

EDITORS' NOTE

The selection panel for this edition of PENning was chaired by guest editor Mary Paulson-Ellis. She was joined by Linda Cracknell, Lindsey Fraser, Liz Niven and, for the first time, Moira McPartlin. Unusually there was no theme given in the guidelines for this edition. The submissions were therefore many and varied, and the final decisions made after lengthy deliberations reflected the panel's desire to marry the works with that of our featured writer, Yang Lian. As always, they were all discussed without the panel knowing the authors' identities.

The Poem by A C Clarke speaks directly of poetry as a fragile, yet indomitable currency of communication. 'I was inside its words/safe as houses.'

Donald Adamson's Wind Whispers echoes the latter's sense of restlessness and unrest, searching. Both poems explore the nature of home, and of the part poetry and stories play in creating a home, or a refuge.

In Mukul Dahal's *Lunar Eclipse*, a grandmother reminds her children, and everybody in the village, of the significance of the moon's disappearance. Her story is powerful and its effect widespread. Once the moon escapes from the jaws of Rahu, the villagers bathe and celebrate 'as if they had been at war and won it,/as if the moon were their own sister.'

The publication of this edition of Scottish PEN's ezine follows on Book Week Scotland 2014 – a nationwide celebration of the written and

spoken word. The range of events, co-ordinated by writers, librarians, teachers and organisers for audiences of all kinds and all ages is exciting. Just about anything goes.

Our featured writer for this edition is the Chinese writer **Yang Lian** – exiled from China following the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. All 3000 copies of the first edition of *Narrative Poem*, a long autobiographical poem published in 2011, were destroyed by Chinese officials. We are delighted and proud to be the first to publish his St Andrews poems in English (translations by Brian Holton).

His experience of being a writer is in stark contrast with that of Scottish writers – many of whom will have been freely celebrated the length and breadth of the country during Book Week Scotland.

We hope you enjoy any events you may be attending, and that you'll be as moved as we were by the contents of this edition of PENning. Please do recommend it as widely as possible as a means of promoting the principles that underpin Scottish PEN, and as an invitation to take part in the organisation's activities. We will be posting details of the next edition soon, and look forward to receiving submissions from PEN members, and to writers living in Scotland who are seeking asylum, refugees, or individuals for whom English is not their first language.

Many thanks once again to Anne Clarke for her deft management of the publication of PENning.

FEATURED

YANG LIAN



Yang Lian was born in Switzerland in 1955, and grew up in Beijing. He began writing when he was sent to the countryside in the 1970s. he was among the "Misty" school of Poets. His poems became well-known and influential inside and outside of China in the 1980s, especially when his sequence 'Norilang' was published in 1983. Yang Lian was invited to visit Australia and New Zealand in 1988 and next year, he became a poet in exile and started his journey through out the global since then. All these years, his literary writing, as well as his out spoken voice, has been called as a highly individual voice in world literature, politics and culture.

Yang Lian has published eleven collections of poems, two collections of prose and one selection of essays in Chinese. His work has also been translated into more than twenty

languages, including English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese and many Eastern European languages. Among 12 books of poems in English translation, his most representative works including the sequences and long poems such as Yi, Where the Sea Stands Still and Concentric Circles, they display a profound understanding of, and creative links with, Classical Chinese poetry. His work has been reviewed as "like MacDiarmid meets Rilke with Samurai sword drawn!", "one of the most representative voices of Chinese literature" and "one of the great world poets of our era". Yang Lian and the Scottish poet W. N. Herbert together with Brian Holton and Qin Xiaoyu are the co-editors of Jade Ladder, a brand new Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Poetry (1978--2008) in English, and published by Bloodaxe Books in Apr, 2011.

June of 2014, Yang Lian won the International Capri Prize 2014, a well-known international poetry prize. December of 2013, Yang Lian's "Concentric Circles Trilogy" (YI, Concentric Circles and The Narrative Poem) won the first issue of Tianduo Award for Long Poems in China. January of 2012, Yang Lian has won Nonino International Literature Prize in Italy, the juries of the prize were presided by V S Naipaul. Yang Lian was also awarded the Flaiano International Poetry Prize (Italy, 1999) and his Where the Sea Stands Still: New Poems was Poetry Books Society Recommended Translation (UK, 1999). Yang Lian has been elected a board member of PEN International in 2007, and reelected in 2011. Yang Lian has been invited to become a member of The Norwegian Academy for Literature and Freedom of Expression in 2013.



Lian kindly contributed his own thoughts on Scotland:

'My memory of Scotland is just like the metallic waves of the Atlantic ocean come one by one, I remember this image when I talked to Harvey Holton about Where the Sea Stands Still. I told him, only because of the black-silver light of Atlantic then I finally found how blue of mine is this sequence! the nature came secretly into my body when I was in Sydney, Australia to write this poem, and hidden there to wait to meet another ocean -- finally, there are ONLY ONE OCEAN in our world, and we are all children by the ocean! this is what Scotland taught me! so, if you want me to put one sentence here, then I would love to say: Scotland brought the sentence of Watching Ourselves Set Sail, the formula of my poetical thinking and writing, became a reality where I live!'

STANDREWS

1

holy relics splattering snow-white on every rock death's house number at the street's end commotion so uncontaminated it can only be seen

downward-slanting dripping steps of stone go on dripping in a downward direction bared by degrees the ebb-tide of the heart's ruin

I thread my way through gravestones shades crowd in crawling over a blurred inscription of the smallest James

stroke by stroke stone paints the bitterness of flesh rotten beneath green grass the scene's decoration is an exquisite imagining of the eye as a gash

sliding seagulls study a coffinish wide open linguistics of motion the god we choked leaves a jet-black door of stone

and that faraway indigo slash
is pure and perfectly simple gradation
notched inside the gaze the other side of emptiness is the ocean

in the darkness your face sketches a phosphorescent contour first sight of a huge moon for nineteen years stuck to the trainwindow this night is the road of return

billows quickening beside your lips insert you in the tightly inserted glass and the ocean's mirrored torn-down purity

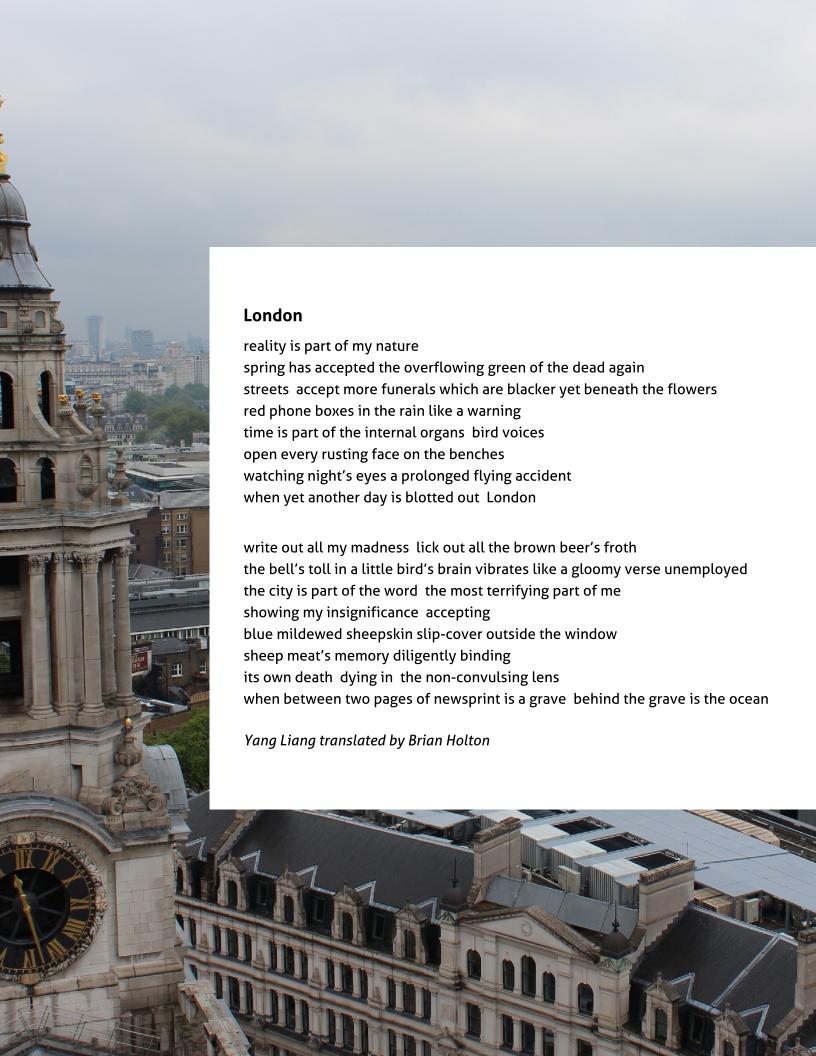
to run into a friend is to run into an illness a kind of beauty to go home is to go back into the sound of a storm declaiming a lonely knowledge that's listening to the sea and growing up

vastness leaks out one beautiful and tender drop the city destroyed again and only now rebuilt in moonlight golden pitch-black imagination mirroring you

face almost near enough to touch though overtaking an illusion a world of missed chances infinitely small travels alongside an instant infinitely large

every night is the road of return on the seat beside me sits a miracle you have turned into a poem lighting up a caved-in everything

Yang Liang translated by Brian Holton



room bi the firth

there's ayeweys a boat gaein fer awa watchin ye ging the ither shore is gaein fer awa the lift an owerturnt thesis a river flows by atween word an word until whaun ye're wordless seagull semaphore is snawwhite an mingin ebb-tide the muin is puuin the names o the droont fish owerlook the dwamin lichthooses fisht frae ee sockets the keekin-gless o ilka day festens a wine-flavourt upstream derkness like an ashet o seafood blooters agin the tide

the ocean sterts wi a spierin it spiers whaur
the room stands like a bird oan the mast
an address o fower driftin waas playin the brig's
string music
ainly watter unmovin atween finger an finger
whit's gaein fer awa is you ayewies further than fer
awa
gazin efter a poem smoored in a body temperature caulder and bluer
mists come mists are nicht's floodyett
ye ken wi een shut that the dawin is in the ocean

Yang Lian

Scots translation by Harvey Holton from Whaur the Deep Sea Devauls, Kettilonia ISBN 1 9020 44 216

TRANSLATOR BIOGRAPHIES



Brian Holton

Born in the Scottish Borders, brought up in West Africa and Scotland, and educated at the Universities of Edinburgh and Durham, Brian Holton has taught classical and modern Chinese language and literature in Edinburgh, Newcastle and Durham, as well as English language and literature in China. He taught Chinese-English translation in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University for ten years.

He has published a dozen books of translations of the work of the poet Yang Lian, and his work has been used, among other things, as a cybertext self-generating poem, as the framework and text for a computer art piece on CD-Rom, and as the libretto of a piece for soprano and *qin* commissioned from Liza Lim by Festival d'Automne à Paris. He is, as far as he is aware, the world's only publishing Chinese-Scots translator, and has published a wide range of classical Chinese poetry and fiction in Scots: an anthology is in preparation at the time of writing.

He has lectured and conducted translation workshops in China and Taiwan, and in Scotland, England, Ireland, Catalunya, Malta, Canada, the USA, and New Zealand, as well as reading and leading seminars and workshops at major literary festivals in the UK, Europe and the Far East.

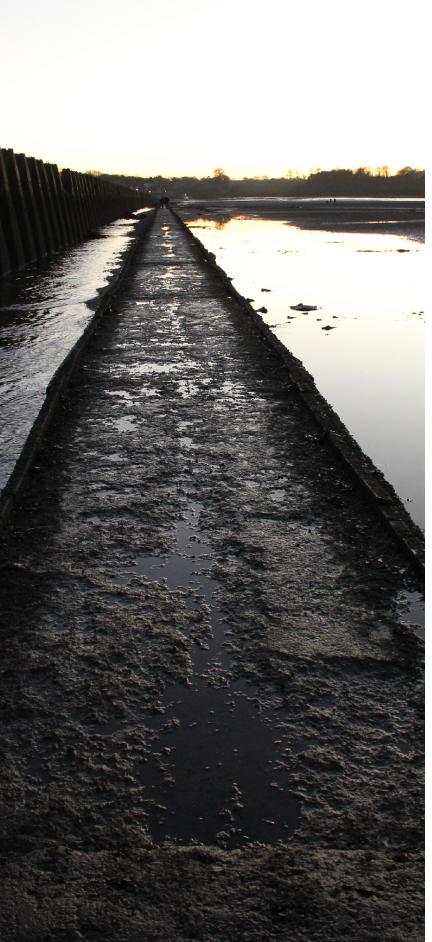
Brian Holton lives in Melrose, where he plays traditional Scottish music on smallpipes, whistle, guitar and Appalachian dulcimer, and sings the songs of his native Borders, when not translating Chinese poetry.

Harvey Holton

1949 - 2010.

Harvey was a poet and lecturer whose most ambitious work, *Fionn*, was an epic cycle in Scots. This was first performed with music with piper Hamish Moore. Born in Galashiels and brought up first in Nigeria, Harvey returned to Scotland with his twin brother Brian in 1955. Attending Gala Academy, he spent much of his adult life in Fife. He worked with Brian Holton on the Scots translations of Yang Lian's *Whaur the Deep Sea Devauls* published by Kettilonia.





Lunar Eclipse

On a night of a lunar eclipse Grandmother told us a tale: The goddess will soon be in trouble,

Rahu will swallow her.
A shadow crept on the moon's face.
Granny sighed, people in the village chanted,

Leave chamare, leave her. Granny never ate a thing and told us not to.

You should not eat when the goddess is in trouble! Then Granny went quiet.

I looked at her face and wondered if the moon ever knew her, if the moon ever heard the villagers' cry.

The cry rose from the edge of the village, and spread. When the moon was swallowed, their cry grew shriller. After the eclipse ended, the villagers took an open bath, splattering buckets of water;

they sang, ate and slept, as if they had been at war and won it, as if the moon were their own sister.

Mukul Dahal

The Poem

The poem is my motherland, my refuge, my friend and my travelling companion Adnan Al-Sayegh

I carried a poem in my pocket as cash for those who won't take plastic, carried it across grey level plains, each more featureless than the last into crowded cities, each more like the next until I settled - the way a butterfly settles - in a place foreign as its people's moonfaces, their blurred vowels.

And the poem turned itself into a room: I was inside its words safe as houses.

Then tanks came, helicopter gunships police who said we are only protecting you who said don't say we didn't warn you

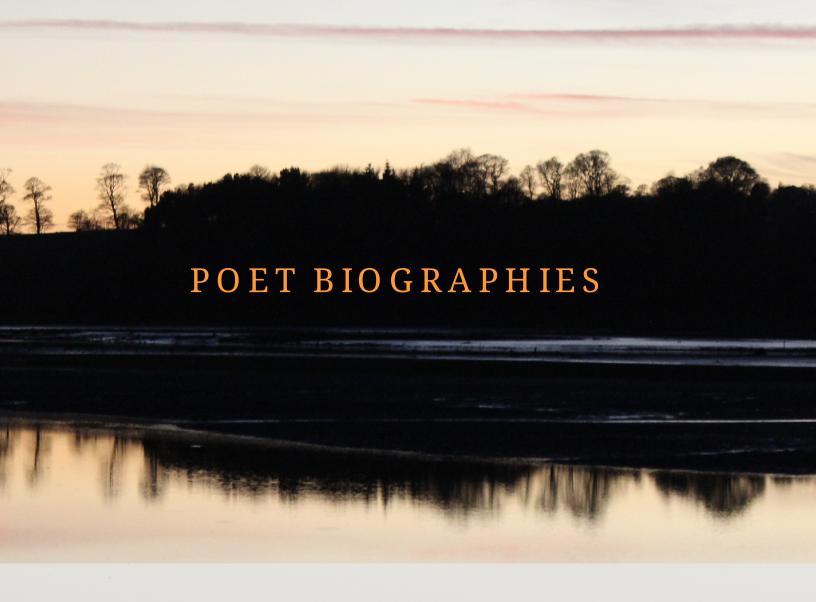
soldiers who huffed and puffed and blew the poem inside out so I stood homeless in the ruined street, words strewn on the sidewalk running black in gutters. I heard their groans.

I took a taxi to the airport to catch the last plane to somewhere else. My eyes stung with salt as I searched the aisle for a seat. When I slid in beside her,

a woman turned and smiled:

Don't fret, the poem said, I'm coming with you.'





Donald Adamson, poet, translator from Finnish, lives in Scotland and Finland. He co-founded the Scottish arts and literature magazine *Markings* and was winner of the Herald Millennium Poetry Competition. Collections: *From Coiled Roots* (Indigo Dreams 2013); *A Landscape Blossoms Within Me* (translations from the Finnish of Eeva Kilpi, Arc Publications, September 2014).

A C Clarke is a poet and translator living in Glasgow. Her latest collections are *A Natural Curiosity*, (New Voices Press), shortlisted for the 2012 Callum Macdonald Award, and *Fr Meslier's Confession* (Oversteps Books). She has won several prizes, most recently the 2012 Second Light Long Poem competition and the 2013 Campbell Burns competition. She is currently working on a fourth collection.

Born and brought up in Nepal, **Mukul Dahal** has had a collection of his poems, *Beyond the Last Frontier* (Seemaatit Seemanta), published in Nepali. He edited *PEN HIMALAYA*, a quarterly e-zine of poetry, book reviews and interviews from 2001 to 2007. He has graduated with an MA in Creative Writing from Swansea University (2008) and MPhil in English Literature from the University of Glasgow (2013). He was the absolute winner of the Nosside international poetry prize in 2009. He currently lives in Aberdeen and is involved in an Educational research in the University of Dundee. He has been published in several print and online journals both at home and abroad.

