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TERRY MCDONAGH
Spring is Round the Corner

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Lotus, Luang Prabang, Laos, photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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

Terry is a founding contributor of Live Encounters Magazine.

TERRY MCDONAGH

Spring is Round the Corner

Here goes. Spring is round the corner. I'm writing to you on a dark January afternoon. Christmas is done and dusted. The Christmas tree is left to its own devices at the back door. It's raining outside as I try to plan a bike tour between the showers. It should be a good time for scribblers. I have bits of bin-ready poems everywhere. I'm still a dreamer. Hope springs eternal. If one could believe cards and advertising, there's a new year in the air but this time, it's tinged with a lingering heaviness – I'll try not to mention the C 19 word. If I read or hear the words, *stay safe*, again I'll take leave of my senses...and if I don't succeed, I might tackle an epic poem to keep me out of mischief.

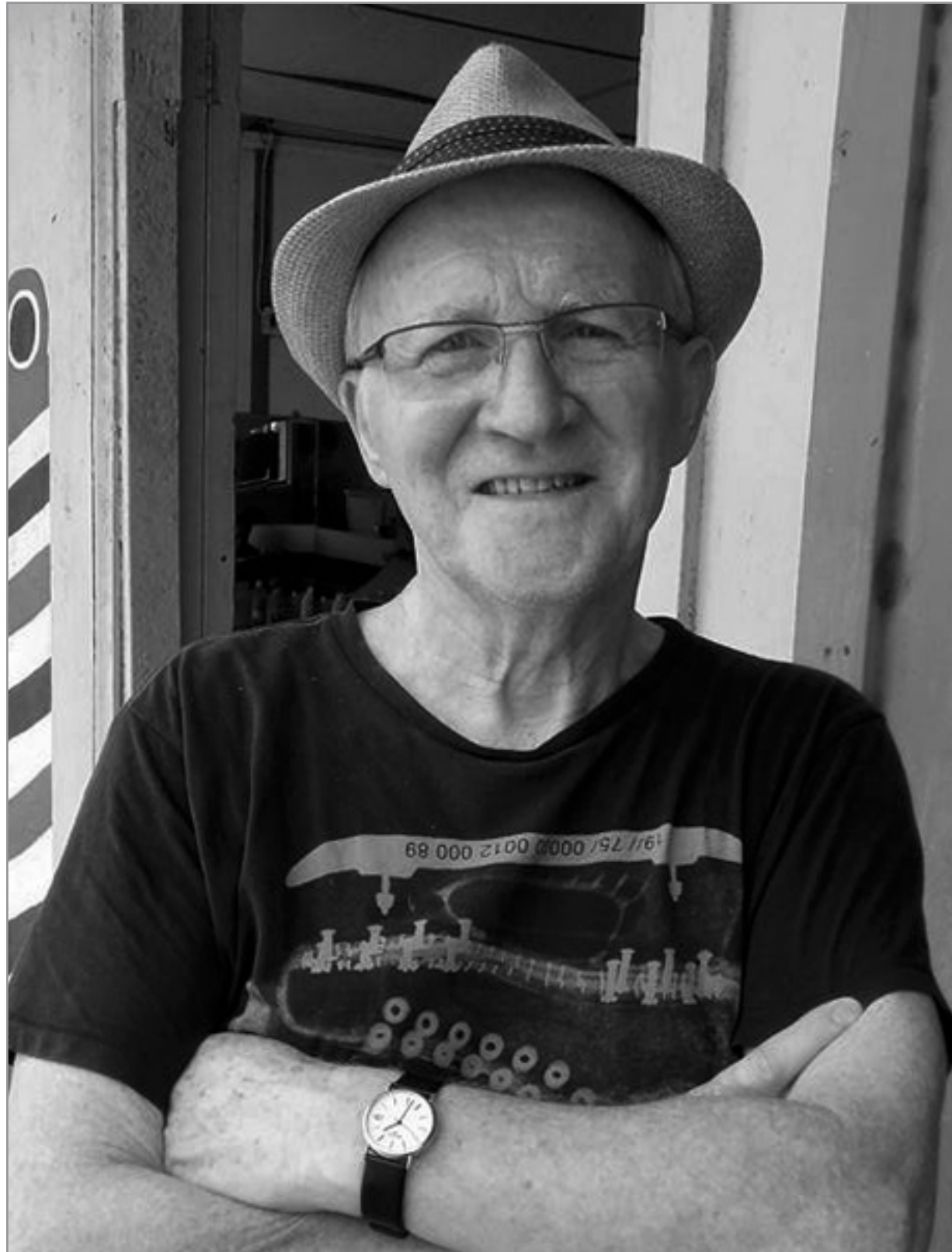
Writers are supposed to like darkness and chaos. Some of us are trying to write the definitive novel, play, short story or poem; gardens are being looked at; neighbours – twenty metres apart – are Zooming or talking 'socially distant' over garden walls. Perhaps it's an opportunity – a good time to reflect on what is past and the influence that past has had on our present. And spring is round the corner.

We are approaching February the 1st and I can't help thinking of Brigid, the Celtic goddess of fertility, later adopted by Christianity to become Saint Brigid (c. 451 – 525) the Abbess of Kildare and one of Ireland's patron saints. Her feast day, the 1st of February – is also known as the pagan festival of *Imbolc*. It is the first day of spring in the Celtic tradition – nicely tucked away halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox.

