

THE MADRID REVIEW

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1



**KEANU REEVES &
CHINA MIEVILLE**

Elsewhere Ops...

PAUL PRESTON

Why I became a historian of
Spain.

SANTIAGO POSTEGUILLO

"I'm writing the third Caesar
book..."

JOHN BOYNE

Earth, Water, Fire!

CAROLINA ALVARADO

Queen of Shadows

TOM COX

80's Child



Kristina Erny	Ewen Glass	R. Ben Beach	Julie Irigaray	Paul Stephenson	Emma Murf
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POETRY

BIOGRAPHIES

Ed Ahern resumed writing after forty odd years in foreign intelligence and international sales. He's had over 450 stories and poems published so far, and ten books. Ed works the other side of writing at Bewildering Stories where he manages a posse of eight review editors, and as lead editor at Scribes Microfiction.

R. Ben Beach is a poet and educator from Austin, Texas, currently living and working in Shanghai, China. His work has appeared in di-vêrsé-city, The Rio Review, OBSOLETE! Magazine, and miniMAG. He can be found online at rbenbeach.com.

Steve Denehan lives in Kildare, Ireland with his wife Eimear and daughter Robin. He is the author of two chapbooks and five poetry collections. Winner of the Anthony Cronin Poetry Award and twice winner of Irish Times' New Irish Writing, his numerous publication credits include Poetry Ireland Review and Westerly.

Kristina Erny (she/her) is a third-culture poet who grew up in South Korea. She is the author of *Elijah Fed by Ravens* (Solum Literary Press, 2023) and holds an MFA from the University of Arizona. Her poems have appeared in Southern Humanities Review, The Los Angeles Review, Yemassee, Blackbird, Tupelo Quarterly, Rattle, and elsewhere. She teaches high schoolers literature, creative writing, and drama in Shanghai, China. You can find more of her work at <https://www.kristinaerny.com>

Ewen Glass (he/him) is a Northern Irish poet who lives in England with two dogs, a tortoise and lots of self-doubt; on a given day, any or all of these can be snapping at his heels. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in HAD, Bridge Eight, Poetry Scotland, Gordon Square Review and elsewhere. On socials (and in real life) he is pretty much ewenglass everywhere.

Julie Irigaray is a French Basque poet living in Birmingham and the author of the poetry pamphlet 'Whalers, Witches and Gauchos' (Nine Pens, 2021). Sixty of her poems have appeared across the world (Ireland, UK, Italy, US, Canada, Mexico, South Korea and Singapore) in The Rialto, Ambit, Magma, and Poetry Wales. She was commended in the 2020 Ambit Magazine Poetry Prize; shortlisted for The White Review Poet's Prize 2019 and selected as one of the 50 Best New British and Irish Poets 2018 (Eyewear Publishing), among other prizes.

Emma Murf is a poet and humorist living in Madrid. Her work has been published in The Shore, Points in Case, Same Faces Collective, Slackjaw, Liminal Press, The Belladonna and others. Her poetry often explores the curiosity of the mundane. But her first poem, at eight years old, explored listing her brother on eBay. You can find her at www.emmamurf.com/writing or on Instagram at [@emma_murf](https://www.instagram.com/emma_murf).

Paul Stephenson has three pamphlets: *Those People* (Smith/Doorstop, 2015), *The Days that Followed Paris* (HappenStance, 2016), written after the November 2015 terrorist attacks; and *Selfie with Waterlilies* (Paper Swans Press, 2017). His debut collection *Hard Drive* was published by Carcanet in summer 2023. Website: paulstep.com/Instagram:paulstep456/X:@stephenson_pj

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

KRISTINA ERNY

We live in Yeonhui dong, Seoul, South Korea.

Our apartment has a narrow balcony where my feral
pet rabbit lives. My favorite things are the monkey bars,

reading, and creating characters with my friends.

I spin inside the playground rings until I become
someone named Jamal who can teleport through time and space,

and also turn invisible. I'm terrified of air raids, tornadoes,
and standing out in a crowd. I don't know how to speak
Korean. I crouch during the drills next to my classmates

in the basement bus garage, the one next to the huge
green trash can, the one shimmering with rats. I don't know
that on the other side of the 38th parallel kids my age

are hunting rats, their parents boiling soup of bark, grass.
I'm afraid of my parents going out and never coming back.
Having to move to America to live with relatives I only see

once a year. My hair is blonde-frizzy, and my eyes are blue-green.
For each book we read, we get to add a slice of beef, tomato,
lettuce, or cheese, to a burger stacked up the classroom's

cinder-block walls. By the end of the year mine has surpassed
the light fixture and this brings me deep, abiding, pleasure.
My teacher is young and beautiful and wears flowy skirts

and hearing aids. She bakes us chocolate cake and plants
four different colors of sprinkles to teach us about crop rotation.
This is the year I draw the best piranha of my life

and crush on a kid named Johan from the Netherlands.
He speaks three languages and leaves at the end of the year.
I will never see him again. I have my own bookshelf but not

my own room. I eat white rice and seaweed for an afterschool snack.
I play outside with the other campus kids until I hear my mom's
whistle. Spaghetti on Monday. Taco salad on Tuesday. We order

bibimbap on Wednesdays. Mrs. Ahn makes chicken fingers
on Thursdays. Leftover soup on Friday. I have a baby sister
and three baby cousins that always mess up my things.

Piano lessons with a witch who makes me cry. A fort in the little forest
that rings the school. Walks back to my apartment past the guard dog.
Thick calluses from the monkey bars across my palms.

There is a small pond that used to be a fountain between
the elementary playground and the school's iconic Korean gate.
Three orange goldfish who seem lonely and sad in the murk.

A new best friend that will be gone by next year. Even though this
is the year he warns me not to get fat and chastises me over a bowl
of cereal after school, I have my dad's t-shirts to sleep in at night.

My favorite one is from last summer's visit to the San Diego Zoo.
It is a huge gorilla face. When my dad was a kid here in the sixties
kids would point at him and say the only English words they knew.

HELLOWHITE BOYYOULOOKLIKEAMONKEY. I love
that gorilla shirt. I wear it weekly and spin into a black blur
on the bars during recess. On the street people often stop and stare.

THE F-WORD

JULIE IRIGARAY

he's dead, '¡cabrón!'
and apparently he died
in excruciating pain – '¡olé!'

'1975 blessed year'
we the refugees
are celebrating in Toulouse
the red city

'Españoles...'

thirty-five days of whispers
tears and mantillas on
the other side of the border
(these poor fellows needed
their deified leader, loved their
forty years of brainwashing)

thirty-five days in which
we avidly read the newspapers
waiting for the God of terror
to die

'...Franco ha muerto'

thirty-five days of death throes for him
thirty-five days of agony for us

'Franco ha muerto' 'ha muerto Franco'

how much do you think the country
has changed? shall we move back to Spain?
our children have French passports
they know nothing about Spanish customs

'Franco' 'Franco' 'Franco'

his name an insult to us:
Ramón called his dog this way
to let off steam kicked him
whenever he felt homesick
I suffer every time he calls him
my jaws clench and I want to spit

'1975' 'blessed year'

History will remember this year
for the end of the Vietnam War

History has forgotten our grief
our forty years of exile or servitude

'1975' 'blessed year'
'for this and so many other reasons'

we've opened a bottle of champagne
I'd kept aside for decades
all the generations are gathered
our children smile and raise a glass:
'il est enfin mort, le salaud!'

'1975' 'blessed year'

it's hard to describe how victory tastes
like forty years too late: a wine ageing
badly, a glass of xeres the flavour of
a poisonous mushroom – a taste of unfinished.

RYANAIR

EMMA MURF

It's 11:53 in Madrid baggage claim, and I'm watching each bag be spit out emphatically like a foul-tasting grape you're relieved to be done entertaining. How each sputters to a landing, crooked and dejected, save the one that doesn't quite make the turn. It dribbles to the airport floor. And I know many bags from many planes pass through this all-too-human machine, but somehow it feels fitting that this is the resolution to my Ryanair flight. One where every seatback poster advertised "the bars open!" with such blatant disregard for punctuation. It seems the whole operation cannot be bothered to pretend it's something else. And frankly, I've never known such envy. What bravery to declare mediocrity in a world of best-in-classes, to sit on your asses and make planes with no tray tables or seatback pockets. I fantasize about making my way down the aisle, saying, "Tío, you paid twelve euros for this flight. Let's not start raising our pinkies now." But I'm in the security line, chugging my water bottle empty, apologizing to everyone behind me. I'd tip a hat to you, Ryanair. If only I had the elbow room.

A COLD, WET TUESDAY NIGHT IN _____

EWEN GLASS

Talking Therapy
in the front room of a terraced house
near the football stadium.
Studied silence and matter-of-fact trauma
my commentator's cliché
(Good Football Man; knows the club; double pivot).
They ward off dead air, as I breathe it
among the ghosts of this house:
brickmakers, machinists, nightwatchmen
(even now, the factory their neighbour!)
In life, drink would loosen tongues and tie them
and the knot between would turn and turn and –
like the fans in Row H and below,
under a covered stand but still getting wet,
I see both sides, and choose to begin
Talking Therapy
in the front room of a terraced house
near the football stadium.

It is called a supermoon
apparently, and
it hangs
over my left shoulder

lush pink in colour, and
so huge, so close as to seem
an obstruction
for airplanes

that fly
over my right shoulder
into the dark warm
Majorcan sky

the sea is three stories
beneath my right foot
the water is warm
as warm as the air, and

teeming with fish
of all colours and sizes
this I know
having swam with them

for most
of the morning
and all
of the afternoon

beneath my left foot
is the restaurant
where we ordered
lime grilled chicken

in pidgin Spanish
this balmy evening
it was
deliciosa

as I type
Mark Hollis sings
in the background
Life's What You Make It

he is right
this time

THE SUPERMOON

STEVE DENEHAN

WINDING, EMPTY

STEVE DENEHAN

Late, warm, quiet
we sit on the balcony
reading, sipping, talking

beneath us
Spanish streets
winding, empty

above us
the moon a wrecking ball
demolishing the dark

YESTERDAY LADY, MAJORCA

STEVE DENEHAN

We have become amigos
over the last few days

this, with a toothless smile
is what he tells me

we come each morning
to swim into the afternoon
passing him by
as he sits
with the lifeguards
tossing crusts
to seagulls
that he calls
'Bandidos!'

he wears a tattered baseball cap
wraparound mirrored sunglasses
and a tight blue vest
with Rent-A-Boat, and a phone number
on the back
though I suspect
if I rang
it would not be his voice
at the end of the line

today our conversation
was not a composite
of pidgin Spanish and pidgin English
exaggerated gestures, and laughter

he was sombre, quiet, and
when he pointed
I followed his finger
to the hotel next to ours

'yesterday lady...she jump...the balcony'
he mimed a syringe
'drogas...drogas...kaput'

'Did she scream?', I asked

from how he looked at me
I could tell
that he was wondering
why I had asked that question
he was not
the only one

DIFFUSION

R. BEN BEACH

Years ago in Spain
I remember an old man
who walked every morning

up and down the aisle
of Metro Madrid Line 7
who would hold out his hand

in the rush hour crush
and shout out his single request:
UNA AYUDA PARA COMER

and I think of the story
of the man in the well
calling out

to anonymous children
who waver under the power
they wield and leave him

to perish alone
coughing and asking:
didn't you want to help?

years ago I'd watch and wait
for someone to respond
for my station to come up

for my turn to exit the car
hoping I still had time
to stop for a coffee

and croissant.

INHERITANCE

JULIE IRIGARAY

My father is obsessed with 'sorting things out'
before I move to the UK. 'If anything happens
to me, you need to know where our plots are.'

My father takes me around the valley to show
me the plots purchased by his grandmother Lucie,
a widow despised by her neighbours

because she owned the poorest farm on the worst land.
My father says that the families who looked down
on Lucie have declined while we have risen.

His fiery speech reveals this reconnaissance
is also about rural rivalries, grudges passed down
generations, that our duty is to avenge Lucie.

Our cousin once complained that Lucie never
smiled in photos, and my father replied
'but she had no reason to smile:'

her husband was a gambler and alcoholic
who died crippled with debts, leaving her
with five children and a miserable farm.

Later, she married the farmhand because it
was convenient and because he brought
16,000 francs to repay the debts.

Lucie had to travel twenty kilometres by carriage
across the Pyrenees to sell her chickens
at the market while at home they only ate eggs.

At the time of her death, her house had no
electricity and my father remembers
mice running around his bed at night.

When his mother complains about trivial things,
my atheist father scolds her: 'I hope Lucie
is watching you from heaven, and that when

you are reunited, she will pull your ears!'
When we're back home, my father unfolds
some parchments from the 1920s, Lucie's

notarial deeds to buy the family farm.
She couldn't afford to pay her share right away,
so she repaid her siblings one by one for two decades.

My father sighs with anxiety, 'I hope
that wherever she is now, Lucie is proud
that her descendants are better off.'

We discuss about how today we are obsessed
with happiness, whereas back then happiness
was death because it meant the end of suffering.

¡MIA, NO!

STEVE DENEHAN

Nestled into a Spanish hillside
under rippling blues and dancing yellows
joyful birds, chirping crickets, magnolia nights
there is an oasis
of angry dark and ragged screams

the woman, her eyes dead and dull
her hair lank and tired
her screams relentless and infinite
“Mia!”
“No!”
“No Mia!”
“Mia no!”
“Back Mia! Back!”
“Happy now! Are you happy now Mia!”

Mia, just a girl, her hair still lustrous
her shoulders sloped
her face hard
we smile
we wave
her mouth a tight straight line
she does not wave back

STORYTELLING

ED AHERN

Oral family history
is of its shifting nature
blotched by secrets:
misrememberings,
overstatements,
embellishments,
and flat out lies.

Those who still know
will rarely admit that
their cousin was a suicide;
they really didn't graduate;
their retreat was a rehab;
their lifestyle is a sham;
their mourning is proforma.

The posed family photos
portray emotional proximity
belying everyday indifference.
But perhaps all the lying
unconscious or deliberate
holds a larger truth-
our narrative reality
demands a good story.

POST-TRUTH, GRANADA

PAUL STEPHENSON

In the corner of the Plaza Trinidad,
a shop by the name of 'La Verdad',
its shutter down, locked and abandoned,
the massive windows plastered with ads
for semi-intensive conversation and
grammar with someone experienced.
Level B2 in 50 hours. A pass guaranteed.
TODO A 5 EUROS – TODO A 10 EUROS

A large flat was available. Fully furnished.
Three bedrooms, bathroom and balcony.
There's a number you could have called:
655 42 38 56 – plus a series of anarchist lectures
two and half years ago: 'Solidarity Today',
'Historical Memory', 'The Workers' Struggle'.
Been and gone. Too bad you missed them.
TODO A 5 EUROS – TODO A 10 EUROS

El Niño del Albayzín wrapped up his tour
Friday 25th with rap in the Sala Pata Palo.
Level C2 in 50 hours. Private lessons.
Level C1 in 50 hours. Expert teacher.
At the Café of the Unicorns they say
the coffee's cheap, fair trade, decent.
Seems the Houdini show was in town.
'Are you ready to see the impossible?'

THE YARD

ED AHERN

II let the wild back in.
Discreetly, so the neighbors
would only slowly notice.
At first, thistles and ferns
sprouting on the edges
of lawns gone weedy.
Then briars and ivy
filling in and choking
bland shrubs and bushes.
As the neglected manicure
tangled and splayed
creatures came and stayed.
Skunks under the front porch,
chipmunks and mice scurrying
past the edges of the house,
a possum in the swamp oak,
moles and grubs in the lawn,
somewhere unfindable a racoon.
The true nature of the yard
hidden under cursory
mowings and prunings
like a bad haircut.
Not a revolt, just subversion

FICTION

BIOGRAPHIES

Angela Acosta (she/her) is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Hispanic Studies at Davidson College. She is a 2022 Dream Foundry Contest for Emerging Writers Finalist, 2022 Somos en Escrito Extra-Fiction Contest Honorable Mention, and Rhysling finalist. Her poems have appeared in Shoreline of Infinity, Apparition Lit, Radon Journal, and Space & Time. She is author of Summoning Space Travelers (Hiraeth Publishing, 2022) and A Belief in Cosmic Dailiness: Poems of a Fabled Universe (Red Ogre Review, 2023).

Hyun Woo Kim is a writer living in Seoul. Kim was a finalist of the 2023 Los Angeles Review Short Fiction Award, and his works have been published by Bear Paw Arts Journal, Half and One, BarBar, and others. When not writing, Kim is busy telling people that his first name is Hyun Woo, not Hyun. He can be reached at paschali@fidei.email.

D. F. Gallardo es escritor de relato, microrrelato y novela, pintor ocasional, y lector a tiempo completo. Natural de Málaga, estudió dos años de Filología Inglesa sin a fecha de hoy terminar la carrera. Como tantos otros empezó a escribir durante el Gran Confinamiento, se auto publicó en marzo de 2021, y desde entonces está consagrado a la escritura, campo donde trata de ganar visibilidad poco a poco. Actualmente tiene en el mercado cinco títulos: la trilogía El curso de la filacteria compuesta por El comedor de relojes, Casa de Lobos y Lo ajeno, el libro de microrrelatos Ciento cuarenta cuentos de ciento cuarenta caracteres, y la antología de historias breves HASHIMA: Historias de La Espiral y otros relatos. Si desea contactar con él puede hacerlo a través de la siguiente dirección de correo electrónico: dfgallardoautor@gmail.com. También podrá encontrarlo en: X/Twitter, Instagram y Facebook.

Marcos Heras Obregón nació en Valladolid y vive en Cantabria. Amante de la naturaleza, su familia y el deporte. La escritura es una de sus aficiones y a ella intenta dedicarle algo de su tiempo libre. Ha escrito varios cuentos cortos que evocan recuerdos y nostalgia, pero también tratan de placeres sencillos y del disfrute de los pequeños momentos de la vida cotidiana.

Sonia González es castellana de nacimiento y madrileña de adopción. Ha dedicado su vida a la enseñanza del español fuera de España y del inglés dentro de ella. Fanática del deporte y la lectura, ha vivido en EEUU, Gran Bretaña y en los últimos 20 años en Madrid. Le pierde una buena historia de misterio o una gran historia de amor, y le maravilla el poder de la palabra escrita y cómo vas descubriendo otro mundo según lees, página a página.

THE METRO IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

ANGELA ACOSTA

A wave of construction meets tourist season in Madrid, creating ripples of confusion among visitors and shrugs among the locals. The metro is always under construction, churning out broken elevators that turn commutes into workouts. My phone must have thought I was climbing tall hills every day I was there, for Madrid manages to be the highest altitude European capital.

Stations are split in half and construction blankets once busy metro lines with blue fences marked with the logo of the company Dragados. I attempt translation, for surely these dragons were the past participle of some verb that I could fish out of my mind. Dragons with large snouts that could pick up subway cars must lay just beyond the fenced area. Workers submerged in the guts of a broken escalator are no longer men, but centaurs with mechanical joints and metal hooves.

Each morning, I enter the metro at the Vicente Aleixandre station. In the middle of summer, the station lacks the echoes of the hubbub of university students headed to class or back into the city. Quaker parrots chirp overhead, relishing in the glow of the morning sun from their perches in pine trees. The university district always feels like a refuge, a far cry from the war ground it once was in 1936.

Colón is my regular destination in the middle of the Spanish empire, flaunting the largest yellow and red national flag in the country. I smirk at the thought that surely there are larger American flags. The statue of Christopher Columbus presides over the stately avenue, a constant reminder of the diaspora of which I too am a part. As a Mexican American scholar of Spanish literature and culture, I sit with the contractions of my heritage and history at the National Spanish Library.

Chueca is draped in the pageantry of rainbow capitalism, plastered in flags and advertisements. I hug the walls tightly for the platform is especially narrow, wedged in the middle of the city like a gay ornament for those who can afford the cost of living. Gran Vía created quite of a stir, churning out an homage to the former glory days of 1920s Madrid. A century old, the metro station now welcomes commuters after several years offline. The imposing signage and elevator entrance hearkens back to well-dressed flaneurs of yesteryear while allowing more accessible access to the great way through the city.

Estación del Arte is closed through October, cutting off a crucial artery through the southern part of the city and gateway to the illustrious art museum. Without a functioning metro station at the Atocha railway station, the taxi queue snakes out the exit. Atocha already confuses enough passengers with its sign for the City of Barcelona, the perplexing street just outside the station.

The metro is always under construction and a constant barrage of reminders blares through each station to remind passengers about alternate routes. It is in these liminal spaces where I begin to think of the past versions of myself who walked through this city and the future versions of myself who will once again forget that line one stops at Sol and requires all passengers to transfer.

A WET ENCOUNTER WITH MISS HERRING

HYUN WOO KIM

It was in the middle of a heavy shower that I met Miss Herring. I do not know exactly if it was a mister, or a miss, or a missis to be fair, but I am calling it Miss Herring just for convenience and solely at my discretion. For the record, I would like to leave a note here that Miss Herring could very well have been a Herring-san or a Frau Herring, and there was no way that Miss Herring could have actually had a family name called Herring.

Then why call it, or why call her, Miss Herring? I was walking in a small park in Seokchon-dong when I met her. There were ancient tombs from Hanseong Baekjae in the park, but the park itself was never a tourist destination. Most people who showed up at the park were people living close to it, and they regarded the tombs merely as nice heaps of dirt and stones to stroll around. It was a place where people walked their dogs to let them pee anywhere they liked, kids ran around, and teenagers fooled around. Miss Herring, however, stood out when I noticed her, as she was not a local.

It was in the middle of the rainy season in Korea, and thus one of the few occasions where the park was empty and quiet. In the middle of the night, I walked to the park with my sneakers soaked, thinking that I would be alone. No peeing dogs, and no teenagers who make out and smoke and then smoke and make out. The heavier the rain, the better. I was wrong though, as I ran into Miss Herring.

Although it was quite dark in the park at 2 AM, I could notice Miss Herring from far away since I saw her running down one of the tombs. At most times, I avoid such weirdos, but this time I wanted to strike up a conversation.

My sudden motivation was in that Miss Herring, was a herring. A herring in a stunning red fur coat with a set of matching red Jimmy Choos, to be precise.

"How interesting to see you out here, Miss Herring!" I shouted out.

"Oh, thank you," answered Miss Herring, with a polite bow. Raindrops were dripping out of her gills.

"It's wet enough for you to take a walk out here?"

"It is true, but does it matter?"

Now I was feeling uneasy. I could smell my body odor, the smell of my sweat mixed with the cold rainwater. Even though it was getting chilly, I had begun to sweat.

"What do you mean, it doesn't matter? You need water to breathe, Miss Herring!"

"Well, you do have some keen eyes to notice that I am a herring. I appreciate that, but it still doesn't matter."

I pondered for a moment. Maybe, Miss Herring felt offended that I had presumed her to be a miss, judging by her, or its taste in fashion.

"Madame, or, Sir, if I have ever—"

I could not finish the sentence. Miss Herring jumped at me and covered my mouth with the fin.

"Good sir, I am afraid our jolly conversation shall end here."

Miss Herring began to swipe the tear off my eyelids. I wanted to hide it in the rain, but she had too keen eyes. I could no longer hold it. I shouted from the sudden yearning for Miss Herring, and the grief to be expected from our goodbye.

"Why? Miss Herring, Why! Why do you say so? Why do we have to part our ways? Why does the story have to end so soon? Our story! Why?"

Miss Herring didn't answer for a moment. She sighed, and took out a Marlboro. She managed to light it with a surprising ease.

"I can't help. The reason is that," murmured Miss Herring, "I am a red herring."

EL APARCAMIENTO DEL HIPERMERCADO

En el solitario aparcamiento a cielo abierto del hipermercado quedó tirado, en el descuido de alguien, un paquete grande de azúcar, rajado.

Nadie regresó a reclamarlo, lo echó en falta o pasó a buscarlo, ni tampoco el personal al cargo del establecimiento que lo vio se tomó la más mínima molestia de retirarlo; solo, siguió echado, vertiendo su contenido a través del papel, mortalmente herido.

A la caída de la tarde, venida con el transcurrir de las horas, se levantó un viento que esparció los gránulos blancos por el negro pavimento.

Firmamento de dulces estrellas, espejo de las que la noche revela.

(microrrelato procedente de
'HASHIMA: Historias de La Espiral y otros relatos').

SIN TÍTULO

Era incapaz de salir, pues los muros se desplazaban y por entonces obstruían la puerta.

Su vivienda implosionaba, estaba atrapada.

Desesperadamente corrió a asomarse por el resquicio de una ventana ya casi consumida por la casa, y con un alarido desesperado pidió ayuda.

Fue en vano.

Ni esos vecinos a los que no conocía y con quienes no hablaba, ni su familia, ni amigos, ni nadie, se percató de que su apartamento había desaparecido con ella dentro, comprimido por un nuevo inmueble que ahora ocupaba ese espacio, con un cartel en el que se leía: "se alquila".

INSTITUTRIZ Y BUJÍA

Los peores temores de los niños se confirmaron el día en que a la severa institutriz empezó a salirle humo del cuerpo, a causa de una bujía defectuosa.

A despecho de que su sustituta se mostró asaz más afable, las semillas de la desconfianza ya estaban plantadas en los críos.

(es el microrrelato número 24 de 'Ciento cuarenta cuentos de ciento cuarenta caracteres')

LOS AÑOS, POR ANNIE ERNAUX DE CABARET VOLTAIRE. UNA RESEÑA

Annie Ernaux habla sobre Annie Ernaux en un libro (que no novela), escrito en un momento en el que la autora rondaba la setentena; realidad que cubre a su artefacto de principio a fin de una inevitable mortaja de melancolía.

Me hace gracia imaginármela disfrazada de Escarlata O'Hara a la caza de un remedo de esa magdalena proustiana que parece perseguir con ahínco y sin esconderse; corriendo tras su elusiva estela con una taza de té tintineando sobre su platillo, en la cual mojar los recuerdos para imbuirlos de esa pátina de trascendencia que la conduzca Por el camino de Swann.

Pero sus evocaciones no conmueven, se pierden por el camino al sistema límbico, y carentes de memoria olfativa regresan por donde vinieron hasta posarse en unas manos de autómatas que se dedican a enumerar los hechos históricos, las vivencias y las anécdotas personales, con el mismo arte con el que se redacta la lista de la compra para uno de esos agobiantes Carrefour tan prosaicos, y faltos de tacto, con la poesía que pretende sea su vida.

Rescato un pasaje que me gustó bastante; el único, me temo:

«A cada momento del tiempo, junto a lo que la gente considera natural hacer o decir, junto a lo que hay que pensar por prescripción de los libros, de los carteles del metro o hasta de los chistes, están todas las cosas sobre las que la sociedad guarda silencio y no sabe lo que hace, condenando al malestar solitario a quienes sienten cosas que no pueden nombrar.

Silencio que se rompe un día, bruscamente, o poco a poco, y unas palabras se superponen a las cosas por fin reconocidas, mientras se forman de nuevo, debajo, otros silencios».

FARO DE RECUERDOS

MARCOS HERAS OBREGÓN

Un niño delgado y tímido caminaba todos los días desde la villa a la punta de la Silla, para sentarse frente al faro a ver una y otra vez su luz titilante. El tiempo que pasaba entre un destello y otro le parecía una eternidad, a la vez que su monótono e implacable parpadeo, le suponía un misterio tan grande, que sólo encontraba en la magia una explicación razonable a lo que veía reflejado en sus pupilas.

Su estéril ritual se repetía día tras día, sin que nada le impidiera acudir a su cita con su luz. Y así quedaron grabados en sus retinas los colores cambiantes de las estaciones, los aleteos de las aves que coronaban su cielo o las formas caprichosas de sus nubes, hasta que un día gris, las gaviotas y la espuma del mar añoraron su presencia. Muchas lunas pasaron hasta que el musgo y los líquenes que se fueron adueñando del albo de sus piedras, se convirtieron de nuevo en su única compañía.

Más de cincuenta años después, una fría tarde de invierno, se vio a un anciano caminar lentamente hasta ese punto. Se sentó en el mismo lugar y se puso a mirar embelesado al resplandor, a la vez que pensaba para sí, que el tiempo que transcurría entre un destello y otro, corría demasiado rápido.

Como la estrella que hace más de dos mil años guió el devenir de nuestra historia más reciente, esa mundanal luz guiaba de nuevo su camino y le llevaba, sin darse cuenta, de nuevo a su tierra, a su gente, a su infancia. Sentía que las olas volvían a salpicar de ilusión su alma vacía de sueños. El olor a hierba y a sal alimentaban su corazón hambriento de recuerdos. El suave roce de la brisa del mar curtía su rostro de emociones contenidas.

Cuando sus ojos se saciaron de luz, el anciano desanduvo sus pasos hacia las calles del centro del pueblo, engalanadas de recuerdos, y una vez allí, se dejó llevar sin rumbo mientras sus sentidos dibujaban a mano alzada detalles imperceptibles para el resto de los transeúntes.

En sus calles empinadas se respiraba una mezcla de calma y nostalgia que calaban hasta lo más profundo de su resuello. El silencio estridente de la rutina de los soportales se rompía con el calor de voces lejanas que abrigaban al alma del frío de la soledad. Las agujas del reloj de la Torre marcaban el compás del emocionado y tembloroso pulso de un niño al caminar por las calles. Los viejos aromas de los fogones evocaban recuerdos de tiempos pasados, donde las prisas pasaban desapercibidas y el ingrediente principal era el cariño.

Los fríos y oscuros paredones del castillo guardaban en su interior la más inocente magia, la misma magia que hace años encontraba la explicación a sus misterios. Magia, que con el paso del tiempo, se fue convirtiendo en razón, ese pensamiento lógico y extraño, que a veces ahoga los sentimientos que mantienen viva nuestra alma.

Pero hoy esa magia llevó de nuevo al anciano a ser niño, a cubrirse de luz, a volver a emocionarse, a sentir de nuevo la emoción de las pequeñas cosas tras las que se esconde la verdadera felicidad, a desandar los pasos de su vida y volver a soñar ante la luz del faro.

MADRID, MADRID, MADRID

SONIA GONZÁLEZ MARTÍN

Madrid es la ciudad de las mil caras, los mil planes, y en muchas ocasiones, la promesa de una vida nueva. Mis primeras visitas fueron como turista, ansiosa de novedad y de libertad, lejos de la seria ciudad donde vivía. Con el tiempo se convirtió en hogar incómodo y como de paso, el futuro incierto del que llegaba pensando que era una etapa más en el camino.

Todavía recuerdo esos viajes de domingo por la tarde, de vuelta del fin de semana, con el Faro de Moncloa en la distancia a modo de estatua de la libertad castiza, anticipo de la ciudad de las oportunidades, puerta abierta a los más variopintos estilos y maneras.

Nada parece desentonar por sus calles; los colores y acentos se superponen, oleadas de peatones se mezclan con el ruido del tráfico, vendedores ambulantes, músicos callejeros, ofertas de menú diario, anuncios, selfies, estatuas humanas, semáforos de fondo, terrazas y risas.

Cuando has vivido en este vértigo es difícil escapar de él. Pero también de sus gentes, todos siguiendo las reglas del juego: la ciudad tiene sus pausas y sus ritmos y hay que saber navegarla.

Muchos no hemos nacido aquí, pero ya somos parte de este mosaico, y como todo puzzle bien hecho, tenemos ya nuestro sitio en él.

Lo que lleva la mujer... DE NUESTRA INTELECTUALIDAD

del AMOR

PENSANDO EN NOSOTROS

A lo mejor, D. C. L., no es que no la quiere, es que no la quiso nunca, es que no le dio la ilusión que usted le dio, pero no de usted. El hombre que ama a una mujer, la quiere de todas maneras y bajo todos los aspectos, nada por la ausencia ni los cambios de la vida. No es amor, es ilusión, es capricho, como cuando usted llorarlo. De amor hay poquísimo, derramado en la vida humana. Cuesta muchísimo hallar el verdadero y cuando lo hemos hallado hemos de ver si somos capaces nosotras mismas de tirarlo. Usted también podría ser que no le quisiera tanto como dice. Pruebe de volar un poco. Pruebe de lanzarse a vivir y a divertirse. Deje de ver el salón y la sala del comedor y el sofá donde se sentaban todas las noches. Los objetos que nos rodean son las torturadoras del recuerdo. Los viejos de familia, encubridores de los viejos de los enamorados. No le haga un esfuerzo. Se lo agradecerá. No vea ese desaprensivo. No le diga— y procure vivir— y usted lo que me dice. No le diga, carta, lo menos que pueda. No le diga que es no perder nunca su orgullo en este caso. Es digno más equitativo de la palabra volviera, y lo hiciera arrepentida, entonces, pero nunca haga uso de su nimo para acercarle; tarde o temprano le echaría en cara, y estaría usted en una franca inferioridad. No conteste a ninguna las cartas particularmente, lo que le ha sido hibido por el director de la revista. Pero créetamente puede decirse todo a través de ella. Gracias por sus frases amables. Desearía solucionar rápidamente su conflicto amoroso, el triste epílogo de esta historia sentimental que no lo fuera.

el secreto del «chic» consiste en conocerse a sí misma. «La mujer inteligente, reconociendo sus limitaciones, tanto físicas como temperamentales, debe procurar asociar su personalidad a la flor que le corresponda de acuerdo con su característica. Si usted pertenece a la familia de las rosas, no se vista como una margarita o una gardenia. ¡Conózcase a sí misma!»

THE DUMB AND STUPID LOVING FEELING OF THE INTELLIGENT WOMAN

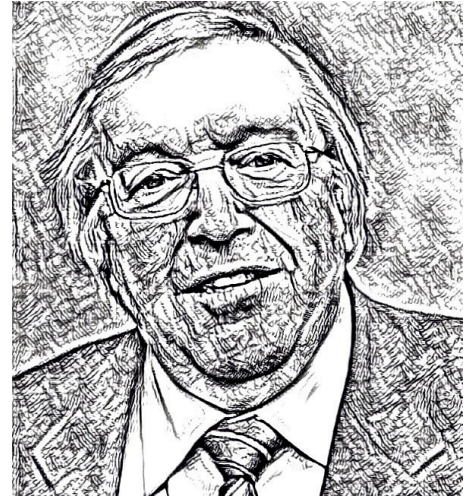
JANICE VELASCO MB @NEGATOCOLLAGE



THE SUMMER VERSION OF GAZING TOO LONG INTO THE ABYSS
JANICE VELASCO MB ©NEGATOCOLLAGE

HOW I BECAME A HISTORIAN OF SPAIN

Award-winning historian and best-selling writer Paul Preston, writes about his childhood and how he came to fall in love with the country.



I am often asked how I became an historian of Spain.

I was born a year after the end of the Second World War in Liverpool, a city which, as a port of entry for ships from the USA, was battered by the Blitz. My mother was diagnosed with tuberculosis when I was 18 months old and confined to a sanatorium in Wallasey on the Wirral. I was brought up by my grandparents.

During my childhood, the adults frequently reminisced about the Blitz and games in the street were often pretend battles between the British and the Germans. By the second half of the 1950s, I'd progressed to assembling Airfix kits of Junkers and Messerschmidts, Hurricanes and Spitfires. Out of all of that came a great interest in the World War and especially its origins.

In Liverpool, from my grandparents, I learned the sense of community that united a working-class neighbourhood, a sense which coloured my response to Spain.

For someone with my background, getting into Oxford in those days was verging on the miraculous. Still, I can't say I learned much as an undergraduate. The history curriculum was rather frustrating for someone keen on the Second World War. It was very traditional, centred on English domestic, especially constitutional, history from the Anglo-Saxons onwards. There was an idea prevalent that contemporary history was indistinguishable from journalism. Most of my contemporaries were public school educated and had no doubts about their futures, convinced that they would go into the Foreign Office or the City. Originally, the height of my ambition was to be schoolteacher. In 1964 when I did my exams, there was no such thing as 'a gap year' spent abroad but there was a scheme whereby you could be 'a student teacher'. I got a job at a school in Huyton, Liverpool, where I taught primary and secondary pupils.

I think that means I must be one of the few people with experience of teaching at every level right up to post-doctoral. Anyway, I loved it and, because Oxford terms were only eight weeks long, I was able to stay there for about four years in total. As I came near to doing my final exams, and thinking about the future, I knew that I wanted to go and do research and wanted to do something European. My college offered little by way of advice, only that maybe I should do something on British foreign policy and some incident or other. While toying with that, I saw an advertisement for the newly created Graduate School of Contemporary European Studies at the University of Reading. I was accepted and given the much-vaunted Weidenfeld Studentship. The course consisted of two taught courses and a 10 000-word dissertation for each. I chose the Spanish Civil War, taught by Hugh Thomas, and Left-Wing Literature of the Interwar period. It was wonderful being able to specialise for a year just reading on the 1920s and 1930s.

"I WAS ENTRANCED BY THE STREETS OF MADRID, WHERE THERE WERE STILL ARTISANS WORKING AT CRAFTS LIKE BOOKBINDING OR SHOEMAKING"

I have to say Hugh Thomas was a great teacher and would often bring characters such as International Brigadiers to our weekly seminars, or Royal Naval officers who'd been involved in breaking the siege of Bilbao. I stayed in touch with him and later worked as his research assistant on the major revision of his book on the Spanish Civil War that came out in 1977.

Back as a student, though, I had no background in anything Spanish, including the language. At the beginning, my interest in the Spanish Civil War was intellectual, seeing it as a rehearsal for the Second World War, and being attracted by what seemed a veritable cornucopia of everything that interested me - starring roles for Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Trotsky, Chamberlain, Churchill et al., plus all the ideologies: communism, fascism, socialism, anarchism and freemasonry.

I had a ball and soon had run out of books to read in English and so I taught myself Spanish (discovering en route that the most useful thing I'd learned in school was Latin). I did it the hard way, reading books with a dictionary, listening to records and hanging out with Latin Americans in the student bar. The big leap forward was making my first trip to Spain in the spring of 1969.



Spain was a very different country then, at the end of the 1960s. It was still the Spain of the Franco dictatorship and Madrid was full of reminders of the Civil War. There were buildings marked by bullet holes, Mutilados de Guerra begging on the streets and shops around the Puerta del Sol that sold only artificial limbs. There was also a sense of dread around the Dirección General de Seguridad, or the Grises (armed agents of the Policía Nacional) and even more so with the Parejas de la Guardia Civil outside the towns and cities. Nevertheless, I was entranced by the sounds and smells of the streets of Madrid where there were artisans working at crafts like bookbinding or shoemaking. I loved the food too. When I went and stayed in a pueblo near Malaga, I was delighted, above all, by the warmth and humour of the people. Their delight in seeing the halting progress of el inglés was a terrific encouragement to work at the language, so different from my brief experience of France. But it was in Madrid in the late 60s and early 70s, that the reality of the dictatorship hit me.

Police baton charges on the University campus were quite frequent. One day, returning home from an archive, I emerged from a Metro station into a street in which a gun battle was raging between police and members of a Maoist group (the FRAP).

In May 1973, after clashes during a May Day demonstration, students who used to work in the same archives as myself disappeared for several days. I later discovered that they'd been arrested, beaten up and questioned.

Inevitably, such experiences influenced my critical view of the dictatorship. It all intensified my feeling for the democratic Republic and sadness at its defeat at the hands of a Franco aided by Hitler and Mussolini.

My sympathy for the Spanish Republic also grew out of my work on social injustice in Spain and the way in which ordinary people endured incredible hardship during the war in order to support the Republic that had given them so much in the way of women's rights and social and educational reform.

Of course, you could not really be from working-class Liverpool and not be opposed to fascism.

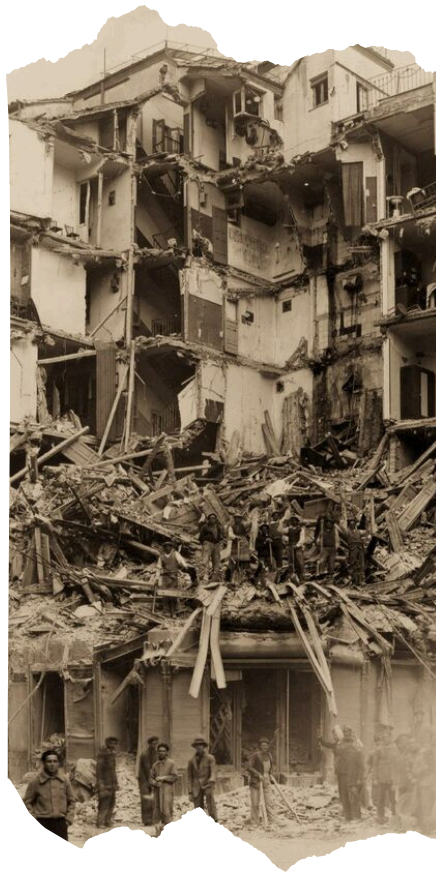
My views of Spain and its history have modified over the past 40 years. My anti-Francoism hasn't diminished much, and my deep conviction that the Republic was right is still in place. But over time I've become readier to see good and bad on both sides, perhaps because my real vocation - if that's the word - is as a biographer. Although I believe in the social and economic dynamics of history, I also very firmly believe in the role of individuals.

When I began my career as a history teacher, the Spanish Civil War was very immediate. It remains so in Spain and discussion and debates can still fill lecture halls. Franco still enjoys a good press. Friends of mine who work on, say, Nazi Germany, such as Ian Kershaw or Richard Evans, don't have to explain that they are going to be critical of the Nazis. That is obviously not the case with a critical stance on the Francoist military rebels during the Civil War or the Franco dictatorship thereafter.

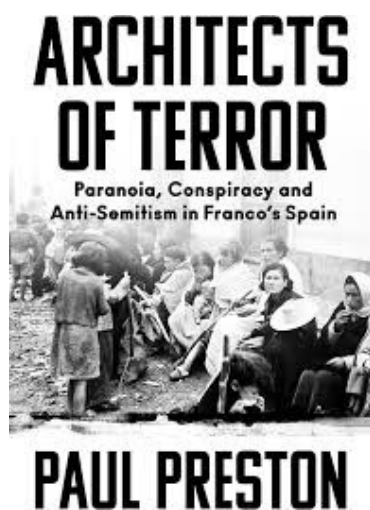
Such views are understandably more prominent in Spain given that the dictatorship carried out a forty-year long national brainwashing. Ricardo De La Cierva, Franco's last official biographer, wrote a virulent reply to my biography of the Caudillo with the title *No nos robarán la historia*. It starts off something like this:

"Once upon a time, five young men were born in Liverpool.

Four of them, who later became known as the Beatles, devoted their lives to song. The fifth, known as Paul Preston, devoted himself to writing rubbish about Spain."



*SIR PAUL PRESTON CBE is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and was previously a lecturer at the University of Reading and Professor of Modern History at Queen Mary University of London. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and holds the Marcel Proust Chair of the European Academy of Yuste. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by universities in Spain and the UK. In 2006, he was awarded the International Ramon Llull Prize by the Catalan Government and, in 2018, the Guernica Peace Prize. Among his many works are *Franco: A Biography*, *Comrades*, *Doves of War: Four Women of Spain*, *Juan Carlos*, *The Spanish Civil War*, *The Spanish Holocaust*, *The Last Stalinist*, *The Last Days of the Spanish Republic* and *A People Betrayed*. In Spain, he was appointed a *Comendador de la Orden del Mérito Civil* in 1986 and awarded, in 2007, the *Gran Cruz de la Orden de Isabel la Católica*. He lives in London.*



A REVIEW

James Hartley

Aside from the research and light he sheds on the times under study – in this case the roots, battles and aftermath of the Spanish Civil War – what makes a Paul Preston book unique is his very particular, passionate narrative voice.

He's there with you on every page, in his incredulity at what he considers the lunacy and evil of his chosen subjects – six potted biographies of key figures on the Nationalist right – and their acts. His prose is driven by a series of conversations with his subjects where he rebuts, contradicts and answers them as though a ghost of one of their many victims, or an avenging angel.

Franco believed in the enemy within Spain, and not just what he saw as the secret Jewish, Anarchist and Masonic factions. When the war started, for the right it soon became a crusade to eradicate the poison of not just enemy soldiers but the ideas they were fighting for. And this meant not stopping at eradicating soldiers.

It is this inhumanism, out of all the vileness witnessed in the book, which is the most striking; the vision that many (perhaps we could say on both sides) had of their fellow countrymen as a virus in the body of Spain which needed to be removed for the country to be clean. Hitler and the Nazi's sad shadow falls over us as we read.

Preston sees himself primarily as a biographer, telling history through the stories of the people who lived it. Here he chooses six grimly fascinating figures and part of the interest in the book is the 'morbo' the reader feels with each passing page. There are poets, priests and soldiers, all converted to the idea of 'them and us', purity and foulness, value and worthlessness. What Preston shows, and here come the parallels with our modern world of conspiracies and theories and post-truth, is that the ideology of the right was largely built upon falsehoods believed in as truth and taken in faith by a large percentage of the population.

Perhaps the modern world is a reaction to the twentieth century's sycophantic belief in 'ideas'?

But is it only the extremes of society who believe we are controlled by secret societies, or that there are hidden agendas which we are not privy to but servants of?

Antisemitism is alive in 2024, as are paranoia, conspiracies and fake news. What this book is about to me is the power of ideas to motivate humans to act in the most inhuman ways; the power of demonstrably false suppositions to be converted into truth and tragic action.

Architects of Terror was published by Debate in Spain and William Collins in the UK and USA.



“I’M CURRENTLY WRITING THE THIRD NOVEL IN MY CAESAR SERIES...”

Santiago Posteguillo, 57-year-old best-selling historical author, linguist, philologist, Tolkien-fan and father, is recommending poets. “I read all sorts of classical Spanish, British and American poetry, as well as African poets who write in English. Lorca, Bécquer, Antonio Machado, Byron, Keats, Percy Shelley, Coleridge and Osundare or Pkara for example.” And do you write poems, I ask him? “I used to,” he says, “but then I found out that I’m a much better novelist than poet.”

And what a novelist! The Valencian writer has wowed readers all over the world with his novels of Ancient Rome, particularly the Scipio Africanus and Trajan trilogies – and that after persevering through rejections from seventeen publishers before he saw his first on the shelves. “As a fiction writing recreating history, I respect historical events,” he says, when I ask him how much of what he writes he invents. “I use fiction in dialogues and to fill historical gaps to provide a complete picture for readers, but I don’t twist history.”

Santiago, whose sold upwards of two hundred thousand books, says he writes every day on his laptop, even when touring to promote his latest best-seller. Home, though, is, and has always been, Valencia.

“Valencia is my hometown and I like the connection with my roots,” he explains. “It also happens to be a city with more than two thousand years of history, which is neither too large, nor too small, with mild weather and a comfortable way of life.

“I travel around the world a lot for research and for promotion and having a place one can call home gives you a sense of stability necessary for writing.”

As well as his fiction career, Santiago is senior lecturer in English Language and Linguistics at the Universitat Jaume I in Castellón and the President of the European Association of Languages for Specific Purposes (AELFE). In addition to his Roman novels, he’s published academic titles such as *Netlinguistics: Language, Discourse and Ideology in Internet* and a dictionary of computing terms.

“I write on a laptop on a daily basis, even when I am on tour promoting a book,” he tells me. That laptop must take a battering. I ask about his youthful trips to Britain and the United States and he says his time at Denison University in Ohio was very positive. “I’ve also studied Applied Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh, Translation Studies at the Polytechnic of Central London and part of my PhD dissertation was in Applied Linguistics at Lancaster University. More recently, I taught historic fiction writing to graduate students in Cambridge.”

Any plans to go back, I ask, as we go our own ways. “Well, my daughter is going to study in London soon, and then in the United States, and I’m sure I’ll go and visit her there.”

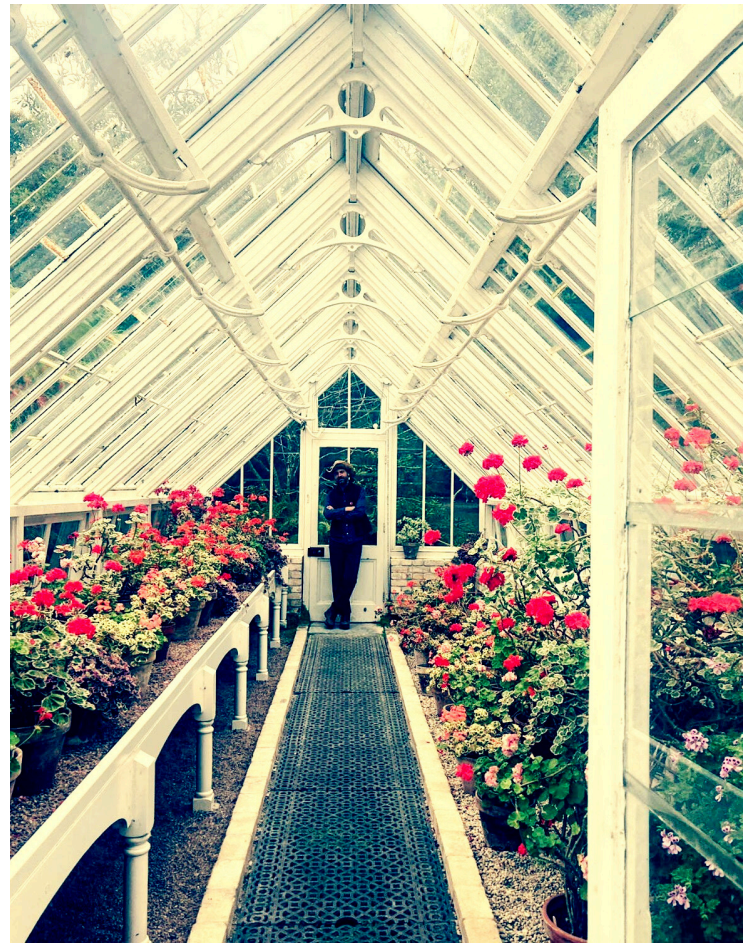
Tom Cox has variously been known for being a professional golfer, a music journalist, a podcaster, and a Guardian columnist as well as a best-selling author. Becoming a social media phenomenon through his 'My Sad Cat' series of books, Tom subsequently published a number of books through Unbound which incorporated nature writing, personal biography and humour. After the success of his short story collection Help The Witch, his first novel Villager cemented his reputation as a unique and talented author in the world of fiction. His second novel - 1983 - is due to be published this Summer.

Tom - Congratulations on 1983, which I really loved. How much of the novel's 1983 setting represents your 1983, or did you take pains to distance your personal experiences for this book?

Thank you, Cliff. Great to hear you enjoyed it. When I first started the book I was instantly conscious that it was probably going to end up being my most autobiographical work of fiction, especially because the character we hear most from lives in a Nottinghamshire village at times uncannily similar to the one where I spent the first decade of my life and is only a month younger than me. But the Penelope Lively epigraph is significant: the one about searching for childhood through obscuring dust and finding shreds of what we think it was. Once I got firmly situated on the rails of the book's narrative and began moving forward - astoundingly quickly -

I realised I was going into a childhood that wasn't quite mine but which I believed in no less wholeheartedly. I used to worry about the idea of writing fiction and people making incorrect judgements about which parts of it had been collected from my own life.

I don't any more. I have realised that it's none of my business if people get it wrong, and the less I give a fuck about it, the more fun it makes the process of mixing personal history with totally imaginary events and people. When it all slips into place to the extent that it seems utterly real to me as I write it, maybe even more real than real life, it's even better.



21st Century Yokel

Cliff Shephard
Talks To Tom
Cox

There's a very definite choice made in the book that I won't spoil here, but that might alienate (oh hang on...) some readers. To what extent did you think about whether or not to do it? My sense is it is a challenge to people who were expecting something which was a bit more traditional in the midst of the nostalgic and familiar 80s setting, is that right?

That choice didn't arrive via an "OOH BUT WHAT IF I SURPRISE PEOPLE AND DO THIS!" moment. I felt myself moving towards it as soon as I'd written the first 1000 words and, as with the rest of the book, I was just obeying whatever mysterious voice inside me it is that makes me feel like I'm pulling stories that already exist out of the air.

At the same time, if there is a parallel book out there maybe more along the lines of what 1983 seems like it might be when you're a couple of chapters in - that's just about early 80s nostalgia and a fondly remembered childhood, I don't think that would have interested me enough at this stage in my writing life to see it through. Maybe 15 years ago, but not now.

Did you feel any pressure after the great success of your debut novel *Villager* (published in 2022) to create a sequel, or further stories set in the wonderful not-Dartmoor setting?

That setting did continue to interest me: I started going deeper into its more surreal ravines and forests with a podcast a couple of years ago called *Moorland Community Radio*. I want to come back to that at some point and rethink the format, because I felt it was some of the weirdest and best stuff I'd ever written, but at the time it fell by the wayside because novels come first, and, because of what's becoming quite a burning and addictive need to always write a book that's extremely different to the previous book, that wasn't what my next novel wanted to be about. I like surprising myself, and learning, with each book, not resting lazily on anything (something I

definitely did used to do, at one point early in my career). That's not to say that I don't have enormous affection for that not-Dartmoor setting and would not delight in living inside it again at some point.

Writing-wise, you seem to be in a really good place creatively, with the crowdfunding campaign for *Everything Will Swallow You* coming more or less straight after 1983 was finished (an obvious nod to Taylor Swift's recent prolific album 'double-release') - do you feel more and more ideas and books waiting in the wings, jostling for freedom? Do you need to calm down?

I probably do need to calm down, if only because, as it transpires (who would have thought it?), writing two novels in less than a year and moving house in the middle of that is not too great for sleep patterns and your general ability to function outside of writing as a human. *EWSY* is almost finished now. Is it *Evermore* to 1983's *Folklore*? Not really.

I think it's more that one is a deceptively simple psychedelic pop album where the songs don't stray over the three minute mark and the other is a more sprawling, ambitious idea of psychedelia which might occasionally hopefully hurt people's heads but in a good way, and leavened with intermittent massages. Four ideas are scrabbling for my attention when it's done but I can't deny that I'm slightly glad it's the most potentially brief and light of them that seems to be winning right now.

Coming from powerhouse publishers like Orion and Simon & Schuster, you made a deliberate pivot to Unbound, whose crowdfunding model is a very different beast. What led you to move away from traditional publishers, and what are the pitfalls to using a crowdfunding model which, on the surface, seems like a perfect way to get published but retain more control over your work? How hands-on do you need to be?

I've written reams on this in the past and would find it hard to fully explain why I chose to continue publishing with Unbound - instead of, say, sending 1983 to a few bigger publishers and see what happens and potentially getting a bigger advance/more sales power behind it - without writing reams more, but, in brief: even though the crowdfunding process sometimes feels like that extra bit of work on top of the writing that might be too much and there can be a few hiccups along the way (e.g. people mistaking me for Unbound) I am enormously glad to live at a time when this kind of publishing exists and, having published books in the past via the powerhouses you mention (it was Transworld, not Orion, btw) and felt somehow, because of the covers and other ways I was steered to be less true to myself, there really is no substitute for seeing your book for the first time and being able to say "This is completely me, totally what I set out to do, and nobody has fucked with it to try to get it into Tesco" even if that book might only sell to a small cult crowd. For an author to be with a publisher and editors who fully understand what the author is trying to do is a special thing and rarer than many people might imagine.

Are you firmly rooted in fiction now, for your physical books, with non-fiction writing going on your Substack page? I could see a printed collection of those articles doing well...

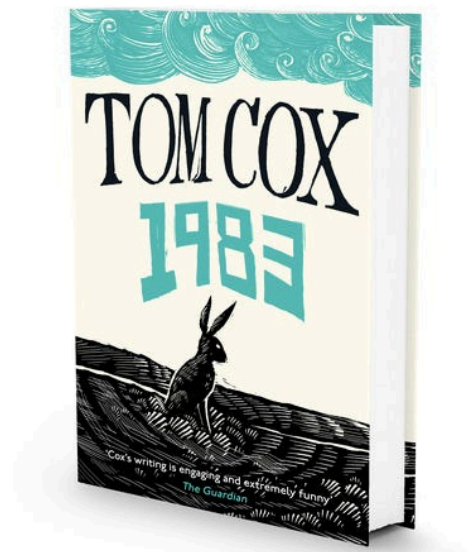
In my many years of yearning to write fiction I finally realised there were more imaginative and enjoyable ways to write non-fiction than I'd boxed myself into believing. Because of that - and because of my happy memories of writing something as genreless and stubborn as Ring The Hill, especially - I am sure I'll come back to it.

But for now there are too many of these novels jostling for attention. I also am still greatly appreciating the break from writing about myself and the imaginative floodgates that open via trying to get inside the mind of other people on the page.

Finally, will we ever see the long-delayed gonzo golf memoir *Rebel Without A Course*, or will it become one of those mythical 'unpublished' classics spoken of only in the footnote of a wikipedia page?

Sadly that ship sailed a long time ago. The idea of me writing that kind of book feels like something from another life, something that, as an ex-journalist of almost a decade and a person who came to terms with his lack of gonzone even longer ago than that, is too semi-journalistic and gonzo to hold any interest for me. But the idea of putting some of the material I'd reserved for it in an extremely different book about a fictional golf course? That's something I could definitely get to grips with, at some point in the not too distant future.

1983 BY TOM COX IS PUBLISHED IN THE UK ON AUGUST 8TH 2024



in thrall to the elements

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR JOHN BOYNE IS BACK WITH A TRILOGY OF NOVELLAS THAT ARE SHAKING THE WORLDWIDE CHARTS.

John Boyne's never been one to shy away from big subjects which interest him, no matter the consequences. The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, an enormous worldwide bestseller, and a huge hit in Spain, gave a child's-eye view of the Holocaust, A History of Loneliness dealt with sexual abuse scandals in the Catholic church and My Brother's Name is Jessica was about transgender teens, a subject guaranteed to stirrup the keyboard warriors. But John brushes this off.

"I never let any of the negative things that come with being a public figure affect the fact that I'm enormously fortunate to be a full-time writer and to share my imagination with the world," he says.

Could this be a mellowing of middle age?

"Well, I turned 50 during the pandemic," he laughs, "so didn't have a party, which was probably a good thing! It sounds like a cliché but I genuinely don't feel any different than I did at 25.

"I stay healthy, I exercise, and I love my job so I feel very fortunate." And his latest work is a series of novellas, Water, Earth, Fire and Air, which are being published by Doubleday.

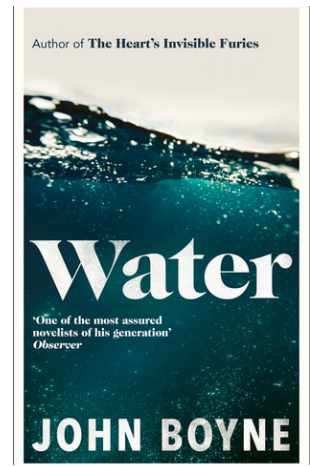
Water, which was published in November last year, told the story of a woman arriving on a lonely island off the west coast of Ireland. The first thing she does is change her name to Willow and lock herself away from the world and her problems but, as we all know, and as they must, her problems catch up with her.



When I was a teenager I spent a summer on Inis Óirr, the smallest of the Aran Islands, and that provided the setting for *Water*,” John explains. “There’s only about 450 people living there so my character, Willow, could find peace there as she comes to terms with the trauma she has recently lived through.” Or so she hopes. *Earth* came out on April 18th and tells a very different, still interconnected story. A young footballer called Evan Keogh finds himself in the dock charged with sexual assault, although the real questions come from Evan to Evan, who realises his life might be one great lie. We find that Evan’s childhood was spent on a remote Irish island and – I ask John – is this where the connection between *Earth* and *Water* comes in? “Yes,” he confirms. “Evan’s island home is where Willow goes in *Water*. A minor character from each book becomes the narrator of the next.” So, was that the grand plan, John? “Well, originally, I had no plans to write four books but I was very pleased with how *Water* had turned out and it occurred to me that water is one of the four elements – the others being earth, fire, and air – and that I could use these to tell stories connected to them. Each one uses its particular element in parallel to the main character’s work or emotions. It seemed like a challenging and interesting idea to me.”

In addition, next month sees the publication of John’s first picture book – *The Dog Who Danced on the Moon* – which will be illustrated by Ashling Lindsay and is based on a poem he wrote. I wonder if he’s a dog lover. “Yes! I’ve had two dogs over the years, a King Charles Spaniel called Zaccy and a shih tzu called Biggles. I love dogs!”

Although John’s not in Madrid for the Book Fair this year, he has fond memories of the city. “I’ve been to Madrid many times and always enjoy visiting. Spanish readers have been incredibly generous to me over the years. The book fair is always fun, and always very busy, but it was great to see so many readers visiting the various stalls that I was signing at and saying hello. There were so many writers there too and it was good to catch up with some friends.”



Fire will be published this November and Air in May 2025.

CAROLINA ALVARADO

CDMX'S QUEEN OF SHADOWS



Millions have read your words. People have queued all night for your work. Your covers are ubiquitous and famous in their own right but nobody knows your name. Welcome to the world of the literary translator and welcome, particularly, to the world of Carolina Alvarado Graef, translator to the stars, among them one gazillion-selling American author.

"I've been translating Sarah J. Maas's work for several years but I've never spoken to her or had any direct contact with her," Carolina says. "I work directly with the publishing house. If I got the chance, I'd love to meet her personally!"

Nobody except a translator and their close friends and family know what the job entails. And it's not simply feeding words into an AI machine or, Lord Help Us, Google Translate.

"I think for the most part AI tools are helpful and can be very effective for certain kinds of texts," Carolina says. "The process of literary translation is significantly different from other types of translation. While I've done both - translators also need to put food on the table, after all - I definitely enjoy translating literature a lot more than translating technical or academic stuff.

"For literature, I want to learn everything I can about the author and I strive to immerse myself in their world. I research if they've been previously translated by someone else and try to understand their stylistic choices, their language nuances and their cultural context.

I think literary translation requires a human sensibility because it implies a lot more than just transcribing into another language: it involves a whole artistic sensibility and understanding that machines have not yet achieved. The soul of any literary creation lies in its human writer.

“THE SOUL OF ANY LITERARY CREATION LIES IN ITS HUMAN WRITER.”

“For translators that are starting out, I’d suggest extensive reading in both their source and target languages, deep immersion in both cultures, and a genuine understanding of the worlds they are trying to make available to other audiences.

Translators are wordsmiths, they’re authors, and creators with a responsibility to make our work relatable, understandable and faithful to the original text.”

Carolina was born in Hermosillo, in the northern state of Sonora, Mexico, where her father was a doctor. At three, she and the family moved to Mexico City, where she’s lived and worked all her life. “I consider myself a chilanga,” she says.

“I attended a bilingual school from kindergarten through high school, so even though my parents didn’t speak much English, it was a language that was part of my life since early childhood.

I was interested in many things as a teenager and I did consider translation as an alternative before going to college but I ultimately chose Biology and Physics. However, as time went by, I found myself drawn more to subjects like Philosophy of Mathematics and History of Science, instead of taking the laboratories and statistics classes I should have!

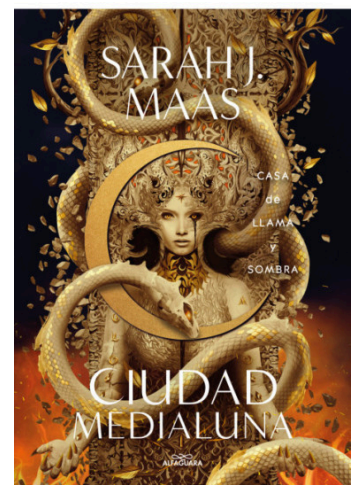
I was actually teaching English and doing translations to support myself through university. So when the opportunity arose to study Literary Translation at the prestigious El Colegio de México, I decided to go for it. And that’s what I’ve been doing for the last 25 years.”

I wonder what differences she sees between English and Spanish. Which language does she prefer? Carolina laughs before answering.

“Oh, I love this question! I cherish both languages. I appreciate their distinct characteristics and how some things are easier or harder depending on what you’re trying to achieve.

“That’s the fun in literary translation. How you can say the same thing - more or less - but using the tools your target language possesses?

“English is a lot more flexible and tolerant with neologisms. It’s a very playful language that allows for a lot of creativity. Spanish is more structured, and its rules are more rigid, but pushing its boundaries and molding it to construct your ideas makes it a very satisfactory challenge. When translating from English into Spanish, adhering to the rules and achieving a text that works and is aesthetically equivalent to its English counterpart is always a joy.”



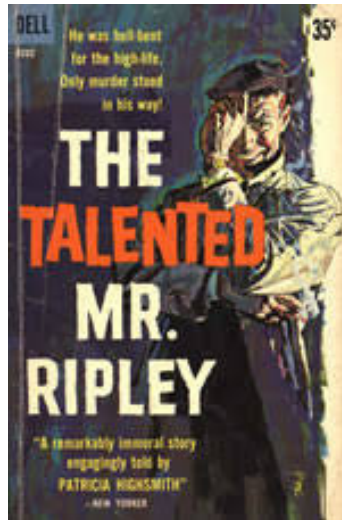
READ CAROLINA'S INSIDER GUIDE TO MEXICO CITY AT THE MADRID REVIEW ONLINE.

THE BOOK WAS BETTER...

A REGULAR COLUMN ROUNDING UP RECENT BOOK TO SCREEN ADAPTATIONS

By Cliff Shephard

Adam Scott is currently riding high from many recent successes such as a disturbing Bond villain in *Spectre*, a lost screenwriter in *All Of Us Strangers*, and of course his highly acclaimed one man version of *Uncle Vanya* at the Duke Of York's Theatre, London. His sinister and unnerving portrayal of Moriarty in BBC's *Sherlock* is however probably the finest audition an actor could give when considering someone to play Tom Ripley. Patricia Highsmith's classic thrillers such as *The Talented Mr Ripley*, *Ripley Underground* and *Ripley's Game* introduced the world to the seminal charlatan and murderer who was to be portrayed by screen legends Alain Delon, John Malkovich and...Matt Damon.



Although this version is very much the 'Andrew Scott Show', the stylistic directorial choices and literal black-and-white-noir feel that Ripley has provides the viewer with an visceral and immersive experience as we follow the plots and machinations of this compelling protagonist. Probably the most faithful adaptation thematically so far, the slow-burn of the story is initially frustrating, before becoming utterly compelling. Initially created as a one-and-done mini series, any follow-up adventures would be warmly embraced, judging by reviews.

RIPLEY is streaming on Netflix

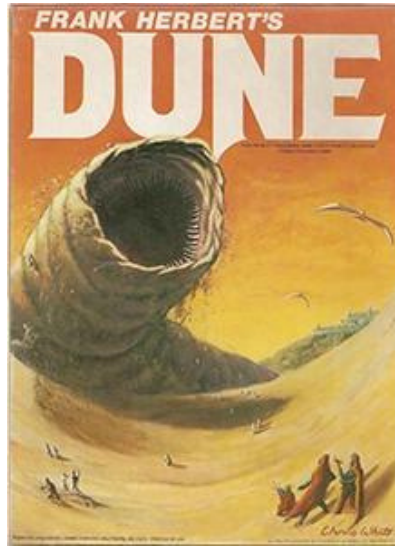
After the runaway success of the first new adaptation in 2021, *Dune: Part Two* recently arrived to much anticipation. Frank Herbert's Sci-fi behemoth *Dune* (and subsequent novels in the cycle) have previously had an uneasy relationship with the screen and been deemed 'unfilmable' on more than one occasion.

David Lynch's 1984 movie was famously butchered by the studio who were expecting something 'more Star Wars-y', and a low budget TV mini-series in 2000 was received no better.

Director Denis Villeneuve's recent faithful *Blade Runner* sequel proved that this could be the man to get it right.

After the standard action-adventure fayre of the first film, this superior sequel takes a much more interesting path, and though the screen is still awash with stunt casting (Donald Sutherland anyone?), there's a much more interesting and satisfying conclusion here that leaves fascinating questions and dubious motivations that demand answers.

DUNE: PART TWO is available on Amazon Prime and Apple TV

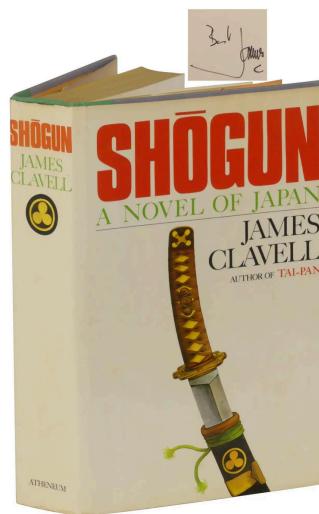


It's clear that adapting an epic doorstep like *Shōgun* was always going to be an attractive prospect. The previous version, set in feudal Japan and featuring handsome lead Richard Chamberlain, was way back in 1980 and despite feeling like it went on forever was actually only four episodes. The makers of this new show have decided to go down the *Game Of Thrones* route, right down to the world-building title sequence.

The use of plot swerves, ultra-gritty violence and shocking cliffhangers are in keeping with what modern audiences would come to expect, but beneath this lies a much more thoughtful and clever adaptation of James Clavell's 1975 novel.

By taking much of the focus away from Blackthorne's rugged hero, we are shown the intricate political and social structure of 17th Century Edo hanging by a thread. Fine performances by largely unknown actors add to the realism of the unfolding story, which has rapidly become must-see TV.

SHŌGUN is streaming on Disney+



INCOMING!

NEW BOOKS BY CLIFF SHEPHARD

The Book Of Elsewhere - Keanu Reeves & China Mieville

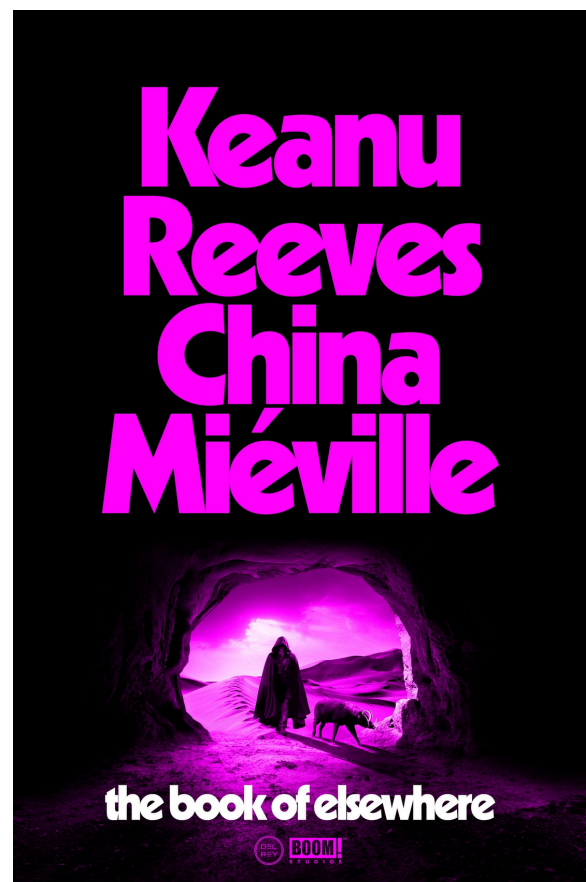
In 2016, Hollywood actor Keanu Reeves went live with a crowdfunding project for a comic called BRZRKR. It was subsequently published by BOOM studios and became the highest-selling debut for twenty five years. Following the life of an immortal warrior called Berserker (or 'B' for short), we see him in modern times being used as a 'tool' for a shadowy government Black Ops department. In this companion novel, Keanu Reeves and China Mieville flesh out the story of 'B' (now also called Unute) and continue the story as he finds himself targeted by ancient forces determined to end his immortality.

Full disclosure - I came at this book fully ready to shit all over it. Having similarly dismissed BRZRKR without reading it, I thought this further 'vanity project' needed no support or encouragement. By the end of 400 tightly-crafted pages though...I realised I was an idiot. With a mixture of world-building, thoughtful philosophical questions, well-paced action sequences and a more than little humour, The Book Of Elsewhere deserves attention. The central concept of what it would actually be like to 'live forever' is explored here with a deft touch, fully rounded out across the life of Unute (who, to be fair, does seem quite like a 'Keanu Reeves'-like character).

China Mieville (superstar author of speculative fiction such as Un Lun Dun and The City & The City) is an excellent choice of collaborator for such a novel, and his light touch and reassuring style perfectly compliments the strong narrative structure that the original comic series had set up.

Never boring, this excellent novel provides us with an irresistible narrative that has suspense, pathos, wit and even a cliffhanger or two.

HARDBACK £22 Published in the UK 23rd July 2024



THE GREAT WHEN - Alan Moore

1949 London: orphaned bookseller Dennis Knuckleyard unwittingly slips into the other London, a dark, magical place where the reality he knows is bent, blurred and unrecognisable. In possession of a dangerous tome which shouldn't exist, he encounters friends and enemies along the way, as well as taking a tour of occult London which means mixing with sorcerers, gangsters, and even deadly crocodiles.

Alan Moore's prose work has in the past received a mixed reception in the commercial world. I must admit that despite being a lifelong fan of his work in comics, I've struggled with his fiction. I own both *Voice From The Fire* and *Jerusalem*...both of which I failed to finish. Widely regarded as dense, wordy, at times inexplicable, they've sat on my shelves reminding me that I might actually need to be more intelligent to understand them. His recent short story collection, *Illuminations*, was hugely entertaining though, and meant that the announcement of a new five book cycle of 'fantasy' novels filled me with excited anticipation.

The Great When is the first in the 'Long London' series, and from the outset grabs the reader and takes them on a journey under the surface of everything that they thought possible. We're treated to a myriad of fantastically realised characters from the sinister to the humorous, all of which have a part to play in our hero Dennis' life. Much in the way that *Jonathan Strange And Mr Norrell* sucked you into a fully realised 19th century setting, we are instantly and evocatively immersed into a postwar London still reeling from the blitz.

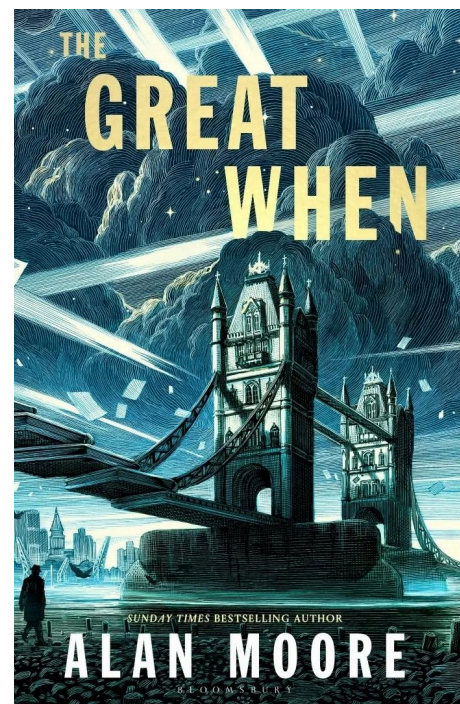
Much like his seminal take on Jack the Ripper - *From Hell* - the details and background of this novel have been scrupulously researched, and I wouldn't be surprised if we see a future weighty concordance that runs alongside to unpick all the minutiae that lies within the pages. Tracing the occult past of London's historical movers and shakers, Moore puts in so many 'easter eggs' that

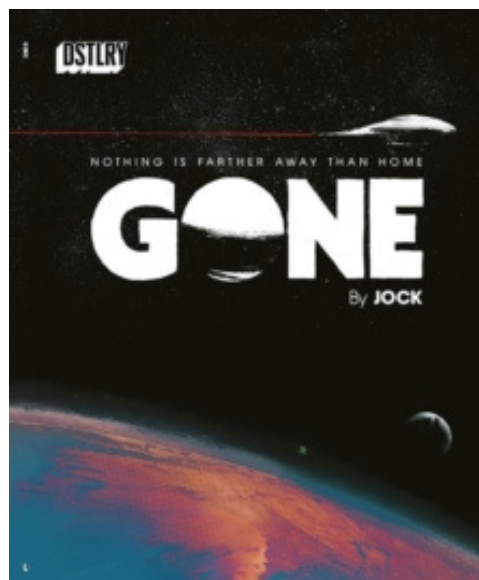
much joy can be found in doing your own research as you discover new figures. In fact, during reading, I found myself pausing to look up characters and stories and finding that they were all factual (or at least, recorded as factual).

Yet despite this meticulous and painstaking attention to the lore of London, the actual plot surges forward unencumbered. Rather than get bogged down, the narrative speeds on as Dennis navigates threats, temptations and betrayals in his path to ultimately...a quiet life. What lies within *The Great When* is the near perfect combination of a hugely engaging story with sympathetic and believable characters, and the fascinating hidden backstory of one of the most important capital cities in the world.

This is an engaging, entertaining and brilliant book which, although a Fantasy, might actually turn out to be the 'Definitive' London nov

HARDBACK £20, published in the UK on 1st Oct 2024





On a far-distant planet, 13 year-old Abi scavenges in the depths of Star-liners to help support her family. When she is accidentally trapped in the guts of a colossal spaceship with a gang of fellow marauders, she finds that it's not just the crew inside who are out to get her, but also perhaps some closer to her than she could ever imagine.

Jock's first creator-owned project is a spectacle - he both writes and draws with the kind of incredible visual storytelling which you'd expect from the celebrated Eisner Award-winning artist. As a concept, it's a wholly cinematic experience...yet it manages to focus in on some subtle and nuanced character beats which keep the story grounded in a way that a lesser author would probably sacrifice for the big splash pages.

The dark, cyberspace noir feel of *Gone* gives off vibes of *Dune* or *Star Wars: Andor* - not surprising given Jock's exemplary work as a film concept artist and storyboard creator.

Never dull or clichéd, this epic tale is wrapped up in a glorious oversized-format hardcover which allows the art to shine and the story to be presented as beautifully as possible.

HARDBACK £26.99, published in the UK 13th Aug 2024

COMICS, STRIPS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS

The Rise of DSTLRY

The rule of thumb goes that it's pretty ill-advised these days to create your own comic publisher. In modern times, what with the digital fragmentation of comics, the rise of the Original Graphic Novel format, the 'death' of single issue comics...it's an uncertain world out there. Many reputable publishers are going under, cutting costs, cutting staff, and struggling to get people to read their titles. Who'd want to sell comics?

However, managing to get together some of the most significant award-winning, critically acclaimed talents in the business for a 'creator owned' company is a good start. The issue of a creator's rights in the comics industry has been a sad and well-documented one, and the shift away from work-for-hire contracts and towards more intellectual property ownership is long overdue.

Enter DSTLRY, a publisher with some huge comic talents attached such as Scott Snyder (Batman, *Wytches*), Jock (Judge Dredd, Batman), Tula Lotay (Supreme: Blue Rose, *Bodies*), James Tynion IV (Something Is Killing The Children, *Nice House On The Lake*), Brian Azzarello (*Hellblazer*, *100 Bullets*), and others. It promises not only physical releases of their individual comics and collections, but also a vibrant online marketplace for its digital versions and collectables, as well as other exclusive extras. DSTLRY is built to be the publisher where the creators get the freedom to tell the stories they've always wanted to.

With projects from Lee Garbett (*The Outsiders*, *Skyward*) and Jamie McKelvie (*Captain Marvel*, *The Wicked & The Divine*) to follow in the upcoming months, DSTLRY has quickly positioned itself in the crowded market as a company which demands our attention, and long may it continue.

SUBMISSIONS FOR
ISSUE 2 OPEN
AUGUST 31ST 2024

