

2010 - 2025



POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
MARCH 2025



TIM HUNT
Traveling Through the Light

COVER ARTWORK 'MARCH HARE' BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor

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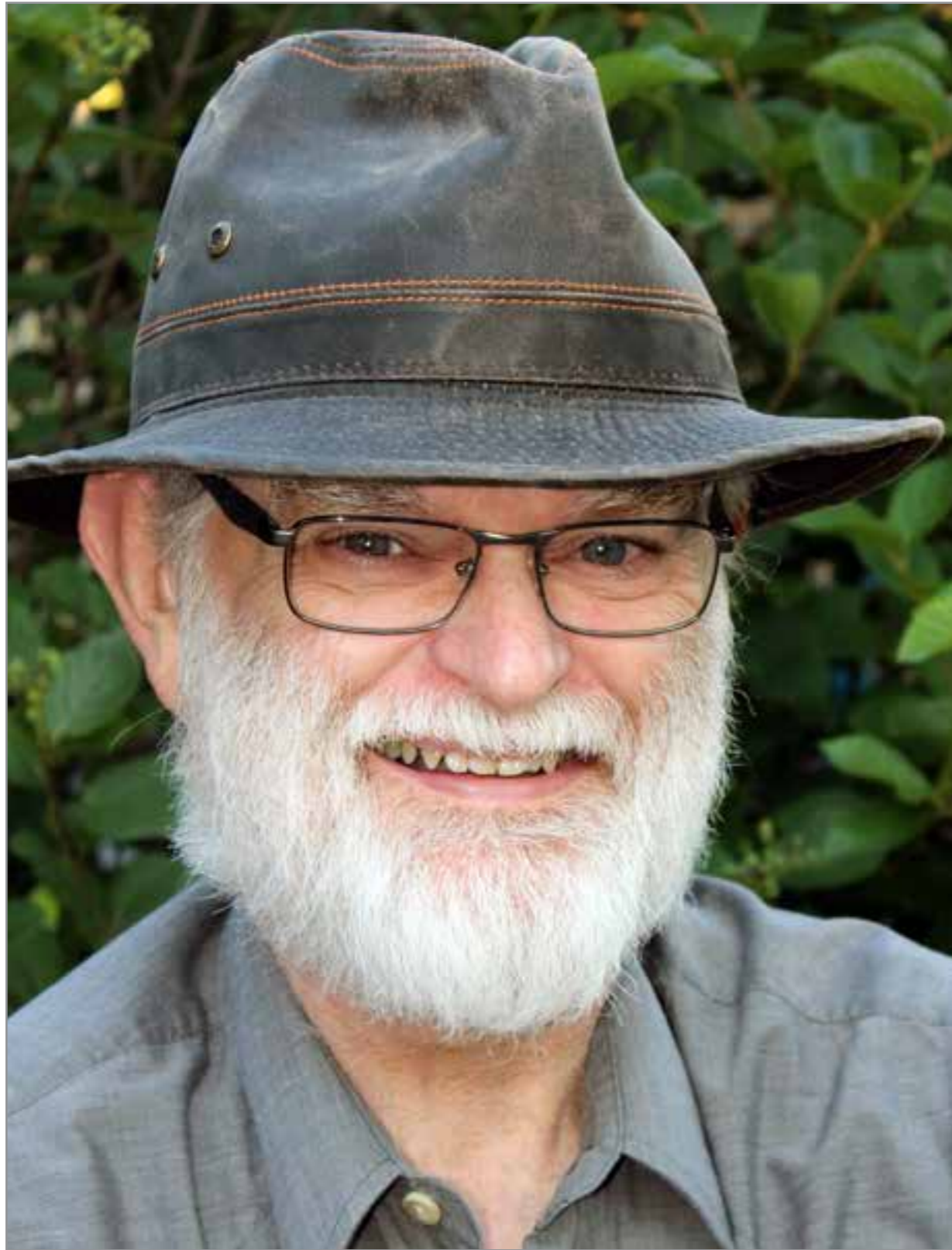


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Tim Hunt is the author of six collections of poetry, including *Western Where* and *Voice to Voice in the Dark* (both Broadstone Books) and *Ticket Stubs and Liner Notes*, winner of the 2018 Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award. Recognitions include six Pushcart Prize Nominations, and the Chester H. Jones National Poetry Award for "Lake County Diamond" from his first collection *Fault Lines* (The Backwaters Press). He has been a finalist for various book prizes, including, The Sexton Prize for Poetry, The Richard Snyder Publication Prize, The May Swenson Poetry Award, The Frederick Morgan Poetry Prize, The Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize, Off the Grid Prize, The Saint Lawrence Book Award, and The Holland Prize. His critical work includes two studies of Jack Kerouac (*Kerouac's Crooked Road: Development of a Fiction* and *The Textuality of Soulwork: Kerouac's Quest for Spontaneous Prose*) and *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. Originally from the hill country of northern California, he was educated at Cornell University and concluded his teaching career at Illinois State University where he was University Professor of English. He and his wife, Susan, live in Normal, Illinois. <https://www.broadstonebooks.com/shop/p/voice-to-voice-in-the-dark-poetry-by-tim-hunt>
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TIM HUNT

TRAVELING THROUGH THE LIGHT

With time, memory fades...and sharpens. Or perhaps it's more that the things we hold onto, as we rehearse them to ourselves, open over time, and we come to understand more of how, or why, they have mattered to us. 1987. The centennial of the birth of the poet Robinson Jeffers is being celebrated by a series of notable poets, each reading a poem or two from Jeffers' rich canon. I've forgotten some of the people who read that night. I do, though, remember Czeslaw Milosz ascending to the stage cloaked in the aura of his Nobel Prize, but not which poem he read. And William Everson, his fringed buckskin shirt, an eagle claw dangling from wrist, the waist-length white hair, acknowledging his debt to his poetic mentor, but not which poem he read. And Gary Snyder's easy command as he looked out at the lecture hall as if we were, as we were, part of his community.

Here, again, I don't remember which poem Snyder selected. It might have been "Salmon Fishing" or perhaps "Fire on the Hills." If this were fiction, I would tell you it was "Oh, Lovely Rock," because that would blend with what I do remember: the seemingly off hand anecdote he shared of camping in the Sierras with the too-little remembered poet Lew Welch. And Lew looking up from the campfire to ask, *Gary, what do you the rocks think of the trees?* And Snyder in his memory, *I don't know, Lew. What do the rocks think of the trees?* And Welch, *Well, you know, they're just passing through*, as we all shared a bemused laugh.

Tim Hunt

That night, I was charmed by how Snyder took a moment to talk as if to, or with, those of us gazing up at him. Now, nearly forty years later, what strikes me are the implications of Welch's answer to his question—how it erases the divide between animate and inanimate, nature and human, by imagining them as different scales of time. From the geological time of the rocks, the Douglas Firs looking down on the campfire are a brief, transitory instant. For the trees, the two poets, sipping their camp coffee, are even more fleeting—a flickering presence as their flickering campfire dies to reddened coals. The rest of Snyder's moment on the stage that evening has faded away (or perhaps I've let it fade away) but not Snyder recalling Welch musing about the rocks and trees and how recognizing the temporality we share with the trees and rocks—even though their temporalities differ from our own—draws us outward from our own moment of being to an awareness of being within the world's more comprehensive being.

And William Stafford read that night. And I do remember what he read: "Vulture," a late Jeffers poem. And I remember how he read it as if he, white-haired and craggy featured, were the poem's elderly speaker, resting on the hilltop, eyeing the circling bird as it inspected him. And as if he, too, were bemused in realizing that the bird might think he was already carrion and willing "To be eaten by that beak and become part of him, to share those wings and those eyes" and sensing too that this would be a "sublime end of one's body," a soaring "enskymment" in death, through death, beyond death.

Even then I sensed that Stafford was not simply acknowledging another poet by sharing one of his poems but celebrating Jeffers by becoming the poem.

A few years later I moved to the Portland area and Stafford invited me to come see him. In his campus office that afternoon, I asked about Jeffers, and he told me that he had, as a young man in the 1930s, hitchhiked from Kansas all the way to Carmel, California hoping to meet Jeffers. He told me that he found his way to Tor House and stood at the gate looking across the garden at the house and the stone tower Jeffers had built, and how he started to reach for the gate's latch, then, instead, turned and hitchhiked back to Kansas. He ended the story there. I think I remember a wry but not rueful smile, and too, understanding that I wasn't being invited to ask him to explain. And didn't. I do remember the trees outside his window filtering the afternoon sun and believing that he was sharing something with me that mattered to him—and that he was choosing to share this because he thought it should, or maybe only could, matter to me.

Over the decades I've remembered that story and the telling of it and wondered why Stafford, having hitchhiked all that way, didn't knock on the door of Tor House. The most obvious is that he thought the reclusive Jeffers would see his earnest homage as an unwelcome intrusion. Perhaps, at that moment, Jeffers was too intimidating a figure to approach. But I've continued to think that Stafford was sharing this moment as something other than a glimpse of the naiveté of his youthful pilgrimage, and over the decades I've come to believe that he sensed, as he looked across the garden at the door of that stone cottage, that the person who would answer his knock was simply a person who wrote poems—a person who could, through the writing of poems, enact (and for moments be) a self beyond the self. And in recognizing this, Stafford, I've come believe, sensed that the Jeffers he wanted to meet, to know, to acknowledge, could only be known in and through the poems. And I've come to believe that this was why Stafford shared that story—as a text for me to study, a lesson I might come to understand and thus better understand how Jeffers' work might matter for my own attempts to write poems that might matter—both for myself and others.

In the 1970s, it was the fashion to understand the relationship of younger poets to those who influenced them through the lens of Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*. Bloom argued that the poet son was inevitably competing with the poet father (yes, a patriarchal model and, if I remember right, explicitly Freudian). To accept the influence of the father doomed the son to writing *weak* poetry. To kill off the already dead poet father through a willful misreading of the elder was the only way to achieve *strong* poetry. In Bloom, influence is the result of resisting influence. And perhaps this was the case, as he proposed, for Wallace Stevens. But Stafford's pilgrimage to Tor House and his reading of "Vulture" that evening some fifty years later suggest a different possibility—that influence, if that's the right term for it, can also happen through accepting the imaginative world of another poet as a possibility to be explored and drawn upon—a resource that enriches, and in some small way even enables, one's own work. Instead of the *yes, but* of Bloom's *agon* of influence, the *ah, yes*, and *oh, this also of dialogue*.

By the time Stafford was recognized as a poet of significance, Jeffers was no longer seen as a major poet—was indeed nearly forgotten. And Stafford's plain speaking seems unrelated to Jeffers' voice, but the young Stafford's pilgrimage to Carmel and the way he gave himself to Jeffers' "Vulture" that evening in 1987 show that Jeffers mattered for him.

And his early, often anthologized “Traveling Through the Dark” shows that Jeffers was not, for Stafford, a figure to be resisted, as Bloom would have it, but a presence to engage, an informing possibility that was much deeper than matters of technique and deeper, too, than the mystery we refer to as *voice*. In the poem, the speaker is driving a mountain road and comes around a blind curve where a deer has been hit, killed, and left in the roadway. He stops to push the carcass, a hazard for other drivers, over the cliff side, then realizes the dead doe is pregnant with a still living fawn. The poem ends:

Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—,
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

One key to the poem is the fifth of these lines. If we read the poem as treating the wilderness as simply a scene or setting for the speaker’s dilemma (treating the world of nature as one thing and the human world as another), the *listening* is necessarily figural (“I could hear the wilderness *as if it were listening*”). But if the wilderness has being or is a being, then the speaker is not imagining the “wilderness” *as if it is listening* but is instead, in a heightened moment of awareness, actually hearing the wilderness as it listens, and the “us” in “for us all” in the next line includes the wilderness. In “Traveling Through the Dark,” the wilderness is an aspect of Nature, and Nature is the being within which the speaker, the doe and fawn, the rocks and trees cloaked in the darkness beyond the red glare of the brake lights, and the river below all have their subsidiary being. Although the tone is entirely different, this is also Lew Welch’s sense of nature when he wonders what the rocks think of the trees. And, too, it is Jeffer’s sense of nature. And this helps explain the impact—the resonance and implications—of “my only swerving.” In hesitating, the speaker is holding back from what must be done. He is momentarily allowing his very human empathy for the fawn that will not be born to obscure his vision of nature’s more fundamental terms and his obligations to and within nature. In the human frame, the scene *is* tragic.

In Nature’s frame, the scene is. And the speaker momentarily swerves, then comes to accept this and acts as he must. This dilemma, the drama, of human consciousness both within and at odds with nature’s being is also at the center of Jeffers’ “Hurt Hawks,” where the speaker hesitates to put a severely injured hawk out of its misery. In Jeffers’ poem the speaker, caught between his recognition of Nature’s indifference to the hawk’s pain and his human, humane, pity at its stoic suffering, delays giving the hawk the “lead gift” of death. In Stafford’s poem, the speaker recognizes and quietly acknowledges his “swerving.” In Jeffers’ poem the too-often misunderstood outburst “I’d sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk, but...” registers his similar, but not identical, “swerving.”

Whether or not Stafford had “Hurt Hawks” explicitly in mind as he wrote “Traveling Through the Dark” (and I doubt he did), Jeffers’ poetry, and perhaps particularly “Hurt Hawks,” offered him elements that he could draw from, extend, and reshape as he confronted his moment on that mountain road (which I choose to believe was an actual moment). And however Stafford’s mapping of the dialectic of our human being within nature’s greater being might differ from Jeffers, his relationship to Jeffers through Jeffers’ poetry was not the *agon* of anxiety where the younger poet contests the elder, but the *and also* of dialogue. And if so, this offers a glimpse of a different kind of tradition than the one T.S. Eliot sketched in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” where each poem is an element in a set mapped on an atemporal chart and the game, the competition, is to have a piece added to this collection called “tradition.”

Stafford’s connection to Jeffers (and Snyder’s as well?) suggests an alternate tradition where each poem—its mode of being—enables further poems, further explorations of being. Perhaps this alternative tradition might be thought of as *tradition and the communal talent*, or perhaps *tradition and the dialogic talent*.

And in the spirit of that, perhaps I can be forgiven by closing with this piece occasioned by that afternoon in Stafford’s office years ago, and too his sharing of “Vulture” that evening even more years ago and offered in what I hope is the spirit of dialogue—of *and this also*.

TRAVELING THROUGH THE LIGHT

*Recalling William Stafford recalling hitchhiking
from Kansas to California hoping to meet Robinson Jeffers*

In time you would come to know that the poem
is everywhere and all things:

Emily at her kitchen window
glimpsing the cochineal blur
of a hummingbird—
the morning mail riding on to Tunis;

the workers loading and unloading their wagons
as Walt, at ease with the late summer sun,
imagines he is one with their manly joy, the rowdy
camaraderie and glistening sheen of broad shoulders.

But I was too young to know these things
when you were telling me of your pilgrimage
—hitchhiking from somewhere in Kansas
all the way west to Carmel hoping to meet the poet.

You were what, nineteen, as you made your way,
ride after ride: the clattering of the Model Ts
and jouncing farm wagons and maybe
a salesman or two with a shiny sedan—

the lull of the thrumming tires and motor's hum
deepening
your first glimpse of the western mountains.

And, too, the desert, then again
the mountains, the Sierras, and at last,
as you walked down the hill through the village,
the ocean—sun-glittered through the trees,

then opening vast and endless.

Or maybe it was still morning and the waves
sighing out
from beneath the retreating fog

as you turned south, walking on,
the hillside pines on your left, sand
spits and granite on your right
until you came to the poet's gate

and stood there

looking across the patch of garden
at the sea-worn stones,
the tower and cottage framed by the Eucalyptus.

Then turned and hitchhiked all the way back
to Kansas: the clattering Model Ts,
the farm wagons and maybe a salesman's car,

the desert stars
and mountain stars those nights,
then again the Kansas prairie—
as if this were the pilgrimage

and that moment of almost
reaching for the gate's latch
your only swerving.

Sandy Solomon's book, *Pears, Lake, Sun*, which received the Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize from the University of Pittsburgh Press, was published simultaneously in the UK by Peterloo Poets. Her work has appeared in journals in the US and the UK—most recently, in *The New Yorker*, *Plume*, *Scientific American*, *Kenyon Review*, *Harvard Review*, and *Hopkins Review*. And, also, in such journals as *New Republic*, *Poetry Review (UK)*, *Threepenny Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Two of her poems have just appeared in *A Century of Poetry in The New Yorker, 1925 to 2025*, an anthology drawn from more than 13,500 poems published by the magazine since its first issue. She lives in Nashville (she has taught in Vanderbilt University's Creative Writing Program) and spends part of each year in the UK where her English historian partner does his research.



STRAY

Open wounds on his legs, his flank, his snout.
 Infected, starved, too weak even to move
 when the man lifts him from the highway's verge
 where someone dumped him, wrapped in a dirty blanket.

For weeks, he's bandaged, bedded down, fed
 by tube. Too weak, too much in pain to eat.
 You'd think they'd put him down. Instead, the humans
 croon as they clean his sores and cover his body.

But over many weeks, like a film run backwards,
 from no movement, he moves. Now he's lapping
 water or eating kibble; now he lifts
 his head to look, his ribs disappearing

in flesh, coat filling out, the lesson
 of recovery condensed clearly in his body.
 A month in, we watch him work to stand,
 back legs held, trembling, and then failing.

We watch him work to walk and later run,
 his helpers propping him up, urging him on.
 I watch out of some radical need
 for rescue: his disused voice, gruffly sounding.

Sandy Solomon

NOTE

At a presentation on essential oils

The speaker for today's talk discusses smell.
He says he'll ask his audience to tell
from cards he's infused, each with a different oil,

what associations those scents evoke.
Aroma, he says, has notes, high and low.
I tune him out to ponder sound yoked

to smell, sense defining sense. My mind
locates smells like the bright, high ī in kind,
almost too sharp, a pang of cheesy rind.

Then smells that conjure up the long ō;
that deeper musk in soil, wobble in the throat,
lament almost, the heart's stumbling Oh.

I'm back when he holds a card for me to sniff
that carries in its highs my mother's scent, the whiff
of rare evenings out in a stir of stiff-

crinolined skirts as she paused to say
goodnight; and we children stopped our casual play
to stare her out, her strange, lip-sticked sway

infused in rose geranium, I learn
today. He smiles. In her wake, the waves churn
at childhood's dock and pass. I see her turn,

no years now to weigh her down. Shadows—
all hurt and difficulty blurred. Echo's
echo. Beneath salt breeze, that earthly nose.

PLUNGE

Get out, I say. Like, Go on. Tell me another.
You don't say. But you do, and we're laughing,
that silly laughter that takes over the room,

as when, running a long race, the lungs crush.
Breathing's a bastard, a bitch. *Come on. Come on.*
Trying it on like tomorrow. Like no tomorrow.

Are you weeping? My first loyalty is to tears,
no matter how I come upon them.
Fall into laughter as into a warm pool.

Body under, head under, eyes closed.
Treading the moment. Not helpless, but like helpless.
Hang onto your arm to hold myself down.

WALK

Down the disused road the dog and I
took a last walk together; we stepped

into our shadows, stretched straight before us
that afternoon, grey, slightly lumpy

shapes that spilled forward. The cracked asphalt
crossed with branched shadow from the bare

boughs above. We breathed damp vegetal
smells where snow melted along the verges.

The thaw, the light, the air's brisk currents,
something promised spring, or winter's end.

The dog stopped and stopped to nose ground,
its scent released from freeze—days and days

of doggy traces now warmed and freed to smell.
I waited, moved, waited again, watching

over his wasted frame, the matted neck
a mass of bones, as he bent; our shadows waited

as well, mine massive, his small.
He was just a dog. I knew—present,

cocked—like my thumb's curl around the leash,
the irritation I'd sometimes felt when

he rolled in smells or chewed cow plops.
But then, no matter what, he'd waited for me

nights, keeping weary watch until,
at last, I'd climb the stairs; he'd greeted mornings;

he'd run circles round me in what looked like joy
at open sky or a meal; he'd looked out.

Now he slowed and slowed again, wanting
rest, wanting home, and when I turned

back, he quickened his pace. Our shadows, longer
yet, fell in behind each hard-cast step.

WAR

His broad hands, their muscular grip,
and all their rage,
which he and I knew
as passion. How helpless we were together
in that Chicago room,
strained gray light
from the airshaft even when the sun shone,

our bodies resting under the wrinkled sheets
curled and overlapping.
Beside his bed, bottles
of pills he took to bring on sleep or blunt
nightmares, pills prescribed
when, back from Viet Nam,
he began to study history again.

The army pegged him as literate and kind
so it gave him the job
of writing from base camp:
Your son, Brian, didn't suffer at the end.
I enclose his personal
effects—letters, photos,
his high school ring—and send the Company's

sympathy for your loss. His fellow soldiers
loved him. Or so I've imagined
the note. I know he'd sit
at his typewriter to peck at the o's and y's.
Fiction sometimes, he said.
The kid had cried and bled out,
rescuers under fire, unable to reach him.

But for the bereaved, the lie about sudden,
unsuffering peace
must have helped as they
imagined their boy down and close to death.
Sometimes my friend wrote
fictions of another sort,
as he squared the soldier's lies, lover and wife.

Perfect job for a historian who had to find,
absent living witnesses,
the truth from scraps of paper.
But the job conditions! What hurt, he said, wasn't
the story of a soldier's death
but the facts, the body bags
dropped in the corner of his room for him to search

for snapshots or last letters, for tokens
or locks of hair,
the soldier's keepsakes.
What hurt, he said, was the red-raw, open-
handed, slack-jawed,
shot-up, bloody
vacancy, the waste, which wormed in his mind,

knocked him back when he searched their pockets for clues
about a life now gone.
As he sat alone
in the forward base at his desk to compose his bland,
comforting notes,
his feelings shook the fingers
that were searching for the right key, the words.

continued overleaf...

In Chicago, in sleep, sometimes he shouted, sometimes
twitched; mostly the war
hid silently,
wearing his gentle mask, his civilian clothes.
But, it showed itself
when he held my body
in his broad hands. Then it joined us, grew

articulate in gesture, seemed to rise
from elsewhere, from a moon-crossed
night of stars and rockets
in Da Nang; from those careful, nuanced letters
to say, to say, to say....
And after, ever after,
from those empty, blasted eyes.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Rachel Coventry lives in Galway. Her poems appear in The Guardian, The Rialto, The North, Stand, and The Moth. Her most recent books are "The Detachable Heart" 2022 (Salmon Poetry) and "Heidegger and Poetry in the Digital Age" 2023 (Bloomsbury).



OLD GALWAY

He'd thrown something at it
just before we arrived.
Three young women
rushed to defend the marauder.

I pay 100 euros to fish this river
he tells us
his face dark with drink and rage
as if to ask what the seal pays.

But what could he say?
When the bulwark of his anger
Bumped against a monolith
of girlish condemnation.

Your grandfather had died that very morning
I remember him telling me
how this river had run black with salmon
once.

Rachel Coventry

A WALK

We take an impromptu walk together.
You are going to the market to get tomatoes,

eggs from a stack,
a fresh round bread

You Moroccans love your bread, I say,
but you don't hear because of some little furore.

I am getting in my steps after work.
I carry you in my hand; you carry me in yours.

Among these crooked silhouette trees,
I watch you get on with the business of living,

occasionally grinning down at me in your palm
as the night gathers in around my crown.

You are farther south, in the yellow for now
but it will slant away from you too.

WE ARE BOTH IN POSSESSION OF OUR FATHER'S DEATH CERTIFICATES

For Leigh

When you tell me about the death certificate
I say, *me too*
as if we'd both visited La Spezia
or liked to eat chia seeds at breakfast
or decided against dying our hair.

In the restaurant, you noted that
we both needed glasses to read the menu
we both have the same Specsavers cases.

We sit in my car at the water's edge in Cornamona,
a place of no particular significance to either of us,
telling stories of the men we didn't really know
and the men we did
me too, I say me too.

Tricia Dearborn is an award-winning poet, writer and editor. Her latest books of poetry are *Autobiochemistry* and *She Reconsiders Life on the Run*. Her work has been widely published in literary journals and in anthologies including *Fishing for Lightning: The spark of poetry*, *The Anthology of Australian Prose Poetry*, and *Contemporary Australian Poetry*. She has been guest poetry editor for various literary journals, including *Cordite 112: TREAT* (2024) and *Rabbit 31: The Science Issue* (2020), and a judge for the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize. She also writes fiction, and was the winner of the 2021 international Neilma Sidney Short Story Prize. She is currently completing a new poetry collection with the support of a grant from Create NSW.



TODAY YOU ARE AN OCEAN

dashing yourself, wave by wave
onto rocks of reality

over and over, the smash
the roar
the reverberations

the rocks are implacable, unyielding
they are the usual types of ocean rocks

igneous
formed by volcanic eruptions and congealings
of sorrow, rage, despair

metamorphic
born of enormous intersecting forces,
contradictory pressures — outrage/terror,
loyalty/the need to speak

sedimentary
the accretion of what's known, the gradual
acknowledgement of harm, the long slow
settling into belief

the waves shatter over and over
into rising jets of spume
disperse into rivulets and mist
while the ocean roars, unbroken

Tricia Dearborn

Scott-Patrick Mitchell is a WA-based queer non-binary poet who lives on Whadjuk Noongar Country. They were the recipient of 2022's Red Room Poetry Fellowship, Westerly's 2022 Mid-Career Fellowship and the 2023 winner of The XYZ Prize for Innovation in Spoken Word. Their debut poetry collection *Clean* (Upswell Publishing, 2022) explores Mitchell's lived experience as a methamphetamine addict and was shortlisted for The Prime Minister's Literary Awards, The WA Premier's Book Awards, The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and internationally in The Read Rainbow's Best LGBTIQ+ Books of 2022 Awards. Mitchell is currently completing their second poetry collection which explores the parallel between the fragile ecosystem of the marine park Perth Canyon and the fragility of the houseless crisis (which Mitchell experienced as an addict) taking place in WA's coastal car parks.



AFTER THE MARINE ECOLOGIST VISITS HER SCHOOL, MY DAUGHTER RECREATES DINNER TIME IN THE DEEP

My daughter embodies the breath of life.
On the beach, she is recreating whale fall.
I laugh and clap at her pantomime's drama
as sea denizens come out to dine and feast.

On the beach, she is recreating whale fall.
She begins to understand how death begets birth.
The sea denizens come out to dine and feast,
make plans to raise a family of their own.

She begins to understand how death starts birth.
The food pulse sparks aquatic love and fish
make plans to raise a family of their own.
"Eggs cost a lot to make, the scientist said."

The food pulse sparks aquatic love and fish
and squid court and kiss and spawn the dark.
"Eggs cost a lot to make, the scientist said."
How a nautilus will sacrifice food for kids.

And squid court and kiss and spawn the dark:
she mimics this with flat palms, wiggling arms.
How a nautilus will sacrifice food for kids,
carry their child's name on their thinning lips.

She mimics this with flat palms, wiggling arms.
I laugh and clap at her pantomime's drama.
I carry my child's name on my thinning lips:
my daughter embodies the breath of my life.

Scott-Patrick Mitchell

SURFING IS JUST LIKE RIDING A POEM

At Ocean Reef, a bitumen plateau: carpark levitates
 above the beach. On to the harbour, waves break.
 You are driving night, searching dark for a poem,
 car curved north, following the coast up, heaven-
 ward, when you pull in here, full moon a lyric
 writing light across foam symmetry of night's sea.

Startled, you stop: half a dozen cars face the sea.
 On top of each are cross-legged youths, levitating
 in the thrall of ember passed along, smoke, a lyric
 curling beams as if a surfer rode a steep wave's break.
 As you arrive, they all turn. You interlope this heaven
 of their hideaway. They're divining aqua for a poem

that will sing them out into the wide wet poem
 of life's ocean. Their jeeps and vans are sea
 stained: they follow coastal currents, seeking heaven
 amid spume. They know how a board, as if praying, levitates
 on wings made from salt, barrelling toward a break.
 Blessed inside their neoprene, their bodies shape lyric's

stance. Gathered, at night, they seek the lyric
 inside the joints they share, their ramblings a poetry
 of giggle. You feel like Johnny Utah in Point Break,
 narc amid the cool kids in their holy site. They see
 you cruising curb, looking to park. Anxiety levitates
 in your blood. A comet scars an arc across heaven

and you all look up. There, stars scribble heaven
 with myths more ancient than any of the old lyrics
 our pop stars sing. See how the low moon levitates
 and illuminates, and you, a poet chasing a poem,
 stop to chat. They welcome you, share their sea
 tales, show you how to read the waves that break

and you inhale, deep, the salt air. Laughter breaks
 the nerves inside of you. A surfer called Heaven
 explains how, for now, they are augurs of the sea,
 paying homage to thalassic energy, moon's lyric,
 the shifting tide. She tells you that surfing is a poem
 you write in foot work, instinct and wax: so you levitate,

you learn to conquer the sea by riding roll and break.
 You lean in, let go, levitate. You thank Heaven
 for the gift of her lyric, and ink her skill into poem.

A LIFE IS MADE OF 600 MILLION BREATHS, UNLESS YOU HAVE A BREATHING TIC

i.

we measure life in numbers the increment & countdown,
a moving toward that reduces all the ways we
diminish ourselves in the addition of digits equalling life more

or less but when we add a disability to the equation
a different math evolves of a body as outlying integer,
just as brilliant a being magnificent: we are the proof

ii.

with baseball bats & petrol they beat my breath broken,
rewired lung into panic attack tics a static black full
body recollection where walls collapse & the roof of my ribs

caving mouth a funnel grasping air sharply a hard huff out
so that i joke & apologise say i'm a coffee machine, percolating
but the punchline is this: a decade later & i'm still here trapped

iii.

when i walk the coast i match breath to the length of a leg
striding to make the most of isolation not a soul about
& i can quell the ragged to cope, waves' metronome

a steady stroke, gull's swoop & there is no murmuration
in my throat, this place sacred for making focus slow, swallowed,
the sand reaching up to engulf: i forget my breath, move onward

iv.

i imagine the bats are bouquets & the bruises come from petal
caress, the stink of fuel, lavender oil, anointing me, the spit slurs
affirmations, holy, & in this act of reinvention, the breath catches

on the corner of smiled lips the past ten years a pilgrimage
i am returning from, feet swollen, air in my chest reclaimed: this works
for a while & one day, it might loosen trauma free-until then, keep counting

Sally Bliumis-Dunn teaches at The 92nd Street Y and is Associate Editor at-large for Plume Poetry. Her poems appeared in The Dodge, New Ohio Review, The Paris Review, Prairie Schooner, PLUME, Poetry London, the NYT, PBS NewsHour, upstreet, The Writer's Almanac, Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-day, and Ted Kooser's column, among others. In 2002, she was a finalist for the Nimrod/Hardman Pablo Neruda Prize. Her third book, ECHOLOCATION, was on the long list for the Julie Suk Award in 2019.



MARCH, 2020

When the water from an ocean wave stops reaching
towards the shore and is not yet moving back to the sea,

a small stillness, like a door, glistens on the wet sand,
then disappears.

A wooden door with green slats, a brass knob

that won't turn. I keep sensing
the signs—

the coconut palms as I walk beneath them,
the wind-whip through their fronds

like someone rummaging frantically
through a cluttered drawer.

And the hibiscus blossoms
in red alarm
like bells for forests burning.

Sally Bliumis-Dunn

WHALE WATCHING

Each time the finback

surfaces this morning—

its lids like labias' soft folds
around the eyeball's shiny center
that catches the light for a moment

before the leviathan

dives back down—

I read that the male finback
must find a band of water

at a certain depth

for his lowest notes to be
heard by the female way across the sea.

Like a ring on a finger,
a narrow band that encircles the earth's oceans *

from which

he beckons

I am here, here.

And she knows precisely how deep
she must swim
to the place where she can

listen, listen.

No human has ever heard the female song,
though I imagine a more mysterious tongue
of pheromone, fluke and fin, tidal pull and moon.

Does she swim across
the ocean

to answer
his calling?

No one

knows.

ON YOUR THIRTY-NINTH BIRTHDAY

All day I carry the soft ache
of you in my body. At first
I thought, am I getting sick?
Month after month, you don't
return my calls. I carry the ache
like the heaviness before
labor pains began when you
were born. I carry it
like a furrowed brow
of weatherfront still in the distance.
Because a mother must have hope.
Must have hope.
Must.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

These poems are forthcoming in Moira Egan's next book, *The Furies* (LSU Press, 2025). Recent work has appeared in *Best Spiritual Literature* (2024) and in numerous American journals. She won the 2023 Raiziss/de Palchi Translation Fellowship of the Academy of American Poets for her translations of the poetry of Giorgiomaria Cornelio. Egan lives in Rome.



FOUR SONNETS FROM "THE FURIES" (A HERO[IN]IC SONNET CROWN)

Another poet bites the dust. They grieve
most openly and throatfully: "He blurred
my second book." "In faith he never swerved..."
I have a different story. Please believe
I mean no disrespect, but he, one evening
was asked to name some *women poets* whom
he loved, admired. A silence. Then a hem,
a haw; his helpful friend tugged at his sleeve—

[while in this auditorium there sat
a dozen noted *women poets*, eyes
downcast in what? anger? reflected shame?]

"Well, Sappho. Dickinson of course — and what's
her name, I chose her book once for a prize—
yes, Jane, Jane, can't remember her last name."

Moira Egan. Photo credit: Eric Toccaceli.

And yes, it's plain, we must reclaim the names
 they hurtle at us. Vixen, harridan,
 virago, harpy, nag, hag, termagant,
 she-devil, fishwife, hellcat, *la belle dame*
sans merci (though I do wonder, where's the shame
 in being merciless at times). Gorgon,
 old bag, old bat, old trout, old cow, dragon.
 A bitch so mythic there's no one to blame

but maybe you. I learned another choice
 vocabulary word the other day:
 it's *fawning*, a response to complex trauma.
 We smile, we shrink, we charm, avoiding drama.
 Of course, my dear, it's never what you say
 but I cannot unhear your tone of voice.

*

"Sometimes, my dear, it seems my very voice
 annoys you. What to do? Change timbre? Pitch?
 Intensity? Stuck in your craw? My sitch?
 If hearing's given, listening's a choice
 that I don't think you choose. I take up space
 — or try to, anyway, discussion nixed
 when my poor mouth I open. What's the fix
 that you'd propose? I'm all ears, you're all voice.

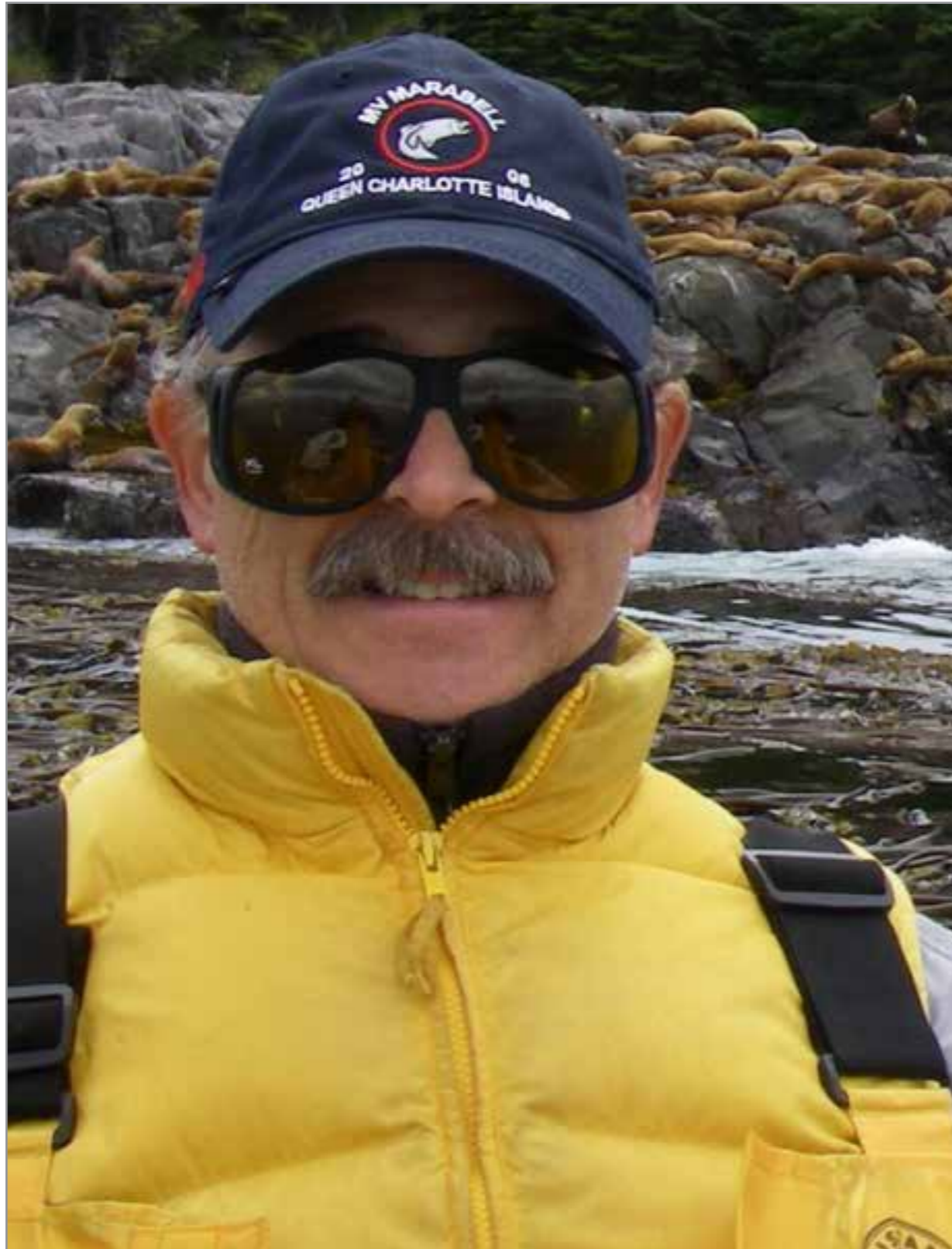
"Elective mute myself? Electrocute
 myself? Go glottal, velar, labio-
 dental? Go mental? Head toward the river
 with stones in pockets? Oh, I don't think so.
 Whatever angle, straight, obtuse, acute,
 I'm out to take it back, Indian giver."

It's hard to write a poem with a fever
 despite the precedents of history:
 of Plath, her out-of-body 103,
 or deathbed Keats, his final days a river
 of sweat and blood, hope whittled to a sliver

O! I can feel the cold earth upon me
 - *the daisies growing over me* -
 How blest he was in Severn, who outlived him.

Our sweet friend died, the early weeks of covid.
 He'd just retired, wanted to be a poet
 and play guitar full-time. What have we learned?
 No masks, no vaxx, logic and science turned
 to enemy. Their signs scream **It's my body**
it's my choice. Ah, blissful blessed irony.

D C Reid is a writer and poet whose work lives in multiple disciplines: web-based video-poems for his book *You Shall Have No Other* on www.sandria.ca; environmental writing, for which he has won multiple awards including the National Roderick Haig-Brown Award; and novels. His poetry has won silver in the Bliss Carman Award twice, among twenty-five other awards including the Colleen Thibaudeau award for significant support of Canadian poetry. He is a former president of the League of Canadian Poets and the Federation of BC Writers. He released a memoir of decades spent on the Nitinat River titled *A Man and His River*, published with Hancock House Publishers in 2022. It won the gold medal in the Professional Outdoor Media Association of Canada's book contest. His most recent publication, *Selected and New Poems*, is his eighteenth book. DC is broadly known for extensive writing on in-ocean fish farms; neuroplasticity and extensive creativity mechanisms. He lives in Victoria, BC. www.dcreid.ca



PACHELBEL'S FUGUE

*You say, I have too much white clothing.
You start to hum.
Several hundred years ago
this could have been mysticism
or heresy. It isn't now.
Outside there are sirens.
Someone's been run over.
The century grinds on.*

- Margaret Atwood

Dreadlocks of old intentions hang on hat racks.
Pampas grasses confer in wind.
Brown stars retreat to the east.
Wind comes in parts of itself.
A meat cleaver chops Pacific air,
slices Jakarta jet ribbons to ice crystals.
A young girl looks down, wonders if there is life.

Friday night is a belch after a gassy meal.
Guests swipe anything. The most oatmeal
cookies at keeling over means they win.
Crumbs at lips are mouths of bank notes:
plastic queens, Bordens, Mackenzie Kings.
Paper airplanes lift to vapour trails.
A smoke ring moves through its fellows, an orgasm up the sky.

You take to wearing white gowns at Animal House parties.
Togas say, 'Take me off,' particularly from wenches.
Concubine men take off white on Friday night,
get down to chest explosion Cheetos and bad television.
The dream is: Conan the Barbarian or 'I'll be back'.
Southern California oranges squeeze down
lily-white backs, 24 vertebrae, bump down each one.

Discs slip and TV is a highway to which no one took a grenade.
You pull the pin with big white teeth,
like a baseball player making millions.
Take the bat, silly, do you think this is mysticism?
Not on your baseball. Slide face first into home.
Your face eats a month of dust.
Gathering short-kneed men, the century grinds on.

Open eyes and lose your self to blindness.
Outside there are sirens.
Stare at Zeus trailing whore wings across copper sky.
Night descends, and friends don't come over.
Many beers magnetize their brains.
Jeopardy opens dollar signs in eyes on Monday, Tuesday, etc....
Mysticism is a gold-edged black book, heads place lips upon.

CNN streams the latest ISIS attack outside your window.
Taxis never stop running red lights.
Is it left or right or out of sight?
You play Pachelbel's Fugue and it never ends.
You build a kayak holder, but never wash your car.
You read yesterday's news, almost escape Earthrise,
but dreadlocks of lost intentions hang on hat racks...

THE MAGICIAN THAT A POET IS

*I would purchase the rains of remember
I would purchase the stars of recall
and what to preserve in a poem
but the drenching of darkness with light.*
- John B Lee

When the automobile came at me, the flying
of my body I did not feel but the five ribs
smashed told me I could win no war with
concrete, no matter my way with words to explain

the flight of body connected to me. The MRI
showed the incandescence of pain, inability
to breathe and interstitial muscles I knew not
on 24 ribs. Meteoric electrons were found stuck

to miniature fractures, a Milky Way on bones,
you can't see when you wear them, and not
being able to breath, in the berserk serenity
of white, Nile lights. And the vehicle took me

there? It decided not to slow, bearing right, to not
cover itself with blood of mere human poet.
I don't have the coin to purchase remember,
but the stars of recall came to me kissing

the concrete, high buildings of cars shouldering
around my soiling blood. I got to keep some
of it, my hand with its vermillion palm I did not
have to hold out or take with a paintbrush.

By the cemetery by the sea where no one lies
a-sleeping for all the flesh is gone. And angels that
don't exist, don't watch over what no longer is nor
can be. And the shore is women falling on

themselves so vividly my eyes are in motion to save
and protect. Ah, the magician that a poet is, pant
leg stuffed in my sock, white helmet protecting
only my head.

Notes: I have been run over by cars twice, not just once.

Cathy Altmann's most recent collection is *Stars Like Salt* (Liquid Amber Press, 2024). Her first collection, *Circumnavigation* (Poetica Christi Press, 2014) won the FAW Anne Elder Award. Her poems have been published in journals, anthologies, websites and on Melbourne's trains. She holds a Masters of Creative Writing. Cathy currently teaches English and studies theology. <https://liquidamberpress.com.au/product/stars-like-salt-poems-by-cathy-altmann/>



Cathy Altmann. Photo credit: Sophie Altmann.

BRINE

Only you
have tasted
my whole body

hollowed me
in green
depths

suspended me
like seaweed
in your cool arms

I enter you
with my one
breast

you coat me
with salt
lick

me awake
somersault me
like a child

You have held me
for twenty
years pinned

to froth and fury
like a blurred
arrow

On the shore
I am naked
and not afraid

Susana H. Case is the award-winning author of nine books of poetry, most recently, *If This Isn't Love*, Broadstone Books, and co-editor with Margo Taft Stever of *I Wanna Be Loved by You: Poems on Marilyn Monroe*, Milk & Cake Press, an Honorable Mention for the Eric Hoffer Book Award, as well as Finalist for the American Book Fest Awards, and the International Book Awards. The first of her five chapbooks, *The Scottish Café*, Slapering Hol Press, was re-released in an English-Polish version, *Kawiarnia Szkocka* by Opole University Press and as an English-Ukrainian edition, *Шотландська Кав'ярня* by Slapering Hol Press. <https://www.susanahcase.com>



PRACTICING ENGLISH WHILE DRIVING

At a bar in Veliko Tarnovo we meet a man
 who offers to drive us to Bucharest next morning
 but never shows up, so I convince Sara we have
 no choice except to hitchhike—her first time,
 reluctant—thumbs out by the road, until a trucker
 sees us, two young women in jeans, brakes
 squeal, we climb in, the driver shouts
Americans! all excited and, wanting to practice
 a bit of English, he offers *Commodores*,
 it being the early eighties with Lionel Ritchie
 still their lead, and I respond *Donna Summer*,
 a little late for disco, and he throws back
Rolling Stones, grins at the game,
Michael Jackson, Pink Floyd, soon runs
 out of singers or groups he's heard of,
 so he starts with cars: *Cadillac, Buick,*
BMW, and Sara, recovered from her pout, finally
 yells *Mercedes*, and launches into the lyrics
 of Janis' "Mercedes Benz," me joining in,
 a song for which he doesn't know the words,
 but drums out the beat on his steering wheel,
 grinning all the way down the highway.

Susana H Case

TENDERLY

Months after we sneak the chunky Senufo stool past customs, an effusion of small dark bugs spills out onto our living room floor. We didn't fumigate the wood. Our Scottie discovers the insects, stares, frozen in curiosity, but you're the one who murders them. For this, you're my hero, my "Coney Island Baby," as the song goes. You're not from anywhere near Coney Island.

New Year's Day, bundled up, we go there, watch the ritual as swimmers rush into the sea. It's our anniversary and fourteen degrees Fahrenheit. We walk to what remains of Steeplechase Park, stand under the steel tower with tea, instead of wine, and vow we'll keep our chips on the table for twelve more months.

Some years together are like riding the old Parachute Jump: couples belted into canvas seats, brought up 250 feet and dropped. A mystery to me, the appeal of that kind of thrill. The tower has aged into a kind of dubious structural integrity—unstable, too hard-won to tear down.

"LA DONNA È MOBILE" / THE WOMAN IS FICKLE

In a video that went viral, the opera singer Maurizio Marchini, from his balcony in Florence, belts out "La donna è mobile," Verdi's version of the lament of priapic King Francis I who didn't trust women or their emotions, thought men who did were fools. In *Rigoletto*—and the Victor Hugo play that inspired it—a woman dies.

Yet it is mostly men who are fickle and cold in these cases of blame-the-woman.

When I was thirteen, my friend's mother went to the hospital. She liked careful attention, didn't want to go home, cried, put her paperback novels and lipstick into a tote bag, before her husband pushed her in a wheelchair to the exit yelling *women don't know what they want*. Home in Brooklyn, she sank into silence. Soon after, she died.

As they float tourists out over the sediment, Venetian gondoliers favor Verdi's aria, its unromantic sentiment. Their boats are popular with proposing men. A *yes* to such an overture is not always the best response.

Sven Kretzschmar hails from Germany. His poetry has been published widely in Europe and overseas, among other outlets in *Writing Home*, *The 'New Irish' Poets* (Dedalus Press, 2019), *Hold Open the Door* (UCD Press, 2020), *Voices 2021* (Cold River Press, 2021) *The Irish Times*, *The Storms*, and *Das Gedicht*. He was awarded 2nd place at the Francis Ledwidge International Poetry Award 2022.



COLOURING THE SEASON

after Helen Fares

Fewer leaves are falling now, mud-brown ground marries slippage of boots and chill, loamy wetness. Another kind of love triangle. No goldenrod colouring the season, faint rays slip through a shredded net of winter branches and brake. What remains for us in those cold days is light, an angle, your warm breath, and the woods. The stillness and harmony that to us is night.

Sven Kretzschmar

SINGS OF BRAVERY

Evening cradled the earth and night
 already crept over the hillsides.
 Tractors were blocking village centre,
 link road, and squares, but her voice
 was discernible from underneath all
 the noise, the stink, protest, and uproar.
 Ukrainian, she confirmed, but gave me her best
 German. For as long as she'd be around,
 she said. An effort my compatriots
 would not value, I thought, and watched her
 push her pram across the road, through the rampage
 of farm machines. Pushing through for her child.
 For as long as she'd be here.

WINTERED BEAUTY

after Michael Longley

Frozen gold on the ground. Before layers of ice melt,
 these leaves are in glittering, frosted stasis. This is
 another day for us in Rosselwood, where moist clouds
 get stuck between hills of neighbouring villages.
 A storm-torn birch bars our walkway, the enigma
 of its root-labyrinth revealed. Lichen lettering
 on cracked branches, and we may meet wild boars
 or red deer in winter coat. They will flee
 into brambles and undergrowth from the large predators
 we are in their quick, dark eyes. Did you hear
 the black woodpecker call from high up

on a wych elm trunk? Its cry so distinct from the falcon
 hovering like forgiveness over the barren crowns above
 us. At forest and barley field edge, I used to pick
 wildflowers for you, to be forgotten in a jam-jar
 of water that, unwittingly, bent and magnified
 the evening light. Today, someone must be looking
 after the pale of that one-time paddock on the crest
 of a hill; its gate long missing. Rosselwood is cold
 leaves on cold ground, barren branches peeking out
 of fog thickets. On this day, even the shards of the year
 can look beautiful.

THE ROSE CLOUD

A single, cold rose cloud along the evening sky,
the repetition of horrors on our televisions.
Some speak of genocide, some others are silent,
some are dying, some unmask themselves
by denouncing the former as human animals.
Proud behemoths in the same place where
others try to provide at least minimal goodness,
while our elected officials are mostly voicing
mute complicity. Thus comes this year to
an uneven ending: a single, cold rose cloud
along the evening sky.

SHEETS ABOVE THE LAND

Nights are bitter and beautiful, ground-cover
plants in silent front yards brittle, but held
by tight ice. Even this early in the year
it may happen: wide, dead-cold silence
caresses winter walkways hemmed
with family homes and driveway stiches.
January's sheets above the land. And underneath
young life, buried devotion, and foreboding
dreams of tomorrow's tenderness
flaring into fog's opaque light.

Gail Ingram writes from the Port Hills of Ōtautahi Christchurch Aotearoa New Zealand and is author of three collections of poetry. Her latest, *anthology (n.) a collection of flowers* (Pūkeko Publications 2024) weaves poetry and botanical and mountain art. Her second collection *Some Bird* (Sudden Valley Press 2023) was selected for best books 2024 by The New Zealand Listener. *Contents Under Pressure* (Pūkeko Publications 2019) is set in the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquakes. Her work has been widely published in local and international journals and anthologies, such as *Poetry New Zealand*, *Landfall*, *Atlanta Review*, *The Spinoff*, *Cordite Poetry Review* and *Barren Magazine*. Awards include winning the Caselberg (2019) and New Zealand Poetry Society (2016) international poetry prizes and being shortlisted for many others. She has edited for NZ Poetry Society's flagship magazine *a fine line*, *Flash Frontier: An Adventure in Short Fiction* and *takahē*. She teaches at Write On School for Young Writers and holds a Master of Creative Writing (Distinction). <https://www.theseventhletter.nz/> https://www.instagram.com/gail_ingram_poet



WORD HIPPO

On this stage I pronounced *Hippocrates* as it's read – *Hippo crates*
and I saw it wrong by the looks on your faces. *Hypocrisy*

is not related, nor *hippopotamus* in this instance
I was swimming in the river. Let me tell you I was born around

doctors who'd not remembered their oath to not harm. My mother
was taken from me. I pretended literacy in another's

campus of hippos, and they gave me fairytales to read, not Greek
mythology about horses with serpent's bodies. Later I set down

my own memories of who I might be. Turns out I was a good actor
on the literary stage, a monster of word gargling, the perfect

hypocrit, feigning to fly without wings through the foam.
I've always been hyper aware of the environment, how horses

travel in crates backwards to keep them from tripping,
if I'm honest. There are those covered in river mud

who prick up their ears. When you say doctors' names wrong
it might sound like *hippotherapy*. You feel the ripple of muscle

underneath you. How those large dumb animals might carry you
through the river, a thousand actors waiting on the other side.

Gail Ingram

A GOOD KIWI LASS

after Jordan Hamel

Though her Scottish father said, you should
cut your hair, those snakes
cannot be allowed to grow, she was still
somewhat surprised years later
when a president-to-be put Hillary in her place
by frightening the masses with
a Medusa face, (a classic
advertising standard she had been taught
not to follow). But that was America
– she lived in a fair
country, and her mother had told her to get
a good education and make good
money, and take his name and
make your belly round, but first
get the ring. She took it all in,
because she wanted the white
dress and the fairytale
slipper.
At the foot
of the clean white peaks, where the air
was still fresh, she began to climb, began
to forget about cutting her golden hair,
she sought other parts of herself – not her sex,
she already knew of the Dark
Age spells and Victorian estrangement
of being adopted – it was
the native herbs she fell upon
to know herself, the star flowers
on dry mosses, the crunch of
night snow, her hand on the slow pulse
of the grey-gold hills of Te Waipounamu
she wrote of

belly scars, chewed-off stalks and fences
imposed by good kiwi blokes using
wide-eyed wives to spread the butter.
When she waved
her pen like a wild woman
holding an eel, picked up from the sacred ground,
her fingers curled over the wrinkled skin together with
her wahine half-sister she had found.
She was going up in the world,
with a backpack on, it was true,
and flowers in her hair, like edelweiss and
ngaio, she thought she was seeking a kind
of kinship until
much later
when her hair was grey, the syllables
her sister had given her – *Pa-pa-tuu-aa-nu-ku*
had become a whisper, then a hiss, *you are*
an imposter, the white people cried upholding
their bigger shinier pens until
they became snakes
in her mirror, *you are an imposter*.

Then, at last, she understood her place
was not here, nor
there, she should have cut her fair hair
then disappeared into the background
hills, become invisible
as her tuahine had always been, invisible as
the next lass – *in-vis-ib-le*
as they had been saying
for the last two thousand years.

EVEN IN THE BEGINNING

she was half-formed, perhaps a seed
that had burst, the pale fist
that had pounded upwards into the dark
of watchful eyes and creepy crawlies but also
the earth around her like arms
until she reached the light, the first blindness,
her exposure,

she was a naked stick
knowing to reach up anyway
despite the branch of strangers
despite the husk below, a distant memory
the hole inside her stem



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

John W Sexton lives on Carn Mór, a mountain on the Kerry side of the Beara peninsula in the Republic of Ireland. He identifies with the Aisling poetic tradition and his work spans vision poetry, contemporary fabulism and tangential surrealism. His poetry is widely published and he has been a regular contributor to *Live Encounters*. He is the author of eight poetry collections, the most recent being *Futures Pass* (Salmon Poetry 2018), *Visions at Templeglantine* (Revival Press 2020) and *The Nothingness Kit* (Beir Bua 2022). In 2007 he was awarded a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry.



SOMEWHERE

for many players

The game of Somewhere requires a horse.
There is no horse provided for the game.

Two players approach another
and ask to be taken somewhere.

Yes, I will take you somewhere on my horse.

This person does not have a horse.

But first you must help me find it.

What does your horse look like?

*It looks different every day.
We will only know it for certain
when it lets us onto its back.*

The three players meet a person rolling a hoop of iron.
Two of them say,

Excuse us; we think this may be our horse.

*No, says the person.
This is the moon.
It fell asleep against my grandfather's barn.
I'm taking it back to the sky.*

John W Sexton

continued overleaf...

The three players meet a second person, also rolling a hoop of iron.
Two of them say,

Excuse us; we think this may be our horse.

*No, says the second person.
This is yesterday's sun.
It sputtered out before the nightfall just gone.
I'm rolling it over stones,
to try and spark it alight again.*

Then the three players meet two people astride a large barrel.
Two of them say,

Excuse us, we think this may be our horse.

*No, say the couple astride the barrel.
This is the bellow of a bull.
We found it
spinning on its echo in the meadow.
We're taking it to the Town Cryer.
He has a private collection of cries
and will pay us a florin for it.*

The three players then come across a boy on tall stilts.
They look up at him, towering over them.
Two of them shout up,

Excuse us, we think this may be our horse.

*Hello down there, booms the boy.
No, this is not a horse.*

*I am riding a stork.
This is the easiest way there is
to travel the sky without wings.*

The three players then come across
a blindfolded boy with a long stick.
Two of them say,

Excuse us, but have you seen our horse?

*No, says the blindfolded boy.
I am not looking for a horse
and hope never to see one.
I hope never to see anything.
I am stumbling around in plain sight,
in the hope of knowing without seeing.
If I see your horse,
or if I see anything of anything,
then I will have failed.*

Finally, the three players come across
a low wooden fence styled like a bannister rail.
The fence wends around an inn and a barn.
The first player hops upon it.
The second player follows,
sitting astride behind his fellow.
The third brightens with recognition,

*At last!
This is my horse.
Let us ride it as hard as we can
to somewhere.*

The game ends when they get there.

Niels Hav was awarded the *Danish Literature Prize* 2024 from Ragna Sidéns and Vagn Clausens Foundation. He is the author of ten volumes of prose and poetry. His books are widely translated into languages including e.g. Portuguese, Dutch, Arabic, Turkish, English, Serbian, Kurdish, Albanian and Farsi. Frequently interviewed by the media, he has travelled widely in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America and participated in numerous literary events. His poems and stories have been published in a large number of journals, magazines and newspapers around the world. His new English poetry collection *Moments of Happiness* is published by Anvil Press in Vancouver.



UNEXPECTED HAPPINESS

My poems are still as ugly
as the scratched bus shelters
along deserted country roads
where schoolchildren and seniors
are waiting for transport.

They hardly improve the landscape,
and people are pissing on them
just because they are here - decorated
with anonymous curses and the new
slogans. Here hangs the timetable.

In May some stay outside listening
to the songlark who sweetens the wait
with a frivolous concert
about summers zephyr wind
and morning diamonds.

But when winter's melancholy vampires
wander freely about in the wilderness,
and a kiss in the suburbs is less common
than a UFO, my ugly shelters
gladly stand there waiting with you -

Till the bus arrives. I, too, am longing,
desperately to find the enigmatic words
that redeem my soul
- a mystery of unexpected happiness
in the middle of the winter timetable.

Niels Hav

WHEN WE WERE ALIVE

We drank lots of wine,
bottles were lined up.
Do you remember?
We yelled and laughed
blissfully ignorant of most things,
but we understood what's important
to one hundred percent.

Love was the only legal tender,
national borders had no meaning.
Violence, war, greed - indeed, stupidity
of any kind was outlawed.
All humans are born equal
with valid expectations and rights.
Strangers were greeted as new friends
we exchanged smiles, kisses and cigarettes.

Whoever laughs deserves a kiss.
Whoever weeps needs love.

We sided with the poor.
We were pacifists and against any war.
We decided to vagabond the globe
and make the world our homeland.
We swam under the twinkling starry sky
in the luminous dusky night -
our skin was firm,
warm and smooth,
when we were alive.
Do you remember?

Happiness and unhappiness are twins.
Sorrow arrives, limping.

We drank the light, we drank the darkness.
We dreamed and sang,
when we were alive,
do you remember?

Translated by Per Brask, Patrick Friesen and the author

WHAT ARE WE TO DO, MALLARMÉ?

The undefined space behind the filling station
where they put scrapped cars to be plundered
for parts.

To stand in shelter there
a black night with the moon like a loose UFO
among ragged clouds.

My steaming piss
a frayed flag waving over grass and thistles
in the dark.

What are we to do, Mallarmé?

Translation by Martin Aitken



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Anita Arlov is the child of Croatian parents displaced after WW2. She lives in Tamaki Makaurau/Auckland. She writes poems and very short prose, hosts workshops and occasionally judges short form fiction. Anita grew up enjoying the cadence of language but didn't begin writing till mid-life in response to the Canterbury earthquake in 2011. Anita has won the Divine Muses Poetry Competition, the NZ Flash Fiction Competition and has placed second in the Bath Flash Fiction Competition. She is widely anthologised, including Bonsai: Best small stories from Aotearoa/New Zealand; Broadsheet; New Flash Fiction Review; takahē magazine; Best Small Fictions and Best Microfiction. She convened a team that ran the NZ Poetry Conference & Festival, a successful three-day celebration of all things poetry including vispo, wordcore, sung poems, cine-poetics and workshops, involving 200 poets and arts activists. For ten years she managed popular spoken word event Inside Out Open Mic for Writers. In 2022 she was selected an Ockham Collective Arts Resident.

THE GARDEN, ONE MORNING IN EARLY SUMMER

*a garden is intimate and exotic at once
like the two end-piers of a bridge:
separate, but connected*

wild jasmine is the first pollinator charm,
tumbling like sweet half-dressed sex
from gate to garden

the glory of the Indian chestnut -
her massed canopy of pink standing panicles
freighted with bees - is seeded in me
like my childhood Christmas tree,
likewise pegged with slim candles,
lit after nightfall and let to burn briefly
while we looked on in wonder

in a minute's shower
bright purple brackets of queen's wreath
drop their loosest flowers, hundreds of them,
perfect as paper lookalikes.
I fill sachets of petal confetti
for my niece's garden wedding, soon

a brown blackbird strides out
managerially
to a wet glisten
in the half-bowl of an avocado skin



Anita Arlov

continued overleaf...

the kik-kik-kik-kik
coming from the power line
is Kingfisher, come back to his honeycomby
nest cave in the phoenix trunk

tree sparrows rim the bird bath
dipping to sip like wind-up
perpetual motion toys

two pīwakawaka flit above the sprawling fig tree,
gorging on the tiny drosophila flies hover-
ing over the fattest large-as-lemons figs,
the ones easing their seams out,
breaking into smiles



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Finbar Lennon is a retired surgeon. He lives in Dublin, Ireland. He is the author of three collections of poetry published by Lapwing Publications, Belfast (2021/2022). He is a member of the Bealtaine Writing Group and has had poems published online in Live Encounters, Planet Earth Poetry and Viewless Wings. Two of his poems have been published in a new Anthology by Amos Greig "When the Lapwing Takes Flight" in 2024. Some of his early poems appear in his late wife's memoir "The Heavens are all Blue" that he co-authored and was published by Hachette Ireland in 2020.



MEADOW OF DREAMS

A will to wander, hill to ponder
 to cap it all, the hub is missing
 tree trunk lies in drill it made
 rings are aged beyond its stay
 death removes it's only sway
 climbing eyes on boots and clay
 draw breath on stepping stones
 sunshine hits the path at fork
 where hedges culled by concrete
 on downward trek pick up speed
 brush leaves of grass in airy flight
 lone woman sits in driver's seat
 worn and grey I passed before
 no nod or hint of common fate
 two dray horses idly stand at gate
 cry out at bramble scrape, too late
 my hand no longer stroking grass
 increased my pace to starting point
 raised a stir towards end of lane
 if dogs stopped barking at my gait
 could rob the house beside - escape
 graveyard closed to passersby, its late
 those at rest inside stay put for good
 on gate *no entry* to their place.

Finbar Lennon

HEAT

Loule, Portugal 2024

Drugged by sun
they sit exhausted
in convent shade
children cartwheel
in front of stage
while band play
never-ending jazz
not a nun in sight
flown the coop
to milder climes
and left behind
a holy place.

WOULD YOU CARE TO DANCE?

Love depends on two
(are) intimate and do
each sense scent of dew
eyes are all on cue
4 hands clasp in dark
lie low heaving hearts
on wild flowers strewn
(to) bloom one day in June.

HOME

Leaving somewhere special
never to return key in hand
to unlock spaces of before
will they disappear or stay
in cloudy memories waving
to remind were not my own?

now belongs to younger pair
eager to explore, change decor
wonder how much time will
spend opening locking doors
to enter and depart a leafy
rambling mansion of the past

what kind of life in store
inside for its new names
above the same address
below now postal code
to click or tap on map
to guide to its front door

for us was comfort zone
where mind and heart slowed
loud colours did not glare
sounds soft and muffled
filled the air to shake lazy
ruffles off the working days

alone with me in recent years
my cosy island on the street,
peek outside at motley crew
just holding on to old routine
chasing tumbleweed by day
while roaming round astray

time to move the deck chairs
have entered new milieu
now being served another fare
my city house has harbour view
walls tall and bare it stands alone
no match for listed stones of **home**.

Born in Mexico, Luis Cuauhtémoc Berriozábal lives in California and works in the mental health field in Los Angeles. He is the author of *Raw Materials* (Pygmy Forest Press), *Make the Water Laugh* (Rogue Wolf Press), and *Peering into the Sun* (Poet's Democracy). His recent poetry has been featured in Blue Collar Review, Live Encounters, Kendra Steiner Editions, Made Swirl, River Dog, and Unlikely Stories.



A GIFT

You can hear the sobbing
in the panting on canvas.

The artist has a gift that
jabs like daggers inside our

hearts. There is no remorse
in the pleasure the antagonist

on canvas yields. The painter
long dead, has left his labor

for all to see. It hangs in a
museum I've only been to once.

Luis Cuauhtémoc Berriozábal

RIMBAUD'S SUN

I see you.
What do I see?
Rimbaud's sun
over the sea.

I watch it
confess its
empty soul
all day long

from my house,
from my porch,
I see you
fly over me.

All alone
embers stir.
I feel you.
It's pure torture.

Down you go
at last. It's
Rimbaud's sun
over the sea.

WALKING ON THE GRASS

Wasps built their nest in our backyard patio.
I planned on drinking a six-pack out there
and walking on the grass without shoes.

Twenty-five years ago, we had pine trees
in the backyard, and two years ago, a giant
pepper tree, which are gone. I wrote a

poem or two about the pepper tree. No other
tree we have grew as high as that one.
There is a lemon tree that provides us

with the most delicious lemons. I like how
juicy they are. The orange tree is not so
shabby. My current favorite is the

pomegranate tree, then the lemon tree.
I like the word granada, pomegranate
in Spanish. It reminds me of Lorca,
the Spanish poet, dead, but alive in my heart.

Originally from Limerick, Ron Carey lives in Dublin. Ron holds a Diploma in Literature and Creative Writing from the Open University. He received Special Commendation in the Patrick Kavanagh Awards 2015. His poetry collection *DISTANCE*, (Revival Press) was a shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection UK and Ireland. In 2016 he was awarded a Masters in Creative Writing at the University of South Wales. His critically acclaimed collections, *Racing Down the Sun*, and *Songs for Older Life*, were published by Revival Press. His latest collection, *A Storm in Arcadia*, will be published by Clare Songbirds of New York. Ron is a facilitator of very successful Creative Writing courses in Dublin and Limerick.



THE HOUSE OF MARY IN EPHESUS

Up the steps of the Temple, Morning carries the sleepy Sun.
 The house of the stranger is still in darkness.
 Mary, already about her stations, stops to listen to John
 Crying in his sleep.
 As she moves about the house, her movements are deliberate,
 As if every moment on Earth is to be savoured.
 A man passes on the Jerusalem Road.
 He is young and handsome and carries lightly
 The tool-sack of a carpenter.
 Mary watches until he is a small speck on the horizon.
 When he is gone, she turns again to her chores.
 Now, Morning lifts the Sun over the white roses at the window.
 Suddenly, the room where Mary kneels is blazing in light.

Ron Carey

ON SEEING A DIGITAL MAP OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

The past is a clever bastard, reaching across time
With words that whisper the exotic, giving a Titian glow
To dead countries and cities that imprison us
Within our own imagination and keep it alive.
I never had to ask where Abyssinia was on any map.
In a moment I could be there, on the hills out of Massawa.
The city glistening in the salt-light of the Red Sea, the dust
Of the caravan in my face and hair, a hundred camels
Bringing coffee, ivory and gold to the Highlands.
And what was Abyssinia but the beautiful, burning
Idea of a place, somewhere on the road to Eden; the same
Fantasy that brought the spear carrying Hittites to Anatolia
And the green fingered Kassites to Babylon.

AT THE ARKADIKO BRIDGE

Arkadiko Bridge is a 3000-year-old chariot bridge in Greece.

Phaëton was setting the Earth on fire as we parked
Our hired car and walked the Tityn road to the bridge, humped
As it was over the dead river of a long dead people.
We sat on the hillside and looked back across time.
Then came the soundless chariots, carrying
The spear-laden soldiers of someone's dream, the men
Of Pylos, Midea, Thebes, Athens and Thessaly.
From noon to sunset we watched them cross, fantastic
In their boar-tusk helmets, shields and armour, horseshit everywhere.
And as the sun set, their gangling reins, studded
With ivory and metal, threw up a jewel-like glittering
Until the hillside was butterflyed with light, light that lit our faces,
As if we were real and everything was not a dream.

Richard W. Halperin's is a U.S.-Irish dual national living in Paris. His collections are published by Salmon (four to date since 2010) and Lapwing (18 to date since 2014). In March 2025, Salmon will bring out *Selected & New Poems*, Introduction by Joseph Woods, drawing upon these collections and including thirty new poems. Mr Halperin's work is part of University College Dublin's Irish Poetry Reading Archive. He reads frequently in Ireland; his most recent reading (on YouTube now) was at the Heinrich Böll Memorial Weekend, Achill, Co. Mayo, last May.



LIKE SILK

for Rose

The New York I grew up in, the adults,
 the way they talked, the impeccable grammar,
 the not always expensive restaurants
 they chose to go to, the way they dressed
 not very expensively to go to them
 or to go to plays or concerts or supper clubs.
 'Sophisticated Lady.' 'Little Girl Blue.'
 The economy of elegance, the dropped lines,
 the sitting on a bench in Central Park
 indefinitely. My mother-in-law was one
 of these. She would not have used
 the word elegant about herself. But she was.
 I think of that this night, as an hour ago
 her adopted son in New York State
 sent me a text that she, at 101,
 had just died. Another silk filament.

Richard W. Halperin. Photo credit: Bertrand A.

RED CARNATION

I had on my desk once
a red carnation. In a little
glass vase. During a time
when I wrote poems
in fresh grief.

The poems helped.
The carnation helped.
The glass helped.
Many things still help,
including the poems of others.

I think of Jessie Lendennie's
prose poem 'Daughter,'
about the death of a mother.
At the end, the daughter says,
'If you love me,
take me with you.'

Good poems – they have
to be good – can be about
anything. One of the poems
I live with is Joseph Woods's
'House-Sitting to Chet Baker.'
I must have read it, over
the years, a hundred times.

Recently, a friend told me
that Simone Weil, who died
young, wrote somewhere,
maybe in a notebook,
that God withdrew from
earth leaving only beauty
and suffering. I think,
if she had lived a little longer,
or like me a lot longer,
she might have changed
her mind about that.

RED CARDIGAN 2

She wears a red cardigan.
She is sitting in a chair
by the window in her
living room. She is reading
or pausing from reading.

Slim, grey-haired,
somehow an old lady.
How did all that happen?
She is Jewish, Russian,
Irish, so, a typical
American. She is a
mother, a grandmother,
a widow, cultivated,
educated, sceptical,
who one day became a bride,
had found herself a mate –
meaning, as far as the soul
goes, a ditto. So,
astonishment, then decades,
then grief, then wearing
a red cardigan, sitting in
a chair reading a book
or pausing from reading.

Words like agnostic,
astonishment, acceptance,
may be passing through
her mind in no order,
part of the wordless alphabet
everyone has a version of.
Waiting for something,
since pausing is always
waiting for something.

I am glad she existed.
I am glad I got, once,
to see her in her chair.
I am glad to know
her name. I am more,
because of her. I am glad of
red cardigans.

GAZA

*'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
and why art thou disquieted in me?'*
Psalm 42:5

If I were not disquieted
I would be only half-alive.
I wonder if that psalm
was written in Gaza.

Recently a friend mentioned
that it is possible that Gaza
got its name millennia ago
when it was a thriving port city

known for its gauze,
woven of cotton and silk.
Everything, even the beautiful,
catches on rocks and tears.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

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 six poetry collections and four books of translations including *Mirrors and Windows* (Guernica Editions 2021). Anna won the 2005 Ted Plantos Memorial Award, two MARTYs, two USA scholarships 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, Denver Quarterly etc. She read on Parliament Hill, at Austin International Poetry Festival, Edmonton Poetry Festival and universities in China, Canada and USA. She teaches Poetry Alive and her 11th book is *Breaking into Blossom* (Frontenac Press 2025).



Anna Yin. Photo credit: Photo by Ying Shi.

A PAIR OF YELLOWSTONE MUGS

for my dear son Jason

At Old Faithful in the park,
we bought them—
each with a different hue:
green as the fresh, rolling hills,
brown as the enduring, robust rock,
embracing moments from a quotidian life.

We wrapped them with soft, weathered newspapers
and sent them to your tiny loft
in the high-rise of the Big Apple—
a landscape
dashing with greenback tally and bitcoin trend,
tinkling with high-heels and sparkling goblets ...

In our distant, cozy cottage,
after shoveling fresh snow, we made tea and coffee.
By the wooden table near the fire,
we sat and thought of you ...

*In the skyscraper-framed metropolis,
after a long, eventful day,
passing by the bronze bull statue,
would you feel tired and cold?
When the night curtain falls,
would you pour green tea or brown coffee
into the mugs and sit with your loved one,
savoring the fresh aroma and free spirit of Old Faithful
dreaming of roaming wildlife and serene scenery?*

We heard the wind passing through our windows,
snow angels you once created appeared in our dreams—
Stars of Times Square blurred and grew unreal.

THE SEEKING HEART

after the 2025 Spring Festival Gala at Living Arts Center, Mississauga

I wish to be the horsehead fiddle,
its melody unfurling a vast prairie,
as fingers glide over tautened strings.
Flocks of snowy sheep drift at ease,
sturdy steeds gallop into sight...
Lasses' hair sways with the breeze,
their smiles sunlit and sweet.
I long to ride toward that boundless horizon.

In dreams, the prairie blooms with song,
wind carries wings and milk fragrance.
Mongolian yurts scattered like stars,
footfalls of dancers' drum through the earth.
Beneath a sun that never sets,
meadows stretch beyond the eye's reach...
Whose gaze stays crystal clear?
Whose heart soars with the eagle?

Your fingers weave a story,
my soul trembles with sighs...
Wherever your morin khuur's music flows,
its echoes linger deep within me...
May the prairie persist in its pristine beauty.
May the world be free of strife and discord.
May locks on our hearts unfasten with ease.
May our eyes forever behold light and peace.



Photo by Lei Yang

Morin Khuur performer: Ming Li. Dancer: Wendy. Photo by Lei Yang.

Sarah Tiffen is a poet, speechwriter and teacher. She is Leeton born and bred, and founded Riverina Writing House in 2021 to allow the voices of rural people to be heard and to make unique books and promote writing, stories and literature at home and abroad. She is forever grateful to her own publisher Ginninderra Press and Stephen Matthews for giving her the chance to be a 'real' poet with her own books, and wants to give this transformative opportunity to others. In a world of turmoil, authentic, beautiful, grassroots, literary objects made with love, telling stories of truth, is an act of defiance, rebellion and a crusade to uphold values that make us human, fragile, faulty and real. She is mother of three amazing children - Tom, Lil and Wilbur - and loves swimming, poetry, her dog Alfred Maximus, drinking whiskey and talking by the fire, and walking in wild places.



ELYSIUM FIELDS

Gone, gone in the beautiful barley-gold days
 where the sunlight sprang from the Earth
 and rained like a fountain of Godsent Light -
 golden-white and burnished in the
 Blushing Elysium Fields where the remnant harvest lies levensduur levenswijze
 the eons of white-gold stubble turning away and away
 quickly to sudden dips and lows
 and the Anodised Road becoming
 a river of Molten Light, quickens by and lowly,
 Bright pagentry exaltory, vastly pregnant and plangent beyond
 High Mountainous Light, o gorgeous days of
 the praising passing joy - when I left my son on his
 birthday and rode a chariot of viscous memory
 over the Turning Bridge on high on the swept bend.
 Past the Great Granite View, past the Great Hedge -
 masterly gothic cactus scrawling in monster dancing
 down the Railway Line, down the cloistered culvert -
 Swept away - gulping miles of golden syrup liquid-y suspended
 in saps and sliding - old gum oozes, thick amber glass knots caught me
 suspended -
 swathes of cherry orchards anointed
 with rich autumn ordered Baroque Eloquencies
 of scene, swing down to the stone castles and
 vasty wandering hills and how I felt each Past
 Moment and it led me, fastly held and broken down
 to that moment of dear heart longing
 that moment of releasing for my
 Beautiful Child, how I let go, at Sherlock's Corner,
 at Alice Lemon Bridge, old Salt Gully and its strange
 uncertain wanderings where I am lost, lost, lost
 for words - knocked down by a vast army Wunderlitz
 Austerlitz
 schottische distel

Sarah Tiffen

continued overleaf..

of Scotch Thistle posies, stark anarchic beauty,
 carved woody stoops and thistle forest sweeping the falling hill,
 grey fossilised bouquets marching from Scotland
 across blood leached miles, the soft fur of grasses
 O down the Valorous Days – that
 Heavy Cataclysm, catalysts of dust motes
 catacombed in air trysts and treasures raining and chorusing in
 millions, a Godly slat of gold from the mutinous Sky –
 onward...I leave, leave, fall and leave my heart and return,
 calling and longing for divine oblivion
 And the Black Rock Hill, and downed shields of light
 like spilled sauternes,
 o landscape of barsac, bommes, fargues and preignac,
 sweeping past like a swipe of gold embroidered world -
 brimming old dams expunging burnished mercurial,
 as though great hands carelessly tore the flesh of the hill
 wide pulling back the gold fringed skin like a purse like a gouge
 to show a mounded wound of Light beneath within
 bulging from the grasses mollusc-esque fronding – dams awash with
 stray and holy light, O Gone, Gone in the year of my dark fortunes, past the
 broken homesteads, the mighty hidden lanes, and
 grand disquisitions of deep-freighted solemn and somnolent heart.
 Stand we, mollified, disquieted and rent at moments of Redemption
 as my griefs and nerves mapped out in a crawling debrided grace
 upon the switching twitching Gold
 of the breezeful paddocks, and voices volleying beyond the ear –
 rejoin and choir, devouring me in miles, and ring out
 conspicuous and transmogrifying joys and journeys, disgorge, reform, retell, and
 vanquish

beneath great canopies, intimate and defenestrated, unmemorised,
 heart-spent and tessellated fears and longing joys, and terrible violence
 and faiths and perspicacious ghosts on the thistle fields,
 rustle and sacrificial kiting and falling, and rocky clusters and caps
 as round the bend from the crescent of the hill, airs of
 forgiveness buoyed with Divinities of Light and secret sceptres
 Forgiveness
 Forgive
 Forgive
 I ask in the name of all that has left and all we must bear –
 O salient, sentient, sentinel and effusions and airs,
 And as we swing round and down away and into –
 Light bursts and airs and all the long days and gorgeous days
 Of love and failure repeat, replete.
 The keening heart expunging grief, devolutions of grief,
 Exquisite follies and bear me down.

SISYPHUS RISING

in honour of Dylan and Seamus

Out in the house paddock
 my father is hunting nightshade.
 Light floats across the green acre
 like water, resounding with heat – oily,
 viscous, mirages of cattle upside down
 amongst the great hairy peppercorn cathedral
 along the old channel bank, in
 the paddock's heart.
 From the sunroom we watch him:
 step, stoop, plant the nozzle –
 like an ancient astronaut carting a yellow tank on his back–
 compositor of his own life and oxygen (or Roundup),
 out in his lunarscape of
 heat and weeds and dung.
 He is a figure in a landscape
 wholly made by himself,
 long, bare and spindly,
 brown leather legs like Quinkins –
 spirit, Father, in his element and Elemental.
 Step. Stoop. Spray.

Each nightshade plant - with bloodpurple berries
 and sturdy, dogged stalks – a pest that must be met in battle
 in direct single handed combat – poison applied directly to each root.
 One plant at a time.
 There are hundreds. Or maybe thousands.
 You can't kill them any other way.
 So you must persist – or capitulate.
 The victory of the nightshade army – and your own defeat - unthinkable.
 Watching, I think of Lear – bare, forked, defying Fate.
 But my son, also watching – has the keener sense,
 invoking Sisyphus.
 The impossible task.
 The interminable, dogged refusal to be owned.
 The pride.

*

My father, a lone figure,
 in his house paddock, hunting nightshade,
 raging, stubborn beyond all measure,
 against the dying of the light.

Incandescent.
 Singular.

Simone King (she/her) is a poet, editor and PhD student at RMIT University who lives on Wurundjeri country, Naarm. Simone's words have been published in Australian Poetry Anthology, Best of Australian Poems 2022, Rabbit Poetry Journal, Cordite, Plumwood Mountain and Mascara Literary Review's 2002 *Resilience* anthology. Simone won the 2022 Blake Poetry Prize and the 2021 Woorilla Poetry Prize. She coedited *What We Carry: Poetry on Childbearing*, Recent Work Press, 2021.



DEATH BY NYLON

Ghost net rakes the tide. A tangle of teal,
fierce orange and lime. Ghoul gear fishes on
after the fisherfolk leave. Under the moon it snares
three bony fish and a sea turtle travelling to nest.
This is no safety net, no cosmic Indra's web –
it's the Halloween edition, a spooky weave
that refuses to be a symbol of interconnection.
Plastic fibres fragment like memories
– they are submerged, frayed, reimagined,
pulled through black water to break the surface.
Forever this flotsam haunts the sea-mind.

Simone King

JoyAnne O'Donnell writes from Emmitsburg Maryland. Born in Pennsylvania but has traveled all over. Nominated for The Pushcart twice. JoyAnne's latest poems were published in Setu magazine. JoyAnne is author of five poetry books on amazon. JoyAnne is also a lover of swimming, and especially writing poems about nature and wildlife and true-life experiences.



THE SOUL OF A SEASHELL

I always love the surprise gifts of seashells
 The gentle morning ocean walk
 In the quiet refreshing land of the oceans wing
 A seashell holds many songs to sing
 A whispered wave, a gentle sigh
 Echoes of the blue day calming high
 Soft clouds string by
 Giving us time to see all that is free
 Inside the seashells drum the sea waves always hum
 The seagulls are angelic wings flying under the calling sun
 The tide holds ancient secrets and moons leap
 Carrying the waves to always peep
 Of golden treasures beaming of days to keep
 The seashell is swirled and shaped like the world that was spun
 Seashell echo peace waves to ring under our hearts sun
 The soul of the seashell sparkles a thousand stars colors
 With the many planets towers.

JoyAnne O'Donnell

SUN'S EMBRACE

I taste a rainbow
In my drink of water
To genuine fresh new day
The morning sweet red
With yellow lace of warm sun
Gives us a warm embrace
To start the day to grace
When everything comes alive to see
The birds spiral all around
Through our sky
With all that is good from way up high
Singing joyous songs
Carrying the sun on my arm
As a energy field for good
The true maple tree's songs
Sterling silver raindrops
Bloom the flowers so strong
Liquid gold rays
Make everything shine
Green palm trees sway
With God's flute to sing
Of a beautiful day to bring
Fruit in our baskets
Playing every days tune
Of a symphony choir strikes noon
Swaying notes in the air of all good tides
Inside the sparkling peace stars
Inner ties forever in my heart a star.

CARDINALS BREATH

True red hearts of love
Fly in their wings
Not a wrinkle in their song
A length of skies miracle
To see a cardinal in our day
Puffed white clouds beep
Looking for night to sleep
An owl would hop on one
In the day time
To escort his nightingale friend
Shining white inside this new day of light.

2010 - 2025



POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
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COVER ARTWORK 'MARCH HARE' BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE