

10 ANNIVERSARY 2010 - 2019



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
AUGUST 2020

ANTON FLOYD
Ubuntu in a West Cork Garden

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

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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.



UBUNTU IN A WEST CORK GARDEN *

for Live Encounters

Here we sit in the garden
in this watery clearing
an amphitheatre fringed
by native summer trees
and so you ask
you intend no offense
if we live cut off
to escape the real world
here in yet another place
you call the middle of nowhere.

And while we talk of family
people we know
town and business
stress and politics,
swallows practice flying
before for their long journey south.
They pour their chatter
out of a moving sky
its changeable weather
makes this a cathedral space
the sky itself a dome
of frescoes catching
creation in the very act.

Anton Floyd. Photo credit: Carol Anne Floyd.

continued overleaf

UBUNTU IN A WEST CORK GARDEN * *contd...*

Here the prevailing winds
jet from the wild west
full of our wet weather.
Oftentimes the wind veers
bringing mild caresses
out of the deep south
and after you have gone
or when you come again
time and the earth's turning
will bring a drying wind
from the mysterious east
or from the frozen north
when it carries clear starlight
and a fox's bark on the night air.

And storms when they come
can come from anywhere.
Just now and close by
a painted lady alights
on an unfurled flower
an Asiatic elecampane
yellow as the African sun.
It spreads a wingspan
a batik of oranges and browns.
Its silence tells the story
that for now all is well here
and in the Atlas mountains.

Edging this lily pond
the South African montbretia,
papyrus from Egypt,
and acers from Japan,
the antipodean tree fern
and some Maori flax,
the giant-rhubarbs from Brazil.
There's rodgersia from China
and prickly aralia from America -
common name -
the devil's walking stick.

These and other specimens
local and from afar
sit with our purple loosestrife
and blooming heathers
and yellow flag iris -
gone over now but standing to
like Greek hoplites.
All is a patterning
drifting colours
a leafy mandala

and in the background
there's that contented hum
a meditative mantra
Irish honeybees on the forage
mapping as they go.
They haunt the nectar-rich fuchsia
from Chile - now naturalised West Cork.
And migrant birds silent in Africa
come here in spring to sing.

continued overleaf

UBUNTU IN A WEST CORK GARDEN * *contd...*

And even as we speak rain threatens
a mild Caribbean gulf-stream-rain
filtered through benign sunshine
- this is Ireland after all -
this self-same sun that shone
mercilessly out of a cloudless sky
a few short hours ago
on an eastern Mediterranean shore.

And yes I could play the gadfly
and ask with a Socratic sting
if you have not observed
such woven things
how landscapes exist
within landscapes
a reflection for the withdrawing mind
that a garden comes with time
and not without its labours.

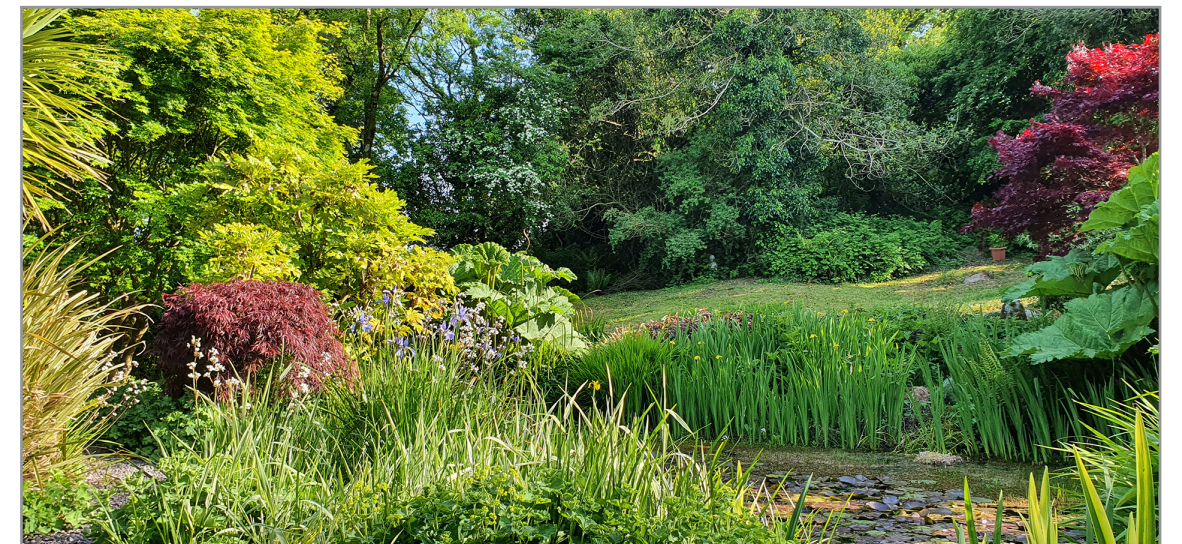
Nor are you the first to visit.
Others, like winds from the four winds,
have come with their news
their sorrows and their blessings.
These all seep into these thoughts
the way rain does this land
like roots stitching us all
into the fabric of the world.

Besides even our here
is an *on* line everywhere
friendship and work, too, take me
to the rush and press of town.

Instead, I ask if you care for more tea
and when you will come again.

* a South African Word that means, "I am because we are."

A quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity,
a need for understanding not vengeance, ubuntu not victimisation.



The Floyd family water garden. Photo credit: Carol Anne Floyd.

THE CHRONICLES OF EXILE

*for Somaya Ramadan
im Desmond O'Grady*

Each day you draw the safron silks of dawn.
You watch shadows slide down narrow streets
slicing time into the syllables of memory:

*The west wind cuts across limestone fields.
It catches a wild hawthorn dancing in light.
It is your childhood at play in the branches.*

You know that in Alexandria the sun
is a chameleon. It changes masks. The noon
mood is for arrogance. It is merciless.

*You fear, after years of unforced exile,
you will find the wild hawthorn in shreds
left only with thorns along dying branches.*

But for now, young women stroll arm in arm
flirting along the Corniche. Their evening voices
rise and fall stirring songs from a restless sea.

*You turn your promises into rhythms
telling how the wild hawthorn whispers,
'Tomorrow, birds will sing in my white branches.'*

Old men sit in waterfront coffee shops. They gaze
at how white horses foam in blind ecstasy, how
they feather the shoreline with fugitive seabirds.

*You know the wild hawthorn, bride of summer,
entices your deepest dreams. It filters the truth
of your identities in the sieve of its branches.*

The chronicles of exile are nightly appended.
You search but neither the Nile nor Shannon
veining your skin, can quench your exquisite thirst.

*White handkerchiefs are records of loss and hope.
The lucid stories you bind to that wild hawthorn
shine like so many prisms in its wet branches.*

Fergus Hogan lives and works in Waterford where he lectures fulltime in Family Therapy and Narrative Storytelling Therapy at Waterford Institute of Technology. His poems have been published in the Irish Times, Channel, Feral Journal of Poetry and Art, Tiny Seeds Literary Journal, and various anthologies. His spoken word poem *Consent* took first prize in Waterford's inaugural spoken word and slam poetry competition in 2018. His poetry chapbook, *Bittern Cry*, was published in November 2019 by Book Hub Publishing and is available for sale online from his local independent bookstore; The Book Centre Waterford www.thebookcentre.ie Fergus' first novel *The Wisdom of Fionn* is a retelling of a well known Irish legend which explores men's lives and masculinities through a lens of Celtic Spirituality, Storytelling and Mythology. It has been serialised and shared for free, a chapter a day, during the stay home stay safe time on his publisher's website www.bookhubpublishing.com.



THE GIRL IN THE SECOND-HAND SHOP

I fancied the Girl in the second-hand shop
 she had bright red curly hair tied up in a bun with a smile
 and a nose ring and a broken sort of confidence that
 attracted her to me. The first time we spoke she said
 it's my birthday on Saturday and I'm going out on the town
 to let my hair down and your welcome to come along
 if you like you can meet some of my friends. So, I said
 I think you'd look beautiful with your hair let down. But
 she didn't respond, but on Saturday night when I turned up
 we got chatting till the end of the night when she asked:
 are you married? And I said yes. Sort of. Maybe. Once. But
 we're separated now, and we haven't spoken a word to each
 other in over five years, but we still live in the same house.
 I said: I sleep on a mattress on the floor in the box room
 but she didn't reply, she just got up and left me sitting there
 alone by the bar. But when she came back from the loo
 she kissed me wet on the lips and said let's get a taxi now.
 So we did. But we didn't make love that night, just hard sex
 over and over again on her knees on her sitting room floor
 half-way up the stairs, bent over her bath, over and over again
 until I woke up in her bed the next morning, naked and sore
 scared and ashamed but feeling wanted for the first time in years.

Fergus Hogan

IN VINO VERITAS

I fell for you by the Trevi Fountain
but you brushed me off with your smile and said
I should return someday with my true love
– as the great tradition divined.

All day long I listened as you spoke Italian, coolly
claiming afterwards you spoke it only moderately well but
without missing a beat you said you spoke German fluently
– *the one true language of theologians* – you laughed

but I didn't laugh or get the joke, or understand enough
to know if you were really joking that day
you seemed to know the name of every novice that passed us
– you were able to say hello in every mother's tongue.

We argued a bit, but in the end, you agreed with me.
I should visit the Basilica – you said – and see it –
sometime, as the beautiful collection of art that it is –
but, on a quieter day when it wouldn't take so long. So,

instead we drank coffees in the morning sun in out of way cafés
and afterwards you ordered lunch, and then dinner for both of us:
Pizza Ai Quattro Formagi, Pizza Focaccia, with Olives to share
– down a side street where generations of locals ate together.

We drank jugs of red wine from noon until
I chanced enough to speak some poor Italian –
in vino veritas – and you laughed out loud at me and said
– *the best in house is never the most expensive.*

Later that night we walked back, for miles and miles
around the tiny cobbled streets of Rome.
You seemed to know each path like the back of your hand
– you could name every church we stopped at as we passed.

When we returned to our twin room in the shiny new IBIS hotel
you shared a sniff of whiskey with me from a silver hipflask.
You laughed out loud again and told me
it was a gift to yourself – one Christmas.

I took a shower and brushed my teeth
but when I came back into our room
you were already asleep in your bed
– your rosary beads and missal left on the locker between us.

.

LEAVE GO

I watch a friend on Facebook clear out her parents' place.
 Bit by bit every night she posts a picture or two of
 something for sale; the dining room table and chairs.
 The sitting room couch; a matching oak dresser and bookcase.

Then, after a week of watching her cleaning out their home
 in silence each evening I come to realize how everything she posts
 or shares online is empty now. Almost like a show house.
 Perfect in its proportions, its cleanliness and style; its cold

straight lines. Empty now of all the clutter and sentimentality that
 a life lived brings. All the stuff we gather as we go. All of the shite
 we hold onto telling ourselves we'll use it again someday or,
 someone we love will want it, or, it's a shame to let good things go.

Our small acts of resistance against the inevitable end.
 Our small acts of protest against the burgeoning disposable world.
 Our small impermanent footprint here and now upon the earth.
 Our tiny fingerprints clinging to the artefacts of our love. But

because I had not taken time to message her – two years ago –
 even on social media when I saw her post and realized her father had died.
 I stopped myself now from liking or smiling or expressing surprise or
 pressing my chubby thumb against any of the five emoji options offered

under each of her show house photos of furniture for sale; and while
 it's all so beautiful, perfect and clean I'd love to some photos of
 the shite she's had to throw out. I'd love an old-fashioned rummage
 in real life through the skip of stuff from a lifetime she's had to leave go.

MOONLIT DIP

Waiting for you all day long by the lake I busied myself
 foraging for mushrooms in the forest and
 greens from the fields all about.
 Thinking of you all the time I walked barefoot for miles
 along the stony shoreline turning flat rocks over and over
 searching for crayfish in the shallows.

When you arrived late that evening, we ate supper together:
 tossed greens, forest mushrooms, crayfish with wine.
 When it got dark, I lit some night lights on the deck, and
 we watched the midges and moths dance around the flame.
 You said, let's go for a swim, but, being afraid I wouldn't.
 I offered to hold your towel instead, and you smiled.

We stood on the shore and I watched you strip. Confidently.
 Looking out across the lake and, into the moon, you let your Laura
 Ashley dress and bra fall to earth amongst the Purple Loosestrife,
 then, bending over before me you slipped out of your panties, and
 turning full-front you handed them to me and said, keep these safe.
 You asked me again, if I was sure, but I didn't reply.

I watched you walk out slowly, almost to your waist, and
 just out of sight, and into the shadows, half-light. Then I heard you
 slip below the water's edge. The splash your body made on entering.
 Then the silence, returning to stillness, for what felt like forever.
 I held my breath until you came back up in a gentle rush of sounds.
 Water lapping against your arms, your legs, your breasts, your face

and, then – the terrible crash of noise from the reeds – a pair of
 Great Crested Grebes making love or, calling out – forewarning.

.

NOTE

Sometimes sadness is written in the stars.
Sometimes she falls from leaves
silent as a child's handwritten note marking time
until it's found again
in a book in a second-hand store.
*i love you dad thanks for tucking me in and
please please please wake me up soon as you get up
before school
i want to finish this chapter.*
A note that might just as well have come straight
from your hand into mine
I remember so often coming home too late from work
to kiss you goodnight when I thought we had all the time in the world
together and still before us.

KITE

Freedom is a kite slipped through a child's hand
in a field of wildflowers by a lake I remember
the smell in the air, the August Sun, all of the colours
as high as your waist.
Your tossed blond hair uncut before school
blowing in the breeze as you ran downhill
laughing out loud, *look, look daddy*
as your red and yellow kite went up, up then away.
How we stood there watching together
the world changing in front of our eyes that day
and now looking back I still wonder
if we were all ever there at all.
You, me, the kite, the lake, the field, the flowers
looking up and off out at freedom

Maria Wallace was born in Catalonia, lived in Chile for ten years and later settled in Dublin. She has won many national and international poetry prizes, amongst them The Sunday Tribune Hennessy Literary Awards, 2006. Her work has been published in Ireland, England Italy, Australia and Catalonia. In 1996 she founded Virginia House Creative Writers and has edited four anthologies of their work. She has published two bilingual poetry collections (English - Catalan). She judges The Jonathan Swift Awards.



MUSEUM WHISPERS

UCD's Classical Museum

In this room the past is present,
personified by the broken bits
it bequeathed to us.

Small pieces
centuries piled up
on ruined memory, on clay
which tasted
different words and ways.

Long ago these artefacts
were part of the people
who fashioned them;
in their fragmented now
they still whisper, say life runs
on railway tracks,
final destination unknown,

say that our time too, one day,
will be displayed in a museum
as wreckage of today,
to be looked at,
wondered about.

Maria Wallace

SHEPHERD

*i.m. Fernando Pessoa, (1888, 1935),
relevant Portuguese poet and writer*

I'm the keeper of a large herd,
a shepherd whose sheep have jumped
the enclosure
and roam where they shouldn't,
trample over pristine gardens,
nibble at delicate blooms.

Unruly as them, my thoughts
are the sheep I'm unable to pen,
domesticate or teach,
thoughts that become feeling keys
opening doors in my eyes,
mouth and fingertips;
doors through which reality
rushes in and is
a minute by minute search
for lost sheep
to make sense
of life and new dawns.



<https://pixabay.com/photos/statue-sculpture-figure-face-angel-4255695/>

Božidar Vasiljević is a Serbian poet and writer. He writes both for adults and children. His work has been translated into many languages and published in prestigious journals, newspapers and anthologies. He has published 22 books. He lives and works in Belgrade. vasiljevic.bozidar@yahoo.com



Three poems translated from Serbian by Danijela Trajković.

Božidar Vasiljević

KAD POPUŠIŠ SVOJA PROLEĆA

Kad popušiš svoja proleća
kao mazna devojčica dolazi smrt
umilna kao početak ljubavi
šapuće
ne boj me se
bezbolna sam
ni kao lahor me nećeš osetiti
proći u kroz tebe
najnežnije
tako da nećeš više poželeti
drugačiju nežnost
bićeš mi zauvek odan
najodaniji

WHEN YOU FINISH SMOKING YOUR SPRINGS

When you finish smoking your springs
the death comes like a little cuddling girl
sweet like the beginning of love
whispering
do not be afraid of me
I am painless
you will not feel me
not even like the breeze you can feel I am
I will go through you
in the most sensitive way
so you won't ever wish
some different tenderness
you will be always faithful to me
the most faithful one

.

PREDAH

Istinsko uživanje je predah
od lova pijenja parenja

trenuci kada ne moraš
da činiš ništa

istinsko uživanje je predah
od svake potrebe
od svake prinude

kada nisi nikom neophodan
kada nisi sebi neophodan

kad kao bog možeš da budeš svuda
a da te nema nigde

kad kao bog možeš da ne postojiš
a da svi veruju da te ima

RELAXATION

The true enjoyment is the relaxation
from hunting drinking mating
the moments of no need
to do anything
the true enjoyment is the relaxation
from any needs
from any coercions
when nobody needs you
when you don't need yourself
when like God you can be everywhere
and yet be nowhere
when like God you are able to not exist
yet everyone believes that you do

.

POEZIJA TREBA DA IMA ČOBANSKU GRUBOST

Poezija treba da ima čobansku grubost
kao fijuk biča
kada čobanin podvikne psu
i dozu bezbrižnosti i veselja
dok pas kruži u trku
skupljajući stado
u okruglu
više pufnastu
krofnastu strofu
koja nastavlja da pase
ne pomišljajući na vukove
i druge svetske katastrofe

POETRY SHOULD HAVE
THE ROUGHNESS OF A SHEPHERD

Poetry should have the roughness of a shepherd
like the whip whistle
when the shepherd shouts at his dog
and also the dose of carelessness and joy
while the dog circles around
gathering the flock
in a round
more puffy
donut stanza
that continues grazing
without thinking of wolves
and other world catastrophes

Danijela Trajković is a Serbian poet, writer, reviewer and translator. Her book “22 Wagons” has been published by The Academy of Arts, Knjazevac, 2018. Her work has been translated into many languages and published in journals, anthologies and newspapers worldwide. She lives and works in Vranje.



Two poems written originally in Serbian
by Danijela Trajković, and translated into English
by the poet.

Danijela Trajković

RABL

Čitam danas uginuo Rabl
najstariji mačak na svetu
starosti trideset i dve godine
što bi bilo sto pedeset da je bio čovek
a ja već trista godina živim
i više ne znam šta da radim
kad ujutru ustanem
kafa i cigarete mi kažu
kao da me čekaju
‘ajde ponovo je stigao dan gospodar rada
i neće te trpeti u krevetu
a krevet me bolno gleda
kao ostareli muž koji se plaši
da ga ne ostavim dugo samog
kao da ne shvata da mi je mrsko
što mi još ne daju penziju
i što moram da budem mlada a stara
koja jedino želi
da sa svojim mužem tišinu sluša

RUBBLE

I’m reading that today Rubble died
The oldest cat in the world
At the age of thirty two
Meaning a hundred and fifty if he was a human
And I have been living for three hundred years
And have no idea what more to do
When I get up in the morning
My coffee and cigarettes tell me
As if they provoke me
Come on it has arrived the day again
The master of work
And it won’t let you be in bed
And my bed looks at me sadly
Like an old husband who is afraid of
Being without me for a long time
As if it doesn’t understand that
I feel awful because
I can’t be retired yet
And because I have to be young although old
The person who only wishes
To listen to silence with her husband

DOK ŽIVOT SANJA

Život je napolju
U sobi smo
Zlatne mesečeve oči
Mirno disanje moje ćerke
I ja
Život napolju je tih
Sanja o tome kako je
Ne biti život
Niko ne želi da mu remeti san
Psi se ne bore oko koske
Kuju su mačke izlizale
Mačke ne jure miševe
Miševi ne grickaju kukuruz
Koji je domaćica okačila na zid
Da se nađe za kokice
Vetar ne fenira belu trešnju
I tako
Život spava
Spava kao devojčica
Koja sanja da ima super moći.

WHILE LIFE SEES A DREAM

Life is outside
In the room there are
The golden eyes of the Moon
My daughter's calm breathing
And me
Outside life is quiet
It sees a dream of how
It is not to be life
Nobody wants to interrupt its dream
Dogs don't fight for the bone
That cats licked
Cats don't chase mice
Mice don't bite the corn
That a housewife
Hanged against the wall
To have it for popcorn
Wind doesn't blow-dry the white cherry tree
And so
Life sleeps
Like the girl who sees a dream
Of having super powers.

Jim Burke is co-founder with John Liddy, of The Stony Thursday Book his poems have appeared in The Crannog Poetry Journal, The Literary Bohemian, The Shamrock Haiku Journal, Skylight 47, The Shot Glass Journal U.S.A., Live Encounters, Bali, Unbroken Journal, U.S.A. Voices from the Cave, an anthology on addiction, published by the Limerick Writers Centre. His Haiku were published in the anthology "Between the Leaves," new Haiku Writing from Ireland, edited by Anatoly Kudryavitsky.



Jim Burke

THE STEAK KNIFE OF DESPAIR

A scene, Charity Shop

dumped during the downturn
I longed for those tender joints
burning pepper-sauce

between each tiny mouthful
the intimate dinner voice

how Carlson fetched me up
after every meal
to wash and polish me
to gleam

when I lost
my place in the world
what the fuck?
it didn't matter

I grew lonesome
in the shapeless days

hollow hands picked me up
and put me down
unaware of who I was
voices beside me pleaded
for ordinary things
a house a car

VENUS IN A HI-VIZ VEST

Wanted: One genuine soulful prospector.
Must have starry handle and face to match.
Sharp colour in both eyes. A pearly
set of. Tight jeans. Howling tanned arms. A tat
-oo on the wrist Tom P, or on the thigh
heart of Tom W. Fanatic myself.
Or mystical for amazing hipness
like a Venus in a Hi-Viz Vest, or
must have bed too, or a lion pawed tub.
Must be on the right side of the river
for when the sun goes down and the party
starts across town all the broken hearted
convene somewhere away from grief and loss
and gloom too. We will be unzipped.



<https://pixabay.com/photos/wine-glasses-stemware-crystal-party-176991/>

Joachim Matschoss is a playwright, poet and Theatre-maker. His Theatre Company, 'Backyard Theatre Ensemble (BYTE)' presents diverse pieces of theatre nationally and internationally. Joachim is fascinated by creating work from scratch and is less interested in seeing a piece of theatre grow like a flower, but more so like a weed, something raw, something with cracks, and something that is challenging both the performer and the audience member. Joachim's poetry is published in Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA. He recently published a book about theatre and travel, *Rain Overnight*. Two new poetry collections, *Sidewalk Theatre* and *Travels with Myself* have been published in India.



AFTER SOCIAL DISTANCING

some time ago butterflies stayed folded
we wished for it to rain
so that our tears could hide more easily
sitting opposite in safe distance
uncertainty was the norm
and time was heavy
we were like stones –

now a bee tickles a rose
makes it gush and tremble
I will pick it later for your hair
grasshoppers click across a field
we quietly approach
and talk about springtime
walking arm in arm
grateful for the gift
of closeness

Joachim Matschoss

HAND IN HAND

when the masked days
have been folded away
into the book of the past
come step into my
lonely, little world
and we'll say farewell to social distance
and hand in hand
we will run through the puddles
that yesterday's rain has left
we'll fly through the clouds
and swim in the sea
we'll sing and dance
and whistle and sway
we'll kiss and be free
free to do
free just to be

SOMETHING SWEET LIKE STRAWBERRIES

across the country birds are making nests
circling rainbow-colored tides of bloom
seduced by narrow chasms of nectar
I am thinking about you
and something sweet like strawberries
coated in chocolate.
a pair of hawk moths suck sweet nothings
from a jasmine bush and the air glitters with pollen
kangaroos stroll through the shallows of the river
not far from where we are
this afternoon calls for laughter
you squeeze the air, and everything turns golden
let's keep walking and let your fingers braid with mine
it's okay
it's okay again

PORTOBELLO IN THE TIME OF CORONA

the sky
so silent and so sickly
caught between
a whisper and a scream
taken hostage by the pain
the uncertainty
and the missteps taken by those that make decisions
now lives are shifted from prison to prison
yet even in those times
I could still hear the sound frogs make
while around me
a philosophy of hands
wiped and wiped again plucking life from me



<https://pixabay.com/photos/>

Peter O'Neill is the author of six collections of poetry, a volume of translation *The Enemy-Transversions from Charles Baudelaire* (Lapwing, 2015); a work of prose fiction *More Micks than Dicks – a hybrid Beckettian novella in 3 genres* (Famous Seamus, 2017); and has edited two volumes of poetry – *And Agamemnon Dead* (mgv2>publishing, 2015) and *The Gladstone Readings* (Famous Seamus, 2017). As part of a continuing engagement with Samuel Beckett's novel *Comment c'est*, he will be presenting a paper at the *How It Is Symposium* organised by *Gare Saint Lazare Players* at Reading University on the 4th May, 2020.



HOMER

"My name is Nobody!"

So, Odysseus replied to the giant Polyphemus,
While fleeing from the cave.
The apocalyptic cave.
The subterranean cave.
The cave where the wines of Maron intoxicated the Cyclops.

Blind Drunk! – such is the expression.
It contains the archaeological trace in the conveyance,
This fragment from out of the discourse of the ancients.

Once it is voiced it is as sure
As the stone- work of those plinths,
Or any other motif from classical architecture.
Such is the parallel of contemporary architecture.

Don't speak to me about your accursed notions of time,
We are all at once both ancient and modern.
The olive stake still smoulders in the mind,
And wine still helps us to escape the things which oppress us.

We are either nobodies, or tyrannical giants.

THE KISS

Like a pendulum above a trench,
I held you till both hands stopped.
At the point of intersection, a ricochet
Through the woods, the sound of rifle shots
Penetrating the wood of birch trees,
All silver barked, creating the sound
Of a hidden symphony, housing foundations.
The sail of invisible yachts, and synagogues.
As yet to be dreamed of structures,
Laid out in your kiss when your tongue
Entered me, my mouth. As if I had trouble
Enough hearing you, so you decided
To slip it in, forcing me then
To eat my own words.



<https://pixabay.com/photos/>

Margaret O'Driscoll lives in West Cork, Ireland and like the Phoenix she has risen from a break in poetry to share her work again. Her poetry has been published far and wide and translated into many different languages. She has been invited to read at literary festivals in several countries including India, Albania and Uzbekistan. She loves nature, photography, dancing freely, listening to music, living simply and spending fun time with her grandchildren.



MY OLD NATIONAL SCHOOL

My old National School long unused,
the yard overgrown, many roof tiles missing
the door jambed open, walls black with mould

In the porch, a row of coat hooks,
memories of dripping coats,
the priest robed in black hearing my First Confession

The Infants Room, floorboards broken,
the blackboard crumbling, fallen twigs from a jackdaws nest piled on the fireplace
where warm milk once bubbled in lunch bottles

The Seniors Room, the principal's podium,
a faded wall map of Ireland, torn.
A flashback comes, the principal shouting,
her pointer tapping, her feet stomping,
she grabs a Hazel rod, a student stammering, his hand outstretched -
the whack of the rod!

Margaret O'Driscoll

JUST PASSING THROUGH

I took a trip down memory lane
along the byways last September,
pointing out familiar places
and events I well remember.
Twin peaks away in the distance,
mountains all hazy and blue,
to the southwest a woodland,
all around a amazing view

The hillside purple with Heather,
Montbretia in bloom at the edge,
Swallows feast for their migration,
Fuchsia drips red in the hedge.
The hayfields that once resounded
to the corncrake's constant call,
where hay was cut and turned,
when dry, piled in haycocks tall

I passed along my old school route,
I thought of the stream roaring down,
water gushing out of a gulley,
froth rising, the bubbles peat-brown.
The turn where I saw a stoat
slinking along, tail-end black,
the hill where a kestrel hovered,
then suddenly launched an attack

A region remote and rugged
where stars lit up the dark nights,
where in childhood I gazed in amazement
at the swirling Northern Lights.
Time passes but memories remain
to be passed to generations new,
cherish those magical moments,
we are all just passing through.

.

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



COVID ONE NINER ALPHA

The park bench sat there
Empty of laughter from young couples
Devoid of much except the background of trees nearby.

Looking in the clear mirror
therein, was the way it used to be
not the way it is now.
Looking, seeing, your eyes noticing the colors
the greens of spring grass
the blues of the gloves ending in a teal hospital gown
the moving neon of a critical care monitor
the greys of the basement where the dim light that comes thru
is that of a narrow window, high up on the wall, dusty, diffusing.

You hear the hiss of the ventilator
wait for the next breath's sound
down intubated lungs into COVID infected tissue

those thoughts dripping sweaty anticipation
it could be you next time
another ambulance, flashing, drives by the park.

Still, there is the silent beauty of butterflies, by the swings
the hummingbirds want the same nectar, both are unaffected by
that little round less-than-a-micron-in-size bastard-ball of infectiousness.

The future is not in the mirror.

The park wishes for forests on mountains.

Children used to play where the wolverines now roam.

Ray Whitaker

COVID ONE NINER BETA

He'd always wondered, was there some form of pity
having for the state of it, that it has no shine of it's own,
and was always regelated to be in forced content
in the shadow of the day.
Thus is another definition
of resignation.

During the covid nineteen crisis, we are -or perhaps should be -
asking ourselves not just how to get along
not just to simply live thru the crisis,
really to ask ourselves:
what can I do right now,
that will make a difference?

Somewhere, remembering a someplace
Where the clock hands are turned back
there the intention is to do good
not where anyone takes fun in the disarray of others
caring prevalent,
it is pregnant with expectation in that space.

Hear the low Tympani roll, crescendo louder, and louder
he raised his Trombone up to his lips
leaning into the note, phrasing, playing jazz
surpized yet again
at the big broad sound filling the ears
of those in the concert hall, this world stage.



<https://pixabay.com/photos/coronavirus-mask-woman-portrait-5184792/>

COVID ONE NINER TRIGONAL

No gilded frame on this mind's eye painting
 of debris blowing down a city alley
 gauze, bandages tumbling. On the corner sign: St Mary's Hospital.

One, of two, respiratory therapists walk out
 N 95's safely retained on a bicep, ready to use again
 they are sweated up even tho it's not hot

cardinal wings look like lungs
 the red bird doesn't play well with others
 nesting in bushes, unmistakable in antics
 even so, flapping angry red wings at the impossible to avoid
 at all the what is hard
 hard to go to dancin' in an isolation gown
 hard to smile thru double-masked up in the Respiratory ICU
 harder to read someone's eyes thru a face shield
 hardest to deal with the sweated up scrub suits under all that.

Burning, down the block, angry yellows and oranges
 smell the obscuring greys and blacks of smoke
 here in Greensboro's place of some the originating 1964 protests

had the window glass broken in
 the Woolworths store had become a museum to racial injustice
 where the original four lunch counter seats enshrined

protests; nay, revolution; revisited like the terrible heavy horse
 ran down the line of sword-holding infantry
 as those armoured horse and did so long ago in Falkirk
 equality the struggle then,
 as well, the struggle now resembling the same then
 as much as it is different now.

The deep desire of equality
 that, that is found in each of us
 the struggle against the oppression of tyranny

and yet, there is this struggle against pandemic
 too, the microbiology is relentless
 too, unavoidable the quarantine fatigue.

