bird with a long neck would be ideally suited to run the country, but after all it is up to her.

Ginger Spice is busy body-stencilling to see if she would look good in a full body tattoo and Baby Spice is sewing gingham shelf trims for her mother. How little you have in common with them. Sporty suggests going to visit Robbie Williams in his detox centre and you decide to tag along. Because the hotel is surrounded by hundreds of iconolatrous fans, you have to slide out the window on a zipcord which leads down to a warehouse housing your private limo. You wonder what the distinction is between a groupie and an insane stalker. They all look seriously deranged to you.

One day there is a tiny piece in the paper about how Victoria Posh Adams has just had a baby girl. We are near the end of our whistle-stop live world tour and, amazingly, people now seem to like our new, punky out-of-tune style better than our bland version. Even serious artists like Neneh Cherry and Sheryl Crow are saying hi to us at award ceremonies. We're slowly becoming more herbal resin than bubblegum.

The news about Posh Spice has an extraordinary effect. Ginger Spice phones her up and finds out how happy she is with her new life. Before you know it, Ginger starts to get maudlin and says how she wishes she could be a normal person again. Then Sporty says, 'Do you remember playing football on a Sunday afternoon and then having a few pints and some chips afterwards?' Nobody does, but each is suddenly lost in her rosy memories of the past. All four charter a plane to Sheffield to visit the baby spicelet. Meanwhile, you stay in America leading your noctilucent lifestyle and you go out briefly with an astronaut who's famous for probing the stars.

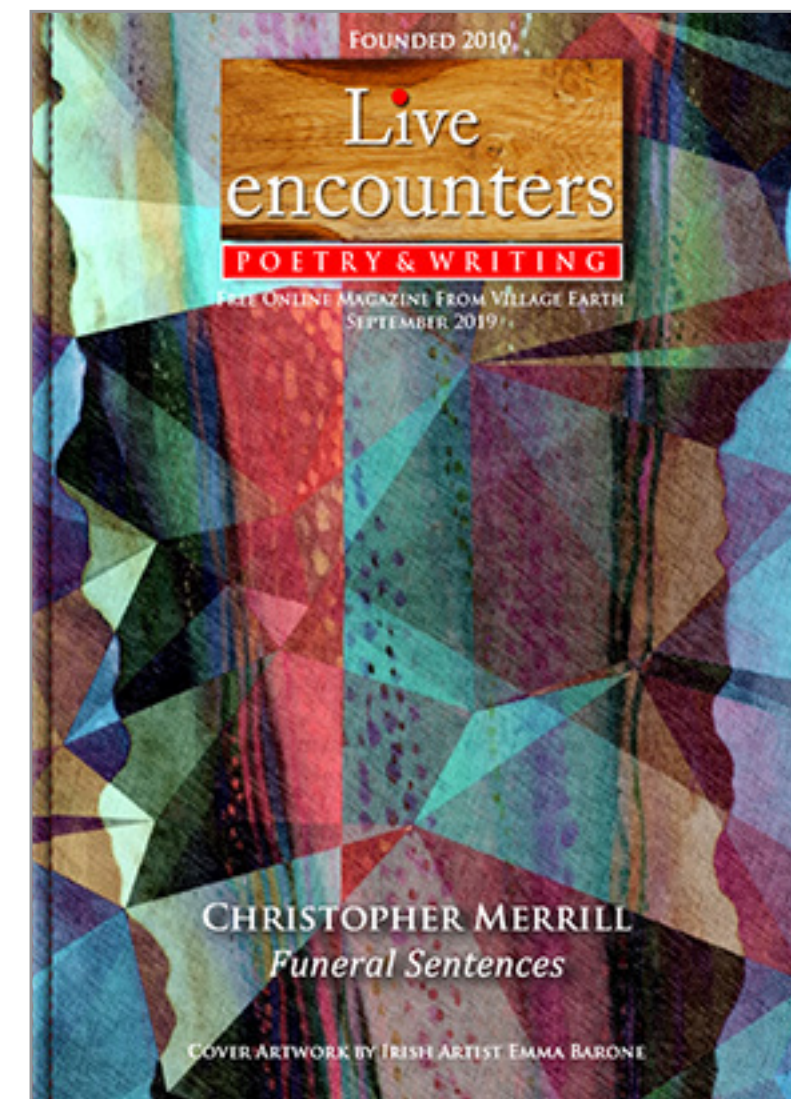
The next day you discover the papers are full of the girls' announcement that they are splitting up. You have not been consulted. Sporty, Scary, Ginger and Baby are going back to their old boyfriends to lead the simple life. They say are tired of living out of a suitcase (you think being accompanied by a travelling wardrobe of five hundred items of clothing hardly constitutes lugging a suitcase around) and they have been living a hollow sham without family and friends. They now realize they have been untrue to one of their founding maxims: Be true to yourself.

