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OSAMA ESBER  
Saviors of the Nomadic Spirit

COVER ARTWORK BY EMMA BARONE





Water lily, photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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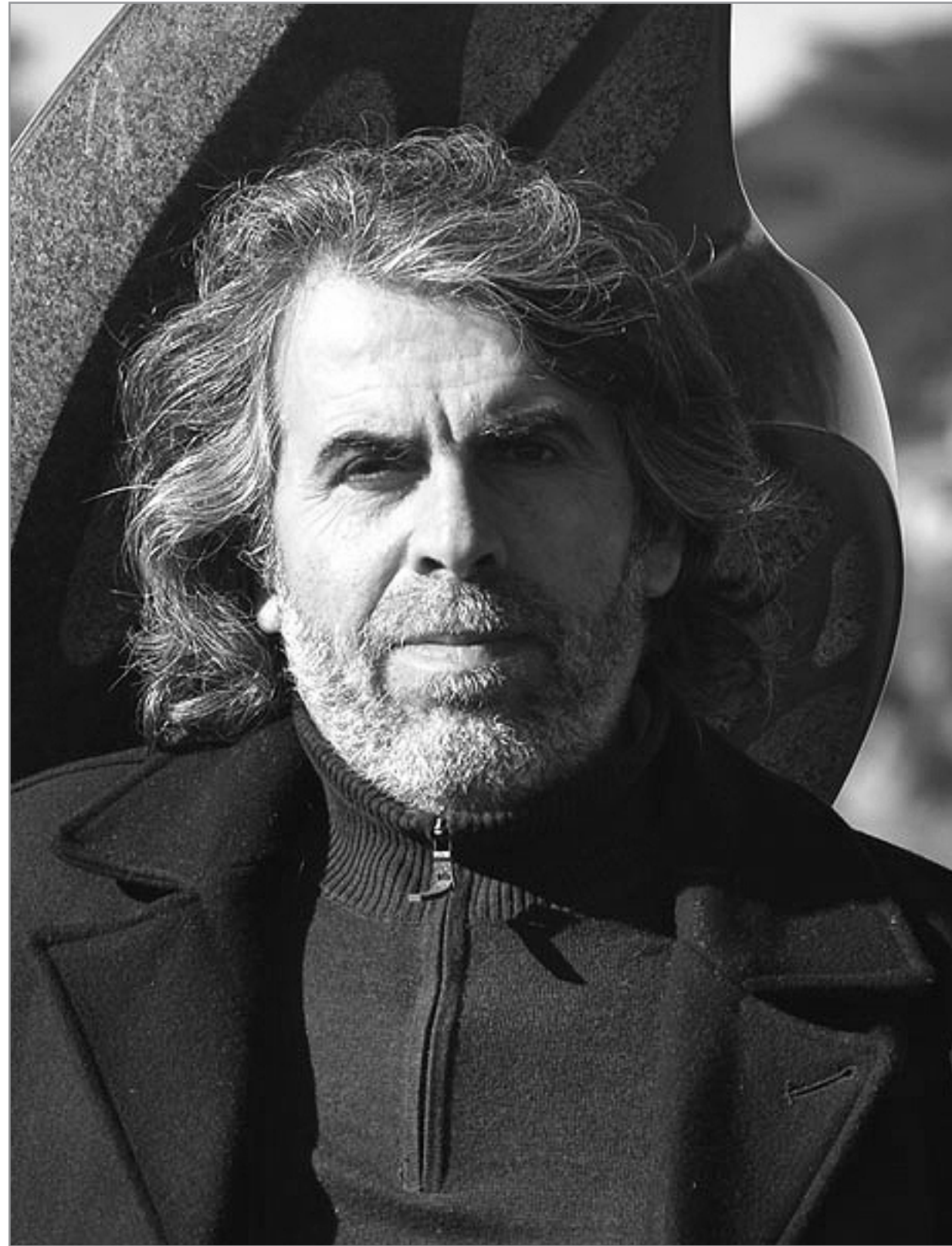


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Osama Eber is a Syrian poet, short story writer, photographer and translator who presently lives in California. He is an editor in Salon Syria, Jadaliyya's Arabic section, and an editor in Status audio magazine. Among his poetry collections are: *Screens of History* (1994); *The Accord of Waves* (1995); *Repeated Sunrise over Exile* (2004); and *Where He Doesn't Live* (2006). His short story collections are entitled *The Autobiography of Diamonds* (1996); *Coffee of the Dead* (2000); and *Rhythms of a Different Time* (in process). He has translated into Arabic works by Alan Lightman, Richard Ford, Elizabeth Gilbert, Raymond Carver, Michael Ondaatje, Bertrand Russell, Toni Morrison, Nadine Gordimer, and Noam Chomsky, to name a few. He attended the international writing program in Iowa in 1995.



## OSAMA ESBER SAVIORS OF THE NOMADIC SPIRIT

Writing as a creative art, in its essence, is an act of immigration. This is because a creative artist always searches for a new way to express his or her vision in a new form. This act of searching means that the poet migrates from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from tradition to the horizon that his individual talent expands. The process of creative artistic experience is defined by this act of migrating.

The manifestos of great literary movements have always endorsed the desertion of outmoded, traditional, and inherited forms, and the pursuit of novel, innovative means of expression. Nevertheless, new creative forms were always received with suspicion; they were censored or burned, rejected or confiscated in a similar manner to how refugees or immigrants were stuck at borders, isolated in ghettos, looked down upon, or discriminated against.

The great modern cities and civilizations were built by immigrants or by invaders who became settlers after massacring or marginalizing natives. Nonetheless, this act of invasion, of colonization, is not the topic at hand. What I want to emphasize is that the act of immigration inhabits our entire human endeavor and has defined it since the beginning of creation. Even in religion, the first man migrated (as a result of exile) from the heavens, wearing the mask of the fall, or the first sin.

We have been immigrants since our ancient African ancestors decided to find a haven in which humankind could continue to prosper. Modern anthropology, according to Bill Bryson in his book *A Short History of Nearly Everything* (Broadway Books 2003) was built around the idea that humans emerged from Africa in two waves. Scientists argued that people have long been migrating and sharing genes as well as information. But humans, who are immigrants in the existential sense, have become citizenry with privilege and power, and have given up their previous role as the saviors of migration as a creative option to enrich and prolong human endeavor. To satisfy their egos, they built refugee camps, regarded immigrants as numbers, taxpayers, or voters and created programs for refugees and asylees, funded fences and walls, created humanitarian relief agencies, and became donors or symbols of charity. Power is highly skillful and cunning in crafting and donning masks.

Osama Esber

Once upon a time, and a good time it was, Arab writers used to visit Western capitals and return to talk about the wonders of modernity, philosophical theories, and great literary and intellectual movements, but now Arab writers come to stay, not to return and tell their stories like the great travelers of old times.

For the current power structures that dominate the world, Africa, the continent from which the first immigrants left, was only a source of slaves and refugees, epidemics and mines; Arab countries are markets and oil wells; Latin American countries are the spring of cheap labor and the dump for industrial waste. Inhabitants of other countries and the children of other cultures were not allowed to taste the bread of modernity, but sometimes were allowed to eat the crumbs that fell from the tables of their supposed masters.

People feed on oblivion and develop a short memory, a memory that betrays history and experience. People forget that they have been immigrants since the first humans migrated to a new place. We live in an age of disconnection and isolation. Politics, as practiced in the world, continue to pave the way for disaster. The gap between misery and privilege expands, technology still under the control of Cain, the slayer of his brother. The story originated and continues from a crime that has disguised itself as progress. Brothers have forgotten that they are related, blinded by greed and the desire to dominate nature.

The human nest, the only haven for us, we the migratory birds of creation, has been disturbed. New developed powers of evil and darkness have been released. The main concern, as usual, has been what should be done to make businesses thrive and large companies continue to operate. We should give money to people so that they can make purchases. The market should not stop. Consumers should remain activated. Concern for the market's continuous immunity has required taking care of human subjects.

In the Arab world, where the future is as murky as London's fog, governments behave as if there is no epidemic. Money is not for taking care of people; money is for buying from the West more gears to control people, or for depositing in private Swiss banks.

