

2010 - 2021



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JANUARY 2022

RANDHIR KHARE
TARA

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



**SUPPORT LIVE ENCOUNTERS.
DONATE NOW AND KEEP THE MAGAZINE LIVE IN 2022**

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

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

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

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor
markulyseas@liveencounters.net

[Donate](#)

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



CONTRIBUTORS

RANDHIR KHARE
DAVID ADÈS
RICHARD W HALPERIN
FERGUS HOGAN
EILEEN CASEY
RON CAREY
PETER O'NEILL
CATERINA MASTROIANNI
MARGARET KIERNAN
MARIA MCDONNELL

Randhir Khare is a distinguished writer, artist, teacher and theatre personality. He is the recipient of numerous national and international awards for his unique contribution to culture and education. His 37 volumes of poetry, fiction, essays, translation from tribal dialects and other writings as well as his seven solo exhibitions all explore themes of identity, belonging and the struggle to stay human in a violent and fragmented world. His memoir *THE FLOOD & AFTER: A Memoir of Leaving* will be appearing soon. He has spearheaded an initiative to enrich formal education through the experience of the arts. Randhir is a founding contributor to Live Encounters Magazine. <https://randhirkhare.in/>



Randhir is a founding contributor of Live Encounters Magazine.

RANDHIR KHARE

*Excerpt from still to be published novel,
TARA, THE DOG WHO ALWAYS WAS*

So, hissed the tom with a bitten ear, as he balanced himself in the fork of the Neem tree, *where exactly do you live? I've seen you around here but I'm not sure where you live. I suspect with that arty fellow. Am I right?*

I live with a poet, up on the third floor.

There. I was right. A poet. How boring, he hissed again. Up in the air with no idea what it's like to be close to the earth.

But I do go for walks and I run around in the garden.

Yes, run around in the garden, big deal. You chase that silly rubber ball and carry it back to that poet.

I do more than that, she corrected him.

For instance? The tom leaned forward with his good ear. What?

I chase birds and eat cat's poop as an after-meal snack.

You're the pits, he said. Doesn't that poet give you an after-meal snack?

Don't talk about my eating habits. You're in the garbage bin all the time.

My diet is nutritious. I get the best of stuff; that's why dear girl, my poop is so tasty and packed with energising vitamins.

Randhir Khare. Photograph by Rani Wilfred.

Who gave you the permission to call me a girl? She glared at him.

Then what do I call you? Old lady?

I'm Tara.

Ha, Tara. There comes your poet. Go on, waggy waggy your tail.... Saying this, he did the Leap of Death and sprang on to the roof of the Security cabin and limped off. *I've lost my touch. There was a time I could do the Leap of Death with my eyes shut.*

I told you, said the poet, no chasing cats Tara. No chasing cats. He slipped on the choker leash and led her off for a walk, out of the main gate.

Ah, I love it here, she said to herself. The smells are delicious. Dog's pee, cat's pee, poop, smelly torn clothes, rotten vegetable and look there's even a boy peeing into a bush. And it's particularly lovely today because it has rained and there's slush everywhere. Before the poet stops me jumping into the muck I'm going right in. Wheeeeeee.

Hey Tara, no, no. The poet yanked her out. That's slush, now look at your paws.

Big deal, what's wrong with my paws? I'll just twiddle them around in my drinking water basin when we get home and they'll be clean. AND the water will be tasty.

Of course, the poet couldn't understand what she was saying, because he was slightly deaf and his mind was always somewhere else. If he cared to, or could, be in the present maybe he would discover that Tara was no ordinary creature. But she didn't bother herself with that too much. He was a good guy, the poet, because he didn't mind her sleeping in his bed. When he was not in it of course. Besides that, he never forgot to give her titbits, an occasional bowl of buttermilk and chicken liver.

More recently he had taken to giving her a raw carrot now and then. She carried it around the apartment like a bone, hiding it in unusual places. Once she hid it under his pillow and then in the middle of the night wanted to munch it. Getting it out was a hair-raising experience because the man talked in his sleep and threw his arms around this way and that. The only way to get at it was to do the Tara Bark. So she'd rush to the front door and start barking as if someone was outside. That would get the poet out of his bed. She'd pull out the carrot from under his pillow when he was at the door then walk past him sheepishly. He was gullible without even a streak of street-smartness. Tara wondered how the fellow had even survived in a world that was crowded out with tricksters, fixers, sweet-talkers and shortcutters.



Tara. Photograph by Randhir Khare.

Everything that he owned didn't seem to belong to him - his money, his belongings, everything. He gave them away freely, smiling after he relieved himself of them, as if they were doing him a favour. *Maybe that's why I am so attached to him. He's animal. Well, ALMOST animal. The only thing that sets him apart is that he's a poet so all of him isn't in one place. Not that I understand a word of his poetry but being a poet softens his edges and makes him almost one. Most other people aren't almost one. They are threes and fours and fives and sixes, some are even more. Animals are one. Look at me. I'm one. Just one - right here and now.*

I've been thinking about my chat with the Tom up in the Neem tree this evening. He seemed to think that living in an apartment up in the air was no good and that one has to be grounded down there and smell the earth and feel the realness of everything. Well, I feel the realness of everything thrice a day when the Poet takes me for a walk and when I am up here there's realness all around me. The plants, the birds, the insects, the geckos, the Vaghdev totem brought all the way from the jungles of the Dang by the poet....it smells of the wild. The crows and kites that sit on the ledge of the roof above remind me of my babyhood in South Goa. That's where I was born, beside the sea in a resort. When we'd sit outside the kitchen waiting for snacks to be thrown at us, crows and kites would hover overhead. They scared us silly. But we were happy and didn't care.

My mind is drifting now. Just a thought - it's not where you are that makes you one, it's what's between your ears.

Great, the poet is giving me chicken liver for dinner. The aroma is killing me. I wish he'd hurry up.

Tara sneaked into the poet's room to check if he was aware that the liver was ready. Instead, it appeared that his poem was almost ready. Hunched over the keyboard with his eyes a few inches away from the screen, he typed away furiously, stopped and stared into space then back at the screen. As much as she wanted to let him be with his muse, she rushed to the front door and barked hysterically to get him out of his chair. On the way to the front door, he stopped by the kitchen and realised that the liver had almost burnt so he rescued it, added a bit of water, put on the fan full speed to cool it down and returned to his poem, quite forgetting about the front door. So, Tara did the front door act again sometime later when she had to remind him that her food had cooled. The wait was worth it.

After dinner, she sat outside his room, watching him write. He had become much quieter, almost still like a Pond Heron as if he was watching fish in the water, waiting for the chance to strike. She noticed that at such times he'd either burst into a rage of keyboard strikes or simple peck at the keys, gaining momentum on the way. But that evening, whilst the birds were restless in the trees outside his window, he seemed to be listening to someone speaking to him, tilting his head slowly from one side to the other. He started typing again as if he was taking dictation. Some one was dictating something to him. It was so spooky.

Tara looked around the room but saw no one and nothing. She switched on her sixth sense radar, sending out waves that returned to her like ripples. Her body tensed. There was someone in there, she was certain. Lowering her body as she entered the room, she peered under the bed, over the bed, behind the bed, outside the window. Stopped, tensed. There was someone out there speaking to him, she was sure.

He suddenly stopped writing and leaning back in his chair, listened with his eyes shut. *What is he listening to? Who is he listening to?* Tara watched him respond to the invisible presence in the room or was it outside the window? She couldn't tell. He leaned forward and stared at the laptop screen then began to speak, loudly. She hadn't considered that he could be reading aloud the poem to see if the flow and rhythm was right and the pauses were appropriate. What better way to find out than to read aloud? Who knows - maybe he was reading the poem aloud to the presence in the room. She couldn't understand what he was up to and it spooked her.

Creeping out of the room, she headed for the terrace and the comforting fragrance of the potted plants, as far away as possible from the poet's voice. Dark clouds gathered overhead, slab upon heavy slab, each nudging the other, quickly filling up empty spaces. *There's going to be a thunderstorm. That should stop the poet from talking.*

Rain always reminded her of the resort by the sea and the spirits of drowned people who would come out of the water to talk to her. One of them was a woman who would gather her up in her arms and take her to the waterside. *This is the sea, Tara, she would say, sky water. All water is sky water. In the beginning there was only sky. Water was part of the sky. Water is pure. Water is precious. Water is blessed.*

The hair on the back of her neck bristled. There was the presence of someone behind her. *My radar tells me that there's someone here. Someone different. Someone familiar. I can smell her, sense her, hear her breathing.* She turned around but there was emptiness behind her. Entering the apartment, she sniffed the air. It smelled of the sea, weeds, sand and shells. *I know she's here.*

She stalked the dark, her radar scanning the interiors, from room to room, even the kitchen and the corridor that led to the front door, but no sign of anyone. The poet was talking to himself as if he was addressing someone else or so it seemed. She stepped in to check if indeed there was no one else. He was staring intently at the screen. Was there someone inside the machine, someone who she couldn't see?

The overpowering fragrance of the sea was everywhere.

That night, as she lay asleep in her cot near the poet's bed, enveloped by his comforting nearness, a terrible storm crashed over the city and churned the air to shreds, sending giant buckets of rain down on the streets and fields and parks, turning shanties into slushy islands and manicured gardens into swamps of flower beds.

Each time, the dark was torn open by lightning and the air burst with peals of thunder, she shivered and curled deeper into herself. When she couldn't curl any deeper, she climbed into the poet's bed and tucking her head deep into his arms, felt safe. In the middle of the night, she opened her eyes and saw the shadow of the Sky Water Woman standing at the foot of the bed and watching over them. She sensed her smiling, so she smiled in response.

For the first time, that night she dreamed of her long journey from life time to life time before she reached the resort by the sea. She travelled through strange lands, saw herself as a wolf in the wilds, as a husky in the arctic, as a mine sniffer during the Second Great War, as a hunting dog of the Mullu Kurumba tribesmen of South India...as life after life unfolded, she lost consciousness just when she began to see herself in human avatars. But the next morning when the Crow Pheasant started whooping in the bamboo thicket outside the window, the window to deep memory quietly closed and a new day intruded with an explosion of light and early birds.

Down in the garden that morning, Tara met Captain Lazybones, the black Pug. Actually, his name was Blackie. What an original name, heh, Blackie. The fellow was scared even of his own shadow. When his Mum put him down to walk on the lawn, he tottered over to Tara and stared at her with his bug eyes. *What's your problem?* She asked.

Just saying hello.

How come you're out of breath?

Because I'm tired.

Come on, shake a leg, it's early in the morning when all creatures are done with their rest time. Didn't you sleep last night? Or did you have nightmares of mice chasing you around the house?

That's being rude, I just came over to say hello and you're making fun of me. Breathing heavily, he sat down and continued to stare at her.

Stop staring at me, said Tara, *say something.*

What do I say?

Pssst, pssst, signalled the tom from the wall. *Want to chase me? Its good exercise Lazybones. The more you run, the more energy you churn up and the more energy churn up, the happier you will feel. And the happier you feel the friendlier you'll get. The friendlier you get...*

Why do you talk so much? Asked Captain Lazybones. *Your constant lectures tire me out. I'm already half asleep.*

Stop being such a wet rag, hissed the tom. *Come on now, chase me. I'll run slowly, I promise.*

My Mum is watching.

So what if your Mum is watching? He snapped. *She's always watching. She's the watching kind. I bet she's watching even when she's fast asleep. She's watching even when she's dreaming. She's...*

There you go again, interrupted the Pug.

Stop telling me what to say and how to say it. You're lucky that I'm willing to let you chase me, the tom sneered.

Go on Lazybones, go for him, Tara tried to sound encouraging. *I'll join you. All you have to do is take a deep breath and move your little legs as fast as you can. They'll carry you along.*

The tom feigned a limp and staggered up to the Pug, *come on, get me,* he said.

Gathering all his courage and weight, Lazybones flung himself at the Tom, bowling him over, then sat on him with a smirk. *Well? He asked.*

Now get off me, mutt.

I got you, didn't I?

Yes you got me. But this is no exercise. I let you get me. You have to chase me....now get off me and chase me.

Ok, have it your way. Lazybones rolled off and sat up and the Tom broke into a trot.

Go on Lazybones, go for him, go for him, go for him, shouted Tara and the Pug actually took off, first stumbling along and then actually running as fast as his stumpy legs could carry him, round and round the garden. When his Mum realised what he was up to, she was frantic.

You, stop. Stop. No chasing cats. You hear me Blackie? No chasing cats.

Let him be, the poet interrupted her. No one is getting hurt. They're just playing. It's a good way for your pug to get some exercise.

What do you mean by that? She challenged him. He has all the exercise he needs.

But you're carrying him around like a Pasha all the time, he corrected her. Why don't you let a dog behave like a dog?

This is my dog and not yours. Besides, this is no ordinary dog, she shot back, he's a Black Pug, an American breed.

Fair enough, said the poet. Sorry for offering an opinion.

That's ok. But at least you can help me stop the chap. Just look at him, he's gaining speed every moment. There now, he's even trying to scramble up the sandalwood tree.

The Poet turned back to revising a poem in his notebook, ignoring the grumblings of the Pug's Mum.

Tara was astonished by what she saw. Where had the Pug garnered all that energy from? What had inspired him? Who had inspired him?

When his Mum grabbed hold of him to carry him home, he wriggled out of her grasp, landed on the grass and chased after the tom who by now was running in circles on the lawn.

The chase finally ended and Lazybones was carried home. The tom and Tara slipped off to confer behind the Club House.

What exactly got into the fellow? Asked the tom.

He must have got spooked.

What? Spooked? How did that happen?

It happens, said Tara knowingly, there're all sorts of energies floating around the place and if one manages to catch hold of you, well - anything is possible.

Ha, the tom grinned, seems like a Grey Hound spooked old lazybones. If it hasn't left him as yet then he's going to drive his Mum crazy. After a pause, he said, I've never seen your place up there. When are you going to invite me up? The night's have been awful and there's not much the bins have to offer.

You are welcome tonight, she replied. I'll see what I can rustle up for you.

And so that night, when the storm broke loose again and the poet was busy clearing the pool of water from in front of the terrace door, the tom slipped in.

This way, Tara led him on. The house rules, no stealing food, no rummaging in the dustbin and no sleeping on the couch.

Seems more like a prison.

It's just common courtesy when you're in someone else's home.

Fair enough, I'll try my best, he assured her. But unfortunately his best wasn't enough and he ended up inside the dustbin and after a hearty meal of food scraps, curled up on the couch and fell asleep. He was lucky that the Poet was busy talking to himself and hadn't noticed his presence.

The tom surfaced in the middle of the night when the dark outside was being battered by thunder, lightning and rain. He saw Tara sitting near the big glass door that led on to the terrace garden, looking out at the night. Behind her stood the shadow of a woman. His feline radar told him that it wasn't usual. She was no ordinary presence but from somewhere else. His coat turned bristly just the way it had done a long time ago when he saw a dwarf climb down from his neem tree and walk off whistling in the night.

He hopped off the couch and stalked towards Tara and the woman but when he neared, the shadow had dissolved. *What are you doing up so late?* He asked Tara.

It's a strange night.



Spooky, you mean, he corrected her.

Maybe.

Not maybe. Spooky for sure. There was a shadow standing behind you.

Must have been The Sky Water Woman, she replied.

Now WHO is that? He wanted to know.

It's a long story. Let's just say that she watches over me.

You have a spook watching over you? I'm impressed. A long time ago when I was a kitten, a spook watched over me too, he whispered. She lived in the Ramphal tree near the main gate.

Then what happened? Tara wanted to know.

She vanished one day.

Why?

Because I stole eggs from a myna's nest.

Didn't you apologise?

There was no need to apologise, I was hungry and because there was no one to take care of me I had to take care of myself. That's the law of the wilds, he replied.

But these aren't the wilds, she corrected him. We live in a city.

You live in a city in a home, someone takes care of you, you don't have to rummage around in dustbins and steal bird's eggs and pick at rotten food by the roadside. You get hot fresh food to eat, a bath, a clean bed, company and the safety of a roof over your head in bad weather. You aren't attacked by other free creatures outside. I am, all the time. You'll never know how tough life is for me.

Can't I help you find your spook? Maybe if you apologise, she'll forgive you and take care of you then life won't be so tough.

Stop feeling sorry for me. I don't like the way you talk. You have everything you want here so you think you have the right to give me advice. Let's get it clear here and now. If you think you are doing me a favour by letting me stay here, you can stuff your favour. It doesn't suit me. I'm a wild cat. Your house rules don't suit me.....don't sleep on the couch, don't rummage in the dustbin, don't this and don't that and don't the other... life is tough anyway without you making me feel small. The tom paced the room irritably, flicking the tip of his tail this way and that. Don't get me wrong, he said, but you are sounding more human than animal. Behave like an animal, Tara.

I am an animal but since I live with a human, I have to follow his rules.

You don't have to follow his rules. You don't have to follow anyone's rules but your own. You have the spirit of a free animal. You aren't one of those powdered and shampooed and brushed huskies who trot obediently beside their owners, nor are you that Yankee Pug or that oh so bouncy and glowing golden retriever - they do what they are told to do, behave the way they are expected to behave. You are a free soul. Come on Tara, stop being so stuck up.

He sat at the open glass door and stared into the rainy dark. If I'm irritating you, I'll leave. Don't bother to let me out of the front door, I'll scale down the water pipe. I'm good at that. Listen, I know when I'm not wanted...

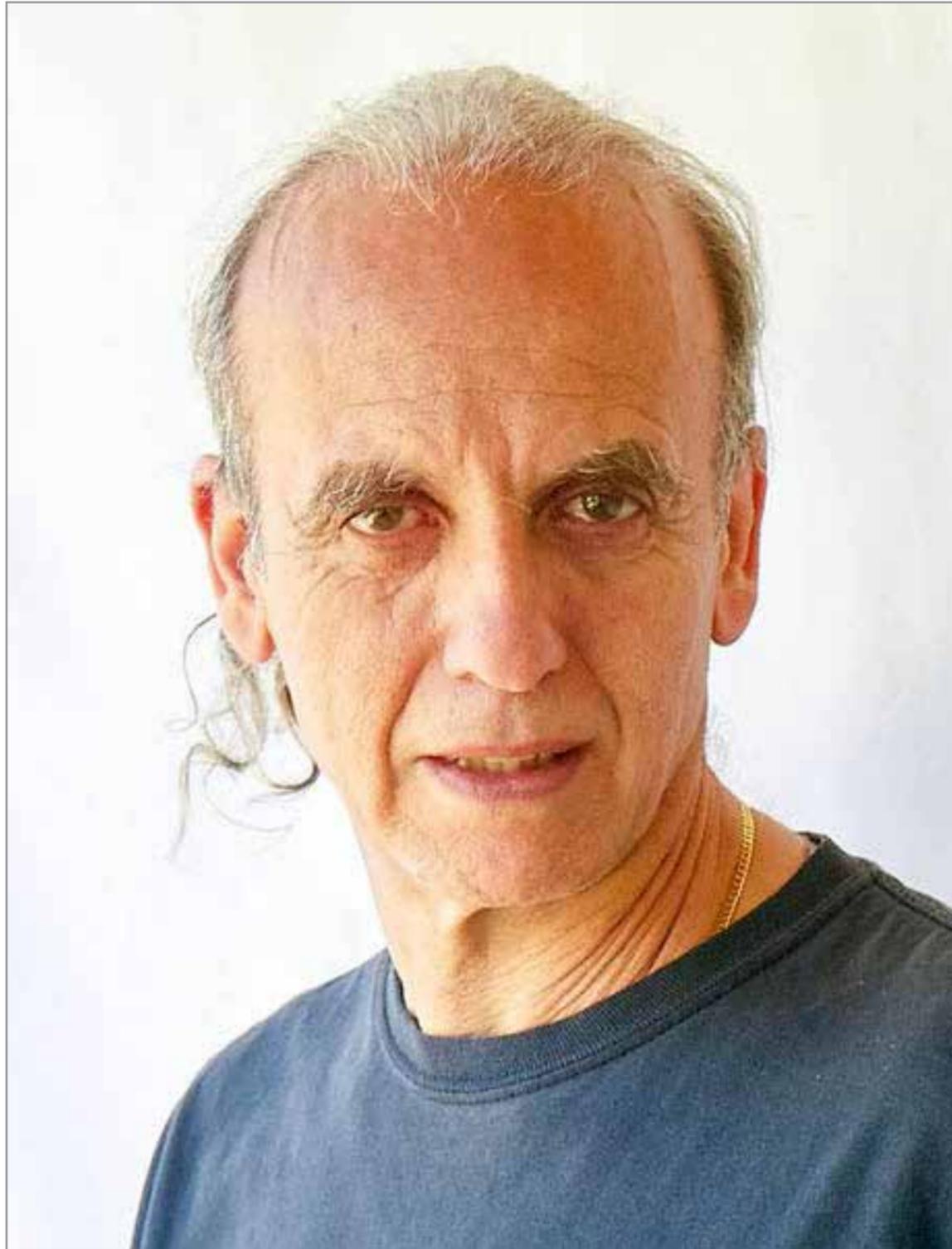
Suddenly the light in the hall was flicked on. The poet had entered the room. What's going on here? He asked himself confused. There's a cat in the house. The ginger cat with a chewed-up ear who is always up the neem. Heh you spooked the Pug today, good boy. He cautiously approached the tom who had frozen in his tracks and was too shocked to move. Leaving the room, he returned with a large bowl of warm milk. Here, Hero. Warm milk. It's a cold wet night. He walked over to the couch and patted it, you can sleep here.

That was the start of a lasting friendship between the poet and the tom. Tara wasn't sure what to feel about it.

That night when the poet retreated to his room and started talking to himself, the two free souls reclined on the couch.

Guys like me, said the tom, can't remain in one place for very long. We're here for now, enjoy the company, we play kitty kitty then wake up from a nap one day and don't like what we see, don't like what we feel, don't like the routine, don't like the discipline, don't like doing the same thing over and over again and feeling the same feelings over and over again. We're adventurers who can't sit still.

David Adès is the author of *Mapping the World*, *Afloat in Light* and the chapbook *Only the Questions Are Eternal*. He won the Wirra Wirra Vineyards Short Story Prize 2005 and the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize 2014. *Mapping the World* was commended for the FAW Anne Elder Award 2008. David's poems have been read on the Australian radio poetry program Poetica and have also featured on the U.S. radio poetry program Prosody. His poetry has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and twice been shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize. His poems have been Highly Commended in the Bruce Dawe National Poetry Prize, a finalist in the Dora and Alexander Raynes Poetry Prize (U.S.) and commended for the Reuben Rose International Poetry Prize (Israel). David is the host of the monthly poetry podcast series "Poets' Corner" which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLb8bHCZBRMBjIWIPDeaSanZ3qAZcuVW7N>. He lives in Sydney with his wife and three children.



DUST MOTES

I never saw, as the days unfolded their petals
one after the other, as I leaned into my future

and made it with every breath, with every step,
entering a mystery of shape and pattern,

following intuition, instinct, inspiration – as much
as chance, randomness, a multitude of paths opening —

that it was a construction of infinite variation,
a miasmic swirling, a Mandelbrot set,

that I was engaged in making something so much
larger than myself, something I could not hold

or see clearly, an endless shifting puzzle
of pieces – part tear beneath an eye, part drop

on the end of a leaf, part wings unfolding for flight —
and that, together, the billions of us

are making light, making stardust, so much more
than we can apprehend, and for all the missteps,

for all the flaws, for all the conflict and damage
and toying with extinction, we are embarked, together,

on a quest profound and glorious, dust motes shining
in the universe, sight coming, at last, with the glow.

David Adès. Photo credit: David Mane

IN THE CONTINENT OF REGRET

In the continent of regret, the sun's
relentless glare lays bare each broken,
each shattered thing, scatterings

of bleached white bones on the ground
and all around old, low mounds of stones,
of cracked and crumbled shells,

forgotten middens of despair,
where ragged trees droop limp limbs in air,
where distant mountains lie jagged knifing sky.

Hidden middens of despair mark time
among shifting sands of dunes,
between ragged, drooping trees,

in the silent gaze of jagged mountains
etching sky, of broken cloud-shadows over
low mounds. Rivers swollen full of tears surge

beneath the knifed sky, the rain
of each shattered thing making the earth nearby
sodden, porous, a huge sponge.

By the riverbanks, far from the ragged trees,
between the jagged mountain peaks
and spreading all around, lie lush fields

of blame, verdant grasses of guilt.
In the continent of regret, there are
no borders beneath the sun's relentless glare,

the knifed and bleeding sky, beyond the old,
low mounds of stones, of cracked and crumbled
shells, the stretch of distant horizons.

Among the shifting sands of dunes,
white and hot under a blazing knifed sky,
ragged trees droop before indifferent

mountains, while around low mounds
scattered, shattered souls wander by,
alone, unmet, in the continent of regret,

not speaking a word, eyes full
of remembered middens of despair,
leaky hearts porous, sodden sponges.

DAYMARE

In those half-forgotten dreams of youth
I carry still like excess baggage,

when I ran soundlessly through endless corridors

stalked by an unseen, unknown menace,
caught like a mouse in a maze,

the heart-pounding labyrinth of my fears

transmitted to my feet, my sweat,
the suck of air into my lungs,

I never imagined breaking the membrane

into wakefulness, only to find myself
living my dreams.

