

2010 - 2021



POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
VOLUME ONE DECEMBER 2021



TERRY MCDONAGH  
Twelve years of *Live Encounters*

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE





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Water lily, Luang Prabang, Laos, photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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

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

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  
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VOLUME ONE  
DECEMBER 2021

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

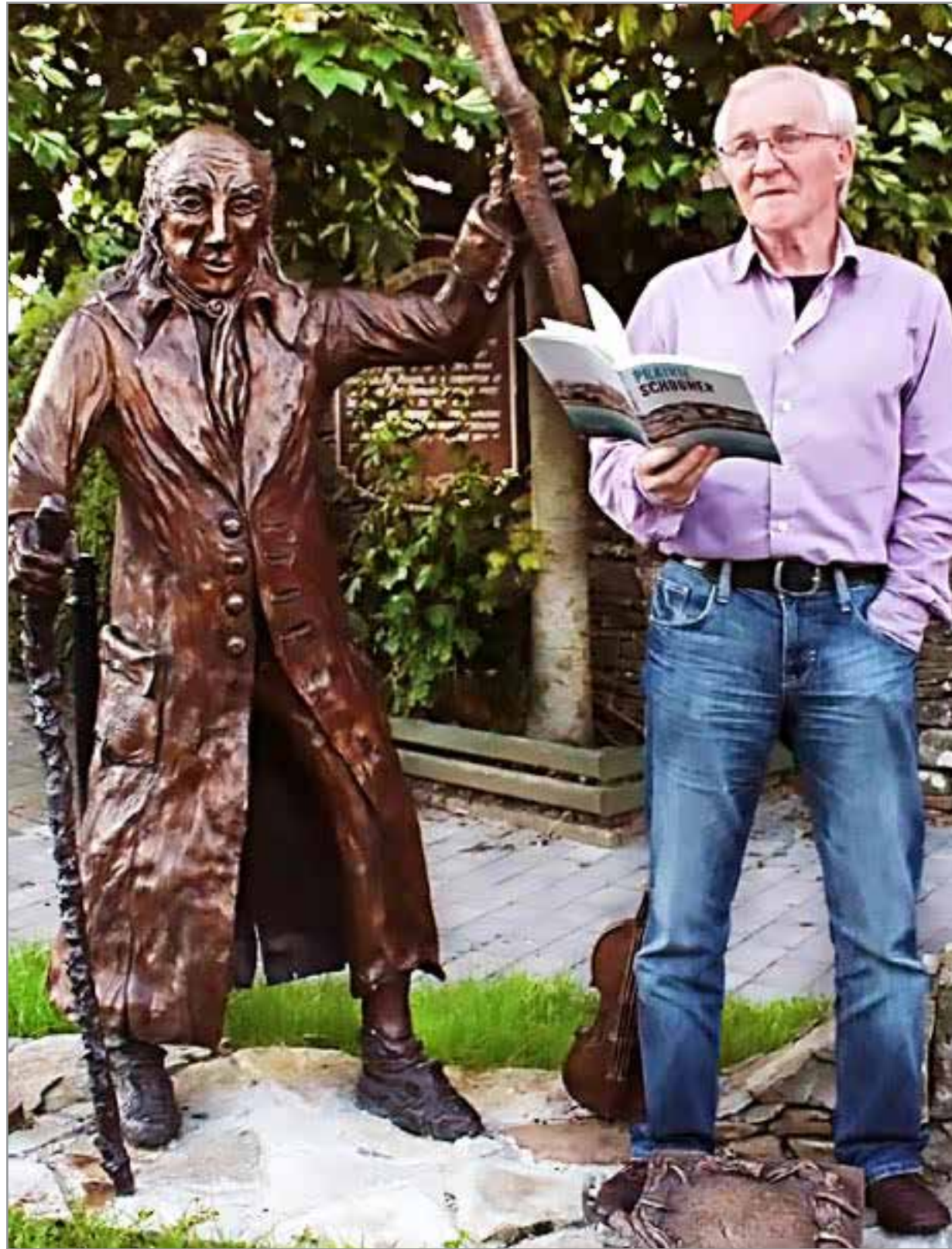
Terry is a founding contributor of Live Encounters Magazine.

## TERRY MCDONAGH TWELVE YEARS OF LIVE ENCOUNTERS

Twelve years of Live Encounters and all of the encounters have been colourful, uplifting and very much alive. Thanks to Editor, Mark Ulyseas. In Tintern Abbey, William Wordsworth talks of *five winters with the length of five long summers* – LE can boast of twelve winters with the length of twelve long summers. It has been summers of words blended into a colourful journal of experiences, poetry and short stories. In quiet moments I try to sense the mountains of loss, happiness, joy and despair suggested and expressed in and between all of those lines and rhymes.

And I often ask myself: *where does poetry come from?* I really don't know but I imagine it must begin somewhere in dreams and between the folds of dawn and dusk. T.S Eliot said poetry was a perfect arrangement of words and he might be right but I feel that poetry arranges its own words – it goes much deeper than a planned orchestration. Poetry, dreams and special moments are closely related. Most words on a page – unable to get at fundamental truths – hint and suggest while we, the readers, take what we can from all those promptings.

Poetry seems to come to the page in heightened moments and times of struggle, tragedy, success or happiness – when a child is born, a loved one dies, new love begins or a frayed one crumbles. It has to do with memory – with experiences long past, half-forgotten and buried in childhood and in our subconscious. It's as if we attempt to dig deep and paint our findings onto a page all dressed up in appropriate colour and costume.



Terry McDonagh reading next to the sculpture by Sally McKenna of the blind poet, Anthony Raftery (1779-1835,) in the town square, Kiltimagh, where Terry grew up.



And language is cultural. Just recently I had the pleasure of listening to a poem being recited in Japanese. The performer explained the context and gave us a short summary, first, but the real pleasure was in simply listening to the rhythm and music in language. I didn't understand a word – yet I felt inspired. It had to do with the language of the heart – a tango and ballet in sounds.

I lived in Germany for many years. At the beginning, trying to understand and communicate was not easy but it was an exciting experience for which I am grateful. After a time I began to hear differences in intonation, regional accents and expression – a bit like living in a poem that was trying to find its way on to a page. On one occasion in Munich, I was delighted when asked how I could possibly live in Hamburg – I had picked up some words and intonation, peculiar to my adopted city. That felt like a poem. I liked it even if I had to let my thoughts catch up. It wasn't just the words themselves but the silence between them that was the puzzle.

Here in the west of Ireland I talked to my neighbour about profit he had made on a few cattle he had sold the previous week. He wouldn't give much away. It was like trying to decipher a complex, barely accessible text – I had to listen between the lines. He hadn't lost money, of this I felt sure. He was smiling.

*Did you make a few quid?*

*Well now...*

*I'm sure you didn't lose?*

*Good cattle made their price.*

People use the words they use. Sometimes words use people. We celebrate, embellish and place words in an order that supports our argument or position. Language is spontaneous too. We enjoy watching reactions and listening to ourselves sifting and sorting as we work our way through our topic. *Well now*, speaks volumes. It's almost a poem steeped in the history of a region. Even when the listener takes it on walks and journeys, it can never be fully understood – therein lies the challenge and fun. In most cases a few well-placed words smooth, unite or annoy. Temperatures rise and cool. Villages and families celebrate or fight to procure possessions or gain the upper hand. Fellow hunters always try to cross borders and poach in foreign waters. The grass is greener and poems will come and come.

Malala Yousafzai said, *one child, one book and one pen can change the world*. She could well be right. These cannot change everything but the spoken and written word can awaken a sense of belonging in a cramped childhood. I will always remember working with a group of teenagers where one very disturbed teenager threw caution to the wind and put his wish into four lines:

*I wish my mum and dad  
and my sister and me  
could all be together in a house  
by the sea. That's my wish.*

When he had read it to the class, he seemed happier.

The opportunities afforded to writers by LE are special. It's one thing to write but another to find an outlet for your work. Not only does Mark Ulyseas publish work but he surrounds it with rich pictures that support and enhance the written pieces.

Twelve years and Live Encounters has remained vibrant and generous in its promotion of new and not-so-new writing. The number twelve is special...it leads us into a new year...a chance to be begin again.

Pablo Neruda, in his poem, 'Keeping Quiet' begins by saying:

*Now we will count to twelve  
and we will all be still.  
For once, on earth,  
let not talk in any language;  
let's stop for one moment  
and not move our arms so much.  
A moment like that would smell sweet...*

Live Encounters has reached its twelfth year.  
Congratulation and thank you to Mark Ulyseas.

*Published in the inaugural edition of Live Encounters January 2010.*

## A GYPSY WOMAN IN IRELAND

These days in Ireland, people talk  
about the price of sites,  
the cost of tribunals, property abroad,  
or foreigners...refugees:  
lazy people come for our riches,  
who won't work. They steal,  
eat raw from our fields,  
blacken our reputation and  
colour the skin of our children.

I am Sonia, a Gypsy woman  
who dreamed colours and grew up  
gathering berries in a village  
in Romania. I earned my way  
to university to become a doctor  
and the pride of my mother's heart.

My father never had a nation  
and died in Auschwitz.

I was arrested with a bundle  
of leaflets and when I had to flee  
to Ireland, I was sad:  
not to be a doctor,  
not to visit my mother's grave,  
to marry an Irishman.

I have never stolen. I am  
spring clean, stalk strong,  
proud and honest as

the memory of snails and owls  
in our desolate garden.

I fled when a sneering bullet  
ended my mother's life. She died  
at the mean will of our state; in  
our house; in my place.

Now, I can only shelter  
behind my husband's curtains  
in a childless fourth-floor flat  
before closing time in Dublin.

I still see my uncle  
blazing  
with his shining sickle  
in shirt sleeves.

My husband in Ireland  
you gave me my first passport  
and beat me daily:

These days in Ireland, people talk  
about the price of sites,  
the cost of tribunals, property abroad,  
or foreigners...refugees:  
lazy people come for our riches,  
who won't work. They steal,  
eat raw from our fields,  
blacken our reputation and  
colour the skin of our children.

*continued overleaf...*

## A GYPSY WOMAN IN IRELAND *...contd*

I am Sonia, a Gypsy woman  
who dreamed colours and grew up  
gathering berries in a village  
in Romania. I earned my way  
to university to become a doctor  
and the pride of my mother's heart.

My father never had a nation  
and died in Auschwitz.

I was arrested with a bundle  
of leaflets and when I had to flee  
to Ireland, I was sad:  
not to be a doctor,  
not to visit my mother's grave,  
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I have never stolen. I am  
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the memory of snails and owls  
in our desolate garden.

I fled when a sneering bullet  
ended my mother's life. She died  
at the mean will of our state; in  
our house; in my place.

Now, I can only shelter  
behind my husband's curtains  
in a childless fourth-floor flat  
before closing time in Dublin.

I still see my uncle  
blazing  
with his shining sickle  
in shirt sleeves.

My husband in Ireland  
you gave me my first passport  
and beat me daily:



Thomas McCarthy was born at Cappoquin, Co. Waterford in 1954 and educated locally and at University College Cork. He was an Honorary Fellow of the International Writing programme, University of Iowa in 1978/79. He has published *The First Convention* (1978), *The Sorrow Garden* (1981), *The Lost Province* (1996), *Merchant Prince* (2005) and *The Last Geraldine Officer* (2009) as well as a number of other collections. He has also published two novels and a memoir. He has won the Patrick Kavanagh Award, the Alice Hunt Bartlett Prize and the O'Shaughnessy Prize for Poetry as well as the Ireland Funds Annual Literary Award. He worked for many years at Cork City Libraries, retiring in 2014 to write fulltime. He was International Professor of English at Macalester College, Minnesota, in 1994/95. He is a former Editor of *Poetry Ireland Review* and *The Cork Review*. He has also conducted poetry workshops at Listowel Writers' Week, Molly Keane House, Arvon Foundation and Portlaoise Prison (Provisional IRA Wing). He is a member of Aosdana. His *Pandemonium* was published by Carcanet Press in 2016, and his latest collection, *Prophecy*, was published by Carcanet in April, 2019. Gallery Press, Ireland, will publish his journals, *Poetry, Memory and the Party*, in late 2021. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_McCarthy\\_\(poet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_McCarthy_(poet))



Thomas McCarthy

## THINGS ON MY DESK

This now slightly rancid coffee cup from months ago  
Has stood on a blue plastic box of faded 35mm slides

Since that early April evening I brought it here, coffee  
Still steaming and the cup itself vibrant with accrued  
Conversations from the city below. I forget which group

It was that gathered in the coffee-shop beneath the  
Wearily heavy railway bridge, but as the names fade

And that golden feeling of being in very good company  
Also dehydrates for want of practice, I take a look at

These slides from the blue box and think how time,  
That old projectionist, sends back the light to me that

My sense of isolation had dimmed so fatally. Images of  
People whose names I've now forgotten come between

Me and the low energy bulb swinging from the ceiling.  
I've disturbed something on my desk that didn't need

To be disturbed from among the paper-clips, fountain  
Pen ink cartridges, blank diary and unused bus tickets –

A coffee scent that has surfaced like ink through a need  
To disturb this melancholia, this year's settled idleness.



## ROOKS IN SEPTEMBER

On a day of late Autumn heat, of such hot oil

Clinging to the burned trees, an abrupt fury  
Of untidy feathers. With churning wings

Two rooks rise and fall,  
The leaden sycamore shivering in appeal –

So late in the year that rage seems pointless.  
Their bitter recriminations wake

The whole neighbourhood of feathers,  
Startling trees that were nearly asleep.

A blackbird veers to avoid the fuss  
And settles in a lower hawthorn bush –

Things that are smaller need the dead calm  
Of this late September evening, not the fuss

Of untidy wings, of April's wild ridiculousness.

## D.V.

Burdens that the poor seemed to carry were lighter somehow  
Between the will of God and the will of God. The hard rain  
That fell slantways across your frayed coat, the blue snow  
That made your delicate, girlish knuckles also blue; the pain  
Of not knowing and never knowing how the house might appear  
As you climbed the frightened, ungrateful tenement steps:  
Such things were how God ventured, such things were in the fear  
You felt for the lives of others and never your own life, except,  
It must be said, in the days leading to Christ's day of birth;  
Days when you thought, to the end of Advent, to a turning of the key,  
That something of Christ's peace might have landed on earth –  
On your own house specifically. Worried, you might say,  
Very quietly, "God willing, let's hope the mood is good inside.  
Let's hope his mood has changed again." But flesh and state  
Would be too weak to yield to our dreams; his crushing diatribes  
Awaited your cold, ashen face. My hand in yours, I lost my faith.

Angela Patten's publications include four poetry collections, *The Oriole & the Ovenbird* (Kelsay Books), *In Praise of Usefulness* (Wind Ridge Books), *Reliquaries* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland) and *Still Listening* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland), and a prose memoir, *High Tea at a Low Table: Stories From An Irish Childhood* (Wind Ridge Books). Her work has appeared in many literary journals such as *Calyx Journal*; *Nimrod International Journal*; *The Café Review*; *Crosswinds Poetry Journal* and *Poetry Ireland Review*; and in anthologies including *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*; *The White Page/An Bhileog Bhan: Twentieth-Century Irish Women Poets*; *Cudovista Usta (Marvellous Mouth)*, *Drustvo Apokalipsa (Slovenia)*; *The Breath of Parted Lips Volume II*; *Birchsong I and II: Poetry Centered in Vermont*; and *Roads Taken: Contemporary Vermont Poetry*. Born and raised in Dublin, Ireland, she now lives with her husband, poet Daniel Lusk, in Burlington, Vermont, where she is a Senior Lecturer Emerita at the University of Vermont.



## SUMMER SUNDAY IN SOUTH COUNTY DUBLIN

After weeks of steady rain  
the benediction of the sun  
prompts the world and his wife  
to strip to their skivvies  
round up the kids and head  
for the seaside to cook themselves  
red as beets, tender as sirloin.

Old women dig out ancient  
sundresses while old men  
roll their sleeves to the elbow  
and loosen their ties  
in deference to the heat.

Later parboiled redheads  
will stroll home draped in towels  
sated with heat, smelling  
of baby oil and salt, wet togs  
tucked under their oxters  
like Donnelly's Irish sausages  
taken home for their tea.

Angela Patten



## MONO LAKE, CALIFORNIA

A small grey lizard darts away  
perfectly dressed to disappear  
on the rocky surface. Osprey nests  
loll on top of ragged tufa towers.  
Alkali flies form a cloud on the water  
scatter when we wade among them.

In late summer the flies carpet  
the shoreline and California gulls  
run along the edges of the lake  
beaks open to gather in the glut  
like greedy children at a tea party.

No fish can live in this salty stew  
which reminds me of the fish we ate  
on meatless Fridays of my childhood  
when everybody spoke in code:

*Put down that yoke and hand me that gazebo.  
Now pet, say day-day to the gee-gee.  
Would you ever go out and get me the messages?  
You'll do it while a cat would be chewing a marble.*

And so I thought outlandish places  
such as Jericho and Timbuktu existed  
only in the stories of Scherezade  
and The Dead Sea was nowhere  
on a map but only in my dream  
of floating supine in its brine embrace  
suspended by the miracle of salt.

## WELLFLEET

*Fiddler crabs are so named because the male holds one claw, always much  
larger than the other, somewhat like a violin. Encyclopaedia Britannica*

In the distance a house on stilts  
all its balconies facing the water.

I imagine living there, encircled  
by the sea's perpetual music.

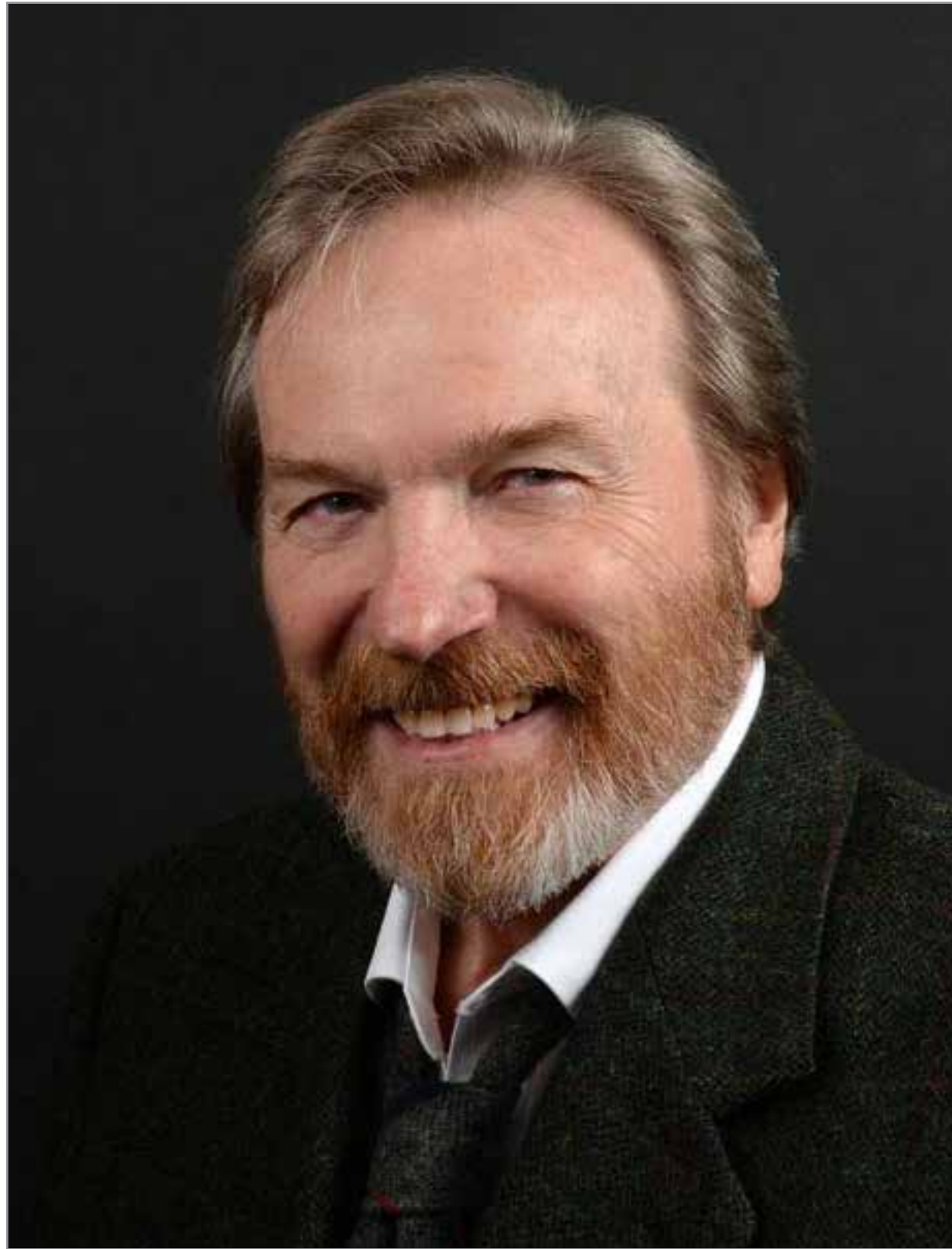
Long grass of salt marshes, tidal flats  
shallow pools thrumming.

Fiddler crabs appear and disappear  
diving and surfacing in an endless rhythm

roiling the sand as they sift and scavenge  
for nourishment, pausing only when

the males brandish their colossal claws  
to wave at their prospective mates

moving their instruments in unison  
like the string section of a surreal orchestra.



Daniel Lusk is author of six poetry collections and other books, among them *The Shower Scene from Hamlet*, *The Vermeer Suite*, and a memoir, *Girls I Never Married*. His work has appeared in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *North American Review*, *Poetry*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, *American Poetry Review*, *Markings* (Scotland), *Salamander*, *Nimrod International*, and many other journals. His genre-bending essay "Bomb" (*New Letters*) earned a Pushcart Prize in 2016. Well-known for his teaching, Daniel has been a Visiting Poet at The Frost Place (Franconia, NH), Eigse Carlow Arts Festival (Ireland), and Juniata College (Huntingdon, PA), and a Resident Fellow at Stranmillis University College-Queens (Belfast, N.I.), Yaddo (Saratoga Springs, N.Y.), and The MacDowell Colony (Peterborough, N.H.). He is a Senior Lecturer of English Emeritus at the University of Vermont.

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## NUDE IN A CATHEDRAL WINDOW

Next door, the grand barn window  
of a stained-glass studio. A figure lies naked  
on the broad sill inside, skin like terracotta.

Art students wipe charcoal dust  
from their hands and abandon their easels.

Refractions of sunlight cast a border  
round her window like prayer flags.  
The air perfumed with the scent  
of laneway Century trees.

In the geometry of summer lassitude  
an ensemble of musicians surrounds her,  
improvising harmonics and hues  
that resonate among her shadows and swells.

Later they may take off their shoes  
and approach her unafraid.

Over in Christ Church the choir singers  
have come to practice in the nave;  
the Quality of Mercy soars into the arches.

The psychoanalyst in her salon  
murmurs something about iconography  
and crosses her legs.

Who is the man outside the window  
on whom the girl reclining smiles?

This is the mad monk's inhabited letter  
in the Third Book of Djinn,  
where the poet interprets the dream.

Daniel Lusk. Photo credit Alison Redlich.



## KISS THE LION

— *Looking Glass Theatre, Chicago*

Houselights come up  
we clatter through the lobby  
buoyant, elated        wildness clinging to us  
like wool and whimsy and the crackle of laughter.

Our minds clutch remnants we liked best  
to recall over whiskey or when we sit alone.  
How she how they, the fireplace mirror an illusion  
how a ring a rope can mime a rabbit hole  
the giant queen her black mustache  
the Hare a-scamper down a row of chairs

and how in a golden age of skin  
after a naked swim an actress knelt  
beside the mirror of a neighbor's pool  
a glimpse a pause the ladder of her hem  
and I a useless pronoun    wanton  
gems of water on her secret hair.

Those pebbles later at her window so  
ca-co-pho-nous        she will she won't  
the white knight on a silver bicycle will  
crash and clattering to bits        a metaphor  
but then return astride his wheel a plethora  
of dear mistakes much like our own  
regrets gathered will-he nil-he in his arms.

A song next door, a peacock's cry or else  
the cat in pain reminds us  
of a laughing moon        the ladder of her hem  
and when she ate the rose        was it a fake  
a ladder to the balcony        and did we  
did he really fall?

Daydream 20 years and more the Hatter mad,  
the whiskey good again, that play, the pool  
*o puss, o purse o sighing hills.*  
*Wasn't there a lion?*

## DANIEL THE VEGETARIAN: BOOK THE SECOND

— “...and the king saw the hand” etc. Daniel 5:5

Not long after the cave incident, the King was back with another dream for me to puzzle out. He had forgiven me for the fried food remark, but I knew he had not forgotten. His aura was better, pale purple like my mother’s after prayer circle. Said the hand was there again, only this time writing in left-handed cursive, suggestive of a ransom note in Chaldean. Something about taking chamomile tea with paprika at bedtime. ‘Turmeric?’ I offered. Great with goat. Also good for curing insomnia. He grumbled something unfortunate about vegans I knew he had heard from Jay Leno. Likely why he thought to call on me again. I caught a whiff of lion breath. But what does it mean? He was obviously desperate. Now I understood the earlier cave episode: a pride goeth before a fall. Why is it nobody dreams of kohlrabi?



Yellow cockscomb with banana trees in the background. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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.



## SUNSET OF THE WINTER SOLSTICE

*Response to a painting by Pádraig Lynch*

Snowfall has almost stopped.  
 Sunset fills my mind with colours:  
 Tangerine, ochre, orange ... warm-blooded  
 Solstice sits like a bird's nest on fire  
 Its mystery holds our attention  
 Caught like a ball in the branch of a tree.  
                                 Umber tree trunks  
 Hold up the clouds. Winter snow binds us  
 In a trance. Smudge of scrubland in the distance,  
 A man and his dog wander into view  
 From somewhere. Sunset of winter solstice  
 Turns on its axle to face the surprise of spring.

Noel Monahan

## SEISREACH

Cuimhním m'athair ina chéachtair,  
Dhá chapail ag tarraingt  
Iarann céachta, is iarann rotha  
Ag triall go mall síos an chnoic,  
Is súile m'athair ghreamaithe  
Ar sceach gheal taobh thíos de  
Is an line díreach á choimeád aige  
I bpáirc seimre chapail, i gcónaí.

## A PAIR OF PLOUGH HORSES

I remember my father ploughing,  
Two horses pulling  
The iron plough and the iron wheel  
Moving slowly down the hill  
And my father's eyes glued  
To a white thorn bush below him  
And he forever keeping a straight line  
In the red clover field.



Anne McDonald is an Irish spoken word poet, dramatist and creative writing teacher whose work is centered on the challenges we face in a society that is changing rapidly and how we respond or react to those changes. Through her writing she explores themes of parenthood, aging, death, loss, inclusivity and response to the human condition. She is interested in the power of enabling people who would otherwise not be considered “writers” to find ways to give voice to their own experience. She has had work published in Women’s News, Hot Press, Electric Acorn, Woman’s Work Anthologies 1 & 2, The Blue Nib, The Strokestown anthology and online journals and reviewed and broadcast on RTE Radio. Anne has an M.Phil in Creative Writing. Her first collection of poetry “Crow’s Books” was published in 2020.



Anne McDonald

## TODAY

Today I walked the shore at Mornington  
in light that sparkled off the river.  
The same path beside the same house  
that my mother was born and reared in,  
one I walked many times as a child.

I pass the river I to learned to swim in,  
wearing my granny’s cotton bloomers.  
Touch the sand banks where we used to slide  
skutch grass on cardboard in a place  
we called the “Burrows”.

Walking now at low tide, I hear the curlew’s call,  
it, too, is the same as I remember.  
Tiny pebbles crunch beneath my feet,  
and the salt-sweet smell of seaweed  
carries on the wind across the river from Baltray.

Today I walk the memories of being eight years old  
and stabbing with a stick, silent stranded jelly fish,  
ignorant of the idea of causing pain.  
The horizon is as wide as I remember,  
in my youth I saw it as a blue-grey prison wall of water.

Today I walked where she walked.  
I falter as I picture her small hands picking sea shells.  
I see her waiting for the pilot boat to cross the bar,  
her older brother at the helm,  
her hero never far away and always coming home.

As I walked her path, in her shoes, I heard again the curlew calling.  
Today I really missed the child who became my mother.

## A VERY MAGIC MUSHROOM

We both saw it at the same time  
the bin man and I,  
sticking proud as you like  
out of my blue pot of pansies  
at the front door.

“I never saw that before”. I said.  
He winked and answered  
“I have tried every drug known to man,  
and I can tell you now Missis,  
I am three years clean today.  
There is no way I will be taking any  
of your magic mushrooms”.

A man delivering a plastic bin  
for me to put my junk in  
was young and fit and lean,  
keen to tell me life, for him,  
was not always like that.

“I threw my hat at it one day,  
moved away to a different town,  
got clear of the clowns who sold me gear,  
If I didn’t do that,  
I don’t mind telling you,  
I wouldn’t be hear now  
happily married with two kids.

You think it was the drugs that is the worst,  
but for me it was the drink.  
Anything I could get my hands on,  
and anything I could do to pay for it,  
I did.

I even hid the bottles in the  
Next door neighbour’s garden,  
little Baby Powers, you could slip  
one into your top pocket in the morning  
and you think no one will know.

But they had me well copped,  
the wife, the kids, the mother  
and the fella I owed money to.  
I moved away, got to fuck,  
clear of it all, got myself a job  
delivering bins in my own van  
I’m a new man.

And here is you,  
showing *me* a magic mushroom”.



## FISH & SHAMROCKS

I am from a long line of labour voters and men of the sea,  
fed on fish and cabbage grown in patches under nets  
to stop the caterpillars, and parsley picked in early morning  
for white-sauce on Sunday dinners.

I am from keepers of hens and pigs and greyhounds,  
walking dogs in winter's frost with children's hands  
wrapped tight in leather leads, the dogs too fast  
for my young legs, but too slow to win a race.

I am from paper chains strung from ceilings every Christmas  
and apple-dunking into ice cold water for Halloween,  
pious attempts to say the family rosary every spring  
that erupted into laughter on the red-tiled kitchen floor.

Knees creaking in confession boxes, making up sins  
that were bad enough to warrant a few Hail Marys,  
but not enough to warrant a whole decade of the rosary.  
I am from a Catholic family of immaculate conceptions.

A tribe that gives a name at birth then changes it  
to something unconnected. Cecila Maria Gorretti  
becomes Sandra, Margaret becomes Peggy.  
Robert changed to "Eamon" in homage to DeValera.

I am from the people who picked shamrock  
from the roadside with bone-handled knives in March  
before walking to the chapel and singing out-of-tune  
to the Saint Patrick who was apparently glorious.

I am from a field we carved a garden out of briars,  
inch by thorny inch, pock-marked with daisies in the summer  
laden with the smell of white-thorn and wild roses,  
winters smelling of turf and damp hedges.

Water cracked with ice in a pump that had to be drawn  
in early morning. No running water until the well  
that nearly killed our neighbor was dug and, without warning,  
gushed to fill the hand-dug hole, ladder barely hauling him out.

I am from roads that ribboned fields alive with rabbits.  
Wood pigeons taunted me like ghosts in early evening  
where crows held court in towering chestnuts.  
Spiked green coats peeled from fallen fruit

by tiny ink-stained hands, chestnuts counted out in games  
that had no real purpose other than the company  
of neighbours' kids in mucky clothes, who planned  
the world they would inhabit when they owned it.

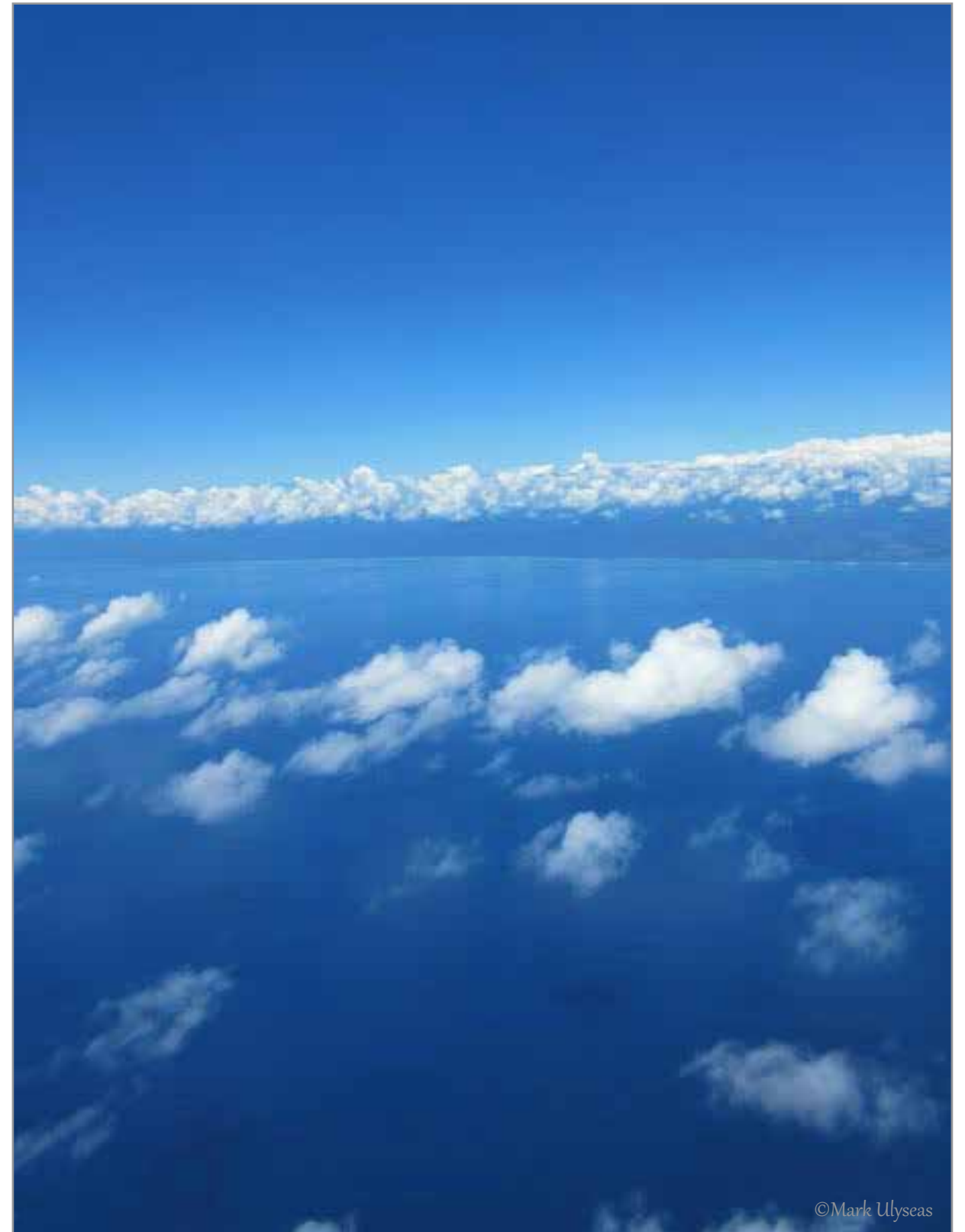
## THREE THOUSAND MILES

*For the poet Barbara Bald, New Hampshire, US.*

You track wild animals in the snow.  
I plant primroses in the sun.  
I struggle with the weight of being a mother.  
You struggle with the choice to remain childless.  
You craft words with care and practice.  
I throw words together on a page, and yet between us,  
we dig an age of ancient wisdom from wells  
hidden far below where bog lands or mountains  
hold them safe.

You find the perfect shaft of sunlight.  
I take the tail end of a rainbow.  
Together we burrow with words and rhyme,  
moving back and forth in time  
between walls of water.  
Crafting poems out of love, about love,  
made with love to celebrate all there is to love  
between two women of a certain age  
documenting life in the pandemic.

In this world of magic we sit separated  
by three thousand miles of water,  
poetry reducing it to nothing.



©Mark Ulyseas

Flying over the Indian Ocean. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Anton Floyd was born in Egypt, a Levantine mix of Irish, Maltese, English and French Lebanese. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin and University College, Cork. He has worked in the eastern Mediterranean and now lives in West Cork. Poems widely published in Ireland and internationally. A member of Irish Haiku Society, he is several times winner of International Haiku Competitions. A selection of haiku is included in *Between the Leaves*, an anthology of new haiku writing from Ireland edited by Anatoly Kudryavitsky (Arlen House, 2016). His first poetry collection, *Falling into Place* was published by Revival Press in 2018. He edited *Remembrance Suite*, a chapbook of sonnets by Shirin Sabri (Glóir, 2018) and an international anthology of poems, *Point by Point* (Glóir, 2018). He received the 2019 Literary Prize awarded by the Dazzling Spark Arts Foundation (University of Macau, China). A new collection, *Depositions* is forthcoming from Revival Press in 2021.



## LUX FLUENS - A TRIPTYCH

*for Cian born 23 January 2019*

### In Utero

I know every life is a mystery,  
a gift of the cosmos, precious  
and like the constellating stars  
must surrender to the laws  
and rhythmic symmetry of time.  
Your mother carried you folded  
in her body, the soul's homeland,  
an origami of cells, an embryo,  
an evolving amniotic secret,  
tuned to the timpani of pulses  
and the frequency of her voice.  
You are heir to all the ages  
a saint of negative capability  
sculpting an instinct for love.

Anton Floyd



LUX FLUENS - A TRIPTYCH *...contd*

*for Cian born 23 January 2019*

**Yellow Flares**

In April the field sloping from our house  
is filled with daffodils. Some days ago  
these moons and suns with springing hope  
shook free of earth their yellow flares.  
This was once your mother's childhood estate  
you too one day will chase your green thoughts  
here as they rise and fall like finches wings.  
For now, I hold a photo of you moulded  
in your mother's arms. She has rocked  
your fretful scansions into easeful sleep.  
I imagine the magic of your innocent dream  
like golden pollen floating in the silken air.  
It is caught by a planetary wind.  
It overhauls horizons, banishes winter days.

**Lux Fluens**

I pull down a branch whose first leaves  
grope for the sun. You reach for it too.  
There's no lie in that fire - the fluent energy  
that lux fluens in you. It identifies you as you.  
Certain as the tides, it drives the first image  
forming in your inner eye - vivid as blood  
vital as breath. It is there in you when you  
practice on the single sheet of the air  
your first few syllables, form the vowels  
and consonants of your mother tongue.  
It is a deed of greatness to braid sounds  
together. Primed from solitude, being  
grows towards eloquence, balances  
understanding with being understood.

Bernadette Gallagher lives in County Cork, Ireland. She writes under towering poplars that she planted thirty years ago. Her work has been published in: *Southword 41*, *Irish Examiner*, *Boyne Berries*, *ROPES*, *Stanzas*, in the US peace journal *DoveTales*, *In the Cinnamon Corners*, *Ó Bhéal Five Words*, *In Dappled Shade*, and in online journals including: *HeadStuff.org*, *Picaroon Poetry*, *Poethead*, *The Incubator*, *Live Encounters*, *Backstory*, *Other Terrain*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *The Galway Review*, *Pendemic*, *The Poetry Shed*, *Issue 1 Bealtaine*, and *Issue 4 Drawn to the Light Press*. She has an essay on Dorothea Herbert (1767-1829) in *Irish Women Poets Rediscovered: Readings in poetry from the eighteenth–twentieth century* edited by Maria Johnston and Conor Linnie published 2021 by [Cork University Press](#). A selection of her work has been recorded by the [University College Dublin Poetry Archive](#) and her poem 'Coming Home' has been added to [Words Lightly Spoken](#) podcast. [bernadettegallagher.blogspot.ie](http://bernadettegallagher.blogspot.ie)



## NOVEMBER SUNSET

Trees felled or fallen  
lie prostrate, overlooked  
by those still standing.

A sliver of sunlight  
picks out at random  
one tree then another.

All at once a ripple of wind,  
traffic noise, a bird, water  
dripping — so much to take in.

And I dare ask *what is it all about?*  
As I place one foot in front  
then another and turn homewards.

Bernadette Gallagher

## FLEDGLING

You lay there alone  
on the roadside  
your little body still warm

crushed by a car

you chose a sunny day to make  
your first and final flight.

## STONE WORDS

Each word a pebble — this poem a small stone  
in a dry wall, sitting unremarked for centuries  
until man or animal break it

apart, to make an opening to a field beyond  
or piece by piece build a house or mend a wall.

A stone fallen onto the road — I lift and put it back  
sitting beside a different neighbour and likely  
not its final resting place.

Larger rocks sit and challenge me to wonder how  
they came to be.



Betsy Mars practices poetry, photography, pet maintenance, and publishes an occasional anthology through Kingly Street Press which she founded in 2019. Her poetry has recently appeared in *One Art*, *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Muddy River Review*, and *Autumn Sky*, as well as numerous anthologies and journals. She is a Best of the Net nominee and her photos have been featured in various journals including *RATTLE* and *Spank the Carp*. Betsy is the author of *Alinea* (Picture Show Press) and co-author of *In the Muddle of the Night* with Alan Walowitz (Arroyo Seco Press).



## SCHOOL RESUMES

Something is different in the air. A door  
has creaked open on its squeaky hinge  
and children with their new lunchboxes  
and thermoses rush in,  
pasting roughly cut out birds  
onto jagged branches of rusty trees,  
thin tissue paper leaves fluttering to pile  
on the earth in my memory.

The warmth of summer retreats,  
gives way to flash cards and football,  
plastic totes and coat hooks  
labeled with heat-sealed names.  
Small chairs scrape Lysoled linoleum floors,  
students look shyly at classmates. And I look out

upon the empty street where my own children stumbled  
and our black Lab streaked after tennis balls,  
at the rail we added when my mother grew unsteady,  
and later when my father did as well.

Now I am the old one on the block,  
planting for butterflies and bees, laying seed,  
lighting the path for my own inescapable exit.

Betsy Mars. Photograph by Kat Naphas.

## IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Yet another dream where I am  
collecting shit everywhere,  
dropping out of me as I sat -

*where was my underwear?*

I tossed the small balls of dung  
into bins, the dishwasher,  
any dark place where I hoped

they wouldn't be noticed,  
as I hung on, played innocent,  
tried to pay attention to the others  
in the room, as best I could

while consumed with hiding  
the waste still coming, incessant.

## MY BROTHER SHARES A ZILLOW LINK

My brother shares a Zillow link  
for our parents' last home  
and I wander through,  
a virtual voyeur, landing  
in the foyer.

I tour the master suite  
where my mother died  
more than twenty years ago.

Now there's a different bed,  
a different fireplace molding—  
a staged scene, fire crackling—  
eating oxygen as it did that night,  
swallowing her last breathing.

Downstairs is the room  
where the extra crib stood.  
To get there, the stairs  
my children rode, sledding  
down on feathery pillows.

Upstairs the kitchen  
where they made cake out of air,  
carefully measuring and stirring—  
making their generous offerings.

In this place so much is buried—  
my mother's ash still nurturing  
the soil beneath the grapefruit tree.

Brian Kirk is a poet and writer from Dublin, Ireland. His first poetry collection *After The Fall* was published by Salmon Poetry in 2017. His poem "Birthday" won the Listowel Writers' Week Irish Poem of the Year at the An Post Irish Book Awards 2018. He was awarded a bursary from the Arts Council of Ireland in 2020 to write and film a sequence of formal poems on the Covid 19 pandemic. His short fiction chapbook *It's Not Me, It's You* won the Southword Fiction Chapbook competition and was published in 2019 by Southword Editions. He blogs at [www.briankirkwriter.com](http://www.briankirkwriter.com).



Brian Kirk

## REMEMBER

Remember London in an alcohol-fuelled daze,  
Saturdays spent falling in and out of pub doors,  
the endless cigarettes, deferrals and delays,  
detaching yourself from those you considered bores,

although you recognise that you were one of those  
who trod the same old ground each day, complaining  
that your romantic-seeming world offered dull prose  
when you expected poetry in everything.

Later you realised all cities were the same;  
noisy, lonely, empty, draining your life force.  
In London there were few who knew you by name  
and you were happy to be exiled from your source.

That was the point, to escape father and mother,  
to push yourself beyond the comfort of childhood,  
to be a man alone without sister, brother,  
friend or lover and not complain. You understood

that this was your life to be lived on your own terms,  
so you turned away from everything you cherished  
and set your face like flint, determined to bear arms  
against this new world – what of it if you perished

in the attempt? And you nearly did that first year.  
For months you only dreamed of going home again;  
no one could say you hadn't tried, but you drank your beer  
till there was nothing more, no pleasure and no pain,

beyond the night-time high and morning headache.  
Pretending you knew what you were doing every day,  
fixing your tie in the mirror while your hands shake,  
holding the handle on the tube while bodies sway



REMEMBER *...contd*

like seaweed on the tide. You sensed an emptiness  
inside you couldn't name and were afraid to own;  
it followed you around, was nothing more or less  
than your own self asleep inside you like a stone.

Your soul once danced in time to your potential,  
hugging the body in a symbiotic clinch,  
feeling the world and self as one, both essential  
to the other, eye to eye, so neither one would flinch,

but flinch you did and more than once. That time  
you stayed at home and drank alone for days  
avoiding the truth. This should have been your prime,  
but you were trying not to think, moving sideways

or not at all, blinded by the headlights of the endless  
London traffic, dazed by an unacknowledged fear of heights  
that left you clutching the bar counter, friendless,  
watching other people leading normal lives those nights

when you would not go home because you hated  
your own company. But you were alone in every crowd,  
with nothing on your mind beyond getting intoxicated  
enough to loosen your tongue so you could speak aloud

to another person without them sensing how inadequate  
you were in every way. You revelled in that high wire walk,  
to be drunk enough yet sober-seeming, cigarette  
smoke adding implication to your broken talk.

While all the time detesting how your true self failed to rise  
above the routine run of undemanding jobs  
that passed the days, allowed you to desensitise  
yourself to your own failings, but didn't quell the sobs

late into the night. Far too much cheap red wine, alone,  
mind racing, waiting for sleep to overtake your worries  
and delay the moment when another tedious day might start, postpone  
the ache of knowing that you weren't living right, a truth that scurries

along the edges of your vision like a rat the morning after.  
For months you suppressed all curiosity of mind with thoughtlessness,  
became a person of no humour whatsoever; laughter  
was as unknown to you as much as play or playfulness.

Just as cigarettes kill taste and alcohol desire, so were you stripped  
of appetite for life by a drug of your own making.  
You dared not take on any task, took comfort in the nondescript,  
applied yourself to nothing but the drudge of work, breaking

only to embrace self-pity, thinking of the lonely life you forced  
yourself to lead; took perverse consolation in the sorry figure  
you'd become as if you were a stoic, dignified by trial, coerced  
to spend his days and nights alone in silence, a bigger

person than the herd, apart, serene and wise.  
But you were none of these; a lonely boy who cried  
himself to sleep at night, who in the morning dried his eyes,  
put on a mask for the world beneath which he was terrified

that things would always be this way. How long life seemed  
back then, no sign of end to tedium, worry, solitude;  
the pain of waking up on winter mornings when you dreamed  
that you were happy, were somewhere else with someone who'd

loved you was the worst. Cruel subconscious that identified  
your weakest point and having done so determined to have sport,  
picking the thing you lacked the most, turning you inside  
out like an old coat, revealing the threadbare lining of your heart.

Colette is an award winning poet who resides in Galway in the West of Ireland. She writes in both Irish and English. She has fifteen publications which include a volume of short stories, *Ádh Mór*; as well as an academic study of the blind poet Anthony Raftery, an 18th century bard whose songs and poems are still recited and sung today. She has one volume of English poetry, *Sundial*, which was published by Arlen House Press. She also has two dual language collections of poetry by the same publisher; *Between Curses: Bainne Géar*, and *In Castlewood: An Ghaoth Aduaidh*. Her work is on the syllabus in Primary, Secondary and Third Level colleges. Colette's latest collection (bilingual) is titled *Bainne Géar: Sour Milk*, which is available in hardback and softback, published by Arlen House, 2016. : Colette is pursuing a PhD in the English department of NUI Galway; she also has a master's degree in modern Irish. Her newly published collection of Irish language poetry and art is entitled *Réabhlóideach* is published by Coiscéim, Dublin, 2020.



## BRAEFOOT

*For Ella and Lochhlann*

Sending Titans and their cousins to my Scottish niece  
besotted by Hogwarts,  
she lives in the Highlands, suitable backdrop for Wizards,  
a different alphabet fits with stone monuments –  
her father, a Pict, her brother, Viking –

born of the skin of longboat, ivory horn of Narwhal,  
she takes to the mountain tops, home of the gods,  
sickle in hand, wolf and bear are friends  
as Neptune washes ashore in the Firth of Lorn  
collecting horseshoes for his Steeds.

Colette Nic Aodha

## DOORWAY

Portal to otherworld these tombstones  
quartz glistens in the sun

(there was quartz left at the gate  
Of the old cemetery at Balvicar.)

Concentration of spirits  
Pour forth, possibilities of growth,  
quartz enhances creativity and inspiration,  
do not wonder at its scattered fragments.

pebbles  
flint knife  
arrowheads  
a cow tooth....

Look to the east...  
Look to the west...  
Look to the north....  
Look to the south....

mound stones  
chamber tombs....

A ceremonial avenue  
lined with tribute pots,

I look for the boar in the woods.

## TEMPLE

Temple Wood's stony floor  
ceremonial copse  
that reaches for sky,

ladder to Sungod,  
Moonqueen

watch the midwinter sun set  
over its southern aspect

full moon rises from opposite position  
concentric circles  
spirals  
recall ancient artisans,  
their Orkney and Irish cousins.

Sun disks, sun marks, sun seeds  
earliest man left flint arrowheads,  
stone scrapers,

and then ....

A beaker pot

Tooth of child

Is this ivory for decoration ?

babytooth stolen from beneath pillow?

Odd connections sweep through memories,  
kin with ancient monuments  
as custom continues, one hand to the next.



## SOMME

wounded and battle scarred  
 semi-reclined in chairs  
 mass of bloodied bandages,

some with crazed speech,  
 voices animated  
 soon turned tears  
 my heart breaks  
 for these young men,  
 my son amongst them

no amount of mother's milk or tears  
 can cleanse the memory of this morning  
 or festering wounds.....

no help forthcoming  
 eyes averted in distress or fear  
 looking away  
 medics move to the next body,  
 place Band-Aid in gaping wound,  
 nothing stanches the loss....  
 no surgeons – it is the weekend  
 pity the victims with no mother  
 to fight their corner

they slump in slumber  
 or remain wide eyed  
 as machines beep a cacophony of distress  
 much like the battle of one hundred  
 and five years ago  
 psychological trauma

drenched  
 is yet more flammable  
 hearts break.

## DILEMMA

I would write a poem for Kirsteen  
 If only I could remember her name

OK: think of “Fairytale of New York”  
 ...that's Kirsty.....  
 She has the complexion of a teen....  
 Definitely .....

Put the two together....  
 admire how she handles the Kubota,  
 steers the ferry,

*Go Mairifidh tú\** a Kirsteen!

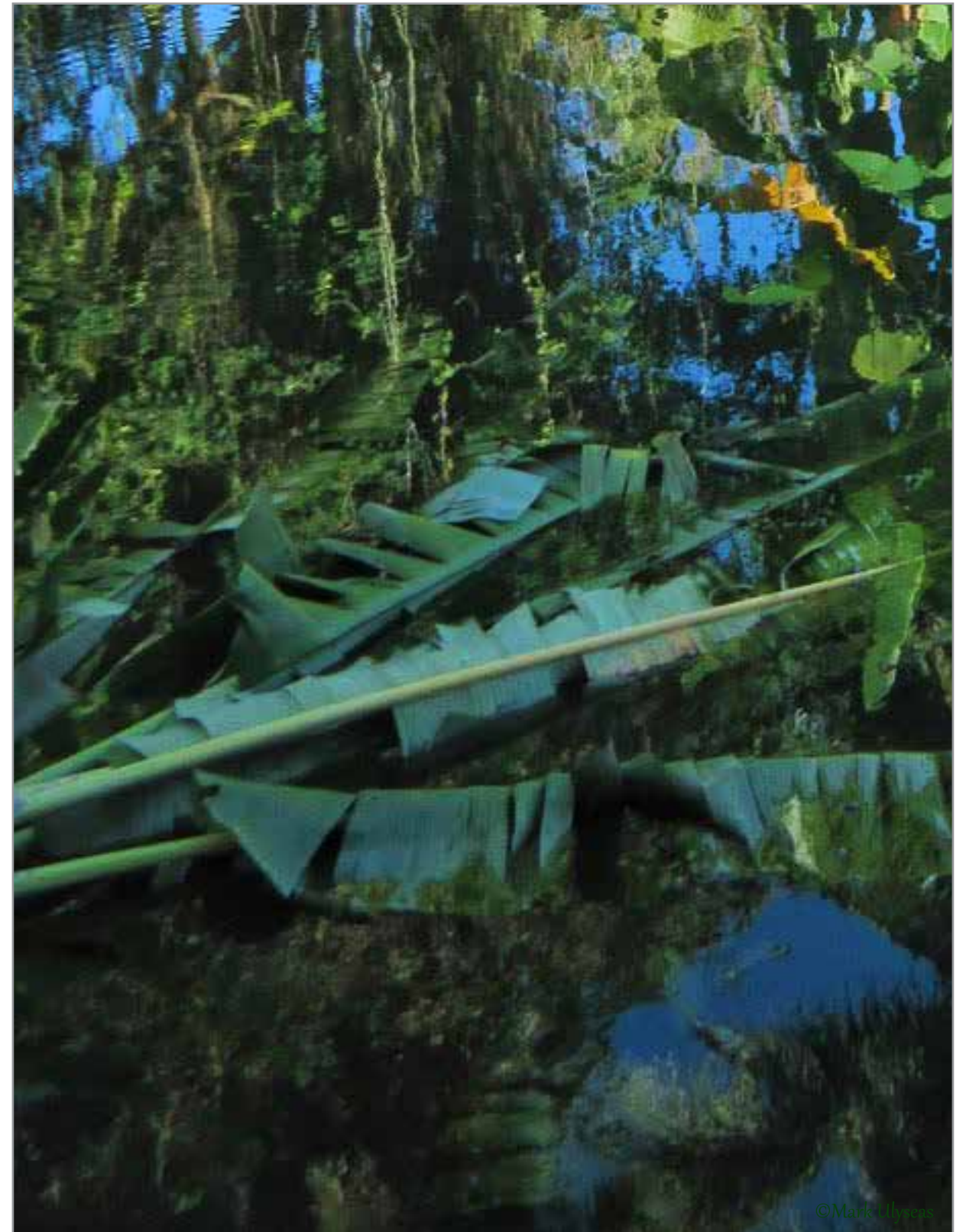
\*Long life to you!

## YELLOW HAG

comes between me and sleep  
bends bones low with her venom

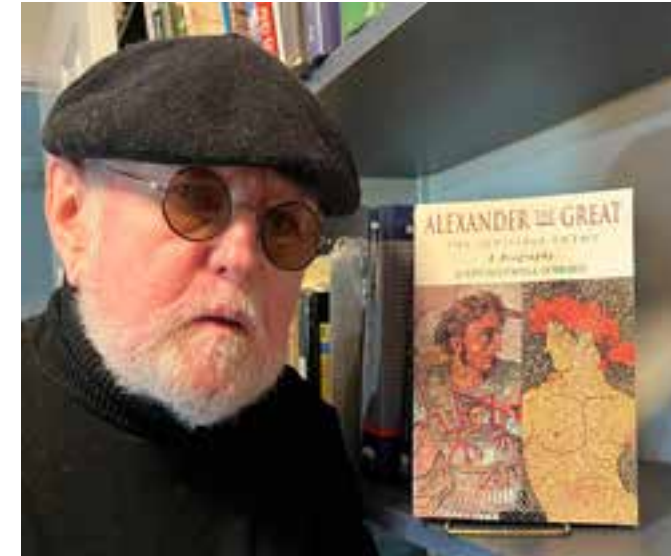
motionless, before her one eye...  
she is Balor's wife  
giving me the evils

stricken  
I fall.



Fallen banana tree in lake, which is reflecting the surrounding vegetation and evening sky.  
Photograph by Mark Ulyseas





John Maxwell O'Brien is an Emeritus Professor of History at Queens College (CUNY) and his best-selling biography *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy* has been translated in Greek and Italian. He has also published numerous poems and articles on Alexander as well the history of alcoholism, and a novel entitled *Aloysius the Great*.

He served as editor and historical advisor for the work represented here.

### *Extract from* **ALEXANDER THE GREAT** *A Lyrical Biography*

*Alexander the Great: A Lyrical Biography* (with illustrations) consists of an epic poem portraying Alexander's life written for people of all ages from the curious teenager to the venerable student of life.

The poem is accompanied by classical and contemporary illustrations of Alexander, his family, and significant events in the Macedonian conqueror's career.

It is designed to stimulate your appetite for more information about Alexander.

It will be published by Marquette Books on July 20th 2022, his 2,377th birthday.

Christine O'Brien holds an Honors degree in Classical Civilization from Boston College and has just embarked on her literary career. The stanzas below are taken from a poem which is her creation.





The Birth of Alexander from a 15th century miniature in the Musée de Petit Palais.

*Extract from*  
**ALEXANDER THE GREAT**  
*A Lyrical Biography*

Twenty days into July  
 Three fifty-six BC  
 A boy of royal blood was birthed  
 Unto history

\*

His father's name was Philip  
 Reigning King of Macedon  
 His mother was Olympias  
 And he her only son

\*

The seers prophesied this child  
 To be a great commander  
 Superlatives were always used  
 Describing Alexander

\*

Less than average height he stood  
 One brown eye the other blue  
 But all that was foreseen for him  
 Was destined to ring true

\*

In our histories we have  
 But fifty who are "Great"  
 And being first amongst this list  
 Was Alexander's fate





Alexander Mosaic (detail), House of the Faun, Pompeii, circa 100 BC.  
Credit: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexander\\_the\\_Great\\_mosaic.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexander_the_Great_mosaic.jpg)

*Extract from*  
**ALEXANDER THE GREAT**  
*A Lyrical Biography ...contd*

And so I beckon to my Muse  
Please whisper in my ear  
A melic tale of peerlessness  
I've yearned so long to hear

\*

His life was filled with struggle  
Almost from the very start  
His parents ever colorful  
Were culpable in part

\*

More blessed with name and privilege  
Than any child could be  
He felt the pressures early on  
Of meritocracy

\*

His mother was a brilliant soul  
Who came from royalty  
Bringing him his greatest gift  
Eternal loyalty

\*

Tough as any man  
Walking on this earth  
Olympias was his sentinel  
From the moment of his birth





Olympias and Alexander drawn by the contemporary artist Doug Jamieson.  
©Doug Jamieson.

*Extract from*  
**ALEXANDER THE GREAT**  
*A Lyrical Biography ...contd*

A devotee of Bacchus  
She entwined herself with snakes  
Enough to ward off enemies  
For both of their sakes

\*

Descended from Achilles  
Greatest hero of the Greeks  
Expecting no less of her son  
In laurels that he seeks

\*

When he left for Asia  
She said without demur  
Be worthy of divine heritage  
About which you can be sure

\*

His father was a warrior  
And thus not often home  
All across his conquered lands  
The king would often roam

\*

Philip's plan was first to quell  
The Greeks and those up north  
Reluctantly most states succumbed  
An Hellenic League sprung forth





Philip II and Alexander drawn by the contemporary artist Doug Jamieson.  
©Doug Jamieson.

*Extract from*  
**ALEXANDER THE GREAT**  
*A Lyrical Biography ...contd*

This league was just a power tool  
To keep the Greeks at bay  
With everything at home secured  
He'd need no longer stay

\*

For Philip had a glorious dream  
To conquer Asia Minor  
Greece was a sweet victory  
But Asia even finer

\*

Little Alexander knew  
The victories of his dad  
But Philip's countless triumphs  
Rarely made him glad

\*

If all Alexander wanted  
Was the power without merit  
All he'd have to do is wait  
And soon he would inherit

\*

But this was just the problem  
In Alexander's eyes  
To him a soul without a dream  
Inevitably dies

Most recent of David Graham's seven poetry collections is *The Honey of Earth* (Terrapin Books, 2019). He also co-edited *Local News: Poetry About Small Towns* (with Tom Montag) and *After Confession: Poetry as Autobiography* (with Kate Sontag). His poetry has been featured on Poetry Daily, The Writers Almanac, and in many journals and anthologies. He retired from college teaching in 2016, and now serves as contributing editor for *Verse-Virtual* (<http://www.verse-virtual.org>), where he also writes a column, "Poetic License," on poets and poetics. He lives in Glens Falls, New York.



## NEXT TIME YOU SEE HER

After a death come the ordinary shocks—  
thinking you glimpse her at a crosswalk  
as you sit with your foot on the brake  
till the car behind starts honking. Or  
in your dream she's opening a door,  
starting to speak but you can't quite  
make it out, then abruptly you're awake,  
your heart gradually slowing down.

That daylong heaviness, like walking  
into a stiff wind, even as you write  
your usual emails, lift the dog's leash  
from its old hook, and chuckle  
over some blooper of a headline  
—*Good News About Death!*—  
that you really must remember  
to tell her next time you see her.

David Graham



## ELEGY

*As the last egg in the carton,  
I should tell you about the others*  
—Jackie Craven

I'm the last egg in this carton,  
little dab of wine in the bottom  
of the glass you can't drink,

single patch of snow left  
in April, sooty and hard as stone  
in the garage's penumbra.

I am the lone sock in the dryer,  
the dip in the road that hoards  
rainwater, final phone call

that neither of us knew  
would be the last, and now  
only I am left to know it.

One more page before sleep  
arrives, phone that rings once,  
last scoop of chocolate ice cream

long since crystallized and forgotten  
behind some ice trays and three  
bags of frozen peas and corn.

I'm throwing the ice cream out  
while remembering the night we  
shared it, just the two of us,

never glancing at the clock, not  
checking our email, saying things  
we could not say to anyone else.

I could tell the others about you,  
but won't. It would be like  
explaining a joke. You understand.



## CROW BEETHOVEN

Hawks and swallows, hummingbirds  
feint and loop, carve the air like thought

made visible, and the spirit yearns  
and rises in harmony, but I rather like

the ragged-ass crows toiling hard  
as they struggle to harry and curse

the magisterial eagle, pestering it  
into departing their patch of woods,

squawking in pissed-off joy  
as the Buddhist raptor merely tilts

its broad wings in an updraft,  
then rises out of reach forever. Eagles

are Mozart, angels lifted in sunlight  
by the hand of God. Crows, God

bless them, are Beethoven, red-faced  
and sweaty, pounding their hard way

to heaven note by heavy, dying note.

## BACKLIT

*in memoriam J.C.P.*

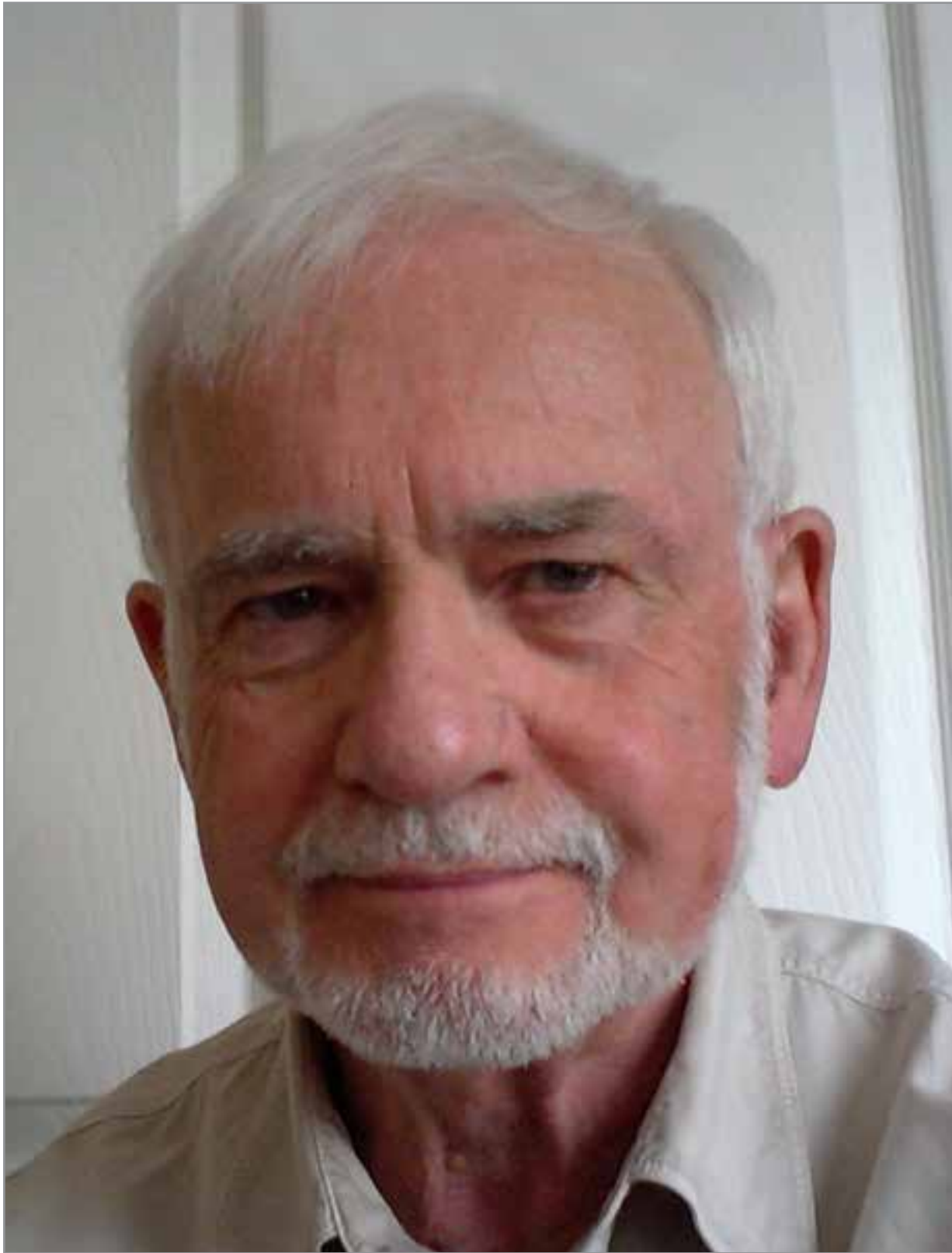
These memories backlit with dread:  
my dead student  
I see dimly—tilt of his head,

pondering, one hand brushing back  
his hair, or how he strode  
purposefully across my path

ignoring my casual wave.  
I'll never know  
if he saw me, that final day,

as an already-filed memory,  
or just part of a world  
he would prefer not to see.

Eamonn Lynskey is a poet and essayist whose work has appeared in many magazines and journals. His fourth poetry collection, 'Material Support', will be published by Salmon Poetry in early 2022. [www.eamonnlynkey.com](http://www.eamonnlynkey.com)



## AZULEJOS

Old men chat together in the shade  
and smoke and sip their beers and watch the tourists  
brave the heat to photograph these tiles  
designed to baulk the savage midday sun.

Rectangles frame triangles, interlock  
with squares, repeat themselves in patterns  
devoid of human figure or divine,  
as laid down strictly in the Prophet's laws –

until by force arms Queen Isabel  
declared her Christian kingdoms purified  
and Blessed Virgin Marys, Lambs of God  
and other of the re-established Faith

appeared above the doors and lintels. But  
the *Azulejos* held their place, survived –  
the useful always will survive – to lend  
the heavenly some material support.

Eamonn Lynskey

## NAZCA

*I will never need to venture  
past the Pillars of Hercules*

Three storeys high, another world  
hoves into view: birds' nests reveal  
tight architectures, vagrant weeds  
inhabit corners, playing fields  
display white geometric lines  
and ventilator shafts converge.

*No daring voyage beyond the rim  
will take me to more curious regions*

Seen from here, a wondrous realm  
of flat roofs trapping rainwater  
and mirroring the infinite—  
a world as strange and unfamiliar  
as the windswept plains of Mars,  
or valleys under Venusian cloud.

*I never linger on this stairwell  
but, transfixed, recall again*

the Pampas de Jumana carved  
with giant figures: hummingbirds  
and snakes, invisible from below –  
a landscape Sir John Mandeville  
might have described. And runways laid,  
it's said, to welcome back the Gods.



Fungi growing from a crack in a wooden bench. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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.



## A WEAVING EYE

Midlands' landscape was, still is,  
flat - a place  
- they say - once housed textile workers.

Hard to believe this world round. No linen mill  
found. Napoleon and his wars put paid to that.  
Only cotton. Miles outside the town,  
white-washes summer bog lands.

My maiden name is *Cordial* – it's well known  
Huguenots settled in the midlands long ago,  
brought linen and lace though what I've learned  
came from vestments starched by nuns for altars.  
Or seen in creases, knife-edged,  
worn by a woman like Jackie Kennedy,

her gaze hidden behind dark glasses.

Sometimes I made rope or twine, useful things.  
Flour bags too transformed to sheets for beds,  
Manufacturers' names stamped in red –  
bleached to eerie brightness.  
The better off lay linen squares over pillows  
–for appearance sake. Grandeur  
stretched full length its narrow width.

Truth is stranger than fiction  
flax far stronger than cotton;

Ancient Egyptians bound their dead in *Woven Moonlight*,  
through centuries  
luminous.

Eileen Casey

## CONFINED

We gather mirrors like candles in a power cut  
so images double and quadruple, just  
like the old days; a full house. You pouring  
crimson into crystal. Me fussing with gravy.

Flesh and blood gestures trapped  
behind cold surfaces seem more real.  
Us but not us. The same yet not the same.

But this isn't Versailles. No courtiers  
in the long hall to fawn over pompadours  
however high. Bejewelled costumes.

Or a fairground from our past, reflections  
larger than life distortions.

How long this isolation lasts who can tell  
unlike tins and packages stored by shelf  
life date, what's least likely to go off.

Who knows how long this glass will hold  
before isolation sledges into slivers  
optical illusions, piercing truths.

## SMOKE

Outside my hotel there's a chimney in the middle of the road.  
All day it spouts ribbons of smoke from the subway;  
tensions released in a white gasp.  
I take a photograph, halt the ghostly spiral amid  
bustling downtown New York.  
At the subway, I descend the warren of entrances and exits  
Leading to unbearable heat. Prized by wintering homeless.  
Trains roar up to the platform, departing  
uptown, downtown, anywhere you want town.  
I pass a living, breathing memorial. Young men,  
limbs entwined in sleep, faces beautiful  
as Michael Angelo's *David*. Despite weather  
tangled hair. Empty bottles nearby.  
Later, that stilled jet of smoke brings memory.  
First people in a new world. Tribes ago,  
sending signals skyward.  
And cool summer linen. For sleepers lost  
In troubled slumber.



Elsa Korneti was born in Munich, Germany, but grew up in Thessaloniki, Greece and still lives there. Her career has been similarly diverse: studied finance, a journalist; she has published essays, book reviews, translations, short stories, and eight books of poetry. Two poetry collections of her, *A Bouquet of Fishbones* and *The Tin Pearl*, were nominated for the Greek National Poetry Award, and a third, *Regular People with a Plume and a Brindled Tail*, received the George Karter Award from the literary magazine *Porphyras*. Part of her work among 15 books of poetry, essays, fiction has been translated and published in foreign anthologies and literary magazines in ten European languages and in Chinese.

*Poems translated by Patricia Felisa Barbeito* (PhD, Comparative Literature, Harvard University). She is Professor of American Literatures. Currently, her research focuses on African-American literature and culture of 1940s-1960s. Based on this research, she is working on a book about African-American author Chester Himes titled, *One Jump Ahead of Disaster: The Politics of Race, Interracial Sex, and Literary Style in Chester Himes's Writing*. She is also a translator of contemporary Greek fiction and poetry. Her translations include *Their Smell Makes Me Want to Cry* by Menis Koumandareas (co-translated with Vangelis Calotychos; Birmingham University Press, 2004), and, most recently, Elias Maglinis's *The Interrogation* (Birmingham University Press, 2013) for which she was awarded the 2013 MGSA Constantinides Memorial Translation Prize.

## ARGIOPE

*Art is reality; a work of art is a language –  
art is a way of recognizing oneself*  
Louise Bourgeois

There is no possibility for return, cancellation, erasure, a new beginning.  
The course has been set. It's all systems go. The past sinks into an  
abyss. Statues are not carved to domesticate wild beasts.

Louise Bourgeois, who could make skeletons and rows of teeth dance,  
first enshrined the family phallus, then tamed the spiders, rocking the  
final Argiope in a silken cradle.

Once, eternity bent over her in the guise of affection to give her this  
advice:

*The fastest route between two points is a straight line*  
And she answered, cocking her eyebrow to the sky:  
*No, thank you. I prefer the twists and turns.*



Elsa Korneti

## DOLL HOUSE

When you were just a young 'un  
you played hide and seek with dolls for fun  
and that's how one fine day  
you ran off and hid away  
somewhere where you left no trail  
Then, locked in a lilliputian jail  
you found yourself by accident  
By accident the cat swallowed the key  
By accident no-one noticed your truancy

And by accident one day you grew  
Your arms hung out of the windows  
Your legs out of the door  
Your head poked out of the chimney flue.

And your doll house prison break  
by mistake was believed to be  
a mutiny.

## ALL OUT OF LOVE

Do you hear it?  
We're out of tune again tonight.  
Teetering on a loose guitar string  
we grind our teeth  
a discord of loveless glances.  
Remember?  
Once you used to treat me to a fairytale lightness,  
spying under the Earth's unbuttoned shirt  
we'd touch each other with electric fingers.  
Now:  
You are an armchair of stolid movements,  
I, a chandelier with moribund flickering light.  
Shedding a love threadbare  
that used to be like a temple, made up and trimmed in gold.  
Do you feel it?  
So stiff tonight again  
and another evening puts out its cigarette  
in our aching joints.  
Our bodies embrace an emptiness  
With no spark  
No flare of spontaneity.

Only the chatter of the voluble mosquito  
The piercing drone of jackhammer mouths  
The tyranny of white noise, you see.



Elva Robins lives and works in Dublin. She has a Degree in English from Trinity College Dublin. This year she has had poems in Skylight47 and the Honest Ulsterman.



## ALMOST

Sails billow back drawing strength  
to return with a rigid force,  
repeatedly I'm assaulted by the stunning  
blow of the boom as it swings in the storm.

I grasp the mainstay, my grip loosens.  
By morning we have disintegrated  
to broken selves; directionless the prow  
bobs in a calm sea. Our hull is sunk.

For months I am almost motionless,  
then I move where reflection pools.  
I stand by these long, wide places  
hearing only the quiet sip of canvas.

Elva Robins

## THE PILLOW TALK OF AILILL AND MAEVE

*after the old Irish Legend*

The castle was night quiet, drapes billowed  
at the ope. We rested against a bank  
of pillows when Ailill remarked on my  
good fortune to have met him. Enough  
to make any woman get out of bed  
to feel the ground under her feet...

*No one can afford constant raids and losses.*

*You know your lands were run down.*

Injury assembled, he insulted my army.  
Approaching rage tide, I overpowered  
his comment by listing my mercenaries,  
counting the men from our province,  
and abroad. Ailill's face endured.

*How sought in marriage I was!*

*Well then, why didn't you pick them?*

I retreated to his heart as darkness  
curls into a crescent moon, I thought  
of my conversation with the worm;  
how Ailill strode ahead in battle; his generous  
spirit (unlike those, who's beaded eyes  
intuited each dark coin)

*Let me take your hand Ailill*

When he looked like he might speak,  
Injury re-assembled, blooming red.

*How fortunate you are!*

*You gained the finest chariot,*

*The breath of your face in red gold*

*The weight of your left arm in white bronze*

His retort: his possessions eclipsed the land!  
I had servants fetch the wooden cups,  
and the iron vessels, for us to compare,  
our bracelets and thumb rings, traipse  
off for our gowns; purple, the yellow.  
Our flocks of sheep were herded to the lawn.  
All alike, as were the horses and swine.

In Ailill's cattle herd, stood Finnbennach:  
the special bull, a calf to my cow.

*He does not wish to belong to a woman,*

*he has taken his place in my herd*

Peace in the castle at night, the cool  
draft, distant now. I was weary  
however I will not be inferior in anything,  
for then I am owned.

*Get the bull – Donn Cuailnge*

## FOREST

Pillows of moss hillocks, abundance of leaping green,  
not the sleeping green of spruce sustaining  
a circle round me, branches resting on each other like hands  
and the curved backs of the ferns moving to

light delivered by a sky of papered leaves  
around this sink hole of dripping weeds and earth juice  
Listen, a fungus speaks of under-ground,  
Here a cache of acorns: future-proof for squirrels and jays.

## SHORE

Moss green and mustard lichen  
rock pools that flicker and shudder  
with shrimp. Hard runnels of sand  
an audience of neat knees.  
A tangle of plump plant,  
interrupted with orange star.  
Fish skulls edged with fine rows  
of needlepoint. Blanched sea holly,  
silver grasses papered with pinks.  
Frayed turquoise ropes, peach  
punctured buoys. Great antlers  
of drift wood the colour of ash,  
decorate the shoreline.



Fotoula Reynolds is a writer of poetry, born in Australia of Greek heritage. She lives in the Dandenong Ranges in southern Australia. She convenes a poetry reading group in her local community and regularly attends and participates in spoken word events in and around the city of Melbourne. She is the author of three poetry collections and is published widely in anthologies, journals, reviews and magazines. Fotoula is a 2019 Pushcart Prize nominee.



Fotoula Reynolds

## HOLD THE DAY

Mulled wine  
Waratah red  
Lipstick on rim  
Glass gathers dust

Cracked window ledge  
Flowers air dry  
Nail set in stone  
Apron hangs threadbare

Yellowed photograph  
Travels back in time  
Childhood faces fade  
Flakes to a white nothing

Gatekeeper in the hedgerow  
Kites bullied by the wind  
Boy sings to a bird  
Woman in blue does not look

Fifteen storeys high  
Brass numbers on door  
Key breaks in lock  
Chain of helplessness

Man of many colours  
Songs on railway track  
Thin line of bluebells  
No life on platform one

Gardener prunes cherry trees  
Iron gate, red brick surrounds  
Cat sleeps on warm headstone  
Guided tours available

## TREES ON BOTH SIDES

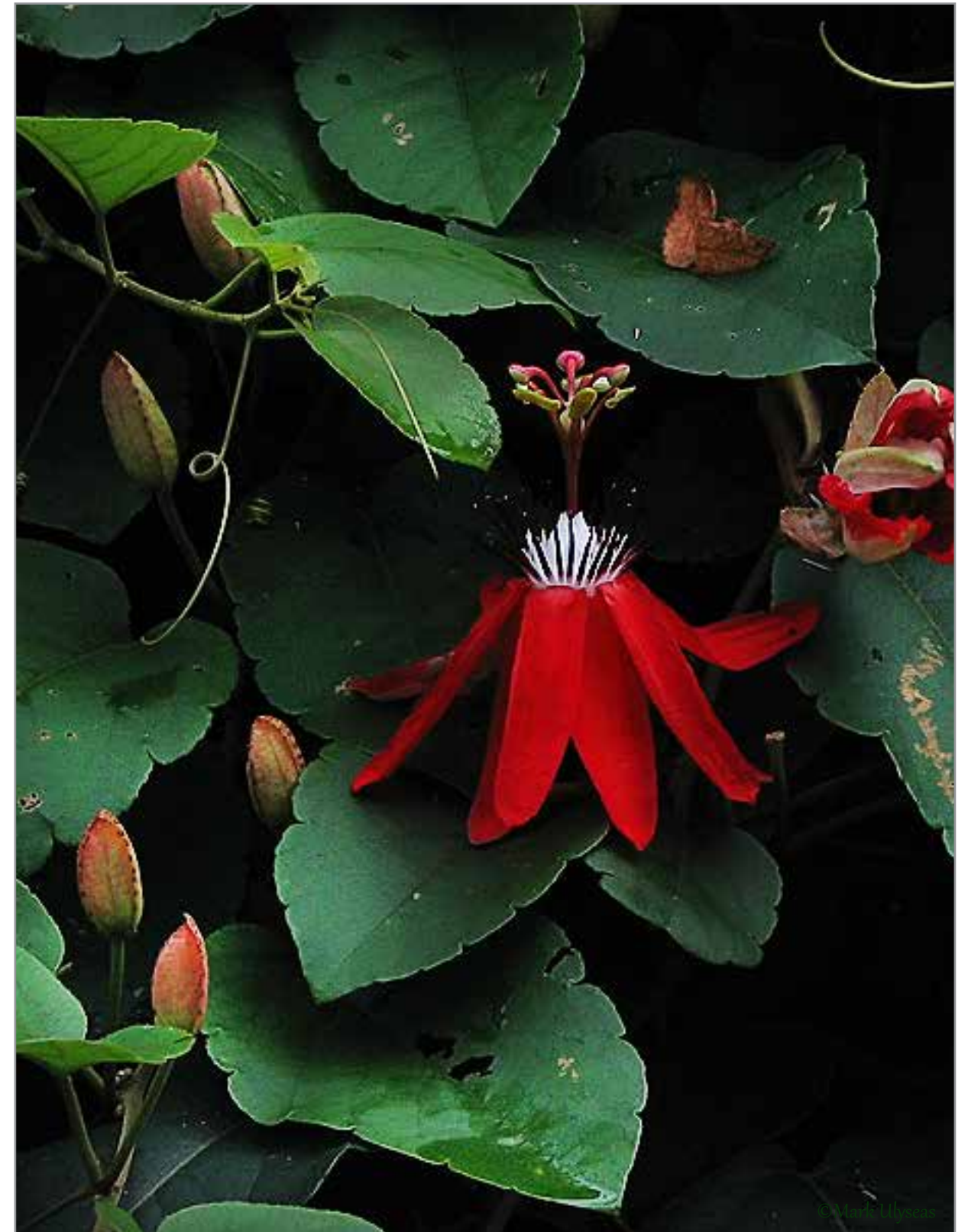
On the road where  
My childhood  
Dared to dream  
I learned to count  
By two's  
English first then Greek

Rain drops tap danced on  
Glinting tin roofs  
They were a standout  
In an avenue of music  
Looking up, I'm sure  
I got a peek at heaven

Spring and summer  
Smelt the same  
Catching the tingling  
Sunlight between us  
I came and went  
And you stayed

Upright and still  
They held one entire street  
I never knew its name  
I skipped with the  
White butterflies  
My arms outstretched

I heard the trees  
On both sides talk  
In whispering tones  
All I could do was  
Hold that moment forever



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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. He lives in Galway, Ireland.



Fred Johnston

## BONE

"What is happening right now is happening always."  
Octavio Paz: Telling and Singing

There's another one gone -  
How well the oily clichés run  
At our age it's a given that the shadow by the door  
Is a hag pointing a bone  
We pointed a few in our day too, remember?  
Rowdy, raunchy heroes were we  
We got away with things.

Is that the best that can be said  
Of this one, too?  
Is there more? They die younger each day these days  
They're not getting away with much.  
Is longevity down to luck, like strokes and tumours?  
Perhaps our bawdy girls of beery memory all have arthritis  
Or like Amazons, conceded a peachy breast

For a month he fobbed off the hot pain  
It started innocently enough  
Then his eyes turned a funny colour, the whites of them  
Yellowed, and that was that.  
Doesn't do to play around with your chances  
We're none of us young bucks  
We've lost what we knew of decent language

And ancient formulae rush the brain  
Say this, nod at that  
Get by. Tell lies. Make it up as you go.  
You buried your mouth in all that was holy of her  
The young wouldn't believe what you'd get up to  
Now even her house is demolished -  
Never mind. All in the same boat now.



## VIEWER DISCRETION ADVISED

I spent an afternoon watching a YouTube video  
 Of two commercial aircraft crashing into one another  
 Tragic, frightening, not for the timid -  
 I learned that primary radar is not enough  
 That secondary radar would have displayed  
 Aircraft altitude as well as position  
 That installing TCAS (Traffic Collision Avoidance System)  
 Arguably would have prevented the calamity  
 And that faulty flight-deck communications don't help.

Look – it's not just a question of who files the  
 Flight plan, or hauls out the garbage, or makes the bed:  
 So many variables, often we fly blind  
 Some vital instrumentation frizzles, wires get crossed  
 A crack across the cockpit window, a fall in pressure  
 It's impossible to keep track without a check-list  
 How near is too near, all the rest of it –  
 We're trying tricky manoeuvres at the best of times  
 We're a video labelled *Viewer Discretion Advised*.

## IN MEMORIAM, A TABLE

So now you've your legs in the air  
 In the grasses of a damp back yard -  
 Not much dignity there, old table  
 And the rain has glamourised them like spray-on tan

High days had you polished as a debutante  
 The odd washable spill was unavoidable  
 The tickle of the fingertip tripping on your grain  
 The caressing cloth wiping you down

You're folding into the fuck-you earth  
 From my window you're a spectacle  
 Those well-turned shins and ankles starting to streak  
 You're like a sad ballad sung to a drunk

Not what you were, no, when the playing-cards  
 Breathed heavy in the wee hours  
 Before the cigarette-burns, infuriating age spots  
 And an infant sadist knifed in his initials for good measure

I suppose that sadist was me -  
 You were ill-used, when I come to think of it  
 Taken for granted, part of the furniture; now  
 Crudely up-ended, left standing on your head.

## WHILE

While we were sleeping, a strange thing:  
The world turned with its shopping-bag of wars  
Into the kitchen  
And sat down with a collapsed sigh  
Like an elderly aunt anticipating a cup of tea.



©Mark Ulyseas

Cup of black tea. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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



## BIRD OF PASSAGE

*for Uche Nduka – poet of Lagos, Bremen and Brooklyn*

The messenger, received  
into our runway lights;  
a songbird, fled from times  
more troubled than our own,  
has landed north for winter,  
where city birds have also known  
apocalyptic times as dark as  
door-knocked Lagos nights.  
And if the bureaucrats forget,  
and if the filled-in forms  
neglect your song,  
then know at least that you  
have friends in Germany  
whose memories are long.

Ian Watson



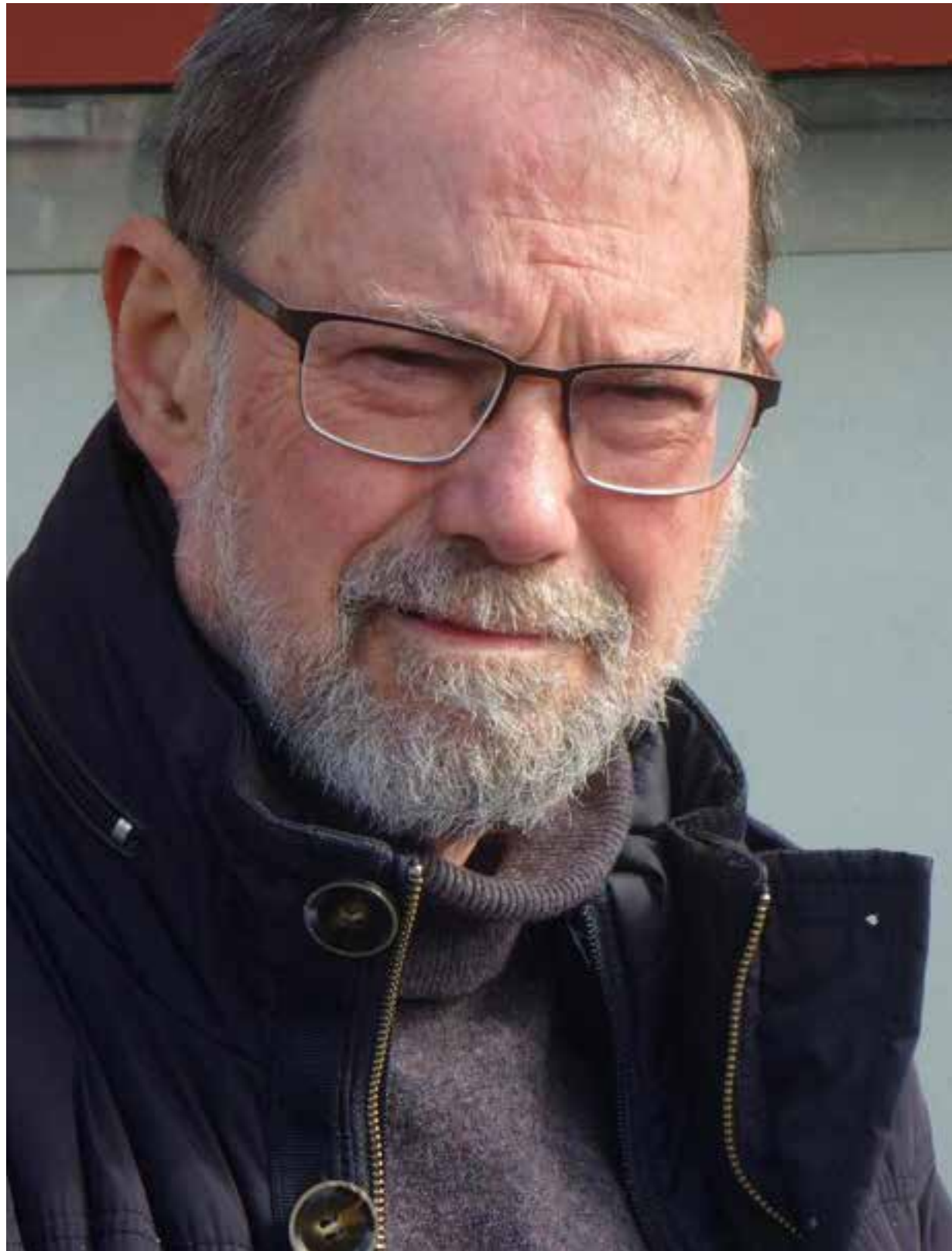
## KID AT THE STAR CLUB, 1967

If he had lived, he  
 would have loved *Lucy in the Sky*  
 and painted Sergeant Pepper's Band  
 in yellow murals four hands high  
 on every bus in Liverpool.  
 If he had lasted  
 he'd have scribbled a chorus or two  
 or pencilled the bass-line to *I Feel Fine*  
 and sketched a portrait of Father Mackenzie  
 on the back of the record sleeve.  
 But the poor sad sick fifth Beatle is dead;  
 the cellars of Hamburg have quarried their prey  
 the scarlet lips in the scarlet bars  
 have parted to show the yellow teeth  
 below the Große Freiheit façade.  
 The city has collected its rent  
 and if the Star Club has closed for the day  
 today is all the mourning he'll get –  
 for tomorrow the lights of the strip clubs will yell  
 and the smell of the *Pommesbuden*\* will stick  
 to the kids and the cops and the retching bins  
 that swell and burst with the Reeperbahn's sins.  
 If he had stayed, he  
 could have given Hamburg to the world.  
 But the poor sad sick fifth Beatle is dead.

\* *Chip-and-sausage stalls*

## DRILL EXERCISE

The night is almost still.  
 In the third movement  
 of the Mahler Titan symphony,  
 Herr Bertelsmann next door  
 decides to realign  
 his bookshelves, bit by bit.  
 Six-millimetre bit,  
 eight-millimetre bit,  
 ten-millimetre bit.  
 The tune is violin and cello  
 and, where the bit bites stone,  
 a stand-up bass.  
 But when the bit hits brick  
 it is a dentist's drill.



Jack Grady is a founder of the Ireland-based Ox Mountain Poets. His poetry has been published in Ireland, the UK, the USA, Canada, France, Belgium, Columbia, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Russia, Indonesia, India, and Nepal. Publications in which his work has been published include *Live Encounters*; *Crannóg*; *Pratik*; *Ink, Sweat, and Tears*; *Poet Lore*; *The Worcester Review*; *The Honest Ulsterman*; *North West Words*; *Mauvaise Graine*; *The Galway Review*; *Algebra of Owls*; *The Irish Literary Times*; *Skylight 47*; *The Ekphrastic Review*; *Dodging the Rain*; *A New Ulster*; *Mediterranean Poetry*; *Alameda 39*; *το κοράλλι (The Coral)*; *And Agamemnon Dead: An Anthology of Twenty First Century Irish Poetry*; *Invientario, Antología poética de los cinco continentes*; *Poesia a Sul 1*; *300K: Une anthologie de poésie sur l'espèce humaine*; *La Constellation de la Lyre*; and several others. He has read at international poetry events in Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Russia, and Belgium. His poetry has been translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, and Russian. His collection *Resurrection* (Lapwing, 2017) **was nominated for the T.S. Eliot Prize**, and it can be ordered from their list of poets on the Lapwing Publications website or via their direct link to the collection, which is [Jack Grady – Lapwing Store](#).

## NOW

In the endless rain of disillusionment,  
we find we're as free  
as fallen leaves stuck to the pavements.

Now, we perceive the lives  
we believed we were living  
were nothing but dreams.

We've been stunned awake  
by something we can smell  
but are afraid to put a finger on.

Eyes of the passers-by  
gloom above muzzles  
like the eyes of dogs, beaten and unloved.

Now, we're more disciplined  
than steers corralled,  
for we queue-up to be branded.

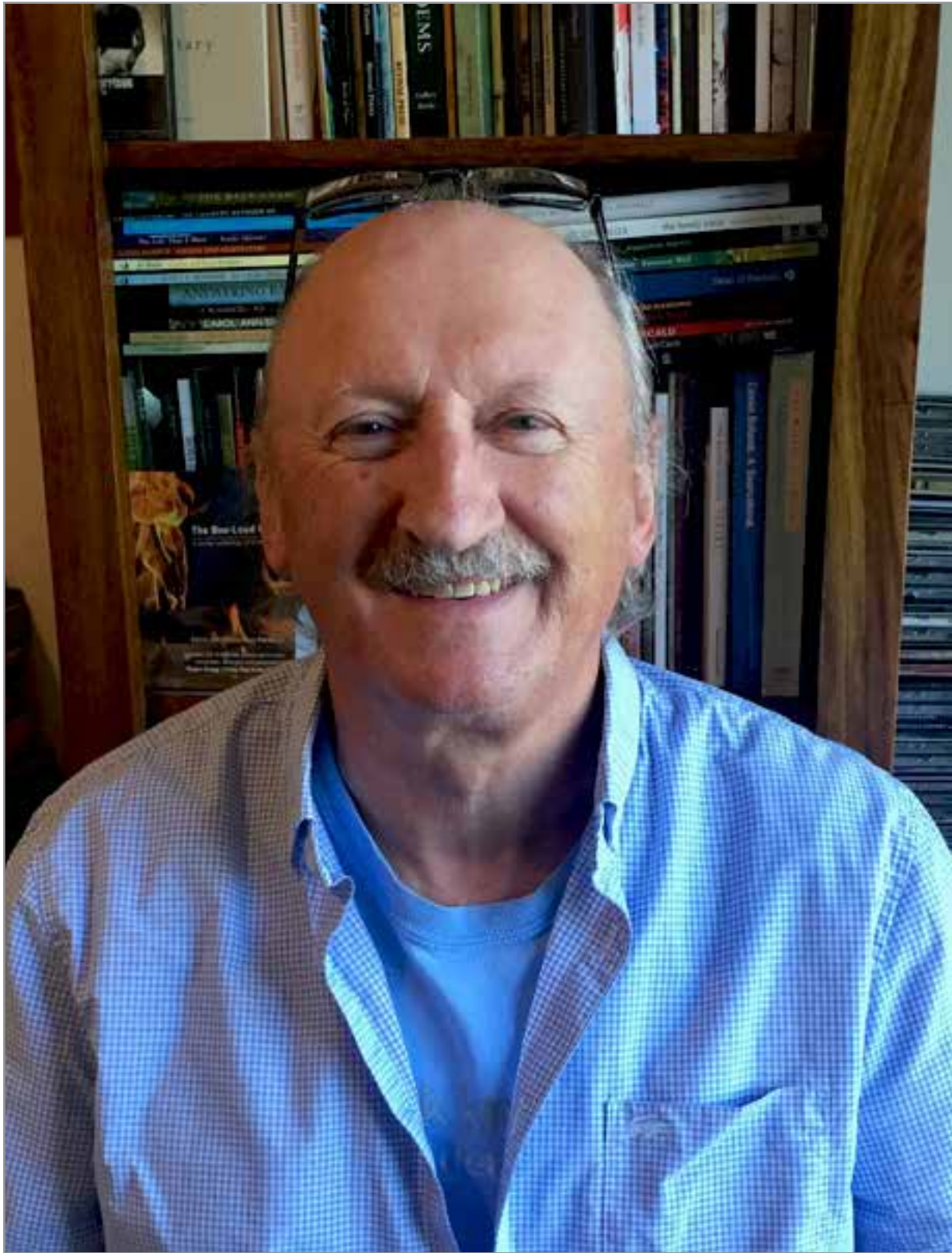
Voices incessant on the airwaves  
train us to march in unison,  
not daring to question.

Now, we shame the recalcitrant  
who would rather dance than join  
our blinkered parade to the slaughterhouse.

Jack Grady



Jim Burke, lives in Limerick, Ireland, and is Co-founder with John Liddy of *The Stony Thursday Book*. Some of his haiku are featured in the anthology *'Between the Leaves'* (2016) edited by Anatoly Kudryavitsky. *'Montage'* (2021) appeared from The Literary Bohemian Press.



## THE WRITING EXERCISE

It's raining outside.  
It should be stopped by now  
but it isn't. I hear a sound  
with the midnight rain.  
Maybe all the rain wants  
is to blow its own trumpet  
just a little bit.  
Rain rains upon the darkness.  
If it rained poems  
I'd go walking  
I'd turn my umbrella  
upside down.

Jim Burke



## ONE WEEK AFTER

Rain falls on the darkness  
it falls on telephone wires  
on chimney pots and the old  
yellow tractor beneath the tree  
running down its long  
blank face.

I am thinking of someone  
known to me whose last  
wish was for privacy.

No word  
until one week  
after cremation.  
News gathers legs  
calls door to door  
like it's a postman  
who once wore a suit  
and delivered us  
from isolation.

The rain remains  
what it is and darkness  
telephone wires  
chimney pots  
the yellow tractor  
the tree the voice  
of someone known to me  
that speaks to me  
with this spoken thought.

