

THE GALWAY REVIEW

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The Galway Review

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Biographical Notes

A word from the Mayor of Galway

An initiative that gives Galway a greater literary footprint on the digital front is an initiative worth welcoming.

As Mayor of Galway, I wish to express my support and indeed my thanks to The Galway Review for raising Galway's profile as a productive literary hub. Since its modest beginnings in November 2012, with the assistance of the City Council's Art Office, The Galway Review online and its two printed editions with another in the offing, has grown steadily in popularity, not only on a national scale, but also on an international scale.

I want to congratulate the team and wish them continued success. Well done on the upcoming 125,000th online visitor!

Galway's literary future will be assured by the continuance of literary festivals such as Cúirt International Festival of Literature backed up by published online and printed editions emanating from Galway's growing writers' community.

This in turn will impact positively on Galway as a literary tourism attraction and economic benefits to the city and county should result.

As younger writers are being encouraged too to write in Irish and English a continued growing corpus of work is assured.

At a time when we are welcoming the visiting Mayor of Boston, Marty Walsh, to Galway, it gives me particular joy to reveal that the second most frequent visitors to The Galway Review website (www.thegalwayreview.com) are visitors from the United States of America, currently numbering 10846!

Ba mhaith liom gach rath a ghuí ar obair an Galway Review ins na blianta atá romhainn amach.

Donal Lyons
Méara na Gaillimhe
Halla na Cathrach

Ronnie O’Gorman

An artist opened Galway’s ‘Secrets Box’

Most families, most adults, and most communities have secrets; past indiscretions they would rather forget about, and usually not very serious. But some of them can be very painful, and are kept hidden, in a sort of a Secrets Box, long after they need to be.

It took an artist like Patricia Burke Brogan, to prise open the heavy doors of the Magdalene Laundry, which had remained a sad, and neglected, community secret for generations. The marginalisation of unmarried mothers was so embedded in our psyche that we were afraid to look inside ourselves.

There were no whistleblowers in the Ireland of the early 1990s; yet Patricia deeply felt that the stories of the ‘Maggies’ had to be told. Not in a sensational headline-grabbing way, but in such a way that the lives of the women involved would be remembered as part of our shared humanity.*

Patricia, a former Mercy novice, who had worked as a supervisor in the laundry, originally wrote the story as a one-act play. Single-mothers, Cathy, Brigit, Mandy and Nellie-Nora, whose children are either dead, or have been taken away for adoption, or were enclosed in orphanages, were condemned to work in humiliating conditions in a laundry. The women are ‘disgraced and

forgotten' by the community outside the gates; while their lovers, the fathers of their children, are not held responsible. Having read the play, Fintan O'Toole, the literary editor and drama critic with *The Irish Times*, encouraged Patricia to enlarge the story into a full-length play, and send it to Irish theatre companies for production.

After several rejections, Punchbag Theatre Company, agreed to do it. *Eclipsed* opened in a converted garage near the Spanish Arch, on St Valentine's Day, February 14 1992 (the irony of the date was not lost on Patricia). It was an immediate success. ** There were some objections, which probably helped its promotion. One evening people stood outside the theatre objecting that nuns were depicted in a bad light. Yet the crowds kept coming. People openly wept in the audience. It went on tour of Irish theatres receiving excellent reviews. But when Punchbag took the play to the Edinburgh Theatre festival, and it won the major Fringe award, it attracted the mother and father of all the publicity that you can imagine.

Hidden stories

Despite all this success Patricia was uncertain how to cope. There were still demonstrations outside theatres; and sinister phone calls. She was most upset when opening her post one morning she found a photograph of herself, cut out from a newspaper, disfigured with horns and devil symbols in black ink. She denied that she was anti-Catholic Church. "Everyone blamed the sisters, but the State did nothing to intervene."

But there were also the quiet 'thank yous' from friends and strangers; even desperate calls from distant voices wondering if Patricia knew what happened to such-and-such baby? a mother? or family sibling?

Opening an exhibition of Patricia's paintings and etchings at a later date, Minister for Arts, Culture and Gaeltacht, Michael D Higgins, commented on the 'risks' that she took in bringing her 'hidden story of grief, and enforced silence' to the world. "It represented," he said, "a drawing back of the veil in many senses." Patricia was faithful to the characters the play represented. "It was as if the hidden stories could almost not have had another author".

Film rights

Patricia's uncertainty at how to cope with the reaction to her play, and her naivety in dealing with legal contracts, lawyers, and the important business of copyright, became evident when Samson Films contacted her to say that the BBC appointed it to negotiate film rights, and script. Of course Patricia was interested, and anxious to be involved in the project. It was agreed that she adapt the play for film. But it all ended in tears. Misunderstandings, deadlines, and disagreements over her script, incredibly cost Patricia any say in the final film. She lost all entitlements to her story.***

Frustrated at this turn of events Patricia decided not to lose sight of her initial objective. She turned her thoughts 'to the darkness of their great wounding' which had affected thousands of Magdalene women. ' Though

those women gave birth, created new lives, the art in which woman is most like God, they were used and rejected by lovers, by their families, and by the Irish State. The Church colluded. Their names and the names of their babies were obliterated from the history of humankind.'

'What has happened to me, and to my play *Eclipsed*, brings me closer to them in their despised and rejected lives. With them I too am eclipsed.'****

*NOTES: * It should be stressed that Patricia does not blame the nuns for the humiliation of the laundry inmates. The nuns shared the same culture of condemnation that existed in the Ireland of the time. I have often wondered about the parents of the girls who put their daughters away. Were they too victims of the warped morality of the time that made them punish their children? Everyone suffered.*

***The Advertiser drama critic at the time was An tSuir Ailbé, an Irish scholar, school teacher, and a member of the Mercy community. She saw the play on its opening night, and described it as 'A small masterpiece'. There was great excitement in the Advertiser office when the BBC flew her to Edinburgh for an interview, and some sticky questions on the Magdalene laundries. Ailbé, however, was well able for them!*

*Although Patricia Burke Brogan has written two further plays, *Requiem of Love*, and *Stained Glass at Samhain*, *Eclipsed* continues to attract attention. It was the first to*

tell the story of the Magdalene laundries, and has been performed on three continents, winning major awards and still attracting publicity.

**** In 2002 *The Magdalene Sisters*, written and directed by Peter Mullen, was a successful film starring Anne Marie Duff, Nora Jane Noone, Dorothy Duffy, Geraldine McEwan, and Eileen Walsh.*

***** *Memoir with Grykes and Turloughs*, by Patricia Burke Brogan published by Wordsonthestreet.*

Was this a glimpse of Dante's Purgatorio?

'No one wants these women. We protect them from their passions. We give them food, shelter and clothing. We look after their spiritual needs.' And that was all that was believed to be required for the inmates of the Magdalene Laundry, in Forster Street, Galway. It is true that no one wanted 'these women', because of the twisted sense of morality of the time. Girls who gave birth to a child outside marriage were ostracised by society. If the pregnancy and birth could not be kept hidden (some families kept their pregnant daughter locked away in an upstairs bedroom, or sent to a relative in England); people feared local gossip, and judgment to such an extent that parents turned against their own daughters. They brought their daughters to the nuns, and walked away. The problem was out of sight, and, they probably believed, gone away.

Patricia Burke Brogan, a young novice with the Mercy sisters, although concerned at the discipline demanded in the religious life, she was happy enough, and teaching in the school. But her vocation was

immediately challenged when she was sent across the city to Forster Street to supervise the Magdalene laundry which, she was told, was 'the richest branch-house of our Order'.

Stepping inside the building she noted that each door was double locked and bolted behind her. Having walked down a long dark corridor with the Mother-in-charge, another heavy double-locked door was opened, and Patricia was met by a deafening noise: 'We're in a room with huge machines from which steam hisses. Prison bars pattern the roof-windows. The grey walls are sweating. There is a stench of soiled clothing. Bleach fumes sting my throat. I gasp for air.' * Gradually Patricia made out that the room was full of women. 'Elderly women, middle-aged women, and young girls all seem to merge with the grey womb-like washing machines.' After the lecture from the Mother about why the nuns must look after the women, Patricia is warned not to speak to them. Her job was to supervise them, nothing more. Patricia asks why the women are there? She is told abruptly that the women are all penitents. 'They're weak. They've no control Sister. They have broken the sixth and ninth commandments.'

It is the first time she has heard of 'The Maggies' as the women were called in Galway town. Patricia wondered if she had slipped down into Dante's Purgatorio.

Seven generations

Once the Mother-in-charge went away, Patricia went over to an arthritic woman bent over a sink hand-

scrubbing a dirty shirt collar. She took the scrub from the woman and began to scrub herself, despite the woman protesting that it was her work. But Patricia felt that Christ would have done the same.

Moments later the Mother-in – charge had burst in. She loudly reprimanded the woman for allowing Patricia to help. She warned Patricia that she was there to supervise, not to do the work.

‘But they are our Sisters in Christ,’ Patricia protested.

‘Our Sisters’!

‘Yes Mother. Part of His Mystical Body.’

‘You are preparing to take vows, Sister. A vow of obedience. Keep aloof from those fallen women... some of them were mothers of women in the laundry now. You see this weakness for sins of the flesh stays in the blood for seven generations. From now on you’ll just check their work, Sister!’

Grieving for their babies

Some days later two young women approach Patricia and tell her that they are going on strike. ‘No more of this filthy, dirty work. You can run over now and tell the big-toothy dragon’ (mother-in-charge).

At a signal from the two ringleaders, all of the women, except for the white-capped consecrated penitents (who were those who had taken an oath never to escape), sit on the flagstone floor. Some hold baby clothes in their arms, and rock their bodies as they sing lullabies.

Seoithín Seo hó, mo stoirín, mo leanbh. Mo sheód gan cealg, mo chuid den tsaol mór.

Suddenly the consecrated penitents join the others on the flagstones. They too rock to and fro. To and fro. The place is full of mothers grieving for their babies.

It is a moment of decision for Patricia. What was she to do? Saying a silent prayer for guidance, she walked towards the protesting women, and sat down among them.

Everyone looked at her in surprise. Time passed. Then slowly, slowly, one after the other, the women got up, and went back to their work in silence.'

*NOTES: * I am taking all the quotes from Patricia's latest book, *Memoir with Grykes and Turloughs*, published by Wordsonthestreet*

Patricia's vocation did not take root

Patricia Burke Brogan joined the noviciate of the Mercy Sisters at the convent of St Vincent, Newtownsmith, Galway at the end of the 1950s. It was before the reforms of Vatican II had relaxed rule of the heavy medieval habit, the shorn hair, and a constant reminder 'to keep custody of the eyes'. What was called 'discipline', was nothing less than outrageous bullying, was meted out on the novices by some of the older nuns, in a cutting and wounding way. The nuns were hard on each other.

Deeply upset by the treatment of the Magdalen women at Forster Street, Patricia left the convent. But not before

appearing before Bishop Michael Browne, and three senior members of the order, in one final ordeal. She had asked to leave six months before, but was told she had to wait for permission from the Vatican, and warned that if she told anyone of her intentions it would be a mortal sin!

This delay, however, was not necessary. Patricia could have walked away at any time. However, she waited the prescribed time, and gladly signed her departure form (with the Bishop's own gold pen), which included a fee of £50 to be paid to the bishop 'for his presence' on that occasion.

Its probable the nuns were glad to be rid of her. She was a bit of a rebel. For three years, 'keeping custody of the eyes', she cleaned and polished corridors, washed and chopped vegetables, and carved the meat for the following day. One day, while re-heating dinners in the refectory, she decided to put the best slices of meat under the novices' plate-covers. "The superiors at the top tables have vows of poverty so they should practice poverty. Novices are the future members of this congregation, and need extra nourishment." she remarked to another novice.

Without a word being said, Patricia was ordered to different duties the next day.

Dancing in Gort

Leaving the convent Patricia was warned that she would never get a job in the diocese. Yet as a fully qualified teacher, she had little difficulty. She became the

mhúinteoir of the little national school at Ballinderreen, on the edge of the Burren, and enjoyed happy years teaching art and stories to the imaginative children there. National schools were extremely relaxed places at the time. Visitors would pop in and out. A frequent visitor was lady Christabel Ampthill, who came to live in Kinvara castle to escape from the publicity of the notorious Russell Baby Case of 1922. It was proved that despite her being virgo intacta, she had given birth to a son. Her husband sued her for a divorce.* She was an expert horsewoman, and would ride up to the school and invite all the children to a party at the castle.

Another visitor, but properly so, was the parish priest. He would ask Patricia to buy him a pair of new shoes in Galway. He couldn't understand how rapidly they were being worn down. He did not know that when he put his shoes outside the bedroom on a Saturday night to be polished, his housekeeper quietly took them for her boyfriend so they could go wild dancing in Gort.

Christmas tree

Apart from the plight of the Magdalen women, there was one particular incident in the early days of Patricia's noviciate that prompted her to reconsider her vocation. It was a very simple one; but an intimate family tradition at Christmas time was not appreciated in her community, and immediately left Patricia feeling isolated rather than part of her new 'family'.

An elderly friend Mikey Walsh, always brought them

from his land, a Christmas tree every Christmas Eve. But when Patricia joined the convent he cut a larger than usual tree, brought it into Galway on the bus, and carried it to the door of the convent.

Patricia was polishing the long corridor floor when she was summoned to the Mother of Novices' office. She was told that a Mikey Walsh had brought a tree for her but it was not acceptable 'to entertain strange men in the convent'. The tree was left outside in the garden. She could look at it from the window just this once.

There was the tree lying on its side in the earth.

'Could we not have offered Mikey a cup of tea? Asked Patricia, 'We always gave him tea and cake at home.'

The Mother shook her head. 'You may return to your work in the long corridor now, Sister'.

Some days later a letter from her father was handed to her already opened and read. It was all about Mikey who returned home puzzled by his reception. He had managed to get the tree into a hackney cab as far as the nearest Longford-Galway bus stop. He was allowed stand the tree at the end of the bus for the 25 miles to Galway. The poor man carried the tree all the way to the Salmon Weir Bridge, and rang the convent door bell.

After some time a sister opened the door. 'I have a present here for Sister Patricia,' said Mikey, 'all the way from Cooloo,'

Without a word, the tree was taken inside. The door was shut.

As Patricia went back to her polishing the long corridor she wondered if the tree would take root in the earth

outside. She instinctively felt that she would not take root in the convent. **

*NOTES: * I have written several times about this intriguing case. DNA testing was later to prove that the baby was the legitimate son of Lady Amphill's husband. The mystery was how the child was conceived. In 1976 the House of Lords agreed that the boy, Geoffrey, could succeed to his father's title as Fourth Baron Amphill. ** I am taking the story of the last three weeks from Patricia's Memoir with Grykes and Turloughs, published by Wordsonthestreet.*

Coping with the Magdalen fallout

I learn something of the impact that the Magdalen Laundries scandal had on the Mercy nuns themselves reading the personal testimony of Sister Phyllis Kilcoyne. Sister Kilcoyne is part of the Leadership Team of the Western Province of the Mercy Order.*

I suppose every sister reacted in her own way, but Phyllis's reaction went back to the time when she told her mother that she was joining the nuns, and her mother's tearful plea that she reconsider her decision. Her mother's experience of nuns at primary school was quite negative. She remembered them as being harsh and uncaring. When Phyllis told her of her vocation, she cried for weeks. Her father accepted her decision, and tried to act as peacemaker, but her mother was never

really reconciled to her daughter's decision. Phyllis joined the convent directly from school. Her mother visited her regularly and, clearly disapproving of her daughter's choice, told her that she would always be welcomed home. It was a difficult time for both women. 'At one level, I thought I was doing a good thing. But at another level my choice was hurting her.' Her mother's upset caused Phyllis to seriously reconsider her vocation. She questioned some of the practices within the convent, some of which she thought were nonsensical. She particularly objected to the fact that her mother's letters were read before she got them. For the next decade and more, Phyllis still questioned whether it was the life that she really wanted. But, in her mid-thirties, after a prolonged retreat with the Jesuits, she knew that the religious life was her true calling. She would give it everything she had. She never looked back. 'Over the years the pain around the relationship with my mother had wounded me, and caused me to falter in my faith many times. But now I am at peace with whatever comes my way.'

Reconciliation

When Justice Sean Ryan's report of child abuse was published in May 2009, Phyllis felt embarrassed and ashamed.

She remembered her mother's disappointment that she was joining the nuns, and her negative experience of them as a child. Over the years a sadness had grown between them.

Although they were very caring to each other, there was 'an unspoken barrier'. But one evening they watched the orphanage story on television together, when her mother was in her nineties, and in a nursing home. Phyllis instantly understood her mother's long time concern. 'It helped me,' writes Phyllis, 'to hear her story in a new way.

It was an insight for me, and a release for her, and it brought tears to us both.

In a mysterious way I felt God was offering me this truth to help bring about a reconciliation in my heart with my mother. This indeed happened. I was with her when she died.'

A lower energy

Phyllis had never worked in an orphanage but she talked with sisters who did. They all acknowledged the pain that was caused by what happened, and its revelations. 'I am happy that we, as an order, did apologise to the victims of abuse; but it still cast a big cloud over all our lives. I found myself dealing with sisters who were very vulnerable around the story. All of that lowered our energy considerably. But I do believe that good will always triumph over evil, and that the truth will always set us free.'

Phyllis was born in a county Sligo village, the eldest of three and the only girl. Her family were not particularly religious. She attended a two-teacher school, and was the only girl in the class. She was on her own most of the day. But in secondary school, the Mercy nuns were

caring and interested in her and their students, enough to attract Phyllis to join them immediately after school. She became headmistress of the school, but after the Magdalen revelations, she moved from the school into family therapy, and has played a vital role in finding new directions for the Sisters of Mercy. That quest is still on-going.

‘Our opportunities as Mercy sisters are endless now. If there is an idea that we have that we would like to set up some little project, or do something for any group in society, there are few regulations around that. But sadly our energy and our numbers are diminishing. There is the contradiction. When we were younger we had the energy, but felt restricted in what we could do. Now the reverse is the case.’

*NOTES: * Credo – Personal Testimonies of Faith, compiled and edited by John Quinn, published by Veritas, which will be launched at Charlie Byrne’s Bookshop at 6.30pm this evening, by acclaimed harpist Mary O’Hara.*

Daniel Sammon

Liam Diamond: I would never be bowed down by failure

(This article was written, based on an interview with Liam in February 2013, at the depths of the economic crisis, after five long years of recession, the worst in Irish history since the Great Famine. Now, as it goes to print in 2014, less than two years later who could have believed the economy would have turned around to such an extent!)

In the midst of all the doom and gloom and the negativity regarding the present economic situation in Ireland, it is uplifting to come across somebody who discards the prophets of disaster and despair and emerges through the whole scenario with confidence, positivity, vitality and an energy that is not readily found in abundance today, 2013. Meet one such man by the name of Liam Diamond!

Like many a polished gemstone of a similar name this man is a multi-sided Diamond. While other people of his age, have been enjoying a retirement pension for several years, he continues to run smoothly and successfully so many different businesses it's amazing where he finds the time to do it all, having just turned sixty two.

One of his secrets is that he starts most mornings at around five, to get his wholesale fish distribution network up and running for nationwide deliveries.

From the variety and quantity of fish procured from the Atlantic Ocean, part of which is not too far from his front door, to The Faroe Islands, Iceland, Scotland, The Netherlands and even from as far away as South Korea, it's not surprising the motto on his vehicles is: 'If it swims, we have it.'

When all his delivery vehicles have left the depot, he turns his attention to another, possibly his favourite business, that is his equestrian centre.

His passion for horses and his love of ponies and all things equestrian emanates from his genes. His father Willie Diamond bred some famous Connemara ponies. With his keen analysis, his observation and sharp evaluation he can study a horse in the blink of an eye and make an instant decision as to its potential.

Britain, Sweden, Italy, Belgium, Spain and now China are amongst the countries he exports performance-ponies to. As well as the equestrian base in Renvyle he has now established sister-businesses in Walsden, North Manchester, UK and in Kungsbacka, Sweden.

Though his parents and grandparents were involved in business all their lives, Liam had to start from scratch himself and build up what he has got today.

While his father owned what would be regarded as a substantial farm, every one of the approximately 500 acres of land owned by Liam today have been purchased by him.

His land portfolio is only one of a number of property portfolios. The number of houses in his possession is steadily increasing, most of which would be rented out on a long-term basis. Like most people who dabbled in bonds, stocks and shares he would undoubtedly have taken a major hit with the collapse of share prices, especially bank shares but he doesn't dwell on the negatives.

He takes them in his stride and moves on, knowing full well that most of them will come good again in time. 'I would never be bowed down by failure' he confidently declares. As a young man, just out of college he generated some ready cash and employment for himself by qualifying as a diver. Whilst doing a course in diver-training in Galway he was simultaneously studying marital arts there as well.

This valuable diving skill was very much appreciated a number of years later in 1978 when he recovered two bodies after a tragic drowning accident, a short distance off the coast of Mullaghgloss in Renvyle.

One of his trophies taking pride of place is a letter of gratitude from the father of one of those drowning

victims. He later assisted the Garda Sub Aqua team and Tommy Mulveen who eventually found the body of Mary Duffy in the dark recesses of the mucky base of Lough Inagh in Connemara.

She had been brutally murdered by John Shaw and Geoffrey Evans, who later served what became the longest sentences in the Irish legal system, of more than forty years and still going for one of them, the other criminal having died about a year ago.

It was while he was still about 22, with a £ 5,000 loan from AIB, guaranteed by his father, he built a large music-lounge on to the family licensed premises at his home base in Renvyle that catered for up to about 500 people. Some of the biggest names in show business in the 70s like Margo, The Dublin City Ramblers, Paddy Reilly, The Barleycorn, The Wolfe Tones, Anna McGoldrick, Brendan Grace and lots more played in Diamonds of Renvyle back then.

He later converted part of the pub to a restaurant specialising mainly but not exclusively in seafood. The premises were used for all kinds of functions including annual GAA and sea-week galas, birthday and anniversary parties, holy communions and funerals. Sadly, like many rural pubs, it had to make alterations and after a short closure for renovations and major changes for the future, it is due to re-open again in early 2015.