THE CATASTROPHIST

The catastrophist is captive to the runaway

train of her anxieties, forever stuck on repeat,
a closed circuit, a never-ending loop

of worst-case scenarios

where nothing can be benign, innocent,
well-intentioned, where alarm bells ring,

danger signs flash, suspicion lurks

in the cloisters of overreaction, blame,
accusation, a never-ending loop

of automatic reflex, of raised voice

and anger, a corralled emotional lexicon,
a distorted vision touching down like a twister

leaving those around to run for cover,

to jump through hoops,
to sift through the debris of its passage.

FOREVER AT THE CROSSROADS

Each day is the same:

a part of me leans back,
peering into the shadows of the past

searching for something

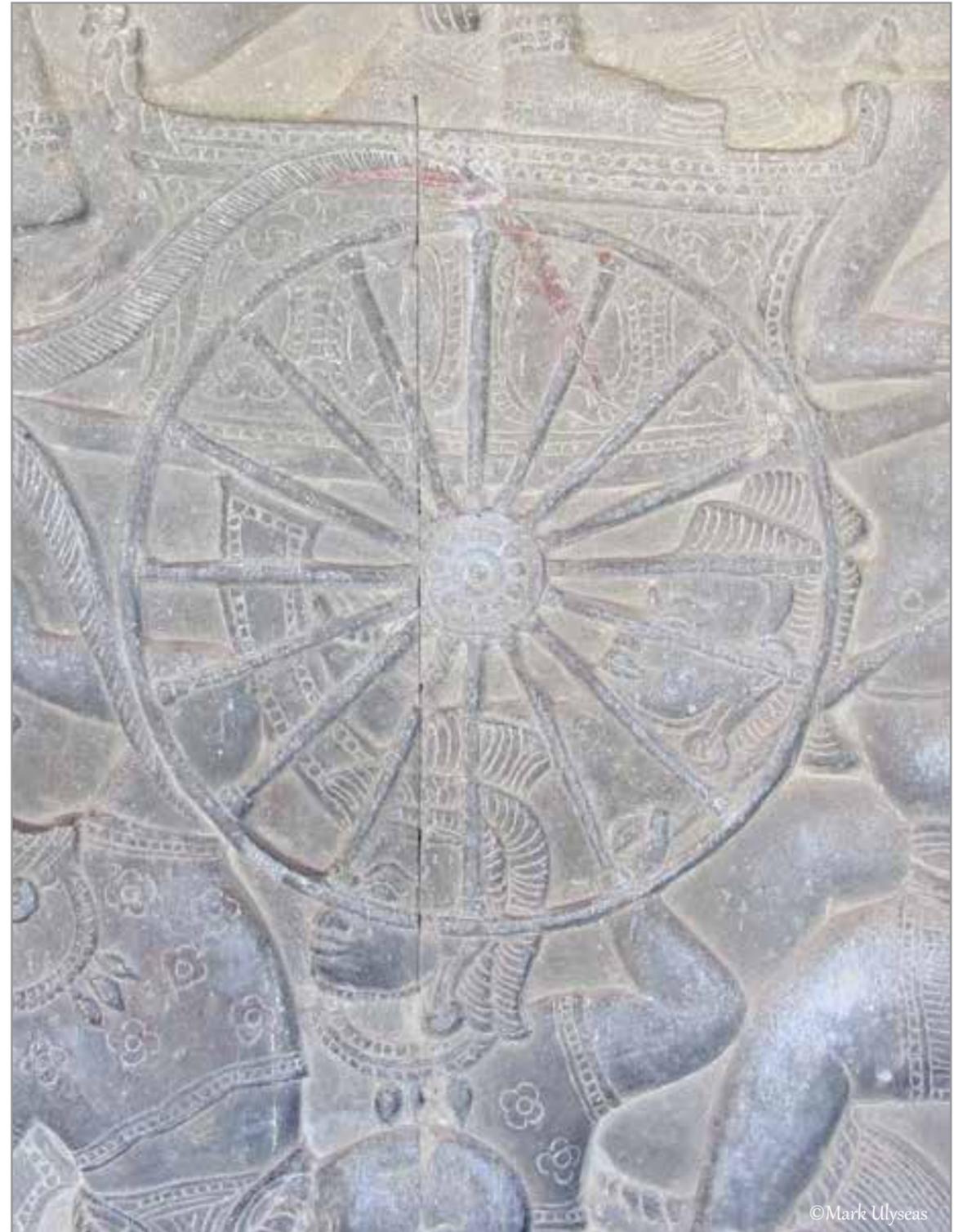
that may have been lost or not at all,
that cannot be reached,

whilst a part of me looks ahead

moving forward towards
what might never be known,

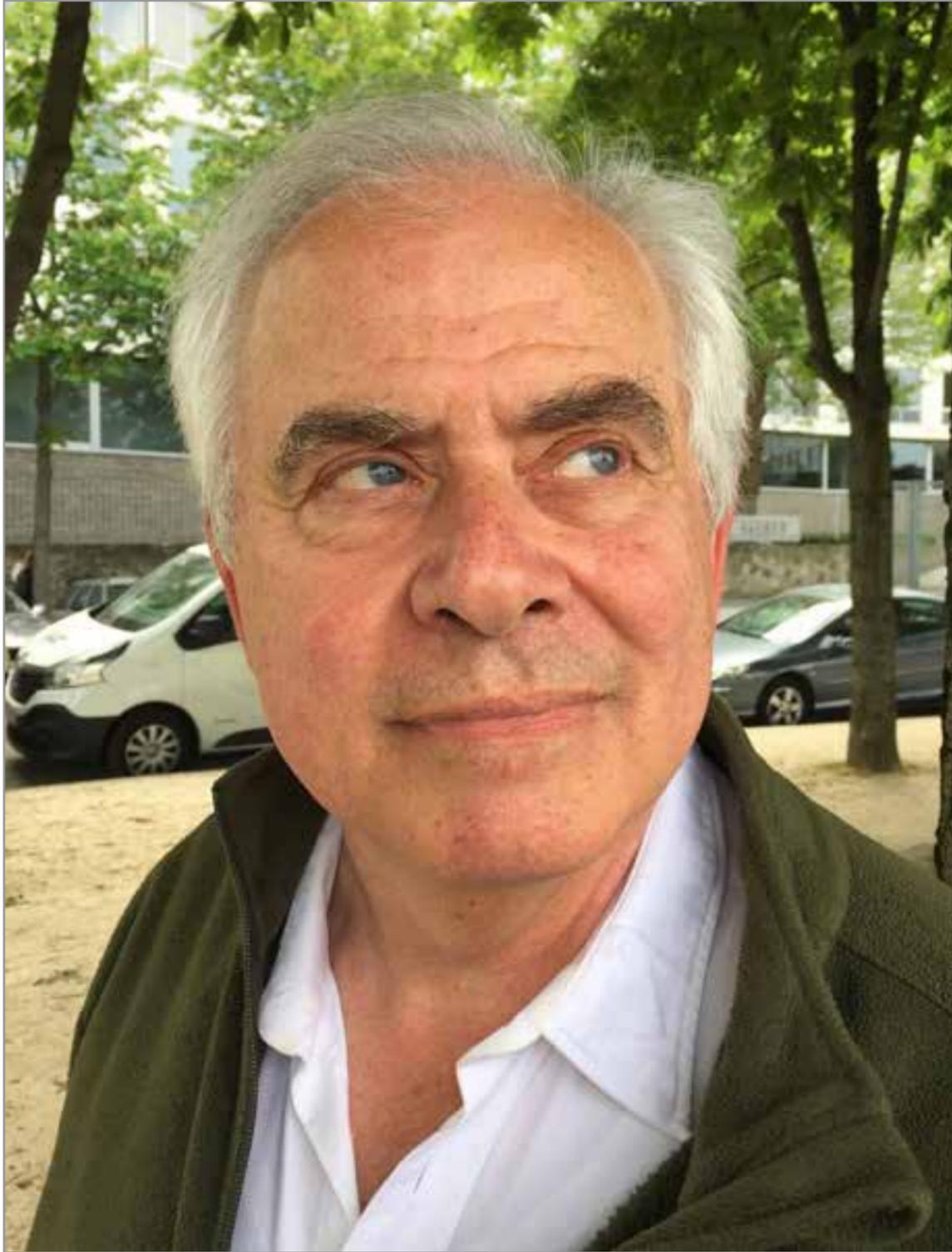
the sharpness of my gaze,

the keenness of my want
never parting the mist.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Richard W. Halperin holds Irish-U.S. nationality and lives in Paris. Since 2010, he has published four collections via Salmon Poetry, Cliffs of Moher. The most recent is *Catch Me While You Have the Light*, 2018. In complement, since 2014 he has published fifteen shorter collections via Lapwing, Belfast. These are compilations of sequences. Three were published in 2021: *Richard Dalloway in Wisconsin*; *Summer Night, 1948*; and *The Girl in the Red Cape*. *Selected and New Poems* has been listed by Salmon for Spring 2023.



GRANDMOTHER IN THE WIND

'Mais ma grand-mère, ses cheveux grissonnants au vent, continuait sa promenade rapide et solitaire . . . ' Proust, *Les Soixante-quinze Feuilletts* (Gallimard, 2021)

There she is, Proust's grandmother, out in the wind
And rain, walking, whilst the rest of the family
Seek shelter in the house, some of them
Dragging indoors this garden chair or that.
Not she. She came to the country to be in Nature,
And Nature is not in the house. Nature is the house.
There she is, realist, her greying hair blowing.

And who is not, I ask, a grandmother in the wind?
Flappers and teeny-boppers of every persuasion,
Every Easter Parader on Fifth Avenue, I certainly
And I have come to know it, Achilles and Hector
And every soldier before or since, all, all,
Grandmothers in the wind, in a high wind,
In a very high wind.

Richard W. Halperin

FELLINESQUE

Felliniesque, Garboesque, there are some artists
Who change one's perceptions, who survive their era
And themselves, whose work is best taken in
By those in their own field. My late friend
Francis Thompson – Academy Award and all –
Thought *Fellini's Casanova* was the greatest film
He had ever seen in his life. Louise Brooks wrote
Of Garbo, we watched and watched, we couldn't
Understand what was going on. I think of this
Tonight, when a radio broadcast on Nino Rota
Brought back experience after experience in
The dark shoeboxes of the twentieth century
Which one entered to see shadows on a screen.
I shall never know who or what – especially, what –
I am, but that said, some of the better parts
Were given me in those dark shoeboxes by artists
Who made the line between dream and film
Non-existent. Who gave me without illusion
What illusion is supposed to be but isn't. As
Spenser does in *The Faerie Queene*. Is there anything,
Anything at all, which isn't in it? In some poems –
This one – one pays what one owes.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

UTAH BEACH, 2011

For Harry Blair

Utah Beach, 2011
You were part of it back when.

A beach is what is left
when the sea has done its work,
when earth is too exhausted
not to want to stretch out and die.

To each medium, its own furore,
its own memory of peach – I mean, peace.
A letting go, a not having to make one more decision,
An uncurling of gnarled hands which remember
having caressed, which remember
having harmed beyond any
conceivable repair.

Better to see things in broad daylight: tanks, helmets,
chewing gum wrappers, scumbags, boots.
amphibious things.

Colour is a joke. A bleach is always what's left
after each year goes. 2010 –
a moment of silence for it.

Protruding from the sand,
a rib or two. Mine? Yours?
(You remember when.) Ours, for a few years.
The pearly part, friendship.

Something protruding. Snapped in two.
Bone?
Steel?
The latest thing in 1944 hubba hubba aluminium?

The mind wanders – what focus is
includes that.

An escargot climbs a chunk of cement.
(It rained earlier this morning.)
Something gooey. Antennae. Sensitive.
Not yet blind. Thinks the cement
is a garden maybe.

What keeps it going?
God?
A pin-up?
Home?
Curiosity? (Your favourite word.)
All of the above?
All of the below?
So many below.

Certainly not France.

Last night I read a new book
by a very fine American poet
Matthew J. Spireng – *What Focus Is* –
and I think of such things.

There may be more years than stars.

Mercy.

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



MY FATHER WAS A YOUNG MAN ONCE

I saw him standing in a in a photograph in his mother's kitchen,
not long returned from Africa – before I knew his name.

Isuikwuato, Uhamhia, Nigeria, 1964-67. Biafra War.
Kitovu, Masaka, Uganda, 1970-73. Idi Amin.
New Ireland Road, Rialto, Dublin, 1973. Home, again.

His thin white legs in khaki shorts, black shoes, grey socks,
blue and white striped towelling tee shirt
with fly-away collars all 60's jazz style early 70's
his long dark curling hair, his short black stubble – sharp,
his arms tanned and wrapped about his new-born baby –

years later, nana showed me the photo – *look* – she said:
who's that smiling boy

Fergus Hogan

ON REACHING FIFTY I WORRY MORE

out of the blue reading a poem, On steam engines
by the Lithuanian Poet *Gintaras Grajauskas*.

He says that on *passing fifty years, the body barley has
50% of its water left* (as opposed to)
when a person is born the body contains 75 – 80% water.

I feel myself tighten (all my bits) in the chair by the fire
I worry. I drink too much of the wrong stuff
too early each evening and I worry.

When I wake in the night, and I can't piss
I worry, when I want to pee, and I can only just dribble
I worry.

In the morning I worry about the pain in my lower back.
Then in the shower I worry when I'm washing my balls and my willie
trying to waken them up when they just don't want to play

and if I do eventually cum now or then, I worry
it's just not enough anymore. I'm drying up and
I worry. I'm disappearing, and I think to myself

I should drink more water.

THE CHOICE BEFORE SLEEP

Some nights, sitting in the shadows of the tilly lamp,
an uninvited sadness knocks upon the door.

I sit a while and wonder if I'll let him in.
While he knocks and knocks again, impatiently

I pour myself another drink, trying to decide.

It sounds like a simple sort of question, but some nights

sitting all alone in the shadows of the tilly lamp it's hard.
Sometimes even an extra-large drink just isn't enough.

I stand up, I open the door. I welcome him in, knowing,
on nights like this any kind of company at all will do

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.



WALKING WITH MY HUSBAND

Tymon Park, Tallaght

Do not Feed the Birds signposts the duck pond.
 Ducks can't read but crusty bread; Once Eaten,
 Never Forgotten waddles bright billed mallards
 our way. Avian Teddy Boys, hind view
 a throwback to '50s ducktail hairdos. A pair of
 geese honk past a swan family at sight of us.
 Cygnets on parade recall Sunday morning
 inspections. Shiny shoes, starched collars.
 These birds remember a pre-restriction world.
 Bread flung high, combat squawked in mid-air,
 feathers strewn on grass. Flare-ups over quick as
 begun. Such eruptions resemble petty squabbles
 between a man and a woman together nearly
 half a century. Philosophical herons stare off
 into distances Or stalk faint rustlings in grasses.
 Raucous seagulls circle like old regrets.

River Poddle waltzes through in slow time.
 Earth rooted ash and alder sway blurred
 reflections in lake waters as if embedded in
 Plato's Cave. Sudden showers return us to
 reality. Seasons shed leafy hoards yet stoic
 beech provides shelter under ageless skies.

Eileen Casey

continued overleaf...

WALKING WITH MY HUSBAND

Tymon Park, Tallaght

Side woods parallel the park. Like alcoves
off a main building. Foliage darkens, light
struggles. And it's chillier. Fairy trail magic
works best at this temperature. Baby soothers
dangle from high branches; tell of sleepless
nights. Chewed rubber swapped for Tooth
Fairy gold placed beneath midnight pillows.
Lilliputian bird houses nestle on high timber
pillars. Sanctuary from kestrels or buzzards.

Ever hopeful, we seek out electric blue glimpses
amongst a profusion of straw coloured reeds;
Kingfisher sightings rare. Wild meadows lure
frogs not yet transformed to princes; pollinators
create a buzz. Orange winged butterflies flit
from daisy to poppy. Seed heads fit to burst.

Refreshed, we return to our ordinary home in an
ordinary street. Pinned to the fridge, a collage:
phone numbers, grandchildren's rosy drawings,
hospital appointments. Framed under glass,
glory days. When our world was young.

We find solace in smallest joys. Blossoms sprinkled
like confetti over spring green grass. Apples,
blushed pink. September ripe, picked from the single
tree we dare call our 'orchard'. Pansies' masked faces
bring us 'heartsease,' the language of flowers
faithful to mood. Riches are where we find them;

whether Tymon's abundant store or, here, within
these walls; every breath we take, blessed as a song.

Ron Carey's first collection, 'Distance,' was shortlisted for the Forward Prize Best First Collection UK and Ireland. His latest collection is 'Racing Down the Sun' from Revival Press. He has a Masters in Creative Writing from the University of South Wales and facilitates CW courses in Limerick and Dublin.



