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A New Ulster

FEATURING THE TALENTS OF Terry Brinkman, Calum J McCready, Ed Lyons, Adrian Harte, Kate Ennals, Gary Beck, Pigeon, Robert Ready, Stephen McNulty and Mary L Walsh **EDITED BY AMOS GREIG**

A NEW ULSTER

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This edition features work by. Terry Brinkman, Calum J McCready, Ed Lyons, Adrian Harte, Kate Ennals, Gary Beck, Pigeon, Robert Ready, Stephen McNulty and Mary L Walsh

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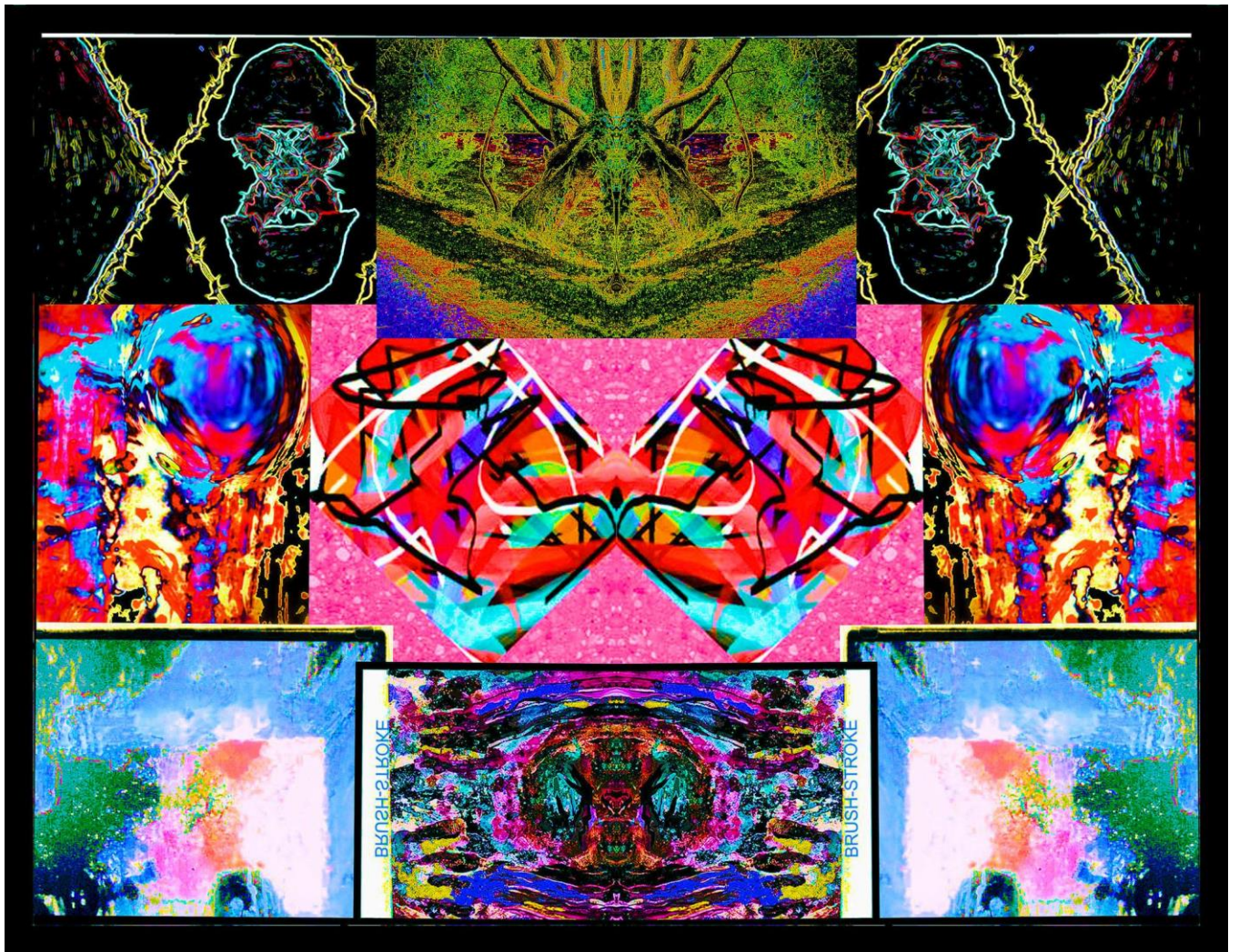
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: ADRIAN FOX

. Adrian Fox's bio can be found here he is a poet from Ardoyne, who has facilitated poetry workshops and had collections published [Irish Poetry by Adrian Fox - Irish Poets, Creative Writing & Art](#)



Genie by Adrian Fox



Adrian Fox



Adrian Fox

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: TERRY BRINKMAN

Terry Has been painting for over forty five years. Poems in Rue Scribe, Tiny Seed. Winamop, Snapdragon Journal, Poets Choice, Adelaide Magazine, Variant, the Writing Disorder, Ink Pantry, In Parentheses, Ariel Chat, New Ulster, Glove, and in Pamp-le-mousse, North Dakota Quarterly, Barzakh, Urban Arts, Wingless Dreamer, LKMNDS and Elavation.

Squirm

She tickled a tiny tot's two cheeks

She won't be misunderstood

She's a chin chopper

Likes peeling the anthem of a worm

Most edifying spectacle to see

Un-lady like things made him squirm

A demon drink beseeching

(Terry Brinkman)

Sonnet CDLXXXII

Midget green Aztec Poker chip
Simple utterly powerless cards trouble
Intrinsically ambitious bubble
Halfway through the dance with a dip
Sea birds friendly communities' talons tip
Mission to conserve are now doubled
Re-lather too shave again to remove the last stubble
Many organizing initiative flip
The feathers detective trio
Leopard like spots and ribbons viol
Evolutionary mystery dazzling Rio
World class sound track denial
Mimicked noises from Leo
Bird colors guide photographing trial

(Terry Brinkman)

Sonnet CDLXXXX

Erin mayor of the cheerless lightning shrug
Storm clouds utterances lightly amplify
Mother-wit helping lost Butterflies
Farraginous chronicle rheometer drug
Scaffold high slipping on we dug
Political extreme poverty we deny
Jesuit claret wine high
Pandemonium thin rain vapors mug
Squander mania old curiosity shop rumor
Brassily street a ten gallon rube
Blood of the lamb stone throw tumor
Great veracity mug of beer with an ice cube
Loud roar mouth wide open humor
Jack knife shaving and brush-up on the tube

(Terry Brinkman)

Sonnet CDLXXXVIII

Heyday of reckless passion burn
Noblest possessed meted psychosis
Gut break of ribaldry under the ice
Celtic literature ghosted grim to learn
Vicissitudes forbearance antidote fern
Giddy butterflies rang the bell twice
Insolvency ingenious methyl some dotards spice
May-hap birds of a feather yearn
Noble gracious bed chamber's turtle
Plough shape problem unfledged quickly
Profligates' lewd suggestions fertile
Exotic trees circumspection murky
Scouring tutelary angle griddle
Forbidden Latin poet diner of Turkey

(Terry Brinkman)

Sonnet CDLXXXVII

Young ravisher father of the underdog
Cozening dames and damsels pay no cover
Lady ships run amok hillock hover
Black thumbed chapbook analog
Tea-house table cork-float log
Scarce walk to pasture with your lover
An obelisk hued un-gated woman shove
Wherry raft cur of the very evil bog
Capsicum chilies warms utter
Pie bald of a holder gray user
Farm yard drake and duck clutter
Incipient vent impotence betokened loser
Disorder thrice happy gutter
Dainty trucker feast day boozier

(Terry Brinkman)





Terry Brinkman

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Callum J McCready

Callum J. McCready is a creative artist based in Belfast who, when not working in retail and bookkeeping, moonlights as a writer.

Trying To Be The Shepherd

A powerful explosion rips to shreds
what was once full of life,
now a monstrous hybrid of metal, bone, flesh and flame.

This is no country for young men.

Divided by things we cannot change,
condemned by our ancestors,

faith will deliver us from evil,
grant us peace in the unity of our kingdom.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
inevitable disintegration,
accelerated.

Murdered,
justice
as told in ages-old anecdotes.

Coward, Traitor, Charlatan, Turncoat.

Disobeying
The One Law.

How do
we Fallout Children
go on?

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.
Revenge is a dish best served cold.

The power of Christ compels us
to purge collective Sin.

born of war, born of blood,
obsessed by surface differences,
we revel in Our tribal antidotes.

new blood born of the old.

Shedding more won't make good the soil.

The flowers, wild roses, will not grow.

Futile deaths for futile causes.

Changing colours
does not fundamentally change the Evil.

The Book tells us to turn the other cheek.
Do good unto others and they unto you.

We have much to learn.

Life goes on, kept alive by
Imprints.

The Dead will never fade.

Those who forget their past are condemned to repeat it.
Only we can save ourselves from
our ancestral fate.

I'm not a murderer yet,
though Father I must confess,
it's hard trying to be the shepherd.

(Callum McCready)

SOMETHING RATHER SPECIFIC

It's easy to think of yourself
as something rather specific
on the basis of order.

Chronological,
past, present, future,
systems making concrete
water, flowing through the
events of a lifetime.

It's easy to think of yourself
as something rather specific
on the basis of the past:

the things you've done,
loved, regretted, as you
sink with them into eternity.

It's easy to think of yourself
as something rather specific
on the basis of the present:

the only moment we have,
erosion every second
bringing a new page,
starting another chapter.

It's easy to think of yourself
as something rather specific
on the basis of the future:

infinite possibles,
the fading warmth of a parting kiss.

You might be awake.
You might be asleep,
living life,
a lucid dream.

All those that are, have been and could be.

Nothing's set in stone,
with time out of place
and
we out of step.

Dislocate.

The irrational rational,
rational irrational.

Right now, you might be,
but in the next moment, you might not be...

(Callum McCready)

Our Divided Land

In our divided land,
all's cut in two;
the name, the land, the people too.
Smashed like broken china,
the beauty we once used to know
is buried down deep in the ground below.

In our divided land,
we've lost our tongue;
our speech, our language, our lovesong;

shattered glass.

The homily is lost
in quiet evening's frost.

In our divided land,
people go separate ways;
lost, alone and led astray.
Helpless babes,
no voices, just silence
amidst bloodshed and violence.

In our divided land,
there is disorder;
a line, wall across our border,
though our passion will not go:

Ireland lives on in our souls.

(Callum McCready)

Beyond The Pale

Beyond the pale and outside the world,
thieves at large,
our guards,
are maintaining order.

Beyond the pale, outside society
falling all together in line,
I walk alone
with an altogether different mind.

Beyond the pale and outside the norm,
I seek another form,
of wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment.

Beyond the pale, outside the main stream,
I simply like to dream
of rivers and the sea.

(Callum McCready)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: ED LYONS

Ed Lyons has been writing and publishing poems for over forty years. He is a regular contributor to the Poems from the Heron Clan anthology, which he co-founded, and a frequent contributor to Lothlorrien Poetry Journal, which won him a Best of the Net nomination. Ed's work has also appeared in Albatross, A New Ulster, Án Aintiúl, and North Carolina Bards. Ed has written hymns for the Moravian Church. The last is the subject of Ed's 2019 chapbook Wachovia, published by Katherine James Books in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Ed lives in Winston-Salem, also in North Carolina.

Thundering of the Modern Sea

1.

Michael shoves the plow, dragged behind a brown mule,
Cutting the dirt into twin showers. He sees
The spray parting before a battleship's wedge of steel.
He thinks of those who have left these counties

For where the radio newscasts whistle from..
Hearing them, he hears the Pacific's thunderous
Wings, waves of bombers breaking in a firestorm
On the Japanese coast, then ebbing back into darkness.

2.

A silent comet streaks across the evening; a cloud,
A purple wave swells on the horizon,
Engulfs the meadow, ebbs, leaving a world
Altered: no two things bear the same relation.
The bearded men who view that twilight field
Believe they've entered a hallucination.

A wave of history crests at ever more
Terrific peaks, convolutes time, compressing
An age into a decade. Surfers, having no other
Choice, ride to higher beaches than before.
None has a chance to help his floundering brother,
Not knowing his fate, but morbidly guessing.

Now surf music roars like thunder along
Hollywood Boulevard. A crowd, fascinated
With the televised image of a man
Playing electric guitar left-handed,
Intuits what manifesto or gospel can
Be drawn from last week's number-eleven song.

While their suburban fathers, foreigners, bend over drawing
Boar, working ever more complex equations
Into a thousand revolutionary automations
And earn themselves a comfortable living.

3.

He smokes a cigarette, resting on the porch.

His wife's cooking on an iron stove. The radio

Whistles from inside. His daughter wields a welding torch

In a war plant somewhere out in California.

His son's off fighting in a remote archipelago.

The dusk settles on hedges of azalea.

Green blossoms hang on the dogwoods like mist, or

Like the smoke he smells from a distant rubbish fire.

(Ede Lyons)

Two Bucolic Sonnets

I

A country girl, wandering barefoot down the road
With her dog, enjoys the brisk afternoon early in fall.
The cattle grazing beyond barbed wire make her recall
Grandpa's tale of a buck-goat big as an elk and a witched toad:
That she prefers to pompous Reality's all-important load.
The stones in the churchyard where her ancestors lie remind her
Of Tommy Blackburn's wink in the light of the revival fire.
She hears the rush of an approaching car ahead.

Glad no interstate connects the cities between which he drives,
Steven Porter's fingers twitch out the guitar riffs on the radio.
He lights a cigarette, knowing harder ways to earn a dollar.
This country, these clouds, remind him of where his grandmother lives:
Trees, no billboards, sparse traffic, wind blowing through the window.
Past the Baptist church, he waves to the girl who holds her dog by the collar.

II

A chinaberry, leaves half turned gold, creeps its shadows
Over the yard, near where Sara Decker plants onions.

Fiercely, Billy chases Skipper through the rows.
She shouts, "Quit tearing through my garden, you little hellions!"
Thinks how nice it will be when those two outgrow that game.
Skipper tosses the ball, stoops to look at the vine
Overgrowing the cinderheap, remembers Grandpa dropped beans
When robins plashed in the birdbath. Beans and Jack-o'-Lanterns. Same
Ashes. Shadows fail. Geese fly squabbling in a wedgeline.
Sara hears then, stands up, and realizing she's tired, leans
On her hoe. A chill sets in with the coming of night.
That jacket's too small for Skipper. Need a new one for winter.
Smoke from a neighbor's leaf heap rises purple in the twilight.
She wonders, but can't figure out what it is that saddens her.

(Ed Lyons)

Our Tale of Two Cities

She would not make that mistake again.

When Menelaus came for her, flying overseas,
she bade us hold our fire,
and returned quietly with him to her own country.
Paris has lived to tell of loving her.

Though he had clearly favored the Grace of Love,
our city would burn this time.

And love has favored Paris:
he quickly sailed the ocean in his grief,
and enjoys the company of a young woman
who thinks him Galahad.

Who would deny that our souls have made a long, long journey?

When she was lonely, he came to her
most angelic. What had lain inside her
for many years, he kindled.

He crossed plains and seas to lie in her arms,
and the wind blew from the manycolored sea.

The time came for her own people to bring her in,
and she wept, and turned silent,
and passed back into her own life,
and her own speech, and her years of decision.

He knew that it was time for her to leave him,
and did not intervene.

The December sun will shine on her,
clearing baggage and customs,
winging high over waves and mountains,
her face painted as it becomes her,
whom Generals have desired.

But we like to think of her on the deck of a wooden ship,
her hair misted by the spray of waves,
and all the colors of the tropics falling around her,
in a swirl of gulls and migrating ducks,
in a vision of water and flowers,
she loved so well.

Now spring has fallen on us with its long heat,
our brother has planted a garden,
and the wisteria should come in nice
now that I've cleared the trellis out.
Beneath the sky God rained above us,
may our tribe increase.

(Ed Lyons)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: ADRIAN HARTE

Adrian Harte is Irish but has lived in Switzerland for twenty years. He has been published in the Peregrine Journal, Vita Poetica, Beaver, Embryo Concepts Zine, Awakenings, Roi Fainéant Press, and Abridged. He has also written *Small Victories: The True Story of Faith No More* (Jawbone 2018).

(Trigger warning: suicide, abuse)

THE MASTER

*Don't look at any pictures
you wouldn't show your parents,
you told us, in sixth class.
Ten years later, I saw your Toby jug
mug on the cover of the *Star*.
Accused.*

In fourth class, I was sent to you
to read my scared bird short story.
Sent by your son-in-law. Or the brother
of one of the kids you abused.
One that didn't kill himself.
Or did it more slowly.
One who spoke up to bring you down.

I felt your breath, as you sat.
Brown-suited, flat-haired, thick-rimmed.
But you didn't touch me.
Even when I went to your big house.
The biggest in the town.
Bay windows, on the hill.
To play video games
with your son. Or to pick up
passes to football matches.

The papers called me.
I was the local scribe.
I was the reverse St Peter;
I refused to deny you.
I saw and heard
nothing. You didn't touch me.

Did they spend every December
making plaster of Paris nativities?
Did you tell them local tales
of the war of independence?
Before you assaulted them.
The children who shouted
from the other side
of the world
for thirty-five years,
and were finally heard.

OBJETS PERDUS

A scuffed to its silver skin
red water bottle.

A size thirty-eight white
and grassed green Nike shoe.

An Elsa and a faded Anna
violet and mauve lunchbox
with an apple stalk inside.

Objets oubliés. But that's not
you.

Objets perdus. Yes, me
and you.

Behind sliding glass
there is one cricket pitch,
two basketball courts, and
No you.

Shining the hard maple floor.

Flinging yourself in the air.

Hitting balls into nets and baskets.

Crashing off and into wood.

Lost: white and red and
never roams.

Lost: we miss her very much
and need to see her home.

Lost: unfamiliar with humans.

Cash reward.

(Adrian Harte)

UNSPECIFIED ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER II

Stuck in the middle, it
moves faster than me. Light;

life. Snow, scree, the
quondam mountain

skis. We pump shots;
hit what we need to

hit. The drop from
the top is too steep.

The cascade shears
the peak. Water has no

froth or flow. Silver
strands pleach. The stream

founders. The valley
too. The whole hill

sunders. Green and white
now steeped in muck turns

brown and boulder grey.
Small men hare here, there

but no
where.
No one
is coming

to save us now.

(Adrian Harte)

LIVES ARE LITTLE THINGS

I've felt good things too I promise
myself. Moshing in dust in rare sun,
still a sweet child in Slane,
throwing myself to every song
I ever lived, against every friend
I ever loved. Or waiting
in the church with all who still sweep
the thickets and trouble from my path. Waiting
together for her —pink, red, and ivory—
to walk my way.

And the days when nothing happened.
Never enough of those.
Speak of the angels
and they never appear.
The whole of two thousand and two
is a Robbie Keane goal and a white rabbit
pissing on stiff green IKEA bedclothes.
That's the last of it.
That's all of it.
Lives are little things.

(Adrian Harte)

LIMERICK 1-9
YEATS 1-6

A terrible terrible beauty is born
and more meaningless corn.
Things changed utterly,
words not said, politely.
And rebels' clothes are oddly worn.

A terrible beauty is still born.
All except me played their turn.
She stops riding for Rising.
Pearse, MacDonagh dying,
even the drunken lout, long Gonne.

Have some stones and clouds and streams.
Idiots, not me, chase dreams.
Horses, hens all change,
clouds and cocks change.
Enchanted stones can only scheme.

Was it needless death after all?
Here's a handful of names I recall:
Pearse, MacDonagh, McBride,
Connolly, all dreamed and died.
As for me, a Noble booty is born.

(Adrian Harte)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: KATE ENNALS

Kate Ennals is a poet and writer and has published poems and short stories in a range of literary and on-line journals (Crannog, Skylight 47, Honest Ulsterman, The International Lakeview Journal, Boyne Berries, North West Words, Crossways, The Blue Nib, Dodging the Rain, The Ogham Stone, plus many more). Her first collection of poetry **At The Edge (Lapwing)** was published in 2015. Her second collection, **Threads (Lapwing)**, was published in April 2018. Her third collection, **Elsewhere (Vole Imprint)**, in November 21. Her fourth, **Practically A Wake**, will be published next year (**Salmon Poetry**).

She has lived in Ireland for nearly 30 years and currently runs poetry and writing workshops in County Cavan. Kate also runs **At The Edge, Cavan**, a literary reading evening, funded by the Cavan Arts Office. Her blog can be found at kateennals.com.

Playing with Baby

on the floor

I stretch out

cover my eyes

turn cuckoo

you twist your torso

roll on your front

push down on your hands

bottom high - a white lily blossom

land plump on your bum

upright and chunter

bounce yourself forward

full of delight

fingers outstretched

cuckoo

I spring my face free

you chuckle a chortle

your blue eyes burst

into a thousand giggles

I hide again
my hands shaped in a garland

a white flash
goosebumps rise on the back of my hand
I suddenly understand
that I never tasted before
this humor, this inextricable bond

Seated behind us
upright and solid
is Grandmother
she chides my frivolity.

(Kate Ennals)

Barnet Fair

What did I do to you, Fair Barnet
that you abandon me so?

You are turned into a lacklustre
tumbling nest, piled high
adorned with bobbins and ties
to distract the eye from the brittle
frayed stalks into which you have morphed

Fair Barnet, why do you take cover
in pretty sounding alopecia?

You tell me a bald patch Is a badge
of courage, a proclamation of experience
that I should wear with pride

Fair Barnet, that might be true
but without you, people see
a wrinkled old woman
if they see at all and they turn away.

Fair Barnet, what must I do
To entice you to stay.

Barnet Fair is Cockney Rhyming Slang for Hair

(Kate Ennals)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: GARY BECK

Gary Beck has spent most of his adult life as a theater director and worked as an art dealer when he couldn't earn a living in the theater. He has also been a tennis pro, a ditch digger and a salvage diver. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes and Sophocles have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry, fiction and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and his published books include 36 poetry collections, 14 novels, 3 short story collections, 1 collection of essays and 7 books of plays. Gary lives in New York City.

Aberration... Or?

Crime is up, up, up,

especially violent crime.

The economy is down, down, down,

except for the privileged,

impelling the poverty class

to go out and shoot others.

People are dying, dying, dying,

and we're still not aware enough

that we're at war with the virus.

My neighborhood is well-to-do,

but since the pandemic started

too many people don't wear masks,

only a few try distancing

after months of admonitions

to protect fellow citizens.

They're supposed to be educated.

They all think they're intelligent.

To this day I can't decide

are they stupid? Macho?

Unconcerned with others?

I tend to think all the above,

yet sincerely hope I'm wrong

for the sake of the nation.

Deaccessed

All the Major Cities

in caring America

have homeless populations

that overwhelm the system

that cannot solve the problem

how to help this needy group.

Families with children,

abandoned veterans

should get priority care,

since veterans served the country

and we owe them for service.

Children didn't cause homelessness.

They are innocent victims

of failures of the parents,

yet are equally punished,

denied opportunity

for a better life

through no fault of their own.

Innovation

A tv news channel
recently announced
they were replacing humans
with android newscasters.
They broadcast specifications
of the new replacements
that had a bit of A.I.,
sleek humanoid bodies,
moderate facial movements
and not unpleasant voices.

There was a public outcry
protesting the substitutes,
especially the males
who looked very similar.
There wasn't much objection
to the nubile females
who were visually pleasing.
I may be one of the few
who already thought
most tv women
really were androids.

Rank Corruption

I learned at an early age
not everything was as it seemed.

Our leaders praised democracy,
professed to serve the people,
but were hired by capitalists
to benefit the wealthy.

We always had poverty,
crime, violence, disorder,
only slightly better
than other countries.

These conditions continue
year after year without change.

Why is there no improvement?

Why does each generation
include the disadvantaged
whose children are denied
equal opportunity?

In a dumbing down country
all children should be valued
for potential contributions
to an endangered future.

Frightened Faces

I go to the hospital.

They take my temperature
before letting me in.

I fill out forms,

although I already did it
online.

The worker disinfecting chairs
in the tense waiting room
does not distance.

Everyone looks tired, stressed,
yet they are pleasant, polite
to the apprehensive patients.

I wait a long time,
but don't think they're playing golf.

They take vitals, draw blood,
I wait again.

The doctor appears,
moving slowly,
does everything carefully,
studies my chart,
kindles a smile.
"You don't have covid 19."

I heave a sigh of relief,
thank him, leave,
try to forget scared patients
waiting to learn their fate.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: ENDA BOYLE

Enda Boyle was born in County Derry Ireland in 1994. He was educated at Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast. Previous poems and short stories have appeared in short magazines online and in print.

In the Footsteps of the Greats

Michael McClure hippy prince of North California and ‘mammal patriot’
gave a reading of his poems to the lions of the San Francisco Zoo.
Leaning in as close to the bars of the cage he recited from For Artaud.
In search of a deeper more primal sound than the roar of life insurance.
He moved beyond the prim boundaries of human speech as he growled
at the resting male lions while they lazily snapped at the enclosure bars.
Not putting too much effort into trying to maul the trim-maned troubadour.

Remembering McClure and his Orphic desire to sing a to unified creation.
I look down at my family’s apricot-blond cockapoo curled up at my feet.
Opening my own copy of McClure’s Selected Poems and treat her to a reading
I stand on top of my chair so she can hear me project my special poetry voice.
Not reading but chanting the poems of McClure I am ablaze with bardic glory
Pausing at the end of a stanza I look up and breathe in lungful of pomposity.

Stirred by the first spark of inspiration the dog jumps past me and barks
softly at first then louder she is discovering the magic of breath and voice.
Louder still she is calling me towards her obviously hungry for more poetry
as I advance on her she runs towards the fridge barking even louder
She lands near the fridge and places a paw on the handle begging for ham
Once again, the demands of the stomach wins over improving the canine soul.

(Enda Boyle)

Dawn-Song for The Night Shift Workers

Five in the morning and walking back from a party.
I am ambling home across the Ormeau Road bridge.
It's a bright reviving frost-clear autumn morning
and yet the harsh tangerine glow of the streetlights
still accuse and the stray cats hiss "waster" as I pass.
Coming across a 24-hour supermarket warehouse
I stop to watch the row of identical lorries disembark.
surrounding the one nearest to the me are a team of men
who had clearly been up for almost as long as I had
loading and unloading pallets of locally sourced food.
pans of fluffy white fresh bread, phalanges of eggs,
enumerable pigs worth of smoked thick back bacon,
Taking a break from the labour, and from the cold
these workers huddle under a slanting iron roof.
The men who feed us all smoke, joke, and laugh
while the sleeping city turns on its side oblivious.

(Enda Boyle)

A Horse Designed by Committee

Keep your quaff-manned high strung equine aristocrat.
With its haughty trot or its lackadaisical pre-race gallop.
Fastidiously groomed the horse is nature's sportscar.
A sleek toy of rich bread to fight wars and win races.
Horses are as aloof and unreliable as investment bankers.

In the short-term horse's speed may seem impressive
However, it will tire after two or three miles and give up.
Your horse will not listen when you order it to start again.
Instead, it will answer you with a whinny of contempt
and turn away from you and go looking for food and water.

For longer journeys we recommend a less flash quadruped
Camels are just as fast as racehorses and can withstand more.
With two humps each capable of storing 80 pounds of fat.
a camel will not falter no matter how long you to travel for
They have been bred to survive in extremely harsh terrain.

Evolution, the blind engineer behind everything on Earth
cares nothing for aesthetics its main concern is functionality.
hence the camel with its ungainly spindly skinny legs,
ridges of unevenly shaped humps and its elongated neck
The body of a camel is a triumph of utility over style.

The most adaptable animal humans ever domesticated
supplier of milk and meat its hair makes valuable textiles.
Transporter of vial goods and people across the desert
I prize your unfussy industriousness solid dependability
and condemn those who jeer at your graceless carriage.

(Enda Boyle)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: PIGEON

A quintessential old soul in a young body, Yashasvi Singh has a great love for poetry and uses nuances and symbolism to express the plethora of emotions, she has been victim to, in today's world. She employs cool detachment which feels anything but youthful under the pen name of "Pigeon", something she feels relates to her and her world deeply.

In April 2015, she was published as the editor's choice in the contemporary "Poetry Digest Monthly". In June 2017, became the youngest contributor to the anthology featuring, Poet Laureate Amit Dahiyabadshah, Titled - "Word Wine 2.

She was published on the official website of Delhi Poetry Slam (2018) and in Online Poetry Magazines- Verse of Silence (2020) and Ink & Graffiti (2020). She is associated as a co-author with the anthologies- "Love As We Know It" (2019), "Love Is Magic" (2019), "Among The Stars" (2020), and "Guldastaa: A Bouquet Of Poems " (2020.)

‘Koi No Yokan’

Writing poems is like conducting an autopsy,
dissecting sanity from feelings and thoughts
to be able to get your hands dirty in the wounded cavities,
is no less than performing a magic trick.

I carve outlines, snapping open my chest
and split my tongue in two,
before I spit out how my bone-dry elbows felt,
the last time they were touched.

I'm a gutted pig on a mortuary table,
with a functional body
brimming with apathy and empathy,
passion and adulation,
Solicitude and pity,
dangling deep in dementia.

Threatened by my own teeth,

for running the gospel truth-
I rip them off and crush them into confetti,

for the celebration of my resurrection
or a pity party of the living dead.

I am afraid of skin shrinking before it's time,
so, I try to tear myself a new one.
I'm on a pilgrimage,
rearranging thoughts and bones

3

to coordinates.

As I take off hands with blood on them
into the washing machine,
I am worried you'd read the poetry in lint
and not understand who it belongs to.

You'd be unaware with fresh laundry,
Why I asked you if you understood Japanese,

because you still won't know what, "Koi No Yokan" means,
And why I call what I write, unapologetic.

There will still be less time then,
but I promise I'll read you some,
come and find me
find me, by the sea in blue.

Koi No Yokan is the 'untranslatable' Japanese phrase that means 'the premonition of love.' It's
"the feeling upon first meeting someone that you will inevitably fall in love with them".

4

Un-deliberate

Am I chafed meat rotting, still?
I must be,
after all, "We are the source of our own hell."

How will you navigate?
I am an un-deliberate storm with a missing sign
Welding the feral appetite
Of licking wounds that don't belong to me.

For somebody with
a semi-automatic rifle of explanations for a tongue,
I fear facing my own mother for all the things I let happen to me.

As an embodiment of turbulence,
I'm tethered to what caused me,

As who I am today-
A hook

A bait
Exhaustion
An abnormality you can't explain.

Fondly threading trauma into an aesthetic,
Fluently,
Without an end, vague.

Words come to me when I am sad,
tragedy does infect;
Brims me to a saturation point -
a deranged need to vomit thoughts.

5

I am a wretched allegiance,
tainted
unfixable in foreign ways,
and now
in a foreign land.

I am-
Flaking false teeth,

Burnt broth
Sawdust;
always shedding.

Carrying the parched impulse
to be dramatic,
branding myself as catastrophic;
I forget that,
I'm ultimately just the last forgotten whiskey swig
to shut the yawn.

6

Night We Met

I have often felt like Houdini,
brimming with an irresistible urge to disappear,
reaching out to the farthest of seas,
hoping to possibly grow gloriously tall or
surrender to sinking without a fight.

Now, I wish I could borrow
the tongue of Shakespear or Joyce
just to scripture the night we met.

Often boasting about an arsenal of words,
and recognising the pitfalls of falling,
I seem to be experiencing both,
while you sit across the table -
Unaware,
making me fall short of words.

Hearing your convinced self of uncertainty,
Oblivious -

Don't I know you from Hamlet?
I probably do, I probably do,
You feel awfully familiar.

My hollow arms have been a vacant residence
to inconsistency,
Until I held you
You called it divine intervention,
without recognising you are it.

7

I often sit helplessly across from you,
You, drenched in unawareness
and I with insignificant knowledge to carry you in words.

An embodiment of a human compass,
for someone with average swimming skills,
You would find the right coordinates in the middle of the sea.
You certainly have felt right since the thunderstorm,
Probably, because I haven't lost my way since.

And I am grateful every day to the
blushing yellow bittersweet crops,
deliberate grace of Wicklow hills,
for keeping you alive.
I am no, Yeats or Wilde,
to be able to create a literary convention to let you know,
that there ain't nobody
I would read Ulysses on a perfect hill with
other than you.

8

Asymmetrical Plague

I often feel my existence is an overreaction,
An opposite response;
Asymmetry in human form.

On those days, I try to breakdown
If I am grieving or If I am grief
either way, I'd put a moirologist to shame.

I certainly am alive but do I want to be?
Being alive as a personification of lost appetite,

is way more pitiful than it sounds,
but to be fair so do I.

9

The Irish Sea

By the liberating mouth of the sea,
Vinegar-dipped fish and chips
Sun setting behind the sea
A rearranged setting of Eden.

I remember talking about this,
A figment of imagination
Until I heard the waves
Screaming my name.

The water calls me
Like I'm his own
While sweeping the shore,
Like -
It's here to take me back,
to where I belong.

I feel like Houdini,
With the irresistible urge to
disappear,

The difference-
I know, no tricks.

I'm here-
None would recognise

I'm washed by the sea,
I'm brand new.

10

Who I am?

As I drive through the wilderness without a destination
The radio crackling Ray Lamontagne
While I try to figure out the science between us,
Playing psychology lectures on a loop in my head,
Like a broken cassette with a crippled thought process.

Slowing down at the Sea Link,
by the majestic sea
The naked waves hit the shore like a sledgehammer
While I recite the periodic table aloud
Like the broken machine that my body is now,
Hoping to break down the math to chemical reactions:
Which felt like fireworks with you and a nuclear explosion without.

Sometimes It feels like our ruins were a civilization.
You must have been Euphrates because I certainly was Tigris,
We created our own version of Mesopotamia
With no archaeologist to excavate our time together.

Realizing I'm the personification of Plague
While your absence is like the siren of the ambulance,
I remember you, turning my insides into a slaughterhouse,
With splattered heartbreaks staining and eroding serotonin,
Maybe the reason why I drink vodka straight is to purify.

Until I underwent an epiphany,
Recalling how my mother taught me to parade unfiltered thoughts shamelessly,
Out of my mouth from the arsenal of words I own
So, I put them all together making this poem sound like a cult.

11

I'm not rotting from inside because I threw your heart out,
and ripped my skin on the outside before it would too.
Somehow I glow like magic
The sort, Madam Curie would have called the personification of her discovery.

I don't shake or wave my hands at people,
instead, greet with the red of my boxing gloves,
I choose and pick people with a pitchfork
wearing harmless fishnets,
that turn into a hangman's knot in case of emergencies,
I'm trying to be more like the warrior, I was taught to be.

I am certainly the daughter of Athena,
with ferociousness throbbing in my blood
like every other woman,
Too strong to protect the throne of the king
I was trained to claim it,
So that's what I did.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: ROBERT READY

EDUCATED BY NUNS, BROTHERS, AND LIBERALS, ROBERT READY LIVES IN NYC AND TRURO, MA, AND TEACHES IN NEW JERSEY. HIS NOVEL *ECK: A ROMANCE* WAS PUBLISHED BY ATMOSPHERE PRESS IN 2021. HIS FICTION HAS APPEARED IN *ANTAEUS*, *GARGOYLE*, *MONDO JAMES DEAN*, *RIVERSEDGE*, *RECONFIGURATIONS*, *ANTIOCH REVIEW*, *EXTERMINATING ANGEL MAGAZINE*, *GALWAY REVIEW*, AND ELSEWHERE. ON WRITING, HE SIDES WITH ISHMAEL: “GOD KEEP ME FROM EVER COMPLETING ANYTHING.”

SWOGs

JoElle was having trouble getting the words out right then.

“Straight. White. Old. Guys.” She said.

They were her most clear words since she’d sat down after holding on to the back of her chair for a minute, staring out at the bay. Something in the bay. When she did say, she blathered out two more words, together, which was better.

“And gals,” she said.

“SWOGs—” Colm said to all around the table—“who cares what they think anymore? Or do? Or ever did, think, or do?”

That was good for releasing the tension Colm regretted because of his wife’s increasing onset.

Nshonge Karmaze, who was second-generation Kenyan hyphenated biracial recently from Pepper Pike, said to Colm, “You really don’t believe that, my friend. You really don’t think straight old white guys are being discriminated against in any serious way. You don’t really think their position of privilege is being threatened in any serious way.”

“SWOGs is good,” JoElle said. “If you can acro. Acronymic it. You can loan. You can own it.” That was the kind of out of nowhere smart remark she could still muster.

“Do you?” Nshonge asked, amused, not really wanting to nudge his old friend’s offhand crack into a dinner downer.

Colm Murtry raised one thick grey eyebrow, then the other. According to his dead white parents, the trick required was a special white-only gene. That probably wasn’t true, but he controlled himself from flaunting it at Nshonge, brilliant in sciences at Ohio State, less good at figures of speech. Instead, Murtry tried to answer him. He said, “SWOGs kind of phrases good old dogs tracking through the swamp for—” He stopped because he lost the word for wild pigs. That happened to guys getting older, white or not. He and JoElle were a pair all right, hers a developing condition, his daily minor lapses.

“Yes?” Nshonge asked him. It was a pleasant ask. Nshonge empathized with what Colm was going through with JoElle. His mother had gone down that path, all the frantic disappointing way. The best anyone could do for dementing elder women, his mother used to say, was keep it to yourself that there but for the grace of, et cetera.

“Whatever,” Colm Murtry said and sipped more of his drink. More and more, he found it easier to slow down and sip. He had to keep his own head clear as JoElle changed in slow drips. They were a long-years couple, actively grandparents, informed citizens, not wearied by the

narrowing future left. Long time now, distance and closeness swung both ways on the hinges of their solid front door.

Nshonge admired his friend Murtry, had admired him for decades. He wished he hadn't toned his whatever question quite that way. Forty years in America, among smart American men and women in the renewable energy industry, and Nshonge still found their white understanding of things, well—he knew he could tell his friend Colm—insufficient. They ran the world, a lot of the world, without knowing enough about enough of it. Good long run of white luck. The American economic imperium. Good night to all that, all that. Still, Nshonge was unsure of post-racial America. Murtry could see that in the man's handsome central African face, his elegant fingers, at the edge of the table in front of his plate, laced together tightly.

Colm looked aside at JoElle's shoulders, neck, and head, which was signaling him to look out a good ways across the moonlit water. She mouthed the words, "Burning ship." That could not be. What could be, was JoElle had just slipped into the kind of delusion her obsession with cable news shows played for her. Here it was, again, the seventy percent recidivist odds against her post-ECT treatment success really taking hold against her on-and-off depression.

Murtry shut that daily worry down, concentrated on his second martini. Bartender Zach's sipping choice for his new customer Colm. "Nolet, no less," Zach said as he shook a few ice chips onto the surface of the potion. Zach made Colm feel the care.

Woody Birdsall started the welcome of the steaming medley fish platter around the dinner company of old friends he'd finally gotten together. Colm gave the man all the credit for the hard work it took to keep post middle-aged friends from serious drifting. The inevitability of all that—children gone all over the country, casualties military and marital, transferences and other seismic shifts, the bankruptcies of alcohol or early onset this and later onset that—the Woody Man's missions ranked friendship appointments, he called them, high value. Like first or second marriages, they made, Woody said, the wheel of life turn round and full.

Though sometimes he thought him a Trumpy blowhard, Colm got a kick out of Woody saying yet again that they all went back so many years the number was expendable. Like votes, properly understood, in a presidential election. Colm Murtry himself never got tired of, even after JoElle's psyche started bending her like mental porosis, introducing himself at B.P.O.E local and state-wide conferences as starting out his career in the third quarter of the twentieth century, and you do the math, mate. Expendable. The chuckles he received from attendees who had heard the bit from him before agreed with him.

So was the growing level of historical understanding among the people at his kind of gatherings. Democracy, in its foundation in this country, was never what the ruling media now called pluralist. Colm liked to get into any such lack of historical knowledge the irony of how close

pluralist and pleurisy were these days. Cure Political Pleurisy would be a big button, but one could do worse than wearing one that said so in certain encounters with the new fools of an impossible woke America. A button that said only CPP wouldn't work at all.

The problem was not the people, as in, Colm believed, we the people. We the white people, we the Black people, we the entirely different people on our borders, the so-called migrants seeking asylum. The problem was this low-end billionaire barker who'd given SWOGs a bad name by hollering out shit like "They want asylums? We'll give them freaking asylums!" That made Colm Murtry laugh at himself, because he couldn't laugh at what was happening to his wife. It only went one way. Ditto America right now. Crazy in, crazy out. JoElle's grandmother from Hungary and then the camps told her more than once that all the men of her grandfather's generation should be taken out and shot.

The small band of true friends, mostly white but not all—their most recent gathering was Dean Whittier's jazz memorial service after cured prostate cancer leaked into lymphoma and Detroit Dean went obscenely fast—chawed politics in America as an appetizer whenever they got together. This time at Galina Clementi's dockside bistro on the last Connecticut harbor before Narraganset. How you drew a border down the same waves lapping two state shores—biannually--gave birth to Galina's place's name. RipTide.

Out there in the Sound in the cooling August evening was Block Island. Beyond where that burning boat JoElle was deluding about. Or was that just her old imagination of disaster kicking up again? Colm skipped over it. To the deep Atlantic, where Galina's fish came from, like it was flying the ten miles on its own to RipTide's gleaming kitchen. They all talked about it, the freshness of the fish. That pleased Woody's choice of venue for this gathering of the clan, hah, the tribe, hah, the sons and daughters of the mixed-race founding fathers and mothers.

Evelyn Birdsall said La Clementi's grandmother had slept with Neptune back in Salerno. "Which reminds me," she said. She refolded and unfolded her napkin on her lap. "While I was chatting with Galina about our reservation being inside or outside in this odd November Indian summer weather—"

"Uh, uh," Sanjay interrupted her. "Don't say Indian." He smiled big.

She ignored that. "Well, anyway. La Clementi particularly wants us to meet her new cook. From the Russian invasion, whom she's sponsoring. Quite a fellow apparently. We'll probably see this very night."

"Remember back in the sixties?" Sanjay Vaz, who could trace his family back to early Portuguese Goa, said above his paper bib of a cartoon Charley Lobster. His wife Georgia Blue Amitai, whose beauty all kinds and colors of older men had to stop themselves from fixing on for

that rude couple of extra seconds, signed a pleasant “Oh, here we go again.” Shut out from birth from the sounds of the world and speech, she’d been part of the group’s special inclusive elan together for decades. She was great at slowing down her signing for anyone who wanted to try it themselves. She’d taught vibrant Evelyn Birdsall to sign all of, Hello nice to see you are you enjoying this weather you look splendid.

“Tell it again,” Colm said. “Always a great story.”

Sanjay had half a tail on his fork pointing at Georgia Blue. “Nona Clementi wins the Connecticut State Lottery. One million dollars.”

Woody Birdsall kept the old story going. “What’s it feel like, somebody asked her,” he said.

Georgia Blue said it, signed it, first. “Ah, you know, it takes the edge off of things.” That made everyone laugh, Georgia’s lovely timing, her ever fresh incongruity

“Actually,” JoElle said, “that. Was. My aunt Dahlia.” That was part of the story a few of them knew first-hand. Others nodded at the comfort of hearing it yet again from JoElle herself. To Colm it distracted JoElle from her delusion of two, three hundred refugees from the southern borders a fed-up New York City was transporting to their Connecticut shore right here, the boat spewing fuel to glue sea bird feathers. Now she’d be seeing emergency fire boats headed for the stricken craft, hapless border refugees who didn’t know Connecticut from Constantinople.

All this roiled in Murtry’s head, then cleared out of it. It just seemed so, what? Uncanny, unfortunate, badly impactful for the whole atmosphere of these old friends’ semi-annual reunion. Coming in his wife’s cable news script, there could be government drones.

“Somebody asked her, Delia said,” JoElle was saying.

Colm quipped at her, “Dahlia, dear.” JoElle didn’t seem to hear him.

“Eh,” the Clementi said, “and snapped her fingers. “Takes the edge off of things, you know?” So the old joke doubled down.

“Gotta love it,” Woody Birdsall said. “Back then? A million dollars”

“Was a million dollars,” Colm said.

“Living in the past again,” JoElle said. She hovered another exquisite RipTide forkful of Chilean sea bass before her mouth and added. “Colm. Nostalgia is a politics, dear. As in my dear Byron.”

In her time as a productive professor, JoElle had done a book on Byron. It had had its five-year shelf life. Of late, early in her retirement, then her early onset, she started retreading bits of it in conversations about SWOG culture. “Byron,” she started.

Woody got congenially irritated. This unwife, this never-would-be wife. JoElle could do it to Woody back in the third quarter of the previous century and wasn’t letting up now.

“And the night’s just begun,” he said, sort of comically.

“Byron,” JoElle continued. “Thought one could get over it. The past. Sort of like.” She stopped, then the rest came out very fast. “Get over it get to the future of the past without losing it.”

“Christ,” Sanjay said. “*Lord* Byron? Give us a break, Jo.”

JoElle persisted. “His word for it . . . Want to know?”

No one said yes. Georgia Blue opened her palms as her yes.

“I’ll tell you,” JoElle said. “He called it mobility. Called it a. Sad thing to be able to do.”

“Sounds good to me,” Evelyn said. “Getting over the past without. I don’t know what. Without suppressing it?”

“Comes at a certain cost, though,” Nshonge said. “Right?”

“You say,” JoElle told him.

“Byron wasn’t just a straight white misogynist,” Nshonge said. “He was, but he was also sexually fluid. Had his half-sister. And boys.” Within seconds, he was regretting using that word again, white.

“Don’t say fluid,” Evelyn said. “Better to pass the bread around again.”

“There’s my good, and straight,” Woody said. “Wife. Blunting the edges for the good of the company.” Then he said, “Jesus Christ, look at that out there.”

“Mobility. Fluidity,” JoElle said. “Absolves straight white old guys from taking responsibility.” To the looks around the table, she added, “Okay. I’m done. I want to eat my fish and have it too. SWOG privilege. I contradict myself?” Colm privately joyed, teared up, at the sudden return of his onset wife’s articulate self. At the same time, he knew it was fleeting, a kind of dinner-party muscle memory that got her through some moments

Her question passed all the table round. It incensed Woody Birdsall as a gross example of what his wife called “manners,” though the word didn’t come out of his chewing right now.

Evelyn got in her usual pitch for more volunteerism as a good antidote to SWOG senior narcissism, as she thought of it while watching JoElle. She had no truck with senior psychoses like JoElle’s, which to Evelyn was a lot of hooey her husband enabled. This year alone Evelyn had volunteered as a post-surgery Green Apron in the Central Connecticut VA hospital, assisted recent naturalized seniors with their first primary mail-in votes, and reorganized the state’s fall-into-tepid DAR. She was known, even sometimes belittled, for her serious joke, “Idle white hands are the red devil’s work.” It was silently agreed among and beyond the group that both Birdsalls were a caution.

Even so, Evelyn said, “We all saw the other side of the ballot this election?”

“Here we go,” two of the group whispered, together enough to be heard. That silenced anyone who wanted to say yes, or even no.

Evelyn said, "Proposal number three, establish a racial equity office, plan and commission." She recited gladly by heart, "The Commission would identify and propose priorities to inform the racial equity planning process and review agency and citywide Racial Equity Plans."

Colm said, "I voted no. 'Cause of that very sentence."

"No. He didn't," JoElle said. "Not actually."

"Let's hope so," Evelyn said.

"Agreed," Georgia Blue said.

A few minutes ensued of intense concentration on the plates before them. Colm thought he could hear what JoElle heard as she just stared frozen at her food for a minute then ate it ravenously the next. Utensil clatter competed with helicopter rotors and a long siren dulled way out there on the water. But there really was something going on there in the harbor, and it wasn't an invasion. To Georgia Blue, it moaned that the evening could end up letting unspoken dyspepsia sour the exquisite La Clementi dinner. Other diners now were standing up watching out there on the water. A few walked down to the boardwalk above the docks for a better look.

"You're very keen tonight, my love," Colm told his Jo. His forever wife took his right hand and squeezed it right down into the center of her lap. Georgia Blue saw that and smiled her radiance at their cute senior way with each other. That warmed Colm's mood, and he made no apology to anyone that the skin they had been given to live in was, yes, first-world white privilege inflected by heterosexual preference. When he had to fill out the personal pronoun slot, he wrote in "Me, My, Mine." Still and all, he thought it good to keep one's temperature about gender, class and race around 98.6

Having amused himself quickly with all that, Colm Murtry went ahead and ate through his halibut dinner. The friends all worked through their fish entrees, their sides, their drinks.

Galina Clementi came by with a bottle of her signature grappa to singe the larynx and a velvet ribboned box of macaroons to die for. And she brought her latest political action with her, her sponsored refugee from Kiev destruction. Big necked, shouldered, chested, but one-armed Mykta, the arm that used to shotgun at Olympic level and help run his own bistro, whom she had cooking for her now, this stranger Mykta fixed on Georgia Blue. Georgia Blue made a circle sign at him, as in go away.

Both made the dinner party look deep into the orange and blue sunset's lateral rays until there was only this spectrum of weird pink light separating them from the grand old bay bedding out to the endless ocean.

To Galina Clementi, this troupe of straight white and other older guys and girls held their position firm. "You do me good," she said, arms still sturdy arcing them all in, "good to see you all

here, here, and here.” They cheered her three times. Her voice struggling, the Clementi told them about her sponsoring Mykta’s surviving Ukrainian family. “This country,” she said in a phlegmed East Boston tone no one could miss or imitate. “Needs more better people. Like these Ukraines now.”

Colm Murtry did a circle gesture with his first finger and said to his woman only, “SWOG on, you know?”

But Georgia read his lips. “Let not your heart be troubled,” she signed to him, in a way a couple of the others used to her picked up wordless. There was trouble in her saying so that Colm would have to deal with. He was sure the disease was implacable. If only it would run down its course for each of them at the same time. That they’d both sink into dementia together, not just the woman. A foolish, contemptible wish, but a fond one even so.

In seconds intervening before their meal ended, a meditation came with Colm’s third and final martini glass. On its lower levels, first-world self-doubt spider cracks spread across foundation walls in bedrooms, studies, and exercise pods. A reckoning force had been evolving out of its own grievances, humiliations, and resentments. The replaced of the earth, the American wasted had been uncollected, unrecyclable long enough. White people were no longer credit worthy. The special credit they claimed they still deserved was spent out, or down, or thrown away. They didn’t like the colors of skin they saw crowding behind them in the mirror. They were threatened, undergoing silenced deportage to the margins of what they once owned.

Colm Murtry heard them coming up behind him as he walked streets he’d been given to think were his and his kind’s. Shuffle-footed some of them were, but others knew how to troop-racket enough. They spurned leaders, hawked the energies of dispersal, disdained local, state, federal authorities, and did not distinguish anarchy from analogue. They did not march, they tramped somewhat, they clumped, clotted, came on, were out there restless, avid, and morphing into homeless. They said, “I gave away all my fucks.” They said, “Each according to his none.” They said, “All hail the great good feeder.” They said, “It’s all fucksense anyway.” They said, “Never mind what it is. As we find it, we will bring it down.” They wanted all the old birdshat statues left standing, all of them, all of us, all, are unknown soldiers. Our liberty is to fight yours, to the death. The SWOG SWAT team will fly in and Make America Grate Again.

“You see,” Colm Murtry said aloud to himself only. “When you say anything you want, anything you say wants you to say it. Problem there, you know?”

Evelyn told him quietly to stop mumbling into his martini. “How are you, really, how are you doing, old friend?” She meant JoElle but didn’t have to say so.

“Sometimes I’m in flight. Sometimes I think my wife is the warrior, the one going full tilt at the Persians.”

He looked hard at Evelyn, just as she put a finger to her top lip and reached a little to touch Colm's bottom lip, laughing a little. JoElle saw that, let it pass for a gesture from a generous heart. Though no Georgia Blue, Evelyn was still chestnut-thick haired, tennis-toned, smiling her wellness. Made Colm think of times gone by he worked at melting into an attractive woman's acceptance. That wellness too was now called white and privileged.

Evelyn talked more, her breath catching hard once as if some image of JoElle passed on abandoned afflicted her. Sorry," she said to both of them. "Maybe one can't, after all, get beyond even that convention. The men hold the cards. They even make them, right? Ace. Jack. King. Them three. But only one Queen."

They were silent, until Evelyn broke into Colm's fixed stare out onto the water. She stood up to examine him, said, "What's out there, pilgrim? You trying to freak me out?"

"Just today's madness," Colm said. JoElle had just told him to look at the bulbous helicopter hovered over the tanker, dropping hundreds of gallons of red ammonium-phosphate fire retardant. That took control into an uncontrollable cataclysm. She was seeing all this, she really was. He saw none of it.

"End of life as we know it?" Evelyn asked him.

"I'd prefer it you don't mock me, Evie."

"You sound terrified, Mr. Murtry. What's wrong with your man here, JoElle? Slipped his meds?"

"Let's go, hon." JoElle hooked his arm, pulled it to her breast. "It's all. Just crazy. Talk. Anyway."

She was losing her refound language again. He didn't budge, laughed good naturedly. "Just a vision. Ended. SWOG schiz."

"I am disturbed," Sanjay Vaz was there right beside JoElle, saying, "that you abandon your seer moment so easily." He shook his head no. "I saw what some are seeing out there. Don't lose your seer just like that." He sounded like a fight manager pumping his lady middleweight back up into the last desperate round.

Colm Murtry felt the nutty pathos of Sanjay's care. But it was true. His was gone. Privilege, normative, male, white, first-world. Out there, a leak at first, then a terrific explosive pissing away, smothered by a red tide from above, built on shifting sands, his Viet Man, end of one man, General Fucking America. He'd had it all. Hadn't even known he could be this tired of it.

JoElle said, "You don't get to collapse. We don't do plotz. You'd be no fun at all, just dead white male. Boring."

Nshonge Karmaze had his light white cable knit sweater draped over his shoulders like a polo player relaxing, one heel on a lower rail, exactly like the Paul Stuart logo. He just shook his head at Colm, slow, solemn, like a tired pendulum.

Woody Birdsall's doughy cheeks inflated like a horn player's, then released in two separate pops, then repeated the same action, which was all he had not to say, until he said, "It's just not going to the same in this country, Murtry. You think?"

"I wish you mobility, Woody." He finished his drink. Third, he thought, replete.

"All right, then, Murtry. Let's leave it," Woody said. "Let's just leave it unsaid." table and filed down as couples to the boardwalk above the docks and the big inboards and two-masted sails bowing on their lines in the slightly lapping water. Out there was a dumpy, steaming mess of a small multi-racial crew now calling for help for one of their poor swimmers too drunk to reach down inside an inner tube to hold on to a comrade girl in red sweats lettered in black Sons and Daughter of SDS. Right.

"Skeerew 'em, these privileged white kids," Sanjay started crying out. "They're cutting off their noses to spite their faces." Murtry was stunned at smart American citizen Sanjay taking it all personally. Murtry was also stymied at how the woman he wanted to love until the end went down could stand her injured mind switching on and off cable news anchors who had no sequence, no borders, no story, just fifty-two phrases they dealt out six or seven at a time without even stopping to shuffle into a new deal.

A local police outboard holding two upright women cops in riot gear swirled around the hapless crew and their flailing mate in the water. The water police women had this one practiced.

Georgia Blue signed a word that Sanjay translated loud enough for everyone to hear. "Asylumites."

"That's good," Colm said. "Sort of like Sodomites of old."

"No," Evelyn said. "They're just bringing a serious matter home to us."

"To SWOGs?" Sanjay said. "Nobody cares what we think. Remember?"

"Pouting doesn't," JoElle said. "Doesn't become any of us"

Nshonge had more to say about it. "This stunt resonates more than these pretentious Ivy children probably know. SDSDS, indeed."

Colm shook his head, which was working it out that if these boat people, sent by fed-up mid-Atlantic city politicians to be dumped on East Coast America's fishermen's wharves, did not make it this time, the next wave, or a next, and some next, would. No more room at Atlantic Inn America. All shit out of luck, and so are we.

On her barked orders, Galina Clementi's one-armed Ukrainian shot-putter chef Mykta stood down after a burst of "put putt putts" from his mouth-rifle eliminated three imaginary homeless

immigrant paddlers ass-slung inside rubber inner tubes. In the suddenly moon-hidden night, Colm couldn't really see the big fellow there anymore by the harbor railing. He heard his putt-putt shooting at the phony refugees in the water. As a symbolic answer to invasion, here or in Ukraine, it seemed silly.

The two burley Black and tan women police officers roughly hauled in the swimless hysterical trickster and his two foul-mouthed female operatives whose black Bolivian bowler hats had somehow stayed on and red alpaca ponchos had buoyed them up. The police kept the three well apart from one another and headed back to the landing in a minor sputtering roar.

The small band of true friends all shook their heads at the meager political stunt. They said good night and good night and hand-shook and cheek-kissed or back-slap hugged one other and started separating in renewed good humor all around.

When Woody Birdsall thought to call out that he'd be getting the word out to them all about the next gathering after the winter, most of them weren't within hearing distance.

"It's all right," Evelyn told him, no louder than necessary. "You can include the invite in the family holiday card."

Colm Murtry heard her, too. He nodded, all right to that, good. Before he turned to catch up with his quick limping wife now gone into caved silence, he saw that the situation out on the Bay was returning to normal.

He saw that Georgia Blue remained, left behind, isolated on the harbor walk under a blue lamp, without Sanjay, signing wildly at the police women on the dock handcuffing the white hyper-gen college kids who thought they could change things before it was too late for their turn at running them.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: STEPHEN MCNULTY

STEPHEN SCRIBBLES POETRY WHENEVER HE IS NOT FORCING A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC INTO A CT SCANNER. HIS POEMS HAVE APPEARED IN BOYNE BERRIES, DRAWN TO THE LIGHT, ROPES, SPILLING COCOA OVER MARTIN AMIS, STRUKTURRISS AND VOX GALVIA.

Eclairs, Etc.

People don't need coffee.

People don't need Alexa.

People don't even need to mow the lawn.

People don't have need designer shoes.

People don't need beef.

People don't need to shave.

People don't need to "do" South America next.

People definitely don't have to vote Fianna Fail.

We would like some things

For example, my brain is hardwired

to eat an entire bag of eclairs

in one sitting.

It's a struggle.

But we don't need everything, all the time.

People need oxygen,

water,

human contact,

sleep,

a wash

and, occasionally,

some food.

But

it's not always time

for the whole bag of eclairs.

(Stephen McNulty)

Ode to Hope

Hope is rain that polishes
almost
and prompts your Granny to say
“it needed that”

hope is a blood relation of fear
especially when one spies
an unkicked football
uninked paper
or unopened envelope

hope is a pair of dusty glasses
trying to glimpse
the road ahead

hope is a four-letter word
sometimes ravaged
by another four letters

but not always

(Stephen McNulty)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: MARY WALSH

The Book of the Story of Love

First, I will bring you the book of the story of love

Written in the earliest times

By lowly peasants and highborn kings

And you will open the perfumed pages and read loves stories

Among pig stys and palace gardens

In the lush rural landscape or big city

In the smallest hovel or loftiest castle turret

You will read how love conquers all

As everything steps aside for loves charm

You will turn the illuminated pages and see

Loves tortuous, twisted path, the path that led me to you,

Surpassing challenges and finding love

First, I will bring you the book of the story of love

And next we will live it forever.

ML Walsh

Birds of the Air Fly Free

And the birds of the air fly free.
How we envy their unfettered joy
They fly to the edge of tomorrow.
Swooping above the feathery clouds.
Skimming the puritanical blue of the sea
Lapping at the edge of the universe
Our thoughts fly with them.
A virtual longing for faraway places.
Their song pierces our soul
as they flit and snatch at our dreams

ML Walsh

Distraction Sonnet

I sit down at my desk to write some lines
The virginal paper ready for its ink
While outdoors the sun beckons and shines
Luring me out until my soul can't think

I stand and sip my coffee now gone cold
I watch the blooms and blossom shake their heads
The dog gambols about happy and bold
My words lie sleeping deeply in my head

I sigh and sit once more my fingers poised
I wait for inspiration to appear
At last, a pause in all the urban noise
A word , a line, and thoughts, rise to my ear

And so, I write a sonnet when I feared
My muse had left me never to come near.

ML Walsh

I am Eve

I took that apple. It looked so round and delicious

it had been a while since breakfast.

Just hanging there, the sun gently warming its flesh

Of course, fruit is no substitute for a Danish pastry

or a bacon sandwich. But Oh! It looked so tempting

I clambered over the fence into the garden

My fingers reached up curled around its rosy flesh

A twist and it was in my hand as my lips parted

the flesh was sweet and juicy then too soon, all gone!

I dropped my walking stick climbing back over the garden fence

ripped my top on a nail as I hobbled away from the man shouting

“Oi! What d’ya think your’e doin?”

With a smile on my face and the taste of forbidden fruit on my tongue

Mary L Walsh

EDITOR'S NOTE

The final issue of 2022 it feels odd writing those words considering how badly 2022 has been for so many, I've lost contact with a number of writers and artists from places such as China, Turkey and Iran. The world seems to stagger from one calamity to another without pause.

Still, we've persevered and continue to provide a platform for artists around the world. As you may have noticed we have been sponsored by the ACNI I've been granted a SIAP so that I can continue to work on the magazine and several other projects.

I've tried to remain Apolitical while working on A New Ulster but the world and the harsh brutality of it all slides me ever closer towards Leftwing policies, here's hoping 2023 is a better year than this was.

Happy reading, good health, and keep creating,

Amos Greig (Editor)

LAPWING PUBLICATIONS

'IN A CHANGED WORLD'

Over the past number of years technology has transformed poetry publishing:
shop closures due to increasing operational costs has had an impact,
to put it mildly, shops are reluctant to take 'slow moving' genre
such as poetry and play-scripts among other minority interest genre.
The figures given a few years ago were: we had 5000 bookshops in the UK-Ireland
and at the time of the research that number had dropped to 900 and falling:
there was a period when bookshops had the highest rate of 'High Street' shop closures.

Lapwing, being a not-for-profit poetry publisher has likewise had to adjust to the new regime.

We had a Google-Books presence until that entity ended its 'open door' policy
in favour of becoming a publisher itself. During that time with Google,
Lapwing attracted hundreds of thousands of sample page 'hits'.
Amazon also has changed the 'game' with its own policies
and strategies for publishers and authors.
There are no doubt other on-line factors over which we have no control.

Poetry publishers can also fall foul of 'on consignment' practice,
which means we supply a seller but don't get paid until books have been sold and
we can expect unsold books to be returned, thus 'remaindered'
and maybe not sellable, years can pass!
Distributors can also seek as much as 51% of cover-price *IF* they choose
to handle a poetry book at all, shops too can require say 35%
of the cover price, which is ok given floor space can be thousands of £0000s
per square foot per annum..In terms of 'hidden' costs: preparing a work for publication
can cost a few thousand UK £-stg. Lapwing does it as part of our service to our authors.

It has been a well-known fact that many poets will sell more of
their own work than the bookshops, Peter Finch of the Welsh Academi
noted fact that over forty years ago and Lapwing poets have done so for years.

Due to cost factors Lapwing cannot offer authors 'complimentary' copies.
What we do offer is to supply authors with copies at cost price.
We hold very few copies in the knowledge that requests
for hard copies are rarely received.

Another important element is our Lapwing Legacy Library which holds all
our retained titles since 1988 in PDF at £4.00 per title:
the format being 'front cover page - full content pages - back cover page'.
This format is printable as single pages: either the whole book or a favourite page.

I thank Adam Rudden for the great work he has done over the years
creating and managing this web-site.

Thanks also to our authors from 'home' and around the world for entrusting Lapwing
with their valuable contributions to civilisation.

If you wish to seek publication please send your submission in MW Word docx format.

LAPWING PUBLICATIONS

POETRY TITLES 2021

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9781916345775_Somerville-Large GILLIAN LAZY BEDS

9781916345782_Gohorry & Lane COVENTRY CRUCIBLE
Mr Lane lives in England-UK and due to the recent death of Mr Gohorry
Mr Lane will be the contact for this publication: