

Callum J. McCready - The Galway Review (28/01/25)

Cover Letter/Bio

Callum J. McCready is an Irish artist based out of Belfast. When not working by day in retail at night he moonlights as a writer.

His poetry has been published by numerous journals including *A New Ulster*, *Bindweed Magazine*, most recently *The Galway Review*, and has a number of projects in the works as well as an intention to cross over into other disciplines.

When not bound by the ball-and-chain he enjoys gardening, exercising, reading, listening to music, watching movies and spending time with family and friends.



Poems

Members Pavillion

Sitting in the Members' Pavillion (Dickhead Brigade) draped in a heavy black tablecloth
drinking a protein smoothie, my nose is running like a leaky tap -
it was -1 earlier on - condensation hanging in the air from the light of my lamp like a
cloud of moondust.

There's no insulation in these marquees.

Tables set, mugs, dishes, cutlery, the works, all these empty chairs awaiting
the festering pestilence of those who will soon inhabit them, supposed dignitaries. Do
these people ever give a thought for what happens
to these things when they're not around to occupy the space?
Space continues to exist whether or not they do.

Chairs are always there, passive, objective, practical observers. They
fulfill a functional purpose in our stead but in our absence a chair,
however empty, is always there, omnipresent.

At the advent of a rising sun, impending daylight, signs of life begin to show.
The morning chorus of birdsong is occasionally interrupted by the chatter of sheep and
goats, lowing cows and horses neighing while pigs squeal.
Distant traffic, cars on the road, nearby motorway,

the first of the day shifts will be starting soon...

At the Balmoral Show (alongside Creamfields and Disney On Ice one part of
what I call The Unholy Trinity of Nightmares, a name I've bestowed upon
my least favourite shifts to work) I've lucked out, getting five straight
nights and having Saturday and Sunday off, the less to look at them,
but I still detest this place, the former Maze prison site.

The chiefs run around like a bunch of blue-arse flies, at least half of whom don't know
what the fuck they're actually supposed to be doing. Like the
rest of us they're just figuring it out as they go along, trying their best
to get by, survive, and the people involved are some of the meanest,
most rude and nasty bunch of individuals I've ever met.

Halfbreed Nordy Hillbillies always yapping and fighting.

Over the years, I've suffered all manner of abuse, ignorance and condescension here.
On one day I was hit by two different cars, had another attempt to intimidate me by
driving close, threatening to run me over if I didn't let him go where he wanted and
when told otherwise, oh, of course, I had no place telling him that, cause what do I
know, I was just "a boy" and "a child." A politician once wanted my head for smearing

his nose with dirt on an election poster. I more than once contemplated crapping in the DUP tent -

And no,
Sammy Wilson,
you have to pay the eight quid
parking fee the same as everyone else.

- What part of you cannot park in the Yellow Car Park do you not understand?
No, you do not pay my wages, that wouldn't entitle you jack shit anyway, so fill your coffers and stuff your boots cause this car park's full. Real farmers are busy working while you folks want a club social over machinery, tractors, combine harvesters and prize animals, so you'll just have to go to the Brown Overflow. I know you don't get out much but stop taking the piss. It's not because we aren't doing our job right. We've had staff out here busting their humps on seventeen-hour shifts since half five this morning. It's because of assholes like you double and triple-park, block emergency exits and lanes and don't listen to instructions, ignore what we're saying and do whatever the hell you want despite the service and guidance we're providing because you think you know better, y'all think you're somebody but you ain't nobody, you're nothing, least of all to me.

Fuck me?

No, fuck you.

That's the kind of thing that would have eaten me up inside,
burning up through my layers of battle-hardened armour,
the shell I built up around myself, the cocoon's wall
disintegrating to leave only a pile of ashes after
the initial bay of blood when the iron maiden
closed over, trapping me inside behind
the rusted, blood-stained spikes.

But sitting here the product of a mind, active yet objective,
restless and relaxed, I realise I'm achieving mind-body
duality, am at peace with the conflict,
tranquilo.

[10th May 2017 0459]

"this is what you've got to look forward to, kids..."

I'm
looking at
these four walls,

lift straight ahead,
double-doors to my left,
stairs and kitchen to my right,
emergency button behind. -

God,
I'd
love
to
bang that buzzer. -

Schools Cup Semi-Final,
15-hundred in attendance distracted from
the humdrum tedium of existence.

"Where's the nearest place to get coffee?"

"Where's the nearest toilet?"

Always what's closest,
easiest, immediate.

Does anyone ever think about looking, seeking, leading, instead of being led?

Questions,

questions,

questions,

and you've already started walking away
before I've given you an answer.
Don't be so fucking rude!

You got what you wanted, an outlet, an excuse to do something, what, I don't know. But what I do know is that you already knew the answer to your own questions. I only exist to you as a mere conduit, a sounding board, an excuse for a human being in the name of interaction, a supposed conversation.

In between
shooting a short film -

I remember my supervisor questioning me about it.
Presumably they were quizzing as much as watching me
from the pie in the sky that was the Ulster Rugby control room.

- reading my tattered copy of
the Little Book of Wisdom,
twiddling my thumbs,
pacing the space,
I walk back and forth to the toilet
just to do something,

see the look
in their eyes,

the adults, at least:

(youths are less discerning or discriminating: their faces do not lie)

Bearded weirdo mumbling to himself staring at nothing.
There's something
off about him,
oh, yes,
the people they
employ these days... -

Maybe this was how I perceived myself as reflected in their eyes?

- It's something that
combines
nervousness and disdain,
and
they wonder
why
I won't
look them
in the
eye, "at my feet," instead, like Austin used to say...

when the crowds head up and down the stairs,
once or twice I'm inclined
to
bellow out
from the top of my lungs,

"this is what you've got to look forward to, kids...

Sorry to dash your hopes and dreams but you're not going to be an astronaut, an astro-physicist or a paleontologist, what you've got ahead of you is

years of mediocrity, working tedious, menial jobs to earn a wage, make a living, get a pension, insurance, all that craic, pay your bills, policies, licenses, benefits, a lifetime of debt and resplendent bullshit that has no meaning.

Bonded and blackmailed into participating in a game you didn't want to play, you were steered there in fancy cars by your parents or dumped in the turning circle off the bus, educated, indoctrinated, integrated, assimilated, the stakes are high and you pay with your life, robbed blind from the cradle to the grave and you'll be lucky if at some point you can rest easy before you die, because the only place of peace
is the piece
that
you left behind
 up inside
your mother's womb,
'the lights outside, they're too bright, come, crawl back...'"

Don't get me started on the middle-class,
as though that status is something to aspire to.

We're failing
our kids.
Twenty years removed from Good Friday and we haven't got past first base.

As it says on the numbers above the lift,
you're less than zero.

Everything I've ever learned I've had to find out for myself because the preachers and the teachers never taught me anything about what what it means to be alive.

What do they know?
They're victims just the same,

unwitting agents raised in this fashion, instilling us with the same empty promises they believe to be good and true, this and the tired, rigid mentality where nothing ever changes and everything stays the way it is, settling for less, bringing you no closer to your dreams and every day closer to death...

But it doesn't have to be this way.

0212, 7th March 2019

1632, 04/09/24

2115, 25/11/24

the wheel

watching dopes park up and wait, I figure I should start charging commission: I'd make a bloody fortune.

I'm back at
the wheel,

the working day comes and goes.
observing the rise and fade of traffic
with the weather as I sit in my chair
highlights it's inherent absurdity.

the pursuit of false goals and
gains for non-existent fame,
imaginary brass rings;

get a job, make some money
so you can spend it on useless
things which mean nothing.

I've been volleyed about and passed around.
not that it bothers me, anyway.
I'll let others get their knickers in a twist.

too many other things to worry about
instead of wasting time on needless shit.

i giggle as they beep their horns,
a futile outlet for aggression,
frustration and anger.

take advantage of the opportunities,
make your own, pave the way.

1054.
the lorries move into the yard where they'll stay until tomorrow.
the office can't let me go till they've heard otherwise, so
here I am being paid to sit on my hole and do frig all.
Most folks would be happy enough with that but
not me.

The weather's alright.

Cars at the lights,
junctions, crossways,
maps, mental pathways.

Is that the way to engage?
Is this living?

Spending your life at
the wheel - "there's a reason
- it's not called the grind for nothing!"

It won't end till you're ground down to dust,
waiting to fade away before being scraped
up, blown off the edge of the world.

That's why I refuse to place importance in such things.

I reject false idols and prophets masquerading in our name.
You do not speak for me, are nothing but your own, -
as am I
- so restake a claim among the human race and not above it.

I do this from necessity but things are only
necessary because we choose them to be so.

If God made man in His own image, does it not stand that
man has made the world in *his* own image?

Is it any wonder our polluted, poisoned planet is revolting against us?

In our corrupted defamation,
efficacious defilement,
we whip and scourge
our Mother Earth.

The bowels are vomiting, pissing and shitting principles of decadence.

Babylon!

the wheel
is a symbol, grid of code, a wireframe matrix
blinding us from what we know to be true.

run off, take the risk to prosper lone, sing the body electric
or spin with the malevolent whirling dervish, a St. Vitus'
Dance of death moving faster and faster all the time
until you reach the breaking point.

[8-8, two vans, a car, a skip, 5.30-10.30, Windsor Park, Truck Cover.
If - ... - you'll do something with it.]

- when the pink stars have fallen

Draconian ideas breathe
with lungs functioning by
way of rusty foot-pedal,
pumped full of hot air and gas,
infecting with a level fever
that sounds like nonsense, smells bad
and's worth less than the
shit coming out your ass.

Tell a big enough lie you'll make everyone a believer -
hey, alt-right, how you doin'?

- putting the Aryan in sectarian:
no child is born with hate.
It's what you teach 'em and preach to 'em.
Again, you disgrace yourselves,
"terrorists, no longer," you say, -

you're an infidel in my home.

I grew up with pride and principle,
live by a code of honour, ethics which
involve moral fibre, decency and respect;
you are everything I live and breathe and stand against
and the reason you don't like people like me is because we see you for who you are.

- fulfill your will in solemn masquerade.
The Good and the Righteous,
spiders in dark disguise,
the truly virtuous drown on their righteousness,
eat each other alive, egged on by wolves dressed in tailored human clothes,
asps in the grass spreading poisonous bile and toxicity, rumours and conjecture,
whispers and lies. Bereft of love, they seek to destroy truth, beauty and sincerity,

feeding off our pain,
fueling the vehicles of Hate,
the engines of Moloch consuming bodies,
the smoke of souls wisping away into the night,

The Word of God perverted
for a social agenda,
but
you don't have one
really,
do you?

All you've got's an excuse
easily exposed in sunlight,
a new dawn that will not fade,
blood-sucking parasites burned to a crisp,
putting to rest the Devil's favourite demons.

C's and P's, black and white,
puppets dangling on strings,
pawns in the political game,
made to do other's bidding,
ideas created to divide,
walls to keep us apart,
control by contention,
flashpoint.

We'll be one, together,

-

(My Dreams Are) Spurring Me On

(Spoken)

Twenty-five years old, spending Saturday nights on my parents' couch on the verge of tears, wondering what the fuck I'm doing, telling myself I'm happy when deep down inside I fear that the flame flickers when the wind blows, that one day the fire will fade, fizzle out into nothing.

(Sung)

But I know there's something there, it's a case of do or dare;
jump without a care.

My hopes are spurring me on,

my dreams are spurring me on.

And the beat, it goes on, on-and-on-and-on, 'til I'm good and gone

(Spoken)

I've my plans laid out, been working hard on getting my shit together, bringing about a bit of order to a life often as erratic, unstructured and chaotic as my state of mind, and then there's a monkey wrench in the works.

(Sung)

But I know just what I seek

I know there's something there,

just a case of finding where;

which hope to crawl towards, I; which lair?

My hopes are spurring me on,

My dreams are spurring me on,

And the beat, it goes on, on-and-on-and-on, 'til I'm good and gone.

(Spoken)

You had to go and screw me, you bastards, you charlatans, you parasites, feeding off and sucking the blood out of the back-broken, hard-working folks just trying to earn a living, break the chain, the never-ending cycle of pain, spin the wheel, the wheel of fortune, babe!

(Sung)

But I know this rabbit hole,

the dark abyss in the pit of my soul;

ain't it time the light was shone?

My hopes are spurring me on,

My dreams are spurring me on.

And the beat, it goes on, on-and-on-and-on, 'till I'm good and gone.

(Spoken)

The fact remains is that no matter how much you or I try to put me down, there's still so many things to do; it's time to find out what it really means to be alive.

(Sung)

Now I know just what I seek,
draw upon the tears I've weeped,
show the world where I've been,
all the things I've seen.

Our hopes are spurring us on,
our dreams are spurring us on.

And the beat, it goes on, on-and-on-and-on, ever-good and ever-long...

(Spoken)

[Space for a stray thought, in case I find it...]