You are horrified. You insist on being hooked up to them live by satellite. 'Are you out of your tiny gourds?' you ask them. 'We've got a good thing going here. Okay, so we'll have a shelf-life no longer than Paul Newman's salad dressing, but let's cash in while we can. What do you say, Ginge?'

'My name's Geri, not Ginger,' she says and her eyes seem even more vacuous than before if that's possible. She seems inordinately happy that she can go back to her old mousy brown colour.

'Big deal. The wages of freedom are very low,' you remind them. 'And what about our anthem, 'Wannabe'? It was about how men could come and go but the group would always stick together. Did we sell that as a lie to millions of children around the world?' You start singing the bit about 'yougottagetwithmyfriends' and 'friendshipneverends'. One by one, they stand up and leave. 'You never could sing,' says Baby.

You are left staring onto the Spiceless screen. You start shouting, hoping one of them might hear you. 'GIRLPOWER! BE WHAT YOU WANNA BE! SHAKE IT MOVE IT MAKE IT FAKE IT SHOW THEM HOW GOOD YOU ARE! YOU HAVE GOT THE POWER!' And as you shout, you almost believe it, but you are also thinking how long it will take you to spend what's in your account and you figure your best move is to phone Bananarama and see if they want to make a comeback.



September 2019



Stephen Haven is the author of *The Last Sacred Place in North America* (2012), selected by T.R. Hummer as winner of the New American Prize. He has published two previous collections of poetry, *Dust and Bread* (Turning Point, 2008), for which he was named 2009 Ohio Poet of the Year, and *The Long Silence of the Mohawk Carpet Smokestacks* (University of New Mexico/West End Press, 2004). He is also author of the memoir *The River Lock: One Boy's Life Along the Mohawk* (Syracuse University Press, 2008).



## VACUUM

From the hindsight of a flea, this dark mastodon snuffs in one appendage the cracker crumbs of the over-stuffed couch. But it is mainly from the hovercraft of its flat head that small things begin to tremble, then ascend—the way, in some vacuous novel, alien lights might vaporize into the stratosphere of unimaginably tangled worlds. Hair ground into the soft, synthetic knit of the under life of the human foot, cartilage clipped from toe and finger tips, live arthropods and the dried husks of their dead, the flurry of molting skin, fluff devils, matted fur, wild seeds, mud the dog tracked in: all lift to the vortex of its spun, stiff brush and deep, industrial suck. Then, when a man or a woman's touch has quieted it, the promise of a certain absence still gestates in our closets. It is, nonetheless, the action of skimming along carpets that holds its main interest: it spits back paperclips and thumb tacks. Otherwise it seems, on some diminutive level, omnivorous, its digestive track attached to the spine of its back. If we tug its umbilical cord all the way back to the point of origin (the double slit of the wall's orifice), the spark that powers its ability to lift things absent from our lives flies to the bowels of the substrata's black fossils, to the atom's bulge. It holds its breath for weeks, then its ripe belly seems about to break: When we touch the button marked "easy open" or "release," one last puff of dust exiles up.

Stephen Haven





## HOUSESITTING HOUSTON

When the dog moved out the fleas lit in.  
We were right on top of them. Before the jokes  
Of how many Yankees the house might turn up, skinned,  
We cracked their Lilliputian shells. They croaked

Between our fingers, uncut pincers cured  
The lusty leap of a few fat stragglers  
Hanging around the kitchen sink, or  
We snapped them in a water glass, forever

Certain the tap alone was no solution  
Without the human cinch of their pinched backs.  
When we moved the touch of their ghostly volition  
Jolted in a nightly-scratch. We'd ditch the sack,

Flick the switch, scour for the lone stowaway,  
Your blood prick in me, gnaw of each stray city.

## BLACK FRIDAY

I lit the doomed colony  
Of a candelabra on the altar  
The black cassock of all history

*The stupendous monotony of mystery*  
Singing on its knees  
In minor thirds only

Even the hooded cross  
A falcon in the dark  
Through it all the light dripped in:

Bent taper, brass lip,  
Lick of one flame  
Wick to wick

Susan Azar Porterfield is the author of three books of poetry—*In the Garden of Our Spines*, Kibbe (May-apple Press) and *Dirt, Root, Silk*, which won the Cider Press Review Editor's Prize. Her work has appeared in *The Georgia Review* (finalist, Loraine Williams poetry prize), *Barrow Street*, *Mid-American Review*, *North American Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Nimrod*, *Rhino*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, and elsewhere. She is the editor of *Zen, Poetry, the Art of Lucien Stryk* (Ohio UP) and has written on poetical subjects for *Poets & Writers*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, and *Translation Review*.



## HOUSE POEMS

### I.

#### **The Dreamed-House Dreams Itself**

Again the house returns her  
to an empty room,

windows, floor to ceiling,  
and doors that release

to garden birdsong, bloom—  
Again,

she vows, again forgets,

circling daily through her  
rooms enough already,

honey and tea to pass.  
Why, then, deep in the house's spine,

wides this grass-green space?

