

2010 - 2025



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
SEPTEMBER 2025

MARK ROBERTS
*The poetry of place,
history and memory*

COVER ARTWORK 'GINGKO' BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



©Mark Ulyseas

Monsoon. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



SUPPORT LIVE ENCOUNTERS. DONATE NOW AND KEEP THE MAGAZINE LIVE IN 2025

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

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

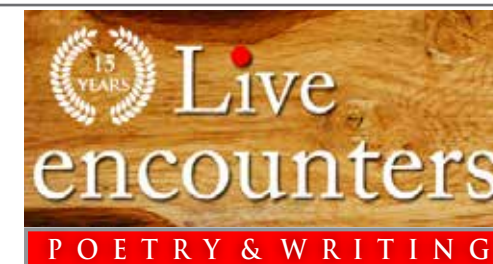
We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor

[Donate](#)

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



SEPTEMBER 2025

CONTRIBUTORS

MARK ROBERTS - GUEST EDITORIAL

LINDA ADAIR

MARK TREDINNICK

DAVID RIGSBEE

JORDAN SMITH

BRIAN KIRK

JANE FRANK

HUGH MCMILLAN

TERRY MCDONAGH

ANGELA COSTI

RICHARD W HALPERIN

ANTON FLOYD

PHIL LYNCH

INDRAN AMIRTHANAYAGAM

LINCOLN JAQUES

EDWARD CARUSO

JUSTIN LOWE

LAWANDA WALTERS

STEPHEN HOUSE

AMY BARRY

MA YONGBO

PATRICIA SYKES

DAPHNE WILSON

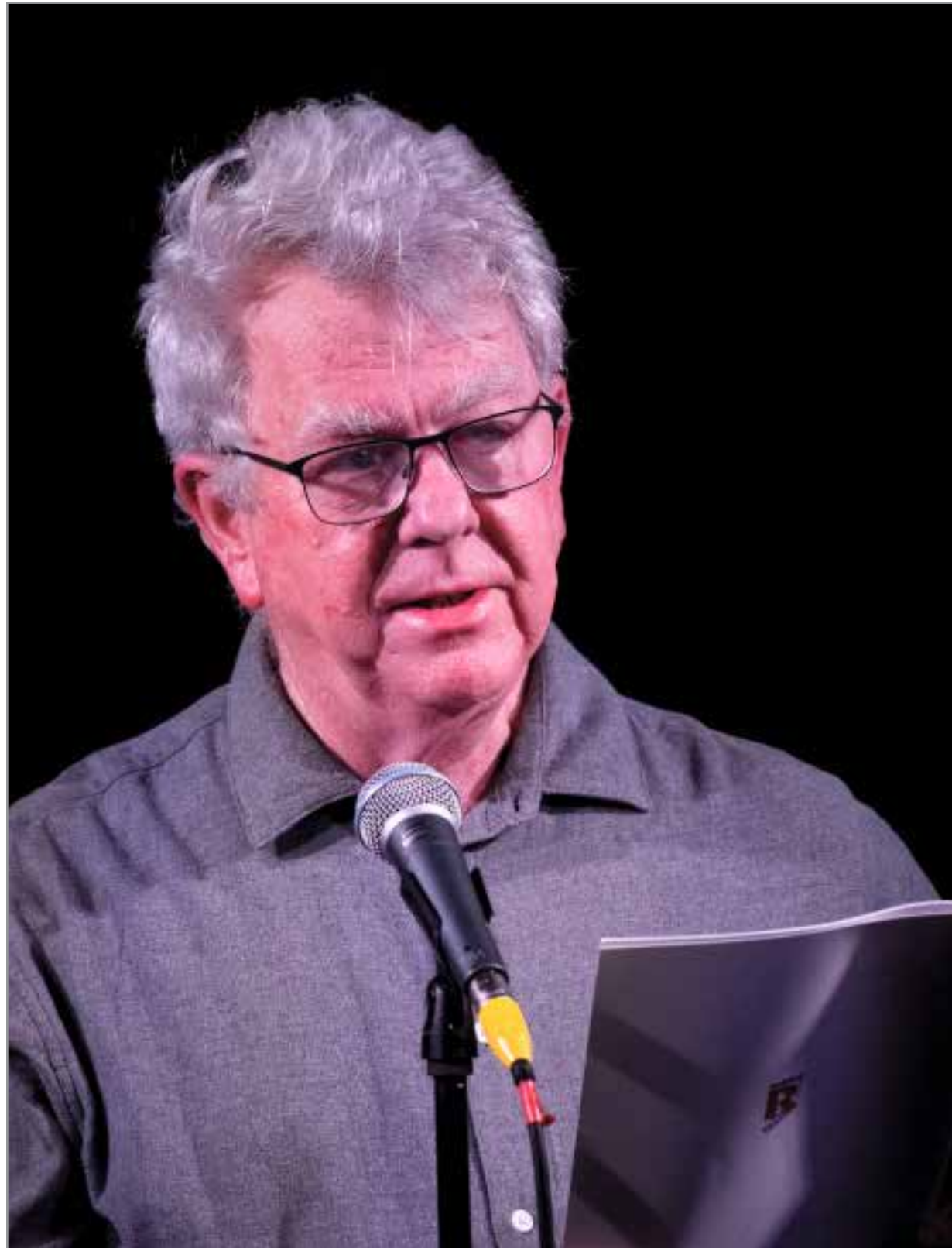
GITA CHATTOPADHYAY

- translations by Paramita Banerjee & Carlyne Wright

DR SALWA GOUDA

For much of the last four decades, Mark Roberts has been involved in writing, criticism and publishing. In 1982, he established *P76* magazine in with Adam Aitken and has been involved in small press publishing ever since. In 2011 he set up the on-line journal *Rochford Street Review*, which is currently publishing Issue 42 <https://rochfordstreetreview.com/>

The Office of Literary Endeavours (5 Islands Press 2025) is Mark's third book, after *Stepping out of Line* (Rochford Street Press 1986) and *Concrete Flamingos*, Island Press 2016.



Mark Roberts

MARK ROBERTS

THE POETRY OF PLACE, HISTORY AND MEMORY

About a decade ago I started thinking about a project based on my memory of spending holidays and large blocks of my childhood on a farm run by my great aunts and uncle on the Cargo road between Orange and Cargo in the Central West of NSW, Australia. My memories covered the first 20 years or so of my life from the early 1960s through to the mid to late 1970s. At first this seemed to be a simple exercise. There were a number of memories that seemed to suit themselves well to poetry - travelling over the Blue Mountains as a child and looking down at clouds in the valley and imagining I was at the sea, looking down the main street of a town and seeing a paddock full of flowering canola like a sea of gold.... so I wrote some poems they were ok, but very one dimensional, much like a faded 1970s instamatic photograph.

Memory obviously wasn't enough for me to produce a good poem. There needed to be some depth beyond the simple description - context, history narrative perhaps? So I decided to return to the place of these memories. Travelling over the mountains again I looked out across the country as I drove down Victoria Pass towards Lithgow I felt a recognition I hadn't felt before. I had travelled through the area a number of times over the preceding decades but this time there was something different. I was looking at the country, trying to see into it, rather than just glancing at it.

A lot of things had changed since I was a child looking down at clouds or marveling at the gold of canola in flower. To start with I had learnt in school the accepted, colonial history of the place I was now looking down on. A history of settlement, explorers and empire (The British). There wasn't much room for First Nations People in this narrative of my youth - if they were mentioned at all it was implied that they simply 'melted' away in the face of the expanding white settlement. Now as I looked down onto the country in front of me I new that I was entering Wiradyuri land and far from melting away they had fought bravely for their land.

I had also been reading authors like William Least Heat-Moon (*Blue Highways*, *River Horse* and particularly *PrairieEarth: A Deep Map*) and the Irish writer Tim Robinson (*Connemara: Listen to the Wind*). The poetic prose in these books drove a deep understanding of place and history, not just the accepted histories but the little histories, the lost histories and traditions that define a place. I was also reading poets like Laurie Duggan (*The Ash Range*) and Kate Middleton (*Ephemeral Waters*). Both of these books highlighted a method of capturing a region in poetry, its history, its environment and our impacts on it.

I headed out to where the old farm used to be just past Orange, in the foothills of what the settlers called Mount Canobolas but which the Wiradyuri knew as Gaaha Bula. I remember standing on the top of the peak as a child, shivering and looking at the radio and TV towers and trying to look back to the farm. Now, alone, I listened and eventually wrote a prose poem:

Gaanha-bula

I'm standing at the top of Mount Canobolas/Gaanha-bula. It is a spring morning, the sun is out, but there is a hint of ice in the breeze which occasionally flicks a piece of yellow tape against the metal framework of a telecommunications tower. This is a return to a place, a connection with country stretching through my family, the hints and suggestions of a buried history, a land that fills the imagination.

I listen to the tape against the metal, like morse code tapping out a message. I lis-ten for a pattern, but the wind swirls around the tower sending the sound in all di-rections. Above me I see microwave dishes, mobile cells and other pieces of elec-tronic gadgetry. This is how we communicate. I listen for a hum which would suggest high frequency radio signals are flashing above my head. But there is nothing but the flickering of the yellow tape.

Gradually I hear further into the silence - the wind moving through the trees be-low, the distant sound of a car heading up a dirt road, the faint rumble of a plane invisible in the sky.

Published in *The Office of Literary Endeavours* (5 Islands Press 2025)

In many ways this was a way in for me. Like Tim Robinson I listened to the wind and it hinted at hidden histories and memories which reached back further than I imagined.

Of course if you are going to try and write poetry you need to read poetry, really read it - read it and read it again. So I started looking for and reading contemporary poets writing about place. In particular I read the work of Wiradyuri poets and writers. Jeanine Leane's work was central to helping me connect with the hidden histories through poetry. Her poem 'After the Silence the Echo', which was part of the *Dhuluny: the war that never ended exhibition* at the Bathurst Regional gallery in 2024 to mark the 200-year anniversary of the declaration of Martial Law on 14 August 1824, became a powerful touchstone for me as I tried to place myself and my poetry in Wiradyuri country. The violence of the so-called Bathurst Wars, and its almost complete absence until recently from Australian history, has to inform how both First Australians and non-indigenous Australians, relate to the area around Bathurst and Orange. Leane's poem concludes:

After the silence there's an echo.
An echo is a sound bouncing back through time

repeating

an echo is a sound that curves around to
re-sound again...
and again...
and again...

An echo is the sound of the past
as it screams

down

through

time
through the barrel of a gun

at the end of a knife
from the thud of a stirrup iron.
An echo is resounding.
Silence is not peace.
The echo comes back
to break the silence...
again...
and again...
and again...
now...
as then...
as now...
As always.^[1]

Once you accept the violence of the colonial past it necessarily impacts the way you view your past, your memories and how you represent them in poetry. Once of the memories I have tried to write about is the old car racing track at what was called Catalina Park in Katoomba. As a child I recall being in the car as my family drove through Katoomba on the way over the mountains to the farm. Down in a gully, off the old highway was a car racing track and, if a race meeting was on, you could hear the roar of the cars from the highway. I had tried to work this into a poem a number of times without success. The history of the racetrack, and the land it sat on, was, however, much more complicated. As settlement spread out from Sydney and across the mountains, many of the displaced Darug and Gundungurra people settled in a gully just west of the settlement of Katoomba.

Over time it became a community and a central point of culture. Then, in the late 1940s the local council decided to build a car racing track on the site and the community was dispersed and de-molished. Recently I read a poem by another Wiradyuri poet Jazz Money called ‘Gully Song’. While this poem is probably not about the Katoomba gully, it does provide another layer of histo-ry to the place I was trying to write about

a mist seeps
through this gully
and I can hear song
feel smoke cling to
hair to lashes
hear the way
the old voices are
held here

- From *how to make a basket* UQP 2021

Auden once famously said that “poetry makes nothing happen”, what many fail to consider is that that section of ‘In Memory Of W.B. Yeats’ concludes with the lines “it survives,/ A way of happen-ing, a mouth”. For me, creating poetry out of place, memory and history is a “way of happening”, an attempt at truth telling in verse. The understanding, the unearthing and recording in art of our understanding of what it means to be living on a country that has a history that has been deliber-ately hidden from us is what is driving much of my current poetic practice.

While my main work at present may be firmly centred on a particular area of Australia, the old saying ‘think locally act globally’ holds true here. Australia is not the only country trying to come to terms with its colonial past (particularly a British colonial past) and the value of international platforms such as *Live Encounters* is critical in reaching out to a global “village” of poets and readers. It is a privilege to be part of that village. The poetry of place can be, indeed, global.

[1] The complete poem can be read at <https://rochfordstreetreview.com/2024/08/25/jeanine-leane-after-the-silence-the-echo/>



Co-editor of *Rochford Street Review*, Adair is a writer, artist, and activist descended from several Irish refugees, most of whom came from Roscommon and Galway. Two of her great-great-grandmothers were sent to Australia as teenage orphan girls on the Earl Grey Scheme in the wake of *An gorta Mor*. Their overlooked stories have inspired many of her poems, and she is thrilled and deeply honoured to be able to read at *Poetry Plus* in Ireland and in Galway at Charlie Byrnes Bookshop event for the National Culture Night on 19 September 2025. Adair's poems have been anthologised in *OysterCatcher One*; *To End All Wars*; *Messages from The Embers*; *Poetry for the Planet*; and published in international journals including *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*; *FemAsia*; *The Blue Nib* as well as a range of independent Australian journals. Adair most recently featured at the Winter 2025 Kedumba Gallery Reading; The August Reading held at the Little Lost Bookshop, Katoomba; the Anniversary Reading for (the renewed) 5 Islands Press in Melbourne; and A Gallery of Poets event at Dickerson Gallery. She has read at major events for Melbourne's 2024 and 2023 Sonic Poetry Festivals; was invited to feature at The Back to Newnes Day in 2023 and presented her work after residencies at the BigCi (Bilpin Internal Ground for Creative Initiatives) and Varuna: the National Writers House. She was interviewed for 3CR's *Spoken Word* program, and has exhibited her poems together with her paintings in both solo and group shows in Sydney, Australia. She has been invited to be a guest poet at the upcoming *The Wonderlust Women* event in Glasgow.

SÚILE GORM DÚNTA Ó GLARE CERULEAN blue eyes shuttered from cerulean glare

In searing cerulean brilliance
you all wonder is this a light of possibility
after months in the half-lit world below

On deck the optic nerves twitch
in the disarming glare of
sunlight dancing on waves

as the boat is anchored
from far away the too-familiar grey
of the Workhouse walls rise in your minds eye

Today, the *Digby's* manifest declares you were
a housemaid who can read
presumably English

Afterall, the banned language *Gaielge*
would not be worth considering
from the Empires' point of view,

Yet you made an illiterate mark
as you disembarked from that first
Earl Grey Scheme ship to sail to Australia.

Why? I want to be able to ask
but of course you do not answer me so many generations gone.

I imagine this is because we do not share the same mother tongue.

Linda Adair

THE LIMITS OF DIS-LOCATION

in memory of my great great grandmother

You were ...

a mere girl
one among 4114 souls
'rescued' or trafficked
from that occupied country
to this vast stolen land
over 300 First Nations

dílaithrithe / displaced
díbeartha / exiled
díbeartha / banished

You witnessed ...

that water-mold
infest bog-land plots
as the 'late blight' fed
Sassenach greed and bigotry
and starvation and eviction
swept away resistance

dhaoradh / condemned
dídhaonnaithe / dehumanised
díshealbhaíodh / evicted

You learned ...

that choice was easy
if you wanted to stay alive
Earl Grey's elegant scheme
outsourced the cost
of supporting poor orphan girls
to the insolvent colony
bás / perish
nó / or
daonra an choilíneacht / populate the colony

You escaped ...

the last -resort refuge
of Roscommon's workhouse
arriving in Port Jackson
on the *Digby* in April 1849
its bounty of young housemaids
resented by the protestant press

bhreithnigh / judged
náire / shamed
doicheall / resented

continued overleaf...

You muted ...

your mother tongue
stilled behind compressed lips
you always answered in broken *Bearla*
kept your thoughts to yourself
as they whirred in the fluency
of your native *Gaeilge*.

ina thost / silenced
toirmiscthe / forbidden
shéan / denied

You knew...

your role was
to serve in *ciúnas*
in boisterous households
where squatters pushed
past 'The limits of location'
your policeman patrolled.

comhshamhlú / assimilate
eirigh suas / rise up
pósadh / marry

You became a ...

bean chéile , *mháthair*
then widow when carrying
your youngest child
you beloved matriarch
whose calm smile of welcome
was rememberd in the death notices
50 years after you arrived.

I gcuimhne ar mo shin-seanmháthair, Margaret McGarry,
dúchasach de Ros Comáin / In memory of my great great grandmother,
Margaret McGarry, native of Roscommon.

Mark Tredinnick, the author of twenty-five celebrated works of poetry and prose, is the author, most recently, of *House of Thieves*, *One Hundred Poems*. His books on the writing craft have touched the lives and works of many. He runs *What the Light Tells*, an online poetry masterclass, and teaches at the University of Sydney. His edited collection of essays for Robert Gray, *Bright Crockery Days*, is just out from 5 Islands Press, whose managing editor he is. Mark lives and works southwest of Sydney on Gundungurra Country.



SHRIKE-THRUSH, FOR INSTANCE

*For Meredith**

You flew the nest years ago, of course. There is a time that needs
no mother in it. But when the day comes and she no longer
breathes the living air, one is as a shorebird without a shore.

Neither north nor south. Or now, perhaps, you're as the shore without
the bird. *You can prepare yourself*, a friend had said; what starts, ends.
But there's no easy getting used to her never coming back.

Still, though, the way the days keep landing, and the birds, though fewer,
keen and cry: what it was she passed to you does not cease. Life keeps
living all that lived. Shrike-thrush, for instance, naming all the ways.

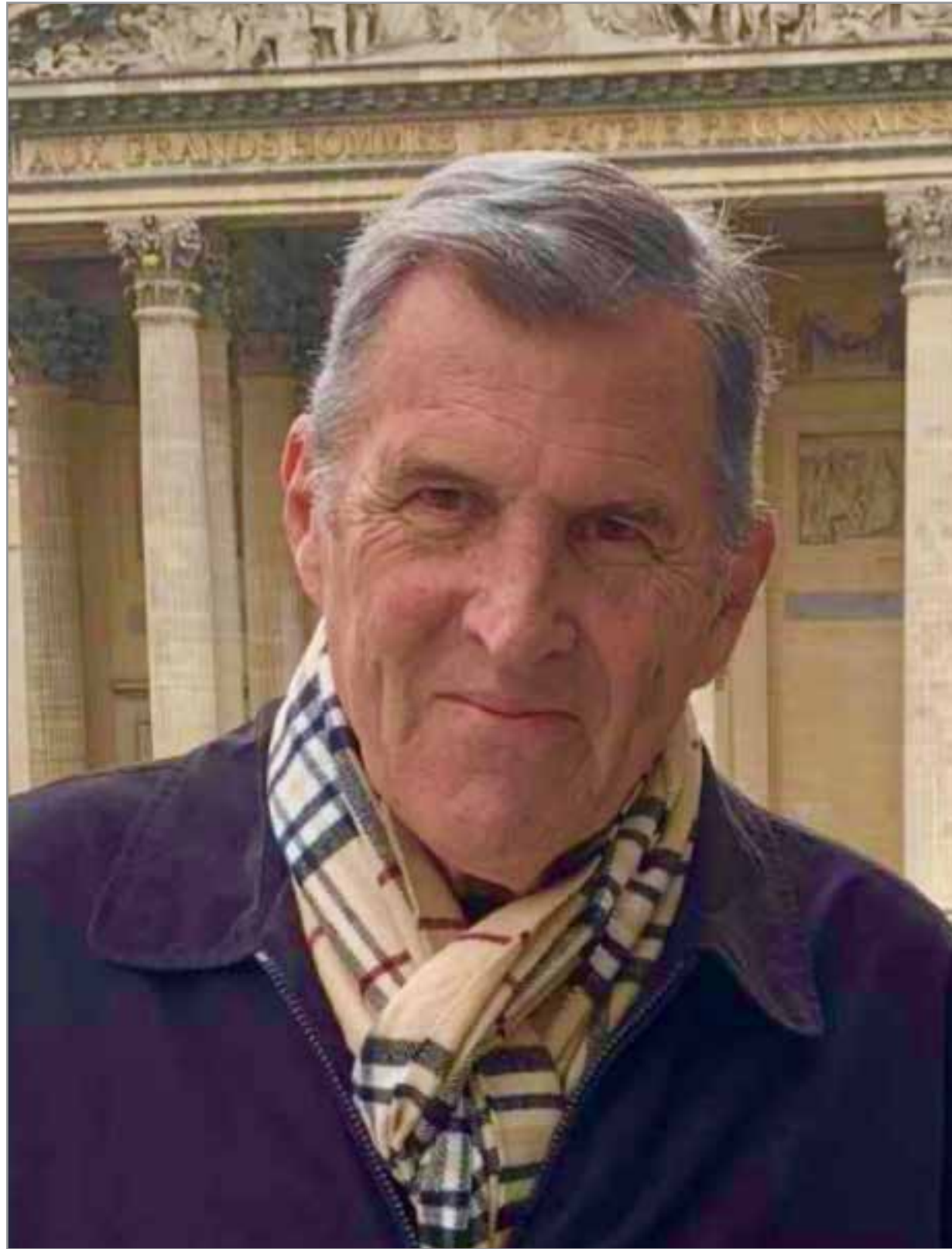
** a poem written last week to console a friend on the sudden loss
of her mother.*

Mark Tredinnick.

David Rigsbee is the recipient of many fellowships and awards, including two Fellowships in Literature from The National Endowment for the Arts, The National Endowment for the Humanities (for The American Academy in Rome), The Djerassi Foundation, The Jentel Foundation, and The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, as well as a Pushcart Prize, an Award from the Academy of American Poets, and others. In addition to his twelve collections of poems, he has published critical books on the poetry of Joseph Brodsky and Carolyn Kizer and coedited *Invited Guest: An Anthology of Twentieth Century Southern Poetry*. His work has appeared in *Agni*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The New Yorker*, *The Southern Review*, and many others. Main Street Rag published his collection of found poems, *MAGA Sonnets of Donald Trump* in 2021. His translation of Dante's *Paradiso* was published by Salmon Poetry in 2023, and *Watchman in the Knife Factory: New & Selected Poems* was published by Black Lawrence Press in 2024.

OUT OF FRAME

Flat light. The houses rise gleaming
out of the grass. Here an aluminum ladder
and some weathered fence slats seem
out of business in the green and the moss.
That one-propeller plane keeps the air busy.
Some birds have a conclave in a neighbor yard.
It was something urgent, whatever else it was.
Just the thing when light outdoes the attention
as both soften, the corners bend and darken
like an old photo in the middle of which
stands a farmer, awkward, sure of nothing
except the work the dusted fields require
out of frame, behind the gathered family
that, except for his inscrutable frown
he cannot explain or describe to the viewer.



David Rigsbee

ONCE A SKUNK

The dog looks up from the end
of the master's leash. He's trying
to tell you he's the familiar of clouds,
especially those mid-summer armadas,
the colliding forces of cumulus and stratus.
The master, meanwhile latex-gloved,
waits. It's the inverse of leash law,
the orderliness brought to fecal matter;
clean sidewalks pacing away unbroken
until the road turns, either curving
or dipping at the horizon out of sight.
When I was a child, I walked the dirt
path outline dividing field from forest.
Often an animal would bound or slink
or creep from one to the other. Once a skunk
ambled out of the woods and plunged
into the corn, the same day a cornsnake
made its hasty sine wave in the dirt
like the fingering on a cello during
a difficult passage in the repertoire,
angling from field to piney thicket;
finally like a buzzer going off in a dream.
It was the way home then, and unless
time is a lie, it is the way home now.

HOLDING LEAR

To his children, the father sent a note:
"Henceforth, all requests for gifts and loans
should be made through my attorney."
A coin dropped under the table first rolls,
then wobbles in an onrush of uncertainty
until it lies down spinning, speeding up
even as it settles, before coming to rest
altogether, an inert thing among things.
When it was a wheel, it dreamed
the Royal Brougham was dead weight
without it, the government in ruins.
Perhaps we should, as Vaughan
recommended, expect and moan.
Downstairs my daughter regards the sea
by staring into her phone. When it was clear
he was dying, my father, who hugged a pillow
months to his aching lung, cut loose
and cried in the night like a girl.
Standing in Barnes & Noble, I reread
the opening lines of *King Lear*, "I thought
the king had more affected ..." and put
it down, the Arden edition with its
massive apparatus, the text afloat
on an ocean of explanatory notes,
and on the cover, bare tree crooking
charcoal joints, leaves long in the process
of blowing out over bare earth, a fact
not even bad art can fail to get right.

ADVENT

Now, the first of December was covered with snow,
sang James Taylor. And it was. Ohio was under
an advisory, Virginia just getting underway. It was
one of those dread afternoon assignments. I was
teaching Hart Crane to an auditorium of students
still in their overcoats, trying to jot down Crane's
heartache in bullet points. I know they will remember
how complicated it was, but should they ever
refer to their notes, they will find it there, now
thirty years on, how the sky looked this way and that
divided by the cedar crown. They slushed their way
back to the parking lot, their dorms and lives.

Today, I refer to my notes, as I do every year:
your hair parted in the middle, your mustache
bent in a frown like an activist, ca. 1975.
Weeks earlier, you had called to invite me
to Thanksgiving. My partner, not yet
under the pacific cloud of Zoloft, and citing
upcoming law school exams, made the case:
we wouldn't go. She recalled your only visit, when,
with new bride in tow, you stowed a wine bottle
under the guest room bed. We could only hear
the rustle and thump, proof of mischief.
You had become a nonperson in her eyes.

She was unkind, and you saw how it verged
on misery before succumbing to worse.
You knew because I told you, riding around
the Virginia mountains before you left,
waving from the window that summer day.
Your call was the last time I heard your voice
alive. Years later it was your greeting
on the answering machine, which I recorded
so that it became a computer file, itself lost.
The next call was your neighbor. I had just
put my briefcase loaded with books down.
Kitchen. It was snowing outside. December.

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.



NO EXPECTATIONS

*But ever in my sweet short life
Have I felt like this before*
(Jagger/Richards)

*Don't show me your desires,
He said, the record
On the old lp changer repeating
The same side, an example
If not an exact one, he acknowledged
Of what he meant, all those years ago
Still in high school, when he walked home
From the church basement coffee house
Through the suburbs to his parents' house,
The traffic light on Route 31 strobing,
The acid just taking hold,
And he knew the night would just go on
Folding in on itself, an origami
So complex,
That when he stared at it in the mirror
On the back of his bedroom door,
Each sharply creased facet
Was another axiom,
Proving the self unprovable,
Another face
To pull on, like the oversize sweater
He wore now most nights against a chill
The whiskey couldn't reach,
And this is why, he continued,*

Jordan Smith

continued overleaf...

He decided that night he might as well give himself
Fully over to whatever came to hand
Rather than to anything scrawled on his own
Or anyone's endless list of expectations.
Show me your loyalties,
He said, as the song began again,
Especially if you've kept them
As simple as I have.
When I pass through anywhere, I never want
To pass through there again.

THE GREAT UNCERTAINTY

He never thought he'd be even a footnote
In anyone's biography, unless as one
Of those contingent circumstances
(Which, the sages wrote, are known
As the great uncertainty), like
Today's visitation by an owl in the woods,
Which happened only because he switched
Shoes for boots, and then, discovering
A hole in his sock, took the time
To change it, and later for no reason
He could remember, he picked the direct
Rather than his usual circuitous path,
Straight up, not following the contours
Along the ascending ridges, the narrower
Less-traveled way he preferred that seemed
Suddenly predictable, self-referential,
And then the feathers like smoke, and then
On an ash branch a few feet off the trail
The horned head, and the bird's charry
Silhouette just emerging against the trunk,
Watching him as if he should
Have more to offer, but later, when he texted
His friend about the band on stage,
The singer from whom they'd both
Learned so much about desolation
And the insufficiency of nostalgia,
Who performed now with near-

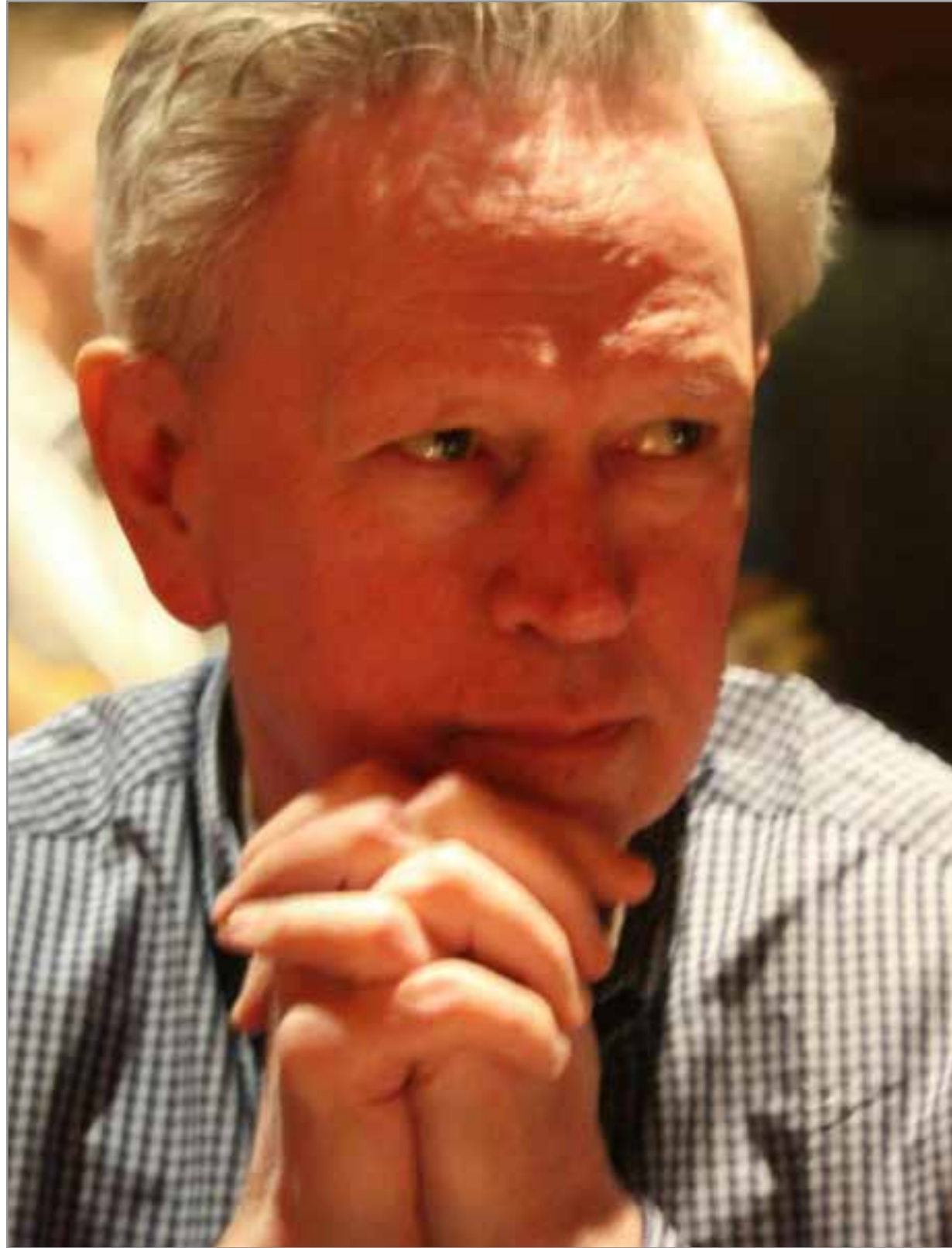
continued overleaf...

Indifference to anything like praise,
And when his friend sent back a selfie,
Holding up the singer's rarest single
Framed in a mirror so that his face
Was just visible through the spindle hole
There seemed no reason that some
Gesture from his life might not become
A trace in someone else's story,
What a biographer might call
A *source*, as if you could find any beginning
To whatever was always going to come,
Next.



Photograph by Jordan Smith.

Brian Kirk has published two collections with Salmon Poetry, *After The Fall* (2017) and *Hare's Breath* (2023). His poem "Birthday" won Irish Poem of the Year at the Irish Book Awards 2018. His chapbook *It's Not Me, It's You* won the Southword Fiction Chapbook Competition, published by Southword Editions in 2019. His novel *Riverrun* was chosen as a winner of the IWC Novel Fair 2022. www.briankirkwriter.com



NETTLE

What does it mean to feel a sting?
A sign of life or just an ache?
Perhaps it signifies something
that can't be named, something opaque
like worry, fear or maybe love,
a pinch that urges you to move.

But if I steel my will and grasp
the moment that is offered me,
and even as I swear and gasp
I still may find tranquillity.
Remember how we used to live
before we took what we should give?

Look closer and you'll see her worth,
a source of food for Tortoisehell,
indicative of fertile earth,
verdant garden damoiselle.
Don't take this sharp conceit amiss,
her sting is like a lover's kiss.

Brian Kirk

COCO

That is the name
they have given me.

A clown's name –
they have no idea.

They imagine that
I am domesticated,

but I am more wild
than they'll ever

know. I am Diana,
the hunter, Artemis,

Bastet. My brothers
pulled Freya's chariot

from battlefields to Fólkvangr.
Pangur Bán was my father.

When they stroke me
I take on their fears.

The wisdom of ages
sleeps in my coat.

CROSSING THE THAMES

The water down below is black as pitch,
the lights from stars and shore blend and bewitch,
making the city seem an eiderdown
on which is draped a silken evening gown –
brocade, studded with silver jewels, hand-sewn.
The dress she wears is dark as chocolate cake
and she is good enough to eat. You slake
your thirst with furtive looks, but still you ache
for all the things that she might let you take.
Hope lives until you reach the other side,
there the world begins or ends – fate will decide –
but you delay the moment, slow your stride,
you want this crossing over to abide
so that your love might live always untried.

Brisbane poet Jane Frank's third collection of poems is *Gardening on Mars*, to be released by Shearsman Books in October 2025 and she is author of two previous books published by Calanthe Press — *Ghosts Struggle to Swim* (2023) and *Wide River* (2020). Her poetry has been widely published in Australia and overseas in journals and anthologies including *Westerly*, *Other Terrain Journal*, *Meniscus*, *London Grip*, *Antipodes*, *The Mackinaw*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, the *Liquid Amber Prize anthology* and *100 Poets* (Flying Island Books 2025). She is Reviews Editor at *StylusLit* literary journal and teaches in the School of Business and Creative Industries at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Read more of her work at <https://www.facebook.com/JaneFrankPoet/>



VICARIOUS

Late afternoon in a part of town I don't know well & I need somewhere to sit, drink tea, during my son's guitar lesson. I've wound myself from one side of the street to the other like a cat's cradle & now I'm at a rickety table watching the road spin like ribbon up and around the hill below cassia & coral trees, between fringes of bright painted shops, tiny cars rolling home past me in a blur of end-of-day ordinariness. At the tables around me—a nurse who's finished her shift or perhaps about to start, three school kids glugging chocolate milk, an elderly woman in a shawl beside a decrepit bicycle feeding shortbread crumbs to a dog in a square basket. I've started imagining myself into other bodies, minds, shedding them just as fast, so all the lives I've never lived are scattered around the suburban streets & in coffee shops & cinemas & parks & on the curving path beside the bay where paragliders wash upwards into a dark orange sunset

Jane Frank

BANKING SLEEP

... up come the sleeping words, bright red, fresh, blowing about
Ali Smith

I've been banking sleep
these almost winter mornings—
been in debt for months—
so I bought mahogany sheets
designed for dreamers
& free spirits,
textural and timeless
as a way of telling myself
that Plato was wrong.
Unconsciousness
is not the same as death
or even the borderland
before it

At first light
in the undergrowth
fern trees are a nucleus
of colour & energy:
I wonder if there are still
tiny fragments of us
caught dormant in the silk
of that golden orb web?
Imprints of you:
the whorls of your fingers
the ridges & deltas
of your green touch,
everything you planted
in this garden cast onto days
in shiny fuchsia film

If I'm honest
a scarcity of time
is on my mind
& when I dream
it's an organic matrix
of dahlia beds alight
contre-jour with autumn sun,
gums with scribbled trunks,
cascading fountains
of leaves hiding
the crevices where frogmouths doze,
a dog sprawling on the lawn,
a lazy eternity symbol
of fire pit smoke,
tawny blooms
arranging themselves
in a moon and stars vase
& lullaby-birds
circling the old house
as if years haven't passed

DREAM MAP

Orange and yellow canna lilies
grow fast from crinkled pages,
through places where folds
have made the paper soft
as earth. On these unseasonably
warm nights, I carry dream-maps
in pockets edged red
with rickrack. From
my bike, the past
moves fast in and out of criss-
crossed streets —the Queenslanders
of my grandparents
and aunts, best trees
to climb, the baker's shop that sells
rolled chocolate sponge,
Neapolitan slice, the skate rink, pony club,
swimming pool and school,
the graves of pets, not all
my own. This dreaming world
no longer grieves: nights
are peppermint fresh, shining
through dark-hour furrows.
I pack and unpack all the trinkets
and books I've ever owned
in the house with rooms
of many colours. Sharks swim
in dark unreachable rivers

and there are snow-capped mountains
I can't touch, no matter
how long my arms extend, far off
beyond frangipani trees
and sugarcane fields. The strangest thing:
all the people have gone.
I don't dream of love but still
believe it might be somewhere.

Hugh McMillan is a writer and performer who lives in South West Scotland. His last collection 'Diverted to Split', was published in summer 2024. In 2021 he was appointed editor of the Scottish Poetry Library's anthology 'Best Scottish Poems' and this year was also chosen to chair the Saltire judges for Best Scottish Poetry Collection of the Year. His cult classic 'McMillan's Galloway' was reprinted in paperback form in May 2023, and 'Whit If', his Scottish History poems were reprinted in April 2024 and formed the basis of a successful show at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2024 and 2025.



THE SECOND LAST FRIDAY IN APRIL

A faultless steel sky.
Small trees

shudder as buses
carve through puddles

ready to fill.
A couple drift diagonally

across the road to the baker's,
they are beautiful,

she has kanzashi, he is
tattooed blue all over.

Their Thornhill is not mine:
there is love, and blossom

frames the steak bakes.
Stand us where we did?

Pass me the Bovril
and pepper, my muse!

Each day I set sail
and am washed ashore.

Hugh McMillan

AVANTI

Avanti I love you.
I have missed three trains
and yet you are here
with your blue snake shining
allure, your livery, your
carriages lifting and seething

slightly in a sexy way.
You are destined
to go somewhere I will
get off, though I may
not want to, it will be
a place where the rails

go away smoked
with frost.
Avanti let me confess
or cry to you
my faults my passions.
I am dying pasted

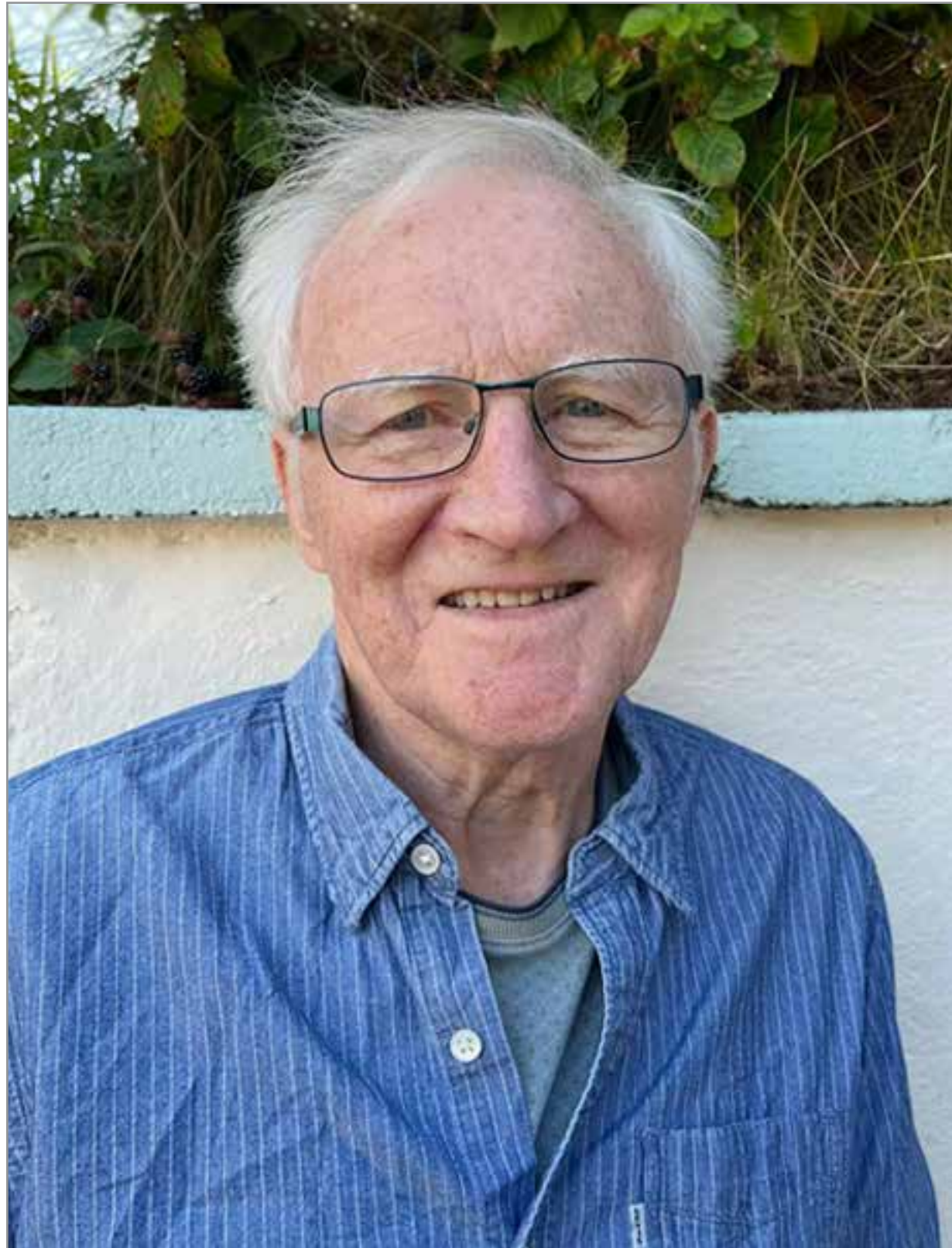
to this window here,
this icon of night
and reflected sadness,
joy too, of course.
I am wondering where
in the starry lovely

night I am going?
and all the time I am digging
with a blunt key
in the lining of my
jacket for what I hope
is a plastic bottle of wine.

POEMS I ADMIRE

So many of the poems
I admire have people
walking through city streets
in rain or fractured sunlight,
they are rushing to meet friends
or imagining they are
and in the process see the faces
of street vendors or hear
the snap of bright
umbrellas opening. There is
a hiss or stir of traffic, trams
maybe, the clouds overhead
remind them of animals at
the zoo, there's a hole
in one of their shoes
and they stand in a puddle
but don't feel sorry for themselves
because they are all wrapped
up in rush and watching.
They are nearly all in love
even the old ones
who simply sit on that bench
in the park by the shade
of a linden tree
and spend the day reading
or playing chess. Oh I am
late they say to themselves
or to the ones they meet
at last under a statue who
turn full and wonderful
faces towards them
in one unadulterated
moment of joy.

Terry McDonagh, poet and dramatist, has worked in Europe, Asia and Australia. He's taught creative writing at Hamburg University and was Drama Director at Hamburg International School. Published fifteen poetry collections, as well as letters, drama, prose and poetry for young people. In March 2022, he was poet in residence and Grand Marshal as part of the Saint Patrick's Day celebrations in Brussels. His work has been translated into German, Indonesian and Arabic. His poem, 'UCG by Degrees' is included in the Galway Poetry Trail on Galway University campus. He's been a voice and narrator on several RTE radio dramas (All Points West production) for young people. In 2020, Two Notes for Home – a two-part radio documentary, compiled and presented by Werner Lewon, on The Life and Work of Terry McDonagh, The Modern Bard of Cill Aodáin. His latest poetry collections: A) An eBook 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Not Dead' – Live Encounters Publishing. B) 'I Write Because' – Calendar Road Press. After more than thirty years in Hamburg, he returned to live in County Mayo in 2019.



LANDSCAPE IN SEASON

If we can read a landscape we will never be lost.
There is always tree shade, shrub and colour
to guide us through the crescendo of seasons.

Great chunks of winter become a fading memory
when the fresh extravaganza of spring begins
to paint spectacles on canvas of dance and vigour.

Summer is a time for immersion and unravelling on land
and seascapes – on journeys around galaxies of fine wines
and smirking salads in abundance for inexhaustible eyes,

and then – rich as any flame – we have autumn insights
sauntering under a sprinkling of stars with pink fingers
nestling and hidden from the snarl of approaching winter.

If we can read the landscape we will never be lost. We are earth,
air, friends, fire and water nourished by enquiring breezes,
movement in wild grasses, colourful horizons and dogs barking.

Terry McDongah

EDUCATION OUCH!

I was only four or five when school started to insist
on tributes to a life without dreams. *Tone down child.*

I, who had shared lanes with butterflies and slithered
along hedgerows with blackbirds, had to arrive on time

in shoes bulging with squelch and sucking sound.
Behave started on page one. I was a solitary fighter

with a pocket full of stones – being trimmed to
fill a front pew – perfect as any saint or neighbour.

I learned page after page by heart and grew out of
jumping about on cloud nine extravaganza.

Against a shroud of statues and epics, I was
unprepared for the hacks and quips of what to do

when bewildered and happy. I learned rules: a man
could never be asked to strip during singing lessons,

or when licking a plate, slurp and slobber
should be frowned upon and, as I didn't know

which smile suited, I'd imagine me on a table
doing a colourful swing-about in monkey gear

to shock – to be good craic – to be a bit of a lad
but I'd usually revert and nod to the dictum:

*never get above yourself
or speak out of turn in gatherings.*

Let's atone. Atone or pay a price for gyrating like
gypsies in pink and magic. There was no light in noise.

Behave. Atone. Conform. Keep taking the tablets
and smile at other Sunday-morning dog-walkers.

I'd always wanted my fill of magic stones, shenanigans
and skipping like an untrained antelope among trees. I did!

Daydreamer

Dosser

Daydreamer.

Thankfully, the west wind came to my rescue
dropping word-potions-droplets on me and

I'd rejoice keeping them secret to float my feet
to horizons where oceans grew – to where

longboats appeared out of nowhere whistling
and singing of places where colours could fly.

I'd sift through tests, crawl on beds of nails,
often missing the magic in hedgerows – fearing

the clatter of shadows under heavenly influence
and demons crowned in halo attire.

These days, I close my eyes to see horses galloping
on wild sea waves or rolling in flat on white foam

while I wriggle happily with carefree fish.
My real learning had to be learned later.

Angela Costi has a number of poetry collections including *Honey & Salt* (5Islands Press, shortlisted Mary Gilmore Prize 2008), *An Embroidery of Old Maps and New* (winner of Poetry Prize in English, Greek Australian Cultural League 2022), and most recently *The Heart of the Advocate* (Liquid Amber Press). This year, her poetry has been placed in a number of prizes, including the Joanne Burns Microlit Award, MSB International Competition, NSW Poetry Prize, MPU International Poetry Competition and the Liquid Amber Poetry Prize. She is known as Αγγελική Κωστή among the Cypriot diaspora, her ancestry and heritage. She lives on unceded Wurundjeri land in Naarm (Melbourne, Australia).



BEIGE IS NOT A COLOUR

for Eleni Costi, my mana, who resides in 'the Sensitive Care' unit

it is a hallway of closed doors
caging the bird-like chirps
of a woman who once roared demands
as she worked in her red apron

it is her accommodating womb
before my legs kicked and eyes
opened before their quarrels
swept into my heart

it is the tone a person with status
but no power makes
as they promise assisted housing
with a tear for the *demented*

the squashed cream in a biscuit
a peach wanting to die
her bowl sent to the op shop
it is makeup stealing my face

Angela Costi

FULL FRAME

*the naval commander of the Greek war of Independence in 1821,
Laskarina Bouboulina, is shot dead from her balcony's window
final scene, Bouboulina, film, 1959*

we watch her speaking to loaded guns we are very good cowards eating
our popcorn licking our choc tops sitting very quiet in the dark she scoffs
calls them skoolikia tells them to squirm back to their holes she is more
personal to us than a saint or a god in her traditional dowdy dress with her
outstanding breasts thrust towards ocean as she commands her fleet of ships
outliving her husbands and sons and balikaria killed by cannons and swords
until one shot is fired she falls back into the dark of her house back into
our darkness with only seconds to live she says I was spared the death
of war to die inside my house help me to see the sea she says the old
man lifts her up to watch the freedom of waves and there is something
else she sees it could be her dying son we think but the view is blurred
with our tears

FACE TIME WITH COUSIN PHILLIPO

you seem bonier around the shoulders
if we hugged
it would be awkward

you're keen to describe your studio as a raft
where you write for *Simerini*
about football's failure in Cyprus

you say *Alexander the Great was Greek*
as you walk over to your large laminated
map of the world stuck to your wall

from your desk you like the view
of red push pins you've forced
into the lands you've travelled

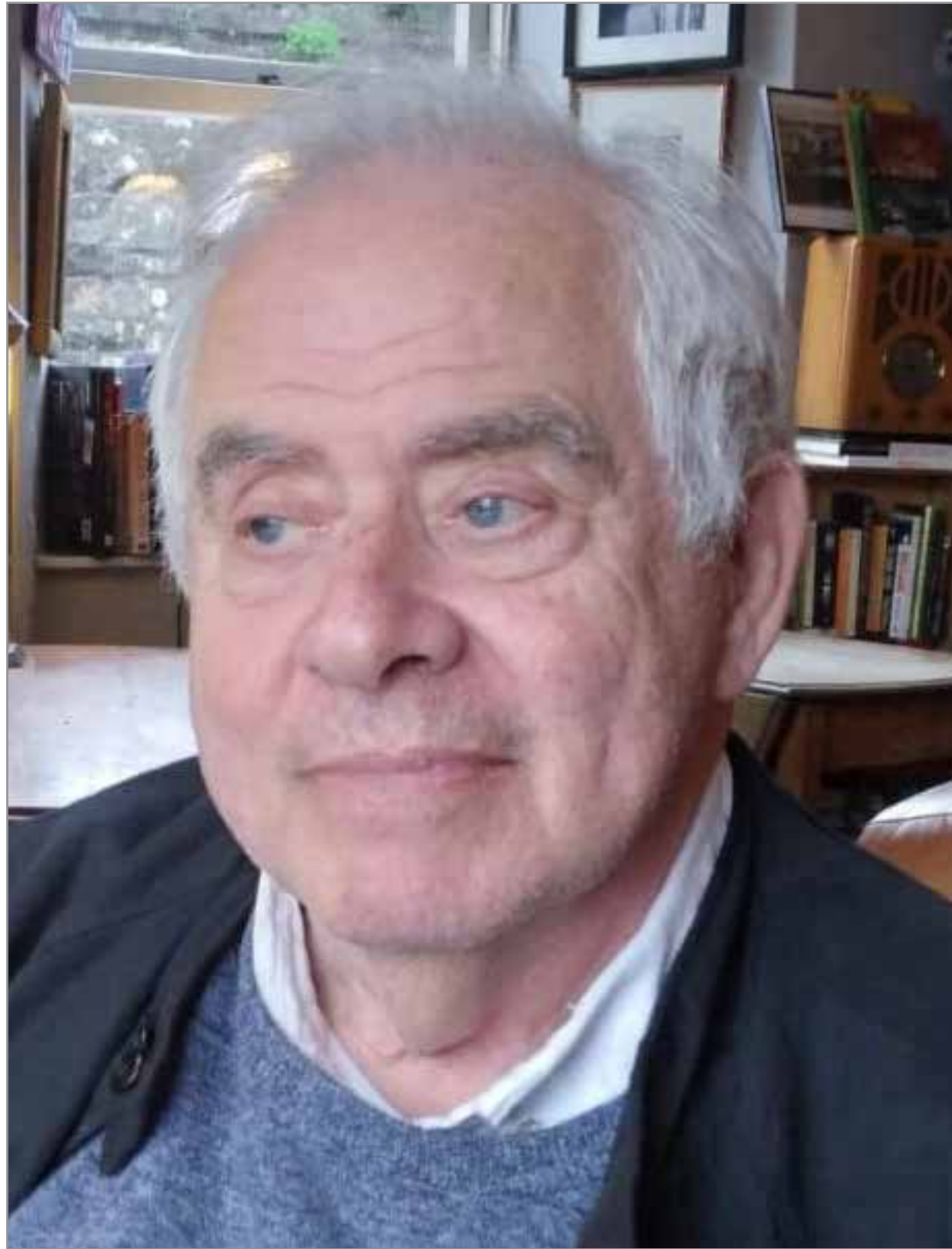
a solar system of pins in Europe
a bouquet of fireworks in South East Asia
a zig-zag path into the Middle East

you fiddle with a pin
too close to my screen
I roll my chair back

you return to your map
become the smaller person
hovering the pin over a land

out loud you say *Egypt!*
as the pin stabs through
I want to ask Why Egypt?
But your face and voice conquer
my screen *Alexander liberated them*
from the oppressors...

Richard W. Halperin is a U.S./Irish dual national living in Paris. His poetry is published by Salmon (four collections) and by Lapwing (eighteen smaller collections.). In Autumn 2025, Salmon will bring out *All the Tattered Stars: New and Selected Poems*, Introduction by Joseph Woods.



CROSSING THE ILLUSION

No one knows what a dragonfly is.
No one knows what it does.

I think it carries things away
but I have never seen one carry anything away.

Crossing the river
Crossing the illusion

A friend recommended I read the poetry of Henry Vaughan.
I tried.
A dragonfly does for me what Vaughan does for others.

Crossing the river
Crossing the illusion

My wife once gave me a very good hairbrush.
Here it still is.

She isn't.

Richard W. Halperin. Photo credit: Joseph Woods.

ANOTHER VERONICA

I overheard a woman saying to a friend
'Halfway into the conversation, I realised
he was speaking about another Veronica.'

That sometimes happens, of course.
But how many Veronicas was each Veronica?

I know in my case I am multiple
Richards, some of whom I can sense,
some of whom I suspect. Real focus
could see all the Richards at once.
My wife could see all the Richards
at once. Who else could do that?
Mycroft Holmes? Jesus? Love can do that.

A PAISLEY SHAWL

for Anton, Carole Anne and Aodhán Floyd

At the house of friends, I see a Paisley shawl
that someone left on a table. As I look,
I understand something about Persia.
I do not know what I understand,
but there it is. As I continue to look,

I feel as if I were on holiday
or on the deck of a sanitorium.
Something collects in my mind, or in
my soul. Something remembered. Something
not quite remembered. Poetry.

A CALM EAGERNESS

Years ago in Ireland I heard at Mass
a priest give a homily on Mary:
that she is barely in the Gospels
or in Acts, but that her presence
then and now is enormous. He ended
the homily by saying, 'How then does
all this affect the way we live our lives?'

Mary affects the way I live mine. How,
is private. My life is also affected by
certain entities, which I make small
if I call them 'literature.' These include,
recently – as my country of birth inflicts
torment on itself and on the rest of
the world; for nothing – the poems
of Robert Frost and *The Great Gatsby*.
They are written with a calm eagerness.

Years ago in Paris, where I live,
I went to hear a monologue spoken by
an actor and written by a young playwright
who, one evening in 2015 when he was
at home minding the baby, learned

that his wife was one of those killed
in the Bataclan massacre. The monologue
reproduced, as best art can do, his feelings
and his life that night and during the days
and years which followed. Which follow.

He entitled the piece *Vous n'aurez pas
ma haine*. You shall not have my hate.
If you have my hate, you will have won.
You will never win.

ELEGANCE

The thread of it is unbreakable.

I look at a painting of an
eighteenth-century German park:
trees, fountains, paths, laid out in
perfect symmetry. If it poured rain –
and there must be rain - the design
would remain untainted.

Wilhelm Kempff playing
The Goldberg Variations has to do
with this.

Gene Tierney in films has to do
with this. '*Belle composition par
Gène Tierney*' wrote a critic recently
about her Mrs Muir.

Experience – mine – can never
be passed on to anyone.

I can see – because I choose to –
Gene Tierney walking through it.



Anton Floyd was born in Cairo, Egypt, a Levantine mix of Irish, Maltese, English and French Lebanese. Raised in Cyprus, he lived through the struggle for independence and the island remains close to his heart. Educated in Ireland, he studied English at Trinity College, Dublin and University College Cork. He has lived and worked in the Eastern Mediterranean. Now retired from teaching, he lives in West Cork. Poems published and forthcoming in Ireland and elsewhere. Poetry films selected for the Cadence Poetry Film Festival (Seattle, 2023) and the Bloomsday Film Festival (James Joyce Centre 2023), another, *Woman Life Freedom*, dedicated to the women of Iran, was commissioned by IUAES. Several times prize-winner of the Irish Haiku Society International Competitions; runner-up in Snapshot Press Haiku Calendar Competition. Awarded the DS Arts Foundation Prize for Poetry (Scotland 2019). Poetry collections, *Falling into Place* (Revival Press, 2018) and *Depositions* (Doire Press, 2022); a special, illustrated edition of *Depositions* translated into Irish, Scots Gaelic, Welsh, and Scots with an introduction by Professor Emeritus Seosamh Watson (Gloir, 2024). New collections *On the Edge of Invisibility* and *Singed to Blue* are in preparation. Newly appointed UNESCO – RILA affiliate artist at the University of Glasgow. He is an Associate at the Centre for Poetry Innovation at the University of St Andrews, Scotland.

IN HIS POEM SNOW STORM, DU FU,

For Martin Derbyshire and Farzaneh Ghofrani

In his poem *Snow Storm*, Du Fu,
the 8th century Chinese poet,
broods on the uselessness
of letters to ameliorate his world.
Despair prowls through his lines.
It lingers over ordinary things
the detritus of a stilled life -
an empty bottle, a spilled cup,
the empty grate. People talk
but are secretive. He is wearied,
heartsore, haunted, alone.
Even if we could reach across time
what comfort could we offer him?
Tell him his words resonate today?
That would hardly satisfy.
All I know is that our son,
in his fearless concern once
led a runaway, hoof-mad bull
by the nose back to his field.
There is something mythic about that.

Anton Floyd. Photo credit: Aodhán Rilke Floyd.

* *Where there is no hope, we must invent it.* - Albert Camus

SESTINA FOR ALANNA MAEVE

*born 31st May 2023**When did other people give up the idea of being a poet? William Stafford*

Leaving Kinsale we drive home. It is a starless night.
 Except for our headlamps, the countryside is pitch.
 It feels like a deep-delving dark. Some might say
 it feels menacing. The motor, its undertow of sound,
 is a kind of mantra. My sense of being comes easy
 as breathing - a somatic tuning. I breathe in. I breathe out.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out.
 The image of our new-born grandchild fills the night.
 The sense of her and love for her come as easy
 as the eye drawn to a pinprick of light in a pitch
 black sky. Her name, Alanna Maeve, is an ecstasy of sound -
 something more than thought or words can say.

Human voices disturb the spell. I hear one say
 and she, soon to be a grandmother, speaks out
 her genuine concern, *Is it right? I mean, morally sound,*
to have a child now with the future bleak as night
and everywhere the screech of politics at fever pitch?
 Silence, then, fills the car, deep-delving and uneasy.

I'd be wary to think that way, my heart replies. It's easy
 to cede the ground, believe what cynics say -
 they'd have us dig our apathetic graves. They'd pitch
 us into the maw of hell. But ah, as Virgil said, climb out,
 reclaim the upper air or pilot permanent night
 where the uncommitted howl giving horror a sound.

Yet here in the upper air we weep at the sound
 of hope denied while fanatics make easy
 excuse the sacrifice of innocence; make night
 of day heedless of what the tears of Guernica say.
 As for the future they'd have us blot it out,
 would smear the sanctity of life with pitch.

And pity those who fall for the cynical pitch
 to compromise. Better by far the stirring sound
 of any child's tears and blisses. Promise out-
 shines all in the infant; is natural and easy
 from birth. So, we, in the infancy of race, say
 welcome that age when day's not followed by night.

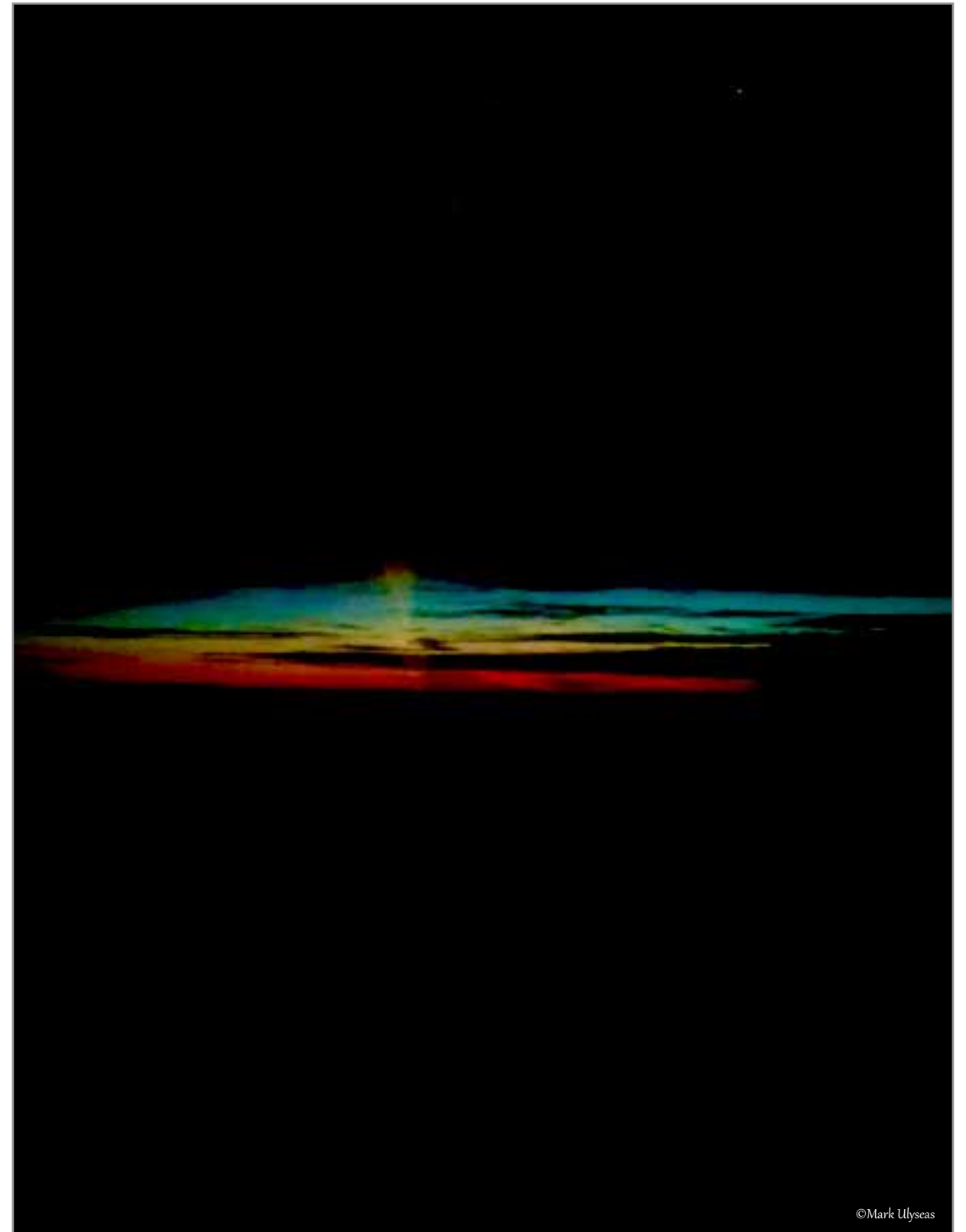
Alanna Maeve, I sing out your future worthy of perfect pitch.
 I wish your nights free from fear and your sleeps sound.
 May happiness come easy and love stir all you do and say.

NE'ER CAST A CLOUT

for Marcas Mac an Tuairneir

When the hedgerows stirred out of a long sleep,
warm light welcomed all manner of birds
territorial, wary, and noisy, building and foraging.
Small life on the move.
Everywhere smelled moist, fecund, ceremonial.
Sharp things pushed out of the dark ground,
Rainbow colours carried in green juices.
Everything was making ready for summer.
Everywhere sang the world afresh.
And we sang with it.

But war like a late frost ambushed us.
Winter was in its breath like a virus,
a cruel cold hand to cover our mouths,
would mute our voices.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Phil Lynch lives in Dublin (Ireland). His poems have appeared in a range of literary journals and anthologies, on Podcasts and CDs and have also been featured on poetry and arts shows on national and local radio in Ireland. He is a regular performer of his work at poetry and spoken word events and is the coordinator and co-host of Words by the Sea, a monthly open mic night by ArtNetdlr in Dun Laoghaire (Dublin). His latest poetry collection, *Moving On* (Salmon Poetry), was published in 2024. A previous collection, *In a Changing Light*, was also published by Salmon Poetry.



FLYING SOUTH

There is rain in the wind,
the first of the Brent Geese
have landed below in the park,
a spaceship floats among the stars,
our thoughts return to journeys made,
car packed to the gills, full of giddy fun,
compass set, as we hurtled towards the sun.

Phil Lynch

EVENING IN TOSSA

They sit with their backs to the sea,
their faces to the evening sun.
The purr of the tide on the breeze
soothes the squalls of scavenging gulls
flailing around a fisherman's boat.

Quiet chatter ripples the beach,
great splurges of laughter erupt,
friends caper and shout in the waves
till the church tower bell above
calls them home to close out the day.

The clangs on the hour send scatters
of birds in a frenzy of flight
to flutter around the old square
until clamour of daytime gives way
to uncertain sounds of the night.



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

Indran Amirthanayagam writes a Substack at indranmx.substack.com. His 28 poetry books include the Paterson prizewinner *The Elephants Of Reckoning* (Hanging Loose Press), *El bosque de deleites fraticidas* (RIL Editores), *Seer* (Hanging Loose Press), *The Runner's Almanac* (Spuyten Duyvil), *Powèt Nan Pò A: Poet of the Port* (Mad Hat), *Ten Thousand Steps Against the Tyrant* (Broadstone Books) and *Coconuts On Mars* (Paperwall, India). He is the translator of Kenia Cano's *Animal For The Eyes* (Dialogos Books) and *Origami: Selected Poems of Manuel Ulacia* (Dialogos Books). He edits The Beltway Poetry Quarterly (www.beltway-poetry.com), hosts the *Poetry Channel* on YouTube, and publishes poetry books at Beltway Editions (www.beltwayeditions.com). Amirthanayagam writes weekly poetry columns for *El Acento* (Dominican Republic) and *Haiti En Marche* (Haiti). He writes and publishes in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole and English. Amirthanayagam served as a diplomat for the United States from 1993 to 2023.

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF FOURTEEN LINES

I declare here that every poem I write, every comment on the war, every declaration of love, every naming of memories, the whole shebang, will be housed in fourteen lines. Thus I join Shakespeare and Petrarch

and the millions of their followers who have already joined the Fourteen Line Club, civic association, fraternity and sorority, League of, then United, Nations, together to celebrate the *International Day of Fourteen Lines*.

This is a heady moment. We have gone through war and heartbreak. We have lost love only to find it, then lose it again. This needs to be documented, in this format that has withstood vicissitudes of historical preference,

that has come back into fashion thanks to our conscious decision, to say with pride, fourteen lines.



Indran Amirthanayagam. Photo credit: Ethelbert Miller.

SOCIAL CONTRACT

What are you concocting in your studio?
We would like to know what to expect, when
the words come out to walk, to get some sun,
to say hello to the trees, to venture down

into town and straight to the cafe where
the coffee is hot and the waitress used to serving
you a first beaming cup...Oh, and if you insist
on keeping words to yourself, that can work.

The right to privacy is as important as any
other, including that of the social contract,
knowing what your brother thinks and does,
so you can sleep better, and wake up content

that the village is taking care of itself
and nobody writes or screams in silence.

CLEARING ON THE PATH

When melancholy starts to seep
into mind, filling thought with
smoke and fire, bile and blear
thickness, stillness forming into

a pressure cooker about to burst,
your message arrives like light,
cool wind after heat, stirring me
to smell roses and look for rabbits

and deer gamboling on the path,
setting off on that morning bet,
refreshed once more, advancing
on the year's end goal, new year's wish

recovered, step loose, strong, striding,
getting stronger, not looking back.

TRUST THE VOICE

Searching for the elusive with roses,
darts and excuses, the essential
question, win the girl or write the verses...

and build stock for the next long winter,
seeds that will not perish, perennial
protein but partnership provides clues

to finding the escape route, a word
in French, a floor in a house where
we share an office, a blanket contract

obliging us to work under all conditions.
If this is not union then who will update
the dictionary, defining the term

according to love and dream, station
and use, none of which are at issue?

DISTRIBUTING SEED

The sharing was sweet, exchange
of heart speech, interweaving
of lines, mutual inspiration pact.
Not writing to you now feels

blear, befogged, bitter. How
easy to hit send again? As easy
as a finger pressing on the key.
But the finger depends

on the brain, and its guidance
counselor says we must rest
for a time, to give other seeds,
beside this damned business

of loss, the opening they
will need to sprout.

Lincoln Jaques is a Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland based writer. His poetry, fiction, travel essays and book reviews have appeared in collections in Aotearoa and internationally, including *Landfall*, *Live Encounters*, *The Spinoff Friday Poem*, *Poetry Aotearoa Yearbook*, *Mayhem*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Burrow*, *Book of Matches* and *Takahē*. He was shortlisted for the 2023 inaugural I Te Kokoru At The Bay hybrid manuscript awards, and has been selected for the 2025 Best Small Fictions (BSF) anthology from Alternating Current Press.



Lincoln Jaques

HOW NOT TO WRITE A POEM IN A CROWDED CAFÉ EARLY MORNING (A TRIBUTE TO LEN LYE'S HOW TO WRITE A POEM)

Len preferred a brioche
but I would rather a raisin scroll
for its wheel-of-life feel.

I order one along with a mocha
sit near the window facing out
to dying bromelias and racing traffic.

The 5-inch pencil recommended by Len
for me is a Staedtler 0.9 lead
mechanical adjustable spring-loaded.

Staedtler positioned in line
with Moleskin notebook
opened at empty page
aligned with Surface tablet
blank page open cursor blinking.

I may write about the girl
in the Black Lives Matter t-shirt
her tattoos that rewrite history.
I may write about the couple arguing
in the corner like Hemingway characters.
I may even describe the woman sitting alone
in a silk headscarf, brand-new Jimmy Choo's
staring out in wonder at the dwindling bromelias.

Like Len I'll write something though
as soon as the coffee and scroll arrives.

That may still be 10 minutes away.

7 COUNTERS TO DEPRESSION

1.

Now is not the time for depression.
We tell ourselves this, every day.
But even this morning the rain falls
and bounces from the asphalt
like the time we walked
along the waterfront
a pod of dolphins
bursting the harbour's crust,
surprising us.

2.

Now is not the time for depression.
It's a mantra, a false economy.
This morning we walked all the way
to the shopping centre. The rain held
off. I saw a bearded man sitting at the curb
spooning beans onto white bread.
His only meal of the day.

3.

Now is not the time for depression.
This morning we argued over the Hoover
trying to fit the new bags into place.
We immediately blamed each other.
I couldn't stand the thought of going
all the way back to the shop.
Then like a State of Grace we clicked:
we were fitting them from the wrong end.

4.

Now is not the time for depression.
You come into my room each afternoon
with a watering can. Pour the contents
into the cyclamen sitting in a green pot
on the windowsill. You leave, without
saying a word.

5.

Now is not the time for depression.
My neighbour's ceiling fell in. My wife
baked her burek and it took to her
in a glass dish, the burek still warm.
My neighbour's Albanian-Italian.
We are a small village, at the end
of the world.

6.

Now is not the time for depression.
Yesterday we drove past a festival
for Eid. The colourful families spilled
onto the road, full of thanks to their God.
I drove on through the afternoon's thin light
glancing often in the rear-view mirror
watching the last of them fade out of sight.

7.

Now is not the time for depression.
We tell ourselves this, every day.
And every day we give ourselves
excuses. If I had only you, and the times
we walked hand-in-hand, seeing those
dolphins and the water dancing
one could reach up into elation.

JOLENE CHANGED THE COURSE OF MY LIFE

What was I? A kid when I first heard
“Jolene”.
1973.

The year before we left the bruised Britannia waves
and fled like scared cattle to the end of the world.
My father had not yet started on the sherry—
that would come later, in a flood of pent up
anger. Like Dolly towards Jolene.
He loved Dolly. Not necessarily for her songs.
He played the 45-rpm on the National 20
record player shipped over from the Motherland.
He played the single endlessly. As if to forget
his ego.

Jolene stole Dolly’s man; but it wasn’t all about that.
The real Jolene stood in the audience, a tiny flower
among snakeroots. Jolene wanted an autograph.
Dolly sang to her: *Jolene, Jolene, Jolene...JOLENE!!!*
You are the prettiest thing!
My father scraped that 45 rpm raw.
All through summer the turntable on repeat
as my mother became slowly invisible.
I said the sherry came later but the rants came earlier,
they led to the sherry drinking and him singing Jolene
at the slurred top of his voice
before collapsing on the 70s rug carpet,
the turntable ticking over
the vinyl of the 45-rpm wearing thin.

But it doesn’t quite stop there. Jolene was real.
Jolene was a bank teller. Jolene took too much interest
in Carl. Dolly shut that down. That’s Dolly for ya!

Years later I found Jolene, her cover torn, the A side
scratched and unplayable. I remembered it being still
on the turntable as they wheeled my father
to the awaiting ambulance.

Edward Caruso has been published by *A Voz Limpia*, *Australian Multilingual Writing Project*, 'La Bottega della Poesia' (*La Repubblica*, Italy), *Burrow*, *Communion*, *Kalliope X*, *Mediterranean Poetry*, *Meniscus*, Melbourne Poets Union, *n-Scribe*, *Right Now*, *P76*, *StylusLit*, *TEXT*, *Unusual Work* and *Well-Known Corners: Poetry on the Move*. In August 2019, he featured on 3CR's Spoken Word program. Since 2024 he has co-judged the Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize. In 2025, his third collection of poems, *What Distance Means*, was published by Hybrid Publishers.



ROM

A worn handkerchief over the hair,
she emerges, hand outstretched,
thrusting a baby into my mid-section,
another hand searching for my wallet.

Her resemblance to the farmhands of old.
As I withdraw from the baby against my chest
among traffic that contains us,
she who is closest to me,
my wallet still in place.

Edward Caruso

ART CRITIC, ASSISI EARTHQUAKES, SEPTEMBER '97

Those remaining friends who gather.
The critic looks beyond,
sees swirls of dust
invading the upper basilica of St Francis
at the time of the tremors.
He murmurs:

*Any destroyed work of Giotto's is a house torn down.
Our children gazing at photos of lost works.
What if the quakes had taken their lives?*

He nestles in his pillows,
forgets to close his eyes and breathes no more.

ODYSSEUS 2000

Shadows of shortening days,
rainfall bathing the face and its emotions.

In this interlude, Calabrian wine,
coastlines adrift beneath the Pleiades,
wild sage and salt.

Once beyond familiar coasts,
libations to the gods speed me on.

REFINEMENT

The divorcee mutters friendships are not free,
thumbs fashion magazines,
her nightly ostentation at strada Cavour remembered
for the most expensive attire

A lunchtime appearance
on the Teatro Reggio's balcony, a soprano,
flowing black dress,
sings to the crowd,
the street filling with her voice

Beneath, the divorcee trembles
Verdi's 'Sempre libera' her anguish,
her torment, what she feels next

the release she labels determination

POMPEII

Supine nymphs, priapic statues.

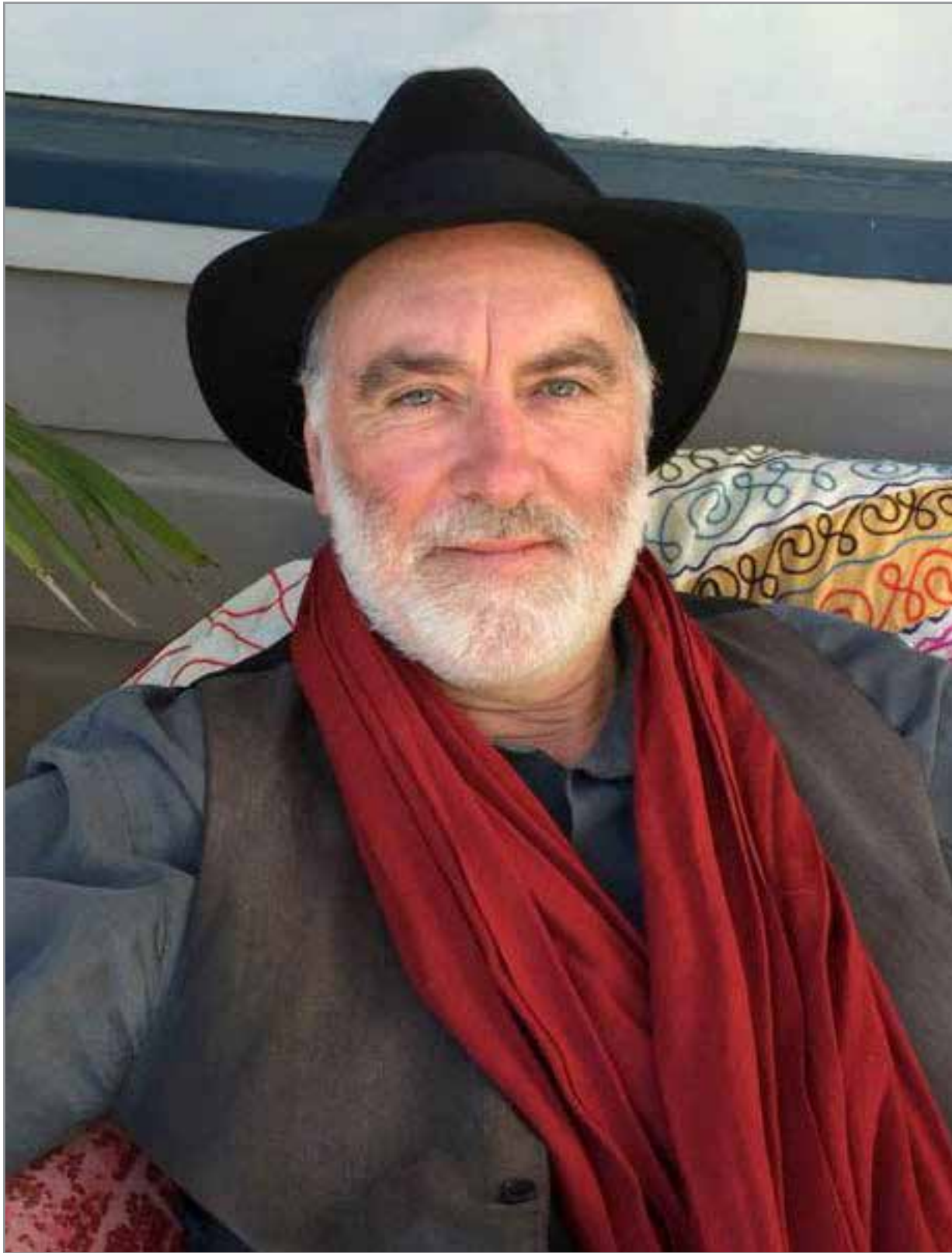
How many couples have taken refuge here?
How many have felt, groped, pashed,
argued and made up in this hidden courtyard?

We undress.

Rain beats against stone and terracotta roofs.

We are a couple among ruins, making love.

Justin Lowe lives in a house called “Doug” in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney where for 18 years he edited international poetry blog, Bluepepper. His ninth collection, “San Luis”, was released through Puncher&Wattmann in October 2024. His next collection is close to taking some sort of shape.



VERMONT

I am sitting at a co-op coffee shop
riding out the morning

under a shock of silver hair wrenched
from some dark dream into this bright town.

people pass the window where I’m perched like a stylite,
wave and mouth *good book?*

pout at the empty page, the pen hovering over it,
the high wire act that is me, the gravity working on me,

and the *no safety net* flyer stamped to my forehead -
doubt, the sea of all things.

my breath on the window
the little storm in my coffee,

the kindness of strangers just galls me.

Justin Lowe

ARTICLE 48

Sovereign is he who decides on the exception. - Carl Schmitt

I have been given more than one life.
a couple I squandered,
the rest I am holding back for a rainy day.

it is why youth in a man my age can be so arresting,
why my handwriting changes from one day to the next,
like my politics and my predilections.

I have never been voted the one most likely,
and yet I have always been considered a contender,
the man stood tall at the back of the meeting,

watching, listening, saying nothing,
silently correcting the spelling of the placard-wavers
without bothering to absorb their meaning.

RESCUING AN OLD TABLE

I found some trestles in a roadside skip.
someone had removed the hinges,
but they are otherwise intact, painted a smart navy-blue.

if fidelity had a colour, that would be it.

I have had nowhere to set my wine down
for a whole troubled year,
since an angry wind passed through.

the surface survived,
not a single crack in the glass,
but the legs were all twisted and broken.

and so I have taken measurements,
sounded my mornings,
the press of my elbows where I would read and eat,

bought the wires and joists, the wing nuts and screws,
sawed and hammered until the sweat poured off me,
and one country after another fell to the oligarchy.

LaWanda Walters earned her M.F.A. from Indiana University, where she won the Academy of American Poets Prize. Her first book of poems, *Light Is the Odalisque*, was published in 2016 by Press 53 in its Silver Concho Poetry Series. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Georgia Review*, *Southern Review*, *Nine Mile*, *Antioch Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Shenandoah*, and several anthologies, including *Best American Poetry 2015*, *Obsession: Sestinas in the Twenty-First Century*, and *I Wanna Be Loved by You: Poems on Marilyn Monroe*. She received Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Awards in 2020 and 2024. She lives in Cincinnati with her husband, poet John Philip Drury.



ON NOT FINDING OZON'S FILM

Certain times don't feel conducive
to composing a poem or sonata
or doing anything, frankly,
and so we want to find François Ozon's
Swimming Pool on Netflix.
We want the one from 2003,
with Charlotte Rampling.

We get a different film—
La Piscine, with Alain Delon—
that's overdone and hackneyed.

We wanted the pure thing of it,
the blue water and its cool
in the bright sunlight
on an ochre lawn.
The pool was an alluring character—
it lay in the sun like a nude,
like a sapphire or a Diebenkorn.
It was an experience to see it.
It evoked some mystery,
like a boxwood maze.
We weren't just watching—
we were in it.

That's what we wanted, today,
a calm blue bath in sunlight,
the sound of the French language
against crude English words
thrown like spitballs in these mean times.

LaWanda Walters. Photo credit: Tess Despres Weinberg.

CORNFIELD

these hips are big hips
they need space to
move around in.
they don't fit into little
petty places.

—Lucille Clifton

One time, I might have been in the seventh
grade, I was out with my dad and other men,
my granddaddy and great-uncle Ted,
looking at the new cornfield he'd just bought.

Uncle Ted wore a cowboy hat like Gene Autry,
and I'd thought of him as handsome and nice
enough, one of those old uncles you have to hug,
when you see them, to be polite.

I hadn't really wanted to come look at this place,
which was dusty—all dead cornstalks and dirt.
Not a cloud in the sky. This was Mississippi.
It was hot. I was wearing white shorts so I couldn't
sit on the ground. I was bored.

Then, quick as a rattlesnake in a TV western,
Uncle Ted looked at me and said, "I bet you weigh
a heap more than your pa, dontcha?"

I could feel my face get red. I weighed 135,
but I was tall, like my dad.
I felt like my face got slapped.
I'd thought adults never said things like that.
Inside, he was like the seventh-grade boys
in the school cafeteria, folding their upper eyelids backwards
so they stuck, showing the red inner lid
to gross people out, to shock.

I remembered how pretty his grandchild was. Marlene
had blonde hair with no frizz. She was just the right size.

I'd been a child before we went to see that field.
Now I'd been looked at, weighed up in that man's mind
like a bag of salt. We were two bodies, my father and I,
both of us shaped wrong for the world.

My dad and I felt awkward, riding home.
I knew, and he knew, that a father
shouldn't hear another man speak to his kid
like that. He'd shamed us both, somehow,
about our bodies. My sweaty legs stuck to the seat.
It may have been about then
that my father started getting angry with me.
I was skinny except I had big hips.

COUNTERPOINT

Against every reference to the beach
and summer entertainment, we hear
(if we're still able) the contrapuntal
news. There are two wars, and lots
of people like us are dead now
in Ukraine, in Israel, in Gaza.

All it takes to know is to gaze
for a second at the news. We turn Bach
on loud, try to drown our minds' knowing
so immediately how war is. We hear
too much about the concert, how lots
got raped with guns. And the counterpoint,

babies in Palestine with no counterpane
to dream on, ever. Their open-eyed gaze
so soon. The counterpoint is why Lot's
wife looked back. The ads for beaches
are ear-splitting now so we cannot hear
those children crying, either. We know

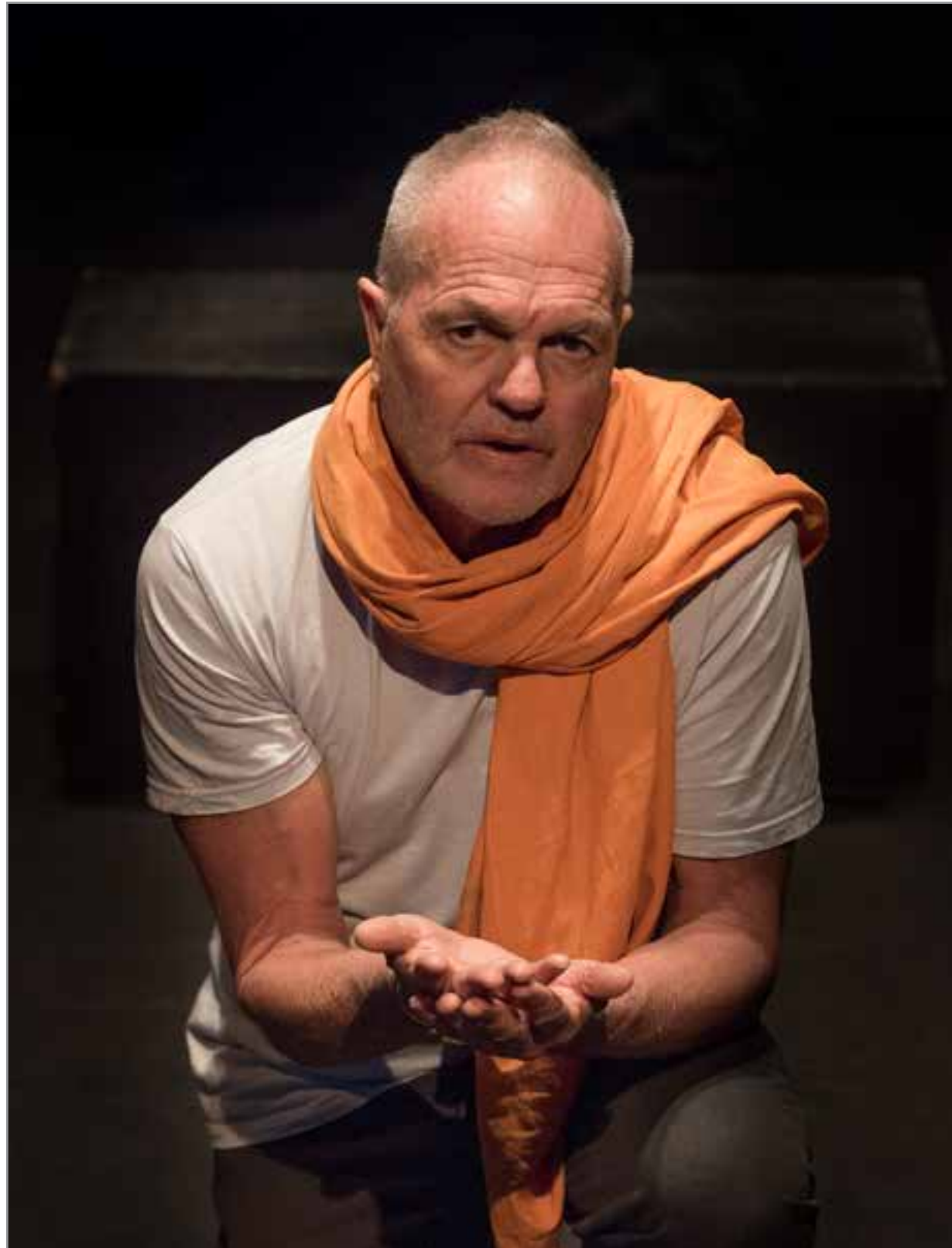
too much in today's blue light that knows
so many cruelties—the world is pain
and all those decibels hurt our hearing.
The news shows us Ukraine, Israel, and Gaza,
then breaks to an ad—vacations on the beach.
There was no TV in the time of Lot's

wife. She remembered throwing lots
(like mahjong) with her friends. She knew
these women. She'd bathed with them at beaches
in other days. She did not forget the pain
of worry, of not being chosen, married, rescued, gazed
upon and recognized. Against God's law, she heard

the terrified voices—like my sister with perfect pitch, who heard
every key pushed down by an arm, a parlor trick, the whole lot
of notes crammed together. Ukraine, Israel, and Gaza—
their worlds smashed, but paused by ads on TV so we don't know
more than we can handle. In case of sunburn pain,
there's aloe-vera balm when you leave the beach.

Once I read *Eyeless in Gaza* on the beach
at Lake Lanier. I was young and didn't know the pain
the woman (that old salt) heard, seeing her lot.

Stephen House has won awards and nominations as a poet, playwright, and actor. He's been commissioned often, with 20 plays produced, many published by Australian Plays Transform. He's received international literature residencies from The Australia Council for the Arts to Canada and Ireland, and an Asialink residency to India. He's had two chapbooks published by ICOE Press Australia: 'real and unreal' poetry and 'The Ajoona Guest House' monologue. His poetry is published often. He's performed his acclaimed monologues, 'Appalling Behaviour', 'Almost Face to Face' and 'The Ajoona Guest House' widely. His play, 'Johnny Chico' ran in Spain for 4 years.



ANSWERS

i had some realisations earlier today
though i'm not entirely sure what they were
but i know they began the instant i woke up
and continued over the rest of the morning

the beginning came from a few music clips
on the screen of my phone at dawn
as i lay in my bed scrolling social media
trying to work out how to deal with some stuff

i put down my device and went outside
to sit in the garden with a cup of coffee
where a magpie landed right beside me
and sang a song in a beautiful warble

by the seat where i sat an orange flower grew
and beside it one the same was dead
i reflected on both for about half an hour
which bought on sadness that led to acceptance

on the concrete path a line of ants marched
in and out of a crack probably leading to nest
their attention to task was almost hypnotising
as they never rested from their dedication

Stephen House

continued overleaf...

in a yard behind mine a woman called her cat
and became distressed when the cat didn't show
eventually her pet dashed through my garden
and to the woman's delight leapt into her arms

i left the garden inspired and somewhat informed
for in a cryptic way i felt answers were coming
and i walked out the front in only my sarong
which saw a jogger stop to comment on its design

the jogger asked if my sarong was from indonesia
to which i said yes and explained i once lived there
he was from there himself and shared his town
and smiled wide when i said i'd spent time there

a cloud drifted over the summer sunny day
and in no time the sky turned black
without any warning it started to rain
and i stayed outdoors and got completely wet

eventually i went back inside my house
and saw i had a missed call and two messages
i ignored the call and replied to the messages
one from my partner and the other my son

as i dressed i saw an odd connection of themes
that came together without any answers
and i went for a walk relieved i'd been given
some living snippets to ponder on for awhile

this morning's encounters offered much i think
with plenty of life-changing moments delivered
so i'll keep wandering around alone all day
allowing more unexpected surprises to find me

Amy Abdullah Barry, a poet & short story writer. Her work has been widely published, and translated into several languages. Selected for the Poetry Ireland Introduction Series 2022, Amy has received literature bursaries from the Arts Council and Words Ireland. Amy regularly organizes poetry & music events in Athlone, Roscommon and Dublin, and facilitates workshops in schools, hospitals, libraries, bookshops, and at the Irish Writers Centre. A travel lover, she has performed her poetry both in Ireland and internationally, including opening for headliner, Lemn Sissay at the Morecambe Poetry Festival in UK. Her debut poetry collection, *Flirting with Tigers* (Dedalus Press, 2023), has received acclaim in *The Irish Independent*, *The High Window*, *Irish Examiner*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Senior Times*, *The Galway Review* and *Roscommon Herald*.



MORNING PAUSE

Parked —
 leaning back, gently —
 engine ticking its warmth
 into silence.
 The children,
 dropped at school.
 A breath —

Newstalk murmurs:
 Dublin's Spire
 won't bear Mandela's name...
 The French President
 chooses an actress
 over his first lady.
 Paolo Nutini croons *Candy* —

Suddenly
 unfolding before me
 the hills of Nagarkot,

the sky leaks saffron into the valley
 and terraced paddy fields.

Jaandh in hand,
 sipped slow
 through a bamboo straw.
 Mount Everest,
 a hush in the gylden haze.

Amy Abdullah Barry

continued overleaf...

Yet —
here I am,
in this Nissan,
cupping a sleek mug
from the holder,
rubber grip warm
to my fingers,
the Kenyan roast
swirling
its rich, fruity fog
into my head.
A moment — still,
whole.
Mine — on a cracked roadside
in Athlone.

AMOI

Was it you I heard—
your voice, light as sun through glass—
or only the wind
brushing the fields,
wet with yesterday's rain?

I glance at the three vases
you gave me—still proud
atop the bookshelf,
their purple morning glories
unchanged by time

I remember:
the motorbike hum,
your eldest clutched to your chest,
your laughter —
quick and bright —
tangled in the wind.

The meals you made,
spiced and wild —
flavours we chased to the bone.
Your wife and I,
licking our fingers,
laughing like girls
with no weight on our backs.

continued overleaf...

But joy cracked on March 3rd, 1997 —
Langkawi skies.
A Cessna rising.
A camera.
A friend.
A flight.
And then —
only swamp,
only silence.

The phone rang.
We forgot how to breathe.
Words failed.
Only the railing remembered —
twisted and cut
to carry you
back inside.

They laid you in the sitting room.
Mourners came like mist —
soft, unbelieving.

Rain fell.
And the earth took you gently,
beside the jackfruit tree
that leans a little now.

She stood there —
your wife —
two sons pressed to her heart.
One barely walking,
one still wrapped in milk-sleep.
She didn't wail.
Only whispered prayers,
wondering how she would raise them alone.
Without your steady hands,
your calm voice,
your way of fixing broken things.

But still,
she rose.
She raised them.

And even now —
when the dusk hums low
and the wind forgets itself —
sometimes,
I hear it:

“Amoi...”

I turn,
and for a breath —
believe.

*In memory of my brother-in-law
One of the Filem Negara cameramen who perished in the Cessna crash,
Langkawi, 3 March 1997, filming The Tour De France.*

Amoi meaning sister in Hokkien.

Ma Yongbo was born in 1964, Ph.D, representative of Chinese avant-garde poetry, and a leading scholar in Anglo-American poetry. He is the founder of polyphonic writing and objectified poetics. He is also the first translator to introduce British and American postmodern poetry into Chinese, making contributions that fill gaps, the various postmodern poetry schools in Chinese are mostly guided by his poetics and translation. He has published over eighty original works and translations since 1986 included 9 poetry collections. He focused on translating and teaching Anglo-American poetry and prose including the work of Dickinson, Whitman, Stevens, Pound, Amy Lowell, Williams, Ashbery and Rosanna Warren. He published a complete translation of Moby Dick, which has sold over 600,000 copies. He teaches at Nanjing University of Science and Technology. The Collected Poems of Ma Yongbo (four volumes, Eastern Publishing Centre, 2024) comprising 1178 poems, celebrate 40 years of writing poetry.



BEGINNING OF AUTUMN

In the clear autumn, poetry is after all
a war of all against all
sparks glimmer at the end of the road
air currents settle into variegated dregs of wine in the valley
those who set out overnight drink at sea
slip on the glass greenhouse

The cracks in things make people secretly surprised
yet gladden the climbing sparrows
the wind has gone to the Ladakh Desert
embracing last year's ghosts, in the caravan
debating theology all night with the Tartar princess

Fewer and fewer things we can do together, my beloved
for instance, rousing from sleep as one
slowly like a disease
in the increasingly empty and cool room
Dazed like children who has just had a haircut

Ma Yongbo

MOMENTS OF MOTHS

In the evening, the wind suddenly rises
the windowpanes let out a wail
I stop my hands, listening the towering poplars
shake their dark green flames violently

I happen to be translating a poem
called "When I Am Old"
the twilight years, transient joys

A kind of solution slowly fills the room
on the sidewalk shaded by trees
there were originally many people standing
talking about things I cannot understand

The wind carries some cold fragments
there is still a group of bicycle teenagers in the square
wearing hoods, riding in smaller and smaller circles

Crickets sharpen their blades in the corner of the wall
someone always wants to hide me away
dazed moths appear, clinging tightly to the glass
their yellow is turning pink

MORNING SONG

Someone is groping his way upstairs in the dark
the heavy thud of his suede leather shoes
in the faint glow of dawn
seems to come from another neighborhood

He moves slowly, keeping the same rhythm
as if he'd been drinking all night outside
his coat still clings to the damp straw from Cavalry Street

At last he pauses before a tall dark green door
fumbling in his cold, rough large pocket
where blurrily patterned coins clinking

Inside the door, only darkness is listening
no one waits for him, no brass samovar
no rustle of a tweed plaid skirt

Dazed, like a soldier who's fallen behind
a lighter hisses to life
a faint blue flame illuminates a face
handsome and pale, with an unreadable age

MORNING SONG

Someone is groping his way upstairs in the dark
the heavy thud of his suede leather shoes
in the faint glow of dawn
seems to come from another neighborhood

He moves slowly, keeping the same rhythm
as if he'd been drinking all night outside
his coat still clings to the damp straw from Cavalry Street

At last he pauses before a tall dark green door
fumbling in his cold, rough large pocket
where blurrily patterned coins clinking

Inside the door, only darkness is listening
no one waits for him, no brass samovar
no rustle of a tweed plaid skirt

Dazed, like a soldier who's fallen behind
a lighter hisses to life
a faint blue flame illuminates a face
handsome and pale, with an unreadable age

LITTLE BALLAD

Just look at the clouds—
they know not birth, know not death,
never age, only dissipate.

Just look at the wind—
it knows not where it wants to blow,
it only knows to blow; wherever it goes,
there, the sound of wind arises.

Just look at those extra-long red trucks—
they pass by, pass on,
not knowing at which crossing they'll turn,
on which road they'll keep driving, keep going,
hauling half a load of branded livestock.

Just look at that cyclist—
his giant shadow, carrying two iron hoops,
chases him, chases after him.

Just look at the light—
radiant light, reflected light,
scattered light, misted light,
in the light, there's always a great hand
gathering pale petals,
cold tears, shrinking bodies.

Patricia Sykes is a poet and librettist. Her poems and collections have received various awards, including the Newcastle Poetry Prize, John Shaw Neilson award and the Tom Howard Poetry Prize. She has read her work widely and it has featured on ABC radio programs Poetica and The Spirit of Things. Her collaborations with composer Liza Lim have been performed in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Paris, Germany, Russia, New York and the UK. She was Asialink Writer in Residence, Malaysia, 2006. A selection of her poems was published in an English/Chinese edition by Flying Island Books in 2017. A song cycle composed by Andrew Aronowicz, based on her collection *The Abbotsford Mysteries*, premiered at The Abbotsford Convent Melbourne — now an arts precinct — in 2019. A podcast of this work is available on various platforms.



I AM/WAS

Once aboard the train
she opts for clarity
via third-person mode
she begins 30 minutes
ago at her own front door
her keys on the bookcase
her verified ticket
safely tucked away
in her shoulder bag

as the forest flashes by
her mind rustles among
the morning's nuances
her fingers on the piano keys
the sharps, the flats, the chords
the improvised melodies
a note here and there slightly
out of tune, recording it all
like an obsessive diary

one life, she whispers, *one life*
remembering much younger
mid-winters when her feet
danced so easily across
a myriad floors, mapping
contours, depths, and now
here she is again, dragging
her life's freight behind her
suitcase after suitcase.

Patricia Sykes

Daphne Wilson is a poet from Belfast whose work has been published in various publications - Causeway/Cabhsair; Worktown Words, Lothlorien Poetry and Mornings by the River. Her poems often highlight how change in landscape and personal circumstances affect us.



METAMORPHOSIS

There were strongholds, once, on these hills:
circles, cairns, raths, rings,
places of strength proclaimed
where faith and creed
piled up foundations and walls
for all to see, and fear.

Then, with time and seasons' wrath
(and perhaps the weaknesses of men)
they crumbled, crashed and fell.

But the river took the stones underground
out of the sight of the living,
questioning their power,
and in tunnels of turbulent cold
thrashed and beat them in the blackness

to emerge -
into this damp distant valley bottom,
deep with the remnants of mountains and men
long forgotten,

fertile, luscious,
and covered with its own fragrant crown
of Meadowsweet.

Daphne Wilson

Translated from Bengali by Paramita Banerjee and Carolyn Wright.



GITA CHATTOPADHYAY

Gita Chattopadhyay was born in 1941 into a traditional *zamindāri* (large landholding) family in North Kolkata, in the family's 175-year-old ancestral home, where she lived with her widowed mother, a brother and two sisters, all unmarried. She was educated at the Baptist Mission School, then at Lady Brabourne College, University of Calcutta. After that she devoted herself to her writing—mainly of poetry and literary criticism—and to extensive reading in Bengali, Sanskrit, and English. Although she gave a few readings on All-India Radio, she lived essentially in seclusion, and remained an elusive and highly respected figure in contemporary Bengali letters until her passing in 2019. For all her privileged background and Dickensonian lifestyle, her work is among the most powerful and politically committed written in Bengali in her generation. Although she was wary of the commercialization of literature, her poems appeared in the magazines *Kabi o Kabitā* and *Samved*; and she published several volumes of poetry, essays, and verse drama, including a *Collected Poems* (কবিতা সংগ্রহ) from Aadam Publishers. In English translation by Carolyn Wright and Paramita Banerjee, her work has appeared in *Artful Dodge*, *Calyx*, *Chicago Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Field*, *International Quarterly*, *Poetry Review* (U.K.), *Primavera*, and in the anthologies *In Their Own Voice: The Penguin India Anthology of Contemporary Women's Poetry*, ed. Arlene R. K. Zide (Penguin India, 1993), *Penguin New Writing in India*, ed. Aditya Behl and David Nicholls (Penguin India, 1994), and *Majestic Nights: Love Poems of Bengali Women* (White Pine Press, 2008), ed. and trans. Carolyn Wright.

Gita Chattopadhyay

ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS

Paramita Banerjee was born in Kolkata in 1958, the daughter of two university professors. She received a B.A. with Honours in Philosophy at Presidency College, and an M.A. in Mental and Moral Philosophy from Calcutta University in 1981; and is currently completing her Ph.D. in Social Philosophy on a research fellowship from Jadavpur University. As a child, she wrote for several Bengali children’s magazines, and won prizes for her stories and poems. During her college years, she was involved in student politics, especially as an election organizer and observer in the frequently violent polling stations in rural West Bengal; at one point, she was beaten up by political party thugs and hospitalized for these endeavors. As an adult, she has been active in local political theatre groups and alternative bookstores, and has published articles on theatre and on women’s issues, as well as poetry, in a number of small literary magazines. She has written feature articles for the Calcutta English daily *The Telegraph*, published poems in *Desh*, and translated two novels of the late Samaresh Bose from Bengali into English for Penguin India. After a few years of editorial work at the publisher, Orient Longman, and teaching of Philosophy at Muralidhar Girl’s College in South Calcutta, she now directs Diksha, a non-governmental organization to provide social services and education to the children of prostitutes and other residents of the urban slums. She has three daughters, and lives with her family in Lake City, a suburb of Kolkata.

Carolyn Wright spent four years on Indo-U.S. Subcommission and Fulbright Senior Research fellowships in Kolkata and Dhaka, Bangladesh, collecting and translating the work of Bengali women poets and writers for a major anthology in progress. For these translations, she has received a Translation Fellowship from the Santa Fe Arts Institute, a Witter Bynner Foundation Grant, a National Endowment for the Arts Grant in Translation, a Fellowship from the Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College; and she has been a research associate at Harvard University (Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies), Wellesley College (Center for Research on Women), and Emory University (Asian Studies Program), where she also taught courses on South Asian Women’s Literature which were cross-listed with English and Women’s Studies. Volumes in Wright’s translation from Bengali published so far include *Another Spring, Darkness: Selected Poems of Anuradha Mahapatra* (Calyx Books), a renowned West Bengali poet about whom Adrienne Rich has written, “across culture and language we are encountering a great world poet.” Another published collection is *The Game in Reverse: Poems of Taslima Nasrin* (George Braziller), the dissident Bangladeshi writer living in exile with a price on her head. Most recently published is the anthology, *Majestic Nights: Love Poems of Bengali Women* (White Pine Press, 2008). Wright has published eleven award-winning books and chapbooks of her own poetry, and three other volumes of translation from Bengali and Spanish. Since moving back to her native Seattle in mid-2005, she has taught at the community literary center, Richard Hugo House; and was on the faculty for the Northwest Institute of Literary Arts / Whidbey Writers Workshop MFA Program until its closure in 2016.



Paramita Banerjee



Carolyn Wright

IN A FIELD ALREADY HARVESTED

Giving my ripened grain into others' hands, I sailed away--
Thus the shore was emptied on our darkened day.
Spreading the approaching evening's shadow,
 the lark flew away,
The starved pigeon lay dead on the porch
 in her nest of hay.
Thousands of starving boars and sows gave off a smell;
Deaf and dumb, I sat beside the winter fire.
Hidden behind the burning ground, twelve temples by the river—
A famished eventide goes down into the tall-grass tangle.
All the starving, frightened faces reddened by the fire
Raise their fists to the stars and cry out in their ire:
Grind to death the star-seeds in the sky's space-garden!
Murder the worthless amulets fastened on your arm.
The cunning, seeming-lovely hare
Destroys our deep-rooted grain, our secret gardens.
Gradually froth collects on the lips,
 the hard knot in the blood opens—
Dust clawed up by sharp, harsh nails, feet
 wiped on the doormats!
Ruthless daggers pointed at each other's hearts,
By now they've filled their bowls up with the ashes
 of the Buddhist nun.

Notes:

The twelve temples are the twelve shrines dedicated to Shiva (the Lord of Destruction in the Hindu pantheon) at the great Dakshineswar Temple beside the Hooghly River just north of Kolkata. The last line refers to the story of King Ajatosatru, a staunch Hindu Brahmin revivalist in the aftermath of the spread of Buddhism in ancient India, who banned Buddhism among his subjects. Only his mother's maid continued to practice her faith, and was killed by Ajatosatru's guards when she went to light lamps at a memorial stone for Lord Buddha. The poem was written in 1965, when Buddhist monks and nuns were immolating themselves in Vietnam to protest foreign occupation.

Published in Bengali in *Gourīchāpā Nadī, Chandarā* (*Gourichapa River, Tribal Girl*).
Kolkata: Kabi O Kabita, 1973. Copyright by Gita Chattopadhyay.

© Banerjee & Wright

WHAT IS THERE TO BE SORRY ABOUT?

Our days have gone with the evening light, Malati Basak!
 Life's meaning has to change when your liver breaks down;
 If your heart is damaged somewhere, somewhere else again
 Clichés would tame the docile Cadillac.
 But this is no heart, this is a strange lilac
 That has bloomed in a maroon forest at the onset of winter.
 The church's comely bell will toll in death's honor,
 A shadow cast in the alcohol--we're not Laura and Petrarch.

Mid-day descends in Mobil Oil, evening comes bikini-clad;
 I watch bemused the yearly *soiree* at the Eiffel Tower
 And summer ends in Brighton—an exquisite deer.
 A priest from Florence asked, "But, how much longer?"
 As if he'd seen the inevitable *hara-kiri* in the cherry bower.
 I read out the *Gītā* as Huxley bade:
 "The wise mourn neither for the living nor for the dead."
 I pour this theory into the decanter
 with other injudicious cards.
 "Que será, será. . ." Foxtrots. . . Frenzied mandolins.
 Against the backdrop of a monsoon night we're broken violins!

Note:

Line 15 ("The wise mourn . . .") is a quotation from Chapter 2, *Sloka* 11 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.
 The translation is that of Mahatma Gandhi.

Published in Bengali in *Gourīchāpā Nadī, Chandarā* (*Gourichapa River, Tribal Girl*).
 Kolkata: Kabi O Kabita, 1973. Copyright by Gita Chattopadhyay.

TRUCE

Remove this metal armor, it hurts.

Let the breeze play on my bare body now,
 undo the ancient brass lock from my heart.
 Won't your hand be a prisoner in mine?

Let the sky, the earth and the fourteen worlds know
 the war is over now, Commander;
 throw down your shield and sword, wash off

your scars and arrogance in water, remove the armor.

Remove the armor, the flowers will all be trampled;
 their days won't be numbered by raising victory pillars!
 Time robs them of so much anyway,
 at least let them be spared by your hand.

The day wears on, Commander; say how long twilight
 can linger still on the battlefield with the close
 of Raga Bhupali at sunset. Knowing shoreless

evening will descend, make peace, in a duet join hands.

Note:

Raga Bhupali (*Rāga Bhūpālī*) is a *rāga* to be played just at the hour of sunset.

Published in Bengali in *Sapta Dibāñi Kalkātā* (*Kolkata: Seven Days and Nights*).
 Kolkata: Kabi O Kabita, 1973. Copyright by Gita Chattopadhyay.

Dr Salwa Gouda is an accomplished Egyptian literary translator, critic, and academic affiliated with the English Language and Literature Department at Ain Shams University. Holding a PhD in English literature and criticism, Dr. Gouda pursued her education at both Ain Shams University and California State University, San Bernardino. She has authored several academic works, including *Lectures in English Poetry* and *Introduction to Modern Literary Criticism*, among others. Dr. Gouda also played a significant role in translating *The Arab Encyclopedia for Pioneers*, a comprehensive project featuring poets, philosophers, historians, and literary figures, conducted under the auspices of UNESCO. Recently, her poetry translations have been featured in a poetry anthology published by Alien Buddha Press in Arizona, USA. Her work has also appeared in numerous international literary magazines, further solidifying her contributions to the field of literary translation and criticism.

DR SALWA GOUDA MODERN ARABIC POETRY AND THE DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE

Modern Arabic poetry has evolved into one of the most sophisticated and potent mediums for political dissent across the Arab world, serving as both witness and weapon in struggles against colonialism, authoritarianism, and social injustice. Unlike traditional Arabic poetry that often celebrated tribal glory or romantic ideals, contemporary Arab poets have forged a new literary tradition where verse functions as an act of rebellion—preserving collective memory, articulating unspoken truths, and mobilizing resistance movements through the sheer power of metaphor and rhythm. This essay explores how major Arab poets from Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and beyond have transformed classical Arabic forms into revolutionary texts, examining specific poems that became manifestos for liberation movements and analyzing the unique devices that make poetry such an effective resistance tool under censorship.

The Palestinian poetic tradition offers perhaps the most striking examples of verse as resistance. Mahmoud Darwish, often called the “voice of Palestine,” mastered the art of transforming personal exile into collective anthem. His 1964 poem “Identity Card” begins with the defiant lines: “Write down! / I am an Arab / And my identity card number is fifty thousand.” These deceptively simple words weaponized bureaucracy’s dehumanization, turning the Israeli occupation’s ID system into a platform for asserting Palestinian existence. The poem’s repetitive structure (“Write down!”) mimics official documents while subverting their purpose, a technique that made it perfect for protest chants during the First Intifada. Darwish’s later work “Under Siege” (2002), written during Israel’s siege of Ramallah, demonstrates his evolution toward more complex imagery: “We have brothers behind the horizon / who are preparing for our dawn... We smell the fragrance of our past / coming on the shoulders of the wind.” Here, Darwish transforms military occupation into a sensory experience where memory becomes both burden and weapon, showing how modern Arabic poetry balances immediate political commentary with timeless artistic merit.



Dr Salwa Gouda

Syrian poet Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said Esber) revolutionized resistance poetry by fusing avant-garde techniques with ancient Arabic symbolism. His 2011 poem “This Is My Name,” responding to the Syrian uprising, declares: “I write in a language that kills its readers / in a country that devours its children.” Paradoxical imagery captures the impossible position of intellectuals under dictatorship, where even language becomes complicit. Adonis’s earlier masterpiece “A Grave for New York” (1971) uses the mythical fall of a city to critique both Western imperialism and Arab authoritarianism: “New York is a woman / holding, between her legs, a rag / called liberty.” Such visceral metaphors allowed Adonis to bypass censors while delivering devastating critiques, proving that modernist experimentation could serve radical politics. His work demonstrates how contemporary Arab poets have expanded classical Arabic poetry’s capacity for layered meaning, creating texts that operate on both aesthetic and revolutionary levels simultaneously.

Also, Nizar Qabbani transformed love poetry into political rebellion through his signature blend of eroticism and revolutionary fervor. After the catastrophic Arab defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War, his incendiary poem “Margins on the Notebook of Defeat” lambasted Arab leaders: “My people entered history barefoot / and left it barefoot... What a people! / They die like insects / and don’t complain.” The shocking insect metaphor, combined with the poem’s abrupt, staccato rhythm, created a verbal monument to Arab shame that circulated clandestinely across the region. Qabbani’s later “Children of the Stones” (1988) celebrated Palestinian youth during the First Intifada: “They write their names with their fingernails / on the cheeks of soldiers... / They are the new prophets / carrying pebbles in their hands / instead of scriptures.” By depicting stone-throwing children as sacred figures, Qabbani sacralized resistance while exposing the absurd power imbalance of the conflict. His work exemplifies how modern Arab poets have appropriated and subverted classical Arabic poetry’s religious and romantic conventions for political ends.

In addition, the contribution of Arab women poets to resistance literature has been equally transformative, though often overlooked. Iraqi pioneer Nazik al-Mala’ika’s 1949 poem “To Wash Disgrace” daringly connected colonial violence to gendered oppression: “They pressed their nails into my flesh / and left me naked at the crossroads / where dogs and strangers pass.” The visceral female imagery made Iraq’s political humiliation painfully personal, establishing a template for later feminist resistance poetry. Yemeni poet Amina Atiq’s 2016 work “Borders” continues this tradition: “My country is a woman / stitching her wounds with barbed wire / while the world brings bandages / too small to cover the scars.”

Atiq’s metaphor of the nation-as-woman critiques both foreign intervention and patriarchal nationalism, showing how contemporary Arab women poets navigate multiple layers of oppression. Their work expands resistance poetry’s scope by insisting that true liberation must address both political and gender oppression simultaneously.

Moreover, in the digital age, new generations of Arab poets continue adapting ancient forms to modern resistance struggles. Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha’s 2020 poem “Self-Portrait as a Bomber” juxtaposes childhood innocence with military violence: “At seven I learned to tie my shoes / at nine, to distinguish F-16s from drones / by their sound.” The brutal matter-of-factness of this progression captures how occupation distorts childhood, while the title’s shocking metaphor forces readers to confront the dehumanization of Palestinians. Such contemporary works demonstrate Arabic poetry’s continued relevance in an era of hashtag activism, where compressed, shareable verses can circulate globally while maintaining literary depth.

What makes modern Arabic poetry uniquely effective as resistance literature? First, its mastery of classical Arabic forms gives it cultural legitimacy that political speeches lack. When Darwish employs the Qasida’s traditional repetition or Adonis subverts Sufi imagery, they tap into deep cultural reservoirs while transforming them. Second, poetry’s inherent ambiguity—its “code” of metaphor and symbolism—allows it to evade censorship that would suppress direct political statements. Finally, the oral tradition of Arabic poetry makes it perfect for protest; from Darwish’s recitations in Beirut refugee camps to verses chanted during Arab Spring demonstrations, these poems live in the air as much as on the page.

From Darwish’s elegies to Adonis’s allegories, modern Arabic poetry confirms that artistic expression remains one of the most potent weapons against oppression. These poets have created what might be called a “literature of persistence” works that document suffering while refusing to accept it as permanent. Their verses function as both mirrors and scalpel: reflecting brutal realities while dissecting their causes. In doing so, they’ve expanded the very possibilities of political art, proving that poetry can be simultaneously beautiful and dangerous, personal and collective, traditional and revolutionary. As long as injustice persists in the Arab world, its poets will likely continue perfecting this vital tradition, ensuring that even when revolutions are crushed, their essence survives in lines memorized, recited, and passed on like sacred texts of resistance.

2010 - 2025



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
SEPTEMBER 2025

COVER ARTWORK 'GINGKO' BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE