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CREATIVE WRITING CENTRE

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ERIC DREYER SMITH JAYNE STANTON WILL TEATHER CLARA WALKER
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THE LAMPETER REVIEW

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Editorial

The focus of this issue of The Lampeter Review is magic realism and the writers of Latin America.

The line between magic realism and fantasy is a fine one, but neither of these short definitions gives the distinction the nuance it deserves: Magic realism is “fantasy written by people who speak Spanish” (Gene Wolfe), or “like a polite way of saying you write fantasy” (Terry Pratchett).

Magic realists don't so much create fantastic new worlds as point to the magic in our own. To paraphrase one authority on the subject, Clark Zlotchew, whose marvellous translation of a chapter of the Argentinian Antonio Brailovsky's novel *Identidad* is printed in these pages, in magic realism there is no hesitation on the protagonist's part in attributing supernatural causes to an unsettling event. In fantasy, on the other hand, much of the dramatic tension is a result of the uncertainty between rational and irrational explanations for what is going on. Perhaps, we think, Frankenstein or Mr. Hyde could really be real.

Many of the fiction submissions we received for this issue embrace the magic-in-our-everyday-world definition of magic realism. Historically, few writers in English have made the jump from fantasy into a world where the heroine, seated in her suburban kitchen, converses with her dead mother about what to have for dinner – unless a sinister pathology is waiting to pounce. But look at Thomas Chadwick's delicious domestic romp *Spider Plant*, Bethany Pope's finger-licking *The Aswang* or Eric Dreyer Smith's evocative *The Last Dream of the Destiny of Rogelio Jones*. Something out of the ordinary is going on here, but the writing never spirits us away from its roots in the protagonist's world.

The definition of magic realism is not a concern of *The Wooden Chair* by Viola Canales. Brought up a Mexican-American in a Texas border town, she infuses

this delightful short story with the sensibilities she was surrounded with as a child. It is appropriate that her story is reprinted from a collection of young adult fiction. Here is an audience happy to embrace supernatural causes, and all the ambiguities that flow from them.

We are happy to have Ignacio Solares' approval to publish C.M. Mayo's vivid translation of his short story *Victoriano's Deliriums*. C.M. Mayo's involvement in the literary life of Mexico, and her essays and translations of Mexican poetry and fiction, have introduced the English-speaking world to little-known jewels of its rich history, and some of the esoteric secrets of Mexico's recent past as well. This story touches on one such episode.

We have not been so dogmatic to exclude some wonderful stories that fall outside the strict definition of magic realism: Carly Holmes' beautifully written *Scarlet Dreams*, Clara Walker's *The Mexican*, a modern Gothic tale, and Maggie Harris's brilliant *The Other Side of the River*. And Tim Cooke's episodic travelogue *The Blue Harbour* seems to have picked up a Latin-American mood or dreamworld along the way and reflected it back to us.

This issue of The Lampeter Review is particularly rich in poetry. The reverence with which we hold the great 20th century Latin American literary figures – Borges, Márques, Neruda, Octavio Paz, Vargas Llosa, to name a few – is evidenced by the translations and attributions we received. We open with Richard Gwyn's striking translations of three Latin-American poets: the Colombians Rómulo Bustos and Juan Manuel Roca, and the Chilean Gonzalo Rojas. We are also especially pleased to print Thomas Clark's translations into Glaswegian Scottish of three Latin-American poets: Ricardo Jaimes Freyre, the pre-Columbian Nezahualcoyotl and the great Peruvian César Vallejo. Then there is *Araucaria* from David Cooke, after Pablo Neruda, *A Lament for Ponciano Díaz* from Jack Little, after Federico Lorca (Spanish rather than Latin-American), and Dan MacIsaac's translation of Rubén Darío's *Symphony in Gray Major*. Most of these are printed alongside their Spanish originals.

There is little value in extending the discussion of magic realism to the original English poems we have included in this issue. Each has its own very personal take on how the supernatural touches the worlds they have created, if they even grant any validity to that duality. Some bring to mind the fairy tale and mythological tradition, others use the Latin American sensibility as a reference point. What they have in common is a freshness of imagination and a freedom to go beyond a sanctification of the ordinary and everyday.

Of these poets we were sufficiently struck by Pippa Little's wonderfully evocative poems to spread them throughout the issue – small nuggets to remind us of the Mexican heart of magic realism. Keely Laufer is another poet whose work we found strikingly original and full of the love of words and word play. The three poems from her sequence *I, Cadmeia* are preceded by a short introduction, but their wit needs no explanation. And Helen Ivory's three beautifully-crafted poems are part of an artistic collaboration on a pack of tarot cards to be published later this year. There are a dozen other poets in this issue, whose imagination, craft, passion and wit we are delighted to share with you.

The issue's featured artist brings magic realism home with a vaudevillian flourish. Will Teather's paintings perfectly complement the written words that surround them. They too tell a story and push reality beyond its limits, often using theatrical metaphors to provoke and point.

Finally we'd like to draw your attention to the scene from Gillian Eaton's powerful play *Nothing Personal*, which tells another side of the Latin-American story, the underworld of illegal border crossings.

To acknowledge how much the writing in this issue is indebted to its Spanish language inspiration, we are including in the Contributors' section brief biographies of the poets and writers whose work appears in translation.

Tony Kendrew, Editor

Three Poems in Translation

Richard Gwyn

What Happens in the Poem - *Juan Manuel Roca*

In this poem
A cat enters, chasing a skein of wool
And climbs inside a wardrobe.
There is a man watering dream pillows.
A blue flask of black china ink.
A red dog enters as if in a painting by Gauguin.
In this poem, a mad mathematician
Counts on an abacus the number of dead
Registered in the plague year.
The coveted woman from the grapefruit stall
Takes off her clothes and dances a belly dance
Around my paper-strewn table.
Between the unbending tracks of the poem
A treasure is about to be found,
A miracle is about to take place.
In this poem the exiles return home.

Lo que ocurre en el poema

En este poema
Entra un gato persiguiendo una madeja
Y se trepa en un armario.
Hay un hombre que riega en las almohadas del sueño.
Un frasco azul de negra tinta china.
Entra un perro rojo como si fuera en cuadro de Gauguin.
En este poema, un matemático loco
Cuenta en un ábaco el número de muertos
Censados en el año de la peste.
La deseada mujer del puesto de toronjas
Se desnuda y baila la danza del vientre
En torno a mi mesa empapelada.
Entre las rectilíneas carrileras del poema
Hay un tesoro a punto de ser encontrado,
Un milagro a punto de ocurrir.
En este poema regresan al país los desterrados.

From *Biblia de Pobres*.

Story - *Rómulo Bustos Aguirre*

I ask myself: why write poetry?
And from some place in the mysterious forest
(in that other story that I am trying in vain
to write with this poem)
the wolf replies
Moving his bushy tail Socratically:
– the better to know you.

At the bottom of all this sleeps a horse - *Gonzalo Rojas*

At the bottom of all this sleeps
a white horse, an old horse
long in the ear, lacking in
brainpower, worried
by the situation, the pulse
running through him is speed: the children
mount him as if here were a ghost, they mock him, and he sleeps
sleeping as he stands there in the rain, hears
everything while I sketch out these eleven
lines. He has the look of a thing crazed,
he knows that he is king.

Cuento

Me pregunto: ¿Por qué escribo poesía?
Y desde algún lugar del misterioso bosque
(de ese otro cuento que en vano estoy tratando
de escribir en este poema)

responde el lobo
moviendo socrático la peluda cola:
– Para conocerte mejor

From *Muerte y levitación de la ballena*.

Al fondo de esto duerme un caballo

Al fondo de todo esto duerme un caballo
blanco, un viejo caballo
largo de oído, estrecho de
entendederas, preocupado
por la situación, el pulso
de la velocidad es la madre que lo habita: lo montan
los niños como a un fantasma, lo escarnecen, y él duerme
durmiendo parado ahí en la lluvia, lo
oye todo mientras pinto estas once
líneas. Facha de loco, sabe
que es el rey.

From *El alumbrado*.

The other side of the river

Maggie Harris

You can believe me or you can believe me not. Mamme always say that truth like water. You got to catch it before it soak away in the dirt. As the Lord is my witness is true true what happen that day, when my mother catch Spanish through the radio.

See me now and I'm a big man in Tampa, Florida. Only that wasn't always the truth. That day I was just playing at being a big man. Truth is, I was a small boy. A small, small boy.

That I was downstairs playing in the yard was only because Mamme was sick. Mamme was never sick. And I was always straying somewhere, me and Ignatius. If not in the bush we were on that river. Georgie, she whisper, Georgie, stay round the yard today, me na feel so good, me belly got nara bad bad. And she tell me how to make bush tea and fetch for her. I don't like to see my mother so. Normally is happy she happy as she moving round the place, brushing and sweeping and pounding cassava and always that radio in the background playing loud those Portuguese and Spanish numbers from across the water. Mamme always listening to that radio, she would shake her head and agree and say um hmm that is right, while she sweeping. I grow accustom to that so I don't see nothing extraordinary when she say, watch out for the man in the radio, he coming. Then she lie down and hold her belly.

I don't like to see my mother so. I used to her singing and dancing up and her little conversations. I used to her up and down our bruk-down steps with baskets of this and that. I used to her swaying down the road heading for the market. I used to her sprinkling water on the dust in the yard and tending her little

vegetable patch. Always is only me and her always forever. I am her little man. So she always tell me and this time she say, stay round and mind me, Georgie. So that's how I staying round on the bridge and that's how I see the salesman walking up the track shimmering like wet lizards on the fence after rain. Ignatius stand by me watching me play with the dog I call Dreyfuss. From nowhere that dog had appeared and he become my shadow. You see Georgie, you see Dreyfuss, everybody used to say. Must be six months or so since he come, appearing on the bridge with his tongue hanging out. After I shoo him away twenty times like the stray dogs, still he sit there watching me; is give up I give up and get used to him like you get used to your shadow. He was smart, real smart. He could do anything a dog could do, only better. Not only would he find anything I hide, no matter how I disguise it, even in Mr Patrick field under the cow-down. Not only could he jump almost half-way up a coconut tree if I throw anything high, but he was more than smart, he could see it in his eyes. You could see it how he run from log to log by Mr Alphonso saw-mill, nimble as a I-don't-know-what and never fall in the water once.

Ignatius was standing by me that day, watching me show him Dreyfus next trick, pretending to be dead when I tell him. He lay down and stretch out his legs by Ignatius feet. Ignatius toenails were black. He stood holding that blue rope he find hanging from Mr Patrick coconut tree even though his mother tell him to put it back where he find it. She bawl him out good, telling him he bringing bad eye and obeah to her door and she would cut his ass to ribbons. But Ignatius hide it under the bridge by we. He like to practise lasso like them American cowboys in the movies. I remember looking up and asking if he not frighten he would get obeah. But he just laugh and curl up the rope one two three time in his hand before he practise spinning, whirling round on one foot and cutting circles between the sky and the dust he was flinging.

Apart from Dreyfuss jumping up and trying to catch the rope, barking loud in his excitement, the place was quiet. Normally Mammee would have the radio on but like she feel so sick she just want peace and quiet.

The salesman walking up the track wore no shoes. The only reason I know he is a salesman is because he carrying a briefcase and wearing shirt and tie. Plus he was going in and out the gaps, stopping at gateways and taking off his hat. Me and Ignatius stop playing with the lasso and watch him. He got evens. Two people call him inside and two people set their dog on him. By the time he got to us, he was sweating. He could have been sweating anyway, I am not to know. That day was a hot one. He stood on the bridge and fanned himself with his hat. Was an old felt

hat with a red ribbon. His shirt was white and his tie and trousers black. His feet were the same colour as the road.

Morning young mens is your mother at home?

Is who aksing? Ignatius tongue sharp.

I didn't volunteer any information. I just stand there with my hand on Dreyfus head. Then I realise that Dreyfus gone quiet, he wasn't baring his teeth like he usually do to strangers.

Thinking back now, I am positive the salesman specifically asked for my mother. He didn't ask for my father. He didn't say, Morning young mens, is your father and mother at home. Perhaps I put too much significance in that. Later, when I wondered where he himself had come from, I would just accept that he knew there were not many men about.

I have a guitar that sings to me now, from the top of the wardrobe. Nobody believes me of course. It is 2014, and I am a big man selling real estate in Tampa. Nobody believes these things anymore. That guitar sing to me just like that radio sing to my mother.

There were not many men about for a reason. And that reason, my friends, was that river. Forgive me if I can't tell you all those other stories that keep me awake at night. Forgive me if I also am unable to name the exact place I grew up. Ha, excuse me, old habits die hard, and names are one of them. No point in digging up all the spite that the dust keep down. Of all the stories, this is only one, although I must add, that at the time it wasn't a story at all, it was just one day in my life.

That life was lived on the banks of a river the Portuguese and Spanish had settled for many generations, tearing it between them like a dog with a bone, interrupted sometimes by the French and Dutch, and finally the English. Until Independence of course, (if you can call it that), but this story isn't dependent on any of that. Or maybe it is. What they all had in common was that river, and of course you can see why, look on any map and rivers do a good job of marking a territory.

It always seemed like another world, that river, even though I knew our shoreline as intimately as I knew the fingers on my hand. Even though I spent my days upon it. It wasn't only its incandescence in moonlight, the romance poets like to write about from the safety of their attics. It was the very fact that it spirited

young men away who were never to return. It would spirit me away too, only I didn't see it like that then, on the contrary it would represent the highway to opportunity.

That river had qualities of its own, independent of what or who it brought, or what or who it took away. Bright mornings would see it shimmer like silver; they said fairmaids shed their scales during the night, that's what gave it its sheen, and just before sunset you could see their shapes forming on the ripples the water threw up like seals, their backs lit up by the dying sun. Listen to me now and you would think I was a poet! Ah oh our slippery tongues! Ha! Only women and old men would say these things.

The men who crossed the river went in search of dreams. Not many returned. Of the exceptions that did, they returned minus limbs or teeth or their minds, the courtesy of piranha or explosives or gunshots. Stories returned with them, of cigarettes extinguished on the backs of women who had skin like armadillos and didn't feel a thing. Violence returned with them and they eased it away in Marvellous rum-shop. Very few returned with diamonds. Of the few that returned with diamonds, Marvellous was one. His rum-shop was frequented day and night by the living and the dead and salesmen bringing Bibles and aluminium saucepans and fragrant soaps and radios, some small enough to hold in the palm of one hand. Of the few that returned with diamonds, Mr Alphonso was another. He had unearthed enough diamonds to build himself a brick house with a veranda where he sat and watched the water writhe from sunrise to sunset. But they were the exceptions.

We lived in a house like any other, my mother and me. A wooden house on stilts. The land flooded at least once a year, and brought alligators out looking for an easy meal. There were two rooms upstairs and a cook-room downstairs, a mere square of bricks where Mammee lit fires for the pot.

In my earliest memories my mother is Mama Wata combing her hair by the window. It falls, thick and black, over her shining shoulder, hair and skin both glistening with coconut oil after her evening shower. She is forever singing. That is how I acquired my love for music, listening to my mother sing as I lay half-awake in my cot. She accompanies the radio to Carmen Miranda and Clara Nunes and Alfredo Sadel, rousing choruses accompanied by violins and guitars pouring through the windows even as the night falls and the crickets begin.

I can't let the salesman bother my mother when she's sick. I stand before him on the bottom step and shake my head. No, I say, No my mother not home. But the salesman holds his hat with his two hands in front of his belly and circles it round and round, his thumbs sliding on the ribbon. His briefcase sits on the ground like a dog between us, waiting. Then my mother's voice drops down through the side window. Georgie? Georgie, somebody there? Before I know it the briefcase floats up into the salesman's hand and he starts to climb the steps and I have no choice but to stand aside and watch him place one bare foot after the other climbing up. I went to follow him, my foot getting ready behind his, but his hand stays me, say, stay boy, and I was my mother's little boy, not her little man.

That was when Dreyfuss starts to whine, one mewling after another, he sounds like a baby. Shush Dreyfuss I say. Ignatius tries to tempt him with the lasso. He whirls it round and dangles it like a promise high above his head. Another time Dreyfuss would have leapt on that rope like a chicken hawk on a fish head. Leap with his jaws snapping open like an alligator. But now he just keeps his head down between his paws.

Ignatius and I both jump when we hear my mother cry. Both of us rush up the steps and I remember chiding myself what stupidity catches me to let a complete stranger enter our property and enter the sanctum of my mother!

The salesman was sitting at the table with his briefcase open. It disappoints me to see there is very little in it apart from a few jars of coffee and a scattered stack of records. His eyes catch mine and he laughs, a note of money fluttering between his fingers. I turn to my mother who is no longer lying in her bed as I left her, but fully standing, looking the same as she did the day before and the day before that. I remember thinking, what use are records? We have no record player; but the salesman's voice distracted me.

Speech! He said brightly, there is a time for speech! And my mother took on the coy look of a girl and twirled the edge of her hair with her fingers.

Ice, young man, ice! The salesman instructs me. Your mother and I have just conducted a successful exchange. My eyes move from my mother to him, and to his fingers where the money still flutters. As I watch, my mother walks closer to the table and lifts a record out of his case. There is something about the way she walks. She's not quite touching the floor. My eyes are drawn to her waist where a narrow red ribbon is firmly tied in a reef knot.

When I come back with the ice the salesman was gone. I would only find out that Dreyfuss was gone later, because the problem I find with my mother then was that she start to address me in Spanish. Of course I did not speak Spanish myself but I have heard a few words from the radio through those love songs that constantly wail words like 'te quiero,' and 'amar'. From that day onwards Mammee speak nothing but Spanish. That was to cause a lot of confusion in my life. So much confusion that it would lead me to Tampa, Florida, with my father's guitar. But that is another story.

I search for that dog. I search for that dog in every trench, every doorway, every upturned boat. I beat down the bush with a cutlass at the back of our house and shout his name. I holler his name with my cupped hands from the banks of the river until next morning Mr Alphonso beckon me up on his veranda. Because fear had already filled my heart with the appearance of the salesman, the occurrence of my mother speaking completely in Spanish, and the disappearance of Dreyfuss, I wasn't frighten to climb up Mr Alphonso doorstep and sit on his veranda. I forget all those things people say, how he half-mad searching for diamonds and infected by mercury. I forget all those other stories what come back with the half-men. I only look at Mr Alphonso, a old man in a Panama hat sitting on a cane chair, and watch him suck tobacco smoke from a clay pipe. Boy, he say, Boy, and he clear his throat and move his eyes from the pipe to the river where the dolphins were question marks riding behind the fisherman's boat. Boy, you mother, she deh? And I say, yes Mr Alphonso, she deh. And he say, don't concern yourself with the dog, boy. Your dog done he business. And he turn and watch me with he yellowy old man eyes and he say, you don't get something for nothing in this world boy. Remember that.

These days, driving round Tampa, a city far removed from those shacks and nights full of the songs of tree frogs where sunset drop sudden and the scales of fairmaids light up the river like slices of silver moons, is a far cry, this city of noise, these main roads blasting their pistons like gunshots, the never-ending explosion of hip hop and country and Memphis preachers, these sidewalks and front yards and driveways where I pull up to climb steps made of stone to knock on front doors which will be sometimes opened by housewives with their hair in curlers or balancing babies on their hips, or by disgruntled men rustling newspapers and adjusting their glasses, where the open door might offer a glimpse of a blue pool shimmering out back. So many sum me up in one look – another fast-talking salesman in a sharp suit with a leather briefcase and shining, polished shoes. But there is another me, oh yes, you know.

Three Poems

Helen Ivory

Strength VIII

When she rode into town
on an unsaddled lion,
the world was asleep;
all pitch velvet hush.

They had arrived
at a slow migration of company –
now she was more lion,
and lion, more she.

They walked knuckled paths
on steady paws,
while her human voice
sang calm the fell night beasts.

Temperance XIV

This angel is a triangle
held by a square.

This angel is red feathered,
haemoglobin.

Holds ice in one hand
oaked wine in the other

dips a toe into high sea,
weighs it up with his blood.

Justice XI

She arranges the day's clatter
on her desk in neat little stacks
with the cool of an accountant
constructing a spreadsheet.
Dead centre, a spirit level
and its plumb bubble.

The walls of her office
hold all of this square
and whatever you have done,
she holds square.
You place a red apple on a bone china plate.
She bisects it with a silver blade.

Victoriano's Deliriums

C.M. Mayo

A translation of Los delirios de Victoriano by Ignacio Solares.

Translated and published with the author's permission.

Background: In 1913 General Victoriano Huerta led the coup d'état that overthrew Mexican President Francisco I. Madero. Madero, an ardent Spiritist, had led the 1910 Revolution, then campaigned for and won the presidential election in 1911. As President, Madero had trusted General Huerta, a fatal mistake. Huerta's own rule was troubled and brief. In 1914 he fled for Europe and was arrested on arriving in El Paso, Texas. He died there in early 1916 from cirrhosis of the liver.

After staying some days in Fort Bliss's military prison and posting a bond, Victoriano Huerta, ex-president of Mexico, was permitted to reunite with his wife, Emilia, in a cottage on Stanton Street in El Paso, Texas, under house arrest. The authorities, proceeding at President Carranza's request, had arrested him as soon as he arrived in the United States. Huerta fell into a deep depression and began drinking more than ever. He would drink, remember, and cry, and he suffered several attacks of delirium tremens.

Now and then Father Francis Joyce, the chaplain at Fort Bliss, who spoke very good Spanish, would visit him. He would arrive unannounced, sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon.

It was always the same when his wife had to wake him, which almost never happened because he scarcely slept at all. But that afternoon Huerta was asleep, deep asleep, not even having undressed or covered himself with a blanket, and his wife knew what she was risking. Expecting the worst, she touched him gently on the back, as if to sing a lullaby:

“Victoriano, Victoriano...”

Huerta woke with a groan of a snore, a convulsive shake of his knees and hands, his entire body and voice throwing off something horrible, like an enormous piece of some sticky gunk, dragged from the bottom of the dream. She tried to calm him.

“Tranquilo, tranquilo, it’s me, Emilia.”

A needle stabbed his brain, a hammer pounded his temples.

“What is it?” with words flattened by fatigue.

“Father Joyce has come to visit you, that is why I dared to wake you.”

“What time is it?” he asked, blinking with lightless pupils, passing a hand over his wild hair, his jaw lifted a little, though his forehead went back as if still sliding on the pillow.

“Five in the afternoon. Since you are going to talk with him, have something to eat.”

“I am not hungry. I feel very bad,” he complained, straightening himself on the bed, as if he might break his bones in the effort. He put on his glasses, the ones with the smoky lenses, like a daily disguise, indispensable.

To her it seemed that in his eyes, with or without glasses, there was some obstinate image (of whom?). Whether before or after drinking, of waking, of sleeping, it was the same acid cold tremor of a presentiment, maybe the same filthy exhaustion, the same leftover of an endless sobbing (by a man who never before cried), so in another world that it was precisely into this world that now — Tuesday, January 5, 1916 — he was affixing himself, minute by minute, with his alcoholic fantasies.

The house had only two rooms, the larger one serving as both parlor and dining room, and the bedroom. There were dark woods, thread-bare carpets, murky upholstery, ragged curtains, empty flower vases, a small kitchen with smoke-stained walls. In the bedroom, an old mahogany dresser, the only light from two little candlesticks on the night stands, and in the dining room, a floor lamp with a parchment shade which gave no more than a yellow stain within the gloom. An impersonal and sad house, perfect for the house arrest in El Paso, Texas of a Mexican ex-president rejected by his people, depressed, and gravely ill. When Father Joyce arrived, Doña Emilia told him about the attack her “poor husband” had suffered some days ago, begging him not to tell that she told. Victoriano had been drinking all day, as he drank lately, and by afternoon, sitting on the sofa in the parlor, he started to shout frantically and point at a window to the street.

“You! You!” The syllable was more a drowned grumble.

Even behind the dark glasses, his eyes seemed to have enormous pupils.

Emilia could see that he was paler, almost as pale as a cadaver. Copious sweat ran down his temples, soaking his neck and his shirt. His rigid arms shook. His whole body shivering, imprisoned in a spell. Of what?

“Victoriano, what is happening?” she said, running to his side, trying to embrace him around the shoulder, passing a hand over his sweaty forehead.

But he only looked through the window and shouted, “Him! Him!” with words that seemed on the brink of all language.

Then he took a long swig from the bottle of cognac, and that calmed him a little, to confused sentences that a convulsed, childish weeping reduced to threads, then a dry, brief hiccup.

Until this delirium, everything had been moderately bitter and difficult, but since then, she felt she could not handle him, she needed help. She wanted to call a doctor from Fort Bliss, but Huerta stopped her, arguing that they would take the opportunity to send him to jail, a tiny little nasty-smelling cell, far from his wife, like last time.

“What must worry him is that there he would have no cognac,” said Father Joyce, with a touch of irony in his voice. He was a tall, blond, impeccably barbered man and his Roman collar seemed an integral part of his person.

Huerta and Father Joyce sat at the dining table to converse. A pot of coffee percolated in clouds of vapor in the kitchen, where Emilia remained. Huerta yawned and drew his hands across his face as if tearing at spiderwebs. Father Joyce began by suggesting that he considerably reduce the amount of cognac he was drinking every day, but Huerta returned to the topics he always touched on, the only ones he seemed obsessed by, no matter to whom he was talking.

“You see that all our plans to rescue the country have failed,” he said with a hoarse voice that seemed to drown in the back of his throat. “Like it was nothing, they killed Pascual Orozco, for whom I came to the United States, Creel could not get the rebels here to agree, the Germans did not deliver on their promises, and the Americans spy on me day and night. In Mexico, it won’t be long before those who are fighting me fight among themselves. You know what the traitor, Jorge Vera Estañol, who was my Minister of Education, just wrote? That he could not consider me human for my infinite capacity for cruelty. Imagine that. Son of a bitch. After I did nothing more than try to bring peace to my country...”

“By whatever means, General?”

The question was a bullseye in the heart, and Father Joyce knew it.

Because, again, lately, Huerta’s memories and reflections were like butterflies tumbling toward the flames in which their wings would burn. He was not yet able to justify everything to himself with the little song that, “I did

nothing more than try to bring peace to my country...” because certain scenes harrassed him at all hours and even inserted themselves into his dreams. He would look back at them again and again, and though the cognac could keep them at bay for a few moments, they would come back in greater vividness. This very morning it seemed to him he relived his campaign to “pacify” Morelos during the interim presidency of De la Bara, in 1911. “Do you remember, General Huerta?” he asked himself when, a little after waking, he took his first glass of cognac.

They were breaking down doors of hovels with their rifle butts, they threw down planks, timber, furniture, adobe walls, while the inhabitants defended themselves as best they could with sticks, brooms, sickles, hoes, machetes, and the women even with their fingernails and buckets of boiling water, or they would crouch behind tables, trunks, counters, mattresses, boxes or sacks of dirt and from there, throw whatever they could grab, with a hate that went even further, taking, in exchange, the well-aimed projectiles that finally pacified them (“pacify the south, General, at whatever cost”). They were silenced bit by bit, their moans died down, the last cries of children inside the tumult of eddies of dust, walls blown open, broken-down doors, pulverized things; they were silenced by tongues of fire that rose from so many hovels in the zone: a mixed up confusion of these attacks so full of cruelty, that left thousands of Morelenses dead and that only someone like General Victoriano Huerta could have perpetrated. Or no, General?

But in his reports Huerta justified these acts by underlining the Morelenses’ brutal and vengeful responses. At one time he talked about five men sent on a patrol, purely on reconnaissance, and not long afterwards, in a little pueblo, they were found in their death throes, men and women still beating them without mercy. “They tore off their uniforms so that, dead or dying, they could insult their manhood.” These people needed to be taught a lesson and Huerta ordered that they be burned alive, drenching them with gasoline and then lighting the fire. Do you remember, General, seeing the bodies burning, crackling, writhing like snakes in the dirt, and within a sudden blaze, hair like great reddish plumes?

You only fulfilled your mission, no?

Or when President Díaz’s government gave you the task of “pacifying” the remote territory of Quintana Roo, that is, exterminating the last Mayas of the Caste War. A general named De la Vega was at the head of operations, one who preferred to utilize conventional tactics, ineffective in a guerrilla war. Huerta wrote to Bernardo Reyes, Minister of War, accusing De la Vega of incompetence; in reply, Huerta was given command, inculcating in his men a spirit — as the son of a bitch Vera Estañol would say, “a cruelty” — which he did not have before.

Remember.

The general's shining eyes that see into a sudden blaze — ah, the role that fire has always played in his military career — hovels turned into sputters of wood, adobe, cans, mats, unidentifiable objects that exploded, disintegrated, disappeared. The barrage increased and the Yucatecs remained buried under a cloud of smoke that climbed the foothills and then opened, here and there, in craters, from which, reached by new explosions, go flying pieces of roofs and walls. A group of his best soldiers enters the small city, between puffs of smoke that must be shots. They disappear, swallowed by the labyrinth of roofs made of tiles, straw, stakes, from which, now and then, surge flames. "They're mopping up all those who survived the artillery," Huerta thinks. And he imagines the fury with which his efficient soldiers will avenge their comrades, hung in a string of trees near the capital, eliminating the ambushes that cost the Federales so many lives. Well done.

In October of that 1902, Huerta could report to Bernardo Reyes that the peninsula had been pacified, for which he was promoted to Brigadier General.

There, before Father Joyce and with his wife making an insufferable noise in the kitchen—lately, every noise, no matter how faint, resounds in his head — Huerta thinks that a person inebriated — above all, that: inebriated — by power, as he was, does not expect death. It does not exist, and with each action and each decision one takes, one denies it. If one receives death, it will probably be without knowing it; for him it could not be more than an accidental crash or spasm.

That is why the worst torture they could have inflicted was not to kill him in one of those many battles, but this death, so slow and intolerable, that he suffers in this little house in El Paso, Texas, his wife by his side, all his friends gone, the plans for the country's recovery aborted, and the burning eyes of a priest — a gringo, moreover — that do nothing but judge him and counsel him to quit drinking. By God. In those blue eyes, as on a screen, he once again sees each one of the people he killed with his own hands — including one of his soldiers, who suddenly, exhausted, sat down on the side of the road and whom he immediately shot in the head because, he said, "my soldiers don't get tired" — but also those, and there were so many, whom he ordered killed.

His close friend Jesús Cepeda, governor of Mexico City, whom, after a heated a discussion, he first sent under arrest to San Juan de Ulúa, where someone shot him, then he was thrown into the sea, meat for the sharks.

Abraham González, thrown under the wheels of a train. Serapio Rendón, shot in the back of the head as he was writing a farewell to his wife. Senator Belisario Domínguez, who died tragically and spectacularly — they cut out his tongue — for having called Huerta a dictator, traitor and assassin.... The deaths

of Madero and Pino Suárez, who departed as if by their own hands, for which he was implied a traitor, and such pointless deaths, for he easily could have sent them into exile — wasn't he the one who escorted Porfirio Díaz to Veracruz, to board the *Ipiranga*, that would carry him to exile in Europe? But what happened to him, to Huerta, with this so unconditional and even what he would call loving attitude of Madero towards himself? As if he could sense some quality of loyalty and humanity that Huerta did not recognize in himself. Or did he have that? But the truth is that he hated nothing more in Madero than his goodness, and that is why he had to finish with him and quickly.

All of sudden, Huerta could no longer endure Father Joyce's knife-like eyes. He had turned pale and the coffee cup trembled in his hand. He jumped up from his chair, as if escaping a nightmare. In fact, at this moment, Father Joyce was looking at the floor so as not to intimidate him, although, thought Huerta, the bastard was faking, he was spying on him from between his eyelashes. Was he becoming paranoid again, as one of the Fort Bliss doctors, damned gringo, diagnosed him? Without saying goodbye, he left the dining room, moving towards the bedroom, balancing himself on the furniture and cabinets.

That night he had his last hallucination and shivers. Emilia applied some turpentine and mustard packs to warm him — before she decided, finally, to call Dr. M.P. Schuster from Fort Bliss. Suspecting that an inflamed gall bladder was impeding bile from entering his intestine, the doctor was inclined to operate on him as soon as possible. The surgery was performed in a hospital in El Paso on January 8, 1916. Dr. Schuster removed several stones from the gallbladder, but as he informed the press, the operation had revealed more serious complications. While Huerta was on the operating table, the doctor detected a serious degenerative disease of the liver, very probably toxic cirrhosis, common among chronic alcoholics. Two days later, Huerta underwent surgery again, an apparently simple procedure to extract excess liquid from the intestinal conduit, but nothing was done for the cirrhosis. For about three days it seemed the patient was improving and he was taken home, but then he began to decline and to have new hallucinations, according to his wife. He said he received a visit from Francisco I. Madero, who came for him, that he saw him with perfect clarity, just as he saw him before, during his delirium tremens, through a window to the street, in the jacket and striped trousers, the shirt with the starched collar, the bowler like a mushroom. He passed his hands over his forehead, he smiled at him, he comforted him. That Francisco I. Madero who had so trusted him, to the point of absurdity — and why not recognize it, General? — foolishness.

On January 12 the doctors called Father Joyce to his bedside. And now he and Father Joyce spoke at length. He prepared a brief addition to his will in which he left his now very few possessions to his wife, with the exception of a box

of documents he entrusted to Father Joyce, on the understanding that the priest would try to get them out of Mexico to deliver them to his family, and arrange for their publication. By this time Huerta was too weak to sign his will, but he managed to place an X in the appropriate place.

His surplice on his shoulders, falling from both, Father Joyce bent over the dying man, who seemed to be smiling at him. The sacrament of extreme unction took on an unusual solemnity. No doubt there was the smell of oil. Oil on the eyelids, on the lips, on the hands, on the soles of the feet. On departing, the priest left a smell that lingered in the air. A smell of wax and mothballs.

In Mexico, on learning of his death, one of the more reliable historians of the time, Alfonso Taracena, wrote in his diary:

“Yesterday at eight-thirty in the morning of January 13, 1916, General Victoriano Huerta died in his house in El Paso, Texas. It was said that, on the edge of his grave, he called for a priest. So perhaps he did not keep the secret about the assassination of Madero and Pino Suárez.”

Malinche, Immortal in Mexico City

Pippa Little

But the poor remain and the sky

Albert Camus

Along telegraph wires
looming out of rotten-egg fogs
I thread dirty stars, bright razors,
ganja fumes through your women's hair,

on men I map sweat-continent, arouse
where follicles ooze diesel, that tic /
reflex at their thighs' fork.
I am water in split pipes, lizard

from a shadow's crack, I am
tow-headed children's out-held palms
in the 4-lane highway, barrio
bullets in unplastered walls my hot, wet kiss,

I am the baby shoe hung on the bus rail,
cemetery bouquets moist and grey.
Look for me between your teeth, in your fingerprints,
Santa Muerte, I am always smiling.

Doubt

Ann McGarry

Sister Mary Rosa sits on the edge of her bed.
Her vows are worms in a hole.
Her breasts hurt and when she looks inside
She finds a crowd of babies.
He has changed His mind, she thinks.

On the way to chapel she steps on a worm.
Already her soul is in labour.
This is my body, this is my blood.
When she bows her head to pray
She feels the sword of Solomon lick her neck.

The Mexican

Clara Walker

My sister, Catrina, and I met the Mexican in a bar, as October turned into November. We warmed ourselves against the cold outside, over mojitos and merengue and both allowed ourselves to be played like dying fish on the end of the gaze from his orange eyes.

That was how it started.

After that evening, Catrina's metamorphosis devoured the following two weeks, to the accompaniment of accusations, insults and promises of retribution. At the end of the process, she was installed with the Mexican in his bedsit in Scarborough while I was left, with our parents, in Whitby. We three in Whitby, with our vanilla house, wallpaper paste religion and polka dot politics were vacuum packed and confined, by her, to the bottom of a metaphorical meat freezer. She wanted us far away enough to avoid any risk of our contaminating her neoteric Aztec sensibilities. We reeled and wondered how it could all have gone so badly wrong, so quickly.

My parents and I entered the period where our texts were unanswered, our emails were unopened and our Facebook posts unliked. Our shared twenty year-old happy family history was surgically dismembered and burned in her charnel-house. About a year later, we learned, third hand via an ex-neighbour with whom my father had once engaged in some sort of dispute about a hedge, that she and the Mexican had been married among marigolds, in a ceremony in Patzcuaro in Northern Mexico.

She had him. I had the crap she had left in her newly wedded, marigold wake.

Two years after the night in the bar, while my parents were at Mass for the holy day of obligation, she got in touch with me again, by phone. By then, I had passed through and emerged from the grieving process, had lain the ghost of my little sister and best friend painfully to rest with all the other forcibly forgotten saints and souls.

The next day, in the café in Scarborough, where I had suggested we meet, she crossed her legs and sneered, disapproving of the plastic chairs and the plastic air. A scarf was knotted tight around her throat, rich ambers and golds were imprinted with stony black distorted heads, flaring nostrils, megalith teeth and a singular, otherworldly eye. The Aztec scarf-eye followed me across the table, endorsing my sister's hypnotic disapproval.

'I like your scarf,' I lied, eager to please her. She was back in touch following two years of nothing, after all. Perhaps there was a chance that everything could go back to how it was before the Mexican had chosen her instead of me. Perhaps our cold, grey Mum would regain her colour, she might even stop trembling and sniffing all the time. Perhaps Dad, previously a thankless consumer of Mum's care would stop fussing around his bereaved wife, like an annoying old hag.

In the café, my sister and the Aztec eye sneered afresh at the African rather than South American provenance of the coffee, for which I would be required to pay as she had no purse. She shuffled her ankles, feet and backside, arranged in a bony triangle on the chair.

'Mum and Dad are getting older, this is really hard for them,' I tendered.

'Of course they're getting older, everyone does, older and older until they die. Unless they were never really born in the first place.' Was it my sister speaking or the Aztecs on her scarf? It was my turn to shuffle. I heard the bones in my own backside rattle and crunch on the plastic chair.

'So what have you been doing?' I swallowed the concluding 'in the two years since you cut us all off and left me to deal with Mum and Dad, while you ran off with our Mexican,' as she was already looking for excuses to take offence and leave. I wanted her there a bit longer. I wanted to see her suffer.

She flicked away the question with an arc of her hand and the bones crunched in her wrist. It was an old gesture of hers, from way back. From well before the evening in the bar. As she did it, the cuff of her cardigan rose and a purple bruise slipped into sight. She caught the cuff and held it tightly between the middle and third finger of her right hand. The ribbed stitching was already stretched, as though pulling it down had become a new habit of hers.

'What's wrong with your wrist?'

'Nothing.' Her spit, which landed on the table between us, was orange.

We returned then to our separate lives. When Mum and Dad next asked whether I had heard from Catrina, I said not. She hadn't told me anything worth hearing, or passing on, after all.

The next time was six months later. It was spring by then, so I suggested we meet in Whitby, somewhere in the open air. I would be able to see her better,

in the light. She chose the churchyard where, presumably, she would be able to sit cross legged on the floor, or whatever it was she preferred doing these days to sitting on plastic chairs in a café.

She still wore the same scarf but she had changed colour. She was bleached. Her bones strained to break through the skin at her knuckles and at the hinge of her jaw.

Her gestures were staccato now.

Her eyes ricocheted around the walls of the churchyard, bounced in upward arcs off the tops of the gravestones, as though she was expecting something to fall on her head. The cuff of her cardigan was still stretched, she still clasped it against her wrist with the middle and third fingers.

‘How’s... M ... M ..?’ As soon as I started, I realised that I didn’t know the Mexican’s name, only that it had begun with an ‘M’ and was long and complicated. All I remembered clearly were the hypnotic clench of his orange eyes and the way he had smelt of saffron steeped in something synthetic, chemical, flammable. Something sufficiently caustic to pluck what he wanted, and then rot the roots of what was left behind.

‘He’s OK. He’s writing a book.’

‘What about?’

‘La calavera Catrina. The Mexican image of death.’

‘Oh, right. That’s jolly for you both.’

The embryonic humour was suffocated before it even left my mouth.

An unsatisfactory silence clung in the warm air before the temperature plunged and the sun slipped away. She glanced upwards at the cloud, as if expecting its stony bulk to fall from the sky and crush us both. The bulge of her throat was momentarily visible above the scarf. Unlike the laundered white of her face, it was smudged grey and silver, matching the bruised sky.

She saw me looking.

Her hand shot upwards and rearranged the scarf so its eye stared straight at me again. It was accusing rather than sneering this time, among the multiple severed heads, writhing snakes and piercing teeth.

‘Did he buy you that?’

‘Buy me what?’

‘The scarf. It’s creepy, just like his bloody book sounds creepy.’

She was silent. I had transgressed a boundary. She wobbled as she stood up, her right hand still clutching the scarf to her throat, the other awkwardly gripping her cuff with which she hastily brushed grass from her jeans. She and the scarf shot me a fiery sneer through yellow eyes before turning and stamping through the gate.

‘I don’t know why you bother to get in touch if you’re just going to shut me out and run back to him,’ I called after her. ‘What’s the matter with you anyway? You look awful. Why did you call me and make me come again, just to waste my time?’

I followed her to the Car Park a few minutes later, but, despite having no transport of her own, she had disappeared.

It was autumn, nearly winter, when I saw the identical scarf. Its horrific, solitary eye trapped me on the end of an invisible thread, from its fluttering lair outside the shop on Hagersgate. Mum, Dad and I were enduring yet another heart-tearing trip into the town. Walking along the harbour, over the sand.

Spending a few tortured hours pretending to enjoy each other’s company while the spectre of Catrina lurched after us; filling the unutilised twenty five percent of our whole.

I made them stand outside the shop on the pavement, as I went in and bought it, hating myself even more than I loathed Catrina and the Mexican for having drawn me to it, hating Mum and Dad for silently hating it as I did so.

That evening, after months of complete silence, I received a text from her phone.

‘Meet me outside the abbey at 20.00.’

When I arrived, the tips of the gothic ruin scratched at a rash of stars, strewn across the sky. I locked the car and started out across the grass, wrapping the scarf around me, reprimanding myself for having dropped everything once again to dance to Catrina’s tune.

The soft, wet ground pulled at my feet. Breathless with the effort of walking, I leant against the freezing monolith, scanning the void for my sister.

Having virtually ordered me to meet her there at eight, she was the one who was late.

‘La calavera Catrina.’ His voice birthed from the darkness somewhere just behind me, followed by his saffron scent and then his eyes; burning through the dark.

‘What? Where’s Catrina? She didn’t tell me you’d be here.’ I swallowed the ‘If I’d known, I wouldn’t have come,’ because it wasn’t true.

His darting, orange eyes drew me back to the night in the bar, exactly three years ago. The night when my little sister and best friend had proved her point and set in train my three years of hell.

‘I’ve got the right night, haven’t I? I got her text this afternoon. She did send it today ... didn’t she?’

'Dia de Muertos,' he answered.

The bubble of spittle, which had settled on his lips, boiled and crackled.

He raised his hand, in which her scarf was trapped between stained, steely fingers. When hand and scarf reached the level of my lips, I looked down and met the gaze of a single, grotesque eye, leering skywards, from among the fluttering folds.

Sad Jaguar

(Full Moon in Mexico City)

Pippa Little

The sad jaguar stalks Insurgentes Sur,
her sleeping body left in the menagerie
hardly knows she's gone but for a breath
of warm night sticky with mango skins
to tremble her eyelashes and whisper of lightning;

is in no hurry to meet Santa Muerte
who glitters eyeless in her tree-bole shrine
or the street-sleeping guardian's dark
presence if she comes too close -
so swerves towards The Angels Club,

steps through a circle offering of maize, chains
and chicken blood at the hash-sweet entrance
while girls get shipped on by the back door
in low slung motors dark as liquorice

can be last seen by the Inquisition arch
slipping between white-dipped trees whose roots
lift and split the pavement stones into small volcanoes.
She is making for the avenue of the dead,
will arrive by morning.

The Stone Bell

George Sandifer-Smith

Miracles are not like rules or pastries;
they are promises bound up in impossibles,
their crumbs scattered on uneven steps,
and, here, in the space left behind
where the water between two lands
cut itself a greedy slice of rock and grass.

Miracles are not to be untied,
they're built to last, no matter what.
Govan could not give the pirates
his silver bell, cut for the waves to dance on,
after the angels dulled it into ringing stone.
So they took the children
and chained them to a cave's wall
and the tide came in.

Now the wind howls through sink-holes,
high-pitched and shrill,
before lowering in tone
to a gurgle of ice-cold salt,
a mouthful of foam and raw glass.

The Wooden Chair

Viola Canales

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Cecilia’s grandmother is whistling busy in the kitchen, preparing her most favorite meal of all — *cabrito en sangre*, which is kid, as in baby goat, cooked in its own blood. Cecilia thinks this a rather spooky meal, but she likes the great glee it brings to her grandmother, who was born and raised on a ranch, and so loves eating the most unusual things, like the eyeballs of cows, which she eats rolled up, one big greasy eyeball at a time, in a hot tortilla, and cow brains, as well as cow tongue, which comes rather long, with hundreds of bumpy taste buds.

Cecilia has gotten to the point where she now doesn’t even dare open the freezer door for a popsicle or ice cubes, especially after finding a whole row of shrunken heads, their big round eye sockets glaring out at her. When the girl screamed, running to tell her grandmother about the severed heads in the freezer, her grandmother had just thrown her head back in a roar of laughter, saying that those were tonight’s dinner.

The kid-goat-in-blood dinner is one that the girl’s grandmother only cooks on very special occasions, and this special occasion is the recent birth of the girl’s little sister. Cecilia thinks it quite interesting that the arrival of her new kid sister is being honored with the cooking and eating of a baby goat in blood.

In the living room, relatives are soon gathering, congratulating Cecilia’s mother and taking turns making sounds to the perplexed-looking baby. Some sound like birds, others like monkeys, and still others like water buffaloes, or what you would expect a water buffalo to sound like. There is laughter and noise and more noise. Cecilia is amazed to see how many people can fit in the small living room, but more amazed that a tiny baby, who can only wiggle and wiggle some more, just fascinates adults and reduces them to coos, goos, and moos.

Then her grandmother calls everyone to the table, as she carries a large white porcelain bowl filled to the top with the kid goat in blood. She places it carefully on the table, like some priceless offering to the gods. Everyone quickly takes a seat, and then deep white bowls filled with hot beans, rice, chile, and a stack of corn tortillas pass from one person to the next. The girl's grandmother walks around the table, ladling on each plate a big helping of kid goat in blood.

They all immediately start devouring their food like starving alley cats, everyone, that is, except Cecilia, who just sits there, staring intently down at her plate, wondering exactly what part of the poor kid goat she has floating around in blood on her plate. She wonders whether the little goat was white or brown, and whether it even got big enough to grow a little goat beard. She next wonders how they managed to drain all its blood and put it inside the plastic bag she saw her grandmother carrying around earlier.

But Cecilia suddenly forgets about the kid goat when Tio Panchito bolts from his chair and tears out the front door, with her grandmother following close at his heels. Moments later, her grandmother returns and stares at the chair where Panchito was quietly sitting before.

"Where did this chair come from? Who brought this chair? Does anybody know?" she asks, as her eyes survey the circle of round faces sitting around the table. The chair is wood, carved, looks quite old, and smells like a stinky bat.

"Well, I did," Cecilia finally says, quietly.

"Where did you get this chair?"

"From the back alley. You said to go find some extra chairs, since we didn't have enough for everybody, so I got this one. I think somebody put it out for the trash people to take."

"Well, this little wooden chair almost killed your Tio Panchito. Did you know that? He claims it started rattling all of a sudden, right when he started talking to Elsa, telling her that, well, that he liked her new hairdo, that is, after she specifically asked him about it." Everyone's eyes then immediately turn to Elsa's hairdo, which, quite frankly, looks like a big bird nest, and not a very well-built one, at that.

The girl's grandmother then walks over and lowers herself down carefully into the old wooden chair. She turns over to Elsa, who is sitting immediately to her left, and says, "Where's the vulture? I mean, your hairdo, it looks like the bird nest of some scruffy vulture. You should immediately go and get your money back!"

Elsa instantly turns red and angry. But then Cecilia's grandmother just as quickly turns to her again and says, "No, really, I was just kidding. That's really a nice hairdo, and..." But before she is able to finish praising Elsa's hairdo, the wooden chair starts rattling and only stops when she stops talking.

Everyone has now completely forgotten about the kid goat in blood, as well as Cecilia's kid sister, and is totally captivated by the mysterious wooden chair.

"Do you want me to haul that old chair back out to the alley?" Cecilia asks, feeling bad that a whole lot of work went into cooking the kid in blood and birthing her kid sister and now no one seems the least bit interested in them.

"No, no!" they all say, as they then turn back to discussing the wooden chair. They wonder whether it's haunted, whether it starts rattling at the mention of a lie, since they all unanimously agree that Elsa's new hairdo is a colossal disaster. This instantly transforms Elsa into a cyclone. She storms out the door, but not before proclaiming, in furious gusts, that she spent fifty dollars, repeat, fifty dollars on her hair, which is more than any of them make in a week, even combined, and that the problem is not her hair, but the fact that they're all a bunch of peasants — no, cannibals — who don't know the first thing about taste, not even how to spell it, and whose only concept of taste is killing and devouring, like jungle animals, some poor little defenseless baby goat in its own blood, and, moreover, that they wouldn't know what taste was, even if it bit them, and bit them hard, on their butts, big butts, which is the only real mystery behind that stupid rattling chair.

The conversation then turns momentarily to whether Elsa, with her new high-class airs that match her high-class hairdo, is perhaps taking lessons on how to insult others in a high-class manner, since that part about the "butt" is new to them; they have never heard it used quite that way before. And upon reflection, they all agree that it is really quite an effective way of punctuating an insult, and so they think they will now start incorporating it into their own insults.

Then they start wondering how to test the wooden chair. Perhaps, it is only a coincidence that it rattles when the person on it starts to lie. So they each take turns sitting on it, standing on it. Next, they get skinny people to sit on it, then pleasantly plump ones. Old and young ones. They even lay the newborn baby on it. But they conclude that it only rattles when the person sitting on it lies.

Before the night is over, they decide to invite Father Kelly over to the celebration dinner. Father Kelly is a young priest, recently transferred to the local church to replace old Father Avila, who is returning to Spain to retire. All of them recall Father Kelly saying in his sermon, just last Sunday, that he wanted to go out and get to know his community, in their homes, schools, and places of work and play. He had also curiously mentioned that he wanted more and more of them to start coming to confession. How did they ever expect to be forgiven if they didn't even bother to stop by to confess their sins? And as for the complaint he has heard rattling about that it takes too long to even think about going

to confession, what with the lines, the heat, the flies, and especially the severe penances meted out, not to mention that other piece of gossip about some poor old man who finally went to confession, after twenty years, and suffered a heart attack when he got sentenced, not only to one hundred “Our Fathers,” but also to seventy-five “Hail Marys,” well, all he had to say about all that was that it was his church now, it was a new beginning, a new day. As proof, he was guaranteeing that they would be in and out of confession as fast as they were in and out of one of those convenience stores he always saw them at, buying some cold drink in some huge plastic container, and, incidentally, he wanted them all to know that in hell, which, by the way, is much, much hotter, there are no little convenience stores where they can stop and get a cold drink to cool off, not even one in a tiny Dixie paper cup.

Well, Father Kelly is called, and true to his word, he actually stops by around eight o'clock. He smiles and coos at the baby, saying that he looks forward to baptizing her. He then greets and shakes hands with everybody, even takes a sip of red wine. But when it comes time to sampling the kid in blood, he turns as white as the pope.

But Cecilia's grandmother is undaunted. She politely asks Father Kelly to please sit down, all the while pulling out the old wooden chair for him. Father Kelly hesitantly complies, but not before looking around the room and noticing a number of far more comfortable chairs he'd clearly prefer. Once seated, Cecilia's grandmother again takes to insisting that he must take a little bite, however small, of the special celebration meal, since how else is he to get acquainted with the special delicacies of his new church community?

Well, Father Kelly, still white as the pope, starts stammering and then says that the dish looks, well, really quite interesting, rather, quite delicious, but, you know, his stomach . . . Then the chair starts up again, rattling and shaking.

The priest jumps up and then jumps under the table, insisting that everyone take cover, that he was not told, when accepting this new parish, that there were earthquakes in this part of the country.

After dragging Father Kelly out from under the table and fixing him up in a big, comfy upholstered chair with a big glass of strong red wine, they recount the experiences they've had with the old wooden chair. Upon hearing all this and finally feeling satisfied that there's no earthquake and that his newly acquainted parish members are not completely mad, despite their bizarre celebration dinners, he gets up from his comfortable chair and walks over to the wooden chair

He picks it up, puts it down, walks around it several times, and then startles everyone present by announcing that he finally gets it now, that the wooden chair is actually a gift from God, that God has just answered his prayers.

At first, they all think the priest has had a little bit too much to drink, but then they really have no opportunity to formulate a second thought, because

the next thing they see is Father Kelly throwing the chair over his shoulder and heading out the door with it. As he leaves, he turns his head, saying that if they are wondering about the chair, they will just, well, have to come to confession.

And there the very next day, they find Father Kelly hard at work in his confession box. Surprisingly, though, people are going in and coming out of confession in about thirty seconds flat. When Cecilia then accompanies her grandmother into the confession box, her grandmother discovers that she's sitting on the old wooden chair. She immediately starts laughing and is soon joined by Father Kelly, who is sitting on the other side of the confession screen.

Father Kelly then quickly reminds her, as he says he has since warned all others, that she better confess truthfully, not forgetting little sins or embellishing others to seem like some big shot, since, as she well knows, the wooden chair she's sitting on will immediately start rattling at the mere whisper of a lie.

After Cecilia's grandmother darts off a quick "Hail Mary" for making fun of Elsa's hairdo, they walk home by way of the back alley, with the grandmother saying that perhaps they'll find another gift from God. And when they finally get home, Cecilia shows her grandmother the three loose floor boards where the old wooden chair had stood and rattled the night before.

A Lament for Ponciano Díaz

Jack Little

After Federico Lorca

In the *gandería de Ateneco*
Ponciano Díaz's father fought bulls
with a cloth in one hand and his child in the other.

In the evenings, his brother would sit on the other side of the room
the semi-darkness of the setting sun would leave half shadows:
the day's sandy footprints, the dry spittle at the side of the old man's mouth.

Tonight proclaims his fate is pre-ordained
under the breath of a thousand secret voices:
Some of us dwell in our passions more than others.

But before the stains of crimsons spines, and viscera between his sequins
the sunrise will be another part-renewal, grown boastful with swollen pride
and base recognition, the fight is in his veins.

A Day in Rodin's Studio

Kelly Creighton

for Camille Claudel

You ask me to pose for you
and you take the pencil from behind your ear.
The woman standing in the corner
is caught in the moment,
like in a cobweb,
and notices us with eyes as grey
as they are on paper; they reflect
what she has seen,
when she stood here.
She has closed all the curtains
and fired the clay out of the window,
those greys have flattened
as if hit by a multitude of spades
but she refuses to look the other way.

The Last Dream of the Destiny of Rogelio Jones

Eric Dreyer Smith

What can I tell you about the moon? It is a place of wild love that not all that live allow themselves to experience. I cannot tell you why others do not find the moon. For me, I found its music when I crossed the *Rubicon of my Dreams*. My name is Rogelio Jones and because of my understanding of the moon I aged in a way where year after year I cursed less while all around the climate of my times people were cussing their heads off. Whereas, I observed the weather and one could call me stable.

My dream kept moving me south. The heat and moon went well together. This suited me though I did not proselytize on the subject. As I aged, I greatly discovered the benefits of more silent vocabularies. I stopped searching for love. I did not think of money or promotions. If friends called on me, I engaged them, but did share their longing greatly with the notion of high expectations from comrades. I read more, but only what I would have liked when I was either fourteen or twenty-two. I thought all this progress and it was, until one night when an even greater occurrence showed me more of life's vision. It was the night of the big dreams. Do I have to tell you it was a night of a full moon? - Perhaps not, but I must tell you it was the night of my death. Was I ninety-four? Yes, I was ninety-four.

Before my destiny was revealed to me that night I had been observing a few interesting things. The cats in my neighborhood had become more intelligent and seemingly important during the previous few weeks. I realized they were not merely random, lone elements in my neighborhood. They had a community or environmental condition that was more vital and connected than even us that were humans as far I had experienced.

They were divided firmly into two groups: hunters and scavengers. With one large orange hunter dominating the rest. At times he would perch on top of the next-door neighbor's car roof to survey his empire. When I realized this was what he was doing, I was awed. He had more power than I did on that block or maybe even more power than the local mayor did.

When I was young for a time I had the power of that cat. The first time I chased the moon I had that power. I had gone for a woman from a wealthy family and with my looks, words and daring seduced her. It did not last long, but the moment of having her reminds me more of my power than any distress over the pain of losing her.

In recent years, I was more like the scavenger cats. Still, the moon was with me and, being older, I took what I could with whimsy and charm replacing the boldness. I did not often lack companionship. I had discovered that my looks and words having faded resulted in me making not as much money as when I had been younger. Still, I took chances and bits of wild luck here and there came my way.

Last year I believed there was a ghost in my house. It was no use in trying to make it a friend. It was angry. Kitchen items kept falling. The best course was to ignore it. Eventually it went away – whatever it was.

That surmised much of life, yet for that *Dream of Destiny* which occurred on the night of my last full moon.

To be honest though, first let me assure you I had many seasons of three-quarter moons and half moons and even quarter moons before the power of the moon lost its effect on me. Still, I had one last full moon to own as my own. Perhaps I was a little past my prime, but my cunning and the way my walk showed hints of the prowess obtained in my youth impressed her. I was able to convince Rosalinda to be my lover. She was a simple waitress who had large breasts. Breasts were not always my first choice of excellence to be chosen in a woman's body but, right after I was less able to prance in as many nocturnal wanderings as I had been in real youth, they became of greater significance. The breasts became more important a fixation than the behind or the legs as they say and even the face too.

Rosalinda and I shared passion and many times we would go to the beach and make love there. It was extraordinary. There is a time right after the initial meeting and before the stresses of discussion on commitment when a new lover is all a relationship of bliss and grandness.

Then the Whale of the Dream:

Should I tell you now of the beautiful dream of my destiny? It was a full moon dream, it was Achilles' Shield with the full panorama of civilization and it was a reminder of the truth. The dream, the one on this last night, revealed to me the extreme depths of all my experience that I believed to be merely twenty-five or even ten percent of the moon shining its powers on my life. I recalled my giving and receiving of small touches and glances that made my heart soar, I was not sure if all the people were even real in this dramatic revelation of my past that was endorsed on my soul that night. I heard again countless pieces of music, background sounds, I had ignored while on cell phones or looking too intently on one object of desire, I listened again to the wishes of people I almost, or barely, knew that were stupendous in their valuation of me and their longings toward me. No longer was I the man at his end. My old prayers, many that I had thought to fall on a god's deafness, had been heard and resolutions that I had not been aware of at that time were now made known to me. Letters my lovers wrote, but never sent, were read to me by the voices of angels. I did not know Alicia had cared so or wanted more...

The full living dream of Rosalinda – that was the full moon I had wanted to tell you of at first, the lust of life, but now it seems you have found sides just as sweet – I wanted to tell you how I lived, not my dream at death, but you got it from me, my secret that will one day be yours as well. Will you see the same things? See it now that I am dead and told you? It is hard to tell; our own whale swallows us each. I showed you my way. What I had wanted, but then the last thing in my dream, the final thing that is mine alone to keep, I said I would never tell. Did I tell all? I will use this to get your attention next time, when I have another life to tell you of...

Three Poems

Keely Laufer

Cadmus's sister Europa was stolen by Zeus and taken overseas. Unable to find his sister, Cadmus seeks the oracle of Delphi who tells him to build a city in this new land. In the land, Cadmus's men discover a serpent in a cave near who kills them. Cadmus kills the serpent and buries its teeth in the ground from which new men grow, though, as a punishment for killing the serpent, Cadmus and all future generations are cursed. Cadmus seeks help by sacrificing himself to break the cycle, but the damage has already been done and he is turned into a serpent to roam until his death.

1. I, Cadmeia

After the myth of Cadmus

I, Cadmeia
for my adolescent
so still impressionable self
seek to establish


I, Cadmeia
throb infrared
to the serpent searching for *Saes*
for *Saes* sorts of mice

from the bowels of the building
when I stand still
the serpent serrates the flooring
under my feet when I speak

I, Cadmeia
freeze before the flipped-up tile
where the mouth gapes offers
pointing its forked tongue to

I, Cadmeia
reach to push down and release
a tooth from the teeth that talk
torrent goad Welsh words

I put the tooth in my pocket.
It pulses *Geiradur* [LOAD]
Gymraeg [ING] up
through my teeth

I, Cadmeia
thinking with the tooth
that talks to mine
mae'n 98% ||||

I, Cadmeiaur
meddwl gyda'r dant
sy'n siarad i'm danedd
Fi Cadmair

2. EE

the tooth in my pocket
sends signal, E E
capitalising Welsh reception
in my t*E E*th-

I, Cadmair thinking with
my recep [STOP] unrecept [STOP]
i've got unreli [HYPHEN] able t*E E*th

place the tooth
that talks to mine
from my indep, unindepend hand onto
a Cad-made barren gum

plot that goes nervoh [STOP] numb
when Serpent and my t*E E*th
lose the E E of their t* *th ID-
[SIGNAL OO OUT to O O] t*O O*th.
face [FULL STOP] to [FULL STOP] face
each t*O O*th like bees
fight for dominant frequency,
buzzin with chaotic E E O O E E O O [COMMA]
until [COMMA] no [CO-MASS]
to rule region Mouth @CAD15-

antibodies rot my Canine t*O O*th [FULL STOP]
fall [STOP]
down throat
to stop trans
lational
process.

3. Agave

Variation upon the story of Agave

I, can't wash your milky body
in toothpaste anymore,

I, can't protect you from hurt,
fill an emptiness inside of you

if visible cavities don't grow
like blackheads in your skin,

to signal your place of pain.
You're becoming a baby, my baby daughter -

to-be Agave, from the Canine tooth;
the enamelled egg of you.

I swallowed the strongest human substance.
Agave, you will be as strong as your name,

a deity spawned from the only divine
body part. Immortal.

Agave your canine tooth, that all seeing Eyetooth
will come from the Canine tooth that grew you,

that came from me, I,
Cadmair.

The scan that said 'Cadmair's baby', showed you
shadowed with rotted-potential:

*Agave, Pentheus, Jocasta, Oedipus:
generations of blindness, death, blindness, suicide.*

You Agave, a baby, are a gift to perpetual doom
being grown by I in my pink balloon

with lavender umbilical ribbon that my
body might as well bow around your neck.

My body made me swallow my identity
to heal my sense of self. But

your teeth won't know where they are from.

The Art of Will Teather

Artist's Statement

My practice centres around making paintings that depict curious characters often caught up in extraordinary situations. Over the last ten years, my artistic career has also explored similar themes through performances, music, printmaking, drawing, writing and sculpture. Realist painting, however, remains particularly close to my creative preoccupations. The act of painting, for me, is about self expression through enhancing, adding and subtracting from what is already there in front of you. To my mind, there is also an inherent sense of showmanship in a realistic image that is handmade from the raw materials of pigment and canvas. Working in numerous public studio spaces has made me acutely aware of a performance element to the process of painting, a notion that is perhaps reflected in the theatrical themes of some of my imagery.

I also enjoy painting's almost limitless ability to provide alternate realities, something that is only tempered by the counterfeit nature of that reality. This apparent contradiction seems comparable to the artificial realms of theatre and film that my works draws inspiration from. In the spirit of magical-realist fiction, the paintings tell stories that explore the indefinite space between reality and fiction, horror and humour, fantasy and fact, beauty and ugliness. Vaudevillian characters inhabit an open-ended play, where carnival and folk traditions are pastiched together into simulacrum and spectacle. As with Angela Carter's novels, the carnivalesque elements of theatre, transgression and excess enable illusion to work and the improbable to become possible.

The artworks employ a series of visual devices intended to invoke a sense of the uncanny. Subtle games are played with perspective; varying viewpoints melded into a single image to create mild distortions between otherwise normal spatial relationships. There is perhaps an ontological ambiguity in the almost doll-like crispness to many of the figures in my paintings, something that could also be said of my use of mannequins and masks to create fictional characters that are

then brought to life through paint. Perhaps my upbringing surrounded by the gothic splendour of religious symbolism and icons cemented my interest in a baroque darkness and the pursuit of transcendental imagery, which has led me to also appreciate both the poetic themes and heightened reality of Pre-Raphaelite painters alongside the semi-abstract figures of expressionism. With this in mind, I aim to create artworks that enter into direct conversation with the history of painting that stands before me and bring something new to the table.



Nay The Plainness of Her Dresses? Now I know her But in Two



Time Capsule



The Vast and Unknowable Universe



See her faces unfurl

From: Nothing Personal

Gillian Eaton

ACT TWO. SCENE TWO

A week later. Daylight seeps weakly through the cheap curtains. Light also comes from the TV downstage and silhouettes a male figure on the couch. A Mexican soap opera is playing quietly. A sudden wedge of bright light as the door to the outside cracks open and ISABELLA slides in. She shuts the door quickly behind her.

ISABELLA (*Whispering*): Tony. Tony.

The figure on the couch grunts

ISABELLA: O Blessed Saint Therese. You're here.

She moves quickly to the window and twitches the curtains open a few inches. Then she pours water into a glass and drinks deeply.

ISABELLA: I'm so scared Tony. They came to the factory looking for Magda. But she didn't show up for work today. Your name came up. They asked me where you were. I said you were sick. Did they come here? I said you were sick with worry about Magda. They had guns, Tony. I swear. I'm so scared.

SILENCE

ISABELLA: Tony?

The TV clicks off. Silence

MALE VOICE: No, not Tony.

PAUSE

ISABELLA runs for the door. The figure gets there before her and switches on the light. The Man is PACO. He leans gracefully against the door and smiles at ISABELLA.

ISABELLA: Let me out of here.

PACO: But you just got here.

ISABELLA: Let me out!

Slowly the Man moves away from the door to the window. He opens the curtains and pours himself a glass of water. ISABELLA watches him. His relaxed confidence has confused her.

PACO: Go! Go on. Get out of here.

ISABELLA: Where is Tony? What have you done with him?

PACO: Why would I want to do anything with Tony? In fact I was going to ask the same question of you. Where is Tony?

ISABELLA: I just asked you that question.

PACO: Don't you think it's interesting that we both want to know where Tony is?

PACO crosses back to the sofa, turns off the TV and picks up a back pack which is on the floor

PACO: If you see him before I do, tell him I sorted out the problem. Can you do that?

ISABELLA: Of course I can, what do you think I am?

PACO: A girl too young and foolish to remember important messages.

He crosses to the door.

ISABELLA: Wait! Are you Tony's friend? Where are you going?

PACO: Too many questions. You should know what happens to girls who ask too many questions.

ISABELLA: Please. Are you Tony's friend?

PACO: Yes.

ISABELLA: You are the traveler, right? You take people north, right?

PAUSE

ISABELLA: Tony said he would take me to you. He said you would help. I need to get to my mother. Tony says you can take me.

PACO: *(puts backpack down and crosses to couch)* Come. Sit next to me.

ISABELLA crosses warily to couch

PACO: Sit.

She sits

PACO gently picks up her hand and turns it over, caressing her palm.

PACO: First we must see what your destiny holds. Ah. Look here, this head-line shows an obstinate and willful girl. And the heart-line? What does it tell me? *(He moves closer and speaks in a low seductive tone)* I see a warm heart full of love, full of generosity... *(He looks at the side of her hand)* and many, many men in her life, too many to count...

ISABELLA: *(laughs nervously)* No, I have no brothers and my father is dead...

PACO: Lovers, I mean, many many lovers...

ISABELLA: I don't want many lovers...

PACO: *(Twisting her hand painfully)* You may have no choice. Whatever your name is.

ISABELLA: My name is ISABELLA and you're hurting me.

PACO: *(he twists her hand even more)* Isabella.

ISABELLA screams

PACO: You may have no choice at all. So you want to go north, Isabella. Is that true?

ISABELLA: Yes.

PACO: *(whispering in her ear as he pins her to him)*

Could you bear it, little ISABELLA? Do you think you can run fast enough? Do you have enough breath in this little body? Enough love in this little heart to get you there? *(ISABELLA is whimpering)* Let me tell you a story, Isabella. You'll appreciate this. Do you have pretty underwear? Does it have flowers on it? Or bunnies? Or teddy bears? Better buy some new ones if you want to go. And, you're obviously desperate; everyone has his or her own desperation, don't you think? And it always leads to the same story. You work like a dog and you get some money and someone tells you about a 'coyote' you can trust. But the nature of Coyote is that he can never be trusted, remember? But you're so desperate to go you ignore your own common sense. Because bad things don't happen to you, do they? So you travel north with this coyote, and there's a group of you, and you think: 'safety in numbers' right? And you get across the border, hurray! But you still have to walk across the desert and it's night and that's when the bandits find you and they separate the women and the children from the group, and there's nothing anyone can do because they have guns, and they take you further into the desert and rape you and rape you and rape you again as much as they want. There's nothing you can do. No one will hear your screams. Then they will hang your underwear on a tree with all the others as a badge of conquest or warning or just as a joke. And this they do to mothers and daughters, sisters and wives. The Underwear Tree. That's what they call it. And they laugh while they do it and spit at you. If you're lucky they leave you there and you try to find your crossing group, in the dark, alone. And you're ashamed. And when you find them, the others guess what's happened to you and somehow it's your fault and no one will speak to you, and you cry for your Mamma and there is only darkness and the pain between your legs.

PACO lets ISABELLA go.

LIGHTS OUT

Symphony in Gray Major

Dan MacIsaac

A translation of "Sinfonía en gris mayor" by Rubén Darío.

The sea, a vast quicksilver looking-glass,
reflects the gloss of a zinc sky;
distant flocks of birds stain
the burnished background of pale gray.

The sun, round and opaque like a rimed porthole,
climbs to its peak at an invalid's pace;
the sea-wind slumbers in shadow,
pillowed on its dark trumpet.

Beneath the dock, waves groan,
rolling their leaden bellies.
Crouched on a coil of rope, and smoking
his pipe, a sailor recalls the shores
of a far, fogbound land.

This sea-dog is an old man. Fiery beams
of the Brazilian sun have razed his face;
the terrible typhoons of the China Sea
have seen him guzzle his gin.

El mar como un vasto cristal azogado
refleja la lámina de un cielo de zinc;
lejanas bandadas de pájaros manchan
el fondo bruñado de pálido gris.

El sol como un vidrio redondo y opaco
con paso de enfermo camina al cenit;
el viento marino descansa en la sombra
teniendo de almohada su negro clarín.

Las ondas que mueven su vientre de plomo,
debajo del muelle parecen gemir.
Sentado en un cable, fumando su pipa,
está un marinero pensando en las playas
de un vago, lejano, brumoso país.

Es viejo ese lobo. Tostaron su cara
los rayos de fuego del sol del Brasil;
los recios tifones del mar de la China
le han visto bebiendo su frasco de gin.

Foam reeking with rock salt and iodine
have long known his raw nose,
his stiff curls, his burly biceps,
his canvas cap, his drill shirt.

In the haze of his smoke, the old man sees
the distant misty land for which
one hot and golden afternoon
his brig set sail.

Tropic siesta. The old sea-dog snoozes.
The scale in gray major smothers him.
It's as if a chunk of charcoal, soft and enormous,
would smudge the horizon's curve.

Tropic siesta. An old cicada plucks
at its ancient hoarse guitar,
and the cricket starts a monotone solo
on the single string of its fiddle.

La espuma impregnada de yodo y salitre
ha tiempo conoce su roja nariz,
sus crespos cabellos, sus bíceps de atleta,
su gorra de lona, su blusa de dril.

En medio del humo que forma el tabaco
ve el viejo el lejano, brumoso país,
adonde una tarde caliente y dorada
tendidas las velas partió el bergantín ...

La siesta del trópico. El lobo se aduerme.
Ya todo lo envuelve la gama del gris.
Parece que un suave y enorme esfumino
del curvo horizonte borrara el confín.

La siesta del trópico. La vieja cigarra
ensaya su ronca guitarra senil,
y el grillo preludia un solo monótono
en la única cuerda que está en su violín.

Araucaria

David Cooke

after Pablo Neruda

All of winter – with its endless battle
and nests of dripping iron –
is raised against your wild city,
that fortress the air assails.

An obdurate stone prison,
the drenched weave of thorns
has turned your wiry crown
into a dark mineral tower.

Blustering dirges, eternal rain ...
on scaly heights where hooves spark
your stormy house is braced
in petals of pure geology.

Aromatic and raging, spring crashes,
thirsting, against your stern statue;
while autumn tries in vain
to gild its drab colossus.

Scarlet Dreams

Carly Holmes

The silk scarf catches suddenly on a branch and she is snatched from flight and tugged backwards. Fingers frantic at her throat, she rips at the scarlet material, frees it from its embrace, and she can run once more.

The wood is thick with the longing of night-time creatures and she knows that they can all move faster than her. They're simply playing now, prolonging the wait before their feast. They are steering her, with their noise and their silence, up and down paths of their own choosing.

They are having so much fun.

I am Scarlet. I'm going through a tough time at the moment, though I'm trying hard not to let it show. I eat the meals mum cooks for me and I doubt she even suspects that I hate most of what's on my plate. I go to bed at the usual time and she never guesses that I force myself to stay awake for most of the night, curled inside the lamp's glow so that not one part of me is splashed by shadow. I can't tell her anything about anything anymore. I've started to really hate her lately.

I hate that moment when her head dips down slightly to the left, just an inch or two, to signify her disappointment in something I've done, or neglected to do. She's read all the books, is alert to the telltale signs of drug dalliance and eating disorders, and assures me constantly that she will be there to catch me when I fall. When.

I love my granny and I'm not afraid of her smell and her liver spots and her lack of glamour and grace. She lives close enough to be a regular part of our week and I don't mind popping in on her every couple of days with whatever delicacy mum has prepared. The tuna bake generally raises a grimace but the lasagne always goes down well. I sat with her yesterday afternoon and after she had finished eating I washed up and we talked for a while. I look forward to that. For an hour or two she gives me glimpses into the time before mum became mum and was young and wilful and irresponsible.

There is a clearing she doesn't remember seeing before, or maybe it's just that it looks different at night. She pulls at her scarf and winds it round and round her neck, tucks it into the top of her t-shirt. She hops from foot to foot and listens to the breaking of twigs and the rustle of leaves. The breathing of the creatures as they approach from all directions.

Through her I can be close to my mother again, and for that reason particularly I linger with granny. Mum, of course, doesn't understand that. She got pregnant young and though she rushes to tell me, tell her friends, tell the postman, tell pretty much everybody, that she's never regretted having me and obviously wouldn't change a thing, I know her biggest fear is that I'll repeat her mistake. Or even trump it by shaving a year or two off her personal best. When she was my age, as she keeps telling me, she thought babies were conceived by a man kissing a woman's belly button. With or without the use of tongues. But within a relatively short, and clearly instructive, space of time, she'd managed to get herself saddled with me. Apparently you can still see the scorch marks on the road where my father turned tail and ran for the hills when he got the news.

So my role these days is to play the innocent, sidestepping her anxiety and nodding along to her regular bleating about the importance of love and commitment. I want to scream, but I keep nodding. It's got so bad that I erect a mental screen in my mind if I so much as think about boys, just in case she can penetrate the cage of my skull and dig down to the dirty little longings hidden beneath my hair.

She was probably the only mother in my school who nearly had a nervous breakdown when I started my periods last year. She actually cried when I told her, and spent weeks afterwards guarding the front door and insisting she walk me to and from school. I assume she was expecting to see a pack of crazed men gathered in the streets, howling. I half thought she'd buy a collar and lead and put a sign around my neck. 'Bitch on heat. Keep your distance'. And then send me down the vets to get spayed.

And then she spins and leaps and starts to run again, charging right at them and feeling the delicate shift in pressure as they move aside and let her pass. They're not ready for this to end just yet.

My two best friends told me I was weird last week, though they said it with affection. "You're a right weirdo," were the exact words. I laughed and shrugged off the sting of it, but had to grudgingly conclude that I am fairly weird by their standards. I'm the only one of our group who would break stride and stand stock

still for ages on the side of the road, just to listen to a blackbird singing its tiny blackbird heart out. And I'm the only one who would then applaud it, and swear, absolutely **believe**, that it dipped its head to me before it flew off.

And, of course, I'm pretty sure I'm the only one who has nightmares every night, the same nightmare over and over again, and who wakes every morning smelling of the chase. I hadn't told them about all that, and now I definitely won't.

And I like to walk. That's weird too, or so I'm told. I mean proper walking, in boots with thick socks, and preferably through woodland and alone, which may also be connected to why I love visiting granny so much. She lives on the other side of our village and I can choose either the long, noisy road way to her house, or the shorter, earthier loop across the fields at the end of our street and then down through the damp wood, cradling her food parcel under my arm or in my rucksack. The mud sighs and sucks at my feet and everything is tinged with green.

The people I encounter acknowledge me with a nod or a smile but don't burden me with conversation. There's a boy with lovely eyes who I sometimes see but have never spoken to. Not yet. I think he sees me too, but I can't be sure.

Mum, obviously, would rather I stuck to the road and the threat of abduction from some psycho with a blood stained car boot and squinty eyes than risk the dangers of the wood and the unseen, ancient horrors that lurk there. Fairies and badgers and owls I assume, those harbingers of evil.

She runs, and stumbles, and rights herself. Her left ankle is twisted and her chest hurts from her barbed wire breathing. She tries to force herself to move with more speed, more stealth. She stumbles again.

I do occasionally manage to scare myself, knee deep in ferns and the rich stench of leaf mould. I used to quite like the sudden prickle of fear at the nape of my neck, the dry gulp of panic. I never really believed that I was in danger and so I tested myself by wandering off the path or shutting my eyes for a few moments, fumbling towards that thrill of rising terror. But since the dreams started, a few weeks ago, I've been a lot less inclined to play games and I find that I'm genuinely scared, just for a second, when a dog careens out of nowhere to launch itself at me, or the birds suddenly stop singing.

Now, that's when you know you're in the presence of something sinister, something predatory and watchful, when the birds stop singing. Give me woodland sounds over woodland silence any day.

She's reached the limit of her strength now. Her hands are filthy where she keeps falling down and she has blood across her cheeks. She's back in the same clearing and realises that she has been running in a huge circle through the trees. They have been driving her round in a circle. She slows, then stops and spills to her knees. She holds her hands up in front of her face. Enough. Please, no more.

They start to close in on her and she can hear their breathing above her own.

Take this morning for example. I'm walking along, sticking to the path and loitering only slightly. Everything's bright and murmuring and I've just seen an adder coiled like dropped knitting in a patch of sunlight. Once I've rounded the next twist of trees I'll be able to see the tip of granny's chimney. I bend to pick a bluebell and when I straighten up the boy with the nice eyes is suddenly in front of me. The adder has disappeared. Static crackles behind my eyes and for a second I'm the dreaming me, the running and fearful and desperate me. Shapes dart and flicker at the edges of my vision. But then I blink and move aside and he nods with surly shyness and continues past. I look back and he is gone. I carry onto granny's house and start to hum a tune, but my enjoyment in the day and the walk, and the boy too, is spoilt just a little.

I almost tell granny about the dreams, but decide not to when she waves a plate of freshly baked scones under my nose. My mouth is too full for the next half an hour to say much of anything at all. After I've eaten my share and most of the ones I was supposed to take back for mum the urgency has left me. I decide to hang onto my secrets.

Nevertheless, I choose to take the road route home. Just for a change.

She squeezes her eyes shut, and kneels, and waits.

I have to endure an extra dose of mum's silent disapproval when I get back. I shouldn't have picked the raisins out of the remaining two scones, I know, but I wanted to leave something nice for the birds nesting in the hedges on the street.

Over dinner, as she passes me the garlic bread and flicks me a tight lipped smile, her face morphs for a second into one of the creatures from my nightmares. Reality bleeds out of the room and I drop my fork, duck to pick it up. When I'm back above the tabletop she looks like her again, only slightly more exasperated.

And then they pull back and just stand there, watching her. Waiting. She raises her head.

The air thins and sharpens. She shivers and looks around her at the creatures. They feel it too. One of them whimpers.

And then he strides into the circle of flesh and stops before her. He reaches

out his hand and helps her to her feet. Teeth flash bone white and pure in the moonlight as he grins. They stand together and he strokes her arm. The other creatures melt away into the night. She could turn and run now, she knows, without fear of pursuit.

She doesn't run.

I curl up on the sofa and try to sedate myself with television. I have a vague theory that if I don't actively pursue sleep, but rather let it steal up on me and hijack my consciousness, the dreams will shrivel to nothing inside my brain. It hasn't worked so far. I'm half way through a documentary about street gangs when mum jerks up from her armchair and nudges me with her foot. It's the dreaded time. I know from bitter experience that no amount of pleading will buy me an extra hour downstairs, so I fill a glass with water and trail up to bed with her behind me, locking and fastening as she goes. I want to tell her that there's no point thinking she can lock the dangers out; they're already inside. They're in me.

And so I shut myself into my room and huddle against the headboard and try to stay awake. I'm so tired now, I can't imagine a single human being in the whole of history has ever been this tired. Part of me just wants to let go, rush through sleep to join the creatures, accept my fate. I keep my neck straight and my eyes open. I nip regularly at my bottom lip and sweep with my tongue to collect the blood laced there.

He turns her to face him and keeps stroking her arm. She can't look away.

"Where are you going, little girl?" he asks.

"To see my grandmother. To take her food."

"Then I've saved you a needless journey. You don't need to go and visit granny now. Stay here with me awhile."

He trails a sharp fingernail slowly up the softness of her inner arm, just above her elbow, and watches her shiver.

"I must go... She'll be wondering where I am."

She can't even blink. Trembling starts deep in the muscles of her thighs and she sways as she fights the urge to lean into him. "Please, I must go."

He steps back and bows. She steps towards him. He grins again.

"Come with me instead. I've trapped the moon and turned it into a jewel for you. Let me show you."

A howl throbs from somewhere deep in the forest, behind her. The noise tautens the hairs at the top of her spine.

"She's probably getting worried..."

Her voice is cracked and she knows he can sense her desire to be persuaded. The tip of his tongue gleams as he licks at the corner of his mouth and smiles, and then he reaches to cup her cheek in his palm.

His skin is rough.

I wake before dawn. The pillows are on the floor and my chest hurts. I scuttle upright and look at myself in the mirror. There's blood smeared across my lips and over my chin. I sit and look, and start to cry.

By the time mum's dragged herself out of bed I've been downstairs for what feels like a full day. I think I know what to do and I don't want her interference, so I grab my jacket and yell a goodbye as she comes down the stairs, then hurl myself out of the front door before she can respond. I head for the wood.

Settled on my favourite rotten tree stump, I dig a hole for my finger to worm its way into. I like the feel of the wet, pulpy innards against my flesh, the thought that I'm the only human being who has ever touched the hidden heart of this tree. My fingernails are stiff and coated with it. I sit and hum a tune, and wait.

She's suddenly sleepy, and pushes her face more firmly into his palm, chasing the tenderness of his fingers. They stand silently for a while and he caresses her. When he moves away she nudges closer and whimpers, but he stays still and apart. She opens her eyes, nods, and takes his hand. She walks with him out of the clearing.

I'm so still the birds have forgotten me. They scatter around my tree stump and pursue their lives with intense concentration. I want to clear my throat but don't want to lose their company.

When they fly off they go together, all of them, in one panicked whirl of wings and alarm calls. And then there is absolute silence. I stand up and shuffle to coax sensation back into my numb legs.

The boy appears, strong and fast through the trees. He hasn't seen me yet. I watch as, head lowered, he covers the ground in huge, loose strides, carefully avoiding the bluebells. He jerks slightly when he spots me, and his grace falters.

I step onto the path and he's forced to slow down to move around me. "You're my wolf."

He stops and stares at me. I try again. Less weird this time, Scarlet, would be good.

"Would you...? Would you like to walk with me?"

His skin darkens with embarrassment and I can feel mine rushing to match it. We stand and look at our feet for a moment and I almost turn and run.

Then he smiles though his blush, just a quick twist of the lips, revealing teeth bone white and pure. "Sure. Why not?"

We both grin, and as we walk out of the clearing, I reach to take his hand.

Ghazal

Rhys Owain Williams

Outside the front door of a mid-terrace house
wedding photos spill from a broken black bag.

In the summer, we enjoy a barbecue on the beach
but the sausages dropped on the sand go uneaten.

The next day – despite the hours between us,
my fingers still cling to your faint-perfumed breast.

Although I find her number in a charity shop shirt,
I do not phone to see if she was unwanted too.

Despite what Hollywood would have you think,
nobody makes love in slow motion.

Morning – a dried slug curled up on the carpet
brought through the house with last night's bins.

To feel the sting of aftershave on his freshly-cut jaw,
the felled soldier would kill many, many times more.

How to tenderize a word

Rosalind Hudis

Take a word like *torture* – wherever you buy it
it's tough, won't chew down without the aid
of classy practices. Its shocked cells locked
rigid at the point of butchery, stay locked
in the swift passage to freezer. No time, no grace,
to loosen. And show me the butcher
who will let words hang
in forgiving back passages, their syllables
softly dislocating. Come in the marinade!

Your word must lie on its back in a suitable container -
slowly submerge it in a mixture of sweet and acid.
Vinegar will do, pineapple if you wish
for a dash of the Caribbean, but any flavour
you choose will serve to suffuse
with overlays of atmosphere, make tender,
exude a confession of bikinied heat
of Moroccan palaces or Mexican stars.
Flesh will be in there – a hint of pheromone

so close to fear – teasing, a spice, an electric trace
in such enhanced techniques of manipulation.

Spider Plant

Thomas Chadwick

My wife and I, we bought a spider plant last Saturday. It was the first time we'd ever bought a plant together, but we've not been married long and there are other reasons to do with my wife's job and us moving around a lot that meant we'd never even considered it until then. In truth, it's not something I'd really considered at all, buying a plant.

"We should go and get a plant for the house tomorrow," she announced on Friday evening.

"Why do we need to get a plant?" I asked, pouring my wife her glass of wine as she sat back in her chair.

"This room," she said, pausing to take a sip, "it's a little sparse?"

I looked around our living room. There was the dining table at the far end, two sofas, a tall bookcase. The TV sat on a TV stand that also housed a DVD player, a digital TV receiver and a collection of DVDs. On the mantelpiece were two china dogs, each roughly the size of a decent Easter egg, staring across at one another. Above the doorway was a clock with a thick black rim and no numbers. With the way the room was angled it was a real slog to make out what time it was if you were sitting on the sofa.

"I wouldn't call it sparse," I said.

I was going to add that I thought it could if anything be more minimalist. I found myself staring at the dogs on the mantelpiece and the DVDs that were near falling out of the TV cabinet but I could never remember if being minimalist was something we'd talked about or whether it was just something I thought about myself from time to time.

“But a plant would lift the room,” my wife continued. “And they oxidise the air. It will be good for us to have a plant.”

My wife works long days for a government administration office. Her desk is on the ground floor of a large concrete building. I have been there just once. I went there one day to pick her up after work. It was shortly before we got married and we were both very excitable at the time. I saw her working through the window of that ground floor, her desk pressed up between two others, her head hunched forward over a computer. She had her back to me but I knew it was her. Thinking about her office I thought I could see why she might want a plant at home. Plants can still be minimalist after all.

I saw no reason to be obstinate. The next morning, after drinking coffee together and discussing the situation in Syria, we drove to Homebase. My wife marched straight to the garden centre section and found a selection of house plants. For a moment we both stood there and stared. I realised that I didn't know the names of any plants. Most of the plants I could see on the racks I'd never even seen before. I knew green stuff, sure, but actual plants in pots left me out of my depth.

My wife seemed less troubled.

“I like that one,” she said, pointing at a thin green number whose leaves were long and stringy with white edges.

SPIDER PLANT read the label.

“Well let's get that one,” I said eager to get the hell away from the plants.

It was only once we had the plant on the back seat of the car and I was driving home around the ring road, listening to the football updates on the radio while my wife sent frantic emails to a sister in Vancouver – whom no one had heard from for days, that I properly noticed that plant. Occasionally as I went to change lanes I'd see its thin leaves bobbing up and down in my rear view mirror. I realised that I would have rather taken home any of the other plants on that rack but the one we had. I did not tell my wife this.

“Laura's probably gone up to the mountains to go skiing,” my wife said.

That would be a nice thing to do, I thought.

We put the plant on the mantelpiece, in-between the two dogs. My wife said it was a great improvement and bustled off to make supper. I tried to watch some TV. I read fragments of an article about Syria in the newspaper. I attempted to make my way through another chapter of a difficult book about the Spanish Civil War. The spider plant's leaves were so long that they hung way down in front of the fireplace. At the very end of its longest leaves it looked as if new baby plants were beginning to grow, which was strange as they were not in compost, but just floating about in mid-air.

"You know I think he'll have to go," said my wife at dinner. "The United Nations may have to step in, but from what I've been reading, he'll have to go."

I tried to work out whether or not my wife's job with the government office was informing her position on Syria or whether she was just taking her perspective from the news like everyone else. In the end I decided that her suspicion of the al-Assad regime was probably no more than a robust western scepticism of Middle Eastern authority. I was going to explain that I thought that the West's behaviour in Iraq and Libya and to a lesser extent in Egypt, made such intervention problematic, but my wife was already onto the sister in Vancouver who may or may not be skiing.

"You know, I think that plant might be trying to breed," I said, as we cleared the table together.

My wife looked confused, so I explained about the suckers, and showed her where I thought the new plants were developing.

"It's kind of sweet, don't you think?" she said, before announcing that she was going up to bed.

I hung around downstairs for a while, tidying the DVDs underneath the TV and wondering if maybe I could take a few of the books we were never going to read again to the charity shop.

By the time I went upstairs the plant seemed to have reached a little closer to the floor. One particularly long leaf was almost touching the wood effect flooring. That night I was restless. My wife was sound asleep beside me but I found I couldn't sleep. Between two and three am, I gave in and read my book, but the

Spanish Civil War is not ideal reading for the early hours. For a short while I considered going back to the bookcase downstairs and getting out something a little lighter, but in the end I just lay in the dark until I drifted off to sleep.

I did not wake up until nearly 10am. My wife brought me a coffee and sat excitedly on the edge of the bed.

“I’m just so excited to be here with you,” she told me.

“Me too,” I said.

We had no real plans for the day. I had half an idea to fix the fence at the end of our garden. The houses on our street backed on to the river. There was a footpath along the edge of the river. Some of the other houses had little gates that led out to the footpath, but we only had a fence. At some point in the last week a portion of the panelling had either been blown over by the wind or knocked over by someone walking down the footpath. My wife said we should replace it with a gate like the ones next door. “It would be nice to be able to just walk out and be by the river,” she said. I was less sure. I was convinced that the fence had been kicked in. A gate would only encourage people to break into our property. I decided not to bring up the fence. Fixing it would require us to decide whether we wanted a gate or not and we’d already been to Homebase the previous day. In the end my wife suggested we go and find a birthday present for the sister in Vancouver.

“I think I’ll get her a book,” she said, “Something that’ll really engage her.”

Skiing’s quite engaging, I thought to myself, but did not say.

Just as we were going out, I noticed the spider plant. Its sucker was now definitely resting on the floor in front of the fireplace. Another long leaf was reaching down to its left. I feared it may too begin to shoot.

By the time we returned from the bookshop, clutching a history of Maoist China and a novel that had been overlooked for the Booker, the spider plant appeared to have developed four new shoots, each reaching down to touch the floor. The original shoot, meanwhile, was now growing in its own right, with its leaves beginning to stretch out and up the chimney. We sat and watched TV for a while, flicking between news and a documentary about owls. I knew that my wife was thinking about her sister because she kept checking her phone for updates on the

action in Syria. I was thinking about dinner, but my wife was lying across my lap and I couldn't be sure what time it was without getting up to look at the clock properly.

That night I slept fitfully again. I made no attempt to read. I just lay there, with my eyes clamped shut, failing to sleep.

At one point, around 3am, my wife got up and went to the bathroom.

"Are you okay?" she asked when she got back.

"I'm not sleeping too well at the moment," I explained.

"I know exactly what you mean," she said. "It can be hard to switch off."

Within minutes I could hear my wife snoring.

When I got back from work on Monday night the spider plant had seven sucker plants spread across the floor of our living room. The first and original sucker plant was now so big that its leaves almost stretched back up as far as the mantelpiece. Some of them looked as if they were themselves developing suckers, which in turn would fall and grow into more plants. Many of the leaves that were growing up from the floor, seemed to be trying to grow up the chimney, which was baffling as everything I'd ever read about plants stressed that they needed light. I had not watered the plant once, but someone clearly was as there was a small green watering can on the side in the kitchen that I'd never seen before.

My wife was late back and very tired. Her sister had emailed to say that she was in-between jobs but sleeping on a friend's sofa to pay rent.

"The whole point of her going there was because it was easier to get a job," my wife said. "She might as well just come back here?"

My wife's sister had not managed to come back for our wedding. It never bothered me much, but I think my wife was still a little sore about it.

In Syria there were reports of summary execution of opposition forces by al-Assad troops.

"It's selfish more than anything," my wife said.

I was so tired that all I wanted to do was go to bed. When I got there I found I was unable to do anything about it.

I spent Tuesday yawning. My wife texted me at lunch to say she was going to be late back again, due to an impending inspection. I made my way home slowly and sat down on the sofa. The British Government was issuing strong rebukes of the events in Syria, but as predicted various commentators were citing the Libya situation as making it difficult to act. From where I sat, watching TV, it appeared that the spider plant had taken over the entire chimney breast. There were now so many suckers and shoots that it was almost impossible to tell which were from the original plant and which had sprung from it. Only the golden muzzle of the two porcelain dogs was visible amidst the leaves. I started to compose a message to my wife in which I suggested that maybe we water it a little less, but then, remembering the inspection, I deleted it and lay back into the sofa. I found some football highlights that I had forgotten I had pre-recorded and watched them.

My wife was cross with me when she returned.

“I can’t believe you’ve done nothing about dinner,” she cried.

“I’m so tired,” I said.

“You’re tired! You’ve been sitting on the sofa for three hours.”

My wife refused to let me help and insisted that she make the pasta. I wanted to explain about the spider plant and the suckers and how I was worried that in a matter of weeks we wouldn’t be able to see each other across the room.

“You know I think I like it sparse in here,” I said out loud, almost without meaning to.

My wife ignored me and carried on stirring the sauce.

We ate in silence and then both went up to bed.

“I’m sorry,” my wife said. “I’ve just had a hell of a day.”

“I’m sorry too,” I said.

By some miracle I managed to drift off to sleep. For maybe two or three hours I was out of it, but then, perhaps simply due to shock of rest, I woke up. I tried to ignore being awake and pretend that I was still asleep. I tried reading my book about the Spanish Civil War. I even got up and went to the bathroom and washed my face with cold water.

It was no good.

At 4am I stormed downstairs. The spider plant was stretched across the whole wall. I burrowed in amongst its leaves and strands until I'd got a hold of the pot. When I walked away with it, I had to tug at the leaves to free them from the chimney breast. I was in pyjamas and had no shoes on but I went outside all the same. I walked down our small garden to the hole in the fence that led out to the river. I put the plant down on the path but its leaves were so long it was hard to get it all in one place. They stretched back behind me towards the house. Some of them appeared to be moving. I spent ages coiling leaves and wrapping them into balls and stuffing them in amongst the main body of the plant. When I had it all in one place, I stooped to pick it up.

"What are you doing?" a voice called out.

I turned to see my wife in her dressing gown.

"Why the hell are you out here? It's the middle of the night."

"It's this spider plant," I said. "I can't take it. It's too much."

My wife shook her head.

"Can you please come back inside?" she asked.

"I'll be right back in," I said.

Once my wife was back through the door, I got a grip of the pot and with all those leaves wrapped up inside it I hoisted it into my arms. It was far heavier than when I had picked it up from Homebase four days earlier. With a huge amount of effort I hurled the plant into the river. There was a single splash and then it bobbed away.

We both slept in the next morning. My wife was late leaving for work.

“Fuck ‘em,” she said, as she kissed me goodbye.

That evening we made dinner together and then sat to eat it on the sofa. There was a programme about Iron Age Britain that we both liked a great deal. My wife had sent her sister an email asking if she might like to come and stay for a while.

“We’ll just see what she says,” my wife concluded.

“It would be nice to have her around,” I said.

We went to bed early.

Whirlwind

Pippa Little

*For Remedios Varo, after her final painting 'Naturaleza Muerta Resuscitando'
(Still Life Reviving), Mexico City 1963.*

The table threshes its skirts
To deep crevasses
Twisting, untwisting
In the throes of a death dance

The inanimate meal
Sanctified by love
Offered to indifferent lips
Levitates in fury
Tin plates career off,
Their rims whetted knives
And flesh orbits
The flame
The still point which may
Or may not hold

Mother of the séance you are
Absent here only in our arms,
Those unequal formalities.

We set our tables over and over
For the living and the dead
With once alive and long-life
Provisions, for
The whirlwind at our back,
that wasps' nest, keeps
reviving us

for the next world.

That Christmas

Sarah James

First, folks thought skaters
had created the Ice Maiden

magicked overnight on the lake.
Mystery glistened. Crowds gathered.

Days passed. She didn't melt,
but her glass clarity scuffed

from white to tarmac black
with the impact of every touch.

More pilgrims flocked; birds flew
off track. Time clothed her in myths.

Someone recalled then how a shower
of falling stars hit the Earth's dark,

like sparks tumbling from a lit taper.
At her feet, a scattering of spent matches.

Tourists queued to buy their daughters
brittle icicles made in her image.

Identity: Chapter 18, War and Wandering

Clark Zlotchew

This is a cut-down version of a translation of Chapter 18 of Antonio Brailovsky's novel, *Identidad*. The title was later changed to *Isaac Halevy, Rey de los Judios*. Translation of the complete novel is in progress.

Identidad is a glowing example of Latin American Magical Realism. Spoken words become visible and palpable, several characters see their own souls reflected in the eyes of other characters, and the 20th Century Hebrew-speaking Indians communicate with their 15th Century ancestors. The action alternates between the end of the 1400s of Spain and Mexico and 20th Century Mexico and California.

The action begins in Inquisition-era Spain. A group of crypto-Jews, sails from Spain to the New World to conquer and settle territory, like Hernan Cortez and the other Spanish conquistadores. Once on the high seas, they openly revert to Judaism, change their assumed Christian-Spanish names to their original Hebrew ones and ban the use of the Spanish language in favor of Hebrew. They settle in the most inaccessible reaches of the Mexican jungle and convert the local Indians, with whom they intermarry, to Judaism. These Jewish Indians have been waiting centuries for the Messiah to arrive and lead them to the Promised Land. By the 20th Century, members of the village begin abandoning their homes to follow Mexican political leaders or revolutionaries, like Emiliano Zapata, whom they believe to be the Anointed One. Still others leave the village to see the wonders of Mexico City, or to travel to the Promised Land of California with other illegal immigrants. In the 20th Century a group of them is brought to Israel, where the media believes them to be part of a political hoax.

War and Wandering

He spent a period of time he was not capable of measuring among those sensations while actually there, and which afterward no longer mattered. But he conceptualized that period of time as one single immense day, composed of infinite fragments of thirsty marches on horseback beneath a low flat sky in which several simultaneous suns shone against a background of intense blue, almost black, like the open eyes of those who had fallen in battle, forgotten by the troops who continued their interminable march, on that one colossal day on which they had been born on that plain, affixed to their horses forever.

“Let’s go back,” Solomon Eagle had said too, and the eyes of the four men repeated the words, tested the weight of the words in their hands and savored them, and then gradually gave them consistency with their hands until they formed a solid shape before their eyes and became flesh. And so it was that they deserted.

“We’re leaving for the city,” Martin and Sarah Ezra, Solomon’s parents, told the Chief.

“Stay here,” the Chief had asked of them. “Our land is here, not there.”

“We’re going to look for our son Solomon and his wife, Myriam Baruchel,” Martin Ezra said. Because they felt that a land without its young people has a parched soul and that the dazzling flowers of the jungle were worthless if their children were not with them.

“Stay here,” the Chief repeated, “because people come and go but the land remains.”

But they answered that they had heard of a city so large that one could spend entire days traversing it on horseback without ever seeing where it came to an end, where there were men who spent their lives walking through it, each time taking a different street but never managing to walk on every one of them. They also said it had buildings taller than trees and that some people assert that they were even bigger than mountains. When the sun goes down at one end of the city, it rises at the other, so that it never is entirely in the dark.

“We’ll ask for that city,” they said. “That’s where they must be.”

And the flight in the immense night through the countryside with fires everywhere, the cries of sentinels who yesterday had been friends or enemies, and who were now becoming unreal, some distant shot, perhaps imagined, and the taut, resonant plain echoing the hoofbeats.

In the half empty village the Chief is astride his horse in memory, and again recalls that first dawn when they were thrown into battle in a glaring harsh light under which solid objects dissolved, and they clung to those horses which had just been created by the Lord God so that their campaign would be victorious. Later, the dangerous, feverish gallop, the confusion of cries and shots, and the surprise of encountering an enemy identical in appearance to his own comrades in arms.

He heard the click of the weapon crooked in his arm, and perhaps there was a secret accord between that powerful animal carrying him along at full speed and that other animal made of iron that roared in his hands, to submerge him in the vertigo of that road that led to the end of the earth. And then the surprise of discovering in the hands of the anonymous enemy the same thunder of the firearm that the Chief had identified with the forces of Good.

...The Chief is now recalling the memories of that intense night more clearly than he remembers the actual events that took place. It was as though the events themselves were erased with the years while the *memory* of those events consisted of its own matter alone, remembering only itself. His eyes fixed on the moon, the Chief feels his father's eyes on him, and as the bushes grow with his horse's gallop and the trees fleetingly leap backward, he listens to that powerful voice which so contrasted with his father's physical frailty that the former chief used to allow it to escape from his body as though he were in fear of losing something of his very substance.

"I'm going to leave, too," David Etz told him, and the Chief felt the weight of time bear down on his shoulders, the weight of the irremediable old age of the tribe that was materializing in his own body.

"Why are you leaving?" he asked.

"To know iron," David Etz said.

Because the Philistines who live beyond the jungle raise gray plants which, when they grow into trees, produce a very hard substance that is melted like wax by the heat of fire and which they call iron. They make their cabins from black iron and put them one on top of the other, and other ones higher up, in order to see great distances. Of white iron are their tables and their sleeping mats and their children's toys, and even the weapons with which they hunt in their own jungle. They also make out of iron the carts with which they move about in

their enormous cities and even use them to cover their horses, so that it appears that the carts move by themselves.

There even are those who say that the Philistines from beyond the jungle have slaves who spend long years polishing some of the iron until it becomes transparent, and then they put it up as walls in their cabins and look out through them. With this same iron they make animals that fly, like the one that came here to our tribe, and they use it as the surface of the paths on which they walk and some of them even dress in iron. So, when a man climbs to the top of the lofty cabins in which they live, looking through the polished transparent iron, he can see, in the late afternoon, the sun reflected on each of the roads and the carts and the houses of that dark and sparkling mass, and it is as though the city were a single animal made of iron.

Before his solitary fire, the Chief remembers his awakening with fog-filled eyes in a darkened room, a woman's voice both distant and close at the same time, and that pain in his side, about which he now dreamed at times. Those were undifferentiated days and nights, in the confusion and the chill of the fever, in which there would appear to him, in a thousand different forms, his father's face.

"You are never going to return," the image would say in a mournful voice, as though his father's ghost too felt that bullet wound in his side, the wound that hurt so when he breathed that he would hold his breath and then very carefully let the air escape, as if his entire body were on the point of breaking. And at a given moment his father's form disappeared and the woman's voice began to be more solid and more real, and perhaps the hands had been hers which, a short time before, had washed and bandaged his wound, and even from the start he was barely able to discern her presence, without a face yet beside him, waiting for him at the end of the foggy road, while little by little he returned to consciousness.

There was some kind of mystery, the Chief felt, about that unknown woman who had found him bleeding to death on the plains and had taken him in and cared for his wounds, as though she had been sent there by the prophet Elijah who, from on high in his night ship, had seen him fall. He asked her about it and the woman gestured for him to be still. When she returned to feed him, the Chief, having barely managed to sit up, once more asked her, "Why did you nurse me back to health?" But she had left the room without speaking to him, as though words might have the power to take something away from that atmosphere of silence and magic intuitions. Many years later, the Chief now remembers, he repeated that same question, and she answered: "The war had left us without men."

“I’m going to the land of the Philistines,” Solomon Tiger said to him, and the years were dropping in each one of his words, while the Chief felt the disintegration of the tribe join with his own.

“Why?” he asked.

“To know the sea,” Solomon Tiger said.

Because the Lord God had made the world out of water, with the jungle in the middle and the fields and cities of the Philistines surrounding it. But around those lands there was nothing but water, out to the uttermost reaches of infinity. It was said that the Philistines had canoes as big as their cities, made of that dark gummy paste they call iron, which they propelled with so many paddles that they could not be counted.

Solomon Tiger would embark on one of those immense canoes. They would give him his iron paddle and, at a signal from the Chief of the Philistines, they would glide through the limitless water until the sea became one with the horizon. They would continue cruising through the waters that are above the sky until, peering over the gunwale, Solomon Tiger would look down to see, beyond the bottom of the translucent waters, the upper part of the sky and the stars and, lower down, the houses and cities of the Philistines, and even the jungle and the village. Perhaps he would even see himself as a child, or even as an old man, because time does not exist on the seas.

And at one point –the Chief now remembers—the days and the nights became more distinct, the wound began not to hurt, and the woman took to sitting beside the blanket on which he lay, and would speak softly to him in a strange language. At first they were just a few words, later entire sentences, and finally they would spend the days speaking to one another each in their own tongue. The woman spoke with a soft and modulated voice, almost singing without music, the Chief in dry, choppy tones, almost thinking with his lips.

Then one morning the woman served him a pot of coffee and cornmeal tortillas, waited for him to eat while looking into his eyes, sat down on the blanket, and without a word, with an ordinary nod of her head, motioned for him to come closer, and the Chief knew his woman. And when war and fire once more fell upon them, they struck out for the jungle, leaving at midnight to travel across the vast plains, their shadows running before them. The Chief turned his head to see tall flames leaping up from where his wife’s house had been and the horsemen with their red-glowing torches scattering throughout the tiny village. At dawn the Chief asked some non-combatants, “Where is the jungle?”

“We don’t know what the jungle is,” they told him.

Then the Chief used sign language to describe the tall trees, the slow wheeling of the eagle and the clumsier flight of the multi-colored birds, the abundant waters of the Jordan River in springtime and the smell of the deer. He had them listen to the roar of the jaguar in the thicket and the voice of the water in the hidden waterfall, until one of them appeared to understand.

“At a three-days’ journey from here,” he said, “lives a man who used to speak of these very things.”

They continued along the parched plain, which rose in clouds of burning dust to fall and then once more rise above them. There they traveled in circles for many broiling days and freezing nights, exhausted, suffering thirst to the point of drinking their own urine. Until they saw in the distance a forest of very tall trees, with herds of deer surrounding the walls of a castle. When they approached, the castle disappeared into thin air. The following day they saw, on the spot on which the castle and its forest had been, a dilapidated hut surrounded by parched shrubs, with two or three goats and several hens milling about, which an old woman dragged inside.

“We’re searching for a man who knows where the jungle is,” the Chief’s wife said at the opening that served as a door. Two ragged old women came out and asked them to repeat the question. They finally went back inside and brought out a stammering old man who looked at them with empty eye sockets and then raised his hands to the sky, groping until he found the sun’s position. Once he had found it, he stood there thinking for a while until he oriented himself, and finally pointed in the very direction from which they had come.

“The jungle is out that way,” he said.

...The Chief knew the Philistine country, composed of parched plains ridden over by horsemen who were filled with hatred and who killed each other for no reason, not even to use those fallen in battle as food. They would leave them behind in the open countryside and continue on their way. The Chief had not seen the cities of iron with hanging gardens that the Jews had constructed during their captivity in the land of the Philistines. On the other hand, he knew the Philistines themselves. He had seen them arriving at the village. He had followed them through their arid plains and thought it was not good for the Jews to move out of their own lands.

“Many years ago,” he said, “when I went off to fight for Emiliano Zapata, my father told me before I left that I was never going to return, and I didn’t believe him. Now I’m saying the same thing to you who are leaving, because those who leave the village never come back.”

He added, "I went to war. I met my wife and then I tried to come back, but I couldn't because it's easy to leave the jungle, but there's no one who can show us the way back. Because there is no one who knows where the road of the wind is, and the Philistines didn't know where the jungle was. We got lost in the desert and were almost dying of thirst until we finally came to a blind old man who pointed out the mountains and told us, "The jungle is out that way'."

The Chief told them that the jungle in which they were living was not the only one in the world –although he did not know whether or not it really was in its center—but that there existed innumerable jungles separated by plains and cities. Perhaps there were others beyond the sea in which men lived who did not know the language of the Jews or even of their existence.

Through a thick, humid jungle they had followed from its headwaters a river that slightly resembled the Jordan and whose waters had the same taste. But as they continued along its banks, they began to detect a change in the water's taste as the days passed. At first the difference in taste was almost imperceptible. Later it was so unmistakable that in the course of one afternoon the Chief was able to detect that the water of that nameless river was becoming more transparent and pure, swelled with the contribution of crystalline brooks which were diluting the texture of red clay more and more, and were bringing it closer to the universal water, the water that rains on all the jungles in the world. They had made their way out of that jungle and the other one as well, crossed a river, wandered for a period of four days while listening to the murmur of the sea, but without seeing it, or even knowing in which direction it lay.

"I didn't see the ocean," the Chief told them, "but I heard its breathing. It's a huge animal, all made of water. It's imprisoned by the plains of the Philistines and is struggling to break free."

After nightfall, he and his wife were very cold and could not sleep because the sea was crying out all night long. But on the following morning the sea had become so silent that it was as if it had finally found an escape route, and they heard it no more. They came to an Indian village and asked the village elder, "Where do the Jews live?" And the elder pointed in the direction opposite to that in which the sun was at that moment. Then they went in that direction until the jungle ended and an enormous parched plain began on which they wandered consumed by thirst, until they saw the mirage of a castle surrounded by a forest. On the following day they came to a dilapidated hut, from which two old women brought out a blind man who, groping for the position of the sun with open hands, once more pointed in the direction from which they had come.

"The jungle only has trails that lead away," the Chief said. "There are no paths that lead back."

They came out of the plains, and the jungles they crossed were so alike that they became confused in his memory with the only true one, the one on the banks of the Jordan which had been promised by the Lord God to His chosen people. They traveled over roads inhabited by dark men who shot arrows or fired guns at them from a distance, unwilling to listen to their questions. Again they became lost time after time in the jungle, a jungle that was ever different yet always familiar. It was as though they had walked in circles for many months, drinking the alternately crystalline and clayey water. They were careful when they made a fire. They hunted birds and monkeys with bow and arrow because they feared that a gunshot might attract the attention of hostile Philistines. Until one day they saw a column of smoke before them and the Chief approached to ask his questions.

“But it so happens that three days before,” he explained, “in another place people had tried to shoot us. So I told my wife to stay behind and I carried my weapon in my hand in case there might be a need to use it. It was this pistol that you see here.” And he took a rust-colored revolver, from which the drum was missing, out of a blanket, and the useless weapon passed its roughness along the hands of Martin Ezra, Solomon Tiger and David Etz.

“I don’t know how I didn’t realize it,” the Chief said. “I arrived at an unfamiliar village of men with skin darker than ours, who allowed us to enter, without a glance, and to pass by the altar on which they were worshipping some unfamiliar god, and to come to the largest of the cabins, where I found myself face to face with my father. Because I know the road that leads from the lands of the Philistines to this place, a road that sometimes exists and sometimes does not,” the Chief added, “and because I know all of you too, I know you aren’t going to come back.”

Fledgling

Katrina Naomi

A corner of your room's lined with the stuffing from pillows,
pieces of speckled shell. I've seen you perch on the ledge,
half out, half in, not knowing whether you'll jump or soar.

I think of those men who strapped on heavy plumage,
stood on cliffs and faced the breeze; those scientists
who studied the dinosaur of feathers. You're still waiting

for your scratchy wings to sprout, for your fall to earth
to be spectacular, your legs greeting the ground, travelling
up through your pelvis and into your guts. And I think

of Amelia Earhart, who knew just how much to believe
in herself. You sit in the cold air, a boy and the moon,
calling to your new friends, safe in their branches,

as you test your language, fashioning yourself after a finch.
Your eyes glitter; a dish of worms writhe at your side.
In the morning, I'll unravel the strings of my kite.

The Dance

Bethany Rivers

Selene dreams of a girl waltzing between stars
kicking up sand dunes, spitting wine
in the eyes of self-made gods. The girl washes
her ankles in forest streams, her energy vibrates

through Earth's veins; she burns bridges
to the past and future, licks mountains
like ice lollies. Selene knows the melody
of the girl's heart, as she ravages the ties

of the rich, unpickets fences of neighbourhoods,
paints rainbows on council buildings;
she upholds people's life-lies, blows wide
open society's deceptive lives, kills scarecrows

for fun, whispers poetry into the hearts
of rulers. Selene dreams of a time
when girl becomes woman and knows
her own truth; realises the reins

are hers, trusting horse galloping darkness
as it silvers into dawn. The girl nightmares
through her teens as Selene weaves her tears
into a chrysalis of gossamer, shining with morning dew.

Selene – Roman Moon Goddess

The Blue Harbour

Tim Cooke

Two years after the Olympics in Rio, my girlfriend and I were still in South America. Our trip had been fun and exhausting. We'd danced with three million people on the streets of Salvador, sipped Malbec on the balconies of Mendoza and played football in the shadows of Salcantay Mountain. Our Lonely Planet guidebook was grey and ragged, spineless and scarred with black and blue pen – guilty as sin.

For the last week we'd been making our way slowly south from the Bolivian salt flats, stopping briefly in Salta and then Cordoba – where a prostitute shot our German friend in the face with an air rifle, giving us something to write home about – before arriving finally in Buenos Aires. It was April and a cool breeze had pushed in blankets of cloud and dust. This was our second visit to the city and it came as no surprise to find the streets still awash with chewing gum and dogs' muck.

On our first night in the backpackers' hostel, we met a man from Bridgend – the South Wales market town where I was born – whose daughter in law had been a classmate of mine. His nose was broken and his hands and clothes were torn and bloodied. That afternoon he'd been the target of a clever scam comprising bird faeces, a pretty girl with a napkin and a fleet-footed bag thief. This time, though, they'd picked on the wrong guy. A veteran surfer and labourer, short and deceptively solid, he'd caught on quick, lost his rag and pummelled the unfortunate pair into unconsciousness, breaking his own nose on the back of someone's head in the process. He told us how a crowd had formed, cheering his brave defiance with vigour until the crack of skull against curb echoed flatly across the thoroughfare. He'd left the scene in silence, disturbed by his sudden loss of control.

His story shocked us, but after a few gins we all loosened up and he made for good company. We explored our hometown connections, dropping names, streets and pubs – walking blindly together into the darkness of a place we'd left so long ago. We told stories and lies, drawing maps with our mouths until the bottle was empty. We opened another and started all over again. By about 3am just he and I remained at the plastic table in the centre of the kitchen, slurring back and forth in the dim lamplight. He drained his glass and finished some spiel about a local artist who'd stayed a month at his small house in Ogmore by Sea, photographing his surf workshop and way of life.

Placing his elbow with what seemed like care into a small pool of ash and booze on the white surface, and resting his bristled chin between thumb and swollen forefinger, he considered me carefully for a moment. Sounding oddly serious he asked where I'd been – something we hadn't talked about yet, which amongst 'travellers' was unheard of after more than two hours' chat. It pleased me to think we'd not touched on the sure commonality that I, like him, had laboriously shared with so many countless others on the busy trail. I gave a brief, uninteresting summary and returned the question. "Puerto Azul," he said. I coughed a fat gulp of sour liquid into my throat.

A year earlier, on that famous trek through high-school history in Peru, a quiet Swiss from the German side of the Alps told us of a big freeze that had swept across the bottom of Chile and Argentina, immediately wiping names from maps and route-planners. Puerto Azul, a harbour town perched on the southern-most coast of the continent, had borne the brunt. So extreme and sinister was the weather and so isolated the town that no one could get in and even fewer could get out. Life had come to an abrupt and anxious halt.

This had happened, by my reckoning, about 20 months ago, and public transport to the wintery reaches had since completely ceased. The name Puerto Azul slipped quietly from our minds. That was until mutterings in Cusco – the rumbling belly of Peru – jogged our memories. A Dutch girl we'd met, who had attended a mysterious boarding school hidden in the woods on the edge of Bridgend, heard something in a local post office. "The ice has engulfed the entire region," she said from behind a flow of red fringe. Any suggestions of air rescue had been quickly dismissed – there was no runway safe for landing and helicopters were completely out of the question. Fearing what might happen if the weather didn't shift soon, with supplies at the town's single supermarket already on the wane, rumour had it that a plan was hatched with an international shipping company.

Apart from a small number who felt compelled to stay for whatever reason, the townspeople marched more than 17 miles through ice and snow before crossing the nauseating Drake Passage to Antarctica on an out-of-service oil tanker. They gathered for months in one of those hanger-like research centres explored so beautifully by Werner Herzog in his documentary at the end of the world – McMurdo Station, or something similar. The place took on a role like that played by school gymnasiums in New Orleans, only without the cameras. Many families are still there by all accounts, cold and rootless.

Looking at me with a kind of devious pride, his shirtsleeve drenched in gin, my bruised friend laughed. “You’ve heard of it then?” I nodded, wiping phlegm from my face.

He went on to explain that close to a month previous, about to embark on a five-day trek through a contained wilderness called Torres del Paine, he’d met a native of Rio Gallegos at a cut-price climbing store. The Welshman was ticking off a camping checklist given him by the American owner of a hostel in Natales, a tourist town not too far from the national park, when the stranger approached. (Please note: The three places mentioned in the previous two sentences can be sliced through on a map with a short, jagged pencil line drawn about three centimetres north of the region buried in snow and frozen in time.) They got talking about whether or not a pair of Hi-Tec tennis trainers could cope with moderate-to-difficult mountain terrain. One thing led to another and they found themselves splitting the cost of a pizza and three pitchers of Quilmes at a bar down the street.

Over lunch the Argentine, Eugene, spoke freely of Puerto Azul. He explained that the ice had started to thaw a month or so ago; this was according to local fishermen who would cast their nets offshore from Punta Arenas, a city split from the continent’s lower tip only by the Strait of Magellan. Bizarrely, nothing had been confirmed online; so forgotten had the country’s nether regions become that only the most patient of Google trawlers, with a God-given talent for digital excavation, could have unearthed word from the other side. If any did, they refrained from sharing.

Eugene, a mountain tour guide in a former life, had assembled a mix of six locals and two adventurous tourists to join him on a rare journey into the unknown (for a reasonably extortionate price). He’d already chanced a trip from his hometown on the coast all the way to Natales – for no immediately discernible reason, geographically at least – in a Bolivian microbus well worthy of the scrap

heap. An old friend was presently fitting the vehicle with a second-hand air compressor. The rest of the group were at a hostel nearby, putting final touches to preparations before setting off for the mysterious Blue Harbour the next morning. There was room for one more on the expedition.

The Welshman dropped his glass and reached from the table to the surface by the sink, tearing a piece of kitchen towel from a hanging roll. The two chair legs on his right side strained beneath his weight, ready to slip from under him at any moment. He toppled heavily back into position and wrote something down.

“It’s where I came to,” he said, sliding the tar-yellowed scrap of tissue paper across a brown stain towards me. “They’re running one every fortnight. You’ll hear nothing from Eugene – won’t be doing it again. Get the bus from the Retiro Terminal for Rio Gallegos. Get off and walk or taxi two miles south on Jose de San Martin. Hut of a house, two shitty buses outside – one on bricks. Give them my name and wait.” He paused to belch. “Take long johns and water.” Leaning forward he pushed himself up, making his hands purple, and stumbled for the door. He coughed twice, hoarsely, and vomited in the bin.

“Goodbye,” I said. He was gone.

*

Upstairs was silent but for a restless Canadian tossing and turning in the bunk above mine, muttering unconsciously about Israeli national service. The alcohol made sleep easy but shallow.

That night I dreamt of East End gangster films. Of Richard Burton’s Vic Dakin losing his mind over Lovejoy’s Ian McShane. Builders on cranes, the public watching from high-rise balconies. I was in the back of a car with the Kray-inspired villain and his dying mother, driving over the Sussex Downs – a trip only talked about in the film. They were planning a walk in Shoreditch, shuffling through the slums with the ghost of Mrs Sanderson’s mother, Ada (they were reading, at bedtime, Michael Young and Peter Willmott’s document of *Family and Kinship in East London*). They took photos of locations used for scenes in later crime flicks. I was at a funeral in Bethnal Green, listening to someone’s aunt – never a mother – screech about the war, making sounds like dead babies gurgling in the depths of Victoria Park pond. A dumping ground for botch-abortionists.

The heat and fizz of mosquitos brought me to my senses. I sat on Facebook until breakfast.

*

Next morning we walked to San Telmo market, the Argentine equivalent of Hackney. After quick deliberation, I bought a camera – a 35mil piece of shit – and a pile of cheap film. We sat down to lunch in the main square and watched two tired looking dancers tango for change on a red carpet. The guy’s suit was scuffed and stank. He was pale and his teeth were rotten. His partner kept turning her face from his, reaching to the sky for fresh air, throwing them out of sync. We finished a pair of thin steak sandwiches and read for half an hour. I raced through the final two chapters of *In Cold Blood*, available in every bookshop and exchange in South America – always the most expensive item on sale.



We arrived at the bus terminal just after 3pm and bought two tickets to Rio Gallegos. 45 hours on one of Andesmar’s much-talked-about luxury buses.

It was a strange experience, drifting along an endless ethereal coastline to the noise of Shania Twain and Celine Dion. Their hits interspersed with disorientating movies about snipers and Japanese Akitas (shot in Canada, Philadelphia and Rhode Island). Mark Wahlberg and Richard Gere at their

very worst. We found ourselves gorging on tin-foiled meals that played havoc with already suspect bowel functions, reclining to twitch and squeak on thinly cushioned cellophane seats. I dipped in and out of sleep in a breaststroke motion. Images of a Kansas farmhouse, a smoking barrel and blood-brain décor making waves before my blank eyes. Documentary and fiction weaved together to form a rich tapestry of new-age Americana. *“It’s as if Perry and I grew up in the same house. And one day he stood up and went out the back door, while I went out the front,”* came the voice of coincidence, plastic rubbing on bare skin, déjà vu let loose like bacteria.

I took photos from the window; micro-tornados of sand and Lay’s potato chips framed by wafer-thin red curtains. Cyclists pedalling in circles, shopping bags hanging from handlebars, featureless faces singing cerebral songs from black vacuum mouths. Feverishly, I cranked open the camera back and destroyed my evidence with light. Only memory left to write fictions of a trip that never happened.

*

At Rio Gallegos we could think only of wine, clean skin and a comfortable bed. We found a quiet hostel with a roof terrace overlooking the docks, cooked our staple ragout and sat out in the dark, drinking a bottle from the communal fridge. The city was spacious, laid out in squares like a circuit board. The quiet roads lit infrequently by midnight travellers, visits to the shops and the occasional flicker of lighter flames. Information raced in flashes through the streets. Liners blinked in the distance, hauling coal across the continent, arriving home in time for last orders. It was like an ultra-industrial take on that fictional Welsh town populated for a day – and forever more – by Burton’s First Man and Elizabeth Taylor as the foxy Rosie Probert; Peter O’Toole’s poetry and David Jason’s youthful lunacy both something to behold.

It was strange that the capital of a Patagonian region, an area so famously linked with the homeland, should rely in part on coal and sheep for profit. Of course, the Welsh who migrated in the 19th century settled north of where we were, primarily in the Chubut Valley province – Trelew, Puerto Madryn and the like. Three Jones clans journeyed from Mountain Ash to Liverpool to board the *Mimosa*, a clipper ship with just enough wind left in its sails. It was built in 1853 in Aberdeen, not for passenger purpose, but found its calling elsewhere, with the Welsh men and women in search of a haven, a landscape that could accommodate and preserve their sacred way of life. In 1865, approximately 153 passengers arrived in a place

they named Porth Madryn, writing themselves and their boat into a fog of myth and history.

We sat plump with food and alcohol, listening to Gruff Rhys – that psychedelic troubadour – and his musical transcript of a journey into the Allegheny Mountains, in the footsteps of his ancestor John Evans. Legend has it that long before Columbus took rape and tyranny to the Bahamas, a Welsh-Viking mariner by the name of Madog happened upon the unwritten continent. Evans, an orphaned farm boy with a taste for adventure, left Snowdonia in the 1790s to track the whereabouts of the Madogwys, a fair-skinned tribe of Madog lineage nestled somewhere in the Canadian edge-lands. Last seen in New Spain, calling himself Don Juan, he disappeared into the wilderness of folklore. Rhys walked straight in after him. The Welsh don't half get about, we said.

That night we slept under a woollen blanket, on a hard single mattress, with the windows wide open. Songs of rolling hills and rushing streams, warrior princes and poets slipped in on a saline midnight wind. We shared our room with ghosts, our dreams drenched in Wales.

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The taxi driver took a right and bumped along a thin dirt road. We pulled up alongside a motley row of closed shops – beige stone like Bolivian gaucho canyons, traces of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* infused in the familiar tones, narratives at every turn. We paid up and crossed over to the shade. At the far end of the lane, a long driveway stretched down into the mouth of a smallholding – a glorified shack with chickens panicking in the yard and a bull tied loosely to a tree, slumped in a large hump of meat. Two shitty buses stood to one side, one on bricks.

As we walked to the house, a heavy wheeze and a cough kicked up a cloud of dust like nervous hooves, taking us by surprise. Two yards to our left an apparition emerged from a pile of broken rocks. His face, like cracked concrete, was thick with weeks of grime and filth. He wore clothes of mulch and earth, scabbed all over with dead shrubs. His eyes, peering through crusted slits, were the colour of clotted blood – rotten fruits. We took two quick steps back and stood motionless. He turned sluggishly on his side, put his hands together as if in prayer and pressed them between his knees. With one long sigh he rolled over again and disappeared back into the crumbling wall.

Before reaching the door, we took turns to leg it past the bull, which had raised its great muscular self the second we'd crossed the property's threshold. A mother, feeding her baby, ushered us into a thin timber hallway. It was warm and smelled like cabbage and over-boiled sweet potatoes. A broad man sipping Lucozade and munching raw white bait from a plastic bag squeezed passed us and made for the kitchen, leaving behind a strong whiff of bonfire. A large spider crawled out from under his collar and scuttled down his arm. The Argentina we knew felt a long way away all of a sudden. We'd entered a new culture, a new dimension. The geography had changed and it took all of our energy to remember where we were.

We sat on a faux-alpaca couch in a small room with three other couples of varying European descent. A photographer from Leeds completed the party. The cluttered space was cast in fumes and shadow. I watched a small child sitting soundless and upright through a haze of creeping nostalgia – a genetic disease I will never shake. I snatched a small piece of his soul with my camera and waited for what felt like days in silence.



*

From the side of the road we took one last look at the scene a few hundred yards back; smoke gushed from the upturned bus into the cold crimson sky, flooding the bright horizon with black and the darkest shades of grey. Half a mile ahead was the lost town, blue with frost and shivering in the distance. The road, caked in ice the colour of coal, weaved this way and that through thick clusters of wood that

ran along a steep decline to the flat where the Blue Harbour spread. We limped on, tired and thirsty.

The air was fresh and smelled like ferns. There was no snow, just ice and slush. She took my arm at the elbow and squeezed. I fumbled with the cracked body of my camera and thought of her large eyes, her careful brown hair brushing the tops of her pale shoulders, the blood congealing in her brow. I loaded one final reel of film and began to shoot.

Empty aluminium huts with faded blue and white flags peering through broken glass; cars flumped on sunken wheels, stripped of rubber and fuel; shops and restaurants gutted; torn political campaign posters willing votes for Cristina – a handsome, sturdy red head of years gone by; a mustard camper straight from the 70s with a Malvinas plate hanging in the window. There was graffiti everywhere – planes, boats, war, but mostly of the indigenous Yaghan peoples of the Southern Cone, narratives at every turn.

After a lunch of out-of-date crackers – one of few salvageable products left on the supermarket shelves – we met two people: the first was a tin man we found prostrate and rusting in the grassy yard behind a gentleman’s club; the second an overweight child playing on a groaning roundabout. Our broken Spanish wasn’t nearly enough to make sense of his quick-fire questions. Unimpressed by our gory appearance, he hopped from the slowing carousel and kicked a flat football high over a broken fence. He ran fatly into the darkness of a narrow alleyway.



*

Time went awry during our spell in Puerto Azul. Our watches stopped and our desire for food and sleep slowly diminished. We ate what we came upon and slept only when we found ourselves on our backs.

Walking along the forested strips on the edge of town, through the Tierra del Fuego, we saw ghosts. Golden-brown women with jet-black hair and bare breasts carrying children and rugs that reeked of shellfish. They were unsmiling and beautiful. They sat together on large fallen branches beneath the protection of the towering trees, talking peacefully with their hands. From the banks of a lake, we watched them paddle their canoes to the deep core, where they dove naked for food. The men were slim and stern and fearless. They dragged behind them bleeding sea lions.

*

One morning, that might have been days or weeks into our stay, we saw from the top of a fire escape three buses arrive in town. One after another they pulled into a car park that overlooked the harbour. Empty vessels clanged gently against their buoy chains as the visitors disembarked. A lighthouse way out beyond the marina looked on with apprehension. Waves crawled up its walls and dropped back into the water like tears.

Night came and with it the noise of construction. Torches fluttered and then fires burned loudly across the landscape. The endless clatter and grind of revolution churned the dark into light, and with the rising sun came our first glimpse of the Ghost Town. Much the same but for a slick fast food joint and up-to-the-minute information centres; hotels and hostels warm again, uniformed signs proclaiming *vacantes*. Similar signs no doubt peppered the roads in – like the route to Don DeLillo's most photographed barn. From my rucksack we pulled the grey and ragged Lonely Planet and read a brand new brief history of the Blue Harbour. It had appeared as if from nowhere.

Overnight the books had been rewritten and the maps redrawn, the trails and walkways swept clear. But for a moment, at least, we'd felt something real. A world frozen in time and briefly lost from view, a place positively glowing with absence. One of the buses skirted the western flank of the centre and disappeared into the distance. We shook the cold from our bones, headed down the steel staircase and made our way quickly across the road.

The Magician's Daughter

Kittie Belltree

He draws a silk scarf from a secret pocket, snakes it around wrists,
splits in two, twists it taut, like her vocal chords, places it over
her eggshell eyelids, then offers his hand - white-gloved -
bowing low, he lets loose the stolen jewels lining his jacket.

She accepts - blindly - curtseying into the citrine shaft of spotlight
that slices the stage in half, then footsteps into the dead-flat box
arranges herself - doll-like - inside, before he lays the wooden lid to rest.
Until now he has kept her for himself, hidden in the folds of his second -

best hat-box, fed on a diet of sliced tongue and pearl cufflinks.
The ritual begins before the stage door, before the audience,
the dressing room - where he inserts the knife into her velvet and feathers
plucks her hair into tucks and tresses, places a glass slipper on her pillow -

Thus he enters without breaking, and she slips seamlessly into the space
conjured by his third wife, who broke all his spells while he snored by the stove
after Saturday *matinee*, stole the key to his best hat-box for her whale-bone
combs
and peacock frocks, and vanished with a ventriloquist from Vladivostok.

He feels the thickness of the blade like honey inside her newfound flesh
and the strength of his heaving old magic. Why, his wand can cut her in two -
separate her bones from her meat, like halving a peach - she is ripe - now
for his next trick - now he has her undone, he will make her disappear. Now - .

How the Dark Came to Stay

Jayne Stanton

We heard it coming
through windows we'd left open
at the say-so of the wind.

It claimed the bedroom carpet, spread
its bulk like a stain. It froze our breath
as it licked the maps from its monstrous paws.

Its coat harboured rumours:
fields sick of floodwater; ewes swept downriver,
their stillborns beached from the wrecks of their bellies;

flightless birds weaving grounded circles
in barbed-wire nests, laying clutches
of cages empty of song;

death masks
fixed on the faces of sleepers who lose sight
of the last bright morning.

We knew then
what the dreamers brought back from the brink.

The Aswang

Bethany W. Pope

Maria Lagada picks her way home through the Cementerio del Norte. She shifts her heavy, dripping mesh-bag from hand to hand every few feet. The meat she carries is relatively fresh, still on the femur (she can smell the rich red marrow leaking through the cracks in the long, white bones) and the blood is vivid against the scavenged newspaper she's wrapped it in.

The early-morning light is bright between the graves. There are no trees within the high, volcanic-rock walls the Spanish left, but there are a great many gardens between the gravestones, filled with flowers and food. There are grassy, shrubby places where children and adults meet to play or make love. There are chickens pecking and scratching in the mud at the edges of the paths. The houses and stores built atop the mausoleums glitter with rain. They look fresh-painted; their yellows, whites, and blues shimmer as though the coats were brand new. This is the largest, oldest cemetery in Manila North and it is home to millions, most of whom are dead.

There are thirty-thousand people living here - though hardly anyone has been here as long as Maria has. She's much older than she looks. Her current husband is a relatively new resident. They met twenty years ago and, later, married, in her mausoleum restaurant. Tony swaggered in, still fresh from the barrio in his ragged peasant clothes. He grinned at Maria when she looked up, his white teeth gleaming in that red mouth, and she dropped the chunk of meat she was deboning. His beautiful vulnerability unseated something nasty in her.

Tony strode across the tomb to help her with the mess and said, 'Oh, I'm sorry. Very sorry. That looks like pork. They told me you knew where to get it cheap, but still it's a worse waste than chicken.' He handed her a chunk, 'I haven't had real meat in years. We can never afford it.'

Maria smiled, 'It's ok, don't worry.' She set the red chunk aside to glimmer wetly on a green banana leaf. 'Waste not, want not. I'll have it for dinner. My special adobo, too good for customers.' She paused a beat while he sat down on a stool beside an exhumed coffin-counter, 'Would you like to join me?'

The priest they bribed to join them used the carved pink-marble tomb of some great lady as an altar - a step up from its usual use as a cutting-board. He was reluctant. A priest can be punished for marrying people who don't have birth certificates. In the end he took the money they offered. Maria can be very persuasive.

The newlyweds set the small white cake they scrounged in the centre of the altar-cloth, cut it with the knife Maria used to excise gristle, and fed each other sweet fragments from the table of death.

Their marriage has been blessed. As the city grew more crowded, more bodies clamoured in. When Maria set up shop, she ran the only local restaurant. Now there are ten food stands selling everything from hamburgers to balut, though the consensus is that she makes the very best adobo - everyone else cooks with chicken and, Maria says, they use inferior spices. There are also three grocery stores, all operating rent free out of conquistador's mausoleums, along with a hairdresser, a radio repairman, and a man who wanders round with a car battery to jumpstart homemade portable generators.

Looking around, Maria smiles at the world she's helped to build. Her people, the people she loves, feeds, and profits from, are generally happy. It's much safer here than the shanty towns that line the many-flooded rivers, where cholera rages in the rainy season, leaving corpses that clog the waterways and interfere with the engines of the boats.

The cemetery is better, yes, but even here there are dangers at night; teenage gangs that rape and mug the residents, kids a decade out of school (most dropped out after first or second grade, the school costs are prohibitive) wander aimlessly, poor, hungry, jobless and bored. Even though alcohol is very cheap it still costs more money than they have. Even at her great age, Maria is surprised by how much human violence is rooted in boredom. She knows that most creatures kill only to eat and feed the animals they love.

Lately, though, those roving gangs have been disappearing. In the daylight, the living residents agree that they must have happened on someplace better. Certainly, they say, Maria has never been harmed and she leaves in the middle of the night to reach the cheap inner-city meat markets. Maria smiles when she hears this. She, and the dead, know something else.

It's nearly mid-morning by the time Maria reaches her home. The little yellow-plywood house, where Tony lies breathing softly in sleep, is built above the flat-topped mausoleum that she has refurbished into a restaurant. Most of

the houses around here have a very noticeable smell, but the only fragrances in hers are the sweet scents of jasmine rice and the spices she pounds to make her adobo. Maria glances up at her home, her face set somewhere between hunger and longing, but she shakes her head (like a dog) and heads in to work.

She unlocks the steel grate across the doorway (she installed this herself, tombs here are open and knives are very valuable) and sets the cuts of meat she'll use today on the scrupulously clean grave in the centre of the room. Unwrapped on the rose-pink stone, the flesh is even redder and the bones shine a starker white. She feels her mouth fill with involuntary saliva. She did most of her butchering at the site, but there's nowhere safe to eat there and it's better to trim and clean the meat again here where nobody can see her. Maria finds it difficult to think in the very early morning, though that's her best working-time, when she's strong as a wolf.

Now, dog-tired, she uses her large cleaver to trim the splintered femurs so that the cuts will look professionally done by the time that Tony comes down for breakfast. She sighs when she notices the tooth-punctures in a thumb-sized shred of brown skin she forgot to strip from the muscle. She uses a boning knife to scrape the shred off and then she throws it out the door for the seagulls.

Nobody is around yet. Maria can relax a bit. She is very, very hungry; weaker than she was when she set out – although she never journeys as far as the city. She slices a bloodless pound of flesh from her haul and eats it raw where she stands, gazing, glassy-eyed out the front door. There is nothing, no nothing at all, like the taste of fresh, tender young meat.

When Tony eventually walks downstairs for his breakfast the first batch of adobo is bubbling away in the pot above her makeshift granite hearth. The fire was built from splintered coffins and the cedar smoke adds flavour to the broth. White, sweet rice is steaming in Tony's bowl, spoon standing erect in the centre of the scoop. Maria ladles a dipper-full of aromatic meat and thick brown sauce on top of the grains and bends to take the kiss her husband has all ready for her. Tony reaches around her thigh and grabs a handful of muscular young-seeming ass. 'My darling, you are beautiful.'

She leans her black-haired scalp against his cheek, her eyes slitted with bliss as she listens to him chew. Tony swallows, kisses her again with fat-gleaming lips.

He says, 'That was delicious; masarap. But Baby, your eyes are all red. You've been working too hard.'

Tony pulls Maria into his lap. She leans against him, listening with a longing that is almost hunger, to his hammering heart. 'Oh Tony,' she says, 'It's worth it for you.'

Maria cries a little. She doesn't know how long he's got left.

Ice

Ian Parks

Some say the universe will end in fire:
a final conflagration burning up
the world and all that's in it.

But out there walking with my son,
crossing the moors in need of sleep –
lost when the sun gave way to the moon

and the moon itself reflected
in frozen puddles fractured by our tread –
I knew there was a stark alternative:

that cold and overtaking snow
might cover and obliterate our cities and our towns
as surely as it covered up our footsteps as we trod

our flagging circuit, climbed a final hill
and dropped into a valley off the map,
deep-drifted between dry-stone walls.

There we found shelter, lit a lamp,
broke bread together, drank our fill and slept.
The heat was meagre but it was enough.

The memory flickers but it will suffice.
Since then my son has slipped and gone
into a fissure deep and wide,

a sheer transparent precipice
from which there'll be no clambering.
Now I believe the world will end in ice.

Finding Magdalene, Cardiff, 2014

Phil Wood

Mary's wearing a weary smile:
her hair's a stack
of black with flecks
of confetti white;
her lips are as dry
as the Atacama sky
- or so the Peruvian said.

She's nailing down
her mother's crucifix
above the bric-a-brac
and then she's kneeling
to bathe these blisters
on my sunburnt back.
Just like stigmata? she asks.

I look away,
hear the slap of sea,
her rack of prayer inside.
Next spring she'll walk
with the Peruvian,
nurse a blistered thirst
beneath the Atacama sky.

States: a view from the left coast

Tony Kendrew

The Wit and Whimsy of Auntie Flo

Reading and thinking about magic realism over the last few months has thrown up some tempting generalizations about the genre and its relationship to fantasy and the gothic. I suspect it's rather a complicated subject but, to invoke one well-worn dichotomous generalization, is there a Catholic-Protestant thing going on here?

I have never had much interest in the fantastic, the ghoulish or the surreal. Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Raven*, often exhumed and aired on National Public Radio at Halloween, leaves me not just cold, but amazed at our capacity for mediocrity in the name of tradition. The same sort of thing as *Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer*. And *The Raven* is not even a ghost story, but the tale of a love-crazed youth, who is too besotted or grief-struck (it isn't clear) to follow his earlier insight that "Nevermore" is just a word the raven learned. Is he that dumb? Apparently he is a student.

I can't remember a time when the scary ghost my childhood friends were screaming at looked to me anything other than someone covered in a sheet. This rationalism, encouraged by the laissez-fair Anglicanism of my parents, extended to my attitude to what happens after death and the possibility that those who have died may connect in some way with the living. It was backed up with a determination not to be taken in by smoke and mirrors, to feel confident, obnoxiously so in the eyes of those same childhood friends, that the Wizard of Oz was just a regular guy pulling levers behind a curtain.

I am no longer evangelically materialist, having had one or two weird experiences and being more tolerant of others' rituals and the people who perform them - pull the levers, if you like.

So there I was on the eve of Día de Muertos on the bus to Pátzcuaro, the epicenter of the Mexican Día de Muertos celebrations, to experience it for myself, persuaded by California neighbors that it would be pigheaded of me to fly in two days later just to avoid it. With that word "celebration," we depart from the bastardization of All Souls Day into white sheets and fang-fronted Frankensteins. For celebration it is, in Mexico at least, not an opportunity for horrid acting out, though there is certainly time for that at other festivals.

Pátzcuaro, just to say that lovely word again, is a quiet little town perched at 7000 feet above a lake whose shores are dotted with Indian villages. It's no coincidence that the town's founder, the 16th century cleric Vasco de Quiroga, had the foresight to protect the culture of the local inhabitants against the invasions of the Spanish and helped them develop crafts which survive in those villages to this day.

Off the main square outside a café someone had seated a skeleton on a park bench, and people were stopping to have their photos taken with the left arm draped around their shoulders. No big deal, no screams, no ohmygod - in a word, no thinking of The Day of the Dead as creepy, but a time to honor your dead friends and relatives with your attention - and food. That evening I walked past a restaurant where one of the tables on the sidewalk outside was taken by a couple of skeletons, outfitted with hats and warm clothes to keep out the mountain chill.

Día de Muertos in Mexico, and most of Latin America, is not the trick or treat, toothless pumpkin, bloody ghoul event that it is in North America and the UK. It is the Day of the Dead, the day *for* the dead - and not dead as in scary ghosts, but dead as in our much-loved grannie who passed away last year. It is a time to remember her, to bring her back with the things she loved. Take some Cadbury's Dairy Milk to her grave. Makes perfect sense, even to me.

I never did that. I never took anything to anybody dead, even my mother. Wouldn't an evening glass of whisky with her favorite music from a portable CD player in the background be an excellent thing to do? In the Anglican church a day of prayer for the dead is an optional celebration, which may be why many people in Britain have never heard of it, let alone used it. And I doubt if the congregations that celebrate it would do so with CD players and whisky. The

graveyard visits with the bunch of flowers for grandma that I have witnessed are sad and solitary affairs. And who knows where grandma's remains are anymore anyway? Pile of ashes in a box behind a locked door somewhere.

What's all this got to do with writing? Lots. I'd say it's the main reason the ghost story blossomed after the Reformation. Anglicans have no relationship with the dead. They prefer the dead to be dead and gone, and for understanding and sympathy have substituted the bizarre and the grotesque. The inability, or unwillingness, to prolong the small signs of personal affection after death seems to me a deficit in the Anglican way of life, and the obsession with the bloodier, scarier, aspects of the paranormal one of its more obvious displacement activities.

You may have noticed I have been slipping between "Protestant" and "Anglican." As I warned at the start, we have entered the world of tempting generalizations. This is a complicated subject. Which denominational adjective should we place in front of the word "bastardization" in the earlier paragraph? Can we blame anyone for this catastrophe? To summon the Catholic-Protestant dichotomy again, I suspect Catholics are better at relating to their dead than Protestants. And to what extent is the tradition of Latin-American writing that we celebrate in this issue of *The Lampeter Review* religious or cultural or geographical or historical? And what is the influence of pre-Columbian practices and cultures on the present-day Día de Muertos? Did we only start ignoring our dead after the Reformation, at least keeping the reality out of mind as far as possible by characterizing them as ghouls? Or are the roots of this obsession older and deeper? England has specialized in haunted houses for a very long time, and perhaps we never really liked our grannies! There's a truth in here somewhere, but I'm not qualified to exorcise it.

I was reading recently that there is an argument within the Catholic church over whether Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is "a profoundly Christian myth," or whether its belief in a supernatural power that animates the universe is "erroneous and to be rejected." The argument goes: Did not God create the universe and all its parts instantaneously? It's an argument that closes the book on most gothic and fantasy novels to the eyes of the Catholic church.

I should acknowledge here that the ghost story is as old and universal as the word, but feel justified restricting my observations to Catholics and Protestants without involving Jews, Muslims, Pagans and whoever else, because the great Latin-American writers that we celebrate in this issue – Borges, Márquez, Neruda, Octavio Paz, Vargas Llosa, to name a few – were from Catholic countries,

though for the most part their left-wing politics kept them out of the church. We may think they created alternative worlds, but the setting is always their world, and their magic realism as real as catching the bus to work.

Magic realism does not come naturally to the British, to use yet another generalization. It's hard for us to imagine Auntie Flo joining us for dinner and talking from beyond the grave about the price of eggs. That would be way too accommodating to death. It is fantasy which is the genius of writers in English: Swift, Mary Shelley, Lewis Carroll, C.S. Lewis, Tolkien, Terry Pratchett, J.K. Rowling. I have no idea whether the contributors to this issue of *The Lampeter Review* are, or were raised, Catholic, Protestant or neither, though I suspect that in the English-speaking world at least it's those with a Catholic background who are better endowed to appreciate and write magic realism. And, as an American blogger recently wrote on *Book Aunt*, the most fantastical fantasy, that with the most wit and whimsy, tends to be British.

Three Poems in Translation

Thomas Clark

Bewaur, Spain! - César Vallejo

Bewaur, Spain, o yersel, Spain:
Bewaur o the haimer woot the sickle,
Bewaur o the sickle woot the haimer!
Bewaur o the victim despite hissel,
The executioner despite hissel,
An the indifferent despite hissel!
Bewaur that, gin the cock haes crawt
Refusal three times,
Ye refuse benon three times!
Bewaur o the mort-heid woot the schin-bane
An the schin-bane woot the mort-heid!
Bewaur of the newlins pouerfu!
Bewaur o whit feasts oan yer corpses,
An whit deiths devoor yer life!
Bewaur o the hunner percent leal!
Bewaur o the heivens this side o the air,
An the air abuin the heivens!
Bewaur o thaim that luv ye!
Bewaur o yer heroes!
Bewaur o yer deid!
Bewaur o the Republic!
Bewaur the futur...

¡CUÍDATE, ESPAÑA...!

¡Cuídate, España, de tu propia España!
¡Cuídate de la hoz sin el martillo,
cuídate del martillo sin la hoz!
¡Cuídate de la víctima a pesar suyo,
del verdugo a pesar suyo
y del indiferente a pesar suyo!
¡Cuídate del que, antes de que cante el gallo,
negárate tres veces,
y del que te negó, después, tres veces!
¡Cuídate de las calaveras sin las tibias,
y de las tibias sin las calaveras!
¡Cuídate de los nuevos poderosos!
¡Cuídate del que come tus cadáveres,
del que devora muertos a tus vivos!
¡Cuídate del leal ciento por ciento!
¡Cuídate del cielo más acá del aire
y cuídate del aire más allá del cielo!
¡Cuídate de los que te aman!
¡Cuídate de tus héroes!
¡Cuídate de tus muertos!
¡Cuídate de la República!
¡Cuídate del futuro!...

The Swuird - Ricardo Jaimes Freyre

The breuken, bluidy sodger's swuird,
Whan the couser o licht his reid mane bauthes,
Lies ablo stour, an eedol forwandert,
An auld god sunk in a muntain.

You Unnerstaun Ma Hert - Nezahualcoyotl

At last you unnerstaun ma hert,
Ah hearken tae a sang,
Find a flouer tae consider,
Howp it willna wilt.

La Espada

La rota, sangrieta espada del soldado
cuando el Corcel luminoso con su roja crin la baña,
cubierta de polvo yace, como un ídolo humillado,
como un viejo Dios, hundido en la montaña.

Lo Comprende mi Corazón

Por fin lo comprende mi corazón:
Escucho un canto,
Contemplo una flor:
¡Ojalá no se marchiten!

Contributors

RÓMULO BUSTOS AGUIRRE (born 1954) is author of eight volumes of poetry, most recently *Muerte y levitación de la ballena* (2010). Using an exquisitely refined language, rich in metaphysical and erotic imagery, he is known as a writer of ‘slow’ poetry, inspired by the landscape and themes of his native Colombia. A professor of literature at the University of Cartagena, he has won the National Poetry Prize from the *Instituto Colombiano de Cultura*, and the Blas de Otero Prize from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

KITTIE BELLTREE lives in St. Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire, and is studying for a part-time PhD in Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University. Her poems have been broadcast on *BBC Radio Wales* and been published, or are due to appear in *Orbis*, *Obsessed with Pipework*, *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*, *New Welsh Review* and *Poetry Wales*. Her fiction has been anthologised by *Honno* in *Cut on the Bias: Stories about women and the clothes they wear*.

ANTONIO ELIO BRAILOVSKY (born 1946) is an Argentine author who has published numerous books on ecology and Argentine politics as well as several novels. His first novel *Identidad*, awarded First Prize by Coca-Cola Company’s Argentine branch, came out in later editions as *Isaac Halevy*, *Rey de los Judios*.

VIOLA CANALES served as a field organizer for the United Farm Workers and an officer in the United States Army, overseeing Patriot and Hawk missile systems in West Germany. After graduating from Harvard Law School, she practiced law in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and then headed up the westernmost region of the Small Business Administration under the Clinton Administration. Her books include *Orange Candy Slices and Other Secret Tales* (University of Houston’s Arte Público Press), a novel, *The Tequila Worm* (Random House), designated a Notable Book by the American Library Association and winning its Pura Belpré Medal for

Narrative and a PEN Center USA Award, *El Gusano de Tequila* — her Spanish translation of the novel — (KingCake Press 2012) and a bilingual book of poems *The Little Devil & The Rose (El Diabólico y La Rosa)* published in 2014 by the University of Houston.

THOMAS CHADWICK is a writer based in London and Gent. His fiction has previously been published by *Popshot*, *Litro*, and *The Stockholm Review* and he has also recently collaborated on a haiku collection entitled *Is that all you people think about?* He is a founding editor of *Hotel* literary journal. For more details please visit www.partisanhotel.co.uk.

THOMAS CLARK is a widely published writer and translator from Glasgow, and poetry editor at The Hawick News. His most recent book, a Scots translation of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, was published earlier this year. He can be found on the web at www.thomasjclark.co.uk.

DAVID COOKE won a Gregory award in 1977. His retrospective collection, *In the Distance*, was published in 2011 by Night Publishing. A new collection, *Work Horses*, was published by Ward Wood in 2012. His poems, translations and reviews have appeared widely in the UK, Ireland and beyond in journals such as *Agenda*, *Ambit*, *The Bow Wow Shop*, *The Cortland Review*, *The Interpreter's House*, *The Irish Press*, *The London Magazine*, *Magma*, *The Morning Star*, *New Walk*, *The North*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *The Reader*, *The SHOP* and *Stand*. He has two collections forthcoming: *A Murmuration* (Two Rivers Press, 2015) and *After Hours* (Cultured Llama Press 2017).

TIM COOKE is a PR professional and part-time culture journalist with an interest in filmmaking and photography. He has been published by *Guardian Film* and writes regularly for the *East End Review*, *Get West London* and numerous other local and regional news outlets. He graduated from the University of Sussex with an undergraduate degree in English literature and a master's degree in documentary film. He is from South Wales and lives in Hackney.

KELLY CREIGHTON is an arts facilitator. Her debut poetry collection, *Three Primes*, was published by Lapwing (2013). Her short fiction has been shortlisted for the Fish Short Story Prize and featured in: *The Stinging Fly*, *Litro*, *Cyphers*, *Long Story Short* and elsewhere. She edits *The Incubator*.

RUBEN DARÍO (1867 – 1916) was a Nicaraguan poet who initiated the modern era in Spanish language poetry. As a young man he travelled widely throughout South America, and later lived for years in Spain and France, whose poets were his strongest influence.

GILLIAN EATON was born and raised in Wales and is now a professor of theater at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has written for film and stage and has had poetry published on both sides of the Atlantic. She is currently writing a play about women and jazz.

RICARDO JAIMES FREYRE (1868 – 1933) was born in Peru of Bolivian parents. He served as Bolivian ambassador to a number of countries, including the United States, but spent much of his life in Argentina, where he taught history and literature.

RICHARD GWYN is the author of five collections of poetry, two novels and a memoir, *The Vagabond's Breakfast*, which won a Wales Book of the Year Award in 2012. His translations include *A Complicated Mammal: Selected Poems of Joaquín O. Giannuzzi* (CB Editions, 2012) and *The Spaces Between: Poems of Jorge Fondebrider* (Cinnamon, 2013). He is currently preparing an anthology of contemporary Latin American poetry, to be published by Seren in 2016. He is Professor in Creative Writing at Cardiff University.

MAGGIE HARRIS is a Guyanese writer living in Wales, and Regional Winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize 2014. Her short story collections are *Canterbury Tales on a Cockcrow Morning*, and *In Margate by Lunchtime*, both published by Cultured Llama Press. Her poetry is published by Cane Arrow Press.

CARLY HOLMES lives and writes on the west coast of Wales. Her debut novel, *The Scrapbook*, was published by Parthian in 2014 and her short fiction has appeared in a number of journals and anthologies. In 2014 she received a New Writer's Bursary from Literature Wales to work on a collection of ghost stories. Carly runs and hosts The Cellar Bards, a group of writers who meet monthly for an evening of spoken word poetry and prose, and she is also on the editorial board for The Lampeter Review. www.carlyholmes.co.uk

ROSALIND HUDIS is a Wales based poet and writer. A 2013 recipient of a Literature Wales New Writers Bursary, she has published two collections. Her pamphlet *Terra Ignota* was published by Rack Press in 2013, and her full collection

Tilt was published by Cinnamon Press in 2014. She is currently working on a third collection.

HELEN IVORY is a poet and assemblage artist. Her fourth Bloodaxe Books collection is the semi-autobiographical *Waiting for Bluebeard* (May 2013). She has co-edited with George Szirtes *In Their Own Words: Contemporary Poets on their Poetry* (Salt 2012). She teaches for the Arvon Foundation, The Poetry School and mentors for the Poetry Society. She edits the webzine *Ink Sweat and Tears* and is tutor and Course Director for the new UEA/Writers Centre Norwich creative writing programme. She is currently collaborating on a pack of Tarot cards with the artist Tom de Freston, which will be published by Gatehouse Press later this year.

SARAH JAMES is a prize-winning poet, fiction writer and journalist. A narrative in poems, *The Magnetic Diaries* (based on Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*), will be published by Knives, Forks and Spoons Press in April and her fourth solo collection, *plenty-fish*, with Nine Arches Press in July. Her website is www.sarah-james.co.uk.

TONY KENDREW lives, writes and hikes in a remote and beautiful part of Northern California, where he has produced two CDs of his poems, *Beasts and Beloveds* and *Turning*. His first printed collection of poetry, *Feathers Scattered in the Wind*, was published by Iconau in 2014. www.feathersscatteredinthewind.com

KEELY LAUFER is in her final year of studying English Literature and Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University. The poems in this issue are an extract from her *I, Cadmeia* sequence which intervenes with the myth of Cadmus, exploring the relationship of the self with its other selves and future generations through the tooth as a physical embodiment of identity. She has been published by various anthologies and recently by the Cancer Research anthology *The Wait*.

JACK LITTLE (b. 1987) is a British poet, editor and translator based in Mexico City. He is the founder of The Ofi Press and his most recent publications include *Under the Radar*, *Wasafiri* and *The Screech Owl*. www.ofipress.com

PIPPA LITTLE is Scots, grew up in Tanzania and now lives in Northumberland. *Overwintering* (OxfordPoets/Carcanet) was shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney Centre prize in 2012. She has published two other collections, *Foray* (Biscuit Press) and *The Snow Globe* (Red Squirrel Press). Poems and reviews have appeared in *Magma*, *Poetry Review*, *Ambit*, *TLS*, *MsLexia* etc. Later this year she will take up a

Royal Literary Fund Fellowship at Newcastle University. Jack Little, also featured in this issue, is her eldest son.

FEDERICO LORCA (1898 - 1936) spent most of his life in his native Spain. As a youth he trained as a pianist, and his interest in music and theatre continued throughout his life. He published more plays than books of poetry, kept company with the Spanish avant-garde and collaborated with Manuel de Falla and Salvador Dali. Perhaps his best-known collection of poems is *Gypsy Ballads* (1928). He was executed by Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War.

DAN MACISAAC writes from Vancouver Island, British Columbia. His poetry has appeared in many journals, including, in 2013 and 2014, the print magazines *Poetica*, *Vallum*, *Poetry Salzburg* and *Agenda*. He has published translations of Lorca, Dario, de Ibarbourou and others in numerous literary magazines, including *Weyfarers*, *Other Poetry* and *Rio Grande Review*. Links to publications of his verse by journals online can be found on the publications page of his website www.danmacisaac.com.

C.M. MAYO is the author of several books on Mexico, most recently, *Metaphysical Odyssey into the Mexican Revolution: Francisco I. Madero and His Secret Book*, *Spiritist Manual*, and a novel, *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire*, which was named a *Library Journal Best Book of 2009*. Her essays published in US literary journals including *Creative Nonfiction*, *Massachusetts Review*, and *Southwest Review*, have been recognized with Lowell Thomas Awards, among others. Mayo's translations of Mexican poetry and fiction have been widely anthologized and also appear in her own collection of 24 Mexican writers, *Mexico: A Traveler's Literary Companion*. Born in El Paso, Texas and educated at the University of Chicago, she has been living in Mexico City for over 20 years. Her website is www.cmmayo.com.

ANN MCGARRY writes: My first dive into that creative pool, pulling in the imagination and coming out with a poem, happened when I was about seven. I remember writing about what I couldn't see with the eyes but so clearly without them. In that first attempt (an eight-line rhymed) the subject was a non-existent red shoe with strap and button. The poem in this issue, *Doubt*, took at least three forms. The first was a long, narrative poem exploring doubt, surrender and transformation, then stripped down to five two-liners hinting beyond doubt to love. This last version goes back to the first spark – doubt – and leaves it there: a woman at the crossroads, in crisis, not going anywhere. The thing is in writing a

poem, one can return to the source of it over and over, and bring out whatever the imagination gives shapes to. I call that real magic.

KATRINA NAOMI'S pamphlet *Hooligans*, inspired by the Suffragettes, was published by Rack Press in February 2015. Her second full collection *The Way the Crocodile Taught Me* will be published by Seren in 2016. Katrina has just completed a PhD in creative writing at Goldsmiths, with a focus on violence in poetry. She teaches at Falmouth University. www.katrinanaomi.co.uk

PABLO NERUDA (1904 – 1973) was probably the greatest poet writing in the Spanish language during his lifetime. He spent much of his life outside his native Chile and was Ambassador to France when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. He moved away from the political stance of his early work to write about nature and everyday life, and in his last twenty years produced some of the world's great love poetry with *One Hundred Love Sonnets*.

NEZAHUALCOYOTL (1402–1472) ruled the city-state of Texcoco in pre-Columbian Mexico. He brought the rule of law, scholarship and artistry to his state, but is best remembered for his poetry.

IAN PARKS' collections include *Shell Island, Love Poems 1979-2009, The Landing Stage*, and *The Exile's House*. His poems have appeared in *Poetry Review, The Times Literary Supplement, The Independent on Sunday, The Observer* and *Poetry* (Chicago). He was writer in residence at Gladstone's Library in 2012 and Writing Fellow at De Montfort University, Leicester from 2012-2014. *The Cavafy Variations* was a Poetry Book Society Choice.

BETHANY W. POPE is an LBA winning author, a finalist for the Faulkner-Wisdom Awards, the Cinnamon Press Novel competition, and the Ink, Sweat and Tears poetry commission, placed third in the Bare Fiction Poetry Competition, recently highly commended in this year's Poetry London Competition, and she has been nominated for the 2014 Pushcart Prize. She received her PhD from Aberystwyth University's Creative Writing program, and her MA from the University of Wales, Trinity St David. She has published several collections of poetry: *A Radiance* (Cultured Llama, 2012) *Crown of Thorns*, (Oneiros Books, 2013), *The Gospel of Flies* (Writing Knights Press 2014), and *Undisturbed Circles* (Lapwing, 2014).

BETHANY RIVERS has an M.A. in Creative Writing and teaches creative writing to adults in further education. Her poems have been published by Cinnamon Press, *Scintilla* (USA), *Bare Fiction* and *Blithe Spirit* (British Journal of Haiku). In February she read and ran a workshop at Welshpool's First Poetry Festival.

JUAN MANUEL ROCA (born 1946) is one of the most widely read and respected figures in contemporary Colombian poetry. A successful journalist and social commentator, he has a long association with the world-famous poetry festival in the city of his birth, set up in defiance of the long years of war and civil strife in his country. He has received numerous awards, including the prestigious Spanish prize, *Casa de América de Poesía Americana 2009*, for his collection *Biblia de Pobres*.

GONZALO ROJAS (1917 – 2011) was one of the leading Chilean poets of the twentieth century. His work is part of the continuing Latin American avant-garde tradition. In 2003 he was awarded the Cervantes Prize.

GEORGE SANDIFER-SMITH is a Welsh writer and PhD student at Aberystwyth University. He has had one children's book, *Cholloo's Birthday*, published by Lily Publications in 2014, and edited the Cancer Research charity poetry anthology, *The Wait*. He also co-edited the 2014 poetry and fiction anthology, *Make Time for Aberystwyth*. His poems have previously appeared in *The Cadaverine*, *Long Exposure Magazine*, and *The Stockholm Review of Literature*. Twitter: @SandiferSmith.

ERIC DREYER SMITH lives in San Antonio, Texas. He has a B.A. from Trinity University and an M.A. from Wayland University. San Antonio was intended to be Mexico City North for the Spanish/Mexican Empire in North America; being brought up there allowed him to join The Tribe of the Latin and gave him the perspective for some of his poetry and the piece in this issue. He has published several short stories, three novels and poetry. He is currently working on his Research Psychology PhD. with an emphasis on Evolution's Dual Inheritance Theory and Complexity Dynamics.

IGNACIO SOLARES (born 1945) is one of Mexico's best-known literary writers. Among his many works are the novels *Un sueño de Bernardo Reyes*; *Madero, el otro*; *El Jefe Máximo*; and *El sitio*, which won the prestigious Xavier Villaurrutia Prize. Born in Ciudad Juárez, he now lives in Mexico City where he is editor-in-chief of *La Revista de la Universidad*, the magazine of Mexico's National University.

JAYNE STANTON is a teacher, tutor and musician from Leicestershire. Her poems

appear in *Antiphon*, *Ink*, *Sweat & Tears*, *London Grip*, *Obsessed with Pipework*, *Popshot*, *Southword*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Under the Radar* and others. Her pamphlet, *Beyond the Tune*, is published by Soundswrite Press (Sept 2014). She blogs at www.jaynestantonpoetry.wordpress.com.

WILL TEATHER studied at Central St. Martins and Chelsea College of Art & Design. In 2007 he was selected as the inaugural Artist-in-Residence for Aberdeen Arts Centre, and returned to his native Norfolk as Artist-in-Residence for the Anteros Arts Foundation. His paintings and drawings are featured in over one hundred gallery exhibitions across the UK and overseas, and widely showcased in publications, including *The International Drawing Annual*, *Artists and Illustrators*, and *The Artist Magazine*. His interest in theatre and music has led to a variety of collaborations. *The Reappearance of The Remarkable Disappearing and Reappearing Maudeline Spacks* was awarded an Arts Council England grant for its re-staging as part of Norfolk and Norwich Festival's 2012 Beta Programme. He has lectured at The University of Arts London, Leeds College of Art & Design and Norwich University of the Arts.

CESAR VALLEJO (1892 - 1938) was born in Peru. In 1923 he accepted an invitation to go to Paris and never returned. Subsequent years of movement between France and Spain were marked by poverty and his devotion to Marxism. He was one of the great poetic innovators of the 20th century, though only three books of poetry were published in his lifetime.

CLARA CHALLONER WALKER is the mother of two grown up children, a cat lover and a knitting addict. She left her job in the corporate world, in November 2013 to concentrate full-time on writing and study for a masters degree at York, St John University. During 2014, she has completed her first novel and published poems and short stories, both on-line and in journals. Her novel *A Tapestry of Vice and Virtue* is inspired by her experiences in the Middle East and Africa and will be available from February 2015. Clara is always delighted to hear from readers and writers. A contact form is available via her website www.clarachallonerwalker.com.

RHYS OWAIN WILLIAMS was born and raised in Morrision, Swansea. Having completed an English with Creative Writing degree at Swansea University, he continued to study there for an MA in Creative Writing (2009–10). Rhys has published in various magazines, and was one of forty poets to be featured in Wales' first ever national anthology of haiku poetry, *Another Country* (Gomer), in 2011. He is a regular reader at spoken-word events across south Wales.

PHIL WOOD works in a statistics office. Enjoys working with numbers and words. He has a B.A. Hons. in English Literature from UCW Aberystwyth. Previously published work can be found in various online publications: *The Centrifugal Eye*, *Message in a Bottle*, *Streetcake Magazine*, *London Grip*, *The Open Mouse*, *Sein und Werden*, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, *The Recusant*.

