

PENNING

PATIENCE



JULY 2020



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FOREWORD

Here at last, is our current edition of PENnings. Appropriately, the theme is Patience. The magazine is much later than expected and for very understandable reasons.

We invited Dr Stella Nyanzi from Uganda, to be our international featured writer. She was delighted to be invited. We waited patiently for her biography, photo and work, and with the help of Danson Kahyana, the President of Uganada PEN, we managed to make contact. Stella had been imprisoned again, was in ill health and, although she wished to compile her materials herself for us, was not at a point

where she could do this. She would very much like to be our featured writer in the next PENning, and we will happily wait for that. We wish her well and hope she can live peacefully and in better health.

We delayed the launch of the magazine until we found another writer to feature. With events in Hong Kong being currently extremely stressful, we decided that a writer from Hong King would be timeous. I'd like to thank Jenny Niven for her Far East connections in making contact with author Hon Lai Chu.





Having explained the circumstances to Hon Lai Chu, and the need for a more hasty provision of materials than we'd normally expect, she very helpfully responded. We're delighted to have her name brought to PEN readership and to have been provided with such sharp insight into the difficulties facing Hong Kong writers at this time. Oddly enough, there's even moments of relevance to our theme of Patience in her article.

A salutary example of a lack of Patience and humanity is demonstrated when she described the railway's inability to wait 10 minutes for a stray dog to leave the railway line. There's the patience of an interrogator hoping to trip up a student in conversation about the mainland's relationship with Hong Kong.

We wish the writers of Hong Kong well and agree with Hon Lai Chu's statement that life is, 'a continual hope for miracles, time after time'.

So, apologies to the fine writers and readers of this edition of PENnings for its late arrival. I hope you'll understand the reasons behind the delay and agree that it has been very much worth the wait.

Liz Niven
Chair Writers-in-exile committee
June 2020

The theme of this edition of Penning is patience, something that was chosen long before the Covid 19 pandemic struck and taught us all that sometimes, all you are able to do is wait something out. There is something of 'perseverance' in patience, or, if you like, the Scots word 'thole', to endure. We are enduring. We are waiting for better times to come, though we do not, now, know what they look like, given we may lose loved ones, may have to have tholed these months out in any way we can. The stories and poems you'll read here touch on various sorts of patience, from the innate qualities possessed by a desert animal, always a distance away from the relief of water, to the patience of a person facing the years-long process of mental health tribunals, punctuated by a brief break in a beautiful place, to the simple wait for a bus – which may or may not arrive. Though these pieces are diverse, they bring forth a quality in patience that is softer than endurance; the act of looking. There is a fine attention that comes from being 'stuck' in a place, a mood, a difficult or uncomfortable situation and writing about it. This attention can illuminate the pain, the complex behaviours of others, or simply allow us to notice the flowers, bright and covert, coming up through the cracks around us. The writers contained here all have something to show us. Take them in. Sit with them a while. Let them unfold before you.

Helen McClory.

Guest editor PENnings 'Patience'

FEATURED
WRITER



HON LAI CHU

Hon Lai Chu is a Hong Kong author of several novels, including *Body-sewing* (《縫身》), as well as *The Border of Centrifugation* (《離心帶》). She won the Hong Kong Biennial Award for Chinese Literature for fiction with her anthology of short stories *Silent Creature* in 2004. Her 2006 novel *Kite Family*, first published as a novella, won the New Writer's Novella first prize from Taiwan's Unitas Literary Association; the extended version was one of the 2008's Books of the Year by China Times in Taiwan. *Kite Family*, as well as her latest work, *Grey Flower*, were selected as Top 10 Chinese Novels World-wide for the year 2008 and 2009 respectively. She has recently published *Darkness under the Sun*, a dairy from April to November, 2019.

SEEING THE OTHER

A high-angle, wide shot of a massive crowd of people filling a city street. Most individuals are holding open umbrellas in a variety of colors, including black, blue, grey, pink, and white. The street is flanked by tall, modern buildings with numerous windows and signs. The scene suggests a large-scale public gathering or protest, possibly during a rainstorm.

(Translated by: Andrea Lingenfelter)

Andrea Lingenfelter is a poet, scholar of Chinese literature, and a widely published translator of contemporary Chinese-language fiction (Farewell My Concubine, Candy) and poetry by authors from Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

If we have lost the capacity for empathy and fallen into endless division, the only way that we can move forward and keep living is to renew our connections.

Invited writer Hon Lai Chu (Hong Kong, August 30, 2019)

The city these days is like a body afflicted with a malignant tumor; and while the mind is unwilling to acknowledge the tumor's existence and only wants to clean up the annoying but superficial signs of disease that crop up on a daily basis, nonetheless the heart is plagued by unease. Illness is an ongoing struggle in the body, and only a healthy person has the strength to withstand the battle between good cells and bad cells. Whether we're talking about one person or an entire city, a bout of sickness represents an opportunity for deeply seated problems to be cured. Although a body that has never known illness may continue to function normally, when toxins accumulate and cannot be easily expelled, the situation can be fatal.

As I write this, marchers and police are engaged in confrontations in Tsuen Wan. The marchers obtained a notice of no objection from the authorities, permitting them to gather until 7:00 PM. But starting at noon today, the metro stations at Tsuen Wan and several nearby neighborhoods were closed, and bus service was suspended as well. At 5:30 PM, law enforcement began using tear gas, a water cannon was deployed on charges of unlawful assembly. After two months of protests, first shot was fired. Everyone knows that those arrested for protesting will be taken to detention centers where, unable to see a lawyer or phone relatives, they will have to face psychological and physical humiliation alone and unaided. We see all of this with our own eyes and yet are powerless to help. In the past two months, so-called normal life has been transformed day by day, so that while outwardly the city continues to thrive, signs of internal collapse have begun to surface, one by one. We have lost the sense of calm and stability that has allowed us to live our lives, and thus we understand with even greater clarity that the current war is not like traditional warfare, where the spectacle of devastation is there for all to see. Rather, it moves in the shadows, embroiling the MTR, the airline, the media, and the television stations. Those in power have been terrorizing people in many different ways, and they hide behind that terror. By making everyone afraid, they can shift everyone's attention to their own sense of fear. Before this malignant tumor had metastasized and spread to the rest of the body, the body of the city appeared to be perfectly healthy, fostering in people the mistaken belief that they could simply ignore the problems and return to the illusion of a normal life.

When confronting those in power and law enforcement, the only weapon or equipment that people have is their own bodies. Ultimately, hard hats cannot stop bullets; and iron rods and bricks are no match for pistols. Furthermore, the powers that be have changed the rules, so that citizens hurling water bottles constitutes a violent attack, while law enforcement firing bullets at the heads of innocents are just doing their job.

I feel that I no longer have the space to live safely or in peace -- what I mean is that animosity and anger, like expired tear gas, linger in the air, on clothing, and on the surfaces of objects, even reaching into people's bodies, so that each person's heart becomes ever more cramped and narrow. Whether speaking of those who support the extradition law or those who oppose it, everyone's psyche is enmeshed in the current social upheaval, and most people have no way to focus on their work or lives. As a result, a person's position on this issue has become the basis by which people prejudge one another. At school, at the office, among friends, between lovers, and among family members, even at chaa-tsaan-ting, Hong Kong-style diners, on the bus, and in every corner of the city, each person has to state their opinion, and as they speak each word, and write each sentence, they have to guard against the eyes that may be watching from some dark hiding place. In this sense, we have already lost the space to live. We no longer have room to breathe. Whether stating an opinion is something others demand of us, or if it is something that we ask of others, it is all rooted in the same nameless fear of everything, which comes of the chaotic situation we are in. Society has lost its old sense of order, and the people have lost their faith, which leaves them feeling weak and helpless. Everybody is anxious to prove that they are right--indeed, they need to be right--and this unassailable certainty is extremely dangerous.

Although Hong Kong has always occupied a very small area and is densely populated, it is at the same time an unusually open city, one that embraces different voices and viewpoints. This has allowed incredibly diverse kinds of people to, live among each other, and the city has also been a sanctuary for refugees.

At times like these when I am utterly exhausted, it's difficult for me to be as attentive to the needs of others. Take for example two of my former writing students from Mainland China, A and D. Not long after the beginning of the movement against the extradition bill, A, who had recently graduated from university but was planning to stay in Hong Kong to pursue higher studies, wrote a post on Facebook about being "invited to drink tea" by an individual from the Mainland. Adopting a tone of deep concern, this person questioned A about her studies in Hong Kong. A naturally realized that there was another agenda behind of this probing, and for that reason she was unforthcoming. Finally, the person gave A a little poke in the shoulder and, wearing a "gotcha" expression, told her: "This movement isn't something you'd support, now is it." This wasn't a question; it was a display of power. In the last sentence of her post, A wrote that the only way for her to resist was by not nodding her head. Of course, this post was soon deleted.

Plucky and quick-witted D told me that because she had loved Hong Kong culture since she was a child, she had come here for university. She comes from the nation behind the Great Firewall -- the "Land of the Wall" -- but she is on the side of the egg, and, using her wits, she managed to get out of an invitation to "drink tea." Nonetheless, when she went home over the summer vacation to visit relatives, her family, friends, neighbors, and even people who she normally had nothing to do with, instantly detected the Hong Kong in her, and they were intent on getting her to express her opinion about the protests. Her visit became one long, drawn-out interrogation.

But not everyone gets to have their own point of view. A and D come from a nation where opinions are preset on their behalf, but since coming to this city their field of view and their thinking have undergone irreversible changes, so that when they return to their birthplaces, they no longer blend in. They will be always be strangers in a strange land.

I cannot offer them any further support or understanding, but I can go on being a Hong Konger. Not only can I, you could say that this is my responsibility. At a time when Hong Kong is gradually being whittled away and threatens to disappear altogether, I have been increasingly conscious that this city is being burned into my memory. Many years ago, the Hong Kong writer Xi Xi said [of Hong Kong] that we are not citizens of any nation, rather, we are citizens of a city. Because of Hong Kong's history, the nationality written on our passports cannot accurately reflect our identity. Thus, we understand that the world a person belongs is not dictated by their race, nationality, skin color, or gender; rather, it is based on each individual's experiences and ways of thinking. I cannot think of the A and D as "students from China", because they have already established complex worlds of their own.

I am also powerless to help the homeless people and stray animals that continue to be harmed by the choking smoke from tear gas and pepper spray that lingers in the streets. I can't find protective masks and eye coverings to fit animals, and toxic smoke has already seeped into the corners of people's homes through window cracks and air intake fans. I haven't learned the basics of how to take care of the eyes, noses, and skin of pets that have been burned by tear gas. Sometimes I worry that when this city has been changed beyond all recognition, the animals that live in our homes will no longer be protected.

Perhaps, this malignancy is a form of karmic retribution. When law enforcement and government supporters refer to protesters as cockroaches, it reminds me of something that happened five years ago. A stray dog had wandered onto the tracks

of the MTR. After metro workers discovered the dog, they tried to chase it off of the tracks.

They spent seven minutes but weren't successful. The next train was waiting. The conductor said that it was just a dog, and if they waited any longer it would disrupt traffic. They let the train move forward, and it crushed a living dog, and when they reported the event they described it as the "discovery of a foreign object." In such a hyper-efficient, inhumane system, a dog can become a foreign object; likewise, human beings can also be viewed as cockroaches. In recent years, for the sake of profit and in order to keep the massive machinery of capitalism operating without interruption, when we have sacrificed countryside and land, a robust healthcare system, countless small shops and reasonably priced homes. In the past two months, at least six people have lost their lives, three have lost eyes, and we have all lost trust in one another. We have also lost normal law enforcement activity, our daily metro system, many young people, and our physical and mental health. What else is left for us to sacrifice?

The best cure for this malignant tumor may not be to take a scalpel and cut it out; perhaps all we really need to do is to take a long, deep breath, break the bad habits we've developed, and once again open up a space with enough capacity for us to live. I have been wondering, why was it that five years ago, in the eyes of MTR corporation employees, ten minutes were more important than the life of a dog. Similarly, why is it that in the midst of opposition to the extradition bill, a number of people have believed that the destruction of public property is more important than a human being losing their eye. Why is it that so many people cannot see the sobering suffering of the weak? Could it be because those who have been trained most strictly cannot see where they have themselves been injured, so that they may even take the side of the powers that oppress them in order to curry favor with them? Moreover, in the course of their fast-paced and busy lives, many people have lost the connection both to themselves and to others. When the unexpected happens, are they thus unable to appreciate the more complex, intricate, and fragile parts of human nature? If this is the case and we have lost the capacity for empathy and fallen into endless division, the only way that we can move forward and keep living is to renew our connections. We can begin with the connection between our minds and hearts, our bodies and the earth, the connections with our families, friends, lovers, animals, and lastly our connections with those we don't know and those with whom we disagree.

For the blood of the city to recover its ability to flow freely, it will take a miracle, but that's what life is: a continual hope for miracles, time after time.



FICTION

Graham Morgan is the author of *START* (Fledgling Press) a memoir of his experiences of Schizophrenia and ongoing compulsory treatment under the mental health act, but also a memoir about love, the Highlands and Argyll. He is currently working on a sequel based around the death of his partner's father. He writes when he can and used to help facilitate a number of creative writing groups and occasionally appears at author events to read from his work. He is on the Scottish Book Trust Live Literature Database.

GRAHAM MORGAN

BIRGIT ITSE

Birgit Itse is originally from Estonia, but she sold her house and moved to Scotland to pursue writing in Dec 2019. She is a single Mom and writing has made her the person she is. She loves stories and she has her own, unique way. She has written for more than 20 years now and she loves many genres: poetry, lyrics, speeches, creative writing, etc. Writing in English is quite new to her, so she is all about learning it. Writing in Scots – that's something she would like to master one day.

Malena grew up in Buenos Aires, Argentina and moved to Europe in her early 20s. She's an avid reader and writer and a polyglot in progress. She agrees that people do make Glasgow and is excited to continue her love affair with Scotland.

MALENA ROCHE



SHORT BREAK AT KNOCKDERRY CASTLE

Graham Morgan

We are used to it now, we have had practice; even gained some patience with the system. After ten years you would hope we would have.

Each tribunal is different; contains its own surprises, its own memorable events but, to be honest, in a way I find painful; that last one; a scant two months ago; I can hardly remember it.

You would think that going to what is, in effect, a court, would stick in your memory, but try as I might, I can't remember the detail at all. Of course, I remember the decision but then my love had told me beforehand that it was inevitable and I did and did not believe her; was both reassured and dismayed.

I remember that we went to the wrong building to start with and that this time, unlike last time, we did not have to hang around trying to get attention; did not have to have the security guards in the room explained to us. The person who greeted us was nice; she seemed a kind person but slightly sad. The room she got us to wait in was so much better than that last cramped untidy room of two years ago.

Because we were first; we got the comfy chairs. It seemed wrong when the psychiatrist and social worker came in and had to sit in the plastic chairs. I almost got up and asked them to take my one and then thought No, not today.

It is strange to sit waiting; opposing parties as it were. Sitting together, awkwardly, in the same room before being summoned to the panel in the next room; exchanging pleasantries.

My love is very good at this, she draws people out, connects with them, tries to make them feel at ease.

There is a familiarity to this that I am both weary of and delighted to encounter. I know these people; have known them for a number of years. Though I know little of who they are, what they like, what their families are like, what they wish for and what they fear, at least I know their mannerisms and am beginning to sense something of them as people and not just as combatants. They are no longer impersonal officials mapping out my destiny.

To be clear, I do though, at these moments; see them as my enemies. I will hate it when they talk about my private life and my past and my inner thoughts and desires in front of strangers who will decide on my future. Although I will try to smile and laugh, my leg will be jiggering up and down and I will be staring out the window as people speak about me; doing my very best to look at the sky, the trees, the seagulls and crows. Wanting not to be here; not hearing all these words. Being there but doing my very, very, best to not be there; even though I came willingly; hoping to bear witness to what was being done to me. At times I will want to cry and at times I will want to hug my love and at times I will hear my psychiatrist saying things about my past that are just plain incorrect and I will think; I could challenge this, make them seem foolish and ill prepared and yet I do not.

I keep my silence and let my leg jigger away again as it does at such times, while I stare out at that dark silhouette of the tree outside the window. I look at the low building opposite, the parked cars; staff and patients ambling around; while we remain inside for this little; very personal, mini drama.

I have given them a prepared statement in which I accept there are different ways of seeing the world and in which I acknowledge that I do not know what decision I want them to reach.

Because life is complicated, justice and rights are complicated. If I have my way and I am far from sure I want my way; I will be free to stop my treatment and if I do, going by the evidence of past years, my life will be at risk. The darkness and the terror and the thoughts that I only now have at two in the morning will be there all the time and instead of worrying about the effect on the driver of the train if I step on the tracks at Queen Street I will instead, see the rush of air that heralds all that fast, so solid, so final metal as my salvation, my oblivion, my release from what I subject those I love to; by existing. Or else I will be back to the filled petrol cans, the razor blades, the pills and the electricity; the scalding water.

And if don't have my way; I will have to open my shirt every two weeks for that jag and the drugs that, as far as I am concerned, stop me being real; stop me really, really, knowing how much I am harming the world and those I love. I will continue

with this claggy twilight, where I struggle to think, to brighten and laugh, where I am still but in all the worst ways. I will open my shirt and, since that time a few months ago, worry that with the clogging of the scar tissue from the years of injections, they will again have to use two hands on the syringe, such is the resistance in my shoulder to the liquid. Or that they will even have to give up; remove the needle, stuck so deep in my muscle and ask me to lower my trousers instead, for access to a site where it is so much easier to drug me.

I remember I liked the psychiatrist on the panel; she seemed interested; my love didn't like her; thought she took us on tangents. I think the legal person and the lay person were nice but I really don't know; I cannot see or hear them in my memory anymore. I liked the humanity and regret of my social worker and could see that my doctor was trying his best but we knew what would happen.

After ten years of this, it is easy to predict the result. Although each time I think they will at last realise that I am not ill; not what they say I am and each time my love laughs at my naivety. We also laugh when she says that she agrees with them too. After twenty five years of schizophrenia and thirty five years of admissions to hospitals. When, with each admission, you are followed everywhere you go; where the light is not turned out for weeks at a time so that you yearn for darkness; to sleep without being stared at. Where the door from the ward is barred to you; the feel of grass, the fresh air of the hills and the loch side become a distant memory. Where you have to learn the complex dance of going to the toilet or having a shower while the nurses watch; trying to work out which ones are the least awkward to be naked in front of. I can begin to understand why some in the United Nations say that this is akin to torture and is cruel and degrading treatment. I can both see and not see this.

Because without this cruel and degrading treatment; without my restriction, now provided in the community; I wouldn't get to kiss my love every morning. I wouldn't cuddle her daughter after school and giggle when her son says something so dry and cutting it becomes hilarious. I wouldn't walk the dog by the shore; listening to the lap of the waves, taking photos of the sunken sugar boat in the Firth and the hills deeper into Argyll. I wouldn't feel the wind and the sun, the cool smirr of rain; smell the sea air; hear the bird song; the geese, the swans and oyster catchers. Witness my love's wonderful optimistic, humor, as we peer around us at the cumbersome herons; the bobbing seals.

I wouldn't be here and if I was, by some faint chance; my life would not be the joy it is just now. I would not work or write. I would not cook or listen to the radio in the early morning. I would not laugh or sit at the table outside, with my whisky, in the

summer. I would not wake in the snoring room with Dash the dog cuddled up to me in the morning. I would not annoy the family by asking them again and again what they want me to cook them for breakfast and lunch and tea. I would not. I just would not. Because we are used to this and although we have developed a patience with it; we know, when the verdict is handed down, we will still be halted and dulled and shocked; despite knowing this will happen and has for year after year after year. This will happen as long as I say into the silence "I want to die" as long as I deny I have schizophrenia, as long as I refuse my drugs.

And because, when we walk out the room after their verdict, I will be shaky and wanting to escape; my love has booked us a night in a hotel on a strange peninsular of bizarre and wonderful houses; a place of peace and calm and distraction and rare luxury.

And delightfully; when we arrive, we find that she has made a mistake and has actually booked us into the air B&B in the castle perched on the cliff above the hotel. It is wonderful and so incongruous that I forget the tribunal, the medical reports; all those ponderous serious expressions. That burden of words, evidence, that burden of decision making where my existence is being decided on.

We have three rooms; a wonderful bed, views over the loch, sofas, a fridge and television, a dining table, a fridge and washing machine and Dash the dog galumphing all over the place; us frightened he will get his muddy paws on the bed.

I have my whisky; my love has her diet coke and tea. We pause; sleep before dinner, cuddled together. When I take Dash out for his wee in the evening, the sight of a flock of deer grazing in the castle grounds delights me, sparks him. They run away into the dark; he goes frantic.

Later we go down the dark, muddy, leafy, track, using our phones as torches, to the hotel we thought we had been booked into originally.

We eat in the room reserved for dog owners; talk with fellow diners about their day. Try to be polite when someone says how great Brexit is and how bad independence would be.

We delight in the treat of food and wine and leave the 'section', that tribunal that goes on and on, far, far, behind. So far behind I don't even think about what our dining companions would think if they knew what happened to us today; if they knew why we were here. So far, that I forget that I am on the committee that is reviewing the very legislation I have just been sectioned under; yet again.

In the morning, the sun shines; there is snow on the hills of the Cowal peninsular opposite us.

My love is still kissing me; Dash can still smell the deer; the young children of the castle owner are bashful when they see us outside. There are snowdrops. There will be more mornings like this.

And are we being patient with them; those that decide on my future, my life? Or them with us?



ELU PARIMAD HETKED

Birgit Itse

(Estonian)

Nad istuvad rannal ja vaatavad, kuidas päike merre kaob. Teevad pilte. Vaatavad kella. Öhkavad. Kui päike juba poolenisti kadunud, hakkavad esimesed lahkuma ja neile järgnevad paljud. Üksikud vaatlevad loojangu lõpuni.

Siis algab minu aeg: pärast loojangut ja enne pimeduse saabumist. Need tunnid on nagu üks ütle mata põnev film, mida saan vaadata ainult täna õhtul. See linastub ainult mulle. Ja Sulle, kui Sa oleksid olnud minuga...

Näen, kuidas eemalt rabadest hiilivad välja udusiilud, mis mu silme ees kohtuvad ja seejärel teineteisesse põimuvad, saatjaks leegitsev taevas ja kaugemal metsakohal tekkiv pilveviirg. Ilmselt homseks pilvitut taevast ei jagu, jõuan ma mõelda.

Siis aga kerkivad udust kellegi kõrvad - minust vaevalt saja meetri kauguselt jooksevad mööda kitsed. Kolmekesi. Hetkeks nad peatuvad, otsekui kuulatades ja seejärel jätkavad oma teekonda – saatjaks tihenev udu, tumenev taevas ja oma külma kuma saatev täiskuu. Taevas omandab üha kargemat sinist tooni ja korstnatest tõusev valge suitsujuga, mu oma hingeaur ning maad kattev ja tugevnev härmatis on sellele eredaks kontrastiks. Seda vaikust ei häiri miski – isegi külakoerad ei haugu, autod ei sõida ja puud ei liiguta oma oksid. Kui olla õige tasa, siis on kuulda ainult see, kuidas õhk muutub järjest külmemaks.

Ümberkaudsetest taludest on nüüd hämaruses näha veel katused ja puudeladvad – kõik muu on mähkunud hõbedasse udupilve. Tasapisi kerkib see kõrgemale, moodustades justkui puid, tornikesi ja teisi muinasjutulisi kujundeid. Läänetaevas on veel pisut heledam, kuid öö on võtmas võimust. Ometi ei näi olevat pime – täiskuuvalgus on pannud udu helendama justkui lume. See kõik on nii ilus, et hingel on valus. Sellistel hetkedel unustad päeva jooksul kogunenud pisikesed pettumused ja altvedamised ning andud hetkele. Hetkele, mida ei saa võtta mitte keegi.

Kuid ma ei saanud seda ka kellegagi jagada, kuigi oleksin siis väga soovinud. Teisalt jälle – kui keegi oleks olnud mu kõrval – kas ma oleks seda kõike märganud või oleks see kõik meist justkui mööda läinud, sest on ju tuhandeid tühiseid teemasid, millest vestelda. Muidugi on ka teistsuguseid, hinge puudutavaid teemasid, aga inimesi, kellega sellistel teemadel rääkida, on vähe...

Enamik inimestest kardab süveneda, sest aega on vähe, kuid teha nii palju. Lihtsam näib olevat teha kõigest natuke, selle asemel, et teha vähem, aga pingutada kauem, püsivamalt. Lihtsam on mitte vaadata ja kuulata, sest siis võid näha ja kuulda midagi, mis koputab südame salasoppidele ja äratab ellu unistused ja mälestused, mida kunagi kalliks pidasid, kuid mis nüüd ratsionaalsele tegutsemisele allutatud mõttemaailmas on tabude tuppa suletud olnud. Kas tõesti soov kuulata, vaadata, puudutada, soov end hetke unustada on midagi, mis ei käi eesmärgistatud tegutsemise juurde? Kas tõesti loeb ainult aja ratsionaalne kasutamine, mis väljendub näiteks kellaajaliselt paika pandud ringkäiguga kodumaal: Valaste juga – 15 minutit, meres ujumine 10 minutit, rabamatk 45 minutit.... Kohustuslikud pildid fotokaga, et oleks pärast lähedastele näidata ja järgmine koht... See polegi nii harv. Isegi puhkamisega on kiire.

Tuulel pole Sinu tujudest midagi. Päikeseloojangut ega-tõusu ei huvita see, et Sul on kiire. Putukad ei kavatsegi sinu puhkuseplaanidega arvestada ning tõusud-mõõnad ookeanis ei säti minekut-tulekut pisibeebi uneaja järgi. Kui tahad naudingut, pead ootama, peatuma, vaatlema, kohanema. Olema kiire ja kannatlik, vapper ja haavatav üheaegselt. Nagu nemad. Lihtsalt olema.

TIME OF OUR LIVES

(Translated)

They sit on a beach and watch the sun setting. Hundreds on them. They take pictures. They watch the clocks. „It's taking so long today.“ Say something like “Pretty nice“. When the sun is half-way to the sea, first of them start to leave and many of them follow. Only a few of them stay until the end. It's always like this. Especially now, when it's cold.

It's my time after them: after the sun has set and before darkness has arrived. These hours are like the most exciting film being on-screen only tonight. Only for me. And for you, if you'd be here...



I see these foggy stripes coming out of the bog, they meet in front of my eyes and blend into each other, watched by flames in the sky and few clouds above the forest. There's going to be cloudy tomorrow, comes to my mind. All of a sudden I saw someone's brownish ears above the fog – less than a hundred yards away are three young deers. They stop for a second or two, listen and keep moving, accompanied by thickening fog, darkening skies and the full moon with its cold light. The sky is having dark blue shades now. The smoke from the chimneys, my own breath, and frost on the grounds make a great contrast to the sky. This peaceful quietness is not disturbed by anything – not even the dogs in the village, not by the cars usually driving by and even the trees keep their branches still. Absolute, perfect piece. Be quiet now, and you could hear how the air is breezing.

Now, only the roofs and treetops of the nearby farms are to be seen – everything else is dressed into a silvery fog plaid. Inch by inch it raises, creating towers, trees, houses and other fairytale-like ornaments. There's still a bit light in the western sky, but the night is settling in. It's not dark though – full moon has turned this fog into a sparkling night light. It's so pretty it hurts inside. Moments like this make you forget every trouble you had in a day, every disappointment disappears and you patiently live in a moment. Moments you will have forever.

Most of the people are afraid to dig in, live the moment, because there is so much to do, so little time. It is so much faster, easier and sometimes effective to do a little bit of everything instead of doing one thing for long periods. To persist. It is easier not to really look and listen to, because by doing so you might actually see and hear something that touches your heart and soul, something that really awakes your dreams, values you cherished but locked them down as taboos in this fast pace, rational world. Is it really so that the urge to look, listen to, touch and forget yourself into perfect moments is not really a part of goal-oriented behavior? Is it really all about perfect time-management? Let's take family holidays where everything is in a timetable: 15 minutes by a fall, 10 minutes for swimming in the sea, 45 minutes for walking in a bog... Pictures, posting social media and off we go... It's not that rare. We are even restless on a holiday.

Wind couldn't care less about your moods. Sunsets and sunrises are not interested in you being busy. Bugs have no intentions to take your holiday-plans into account and tides don't set the times of arrival and departure by the nap-time of your little ones. If you are looking for memories to keep, you have to learn how to wait, stop, look, adapt. How to be fast and patient, brave and vulnerable at the same time. Like all the above. Just be.

YER MAW

Malena Roche

It was the 21st of December and there was a general strike in Catalonia. We were really worried that there was not going to be a way for us to get to the airport and make our flight to Scotland, where I was meant to spend my first Christmas ever with the in-laws. How great that now I wasn't only nervous about meeting them but I was also nervous about missing the chance to actually meet them.



With some luck on our side and against all odds we ended up arriving at the airport in time and catching our flight up north. That's how one cold December evening I met the fam, and they were all you could want from a Scottish family: they were lovely, they were welcoming and they drank like pirates.

I was specially nervous about meeting my partner's mother. She was this strong matriarchal figure who could probably scare any hooligan away just by yelling at him and calling him a bawbag. We've all heard the mother-in-law's old tropes; that they are super critical, you never live up to their expectations and they never think you are good enough for their son. Honestly, in my case I believe Helen probably thinks I am too good for her son. One day, at the end of that first Christmas in Dundee she asked me how 'ma bairn managed to get a lassie like yerself?' I said I was desperate. We laughed. My partner didn't.

The next time I saw her was after the summer. We were moving back to the UK and needed a place to stay until we could find a flat of our own. What was meant to be two weeks ended up being five, during that time me and Helen had lovely heart to hearts, made countless liters of soup and even had the whole family make home made empanadas.

Helen is obsessed with her cat and I get why, I don't even like cats but this one is incredibly adorable. She is tiny and black and behaves like a dog. One night seeing her spoil her pet tirelessly I said joking 'hey Helen, is she like the daughter you never had?' to which she responded -in a very serious tone- 'Naw, you are!' I immediately got off the couch and gave her a massive hug while swallowing about a million tears (because now that I am in Scotland I am trying to integrate).

I'm not going to go on about my relationship with my own maw, because that would be another couple of essays of their own, but I will say that it's less than ideal. It's funny though how sometimes biology doesn't give you the family you wanted, but if you are patient enough, maybe life will.

POETRY

Based in Edinburgh, albeit with frequent stints in Germany, Annie Rutherford makes things with words, and champions poetry and translated literature in all its guises. Annie works as Programme Co-ordinator for StAnza, Scotland's international poetry festival, and as a writer and translator. Her translation of German poet Nora Gomringer's work, *Hydra's Heads*, is available from Burning Eye Books. She's currently translating the German novelist Isobel Bogdan and the Belarusian poet Volha Hapeyeva. Annie is fictions editor for *The Interpreter's House*.

ANNIE RUTHERFORD

JANE OVERTON

Jane Overton is an Ayrshire-based creator of poetry and spoken word. She has read her work at open mic events, slams and festivals as well as having been published in print and online. Her style is sometimes humorous or satirical but always, she hopes, humane.

Leela Soma was born in Madras, India and now lives in Glasgow. Her poems and short stories have been published in a number of anthologies, publications. She has published two novels and two collections of poetry. She has served on the Scottish Writer's Centre Committee and is now on East Dunbartonshire Arts & Culture Committee and The Scottish PEN Women Writers Committee. Some of her work reflects her dual heritage of India and Scotland. She was nominated for Pushcart Prize 2020.

LEELA SOMA

LINDA CRACKNELL

Linda Cracknell is a writer of fiction, non-fiction and drama for whom landscape, place and memory are key themes. She has published two collections of short stories, a novel *Call of the Undertow* (2013) involving maps and a character in exile in coastal Caithness, and *Doubling Back: Ten paths trodden in memory* (2014) an account of a series of walks, each of which follow a story from the past. Linda lives in Highland Perthshire but her writing and teaching take her to different landscapes, including the Sahara.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR VISITING HOURS

Annie Rutherford

It takes ten full years to master
the art of silence, a painstaking
apprenticeship conducted in waiting
rooms, bedrooms with square windows.

Let chatter heavy with inconsequence
rise into unasking quiet. Pray
to the nothing that is out there.
Sit. Wait. Do not be afraid.



THE OTHER SIDE

Jane Overton

Don't turn your gaze aside when
our orbits walk on by.
It still feels right to look you in the eye.

Standing apart united,
lets look across and smile.
It's going to be like this a little while

so holding on together
as the gap between us shows,
we'll raise our voices to call out hellos.

One day I know we'll have the
'lovely to meet up' kiss
that's waiting on the other side of this.

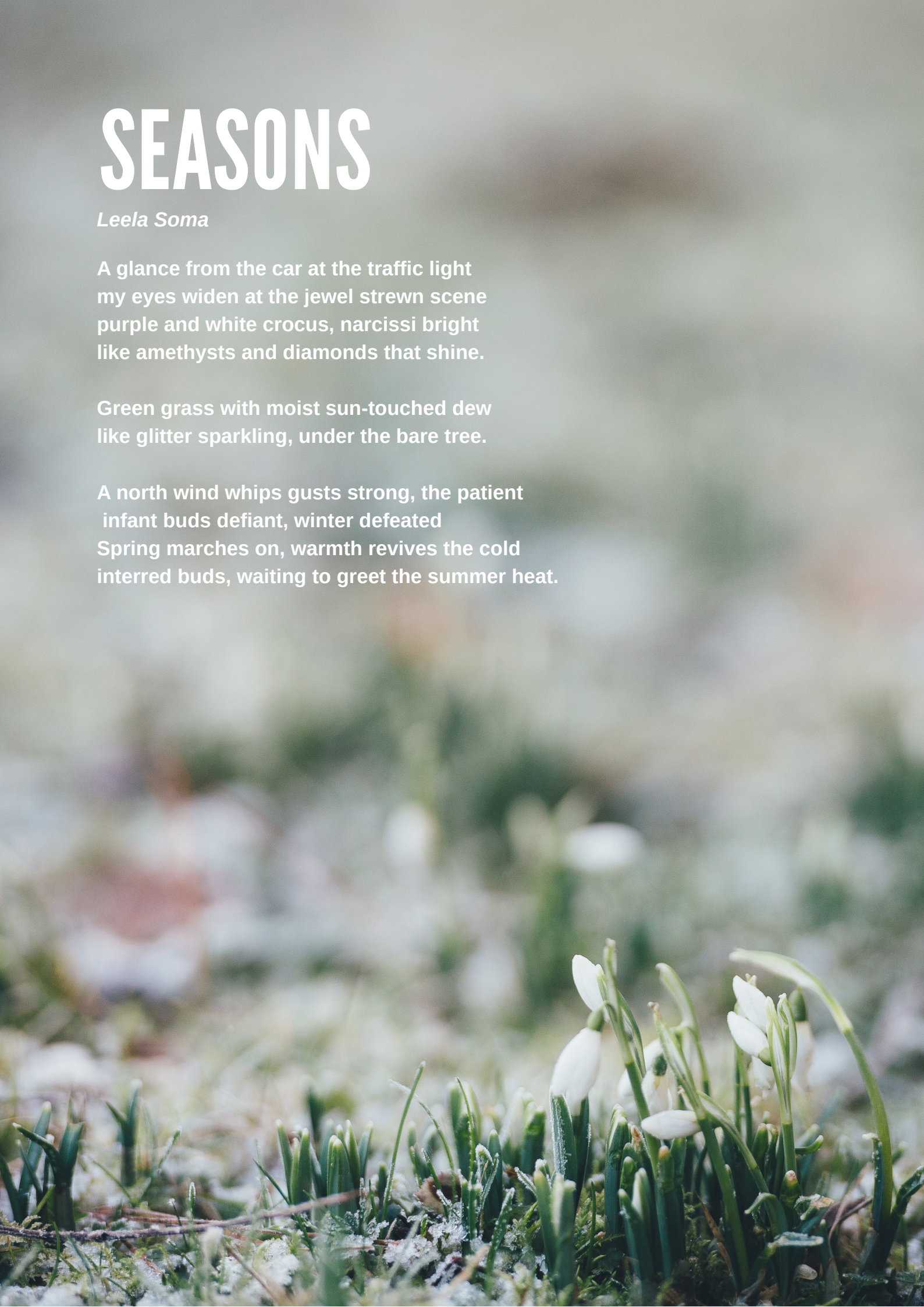
SEASONS

Leela Soma

A glance from the car at the traffic light
my eyes widen at the jewel strewn scene
purple and white crocus, narcissi bright
like amethysts and diamonds that shine.

Green grass with moist sun-touched dew
like glitter sparkling, under the bare tree.

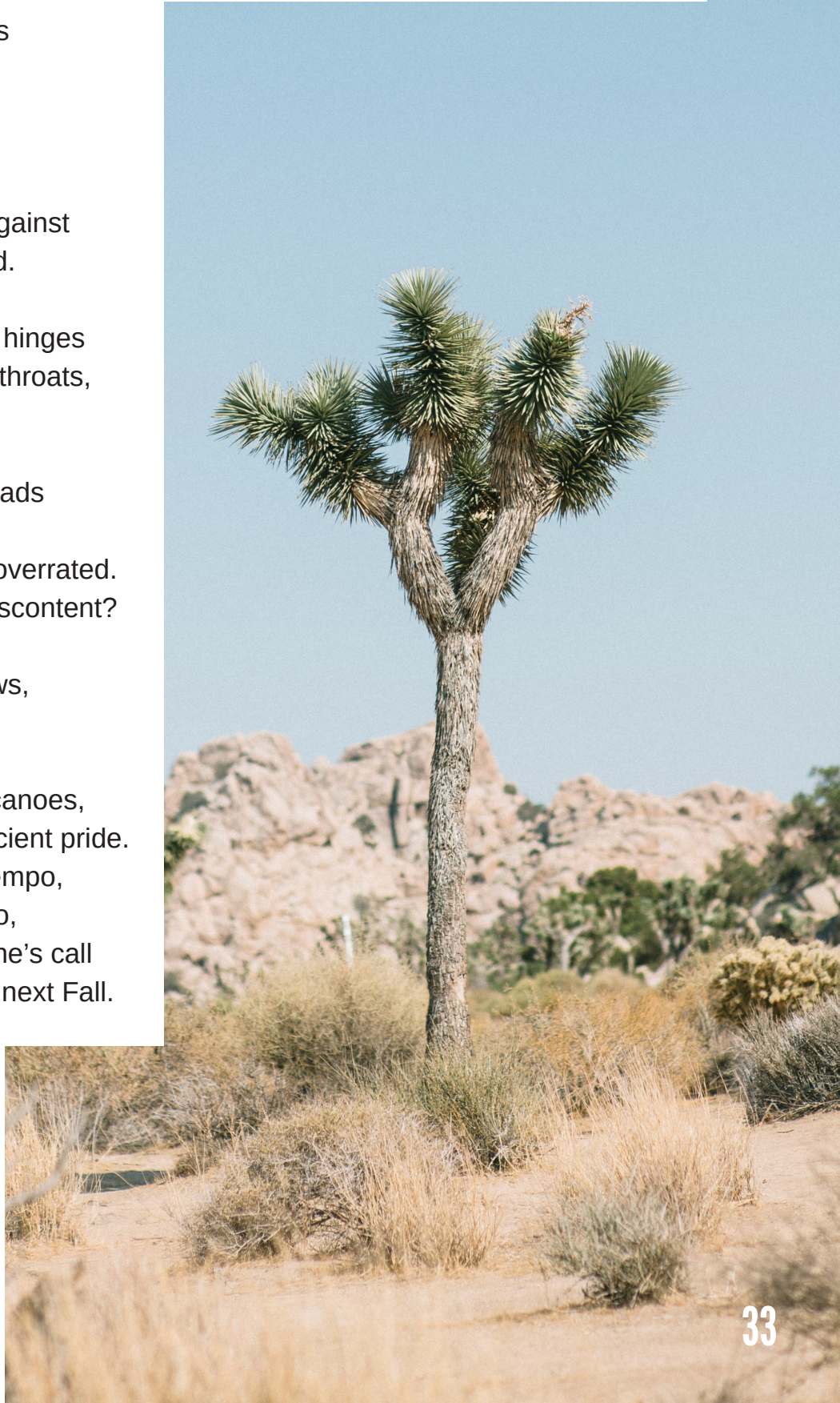
A north wind whips gusts strong, the patient
infant buds defiant, winter defeated
Spring marches on, warmth revives the cold
interred buds, waiting to greet the summer heat.



CAMEL CADENCE

Linda Cracknell

Loping on two-toed pads
of spreading leather,
there is no hurry.
But slow?
No, we're not,
as we bat long lashes against
flies landing, blown sand.
It's a soft slipper shuffle
engineered by dinosaur hinges
at knee and elbow. Our throats,
low beside our girths
bellow and gurgle.
We swing soft-lipped heads
on our eel necks
demonstrating haste is overrated.
What point is there to discontent?
We chew, loose-jawed,
drink when chance allows,
blink an aeon at a time.
We regard your tasks
with the patience of volcanoes,
undertake them with ancient pride.
Lolloping in tempered tempo,
we're desert-droll. Oh no,
not answerable to anyone's call
just limbering up for the next Fall.



Born in 1967, Lizzie Eldridge grew up in Glasgow. After completing my PhD, she taught theatre in universities for 15 years. Lizzie moved to Malta in 2008 to pursue her creative work and became an active anti-corruption campaigner in the fight for justice for Daphne Caruana Galizia. She has published two novels: *Duende* (Amazon) and *Vandalism* (Merlin Publishers 2015). The latter is set in Glasgow and was shortlisted for a National Book Prize. Waterstones Byres Rd selected it as one of their Best Books 2017. Lizzie also co-authored *Raymond Williams: Making Connections* (Routledge, 1994) and has written, directed and acted for theatre.

LIZZIE ELDRIDGE

JIM AITKEN

Jim Aitken's last poetry collection was *Flutterings* (2016) and his last play produced was *Letters from Area C* directed by Karen Douglas of SpartaKi in 2017. Jim also tutors in Scottish Cultural Studies in Edinburgh and organises Literary Walks for groups around the city. He also works with the Outlook programme teaching creative writing for people with mental health issues. Jim is also a member of Scottish PEN.

Martin Stepek is a second-generation Polish-Scot, author of six books on mindfulness, and four volumes of poetry. His father was imprisoned in a labour camp in the Soviet gulag from 1940-41, as a result of which his mother, the author's grandmother died of starvation. Her husband, the author's grandfather, died of cancer while in the Polish resistance, wanted by both German and Soviet forces. Martin focusses his poetry on heritage and the detail of the present moment, influenced by Japanese Zen.

MARTIN STEPEK

DONALD ADAMSON

Donald Adamson is from Dumfries. He writes in English and Scots, and translates from Finnish. He has been a prize-winner in many competitions, including first prize in the Herald Millennium Competition and the Sangschaw Translation Competition. His collections include *From Coiled Roots* (IDP 2013) and *Glamourie* (IDP 2015). His pamphlet *All Coming Back* (Roncadora 2019), which takes as its theme the third age of life, is illustrated by Hugh Bryden. A new pamphlet in Scots, *Bield*, will be published by Tapsalteerie.

ROUTE

Lizzie Eldridge

Are you having a laugh, my man?
There hasn't been a bus
round these parts
since 1985
and even then
you'd be lucky
to catch the last one
staggering home

Do you remember
when memories
seemed stretched out tight
and all our yesterdays
wrapped safe
in fresh-creased newspaper?

Don't hold your breath, pal
There's none of us
can see the past
down here

Don't hold your breath, pal
The sky's still overcast
It was the same
last year

PATIENCE AT THE SAMYE LING TEMPLE

Jim Aitken

You were in pain and confusion
full of hurt and unhappiness
crying like the child you were.

We could only be with you
saying the things you already knew
but we said them all anyway.

And then we saw the butterfly
having heard its demented wings
breaking the peace and the quiet.

The window above the temple door
burned in the brightest of light
as the butterfly tried to get out.

If only it had known, could see
that just beneath the window
was the open door to freedom,

It would not have wasted
such passion, created such confusion
in its self-imprisoned , frantic little frame.

If only it had listened to the monks
reciting their prayers with patience
saying all worries, all things will pass.





YOU SO OLD SO FRAIL, AWARE OF THE END

Martin Stepek

You so old so frail, aware of the end
who said,
'Eventually you stop trying'

Who gathered up the pain of
infinite varieties of mundane barbarity
soaked it all up
in a garment of self-protection
poised brittleness
energy that lived on massive restraint

Let's grieve together
for your mother
for your father
who rotted alone
never to see his Janina again
or his three lights of life,
and for Poland's pain,
the diaspora here in Scotland
their Slavic smiles etched in unfathomable agony,
a spread of love strewn through Europe's glory

Let's sit together
father and son
with the ghosts of those we never saved
shimmering around us,
three generations entwined,
tears from Heaven soaking
the tattered gulag clothes we share
on this long voyage
into the good light.

A LANG WAIT

Donald Adamson

Ye nicht wait lang
afore fowk – yon's you and me and aa –
arenae gowkit –

– bi thaim as promise jam the morn
(a tax brek, a pun or twae mair pension, oor country's glorious futur)
– bi thaim as gie us an enemy tae turn oor hate upon
(immigraunts and furriners, Jews, Muslims, aye, and a wee war warks wunners)
– bi breid and circuses
(think Meghan and Harry, onie celeb ye can nem)
– bi thaim as awns the media and gie oot fake news for thir ain fell purposes
(the heidlines ony day o the week)
– bi thaim as haes maistered and refined the cantrips o kings, emperors,
warlords and high-heid-yins sin the beginnin o time.

Ye nicht wait lang. But keep the faith
for things will chynge for the better –
the lees will be seen throu
and the truth come oot suiner or later.
It's happent afore, it'll suirly happen again.
It's a lang road – yit wi howp
and mair nor howp – gin ye speik oot
for thaim as cannae speik oot and for thaim
whase vyce is owherwhaulmt
bi the warld's stramash and scurry-whirry
stour will flee frae the een. Dinnae gie up.
In daurk days aye haud forrit, haud on.



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Seeing the Other

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Time of our Lives

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Yer Maw

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Instructions for visiting hours

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The other side

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Seasons

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Camel Cadence

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Route

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Patience at the Samye Ling Temple

Page 36: "Samye Ling, entrance to the Temple", Photo by acidpolly at Flickr

You so old so frail, aware of the end

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A Lang Wait

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