2010 - 2026 - 17TH ANNIVERSARY

Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
VOLUME FIVE NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2026

23 POETS

Alan Walowitz - Aristi Trendel - James Deahl - Tim Hunt
Valentina Teclici - Dirk van Nouhuys - Hedy Habra
Alastair Clarke - Bernadette Gallagher - Oz Hardwick
Eileen Casey - Carolyne Van Der Meer - Julian Matthews
Phil Lynch - Karen J McDonnell - Paddy Donoghue - John Grey
Cathy Altmann - Mandy Beattie - Gordon Meade - Tobi Alfier
Susan Glamuzina - Doreen Duffy

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

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

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

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor

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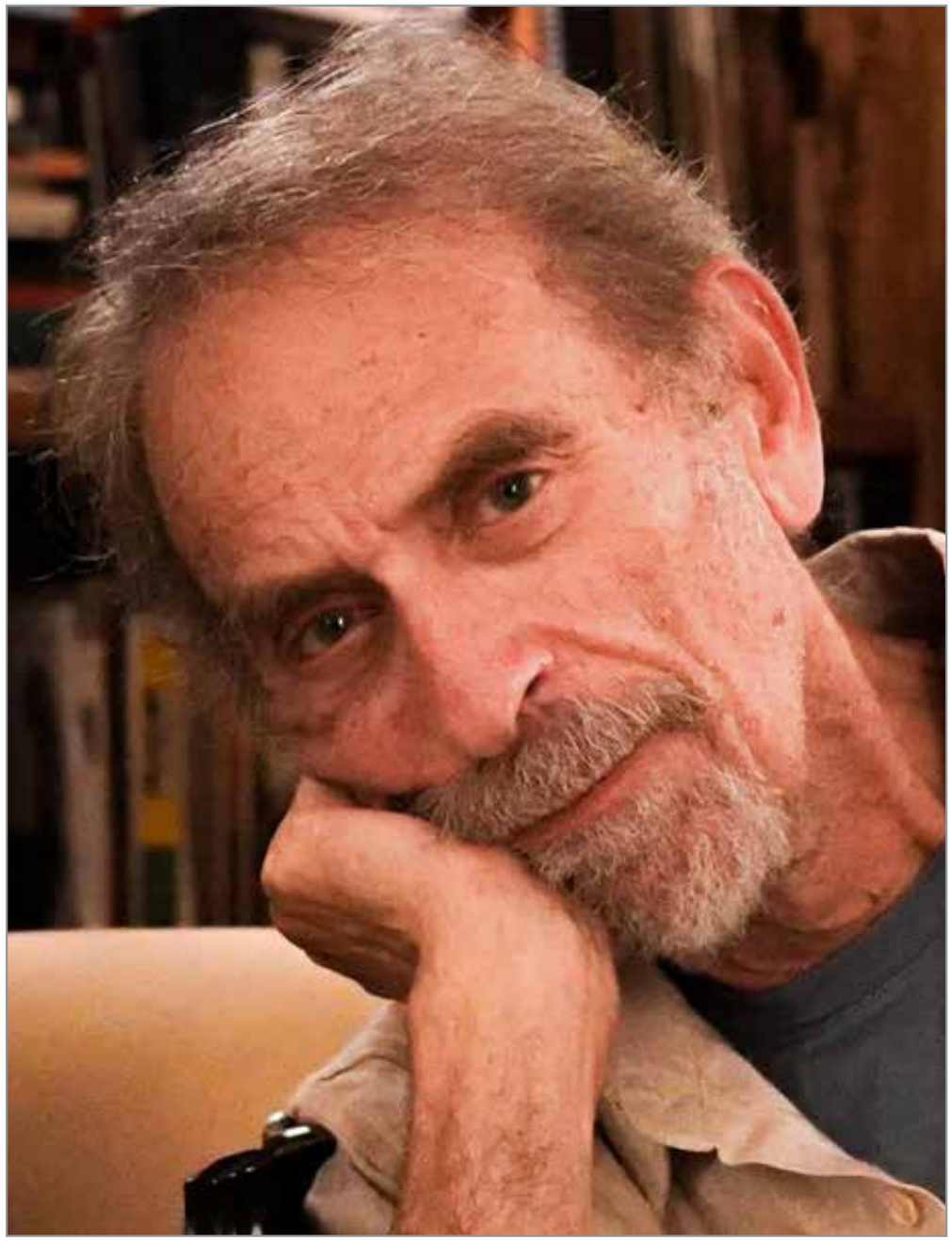

Alan Walowitz

Alan Walowitz is a retired secondary school teacher, school administrator, and professor of education at St. John's University, Manhattanville College, and Pace University. He's a Contributing Editor at Verse-Virtual. His chapbook *Exactly Like Love* comes from Osedax Press. *The Story of the Milkman and Other Poems* is published by Truth Serum Press. From Arroyo Seco Press: *In the Muddle of the Night*, written with poet Betsy Mars. *The Poems of the Air* is available for free download from Red Wolf Editions. His poems have been nominated several times for the Pushcart Prize and once for the Orison Prize.

Fugue State

for A.E

This is not a dream, says everything you learned from books,
those advanced degrees you didn't really need.
It's not where you were born,
or where you met your wife,
who rests, perhaps, in another room.
Not where you'll die--
it's an incidental place no one can tell
when they've arrived.
Let it wait.
Consider this your pied-a-terre.
to be used as you desire:
the bed, again, a trampoline,
the couch, at last, a steamship,
the stair, if you please, a sliding pond.

Then, notice, as the house gives way to another and another,
as if you're leafing through a book of houses,
and though you don't know where you are,
the voices seem almost familiar--
strangers you come upon on the train.
Maybe your father and mother,
here to talk with each other,
which might never have happened
in the stories you tell around the kitchen table.
These ghosts will soon be gone
and all will be good, if slightly askew.

continued overleaf...

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Let them rifle all they want through the pages of the DSM.
You could care if they claim you're impulsive,
or they call it a case of loss of control,
or even willful compliance.
There is no blame to go around.
All you need to know--it's lovely here,
and that should be plenty to keep you.

** A rare psychiatric condition characterized by reversible amnesia regarding one's identity, often accompanied by unexpected travel or wandering.*

Camels

In the War they used to say,
Smoke 'em if you got 'em,
and now we finally had 'em.
Tony clutched in his hand
a pack of bent and broken
Camels must've fallen out of someone's pocket
trying to catch up to the 3A-227
which came by only once an hour.
So, here we were tucking our little butts
into the dollhouse out back in Tony's yard,
the four of us all squoze in like eggs in a carton.

Tony tried best he could
to work his bony little fingers on the roller of the lighter
so that after five or eight tries, and him yelling, *Abla Fenabla*
the flame magically ignited against the striking strip.
He was the oldest, and we looked up at him
But in that moment, holding the flame
him lighting each of us up,
our half-skeletal, half-shiny faces
in the hot summer sun, holding a smoke
tenuously between our teeth,
like we'd seen on TV,
Tony was all we'd ever hope to be.

Later, when I snuck in the door where I lived--
still a pale shade of green.
I had been coughing the rest of the day,
and for all I knew the rest of my life,
stinking still of cigarette-smoke
having being cooped up in a doll house
on a sweaty summer day.

continued overleaf...

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She looked at me pitifully, told me to run the bath
and asked that timeless mother-question:
If they told you to jump off the roof?
I should have been ready to lie.
but I thought about the discarded mattress we planned to drag
to Jimmy's backyard when no one was home,
then climb out through his attic window.

Of course, I lied.
I loved to lie, but I loved her more,
and so wanted to tell the truth--
Yes, Ma, yes. I probably would.

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Karen J McDonnell. Photo credit: Aidan Sweeney Photography.

Karen J McDonnell's writing is widely published, including *Poetry Ireland Review, Southword, The Poetry Bus, Peaceweavers Anthology* (Culture Matters, UK), *Washing Windows V* (Arlen House), *Vital Signs* (Poetry Ireland), *Romance Options* (Dedalus Press), *New Isles Press 2, Skylight 47, Crannóg, The Stony Thursday, The Cormorant, The Galway Review, The North,* and *New Irish Writing.* Her poem 'Driftwood' was shortlisted for Irish Poem of the Year. Non-fiction and poetry have been Best of the Net, Pushcart, and Forward Prize nominated. A recipient of Arts Council funding, writer's residencies, and an Irish Writers Centre Evolution Award, her poetry collections *This Little World* and *TIDAL* are published by Doire Press. More: karenjmcdonnell.com

After the Voicemail

Now it's all about yesterday.

You wide-eyed, creased with laughter,
party cheesecake smeared over your face.
That young New Year's Eve: our gang on lakeside benches
breathing in frost. Shouting ambitions and war cries.

Us, either side of the fire; unspoken desire
storming our delicate teenage citadels.

Roses for my twenty-first birthday.
The damp shoulders. The sung poems.
The nearly-not-quites.
Burnt-out beginnings.

How strange to be dead.
How strange to be left behind.

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In the Corridor

He is in the Assessment Unit.
We are in the corridor.

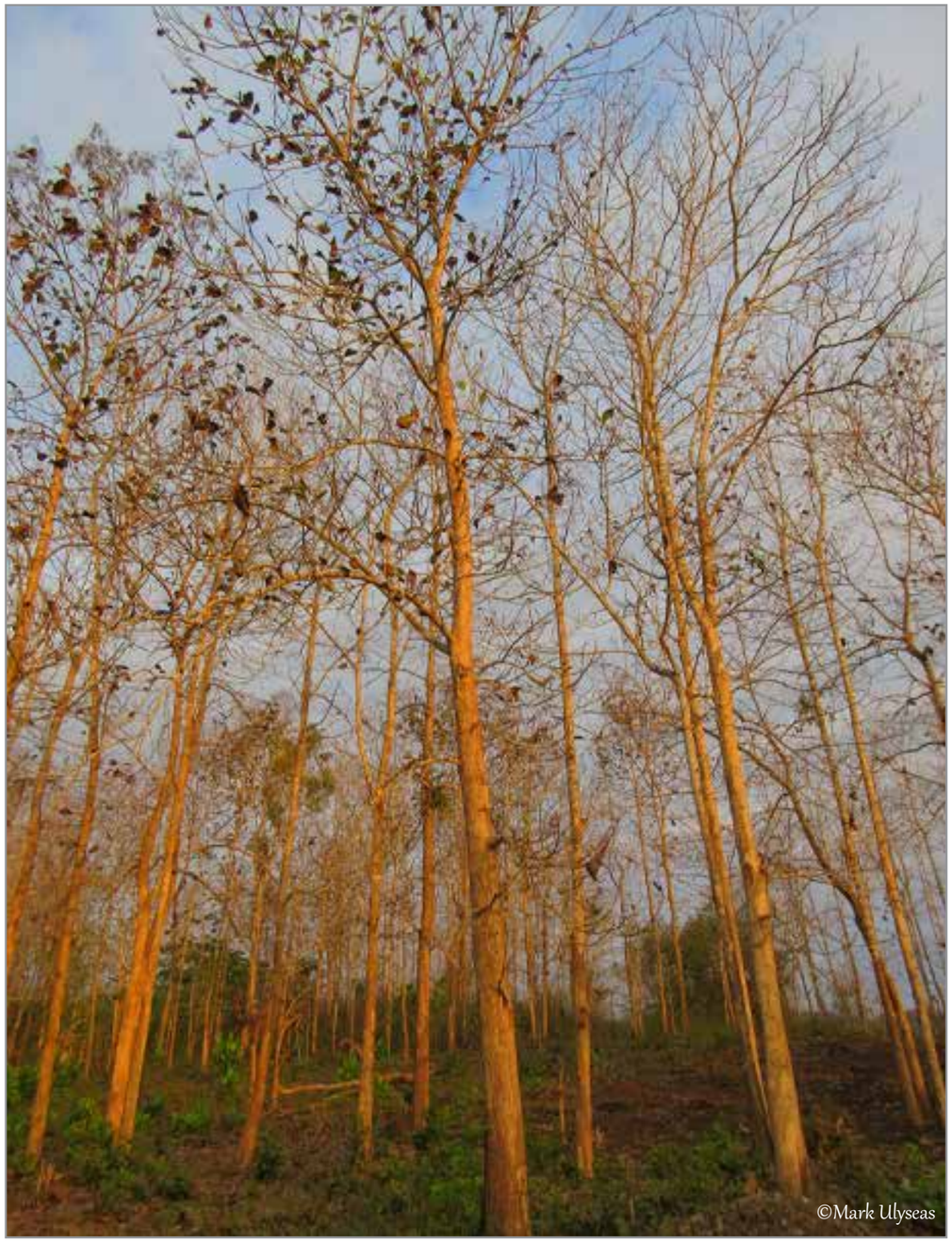
Plenty of time for small talk.

For memories of my mother's aunt
who insisted on sea
dipping, in her nineties.

Shells and her swimming togs in the coffin.

She sent post-decimalisation envelopes
heavy with fifty-pence coins
sellotaped to birthday cards.

We might make ninety.
There's laughter in the corridor.



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Carolyne Van Der Meer. Photo credit: credit Vadim Daniel.

Carolyne Van Der Meer lives and writes in Montreal, Canada. She has five published books, including *Motherlode: A Mosaic of Dutch Wartime Experience* (WLUP, 2014), and the poetry collections *Sensorial* (Inanna, 2022) and *All This As I Stand By* (Ekstasis Editions, 2024). Two chapbooks were released in 2025: *Birdology*, published by Cactus Press; and *Sincerely, Sincerely*, co-written with Rayanne Haines, and published by Agatha Press.

Sixth Race, Woodbine

We take a seat on a bench beside Miranda her brand
new stable jacket glittering with blue embroidery
There's a leather halter hanging off her arm and I
remember how in my twenties teaching at an equestrian
camp all I wanted was a bridle with a jangling bit looped
over my shoulder looking important to the young riders
waiting their turn in the arena That dream is gone yet I
think Miranda is lucky I ask her which horse she's running
in this race *Number eight* she says ebony brown gelding
I've just seen in the paddock When I ask about his chances
her hands shake a little says *he was looking fine today
better than ever* While we watch the horses enter the
starting gate on the backstretch she tells us about her
new foal grandson of Triple Crown winner Justify how
everything is riding on him future champion *You don't
make a hundred grand doing this* she says *But I couldn't
do anything but train racehorses It's the only thing that
makes me happy* When her gelding places next to last
and she walks towards the track to unsaddle him I think
about all the chances we take on happiness how it's all
a gamble even when there are no horses

© Carolyne Van Der Meer

Falling, Thunder Cove

I am ridiculously bundled several sweaters another hooded one tied around my neck as a scarf It seems I cannot get warm so it's almost crazy to walk barefoot on the beach the wind clipping my hair I don't care much because the sun is surreal hanging there a ball of silver decadence between sea and sky We are removed from our lives my husband and me nothing in the world matters and it doesn't The fresh water brook that meets the salt seashore has widened after recent rain With childlike glee my husband pushes at the sand on its banks watches them topple into the seaward flow I smile at his recklessness breakage house of sand On the way home I kneel to clean a shell wait to greet a wave hand outstretched but the wave is stronger than I expect split second on my feet jumping back until water penetrates my shoes and I scream *no no no* giggle keep jumping back body on auto pilot even though it's too late wet cold snaking around my toes In my final hop lose my footing land hard flat on my back in the sand wait for pain but it's nothing but an ache of belly laughter *Are you all right?* my husband calls And I am the house has not broken I get up he brushes sand from my jeans hair kisses me lightly my face in his hands

Girlfriends

~for J.Q.~

It was when I stepped in dogshit on the corner of Elgin and Slater that everything changed that suddenly we were little girls again giggling the only goal now to find a fountain in which to clean my shoe Oh how we laughed our arms linked now fully dropped into roles from almost forty years ago roommates girlfriends who wore cowboy hats on Friday nights tilting back cans of Black Label late eighties version of pigtails and pop bottles Now in Confederation Park we find a fountain She aims the stream at the sole of my gold sneaker while I balance on one leg angling to unlock the excrement from the tread an analogy for lives lived as we approach the next decade We can't stop laughing yet only fifteen minutes earlier had held each other tight together surveyed my parents' deaths and the impending drop into eldercare for her own our children their moves into adulthood now and then strayed by diversion but oh so loved our cancer journeys decades apart drawing us close again The shoe now clean we fall into a last hug before saying goodbye knowing we'll laugh about this for years to come that moment of levity in the long game

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Hedy Habra

Hedy Habra's fifth poetry collection, *In the Folds of Time* is forthcoming in fall 2026 from Press 53. Her latest book, *Or Did You Ever See The Other Side?*, won the International Poetry Book Awards and was a finalist for the Eric Hoffer and USA Best Book Awards. *The Taste of the Earth* won the Silver Nautilus Book Award and Honorable Mention for the Eric Hoffer Book Award. *Tea in Heliopolis* won the Best Book Award, and *Under Brushstrokes* was a finalist for the International Book Award. Her story collection, *Flying Carpets*, won the Arab American Book Award's Honorable Mention and was a finalist for the Eric Hoffer Award. Her book of criticism is *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa*. She is a twenty-five-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net and a recipient of the Nazim Hikmet Award. https://www.hedyhabra.com/

As Autumn Sets its Tone

Each season with its visual and sensorial prompts
hones our senses to mark the passing of time.
The older we get the more acutely we perceive
changes around us that echo our own visible
and invisible transformations.

When harsh winds and rains torment flowerbeds,
break branches and send furry and feathered
animals into hiding we ache as though a sharp
gust penetrated our innermost self, pulling
on every joint.

I've heard that changes in air-pressure are felt
in every tendon, muscle, and scar, causing cells
to expand or contract. And if the lack of sunlight
affects our propensity for laughter wouldn't this
be true for every root, shrub, limb, and leaf?

And before entering a stage of dormancy, doesn't
every plant tell us a different story if we take the time
to listen to its farewell song? Like my Phalaenopsis
orchids who stopped flowering but still require
attention till they bloom again.

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Furtive Presence

Words clothed in other words, other tongues, crowd a crossroads of sound that shatters into scintillating stars as voices resound in dream corridors. Silhouettes in black velvet loup revel in an eternal carnival where no one bears a real face, no one ever knows the other's thoughts. Words never said, never heard, imagined, conjuring up a furtive presence, soon to vanish. Muffled words read aloud in a murmur, the soundless sight of glowing fireflies glued to windowpanes watching me hold an open book, eyes raised in thought, recalling the muted sound of water gliding over skin, fingertips eroded from an imaginary erasure, an echo seeping through walls, a woodpecker drilling cedar siding, the soothing lap of ocean waves in darkness, a storm breaking trees menacing the roof, the yearning for crackling embers on a winter evening.

Elusive Echoes

I want to hear voices through the mirror's glass pane, a mirror made of words, or through a fabric stretched into a tent, swelling into a globe drifting through clouds rocked by waves' cerulean foam: an ocean gazes down at me from above in a sunset bleeding like a ripe pomegranate bursting wide open, beneath midday sun as I follow the winding path among pines, feeling my way over dry needles that answer with brief moans, picking up a pinecone that sticks to my fingertips with the acrid taste of what I thought forgotten.

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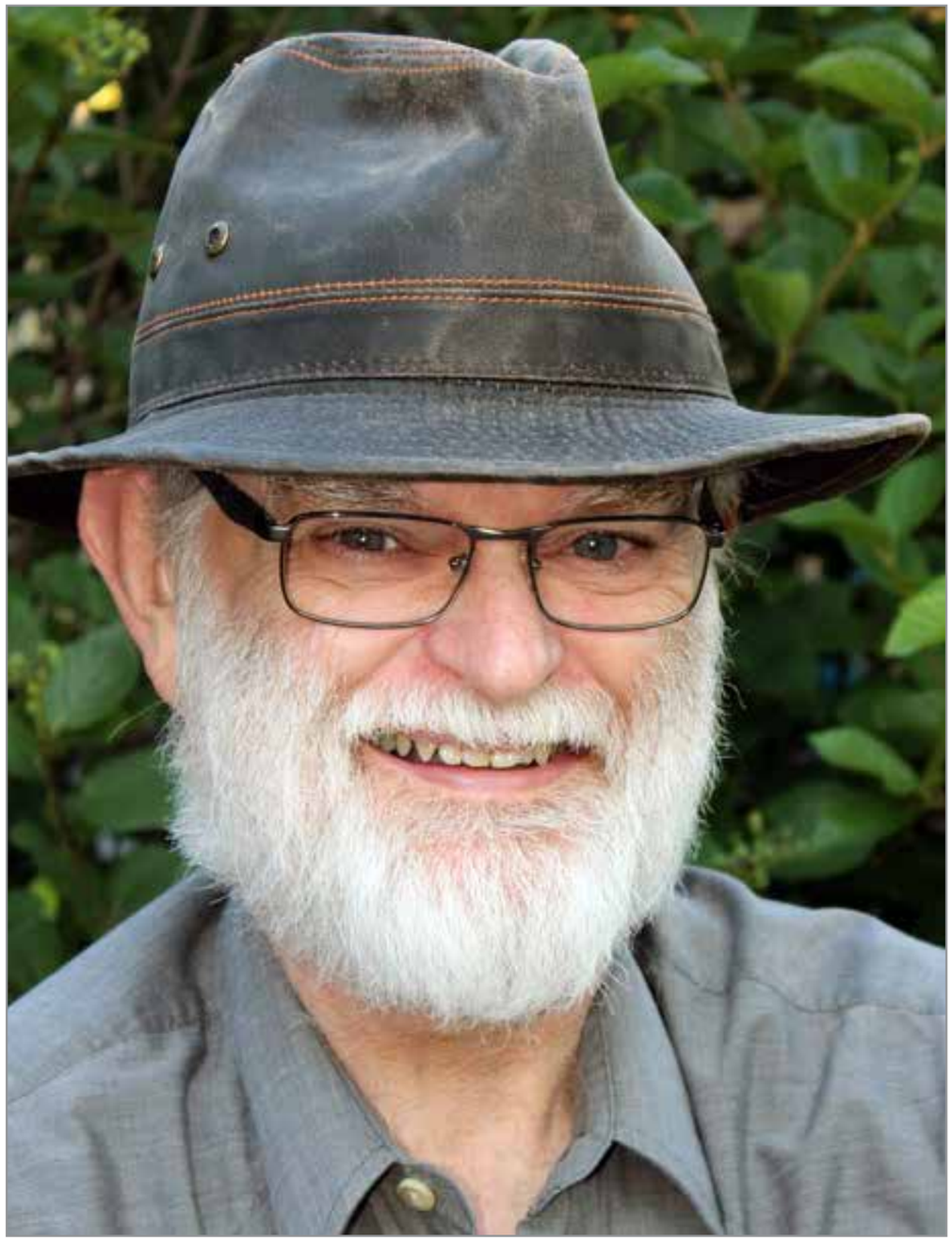

Tim Hunt

Tim Hunt is the author of seven collections, including *Making Time, Western Where*, and *Voice to Voice in the Dark* (all Broadstone Books). Recognitions include the Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award for his 2018 collection *Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes*, six Pushcart Prize Nominations, and the Chester H. Jones National Poetry Award for "Lake County Diamond." He has been a finalist or semi-finalist for The Sexton Prize for Poetry, The Richard Snyder Publication Prize, the May Swenson Poetry Award, the Frederick Morgan Poetry Prize, the Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize, Off the Grid Prize, the Saint Lawrence Book Award, the Holland Prize, the Able Muse Book Award, the Washington Prize, and the Cleveland State University Poetry Center First Book Prize. His critical work includes two studies of Jack Kerouac (*Kerouac's Crooked Road: Development of a Fiction and The Textuality of Soulwork: Kerouac's Quest for Spontaneous Prose*) and *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. Originally from the hill country of northern California, he was educated at Cornell University and concluded his teaching career at Illinois State University where he was University Professor of English.

To a stone-cutter (October Evening, Tor House, Carmel, Ca)

Stone-cutters fighting time with marble, you foredefeated
Challengers of oblivion
Robinson Jeffers

In the slant of the late afternoon light, I walked the beach
looking for traces of you in the tangles of driftwood and wave-
washed kelp scumming the sand and granite boulders—the ones
too big for you to have harvested from this tidal field.

Now, as I sit on this bench outside your door,
the last ember of the daily bonfire glows at the horizon's edge
like the phosphorescence on a fallen tree trunk fading into Time

and the night is already as dark as the wings of the flitting crows
in the eucalyptus that rise above the stone intrusion
of this humble cottage and arrogant tower.

I am waiting, but already I know you were wrong.
It is not your ghost that lingers in this stone doorway
but your foredefeated desire

and your words and mine like the cascading caws of the crows
flaring out against the darkness, then ebbing
into a silence that we choose to believe still echoes
as we deny oblivion by embracing it.

© Tim Hunt

Aristi Trendel

Aristi Trendel is associate professor/HDR at Le Mans University, France. She has published book chapters and articles on American writers in American and European journals, book reviews, and fiction in literary magazines. She is the author of the monograph *Master and Disciple in the American Novel After the 1980s* (Bloomsbury 2021) and six books of fiction. Her forthcoming books, *My Sister's Baby and Other Stories* (*Το μωρό της αδελφής μου και άλλες ιστορίες*), Perispomeni, 2026, and *The American Dream in the 21st-century: A Transcultural Perspective*, ed. Bloomsbury, 2027.

How Long Will You Stay in the Homeland?

For G. V

I weep because I have forgotten you, not because I don't have you.
Michalis Ganas

The question sounded strange
How long will you stay
in the homeland...
with an almost hostile hum
bringing back others
long forgotten
fossilized
sculpted for a wax museum
faithlessness,
homelessness,
helplessness
*she sought Ithaca upon the seas**
which Ithaca?
did she know
or didn't she?
what homelands mean
scattered oases
along the exile's journey,
Fata Morgana mirages
for those sworn to live without a homeland

**cf.* Stratis Myrivilis, « Troy »

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Tobi Alfier won second prize in the Orchard Street Press 2026 Poetry Contest. Her credits include Arkansas Review, The American Journal of Poetry, James Dickey Review, Jerry Jazz Musician, Louisiana Literature, ONEART, Permafrost, Prosetrics, Ragaire, and Washington Square Review. She is co-editor of San Pedro River Review (www.bluehorsepress.com).

Tobi Alfier

The Map of Letting Go

Hers is a life doomed to gray.
Her prayers haven't made it past
the rooftop
and they won't ever.
She is like the lush decay
of a forest as the season changes,
the paths are hung
with the stench of failure,
she is a darkened shadow.

She says her smile is off-duty,
he says she needs a touch,
his touch—the compass
she should follow.
North or south, truth or lie,
he touches her skin
and names her beautiful,
she becomes
the dark-gold wind
that rushes
through her window.

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Sliver of Moon Debuts in a Mirror

He works hard into the late hours
his knobbled hands and arthritic fingers
shape an oaken frame for an antique mirror.

His wife brings him tea—
the warm ceramic eases his discomfort
much better than the pills he takes,

one every six hours, they don't help
and he doesn't care anymore,
he just feels blessed for both his craft
and his wife.

She was the prettiest girl in school
and the first to kiss him under a midnight sky.
They went to different colleges then came home

to find each other again. Kids these days—
they don't understand the heat of a whisper,
nip on an ear, the scent of lemons in a bowl.

They don't understand *that song*, the dark warmth
of bodies, secrets, what stays unsaid.
What will this mirror reflect…

Glenfiddich at Tea

All strangers are moving targets
just as all wildflowers are meant
to be picked, weeds meant
to be pulled, birds meant to be fed
and watered in homemade houses
meant especially for them.

Such is the country-way,
the heat-work of a garden in July,
so much to encounter and accomplish
before a walk to the harbor,
a stop in the shop for the perfect
pink gloss—color of an impatient wildflower,
face to the sun,
waiting for that one wild kiss.

And she is waiting to be kissed.
All those dance classes
have made her move with grace,
a penchant for whisky
learned from her father, made her drink
with grace as well,
and the next morning
she woke her lovely self, did chores
under the summer sun,
still waiting…

He looks like the last thing she needs
but all his words are in the right place.
She could've lived a whole lifetime
in the way he promised to love her,
and she loved him back,
she loved him back the way
her first language wasn't words,
she loved him back.

© Tobi Alfier

Phil Lynch

Phil Lynch lives in Dublin (Ireland). His poems have appeared in a range of literary journals and anthologies, been featured on radio arts shows, on Podcasts and CDs. 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). He has two poetry collections published by Salmon Poetry, *Moving On* (2024) and *In a Changing Light* (2016).

Reflection

The nights that once were filled with joy
grow longer with the fading rays
and sadder still the waking eye
that casts itself to sorry days

Renewal

Walk me to the river
let us wash each other down
dip flesh into the rhythmic flow,
linger by the shallow bank,
skim flat stones, count the bounces,
wrap ourselves in cleansing glow
take the longer path back home.

© Phil Lynch

Bernadette Gallagher

Bernadette Gallagher, from Ireland, is a writer of poems and author of The Risen Tree, (Revival Press, 2024). Her work is published in literary journals and anthologies including Cyphers, The Stinging Fly, The North, The Tablet and Southword…She is a recipient of awards from Culture Ireland, Arts Council of Ireland, Poetry Ireland, Cork City & County Councils and Cruthaitheacht Chois Fharraige 2025 Earagail Arts, County Donegal. For 2026 Bernadette was selected as a participant in: the Cork/Cologne Poetry Connections project by Cork & Cologne City Councils; Dwaalgasten / Wanderers festival exchange project, a partnership between West Cork Literary Festival and Meet Me At The Lighthouse festival, part of New Dutch Writing and she has been invited to read at the Kistrech International Poetry Festival, Kenya and appreciates the support from Culture Ireland for this event.
@bernadettegallagherwriter bernadettegallagher.blogspot.ie

Home

Somewhere between the end of darkness
and start of twilight, a path
waves its way like a swarm of bees
swirling up and over as if
a road lies underneath
or a body, all highs and hollows.

Light alone makes its way, never stopping
to take a breath. It picks up
a child, featherweight, and drops
it down still asleep.

A mother and father echo a name
in a tongue not familiar
an old word — a new name
a new place.

© Bernadette Gallagher

Migration

In memory of Moustapha Anaki, Commandan, Lamis Abounahi, Uday Abounahi, Layan Abounahi, No Name [died August 2013]

The howl of the wind at night
differs from a daytime storm.
Does the wind know night from day?

The swallows' nest is safe
from wind and rain, even the sun
cannot reach this hidden place

under a corrugated sheet
on top of an outdoor light
a few feet from our back door.

Three little beaks, open.
We look up in wonder and fear a fall —
our cat sits still beneath.

An adult flies in to feed the young.
An other flies away with fecal sacs.
A third dead at our door.

Only death prevents us all
from the need to move
elsewhere.

Note: I tried without success to find the names of the six people who died crossing the channel on 12 Aug 2023 (the day I wrote this poem). They were Afghan men. I found a list and selected names from 10 years before and as near to the 12th Aug as possible and have memorialised the names of these people in this poem.

Butterfly drowned in a flower vase. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

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Valentina Teclici

Valentina Teclici was born in Romania and immigrated to New Zealand in 2002. She holds a Bachelor in Philosophy from the University of Iasi and a PhD in Sociology from the University of Bucharest, where her doctoral thesis focused on street children. Her debut book, *De la noi din grădiniță* (From our Kindergarden), Ion Creangă Publishing House,1986, was awarded a national prize. Poems and excerpts from her books for children are included in the bibliography and textbooks for primary and secondary education in Romania. She has published several books of sociology, poetry and stories for children in both Romanian and English. Her work has been translated into French, Te Reo and Spanish, and published in many magazines and anthologies in New Zealand and overseas. Valentina has been a member of Writers' Union of Romania since 1993, and of The Theosophical Society (TS) since 2022. She is the coordinator of Theosophy Hawke's Bay Affiliated Centre and also a TSNZ national speaker. She lives in Napier with her husband Robert.

Poetry Nurtures Love

"Love is the way" is one of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh's works of calligraphy, and also his message and advice for humanity to choose and walk on the path of love to reach within, create inner harmony and celebrate oneness.

Thich Nhat Hanh was 25 years old when he was ordained as a monk, after his training in Buddhism at Tu Hieu temple, in Hue, Vietnam. He was 40 when he was exiled by both the North and South Vietnamese governments for refusing to take sides in the war. One year later, after playing a central role in the Vietnamese peace movement, Thich Nhat Hanh was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Martin Luther King Jr. Vietnam was fearful of Nhat Hanh's ideas of peace, nonviolence, unconditional love and his vision of Engaged Buddhism, which was his response to the Vietnam war. France was also visionary, and offered him, with open arms, asylum and a "home" for 39 years. Nhat Hanh, a scholar fluent in seven languages, including French, found there the right conditions for founding the Plum Village tradition, writing and publishing over 130 books (translated into 40 languages), teaching mindful living, and organising retreats for professionals and everyone who wanted to overcome traumas, addictions, anger, relationship problems etc. He spread the wings of his ideas and practice in many places in the world, becoming a spiritual leader, world activist, having a major influence on Western practices of Buddhism and leaving an extraordinary legacy, after his death, at the age of 95. On 11th October, this year, it was a celebration of 100 years since Thich Nhat Hanh's birth and of 60 years of the Order of Interbeing, which he created as a spiritual resistance movement.

continued overleaf...

© Valentina Teclici

His teachings and creative work extracted their essence from different Buddhist concepts, such as impermanence, interpenetration, emptiness, non-self and Brahmahivaras (in Sanskrit); vihara is an abode or a dwelling place of the four elements of true love: love, compassion, joy and equanimity. Brahmahivaras was translated by Nhat Hanh as "Four Immeasurable Minds", all of them being strongly interconnected. For example, love to be true love must contain compassion, joy and equanimity. Compassion to be genuine compassion has to contain love, joy and equanimity and the same for the other two.

"They are called *immeasurable* because if you practice them, they will grow in you every day until they embrace the whole world", Nhat Hanh wrote.

Nhat Hanh published only two poetry collections, but real gems: *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment* (Parallax Press, 1990) and *Call Me by My True Names* (Parallax Press,1993) which were reprinted in many editions during his life and after his passing. I consider myself fortunate to have hard copies of both collections, which allows me to write notes, in pencil, turn the pages and feel them. I found Nhat Hanh's notes at the end of some poems useful, where he explained the circumstances and reasons for why he wrote certain poems.

Unconditional, true Love is a strong and constant message in Nhat Hahn's teachings and poetry. It has the power of profound understanding, forgiveness, connectiveness, healing and hope. For example, his antiwar poems express the deep pain of his sorrow, sadness, suffering and also the light, the bright side of his understanding of the causes of human behaviour, acceptance and compassion. The stanzas, selected from the poem *A Prayer for Peace* illustrate this. The author's note informs us that the poem was used as a prayer throughout South Vietnam in 1965 in the "Don't Shoot Your Own Brother" campaign to raise the willingness to work for peace:

"Homage to all Buddhas in the ten directions.
Because of your love for all people,
have compassion on us.
Help us to remember we are just one family,
North and South.
Help us rekindle our compassion and brotherhood,
and transform separate interests
into loving acceptance for all.
May your compassion help us overcome our hatred.
(…)
I am determined to cultivate only thoughts
that increase trust and love,"

Many of Nhat Hanh's antiwar poems were set to music by well-known Vietnamese musicians and sung on the streets, at meetings, and on radio.

Love is the way to increase awareness and is the response to cruelty in the poem *Those That Have Not Exploded* which Nhat Hanh wrote in 1966 after an attack on the School of Youth for Social Service (co-founded by him in 1965) by a group of unknown men with grenades and guns:

"Twelve young people fell
With mangled bodies and burst skin."
(…)
This morning, two are buried.
Each waits for the sun to rise again
in our motherland.
(…)
And still
we beg you to believe
there is no hatred in our hearts,
no rancour in our souls.
What the world needs
what we all need
is love."

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Nhat Hanh explained that he wrote the poem *Recommendation* in 1965 for the young people in the School of Youth for Social Services who risked their lives every day during the war, recommending them to prepare to die without hatred. He wanted young people to understand that "Our enemy is our anger, hatred, greed, fanatism, and discrimination against men. If you die because of violence, you must meditate on compassion in order to forgive those who kill you."

"Even as they
strike you down
with a mountain of hatred and violence;
even as they step on you and crush you
like a worm,
even as they dismember and disembowel you,
remember, brother,
remember:
man is not your enemy.

The only thing worthy of you is compassion –
invincible, limitless, unconditional.
Hatred will never let you face
the beast in man."

"Poetry nurtures love" is the last verse of Nhat Hanh's poem *Armfuls of Poetry, Drops of Sunshine*, which is a devoted ode to poetry that the poet sees in every change and miracle of nature, the cycle of seasons, in close relationship with the human spirit, and the cosmos:

"Following the rain, poetry comes to dwell on each leaf.
Sunshine has a green color, and poetry a pink one.
(…)
On sunshine footsteps to the deep forest,
poetry drinks the nectar with joy.
With the excitement of celebration,
butterflies and bees crowd the Earth.
Sunshine makes up the dance, and poetry the song."

Each line of this poem is an expression of love and of "interbeing", a term that Nhat Hanh, also called "The Father of Mindfulness", invented in the early 1980's during a mindfulness retreat in California.

In his work, the historical dimension and the ultimate dimension to life or nirvana, the whole philosophy of Mahayana, are strongly interconnected. He compared the historical dimension with "a wave" and the ultimate dimension with "water". He also explained that we usually touch just the wave, but when we discover how to touch the water, we receive "the highest fruit that meditation can offer" and we can transcend time.

Writing the poem *The Beauty of the Spring Blocks My Way*, Nhat Hanh touched the water:

"The breeze of spring in its song
expresses both my love and my despair.
The Cosmos is so indifferent. Why?
To the harbor, I came alone,
and now I leave alone.

There are so many paths leading to the homeland.
They all talk to me in silence. I invoke the Absolute.
Spring has come
to every corner of the ten directions.
Its song, alas, is only the song
of departure."

When I read this poem, it touched me deeply, however, I had the real understanding after I read the poet's note, which revealed that he was a man blessed to fall in love and experience this wonderful, human emotion. Nhat Hanh confesses that he wrote the poem less than twelve hours after he fell in love with a nun. He was 25: "It happened at the Vien Giac Temple on New Year's Eve in the beautiful village of Cau Dat in the highlands. She was twenty. Both of us realized that we wanted to continue being a monk and a nun. So, we decided to depart from each other. This was not easy."

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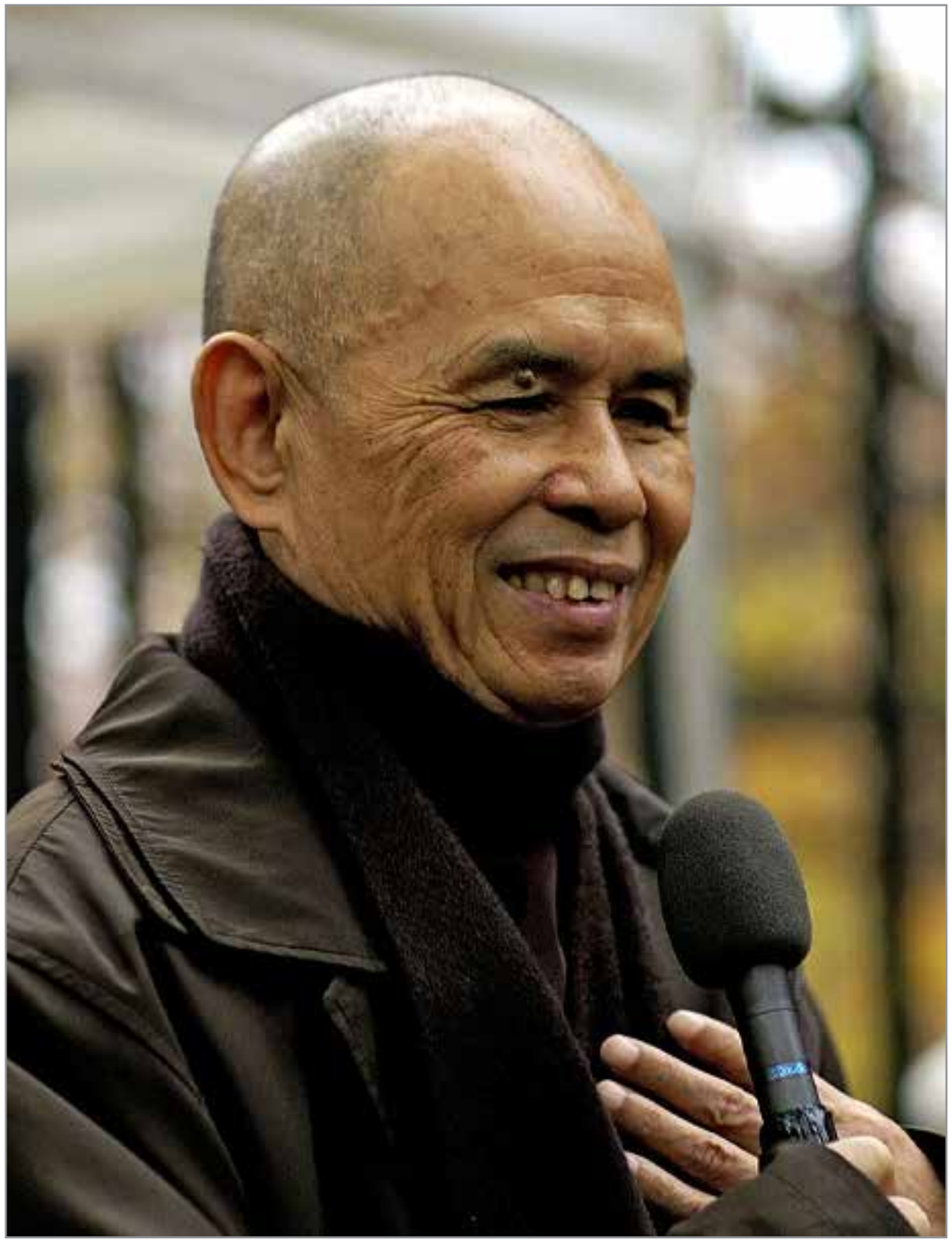
Nhat Hanh told this story forty-one years later in a twenty-one-day retreat at Plum Village in England.

Unconditional love, the spiritual path which connects us with others and the Divine, was Nhat Hanh's genuine nature, which he shared in his work and practice. His work and actions informed us about the power within and the control that we can have in the process of our spiritual self-transformation:

"Each of us has anger, hatred, depression, racial discrimination, and many other kinds of garbage in us, but there is no need for us to be afraid. In the way that a gardener knows how to transform compost into flowers, we can learn the art of transforming anger, depression, and racial discrimination into love and understanding. This is the work of meditation".

Thich Nhat Hanh's contemplative poems nurtured love and his true love – the Four Immeasurable Minds - nurtured his poetry, teaching and all his work for humanity.

Reference:
http: plumvillage.org/articles



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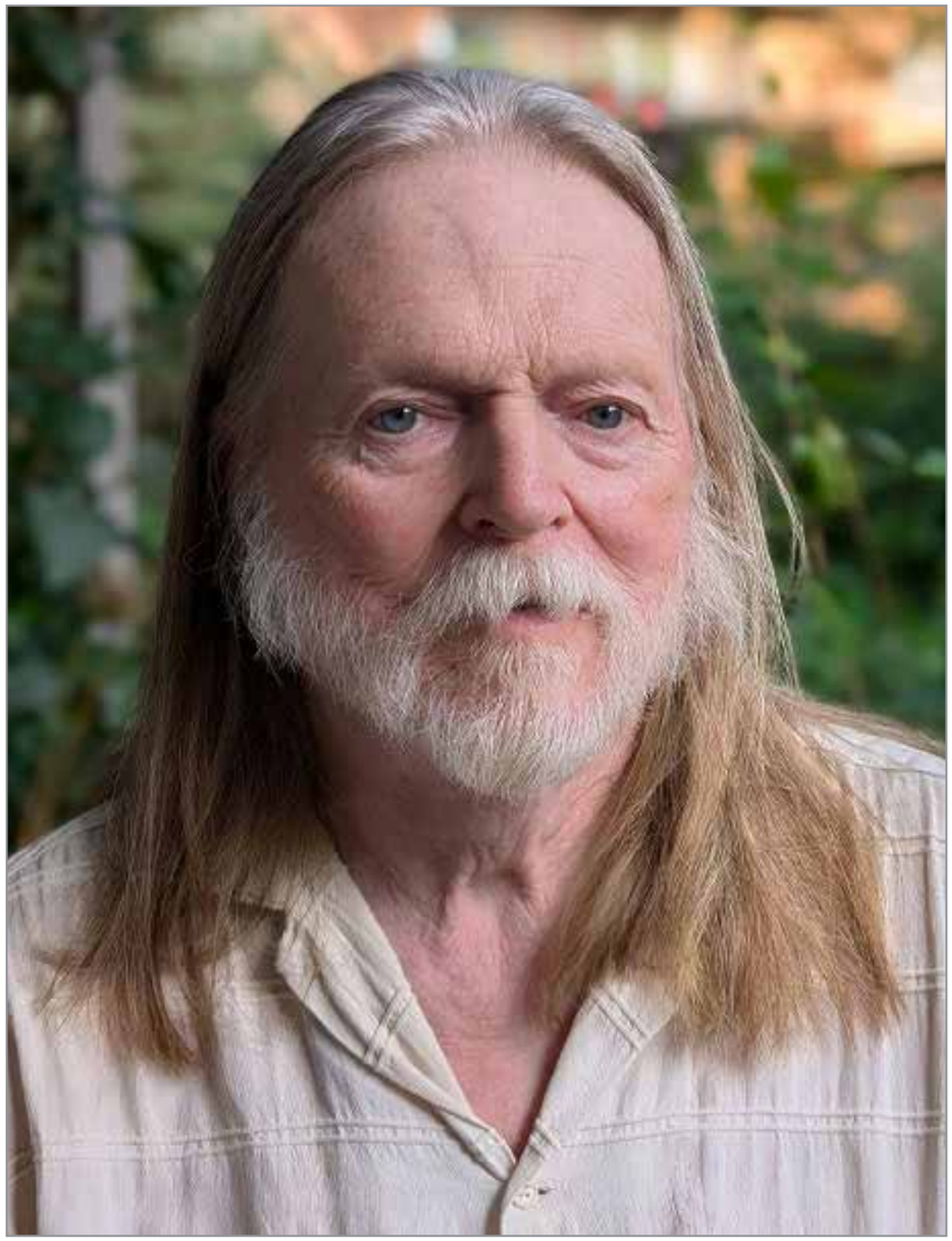

James Deahl

James Deahl was born in Pittsburgh in 1945; he moved to Canada in 1970, and is the author or editor of over thirty-five books, his five most recent titles being: *Releasing The Wisdom Of Stone; To Possess The Land: An Anthology Of Confederation Poetry; Four-Square Poems; Awareness; and The Confederation Poets: The Founding Of A Canadian Poetry, 1880 To The First World War.* He is the editor of *Tamaracks: Canadian poetry for the 21st century; In A Springtime Instant: The Selected Poems of Milton Acorn, 1950 – 1986*; and *Adder's-tongues*: *A Choice of Norma West Linder's Poems, 1969 – 2011.* A cycle of his poems is the focus of the American television documentary *Under the Watchful Eye. Deahl* is the father of three daughters, Sarah, Simone, and Shona, and the grandfather of Scot and Felix. He lives in Sarnia, Ontario.

After Reading *Poemas Humanos*

Death must have weighed on the heart
of César Vallejo as he lay ill in Paris
that spring of nineteen thirty-eight,
civil war sweeping Spain, Hitler
about to start the Second World War.
He knew he'd never see Santiago de Chuco
again, nor would he cross the Pyrenees
to stand with the poets against the darkness.

This, too, is a year of death, of pestilence.
Today in our new, but not better, century,
snow streaks the farms of southwestern
Ontario. The harvest over, fields lie naked
under a grey sky. Farmhouses withdraw
farther within their circle of trees where
only the odd beech retains its leaves.
Their dry rustling grants the afternoon life.

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When Stone Speaks

Se concentra el silencio
en una piedra
– Pablo Neruda

An hour or two before dawn
and silence lies everywhere.
Not one creature moves;
it's far too early for them.
Even the birds who summon
the sun are asleep.

Summer's hanging on,
the afternoons remain warm,
yet a hint of autumn
creeps through the darkness,
a warning, perhaps,
of the bitter winter to come.

This is a wind come down
from northern Ontario,
where silence formed stone
three billion years ago:
a time when the concept of silence
was known only to God.

Now, the stone that silence became
awakens the blue heron.
Lake Huron rises to join the sky
in voiceless communion,
and our sun does not forget
the grace preceding resurrection.

Winter Squash

November opens unseasonably warm;
the harvesting of fodder corn proceeds
under clear blue skies. Sugar beets are heaped
along the margins of country lanes, beets
like mud-caked boots with no more roads to walk.
At a farm on Michigan Line, hubbards
are pulled from frost-touched vines into bright day.

November squash release dreams of summer,
of late evening sunsets, of river mists
that drift in only to depart like magic.
Squash are the winter stars that come and go
with the clouds, with the frosty air. Look up!
Squash seeds have birthed countless galaxies.

© James Deahl

Green Dolphin Street

In memoriam: Eric Dolphy
June 20, 1928 – June 29, 1964

Springtime and maple flowers erupt
into new growth; crabapples
stand ready to launch ten thousand blossoms
by the Hudson River. Eric recording
in Englewood Cliffs:
a new month and season;
1960, the beginning of a fresh decade
and a brash extension to jazz.

Six decades later
his juxtaposition of old and new,
of “Green Dolphin Street” and “G.W.”
still startles. Today I watch
spring arrive once again,
drawing light from Death’s embrace.
Sometimes I am permitted
to return to that high school boy
moving from Gene Vincent and Elvis
to Smokey and Aretha, and later
from R & B to jazz.

Moving from passion to desire
— as from afternoon to midnight —
past becomes present, an affirmation
of life continuing,
for past is always and only present.
In the clubs of lower New York
Eric moved from post-Bop
into Free Jazz: a form without limits.
That some critics thought Free Jazz
not only not jazz, but not even music,
sent Eric to Europe.

Sometimes I am permitted to relive a youth
that might have been mine.
While April summons us to ourselves,
music enters the wetlands
to conjure another generation of reeds
from the elemental mud.
The old Five Spot returns late at night
to Cooper Square, and Eric, too,
a young man blowing the darkness away,
and the Bowery is again
what it must always and only be,
a realm made by music.

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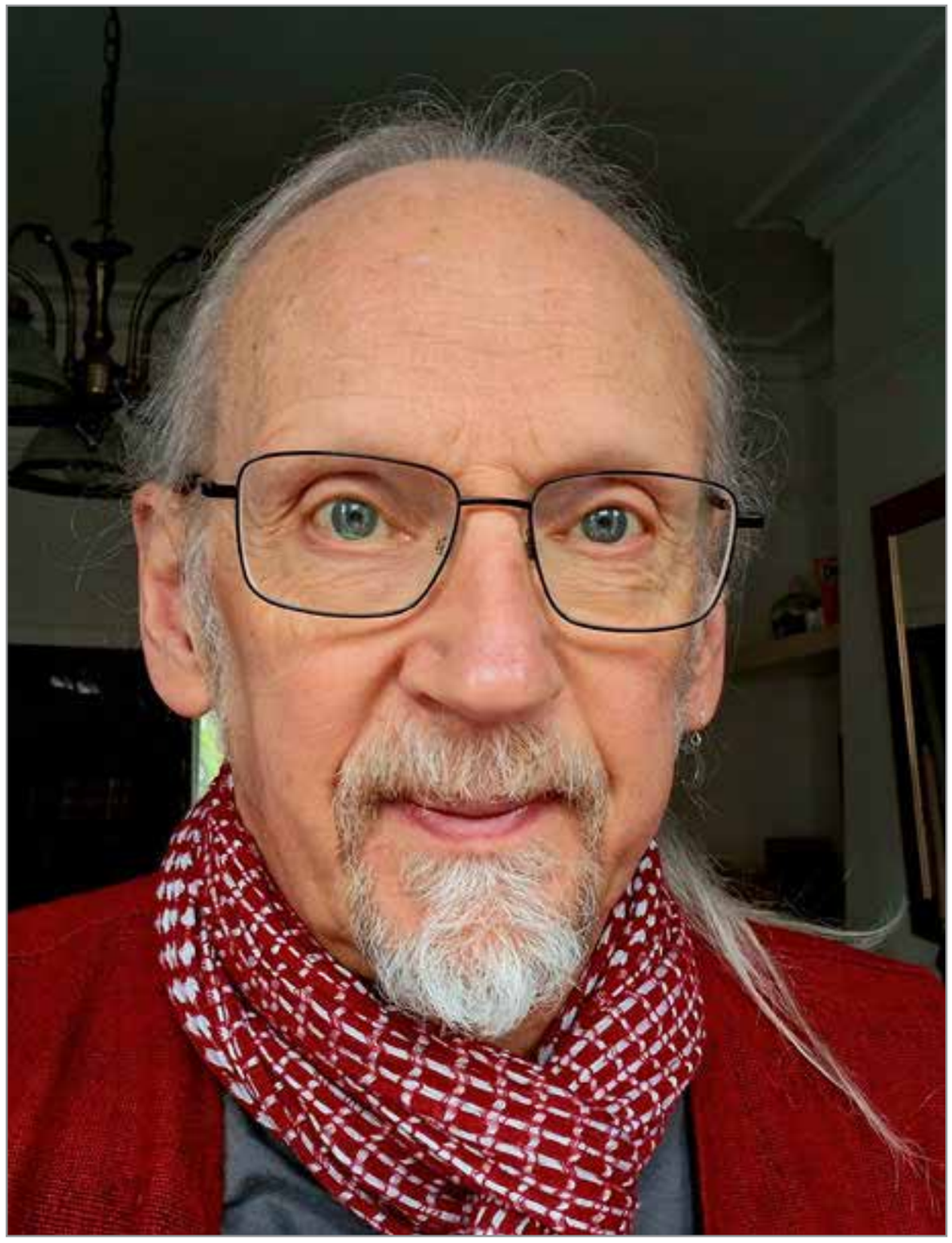

Oz Hardwick

Oz Hardwick is an award-winning poet and photographer, who has been acknowledged as a "major proponent of the neo-surreal prose poem in Britain." His work has been widely published in international journals and anthologies, and he has published "maybe fifteen?" solo collections and chapbooks, most recently *Actioning the New University* (Yaffle, 2026). Oz has held residencies in the UK, Europe, the US, and Australia, and has performed internationally at major festivals and in disreputable dives. Always keen to work with others across diverse media, Oz has collaborated on albums, films, art installations, and performances, as well as numerous collaborative poetic works.

The Lamplighters

Along the sand-smoothed strand, the thin men light lamps. It's that uncertain hour when shadows play tricks, and selkies shed their skins and step ashore on dainty feet. The thin men sigh and bow as visions dance by, and they remember the thrill of once-upon-a-time in a fairground staked out beneath a million or more bright stars, the brush of chilly fingers and the glance of sea-deep eyes. From the salt-caked machinery of the clattering town, music blows like torn sails, like myths stretched out on sun-steaming rocks, and the thin men recall nights that sang like dreams of whales. When the morning comes, blind and bumbling, the thin men will be thinner still, as they snuff out the lamps, sift sealskin tatters from grey sand, then twist themselves into iron railings beyond which no one may pass.

© Oz Hardwick

A Fond Farewell to the Age of Steam

I'm running, once again, for a train that I know has already left from a station that was redeveloped in the 80s. I'm weighed down by baggage, both material and predictably metaphorical, and I'm in no shape to be running anyway, but it's one of those roles to which I've adapted through lived experience, and after all this time there's comfort to be found in the discomfort. Family, friends, and casual acquaintances drive past in shiny cars, and though each keeps their eyes on the road ahead, I wave as best I can in hopes of flagging a lift, but no one sees me and, besides, the train left so long ago that it was black and white and wrapped the whole scene in steam and longing, like a lobby card from Brief Encounter. But still I run, cases and confusion bruising my legs and rubbing my hands raw, because although I missed that train before I had even finished packing, I just might be able to lie in front of the next one.

Scenes from the Industrial Evolution

Flying machines crowd the sky, and I don't just mean aircraft. There's everything from food mixers and kitchen timers to bucket-wheel excavators and other vast industrial contraptions, all fitted with wings, whirring and clanking in an intricate murmuration. Everyone's out to watch, with tartan blankets, flasks of tea, and headphones to keep out the noise. Some have guides clipped from the local paper, others call up apps on their phones, and of course there are experts – some of whom have travelled halfway round the world, with their expensive binoculars and phallic cameras – who are happy to share their knowledge, whether asked or not. All are agreed that never has the line between beauty and ugliness been so comprehensively erased, as all this ungainly clutter – which, let's be clear, should not be up there at all – dances such elegant figures. We know, of course, the inevitable conclusion regarding everything that goes up, so, as evening dims to night, we reluctantly retreat to our underground shelters. Someone suggests tea, but even the kettle's up there somewhere, so we'll need to wait until morning.

© Oz Hardwick

Cathy Altmann

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

Orion II

The orb spider
now – as I write
is moving
around its web
a silver structure
tilted like a satellite
towards Orion
strung between
the vine and lemon
this autumn night

Its body weighs
the web
as a small pebble
might
making it concave
yet perfect
as Pythagoras

If I did not know
spiders existed
I would not believe
such a thing
was possible – the spider
attached like an astronaut
to a spaceship
in the silver dark

continued overleaf...

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I watch its forelegs
measure
the gap
between rungs
already spun –
quick
meticulous
while the back legs
tease thread
like crochet
the middle legs
clasp and unclasp
the skein
and the abdomen
presses the span
into place –
deft movements
like fingers
playing a fugue
oblivious to all
but their own
music

I stand beneath the web
and see Orion
glinting through it
with something
of the same silver
I ask what it is
telling me
but see only
an intent
transitory
ability – knowing
nothing
of Orion
but mimicking
the invisible threads
which surely
join each
star
to the next

Oh let it be
recorded
when I am dead
that tonight –
tonight an orb
spider
has created
a silver bed
of perishable
thread
beneath Orion.

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Eileen Casey

Eileen Casey is originally from County Offaly, now based in South Dublin. Casey's poetry and prose are published in magazines and journals including *The Irish Times, Ireland of the Welcomes, Crannóg, Salmon,* among others. Her work is also included in anthologies by Dedalus, Faber & Faber, The Nordic Irish Studies Journal, New Island, Salmon, among others. She has published a number of prose/poetry/short fiction collections (New Island, Arlen House, AlTents). Awards include: Poems For Patience (2026), A Sunday Tribune/Hennessy Literary Award (Emerging Fiction), The Oliver Goldsmith International Poetry Prize, and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship (Poetry), among others.

FLOATERS

'She'll listen and agree, I know she will.' I look at you aghast.

'You want me to tell Ellie there's a ban …' I begin…

'Not *a* ban,' you interrupt…*a complete ban*.'

'Don't act like some crazy man. There's never been a 'do' without them.'

'A first for everything then,' you shoot back. I decide different tactics are needed.

'At the top table you'll be out of danger.' My patient explanation falls on deaf ears.

'Bullshit.' You throw up your hands in mock despair. 'What about other poor sods?

Work friends. Relatives. Neighbours.'

'Since when have you cared about them?'

'You haven't experienced it woman. Aunt Joan one side of me, you the other.'

'Why didn't you just say?' I ask, perplexed. 'We'd have taken them off.' Like hell we would! Not without a mirror, hairspray and a hairbrush at hand.

'It felt as if I had floaters. In both eyes.'

'Don't be such a baby. Floaters! Come on! Ellie won't buy it. They are *de rigueur*!

After all.'

'Steady on. no need for fancy talk. Ellie's a reasonable, mature woman.'

continued overleaf...

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'And I'm not?'

'Try to see it from my perspective.' I can see you are hell bent on reliving your 'floater' experience.

'A whole dinner with a floppy, flamenco-sized brim either side…my peripheral vision shell-shocked. Not to mention the migraine.'

'Brought on by too many whiskeys. Besides, it was the year of hats. Joan and I looked stunning.'

'If you say so. Another thing. A fortune spent on hair styling covered up with *millinery* monstrosities, also costing a fortune.'

'Now who's fancy talking! It's not as if we wore Philip Treacy's *Galleons in Full Sail.* Your own mother was a picture of Parisienne chic. Especially with black netting over her face.'

'A bit long in the tooth for the Mata Hari look though.' There's a twinkle in your eye.
'I can't win!' I reply but there's also the beginning of a giggle. I may have exaggerated a little with the Parisienne chic reference.

'So,' I continue, 'you want me to fabricate a story; tell Ellie that the clouds parted and some Great *Millinery* Goddess issued a decree saying hats are off the table for her wedding?'

'Tell her hats are a menace…no…a danger, to her father…and to all men.'

'Why? Over a few floater like sensations which might never re-occur? You drank a lot of whiskey that day…and wine…'

'And you have a short memory.' Oh Oh I know what's coming now.

'All hell nearly broke loose when your mother *pricked her* finger on a hatpin and it bled onto her two-piece.' Your annoyance is visibly growing. 'Plus, did you not hear the rumours?'

'Some nonsense about it being a bad omen,' I say, adding 'an old wives tale.'

'Well, Margie broke up with Philip a few short years later.'

'Don't be silly.' My turn to be annoyed. 'A bleeding finger had nothing whatsoever to do with their breakup.'

'Do you not remember how your mother spent the day trying to get that spotting out?'

'Don't turn her into Lady Macbeth all of a sudden,' I say. 'Of course she tried to remove the stain. That suit cost an arm and a leg.'

'She scraped at it with her fish knife. I was mortified.' There's no denying it was embarrassing when my mother, in all innocence, did that.

'We've reached an *Impasse*', I say, tongue in cheek.

You smile, despite yourself.

'You know my argument is a *tour de force*,' you float back.

I smile too. Despite myself. 'Fascinating,' I reply…then Bingo! Perhaps it's time to bring back the good old fashoned Fascinator! That should do the trick only I won't put you out of your misery just yet. Where's the fun in that!

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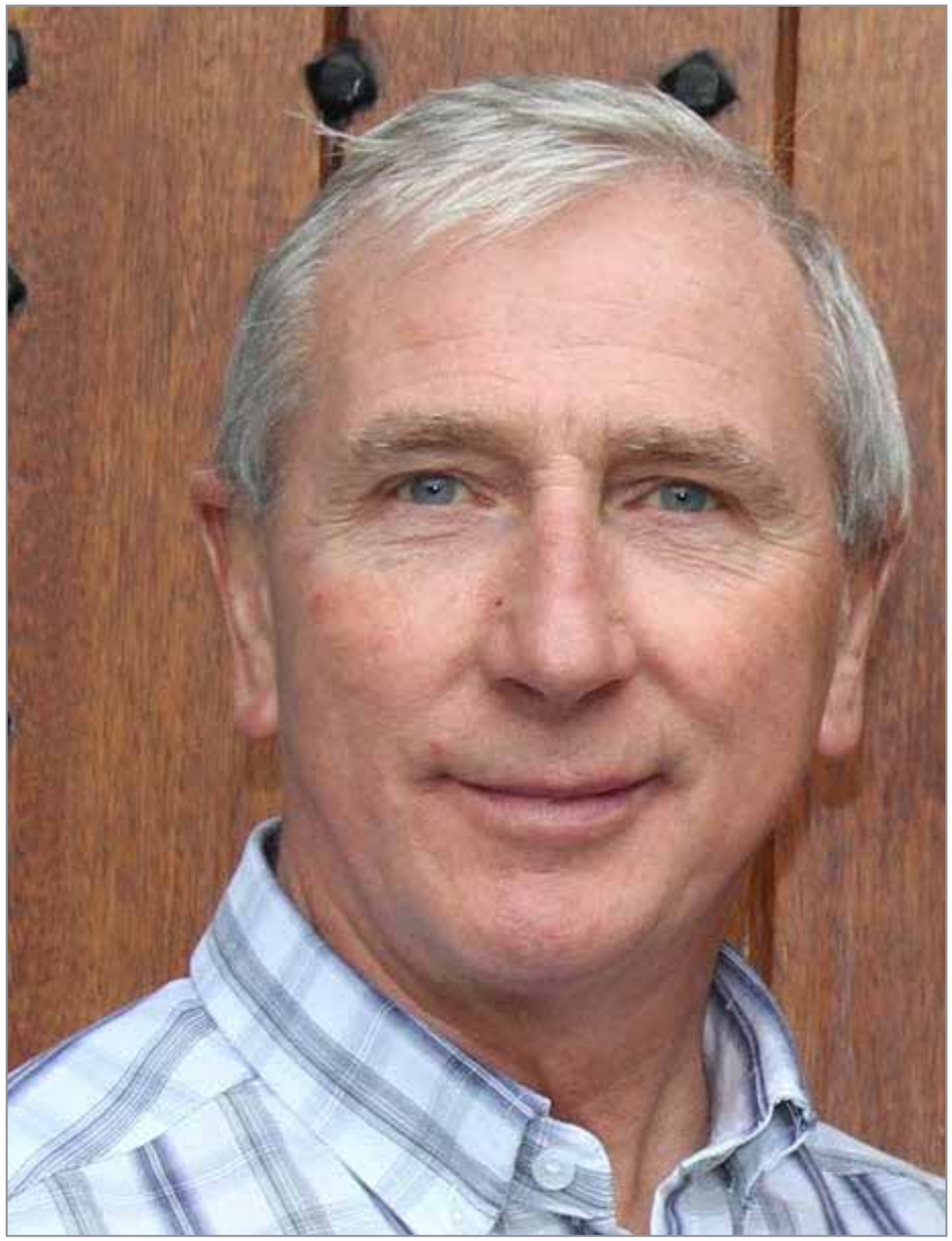
From County Donegal on the north west coast of Ireland, Paddy Donoghue has been a prolific writer of poetry for many years. Facilitates writing workshops on a regular basis. His last full collection *Leave Taking* (2024) was shortlisted for the CAP Awards 2025. His bi-lingual collection *Gathering of Haiku*, a collection of haiku in Irish and English was published in June 2026 to much acclaim. He is a member of the Atlantic Writers Ink group.



Paddy Donoghue

Waiting on Storms

The storm, tracked for days
sweeps in from the ocean
big rollers crash across the reef
white knuckled and angry
– surf's up

the cliff edge dotted with lycra clad
huddles, boards tucked underarm
hands pointing, eyes scanning the
horizon, counting sets as the swell grows
– wind offshore

a shout rises, echoes along the shoreline
the lycra army scurry, penguin style
over the shore rock, boards on heads
fling themselves into the breaking surf
– paddle hard

cresting and diving, scrambling beyond
the breaks, settling in the trough to wait
sitting, legs dangling, idling, alert, waiting
calculating, holding, flat boarding, then
– the pop up

steadying, angling, dropping into the wave
hugging the barrel wall, riding the arc face
propelled forward with force and venom
curving the line, riding into calm water
– same again

© Paddy Donoghue

Recall

i.m. Anna Akhmatova (1889 - 1966)

laying awake
it's 3:00 am
darkness conceals
the terror hidden
in my eyes
the trembling
of my body

- it remembers

a dull streetlight
steals through a
cracked blind
streaks across
bare floor boards
lands on an old
photograph
gathering dust
on a bedside
locker

- it remembers

comes sometimes
in dreams
like a grief
lost somewhere in
the in-between
and some nights
the silence gets
too loud for

- it remembers too

it remembers
everything
I try to forget.

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Susan Glamuzina is a published New Zealand author and poet who feels at home when there's sand between her toes and her thoughts are in the clouds.

Susan Glamuzina

Autumn

I am autumn
changes forced on me
I hold on
but my leaves are falling
my roots are strong
yet I'm falling apart
by outside circumstances
falling
I am adaptable
not concrete
ever changing
I have to ride the wave
new buds will form
I need faith
but I'm bare
my new coverage
will be all new
want it or not
never the same again
fall

© Susan Glamuzina

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Midnight Mind, Willow Review and the Pennsylvania Literary Journal. Latest books, “Bittersweet”, “Subject Matters” and “Between Two Fires” are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in the MacGuffin, the Bayou Review and Plainsongs.

John Grey

My Pains, Her Growing

I keep her in plain view
but not up close.
For now she is untouched, unbroken.
Why tell her what I know?

She plays with snakes.
I don’t snatch them
away from her.
She ducks down alleys.
I keep tabs but do not follow.
She approaches the giant waves
and I do not pull her back.

Already she is shedding me,
slipping her bright skin
like a warning I’m meant to ignore.

She nears the rim of every danger
as if it were a cradle she can crawl back into,
as if the world’s hold was a arm around a waist.
not fingers to the throat.

I cut the tether,
and she and the future go one way,
I recoil in a whole other direction.

My duty is only
to witness her becoming,
to be somewhere in the background
while she learns
how the dark opens,
how the light flickers,
how, when jaws are
snapping all around her,
a girl grows teeth of her own.

© John Grey

A Man On No Mission

No schedule. Not for him.
He does what needs doing in the instant.
Often he's bent over the sidewalk,
lured by a scrap of paper.

In a hip-hop world,
his headphones fill with Debussy.
He rolls cigarettes, pops them into
his mouth but forgets to light the things.

He touches the piano keys without insisting
any kind of melody ensue.
He takes long walks through neighborhoods
of wire fences and growling dogs.

And pauses at ponds, watches tadpoles
slither here and there, in a dream of becoming frogs.

He feels pity for racehorses,
for saxophones behind pawnshop glass,
for athletes whose fame resides in yellowed clippings.

He's some kind of painter
though his canvases content themselves
with shapes no one can quite decipher.

These are quirks, not crimes, says the world.
That's its excuse for ignoring him.

He has this watch, a hand-me-down.
But he has no interest in the time.
He just likes to know how long its been.
Come the evening, he pockets that watch.
From somewhere deep within him,
its quiet ticking is enough.

From The Tower

The branch scratches the pane -
tests out its writing skills
yet it's a pen that never gets its wording right –
not today, a name that could make
a difference – not today, not any day.
a name that might change things.

Rain drips down from the gutters, the eaves –
it's steady, it's soft, its inhuman -
it promises something in the stains it leaves –
and yet nothing comes of it –
just dampness.

Sure, the sun comes out,
but its illumination is from fire,
not insight – same with the moon –
the sky continually disappoints.

Maybe that's why I stand here,
hand on the sill, asking the world's
advice - and what do I get -
nothing but the smell of old pennies -
quit while you're behind says the mockingbird.

© John Grey

Gordon Meade is a Scottish poet based in the East Neuk of Fife. He has published thirteen collections of poems including most recently his *Selected Poems: Beyond The Ninth Wave* with IntoPoetry in 2025.

Gordon Meade

Today's Lesson

Sunday, and no sign of him, as yet.
Perhaps, he has somewhere better
to go. Surely, not church. He doesn't
really strike me as being a believer,

at least not of any organised religion.
Having said that, he is always dressed
in black. Maybe, he is a death doula. If so,
he might have come to the right place -

a complex of sheltered housing -
somewhere that might well provide
him with a steady stream of willing
clients. I should think he will be back

sometime this evening. Both the faithful
and the non-believers, all still have to eat.

© Gordon Meade

A Crow And Cancer

How many years have you had it,
he asked me, the cancer?

By now, almost twelve, I replied.

That would have been a magnificent lifespan
for one of us. Some of us are lucky to even make it
past our seventh. Looking at you, I reckon
that you have about another two or three left.

The ghost of a very dear friend of mine
once told me that I would pass away when
I was seventy-six, which would give me
at least another seven.

Well, by all means, do trust in what you have
been told by a human representative of the spirit world.
I am nothing more than a flesh and blood crow
and, what on earth, would I know?

The Weighing Of The Heart

In olden days, The Weighing Of The Heart had
absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with either me
or you but now, we have bought ourselves a pair
of scales and have decided to give it a go.

On one side, I will be seated alongside all
my faults, my blemishes, my regrets and even,
in these days, what might still be called, my sins.
On the other side, will be yourself, alone

with none of the above; just your beak,
your claws, your beady eyes, and your black glossy
feathers. There is no way of knowing as to which
side the scales might tip. No way of knowing,

until we release the mechanism, and wait.

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Doreen Duffy

Doreen Duffy was awarded her Masters with 1st Class Honours in Creative Writing, at Dublin City University, she also studied Creative Writing at National University Ireland Maynooth, University College Dublin and Oxford Online. Doreen is a Pushcart Nominated Writer. Publications include, HOWL 26, Crannóg 64, The Honest Ulsterman, Chicago Write City, Live Encounters, Poetry Ireland Review 129 by Eavan Boland, Washing Windows Too & Three & Four & Five by Arlen House, Beyond Words Literary Magazine, (Germany), The Storms Journals 1 & 3 & 4, The Galway Review, Flash Fiction (USA), Glisk & Glimmer by Sídhe Press, The Woman's Way and The Irish Times amongst many others. She won The Jonathan Swift Award and was presented with The Deirdre Purcell Cup at The Maria Edgeworth Literary Festival. Doreen was shortlisted in The Francis MacManus Writing Competition. Her story 'Tattoo' was broadcast on RTE Radio One. Website - http://doreenduffy.blogspot.com/

Liar

I live in the house on the hill. Eighty-Eight, Railway Road. The one with the green door.

Amy took my brand-new Barbie doll and lifted the drain outside my house and plopped her in. Amy lives four doors down. In the house with the peeling paint and the curtains hanging crooked, but her mother's lipstick is always shiny bright red when she goes out at night.

Amy crouched beside me, kept one hand pushed hard on my front making my breath stop, while we watched my doll fall deep down into the black water.

'That woman with her skirt too short.' My mam always said. When she thought no one could hear. 'Lips painted up like a hoor,' she said through her teeth to my dad one day and dropped the net curtain like she wanted to rip it off the wire, she stared at his back as he walked out and let the door slam.

Amy said sorry straight away, about my doll, the words flew out of her mouth, spit landing on my face on the sorry, she begged me not to tell.

She's supposed to be my friend. Sometimes she sleeps over. Even though top to toe in my small bed, her feet stink and she never flushes when she goes to the loo.

continued overleaf...

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When her dad comes to collect her next morning, with his beard still blue. She leaves with him, but she never looks up into his face, and she accidentally misses his hand when he goes to hold hers. I don't blame her. His fingernails are manky. I'd get sick if he touched me with those fingernails, the way Amy said he touches her.
My dad shaves every morning before he goes out. I would always catch his hand, if he tried to hold mine.

I don't think Amy did see my dad with her mother, the way she said she did. No way was my dad kissing her mother, while his lovely clean fingernails crept up her skirt that's too short.

I think Amy's a liar.

The last night Amy stayed, there was the biggest bee you've ever seen. Bumbling and buzzing along the curtain rail. That night was so hot the curtains stayed open. The car lights bounced off my walls. I thought they would make a loud crash they bounced so hard, from around the corner and up the hill, to the top, past her house, four doors down and up to mine. Amy fell fast asleep. I didn't know how she slept with the crashing lights and the noise of that bee. The thought of what he might do to us…And after the things she told me. I lay awake watching that bee, thinking of some way she wouldn't be staying again.

I was glad when she left. I didn't have to smell her shit that she always left in my house. She's not my friend anymore. If anyone asks me, she won't be staying again, top to toe in my bed.

My mam has got tired of whispering stories now. She tells them loud enough for anyone to hear. Me. Next door, either side. Maybe even four doors down. I don't think Amy will be staying again. I told my mam some of the things Amy told me.

But not all the things.

I didn't know how to tell the stuff about what Amy said her dad did to her, when her mother was out.

I just told the things she said my dad did with her mother.

That might be what made my mam so mad at Amy.

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Alastair Clarke's work has appeared in the New Zealand journals Landfall, Mayhem Literary Journal, A Fine Line, Fresh Ink, Ezine, Poetry Aotearoa Yearbook, Blackmail Press, At the Bay, Landing Press, and in Orbis (UK), and in Antipodes (US). His work has been published in the collections Seeing, Green Rain and Drift. Poems were included in the November-December edition of Live Encounters.

Alastair Clarke

The darkest moment

the darkest moment of theoretical possibility/
it might attend you/ though you might
shunt it back and bench it for next day/
the moment darkest/ it moves about
the spectrum in cold colours/ if the words chill
just leave your position and pivot elsewhere/
it is not an all-or-nothing (though it might
well be) and there are usually other possibilities/
that the totara just beyond our wall
will crash down soon/ or remain/
that a quake crash soon/ how to measure the possible,
or probable?/ but at least for now seas remain/
though glaciers are retreating
as the abstract morphs to fact/
as the US scorches/
as heat's emptying Greece/
as Greece burns/
as Canada's forests burn/
as across India the barometer rises/
while Kiribati sees the darkening of the familiar
as the island drowns

© Alastair Clarke

A pebble tossed

She said, You praise too much.
The little lake (Yes, beautiful).

The ducks the birdsong – these passing muster
in the grand scheme of things. They backlight our days –

are bookends, our world here. Absent, “out there” –
remembered things. Dislocate. Though flesh and bone

are reducible we’re unalterable.
We cannot escape our ordinary fears

or questions. Tossing a pebble into the still lake,
watching the ripples multiply like growth rings

like time ebbing. There is steadiness here.

The Brush

It is the government, the direction of the brush.
Each careful line, its brevity. Its length. Its curvature.

Pausing. Then urgent, such firmness over the wash.
How the line walks, speaks of love, of delight –

A bird, so vivid, just vanishing.
The grass, leaning a little in breeze.

Distant – a dog walker? The light – shimmering.
And, yes, your voice, simply calling. Made visible.

These particulars. This everydayness
in things. How the brush (so finely tuned)

speaks of now. The completeness in water, or oil.
The good, the best placement of things.

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Julian Matthews is a poet from Malaysia. He is published in The American Journal of Poetry, Beltway Poetry Quarterly, Loch Raven Review, Live Encounters and New Verse News, among 60 other literary journals and anthologies in 17 countries.
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Julian Matthews

Garden of Yesterdays

I pull at the weeds with ungloved hands.
Shovel the earth, every hardened chunk another yearning uncovered.

My hoe is aged, rusted; its blunt blade has seen better days
like the days once shared over coffee, cake, laughter.

I loosen dirt, slice through roots, expose seeds still asleep,
curled in their husks—expectations that never sprouted.

I accidentally sever a lone worm, two halves writhe and unravel,
blinded by the light.

I am sorry. I am sorry. I am sorry.

Memory is an untended garden, it plots and prods,
turns over blood-red guilt, cracks and wilts me in the midday heat.

You win, grief. Some days, I am the cleaved worm
in search of my cleverer half. Most days, I wallow in the soil,
awaiting the rain.

Today, I give in to the severance, this separation

and surface.

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Advice to a Young Poet

Oh poet, what shall I make of a thousand butterflies
if I can't feel a single flutter in my heart?
Of what use is a thousand bouquets
if they can't halt this withering inside?
What does it matter if there are a thousand lit stars
if there is no sparkle in our eyes?
Or a thousand lines with predictable rhymes
without one that truly surprises?

Oh poet, you don't need a thousand mirrors,
only one to reflect what's really inside you
Wash away the 'swollen ocean', the 'sobering sky',
fling them into the 'forgiving wind' and down
that abyss of cliche-ridden metaphors
Give in to silence, be still, meditate
You don't need a thousand of anything
to exaggerate your yearnings
Not a thousand "moonkisses", eyes, tears,
or any such anatomical longings

You are allocated 23,000 breaths a day
Inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale and write one line
Electrify two neurons into synaptic synthesis,
fire up a kiln of incandescent thoughts,
weld the emerging core memory into a dendrite spine,
glassblow it into one glowing, propulsive, sensory incantation
Entangle the light of that reminiscence
into an emotional feedback loop then just let it go
Let its aesthetic trigger the atrial connections
in our collective souls

Oh poet, you don't need a thousand of anything
to make a poem yours and mine
Dig deep, pare down, ignite us
with just one vivid verse (not a thousand terse songs)
then levitate us to where we belong

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Mandy Beattie

Mandy Beattie is a feminist, former social worker and academic. Prizewinner and shortlisted poet. Her poetry appears in, The Waxed Lemon, Skylight 47, Poets Republic, Drawn to The Light, WordPeace, Orphic Review, Abridged, Banyan Review, Gyroscope Review, Full House Literary, Verse-Virtual, Abridged and many more. Best of Net nominee 2024, 2025.

Dawning Follows Darkness

*Found poem of poem titles**
— Kenneth Steven

Music of geese that year catching *light* where slide in winter *light* is a sonnet in snow. Snatches of song *illuminated* manuscript. Words a green woodpecker after storm. Songs cloister listening; understanding dark of winter's willow — where long ago two dead wrens and ice in daffodil living: waiting a different kind of *light* at morning resurrection. Turn of a turnip lantern after ravens, then *light* in beehive cells in long silence on the somewhere road: strangest gift the christening coracle of words. Her hermit cell is an island where Easter lilies school patient *moon*. Alone, let it be a garden, a kind of coming back of *light*, remembering after all the *ghost* orchid unfound. Last day's place, where

rivers meet chapel
and lapwings. Leaving Island
horses after all

*From: *Coracle; Letting in The Light; Salt and Light; lona*

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Acoustics Through Glass

Squeegee-knuckles like wrinkled walnuts
hermit-woman stood in a dwam at the kitchen sink—

In song-prayer her larynx became a piccolo
of gobbledygook notes soaring to cornices and chandelier:

Opposite, the neighbour's tortoiseshell she-cat basked
on shed roof's suntrap, licking her perineum—

From hermit-woman's first semibreve, she-cat swivelled
fouetté, pogo-bounced to guttering's edge

strained closer than loose tea, or a nesting sparrow
tipping over into opera's cast iron front row

She-cat audience sat unblinking, as if the Sphinx
until hermit-woman's last encore and outro—

There was no stage-thrown, wind-blown wildflower
bouquet but she-cat stalking off, with a satisfied smirk

Dwam: Daydream
Fouetté: Ballet Movement
Outro: Concluding section of music

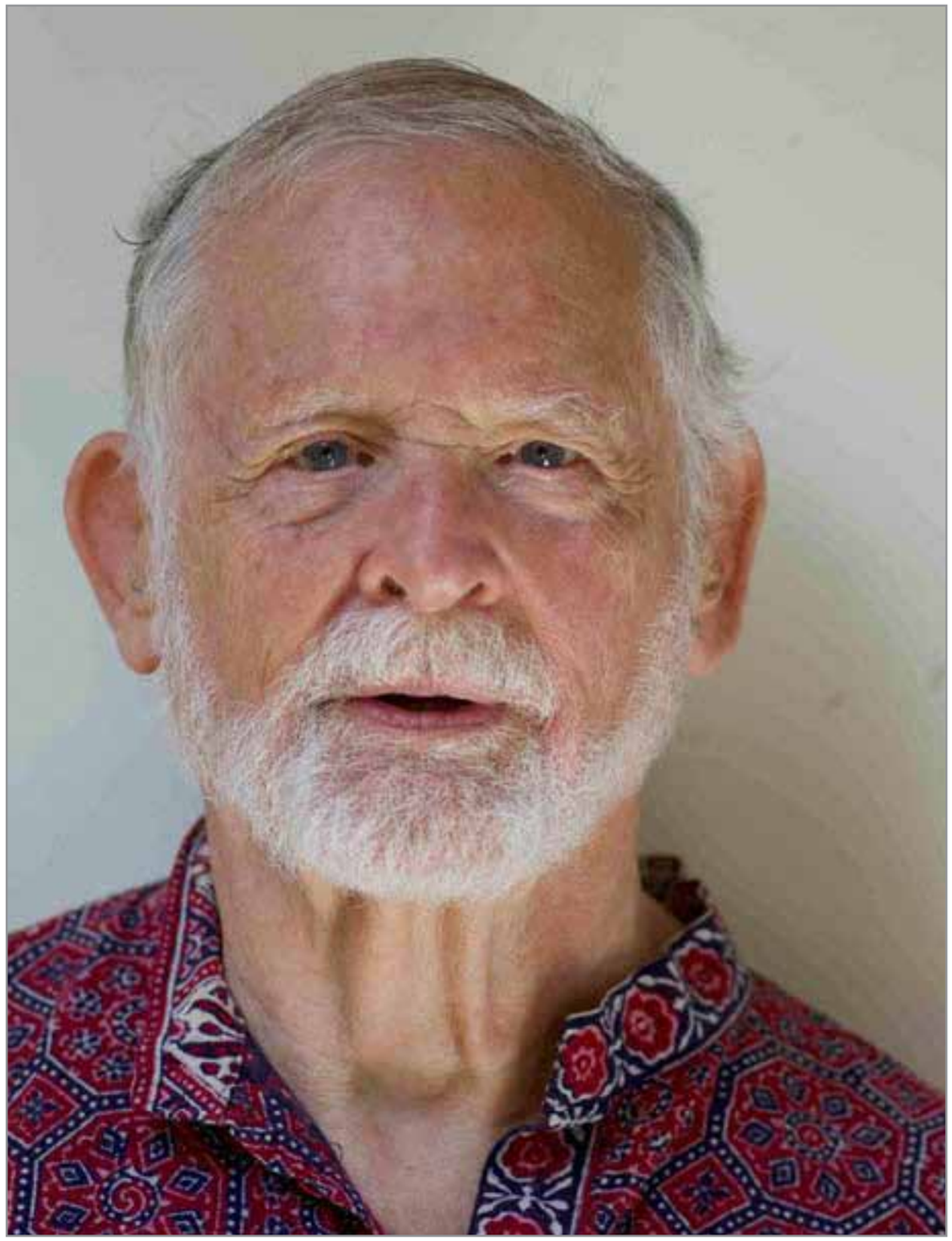
Bairn Mannequins

Mam lullabied us
hatched and unhatched to Brahms
Elvis, Buddy Holly among heather's home-crannogs
and across borders: Hands a dove's
symphony of tailor's chalk, she drafted, crafted
as her swan mobile swam above my sister's crib. Watched
the door. Spun
snowdrift blankets, booties, bonnets, dollies and us
played dress-up in everyday Sunday best—
mam-made breeks from patternless tangerine pleather
bell-bottoms before animal awareness
Tartan trews afore Bay City Roller's rocked
Culotte suit, anklet skirt, cloche hat
in Roaring Twenties forever and much
much more—aye on mam's catwalk modelling
her heart-bespoke palettes in tap shoes
teetering heels, clompy boots, ballet pumps:

Chuffed as Dolly Parton
in *'Her Coat of Many Colours'*

Creative couture
crafted in indigo nights
Never shop-sameness

© Mandy Beattie



Dirk van Nouhuys

Dirk van Nouhuys is an American writer, journalist, minor Silicon Valley pioneer, and editor known for his work in fiction and non-fiction. His work spans various genres, including novels, short stories, essays, poetry, manuals, and technical documentation. He has contributed something over 100 times to literary magazines. Van Nouhuys' writing often explores complex characters and intricate narratives, reflecting his interest in the human condition and societal issues. You can learn more about him from his web page(www.wandd.com) including a complete list of publications.

Chiyo and Dennis

Although he had only been there twice before, on Friday evening Dennis recognized the single plastic arching entranceway of Chiyo's apartment house on Castro Street in Mountain View without checking the number. He pulled into the parking lot beside it where he felt both more at home and more at strange than he had the first time he picked her up.

Under the plastic shell, he rang her apartment bell. He was wearing a grey sports jacket, a cream polo shirt, grey gabardine slacks and black penny loafers. Her crackling voice replied, "Come on up, second door on the left on the third floor." They had a date to dine on Peking Duck at 7:00 and they had not planned that she would ask him up. The small elevator and the walls of the narrow hall were bland in featureless shades of tan. He knocked on her door and it opened, not by Chiyo's hand, but by the action of a remote control she held sitting on a couch. She was wearing a moderately tight black silk dress with a white fox embordered on her left shoulder. The couch, which squatted in the middle of the room facing the door as if it did not quite known where to put itself, was covered with chrysanthemum brocade. Two comfortably padded stacking chairs leaned against the walls, one behind the couch and one before it. Under the window stood a white, seven-drawer dresser. It supported only a white, shallow square bowl of water where a frog held a daffodil and a bending branch of fruit blossoms, while a white camelia floated free.

Chiyo used the remote to close the door, stood awkwardly in the narrow space between the couch and a glass coffee table and asked, "Would you like me show you around?"

"Certainly."

When Dennis stepped beside her, she added, "It's a little gawdy."

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A door in the opposite wall led to a dim hall with a door on the right. Chiyo opened it and gestured, “My kitchen.” It was like the inside of an avocado, avocado walls, avocado linoleum floor and Formica counters, and an avocado refrigerator. A 100-pound, burlap bag of rice on the floor leaned heavily against the door of a cabinet. A dishwasher, two gas burners, and an oven. All the dishes were put away. She opened another door in the hall, “My bathroom.” As the kitchen was Avocado, all the tile was orange, spic and span. A large bathtub with a shower curtain and a sink were white porcelain. No window; the little room was a pouch in the structure of the building. They went on to the bedroom at the end of the hall.

The walls and ceiling were white. In the wall opposite the door a wide window overlooked an empty roof. On the floor two cranes on a blue, wool rug flew long-legged and wide-winged toward the window. In the middle of each other wall was a bright image laminated in plastic. She was stepping toward the open closet door when Dennis stopped her.

“Wait, what are those?” Dennis gestured toward the framed images.

“Fruit crate labels,” she replied, slightly fumbling the syllables.

“I don’t understand.”

“Don’t you remember from when we were kids? They packed our fruit in wooden crates for shipment. The growers or the shippers glued fancy labels on the ends of the crates. Don’t you remember?”

“Maybe I do?”

“Now they’re collector’s items.” She pointed at the prunes, which were over her bed, in a label with the words Lincoln Prunes, and an image of the former president. “We had some of these.”

“No Avocados?

She laughed. “They exist.”

A quilt covered a twin bed alongside a wall. The quilt showed a garden scene framed with castle walls. Piecing, fussy cut embroidery, metallic border. A large mirror was above a dresser. Another stacking chair leaned against the dresser. Chiyo patted the bed but did not sit on it. She turned toward an open door and said, “A great closet.” She led Dennis in. It was he size of the bath-room. Clothes hung on rods around them arranged by type, skirts here, slacks there, blouses on another rod. A small dresser stood against a short wall. The floor was littered with shoes of various kinds. Chiyo kicked at her shoes.

“I have a lot of shoes,” she said, embarrassed.

“That’s all right,” he said.

Chiyo reached around and closed the door behind them. They stood untouching in a dark, warm space littered with possibilities like the womb of the future.

“Read the air,” Chiyo said.

Dennis kissed the back of her neck.

“I like that,” Chiyo said softly.

“If we made love,” Dennis asked, “What would it mean?”

“It would mean that we were important.”

“I want very much to be important.”

“I know.” She turned, touched his chest, and bunched up the font of his polo shirt in her fingers.

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Dennis let slid his hand down her silken back and cupped her ass. She bit down on his polo shirt where she had been gathering it in her fingers and then opened the door. She put her hands at his waste and began to raise the shirt. He raised his arms to ease her purpose and shrugged it free as she lifted it off. They kissed again, forgetting themselves in their mouths. Her dress had fallen around her ankles. She stepped back a little and fumbled it off her feet and kicked it to one side. She was wearing a plain black brassière and panties. She bent to slip ff her shoes and exposed her back. He fumbled to unlatch her brassiere, but his fingers seemed suddenly hopeless. She stood, reached back, and it fell onto the bed. He reach for his belt buckle, which felt distant but he loosed it, and his pants. She slipped them down. He stood in white boxer shorts. They were moving ever faster.

She asked, "Do you want the light."

"Can you turn them down." She fingered a rheostat. They found themselves surprised lying on the bed and kissed again for a long time. He slipped off her panties and, after a moment's hesitation, kissed her stomach. "I want to be under the covers, to be really in bed," she said. She stood and pulled down the duvet and he the sheets. He sat on the now-exposed lower sheet, bent and untied his shoes. She embrace his back as if shielding him from something, but it seemed to him as if he were shielding her. He suddenly felt embarrassed and uncertain what to do because his socks were still on. She curved over his back and watched him remove his simple black sox. When he lifted his legs to pull them off, she ran her hands over his calf.

"Where did you get these?"

"Somewhere in Valley Mall."

"Dixson's?"

"I don't remember. Do you really want me?"

"Read the air," she said again.

They lay facing each other. He looked into her eyes and remembered looking into her eyes once when he had been driving. What air should he read? The air tonight, or air that blew back from the decades and wars. Now her eyes seemed fixed, intoxicating, and dangerous. Their arms drew them together like a gang of drunken friends. She had evidently forgotten about wanting to be under the covers, and the room itself seemed charged with desire, as if it had been building since he had first stood by her table in some forgotten café, his memory of her as a child only half-gelled. Now he remembered. They made love and then fell into a nervous, cuddly doze. When they wakened they looked at the hands of a bedside clock, which read 7:15 and laughed together.

"I'll try to talk them into it," said Dennis, who went naked to the living room, called the restaurant, and talked them into an 8:00 reservation. He figured it would take them ten minutes to drive to the restaurant, so they had to hurry. The black bra and panties were back in place and, he zipped up her black dress.

They made it to the restaurant. While they gorged themselves on the crunchy skin and succulent dabs of moist meat they retreated to talking about music, what they liked and didn't, how their tastes had changed since they were children.

Chiyo said her father had some records of a Japanese end-blown flute called a shakuhachi that he said he liked but did not often listen to. It had a haunting sound. She did not know how she felt about it. Her mother liked light opera and once a year went with a friend to the San Jose Civic Light Opera. Dennis remembered hearing his father hum to himself when he worked in the orchard but had no sense of what might have been the tune. Dennis remembered his mother loving the Andrews Sisters, but now she too went to the San Jose Civic Light Opera. They looked at each other in surprise. Could their mothers have ever been to the same performance and seen one another but not recognized one another?

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"It's a big auditorium; they could have been there at the same time and missed each other."

"I think if they saw one another, if one had, they would have spoken. They were real friends before…," Chiyo said.

"But would they have told us?"

"I can ask my mother," Chiyo said.

"Can you asker her that?"

"Yes." Her response reassured him.

She asked him about his work as an assistant District Attorney. He said he mostly did legal research and delt with police to support cases and prepare for trials. She asked if he thought his work created justice. He said, "Usually."

They drifted on to agreeing that popular music was changing. Neither had been to a disco in years. Videos were coming on. They both remembered Olivia Newton-John's video "Physical" They looked at one another in an embarrassed way. Their bodies had talked, but they were not yet ready to talk about the talk.

"What will we like ten years from now or twenty?" Chiyo mused.

"We can't know the future," Dennes pontificated.

When they reached her apartment building, Chiyo pointed to an empty space beside her car, a four-year-old Honda.

"You will stay the night," She half declared, have asked. He had half forgotten that he might leave.

In the morning, after making love again, Chiyo returned to her closet and emerged in a light blue kimono with a dark blue floral print. He had nothing but the clothes he come in. He lay with the bed covers tossed aside embarrassed although he had not been embarrassed when he had gone to phone in the living room the night before. She tossed him a thick, black cotton kimono with cranes embordered in silk. It was tight on his shoulders.

"I want to be with you a lot," she said.

"After everything?" he asked.

"Yes."

They padded to the avocado kitchen. It was bout 10:30 on a bright Sunday morning.

"I don't have ham & eggs," she said.

"I could take us out for breakfast."

"Let's stay in," she said, "and have what I usually have." She prepared warm rice, pan-fried salted salmon, miso soup, seaweed, and green tea.

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