

Live Encounters celebrates 7 years 2010-2016

Live encounters

POETRY

BAZAAR

Free online magazine from village earth

Volume Four December 2016



GUEST EDITORIAL
EILEEN CASEY
IRISH POET & WRITER

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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

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Cover photograph: Lotus at Pura Taman Saraswati, Ubud Bali Indonesia by Mark Ulyseas.

CONTRIBUTORS

Click on title of article to go to page



Guest Editorial and poems, Reading Hieroglyphs...

Eileen Casey

Eileen Casey is based in South Dublin. Her poetry, fiction and prose is widely published in literary anthologies, journals and magazines. Dedalus Press, Faber and Faber, New Island, Jelly Bucket (Eastern Kentucky University) are among inclusions. As publisher and editor, recent collections include: *Circle & Square* (2015) and *Reading the Lines* (2016), a joint venture with *Live Encounters*. She received an Individual Artist's Bursary from South Dublin County Council in 2016.



Christian Conflict

Joseph Black

Joe Black was born in Dublin in 1954. He came late to writing. Since combining this with his other passion photography and in collaboration with Achill sculptor Liam Kelly has found his love for nature has given him plenty of material to work with. Having completed courses with creative writers ink he was encouraged to pursue his love of poetry. His work can be found at www.wordverse.me.



Auld Rope

Bob Shakeshaft

Bob shakeshaft is a regular reader on the Dublin open – mic scene since 2004. Bobs poems have appeared in Census Anthologies 2009/2010. Also in Agamemnon dead 2014 an anthology edited by Peter O' Neill [poet] and Walter Ruhlmann. Bobs poems appear in the New Ulster 40th. Edition. Several of his poems appeared in the Riposte, edited by Michael O'Flanagan [poet]. Bob has read at Skerries Soundwaves Festival. Also on Radio KFM. Liffey FM. And Dublin South Radio. Bob is a member of the Ardgillan writers group.



Not From Concentrate

Kenneth Nolan

Kenneth Nolan is a poet and playwright from Tallaght Dublin, who now lives in Blanchardstown Dublin. Founder of 2 regular literary events in Dublin, 'Dreaming without sleep' which is held in Dublin Castle and 'The Merg Sessions' held in Tallaght. He holds Higher Diplomas in Creative Writing and Cultural Studies. In 2012 he won first prize for poetry in the 'CDVEC Sports & Cultural Awards' and has been shortlisted twice for the 'Jonathan Swift Award'. His work has been published in: *Van Gogh's Ear Anthology*, *Tallaght Soundings*, *Brilliant Flash Fiction-Online*, *Headspace Magazine*, *The Echo Newspapers*, *Ink Splinters Anthology*, *Phoenix Ink Anthology* and others.



In a Cold Land

Matthew Rice

Matthew Rice was born in Belfast in 1980. He now lives and works in Carrickfergus, County Antrim. Rice has published poems in magazines and journals on both sides of the Atlantic, including *The Asheville Poetry Review* and *The Honest Ulsterman*. He was one of six new poets showcased in a special reading organised by Poetry NI and Poetry Ireland. Matthew was long-listed for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2016. He was shortlisted for the FSNI National Poetry Competition and is one of Eyewear Publishing's Best New British and Irish Poets for 2017, selected by Luke Kennard.



One Poem

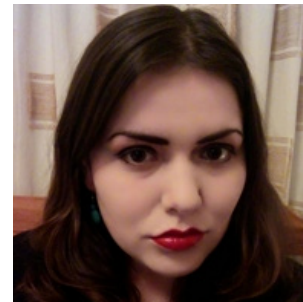
Simon Costelloe

Simon Costello was born in Co. Laois Ireland. In 2014 he graduated with a B.A. from Athlone Institute of Technology. He currently works as a teacher for a private school in China. Previously his poetry has been published in *Tales from the Forest* and *Oddball Magazine*.

