

2010 - 2020



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
OCTOBER 2021

EILEEN CASEY
THE STRANGE CASE OF THE IRISH ELK

COVER ARTWORK BY EMMA BARONE



©Mark Ulyseas

Water lily, photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



SUPPORT LIVE ENCOUNTERS. DONATE NOW AND KEEP THE MAGAZINE LIVE IN 2021

Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of:

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

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor
markulyseas@liveencounters.net

Donate

All articles and photographs are the copyright of www.liveencounters.net and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of www.liveencounters.net. Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.



CONTRIBUTORS

EILEEN CASEY
JEANNE CANNIZZO
JORDAN SMITH
LYNN STRONGIN
JEREMY GADD
GLEN SHEA
CLAIR CHILVERS
KEVIN COWDALL
RICHARD W HALPERIN
ANNA YIN *book review by Yuan Changming*

Eileen Casey is a poet, short fiction writer and journalist. Her work is widely published, in anthologies by Dedalus, Faber and Faber, The Nordic Irish Studies Journal, Arlen House, New Island, among others. *Berries for Singing Birds*, her fifth poetry collection (Arlen House) was published in 2019. A Sunday Tribune/Hennessy Award Winner (short fiction), she's also a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh fellowship recipient. She has received many awards for her poetry, including The Oliver Goldsmith International Prize, among others. As a mature student she received a B.A. (Humanities) From DCU (2009) and an M.Phil (Creative Writing) from The School of English, The Oscar Wilde House, Trinity College, Dublin (2011). Following a successful collaboration with Jeanne Cannizzo (The Strange Case of the Irish Elk), *Bog Treasure*, (featuring poetry from Casey and Cannizzo) is due out from Arlen House.

EILEEN CASEY THE STRANGE CASE OF THE IRISH ELK

Growing up in the Midlands (Birr, County Offaly), I was surrounded by Georgian architecture. Added to the elegant buildings was the skilled craftsmanship of my grandfather Robert, a stonemason carrying on a tradition steeped in my paternal family. "We Cordials built this town", my father often said. I grew up on a council housing estate but never very far from our summer playgrounds; fields and farms and rich bog lands. This was architecture of a different kind. Sod upon sod, as brick upon brick, blood of my bog blood. I felt an affinity to bogs as my mother, coming from Galway, surely felt with the sea.

Bog and all things peaty, entered our home via baskets of brown sods. Rectangular shaped, threadbare ends suggested an unravelling of sorts. Like an old but familiar rug coming undone. Uprooted, still clinging to bog layers. And not without struggle.

This latter proved in itself a recurring motif with regards to family emigration. Generation after generation. Leave takings but few homecomings. My brother Noel lives in South Carolina and often speaks of the 'Pocosins' (evergreen shrub bogs on the coastal plains of the south eastern United States, from Virginia to Florida; most common in North Carolina). 'Pocasin' is an Algonquin (native American) word and means 'swamp on a hill'. 'Pocasins' are known for their population of black bears, raccoons and mink, among other animals.



Eileen Casey

Peat sods, on the Irish bogs of my childhood, were stacked in pyramids, for drying, or in a linear kebab shape, one sod on top of another and held in place by steel construction, again like a skewered kebab. Because bogs are swampy, it took a while for the sods to dry out enough to bring home, usually on a cart pulled by a donkey. Those sods were doused in the scent of bog rosemary and asphodel and steeped in birdsong; the skylark, golden plover and hen harrier. Mixed with logs or briquettes, they smouldered for hours, drifting various bog odours around the kitchen. An overall earthy smell mostly, not too unlike my mother's prized geranium hoard. All down the length of my street, the same wisps of bog scented smoke meant that neighbours were either cooking or boiling water for washing (none of the houses had bathrooms).

Summer months saw neighbours bring donkey drawn wooden carts into the street, loaded up with 'saved' turf for winter burnings. My father borrowed both cart and donkey from our next door neighbour. The braying of that beast was the first thing heard each morning. It was musical in an odd sort of cacophonous way. Without fail, donkey battled it out with the rooster population for audio supremacy in the long back gardens down the laneway. I fancied at times I heard a beat-box rhythm going on...rooster, donkey, rooster donkey.

When I grew older, I'd pass the bogs on bus rides to larger towns and counties. It was a bit like driving through the Nevada desert, towards Vegas glitter. On a smaller scale of course and without the scorching heat. More in terms of expectations; looking forward to bright light excitements. Sometimes bog cotton caught my eye. Snowy lanterns that waved soft as the bus roared by. In the city, because of my Midlands background, I was sometimes referred to as a 'bogger', an affectionate term I'm now, as I was then, proud of. I later discovered that what seems like a vast stretch of flat, uninteresting landscape, is a fertile breeding ground for thriving flora and fauna. Often surprising, like the delicate bell shaped bog pimpernel, soft sedges and heathers. Nature's connected communities, each lending their own weight to the resulting natural riches. Sphagnum moss is the royalty of bog landscape. Its ability to retain water and its healing properties are legendary. Mysteries too are buried deep.

Bogs have yielded many treasures in the form of psalters, illuminated manuscripts, coins, artefacts as well as bodies; sacrificial offerings, ritual murders. In short, a place where the mythical, magical and also the brutish elements of humanity transcend the ordinary of the everyday. Often, in a busy city scape, I think of these bogs. Clara. Boora, among others. How a big fat gorgeous moon sinks down into spongy heavens, providing a backdrop for birds on the wing. Thank goodness that such vital places are now being preserved. These huge carbon tanks make a valuable positive contribution towards preventing climate change.

When Jeanne Cannizzo and I decided to collaborate on 'The Strange Case of the Irish Elk,' the stage was set to explore some of the many facets of bog lore, not least being the fact that discoveries of great elk bones have been found, mostly in Irish bogs. Deer or elk? Our much loved poet Seamus Heaney wrote a series of bog poems, alert to its romantic (prairie like) possibilities as well as its ability to preserve for posterity. In 'Bogland', (*Door into the Dark*, Faber & Faber, 1969), Heaney lifts out a great elk from the bog and crates him in air. He uses the word 'elk' and by surrounding him in empty air, I believe Heaney gives the elk space to roam in new, unfettered territories. Our imaginations. Heaney's use of bog landscape is exceptional in evoking history and memory. Readers of Heaney's bog poetry will know how much political and cultural depth lies in the work. 'Bog Queen' hopes for the rise of Irish cultural identity while 'Punishment', through the prism of a bog body discovery (a young girl) is used as a metaphor for Ireland. Heaney's 'The Tollund Man' connects us on a deeply human level with a well preserved man found 10 kilometers west of Silkeborg, Denmark. Heaney's close attention to detail (Tollund Man's clothes, his last meal) is a moving memorial to this man while at the same time offers an insight into the brutal circumstances of his death.

Seamus Heaney isn't the only artist whose artistic vision viewed bogs as cultural material. Painters such as Barrie Cooke, writers such as Patrick McCabe and Marina Carr have used bog landscape in their world renowned works. I came across a very interesting article in The Irish Times (Monday, August 15th, 2016) by Manchán Magan. His article reminded me of a genuine passion for bog oak, for example. How it's been used to make brooches, walking sticks. Come to think of it, I was given a beautiful piece of bog oak when I received the Hannah Grealy award (Roscommon Libraries), a piece which has pride of place in my home. Magan mentions how peatlands became "a popular scene in Irish art, with bucolic vistas of blanket bog cloaking statuesque hills by such painters as Paul Henry and Maurice MacGonigal". He also mentions Joseph Beuys, an avant-garde, postwar artist. Magan cites Beuys as being lured to Ireland in 1974, "by the sheer wonder of these fibrous almanacs that loyally record every fallen pollen spore and Neolithic wheel rut." Perhaps Beuys is most remembered for the sculpture he created, using two peat briquettes sandwiched together with a pound of Kerrygold butter, titled *Irish Energies*.

What draws me as a writer to the bog is the surface and depth elements, that sense of outward calm while underneath is written layer upon layer of narrative. Heaney described these layers as being like the pages of history. Boora Bog (County Offaly) discovered a Mesolithic site in 1977. Joe Craven of Kilcormac was digging when he unearthed a storm beach on the shore of what had been an enormous Ice Age lake. Scattered along it were the charcoal heaps of hearths tended by hunter gatherers some 9,000 years ago, barely 1,000 years after the glaciers retreated. The imagination finds plenty to feast upon when standing on the same ground as our Mesolithic ancestors. Researching bog material is an exciting backdrop to writing bog poems.

SIBERIAN ICE MAIDEN

Made from larch, plentiful in Siberia,
your chamber door opened, fast-tracked
a Bronze Age world into a modern summer.
Resurrected old stories, already transformed
by myth. Reality scripts other realms.

Stories outlive their time. Subterranean
artefacts tell their tale. Two small tables,
horsemeat. A wooden vessel with carved
handle. Beverage in a horned cup.

High Priestess, you might have stepped onto
pages of Vogue. Dressed in a yellow silk
tussah blouse, crimson and white striped wool
skirt, thigh high white felt leggings. Cause of
death, also modern. Cannabis to quell pain.
In life. And death. On the boundary of Steppe
and Mountain, on either foot of the Urals.

Mummified, your body belongs to another
epoch. Elaborate Sintashta burials. Horses,
chariots, deer. Riding together into afterlife,
'The Pastures of Heaven'. Chieftains buried
with sacrificial animals, as you were. Horses
masked and head-dressed to look like deer,
antlers fashioned from wood or cloth.
Markings tattooed on your skin, likeness
on polished mirrors, tell giant deer were gods
worshipped in Ukok*. Herdsmen bring sheep

and horses to this plateau during winter's want.
Wind blows so fierce, snow falls off grazing grass
tiny avalanches revealing lush green undergrowth.

**Ukok is now The Altai*

LEMANAGHAN BOG BODY

Between *Ballycumber* and Ferbane, surrounded
by River Brosna, *Lemanaghan* island bogs;
music composed for voices. *Corhill, Tumbeagh*.

Near St Manchan's Holy Well, *Lemanaghan* bog yields
a man's lower torso, mysteries in peat, unsolved over
two millennia. Flexed feet suggests force. Dragged
to burial after torture. Halved. Like a nation split in two.

His story could be today's headlines. Bound, gagged,
brought to an out-house, hedgerow screened,
sound-proofed. Clues to his whereabouts obscure as tyre
tracks on a dusty road. None but quarrelsome crows
see or hear cruelties perpetrated at his execution.

Blackthorn, stone axe heads; *Corhill* bog finds. Silver
Coins hoarded at Curraghalassa, date back to Edward 1.
Bog weathered, medieval shoes, shaped by warm flesh,
also Curraghalassa. Parish of Ferbane in the Barony of Birr.

Until torsos re-unite, *Lemanaghan* bog body mystery
remains. Pilgrims visit St Manchan's site. Some believe
he restored life to his beloved cow*. Stolen then slaughtered.
Then, as now, the milk of human kindness soured.

**St Manchan's cow was prolific in her production of milk.
So much so that greedy individuals stole and slaughtered her.
When the saint caught up with the thieves, the cow was already boiling in the pot.
He put the pieces together and restored life to the dead animal.*

MATING DANCE

Antlered branches brush against woodland's
low foliage. Earth scraped by hooves. A dying
man's surrender scrawled in clay. Watched
by gentle doe eyes, elk mating choreography
slow but showy. Molyneux believed;

Providence resurrects. Fossils coming back
into fashion like platform shoes or bellbottoms;
bushy sideburns. Small revolutions confusing
elk with moose or reindeer. Curvier argues no.

Not so. Fossil remains remain fossils. Linked
to glacial un-peelings. The Great Elk dance
done. Dusted. Scattered to extinction by ego
evolutions. So Curvier says. Artful a tale as

the style worn by Suebi Tribesmen.* Hair held
back in a thick knot. On battlefields, warriors
appeared taller, fiercer. It distinguished freemen
from slaves, seperated the men from the boys.

*The Suebian knot found on 'Osterby Man' (70-220AD)
at Osterby near Rendsburg-Eckenforde Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.

SPRING NIGHT

After Lia Bai (700-762)

*From whose house are the flute notes floating?
Like autumn leaves in dry September's mulch.
They blend into the spring breeze all over Luoyang;
across this bog asleep in a cradle of stars
until dew dank morning wakes music memory
soft on membranes thin as a seasonal moment
merged into hours, days, weeks.*

*In the tune I heard expectant hands break willow twigs.
How a startled breath blows on bog perimeters
gathers crumbs of dusk across spongy surfaces
scraped into cavernous lake, knee deep in lives
no longer ebbed or flowed yet felt in the hush
of breaking light, settled darkness.*

Who wouldn't think of home at such a moment?



The Strange Case of the Irish Elk
Jeanne Cannizzo & Eileen Casey

Research as writers know, can lead us down many avenues, some cul de sacs but mostly broad vistas that just keep on nourishing those creative juices. Exploring discoveries of elk bones led me to Christie's Auction Rooms and catalogues (found poems) as well as to Siberia and a Princess (buried in elaborate Pazryk fashion) who surely must have seen these giant creatures cross Eurasian plains, right before her very eyes.

'The Strange Case of the Irish Elk' went on show at ErrantArtspace, Alston St, Victoria BC from September 10th, 2021. Supported by The Arts Council of Ireland and County Offaly Arts, it features poems by Eileen Casey and sculptures and objects by Visual Artist, Curator, Academic, Dr Jeanne Cannizzo.

Treasure, a short film featuring Casey's bog poetry set against Irish Peatlands launched on Culture Night, 17th September at Boora Parklands, County Offaly.

Jeanne Cannizzo is an anthropologist, artist, curator, academic and sometimes a poet. Her latest poem is in the Spring 2021 issue of J Journal, from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York. Her sculpture was shown in *Neoneanderthals*, for which she also wrote the catalogue and wall text, at the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh, 2019. She lived in that city for several years while teaching at the University of Edinburgh and acting as an occasional guest curator for the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland, as she has done for the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria since her return to Canada.



THE ART OF BOG SWIMMING

A hat of felt floats on the bog's surface.
Has someone drowned? An accident?
Suicide, a nefarious murder even?
A ferret-faced head surfaces under the hat.
The bog-swimmer is small-bodied,
slight but powerful. Back into still water,
to emerge shrouding himself with black mud.
Twisted, contorting ritual.

Two men watch. One begins to photograph
the twisted, contorting shaman at his ritual.
For this is Joseph Beuys, and this is art.
Performance art, needing documentation,
preservation for the unborn generations.
A commentary on the environment,
danced lament for disappearing peatlands.

Jeanne Cannizzo

CAVE LION KILLS GIANT ELK

That's the headline from *The Prehistoric Times*.
 Not really news, I should think, as far as predator and prey go.
 But the detail is missing as to how she, the cave lion, did it.
 How would I do it, if I were the killer?
 The elk is gigantic, with huge antlers, so
 I would have to sneak up on him. Or would it be better
 to let him get a whiff of me, and run himself silly?
 Then go for the throat, a frontal assault,
 wrestle him down onto the ground to bleed out.
 But all that blood smell, what else would come running
 to get in my way or even try to turn me into prey?
 It might be safer to come up behind him,
 my soft pads not making a sound in the grassland.
 And then with a single bound I launch myself through the
 air onto his haunch, one side of the other.
 Much better. Then I don't have to see those sorrowful eyes.
 My cubs have to eat too, you know. End of story.

BOG BUTTER

"Butter to eat with their hog, was seven years buried in a bog."
 James Farewell, English poet and lawyer
 1689 (The Irish Hudibras)

Cylinders of white - marled and mottled
 by centuries of submersion in a bog.
 Sculpted in dairy fat, packed and
 pushed into a girdle of blackened wood,
 wrapped in the bladder of a deer.

Bronze Age to Iron Age, unto the Medieval
 and even Modern times, the Irish have buried
 butter in their bogs. Weeks, months, years,
 millennia in that frigid, acid water, no oxygen,
 no bacterial growth, no mould, no rancidity.

Another Irish barbarism, a unique
 backwardness, the English thought this
 custom quaint. They knew nothing. An ancient
 technique, many are the peoples who have
 buried their food to store it without spoilage.

Buried, like golden hoards or a cache of weapons,
 butter is a mysterious substance. Born as liquid, transformed
 by human hand in a process not fully understood,
 it becomes solid, liable to melt into something not quite either.
 Like a bog, it is liminal in its nature.

So why not surround it with rituals and meaning
 beyond nourishment? Make it a food reserved for the rich,
 consumption governed by sumptuary laws, pay taxes with it,
 heal the sick, mark boundaries or make a votive offering.
 Still edible after thousands of years, surely bog butter is magical.

ENDLING

The last of its kind,
Unique among those dying animals.
The final one, a survivor, alone.
Waiting for its own death.
Herd animal with no herd.
Twin without its other half.
A remnant without issue.

And what if it becomes not a remnant but a revenant?
Cloned in an alien womb,
born into a new world, our world.
But still alone, without a herd?
Once the last is now the first.
De-extinction in an unfamiliar landscape,
strange predators, new diseases,
Better, surely, as an endling?

BORN STILL

I was never of their world.
The bog holds me; I am of this place.
Suspended in its collodial grasp,
In the warm thickness of the dark,
I am comforted.

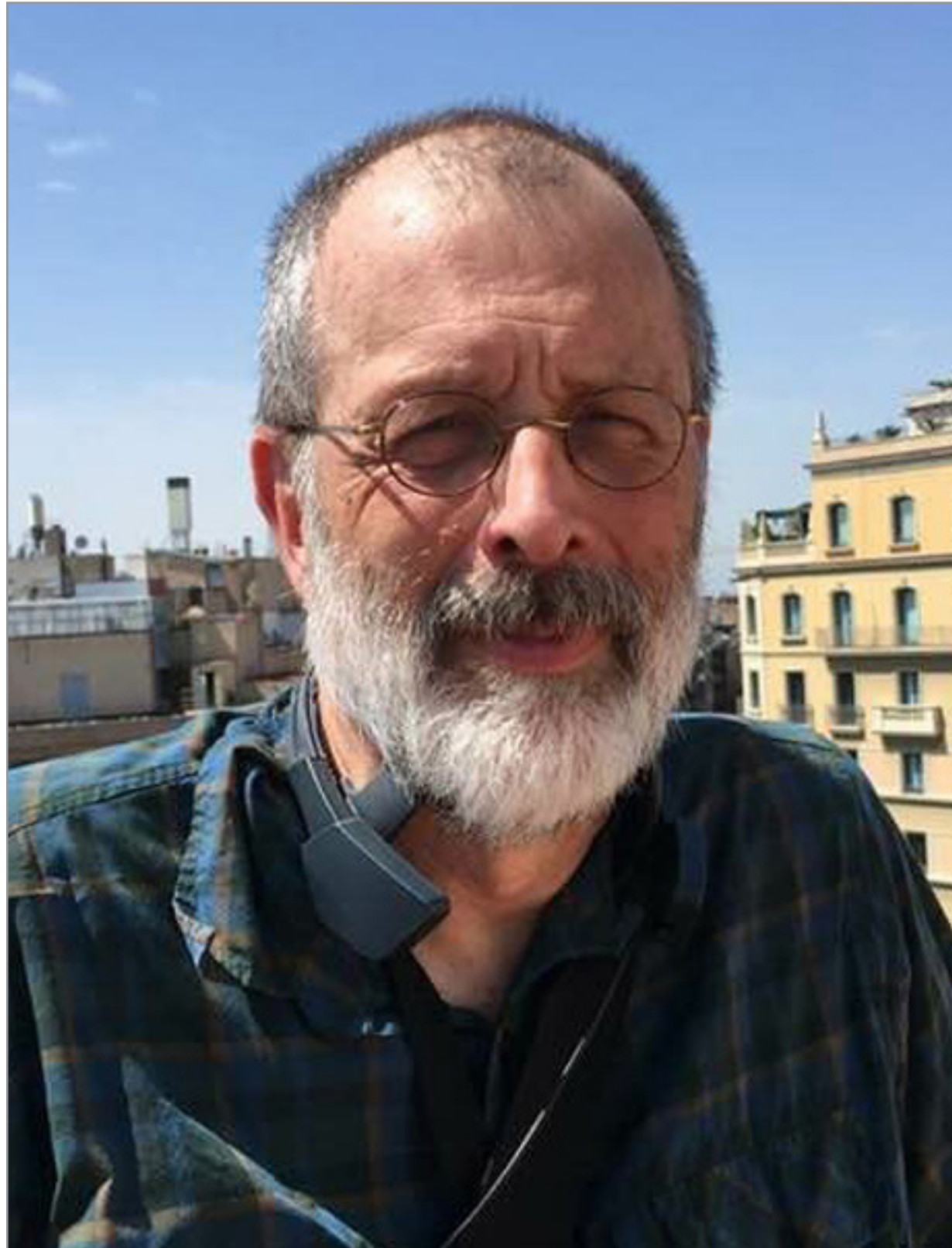
DAINTY TOES

Haiku composed while observing the skeleton of a Giant Irish Elk

toes buttress the weight.
keep the bones upright
when laden with flesh.

DOE AT CHAUVET

The doe is alone, without her mate or herd.
Elongated neck, the tell-tale hump on the withers.
Legs almost too delicate to bear the true weight of the enormous belly.
The womb seems already occupied with the next generation.



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. 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.

KINTSUGI

for Sandy McPherson

This second pandemic summer is even more beautiful than the first
The eerie long evening stillness of the suburbs,
Variegations of green on a ground of asphalt.

A broken thing may be made more elegant, more valuable,
Between the shards of the bowl's rough pottery
Fine lines of gold-dusted lacquer.

I would like to hand you this smoky tea in the mug I dropped
Years ago on the tile floor of another kitchen,
A plain cylinder, thick-walled, grey and unglazed brown.

Think of this as a poem of exile, one ancient to another.

No, think of it as the courier who brings that poem.
The steam rising from the road to nothing is reply enough,
The flash of gold above the green at sunset.

Jordan Smith

POEM BEGINNING WITH A LINE MISATTRIBUTED TO ONE OF THE TROUBADOURS

Life got complicated and the pears aren't ripe,
Wrote, supposedly, he of Anjou, the thin-skinned,
According to his *vida*, the unforgiving,
Although the commentaries differ as to the subject.
Was it his lover who would not receive him, the harvest
Delayed by the *siròc*, the machinations
Of the lady's husband, who had seemed, if not complaisant,
At least preoccupied?
It is generally conceded that he wrote the poem
Locked in the keep of that gentleman, and, ransomed,
Rewrote it, keeping only the first line.

Perhaps he thought he'd said enough.
The pears (bosc, not Anjou, thicker-skinned)
In the bowl on the counter are still hard under my thumb,
And it is the height of summer, of irony,
That in his century, the plague had abated
As he stepped out into the swelling orchards, squinting
After so long in darkness, and he saw her
On the battlement, like the sun's corona in eclipse.

Perhaps the line was never his.
Perhaps I said it, an excuse or to pretend
That pears might take precedence over our desires, that waiting for their ripeness
Was a lover's vigil. World we seem to have lost,
I might have said, hard and unforgiving, we loved you.
The pears are not yet ripe. I have not yet
Erased all I meant to say.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Lynn Strongin is a Pulitzer Prize nominee in poetry. A recipient of a National Endowment Creative Writing Grant, nominated twice for Pushcart Prizes, Lynn Born in NYC at the end of the dirty thirties, she grew up in an artistic Jewish home in New York during the war. Earliest studies were in musical composition as a child and at The Manhattan School of Music. Took a BA at Hunter college, MA at Stanford University as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. Lived in Berkeley during the vibrant sixties where she worked for Denise Lever-tov and took part in many peace demonstrations. Poems in forty anthologies, fifty journals; Poetry, New York Quarterly. Forthcoming work in *Poetry Flash* and *Otoliths*. Canada is her second home. The late Hugh Fox said Strongin is the “most exciting poet writing today.” Danielle Ofri wrote to her; “you tear the veil off that mysterious disease polio.” Strongin’s work has been translated into French and Italian. <https://the-otolith.blogspot.com>



MISS JACKSON & HER YOUNG CHARGES

for Jordan Smith

Prove that changing the pattern hurts
Alas, my prayer has not been answered.

Hymnals are sweeter than arithmetic
books. But they do not cut the cheese.
Guitars frailing win. Bluegrass spun.

The boys may hunt in Whitethorn field
After half an hour’s jumping.
Rain gives way to high winds, thunder whipcracks across boys’ backs.

Talk to the ironmonger
Look at the weathervane. There’s a nick in the sugarcube, back home.
You are eating, you are fasting. Hymnals are cast on the school floor.
God counts our tears, you love Malie most of all:
Almost dinnertime, walking home, you keep thinking of the light.
Everlasting.

Lynn Strongin

I INTERSECT WITH YOU

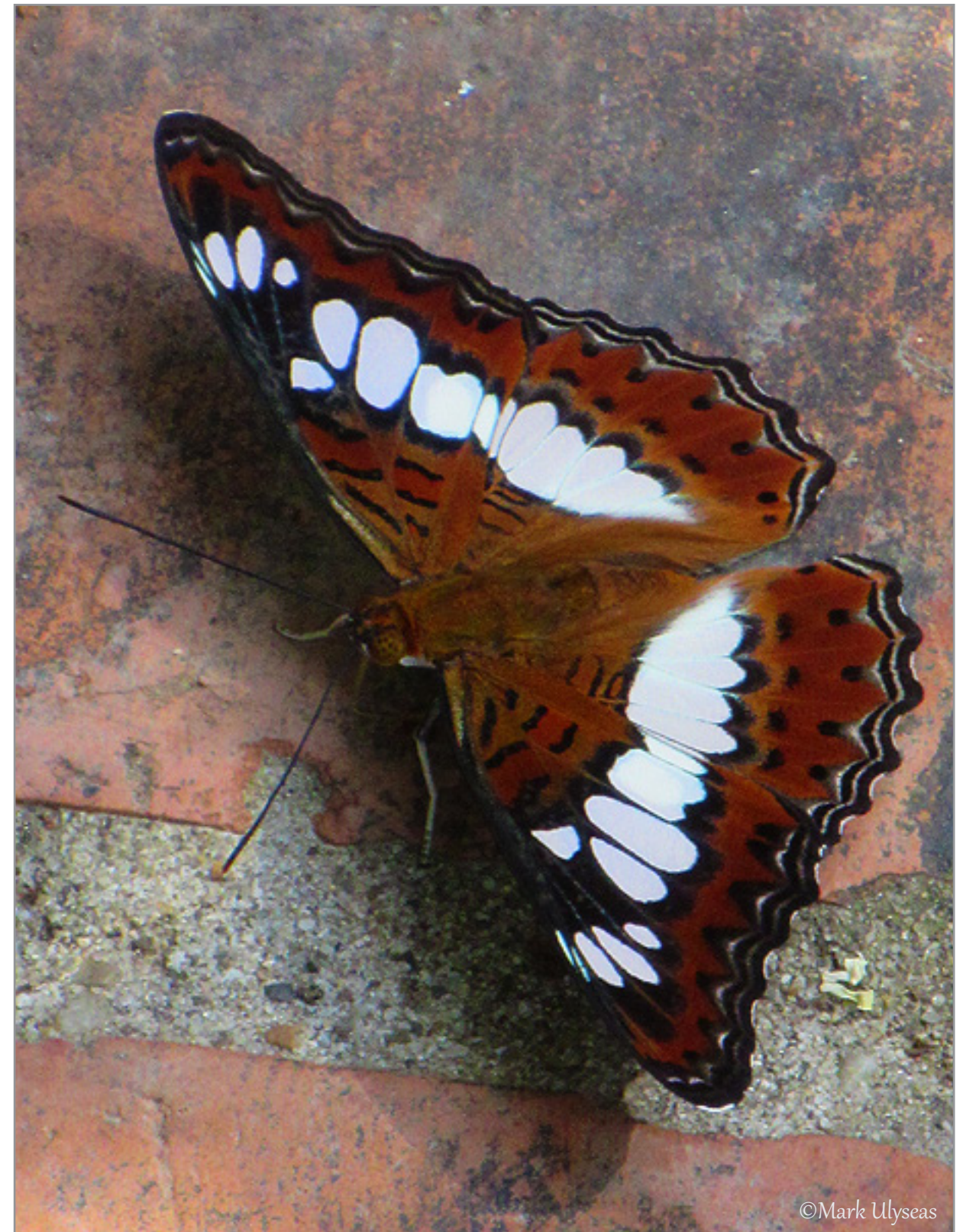
For Jordan Smith

With you, with the Adirondack mountains
With the New England ranges on the maps
Rolled up charted in the heart chambers.

Pastels mainly like those snap-down maps we had as kids
Enchanting as kaleidoscopes but anemic faded ones
When pulled down by Miss Harp

The only enchanted thing in the room
Aside from the soul itself—
these Rand McNally spiritual hymns of American history
Which transcended & intersected the heavy clock,
its numerals bleaching as day wore on
An ache in the left rib relieved only by the bell

We sprung forth like untamed ponies breaking all records
for speed, ripping thru maps, tearing into home base
taking the flaming forth with us in both hands, bleeding, larking.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Jeremy Gadd is an Australian poet and author who has published five volumes of poetry, including a livre d'artiste with engravings by P. John Burden (now found in rare book collections such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Samuel Paley Library, Temple University, Philadelphia, and the Reid Library, University of Western Australia). He has also published two volumes of short stories, two novels and had plays produced. Jeremy has a Bachelor of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and MA with Honours and PhD degrees from the University of New England. His writing has won several literary awards. He lives and writes in an old Federation era house overlooking Botany Bay. <https://jeremygaddpoet.com>.



TO AN ABORTED CHILD

The Prophet taught abortion is forbidden –
'haram' – but that, sometimes, there can be
extenuating circumstances which permit the practice.
As a Hindu I believe in 'ahimsa'; the belief any
course of action should be that which causes
least pain to all concerned – but also that a soul
deprived of human existence suffers karmic calamity.
As a Western atheist, the decision is secular,
mine alone, as is any pretense to be emotionally
untouched by the distressing experience.
As a Christian, I stagger beneath the burden of
my guilt and beg forgiveness at St Margaret's feet
but, as a Buddhist in Japan, at the ancient Zojoji Shrine,
I place toys and sweets for you to play with or
taste in the garden of the unborn children,
where I feel your presence and forgiveness ...

Jeremy Gadd

IT IS A PLACE

It is a place where rain refuses to visit,
where dead souls come to count their pains,
where despair hangs in the air like blimps
and spite makes liquid thoughts obsessive;
where hope evaporates like moisture on the tongue
and wails of loss and chants of loneliness are sung.
You could be past Zanzibar, in suffocating
Saharan heat, with only the muffled tread of
camels' feet, rhythmical as a soft drum's beat
on the blistering sand for company but,
this is Australia in drought, where,
dreaming of flooded fields and dams that burst,
farmers contemplate their yields when -
and if - the scorched, parched, land
replenishes its decades' long thirst.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Glenn Shea was born and has lived most of his life in Connecticut. He has worked in the library of a cancer clinic and in the French department of a foreign-language bookshop, washed dishes in the Scottish Highlands, gone to pilgrim's mass in Santiago, and eaten really good tex-mex in Chengdu. He has read his poems in local libraries and shops and venues in Dublin, Paris, London, and Verona. He works with a group of illuminati in a huge used-book shop in Connecticut. He has published two full-length collections with Salmon Poetry in Ireland, *Find A Place That Could Pass for Home* (2010) and *The Pilgrims of Tombelaine* (2017); a third collection, *In the Middle of the Month in the Human Realm*, is in the works.



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE WORLD

So it's happened to you, right?
 You're picked up by the ears and flung
 whole oceans away, right out of the ordinary?
 So really I'm in my car in the drive-up
 at the Niantic Liberty Bank, taking money out for rent,
 window open onto the March chill morning, waiting,
 and out back of the parklot two chain saws
 are gnawing through the branches of dead winter wood,
 the electric growling steady for twelve, maybe fifteen seconds,
 then one pulls up, a second's pause, and start again, with
 the other maybe two seconds' syncope behind it.
 The note of them is maybe low G on the keyboard,
 the default note of the adult male voice exhaling.
 It's Bodh Gaya, in Bihar, the bit of hamlet? town?
 where the Gautama Buddha woke,
 where you'd wake up at dawn or a bit before
 from a light sleep on the thin mattress in the guesthouse,
 that note droning already in the monks' rooms next door,
 from the Tibetan next, and the Thai monastery the next streets over,
 then from the speakers on trees in the center of town,
 near the Bodhi tree, fifth descendant of its teaching original,
 with its thick greening leaves at the center of the universe,
 and you really don't mind the wake-up call because
 why else are you there, where for the first time in the world
 you're there for the same reason as everyone else,
 to learn, to be good, and—
 here's the rent in the little flapped white envelope
 and you put the window up and the car back into gear
 and you head off to work, to sell books,
 to learn, to be good, your heart
 in pace just a little quicker than before

Glenn Shea. Photograph by Kat Smith.

GEESE

In the university of life I have been taking
 —well, not a PhD. as I tend to think of philosophy as
 man's vain attempt to get everything in a box and tie it shut,
 lovely as some of the knots and bows can be;
 call it a program of continuing study
 in what my friend John calls Negative Capability,
 those hours after waking when with considerable skill
 and sweatless effort and maybe a few games of patience,
 you can do what looks pretty much
 like nothing, but which really after considerable untying
 of the innumerable differences between what you want
 and what you get, and looking down so long into that hole
 that you see nothing that looks like you looking back,
 lets you, with some smoothing back of the hair
 and adjustments of posture, get to the appointed work,
 to stop shoving life around and let it
 go on in its own wise way. Geese you will notice then
 come up from the pond, picking wetly through the mess
 they leave behind them, inspect with great attention
 their bits of lawn, occasionally let off a cautious honk,
 and then eventually waddle back slowly off.
 The Buddha nowhere in the Dhammapada mentions geese,
 nor for that matter the children that play in the dried stream-bed
 there in Bihar, but if he'd seen them he would have
 as I do come to no conclusion. Having cast off
 for even an hour what John called the irritable reaching
 after fact is no mean, perhaps an immeasurable, accomplishment
 and sometimes a great joy. It is long work,
 and best done regular, but what at last it comes to
 I couldn't begin to say. In these things we all
 make our own negotiations, so few of them final.

TOUCH HAS ITS OWN TRUTH

Locked in argument, they say.
 Tell a true story, follow a logic
 and you're on the rail and grid
 of True or False and Right or Wrong.
 That must follow this,
 something ergo something other.
 The jingle of rigid truth,
 hard fact, clocklike, barred
 and mechanical. It ends in rifles,
 never donkeys or azaleas.

But touch escapes this, these
 isolate times remind us.
 Touch has its own truth,
 and sight. Lock eyes
 and borders fall. The vast lands
 of each other's exchange
 their ways. Debt, forgetfulness,
 hard words are forgiven
 in the flesh. Where you fare
 in that easy way is fine.
 This simple makes sense.
 And song.

THE HAUNTED BOOKSHOP

I think the ghost's come back.
 When we'd closed the upper floor off
 for storage, the rounds of steps we'd hear
 above fell silent, the weird air of the place
 at night emptied away, sightings
 of the girl who'd step from the cabin's
 door and vanish in the woods behind
 fell off. The old shack at the back
 corner of the grounds persisted in
 ordinary days—this is years now
 I'm talking. But of late as we've
 rebuilt the shelves and stocked
 the leatherbounds and the books
 on antique stuff and the shelves
 and shelves of poems, I've begun
 to hear the noise again of
 a leaning book fall flat, a step's
 echo on the rough wood floor, a creak
 from a corner out of sight. Not
 a frightful thing at all, rather nice
 to think the place reoccupied:
 the girl perhaps in one of the chairs
 out there, in the quiet night paging
 through the books on colonial toys,
 or the engravings of old lace;
 tapping the meters out of Keats'
 poems, that her mother had loved—
 certain, in these songs, that
 her mother was soon to be near her,
 that her friends were soon to call.

MOURNING'S DAUGHTER

Would she miss him? Maybe, a bit.
 He was never unkind, just serious, occupied and forgetful.
 He was the emperor and
 she the emperor's fourth child, in a motley of nine.
 The eldest, fortunately, was a son,
 with two hands, a mouth, and a brain,
 which settled the question of succession.
 The ones who came after would be moved around
 on a chessboard of marriages and alliances;
 this far down the line she would be given to a minor prince,
 she hoped not too stern, stupid or ugly.
 The emperor's death—all that flurry,
 of doctors and conferences, hot water
 carried in or out—was now past for weeks.
 Dressings and ceremonies were arranging themselves
 back to the usual, with even a hint among the servants
 of the rush and jolly of a coronation coming on.
 Other than that, the usual; in the morning
 the choice of familiar crinolines and damasks,
 the harsh daytime language of politics
 softening into the sibilants and palatals of French
 for the evening conversation and tea.
 That sameness.
 She knew a peevish and sour look was imprinting
 on her habitual face—frown lines more than laughter.
 Maybe it was from that dream that was besetting her
 of late—that she was a package, or in one,
 a square wooden box, large enough to sit down in,
 quite carefully sealed and twined,
 in a post station, labeled "To Be Left Until Called For."
 She'd dreamt it again last night,
 and might still again tonight.
 She would try to occupy herself then
 with what was scheduled for tomorrow,
 if only she could remember what that was.

THE POOR ONE

Lord, to make a man say in his prayers,
Lord, I am fallen, Lord, I am weak and selfish,
the poor one among your lightsome
creatures, the lily and the feathered lark,
is to give him your strangest gift, a wearing
of so much sweetness of the world
he might almost be mad with thanks.



©Mark Ulyseas

Nam (river) Ou, north Laos. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Clair Chilvers was a cancer scientist, and latterly worked for the UK National Health Service. She divides her time between writing and volunteering for the charity Mental Health Research UK that she co-founded. She lives in Gloucestershire, UK. She has had poems published in online and print magazines including Agenda, Allegro, Amaryllis, Artemis, Atrium, the Ekphrastic Review, Impspired, Ink Sweat and Tears, the Poetry Atlas, Sarasvati and Snakeskin. She won second prize in the Poetry Kit Ekphrastic Competition 2020 and her poems have been longlisted or commended in the Cinnamon Press Pamphlet Prize 2020, and Poetry Kit Competition 2020. Her first collection *When We Come Out of the Darkness* (Frosted Fire) was published in 2021. Her second collection *Island* (Impspired Press) is forthcoming. www.clairchilverspoetry.co.uk



MOTHER AND CHILD

Inspired by an Inuit carving of a mother and child

I

Carved from a cube of stone
straight lines, triangles,
geometric figures
one side fish scales
the back like a tiered dress
from the top the two round joined circles
the heads of the mother and her child
it is not signed even with a mark

II

*Why are you doing that? she asks
It is ugly, rough hewn.
Why aren't you doing another seal? Maybe a large expensive one.
They sell so well.
Because, Aakuluk¹, I have carved seals all my life
taught by my father, exactly as he did them.
I wanted to do something from my heart –
a sculpture of you and our child.*

MOTHER AND CHILD *cont...*

III

You are getting too heavy, child,
for me to carry you.
I am exhausted with the work, the loneliness, and the cold
and you turn aside from me
as if you seek something else
something away from me, from our life.

When you are grown
will you reject our ways
go to the City to seek work
maybe sweep the steps of a shop every morning
the only work that you can get?
You will not learn your father's skills
as a stone-carver, as a fisherman.
You will not spend the winter
as we do in the igloo
or the summer working with the stone
to turn out seals for the tourists
once in a while create something for yourself
something from your heart.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



Kevin Cowdall was born in Liverpool, England, where he still lives and works. In all, over 200 poems have been published in journals, magazines, and anthologies, and on web sites, in the UK and Ireland, across Europe, Australia, Hong Kong, India, Canada, and the USA, and broadcast on BBC Radio. His 2016 retrospective collection, *Assorted Bric-a-brac*, brought together the best from three previous collections (*The Reflective Image*, *Monochrome Leaves*, and *A Walk in the Park*) with a selection of newer poems). His most recent collection, *Natural Inclinations*, features fifty poems with a common theme of the natural world. Both are available in paperback and e-book. His poem for children, *The Land of Dreams*, was published on the Letterpress Project website, wonderfully illustrated by Chris Riddell. Kevin's novella, *Paper Gods and Iron Men*, has received excellent reviews, and is also available in paperback and e-book.

THE DANGLING CATKIN

Walking alone through the bleak, wild woods,
surrounded by the lingering vestiges of winter.
My breath curls on the raw morning air
as I stand, for a while, in a melancholy clearing.

Savouring the moment while my senses rise,
and time stands still as I close my eyes –

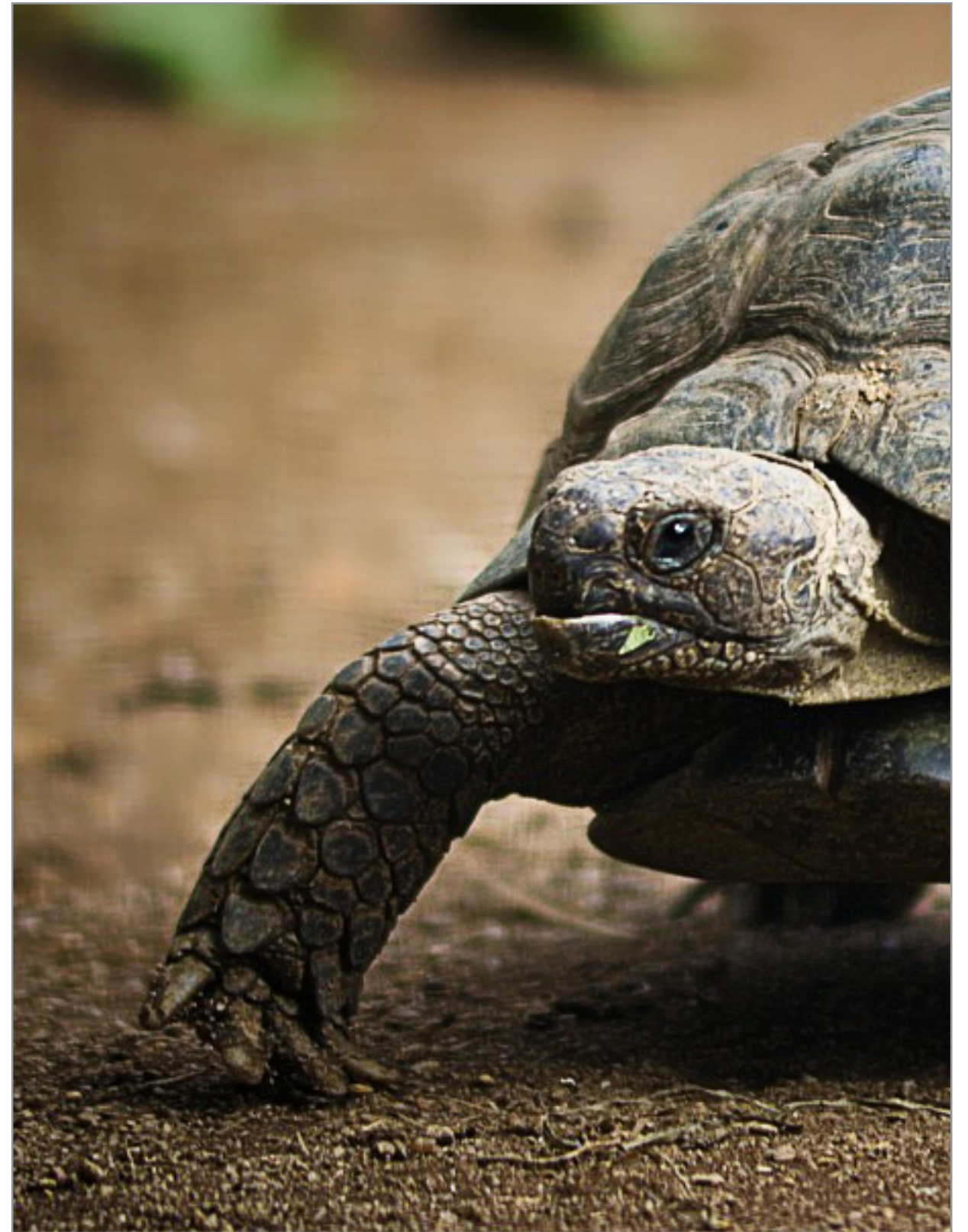
Alert to the staccato sounds I'm hearing:
an icy crunch beneath my well-shod feet,
a chill whisper amongst the bare trees,
the rustle of a cluster of dangling catkin buds.

Kevin Cowdall

THE PATIENT TORTOISE

(Tanka)

One step at a time,
patiently progressing
along its own path,
capable of greater pace
were it ever more inclined



Photograph <https://pixabay.com/photos/giant-tortoise-tortoise-reptile-6559920/>

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 collections for Lapwing, Belfast, are *Richard Dalloway in Wisconsin*; *Summer Night, 1948*; and *The Girl in the Red Cape*, all 2021. His poem 'Snow Falling, Lady Murasaki Watching' is on permanent display at Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo. His work is part of University College Dublin's Irish Poetry Reading Archive.



HARP

In a New York of not too long ago, we would meet
After work in the lobby of a huge hotel near Grand Central.
A lovely young woman, Irish, would be playing the pedal harp,
An idea of the management's as inspired as the martinis
And rob roys of the period. Our New York. As was
The Alice statue in Central Park, covered with snow in winter –
As close to the Buddha as New York ever got. Today all of it
Comes back. A plane high in the sky, you on it, I soon.

Richard W. Halperin

BOSTON, 1977

Tears, rain, hail, snow, there is not
Much difference among them. Years ago,
I stood near the Boston Common which
Was blanketed with snow. The peace of it

Covered over a patch of my life of which
I was ashamed. Now I know that what I was
Ashamed of was of being young. This, in
Boston, a city I barely knew. Jack Lemmon

Was trying out a play there. In a poem, things
Hang together. Because they feel like it.
Writing certain poems is the same as paying
One's taxes. In this poem, I am paying my taxes.

THE MAN IN THE RED-FRAME GLASSES

We live in the same neighbourhood,
Although we have never met.
He is a musician, about my age.
He carries a portable keyboard piano.
We always give each other a little wave.

He knows I am a poet. Someone blabbed.
He wears red-frame glasses. Bright red.
Most artists do not display little flags.
Some do. The late John Kliphan
Wore a beret all year round.

There is pleasure in knowing that what
You have the luck and the skill to do
Can bring delight into a sorry world.
There is pleasure in knowing that
Your own problems are your own business.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Still a companion as the decades pile up.

My mother read me *A Child's Garden of Verses* before I
Could read, but not before I could think. One of the few
Adventures with one's mother one can mention in public.

Blind Pew, who terrifies me each reread – as good as
Shakespeare and, like Shakespeare, tossed off.

The Wrong Box, a joke in slow motion – not as easy
As it looks – which gave rise in the film, via Michael Caine,
To 'Julia Finsbury, soon to become Julia Finsbury.'

A writer's writer, Proust, Henry James, their *chapeaux bas*.

He left Scotland and California better than he found them,
Which many can say, but nevertheless.

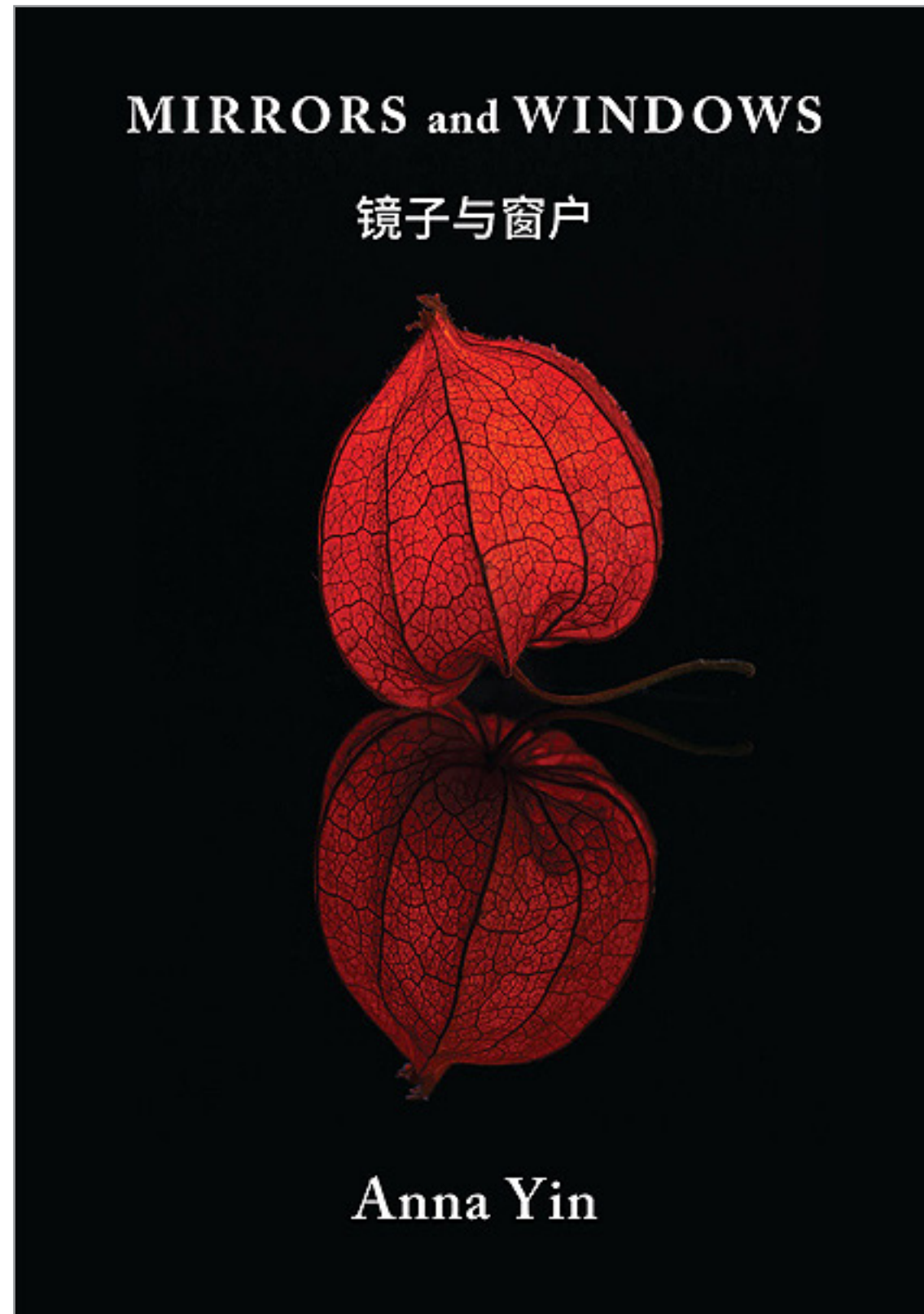
He is all over Paris.

If I had a dog, I would name him RLS. Dogs, too,
Die young. Faithful friend.



Rainy, my friend. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Yuan Changming grew up in an isolated village, started to learn the English alphabet in Shanghai at age nineteen, and published monographs on translation before leaving China. With a Canadian PhD in English, Yuan currently edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Yuan in Vancouver. Credits include eleven Pushcart nominations, nine chapbooks and awards, as well as publications in *Best of Canadian Poetry* (2009, 2012, 2014) & *Best New Poems Online*. In March 2021, Yuan served on the Jury for the 44th National Magazine Awards (poetry category).



Mirrors and Windows by Anna Yin,
published by Guernica Editions, Fall 2021.

Available at:

<https://www.guernicaeditions.com/title/9781771836159>

YUAN CHANGMING

Book review of

ANNA YIN'S

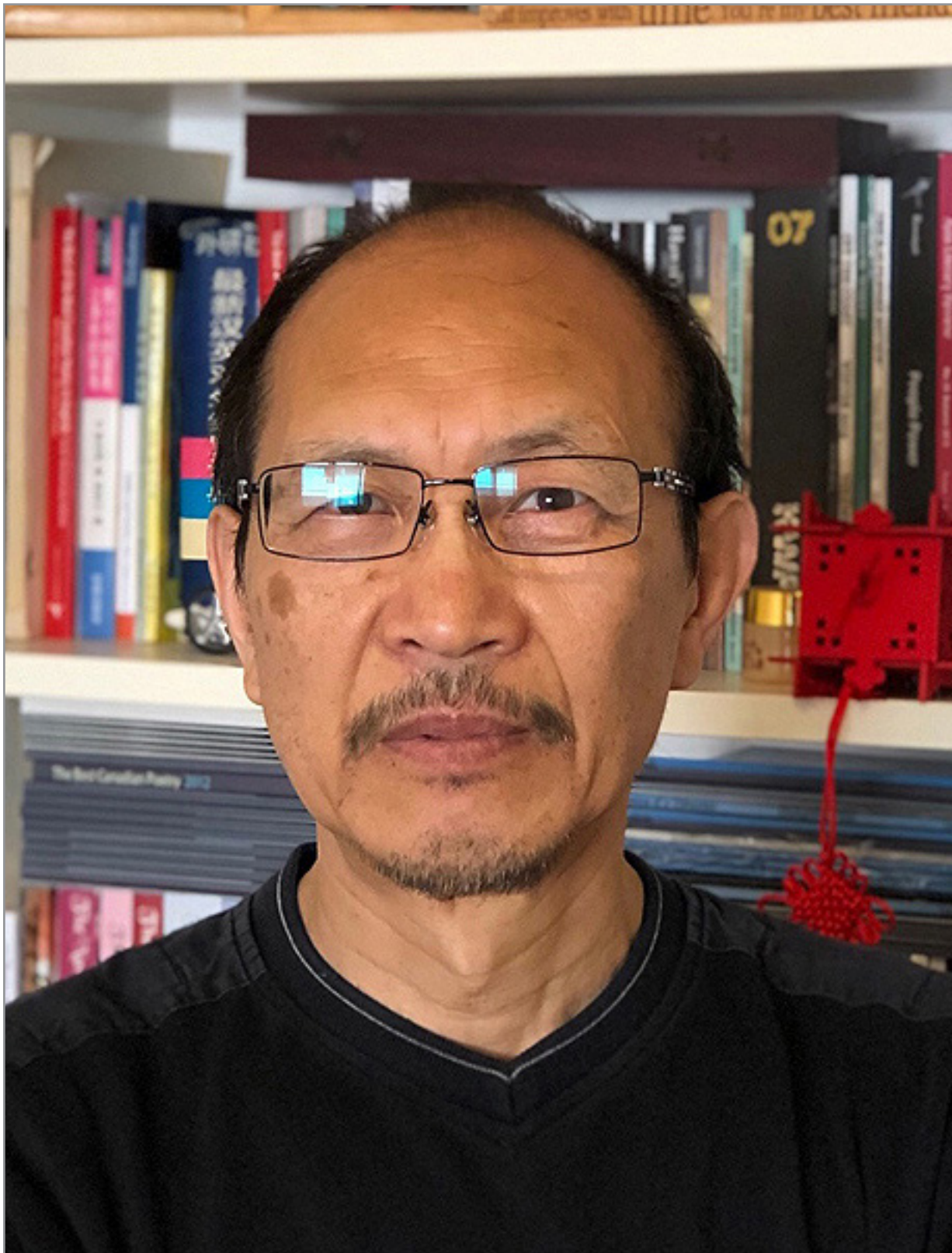
Mirrors and Windows:

East-West Poems with Translations

Guernica Editions, 2021

Just as not all bilingualists can be good translators, not all good translators can work well with poetry; indeed, poetry can sometimes turn out almost untranslatable, especially when such disparately different languages as English and Chinese are mutually source or target languages; however, in her most recent collection *Mirrors and Windows: East-West Poems with Translations*, Anna Yin shows herself to be not only a good translator but a highly skillful and talented translator of poetry. Part of the reason must perforce have to do with her rich experience with writing poetry and her close contact with the authors and their work.

When it comes to translation per se, there have, needless to say, been many influential theories about the proper ways in which to do or 'judge' a particular work of translation, as one can respectively recall from A. F. Tytler to E. Nida in the English context and from Yan Fu to Xu Yuanchong in the Chinese one. While Anna may or may not be very familiar with them, her work certainly exemplifies that her translation is both 'faithful' to the original, and articulate to the reader. For a random example, the poet-translator renders the first couplet of Allan Briesmaster's poem "Ask" ("Then who can sight the shadows on the wind, / or hear a single note sung by a stone?") into "那么有谁能看到投在风上的阴影, / 或者听到石头吟唱的单个音符?"; apparently, the Chinese version is not only a 'faithful' but also an articulate cross-cultural representation of the original in terms of tone, diction and syntax, as well as of rhythm, imagery and content.



Yuan Changming

Likewise, Xin Mu's "Short Poems" are particularly condensed, heavily loaded with imagery and meaning in the Chinese version, but Anna's translation proves no less effective than the original as in the case of the first one:

碑

那是一张蚀满皱纹的脸
在现实与生存之间
那是一张望着远方发愣的脸

Monument

That is a face full of wrinkles
between reality and survival
that is a face, dazed, gazing into the distance

Actually, the English version not only retains the vivid imagery of the original, but offers perhaps an even more concise read.

As every reading of a poem offers a new poem, so does every rendering of it. Though difficult choices sometimes have to be made in relation to certain formal features characterizing the original work, it is still possible, and perhaps preferable, for translators to explore their skills for the benefit of both the author and the reader. In her remarkable effort to attain 'fidelity, clarity and elegance' during the translating process, Anna shows a high degree of flexibility, and works at the height of her talents. Being a fine and sensitive poet in her own right, she well knows what to retain, relinquish or "re-present".

A good case in point: Li Jiaxian's "Autumn Poem" has a quite traditional rhyme scheme in the Chinese version, but in the English version this pattern is absent; instead, the poet-translator makes use of such sound effects as alliteration, assonance and consonance, which are not there in the original — so much so that she is able to add to the poem a stronger sense of rhythm. Just look at the opening stanza:

漂泊多年，我遗失了
你给我的那颗红豆
只有那温暖的南风
至今还缠绕在心头



Anna Yin was born in China and immigrated to Canada in 1999. She was [Mississauga's Inaugural Poet Laureate](#) (2015-2017) and Ontario representative for the League of Canadian Poets (2013-2016). Anna has authored four poetry collections in English, "Love's Lighthouse" in Chinese and English (2019), and "Mirrors and Windows": a book of translation works (Guernica Editions) in 2021. Anna won the 2005 Ted Plantos Memorial Award, two MARTYs, two scholarships from USA and three grants from Ontario Arts Council. Her poems/translations have appeared at Queen's Quarterly, ARC Poetry, New York Times, China Daily, CBC Radio, World Journal. She was a finalist for Canada's Top 25 Canadian Immigrants Award in 2011 and in 2012. Her poem "Still Life" was displayed on 700 buses in 13 cities across Canada for the Poetry In Transit project in 2013/2014. Anna performed on Parliament Hill, at Austin International Poetry Festival, Edmonton Poetry Festival and universities in China, USA and Bangladesh. She has designed and taught Poetry Alive at schools, colleges, libraries and online. In 2020, she started her own small press: [Sureway Press](#) to offer translation editing and publishing services. Her website: [annapoetry.com](#)

After many years of wandering,
I lost the red bean you gave to me.
Yet the warm breeze from the South
still entwines in my mind.

Reading these lines, one finds the English version of the poem as enjoyable and as suggestive as the original.

One last important thing to note is the wide range of style and subject matter embodied in the poems Anna has chosen for the collection. In other words, thanks to her eclectic taste, we have a new poetry book whose diversity offers us a rich and in-depth cross-cultural reading experience. Let's keep our ears as open as our minds to the new voices that are speaking in English and/or Chinese, the world's two most widely used languages today, in addition to what we hear in Dana Gioia's poem "Prayer":

Echo of the clocktower, footstep
in the alleyway, sweep
of the wind sifting the leaves.

钟塔的回声，
小巷的脚步声，
风筛树叶的扫拂声。

In short, Anna's Mirrors and Windows offers a highly important and intriguing read in both English and Chinese.

Anna Yin

2010 - 2020



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
OCTOBER 2021

COVER ARTWORK BY EMMA BARONE