## A FABLE FOR TOMORROW

A corner of the moon  
Sitting on tree tops

Along a road like a river  
In flood

Where traffic flows  
And things aren't made to last

Maybe that once belonged  
Nearly forgotten past of pastures

Through which the freshness blew  
Blue mountains were

Of themselves blue mountains  
We don't see them

Like that nowadays  
No not at all

## AFTER TAWARAYA SOTATSU

searching for new bait  
making little waves  
in the lotus pond

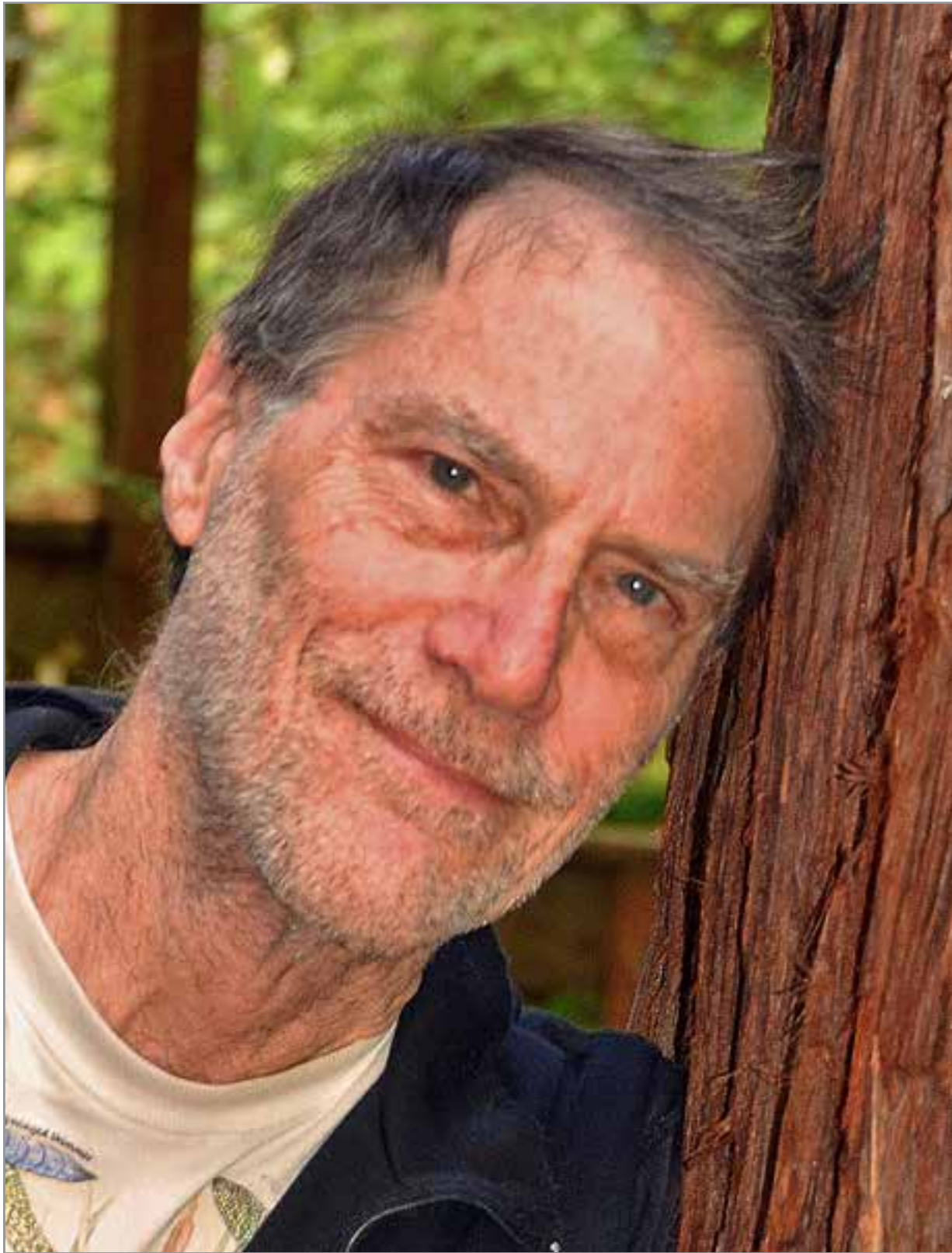
the grebe swims ahead  
his upturned bill half-open



©Mark Ulyseas

Water on a lotus leaf captures a petal. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Joe Cottonwood has repaired hundreds of houses to support his writing habit in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California. Long ago he wrote an underground novel called Famous Potatoes. His latest book of poetry is Random Saints.



## CARPENTER, NUDE

The new kid wears boots with steel toes.  
Otherwise, nude.  
Splinters may stick in sensitive spots  
but fewer injuries than you or I  
because, like,  
wouldn't you be extra careful?

Skin deep brown with a  
pale line from the tool belt,  
shimmering silver star in his navel  
like a nail-head, deftly dealt.  
The owner's wife glances once,  
then again.

The crew accepts.  
Summer job, we all have quirks.  
Honor craft; praise good work.

Judge him as any random plank—  
check for knots, rough edges.  
Choose — for structure or decor?  
Mark to chisel, cut, or bore.

End of the season  
with pay  
he dons clothes (a pity)  
for the mad city.

Joe Cottonwood



## LOVE OF LUMBER

Reverent  
rough-hewn fingers  
swim rivers of grain.

In flaw  
he sees character.  
Where the growing tree  
overcame difficulty  
with a pivot, a hard pocket,  
where she lost a limb, kept a scar,  
where she grieved in pain sobbing sap  
he rubs oil, caresses  
to bring beauty, to find  
the goddess hidden  
in raw wood.

So might we.

## WHY'D YOU CALL THE COPS?

Brady in a hoodie  
crouching at your front door  
never had judgment of the social.  
Brady with a lifetime stutter  
would say *en-en-en-entrance*,  
never exit.

Brady worked this good neighborhood  
when it was bad.  
Brady built the best doors  
with lumber salvaged from packing crates,  
from thrown-away scraps of rare Asian hardwoods.  
Brady guaranteed each one-of-a-kind  
*en-en-en-entrance* for life.

Brady checked on a creation  
delivered four decades ago  
lovingly crafted for the fearful mansion  
now wafting scent of fresh blood.

Brady couldn't form words fast.  
Brady with Leatherman in hand not a weapon.  
You could have opened the *en-en-en-entrance*.  
You could have *ass-ass-ass-asked*.

## NOT DEAD

At the lumberyard you pull a board  
from a high rack, badly stacked.  
With a roar, sixteen four-by-fours  
clatter onto your skull.

Knees buckle. Galaxies flash.  
In your mouth you taste blood. Brain blood.  
You have a cerebral hemorrhage.

At least you are still thinking.  
You can formulate the words “cerebral hemorrhage”  
though you couldn’t spell them at this moment.

You look around the lumberyard where two guys  
in T-shirts are going about their business  
not noticing your moment of dying.

Your tongue hurts, bitten.  
Your ears ring, a distant gong.  
Your brain aches. Rattled. Not broken.  
You stand. Touch fingers to skull.  
Two lumps on the cranium. Tender.

“Need a hand with that, bud?” says a voice.  
“Yes, thanks.”  
“Took a bump there, bad luck.”  
“I’ll survive.”  
Together, you load the truck.

## YOSHI, FORESTER

Thinning trees, Yoshi says,  
is like selecting children.  
Impossible. You love them all.

In their vigor, their enthusiasm  
they crowd, they jostle, too many branches.  
Yet some will fail. Some must fall.

But whose child?  
Listen.  
Already, sweet music.  
One — which one? — will sing the perfect song.  
A forest is a chorus. Listen...

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



## A FAREWELL SONG

*for Síle*

At a crossroads in La Mancha  
instinct took a left for Madrid  
after an evening in Almagro  
with Denis Rafter's childhood

Play about tenement Dublin  
and his rise out of the lane,  
political inheritance best left  
to the car's quiet rumination

As I contemplated your glow  
amongst people, luminance  
combined with a diplomat's  
care for words, transparence

Like a natural breath of air,  
a wall through which the wind  
blows, performs according  
to your elegant command.

John Liddy



## GONE TO POT

Applause for the dead in their coffins  
as though they have just taken a bow  
for the performance of their lives,  
victims of the microscopic scourge,  
their selfless duty each evening  
recalled with the sound of patio  
clapping, gestures for the healing.

Flesh against flesh, skin against skin,  
the bones of our hands a drum-beat  
of humanoid ancestral expression  
like that ancient thump on the chest  
a cry from the heart, a rendezvous  
with their sacrifice on the frontline  
between contagion and you.

Applause for the doctor and the nurse,  
the cleaner of hospital wards, the carer,  
the ambulance driver and the tillers  
of fields and seas, the shop assistant  
and the road sweeper, shelf stackers,  
cooks, porters, teachers, public servants,  
growers of fruit and fruit sellers.

For the homeless in need of shelter,  
ease for the afflicted, tormented minds,  
the beaten and defiled who never  
stop cocooning between lockdowns  
and lockins, the lonely in isolation  
and those unable to escape abusive  
hellholes, insult and punches taken.

Applause for the harmonica player  
with Alzheimer's who, like a child, waves  
to us in shy belief we want an encore  
and we do as we do for the zoom dance  
linking the world, communal generosity,  
online collaboration between artists,  
thrush and blackbird below my balcony

Bewildered by pot bangers banging pots  
black from flag-draped windowsills  
and crowded street, a waste of utensils  
best used for feeding the food queue;  
homage and dignified respect replaced  
by the din and clamour of false patriots  
who claim their right to infect hate.

Applause for the clear-headed, the open-  
minded with a will for the common  
good, who reject the gun-slinger's slogan,  
the narcissist who defies scientific reason,  
the spit-in-your-face brigade who think  
they smell of roses, their conspiracies  
writ as truths on placards of delible ink.

Take a bow my anonymous neighbour  
who has won back the patio with hands  
that silenced the usurpers who care  
not for the fallen, their Bat & Spiderman  
binned by Banksy's Game Change – a boy  
holding high an effigy of a health worker,  
an enduring homage for the real McCoy.

## MINDFULNESS

*i.m. Patrick Early*

Snow was general all over Madrid,  
to paraphrase Joyce's line in The Dead,  
days after you departed like Machado,  
'ligero de equipaje', ready to rendezvous  
with Berber nomads and Tito's ghosts,  
Aute's Al Alba and Amazon outposts,  
the intricacy of Liscannor pishoguery,  
woven to find a safe harbour in poetry.

I was fortunate to have known  
about those layers of friendships sown  
in a world perpetually dehumanised,  
bandaged by Stephanie, cauterised  
by your diplomacy; a high-risk facilitator  
retired to a life of nurturing the writer  
and translator in a man of rational faith,  
a linguist honing words as a poet.

Yes, snow was general all over Madrid  
and I am mindful of the good you did  
when I observe Damocles' frozen sword,  
the severed branch of chaos and discord  
on covidless boulevards we once walked  
in the flow of the maskless and talked  
about poems you would later write,  
an empty fist of feathers, a bird's flight

## OFFSPRING

*a birthday poem for Mir*

They grow together for a while,  
six unique siblings who learn  
from each other the rudiments  
for a future to discern.

Bonding before branching out  
along their separate way,  
they live within wider circles  
of calm or frequent disarray.

Some turn to the fold again  
for a semblance of peace  
and love found in the blood-  
link, unspoken forgiveness

A reassurance on occasions  
when offspring come together  
via Zoom for a threescore  
and ten as brother and sister.

A career in human resource management provided preparation for Karen's current activities; cats and words. Sometimes they hide, reappearing unexpectedly; sometimes they scratch, sometimes they purr. Her words have appeared in online publications and *Penned In*, co-written with Gaynor Kane published by The Hedgehog Poetry Press. Her own pamphlet is due to be published later this year by The Hedgehog Poetry Press. Facebook: @observationsbykaren Twitter: @lkarenmooney



## IN SEARCH OF LIGHT

*i.m. Jim*

In between treatments, you venture out;  
visit old haunts, catch a movie, visit a gallery,  
hold family near lest they shed a tear  
whilst you show no fear; full of fight.

In between treatments, you venture out;  
cross stormy seas with your next generation  
taking giant steps with boots on roots  
from whence you came. That visit hame,  
catching up with friends again,  
crafting memories in plain sight.

In between treatments, you venture out;  
buy another guitar, eleven, the final count.  
Camera in hand, you capture flowers,  
looking up, take a tree, send it to me  
along with news from hospital reviews  
and, as with every exchange -  
I study it for light.

Karen Mooney



## SEA GLASS

Stumbling across you,  
an unexpected find,  
wondering  
just how long it takes  
to blur the scars  
of what damaged you.  
I catch jewel glints,  
find myself reaching  
despite the angry edges,  
protecting you from proximity.  
But my pockets are packed,  
and you, you  
may yet still be too sharp to hold.

## RIPPING SEAMS AND STITCHING DREAMS

I found it at the back of her linen cupboard,  
Granny called it flowering; delicate embroidery,  
stitched to order and design on quality linens  
that she could not afford for which she was paid  
*pin money*, the rest of her work unmeasured.

Patterns stitched by her mother and hers before her;  
the count of each appraised with a judgemental eye.  
A life loom, a waft of domesticity, we, the weft,  
create our own fabric with what was learned  
at our mothers' knees. Clean, cook, sew, submit,  
and rear a family, shouldering traditions  
garbed in another's identity.  
A tapestry of expectations.

Mum continued the tradition, the pattern replicated  
but unfinished, the loose ends of which I picked up,  
taking comfort in familiarity after her loss until  
the design unravelled.

Pattern unpicked, threads waxed  
and on a threadbare fabric,  
wildflowers sewn.

Kate Ennals is a poet and writer who has published poems and short stories in a range of literary and on-line journals (Crannog, Skylight 47, Honest Ulsterman, The Moth, Anomaly, The International Lakeview Journal, Boyne Berries, North West Words, The Blue Nib, Dodging the Rain, The Ogham Stone, plus). Her first collection, *At The Edge* was published in 2015. Her second collection, *Threads*, was published in April 2018. Kate runs *At The Edge, Cavan*, a literary reading evening, funded by the Cavan Arts Office. Blog [www.kateennals.com](http://www.kateennals.com)



## THE LAMB

The leg stands pink with pride, steams its juice  
tender, ribbed, threaded with strips of rosemary  
garlic; an abstract of art, roasted, snuggled  
amongst seasoned courgette, tomato.

The kitchen swoons in aromatics, steam  
keeps the world at bay. The leg rests  
centre stage, while She mashes potatoes  
lays the table: salt, pepper, napkins, flowers

She carves the thinnest slices from the thigh  
scatters jellied mint across the flesh  
calls him to eat. *I'll be there in a second*  
Ten minutes pass. She calls again.

*Coming*, he says, impatient in his voice  
The gravy grows a film of grease, congeals  
She serves herself a limpid piece of stony lamb  
forks cold vegetables into her mouth

goes to bed. *Dinner is on the table*, She says  
He turns from his computer screen, lips stained red  
*I said, I'll be there in a minute*  
The lamb died. The lamb is dead.

Kate Ennals

## GARDENING BY THE MOON

*After Foulsham's Original Old Moore's Almanac 1697 – 2022*

Originally, I was interested in lighting up times  
sun and moon tables, sea tides  
everyday routines that make the world go round.

So, when Moore's Almanac arrived this September  
I wasn't prepared for Lucy Rainwater  
a native shaman, dressed in tassels and leather  
using the magic of her Indian ancestors  
to promise me health, wellbeing, and power.

Nor did I expect Finbarr from the town of Folkestone  
sounding like Nigel Farage selling good fortune.  
Finbarr's Magic Salt Rites work within minutes  
performed correctly, they get rid of all ailments.

If you send Finbarr a cheque for 9.99  
you will acquire, by return  
a range of hand gestures  
to use against 'nuisance' neighbours.  
They will also expand your bank balance  
And according to Finbarr, are easy to execute  
TBH, they avoid the embarrassment  
of magic rituals more awkward to perform  
should you ever you have the misfortune  
to find yourself in front of the court.

So, after learning which psychic I should consult  
Learning my lucky lottery digits and reading my horoscopes,  
What did I find most useful in the Almanac?  
It was advice about planting my peas and beans  
Which I must do between 12.50 and three  
underneath a waxing moon  
and I must sow my potatoes and other roots  
between 1pm and two when the lunar is low.

I found it all very useful  
which is why I'm sharing  
this poem with you.



Kevin Higgins has published five full collections of poetry with Salmon Poetry and a *New & Selected Poems* in 2017. His poems also feature in *Identity Parade – New British and Irish Poets* (Bloodaxe, 2010) and in *The Hundred Years' War: modern war poems* (Ed Neil Astley, Bloodaxe May 2014). *The Stinging Fly* magazine has described Kevin as "likely the most widely read living poet in Ireland". His extended essay *Thrills & Difficulties: Being A Marxist Poet In 21st Century Ireland* was published in pamphlet form by Beir Bua Press this year. *Ecstatic*, Kevin's sixth full poetry collection, will be published by Salmon next March.



## 'LIBERALS' & 'DEATH'

Two words that strut confident of  
their own historical inevitability.  
Everyone in time meets them,  
though hopefully not both  
ringing your door bell  
the same day,  
unless your name is  
Nagasaki or Vietnam;

or you're the first village  
no-one's ever heard of  
successfully abolished  
from thirty thousand feet  
by a transgender person  
pressing a button;

or you're the first Somali in history  
proudly turned into a pile of burning mince  
by a drone designed by a woman of colour;

or you're the wrong type of Australian  
whose computer told us the names  
of the obliterated  
and so can only leave prison  
in a fair-trade cardboard box.

Kevin Higgins

## UP WITH CLEVER LITERATURE

*after Roy Campbell*

Enough of these who just strip back the wrapper  
to lay bare the mould that's got into the marriage,  
what clergy, journalist, and judge

are wearing under their frocks – who put in your face  
the receipts – who exactly pays  
for the Archbishop of Canterbury's

Buttercup panties. We want verses  
that dress our beetle ridden corpses so thoroughly  
in what look like peacock feathers,

no one would know we've been dead for years.  
And, before that, metaphors that blind like a comb-over,  
so successful the reader forgets the ham

beneath. The literature-appreciating public expect  
men in casual jackets going up hills and realising  
no one knows exactly what;

need to know how Queen Medbh  
might have reacted to something you think  
you read in the I-Ching  
or Eat, Love, Pray while your temporal human form  
was temporarily stuck on a broken down Southern Rail train.

Give us themes like these in metres preferred  
by the Persians, or Charles the Twelfth of Latvia,  
so Professors with banjaxed hair  
can spend half a century working out  
what it was you were getting at,

or, even, what you weren't.

Laura Johanna Braverman is a writer and artist. Her poetry has appeared in journals including *Plume*, *Levure Litteraire*, *Sky Island Journal*, *New Plains Review* and in the anthology *Awake in the World, Volume II* by Riverfeet Press. *Salt Water*, her first collection of poetry was published in 2019 by Cosmographia Books. She is pursuing her MA degree in Poetry at Lancaster University, and lives in Lebanon with her family.



## EXEQUY

My husband's father burns incense.  
Looks smaller. Writes eulogies for the departed—

First, a brother-in-law,

the quiet doctor (he marries my husband's aunt  
before she is shot by a civil war sniper).

Two more over two days,

a tall mild-mannered man, named after the converted apostle—  
(he joins us, that summer in Salzburg);

the other, robust and bald, a man reconciled with his brother  
after decades of impasse.

A few weeks later,

the caustic interior designer who becomes a painter—

transforms canvas shadows  
into countless outlines of small black shapes.

Laura J Braverman



## QUARANTINE CHORUS

Beyond the window black with night, a dog sounds—  
I sit by the window emptied of light.

Faraway four- and five-beat barks remind me of childhood  
nights when parents were out.  
When everything outside the house was vast,  
unmapped.

The frogs here voice a boisterous counterpoint—  
outside gurgles and chirps are new and strangely jolly.  
No anuran trills in the city.

Behind their chorus, the coastal highway hums quieter  
than what I'm used to. Sometimes I pretend  
passing cars are waves instead.

I sit by the window black with night—

under lockdown, our new home is a cocoon. We moved  
three days before schools were shut.

After hospital, my husband isolates downstairs.  
We share FaceTime meals, see each other through glass.

Beyond the window black with night, the frogs trill  
and sing—  
voice a boisterous counterpoint

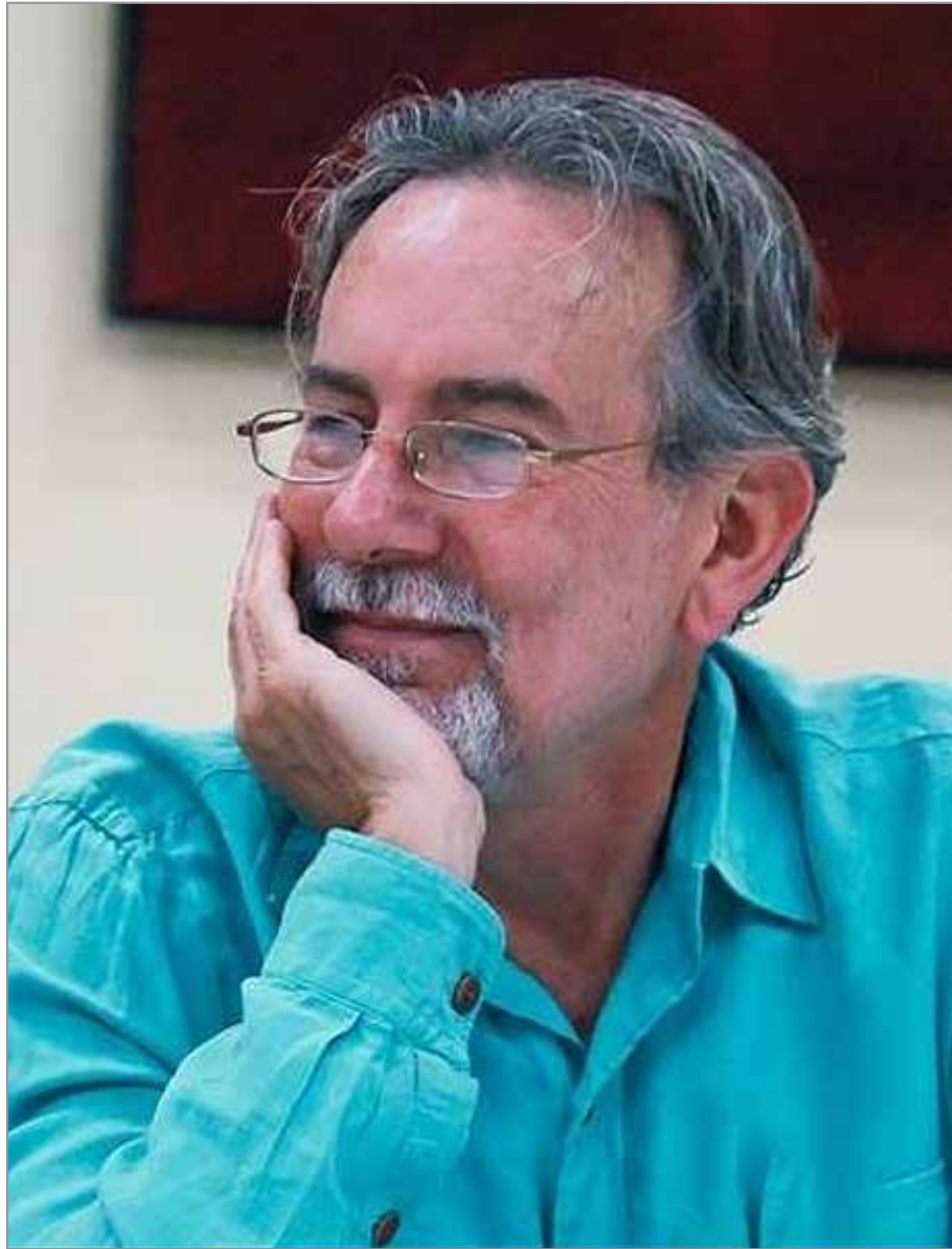
as the coastal highway hums.



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Frog in the night. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Les Wicks Over 45 years Wicks has performed widely across the globe. Published in over 400 different magazines, anthologies & newspapers across 32 countries in 15 languages. Conducts workshops & runs Meuse Press which focuses on poetry outreach projects like poetry on buses & poetry published on the surface of a river. His 14th book of poetry is *Belief* (Flying Islands, 2019).  
 leswicks@hotmail.com <http://leswicks.tripod.com/lw.htm>



## EAT SILENCE

The leader was a song  
 stuck in our heads.  
 Of course nothing much happened  
 some executions.

They built a holy house  
 over the remains of a clinic.  
 Scruffy wildlife was tidied up  
 & the war barely lasted a lifetime.

The leader was a song.  
 Trick is  
 more simple the melody that much harder  
 to expunge from our minds.  
 We were told we had sunshine  
 but never went outside.  
 He eventually dropped off the charts  
 a riot ensued.

Les Wicks

## ESCALATIONS

Baking the cake  
called awake.  
This life not much, but more than bread,  
herd the shadows to the shed  
for milking & the drench  
(those delusions we too are not led).  
So we invent, peer out of our trench  
write some books, pretend there'll be recompense.  
The sun combs its shattered hair  
once so ordered, such permanence  
or this we thought seeing only there  
that casual endorphin glare.  
The ambition of table, of chair  
another day to live, much as we dare.  
Tried to believe in numbers  
but they never added up.

## HIT

At breakfast that song snuck in  
like some showy blue cockroach.  
Scuttled across the floor  
left chord-scat all over the kitchen.

The commuter train was twelve-barred by deluge  
phones broke open  
bells fell out.  
Laptops clapping, one geezer's chipped transistor —  
full volume. Earworms wobbled & I  
blame a specific tune.

Calls come in, dumped off the schoolbus  
our children sway  
the metastasis of music  
knows all about locks  
& the school gates are brokedanced.

Air guitars wailed as news of war broke out.  
Of course there's demos.  
Down in the streets banners sang — that song —  
while those who marched hummed along  
forgot that peace  
had to be chased with tougher words than mere lyrics.

From our office towers we watched the ruin  
of purpose, of silence.  
Naturally, we too sang  
*guess what*, this product or path  
oh sunny day.  
Push the pencil in your ear  
all the way.



## BECOME BACK

I needed this thing  
your glow  
one remarkable moment  
when all the almoses we'd had that night  
forgotten.

The contusion of our histories  
put aside, to be read later  
beneath the argument of sleep.

Like some Venice gondolier  
the veins I navigate  
then some seasonal deluge arrives —  
laughter raw, implacable.  
Our vessel is tossed  
there is no territory, destination  
or want.

We are both surprised.

## &amp; THEN

Our laughter is a commitment,  
the fightback.

You ask *fight against what*  
but you know.

This age  
where every park bench is a battlefield.

All the jobs lost, too many of us  
crowd the Nostalgia Diner.

Viruses fly in, a world tour  
not quite the musical, long past the concept album.

Pick a country, there're hundreds.  
Only the missiles have purpose. People starve

yet find energy to kill.  
This is not enough.

Perhaps the wine, maybe naked  
there's this way forward. A project.

Hands break us up.  
We need to be broken.

Magdalena Ball is a novelist, poet, reviewer and interviewer, and is the Managing Editor of Compulsive Reader. She has been widely published in literary journals, anthologies, and online, and is the author of several published books of poetry and fiction, including, most recently *The Density of Compact Bone*, published by Ginninderra Press in 2021.



## KINGFISHER AT NIGHT

Against a black sky  
a kingfisher  
body jewelled, eye fixing me  
subject of its gaze.

Both of us halted, connected  
framed against a pattern  
of regression  
we can neither articulate  
nor understand.

There is a message here  
curve of beak  
head-tilted, body pressed  
into darkness.

A staccato of insects  
send out signals.

I reach out, hand to claw  
claw to skin  
skin to feathers  
bill rattling  
head thrown back

voice of smoke  
and laughter.

Magdalena Ball

## TRACKS

The first point of penetration  
when the needle entered  
she was already a mother, already angry  
already beautiful, already hurting.

What was she hungering for  
could she guess the chain reaction  
when she constructed her own  
death on life on life on death.

All of the cards in the house she'd built  
fell to fake freedom  
washing her body  
that never felt clean.

Did she think about anything  
when words failed her  
sliding into her lap like shadows

the cute boy, holding the belt on her arm  
frozen in time  
his wispy moustache  
reminding her of a grandfather  
who touched her  
she couldn't quite remember where.

Or her baby at home with a friend  
in the tiny apartment  
she tried to keep clean  
against a tide of roaches  
that kept coming.

The city invaded  
every one of her dreams  
each tall skyscraper a father  
stinging barbs  
entering her bloodstream  
boxing her into a small space  
under the steps.

Just at the point of peace  
those terrible contractions.

She hated him, the cute boy  
her sister's boyfriend  
though he stroked her dark  
hair and told her she was prettier.

She knew he was lying  
but his words felt sweet as resin  
opium poppies  
warming her body.

He held the syringe while she lay down  
and for at least a minute  
thought of nothing.

Then her body was flooded  
not with the pheromones  
the not so cute boy promised her  
still whispering something she  
could no longer hear  
it was ghosts.



## ULTIMATE GREY

Despite years of trying  
we have failed to detect  
a single flash.

Looking up cricks the neck  
but I can't help it, stargazy.

I will continue to believe  
against evidence. It hurts no one.

Nevertheless, the dirt is singing.  
I lie on my bad back  
the forest surrounds my house  
painted illuminating yellow  
before it was colour of the year

feel it vibrating through  
pulling me down, the ultimate home  
soft moss beneath  
cellular non-sound  
coming through.

Of course I'm too old  
for space travel.

The aliens are not going to save us  
from our own stupidity  
in their state-of-the-art  
fully automated ship.

Who would want this flesh  
softening already into the  
still beautiful, pre-apocalyptic ground

whistling at me  
like a construction worker  
saying come, come  
it looks cold but it feels warm  
when you get here.

This is where you belong  
this silver, this light slate grey  
these shivering insects that crawl  
across skin in broken light.

## HEDY AND ZEBRA

My grandmother  
cut her skirts short  
sewing them up  
to show off good legs.

She would cinch in her waist  
hide keys in her ample bust

dyed her permed hair black  
bold lipstick, Hedy Lamarr red  
a perfect cupid's bow.

She would not be caught  
off guard, unready  
unkempt.

I still have a zebra print  
mini she gave me  
more than two decades ago  
black and white  
mid thigh, leg flattering  
though in the end  
it was my mother's body  
I inherited  
shivering under the covers.

I didn't know anything  
didn't ask why.

Let her take care of me  
took the medicine  
made my own cupids bow  
traded tradition for luck  
swam up on the shore  
of another island.

## CROSSROADS

In a picture of a picture there was a man tagged with your name sitting next to a man I recognised as your father. He was very small, nearing a death that had already happened, though not yet in the moment you were leaning in. Time shrinks us in places, grows us in others. Your body had changed; your face, unrecognisable. I remember you in my first rented room in Queens, walking back and forth in that small, tidy box, minimal in decor. Underexposed. The rest of the house was a dump, dishes that weren't mine piled in the kitchen sink. You were just over mono, skinnier than you would ever be again, your eyes vulnerable and soft, your post-illness skin translucent, though lit by a distinctive flush coming over your jaw. I remember thinking that I was almost at the point of saying goodbye and hung on a little longer. The grief then, was not so much an absence that had not yet happened, already visible just beyond the frame, but for the bodies we no longer inhabit. Bodies that continue to pace in tidy rooms, somewhere, waiting.

Manuela Palacios lectures on anglophone literature at the University of Santiago de Compostela (Galicia, Spain). She has edited, translated and written about Irish, Galician and Arabic poetry. Among the recent anthologies she has edited are *Migrant Shores: Irish, Moroccan & Galician Poetry* (Salmon Poetry 2017) and *Ανθολογία Νέων Γαλικιανών Ποιητών - Antoloxía De Poesía Galega Nova* (Vakxikon 2019). Manuela's research on women's studies, ecopoetry and the human-animal trope has set her on the stimulating path to creative writing.



## COLLAR

Take a word  
between your fingertips  
consider its shape and lustre,  
its inner glow  
–the nacre layers  
that swathe the core.

The ways of the world penetrate  
the surface and send back  
refracted beams of variegated light,  
despite daily abrasions.

Don't let the apparent smoothness  
fool you.  
It may grit your teeth  
when spoken out loud.

The laws of syntax will  
drill through the kernel to form  
a string of round or oval, pithy or fancy  
beads. Each thoughtfully chosen to  
match its neighbour on each side, with  
close-fitting but supple knots  
to let the sentence flow.

Manuela Palacios



## LOTUS FLOWER

Your fingers  
drawn together like a closed  
lotus flower

your mind  
clueless as to why, what, when or where  
while the rod  
swishes  
past  
your face  
and lands  
on your fingertips.

The lotus dips  
into the grime.

A lotus flower re-blooms  
immaculate  
the next morning  
but you do not  
because punishment has dawned upon you.

You stand  
facing the wall  
while the teacher continues her lesson.  
You are the lesson  
schoolchildren learn.

The lotus dips  
into the grime.

You kneel  
your arms stretched  
along an imaginary  
crucifix.

The lotus dips  
into the grime  
at night  
and re-blooms the next morning

but for you  
there is no resurrection.

A SPIDER IN LOVE

On spreading her glowing silk net  
she casts a strand to my hide-out  
gauging my size and weight  
with enticing cunning.

I dream of ballooning cruises  
on a tropical jet stream  
but will be quite content with this

s  
w  
i  
n  
g  
i  
n  
g  
amorous bridge of sorts.

Her heart is my beacon,  
safely far from fangs or brain,  
wisely placed near the silk loom  
that will guide my intent.

These hourglass frames of ours  
will disfigure time  
while the industrious spinnerets  
wreathe an everlasting nuptial berth  
to the elation of feelers and palps.

COSTA DA MORTE\*

*after Estevo Creus*

Estevo speaks of his childhood  
in Land’s End,  
that Galician coast of death.

He claims he was once bitten  
by a whale –and his body now carries  
the mammal’s DNA.

Our bard remembers bathing  
in the sea, when the news  
arrived of a newly hunted whale;  
the sea water warm with  
animal blood.

That cook at the whaling  
factory  
brings meat home. A feast  
for children’s eyes.

On a visit with father to the whaling  
factory  
the infant gapes in awe  
at a blue whale Himalaya  
climbed upon by  
seashore mountaineers.

Estevo has seaweed  
eyes and an abyssal voice.  
On taking his leave, he mumbles:  
‘see you under water’.

*\* Costa da Morte [Coast of Death] is a stretch of Atlantic coast in Galicia (north-western Spain). Its name allegedly stems from the numerous shipwrecks in the area, but its west orientation also marks the place where the sun sets... or drowns.*

Margaret Bradstock has eight published collections of poetry, including *The Pomelo Tree* (winner of the Wesley Michel Wright Prize) and *Barnacle Rock* (winner of the Woollahra Festival Award, 2014). Editor of *Antipodes* (2011) and *Caring for Country* (2017), Margaret won the Banjo Paterson Poetry Award in 2014, 2015 and 2017. Her latest collection, from *Puncher & Wattmann*, is *Brief Garden* (2019).



Margaret Bradstock

## SILENT SPRING

*All the instruments they have agree  
there's no such thing as Climate Change.*

First there was the demise of the planet,  
extinction, to look forward to –  
no birds, bees, trees, marine creatures

nothing afloat in the ocean  
but resurgent plastic bags and oil spills.  
We held our breath, awaiting

the whirr of cicadas, sonic communion  
of the whales, deafened by silence.  
Except for terrorist attacks on city

streets and mosques, red-alert sirens  
and a pre-apocalyptic hum of unease.  
After the earthquakes and volcanoes

came drought, heatwaves, the fire season  
(the great Hawaiian escape for those  
who don't hold a hose).

Summer vanished from us in a haze  
before the scythe of floods and viruses.  
I cycle past forbidden beaches

discovering (certified) that I'm old,  
self-isolation threatens, and somehow  
it's political, all about the economy

and missed football matches,  
forgotten art and music, poetry, truth  
the wellsprings of a subterranean life.

*I should be glad of a different season.*



## SWIMMING WITH STINGRAYS

The third I've seen this summer  
                   lying flat on the ocean floor,  
 undulating slightly with the current  
                   like a grey, non-slip shower mat.  
 They wash in over the breakwater  
 at high tide, bury themselves in sediment  
                   waiting for hard-shelled prey.

Docile and curious, stingrays  
                   (they say) may attack if provoked.  
 Filming in shallow waters, Steve Irwin  
                   swims towards the chosen specimen,  
 his shadow its predator, a tiger shark  
 perhaps. The venomous spike  
                   stabs wildly at heart and lungs,  
 swirling of waves, the taste of salt.  
 Ten seconds for him to die.

Hovering beneath water,  
                   your passing shadow dogs you  
                   like an unexpected diver

## THE BIKE WITH NO BRAKES

Ten years old, she pedals to the river  
                   a freedom from rules, like wind  
 on the nape of her neck.  
 Yes, there were accidents, a run-in  
 with the back of a car, crashes at the base  
 of hill-roads, faded purple scars  
 a reminder, the tattoo of embedded gravel.  
 Once the hem of her jeans  
                   caught fast in the bicycle chain.

In the hot tin changing-shed,  
 woollen cossie rolled down to the waist,  
 she'd pass for a boy. Alone, drifting  
                   in the current, floating  
 under the willows, the tug of water  
                   that stays with you forever,  
 the tyre on a knotted rope  
                   tied to a tree branch, swinging empty.

The boy is there again, faun-like  
                   down in the reeds by the river,  
 just watching, smoking languidly  
 cigarette held to his lips  
 as a shadow falls across the afternoon  
                   and the mountain range draws in.  
 Words gather, heavy as fish,  
                   the river's ripples no longer  
 a pillow for her head.

Margaret Kiernan has a background in Public Policy and Social Justice. She writes poetry and short stories. She also paints landscapes in mixed media. She is published in, The Blue Nib Literary Journal, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, Burrow at Old-water-rat publishing Australia, The Galway Review, Poet Head, A New Ulster, Anthologies, and Cultural news magazines. She is listed in The Index of Contemporary Women Poets in Ireland, 2020. She writes with the Thursday Group of poets, at Over -the-Edge, Galway. Is also a member of Ox Mountain poets.



## PEARS IN GLASS BOWLS

We went the low road. Mother, and I  
walked along the mountain way  
beside grey stone walls  
heard the bleating sheep.

Together we arrive, startling two  
spare framed tall men  
my maternal great-uncles 'who  
spoke in native tongue' she answered them.

I listened, watched above to the mezzanine  
beneath the roof  
filled with bales of sheep's wool  
I inhaled its pungent oil.  
John hooked the kettle upon the iron crane  
above sods of burning peat.

With delicate fingers, he drew glass dishes  
from a cupboard  
opened canned pears  
gave me a glass of raspberry cordial.

Gentle graceful fluid movements of men  
at home beneath those mountains.  
They were pleased Katie called,  
that she brought the girl with her.

Margaret Kiernan

## WHISPERED BENEDICTIONS

I stand on shifting sand, I feel it  
heave, throb like a drum  
no house will I build here, for I am  
a home filled with  
Love.

The star strewn sky upholds the night  
I allow it to enfold me, how small I am.  
I wonder about portals to Jupiter or Mars  
celestial sphere of eighty -eight constellations.  
My eyes seek the Milky Way, the Bear.

Memory filters footprints of a journey  
going home sometime  
as a fluttery breeze taps my cheek.  
I am full of gratitude  
with simplest  
benedictions.

Sparkled stars slip away  
fall into the night  
I am of that realm,  
just another spark.

## CRADLE OF CRIMSON

Was it a cloudy day or just layered with sparkled mists?  
No dream lit dust motes, syssel- seeds, unspoken love.  
Evening arrived when the sun went down.

By the gate, a cat goes by full of milk  
Rumbled out from that family so jaded,  
even the kids want to go to their bed.  
Marooned scraps of folly  
Secrets visited upon them.

In the churchyard near the yew tree  
Lies un-hinged, a plastic posy of violets  
Tarnished by wet clay.



Mari's work featured in the Poetry Jukebox STARS Curation as part of the 2021 Belfast International Arts Festival, 'Branching Out' with Brilliant Flash Fiction and is forthcoming in 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.



## AUTUMNAL SHIFT

Amethyst harebells  
sweep translucent trumpets.  
Hold tight to the earth,  
ringing singing  
in October scowls.  
Spread coy skirts  
along swaying tides  
where we all drift.

Mari Maxwell

## TREADING

We are all of us lost  
Poppy from the top deck  
Mamma's fingers lingering,  
loitering on the squat fat rope.  
Then gone. Gone.  
Granny holding me and Ruby.  
Hard, so hard I fear we'll break  
shatter even.  
But the puffy jackets  
hold fast through trough and swell.  
Bigger than the skyscrapers in New York,  
wider than the Hudson.

That's why I know we're lost,  
in the sea, watching dolphins.  
Just me, Ruby and granny.

## FELINE TANGO

The white cat snoozes  
on the warm tin roof.

Face tucked on outstretched paws.

Behind him the ginger tom cat  
is nonchalant.

Creeps slides and slinks.  
Then pauses.

Circles, halts  
and the dance begins.

Creep and slink,  
slide  
midstep pause,  
tango, salsa.

Fur will fly  
rain like  
dandelion clocks.  
Their backs  
quiffed in Elvis curls  
feline falsettos  
and whisker sneers  
as my cats dance The Slide.

Mary Melvin Geoghegan has five collections of poetry published. Her most recent *As Moon and Mother Collide* with Salmon Poetry (2018). Her next collection *There Are Only a Few Things* will be published with Salmon Poetry in 2022/23. Her work has been widely published including *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Sunday Times*, *Live Encounters 10th Anniversary Anthology*, *The Stinging Fly*, *The Moth*, *Cyphers*, *Orbis184*, *Crannóg*, *Skylight47*, *Hodges Figgis 250th Anthology*, Poem on the DART, amongst others. Short-listed for the Fish Poetry Award, Cúirt New Writing, The Rush, The Padraic Colum and in 2019/20 for the Jonathan Swift Poetry Award.



Mary Melvin Geoghegan

## THERE'S MORE OF NOTHING

it's a privilege to step out  
into a seemingly infinite nothingness  
everything still –  
and for the most part silent.  
There's more of nothing  
than we usually care to notice  
it being neither inert nor empty.  
Fertile, endlessly suggestive –



## IN A NARROW STRIP OF NEWSPRINT

Aya Aloud recalls the moment –  
from her hospital bed, in Gaza City's Shifa hospital  
covered in wounds and bruises.

Before –  
trembling, she pulls a mattress  
closer to her sleeping parents.  
Checking in with a friend on WhatsApp  
and suddenly the sound of bombing, darkness  
and she's trapped beneath the concrete.  
Struggling to free herself  
hears her mother breathing  
and tries – then rushes through the rubble  
pleading for help to pull her out.

But, her father, Moeen  
one of Gaza's few neurologists  
along with other colleagues will be named  
amongst the 42 Palestinians  
killed that Sunday.

## EVEN FOR A BIRD

Over the centuries  
millions of painted ladies  
have travelled out of Africa's Sahel Region  
as far north as the Arctic Circle  
then back towards the Middle East.  
Even for a bird –  
such an odyssey is impressive  
but, for a butterfly less than a single gram  
it's truly wondrous –  
A heritage that could be lost  
in our obsessive concern  
for mechanised order – especially on road verges.

And though we like to assume:  
natural ecosystems are complex  
highly adapted and beautiful  
and will always be there.  
But, like a clutch of lapwing eggs  
in the grass, could be crushed

in one false step.

## THE LITTLE DRESS

for between four and six months.  
The soft organic cotton  
was exactly what I had in mind  
for Ailbhe their new baby daughter.  
Free, after months in lockdown  
to wander amongst all the new-born things.

And reminded of the first gift  
after my son's birth still upstairs.  
So tiny it only fitted a few times  
but, still the same blue and texture  
as the little dress – ready to be posted.

Wrapped in tissue paper

inside an envelope.

## IN THE CALLIGRAPHY OF A LANDSCAPE

Breathless, a young Oliver Plunkett returns.  
From exploring one of the many cairns  
outside the walls of the Tower House, his home  
at Loughcrew Estate, in County Meath.  
Having managed to crawl further inside  
mingling with his neolithic ancestors  
touching the mystery of the long interred.  
Built before Newgrange, the cairns like cemeteries  
punctuated the surrounding countryside.  
And sadly, Oliver's future would be far  
from those rambling drumlins and cairns.  
But his name would be interred in Irish hearts  
long after that brutal execution at Tyburn.  
And centuries later they'd inscribe saint.

Mary O'Donnell is one of Ireland's best known contemporary authors. Her poetry collections include *Spiderwoman's Third Avenue Rhapsody* (1993) *Unlegendary Heroes* (1998) both with Salmon Poetry, and *Those April Fevers* (Ark Publications, 2015). Her eighth poetry collection *Massacre of the Birds* appears from Salmon Poetry in October 2020 and can be ordered direct from Salmon. Her poetry is available in Hungarian as *Csodak földje* with the publisher Irodalmi Jelen Könyvek. Four novels include *Where They Lie* (2014) and *The Elysium Testament*. A volume of essays, *Giving Shape to the Moment: the Art of Mary O'Donnell* appeared from Peter Lang last June, and her new fiction collection, *Empire*, was published by Arlen House in 2018. Her essay, "My Mother in Drumlin Country", published in *New Hibernia Review* during 2017, was listed among the Notable Essays and Literary Nonfiction of 2017 in *Best American Essays 2018* (Mariner). She is a member of Ireland's multi-disciplinary artists' affiliation, Aosdana. [www.maryodonnell.com](http://www.maryodonnell.com) Twitter: maryodonnell03



## A BASKET OF TASKS

Either too empty or too full.  
 I fill up before each visit.  
 After, it is empty.  
 I am empty.

There is no division  
 between me and the basket.

I fill again and again, transfer the warmth  
 of my straining hands so that each task  
 is nourished. Sometimes, the base splits,  
 releases a trail of undone morsels,  
 their bright packaging ripped  
 as I move through drifts of fallen leaves,  
 leering trees, on my way to visit.

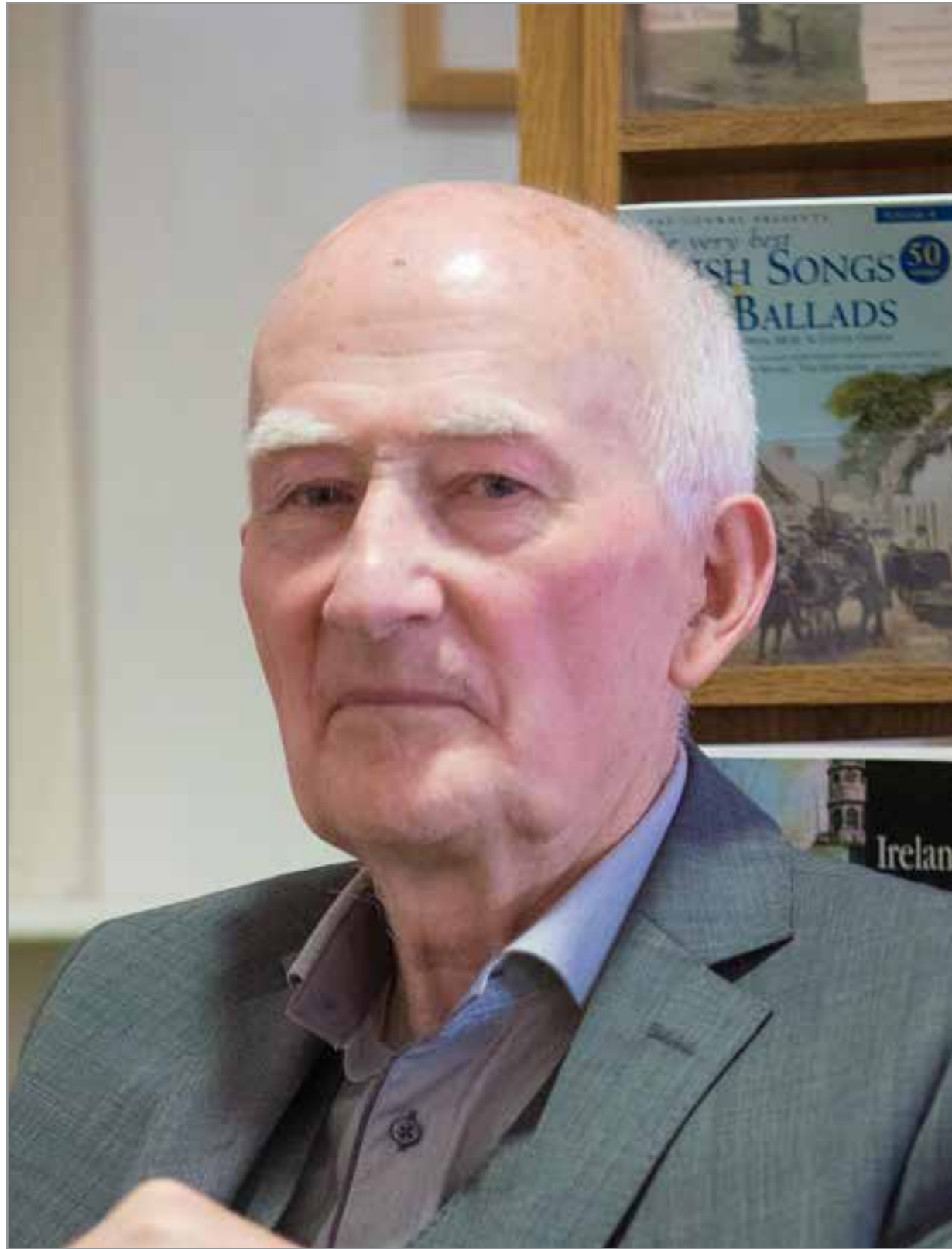
Then too, I empty, return the way I came,  
 traverse the muddled path,  
 attempting to find those broken tasks:  
 like dreams, some shatter, then scream  
 for my attention.

I gather up, press them softly down,  
 ignoring their distress. Although the basket brims,  
 I cannot deliver such crumbled entities:  
 I head for the canal, that long belly  
 of black water. It opens to my offerings  
 until the basket is empty  
 and I am free of its weight.

Mary O'Donnell



A native of Galway, he lives in Listowel, Co. Kerry, Ireland. His six collections of poems are: *Droving, Falling Apples, Earth to Earth, The Singing Woods, Steering by the Stars* and *Éalú*. Winner of The Pádraig Liath Ó Conchubhair Award 2019. He is the Deputy Editor of The Galway Review.



## HARD OLD STATIONS

Which way, every way, you turn,  
 every station is a hard old station,  
 all, or almost if not all, deserted.  
 Stuck on a sluggish non-stop train  
 since we got on the last lockdown,  
 unsure of the lines-end destination.  
 Not that events don't happen to us,  
 Joe Burke to die in our worst hour  
 brought the train to tears for him.  
 Anyway the day that the music died  
 came long before this. It's in the air,  
 and if you cannot zoom it's nowhere.  
 Then on dull days on end you wonder  
 if the glimmer goes dimmer and dies  
 will the train prevail if the light fails?  
 Still, better to keep moving on ahead  
 got to keep the engine singing high,  
 we never died a winter yet 'twas said.  
 A young girl stands by a country road,  
 on a mobile phone, her only link left  
 to a reality that's nearly non-existent.  
 But I can't forget the Little Egret seen  
 in pensive pose pictured by the Feale,  
 of the purest white full of light for me.

Matt Mooney

## SILVERED

Gone over the fine soft sand,  
printed behind me my traces;  
fortress face jutting out low  
in front of the Castle Green.  
Summer time ascending on us.  
The Black Rocks away at sea,  
out in the tide, out of bounds.  
There's one going underwater  
only a stone's throw from me,  
smooth, like a hippopotamus,  
that's singled out and silvered  
by the sun that bravely breaks  
through the clouds that crowd.

## SEEING POPPIES

I saw myriads of poppies, not in a cornfield,  
red robed ballerinas dancing just for me,

but in the National Mall facing The Capitol,  
and punch-drunk with joy on a red-letter day,  
looking over the two hundred thousand flags  
in rows and rows for locked-down absentees,  
watching in every State that makes America

the inauguration of the President of a nation,  
Joe Biden, they want to celebrate and cheer,  
knowing they are bound for a greater destiny.

## LEAVING ESTONIA

Short was our stay that day,  
it was only a port of call  
for our Cruiser called the Breakaway  
in the fall of the year,  
heading now for Petersburg,  
for our Captain spoke of stormy seas  
raging in the Gulf of Finland,  
not now to feature on our Baltic Cruise.  
On a high stool at a circular bar  
with a Southern Comfort for company  
as we leave Estonia,  
silently toasting the hazel eyes  
of Helen who sold me a souvenir  
in a teeming harbour shop in Tallinn,  
sending me hurriedly away.  
Placed outside the diner on deck six  
where soon I'll go for evening dinner  
a piano man radiates his melodies  
as we cruise unconsciously to Russia,  
making a heaven of the high atrium  
where chandeliers hang high like stars.

## GUARDIANS

I know no castle built by blistered hands  
so noble in its allure  
that could withstand  
the toll of time  
so well as yonder cliffs  
that overlook the golden sand:  
richly coloured, russet, green and yellow,  
the lofty guardians of the Ladies' Strand.





Selected for Poetry Ireland Introductions in 2016, his poems have featured in a significant number of journals, both in Ireland and internationally. He was a featured poet at the Poets in Transylvania Festival in 2015 and a guest speaker at the John Berryman Centenary Conference in both Dublin and Minneapolis. His poems have been nominated for Pushcart, Forward and Best of the Net prizes and his Pushcart-nominated poem, 'The Lion Tamer Dreams of Office Work', was the title poem of an anthology published by Hibernian Writers in 2015. He is curator of the Irish Centre for Poetry Studies site and he published his debut collection, 'Growing Up in Colour', with Doire Press in 2018. [https://www.doirepress.com/writers/m\\_z/maurice\\_devitt/](https://www.doirepress.com/writers/m_z/maurice_devitt/)  
<https://thegloss.ie/writers-block-with-maurice-devitt/>  
<https://www.poetryireland.ie/poetry-day/discover-poetry/dare-poems/the-lion-tamer-dreams-of-office-work>

## A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Maybe if you walk three times  
around the church, you will meet the devil  
coming back and, if you do, be sure  
to hold his stare. Remember  
it's the eyes have it, and that nasty  
little tail that can whip a cigarette  
from a woman's lips at twenty feet.  
He also does a nice line in cloven hooves,  
good for tap-dancing and maintaining poise  
in a muddy field, but useless in a sprint;  
a genetic mutation that always favoured  
the horse, though at the expense of balance,  
which explains why if you ever see a horse  
in a bar, he will be leaning on the counter.

Maurice Devitt

## OCTOBER SUNDAY

It's one of those days when you realise  
that summer is not coming back,  
despite the light bursting confidently  
into the bedroom, the deception  
of heat behind glass and the glimpse  
of a neighbour, hurrying coatless  
up to Mass. It's the leaves that give  
the game away, and the grass,  
that you try to convince me is still growing,  
your deft scissors-work a joy to behold.  
Only bettered by the pumpkin –  
the face you carved a good likeness  
of me – waiting on the step,  
eyes casting ruefully into the night.

## RANELAGH MORNING

The last wink of a disconsolate moon  
caught in the chimneys above Annavilla,  
where houses of every shape and size  
lean into the street as he passes,  
the clip of his shoes setting off  
a pinball of bedroom lights.

The first car of morning  
runs the gauntlet of neighbours  
desperate for newspapers and milk,  
breakfast tables already set  
for splintered conversations,  
while the radio announcer, hidden

behind a fruit bowl on the counter,  
clears her throat to bring drama  
to last night's news –  
and just as the blinds are pulled up,  
he ghosts into shot, like a wraith  
from last night's dream.

Mick's poems have been rejected by some of the best magazines and journals around, he has also been nominated for The Pushcart Prize (USA) and The Forward Poetry Prize (best individual poem) UK. He has spent the pandemic doing wild and reckless things with his hair.



## THE GILEAD BOY GOES IN STUDS-UP.

The teachings of faith re-purposed to dark matter,  
that vast black hole where compassion goes to die,

(but it can only be theocracy if it's someone else's god.)

The daddy man with a lizard smile,  
rapture boner poorly concealed  
in chest high trousers and Christian braces,  
the default cloth of a pyscho-clown  
when he's finally consumed his inner child.

Never the brightest guy in the room  
even when he's alone in the room,  
regularly reaching into his toolbox,  
always coming back with a hammer.

Eyes the colour of cold dead water  
caught in the glint of a well-polished gun,  
carefully drawing up the lists,  
the names, addresses, the guilty verdicts,

Gods' clenched fist putting us all in order.

Michael Corrigan



## THE WEST UNLEASHES A FIERCE BARRAGE OF HOPES, THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS.

First the rumours then the pictures,  
“appears to show” and “unconfirmed”,

the radio narrating a fantasy spiel,  
“our violence, so much better than their violence,”

then the cold knock to the pit of your stomach  
as the thought police go door to door.

Today I am much older in myself,  
hobbling these quiet woods,  
fathers’ walking stick in hand,

Autumn trees, beautiful in their death mask.



Banyan tree. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



Michael Durack lives in Co. Tipperary, Ireland. His poems have appeared in publications such as The Blue Nib, Skylight 47, The Cafe Review, Live Encounters, The Honest Ulsterman and Poetry Ireland Review as well as airing on local and national radio. He is the author of a memoir in prose and poems, *Saved to Memory: Lost to View* (Limerick Writers Centre 2016) and with his brother Austin he has recorded two albums of poetry and guitar music, *The Secret Chord* (2013) and *Going Gone* (2015). His poetry collections are *Where It Began* (2017) and *Flip Sides* (2020) both from Revival Press.



## TO SIR WITH LOVE

*for Jan Claire*

It may not always end like this.  
The beasts of the Blackboard Jungle tamed.  
The bully trading aggression for respect.  
Lessons in personal choice and responsibility  
wholeheartedly absorbed.

When the end-of-term hop comes around  
don't expect the pretty wild-child  
to turn to you for her Ladies' Choice.  
Don't hold your breath for a gift-wrapped present  
to be dropped into your hands,  
or for a tomboy to step forward to serenade you,  
on behalf of her grateful classmates,  
with the song, *To Sir With Love*.

Michael Durack

## NEW WORLD

Larry, nicknamed Sonny, trailblazer  
(eldest of sixteen, eleven boys)  
ups sticks for the New World, roaring twenties.  
Turned back by US immigration,  
rewinds over land and ocean  
to Ireland, East Clare,  
small farm, thatched homestead  
where a bewildered younger brother  
runs to tell his mother: *There's a fella  
looks like Sonny in the yard.*

Undaunted, strikes out again for Illinois,  
breathes the same ether  
as Capone's bootleggers,  
opens the door to younger brother,  
mild-mannered Denny,  
naturalised American  
(St Patrick's Day 1938),  
discreet war veteran-to-be.

Mercurial Dilly sails from Cobh  
aboard the SS Celtic 1928;  
Irish Juliet to a Latin Romeo,  
vanishes from family radar.  
While level-headed Mary leaves her mark  
in the 15th Census of the United States,  
cook to a private family  
on Manhattan's Park Avenue,  
marries a Galway man, succumbs  
to a fatal affliction 1950,  
the year in which Michael, her brother,  
as an *in-law* so crudely put it,  
*was fished out of the Hudson.*

Last of all Joe, the baby  
(apple of every eye)  
flees dismal post-war Ireland,  
joins the family colony in Chicago;  
German wife, three American kids,  
returning just the once for a family reunion,  
(nine years before his passing)  
to chew the fat and sing and pose  
in a sibling line-up, one short of a football team,  
in a hotel in Scariff. Ashes of his  
the only material trace  
of all that export human freight  
to merge with clay of their forebears  
In Moynoe Cemetery.



## AFTER THE DELUGE

Like a scene from an apocalyptic movie  
the heavens opened to end our ten-day heatwave;  
Indra and Ba'al twisted the stop-cock  
while Zeus and Thor took charge  
of the lighting and sound effects.

Our soft Irish rain now Biblical-Monsoon,  
for ninety minutes I was wonderstruck,  
a Noah without the Ark,  
Gene Kelly without the lamp post,  
Frank McCourt without the squalor,  
The Quiet Man without an Abbey or a Maureen O'Hara.  
In the rhythm of the pouring rain I was  
The Cascades without the stolen heart.

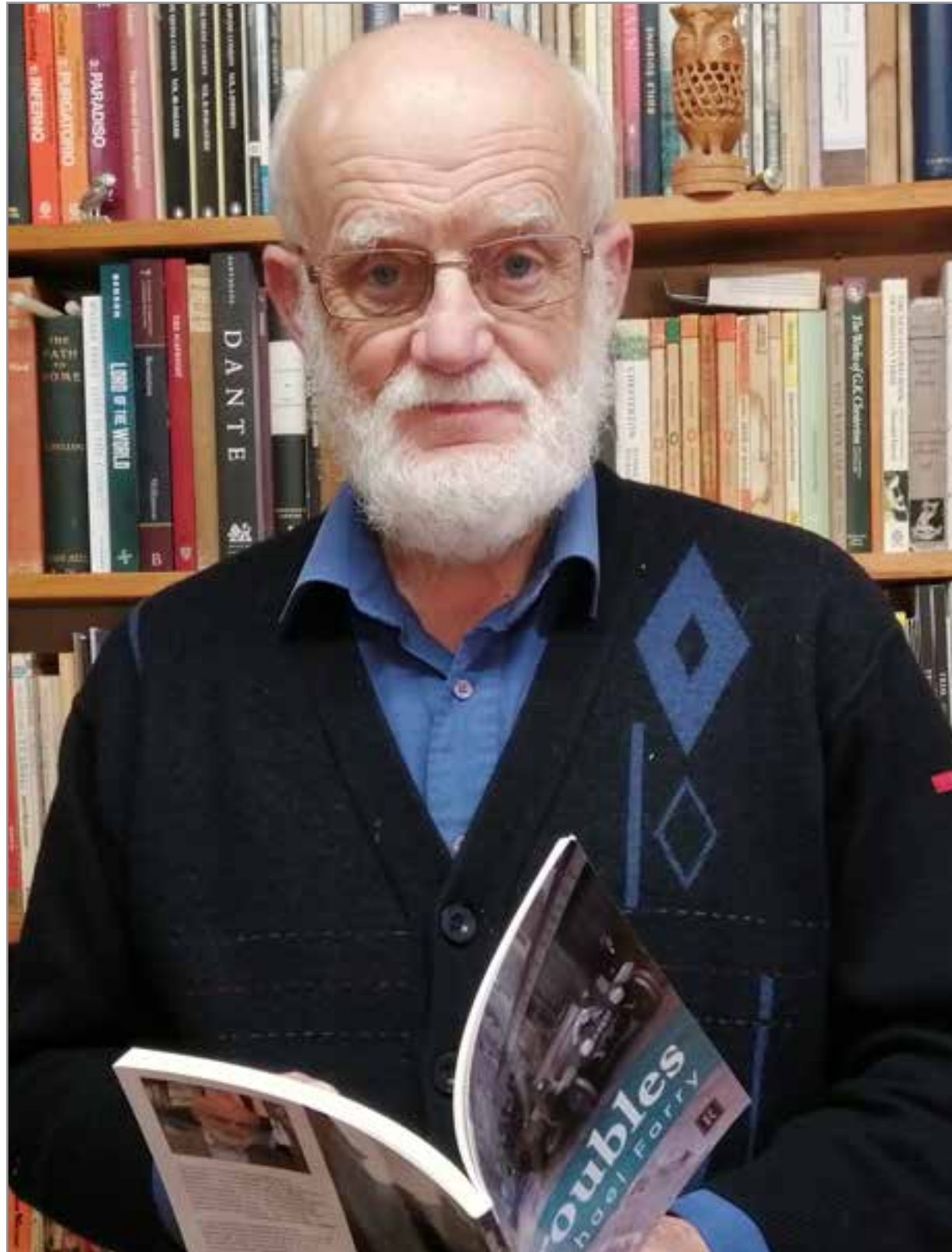
And when the downpour ended right on queue,  
as determined by the weather gods of Apple and Google,  
I became Sisyphus wielding a yard brush,  
his rock dissolved to water in a flooded garden shed

## INTERIOR DESIGN

My parents must have flipped and engaged  
a museum curator or a Belgian surrealist,  
the kitchen a dead zoo of body parts:  
the heads of otter, rabbit and hare  
mounted on wooden plaques above the door;  
flitches of bacon dangling from the ceiling;  
wearing his thorny heart outside his shirt,  
a bearded Saviour watching over us.

Along came the rural electrification;  
the gleaming light bulb banished the shadows.  
In lieu of taxidermy a new divine trinity  
of solemn Pope and two smiling Kennedys.  
Facing the Sobell black and white TV  
we worshipped the rock gods, Stones, Bee Gees  
and Beatles, especially John and Paul,  
their flowing locks like Jesus's on the wall

Michael Farry's latest poetry collection, *Troubles* (2020), is published by Revival Press, Limerick. Previous collections were *Asking for Directions* (Doghouse Books, 2012) and *The Age of Glass* (Revival, 2017). His poetry has been widely published in Ireland and abroad. He has also written and published widely on the history of the Irish war of independence and civil war. A retired primary teacher, he lives in Trim, Co Meath, Ireland.



## THE ADJUSTMENT OF SAILS

*for Tommy Murray*

Only now have I learned the language of stained glass windows  
The grammar of devotion is a lifetime's study  
In the beginning I was too wise to spend time on splendour  
When the sun shines through you must be up and ready

I never wanted my name in lights but here is perfect  
Tell him I survived it, that her advice helped  
If we face north every Sunday, where is the east window?  
I adore the cut of the sails and the roof's angle

Let us consider the word home, now that we are older  
It holds a terror for us who have travelled far  
But also joy. Each new morning is a different definition  
The slim atlas of ways home dares us to take and read

River pathways are compelling, trim lawns are seductive  
The day is too brief to consider alternatives  
History was my subject but it's hard to remember dates  
Each nightfall now is like the eve of Waterloo

Michael Farry

## THE LAST TRIP HOME

I leave behind my history books, car  
unfinished poems and best suit  
take the wedding photo and the faded cutting.

Modern trains are comfortable and I enjoy  
the free wi-fi, the flat midlands, the neat stops.

As a child I thought Collooney stationhouse  
a mansion but it's smaller now,  
prize-winning flower beds weedy,  
wilting hydrangea and straggling roses.

I search for a taxi to take me the final leg  
but find a steam engine and four carriages  
waiting on the branch line. I board,  
a whistle, we rumble off on rotting rails  
through the undergrowth of fifty years.

I, the sole passenger, get off at the dead stop  
where the windows are boarded  
and broken slates litter the platform.

No-one meets me.

I could abandon hope, take the next train back  
but they will have sensed  
that I am on my way, have the dinner on  
the table set, a fire in the good room.

When I reach the cottage the sharp scent  
of creosoted sleepers reminds me  
to look for the wild orchids behind the shed.  
I find them, Early Purple, upload a picture.

The Scots Pine wood, smaller now, gossips,  
passes on the word, and the fuchsia whisper  
that my father sits inside, alone,  
under the turn of the stairs,  
the table unset, the range cold,  
his fingers too stiff to strike a match.

When I push open the rotting door  
I hear his soft uncomplaining voice  
"Welcome home, son."



## THE GRAMMAR OF GLAMOUR

Now that she has gone, he swears  
he's studying a new language,  
one of the inflected tongues  
of the Romance group  
with an independent syntax.

Students of such obsessions  
such as I  
can tell at once  
that underneath his careful apathy  
the struggle to emulate her perfect grammar  
goes on in their mother tongue.

Just this week I noticed  
his rejection of the run-on sentence  
the comma splice,  
favouring instead a coordinating conjunction,  
his instinct being logical in everything;  
and so to correct  
*She broke hearts from the age of six,*  
*she is very beautiful*  
he substitutes  
*She broke hearts from the age of six*  
*because she is very beautiful*

He still has major difficulties  
with the use of the apostrophe,  
still mixes up his plurals and possessives  
which I suspect was his downfall.

I myself only recently became an expert,  
finally being able to tell my *lady's* from my *ladies*  
appreciate the subtle use of highlighter,  
the difference between the active and the passive,  
how concealer can sharpen your winged eyeliner.

## FOUNTAIN PEN PEOPLE

*i.m. Tony Joyce*

We were the last of the fountain pen people  
chose perfection in presentation – my metre  
your impeccable accounts.

Way back then we were naive enough to mock  
what we thought were fleeting novelties  
Biro, cartridge, felt tip.

Now on bitter evenings, after final bulletins  
we take down the bottle, refill the pen  
with Quink, concentrate

for hours on lines and columns, vital figures,  
firm words, in an effort to leave behind  
a fine but perfect record.

To-night plying my friendly 40s Parker,  
plastic plunger, banded celluloid, deluxe,  
older than either of us

I remembered, thought you should have it  
to balance your books in your best hand.  
Then I heard, it's too late.

It's not too late to put down on paper  
in robust ink why we wrote what we wrote  
valuing craft and courtesy.

So I'll keep this relic of our loyalty  
to write a final eulogy for you and us  
last of the fountain pen people.

Michael J. Whelan is an Irish soldier-poet & historian. He served as UN Peacekeeper in Lebanon and Kosovo in the 1990s. His poetry collections PEACEKEEPER (2016) and RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (2019) were published by Doire Press. He lives in Tallaght, South Dublin.



## THE OLD SKIN OF A COUNTRY

Long zips of shaped water  
in muddy tank tracks  
made by mechanical war  
caterpillar on the old skin of a country.  
Today is a sunny day,  
an anniversary of any day of peace  
in the realm of a century.  
The soil grows hard - a scar of deep ridges  
in squared reflections  
of the same piece of sky,  
moving,  
slowly,  
silent.

Michael J. Whelan

## IN THE GARDEN OF STONE

White face, under inquisitive brows  
 your marble eyes examine me,  
 not once in all our years  
 has your hair been lifted by a zephyr.  
 You do not move or bend to life  
 yet you are burdened, animated  
 as if seeking an answer of your creator,  
*where is the one who birthed me in hewn stone?*

In this darkness you are ghostlike,  
 the spectre of Caesar's Cleopatra,  
 of Apollo's Daphne, a nymph bound to this place.  
 Our conversation requires no movement of lips,  
 only the passage of thoughts between sculptor and muse,  
 the shaping of myth every time someone steps into your presence.

You have come from the mind of generations,  
 from the eclipse of enlightenment to stand before me,  
 here in this collected place  
 and you will remain perfect like this  
 long after I have gone.

## MURMURATION

*War in Palestine – May 2021*

In the black eye of Tristram's Starling  
 at the very edge of the murmuration  
 there are answers  
 only humans chase,

into the dusk  
 the beautiful animation  
 steals the passer-by,  
 is it music they hear?  
 is it that music they seek?

They are dancing  
 in honour of the end,  
 and whichever trees survive  
 are watching them,  
 they feel it too,  
 anticipating the night time's  
 temporary raptures.

*Tristram's Starling = Starling native to middle east regions*



## IN THE MUSEUM ON KILDARE STREET PRIOR TO A PANDEMIC IN THE YEAR 2020 AD

Before the display case  
I am alone in a crowded place  
near a once gilded sword –  
the ornamental hilt of the Viking Age,  
a rusting tip and blade  
and I recognise the tempered chevrons of autumns,  
the rhythmed stamps of rivers in time.

My mind's eye watches the forger work  
the fire, the hammer, the steaming trough  
and I wonder how many might have been stuck  
on the end of this treasure?

The seconds, and years, chime from cold mud  
like they do for the voices in bog-butter and bodies,  
the hymns in the psalteries and galleries  
discarded when the night skies were galaxies  
in a storms' rolling sea sprays.

## THE FAR AWAY CURVE

The shadow of my fingers  
rests upon your face,

your eyes open wide, then close again  
as if the sun has suddenly discovered you,

as if my fingertips have found  
the faraway curve of your dreams  
and my wish to be part of them

but there is no touch of skin,  
no requited gesture,  
only the illusion of affection

and that for now is all I have  
to surrender too.

Moyra Donaldson is a poet from Co Down. She has published nine collections of poetry, including a limited edition publication of artwork and poems, *Blood Horses*, in collaboration with artist Paddy Lennon. Her most recent collection is *Bone House*, Doire Press, 2021. In 2019, she received a Major Individual Artist award from Arts Council NI.



Moyra Donaldson

## A HARD PLACE, APRIL 2020

*It is not enough that yearly, down this hill, April  
Comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.*  
Edna St. Vincent Millay

Soft Spring; first delicate shoots,  
bright mornings and loamy evenings,  
liquid stirrings of sap, birdsong  
and underground  
bulbs green fountaining to air, carrying  
white quietude and yellow trumpeting.

April's promise seems to mock  
the primitive needs of heart, iced  
into this place of spikes and brittle edges,  
distance and glass between us - fear.

My ancestral hand longs for the feel of her,  
the sweet blessing of her fontanelle  
beneath my palm, the soft skull of her -  
granddaughter - my being grieves the lack.

## MY OWN DEAR MAGGIE

*from letters (1875/76) to Maggie Hutchinson from Joseph Sivenarton  
held by Maggie's great granddaughter, Helene*

I once more commit my pen to paper  
to state the facts of my love for you.  
I spend some sleepless hours  
alone in bed and thinking  
of the modest and pleasing manner  
you possess, I feel in a state  
that I really cannot express by letter.  
My hopes are that in a short time  
we will be able to confer all the kindness  
that nature has bestowed on us.  
My brother is highly pleased with you  
and I hope my dear Maggie, that your love  
for me (and no other) is still continuing.

\*

My dear Maggie, I was very much surprised  
when I called down yesterday evening  
and found you were not there according  
to appointment. I would have proceeded  
on to Drumagarner but I had to be home  
to go to Cookstown with flax. I consider  
and believe that it was not with your will  
we had not the pleasure of meeting  
according to arrangement and if there  
are anything of a disagreeableness  
with your own people, or a change of thought  
of your self, I would feel very much grieved  
and disappointed as you are my choice.  
So lest there be another disappointment,  
I will wait for a few lines from you by return.

\*

My dear Maggie, we have got on well  
with the business here today, the names  
are down in the registry, I gave your age  
as twenty four and mine thirty four.  
Wednesday week will be the big day.  
I sincerely hope you and all well and there  
will be no mistake in our good intentions  
and again my dear Maggie I subscribe  
by ever remaining your devoted and loving  
(I might say) husband. I will not be saying  
too much at present, but you know I am  
your own dear J.S. (and you mine).



## No 71

The room is in the child  
and the child is in the room,  
sitting against the bed, knees drawn up.  
The gas fire is lit, the air heavy with heat;  
two women lie in the bed  
side by side.

Outside the bedroom, the bungalow lays itself out  
into hallway, living room, kitchen and the other bedroom  
where a man listens to voices on his citizen band radio set.

The garden grows; in the greenhouse, peach trees hang  
heavy with perfect fruit; the child will always  
have the taste of peaches in her mouth.

## CLEAR

The white amaryllis helicopters its bloom  
above a long green stem, careless of time  
and of the fading edges, following its own  
imperative - in the mirror we are a ghost.

I will take my caring to where it sits stillest,  
to where it matters least, to all the places  
that ignore me best.

Nessa O'Mahony was born in Dublin and lives there. She won the National Women's Poetry Competition and was shortlisted for the Patrick Kavanagh Prize and Hennessy Literature Awards. She is the recipient of three literature bursaries from the Arts Council of Ireland. She has a PhD in Creative Writing from Bangor University and teaches with the Open University and the American College in Dublin. She has published five books of poetry – *Bar Talk*, (1999), *Trapping a Ghost* (2005), *In Sight of Home* (2009) and *Her Father's Daughter* (2014). *The Hollow Woman on the Island* was published by Salmon Poetry in May 2019. Her first work of historic crime fiction, *The Branchman*, was published by Arlen House in 2018. She has co-edited several anthologies of poetry, including (with Paul Munden) *Divining Dante*, a celebration of the 700th anniversary of the Italian poet, Dante Alighieri (Recent Work Press 2021) and (with Alan Hayes) *Days of Clear Light. A Festschrift for Jessie Lendennie* (Salmon Poetry 2021). Details of her latest poetry collection, *The Hollow Woman on the Island*, can be found here: <https://www.salmonpoetry.com/details.php?ID=509&a=281>



## THE ROAD TO ROSROE PIER

*"That whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent"*  
Ludwig Wittgenstein<sup>1</sup>

Tread carefully. This B-road is a high-way  
to imagery and carefully sculpted words.  
I try to set the scene, but find myself borrowing  
Cannon's *companionable* Pins, Yeats' stone-dark *froth*.  
A Henry cloud scuds the skyscape as the car sides the lake,  
passes the fairyhouse where the happy prince fished,  
Victorian chimney smoking through Grimm brambles.

There's a thinker at every turn here;  
no epiphany unturned, no revelation  
other than what the camber permits  
through trees and gaps in fuschia.  
Over that hill is the fjord, its enigmatic pool;  
in Rosroe we do what we can within harbour walls.  
Waves niggle the quay, oblivious sheep ruminant  
in front of the whitewashed house  
where the philosopher once strode  
back and forth on meaning,  
releasing *thoughts on wings*,  
leaving notes for the next poet to find  
stuffed in the eaves for warmth or legacy.

Nessa O'Mahony

<sup>1</sup> *Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein lived in Quay House, Rosroe Pier, Connemara in 1934 and 1948*

## THE DREAMING OCTOPUS

dreams of open seas  
as the walls of her cell dissolve  
and she floats in monochrome.  
She colours as images form  
in her three hearts, pores bleed  
pigment till her mantle aerates  
the dream into indigo, blue,  
the most vibrant purple ever seen  
in the five oceans, the 50 tanks  
of her laboratory.  
Scientists scan her thoughts,  
but fail to detect  
which memories stay with her,  
having only their own,  
suppressed since the seas rose,  
the oceans boiled over.

## AFTER ILLUMINATION

What if those certainties eclipse  
when you round the corner, slow your pace,  
and the white glare of a half-moon off-axis  
blanches out the stars, stains the sky,  
blurs clouds like masses on a ultrasound  
to haunt your sleep and waking?

What use perspective now,  
a knowledge of phases?  
Say all you like about transience,  
the dog days between one lit candle and another.  
The light we make or that we recognise  
has no times or dates, no lunar calendar.



XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX



Niamh Byrne

AZURE BLUE WASHING LINE

Turning over the timer  
another day to fill.  
Light casts its ceaseless reminder  
You are still alive.  
Life's nasty whip.  
Unspoken. Locked in.

The light seeps out and nothing stood  
behind her except her rusty shadow on  
the bed.  
Among the shimmering leaves  
the world alive outside Nothing's window  
she hears the light chat  
Lash  
Nothing smells the barbecues  
Lash  
Nothing sees the pink and sliver  
of the flamingo and star fairy lights  
Lash.

No bin to take out  
full of get togethers  
no dishwasher to fill  
or guest towels or fancy soap  
no phone ringing or doorbell  
chiming.

What's the point.

*continued overleaf...*

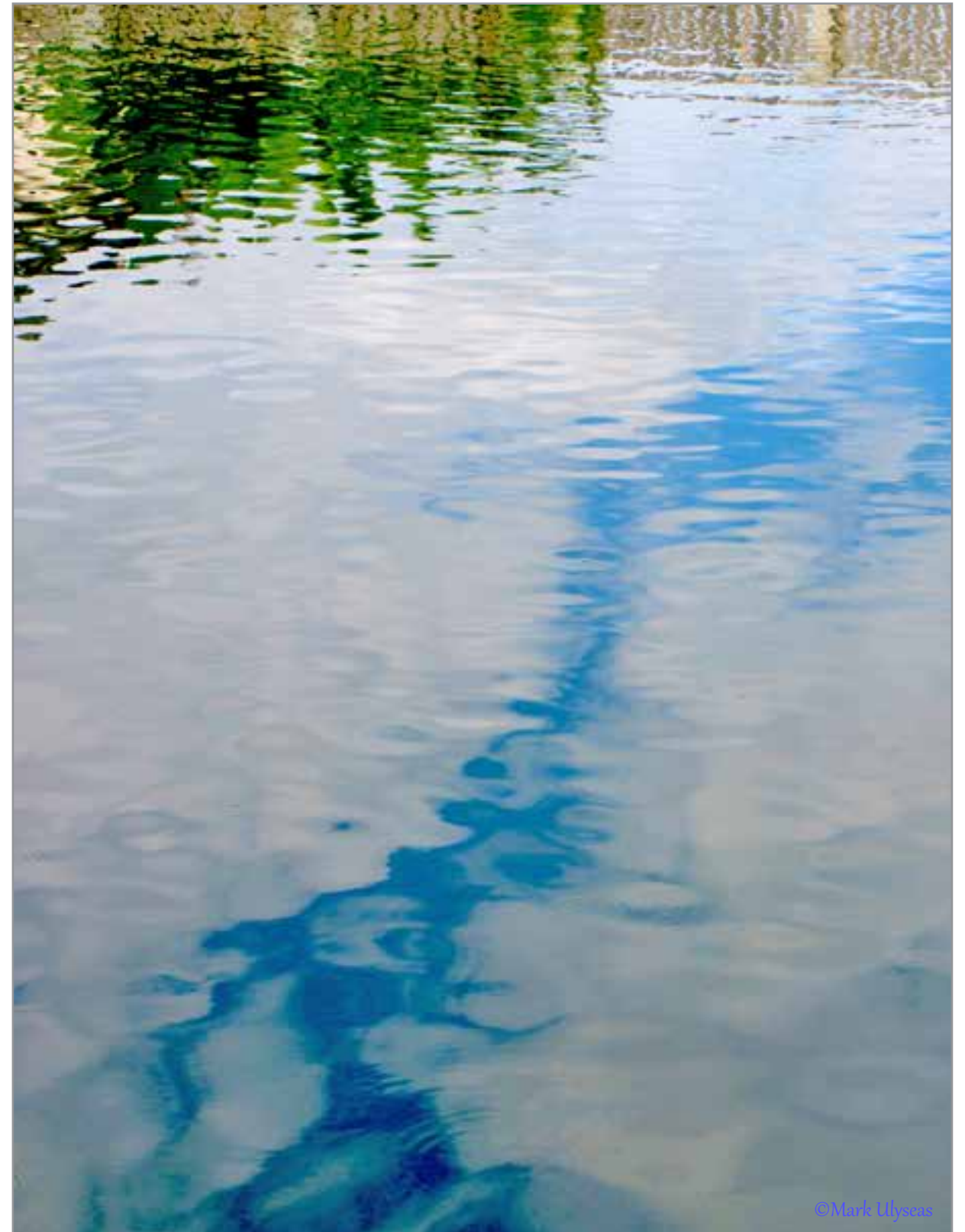
AZURE BLUE WASHING LINE *...contd*

Nothing didn't bother to replace the milk or bread it stayed out on the counter with the masticated ball nothing spat out that balmy morning.

Nothing didn't bother to sit down or lie or stand.

Nothing took the garden sheers and with a flourish clipped the Azure blue washing line. She hurled the shears like an expert axe thrower at the wooden post where it vibrated and sang like a saw. Nothing strode up the stairs and stopped on the tenth step. Nothing wrapped the azure blue washing line three times around the bannister. Nothing threw her leg over and sat atop the post and just like she was told the midwife had said, it was like a washing line three times wrapped around her neck. From atop the post she slid down the bannister until the rings of azure blue stopped her. Legs dangling her palms and fingers gripped between the spindles. Nothing pushed off the bannister like pushing off onto a waterslide, legs go high and then splat. Nothings legs cracked against the wall and her neck sprung up her lungs gasped for air like a dying fish. The azure blue washing line silently taut while nothings shadow cast upon the doorway.

Outside, the pink and sliver of the flamingo and star fairy lights mingled with the charcoal smoke and cast a bloom of savannah camping over the get togethers. In the row of gardens, families ate, and dads stood over the red embers testing the firmness with the spatulas while light chat, clinking glasses and sissles of meat float over the fences and walls to sweep across the setting sun.



Sky in water. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



Owen Gallagher was born of Irish parents in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, Scotland. He now lives in London. His recent publications are: *A Good Enough Love*, Salmon Poetry, Ireland, 2015, which was nominated for the T.S. Eliot award. *Clydebuilt*, Smokestack Books, 2019. Shortlisted for Scotland's National Books Awards, 2021. *The Sikh Snowman* an illustrated children's picture book was published in November 2020 by Culture Matters. Reprinted December 2020. *Rabble Day*, a play, will be premiered in Ireland in 2022.



## I SAW HOPE AT THE AIRPORT

At times Hope boards a plane  
and leaves you stranded

with something to declare  
but no one to declare it to.

At times you don't know  
whether you're at Arrivals

or Departures and feel  
you're on a carousel

or destined for Lost Property.  
Hope goes AWOL frequently

but always reappears.  
There it is! Waving at the gate.

Suntanned and sandaled.  
Lugging Duty Free.



## EVERYONE'S RUSHING OUT OF THEMSELVES

Everyone's rushing out, leaving themselves  
behind the front door  
to slip back into later.

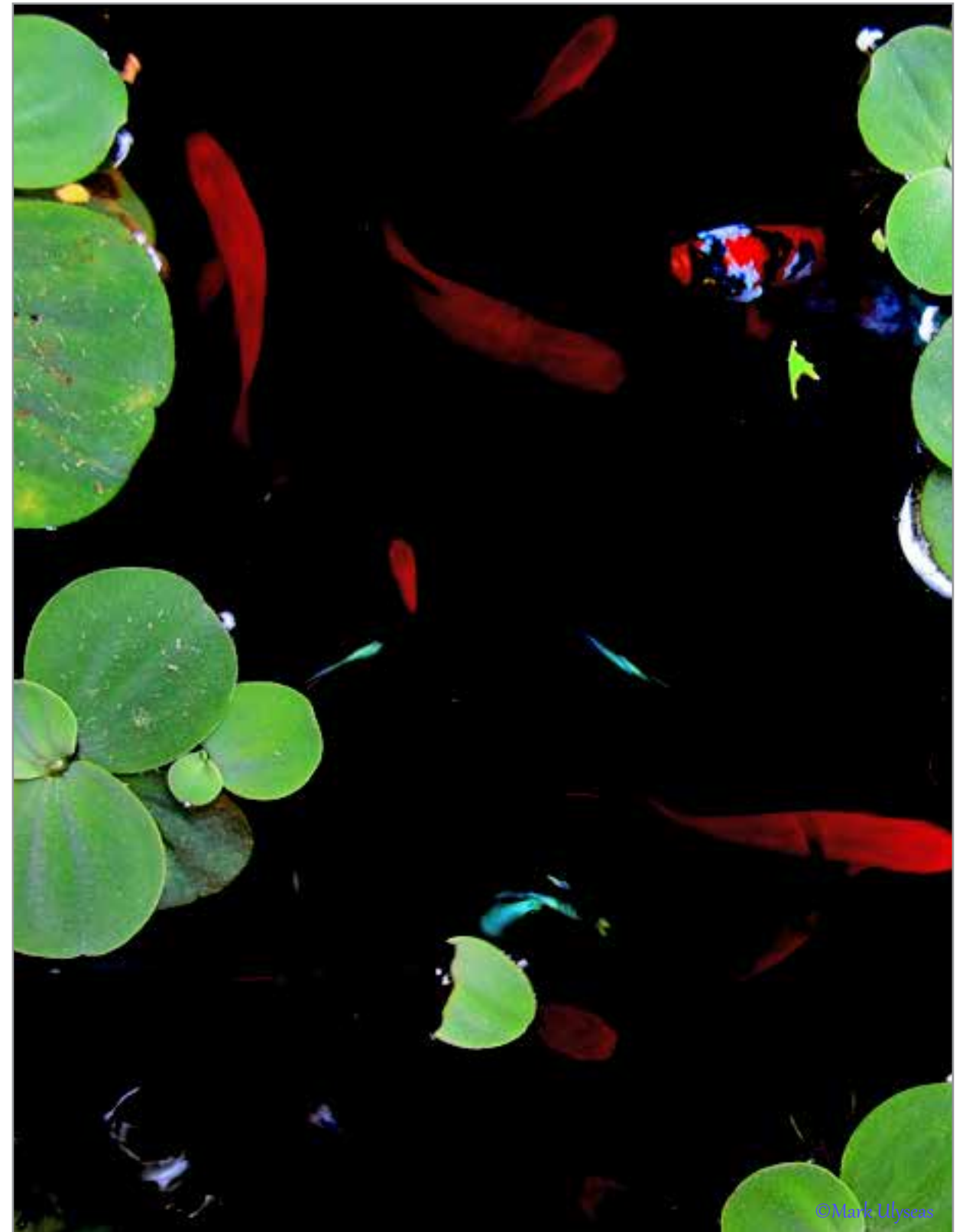
They're wearing different clothes but the same faces,  
each of them is sprinting to work  
to get it over with.

Everyone's on a starting line,  
running a relay race,  
passing the baton to themselves all day.

They bolt home  
with their to-do lists.  
They've lost the keys to themselves.

Everyone's dashing  
to a finishing line  
then lining up for the next event.

We think they're content - they think we're content.



Fish in a pond. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Patricia Sykes is a poet and librettist. Her poems and collections have received various nominations and awards, including the Newcastle Poetry Prize, John Shaw Neilson award and the Tom Howard Poetry Prize. Short listings include the Anne Elder, Mary Gilmore, and Judith Wright Awards. She has read her work widely, including on Australian, Paris and New Zealand radio. It has also been the subject of ABC radio programs, *Poetica* and *The Spirit of Things*. Her collaborations with composer Liza Lim have been performed in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Paris, Germany, Russia, New York and the UK. She was Asialink Writer in Residence, Malaysia, 2006. A selection of her poems was published in an English/Chinese edition by Flying Island Books in 2017. A song cycle composed by Andrew Aronowicz, based on her collection *The Abbotsford Mysteries*, premiered at The Abbotsford Convent Melbourne — now an arts precinct — in 2019.



## SILENCE IS HER MISFIT

Her life is missing. The nights are colder.  
The gold-brown flutter of Autumn has  
buried the footsteps of her final season,  
all she was, the brights of gentleness,  
her wry and subtle humour.

Her privacies are her privilege  
are as complex as fertile soil.  
I mull over her foreshortened years  
as I rake, reaping the seasonal wine  
of my Japanese Maple, its clarets

a little less bountiful this year, a little  
less robust each friend lost is  
too deeply gone for a glib epitaph  
or emotive tilt I rake and rake  
listening to the shush-shush

of skitter leaves. Embraced  
by rain-drenched greenness  
I take stock sooner, later,  
my bones will join hers  
sooner, later, my thoughts

and words will have stopped  
their chatter whether in  
whisper or raucous mode  
Nature itself is never quiet.  
Silence is a misfit.

Patricia Sykes

## IN TRANSIT NOW THE RAIN HAS COME

*Via Opodiphthera helena*

Bushfires, drought, debates of cause  
 the climate still the climate, argumentively,  
 the seasons arriving like nervous guests,  
 staying for no one, no thing, not gains,  
 nor losses, which like stockmarket falls  
 trouble those who fear fools gold.

Now this small life, flying in as moth.  
 For long nights, four, she scrabbles at  
 my night window like beseeching hands,  
 is doomed as an adult never to feed,  
 within her five-day span must mate  
 or forfeit, must trust her own lustre  
 to deceive predators. Must trust me  
 not to trap her within my bedroom's

fake moonlight. On the fifth day  
 I go hunting her corpse  
 and find only absence.  
 Not even ground soaked  
 and reprieved can revive  
 the *helena's* brief hours  
 or make her wing-eyes  
 re-open. Beautifully.  
 In defiance.

## WIFE

*Mortgage*

A lover, then children, sequential days mussed and mazed by the tumble  
 and rough of wife-self-motherhood. The sheer verve of entrapment: toys,  
 debts, food, pets, arriving, passing, sleep-deprived nights forever wanting  
 the bodies in the beds to sleep beyond lasting.

*Roof*

A hole in the roof can be hidden by wishing, made smaller by patching.  
 Children still leave home. In sunlit dawns trees aglow like a forest far from  
 the axe though twigs in the nest are never so tight a predator cannot breach gaps.

*Sky*

Between foliage breaths a leaf drops on new ground. Beads of rain along its  
 stem bleed like amputation. Above it the sky domes and domes, eons of lives  
 staining its table cloth.

*Finity*

If eternity were a wife who could pay her wages?



Penelope Layland is a Canberra poet and former journalist and speechwriter. Her 2018 book *Things I've thought to tell you since I saw you last* (Recent Work Press) was shortlisted for the Kenneth Slessor Prize and the ACT Book of the Year, and was the poetry winner in the ACT Writing and Publishing Awards. Her most recent book, *Nigh*, was published by Recent Work Press in 2020.



## REFLECT ON THIS

You slide into the bathroom mirror beside me,  
not quite right, left made right.

You see yourself as you've always seemed—  
to you at least—if more ragged.

I see migrations—of chipped front tooth,  
small, sexy scar, now cutting whitely

above the wrong eyebrow.  
Wrong you, not exactly haggard, but strained.

When you stroke your cheek for stubble  
your ring's on the wrong finger again.

Penelope Layland

BABY BOOMER TATTOOS  
(PRICES ON REQUEST) \*

Spider veins to span a man’s delicate inner thigh.  
Age spots to muddy the backs of hands.  
Matte grey keratoses, with three-dimensional effect.  
Dark menace of moles, priced by size.

Senile warts and skin tags (extra for intimate sites).  
Squamous cells and BCCs, mottled décolletage.  
Varicose veins on the back of one knee (discount for job lot).  
Insurance rebates for any ‘x’ that marks a radiation spot.

Anchors, swallows, nautical stars all incur surcharge.  
‘Mother’ fades the fastest to an abstract kind of art.  
Results may vary at first—in the long run, not so much.  
Arrows persist far longer than their pierced red hearts.

SMOKE

Decades after we broke, you could make me groan awake, fierce  
with disappointment at my weak, weak self, till the strip light  
between the blinds, my clean mouth, let me know it was only  
dreaming. But what dreams, inspirited/respired, what language  
and desire, smoky music and rasped laughter in between the  
inbreathing, the outbreathing. What a time it was to be thinking  
not of long life but of living.

\*Cooling-off period waived for over-80s

Phil Lynch lives in Dublin, Ireland. His work has appeared in a range of literary journals and anthologies, including previous editions of Live Encounters Poetry. Other recent publications in which his work has appeared include: Skylight 47; The Honest Ulsterman; The Bangor Literary Journal, Days of Clear Light, The Music of What Happens and Two Meter Review. He is a regular performer at poetry and spoken word events and festivals. His poetry collection *In a Changing Light* (Salmon Poetry) was published in 2016.



## ROLL CALL

A bird atop a tree keeps sharp lookout,  
a jackdaw or a crow, it's hard to tell  
against the glare the sun has spread about,  
its feathers flutter in a breezy swell.  
Lithe blue tits dart from branch to fence to hedge;  
alert to dangers posed by prowling cat,  
they chirp shrill warnings from a safer ledge.  
A robin drops in silence from a slat,  
an unsuspecting insect in its sights.  
Each piece of nature's puzzle finds its place.  
When daily bustle settles into nights  
we gather all our own for safe embrace,  
aware that unexpected tolls may sound,  
we pray our fragile pieces are all found.

Phil Lynch



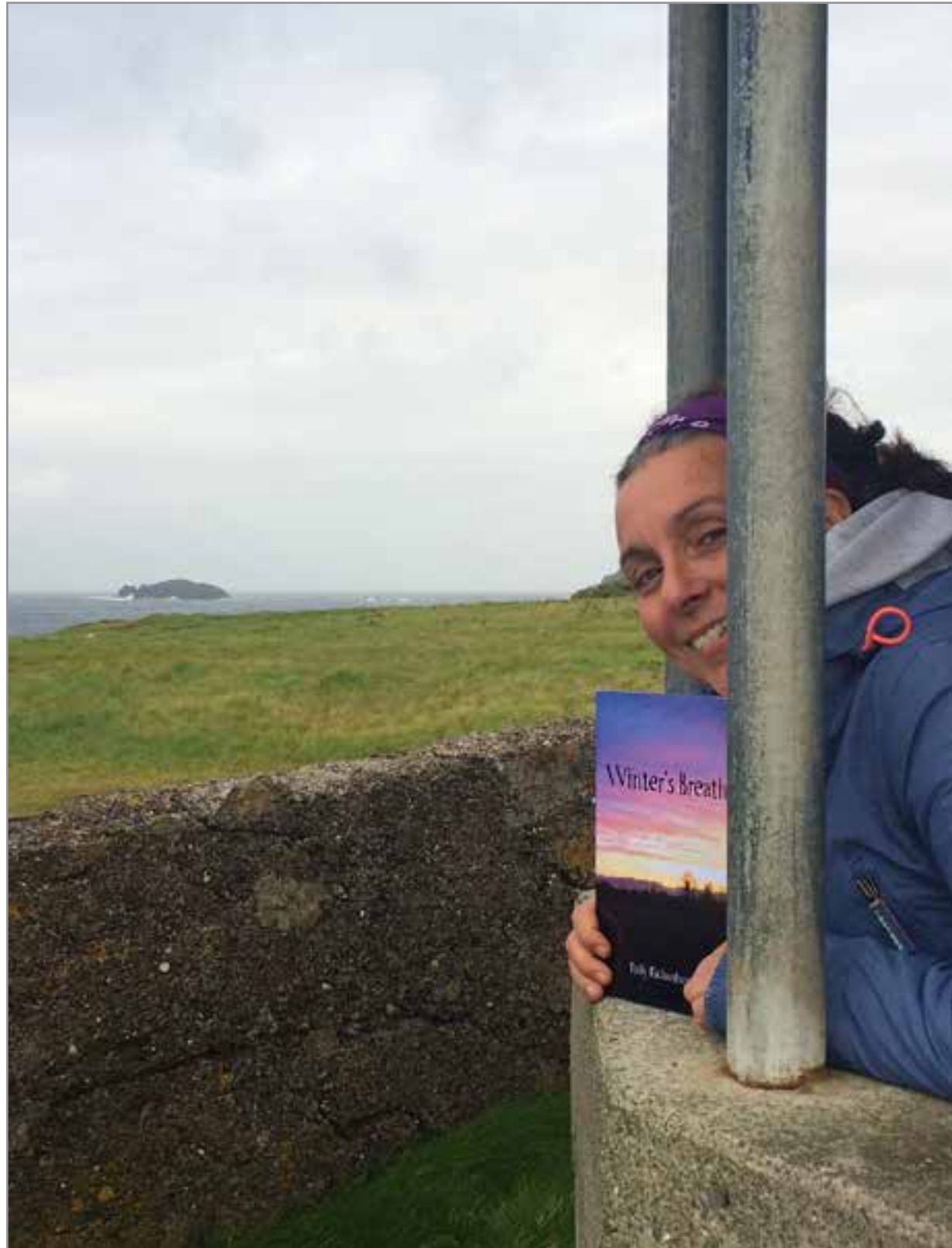
SUMMER SONG

let's not squander  
  
the stronger light  
of longer days  
  
let's harvest it  
  
with honey, nuts,  
most precious crop  
  
let's gather in  
  
the warm flavour  
before it fades  
  
let's savour all  
  
it has to give  
each luscious drop

IN A SPIN

The sea whispers to the shore  
*there are no words, no words anymore.*  
It confides to the sand that it is choking  
in a strangle of stacked up packaging.  
Everything backing up,  
stifled outlets forced to reverse their flow,  
water and waste push back to their base.  
Sinks and toilets jammed-up and stinking  
overflow onto streets, across fields, down roads,  
filling rivers and lakes as they squeeze a last gasp  
from their plasticated lungs  
before everything spins way out of control.  
There are no words, no words anymore.

Polly Richardson Munnely is Dublin born poet, currently living and writing in Dingle co Kerry, Ireland. She continues to run the Bulls Arse Writers group Navan co Meath remotely and her Tuesday's Zoomers group of international poets. She has been published both nationally and internationally. Her debut collection *Winter's Breath* is out and available on Amazon. She is currently working on her second collection.



## DINGLE WILDS – AUTUMN 2.5

I'm sitting, sitting here, just here. Autumnal wisps nibbling.  
 Curling itself around defiance, marina's orchestral harmonies in  
 full dynamics as if knowing. Horizons waves through Dingle-bay mouth  
 I'm sitting. Here.  
 I imagine conversations beneath tidal ebbing, among umbilicails  
 and serratus as crab moves for luncheon in between  
 while August preps farewell  
 Smells of stillness teases. I'm siting. Stitching eyes wide open.

Bustling flocks as if commuters on a Fridays rush hour disperses  
 gulls as they chorus. Each footfall wrapped up in own have-to and nots,  
 and I believes it's meant to ...  
 moving faster than light to sea,  
 foreign to westerly whirs, pauses and cloud caracole  
 while boats bob speaks low. Soon my darlings soon.  
 The crow hears, flaps his yeses

leaving solo feather falling gracefully like mist licks from summit.  
 And I'm sitting with coffee slurp - rolls through mouth softening  
 this pallet enriching like warm salting caramel sliding from tongue,  
 remembering blubber-breaths on surface shimmers of a Sunday morn  
 in stillness of solitude. Soon my darling soon, curlew, oyster catcher will  
 decorate local shores, bustling fading back with summer memories.  
 Winter's beautifully bleak blanket will gift wonderfully, and Autumn slowly rises  
 With dawn and lunar light for now leaving Blackberries silently thrive. slow .

Polly Richardson

*Note : umbilicails & serratus – type of seaweed common to Atlantic waters*

## HUG

Cocoon. metaphoric as butterfly first flight towards sun  
 With springs lifts of Winter's pattering sigh.  
 Melt into arm envelop merging pulse beats to a whisper  
 Swaddle, slurping up lingering darkness lurking,  
 collapsing into embrace wooing warmth  
 In a moment, imprinting beyond decades,  
 clothing each revelation forward.  
 I miss you.  
 Paws placed pulling forehead to forehead heating depths  
 a silent knowing there's longing wising whinny, hand curl grasp  
 wags sync constant yet rhythmic till sighs exhale with tomorrow's dream  
 will come dancing itself with dawn's sweet solas  
 and curlews loan cry with breaking laps.

## DINGLE WILDS 31 – BOW

I bow. Bow to wilding, to each sand grain  
 left by tidal-palms, dust off stars as they claim  
 their spot to gleam, gifting raw awe-ness  
 scoop rainbows after they cried themselves coloured arcs  
 leaving transparent crescents falling from skies

catching, taking eyes with sea crystal deposits  
 as they depict sailors stories within each glint winking  
 with sun, their low hums sing its own Atlantic rhythm,  
 stripping me, striping me back bare before both birth  
 and sward touched.

Grounding already decided, forming forged paths  
 for the following amongst hills, held in sight of grasses  
 and blooming heather dripping buttery yellow with dots of  
 brilliant plum fringing edges - rugged, breakable to  
 crumbs from seas sensational rough licks

I bow. Bow to wilding, to each sand grain left by tidal palms  
 dream of transcendence with wave and the kelp parting  
 it's ways so in this garden perhaps Eden  
 I'll sit with curlews colourful sound sow joy into each  
 breath, sing loud as dawns chorus,  
 low hums synchronising this Atlantic rhythm.



## THREAD

The unseen strength, looping each part in togetherness,  
lifesaving sea baring keeping sails catching its breath.  
The final close on open heart in hands  
deep in dark red before chests pull  
a heave -ho closed like elevator prep to go either way.

Bounding words for centuries. Holding poise while  
hooves galloped final words, pulled the linen  
from those mills long undone, yet still, hands thread leathers.  
That bungee cord wetting decades as feet christen  
themselves in leap and faith,

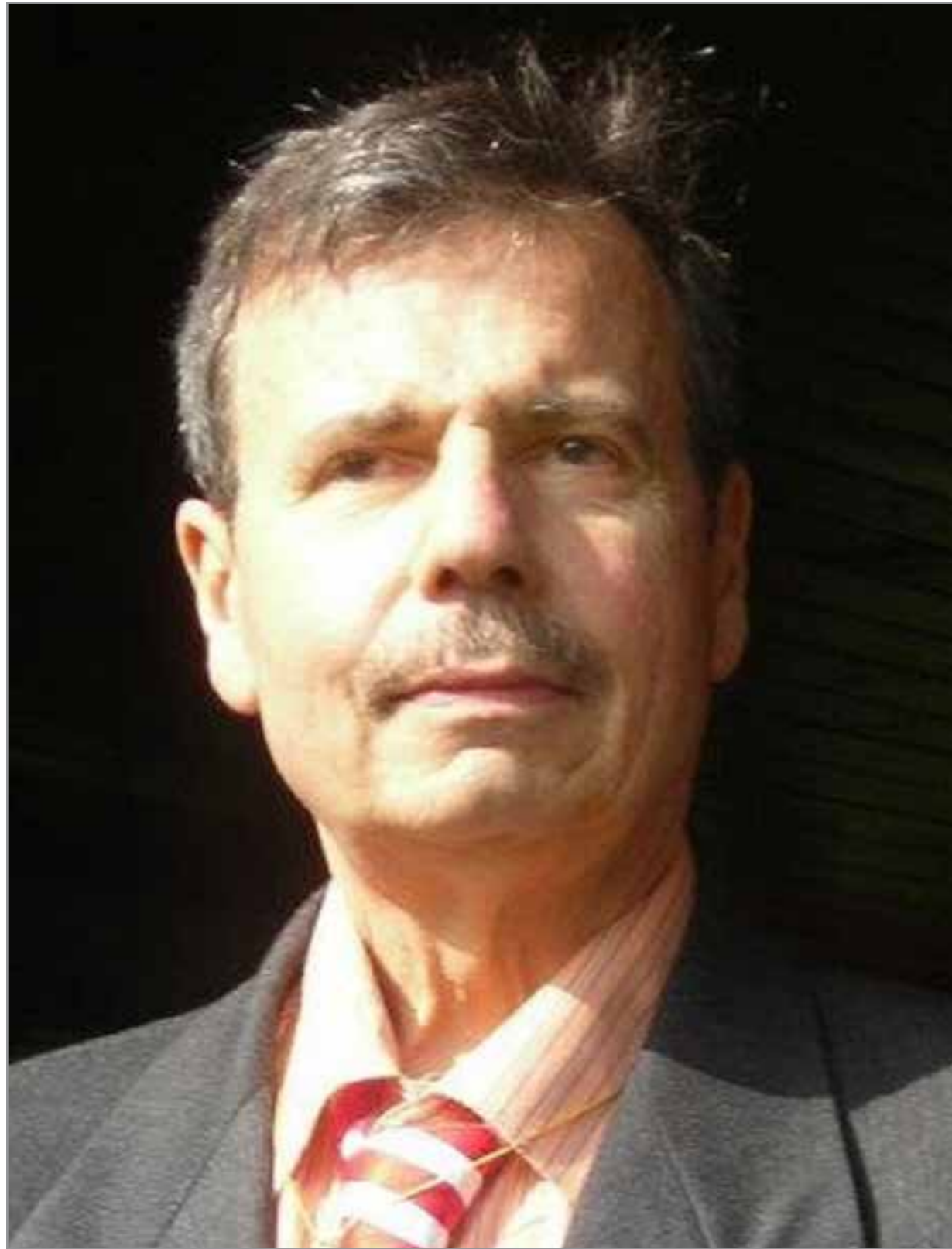
weave of nets heaved to land to feed bellies of the aching.  
frayed, undone hanging on to fringes or artist  
stitch claiming Paris depending on your outlook.  
Thread. Single strand.  
Silken wonders, multi- layered

Woven lavishness for the fondle, carpeting millions  
laid down for bare-gasums while the blistered grind,  
bake bread. Thread. Thing of armour, warriors, survival or  
simple maternal appreciation tracing each letter  
sown honouring new arrival, swaddled joy with joy.



Stone relief at Hampi, Karnataka, India. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Bremner has been writing of incense, peppermints, and the color of time since the 1960s. He appeared in the legendary first issue of the *Passaic Review* in 1979, which also featured Allen Ginsberg, and has appeared in *International Poetry Review*, *Anthem: Leonard Cohen Tribute Anthology*, *Jerry Jazz Musician*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, and elsewhere. Ron has published seven books of poetry, including *Absurd* (Cajun Mutt Press) and *Hungry words* (Alien Buddha Press). He has thrice won Honorable Mention in the Allen Ginsberg awards, and has featured at the Bowery Poetry Club in NYC, at the Brownstone Poets in Brooklyn, and elsewhere. He lives with his beautiful sociologist wife, son, and dog Ariel in wonderful Northeast New Jersey.



## YOU HAVE LOST

You have lost  
the music in your eyes.  
You have lost  
the color in your walk.  
You have lost  
the flash in your talk.  
Though you have improved your knowledge in  
the many ways required by your new life  
it is what you have forgotten that sacrifices me.

I want to send a tornado through you.  
I want to switch you on like a radio, to hear the news.  
I want you to melt me in the heat of your kitchen.  
But I stand outside in the dining room,  
wondering if dinner will come



## PEARLS OF WISDOM

What pearls of wisdom  
do you have for me today?  
my stroke doctor asked me.

Pearls of wisdom. Pearls of wisdom?  
I failed to seek those from my father.  
What wisdoms he knew were lost to me.  
I thought he had nothing to teach me.  
There was nothing about him and his life  
and his world that I cared to know.  
Now I know how stupid and useless  
were my beliefs about my father.  
There is so much I yearn to discover  
about him and the world he lived in.  
I do not want him to be a stranger,  
just some body six feet underground.

But it's too late.  
Looking at old photos, reading a letter he wrote,  
who were these people, what did your words mean?

Roasting mickeys in a vacant lot  
with the neighborhood kids.  
The second baseman with the rocket arm.

The war he fought in,  
the depression he lived through,  
his courtship of my mother,  
his endless days hammering nails into shingles  
his descent into Parkinson's.  
an epic life that escaped me,  
all his mysteries I can't solve  
explode in my brain.

Father, Dad, you didn't know the son  
whose self he kept hidden from you.

And you?  
I will never know you.  
The pearls of wisdom  
have cracked and yellowed.



## I KISSED YOUR SHADOW

I kissed your shadow in the dark  
while music skipped through the pines  
and chill shivered our bones.

Your shadow told me it was not you  
but I knew better  
as it hugged me like  
an ocean hugs sand.

## IDEAS

Ideas percolate on this steamy morning. The landfill of the mind accepts all incoming garbage. As usual, I cannibalize the Draconian grog and filter the sturm und drang that would draw out the vomit in my soul. And another day's useless energy prepares for blastoff!

Raine Geoghegan, M.A. is a Romani poet, writer and playwright living in the UK. She is a Forward prize, twice Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net 2018 nominee. Her work has been published online and in print. Her two pamphlets are published by Hedgehog Press. Her essay is featured in the anthology 'Gifts of Gravity and Light' with Hodder & Stoughton. Her First Collection will be published with Salmon Poetry Press in March 2022. Website: [rainegeoghegan.co.uk](http://rainegeoghegan.co.uk)



## THE SADDEST EYES IN THE WHOLE WORLD

*im. Dan Leno*

He wore long baggy trousers and boots.  
His face painted white.  
When he walked onto the stage,  
the audience fell silent.  
His eyes were the saddest in the whole world,  
yet the audience laughed as soon as he began to perform.  
Charlie Chaplin stood in the wings, looking on, taking it all in.  
Around him dancers limbered up, their long legs stretched high  
against the wall and their backs arching like swans.  
Maybe it was the smell of the sawdust, or the man on the stage  
with the sad eyes, reminding him of his own sadness,  
but the way the laughter made his heart flutter, well,  
whatever it was, he was hooked.

Raine Geoghegan

## REMEMBERING ERNESTINE

She arrived one afternoon in late May.  
I opened the front door and there she was,  
a little breathless from walking,  
her auburn hair turning grey.

She wore bright red and green,  
jazzy colours that cheered me.  
When she spoke with her Jamaican drawl,  
it made me want to shimmy my shoulders and dance.

It was warm outside.  
We had Ceylon tea and lemon cake in the garden.  
I placed soft cushions on the wicker chairs.

The dogs sat at our feet,  
waiting for crumbs to fall.  
I was ill.  
She noticed that I had lost weight,

that my skin was pale.  
She talked about the ocean,  
the West Indian breeze,  
how it would do me the world of good.

*'The next time I go to Jamaica, you must come, swim in the ocean  
and catch the breeze.'*

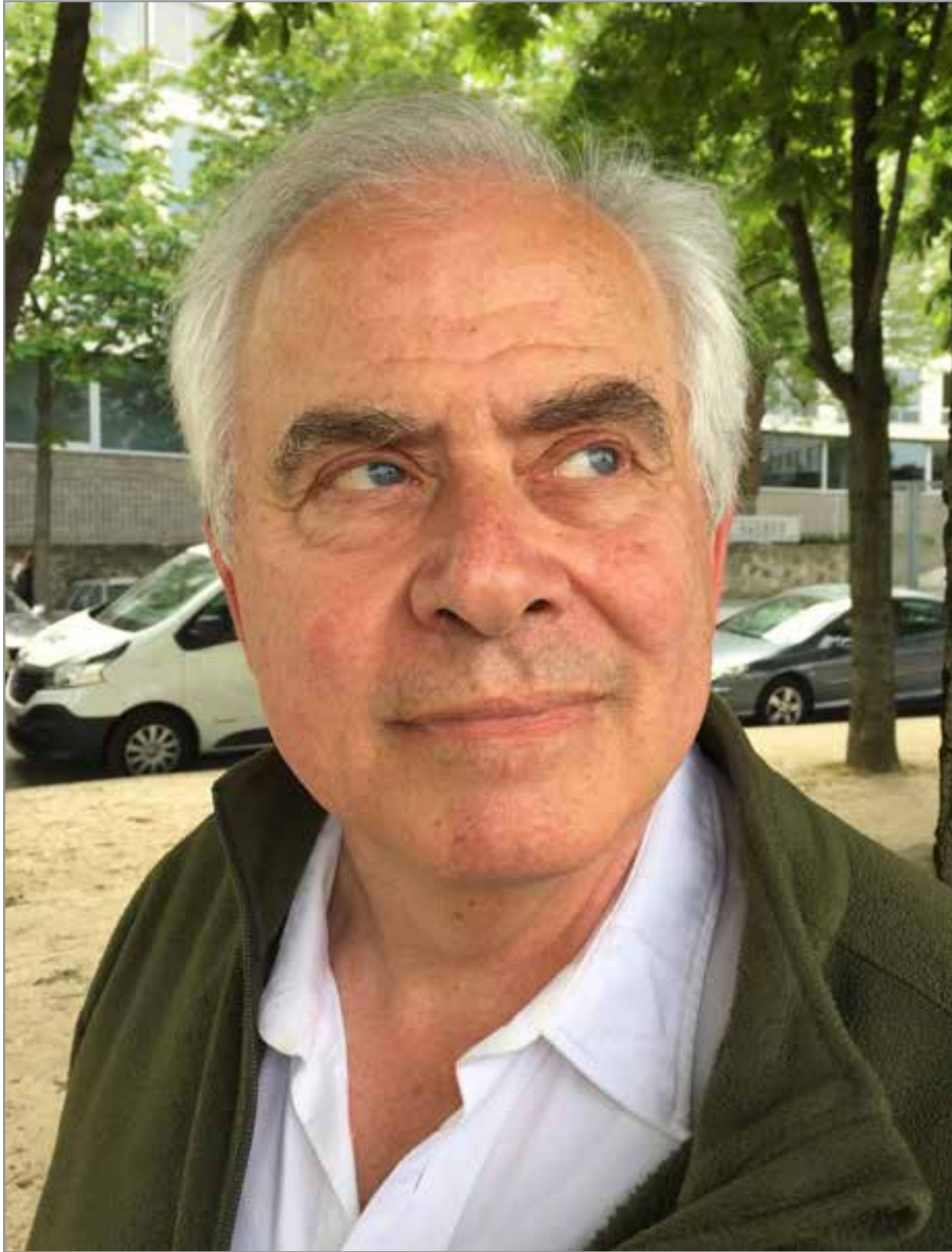
She left in the late afternoon,  
wanting to get the 4 O Clock bus to Isleworth.  
We hugged each other,  
said we'd keep in touch.

I watched her sashaying down the road.  
She lit up the street,  
with her hips swaying,  
her purple handbag swinging.

She turned once, waving and smiling.  
I waved back then went inside.  
I think of her from time to time.



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.



## THE ROSE WINDOW

What has held – really held – in my life,  
When so much has not? Some beliefs.  
Some friendships. Stained glass windows  
Which remain after they break. Bereavement,  
A word I prefer to grief, bereft means  
Robbed of. Courage did not hold, I cannot  
Write about that, but here I still am.

Richard W. Halperin

## THE CAPTAIN'S DEATH BED

'Early in the morning of August 9th, 1848, just about dawn  
he died.' *The Captain's Death Bed*, Virginia Woolf

The Captain is dying in a room the walls  
Of which are painted with trellis work  
Covered with roses. The bedroom with  
My crib in it in Chicago in 1944  
Had roses on the wallpaper, I can still  
See them, although one isn't supposed  
To remember anything before the age  
Of three. In Harlem in 1972,  
At Adam Clayton Powell's funeral,  
Who knows what was on a bystander's mind  
When she said, 'Those are the wrong roses  
For that man.' I think roses on wallpaper  
May be the language of actual death.  
I think they may be the language of marriage  
And of friendship. I think they may be  
The language of the angels in Matthew 4  
Who arrive to look after Jesus, for a while.

## THE RED SHOES

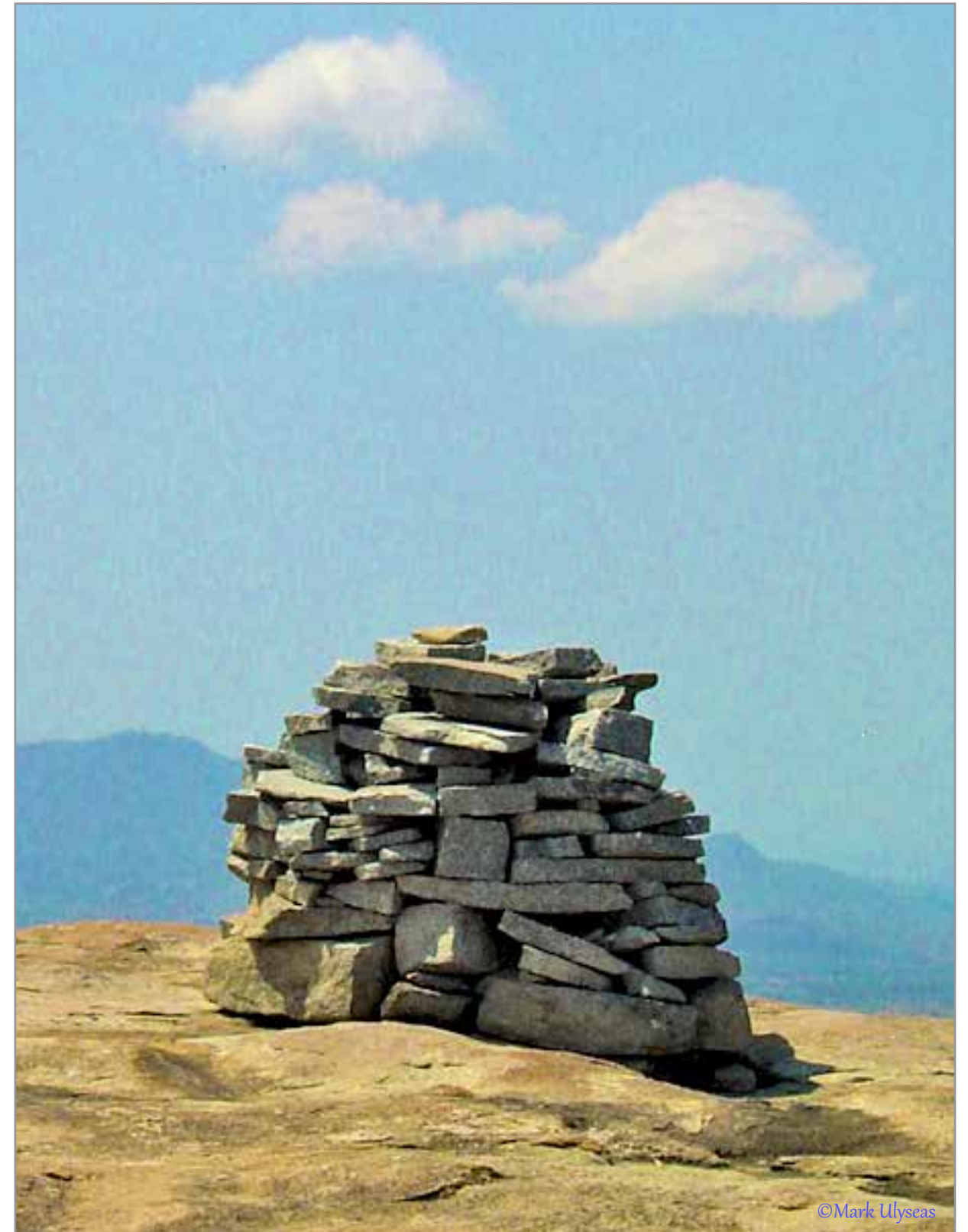
Empty street on a rainy day, empty flat and a pot of tea,  
Empty poem which is any poem, newspaper pages  
Blown about at night on an empty street, one of the pages  
Become a dancer to dance with the exhausted girl  
In *The Red Shoes*, 'she dies, of course' as a line in  
The film goes – artists doing their work of help as do  
Doctors and firefighters, notes in a bottle and even  
*Anna Karenina* is a note in a bottle.



## IN AN ABBEY

*For Liam Ó Muirhile*

I came across in an abbey just now  
*A Poetry Ireland Review*. No. 52. The most  
 Wonderful poems, with no exceptions.  
 And an interview with Pearse Hutchinson,  
 And more poems. Does anyone write like that  
 Anymore? Even the writers in it who still  
 Write? Yes. Some. What happened?  
 The model A Ford chugs along, or the Morris.  
 Words are all inadequate – Eliot spends much of  
*East Coker* on that – and chug, chug, up  
 The hill and down, on a road poets know  
 To a destination no one knows and the road  
 Has no destination, the road is the destination.  
 (More inadequate words and maybe not true,  
 Which is why Plato calls us liars, but he  
 Lied too.) A magazine issue I would hold up as  
 The gold standard, skimmed off the top  
 Of ten thousand years of writing which still  
 Continues. And I hear the poets in it say to me,  
 ‘Are you one of *us*?’ It is good to be asked.  
 I pick up *The Shepherd’s Calendar*, which  
 Has never been bettered, and I hear  
 ‘Are you one of *us*?’ The question burns the fat  
 Away, the question burns me away. I hear  
 The Model A chugging, dropping parts all over  
 The road. May my mother rest in peace is all  
 I want to say, is all I ever want to say.



Ancient stone grave in South India. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



"Rob Buchanan is the author of *The Cost of Living* (Five Nothing Press, 2016). His is an utterly unique voice in contemporary Irish poetry. Coming from a working class background in Dublin's southside, in a society which pretends to be classless, as an openly gay man, Rob only recently married the man for whom his book is dedicated, his poems cut through all the veneer of the Republic, revealing a brutal world, yet one from which he, like Baudelaire before him, has extracted miracles." – Peter O'Neill



## I DON'T WANT TO BE LOST

### *Dementia ward*

How did ye know where to find me?  
 She says,  
 As if I haven't been looking for her  
 my whole life.  
 The psychiatrist says  
 I should write you postcards.  
 But I can't decide on your address.  
 Do I still live at home in Whitestown?  
 Is Da alive? Why aren't you in school?  
 And then the traitors lance in my side  
 Am I your Mammy?  
 Yes my love, but you're my baby too.

We have difficulty recognising each other,  
 This fake hard man, who cries daily.  
 This grey little girl, who was once my mother.  
 I spoonfeed you dinner and lies about  
 coming home. While you clutch that teddy.  
 My Soul's slow puncture deflating sanity.  
 Christ Mam, I'm not ready.

You'd make a good Daddy, that ghost told me.  
 Lord this feels so alien yet so familiar.  
 Painting your nails pink. Brushing your  
 Salt and pepper paper thin  
 banshee hair strands,  
 My unshaven face in your arthritic hands.

*continued overleaf...*

Rob Buchanan

I DON'T WANT TO BE LOST *...contd*

My Holy Mary, my Princess Cariboo,  
 Treasa Ní Faollán is ainm dom,  
 My Magdeline Cassandra,  
 My Wandering Jew,  
 Maiden mother crone.  
 They won't let me take you home  
 Understand why ghosts don't notice you  
 Womb widow, windows of bone.  
 In nightmares I carry your shrinking body  
 till it slips from me,  
 absorbed part of a painted landscape.  
 Retreating like tears of mercury.  
 How did we both get here?  
 Which one of us is really free?

An Autumnal sun streaked tear  
 darts down your folded face,  
 shocks me with its starlings velocity.  
 I would die here in your place, a million times.  
 Perhaps I am, in some close shadow reality.

I don't want to lose you I say, crying.  
 Holding your sweet face, I can't lose you,  
 as every day I watched you fade further away.  
 I don't want to lose you Ma.  
 You smile your little girl smile at me,  
 "I don't want to be lost".

## PRISONERS OF HEAVEN

We talk about it with our eyes,  
 Us few, the ones who clawed  
 above the rim of memory.  
 Devoured whole by that giant's mouth,  
 Who learned from pleasure, and the worm.  
 Were spat out vernix-waxed  
 from times ouroboros womb.

Immaterial membrane pain, my bodies  
 Pastel cathedrals with scarlet yellow tombs.  
 Gore groaning geometric bones  
 feeding upon each other's flesh infinitely.  
 Every field a sacrilegious scene  
 of spines and organs, flags of feelings.  
 Blasphemous wounds seeping, please

Yes we talk about it  
 because we can't return.  
 Reach out to each other, knowing nothing but  
 Eternity's too soon. Maybe once  
 For a miraculous moment  
 I saw the real-world bleeding,  
 Its evil energy breathing in to being,

As a stranded solipsistic whole.  
 Suffocating armies on no-mans-land.  
 Humanity trapped my soul inside amber,  
 Stuck each glistening surface of identity,  
 The hideous hissing hymn screaming  
 "He is me!" to everything I see.  
 But what does that mean,  
 When I am nothing really?

*continued overleaf...*

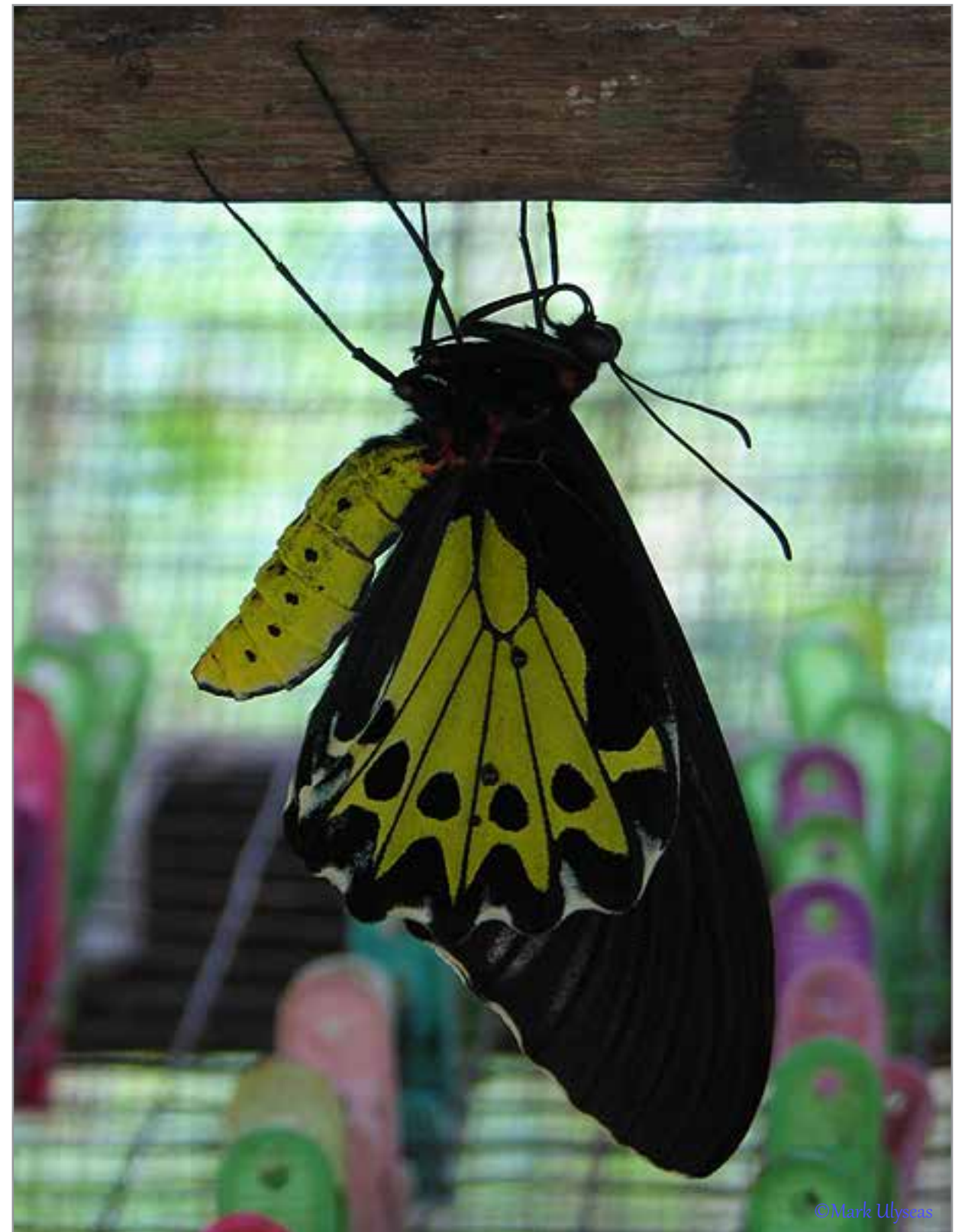
## PRISONERS OF HEAVEN *...contd*

The fly-blown unknown vacuum,  
The cold star above us three beaming.  
There is no knowledge but experience,  
And no real sleep just dreaming.  
Fatal fractalising split of the human prism,  
Forge of my matryoshka prison as holy spirit.  
And might I be forgiven by forgetting?

That Demiurge swore to me  
if I would only promise to forget again  
I could return to Heaven.  
Or I could have mansions in this shiny Hell  
and never knowing better,  
Forced by my sins, to live to tell.  
The paralysing certainty that  
I am not an individual, my minds disposable  
That I am divisible by three. And that  
certainty divides and conquers me daily.

Violent flashbacks of sweet suffering  
Rearing up before me from black infinity.  
Foaming famished mouths of startled stallions  
on trembling hindlegs of blistered bronze.  
The truth as Trinity, and me  
without even a man-shaped space  
God might shine through.  
I was no coward, yet I'm ashamed  
It was not me dying,  
I'm ashamed that I still dream of rescue.

So, I am homesick for Heaven.  
I have nostalgia for infinity,  
Doomed me as father, son and holy ghost.  
Everything sacred, secret and true.  
No one understands that part of me  
is still imprisoned in Paradise with you.



Butterfly in captivity. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

©Mark Ulyseas



Robbi Nester lives and writes in Southern California. She is a retired college educator and author of four books of poetry, the most recent *Narrow Bridge* (Main Street Rag, 2019). She has also edited three anthologies. One of these, *The Plague Papers*, is available to read for free online at <http://www.poemeleon.me/peruse-the-mall>. Her website is at <http://robbinester.net>



Robbi Nester

## THE PRICE OF LIES

I was thirteen, an innocent who'd never really lied to anyone, especially not my mother. But I had a friend—I call her that; it's probably a lie. She toyed with me, determined to be cruel. I smelled the danger, like ozone after a storm that may start up again. She knew that I was drawn to the swimming pool up on the Boulevard, a place my parents had forbidden: I understand now why it was off-limits. We had our own pool. This one was the haunt of young boys, blonde forelocks falling on their faces, who hated us for being who we were—not like them. But how could I resist? I wanted what was worst for me. We told our mothers we were going to our pool, and they'd have never known, except while we were gone, my mother got a phone call from a man whose voice sounded familiar, saying he had kidnapped me, described what I was wearing, the blue and red beach bag I was carrying, my purse. He said to close the shades and strip before the windows, and she did, because she was afraid of what he'd do if she refused. I don't know what else he said. She didn't tell me. But when I returned later that afternoon, there were police cars in the street before the house, and all the neighbors, my mother crying. My friend didn't follow me into the house. Somehow, she slipped away. I knew then that she had everything to do with that man on the phone. But could I really blame her? I was the one who lied.

## RESEARCH

Someone said that research is “a blind date with knowledge.” Take llamas. I’ve always liked their silly smiles, their loopy loping gait, but today I read that something they produce might be the best defense yet against COVID. That must be why the beasts are smiling, why they’re generally relaxed, chewing their cud, standing in a field as though trouble were the last thing on their minds. When the unexpected upends everything you think you know, that’s when you’re hitting paydirt. Remember Galileo, discovering that Earth and all the people on it were just a pinprick in the universe. You think you’re standing on solid ground? It’s actually in flux. I’m not sure what keeps us all from falling through into the whirl of particles, like the workings of a giant trash truck. Learning is a thrill ride, fraught and frightening, frequently disturbing. How many losers must one date before the right person walks into the bar? Unexpected and inevitable, a tribute to the universe, with its endless stockpile of surprise.

## CONNECTING

At my son’s travel baseball games, we’d sit with other parents on the bleachers, nothing in common but our proximity. We women would try to strike up a connection, envying our husbands’ easy banter. Men always seemed to have a subject to fall back on, but for women, the difference in our lives was more difficult to hide—their Botox injections, new BMWs didn’t synch with my job as a college adjunct, teaching reluctant freshmen how to write an essay, grading papers while the others had their nails done, shopped for shoes. No joke I told was comprehensible, and vice versa. Of course, we steered clear of taboo topics like politics and religion, the Scylla and Charybdis of the Orange County suburban set. The gulf between us was too broad and fraught. Should I let it slip that we weren’t members of anybody’s church, celebrated Chanukah instead of Christmas, I knew the women’s heads would all swivel in my direction. Someone would put her soft hand on my arm and say, “We’ll pray for you,” before I turned away.

## SAME OLD DARKNESS

I used to turn away from darkness  
toward the distant light, taught myself  
to love the pearl-grey storm clouds, heavy  
on the horizon, the ones with brightness  
breaking through. But year by year, darkness  
blotted out the sun, threatened to send  
the planet spinning sideways, a runaway  
tire on the freeway, tangle of tumbleweed  
targeting my windshield in high wind.  
Eventually, space junk will hurtle to  
the Earth, microbes or faulty genes catch up  
to all of us, this world incinerate to a dark  
cinder. But for now, I'll take your hand  
and won't let go, even though you want  
me to. We'll stand together under a sea  
of phosphorescent stars that died a million  
years ago, and let that be enough.



Before the storm, Bali. by Mark Ulyseas.



Robert (Roibeard) Shanahan. I am a poet playwright and a painter. A storyteller. For me all there really is...Compassion and Expression. I describe myself as a...'Grand Lector of Apocalyptic Utterances'. I live in Tasmania. I am from the Irish diaspora. My family from Cork. My prose was published in Australia. Ireland in Outburst magazine. India in Setu poetry magazine. I was awarded high commendation. In the W.B.Yeats poetry prize with 'Violence at the Egg'. It was read out in the National Parliament of Australia. <https://www.facebook.com/robert.shanahan.98>



## VIOLENCE AT THE EGG

Flurried matted natal down feather listings  
 A Nest now blood congealed on the twig  
 The last flight of the leaving parents  
 Winged shadow remains as if in silhouette  
 Troubled ants cover it hold up broken shells as mort flags  
 These ants shadows lay as lace  
 On a before first flight fledgling dying  
 Feather lice dislodge to devour this sad bird  
 Amniotic visions grey shapeless flight falling permeates the atmosphere

Receding branches perches  
 Retract further into treeless gloamings  
 Leaden as stone forever grounded  
 To the soaring out of sight flock  
 No diurnal sun hovering wind blown  
 Seed cracking seed insect scratch

As the bird shudders shell crumbles  
 Egg teeth jewels in feathered decay  
 The least damaged eye  
 Stares into the abandoned nest in memory  
 The other dangles above a broken wing  
 Gazing out past unnatural hues  
 Blood and loss beak splits grotesque  
 To shape a sound and tries to tweet

Robert Shanahan

*continued overleaf...*

VIOLENCE AT THE EGG *...contd*

In the sacred calcium eggs in clutch we future nestlings  
 Under the cooing comfort of the hens covering wing  
 We laid in shared incubation in dried saliva and grassy mud  
 The lift the gliding flapping hovering our future  
 Our eyes grow larger than our brains we are life cycle

Heavy brooded rain shells sprinkled moonlight specked  
 Thunder drones across the flight ribboned sky the nest warm  
 Heads hidden beneath the wing statue like to the storm  
 Lightning strikes the shells  
 Conjoined beaks crack the shells fledglings are born into nesty love  
 Rostrums snapping at air deluge deflected by parental wings  
 Fervid joy night fallen swaying in feathered tenderness  
 From the first pangs our future warbling throats were stuffed

Lids open vision came all sight was enthralling to the edge of the nest  
 All fledglings in non rival to each other the egg balance the sacred egg  
 Together shuddering our bodies merged we thought there flew a hawk

Beaks rise in natures order mother gives one to one to one  
 Wing in wing our feet create stairs in turn we see there is more than sky  
 An apology for expanding nature creating our separation wing growth

One arises opens their wings tumbles over the dawn and the down  
 Thermals swirling the breezes nervous whispers unsettles the tree  
 Leaves quiver eddy in whirlwind float as wooden mourners around the nest  
 Father flown his frame feathers now as moonbird beak star filled spilling  
 Mothers eyes looking back nest view fledglings at nest leaving  
 The thrusting first fledgling suspends on the edge jerking back strikes the sibling

Blood spurts into the surprised sibling eye lid rebounds horror  
 Skull chips a flailing storm of pecks falls to nest bottom  
 Feet of my flyers squash as falling branches  
 Eye to eye the looking through gaze  
 Broken body twitches moribund on twigs  
 Broken shell and excreta rise votive

Blowflies now accusers cast maggots as stones at the flying away assailant  
 Mother frozen in expected grief sparkled sky the departing blood birds  
 Brush in haste her side father gone lost in his uncaring plumage  
 The corpse so still as only left life can be  
 Lice ants nature raise the corpse  
 Damaged spirit flares .....

Roisín Browne lives in Rush, Co Dublin and has been published in *A New Ulster*, *The Galway Review*, *Flare*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*, *Poetry NI* and *Echoes from the Castle Anthology*. She was commended in the Gregory O'Donoghue Awards in 2018 and shortlisted in The Seventh Annual Bangor Poetry Competition in 2019. She recently performed her poetry with Ardgillan Creative Writers at the Fingal Poetry Festival 2021.



## TO ORANMORE

*Arena* on the radio  
engine quietly hums  
asphalt in front

Cars turn on an elevated height  
M1 to M50  
a small exhale -  
decompress

a scatter of motors move at holiday pace  
the big sky fills the windscreen  
hard shoulders and retail parks give way

to rubied hedges and orange clouds  
thought borders dissolve  
promise of contentment overtakes

something like hope spins outwards  
spreads like a young galaxy  
catching roads, trucks, disappearing clouds,

the dipping sun melts into every evening atom  
a small exhale -  
lighter

like a flock of end-of-summer birds  
I'm escaping.

Roisín Browne



## WALKED, WAITED

And  
we all went back  
looked up, saw blue  
sipped heat, heard birds

Walked, Waited

hunkered down  
paused breaths  
humbled at awfulness,  
howled, outside  
ourselves

Walked, Waited

for the first light of winter,  
opened the front door  
to let the new in,  
glimpsed solstice,  
opened the back door  
to let the old out,

looked up,  
saw grey  
saw white  
saw no way

Walked, Waited

bedded down,  
again  
ready for the rise  
buds pushing up  
yellow splash  
sun slant, crescent moon,  
start,  
stop

once more  
we all went back  
leaned into air  
- to step forward

Walked, Waited

Walked.

Ruairí de Barra is from Co. Mayo and now resides in Co. Cork. He is a sailor, an award-winning military journalist, and a poet. His creative work has featured with *Tinteán*, *A New Ulster*, *Live Encounters*, *Bangor Literary Journal*, *The Ranthology Anthology*, *Black Bough Poetry*, *The Boston Globe*, *Boston Accent*, *Poetry Jukebox*, *The Cobh Chronicle*, *The Silence Anthology*, and all his work can be read on [www.paperneverrefusedink.com](http://www.paperneverrefusedink.com)



## NEW TRIANGLES

Wear the new triangles,  
behind the chain-link fences,  
orchestra of crying children,  
dread anthem of the summer sun.

Separate the little ones,  
no need to sew the yellow to their shirts,  
they wear their badge forever,  
on their skin.

Build the wall and mend the wire,  
with bricks of fear send it higher,  
until all the good is on the pyre,  
and the sky is gone.

Concentration camps in the desert,  
for babes as well for men,  
who carry the mortal sin,  
of being born poor.

Here in the land of plenty,  
the well of dignity it is empty.  
good enough to fight the wars,  
and pick the fruit,  
but not to stay.

Ruairí de Barra

## SATELLITES

You stand in condemnation a thousand miles away,  
the disconnected screen far from suffering living flesh,  
oblivious to the screaming which greets the day,  
billion dollar satellites streaking across the heavens,  
delivering the manipulated digestible grotesque,  
another pitiful cargo dumped into the ocean,  
beneath the Moon where man walked once,  
glorious in all our proud progress,  
oh would that an end of slaughter have descended,  
for stepping out into the edge of our existence.

## THE CURVATURE OF CORK

Curvature of Cork,  
breaking free of static lines,  
blending ancient bridges,  
with sharp edged blocks,  
scraggly trees,  
and pavement gazing pedestrians.

Rushing head long,  
into the event horizon,  
when distant melts,  
will raise the waters,  
wash out the swamp,  
for a final time.

Pleas will be hurled,  
prayers incanted,  
as the great and good,  
are carried downstream,  
like petrified timber,  
ripped from the Gearagh.

Concrete and brick crumbles,  
high tide lines settle,  
to wet the tail of the salmon,  
leaping o'er the silent Shandon,  
returned at last into the sea.



## IN SUMMER LANES

Curvature of Cork,  
breaking free of static lines,  
blending ancient bridges,  
with sharp edged blocks,  
scraggly trees,  
and pavement gazing pedestrians.

Rushing head long,  
into the event horizon,  
when distant melts,  
will raise the waters,  
wash out the swamp,  
for a final time.

Pleas will be hurled,  
prayers incanted,  
as the great and good,  
are carried downstream,  
like petrified timber,  
ripped from the Gearagh.

Concrete and brick crumbles,  
high tide lines settle,  
to wet the tail of the salmon,  
leaping o'er the silent Shandon,  
returned at last into the sea.

## CHAMPAGNE SORBET

On the day in summer when the old man warms his bones,  
Stretching idle legs on Sean Walsh Park benches,  
Mimicking the patient heron balanced in the water,  
First one and then the other, pop, ease, and crack,  
The light will be thrown off at an angle, just right,  
Soft tones glow, wrap warm around the moment,  
Drawing a long contented sigh from the soul,  
Of the inkstained child of Inis Fáil,  
Grown now with a full notebook,  
Who remembers the days of champagne sorbet,  
Close he the eye to drift with flight feathers spread,  
Meander along the lane, lined with ten thousand doors,  
The tap and rap, the welcome in, and rush of memory,  
Full formed fat tears and Nile wide smiles,  
Distilled into history as drink listener is made.

Sinéad McClure is a writer, radio producer and illustrator. Her writing has been published on radio, in anthologies, magazine and on-line journals including; Crossways Literary Magazine, Meat for Tea, Live Encounters Poetry & Writing, Poethead, Drawn to the Light Press, The Cormorant Broadsheet, Dodging the Rain, A New Ulster, StepAway Magazine, Sonder Magazine, Tiny Spoon, The Poetry Bus (coming Autumn 2021), Vox Galvia, Ink Sweat & Tears, the Ekphrastic Review and RTEjr radio. In March 2021 Sinéad won the O Bhéal Five Words International Poetry Prize. In June 2021 she won The Wingless Dreamer Spring Poetry Prize, and in September 2021 was shortlisted for the MONO "Sanity" Poetry Prize.



## CLEAVERS

We carry your progeny. The round, green, stragglers  
that cuff jackets, hem trouser ends, catch in hackles, and collie tails.  
We break you away, take you to different parts.

You sidle up to nettle beds and slowly strangle their offspring.  
Lock into grass, knot around trees, dramatically drape  
across the dog rose in a horticultural faint.

You are the plant we threw at each other as children;  
the stickleback, the robin-run-the-hedge, the cleaver who split in two  
and so you keep dividing.

A damaging sunder. Two becomes four and four becomes  
eight and eight becomes more and more and more.

The same act took my father, and my mother and finished friends too soon.  
A type of propagation that covers the world at first  
in a seemingly innocuous kiss, this gentle grip  
now wraps itself around my throat.

Sinéad McClure

## LIMB

How do you avoid a frog crossing in March?  
Especially one who has forgotten how to hop  
in his rush to procreate.

One who stops mid amphibian breath,  
lost in the dark, his brown shape  
fading against the tarmac.

When I came to the country you could hear the frogs.  
A low hum drumming from the ditches  
as they lay on their women three at a time.

Now the ditches run red. Iron spills from fields  
where young farmers gouge out natural channels,  
make drains that empty too soon, spawn frog road-kill.

Once, this land grew one limb at a time.  
Nowadays it's hammered together  
like flat pack furniture; neat, lifeless, and grey.

## FLAGS

This acre is an ocean.  
Its grassy waves rise and fall.  
Meadowsweet-sails tall from boom to jib  
to join the masts of alder and goat willow.  
This could be a silent regatta  
save for the sound of a hinged box  
opening, then closing  
as reed buntings learn to fly.

Their parents hoisted flags  
on battened bulrushes  
quiver in the unsure breeze.



Susan Azar Porterfield is the author of three books of poetry—*In the Garden of Our Spines*, *Kibbe* (Mayapple Press) and *Dirt, Root, Silk*, which won the Cider Press Review Editor's Prize. Her work has appeared in *The Georgia Review* (finalist, Loraine Williams poetry prize), *Barrow Street*, *Mid-American Review*, *North American Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Nimrod*, *Rhino*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, and elsewhere. She is the editor of *Zen, Poetry, the Art of Lucien Stryk* (Ohio UP) and has written on poetical subjects for *Poets & Writers*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, and *Translation Review*.



Susan Azar Porterfield

## STORY OF A LITTLE TIME (WITH BIRDS)

They thought she'd died  
but maybe not.

After all, there she was  
sitting across from him as always,  
chatting away at the breakfast table,  
reading the *NYTimes* (*all the news . . .*).

Meanwhile, birds flew in and  
out as if the house

were a conduit or path.  
They couldn't stop them, and really,

they liked the razzle-dazzle wings  
though she cautioned, in public,

he shouldn't speak to her aloud,  
since people were sure to ask,

*who you talking to?*  
and besides, they themselves

didn't know what the story was  
since they were pretty sure she'd died,

though she wasn't acting dead. And  
in truth, they didn't care.

*We could live this way forever*, they thought,  
birds and all, fluttering

round their place, twittering airs  
she began in her sleep to hum.

Sven Kretzschmar hails from Germany. His work has been published internationally, e.g., in *Writing Home. The 'New Irish' Poets* (Dedalus Press, 2019), *Turangalîla-Palestine* (Dairbhre, 2019), *Hold Open the Door* (UCD Press, 2020), *100 Words of Solitude* (Rare Swan Press, 2021), *Das Gedicht*, *Loch Raven Review* and *The Irish Times*.



## GALACTIC GARDENS

They shone all day anticipating  
Longley's The Evening Star –  
a sky of snowdrops scattered  
on a meadow behind exhibition premises,

crushed and trampled by afternoon's  
black boots and coats –  
one got the whiff of rumours about  
degenerated art and chatted away to the Schutzstaffel.

Sure, the gallerist was taken,  
no questions asked –  
his head a galaxy of red and grey spattered  
on a canvas arranged among a year's new shoots.

Sven Kretzschmar

## WOODLAND OUTING

*after Marcus Hammerschmitt*

Camp detainees lay around like carelessly jotted togs.  
Carinhall appeared as if everything had just been parcelled.  
Stuff and SS stood in the way like worthless plunder.  
Paintings had slumped from prescribed hooks on walls.

The Schorfheide area now exhibits the art of nature.  
Paintings hang again, elsewhere, their voices visible.  
Reminiscence and reminder, from prescribed hooks on walls.  
Weber's 'Woodland Outing' lost like a fat coward's responsibility.

## CHAMBER CHOIR

He draws torture on cardboards he keeps  
hidden under a mould-corroded mattress.  
Wardens mustn't know he entertains the barrack  
the way he entertained the capital of the Reich

before black coats seized his brushes and paint.  
They all unhear, over his sketches, the screams  
that are chamber music for black-clad  
security guards.

Sky blurs into clouds over barracks,  
mingles with ashes and smoke from high stacks,  
while inside the painter is beating time,  
waiting to join the chorus.



## OFF-LIMITS

Who is to define what degeneracy means?  
Who is counted among the disabled?  
Who is afraid talking their mental states in public?  
Who feels overburdened by meritocratic standards?  
Who prefers laziness over an achiever's mindset?  
Where are the wheelchairing children hidden in schools  
for the mentally defective?  
On whom do those taboos of ours fall?  
Who is to decide any of the above? Who to answer it?  
Are the later those these limits are inflicted on?  
And who can be a speaker of the unacceptable Truth?

## WE SHOULD HAVE

We should have been going to laser tag  
or a pony farm. That attempt to bring art  
under control: worse than the attempt  
to bring disinhibited children under control  
between sculptures, Old Masters, museum  
watchmen. Sweet briberies fail leading  
the focus on a stolen art exhibition  
we seem to have gotten lost in. Seriously –  
  
who has a birthday party on Museum Island  
when the guests are so young their grandparents  
did not live to see those artworks  
being looted? Next year, it'll be laser tag or  
a shooting range.  
We should have not let any of this happen.

TH Keane lives in Castlebar, Co Mayo, Ireland and has worked as a freelance journalist for leading national publications in the UK. With poetry published occasionally in magazine and literary journals, Keane is presently working on an anthology of poetry focusing on themes of loss, grief, beauty, spirituality and identity.



Teresa Keane

## ABOUT WRITING

I am awake and upright  
in the middle of the sunshine clean bed linen  
as dawn rises up and up  
I wash, dress and think about writing.

I straighten out the sleeves of  
my husband's shirt  
turn off the steam iron  
add the shirt to the pile of laundry.

Dabbing the yellow duster with floor wax  
I rub it into the thirsty grain  
the scent of almonds anchors me  
and I think about writing.

I wipe the small red handprints  
from the fridge door.  
replacing the magnets  
one reads: You have two choices for dinner.  
Take it or leave it.

That reminds me, supper;  
meatloaf in the oven,  
water for two pots –  
one with broccoli  
and one with new potatoes.  
All the while my keyboard calling  
while I think about writing.

## THE HAYSHED

My tears have hopped off  
that galvanised roof  
like raindrops in a never-ending storm.  
That green hayshed where  
we forked and lifted and spread  
the shorn grass now spun gold,  
hope against the coming winter.  
He chose to step outside  
away from the sweat, infighting  
and simmering resentments.  
Outside alone in the early morning  
he chose to die  
hidden from view behind that shed.

## NEXT DOOR

There it is! The shrieks signalling a new row  
I look in the direction of the  
stone wall separating us.  
I'm jealous of the Lilies in  
their grand circle seats –  
white heads bobbing in amusement

He steps through the glass double doors  
into their garden  
she follows full on his heels.  
I leg it over to the clothesline  
removing pegs, ears flapping.  
His arms outstretched in supplication  
while she walks hand on hips  
and blocks his escape to the shed.

They realise and look over at the same time,  
nod and smile as  
I wave and turn like treacle.  
Back inside I enter the quiet.  
There's muffled laughter and a door slams.



## THE WISE CHILD

She's dressed from head to toe  
in widow's weeds as.  
Black widow's weeds.  
The wise child lives to fight another day,  
run another race,  
survive another storm.  
Shut up  
G'wan out of that, she is told.  
You're mad. What's wrong with ya?  
Have you nothing for doing? Ya useless article.  
She's taken those bruises into her skin  
a patchwork of insults and abuse  
stitched together as scars.  
She stands her ground  
facing those adults down.  
She will outlive them all,  
their spittle and fists,  
their bruises and spoons of poison.  
The wise child is always climbing  
like nasturtiums, to high places away  
from the fight  
to a place of shelter  
where she can see and keep  
me safe.

## THE MORGUE

Alive in my mind  
its long corridors,  
its hidden entrances.  
Those great slabs,  
yellowing paper skin covered  
with thin sheets.  
And him at the centre  
all the beauty and glamour of  
a silver screen A-lister.  
Unrecognisable - free of pain  
beautiful in death.  
Hypnotised, by the steepled hands,  
I reach out to touch him before mother pulls me away.  
Cold - as the alabaster slab he lies on.  
Cold that enters deep into the bones,  
a chill that can never be undone.  
No turning away will cure this,  
nothing will extinguish what has been done here.

Tim Cumming's collections include *The Miniature Estate* 1991), *Apocalypso* (1992, 1999), *Contact Print* (2002), *The Rumour* (2004), *The Rapture* (2011) *Etruscan Miniatures* (2012), *Rebel Angels in the Mind Shop* (2015) and *Knuckle* (2019), chosen as one of the books of the year by *The Irish Times*. His work has appeared in numerous anthologies, including *The Forward's Poems of the Decade*, the WS Graham anthology, *The Caught Habits of Language* and Bloodaxe Books' anthology of poetry from Ireland and the British Isles, *Identity Parade*. He made the BBC4 documentary *Hawkwind: Do Not Panic* in 2007, and has shown his film poems at cinemas and festivals worldwide. He writes regularly about music and the arts and his paintings have been exhibited at Slader's Yard in Dorset and the Rowley Gallery in west London. They can be seen at <https://timcumming.wordpress.com/>

These poems from *All That Survived the Territory* are for Mary Cumming and Margaret Cullen.

## NIGHT THOUGHTS

The high beeches speak to me at night,  
troubled by thoughts like so much  
trailing ivy. The dark suits them,  
they are so brooding and tall,  
Orion swinging his club through  
each one, Homeric in scale,  
gracious in leaf fall, tossing and turning  
their heads to the winds blowing hard  
about this place, spreading their speech  
across the land, each casting to each  
in one gathering movement of a wave  
through the depths of the air where  
we breathe in and crows fly out,  
navigators all on the long terraces of memory.



Tim Cumming

## BALM

I rub cream into a dark patch  
 of skin around her ankle.  
 She cringes, cracks a girlish grin.  
 I kiss her brow, tell her I love her,  
 sit by the bed for a while, then say  
 goodnight. She doesn't seem  
 to hear. Right now, I'm not  
 sure what goes in or where.  
 We're in the ante-room  
 of the familiar turned strange.  
 In the basket of her walking  
 frame, a neatly folded blanket,  
 soft slippers, a thin white scarf  
 wrapped around a photograph  
 of her mother and father.  
 She says she will see them soon.  
 She is ready to start out on  
 her next important journey.

The expectation on her face  
 when she talks of going home.  
 She can't believe it won't happen.  
 She is not in a travelling state.  
 The purring cats of childhood  
 curl around her feet.  
 She's eaten well – she's not lost  
 her appetite. We think she will  
 sleep tonight, and sleep long,  
 inhaling its balm, dreaming  
 when she does of a little girl  
 sat at the end of her bed,  
 neatly dressed and ready to  
 leave for wherever she must go.

## THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Christmas after his first term at Oxford,  
 Ollie took us into a side chapel at Keble  
 to show us *The Light of the World*,  
 Holman Hunt's Jesus lit up from below,  
 the lantern and halo picked out in gold.  
 Beyond its historic centre the city's substrata  
 of pitted tarmac peels back to original track  
 along Cowley Road, homeless men scrumming  
 at the entrance to the old Regal Bingo that  
 used to be a cinema. It's Pentecostal now.  
 Turn left for the convent of St John,  
 uniformed staff attending to the dying,  
 the distant of face for whom time and space  
 compress into one small body exhaling air.  
 Windows strung with fairy lights, my aunt  
 is on the third floor. I say, "Hello Margaret."  
 "I know you," she says. "Since you were small."  
 My mother's sister. Memory's pitted substrata stretches  
 away from her, the angels she painted over and over  
 walking in procession, arms upraised, to kneel  
 at the foot of her bed. So I like to believe, or hope.  
 I think of Holman Hunt, the light from below,  
 the fairy lights hung in her window, Ollie in his first term.  
 Before I've left the grounds, sloping to the road,  
 my first exhalation of smoke, winding through  
 the air, the frayed end of a long, thin rope  
 hanging down from somewhere very cold and clear.  
 The sky is an icy blue. The shade holds its frost.  
 My fingers twitch. In my mind, I finger the switch  
 that illuminates *The Light of the World*.  
 My aunt believes, I'm sure she does. I raise my  
 head to the sky and observe the phase of the moon  
 as it rises, as if that itself was an act of prayer.



## UNSTOPPABLE

Her retreat was unstoppable, Napoleonic,  
 as predicted in the medical literature  
 we'd been given. In her bed at The Montrose  
 she sits quietly, my sister's lap blanket  
 draped around her shoulders.  
 Sometimes we're there to take her home,  
 and she gets angry when we don't.  
 Sometimes she smiles, a sun-flash of  
 songbirds trained all their fast-beating  
 lives to fly the spiral stairways,  
 settling on a high beam in one  
 perfect movement of a wave.  
 Then she's gone again, lost in a world  
 of her mind's unmaking, taking the lead  
 in an end of term play in which she is  
 the only actor, filling the smallest place  
 she can be. The birds sing at dusk. They sing:  
*It is so lonely here and life can be so cruel.*  
 I want her to turn into her bird nature,  
 fly out of her body as if was a nest, and take wing.  
 This song ends at nightfall and the darkening day  
 is what is here and what lies beyond.

## BODY PARTS

Picasso talked about the magic power  
 of images made between you  
 and the world inflicting itself upon you,  
 upon which you open your demands,  
 taking apart the body  
 and scattering its separates  
 among the hard and fastening surfaces.  
 The day after my mother's death  
 I walked the galleries of Musée Picasso,  
 eyes trailing far from my head,  
 feet and hands of infinitesimal size.  
 The distances I could recognise.  
 I felt the chill of loss spread  
 through me like groundwater,  
 taking on volume and mass,  
 a lifetime's receipt for lost property  
 folded round a small flat key  
 stuffed into the lining of a well-worn shoe  
 as I passed through gallery after gallery,  
 head the size of a tiny dot,  
 knowing not what small unravelling force  
 stopped her breath, her beating heart.  
 Fumbling with lock after lock  
 in the chamber of images between life and death  
 I followed my mother as far as I could on her journey.  
 Then I stopped, and she left to continue alone.  
 Did she keep praying for me, bunching  
 her hands like the women of Picasso?  
 One by one those lights went out.  
 When she died there was no one there  
 to pray for her. Distorted by grief  
 I pray for her now. On the street of a foreign country  
 I fall to my hands and knees.

## LOSS

However much you  
anticipate loss its appearance  
strips you of your grain.

Words of loss fail to carry  
the weight of their presence,  
the vastness of the absence they hold.

You think, how to live  
in such a small room  
with such loss.



Ham Hollows III, acrylic on A3 board, painting by Tim Cumming.

Tim Dwyer's poetry appears regularly in Irish and UK journals and previously in *Live Encounters*. His chapbook is *Smithy Of Our Longings*. His work is most recently in the anthology *Local Wonders* (Dedalus Press). He left the U.S. in 2019 and now happily makes his home in Bangor, NI.



## IMAGINING JANE

*for poet Jane Kenyon (1947-1995)*

I'm driving through  
a tree-lined New England town  
where children wait for their bus  
on the last school morning,  
as sky threatens with remnants  
of Michigan tornados.

When the engine of my aged Camry  
turns no more,  
you tell me where to look—  
in my faded denim jacket,  
the hidden pocket where spare change is held.

*Look in there, you whisper,  
for trinkets of joy.*

Tim Dwyer



## READING CD WRIGHT, 1980

*A boy from another country  
crawls out of the moonlight of the attic.*  
— Roadblock, CD Wright

I'm back on the mud brown sofa,  
one of the legs ready to give way,  
cases of Schmidt's for end tables.  
Ohio living room ever twilit  
like the evening news  
on my black and white TV.

The brittle fern by the back window  
is left unwatered day after day.  
With each toke, I am more adrift  
with the next line of the next poem  
I wish was mine.

Closing your book,  
the room's smoky haze  
rises like incense—

again and again I read  
a telegram of betrayal,  
an endless novena  
while my writing disappears.

## HOPE

*Feast of the Immaculate Conception*

Walking back from Groomsport,  
we reach the long wall,  
that stretch of woodland  
with an unknown boundary  
where this town ends and ours begins  
and the centuries blend.

We believe these flowers  
growing under the hedgerow  
are wild garlic— tiny, white,  
tilted like reading lamps.

You assure me they will last through winter.  
I savour your words; they turn in my mind—  
lasting through the winter.

Tobi Alfier is published nationally and internationally. Credits include War, Literature and the Arts, The American Journal of Poetry, KGB Bar Lit Mag, Cholla Needles, Galway Review, The Ogham Stone, Permafrost, Gargoyle, Arkansas Review, and others. She is co-editor of San Pedro River Review ([www.bluehorsepress.com](http://www.bluehorsepress.com)).



Tobi Alfier

## AUNTIE'S WAYS

Early mornings, when the sun looked like sunrise  
and sunset both, she'd go out walking.

A shawl the muted colors of the waking earth  
around her shoulders, shallow basket over her elbow,

she'd walk the paths barefoot, picking flowers  
and herbs for her teas and tisanes. And for beauty.

Respect for her—many of us drank her teas  
for our lady-times. She was kinder than any doctor

and she understood. Daytime found her in ordinary  
clothes, off to a soul-crushing job as so many of us had,

after making her carpenter husband eggs with yolks  
the bright orange of marigolds and kissing him a sweet goodbye.

Their small house—on the strand and dotted with color,  
everything a merry-go-round of brightness, even when cloudy.

Both of them could play any instrument, and they did—lute, lyre,  
bouzouki, recorder. But if you needed her, you were welcome.

She'd pause her quiet song and was there for you,  
always without hesitation no matter the time.

More is rumored than known about Auntie  
but I will go to the ends of time to defend her,

the foraging lovely woman with the smile and face  
of a calm river no one has yet discovered.

## A RIGHT PROPER DRINK

This life ain't no cakewalk but let me tell you—  
I can make a right proper drink to cure  
the down-and-outs for anyone.

From their barstools, strangers lean into  
each other as if to weave their breaths—  
the air around them thick with smoke and music.

Wordlessly he'll bottoms up, go home to a stolid wife,  
cold meatloaf and a family prayer mumbled  
into faithless whispers.

She'll weep over dropping her keys  
down a street drain, return alone to rooms  
smelling of creosote and nicotine.

All night, footsteps recede along the walkway  
fronting motel doors, leaves and trash  
swirl in a trick of wind—

down the hall, the voices of exhausted lovers  
whittle down to sighs as candlelight frays  
the edges of windows hidden by gauze curtains.

To make a right proper drink I keep  
a cheerful word or two for those who stay,  
speak in spare phrases, sit in the dark.

The sky is a play of light and shadow,  
the musician holds the mic so gently,  
it's as if he's cupping flame. Last call.

## IN THE BLUING HOUR

dawn drifts inland like smoke, sea oats  
make paths through the dunes, a sandcastle  
casually crumbles in the oncoming tides  
and dreamers start to stretch, remember  
where they are and who they're with.

You lie awake, eyes impersonating sleep  
while a briny smell comes through the windows  
like sage in an old haunted house. The pallor  
of last night's moon begins to disappear  
while intentions of closing time—whispered

in your ear—make themselves remembered.  
The pleasing taste of wine on your lips,  
a stone pressed into your hand before sleep—  
*may this heart bring you pleasant dreams—*  
much laughter filling the empty spaces between you.

As the new sun rises it will be your setting.  
You will never be that older couple sitting on the pier,  
your talk close and small, sifting into lies and memories.  
Wind off the sea makes a fragile pact with which you agree.  
In the Bluing Hour, you and the shoreline are lost to the sea.



## SUMMER AT BRIGHTON

He fishes all day into the failing light  
as he does every day, in every weather.  
Misses the thinly-clad vacationers  
as they hit the shore early, pray  
for the sun to be kind to their lily-white hides,  
settle in groups to watch each other's things  
before taking turns playing dolphin  
amid the waves.

He sleeps on the bus home, arms laced with sweat  
and brine, ice chest full with the day's catch  
invading his dreams to wake him at his stop.  
Two seats up, she's pink and heated, also asleep,  
her breath a light fog against the window.  
He wants to wake her, tell her about aloe  
and oatmeal, but he's as shy as the summer folk  
are outgoing and he can't even whisper.

He walks along the promenade,  
listens to the soft hush of low tide  
as it mingles with arcade games and taxis,  
and live music from the beachside bars.  
He thinks about the girl with the sunburn  
asleep on a bus filled with secondhand air,  
wonders if he'll ever be man enough  
to understand the kinship of heat and flesh.



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Sailing, Bali. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Born in Germany in 1954, Wiltrud Dull lives in the West of Ireland, near Portumna for many years now. In 1998 she experienced a lively Baffle poetry night in a local pub and was hooked on writing poetry. Since many years she is a member of the "PortumnaPen-Pushers" a wonderful writers group. The Arts in general, painting, crafts, reading, gardening and cooking are important to her, and the language we use to express ourselves about everything. Her poems are published in: Baffle Poetry Collections. Maple Leaves Anthology 2005. The Blue Max Review 2015. Boyne Berries 2015, 2018. SiarSceal festival, Anthology-Centenary in Reflection 1916. in 2016, also 2018, 2019. Shorelines Arts Festival 2018 "Pens to Lens" project. Live Encounters Poetry and Writing 2020. Shorelines Arts Festival 2021 "Bobbins and Pens" project and "only for this" project. Her villanelle "Wuerzburg 16th March 2015" was set to soprano and piano by composer Derek Ball.



## COME INTO THE GARDEN

A weedy patch behind the house selected,  
 I turn and rake the clay for my Covid hospital.  
 Pandemic restrictions force me  
 to be an institutionalized gardener.  
     A hedge and paling fence enclose the ground.  
     Gravel lined corridors separate the rooms.  
 Medicinal herbs are first to root in the soil.  
 The other beds fill steadily with vegetables.  
     A row of runner beans shelters the spuds.  
 Then I recruit the nurses and carers– a quick operation.  
     Skirted Fuchsias and big bosomed Begonias to induce comfort.  
     Brightly coloured Busy Lizzies dish out resilience and hope.  
     The contagious smiles of Marigolds spread happiness.  
 There is lots of work: watering, feeding, weeding, treating pests and diseases.  
 But the rewards are delightful and very tasty.  
 I attend my Corona garden every day,  
 where I am well looked after in every way.

Wiltrud Dull



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COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE