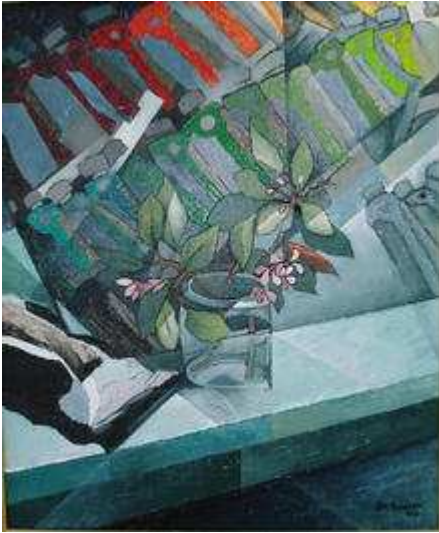


Augustus Young Poetry and Prose a regular webzine

No.3 October 2006
A Tour des Horizons - and Welsh



*Illustration 'A Flower for James' by Ian D
Scott
(see Meet Welsh)*

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augustus-young-no-3
23/09/06

Intro and comments	This is a regular magazine featuring the work of Augustus Young.
Meet Welsh	COMMENTS AND CORRECTIONS (Issue no.2)
French story	'Who so loveth instruction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is brutish.' Proverbs, chapter 12, i
Irish dance	Regarding 'Deaf Ears' (Issue 2, A Story):
Politics	Mark Jacob tells me Laura Riding's legendary 'Rational Meaning: A New Foundation for the Definition of Words' was published in 1996 by the University of Virginia. See link below for further information.
Word sonnets	http://www.ntu.ac.uk/laura_riding/books/38534gp.html
New poems	
Recovered poems	Send any comments/corrections to jmhogan@wanadoo.fr (link on cover page) for inclusion in the next issue.

AUGUSTUS YOUNG

Young was born in Cork, Ireland, in 1943, worked in London as an epidemiologist and adviser to health authorities, and now lives in France. Over the years he has published many scientific papers and numerous pieces of medical journalism.

He is the author of eight books of poetry, most recently 'Lightning in Low Places' (Cranagh Press, University of Ulster 2000), and 'Days and Nights in Hendon' (Menard Press, 2002). The autofiction 'Light Years' (London Magazine Editions/ Menard Press 2002) was his first full length work in prose. Full details of all these works and how to order them are at <http://www.menardpress.co.uk/>

Numerous stories and poems have appeared over the years in anthologies and periodicals in Ireland, America and the UK ('Cyphers', 'Sniper Logic', 'Books Ireland', 'London Magazine', 'Hopscotch', 'Modern Poetry in Translation', 'Leviathan Quarterly', 'Arete' etc).

He is currently featured extensively in the international journal 'Ars Interpres' <http://arsint.com/>

Young has recently published 'Storytime' (Elliot and Thompson 2005), a humorously satirical account of the Irish literary mafia and the graveyards of East Cork. It is available from <http://www.elliottthompson.com/>

Young has just completed 'Chronicling Myself', volume one of a trilogy 'Who Am I Talking to in My Head', and is also working on prose, poetry and light verse which draws on his nascent knowledge of the French language. Read more on this site.

[Intro and comments](#)**INTRODUCING WELSH: FIRST INSTALLMENT**

'Nobody's perfect. And I'm nobody.'

[Meet Welsh](#)**THE FIRST SIGHTING**[French story](#)[Irish dance](#)

YB Welsh, artiste et graveur, who hangs a hippocampus sign outside his atelier. I glimpse him through the window, back to the world, working pale dabs on a black canvas. Crimbly, gray ponytail, retired RA, I decide. I did not come to France to revisit Cork Street. But there is a stuffed owl in the window that tells me I should perhaps look again.

[Politics](#)[Word sonnets](#)[New poems](#)**A FLORAL FANTASIA**[Recovered poems](#)

Every evening I steal a flower from somebody's garden before beginning my writing. The theft gets the adrenaline flowing. I carry it aggressively. When the gendarmes see it in my hand, they say, there goes Baudelaire. But there is nothing poetical about it. I can't work without my pipe, and cut flowers purify the air. Coughing less, less dottle clogs up the keys.

Rose on a Plate

Welsh snatched a blossom I nicked from a Council bush neither of us know the name of, and put it on his easel to paint. I coughed till dawn and got nothing written. But next day I saw his painting. A pink sprig in a glass of water against a radiating background of paint tubes in the style of Zurbarin's 'Rose on a Silver Plate'. His Euclidian eye had caught it to a QED. He called it 'The Art of Nature'. Though I wanted it to be 'The Nature of Art'.

'A glass of water?' I said rather ungraciously. 'What's the world coming to?'

'I'm trying to give up. In life for me at the moment there's nothing like a glass of water, unless it's another one.'

'I must reflect on that. Last time we discussed water you said it was only any good for shaving or drowning in. Now it's the water of life.'

'Never touched the stuff, with or without the 'e'.'

'Touché. Bushmills apart, you certainly brought this one to life. In art at least. Time to drink it in. It could be a water cocktail with the fancy flower...'

'My thoughts exactly.'

An Arab businessman from London, while sheltering his cruiser in the port from a storm, took a stroll around the town and because it was raining dropped into Welsh's atelier and fell in love with the flower. He was attracted by its Rubensesque qualities. But it was the geometric patterning of the light and shade that made him open his chequebook, I think.

The businessman was finding it difficult to obtain a British passport. So to get his foot in the door he presented his art collection to the nation. Welsh's 'Art of Nature' hangs adjacent to Zurbarin's 'Rose' on the first floor of the National Gallery. It shows to advantage.

Welsh now winters in Guadalupe and in the summer yachts around the Greek islands with his copains Nige, Guy and James. He is thinking of changing his name to Scott. The notoriety of having outsold 'The Gipsy Girl' embarrasses him, except financially. Collectors from five continents, of his seascapes with vineyard backgrounds, have donated Welsh masterpieces for a museum in his Ceret house (once the French Government gets its act together).

Welsh's name is whispered in New York and Paris. Lucien Freud wants to meet him. Paula Rego has conceded her 'Nicotine Cat' is no match for his. It's going to be difficult to change his name now it is household.

Every week, Welsh sends me a bouquet of fresh-cut flowers, delivered by helicopter. Today's roses were airlifted from Madame Sophie's estate outside St Denis, 'El Dorado', to Auchen, the local Superstore. They look as though they will open tomorrow for the feast of Saint Jean. As I write this, I couldn't cough if I wanted to.

Tatty is outside my window dancing a tarantula with Stanis, whose pipe is still letting off steam. He'll need all the energy he can get. Tatty is no longer half his size and twice his width. She wears a cactus flower in her ear. They make a handsome couple.

Stop Press 1

The Arab businessman still has not got his British papers. He wants Welsh or Scott to put a word in for him, but doesn't know which to ask.

Stop Press 2

Someone called Ian D Scott is drawing seahorses somewhere off the coast of Cap Verde. He is believed to be a retired artist (a contradiction in terms) and a fat man.

Stop Press 3

I gave Welsh a flower.
And he gave me a painting
and the flower back dead.

Le Fin

His last words were, 'I am a man of my word, but which word I leave you to guess.'

WELSH'S HUMANITY TO DOGS

Dice of Death (From The Dog Chronicle)

Welsh has let the nails of his two forefingers grow for twenty years. Comes in handy when you want to clean the other one, he says. Beautiful talons – pellucid, swanlike, defying the years, like heaven's portals, and intimidating (he's a male witch but I don't see any broom around his dusty atelier).

At the door, you step over what was once an English sheepdog, spread out like a shearing that went wrong. Everybody smells bad in this canicule, but Leah's is death on the doorstep. She has been made comfortable for the journey. A bowl of water, a personal fan and as little attention as possible. The old girl is disappearing into the ground before

our eyes.

Welsh, a country boy at heart, accepts the cycle of things, says he keeps five dogs on the go to offset the sadness of loss. When Leah's personal fan is turned off I promise to myself that I will compose a poem for Welsh. He will be sorry to see her go. The manky creature has outlived several generations of normal dogs.

Now, twelve months later, and I learn Leah is alive. She still flops around his farmhouse in the mountains like an ancient hippie with an afghan coat not quite eaten to the skin. Having outlived the maggots, she's not ready to give up the struggle. La vie, c'est une question d'énergie. Leah's is conserved to last the pace as long as possible.

Though *Alea Jacta Est* is her full name, Leah is not above meddling with fate. Knowing that the game is not over till the fat lady sings, she has had her gagged by one of Patricia's criminal cousins.

This dog is an example to all of us.

Cornered

Leah, Welsh's dog, is now totally blind. She gets around by walking in circles, clockwise like the rotation of the earth. Figures of eight see her to where she wants to be. Sometimes she gets lost, the circle broken by a corner. When that happens she sits patiently. As there are only four corners in any given room, she does not have long to wait.

(It's impossible to say whether Leah has learned from Welsh or Welsh from Leah. But they are both patient waiters. He for the moment of genius when he finds himself. She for someone to find her and take her to the doggy dish or Patricia's lap.)

WELSH ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LAW

Tagging Gendarmes (from *The Dog Chronicle*)

Welsh, being the only real artist in town, does the glass plaques for honouring the war dead, living sportsmen, and gendarmes who keep the peace between life and death. He sits at his latest, peeling off the imprint strip like a tailor making shoes for a princess. A backlog of unfinished paintings awaits his patient attention. But plaques pay the rent, he says (though I understand he is three years in arrears and his landlord has given up and decided to become Welsh's friend. A wise man, I think).

His relationship with gendarmes has been transformed. Before the plaques, he was always in trouble. His non-paint brushes with the law would make an exciting B-movie. Minor offences with his BMW, ridiculously jumbo for a small town and the coastal corniches, blown up into a one-man crime wave. Not enemy number one, but as an ex-hippie Welsh defended his right to be sussed at every opportunity with an insouciant toss of his ponytail. Now he is the gendarmes' favourite artist. And the Colonel drops in from time to time with a complimentary bottle of whiskey (this is a border town) to talk about the next batch.

Gendarmes move on every three years, but they think of Welsh when plaques are needed in their new postings. So he gets phone calls from all over France. No wonder his atelier looks like a glass factory and he sit there like a cobbler diversifying into the dresses for the wedding of the year. Still, what brings in the money does not make him happy.

Serious art is a luxury in the real world, and Welsh is a luxury man. Bent over a canvas that will take a year to complete, perhaps, and two or three to sell at bargain prices, he is a self-portrait of a man at one with his métier. Neither happy nor unhappy, just there.

Gendarmes' names mean nothing to Welsh. They are a succession of uniforms filled by brusque banterers, dropping in to commission glass trophies and who pay cash in advance. But when the wives come to collect the plaques, he gets to know their dogs. So when the gendarmes ring up they identify themselves with an 'I am Cookie's papa' and Welsh remembers them.

[↑ Haut](#)

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Intro and comments	AN ASHTRAY OF NINE FRENCH CIGARETTE SMOKERS
Meet Welsh	Bernanos
French story	Brand: Aromatic Turkish
Irish dance	Hold: furtive. Loathes the sensual dangle of a coffin-nail on his nether lip. Would prefer to be breathing fire than latakia. A Holy Smoker.
Politics	Style features: counts the butts and suffers remorse (while lighting up again).
Word sonnets	Consumption: 23.7 a day.
New poems	Breton
Recovered poems	Brand: rolls his own. Hold: grips reefer in knuckles, sunny side up. Style features: smokes in his sleep. Wakes up and examines the pointillist burns in the sheets with more interest than deserved. Experimented with smoking three at a time under laughing gas. Consumption: 10 a night.
	Camus
	Brand: cheapest French. Hold: classic pucker grip (fag clenched between teeth while lips work as bellows). Style features: brisk, quick draws. Skills include whistling while smoking, talking, making love and correcting proofs. All at the same time. Admire his manual action: thumb and index rivet while little finger tips. Consumption: packets and packets (circa 60 a day).
	Céline
	Brand: ragged mégots (usually Camels broken in two). Hold: never uses his hands. Style features: rolls the crooked stub laterally along the lower lip from right to left and back again while spitting fluently... shredded flakes stick to his kisser. Consumption: chain.
	Cendars (Freddy Saucer)
	Brand: king-sized Lucky Strikes. Hold: cigarillo hangs monstrously from bottom lip, left side. Usually not lit. Mainly a talking aid. Style features: his surname has misled many (the 'ars' in it is not a 'rier'). When his denture slips, all hands on deck to shove back and redeem the fag overboard. Consumption: 1 a day, excluding losses at sea.
	Cocteau
	Brand: anything hard to get or oriental. Hold: centred in the mouth by sustained lip kissing (the gabella clench). Style features: when entertaining, ciggie is pointed between the forefinger and thumb like a pen. Consumption: a social puffer, not heavy duty. 10 an evening.
	Mauriac

Brand: Craven A.

Hold: long hookah holder (to keep Gide at arm's length, it's said).

Style features: lights up and lets the perfecto go out in the air. Tends to avoid the mouth when he is thinking.

Consumption: a wasteful smoker (good pickings for collectors of dog-ends). 20 a day (half smoked).

Sartre

Brand: anything free ('freedom is the apparition of nothingness in the world').

Hold: fixes the gasper between the teeth and grimaces (fear of asthmatic attack).

Style features: never a serious user except when posing for photographs with groups of male smokers. Then he is seen to smoke aggressively, competitively. Otherwise, in café company for instance, he passes the lighted cigarette to somebody to hold while he looks up something. Invariably forgets to take it back.

Consumption: a puff and part man. Probably, none.

Proust

Brand: not known. Not for him to choose.

Hold: uncertain.

Style features: he tried it as a young man but got sick. Essentially a passive smoker. Particularly enjoys being choked up by the vaporised pique of menials (janitors, chauffeurs, bellhops and waiters) sneaking a crafty smoke. As a passive inhaler he indulges in interludes of night coughing which he likes to record in notebooks for longitude, depth and phlegm yield.

Consumption: not TB.

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HOW DO I DANCE (from Hard and Soft Landings)

Traditional Irish dancing is akin to Irish speech patterns. The Irish speak and dance the same. I don't know why, but perhaps dancing is a form of speech that uses the whole body. The Gaelic word for dancing is 'rinnce'. A dinky, finicky, tight-arsed buckleap of a word. The steps are vertically inclined, rigidly up and down and without side. Up and down, up and down. Bad for the spine. Up down, up down. The only part of the body that moves is the feet, with the occasional knee kick.

The revival of Gaelic and Irish dancing was national policy in the middle decades of the twentieth century. 'Comely maidens dancing at the crossroads' became De Valera's Cross of Lorraine. In earlier times the dancing was looser (as early Gaelic speech probably was, to judge from Shakespeare's Irish characters). But in the mid-nineteenth century a white hanky appeared between partners (as a form of population control, sorely needed at a time of famines and rampant fertility), and inevitably solo dancing (celibacy) came into its own.

In the 1930s the Commission of Irish Dancing (An Coimisiun Le Rinnce Gaelada) standardised the national dance. Arms and hands were to be held stiffly by the side, no waving around. Hands on hips were deemed provocative and banned. Dancing was never to be mistaken for mating. Commission members, often parish priests, saw to it.

The urban poor particularly engaged in this punishing pastime. Silver and bronze medals were awarded lavishly and worn proudly on the breast plate. Dancers were weighed down by a profusion of medals, like veterans in handicap races. The medals also gave the rinnce a gangling music not unlike a tram. In the mid-1990s I saw pre-teen children perform a fertility dance in Jericho to welcome a Heart Foundation charity cycling ride in Israel. Though the little performers were oblivious of the purpose of the stately rite, their precocious prance had more to do with the things of the flesh than the authentic Irish fling.

When I was six the Wallace sisters came on our family holiday to mind my baby brother and me. They were All-Ireland Dancing Champions with a museum case of medals fronting their gymslips. In the village it was said the Wallace sisters could only move up and down and had no side. But that summer in Bray these dark beauties with their antelope legs showed ample side. Once past the train-crossing on the promenade they slipped our trusting hands and made for the funfair on the beach to play with the pinball machines and local youths. We tagged on in their tow, neglected but interested.

I can't remember hearing the Wallace sisters speak. They talked out of the side of their mouths (quickly, softly and mostly to one another) and it wasn't my side. They had plaited hair tied up in a birds' nest bun (my sisters just had pigtails). Grown-up bobs that bobbed when high-stepped. The judges must have been influenced, I imagine. The Wallace sisters were comely maidens, but no cross roads could stop them.

Irish dancing, the dog of Irish culture when I was growing up, is having its day with 'River Dance'. This Irish American phenomenon exploits a dialectic between nubile dancers and puritan performance. The beautiful girls and boys are puppets on a control freak's string. The thrill comes

when the straightjacket breaks loose and voluptuousness is released. This travesty has less to do with the straitlaced Irish tradition than the salacious temptations figuring in 'Saint Francis' Flowers' and 'The Chronicles of Saint Simon Stylites'. In sum, the demure nun discarding her wimple to reveal she is the devil incarnate. Gaelic Geishas girls and boys!