THE LOUIS COPELAND SUIT

He was a twelve-year-old Caravaggio boy, without
 The knowing smile, a patch shaped like Australia
 On his corduroy trousers, that first day at Secondary School.
 And in his hand he held a sweaty promissory note.
 A promise by his out-of-work father, written hastily
 The night before, that school fees would be paid.
 Now in *Louis Copeland's*, the Manager asks him to feel
 The richness of the fabric, rolling between his experienced
 Thumb and forefinger the woolen cloth that fills him
 With a kind of wonderment, as if he touched the robes
 Of the Pope or some ancient Saint.
 This bespoke suit has fused lining and stitching of such precision,
 Any heart-surgeon in Ireland would be proud to claim it.
 See how the whole thing comes together, the fit, the drape,
 The buttonholes, and the rather special boutonniere loop.
 The material, carefully chosen by someone, is classic grey,
 With barely perceptible veins of red running through it.
 He tells anyone who will listen – he doesn't usually spend
 This kind of money on a suit – it's for his daughter's wedding.
 The Manager looks at him with a kind of bemused compassion.
 He asks if she lives here, in Dublin.
 No, he tells him – she's coming home – from Australia.

Ron Carey

GOLIATH

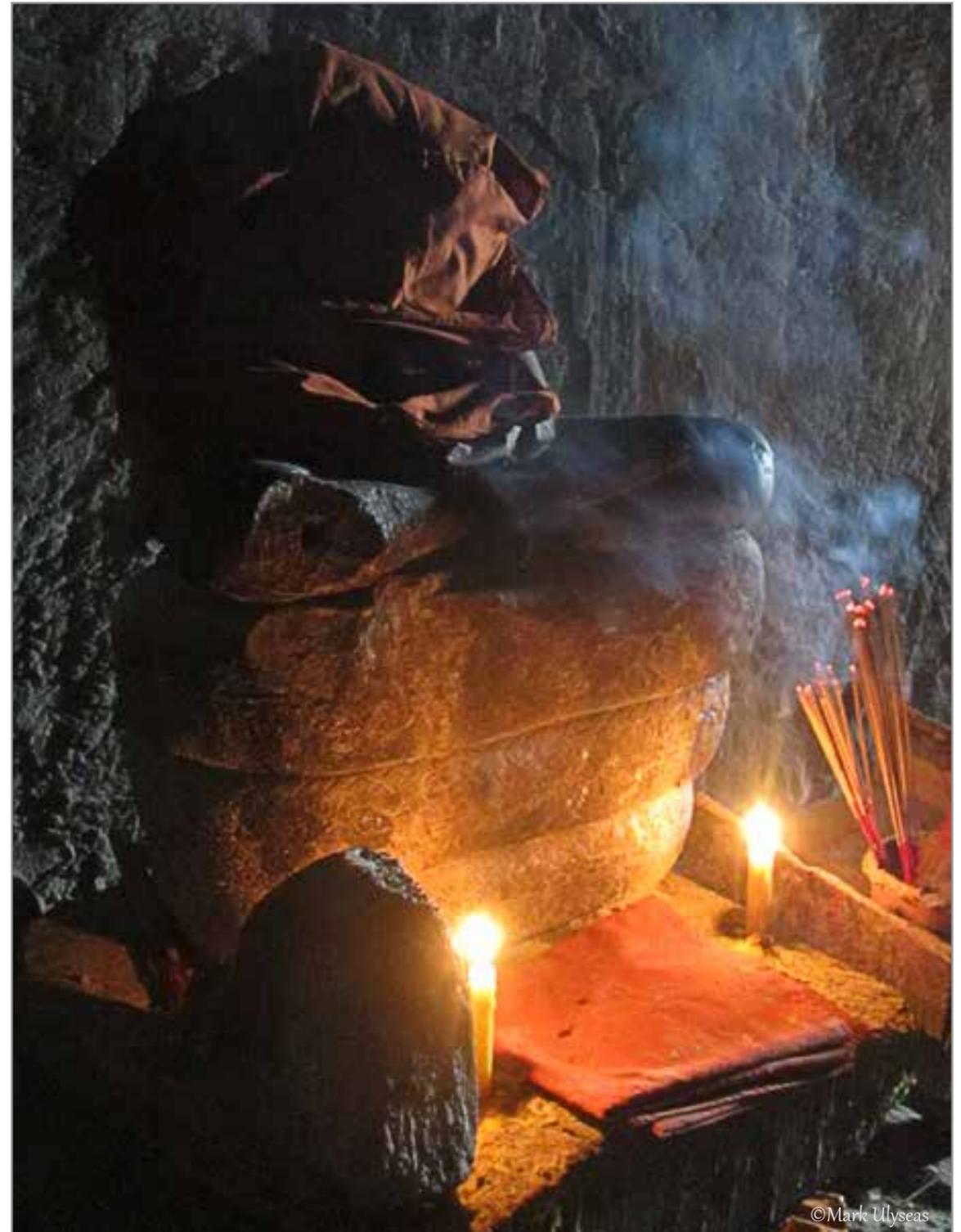
Rapha, my father, descended from angels and men,
How lonely I am tonight; how I miss you and my home.
My head is full of sunsets and a thousand irises turning
The garden pink, while my brothers and I played at heroes,
Fighting to save Gath from the enemies of the Philistine.
Remembering how Mother would pray in the silent place
For Dagon to spare her children, though we were already giants.
How she cried when I marched out with the King.
How proud and hard I was then, not understanding her tears.
Since then, I have won many honours – I am an army unto myself.
But how miserable is this life; I have no one, no friends, no woman.
Each night I lie down but never sleep, my armor beside me –
An old friend, resting in the quiet before the battle.
Tomorrow I must face the champion of the Israelites.
Dagon, bless me, for my mother's sake, grant that I fight well.

THE TRADE

The tools have been kissed goodbye by the red lips of rust.
The chisels, half their original size – shortened and ground, ground
And honed by my Grandfather, while he chased perfection
Down that never-ending road.
When I think of him, I see him working the sharp edges.
Working with all the clarity and intensity of a zealot, a thrilling of sparks
Lighting up the life of that kind old man.
One day I had nerve to tell him I had fallen in love with poetry
And that I might be a poet.
He stopped in the middle of the satisfying rhythm of the saw
And looked at me, as if seeing me for the first time – his fingers
Gently touching the saw's jagged and dangerous waves of steel.
He pointed to the dovetailed frame on the bench –
Joints happy in each other, solid and locked in precision.
"There's poetry for you," he said.
And so, I have taken up poetry's claw hammer, its handsaw, its oil stones,
Its block plane, and its iron vice.
Sometimes you will find me working on the sharp edges, with all the love
And intensity of a zealot, a thrilling of words lighting my room.

RETURN TO THE CITADEL

My faith had no power back then, not like the faith
Of my mother and father, a faith that could sweep you away.
A faith you could get lost in.
But what I did believe, I believed with everything I had.
Yes – it was unquestioning and raw and medieval
But it was my medieval, and I was happy in it.
I hardly ever sing but I sang back then.
Sang as if I had a voice worth hearing, sang of my belief
In a God who would hear me.
Sang in the light of candles lit by the explosive
Confraternity of a thousand men on an Easter night, until
I felt lifted, body and soul into the air.
I was never good with people, but people were good.
It was a world of unknowing that allowed them to be real and whole.
And I wanted that, wanted to be one of them.
I've never had much to lose but I had more than I knew
And I lost it back then, shame on me
And if I've touched a guilty nerve, shame on you.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Peter O'Neill is the author of *Henry Street Arcade* a bilingual collection translated into French by Yan Kouton, *The Enemy – Transversions from Charles Baudelaire* and *More Micks than Dicks – A Hybrid Beckettian Novella in 3 Genres*. His first collection *The Dark Pool* is due to be reprinted early in the new year. His poetry has also been translated into German, Spanish Italian and Arabic. He is currently working on roman noir in collaboration with Daniel Wade.



THE HIGH WOOD

You walk across the beach, when the tide is out,
To the Ladies' Stairwell from Barnageeragh.
Once in the wood, you come to a clearing;
Heidegger's *lichtung*. A space in the wood

Where light would get in analogous with the mind-
Illumination. After the week's commute,
You need to come up here to find the space
In your mind to find the Clearing!

Then, once your thoughts have settled,
Those trembling branches, interconnecting,
You return to the apartment – the bunker-

Surrounded by your books, the great window
Which floods the room in shafts of light;
You take out your laptop and start to type!

Peter O'Neill

THE CITY OF GOD

The book by Saint Augustine gave you the idea,
To create a website with all your poetry collections
About Dublin. First point, *The Dark Pool*
Set mainly in Baggot Street and environs.

Then *Dublin Gothic*, *Henry Street Arcade*, *The
Bridge*, *Merrion Square* and *The Custom House*.
You long ago stopped thinking of sending
Them out to publishers who have only

One thought on their mind, despicable shower!
All the politics and cliques of the scene;
What has any of this to do with poetry?

No, far away from it, a place or a site
On the internet, to upload all the poems - some like prayers
To certain people and places and others no go areas, places of danger!

MUSE

You walk within it, through the city.
Striding through the streets, lanes and intersections.
I have seen your perfect form – Vitruvian.
The utter contour of your limbs

Fashioned like animal hide or animal skins.
Fashioned with cruelty, through and through.
And fashioned with extreme gentleness too.
In truth, there is no evading You.

I have met you in cafes, streets and in pubs,
Your mind far away on some thoughts about films
Or books, as none of what you see is Real that surrounds

You – the cheapness, the ungenerosity, the utter depravity!
For you are looking for something Otherly too;
A life on two levels, both physical and spiritual.

OUR PENCILS NEEDS SHARPENING

Our pencils needs sharpening, if it they are to Lance
Properly into any topic, for they are currently far too
Soft and rounded and so could not open the merest Wound.

Our pencils need sharpening, they need a fine
Blade to sharpen and pare the graphite,
So they might shine and light like a fire ablaze
Upon the empty page.

Our pencils need sharpening, as sharp and cruel
As our minds so they may rip and tear through bogus,
Rent it from the air just like a rapier.

Our pencils need sharpening, they need a fine
Blade to sharpen and pare the graphite,
So they might shine and light a fire ablaze
Upon the empty page!

Oh who can find me a proper sharpener,
One that will pare my pencil into beautiful shavings,
Pencils which curl up like empty crowns?

Oh who can find me a proper sharpener
One which can sharpen the head of my pencil like a lance
So it might cut through all matter?

Our pencils need sharpening,
For the issues tower up before us
Like wildly overgrown trees.

GENESIS OF A DREAM

*After Jeanne Duval
(1820-1862)*

The dreaded mane worn regally like a crown
Evokes Nubian Queens and Rastafari,
All such stereotypical nomenclature,
While the ebony limbs, enveloped in Vegan

Leather with matching black Mad Max Boots,
Herald a post-apocalyptic Vibe
Which at 7:00am on the commuter train
Is a pretty heady mix!

I sit opposite her. Both of us are Covid –
Masked adding to the already catastrophic feel;
Notions of WoManhood deconstructed.

A volume of Baudelaire rests on my lap,
Of which She, noble stranger,
Would appear to have been summoned from.

Caterina Mastroianni is an Italian born Australian poet and educator living in Sydney on the land of the Cadigal and Wangal people of the Eora nation. She has [published work](#) in various literary magazines and four Australian anthologies, most recently in the [Poetry for the Planet](#) anthology by Litoria Press. Her work also appears internationally on the [Medium](#) platform.



MY THIRD SKIN

where I curl and unfurl grows my third skin
holding the sepals of a softening narrative

it fits like a glove holding supple emotions
a mannequin or robot cannot embody

I gently unpick one chapter, clinging
to be the heroine of a smooth story

I unpick another that was the bud of words
wild words acting like the image of others

the remaining words hold onto sentences
conflicted and recycled for you, earth and sun

I follow the stem that grows pages
against stasis, prise open hints and clues

fertilise new phrases from old languages
print on my third skin every bow and yaw

don't be too definite with the words you wear
your second skin will not have the final say

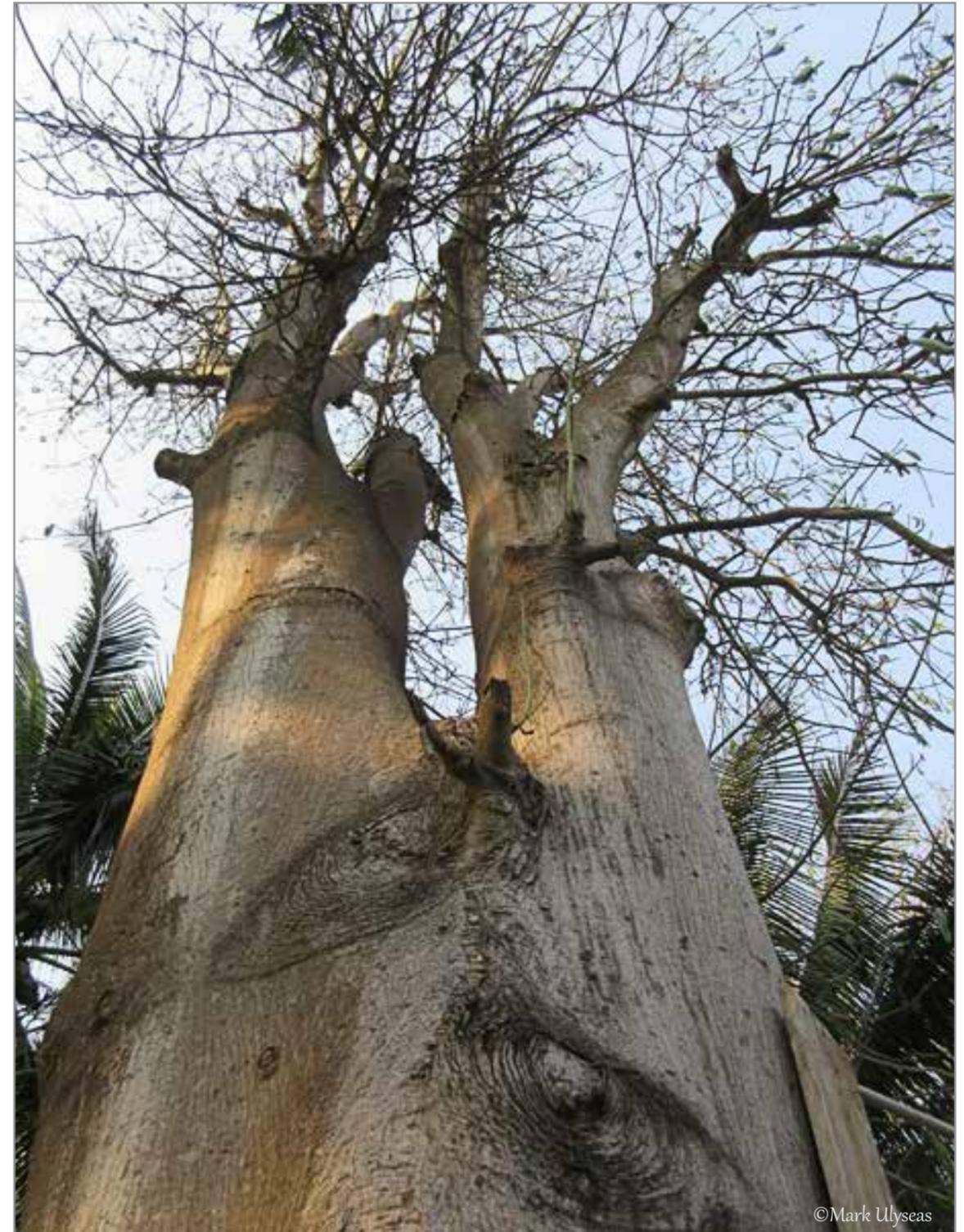
don't be too repelled by my third skin
it cascades stories and poems into the wind.

Caterina Mastroianni

OUT OF THE OASIS

I stumble out of the oasis of oestrogen, its heaviness and lightness
pull the rips of bodily currents through each oscillating palpitation
the contexts of busy words and memories rise and fall
into disclosures of every doing, every trying, every loving
looking for a respite room, questioning the ease of the oasis
the curtained hopes, the over-compliance, the cortisol cuts
until I enclose problem makers, vitality takers, peace posers
twist them around and around into a tight ball in my fist.

I throw the ball backwards across the shortening green expanse
run and skip from the impossibilities of caught men and women
forever submerged in documents and mortar and code
until a feeling of enough-ness settles over my curves
the seeds, roots, fruits and skies are enough
the poems, songs, stories and art are enough
the loving and caring of you with me is enough
all ensconcing me into a holding-ground inside out.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

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.



2021 WINTER SOLSTICE - FRACTURED TIME

On our streets there is edgy chatter
facial tick's with
foul tastes in the mouth
from decayed masked grief
delayed fears
who are you who am I?

Life forces back and forth
Sweeps the floor the streets where there is fear
of helmeted men in black rubber
holding guns with
moody wary smoke bombed scowls
edge-to-edge hate

Solstice
wheel turn of that earthly year while
planets move in cosmic galactic cycles
up down begin and end
the winter grief fractal
Euclidean spaced
emotions hefted
un-synced

Beauty bridges grief perhaps tugs to
observe the path behind
what did it bring?

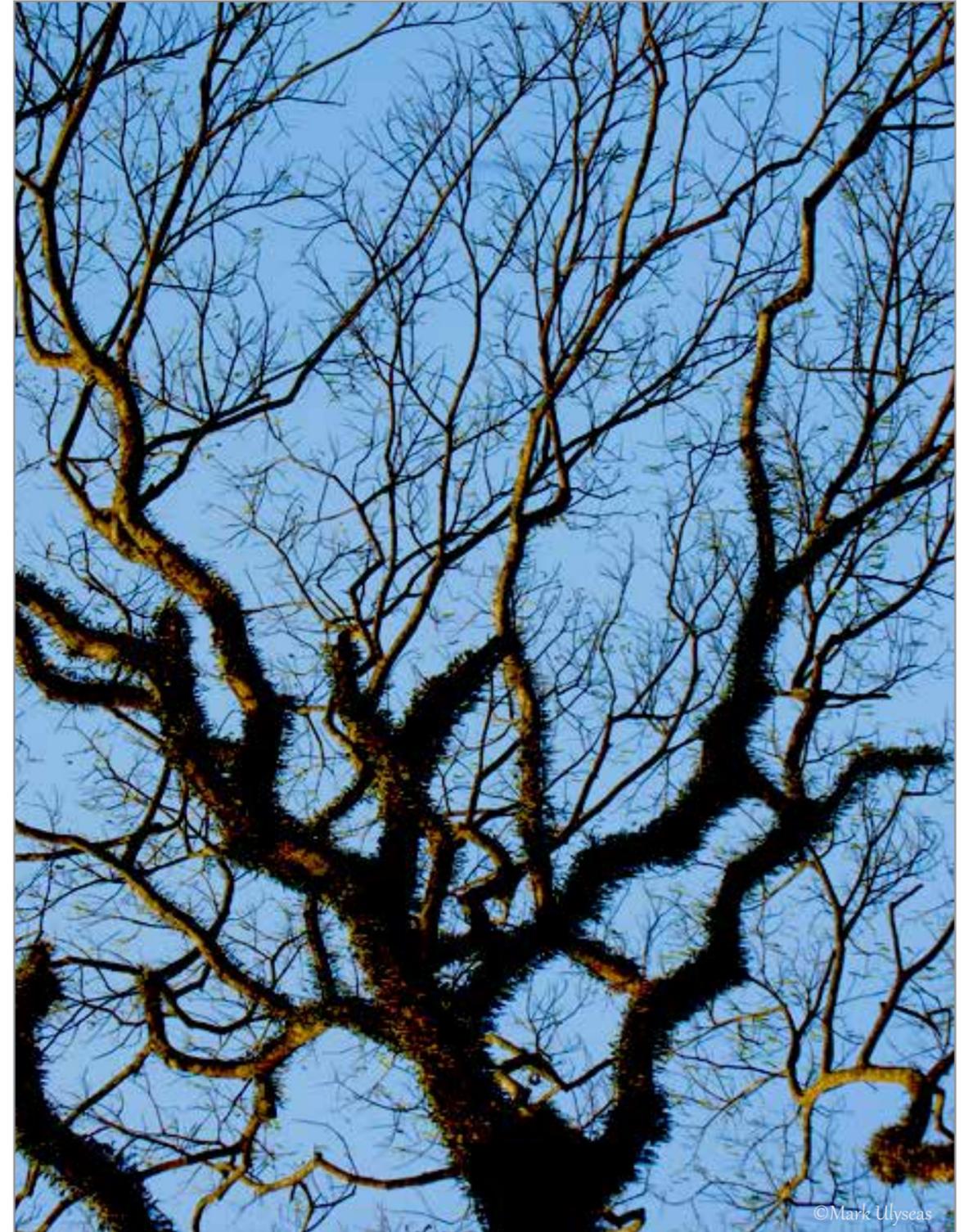
continued overleaf...

Margaret Kiernan

2021 WINTER SOLSTICE -
FRACTURED TIME *contd...*

Faces of stone
 avoidance
 plague

Solstice
time to go within
resides in Self
tucked- in like a fox or baby vole
snug within the clay
gnaw at sloes nuts haws
smug
forgiving in the dreamtime
until Spring is sprung.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

My name is Maria McDonnell and I am fifty- three years old, born reared and still residing in Finglas. From an early age I loved writing, especially poetry, however having grown up in an under privileged area there were not many chances for me to fulfill my dreams with writing and if I am honest I was too wild and carefree to advance any further with my education. I decided to travel for a few years and then returned home to have my daughter, whom I reared alone. After putting her through college and seeing her mature into a young woman, I found myself at a loose end and wanted to explore into further education. In 2019 I was accepted onto the Trinity Access Programme and successfully completed my year which I was so proud of. Now two years later I am half way through my second year of my degree in English studies at Trinity and am loving every minute of it. I am continuing with my poetry, which now has deeper meaning personally. My dream is to one day have some of my poetry published, so until then I will continue with my writing and live in hope.



I PROMISE I WILL CARRY YOU

Oh the joy and the excitement, the hopes and dreams I had
 Being told I was your vessel, to carry you through good and bad
 The morning sickness comes, not complaining, I longed for this
 To finally become a mother, the feeling of just sheer bliss
 I was scared, not of this journey, but of doubts which lay ahead
 Hearing shots and missiles in my town, some families have now fled
 The sound of children's laughter, now turned to screams and cries
 The fear of the unknown, I couldn't believe my eyes
 Attacks became more frequent, the worried looks on faces
 Was there somewhere I could go, was this happening in other places?

But I have promised to carry you, forty weeks will bring new life
 The news of your father's death, makes me a widow, no more a wife
 I am still your mother; it won't be easy doing this alone
 Singlehandedly I will carry you, even within a war torn zone
 Days turn into weeks, my town is now grit and dirt
 The bombs have destroyed the houses and many friends are hurt
 I need to feed and nourish you, staying here there is no hope
 So I'll sit and think for a while and wonder how we will cope
 Then news comes of a better place, to be free of this raging battle
 But it is a long trek to take, crossing miles like herds of cattle

Weeks have now turned to months, a few more days and you are here
 I promise I will carry you and relieve you of pain and fear
 You have every right to be a child, to be happy and have such fun
 To play with other children under the radiance of the sun
 Like I once did many years ago, when I was happy and free
 You will have those chances my child, just you wait and see.
 We finally reach the camps, but they try to turn us away
 Beatings and shouts of abuse, using tear gas and pepper spray
 Why are they doing this? For we have done nothing wrong
 Our only crime we feel; is we have nowhere to belong.

continued overleaf...

Maria McDonnell

I PROMISE I WILL CARRY YOU *contd...*

We queue up for our meals, getting slop on plastic plates
 Trying to have a normal day, enclosed behind barbed wired gates
 The time has now come my child, it is time for me to give birth
 What world is out there for you now, what happened to this earth?
 I push, I scream and I cry but finally you are here
 Oh look at this beautiful face all innocent of hatred my dear
 I promise I will still carry you, this time laying upon my breast
 There is a long journey ahead again, but for now we shall just rest
 I have hidden money for us both, I can use it to get us to sea
 We will take a boat together my son, live happy and be free

Not a tear you have cried, my beautiful baby boy
 We climb on board with dreams, I am smiling with feelings of joy
 This is our only way out and the trip will be so tough
 I hear the men on board exclaim, the sea is becoming rough
 The waves crash against our boat, many women and children crying
 Food and water are running out and some around us are dying
 I grab my little knapsack and hold you close to my heart
 Then someone cries out 'Land ahead' our new life may now start
 One more crash upon the rocks, the boat turns upside down
 The silence and the darkness, the fear that we may drown.

I wake upon the sun kissed beach and reach out for your hand
 But, where are you my little boy? have you not reached dry land?
 I jump up and I scream your name, others look on me with fear
 A woman comes to my aid, 'stay calm don't cry my dear'
 I ask her where you are, she points to planks of wood
 And there your little body lies, around you people stood
 I promised I would carry you and this I always did
 But now it's to your final place, in a box with a covered lid
 I can no longer carry you, I cannot carry on
 The emptiness inside my heart, my lust for life has gone.

And now I live my life alone although I may be free
 But freedom comes with a price when escaping tyranny
 I have no friends to call my own, my family have all now died
 Either killed within the warzone, or when trying just to hide
 People look at me and label me, and they think I'm here to demand
 But they will never know that feeling when I reached out for your hand
 I am not just a refugee I am a person with feelings and life
 I was a daughter, sister, friend, a mother and a loving wife
 Now I am but a woman with an education and a brain
 I am just the same as you my friend, but perhaps with much more pain.

2010 - 2021



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JANUARY 2022

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE