



*Remembrance and Resolve:
Hope Maintained*

Global Peace Leadership Conference Belfast 2016

Queens University,
Belfast, Northern Ireland
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*Three poems read by poets of the Seamus Heaney
Centre for Poetry: Andrew Eaton, Elaine Gaston,
and Shriram Sivaramakrishnan on the occasion
of the commemoration.*

*“Even if the hopes you started
out with are dashed, hope has
to be maintained.”*

-Seamus Heaney

The Dark Hedges

Jamesy was walking back from the dole one day
past the Big House. It was about 3 miles home.
Better wearing out the boots
than wearing out the bedclothes,
his father had barked at him.

At the time you had to sign on in the Orange Hall
— imagine! — the wooden floor, sun and dust smell,
mahogany boxes with yellow cards.
A desk, a chair, a file of people
queued out the door.

He was scunnered in the cold, early morning.
On the way back he snapped
a few photos with his second-hand camera.
The local paper published one. Everyone wanted it.
The corner shop made it into a black and white postcard.

Then the negative got scratched, the original got lost,
and he went across the water
with his camera and a folder full of photos.
He traipsed round everywhere to find work.
This was long before film sets or tourist buses back here.

On the day of the ceasefire
a big London broadsheet newspaper
ran an article and a full-page feature
of his photo — The Dark Hedges
as first light filtered through the inky branches.

Elaine Gaston

Elaine Gaston is from the north coast of Ireland. She was educated at Oxford University and at Queen's University, Belfast where she is a PhD candidate at the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry. In 2015 she received an ACE Award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and was runner-up in the Vincent Buckley Poetry Prize. Her first collection, *The Lie of the Land*, published in 2015 by Doire Press, was Highly Commended in the Patrick Kavanagh Award. 'The Dark Hedges' was first published in *The Yellow Nib*.



Things To Carry Before You Flee

No duvets, Maggi packs, essays on Phenomenology, mobile chargers; and certainly no sanitary napkins – they don't work in a land gushing with blood.

Maybe a fragment from Isaiah, earphone plugs to protect your eardrum, a scratched CD to see your reflection, the soles of two left shoes

to wade right through bushes, a guitar draped in satin to be held as a double-barrel, just in case.

These are some of the things you can take before you flee – disposable but not yet, plus the opulent necessity such as a nail clipper

(you need to stitch it in secret inside the pyjama pants with pockets deep enough to bury your sufferings.)

That way, if you do end up reaching a refugee camp, you can indulge a little in clipping your forlorn nails as the authorities fill out forms

to tag you in. That way, when you get to hold a morsel of food to the mouth, you are not so weak as to be weighed down by a gram of nail.

Shriram Sivaramakrishnan

Shriram Sivaramakrishnan is a poet from India, is currently pursuing Masters in Poetry at Queen's University Belfast. His poems have appeared in Softblow, The Mondegreen, Message in a Bottle and so on. He tweets at @shriiram.



War Music

Though the purity
Of moonlight has silenced
Both nightingale and
Cricket

—Anonymous

i. Ensemble

Then music was whatever moved
between two fences—even boots,

guards speaking in the rain
to one another, wind in chain-link.

Or in the black that wrapped our barracks
what echoed through sleep became far-off

engines starting, then stalling in salt-water.
During work in daylight heat,

even a low song would pass through
a group of men in unison,

an ensemble hidden by their labor,
the religious and the irreligious humming

a hymn or “Tumbling Tumbleweeds”
like song itself was hesitating over them,

then lifting, with no spirit left behind it.
A holding off of the deeper knock of grief

while hands went hacking, cutting to clear
the wood free of all its bamboo staves.

ii. No Trumpet

No flutes in those bands.
No dancers in the men.
Not then. Though some guy
carried one trumpet

mouthpiece he could blow
as if ripping open
a book of griefs,
and through its silver

lips, the phantom
horn resounding
like a chorus
of delighted wives.

iii. The Bow

But it was the bamboo music of the violin
that caught and held me like a nervous fish,
lifted then re-baptized in a new and cleaner

source. From the sound of leaf and cane
thinned as horsehair, drawn across
that jointed body, grassy pitches went up

like ladders in the night around our heads.
And the sound of tongues thrummed
lowly in the dark. The only fiddle player

in the camp would tilt his neck
where we wrapped around him like gauze
in the middle of that bamboo room,

and rock the moon to sleep, gliding the bow
until it pointed past him, the way
I imagine Christ appeared in the boat

showing his disciples to the other side.

Andrew Deloss Eaton is an American poet living in Belfast, Northern Ireland. His work appears in or is forthcoming in journals such as Copper Nickel, The Moth (Ireland), Poetry Ireland Review, and Prelude, among others. His chapbook Sprung Nocturne is forthcoming.



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