In times past, patriots died for Ireland but modern-day patriots live for Ireland, working and if possible providing jobs for people. Presently Liam would have approximately a dozen people employed. Separately from his present employees, much badly needed pre-Christmas employment was created by Liam each September for a few months over seven or eight years, when in conjunction with Coillte he would have felled approximately 40,000 to 50,000 Christmas trees, to decorate homes in Ireland and abroad.

Renvyle is an ideal location for film-making and Liam was involved with numerous films made there. He supplied all the special cattle (with horns!) required by *The Field* starring Richard Harris in 1989.

He leased out a warehouse for two years to another film company who produced *Single-Handed*. His licensed premises were an integral part of *Seventh Stream* and one of his other premises was converted into another pub for the film. He was also part-owner of *The Angler's Rest* in Tullycross in the late 1970s and early 1980s and he became the sole owner of *Diamond's* licensed premises in Dugort, Achill for a number of years.

Liam married the love-of-his-life, a local girl named Breedge Sammon who would have been the back-bone of the bar-restaurant business, after she acquired her training and apprenticeship in nearby Renvyle House Hotel. Breedge is also a Director of all the companies

combined. Together they have two sons and two daughters. The oldest daughter Priscilla who is the companies' financial director is married to Comdt. Barry Carey and the younger daughter Sorcha is married to Mark Burton and they live in Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow.

Aaron who is unmarried, and in his twenties is a Sales Manager. The youngest son Alan is also unmarried and he lives in NY. Among his other business pursuits are all types of building supplies to the construction industry and for the domestic market all types of fuel. He is a major supplier of farmers' requisites, all of which are delivered free locally.

He's an all-round sports enthusiast, but particularly the GAA, being one of the local club's main sponsors, also soccer, boxing and racing. 'I look forward to the future with increasing optimism both personally and nationally'. He is very much involved with the Connemara Pony Show held in Clifden each year on the third Thursday in August, as well as all the other pony shows held throughout Connemara during the summer months, in the lead-up to the big one in Clifden. A long time after this article was written (approximately one and a half years) together with Breedge, Liam has now acquired the Renvyle Inn, a long-established licensed premises in the village of Tully to add to his property portfolio, just at the same time as bonds, stocks and share prices have made enormous gains on the Stock Market.

Margaret Martin

Patrick Kavanagh stands as a monument to nobility

(This paper was delivered to Society of Teachers of Speech and Drama 2014 Cork Conference)

Inniskeen to 2014

I have called this paper Inniskeen to 2014 because that is what it is. In it I will talk about how Patrick Kavanagh stands as a monument to a nobility and gentleness of soul – that surprises even as it inspires how his works transcended a life of extreme poverty by his love of the stony grey soil of Monaghan.

I will bring you through his life with dramatic adaptations of characters, relevant poetry and the legacy he has left us with to the present day.

In the peasant poet genre ..Wales has Dylan Thomas, Scotland has Robbie Burns, earlier times England had John Clare but we in Ireland have Patrick Kavanagh. He was born in Inniskeen, 1904 near Dundalk and about 50 miles from Dublin

Introduction

My connection with Patrick Kavanagh started with my father. My father was born in 1908 in Drumkeath, Inniskeen. He was four years younger than Patrick Kavanagh.

He was one of nine children and when he finished school in Inniskeen he went to serve his time as a bar

man in Belfast. He later became Manager of a pub and then he met my mother, and in 1950 he bought a pub from P.J.Higgins in Main Street, Carrickmacross. This pub is mentioned in 'The Green Fool' the Hiring Fair Chapter.

I worked in that pub as a child and I remember, my father with pride would say we were an 'Inniskeen Pub' . I can remember the talk among the farmers especially on the Fair Days of the 'mad poet' in Inniskeen. We were central on Main Street and even though Ollie O'Rourke, also from Inniskeen, had a pub at the bottom of the town we liked to think people came to us first. Let me start with Miss Cassidy, his teacher... I will share the observation of his teacher Miss Cassidy, indeed, she observed as any of us teachers observe, our students be they blessed, burdened or both.

All of this section is based on fact from his autobiographical book 'The Green Fool' and Una Agnew's excellent 'The Mystical Imagination of Patrick Kavanagh A Buttonhole in Heaven.?'

I have also used an interview I did with Owen Kirk, (father of Bernard Kirk, Director of Galway Education Centre). Owen's mother, Katie Mc Geogh, (the grandmother of Bernard), was a class mate of Patrick Kavanagh. I would love to have had Patrick's copy book but we are very privileged to have Katie's copy as the Kirk family have kindly donated the copy book his mother kept complete with Miss Cassidy's corrections. The Original Copy Book is in the Museum in the Patrick Kavanagh Center, this is a photocopy of it and feel free to look at it if you wish.

In 1909 Patrick started school in Kednaminsha.

Patrick left school in 1918 but until 1939 he lived and tried to work as a farmer with the family on a small farm. They were a thrifty family and money was universally scarce in rural Ireland during the 30s and 40s. Kavanagh's family were living in constant struggle to make ends meet and rear a large family (nine eventually) From owning merely a garden they progressed to becoming one of the small farmers of the locality.

According to Una Agnew this small farm played a greater role in Patrick's life than the Kavanagh parents had envisaged. As a poet-farmer, he would learn enough about the land, ploughing, harrowing, sowing, spraying, digging potatoes, threshing and harvesting, to make the land yield its harvest. 'It grew good crops for me, more by good luck than good guiding...He struggled 'with the crude ungainly crust of earth and spirit' to immortalize Irish rural life in poetry and prose.

The Great Hunger was to become one of the 20th century better long poems. Later in 1983 Tom McIntyre adapted it for the theatre and was produced in Abbey Theatre.

During this time he published Ploughman and other poems. Also The Green Fool was published and he visited London where he met G.B. Shaw and Sean O'Casey.

Next I am going to introduce you to Mrs. Flynn. Tarry's mother. From his novel Tarry Flynn which has also been adapted for stage. Banned for a time then in 1966.

Thomas Mac Anna was working at The Abbey Theatre Company at this time. He was one of the first producers of this play and Donal Mc Cann played the lead.

Set on a farm in Co. Cavan it deals with the conflicting aspirations of a young man to be a poet and to get hold of a wife. Constantly outwitted by his narrow minded neighbors, Tarry is also mocked by his sisters and larger-than-life mother – but she adores him too. In the end Tarry suddenly leaves home wifeless but still poetic, lyrical, realistic and biting funny.

On opening night Patrick Kavanagh collapsed in the theatre lounge before the performance but sat through the play beside his sister Mary who was a nurse.

In 1939 Patrick left Inniskeen and went to live permanently in Dublin He was influenced by AE who befriended him and Gertrude Stein ...'was whiskey to me...her strange rhythms broke up the cliché formation of my thought'. He was a columnist for the Irish Press from 1942 to 1944. The archbishop of Dublin John Charles Mc Quaid found Kavanagh a job on the Catholic magazine *The Standard* and continued to support him throughout his life.

This support was needed as Kavanagh states in the Author's Note of *Patrick Kavanagh Collected Poems* 'On many occasions I literally starved in Dublin. I often borrowed a 'shilling for the gas' when in fact I wanted the coin to buy a chop.'

But he was still driven by his verse. In *The Green Fool* he says 'Having knocked and knocked and knocked at the door of literature it was eventually opened and then I did not want to enter. The clay of wet fields was about my

feet and on my trouser bottoms. I was not a literary man. Poetry is not literature: poetry is the breath of young life and the cry of elemental beings: literature is a cold ghost wind blowing through Death's dark chapel. I turned from the door of literature and continued my work among poetry, potatoes and old boots.'

He transcended poverty throughout his life....magical work of poetic transfiguration examples of this are seen in his portrayal of Paddy Maguire in *The Great Hunger*. Kavanagh had the nerve to include a hero without any heroic qualities. This is a poem of 759 lines I will recite four of them.

Men build their heavens as they build their circles
Of friends. God in the bits and pieces of everyday-
A kiss here and a laugh again and sometimes tears.
A pearl necklace round the neck of poverty.
Seamus Deane has said ..'He climbed down from the dizzy heights of mythology, the glories of battle and concentrated instead on the stony grey soil of his native Monaghan and the actualities of living in the here and now.'

Kavanagh acknowledged that 1954 was the worst year of his life. He was undergoing an intense phase of frustration and purification. He lost a libel case, he had serious lung cancer and his lung was removed. He experienced spiritual renewal during his convalescence.

There followed in 1955 his happiest years during which he produced some of his greatest poems.

One of those poems was *God in Woman* written at a time when women held a very lowly position in society. After having a baby they had to be 'churched'. When the mother wanted to attend Mass or go back into the church after having the baby, she remained outside until the priest came to her and 'cleansed her of the devil'. This was practiced until the 1970s. Patrick Kavanagh was radical in writing this poem in the 1960s.

Let me bring you to the parallel worlds of then and now. Then we got married first then lived together. Time sharing meant togetherness. A stud was something that fastened a collar to a shirt and 'going all the way' meant staying on the bus to the terminus. Grass was mown, coke kept in the coal house, a joint was a piece of meat you eat on Sundays. You cooked in a pot and a gay person was the life and soul of the party.

Then 3 pennies was decent pocket money. 4 got you into a cinema. You could reach into the drain for a penny and with that penny you could go to a sweet shop, get a hap'worth of sweets and hap'worth change...from the lady in the sweet shop who knew you.

Now

You have a plastic card. Remember your password, hide your password Carry out transaction with the machine. No communication.

Then

In the Grocery shop bacon was sliced into rashers in front of you.

Cheese was cut off a massive orange chunk.

Tea, sugar, biscuits all weighed in bags with price tags – then entered into a book, added up, money exchanged, into cash register, rang open, change and receipt given. Entries then written into ledger and all accounts recorded by hand.

Now.

We have honey roasted ham. Tea, sugar and biscuits all parcelled, packaged in plastic.

Pay with card, remember password, hide password all goes to central computer...in the era of big data...and governments seeing everything.

Then.

At the butcher shop beef and lamb carcasses were displayed, sides and quarters and meat were cut as required. All organs available, liver, kidney, hearts and tails...low carbon footprints.

A world where on marriage women gave up their jobs, became stay at home mothers and men were never seen pushing prams.

Now.

Beef and lamb displayed in exotic sauces and complete meals made up with flavourings, antioxidants, colourings, emulsifiers, preservatives, sweeteners and Es. 160.234.307.440, 501 to name but a few. Many carbon-footprints.

Now there is greater equality for women and men are proud to push prams.

From Inniskeen in 1904 to the BAFTA awards in 2010 when Russell Crowe used the poem Sanctity in his acceptance speech. This was given great publicity as the BBC cut the poem in editing and Crowe objected strongly in social media. Crowe has now been invited to make a film based on the life of Patrick Kavanagh.

To be a poet and not know the trade,
To be a lover and repel all women;
Twin ironies by which great saints are made,
The agonizing pincer-jaws of Heaven.

Let me finish with Seamus Heaney. Heaney has admitted in several interviews that Kavanagh was ‘a stepping stone’ for him and those that followed. In his acceptance speech of his Nobel Prize when speaking of his influences he stated..’.....the barefaced confrontation of Patrick Kavanagh. I encountered further reasons for believing in poetry’s ability – and responsibility – to say what happens.’

In a later interview he stated ‘ Kavanagh was a poet of pure spiritual force to the extent that many of his lyrics now belong in the common mind as if they were pre-natal possessions – even perhaps pre-natal necessities. Whats more his impact and relevance are to be felt wherever English is spoken’.

His legacy, the volume of poems he left us 253 in all, *The Green Fool* and *Tarry Flynn* all stand as monuments to a nobility and gentleness of soul that will

continue to inspire and surprise those who read him.
From Inniskeen to 2014, the ordinary in the
extraordinary.

Brendan Smith

Galway- Potential to become Europe's 'Silicon Valley'

I was privileged to be granted recently the Galway Science Person of the Year 2012 award. So I decided to take advantage of this recognition by encouraging the relevant local stakeholders to work together to promote the city and environs as a Digital Galway Bay or as a European version of Silicon Valley, a concept that is perfectly achievable and that could easily capture the popular imagination.

I truly believe that Galway should emulate its international status as an arts city by striving to become the European equivalent of California's Silicon Valley. The city possesses many of the key ingredients needed to transform the region into a leading global hub for smart technologies.

Silicon Valley is located in the San Francisco Bay area and is home to many of the world's largest information technology corporations as well as thousands of small start-ups who have established a symbiotic relationship with third level colleges in the vicinity that provide the stream of young enthusiastic inventors, innovators, entrepreneurs, engineers and scientists needed to sustain their existence and success. Companies such as *Hewlett Packard* and *Google* grew out of the research work being undertaken by neighbouring university and research institutes.

Whilst it is the digital products and business aspects that largely define the identity of the Silicon Valley and environs, nevertheless there are other elements of the San Francisco Bay area that clearly played a crucial part in its evolution as the world's premier powerhouse of technology innovation.

Located on the west coast of the United States, the area is famed for its natural beauty that has engendered a 'quality of life' ethos amongst the inhabitants. The city of San Francisco has also long been characterized by political, environmental and social liberalism; possessing a strong progressive artistic, music, cultural and community solidarity dynamic with a youthful, student, cosmopolitan and outward-looking population.

Galway therefore bears an uncanny resemblance to San Francisco possessing many of its main traits in abundance. Our president Michael D Higgins could be said to be the personification of this image of Galway as visionary, vibrant, artistic, socially just and technology-savvy.

Many of the leading corporations in the biomedical and information technology sectors such as *Avaya, Boston Scientific, Cisco, Electronic Arts, Hewlett-Packard, Medtronic, SAP and Valeo*, are already based here with established links to research institutes located in *GMIT* and *NUIG* such as *DERI, Ryan* and *REMEDI* which are providing the scientific

expertise to sustain their presence in Galway and underpin their status as leaders in cutting edge product development. DERI for instance has over one hundred and forty young experts from thirty three countries developing the next generation of the World Wide Web known as the Semantic Web.

There is also the presence locally of indigenous high tech manufacturing and services industries comprising Irish-owned companies such as Creganna and Storm Technologies.

But what is also an abiding feature of Galway is the deep sense of 'community solidarity' as well as the high level of volunteerism that exists amongst many of the prime 'movers and shakers' in the industrial, political, educational and local government sectors who have over the years collaborated under the auspices of the Galway Education Centre, Junior Achievement and the Galway Science and Technology Festival, to deliver important learning initiatives in schools and colleges across the Western region. In a modern industrial urban version of 'Meitheal' that was once the hallmark of traditional Irish rural community support, these visionaries have promoted and harnessed an army of young professional mentors from industry and third level colleges who give their time and energies to teach in primary and post-primary classrooms delivering science courses whilst acting as positive 'role models' for our young generation.

Such courses will equip our children with a range of skills, from using mathematics to fostering critical thinking, necessary for transforming Ireland from being a nation of ‘digital users’ into a nation of ‘digital creators’ that would export worldwide a series of beneficial Irish-made smart tech products and services.

These formal learning programmes are now being complimented by the activities of electronic and computer coding volunteer clubs such as *091 Labs* and *Coderdojo* which are often established by young people themselves to provide informal after-school digital maker’s environments where participants are encouraged to be creative and to experiment in new processes and ideas, writing software for instance for online games or to control the movements of robots. The success of these initiatives is best shown by the dramatic uptake by schools in these mentoring courses as well as by the tens of thousands that attend the science shows and exhibitions during the annual two week Galway Science and Technology Festival.

Galway can rightly claim to be the country’s first and premier ‘*Digital City*’, building on an unbroken tradition of computing innovation that dates back to 1971 when Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), then the world’s largest minicomputer company, opened its first European manufacturing facility in Mervue. This proud technology heritage is exemplified by the fact that the ‘Computer and Communications Museum of Ireland’,

which pays tribute amongst other things to the oftentimes hidden role of Ireland, women and youth in communications development, is based in the city at DERI in NUI Galway.

Timothy Kenny

Begging in Kabul

One:

In February of 1990 I lived for a week at the Intercontinental Hotel in Managua, a faux Mayan palace semi-famous for housing a reclusive American billionaire named Howard Hughes who dated Hollywood starlets and flew fast airplanes; today, only old people know who he is. In the hotel lobby I bumped into Jimmy Carter, in town to monitor Nicaragua's presidential election, even as the United States waged its contra war against the Sandinistas.

A short block from the four-star hotel acres of land lay stripped and barren, eighteen years after an earthquake. Chunks of concrete pushed through the ground like bones in a third-world graveyard. Goats and rib-skinny dogs foraged for food.

Almost everyone I interviewed about the upcoming vote — pollsters, shopkeepers, political scientists, Nicaraguans who lived in collapsed buildings — said the same thing: President Daniel Ortega was certain to defeat Violeta Chamorro, the ethereal-looking, white-haired widow of an assassinated newspaper publisher. She dressed in white and was carried to political speeches on a litter because of a foot injury. Chamorro understood the drama of politics. She also spanked Ortega in a landslide election victory.

It turns out Nicaraguans don't like telling strangers how they plan to vote.

Two:

After thirty-five years away I returned in April 2012 to my native Detroit. Just off Woodward Avenue the once powerful Motor City reminded me more of Managua than any of the forty-five states I've visited. Blocks of brick homes that once kept people safe and warm were scraped clean of everything but rubbish and memories; native prairie grass grew in lots plagued by packs of wild dogs. Away from Woodward's eight lanes that run north from the river, dead neighborhoods idled, waiting for a proper burial that was slow in coming. The ruin shocked me.

After college I moved from Michigan to Oregon and then to Virginia and later still to Romania and Kosovo and Connecticut. There was no one to talk to about Detroit. Any mention of the city while I was away would trigger odd childhood memories: Tommy Wagner's father going to communion. He always shifted his weight back and forth at the communion rail as he knelt, waiting for the priest to arrive. Going back to his pew one of his shoes squeaked. Every other step on the marble floor gave his walk a bright, upbeat cadence. Heads turned. He'd find his place and sit for long minutes in the back of the church, his butt on the bench, his gray hair buried across forearms that rested on the pew in front of him. That's what Detroit was when I lived elsewhere: the remembrance of good men who went to six o'clock

Mass every morning before work.

I talked to a lot of Detroiters about their city. Most seemed angry about its steady slide, uncertain about its future or what should be done. Everyone had ideas. People railed against corrupt mayors, unions, automakers, the federal government, House Republicans, racism, all of which made some sense. None of the people I talked to blamed themselves for Detroit's desperate fall from grace.

Three:

I used to find reassurance and understanding if I compared what I did not know to what I did. The meanings of things used to get more complicated the farther I traveled from Detroit.

I live now in the heartland of eastern Connecticut's "quiet corner" where crime is low and residents keep up their property and drive decent cars. Despite almost a decade of regular visits to my daughter's school and the local gym, it's rare when anyone offers a greeting. I tell my New Hampshire-born wife I'm not looking for friends; a nod would be fine, a curt hello acceptable. She says perhaps I should smile more and say something first. I tell her that I can't seem to make eye contact; I remind myself that Connecticut's unofficial motto is "The Land of Steady Habits." I think about the Detroiters I met who did not see their own lives as part of the city's relentless, downward drift. Maybe my wife is right.

Four:

In Kabul, Afghanistan, where I worked for most of May of 2010, I frequently saw a woman wearing a bright blue burqa, begging on the sidewalk outside a grocery store that catered to foreigners and wealthy Afghans. Surely, I thought, she was desperately poor and without family to humiliate herself in this way.

She walked back and forth near the front door, muttering in Dari, a small, calloused hand stretched out from under her gown. The store security guys let her beg, which means someone was paying them off, surely not her. Her eyes, visible behind a screen of blue gauze, never met mine. I saw her several times and each time I thought about giving her money.

I was often uncertain about much that I witnessed in Afghanistan, as I was about Nicaragua twenty years before and in Detroit and my small Connecticut town. It's unusual for women to beg; perhaps there was more to it than what I could see. Afghanistan's drug problems, once just bad, are now epidemic.

My tight-lipped Connecticut neighbors don't believe they are unfriendly; they are reserved. Too much friendliness is slightly suspect in eastern Connecticut. It strikes me as odd, but I am from Detroit, a city whose disappearance into neglect and disregard makes even less sense than politics in Nicaragua or the social graces of southern New England.

I find that my assumptions about people are often wrong, even when I filter initial certainty with caution or disbelief. What nags at me is this: The chance that something might be untrue does not make it so. It's rare

to see a woman begging in Kabul.

So when I do see a begging woman, her face and body hidden from the world under bolts of blue cloth, I worry about upsetting some unknown equation that provided balance in a place that always teetered on an unseen precipice. I was afraid of what might happen if I gave her money. I never did.

Sandra Coffey

Party Politics

The oil from the bicycle spokes dripped thickly onto the concrete. I replaced the red oil canister and put it back on its shelf, remembering Father's words to place its handle facing outwards. I felt ready for what lay ahead; a race course put together from a pencil drawing and a list of unused items that lay around the farmyard I knew every bump of. The drawing was folded out neatly by my older sister Gwen who drew it out with the precision of a woman 10 years her elder.

Fences were numbered one to 10 and a list of items needed for each one was written in brackets. Square bales of straw were lifted out from the shed. Planks of wood were placed on either side. An old hen house door, destined for the scrap man, was being put to use as a ramp over a set of four tractor tyres. Tyres were kicked as they lay on the ground to check their hardness. Some had green around the edges having spent the winter housing fallen leaves.

The visitors would be arriving soon. Although they were cousins who lived four miles away, they were always spoken of as "the visitors". It was a habit passed down to us from our parents. We walked the course, counting our steps between fences. We nudged the already fixed tyres and slapped a hand down on the bales securing them in place. I wondered what fences could separate

the gutsy-stayers from the rest. Gwen stood with arms on her hips. She admired her work thinking it looked like a point-to-point course from nearby Ahamount Races.

Gwen looked at her watch. It was half past three and time to go inside. There was just enough time to get an ice cold drink and take our seats in the back kitchen to watch the steeplechase event of the year. Gwen had looked through the list for the Aintree Grand National. Party Politics was her loyal bet.

Keepthewolffromthedoor, 1F5644P. Pulled up, fourth, fourth, sixth, fifth, fall and a win. This was how our analysis began earlier that day as we picked our horses and Mum wrote them on a notepad.

‘Going for the biggest horse in the race, means it takes more effort for him to get around’, I spoke then as the knowledgeable younger brother, the master of ceremonies in the school playground. The five year gap in age had not awarded Gwen any superiority that came with the tag of older sister.

‘Party Politics has a tube inserted in his windpipe to help him breathe. Other jockeys can hear him coming a mile off.’ Gwen slapped her palm down on her knee and continued to stare at the tv screen.

The procession began and the jockeys and their horses were introduced to the crowd. We never travelled to the Grand National and we never felt the urge to make our

parents bring us there. April was the busy lambing season. We knew better than to ask. Father placed his wellingtons in the enclaves by the Stanley range and positioned himself between the fire and the television, to get the best of both.

Peter Bromley's voice gradually quietened ours as he showed off his weeks of preparation with details of this horse and that fence. Party Politics stood at 17 hands tall and his jockey wore purple and baby pink colours so he was easy to spot among the large field of runners. I could see my choice, Royal Athlete in the red cap and black and white colours. *Class name*, I thought. The horses began to leave the parade ring. In front of the stands, their hooves played a staccato tune that tore the grass open.

'And they're off in the national!' announced Bromley. The jockeying from side to side wove colours together like a piecemeal dinner set being laid on the table. Gwen would gradually lean outwards from her chair. I watched it standing up. I still do.

The camera panned across white tents that were folded by the side of the track. Four were used last year to put around horses that died trying to get to the finish.

'Does the horse get a funeral when the tent goes up? Was it blessed?' These were questions I don't remember any commentator having the answer for.

First time jockeys guided their mounts over the five foot high fences only to realise the scale of the near seven foot drops on the landing side. I wondered what the jockeys chatted about as they go around the track. Do you think they even talk to each other? I asked Gwen but she gave no reply.

‘Giveamanakick followed closely by Whats Another Year, Bringingitallbackhome, Romany King, Snowy Day, Autumn, and Joe’s Day Out. A good length’s clear of Cool Ground, Craggy Island, and Kentucky Morning.’

That was how the commentary spilled out.

‘Over the Melling Road.’

The camera flicked briefly to the stands. Crowds waved, gave peace signs or called out their horses’ name. ‘Who is still in the race? Father shouted. Mum’s horse had been pulled up early. As she prodded the potatoes with a fork, she asked us to shout for her when the winner was coming in, so she could see the style of the winning connections.

‘I see the purple colours of my horse,’ Gwen’s voice rose sharply like a scale, relieved that she could spot Party Politics among the stream of horses that galloped towards the Chair. *Why on earth would anyone call a fence the Chair? It’s funny, surely.*

'Beautiful camera work,' Gwen felt the need to confirm what we were all looking at as Party Politics' lightly brushed the top of the fence with his belly. By now, horses had separated into pockets of threes and fours. Horses without their jockeys straddled the edges of the track, avoiding the fences. A loose horse was the only thing that caused us more worry than the fences.

'Is there such thing as horse goodies? That would tempt them off the track,' Gwen declared, convinced that this method should be tried.

And now back to Peter O'Sullivan. The television volume was only this high for the Angelus or the lotto numbers. We knew the run-in was near.

'They're coming down towards the final fence now, Royal Athlete edging into the lead, to the right is Master Oats and Party Politics who is making good ground. Royal Athlete has more left, it's between these two now. Could this be a second win for Party Politics? Royal Athlete has gone past, past Party Politics, who has no answer.

'Royal Athlete is the winner. Royal Athlete is the winner. Royal Athlete arrives home to rapturous rounds of applause from the crowd. Royal Athlete has won the National in stunning fashion.'

The television picture shook slightly with the delighted punch I gave the cabinet.

'I won, I won.' Mum came rushing in and went straight to the bowl of keys to check the odds. '14/1 odds Tommy. You'll be able to buy yourself that guitar you were after.'

I was skipping around the room. On the tv, the winning connections came rushing out. A reporter stood by waiting to ask questions. I began to work out how much I was set to make.

'You'd better be getting ready for your own race,' Father said turning away from the television as if the rain and wind was at his back. Mum kept an eye on the style as she plated up. 'The visitors will be arriving shortly,' she said.

The back door slammed. 'All is set for the Knockmeddan Champion Chase. I just came up with that name,' I said to Gwen as we ran around the side of our house, down the steps and into the yard. Gwen had a new bike this year, a second hand racer, owned by a young teenager who sold it after she got pregnant. Gwen carried the newspaper and scissors out to the yard and started to cut around the edges of the colours of our mounts. With sellotape, we stuck it to the back of our saddles. When the visitors arrived they would do the same.

'We need to sort out the line-up for the race,' I pointed to the lines of bricks that doubled as bike lanes at the start line. With his hands off the handlebars, Cuddy rode in on his mount Aldanti, circling round Gwen before he stopped.

'I've already got my colours on,' said he smiling. Gwen knew this as Aldanti had not run at Aintree for many years but his win was often talked about during lulls in commentary.

'I saw the rest getting ready at Badger's place. They're coming behind me.,' Cuddy said as he dismounted.

In they came, one by one, doing a circle before they came to a stop. Gwen worked out the line-up, deciding that last year's top three should be in spots three, four and five. That was me, Cuddy and John. Gwen was quick to spot Denise's new bike complete with sporty stickers.

'Nice stickers Denise.'

'The bike is brand new too.'

With my thumb on my bike bell, I asked for quiet so all racers could hear the countdown.

"1,2,3 – off!"

Gwen took off but failed to get her right foot up on the pedal and immediately lost the vigour her effort should have given. I took an early lead as the race entered the gates into the haggard and on to the first fence. The old henhouse door made for an easy introduction. Up and over.

‘Peasy!’ yelled Cuddy.

Denise had started to run in the school athletic club and her fitness level was bound to be up on previous years. Our tyres rattled over the metal bars and on past the cattle crush. Badger or Ollie, as we called him after Mass, lurked in the middle of the pack.

As we rounded the hen house, the sunlight hit hard and I longed for the shade of the trees behind the hayshed. Some splashes from the morning’s rain sprinkled a light brown coating over the tyres. The grass track wielded its way around the side of the hayshed and out to the pump field, named by Father as it had a pump in it that propelled water around the farm. He had a knack of naming fields so it was easy to say where animals where and how he wanted them moved. From the pump field, go left through the hay field and on to the long field was how he described their movements to us.

The pump field made for an ideal race track as it didn’t hold much water and had a hill on the home stretch. Tractors going up and down meant it had a track beaten in to it. We went down on the left side and up on the right. Six straw bales, packed on their bellies with a sheet of plywood as a ramp was what was next. All riders went safely over.

A screech of brakes from John’s bike almost cost Denise her perfectly timed run in to the third fence.

‘Could you keep back, the field is big enough,’ Denise pedalled on quicker, trying to get away. Her black bottoms and white top matched the colours of her mount, Cool Running.

We passed under the shade of a cluster of trees. For as long as I can remember this shelter belt was the first warm home to new born lambs. It was where they prepared for their move further up the land. The long bend across the top of the field gave us a rest from the fences. Cuddy was yelling that Badger was invading his cycling space.

‘There’s no such thing!’ yelled Badger.

I looked back to find Gwen. I figured this would be her last time in the race. She must have been thinking of how close Party Politics came to winning. I reminded myself to chat to her afterwards during supper. I thought of how we could share my winnings in Finnegan’s Music Shop.

Cuddy had a steady pace. He tracked John for the early stages but now strode out on his own. *Smart move*, I thought. Focus, I shouted in my head. Gwen had every reason to feel pleased with her design of the next fence. It looked like it could belong in some design fair such was the attention she paid to it. It came about after a visit to the Dublin Horse Show.

'We should put two fences close together,' was how she began to describe it to me. Two rows of small tractor tyres formed a set of smiling lips. One huge smile. There was old dung placed inside, to keep them from stirring.

Badger started to sidle close to Denise.

'You cut me off. You've cut me,' she cried as she hit the floor before reaching Gwen's masterpiece. 'You okay?' Gwen cried out to her. She got no reply. Denise's pouched cheeks shored up her glassy eyes as she watched the rest of the race from a rear angle.

Cuddy got off his saddle. I was close behind. We waved our arms as if we had whips in our hands. The chain came off Badger's bike. In the seconds it took him to notice, he pedalled on, then looked down with the surprise of people who get fooled on Beadles About. Myself and Cuddy were yelping as we jostled past him. As he dismounted, he blocked Gwen's path. I heard her scream tail off in the wind. Cuddy had a narrow lead.

I could see that the sheet of plywood on the final fence had almost become displaced. Hang on just for a couple more minutes, I pleaded. Cuddy: over. Me: over. Frantic pedalling to the line. We were both up off the saddles, me picturing Stephen Roche climbing mountains in France.

'You only win on the tv,' Cuddy shouted.

Just then, I thought of when I had seen him and Gwen behind the school shed. I wanted to listen in but was dragged away by a football which swept in at my feet. The finish line was coming fast. I glanced back quickly looking for Gwen. *Was she hurt?* I wanted us to still be friends after she went to England with mum.

Cuddy won. He got up off his saddle with one arm in the air, giving the beck to the others and shouting 'Aldanti does it again.' I crossed the line and waited for Gwen there.

'Let's do something else next year,' she said. I longed never to leave the farm. School was asking what we wanted to be and I didn't have ideas. The next year, I raised some pet lambs and there was good money in it too.

Gwen never said what she spoke to Cuddy about. I knew it had something to do with her leaving with mum to visit our sick granny in England. Gwen told me it was for the best, the best for a while. Father swallowed up his new role, practising home economics recipes on me. I wrote letters to Gwen and signed them from the both of us. Her replies had different hospital addresses printed on the top left corner. I never asked her why. Many years later, I pressed Father about it and he told me.

Gwen's make-up looks perfect. It's almost as if she did it herself. The subtle rouge of her cheeks lingers like red seaweed reaching to the surface of still water. Women

approach, their faces askew. Some touch her hair, others her forehead. Scented candles surround the condolence book.

Cuddy with his wavy hair and three shirt buttons open walked in. I allowed my eyes wander over to see who was talking to him and if he will have the gall to come over. The stiff smile on Gwen's face reminds me of when we went to christenings of our own children. Afterwards, we'd sit and laugh at old photos. We'd look at ones of us on our bikes, wearing tatty clothes faded by the summer sun.

Outstretched arms come at me one by one. Cuddy made his way around and heads towards me. Sturdy men's hands grip mine and I thank them for coming. Another hand leaps in.

'Well, I'm very sorry,' he said to me as he approached.

'We all are.'

'It wasn't easy for her,' he adds, feeling the silence in the room.

'It was all sorted out for you. She never got over it.' I long for him to step on past. People would stop staring at us. The shame of two cousins having a child together was too much for our mother who died not long after Gwen's son came knocking on our door.

'She's gone now,' he turns his head back at me.

I walk slowly towards Gwen's coffin and give a small nod to the undertaker who held the lid of her coffin. Softly, softly, he taps on the corners of the lid as it sinks into position.

Emily Cullen

The Death of Night: Poetry as Vehicle to a New World

After only ten years in Ireland, Albanian-born Ndrek Gjini has produced his debut collection of poetry in English. Gjini has firmly established himself in the Galway arts community through his work with the City Arts Office and his several successful literary initiatives. His collection offers unique insight into a poet's quest to find the Self through the heightened lyrical possibilities of poetry within a newly acquired second language. Gjini uses English and poesy as a vehicle to a new world, condensing his experiences of home at a cultural and linguistic remove. This becomes a crutch he crafts to carry the freight of his broken history. The combination of geographic dislocation, moving between traditions, and weighing words in an adopted vocabulary bestows a vibrant freshness on Gjini's poems. We experience the world anew through his philosophical eyes and poet's heart as he breaks free of the normative and the descriptive, giving full reign to his imagination: 'what if a fish was looking up / a good recipe / on how to cook a man' (from 'On Holidays'). His subtle use of the macabre affords a glimpse into the fraught history of the Balkans, arresting the reader from the very first poem: 'neon lights on the roads and squares/are like bandages on its injured body.' But even in this title poem, light appears alongside darkness, ultimately overtaking it. Simplicity of language is a strength of this book as Gjini

speaks in an almost elemental tone, conjuring the idiom of a folk tale. Nature and the seasons are often personified: 'The twilight runs away from him / or the night locks him in forever' (from 'The refrain of a pensioner'). A concern with the cyclical continuity of life, and a veneration for the customs and beliefs of his people pervades his work. The magic is in the brevity he achieves, collapsing an emotion and an insight into just a few potent lines. This same concision falters, however, in certain poems where imagery and ideas are truncated in ephemeral conclusions. Consequently, these sparse lyrics become like fragments that suggest there is more that might have been said.

While an affecting, poignant note resounds through the collection, especially in poems evoking the poet's mother, Gjini is, ultimately, a celebrant who advocates belief. 'Every time we believe / we extend our lives a little bit', he writes in 'War against doubt'. The manifestation of hope becomes a key concern for Gjini who closes his book with the lines: 'Yet as long as more bridges / are being built than destroyed / love prevails over hate.' We are reminded of Walter Benjamin who stated: 'It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us.' Gjini has seen, first-hand, how the 'milk of love' is necessary to crumble the 'walls of malice' and his message is an important one. Every so often we need to hear an authentic voice, such as Gjini's, to remind ourselves that we are responsible for our own perceptions, for fostering our imaginations and, ultimately, for nurturing our own happiness.

Gerard Hanberry

I am delighted to present poems from a number of well-known writers

I am pleased to have the opportunity to gather together some wonderful poems for readers to enjoy. I am particularly delighted that the Galway Advertiser, together with the Galway Review, has been presented with two wonderful and important poems from the pen of London based Mark Reed, the only son of film actor Oliver Reed. The Reeds are a remarkable artistic family. Mark's great grandfather was the actor/manager Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree who built Her Majesty's Theatre in London (then called His Majesty's) and founded The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. It was Beerbohm Tree who first staged Oscar Wilde's 'A Woman of no Importance'. Mark's grand uncle was the film director Sir Carol Reed, perhaps best known for 'The Third Man' and 'Oliver' for which he received an Academy Award. His grandfather was the sportswriter Peter Reed and his father was Oliver Reed.

In the poem published here, 'The Final Call', Mark writes for the first time about the tragic events surrounding his famous father's untimely death while filming 'Gladiator'. This poignant poem allows the reader to see the sad events from a very different and personal perspective. It is an important poem because it is the first time that Mark has published on the sad death of his father and we are privileged to be his publication of choice. A major

factor in his allowing us to be the first to publish this poem was the warm welcome he recently received from the good people of Galway who fondly reminisced with him about his father's boisterous visits to the city. Mark was in Galway at the time promoting the one man show 'Wild Thing' about his father and in his second poem published here, 'Cormorants and Swans', he recalls that short visit.

I am also delighted to present poems from a number of well-known Galway based writers, members of the Talking Stick writers group, who have all developed successful literary careers publishing widely in full collections of poems and stories. The Talking Sticks, of which I am pleased to be a member, include the writers James Martyn Joyce, Geraldine Mills, Alan McMonagle, Hedy Gibbons Lynott and Jessie Lendennie, all featured here.

Mark Reed

Cormorants and swans

An Atlantic Friday in Galway.
Stoic, the ladies in their see-through waterproof bonnets
lean through the elements.
Perms will remain permanent today.

In Eyre Square dogs bark to themselves
and an old vagrant continues to read Tuesday's Mirror
fag perched cleaning-lady style
crumpling pages to a bin as she goes.

On Shop Street buskers strum their stuff.
Outside the King's Head
Father Christmas like, a bearded man plays three
instruments at once.
He's happy.

In Dubray Books, Mary the owner awaits her next
learned reader
fine works here
no Mills and Boon,
Wilde's more the fare.

In Quay Street bars offer homage,
heated by a thousand bodies
ice melts fast.
Artists hard at work.

At street's end the wind picks up,
Father Griffin's hoolie.
The Corrib lives today
fed by her bloated mother upstream.

Weirs plume peat coloured water baywards
past eel traps
and the blue Cathedral pierces a darkening sky.

Hedy Gibbons Lynott

The Final Call

We sped to a crying widow,
a fine hotel
but what does that matter now?

Where it happened -
a table next to a gaming machine in a Maltese
backstreet bar,
his last place a gloomy unbecoming shrine.

Passport corner clinically clipped.
“So very sorry – I liked his work.”
A thin young man not used to his words.

An orange pillbox mortuary stood alone on the hill.
White rubber aprons and oversized green boots,
staring staff waiting to see important people.

And there were none,
just us.
Those that loved him most.

A Different Kind of Footing

They say
you can tell the depth of ice
by how far down the fallen leaves
are trapped:
golds and reds of ochres
of last year –
possibilities in amber.

But
to walk on water
you must first let go of land
listen for the ice-song
seek its buried colours.

James Martyn Joyce

Scryer

She proffered the mirror in a thousand shards,
said it must be buried before light,
where four fields meet, to lay the curse.
Made me promise to choose well,
her nail-grip holding me, my heart
a pounding rush behind my ribs.
'Bury it deep,' she whispered.
'Keep nothing of it, ever.'

She told me how she'd brushed and brushed,
used a torch to raise up icicles of light,
swept every last particle,
the gleanings of the floor,
wrapped everything in her oldest blouse,
shook the knotted bundle in my face,
her low hiss urging: 'Go!'

The moon is a watching eye
as I stumble the rushy hill,
I know the spot, I've chosen well:
a dry-stone angle where neighbours touch.
I'll push her bad luck down to hell,
wait for her lips to save me.

Alan McMonagle

The Hitchhiker

I had been sitting for hours upon a roadside stump
(somewhere between Mountbellew and Ballygar, I'm
sure it was)
in thrall to conspiring wrens and a crow's lofty advice

when they pulled up. Four of them, blotchy and
shrivelled,
and ancient-looking as the witchgrass in surrounding
fields,
crammed into the belly of a Fiat 127. A door clicked
open.

'In you get,' came the raspy voice and I wedged
myself between the lank-haired pair in the back.
'You're a nice-looking boy,' croaked the one to my left,

a gargoyle with mulch for teeth and a furry nose.
'How far are you going?' I asked the one behind the
wheel.

The others looked at me, feral-eyed and puckering,

tittered together, nodded their crackly heads.

'Don't you worry,' squawked the one to my right, as she
rested
a twitchy claw upon my knee. 'We're going all the way.'

Geraldine Mills

Words in the Mouth of the Corrib

*You don't know me.
Come down and watch
the becoming of me.*

*If you could believe,
I will be something
other than the stream*

*turning into sea
my name foaming darkly
before I let go of it.*

Jessie Lendennie

Quay Street, Galway

There are ghosts on Quay Street
Not the Claddagh ghosts
Who looked for company
Late crossings on the bridge
To the old place
But my ghosts
Left behind on Fairhill
Wondering now where I am
Why the light flickered
Why I can't find my way home.

Des Kenny

These poems excited and delighted me

Sitting in front of a new batch of writing is a bit like sitting in front of a massive library that has just arrived into the shop. You know there are going to be some gems here but don't know where or when they will emerge. And this occasion was no different. At first, the mound of print before me looked like just big mass of writing going everywhere and anywhere and it was my great pleasure to distil from it the rough diamonds that I now have the pleasure of presenting to you. The three poets represented here have already served a long apprenticeship and have courageously stuck to the tasks presented by the word anvil. These poems excited and delighted me as I hope they do you.

Jean Andrews "Ventilation" and "Uncle", Maire Morrissey "Rain Rhythms", "Sparkle of Wings" "Fresh Paint" and Timothy Walsh "Honey Spoke Well" "Michael Hartnett Entering Irish" "At A Poetry Reading in a Language I Didn't Understand"

Jean Andrews

Ventilation

My mother's was the kind of world
in which something was always to blame.
So, when it came to dying,
without a thought,
she pinned it on us,
swearing we made her climb a huge great tree
when she should have been on her sick bed
and kept her there until she was all out of breath
and the only possible conclusion
was early, untimely death;
that we put her on a patch of green lawn
and made her run on the spot
and jump about until her insides burst
and she fell down
and down into unconsciousness.
She'd change the lock
on the front door when she got home
and that'd fix us,
she said.

Uncle

i.m. Kenneth

I saw him,
younger than I would ever have known him,
in a duck-egg blue, lambswool, v-neck pullover,
slimmer and cleaner of line, hair and moustache
than in my lifetime,
and happier, more open,
alive to a future, perhaps,
before it never happened,
became ossified in irretrievable past,
before he turned into an old cove
in tweed jacket and too many fags,
in a one-room bedsit
with a poster of topless Samantha Fox
on a cupboard masquerading
as a kitchen for a grown, then elderly, man,
trading on a store of jaunty escapades
assembled in an annual fortnight's
grouse moor, Scotch and pub grub charabanc.

Now in his grave on a bleak hillside,
two decades and more in timber and fabric and bone,
there are hardly any left who remember him.
The tombstone, at his request, reads 'At Peace'
though most of his life was spent
a long, long way from home.

And yet, this once he brought himself to mind,
safe-conduct from the shadows

one single time:
delivery of a bashful legacy -
bendicite,
from one who proved, to all attempts, hermetic,
unpropagated, while alive.

Máire Morrissey-Cummins

Rain Rhythms

She slides the curtains
to the changing season,
clicks the window shut
on a rain drenched morning,
thick mist crossing the sea.

The radiator ticks,
swirls with waters warm
filling the room
with a July noon.

She pats down her dreams
on a slumber tossed duvet,
soothed by the drumming rain.
A flame lamp lights the dusky morning,
precious warmth on a November day.

Sparkle of Wings

A flight of gulls
glide the rooftops
coasting towards the sea.
The train chugs deeper
into the city,
sparkles of ocean
ripple behind me,
purple mountains
fade in the distance.

Dark tunnels of Summer's end
emerge to elderberry Autumn.
Auburn fields fly by
and I am surrounded by strangers,
knees touching knees,
my feet poised tippy toes
ready to take flight
like the wings of birds.
I want to feel cool water
splash between my toes,
to return to the sea,
to the shine of Greystones,
away from the drab grey concrete
of the city.

Fresh Paint

Autumn eventide,
nestled beneath freshly painted walls

I trek through mossy green fields
bordered with tender yew.

A dark shadows above the wardrobe
takes me to pine scented forests,

high, amid snow-peaked mountains
on a dense winter's day.

Candlelight flickers
on the new white cabinet,

a flame sunrise
crosses oceans deep.

My breath rises and falls
like a sprinkle of mist

touching the silent spaces
between falling leaves.

Opening my book,

I crease into soft white pillows
legs long, crossed at the ankles,

painted toes twitch for warmth
the nip of an October night, biting,

as I join the search for a missing child
in the story of Lucy Gaunt.

Timothy Walsh

Honey Spoke Well

I know you're thinking this will be about
something my lover said—
something clever, something amusing—
but it isn't.

It's about how the sun glinted on the spokes
of my bicycle wheel
as I pedaled past the holy well
after sampling the beekeeper's wildflower honey.
And, yes, my lover (my wife) was with me, too,
the spokes of her bicycle wheels glinting as radiantly as
mine
as we brisked along the rutted dirt road
in the far northwest of Ireland.

Now that I think of it, though, I'm sure she must have
said something clever,
since she—my honey—always speaks well,
but it was simply the concatenation of these three sunlit
things—
the whirling glint of the bicycle spokes,
the pellucid waters of St. Attracta's well,
the rich, golden wildflower honey
(so like sunlight itself rendered into syrup)
that struck me as a revelation,
a somehow miraculous equation,
something we cannot touch with words.

Years later, in the far north of Wisconsin,
we rode our bicycles along Lake Superior's shore,
sunlight glinting on our spokes.

At the little farmer's market in a fishing village,
jars of honey caught the light and caught my eye,
held me in their amber embrace.

Later, hiking deep into the forest, we found Lost Creek
Falls—

sheets of murmuring water sheening over the lip,
cascading into the fern-rimmed pool,
the mossy rocks dripping, glistening—
and, again, the hieroglyphs of the day aligned:
Honey Spoke Well.

Have you never noticed how the hidden wellsprings
that interlace this earth
interlace us, too,
how sunlight fills us like honey in a jar,
lighting us up from within through translucent skin,
and how we are borne up on spokes all our days,
a whirling blur, mostly nothing, glinting in the light?

Michael Hartnett Entering Irish

When he bid his farewell to English,
set off across the hills,
a few self-fashioned implements in his rucksack,
did he need to know the magic words
to cross a stream?

duibhe na rós

Words to awaken a holy well
while circling it slowly three times?

nead préacháin,

an muince dreoilíní,

abhain chyioistail

Words to make a salmon leap
into his waiting hands?

sneachta geala.

Now that all the road signs bear the Irish
side by side with the occupying English,
English with its easy dominion over these ancient hills,
now that the Irish is there to rebuke and remind
how we can occupy more than one universe
simultaneously—

the future always malleable as wax—

now that Michael Hartnett has entered Irish,
first in this world and then the next,
and so courteously left the gate unlatched,
trimming back the briars and scything the flags
of gorse,

now we shall see what serendipities there'll be.

Here him pacing the yew-paneled hall
in the sky.

See how he assumes the shape of a red stag
at dawn

or of a thistle in an upland bog.

He entered Irish, first in this world,
then the next,
and now brings the afterworld to bear
on the timorous equivocations
of these makeshift days.

At a Poetry Reading in a Language I Don't Understand

At the podium, the old poet gestures vigorously,
swinging his arms like a conductor.
Words swirl round my ears
and the hundred other pairs of ears cocked like
seashells
to catch the current.

I inhale and steep myself in the languorous flow.
Language—such a strange oxygen—fills my lungs.
There is no need of meaning—
just as this Chilean merlot needs no wine critic's
purple prose
or a tantalizing label gloss.

The room is packed with people and lined with books—
shelf upon shelf from floor to ceiling,
each book slid neatly in its nook
like a safe deposit box waiting to be unlocked.

I sip my wine and think of the words stacked
within these covers,
arranged in lines like dried strands of pasta
awaiting the salted water of a reader's eyes.

I swirl the wine remaining in my glass,
wishing I was nearer the bottle....
Invisible as melody, the words intoxicate
while the wine holds forth with booming voice.

I'm sure I'll never have enough poetry
or drink enough wine,
but I am at least drawing closer to that state of mind
where I can't tell which is which.

Eva Bourke

Everyone in Galway seemed to be a poet, a street musician or a singer

Years ago in a translation workshop during the Cúirt Festival I met Herman de Coninck, a Flemish language poet, who, amazed at the lively literary scene he found in Galway, later wrote in an article for a Belgium paper, exaggerating only slightly, that everyone in Galway seemed to be a poet, a street musician or a singer and often a combination of all three. I remember experiencing a similar surprise when I came to Galway. There were countless musicians, but not only that, the music sessions were frequently interrupted by recitations of poetry during which the raucous pub fell into an attentive silence. Over the years the community of poets and writers grew, nurtured by the wonderfully brave Jessie Lendennie's shoe-string publishing venture Salmon Publishing that gave new poets a chance, many of whom later shot to fame, and the Cúirt Festival which started out as a poetry festival. It still has an important poetry constituent and offers a platform to young readers. Then there are the regular Over the Edge and North Beach Poetry Night readings, the Live Word and Slam poetry scene, many of whose contributors are students or graduates of the MA in Writing founded by Adrian Frazier of NUI Galway. One of the hubs of this literary activity is Charlie Byrne's bookshop and I've lost count of the books that were launched there over the years. There are three literary presses in Galway at the

moment – if you include Salmon which is now perched on the Cliffs of Moher. It isn't easy to pick from this wealth of literary creativity. I opted for a chronological approach that will also reflect the variety and thematic richness of poetry in Galway, from established and well-loved poets Michael Gorman, Moya Cannon and Lorna Shaughnessy to three starting-out poets: Laura Caffrey, a recent graduate, as well as Jarlath McDonagh and Alvy Carragher who are still students of the MA in Writing at NUI Galway.

Michael Gorman

The Month of May

Standing over my mother's dead body,
I note, as for the first time,
the freckles on her neck and shoulder
gone from the world of small gesture
that never drew attention to itself,
the way she sprinkled a modicum of salt
along the edge of a closed egg salad sandwich,
years before, in the Mozart café.
Everything outside is suddenly magnified;
I can follow individual blades of grass
moving on the hospital lawn,
a poster on a faraway pole
in familiar blocks of colour
declares the circus is in town.
Alex Lacey, lion-tamer, the Flying Sousas
acrobatic troupe, Miss Beatrix Spindler
with her amazing Spanish horses
are appearing at Sligo Fairgreen.
She carted us off together, once,
paid in to an everyday field
beside the river at Ballisodare
where we watched stars of All-in Wrestling
avoid each other entirely
as they crashed into parallel ropes
on a makeshift, elevated stage.
We never look closely enough
at our nearest and dearest.

After the show was over,
the cars filed out an open gate,
midges hovered in the riverlight.

Moya Cannon

Burial, Ardèche 20,000 B.C.

No bear or lion ever raked him up,
the five-year-old child,
victim of illness, accident or sacrifice,
buried in a cave floor
high above a white-walled, roaring gorge,
shortly after the ice-sheets had retreated.
Someone sprinkled his grave with red ochre,
someone tied a seashell around his neck,
someone laid a few flint blades by his side,
and under his head someone placed
the dried tail of a fox, perhaps a white fox.

Viewing the Almond Blossom

was an exercise repeated every year
as though some lessons could not be
well enough learnt –
how bare twigs put out small pugilists' fists
which open, fragrant burst
after fragrant burst
right to the stem's tip.

Lorna Shaughnessy

Santa Fe de Antioquia

In the woods there are butterflies bigger than birds.
White and yellow, their wing-flap slow and silent
above the sun-spattered forest floor.

In old patios there are birds smaller than butterflies,
glints of emerald suspended in haloed wing-whirr.

Their syringe beaks sip and sip again,
take so little,
ask so little
of the world.

Maríel

“I wrote this piece in memory of Maríel Stubrin. I attempted to capture that short instant before grief, in which one learns of the sudden death of a friend.”

Oswaldo Golijov.

What happens in the moment

between innocence and knowing?

The heart's marimba caught mid-swell or ebb

doesn't miss a beat, obeying only inner rhythms.

The moment between ignorance and grief

before the bitten apple is thrown in dismay,

before loss and the long fall into pain

marked by the cello's drawn, deliberate bow.

(Translated from the Spanish by Lorna Shaughnessy)

Laura Caffrey

Three Swimmers

Three swimmers cut
through glass-like sea
in Salthill at dusk,
barely a splash between them,
their black capped heads
bob for air,
the slice of arm,
the rise, curve and descent
to break water,
the flick and kick
of well timed feet as they
push on with only
the next stroke in mind.

Alvy Carragher

Bedside Locker

I've been trying to find ways to tell you mother,
leaving sheets twisted backwards on my bed,
he was everything and nothing like my brother.

I broke vases, smashed one against the other,
thinking you would see inside my head,
I've been trying to find ways to tell you mother,

There are things I cannot bring myself to utter,
I broke his baby pictures left them in the shed,
he was everything and nothing like my brother.

finger-painting canvas makes me shudder,
knowing places touched that way bleed red,
I've been trying to find ways to tell you mother,

I spin dreams upon a star and then another,
but none of you hear the things I wish I said,
he was everything and nothing like my brother.

And everytime you say his name I stutter,
hoping you see that parts of me are dead,
I've been trying to find ways to tell you mother,
he was everything and nothing like my brother.

Jarlath MacDonagh

Battenberg

Da turns his head and Granny's dead.

And Josie says:

'There goes Nora, with her clasped hands and rosary bands.

She's gone now. No more slippers or Bing Crosby.

No more simple philosophy.

No more guessing times by the number of chimes when the clock's

A turn of the head away.

No more ugly floors, no more squeaking doors,

No more swift slaps or woolly laps,

None of that.

No more staying up late, no more 'clean that feekin' plate'.

No more quick fixes and sneaky Twix's 'when your ma's not looking'.

No more sweets for sucking.

No more bonbons, long-johns, macaroons and treacle,

Stoppers, wappas, goody with sweet milk,

Nora and her Cadbury fingers.

No more pots and pans and decorated fans with fauna and flora.

She loved that, her fauna and flora.

Well, that's all gone.

No more Nora.'

And off Josie goes

And her bags held beside her.

Patrick Deeley

Vixen

She is the one washed across the River Dodder,
fur plastered to her skin and on her face
a rictus grin, the one yet making her rounds
unfazed by thump or roar of motorcycle
or by ambulance's blue flickering hullaballo, its
red tinging, and she perpetuates the one
leaping through a net-wire henhouse window
fifty years ago, the cub my neighbour fed
from a trough after he had killed her mother,
the cuddlesome one soon to tune in
to her own feral nature; she absconds, vagabond
at home among the urban – the long
rout of foxes gone before seems to become her,
those dug out, those poisoned or shot
or mangled by hounds, those broken
under the wheels of cars; survivor, the glisten
of health attends her, the youthful lustre
she won't outwear, being too wild, too crossed
with the cricks and crimps of her kin;
she's a fire, an aura, a lollop along the back lane
from dustbin to doorstep, a den dweller,
my first Galway Blazer, my townland namer,
and it's as if the stars have fashioned
a pelt for her, the frosts a carry, the hills a cover;
as darkness deepens she comes brushed
with heather smell, harebell, stone-quarry dust,

comes maybe to shake loose her shrieking
mating oohoons or the chalk of cemetery bones –
this numinous one representing all, this
watcher whom I suddenly want to get next to
as though she were the burning down of my years
so lightly here and gone as I take the air
in midsummer, in a midnight suburb of Dublin.

Breda Joyce

Moments

for Mark

On this May morning
I awake to birdsong breaking night,
to hawthorn creaming hedges.
My first seedlings are claiming clay,
though a hint of bluebells still holds sway.

Evening carries our children's voices
as frame by frame you tend your beloved bees.
Hives pulse with earnest endeavour
like your golden pocket watch, my gift to you
on a spring night in eighty nine;
my heart tries to stall winding time.

My hands tremble
lest such moments
trickle through cupped fingers.

Autumn Opera

Fingers of sycamore
flutter effortlessly
at the end of an outstretched limb;
wing spanned they play
into the November air

'till they run out of octaves,
unheard by all but those
who bend like boughs
and listen to their silent fall
as they are taken

into the music of water
by the Mall;
the gush and shush
of timeless metronomes
beat out unearthly arias.

Fatmir Terziu

The church of the eyes

Those just out of the egg,
The confused yellowings
Open their wings, take an unreasoned stance,
Only their mothers understand them.

They open their light wings
Over fleshy bodies, carefully breathing.
Pressed against the blossoming buds,
The rose petals
Guarded by the thorns.

The aroma of the flowers, the varied colours, everything
Embraces the reason of love in the church of the eyes;
the prayers have started.

In the garden, the last preparations are performed
By all the living things,
It is the time of multiplications
And love has raised its head.

Over newly blossomed roses
Where the buds shade the egg hatchlings
A snake slithers towards the nest
Aiming to end
the newly born dreams.

The thorns are privy to the wrath of the sun,
Bringing from above the whole curse of the sky.
The feast restarts soon,
When the snake fleetingly burns in flame.

Matt Mooney

Candlelight

There is nothing left behind
Of our evening's get together
But the candles lighting
For the congregated
Who have just vacated
The tables in white linen
And the waltzing is all over
In the room of great windows
Looking down on the river-
An arc around the racecourse
And its ripe and ready meadow
Waiting for the balers' coming
To change its profile picture
And make it all the better
To be seen by others later
From this treasury of memories
Of fair maidens and tall mirrors.

Morning Kiss

I am the herald of the morning.
It was I who kissed your brow;
I saw the shadow of the night
Steal away to make room for me
With the waning moon on its back
And carrying a bagful of dreams-
Unfinished, to be returned tonight.
Fly with me now up into the sky
To daub it with the streaks of dawn
Borrowed from the sun that's rising.

The Steel Fixer

There was a poem fixed in his head
But that is not exactly what he said
To me in the communal sitting room
Christmas Eve in the nursing home-
What had to be said he would write
When the words he needed arrived.

A man who had prayed to the Muses
For a way to break through to speak
About the steel of a steel fixing man
Seeing in his everyday interweaving
A web of words with some meaning
That he hopes will soon fall into line.

Mary Madec

Nurse

2013

I take the train from Ogilvie to Palatine,
imagine her now at eighty three from childhood
in nineteen seventy four, as I go in and out of stations
like decades on a rosary and half-remembered licks of
ice-cream,
the day she was a queen with her king, her retinue
Jo and I, princesses weaving through the mountains.

We thought the sun set like a red lollipop in the
mountains
Connemara glowed for us, imprinting this memory for
Palatine
in two thousand and thirteen and she tells me of her
golden retinue
her girls and boys, what they've grown into from
childhood
and how she remembers the taste of Chambers' ice-
cream
in Newport en route to Achill for the Stations

She takes out the Irish china, adjusts the radio stations
until she finds Irish music and melodies from the
mountains
like home and serves up her apple pie with a dollop of
ice-cream
tells me who's schizophrenic, gay, divorced in Palatine

and how she became a nurse, the dream of childhood
after the kids got through High School she showed the
gifted retinue

where their brains came from. Did I mention the beauty
too of her retinue?

their high cheekbones and auburn hair in photos above
the play station

detailing rights of passage and moments of glory from
childhood

paraded every few years, money permitting, in the Achill
mountains

a far and distant cry from Illinois, Palatine

where they romped their way through childhood

*We made sure they had a chance to see their mother's
childhood*

*the goats and sheep, their father teased, were then my
retinue.*

Hard, I thought to imagine around the red brick condos
of Palatine.

*We made them do the climb on Croagh Patrick up to the
first station*

*harder than the steps in the Wrigley Building, a
mountain of mountains*

*for little feet, all made up for, she said, at the bottom by
whipped ice-cream.*

Ireland a blissful world, everywhere there were lollipops
and ice-cream

melting between wafers, like the two continents of their

childhood
and when life was hard they knew how to make a path
in the mountains
and nostalgic, tried out orienteering at home later in
Palatine
grew up fast and now, in their turn, command a lively
retinue
of little ones who bring them back to the Nurse's station

She says, Look to the Mountains
Revere childhood
Eat Ice-cream

Penelope

21.02.2014

Penny lives here with the kids
and Ods is in London
fighting all kinds of battles
on the Stock Exchange

She takes it in her stride,
the way her mother before her did
when her father emigrated
to tatiehoke in Scotland

No use looking out wistfully from the
Atlantic Drive or Achill head,
her Dad was bent over a dark ridge
somewhere north of Aberdeen.

She didn't even know. He was gone
And she got on with it,
got used to saying he was away,
the only way to dream of him on long winter nights

when her mother sat by the fire
and knitted aran sweaters for the factory.
Each wondered but would never ask
if he'd ever get back
It wasn't as if no-one cared.

Now she knows the wisdom
of not saying it as it is
even with Skype and instagram
she knows how it feels

absence like the empty side of the bed
and the silence of the late evening
when the children are asleep,
the way the dog looks at the front door

and she sees her mother darning reason
into feelings she couldn't mend
even if it was love that made the stitches
she'd still throw it from her in the end

say, There it is now, that'll do

My dear Hades

Something about you reminds me
of mussels on the rocks,
black-blue clumps of darkness
rising and falling with the tide
in this newly discovered harbour.

What is the smell,
its provenance uncertain?
Slightly off but inhaled as something healthy now
detoxifying. Limbic triggers
hypnotic narcissi and their pollen pollution.

The wind is calm enough
for me to appreciate that my breath
is taken. It is you I am breathing
in and out.
Your blue flesh beneath my hands

in fronds of wrack
small fertile vesicles
bursting against your skin
and softening the contours
of what mine holds,

tired muscles, old bones.
Mostly, we float around in it
though sometimes you scuba dive
to see what you can remember
from below.

When it's sunny we give our bodies
to the water
only our fingers touching
listening to how molluscs gurgle
under water, enchanted, satisfied.

Michael Nolan

Shakespeare's Razor

The inevitable answer must be that there is no question-
none, at least as perfect as a leaf, or obvious as a
blade.

They have all put their penny's worth in, men and
women
as they are, whose vision is the question and the
answer.

Hannah James John Jane Hypatia Miguel Epicurus
F.Scott

Simon Zeno Elizabeth Vladimir Dante Fyodor J.D.
William

Avicenna Anne Thomas Ayn Confucius Dame Mary
Mark

Rene Paul Plato Aristotle Marcel Bob Lenny Joanie Neil.

Each as human as the next, as one they give an answer
to the leaf, the blade, the new new born swaddling
babe.

For a reason I left many out and you Shakespeare, you
never raised a question, only perfect existential
answers.

Anniversary

Married forty three year ago today-
aware only of the uncomfortable steely grey suit
my mother had chosen,
I entered their bedroom.
She lay swaddled in a candlewick.
“I’m going now Ma” I said,
“I never want to see you again”, she said.
“Ah May”, he said,” you don’t really mean that”.

He drove me as far as O’Connell Street,
crossing the Liffey was beyond him.
Strolling the rest of the way towards Earlsfort
to sit my finals, I felt liberated and noticed everything.

Afterwards, my nearly brother-in-law (doubling up as
Best Man)
greeted me at the church, gave me a swift one over,
seemed to approve of mothers choice and led me to my
seat.
A choir struck up the Bridal March
and we were married

On that sunny day at the reception, a friend told me
my shoulders looked broad on the Altar.
I still don’t know what he meant, maybe mother’s suit.

Michael Burke

I Need a Life of my Own

My mother abandoned me for no particular reason a short while ago. She left a brief note in her usual tiny meticulous hand writing. "I cannot look after you any longer", her unsigned note said; "I need a life of my own " I don` t think I will ever be able to forgive her. I wouldn` t mind but it was just two days before my fifty sixth birthday.

Denial in Eyre Square

In the early morning summer sun
walking determinedly to the courthouse
in her best high heels
half way across the square
she barely notices
a fresh faced garda
kick the boots
of a sleeping homeless man
checking for reaction
nothing more
As she wonders what to say
to persuade the company's esteemed barrister
(who has become a tribunal millionaire last year)
to agree a small settlement with the young woman
in the first case listed
the worn faded blue v-neck jumper
registers with her
as
her youngest brother
stirs
squints
in the sunlight
fumbles in the torn pocket
of her ex-husband's old tweed jacket underneath him
eventually extracts a can of warm cider
and swigs from it
before
mumbling to the young recruit that he's ok
while she furtively glances all around

making sure she has not being recognised
and
gratefully
hurries
to her
now
even more
important
appointment.

Piaras Ó Droighneáin

Leis fhéin

Bhí sé leis fhéin
A éadan folamh,
Mar leac fhuar
Nár bh fhéidir a léamh,
Níor thit an solas air
Ach chuaigh sí thríd,
Ní raibh an scáile fhéin aige
Thréig sí an corp
Agus chuaigh léi
I mbaclainn na hoíche.

Ní raibh beo ach a dhá shúil,
Súile boga, suile fia
Ag líonadh agus ag at
Le teann faitís, le scéin,
Caoineadh na gcúití ag teacht chuige
Ar an ngaoth shílfeá,
Macallaí ag ardú i sléibhte uaigneacha
A intinn.

Tháinig casadh tobann ar an aghaidh gheal,
Preab ghéar éigin
Ag cur pian air,
An saol ag éalú as go deo
Nach mbeidh fágtha ach
Sióg ocrach,

Gan feiceáil air ach an oiread
Le puth gaoithe.

Tabharfaidh sé an baile air fhéin go luath,
Aistear brónach i gcomhlúadar
Glórtha beaga ag tarraingt as,
Ag magadh faoi,
Leamhain bhána ag tógáil cruth ar an mbóthar
Ag teacht as an dorchadas
Mar thaibhsí cheapfá,
Ag síneadh méaracha chuige,
Na crainnte ag croitheadh a gcuid cloigne troma le trua,
Gealach lag ag ligeann a cuid sála buí
Síos le sáile,
Bó á scríobadh féin le claí,
Leanann an oíche ar aghaidh
Leanann an saol ar aghaidh.

Stefanie Bennett

EULOGY: SLEEP

for M.C.

The birds, the stones,
Habitat for
An arpeggio
Jack-knifed
To the wind's girth -

Seesawing the plain,
Your apparition
Pressed into
The red-brown grasses
Rises wherever

Love's inventory goes;
The engendered
Violet's
Villanelle bled
By fathoms, five

- And the last
Pre-eminent sun
Going down.

DEAR READER

In pursuit of the common touch
They wanted to know if
I'd stake
My life on it...

Vive la difference!

What I'm most curious of, is...
Would they, then
Raise
Defiant fists
If I didn't?

William Ruleman

ROBINSON CRUSOE FINDS FRIDAY

He stopped when he saw me, his fright-filled eyes
immense.

When I saw him, I stood as if turned to stone,
Mid-stride. O heavenly offense!

O well-shaped man! O joy, to be overthrown
By love, by the kindred sight of lips and eyes
And knees and hands and ears and five-toed feet
Like mine . . . This quite familiar form just shies
A bit, then spreads its feet, makes no retreat:

An answer to my call. Sweet melody
Of the human voice! Do I share such pulchritude?
Has God created this playmate for me
Simply to mirror my solitude?

ON A PACKET OF LETTERS

I picked it up (the faded thing that I
Had long declared deceased) as gingerly
As an ash-filled urn, concerned the dust might fly
When I carried it. Yet still, it burdened me:

Now vanished heavens crashed down shining,
streaming;
Temptation, like the serpent once, lisped now;
And long-lost hells returned now, beaming,
Nestling snugly round my cheeks and brow.

And then I watched the flowering flames ascend
The way life burns—hot, livid, naked, red—
And sing like a choir: now this is the end.
We live, we live. But you are dead.

Orla McArt

Office Politics

Sucrose-scented bitching
wafts 'round dank corridors
consuming empty halls.
Drones escape like
snakes slinking out of
their work-a-day skins.

An institution consumed
by scorn; silent vicious
jibes reverberate off
whitewashed walls-
easier
than off the human psyche.

Tomorrow's staff
trash in wakeful Sunday sighs-
work weariness consolidates
Monday's mourn.
They suffocate
on unbitched oxygen.

On tick-tock time they toil
together, stealing
seconds in whispered
corners to keep a dose of
rumour air-flow
pulsating through concrete.

Drizzling down
sweating walls are tears
of condemnation. Inhaling,
asbestos-like, deathly fibrous
crystals of hate. At six
they say farewell.

Heather Minette

Jagged Moonlight

He's half-awake
and half-asking again,
the question I can't answer.

The words getting stuck in a cortex,
lost in some hemisphere.

I don't know what it was
that drifted between us
when our knees touched
beneath the table
that afternoon in midtown,

or why it was his voice I longed for
on the quiet train ride
from Pisa to Florence,

or how an overexposed photograph
of his sunburnt cheeks
and my crooked bottom teeth
could be so dense with love.

I don't know what it was
that made me reply yes that night,
under the jagged moonlight
with a sincere and eager heart.

I only know
its nature was to flee,

and it fled.

Kevin. J. Nolan

Flavescent

A colourable moon perspires down
on a foreign country.

A road surrounds an Anglican church;
the door swings open and a distant high pitched sound
gets higher.

The air is wet with Ave Marias, a solitary singer
searchingly fingers her
soul and moans low while city foxes dash by dizzy and
wild-eyed with
questioning snouts.

Sitting near on footpath
are two people, in love, smiling at each other, knowing
each other
emphatically.

In one beats a heart:
its drawers swing open and shut in slow motion, catch
imaginary
snowflakes, which melt and leak down to collect in the
swells of her eyes
opening like butterflies

The other's heart
is wet with vitality, desperate in its countenance

opening and reaching out to her like a legousia flower to
the heat
of flavescent moonlight.

Theresa McCormack

The Night Storm

Blustery leaves and branches bend to kiss rooftops
The wind whistles it's song against the window pane
Toes curl up to one another in comfort
And so the endless pitter patter of the rain.

This old house shakes, quivers and rattles and roars
The ghostly letterbox knocks but nobody's there
I pull the blanket even tighter
And the storm rages on in the warm salty air.

Flower pots tumble off walls as gusts throw them into
space
I toss and I turn in a restless sleep
In my little warm cocoon I shall not emerge till morning
The wind roars through trees and branches leap .

I hear the night storm closing in and grasping tight
Bins roll like tumbleweeds and rain tip taps
My jack Russell barks at Mother Nature's roar
And cats purr contented taking naps.

Clothes lines rattle and clink at the winds unyielding
mercy
I pray for sleep and the gentle lull of night
But the storm continues and gathers pace and glory
In an endless roar she holds on tight.

Dawn breaks and with it peace and calm breezes
You and I stretch hello to the morning sky
We survey the wreckage of broken pots and broken
sleep
It's the end, morning has come, the storm is nigh.

Dean Buckley

The Cartographer's Paradox

I could no more find you
than a cure for economics. I reach
but your electrons repel mine,
hands stopped, time stopped, but
further? No, my fingers cannot break
your skin, and if they could,
what would that achieve? Only
more walls carved into walls.
Divide and the surface area increases,
again and again until
the dust of your body spreads
evenly throughout the air and

BOOM

didn't I know it was dangerous
to disturb particles so? Even if
you didn't combust like a grain silo,
how far could I split before you
ripped apart into heat so extreme
you'd light rivers on fire? No,
I need to stop pushing, into you,
against you, through you. You
must remain unknown to me,
your truths inferred, gleaned
through the rose window
as you pass by, laughing.

Majella Kelly

Double Tap A Lifetime

Impromptu thumb and forefinger
touch and separate on your face
in the photograph, as if on a screen.

I double tap a lifetime,
slip you on again
like a pair of skinny jeans,
zip our hips together, button
your sun-kissed navel to mine
from the inside.

My digitised mind reverse pinches
to the dance where we began,
in monochrome.

Looking down I see your feet.
Feet
are not always easy to love.
I loved your feet.

Intervening sacraments delete,
divine absolution of two weddings
and three holy communions,

leaving only your tight buttocks in that tuxedo

and the sad ashes of hand-written love letters
that were not hers to burn.

Sean Garvey

The Mighty MacBride

“You knew him?” she asks, her words almost lost on the wind. They sound so distant that I half wonder if they are meant for me. I nod a reply to her and she smiles and tucks her chin into her coat. I watch her turn and wander down the hill, stopping every now and then to examine a name on a headstone. Soon she is consumed by the twin ranks of fir trees that line the entrance to the graveyard. They are an ancient gaping gullet, swallowing the dead and spitting them out in neat grey rows.

I turn once more to look upon my father’s grave. Seamus MacBride, beloved father of one, widowed at the age of twenty, never to remarry. He knew loneliness too I suppose. The flowers in my hand don’t seem appropriate. My father was not a man for flowers while he lived; I’m not sure why he would appreciate them now he’s dead. And yet it’s the only acceptable gift to bring to a graveyard, so I lay them near his headstone and remove the dead ones they replace.

The wind whips across the barren hill once more and the sky has darkened overhead. It’s threatening to burst and a sudden chill in the air promises rain. I turn my collar up against the wind and follow the old woman

downhill. Is she old? Not much older than myself. Time is slippery.

The drive home is slow and tortuous. Pounding rain has muted the colour of the world I drive through. Trees bow and dance in the wind, but not of their own volition. There is something awful in their movement. I am trapped in this car with memories of my father. I recall long evenings sitting on his knee while he told me of our history. His father was fireman in London when the wax museum burnt down. He said he saw nothing like it until twenty years later when he saw pictures of Hiroshima after they dropped the bomb. Melted faces.

My uncle Joe built the Empire State Building. I saw a picture of him once, high above New York. He looked half a god. "We lost him to the drink," my father had said while he thumbed the picture in his hand. I had never met him so I can only recall him as half a god. It's for the best. My father once told me that Joe was loved by everyone until the day he wasn't. No-one knew what line he crossed to change their mind. Perhaps there is no line. Perhaps they just get sick of you.

I remember him telling me about another brother who was a fisherman. He was caught in a storm once, two fronts forced together by a third front blocking from the north. There was never a storm like it they say, waves as tall as mountains; the coast was torn apart with the

power of it. My uncle, the fisherman, was lost at sea. Only seventeen years of age.

My father loved my mother, that much I know. I had never met her. Any pictures that remain of her have her face rubbed clear off by my father's thumb. I don't know my mother's face, but I know her as my father did. She was eternally beautiful to him. He would tell me she moulded him into to the man who raised me. I am forever grateful to her for that. I know I should shed tears for them.

The car boot is stuck and it takes the heel of a hammer to pop it open. The stench of cattle feed pours forth, a familiar smell. I throw a bag upon each shoulder and carry the load into the shed. I make another trip for the last two bags while the rain tapers off to a drizzle. The calves are costing me more than they're worth, but I should keep the place ticking over. I owe him that much. He reckoned this land has been in MacBride hands for centuries. He was proud of his name, of his family.

I've lived here my entire life. It is a discomfort to be so familiar with a place. Some evenings I sit before the fire, sip on a mug of tea, and try to recall a single thing I did that day. Weeks pass unmarked by exceptional events and thus they blur together into nothingness. It is as if time has given up on me, and has decided to wind its way around me and leave me in a vacuum. Still, this

farm is where I remain. I'm not sure how to live anywhere else.

I place the kettle on the hob and watch it boil. The whistle begins to blow and steam curls in ribbons towards the roof. The ceiling is blistered and wet where the ribbons meet old paint. I must repair the blackening plaster. Perhaps that will help me mark tomorrow. The boiling water scalds me as I wash my face and hands. With reddened skin I sit and read a little.

A poet once claimed that love was his religion, and he would become a martyr for it. What cause have I to die for? I know myself capable of love, but I've yet to meet someone who believed me. Instead they claim I know nothing of affection. I hadn't realised they were the same thing. It is too late to learn such tricks. When I'm finished I dress myself and sit into the car once more.

The pub is full this evening. The young Reilly girls are playing some song or other in the corner and I sit upon my stool and listen. As the night wears on it becomes harder to keep my eyes open and often I find myself sliding from my perch. Frank Higgins approaches me from a crowded table. He shakes my hand. "Cormac MacBride," he says, "the last of his line." And I begin to cry at last.

Donal Mahoney

Some Day Soon

Dexter Dalrymple had no idea why anyone would want to interview him. Who would care at this point what he'd have to say. Maybe his family and a few old friends, in deference to his age and wealth, hoping to find themselves in his will some day soon. But he had agreed to this interview and there he was now, at 82, sitting across from this financial reporter, a young lady, perhaps 22, the age of his granddaughter who had just graduated from college.

His granddaughter was the light of his life. He would leave all of his money to her if it wouldn't make everyone mad.

Dexter knew the only reason this young lady wanted to interview him was that he's worth roughly \$5 million, the harvest of over 50 years of investing in the stock market, all on his own, with no advisor. A remarkable achievement, he realized, for a man who had dropped out of high school with more than a little shove from the principal.

"Investing in the stock market is easy," Dexter had once told a financial advisor who had sought his business, "provided you have the brains and the balls to do it right. It's no place for the chicken-hearted."

The advisor went back to the office without a new client but he had met someone he--and many other people over the years--would never forget whether they bought and sold stocks or not. Dexter was a character, right up there with W.C. Fields whose old films he loved to watch in his home theater.

Many times Dexter had told Penelope, his wife of 60 years, that the smartest thing he had ever done was to marry her and the second smartest thing he had done was to quit drinking and smoking.

"I may have had too many milkshakes since then but that's why someone invented statins--to keep my cholesterol down," Dexter would tell anyone in earshot, sometimes more than once a day.

Every man has at least one weakness or maybe two, and a daily milkshake at 3 p.m. was the last one Dexter would admit to in a long life of making big money, collecting cars and admiring women, not always from afar.

"What was the greatest moment in your life?" the young reporter asked in her opening question, pushing back the waterfall of auburn hair falling over her left shoulder.

Nice hair, Dexter thought, but not a very good opening question for a young financial reporter interviewing a millionaire. She was supposed to find out how he made all that money. He didn't plan to tell her everything--

maybe a few things because she seemed like a nice person--but at least she could ask the right questions.

Dexter coughed and said, "I'll tell you the truth as long as you keep it between the two of us. The greatest moment in my life was the day I realized I was finally old enough that one woman was enough, that I could be faithful to one woman, my wife, and go back to the Church, and worship God the way I did when I was a kid in school and women weren't a distraction."

The young reporter looked befuddled because she had expected Dexter to tell her about some big deal he had made in the stock market. She knew he was one of the wealthiest men in America. He was a little odd, she knew, but in her young life she had already discovered that many successful men were a little odd in one way or another. But Dexter was on a roll now so she stayed silent and decided to let him finish.

"When I went back to the Church, " he said, "it was truly the greatest moment in my life. Better than making money or anything. To know that I could finally be faithful to my wife was a great satisfaction. I felt better doing that than making money. It's easy to make money. Not so easy being faithful. Not even with a milkshake every day.

"Remember now, this is just between the two of us. Don't put that in the paper and don't tell a soul. People

will think I'm nuts. I know I'm nuts but why confirm it for the public."

The young reporter said there would be no need to include that information in her article. She simply wanted to know what Dexter had done to make millions of dollars without any formal education and without any financial advice.

"Most millionaires rely on a financial advisor to keep up with the stock market," she told Dexter. "What makes you different? Is it that you never give up?"

Dexter thought for a moment and then said that not giving up was very important because the stock market is the roller coaster the cliché would have it to be. One has to be in it for the long haul, know when to buy and when to sell. Never lose interest. Never stop, except maybe for a milkshake every day. And always keep an eye out for the next big opportunity.

"By the way, young lady, do you have any plans for lunch? I have a table over at the Mark IV," Dexter said, rolling his wheel chair toward the door.

"Years ago I owned that restaurant and sold it for a nice profit to a gentleman who said he would have a reserved table waiting for me for the rest of my life.

"Scallops are the special of the day on Friday. Or if you like steak, theirs is well marbled. Marbling is important, on steak or on a woman. But don't quote me on that.

"We can finish the interview over there. I hope you have a big notebook. I think I'll have quite a bit to say.

"My driver is waiting downstairs."

Roisin Kelly

Love Poetry

Write what you know, they say. Even so
I have tried to imitate
those who have urged
poetry from the wound of history

kicking and screaming:
a forceps birth. Palm on the atlas
as if swearing on the Bible
I have tasted for words

of far-off places of which
I know nothing.
But it turns out I have only words
for love, and not-love.

For the way you rested your head
on your arm when you slept.
Perhaps you still do?
For the two of us running down

to the corner shop for biscuits
the way others race for liquor
against the 10 p.m. closing time
at the off-licence.

For the useless waterfall of days after
you left, the glittering void.

And I have words, too, for what
I know of here:

Leitrim and its bogland
the back-ache of days stacking turf.
The farmer laughed at the mediocrity
of my stacks, toppled them

like little ruined castles
and told me to start again.
Sometimes, cut turf
never makes it to the trailer, or the fire

and over the years
becomes rotten with moss-growth.
Sometimes, I wish
that houses did not mark out

the distant boundary of brown bog
but that it continued, edgeless
to the horizon.
I walk in the bog, and long

to lie down in its sodden grasses
and I write of it.
And once, I raised my eyes
to a late summer sky after rain

where dark clouds edged
with sunset's gold lace were parting

to reveal a lake-blueness beyond
like a glimpse of heaven.

Anne Marie Kennedy

Timing

It all started on Saturday, when you didn't go to mass. You got a 'right wallop' on Sunday, that's what you called it. On Monday, the ticker went completely off-kilter, and only then did you let them call the doctor, and me, in the middle of the night in Boulder, Colorado. My small sister sounded brave on the phone and I was afraid of the words she was saying; doctor's words and nurse's phrases about the heart, about your heart in particular. Mam said to come home as quick as I could. She said to try not to worry on the way, because she knew your heart well, and she knew for sure it would wait for me.

Five thousand miles of crying like a child on Tuesday. Denver, Chicago, Shannon; the air miles, the road miles, the road works in Gort never ending and I alone, and terrified you'd be cold when I'd kiss you.

But you weren't.

You were warm, frail yet fatherly.

'Dry up your eyes now a girleen. Isn't it great you got home, safe and sound, and sitting here beside me?

Now – tell me about the flight, was it Aer Lingus?

What was the captain like?

How was the landin' and how did he handle her coming down?

Did ya get a glimpse of the black cliffs along the coast of the county Clare?'

In the next three days, you did your damndest, as you'd

say, to make us laugh and make the crying go away.

You didn't like it.

'I've a lot a mileage up on the clock,' you said, 'it's a bad job that, mark my words, the high mileage, on any engine.'

In and out of a coma you went on Wednesday. We went daft from lack of sleep, non-stop cups of tea and Bourbon cream biscuits.

On Thursday you wanted jelly and ice cream. A nice nun said she'd make it but then we couldn't wake you. Don't worry, it wasn't wasted. When I got her back turned I ate it.

On Friday we thought you were gone, but then the cousins came. 'The big lads' you used to call them. Tall grown men, awkward, shuffling, mad about you; never took their eyes off you, no touching though; just small talk about parts for vintage tractors and how the buckrake was broken. They said you were going to weld it. You smiled from your sleep and they were delighted. They made round bales around your bed. They brought in the oats and the barley. They footed turf, told you the weight of the weanlings at the mart and what the dry cattle went for. And who'd be the first to hear the cuckoo that year? Simple things they knew you'd want to hear, being said, near you.

They said they were staying the night then, told me to go to bed, but then you sat up.

'What age am I at all?'

'You're eighty seven Dad and you'll be eighty eight in two weeks.' I answered.

'Wouldn't that be some number lads? Wouldn't it be

great to see it? Only round the corner. I think I'll hang on for that.'

But your number was up.

As you'd say in your own way, 'it came up, with the dawnin.'

Schira Lane

Year One

The year began in November when my husband and I lost our son. It wasn't something we were expecting. But apparently Charlie was planning to go for a while such was the firm way the rope was attached. He was afraid of failure and always wanted one crack at everything, so it was no surprise even at the end he left in a single snap.

It was the squeak off the pulley wheel Higgins said, he'd never forget. Hell on the ears as he lifted his head to my wide-eyed boy. That dangled in a synchronised trapeze with bats. Almost reverent, he said the bats were, like they were keeping him company. But I'll be damned if the bats will claim him.

I wonder did they dart in an attempt to stop him, fill the air like dragons as if to scare him off. And what about the dog; where was Casper when we were still asleep? The dog would have sensed something was wrong and barked, and we would have woken, leapt through the yard and brought him back with mouth-to-mouth. I've thought of it often and I'm sure it would have worked if only we had known.

But we didn't and as often in winter we were deep in sleep, and I don't understand why we didn't hear the latch on the door downstairs. It needed oiling so it would have creaked as the bolt flew up and it would have scraped as he pulled the door back. The latch was clapping on the wood when I came downstairs so I know

it was his exit from the house. But at the time I didn't wonder. I simply screwed it back and closed it over. It was only when Higgins came to tell us did I make the link.

We were only just awake and I was making porridge. Listening to the weather forecast and hating it was dark at five to eight. I hadn't opened the blinds but yet if I had Higgins would have crossed the yard in front of the window and I would have seen him leave the barn with his ashen face. And of course we didn't believe Higgins when he came to tell us, as Charlie was:

"Still asleep in bed."

In the yard the galvanised door screamed in the wind, thrashing and banging like a great brass band and as the sun cracked it danced from the wall like knives. The hurricane roar that came after crashed like the sky was falling in. I remember it well, the last misery, as I knew them then. The hens made a sympathetic approach through mud and a bird was singing somewhere, the song so odd. I stalled at the entrance and turned away. I wiped my hands in my apron as if fighting with cotton would change the outcome. Maybe I wanted to see the mountains for one last time. As a mother you see, when I knew in my gut that status was gone. But I couldn't trust my gut, not then. They were lovely mountains, purple and deep, the plots like a comforter as the world turned yellow as corn. Such was my denial, I'd have found yellow in black. It was then I heard a shout and Higgins took my arm.

How my husband took him down I'll never know. But somehow he was able and so steady underfoot as if the

boy was weightless and hollow inside. Like a hatched egg after the animal had left.

“Would you do me a favour,” he even said, “will you hold his head?” But I couldn’t hold his head, or even look.

The rigid angle of his legs was enough.

“Take the pulse,” someone said, as if we were just in time.

The day was appropriately frozen with an early frost that the sun refused to melt. And I spent much of it brewing tea until it went cold too. Twenty cups I must have made, before I drank one; taken up with tannin rippling through the water and staining the side of each cup. When I did I couldn’t swallow and I spat the cold milky sauce straight into the sink. My husband spent the whole day in the barn, so he never had tea either. And Higgins – I never found out what he did that day. The dog sat at the door, ear cocked, like he was expecting someone. And when Casper went missing for three full days I knew he was searching.

It was with droopy ears, a squat snout, and the tail tucked away that he returned in a storm. It was the night before the funeral and there was so much right with the howling wind and flash flooding rain. At the cemetery when a blue sky seared, all I remember is whispering like a tailwind and Casper’s golden coat as it shed on the grave.

In the spring my husband said, “We need to get on with our lives.” That it was bad all this sitting and wearing black. I wanted to shout and ask him to stop being cruel. How could a man so cold have a son like Charlie?

Charlie who was so sensitive he had to get out of this world.

There he was but twenty, life in the palm of his hand, and by his very own arrow he cut it because of mood. But for all his delicacy he had no sentiment. He didn't even leave a note. Was it to hurt me he did that for; something I said or didn't say? The nurse in the coroner's said it was no one's fault.

"Treatment might have kept him going for a while," she said, "but when there's real intent they win no matter what." I never thought of it as winning, but there you are. It's the only thing that makes me think there's something after. That he's standing on God's podium with his victory cup in hand. So we went to the beach to find him with his trophy. As if he'd be smiling out from heaven onto the sea. My husband brought me and we trucked the water's edge as the sand chapped my feet and the wind my face. The terns were out, and as each swooped down I craned my neck to check on the beaks. But nothing came out of the spray that was Charlie. And my husband coughed and spluttered his way to the car. Like an angry jackdaw was the flapping of his coat.

I never touched Charlie's things, wanting to save the wonderful smell of manure that filled his room. That's gone now too. Higgins says, we should clear the space and make it a sitting room with a chair and a lamp where I could read. Higgins can do it if he wants, for it is no shifting of his elements, of a jumper or boot or spade or ball will bring him back.

Poor Higgins. He hosed down the yard the night Charlie was born like it was his son was expected home. I never

saw the yard so clean again. And since Charlie's gone he's been talking of angels, that I've an aura on my shoulder. It's a nice idea but I know it isn't real. My husband doesn't think so either, preferring to work off his grief with shovels and spades. And he's grown so thin because of it. Every week there's less of him and his eyes aren't like they were. I married him for his eyes and Charlie got them. So now I have two sets, flat of life. And nothing I say when I bring him lunch will make them sparkle. All that passes is the brush of two hands as they collide on the tray. And when it rains in that field, there's something right about the sound on the tarpaulin. We still go to mass like the habit will bring us a miracle, and the gap in the pew hangs like a broken clock. When I'm there I look at the Virgin Mary and I wonder why she gave me only one. If he just had siblings he might have been able to cry; expel whatever it was. He had his friends but that's not the same. They had their own rooms to go to after dark and at the funeral they were as confused as us. Funerals are all about too much, too late and if I'm frank I wanted to hit them all for just being alive. One poor lad continues to call but all it does is increase the absence like an ill-tuned band, amplifying that Charlie never gave us a sign. So I send that boy down to my husband, and I watch them with that male affliction, hiding their feelings below. My husband creased over a spade and the lad uneasy with his eyes diverted and his hands. They twitch on the fray of his denim, the leather of his belt. I wonder do they talk at all with the way my husband has his head down. And if they do, is it Charlie they speak of?

And about the siblings; is he there wherever the unformed nothings we tried to give him are? Maybe they are together in a swarm of midges. Or skimming over the ocean as the terns I couldn't see. But I'm inclined to think if they collided in the stratosphere there would be no recognition to link them genetically and they would have drifted on. That's what happens when twenty meets zero; unequivocally different the soul that lived from those that didn't. And the twenty might be crying. The amorphous ones wouldn't know what it was about and I can't imagine they'd ask him in the air.

It's hard to understand where he was going with his bright idea. Did he really think it was the answer or where was his at all in his mind when his neck snapped? Was there regret at that last second and was there me? But I think if I was on his mind, he would have left some declaration of his love on a page somewhere. And how did he think his father would manage with all those fields and the animals too? Higgins has to do it now, and he's hardly able. Two old men left with so much can't be right. But maybe that's what he wanted, using the barn. The shed belongs to Higgins, and it might have been Charlie's way of asking him to take his place.

I was searching through the cupboard, looking for a torch, when I found my son's hat. It was blue and a knit I did when I was pregnant and he was a squirm. It was too big when he was born and when he was two the hat sat on his tawny curls without flopping in his eyes. The blue in the wool brightened his green set and his face was most alive under that hat; running in the yard,

hunting back chickens with a big stick and yellow boots. And he wasn't laughing, just intent. He never laughed, so I should have known. Maybe if he'd chuckled, seen the funny side, been cynical even, it might have aerated the spirit and the damp and the place into which he was born.

I found the torch eventually, about an hour after twirling wool and keening with the hat. It was an orange flashlight, for search and rescue, spot beamed and a battery that would go on all night. It looked so strange at the door. The rope there too, all set for the anniversary. The day had to be passed somehow and the last hours of that first year drifted like lead as the moments floated oddly. By nightfall I was up in bed but not asleep.

My husband was the bubbliest he'd been; snoring like an animal and the shrill whistle after as he exhaled. I longed for such vigour for what I had to do. I had asked Higgins to leave the barn door open and he seemed to age with fear at my request. Conscious of the date, I'd say he was.

As I peeled back my side of the bed, my legs were lit by the light of the full moon and they grew to silver limbs like prosthesis. Did Charlie's shine like that? The creak on the stairs was eerie and opening the door downstairs, the wind sighed through. I remember how cold the latch was on my fingers and how my feet were bare and numb. Like his would have been. I drifted to the barn, the balls of my feet hopping on the silver ice as if he was with me rein-acting with a metallic conduction. And the mountains were sinister tomes, lifeless and black. A low-beat whine fell from the hinge when I pulled

back the galvanised door and as I stepped inside the torch threw a spot on the beam where he died. Casper woke but didn't move, preferring to watch me with secret implication and just one eye. And a fetid smell rose like someone was rotting.

I think my chest distended then.

The rope fell from my hand like a snake to the ground and something was breathing. When I peered to the beam beady eyes peered back. Water raced into my mouth, a bubble, and a vacuum emptied as air left my lungs. My shoulders rose and my arms went out and my fingers seemed to reach before me like those of another. But they found nothing and when they shook and I couldn't hold them any longer gravity brought them down. I swallowed then, gulped and chewed back what it was he might have felt at his final breath.

My knees roared as I hit the ground and my head lifted as I tore strands of hair from my scalp. And the shaking and rocking with hardly a breath went on for a while; my mouth wide, eyes pained, my purple face. I don't remember but the evidence suggests it was way before dawn when Higgins came to see what I had done. And he sat with me then, a blanket on me, a coat on him, silence but for the fall of animal breath, the odd shuffle under chaffing and my feet – kicking in two fat boots, until the sun rose and lit the second year.

Jean Folan

A GENTLE FIRST CUT

I mow grass,
blade to blades,
gentle first cut.

*Between two clamps
sever the cord that links
mother and child.*

I skirt the daffodils.

*We keep the first lock
when society demands
for the toddler a haircut.*

I circle the primrose.

*The first razor bought
for a boy heralds
the promise of manhood.*

I behead daisies.

*Cut-throat.
Post-mortem
Y-shaped incision.*

In the after-cut
a thrush pecks,
for worms.

Susanne Wawra

Flavescent

My eyes are closed, I am floating
In the juicy yellow of my view
A large pulsating circle of light
Embracing me, warm, welcoming
The heat of the sun glows
On my face, gently caressing it

I dip my fingers deep into the colour
Spread it over my arms, its soft
Texture hugging my skin and bones
I lick it off my hands, its sweetness
Bounces on my tongue, the taste
Of adventure soon fills my inside

Once more I reach into it, then dive
Throwing my entirety into the sunny
Abyss, I bathe in its electricity
It tickles and tickles my atoms
Immersed in luminous paint, I let in
The lightness, the joy, the good

I lose gravity and fly towards the
Burning sky; laughing, free, high
Finally, I have reached it, arrived
I open my eyes, blink and go back
Into the darkness of my every day
But I am recharged, reborn, ready

Maroon

In your room, we sit down
On your shaggy rug, light
A cigarette and read our
New poems to each other.
We take them for a spin
On our tongues, let them
Roll through our mouths,
They fill the space
Between me and you.
The maroon rug becomes
A magic carpet and
Carries us away over the
Landscapes of meaning.
The images in my head
Chase each other as I listen,
The words gallop in a
Beautiful rhythm towards
The finishing line, you give
Your consonants the spurs,
The vowels cry out. The
Sounds echo on till we sink
Into each others souls,

Emptied, enlightened,
Enriched.

Máire Holmes

Osna

Tuigeann croí an aistear chiúin,
Níl comhairle uaidh faoin slí,
Gan aird ar réasún agus ciall,
Ag brath ar anáil atá a thriall.

Chas croí agus anáil le chéile,
Níor scaradar, déanach ná moch.
Ní féidir le croí bualadh gan bheatha,
Is dá anáil a thug sé a ghuth.

Glacann croí le gach gné,
Sin lom chlár na fírinne,
Cé gur féidir le osna é a chrá,
Í ag teacht agus ag éalú

Fiú guth, le aer úr a fháil,
Is le preabadh atá sé ag fanacht.
Ní droch rud, croi a leanacht.
Is gaol domhain é le beannacht.

Helicopter

In aois do seachtó cúigiú bliain
thuirling helicopter
chun thú thabhairt go
dtí na flaithis.
I do chuideachta
bhí do chlann.
Glúin agus céim eile.
ní snámh na marbh a bhí ann,
ach ceiliúradh dár n'athair.
In aois a seachtó cúigiú bliain
é in airde a réime.

In aois d'ochtó seachtú bliain
Thuirling an spiorad naomh
Chun thu thabhairt go
Dtí na flaithis.
Is snámh na marbh a bhí ann.
I do chuideachta
Bhí do chlann
Glúin agus céim eile.
Brat suaimhnís thart timpeall
Ár n-athair agus máthair
Íad go síoraí in airde a réime.

(The second verse was written twelve years after the first verse).

Inís Oírr
(2005)

Leaba Caomháin
Ag séideadh ins an ngaoth,
Fliuch faoi dheora Inís Oírr,
Fearg ar oíche an chinnbhliana,
Í ag múchadh.
Deireadh greim
Dhá mhíle agus a cúig,
Le blogamacha móra báistígh
Cantáil agus fuaim.

Ruaig uaim na drochnósanna,
Ruaig uaim smaointe
A fhágann peann ar imeall,
Ní faoi uisce,
Ní faoi thalamh,
Ní faoi thuairim
Ní faoi réasún
Ní faoi chuibhne
Ní faoi dhraíocht
Ach ag seoladh i measc ciúnas atá idir bualadh croí.

Fir cróga ar an gcéibh
Ag tábhairt comhairle
Don té nach dtuigeann an aigéan.
Muid báite le chéile
i bhfoscadh claoi atá ag scoilteadh,
beagán ar bheaga
Le brú uisce agus ama,

Ní thuigeann cloch am
Ná am, aon rud ach imeacht.

(ii)

Ní gan misneach atá na daoine,
Páistí ina measc ag lorg treoir.
Ní gan cuimhne atá muintir an Oileáin
A thuigeann contúirt glór gan focal,
Uisce ag caint idir tonnta agus deor
Ag sileadh léi ag dul thar stró,
Ceangal na dtonnta
Scaoilte le fána
Talamh agus spéir go léim maraon,
Teanga a thuigeann súile gan éisteacht
Tá an pictiúr mar atá os ár gcomhair.

Tá salann i chuile dheoir a thiteann,
Níl cumhacht sa mbáisteach
Ach tá tárraingt ag tonnta
Fíochmhar agus mór,
Béal an domhain ag lorg beatha,
Is iomaí iascaire a d'fhreagair an glór.
Ceol na gaoithe
Ag damhsa léi,
Inníú tá fuinneamh sa nglór snasta
A d'fhág an taoide ard
Ag ceithre a chlog.

Amach ar aghaidh
Tá an bád ag luascadh,

Níl cosa aice le snámh nó siúl,
Siad na fir áitiúla arís atá cróga
Iad ag stiúradh
Bád gan ceangal
Isteach sa gcuan.
Ní iontas nach bhfuil bád ag seoladh
É ag iarraidh breathnú ar éalú bliain!

(iii)

Tá leaba Chaomháin faoi uisce spéire
Is thar sáile atá an bád,
Fir, mná agus uile
Ar oileán bheag Árainn.
Bliain eile ag sciarradh uainn agus romhainn
Guth lag-láidir lá agus oíche
Slabhra nó saoirse, níl rogha roinnte,
Tá mo chása fanntá, fonn scríobh ar mo pheann,
Faoi eangach, clocha nó coiscéim ar trá.

Tom Duddy

The Painting Class

The affable man knows what we want as he glances with every teasing word over the rims of his spectacles. His features are set at a smile, his eyes at a twinkle, though perhaps a shadow visits each time he turns his back to us to draw attention to all the soft greys of the clouds or to find the horizon line in the finished painting he has brought for us to copy. Visual decisions already made, he knows that two hours is enough time for us to get a semblance of it down on our own piece of canvas, even with a coffee-break at eight or so. In trepidation we dip and dab and mix and swirl and tentatively apply, until, to our childlike surprise, a small cottage boasting a very yellow thatch appears at the very edge of a deep blue lake, then two red ochre cows lying at ease on a flat-green, lawny expanse of meadow in the foreground. Our beginners' classes on Cezanne, Surrealism and the Russians come to nothing as we, at ten to nine, complete the picture by chucking in swathes of clovers unknown to bee or botany, plus some 3s

at an angle – the distant essential birds
that take the bare look off the heavens.

Father Cheerful

The Canon always strode cheerfully down the presbytery avenue and out through the silver gates, briskly led by two or three of his cocker spaniels. He would sing out to us children on our way to the school – ah, yes, ha, ha, ha – tweaking a nose here or an ear there (always a painful thing, despite his high good humour). Then he would continue, laughing as he went – ah, yes, ha, ha, ha – on into the town to collect his morning papers, while we children dropped in to the church to pray that we would not be slapped hard that day.

Michael J. Whelan

Grapes of Wrath*

It happens on a Thursday, just after 2pm,
when ancient cultures and beliefs conspire
and vultures spiral above a peacekeepers' camp,
where cedars age slowly and the Litani River
caresses the ground where Jesus turned water
into wine, where artillery salvos rip the air
on their long flight and bite deep, deep into
that place of safety vaporizing its concrete
walls and burning and blistering and tearing
apart the mass of terrified flesh and innocent blood
seeking refuge from the hate of man.

A soldier climbs from the rubble limbs
and discarded faces, his eyes caked black with tears,
his hands at arm's length clutching the newborn baby
that looks like a headless doll.

**(Qana Massacre April 18th 1996). During 'Operation Grapes of Wrath'. Israeli Defence Force artillery shells strike a Fijian UN compound in South. Lebanon protecting 800 civilians fleeing the fighting, approx 120 died.*

The Rain has Come

The war is long over but it is not ended.
The searchers have come again
to dig but they must wait,
for today will be made of sorrow and pain.

The rain is falling, contaminated by gunpowder and
the residue of long decayed firebombed trees
rolling down into ditches and the gullies of dried up
riverbeds,
where the wind might sometimes lift the ghosts of the
dead
into whispering dust devils to live and die once more
within the span of moments.

The rain has come
to wash away the footprints of killers
and the hopes of the hurting,
who still long for the missing,
their hearts hinged on a rusting bullet casing
exposed like a white bone on the deepening red mud.

ECHOES

There is nothing left in this village
but the burnt out shells of homes,
roofless rooms and echoes
drifting across scorched black grass,
following boot prints through alleyways
and well trodden streets,
over rank smelling chicken coups,
dead pigs and silent tractors
stuck in time and sodden earth,
past the ancient cemetery and schoolhouse
to a raised ditch on the side of an infamous hill,
where the only living things without guilt
are the swarming swollen flies
feasting on the end story of a thousand years.

The echoes are not of children's laughter!

Seamus Scanlon

A hAon, a Dó, a Trí

I was born and braised in Galway.
Perfect skin.
Made in sin.
A Bohermore beauty from a corrupt mare.
A bastard fair with sartorial flair.

A blue eyed stare is what I hate with.
I never cry.
I never falter.
Up the Cathedral marble floor
I slowly saunter
In a fucken halter top
That melts the altar.

Brass, as bold as, my mother vented.
Bountiful blood-flow wise I presented.
Boot boys bored my fucken head off.

Breasts beguiled me in the grey Galway light
Poor Clare bodices on a Sunday night
Blue energy light came through me
And knocked me out.

Bless me sister I am a daughter.
I'm Zelda
I don't like fellas like I oughta.

My mother said Zelda you will break my heart.
I shoved her down the stairs – she called me a tart.
I clip-clopped down the steps
In my new slip backs
I said – do me a favor Mammy
Die fucken real quick
You lay with a murder man
And now you have me.
I'm Zelda.
I'll kill ya.
A hAon, a Dó, a Trí

Esther Murbach

Wild West Poet*

My stolid hometown of Basel
was brimming with excitement
at the arrival of the unruly Irish poet
who came to conduct a workshop
which was expected to produce quite a stir
in this civilised part of Middle Europe
as the guy is of the wild kind
not (yet) being tamed by a Nobel or a Booker Prize

Though, he had been considered prize-worthy
by some experts in his homeland
long- and short-listed on several occasions
once even the winner
when the Connemara Sheep Breeding Association
advertised a competition
for the best piece on the feelings
of a ewe at the birth of her first lamb
in free verse

He snatched the prize easily
the reward being a young ram
of the Blackface Mountain Breed

The ram was opposed to being milked
the Breeding Association was opposed to exchanging
him
for an ewe

who would at least have been useful
to the poet's breakfast
by adding milk to the extra-strong Irish Tea Blend
to which he was addicted

Apart from the tea
he was hung up on other things in his diet
like slurping the faces on Facebook
before the first morning cuppa in my kitchen
savouring even the occasional unsavoury portrait
of a so-called friend
appearing on the screen
happily produced by my ancient notebook
who enjoyed my guests's undying attention
as his dedication to virtual communication
surpassed mine by far

Not to mention that the poet was unable
to get through the day without the solid foundation
of crisply fried bacon and sausages

But bravely he kept quiet on the fact
that the lack of black and white pudding on a Swiss
table
sorely tried his ability to survive the withdrawal
symptoms
caused by the unavailability of this drug
which could not even be produced
by our local Irish Club

Thus suffering
the poet still let me lead him
to our local English Seminar
where the workshop was scheduled

We were greeted
by a long line of participants
queueing up for the thrill
of being taught the shivers
by a literary carnivore
short of the temperament of a wounded Celtic tiger

Getting iron bars
for safety during the workshop
separating the exotic animal
from the intimidated crowd
had been contemplated by the University Board
but the statutes said
cages were not allowed in the historical Baroque
building
which housed the seminar
because of aesthetics and monument protection

But who would protect the students from the slashes
in case the predator felt like lashing out?

Things did not turn out as badly as expected
due to the dietary shortcomings of the Swiss habitat
the carnivore lacked his habitual ferocity
the complacency of the emergency ward
of the nearby hospital was not disturbed

The blows he dealt out were minor
treated with band aids
and a few balmy words
from those unharmed

The few victims who were nicked
licked their wounds
and we all survived

**Inspired by the visit of Kevin Higgins of Galway to
Basel/Switzerland in November 2013*

Trevor Conway

The Taste of Raspberries

I bit into a peach,
And somehow, the sour kick
Of flesh softened by four days' waiting
Reminded me of raspberries,
Dunally raspberries,
Skulking behind the fir trees of my childhood home.

We'd pinch them off like eggs from a nest,
Be on our way
Across the rocky stream dipping and tumbling to Sligo
town,
Or whipped by low twigs
As we scurried between trees,
A burst football or two
Kicked to the base of each trunk.
Sometimes, kids from fields away
Would come to play
(Or cousins, measured in roads).
They'd steal a berry or two.

Today, I'll buy my fruit in the Galway market,
Sure to pluck a Sligo face
Shining between the shoulders and scarves.
Here is where they come some Saturdays.

I'll cross the Corrib,
Atlantic spray webbed to my window.

I play in Salthill, too,
But I've never found a raspberry
At the bottom of the ocean.

Jack McCann

The Creaking Door

Monologue

Lady with head shaven holding a cleaning rag, wearing a smock with pockets. Rosary beads and headscarf in pocket. Scrubbing brush, galvanized bucket and mop on stage, chest of drawers at side of stage, with vase of flowers and book of poetry on top, in drawer there are 2 wigs (one with short brown hair, one with blue rinse perm), a hat, a pair of Sixties style glasses, wedding and engagement rings. Duffle bag containing teddy bear on floor beside her, a little pile of sand to the side. Mirror on wall and holy pictures and crucifix on either side of a door.

How would you feel if you were left
On the steps of the orphanage at the age of four?
That was I, with nothing except what I was standing in
And the teddy I was holding.
My mother was crying
After knocking on the door telling me
To stay with the nuns and to be good.
I have stayed with them and I have tried to be good!
Yet I have been told constantly that I am bad, a bold girl,
an orphan!
I will always remember mam crying
Weighed down by her tears and by me and teddy!

She was getting rid of us, all at once.
I hoped that that, made her better, not crying.
I prayed for that special intention,
that her crying had stopped
And that she would smile again.
I did not find out that she had stopped crying 'til
Christmas
When she visited and every Christmas after that with a
packet of Marietta!
She still looked as if weighed down but by what?
Now I know, by me being there!
Never a visit from anyone else!
I was alone!
Mam's visits stopped when I was twelve, I presumed
she died!
I was afraid, but why? No hope of being claimed!
No hope of Mam coming to bring me to her home – our
home,
Where we would live happily ever after! No such luck!
I learned not to rely on dreams.
I tried not to dream at all, but they still came and
tormented me.
Showing me free, walking down the town,
Eating in a restaurant, going to moving pictures,
Which one of the girls saw before she came to join us.
Her stories were incredible and we all listened in bed
With great attention, consideration and delight!
And so we were educated by others who had
experienced things
We knew nothing of. It was flavours of a different world!
And what do I do all day? I pray, I clean, I pray again!

She starts scrubbing the floor with scrubbing brush

I pray while I clean, while I scrub. I pray the Lord
Will take me out of here and deliver me into society.
But am I ready for society? Is society ready for me?
Always intimidated, verbally and physically abused
So that I cannot think for myself!
I cannot do anything unless I am told, when to start,
when to stop.
How much elbow grease to use? Lots! How often? All
the time!
Is it ok Sister? It's not! I'll try harder after you stop hitting
me!
What! I didn't mean to use so much wax polish. I know it
doesn't grow on trees!
But the floor needed it as I could not see myself in it!
Now you can see yourself in it – beating me!
You beat me because you care for me
And you want me to turn out right!
Will I survive to turn out at all?
How many others have succumbed to the barrage of
blows?
The downgrading, the mental torture knowing I am going
To be pounced upon. But when and for what?
For being forgetful! For not polishing your shoes!
I am not worthy of polishing your shoes, washing your
feet,
Making your tea, and your life better!
Because I am a sinner, (***blesses herself***) born outside
of marriage,
Conceived out of lust and fornication, on the road to
damnation!

Do penance on earth you tell me! Not to look at you
In case your eyes are afflicted by mine
And my eyes will turn blind for looking!
Yes, you send me to school but with my head shaven!
So that I and all the orphans stand out in our smocks
Made from flour sacks and sackcloth!
And being told we should be glad of them, which we
were!

The front door, the creaking door, only opened
Announcing the arrival of a sister or a special visitor.
Otherwise it was shut, locked, barricaded so no one else
could pass through.

To lose your freedom as a child, means losing your
childhood.

Working instead of playing, silent instead of
gesticulating,

Backward instead of forward – for forward is forbidden,
now and forever.

I wash in cold water, yet the floors, the toilets and
clothes get the hot stuff!

I don't hold it against the floors or clothes, for they are
better than I!

Because they can be made clean and there is no hope
for me!

I would love a Marietta biscuit now but Reverend Mother
Is feeding them to the Priest

With his afternoon tea and brandy – purely medicinal!

For the love of God and not for my fellow man!

I not only once thought of terrorizing my captors
Change their prescriptions for a lethal dose.

Take their rosary beads to make a bead ladder to
escape.
Now I need a cuddle but I have lost – somebody has
stolen – my teddy bear!
I think it was the Reverend Mother. She wants it to
replace
The infant Jesus in the crib at Christmas as he is
missing!
Even the three wise men can't find him.
My teddy bear being breathed upon by a cow and
donkey
And being watched by sheep
My only relic of the past, gone!
When I leave or escape I will have lots of teddy bears
So I can have loads of cuddles.
Sister calls me a bastard child! (***blesse*** ***herself again***
) I like that word bastard!
It seems so strong. I do not like the word child, as I do
not know what a child is!
I am a bastard survivor! Victorious in having stayed alive
for so long
To have made my first and two hundred thousandth
confession,
My unholy Communion, my uneasy Confirmation,
Sacraments they are called!
O Sacrament most Holy, O Sacrament Divine, release
me from
This Valley of Tears that wash away my iniquities!
Sister says they are my periods or monthlies, given by
God to all women
Because Eve had tempted Adam and he gave in!

Maybe they should have been given to all the Adams for giving in?

What's this? Sister Concepta giving me a sweet! (**shows a sweet in her hand**)

What does she want?

Just to thank me for my silence and for not telling on her when I found her

Reading Lady Chatterley's Lover, where else? But in the garden shed!

She's too nice, too different, that the door doesn't creak when she enters or leaves!

Even with all the oiling and adjustment of hinges, it still creaks

If, you are one of them! The door tells on them. It never lies!

I am years here! I wish I could float away on a baggy white cloud

And be dropped on a desert island with the rain!

The natives would be so grateful to see the rain they would be happy to see me too!

They would make me their Queen when I married their chief

And they would copy everything I do!

How I clean and scrub and look in polished floors!

They would all bring me gifts of teddy bears, all different, all individualistic

(**saying in div id u al is tic slowly**) The Sisters were always telling us we were

in div id u als. As different as chalk and cheese! All these teddies I get, would need

lots of hugs and kisses and no one would steal even one of them!

I would lend one for the Christmas crib and get it back afterwards as I was the Queen.

Life would be on my terms and it would be worth living!

There would be no orphanages only happy homes, each with a mam and dad.

Children with a childhood, playing games, singing and dancing!

Learning about faraway places and people and no laundry to be done,

No floors to scrub and polish, no darning of socks, no hypocrisies.

I wonder if such a world exists and if so where?

Someone please tell me

So I can have hope and desire, two things that are forbidden.

Meanwhile, I can make believe and I am happy in make believe! For it's magical!

I am alone, no one shouting or pulling my hair. I am free!

I can fly with birds, rub noses with horses and take a piggy back ride on dolphins

She mimics doing all of these

I might even want to live, even forever!

Be able to look everyone in the eye without turning blind!

To be able to eat when hungry and sleep when tired.

In other words to be in charge of my own life! To have my own Marietta!

She takes a head scarf from her pocket and puts it on

I am nearly eighteen, they say I will be leaving soon.

Leave to do what? Where to go?

Here I only go to bed, to the laundry, to the kitchen,

To the chapel, to the laundry, to the darning room.

All within one hundred yards.

The garden is off limits since Sister Concepta was caught in the shed.

I wonder if everyone lives in orphanages?

Orphanages for different ages.

Am I going to one for over eighteens?

She blesses herself

I bless myself thinking of it, to protect me!

It's great that blessing yourself, can make things alright!

The Sisters like to see you blessing yourself!

She takes out rosary beads from her smock pocket

Saying the Rosary while you soap, scrub, shine without stopping.

No rests allowed either in the Rosary or the work.

She puts the rosary beads back in her smock pocket

I have two mouse friends,

They only like me because I feed them some of my porridge each day

Which I bring them in my cupped hand.

I wonder will they come with me when I leave

Or do they like porridge too much?

Once a crow came down the chimney when I was cleaning the fire grate.

He was shocked to have landed in front of me and looked at me with one eye

And when he had taken stock, he turned his head

And looked at me with the other eye!

He allowed me pick him up and brush the soot off him
And moved his back, up against my hand.
When I stopped he asked for more.
I wish someone could brush me the same way!
They say I will go to a house first where I can stay till I
get a job.
I have a job here – loads of jobs to do here!
I mustn't be good enough if they don't want me to stay!
I must remember to scrub harder and polish better in
future!
What job can I get?
All I know is to clean and polish, wash and shine,
Arrange and re-arrange; so that's what I'll do!
I will clean for someone, for anyone, for many, for
money!
I will need money to live, to stay somewhere
By myself or with other orphans.
To buy food, so I can have it when I want it and not fixed
by time.
Eat at 8am, 1pm, 6pm.
Sleep at 8.30pm, wake at 4.30am,
Mass 5am
Cleaning and polishing at 6am, laundry at 8.30am
Again at 1.30pm and 6.30pm.
Wash- water, sweat, tears mingle with the clothes,
Stain them, leave with them and are worn
On the backs of their owners,
Not knowing what has been spent to dress them.
Some lives have been spent, many lives have been
wrecked.
What of the survivors?

They all carry baggage,
Wounds, some still festering
Which will bring their downfall.
Others will wear the scars till they enter their graves
And will be able to show them to their God
When they arrive at the gates of Heaven.
And He will say "You have had your hell on earth,
Now enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven!
Come in and meet all your friends that have gone before
you,
They are here too!"
***She takes off the headscarf and puts on a wool cap
She puts a duffle bag over her shoulder***

The day has arrived.
I am to leave today.
I can walk out through the creaking door
And I don't ever have to come back.
And I have a job!
Sister Concepta told me yesterday that I am to work
As a housekeeper for a doctor in the country.
He has a large growing family and his wife needs help in
the house.
It will be the first family I've been part of.
It will show me what I have missed all these years.
The childhood that has never been, but work, work,
work!
I will not let them down.
I have packed all my things in this duffle bag
Which Mags made for me and I am ready for the off!
Some quick goodbyes to my closest orphan family

And to Sister Concepta

Who is the only nun to see me go out into the world!

Would you believe it?

The door did not creak when I opened and closed it!

I insisted that I do it myself for my self-esteem and confidence,

And the feeling was all the better when it did not creak,

Getting a big hooray from those left within!

I walked, glided from my fourteen year residence sentence,

The air smelling sweet with pink and white cherry blossom.

The birds were singing, wooing each other.

A collie dog came up and sniffed me and I sniffed back.

A beggar, who had just begged from the nuns,

Put his hand in his pocket and gave me a shilling!

With a “you need it more than me” retort!

I did not look back; I did not want to turn into stone!

At the end of the lane a car was waiting,

The door held open by the doctor.

“Your car is waiting Miss – let me take your bag”

I got into the front seat but I held onto my bag

I had never been in a car before

And found out that they have bonnets

To keep the engines warm, like bonnets keep our heads warm!

I felt that I was being pushed very fast in a big pram

And me looking out at fields surrounded by stone walls.

Animals everywhere, horses, cows, sheep, I had only seen in pictures.

Each welcoming me with sounds I had not heard before

Speaking a language I did not know.
I had never seen so many trees – of all shapes and sizes
And I thought that all houses were orphanages
With children scrubbing, polishing, and washing inside!
The doctor said that they were family homes!
Mostly with a Mam and Dad and children inside.
Some with no children at all! No children?
Those houses must be empty, quiet and eerie
Like in the orphanage when everyone is at Mass
The tiled floors sounding hollow when hobnail boots
smack it
But the sound being dulled when the hustle and bustle
returns
We stopped outside one of the biggest houses,
Bigger than the orphanage and probably bigger than the
Pope's Vatican House
From the pictures that Sister Concepta showed us.
I immediately thought of all the washing and scrubbing
needed
The miles of floors that would need polishing
And that it would be very easy to lose yourself in it
So that you might miss dinner, because you may not
hear the bell!
The doctor's wife looked at me and asked to feel my
shaven head,
It was her first time she said, so she was treading softly,
like me!
All their children had plenty of hair – some in curls,
others in ringlets.
I would brush it for the girls and they mine, when it grew!

She puts on wig and looks in wall mirror

I would look at it, stare at it, in my very own mirror!
We weren't allowed to look in mirrors in the orphanage
Vanity is a sin – we would go blind!
I did not want to go blind, so I didn't look in mirrors
Except the odd peep when no one was looking.
This was the only family home I had seen.
Everything was new, bright, and beautiful to me.
I was amazed at the amount of laughter
Coming from the rooms, from up the stairs
Out in the garden, by the river
People were happy, able to talk to each other,
Sing out loud, dance a jig, run, skip and jump
Without been told to stop. "Stop making a nuisance of
yourself!
The devil loves idle hands! Go and say your prayers!"
Everyone looked each other in the eye
Especially, when they talked to one another
And they did not go blind, even a little bit!

***She takes off the smock and is wearing a blouse
and skirt and apron underneath***

I sat at their table and ate their food
They talked to me and I shyly talked back.
I walked with a big stride, head in the air like a giraffe
Forgetting my shuffle and bent head, looking at the floor
And the tips of my toe caps
I helped the doctor's wife, cooking, cleaning, polishing,
Minding the children when needed.
She said I worked hard, the best she has had
And gave me Sundays for myself, to walk, run, admire
nature

I did not leave the house at first 'til I gained confidence
When I could decide what I could do
“No! – do this, do that! Come here, go there!
Don't you know, you should be seen and not heard!”
It took some time to realize that I could decide.
That I was mistress of my destiny, my life.
Able to walk through a door into the open and walk in
again!
I did this many times and waited for the door to creak –
it did not!
I found myself, I blossomed in that household,
The family brought out the real me, my inner self
They believed in me, so I learned to believe in myself!
I started to make decisions, not to bless myself so
much.
To look people in the eye, when talking to them
To see into their souls, as they saw mine,
And I was always the better for it.
No longer afraid, no matter what the problem.
I started to smile, to laugh, I even cried
When the family puppy died from eating poison.
I did not remember when I last cried?
I think it was when little Molly Duff died of the
pneumonia!
Then I was told –“don't be silly, dry your tears girl!”
She arranges flowers in a vase
I love flowers from the garden – I arrange them in the
house
I have them in nearly every room and they smell of joy
and peace
If someone gets annoyed, I give them a flower.

She picks out a flower as if handing it to someone

They see the beauty of it and their annoyance goes away.

The doctor's wife gave me my first birthday party.

She said she got my birth date from the nuns.

We had cake with my name on it and plenty of candles.

I had to blow out all the candles and make a wish.

I wished that Mags in the orphanage could be as lucky as me.

They all gave me a present – I have them still in my duffle bag

She picks up her duffle bag and takes out her teddy

Beside my teddy bear – did I not tell you?

When I opened my bag in my own room

What was in my bag but teddy! My infant Jesus!

She cuddles him

I do not know who put him there, but he was there!

My only possession from my past life with Mam.

Was it one of the other kids that had him all along?

Or was it the Reverend Mother having a conscience attack?

I did not care, I hugged and cuddled him and he cuddled me back!

I went to the seaside with the family on a sunny day.

Everything was new, beyond belief, full of happiness.

I wanted to stay there, live there, fill my lungs with sea air,

Warm my white cold skin with my new friend, the sun,

Which up to then, I hardly ever saw,

Never mind hanging around for it to warm me!

She takes off her shoes and socks and tests the

sand with her toe

I walked in the heated sand in my bare feet,
Then tiptoed at the edge of the water to cool my toes.
She runs backwards as if a wave is chasing her feet
I watched the children swim and dive and have fun
And wished all the orphanage could do the same!
They would talk about it for months afterwards
And the beatings would not hurt if you thought of it.
It would act like an anaesthetic to get rid of pain,
It would be like physiotherapy especially for the brain.
The waves rhythmically beat on the shore, kissing it,
One can neither do without the other!
Like me and my past, not to be forgotten.
Like the sailboats can't do without the sea and wind.
The shore listens to all the stories brought to it
From far off oceans and lands by the waves.
I caught a creature called a crab – walking sideways
It's nippers pinched my toe and hung on for dear life.
I was having none of it and gave him back to the sea!

***Holds up her hand, opens her fingers as if dropping
the crab***

The doctor recited a poem in the car on the way home,
By William Butler Yeats

(slowly)

"I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey
bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the
crickets sings.
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements
grey,
I hear it in the deep hearts core."

It sounded lovely! My introduction to poetry.
He later gave me a book of collected poems
***She picks up a poetry book from the top of the
cabinet and leafs through it***
Allowing me to escape to other worlds!
It has fired my imagination beyond belief.
I am so glad Sister Concepta taught me to read and
write
But I got no chance to practice either!
The doctor said I should travel and see the lands of the
poets,
So I would better understand what they are writing
about.
I can see them in my mind when I close my eyes
But I always have to pass through the creaking door
first!
With the doctor's help I found Mam's grave.
A stone marked the spot, nothing on it except moss and

weathering.

It stood out because of its simplicity

And I loved it all the more.

We all said prayers and I left flowers

I recited part of the poem “Elegy in a Country
Churchyard”

Which I had learned off by heart to make her proud of
me.

I felt this poem was written just for Mam and me!

Especially the last verse.

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene

The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,

And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

I visit Mam’s grave and talk to her.

I love to sit and recite poetry that I think she’d like.

I had her name put on the stone.

And the possible date she died – during my twelfth year.

I really hope she is happy in Heaven!

O Mam! Rest in peace! I’m alright!

I cleaned the doctor’s office as well.

There, I saw him treat rich and poor,

The rich paying for the poor, God bless them!

I liked it there amidst all his medical books and
instruments.

With these, along with his knowledge and kindness, he
made people well.

I believe he has **the cure** in his hands,

They would be on fire when he would be examining you
You could feel the pain ease almost immediately.
He did not know where the heat came from
But said that he once got a shake in his hands
Which gradually got worse and worried him.
It was noticed by a lovely old man who was a patient of
his.
This man was a carpenter, just like our Lord.
And he had his hands blessed by the Pope.
He asked the Doctor if he could say a prayer over the
Doctor's hands
To pass on the blessing, for all the good work he was
doing.
That night, while he was sleeping, didn't the shakes
leave the Doctor
And he has not seen or felt them since!
The old man on the other hand, died soon afterwards.
It's as if he knew he was going to his Maker and wanted
to pass on the blessing!
I regularly shook hands with the scrawny skeleton in the
corner!
We were great friends but he was the quiet type.
I dressed him handsomely to the amusement of patients
Using some of the Doctor's cast off clothes
Or some from the pawn shop or a second hand shop
But only the best, you know?
The doctor said it broke the ice with the children!
They would tell the skeleton their problems
As he was really attentive to them
And he had to be one of them as he had obvious
problems too!

I also accepted all clothes given to me, for myself
Whether they suited me or not!
Eventually, those I did not use I gave to the doctor for
the orphanage.
It would give them something to wear instead of the
smock when they left.
I liked to buy occasionally the best of clothes.
Most of the time I would just look at them
And I would know I had come a long way!
Clothes and things I could only have dreamt of in the
orphanage
Never thinking that some day I would be looking at them
Never mind having them in my wardrobe, or better still
wearing them!
I have bought brothers and sisters for teddy bear
The only reminder of my past besides my memories
My most treasured possession, my listener, my
confessor,
Who dried my tears so often he became waterlogged!
The family set up a teddy bear hospital for me
As I have repaired, patched, sewn injured bears,
Returning them proudly to their little owners
Who no doubt will comfort them through life?
In time, again with the doctor's help, I got my own flat,
My own space! I would walk from room to room,
All four of them, from kitchen to the sitting room,
To the one bedroom, and lastly to the bathroom!
Then, I would start all over!
I would switch on the light and switch it off again,
On again, off again, and laugh as it obeyed my every
command.

I would open and close the doors, waiting for them to
creak
Which they never did, even a little bit.
It was another dream come true and I used to pinch
myself.
I would invite the Doctor's children, they were young
adults then,
To tea, for a chat, to fill me in with what was going on in
their lives
As I had been part of their young lives for so long.
I would also have some of the orphans around.
Sorry, young ladies from the orphanage,
Who had left the home and like me, were free!
They were having their eyes opened as mine were
And we were a big help to each other.
We were a family again but on our own terms,
Learning to laugh and cry at what we had been through
And thanked God that we had survived to see what was
on the outside.
I introduced them to books, especially poetry.
I taught some of them to read and write,
To lose their fear, to hold their heads up high.
I watched them blossom, skip along the pavement,
Run on the strand, bury their feet in the sand.
To see them lick an ice-cream cone for the first time
And catch the hidden sparkle in their eyes as they do
so!
They kept me down to earth with their stories
Of their so called life before they passed through the
creaking door!
Yes, the door still creaked, some of the old nuns passed

on,

And there were new ones, with different names but with
the same ways.

Heads were still shaven, smocks were still worn.

Times were still regimented, heads still bent,

Eyes to the polished floor, so you could see yourself in
it.

Do this, do that, and still get a beating with hand and
tongue,

Good for nothing wretched girl, day in, day out,

Seeping in under your skin, 'til you believed it, all of it!

When will it all change? Who will change it?

What can I do to stop this torture of innocents?

Who will listen and take these young Jesuses down
from their crosses?

Meanwhile, young helpless creatures, not people are
treated so!

Open the creaking door, let them all out! Let them
breathe!

Let them see the light, feel the sun on their faces,

The rain on their heads, the sand between their toes!

Let them smell the roses, the hawthorns, the new mown
hay.

Look at the oceans and the waves that caress the
shore.

Let them stand up straight and be proud of who they
are!

Let them live, it's not enough being alive, let them live,
live!

She puts on a hat and a pair of glasses, sixties style

As years slipped by I grew in stature,

Like climbing a stairs, I took it step by step,
Building a foundation not with blocks but with friends,
I wrote poems, stories of what it was like to be in an
orphanage,
A “home” (***she indicates inverted commas with her
fingers***)
A laundry or sweat house, at all ages, with no names.
I spoke to Politician, councillor, journalist. I even wrote
to the President!
Some listened, some took it in, many did nothing at all.
I gave talks, readings, sometimes to a handful,
sometimes to many
Reaching out and happy to be there!

One day, my mother’s brother’s daughter, my cousin,
came to see me!
I did not know my mother had a brother!
Her family disowned her after she had me.
My cousin lived in America and while tracing her roots,
traced me!
I was gobsmacked! I had family! I was not alone!
We got on like a house-on-fire, swapping stories.
She was able to give me some history of where I
belonged.
It was like my jigsaw life was coming together.
The lost pieces were found and they fitted perfectly!
I was found, had found my identity, found my family!
Which now hit me like a bolt of lightning!
She had pictures of my Mam, her father, Mam’s brother,
And one of me when I was about two, in a sailor suit.
What was I holding but my teddy bear friend!

Mam was smiling and this took my breath away.
So, there was a time when she seemed happy!
My cousin told me my father was a Priest.
The same Priest that visited the nuns regularly
Having brandy with his afternoon tea – and my Marietta!
Mam was his housekeeper, they fell in love and she had
me!
My father would not give up the Church, so I was given
up instead!
Having kept me, fed me, cleaned and loved me for four
years,
Thinking, hoping, praying we would be a family.
My mother's heart was broken and it eventually killed
her!
I decided to go and see the Priest in the presbytery
He got the shock of his life, asked what I was doing
there?
I came to see my father I said boldly! I came to see you!
He went from pale grey of shock to red with
embarrassment.
What do you mean your father? I am not your father,
dear woman!
So you still don't want me, I said. You don't know what
you're missing!
I walked away and that was that! I never saw him again.
And that did not bother me a bit! It's what I had
expected!
What I didn't expect was a letter from his solicitor!
He died soon after I had descended on him.
He left half of his estate to me, the other half to his
sister,

Who also had been his housekeeper after my mother
and she contested the will.

She won, as his name was not on my birth certificate.
I could not prove he was my father anyway. Let the
scandal lie!

Why he didn't want me and Mam as a family I'll never
know.

My cousin said it was a sign of the times!

How did he explain me to his Maker? I'd say it was fun!

No wonder the creaking door creaked loudly when he
entered and left!

May he Rest in Misery!

My cousin wanted me to visit the land of Opportunity!
The land where dreams can come true, if you have one!
Where the Irish went by the boatload to seek their
fortune.

Which for many was a loaf of bread at that time!

Some succeeded and others were buried with little to
show,

Most pining for the country of their birth or the country of
their ancestors.

My uncle did well and was happy.

He wanted my Mam to join him – she said she couldn't.

She needed to see me each Christmas and be near if
anything happened to me.

She would not visit more, her heart would not allow it!

It was broken each time she saw me and she cried
herself to sleep.

She never stopped loving the priest.

She had hoped we would be together again but it was

never to be.

She wrote all this in letters to her brother,
Letters which I was able to read and cry over!
After a number of visits to Ireland by my cousin I went
back with her

Flying in a big metal bird, high above the clouds where
the day's sun shines.

It seemed more Irish people were still emigrating
Changing the boats for these flying birds!

Florida – sunshine state, land of the retired and rich
Was beckoning me to come and explore, which I did.

I saw swamps and alligators that would eat you!

But when they heard my story, they didn't bother!

I drank coffee and ate doughnuts with ladies with blue
hair

Who wanted to talk to me because I was myself.

Who else would I be? Not one of those primadonnas.

I was being invited to this house and that,

Each one bigger than the other with all mod cons,

Including a swimming pool, or a tennis court or private
pier with boat attached.

The best fun I had was with my cousin's neighbour.

We met at a barbeque given in my honour.

He was doing the cooking and had been doing so since
his wife died.

He loved poetry and knew hundreds of poems

Which he would recite to me either by the ocean or at an
opportune time.

He even had written his own book of poetry and short
stories which I enjoyed.

He is a realtor, selling houses and property.

He is very successful and is semi retired
As the business is running itself with his able staff.
You could see he is a leader but a quiet one, leading by
example.

He has worked hard to get to where he is but is still
down to earth.

That's why we get on so well, he calls a spade a spade.

As you know, I grew up with no airs or graces.

There was no one more down to earth than me!

He visited Ireland and me after a few months

Saying he wanted to spend the rest of his life with me!

This swept me off my feet. I was flabbergasted!

I did not need time to think, I accepted graciously!

***She shows off rings on her wedding finger and has
a blue rinse***

I am now in Florida with teddy in a big house,

Mistress of our house of teddies, poems and stories

Which, needless to say I keep spotless, being able to
see my face in the marble floor!

I am his Lady of the manor – his Cinderella.

He is my Prince Charming – my Romeo!

The creaking door, creaks no more.

The shiny floor, mocks no more.

I look him in the eye and smile.

He smiles back with understanding in his expression

He holds me tight, wipes my brow, whispers in my ear

When I awake with the same nightmare,

Of being locked behind the creaking door and I'm
unable to open it!

But they are getting less now.

I still wonder at how the cards of Life were dealt,

Of what might have been if my father had really loved
my Mam,
If he left the priesthood, would God have really minded?
If we were a family would we have had his blessing?
Would Mam and Dad still be alive now?
Would I have my own brothers and sisters
Rather than my sisters in the orphanage?

Life has taught me, to always be true to myself.
Not to dwell on what might have been
And my life has come a long way,
Since I came through the creaking door!

The End

Biographical Notes

Ronnie O’Gorman is a recognised innovator in the media business. His newspaper, *The Galway Advertiser*, was the first free sheet in Ireland and one of the first papers to really embrace the use of colour and more telegraphic formats, content and layouts, which are now widespread in the print media business. Ronnie was born in Galway, where his family had run a successful business, printing works, bookshop and stationers since the turn of the century. He graduated in London and worked with the Westminster Press before returning to Galway in 1970 to set up the *Galway Advertiser*. The *Galway Advertiser* is today acknowledged as the leading free newspaper in Ireland.

Daniel Sammon lives in Renvyle, Co Galway. He walked in 2009 from Renvyle to Dublin to commemorate and celebrate the 1916 Easter Rising and all the great men and women who fought and died for Irish freedom down through the centuries. The story of this Walk is recorded in his first book, launched in 2010, called *My Great Walk Across Ireland*. In 2011 he took up academic studies again earning a Certificate of Distinction in Legal Studies. In 2011 he also published a book of poetry called *Take Your Ease & Rest Awhile, Enjoy Some Poetry From Renvyle*. The following year 2012 he achieved a Certificate of Distinction in Self-Employed Accountancy & Taxation from Kilroy’s College in Dublin. In 2013 he went back to the Open College in Dublin and received once again a Certificate of Distinction in Creative Writing. Now in 2014, he is planning to launch his next book called *Saints off Connemara Coast & Other Stories*.

Margaret Martin has acted in and directed plays and musicals throughout Ireland. She graduated with an MA in Modern Theatre Studies in The National University of Ireland Dublin. Margaret is a Public Speaking and Debating coach with the Galway Education Centre, and lectures at Galway Mayo Institute of Technology. A native of Monaghan, she grew up in a county immortalised in the Poetry of Patrick Kavanagh and has performed at the Kavanagh poetry festival in Iniskeen and recently address a Conference of Speech Drama Teachers in Cork. She has played leading roles with Patrician Musical Society and An Taibhdearc.

Brendan Smith is the Education and Community Outreach Officer at the Digital Enterprise Research Institute (DERI) in NUI Galway. For over twelve years, he has coordinated an array of successful medical, environmental, digital heritage and web science projects for schools and communities through his work with DERI, Medtronic, Waterways Ireland, the Galway Education Centre, Galway County Council and the Galway Science and Technology Forum. He is co-founder of Coderdojo Galway, Conservation Volunteers Terryland Forest Park, Cumann na bhFear (Men's Shed Galway city), Ballinfoile Mór Community Organic Garden and curator of the 'Computer and Communications Museum of Ireland'. As well as being a previous recipient in 2006 of the Galway 'Science Person of the Year' Award, Brendan has also earned other accolades including the Galway City Mayoral Community Award, the ITAG 'Computing in Schools' Award and the Apple Distinguished Educator(ADE).

Timothy Kenny is a former newspaper foreign editor, non-profit foundation executive, Fulbright scholar, and college journalism professor. He has traveled widely throughout the Balkans, Western Europe and Central Asia and has lived and

worked in Romania and Kosovo. His narrative nonfiction has appeared in *The Louisville Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Irish Pages* (Belfast), *The Kenyon Review Online*, *Green Mountains Review*, *The Common* and elsewhere.

Sandra Coffey is a writer from Galway. A former journalist, Sandra is inspired by her upbringing on a farm, quirky stories and her time working for regional and national newspapers. When not writing, she is a solo singer who released her debut album, *Morning Zoo*, last year.

Dr. Emily Cullen is a writer, academic, arts manager and musician. She holds a Ph.D. in English and works as Programme Co-ordinator with the Digital Humanities Observatory.

Gerard Hanberry is an award winning poet and writer who lives in Galway. His fourth collection of poetry was published by Salmon in 2013. This follows *At Grattan Road* (2009) also from Salmon. In 2011 The Collins Press published Hanberry's biography of Oscar Wilde and the Wilde family, *More Lives Than One-The Remarkable Wilde Family Through the Generations*.

Mark Reed lives in London with his wife Louise. He has a background in marketing communications and whilst he still works as a consultant he now spends much of his time writing, broadcasting and working in the area of voice-overs. He is currently working on his first collection of poetry.

Hedy Gibbons Lynott: A regular contributor to radio, her prize-winning fiction and creative nonfiction have been published in anthologies. She holds an MA in Writing from NUI,G, facilitates creative writing workshops and collects

folklore and local history.

James Martyn Joyce is from Galway. His first collection of poetry 'Shedding Skin' was published in 2010 by Arlen House. His collection of short stories 'What's Not Said' was published by Arlen House in 2012.

Alan McMonagle is best known as a short story writer but he also writes poetry. Alan has been invited to read his works at events and festivals both in Europe and the US. His second collection of short stories 'Psychotic Episodes' has recently been published by Arlen House.

Geraldine Mills has published four collections of poetry and two collections of short stories. Her third collection of short stories, Hellkite, was published by Arlen House in December 2013.

Jessie Lendennie is a poet and also co-founder and Managing Director of Salmon Poetry. Her poems, essays and articles have been widely published and she gives numerous readings, lectures and writing courses in Ireland and abroad. Jessie's latest collection of poetry is called 'Walking Here' and she is currently working on a memoir 'To Dance Beneath the Diamond Sky'.

Des Kenny, a member of the Kenny bookselling family in Galway, is one of the four sons and two daughters of Des and Maureen Kenny, who opened their first bookshop in 1940. Educated in Coláiste Iognáid, Gaillimh, University College, Galway and the Sorbonne, Paris, he has been a bookseller, real and virtual, all his working life. He and his wife Anne have four grown-up children and live in Salthill, Galway.

Jean Andrews was born in Co. Clare and educated at NUIG and the University of Nottingham where she teaches Hispanic Studies. She has translated the Cuban poet, Nancy Morejón (*Black Woman and Other Poems*, Mango, 2001) and published a first collection, *In an Oubliette*, in 2005 (Arima). Her translations of the Spanish poet, Carmen Conde and her second collection appeared in 2013.

Máire Morrissey-Cummins is from Waterford. After working for many years in the Financial Sector, she lately has found the wonder of poetry and art. She has been published with *Every Day Poets*, *Wordlegs*, *The First Cut*, *A New Ulster*, *Open Road Review*, *Your Daily Poem*, *Bray Arts*, *The Galway Review*, *Verseland*, *Notes from the Gean*, *A Hundred Gourds*, *Lynx*, *Sketchbook*, *Kernels*, *The Never Ending Story*, *Chrysanthemum* and many online and print magazines worldwide. She is a member of Haiku Ireland. She was listed in the top 100 European Haiku writers for 2012.

Timothy Walsh's poems and short stories have appeared in *The North American Review*, *Arts & Letters*, *Cutthroat*, *New Millennium Writings*, and others. His awards include the *Grand Prize* in the *Atlanta Review International Poetry Competition*, the *Kurt Vonnegut Fiction Prize* from *North American Review*, and the *Wisconsin Academy Fiction Prize*. He has been featured on *Garrison Keillor's The Writer's Almanac* and has been nominated three times for a *Pushcart Prize*. He is the author of a book of literary criticism, *The Dark Matter of Words: Absence, Unknowing, and Emptiness in Literature* (*Southern Illinois University Press*) and two poetry collections, *Wild Apples* (*Parallel Press*) and *Blue Lace Colander* (*Marsh River Editions*). He is an Assistant Dean at

the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Eva Bourke is originally from Germany but has lived in Ireland most of her life. She has published six collections of poetry, most recently *Piano* (May 2011, Dedalus Press, Dublin), two comprehensive anthologies of contemporary Irish poets in German translation, as well as a collection by the German poet Elisabeth Borchers (Poetry Europe Series, Dedalus Press). Together with Bórbala Fárago she edited an anthology of immigrant poets to Ireland, entitled *Landing Places* (2010, Dedalus Press). Her work has been translated into many languages, her collections *The Latitude of Naples* and *Piano* appeared in Italian translation in 2010 and 2011. She has lectured on poetry and taught creative writing at universities in the United States and Ireland. She teaches in the MA program at NUI Galway, has received numerous awards and bursaries from the Arts Council and is a member of Aosdána.

Michael Gorman is an acclaimed poet from Sligo living in Galway. He has been lecturing in poetry and creative Writing in NUI Galway for many years. His collections are *Postcards from Galway*, *Waiting for the Sky to Fall* and *Up She Flew*.

Moya Cannon was born in Co. Donegal. She has published four collections of poetry. Her most recent collection, *Hands*, (Carcenet Press, Manchester) was short listed for the 2012 Irish Times/Poetry Now award. A further collection, 'Keats Lives on the Amtrak' is due from Carcanet Press in 2015.

Lorna Shaughnessy has published two collection of poems *Torching the Brown River* and *Witness Trees* (Salmon Poetry 2008, 2011). Her work was selected for inclusion in *The Forward Book of Poetry* 2009. She has also published

two translations of contemporary Mexican poetry, *Mother Tongue. Selected Poems by Pura López Colomé* and *If We Have Lost our Oldest Tales* by María Baranda, (Arlen House, 2006). Her translation of Manuel Rivas' poetry, *The Disappearance of Snow*, (Shearsman, 2012), was shortlisted for the Popescu Prize in Poetry Translation.

Laura Caffrey studied in the MA in Creative Writing at NUI Galway with an emphasis on poetry. She is putting together a full length collection at the moment. She lives and works in Galway.

Alvy Carragher ricochets between writing poetry and weeping over the hopelessness of it all. Her poetry is often put on lists of varying length. She has twice become Connaught's Slam Poetry Champion. Her blog is the funniest in the land, according to the Irish Blog Awards and her mother.

Jarlath McDonagh was awarded an MA in Writing at NUI Galway in 2014. He is travelling the world at the moment.

Patrick Deeley is a poet and children's author. He was born in Loughrea, County Galway, but has lived most of his life in Dublin. David Marcus published many of his early poems in *New Irish Writing* during the late 1970s and early 1980s. His first collected work appeared in *Raven Introductions 1*. Six highly praised collections of his poems have been published by Dedalus Press: *'Intimate Strangers'* (1986), *'Names for Love'* (1990), *'Turane: The Hidden Village'* (1995), *'Decoding Samara'* (2000), *'The Bones of Creation'* (2008), and *'Groundswell: New and Selected Poems'* (2013). His poems have also featured in leading literary journals in Ireland and been published in the USA, UK, Canada and Australia, as well as being translated to French, Italian, Dutch, Ukranian

and Moldovan, and anthologised in more than thirty compilations. His books for children, published by O'Brien Press, include 'The Lost Orchard', winner of the Eilis Dillon Book of the Year Memorial Award in 2001.

Breda Joyce's poem *The Void* was commended in November 2013 in *The Poetry Project Award*. Her memoir, *John Henry Joyce and the Nine Irons*, was long listed in the *Fish Publishing contest* in 2013. Her poems and a memoir piece were published in *Musebox*, 2011/2012. Her story, *Thresholds* was published in *The Ireland's Own Anthology* 2010. Her poems have been twice shortlisted for *The Writing Spirit Award*.

Fatmir Terziu lives in London, UK. He holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from the London South Bank University. He is an academic, writer and filmmaker. He is author of many books of poetry, short stories, and essays. His documentaries such as *Pencil and Computer* and *One Egg* are selected for BBC. Fatmir Terziu is known in the UK for his essay, *Parametric Narration in Norman Wisdom's Films*, written in 2007. This essay was one that helped shift the orientation of film theory towards a study into the parametric narration of Norman Wisdom's films.

Matt Mooney. Born in Kilchreest, Co. Galway. Living in Listowel. His collection 'Droving' was published in 2003 and 'Falling Apples' in 2010. His poems have appeared in 'Feasta', 'West 47', 'First Cut', 'The Applicant', *The Galway Review*. Ranked in top 30 in Poemhunter contest.

Mary Madec has a B.A. and M.A from NUI, Galway and a PhD from The University of Pennsylvania.

She has published poems here and abroad and in 2008 she won The Hennessy Prize for Emerging Poetry.

In 2010 her first collection, *In Other Words* was published by Salmon Poetry. She launched her second book, *Demeter Does Not Remember* with Salmon Poetry, in 2014.

Michael Nolan (b. 1950, in Dublin) recently retired from a lifetime spent in education. He was Principal of a Jesuit Special School for nearly the last twenty years of his teaching career. He also studied Law and was called to the Irish Bar. He has lifelong interest in writing and literature.

Michael Burke was born in Ballaghaderreen in 1956 –one of ten children- moved to Galway in 1974 – married Denise in 1979 -they have two sons in Scotland –at present they are living quietly /frugally in a two-storey house, with stairs, in the east of the city...although they have removed the wallpaper .

Piaras Ó Droighneáin. Is as ceantar Chois Fharráige do Phiaras. D'fhreastail sé ar Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh, áit ar bhain sé céimeanna BA agus MA amach. Is breá leis a bheith ag scríobh ina theanga dhúchais.

Stefanie Bennett has published eighteen books of poetry. Over 40 years she has acted as a publishing editor, tutored in The Institute of Modern languages at James Cook University and worked with Arts Action for Peace. Of mixed ancestry (Italian, Irish, Paugussette-Shawnee) she was born in Townsville, North Queensland, Australia. Stefanie's latest poetry title, 'The Vanishing', is to appear at year's end. Publisher – Walleah Press.

William Ruleman is Professor of English at Tennessee

Wesleyan College, where he teaches a wide range of courses, including creative writing and literature, with a specialization in modern poetry in English, including that of Yeats, whose hometown of Sligo he visited in May 2013. His poems have appeared most recently in *Open Writing* and *Poetry Salzburg Review*, but also in many other journals, while his first two books of poetry were published by Feather Books of Shrewsbury, England, and his translations of Stefan Zweig's early novellas and stories appeared in 2011 from Ariadne Press. Currently he has several other books of poems and translations in progress.

Orla McArt is a history and English teacher. At present, she lives in Tullaghan, Co. Leitrim. Her poetry has been published by Ink Sweat and Tears, HeadStuff, the Floor Magazine and Silver Apples Magazine.

Heather Minette is a graduate student of literature at the University of Houston – Clear Lake and the author of *Rooftops and Other Poems* (Blue Hour Press 2013). Her work has been featured on Freshly Pressed and nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

Kevin. J. Nolan, Dublin born, holds an honours degree in Philosophy from The Milltown Institute. He also studied fine art in the National College of Art and Design. His writing has appeared in, *Skylight 47*, *Colony and Studies*, among other journals. Also a singer/composer he has recently released his debut album entitled “Fredrick & The Golden Dawn”, notably he has recorded a duet, “Aubade” with Julie Feeney.

Theresa McCormack comes from Cobh, Co. Cork, looking out on the sea. She is married and has two children. She enjoys photography and writing poetry and is a fan of the Cork

G.A.A.

Dean Buckley is a writer of fiction and poetry, originally from Cahir, Co. Tipperary, and currently living in Galway City with his girlfriend and their two cats. He studies English and philosophy at NUIG and enjoys arguing with people in public places. His previous publications include *Verse Kraken*, *A Hundred Gourds*, *Revival*, *Literary Orphans* and *The Found Poetry Review*.

Majella Kelly is a native of Tuam, Co. Galway. A graduate of UCC she also holds an MA in Modern Drama Studies from UCD. She was short listed for the Cuirt New Writing Prize 2013 and The Fish Poetry Prize 2014. She is a photographer, half of the creative duo known as Fotissima. Her first poem was published in the Autumn issue of *Skylight 47*.

Sean Garvey is an IT consultant working in north Dublin. Originally from Mayo, he spends his spare time writing short stories and building websites. Sean has had his first short story featured in *Wordlegs*.

Donal Mahoney was nominated for Best of the Net and Pushcart prizes. He has had poetry and fiction published in *The Galway Review*, *Revival*, *ROPES* and other publications in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Roisin Kelly was born in Northern Ireland in 1990 but has mostly lived south of the border. She moved to Cork after completing her MA in Writing at NUIG. Publications that have featured her work include *Crannog*, *the Bohemyth*, *Wordlegs* and the *Irish Examiner*.

Anne Marie Kennedy, MA in Writing at NUI Galway is the winner of the Molly Keane Creative Writing Award 2014. Her work is published in ROPES 2014, Black Heart Magazine, The SHOp, The Colony, Galway Review and others. She is an award winning performance poet.

Schira Lane is a graduate of English Literature from University of Limerick and In May 2014 she was selected to attend the writing workshop with Trinity College Dublin Writing Fellow Declan Hughes for her novel and in July 2014 she was longlisted for her flash fiction in the Swift Satire Festival/Battle of the Books. She has just completed her first novel.

Jean Folan lives in Inishcrone, Co. Sligo. She earned MA in Writing at National University of Ireland, Galway. Her poems have been published in West 47, Crannóg, Revival, The Cuirt Annual, Network Magazine, Trácht Magazine, Midlife Slices Anthology. Shortlisted for The Cuirt New Writing Award 2007. A featured reader at Over the Edge 2007. Winner, Culture Night 2010 Ballina, Co. Mayo. Runner-up Culture Night 2012, Galway. Her first collection of poetry *Between Time* was published by Lapwing in 2013.

Susanne Wawra is a German visual artist and poet based in Dublin, Ireland. After an exploration of work life in an international big name company, she decided to swap a secure career for life as an artist. Even though English is not her mother tongue, it is her preferred medium for poetry. Recent publications include *Weyfarers*, *Valve Journal*, *Boyne Berries* and *The Glad Rag*.

Máire Holmes is author of *JOY Selected Poems* and *DÚRÚN* (1988). Coiscéim, Dublin. She holds MA in writing from N.U.I.Galway, and Education Award in Psychology, Counselling and Therapy. She is Editor in Chief of *The*

Galway Review. Máire Holmes is a bilingual poet, playwright, writer, songwriter.

Tom Duddy was born near Shrule Co. Mayo in 1950, and died in Galway in 2012. He worked for over 30 years in the Department of Philosophy at NUI, Galway, where he authored *A History of Irish Thought* in 2002. In 2006 a chapbook of his poems, *The Small Hours*, was published by HappenStance Press. His first full collection, *The Hiding Place*, published in 2011 by Arlen House, was shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney Centre Poetry Prize and the Aldeburgh First Collection Prize. A posthumous collection, *The Years*, was launched by HappenStance Press in March 2014. Here are two unpublished poems written by him, submitted to *The Galway Review* by his daughter Clare Duddy.

Michael J. Whelan is a poet and historian living in Tallaght, County Dublin. He served as a peacekeeper with the Irish Army in South Lebanon and Kosovo. He was 2nd Place Winner of the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award in 2011 (short listed 2012) and selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions Series in 2012. He was 3rd place winner in the Jonathan Swift Creative Writers Award (poetry) 2012. His poems and short stories have been published in *Cyphers*, *Crannog* and *The Moth*.

Seamus Scanlon is an associate professor and a Carnegie Corporation/New York Times awardwinning librarian at the City College of New York's Center for Worker Education. He is a native of Galway, Ireland and a graduate of University College Galway, the University of West London, and the City College of New York. Recent achievements include a residency at the McDowell Artists Colony and an

emerging writer fellowship from the Center for Fiction in New York. His latest theater project 'Dancing at Lunacy' ran during March 2012 at the cell theater in New York to enthusiastic reviews for example in the Huffington Post. The sequel 'I Am Harm' is nearing completion. His work has appeared in the Irish Times, the Sunday Tribune, Promethean, Journal of Experimental Fiction, Review of Post Graduate English Studies, Global City Review, Fish Publishing Anthologies, the Roanoke Review and Gemini Magazine.

Esther Murbach, born in the middle of the 20th century, was raised and is living in Basel, Switzerland. She studied languages, history and philosophy in Basel and Berlin. She is a journalist and translator. She has been a freelance author since 2008.

Trevor Conway, a Sligoman living in Galway since 2005, writes mainly poetry, fiction and songs. He has recorded an album of his songs, released in 2013. His work has appeared in magazines and anthologies across Ireland, Austria, India, the UK, the US and Mexico, where his poems have been translated into Spanish. These publications include ROPES, Decanto, Read This, Fusion, The Literary Yard, Cuadrivio, Periodico de Poesia, Poetic Expressions and Poetry Salzburg Review. In 2011, he was awarded a Galway City Council bursary. He is a contributing editor for The Galway Review, and his first collection of poems is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry.

Jack McCann has been writing seriously for the past few years and attends KARA (under Maire Holmes) and Oughterard (under Pete Mullineaux) Writers' groups. He has published two collections of poetry, Turning on a Sixpence in

2011 and Escaped Thoughts in 2012. He is included in two anthologies, Off the Cuff (KARA) in 2012 and Oughterard Voices in 2013. He has written plays and is currently finishing a novel.