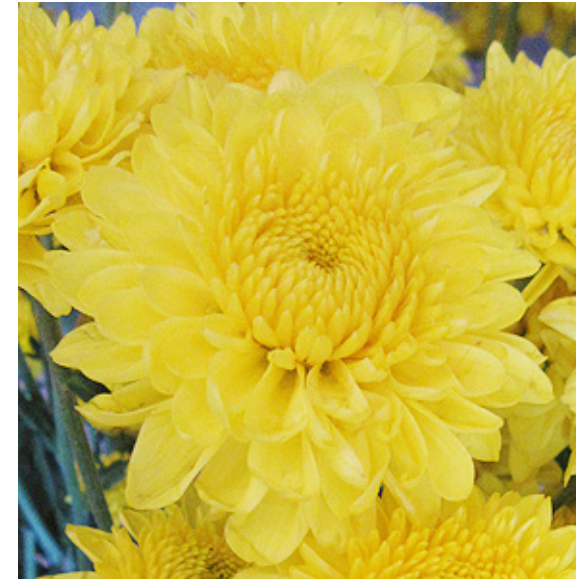
In my childhood and, to some extent, today, Saint Brigid's crosses were made from rushes and placed above doorways to protect the family from evil spirits, sickness and to bring luck and blessings in the coming year. Holy wells were visited and straw dolls, wrapped in white fabric, (*Brideógs*...pronounced bree-jogs) were hung over doors. Fresh beginnings. There were many such practices and traditions to announce to passing from one season to another – darkness to light – winter to spring – pessimism to new shoots.

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Terry McDonagh



In her poem, '**A Light Exists in Spring**,' Emily Dickinson tells us: *A Light exists in Spring / Not present on the Year / At any other period – / When March is scarcely here / A Color stands abroad / On Solitary Fields / That Science cannot overtake / But Human Nature feels...*

She seems to tell us we have the capacity to immerse ourselves in spring light and hope – and, even if our positive outlook is, sometimes, tarnished by a sinister set of real, media-propelled fears, we have the capacity to *always look at the bright side of life*. Fear is an emotion that protects us while, at the same time, keeping us at a distance. Balance is everything.

And when I think of the Romantic poet, Wordsworth, I sense the excitement he experiences in springtime – tinged with an undercurrent of sadness. **In Lines Written in Early Spring:**

To her fair works did nature link / the human soul that through me ran / and much it grieved my heart to think / what man had made of man.

Thankfully, I'm an optimist at heart. Like all of us, I add, discard and ponder. I go up and down but can feel a spring in my step when reading an uplifting text – something I experience when reading William Blake's innocent celebration of **Spring** in his childlike welcoming of the new season:

Sound the flute! / Now it's mute! / Bird's delight / Day and night / Nightingale in the dale / Lark in sky / Merrily / Merrily, merrily / To welcome in the year...

Writing, and poetry in particular, attempts to deal with what is at the core of what it means to be human. Topics like life, death, love, despair, success and failure are ever present – they challenge us as writers and, more importantly, as human beings. As I've said I'm an optimist – a lover of spring. In the following poem I try to make my case for hope in a world that can be confusing.

SPRING

first published in my collection, Fourth Floor Flat

But spring will come again.
Grass will be greener
and pleased.
Hills will arch, stretch
and spread blankets of colour.
Trees will stop mourning.
They'll lilt.
Humans will feel warmer,
doff, peel, shed and season.
Doors close. Doors open.

I'll breathe plumes into twilight
and be easy. Robins and wrens
will come again to garnish branches.
They'll chorus and sing to high fields,
low lands, dykes and pastures as
fox cubs and kittens tackle first frolics.
I've had my fill of drear,
I think – as my kettle screams
like a lone voice on a fresh planet.

And optimism. I sense there are more poems and poets out there than used to be. Social media has become a busy platform. It provides an opportunity to express the end results of what nature has taught us. Mainstream media and politics are well capable of keeping us tuned into drear. Spring is round the corner.

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



PRAYER AT THE DEATH OF HELEN DANIEL

She
self-mutilated stabbing in punitive punctuation marks, scored out spelling
mistakes, broke open her skin to erase every broken rule of grammar or syntax,
every semantic misstep, gouged words and their etymology, their dictionary
meaning, their literal meaning, their phonetic symbols into deep meat

She
honed daily the little bone-handled penknife in an act of ritual readiness,
poised the point of the letter opener to lance and lacerate, pared with the
serrated kitchen knife parsings in parentheses

Because
to make a slip and be wrong, to make even the smallest slip whatsoever and
be seen as slipshod, to ever be at all in any way wrong, required, of utmost
necessity, a mortification, a visible and readily apparent bloodletting act of
contrition

For
those pompous, self-appointed Authorities and Experts who had taken it upon
themselves to be forever vigilant on the wait and watch – red pens poised and
at the ready

This poem for Helen Daniels was written when she died - she killed herself. She was a lesbian, a writer and editor of Australian Book Review. She always gave me books to review and published some of my writing but after she died and Peter Rose took over - nothing. Anyway, she used to self-harm and every time I'd take copy in to her she'd have hands and arms in bandages. It was very sad, very awful.

Kathleen Mary Fallon, photograph by Joseph O'Connor.

Robbi Nester is a poet, editor, retired educator, and foodie who dreams of being a chef, despite her lack of manual dexterity and untidy work habits. In the chapbook *Plated*, she has turned her ekphrastic skills to Netflix cooking series, *The Chef's Table* and *Street Food* (season 1). Her poems have appeared previously in *Live Encounters*, as well as in many other journals and anthologies, including *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *Verdad*, *Negative Capability Press*, *Verse Virtual*, *Pirene's Fountain*. Forthcoming work will appear in *SWWIM*, *Gargoyle*, and Glass Lyre Press's anthology, *Aeolian Harp* Volume VI.

The following poems are from the unpublished chapbook titled 'Plated'.

A STORY OF SURVIVAL—ANA ROS

In a wild country of mountains and rivers, she left one path
but found another, buried under snow, among the pine tree's
fretted roots. As a child, she wanted only to please
her parents, excelled at everything she did-- becoming
an Olympic athlete, training to be a diplomat.
Her father, a doctor, prepared her carefully to leave
remote Slovenia and make a life of honor and respect.
But she didn't go. "Because of love," she says, "
we sometimes create catastrophes." She met her husband,
sommelier at his father's inn and restaurant. He served her family
dinner, expounded on the energy of well-paired food and wine.
They married, traveled, and she prepared to take a post abroad.
But when her husband's father died, leaving him the restaurant,
she had to choose between the life she planned for and her marriage.
She left that life to be a chef, without an inkling how to do that job.
She faced her parents' wrath, took instruction from old cookbooks,
from farmers and artisans who raised the animals, made the wine
and cheese, tended the hives, and found in this a freedom far from
her former regulated life. "I'm proud of my audacity," she says.
Not as a diplomat, but as a famous chef, she represents her country.
People travel here to sample foods known nowhere else: marble trout
and Dreznica goat, aged wheels of Toulmin cheese. She draws
a rich abundance from imagination's stream.



Robbi Nester

THE GIFT: JORDI ROCA I FONTAN

He holds his nose aloft, sailboat
in a breeze alive with the scent
of sheeps milk, the rich
black soil of his native Girona.
Speaking in harsh whispers,
he gestures to his *sous chef*.
The youngest of three brothers,
he's the one no one ever
really knew. He follows
his nose into the fields
and forests, plays on odors,
colors, evokes a place and time,
infusing ice cream with the smell
of cigar smoke. "Rainy Forest"
transports us to a shady path
where pine cones litter the dirt.
A waiter pours a glacier
distilled from the bitter essence
of earth, carries miniature trees
laden with ovals of gold-green
olive sorbet to each table.
Another dish sports a pearly
sphere of spun sugar, enticing us
to take up a spoon and shatter it,
releasing a confetti of carrots
and orange beets, bits of sweet color
that surprise the palate, delight the eye.

RAMEN CHEF: IVAN ORKIN

He is awkward, full of energy,
out of place in a family
of American achievers.
Never one to take instruction,
he follows his own impulses,
adjusting as he goes,
discovers, in a bowl
of rice and beaten egg,
the flavor of the sea.
Western chefs embrace surprise
arising from the seldom seen,
the never tasted. Japanese
cuisine demands a smaller
repertoire of tastes one
must not alter. Yet form
inspires invention. He wrings
familiar flavor from unexpected
sources, marries old and new,
still hewing to tradition
in all the ways that matter.

DEATH HAPPENS: ALEX ATALA

That's what his tee-shirt says—this accidental chef, aging punk rocker, reminding us that every dish requires a death. Looking away so as not to see the blood, the stained axe buried in the stump, doesn't change that. He's a celebrity, appearing on the covers of GQ, dressed in biker black, but spends half of his time wandering the Amazon, learning from indigenous farmers how to "build a better food chain." Brazil speaks through his fingers, offering us a flavor or a scent not always comfortable or pleasant, elemental—the dark taste of ants, so much like lemongrass and ginger.



Vegetarian Raw Food: Nut and Seed Sushi Roll by Chef Chris Miller, Bali.
Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.
<https://liveencounters.net/2012-2/11-november-2012/chris-miller-raw-food/>



Richard W. Halperin holds Irish-U.S. nationality and lives in Paris. He has published four collections via Salmon Poetry, Cliffs of Moher; the most recent is *Catch Me While You Have the Light*, 2018; *People in a Diary* is listed for 2021. In complement, he has published thirteen shorter collections via Lapwing, Belfast; the most recent is *Under the Olive Tree: Three Poem Sequences*, 2020. His work is part of University College Dublin's Irish Poetry Reading Archive. He reads frequently in Ireland; scheduled readings for 2020 have been jumped to 2021. In 2005, Mr Halperin retired as Chief, Section for Teacher Education, UNESCO, where he edited *Reading and Writing Poetry: The Recommendations of Poets from Many Lands on the Teaching of Poetry in Secondary Schools*, downloadable *gratis* in English, French and Spanish. He holds a Ph.D. in English Literature from City University of New York; his mentor was Sears R. Jayne.

A SILVER CLOUD

What do I remember?
The silver prose of *The Great Gatsby*
And the teacher Brother Francis who taught it.

Walks to The Cloisters,
The only Europe I knew
Except for Rizzoli's book shop on Fifth Avenue.

A New York now changed
Beyond recognition for me,
Which has become my Jolly Corner.

Friends whom I hope to meet
In heaven, because if not there,
Never.

A silver cloud
Which I thought was
Solid reality.

Fifteen-year-old I,
Twenty-year-old I.
Tennessee Williams

Alive and writing.
Wagner not the composer
But the Mayor of New York.

A silver cloud
Shimmering like East Egg and West Egg,
Which blew away forever.

Richard W Halperin

THE WISTARIA TREES

for Anton Floyd

What if Paris had no chimney pots,
Had no wistaria trees? – and they are
Everywhere. My Paris, in a way, because
To notice is to make something ‘my’
As either a convenience or a necessity
To help with or to deflect from the project
Of living. I have read tonight a poem

By a friend whose poems are like cognac,
They burn, they glow, they daub the day
He is living, they help me because I cannot
Write like that. I am glad I am still living,
To read poets as gifted – excuse me –
As Homer or as Arthur Miller, who put
One word down after another so that living
Gains nobility. One does not need gods,
And yet (Homer) gods are not décor.

Joshua Logan wrote an American version
Of The Cherry Orchard: The Wisteria Trees,
With Helen Hayes, Kent Smith, others as gifted,
Chekhov who insisted The Cherry Orchard
Be played as a comedy. Only virtuosos
Can begin to do that.

