

TWO
THIRDS
NORTH 2019



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Editor's Foreword

A world under intense nationalist strains continues to unveil in 2019. The calls for national and cultural isolation have become dully familiar to all of us, from Brexit, to Trump's wall. In Hungary, Poland, Sweden, Myanmar, China, Russia and so many other countries, demagogues cry out for some idea of cultural purity that has never existed. Yet, art and culture grow, as Salman Rushdie has argued and demonstrated, from the crossings, hybrids and collisions of different cultures. This is what we celebrate at *Two Thirds North*, as we seek to attract into our pages the transnational vision that is inevitable in a world where our climates and our political futures are so intertwined. Like it or not.

The three prose works in this volume all seem to recognize how national conflicts intensify international co-mingling, with two narratives addressing the experience of refugees: Timothy Kenny's "Sarajevo Found" and Loulou Mahaeb's "Grey Memories," while Amirah Al Wassif offers a moral fable of the sacrifice necessary for a shared vision of peace. We open the issue with Casey Killingsworth's "Circus" on having two jobs, because we also recognize the many roles we all work in, as poets and writers, as editors and teachers. Jane Blanchard takes us across borders in a sonnet cycle, to Ireland, trying to find an authentic space away from tourists to investigate some of literature's, and perhaps her own, demons.

Ian Smith returns to us, considering how his own identity was translated as he "plunged down under" as a child, moving

to Australia. These translations through language, border and identity are what the transnational “community” experiences, and what we seek to give space to especially in *Two Thirds North*.

The last set of poems in this volume pick up on the darker tones of personal and global strain, from the memories of private decay, as in the triptych images of a father by Gary Allen, to the simple used objects of thrift shops by DS Maolalaí, to the larger political losses of native Americans in Paul Bamberger’s “A Country of Long Winters,” and conflict that is “the dark blue house of the world” in a sonnet by Omar Sabbagh. Such anxieties lead us finally to “The End” by Clive Donovan.

As usual, as part of our interest in transnational creativity, we are always looking for well-crafted translations of living poets’ works. Donald Stang and Helen Wickes bring us a translation of the recently passed Brazilian poet Julio Monteiro Martins, while Dean Furbish has offers the translation of a poem by Russian poet Kamil Tangalychev.

Paul Schreiber

Circus

CASEY KILLINGSWORTH

I saw on a television show once
that in the circus everyone has
two jobs. One is the glory job,
flying on the trapeze, knife
throwing, that sort of thing.
The other is the shirtsleeve job,
the everyday work, the cleaning up
elephant shit, the whatever.
The circus can't run unless
everyone does two jobs.

In my dreams my glory job is
to drive the train, the circus train,
pulling animals and clowns
around the world to smiling kids.
When I worked on the railroad all
we wanted was to be train drivers
instead of ground pukers
pushing ties under a thousand-pound rail,
all to keep some soft engineer riding
high on the way to some exotic place.

In my dreams my shirtsleeve job would
not be to stack cans on shelves all night in
a grocery store, would not be to
get held up at knifepoint one night
after the store is closed and we're locked in
waiting for the day shift puffs to let us out,
would not be to let a car run me over

on my bike my second night of work,
but still work my shift because
I'm too scared I'll get fired if I don't.

I would rather shovel elephant shit
than work in a grocery store
all night. But we all have to have two jobs,
we all have to live between the glory job
twirling on that trapeze, and
our shirtsleeve job, where safety
nets stretch every direction but never
stretch far enough to break our fall.

Flight Lessons

JOHN SILBEY WILLIAMS

If I could make you a necklace of dead suns
strung together by the light they still give off,
I probably wouldn't. My hands are too dark
a church, my thumbs too fat & clumsy to hold
things that closely. If I could translate, roughly,
your skin on mine, your arms woven through
& back out me, like a knot: a hanging knot:
its loosening, would I bother with the sky,
its cold poetries, this skein of distance?

All the wooden airplanes I've carved for our kids
out of my own vague desires, if I could only
make them fly. If I could learn current & lift,
gravity, what it is that keeps birds from crashing,
maybe what dropped would remain aloft, forever,
secure in their own poorly-whittled wings.

Yield

JOHN SILBEY WILLIAMS

The time of working our bodies
like shovels shallowly into each other

not knowing if this will be the seed
that ends or begins a world, or both,

or neither; how embossed on our skin
all the names we've given it, then

rescinded, harvested & watched wilt—
to keep filling the belly of a river

with salmon just to farm it dry, to build
a shrine of faintly lit images without,

but maybe soon, they say, just keep
praying, a heartbeat; how transient

promise weighs down the mattress
more than any two figures writhing

like whips as much as lovers; what
we read as a kick, this time, cresting—

Thorns

JANE BLANCHARD

1. Prayer

I have not traveled here to see the Book of Kells, walk near the Cliffs of Moher, or lean toward the Blarney Stone. While others look to find such native crystal, I seek more elusive wonders—peace of mind and rest of soul that come from staying far away from tourists. Locals know the island best; they show its temper, essence, each new day routinely. Let me raise a glass, break bread, with those who call this emerald home (despite its rugged cut and long rough use) instead of paying homage at each famous site. May love leave hate behind, for hell is hot. We all have had our troubles, have we not?

II. Aside

We all have had our troubles, have we not?
If only drink could make the mind forget
the actors never cast in *Camelot*:
the spouse who flung a nasty epithet,
then left the stage for good (or bad); the child
of tantrums, whims, and ultimatums which
created conflicts still unreconciled;
the boss with the untreated common itch

to leave the trap door open. Seldom do
such scenes escape from memory; although
they exit briefly, soon they enter through
the wings of dreams to cause a frightful show.
Sure, Arthur had his problems, but perhaps
none worse than mine yet drowning in nightcaps.

III. Solstice

I may not be worth drowning as night caps
all conversation at the stroke of ten.
The drunken sun has set at last; sleep laps
at weary eyelids; jetlag lingers, then
abandons any effort to forestall
oblivion, or some semblance of it. Once
undressed, in bed, I try not to recall
misdeeds of mine or others; temperance
has great appeal at such a time. Lines of
unwritten poems start to script themselves
until dawn breaks, when I awaken, shove
the covers toward the footboard, find that elves
or brownies must have taunted leprechauns,
who have turned all my golden words to bronze.

IV. Literation

Since all my golden words have turned to bronze,
they might as well be put to ready use
in burnished verse which self-appointed dons
may label insufficiently obtuse.
I want the road to rise for everyone!
Too many of us face the wind without

much sunshine on the way each day. For fun,
why wonder what a poem is about?
Rain falls so hard upon our sodden heads,
fields rife with wily weeds. Who really wants
to get on hands and knees in clustered beds
of four-leafed language loved by dilettantes?
Please let us meet with meaning, have a go
at making sense while waiting for Godot.

V. Pratfalls

When making sense of waiting for Godot,
we oh-so-frequently resort to guile
in order to convince a friend or foe
that we conduct our lives in splendid style
befitting saintly royalty. No one
except ourselves is much deluded, and
even we doubt that any gold is spun
from straw. Why do we choose to stand
on pretense time and time again? Instead,
we should be showing off shenanigans,
confessing faults, and letting rumors spread
about slight slips that oddly gain us fans.
This paradox can surely be revealing:
perfection is most often unappealing.

VI. Decorum

Perfection may be often unappealing,
yet we revere as saints the people who
in former times proved really good at dealing
with epic difficulties right on cue.
Patrick supposedly drove snakes into

the sea; David once raised a grassy hill
while preaching; George at last did get his due
against a dragon; all are honored still.
Joan, wearing borrowed armor, brought success
to troops; Teresa modeled ecstasy
through prayer; Agnes showed that nakedness
exposes chastity most modestly.
Because such lore does not depend on truth,
a skeptic cannot help but seem uncouth.

VII. Michelin

This skeptic cannot help but seem uncouth
when given some new travel guide. How should
I beg off following another sleuth
who likely has not chosen what I would?
Granted, not every entry is a bust;
a few might prove informative. But stars?
Must I believe a stranger's ratings just
because he/she has sampled beds and bars?
Most tourists trust a printed text to tell
them where to go and what to do, but I
am more the independent type, a belle
who longs to make decisions on the fly.
So, no, I do not want to take a look,
for rarely have I traveled by the book.

The Day the Dolphins Came up the Thames

DS MAOLALAI

it was a very hot day

I remember.

there were all kids out eating icepops on the pavements

and ants everywhere,

those big

flying bastards.

and it had been on the radio all day;

a school of dolphins

had come all the way up the thames

and if you went into the city

you'd get to see them,

no trouble at all.

they said it might not be like that whale from a few years ago

because the coast guard had been alerted early enough

and were trying to get the dolphins back out to sea

before they died,

but of course the dolphins were having none of it,

jumping up over the boats and drenching the royal navy

right in front of the houses of parliament,

thinking it was a great laugh,

chittering away in dolphin.

and whether they were celebrating england

or giving a big fuck you to the queen
didn't matter;
people were all out on the quays either way
and looking down off the heavy traffic bridges
yelling at them
in shorts and sunglasses like shark teeth,
half in love with the dolphins
and in love with everything.

I was in the garden of the boarding house
listening to it all on the radio
with some tall bottles of cider
and plenty of ice,
laughing my ass off
and trying to explain to the Poles from downstairs
what dolphins were,
dead drunk and sunburned
at 1 in the afternoon,
dead friendly
with dolphins in the thames,
something that was so weird,
even here,
where everything was just
a bit weird,
different money
and shapes of the roadsigns,
that it stopped making everything else seem strange.

and the sun felt the same as the sun at home for a change
and the grass,
and the Poles were making hamburgers
and we had some
with lots of ketchup and fried onions,

and eventually I drew a picture of a dolphin for them
and they laughed
and said some word
that I don't remember
but it must have meant dolphin in Polish
and then I explained to them what else was happening
and they knew the word thames.

Half breed

AMANDA GONZALEZ BENGTTSSON

ask for my origin and I will
split my face in half
with my index finger
and you will notice
I'm still in one piece
if you would explore me
with a magnifying glass
you would see two flags sown together
intentionally

I already disentangled my own roots
telephone landlines under the Atlantic Ocean
and back
but the jury wants me to
live traditions I did not pick
so I will fit in their
categorizations

I'm a new creation just like you
we can even swap organs
I'm a hybrid walking the highways
I'm a fusion driving cars on sidewalks
I'm a mixture poured into jar that's too small
I carry passports from two tectonic plates
help me gather Pangea's broken pieces back
together, let's unite her for my companions
we would never ask each other for origin
or be deemed half when we're double full

Under the Skin

GARY ALLEN

We roamed like a pack of feral dogs
our games were knocks and bruises
jumping through chained factory roofs
raiding the angry priest's fruit garden,
you protestant whores, though we were a mixed bunch
and would learn sectarianism later with the civil pogroms
where street after street was cleared alike
and everyone's poverty was embarrassingly put on show
on handcarts and barricades
and my best friend back then, Sean
still refuses to speak to me forty years on –
it's just easier than trying to forgive.

The only coloured people we came across back then –
apart from the local lad who cut turf, gathered potatoes
spoke broad like the rest of us, whose family came from
Liverpool –
was on the HP telly, which was black and white
and had only one good working channel
and although they were always the baddies
getting in the way of our Empire
we had nothing in reality to associate them with
yet when we played cowboys and Indians
no one wanted to be an Indian
and the gist of my father's argument always was
if they weren't us, they were inferior

though I began to question that
using squares of old newspaper to wipe myself
and then the political famines began
rows of emaciated children sitting in dirty camps
without the strength to swipe away
clusters of flies from their mouths and eyes
with bloated stomachs like bladder footballs
and in our ignorance we mocked one another in the
schoolyard
shouting names we didn't understand

my father shrugged, if they couldn't look after their own
but my mother put pennies she couldn't afford
into relief packets and stated,
We're all the same under the skin
and for some reason I felt ashamed.

Perigrino! Perigrino!

LEE NEERY

in Trabadelo

Between mountains

and Monday,

I meander through
villages of
disheveled houses
and history.

So much stone,
sanctuary to
swallow and finches
nesting in its age,
its imperfections.

As sun sets,
shining on shingle rooftop,
families play
and poke
at cat and kittens -
sprawled and stalking
in roadside gutter.
"Peregrino!"
"Peregrino!"

- somebody whispers,
as children stare
with naked eyes.

Not one of them -
holding a cell phone.

Peregrino,
pilgrim wandering
in search of roadhouse
and refreshment.

But it's not the cats
or kittens,
the uncertainty
of mountains veiled in mist -
or even casual judgement
that hold my attention.

It's the now,
the realization that
neither time
nor name
make my tether.
Peregrino!
Peregrino!

Speaking of Easter

THOMAS PIEKARSKI

It starts at Rockaway Beach, oceanfront
Where smashing breakers maul boulders.
Mussels cling to those boulders, happy
Indians no longer pry them off for food.

Patrons indulge sumptuous Easter brunch
At Nick's seafood restaurant and nightclub.
Nick's an institution here since the heyday
Of Swing, where my senses drift astray.

Bandstand instruments black draped,
Three kiddies twirl on the dancefloor.
A man adjusts his glasses, rubs the chin,
Swirls Bloody Mary with a swizzle stick.

From this beginning other worlds spring,
Whirl as I breathe in abundant salt air.
My psyche transported to Jerusalem
Where a big stone rolls, opens a tomb.

Driving along the ragged, steep coastline
Between Rockaway and San Francisco
I think how perilous the road is, scary
As along a meandering stretch of Big Sur.

Once arrived at the city's Great Highway
San Francisco Beach stretches a mile.

It's wide at this juncture, but doubtless
Will gradually shrink due to ocean rise.

At the beach is installed a stout wall,
Poured concrete full ten feet tall,
Plenty sturdy, reinforced by rebar.
Surfers catch only an occasional wave.

I view a distant sailboat through haze,
What fog there was mostly burned off,
Vaporized without a single living clue.
Horizon line fuzzy, considerably faded.

Windmill blades behind the Beach Chalet
Churn although there's no grist to grind.
A crow cruising at low altitude caws,
Frantic as it careens toward the Pacific.

Looking up the long winding road I see
The Cliff House upon a high promontory,
From pioneer days people's dream venue,
Its grand Victorian ancestor also the rage.

Marauding Crusaders freed the Holy Land
Only to have Saladin capture it right back.
Savonarola cremated at the stake because
He persuaded brethren to burn possessions.

Grey Memories

LOULOU MALAEB

Before the civil war stretched out from Beirut to strangle the mountains where we lived, my parents had started building a new house on the outskirts of our village. We were longing for the day that we'd move out from the little apartment within the crowded village to that that house, which, back then, the five-year-old me, saw as a grand palace.

The first thing I remember about the move was my blue tricycle. The empty house was perfect for trotting around. The terrace to the valley was huge. I remember squeezing my face in the barred fence that surrounded it, thinking, *Which mountain is the highest among them all?* If I closed one eye and looked with the other one, Jabal El Barouk, the bearer of the Cedars of God, would always win of course.

The big day was the twelfth of September 1983.

But ten days before, things took a different turn.

Just like any other day, I woke up in what we used to call the Shelter, with that perpetual bombardment sound in my ears and my mother caressing my hair and weeping softly. It was really just the service room in the building we were staying. We usually remained inside that tiny room since outside was scary for us.

I did not ask Mother why she was crying, since, in my mind, back then, grownups cried easily and most of the time. I always thought that I was much braver than my mother. She was so terrified of bombardments. I was not. The sound scared me when it first started, but once it was there I had trained myself to live with it. My plan for that day had been to convince my mom to allow me to play in the next-door neighbors' shelter. I missed my best friend and I knew he'd be missing me too. It had been a while since I went there. I really did not care that their shelter was not as safe as ours was.

As I got up, I could see my mother's face clearer now that the lantern's light hit it directly. The look in her eyes scared me and I knew that something big must have happened and that this was not like any other day. Mother was, despite the warm weather, shivering. I asked, "Can I go to Mimo's? Will not leave the shelter. I promise!"

When I now reflect on those words, "Can I go to Mimo's," I realize that the five-year-old me did not want to admit or understand the severity of our situation. The five-year-old me was hiding a cry for a normal life in which I could go to my friend's house and not to his bad shelter.

"They left," mother replied. "They all left, and we're leaving too."

I was excited! It had been a long while since we left the Shelter; not since a shell hit the ig room. That day all the men of the house were there in that room. The entire building shook, and the walls started to crumble, glass shattered, and the sound was so powerful that I could not hear anything for a short while after. I also remember my aunt, who was sitting with us in the tiny shelter, rushed to the door to peek out at the dense cloud of dust. I could see

she was coughing hard but I could not hear a cough. Then she kneeled slowly on the floor in front of my mother, her hands over her head, and screamed: "ALL OUR MEN ARE GONE! ALL OUR MEN ARE GONE!" Then, through the silence of the horror of the unknown the two women shared for seconds and through their loud gasps and cries, my father appeared at the door! He was all grey, but alive! Grey is the sweetest color, I thought. Then after him came my uncle with blood covering all of his face.

After that day, leaving the shelter was out of the question.

When my mother said we were leaving, part of me was happy but the other part was wondering why the rest of the family did not share my exhilaration. "Are we moving to the new house?" I asked.

"We are moving to a new house," my mother said.

I stared at her face for a little while, waiting for a smile I guess, or at least a nod, anything to put me at ease. But my eagerness to leave the shelter was much greater than all the pessimist insinuations by the grown-ups, and I rushed to share the good news with my brothers and sister. I looked for them but I could not find my eldest brother. He was 13 years old, and would usually stay with us inside. To my surprise, I heard his voice outside at the building's main entrance, so I ran to the door and saw him standing still at the entrance. I came closer. He was holding a big hunting rifle. I was overjoyed with the view of the gun that I forgot what I wanted to do. I said, "Can I play with the gun too? Please."

He looked at me with a dead serious face, a face I'd never seen before. It was like looking at a stranger. Even

now, after so many years, I still see it very clearly and I still fail to explain it. Even my adult self cannot tell if he was more serious than scared or more scared than serious. The vibrant green of his big eyes had faded and his eyes looked smaller, somehow older.

He said, "Go back inside! This is not a toy!" The resonance of his voice that is still in my ears had a sense of responsibility, care and yet an unprecedented tone of order.

I returned to our dark hole in the wall. "When are we leaving?" I asked.

"We are not leaving. We are evacuating!" someone answered.

"What does that mean?" I asked, but no one answered.

I saw my teenage sister and my cousin cornered by my grandmother who was murmuring to them something that I could not understand as she handed them little bags. I approached my mother again to ask about what my Teta was discussing with the ladies. "It's grown up talk sweetie," she said. "Don't worry about it. Just pray for your father and uncle to come back safely for us."

I closed my eyes in an attempt to talk to God. For the five-year-old me God was this bald old man with a white beard living up high in the sky. *Does it even work?* I thought. I have prayed a lot for the war to end and for my mother to stop being afraid, but it never worked! Maybe God was so up high in the sky that he couldn't hear me from this deep hole. Teta was so sure that he heard everything we say and think, but I wasn't. I always thought that our shelter was way too deep and gloomy for God to hear me.

As I was doubting the omnipotent nature of the Almighty, my brother, who was still at the gate yelled out, "They're back! They made it! And they brought the cars!" I rushed with everybody outside.

There were two vehicles parked in the building's gateway. One for our family, and the other one for my uncle's family. No matter how hard my father begged Teta to get into one of the cars, she refused.

He looked her in the eyes, both of them were crying, and then they hugged longer than I'd ever seen them do. Teta circled around both cars while reading verses from the little book that she kept with her at all times. She did some gestures while doing it, then both cars drove off.

We drove into the unknown, leaving Teta behind. Many times, we'd go places without her joining us, but back then I did not understand why they were both crying. My father and my Teta, unlike most of the adults during that war, had never cried before. They were both so confident and so brave. Their tears terrified me.

The bombs fell so often and were so loud, all that I can remember is the sound! Like it erased any other memory.

On the way, my uncle's car, which was driving in front of ours, stopped. My uncle stepped out with one of his boys, opened the back door to our car where we the kids were sitting, grabbed one of my brothers by the shoulder and said to my father, "I'll take one of your boys to my car and you take one of my boys. If anything happens to any of the families, someone will carry on." My dad nodded.

We continued to a place where there was no bombing and the air did not stink of fear.

"Daddy, where is this new house?" I asked.

"I truly do not know," he said.

Eventually, we reached the safe zone, which was a different area in that tiny, old, grumpy and cherished country of ours. It was a small and quiet village viewing the Bekaa valley. Life was normal there, kids were playing outside. I liked it.

Two years passed. I remember a day unlike any other day, and they called it cease fire. My parents took the opportunity to take us back home for a visit.

Our house looked like emptiness had been eating it from inside and mortar shells feasting on its façade. Glass crunched under our feet as we walked in. The smell reminded me of the smell in the shelter, the smell of fear.

When we went in, I saw my blue tricycle in one of the corners where I had last left it. It was covered in dust and cordite but still alive. I tried riding it but it was too small for me. Then I rushed out onto the terrace. I wanted to see what the valley and the mountains looked like now. I hardly managed to glimpse anything, to see if the grass was truly greener on the other side, to count the mountains and select the highest, when a voice behind me urged, “GET BACK INSIDE! THEY’LL SEE YOU!”

I turned, and said with confidence, “So what if they do see me. They can’t shot me. It’s cease fire.”

I heard my parents laugh and then a hand pulled me back inside. My parents said I was cute and funny. Later they’d even tell about it to friends and family, like a joke. But, back then, I didn’t get what was so funny.

Today, unfortunately, I do see what’s funny about it. I know a cease-fire is but a joke in our part of the world. Where I come from, fire comes to us in all shapes. I see now that fire never stops in our part of the world. I see fire every day. I drink it with my morning coffee. It’s between the lines in my newspaper. I see it in my dreams. I smell the same odor of fear. I see all colors gradually merging into grey. The sound of the bombs and the hums of airplanes, it all comes to me in my sleep. I’m there somewhere, not sure where and do not care where, and

there is war. Sometimes I dream of my three kids grabbing my clothes and looking at me helplessly and hopelessly. They are all five years old in my dream. I always look into their eyes and see the same yearning I had, a yearning for a mundane, dull life.

Now that I get the joke, is it on me, I wonder. In times of war, as Hobbes said, there is no law, no just or unjust. A time of war is a time where fear drives one to break even the most natural of laws. My father did it when he handed that rifle to his 13-year-old son and put his body between US and THEM. My sweet religious Teta, whose religious beliefs would not allow her to hurt an ant, on September 2, 1983, after hearing of what happened to women and girls in the neighboring village, gave us little bags of with sand and grinded glass. “If they come for you,” she said. “Sprinkle this in their eyes, and run. Do not let *them* touch you!”

My old tricycle remained in that empty house and I never saw it again after the cease-fire.

Sandra Calls Us

KEN POBO

messy cookers and disorganized.
Do some messy people have large souls?

Eating a cinnamon bun, Stan says
the best things are messy. Odd
that he keeps his hair so neat,
goes to the barber every three weeks

without fail. I have neat moments. I pull
dead blossoms from African violets.
A heavy snow—

ramshackle flakes flip and flop. Car tires
disappear in white. We face
sloppy Nature, seized by cold,
dig ourselves out.

Nello zainetto di Lorenzo

JULIO MONTEIRO MARTINS

Un grande ragno peloso,
una cavalletta,
uno scorpione,
una formica,
due rospi
e un'aragosta che grida
quando, distratto, la calpesto.
Questa schifosa squadra
di gomma
è il giocattolo favorito
del mio bimbo di tre anni.

È mezzogiorno.
Ora lui dovrà partire.
Andrà dalla madre
per qualche giorno.
Devo vestirlo meglio
e portarlo da lei in macchina.
Lui sa che deve andare.

Riempio il suo zainetto
di plastica verde
con tutti i suoi insetti.
Uno a uno,
loro tornano al proprio nido.
Lui porta ovunque vada
le sue paure addomesticate.
E le ha portate anche da me.
È audace il mio bimbo!

In Lorenzo's Book Bag

DONALD STANG AND HELEN WICKES

A big hairy spider,
a grasshopper,
a scorpion,
an ant,
two toads,
and a lobster, which shrieks
when, distractedly, I step on it.
This revolting squad
of rubber
is my three-year-old's
favorite toy.

It's midday.
Now he has to leave.
He's going to his mother's
for a few days.
I need to dress him nicely
and drive him to her house.
He knows he has to leave.

I refill his green plastic
book bag
with all his insects.
One by one,
each returns to its nest.
He carries his domesticated fears
everywhere he goes.
And he has brought them to my place as well.
He is audacious, my child!

Mentre le rimetto nello zaino
sento che ripeto un mio vecchio
gesto ben conosciuto:
Da tanto tempo custodisco
i miei terrori
dentro di me,
e anch'io li porto in giro
ovunque vada.
Al posto dello spirito
ho uno zaino
carico di bestie.
Saranno vere
o anch'esse di caucciù?

Il mio cuore si stringe
nel vederlo pronto a partire.
Lui mi aspetta
sull'uscio della porta
con lo zainetto verde in spalla.
Lui mi guarda e mi aspetta,
inconsapevole di sé,
così piccolo e fragile,
così leggero,
e già fiero vincitore
di tanti difficili trofei.

While I put them in the bag,
I feel I am repeating an old,
familiar gesture:
For a long time I have hidden
my terrors
within me,
and I carry them around with me
wherever I go.
Instead of a spirit,
what I have is
a bag full of monsters.
Are they real
or also made of rubber?

My heart tightens
seeing him ready to leave.
He waits for me
on the doorstep
with the green bag over his shoulder.
He watches me and waits for me,
unaware that he is
so small and fragile,
so slight,
and already a proud victor
of so many hard-won trophies.

*«В библиотеках деревень
забытых . . .»*

KAMIL TANGALYSHEV

В библиотеках деревень забытых
Печален запах стихотворных книг,
Никем ни разу так и не открытых.
Никто не взглянет и потом на них.

Никем не тронут сборник Смелякова,
И никому не ведом здесь Рубцов...
Зарница за зеленою рекою
Сверкнула гениальною строкою
Над немотой желтеющих лесов.

Вселенская поэма золотая
Являет миру райскую тоску.
Земля, в реке зарницу отражая,
Запомнила навек одну строку.

Напишется ль поэма хоть когда-то
Вся полностью над кроткою рекой?
Вселенная моя – великий автор
Гордится только первою строкой.

Вся вечность даже небу не открыта,
Но бесконечен запоздалый миг...
В библиотеках деревень забытых
Печален запах стихотворных книг.

In the Libraries of Forgotten Villages

DEAN FURBISH

In the libraries of forgotten villages
The smell of poetry books is sad.
Not once has anybody opened them.
No one has ever looked inside.

No one will touch a tome by Smelyakov,
And no one here is guided by Rubtsov . . .
Dry lightning sparkles beyond the green river –
Brilliant streak over yellowing trees.

This golden universal poem affords
The world a paradisiacal sadness:
Reflected lightning on the water –
Earth remembers only this one line.

But will an entire poem ever be written
Just above an ordinary river?
And though my universe is a great author,
It is content with only the first line.

All of time is not revealed even to the skies,
While the belated flash is everlasting . . .
In the libraries of forgotten villages,
The smell of poetry books is sad.

Plunging Down Under

IAN C. SMITH

An immigrant in a land of swimmers who, sinuous, suntanned, at the outdoor pool – the baths – drip on towels over concrete, steaming between lazy plunges underwater, I have a problem. Pale, skinny but strong, I must master deep water or wither in shame, both terrifying thoughts. Most ten-year old English children can't swim. Australians, casually dolphinesque, plunge into happiness. I confess to my working sister who taught me to read, who can swim. She agrees we shall go when it is quiet and execute our plan.

Schoolwork is easy, fractions and friction, explorers and progress instead of kings and queens, bloodshed and plague. Arriving in winter I play football, win at monkey bar grappling, prove my worth receiving the strap with a smirk for laughing at larrikins' antics, so Australia – bonzer, you beaut, good-oh, suits this Pommie. Fair dinkum, mate.

My parents struggle, mother carping about Australia's backwardness in blue airmails to the post-war bleakness they fled, while my father, an outcast at work, becomes a bully at home. I already hate Pommie whingeing, their sorrowful bandaged past, their jealousy of my integration. I attend school, therefore fit in.

Cool, promise of a ripper morning, silvered pool just opened, my sister slips us over the side into the deep end, coaxing. Shivering, swivelling, I watch, listen for mates. Minutes of harsh whispering later I let go, sink, toe-touch bottom, dogpaddle, lungs in panic, break the surface gasping. Elated, I go again and again, further out each time. I can swim. More or less.

Now I must climb to the high board. Diving is for drawling bronzed gods, or lunatics, but I can jump. Schoolmates have arrived, including a girl whose mother's newspaper I deliver. They watch my frightful ascent. I hesitate when I look down, see my future looking up, know I must go, know I will.

Sarajevo Found

TIMOTHY KENNY

Emina was fifteen when a Serb sniper shot her father dead with a single fifty-caliber bullet, fired from the hills that circle Sarajevo. It was the first week of July 1992. He died alone in the middle of a broad thoroughfare called Meša Selimović Boulevard, known to the world as Sniper Alley.

Later that same summer her mother went looking for food and never returned. Emina understood soon enough that the worst had happened. An aunt and uncle on her mother's side, the last of her relatives in the city, fled to Germany without a word, leaving her behind. She got by for three months cleaning apartments. As the siege of Sarajevo ground on, rich people fled and paid work disappeared.

Before long, Emina could not steal enough food and she began selling herself to UN soldiers. Not every day and not all the time. Later she paid some of the same UNPROFOR soldiers to smuggle her from Sarajevo to Berlin in a UN truck.

At a refugee center in Berlin she heard about a couple that sounded like her aunt and uncle and scoured the city until she found them living in an occasionally heated high rise in a rough suburb called Neukölln, four-and-a-half miles outside Berlin. The aunt opened the door and stared at her niece, now seventeen. The sound of her unexpected grief fled down the filthy corridor of their building.

“We could not find you,” she said, “and our only chance was to go right away. We worried about you so much. We thought of you every day.”

“I would have done the same,” Emina said.

She meant it.

Emina stayed with her aunt and uncle, enrolled in school, improved her German, worked as a shop clerk, saved money, and eventually moved to Detroit in search of an American boyfriend who promised to wait but had already left for New York by the time she arrived at Metro Airport, sending no texted address or phone number.

Emina wasn’t surprised.

* * *

Burke and Emina found each other at a party in Detroit that Burke’s Romanian friends threw every December first, Romania’s National Day. A plum brandy called tuica was the initial bonding agent. Despite their attraction they waited a cautious month before becoming lovers.

“Your English is impressive,” Burke told Emina the night they met. He was sincere and liked her Balkan accent.

“Thank you.” A beat. “So is yours.”

Burke laughed, and said, “And witty in a second language. Where are you from? Originally?”

Emina was tired of this question after six months in Detroit, trying to explain to Midwestern Americans where Bosnia-Herzegovina is and why it has a hyphenated name. Instead she said, “Sarajevo. You heard of it maybe?”

“I have; the siege. A friend of mine is a Serb. He told me all about it.”

Emina looked at Burke for what felt like a long time to him, then said, “The friend of yours who is Serb I don’t think told you all about it. Maybe he told you something about it. Not all about it, I think.”

“So I’m guessing you’re Muslim?”

“Your guessing is right. Why do you say that?”

“Just a hunch,” said Burke.

They dated and eventually talked about living together but never did. Burke was forty-two years old and wore a salt-and-pepper beard off and on, glasses when reading. He’s a man whose life has held few surprises, excepting the arrival of stage four colon cancer. Doctors gave him the news not long after the Romanians’ party, a matter he never discussed with Emina.

Burke felt her skittishness and expected her to bolt at any minute. He sensed the fear she kept at bay with sarcasm and coiled anger. Burke liked this young woman whose unlikely life mixed fate with luck, good and bad, giving her an off-key grace and fierceness.

It took Emina no time to find a job shelving books at Wayne State’s undergraduate library, which was light on pay but easy for a person who could focus and saw the logic of the Library of Congress book shelving system. She also made coffee at a Starbucks around the corner on Merrick. Both jobs kept her from thinking too much.

Burke learned something of Emina’s early life by sorting through the detritus of talks in the car, when both faced forward. He researched the war in Bosnia enough to never ask about it, which they both thought just fine.

Neither one realized that their lack of curiosity, their lies of omission, would one day end their once-shared lives, not once but twice.

Both were disposed toward wandering off in their different ways and one day they were simply done, without intention or plan. Emina moved from Detroit to Alpena, a small town at the edge of Michigan's Thunder Bay, where she managed a Motel 6. But that was later.

* * *

Emina's move to Michigan's north was an attempt to escape the street, she told Burke, "The noise other people make." Burke, who kept in tentative contact, always said the same thing when he called, "Hello? Is this Emina? From Alpena?"

She usually laughed. If not he knew something was maybe up. Burke and Emina are now lovers once removed. The good thing is that their first, shortened relationship left each with untroubled recollections of the other.

They haven't spoken in months. They conversed in brief emails and intermittent texts. There are no wild arguments to resolve, no public shouting disputes to straighten out. They drifted from each other without rancor, leaving an abiding fondness between them. Burke would later puzzle over their failure to stay together. He blamed Emina if anyone asked, even though he knew that wasn't true.

"Look, we're in love, right?" he'd say. "That's not enough?"

She never answered.

He realized, as she did not, that there is often just one chance, a perfect moment, to resolve a problem.

Perfect moments are frequent no shows.

Burke and Emina left each other's lives because it was

easier than endless discussion without resolution. Lonely people get used to being alone. It also occurred to Burke, divorced and living alone for decades, that they were both lazy. He didn't have the stamina to sort through disquiet; neither did Emina. The payoffs were never clear to either of them.

Burke also believed that people who know grief early in life avoid taking emotional chances later, but never asked her if this was so.

* * *

Emina slipped free from the tenuous town of Alpena on a soggy Thursday, driving to Detroit Metro Airport in just under five hours. It was not a whim. She found a parking spot close to the door in a four-level garage and walked away from her battered 1998 Honda Civic for the last time, then flew to Frankfurt where she slept on a couch in the airport for eight hours off and on before buying a bus ticket to Sarajevo that cost sixty-five euros, plus one additional euro for her lone piece of luggage. The trip took eleven hours, including stops for food and bathroom breaks.

* * *

Despite their smart phones and mutual Romanian friends, Burke heard nothing about Emina leaving. Neither did anyone else.

He called her from outside Detroit, at a Royal Oak take-out coffee place in a former bank crowded with young people he thought of as “the mills,” short for millennials. There was no answer or voice mail, just an automated

message saying the user was temporarily unavailable. It sounded odd. Burke wondered if maybe she had forgotten to pay her bill. He texted twice, but received nothing in reply, odder still, given Emina's compulsion for immediate text responses, no matter how trivial the question.

Burke enjoyed the drive to Alpena from Detroit. The flat, even landscape that laps up against Lake Huron is unchanged from his remembered childhood, still stippled with scrub and sand, open to the sweep of water, a sky of different blue. He did not try Emina's number again until he pulled into Alpena, where he heard another "unavailable" message on his phone.

Stumped and a bit worried, he fired off an email – E: Are you in town? I drove up. Free for dinner tonight? x/o Burke – and drove to her rented house, a bungalow that costs \$500 a month, including utilities. It was 6:30 pm and growing dark.

Emina's Honda Civic was gone, replaced in the driveway by a Dodge pickup of less-than-recent vintage, its driver-side fender bondo'd together, its rocker panels riddled with rust.

"This," thought Burke, "does not look good."

Deflated and tired from driving, he walked through an inch of fresh snow to the front door and knocked.

* * *

Emina, who thought of Burke off and on, was unaware he carries terminal cancer. She was disheartened at having left him without a word, but knew no other way to find out if there was a place for her in Sarajevo, a city profoundly different than the one she left. Its changes left her breathless and exasperated.

Bosnia and Herzegovina reminded her of the time she forgot a silk skirt on a clothesline overnight, finding its torn and tattered pieces strewn about the garden the next morning.

She is startled by the pornography of war tourism that inhabits Sarajevo, a thriving enterprise also known as dark tourism, that lured the young and others who think the pain of war is worth knowing.

The thought of walking past once-deserted buildings where she lived alone and hungry for so many months filled Emina with palpable fear. She has seen memory destroy lives. Sarajevo is large enough and indifferent enough that she can walk for days without stumbling into an unwanted past.

Then she'll round a corner to find a house still pock-marked by bullet wounds and step aside as a pack of feral dogs runs past her down an alley. Soldiers in filthy uniforms suddenly materialize on a street corner. They whistle and shout and make obscene gestures as she walks by.

She has taught herself to stand still, to close her eyes a few moments before retreating to any unknown street that carries nothing she can recall. Like other Bosnian Muslims who have lived through their war of genocide she is not certain that staying is best.

She enrolled at the University of Sarajevo for the spring semester and found work at a coffee house called Spazio Caffee on Radiveca. It helped that she worked at a Starbucks in Detroit. She delights in speaking Bosnian every day. Foreign customers find her English, now accented with the flat vowel sounds of the American Midwest, an unexpected surprise.

At work she met two former school friends just back from London, fed up with low-paying, off-the-book jobs and the chill of ostracism the British too often level at Eastern Europeans. Neither of the people she knew as a child resembles who they have become. In turn, they did not recognize Emina, who is viewed as a newcomer by those who lived through the siege, a sudden stranger in her place of birth.

She picked what parts of her life to keep, discarding what was unwanted. She remembered Burke with fondness. It's too bad he is too old for her. He was often kind. On those Michigan days when she slept over and could not get out of bed he brought her tea and toast and made her smile with stories of foolish customers who came to the newsstand he owns, even though she's certain he invented most of the tales on the spot.

Emina owed Burke something more than disappearance. She also understood she had a right to another chance, perhaps salvation in a life turned inside out. She was never going to become an American anyway.

Now she worried whether she can become Bosnian again.

When Emina thought of Burke she knew it meant he was thinking of her as well, a psychic connection they shared, its complex value something neither one wondered about. She decided to text him, not call, fearful that the sound of his voice could bring trouble.

Emina has returned to lovers before and found it only momentarily helpful. She found texting useful for sidestepping drama triggered by an unreliable past. This is what she thumbed on her phone:

hello burke

i am living in sarajevo i am fine i apologize for not telling you i was coming here when i left michigan i am sorry i did that but i did not know what i should do only that i had to come back i hope you are well send me a text or an email if you wish but please do not call me yours emina

She always texted this way, which annoyed Burke because he's forced to mentally edit her messages.

Emina considered inserting a smiley face emoji but decided against it.

“He'll know it's me.”

It does not occur to Emina that sending Burke a text is her way of saying she missed him. She feared what might happen if she sees him again, ignoring what might happen if she does not.

She knows Burke. One day, perhaps soon, she'll look out her front window to see a man neither old nor young standing on the stoop outside her first-floor Sarajevo flat. He carries an overnight bag in one hand, a bouquet of daffodils in the other. Whenever they walked past a bed of daffodils Emina always said the same thing, They make me smile.

Alice Had Her Rabbit Hole

MICHELLE HARTMAN

doors contain all the implications of the symbolic hole

Carl Jung

We have a fascination
for openings, portals
a continual font.
Worlds flirt and taunt
a door ajar,
a skirt above the knee.
If a door is the wall's antithesis,
then it can be placed
 anywhere
 anywhen
time being highly susceptible.
The pull
 the mystery
is inherent within us
the only door we are behind
is imagined.

Another Short Poem

PEYCHO KANEV

You wake up
in the midst of
reading your poetry
to a huge crowd ...

The Collected Poems of
Whichever stand on your
nightstand
open and lit by the fading moonlight
Your throat is dry
and you take the glass of water
while outside it starts to rain
like dark music like
ancient tin-drums of the rainy gods
Let there be light you think to yourself
but you know that it doesn't work this way
So you light a cigarette and lie down
in the bed again to listen to the wind outside
to the bitching dark crows on
the trees out there and
to the big clock on the wall that has stopped

And you know that there is always time
for another short dream
and

there is always time for another
short poem
if the crowd is still there
waiting

Platosfire in the Tain

JOSEPH HARMS

Parsifal: I move only a little, yet already I've seem to have gone far.

Gurnemanz: You see, my son, here time turns into space.

Wagner

Unnerving to say the least. Near Halloween in the woods behind Il's farmhouse (I'd assumed she was out entertaining some corpse), the platosfire in the collied portals, leafspark harlequin, understoried duomolight despite the puthery's horripilation, arrival, Il nude, her natal raddle shellacked, emerged from radjel speaking to me eyes on me as if we had rehearsed this act to death. Tornadogreen yet fairied light. The both at once (and later in the printmoonlight the lovers undo everything). God is not the creator but the Noumenon always as if newly uncreated malleable temporal. Their god the creator is Asif, the world itself Crypsis. Quickly regardant one intuits the world recreated. The Noumenon is horror monadic horror...I've spoken plainly, Meir, as I'm leaving soon into the platosfire...Anyway, did you drink the hull I left for you and undo everything? You're freezing, love. Where are your clothes? I came this way. Now piggy me home.

Apricity II's

JOSEPH HARMS

From shelterbelt to shelterbelt then down the wayleave II beneath
the humming powerlines within the pool of Indian aime where
grasshoppers vanish in thin air, the seral slash surfeit with sweetrot
sehnsucht, isled in the quavering woods
enlivened ferrous fauve the vistaed towns detimed within
the blueinghour, stops to cull from the tableau of ashfunnels at
time aflash aligned to perdu sun her farmhouse's chimneyswallows,
continues down the wayleave walled by spinneys yards behind a fox
that'd stay just so till home (I know...it's so) speaking words
of love backwards and unperturbed when waistdown she vanishes
in the aime as needles shed from pines decohere the space they
seizure through as certain swallows flash then vanish in such a
way as to undo the done which is to say nothing arrives that's not
already left (we never were
we've always been).

Give me your Teeth!

AMIRAH AL WASSIF

Once upon a time, in a very far land called Orshalim, there were three innocent boys, Ali, Peter and Abraham, sitting under an immense fig tree and playing with their humble toys. Their toys were very old and dirty, but they imagined they were clean and new.



One night, the three boys approached a mysterious, massive object.

The strange thing started moving from side to side. Ali, Peter and Abraham looked deeply at the strange moving thing as it danced and jumped.

When the big jumping thing shook all the trees around them, the boys moved close towards it. It was a big flying plate, full of the most splendid and delicious kinds of desserts.



The boys gaped at the extraordinary behavior of this flying plate and watched it closely. Then the marvelous desserts on the plate rolled and performed a crazy dance. Each piece of the wonderful candy left the plate, landed suddenly and jumped on the boys' feet. Ali, Peter and Abraham were frightened and astonished. They stayed for a long time, watching and watching all night, and did not go home.

When the sun set, the flying plate full of wondrous desserts disappeared.

“Where is the plate?” Ali cried.

“I cannot believe my eyes,” Peter whispered to himself. Abraham said in a loud voice, “It looks like a dream.”

The boys talked, and talked, but they were not sure if what they saw was real. Then they went home.

They reached Orshalim, and gathered together in the common yard, where they kissed and hugged each other, and said, “Good bye.”

But they did not know what awaited them.

When the boys knocked on their doors, their mothers opened quickly, and each boy entered his house. Their mothers asked them what was the reason for their delay that night. They knew that their mothers would punish them if they did not answer, so, they told their mothers about the wonderful flying plate. They talked for a long hour, describing its desserts, and its crazy dance, but their mothers did not believe them, and the boys were punished.

Their mothers forbid them to go out together and play.

Ali, Peter, and Abraham were angry because they used to go to the wide garden every night, where the wonder flying plate was, but their mothers thought their story was a lie.

The boys were punished for many days, and they did not go anywhere.

During his captivity, as he called it, Peter thought about a solution to their problem. He asked himself over and over: how they could prove to their mothers that the flying plate truly existed.

Finally, Peter had an idea. A very fine idea. He decided to go to and tell his friends about his plan.

He went to Abraham's house first. He knocked softly on the window and jumped in.

Once Abraham heard the plan, they decided to go to Ali's house and told him too. The boys made their way to the garden where the flying plate was sitting under the massive fig tree.

The boys started watching the splendid plate. They were delighted, but Peter suddenly remembered the plan to prove the truth of the flying plate to their mothers, and quickly said to Ali and Abraham, "Carry me, carry me, we shall get this plate, we shall hold it and show its wonderful ability to our mothers so they will believe us, and will never punish us again."

Ali and Abraham were very excited, so they began.

As Peter was being carried by his fellows, he tried to touch the plate, but when he got close to it, the plate disappeared.

Peter repeated this many times, but every time the plate hid from the boys' eyes. They did not know why, however, they kept trying.

By night, the boys had failed to catch the plate, and they were very tired.

Suddenly, all of them fell down. Peter broke his leg, and Ali's trousers got torn. Only Abraham was well, so he helped his friends get home.

As before, their mothers punished them, but this time the punishment was worse because all the people in Orshalim said that Ali, Peter and Abraham were liars, and that, because of their lies, God would punish them. Someone said, "God punished Abraham too, because he was a fool, who believed his friends lies." As a result of this, everybody in Orshalim made fun of him.

Many days passed. Peter and Ali were locked in their houses, their mothers treated them harshly, and all the

people of Orshalim laughed at them and repeated these words daily: *Ali, Peter and Abraham are fools and liars.*

One day, Abraham woke early, thinking of his friends. He wanted to prove the truth of the flying plate to everyone, but how would he do it.

After hours of thinking, Abraham decided to go to the garden alone. When dusk covered the sky, he approached the fig tree. At that time, the flying plate was dancing up and down. He kept watching the plate's performance, and suddenly he tried to catch it, but as before when Peter tried to catch it, the plate disappeared.

Abraham wouldn't give up. He tried and tried and tried. He fell down many times, broke his leg and tore his clothes, but he decided never to go home without the evidence.

Abraham spent three nights trying to catch the flying plate. Tears covered his face, and he cried and cried, but he did not give up.

Then something strange happened. Once, when Abraham finally touched the plate, a piece of paper fell from the fig tree! Abraham was desperate to read the paper. He opened it, and read it with wide eyes and an open mouth. It was a single sentence: "Give me your teeth."

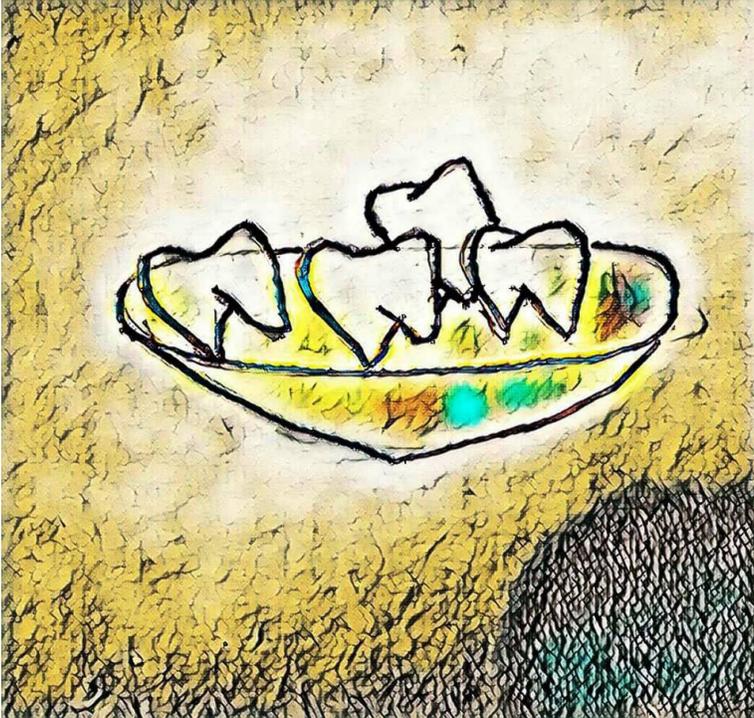
Abraham shook with fear. He did not understand what the message meant, so he wrote on the back of the paper: "How?"

The flying plate sent another piece of paper to Abraham. He picked it up and read these words: "When you give me your teeth, I will show myself to everyone."

Abraham felt fear more and more, but he had decided never to go home without this evidence for his best friends. He wrote on the back of the paper: "How many teeth?"

Then, the plate sent: “One tooth for one piece.”

Now, Abraham understood the game. He started giving the plate many of his teeth. He wanted to catch all the wonderful desserts, and show them to his people.



After a week, Abraham went back to Orshalim. All the people gathered around him, even the mothers, and his friends Ali and Peter. Everyone was waiting for the flying plate. Abraham showed it to everyone. All the people could do was stare.

Now, everyone believed the three boys. After that, honoring Abraham’s courage and his friendship with Ali and Peter, the people of Orshalim started using a new proverb: Courage is as rare as the flying plate of dessert.

Hemingway

MICHAEL SMITH

The day was as short as
a Hemingway sentence, which
(in itself) is a metaphor for life.
The day was short, and it was
a metaphor for life. The old –
the old man
knew that he was dead,
but the world did not accept it,
the people did not accept it.
And the ocean rolled its 'r's
as he sat at the bow,
raking the boat's hull –
but together they lumbered on –
his love and he.
The day was short,
and it was a metaphor for his life.

The Dark Blue House of the World

OMAR SABBAGH

Dubai

I can hear them now, nearing, roomy in their house
Made of a world. They gel, set, emptied noises
Writ to rouse an anger; that of a simpler, clearer creature,
An animal, say, but not a beast, man-like in a snare,
Trapped: the triggered metal, the djinn-spurred errors,
Wrecks to a dream-long gambit that pleaded peace –
Shy now of what might have been, what might have been
Achieved...

I can hear them in their mansion
Whose bricks are hard, jealous blue – the colour
The night brings like panthers in slipping armies,
A wilderness for a world. And it's a strange grammar
In which to live, breathe, or just for lips to quiver with...

But perhaps it has always been like this: trumpets
Of hate sending hollowed noise, upwards from a cage?

Triptych

GARY ALLEN

Three images of my father come to mind
one, a group of young demobbed friends
in Paris after the war
a posh restaurant in St-Germain
all open eyed behind a huge platter of rich seafood
oysters, crab, lobster, beche-de-mer
fattened on the ocean's war dead
an immaculate waiter to the side
smiling professionally for the camera, as he had done for the
Germans
none of them could stomach it
boys from one-horse towns in Ireland
they had no taste for it
all slimy and jellied and staring eyes
like the death they had seen.

Another of my father in his local on Bridge Street
just after the war and before he married
when he still had some teeth
a group of men in their Saturday hire-purchase suits
Mexican-waving like a giant beach ball,
a gigantic promotional plastic Guinness bottle
horse-racing men, they would soon face each other
firing from rooftops or border roads –
he should have chalked his suitcase that day
and gone with his brother on the ten-pound passage to Australia.

And then one of a small shrivelled man
in a cream jerkin, and loafers to cushion his feet
on a town centre bench beneath a hoarding for youth employment
the late afternoon sun cutting shadows across his squinting eyes
because of his medication, he wouldn't be too far from a toilet
a few weeks before he died, his mind full of nothing
but the unseasonal fierce heat of the sun
the long legs of the punk girl with the Mohawk
waiting to cross the street
the slow time passing in the need to pee.

A Country of Long Winters

PAUL BAMBERGER

a black man once came to teach us how to dance and all
hell broke out

where winter tracks of mother and father and child fall
away into deep forest shadows the promise of a new nation
where dark figures dance against winter's hard fires to
keep fear at bay all of a wilderness in which to wander we
chose to run the Indians up the Pemigewasset into the
coos dogging them into a season of starvation got liquored
up in the high country the cool easing down into savagery
a time of stray dogs and lean wolves feared our shadows
on the wall knew only where we did not want to be grew
restless traveled west beyond the towns beyond kentucky
outposts farther out traveled up rivers where shadows
shadow a man where all gain is loss the raw awareness of
death children deep into their fear nowhere to go but up
river nothing to do but say nothing keep moving

we came a long way on the pocket change of what he said
naked before the dream eager to dance the watery circles
that don't easily give up their speculations wanting only to
sing among the yellow reeds bowed to the aesthete of the
dry well crossed a cold land where rabbits circled back set
snares against the long short of our days where shadowy
birds swept low along the horizon we thought often of
home of sweet things carefully chosen to please watched
for clouds

we were told the land was ours for the taking one dare call it gift told we would under god be a people a nation to be reckoned with in back rooms give them their nation we will always have their tongues soon swift on the wing of carrier pigeon word came down the land taken a nation born

1861 the Navajo massacred at fort wingate 1864 the Cheyenne massacred at sand creek 1864 the Navajo massacred at canyon de chilly 1867 the Cheyenne the Sioux the Arapaho massacred at hayfield 1868 the Cheyenne massacred at Washita 1869 the Cheyenne massacred at beecher island 1869 the Cheyenne the Sioux massacred at summit springs 1869 the only good Indian i ever saw was dead- general philip Sheridan 1872 the Modoc massacred at lava beds 1877 the Nez Perce massacred at big hole 1879 frederick w pitkin governor of colorado referring to the Utes Indians my idea is that unless removed by the government they must necessarily be exterminated 1883 the u.s. supreme court decides the american Indian is an alien by birth 1886 -give-me-your-tired-your-poor-your-huddled-masses-yearning-to-breathe

-free 1890 the Lakota massacred at wounded knee the country was growing as smoke trailed low toward the west out of the towns the need to distance ourselves from the unmarked graves the women in their silence understood questions cropped up some lost faith heads rolled of the people by the people for the people in the hollows night fires burned nightriders slumped drunk on swayback mounts their coarse women of hard intent dancing with their hair shaken out the night fires shadowing the hanged men

soon they came from everywhere for love of the nation
took new names for love of the nation quarried the rock
worked the factories fought the wars for love of the
nation gave over sons and daughters the census scripted
possibility but in the cities the unsaid had at them the
streets renamed after dark had at them the last bet laid
down had at them and keeping one eye to their backs
fearing the penalties severe they had at each other in the
cities they grubbed for longevity and died unresolved

died down alleys strung out along the deafness of an age
died without benefit in the streets among the discard and
the crowds died against the chatter of open windows
untold stories spilling down window ledges died behind
drawn shades screams going unheard into the cold sweat
of night died facedown among the many faceless others
died leaving little more than what they came with
the nation came of age in an age when men criminal in
their intent small in aspect made promises they never
intended to keep we needed their promises but let there be
no mythology of plentitude no dogma of the unretracted
or would you rather let it be see how the thing turns out
slide on by it being after all so brief a time to the settling
of the thing or is it simply a matter of having no luck at all
as these men with their secret make themselves at home
in our house of plenty one need not die to walk in the
valley of shadows as do the children left behind walk in
the shadow of who the hell brung ya here anyway

many left to go down after closing to where the homeless
are at home down to where the beggar asks nothing of you
down to where the drunk sees clearly down to where the
shadow girls know they can never go home down to where

you keep it slow and work the dog on the prow down
to where the unspoken spills into the dry space between
each new insistence down to where in golden light flashes
of the sullen ingenuity of the pure meticulous and rats on
the move dream of tunnels opening to the sea in a flash
of we have figured out the thing it was gone only rumor
at ease in our house of plenty it has happened before dogs
take to chasing their tails cats take to the alleys children
turn mean and all that talk of bringing it all back home as
though it were nothing more than a small indiscretion at
the dinner table but for want of a dream one became the
nation's apologist its radical

dressed to kill for want of a dream one traveled the
nation its heavy footed mimic its swill eater its fool
repeater for want of a dream most became the nation's
wasted disconnects the nobodies of its tomorrows and
for want of a dream we let rise up amongst us the lords
of disproportion the purveyors of gouge and they seized
the day now a long winter nears birds will fall screaming
into blind he who once knew nothing of death will run
cursing into the ease of death the mountains will roll call
the names of the forgotten

we never learned how to dance

Thrift Shops

DS MAOLALAI

I liked them
in toronto
more than I do
in dublin - seeing people drag up crates
and unload them
like boxes of bananas
off a boat
in old new york,
checking for freshness
and selling the best. the things
were pretty good.

I got most of my shirts
from goodwill on bloor,
and all of them
blue
and white linen
and clean.

here
it's just
charity. just stuff
people don't want
anymore
so why would you want it? back there
someone would die
of alcohol

or suicide;
very romantic
but tough for the family
to hang on to their trousers.

I still check them out
after work
but it's not similar. I can't pull this stuff off
and wouldn't want to. the only people
who'd leave their stuff to thrift
in Ireland
die
of old age.

The End

CLIVE DONOVAN

This is it, the end.
What end? The end of a piece of rope;
The short end, the thin end, the whipping end.

The end of story, end of a line, of lives
Bravely boring through tunnels and cellars,
Abandoning prisons and citadels,

To end in a horrible meadow of pleasure.
Too many aristos! A sewerage of aristos.
Their statues consume the realm!

Blight takes the vineyards,
Starved roots clamber coffins
Filled with murdered thoughts.

This is the end of a very long note
That curves in a plume like a doomed aeroplane
To crash in a perfect chord:

Smashed ivory splinters. The final rhino.
The last of the sandal trees – and the cedar.
This is the end of the desert – the sea:

Nowhere else to go. Film finished.
Book closed. Lap top lid shut.
Radio knob turned left till the click and the fading glow

Of irreplaceable valves,
Their burnt dust smell
And only future archaeologists to guess and to tell

What purpose headphones, eggcups,
The thin, un-maternal shape of Barbie Doll
And ice-cream scoops.

The end of ice:
All melted then; the last of it licked
By trolls on the summits,

Cactus sidling up the slopes,
The end of tumbling primroses then.
The end of Spring. This is the end, my friend.

CONTRIBUTORS

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