

2010 - 2022



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JULY 2023

LYNNE THOMPSON
GUEST EDITORIAL

COVER ARTWORK BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



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

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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JULY 2023

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LYNNE THOMPSON

Some Poems (Despite Their Serious Intent) Love to Play, Are Inspired By The Ancestors

When I served as Los Angeles' 2021-22 Poet Laureate, many readers who had little experience reading poems often demurred when I encouraged them to listen to my podcast to acquaint themselves with the variety of contemporary poetic voices. They stated they didn't—or feared they wouldn't—understand it. It's hard to argue with their reluctance as I've questioned for some time whether poetry is properly taught in schools. I've wondered if potential readers shouldn't be taught poetry by working backward starting with poets writing today: from Douglas Kearney to Marwa Helal to Ada Limón to Robert Lynn Wood *and only then* back generationally to Sylvia Plath then on to Edgar Allen Poe then William Wordsworth and then William Shakespeare before sitting with Sappho, for example.

But poets and readers often come to the written word with pre-established stylistic preferences that can initially lead them to a more satisfactory reading of the genre. Some prefer a linear narrative approach. Some prefer an experimental style that leads to constant surprises, constant questions. There are those whose brains operate best within a visual context and the field of visual poetry is blooming in contemporary poetics. Finally—but hardly exclusively—some resort to traditional forms: sonnets, villanelles, pantoums. And none of these preferences are constant; rather those inclinations are like Shakespeare's "inconstant moon, that monthly changes in her circled orb..."

Lynne Thompson

Lately, my fondness for poets “at play” has grown exponentially. What can be found in their work is a nod to the various stylistic modes—and more—mentioned above while simultaneously declining to craft the work with relentless seriousness, no matter how serious the themes and their ultimate aims.

One of my favored style of poems at (serious) play are abcedarians. These poems rely on the seeming simplicity of the alphabet but can present as elegy or admonition or reverie. Often these poems bow to their audiences dressed in their glossary-gowns where “the first letter of each line or stanza follows sequentially through the alphabet” (Poetry Foundation). I took one of these lovely, though unsophisticated and possibly too eager, playmates out for a test drive with the following result:

Call It Havoc

as every step you take is clutch and coffin.
Believe me, baby-bent-on-starshine, you're
crazy if you think you can get away by train.
Doubt is your best depend upon it,
especially when it was only a
few days ago when you cast bread—with
glee and hope—on a mirage.
Here's a news flash: we're all chumps who
ignore the fact we live in cities of the already-dead,
justice just a fairy tale,
kingdoms bellicose,
love-sick in these times of unloving....¹

1. Originally published in the literary journal, *Spillway*.

Ok, you get the idea. Luckily, I quickly learned that the approach to this exercise in poetic magic need not be so pedestrian. As far as one can get from pedestrian, for example, is the work of Harryette Mullen in her collection, *Sleeping With the Dictionary*, which includes one of my favorite poems “Any Lit.” An excerpt reads::

You are euphony beyond my myocardigram
You are a unicorn beyond my Minotaur
You are a eureka beyond my maitai
You are a Yuletide beyond by minesweeper
You are a euphemism beyond my myna bird
You are a unit beyond my mileage
You are a Yugoslavia beyond my mind's eye
You are a yoo-hoo beyond my minor key
You are a Euripides beyond my mime troupe
You are a Utah beyond my microcosm
You are a Uranus beyond my Miami

The poem's obsession with “you” (and its variations “eu” and “yoo”) and “my” (and “mi” and “mai”) is heightened by an awareness that the alphabet is flexible and that sound is an element of poetry that plays an integral part in its design. It forms the basis of play in a poem that celebrates my mother's Caribbean accent:

She talk like this`cause me Mum born elsewhere, say

| | |
|------------|---|
| Ackee | and talk funny—make things up, but say apples, apricot—then say <i>ackee—both fruit and juice make you feel good from the</i> |
| Beginning | when she insulted Episcopalian Jesus, singing (top of her lungs) <i>big-inning</i> like a good |
| Caribbean— | or potato or po-tay-toe to a fool who say Caribbean—she laugh— <i>Cari-bee-an..she say</i> |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|---|
| Dasheen: | <i>US got greens, but me mum got something else like</i> | Queer | <i>you mean like the guy who lived in the house behind ours? He drink</i> |
| Egret | is same yes but | Rum | then |
| Fiddle-faddle | she never said, afraid of the | Sweets | <i>The sound when suck air through teeth like low class people from</i> |
| Government | & warned: <i>enunciate the first n like you got good schoolin' not</i> | Trinidad... | <i>(sotto voce) your father's people, not sweet, sail from there to</i> |
| Hard knocks, | as in school of— | USA | then again, mum was never truly naturalized like a |
| [is this | making any sense?] Are you hungry for | Vegeeee-tuble | spinach, peas, or beet soup causing— <i>ha!</i> — |
| jumbee soursop? | foul-smelling, bitter, good for make you suffer and | wee wee | but no one say this when referring to piss & need some |
| keep quiet | (this has nothing to do with mum being from Bequia [she say Beck-way]) she say | X-rays | that don't show the way to float on a |
| Legoland | but her mouth waterin' for leg of lamb and | Yah-chit or yacht | & make we laugh when mum butcher English except she remembers she's a |
| money | <i>never got enough where you from and</i> | Zebra | that is same as you say when you mix the black & white— ² |
| Nurdle | as in a game of cricket when the batsman nudges the ball around and into a pureé of | | |
| onions— | <i>never make a meal without `em.</i> | | |
| Pamela, | (my 1st name she never call me) like I'm | | |

2. Published *Pleiades* and *Best American Poetry 2020*.

Having fun yet? If not, you may prefer something more serious; to rely, perhaps, on the creative directions the ancestors—either genealogical or literary—propose. Again, there's a certain amount of "play" that these poems also employ. Cameron Awkward-Rich relies on his literary contemporaries and ancestors (Hieu Minh Nguyen, Franny Choi and Lucille Clifton, to name a few) in his poem "Cento Between the Ending and the End" to remind us:

Sometimes you don't die
when you're supposed to
now I have a choice
repair a world or build
a new one inside my body.

Cento is Latin for "patchwork" and, in poetry, is formed from lines of poems written by other poets as Awkward-Rich does in his poem above. In addition, the cento can rely on the work of just one poet as I did (relying on various first lines in Marge Piercy's poems) and can address serious matters such as the children who live their first days as those who were once called foundlings:

Catch and Stick, Foundling

I was a girl-child, born as usual,
and every day whittles me.

Victim, not of accident, my vision is
catch-and-stick. There's no difference

between being raped. When did I
first become aware? Who decided

what is useful to its beauty? The city
lies grey and sopping—a dead rat,

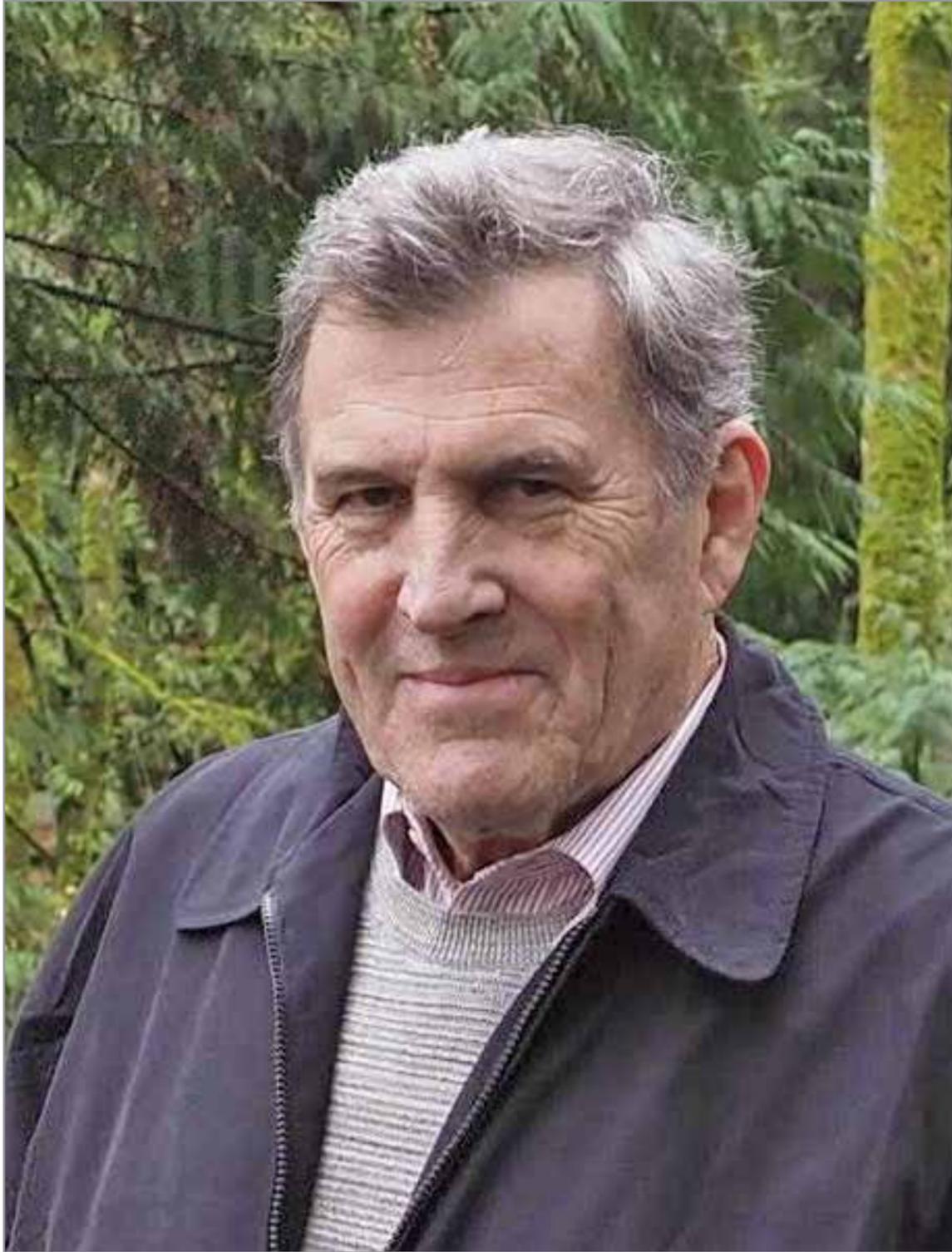
but living someplace else is wrong &
loving feels lonely amidst the violence.

As a final example of wordplay, I offer the well-known concept of anaphora defined by The Poetry Foundation as "the repetition of a word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or lines to create a sonic effect." The young are often exposed to this pattern in children's verses ("this little piggy went to market/this little piggy stayed home"...), but the practice becomes even more sophisticated in the hands of poets. See, for example, Maya Angelou's poem "And Still I Rise":

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

What becomes apparent in all of these poems is that they are likely, because of their playfulness, to engage both the new or rare reader of poetry in ways that make them permanent fans of the art. Can you think of anything else that could make poets happier?

David Rigsbee is an American poet, critic and translator who has an immense body of published work behind him. Salmon Poetry has just published his translation of Dante's *Paradiso*, and Black Lawrence Press will bring out his *Watchman in the Knife Factory: New and Selected Poems* next year. He is working on a memoir and a new book of essays to be called *The Keep of Poetry*.



REENACTORS

It's likely no one will dream again
of the light dripping down the leaves
swaying lightly in relation to each other
at the behest of air. Nor will it seem important
that the mailman's arrival at the end of the block
brought a throb of anxiety. Whatever would seem
the point here. I thought how my relatives sat
like Confederate reenactors around family-style
orders of barbeque and slaw. One provocateuse
turned to me and asked for a grace.
That it was an examination was lost on no one,
their lowered eyes peering up to watch.
I felt like rising and heading for the exit
with prow-like dignity, leaving the room,
I hope, stunned. Instead, I burrowed
inward and mined the script of childhood,
which said, "I am you," saying grace
but also meaning, "I am not you,"
Not in pious helplessness, but in fact.
Something in the next moment pulled me,
and I was out of there, though I sat
and finished the meal, wiping my mouth,
tossing the napkin onto the empty plate.

David Rigsbee

THE THOUSAND ACRES

Two years back he was startled
to find her, and to find in himself
an opening in the rockslide debris.
But in a strange place of distances
and unfamiliar noises, she took him
by hand and led him up dry hills,
past herds of antelope and mule deer,
until they came to a windy prospect:
cattle-fence-bound valleys, hills in bunched
array, then smoothed into prairie, all
belted and parceled. They called it
The Thousand Acres. Here they sat
and stared out over the new world:
every horizon rimmed with mountains
already snow-topped, the whiteness
a filament not even thread, awaiting a tailor
of the imagination, maybe, and there was
no way to know that the first desire
that charged their bodies in nights
of love and days of friendship, like poetry
and prose together entering some canon,
contained a flaw none saw coming,
so high was the start of it, so long
the view. Just so philosophy routs
the striving poem, and what was classic
in the shape of desire tithes the clouds
and bows before the languorous
sweep of broad, impassive shadows.

SAMARAS

Enough to fill a stadium.
A term of ventry would be
“an embarrassment of seeds.”
They twirl beyond their source
to escape the shadow of precedence.
This is fact. Robins suddenly
aiming to listen to soil
plop down from thickets
to parade before you. It’s like
a recurring dream in which the old
friend and the new switch places,
confounding time. One scissors
a writhing worm. There you stand
holding the pliers before the gutter,
its end bent, trapping such substance
as the seasons determine. Now
to turn to the waste and the dead.

RED WALL

Consider the lintel: summer opens:
Aphrodite plus sparrows,
hot stones the size of office safes.
Regardless, the past follows,
like Melchior without makeup,
while a turtle slumbers on a stump.
Maple leaves squirm on their twigs
when a breeze bellies up and through,
invisibly, antic. Then the neighbor
with the black knee brace and that gait
drags her green bag to the curb.
Telephone poles, misaligned, trail off
behind smaller trees, pulled in every direction,
but steadied by guy-wires anchored
in the prim, fussed-over lawns
where black-eyed Susans and sunflowers
stand up in their beds. So martyrs
were painted in Italy once, tethered
to their stakes, their upward eyes seeking
some sign of coherence from beyond
the canvas. Because the light seemed to come
from everywhere, I could see a brown spider
inch up a red wall, pause, and then turn to see
if there were not something there behind,
in pursuit, perhaps, before resuming
its trek up the layered shingles.

BLUEFISH

I was thinking of my uncle Bud who,
though uneducated, had a way with words.
“Them are stout buggers!” he would exclaim,
pronouncing them boogers, as he pointed
to the bluefish lining the pier’s edge.
“That’s some good eatin’ there,” he would add.
A fleet of clouds sailed overhead
followed by another, in pursuit.
These are my only literal quotes,
and so I associate him with fish, the way
the character in *As I Lay Dying* thought
his grandmother was a freshwater drum.
One day he toppled on the pier of a stroke,
passing out as his brain detonated,
and the other fishermen gathered around
the body, wondering what to do,
adjusting their caps and looking away
from time to time. There was nothing to do,
except to notify somebody. One of the men
peeled off and started walking, not running,
to the pier-house. Bud had wide blue eyes,
at canted angles, and a gap-toothed smile
that spread the endemic freckles of our clan.
The Atlantic shouldered in and the pier swayed,
bright clouds continued. Men stood about.
A wooden ship appeared in the distance,
then two. Their sails and the clouds a rhyme.

Kaaren Kitchell's poems have appeared in numerous literary journals (most recently in the *Jung Journal* Winter-Spring 2023), anthologies, and in a fine art manuscript at the Getty Museum. She received an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University, LA. She and her late husband, Richard Beban, taught *Living Mythically* at the C.G. Jung Institute in L.A., at Esalen in Big Sur, and in private workshops, based on her 30-year vision quest. A collection of her essays and his photos can be found at www.parisplay.com. Her most recent book of poems is *Ariadne's Threads*, which is available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) and <https://www.spdbooks.org/>



THE BLACK COAT

You thought they were out to get you.
 You begged me to stay the night.
 The nurses brought in a cot,
 unfolded it beside the bed
 where you were attached to machines.

I lay curled beside you like a snail in slow time
 until I saw you needed space to sleep.
 From the cot I watched the nurses
 come in and out all night long,
 take their meticulous measurements,
 adjust your medicine,
 swift, delicate, sure.

In the morning you said you'd seen
 the black coat hung on the wall,
 and felt pity for its owner,
 a soldier killed in war.
 You sorrowed for his widow.

But no, darling, I said,
 that is my coat hanging there.

Kaaren Kitchell

BASTILLE DAY, JULY 14, 2017

The red white and blue ripples atop the Tour d'Argent
one day each year. He and I walk the length
of Boulevard Saint-Germain to the Pont Alexandre III,

stop beneath the winged gold horse,
all around us, the scent of wine on breath,
the babble of tongues, shouts of the young

gathered to watch the flowers of fire
bloom above the iron tower.
How we have earned this harmony between us!

How hard he and I fought for freedom
from old wounds, hierarchies—fiery explosions!—
before we won true democracy, lasting peace.

VISITATION

Trimming the geraniums
outside my bedroom window,
I find a white feather

the size of my thumbnail
where the roots were spread
as if to make a nest.

Earlier, I'd awakened to a cooing
at dawn, a dove who seemed to be
settling, a commotion of wings

the instant I opened the curtains.
Or was it you, my darling,
my paloma, who one year ago was

ten days away from your last breath,
leaving me a tiny sign, saying, *I'm still
with you, still guarding your sleep?*

HERA, LONGING

The deluge:
deep grumbling thunder,
Zeus is not amused.

The geraniums drink deeply.
I stand at the open window
watch the strobing light,

the sky a strange violet.
That steeple just above the ivied wall:
will it be the rod which attracts the bolt?

What shall I do with this love
that fills me day and night? Where
can it find a home now that he is gone?

Here in my smithy
I forge my lightning bolts.
In whose heart will they find their target?

ROSES, JUNE 14, 2022

After sardines and tsatsiki,
talk of foxes and hedgehogs,
and Ilya's question, What do you love?,
we climb the hill on Serifos,
see a rose blossoming over mountain and sea.

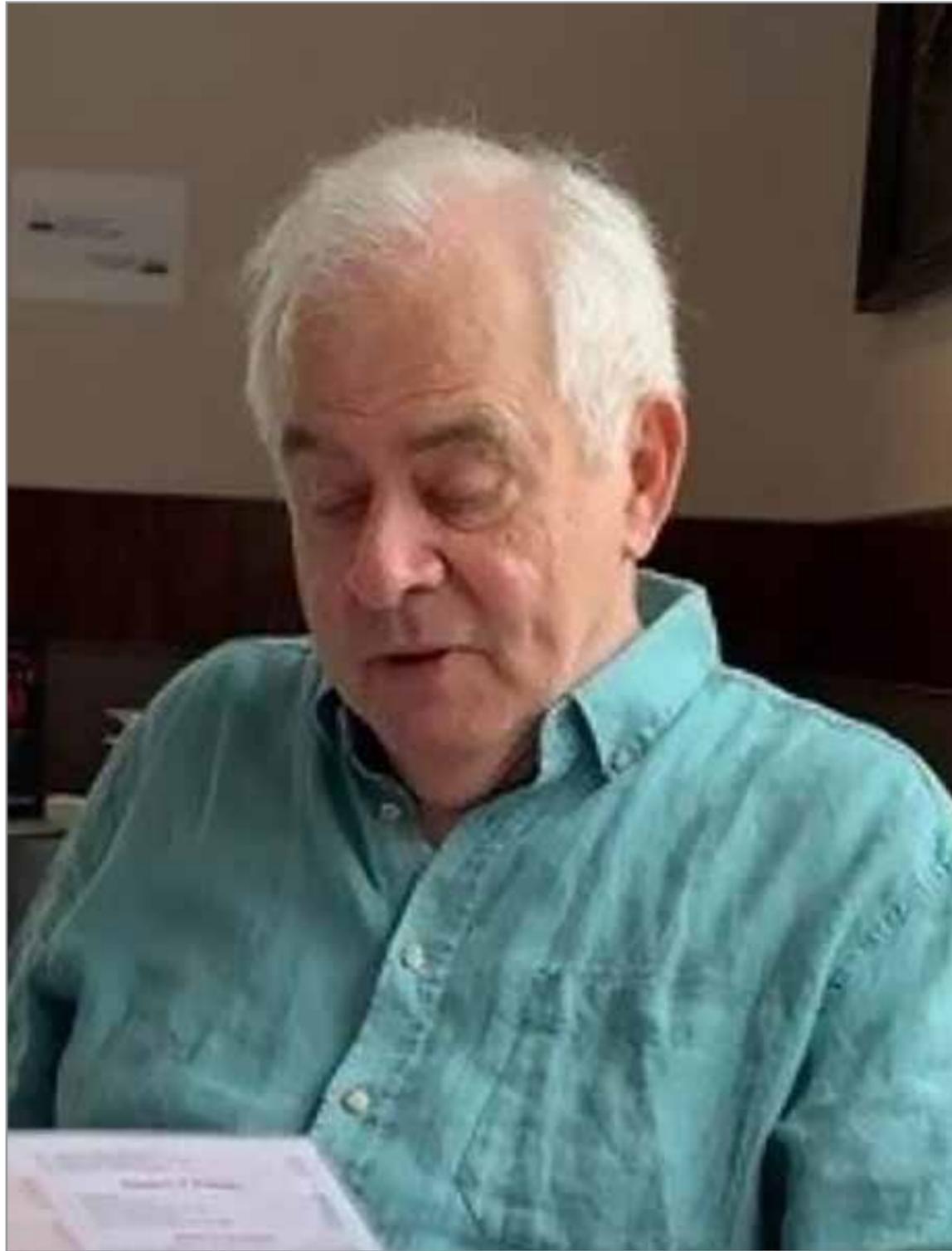
Rose Moon for the roses that bloom this time of year.
Strawberry Moon, according to the Algonquin.
Honey Moon, when honey was ready for harvesting,
sweetest moon of the year.

Vat Purnima, the three days of full moon
when married Hindu women tie a ribbon
round a banyan tree to show their love
for their husbands.

I have no husband.
No banyan trees on this island.
But my heart holds roses, ambrosia, and honey,
and a beloved as sleek as a jaguar,
as wise as an owl.

I will tie a golden thread
around a pine tree
and send this song to him
at the western edge of America
down Rose Avenue, artery of my heart.

Richard W. Halperin's poems are published by Salmon/Cliffs of Moher and by Lapwing/Belfast. Salmon has listed *Selected & New Poems* for Autumn 2023; it will draw upon poems from Mr. Halperin's four Salmon and sixteen Lapwing collections, on the occasion of his 80th birthday. A new Lapwing, *The Painted Word*, will appear this Spring.



I. STRAIT IS THE GATE

Gide was no fool.
Nor is the Bible.
Strait is the gate.
Love must be factored in.

Wide is the way of destruction.

Tyndale was tortured and killed
by order of Thomas More.
The loss is incalculable.
A man for all seasons
and the fifth is insanity.

I leave such odious subjects
as soon as I can. But I
cannot leave this aquarium
until I am given congé.

While in it, I must find – by
the grace of God or by
luck as in a Chinese restaurant –
those of like heart.

He who dwelleth in the secret place
of the Most High, the psalm begins.
The secret place is oneself.
When I die, the secret will be out.

Richard W. Halperin. Photo credit: Bertrand A.

II. A MAN, ALONE

A man, alone, on a bleak country road
in Russia. I have the photograph.
The world knows him as Richter,
but only Richter knows the real Richter,
and no one's affair, that.

Mark Twain tells readers they
will never have his true autobiography.
That that would consist of his thoughts,
'the volcanic fires that toss and boil,
and never rest day and night. . . .
Every day would make a book
of eighty-thousand words.'

Jane Austen was also volcanic –
her six perfections come from that,
which I live with. As I live with
Richter's Bach. As I live with
The Book of Job. As I live with
my late wife, whose life was not
entirely her own affair.

III. THEY TOO

'And yet they too break hearts –'
- Yeats, 'Among School Children.'

Joyce's short poems introduce
the lamentable twentieth century.
I revisit them. I do not understand
most of them, but my soul does.

Where does purity come from?
The song of a thrush. The song
of a New York office colleague
who sang sometimes in the corridor.

A tenor voice. A synagogue cantor.
One note, held two or three seconds
only. When I need consolation,
it is his voice I hear.

These are neither images or people,
yet they too break hearts.

IV. DYING IN VENICE

François Mitterrand, knowing he was dying, loved to walk in Venice. Near the end, I, too. I do not think death shimmers. I do not think truth shimmers. But Venice shimmers. It is the only city in which I need neither courage nor fear. Its beauty is that which Homer nails in *The Iliad*, beauty which takes no responsibility – none – for anything. Venice makes me know that I have passed my whole life in fancy dress. In Venice, the sea washes up on the stones. Even the sea goes to Venice to die.



Bridge of Sighs. Photograph by Mikyoung Cha.

Perie Longo, Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara, California (2007-2009), has published five books of poetry: *Milking The Earth* (1986), *The Privacy Of Wind* (1997), *With Nothing behind but Sky: a journey through grief* (2006), *Baggage Claim* (2014) and *A Mosaic of Poetry* (2013), an eBook of poetry for children. Her poems have been published *Atlanta Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *International Poetry Review*, *Miramar*, *Nimrod*, *Passager*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Rattle, Salt, Solo Novo*, *Wisconsin Review* and other journals and anthologies. She taught poetry in local schools through the California-Poets-in-the-Schools (1984-2014), and is on the staff of the annual Santa Barbara Writers Conference. Poetry chair for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, in 2005 she was invited by the University of Kuwait to speak on Poetry as a way to Peace. As a psycho-therapist, she integrates poetry writing for healing.



SNAKE ON THE ROAD

At first I saw it as a long crack
to step over kidlike, not to break
your mother's back. Then it slowly undulated

weaving in wide swerves across the asphalt,
hypnotic waves of gold and black, skinny tongue
flicking in fear of my shadow overhead.

A sudden SUV at the gate
pressed into the neighborhood. I raised my hand
like a crossing guard, hollered *Snake Crossing*.

When the private enclave was just a hill of oaks,
I'd climb to view the city beyond at ocean's foot—
often dallying to the *cree* of hawks. One day,

before the bulldozers struck, a lone woman
in a rundown house stepped out, pointed a gun at me
and yelled *git*. Watching the tail of snake

zip into the sideline's green wings, safe
from my near misstep and the wheels of progress,
I waved the car through, thumbs up.

Perie Longo

MORE BIG

At dusk, a toddler points to the silver sky,
his father snuggling him close. *More Big*
the child chants, his eyes full-moon wide,
arm sweeping away all that space around us.

From the sidewalk we watch a crane lift
a new power pole into air. *More Big*—
he repeats, very earnest. Spindle thin,
the cable and pole swing wildly, a black line

that divides father and child on one side
of the street from darkness coming soon
on the other. Candles flicker in windows
just in case the plan falls apart.

In this world, little boy not ready for bed,
you've given me two words
that near describe everything day by day
growing big and bigger.

TULIPS

The new man in my life,
seasoned as I, brings me tulips
for Spring he grins, purple ones,
color I'm wearing I swore never
to wear. Not only one bouquet,
but two. Taken by his generosity
I say *make yourself at home*
though we're very new
in an old sort of way.

He sits at my table while I boil
water for tea, the sky peeking in,
tree jostling the window—
though less strangers than when
he picked me up the first time
two months ago for a lift
to a mutual friend's party,
me fearing to drive alone
on a twisty, rural road.

He reminds me I said, climbing
into his shiny blue truck,
going my way?

Such bravado for a widow
of twenty years unwrapping
two bouquets of purple tulips
while the kettle whistles.
Heat rising, he pushes on.

Do you like to dance?
The overhead light flickers.
Sure, I nod. *Fast or slow?*
I shift, feel the road ahead
break in two, no clue
which one I'll choose
and insert his thirsty tulips
in a vase with more
than enough water.

DISARMED

Under moon's faint smile, you press
a row of whisper kisses along the length

of hand, wrist, forearm, my Velcro brace
unfastened to relieve the rash, massage

the ache where break has left me useless.
I can't think, couldn't if I tried,

veins plum-blue on my hand throbbing
with such tenderness foreign to this body

under its own siege. Impetuous, insistent
to keep pushing on whatever interferes

like that tree root risen in trail's center
to spill me yelling help, grounded.

As if my arm were a piece of china,
you place it on the table, take leave

wordless. I sit arrested wondering,
have I stumbled into someone else's life?

I GET LOST SO EASILY

even with a GPS
I may never make it
to heaven anymore than I didn't
mount the mountain top
sidetracked by a plot
of shamrocks
in shade of oaks
around the corner of the day
being Grandma's girl lost
in her County Kerry brogue
and promised to travel there someday
which I did by the grace of Holy Mary
and my son's steady navigation
driving the wandering roads
left-handed passed down
from some ancestral dervish
where I found myself
deep in an ancient *tobair*
waiting for a miracle
grandma said was always coming
when she cured my finger warts
directing me to bury
a dirty wash cloth
under a cherry tree
casting a prayer to the Almighty
but I digress—the blue sky above
sea foaming below
though a fiercest wind
tried to blow me off course—
not easy in a land of low stone walls
marking where you belong
where you don't
and who you are
whirling off on back of the wind
faith and begorra
into the blinding sun



Indran Amirthanayagam produced a “world record” in 2020 publishing three poetry collections written in three different languages. He writes in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Haitian Creole. He has published twenty two poetry books, including *Isleño* (R.I.L. Editores), *Blue Window* (translated by Jennifer Rathbun) (Diálogos Books), *Ten Thousand Steps Against the Tyrant* (BroadstoneBooks.com), *The Migrant States*, *Coconuts on Mars*, *The Elephants of Reckoning* (winner 1994 Paterson Poetry Prize), *Uncivil War and The Splintered Face: Tsunami Poems*. In music, he recorded *Rankont Dout*. He edits the Beltway Poetry Quarterly (www.beltwaypoetry.com); writes <https://indranamirthanayagam.blogspot.com>; writes a weekly poem for *Haiti en Marche* and *El Acento*; has received fellowships from the Foundation for the Contemporary Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, The US/Mexico Fund for Culture and the Macdowell Colony. He is the IFLAC Word Poeta Mundial 2022. In 2021 he won an Emergent Seed grant. His poem “Free Bird” was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Hosts *The Poetry Channel* <https://youtube.com/user/indranam>. New books include *Powèt nan po la* (Poet of the Port) (to be published in 2023), *Origami: Selected Poems of Manuel Ulacia* (Dialogos Books, January 2023), and *Kont Anlèyman* (Edison Freda, May, 2023). Indran publishes poetry books with Sara Cahill Marron at *Beltway Editions* (www.beltwayeditions.com).

CROSS TALK

You used to look for deeper meanings in poetry,
you write, in your twenties. I don't know your age—
the literary one is timeless—and I hope you will
go back to the art and open your mind and heart.

There is no turning 'round I found once the Daimon
meets the Muse savories and sweets in hand. You can't
just say henceforth there will be no deep dive into
the intricacies of a broken heart vessel, that you

can dance the light fandango over such matters
as lilacs in a churchyard blooming, or a bespectacled
and effete young man saying to the reader, let us go
then, you and I, or hopping a language or two, find

in Chilean Spanish the anti-poet and crucified Christ
saying *voy y vuelvo*: I am going. I will be back.

Indran Amirthanayagam

HOLDING PATTERN

I did not want to decline.
I would have enjoyed digging
into the entrails, to find
the chemicals that led to quickening

in your blood, the explosion
in lyrics. But I cannot deny
the waking up of my emotions,
the bond forming when you deliver

your intimate speech for me
to shape, this damned union,
diabolic, ravishing, and
impossible given the obligations

of daily life, the commitments
to family, rings already exchanged.

BOND

When sixteen in Honolulu and moved
by Travolta and Newton-John I dressed

in a tight black suit and a loud pink shirt
and roped my nine- year-old sister into

the frame, my arms loping and hers
mirroring mine. The memory of that

photograph gives me enormous
nostalgia, to know that my sister's

love caught in our dance steps
remains constant more than four

decades later, that within minutes
of my request this morning her help

arrives; and I am blessed as any
man or woman who knows love

has no bond or debt and is given
without question or accounting.

Thank you dear sister for acting
as our mother and our father,

for gladdening my day
and allowing me to return

to labor in tranquility
in this field I love.

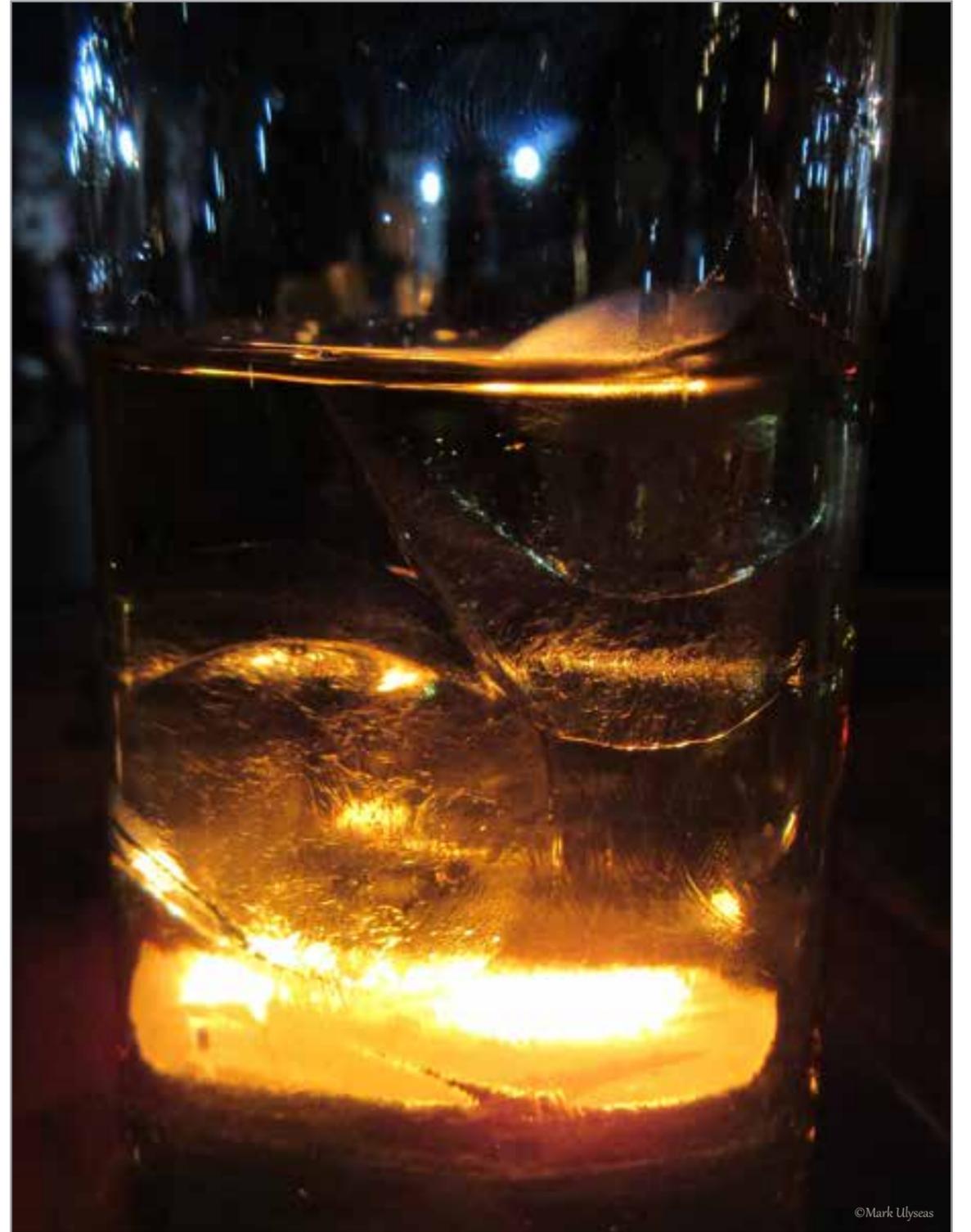
DIGGER

Where is the undiscovered country?
Some of us have passed through
a halo, felt an intense and warm
light. Others on seeing their bodies

comatose have hurried back
to kick them alive. Life is what
happens after you are kicked,
a settling of accounts with parents,

siblings, children, noting what
is right, what can be fixed, what
must be allowed to disappear
into forgetting, although we

make commerce with hope
and will not let the sleeping cliché lie.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Sinéad McClure's writing is published on radio, and in anthologies, magazines and online including; The Honest Ulsterman, The Stinging Fly, Southword, Live Encounters, Poethed, Drawn to the Light, The Cormorant, Dodging the Rain, A New Ulster, Step-Away Magazine, Sonder Magazine and many other fine publications. In 2022 Sinéad was the winner of The Cathal Búi Poetry Prize (English Language Section) with her poem *On the Anatomy of Birds*. She was the 2022 recipient of the Roscommon Bursary Award for her first solo chapbook *The Word According to Crow*. Along with her collaborator Cáit O' Neill McCullagh their chapbook *The songs I sing are sisters* was published by Dreich in Scotland.

This work was first written by Sinéad McClure as an Essay for the Creative Specialism Practice Module of the MA in Creative Practice at ATU Sligo (C) 2023.

WRITING THE PERSONAL— LOUIS MACNEICE AND ME

My first experience of being truly present with a poem was Louis MacNeice's *The Strand*ⁱ. I was standing in the Atlantic Ocean on Keel Beach in Achill up to my knees in surf recording a guest for a radio show. This guest insisted that he read this poem while we stood in the water. There, trying to balance myself and my microphone with white foam swishing at my feet, I got it. I felt it.

'White Tintoretto clouds beneath my naked feet,
This mirror of wet sand imputes a lasting mood
To island trauancies; my steps repeat'ⁱⁱ

While MacNeice didn't visit Achill until he left school, as a child he built a picture in his mind about the landscape of the West of Ireland. These places became almost fantastical, a make-believe of childhood, a place of freedom handed down from family stories.ⁱⁱⁱ

Louis MacNeice was born in Belfast in 1907; both his parents came from the West of Ireland. When Louis was a small boy the family moved to Carrickfergus where his father became a Church of England Rector. In some of his work you can feel a sense of displacement from the orthodox, perhaps a hangover from the close proximity to the religion he grew up with. It is believed that MacNeice did not have much time for organised religion, but he kept an open mind.^{iv}

My childhood was spent roaming the beach near my Dublin home. I played truant every Sunday preferring to walk the strand to enduring mass, I also don't have much time for the church. On the face of it, MacNeice and I should have little in common. But as I have grown into my writing I do find a kinship with this poet.



Sinéad McClure

I became interested in poetry at a very young age, my eldest sisters copy of *Window on Poetry*^v, is still a treasured possession, in all its red and gold hardback glory! I have read widely since but few poets have offered me such a vivid reading experience as MacNeice, lines that have stayed with me ever since;

‘The room was suddenly rich and the great bay-window was
Spawning snow and pink roses against it
Soundlessly, collateral and incompatible;
World is suddener than we fancy it.’^{vi}

‘Snow’ is an exceptionally clean, visually engaging poem, filled with a quiet brightness, a light you can only expect from a scene that is silently filling up with snow. In this brightness there lurks something far darker, a vision of a changing world, a fear that in the quietness something will shake the equilibrium. MacNeice wrote the personal but used his perspective to come to terms with and to offer the reader contemplation on life and death. He often dealt with much larger themes than could be seen at first glance. So for me his poetry is a layering, an unmasking, I can read and reread and discover new things each time.

MacNeice was a witness, he made comment, he was a natural reporter—but ironically as the son of a rector, he never proselytised.

When I first read *Snow*, I was amazed by the audacity of the word ‘suddener’ like something a child would say, so immediate and convincing to be perfectly true. MacNeice’s work spoke to me on a different level my immersion in place, memory, and also metaphysics, the otherworld, something intangible.

In his book *Louis MacNeice: In a Between World*^{vii}, Christopher J. Fauske refers to Derek Mahon, Seamus Heaney, and Michael Longley and their shared admiration for MacNeice. He recalls that before each of them became published poets they visited MacNeice’s grave to try and elicit an elegy to the man they all admired. Longley wrote;

‘When the three of us were next together Mahon took from his pocket ‘In Carrowdore Churchyard’ and read it aloud. Heaney started to recite his poem, then crumpled it up. I wisely decided then and there not to make the attempt.’^{viii}

This anecdote from Longley says more about the collective appreciation for Louis MacNeice than Derek Mahon’s sublime lament. The three poets wanted to write a fitting elegy, it did not matter which one of them wrote it, there were no egos. I am not sure if this is a trait of all writers, but I believe poets often question the strength of new work. This honesty from Longley shows camaraderie with fellow poets which I think MacNeice would have approved of.

I met Michael Longley in 2001 recording a piece for Lyric FM’s art show he took us to the Lisburn Road in Belfast and read his poem *The Ice Cream Man*. The poem was poignant, and soul raking, a heart cry from the boglands which was lifted high above the weekday traffic. ‘Soundlessly, collateral, and incompatible’^{ix} indeed.

Louis MacNeice and I have been having a bit of a revival since I started my MA in Creative Practice at ATU Sligo. It was his poem “*Prayer Before Birth*”^x which I turned to, to inspire my first creative piece while working through my masters.

‘We never grew, don’t speak us
No whale-oak strength
No alder-handed coolness

no leaves to call out spring
or rot to fall in autumn
nothing to tumble into’^{xi}

It is more than just inspiration, and hard to contextualise these things we find to influence us when we read poetry that strikes a chord within us. With MacNeice I share common themes, ecology, land, spirituality but in an otherworldly sense, lapsed, in a religious sense, and we both have written from a quiet place, so as not to disturb, more to endure;

‘Changing the world was never a task MacNeice thought appropriate to himself, but he distrusted the order into which he had been born and in which he lived. He wanted not to take it apart but to enliven and enrich it with the human values of warmth, decency and integrity.’^{xii}

I am beginning to see MacNeice as a silent companion in my own work, someone I am not afraid to learn from. He wrote many eclogues, most famously his *Eclogue From Iceland*;

‘G: Too many people. My memory will go
Lose itself in the hordes of modern people.’^{xiii}

These dialogue poems have become a bit of a revelation for me as I continue my creative practice and concentrate on writing an Epic poem for my dissertation. I am using some of these dialogue techniques to converse with people in my poems. I am dwelling on loss, and on finding characters revealed through noticing. MacNeice wrote radio drama, and I spent the last fourteen years doing the same. I could never parse the two, deciding that radio drama is a whole different realm and genre to poetry. In poetry, I felt I wasn’t offering myself the same space, the same broad sweep of imagination. That is until I started to read MacNeice’s eclogues and there it was, where drama meets poetry on the page.

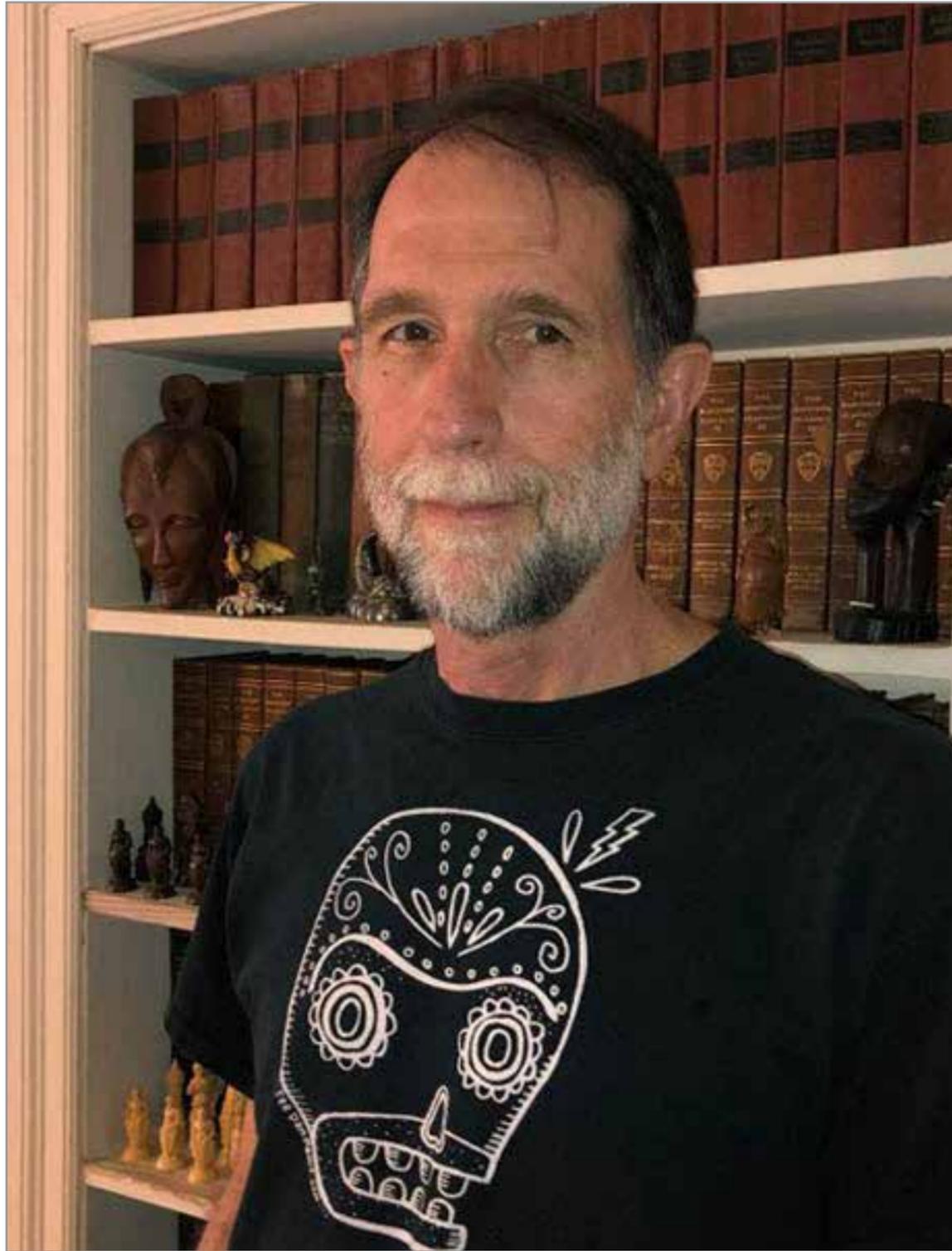
‘In August, MacNeice went to Yorkshire with a recording engineer to get exactly right the sounds from beneath the mountain he needed for *Persons from Porlock*. It is easy to see the hand of fate in the viral pneumonia he apparently contracted while wet, cold and tired throughout the expedition.’^{xiv}

Louis MacNeice died shortly after contracting pneumonia while working to collect ambient sounds for a radio play in 1963 he was 55 years of age. I turn 55 this year.

Then there’s the sea, the rivers, the lakes, land and forests of the West of Ireland that I too heard about as a child, places of make-believe, and exploration. I roam these places now to inspire poems. These same places perhaps that MacNeice spoke of in his *Nature Notes*^{xv}. The same places that make me ‘fall in love, yet fill/The primroseless roseless, gaps’^{xvi}

- i. Louis MacNeice, *The Strand Selected Poems* edited by Michael Longley Faber and Faber 1988(p.105)
- ii. Louis MacNeice, *The Strand Selected Poems* edited by Michael Longley Faber and Faber 1988 (p.105)
- iii. Michael Longley Introduction Louis MacNeice, *Selected Poems*, Faber and Faber 1988 (p.xv) (paraphrased)
- iv. Michael Longley Introduction Louis MacNeice, *Selected Poems*, Faber and Faber 1988 (p.xxv) (paraphrased)
- v. W.J. Steele, *Window on Poetry*, Fallons, 1959
- vi. Louis MacNeice, *Snow*, *Selected Poems* edited by Michael Longley Faber and Faber 1988(p.23)
- vii. Fauske, Christopher J. *Louis MacNeice: In a Between World*. Irish Academic Press, 2016.(p6)
- viii. Michael Longley, ‘Introduction’, *Louis MacNeice: Poems Selected by Michael Longley* (London: Faber, 2001), pp.vii–xii (p.xi) Fauske, Christopher J. *Louis MacNeice : In a Between World*. Irish Academic Press, 2016
- ix. Louis MacNeice, *Snow*, *Selected Works*, Faber and Faber 1988, p.23
- x. Louis MacNeice, *Prayer Before Birth*, *Louis MacNeice Selected Poems*, Faber & Faber, 1988 (p93)
- xi. Sinéad McClure *Poem Before Tree Extract* Created during MA in Creative Practice
- xii. Fauske, Christopher J. *Louis MacNeice : In a Between World*. Irish Academic Press, 2016.(p4)
- xiii. Louis MacNeice, *Eclogue From Iceland*, *Louis MacNeice Selected Poems*, Faber & Faber, 1988 (p27)
- xiv. Fauske, Christopher J. *Louis MacNeice: In a Between World*. Irish Academic Press, 2016.(p139)
- xv. Louis MacNeice, *Nature Notes*, *Louis MacNeice Selected Poems*, Faber & Faber, 1988 (p134)
- xvi. Louis MacNeice, *Nature Notes ‘Dandelions’* *Louis MacNeice Selected Poems*, Faber & Faber, 1988 (p134)

M. L. Williams is the author of *Game* (What Books Press 2021) the chapbook *Other Medicines* and co-editor of *How Much Earth: The Fresno Poets*, and he served as editor or co-editor of *Quarterly West* for five years. His work appears in many journals and anthologies, including *Plume*, *Hubbub*, *Salt*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Miramar*, *The Journal of Florida Studies*, *The Cortland Review*, *Live Encounters Poetry*, and *Stone, River, Sky*, and has been nominated for multiple Pushcart Prizes. He co-emcees the Poetry Stage at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, and he teaches creative writing and contemporary literature at Valdosta State University.



SOAK

If you ask me the *reason* for this certainty, I have none.
— Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 607

The dollar store candle girl
is supposed to be Mary
and the bathwater, heavy
with heat and salts,
steams the room.

She seems to vanish—
all but the yellow flicker
of her ghost heart—
in the mist the mirror
wears like a veil.

M L Williams

SCARLET

Watching her paint each nail
carefully, her pale, aging
hands brightened by polish
perfectly applied, the tight,
black brush fanning out
in a wet red gush
on nail after filed nail,
I begged, "Do mine, Nana."
I was four, and she complied.

She had eight boys out
of ten, knew their
spirit and their bland
ferocities, so when Joe
arrived I was transformed
from boy with blood-red claws
to girl—clearly, in his eyes
a terrible fate—and he
let me know it in a hail
of unclly taunts,
but she shushed him,
told me they were fine,
told me to wear my scarlet
Revlon nails with pride.

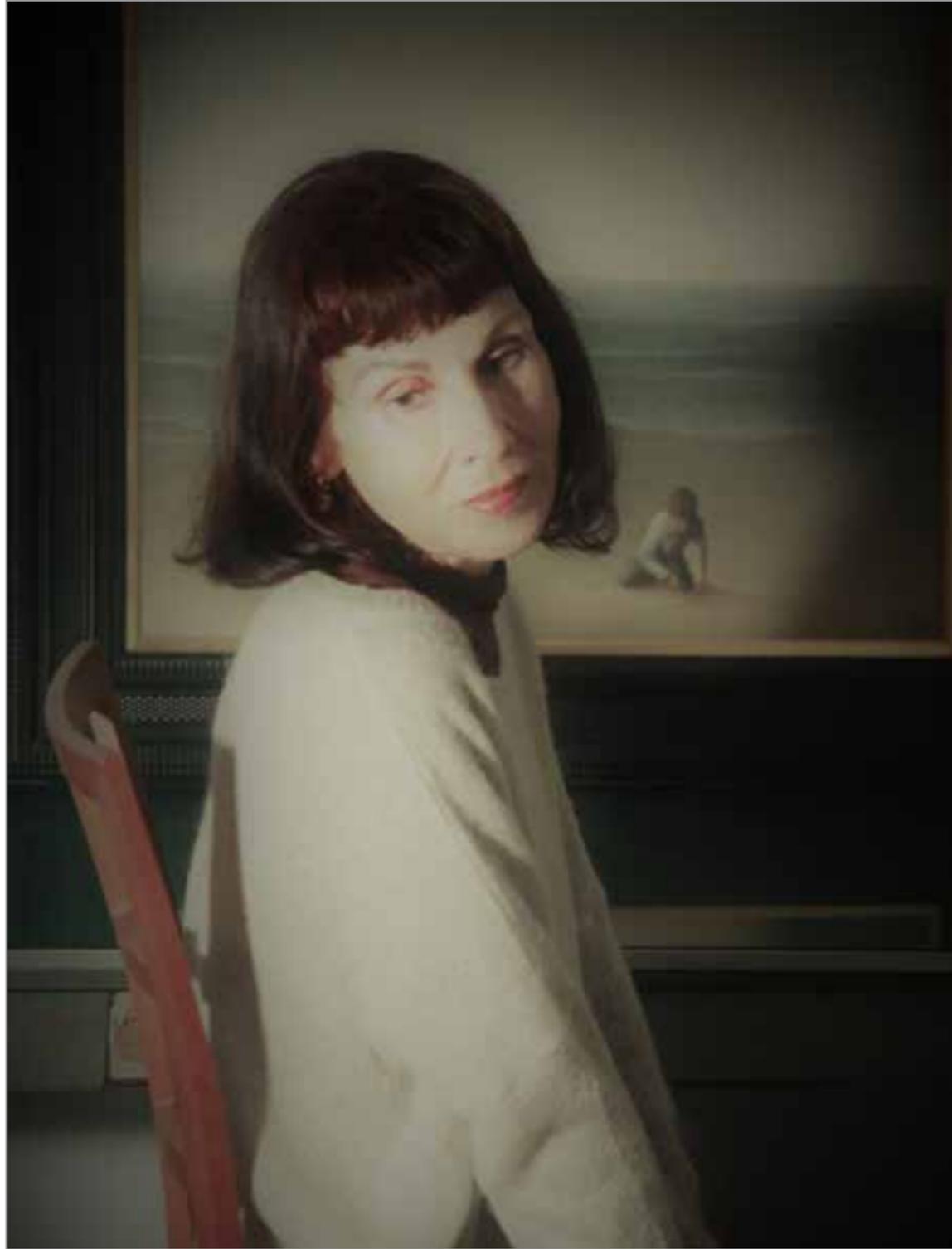
INTENTIONAL FALLACY

Explanations come to an end somewhere.

--Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1

Mockingbirds plunge headlong
into jasmine, thread longleaf
pine needles into a nest
too close to the chain-link
gate I must pass through
to clean the greening
pool. I worry that I'll worry
them once their eggs are lain,
that each shriek warning me,
each nosedive at my forehead,
will silence squawking beaks
that open and open for everything.
I mean no harm, I will think
hard at these songbirds
for whom all meaning
they can't mock is harm.

Maria Castro Dominguez is the author of 'A Face in The Crowd' her Erbacce-press winning collection and 'Ten Truths from Wonderland' (Hedgehog Poetry Press) a collaboration with Matt Duggan. Winner of the third prize in Brittle Star's Poetry Competition 2018. Finalist in the 2019 Stephen A DiBiase Poetry contest NY and was highly commended in the Borderlines Poetry Competition. Her poems have appeared in many anthologies and journals such as Apogee, The Long-Islander Huntington Journal NY, Popshot, PANK, Empty Mirror, Live Encounters, The Chattahoochee Review and Salamander Magazine.



THE MAN WHOSE

piano got thrown
out of the window
into the street below
all his belongings
floating behind
fell out
of the window
screaming *no not the piano*.

People just looked
(or didn't).
Some stole his blankets, some books
his tins of sauerkraut
a coat or two.
A few blocks away
another man's piano
started rolling toward the window.

Maria Castro Dominguez. Photo by Antoinette Castro Domíngue.

WHEN THE STONY WITNESS BECOMES A FLOWER

A mighty menhir stands eight
hundred metres high,
frog-shaped rock by its side.

Worshipped by ancients,
witness to volcanic eruptions
through layers of time. Below and above

clouds become an almost Renaissance sky.
The Fraile rock cliff-like on the way up
takes the shape of a monk praying.

Fissures become windows
onto a kaleidoscope of farmlands,

pine trees and the silent flight of falcons.
From above the Atlantic is a pause,

trembling between sister isles
and the moon (coming out too early),
and the sun (hidden on a bed of yellow)

exhaling wisps of ochre,
madder

cinnabar.

Only now the rock blooms into flowers.



Hampi, India. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Oz Hardwick is a European poet, photographer, occasional musician, and accidental academic, whose work has been widely published in international journals and anthologies. He has published “about a dozen” full collections and chapbooks, including *Learning to Have Lost* (Canberra: IPSI, 2018) which won the 2019 Rubery International Book Award for poetry, and most recently *A Census of Preconceptions* (Dublin & Reggio di Calabria: SurVision Books, 2022). Oz has held residencies in the UK, Europe, the US and Australia, and has performed internationally at major festivals and in tiny coffee shops. In 2022, he was awarded the ARC Poetry Prize for “a lifetime devotion and service to the cause of prose poetry”. With Anne Caldwell, he edited *The Valley Press Anthology of Prose Poetry* (Scarborough: Valley Press, 2019) and *Prose Poetry in Theory and Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022). The anthology *Dancing About Architecture and Other Ekphrastic Manoeuvres*, co-edited with Cassandra Atherton, will be published by MadHat Press (Cheshire, MA) in 2024. Oz is Professor of Creative Writing at Leeds Trinity University. www.ozhardwick.co.uk

THE MODERN IDOL

after Umberto Boccioni

Madame sees the future in pinballing stars; sees what you want and exactly how guilty it makes you feel. She understands that choice is contingent upon planetary alignments, and that any you make will be misguided. She commands you to look into her eyes, but her lips are so red you can feel them on your skin, while her hands move with practiced disinterest beneath the table. Flowers prickle your skin and scratch your eyes to tears, while Madame rehearses her mystic mumbo-jumbo with all the conviction of Death Row and, although you know it’s all sham, you’re ashamed to admit it’s scratching at your conscience. Madame removes her mask to reveal her face, which is your face buffed in blowsy slap, reflecting stars on your greased chin. You see a future of flowers plucked and wilting, and of planets drifting irrevocably out of whack. None of this will be your choice, but you’ll feel guilty as sin itself.



Oz Hardwick. Photo credit: Sue Whitehouse.

THE INEVITABLE DECLINE OF THE MODERN AGE

after René Magritte

Over the fields, it's raining stones, smooth teardrops obscuring the eastern horizon. It's flat out there: the kind of flat that makes even the most rational doubt that the Earth is round; the kind of flat the gives birth to monsters. Birds with scissoring beaks scrape at hard ground, honking their frustrated hunger, as self-important burghers burn inside expensive suits. They circle a tower that's a confidence trick, built brick by brick from guttural speech, and they raise their palms to the falling stones as if they were doves or apples. And I am a pillar of salt, with fluted drum and a head full of wild acanthus. Lick the corner of this poisoned page. See how the rain leaves no trace.

THE HIRELING SHEPHERD

after William Holman Hunt

Too much colour and my head's awash with bleating. *Coarse* is the word, from fabric to faces, though *fiery* would fit the bill, and the background leers and leans between the trees, messing with perspective. It's a day which would afford censorious critics much perturbation at its wanton displays, paint-wet and sticky, red-wired and ready to flood the world with the wrong sort of light. Dirty-handed, the light's alive with reaching, animal instincts straying into daze. The wolf adjusts his rakish fleece. Blush and fluster scatters apples and coarse fabric rucks at the teasing hem. The moral of the story is *no*. Later, the river can swat the fire to soft. The moral of the story is *yes*.

Susan Azar Porterfield's three books of poetry include *In the Garden of Our Spines*, *Kibbe* (Mayapple Press) and *Dirt, Root, Silk*, which won the Cider Press Review Editor's Prize. Her poems have appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *Barrow Street*, *EcoTheo*, *Painted Bride*, *Mid-American Review*, *North American Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Nimrod*, *Rhino*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Slipstream*, *Room*, *Ambit*, *Magma*. She's the editor of *Zen, Poetry, the Art of Lucien Stryk* (Ohio UP) and has written on poetical subjects for *Poets & Writers*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Translation Review*, *The Midwest Journal of the Modern Language Association*. She's the recipient of an Illinois Arts Counsel Award for Poetry.



THE HOUSE TEACHES HER ABOUT DEATH

After he died, he came to call,
waiting at the basement door,

though try as she might,
she couldn't reach it to let him in

what with the party, people cocktailing,
and when she looked again,

he was gone. Breathless,

she leapt upstairs,
yanked open the door, and yes, he was there,

the line of his back, his walk.
She could see him still,

waiting to cross at a light, then crossing,
stopping to adjust the strap of his pack.

I can reach him, she thought, running now.
I can make it just in time.

Susan Azar Porterfield

THE HOUSE TEACHES HER ABOUT LOVE

They seemed a stream of need flowing by her legs,
five or six of them, seven, she wasn't sure, children,

young, vague, but the house would help her
keep them alive. It was large and light--

here, we're safe, she sighed,

meaning absence, mainly, from vigilance,
the mind twisting cat-eared to clicks and creaks,

snap-deciding now again now
about which sounds not to fear.

She ran to secure each window and door,
all locked, all tight.

Except that one.

Fumbling with the latch
she saw outside a darkness outlined in dark--

and now she had to get them out out, quick,
away from the house that, dammit, wasn't hers anyway

just shelter she'd found by chance, and those kids
weren't hers either, you know.

THE HOUSE BECOMES STRANGE

Waking as usual, she began to doubt her hands
were her hands, and certainly

these arms, which refused to reach for her glasses
on the stand where she'd left them,

did not belong to her.
To stretch and grasp took oh, so long. It annoyed her,

the slow plow of body through tides of air,
and now, standing at last,

she found that silly bathroom
was not where

it should be.

The whole structure had shaken loose . . .
lightness became her, and from its own knock,

her heart, huddled in its little lived-space,
shied away.

THE HOUSE VS. GETTING READY FOR WORK

Lifting, I take her out, then coffee,
the *Times*, teeth, and doing the face, anxious
not to hurry the creation

who stands now, mirrored.
First one leg slipped into and then here
is the other, adjusting, adjusting,

making room in the head,
pushing something or someone aside.
And always there is sadness at this cleaving,

a kind of floating in suspense
for the return. Crazy fear
that the time will never come.

Oh, I'll be adrift forever,

the orphan cries,
never to shed these spike heels, dig
for bulbs to burst like falling stars

in startling spring
or feel that nonchalance, unrepentant
as a robe.

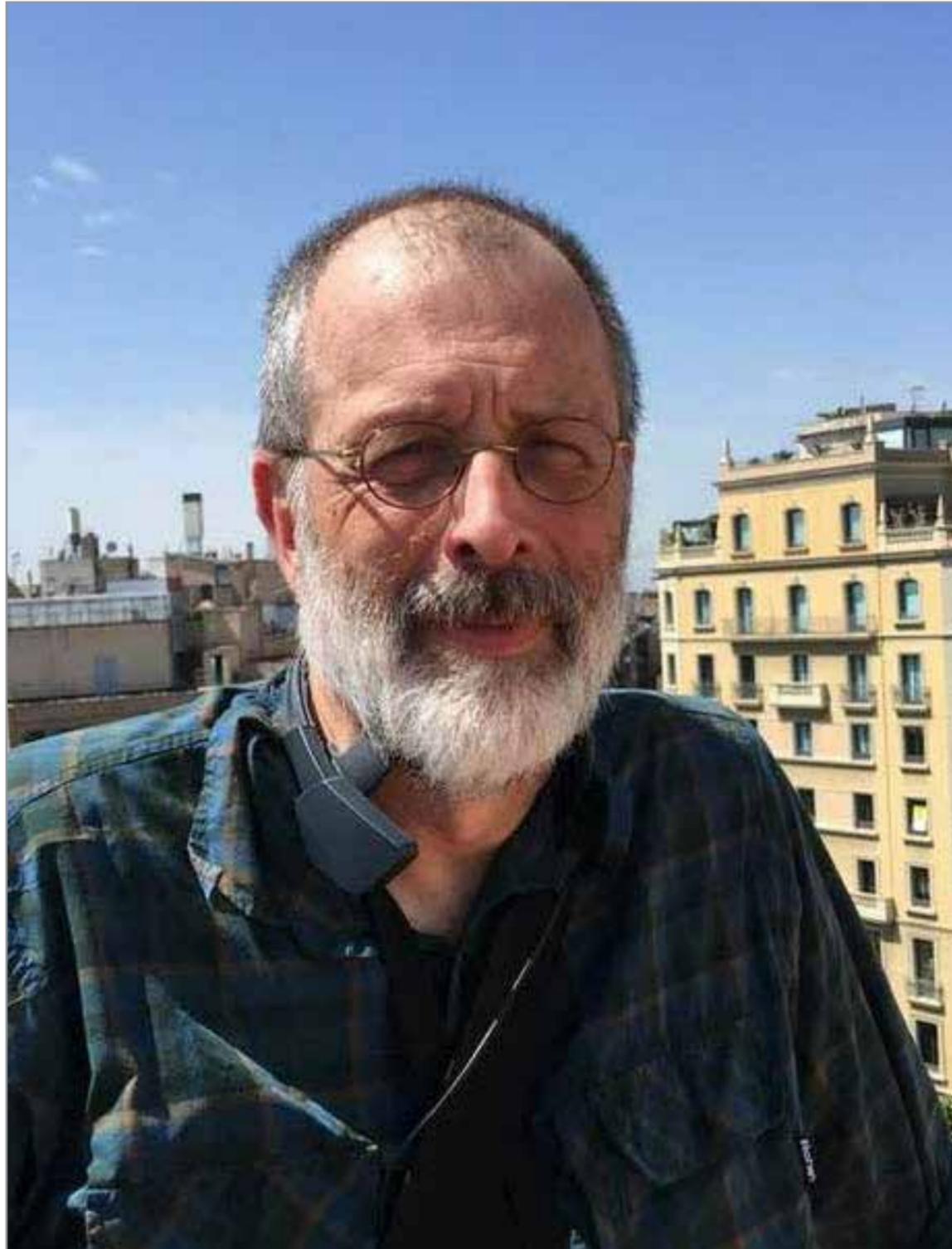
Never witness in my kitchen
the ruby of these apples, gracious,
in their lapis-colored bowl.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

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



DANTE'S GREYHOUND

In her dream, she has the predator's single-mindedness.
She is my shadow and the trees' shadows and the trees.

Dante says a greyhound will save us, yet he turns aside,
Dawdling with the old poets in their grove,
Whose suffering is a longing for a certainty they could never have known.

Her elegance is a by-blow, her gentleness a matter of discretion,
Fragile and watchful.

To think to enter her spirit is to commit an error of spirit.

No wonder they talk about craft and reputation, as if these mattered.
No wonder their relief when, after all the anxious nausea of the crossing,
The sarcastic doggerel of the ferry man,
Minos, like a good maître d', honors their reservations.

No wonder that poor exile thought had found someplace like home,

As he might have wished it to be, consolatory, congratulatory, ignoring for a moment only,
At the margins of the trees, salvation's
Muse, a streak of moonlight on the dark fur of the hare.

Jordan Smith

PILEATED

for Diane Mehta

Somehow, I keep never getting through the *Iliad*.
It's all too familiar,
The impeccable arrogance, the scavenger's eye for an unequal contest.

You might say, sure, everybody knows the story, what matters
Is the day you pick it up, the lines
You open to, the synch
As the oak's shadow forks and forks and the bird's shadow
Traces those elaborating consequences,

As if any moment might have been different, might still be different,

Achilles' pique, the beak-like spear, the slant eyewitness of the ships,
The spite in the heavens'
Repetitive collateral misjudgements.

A black and white woodpecker,
Singular, his crest red, his beak a spear
Circles the tree, grasping for purchase, implacable.

I've left the book face-down on the table on the deck.
I've marked the place of my defeat.

Everyone forgets how it ends, you might say,
Each time, caught in the tangle of narrative,

Familiar and endless.



Photograph by Jordan Smith.

Laura Johanna Braverman is a writer and artist. She is the author of *Salt Water* (Cosmographia Books, 2019). Her poems have appeared in *Reliquiae*, *Plume*, *Levure Litteraire*, *Rusted Radishes*, *New Plains Review*, and *California Quarterly*, among other journals, and in the anthology *Awake in the World, vol. II*. She is currently a doctoral candidate in poetry at Lancaster University. Austro-American by birth and upbringing, she lives in Lebanon with her family.



ALCHEMIES OF PASSAGE

1 *Materia Prima: Convergence, or the Elements at Hand*

At forty-five, I linger – not for dread of grey,
but because now perched on the hill's crest,

I fear its descent, the next decade's neighboring mount.
The limbs of my older son grow lean and long,

a steady melting off of being small, while with caution
my younger one tilts towards a beyond outside

the arms he knows. And as I drive towards home
one afternoon – halted by the routine snake of cars

near Place Sassine, I see a woman traverse the road.
She holds a child of eighteen months or so –

how the years of there's *still time drop* in a sweep
of dominoes – towards the half-century, they tumble.

continued overleaf...

Laura Johanna Braverman

ALCHEMIES OF PASSAGE *...contd*2 *Caput Mortuum: Descent, or Variations on Withdrawal*

Color 654 of my watercolor pigment-cubes –
I often wondered at the strangeness of the name.
It makes me think of my mother's Austrian *kaputt*
for broken – finished, done. Why is the rust-brown

tint named for a skull? Latin's *caput* means head,
but *mortuum* I really should have known:
decayed and withered – dead. Blackening,
the mystic chemists called it, a sinking down

to primal mud. They say it lasts for forty days –
like Noah's rainfall, desert wanderings and fasts.
And forty days, I remember, to recover
from birth's labor, for baby to gain strength

outside the womb. New moon, and darkness
of the monthly blood. Consummation of all colors.
Silent precinct of the seed, gestation in the black
and fertile earth. Without it comes no gold return.

3 *Cauda Pavonis: Eyes of the Faithful, or Rising Up*

Sometimes colors come easily, they paint themselves:
one 'I' can step aside while brush-bristles do their work

of mixing hues on ceramic palettes, but here, a struggle –
tints refuse to settle, refuse the dance. Then I see:

eyes of peacock plumes emerging from the patterned shapes.
One hundred eyes were not enough to defeat the god

of alchemy. He tricked the giant Argus, Hera's faithful servant,
into a fatal sleep. Then like jewels she placed them

on the peacock's tail to honor him who saw all. *Cauda Pavonis*
is the point of turning, when black begins to glisten –

the unguent slick shimmers, does it not? After descent,
comes the fluttering of color's spectrum – of light.

continued overleaf..

ALCHEMIES OF PASSAGE ...contd

4 *Albedo: Distillation, or Variations on White*

When dark can get no darker comes the light –
winter's solstice. Birthday, said the Romans

of the sun unconquered. Herald of renewal:
spring's blossoming, white daffodil in black earth.

Feathers of Albedo's swan are snow and cloud,
but also, ash and salt. The budding strands

on my head, no longer pigment-rich, but earned.
The white of our dog's fur gleams silver-tipped

like morning on snow's crystal crust, expanse
her ancestors hauled sleds across. Named for ice

and the true north's star, my wolfish companion,
my compass in these borderlands I navigate.

Back one hundred years, an artist paints a square:
White on White in oil pigments. It hovers slantwise

on a canvas tundra, untethered in a white infinity –
his planar apogee, he called it: all dissolves into

the free abyss. And will my sons remember this?
One was perched on his father's back, the other

reached my knee. Winter in my mother's country,
a farm of rescued creatures, deer and horse, donkey

rabbit, goat. At the stable doors, I saw it standing
there – like a sentinel, a peacock under falling snow.

5 *Rubedo: Union, or Variations on Red*

Five days into my fiftieth year now –
blood still flows, but soon the cyclic round will rest.
Who will I be without the patterns of increase and retreat?

The near maternal must widen out –
I'm afraid of missing things: plump curve of cheek,
being needed, small feet and hands. Kabir tells us the jewel

is lost in mud. All are searching for it –
east and west, along pathways of the sun, repetitions
of rising up and going down. But perhaps the jewel isn't lost:

in this art, goal does not outrank pursuit –
Rubedo's phoenix calls nest and pyre one, it is both
ash and fire. In antiquity, I learn, the color red meant a call

to arms, a crimson flag signaled defiance –
What will be my battle cry as archers draw their bows?
Hold –, I think. But what match am I for time, or sudden fits

of fury, no less of grief. But *Hold*, I say –
and my feet stay rooted here. And I take the chemist's
counsel: when melancholy comes, use music to lift up the soul.

Bach the younger helped me yesterday –
his variations on what became a nursery song, written
for his mother. Twinkling star, our ABCs. How far away they are.

The other day my older son first shaved –
untrained movements of his hands, the blade entranced.
Then I recall another razor and white lather, watching as a daughter.

John Liddy is from Limerick, Ireland and lives in Madrid, Spain, where he worked as a teacher/librarian. He has many collections published and his latest poetry book is *Arias of Consolation*, Revival Press (2022). He is the founding editor, along with Jim Burke, of *The Stony Thursday Book* (1975-), one of Ireland's longest running literary reviews and is on the Advisory Board of *The Hong Kong Review*. Soon to be published *Spanish Points*, a bilingual anthology of his Spanish-related poems.

These new poems are for a *Travelogue* in collaboration with Jim Burke.



FREEWHEELIN'

In spite of the load on our backs
and our envy of those Germans
with their leather pannier bags

We were propelled to fulfil
the day's quota of miles, to reach
our port of call before nightfall

And set up camp on a spare bit
of ground outside a village,
trace the flames moonlit

Detail, fodder for the eye
on the road here; a flickering
slide show to transmogrify

The journey so far, both aware
we might never know freedom
like this again, the last of the fire

Doused, darkness closing in,
tomorrow's stage ahead, each
to our own shared destination.

John Liddy

INSIDE THE BARREN ROCK

From a precise angle in a particular light
At a certain time of day, we saw seven
White horses ride out of the cave, set
Into the rockface, and to our delight

We made camp in a strange field
Soft as eiderdown, denuded of stone
By generations of hands, to make of it
A grassy bed for something healed.

And at the foot of a slope was a lake
Surrounded by rushes, a fortress
For swans and mallards who dallied
At the mouth of a stream that snaked

Down to the sea which we followed
And swam in as if it might suddenly
Disappear, retreat as an illusion,
Return to where all is swallowed

Up by hatred festered since partition,
To wonder in this idyll how many flaps
Of a blackbird's wing it takes to survey
The work of a boundary commission

Its wings splattered by innocent blood,
A Bogside Massacre in its crazed eyes,
To contemplate such savagery in '72
Was to weep for the creviced orchid

Bed down with a guilty heartbeat
Bin-banging throughout the night,
To wake into peace and silence,
Our journey to complete.

SEARCHLIGHT

There were times of despondency
when the bicycle chain snapped
from too much strain or the wind
caused havoc with our odyssey.

Moments when the writing lark
seemed like too much hard work,
bereft of inspiration, nothing
by way of a sign in the pitch-dark

To sustain the link with the pen
in spite of spectacular scenery
tormented by a raging storm,
lake water lashing the moorhen

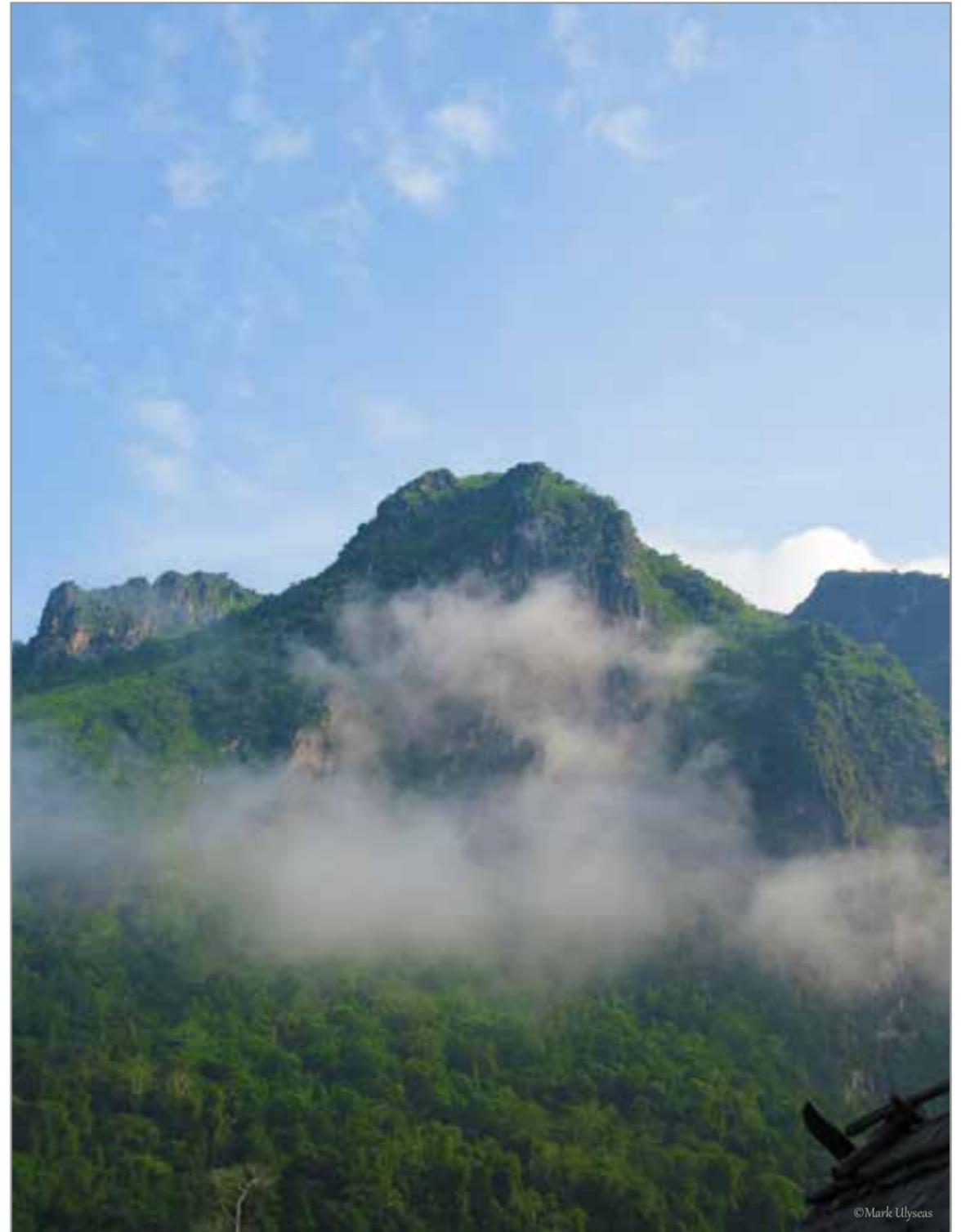
Our tent about to take flight
for one of the twelve Bens,
until a rainbow conjured itself
and through its Arclight

We passed, sailing the highroad
in search of our crock of words,
a futile pursuit worth the effort
for what the slant bestowed.

EITHER WAY

Is it up or down hill we go?
No stopping the loss of air with age,
time oxidising the frame's mechanism
that once moved on fulsome tyres,
sleek and slender like a thoroughbred,
eating up the summer road on wheels
pedalled as though we had four legs
and four hearts, masters of the saddle,
sure of our grip on the handlebars.

With my two and one I now get by,
still powered by the spokes in my head,
the memory-chain intact and the ability
to feel my way in the dark a blessing;
the mind working on tightened valves
despite the frame's malfunctioning.
And I know, to conquer the hill
is to admire the view, delight in
and celebrate its descent.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Enda Coyle-Greene lives in Skerries, Co. Dublin. Her first collection, *Snow Negatives*, won the Patrick Kavanagh Award in 2006 and was published by the Dedalus Press in 2007. Her subsequent collections are *Map of the Last* (2013) and, most recently, *Indigo, Electric, Baby* (2020) both also from Dedalus. A co-founder and Artistic Director of Poetry at the Mills — the Fingal Poetry Festival, she received a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in 2020.



PAUSE

A world transliterated sends them out
in cool insouciance
where they are caught

in the locus of this crescent moon
and its peculiar relationship
with waves;

while one stand-offish star defies the dark
the sky changes face
and a day

that will never come back prowls over
roads for which no one has a use.
I begin to see them

when I pass closed gardens
where flowers open to exhale
their benedictions

into air that's gentled, slowed;
light-rippling, they slip
between the sleeping

driveways filled with cars
which hold cold vigils.
Others, staying shy

continued overleaf...

Enda Coyle-Greene

PAUSE *...contd*

blow tiny, finite clouds on glass
they sit behind to meditate
on what

this pause has taught us all, older instincts
they, like bat, owl, fox, or ghost
know black-eyed.

But they everywhere this morning
in a spring that came,
as it has always come,

from winter, night, and other quiet lands.
At this hour, boneless
almost, on soft paws

they're stealthy and, yes, like the dead,
show such little need
of us.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Alison Stone has published eight full-length collections, *To See What Rises* (CW Books, 2023), *Zombies at the Disco* (Jacar Press, 2020), *Caught in the Myth* (NYQ Books, 2019), *Dazzle* (Jacar Press, 2017), *Masterplan*, a book of collaborative poems with Eric Greinke (Presa Press, 2018), *Ordinary Magic*, (NYQ Books, 2016), *Dangerous Enough* (Presa Press 2014), and *They Sing at Midnight*, which won the 2003 Many Mountains Moving Poetry Award; as well as three chapbooks. Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Barrow Street*, *Poet Lore*, and many other journals and anthologies. She has been awarded Poetry's Frederick Bock Prize and *New York Quarterly's* Madeline Sadin Award. She was Writer in Residence at LitSpace St. Pete. She is also a painter and the creator of The Stone Tarot. A licensed psychotherapist, she has private practices in NYC and Nyack. <http://www.stonepoetry.org/> YouTube and TikTok – Alison Stone Poetry.



HENRI ROUSSEAU'S "THE DREAM"

The naked woman's pointing, but toward what?
Does she covet an otherworldly flower, larger
than her head, and is telling the round-eyed,
pettable-looking lioness to fetch?
Serenely, a dark figure in a striped skirt
plays a tune. Some kind of orange fruit hangs,
round as moons. No one asks who moved a couch
into the middle of a jungle or what the furry,
bird-shaped creature in the background means.
Easy to miss, a small elephant blends into the trees.
Plant leaves gesture like arms. A snake starts to make its way
out of the picture, though I'd rather stay here

than in most of the landscapes I dream myself into –
prisons, train stations, dead-end streets. Always somewhere
I'm struggling to get to -- no signs,
my ticket lost. Still, I'd trade Rousseau's
luscious greens and the pleasure of the unexpected
for a nightly repetition of the fragment I had once,
five years ago, shattered by a workday alarm –
a plain room with bare, tan walls, my mother
in a frilly bed, alive and smiling.

Alison Stone

MERCY

Mercy feels good in the mouth,
even just the two soft syllables, detached
from a specific memory or event.

Mercy, I say, and again, mercy,
sending these sounds into the world,
counterpoint to yet another

Black man murdered
by police. Another village
bombed to flames. Lord have mercy! we lament,

but history shows us
we need to provide
it for ourselves or do without.

My friend's writing about the Holocaust.
She's allowed to -- Her father survived it.
How much space is there

in hearts, on screens for last century's atrocity?
Those dead found mercy, or didn't,
so long ago that I'm free from

pleas to help and guilt if I refuse,
unlike the abused or "to be killed tomorrow"
pit bulls that keep showing up

on my feed. Is it wrong
to mention dogs in the breath
after slaughtered minorities?

So many threads of mercy's opposite
weave through our lives.
Let's parry them with mercy

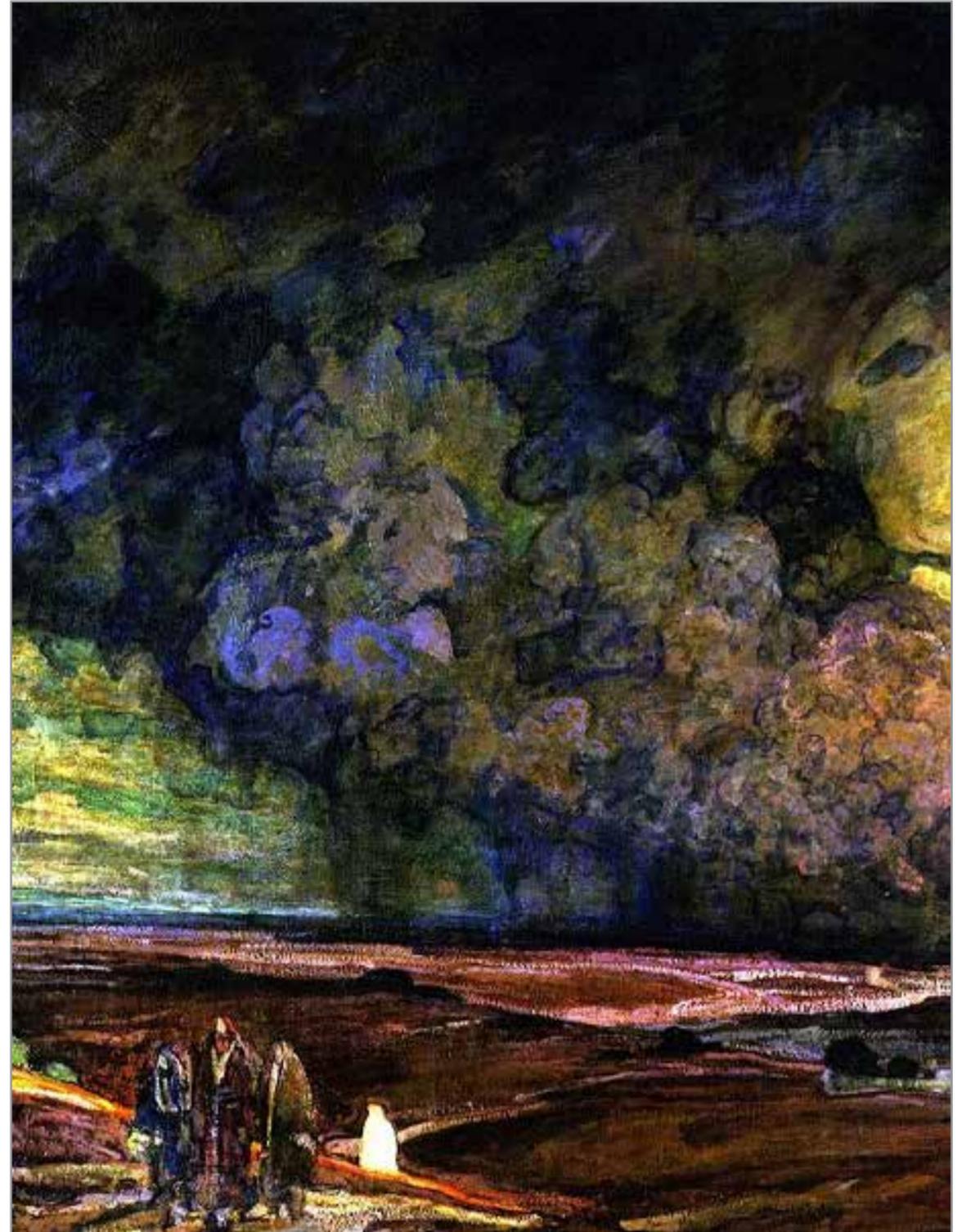
as a greeting, a good-bye.
Good mercy.
That mercy looks great.

They're predicting more mercy tomorrow.
Would you like some mercy with that?
Thank you. Yes, I would.

LOT'S WIFE

Who wouldn't turn around
when love's behind them?
It was instinct, honed for decades,
ever since the oldest learned to crawl.
I needed to know where they were
to keep them safe.
What awful deity
would smite a mother
doing what she must?

My new form's not without pluses.
I improve the taste of food, keep
rot away. Someone remind my husband,
before he lays a finger on our daughters, that I pickle
hearts and one pinch in an open wound
can bring a strong man to his knees.



Transformation of Lot's wife is visible in the painting *Sodom and Gomorrah* by Henry Ossawa Tanner.

Born in Havana, February 19th, 1964. Poet and translator. He has published six books of poetry in his own country: Algo de lo sagrado. Unión, 1996. (Also published in the U.S in 2007, by Factory School, N.Y.; with translations by Kristin Dykstra and Roberto Tejada. www.factoryschool.org/pubs/perez) ¿Oíste hablar del gato de pelea? Letras Cubanas, 1998. (Translated by Kristin Dykstra and published by Shearsman, London, in 2010: Did you hear about the fighting cat?) Canciones y Letanías. Extramuros, 2002. Lingua Franca. Unión, 2009. He has also published a collection of essays on poetry and translation, La perseverancia de un hombre oscuro. Letras Cubanas, 1999. Crítica de la Razón Puta, obtained the 2010 Nicolás Guillén National Poetry Award, and was published also by Letras Cubanas. In the same year and with the same publisher, Omar Pérez offered a second collection of essays, El corazón mediterráneo. In 2016, he published Filantropical, with Letras Cubanas, and Sobras Escogidas, with Silueta, Miami, Florida. In 2018, Station Hill (N. Y.) published Cubanology, a book of days, while the Alabama University Press printed The race, a poem collection; both translated by Kristin Dykstra. Omar Pérez has consistently translated from the English, Italian, French and Dutch languages.

SARABAND

Tremble, hoarse city, lame city, ramp city
spin fortune wheel of rats and rupees
malicious city, I look at your ceilings,
your garbage bins, I look at your tits
and on a dishonorable corner
I could swallow 12 croquettes.

How much is a rumba of competing jingle-bells?
how much is an ice cream, a smile, a patience?
How much is this dark moss that fills everything with glitter
from the timely past?: bibles, shackles and castanets.

I know that you're fond of mambo, that you want to be part
of the ordeal, I know that you blow and suck,
suck and blow full of rebelliousness.
I know that you sing "Havana" as if it was a paradise,
sheer marihuana dreams licking asses for a permit.

Crawl down snake, run away deer, turtle shut up,
let the small birds chirp and the kid dance with his rattle,
my tongue gets crammed in a prehistoric rigmarole:
the prisoner gets his cage and the guard gets his doughnut.

Translation: Pedro Ruiz



Omar Pérez

PARTAKE & PARTICIPATE

Partake and participate
the singing bird lets go of his gut
blowing on the edge of actualities
the Pan flute of festivities.

Partake and participate
in the voltage
communicate with the nymphs of potage
novels of parallel underworlds
group monologues of telos, melos,
jealous and signals.

You see yourself soaring over channels
above an Eden of schools and clinics

partake and participate
in the pipe without peace, peace with no pipe

Gazing at the lowlands of carnival
mechanical parades of special troops

licking the saltpeter of monuments
rusts the hinges of sentiment.

You see yourself soaring over channels
above an Eden of schools and clinics
partake and participate
in the pipe without peace, peace with no pipe

CARDBOARD INTEGRITY

Did they promise you a law
or do you promise it?
A solar hole
fills the molar with salt
did they promise you a law
or do you promise it?

A million meanings are offered to nonsense
your stock price falls in the market
the bankers would mumble whatever:
"Common sense is the cheapest way
to adapt ot chaos."
Every pigeon in its hole
only if they pay, fly for the goal.

The protagonist is a blue child
with a carboniferous brain
in which you can observe
exhausted guerrilla fighters.
Every pigeon in its hole
only if they pay you, fly for the goal.

Have you seen the astrological bonfires
have you participated in the Olympic Games
of self-acquired mental retardation?
Every pigeon in its hole
only if they pay, fly for the goal.

A complete civilization
is a society displayed in lines
of five dollars per spatial minute,
lonely planets, here we come.
Every pigeon in its hole
only if they pay, fly for the goal.

LITTLE BIRD

If you can't let go of the life you have
 you cannot take back the life you lost,
 when they play for the dead, you don't know how to cry
 when they play for the living, you don't know how to dance.
 A little bird who never fell from the nest
 never learned how to fly.

You don't want to die to make it to heaven
 don't want to suffer, yet you find no consolation
 when they play for the dead, you don't know how to cry
 when they play for the living, you don't know how to dance.
 A little bird who never fell from the nest
 never learned how to fly.

If you cannot forget what you have learned
 you cannot learn what you have forgotten,
 when they play for the dead, you don't know how to cry
 when they play for the living, you don't know how to dance.
 A little bird who never fell from the nest
 never learned how to fly.

Little bird, i want to fall
 so that i can learn to fly.

THERE IS NO THEOREM

There is no theorem
 it's the same addition
 ten thousand years beating the bushes
 i write reguetones and forget the subject.

There is no theorem
 out of the same fog
 come down the primates
 in search of phonemes
 make your own regueton and treat the system.

There is no theorem
 with the same lather
 we write song and poem
 everything i hear sounds like a motto:
 to be or not be, i think therefore i am
 God loves you, it's not over till it's over.

There is no theorem
 it's the same lather
 that drips the fog upon the subject matter,
 o granite syntax, conceive your problem
 as just one law tainted with infinity
 which says what it says and what it says is red hot.

Dr Maria A. Miraglia is born and lives in Italy. She is an educationist, bilingual poet, translator, essayist and ministerial lecturer for English language teachers. For a long time, an active member of Amnesty International and several other peace organizations. She is the Literary Director of the P. Neruda Association and a member of several international editorial boards. She is the recipient of a lot of international awards. Recent her election as a member of the European Academy of Science and Arts of Salzburg. Her latest work is *Colourful Butterflies*, also edited in her native language.



Dr Maria A. Miraglia

WHAT WAS IT FOR

Even among the most deafening noises
 you can feel its call
 you know you don't want to go
 but you also know it's an invitation
 that you are not allowed to decline
 you think then
 of what you would like to bring with you
 what does not matter to you to abandon
 but even more
 you ask yourself
 what it was for
 crossing this world
 beautiful and mysterious

How many times have you looked up into the sky
 and wondered about the stars
 shining like pearls
 or sitting in the evening
 on a rock
 in front of the sea
 thought of the earth
 suspended in space
 almost feeling a sense of dizziness

Useless thoughts
 like similar others
 like migratory birds
 have crossed your mind
 now you find yourself sick and old
 to remember those moments
 and you tell yourself
 people have never had
 the keys to open some doors
 to grasp the meaning
 of the immense
 and of life herself

THE SNOW

The snow falls down
Sudden unexpected
And the air fills with small white flakes
Carried by the wind
Which draw faint trifling eddies
In the air

Never seen so many
In this quiet seaside town
Surrounded by long beaches
And white cliffs

From the window panes
Just fogged up
I stay observing
The thin layer of white snow
Alighted on the branches of the trees
In the avenue enshrouded
By an unusual milky light
The windows of the houses are closed
Only silence in the streets

What a show
I tell myself
While the snow silently goes on falling

PICTURE GALLERY

Not a sound
not a word
only a strange silence
filled those rooms
but I could sense
among the ancient walls
moving presences
with stealthy steps
their heads bent

Those paintings on the walls
of women with ungainly features
pale bejewelled
of men in dusty grey wigs
sabres and sticks
aroused unknown fears

Images left there over time
testimonies of past lives
of stories confined in frames
movements perfumes voices
stolen from time

Ahmad Al-Shahawy is an Egyptian poet and author of more than 20 books and poetry collections. His poems have been translated into many languages including French, Italian, English, Turkish and Spanish. He participated in many international poetry festivals organized in many countries of the world. Al-Shahawy was also the recipient of UNESCO literature award in 1995, and Cavafy Poetry award in 1998. Five of his literary works were nominated in the long list of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award in the branch of literature including his novel *The Magician's Hijab* 2022.

Translated from Arabic by Dr. Salwa Gouda.

Salwa Gouda is an Egyptian academic at The English Language and Literature Department in Ain-Shams University. She is a PhD holder in English literature and criticism. She received her education at Ain-Shams University and at California State University in San Bernardino. She has published many academic books including *Lectures in English Poetry*, *Introduction to Modern Literary Criticism* and others. She also contributed to the translation of *The Arab Encyclopedia for Pioneers* including poets and their poetry, philosophers, historians and men of letters.

ALL THESE DAGGERS IN MY HEAD

The door is half-asleep
No lock for it.
I am not afraid
But I fear the night
When it gets drunk.

The dinosaur passed
And it didn't look at me
As if he forgot me
Or as if I fell from its wicker basket.

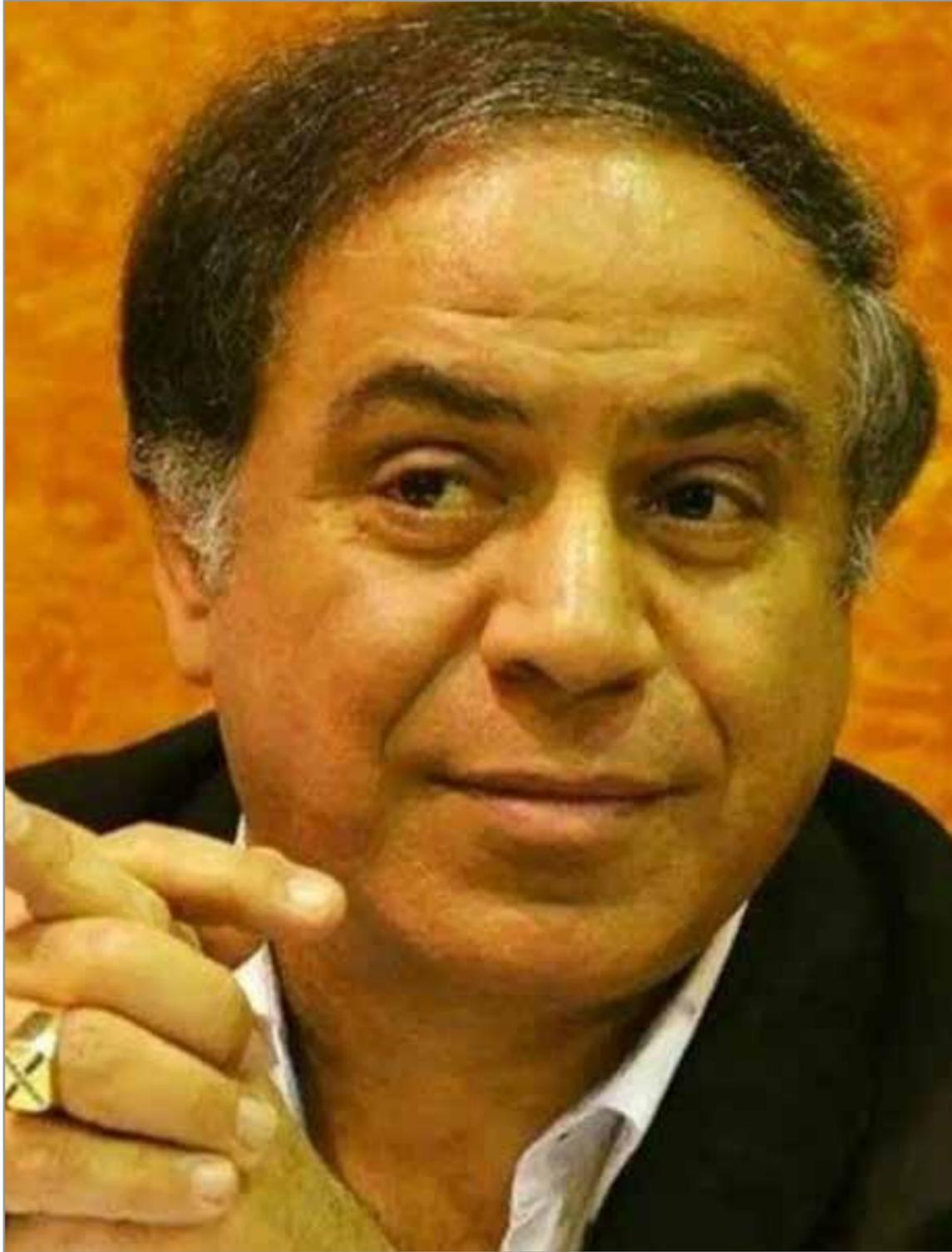
I saw the light that came from afar
As blood flowing from the neck of the night.

The dinosaur entered to bathe.
One of his habits is to stay
Under water for a long time
Recounting his memories
And whispering with what are in his head
And roasting his delusions on charcoal
And boiling illusions before it becomes
A poem without ends
And smiling at the obsessions stored
In the refrigerator at home
And moaning for the fallen leaves
From the garden trees.

It's one o'clock,
The dinosaur did not

Ask me about the time.
He did not ask for a pen
To write his autobiography in exile.

continued overleaf



Ahmad Al-Shahawy

ALL THESE DAGGERS IN MY HEAD *...contd*

My head is not a battlefield
Or the land of a race
Between warring tribes.
Where do horse riders come from?
Where do criminals come from
To occupy every inch of it?

Where does the notoriety,
The astray and those who drink
Nitric acid come from?

Where do the sounds come from?
From their throats?
Or from the blades of swords that
Slaughter mercilessly
In battles we did not fight?

My head is jammed
The occupiers are in its minarets
Or sleep in the streets.
I cannot admit what I am going through.
Despite the crowd of villains
My head is still generous in receiving them.

Is my head worth burning?
I -the stranger?
Or those who came from afar

To spoil my life?

Who put all these daggers in my head
Until it became blind areas
Devoid of light?
I am not the emperor of god
To stick blades in my mind
And who poured the coffee of illusion
Over two decades in my brain?
Who leaves horses to run
 And the butterflies to flicker in my sky
 And the bees to buzz inside me
 And serpents to spread their
 Poison in my tongue.
And the falcons came from an ancient world
To snipe me in a sleep
 And elephants to trample me in the dream.
Death became easier
And I listen to its music
As it is running into my water.

NEITHER YOU NOR THE NIGHT SLEEPS

Does the dream die
 If it does not find a dreamer
 Or flies through the air of
 Rotten rooms
 Drawing a question mark
 And two exclamatory marks?

Sleep takes away the minds
 Of the weary
 Those who no longer differentiates
 Between dreams and nightmares.

These are, then, delusions and sounds
 Fighting in the brain
 And nothing pleases the heart but
 A sign from a palm whose embers
 Are dancing in the morning.

Alone despite the millions that
 Crossed the streets of his head.
 Secluded in the middle of the
 Heads that overlook him.

He does not see me
 He does not even see his own
 Image in the mirrors that stifle the walls.
 As if the brain hates mirrors in summer
 And it retires from seeing them in winter.

For mirrors are nothing but our image
 When we reduce the world to
 A sentence that has no noun or verb.

The unknown who attacks your
 Head farm
 Reaps the harvest,
 Steals the meanings.
 He has no name or family.
 There must be an invention to
 Assassinate him at night
 Or at least dissolve it in patience acid
 Which I carry as an amulet
 Or expel him-if I am not successful-
 Out of the country.
 Oh, if you tell me his name?
 And where did he come from?
 I would have pushed any
 Harm against you.
 I planted a tree in front of the house
 That only bears berries and gold.

You only finished one bottle
 Of a lifetime's wine
 And when you are on the way to
 The drunkenness of the second
 It was broken in your right hand.
 While you were getting ready
 To borrow the third from the stranger's shop,
 The vineyard of the sky fell at your feet.

continued overleaf

NEITHER YOU NOR THE NIGHT SLEEPS ...contd

Since then you have been
 Trying to plant new vines
 In lands you do not know
 Who stole it from you at night
 When I am away.
 I am thinking of stopping walking alone in the parks
 So that the three foxes that
 You carried as a child would not
 Go out and ask about you.

There are many bad days
 They need books to monitor
 But the worst day was
 The day I fell weak
 No pocket
 No bed
 No way leads to me
 No woman in my head
 That I desire
 And no strangers like me cheer for failure.
 Nothing but crossing into the
 Other world to the sun.
 Nothing but broken mirrors
 That show the ugliness in the city
 And blocked streets
 Where the dogs do not come out from unharmed
 As they pass between fires waiting for the eaters.

Neither the night nor you sleep
 No bed there
 No satisfied land

And you are not seeing in front
 Of you but two paths
 A path drawn by your hands in
 The composition notebook which
 Was far from the dream
 And a last way lost from your hands
 It only leads to regret.

WHERE THERE IS NO WAY AND NO BRAIN

Has anyone changed my head
Or taken it hostage
For the money I do not have?
Did a villain afflict it?
Whom I knew?

I have changed a lot
Crowded with demons, jinni
And bloodthirsty.
I look over my head
From a small balcony
Still awake in the neck.
I do not know the ways.
I lost places in my brain.
The streets do not salute me
And do not hand itself over to me.

My head that turned so much
And roamed the world was damaged
As if I lost it in a gamble
Where I do not know the rules.

Is this my head
Which I filled with poems
And texts of the dead?
Did the dead wake up in it?
Did they come for retribution?
I who lived and survived by them.

I was not a scoundrel with them.
I did not steal their eyes
Nor sell their bios to passersby.

My head flew.
Nobody knows me in such a crowd.
Those I know will not believe my fate.
I wish it were stuffed with
A ton of straw or an acre of hay.
I would have managed to
Shake it off at night
And come back to me again.
But the scoundrels colonized it.
They poured the oils of their
Wickedness into it.
They gave their orders:
No sleeping Nor sitting
And eat a sea of fish.

*

I drink water and walk
Where there is no way in the brain
And where there is no way and brain.

Ali Atta (1963) is an Egyptian writer, novelist, journalist, and poet. He was born in Mansoura, Dakahlia Governorate. He works for the Middle East News Agency and for the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper in Cairo. He published more than seven books including novels, short stories and poetry anthologies.

Translated from Arabic by Dr.Salwa Gouda.

Salwa Gouda is an Egyptian academic at The English Language and Literature Department in Ain-Shams University. She is a PhD holder in English literature and criticism. She received her education at Ain-Shams University and at California State University in San Bernardino. She has published many academic books including Lectures in English Poetry, Introduction to Modern Literary Criticism and others. She also contributed to the translation of The Arab Encyclopedia for Pioneers including poets and their poetry, philosophers, historians and men of letters.

To a woman, who, wherever I turn my face, I am drawn to the subtle roundness of her body.
After you, I deliberately fell in love with every woman I came across

MOUSE MOVING PICTURES

I am the one who lies on purpose
And almost from excessive remorse
I say:
"Watch out... there is a liar in front of you"
Those who are fond of lying smile
And sometimes they giggle
"We know you better than you know yourself."
But I never believe
And I severely cry, every time I seduce
A girl to my virtual room
What should have been
To say and I do not say ?
What did I miss feeling
When the kind girl wrote:
"Hug me within your bounds"
And I wrote
Words not from the heart
And I stayed for days
Getting her to grasp at straws
Although still on the beach
What made me call her "darling"?
While the ether is cold as a corpse
And the roses, kisses and hugs
Even the cup of tea
And the smiling faces
And the sad and shy
Are just mouse-over pictures



Ali Atta

EVEN IF SHE HAD A DIFFERENT NAME

I may have known
A girl named Reem
Or I didn't know her
But I need her now
more than ever
And from a time has yet to come
Even if her mother
calls her by another name
I do not remember watching
Any of the Marilyn Monroe movies
who is said to have "committed suicide"
when I was
about to exist
in my mother's womb
Yet I remember her
Whenever I watch a movie by Hind Rostom
Or whenever the girl called "Maryam" came to my mind
Who was also fun
Like "Maryam" Karim Abdel Salam
I remember
When she invited me to dance

At a friend's wedding
Then she suddenly said:
"Marry me while I am embracing my religion
And you are embracing your mother's religion"
She was giggling loudly
in that night
But she deliberately burned her mother's heart
When she spilled the "gasoline"
on her tattered clothes
And ignited sulfur
Inside the bathroom of their dilapidated house
She refused to be discharged from the hospital
Except to her grave
Stipulated that they put
Over her burning body
The dress she bought
With her "lifetime savings"
To wear in the wedding night

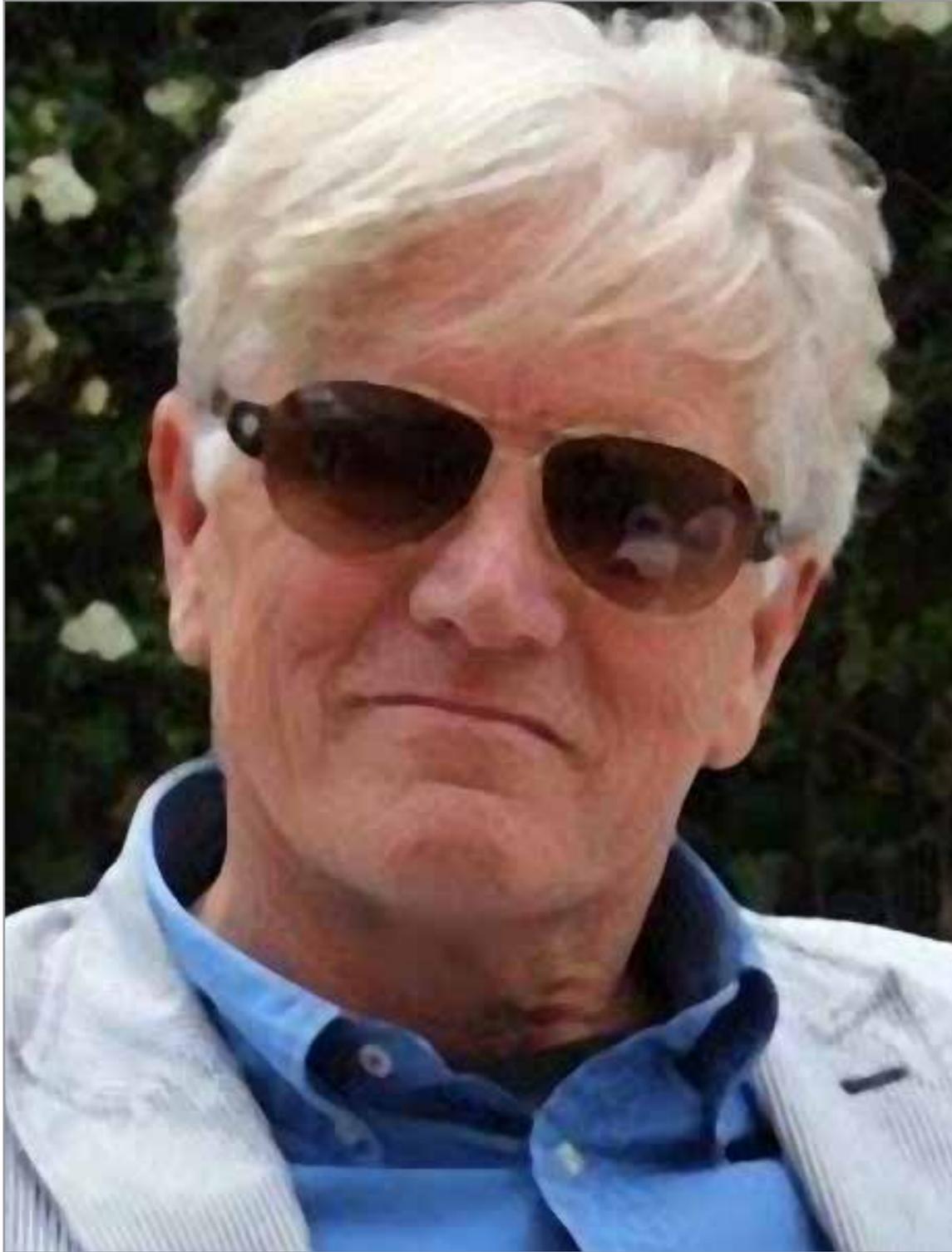
HER BACK TO THE WALL

The girl who leaned her back
Against the wall
While her husband was
Serving the penalty of absconding
From the military service
Was honest in her shock
When I put it in her hand
A few pounds
And I said: I am like your brother
but I do not know
If she had said
to anyone but me
That her brother who is older than her
by a few years
Take off his innocence
at the early years of her childhood
Her back was to the wall
when a chest was split
And the tears flew
I gasped in astonishment
Like I got away in an instant
from death
and i wept like I did
The day they buried my father
- before I bid him farewell-
in a tomb
We have nothing to do with it

FIVE MINUTES BEFORE THE DAWN CALL

The girl who got high
Five minutes before the dawn call
Once I said
I think about her so much
She accuses me of holding the stick in the middle
As she does not like death
While I neither like nor hate it
I'm just afraid it is overtaking me now
So I rot before my neighbor notices
My neighbor who fears
For his wife from me
His wife, whom I have not seen
Or I never hear her voice

Allan Lake, originally from Saskatoon, Canada, has lived in Vancouver, Cape Breton, Ibiza, Tasmania, W. Australia and Melbourne. Lake has won Lost Tower Publications (UK) Comp, Melbourne Spoken Word Poetry Festival & publication in New Philosopher. Latest poetry chapbook (Ginninderra Press) 'My Photos of Sicily'. Literary journals in 17 countries have now published his poems.



I SAW THE LIGHT

It's 8am on a cold Melbourne morning but the young woman who seems to be running this tire shop is smiling, laughing, kidding the guys who fix punctures, install tires. And her joy is going viral. The guys have downed their coffee, know there is nowhere they'd rather be and become men of action as soon as doors open. She be an instant happy hive, this place.

One of my newish tires is losing air or so my car is telling me and I arrived early because warning light on dash was designed to alarm. (!) Alarm. Like the tire shop crew, that worrying orange light appears to revel in its job. Me? I'm feeling tired after flat tire nightmares while my still-on-warranty tires should be feeling more than okay. Cost me the price of a flight to sunny Sicily which was a bit deflating but today horay : *Quick fix / No charge!* A very small win but I drive home feeling momentarily pumped.

Allan Lake

Caterina Mastroianni is a poet and educator living in Sydney on the land of the Cadigal and Wangal people of the Eora nation. She has published poetry (<https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/A14153>) in various literary magazines and four Australian anthologies, most recently in *Burrow*, *Mediterranean Poetry*, *Honeyguide*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing Magazine*, *Poetry for the Planet: An Anthology of Imagined Futures* and *Medium*.



BROKEN SEASON

Purposeless words float by me
like a carbonised fallacy left behind

while temperature and metabolic
variance visit me daily, even hourly.

How this broken season exposes you,
frees me from illusions at a cost!

In a sweat, I climb to the crown of the tree,
merging in with all the women who evince

how love is meant to begin and bend,
its' steadiness gliding and branching

to reach a rutilant, old leaf bowing
showing me how to drift, spiral and fall.

Caterina Mastroianni

MY EMERGING CROWN

framing my face
half-silver fragments
 fall
 fleet
 onto my shoulders
the weight pressures me
into and out of greyness,
 insignificance,
 significance,
 function,
 capability,
into becoming
 fully crowned

but not yet,
this expectation,
not yet,
this new beginning.

I reach for the hair dye.

DUPLICITY

What do I tastefully let go?
What do I embolden more of?
The new social media wave
of how to be brave
about ageing
questions what we hide,
celebrates what we show.

And there is a difficult duplicity in this!

A double act
like a silver-tongued
perfoliate arrow
piercing the becomings
of my *ousia*,
of who I was
and am along the
curving of life.

* *Ousia*: the Greek word *ousia* is a substantiation of "being" and is translated with "be", "being" or "substance". The term is applied to what remains constant on a subject under investigation, while certain properties change." [Philosophy Dictionary of Arguments](#)

Roisín Browne lives in Rush, Co Dublin and has been published in *A New Ulster*, *The Galway Review*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*, *Poetry NI*, *The Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *Flare* and *Echoes from the Castle Anthology*. She was commended in the Gregory O'Donoghue Awards in 2018 and shortlisted in The Seventh Annual Bangor Poetry Competition in 2019.



SCULLY

For Martin DePorres Wright

Ten thousand circled suns
cathedral forests crumbled
rotted, layers, on layers, on layers

rain deluged terma, mulched soil
skeletal animals, tibia, fibula, butter boxes, tribal bodies,
preserved and mingled underfoot

sleán cut silky sods
hand-turned, footed, dried,
countless summers, aching backs

engines came
dug deeper down to granite bed,
now

scarred peat skin
tattoos the earth
the moisture leaves it

a breath and sculpt
a turn and tug
dress a khadi landscape

cotton remnants meld brown and verdant
deep into ancient strata
gossamer gold emerging.

Roisín Browne

CLAMBER MUSIC

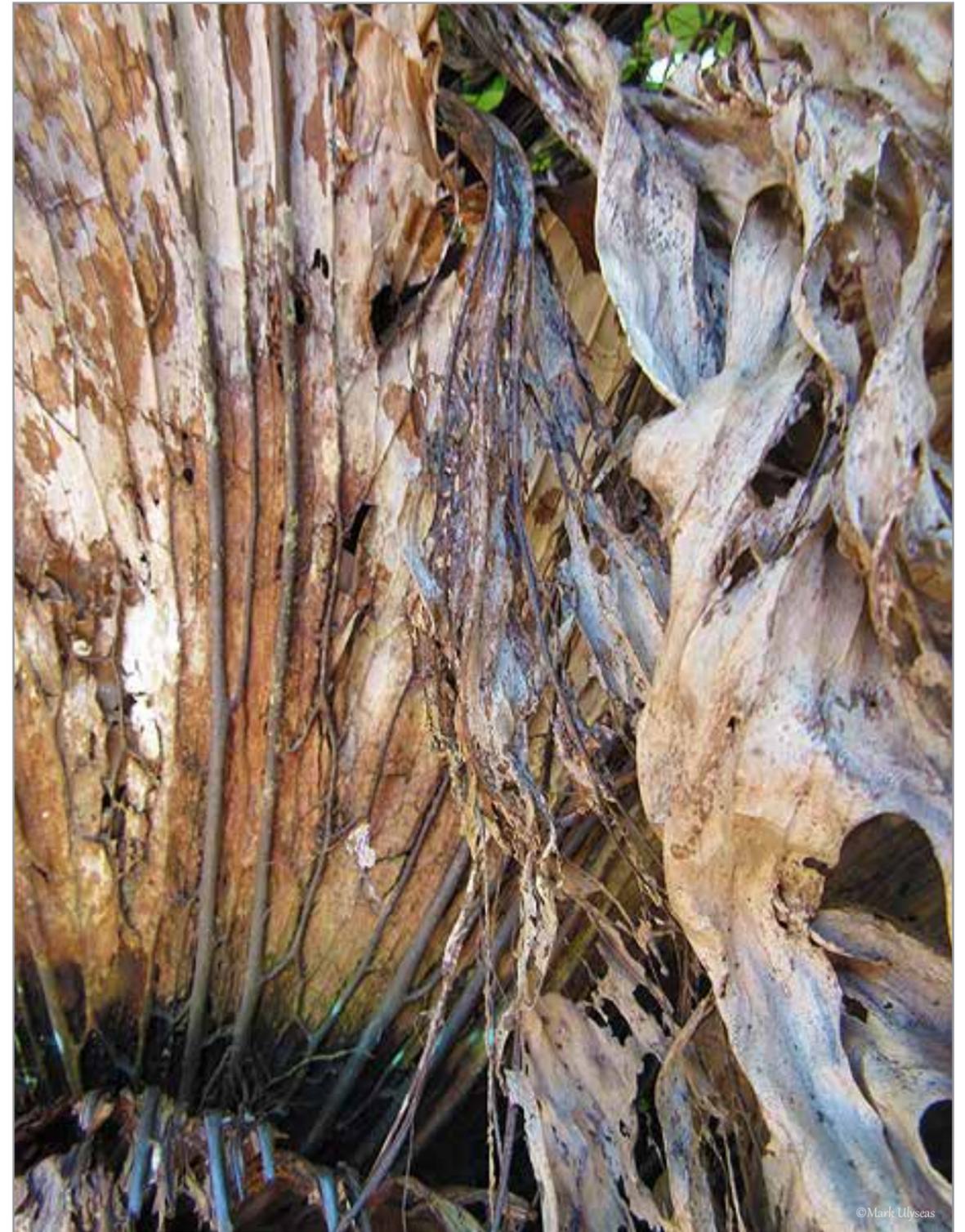
He sits by the fire remnants
legs askew, one hobnail on, one off
blackened stubble sprouting
a two-day blackbrush pattern emerging

his head fuzzy from the day before
mouth dry as grain sackcloth
tired hands tremble like newborn chick fur
pans, pots and ladles are scattered on the ground

symptoms of a *poitín* night purge
he lifts a copper pot
soldered seams in place
good for a hundred years

crafted by his journeyman hand
it catches the shadow of him
a rusty, mottled hulk

he taps this mirror with his yellowed nail
then throws it out of sight
makes clamber music as it rolls



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Gordon Meade is a Scottish poet based in the East Neuk of Fife. In the past he has been the Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow at the University of Dundee. He has read from his work throughout the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg. He is the author of twelve collections of poems, most recently, *EX-Posed: Animal Elegies* (Lantern Publishing and Media, 2022).



THE PASSENGER PIGEON

In the beginning, well before the advent of the Vanishing, there were so many of us that nobody ever thought that we, in our multitudes, would ever become extinct.

And yet, we did. Revive and Restore, an organisation not unlike the present Resurrectionists, came up with the idea of trying to alter the genome of the Band-

Tailed Pigeon so much that it would, in all essential ways, be able to pass itself off as one of us. Releasing us into the wild in the mid-2030s, the team

at Revive and Restore, came too late to realise that there were no longer enough forests left in order to support us. And so began another

mass extinction, brought about in the same way as the one before it had been; with sticks, with nets, with poison, and with guns.

Gordon Meade

THE WHITE RUMPED VULTURE

You never really realised that we were going, nor at such an alarming rate, until the charnel grounds within Tibet, and the Towers of Silence in Mumbai, remained filled to the brim with the rotting carcasses of your friends and family.

It is a bad omen for a corpse to be unattended to, by which I mean, in this case, uneaten. Our DNA was everywhere but, unfortunately, contaminated by the diclofenac which, almost single-handedly, had led to our demise. And so began, the painstaking

process of our own resurrection. Once there were enough of us deemed to be clean of the drug, we became the victims of an intense captive breeding programme, before, at last, we were released to roam free above the mountain peaks once more

to fulfil our roles as undertakers by finishing off the last remains of your nearest and dearest.

THE NORTH/SOUTH DIVIDE

Our Northern White varieties are gone, but not so long ago that our DNA can't still be harvested from our wrinkled skin.

But what to do with it then? Nobody knows as to whether or not the North/South divide can ever be healed. If we

and our Southern cousins are indeed family, or not. I guess it is going to be worth a try, otherwise, perhaps all

of us will, in time, be lost. The cost is the manufacture of a hybrid; neither full Northern, not completely Southern;

a makeshift creature whom, like the planet it will come to reflect, will neither be entirely saved, nor totally

destroyed; just something in between.

2010 - 2022



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

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