Most of my poems are about myself. This one
Is about others. They accompany me, they
Inspire me. They say things that I had never
Thought of. Leonard Woolf said, after
The death of an old friend, ‘The soul
Deserves to be immortal.’ This poem is
Names stuck together, mine not among them.
I only recognise whatever I am when I
Bump into others. What will I remember

If I wind up on the other side? That everything
Got stuck together where I came from, I
Somewhere in it.

A TERRIBLE YEAR, NEARLY OVER

The curiosity to see what will
Happen next, keeps me going.
I am in my late autumn. In winter –
Winter means death, dear reader –
Things sleep; maybe stir.

I lean against the window; look out;
See leaves blow off. They will not
Be replaced. The new is not the old.
Siegfried Sassoon, that ardent
Soul, has never been replaced.

Jesus ascended. He did not want
To stay. We killed his curiosity.

A MELLOW LIGHT

A few people are praying for me tonight
And I am glad of it. I myself pray,
However well or ill, for a few people.
I think well or ill don't count. A prayer

Does not crumble. Buildings crumble.
Friendships, some of them, crumble; this,
I have seen; when they do, they give off
A mellow light. Do poems crumble? They might.
Prayer does not crumble. A shocking hypothesis.

IN MEMORY OF ATLANTIC AVENUE

i. The Sick Wife

I read an anonymous poem
Written two thousand years ago
Translated by Arthur Waley.

A sick wife.
She speaks, then she dies.
Then her husband speaks,

I do not know
About one hand clapping.
I do know, thanks
To the divine Waley,

Exactly how it feels
To enter a room
Which I never left.

ii. The Girl on the Train

Well before I knew my wife, she was
The girl on the train. When we met,
She said she loved taking trains
To places she had never been.

Now when I see girls on trains, I see her.
Something about adventure; something
About optimism; something about what next.

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

Note: These poems form part of a sequence of formal poems entitled *Freedom in Constraint* responding to life during the Covid 19 crisis. The poems focus on the themes of isolation and social distancing and the wider issues and challenges to community and family arising out of the current pandemic. The sequence is made with support from the Arts Council of Ireland / An Comhairle Éalíon's Covid 19 Response Award.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

Of course, we've seen it all before,
how stealthily the night advances
like the tide across the shore,

but this is something new. Chances
are that body and mind are out of sync,
caused by recent circumstances.

We watch the hours of daylight shrink,
try not to dwell on darker things;
it takes a form of doublethink

to welcome the blunt grief Winter brings;
debate a season's fundamental worth
while heart freezes and soul sings.

There are more things in heaven and earth
than are dreamt of in our recent dearth.



Brian Kirk

DOG DAYS

Summer came scampering into the house
this year, uncalled for, dragging garden
smells on muddy paws and a new silence
coloured by a yellow, ever-present sun
that threatened but never delivered storms.
On humid nights you were visited in dreams

by memories of failure, the unfulfilled dreams
of your youth. You cowered while the house
held its breath in expectation of a storm
that never came. Something stirred in the garden;
Orion's dog slept under a shade in the sun,
tongue lolling, his breath breaking the silence,

laboured, hoarse, excavating the silence
of your mind, making room for more dreams,
vague anxieties fostered under a glaring sun.
You grew accustomed to being prisoner in your house,
the known world extended to the bottom of the garden,
no further, but the TV brought you closer to the *sturm*

und drang of peoples tearing each other apart. Storms
in teacups to you who measured out each day in silence.
Heat spilled out the open windows into the garden,
searing the grass, choking flowers while you dozed, dreaming
of disease, death and decay consuming the house.
Outside it was worse, speared under a burning sun,

unable to pretend that everything was normal, to sun
yourself and watch the skies, wait for the storm
to pass. Your impatience could not be housed
by an absence that knew no other form but silence.
Worse than sleeping was the waking dream,
finding yourself alone and standing in the garden,

looking around, naming what you see: garden,
grass, trees, bent flowers dying under the hot sun,
knowing you haven't been away, just in a dream,
wishing to hell that something would change, the storm
might break, the children next door might assault the silence.
After a while you give up, go back inside the house.

After this summer of silences, you are primed to storm
the garden's barricades and reach up to pull the sun
down out of the sky, into your fever dreams, your hollow house.

LETTING GO

In May you threw good money after bad:
food, shoes, a magic pen that wipes out stains.
Too long at home, uncertain, somewhat sad,
watched days drift by through dusty window panes.
Distracted for a while by phone, iPad –
how like a battery concentration drains.
A new way has arrived and you endure
with little choice, distracted and unsure.

The summer passed and nothing seemed to change,
you formed a bond with absence, now distance
became the calculus of safety's range.
Stumbling on the path of least resistance
when you moved at all, denying how strange
the world had grown, proceeding in a trance,
no longer able to remember when
you dreamed you had your old life back again.

September came, October following,
you opened up your eyes as from a sleep
and saw the dancing trees were fallowing;
oak, blackthorn, ash, elm, juniper and beech,
red, gold and bronze, the green leaf yellowing
to white. You knew such beauty could not keep;
the trees, despite their agitation, know
these colours are a sign they must let go.

THE FUTURE

The days roll by, the body stiff and sore,
you know you're not old yet, but these mornings
follow endless sleepless nights, clear warnings
of one more battle lost within a war
with age that can't be won. How can it be?
All things that live on earth succumb to time;
we grow to meet our best selves in our prime
before we bend to Nature's tyranny.
But why should we give in without a fight,
as if foreknowledge of our death was news?
There is no knowing when that trap will spring
so let the end be always out of sight,
and faced with past or future always choose
the second one, whatever it might bring.

Peter O'Neill was born in Cork, Republic of Ireland, 1967. After spending the majority of the nineties living in France he eventually returned to live in Dublin where he has been living ever since. He is the author of five collections of poetry, a volume of translation *The Enemy – Transversions from Charles Baudelaire* (Lapwing, 2015), and a work of prose fiction *More Micks than Dicks* (Famous Seamus, 2017) . His sixth collection of poetry *Henry Street Arcade* has been translated by the French poet Yan Kouton and will be published in bilingual format by Éditions du Pont de l'Europe as part of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) in association with the Alliance Francaise in Dublin on the 8th April 2021.



From THE EROICA VARIATIONS Part 3

XXV

Where are you my Giantess? A poster-girl for mornings.
Hand holding up tresses; a feminine Atlas.
Your voice then mockingly sweet, aping the British.
"To Be or not to Be? *that* is the question."

O Woman voluptuous, your labial folds
Diaphanous. Resplendent cunt
Of mid-summer evening- a bloom with the Rose
Of fragrant ceilings. Legs high mimicking

Cabaret. Your foot like an ingot,
Burnished by a hundred suns, brushes
My cheek. The curtains blow apart with the breeze

As your pelvic muscles constrict ever tighter,
Boa like, a quiver...totemic heads spin.
And later that night, the dinner table sports... a red carnation.

Peter O'Neill

From THE EROICA VARIATIONS... contd...

XXVI

In Saint Anne's Park, there in the Rose Garden,
 You picked the Queen Elizabeth, its pinkish leathery hues
 Blown a diaspora whose scent permanently
 Astounds. Olfactory memory, as Süskind and Proust show,

Can be startling creating a place for spatial and temporal
 Co-habitation. This your hound knows, nose caught up
 Adrift in it. Literally following it, the traces.
 As you recall now, a hundred carnations

Seaborne; atomised in memory.
 The cave borne of such atomic imagery.
 The pinkish leathery folds of the petals...

She loves me, she loves me not
 Such is ontology in the heavens.
 The hounds of LOVE are barking up it.

XXVII

Cut now to a phone call. There is an image of a gun
 Tucked away inside a bedside table.
 From her voice, you can sense that she is afraid.
 She is stateside now. New Mexico!

On the plane there was discharge.
 That summer you attended the abortionists.
 How civilised they have made it.
 Her leonine form lay astride the table.

Still pride in her voluptuousness.
 You handle nervously a miniature pocketbook copy of
Le Bateau ivre by Rimbaud.

Comme je descendais des Flueves impassibles,
Je ne me sentis plus guidé par les haleurs :
 She left you silent at the airport.

From THE EROICA VARIATIONS... *contd...*

XXVIII

Months later, You receive a phone call in *Belgrave Square*.
 Sheltering within the great bay came her words
 In your ear, beautiful in their simplicity,
 Causing deep rupture; fissure – TRAUMA.

But first you are in shock. You hear them
 Only on a superficial level, and they register.
"I'm moving on!" First person in contracted form,
 Followed by the phrasal verb, with full

Emphasis on the final participle... ON!
 Announced like some mythic place
 Which the participle designates, and yet which is mapless.

You, then, speechless. She, clearly in company,
 Happily moving on, voice showing concern for you,
 Clearly in distress... you apologise, deeply humiliated, and hang up.

XXIV

The wine shop is not far off, happily!
 You join a tasting course, all *en vogue* and attend weekly.
 A regime sets in. On days off, you stock up
 The shelf, draw the curtains and play Paolo

Conte. The great blue notes consume
 You... you plunge into a profound period
 Of mourning; The shock now clearly over.
 This is your regime, or diet, every week.

One day, the young Canadian girl who serves you
 In the wine shop asks if you would be easier
 It if they would deliver?

Her question hits you right between the eyes.
 You are still half inebriated from the night before.
 Perhaps, you might have a slight problem, after all?

Ross Hattaway was born in New Zealand and has lived in Dublin, Ireland since 1990. He has been widely published and he is a founder member and organiser of the Sunflower Sessions in Dublin, which publishes the narrowsheet magazine, *Flare*. He has read in Ireland, the UK, the USA, Australia and New Zealand and was the first Irish writer to be invited to read at the Poetry Spring Festival in Lithuania. Ross has three previous collections, *The Gentle Art of Rotting* and *Pretending to Be Dead* (both Seven Towers, Dublin) and *How to Sleep with Strangers* (Turas Press, Dublin). His fourth book, *Plain*, will be published by Turas Press this summer.



BLACK COTTAGE

What we have here
is a phatic gathering,
a celebration
of what we want in common,
raising the group to its good.

Gather is the key.
We come together for what
we count as needed
- friendship, family, milestones,
pockets of love and shelter.

We hope for something
of this to linger, delay
endings, disaster.
We give layers of ourselves.
Not enough, but what we have.

Ross Hattaway

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUNERAL

Funerals are for the living
though they need the dead for focus.
We step quietly in and lighter out,
some shouldered weight left
and the pressure easing,
us but not us,
not this time.
We drive out of the rain
and into the rain ahead.

THE HEART OF THINGS

There is sometimes a sadness
at the heart of things
that can't be run away from.
We try and outbleak ourselves
underneath what we need
but tunnels trap
as well as protect
and despair in dark spaces
will not let us go

NOT

Not belonging is
almost a weapon.

Armed, aimed and all
intention.

But there is no bullet,
not really.

More a bulldozer,
pushing away
our gains and losses.

A way of being safe
by shedding. Excuses.

Surrender
before the struggle

and walk away
from the truces.

SLIP

I climb the hill
behind the house
and sit above a small lake
next to a bigger lake.
There is snow
though not on my hill.
My hill has only sunshine
and a cold breeze.
The cattle watch me
but refrain from judgement
even though I have no horns
and am not covered in excrement
like a respectable creature.
Perhaps they think
I am avoiding appropriation
in a perverse display
of bad manners
presented as courtesy.
On the way back down
I will slip in some
and then they will
nod to each other:
try-hard outsider
trying to fit in.

DEFINED

I am at an open mic night.
I may be one of a few here
not making a definitive, outward
and deliberate identity statement.
We listen to a variety of readers,
in tone, approach and content.
All have something to say
and a way to say it
that will interest and appeal to
at least some of the people present.
As with everyone else,
I find some very enjoyable
and others less so.
Although I am at significant risk
of failing to shed
my heteronormative,
cis-gendered,
wanly patriarchal,
middle class,
middle aged,
multi-privileged,
unipolar,
binary,
testosterone driven,
structurally oppressive,
male gazing,
masculinist,
monolingual,
undoubting,
unwavering,
unintersectional,
unaware

and utterly uniform
at-one-with-all-other-similarly-identifying-and-identified-beings
voice,
I read some poems.
They seem to be well received.
There is a reasonable measure of applause,
although I have not sifted them for appropriation
and am later held to account
for defining and colonising female experience
by a haiku and haibun writer and teacher
from Connemara
and a Crumlin hip hop poet.
I offer to buy them
another glass
of the house tempranillo,
but the matter remains
somewhat unresolved
and we agree to differ.
Or do we?
I am rather unsettled
by the broom wind
of definition and identification
I have just experienced
from people who,
being generous,
can only be dealing
with sparse knowledge
of my position and situation.
I am, it is true, these things.
I am male
and I am openly heterosexual
and happy with my gender and sexual identity.

DEFINED

I am undoubtedly middle aged,
though maybe not for much longer,
but whether I am middle class
depends on a variable range
of social, economic and cultural
norms and external perspectives.
I am also
an immigrant
and a minority nationality
in my chosen home.
I am, by geography, demography,
heritage and birth,
a Pacific islander.
A comprehensive analysis
might confirm my genetic inheritance,
but it is likely that,
with the doubling of each generation rearing back,
I am from many more pools than I know of.
I am a father,
which fewer than half of humans can claim,
and a father of four,
which reduces the numbers further.
I am recently an orphan,
which most of us aren't yet
though most of us will be.
I play cricket in a nation
still riven with suspicion
over this.
I am a lapsed Protestant
in a country defined
by lapsed Catholicism
and a northsider at a poetry reading
in Dublin's southside.

I am at a poetry reading.
I write it.
I am all of these things and many others
that most of us aren't
and I share them with many different people
in different places at different times,
when we do and we don't differ
and what binds us is always more than what doesn't.
We are not these things only.
We do not do these things alone.

Anne M Carson's poetry has been published internationally, and widely in Australia. Recent publications include *Massaging Himmler: A Poetic Biography of Dr Felix Kersten* (Hybrid, 2019), and *Two Green Parrots* (Ginnindera Press, 2019). She has initiated a number of poetry-led social justice projects. She is currently a PhD candidate at RMIT where her project includes poetic biographies of two creative women – Anna Magdalena Bach, a 'flawless' soprano (according to her husband, Johann Sebastian Bach) and George Sand, prolific French novelist.



A POEM ABOUT AN APPLE

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

Anne M Carson

JELLY BLUBBER

A hollow in the shallows
where kids have dug

a mass grave A hundred
or more squashed together

in a gelatinous huddle
like a piece of cut fruit

a giant colourless
pomegranate bursting

with transparent seeds
More translucent than

sago granules brimming
a bowl Amber without

the tea stain Some days
the beach is scattered

with masses of rounded
ice cubes what the bar

tender has thrown out
after an all-night party

Arriving mysteriously
in swarms they float

silently at the mercy
of invisible forces til

they beach and bake
in the sun and air

No-one knows what
sets off their migration

Suddenly they appear
in front of you when

you're swimming
taking on the colour of

sand or water you
feel soft blunt bumps

on your limbs Just the
hint of a shape ghostly

underwater presences
meaning you no harm

As you walk the tideline
they squelch underfoot

squeeze deliciously between
toes like the cool ooze

of mud Dried they shrink
to a child's handful of

crinkled cellophane
a shrunk curl of cling

wrap In a few days
they disappear entirely

until the invisible
mechanism – moon? tide?

sets them going again
A new batch bobs in

Egg cases from the
conical sand snail

Attracta Fahy's background is Nursing/Social Care. She works as a Psychotherapist, lives in Co.Galway, and has three children. She completed her MA in Writing NUIG in 2017. Her poems have been published in Live Encounters, Banshee, Poetry Ireland Review, Poethead, Orbis, Abridged, Impspired, Silver Birch Press, Honest Ulsterman, and many other magazines, at home and abroad. She was the October winner in Irish Times; New Irish Writing 2019, has been nominated for a Pushcart prize, included in Anthologies; Impspired, and Of Mouth Northern Women's Writings, nominated for Best of the Web 2019, shortlisted for 2018 Over The Edge New Writer of The Year, and long listed for 2019, shortlisted for Allingham Poetry Prize 2019. She was a featured reader at the January Over The Edge Open Reading in Galway. Fly on the Wall Press published her first chapbook collection *Dinner in the Fields* in March 2020.



SCARED

(by Jeremy Zucker)

Just the two of us now, and after our walk
through fields covered in rapeseed, our Easter
visit to the well, little to do in lockdown, I ready
dinner, as you play piano in the living room.

It has been at least ten years, you were twelve
when you stopped. I'd given up missing
your cadences filling the house.

Not exactly Glenn Gould playing *Bach Variations*

but my heart overwhelms, as your petite fingers
tap keys, hold them down,

your head to your phone, playing by ear, a song
you love, Scared.

Outside, a blackbird sings her own song,
a wood pigeon picks seed for her young,
they wait in their nest, beaks open.

I peek 'round the door,
your blond hair swings in the air like a lamb's tail.
I retreat, never know if my mothering
is smothering, or not enough.

On the other side of the window, a robin
on a rose branch. I am lost in my own thoughts

as a swallow makes a racket over the conservatory,
now is the penultimate,
ultimate, forever the next
always out of reach moment.

