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Live encounters

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LIFE MATTERS Mark Ulyseas

BABY MONKEY STOLEN FROM ITS MOTHER AND BEING SOLD ON THE STREET FOR \$25
PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ULYSEAS



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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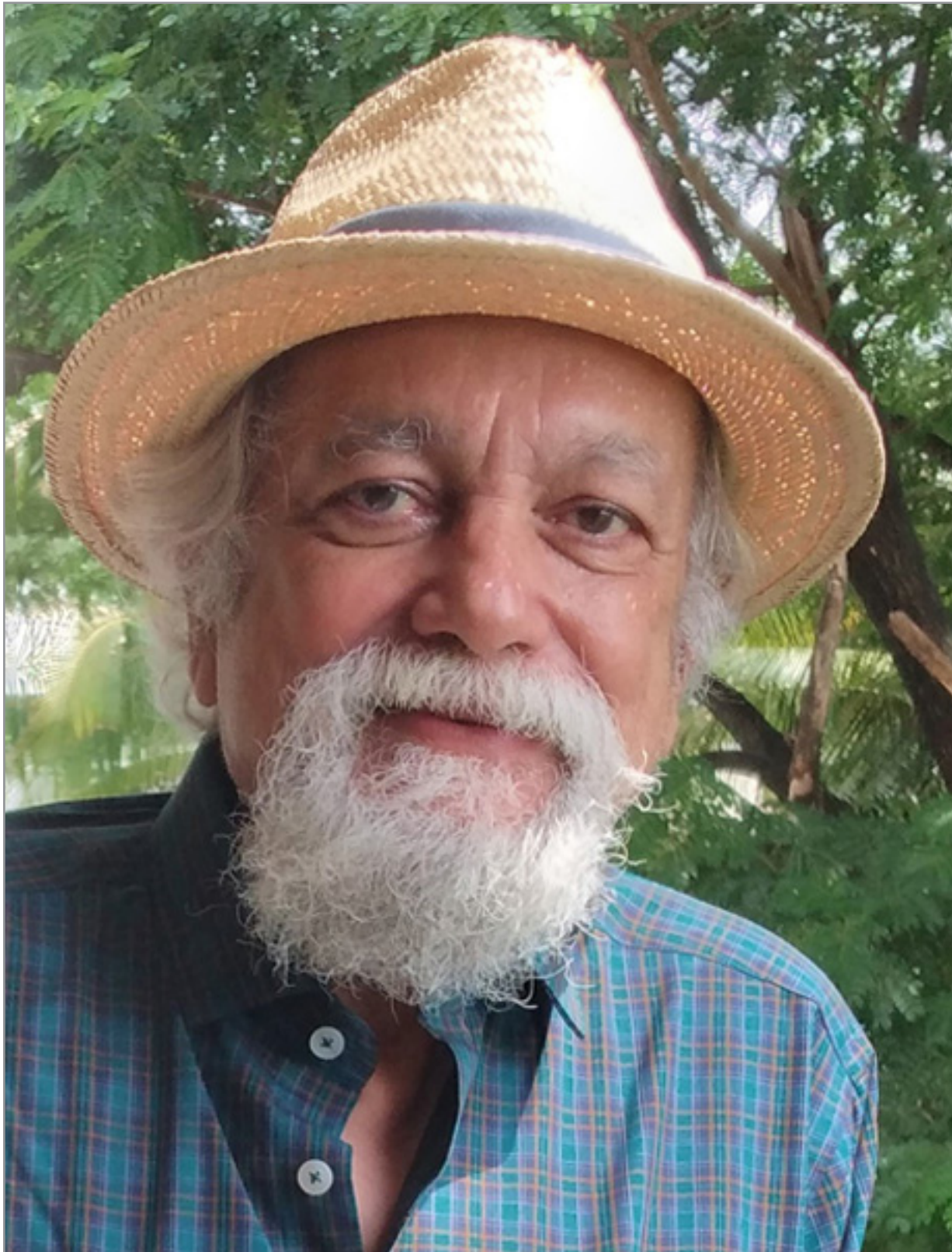
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Randhir Khare. Photograph by Nadia Sen Sharma.

CHERISH ALL BEINGS

RANDHIR KHARE

It is the height of pandemic fear with all human life on hold and the world around my home silent as a battlefield where there are no victors, just the dead. Walking down along the avenue of trees that leads away from my home towards the bustling sprawling diseased ancient city of Pune, I feel as if the world of humans is no more and I am the only survivor, left behind after a holocaust.

Around me, the rest of life continues – birds, insects, reptiles and feral mammals are everywhere, rummaging in empty dustbins, scavenging in desolate gardens, following garbage trails left by disposal trucks. The air is light with the music of nature. I am experiencing the beauty of hell in all its joyful glory.

A young man appears ahead of me, waving a large bag of biscuits. “Hey, come come,” he yells, “come and get your breakfast. Daddy has brought you nice nice bikkies. Come come. Daddy’s here.” He slows down and stands stock still, looking around him. “The bloody dogs have vanished, vamoosed, gone away. Hey, where are you?”

“Maybe if you leave your offerings in little piles just outside the bushes, they’ll come out and get their breakfast when they choose to,” I say and immediately regret having interrupted the man while he is on his crusade against canine hunger.

He spins around and narrows his eyes. “Speaking to me?”

“Yes man, speaking to you.”

“Thanks but no thanks for your suggestion. I KNOW how to deal with this lot. They are just dogs. And dogs have to be treated like dogs. Hey you !!!?!** Come and get your bikkies from Daddy. Come on you little four legged monsters. I am not going to wait here all morning.”

“I could help if you wish,” I suggest.

“Mind your own business,” he snaps. “These are my biscuits and I will give them to whom I wish, in whatever manner I wish. You go and buy your biscuits and feed them your way.” Then he starts waving the bag and shouting, “come on, come on, or the next time I won’t offer you any.” But there is no response, just the birds in the trees and two mongoose fighting over a plastic bag with scraps of leftover food in it and two goats trying to graze on an artificial lawn outside a newly opened garment store with shutters down.”

“Ok, sorry for disturbing you.”

“You are NOT disturbing me, you are irritating me.”

Suddenly he starts fishing out biscuits from the bag and throwing them in all directions. He is obviously fed up and now ready to dispose of his burden but there seem to be no takers. There are biscuits everywhere, in the air, in the bushes, on other people’s gardens, on the road ahead of him and on the road behind him. In his frustration he even throws a couple of biscuits in my direction (to be honest, he throws them AT me).

Then he takes a different pitch. “Ok guys, you think I am poisoning you like the way they poisoned those pariahs and threw them in that garbage bin on Lane 5 the other day? See, I’ll show you, they aren’t poisoned.” He sits down on the side of the empty road and starts eating biscuits.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

While he is busy eating biscuits and yelling at them, dogs of all generations and states of disrepair sneak out, snatch a few biscuits and vanish. He hasn't noticed them, nor has he noticed a half dead puppy stagger out from behind him, quietly help himself to a few biscuits from the open bag lying beside him and disappear into the shrubbery. Others follow. All the while, the fellow keeps eating biscuits and babbling curses at the dogs, still oblivious of what has been happening around him.

Then he stops mid-sentence. "Hey, what's going on? I could swear there were more biscuits in this bag. I mean, its crazy. First the bloody dogs won't eat what I am offering them and THEN the biscuits are disappearing by themselves."

He turns to me. "What happened to these biscuits? And the ones I threw near those bushes? Where are they?"

I shrug. "No idea."

The fellow dumps the bag in the middle of the road and stands guard beside it. "You can't just take these biscuits, I have to give them to you."

It is becoming surreal. A play in the best tradition of the Absurd is unfolding in front of me.

As soon as he turns his back on the open bag, the hungry dogs come out, snapping and snarling. The pack reaches the bag and tears it apart. He tries to run but trips and falls instead. Terrified, he cringes and starts to whimper.

I leave him, without any remorse, and walk on.

All life is now showing its true colours.

W.B.Yeats, the visionary Irish poet, once wrote:

*"Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;"*

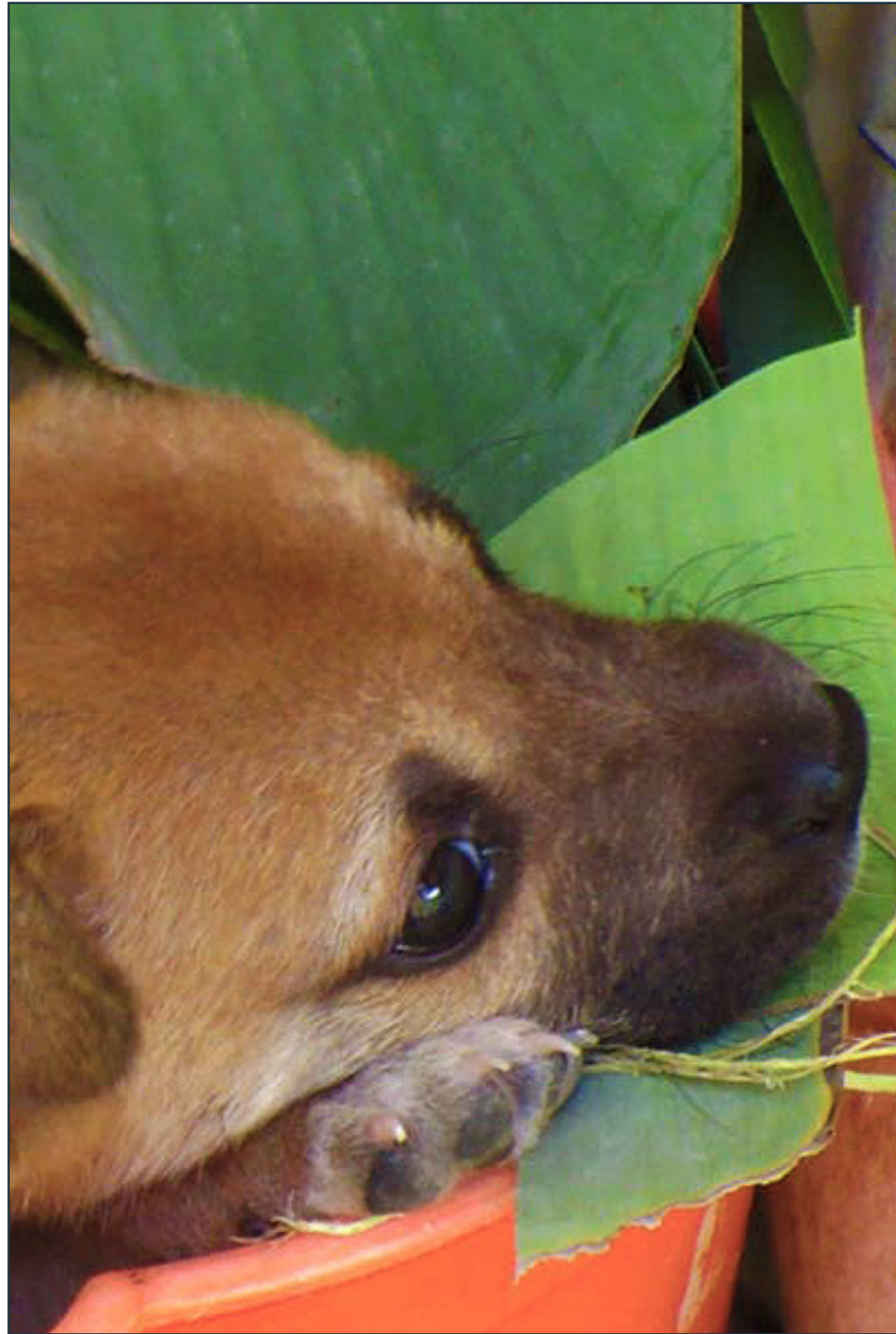
The pandemic has smashed the glass bubble that each of us has existed in, seemingly safe and secure, each within our own cocoon, each within our own dream, each exploiting those who are under the pile that we are perched on. Now suddenly, our bubbles are gone and we are exposed to life as it really is and always has been. And like the young man and his bag of biscuits, we are alone, outnumbered, confused, afraid.

After leaving the young man behind I walk to the veterinary clinic of my friend Dr Milind Mhatre who has promised to keep a bag of dried food for Tara, my dog. I have to remind myself that I am in Pandemic War Zone. When I get to his clinic, I find myself at the end of what seems like a ration queue. Wars do that to people, puts them in queues. If not queues to stay alive then queues to get oneself killed. I have been in War Zones before. War with China, war with Pakistan, war to liberate East Bengal and help it become Bangladesh, war against terrorism in Punjab, war against racism, casteism, classism, war against...the list is long and of course not all of them had an attending ration queue.

Dr. Milind Mhatre is in top form because I am nearly ahead of the queue.

Nevertheless, the wait is endless.

In that endlessness, I become more aware of the two legged and four legged creatures around me. The guy standing next to me is none other than the man who sits beside a small shrine nearby and waits for alms. He holds a small bundle in his arms. There is life inside that bundle and it is shivering silently.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

“She’s ill,” he explains, “very ill.”

Dark glowing eyes stare out of the face of a shrivelled dog from between the dirty folds of cloth.

“Yours?” I ask, stupidly.

“Yes,” he replies. “Mine. All the dogs on this road are mine. My friends. We live together. Care for each other. She’s been ill, shivers a lot. So I brought her here.”

I instinctively take out my wallet to give him money towards her treatment. He refuses. “Oh no, no. I have an account with Milind doctor.”

“Ok,” I reply and smile.

A moment later, he says, “she’s looking at you. Look at her please. She’s looking at you.”

I turn and look at the animal, our eyes meet and something strange happens. Those eyes, I have seen them before.

I go back in time, to the War of Liberation in Bangladesh when I was a young volunteer on the India-Bangladesh border, helping relief services. My role was to assist in the record keeping of refugees crossing the border. One of the many hundreds that I had the occasion to encounter was a woman with a bundle in her arms. It was smelling of death but she wouldn’t let go of it. “This is my only child, I will take him with me into a new life in your country.” We looked at each other, sharing the pain and loss....I will never forget the look in her eyes.

Years later, I saw the same eyes that stared hopelessly at me from an old man who held the body of his dead granddaughter in his arms in terrorist torn rural Punjab. “She was a child,” he said “she never harmed anyone. Why did they kill her? Why?”

The same eyes also stared back at me, from the anti Sikh riots in New Delhi, from the survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy....Everywhere the same eyes...

I thank the man and he looks at me surprised.

The story of this planet is the story of bubbles being created and destroyed and then created again and destroyed and created again – an endless cycle of creation and destruction. And it never ends. Abraham Lincoln burst a bubble and they created it again, Martin Luther King Jr burst a bubble and they created it again, Malcolm X burst a bubble and they created it again....and it will go on...and it's still happening on the other side of the Atlantic and across the rest of this planet. Mahatma Gandhi burst a bubble and they shot him and created the bubble again, Nelson Mandela and Baba Saheb Ambedkar burst a bubble and they have created the bubble again. There have been bubbles bursting everywhere, everyday and they reappear in new avatars.

They will never learn. We will never learn. But in the process of this destruction and regeneration, life has a way of constantly reinventing itself more ingeniously, surviving, flourishing.

All life matters, whether we like to believe that or not. Even the tiny spider walking gingerly across the keyboard of my laptop as I write this...that spider also matters.

In the words of H.H.The Dalai Lama, “As you **breathe** in, cherish yourself. As you **breathe** out, cherish all Beings.”

I am struggling to do that but I still have a long way to go.



<https://pixabay.com/photos/zebra-spider-jumping-insect-macro-4873752/>

Tina Claffey is an award winning nature photographer and author of *Tapestry of Light-Ireland's bogs & wetlands as never seen before* released in October 2017. For almost 10 years, she lived and worked in pristine wilderness areas in Botswana, and this experience awakened in her an appreciation of the natural world of Ireland. Her observations and unique perspective of the flora and fauna of the unspoilt raised bogs and wet woodlands of the Irish midlands are celebrated in her work.

<http://www.tinacclaffey.com>



Tina Claffey

MINIATURE BOG LIFE

PHOTOGRAPHS & TEXT BY

TINA CLAFFEY

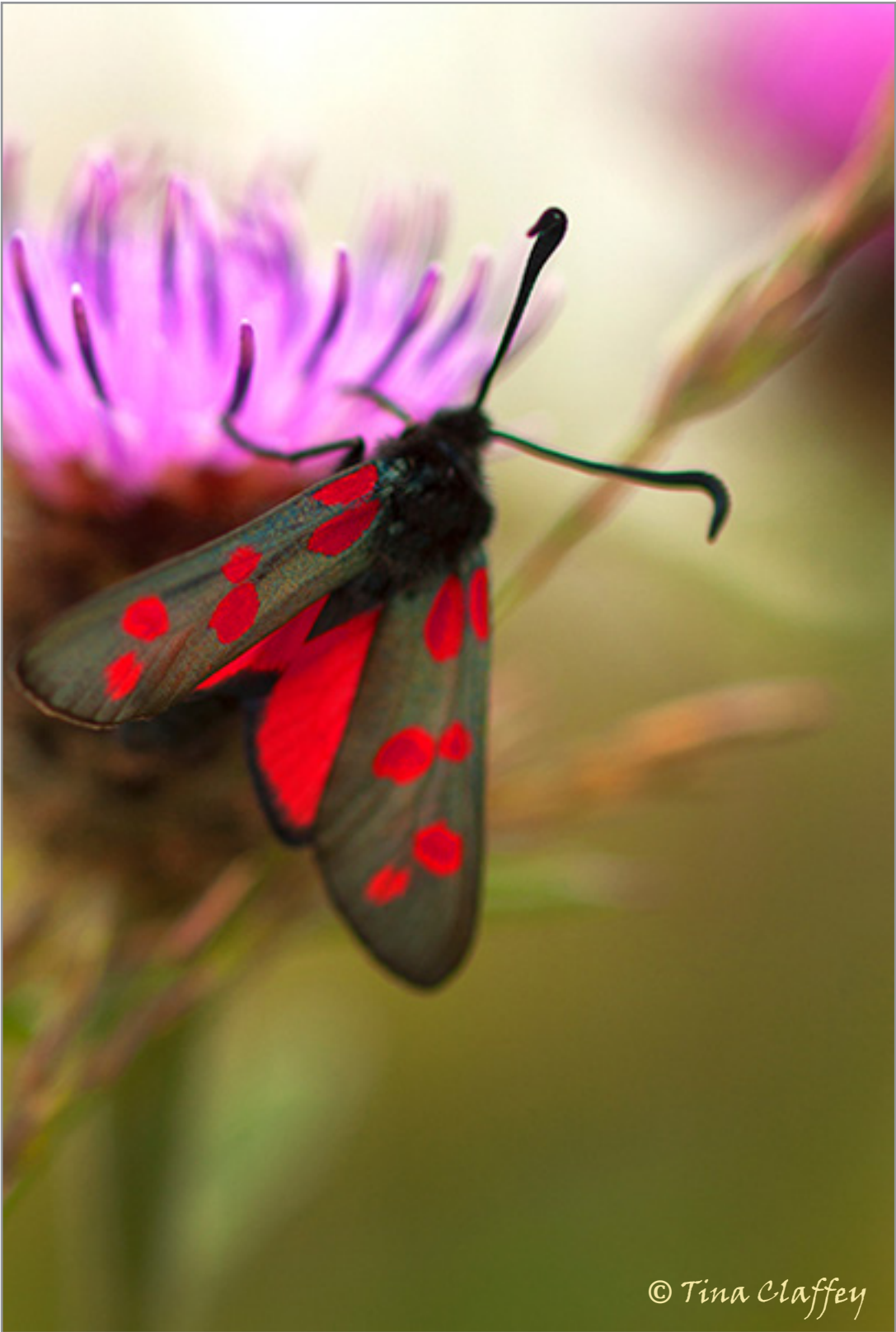
I love to get 'lost' in the bogs, eskers and wetlands of Ireland with my macro lens.

The macro lens allows me to capture what cannot be seen by the naked eye, rendering the ordinary extraordinary.

Such beauty, in miniature perfection, whether it be plant, insect or mammal, prey or predator, has adapted to survive in this unique environment. Much of the flora and fauna are at ground level, so capturing my desired shot requires me to lie down, sometimes getting soaked in the process as I look for new perspectives and ways of seeing.

This involves slowing down my mindset, patiently waiting, and truly seeing the small inhabitants of this ancient wilderness. Many of these inhabitants are ornately coloured and decorated, leaving me wondering how I hadn't noticed them before! Patience is rewarded, and these wondrous life forms reveal themselves and allow me to capture them in a brief moment in time. And I thank them, each and every one.

6-Spot Burnet Moth



© Tina Claffey



Birch Shieldbug



Mating Hairy Shieldbugs



© Tina Claffey

Bronze Shieldbug Eggs



Grasshopper



Raft Spider



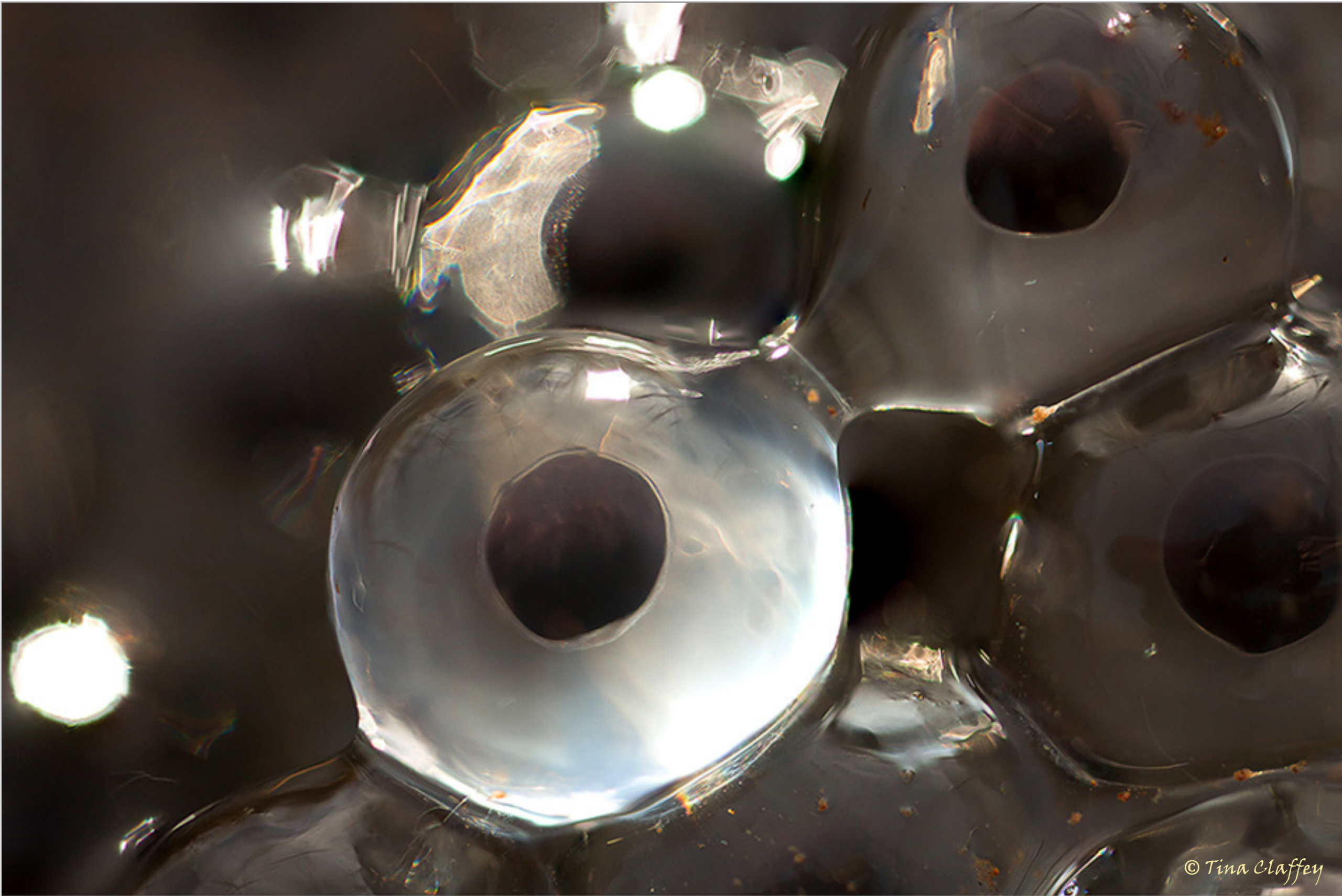
Hoverfly Bee on Devils Bit Scabious



Mating Snails



Feet of Dark Tussock Moth caterpillar



© Tina Claffey

Frogspawn Cell



© Tina Claffey

Tadpole Swarm

David Morgan is an editor and writer based in London and Manchester. He is involved mostly in historical research and has edited a number of books for the Socialist History Society: such as '1917: The Russian Revolution, Reactions and Impact' and 'The Labour Party in Historical Perspective' to which he contributed essays on Freud and Leonard Woolf respectively. He is currently finishing a book that will reappraise the ideas of John Ruskin. David also writes on political issues, especially the Kurds in Turkey. He is a long-standing member of the Peace in Kurdistan campaign for which in 2019 he co-edited a book, *Peace Poems for Ocalan*, with Estella Schmid. David also writes poetry and recently contributed to a volume titled, *Naked Reality*.



David Morgan

ALL OUR LIVES MATTER

DAVID MORGAN

We have a responsibility to remember the dead; not simply those who have fallen in battle in past wars in defence of our basic freedoms; but the anonymous individuals whose comparative achievements in the great scheme of things would be slight. We should cherish the memory of our own ancestors and we need to know about the origins of our own communities, the people whose efforts, labours and ingenuity built the society that exists today. We need to know about their struggles and their battles to achieve human dignity: The political struggles and campaigns that led to dignity in old age, a health service that is available to everyone and which has been seen to be so vital in the current coronavirus pandemic. How many people who stood in the street week after week to clap their hands in unity for the staff of the NHS understand how the NHS was created or what it was like to get sick in the days before its creation. Much of that history would escape many.

Those who claim to be a nation's thought leaders have a duty to reveal hard truths to the wider public and to give guidance in times of crisis. The influential cultural historian and literary critic, Raymond Williams, remarked that the word "intellectual" was normally used unfavourably in 20th century Britain; the related term "intelligentsia" was viewed even more negatively. But we need our intellectuals as never before. We need thinkers, social critics and fearless commentators.

Williams himself was a model of what a public intellectual should be all about; always ready to intervene in the great social and political controversies of his day, he wrote about the 1985 mine-workers' strike, the government of Margaret Thatcher, Welsh nationalism and the growth of environmentalism, to mention but a few. He was a Cambridge professor but he definitely did not live in an "ivory tower"; he drew lessons from his childhood in an impoverished Welsh village, where his father was a railway worker in the 1930s depression years, later experiences in a tank regiment fighting fascism during the Second World War and his activities in the post-war campaigns against the Vietnam War, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and in numerous other great causes.

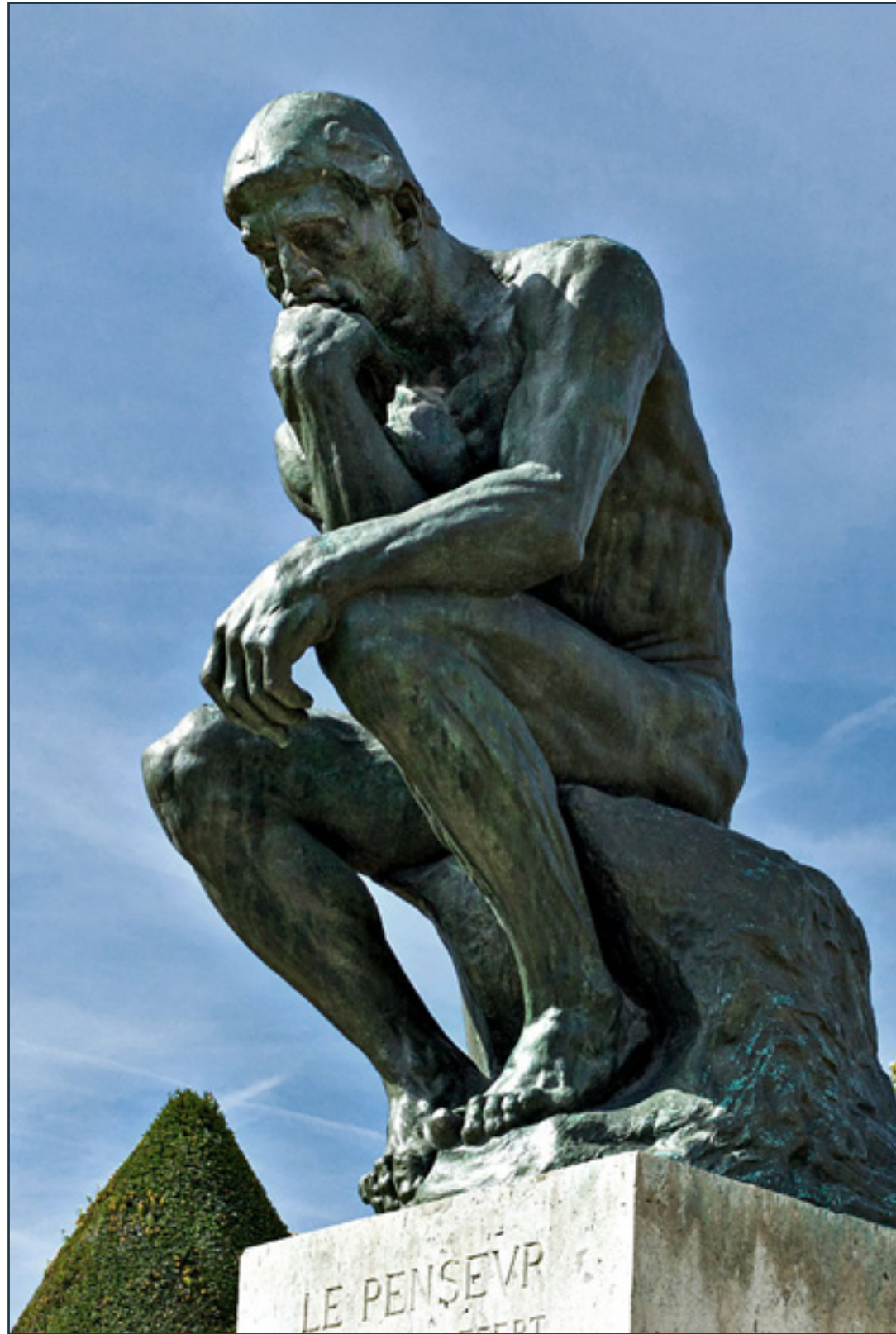
Williams believed that he had a responsibility to educate the public, to use the knowledge that he had acquired to contribute towards the common good. He would not have remained silent in the face of any outrage or irresponsible action if he saw it was damaging to the values that he held dear: tolerance, greater equality, international solidarity and social welfare. He believed in giving a voice to the marginalised; he stood up for the poor and oppressed who had difficulties expressing themselves with confidence. He used his skills with the pen to criticise the powerful and articulate the demands of those seeking to achieve social justice. Williams was a remarkable figure, but he was far from alone in the public role he assumed.

Richard Hoggart, another once influential cultural critic, who was a contemporary of Raymond Williams, wrote a powerful essay in the 1960s about the parlous state of intellectual enquiry and social criticism. He recalls an American scholar who was visiting Britain and his reactions to the weakness of intellectual opinion. In the essay titled, The 'Condition of England' Question, Hoggart writes that his American friend left the country "in a mood of great disappointment" and continued:

"He was bewildered at the state of British intellectual opinion, at what seemed to him its almost complete failure to analyse British life today. In place of this analysis intellectuals usually put, he suggested, a self-indulgent nostalgia or a brash band-waggoning. For the direct and responsive observation of the changing life around them they seemed disabled by their own prior positions, which were either elitist or meritocratic...So there was a thinness in social debate, a failure to appreciate the imaginative dimensions of the social changes British society is now experiencing."



<https://publishhistory.wordpress.com/tag/uk-miners-strike-1984-1985/>



The Thinker, French Le Penseur, sculpture by French artist Auguste Rodin
<https://terraingallery.org/aesthetic-realism/art-criticism/auguste-rodin/>

Hoggart's friend concluded that British intellectuals had lost their capacity to analyse themselves and their society effectively. Hoggart concludes that he believes his friend had got it right because debate about Britain "operates from routine positions and uses inadequate models." Thinking had become stale, routine and unchallenging.