Celebrating 7 years 2010-2016

Live
encounters

POETRY
VOLUME FOUR
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The Bones of It

Alice Kinsella

Alice Kinsella is an Irish writer. She holds a BA (hons) in English Literature and Philosophy from TCD. Her poetry has been published internationally in a variety of publications, including *Headspace magazine*, *The Fem literary magazine*, *Poetry NI Holocaust memorial anthology*, *Poethead*, *Icarus*, *The Galway Review*, *Poethead*, *The Sunday Independent*, *Flare* and *Skylight47*. She has work forthcoming in *Headstuff*, *Hungry Hill Wild Atlantic Words anthology*, *The Ofi Press* and *Boyne Berries*.



Salvors' Reach

Daniel Wade

Daniel Wade is a poet from Ireland. His poetry has been published in *Optic*, *Limerick Revival*, *Wordlegs* (e-publication), *The Stony Thursday Book* (ed. Paddy Bushe), *HeadSpace Magazine*, *the Seven Towers 2014 Census*, *the Bray Arts Journal*, *The Sea* (charity anthology in aid of the RNLI), *Sixteen Magazine* (e-publication), *The Bogman's Cannon*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Zymbol*, *The Runt*, *Headstuff*, *The Fredricksburg Literary Review*, *The Lonely Crowd*, *A New Ulster*, *FLARE*, and the *Hennessey New Irish Writers' page* of the Irish Times.



Monbretia

Roisín Browne

Roisín Browne lives in Rush, Co Dublin; she is a member of The Ardgillan Writers Group and is an attendee at the Gladstone Readings in Skerries. She has recently been longlisted in the Over the Edge, New Irish Writer of the Year competition 2016. Her poetry has been published in *Creative Writing Ink*, *A New Ulster*, *The Galway Review*, *The Flare* and in the forthcoming *Proletarian* issue from *Mgversion2*.



Pieces of Four

Elizabeth Ní Ruanaidh

Elizabeth Ní Ruanaidh is now based in Ireland after living for many years in England and Scotland. She has only recently dipped her toe into the art of poetry writing. She is a yoga teacher and is working towards launching her own business in 2017.



A Golden Heart Makes Fire

Eldhose Alias

Eldhose Alias is a seventeen year old, still stuck in Secondary School. He was born in Kerala and brought to Ireland when he was nine. His love of poetry started when he read Edward Fitzgerald's translation of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. T. S. Eliot is currently his favourite poet (it's always changing). And he is delighted by the chance to be published anywhere other than his school or church.



Reflections on Love

Harrison Whittle

Harrison Whittle was born January, of 1990, in San Francisco, California, and grew up in the East Bay. He graduated from the San Francisco State University Creative Writing Program in the summer of 2015, and currently works at a local pizza restaurant. This is his first publication.

Eileen Casey is a poet, fiction writer and journalist, widely published in literary journals and magazines. Her poetry has appeared in *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Ulster Tatler* (Literary Miscellany), *If Ever You Go* (Dedalus), *The Stinging Fly*, among others. A Hennessy Award Winner (Emerging Fiction), she received a Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in 2011. A Creative Writing Tutor, she works with adults and children alike and has mentored many poets into print. Her poetry collections include *Drinking the Colour Blue* (New Island), *Wall Street* (The Clothesline Press), *From Bone to Blossom* (a collaboration with artist Emma Barone, with an introduction by Grace Wells), *Reading Hieroglyphs in Unexpected Places* (a collaboration with artist Emma Barone). In 2010, *From Spit and Clay* won the Green Book Festival (Los Angeles). She has shown a number of poetry in public places exhibitions, *Poetry on The Wall* (Awarded by South Dublin Libraries), *Reading Fire, Writing Flame* (Awarded by Offaly County Council), *Seagulls* (Awarded by Tallaght Arts Centre) and *The Jane Austen Sewing Kit* (shown during Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival, 2007).



EILEEN CASEY
IRISH POET & WRITER

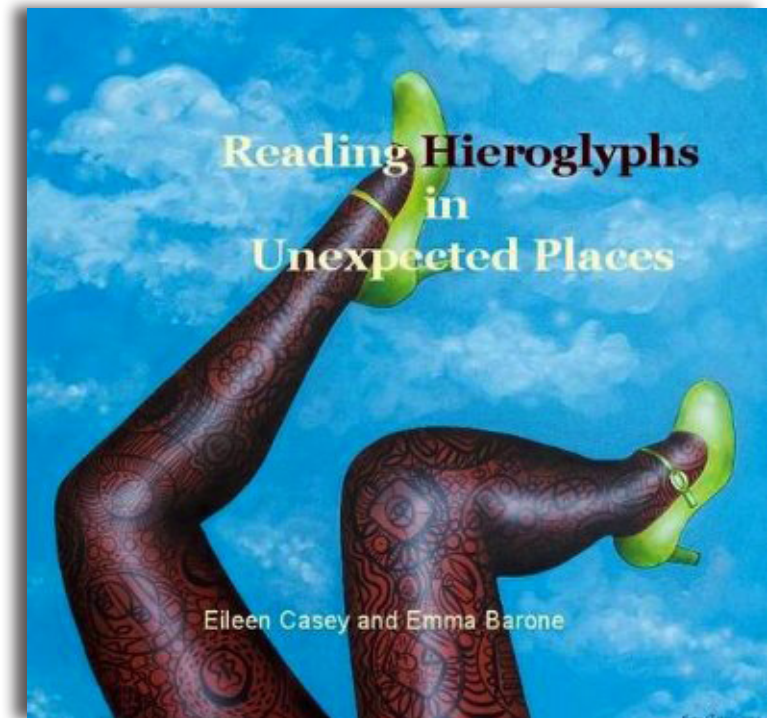
POET DANCERS

It's a pleasure to guest edit on this edition of Live Encounters. The journal is now a byword for excellence and for creating a space where poetry really matters. Being relevant in today's world, via the poetry route, is often difficult to achieve. Words are exacting taskmasters; they take no prisoners. More often than not, the world of publishing becomes like a fortress, impossible to penetrate. Especially for new poets clamouring to be heard. When I started to write (some years ago now), I thought the writing of poetry was out of my league. Somehow, there seemed to be a hierarchy as far as this particular form was concerned, a hierarchy which involved academic reference points (of which I had very little of at that particular time). Instead, I wrote short stories for popular magazines and short articles for newspapers and journals. I wrote about ordinary events which didn't take me too far beyond my 'ordinary' life. Home and family were regular themes. Yet, I always had a hankering to write poetry and it wasn't until I read Eavan Boland's poetry, very much focused on the domestic sphere, that I finally considered the liberating possibilities that poetry offered me. French Philosopher Valéry definitely got it right when he said "prose is to poetry as walking is to dancing." After walking for so long, I was ready to dance. There's a exuberance which comes from writing poetry that only poets can appreciate.

Based on my own experiences, what advice would I give beginning poets? Well, being involved in a strong writing group can be energising. Especially if the group offers constructive criticism and useful information. As a new writer I was always grateful for commentary I could take on board. A properly organised group ensures that everyone gets to read without constant interruption or chit-chat.

Discovering 'found' poems is an ongoing source of pleasure for me, finding texts and images which initially appear to be non-poetic but which are loaded with poetic potential. I rarely go anywhere without a journal *and* my camera. Storing images in this way ensures I look forward to facing the blank page.

Reading Hieroglyphs in Unexpected Places with artwork by Emma Barone. [LINK](#)



If a group is beginning to turn into a social outlet (swopping anecdotes instead of critique), then, it's best to give it a miss. Attending workshops by reputable writers is also very helpful. I certainly never stinted in this regard. Luckily, I live in an area where the arts are highly regarded. Here in South Dublin, we have art galleries, a fabulous library, an arts centre and theatre. Regularly, there are visiting writers and book launches and each year there's a very vibrant book festival, The Redline Festival which is second to none. This festival is organised by the local County Council and it's a much looked forward to annual event.

Workshops by poets I respect and admire stand out in my memory when I was just starting out. Grace Wells, Mark Roper, Pat Boran, Paula Meehan, Dermot Bolger, are just a few of the many poet/writers I've had the pleasure of being tutored by. Summer Schools are also valuable, especially quality ones like Listowel Writers Week in Southern Ireland and The John Hewitt Summer School (Armagh, County Down).

