

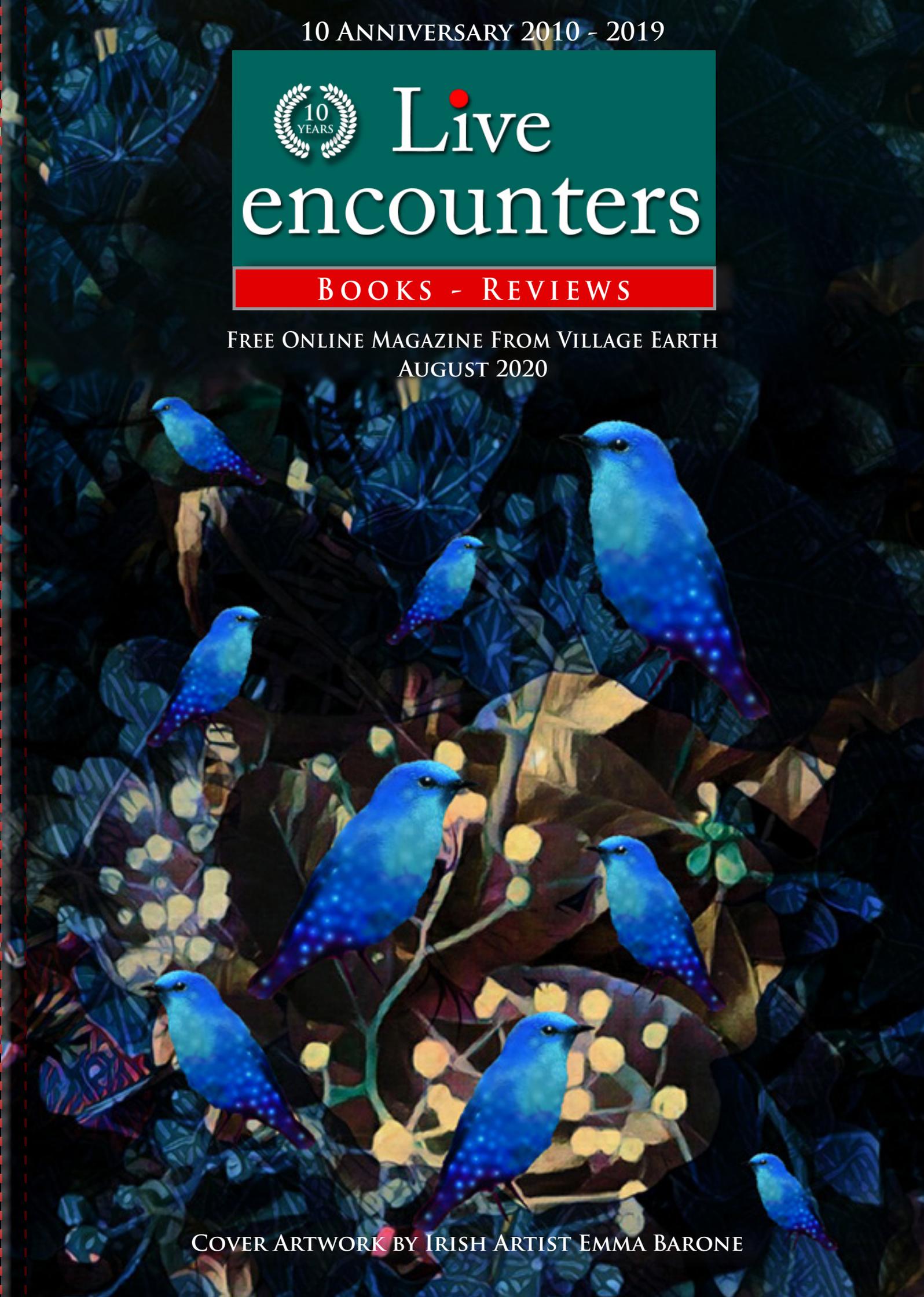
10 ANNIVERSARY 2010 - 2019



# Live encounters

BOOKS - REVIEWS

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
AUGUST 2020



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:

*Live Encounters Magazine* (2010), *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* (2016), *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers* (2019) and now, *Live Encounters Books* (August 2020).

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas  
Publisher/Editor  
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## CONTRIBUTORS

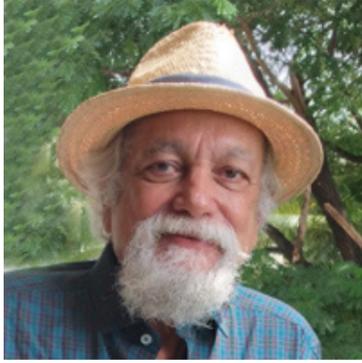
It is only in *quietness* that true passion can exist to create life sustaining memories. In the *quietness* of reading books we inhabit memories of other worlds, worlds beyond the doors of *our* Time.

Books are here to guide us on our journey through these doors. And writers and poets are here to create these books for us.

Let us be thankful and buy books to read and share with the world.

– Mark Ulyseas

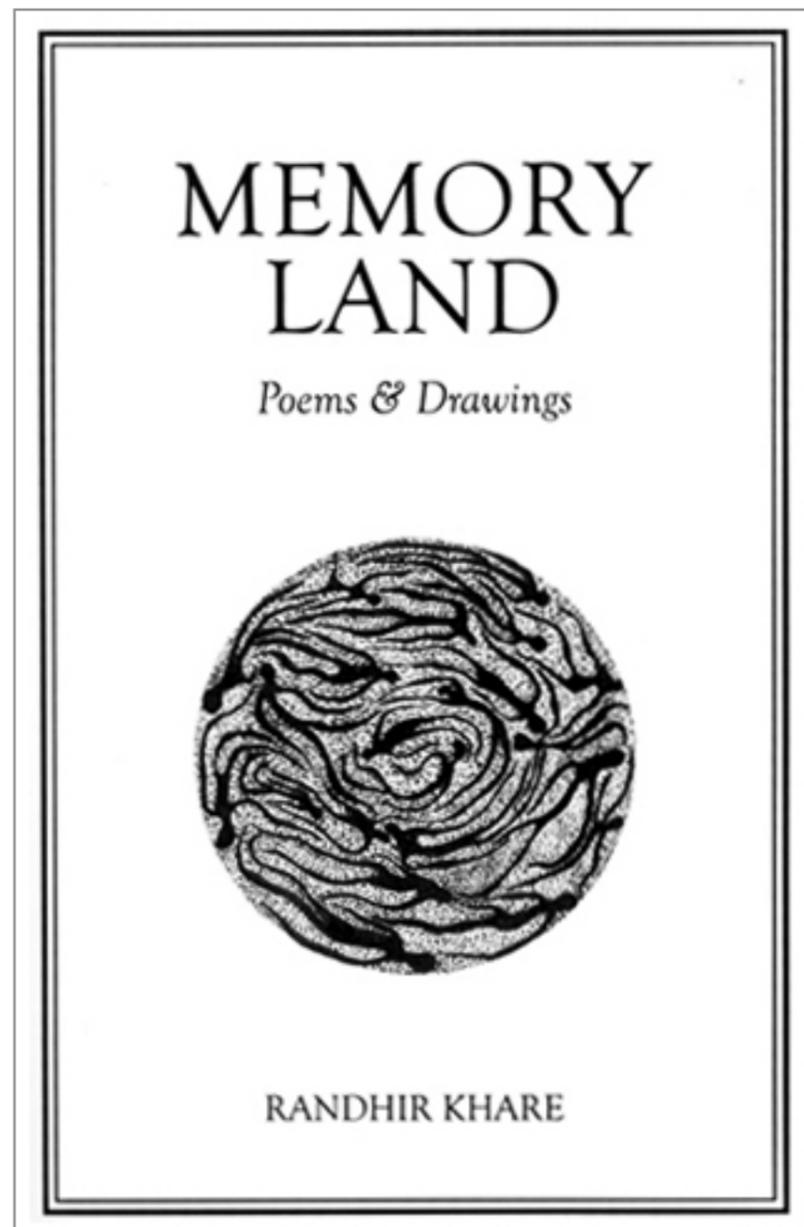
ATMAN MEHTA / RANDHIR KHARE  
 JACK GRADY / TERRY MCDONAGH  
 GEORGE ELLIOT CLARKE / ANN YIN  
 MICHAEL DENNIS / DAVID RIGSBEE  
 JOHN LIDDY / ANTON FLOYD  
 DAMIAN SMYTH / DR MARY O'DONNELL  
 CHRIS KINSEY / DR MARY O'DONNELL  
 CAROLYNE VAN DER MEER / MICHAEL FARRY  
 DAVID MORGAN / DR GRETA SYKES  
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 DR MARY O'DONNELL / JEAN O'BRIEN  
 M HEATH BECKETT / YUYUTSU SHARMA  
 TERRY MCDONAGH / JACK GRADY  
 JAMES WALTON / JOHN MAXWELL O'BRIEN



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 seven solo exhibitions all explore themes of identity, belonging and the struggle to stay human in a violent and fragmented world. He has more recently spear-headed an initiative to enrich formal education through the experience of the arts. Randhir is a founding contributor to Live Encounters Magazine. <https://randhirkhare.in/>



Atman Mehta is a poet, writer and filmmaker based in Pune, India. He was the producer for 'Peepal Tree,' a feature film that deals with illegal tree-cutting in cities, and has written and directed several short films with social and ecological themes. The script of his current project, based on a true story about a domestic worker, was chosen for the Producer's Lab at NFDC Film Bazaar. He has co-authored a coming-of-age non-fiction book, 'The Wind In Our Sails,' which was published by Vishwakarma and launched at the Pune International Literary Festival. His love for planting trees, a zero waste and vegan lifestyle, has led him to start successful community-wide initiatives and work towards the change he seeks.



## ATMAN MEHTA Review of RANDHIR KHARE'S *Memory Land*

### 'The Inner Chronicle of Who We Are'

'Memory Land' explores the region of the Dang forests in Gujarat through an exquisite collection of poems and drawings. It is a soulful reverie that adds to Randhir Khare's distinguished body of work.

The collection is rooted in the questions that folk tradition and modernity encounter when faced with each other. Readers will find it engaging that the poems and drawings evolve independently through the book. This offers something unique as a whole – a poetic preservation of the region's cultural and ecological diversity, which is fast disappearing through the cracks of time. We become observers of the ever shifting lines of existence and are watchful, in equal measure, of the pain of an old tree being felled and the hope offered by a seedling.

The writing and line art is reflective and imaginative in turns, evoking poetic images that stand as startlingly original. We traverse the inner sanctum of the place, its people and the poet, with unflinching empathy and inclusiveness. The pages gently lead us through mythic terrains that mingle effortlessly with inspired visions of reality – inducing a meditative state.

This love letter to the Dangs pays homage to the spirit of its beings and culminates in a subtle yet overwhelming sense of an all-pervasive 'oneness'. This lends the volume a quiet compassion and timeless relevance. It is no doubt a beautiful work but also an important one, and deserves to be shared with, and read by, a wide and varied audience.

<https://vishwakarmapublications.com/product/memory-land-poems-drawings/>



Terry McDonagh, is an Irish writer of international acclaim. He has taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and was International School Drama Director. He's published eleven poetry collections as well as letters, prose and poetry for young people. A much traveled poet who has facilitated and read at festivals in more than twenty countries in Europe, Asia and Australia. His poetry has been translated into German and Indonesian. His most recent poetry collection, *Fourth Floor Flat- 44 Cantos - Arlen House* was published in 2018. He's completing his next collection, *Two Notes for Home* to be published in 2021. He's recently returned to live in Ireland having lived in German for thirty-seven years. Terry is a founding contributor of Live Encounters Magazine. <http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com/>



Jack Grady is a founder member of the Ox Mountain Poets, based in Ballina, County Mayo, Ireland. His poetry has been published online and in print in Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Canada, Portugal, Indonesia, India, and Nepal. He read in Morocco at the *Festival International Poésie Marrakech* in 2016 as the poet invited by its committee to represent Ireland and in the same capacity at the *Poesia a Sul* festival, in Olhão, Portugal in 2019. His poetry collection *Resurrection*, published by Lapwing Publications in 2017, was nominated for the T.S. Eliot Prize.

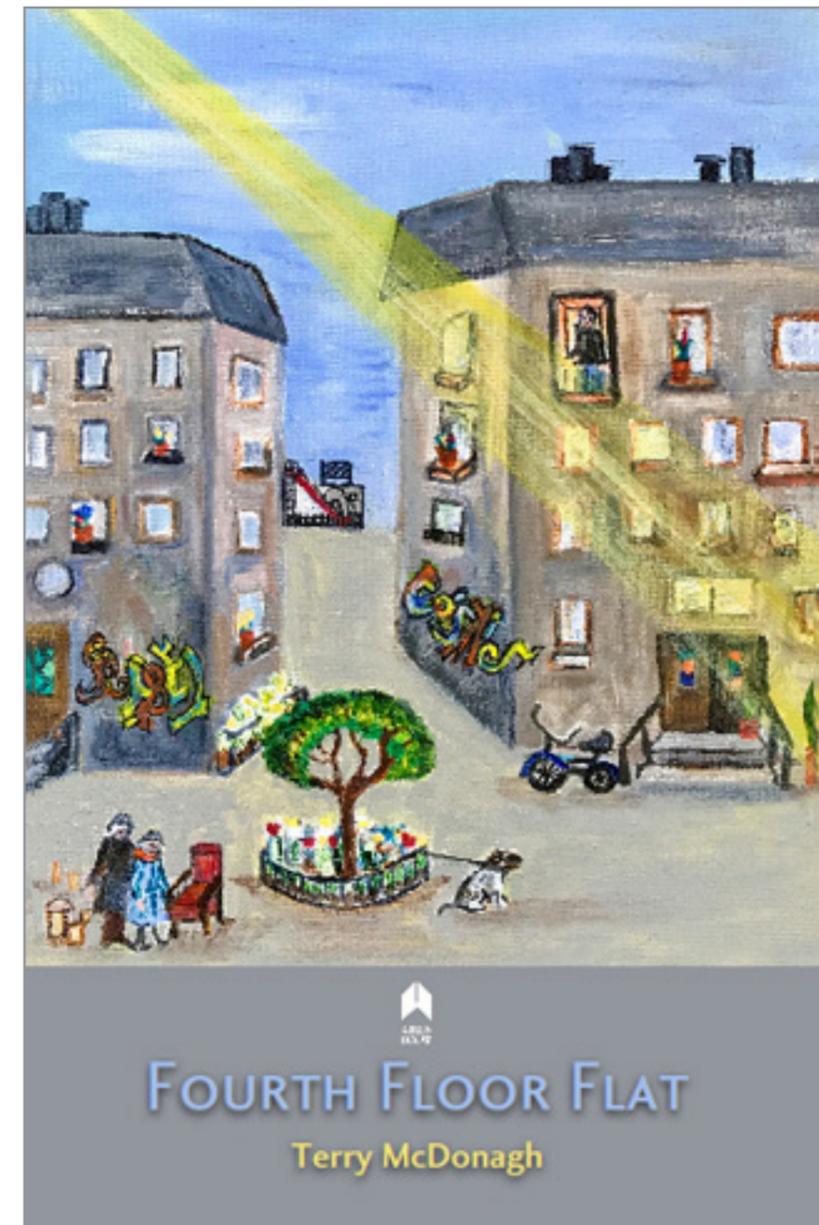
## JACK GRADY Review of TERRY MCDONAGH'S *Fourth Floor Flat*

Terry McDonagh's 'Fourth Floor Flat' is a collection of 44 poems, or one long confessional work divided into 44 cantos. For more than thirty-five years, Terry has divided his time between his native Ireland and Hamburg, Germany, and it is from a flat in that city where he observes the passing of life in the street below and reflects upon his own life and experiences, his successes and failures, his childhood in Ireland, his faith (or lack of); his hopes and fears, doubts and anxieties. When not physically leaving the flat to do such things as a poetry reading and then downing 'the profits with a gulp', he travels from his flat via the magic carpet of memory, and, on that journey, his iconoclasm asserts itself. A particular target is his Roman Catholic upbringing, where, in the poem 'Covering Up', he writes *I grew up/in a confessional box where/no day went by without a sliver/of guilt to beat myself with./At school I retreated into a void/between flagellations*. While he targets all our controllers, secular as well as religious, their dogma and their world - *a dark, buggler of a place* - he celebrates the natural world and the innocence of youth. He urges us to be free of our restrictions, whether imposed from outside or from within, to *gather up the bliss and thrills of youth/go to the fields to be young again*. 'Fourth Floor Flat' is an honest and exceptionally insightful poetic work, rich in musicality and imagery.

*Fourth Floor Flat*, published by Arlen House, can be ordered from Mayo Books at: <https://www.mayobooks.ie/Terry-McDonagh-Fourth-Floor-Flat-9781851321964>

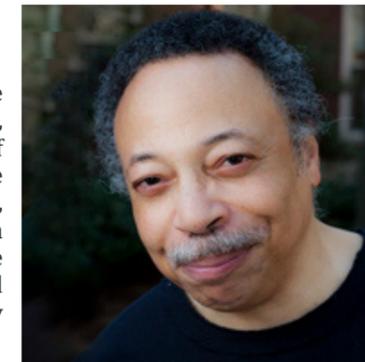
Syracuse University Press at: <https://press.syr.edu/supress-books/148/fourth-floor-flat/>

It can also be ordered from Amazon, Kenny's Galway [www.kennys.ie](http://www.kennys.ie) and all good bookshops.





Anna Yin was [Mississauga's Inaugural Poet Laureate](#) (2015-2017) and Ontario representative to the League of Canadian Poets (2013-2016). She has authored five collections of poetry. Her poems/translations have appeared at ARC Poetry, New York Times, China Daily, CBC Radio, World Journal etc. Anna won the 2005 Ted Plantos Memorial Award, two MARTYs, two scholarships from West Chester University Poetry Conference, three grants from OAC and 2013 Professional Achievement Award from CPAC. She performed her poetry on Parliament Hill and has been featured at 2015 Austin International Poetry Festival and 2017 National poetry month project etc. She also teaches Poetry Alive workshops at schools, colleges and libraries. Her website: [annapoetry.com](http://annapoetry.com)



The 4th Poet Laureate of Toronto (2012-15) and the 7th Parliamentary/Canadian Poet Laureate (2016-17), George Elliott Clarke is a revered artist in song, drama, fiction, screenplay, essays, and poetry. Born in Windsor, Nova Scotia, in 1960, Clarke was educated at the University of Waterloo, Dalhousie University, and Queen's University. A professor of English at the University of Toronto, Clarke has taught at Duke, McGill, the University of British Columbia, and Harvard. He holds eight honorary doctorates, plus appointments to the Order of Nova Scotia and the Order of Canada at the rank of Officer. His recognitions include the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Fellows Prize, Governor-General's Award for Poetry, National Magazine Gold Award for Poetry, Dartmouth Book Award for Fiction, Eric Hoffer Book Award for Poetry (US), and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Achievement Award. *Photo Credit: Harvard University.*

## GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE Review of ANNA YIN'S *Seven Nights With The Chinese Zodiac*

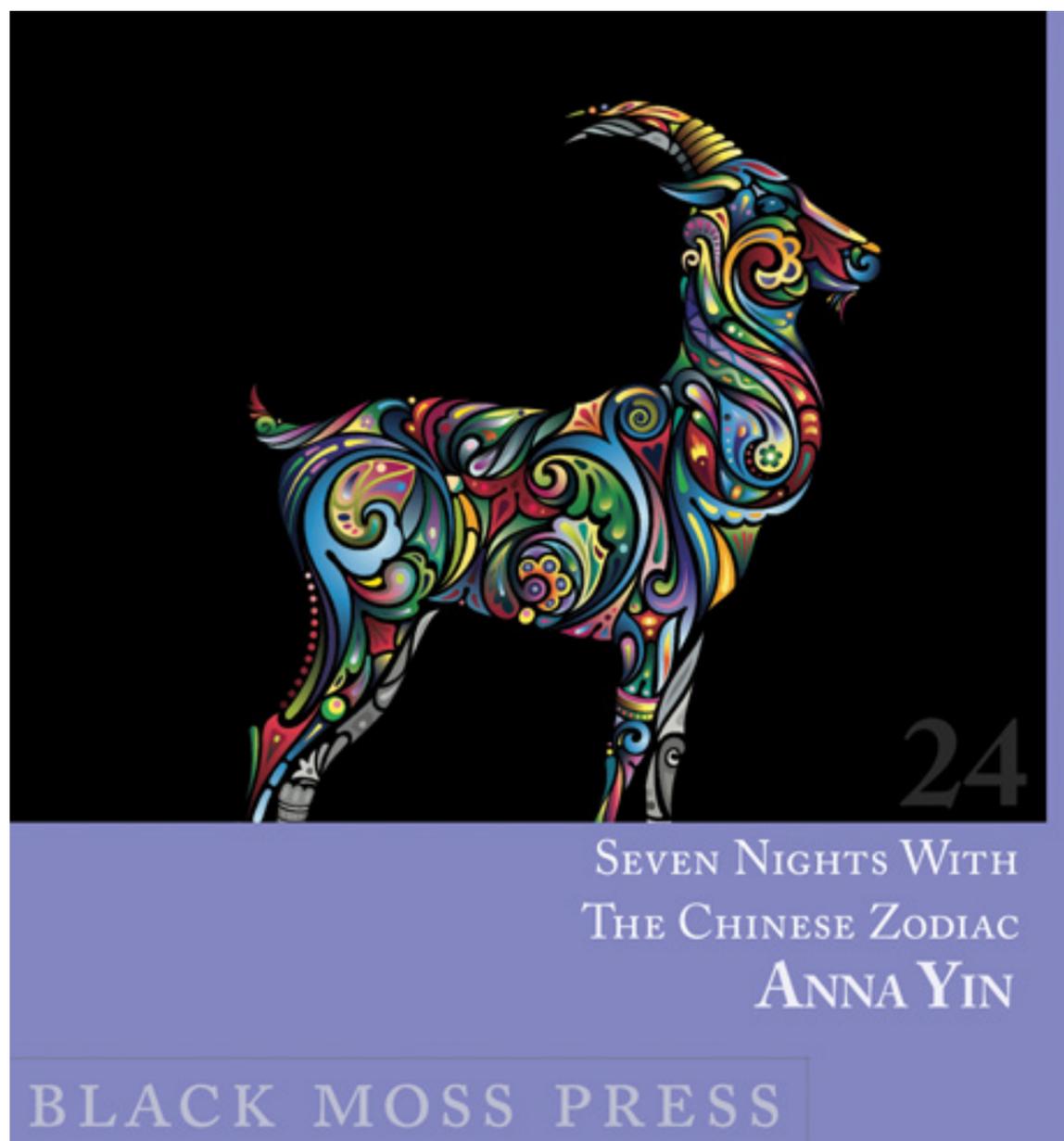
Anna Yin is a startling dreamer. Poems that seem Romantic veer into Surrealism or Symbolism. Tutored in Sylvia Plath and William Carlos Williams, among many other poets (mainly American and Canadian), Yin issues poems that are nightmare dreams or dreamy nightmares: Here's a world where the natural becomes unnatural, the unnatural natural: "the police-monkey escorts a well-suited rat / followed by his cloned brothers..." Some poems are parables, such as the story of a man- a father-who refuses to leave his home, even while it and others are being reduced to rubble: "I received a copy of the photo in the local newspaper. / My father looked so small on the top of the ruins. / It was titled, 'The Last Temple.'"

In another poem, the speaker says, "You are tired of his / molding, over and over, / thrashing, nailing / into you." There's a fierce feminism here, reinforced by readings of Dot Livesay and Dame Atwood. Though it's tricky following Yin's wicked, impressionistic juxtapositions, her painterly imagery is deliciously lustrous.

Yin is endlessly perspicacious, endlessly compelling: "The autumn gusts feel warm / as if it's spring.... / last night by accident I cut my finger... / slowly, on the rice paper, red roses grew."

She brings to Canadian poetry a sense of classicism and aestheticism and minimalism, all nicely mixed up with sensuality.

Yin's bravura poems – so exquisite and extraordinary – merit bravo upon bravo.



[https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Anna+Yin+poetry&i=stripbooks-intl-ship&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Anna+Yin+poetry&i=stripbooks-intl-ship&ref=nb_sb_noss)  
<https://blackmosspress.com/dd-product/seven-nights-with-the-chinese-zodiac/>



David Rigsbee's recent works include *This Much I Can Tell You* and *Not Alone in My Dancing: Essays and Reviews*, both from Black Lawrence Press. His honors include a Pushcart Prize, an award from the Academy of American Poets, two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, fellowships to American Academy in Rome (NEH), the Djerassi Foundation, and The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. He has published critical books on the poetry of Joseph Brodsky and Carolyn Kizer and coedited *Invited Guest: An Anthology of 20th Century Southern Poetry*. *Dante: The Paradiso* is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry.

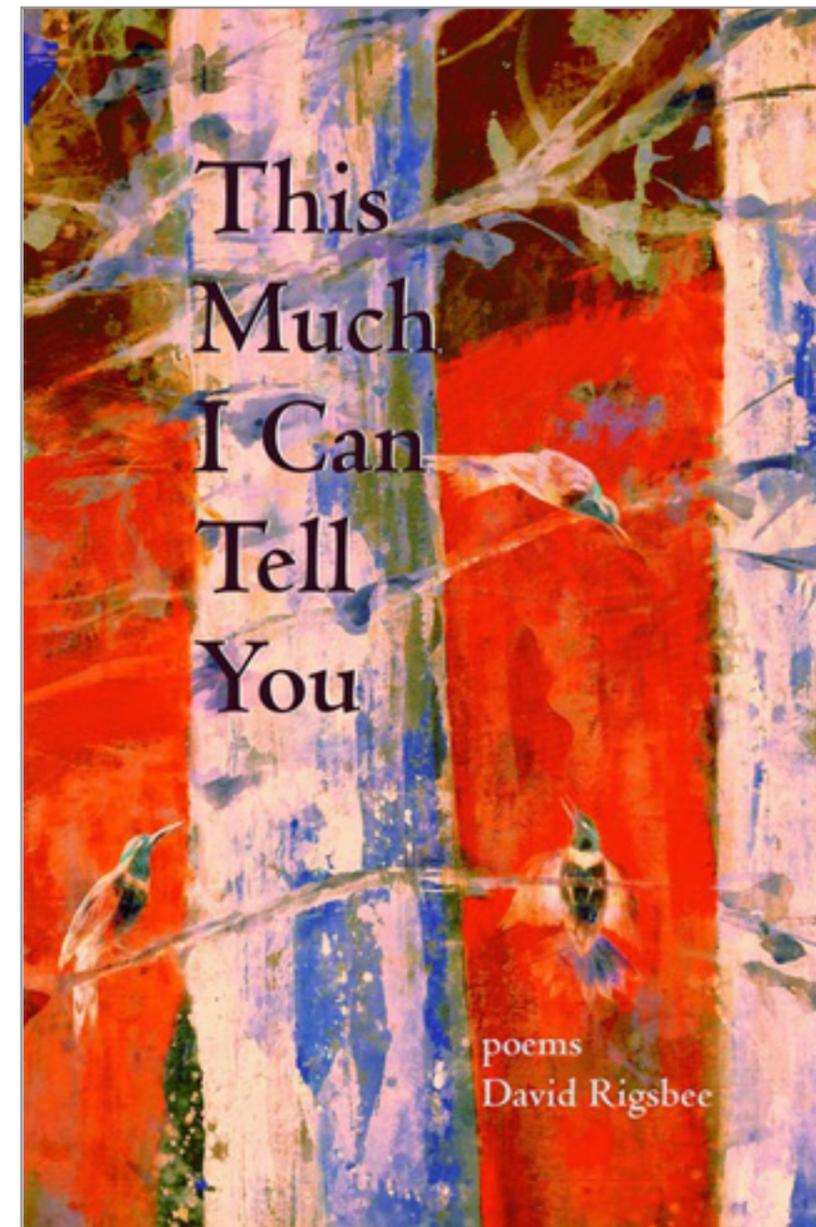


Born in London, Ontario, in 1956, Michael Dennis published his first poems in the early '70s. His poems have appeared in scores of journals and more than 30 books and chapbooks, including *Coming Ashore on Fire* (Burnt Wine Press, 2009), *Fade to Blue* (Pulp Press, 1988), *Sometimes Passion, Sometimes Pain* (Ordinary Press, 1982). From 2013 to 2020, Michael wrote in-depth responses to poetry books he admired on his blog, "Today's book of poetry." He lives in Ottawa.

## MICHAEL DENNIS

### Review of DAVID RIGSBEE'S *This Much I Can Tell You*

In *This Much I Can Tell You* you wonder/wander about within the comfortable environs of superbly constructed poems, almost formal in their elegant narratives, and almost Chandler like. Rigsbee has no problem with holding three or four disparate ideas together with nothing between them but air, brief moments in time, and slight of hand. Being the craftsman/old-pro poet/juggler that he is Rigsbee brings it all home with an astute and gentle logic. Rigsbee people's his poetry with every character from a racist southern Governor Wallace to the German philosopher Hegel and Roy Orbison singing all the high notes and Paul Valery not singing at all. Singers and philosophers litter Rigsbee's poems like touchstones. You might think that these characters are distracting but in fact Rigsbee uses our knowing these names and their stories to access a vaster recess in our curious brains. *This Much I Can Tell You* coils around these associations and our prior knowledge. David Rigsbee has a bigger plan than we first see, this discourse is in search of truth and joy. *This Much I Can Tell You* sets a firm tone, Rigsbee has important stories to tell us and wants to present as a stern advocate for history's firm lessons. But ultimately hope and joy tip the scales. David Rigsbee's instantly accessible narratives burn brightly. Along the way he forges out a voice that knows what Mishima knew, explains it all like Auden. How good is that.



<https://www.amazon.com/This-Much-Can-Tell-You/dp/1625579675>

## ANTON FLOYD

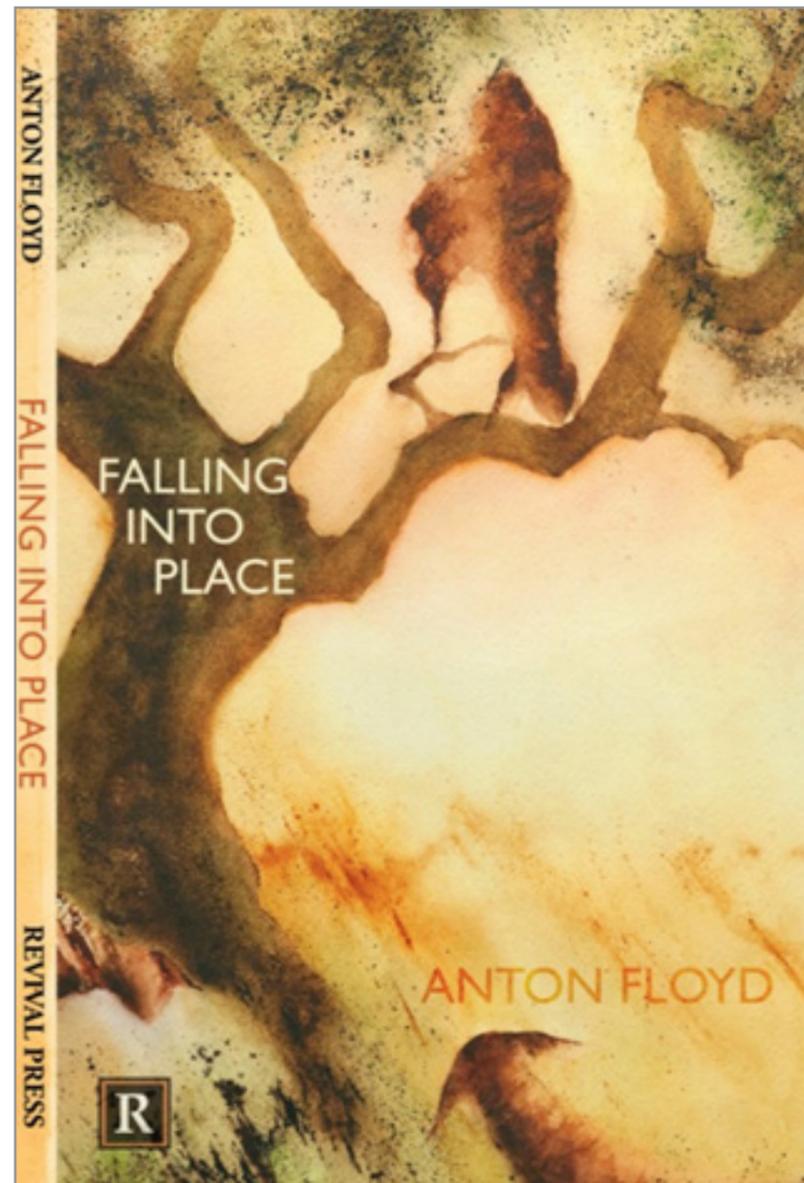


Anton Floyd, born in Egypt, lives in West Cork, Ireland. Widely published, he is a member of The Irish Haiku Society and several times winner of International Haiku Competitions; poems in *Between the Leaves*, new haiku writing from Ireland, editor Anatoly Kudriavitsky (Arlen House, 2016). His debut collection is *Falling into Place* (2018 Revival Press). He edited *Remembrance Suite* - sonnets by Shirin Sabri and *Point by Point*, an international anthology (2018, Glóir). He received the 2019 Literary Award by the Dazzling Spark Arts Foundation (University of Macau, China). A new collection *Depositions* is forthcoming from Revival Press in 2020. Photo © Carole Anne Floyd

## JOHN LIDDY



John Liddy, born in County Cork but raised in Limerick, is a poet whose 11 collections include *Wine and Hope/Vino y Esperanza* (1999, Archione Editorial Madrid), *Cast-a-Net* (2003, Archione Editorial Madrid), *The Well: New and Selected Poems* (2007, Revival Press), *Gleanings* (2010, Revival Press). His most recent book is *Madrid* (2018, Revival Press). He co-founded *The Stony Thursday Book* with Jim Burke and edits occasional issues. He is on the advisory board of *The Hong Kong Review*. Liddy currently lives in Madrid, where he works as a teacher/librarian. Photo © Carmen Lafuente <https://sites.google.com/site/revivalpress/john-liddy>



## JOHN LIDDY Review of ANTON FLOYD'S *Falling into Place*

I welcome this first collection by Anton Floyd (*Falling Into Place* from Revival Press, 2018) with open arms because it is a breath of fresh air on the Irish poetry scene. A long time in the making, it is a very revealing book about the poet and his makeup. The places in 'Falling Into Place' are unveiled with each poem to make a whole, compact collection. There is also the idea running throughout the collection that language (and poetry itself) is an exploration of form. In Floyd's voice there's an elegaic undertone of time and loss. These features cohere, for instance, in the title poem of the collection:

*...Falling into place,  
wherever there's open ground  
tiny seeds like silent letters  
knit themselves into the soil.  
There, each will sleep in winter dark  
dowsing a dream of itself...*

The poems move in and out of each other, revealing greater depth in theme and approach. Nature is his forte though it would be misleading to label the collection this way. The reader will find between its covers touchstones of Homer's *Odyssey*, O'Grady's *Wandering Celt*, Serrat's *Mediterranean*, the poet's own spiritual journey, love of family and friends, Cyprus and, of course, Ireland with its social and cultural diversities; worked on and brought together under the shadow of An tSeithe Mhór, from where it all falls into place.

<https://limerickwriterscentre.com/product/falling-into-place/>  
<https://antonfloyd.wordpress.com/>



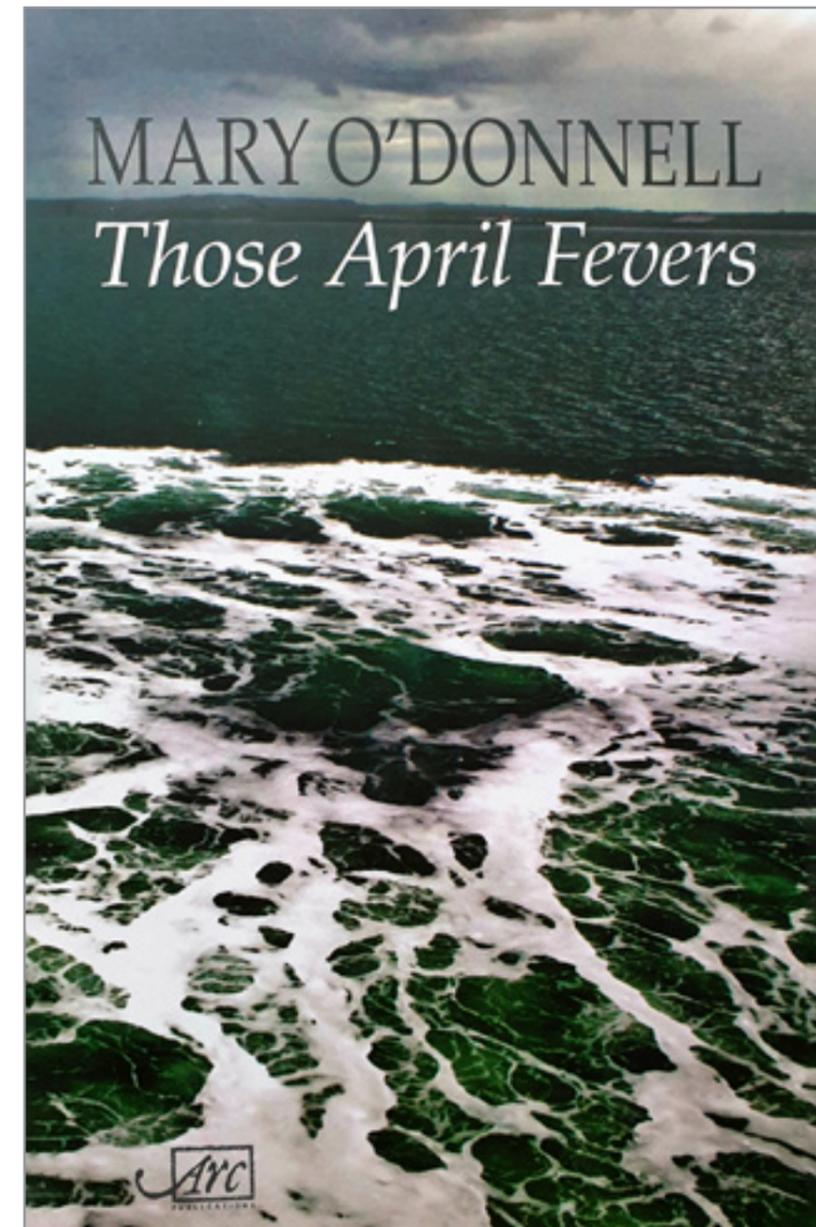
Poet and fiction-writer Dr Mary O'Donnell's work is often cited as key in expanding the horizons of Ireland's traditionally male-dominated literary world. O'Donnell has published numerous collections of poetry, including *Spiderwoman's Third Avenue Rhapsody* (1993). Other poetry includes *Unlegendary Heroes* (1998), and *Those April Fevers* (2015). Her new collection of poetry *Massacre of the Birds* is published by Salmon in October 2020. Novels include *The Light-Makers*, *The Elysium Testament*, and *Where They Lie*. She has received numerous awards including prizes from the Fish International Short Story Competition, the Cardiff International Poetry Competition, the VS Pritchett Short Story Competition and the Listowel Writers' Week Short Story Award, as well as poetry awards from Listowel Writers' Week. Her poetry has been translated to Hungarian, and her short fiction to Spanish. She has been a member of the Irish artists' affiliation Aosdana since 2001. *Those April Fevers* was my seventh collection and came out in 2015, cover by photographer Mark Granier.



Damian Smyth was born in Downpatrick, Co Down, in 1962. His stage play *Soldiers of the Queen*, a family saga with a backdrop of the Boer War, premiered at the Belfast Festival in 2002 and was shortlisted for the Stewart Parker Prize. His six collections of verse are *Downpatrick Races* (2000), *The Down Recorder* (2004), *Lamentations* (2010), *Market Street* (2010), *Mesopotamia* (Templar 2014) and *English Street* (Templar 2018). *Irish Street* is due in 2021. He is Head of Literature and Drama with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in Belfast.

**DAMIAN SMYTH**  
 Review of **DR MARY O'DONNELL'S**  
*Those April Fevers*

From her stunning debut in *Reading the Sunflowers* in September (1990) through her several volumes building to a sustained and formidable career, O'Donnell's has always been one of the fierce voices of poetry: in all her themes, whether intimate, public, reflective or mythic, there is a common fearlessness of vision coupled with profound and sometimes unexpected and humane understanding. The poems here consider history, legend, painting, science, geography, love, disappearance and recovery – “measuring the distance to/a world that tilted savagery from its cup” – with an extraordinary and persistent delicacy of phrasing, at all times drawing newness out of the routine and the taken-for-granted, whether in physical or psychic location, but nonetheless exposing complacency in often chilling terms. From “the murder of infants in temperate suburbs” to a familiar, beautiful world flooded by climate disaster and accessed only by sea life, O'Donnell articulates a mature, vital, angry, political consciousness entirely fitting as the nation reaches the centenary of its most disruptive and revolutionary moment. What an imagination this is for our day.



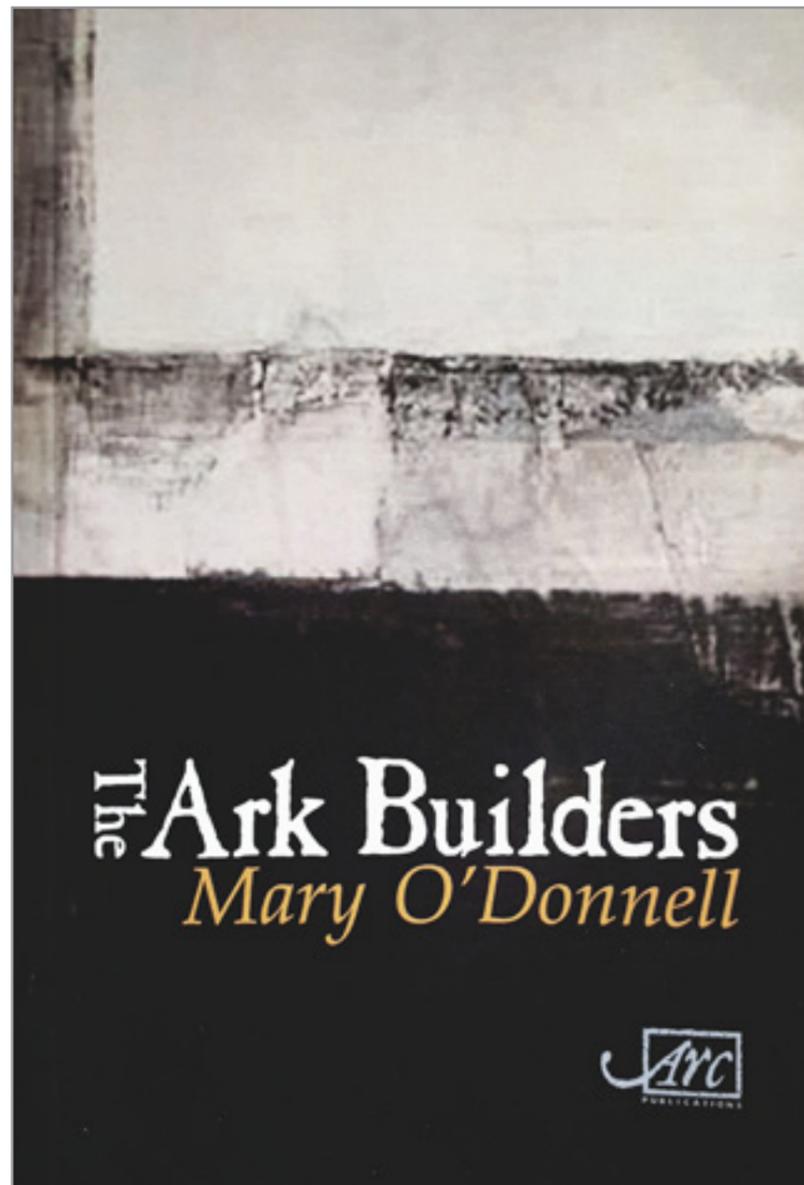
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Chris Kinsey lives in Wales. Her writings are rooted in the landscapes and people of the Mid Wales borders. She was BBC Wildlife Poet of the year and won Natur Cymru's prose competition in 2012. Chris has five published poetry collections: *Kung Fu Lullabies and Cure for a Crooked Smile* (Ragged Raven Press) and *Swarf* (Smokestack Books); *Muddy Fox* (Rack Press) and *From Rowan Ridge* (Fair Acre Press, 2019). She has also written short dramas for the BBC and was a reviewer for: *Envoi*, *New Welsh Review* and *Planet*.



CHRIS KINSEY  
Review of DR MARY O'DONNELL'S  
*The Ark Builders*

The collection which keeps calling me back because it is enduringly rich and interesting is Mary O'Donnell's *The Ark Builders*. This is her sixth collection and as meditations on experiences like mortality, histories, and concerns about climate change, they feel as though they could only have been made as poems – no other form would have allowed such sensuous, physical, expression of thinking.

O'Donnell's concern for speech and languages goes way deeper than the social, "wilderness of etiquette." She is an acute listener to the elements, to the, "wind, skilled articulator, artful dancer", to the past at a 'Fairy Rath' where the "Old gods lean in close." She advocates listening to the land. In 'Only on the Edge', even "earnest" conservationists, "forget to press an ear / to the lip of the land where language / still flowers, seeking pagan ears / and a modern mouth." The poet ventures to many edges, 'secret states' and the liminal. She intends "to write the silence."

Wry, gentle humour is a saving grace, particularly in the poems about women ageing. In 'Girls of the Nation' where, "Plumage is maintained by pensions", there's "A gang flight through the aisles of M & S - / luxury, prepared dinners, new thermals – and / Midnight blue balcony bras, just in case." In cafes they are, "Holding their breath as someone else's memory / falls off the shelf," while "Flights of meaning / Moults into nothingness."

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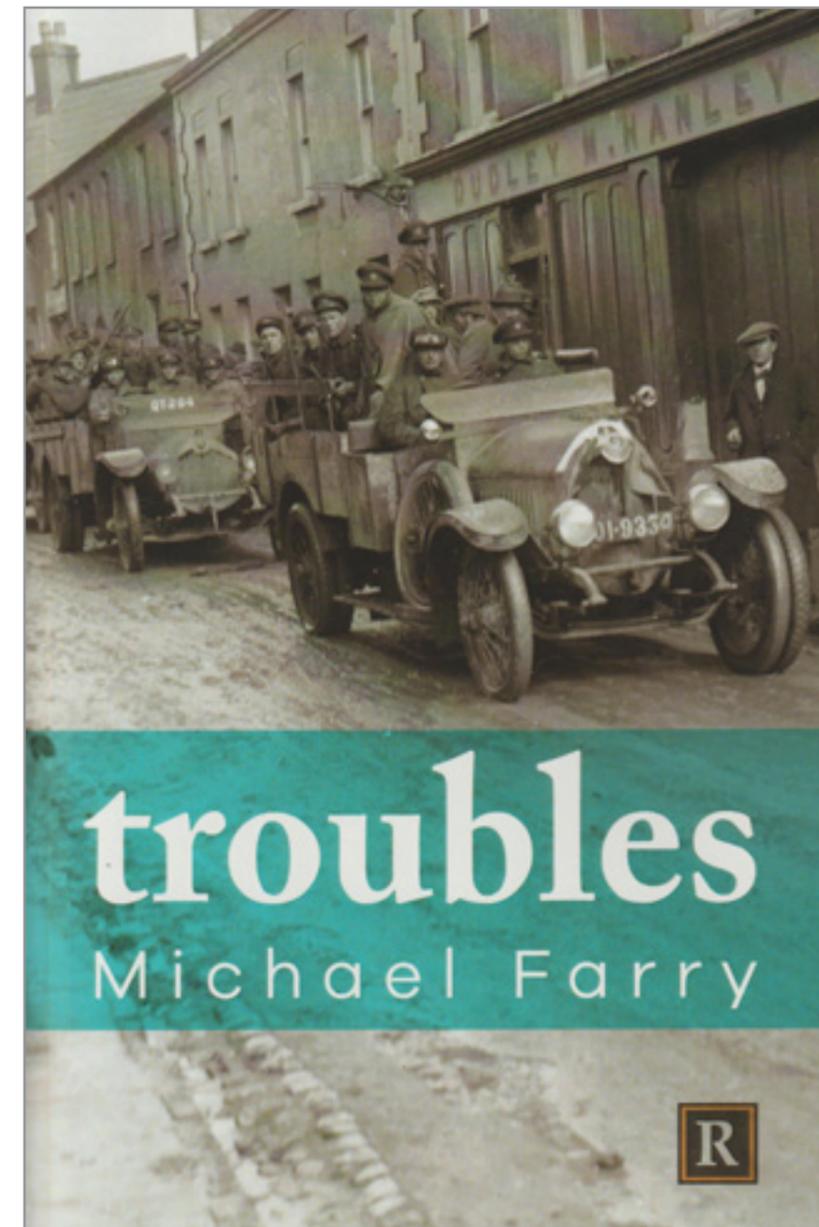
Michael Farry's latest poetry collection, *Troubles* (2020), is published by Revival Press, Limerick. Previous collections were *Asking for Directions* (Doghouse Books, 2012) and *The Age of Glass* (Revival, 2017). His poetry has been widely published in Ireland and abroad and has won prizes in various competitions. A founder member of Boyne Writers Group, he was editor of the group's magazine, *Boyne Berries*, from 2007 to 2014. He is a retired teacher and has a history PhD from Trinity College, Dublin. He has written and published widely on the history of the Irish war of independence and civil war.



Carolyn Van Der Meer is a Montreal journalist, public relations professional and university lecturer. She has undergraduate and graduate degrees in literature from University of Ottawa and Concordia University respectively, and a Graduate Certificate in Creative Writing from the Humber School for Writers. She has published articles, essays, short stories and poems internationally. Her first book, *Motherlode: A Mosaic of Dutch Wartime Experience*, was published by Wilfrid Laurier University Press in 2014. Her second book, a collection of poetry entitled *Journeywoman*, was published in 2017 by Toronto-based Inanna Publications. *Heart of Goodness: The Life of Marguerite Bourgeys in 30 Poems* will be published by Guernica Editions in August 2020 and a collection of poetry called *Sensorial* is forthcoming from Inanna in 2021.

## CAROLYNE VAN DER MEER Review of MICHAEL FARRY'S *Troubles*

*Troubles*, published by Revival Press, the third collection of poetry by Michael Farry, is a powerful exploration of a significant period in Ireland's history and our interaction with it. With considerable allure, it demonstrates Farry's skill as an important poet in the modern Irish landscape as well as a first-rate historian of the country's particular narrative. Through poetry, Farry brings this period to life, reflecting on documented historical background with poems on the famine, the land struggle and the Home Rule campaign by introducing real people. One such example is Kate Thompson, a landlord's wife, whose voice we hear through the pleas she made for assistance for the poor people on their estate. Farry has taken advantage of vast recently-made-available sources such as the military pension records, which enabled him to include a number of "found" poems in the collection. He has tapped into his natural reflexes as a historian, accessing not only these records, but also newspaper articles and other official documentation; this exacting approach to the creative process has enabled him to explore the worlds of both real and imagined characters in an immediate and relevant manner. *Troubles* is invigorating in its continually changing forms, challenging the reader to follow along both historically and poetically.



<https://limerickwriterscentre.com/product/troubles/>  
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## GRETA SYKES

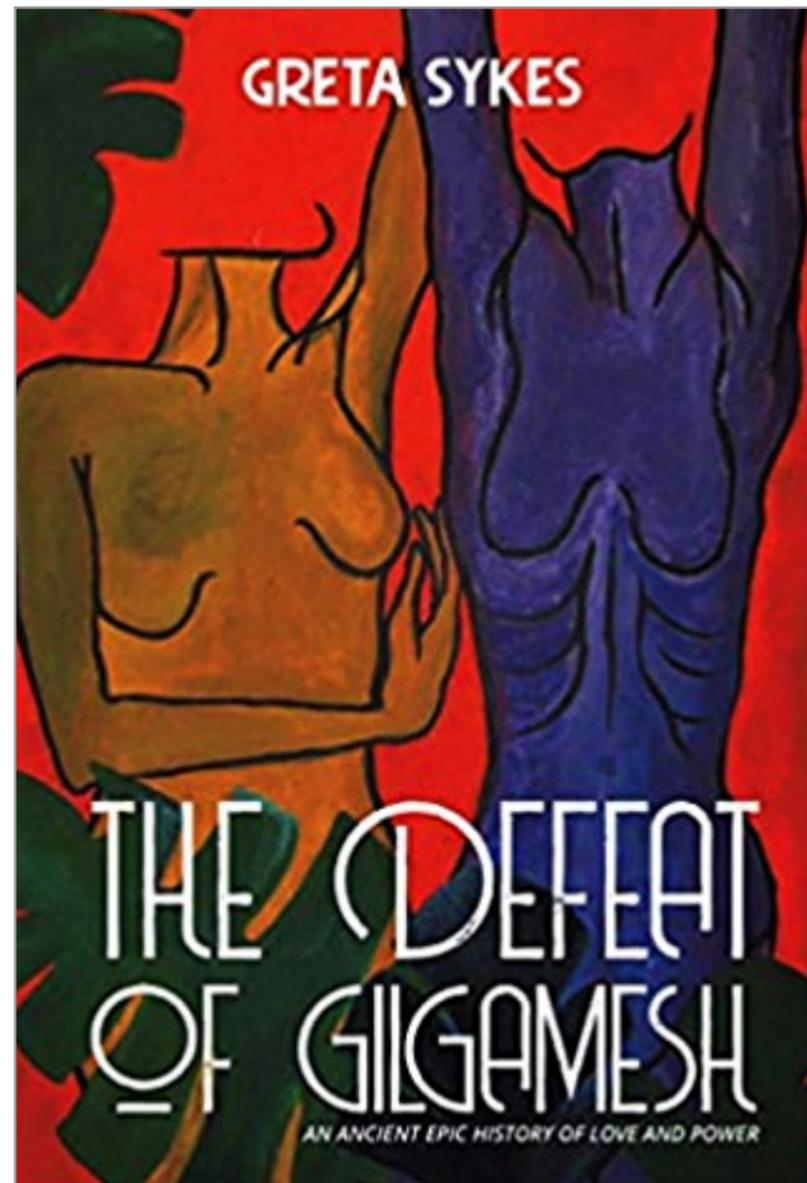


Greta Sykes, displaced person from war ravaged country, first found in Oppenheim on the Rhein, then migrated to Hamburg to watch howling dogs from a rain sodden Nissenhut, she eventually, accidentally ended up in London; walking the streets from Moorgate to Oxford street daily after college, connecting with the old Georgian and Victorian terraces and visible Roman history; she studied art, psychology and history, taught at university and continues writing poetry, short stories and essays and recently two novels. The defeat of Gilgamesh was published beginning of April 2020 and focuses on ancient Mesopotamia from a feminist viewpoint.

## DAVID MORGAN



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*.



<https://www.gretasykes.com/>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Defeat-Gilgamesh-Ancient-History-Power/>

<https://www.austinmacauley.com/book/defeat-gilgamesh>

## DAVID MORGAN Review of DR GRETA SYKES' *The Defeat of Gilgamesh*

The Epic of Gilgamesh is a poem of ancient Mesopotamia which is reputed to be the very earliest surviving work of literature. It is thus one of the most important historical documentary evidences of human civilisation. The work was only rediscovered in the 1850s and was not to be translated into a readable format until the 1870s when it immediately aroused controversy because of the story's close parallels between incidents in the Bible. Classical historians also believe that the story influenced both the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* of Homer.

As the various peoples and cultures of the world become more interdependent, the story of Gilgamesh has become more widely known and appreciated. It has inspired many works of literature, poetry and art. Greta Sykes is the latest in a long line of individuals who have been inspired by the characters depicted in the Gilgamesh epic, which is a richly suggestive text open to numerous interpretations. For Greta the story represents a struggle between female and male power. In taking the women as her focus, Greta treads a path laid by recent feminist scholarship which regards the epic as evidence of a transition from matriarchy to a more modern patriarchal society. There are several characters in Greta's story headed by Inanna, goddess of love and war; her grandmother, Ishtar, and the high priestess, Nin, who combine to challenge the supremacy of Gilgamesh.

The story is told by Enheduanna, high priestess of the city of Ur, who is said to be the earliest known poet ever recorded in history. Her actual existence is established by both archaeological and textual sources. Her hymns composed for reading in the temple have been found inscribed on tablets of stone and represent the world's earliest poetry. Apart from the feminist perspective, mention should be made of how the green movement has seen the epic as symbolic of humanity's disastrous separation from the natural world. The epic is a richly resonant text that still demands careful study. Through her novel, Greta has drawn the epic to the attention of a wider audience.

*The Defeat of Gilgamesh* is Greta's second work of fiction and is a powerful book that can serve as a fine introduction to the remote world of this oldest surviving literature and earliest evidence of human creativity.

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A native of Galway, Ireland Geraldine Mills is a poet and fiction writer. She has published five collections of poetry, three of short stories and a children's novel. She has won numerous awards for her fiction and poetry, including The Hennessy New Irish Writer Award, a Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship and has been awarded two Arts Council bursaries. Her fiction and poetry are taught on Contemporary Irish Literature courses in the USA. She is a mentor with NUI and a member of Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools' Scheme. Her most recent poetry collection, *Bone Road* (Arlen House) and some of her other titles are now available from <https://www.bookdepository.com/search?searchTerm=geraldine+mills&search=Find+book>



Mary Esther Judy, MA is a life-long reader, specialist in children's literature and champion of children's writing. She is a book reviewer, editor and former children's bookseller for Dubray Books. She enjoys nothing more than heading off to one school or another to share stories and gain insight on what the kids are reading. Mary started her blog, *Fallen Star Stories* over 10 years ago, where you can find a plethora of reviews, interviews and random thoughts about the world of children's literature. It reaches an average of 1500-2000 views per week worldwide. She has been a member of Children's Books Ireland for over 15 years, frequently reviewing in their publication, *Inis Magazine*. Mary has lived in Galway for 23 years. She shares her home with her daughter, grandson and much loved dog, Molly; surrounded by stacks of books and a magical, if rather messy garden.

## MARY ESTHER JUDY Review of GERALDINE MILLS' *Gold*

Twins Starn and Esper grow up in a world made dark and silent by massive volcanic explosions. They long for sunshine, fresh air and the freedom of a life only vaguely remembered by a few. A game of dares leads them to discover an ancient book filled with strange writing and a treasure map. This propels them headlong into a journey across the darkened skies in a hand-built glider, in search of the gold that will vastly improve their lives, expose the governments' lies and save a dying planet.

With exceptional crafting and a delicate hand, Mills has created a portrait of an unnerving future world. Gripping and compelling, the boys venture from a world of darkness, regulation enforced by fear and mere survival to one of light, possibility, and freedom. The juxtaposition of the two is explored and balanced perfectly through rhythm and cadence in the text.

The characters are tangible and textural, the relationships ring true. Starn and Esper are two sides of the same coin and must follow their own wisdom and hearts while working together to create a wonderful dichotomy.

Never too heavy or dark, it is exciting, dramatic and filled with nuance and beauty. Written with clarity, compassion and purpose, *Gold* is open enough to allow the reader to fully engage; come to his or her own conclusions; paint his or her own pictures in the realms of imagination. An amazing story, filled with life, this book simply sings!



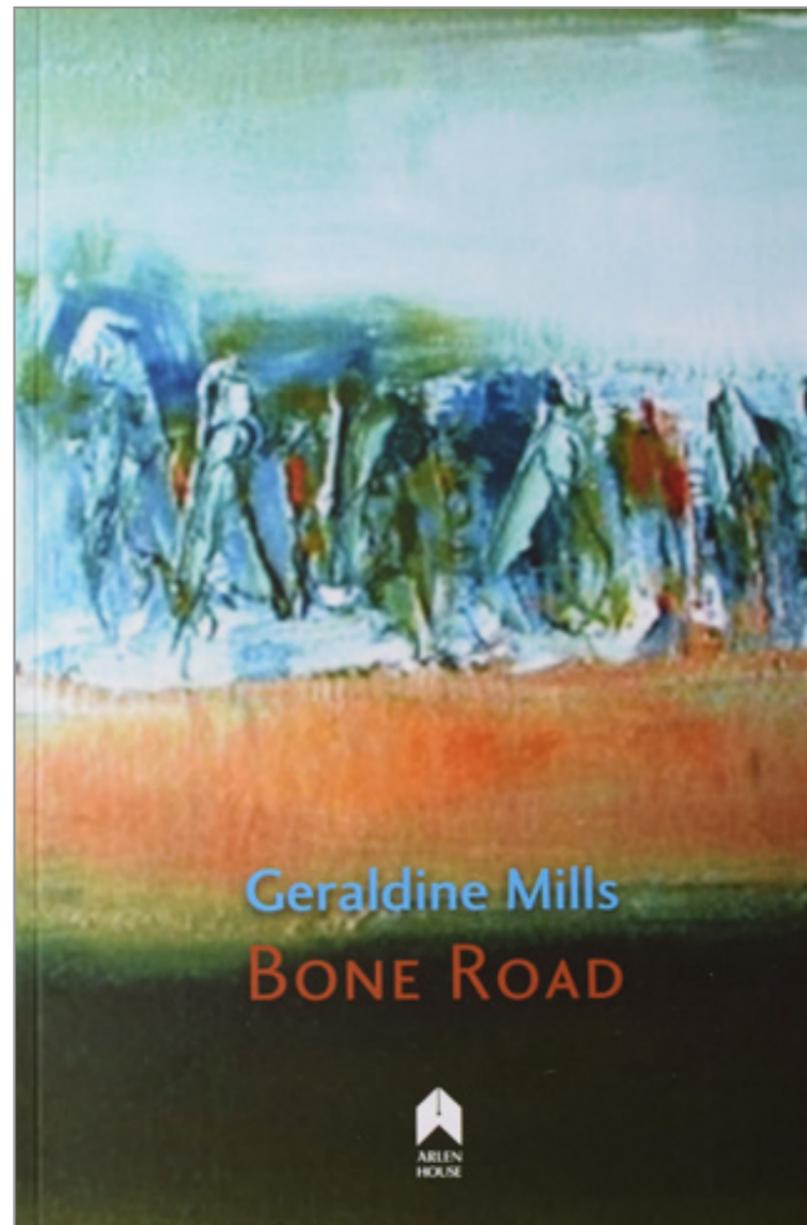
<https://littleisland.ie/product-category/older-children-9/>



A native of Galway, Ireland Geraldine Mills is a poet and fiction writer. She has published five collections of poetry, three of short stories and a children's novel. She has won numerous awards for her fiction and poetry, including The Hennessy New Irish Writer Award, a Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship and has been awarded two Arts Council bursaries. Her fiction and poetry are taught on Contemporary Irish Literature courses in the USA. She is a mentor with NUI and a member of Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools' Scheme. Her most recent poetry collection, *Bone Road* (Arlen House) and some of her other titles are now available from <https://www.bookdepository.com/search?searchTerm=geraldine+mills&search=Find+book>



Lisa C. Taylor is the author of four collections of poetry, including *The Other Side of Longing* with Geraldine Mills (Arlen House, 2011) and *Necessary Silence* (Arlen House, 2013) and two short story collections, *Growing a New Tail* (Arlen House, 2015) and *Impossibly Small Spaces* (Arlen House, 2018). Her honours include the Hugo House New Works Award for Short Fiction, Pushcart nominations in both fiction and poetry, and a short-listed story in the Fish Short Fiction Prize in 2020. Lisa served as a two-time mentor in the Associated Writing Program W2W scheme. Lisa holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Stonecoast/University of Southern Maine. She is the fiction editor and interviewer for *Wordpeace.co* and a frequent reviewer for magazines such as *Mom Egg Review*. Lisa offers online writing events through *Whitewater Writing*. She is working on a poetry collection for publication in 2021. [www.lisactaylor.com](http://www.lisactaylor.com)



## LISA C TAYLOR Review of GERALDINE MILLS' *Bone Road*

“The longest day still entering their dawn” (14) opens the poem *Leaving* in Geraldine Mills’ new verse memoir, *Bone Road*. It is a skilled writer who can pack famine, the promise of a new world, and hope into a short book. The Tuke Assisted Emigration Scheme anchoring the collection brought Irish citizens to the United States with the promise of a better life. The work in Warren, Rhode Island offered to Geraldine Mill’s great-grandfather was at a tedious and soul-crushing cotton mill. The town, originally inhabited by the Massasoit, had its own stories, as “Chimney stacks poked fingers at the sky.” (24)

A mosaic of cultures is juxtaposed with sidewalks, faucets and grocers, new experiences for the family. “The night that is all moon/its light playing puck with him/as he works his way along Water Street” (35) reminds her great-grandfather of Achill Head. His bones ache from work and his heart pines for bog cotton and rain.

The power of this collection lies in its threads—cotton, loom, bay, and family. Hunger is a longing for place as well as nourishment. Geraldine Mills weaves a tapestry of deprivation and renewal through the actions of her ancestors, imprinted and passed on like her great-grandmother’s butter stamp. Anticipation of a new grandchild whose life will not be interrupted by a perilous journey closes the collection. Offering knowledge of the sacrifices of the past, these poems reflect on the ways actions two generations removed are carried in both gesture and memory.

<https://press.syr.edu/>  
<https://www.bookdepository.com/>



Héléne Cardona's books include *Life in Suspension*, *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (Salmon Poetry) and the translations *Birnam Wood* (José Manuel Cardona, Salmon Poetry), *Beyond Elsewhere* (Gabriel Arnou-Laujeac, White Pine Press), *Ce que nous portons* (Dorianne Laux, Éditions du Cygne), and *Walt Whitman's Civil War Writings for WhitmanWeb*. She is translated into 16 languages. The recipient of over 20 honors & awards, including the Independent Press and International Book Awards, Naji Naaman Prize, and Hemingway Grant, she holds an MA in American Literature from the Sorbonne, worked as a translator for the Canadian Embassy, and taught at Hamilton College and LMU.

<http://helenecardona.com>

<http://www.imdb.me/helenecardona>



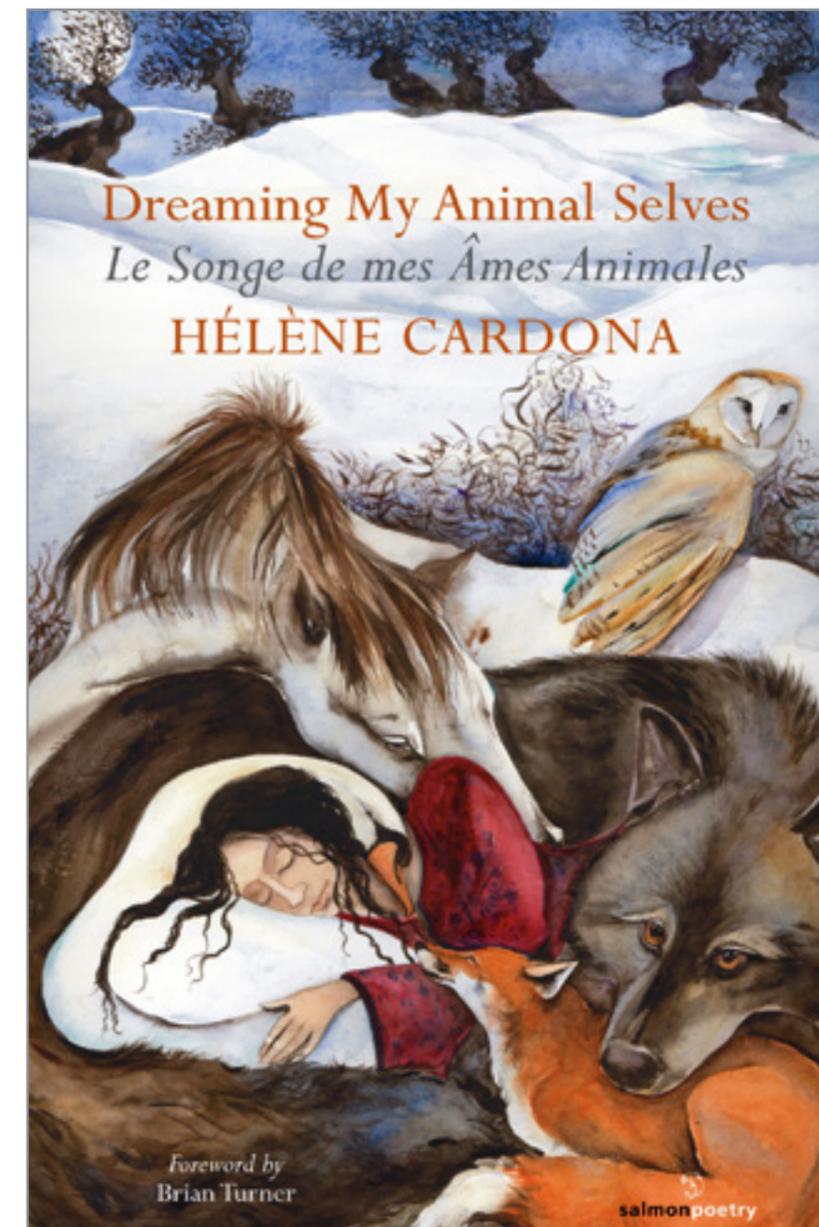
Thomas McCarthy was born at Cappoquin, Co. Waterford and educated at University College Cork. He was an Honorary Fellow of the International Writing programme, University of Iowa. His work includes *The First Convention* (1978), *The Lost Province* (1996), *Merchant Prince* (2005), *The Last Geraldine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

## THOMAS MCCARTHY Review of HÉLÈNE CARDONA'S *Dreaming My Animal Selves*

In *Dreaming My Animal Selves* the poet Héléne Cardona has become a dreamer upon two pillows of language. Taking her queue from Rilke, she has captured dreams in a diglottism of the soul, a literary isthmus of heliotrope and honeysuckle, where her singular voice endures as 'a thistle, resilient/ rooted in Mediterranean Celtic fringe.' Through poetry she reaches that gateway between the past and the way ahead. It was Gaston Bachelard who wrote that the roots of the grandeur of the world plunge back into a childhood and here, in her reflecting moments, Cardona reaches back to the amethyst eyes of a Francophone motherhood. Here is a poetry of exotic retreat, from the translucent face of Tibet to the Cyprus pomegranate of Athena's altar; and here, too, Aphrodite guides her to a place where she is compelled to pay for her mother's death with a literary price extracted from dreams. It is always a risky business for a poet to self-translate: it may seem like wanting both the work of art and the readers' response – but Héléne Cardona gracefully travels across languages, in the manner of our own Michael Hartnett, Paddy Bushe, or, more lately, Fred Johnson, to arrive at a point of insight where we are all enriched.

*Dreaming My Animal Selves* is a graceful skate across a liquid language, a voyage across subliminal waves; a poetry where, as she writes in 'Parallel Keys' she reveals herself by 'fixing the omen.'

*Winner of the Best Book Award in Poetry, the Pinnacle Book Award for Best Bilingual Poetry Book, and the Readers' Favorite Award in Poetry. Finalist for International Book Award in Poetry and the Julie Suk Award.*



<https://www.salmonpoetry.com/details.php?ID=384&a=240>

<https://www.amazon.com/Dreaming-Animal-Selves-Bilingual-Collection/dp/1908836393>



Hélène Cardona's books include *Life in Suspension*, *Dreaming My Animal Selves* (Salmon Poetry) and the translations *Birnam Wood* (José Manuel Cardona, Salmon Poetry), *Beyond Elsewhere* (Gabriel Arnou-Laujeac, White Pine Press), *Ce que nous portons* (Dorianne Laux, Éditions du Cygne), and *Walt Whitman's Civil War Writings for WhitmanWeb*. She is translated into 16 languages. The recipient of over 20 honors & awards, including the Independent Press and International Book Awards, Naji Naaman Prize, and Hemingway Grant, she holds an MA in American Literature from the Sorbonne, worked as a translator for the Canadian Embassy, and taught at Hamilton College and LMU.

<http://helenecardona.com>

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Elizabeth Cohen is a multi-genre writer who holds a degree in poetry and creative writing from Columbia University where she studied with Sharon Olds, Cynthia McDonald, Brad Leithauser and J.D. McClatchy, among others. She is a published poet and memoirist, a twenty year veteran journalist and columnist, and the author of a book of short stories. She has been a visiting professor at Western Connecticut State University and was appointed to the Philip and Eleanor Piaker Chair in Creative Writing and Judaic Studies at Binghamton University in 2003. Her memoir, *The Family On Beartown Road*, was a New York Times Notable Book of the year and was excerpted by the *Sunday Times of London*, *Reader's Digest*, and other publications.

## ELIZABETH COHEN Review of HÉLÈNE CARDONA'S *Life in Suspension*

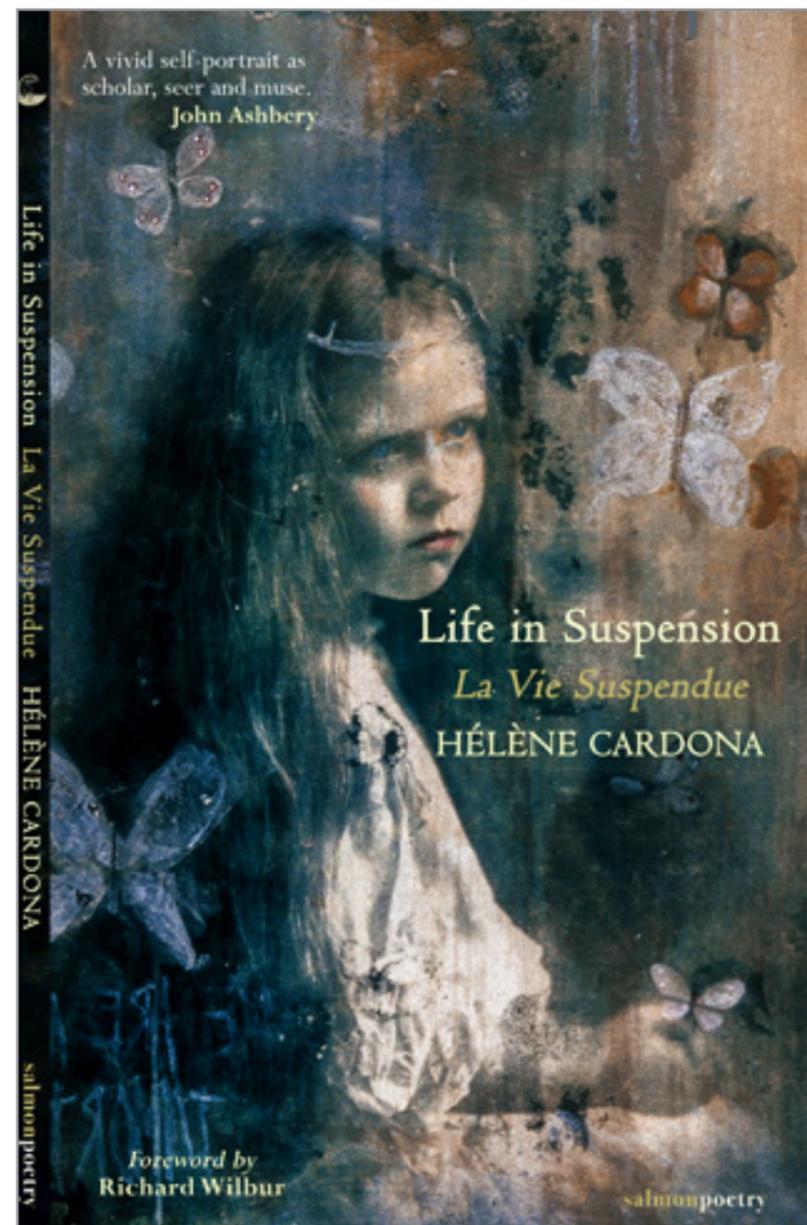
I got lost this week in the bright fields of *Life in Suspension*, a book of poems so luminous and fanciful that you can stumble around for hours within it, lose track of time almost, and fall out the other end feeling lighter and like you just traveled to another time and place. Read this book if you want to experience straightforward beauty.

Many of the poems in this book are about her childhood recollections, and she animates them for us, but perhaps most astonishingly is the volume's title poem, in which she leaps forward in time, beginning with the womb. The poem continues to offer up snapshots from various ages, each one delivering up narrative, imagery and a sense of place and a specific moment in Cardona's life.

The poet maps out a life here, and it feels so complete somehow, via the sensory and sensient moments she chooses to describe. I fell inside these poems and felt entirely charmed and also transported by them.

Best known for her screen and stage work as an accomplished thespian, Cardona demonstrates afresh that she has a lyric gift in this book.

*Winner of the 2020 Independent Press Award, the 2017 Best Book Award in Poetry, the 2017 International Book Award in Poetry, the Pinnacle Book Award for Best Bilingual Poetry Book, and the Readers' Favorite Award in Poetry. Finalist for the 2018 Eric Hoffer Book Award, the 2016 Lascaux Prize in Collected Poetry and the Julie Suk Award.*



<https://www.salmonpoetry.com/details.php?ID=384&a=240>

<https://www.amazon.com/Life-Suspension-Suspendue-English-French/dp/1910669296>



Robbi Nester is the author of four books of poetry, *Balance* (White Violet, 2012), *A Likely Story* (Moon Tide, 2014), *Other-Wise* (Kelsay, 2017), and *Narrow Bridge* (Main Street Rag, 2019), and has edited three anthologies. These are *The Liberal Media Made Me Do It!* (Nine Toes, 2014); *Over the Moon: Birds, Beasts, and Trees*; and her latest effort, *The Plague Papers*, a celebration of virtual museums during the time of the pandemic. She is an elected member of the Academy of American Poets and a contributing editor to *Poemeleon Journal*.



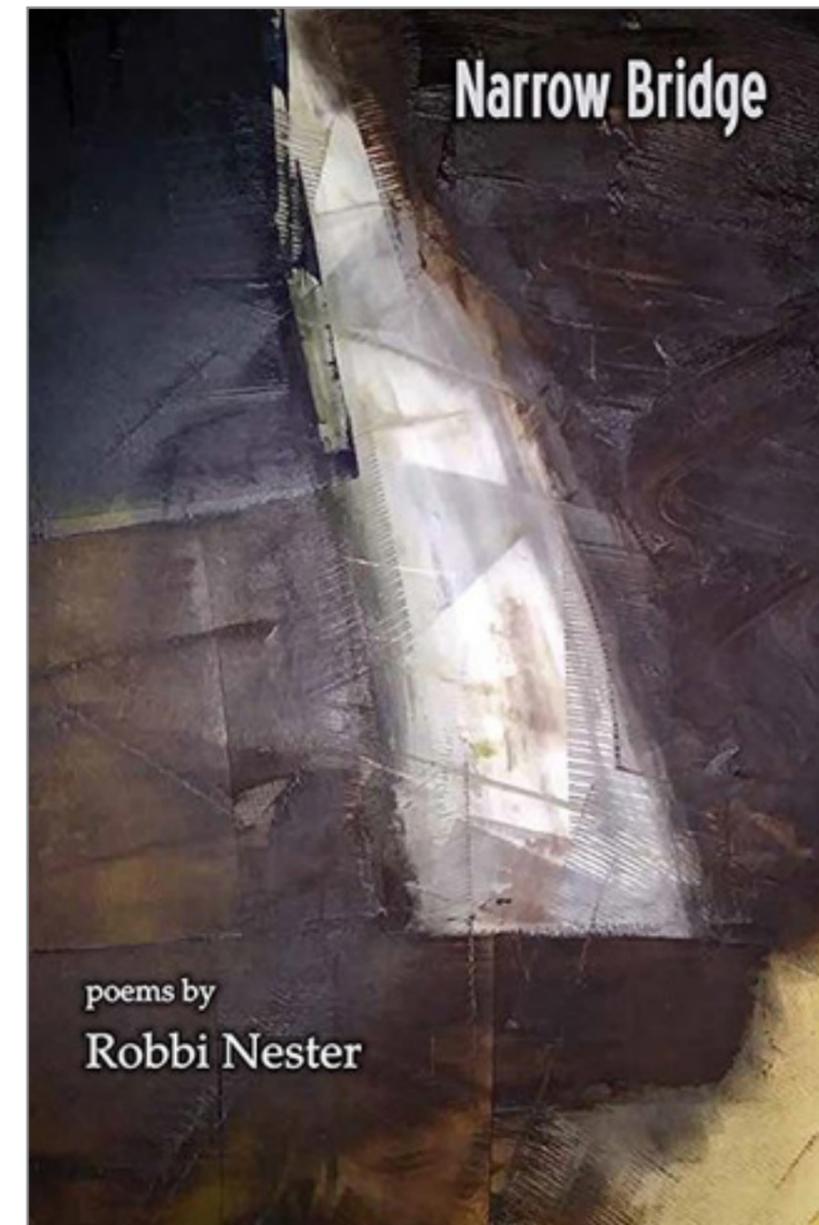
Penelope Moffet lives in Southern California. She is the author of a chapbook of desert poems, *It Isn't That They Mean to Kill You* (Arroyo Seco Press, 2018), and a collection of chaparral poems, *Keeping Still* (Dorland Mountain Arts Colony, 1995).

## PENELOPE MOFFET Review of ROBBI NESTER'S *Narrow Bridge*

The poems of Robbi Nester's third full collection, *Narrow Bridge* (Main Street Rag, 2019) sometimes focus in on one detail of life and sometimes widen to a panoramic vision. These poems examine and remember the world from a range of perspectives: that of an only child trying to understand her family and schoolmates, that of an adult perpetually curious about the natural world, those of various creatures and objects we don't expect to speak. This is a book in which even tree frogs and fried eggs have voices, but the effect, while often funny, is never cute. In one of my favorite poems, "Mermaid to Woman," a half-fish creature wistfully regards the sailors of her past and future, all of whom she drowns, "a predator in love with her prey," with "striped teeth those of a parrot fish,/suitable for tearing flesh." Yikes.

The book's epigraph and title, "The world is a narrow bridge, and the main thing is not to be afraid," come from Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav (1772-1810), a Talmudic scholar and Hasidic reformer who believed everyone should talk directly to God. The language in these prayer-like poems is precise and musical, begging to be read out loud. The poems describe painful incidents in the speaker's childhood which she is still struggling to understand, and they describe elements of a universe larger than any single mind can fully grasp. This poet is perpetually questing, never satisfied. The bridge may be narrow but the view is wide.

Signed copies may also be obtained from Robbi Nester, at [rkvester@gmail.com](mailto:rkvester@gmail.com)



<http://mainstreetragbookstore.com>  
<http://www.thelostbookshelf.com/>  
<http://beyondbaroque.org/bookstorelanding.html>

## JOHN FITZGERALD



John FitzGerald is a poet, writer, and attorney for the disabled. His poetry collections include *Favorite Bedtime Stories*, finalist for the Julie Suk Award, and *The Mind*, semifinalist for the Alice James Award, (both from Salmon Poetry). He is widely published in literary journals and anthologies, notably *The Warwick Review*, *World Literature Today*, *Plume*, *The Taos Journal of Poetry and Art*, *December*, *From the Fishhouse*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Human and Inhuman Monstrous Poems* (Everyman's Library Pocket Poets Series), and *Poetry: Reading it, Writing it, Publishing it* (Salmon Poetry).

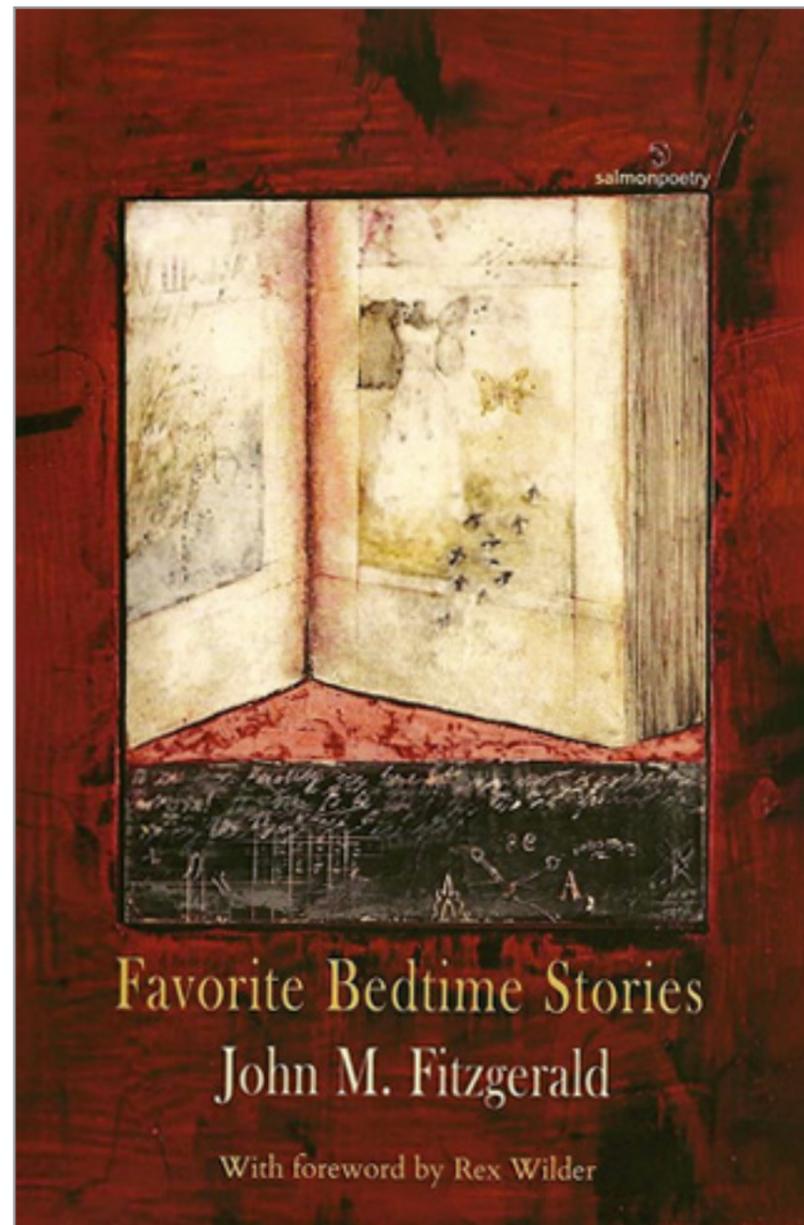
## REX WILDER



Rex Wilder is the author of *Open Late: New & Collected Poems 1979–2018*, *Boomerangs in the Living Room* (2013), and *Waking Bodies* (2006). His work has appeared in *Poetry*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Yale Review*, and *The Nation*. Wilder is a former editorial assistant for *Poetry*. He served as regional director of the Poetry Society of America in Los Angeles, California, where he helped establish Hollywood's "Act of the Poet" reading series. He lives in Venice, California.

### REX WILDER Review of JOHN FITZGERALD'S *Favorite Bedtime Stories*

I want to be John Fitzgerald's baby. Well, his wife's anyway. If he has one; I'm not so sure sorcerers are in the habit of mating for life or raising children anywhere but several inches off the ground. And safe alone with Fitzgerald as a boy barely three feet tall and years old? Not with his imagination and penchant for naughtiness. I imagine myself propped up breathless in the bottom bunk at seven each evening, a gold dusk dusting my fresh features from the window over whose generous glass Dad would refuse to draw the blinds, fuzzy blanket pulled up to my neck, ice water clinking beside me, when my idol would make his Grand Entrance, an imaginary book of fairy tales in his right hand and the promise of my unconsciousness in his left. Or subconsciousness, I should say. Because Fitzgerald is a master at entering without knocking, weaving a spell and leaving it like a quilt as his calling card, both to keep one warm and to wonder where he went. Another sly poet, the great and under-appreciated William Meredith, could have been writing this introduction when he wrote in his "Sonnet on Rare Animals," "Startled or on a signal, what is rare/ Is off before you have it anywhere." At the same time, I could advise the reader of this rewarding collection to heed the advice of Meredith's friend Robert Frost, who reminds us that "Heaven gives its glimpses only to those/ Not in a position to look too close." So look away if you can. Close your eyes. Ask your attorney or talking dog to read these poems aloud to you, and be prepared to fall under their spell. Later on you can study the lines, their craft and craftiness. Because nothing's by accident in Fitzgerald and it's only human to want to know how the magician did it. Although if the poet has his way you will be anything but human in the throes of his transportation. As he advises us, "The world fears a human being/ and when we catch one// We tie it to strings/ and drag it behind cars at weddings/ for the musical sparks left in its wake."



<https://www.salmonpoetry.com/details.php?ID=322&a=194>  
<https://bookshop.org/books/favorite-bedtime-stories/9781908836700>



John FitzGerald is a poet, writer, and attorney for the disabled. His poetry collections include *Favorite Bedtime Stories*, finalist for the Julie Suk Award, and *The Mind*, semifinalist for the Alice James Award, (both from Salmon Poetry). He is widely published in literary journals and anthologies, notably *The Warwick Review*, *World Literature Today*, *Plume*, *The Taos Journal of Poetry and Art*, *December*, *From the Fishhouse*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Human and Inhuman Monstrous Poems* (Everyman's Library Pocket Poets Series), and *Poetry: Reading it, Writing it, Publishing it* (Salmon Poetry).

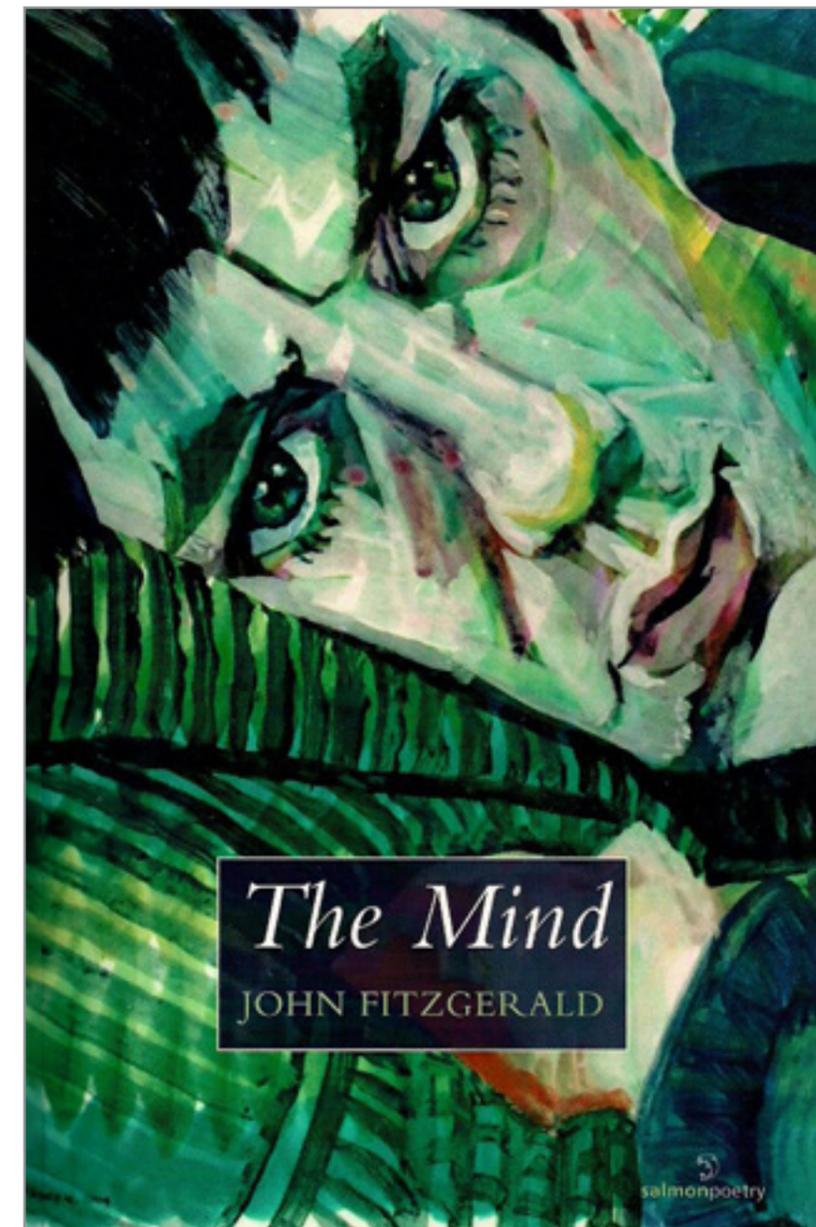


Poet, publisher, and Pushcart nominee Amélie Frank has authored poetry collections and one spoken word CD. Her work has appeared in *Art/Life*, *LummoX*, *Poeticdiversity*, *Sparring with Beatnik Ghosts*, *Levure Littéraire*, *Cultural Weekly*, *Wide Awake*, *1001 Knights*, and *Voices From Leimert Park Redux*. Beyond Baroque Literary/Arts Center and the cities of Venice and Los Angeles have honored her for her activism and leadership in the Southern California poetry community.

## AMÉLIE FRANK Review of JOHN FITZGERALD'S *The Mind*

While *The Mind* is about the remarkable way John thinks, it speaks to the larger questions of how we all think, how we came to be sapient in the first place, and how we develop as thinking souls in space and time. Keeping the language of his prose-like tercets basic, unadorned, and free-flowing, he accomplishes poetry of significance and elemental beauty. Left brain contemplation of structure and systems aligns itself with right brain wonder and whimsy, but neither hemisphere dominates in the work, so the reader can only expect the unexpected. And the rewards are great: poems of curiosity, orientation with the universe, sorrow, finding center, and surprising hilarity. (Only John can make the idea of rocks funny.)

If I were teaching from John's book, I would encourage poetry students to examine his masterful skill with personification. I would encourage philosophy students to wrestle with his experiences of phenomena. I would ask psychology and neuro-biology candidates to experience the brain from inside-out. I would ask physics students to explore how we process space and time in an era when such concepts are continually challenged and updated. I would ask divinity students to consider creation from the point of view of the created. *The Mind* weighs so many approaches to thinking and being that you won't devour it in one or two sittings. Read it as you would the Book of Genesis, or Hawking, or an introduction to meditation. You will not think the same way ever again after reading it.



<https://www.salmonpoetry.com/details.php?ID=218&a=194>

<https://bookshop.org/books/the-mind-78b5e388-614f-4164-ae29-5c453d1990bf/9781907056604>

<https://www.amazon.com/Mind-Salmon-Poetry-John-FitzGerald/dp/1907056602>

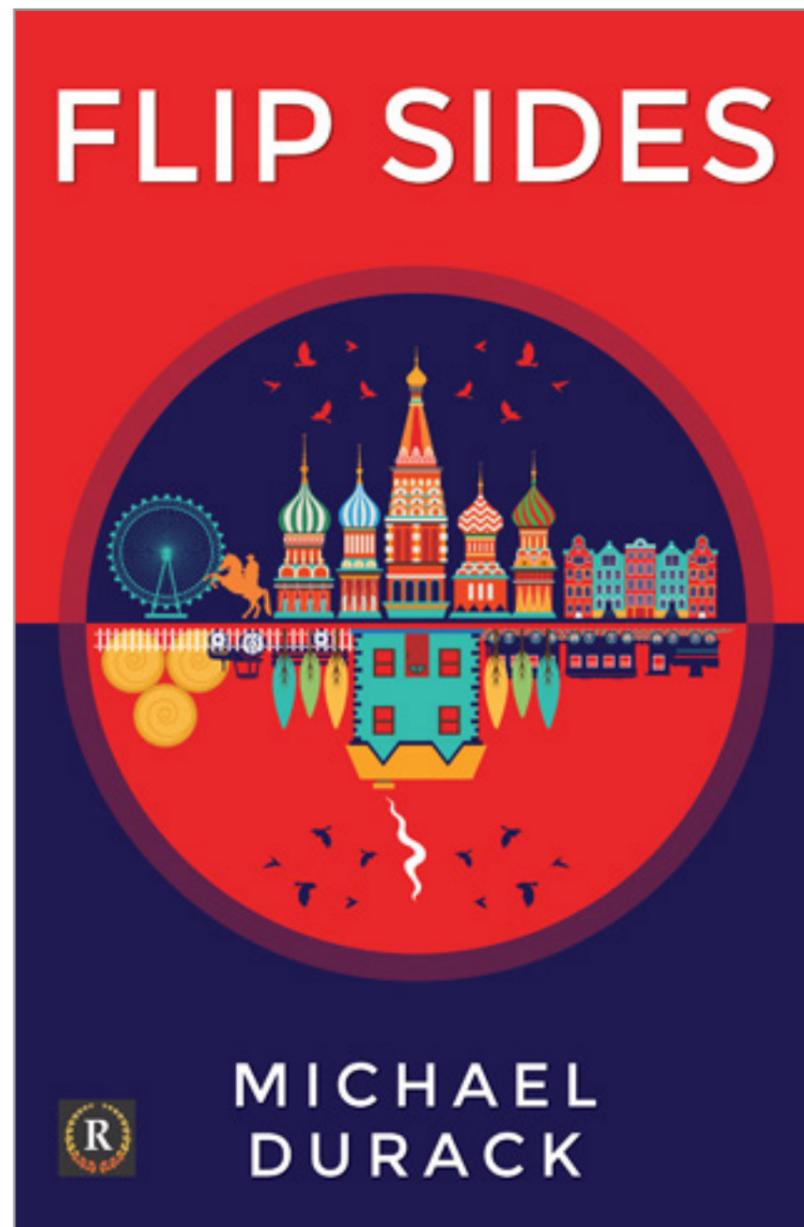
© Amélie Frank



Michael Durack lives in Co. Tipperary, Ireland. His poems have appeared in publications such as *The Blue Nib*, *Skylight 47*, *The Cafe Review*, *Live Encounters*, *The Honest Ulsterman* and *Poetry Ireland Review* as well as airing on local and national radio. He is the author of a memoir in prose and poems, *Saved to Memory: Lost to View* (Limerick Writers Centre 2016) and with his brother Austin he has recorded two albums of poetry and guitar music, *The Secret Chord* (2013) and *Going Gone* (2015). His first poetry collection, *Where It Began*, was published by Revival Press in 2017.



Fiona Clark Echlin is an award winning poet, playwright and storyteller. She sits on the voluntary Board of Directors at The Limerick Writers' Centre. Fiona has lived and worked in many parts of the world, teaching and facilitating courses in Creative Writing, Public Speaking, Academic Writing and Drama to diverse groups of students. Recently, she ran a course in Creative Writing at Limerick prison. Best known as a performance poet and storyteller, her distinctive voice will be familiar to many from her stage appearances and on radio. Fiona's work is often coloured by her background which has strong associations with the theatre. Her poetry collection 'From the Rib', featuring sonnets and villanelles, was published by Revival. A new collection of short stories is due for publication in the near future and she is currently working on a novel and a new play. Fiona lives in Killaloe, Co. Clare.



## FIONA CLARK ECHLIN Review of MICHAEL DURACK'S *Flip Sides*

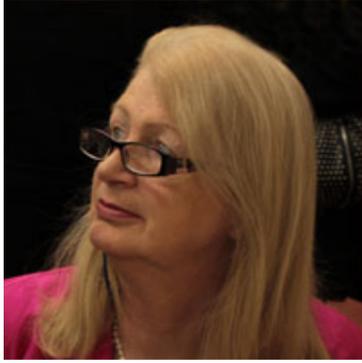
This new collection of poems by Michael Durack is remarkable in many ways.

While adhering to the familiar settings in time and place which have become his signature, Durack's explorations of Ireland's rural Mid-West while coming of age are extended to include the flip side of these experiences. The collection as a whole works to encompass the involvement of all his readers in a common ground 'that's cut from under all of us.'

The simple but wide variety of images he employs serves to develop the 'small world' into something infinitely more complex. Never sentimental or nostalgic, the past is used to reflect the present and it's a process that doesn't include or invite regret. The 'B- side that we longed to hear' is sometimes used of the past, sometimes the present, against a backdrop of the wider world. We are the winners or the losers; we watch from the stands or the side-lines, or we take an active part.

Michael Durack's poetry shows a deep understanding of the human condition. His humanity and generosity of spirit are evident in all his poems, leaving the reader nodding in agreement, often with a broad smile. Durack acknowledges that poetry need not always be serious, but he treats every theme with characteristic compassion. Things change, but as he says, 'the wound has healed, leaving the scar.'

<https://limerickwriterscentre.com/product/flip-sides-available-now-for-pre-order/>



Jean O'Brien's collection, her *New & Selected Fish on a Bicycle* (Salmon 2016 reprint 2018) was her fifth, a new collection is due in 2021. She has received many awards, including the prestigious Arvon International Award, The Fish International, and has been highly commended in the Forward Prize and placed in others. She was awarded a Patrick & Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. Her work appears in many magazines, anthologies and regularly on radio. She has taken part in public art in the Epic Museum and Poetry on the Dart transport (2019). She holds a Masters in creative writing, Trinity College, Dublin. [www.jeanobrien.ie](http://www.jeanobrien.ie)



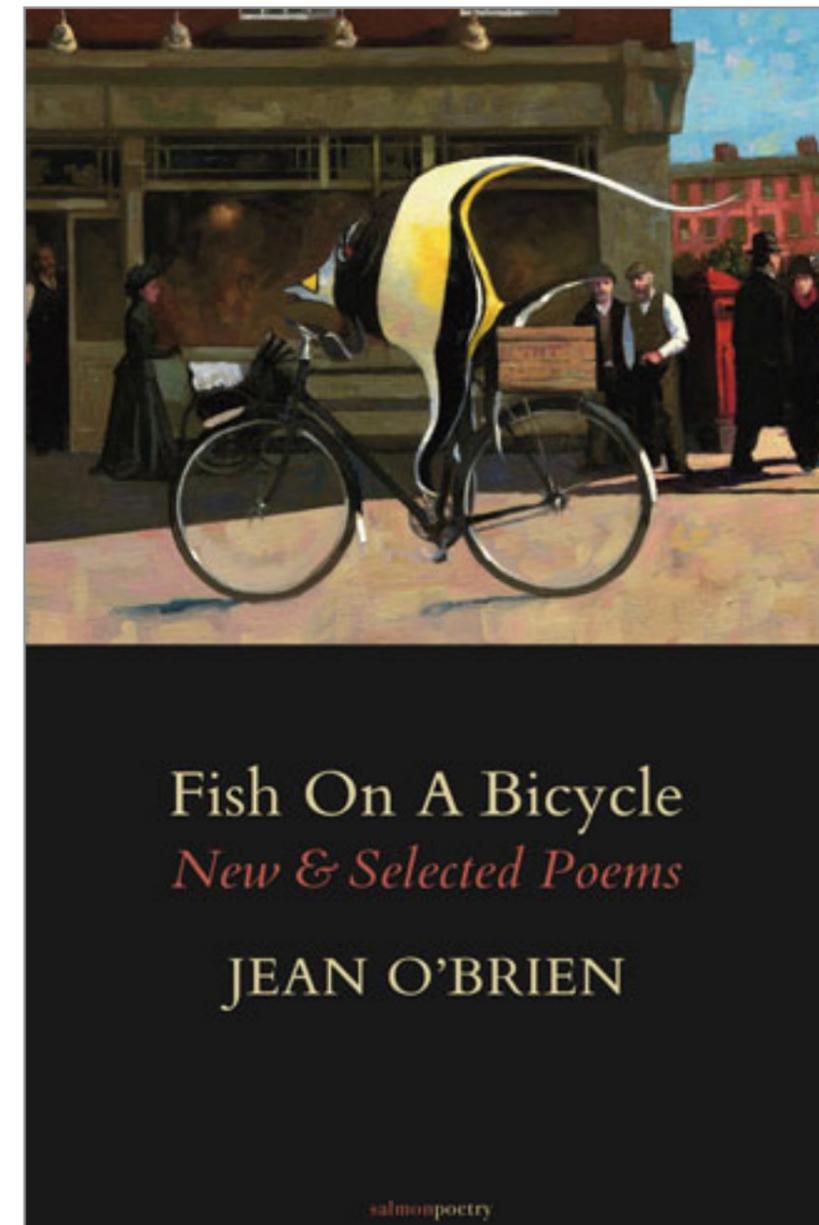
Dr Siobhán Campbell's fourth collection is *Heat Signature* - 'a poet who is invested in words as a powerful social currency' (Compass). Previous books include *Cross-Talk* (Seren) and *The Permanent Wave* (Blackstaff). Siobhan won the Oxford Brookes International prize as well as awards in the Troubadour and National Poetry Competitions. She co-convenes the MA in Creative Writing at The Open University and her research into the place of creative writing in pressurized environments led to projects in Lebanon and Iraq as well as in end-of-life care. Co-editor of *Eavan Boland: Inside History* (Arlen House/Syracuse University Press), her critical work appears in *Making Integral: the poetry of Richard Murphy* (CUP) and in *The Portable Poetry Workshop* (Palgrave). Widely published, her poetry appears in *Forward Book of Poetry*, *Identity Parade: New British and Irish Poets* (Bloodaxe) and *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Literature* (NYU Press) and magazines including *Cyphers*, *The Southern Review*, *Magma* and *Agenda*. [www.siobhancampbell.com](http://www.siobhancampbell.com) @poetrySiobhan

## DR SIOBHÁN CAMPBELL Review of JEAN O'BRIEN'S *Fish on a Bicycle*

This book selects work from O'Brien's six collections, along with a substantial grouping of new poems. From *Working the Flow* (1992) through *Lovely Legs* (2009) and *Merman* (2012), this Selected confirms Jean O'Brien's powerful, uncompromising lyric voice for a new generation of readers.

In early work, there's the tang of recognition as love, loss, jealousy and rage are stilled for a moment into punchy, clear-eyed lyrics. *'I carried her below my heart'* says the speaker in 'The Carrier' of a daughter, but adds *'She will be the death of me'*. It is this capacity for compassion edged with doses of stoicism which form some of the satisfying riffs of the early volumes. O'Brien also maintains a keen interest in looking outwards, whether to draw from the life of mountaineer Alison Hargreave, or to discover folly within 'The Terracotta Army' in a characteristically wry way: *'Quin Shihuang's terracotta army stands/ in timeless mockery of the man.'*

Drawing her reader in with a variety of poetic strategies, ranging from shortened unrhymed sonnets to longer loping lines, O'Brien moves on, in the later volumes, to address philosophical questions while still retaining her wit and well-timed asides. From feminist satire, as in 'The Docile Girls' or 'The Stolen Sheela-Ná-Gig' to the Arvon-award winning 'Merman', here are modern fables to surprise and shock. From poems which reference Adrienne Rich and Neil Armstrong, to an extraordinary piece on the bushfires of New South Wales, here is a poet showing how art can really encompass the world, drawing out new sets of symbolic meanings in a sustained achievement over an expansive oeuvre



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## JEAN O'BRIEN



Jean O'Brien's collection, her *New & Selected Fish on a Bicycle* (Salmon 2016 reprint 2018) was her fifth, a new collection is due in 2021. She has received many awards, including the prestigious Arvon International Award, The Fish International, and has been highly commended in the Forward Prize and placed in others. She was awarded a Patrick & Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. Her work appears in many magazines, anthologies and regularly on radio. She has taken part in public art in the Epic Museum and Poetry on the Dart transport (2019). She holds a Masters in creative writing, Trinity College, Dublin. [www.jeanobrien.ie](http://www.jeanobrien.ie)

## MARY O'DONNELL



Poet and fiction-writer Dr Mary O'Donnell's work is often cited as key in expanding the horizons of Ireland's traditionally male-dominated literary world. O'Donnell has published numerous collections of poetry, including *Spiderwoman's Third Avenue Rhapsody* (1993). Other poetry includes *Unlegendary Heroes* (1998), and *Those April Fevers* (2015). Her new collection of poetry *Massacre of the Birds* is published by Salmon in October 2020. Novels include *The Light-Makers*, *The Elysium Testament*, and *Where They Lie*. She has received numerous awards including prizes from the Fish International Short Story Competition, the Cardiff International Poetry Competition, the VS Pritchett Short Story Competition and the Listowel Writers' Week Short Story Award, as well as poetry awards from Listowel Writers' Week. Her poetry has been translated to Hungarian, and her short fiction to Spanish. She has been a member of the Irish artists' affiliation Aosdana since 2001. *Those April Fevers* was my seventh collection and came out in 2015, cover by photographer Mark Granier.

### DR MARY O'DONNELL Review of JEAN O'BRIEN'S *Lovely Legs*

O'Brien is a prize-winning poet whose presence on the Irish literary landscape establishes her as a narrator of poetic stories that often demonstrate unusual twists in the ordinary run of experience. Her focus is both Irish and also occupies an 'elsewhere' often defined by her sense of the heroism of women. Her women may be famous, infamous, known, mythological or imagined, but they move forwards, through obstacles, and sometimes triumph. Her powerful 'Sheela-na-Gig of Aghagower' is *perched in place/knowing the world through the spread of my lips*, a poem which powerfully presents an image of the female imbued with joy and happiness once social diktats are kept at a remove. She is an intellectually inquisitive geographer of the senses, whose field work takes place through poetry. Many poems handle the existential with deftness and acuity, as O'Brien's interrogation of the experience of ill-health in 'Cardioversion' leads the reader into an unsentimental arena enriched with mythic urgency. She offers wise messages to her readers but also to those close to her: to daughter, husband, and to the dead. Through her fertile poetic this poet wrests the elements of being alive and retrieves a brightness and joy, like the bees in her poem 'Looking for Flowers', who *see the world with compound eyes*.



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Recipient of fellowships and grants from The Rockefeller Foundation, Ireland Literature Exchange, Trubar Foundation, Slovenia, The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature and The Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature, Yuyutsu Sharma is a world renowned Himalayan poet and translator. He has published ten poetry collections including, *The Second Buddha Walk*, *A Blizzard in my Bones: New York Poems*, *Quaking Cantos: Nepal Earthquake Poems*, *Nepal Trilogy*, *Space Cake*, *Amsterdam* and *Annapurna Poems*. Three books of his poetry, *Poemes de l' Himalayas*, *Poemas de Los Himalayas* and *Jezero Fewa & Konj* have appeared in French, Spanish and Slovenian respectively. Currently, Yuyutsu Sharma is a visiting poet at Columbia University and edits, *Pratik: A Quarterly Magazine of Contemporary Writing*.



M. Heath Beckett is a British poet currently completing her MA at Royal Holloway University. She grew up in Yorkshire drawing inspiration from the gothic folklore, the moors and the ruined abbeys of her surroundings. Maria has written three collections of poems, and has two novels and a memoir underway. Her writing has been published by George Whitman, Strands Magazine and Torriano poets. She is a regular performer at London's literary salons.

## M HEATH BECKETT

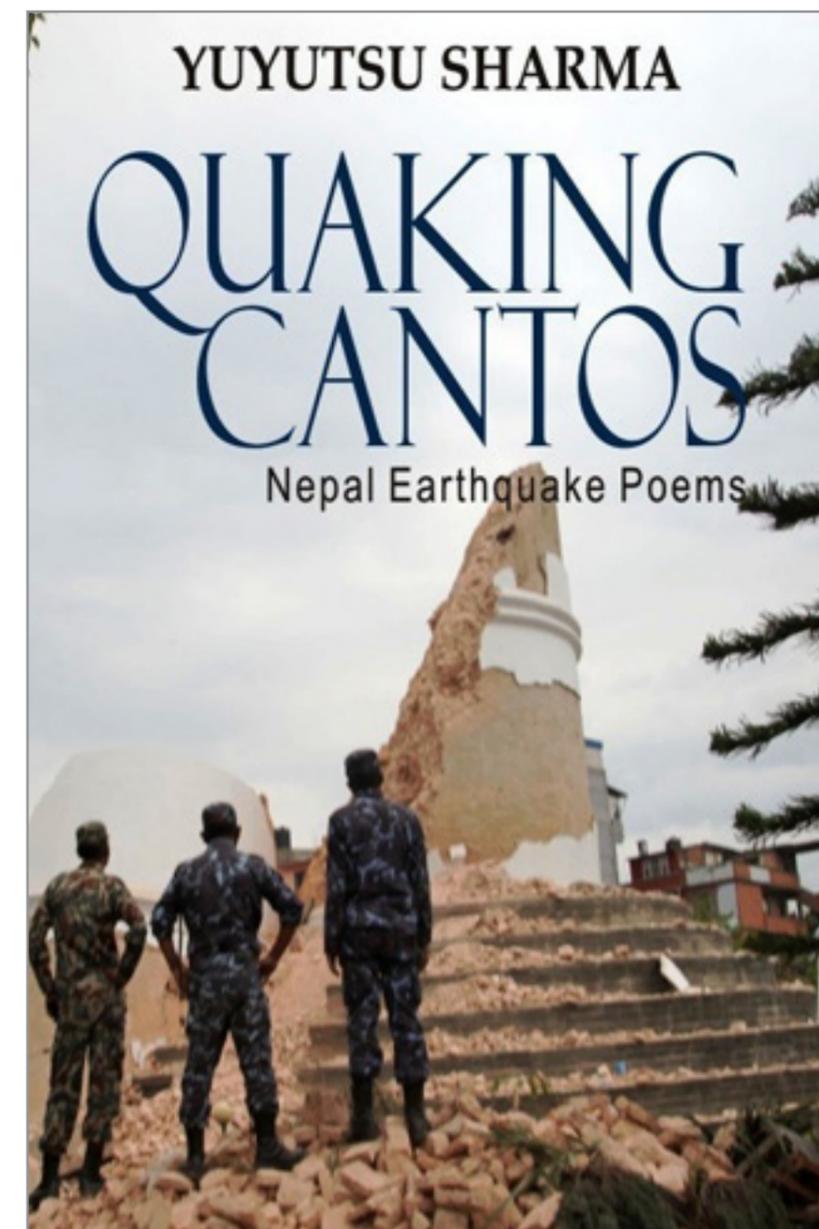
### Review of YUYUTSU SHARMA'S *Quaking Cantos*

Yuyutsu Sharma's *Quaking Cantos* provides an unsparing visceral portrayal of the earthquakes that ravaged Nepal in 2015. The indomitable power of nature, described in *Head-Piece* as 'God's great hammer,' shakes through Sharma's poems in a way that acts as a reminder of human frailty in the face of such a fatal disaster. Unsparing portraits here reveal the abject and merciless suffering experienced across the full human spectrum: baby, grandma, poet, priest, mother and father set side by side in pages where passion and skill combine to create a most sensitive, nuanced response. 'The story of the surprised householder of the creature-like survivor, in *Head Piece*, his home become carapace; the baby's helpless search for her mother's breast, and the deranged man 'bandaged,' in dust and rubble, testify to a poet who seeks for specific details as a reply to the individual situation of each one of us. The houses in Sharma's poems also have character. 'Dolakha houses, wayward travellers...' As such, Sharma personifies the way fabric of landscape and community also has suffered to dramatic effect.

Sharma's poems are not without humour: he has a deft touch with irony in *Cosmic Sleep*, describing the way the devotees have forgotten new found commandments and 'mumbled names of the Gods they had denounced'

Sharma's poems flag up the role of the poet as a voice of suffering and recovery: a voice that commemorates victims and also celebrates resilience, as so potently portrayed in poems such as: 'Reeking Armpits' and *Course of Courage*, where grandmas squat 'like fearless goddesses.'

*Quaking Cantos* shows that Sharma is a voice for our times, able to meet challenging situations with poetic fluency, sensitivity and strength.



[https://www.amazon.com/dp/8182500818?ref=myi\\_title\\_dp](https://www.amazon.com/dp/8182500818?ref=myi_title_dp)

<https://www.foyles.co.uk/witem/fiction-poetry/quaking-cantos-nepal-earthquake-poems,yuyutsu-sharma-9788182500815>

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## JACK GRADY

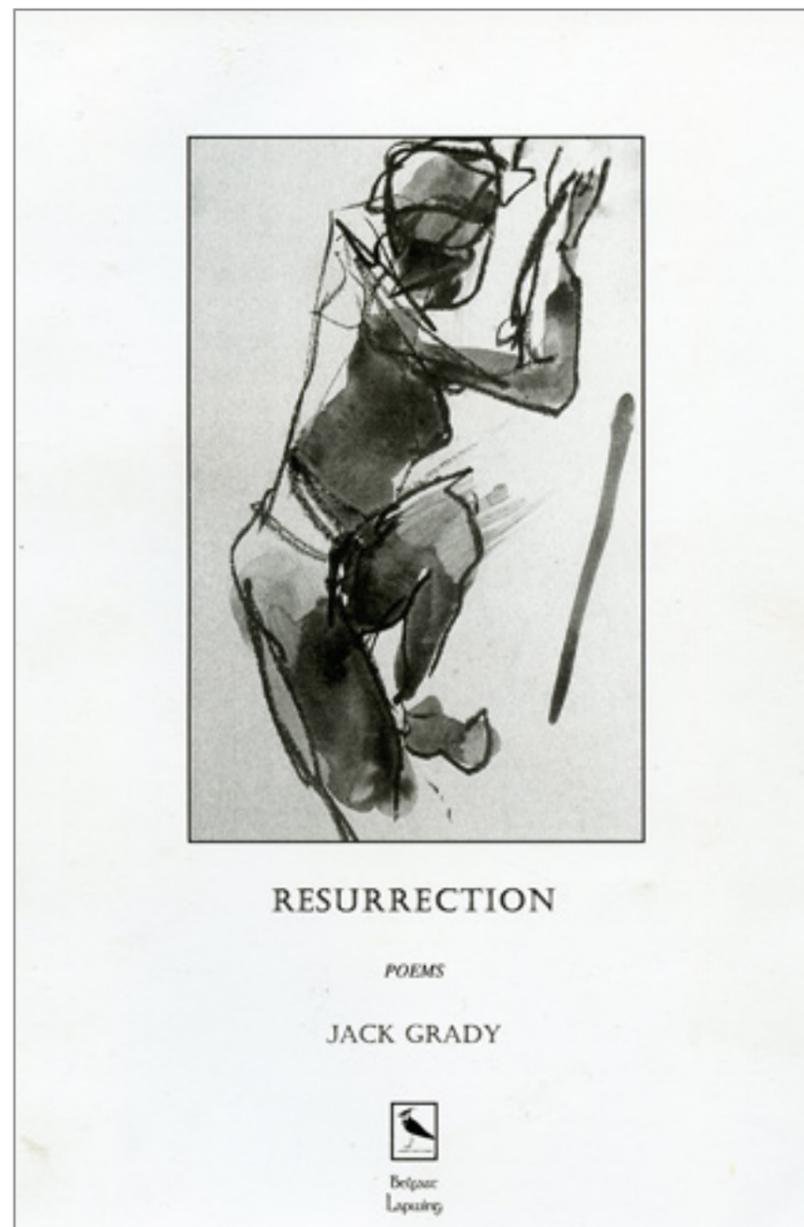


Jack Grady is a founder member of the Ox Mountain Poets, based in Ballina, County Mayo, Ireland. His poetry has been published online and in print in Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Canada, Portugal, Indonesia, India, and Nepal. He read in Morocco at the *Festival International Poésie Marrakech* in 2016 as the poet invited by its committee to represent Ireland and in the same capacity at the *Poesia a Sul* festival, in Olhão, Portugal in 2019. His poetry collection *Resurrection*, published by Lapwing Publications in 2017, was nominated for the T.S. Eliot Prize.

## TERRY MCDONAGH



Terry McDonagh, is an Irish writer of international acclaim. He has taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and was International School Drama Director. He's published eleven poetry collections as well as letters, prose and poetry for young people. A much traveled poet who has facilitated and read at festivals in more than twenty countries in Europe, Asia and Australia. His poetry has been translated into German and Indonesian. His most recent poetry collection, *Fourth Floor Flat- 44 Cantos - Arlen House* was published in 2018. He's completing his next collection, *Two Notes for Home* to be published in 2021. He's recently returned to live in Ireland having lived in German for thirty-seven years. Terry is a founding contributor of Live Encounters Magazine. <http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com/>



### TERRY MCDONAGH Review of JACK GRADY'S *Resurrection*

The title of this collection certainly applies to its author. A prize-winning poet in America in the seventies, American-born Jack Grady has been resurrected, after a hiatus of decades, as an Irish poet in the west of Ireland. As a war veteran, he is motivated by a consuming desire to see an end to war, as expressed in these lines from the eponymous poem, 'Resurrection':

*I have a dream that one day/armies will shoot with songs instead of  
bullets/generals will shed uniforms for the saffron hues of Hare Krishnas...*

Or, in 'Adam in Search of Eve', *I am spiritless now, for I have knowledge/  
and I see too clearly. .../through endless war to end war...*

A compassionate person who feels for the suffering, grief, and loss of all living creatures, he often employs nautical imagery as he describes life's journey, as in the poem 'Dark Voyage', where *the embers glow like a lantern on a square-rigged ship/...its helmsmen blind as our vessel drifts/...a cow in mourning for her slaughtered calf/informs me I am not alone in loss/that the tides of this ocean carry us all/to the same anchorage of grief.* Or in 'Spider', when the arachnid he enjoys greeting every morning is taken from its web by a wasp, and, over time, the web resembles *a ship abandoned /adrift in a gale, sails torn/stays and shrouds tattered/ghosts unspinning in the wind.*

A special poetry collection and a wonderful read.

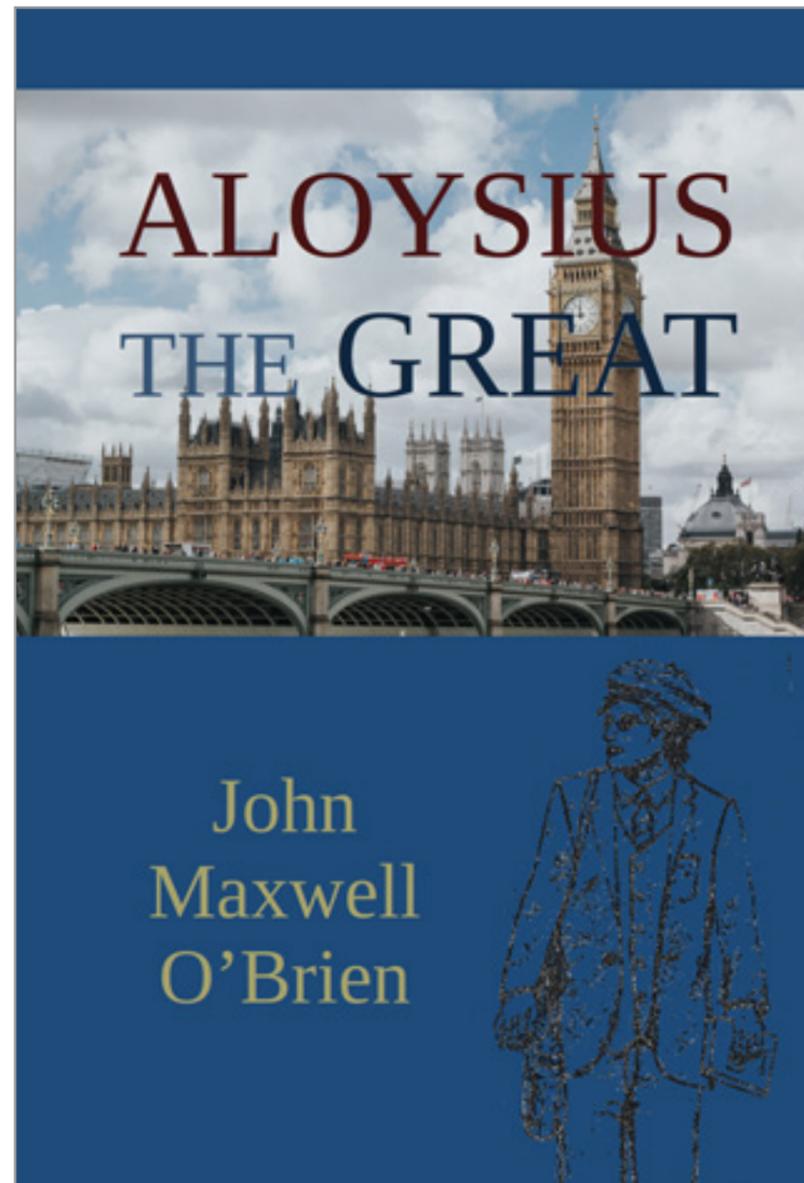
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John Maxwell O'Brien is an emeritus professor of history (Queens College, CUNY) who has written numerous articles on ancient history, medieval history, and the history of alcoholism. His best-selling biography: *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy* (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, and he has published a variety of poems and short stories in literary journals. *Aloysius the Great* is his debut novel (Propertius Press) and was inspired by James Joyce's *Ulysses*.



James Walton is published in many anthologies, journals, and newspapers. He is the author of four widely acclaimed collections of poetry. 'The Leviathan's Apprentice', 'Walking Through Fences', 'Unstill Mosaics', and 'Abandoned Soliloquies'. His fifth collection will be released shortly. He was nominated for 'The Best of the Net' 2019.



## JAMES WALTON Review of JOHN MAXWELL O'BRIEN'S *Aloysius The Great*

In 'Aloysius The Great' O'Brien masters the fracas of language, going beyond allusive homily to Joyce. 'Aloysius' exists in its own place, teeming with wit and grace, in a spellbinding exploration of the faults in clay of which we are cast. Joyce fans will no doubt discover hours of joy making links and sorting through the aspects of the novel which provides rich grounds of reference for analysis; however, the parallels have their own rhythm and the content of another time, in which a traveling academic becomes embroiled. Comedy is used as an affirmation that the loose cannon of a soul is universally constrained, where the choices are made for us, as much as by us. There may be drugs, sex, alcohol, and laughter, as an exiled journeyman, caught in the travail of the mystery of tenure meanders waywardly from crisis to crisis in 1960's Britain, but the set pieces intersect the idiom of *Ulysses*, making fresh again themes and style which established the modern novel. Our hero is not the best of men; he is the mesh of weaknesses that make for everyman. As with Joyce, a book to be wrestled with, a book to be fought over, but always on its own terms, and in its own outstanding quality.

ebook: \$7.49 (US) Paperback: \$22.99 (US) In the continental United States delivery directly from the publisher is free. Simply go to <http://bit.ly/AloysiusTheGreat> and order. Outside the United States? For the paperback (\$22.99) go to <http://bit.ly/AloysiusTheGreat> and order. Then go to [merchant@propertiuspress.com](mailto:merchant@propertiuspress.com) enter the information, and this enables the publisher to get a very reasonable delivery price from a distributor closer to you. You will receive a separate invoice from the publisher after you select your mode of delivery.

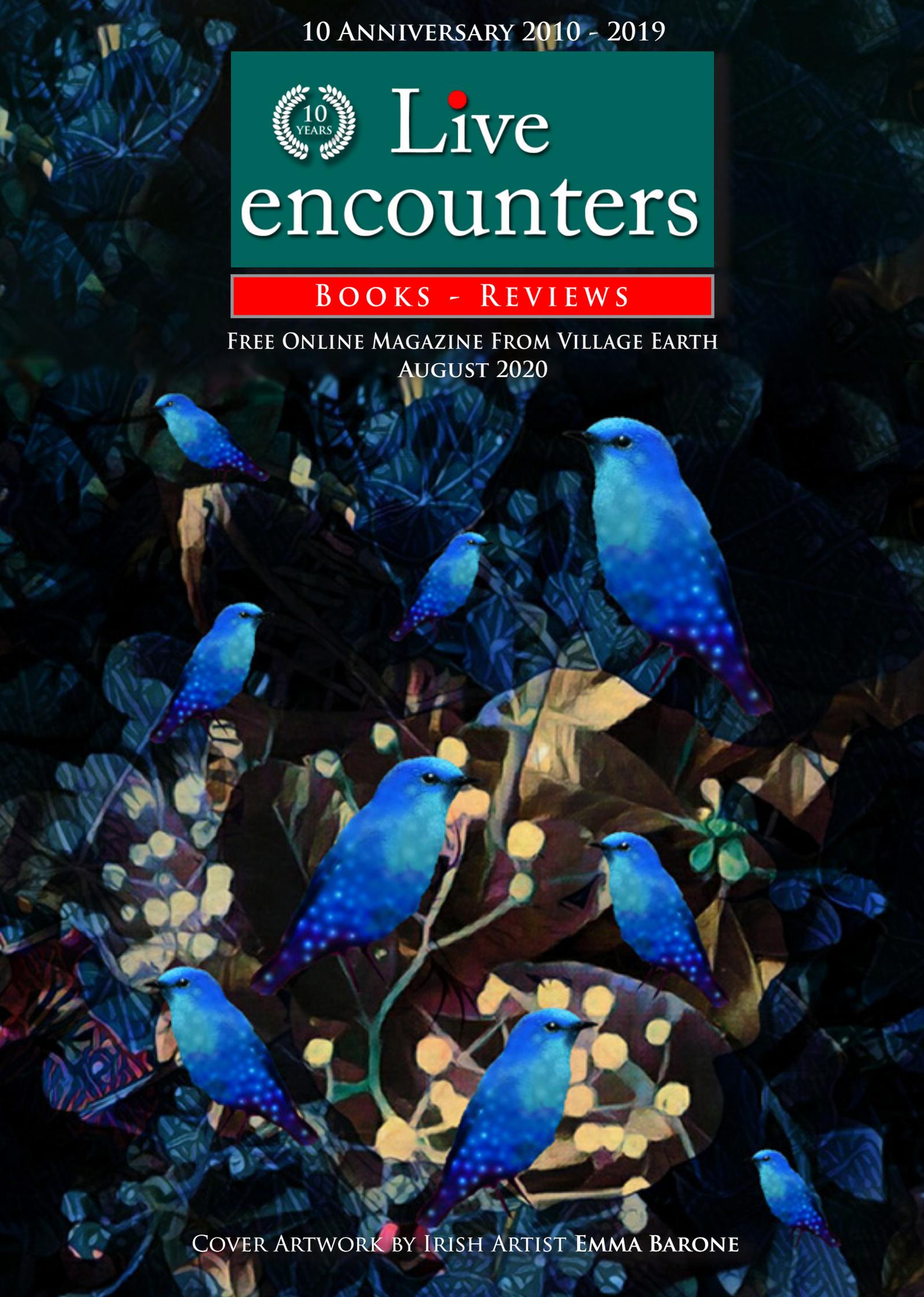
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