In the beginning, regimes were relieved by the pandemic. The dark forces of nature were in the service of despotism and autocracy; no one dared to assemble or to go out onto the streets. But as despair continued to reign, and corruption soared to new heights, people challenged the pandemic as well tyranny, and went out to protest because their livelihoods had been stolen and they were deprived of a life with dignity and respect in the miserable cities of the Middle East. These are cities without hope, where one can "show you fear in a handful of dust," as T.S. Eliot stated in *The Waste Land*, or in any face. This is not only the fear of losing your job that Eduardo Galeano discussed in his book *Upside Down: A Primer For the Looking-Glass World* (Metropolitan Books 1998), but also a fear of losing your meaning and purpose, of reaching a point where you find yourself chanting T.S. Eliot's lines in *The Hollow Men*, "We are the hollow men/the stuffed men."

They run away from tyranny and bring with them their countries in a metaphoric form, recreate them in language or in dreams, and live in an imagined geography, while in the real geography of isolation they face a double estrangement: They become separate from their roots and victims to a culture of fear, expressed by the established citizenry, who have forgotten their roots, their essence as immigrants who built civilization.

Living in the West is no longer as it was. It may not be as promising as before. It is no longer a rosy dream, contrary to what lines of people at the gates of foreign embassies in the Middle East or at border crossings, or anywhere, think.

Once upon a time, and a good time it was, Arab writers used to visit Western capitals and return to talk about the wonders of modernity, philosophical theories, and great literary and intellectual movements, but now Arab writers come to stay, not to return and tell their stories like the great travelers of old times. They run away from tyranny and bring with them their countries in a metaphoric form, recreate them in language or in dreams, and live in an imagined geography, while in the real geography of isolation they face a double estrangement: They become separate from their roots and victims to a culture of fear, expressed by the established citizenry, who have forgotten their roots, their essence as immigrants who built civilization.

When drought afflicted Syria it led, along with much else, to a tide of uprisings, where the poor and downtrodden went out onto the streets demanding bread, water, and freedom. Now, those who did not die there under bombardment have become immigrants, refugees in neighboring countries where racism bares its teeth. Many of them live forgotten in tents at the borders, while scores of others are under the threat of deportation, which makes evident the narrow limits of human solidarity.

In the light of all this, writers, poets, and artists, the saviors of the nomadic spirit of the human race, should always be ready to forge again- borrowing from James Joyce- in the smithy of their souls the uncreated conscience of their races. They should enlighten their people to the fact that there is only one race on this planet, whose short experience, or journey in a caravan of various magical colors, may come to an end, whose migratory spirit may extinguish and may not find another place to reemerge. It is time to dismantle the barbed wires of our hearts. Climate change and its implicit and explicit dangers should make us think of immigration in a creative way. But the big question is: When our poor planet becomes unable to sustain life, will there be any future anthropologists to discuss another migration?



## CITIES THAT VISITED ME\*

- 1-  
I saw dolls on your streets  
becoming women  
and despair stumbling along  
like the feet of Syrian workers.
- 2-  
Sometimes your banks  
inject the day's veins with hope.  
Sometimes your dawn  
breathes in the smoke of words.
- 3-  
Your TV channels told us  
of other doors,  
but when opened,  
they only led to another room  
in the same house.
- 4-  
I saw you a bridge  
hanging in the void of your myths  
and Mediterranean illusions.
- 5-  
In your cafes  
modernism is smoked  
like Cuban cigars,  
their leaves smoothed on the thighs  
of a professional moment  
in a prostitute's dress.

\* From a divan in process with the same title.



Photograph by Osama Esber

## CITIES THAT VISITED ME\*

-6-

I saw books get botox  
to seduce their readers.  
Your newspapers do not read your mind  
your cafes do not change  
the wheels or the oil of their language's engine.  
Billboards in your streets wear  
naked thighs and bosoms  
that relax on sandy beaches.  
In their bronze complexion,  
we read about a future  
that immigrated to other countries.

-7-

The difference in the value of foreign currency  
assumes the job of angels  
and opens momentarily the doors of paradise.

-8-

I see your face  
on an airport's electric door,  
or on a passport stamp,  
from which two eyes,  
on whose balcony police dogs sit,  
look.

-9-

Beirut,  
where the borders cross  
I saw men made of barbed wire  
imprisoning the horizon  
inside the pupils of their eyes.

-10-

You are visiting me now,  
I wish I could settle you in my language,  
I wish I could give you a room  
and invite you to a glamorous evening.  
I wish I could let you lie naked  
on my bed between my arms.



Beirut,  
you do not need to forgive me,  
I do not fall in love easily with Arab cities,  
watching their bellies dancing  
with the belt  
of death, poverty, tents, and slums  
wrapped around their naked waists  
does not excite me.

The clock lost its handles.  
It looks featureless,  
like your soul,  
it has lost the road to a body.





Noel Monahan has published seven collections of poetry with Salmon Poetry, Ireland. An eighth collection, *Celui Qui Porte Un Veau*, a selection of French translations of his work was published in France by Alidades, in 2014. A selection of Italian translations of his poetry was published in Milan by Guanda in November 2015: "Tra Una Vita E L'Altra". His poetry was prescribed text for the Leaving Certificate English, 2011- 2012. In the past Noel has toured in England, Italy and America giving readings and delivering literary papers on Irish literature. His play: "Broken Cups" won the RTE P.J. O'Connor award in 2001 and *Chalk Dust*, a long poem of his, was adapted for stage and directed by Padraic McIntyre, Ramor Theatre, 2019. During the Covid-19 lockdown, Noel had to reinvent his poetry readings and he produced a selection of Short Films: "Isolation & Creativity", "Still Life", "Tolle Lege" and A Poetry Day Ireland Reading for Cavan Library, 2021. The filming and editing of the same was by Pádraig Conaty, Niall Monahan and Jago Studio, Cavan. Noel is presently working on his memoirs and the opening chapters will be published by New Hibernia Review, Center for Irish Studies, University of St. Thomas, Saint Paul, Minnesota. A number of his most recent poems have been translated into German and will appear later this summer.

## PILE OF STONES

It was a world of stones and stories,  
A mound of earth at the edge of a ditch,  
At the bottom of Dagger's Hill.

Dandelions and daisies grew alongside it,  
Stone ornaments adorned it:  
A cross of pebbles,  
A heart of tiny red stones,  
A brown gravel trout.

I can still hear our voices  
Tell a variety of stories  
About some unbaptised child buried there,

Others said: a grey bearded man,  
Life frozen out of him, died by the roadside  
And lay buried in the snow.

A man set fire to himself  
And ever since, the mound bursts into flames by night,  
Smoke Figures: arms, legs and heads on fire,  
Walk around the stones. When dawn breaks,  
The fire returns to clay and stone.

A Croppy Boy was hanged here by Yeomen,  
And everyone throws a stone to his memory  
As they pass by. It's what we do.

And every time we climbed the mound  
We climbed beyond ourselves.  
Each of us felt part of some great need  
To speak and think as one.

Noel Monahan



## AN CHAILLEACH Ó LOUGH AN LEAGH

Is mise an chailleach ó Lough an Leagh  
Do chara ó bhreith go bás  
Ag síor cogaint gairleoige  
Mo phráiscín lán de giurléidi  
Eolas na treibhe im chuimhne  
Banríon Óiríon um gheimhridh.

Ach! Ag teacht an earraigh  
Bainim díom caille de sioc is sneachta  
Athraím cruth:  
Ó fheannóg dhubh go lasair coille  
Ó bhean chríonna go cailín óg  
I'm chráinbheach na maidine  
Iomas gréine im shúile.

## THE HAG FROM LOUGH AN LEAGH

I'm the hag from Lough an Leagh  
Your friend from cradle to grave  
Forever chewing garlic  
My apron full of knick-knacks  
My memory with recall for the tribe.  
I'm Queen Óiríon of winter nights.

But! When Spring arrives  
I remove my shawl of frost and snow.  
I metamorphose:  
From hooded-crow to golden finch  
From old age to youth  
I'm the Queen bee of the morning  
Eyes sparkling with sunlight.