Reel: The Outdoor Relief

The Philpotts did the plumbing in our village. A father and four sons, all over six feet. I think they must have had long slender hands which got into the nooks and crannies, and strong fingers too. Though our family had only one toilet between seven people, I can't recall a sanitary crisis.

As the Philpotts contained the cloacal discharge of several thousand households, they worked around the clock. Five big men with slender hands and strong fingers. Mrs Philpott made them fresh pots of tea before they went hurrying out at all hours. She drank a cup or two with each for company. Which meant Mrs Philpott drank at least thirty cups a day. This harmed her kidneys and she was put on a drip.

Mrs Philpott did not know what to do with the dregs - she hated waste. A kind neighbour gave her some rose cuttings and she planted them by the trellis in front of the house. After her men had left for a job, she emptied the tea-leaves on the roses. The Philpotts' house was just like all the others in the village, gray, gardenless and splattered by mud and manure picked up on the narrow lanes of Lakelands by the number two bus. But it had a bushy profusion of red and white roses, a bouquet for her men to return to.

She was the maid amongst the roses in the top of Cork Road.

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THE LOWDOWN ON THE POST-INDUSTRIAL GLOBAL OLIGARCHY (PIG80) (from Bombing and Shopping)

Pasolini in 'La Terra Vista dalla Luna' (1966) said that Neo-capitalism's consumerism is a particularly insidious form of fascism because it homogenises what it assimilates. He saw the faceless power of its household god, television, 'transforming peasants and workers into a new middle class, fuelling further production and consumption'. I was there at the historical moment. Circa 1970 travelling from Sicily to the mainland across the straits of Messina, I saw the peasants throw away the rye bread and cheese and dig into cellophane wrapped cookies. The wine was turned into coca cola. A miracle in perverse, I thought (the delicatessen next to John Barnes in West Hampstead was educating my palate away from Mother's Pride and Kerrygold).

Berlusconi's television stations consolidated with bombarding living rooms with the representative model of the normal family, something to aspire to, acquisitive and self-interested, surrounded by a multiplicity of commodities, tolerantly Catholic, vaguely inclined to gender equality but with mamas still playing a central role as all purpose service providers and lots of young people partying to chichi pop (Dino Risi's 'Les Monstres', 1963, saw them coming), Alfo Romeo-ing towards realising someone else's dream. This relentless promotion of 'moderate' values by ruthlessly eliminating the alternatives was for Pasolini even more totalitarian than 'historical fascism'. Though Mussolini had a vision of PIG80 two generations before it came into being. 'It is faith which moves mountains because it gives the illusion that mountains move.'

The American model was brought back to Italy where Rocky 4 said it began, pasteurising what Mussolini couldn't, a great culture, into neat little rows of plastic topped bottles. Here at last was Benito's 'revolution of everyday life. Our way of eating, dressing, working and sleeping, the whole complex of daily habits'. First it was the power-barons appropriating the modern media towards their fast food options. East and West alike (the South followed in a pathetic straggle). Then the counter-radicalism of marketolatry. That is, the Left's historical materialism taken over with a vengeance by the Right, giving the repressed nearly enough to be contented so they stay in line and stop upsetting things. Not so simple, but.

The Oil crisis of the early nineteen seventies shunted cross-ideological globalisation into the mainstream of world politics. Its multi-national club was G7. It coincided with a much larger shift. The elevation of economics into a new popular religion which bypassed justice, social equity and cultural diversity into a universal potage for the masses to dip into when the club committee considered they needed a sop. Trickle down they called it, a chalice filled by banks and their political masters. Rock and roll allows some spillage. The overflow (of what? No one knows. The formula is a trade secret) is consumed and almost immediately excreted leaving an emptiness to be filled, again and again. The customer's instant satisfaction does not include sustained nutrition. It's not what you want makes you fat but what you get.

G8 in Gleneagles in 2005 made 'Food for Africa' its slogan. Everybody was there, except Sharon and someone from China (promised for G9). Bush, Putin and all the front men, with Blair as master of ceremonies. 'Justice not charity', sang Bono. But nobody was listening. His song was

drowned out by the London Bombings. All's changed and the same. 7/7 supersedes 9/11. At least for the holier-than-thou Host who knows he's amongst his own but needs to get back to talking about the War on Terror ('We aren't going to let them spoil everything, are we?'). Business as usual (democracy as bombing and shopping). When civilisation breaks down, man returns to George W. Bush, whose step visibly lightens as the bad news sinks in. A nominal declaration is hurriedly signed promising charity (not justice). Outside the golf course the little people carrying placards such as 'Make Poverty History' are history. They re-enact a past that is always forgotten. The present ignores them. Their future is not ours. But who are we?

PIG80 refills the void, and the cycle once again perpetuates itself. Bono decides not to sing Brecht's 'What Keeps Man Alive' in Burrough's version to Billy Graham on his eightieth birthday, but soft-focuses 'Thank you, Billy' instead. Journalists also have fallen into line. The press releases have been prepared for them. The more copy you produce the richer you get. You too can be one of the million millionaires in the world. The phalanx of politicians behind the paranoia platform built to stabilise the PIG80 launching pad myrmidons. Nicholas Sarkozy's 'Les règles du jeu ont changé' spontaneously translates Blair's 'The rules of the game have changed' (after the 7/7 bombings). Ridiculous Sarko, Minister of the Interior and President in waiting, needs your fear. Terrorist attacks in Paris. If there is one, it's 'I told you so'. And Wolfowitz's World Bank ups its loan for security. If not, we have made the world more secure (zero tolerance = reducing your civic rights. Retrenched social security = increased repressive state machinery). Keeping in with PIG80 is how to stay in power. Blair in Brighton, gagging for a fourth term, rants soothingly, 'In 1997 we modernised' (euphemism for shifting to the right) 'and now we' (euphemism for himself) 'must modernise again in a world of ever faster change' (it hasn't changed). 'We' (meaning those who have no choice) 'will have to step up to the mark' (whose mark?) 'to meet the challenge' (who's?). Chaos like never before, once again.

P.S. Babies of Mass Destruction

Sharogne is now the new hero of the Left. He is making noises against the settlers who nobody likes anyway. Riff-raff from Russia and America, blow-ins, almost as bad as the blow-ups on the other side. Everybody loves the army because it has the money and power. Our Boys are seen as a benevolent presence (not the Gaza strip, though). At peace rallies, generals are given pride of place. They only attend if there are no refuseniks on the platform. So the demonstrations are free to go on while troops kill babies who no doubt carry WMD in powdered milk (courtesy of PIG80). Operation Alibi Baby, it's called. Take that pipe of peace out of your mouth or I'll shoot it. Killing babies in self-defence, a new concept.

Intro and comments	A ROYAL WELCOME FOR HISAHITO Happy Event for the C-Throne (6 September, 2006)
Meet Welsh	To
French story	Princess
Irish dance	Kiko
Politics	of
Word sonnets	Japan
New poems	at
Recovered poems	thirty
	nine
	a
	Boy.
	It
	saves
	the
	line
	from
	female
	succession.
	C
	h
	r
	y
	s
	a
	n
	t
	h
	e
	Mum!
	Both
	doing
	fine.
	Shares
	in
	Baby-products
	are
	careering.
	The
	new
	heir's
	entrance
	was
	Caesarean.
	Hisohite
	is
	a
	hit,
	for
	all
	Japan
	loves
	a
	Go(o)d

boy
and
future
Man.

SIRENE

Laure Manaudou, Golden Girl of World Swimming

Elle
n'aime
pas
la
mer,
'quand
je
ne
vois
pas
le
fond,
j'ai
peur'.

[Intro and
comments](#)**FOUR DREAM POEMS**[Meet Welsh](#)

What Sleeps in Me

[French story](#)

What sleeps in me are the moments
that do not need to be remembered
for that would bring them into question.

[Irish dance](#)[Politics](#)[Word sonnets](#)

And the dreams they bring possess me
in oblivion without a thought,
dozing sweetly in the early hours

[New poems](#)[Recovered
poems](#)

of a day that I am young again
with all my life before me to waste,
which doesn't matter in the long run

because you've told nobody the dreams
so they can be taken for granted.
The moment I wake up I'm happy.

My Last Resting Place

Where am I this strange night
with a sky too large for me?
Who's put me in this place?

I'm alive, I'm alive.

A promise has come true.
But who made it to me?
Somebody I don't know.

I'm alive, I'm alive.

Still, who does not matter
now that I have arrived
where I was meant to be.

I'm alive, I'm alive.

If the sky falls on me
I have always the sea.
Or a lie down perhaps.

I'm alive, I'm alive.

Out of Sight, Out of my Mind

Am I strange in not wanting
to leave things behind for fear
of losing them and myself?

A friend from the past I've lost
by leaving a place sometimes
appears to me in a dream

and I wake up crying out.
I don't like to count the cost

of shipwrecks in life's voyage

and trawl the sea for items
no longer of use to me.
I make them into treasures

to discover with a map
drawn from the imagination,
what happened to them and me.

A sentimental journey
gets you nowhere. I find that.
The horizon I live with

mostly is at sea level.
But I navigate a world
I know is round and not flat.

The Water Carrier

I will be your bearer,
walking one step ahead,

bucket behind my back
for you to weep into.

Your way will be announced
in bells of memory

so the crowds flock to see
you spread-eagle the sky.

I'll be there at the foot
to take your body down,

and to water your grave
so you can grow again.

WHEN THE STARLINGS COME TO P-O
(After Li Po)

When they arrive the skies darken.
Now you can hardly hear yourself
with the racket in the trees.

A fall of snow would silence them,
every footstep in the street
resounding as in Oulu.

They haven't come to be reminded
of birds freezing on the wire.
In the mountains it's sub-zero,

where the telegraph poles sing
to lure the eagles of Valmy
for their annual escape,

and the SOS is out.
So they settle at sea level
in cities, outnumbering their prey.

Town gypsies feed them grain
to annoy the good citizens,
who cannot hear themselves talking

of arming the street-cleaners,
or cluster-bombing poison.
That failing, cutting down the trees.

Our streets are like a bordel.
Why can't they move on to Maroc.
Like before this global warming.

They forget, starlings find their North
again when the mimosa comes,
so the insect life can riot.

ON SEEING THE THIRTY SIX CANDLES

When the fishing boats go out
the bars empty. It's not that marins
are all heavy drinkers. I doubt
they have the money. Baratin
from Guy, the world's last bartender,
is that daytimers remember
their youth at sea, take bidons home,
prefering to pass out alone.

ROMAN JAKOBSON'S POEM

I am Roman Jakobson, hein.
Not Gary Romain or Max Jacob.
This is my poem. It's all mine.
Roman Jakobson's. Gary, Max, bof!

I'm Roman Jakobson's mother.
Not Gary Romain's or Max Jacob's.
He should share it with his brother
poets. Roman, Max, Gary = love.

Shut up, Mother Jakobson, I'm
not a poet. Though Max Jacob
some say is, Romain Gary's line
is plagiarism. I've enough.

Don't talk to your mother like that.
Maman Gary, Mamma Jacob
and me will make you eat your hat.
What'll I raise to ladies, he sobs?

Just get on with Baudelaire's cat,
she said, with your Levi-Strauss.
And, Roman, you're getting fat.
Too much time spent in the house.

A HISTORY LESSON

'Anger be now my song, immortal one.' Homer, The Iliad
'Anger is a brief madness.' Horace, Epistles

The peaches in Musgrave's glasshouse are Protestant.

A velvet blush of gold against the red sandstone.
Time to steal into paradise and run rampant,
not caring juice stains will mean hell when I get home.

Taken by the ear before Old Mister Musgrave,
his smile bristled through muttonchops as he bleated,
'Watch me, boy'. He put a knife to a peach to shave
with a single peel. My punishment is to eat it.

I taste the rising gorge of voluptuous guilt.
Adam's peach stone in my throat could go either way.
I swallow hard. 'We've had Musgraves up to the hilt.
My folk built orchard walls on a penny a day.'

Old Musgrave weights the knife in his palm, intricate
horn handled filigree, fly embossed on the tip.
A blade to sliver meat. 'Pity for the wicked,
friend. Don't choke on the pit. Or I'll have to let rip

Heimlich's maneuver.' I spit and hand him the stone.
'I'll plant it in the orchard. In three thousand years
it will bear fruit and you'll have a tree of your own.
Living for ever, James, is the least of your fears.'

The knife is tabled for handshakes. 'I prefer Horace's
'Ira furor brevis est' to The Iliad's', he said.
'Fatalism. Why bring back the dead past? It raises
too many ghosts.' My father, the historian, nodded.

THE WEATHER COMPLAINT

The problem with the world is weather.
Where it's hot it is too hot. Where it's cold it is too cold.
Where it's temperate it is too temperate.

People say they are under it.

On the Mediterranean there are thirty-two types of wind.

The extremes are the tramontane from the mountains, the sirocco from
Africa. In between from southeast to north the salient ones are the
xacoc, llevant, gregac, and northwest to south the mestral, ponent,
llebieg and the hot headed migjorn which comes and goes before you
know.

Sometimes all thirty-two blow at the same time.

This is known as the tourbillon.

When the wind drops, the flies fall on the coast, drunk from the vines.
No getting away from them. Sometimes there is a perfect day.
But it's spoilt by the thought that tomorrow is another.

The weather can't last.

There is a place in Arizona where you don't have to put up with the
weather. You can live completely without an exterior. The only complaint
is nothing to complain about, they say.

But if you fall behind in your climatization payments, it will be switched
off, and you live in total darkness in blocks of ice, until the freezer

begins to thaw and it's hot as hell.

Then you have every reason to.

THE LAST LESSON

I am being taught to breathe
at sixty years and three.
It's not too late to be.
Now teach me how to bleed.

It's not too late to learn
at sixty years and three
to draw in air freely.
Now teach me how to burn

my candle to the wick
as slowly as possibly.
At sixty years and three
I've got to learn it quick.

I'm exhaling the fire
flickering out in me.
At sixty years and three
I'm learning to expire.

PARENTHESIS

Breeding is what we do best.
So haveth children everywhere.
Overpopulation's elsewhere.
The poor who can't afford them are a pest -
the feckless give a bad name to the rest
who are resourceful so have resources to spare.
Of course by famines in Africa we're distressed.
But when I hold my grandchildren in my arms I don't care.

Intro and comments
Meet Welsh
French story
Irish dance
Politics
Word sonnets
New poems
Recovered poems

AT THE DOCTOR'S

The humiliation of waiting rooms
is eternity, or no time at all.
God is at the computer and ignores
mankind, except to mutter 'Take a seat'.
Impersonal inattention. 'Wait your call.'

I sit amongst the humble and infirm
in anticipation of the slightest hope.
'Ah! Mrs (Checkmynotes), you'll be all right.'
He says that forty times a day, each time
with a different meaning. I wonder what's mine?

I do not like being in the hands of fate.
One way or another we're all dying,
the good doctor and the bad receptionist.
I'll take them with me when I detonate.

HANDKERCHIEF FOR A PERSONAL ITHAKA

I come from an island
so small, my father,
the chronicler, made
the history, and,
my mother, the only
chaste goddess in the place,
the indigenous dance.

No wonder, being
the offspring
of legend and movement,
I have a penchant for
extravagance,
and aversion
to the confinement
of mystery.

Leaving,
the isle's extinction
is at hand,
as I pick a grain
of sand from my eye,
clearing the vision
to blue nothingness,
and all now is plain sailing.

JANE WELSH'S WEDDING TESTAMENT, 1826

The whiphand of his balked
body shredded to stalks
the gone-to-seed tulips:

with petals on his lips
he spent the best part of
our nuptial night of love

laying waste the flower beds,

while I caught up with Coeleb's
'The Search for Happiness'.

The pleasures of the flesh!
Poring over my mahogany
writing desk, with cold tea

bathing my eyes, I wept
for two whole hours. Then slept.
Waiting, I could not stem

the flow from the steel pen
he gave me, a wedding gift.
Having never really lived,

in straight-laced prose I wrote
him a short farewell note;
frenzied with ennui, bit

my lip, mounted a brute
of a horse that could not
do anything but trot

and rode thirty-three miles
to escape from Carlyle's
flowery passion and wit.

But how was he taking it?
On the saddle I burnt
to know, had to return

as fast as the beast could,
before leaving him for good.

PERFECT PEACE

The angler only moves
two fingers and a wrist.
The water breaks and smoothes.

The stillness of that stone
beneath the surface is
something more than its own.

And the heron's image
serrates what should be clear
waters beyond the weir.

Bullrushes at the edge
and the slightest of winds
satins moss. And the dredge

stirs up as with desire
clouds of silt and bright things
like stainless steel barbed-wire.

Stone, turn and show your fins
before it is too late.
Which shadow takes the bait?

[↑ Haut](#)

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