Susan Azar Porterfield

*continued overleaf...*

© Susan Azar Porterfield

HOUSE POEMS *contd...*

## II.

**The House Teaches Her about Death***For Lucien Stryk*

After he died, he came calling,  
waiting at the basement door,

but she couldn't reach it,  
what with the party, people cocktailing,

and when she looked again,

he was gone. Breathless,

she scrambled up the stairs to see--  
and yes, there, there he was,

the line of his back, his walk.  
She could see him still,

waiting to cross at a light, crossing,  
stopping to adjust the strap of his pack.

Tearing through the door, she thought,  
I can make it just in time. I can.

## III.

**The House Teaches Her about Love**

They seemed a stream of need flowing by her legs,  
five or six of them, seven, she wasn't sure,

children, young, vague, but the house would help her  
keep them alive. It was large and light--

*here, we're safe*, she sighed,

meaning absence, mainly, from vigilance

about which sounds not to fear,  
the mind twisting cat-eared to clicks and creaks,

snap-deciding now again now.

She ran to secure each window and door,  
all locked, all tight.  
Except for one.

Fumbling with the latch  
she suddenly saw a darkness outlined in greater dark--

and now she had to get them out out, quick,  
out of the house that, dammit, wasn't hers anyway

just shelter she'd found by chance, and those kids  
weren't hers either, you know.

*continued overleaf...*

© Susan Azar Porterfield



HOUSE POEMS *contd...*

## IV.

**The House Becomes Strange**

Waking as usual, she began to doubt her hands  
were her hands, and certainly

these arms, which refused to reach for her glasses  
on the stand where she'd left them,

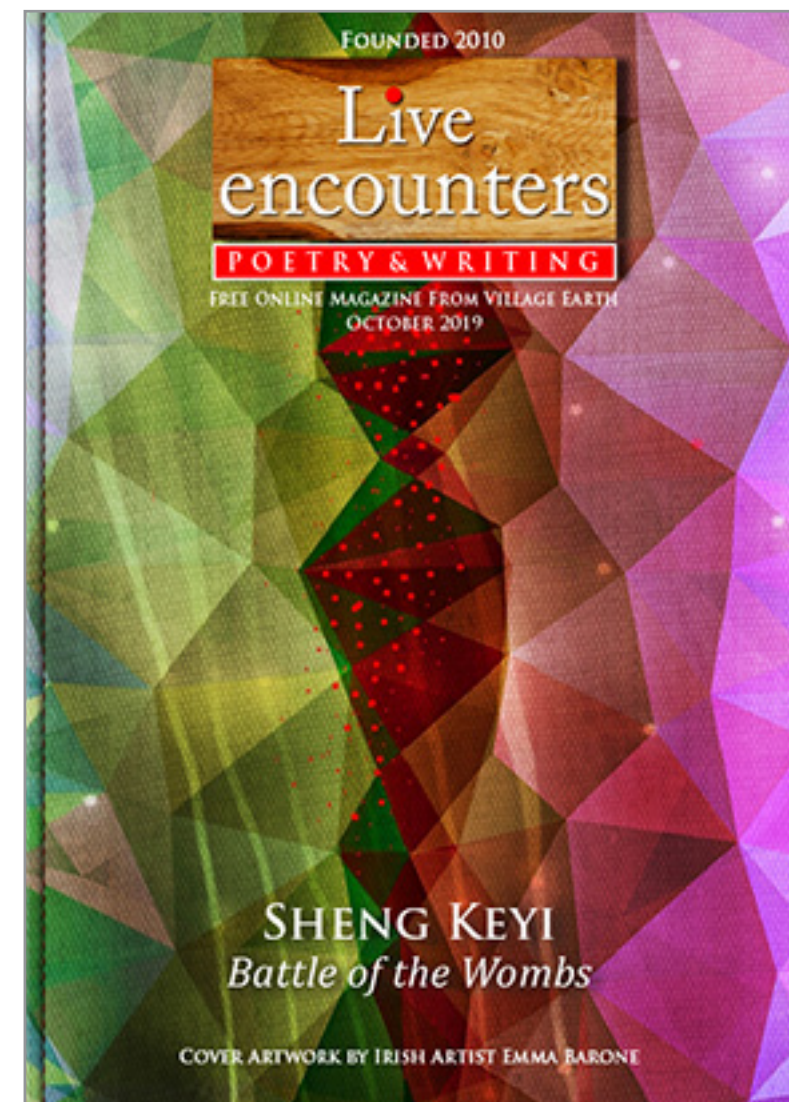
did not belong to her.  
To stretch and grasp took oh, so long. It annoyed her,

the slow plow of body through tides of air,  
and now, standing at last,

she found the silly bathroom  
was not where  
it should be.

The whole structure had shaken loose . . .  
lightness became her, and from its own knock,

her heart, huddled in its little lived-space,  
shied away.



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