*- a Cardinal is a dominantly red bird of North America,
 and the State Bird of North Carolina, USA*

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

Maram Al-Masri was born in Latakia, Syria, and moved to France in 1982 following the completion of English Literature studies at Damascus University. She is the recipient of many prestigious literary prizes, including the Prix d'Automne 2007 de Poésie de la Société des Gens De Lettres, the Adonis Prize of the Lebanese Cultural Forum, the Premio Citta di Calopezzati for the section Poésie de la Méditerranée, Il Fiore d'Argento for cultural excellence, and the Dante Alighieri Prize (for her high and concentrated voice on love, in the great tradition of Arab language and the best European and Italian poetry). She is the author of *Je te regarde*, *Cerise rouge sur un carrelage blanc*, *Le retour de Walada*, *Par la fontaine de ma bouche*, *La robe froissée*, *Elle va nue la liberté*, *Je te menace d'une colombe blanche*, *Le Rapt*, and two anthologies, including *Femmes poètes du monde arabe*.

Three poems from *The Abduction* by Maram Al-Masri, translated by Hélène Cardona.



Hélène Cardona



Maram Al-Masri

13

Il y a la guerre au Rwanda
et moi je mange
il y a la guerre en Yougoslavie
et moi je souris
il y a la guerre en Palestine
et moi je dors

mais depuis qu'on t'a enlevé
la guerre est en moi

From *Le Rapt* (Éditions Bruno Doucey, 2015) by Maram Al-Masri

13

War rages in Rwanda
and I eat
War rages in Yugoslavia
and I smile
War rages in Palestine
and I sleep

but since they've taken you away
war rages within me

.

From *The Abduction* by Maram Al-Masri (Le Rapt, Éditions Bruno Doucey, 2015)
Translated from the French by Hélène Cardona.

19

Loin de mes bras
 tu dors dans un lit qui n'est pas le tien
 tu ne vois plus mon visage
 ni mes yeux qui te regardaient avec tant d'amour
 tu ne vas plus prendre mes mains
 comme tu le faisais d'habitude
 avant de t'endormir

la nuit tu te réveilleras
 pour dire « Maman »
 à une femme qui n'est pas moi

loin de mes yeux
 tu vas grandir
 tu vas aller à l'école
 et je ne t'attendrai pas à la porte
 tu vas être malade
 et je ne serai pas inquiète à tes côtés

je ne connaîtrai ni ton visage ni ta voix
 je ne connaîtrai pas ton odeur
 ni combien tu chausses
 tu resteras dans mon souvenir
 l'enfant de dix-huit mois
 qu'ils m'ont kidnappé

From *Le Rapt* (Éditions Bruno Doucey, 2015) by Maram Al-Masri

19

Far from my arms
 you sleep in a bed that is not yours
 you no longer see my face
 nor my eyes looking at you with such love
 you no longer take my hands
 as was your habit
 before falling asleep

at night you wake
 to say Mommy
 to a woman who is not me

far from my eyes
 you will grow
 go to school
 and I won't wait for you by the door
 you'll be sick
 and I won't be by your side

I won't know your face or voice
 I won't know your smell
 or the size of your shoes
 you will remain in my memory
 the eighteen-month-old child
 kidnapped from me

From *The Abduction* by Maram Al-Masri (Le Rapt, Éditions Bruno Doucey, 2015)
 Translated from the French by Hélène Cardona.

23

Sous le lit
j'ai trouvé ton nounours
celui que tu enlaçais et couvrais de baisers
avec qui tu parlais les yeux grands ouverts
en attendant que l'ange du sommeil vienne vers toi

tu te souviens comme il était capable
d'arrêter la tempête de tes cris
quand je te le montrais et l'agitais
alors la nuit de tes yeux luisait
et même les chutes du Niagara
cessaient de tomber

tu l'arrachais de mes mains
le serrant fort contre toi
apaisé
il était ton compagnon
pour affronter la nuit
ton ami silencieux
celui que tu négligeais quand tu étais occupé
celui que tu cherchais quand tu étais triste

le nounours et l'ange du sommeil
te recherchent toujours

From *Le Rapt* (Éditions Bruno Doucey, 2015) by Maram Al-Masri

23

Under the bed
I found the teddy bear
you clasped and covered with kisses
the one you talked to, eyes wide open
waiting for the angel of sleep to come to you

do you remember how it stopped
the storm of your cries
when I waved it at you
then the night of your eyes glistened
and even the Niagara Falls
stopped falling

you tore it from my hands
clutching it against you
soothed
it was your companion
to face the night
your silent friend
the one you neglected when busy
the one you looked for when sad

the teddy bear and angel of sleep
keep looking for you

From *The Abduction* by Maram Al-Masri (Le Rapt, Éditions Bruno Doucey, 2015)
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