When one looks at current public debate and responses to the Black Lives Matter movement one can be forgiven for feeling that the weaknesses identified by Richard Hoggart in that essay written all those decades ago remain just as pertinent today. Thought leaders need to rise to the occasion. They should begin by insisting on the need for respect. We must respect our differences. We should respect each other's sensitivities and understand where we are coming from. We need to understand our own history "warts and all".

We all have shared histories on this small, fragile planet that we all occupy and on which we depend for our own sustenance and very survival. Ultimately, we all have similar needs, dreams, hopes and desires that must be satisfied. If we start from a position of respecting one another we might be able to engage in free and open debate and from embarking on that dialogue, we may be able to develop a common programme of action to move forward. That means putting our trust in creativity rather than resorting to acts of destruction. Our common dreams are a resource of hope. Let's make use of these resources.



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

ANNA SEGHERS HER LIFE AND WORK DR GRETA SYKES

Introduction

Anna Seghers' life spans most of the 20th century, ending a mere six years before the so-called velvet revolution in 1989 wiped out the community of socialist countries that had dominated politics both East and West since the end of WW2. She lived through both world wars, experienced exile with thousands of others fleeing the Nazis and managed to get a place on a freightliner with herself and her family to Mexico. When she returned to her native Germany after the war, she found a country not just devastated physically but also morally with a population in a state of exhaustion, confusion and fear of the future. She had difficulties settling in Berlin with both her children still living in France and her husband working in Mexico, she experienced the shock of the division of Germany, when the Marshall Plan was started in the West in 1948. She braved all the conflicts, losses and difficulties, as the two German states embarked on their polarized roles in the Cold War. She remained in the GDR heading the writers' organisation and engaging herself in defending world peace, as perceived from a GDR perspective. She stayed loyal to that country and government until her death. Her funeral was a major state occasion in GDR politics. It was also attended by the mayor of the town of Mainz, her home town, and the president of the Johann Gutenberg University of Mainz. Seghers' novels and short stories as well as essays and a wealth of letters she wrote to friends and comrades paint a rich picture of a deeply creative mind and a compassionate and passionate loving person who lived her life for peace and socialism.

Dr Greta Sykes

Seghers' life

Together with Christa Wolf Anna Seghers was one of the foremost communist writers in Germany. She was born on the 19th November 1900 into a Jewish family. She studied art history and Chinese studies and did her doctorate on 'Jews and Jewishness in Rembrandts paintings in Heidelberg in 1920. Her first publication 'The dead on the island of Djal' was published under the pen name Antje Seghers in the 'Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt in instalments. She married Rodi (Laszlo Radvanyi), a Jewish Hungarian communist, in 1925 and moved to Berlin. In Berlin Rodi was in charge of the Marxist workers school (Marxistische Arbeiterschule, or MASCH). Her children, Peter and Ruth were born respectively in 1926 and 1928. At the time she was writing her next story 'Grabetsch' which also appeared in instalments in the same newspaper.

When her book 'The uprising of the fishermen of Santa Barbara' was published in 1928 she was given the Kleist Prize for literature for Grabetsch and her first novel. That same year she joined the KPD, German Communist party, and the Group of proletarian revolutionary writers (Bund Proletarisch-Revolutionaerer Schriftsteller). In 1933 she fled via Switzerland to France. She became a member of the publishing team of 'Neue deutsche Blaetter' which was published from 1933 to 1935 in Prague. She continued publishing stories and participated in the International Writers Conference in Paris in June 1935 and in Valencia and Madrid in 1937. In 1939 she completed the writing of her most famous novel 'The seventh Cross'. Her husband was arrested and imprisoned in France. She fled through France to Marseille where she managed to leave Europe in the freighter 'Paul Lemerle' for New York. She travelled via Cuba to Mexico City. There she founded the Heinrich Heine Club and worked for the paper 'Freies Deutschland.' At the end of the war she returned to Europe via Sweden and Paris where her children Peter and Ruth lived. Getting the correct visa was an on-going problem for her. While living in Sweden with a German communist family called Friedlaender she was eventually offered a visa to come and live in the Soviet zone of Berlin, granted via the Karlshorst official immigration. Due to having married a Hungarian, she was actually Hungarian, yet by the time she came to Berlin she had adopted the Mexican citizenship. It all didn't make her entry easier.

Paris remained her second home. She had many friends there, and through her children met many young French people who enjoyed political discussions as much as she did. She knew Ferdinand Delmas who had translated The Seventh Cross and the journalist and author Vladimir Poczner, as well



<https://www.dhm.de/lemo/biografie/anna-seghers>

as Louis Aragon and Elsa Triolet. She found that Paris showed more generosity and thoughtfulness than Berlin. Between 1947 to 49 she spent much time in Paris, choosing themes for her writing that were focused on France or Paris, such as a Paris piece ‘Quartier Latin’. For the World Peace conference in 1949 she wrote a number of stories, such as ‘The Dove; (Picasso) and ‘The March’.

She received the Buechner Prize in Berlin in 1947. In 1949 she participated in the World Peace conference in Paris and became a member of the World Peace Council. She still had a Mexican passport which, though, caused concerns in the GDR, as they needed her to become a German citizen. She intended to keep her foreign passport, because it allowed her to visit her children in Paris and travel abroad easily. In May 1950 she was granted dual citizenship, a right that Bertolt Brecht also achieved. Rodi, her husband was also granted citizenship in the GDR as well as offered work. He began a professorship teaching American Imperialism at Humboldt University upon his return.

In 1951 Seghers received the ‘Nationalpreis’ (national prize) of the GDR and the Stalin Prize. She was elected chair of the GDR writers organisation and in 1959 she received an Honorary Doctorate from the university of Jena. She travelled much throughout her life and the journeys included many visits to the Soviet Union, Brazil, France, China and West Germany. She was elected an Honorary citizen of her home town Mainz, although by that time she was not well enough anymore to visit Mainz. She had suffered a severe accident while living in Mexico and had balance problems from time to time since then. She was a warm and caring mother to her children, and they managed to meet up regularly in one or another place, depending on where she lived at the time. In 1978 Rodi, Seghers’ husband died unexpectedly during an operation to insert a heart pacemaker. His death was a severe blow to her. Although she continued writing and making plans little was finished after this event. Her health deteriorated, her eye sight became poor. She stayed mostly in her flat in the Adlershof with the help of carers. Her family supported her with kindness and caring visits. She moved to a care home in 1982 and died in June 1983.

Seghers’ Work

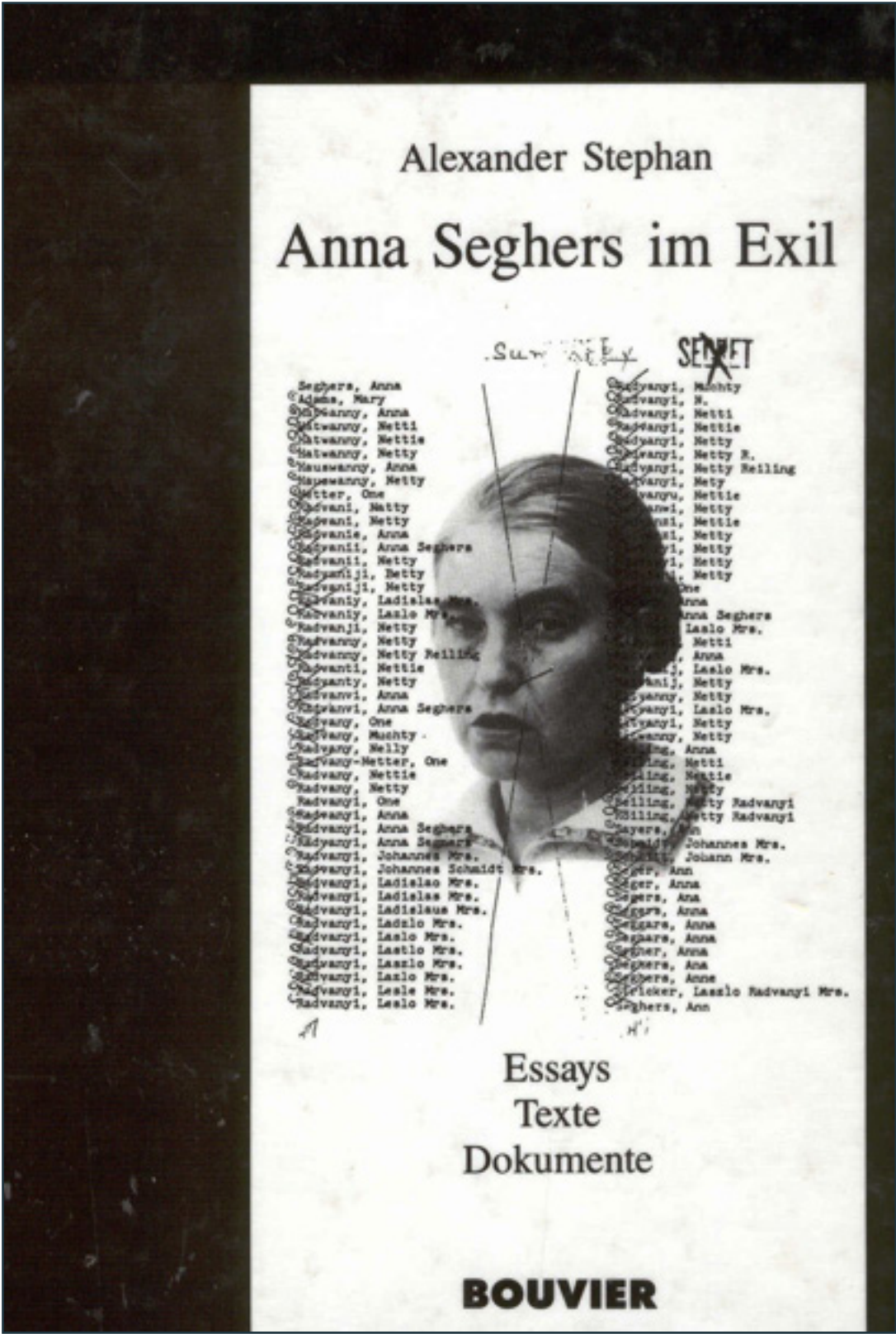
Romero (2001) in her biography of Seghers describes her wish to write German cultural history in her stories, in which she often combines reality with a dream-like aspect to it. She found fairy stories, myths and dreams to be an important aspect of bringing a story close to its readers.

Romero quotes Walter Benjamin commenting that Seghers seems to wait for her readers. She does not just tell a story; she wants readers to listen to her. She hesitates and waits with her own voice clearly present. Bertolt Brecht, quoted by Romero, felt that Seghers when listening to a person tended to have something in the back of her mind, some voice that was already writing a new story. Christa Wolf described her as a magician who created magic by weaving together a reality that she knows or doesn’t know, but maintaining it like a beautiful dream. Her main novels ‘The seventh cross’, ‘Transit’ and ‘The dead stay young’ have been translated into English. Most of her work consists of short stories. She composed many letters throughout her life. The biography about her by Christine Zehl Romero is mainly based on these.

Exiled writers

Seghers was one of thousands of writers who fled Nazi Germany in 1933 and after. They fled to the Netherlands, then to France and from there, when the Nazis occupied France, to the south in order to escape on boats to America. Marseille became the centre of German refugees, particularly in the years 1941 to 1944. An exhibition to mark the catastrophic situation that existed for the exiles in 1944, called ‘ICI-MEME’, was held in Marseille from September 2013 onwards. Already by 1933 55,000 people, mainly communists, Jews, trade unionist and social democrats had left Germany. Jean-Michel Palmier (Weimar in Exile, 2006) describes the forced exodus as ‘Assassination of a culture’. Not only is it a story of catastrophic proportions, it is also one that has consistently been denied and silenced. When Palmier wrote his book (1987) he reminds readers that hardly anything had been published in Germany about it, or elsewhere for that matter.

It was not just the onset of the Cold War and the defamation of communists all over Europe that began to take shape and continued in the US with the Un-American Activities Committee that mitigated against a resolution of the problem of the home comers. Uneasy and problematic feelings between those who had stayed in Germany and those who had left marred the relationship between the two groups and made any real comprehension and reconciliation between them almost impossible. Reasons for those difficulties are raised in Palmier’s book. Illustrious poets and writers, such as Carl Ossietzky and Erich Muehsam died in concentration camps, while others Toller or Stefan Zweig committed suicide. Meanwhile many who had stayed in Germany tended to be regarded as accommodating themselves with the Nazis.



In order to comprehend Seghers life story it is necessary to be aware of the context in which she was forced to leave Germany, be chased through France and finally end up on a freighter for Mexico. In her novel ‘Transit’ she describes the desperation of people who wait for their visa abroad, or queue up for other things, like tins of sardines:

‘I arrived so early and yet there were already other women in front of the locked door, wrapped in scarves and hats because it was windy and cold. A bit of sun looked just over the roofs, but between the tall houses of the street lay heavy and ancient shadows. The women were too tired and stiff to complain. They thought of nothing but their purchase of sardines. Like animals who eye a hole in the ground in which something edible resides they lurked not to miss the smallest opening of the door. Their energy was devoted entirely to capture tins of sardines. Why they had to get up so early to wait for something that normally was ubiquitous in this region, and where such plentifulness had disappeared to, thinking such thoughts was far too tiresome for them.’

In November 1941 Anna is still in France near Marseille waiting for the right visa for her family. Food is a problem, although the children are attending a local school. It’s a kind of cat and mouse game where you need a visa for one country and a different one from another country, and both of them need to fit together within a narrow window of time. This is all very well described in her novel ‘Transit’. While waiting for the correct collection of visa Seghers learnt that Walter Benjamin committed suicide, after he had tried to escape to Spain but was not allowed to enter the country. He walked back to his hotel in France and was found dead in his bed in the morning. He poisoned himself. At the end of November, she writes to Weiskopf that they are still waiting for visa for all the family. She travels to Marseilles again and again. She even writes to the Vichy government. ‘We were sent a kilo of sugar and a parcel of figs. It pleased the children. I cannot describe our life here. Dante, Dostoevsky, Kafka are nothing in comparison. This here is serious, but strangely, you get used to it. The children go to school. I cook a strange soup. We think of Benjamin. What did he think he could achieve by walking into Spain?

After over a year of chasing one embassy after another to get the correct visa in the correct order of need she managed to get a place on a freighter for herself, her husband and her two children to take her over the Atlantic. From New York she had to travel onwards to reach Mexico, where she had managed to get permission to residency.

<https://www.amazon.com/Anna-Seghers-Exil-Dokumente-Literatur/dp/3416023331>

She writes in her letters that she immediately took to Mexico, the climate and the people. She enjoyed living there and obtained Mexican citizenship, restarting her writing life with difficulties. She constantly had problems with money, because she had no income and depended on the assistance from friends. Mexico, however, became an inspiration for her. A number of her works are positioned in and around Mexico, such as ‘The outing of the dead girls’, ‘The real blue’ and ‘Wedding in Haiti’.

Anna was a prolific letter writer and was fluent in different languages, German, French, Spanish. In the early years of exile her letters were written out of dire need for money, support in terms of her manuscripts and needing places to stay, a job to earn a living, food and friendship. After the war when she returned to Berlin her letters tended to reflect her role in the GDR, her travels and her friendships. She writes to a friend, ‘You cannot imagine what we have been through. We had to return to Paris. There they looked for me and we had to change our abode a dozen times. Living in the unoccupied zone is also indescribable. It is a bit like cities in the Middle Ages where you get thrown into a private prison because you have not got enough money. Every week there was a new threat, often they threatened that they were looking for me. We did not wait for the boat to Lisbon. We used the first opportunity. It was very primitive but it did not matter to us. In Martinique we were placed in a very dirty campsite with little food available. We were forced to pay 3 dollars per day. We had not used the 500 dollars from the League of Writers yet. Because we travelled on a freighter with the children, much more primitive than 3rd class travel. The money had not arrived by the time we left and I had to borrow money. Now we are in debt and have to pay it back. I am very sad that a year on none of my chapters have been published in the US so that I have not been able to earn my own living. I have often felt this year as if I was dead and living outside the world. It is vital for me to write, and that is why I must speak with you. Have you posted a copy of The Seventh Cross to Hans? If you read my letter carefully you will find that I am often tired and unhappy without losing hope. I am writing quite openly to you. Now about my travels. There is no direct boat to Mexico, its either via New York or via Cuba. Now do your best to send me the 600 dollars so that we can take the next boat.’

But in 1944 her urge was to go back home. She was expecting to restart her literary career in the land of her mother tongue. She was bitterly disappointed, however, when in 1948 the West German currency was created which split the country into two. She was, after all from West Germany, Mainz near the Rhein, but in future she was going to be a citizen of East Germany, her political home. With her Mexican

passport, her children in France and her divided home country she lived her life as a permanent exile, travelling a lot and feeling divided loyalties. Yet she was able to unify her different emotions through an intense work schedule. She wrote short stories, she wrote speeches, she travelled to conferences, especially to work for world peace. She enjoyed the company of her many friends, especially in the Soviet Union and in France and became a very influential person in the GDR.

1948 was a dramatic year in German history and consequently also for Seghers, as the East-West confrontation came to the boil. The Marshall Plan offered West Germany financial assistance to rebuild the country, but not East Germany, and the D Mark was introduced, basically leading to the two nation state. After her visit to Paris, she travelled for the first of many times to the Soviet Union, followed by her attendance at the ‘World conference of writers for the defence of peace’. It took place in Wroclaw, Poland. German was not one of the conference languages. Nevertheless, Seghers delivered her speech in German and was warmly welcomed as ‘Niemci dobrej woli’ (Germans of good will). Seghers met up with many friends from other parts of the world, such as Ilya Ehrenburg, George Lukacs and Justynia Sierp, her Polish friend. She got to know the Brazilian writer Jorge Amado who, together with Ehrenburg and Pablo Neruda became her close and lifelong friends, her ‘three bears’, how she called them. In March the last meeting of the Allied control group took place, followed by the introduction of the Marshall Plan in the West. International train journeys with Berlin were terminated on the 23rd June. The introduction of the West German currency on the 18th June led to a closure of all transport between the Soviet occupied zone (SBZ) and the West German occupied zones.

During the fifties, after the division of Germany into two states Seghers had to come to terms with the sadness and alienation this caused her. She rooted herself into the newly developing GDR with all the hope and aspiration for world peace and a socialist future that she could muster. She had lost a home and become exiled, and she wished to go back home. This was not to be after the start of the Cold War. She decided to live in the GDR with its strong fraternal links to the Soviet Union and the surrounding socialist countries. They were seen by many people in Europe East and West to be able to present the future path of humanity. She also harboured great hopes in Mao’s victory in China. She worked tirelessly and passionately to further peaceful cooperation between East and West and to develop a new language among young writers to speak about the issues pertinent to building socialism. Most of her letters in the following years reflect these interests and her deep sense of friendship with her many contacts.

Conclusion

Anna remained faithful to her communist beliefs throughout her life. She saw them best fulfilled by staying loyal to the Socialist Unity Party (SED) of the GDR. This was not an easy option to take, especially given both the temptations as well as the animosity coming from the West German media, publishers and writers. Had she given in to the pressure she could have had a glorious and feted life in the West, as has been illustrated by the many who did, such as the singer and writer Wolf Biermann. Romero (2001) comments 'Seghers had expected cooperation and togetherness after her exile and a joint eradication of fascism and its memory of the victims and their enemies.' Further she commented 'In her disappointment about the political and cultural developments in her home country Seghers held on to her youthful ideals and ideas of striving for world peace under the leadership of the Soviet Union and the communist international movement.' Romero states that Seghers 'accepted (belonging to the cultural tradition of the GDR) out of a fatal sense of duty, arising out of her Jewish-German bourgeois background.' Such a conclusion assumes a passive attitude to the developments in the GDR, which was not Seghers way of working or living. Furthermore, at all stages of her life she had taken the initiative to become herself and to be herself, for instance by rejecting her parents' bourgeois life. Seghers had witnessed her fair share of corruption, betrayals and how people can be bought easily through the seductions of consumerism and the glittering colours of the West. She learnt to acquire a long-term view of reaching socialism. That meant that you worked patiently with the situation you inherit and the given context. Her loyalty was therefore her strength and a defeat of the lure of the West.

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After being forced to flee Germany during World War II due to her anti-fascist stances, author Anna Seghers returned in 1947, eventually moving to East Berlin.
<https://today.ku.edu/2018/05/31/book-looks-global-significance-german-anna-seghers-authorship>

Born in Munich 1954. 1973 studied with Ernst Fuchs and Salvador Dali. 1970 he painted *still-lives* in Switzerland introducing curved mirrors which reflect objects in most surprising ways and led to a proposal for the -elegant Universe. Moving to Tuscany in 1980 landscape and atmospheric effects crystallized to intense, portraits of nature. Since 1984 living in Bali. In his search for the- abstract. Papua New Guinea - Warriors combine the archaic with the futuristic. Wolfgang's motto - aesthetic = ethic - points to places where humans experience the Good, the True and the Beautiful.



VENERATION OF NATURE

WOLFGANG WIDMOSER

Sun, moon and clouds,
shadow and light, blossoms,
leaves and little insects,
dewdrops which collect
the dust like a magnet -
once again I discover
the Universe
through a kind of mirror
which contains
the whole cosmos.
Micro- and macrocosm
reveal themselves
as an expression of a
supreme totality
and we observe
the miracle of awareness.
" Everything flows"
Heraklit suggests and
I agree looking at my
bowl of waterlillies.
There,s no beginning
and no end, only
-INTENSITY-

Wolfgang Widmoser



As above, so below - oil on canvas 180 x 150 cm.

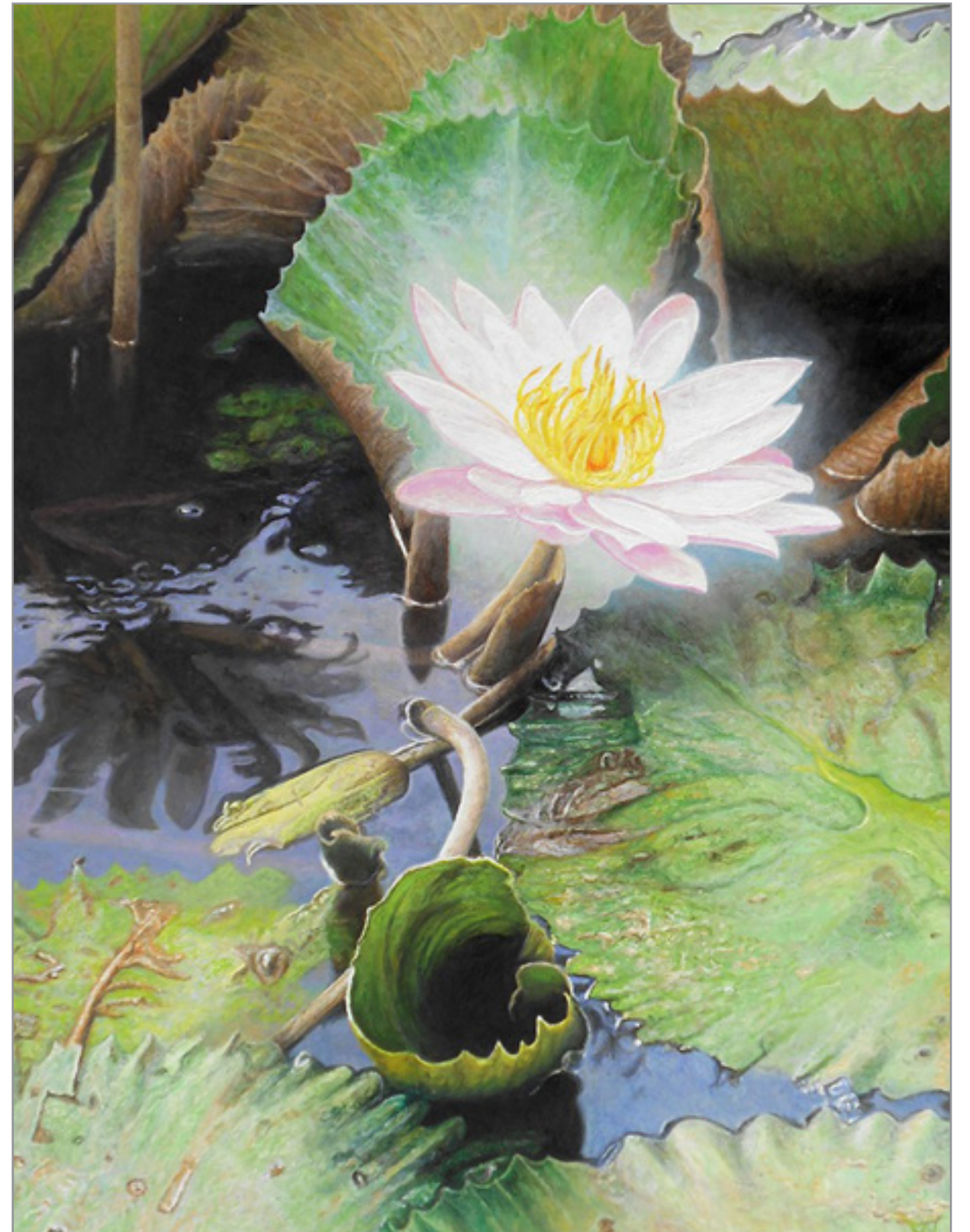


Detail - As above, so below - oil on canvas 180 x 150 cm.



Detail - As above, so below - oil on canvas 180 x 150 cm.

Divas - oil on canvas 100 x 125 cm.





Fallen Blossoms - oil on canvas 125 x 100 cm.



Pink Star - oil on canvas 100 x 125 cm.



Firefly - oil on canvas 125 x 100 cm.



Red sun - oil on canvas 300 x 180 cm.



Evening - oil on canvas 200 x 125 cm.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Mark Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photo-grapher. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. In February 2019 the third publication was launched, *LE Children Poetry & Writing* (now renamed *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*). He has edited, designed and produced all of *Live Encounters'* 187 publications (upto July 2020). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*.
<https://www.amazon.com/Mark-Ulyseas/e/B01FUUQVBG>
<https://liveencounters.net/mark-ulyseas/>



LIFE MATTERS

MARK ULYSEAS

When a black man is publicly killed by a policeman in the West all hell breaks loose. A black man's life in the West is more precious than a black man's life in Africa, or for that matter anywhere else(?). Perhaps that is why the Rwanda Massacre did not elicit a response from the very people who are presently resorting to arson, looting and mindless violence in the West. In the Rwanda Genocide 800,000 blacks were killed by other blacks in a 100-day spree of slaughter (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506>). And this is just one example where blacks have slaughtered their own kind. But *these* lives don't matter because they are *not* being killed in the West.

When the USA and Britain invaded Iraq, bombed and all but destroyed the country, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, there was a deafening silence by those presently violently 'rising up' against racial discrimination in the West. Where were these people then?

When terrorists attacked a media office in Paris and killed people *Face Book* was flooded with 'Pray for Paris'. Where was the grief or even a semblance of genuine concern for the people of Iraq, innocent people who had done no harm to either USA or Britain?

What occurs in the West is the yardstick by which the rest of the world is judged.
What is done to the rest of the world is inconsequential.

When Libya was deliberately dismantled by Western powers not much happened on the streets of the West to protest such action. Now, black slaves are sold in open markets in Libya for as little as 200 dollars <https://time.com/longform/african-slave-trade/>. Where are Obama and Hilary Clinton who spoke eloquently about 'civil & human rights' with emphasis on the Middle East?

When Obama accepted the Nobel Peace Prize for doing nothing and spoke about a 'just war', increased bombing in Afghanistan etc. he was greeted with standing ovations. His drone campaign killed many innocent men, women and children. Obama ended his bloody reign by dropping over 26,000 bombs in 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/09/america-dropped-26171-bombs-2016-obama-legacy>.

But Obama is eulogised in his country because he worked for the 'benefit' of his country, not the world and because he was black US citizens could shrug off the white man's burden as if the country's historical wrongs could be absolved by his election to the most powerful office. What he did in the international arena was, tragically, of no concern to the citizens of his country. This has been the modus operandi of US Presidents since John F Kennedy, who 'authorised the use of deadly defoliant chemicals' to be dropped on (then) south Vietnam, on November 1961

https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/557621/KracheMorris_georgetown_0076D_11888.pdf?sequ

Today over three million Vietnamese are maimed, the second generation of horrible and genetically disfigured children. But no one in the West appears to be too concerned about this.

What a shame. Their lives are of no matter.

None of these so called mass murders can be deemed a holocaust for this term is exclusively reserved for Europeans and what happened in World War Two in Europe.

What occurs in the West is the yardstick by which the rest of the world is judged. What is done to the rest of the world is inconsequential.



Agent Orange victim, second generation, Vietnam.
Screen grab from *Unreported World* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMzJvwG2rsQ>

So it would appear that the lives of animals in farm factories in the West and those of people in the rest of the world are in the same category - disposable.



A pig in a factory farm.
Photograph https://www.humanesociety.org/?credit=tw_post_06252020

And why should one stop here? The West continues to lecture all countries about equal rights and the much abused phrase 'human rights', while it has 'factorised' the production of animal body parts on an industrial scale. Abuse of farm factory animals in inhumane conditions has been extensively documented across the USA, UK and the European Union.

Some facts of U.S. farmed animals.

Broiler chickens (99.9%) live on factory farms

Turkeys (99.8%) live on factory farms

Egg chickens (98.2%) live on factory farms

Pigs (98.3%) live on factory farms

Cows (70.4%) live on factory farms

<https://sentientmedia.org/u-s-farmed-animals-live-on-factory-farms/>

So it would appear that the lives of animals in farm factories in the West and those of people in the rest of the world are in the same category - disposable.

And then we have slavery.

The toppling of statues by sanctimonious crowds who feel they can erase history by their actions have failed to understand the very basic nature of their present culture – profit at any cost.

An Irish relative suggested that the statues should remain but a 'bio' added to each one to educate all about the horrendous actions of the exalted figures. This, in a way, would add a constructive perspective to enlightening present and future generations in the West.

Interestingly, slave trade also extends to those who are pathetically underpaid by corporations...in many areas the minimum wage is not paid to bona fide citizens. We can conveniently 'overlook' the *illegals* that work on farms, and who are often held captive by 'modern day slave traders'?

Some references

US Threatens International Criminal Court (15/03/2019) - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/15/us-threatens-international-criminal-court>
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And then there is the lucrative business of buying and selling of underage children, some as young as a few years old, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. (The FBI's Joseph Campbell says child exploitation in the US has reached near-epidemic levels - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-33592634> . Girls as old as 9 are being bought and sold - <https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/02/26/walnut-creek-arrest-reveals-secret-world-of-child-sex-trafficking-girls-as-you-nereg-as-9-allegedly-being-bought-and-sold-in-the-bay-area/>).

Slavery was never abolished like some western countries would have the world believe. It has just taken on another ominous avatar. Slavery has become institutionalised with the manufacture of products by slave labour in other countries and sold in the West. Purchase of these products makes the consumer complicit in the slave trade. Ironically, many of these consumers are out on the streets protesting against edifices of slave traders of the past.

The astounding statistics of cruelty towards farm animals, wild animals and blood sport (killing of wild animals and unarmed people of all hues) in the West, particularly in the USA, seems to defy all sensibilities commonly associated with a 'civilised state'. But who speaks for all *these* living beings? And why is it that when words are spoken it is always in *black or white*, and not about true justice for all living beings?

Life is not only precious for some in a particular country. If reparations are to be paid to the descendants of slaves then all those enslaved today in the sex industry, farming etc. must all be recompensed. And further the descendants of black slave traders in Africa and present day traders in slaves must also pay their share... Justice for all or justice for none.

Selective indignation and rigorous enforcement of social labelling assists in creating a failed society/ State, preceded, of course, by a violent form of liberalism that now appears to be throttling true freedom by preventing any form of speech that faintly addresses inconsistencies of perceived virtues. A warped narration based on misinformation, disinformation, selective morality and the twisted rule of truth is now fast becoming the 'new normal'.

The mob has spoken, all must abide.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

10TH ANNIVERSARY 2010-2019

Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JULY 2020



BABY MONKEY STOLEN FROM ITS MOTHER AND BEING SOLD ON THE STREET FOR \$25.
PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ULYSEAS