Bobbie Sparrow's poems have been published in many journals both national and International including *Orbis*, *Crannog*, *Skylight 47*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Inkroci*, *Cordite*, and *Southword*. Bobbie won 3rd prize for her Chapbook in the Blue Nib competition 2018 and came second in the Saolta Arts Trust Poems for Patience competition 2020. She was nominated as one of *Dodging the Rain's* best published poets 2018/19 and her Chapbook *Milk and Blood* was commended in the Fools for Poetry competition 2020. She loves lake swimming and cycling downhill.



## AN ARCTIC CHAR'S LAMENT

*The Arctic Char is critically endangered in the Irish seas*

I swim in the beauty of salty waves  
lifting my belly in melodic rubato.  
Pickle coloured seaweed floats,  
sage green flows beyond my knowing.

I bear the weather; my body an instrument  
beneath whimsical clouds  
25 knots, gusting to 34 knots, showery troughs  
increasing rough, rising rapidly.

Malin Head to Carnsore Point  
I am the trumpet blown,  
the tempest of a bassoon.  
I see sardines, circles of bathing piccolos.

I am a creature in decline, my music dims  
confused by man's debris, his noise.  
My rhythm eludes me, I lose time  
where once there was none.

The clash of swells and storms  
wash out my map, eyes seeing now  
only orange twists, bobbing grey bottles  
blue rope entwined with dirty cloth.

Pressure rises, squalls discordant chants.  
Plastic is netting without purpose,  
caught like a note in the tenor's throat.  
I am an Arctic Char, my only song now a lament.

Bobbie Sparrow



## LET THE BODY SPEAK

Stand tall lift your heart  
your blades, wings tipped to fly

*Be ready for a storm but do not fight it*

Bend your knees an iris in the wind  
feel each toe held by earth

*Know you are unique then bow*

Lift the powerful stems of your arms  
claim the sky, turn eyes to the heavens

*Feel your broken piece in a celestial whole*

Breathe wide, ribs opening like a sea anemone,  
send the breath out, a bird from a cage

*See you are not alone.*

Release your tongue, uncurl its lick  
let your mouth be the lily in hot sun

*Let pleasure taste you*

Unbutton each vertebra, your spine a snake  
coiling in grass, your hips a basket of desire

*Open your length to heights unclimbed*

Spread hands wide to the light  
starfish offered to a blue sky

*See hope in the beyond*

Soften the belly, your animal swing,  
it's core the jewel of the earth

*Hear the beat that will not end*

## EVERYTHING MUST GO

It is summer now  
the bite has left.  
I dive into the clear lake,  
skin of day shaved  
by the innocent rushes.  
I am full of sin,  
if sin is lack of grace.  
Body insists I ignore the deep dark  
as it pushes toward my belly.  
I turn, face up, a fish in communion  
allow the light to pass through.  
A slight of sun blesses my forehead.

To be transparent I need the depth  
but fear the loss greater than the return

## THE KISS OF DEATH

I stood as grandmother's breath  
seeped like candle's end  
pooling into stillness on wood  
my mother crumbled –  
a smaller woman with cracks  
I could not paint over

I turned took my bike  
the forbidden skirt and lipstick  
raced to your den  
thoughts only of your mouth on mine  
and did death mean I could not go dancing.

.



Jordan Smith is the author of eight full-length books of poems, most recently *Little Black Train*, winner of the Three Mile Harbor Press Prize, *Clare's Empire*, a fantasia on the life and work of John Clare from The Hydroelectric Press, and *The Light in the Film* from the University of Tampa Press. He has also worked on several collaborations with artist, Walter Hatke, including *What Came Home* and *Hat & Key*. The recipient of grants from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Ingram Merrill Foundation, he lives with his wife, Malie, in upstate New York, where he plays fiddle and is the Edward Everett Hale Jr., Professor of English at Union College.



## COLD NIGHT, LONG DOG

What is the color of a plague sky?  
Breughel and Bosch agree, sister fire, brother ash,  
On earth as it is in heaven.

But the clarity of this night, that cold certainty,  
So many stars gathered  
In configurations I never learned the names of.

I never thought it necessary,  
Not with the lights of my house ahead of me,  
Not with the maps I sketched in the margins of my journals.

The long black dog beside me watches the woods,  
Her coat so dark it glistens silver.  
She leans against my leg.

What is beyond us is untenable, unknowable.  
If it were late afternoon, we might watch the hunters descend the hill,  
Their lanky hounds, their paltry catch,

Through the snow to their unchanged village,  
The little fires, the unabated hunger, and everywhere  
The taste of ash.

She twitches under my hand. She might have scented something,  
Some danger passing, some stretched shadow, some star falling,  
Some cold omen in the warmth of her black hair.

Jordan Smith

## THE DISTINGUISHED THING

We know the soul must prepare itself.  
We know the arduousness of the task, the brevity of the day,  
the master's intransigence  
Concerning the date of the contract's completion and the face-to-face to follow.

We know even Dylan must take off his shades then,  
And Whitman, self-conceived and undisguised and naked, offer a libation,  
As he might have spilled a glass of dark beer at Pfaff's.

The knickknacks in the old headshops whispered of these inevitabilities,  
The incense rising past the cheap prayer flags, dusting the woven ponchos.  
In the basement bookshop where you browsed, a spring binder tucked under one arm,

You begged me to remember how difficult it seemed when it was not difficult at all,  
Not in hindsight, the traverse and then the knife-edge we climbed,  
Carrying an empty bowl that begged to be broken.

## WRITTEN IN THE FLYLEAF OF A BIOGRAPHY

Of course it is a page-turner.  
Who would want it to end? Not before  
The subject finishes his last book,  
The one to redeem all the others.

Were you the muse he honored,  
Your slight pressure moving his hand so smoothly,  
Would you have whispered  
How little time he had,  
Would you have thought to add that urgency,

Have risked the ruin of his late style,  
Easily clever and unhurried,  
And just there, in the penultimate chapter,  
The breakfast on the terrace above the lake,  
As he described the bluish mainsail,  
The little boat tacking across that headwind,

Gaining nothing. The paragraph  
Went on too long. His coffee went cold,  
And suddenly it was all labor again.

He closed the notebook, capped the fountain pen, your gift,  
Ebonite marbled the same emerald as the dress  
That framed your bare back as you turned,  
When he asked you to, wanting  
That glimpse, leaving the text unfinished, leaving

Him at wit's end.



Breda Wall Ryan grew up in Co Waterford and now lives in Co. Wicklow. She studied at University College, Cork and Trinity College Dublin. Her awarded fiction has appeared in *The Stinging Fly*, *The Faber Book of Best New Irish Short Stories 2006-7* and *The New Hennessy Book of Irish Fiction*. Her poems have been published in *Skylight 47*, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, *Deep Water Literary Journal*, *And Other Poems*, *Fish Anthology*, *The Ofi Press*, *Orbis*, *Magma*, *The Rialto* and *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*. In 2013 Breda won the iYeats Poetry Contest, Poets Meet Painters, Dromineer Poetry Competition and Over the Edge New Writer of the Year. She was selected for Poetry Ireland Introductions Series, 2014 and was awarded Second Place in the Patrick Kavanagh Award, Third Prize in The Rialto/RSPB Nature Poetry Competition, was shortlisted for a Bridport Prize and Highly Commended in Fool for Poetry Chapbook Competition. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, a Forward Prize and Best of the Net Award, she won the Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Competition, 2015. Her debut collection *In a Hare's Eye* (Doire Press) won the Shine Strong Award 2016 for a first collection by an Irish poet. Doire Press also published her second collection, *Raven Mothers*, in 2018.



## COUNTING SHEEP

My lover and I are having  
a friendly argument, the kind  
of bickering we do if we're bored  
and it's not yet time for tea.  
He would like a field and three  
or four Herdwick sheep to nibble  
the grass. I want an electronic  
sheep to wander at will, grazing,  
its short blades solar powered,  
so it wouldn't need extra feed,  
even in winter.

We switch on the TV News.  
In Greenland, glaciers disappear.  
Lakes form from meltwater  
high in the Himalayas. Bushfires  
rage in New South Wales  
and Canberra. Somewhere else,  
drought crazes parched earth.  
Rents are out of control.  
Used to this, we have grown  
complacent, we live in an age  
of famine, fire and rising seas.

Cocooned against catastrophe,  
we binge-watch recorded shows:  
Country File, Ear to the Ground,  
The Yorkshire Dales and the Lakes.  
We are first-generation city folk  
with climbing rent and paved lawn.  
'Two Herdwicks might be nice',  
I say, and we agree: two, and a field.

Breda Wall Ryan

## ALL MAPS ARE USELESS

Forget cartography, calculate instead  
the weight of light,

the heat of burnt-out stars,  
the heft of time,

the space between love  
and its perception.

Night stills the trees,  
the ocean quivers, waits

for the river's penetration.  
Down by the lake

signposts written in fog  
dissolve memory.

Silence assembles, snags  
on a place outside experience.

## MY NEIGHBOUR'S EUCALYPTUS

With leaves shaped like swords  
our eucalypt orchestra  
carved surf-songs from sea air,  
our neighbourhood's wind-honed  
ambient music.

People complained,  
the council decreed danger  
to bricks and mortar,  
said roots could push into drains,  
rupture foundations.

Lumberjacks' saws moaned  
through two spotlit nights  
from a crane on a flat-bed.  
Now traffic drones  
where winds played unchained.

When insomnia plagues my nights,  
I tune out the urban noise  
of engines that startle and grind,  
conjure the murdered tree, invite  
its lullaby in, leaf by silvered leaf.



## BECAUSE I LISTENED

when the music stopped,  
I heard the rain snake  
down the window pane  
and looked beyond  
to where heavy drops  
beat ivy almost flat  
against the dripping wall,  
so heard the blackbird's  
warning call and  
glimpsed her  
clapping rain  
off drenched wings,  
then fold them flat,  
and shuffle, furtive,  
into a leafy cave  
she must have hollowed  
underneath the vines  
to hide her nesting site.  
While I was tuning out  
Rodrigo's liquid strings,  
half-focussed on trivia  
on my screen, what else  
must I have missed?

## MEDLARS

Squeezed, the jellybag  
yields a few last drops  
that cloud the jars.  
Wee lick sweet fingers,  
save the pulp  
time will break down  
to compost to feed  
next year's fruit,  
a new crop we'll blet  
in straw and darkness  
to juicy sweetness.

## A WALK IN THE WOODS

I glimpse a sun-glint  
on what might be a coin,  
fish this steel cylinder  
from among fallen leaves,

read 'Winchester .243'  
stamped on the rim,  
trace a finger  
along the steel, feel  
how smooth,  
designed to drive a hot projectile  
through meat and bone.

A soft breath blown  
across its empty neck  
raises the high-pitched whistle  
of a sika deer.

It wakes my inner ear  
to the gun's report,  
my mind's eye sees  
bone shatter,  
knees buckle and fold,  
eyelight quench  
as a deer heart pumps  
hot blood into forest loam.

I stand in a hunter's footprints,  
scan shadows  
spreading between trees.

I pocket as souvenir  
the deer's voice  
trapped in steel.

The sun goes down.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



John L. Stanizzi is author of the collections *Ecstasy Among Ghosts*, *Sleepwalking*, *Dance Against the Wall*, *After the Bell*, *Hallelujah Time!*, *High Tide – Ebb Tide*, *Four Bits*, *Chants*, *Sundowning*, and *POND*. John's poems have been widely published and have appeared in *Connecticut Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Cortland Review*, *American Life in Poetry*, *Praxis*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Blue Mountain Review*, *Rust + Moth*, *Tar River*, *Poetlore*, *Rattle*, *Hawk & Handsaw*, and many others. His work has been translated into Italian and appears widely in Italy, including in *El Ghibli*, *The Journal of Italian Translations Bonafini*, *Poetarium*, and others. His nonfiction has been published in *Stone Coast Review*, *Ovunque Siamo*, *Adelaide*, *Scarlet Leaf*, *Literature and Belief*, *Evening Street*, *Praxis*, and others. <https://johnstanizzi.com/>



## RISING

As the coffee maker  
gurgles and pops  
the cats head-butt my shins  
and the birds are already  
lighting the landscape  
with their intricate sparkles.

My wife is still asleep.  
It is dark  
though well across  
the crepuscular hills  
way over in Munson  
the sun begins its low burn  
all along the horizon,  
as down in the valley  
nestled in the trees  
that cover the small mountains.  
the Montrealer grumbles along the tracks  
in the direction of its next stop  
which, in thirty years, I've never learned,  
too preoccupied with  
the train's clatter and engine rumble,  
its singular voice pulled from the stack  
and echoing up through the fog  
into the new morning.

It is still dark  
and she is not quite ready to rise,  
though the cats are getting restless,  
the light is changing.  
And that's when I hear  
the sound of her waking;  
she sighs one long sleepy sigh,  
the sigh dawn makes  
pulling its clear blanket  
slowly over  
what's left of night.

John L. Stanizzi

## RAELLE AND THE APPLES

1.

Every year the progression is the same.

The young apples begin to show,  
no bigger than a golf ball,  
stem end a little birthmark,  
blossom end a flower  
larger than the tiny apple.

Raelle looks up into the branches,  
knows it's still too early.

There is no chance of letting go here.  
For now all is secure.

2.

Are they moving in opposite directions  
or the same-  
summer dying,  
apples growing.

It is the same direction, I suppose.

Nearly full-grown  
they hang weighty on the branches now,  
long, sweeping arcs  
toward the earth,  
each branch bejeweled  
with heavy green gems.

3.

Now so many apples litter the ground,  
though it is rare for me to  
witness these drops to earth.

It is as if someone has come in the night  
and quietly placed apples  
on the ground all around the tree.

And the apples still hanging  
are bright red and just out of reach  
of my granddaughter's stretching arm,  
though she seems to be growing  
more quickly than this fruit.

I pull down an apple,  
polish it on my shirt,  
inspect it,  
hand it to her.

And looking *directly* into my eyes  
she performs the extraordinary-  
smiling and biting at once,  
the joy of no longer having to wait,  
shining in her eyes.



## CONSIDERING WITH SHEEP

Here at the hem of fall  
I stop when I see you  
as you do when you see me  
your ears twitch listening  
you are fat-sheathed and warm  
in your lanolin

♪

light rain all morning  
which continues now  
into early afternoon  
so light it is not absorbed  
rather it rests atop the grass  
that we might call it dew

♪

we stand for a moment  
considering one another  
near the barn that leans  
in the direction  
it is very slowly being nudged  
by time

we breathe in with the lungs of trees  
I continue on my way  
to nowhere in particular

in the moments we have stood here  
pondering each other  
I am sure the barn has moved  
and you are no more trusting of me now  
than when we first met

♪

you with your absent aspect  
concentrate more intently on me  
than me on you  
then you decide on a languid stroll  
into the dry barn  
and I step off onto the air  
into the distance I must still travel  
however far that might be

## RUBICON

*-after Austin and Mabel  
-and Emily Dickinson – 517 (J601)  
-On the evening they professed their love for each other  
Austin wrote one word in his diary – “Rubicon.”  
  
-My attempt to write in the style of Emily Dickinson.*

One glance – and hunger – bloom’d –  
No fable could complete –  
Even when frigid he’d bundle  
Her on his carriage seat –

A serene - drive through pines –  
Or touch in morning sun –  
Or lusty dates beneath the dark –  
Where rumors - would be spun –

The Joyous – Fervent – Figure –  
Who firm and crusted was –  
The letters by the fire – retrieved –  
The lovers – rend the laws -



Photograph by John L Stanizzi



Pippa Little is a Scottish poet who lives in North East England. She is a former Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Newcastle University. Her third collection *Time Begins to Hurt* comes out from Arc Publications in 2022.



## AT THE EVENING TABLE

*For Jean and Jack Dagnall on their Diamond Anniversary*

Come, this is your place, and yours.  
You have filled the jug with light, with blue hours.  
The cloth runs white as river-spate  
where you've tidied the half-read books away.

Here you can see for miles and years –  
clouds scud high over dimming cedars,  
rain's falling on gardens and spires. Plates shift,  
memories' tesserae, exposed, transfix.

April, you light the lamps later and later,  
dusk rustles, dances in taffeta.  
Come, the bread is warm, the moon is full,  
sons long grown hang jackets in the hall.

I would bring bride-blossom, swallows' wings,  
salt-grain diamond, holy labyrinths.  
But this circle, this feast, is yours. Twofold  
you've filled the sixty years you chose.

Come, there is love enough, spilling over  
for slow endearments, for memories' soft blur  
just as the first drop of light, shared  
from wick to wick, multiplies like stars, like prayer.

Pippa Little

## ANT EXPLORER

Early in Mexico City: here, afternoon.  
In his Pudsey bear onesie I watch him pull on boots,  
look around for the magnifying glass:  
*busy busy!* He wants to be out searching for his newest  
obsession. My phone screen dips and his head slices away  
to ceiling's sloping crack which trembles until, righted,  
we are almost matched again.  
He is speaking a lot now, Spanish with English,  
I catch some of it but exploring waits and his father, sleepy,  
says he'll call again later. They fade into shadow.  
Almost three, locked down for weeks,  
what will he remember - small things without a story,  
the turning over of a stone, flood of silver-black silences:  
will I ever tell him in years to come  
how much it moved me when he went to investigate his world  
of garden size with such fierce love of *look! come! see!*

## IONIDES THE SNAKE MAN

Famous down in that province  
near the Mozambique border,  
word of mouth tales still told  
years beyond his death. My father liked him,  
the almost unclothed man who calmed  
the deadliest of vipers,  
who smiled while they travelled his body,  
curled up by his feet, relaxed around his neck –  
he could have been a shaman, sold spells and cures,  
instead he lived like Ghandi.  
Humans troubled him, he said, while snakes were pure  
in their lowliness. Their touch was warm, dry,  
their bodies' press slow and constant upon his skin  
like the rains' whispering.



## HOW LONG WERE WE GONE

You lifted the broken wing  
of the wreckers' yard, pushed me in,  
ran down its overhang  
looking for smash-ups.

Safer in tight spaces,  
stoved-in roof, foisty leatherette,  
I fossicked for lost things,  
found St Christopher  
in a foot well.  
You climbed till you could see  
your house from the pearlised summit  
but how long gone from my unpronounceable country I was,  
how the cold light lasted and lasted!  
I only wanted it to be dark,  
for birds to roost around us, infilling  
our rifts and traces, unseen but for their settling  
livelong and syllabic as water.

Now in this room far north of middle age  
I watch sparrows burst out from whitebeam islands,  
gulp across the sky as if drowning  
but just at the last gasp plunge on.

How do we learn  
which sanctuary, which threshold  
when so much is missing between the spaces?



Photograph <https://pixabay.com/photos/wolfe-ranch-cabin-roof-wolfe-ranch-3777843/>



Born in Belfast in 1951, Fred Johnston has published nine collections of poetry, his most recent is 'Rogue States,' (Salmon Poetry 2019.) Co-founded the Irish Writers' Co-operative in the 'Seventies with Neil Jordan and Peter Sheridan and the annual CUIRT literature festival in Galway in 1986. In 2004, he was appointed writer-in-residence to the Princess Grace Irish Library at Monaco. He has written and published poetry in French and received a Prix de l'Ambassade in 2002. Two collections of short stories have been published, one in French, and three novels. Recent poetry has appeared in The Guardian, The Spectator, The New Statesman, The Irish Times, STAND, The Financial Times among other publications. A new short story will appear next year in STAND magazine. He lives in Galway, Ireland.



## DECORUM

How her life changed earned two pages in a Sunday supplement  
One morning she woke up to a mutilating headache and a sudden gift  
For blank verse. After the years he'd put her through she had much  
To say. And all her other travails.

The Tuesday evening poetry circle admired her work - what more  
Could anyone ask? The house looked out on fair mountains, but more  
Importantly it looked at her in a different way.

Impatient over his plot, she told him: *This was what I was meant to  
Be if I hadn't met you. And look what you did, you just fucked off.*  
She'd never known him to read a book.

All he did was work. And build the house. As she'd told that pretty  
Girl journalist, all men were useless. Immensely useless, like some  
Uncrossable sea. A hindrance you drowned in.

She had wished to write about his prolonged going, the morphine  
Months, the smell. He had become usable material and the engine of  
Her resurrection. But a sense of decorum – was it? – had stayed her  
Hand. She'd get back to him.

Fred Johnston

## LINGUANOMA

Outside the Eat-‘N’-Sea takeaway there’s a queue forming  
All masked up like a line of Great War gassed and as silent  
And fidgety as tongue or jaw cases, what shrapnel can do -

Odd to have thoughts like this outside a fish-and-chip shop  
Perhaps it’s down to the groan of news bulletins and pictures  
Of grey faces in rubble, the pixelated kids, a savaged wheelchair

In some way or other it all seeps in, sullies, as it’s meant to  
The trimmed-hedge-and-roses cosmetic of our off-licence lives  
The next call will be in for a brick of Polish beer, let’s be clear –

*Let’s be very clear* – isn’t that what the polished spokesmen  
Say when the lie is rooting down, getting fired up to bloom like  
A malignant - let’s coin a word – *linguanoma*? The queue shortens

Time to step out of the car, toss the fag-end, slip the mask loops  
Over your ears. There’s a sea-salty breeze in your face and  
A debit card loaded and cocked in your fingers and life is good.

## IN THE CAFÉ MASSOUD

At the table facing the mirror in the Café Massoud  
You can watch yourself eating;  
The image is not comforting. The man glancing back at you  
Eats sloppily and without interest: he could as well  
Be eating a street stall sandwich.  
He is curious, as if seeing you for the first time; two  
Strangers, one might say, each taking the measure of the other.

The coffee in a tiny cup is midnight black. Or the black of tar.  
Each man – the one before, and the one behind, glass – takes  
A cube of sugar. Then another.  
Creatures of petty ritual.  
They rise together to pay the bill and, as might be expected,  
One of them disappears. There are people like that.  
Such events are not unique to the Café Massoud.



## SAY

The front door slams open in the wee hours  
They come in mob-handed, screeching  
Turning over tables, emptying wardrobes, scaring the kids  
And somewhere along the street  
Women shouting abuse as some young buck is taken away –

Say Batok, Bolni, Krakow  
Say Andersonstown, Falls Road  
Say Umm al-Faraj, Jabul, Jayyours

Say a hundred streets  
Say a thousand villages

It's the same mob, they've changed their shirts but  
It's the same people -  
Some may shoot themselves or spend  
Small fortunes on psychiatrists

But that comes later. They are not monsters.  
They are neighbours' kids, like those they abuse  
They have favourite soccer teams and sweethearts  
They have a parent who disapproves  
One or two will write a book denouncing themselves

Some will be exonerated for juvenile excesses  
Some will hang  
It all depends, it all depends  
Some would do it all again  
Some will never sleep again, others never make love

Say a thousand villages

Say a thousand one-legged young men in football jerseys  
A bullet in the knee always means the loss  
Of the whole limb, the loss of one eye leads  
To the loss of the other  
Say a thousand children watching their homes come down

Peace? What is that?  
A joke? Say a hundred generationsful of remembering  
Barbed-wire, checkpoints, a teenage soldier pushing a gun  
In an old man's face, your father's face,  
The slow rot the soul endures

Say whatever you like  
Or, if you prefer, say nothing.

## IF YOU LIVE LONG ENOUGH

The dogs give them trouble –  
Muscular animals, they hang on the leash  
The women step back,  
Are pushed against a wall  
Uniforms and dogs, nothing new

If you live long enough, it all  
Comes round again, though it is forbidden  
To think that. It was always forbidden  
To take photographs  
But always someone did

This is a narrow street, all such streets  
Are narrow. Name any town:  
*Czausy. Ivey. Luninitz.*  
They had streets that suddenly  
Were narrow and then were empty.

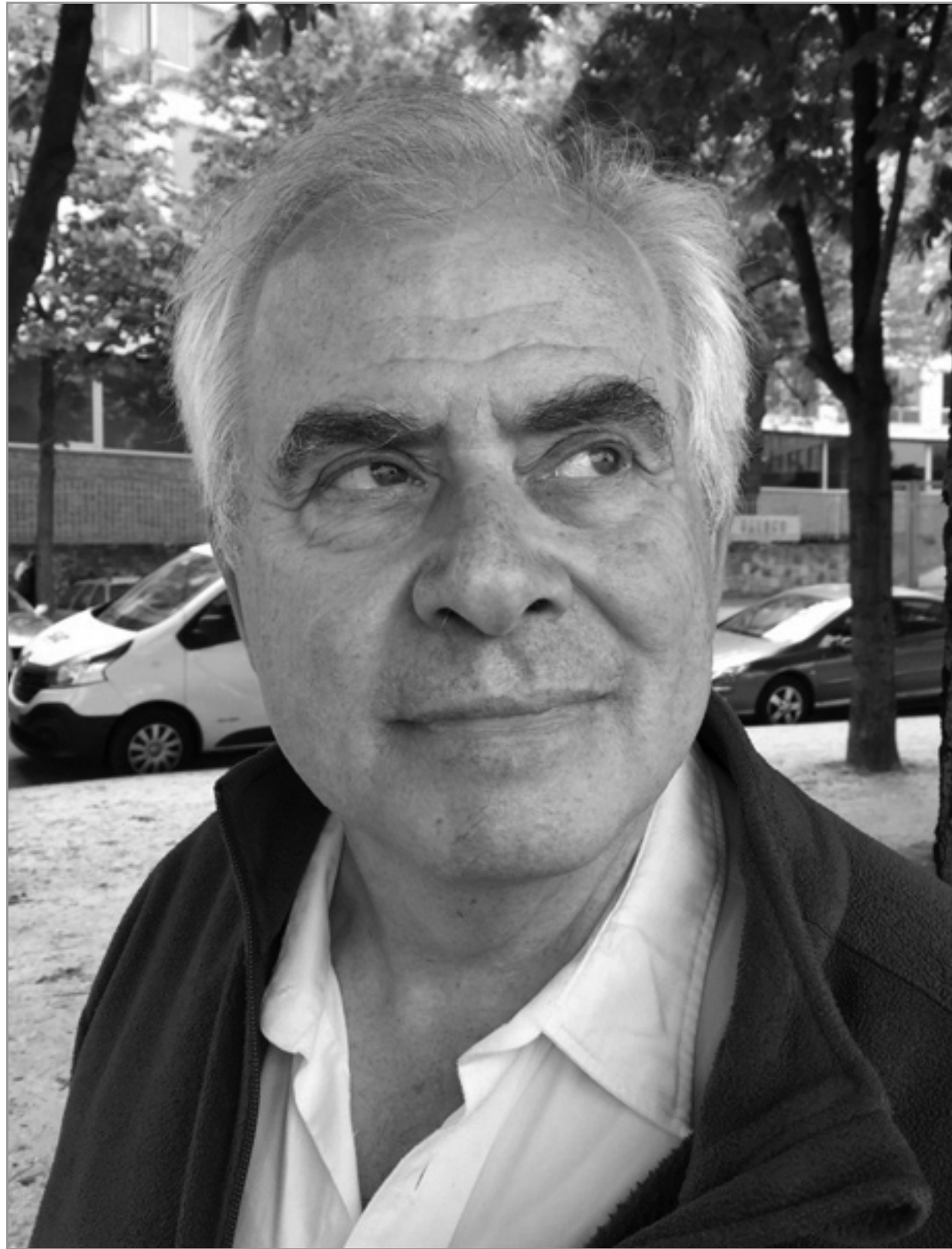
Women tug the young men out of harm's  
Way. The arrests come. One, two,  
Not many. Not yet. To put the message  
Across. It's been thought out.  
If you live long enough . . . .



Photograph Al-Jazeera.



Richard W. Halperin has Irish/U.S. dual nationality and lives in Paris. His most recent collection for Salmon Poetry, Cliffs of Moher, is *Catch Me While You Have the Light*, 2018. *People in a Diary* is listed for 2022. His most recent shorter collection for Lapwing, *Belfast, is Summer Night, 1948*, 2021. His poem 'Snow Falling, Lady Murasaki Watching' is on permanent display at Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo. Readings scheduled in Ireland for 2020 have been deferred to late 2021 or to 2022.



## WALL OF GLASS

Marcel Marceau's Bip walks into  
A wall of glass, invisible. He cannot  
See it, he cannot move it, he falls on  
His hands and knees trying to lift it,  
He feels around for a door in it,  
He runs his hands all around it.  
Everyone can see him doing this.  
There he is.  
If one cannot relate to this,  
There is no point in reading poetry.

Richard W Halperin

## THE GIRL IN THE RED CAPE 2

The girl in the red cape is still where she was.  
On the isle of Miyajima, on the planks  
Of the first Noh theatre. The theatre  
Has no walls. The small deer are still there,  
Still suspicious. The sea is spectacular,  
The sky is spectacular, wall-less, which is  
What good theatre is. Hiroshima is nearby.  
I am somewhere taking a picture. This is  
That picture. Pure theatre is gesture.  
The clouds know this. In Noh the gestures  
Never change. Master actors are aware  
That it is impossible to make the same exact  
Gesture twice. The infinitesimal difference  
Is a specialty of eternity, and of the girl  
In the red cape. I await a gesture from her.  
Awaiting does no harm. Some things do  
Do harm. In a marriage. In a friendship.  
Usually the harm is not the end of the world.  
Sometimes it is.

## THE RED ROOM 2

I look at a small painting given me  
By the artist. I, not she, call it  
'The Red Room.' An interior, almost  
Entirely consisting of a window  
Set deep into white adobe. The sunlight  
Outside is so bright that it, entering,  
Turns the panes to milk, the adobe to  
A white glow. The painting nearly cuts off there.  
Before it does, the artist indicates  
By a thick stroke of deep red that a wall  
Of the room is deep red. Womb red.

Because of the milky panes, I cannot  
Make out the garden. The light outside  
Is too brilliant. Albuquerque light.



Mari Maxwell's work is forthcoming in the Poetry Jukebox STARS Curation, Brilliant Flash Fiction's Print Anthology and Inkroci Magazine. Her work has featured in Northern Ireland's Light Theatre Company's Dickens Festival 2020; Live Encounters Poetry & Writing; Pendemic.ie; Headstuff.org; *Her Other Language*, an anthology with Women's Aid Northern Ireland; Libartes.net (translated to Serbian); Healing Words Exhibition, London, and University College Dublin's Poetry Wall in 2018 and 2019. She received a 2020/21 Professional Development Award with the Arts Council of Ireland and a 2019/2020 Words Ireland, Mayo County Council Mentorship.



## REM

She dreams in limestone coils,  
foetal curls in egg box pitting,  
slides through hay stone,  
silica and fossil, to roam  
along the lake bed.

Seal-like, she propels  
through wayward bamboo,  
catches a golden slice of wild iris,  
head splayed in the sun,  
welcoming every filling thrust  
of sunlight to stamen.  
Where, nothing binds.

Before her the lakeshore summons  
her down, deeper to where the yawning  
abyss awaits to cast its spell.  
And how, yes, yes.  
How, she is gladly lost.

Mari Maxwell

## TIDAL PULL

Between Coleraine and Derry,  
tides thrum below Mussenden.  
Miles of roiling Victorian ladies,  
petticoats dipping and swanning in ordered lines.  
Dancing waves and foam tiptoe.  
Taffy rolls pull, stretch and retreat.  
Long dimples and troughs smoothed in the sand.

In February winds, the foam shakes unruly tendrils,  
so I unveil winter's cloak.  
Recall a naked breast, layers burnt.  
Bubbles blistering.  
The cool sting of virginal epidermis.  
Thirty days of *Hold it. Hold it. Hold it. Release.*  
Peek-a-boo with the mammoth zapper.  
Zap and sizzle.

In Downhill, where the railway tracks meander along  
shoreline and cliffs, past Castlerock,  
mysterious tunnels snake while above the windows  
in Mussenden, a ruby heartbeat throbs in sunset.

Scars retreat in the pull of the tide.  
Pains hauled out to sea in rough, smooth exfoliation.  
As once more I am reborn.

## BY THE LAKESHORE

They twist and grow as  
deadened moss encases branches.  
Limescale dust binds bough and root.  
Still they rise shoot leaves,  
through limestone flutes  
and sing their song.

In the water's edge  
twisted branches levitate  
above drowning limestone.  
Bud and leaf embrace the air.  
Still they rise, shoot leaves.

By the anvil limestone  
where the lichen frees  
her mane,  
etchings scar their  
way through undergrowth.  
And sap tears along parchment  
puddles in bloom and bud.  
Still they rise, shoot leaves.



## ONE MAINE WINTER

Take 114 north to Sebago  
just after a first snowfall.  
Where virginal paths and  
windows eavesdrop  
on the hushed turn of the wheels.

Uphill all is a winter canopy,  
ghostlike spindles unspool  
on fresh fallen clouds.  
Arctic lace in early afternoon light  
a rainbow kaleidoscope.

And if it's clear, still light,  
you may spy the White Mountain trail  
where once The Old Man of the Mountain  
called home,  
near a place we once called home.

## DISROBING

The Tourmakeady Mountains fold and ripple,  
quilt the skyline.  
Seamless vapour trails stitch through puffed grass.  
Winter shifts from brittle brown to trumpeting daffodils,  
heralding the Mayfly up, up.

Arctic terns buoy in our flooded fields,  
where we mosey the village mile,  
glimpse the chocolate calf play  
hide and seek.

You can spy a lemon dusted butterfly  
draw lazy circles  
where aged white mares graze.  
Spring shifts and turns  
when the little egret couple  
house-hunt in our hood.  
The long sleep is over.

Margaret Galvin is a native of Cahir Co. Tipperary living in Wexford for many years where she worked variously with the library service, as Editor of *Ireland's Own* and in Social Care. Her collections include: 'The Waiting Room' (Doghouse Books), 'The Wish-bone' (Wexford County Council) and 'The Scattering Lawns' (Lapwing.) In 2019 she collaborated with Cahir Historical Society to publish a collection of poetry, 'The Finer Points,' documenting growing up there in the 60's. She recently worked with the Arts Department of Tipperary County Council to put together a collection of prose and poetry ('Around Each Bend') by 48 contemporary writers from Tipperary. Recent publishing credits include: *The North*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Stix*, *The Lake* and *Wexford Women Writing Undercover*. A recipient of the Brendan Kennelly Award, she holds an MA in Child, Youth and Family Studies and frequently facilitates writing workshops for self-understanding and identity.



## REPAIRS

Her clothing fascinated: the missing buttons, ragged hems,  
the crudely patched mismatches smelling of smoke and sourness,  
but when she arrived with a skirt split apart at the seams  
exposing her to comments, I wondered why  
she hadn't fastened that particular gape with a safety pin.

My mother winced at my makeshift solution,  
asked why I hadn't recommended a nice sharp needle and thread,  
as if our neighbour was a woman with a sewing basket,  
cards of glittering needles, a thimble, a selection of yarns.

Did my mother see me as a seamstress-in-the-making  
capable of invisible mending,  
turning an efficient hand to the torn and frayed?  
Imagine me a wife from the Book of Proverbs  
who 'worked with her hands in delight?'  
a watchful type, ready with the stitch in time,  
the one that would always save nine.

Margaret Galvin



## MY FATHER BUYS A FRIDGE

The dream of the fridge must have taken hold  
over a few pints.  
The realisation that he could save us  
from lurid spores furry on our food,  
the disappointment of milk 'on the turn'  
flecking our tea with an oily float of globules.  
He could bring to an end  
the pestilent bluebottle buzz of disease in summer,  
our days of stomaching the sour and bitter,  
the back-bite and sting of stew too long in the pot.

He took charge on delivery day,  
marshalled that small, squat box into the kitchen.  
It was as if he had brought America to us,  
the dream of good teeth, glossy hair,  
a wife in a sprigged summer dress  
slicing ice cream from a solid block,  
wide prairies at our window,  
ice cubes rattling in a glass raised in a genial toast  
around a celebratory table.

## THE BLIND EYE

Her cousin in a hideous plaid dressing gown padding  
about the kitchen, making tea  
and she, a few hours widowed noticing random things,  
the track of curling pins in the cousin's hair,  
ants making off with a morsel of cat food.  
Her new disjointed vocabulary:  
'stroke, haemorrhage, sudden death.'

Her private terror unspoken: was he wearing his secret silken uniform,  
(the lingerie she noticed with her blind eye)  
under his sober business suit  
when he hit the office floor?

Knowing glances passing wordlessly between nurse and orderly,  
a sensational tit-bit for the undertaker's repertoire  
smirked about  
over rounds of golf and hands of bridge.  
Her husband's lonely desire for scalloped lace,  
his embarrassed yearning for the touch of silk.

Peter O'Neill is the author of six collections of poetry, the most recent being *Henry Street Arcade* a bilingual collection translated into French by the poet Yan Kouton ( 2021); a novella *More Micks than Dicks* ( 2017) and a volume of translation *The Enemy – Trans-versions from Baudelaire* ( 2015). With a background in philosophy and comparative literature, he is currently working on a novel inspired by Raymond Chandler's *Big Sleep*. He has edited numerous publications, including two anthologies of poetry, organised and hosted a number of literary festivals and readings, most recently the bicentenary celebration *Baudelaire at 200!* for the *Alliance Francaise* in Dublin. His writing has been translated into French, German, Italian, Arabic and most recently Spanish.



## 1988

The book, a first edition cocooned in  
The gentle dusty aroma of slowly baked  
Paper whose electrical element was the Sun,  
Rests before you – a cultural monolith.

And from it your past too is in freefall.  
At the year of its printing, you had just been  
Out of school some three years, not yet still quite  
Out of earshot of the menopausal rage

Of your poor mother. She who, like so many  
Of her Sex, had been charged all her life with  
Phrases like, “Bats in the belfry!”

And what do we as men know about it?  
Measuring our own short lives to Christ's,  
While the blood of so many moons has frozen over.

Peter O'Neill



## CROSSING THE RUBICON

As the semen count mounted in countless pair of testes,  
As the alignment of syntactical structures  
Erupted in cataclysmic fashion;  
Dust particles, in the form of microcosmic

Arachnid faeces, covered the shelves in a film  
Which needed to be continuously cared for,  
While tides, moon governed, came and went,  
To the creation of countless almanachs.

And the soft skin of ageing men transformed  
Into Twelve O'Clock shadows, causing the  
Redistribution of wealth in countless pockets,

Employing a veritable army of Barbers,  
Thus igniting numerous gossip and 'stories',  
And so creating much intrigue in every town.

## ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

*"Le mot âme est un mot immortel."*

Gaston Bachelard

The word soul is an immortal word,  
And yet you hear it no longer today!  
The word soul is an immortal thought,  
And yet the concept would appear to be redundant.

The Redundancy of the Soul took place  
After the inventory of the heart had been carried out,  
Whereupon the results were clear to all;  
Mere words can kill both a woman or a man!

So, where can you find the soul of anyone today?  
Somewhere in the halfway house of coming and going,  
There in the antechamber of every atom.

Wait for her to come again, as she will come.  
Yet, look to her returning as if it were the first,  
For her name, like your soul, is an immortal one.

## BLACK BERRY LANE

*"La poésie est une âme inaugurant une forme."*  
Pierre Jean Jouve

Passing the school, you enter the lane  
And are soon confronted by an image  
Straight out of Claude Lorraine- *albeit*  
Minus the crumbling ruin or biblical motif.

Argo, your Jack Russell, is the only reference  
To antiquity and which, rather comically,  
He is completely unaware of as you peer  
Rather intently at the ascent of the Birch-

The Silver Birch which rises rather poignantly  
Towards the sky, above the other  
Darkening boughs of fir and other darkened trees.

The cruelly torn strips of the bark of the birch unravel  
In silver foils illuminated by the morning sun,  
Their skyward branches are reaching constantly for the heavens.

## BACHELARD AND HIS PHENOMENOLOGY OF POETRY

Here, creation is produced in the taut line of the phrase,  
In the ephemeral life of the expression.  
The well said is an element of the well lived.  
Living poems, in this respect, always have the salutary

Experience of the Emergent!  
Poetry puts language in a state of emergency.  
Life is designated by its vivacity.  
Such linguistic surges which emerge from

The pragmatic line of the ordinary  
Contain in miniature the *elan* of vitality;  
A micro- Bergsonism which abandons the thesis

Of instrumental language in order to adopt to  
The thesis of a language of the Real will find,  
In poetry, documents on the actual state of Language.

.



## DEUX CHEVAUX

What flowering of mind when crowned with pain,  
Thoughts haemorrhage and occur daily.  
It is the stigmata audible on air.  
“C'est genial, non?” Her voice carries!

Transported on *deux chevaux* like Proust's  
*Madeleine* with the sounds of Massila Sound System.  
(Oh Yeah!) And we enter *Langue d'oc*  
Colouring the air superbly.

Resonating in burnt ochre, the clay of substance.  
Richly spilling wineward and resplendent.  
Thoughts then of Beckett & Dante.

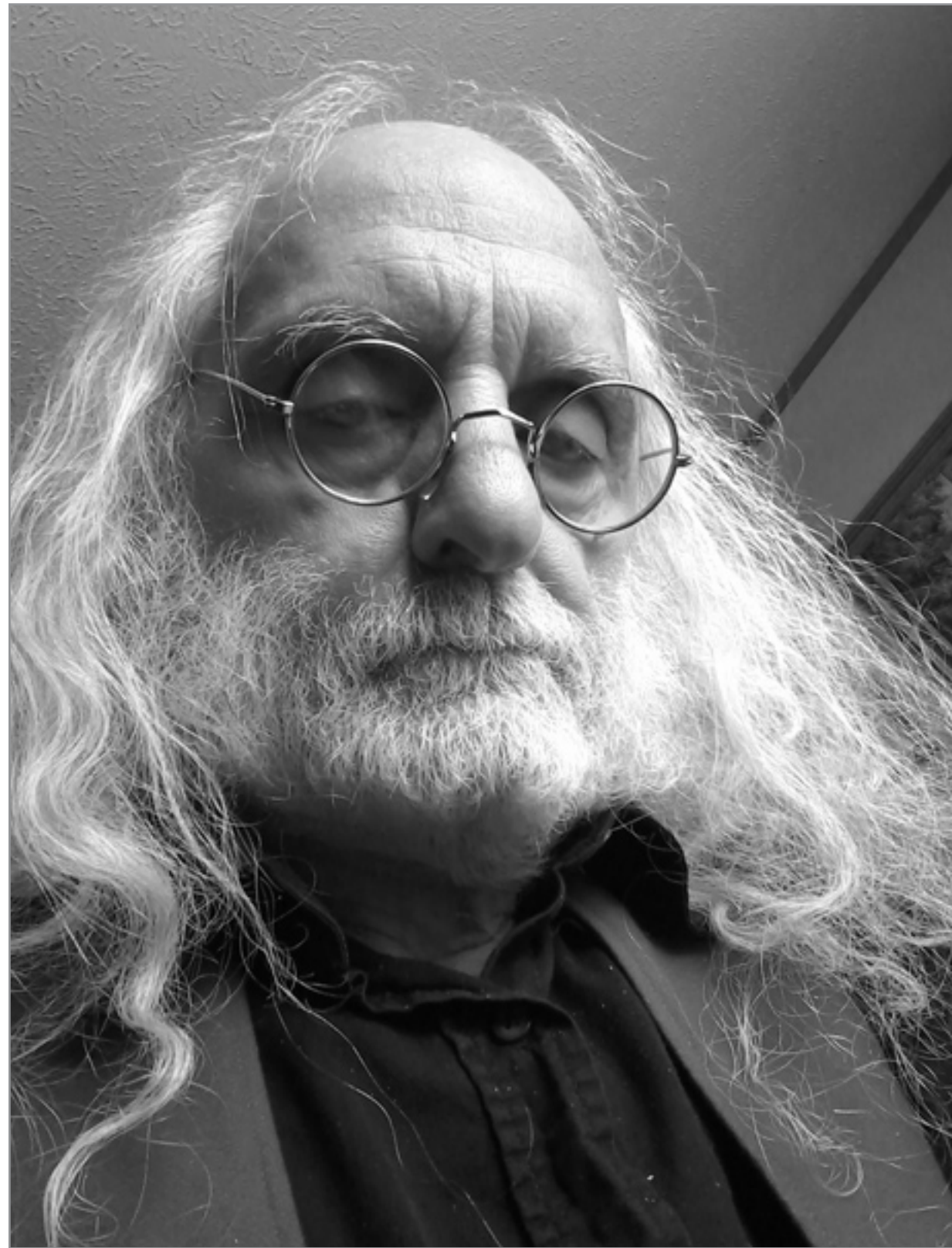
The one evoking Arnault Daniel, the best  
Wordsmith. The other Watt's house in Rousillion.  
And finally, the other Other in that old car driving through la Rochelle!



<https://pixabay.com/photos/statue-hand-flowers-art-stone-4372527/>



Joe Kidd is a professional singer, songwriter, poet, and musician. During Joe's career, he has formed and fronted a number of successful bands, he has performed solo, and now he is 1/2 of the multi-award winning international folk duo, Joe Kidd & Sheila Burke. Joe has toured across North America and Western Europe. He was inducted into the Michigan Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame in 2017. In 2020, Joe published his first full book of poetry titled *The Invisible Waterhole*, a collection of spiritual and sensual verse. The enigma that is Joe Kidd, was formed on the road hitch hiking alone in America during the 1970's, then as a student of theology and church history at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit. Joe is a respected speech writer, and a music and film critic for a number of worldwide magazines and websites. Author Page <https://www.amazon.com/Joe-Kidd/e/B089QYDXSM>  
Official Website <http://www.joekiddandsheilaburke.com>



## SONNET

if there may be more dazzling beauty born  
a human heart as candle wax would melt  
an eye bewitched by vision so adorned  
more noble warmth could never have been felt

as one uncommon in the spirit dwells  
beyond such gravity to hold within  
a prisoner so willing to dispel  
great rumors taking flight a voice to rend

to bear this truth a lesser soul depletes  
and bows to that which might have once occurred  
the burden from which cowardice retreats  
a song not sung, a rhyme without a word

what since is told of one who stands defended  
pure devoted love thus never ended

Marilyn Humbert lives in Sydney NSW Australia. Her tanka and haiku appear in international and Australian journals, anthologies and online. Her free verse poems have been awarded prizes in competitions, published online, in anthologies and journals most recently *Black Bough Deep Time 2*, and *FemAsia Magazine* and accepted for publication in *The Burrow*.



## NIGHT CALL

The landline jangles.

It isn't you unable to sleep  
cuppa in hand, bored  
watching the moon  
needing to chat or debate.

The home where you live  
is staffed by starched nurses  
whose hands dole out measured meds,  
and faces smile under dim lights.  
The clock's slow tick signing off  
each moment to morning

In your sparsely furnished room  
moonlit threads sneak  
beneath drawn curtains.  
Through the window gap  
discontent ruffles like leaves,

an unfamiliar voice explains  
the ambulance has been called.

Marilyn Humbert



## POETRY DINNER

From the café laughter flares  
above the sissing-mic and clinking  
glasses, each sip fuels companionship.  
Chiming forks and spoons intersect  
streams of words, poems on A4 pages  
recited with verve between mouthfuls  
of coffee and cake. The applause.

You are a voiceless shadow  
face pressed to the side-window  
in the company of unsteady ghosts  
from days worn thin with drudgery  
no fixed abode and pension-queues.

Later when night heaves  
its black mantle closer to dawn  
ice-eyed stars deride your despair  
and hunger for friendship  
gnawing a hole in your gut.

## NIGHT PASSAGE

Moonshine strafes a hunter,  
an intruder on the range.  
He's ghosting through the shadows

eyes gleam with rising blood,  
treasures rattle in his pocket. I watch  
this unfold from two paces behind.

Little pad-foot, walking the overflow  
seeps a muddy imprint and knocks pebbles  
out of place under wavering golden wattle

among floral-scents on the evening breeze.  
Passed a wrinkled eucalypt, the mopoke  
statue-still. Moths spiral starlit

around an explorer and his shadow  
beside boundary bottlebrush. Now  
he's tailing the snail's silver-trail.

A dog barks. He lifts his curly head.  
The porch light guides a weary  
tracker back to base.

A leaf clutched in his small fist.

2010 - 2020



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