In my capacity as Tutor/Mentor for beginning poets, I usually recommend the writing of memory poems, based around people and places, dual elements which give a rich lyrical source of inspiration. Memory poems are filled with light and shade (the best of times, the worst of times). They can be piercing and perceptive or darkly humorous. Memory poems have the ability to transcend and transgress; to obey their own rules, to unearth and unfold. Timeline and historical backdrop can often provide the scaffolding for these poems, using language possibilities which cross space and time.

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Some time ago, I suggested to Mark Ulyseas that he might devote an entire issue to poets making their poetic debut, alongside poets who already have begun to publish in journals, chapbooks and magazines. Poets who have been 'dancing' for some time are aware that many ways exist in order to acquire recognition. Every week it seems, a new literary journal appears (online mostly).

Literary awards and competitions are also popular routes to getting the work out there. Give poets a deadline and a theme and there's no holding them. Before long, they are waltzing, tangoing or fox-trotting across the page. There's no right or wrong way to seek inspiration either. One of my collections 'Reading Hieroglyphics in Unexpected Places' was inspired by artist Emma Barone's collection of shoe paintings. Whatever it is that rocks the lyrical boat is what will keep the 'boat' afloat. In the words of J.R.R. Tolkien:

"All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.

From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king."

(-The Fellowship of the Ring)

In the world of poetry, the 'blade that was broken,' could be seen to refer to poetic aspirations, the poet sharpening the pen (which is mightier than any blade) only to have it broken anew by rejection. Writing poetry that is not shared diminishes the work because after all, it is a truism that writing is a two-way enterprise, the writer and the reader. Plato gave voice to this equation when he said "Every heart sings a song, incomplete, until another heart whispers back. Those who wish to sing always find a song. At the touch of a lover, everyone becomes a poet."

Thankfully, Mark was instantly generous, agreeing to devote an entire issue to publishing new work by new poets. It is in the spirit of such generosity that I welcome you to this Live Encounters Special Edition. Who knows where it might lead for the budding poet-dancers? I wish them well on this exciting phase of their journey.

Poems from *Reading Hieroglyphs in Unexpected Places*

Artwork by Emma Barone.



Fly Agaric Shoes

I only know so much. I sit with my back to the light
held in the claw of my hand a thin pen.
Words will not come, unable to birth,
shadow chisels on bare walls
times I flew too close to the sun.
I rise, stretch my arms full span, swivel to see
a feather drift between two spendthrifts,
squawking magpies, remnants of Icarus
scrawled against a melting sky.

I tune the radio, Puccini's Aria from Tosca,
'Vissi D'Arte' bursts from the singer's throat.
Line upon curling line
write paragraphs of sound.
I feel their heat, earth defying freefall
such dizziness in my loins,
into the soles of my feet,
rising to powerful
primate cry.

Fly Agaric Summer

Press your face against the glass, take a look
down the long hall at Versailles.
Candles gamble with what's left of daylight –
which of these will be the first to flicker?

Love itself is sorely tried and tested
rivals outshone in dazzling Venetian glass.
the language of eyes above duelling fans
is both read and written with each passing hour.

Ball gowns balloon a swoon of scent
plumed headdresses glisten with pomade.
Rouge brightens leaded faces – everywhere
Fluer-de-lys. In the drowsy gardens
Fun.gal, cap and stalk, stripped pileus
lamellae, gilled, frilled wings –
spread beyond the palace walls,
where, clamorous as small-pox
the mushrooming mob.

Sounds of hurrying feet
Sculpt a rise and fall – what surely must come
-and follow –
in the Long Hall at Versailles.

Poems from *Reading Hieroglyphs in Unexpected Places*

Artwork by Emma Barone.



Nida's Shoes

Photograph me, put me on a stamp
post me to a place far from here;
a place like Nova Scotia
where wriggling nets are slithered
across swearing decks.

Send me where fishermen know I'm a rare fluted one
something to ponder, so they say "now there's a thing."

Send me over the ocean
through that tunnel – the one that says
'point of arrival'
so I savour that first gasp of wonder
my own mouth a fountain, ready to pour
how I got there, how it came about.
Or, back further yet,
heading out to sea,
borne on the wind, the lusty laughter
of Phoenician sailors, carved
full length of the prow.