Attracta Fahy

LOVE POEM AT 57

It was afternoon when we met,
through glass door you flew
towards me, like the white gull
overhead, calling out my muted
scream, its silver belly flashing.

White light split through sun,
portal broke grey cloud, the air
mercurial, blinding, my body
electrified.

I'd learned to renounce
desire, alive again, we moved
as if we'd known each other
a thousand years.

I kept together, passed every cctv
'I want to be seen everywhere with
you,' I warned,
'in case you murder me.'

Our feet continued down Shop Street,
right on divide to Mainguard.
We talked a spiel of stories,
laughed at anxious jokes.

I took you to the water, the Corrib
threw its magic over us, gone
in mist our bodies sailing each others
minds, we stopped at the bridge,
eyes swam over waves, current,
swept in river rhythm, its gipsy music.

You spoke of colour,
how much you loved,
said,
'I often pray to yellow.'
I linked your arm. You gusted verse,
crossing all our rivers

as I remembered a girl, aged nine,
scraping bark circles onto trees,
a face, lover, prince, a boy to kiss.

Ekphrastic Poem

*Response to Edouard Manet –
'A Bar at the Folies-Bergère.'*

WISTFUL EYES

I had a strong urge to come here
Despite my fear
To be in your grace
See light across your face
In flushes, your wistful eyes
Looking from this desolate world of lies
Your hair like leaves-
Longing for you, I'm relieved
To touch the plum of your lips, skin bright
As moon-glow, blue white
Over your shadow. Say yes it will be
That you will come with me.



A Bar at the Folies-Bergère by Edouard Manet, 1882.

Gordon Meade is a Scottish poet based in the East Neuk of Fife. His tenth collection of poems, *Zoospeak*, a collaboration between himself and the Canadian photographer and animal activist, Jo-Anne McArthur, which uses poetry and photography to examine the experiences of animals in captivity, was published in 2020 by Enthusiastic Press in London.

These are taken from a series I am working on entitled, *EX-posed*. They are my response to a number of visual images in *Hidden : Animals in the Anthropocene*. I have acknowledged both the photographs and the photographers whose work the poems refer to.

ALLIGATOR (EX-POSED)

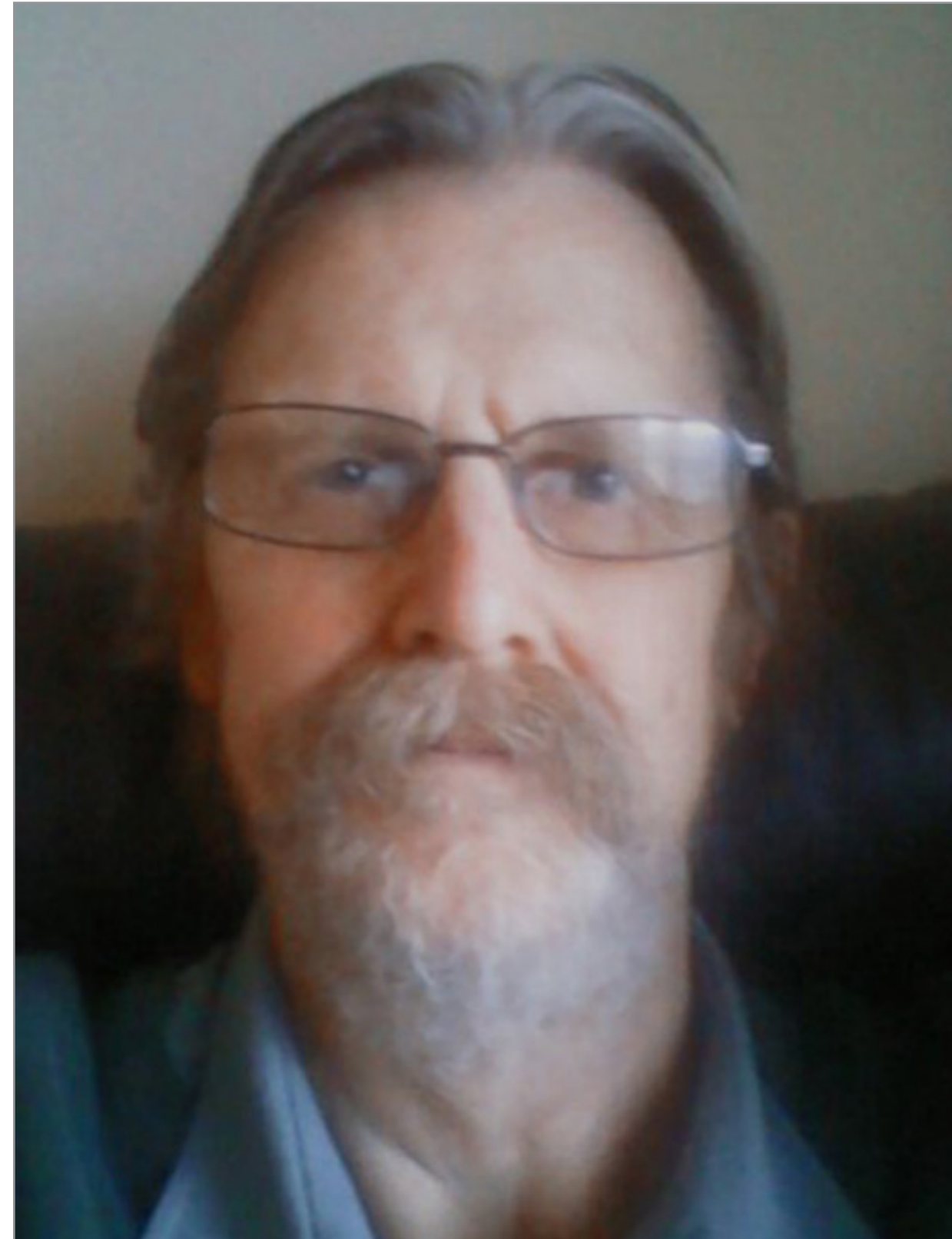
I am green.
I am brown.
I am grey.
I am black.

I am belt.
I am bag.
I am shoe.
I am hat.

I am sight.
I am sound.
I am touch.
I am smell.

I am eyes.
I am teeth.
I am tears.
I am hell.

Skulls as souvenirs. USA. Jo-Anne McArthur



Gordon Meade

BULL (EX-POSED)

I am power.
I am glory.
I am loyal.
I am Sun.

I am bold.
I am strong.
I am determined.
I am one.

I am fought.
I am defeated.
I am discarded.
I am bled.

I am head
over heels.
I am hanging
by a thread.

*Inglorious death. In the horse yard of the bullring in Azpeitia,
a bull is hung by his hind leg to bleed out before being butchered
at the local meat works. Spain. Aitor Gernamlia*

COCK-FIGHTING (EX-POSED)

I am sun.
I am dawn.
I am song.
I am morn.

I am wit.
I am sooth.
I am voice.
I am truth.

I am game.
I am bred.
I am tested.
I am bled.

I am gaffs.
I am spurs.
I am pitted.
I am dead.

*The tradition of cock fighting stretches back thousands
of years, but the result has never changed: a gruesome death.
East Timor. Aaron Gekoski*

FOX (EX-POSED)

I am dog.
I am cat.
I am scent.
I am scat.

I am quick.
I am brown.
I am lost.
I am found.

I am fur.
I am farm.
I am henhouse.
I am harm.

I am swift.
I am fast.
I am electric.
I am gas.

*In Finland, foxes on fur farms can be legally kept in a cage less than one square metre. Foxes are often anally electrocuted to avoid damaging the fur, though the method is painful and doesn't ensure the animals die before they are skinned. Finland. **Kristo Moorimaa***

RATTLESNAKE (EX-POSED)

I am body.
I am spirit.
I am Earth.
I am Fire.

I am Time.
I am Space.
I am taste.
I'm desire.

I'm revered.
I'm reviled.
I am risen
and I fall.

I'm beheaded.
I am skinned.
I am pinned
to a wall.

*Visitors are encouraged to skin snakes and leave their bloodied prints, with signature, on the wall behind the killing stations. By 2020, over a quarter of a million snakes had been slaughtered at this annual festival. USA. **Jo-Anne McArthur***

Ian Watson is originally from Belfast but lives in Bremen, Germany. Alongside his scholarly and didactic work in both German and English, he is the author of two poetry collections in English, the latest being *Granny's Interpreter* (Salmon Poetry 2016); a further collection with Salmon, *Somewhere, Far Away, a Radio*, is forthcoming. His recent German-language non-fiction includes *Spielfelder: eine Fußballmigration*, on football and identity, and *Bremen erlesen*, a literary and cultural guide to his second-home city in Germany (both with Edition Falkenberg). He also publishes translations of poetry from and into German and English. He has worked regularly for radio and also made the film *Cool to be Celtic* for German and French television (arte 1999). He teaches literary writing freelance in schools and in adult education and is a steering committee member of the Literaturhaus Bremen



CLEARING UP

On the windowsill,
 sheets of *mañana mañanas*
 from far yesterdays.
 Behind the left speaker,
 where the dust was deepest,
 a dead bumble bee.
 Poked by the duster,
 the moth behind the curtain
 flickers one last time.
 Three priorities:
 To do, Do now and Panic –
 three accusing piles.
 Wiping the desktop,
 my elbow catches my tea:
 tsunami keyboard.

Ian Watson

DEAF SENTENCE

for EMW

On hearing
a good friend ask
if I, as I got older,
was also having trouble
with consonants and basses,
I had to admit that my main
treble was mostly with
bowels.

FINCA

near Vejer, Andalusia

At our Andalusian farmhouse holiday home,
we have tree rats, scorpions and hornets,
harmless snakes but poisonous spiders.
We are told not to wander out into
the sweet wild meadow, ankle-high,
at the end of our patio without our
socks and shoes. But I do.
Already half a sonnet has passed
and nothing at all has happened.
Which is how the story ends.

GREENWICH MEAL TIME

First came Westminster Pier
then came the riverboat
then came the Thames
then came the hunger
then came a thought
then came the pun
and then came
the falafel

SCOTCH CORNER

for Julia Boll

Hearts
Waverley
Heart of Midlothian -
Who but the Scots
would name their capital's
railway station and a football club
after novels?
If I had some re-naming
to do here in Bremen,
the station would be
Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow
and the football club
À la recherche du temps perdu.

TWO POETS

Two poets out for a walk
with thermos flasks and rucksacks
and sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs
and brand-new waterproof notebooks.
They wandered boldly through the crowd
to where the city's river slimes
down to a sunless sea, down past
the coal barge and the railway bridge,
and drank the milk of pararhymes.
Then one said, a tad too loud,
I want to be Wordsworth today;
I'm tired of being Coleridge.

THE ZOOM FACTOR

Before you Zoom, conduct a thorough
screening of the room, at least the bit
that's going to be behind you. Cast a
curious student's eye from right to left.
But first, be deft and risk a mirror
glance to check yourself and wipe
your nose or trim your ragged eyebrow hair.
And don't forget to give your screen a scan;
for your career will plummet if there's a porn
site logo on your Favourites bar. I mean, you can
get fired or worse.
Oh, that portrait of Comrade Stalin
on the shelf will have to go; perchance
the marijuana plant? Oh no, the lilac
underpants now show behind
your shoulder as you speak.

2010 - 2020



POETRY & WRITING

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COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE