Complete Creative Writing: Poetry

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My Daughter’s Apples

It’s worth every bite.
-Washington Apples ad

My daughter tells me, “Welcome to Yakima!” where apples grow on trees and she’s staying on to pick them because in those apples is America she’s long been dreaming of. Eighty years back her grandpa Bulosan had written about trees so heavy with promise it was madness not to stay. So she sends the fruits of her labor by wire transfer, boundless as the harvest from orchards on the way to the clinic, then she calls to ask how we’re all keeping and about difficult cases or the rare or unusual disease. At times she goes into personal
detail like when she forgot to turn on the headlights one night on a sick call. The northwestern sky never looked so rotten. No wonder, she told the police officer, and was about to confess that an apple a day does not keep the doctor away from loneliness, but he had let her go.
Your email message yesterday
is like kapok bursting from
its pod in late summer, tufts
of cotton in humid air, like tropical
snow tumbling from the sky.
Gently, you drop the explosive:
probable as her hair
grown back after chemo,
the return of your wife’s cancer.

I imagine her hair:
almost
to her shoulders, thick as waves
but petal to your touch, real
as the sun’s resumption on your fastened
lives or the afternoon’s wildflowers
at Kings Park where you two are
taking all the time in the world.
It is September’s end; it is
spring come, but already
her hair is falling, again
her hair

is furring your mouth, your
thickening thoughts, your almost-
said words. The fine threads of herself
tangle in every room, every corner
inside you. On bedcovers, chairs, clothes,
she is drifting away.
Her hair
ink-brushes the whirlpool patterns
on the floor, the narrowing hallway, the door
marked No Exit
on which you are scribbling over
No Entry.

Grief makes you, dear moth,
write me who am virtual yet
real as rain
falling like slashes of invisible hair.

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Tea is *el pacto de sangre*,
the blood compact
that seals a friendship,
the toast,
¡*Vencer o morir*!

Conquer or die—so
we take the city,
the loot,
art, history, tapas
and souvenirs. We sack
room after room
of museums,
cathedrals,
La Rambla, the port,
then head back

to English
where *No molestar*
is *Do not disturb*—
that summer
of the conquistadores.

*Isabela Banzon*
The Postcolonial Condition

Postcoloniality awaits consignment to oblivion.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair

I posted a postcolonial poster from the Postogola post office in puran Dhaka, addressed to the right reverend postmaster general in Portsmouth; and eagerly waited for a kind reply.

To my absolute disappointment, the (im)poster came back, a few weeks later, with the stamps all missing; old habit dies hard! At the upper right corner where the stamps have been was written in a crooked hand—

not arrived yet—return it to sender.

The postcolonial poster now hangs in my cool study, gathering grime, the fringes yellowing with the passage of time.

Md. Rezaul Haque

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1 For Syd Harrex, who has done so much for the postcolonial cause.

Why Cows?
Irish Landscape Art

Because they sauntered into the dusk,
black and white and tan,
redefining green as they moved

across the juicy fields,
patches shiny as patent,
rich as cream sherry.

Because in the shimmering light
they looked satisfied with themselves,
tight udders eased.

Unhooked from machines,
prodded out of the yard,
they sashayed through the gate to paradise,

heads already down, nibbling
a springy dinner in slurry season,
air sticky and ripe.

Because when they buried their muzzles
in the feathery pasture
they ruminated on pleasure.

Because being cows they knew
what to do with deep grass
swishing against their knees.

Because in understanding where to graze
and how to space themselves
they drew the landscape together,

balanced the round hills
with the angular barn,
the barbed fence smothered in hedge,
the toasted coconut of new-mown fields
with a lone oak halfway down the slope,
a steady line drawing parallel

with the narrow lane above
and me, a point on it,
now somehow part of this perspective.

Jeri Kroll
He was there to meet us at the station
in a crumpled suit and worn through shoes
the Lutheran pastor from Vienna
with a Catholic mother and Jewish father
greeting every migrant arrival.
Pastor Zinnbauer would always be there
offering hope and help
bringing clothes and blankets to the hostel
ferrying children to Sunday School
in his Volkswagen bus
or turning up on his motorcycle
wherever there was a need.
Surely he was the heart of Adelaide
providing shelter for the homeless
and spiritual sustenance
giving up his own shoes to a man with none.
It is said that there were rooms in his home
full of donated clothes, shoes and blankets
for distribution to the needy
and it was open house. There was a safe place
to sleep, even under the dining table.
He was a man always lost in thought
dreaming up ways to expand his mission
forgetting to pick up children along the route
until reminded by the chorus of ‘Stop, Pastor, Stop!’
from the back of the bus, then reversing with a shudder
to let passengers on, and after Sunday School
there were visits to the Port and sometimes an ice-cream
from his meagre wage.
Now I regret not giving generously
to the pastor who tracked me down years later,
after Zinnbauer’s death, to establish a mission fund.
But he wasn’t Zinnbauer
and it’s only now, on reflection, that I can appreciate
how much that man gave of himself.

Deb Matthews-Zott
Living on Light

Suck the moorland's prana into my lungs, grass, pine, bog, whatever light might reveal; lie supine, cushioned on soft, soaking moss. The sun sets twice as I blink, twice more as I sigh, as thoughts float in inedia's gloaming, in between times.

Skin, absorb the light, consume the light, convert the light to precious sustenance. Reality? Only the paper's touch, as the words wax heavy, too heavy to lift the book to my eyes, and instead I flick the pages, run my finger across each line. Over the loch strolls a yogi, his legs like strong branches poking through his dhoti. The sun rests on his brow. He stops. Limbs settle in lotus. Glaciers melt in his eyes. He communicates with silence: places a palm on my forehead; and confirms, 'yes, this is true nourishment', with breath alone.  

Kieran Murphy

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1 An Australian woman, Verity Linn, traveled to the highlands in Scotland and, following the instructions in the book Living on Light (written by another Australian woman, Jasmuheen, formerly Ellen Greve), attempted the breatharian diet. Breatharians believe they can get all their nourishment from breath, light and 'universal energy', or 'prana'. Unsurprisingly, Ms Linn subsequently died.
St. John’s Wood

Every morning I paid
for breakfast at Café Rouge
with tips earned pulling pints
for the wealthy the night before.
I kept cool while they blabbered
about the glories of the Empire
and haughtily called me a *colonial*.

I shared a room with a Canadian
and two racist South Africans
next door to farm-raised Kiwis.
We drank together after closing time,
united in our whinging about the Poms.

I blew fifty quid on drinks
for two delectable Nova Scotians
just arrived from a gig in Galway
despite not having Buckley’s.

I shared newspapers in the library
with moneyed elderly gentlemen
who read the *Financial Times*
and muttered about selling another Jag.

On my days off, I walked
through Primrose Hill to Camden Town
where I bought a CCCP t-shirt,
Docs, used Levis and second-hand
Australian novels, saw Nick Cave
getting cash from an ATM,
got hammered in The World’s End.

I bought international phone cards
from surly Pakistani newsagents,
made homesick midnight calls
to family, mates and old flames
in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra.
I slept in other people’s beds or dossed in share-houses in Willesden Green, Islington, Watford and Bayswater, sometimes with an ex-ballera from Altona, but usually alone.

On the day I moved out, I walked to the tube station through floating snow, on my way to Gatwick and a plane waiting to take me home to summer.

Ayr

The bus from Glasgow to Stranraer terminated unexpectedly in Ayr, stranding us amidst beauty.

All of the accommodations were full, so after a cheap dinner we bought cans of Tennent’s and found a secluded site on the beach and drank away hours of northern twilight.

Towards midnight, we unfurled sleeping bags on the sand, pushed passports, pounds and pence down to safety with our feet, positioned our backpacks as pillows and went to sleep hoping to remain undisturbed. We were woken at dawn by council workers collecting rubbish on the beach and the sun rising over the Firth of Clyde and the Isle of Arran as we stared in wild wonder.
Homage

Mouquet Farm, Pozieres, France

Early September on the Somme
and it’s pouring with rain
Twenty-three thousand
of my countrymen
died here
over forty-one days
fighting over paddocks
between this ridge
and that windmill
a distance of less than a kilometre

I’m paying homage
to my great-grandfather George
and his mates who suffered here
travelling from memorial to memorial
from cemetery to swollen cemetery
horrified by the stupidity
of the whole bloody thing

George survived the Somme
and made it home to raise merinos
in the Western District of Victoria
where his Sunday-best suits
were tailor-made by Fletcher Jones
with wool from his own farm
but the mustard gas wrecked his lungs
and he died young anyway
unable to escape the consequences
of other men’s mistakes
Cupcakes and Monsters

For Celeste

Drawing cupcakes and monsters
on the back of a discarded copy
of the Jerilderie Letter,
you are unaware of its significance,
of the power of words
to span centuries and continents.
Grasping your crayons,
you are unaware of your family history,
your dual nationality,
your roots in Ireland, Wales, England,
the Netherlands and Australia.
For now, your world is immediate
and you are unencumbered.

Nathanael O'Reilly
**Ink-Stained Women**

...ink – stained women are, without a single exception, detestable. Nathaniel Hawthorne

ink-stained woman scribbles in a mixed gender workshop

recalls schooldays of inkwells on desks  nibs & pens

navy blue & black ink  her wardrobe’s favoured colours

contrasted with red & orange

not worsted blue stockings  but blue stocking sentiments

not elegant black silk stockings  but attire of mourning & image of power

stained index finger  scribbled school assignments  tertiary essays

professional papers  legal decisions

fountain pens  biros  Ball Pentel R56’s  illegible hand

replaced by keyboard precision

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1 Quoted in Elaine Showalter, A Jury of Her Peers, from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proux, Chapter 5 Masterpieces and Mass Markets Virago Great Britain, 2009,p83

ink-stained woman encapsulates her experience   a moment in a day
transposes silence into words of grief & protest that burn through thrashing seas
that melt into a fiery horizon   with the arc of a crimson sun
at dawn   revived   she opens her books   notebook & computer   picks up
her R56   creativity erupts as she seeks companionship in the voices of
other ink-stained women   writers   poets   artists   imbued with optimism
buoyed by the iridescent light of blue Murano glass & the contrapuntal colours of a
Matisse canvas
Dialogue

Babes of the Second World War we live in peace or so we’re told
atrocities buried cities rebuilt refugees migration new homelands
cold war a memory
2003 alliances bring us closer to its own truth & dread
for the great dark birds of history – territory religion oil tyranny Iraq WMD’s
terrorism – peck at suburban nature strips confront material contentment
disturb commuting routines unsettle cosmopolitan delights & neighbourly trust
mock our sense of freedom unravel goodwill & certainties
when & where will the trigger fire why does the earth’s spindle rotate on poverty
corruption genocide exploitation prejudice & ignorance we ask
tyrrany of the breast unites with desolate roads of resistance
the biopsied core that malignancy abhors our common language
poems of Adrienne Rich prompt dialogue 1900’s lithographs of Käthe Kollwitz
confront the starvation of children the power of women in adversity
those privileged to live outside the frame do so in the company of denial that
views a televised kaleidoscope of sports cooking self improvement crime
mystery & game shows cloaked by global war games that excise peace

Loula S. Rodopoulos

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3 Adrienne, Rich In Those Years Op. Cit.p4
6 Ibid.
the city becomes a painting

spring is named for the walk of commuters.

dead faces awaken from a winter sleep atatakai

strangers discuss the advance of the bloom
as the pink complexioned Sakura Front
advances over a country’s winter face

streets are dappled with the small-change of sun,
filtered through blossom and budding leaves,
coins of light.

the city is a wedding littered
with spent-petal confetti

daubs of the palest pink flurried
into piles in corners and depressions

highlighting the dullest bitumen
with the slightest embarrassment
on a rice-powdered cheek

a city transformed
from stark realist
to pointillist
impression

rob walker

rob walker, ‘the city becomes a painting’,
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