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DAVID RIGSBEE
Still in Love with You

COVER ARTWORK 'THIRTEEN HEARTS' 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

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor

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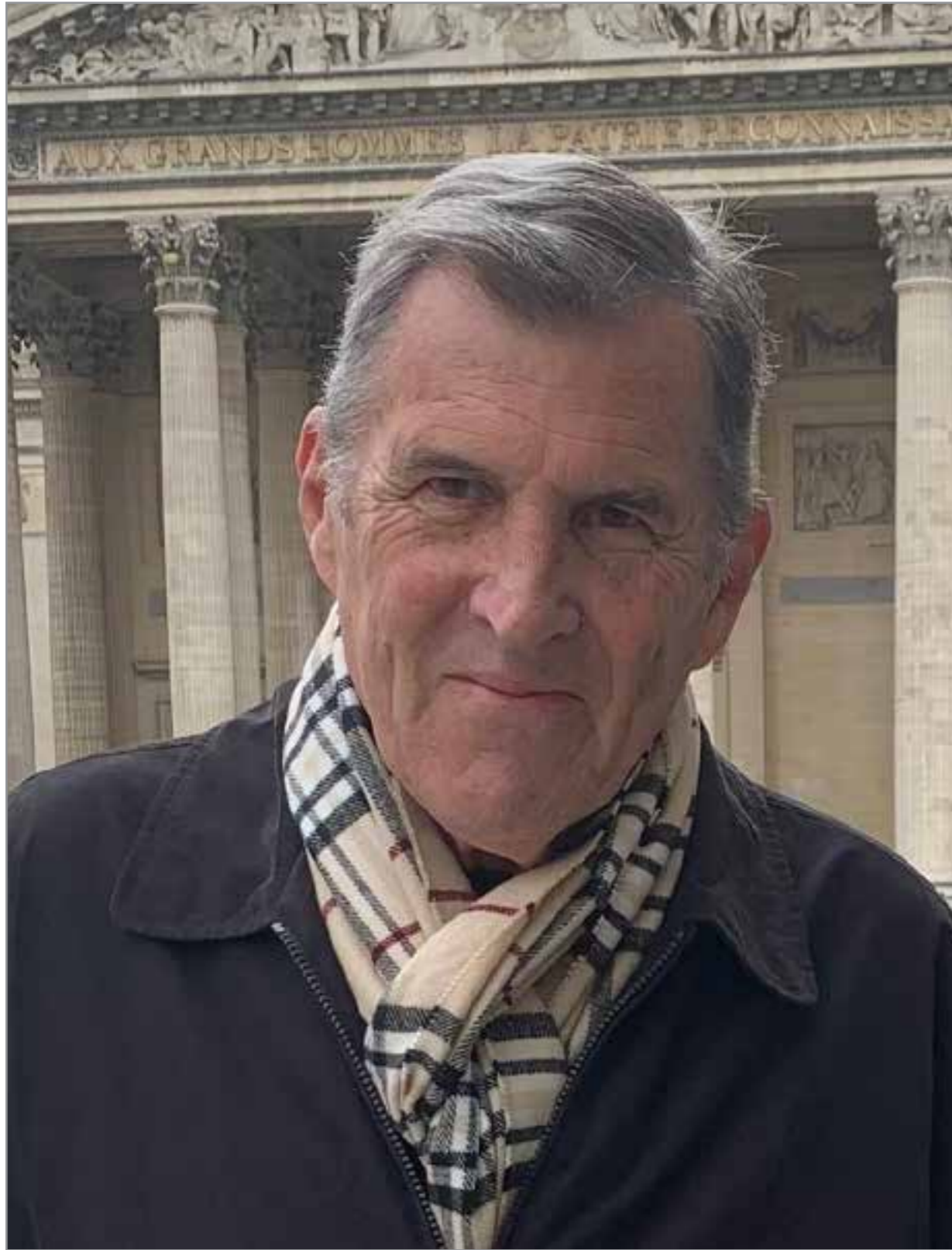
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David Rigsbee is an American poet, critic and translator who has an immense body of published work behind him. Salmon Poetry has just published his translation of Dante's [Paradiso](#), and Black Lawrence Press will bring out his [Watchman in the Knife Factory: New and Selected Poems](#) in June, 2024.



DAVID RIGSBEE

STILL IN LOVE WITH YOU

I keep coming back to a poem of Cavafy's. It expands my mind in ways most other poems don't. How it achieves this effect has to do with what it wills into being, namely the gods, or more precisely, Hermes, the messenger among the Olympian gods and the intermediary between mortality and immortality. Naturally, he is associated with the arts. Here is the poem:

Ionian

*That we've broken their statues,
that we've driven them out of their temples,
doesn't mean at all that the gods are dead.
O land of Ionia, they're still in love with you,
their souls still keep your memory.
When an August dawn wakes over you,
your atmosphere is potent with their life,
and sometimes a young ethereal figure
indistinct, in rapid flight,
wings across your hills.*

(translated by Edmund Keeley)

In Cavafy's world, he is a handsome young man, someone glimpsed once but remembered forever. Cavafy's personal fantasies are not the point here, however. They are not our memories, but the image is ours. It is such a verbal sketch that we don't come away with a clear picture so much as the feeling that what we are being presented we must behold, if only momentarily.

David Rigsbee

On Brodsky's tomb is inscribed, "*Letum non Omnia Finit*—"Not everything ends in death." I'd like to believe that, but we can't know, can we? I prefer to think we write poems to hedge our bets.

Of course, I want my mind to expand, just as the rest of me would like to. But instead, so often it shrinks to a point here and one there, each one just slightly out of focus. If I think of love as a subject, my shrunken mind feels like a man walking among ducks: they are with me (or I with them), and yet they avoid me as I approach. Nevertheless, I like their company, and if some waddle away, as eventually they all will, that's okay. It's after all the subjects of love poems to love well what we're going to lose, guaranteed. I'm charmed by their presence, but I sense somehow that it's the images that are my takeaway. Inwardly I thank them: thank you images, for taking me out of myself and involving me with the world of feelings. Otherwise, what? It's a cold day today. August and the memory of it are at the apogee. The wind moves among the winter trees, and yesterday the Hudson overflowed in the park, leaving picnic tables and benches submerged, where last summer children and their parents picked over their *fêtes champêtres*. Time is not our friend, and yet, I also feel gratitude towards it. It's left me my library of images. My mentor Brodsky, himself Hermetic enough to imagine flying for real, argued that, as Auden said, time worships language and forgives us if we live by it, *because* we live by it. John said that in the beginning was the word. Mallarmé completed that assertion by adding that everything exists to wind up in a book. Thus did the gods themselves survive the centuries of vilification from alien pulpits and chilly altars, to say nothing of religious wars and crusades.

Years ago some poet in Rome whose name I don't remember, told me that the name "capitol," as in the Capitoline Hill, the largest of the seven hills of Rome, derives from the spot where one "Olus," whom he identified as an obscure Etruscan warrior, possibly a king, lost his head, his "caput." Wikipedia informs me that others have argued the name to be Tulus. It doesn't matter. Brodsky wrote an essay on the Campidoglio, but I haven't read it, as I sensed that his real love wasn't Rome, not even Florence, Dante's home, but Venice, where he is buried on an island in the same cemetery as Ezra Pound and Olga Rudge, with the remains of Stravinsky and Diaghilev secured nearby. On Brodsky's tomb is inscribed, "*Letum non Omnia Finit*—"Not everything ends in death." I'd like to believe that, but we can't know, can we? I prefer to think we write poems to hedge our bets.

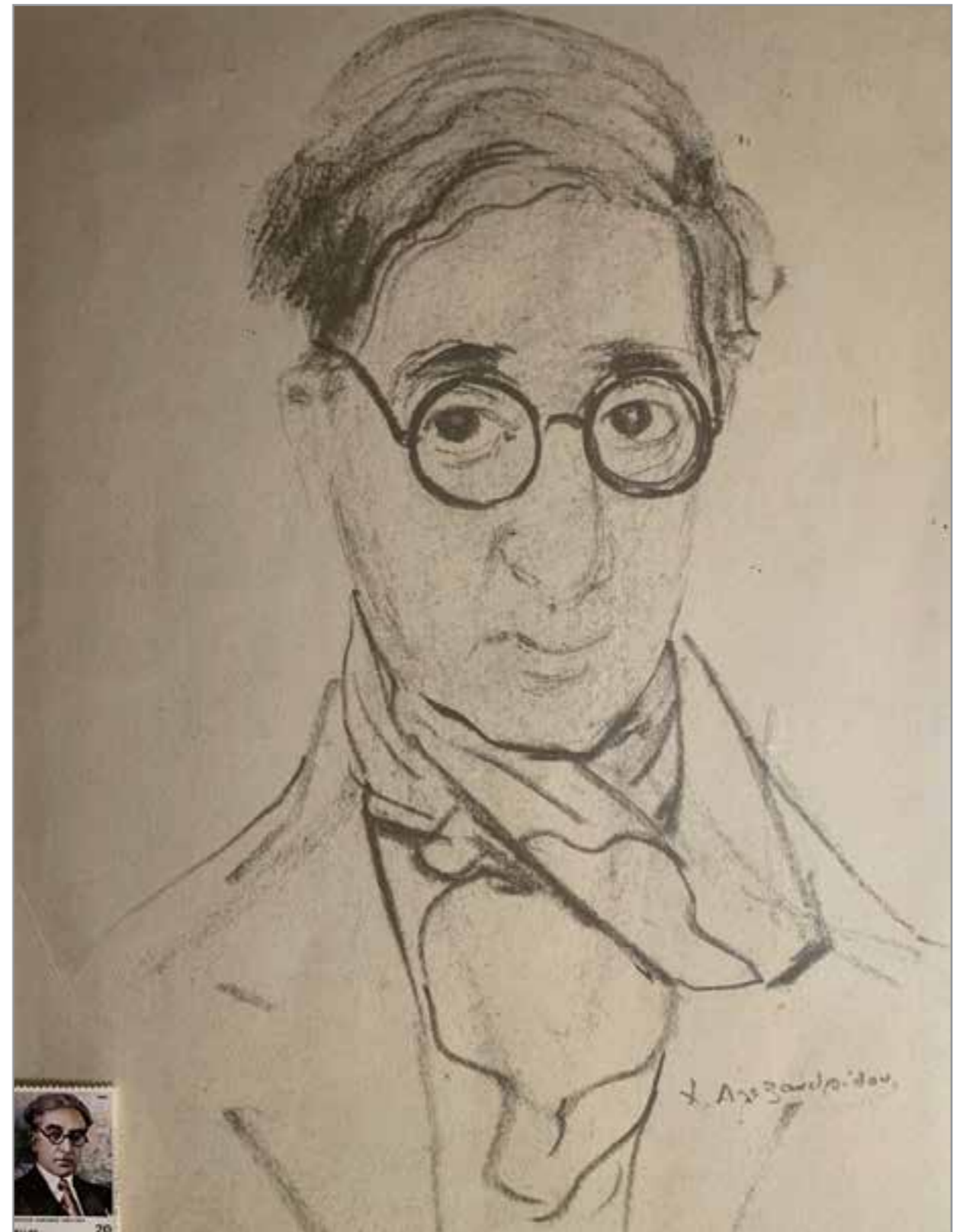
Carolyn Kizer's last published poem ends, "Let me enter my chamber/ and sing my songs of love." Here, she's quoting St. Augustine (*Confessions*, Book VII), whose own connection with love was problematic. We would expect no less from a Church Father. Did he not plead with the Almighty to give him just a few more days of carnal desire before assenting to become a taxpayer in the City of God, knowing in his heart that he (also) wished otherwise? At the very least, he was reluctant to embrace the ambivalence of his heart. But Kizer, who was not above skewering both Augustine and Kierkegaard for their emotional timidity, humbly admits that she would prefer to move inward near the end, to celebrate the images that animated her time on earth.

These poets are also images to me. They and others about whom I have written form the caryatids of a pantheon. As Milosz remarked, "language has its own greatness and selects its own people to serve it." Dante, whom I recently translated, called up the muse figure Beatrice, whom he scarcely knew, and Virgil, whom he didn't know at all, except in his imagination. The first appealed to his virility, even as she grew into a spirit beyond his reach, and the latter as the measure of his ambition, of his (Miltonian, if you will) wish to justify the contrary aims of life and afterlife. Jesus himself is said to have had a beloved figure, but we don't know with certainty who that was. Many religious head-scratchers think it was either John or Lazarus, possibly Judas. John adds, "These things are written that you may believe!" That's what poems are. All poems are elegies in the sense that they come out of the past to encounter our feeling minds. Their very presence points to the absence that is their source and that they represent. In that our poems resemble us. They stand in the place of us. Do they also point to the future? Of course. Of temporal categories, past, present, and future together equal as much about eternity as we are able to imagine. There has been a lot of talk in poetry circles recently about the disappointments that attend our experience in reading poems on the grounds that poems don't deliver what they promise. And why is that? Because the eternal exceeds their reach. They're snared and hobbled by history, canceling any promise.

That's not exactly how I see it. Poetry already rewrites time, just as music does. In fact, you might argue that rewriting time more to our liking is what defines music. It's what the poet's pen and the conductor's wand have in common. The late Allen Grossman, whose deep dives into the sources of poetry schooled many poets of my generation, in spite of a prose that often banished clarity to the shadows, wrote, "Insofar as love wills the existence of what it loves, the principle of poetry is a collective and perpetually renewed act of love that brings the world to mind, and mind to mind, as the speech of a person – at the moment of the vanishing of world and persons, which is every moment of conscious life." The point is not to get in touch with the eternal, but to create images that signify its possibility. Cavafy's poem goes directly to that point.

Where am I going with this, you may wonder. Am I merely talking about intimation, after all? D. H. Lawrence, who suffused his poems with the same Mediterranean light as Cavafy, also has a poem about Hermes called "Maximus" but instead of an "ethereal" youth the speaker takes in a cloaked stranger who, when asked his name, is at first silent. Yet his presence inspires "such a loveliness" that the speaker intuitively him as a god, even God, but the stranger replies, "*Hermes!*" Placed beside the god of the Bible, Hermes is the more relatable figure, and the speaker finds him in the warmth of his home. He is, in other words, the very God, and if we are to believe Linda Gregg's lovely line, He "thinks about poetry all the time."

*God is older than the sun and moon
and the eye cannot behold him
nor the voice describe him
and still, this is the God Hermes, sitting by my hearth.*



Sketch of Constantine Cavafy. The inset is of a Greek stamp commemorating him.

Cavafy raises the issue of powers only half seen, only intimated in the sheerness of a moment, but signifying a reality for all time, which is paradoxically a defeat of time, where we live out our lives. Grossman sees this as an investment of love, of the belief that our images are worth preserving and that they, in turn, preserve us. Proust, who knew as much about memory as anyone who ever lived, taught us that something remembered is infinite, because it is a passport to all that happened before and all that happens after. Meanwhile, only the person who has the memory can say how deep into the past or the future it reaches.

Hermes was sometimes confused with the god Pan, but the consensus holds that in the ancient genealogies of divinity Pan was the son of Hermes. In either case, we are right to understand the connection between the two. Pan is universal. In Milton's Nativity Ode, "mighty Pan" prefigures Christ. Hermes likewise is everywhere, including moving into the vivid domestic space described by Lawrence and topping hills of Ionia for Cavafy, "indistinct" and "in rapid flight." Not only is he everywhere, he is temporally unbound: the beautiful young man and the aged, unanticipated guest of the poet. Images are like that: paradoxical. You are unlikely to be interested in poetry if you are not at home with paradox. Not only at home, but ready to will paradox into being on your own.

In Cavafy's poem, the gods we thought to have driven out "are still in love with you/ Their souls still keep your memory." Dante greeted Virgil as "master of the memory of earth." Not the least of these was the image of smoke rising from Dido's pyre, as the Virgil's hero Aeneas set sail to embark on his brutal destiny but unaware of its personal price until he meets his lover in the underworld where she turns away wordlessly and fades into the ghostly arms of her first husband. Aeneas wills his way toward Italy. He also wills his way toward sustainable abstractions: duty and honor, etc., among them. But the memory of smoke and the violence that accompanies him voids his lingering tenderness. His father, whose ghost he dared to seek among the shades, enumerates a colossal future for his son, but his lover's silence is mockery outright. Cavafy raises the issue of powers only half seen, only intimated in the sheerness of a moment, but signifying a reality for all time, which is paradoxically a defeat of time, where we live out our lives. Grossman sees this as an investment of love, of the belief that our images are worth preserving and that they, in turn, preserve us. Proust, who knew as much about memory as anyone who ever lived, taught us that something remembered is infinite, because it is a passport to all that happened before and all that happens after. Meanwhile, only the person who has the memory can say how deep into the past or the future it reaches.

I don't know where the ducks are going, but I know they live by the marshes on the side of the river. The water has now receded. Train tracks parallel to the river carry commuters down to the city. During the pandemic, the vast parking lot was largely empty, but now it is full. You can still see ponds of rainwater on the asphalt. At night, they ice over, as does the riverbank. Some years ago I wrote a poem called "Empire Service." In it, I tried to hint, as Hart Crane did, of the massive machinery of which we are a part, with a nod to Dante who ends his *Commedia* with his absorption into the machinery of Heaven. Here is the ending:

*At Croton, a wedge of ducks
makes way across the still inlet.
Farther out, swans. Two of them.
Just for a second do they register.
Weeds are everywhere out there.
And yet it's winter and they're dead too,
though still standing at attention,
still presenting themselves somehow
to the vines, the trunks, the sky.
Then off in the distance I hear the horns
warning of the train, and I'm on it.*

Angela Patten's publications include four poetry collections, *The Oriole & the Ovenbird* (Kelsay Books 2021), *In Praise of Usefulness* (Wind Ridge Books 2014), *Reliquaries* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland 2007) and *Still Listening* (Salmon Poetry, Ireland, 1999), and a prose memoir, *High Tea at a Low Table: Stories From An Irish Childhood* (Wind Ridge Books 2013). Her work has appeared in many literary journals and in anthologies including *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*; *The Breath of Parted Lips Volume II*; *Birchsong I and II: Poetry Centered in Vermont*; and *Roads Taken: Contemporary Vermont Poetry*. Born and raised in Dublin, she maintains dual citizenship in Ireland and the United States, where she has lived since 1977. She is a Senior Lecturer Emerita in the English Department at the University of Vermont.



THE WINDOW

I never met my grandfather,
a stoker on a steamship
who died at 57 of pneumonia.

But our mother loved him
and she made us feel as if
we had known him too.

Her gift was to put us there
with her in the tiny house
at the top of the cobbled street,

kicking her button boots
against the rungs of a chair,
a ribbon straggling by her ear

as she watched for his burly
shadow at the window,
the outline of his sailor's cap

and the big canvas seabag
slung over his shoulder.
We could almost hear

his deep-voiced Dublin accent,
smell the salt and sweat of him,
the wet aroma of his woolen jumper

after weeks away at sea.
Her sadness when she talked about
my poor father, my poor mother.

Only now, among these freshwater
lakes and rivers, far from the sea,
I understand exactly what she meant.

Angela Patten

GEESE – A LOVE POEM

On the highway's gravel shoulder
a goose with a gaggle of goslings
waddling beside her.

Urban birds so common
they have become forgotten
except for their indiscriminate
droppings on greenways
and golf courses, a menace
to the built environment.

But this noisy brood is perilously
out of place, close to the line
of buses, cars and trucks
that thunder past, a crush
of armorplated rhinos
kicking up the dust
en route to the watering hole.

You've been watching
all week on television
the frightened faces of refugees
fleeing an invading army,
babies clutched to their chests,
dusty indigo robes flapping,
everything they could salvage
strapped to their backs,
their ruined villages smoking
behind them in the dust.

Back on the highway
the goslings' furry heads
move up and down
like bobbleheaded dolls
while the mother tries
to protect them with her body
as if she could withstand
a metal hurricane
with only her feathers
and her warning honks.

LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

"It's only words and words are all I have/to take your heart away"
The Bee Gees

The story goes that once upon a time
the family of languages set off
on pilgrimage around the world.

Some traveled the trade routes of the East,
some took the waters in ancient springs.
All stayed connected like hands
clasping each other in a human chain.

Pidgin was spoken, goods were traded.
It was a glorious cacophony.

There are 7,097 living languages in the world today
though some are experiencing the aches of old age—
exhausted verbs, arthritic nouns—
the difficulties of keeping up with the young.

In the New York Metro area live native speakers
of 800 languages. Imagine the verbal traffic-jams,
the nods and shrugs, the glottal stops,
the clicks and fricatives, all that joyful noise.

Worldwide one language dies out every fortnight.
Even the word 'fortnight' is threatened
with becoming merely 'two weeks' any day now.

My father, the hardest-working man I've ever known,
was made redundant after 25 years on the job.
Think of that word—*redundant*.

Sometimes forgotten words surface in my head
like bubbles rising in a stream—
plimsolls, jotter, hoover, father—
words I never questioned,
only took for the thing itself.

People keep inventing things, then inventing
names for them. When will it stop?

When the last known speaker of a language
dies, it is called "language death."
Do the other languages lament,
each in its own tongue?

Cristina Calderón, last known native speaker
of the Yaghan language, died at 93.
I wonder what was the last thing she said?
And to whom?

Dominique Hecq is a widely anthologised and award-winning prose poet, fiction writer, essayist and translator. She lives and works on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung land (Naarm / Melbourne). Her chapbook *Endgame with No Ending* won the James Tate Poetry Prize (2023, SurVision). The illustrated bilingual collection, *Songlines / Pistes de rêve* has just been released by Transignum. *Volte Face* is slated for June 2024 (Liquid Amber Press).



FERVOUR

1.

At the Sacred Kingfisher Festival we danced to the beating of drums, our laughter rapturous and rebellious among the pinging of bellbirds. The air smelled of river mint wild myrtle and boronia as a red haze rose between us and the horizon line. In the bog garden we chased the wandering sun and you picked golden billy buttons and we kissed under the tessellated tower of my hair. Caped in your fake lion skin you said I reminded you of Castilla. Who is she, I asked in an intermixing of levity and seriousness. We ate steamed mussels and fried calamari, olives and hot peppers, octopus a *feira* and gazpacho. We drank tequila. Liked its hot spring in our bellies. We sucked on lemons and ice. Already my heart felt unparched, its chambers soft inside its suckering pericardium. You blew through the bushes and wetland bullrushes without a word like a bird or the wind itself.

Was it love's fervency and desire we had interlaced, together?

continued overleaf...

Dominique Hecq

2.

I seek you everywhere through the grasslands and woodlands and shrublands. Through spiny headed mat rushes tufted bluebells sickle ferns and pussy tails. I tear through spear grass and around patches of golden wattle silver banksia and swamp paperbark. At the curve in the creek where the river red gum stands I cut a heart out of its bark for a shield. The gum bleeds but I lash through wedge leaf hop bushes and rosemary grevilleas slashing punctuation save the arrhythmical lone period. For now.

I seek you in shoals of fish.

I seek you in clouds of bats.

I seek you in schoolings of tadpoles.

I seek you in murders of crows.

I seek you in the sturdiness of your name

I seek you in the word *lover*.

3.

I find you in music and painting and poetry. I find you in myth and make you mine. Kneading words as one would dough beyond the trammels of the self where reminiscences and expectations deflate being and slowly I rise from its shell shaping what beckons like a promise.

I surrender to the sky like a flowering gum deploying its satin.

I reach for your hand and touch only a dream blossoming spikes.

Slowly. I rise from emptiness. Shaping what becomes a prayer.

You wave to me from outside the gleaming window when out of the blue a little kingfisher flies into the glass.

Look how stunned the bird is. How it shakes itself off from shadow sheen. And flies away.

Anna Yin was born in China and immigrated to Canada in 1999. She was Mississauga's Inaugural Poet Laureate (2015-17) and Ontario representative for the League of Canadian Poets (2013-16). She has authored five poetry collections and two books of translations including *Mirrors and Windows* (Guernica Editions 2021). Anna won the 2005 Ted Plantos Memorial Award, two MARTYs, two scholarships from USA and grants from Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts. Her poems/translations have appeared at Queen's Quarterly, ARC Poetry, New York Times, China Daily, CBC Radio, Literary Review of Canada, Denver Quarterly etc. She read on Parliament Hill, at Austin International Poetry Festival, Edmonton Poetry Festival and universities in China, Canada and USA etc. She has designed and taught Poetry Alive programs since 2011 along with her daily IT job. In 2020, she started her own small press: surewaypress.com for her translating, editing and publishing services. *Awakening* was a short poetry film produced by her in 2023. Her website: www.annapoetry.com

MIRROR

A house sits by the sea,
its windows watch out.
Night tides hit its wall;
a mirror shatters on its floor.
One broken heart
remembers your face,
forgetting its own past.

Could the pieces be put together?
How many lies must be told
to draw the loved together?
You grow old, grow quiet,
your eyes in deep blue.
Drinking in light,
you color
your own silence.



Anna Yin

RECITAL

The lunar lamp dims...
my keys turn leaden.
Upon your touch,
black and white
slide into
a long soft sigh.

In my heart-lung,
crisp air still fills
its wooden frame,
vibrating strings
in response to
your overdue tune.

They say a happy song
needs a few keys.
But they are broken
by your fierce
crescendo.



Photograph courtesy <https://pixabay.com/photos/>

Zhou Jun is a freelance columnist and writer who lives in Hang Zhou, China. She is the author of several novels, including: *The Proud Painter: A Biography of Wu Guanzhong* and *The Eruditionist in the Forbidden City: A Biography of Yang Boda*. Her poetic drama, *Night Visits to Nuwo*, won the third prize in a major play competition held by Contemporary Drama and Shaanxi Playwright Association.

Translated from Chinese by Anna Yin. She was Mississauga's Inaugural Poet Laureate (2015-2017) and has authored five poetry collections and a book of translations: *Mirrors and Windows* (Guernica Editions). Her poems/translations won awards and appeared at *ARC Poetry*, *New York Times*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *China Daily*, *CBC Radio* etc. She teaches Poetry Alive and lives in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.



I TURN INTO RAIN

As a woman
In the rain, I am penetrating
In the frigid winter, I am transparent
When not believing in love, a drop of water, I turn into...
Do you believe? This drop of water
Slowly, slowly dribbles by your feet
Trying so humbly to catch another glimpse of you
On the merciful earth

我化成了雨

作为一个女人
在雨中，我透彻
在冬天的寒冷里，我透明
在不相信爱情的时候，我化成了一滴水
你相信吗？这点水
缓缓地，缓缓地挪到你的脚边
在仁慈的大地上，试图那么卑微地再看一眼你

Zhou Jun

GIFT

A ball of fire
Tangled within the ice
Chanting on the spindle, spinning, ascending
The honey-peach breasts, ashes of the pale moon
All sink into darkness

Buddha, cracking-open the hard shell
Takes off a grain of purity
Snow-white
Flesh

Tenderly, tenderly
Placed it on my still palm
In the night

馈赠

一团火
在冰的内部纠错
诵经纺锤上回旋、上升
柔美的乳房、月亮的灰烬
全部沉入了黑暗

佛，敲开硬壳
取下一粒纯净
白皙
的肉身

在夜色中
轻轻地，轻轻地
放置在我寂静的手掌上

OPENNESS IN MY HEART

A great gust blows through here
When your hand holds me, it seems not really held
Farewell comes eventually, two very different roads

The night gets dark, I still sing and dance
Birds murmur to me in their dream nests like miserable orange juice
The spring water carries us to the place where children go, sprinting

Where you are, the light is bright —a night that my eyes focus on

心中有旷

巨大的风在这里吹过
当你的手握住我，好像并没有握住
告别就来到了，两条迥异不同的路

夜黑了，我还是会唱歌跳舞
鸟在梦巢里朝我呢喃，像伤心的橘子汁
泉水带着我们朝有孩子去的地方，奔跑

你那里，光线明亮，是我双眸聚焦的黑夜

Daniel Lusk is author of eight poetry collections and other books, most recently *Every Slow Thing*, poetry (Kelsay Books 2022) and *Farthings*, eBook (Yavanika Press 2022). Well-known for his teaching and widely published in literary journals, his genre-bending essay, “Bomb” (*New Letters*) was awarded a Pushcart Prize. In previous decades he has been variously wedding celebrant, singer and groom. Native of the prairie Midwest and also a former commentator on books for NPR, Daniel is married to Irish poet Angela Patten. They live in Vermont USA.



SUITE BERGAMASQUE

“Love’s asymmetry is true./They never think of you.”
Susan Stewart, “Lavinium”

Excitement: flurry of rain.
Great trees—beeches, oaks—rowing
against the ocean of the wind.

Willows weeping and flailing
at the furrowed grasses. Rabbits cower
in their burrows, humming Turkish
moonlight to their young.

Old poet:
Where are the women I used
to dream about when they were real?

Where now the hat I felt defined
my youthful ambitions abroad

afloat betwixt the cobbled shore
and ship beside the ferry gangway
at Calais a sad grey thing

neither coming nor going
and only moments ago
upon my very head.

What did we know of coelacanths
or children of the Raj?
Trying to employ the principle
of *ikebana* in our attempts at love.

Daniel Lusk

SWEAT EQUITY

For her it may have begun
as conquest, achieved
by simply taking off her dress.

For me, I don't know.
Maybe at the outset, pure wonder.

She asked might I be the 500 mule caravans
along her thighs, the waves crashing
when she lay back against the pillows.

This salt that remains on the skin
when moisture has evaporated.
These tears, from the sea inside.

FIRST ANNIVERSARY POEM

Some wanted
the three wedding cups
explained so I said:

this is the cup of plenty
*and in my mind handed it
first to her and then to him*

this is the cup
of want
to him first and then her

the third is what you make
of your life
together

*and they poured together
into that cup and drank
and drank again three times.*

Now I can tell you
for this meaning has come to me.

Richard W. Halperin holds U.S.-Irish dual nationality and lives in Paris. Since 2010, he has seen four poetry collections published by Salmon/Cliffs of Moher and sixteen shorter collections by Lapwing/Belfast. A *Selected & New Poems*, Introduction by Joseph Woods, will be launched by Salmon in Spring 2024. In May 2024, Mr Halperin will read from his work as part of the Heinrich Böll Memorial Weekend, Achill Island.

The poems in 'Winter Dreams' are among the first never to be seen by Dennis Grieg, founding publisher of Lapwing, who passed away on Christmas Day 2023 after a long illness. Mr. Halperin writes, 'He is everywhere in my poetry and in my life. How can he not be?'

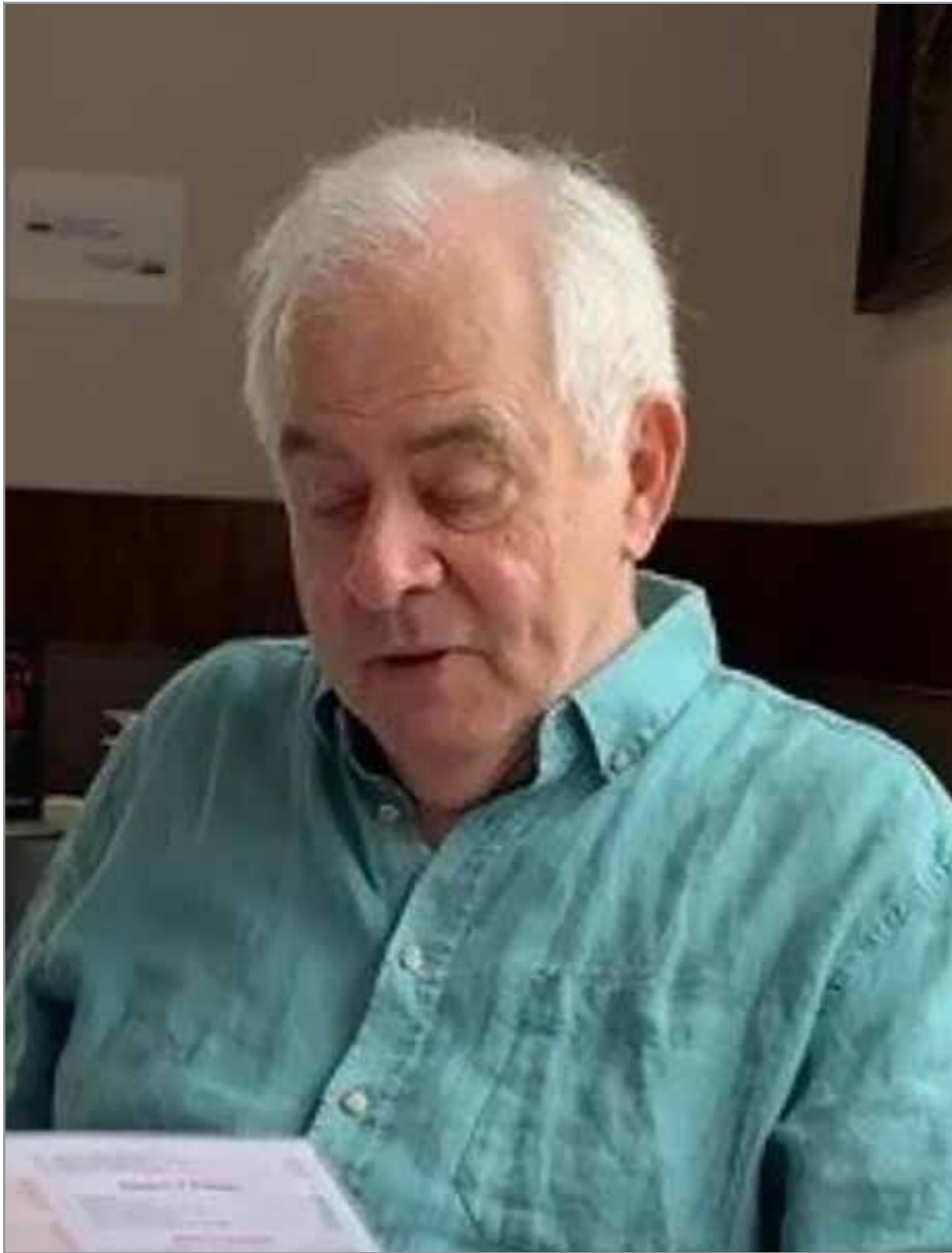
JANUARY 2ND

I look at the slightly open door
of my sitting room, January 2nd.
A rainy day. I live in the letters of friends.
But – shock – I find I am not prepared
to reread letters from friends who have died.

My mother-in-law Rose. I reread one of hers.
Beautifully typed. She had been
a typing teacher. After her signature,
she drew a rose, a pink one as it happens.

I must not, I tell myself, be surprised
by any death. Of anyone, of any age.
What if heaven is best described
not by words like 'eternity' or 'bliss'
but by the word 'surprise'?

Rose's letter is a message from the living
to the living. There is no veil.
The rain beats against my windowpane,
thousands and thousands of drops
running down the glass. I am glad to
see them. The privilege of reality.



Richard W. Halperin. Photo credit: Bertrand A.

THE SOLITARY MAN

Sei Shōnagon writes in her pillow book
that when she begins to settle into
her cell in a temple which she has travelled to
with friends for several days of prayer

she notices that the man in the cell next to
hers is lying prostrate on the ground, praying
inaudibly. She expects him to rise soon,
but he continues thus for hours. She calls him

the solitary man. 'I was very moved,'
she writes. When he does get up, he rests,
then says his devotions, but so quietly
that she cannot make out what the words are.

Does she relate to him? She doesn't say.
Do I? This poem is the answer.

NIGHT SKY

A friend wrote that we are each
a combination of time and eternity.
He did not know that another friend
had just taken his flight – that that friend
was now only eternity, I left on the runway
holding a scrap of him in my hand.

Before there was incandescent urban
street lighting, one could see the entire
night sky. Incandescent street lighting
is neither time nor eternity. It is fake.
The stars move very slowly or very fast,
one cannot tell because for that
one needs to see a backdrop.

I hold a scrap of my friend in my hand.
That is not fake. That is beautiful.

THE CONSOLATION OF LETTERS

Letters of friends. These I do not keep.
They are in memory which is entirely
present if you touch it.

Also, letters of people I never knew,
who know what it is to be alone with What:
Charlotte Brontë, T.E. Lawrence, others.

Also the Bible – a letter for the middle of
the night. The incomprehensible left
incomprehensible. 'And also much cattle.'



Photograph courtesy <https://pixabay.com/photos/>

Brian Kirk has published two poetry collections with Salmon Poetry, *After The Fall* (2017) and *Hare's Breath* (2023) and a short fiction chapbook *It's Not Me It's You* (Southword Editions, 2019). His novel *Riverrun* was chosen as a winner of the Irish Writers Centre Novel Fair 2022. Twitter: @briankirkwriter



ABOUT LOVE

for Laura

Looking back I have so many questions.
Why then, out of all the countless moments?
Why you, from a city made of millions?
Was it the moon or drink that shaped that sense
of kismet, a rush of oxytocin,
surge of dopamine, hypothalamus
reacting, repressing serotonin?
What was it made two people become us?
A miracle of nature or a fluke,
a random deed in a contingent world?
An act of God that made the heavens shake,
a sacred scripture that our hands unfurled?
Why should it matter after all this time
if faith or science birthed the sublime?

Brian Kirk

Lincoln Jaques is a Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) based writer. His poetry, fiction, travel essays and book reviews have appeared in magazines and collections internationally. He was shortlisted for the 2023 inaugural “At The Bay” hybrid manuscript awards, and was the Runner-Up in the 2022 International Writers’ Workshop Kathleen Grattan Prize for a Sequence of Poems.



Lincoln Jaques

A PROMISE

For these many years
we have turned to one another
like origami cranes, gripping
into another life.

Today the rain refuses
to cease. It rained on the day
we promised one another
we would be together always.
Old photos of another us
lay hidden in plastic albums.

That night, I remember
us in the tram, gliding through
the streets of Zagreb. Snow outside
the lights from streetcorners marking
each turn along the cobbled tracks.
A couple sharing a cigarette in an
empty café. Our reflections in glass.

When we reached our stop
the tram drifted away silently
and we were alone, just the city
and us, crushing the snow.
Our footprints forged a new direction.

Arriving at the cold
apartment door I looked back
suddenly as if sensing something
terrible approaching.

For this happiness is a gift
surely taken too quickly.

THE MAGIC TRAVELLERS

these are the places we travelled together

Rarotonga, where we fled along The Great
Road of Toi on a Yamaha scooter
New Delhi, where in the Red Fort we
sheltered from the heat under banyan trees
Zagreb, where you spoke about everything
without moving your lips
Morocco, where the Tin Man squeaked
through the souk to kiss the camel's head
Singapore, where we caught a train to the
empty gardens where the pangolins hide
London, where I was silent this time,
walking out like Pound's apparitions

these are the places we left ourselves
these are the memories that drop like fruit
from trees, only to rot in damp earth overnight.

GARDEN

I found you
digging around
the lettuce
the spring onions

in the planter
I made from
a pallet.

The afternoon sun
lifted you up
from the garden.

I pulled gumboots
on and walk
through damp
grass.

The blind parsley
quivers against

our silent
revolutions.

I held you
close, you
turned your lips
to mine.

Dr Arthur Broomfield is a poet, short story writer and Beckett scholar from County Laois, Ireland. He is the author of nine books, including five poetry collections the latest being *At Home in Ireland*. New and selected poems. His works have been published in Irish, UK, USA , South American, Indian and European journals.



BILLY SHERRILL BMI ICON

The girl with the tear
in her voice,
knocked down
by a day's traipse,
from one Nashville
good luck with that
grunt out of a Stetson hat,
to the next,
happens before your desk.

Her half-whispered sigh,
no one is listening to me,
gets her through a couple of songs.
It's your here and now.
A drag from your cigar,
your eyes meet, full-on.
I'm listening, you say.

Martina McBride sings
Till I can make it on my own.
You're backed by a humming duet.
The older one, blonde, dyed hair,
the one who knows the score,
nudges you, whispers grace notes as she
spot checks this and that celebrity:
the one who stayed home, his guitar needs strings,
the ones who turned up to honour you.
The bells that ring.

You, tuned up to the beat
of your bricks and mortar,
Soft pedal till she fades out.

Your index fingers strum
in tempo, the left to the left,
the right to the right.
We get the optics
as you clear the tears,
from the ducts
behind your specs,
that *sometimes bother you.*

Dr Arthur Broomfield

Art Nahill is a New Zealand physician, teacher, and writer who has published poetry on both sides of the equator, including four book-length collections. He has recently (and inexplicably) turned his hand to short fiction.



TABLEAU

You know how this scene ends. The young man and woman sit on a bed, knees to chest, in a small hotel room in an old section of the city. It could be any city, really, of rain and worn stone. The room is the best they can afford. Their bags lean into opposite corners, where the wallpaper curls upon itself in yellowing waves. The room overlooks a broad street clotted with traffic. He pulls the curtains closed as she reaches up and flicks on the bedside light, throwing the room into a tangle of sharp contours. It is early evening, but it feels much later.

Though you know how this, and all such stories, end, you may be intrigued enough by the setting, the uncertainty in their faces, to carry on. There is something familiar in the way they hold themselves apart. Their bodies have only recently learned to speak. You read on, waiting to hear if any fragment of your own story echoes within the walls of theirs.

The man, in his early twenties you guess, will depart in the morning by train to the airport. She will wander for a time amongst other cities before returning home. From the moment he arrived to visit, he could sense the new dimensions of their separateness, her body withholding something from his, her eyes darting away like small fish at passing shadows. It is always these smallest of things, he thinks.

Recognising they have reached this denouement, you urge him to leave at once, to pack his bag quickly and spend the night elsewhere, even in the busy train station, as though doing so might alter the trajectory of his life. It's what you would do. It's what you have done. But he cannot hear you. He is listening instead to the night settling down around him.

continued overleaf...

Art Nahill

I have not yet told you much about the young woman, though her changing heart is the fulcrum of this story. "Do not judge me," she pleads. "Love is not a pair of shoes waiting for us to step wholly into or out of, at our choosing." You notice the way she stares at the rust-coloured stain on the ceiling. You think she might cry, and so you do not judge her. You know we choose nothing in this life.

It grows late, and the moment you have feared somehow passes indistinctly, like tides far out at sea. The man and the woman eventually fall asleep, their knees lightly touching beneath the sheet. That's it. You know the rest. For a while, there will be cards at Christmas, an occasional birthday message, then nothing. Even now, they are becoming landscapes littered with possibilities and misrememberings, and so, for years, they will keep, in a shoebox high on a shelf or beneath a pile of woolen jumpers, these few photographs, a few scribbled lines of bad, but earnest, poetry.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *New World Writing*, *California Quarterly* and *Lost Pilots*. Latest books, "Between Two Fires", "Covert" and "Memory Outside The Head" are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in *Isotrope Literary Journal*, *Seventh Quarry*, *La Presa* and *Doubly Mad*.



DEAR JOANNA

I know you can't hurt me

so tonight,
for my sake,
emerge from the shadows,
let me delight in your face
once again,
hear your voice,
soft and compelling.

No more of these lipless whispers.
No more fluttering fractured
gleams of light
or curtain rustle
or creak of floorboard.
And please, dispense with
that insistent imperceptible spirit..
the inexplicable sense
that I am not alone
when all else says otherwise.

I know you can't hurt me

but please,
just this once,
materialize,
hurt me.

John Grey

ROMANTIC LIFE, NIGHT ONE

It was the most lackluster kiss
that a boy on a doorstep ever delivered.
But as she lay in bed,
she figured she loved the guy anyhow.
Their lips met, didn't they?
And his hands wrapped around her waist,
if only briefly.
But she was only fifteen.
She relieved the scenes leading up to it.
They were as awkward as the final moment.
And she remembered the conversation.
"Dumb, stupid" she muttered in half-sleep.
If they'd been lines in a script,
the film would have never been made.
For her though, it was something to work on.
Like the touch of his thigh against hers
in the movie house.
Or the brief interchange of fingers.
Or the sight of his tongue
as he licked ketchup from his chin
in the burger joint
Or the ride home in the cab.
And the talk, though surely
the smallest on record,
was, at least, between the two of them.
And then the kiss.. .her kiss...
no other mouth nudged her away
and planted itself in the general area of his.
That's where it began.
And where it ended for that particular boy.
Though that night, she loved him.
After that, she was happy just to love.

SNOW FALLS WHERE IT WILL

Flakes adorn headstones,
soft snow on death,
clouds blocking light, canyons of wind
blowing gruff man winter through haughty streets
but sincere, self-effacing, on crosses and angels.

It's not down to us, citified, locked in our houses,
cursing weather, inconsolable,
in the jaws of this bleak white monster
that devours us all,
but is gentle and accessible to stone gray fences,
lowing willows, yesterday's roses.

A man in coat and wool cap bends over
the grave of his wife, further softened by dampness,
remembers the good in such flurries
back in the 50's and 60's,
now insular but not quite alone,
a lyrical ice-tear in his eye,
a chill beating his breast proud.

In his sorrow, in his memory,
the old bitter brute looks after him well.
In the houses built since the 80's,
the blind stare out,
the featureless rise up.

Michael J. Leach (@m_jeach) is an Australian poet, critic and academic. Michael’s poems have appeared in journals such as *Cordite Poetry Review*, exhibitions such as the Antarctic Poetry Exhibition, anthologies such as *Poetry d’Amour 2022: Love Poems* (WA Poets Incorporated, 2022), and his two poetry books: *Chronicity* (Melbourne Poets Union, 2020) and *Natural Philosophies* (Recent Work Press, 2022). Michael has won the UniSA Mental Health and Wellbeing Poetry Competition (2015), received a commendation in the Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine (2021), jointly won the poetry category of the Minds Shine Bright Confidence Writing Competition (2022) and had a poem shortlisted for the Woollahra Digital Literary Award (2023). During 2024, Michael will publish two new poetry books: a collection of haiku and senryu (In Case of Emergency Press) followed by a collection of poems exploring sounds and emotions (Ginninderra Press). He lives on unceded Dja Dja Wurrung Country and acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land.

BRIMFUL

for Irina
New Year’s Eve 2023

a mugful of mint tea / a mouthful of Baci* / a tableful of delicate dishes /
a houseful of fragrant flowers / a lungful of petrichor / a gardenful of local
birds / a lapful of felines / a rackful of clean dishes / a basketful of clean
clothes / a handful of fresh berries / a palmful of four-leaf clovers / a pocketful
of pocketbooks / a pageful of love poetry / a screenful of romance / a roomful
of bubbly music / a bottleful of champagne / a bowlful of salted cashews /
a plateful of barbecued meats / a scoopful of gelato / a lakeful of pleasure
boats / a boxful of sparklers / a skyful of fireworks / a headful of happiness
/ a heartful of fondness

* ‘Baci’ refers to both the Baci brand of chocolate truffles and the Italian word for ‘kisses’



Michael J. Leach

Tim Dwyer's poems appear regularly in Irish and UK publications, recently in *Acumen*, *Cyphers*, *Under The Radar* and *Masculinity Anthology* (Broken Sleep). He is a previous contributor to *Live Encounters*. His chapbook is *Smithy Of Our Longings* (Lapwing). Originally from Brooklyn, NY, he lives by the shore in Bangor, Northern Ireland.



ENOUGH

for Marianne

No award-winning film,
or life-changing book,
exquisite meal—

enough, the two of us
home on the crowded train,
late Sunday afternoon.

Over the lough
a billowy cloud turns
from peach to rose
to purple

as the sun returns to earth

Tim Dwyer

LAST PLACE IN THIS WORLD

As time shrinks, I send
a prayer to my parents
many years dead.
Maybe quaint and cowardly,
but I'm at my best
when I imagine the beyond.

They don't send back
a sure-fire sign, such as
levitating this book, *The Afterlife*,
a foot above the bed,
or a couple of seconds to hear
their voices again—
but today, it's enough to see
their faces in my mind,
the last place in this world
I am greeted as
my boy.

*The Afterlife, poetry collection by Larry Levis
(1946-1996), University of Iowa Press, 1977.*

WAKE TIME

The sky lightens, you appear
with coffee in my favourite cup,
open the curtains
and begin the story
about the girl from long ago
on a quest to save the boy
from evil stealing his soul.

The chapter ends, I picture
the next stage of the journey,
gaze across the lough,
pulse of the old lighthouse
winking from the other shore.

Tomorrow is the future
when the story resumes.

Alicia Viguer-Espert, born and raised in the Mediterranean city of Valencia, Spain, lives in Los Angeles. A three times Pushcart nominee, she has been published in Lummo Anthologies, Altadena Poetry Review, ZZyZx, Panoply, Rhyvers, River Paw Press, Amethyst Review, Odyseeey.pm, and Live Encounters among others. Her chapbooks *To Hold a Hummingbird*, *Out of the Blue Womb of the Sea* and *4 in 1*, focus on language, identity, home, nature, and soul. In addition to national and international publications, she is included in “Top 39 L.A. Poets of 2017,” “Ten Poets to Watch in 2018,” and “Bards of Southern California: Top 30 poets,” by Spectrum.



LOVE MATTER

I believe in science
one steps out of the blue
sphere of narrow perspectives,
borders disappear into dust motes
of cosmic choreography.

It’s impossible not to acknowledge
how small and equal we are
what nurtures us must feed
the planet’s rhythmic breath;
selfishness is a genetic error.

Science reveals Love’s creativity,
its oxygen causes inner revolutions,
connections filling every crack of life
behaving just like Dark Matter
that 95% of mass we cannot see.

Subtly it affects us, shapes
Galaxies, holds them in place
by a gravitational field engineered
by what we cannot understand,
Love Matter.

Alicia Viguer-Espert

TO BE WITH YOU

After the Rain, the moon leaned over pale clouds,
lit the forest in such way that one could distinguish
a black hand holding a white one at the end of my sweater.
Dripping maple trees appeared vanquished, wounded.
The edges of moss swung pushed by wind
becoming undone braids.

Bundled up we approached the house,
listened to drums of rain still pounding the gutters.
It took a while for stillness to enter the hearth,
slowly the rising yeast of music invaded the room,
the stone fireplace hummed red,

I dried my hair and changed my shoes.
The space between us,
what has been loose by water
tighten by heat.

Your hands fingered my earlobes,
a butterfly searching for nectar
kissed the hollow of my neck,
my own breath reminded me of a sinking ship,
a place to go
inside
cosmic depths of water.

I didn't wish to drown in the slow suffocation of the ocean,
painful they say, but I envisioned,
as monks dream of paradise, paroxysm, pathological
desire to dive into waves of ecstasy,
meeting you at the Gates
of La Petite Mort.

THE RETURN

I return to my city,
search in the cafe of La Alameda,
the young hand holding a wine glass,
his gaze distant and inward.

I return to my city
where every adolescent resembles
the one I knew so well but never knew,
nor understood the consuming flame

burning his wings of moth,
the mystery of strings
holding back his grasshopper legs
propelled by fire.

I return to my city,
cross a whole ocean to hear
his voice in the evening news,
a local station discussing his work,

those documentaries of life in Africa,
savannah, desert, lakes, wilderness,
his love for open skies, and I remember
exactly when those fraying strings were cut

on that summer night
when I said, I couldn't be sure,
perhaps it wasn't love, but plain desire,
and he said, desire is never plain.

Lorraine Gibson is a Scottish Australian poet and writer living in regional Australia. In 2023 she was shortlisted for the Calanthe Press Poetry Prize. Since retiring from her work as a Cultural Anthropologist she has been drawn to writing poetry. Her poetry appears or is upcoming in: *Meniscus*, *The Galway Review*, *Hecate*, *Eureka St*, *Prole*, *Live Encounters*, *Backstory*, *Brushstrokes III*, *Poetry for The Planet*, *Booranga FourW*, *Book of Matches*, *Tarot*, *Last Stanza*, and others. Lorraine has a PhD. in Anthropology from Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Her book, 'We Don't Do Dots: Aboriginal Art and Culture in Wilcannia, New South Wales' is published in the UK by Sean Kingston Press.



ANTIDOTE FOR LOST LOVE

Clearing out our house,
I sorted
through the tartan
biscuit tin
full of old
photographs.
I asked the ether,

Was I not enough?

At the markets, I scanned
a selection of fresh
biscuits—some
were honied and dark.
I took the type
I fancied home—licked
thick smooth chocolate
from the underside
of a new kind of biscuit.
It wasn't long before
the tartan-tin
was replenished.
Thus satisfied,
I discovered life
offers many variations
of black and white.

Lorraine Gibson

Trevor M. Landers has been widely published in NZ and abroad. He hopes to reprise his 2004 volume, *To Rômania* with Love to mark the twentieth anniversary. His next edited anthology called *Ngā Pūrehu Kapohau* (The Spinning Turbines) will be launched on 24 March 2024. He is following it up with a similar survey of another part of the province of Taranaki.



A HIKE THROUGH TE WERA FOREST

We set off with a small pack
some orange juice, egg sandwiches, nuts
I am here for you; the forest is incidental

If you ask me for a match
I will give you a wildfire, an inferno
I am love's arsonist.

We climbed up on a ridge
to survey the world from elevation;
You say you don't know how to love small.

Your name stays with me always
Folded into my skin that only lovers caress
a love more numerous than all these trees here.

Trevor M. Landers

THE YELLOW SWARTHS JUST OUTSIDE STRATFORD

There is clover, cocksfoot
the tang of tall fescue
the eau de parfum of a pearly, sweltering summer
dry winds, drier than the most aridly laconic wit
the savage sun, its countenance ravaging
over rows of barberry, golden hay lies
the musty smell of maturation, expungement of moisture
skin, stalk & leaf burns, blanches and lies utterly acquiescent
first teddered into distress, then rowed into neat lines
they squiggle with the contours and perimeters
the shaved paddock, the bristled storks,
a bountiful dry-matter harvest
pastures replenished by seed
When the grass is amaranthine
the baler is summoned like a verdure midwife
grama gobbled gleefully
tynes, sprockets, belts, plunger
the ballet of agricultural machinery
the mechanics of ingenuity
packing the dry yellow swarths
into neat packages of bovine nutrition.

In our youth, a haymaking crew
subtle competition between brothers
a primary school boy zooming around on the sweep
here, on a pylon's high wire
a magpie squawks clamourously
indignant the glass clip
stop your snivelling bird
come rail hail shine
laughter should echo from your pursed lips
this whenua, burnished by the alchemy of seasons
gives love and sustenance
if you lean in and listen
like the auscultations of the heart
the murmurings of an abyssal love.

Piet Nieuwland has poetry appearing in Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally in numerous print and online journals. He is a performance poet, a visual artist, co-edits the annual Northland anthology *Fast Fibres Poetry*. His new books of poetry *As light into water* and *We enter the* are published by Cyberwit. <https://www.pietnieuwland.com/>



ALIANZA

From gravel heavy stares, spilt on lino,
or silent trash decaying
of rusted iron, with the nausea,
with the day extinguished, carbonic
at arm's reach the glitter glare of Lepidoptera
monarchs spinnaker in endless irradiation

You were trustee to the lights inscription, of vaporized beings
that the late lazy sun tossed at steeples,
glass polarized, with the pollen of bees
your flesh fleeing from unseen balls of fire
prior and subsequent to the day, his Aztec children
Days pass dressed in CIA overcoats
but are snared by your chant beating
Oh woman, in your relax
I planted my hope, my quiet anticipation

With your supple touch digitized pointillist, filling head on out
into the quantities that define the earth,
distant from the ferment of sterile rooms in empty matter
ice with no heartbeat and fading baits,
I examine your tummy combusting and your tangled salivating
tongue receding
like falling larks in my sleep

times are when what your salty prisms of sadness may be
like lines chewing into my brow-
there, surf is convulsing itself to spray
the action wet exhausted final

Piet Nieuwland

Thanks to Pablo Neruda

WHEN THERE IS NO ROOM FOR

Sorrow to stand and braid her hair
On nights of weeping children
When the map of stars shatters / ending all distances

A cascade of blue syllables fall from the fountain
I am alive between two commas
a ridge defining catchments
in summers blush of leaves on a kauri ricker
tui in a blossom burst pohutukawa
warming soil
tomato roots extruding through
like old friends meeting in a café

POINT TE AKE AKE

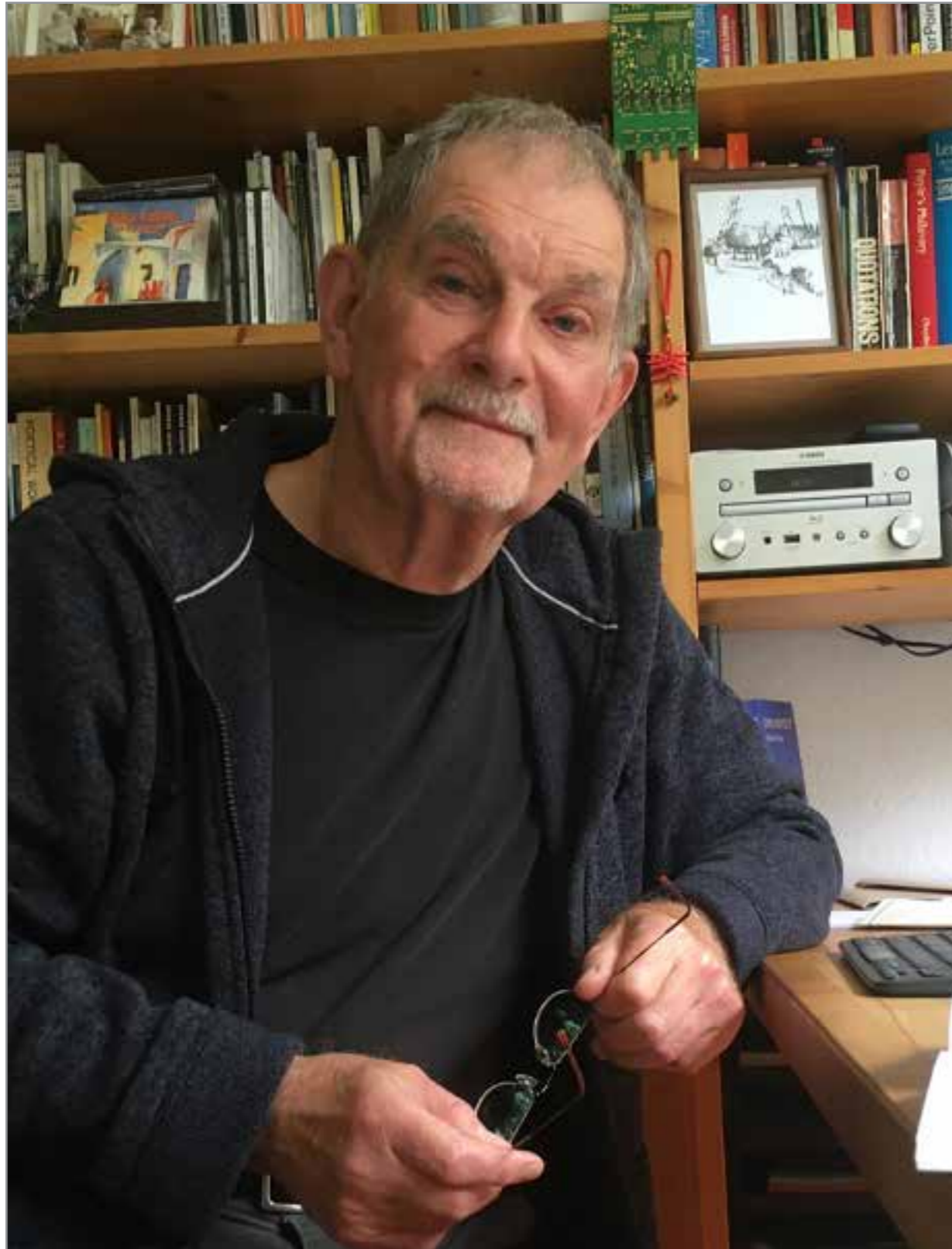
The beach explodes in treasure
each stone flashes, glows, suspended
from night stars, shells nuate shells,
exposing, exposing, till the certain
moment, when all is lost, to the sea,
to the sky, the vortex
that draws day from night, existence from
essence, being from nothingness, this bay
envelopes as the curve of your shoulders, back,
buttocks lie exhausted on the sand.

The wind splays out through the lips
of a lone pohutukawa, turns full circle, left,
right, north, south, as my gut when I reach.

Sitting here in this cabin looking out,
mind taking the shape of these islands,
peninsula, reefs, been fought over,
shed blood for, died for, made love for,
remain in double spangled light for,
by the activities of men foolish,
greedy, happy or mad.

So we travel across this filmy surface,
sometimes meeting a part of ourselves
in a gulping bay, on rocky cliff,
or windswept saddle and make our fortunes
on a beach grinding at the shells beneath,
within, till all light fills us and these
islands, atolls, the world,
becomes our own.

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



NI FEMME, NI ANGE

for Hannah

1.

Circle and fly
half-angel
circle and fly
half-woman
span your wings and
circle and fly.
The circles grow
the orbits change
mi-femme, mi-ange.

The nest is here
it stays as you change
the nest is never far
the nest is ever near
it is your pad to launch
ni femme, ni ange.

2.

Dancing into May
at fourteen: your first late night out.
I sleep. My sleep slips.

Ian Watson. Photo credit: Katrin Krämer.

THE MAKING OF

HIM

Not learning to say No was his salvation;
everybody's handyman, who never shirked
a call for help. I saw more toasters
mended than any child in Europe.
He bailed the others out, worked on Sundays
clearing trees – and worse – from the railway lines.

He was the village poster man; Gill Sans
he could do on his calligrapher's pen.
That's how I printed this out for him then,
the way he liked it: sans serif, no frills, hands on.
They call it People Skills was what he had:
The listener, the decider, the clown on loan
to other people's kids.

We shared that to-and-fro between the limelight
and the quiet hours in the pottering shed.
My greenhouse is a keyboard and a screen
and signs that say Do not disturb.

Not just the eyebrows or the smile; I am heir
to his sense of Help thy Neighbour.
From him I learnt to give.

HER

She was always the arranger:
school dinners, Cubs, appointments,
other women, flowers – him and me.
From her I have inherited a cornucopia:
the full desk diary and the chairwoman's skills;
the sense of order that days and meetings
must have if things are to be achieved.

And though she never played the decider,
she honed the way decisions were made.
She got her way: this I have learned.
And yet this too of her: that if
there is any good at all in pain
it could be this – it slows you down.
Learning to say No was the making of her.
Hands on – but why, for a change, not someone else's?

And yet she sat among us all there, still
arranger, calling on a basket of skills.
For months she had had that room,
that meal, those flowers in her mind.
From her I have also learned
that you have to be an expert to be kind.

SKYLARK

for Peter

*Don't worry; they all come down eventually
– one way or another. The lady laughed.
Would you like a wee coffee to pass the time?*

*I'd watched him walk out, overly nonchalant,
to the tiny Cessna squatting on the grass;
pale he seemed with his smile and cheery wave.*

*Blue sky; the cumulus is fat and bedsheet white.
So, would he be above them now? And would they
churn him like those cloudy airport take-offs do?*

*It is now my third one from the vending machine;
the flaky bench just fifty yards from the tarmac
is beginning to play with my tiring back.*

*And so, I play patience once more on my phone,
glancing up to my left from time to time
to where I think they'll make the descent.*

*Then straining eyes and ears and neck to grab a glimpse
of the tiny hawk approaching with its mosquito whine.*



The Making of - Him and Her. Photograph courtesy Ian Watson.

Paris Rosemont is an Asian-Australian poet whose debut poetry collection, *Banana Girl*, was published by WestWords in 2023. Publications include *Verge Literary Journal*, *FemAsia Magazine*, *Red Room Poetry's 'Admissions'*, *Bristol Noir (UK)* and *Sky Island Journal (USA)*. Winner: *Hammond House Publishing Origins Poetry Prize 2023 (UK)*, *New England Thunderbolt Poetry Prize 2022*; Short-listed: *International Proverse Poetry Prize 2023 (Hong Kong)*, *Born Writers Award 2023*; Longlisted: *Liquid Amber Poetry Prize 2023*, *New Writers Poetry Competition 2023 (UK)*. Awarded: *Atelier Artist-in-Residence Ireland 2024*, *Kathmandu International Artist in Residence 2024*, *Varuna Shanghai Lamplight Residency 2023* and *WestWords/Copyright Agency Fellowship 2023*. Paris's niche is performance poetry. She has performed at events including the *Sydney Fringe Festival*, world premiere of *Slam Messiah 2022*, *Ubud Writers & Readers Festival 2023* and *Short+Sweet Festival Illawarra 2023*, where she was awarded Best Overall Production (runner up), Best Actor (runner up) and Best Script. www.parisrosemont.com

ONCE UPON A TALE, IN A LOVE FAR AWAY

A siren's long-distance lament

From petalled lips I long to sip sweet honeysuckle's wine
Strings of my corset loosening, libation spills my lust
On loam implanting roots with love—a wild Barossa vine
Oh, scatter seeds and yield to me, between my lips combust
Let slip your merlot down my throat and let me sate my glut
For I am one athirst, adrift, delirious on a sea
Of salted tears I cannot drink, and therein lies the cut
The bottles blue as shells untouched: a sailor's remedy
When miles away from tangible caresses on one's skin
A buxom manatee wades by, with folds of slippery flesh
The sun beats down relentlessly; hallucination wins
You dive into the coolness, tumbling deftly with a splash
'Tis I, my love, I sing to you—come warm my watery bed
Forsake the other world you knew, come love with me instead.

This poem is in the form of a Sonnet in iambic heptameter, otherwise known as a 'Fourteener'



Paris Rosemont

Kristian Radford lives in Melbourne, Australia. His poetry has previously appeared in various journals and anthologies including *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Rabbit*, *Westerly*, *Australian Poetry Anthology* and *Best of Australian Poems*. He works as a secondary school teacher.



STAR SONG

I keep searching for words I have no right to—
the afternoon's warm secrets on my neck,
the static of stars singing early in the evening,
the histories tattooed on night's blue ankles

there's a song playing at a frequency that can only be felt
it simmers at the base of my throat
a crucible of languages I can't speak
syllables searching for another mouth

the song asks me where it came from and why I can't sing it
I ask it the same and it runs away
footsteps pounding like drums in a film score
building to the moment the lovers meet the end of the script

Kristian Radford

ODE TO THE RICE COOKER

in this poem I will explain
how the air in this kitchen
has enough empty space
to hide an entire family tree
and enough moisture
to keep it alive

first, I will teach you to be
impervious, the way strength collects
in the smooth walls of Pyrex containers
I will teach you to keep
your heaviness on the outside
and let time slide around you
like a golf ball, clean and anonymous

then, I will demonstrate how to be
precise, to use the instructions
branded onto your body
I will show you the names for
the shapes in this part of the world
and the right language
to say them in

finally, we will practise the
virtue of simplicity
because if you can be trusted
to sing one note
and never lose the pitch
then there will always be a seat for you
at somebody's table

now watch the steam flying like whale-breath
into the shadows of the ceiling
it smells like all of us together
and it always will
even after these faces, these voices
and this house are all gone
dissolving like clouds
in the shape of you

Fred Johnston was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1951. Working as a journalist for some years, he was a poetry reviewer with Books Ireland and The Irish Times, among other publications: he also reviewed for The Sunday Times and Poetry Ireland Review. His work, both prose and poetry, has appeared in The New Statesman, The Guardian, Stand, The Spectator, Iron, Orbis, The Irish Times, The London Magazine, The Dalhousie Review, The Sewanee Review, Southwards, The Moth, The Stinging Fly. Founder of CUIRT international literature festival (Galway,) his most recent poetry collection is 'Rogue States' (Salmon Poetry, 2019.) He is also a novelist and short story writer. He lives in Galway in the West of Ireland.



CANTICLE

I was more than a little in love with Mary
 From my schoolboy's nest up top at the front of the 'bus
 I would see her waiting to board
 Wearing the green uniform of the Fort of the Little Pony*
 And the head of a pony was badged to her jacket
 And the late afternoon went down on our Council estate

I could net the smell of her short hair faintly
 From three seats over. Lust-sick enough for both of us
 My clay-struck homunculus roared
 Mutely with the violence of being young and lonely
 The head of a pony was badged to her jacket
 We kept no clocks, our unformed hearts would regulate

When we rose together abruptly
 Descended the twisting stairs to step across
 To the doors, intimate as skin; the big 'bus snored
 Itself hoarse and caressed the kerb for us gently
 The head of a pony was badged to her jacket
 And the late afternoon stumbled over our Council estate.

Fred Johnston

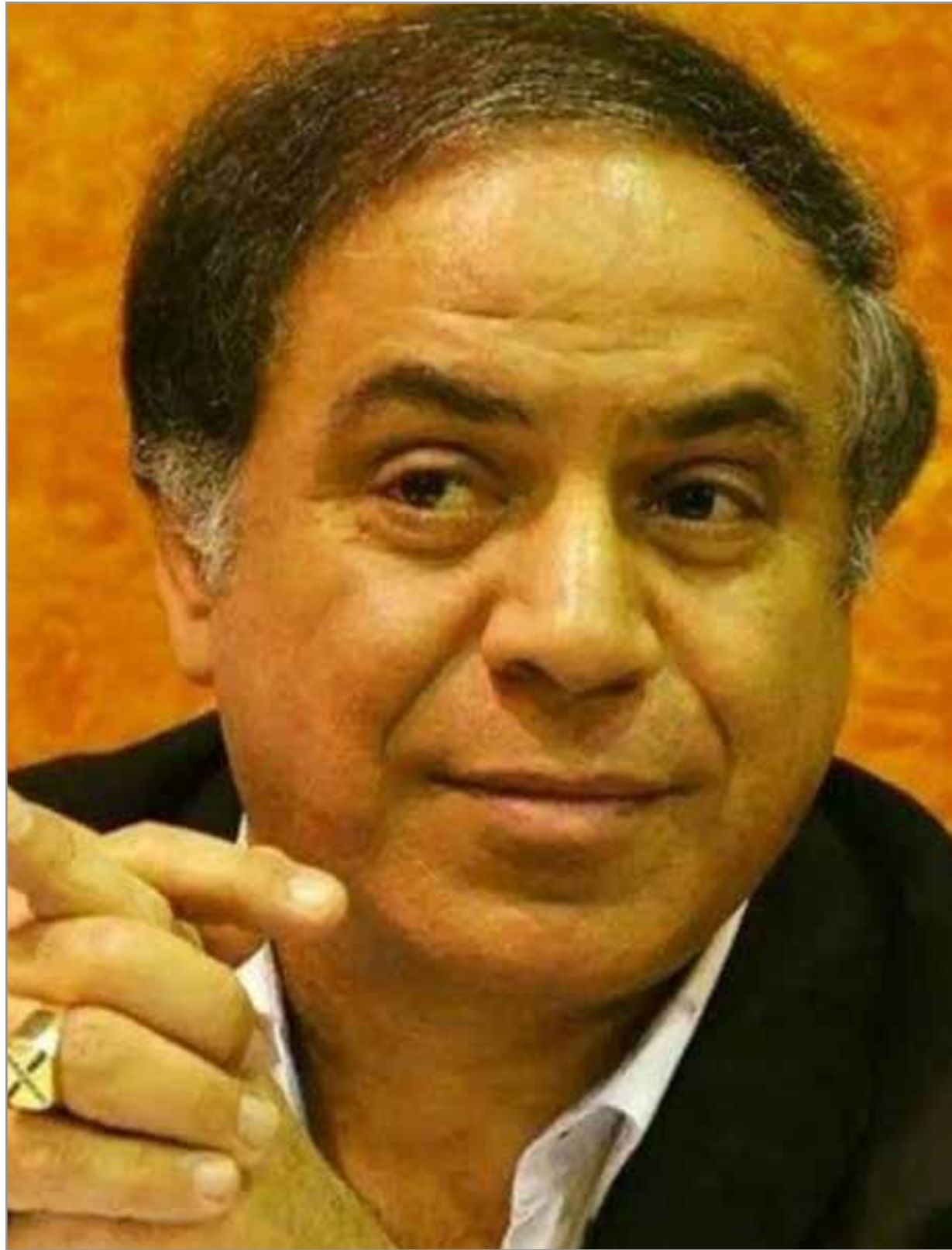
**The Fort of the Little Pony is a translation from the original Irish place-name.*

Ahmad Al-Shahawy is an Egyptian poet and the 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 the UNESCO Literature Award in 1995 and the Cavafy Poetry Award in 1998. Four of his literary works are nominated in the long list of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award in the branch of literature, including his novel *The Magician's Hijab* 2022. Also, recently, *Lavender Ink / Diálogos* published Al-Shahawy's poetry anthology entitled *Alone by the Nile*, 2023.

Translated from Arabic by Dr. Salwa Gouda. She is an Egyptian literary translator, critic, and academic at the English Language and Literature Department at Ain-Shams University. She holds a PhD in English literature and criticism. She received her education at Ain-Shams University and California State University in San Bernardino. She has published several academic books, including "Lectures in English Poetry, and "Introduction to Modern Literary Criticism" and others. She has also contributed to the translation of "The Arab Encyclopedia for Pioneers," which includes poets and their poetry, philosophers, historians, and men of letters, under the supervision of UNESCO. Additionally, her poetry translations have been published in various international magazines.

FROM MY CURRENT STATE OF HEART

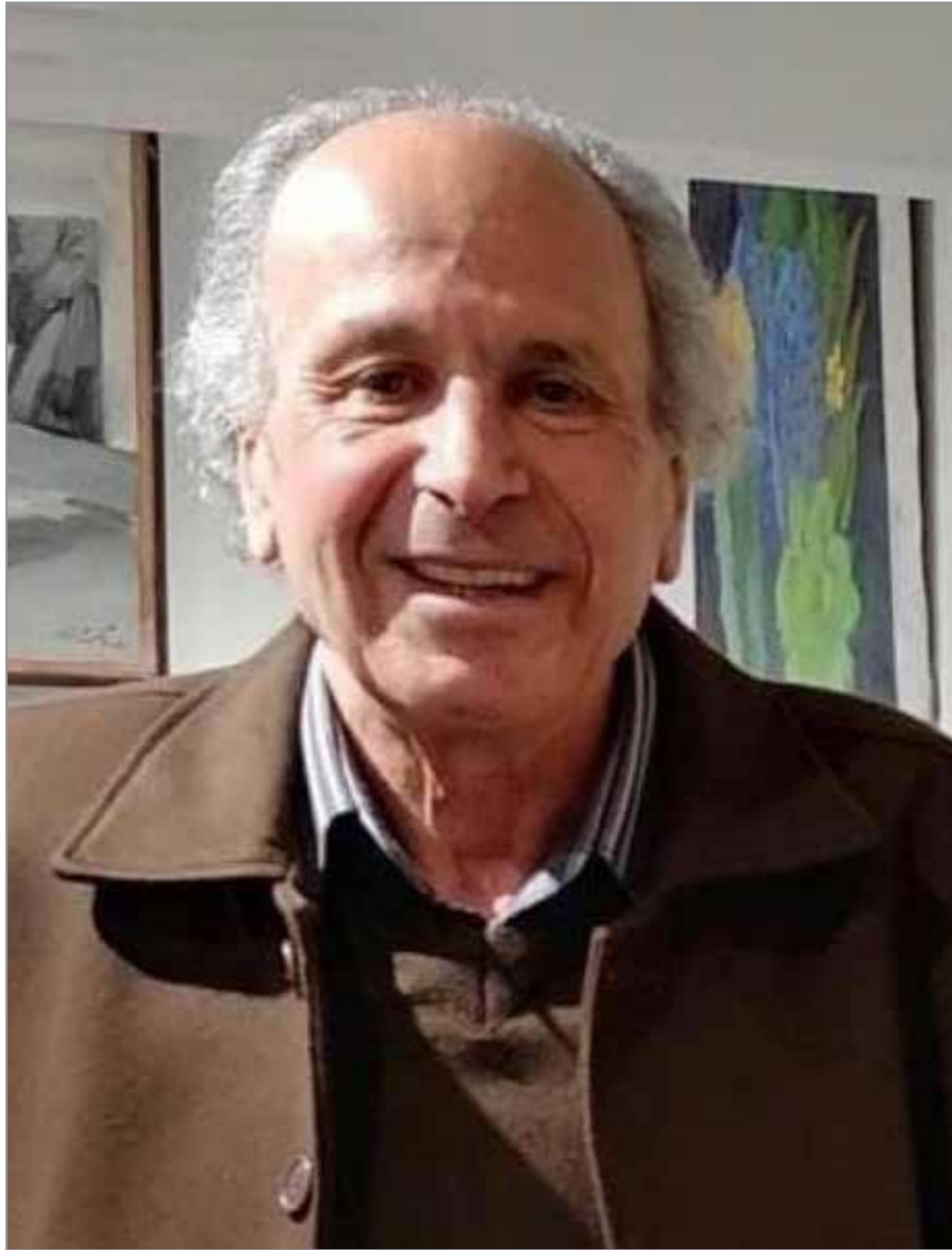
From my current state of heart, I closed my mind
 I said, oh Sea, where are you?
 From the eye of my eyes, I closed my eyes
 And no one saw me except you
 Take my compassionate spirit that is about to Depart
 And go to my soul, nothing is there
 Except you
 My whole adores my entirety
 And some of me is from you
 Give me back my old condition, I am lost
 And there is no arrival without you
 Tell my beloved that if myself
 Transcend for me
 And I tasted death, it is from you
 Every day I see you
 And the face of myself from you
 When the sea of my consciousness appeared
 My ship docked and you melted
 I said to the water, my love
 My death is life, and you are the



Ahmad Al-Shahawy

Gamal Al-Qassas (1950) is an Egyptian poet and journalist. He has published fourteen poetry collections, the most recent of which is "There was Music here" published in 2023. Selections of his poems have been translated into English, Arabic, and Greek. He also won the Cavafy International Prize in Poetry in 1998. He is considered one of the most important founders of the "Illumination 77" poetry group in the 1970s.

Translated from Arabic by Dr. Salwa Gouda. She is an Egyptian literary translator, critic, and academic at the English Language and Literature Department at Ain-Shams University. She holds a PhD in English literature and criticism. She received her education at Ain-Shams University and California State University in San Bernardino. She has published several academic books, including "Lectures in English Poetry, and "Introduction to Modern Literary Criticism" and others. She has also contributed to the translation of "The Arab Encyclopedia for Pioneers," which includes poets and their poetry, philosophers, historians, and men of letters, under the supervision of UNESCO. Additionally, her poetry translations have been published in various international magazines.



TO THE PERSON WHO...

I know you
 I know the situation perfectly
 I know how the mouth leans on the eyes and lips
 How does the sky fold its Book?
 Tear it apart on the table of this rude world
 There is a difference between the past of the flower
 And the past of traitors and thieves
 The tenderness of my heart always precedes the sea
 It knows how to clear the lake for its bird
 You criminal anarchist
 The intelligence of spirits does not require a blind lie
 How many times have you failed to plant it in the tongues of the air?
 Tuck it into a banjo coil
 There is no difference between loving the country
 And the love of a woman

who plays and sleeps on my lap
 I am always the most beautiful loser
 I am not saddened by a rotten thorn
 Or an unlucky stab.

Gamal Al-Qassas

THERE WAS MUSIC HERE

Come on, leave the pelvis
I made you coffee and blueberry cake
I swept the memory
It would be fun to fill it again
Put dreams on the shelf
And we shout: We are here
We practice our final escape
Our feisty jelly fell
We build a small life
One day it will resemble us
It would be a nice city scene
When it's burning.

YOU HAVE NOT WOKEN UP YET

I do not know what this day will do now
What will it eat/what will it drink?
Will it buy new clothes
Will it go to the cinema
Or will it sit in the café
Flirting women at the mall
Yesterday it was meek as it took off its night jacket
When it counted on its fingers like a child:
The exam is over
After five clouds
After a pack of spray
After one session in the good manners workshop
After a demonstration of soul diapers
I will untie the sun knot
I would be unemployed myself
I will sleep in an oyster fragrant with the scent of the seasons
I can curl my legs
I wrinkle them
Like a poem that misspelled your eyes
I can play with them like a balloon measuring its age
With a hole reeling in the mouth of light.

Ashraf Aboul-Yazid (1963) is an Egyptian novelist, translator and poet who has published five poetry collections. He is also a journalist in national and international institutions. His books have been translated into several languages, including English, Spanish, Persian, German, Sindhi and Russian. In addition, He won many local and international awards.

Translated from Arabic by Dr. Salwa Gouda. She is an Egyptian literary translator, critic, and academic at the English Language and Literature Department at Ain-Shams University. She holds a PhD in English literature and criticism. She received her education at Ain-Shams University and California State University in San Bernardino. She has published several academic books, including "Lectures in English Poetry, and "Introduction to Modern Literary Criticism" and others. She has also contributed to the translation of "The Arab Encyclopedia for Pioneers," which includes poets and their poetry, philosophers, historians, and men of letters, under the supervision of UNESCO. Additionally, her poetry translations have been published in various international magazines.



FLAMENCO

A girl from the book of Al-Andalus
He had not seen her before tonight
But the feet will weave
A rhythm in her dance
That he kept dreaming about it before he was born!

Perhaps the sweat that rolled away
Drop, drop, like a river of gold
Above the bronze face
Evaporates from a crack dug by his grandfather
A thousand years ago in Cordoba.

Perhaps the music that
Moved the body to the edge of the stage
And the heart
Al-Mawsili wrote it on a scroll
Hidden by a poetess in love
In the shirt of history.

Perhaps the dress she wears from a cotton tree
Its seed germinated in the East
Before a knight carried it
Across the strait.

I do not remember anything other than the name of the dance:
"Flamenco"
Who among you remembers
A girl from the book of Al- Andalus?

Ashraf Aboul-Yazid

THE MONK ON THE GRAY MOUNTAIN TOP

Like a fugitive ibex
I jump between floating clouds over fields of hope
I wish you enchant me as a star
To rain.

I arrive to the gray mountaintop
The monk was waiting
With his temple that looks like a cloud
Overhead a skyscraper

To reach him
I walked for sixty stations
I do not remember from them but the worn names
And its empty seats

The monk asks me what I came across

Seven butterflies dancing while hugging a cocoon that is about to transform?
Ten roses were tearing a perfume of musk and vineyards?
A pond of water with the image of a bird with dragon wings?
An army of ten squirrels?
Five trees bear fruit apples of light?
A constellation of twenty galaxies?
An elephant raising his golden hodge?
Or a frog stretched its lips to a fleeing prince?

The monk looked at a bottle of water that I carry
It did not keep a drop
It was watering my lost steps.

He looks at my desperate face from seeing something
In a path that cruelty sealed its eyes

I had a one-way ticket
Would he give me a return ticket to search again?

Walid EL Khachab is an Egyptian poet, critic and academic at York University in Canada 20 years ago. He published more than three poetry collections and several critical books. Walid Al-Khachab got the opportunity to work and complete his studies at a Canadian university. He gradually turned into an immigrant university professor, but this immigration did not sever his connection with the reality of cultural life in the Arab world, as he was active in many initiatives based on confirming the presence of Arab creative voices in and outside Canada.

Translated from Arabic by Dr. Salwa Gouda. She is an Egyptian literary translator, critic, and academic at the English Language and Literature Department at Ain-Shams University. She holds a PhD in English literature and criticism. She received her education at Ain-Shams University and California State University in San Bernardino. She has published several academic books, including “Lectures in English Poetry, and “Introduction to Modern Literary Criticism” and others. She has also contributed to the translation of “The Arab Encyclopedia for Pioneers,” which includes poets and their poetry, philosophers, historians, and men of letters, under the supervision of UNESCO. Additionally, her poetry translations have been published in various international magazines.

THE FRENCH SCHOOL

The time I kissed you in the city night
The hours were short and subdued
Your lips were salty
My throat was sad

She was walking down that aisle
Between the Street of Stores and the Street of Banks
Lucie’s salon
Was a Kaaba for beauty
An area between the two ranges

Gorgeous blonde like a nation gone by
Pure as the minds of the ancients
Paris alone
Scatters philosophy on girls’ skirts

You walk confidently on the gym paths
Like a historical coincidence
You made the affricative letter among the Arabs
A square where bodies drink
Morning exercises



Walid EL Khachab



Lynn Strongin is a Pulitzer Prize nominee in poetry. A recipient of a National Endowment Creative Writing Grant, nominated twice for Pushcart Prizes, Lynn Born in NYC at the end of the dirty thirties, she grew up in an artistic Jewish home in New York during the war. Earliest studies were in musical composition as a child and at The Manhattan School of Music. Took a BA at Hunter college, MA at Stanford University graduation as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. Lived in Berkeley during the vibrant sixties where she worked for Denise Levertov and took part in many peace demonstrations. Poems in forty anthologies, fifty journals; Poetry, New York Quarterly. Forthcoming work in Poetry Flash and Otoliths. Canada is her second home. The late Hugh Fox said Strongin is the "most exciting poet writing today." Danielle Ofri wrote to her, "you tear the veil off that mysterious disease polio." Strongin's work has been translated into French and Italian. Her forthcoming book is THE SWEETNESS OF EDNA She recently received a ten-thousand dollar Emergency George Woodcock Grant for Writers from The Writers' Trust of Canada and has been nominated for LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN WRITING in British Columbia, and an HONORARY DOCTORATE from The Manhattan School of music. Her latest book is KIOSK (Erbacce press). She is currently working on a new book of poems ALTO SONNETS: for a dark time.



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 and *Clare's Empire*, a fantasia on the life and work of John Clare from The Hydroelectric Press, as well as several chapbooks, including *Cold Night, Long Dog* from Ambidextrous Bloodhound Press. The recipient of fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim and Ingram Merrill foundations, he is the Edward Everett Hale Jr., Professor of English at Union College.



JORDAN SMITH Review of LYNN STRONGIN'S *Kiosk*

Liverpool UK: erbacce-press, 2023. 72 pp.

In *Kiosk*, the most recent collection from Lynn Strongin--feminist, disability activist, polio survivor, as well as an accomplished poet with nearly half a century's worth of innovative publications to her credit--the heart's place might seem to be the home described in "MOON GLYPHS over Invisible Landscape":

My writing-room
awash in brown-pink sunset,
books,
photographs
From our kitchen we can see Elizah
In her rocking chair, her shadow only...

Available at: <https://www.erbacce-press.co.uk/lynn-strongin>

continued overleaf...

And yet other shadows deepen this sunset scene past comfort: a former tenant who “sat in the same window circle of light / reading library books / & taking notes,” the speaker’s failing health as she sinks “back in bed / As into lake water” and extends a hand, the “beloved,” to whom it is offered, the “patience” and the “apocalyptic predictions” which are the givens of their lives, “not the way / we want to see it play out.” There is a futile longing to travel and an imperative “to litigate these / eerie hieroglyphs in clouds? / To adjudicate ... / Elizah in her rocking chair / Cindy in the circle of light.”

These measures of absence, like William Carlos Williams’s lament that there is “no one to witness and adjust,” are reminders that a poet requires, as well as the immediacy of empathy, the distance of understanding that is found as much in the imagination as it is in observation and memory, as much in the use of a persona as in direct revelation.

The voice Strongin chooses in many of these linked poems is the resident proprietor of a newspaper kiosk near Central Park in a time of pandemic, homelessness, and other fragilities, other resiliencies, in a space that seems the opposite of the poet’s domestic orderliness:

Would you have entered an artist’s studio
Flinging paints, brushes, canvasses aside
& said it’s a helluva mess?

My life in the kiosk
Came about
Because it was necessary to escape
such control
such order.

(“Acolyte, eunuch”)

Like a Hamlet’s nutshell, “my kiosk is reality multiplied,” like Whitman’s self, it exists where neither time nor space impose their limitations. Memories are part of what it holds—of England and training in the theatre, of “Ilse and me cupping our hot coffee, / faces wreathed in steam, / walking along the Thames,” of “Her last time, on the boards, / her beatitudes spoken in a voice / harsh with age but modulating / like the leading alto into a trouser role.”

And there are hopes recalled as sharply as are their attenuations:

... love and its letdowns.
I thought we would be
A woodcut
gentle, severe
Early American.
Tapped like sugar
Tears
Amber as honey. The sting
Of balance books, multiplication, integers o lord,
Division lessened by
Ash blue-bonnets, Scottish shawls against cold,
against despair, Jewish mysticism ...
(“THAT CURSIVE, learned half a century ago,”)

The Kiosk contains material enough for a picaresque memoir, and this hardly exhausts its possibilities. It is a sensibility, including, spread over several poems, a consideration of *Las Meninas* of Velasquez, which is also a kind of “reality multiplied”:

Velasquez’s unidentifiable child whom I see as a child-eunuch
her rustling crackling taffetas in stage-right,
traces of her or his whole world having been burned;
tiny androgyne
like ice breaking on the lake this morning
(“Chimney Terraces,”)

The ambiguity of gender and agency, the apocalyptic crackling anticipating a burning world, the lake’s ice, are the poet’s, not the painter’s, recurrences within a sensibility that includes Dickens and Schubert and Henry Moore, polio and COVID-19, that thrives on correspondences and repetitions, and reconsiderations, that situates itself at once in the midst of life (as a vendor who works near an urban park with a bakery two blocks away, who wears red stockings, who asks the passersby “What is your deep request,” who meditates on “Scattered / Sacred things,” of which the eunuch/girl in the Velasquez painting is one) and at the remove of a persona, often fused with the poet, finely attuned to “vulnerability, which shines everywhere.”

Kiosk is dedicated to this vulnerability to “the homeless; all over this world.” Who better to observe and empathize than the news-seller in a kiosk on their urban ground, than the poet who understands the radical isolation of patients “housed / in in multiple iron lungs filling rooms / like stainless steel lace,” who found two friends--Celine (“small cigarette burns / all over her arm”) and the invented Annie (“Sometimes, you drew her in a collar of lace / Or like arrow & bow / drew her to hit the target, / unnamable”)—in a monastery’s eating disorders ward where she also discovered her vocation, “talent having beat starvation.” In “STRANGE CHILDREN, those with swan necks,” she incorporates Bob Dylan’s phrase, “no direction home,” and it makes perfect sense to be reminded of the singer’s paeans to the virtues of the dispossessed life (“when you ain’t got nothing, you got nothing to lose” and “to live outside the law you must be honest”) when face to face with this book’s insistence that dislocation can transport us where we most need to go. Like Sandra McPherson’s *Speech Crush*, another recent collection that takes up the experiences of aging, illness, and the institutions of healing and holds these to the light of candor and understanding, that looks hard at the damage and partial redemptions we experience as we go on, Strongin’s *Kiosk* reasserts what we need most as we witness and adjust, as we travel: clarity and capaciousness of heart.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

2010 - 2024



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
FEBRUARY 2024

COVER ARTWORK 'THIRTEEN HEARTS' BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE