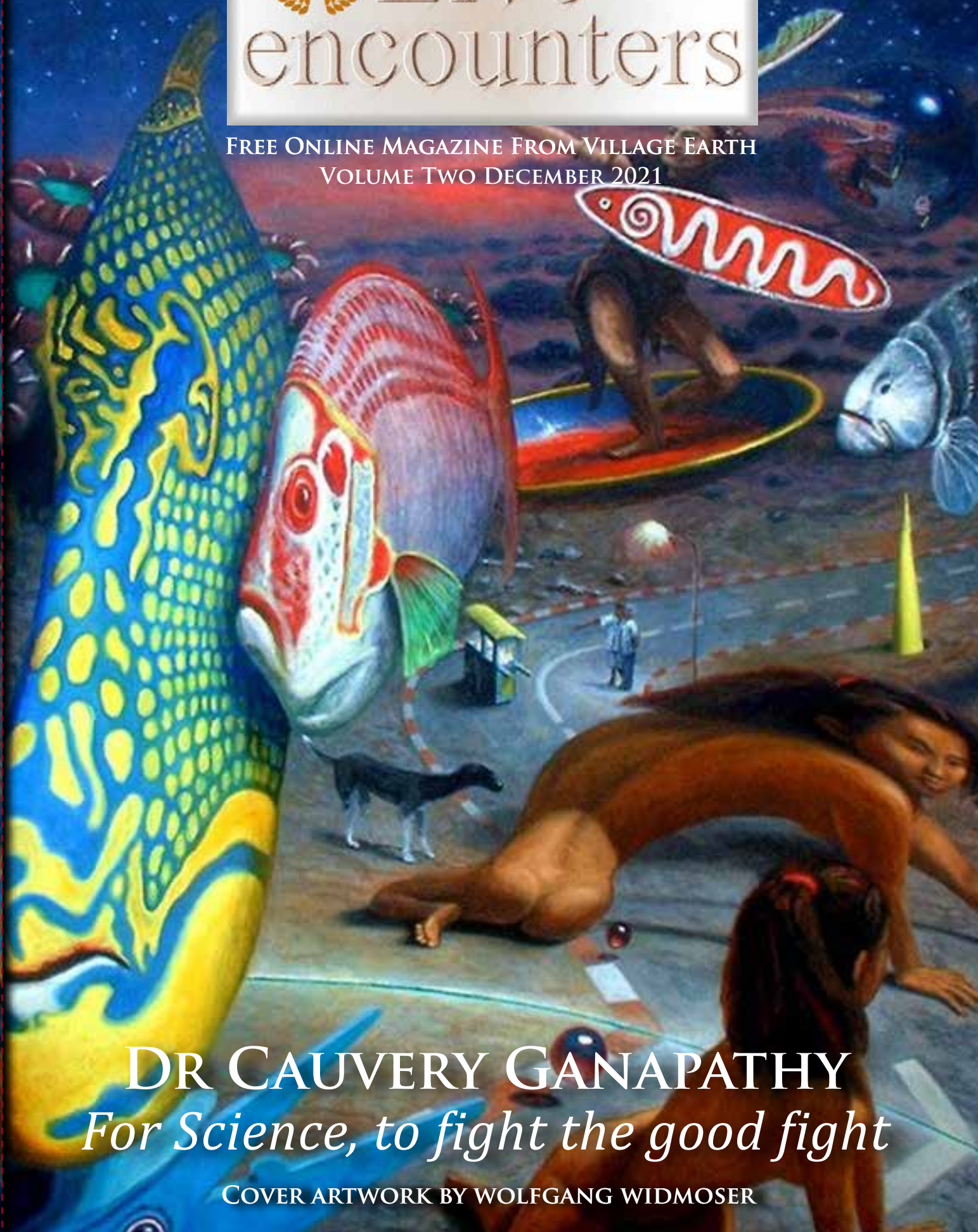


2010 - 2021



# Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
VOLUME TWO DECEMBER 2021



DR CAUVERY GANAPATHY  
*For Science, to fight the good fight*

COVER ARTWORK BY WOLFGANG WIDMOSER



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Butterfly, Luang Prabang. 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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As 2021 downs its shutters the price of human body parts has gone up. Human trafficking, organ trafficking and harvesting around the world (transplant tourism), including the civilised nations, is now second only to drug peddling in revenue. Profiteers forecast a higher income in 2022, thanks to continuing war, growing poverty, disease and transmigration of people (illegal migrants?).

And once again, as we have done in the past, this Christmas and New Year we shall all sit down to sumptuous meals, drink whatever fancies our taste buds, shop till we drop and pamper our overweight children and pets. It's the season of happiness, love and family especially for the homeless, injured and maimed children of wars, missing people in Afghanistan, Syria, Xinjiang (Uighur), Tibet, Yemen, Hong Kong and elsewhere, asylum seekers, political detainees and the fringe folk of the planet. They will surely be very happy and content with what they see, hear, feel and touch this festive season.

From genocide to environmental disasters to a devastating infectious virus it has been a roller coaster ride through many countries and peoples and cultures and religions. This journey will end only when we truly comprehend the reason as to why we have been put on this planet by a power far greater than we can ever imagine.

Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

– Mark Ulyseas, *2021 Year of Living Foolishly, Once Again?*

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Dr Cauvery Ganapathy

## DR CAUVERY GANAPATHY FOR SCIENCE, TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

Compounding the existing differences and fissures within populations grappling with the overwhelming panoply of issues that the pandemic has thrown up, is the question of how one may react to the vaccines that could eventually help end it. Within and across national borders, economic strata, political orientations, religious adherences and social backgrounds, there is today - *as there have been during previous pandemics*- a raging debate regarding not just the efficacy of vaccines but also the objectives underpinning their development and even more fundamentally and in the most polarizing manner, regarding their very need- a question that should more reasonably have existed only in the realm of facts and science and not have been subject to opinions.

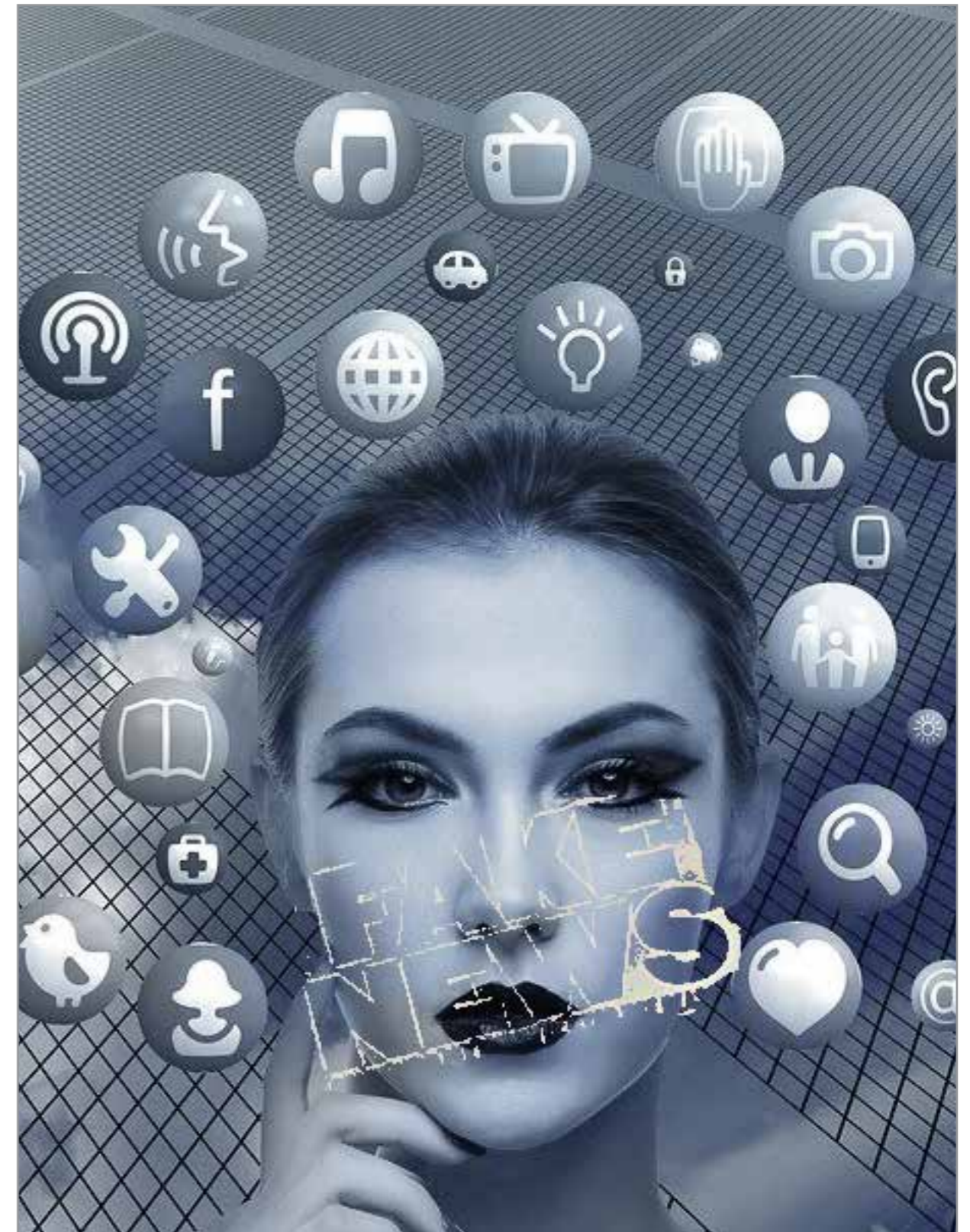
The line being drawn between opinions and facts has come to become painfully thin in a society where uncorroborated information has been abundantly and disturbingly easily available. The existence and celebration of the different views that naturally exist in open societies should not in any way allow for solid and proven science to be questioned by those not technically trained or equipped to do so. It is the tragedy of our times, however, that the biases against an elite generating meritocracy have gotten intertwined with a mistrust of issues that demand a rigorous technical training to become even intelligible enough to be debated upon. We live in times where offending and getting offended takes pitifully little and the chasms between populations standing on either sides of any debate widen surprisingly fast. The views against vaccination have come to become one of the most significant examples of such cleavages.

As persistent and with a far higher rate of sustenance than the Covid pandemic itself is what the WHO has termed an 'Infodemic'- *too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak*. To address this effectively would mean to redesign the algorithms and business models of at least two if not more of the largest and most profitable enterprises in the world today. Cynically, however, to hold on to the hope that this may come to pass despite all the momentum that has been building up against Big-tech and the demand for accountability from them, appears naïve at best.

It becomes that much more necessary then to be far more vigilant in terms of how Science and those that advocate on its behalf presents itself to the layman. To continue being sanguine about knowledge and facts being on their side is for Science to lose the war in the new world of infodemics. It is no longer enough and must be recognized as such, however unfortunate the concept of facts needing credibility and popularity may be. In an era where information is currency, the race to be able to get your own credible voice out there in time can no longer be run as half-heartedly. It is critical and urgent that a more fierce pushback be mounted by the scientific community.

As is the wont of our times, the multiple easily accessible avenues of self-expression and propagation through social media and other digital platforms, have both amplified the voices and muddied the waters in a classic unaccountable fashion. The need to address the vaccine hesitancy and opposition to it urgently today arguably is due to two reasons in particular- first, the fact that the near militant skepticism regarding vaccination where it is considered a personal prerogative, is morphing into political, economic, religious and social movements threatening societal cohesion and order, apart from preparing the ground for multiple future pandemics; and second, that while the tools for presenting the counter-positions to the arguments against the denials of vaccine efficacy or need, are as easily available, never before has the exploitation of the same mediums carried as much momentum as it does today due to social media's ecosystem of unchecked facts.

While the arguments against vaccination have been vociferously put forward by both groups, it is necessary also to not blur the distinction between anti-vaxxers and those that may be vaccine-hesitant in this narrative. To do so is to not allow the latter a chance to have legitimate questions be answered, thereby increasing the distrust of the other side. Given the urgency of the situation the pandemic has flung us into, it is no surprise that patience with what is easily apparent to be faulty logic and abject ignorance regarding credible science is running low.



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When matters of pure science frustratingly fall prey to the irrationalities that govern the political and religious sphere, it doubles the unknown quantities in the narrative enormously. The links between scientific populism and political populism are not tenuous and appear to have gradually mastered the art of weaponizing one to supplement the other.

Yet, to belittle questions and arguments that do not correspond to what may be known as irrefutable science, is to whittle away the rare opportunities where an understanding of the fears of the other may be attempted, and a more resounding case could be made for the efficacy of vaccines to those that may have been misled by the barrage of misinformation. Vaccine advocates do a great disservice to the cause of convincing people of the legitimacy of vaccines when they deprecate the founded or unfounded fears of the other side as the rants of a fringe group. While the size of the latter may be small, importantly, it has been found to be one that is growing, and that should give one reason to pause and recalibrate the approach.

The debates of this group dwell on questions and doubts that have been raised before in relation to other vaccines, and more importantly, that have been festering either unanswered or inadequately countered under societal frameworks for generations. To not counter the false narratives more stringently and consistently has allowed for a snowballing that is manifesting itself in the protests and growing opposition to the Covid vaccines today. A watershed in this regard has been the opposition to the MMR vaccines. Andrew Wakefield's notoriously erroneous publication in a major scientific journal in 1998 can be identified as the fountainhead of the mass doubts cast over the MMR vaccines. While the Journal did retract the publication later, once it was proven to be a faulty one, retraction itself did not stop the spread of Wakefield's narrative and the damage had already been done with that particular article of his continuing to serve as a Bible for those fighting the MMR vaccines. Despite his being debarred from the medical community technically, Wakefield continues enjoying cult status in the anti-vaccine movement. The resurgence of measles in the UK in 2020 should have been proof enough of the need and efficacy of the MMR vaccines, but so entrenched has the misinformation regarding it already become online with material from that decades old article being used as proof, that the counter-narrative to it appears frustratingly ill-equipped to make the cut with any skeptic. In this regard, it would also behove the academic community to consider how work that is so obviously in contravention of all expected scientific rigour and data triangulation was allowed to be published in the first place.

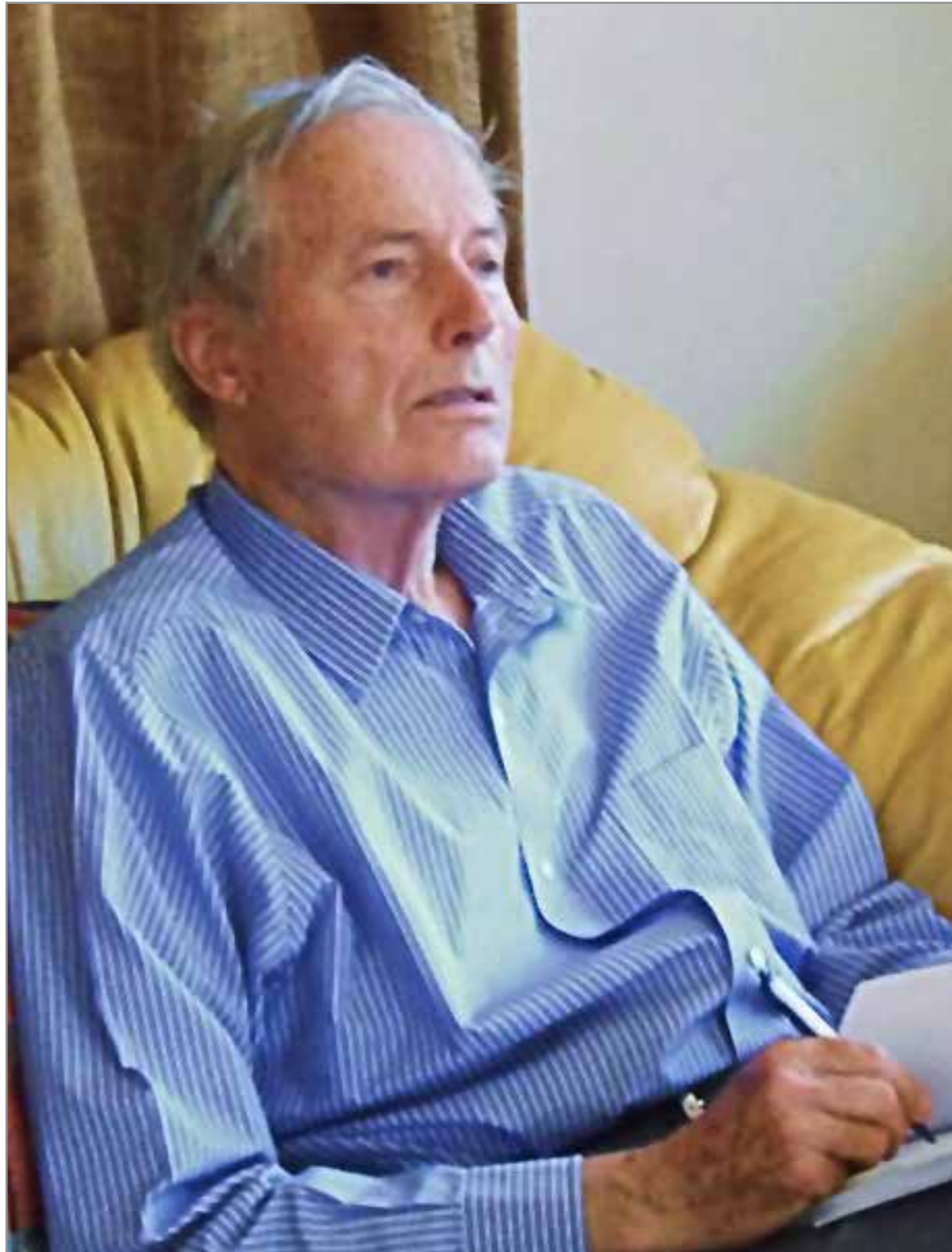
When matters of pure science frustratingly fall prey to the irrationalities that govern the political and religious sphere, it doubles the unknown quantities in the narrative enormously. The links between scientific populism and political populism are not tenuous and appear to have gradually mastered the art of weaponizing one to supplement the other.

The inherent disregard and distrust of the political class and the assumption and attendant proof that policymaking has not always been based on the idea of pure public good, has made it more difficult to convince people of the credibility of any directive by the State regarding vaccination. Alike religion, healthcare appears now to touch upon a personal space where there is near aggression directed at anything inconsistent with one's own views. The interstice between the two viewpoints regarding the value of vaccines is woefully small and the effort to find common ground needs to reflect that more adequately. While it should not fall upon Science to advocate its credibility, it is a burden that it will have to bear most urgently.



Photograph courtesy:  
<https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/blog/fake-news-about-covid-19>

Dr Howard Richards (born June 10, 1938) is a philosopher of Social Science who has worked with the concepts of basic cultural structures and constitutive rules. He holds the title of Research Professor of Philosophy at Earlham College, a liberal arts college in Richmond, Indiana, USA, the Quaker School where he taught for thirty years. He officially retired from Earlham College, together with his wife Caroline Higgins in 2007, but retained the title of Research Professor of Philosophy. A member of the Yale class of 1960, he holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of California, Santa Barbara, a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the Stanford Law School, an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) from Oxford University (UK) and a PhD in Educational Planning, with a specialization in applied psychology and moral education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada. Dr Richards is a Catholic, a member of Holy Trinity (Santisima Trinidad) parish in Limache, Chile, and a member of the third order of St. Francis, S.F.O [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



## DR HOWARD RICHARDS

### A PROPOSAL TO HUMANITY: A PATH TO SURVIVING TODAY'S MEGACRISIS

After World War II it was widely believed that the formula for peace, dignity, and sustainable prosperity for every sister and brother in the human family, had been discovered. The formula was often called "Development." Its ingredients included the steady advance of the rule of law, the steady advance of human rights including the social rights declared in the Universal Declaration of 1948, and –crucially --mixed economies like those pioneered in Scandinavia. Further, as in, for example, India, Tanzania, and Indonesia, true development would synthesize human rights, a gift of the West, with the best spiritual ideals of ancient traditions, gifts of the East and South. Development was not just economic growth. Nevertheless, it *was* economic growth.

Now the dreams of 1948 have turned into the nightmares of 2021. It is not only that humanity is under attack by the forces of climate change, by new mutations of viruses, by growing mountains of unpayable debt, by stagnating living standards, by the exponential growth of precarious low paid employment in some places, by no employment at all for youth in other places, and by uncontrollable waves of migration of the economically desperate and the politically persecuted. It is that humanity is in disarray. Nobody knows what to do. The formula of 1948 failed. Why?

Dr Howard Richards

Our point was that social democracy does not work *because* social democracy was and is incompatible with the basic *cultural structure of the modern world*. That is why the dreams of 1948 evolved into the nightmares of 2021. Social justice fell apart. Peace within and between nations fell apart. The governability that might have been –so necessary to achieve the compliance of our species with the natural laws it must obey to survive—was not to be.

My book with Joanna Swanger, *The Dilemmas of Social Democracies* (2006), charted in detail the downfalls of the post-World War II Swedish model, of successive buds and half-blooms of social democracy in Spain, of the temporarily successful but unsustainable Austrian model, of the immense disappointment in Mandela's South Africa when the end of *apartheid* failed to be the beginning of social justice, of the bloody end of Sukarno's non-aligned Muslim social democracy in Indonesia, of successive disappointments in Venezuela, and of the philosophical evolution of the World Bank as it deployed its formidable resources of money and of knowledge in unsuccessful efforts to prevent the dreams of 1948 from becoming the nightmares of 2021. A reviewer wrote that there was nothing new about our book. We simply agreed with neoliberal conservatives like Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman. They said social democracy does not work. So did we.

Indeed, it is true that attempts to govern the economy doing what must be done to adjust to physical reality; or to redistribute wealth and power from the few to the many; or to honour human rights to medical care, dignified employment, and security in old age; regularly lead to what Karl Popper famously called "unintended consequences." Typical unintended consequences include disinvestment, soaring prices, shortages, inflation, intolerable tax burdens, insolvent governments, unemployment, and violence.

But the reviewer missed our point. Our point was that social democracy does not work *because* social democracy was and is incompatible with the basic *cultural structure of the modern world*. That is why the dreams of 1948 evolved into the nightmares of 2021. Social justice fell apart. Peace within and between nations fell apart. The governability that might have been –so necessary to achieve the compliance of our species with the natural laws it must obey to survive—was not to be.

Joanna and I did not propose to resign ourselves to the impossibility of peaceful, inclusive, rational, and functional solutions to social and environmental problems. We did propose cultural action leading to culture shifts. "Culture shifts" is here a name for transforming the mechanisms of structural frustration. They are, as Ludwig Wittgenstein would say, a way out of the fly bottle. What is impossible because of the BCS, can be made possible by transforming the BCS. The empowering culture shifts would include shifts to ethics of care, shifts to community development, and shifts to unbounded organizing. A theoretical construct, *basic cultural structure*, one that overlaps with *basic social structure*, and *basic legal structure*, thus emerges in our 2006 study as a name for causal powers that are hypothesized to be more decisive as determinants of the course of history than other causes whose

impacts changing the course of history are more obvious and perhaps easier to understand, such as who wins wars, who wins elections, population growth, new technologies (the printing press, the atom bomb, robotics, artificial intelligence, ...), and so on.

Five years later (in 2011) the evolutionary biologist D.S. Wilson's book *Darwin's Cathedral* proposed a concept similar, if not identical, to BCS: *moral system*. Wilson wrote of biologists doing a Darwinian analysis to explain which forms of life adapt and survive, and which do not adapt. When it comes to applying such an analysis to *homo sapiens*, Wilson suggests, the appropriate unit of analysis is not the individual. It is not the group. It is the moral system. "Moral system" is an accurate and illuminating name for that which adapts and survives or does not adapt and does not survive.

An initial inkling of what *basic cultural structure* (BCS) might mean can be gleaned from considering common uses of the three words that compose the phrase. *Basic* refers to institutions that meet basic human needs, such as those Plato referenced when he wrote in the second book of *The Republic* that the true architect of our city is our needs, and the first and most basic of our needs is food. *Cultural* refers to the ecological niche of the human species. *Homo sapiens* possesses capacities for creativity and cooperation. It passes on new learnings from one generation to another. It can reprogram its behaviour more rapidly than species that change behaviour much more slowly, for example by mutation and natural selection. *Structure* refers to organization. The same component parts often have different causal powers when they are organized differently.

More hints regarding the meanings and uses of the BCS concept are given below as by-products of a short list of practical ways to transform the BCS of the modern world.

### A Path to Surviving Today's Megacrisis

Here are some steps you and I can take and can urge organizations we are part of to take.

Pledge to act in such a way that, if everyone acted as we do, dignified human life could flourish sustainably in harmony with nature. Perhaps most importantly: pledge to share our surplus money, time, property, expertise or whatever we have but do not need (if we have any surplus –many people do not). Move resources from where they are not needed to where they are needed.



**Create, or help create, dignified livelihoods that do not depend on sales.** The BCS of the modern world can be regarded as a moral system whose centrepiece is what André Orléan calls “*séparation marchande*,” and whose characteristic form of human relationship is what many call “patriarchy.” These two main features of the BCS already imply the two main findings of J.M. Keynes *General Theory*: (1) A chronic insufficiency of effective demand (the fact that we need to sell our labour power for a wage sufficient to lead a human life and support our family, does not mean there is effective demand for it in the labour market), and (2) the weakness of the inducement to invest.

With just these few considerations, without going into more detail here, the answer to the following questions is perhaps already becoming clear. The questions are: “Will a day ever come (given the BCS) when there are enough long term investors who find it profitable to hire people, and to pay them good wages out of the revenues generated by the sale of the goods or services that the people hired contribute to producing? Can this approach create sustainable dignified livelihoods for everybody?” The correct answer is: “Not bloody likely!”

Therefore: Dignity for all requires flows of resources that do not always come from selling what the employees produce and using some of the funds generated by those sales to pay wages. It requires thinking and acting outside the box of the BCS, as is done, for example, at the showcase sites of South Africa’s Community Work Programme (CWP). Here is a second example: I review my budget and I find I have no surplus time, but I do have a thousand South African Rands every month that I do not need. I donate it to a non-profit. My donation combined with donations from others creates a dignified livelihood for somebody.

How many examples would it be possible to give? The concept of *unbounded organizing* offers answers to many questions and this is one of them. The answer is: an unlimited number.

N.B. The correct answer to the questions, “Is racism going to end while the total number of decent jobs is inflexible, so that more good jobs for people of one ethnicity necessarily means fewer good jobs for people of other ethnicities?”: “Will sexism end while more good jobs for one gender necessarily means fewer good jobs for other genders?” and “Will organized crime featuring profit from vice end while a considerable fraction of the population is unable to find dignity in the legitimate economy?” is also “Not bloody likely!”

Dignity for all requires flows of resources that do not always come from selling what the employees produce and using some of the funds generated by those sales to pay wages. It requires thinking and acting outside the box of the BCS, as is done, for example, at the showcase sites of South Africa’s Community Work Programme (CWP). Here is a second example: I review my budget and I find I have no surplus time, but I do have a thousand South African Rands every month that I do not need. I donate it to a non-profit. My donation combined with donations from others creates a dignified livelihood for somebody.

**Talk the talk.** It is not enough to walk the walk. Be an organizer of necessary conversations, facilitating the inner coming to voice of other people. A working hypothesis: if the facilitator can succeed in breaking the ice, encouraging people to be simultaneously more introspective and more communicative, then people will of their own accord overcome their unconscious resistance to facing the bad news about humanity’s probable future. They will themselves see what is obvious to whoever opens their eyes: *inter alia*, the need to replenish the social capital that the extreme individualism of the BCS has depleted. They will join with others to save people and planet, volunteering of their own accord to design and implement action for change.

**Join the legal revolution.** It is not illegal to choose to use the powers that come with the ownership of property to serve other people and the common good. It is legal to form labour cooperatives and other businesses where the workers and the owners are the same people. If we are working in the public sector, we can serve the public, as we ought to be doing, defying Gary Becker’s empirical finding that public servants commonly serve their own interests more than the public interest. It is legal to abolish neoliberalism in our own hearts and in our own corner of the world, by being mission-driven instead of profit-driven. It is legal to defuse the growth imperative created by the BCS by reducing, reusing, and recycling. Nobody has ever been arrested for planting trees to combat global warming and donating to a neighbourhood food bank, instead of spending the same money on a luxury vacation.

The more people deliberately serve the common good, and the more customs change so that conventional behaviour serves the common good, the more the BCS is transformed.

**Small is beautiful.** Social democracy got off to a good start in western Europe after World War II, but by 1970 it was becoming clear that globalization was killing it. The BCS gave globalization its ethic –individual before community, named “perfect liberty” by Adam Smith. The BCS gave globalization its jurisprudence –property and contract. Assuming these premises mainstream economics deduced that almost unrestrained globalization was equivalent to maximizing efficiency, rationality, and welfare. In practice globalization has been a global race to the bottom. Nations compete in racing to relax environmental protection, to lower wages, and to lower taxes. Why? To attract investment and to deter capital flight.

Going forward from 2021, our survival as a species depends on ethics understood as the improvement of morals. Practicing ethical reflection, we can find our way out of Wittgenstein's fly bottle. Our minds become reasonable, "adopting a reasonable standpoint, that of the common good."

Already in 1973 E.F. Schumacher read the handwriting on the wall. Given the BCS and the global social and legal structures the BCS fostered, social democracy was not going to work. Schumacher countered with economics "as if people mattered." Starting from an ethic of care rooted in Buddhism and other great religions, Schumacher deduced that the global race to the bottom was "institutionalized irresponsibility."

Today, when a pandemic has taught everyone that it is dangerous to be dependent on long and complex global supply chains, we have great opportunities to transform the BCS by doing local community development.

**Practice ethical reflection. Big is beautiful too.** Dewey and Tufts (*Ethics*, 1908) traced the early history of moral systems back to tribal customs. Without customary morals our ancestors would not have survived. Nevertheless, Dewey and Tufts write "... the rules which sum up custom are a confused mixture of class interest, irrational sentiment, authoritative pronouncement and genuine considerations of welfare." (position 5483)

"Morals" and "ethics" are often treated as synonyms. Here it is important to distinguish them, treating "ethics" as the rational reconsideration, justification, and improvement of morals. Practicing ethical reflection, we critically examine the globally hegemonic BCS, and we also critically examine what Shiv Visvanathan calls "the defeated epistemologies."

Both the BCS and local morals, as history has bequeathed them to us, too often serve hardwired emotional tendencies inclining toward "us versus them" --love our tribe, hate our tribe's enemies. A famous piece of evidence for the hardwiring of hostility to "them" is Muzafer Sherif's Robber's Cave Experiment (1954). Twelve-year-old boys were *randomly* assigned to two different groups. In a few days, the groups became so aggressive toward each other that the experiment had to be discontinued.

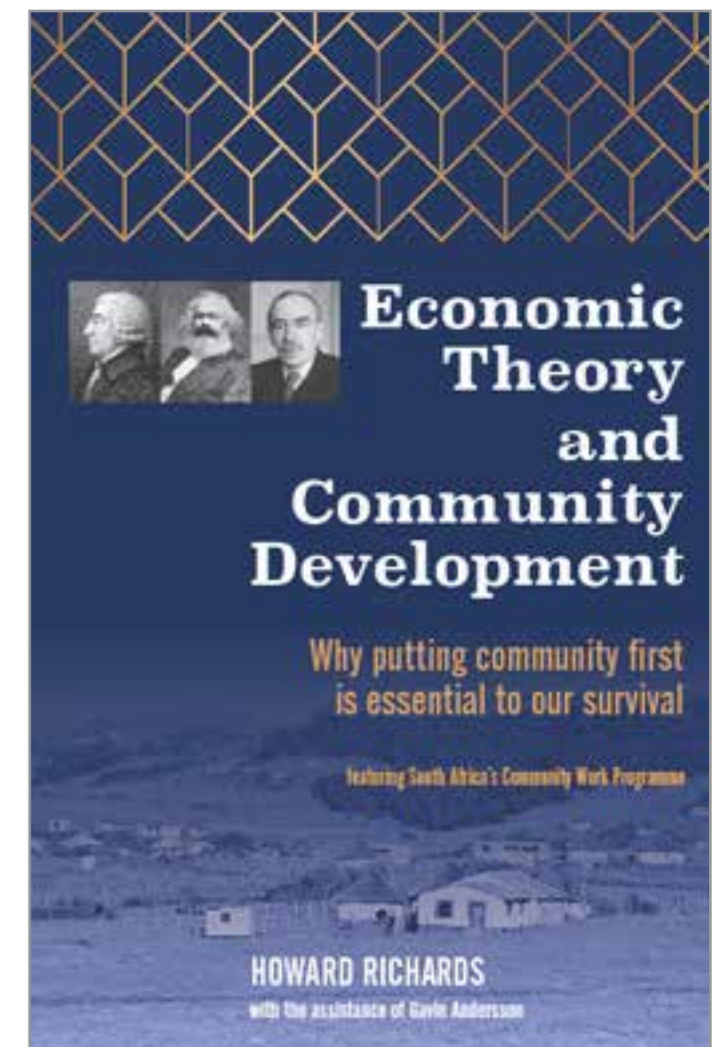
Going forward from 2021, our survival as a species depends on ethics understood as the improvement of morals. Practicing ethical reflection, we can find our way out of Wittgenstein's fly bottle. Our minds become reasonable, "adopting a reasonable standpoint, that of the common good." (position 5261).

The context of humanity's common good is one big habitat, earth. There is only one big atmosphere, and only one big biosphere. Evelin Lindner concludes (2020) that we need one big love.

**Spirit, soul, mental health.** Fritz Schumacher used to say that the place to start building a mosaic of global fraternal cooperation among resilient local economies was our own "inner work." We should not assume that you and I are pure in heart while deep anger and fantasies of revenge, are found only among the approximately 7,899,999,998 other human beings on the planet. We should practice and recommend self-improvement.

Howard Richards' new book, *Economic Theory and Community Development*, is now available from the publisher, Dignity Press, and from Amazon and other major booksellers, as a print book and as an e book.

<https://www.dignitypress.org/>



Katie Costello was born and raised in Hubbard, Ohio, USA. Her greatest passion in life has always been to help animals. She is lucky enough to be a licensed veterinary technician and owner of The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center where she helps animals through behavior work. A vegetarian since she was 6 years old and a vegan for the last 13 years, she currently has 6 dogs, 6 cats, 8 chickens, 3 roosters 1 very special turkey and 3 farm pigs that are amongst her dearest friends. She is founder of 2 non-profit organizations, K-9's for Compassion (Co-founded with her father), a therapy animal group and The Together 3 Journey, a service dog organization. She has been on the board of many animal organizations throughout her life, including Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary and C.H.A.I.N. (Community Helping Animals In Need) and SVBT (Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians) She enjoys freelance writing about (mostly) animals for different magazines, with her favorite being Live Encounters! <https://thecaninecampustraining.com/>

## KATIE COSTELLO

### HELPING THE WILD MUSTANGS TO SURVIVE

*Text & Photographs*

I truly believe that without some quick and serious intervention, we are going to lose what is left of the wild mustang and Burros. The Bureau of Land Management, or BLM plans for roundups is appalling and frightening, and the removal plan is drastically increasing in numbers. Wyoming is the first target. With a goal of eradicating the wild mustangs entirely. Delete following in brackets (They want to eradicate the wild mustangs from this state). Wyoming says "wild west" more than most other states! This would be a huge disgrace and loss of an American icon. We need a modern day "Wild Horse Annie". We need a hero that can come in, fight legislation, and save the wild horses and burros. Maybe Wild Horse Annie lives within all of us. Maybe WE (collectively) are the answer.



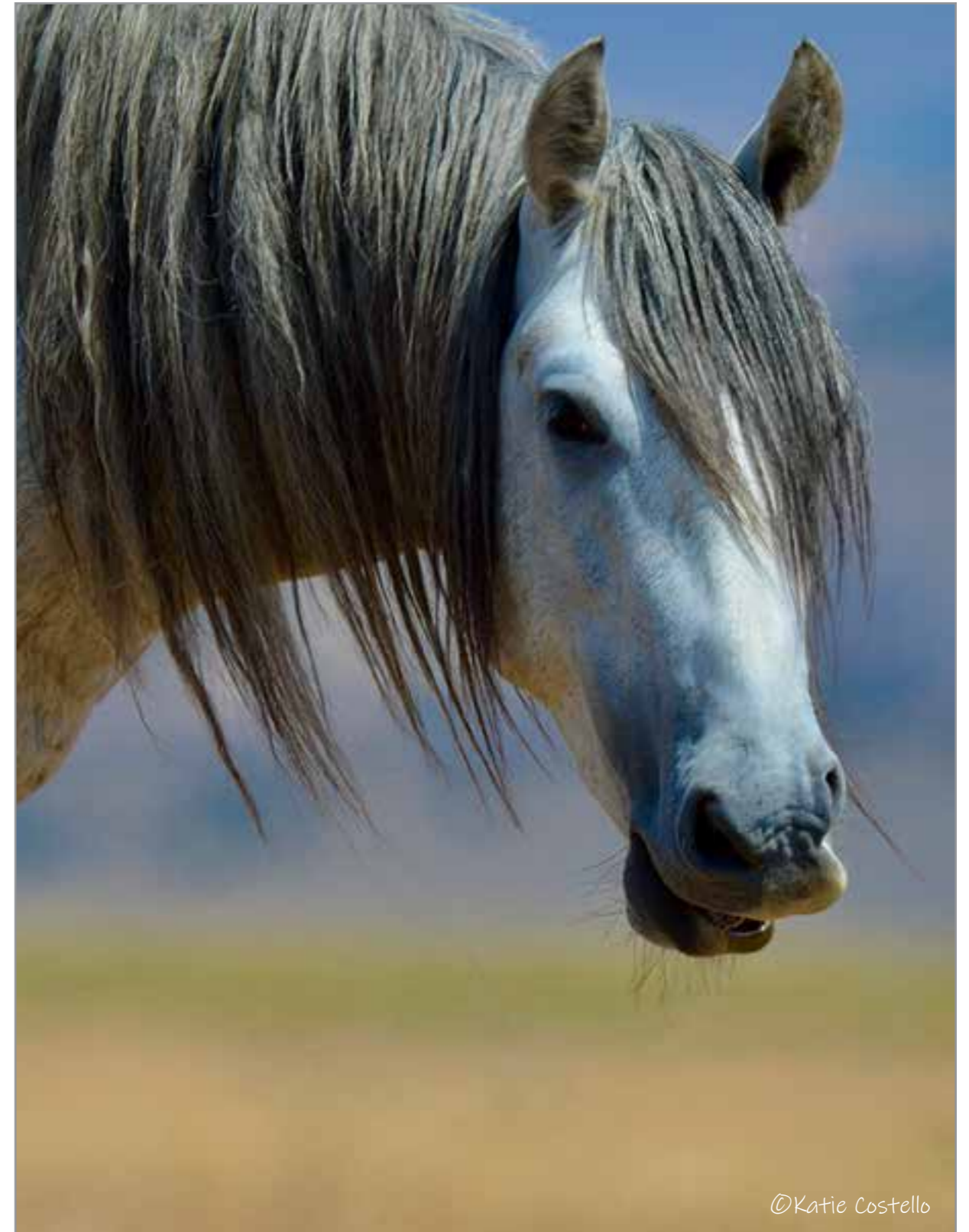
Katie Costello

The government is spending millions on their current program. I am convinced if the public knew the truth they would be outraged. We are all told a story about how they are starving to death, there isn't enough food and water, etc. And of course, the public doesn't want anyone suffering. So, this plea works. But if you speak to people that love these horses, they have another side to tell. What they are seeing aren't underweight horses starving at all, and they have pictures to prove it. Our taxpayer money is allowing our government to remove horses and burros for other benefits. They remove the horses without a plan and have them living in storage facilities holding thousands of horses, and paying prime money for them to stay there. They hope to adopt out these animals, but the reality is the homes aren't there. There aren't enough able and willing to take them in. They are better served to stay where they are, in the wild that they have always known, with their families that they have strong ties with.

From a behavioral standpoint, adopting a wild mustang is served only to the most dedicated. A wild horse would certainly come with different behavioral issues because he/she is wild. He/she isn't a pet horse. I am not sure why anyone would want to try to "tame" a wild horse. Of course, with the current plan of the BLM, it is the only shot they have. But I must say I worry about the well-being of these animals. Placed into the hands of someone that doesn't know or understand behavior, or doesn't reach out to a positive based trainer worried about the welfare and well-being of the horse, it is a recipe for disaster. These animals deserve better.

But of course, this is a complex problem. As discussed in the earlier two articles on this subject, when government determines a species to be overpopulated, they allow a hunting schedule. This, obviously, is not what we want either. Education, working together with the BLM, and fighting at the government level to create better legislation is the way out of this. It is the only way to win for the horses and burros.

Below is a list of way to help. This list includes options for all levels of lifestyles. Some take as little as a signature and clicking the "send" button all the way up to actively going to the sites of the horses and volunteering to clean up. I beg everyone reading this article to please take some action. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and the mustangs and burros are running out of time. As I type this, gathers continue, and more families are displaced.



©Katie Costello

Member of the Onaqui herd. Photograph by Katie Costello while travelling on the famed Pony Express at Tooele, Utah.



Member of the Onaqui herd. Photograph by Katie Costello while travelling on the famed Pony Express at Tooele, Utah.



There are organizations that have been fighting for the plight of the wild mustang for years, successfully. There really isn't much need in thinning the money out further and starting a new organization. Find one of the current organizations that are truly making a difference, and help them as much as you can. I am certain there are more; however, these are the organizations that I know, love, trust and donate to regularly.

So what can you do to help?

01. Support the agencies that are successfully helping the mustangs with your donations. The places that I recommend should always tell their story loud and clear and have many regular updates as to what exactly they are doing. Sign up for their newsletters.
02. Many of the organizations that I will recommend have shops that you can buy items from. Support these organizations.
03. Write to your congressman, and to the congressmen that have horses in their jurisdiction. Remember that the congressman work for the people, and the more people say this is important, the harder they have to fight for it. Because you are their ticket to re-election. Many of the organizations will send out pre written letters and tell you exactly who to email or call, all you have to do is sign it.
04. If you live near any of the wild mustangs, volunteer with local organizations. This could be cleaning up wire and debris from stopping the horses from being injured, to asking for donations, holding fundraisers, etc. I recently held a virtual and in person Pampered Chef party where I ask that all, I would have received for being a host be transferred to an organization of my choice. For 1 evening of fun we raised over \$1,000. Remember, legal fees are incredibly expensive and fighting this at the court level is the only way this will be won. Many of the organizations work on litigation to stop further round ups, legislation to get ahead of this, fertility control which needs addressed, and documentation of the roundups, which enforces accountability.

Member of the Onaqui herd. Photograph by Katie Costello while travelling on the famed Pony Express at Tooele, Utah.

05. Planned gifts, wills, and living trusts are all ways of leaving a legacy for something you love. There are many implications with this choice and you should talk to a financial adviser on the best way to do it.
06. Donate stock! Speak to the organizations to see if this is something that they do many of the large organizations do.
07. Write an opinion piece and help to educate on the problem. Talk to groups and people about this. If the public knew more about this, I am convinced that things would be different.
08. Train to be a PZP (or sterilization darter) to help to keep the numbers of horses workable.
09. Train to document wild herds. Data driven statistics will keep everyone accountable as well!
10. Adopt the wild burros and mustangs to keep them safe and out of the hands of slaughter houses.

The American Wild Horse Campaign is one of my favorite organizations. Their website has many options, and is well organized and thought out. Go here to see and educate yourself more on the problem or donate! <https://americanwildhorsecampaign.org/action-center>

Another favorite of mine is The Cloud Foundation. The story of Cloud is beautifully documented. They have a great team of people that are on top of the latest developments. <https://www.thecloudfoundation.org/get-involved>

And then Red Bird Trust holds a special place in my heart as the Onaqui Horses are the first wild mustangs I visited. They do things a little differently, they work at cleaning up the range so the horses don't injure themselves, as well as horses that are injured to help care for them. <https://redbirdtrust.org/#/page/how-to-help/>

Return to Freedom:  
<https://Returntofreedom.org>

Return to Freedom has a wonderful hyperlinked page on writing the congressmen, president, BLM, and petitions. Check this out and spend a few minutes doing this. Remember! You vote your congressmen in. Your opinion matters! See the page here:  
<https://returntofreedom.org/8-ways-to-help-americas-horses-2/>

A few other notable mentions work from the realm of getting the burros and mustangs adopted.  
<http://www.uswhba.org>  
<https://ispmb.org>

Many of these organizations can receive a percentage of your amazon sales simply by going to Amazon smiles and setting the organization of your choice as your default. Then every time you spend money at Amazon, a percentage automatically goes to that horse organization.

As with any great cause, education is first and foremost. If you truly want to help the wild mustangs and burros (And I hope you do-they need your help!). Educate yourself on all sides of the problem, and then talk to everyone you know about it. Spread the word. Educate. Education empowers people and calls them to action. It is through the power of the people that the legacy of the Wild Burros and Mustangs will be saved. I will leave you with some great articles to read to educate yourself on the entire cause.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/article/wild-horse-management-options?loggedin=true>

<https://awionline.org/content/myths-and-facts-about-wild-horses-and-burros>

<https://americanwildhorsecampaign.org/myths-facts-about-blm-wild-horse-and-burro-program>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure/article/wild-horses-part-two>

<https://returntofreedom.org> has an entire part of their website dedicated to education. Click on "Learn" to see all of the choices.

<https://americanwildhorsecampaign.org/media/roundup-report-wild-horses-wyoming-checkerboard>

<https://americanwildhorsecampaign.org/issue>

<https://www.thecloudfoundation.org/get-informed>

One of the best books out there is *Wild Horse Country* by David Philipps.

I hope you will join me in any way in helping the wild horses and burros of the Wild West of America. I just know they can inspire you as much as they inspire me. They remind us all of what freedom, endurance, and what it means to be truly free.



©Katie Costello

Member of the Onaqui herd. Photograph by Katie Costello while travelling on the famed Pony Express at Tooele, Utah.





Members of the Onaqui herd. Photograph by Katie Costello while travelling on the famed Pony Express at Tooele, Utah.

Suzanne Asha Stone has been on the front lines of wolf restoration in the Western USA since 1988. She began in the role of Boise State university intern for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, and Nez Perce Tribe's Central Idaho interagency wolf recovery steering committee. There she coordinated reports of wolf sightings around the state and helped the search to document wolves in the wild places of Idaho. After graduation, Suzanne served on the Central Idaho and Yellowstone wolf reintroduction teams in the mid 1990s, caring for wolves awaiting transport in northern British Columbia and releasing them in central Idaho. In 1999, she was recruited by a national wildlife organization covering wolf conservation across much of the West from the Rockies to the Pacific Northwest and California. Often her work placed her at the heart of the sociopolitical war over the return of the wolf where she recognized that wolves would never escape human persecution until people found a way to live in peace with them. Suzanne completed her masters program in Wildlife Conservation and Conflict Management at Prescott College and then turned her attention to helping scientists, ranchers, and wildlife managers develop and test nonlethal methods that proactively protects livestock from wolves and other native predators. She founded the *Wood River Wolf Project* in 2008 to demonstrate that wolves can coexist with sheep operations on national forests when adequate nonlethal deterrents are consistently applied. She is the lead author on the first landscape level wolf and sheep nonlethal measures study *Adaptive use of nonlethal strategies for minimizing wolf-sheep conflict in Idaho*. She has spoken at conferences and events around the world including the Smithsonian Institute, Oxford University, the United Nations Conference on Biological Diversity, and more. Suzanne is now the Executive Director of the newly launched International Wildlife Coexistence Network where she is now helping to protect wolves and other imperiled wildlife with communities around the world. Visit the website: [www.wildlifecoexistence.org](http://www.wildlifecoexistence.org) View their 5 minute video: <https://wildlifecoexistence.org/video-introduction/>

## SUZANNE STONE

### THE SECOND ERADICATION OF WOLVES FROM THE WEST

Spring is the time of new life for wolves. The whole year before and after revolves around preparing for pups and caring for them until they reach about 10 months of age and can take care of themselves. The pups are so cherished by the adults that they can do no wrong: chewing on noses, tails, and mock stalking are all part of being a wolf parent and they suffer these little annoyances often with a grin and encouragement to their little challengers. We see these same behaviors in our pet puppies when they play pounce, stalk, and wrestle. Play is a way to bond with the family as well as learn the skills needed to be a good hunter. And wolves are among the most important hunters in our ecosystem. They have a unique gift in smelling disease, decay and distress in their prey and focusing on those animals, which helps preserve the health of elk and deer herds and keeps these herds smaller and moving. This is important because herds that become too stationary or too large destroy their own habitat by stripping new growth that feeds other species and protects the soil from erosion. Nature's perfect system that has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years. This was the primary goal in restoring wolves to Yellowstone, the Northern Rockies, and the West. The reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone and Idaho was one of the most successful wildlife recovery efforts in our nation's history. That all changed this year.



Suzanne Asha Stone

This year, a mother wolf gave birth to eight pups. They were her first litter. She had picked a beautiful place to dig her den with tall trees, open green meadows, and a nearby stream nestled in the valley surrounded by tall mountains and rolling green foothills. She and her mate were unaware that they had a name – the “Timberline Pack” – given to the wolves of this area by Timberline high school students in Boise, whose school mascot is the wolf. Their motto “The strength of the wolf is the pack, and the strength of the pack is the wolf” is painted above the doors in their hallways.



This Spring, only a decade after wolves lost their federal protection under an agreement with the states of Idaho and Montana to manage wolf populations the way they manage other valued wildlife, the Republican governors signed legislation that harkens back to the brutal persecution of wolves that ultimately led to their full eradication from the Western United States. It wasn't enough that hunters were killing over one third of the wolves and that government agents were gunning down entire packs each year. Now, they are paying bounties for dead wolves across the region, including newborn pups and their mothers, allowing thousands of snares on our national public lands that slowly choke wolves and other unfortunate animals including our pet dogs to death, and giving wolf haters permission to kill as many wolves as they can.

People who care about the treatment of wildlife are often shocked to learn of this brutality. Many think that wolves are being hunted in a similar way to bears, mountain lion, and deer. They're wrong. We don't allow anyone to legally kill bears or mountain lions this way or any other valued species. And while Idaho still maintains the terrible Spring bear hunt where “hunters” can set packs of dogs trained to kill on mother bears and their defenseless cubs, they do even worse to wolves.

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For several weeks, this new family lived in peace with the mother wolf giving warmth and nourishment to her tiny pups that were born blind and deaf but still so full of instinct that they whimpered and softly howled to each other even before their eyes opened. Their father brought her food and devotedly stood guard of the den to protect her and their new pups from bears and strange wolves. She would slip out every few days for water while he stayed to protect their litter. In just a few weeks, the pups opened their eyes to their new world. By now, they recognized their mother and each other by scent, their strongest sense. Crawling to the den opening, they met the sun, moon, and their father as they peered out into their new world. Encouraged by their mother, they followed each other to take their first steps outside the earthen den onto the grassy meadow floor.

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These pups were killed because a single rancher who raises his livestock on our national public forests demanded it. And the American people paid for it through funding to USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) whose mission is supposed to be “to provide Federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts to allow people and wildlife to coexist.” WS claims that they killed the pups “pre-emptively” before any livestock were harmed this year because there were “chronic” losses to wolves in this area in the past. And they define “chronic” as one or more losses in an area. When is anything defined as chronic when it happens only once? In the last six months, WS has confirmed that wolves have killed 54 livestock in Idaho. A total of 54 cattle and sheep out of 2.5 million cattle and 300,000 sheep statewide.

It was the radio collar around their father’s neck that gave away their location. Their parents had taken all precautions to keep them safe but could not anticipate that a paid killer with a rifle was waiting downwind and on May 18th, half of their pups would be shot and killed at their den site. The surviving pups scrambled back into the den with their mother as the government agent picked up the bodies of their siblings and stuffed them into a bag. Their father ran away in fear and confusion but stopped not far from the den to bark in anguish against their unknown intruder. The man had instructions. Leave the father alive so they could track him back to his mate and their young pups.

When the parents were sure that the intruder was gone, they did what other parents would do when protecting their young. They moved them to a new location. It wasn’t as safe as the den had been, but they couldn’t detect the smell of the man or his kind there. The pups were now exposed to rain and other predators, but they were safer on the run than at the den. They lived this way for nearly a month. Moving from hidden glades and deep woods, the parents diligently raised their pups that could now eat meat that a parent regurgitated (think baby food) for them. They spent their days sleeping during the hottest part of the day and moving at night under the cover of darkness. Then, on June 10th, a shot rang out and one of the pups fell dead. In a panic, the others ran with their parents as fast as they could. Only three pups remained. For five more days and nights, the parents kept them on the move desperately trying to save their young. On the sixth day, the man caught up with them again and killed the last three as they tried to run away from this relentless danger.

### Crying Wolf

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This Spring, another litter of pups was reportedly killed by a man who crushed the wolf pups to death and then turned their bodies in for the bounty of up to \$1,000 each. They were only days old and had never even opened their eyes. Another man bragged during an Idaho Fish and Game Commission hearing that he has set hundreds of snares. These wire devices choke their victims to death sometimes over a period of days before the animal is completely strangled to death. If this is what passes for hunting now in Idaho and Montana, we seriously need to reconsider allowing these “hunters” on our public lands.

Thousands of livestock are lost to disease, bad weather, stress, and neglect. The loss of 54 is not even remotely a crisis. And WS notes that this is the highest loss of livestock since wolf reintroduction in 1995.

Regarding elk and deer issues, the situation is quite similar. A lot of bellyaching and blame has been tossed at wolves, but the overall elk population has increased in number over the last 25 years since the wolves were reintroduced. Idaho Fish and Game managers are calling this the “[the second Golden Age of Idaho elk hunting](#).” Clearly, wolves are not destroying the elk herds as some Idaho legislators claimed.

### Fair Chase?

The states of Idaho and Montana are also now in open violation of longstanding wildlife management practices and sportsmen ethics by permitting the hunting, trapping, and snaring of an unlimited number of wolves on a single tag. They are openly seeking to kill up to 90% of their wolves, which still number far fewer than bear or mountain lion populations. Hunters can now legally chase down wolves on snowmobiles and ATVs.

They can hunt and trap during the birthing and pup-rearing season killing newborn pups and nursing mothers. Sportsmen and wildlife managers in the West and around the world have long opposed unethical practices like these, since they violate “fair-chase” principles giving hunters an improper advantage over wildlife.

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## The Alternatives

If Idaho and Montana were as determined to proactively protect livestock as legislators appear to be toward just killing wolves, we could work together to resolve even hot spot areas and minimize livestock losses even more. Progressive, wildlife friendly ranchers are proving that beyond doubt in the Big Wood drainage area in Blaine County where the [Wood River Wolf Project](#) for 14 years has consistently held livestock losses to an average of only five sheep out of 20,000 annually grazing our nearly 500 square miles demonstration project area. Our losses are 3.5 times lower than producers in other areas where they rely on lethal control while we're spending far less money to accomplish this without killing wolves. Yet, in Idaho, state law prohibits any of the wolf control taxpayer funds to be spent on effective deterrents rather than lethal control. All of this is clearly about persecuting wolves rather than addressing the problems they're blamed for. And if we don't act now, we could witness the second brutal eradication of wolves from the West.

The fate of wolves in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the northern Rockies will change when enough people demand their protection. US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland can stop this persecution today. President Biden can listen to his grandkids and direct the US Fish and Wildlife Service to stop the persecution of wolves today. When wolves were delisted, the federal government promised "While our post-delisting monitoring window is 5 years, meaningful changes in State law or management objectives that would significantly increase the threat to the wolf population could lead to reconsideration of listing, including the potential for emergency listing, at any point. For example, if a State changed their regulatory framework to authorize the unlimited and unregulated taking of wolves, a condition we have previously determined threatened a wolf population, emergency listing would be immediately pursued. Finally, as an additional layer of protection, the Act allows for citizen petitions to consider relisting should the population's status change."

You can help. [Start by taking five minutes now to watch this video featuring Jane Goodall, Senator Cory Booker](#), tribal leaders, science students and others describe what's happening and what can be done to help wolves in the Northern Rockies. As Jane Goodall warns "When I heard that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services is planning a 12-month review of the effect of delisting wolves in the Northern Rockies, I was horrified because this means that the ongoing cruelty could be sanctioned for a whole year while they gather statistical data." Please help us share the video.

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Ask the US Fish and Wildlife Service to provide emergency protection by relisting wolves in the Northern Rockies now. [Regulations.gov](#) Please include your full name and address and tell them that you are petitioning for emergency relisting now.

If you want to take one more step, please sign the petition: [Sign Petition: Restore Protection for Wolves Now! - Action Network](#) We are working toward 100,000 people to send a message to President Biden and Secretary Haaland. If you would like to keep updated on our progress, please choose to share your email address with us when you are offered that option.

In support of all wildlife that faces persecution. May we learn to value life on earth beyond our own before it's too late.

Suzanne Asha Stone, *Executive Director*  
*The International Wildlife Coexistence Network*  
 Boise, Idaho.

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: Baine 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 *Baine 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.



## COLETTE NIC AODHA ÁR N-OIDHREACTH: FRAGMENTS OF OUR PAST

Colette Nic Aodha has exhibited her works with UachtarArts and collaborated with artist Kathleen Furey, historians Dr Mary Clancy and Dr Caitríona Cleir for the Resonance exhibition by Artspace. Colette is pursuing a PhD in the English department of NUI Galway on the work of Anglo-Welsh visual artist and poet, David Jones. Colette has Masters degrees in both English literature and Modern Irish and studied bookmaking, drypoint and copper engraving at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. She has fifteen publications, her new collection of poetry and art, *Réabhlóideach*, is published by Coiscéim, Dublin, 2020. Her art, a copper engraving, *Óglach*, featured in the Art Trail during The Clifden Arts Festival 2021. These nine artworks are a mix of copper engravings, drypoint, watercolour, pen and ink, and monoprints. Colette based her recent collection of Irish poetry and visual artwork on revolutionary figures and these are portrayed in large monoprints which also feature text. Those not included in this are based on and influenced by the life and work of David Jones, his interest in all things Celtic. Colette is influenced by Jones's unique use of text as art and his adaption of both modernist and late modernist aesthetic.

DM Colette directly if interested in purchasing any of her featured work. - [cnicaodha@icloud.com](mailto:cnicaodha@icloud.com)

*\*Images photographed by Didier Riva*

Colette Nic Aodha. Photo by Didier Riva portrait



Once and Future King, monoprint, 30 x 36 cm.



Players Please, Copper etching, 36 x 38 cm.





Óglach, copper etching, size 36 x 38 cm



Ancestors: Y Goddodin, drypoint, 30 x 34 cm



Fuinneog 3, monoprint, 90 x 60 cm.



Réabhlóideach 2, monoprint, 84 x 64 cm.



Réabhlóideach 3, monoprint, 84 x 64 cm



Fuinneog 2, monoprint, 90x60cm

Tina Claffey is an Irish nature photographer and author of the book 'Tapestry of Light-Ireland's bogs & wetlands as never seen before' published in October 2017. Her observations and unique perspective of the flora and fauna of the raised bogs and wet woodlands of the Irish midlands are celebrated in her work. Tina has been exploring these wondrous bogs through the seasons with her macro lens, which captures this enchanted wilderness in its minuteness, seeing beyond what the human eye is capable of. She has exhibited in the US (New York & San Francisco), Botswana, Zambia and throughout Ireland. She has been honored with awards from highly prestigious world competitions including the International Photography Awards, Fine Art Photography, BigPicture, Close Up Photographer of the Year and IGPOY Macro competition. <https://www.tinaclaffey.com/>



## TINA CLAFFEY

### BOG POOL REALMS

I love to get 'lost' in the bogs, eskers and wetlands of Ireland with my macro lens.

The macro lens allows me to capture what cannot be seen by the naked eye, and capture scenes that defy our sense of reality, glimpses of other miniature worlds that co-exist with us.

Bog pools within the living carpet of our bogs and wetlands truly fascinate me.

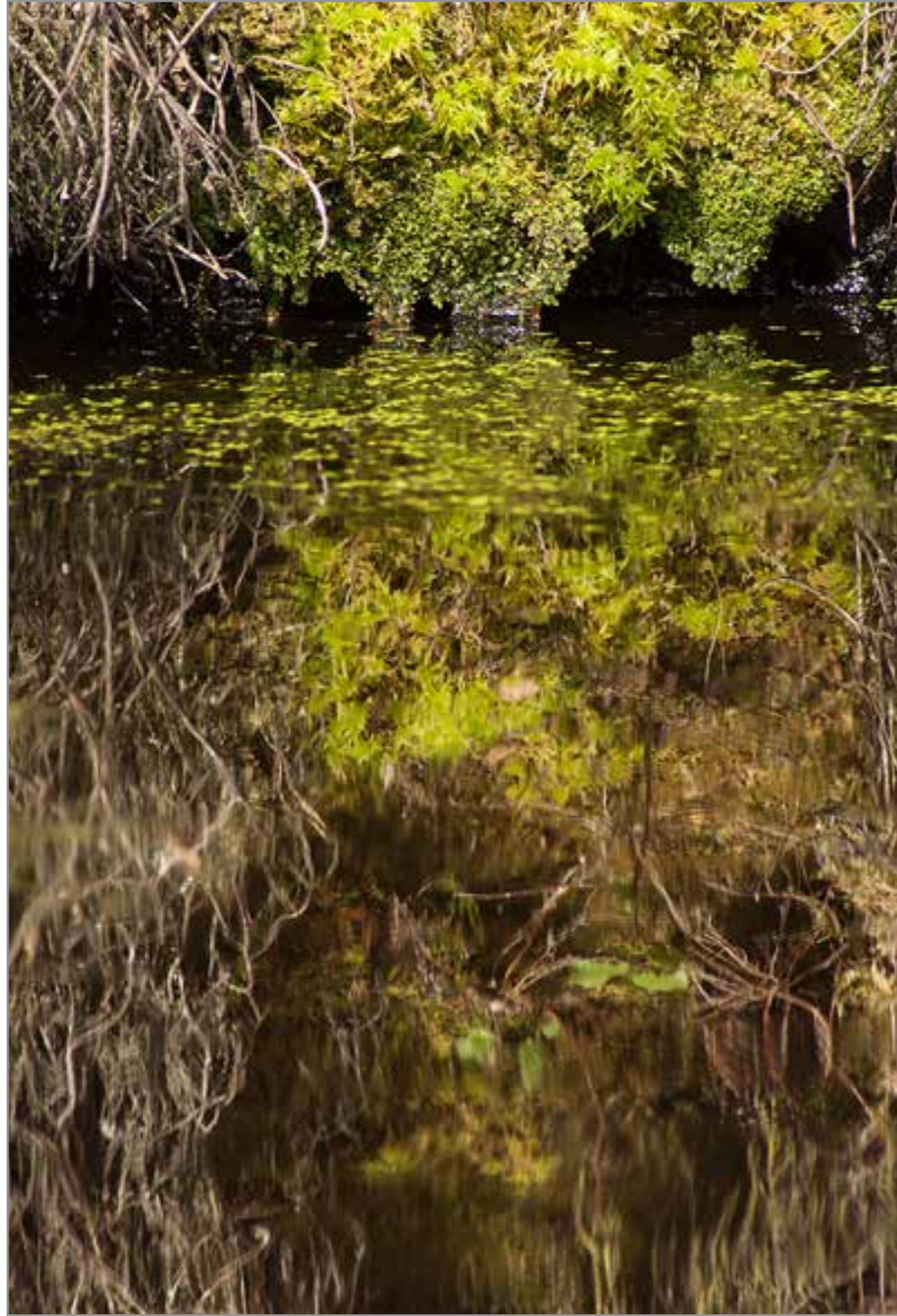
I am always enticed to their edges, their dark waters so mysterious, and their depths unknown.

Bogs and their pools were an ethereal in-between space for iron age Europeans. They thought that these wild bog wetlands, with their deep pools of still black water exposed an opening to another realm. The remains of hundreds of human sacrifices, offered to their Gods, have been discovered over time, and no doubt many more remain caught forever between worlds within its watery depths.

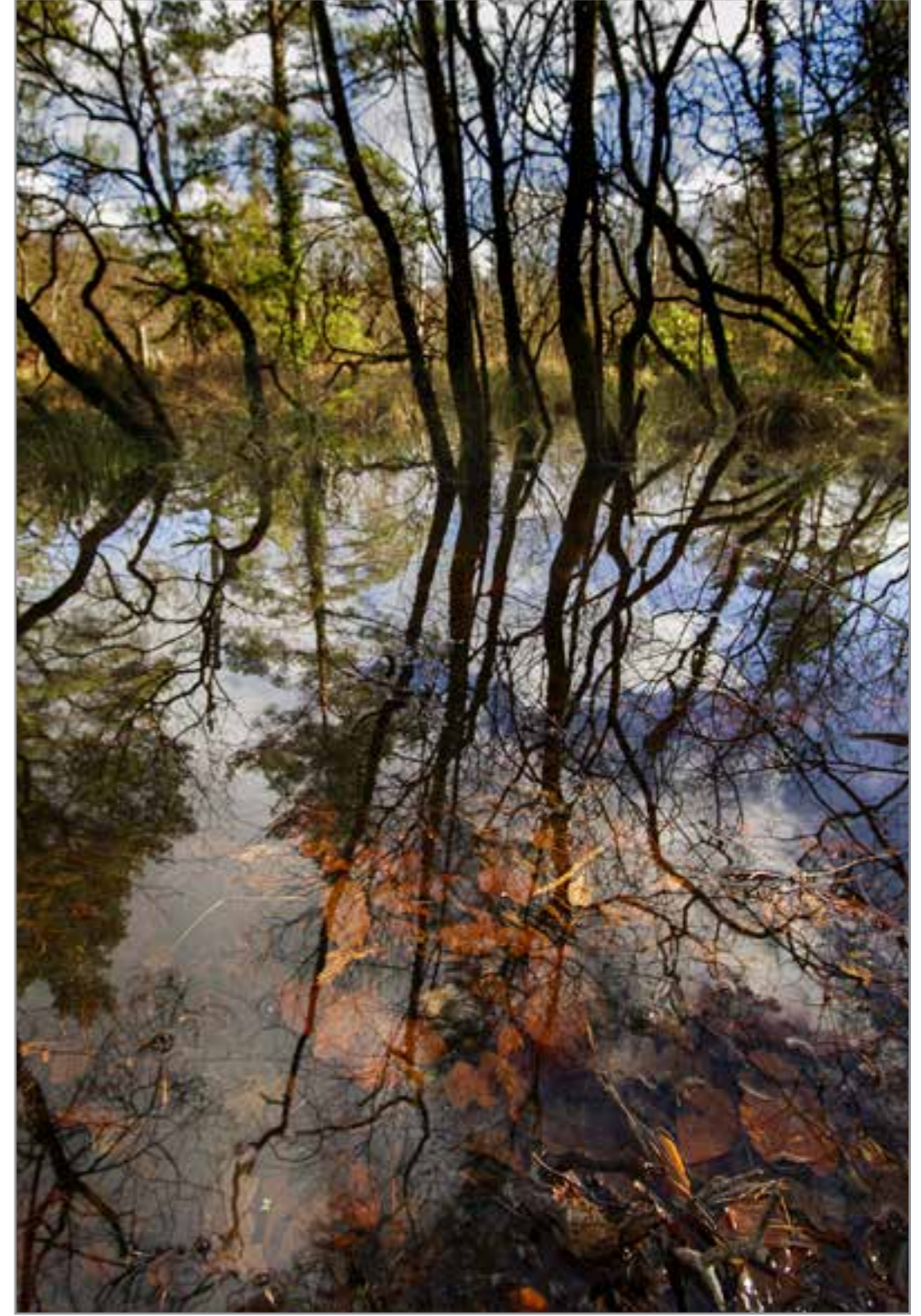
I can relate to the ancient belief that these mysterious bog pools are enchanted. I can sit and be mesmerised by them. An oasis for the mind. Their mysterious depths draw me in, sphagnum mosses display their wonderful colours and feathery limbs.

Time stands still, yet the light is ever changing. The sun appears, light penetrates the pool, revealing the mysterious flora and otherworldly creatures within its depths, clouds roll in and reflect from the surface, ever changing by the second. The bog pools transform throughout the seasons, swelling with life in the Spring and Summer, reflecting the heather and gathering leaves in the Autumn, and freezing like cubist art in the Winter.

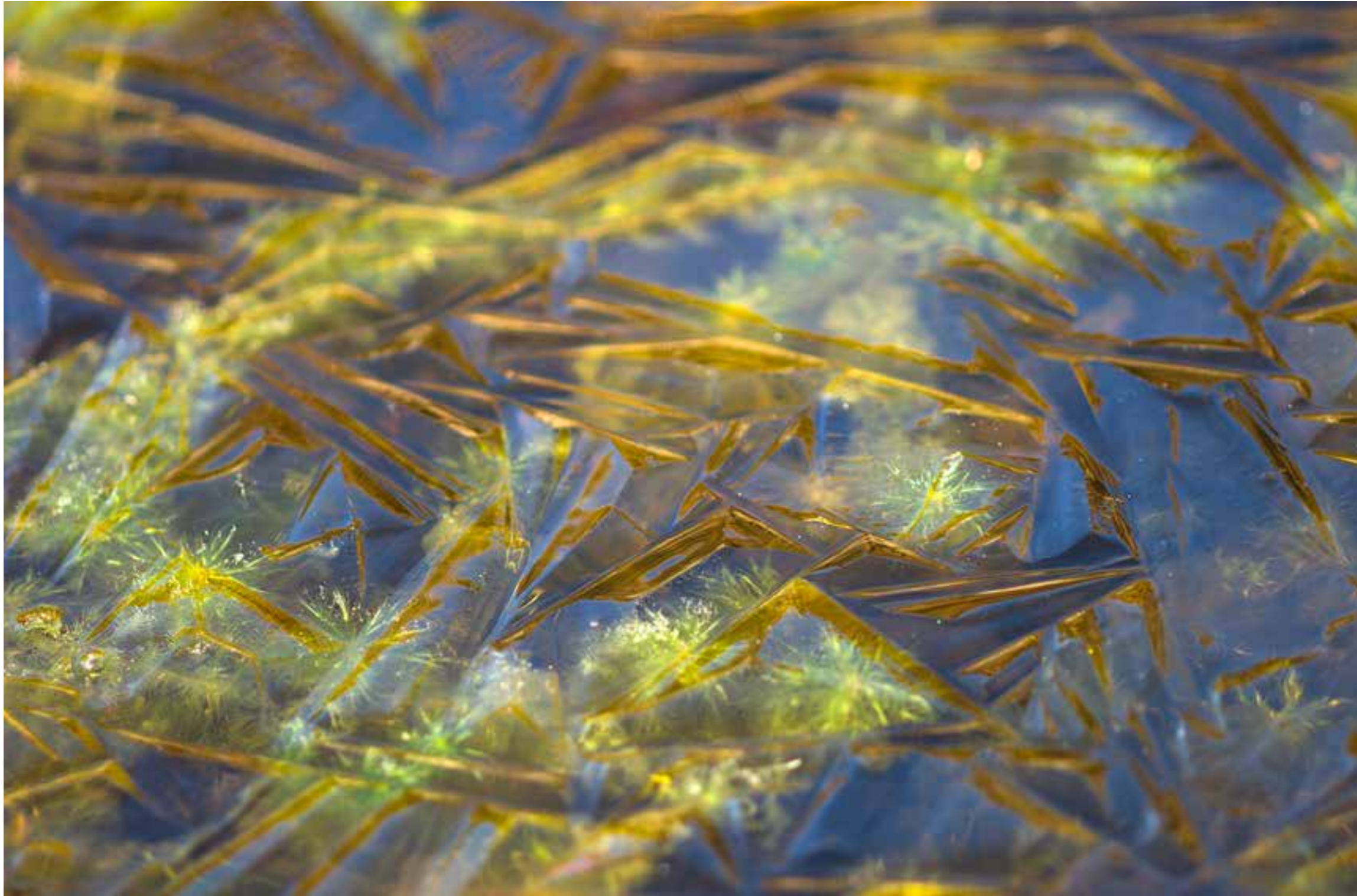
Tina Claffey



Bog Pool-Oasis



Bog Pool-Wet Woodland Reflections



Bog Pool-Cubist Ice Forms



Bog Pool-Sphagnum Depths



Bog Pool-Heather Reflection





Bog Pool-Emerging Sun



Bog Pool-Fallen Leaves

Poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of London Voices Poetry Group and also produces art work for them. Her new volume of poetry called 'The Shipping News and Other Poems' came out in August 2016. The German translation of her book 'Under charred skies' has now been published in Germany under the title 'Unter verbranntem Himmel' by Eulenspiegel Verlag. She is the chair of the Socialist History Society and has organised joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Café. She is a trained child psychologist and has taught at the Institute of Education, London University, where she is now an associate researcher. Her particular focus is now on women's emancipation and antiquity.  
<https://www.gretasykes.com/>



## DR GRETA SYKES FROM INFERNO TO PARADISE - DANTE ALIGHIERI'S DEATH DAY CELEBRATION IN RAVENNA

In life you can always do with a little bit of luck. For many years I wished to visit Ravenna, the capital of the western Roman Empire from the year 402 AD. This year, finally, after Corona had allowed us out again, we travelled there. It was cumbersome, no doubt. We had to present a Passenger Locator form, vaccine pass, negative test plus passport. Without those one is not going abroad. We obliged and flew to Italy. In Ravenna, as in many of the old cities, you can find very good accommodation in the old palaces. They usually house a small hotel on an upper floor with a few rooms, while there tend to be offices downstairs. We had a room under the roof and breakfast on a small terrace under an umbrella pine in the old city. It was all very Italian.

We queued for our day ticket to visit five of the most important sites and then wandered using our map from one place to the others. A day of beauty and cherishing the artefacts and skills of people 1500 years ago.

Dr Greta Sykes

Ravenna, city of arts, is home to some of the most glorious mosaics originating in the Byzantine Empire. It is also the town where Dante Aligheri was buried. This year his 700th day of his death was celebrated. Byzantium, the eastern part of the Roman empire, lasted until 1453 AD. In 402 AD Emperor Honorius decided to move his court to Ravenna, a small town near the Adriatic Sea, because it could be better protected from raiders, as it sits in a large wetland area difficult to cross. The largest Roman navy fleet was installed in Ravenna Classis, the harbour area. Ravenna soon became a great city which attracted artists and crafts people, as well as merchants and traders from afar.

In 423 AD Galla Placidia, Honorius' sister, assumed power, when her son was declared emperor. He was only five years old. She ruled for over twenty-five years. She patronised the building of many churches. She had her own mausoleum built shortly before her death. It includes a domed ceiling in blue mosaics covered with a multitude of golden stars and Christian scenes. With its fine quartz windows, symbolic scenes of the Good Shepherd, doves and deer drinking at the fountain of life and the starry sky in the central vault it is an exquisite and memorable burial chamber in the shape of the cross.

The Ostrogothic ruler Theodoric set up his government and court in Ravenna in 489, lasting until 526 AD. He was one of the non-Roman military leaders encouraged by Byzantium to go West and maintain authority in the fractured Italian provinces. His rule was popular and brought forth a continuation and patronage of antique culture, commissioning mosaics of the life of Christ and miracles. Like Galla Placidia he had his own mausoleum built in the city.

After his death the Byzantine army commander Belisarius recaptured Ravenna for Byzantium where Justinian I was ruling. Justinian's greatest achievement was the building of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the largest Christian church ever built. The octagonal dome was replicated in Ravenna, when after the return of the Byzantines the church of San Vitale was built in honour of a Christian Roman soldier who was martyred. It houses the perhaps most famous Byzantine mosaics altogether, those of Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora. Theodora is shown in her purple imperial robe. She wears a broad jewelled collar on her shoulders and on her head a tall crown with long strings of pearls hanging from the edge over her breast. The mosaics made of smaller and larger tesserae capture an imperial figure of supreme authority, making one forget her humble origin as a pantomime artist. Justinian is facing her in full imperial costume.



Dante Aligheri bench in Levanto, Liguria. Photograph by Greta Sykes.

It was impossible to miss Dante Aligheri during our meandering through the narrow streets of Ravenna. Posts with his poignant profile, A painting by Sandro Botticelli, and a Q code with which I could access a verse stood along the main thoroughfares. When I held my phone near the code a verse would be spoken for me to listen to.

Dante is still Italy's number one literary genius. He was born in Florence in 1265 and occupied a position of responsibility within the town council. Like many other people he was embroiled in the conflict between two of the top families, the Guelph and Ghibellines which extended into political opinions. It led to Dante being expelled from Florence, never to return for fear of death. Dante spent the rest of his life wandering from friend to friend throughout the area of Emilia Romagna and Tuscany.

During his wanderings he began to write the Divine Comedy, both in Latin and in the Italian vernacular. It is written in verse. It starts in hell and ends in paradise where he re-joins his beloved Beatrice. It is a love poem and a political and historical document with personas both from classical history as well as Dante's compatriots making an appearance. Various forms of severe suffering and punishment in floods and hell fires are elaborately described. They conjure parallels to our modern world with its distressing sufferings of wars and poverty but no paradise in sight. In that sense it is a very modern book. Dante helpfully, had a friend, the writer Vergil, who guided him on his paths.

The Florentines eventually regretted having lost their famous son to Ravenna and asked for his body back. At one point it came close to him being handed back to his birth city. But monks removed his body from the mausoleum and hid it. The Florentines came to an empty burial place. That is how Dante remained in Ravenna where his mausoleum is a celebrated building in the old city.

That weekend in Ravenna Dante events were posted on walls and entrances. We wandered through the streets after dinner and noticed people enter the Basilica di San Francesco, built in 450 AD. Dante's funeral was held at the church in 1321. His mausoleum is next to it. We followed the people and entered the church with our masks on and found a bench to sit on. The church was half full. A short while later musicians arrived on the stage. There followed an inspirational hour of verses being spoken, accompanied by piano and percussion sounds lingering evocatively in the background. On the following evening we visited the Dante mausoleum.



Empress Theodora mosaic in San Vitale. Photograph by Greta Sykes.

Next to it is the Dante Museum where music and verses from the Divine Comedy emanated from the open windows. Many people were inside to enjoy the celebration. We had been lucky. It was the weekend of Dante's anniversary. That night his verses embedded in music followed me into my sleep and dreams. I saw him be welcomed to paradise by his great love, Beatrice, after his troubled journey through the inferno and purgatorium with his friend Vergil.

On the afternoon of our last day in Ravenna we took a bus to the Marina. It is on the Adriatic coast. It is lined with forests of umbrella pines and tamarisks. We walked through the forest on a sandy path which leads to the beach with beach restaurants lining the shore, playgrounds for children and beyond a huge wide long golden sandy beach edged by the calm sea. Boats on the horizon. The restaurant served us an enormous salad with fresh prawns and a cup of tea. We were happy and watched the children jump up and down on the trampoline. Later we dipped our toes into the Adriatic and then took the bus back. When we arrived back in the small town on the Ligurian riviera travelling the whole breadth of Italy, we found that a Dante bench had been situated on the promenade by the sea. It was made of cement and looked like an open book. It had a verse on it speaking about the sea:

'...ma misi me per L'alto mare aperto sol con un legno a con quella compagna picciola da la qual non fui diserto...'

'And so, I travelled to the open sea on a boat with my friends who stayed with me never to leave me...'



Neonian Baptistery. Photograph by Greta Sykes.

Percy Aaron is an ESL teacher at Vientiane College in the Lao PDR and a freelance editor for a number of international organisations. He has had published a number of short stories, edited three books and was editor of *Champa Holidays*, the Lao Airlines in-flight magazine and *Oh!* - a Southeast Asia-centric travel and culture publication. As lead writer for the Lao Business Forum, he was also on the World Bank's panel of editors. Before unleashing his ignorance on his students, he was an entrepreneur, a director with Omega and Swatch in their India operations and an architectural draughtsman. He has answers to most of the world's problems and is the epitome of the 'Argumentative Indian'. He can be contacted at [percy.aaron@gmail.com](mailto:percy.aaron@gmail.com)



Percy Aaron

## PERCY AARON READERS, REVIEWERS AND ASSORTED PSEUDS

*Why do we need to lie about a book that we've half read, quarter understood and that's given us zero enjoyment?*

Many years ago, I did an online writing course with Oxford University. In order to encourage all the participants to get to know each other better, the course instructor asked us to draw up a list of the five best works of fiction we had ever read. Remembering all the good books that 'we had ever read' was an almost impossible task, made doubly difficult, if I recollect correctly, by the fact that we were given just 24 hours. The idea of giving us such a short time was that we would remember only the books that had had the greatest impact on us. For me, and presumably some others, there was another consideration: like with films, there were many books I had read two or three earlier, that I no longer felt the same way about.

From the lists drawn up by the sixteen of us - spanning five continents - mine was distinctly low-to-mid brow. I had long since passed out of that phase when I read a book because a critic had declared 'If there's one book that you read this year, this must be it'. On the list there were several that I had never even heard of, not even the authors. For somebody who thought he was very well-read, on a variety of genres and a wide range of topics, the realization that I was so unschooled, pricked my ego.

Remember the story of the *Emperor's New Clothes* and the little boy innocent enough to exclaim that the man was naked? I suppose it's the same with books. Who among us would be daring enough to openly say that a book is unreadable when it's made it to the bestseller list of a leading newspaper or magazine? Who would be brave, or is it naive, enough to declare a Booker - *White Tiger*, for example - or Pulitzer Prize winner ordinary, even as we wonder at the political and financial reasons behind the nomination?

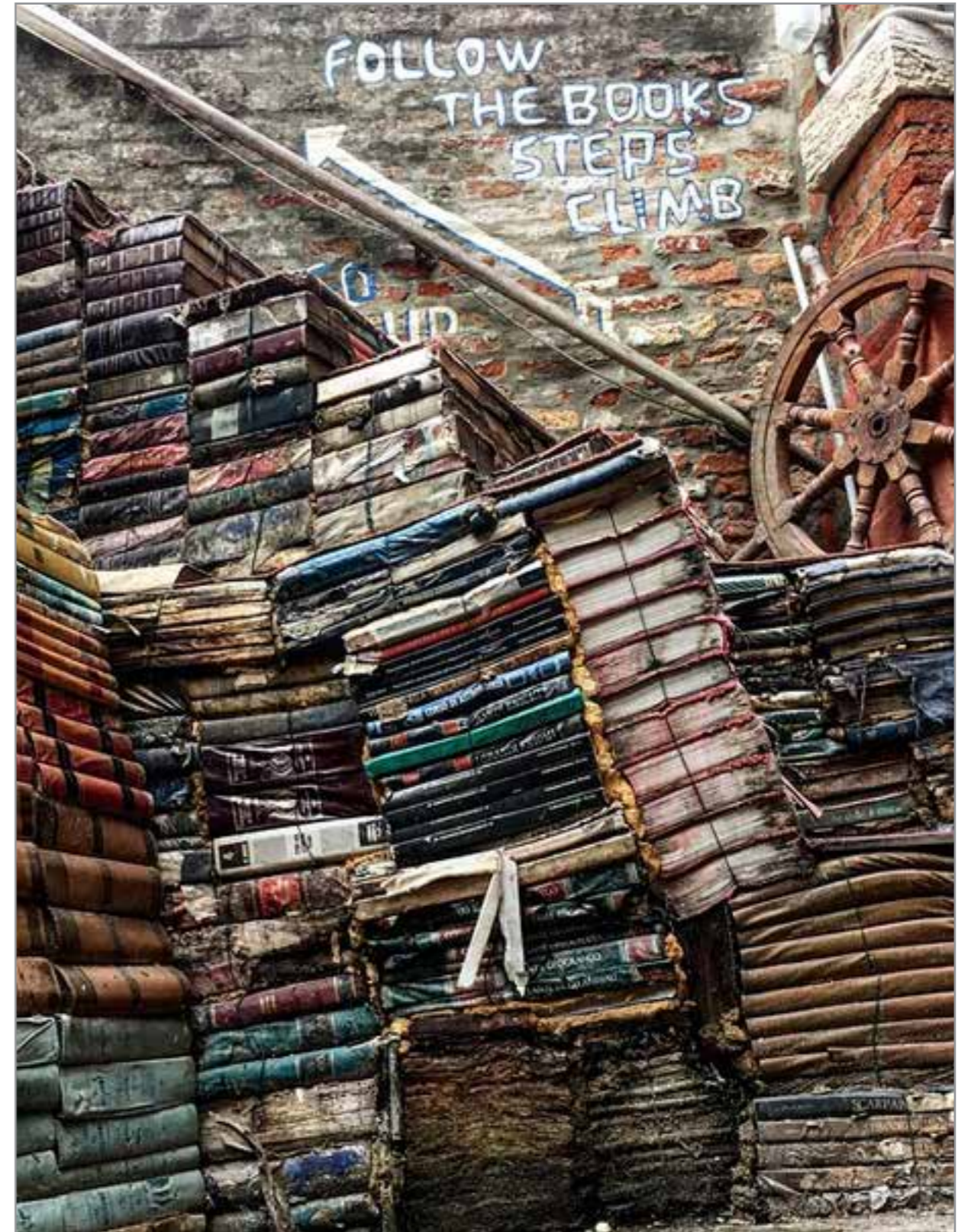
In the forum though, I admitted to my ignorance and pointed out that there were books and authors I was hearing of for the first time. I also wrote that there were several - Ulysses, for example - which after two or three attempts, I had decided to try again only in the after-life. One by one, several of the others started admitting to the same. A few even 'delisted' books they had mentioned earlier, while two of them said that they had inadvertently included books that they hoped to read sometime in the future. With a degree of smugness, I patted myself on the back for puncturing some pretentiousness.

I remember once leaving a novel written by a friend on my desk in the school staffroom. The resident scholar picked it up, looked at the front and back covers, flipped through it and then said, 'I haven't read this one. His other books are OK. How do you pronounce his name?' I looked at him in disbelief. The publisher's blurbs, front and back, clearly stated that it was a debut novel.

So if reading, fiction at least, is supposed to be a very private pleasure why do so many of us get caught up in name dropping, or should I say title dropping? Why do we need to lie about a book that we've half read, quarter understood and that's given us zero enjoyment? Why do we need to persist with a book on the NYT bestseller list or a Booker Prize winner, when we are struggling through every page? Why even pick up one of a genre that we detest?

Remember the story of the *Emperor's New Clothes* and the little boy innocent enough to exclaim that the man was naked? I suppose it's the same with books. Who among us would be daring enough to openly say that a book is unreadable when it's made it to the bestseller list of a leading newspaper or magazine? Who would be brave, or is it naive, enough to declare a Booker - *White Tiger*, for example - or Pulitzer Prize winner ordinary, even as we wonder at the political and financial reasons behind the nomination?

And do the reviewers get it right? Have they properly understood a book they are touting or ripping to shreds? Does it make sense to let a critic decide our reading tastes? Some months ago, I watched a Nobel laureate being interviewed on a well-known news channel. Its book critic, in discussing the author's oeuvre, made a reference to the message of one of his works. The author replied that was not the message of the book. With a very straight face, the interviewer let that gaffe pass. Remember the people who claimed that *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* was a Beatles' ode to LSD, despite composer John Lennon repeatedly stating it was a response to a painting by his four-old son.



Photograph - <https://pixabay.com/photos/venice-a-book-books-shop-reading-3514735/>



So, a Booker judge reading 1.4 books a day, is a bit difficult to swallow. Writers, with any respect for their craft, spend months, if not years, polishing and re-polishing a manuscript, agonizing over words and sentences till they think that they have a jewel. How do they feel when a so-called judge has read through their book at the speed of pound? Or dollar? How can any reader understand a novel they are speed-reading, if the settings and names are from a land and culture completely alien to them?

Talking about the Booker Prize, I once [read an article](#) by one of its judges that she had read the 145 novels on the long list in seven months. That's 145 books in 210 days. Or an average of 1.4 books per day! This person wrote that she had read every page of every book in the selection process that year. Was her declaration also a work of fiction? In the comments section, I posted that question, but unsurprisingly never received a reply.

**Another** wrote, 'and it ate up all my free time: during every bus journey, every moment sitting waiting for a film to start, every interval of whatever play I was reviewing, I'd whip out a book and cram a few more pages in'. Was she doing justice to the play or to the book?

Still another wrote that she would even read a few pages before a dental appointment. Admittedly, reading 'a book a day' because it's a job, can numb the mind. I didn't realize that it has similar effects on the gums. Maybe, dentists should consider books for their patients instead of anesthesia. The critic didn't say whether she read while swimming or bungee jumping, or checking her *Facebook* and *Instagram* accounts, though I'd bet she tweeted between paragraphs.

In the past there have been leaks about judges, skipping large sections of books they were passing judgement on, and in some cases not even reading all the ones that had been allocated to them. Even the most diligent of us sometimes slips up on the job and we should keep this in mind when allowing a reviewer or a judge, to determine our tastes.

I read about 5-10 books at a time (on a variety of subjects) and admittedly that slows me down. But even as a voracious reader, I still manage to finish just about 4-5 a month. It took me almost a month to finish Ma Jian's, *The Dark Road*, as I was unfamiliar with Chinese names and settings. Despite having read a lot of Russian literature, about eleven months had passed before I sorted through the numerous characters, each with several variations to their names, not counting the diminutives, in Simon Sebag Montefiore's brilliant three-part biography of Joseph Stalin.

So, a Booker judge reading 1.4 books a day, is a bit difficult to swallow. Writers, with any respect for their craft, spend months, if not years, polishing and re-polishing a manuscript, agonizing over words and sentences till they think that they have a jewel. How do they feel when a so-called judge has read through their book at the speed of pound? Or dollar? How can any reader understand a novel they are speed-reading, if the settings and names are from a land and culture completely alien to them?

Reading and appreciating a well-written work of fiction - like sipping a fine wine - requires time, a certain mood and total concentration. Anything short of that is an injustice to a good writer. And to a good reader too, because reading properly is also a craft.



Photograph - <https://pixabay.com/photos/reading-book-girl-woman-sunshine-925589/>

Sujit Sahgal is a financial markets professional with over 28 years of experience in various investment banks in India and rest of Asia. Over the years, his area of work has included macroeconomics, investment strategy, sector and company research, equity sales as well as investing globally across asset classes. Sujit completed his MBA in 1993 and has spent most of his working career based in Singapore having recently returned to India. During his research days Sujit was ranked #1 Analyst for Global IT Services Research by *Institutional Investor*. He was also consistently ranked as a top three analyst in Asia by *Asiamoney* and *Institutional Investor*. Among various financial institutions, Sujit has spent close to a decade with UBS AG and ran his own global macro, multi-strategy hedge fund from Singapore for a few years. Sujit has been with HSBC since 2010 and is currently the head of institutional equities for HSBC, India. He is the author of the book – *A Wall Street View of Rural India – a banker's diary of a decade of road trips* (Olympia Publishers, June 2020). The book captures Sujit's observations, insights and views emanating from nearly a dozen rural trips done over the last ten years across seven to eight states of India and meeting hundreds of farmers covering close to a hundred villages. The trips included three to four hundred foreign investors from over ten countries who were trying to gauge the overall health of the rural economy – which is such an important part of India.

*Agribusiness and Technology* by Sujit Sahgal, published by SAGE  
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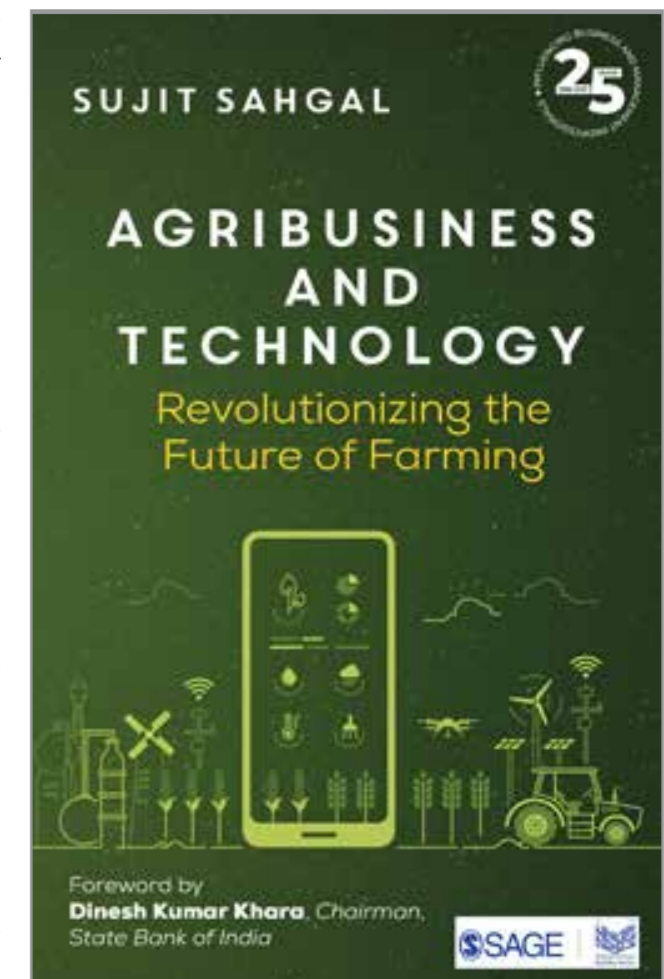
## SUJIT SAHGAL

### AGRITECH & THE FUTURE OF FARMING

I realized towards the later part of my research for my first book – *A Wall Street View of Rural India* – how important and effective it would be for farming families of all sizes and income groups as well as their children, to adopt best practices, modern methods and agritech to achieve a sustainable model of farming which would be independently lucrative even for the smallest of farmers.

This strong held belief led me to write my second book – *Agribusiness & Technology, Revolutionizing the Future of Farming*.

The best way to give an overview of the book would be to focus on the key aspects I touch upon to deliver an easy to adopt framework. The framework is for all stakeholders and there is something for everyone. Right from the smallest to the largest farmer, to all kinds of companies that sell to or buy from the farmer as well as the government and its advisors and last but not at all the least – the next generation of Agri-professionals --- the students.



Sujit Sahgal

The fact that Indian agriculture and in fact, agriculture worldwide is facing its moment of truth and a lot of challenges. More output is being demanded (as we add another two billion people to the planet) but in a more environmentally conscious way (just a little less than half of all greenhouse gases are caused by agriculture), which implies a higher cost. At the same time key resources needed in food production are getting scarcer by the day (land and water) and lastly, the weather is getting more volatile and unpredictable all over the world (climate change), which hurts even more when agriculture is still largely dependent on the rains. All this means the farmer's income is under increasing pressure and he needs more hands on the farm and use of more complex and advanced methods.

Alas, the average Indian farmer is short of both. His children do not want to continue in farming, and he is not that tech savvy to adopt a lot of new things and is in fact wary of change. It is in this context that I start first by talking of a SOLID framework. Sustainable Solutions to make farming lucrative, the farmer independent and to help his income improve multifold regardless of size.

### Does size matter?

Yes, regardless of size. I say that very specifically because it is often felt that all the good things that are happening in farming are only meant for farmers who are very large and have the wherewithal and the economies of scale. I have taken pains to disprove that myth and open the eyes of all stakeholders that small can be successful too. And it is in the way I define Agritech (B – Best practices, M – Modern methods and T – Technology) that allows me to showcase this. Agritech defined in its narrower sense would probably fall into the trap of digital divide. And that, I do not want. I believe even a 2–3-acre farm plot can be lucratively cultivated.

I highlight the very basic of things, starting from using the right seeds, testing your soil, choosing the right crop, trying to grow more than once crop per year and using mechanization (even if on hire), information (on weather and prices) precision farming principles (to reduce input usage). I also posit, that small farmers can become large farmers by either leasing in land or coming together to buy and sell in bulk or even share the high fixed costs of mechanization and automation.

### Who will run our farms?

That brings me to the second issue mentioned above – that of his children not wanting to continue farming. I very strongly believe that by addressing this one aspect a lot of the farmer's problems can be solved. If the younger generation did indeed stick to or come back farming (rural or urban youth) they would automatically be more literate, tech savvy and open to trying new (modern) methods and best practices and new business models (aggregating). However, this, as so many things in agriculture are easier said than done. I have tried to think through all the key reasons why a farmer's son or daughter do what they do – detest farming to not mince my words. And feel that if some of these can be changed, it could be enough to bring them back or prevent them from leaving the farms in the first place. Curious? Let me just mention two here. Very low return on effort and socially risky. I mention only two because the first one captures almost all the others and can be fixed quickly but the second one will take time. All the hard work that goes into manual, rain dependent farming does not give adequate returns to make it all worth it. No wonder their families also do not want them to stay back. So, at the heart of the issues is to make farming more lucrative and efficient which can happen by deploying the BMT framework. Ensuring in-depth training and education on the technical and commercial aspects of agriculture is a key ingredient of this solution.

### Understanding agritech

Agritech or Agtech as it is fashionably called, is often confused just with very high-end esoteric gadgets meant for the rocket scientists. Indeed, there is one end of the spectrum which involves AI, ML, Robotics, 3D-vision etc. etc. But it would be naïve to look at agritech just as that. It is my strong belief that the first step in making farming families adopt the SOLID model and re-commit themselves to the farm is to define it in the broadest and simplest way possible. Think of it as a easy to understand catch all approach. I therefore include best practices and modern methods into the mix as much as I do new technologies. It maybe of surprise to many, how large an impact on incomes can be achieved with some very simple non-tech interventions or changes. So, if something can have an equally massive impact, should it not be part of the transformational Agritech that we hear about? I will highlight a few such simple things to give you a flavor of what I mean. Most farmers grow crops not only based on their agroclimatic regions but also based on what has traditionally been grown on their farm or near abouts or often based on what gets them higher government support.

Hence very basic things like crop choice can be of immense value add. It is a fact that growing a high value commercial crop could fetch you five times the revenue than growing a basic food grain. Many times, it is agro-climatically possible but not being done. Another change is the number of crops – more than 75% of arable land in India lies uncultivated for about 6 months a year! If a farmer could grow 2 or 3 crops in a year, his income could increase manifold. So, crop choice and multi-cropping can theoretically increase income manifold and are really low-tech age-old solutions. Again, I am very clear, this is all easy to say but difficult to put into practice. And I do try to list down various ways in which such powerful change can be achieved using not only technology but also new business models of aggregation.

### Global and local landscape of players and policy

Hence, I dive deep into the world of technology worldwide and put forward technologies that are being used and methods deployed in real life in India or other countries. This demonstrates that it's not a fairy tale but happening at a farm next to you. Various governments have also recognized the power of these new approaches and are going full steam in supporting and investing in them. The Indian government over the decades has also done its bit and on an ongoing basis is adapting and adopting newer paradigms. But there is always more to do and the new ecosystem of agritech startups in India and elsewhere are now leading this change and looking to governments to facilitate their efforts.

### Insights from the ground

We know well how change can be brought about though. And it is essential to focus on the user – the farmer in this case if we want any of this to really catch on and get embedded. Hence without talking to the farmers and other grassroot level workers, any effort of pushing down solutions would only see limited impact if any. I have therefore spent the good part of 2021 on top of my decade full of travel into rural India to meet and speak with thousands of farmers, NGOs, producer organizations and the government machinery of KVKs and Extension offices to hear their side of the story. What are their key challenges and bottlenecks in adopting new ways of farming?

This extensive outreach has left me with insights that have helped me to come up with areas where the supply (of solutions) and demand (adaptability by farmers) could meet. The most important insight of it all is to offer farmer friendly solutions which they need urgently. Low hanging fruit which will have early adoption and high impact. The high impact is critical as that is what will lead to the buzz and word of mouth spreading and leading to larger scale take up.

### A focused approach

This is the approach I take to look for easy to adopt high impact gaps where the farmer is equally eager to try out and even spend on. I will highlight a few of these to give a peek into what is elaborated on in great details in my book.

**Infocation**, I call it. A combination of Education (for the youth and small farmers), Information (for the medium sized farmers) and Advice (for the largest ones). Yes, Infocation is a basic building block with huge positive impact and has so much room to improve. It can help retain the youth as well as remove the size inequality.

A second such area is **offtake solutions**. Again, a broad term encompassing helping the farmer sell his produce in terms of quantity, quality, and price i.e., allow him to sell all his produce (good and bad quality) at a better price (net of costs) even if it needs a delayed sale (storage solutions).

I will wrap this up with this last peek into the various solutions – **input cost efficiencies**. This bucket of solutions includes all inputs – ongoing (seeds, fertilizers and pesticides) and one-time (cheaper to use mechanized equipment). Whether aggregated buying or online buying reduces cost or novel renting services allow a farmer to access high end equipment at a fraction of the cost --- both will go a long way in boosting his income.

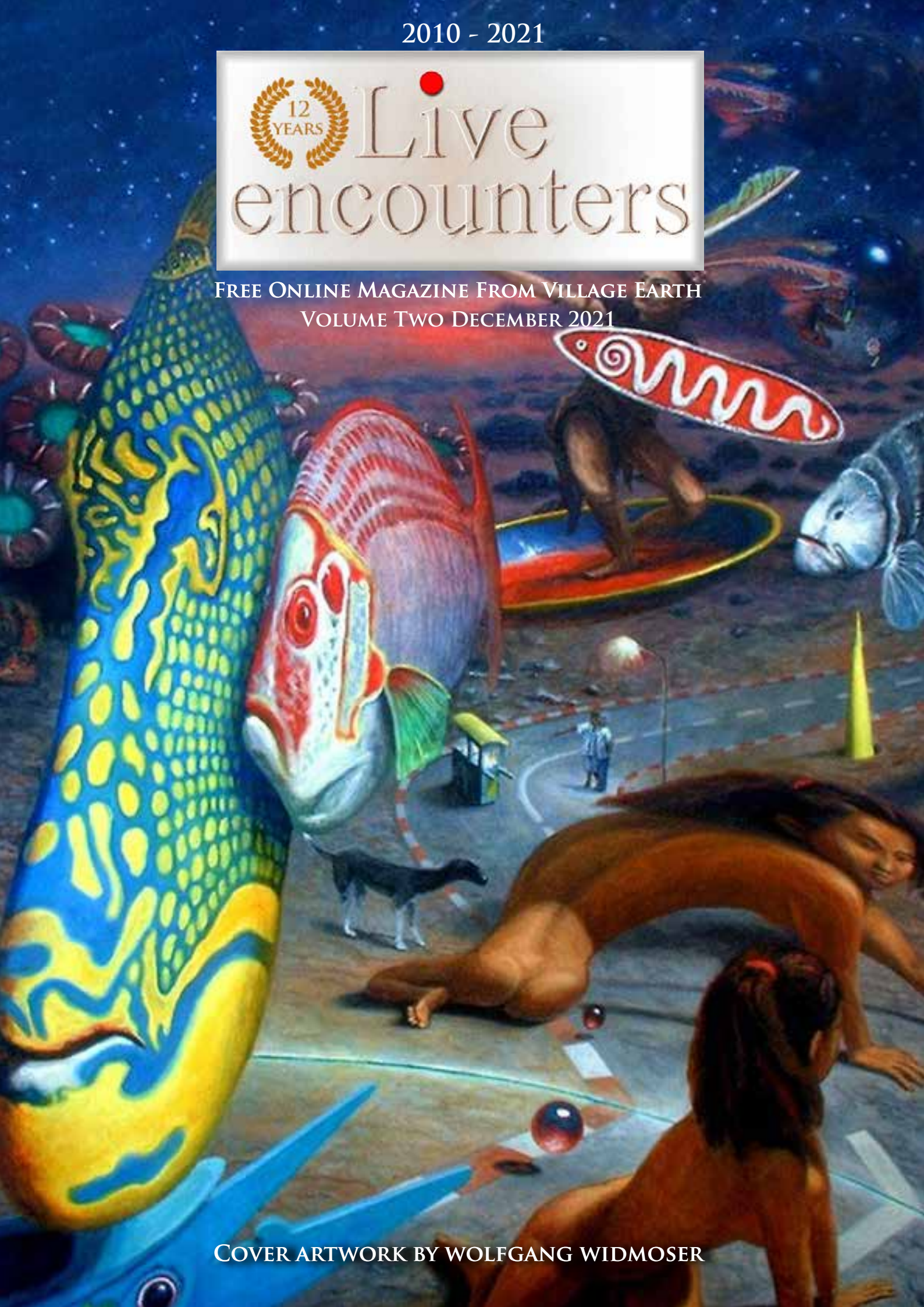
I believe farmers, agribusinesses, academia, students and the government and its advisors should focus on these areas first and broadcast aggressively success stories to create a positive spiral for ensuring a quick large-scale adoption which will ensure a **SOLID** future for the Indian farmer.

2010 - 2021



# Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
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COVER ARTWORK BY WOLFGANG WIDMOSER