

Welcome to this web supplement to the Weatherings issue of *Agenda* Vol 55 Nos 1-2

Featured artists: Johnny Marsh and Mary Harris

Johnny Marsh says of his work: These are images from my sketchbooks, inspired by the re-reading of two books by Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* and *The Poetics of Reverie* published in 1958 and 1960 respectively. I have had a problematic relationship with these books for 36 years, in that I've lost them, lent them, found them a number of times. I re-found them in a fine second hand bookshop in Monflanquin, south west France, and in English – a joy to be reunited with old flames. Books that resonate with one. The sketchbooks are like cupboards or chests of drawers, furniture that you fill, dependable spaces, personal, hidden away, filing cabinets where the contents are ordered, safe, accessible (in theory). By their very nature they are chronological, an accretion or sedimentation of one's ideas. Drawers can be pulled out, doors can be opened and stuff will come tumbling, bursting out. They are spaces for memory, spaces for reflection – as are compost heaps and piles of autumn leaves, potting sheds and old shoe boxes full of seeds.



Mary Harris says: I have always been lucky enough to live in rural places and the countryside has inspired me to be creative. I am fascinated by the character and resilience of ancient trees, also by contrast the very varied coastline around England. I am trying to express what I see in different ways, charcoal, watercolour and probably most successfully with woodcut printing. I use soft Japanese woodblocks and tools using techniques learnt with Merlyn Chesterman at West Dean College. During Lockdown I have been very fortunate to work with Gaye Jee illustrating her delightful tales about Stan and Dweezil, her cats, and a friend's dogs, Truffle and Winnie. Also I was surprised and delighted that a Lockdown Depression Self Portrait was shortlisted for the King Lear Prize during 2020





Johnny Marsh: clown in wardrobe

David Harsent has published many volumes of poetry. He has won major prizes such as the Forward Prize for the best collection, the T S Eliot Prize and the Griffin International Poetry Prize. In the current 'Weatherings' issue of Agenda, he is interviewed by Patricia McCarthy.

Marsyas

Those who were there, not least the women, opened to his cries.
Two had been to the market. They peeled a peach and shared it.
Others brought bread and cheese and meat and whisky. A child
carried her birthday gift: a linnet, caged. From time to time she ran
a finger along the bars and whistled through her teeth. The bird
dropped its head. A man set up an easel some way off.

His tree took the wind: a shiver from crown to root, and when
the sky darkened, everyone looked up expecting rain
which was there and gone in no time – *drench* – and then the sun again
drawing all towards it. Some workmen turned up and paused to watch.
They understood: haulage, measurement, method. Next there came a lapse
as when water draws back; in that silence, then, the tree grew eyes.



Johnny Marsh: Woman reading in a tree

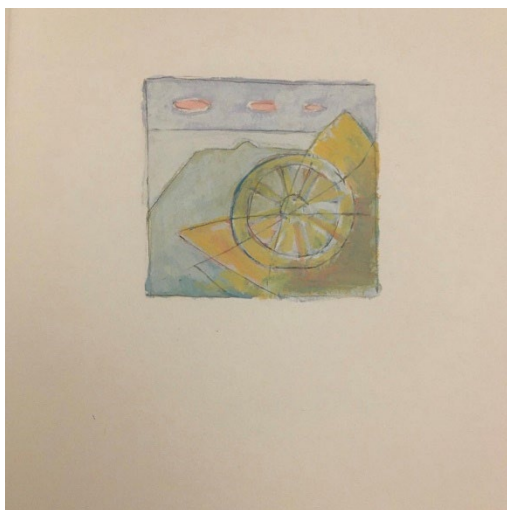
Hilary Davies' most recent publications are as a co-translator of Yves Bonnefoy's *Collected Prose*, (Carcanet, 2020) and co-editor of *Prophetic Witness. The Re-Imagining of the World*, (Routledge, 2020). She has been a Royal Literary Fund Fellow at King's College, London and the British Library, and is a former Chairman of the Poetry Society.

Beyond the Letterbox

for Henrietta on her 80th birthday

Beyond the letterbox forest rises
And the paths of our lives lead into it.
Hold my hand. The warmth of touch fires all.
If we once called to mind one day, one room, one hour
With attentiveness' true touch, what tents of time
We would inhabit. Think of a garden:
Was it a flowering currant that pressed sharp fruit scent
Into the air? Or feathers of carrot foliage
Soft between your fingers? A room, your husband's:
His books' smell and thoughts' vellum.
An evening by a river held in a glass of wine.

We are far into the forest now.
Your child's hand turning over pebbles by the seashore,
A lane with mother and father,
Leading towards a hill's swell,
Something which caught your soul
When life was just beginning long ago.
Beyond the letterbox throng the messages –
Enough, it seems now, to reach to the edge of space –
And yet, look, they are all hung upon a leaf vein,
In a thistledrop, their names all written
On the palm of God.



Johnny Marsh:gouache

Jane Lovell is an award-winning poet whose work focuses on our relationship with the planet and its wildlife. She has been widely published in journals and anthologies in the UK and US. Jane has won the Flambard Prize, the Wigtown Prize, the Geoff Stevens Memorial Prize and this year's Ginkgo Prize. Her new collection, *The God of Lost Ways*, is published by Indigo Dreams Press.

Jerusalem

Pierced in the centre, a perfect circle
marks Jerusalem,
its raised battlements feathered with light.

We imagine the dust, the golden stone,
the view from the curved walls looking out
over parched terraces, twisted trees.

Eight gates lead out onto the land.

The first admits a rampant lion
balanced on his claws, tail whipping
like a snapped flag, eyes blue glass.

An olive tree casts its shadow
through the second, wind flurrying
green to silver.

Three reveals a startled gazelle
mid-leap, its geometric form
the points of a forgotten constellation.

The fourth opens onto green slopes:
a profusion of poppies and mustard,
thistle and ox-tongue.

Carved from water, caves beckon
through a heat haze behind the fifth,
its screech of swifts.

Beyond the flowering hawthorn
of the sixth, flocks of storks descend
onto a lake.

A vineyard patrolled by
hooded crows and jays, snips of vine
between their beaks, is last;

the eighth gate - wrought in gold -
is locked and sealed.

A figure waits outside; He bleeds.



Mary Harris: Los Olivos

Dylan Willoughby was born in London and lives in Los Angeles. Recent poems have appeared in *The Laurel Review*, *Fahmidan Journal*, *Goat's Milk Magazine* (Canada), *Sledgehammer Lit* (Guernsey), *ZiN Daily* (Croatia), *Melbourne Culture Corner* (Australia), and *Bloom Magazine* (Scotland), and are forthcoming from *Pareidolia Literary*, *Amethyst Review* and *Ample Remains*. Photography is forthcoming in *Rejection Letters*.

Love has No Lull, No Limit*

"The tragedy of things is not conclusive" - Geoffrey Hill

i

Immolate clay
the blood-ministry's benison
— listen, the choir's required burning —
startle the gasp, the wind-struck

word-writhe & parle-grapple
breath gathers to itself *is*

ii

A rebellion of flame
cracks the sky

iii

They sewed shut
my father's lips
so as not to disturb
a silent wake

Still, he wakes me

iv

*I, accomplice to visions,
Am a sacrifice to God*

v

— what shocks have shook me —
seizings spurred by electric jolt
to evacuate the torments

(The bitterest scroll
tastes of honey)

vi

“Love has no lull, nor limit”

Godward
tending towards God

we denigrate the pull,
slacken the unearthly cord

vii

My father worshipped
the false river

Two-faced waters
in whose baptism was death

viii

Jerusalem remembers
bodies erected, torn down,
ruined, the hollows of dust

Jerusalem remembers
even if it is not Jerusalem

ix

I hope there are no bones in Heaven

x

We cannot understand the once-bloom
Time is both fugitive and tomb
Short-lived the hawkmoth's thrall

xi

You planted this ghost like a seed
inner whorl whirled, its saint filigreed
in the rustle of being and non-being

Convolvulus —inimitable lamp, or bind-weed?

Opalescence the mirror-trap

xii

So much is beyond repair
memories harden like grisaille
do I petition for what is just?
or entreaty for forgiveness?

Scarify the offending lobe
my brain like a blown flash bulb
refulgent and numbed
(do not mistake this for love)

I pray for the soft canticle of dusk...

*title from C. Day Lewis translation of *Eclogue II*

Diana Cant is a child psychotherapist living in rural Kent. She has an MA in Poetry from Newcastle University / The Poetry School. Her poems have been published in various anthologies and magazines including *Finished Creatures* and *The Alchemy Spoon*. In 2021 she was voted Canterbury People's Poet, was commended in the Hippocrates Prize and was a winner in the Spelt competition. Her pamphlet, *Student Bodies 1968*, was published in 2020 by Clayhanger Press, and her second pamphlet, *At Risk – the lives some children live*, was published by Dempsey and Windle in 2021.

The Old Way

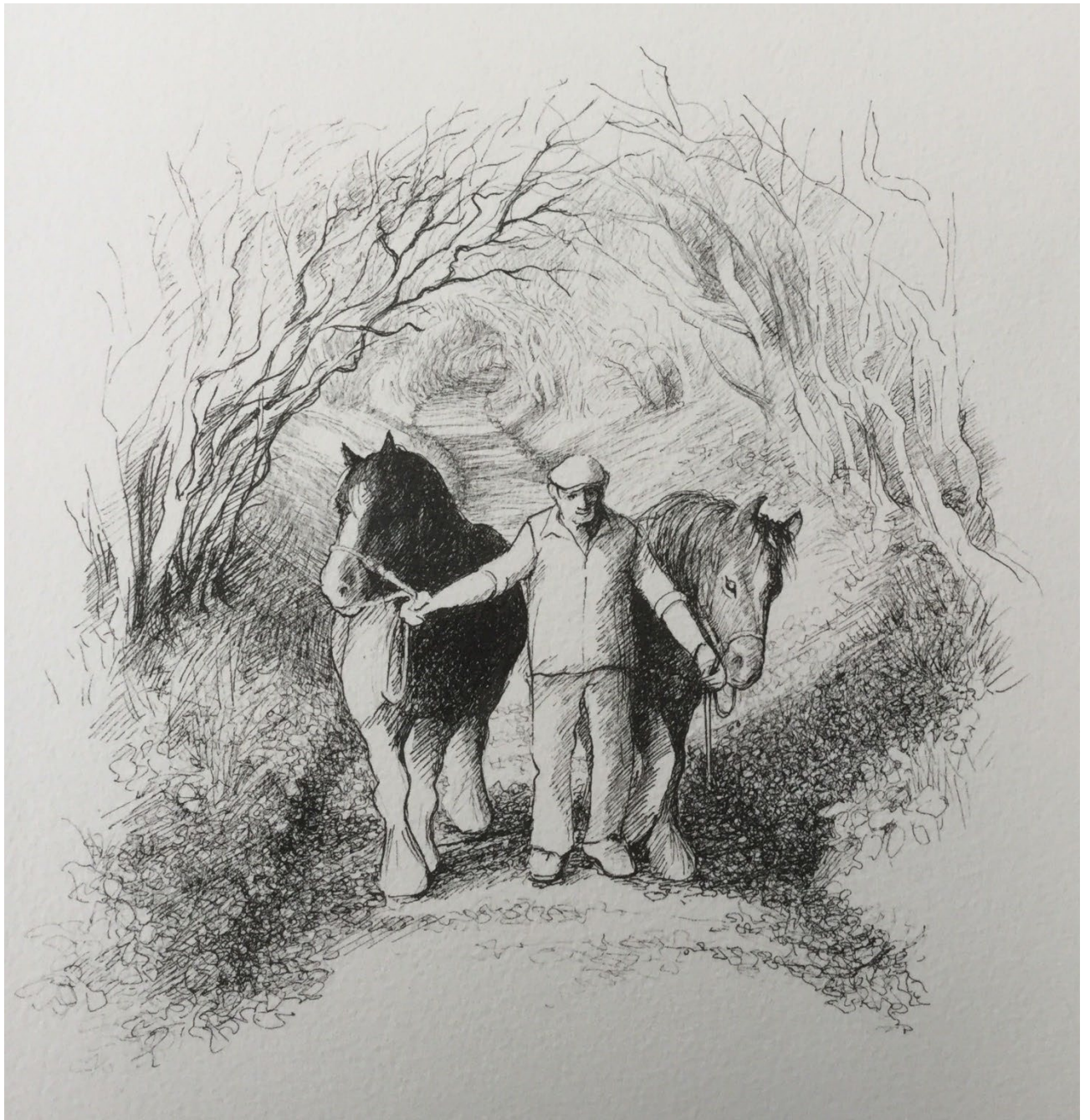
A buzzard swoops as close as breath,
wingtips whisper a roost nearby,
two lime-green butterflies flit
between ramson and herb robert
marbled in the sun

yellow from the cowslip field
the dog rolls in the dandelions,
piss-a-bed, we children said,
like that would stop us picking them
and blowing time away.

We found this drove way years ago
in winter, when the branches arched
a tunnel overhead, and snow
had carpeted a path invisible
until then.

White windflower stars, proud
proclamation of a purple orchid,
moss a prehistoric sea of green
pierced by witches' thimbles, trembling
violet blue.

Two years ago you said
the canopy of the wood was lifting,
opening, letting in the light.
I couldn't see it then and I doubted you;
I see it now.



Mary Harris: 13 Drovers Way, N Yorks

Erica Collier was born in 1953 in Toronto and lived in England and Holland before settling in France where she studied French and linguistics. She opened her own school of English and translation in Paris fifteen years ago. She has been writing poetry concerning the human condition and the mysticism of nature for 30 years and has published in *Beyond the Cloisters* and *Coasters Poetry Anthologies*. She is the great-niece of the poet Edward Thomas, her grandfather Julien being Edward Thomas' youngest brother.

BIRTH

Where were you when the world arrived and you perceived its face,
were all your unstained senses stabbed by the brilliance of space
and when my fingers slipped you from the darkness into light
how did the jewels of your bright eyes ever sustain sight,
how could you, undemanding one, my sudden-seeing startled one,
what did you choose my chosen one,
is here, without, your element,
or is your world within?

Who were you when the waters broke and washed you from your world
and tell me of the water's warmth where noiselessly you curled
coiled inside the membrane of your weightless, wordless cell,
how did the shells of your young ears ever bear the swell
of human din, my naked one, my soft-tongued, slow, unspoken one,
when did you choose my chosen one
to hear the human howl around
and leave the peace within?

When did you ever ask for birth that tasks the buoyant soul,
why did I pull you from the depths of dignity to crawl
into the waste of human love, the hunger of the human race,
how did the roll of your round lips ever take the taste
of air, my sudden-sucking one, my baby, world-of-water one,
when did you ever choose to breathe,
to be, to live without yourself,
lost, my chosen one.

MY FATHER'S HANDS

On those white winter mornings, early,
when our attic bedroom windowpanes
were stiff with patterned ice,
my faithful father would quietly climb
the narrow cottage stairs, head bent,
his long, lean fingers white with cold,
to fill the black wrought-iron stove
with paraffin, close it, sniff it,
strike a spitting match,
and stay to see it safely light
to throw a glow
on our young heads in the low beds,
then he softly stooped again and slipped below
to fill and strike and light more stoves
in other ice-stiff rooms.

At first I smelt the paraffin
and felt the flame,
and then I saw up on the peeling ceiling
the dappled dance of the quick light
projected through the patterned holes
of that black, ornate, iron stove,
shapes that seemed the eyes and nose,
the rich red hair,
the warm smile of my father.

Bernadette Gallagher lives in County Cork. Her poetry has been published in print in the US, UK, Ireland and in various online publications. A selection of her work has been recorded by the [University College Dublin Poetry Archive](http://www.universitycollegedublinpoetryarchive.com) and she has been invited to read her work in Ireland, UK, US, and at the Sahitya Akademi in New Delhi, India.
bernadettegallagher.blogspot.ie

Dreaming of Father

In a room full of people, you appeared
through a door
no-one knew was there.

I ran to you calling your name.
You held me as you did
for my first waltz.

Dancing me towards the exit
I tried to say I was not ready
to leave.

Your Words

On a small piece of paper, you wrote words
for my wedding day.

In my excitement I forgot
to ask you to speak.

Later that year you wrote more, this time for the love
of your life, to be read by her after you were gone.

I slipped your words for me safely into a book
but now I can't remember which one.

Kate Ashton was born in Beith and returned to live in the Highlands of Scotland in 2003, having spent 25 years in the Netherlands. She writes narrative non-fiction and translates from Dutch and Frisian. Her poems and reviews have appeared in UK magazines and webzines including *THE SHOp*, *Glasgow Review of Books*, *Agenda*, *Shearsman*, *Shadowtrain*, *Causeway*, *Molly Bloom*, *londongrip.com* and *Long Poem Magazine*. A pamphlet, *The Concourse of Virgins* was published by Lapwing in 2012, and her first collection, *Who by Water*, came out from Shearsman Books in 2016. She is currently working on a second collection.

the sound of music

for CR

and here she is as a giggling
girl long before she knew
who she would marry or
give birth to + and here she is

long afterwards laughing
because it was true and she
never knew all the things
that were wrong with her

sickness dire diagnosis all
those things the doctors
knew + she never knew dis-ease
so 'how are You?' she'd ask

before your worry could
get through before your
anxious daughter tone could
cross oceans by telephone

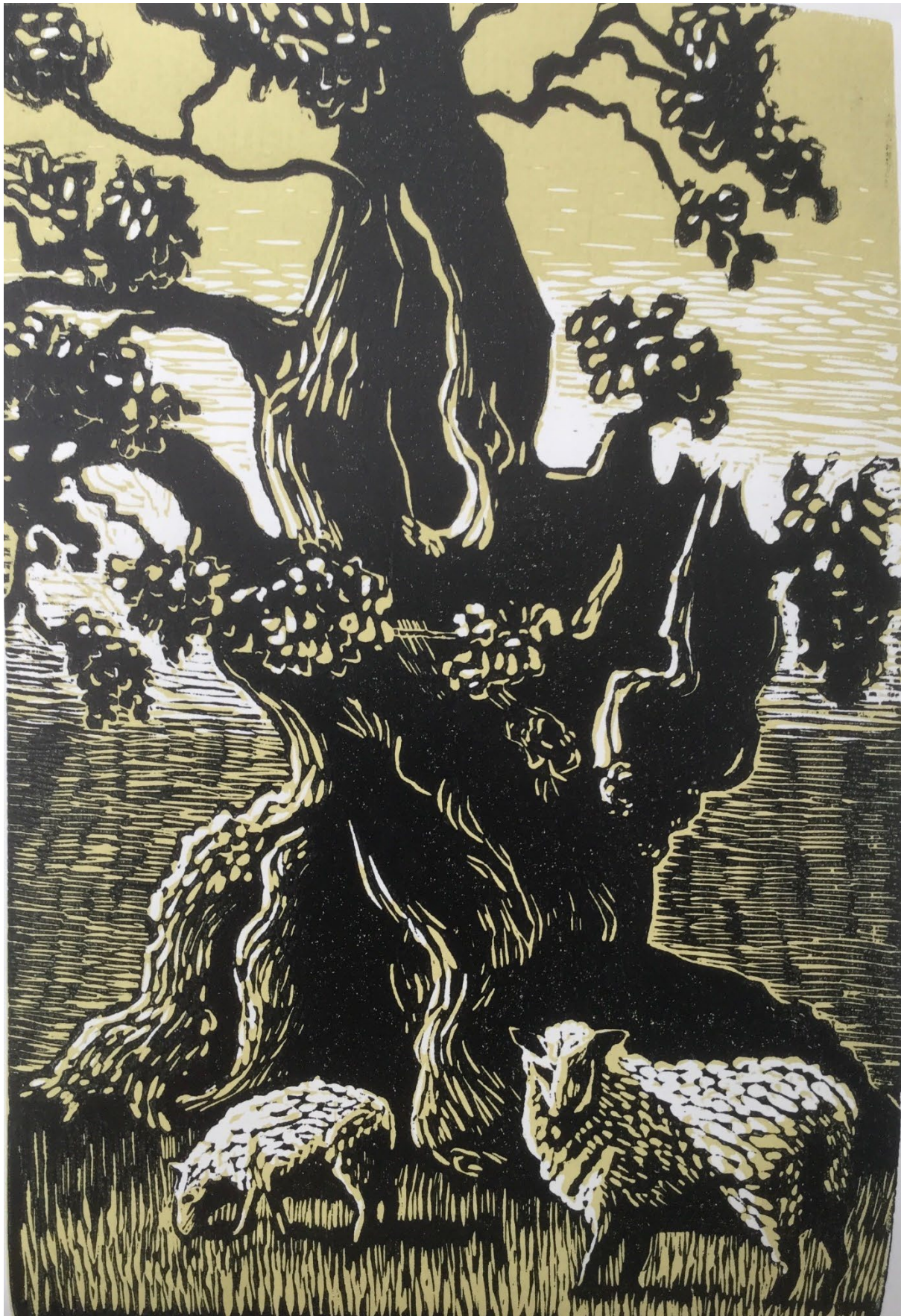
she never knew her sins
forgot small wanderings
until extreme unction
caught her confessionless

as ever bidding 'You go first'
and faced with such undying
faith the priest anointed her
with absolution in excess

of powers granted by his
vows + saw her put on immortal
when the trumpet blew
and heard at last what she

had loved to listen to + the
sound of music twice sung
in the flesh + once young
and once in aged blessedness

shared day by day without regard
for time or place or suffering
or pain or person near or far
or any worldly wrought dogma



Mary Harris: West Dean Oak

Shanta Acharya, born and educated in India, won a scholarship to Oxford, where she was among the first batch of women admitted to Worcester College. A recipient of the Violet Vaughan Morgan Fellowship, she was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy for her work on Ralph Waldo Emerson. She was a Visiting Scholar in the Department of English and American Literature and Languages at Harvard University. The author of twelve books, her publications range from poetry, literary criticism and fiction to finance. Her most recent publications are *What Survives Is The Singing* (Indigo Dreams Publishing, 2020) and *Imagine: New and Selected Poems* (HarperCollins Publishing, 2017). www.shanta-acharya.com

THE FORGIVENESS OF BEES

Dancing in riddles, buff tailed, they buzz and bumble
against the double-glazing – swirling poems
on ecstatic wings, praying without ceasing.
I sit cross-legged, meditating, their swing and jig
the propolis protecting me. One can't be lonely
admiring flowers and trees, clouds, birds and bees.
Day my boiler stopped working, the gasman found
a drift of bees dead inside – warriors, brave
as Abhimanyu who knew how to enter the maze
of life, love and war, the invincible Chakravyuha,
but lost his life for not knowing how to exit the field.
Grief-stricken, not knowing how to save or warn
that instinct can destroy bees and humans, I feel
their forgiveness soft as velvet against my skin.



Johnny Marsh: Gouache



Johnny Marsh: little gouaches

Timothy Houghton's *The Internal Distance* (Selected Poems 1989-2012) appeared in a bilingual (Italian/English) edition from the Italian press Hebenon/Mimesis Edizioni in 2015. The book was presented in Florence at the Museo Casa di Dante. He has worked at Yaddo, MacDowell, and Hawthornden Castle. His recent book is *Where the Lighthouse Begins* (Salmon Poetry, 2020). He has published in *Agenda* and numerous other journals in the U.K. and Ireland. He is a field trip coordinator for Audubon.

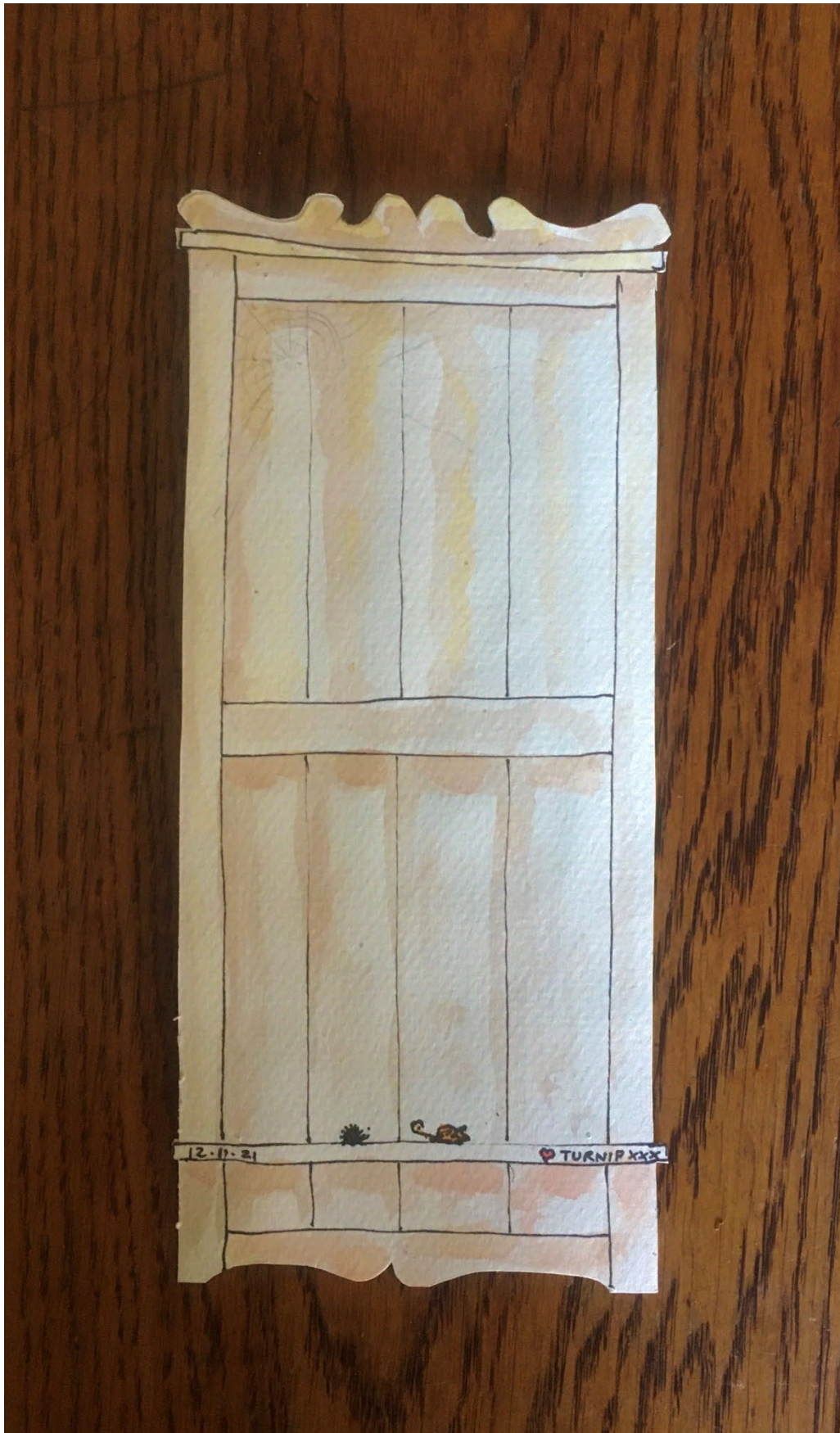
Raising Mantids

Two thousand die each summer,
mainly babies, like chopped-up sprouts
quickly gulped—wrens
savage the bushes. I pace the porch. Ten
might survive to October, when wings burst out
at the final shedding: huge,
clumsy flyers able
to chew the eye of a wren. Last year,
swollen with eggs, one turned her face
to ponder me. I'd seen the male lose its head
in slow, matter-of-fact
dismemberment. But now it's May!
Babies boil up in bushes
when I spray water to track them.
Their black eyes look like colons
unsure of equivalents. They jerk around,
desperate to keep life going. Evil spirits
float among the twigs, black hornets
with excellent vision.
But fall is mantis glory. Ghastly
Assassin Bugs, with daggers and terrifying
cog-wheels from *Eraserhead*,
are snatched with spiked legs
that don't let go. Mantids munch them
with other-worldly calm, pure violence.

First-Year Dorm

after Talking Heads

I saw myself caught
in the chambered nautilus spiraling,
pedestaled above the fireplace
beside the picture of Jesus,
TV blasting as always,
with mom and two brothers. Charley,
the unscripted Cairn, snorted at our feet.
The shag carpet was a carnival
of treat bits, feasting roaches, and trace
urine smell—my hoarded home
guided by mom who loved us.
We had to be careful in the dark
after Dad's death. Issues of *National Geographic*
dating to Sputnik
were stacked on steps to our bedroom.
Those were the endless years
of pine needles
raining down in the yard.
From my bed in the dorm, I stared at the nearly
blank ceiling thinking
How did I get here—
a friend showed me a baggie of pot.
I didn't believe him, naivety
taking a moment
to behold the astounding fact. Home for holidays
was strange weather
I have never grasped entirely. I wonder
about the mysteries
in the mantled nautilus next to Jesus.



Johnny Marsh: closed armoire

Judith Shalan grew up near Cambridge. She worked in London for the BBC Arabic Service and Radio Drama before moving with her family to Kent and then East Sussex. She worked as a journalist and subeditor travelling widely in England and abroad before freelancing. In the past few years she has been able to concentrate on writing poetry. Poems have appeared in *Agenda* in *Agenda's* online web supplement, and in *The High Window*.

Room with a view

The Robinia arches over an ice grey sky, ragged
lace just a hint of blaze

dusky chimneys mark time going down the lane

a blackbird with a sideways look, snatches at
shrivelled grapes

lights in the valley flare then fade
turquoise to orange to mauve and deep grey and

is that you behind me?
How you still find your way along the ridge
warmth encircles, then
gone in a jolt.

And I have to ask you what is owned, all I can see
is it just on loan?

Peter Carpenter's poems have appeared in many literary journals including the *TLS* and *Poetry Review* and have been widely anthologised. There have been six previous collections including *Just Like That*, a New and Selected Poems. A pamphlet is due from Mariscat in late 2022, and a full collection with Smith|Doorstop in 2023. He teaches creative writing for the Arvon Foundation and has worked at many universities including Cambridge, Exeter, Reading and Warwick (where he worked as a Visiting Fellow for the Writing Programme). His chapter on the teaching of creative writing appeared in the OUP *Companion to British and Irish Poetry*. He co-directs Worple Press and lives in Suffolk.

Brexit in Autumn

*'My journey to Tonbridge...is really a kind of pilgrimage
to see the autumn...in the great damp woods of the Weald'*

Sidney Keyes

Walk now down the avenue between London Planes
to one side and horse chestnuts to the other,
both lines of trees kitted out for the long haul.
Spiky fruits on the planes comprise a dense cluster
of stiff-haired seeds that aid dispersal by the breeze,
now just about ready for release. Run your hand
across olive-green bark; the scaly plates peel off
to reveal a creaminess beneath. Berghaus boots
negotiate sodden ground down the slight incline
to a creaky wrought-iron gate; check out
the bristled casing to conkers mirror-glazed,
waiting to be downtrodden or gazed at in awe.
Way over your head canopies tremor and rustle
in a south westerly, have a temporary coming together.

A front rolls in. For a moment all elements broker
a hush. Bidborough Ridge dominates the skyline
above the Weald but you know that somewhere
in the valley past *Greggs*, *Bet Fred* and 'The Chequers',
the Medway flows under a bridge, dividing the town.

Rewilding

Let the fields rest now; commit their names to memory.

Instead, bring on the Longhorns, then the deer,
both Fallow and Red, and let them roam.

Import Tamworths and watch these boar by proxy
imitate the plough. Marvel as they rootle
for earthworms and grubs, snout out docks
and thistles, turn over clods and expose soil
to air before it's shifted by limpet-mine explosions
of cattle shit. Let bees colonise and anthill complexes
establish their miniature Towers of Babel.

Let green woodpeckers alight and feast. Study
the migration of beetles from edge to centre.

Allow the sallow to emerge and by the summer
purple emperors will be spotted over ditched water.

May all this rootling encourage chickweed, fumitory
and knotgrass to take over. Scarlet pimpernel
and red fescue too -- like gatherings from Ophelia's reason
in madness. Let turtle doves breed and a purring male
appear on cue, from behind white gloves, the final act
in the magician's set.

When the clocks go forward repair
to the treehouse set deep in a forest of oak
and elm and out of darkness listen to smatterings
of sleet then snow on twig and leaf.

Staying On

That Ford Anglia Deluxe parked up on the hill
has just under two hundred thousand miles
on the clock but it hasn't ticked over in living memory.
Its pale grey bodywork is grainy with sirocco sand.
Jay walkers in flip-flops ignore signs for Pick 'n' Mix
in 'The Grapevine', just past 'The Venus', where they're
getting a spot of siesta shut eye. A 'Pub for the Living'
is how it's billed. Follow the slope down to 'The Empire'

(six screen complex and pizzeria) and you're sure
that everything is 'near completion'. Bugibba:
pebble-dash sea; tankers housing big oil. See out
your days in the land of the all-day breakfast, close to
the spot where Paul was shipwrecked. Those who study
the chronicles have found no letters to the people from here.



Mary Harris

Omar Sabbagh is a widely published poet, writer and critic. Among his poetry collections are: *My Only Ever Oedipal Complaint*, *To The Middle of Love, But It Was an Important Failure* (Cinnamon Press, 2010, 2017, 2020). His *Morning Lit: Portals After Alia* has recently come out with Cinnamon Press. At work on a contracted Lebanese verse novel, *The Cedar Never Dies*, he teaches at the American University in Dubai (AUD), where he is Associate Professor of English.

Portrait Of A Man

Beirut

The artist we seek may be a master gone missing;
His small blue sign occludes, a blunt mark from a blunt-used
Tool. So, all we have is the painting, left here like a draft
Of where perhaps in time and place a man had loved
In the lineaments of a lived, felt age, facing us.

And when the scholars, as they must, do their digging,
Trying to historicize what just must have been,
Searching for the man (or perhaps, the woman)
Who painted this image, a felled angel formed like this,
Who dealt in the fabric of a seeming saint,
Who'd felt, it's clear, the presence of a certain native goodness
Like silk, a suggestion, upwards, outwards from the paint,

The record, after long and muddy work, shows
Nothing. And all suppose it was a weakness in the painted man,
Questioned and scored by lines of paint as they went
Duly into figured dream, colors mounting colors as if
To burden the picture's frame with the touch of rapt dissent
As it hangs there on the wall, curated like a dare

To posterity. And none, I think, will ever
Unwrap the mystery of this painted face, more
Like a tone of voice, a kind of forlorn music, slowed;
And none will ever be daft enough to look to the far
Corner of the image, a point almost painted-out.

There, we must assume, a wound resides, some unhappy woman
Going on to lie; devising, like only a worn, hurt woman can,
While petering the face we see with the horror of its vision
There at the corner of some fogged or failed decision.

And the painter's question seems to catch him here,
This man of so much strength, and of so much fear,

Only at the moment of his own sheer excision.

Collecting Beauty

For Alia

She treats her slow descent into dream
as though it were a waking pattern
of birds, a perambulating
collation of wings, ratcheting bits of sky
by more – the air, in a secular collect
for a cause that she alone decides.

And as I watch her, kept, and keen
to know again the way her mind may turn,
careering in that sky clothed by wings –
a zealot, a raving follower, a man to die
for her, and for the life that she corrects –
twenty years of tears vanish, finish, dried.

I wish my dreams could be such painted pictures,
earning eyes like these, filled by so much care.



Johnny Marsh: armoire



Johnny Marsh: writing desk

Indran Amirthanayagam (www.indranmx.com) writes in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Haitian Creole. He has published twenty one poetry books, including the just-released *Blue Window* (translated by Jennifer Rathbun) (*Diálogos Books*), *Ten Thousand Steps Against the Tyrant* (*Broadstone Media*, 2022), *The MigrantStates* (www.hangingloosepress.com), *Coconuts on Mars*, *The Elephants of Reckoning* (winner 1994 Paterson Poetry Prize), *Uncivil War* and *The Splintered Face: Tsunami Poems*. In music, he recorded *Rankont Dout*. He edits the Beltway Poetry Quarterly (www.beltwaypoetry.com); writes <https://indranamirthanayagam.blogspot.com>; co-directs Poets & Writers Studio International, writes a weekly poem for *Haiti en Marche* and *El Acento*; has received fellowships from the Foundation for the Contemporary Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, The US/Mexico Fund for Culture, the Macdowell Colony. He is a 2021 Emergent Seed grant winner. Hosts *The Poetry Channel* <https://youtube.com/user/indranam>. New books, including *10,000 Steps Against The Tyrant*, *Powèt nan po la (Poet of the Port)* and *Isleño*, will be published in late 2021 and early 2022.

Robert Bly

in memoriam

I have retired from the game, the hustle, the only
connect. to drive away on a country road in the state
of ten thousand lakes, past combines in wheat
fields, and houses with chimneys, smoke curling
out, and in the yards bounding dogs and beyond
the hen houses foxes waiting to steal inside, sky
filled with carrion birds swooping over still-fresh
flesh of roadkills, The birds will clean carcasses
to bone, and bones will bleach in the sun and sink
into soil with the rains, to pop up in some future
when archaeologists operate remote diggers
and sifters to search for evidence from the day
a man gave up the clap of the gab, got into his car
and drove away into the crow-filled horizon.

Train

Let us take a train across Europe as in the days
before the aeroplane, the pandemic, the I phone.
Let us take our time, get off in the capital

and in two provincial towns before moving
on to the next country: Roma, Verona, Napoli.
Three stops. Three lines. American haiku,

and let us write as we gaze through the windows,
of the world we left behind, the one moving
on the rails, the other waiting on the platform.



A/P
Mary Harris

Colin Bancroft is currently finishing a PhD on the Ecopoetics of Robert Frost. His pamphlet *Impermanence* was published with Maytree Press in 2020 and *Kayfabe* a small collection of wrestling poems was published with Legitimate Snack|Broken Sleep in 2021. His pamphlet *Knife Edge* is due out with Broken Sleep in 2022.

Sun Dial

During the summer the late afternoon
Light falls through the backroom window
And lays squares of heat across the bed,
An illuminated chessboard on which I
Throw myself down like a conquered King,
In a daily ritual of abandonment.
Each day the light shifts imperceptibly,
Climbing higher up the wall, receding
From the high-tide marks of summer,
Until by this mid-winter afternoon,
It has barely cracked the floor beyond the sill.
And there it will flatline for days, in stasis,
A golden thread as thin as the edge of a knife
Until suddenly something shifts it back into life.



Mary Harris: Kings Standing

C.P. Nield's poetry has been published in *New Poetries IV* (Carcanet) and *The Poet's Quest for God* (Eyewear) as well as a range of leading journals, including *The Spectator*, *New European*, *The North*, *The New Humanist*, *The London Magazine*, *PN Review*, *Acumen*, *Ambit*, *The Rialto*, *Poetry Wales*, *Stand*, *Brittle Star* and *Magma*. In 2020, he completed an MA in Poetry at the University of East Anglia.

Purge

My in-breath
panics the lungs,
scrapes short.

Space crawls away
from the rib
cage.

Calm
disappears in one cough –
then a Zen

monk squeaks
Om from
my throat,

but the in-breath runs riot,
rattles the crown, turns
Zapatista

leading the charge,
backed up by a trillion
ragtag cells,

as blood begins to clog
with balaclavas,
militia stomping for liberty.

I bolt.
Taste mucus and iron.
Spit acid and salt.

The Swerve

It starts with a shrug,
a smile,
the faintest swerve –

this stark,
understood,
polarising of bodies.

One sheepish look
masks sly
calculation –

four, three, two –
tensions crackle,
bones sway

and slow,
step a gallant,
embarrassed

elsewhere.
On every path,
a clown-footed

wide-wobble
waltz of preening
contaminators,

splutter-storm
super-spreading
snot-bombers,

all in dry
‘Spirit of the Blitz’
pantomime drollery.

So we swerve,
doff selves,
‘stay safe’,

dance off in our sweet distances,
coffins of personal
space.

Lenny Emmanuel is an American poet and essayist with well over 250 publications in America, Canada, Austria, Australia, and England. He has published seven books, and his *Selected Poems* is forthcoming in 2023. He also has seven books in manuscript almost finished, still requiring final proofing and revising. Having retired after 40 years of Pathology and English departments at six universities, though a native of Savannah and Tybee Island, Georgia, he currently lives in Pass Christian, Mississippi, USA. His Website is www.lennyemmanuel.com

La Femme Fatale

As if programmed to destruct over cliffs,
they live fast, masquerading happiness,
always carefree, without griefs or beliefs.

They become the magic in every room,
their smiles enlighten a world of darkness,
without a thought of an impending doom.

Full of fire the eyes in every room turn,
hands cross sacredly to admire and bless,
but flames we know do not forever burn.

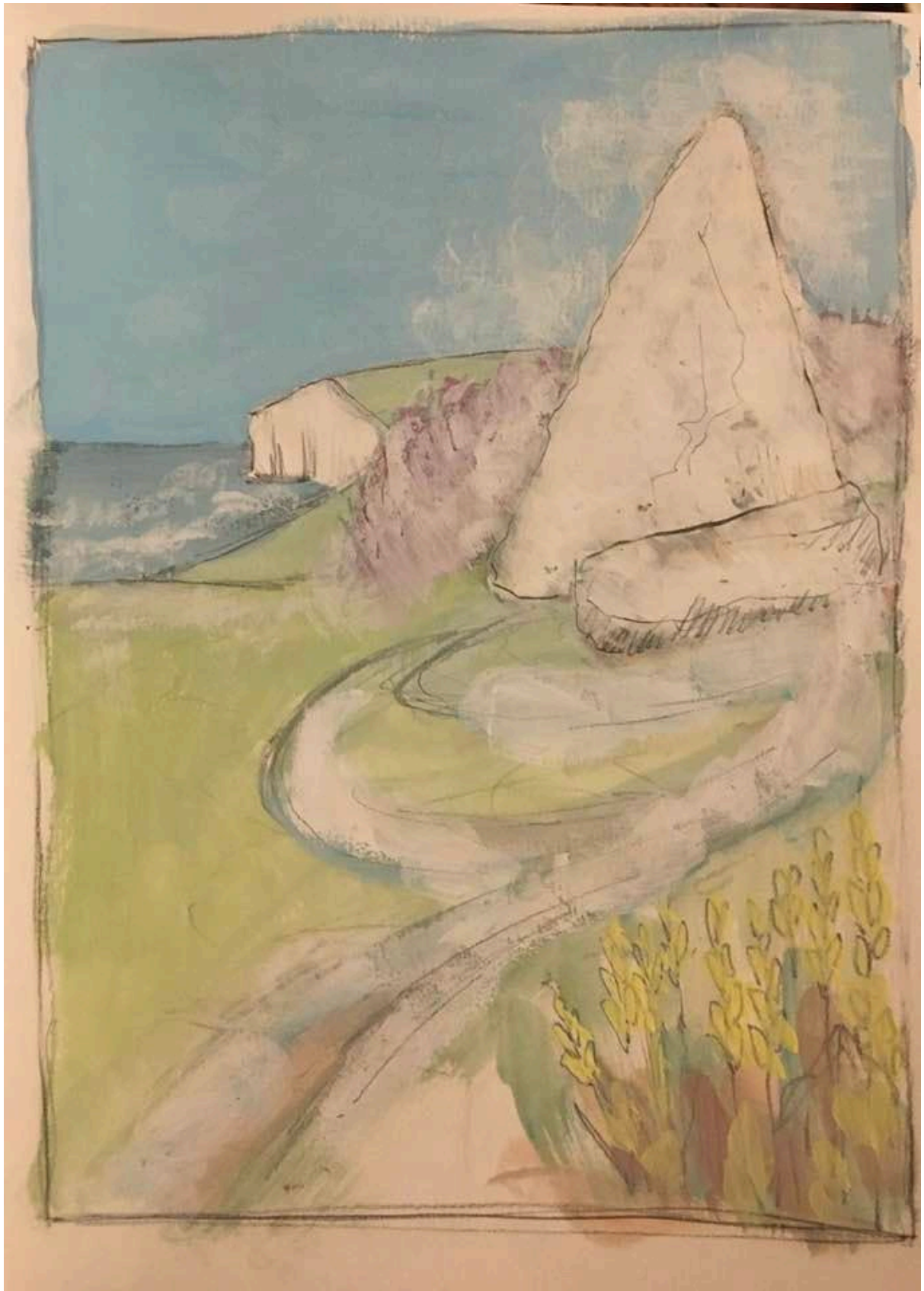
They dance into tides of a drowning moon,
swim in blue rain hurricanes without rest.
Their lives crash into the rocks very soon.

And whether crash of plane or hurricane,
their early deaths make an ungodly quest.
How can old lives not be boring or vain?

But over margins of our world they fled
as their tomorrows mattered so much less,
cherchez la femme, with an awful dread...



Johnny Marsh: untitled



Johnny Marsh: Isle of Wight

Greg Delanty's latest collection of poems is *No More Time*. Other recent books are *Selected Delanty* (Selected and introduced by Archie Burnett) and *The Greek Anthology Book XVI* (Oxford Poets, Carcanet Press, UK – titled *Book Seventeen* in US (LSU Press)). He has received many awards, including a Guggenheim for poetry. In March of 2021 he was awarded The David Ferry and Ellen LaForge Poetry Prize for his body of work. He teaches at Saint Michael's College, Vermont. Delanty's papers up to 2010 have been acquired by the National Library of Ireland and from 2010-2015 at University College, Cork.

Solitario Jorge

On June 24, 2012, Lonesome George was found dead by Fausto Llerana, his care-keeper 40 years.

Only his custodian, his keeper, Fausto,
should be on first name terms with this sage,
the last Pinta Island tortoise to go,

a centenarian, which is hearty middle age
for a tortoise. Each day he'd welcome his care:
this humpback speed-creeping from his cage,

He'd stretch his periscopic neck, throat-smell the air,
open his denture-less mouth as if to say *Hello*,
how's it going, Fausto, old boy? Hard for me to bare

the creeps, slobs, angsts of humans at my daily show.
Lonesome is right; all the rest of my own sent ahead
to Tortoise Tartarus, animal Avernus. You know

I know that you feel for us, but when all is unsaid
we live only here now, the Galapagos of the Dead.



Johnny Marsh: ghost in wardrobe

