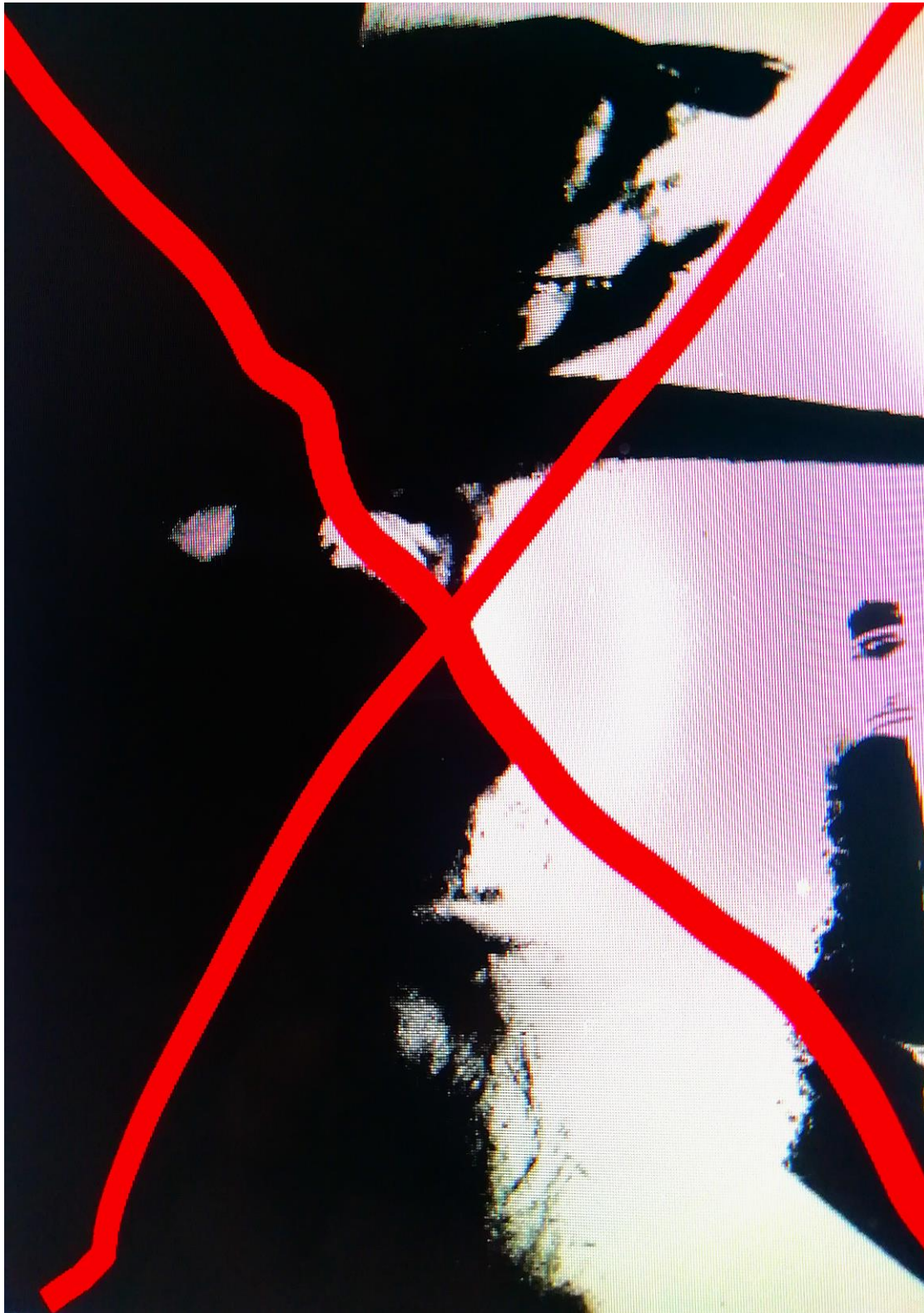


Cover Letter/Bio

Callum J. McCready is an Irish artist previously based out of Fistera and Galicia. Published in both poetry and prose across numerous journals including *A New Ulster*, *Bindweed Magazine* and *The Galway Review*, when not bound to the desk he enjoys gardening, exercising, reading, listening to music, watching movies and spending time with family and friends.



Paola

when you're standing on a beach,
battered, bruised, beaten and broken,
a wrecked, dishevelled brute, a hollowed-out
shell of a man, wondering
what the hell you're doing
with all these people you
can't stand as they
marvel over a monster,

just remember
that

on the other side of the river
running through
into the sea,

though you can't hear her words,

there's always going to be
someone smiling over,
waving at you...

0033, 25th Feb, 2020

there's a dead bird in the garden

in between overgrown weeds.

looking at it's carcass,
the blood of a fresh kill
in the early stages of decomposition,
flies buzz around, proboscises feasting,
I wonder,

was it old or young?
it's only a little thing.
did it die painfully?

with it's open beak,
eye (still) glistening,
there's an anthropomorphic tragedy
that defies the cruel laws of nature.

i know
I'm projecting,
but still
I detect
 sadness in
the blank, vacant stare of death,
a view of the abyss, window to the void,
being and nothingness.

picking it up with a dustpan and brush,
it sticks to the grass
before coming up.
I put the body in with
the brown bin's
 green waste.

my father points out another. i mention a cat prowling about,
thinking back to the bird screeching up a racket the day before, flying
away as one of those furry fuckers sidled past through a hole in the hedge.
holding my smoke between my lips,
i clap my hands together,
spooking it to go fuck off.

i stand,
finish a page of Walt Whitman,
intending to deal with the corpse when
Dad scoops it up with a hoe.

Full Circle

"no journey is complete without a return home."
So a wise woman once said.

In your company I was comforted
by the warmth of your presence.

We shared the same bed when you slept over,
the sound of your voice singing as you went about
chores, washing dishes and the like, filled, nourished with happiness.

I'm in my grandfather's chair,
the faint, lingering smell of smoke in the air,
As a child my family worried about my health.
As a man I'm here to make sure you keep yours.

Coughing rings through the silent night all about the house.
Occasionally I check to see you're okay. You're settling down.
I hope you get a good night's sleep. Though I don't share your
sick bed, the ever-present commode by it's side, I'm here for you.

We used to go to shopping centres. Always kind and generous, you spoiled
with gifts and love. I can only hope to pay you back for everything;

maybe someday.
Perhaps
living is the only way I can.

He's put himself in the hospital because he didn't listen to the doctors again.
Blessed with the goodness of health, I want him to come out alright,
but he's stubborn as a mule, foolish with pride, and
I can't help feeling he's throwing his time away.

You didn't ask for sickness, nor did you deserve it.
You've been through enough to put most folks down three times over,
but somehow you still find the ability to fight, muster the will to survive, just
so you can step outside, breathe in the air,
the brilliance of life.

That's why I'm here for you.

I don't have to go out of my way;
you've never been a burden to anyone, are a pleasure to be around,
my greatest influence, our bedrock and matriarch.

You built me, made me, inspired me.
I wouldn't be half the man I am today without You.
I'm not perfect but without you I'd be a whole lot worse.

Nanny, I love you with all of my heart,
appreciate everything you've ever done for me.
That's why I'm always going to be here for you,

still am, five years down the pipeline...

Unburdened

Although it was a decision which saw me hesitate before the touchpad, it didn't stop me pushing the button; the cursor on the 'Send' icon did the rest.

With a heavy exhale, I let out a breath which shook the weight of my chains.

Come what may, come what will...

I said what needed to be said, and regardless of consequences
I am determined, confident in the rightfulness of my actions.

sitting on the Bangor-to-Belfast train, no response from GM,
heading back from a twelve-hour night shift.

Since I sent the email I've been offered a hundred hours of work.
Must have done something right.
Right?

It's about time someone took these folks down a peg or two, but
most of all I've unburdened myself of pent-up grievances,
issues symptomatic of the wider workplace.
The boys don't want to speak up,
lest they get blackballed.
I've been there before

but it's wonderful when you get to the point
you just don't give a fuck.

It rained and it rained and rained,
the same way as it did yesterday,
but I know down the line the
weather's going to change.

It has to.

There's nothing but sunny days on the horizon.

it happened that way within this realm (somewhere between Sigüeiro and Santiago)

hobbling along without a compass or a care
somewhere between Sigüeiro and Santiago,

I walk in damp clothes worn the day before beneath one
of Galicia's many indiscriminate, nondescript underpasses,
crossing over, one step closer to my eventual destination;

I can already hear the pipers beneath the arch, the band
playing by the square, the tourist train whistling as it goes
past, see myself falling to my knees by the ground plaque
buried in stone before the frontal façade of La Catedral.

It's not quite Victorious,
though it's very beautiful,
always feels like coming home,

but before that, I
have to get there first.

Going long-distance alone,
the mind wanders to places –

cards drawn towards the Hands of Fate,
I always knew you were The High Priestess...

– mysterious, strange, occasionally wonderful, –

I recall saying to Tuss in Casa de Santa Maria how
in the woods after Bruma I thought I saw
a staring stone man come alive,
remembering now our meal...

– and indeed,
as I move through
I can almost picture

a circus, big red-white striped top, a
carousel down by the right-hand side of the
road, watching those rocking horses as they levitate,

elevate, suspended beyond disbelief on bars,
rising and ascending, falling and descending to
the sound of an off-beat, melancholy carny song,

like wind-up dollies wandering along library corridors, the
inner catalogue of my memories and my visions, creating
ficciones, centuries of children within imaginary places that never
happened but at the same time all at once come together. I'm letting it unfold

in the natural way, a blended strip, mixed script,
as I sit at home seven months removed listening

to The Dreaming, scrolling webpages
checking out the price of Fairlight CMI's,

– “I could stare for a thousand years...
You wouldn't believe what I've been through.
It's been so long...” –

having lived and laughed and loved my time away.
I don't know if I'll ever get to do it ever again, but at least
I'll always have one act of courage against cowardice to my name.

Although things never occurred,
happened that way within this realm,
I believe in these worlds, and they each and every one

remain no less ecstatically true.

2004, November 26th, 2025