Now Voyager

Strapped to the passenger seat, an old sofa
I hear Bette Davis not ask for the moon.
This river of black leather, a two-seater
creaks itself into shape, cracking open
hard ice of hard shoes
skinning ankles.

The T.V. breaks down, becomes a snow dome.
Memory shakes itself out in drizzles of dead stars.
It seems I was sometimes in need of rescue
sometimes waiting for the repair man to come,
one shoe off
one shoe on.

Poems from *Reading Hieroglyphs in Unexpected Places*

Artwork by Emma Barone.



Shoe Haiku

Under a low bed
After winter's wrecking ball
White summer sandals

Sweet Acrylic brush
Musking each surface with scent
Remembered footnotes

Two blue containers
Clattering down the stairwell
Thieving the silence

Tapping her way home
Composing dawn symphonies
Birds park to listen

Below dimpled knee
Three miles west of stiletto
A draughty basement

Newspaper cutting
Waterproof story insert
Keeps shoes extra dry

What Dylan Thomas Said

*'Poetry is not the most important thing in my life...
I'd much rather lie in a hot bath reading Agatha Christie and sucking sweets.'*

...and I'd rather wallow in a pair of Emma Barone's shoes
twirling them as a majorette twirls her baton
before the long mirror
behind lacquered screens
a dazzling macaw on my shoulder
silk kimono sliding down my legs.

Joe Black was born in Dublin in 1954. He came late to writing. Since combining this with his other passion photography and in collaboration with Achill sculptor Liam Kelly has found his love for nature has given him plenty of material to work with. Having completed courses with creative writers ink he was encouraged to pursue his love of poetry. His work can be found at www.wordverse.me.



Ashamed ? I wonder

Lost in the dead of night
A City sleeps, dim the light
Soft cool breezes fill the air
Homeless stranger, unaware

Of the beauty that's around
In the corner he has found
Living in his cardboard box
Set upon some stone cold rocks.

No one knows he's sleeping there
Pass him by, without a care
Homeward bound comfort zone
Destitute he's on his own.

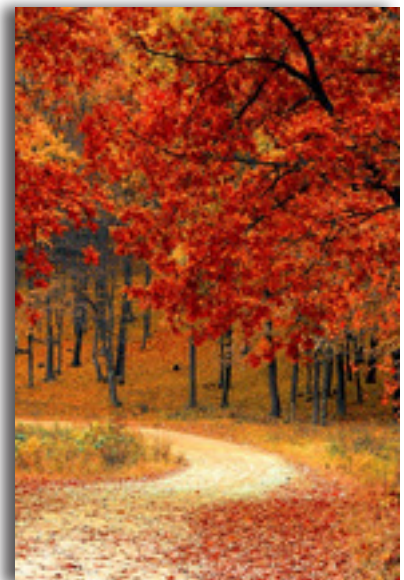
Autumn's coming in

Autumn scents are in the air
Purple heather spotted there
Clear cool waters drifting by
Beneath its bright September sky.

Murmurs of the rippling stream
Cold clear waters all agleam
Into the valley ferns are showing
Among the forty shades are growing

Harvest time and Halloween
Fruits and nuts, the scary queen
Fairs and Festivals are all the go
Thanksgiving, Sukkoth soon on show.

Let us give thanks for natures treasures
Summer's rain and simple pleasures
Let's all celebrate and grin
Now that Autumn's coming in.



Rethink the plan

The rowan tree or mountain ash
Red berries on the hillside flash
A sign of winters beckoning
Close by the mistle thrushes sing.

A view from hillside Windows fair
Nature with its neighbours share
Where progress and the earth collide
Betray the beauty, countryside.

We wonder then why butterflies
Have disappeared, a quick demise
Or why the hedgerows silent now
No horses pulling on the plough.

Urban sprawl cannot be stopped
Concrete jungles replace the crop
Be careful now or you may find
Accelerate the end. mankind.

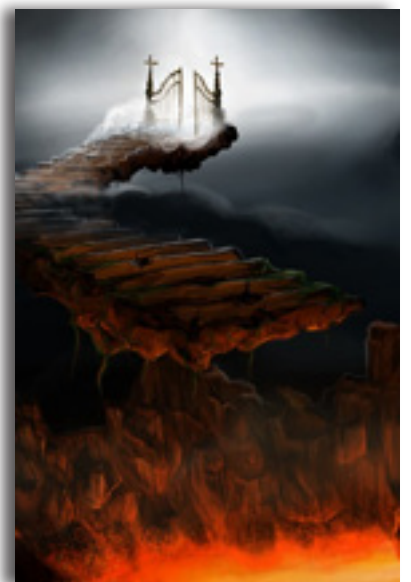
Christian conflict

Stop! Listen a child is calling
Plight, sight, it is appalling
A raft adrift in wilderness
Cold confused in the abyss.

In a world that's full of treasure
Golden nuggets for our pleasure
Ignore the cries of those that matter
Have another oyster platter.

Bodies floating on the waves
Compassion, mercy we can save
Or do we hide behind the mask
Close our eyes, ignore the task.

Secure our borders, shut our minds
Turn our backs, draw down the blind
Internal conflict it will ignite
Death, damnation, wake up fight



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Ashen sun

Moonlight’s pallid blossoms,
white, wondrous,
blots the sun, soothes
an imperilled man, dying
for death, prepares his heart,
turns pale with panic and piety,
blood congeals,
coursing to its state.

Loathing his life,
his self, transgressions
eclipsed by perdition,
scars within seek solace,
suffering till the last,
beat breathes its end,
cremated in pallid ash.

Granny Reilly

Bellowed
Over the excited chatter
Of little ones
At the gates of Phoenix Park
Turnstile zoo

Get your nuts for the monk-ees
A hapenny a bag
Ask your Ma n Da

Soon the poor crathers tugged
At tight pocketed hands
Pleading for a hapenny
Or a penny for two
Brought a smile

To care-worn faces
Struggling to treat the kids
Cost a missed rent
A coal-bill or worse
The money lender

All soon forgotten
In the hugest excitement
Of

*Ma da look
The Monk-ees, the Lyons
The Elefints”.*





Auld rope

Not so long ago in Dublin city
Children swung high
On green lamp-posts
No time to care the day

Breezes, traffic the Liffey
In tempo, chisellers skip
Under n over
An old Guinness rope,

Some mans coiled frame
Brang home in quiet light,
From shoulders weary fell
On floor of Linenhall Street.

Till some child's father
Measured even lengths
By axe, swung sky-high
Splintering fiery sparks

Rang to...hip-hip hooray
From young wans
And young fellas
Dublin as can be.

In rest the axe laid safe,
Each mothers grip
Sets free a tug of war
Cries, chaff the skin

Sings, *gimme dat, gimme dat*
Dats ours...ill reef ya
Watch out will ya
Till we get a proper dangle

Some mothers bawlin
Turn the bleedin rope
Will yeez jump n sing?
Vote, vote for De Valera
In comes Marie at the door I oh

And over n under
Till a shout jumped in
Telling the Walsh's...
Yer Tay is poured,

In silent swish
Each rope did rest
In waning lamp-light
Reflects...

Women's idle chatter
Sets men out to drink
A pint of black
In the hush of twilight,

Sleep little angels
Deep, the Liffey flows,
Past another day
Let's night creep in.

Granby's lane dark shadows
A busty woman,
Earnin to feed her child
N drunken husband,

So late, swears old promise
On his mother's grave,
To stop dead the habit.
He shames each night,

Suffering his lacuna,
In this city life,
Good bad n-different,
Sun rise urges, a new day

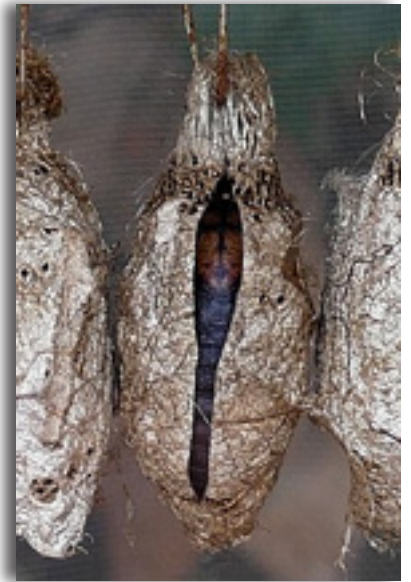
Bids some, priest to pray
For men to leave the early house,
N chiseller's to school n -joy
Each mother's wave good-bye.

Moore Street

This once proud market place
Among the smells familiar race
Where native n visitor thronged
Fresh fruit n veg with fish belonged
Each descended dealers song did meet
Falling deaf on o Connell Street

N apples n onions n oranges 6 for a schillin
6 large mackerel 1/6d fresh off the boats for skinnin

N underneath the covered prams
Offers of unsolicited goods are crammed
In a whisper in your shell like ear
When the blue coats were not so near
The sing song voices scattered on the wind
And so it is today a tradition in rescind.



Gobo

The shell must be broken
Before the bird can wing

Just as a chrysalis cracks
The larva's hard coffin

Shows its wings
To the sun

Does it remember?
Does it mourn?

For what
It once was

Nanny Anne

Sits on the step, stares
At the promised tap on pane,
For a penny-worth of winks,
In basin enamelled shell,
A glass lies - measure ready,

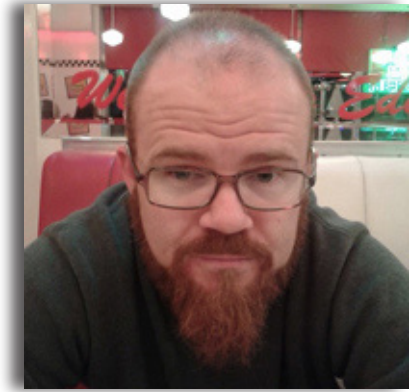
As the sash window opens on
The green of Linenhall Street.
The small coin palms,
And clinks the apron,
As the periwinkles coned news,

Print as sharp as a pin-ready,
To dig deep
The soft taste, made
Juicy feast slurped,
With long necked Guinness?

And eyes of Irish smiling,
On the print survived
Old gossip smeared,
Missing words...swapped,
Is still-news.

Kenneth Nolan is a poet and playwright from Tallaght Dublin, who now lives in Blanchardstown Dublin. Founder of 2 regular literary events in Dublin, 'Dreaming without sleep' which is held in Dublin Castle and 'The Merg Sessions' held in Tallaght. He holds Higher Diplomas in Creative Writing and Cultural Studies. In 2012 he won first prize for poetry in the 'CDVEC Sports & Cultural Awards'. Kenneth has been shortlisted twice for the 'Jonathan Swift Award'. His work has been published in: Van Gogh's Ear Anthology, Tallaght Soundings, Brilliant Flash Fiction-Online, Headspace Magazine, The Echo Newspapers, Ink Splinters Anthology, Phoenix Ink Anthology, Creative Talents Unleashed.

www.kennethnolan6.wordpress.com www.facebook.com/kennethnolanwriter



Battambang

flowing black hair
drops down upon your noble shoulders
a shining darkness

the scent of elegance
with a tone of pride
a hue of danger

the most striking
piercing
Oriental eyes

honest nose
hung upon so sweet a smile
lips like pulping fruit
cheeks a blossom
a face of allure

bamboo legs
concrete hips
breast of firm glory

a princess
a goddess
the jewel of Kampuchea
my historic Khmer lady

Bludgeoned

Mouthpiece soldiers
re-imagine
the footsteps of yesterday
Trapped percussive sounds
Ringing Out!
from the caressed masses

Young revolutionaries commune
and sing about obedient despair
They wear shabby clothes
to dress their egos

Proudly adorned
ribbons of green
akin to a bandage
on an infected wound
Sturdy steel holds back the puss

Personal freedom hanged in effigy
True freedom
is honouring your own convictions



Disingenuous

Once I was a wayfarer.
 Rambling to my heart's content.
 On bus, train, bike, and blistered foot
 through Eire's veins I pumped.

I supped in the homely taverns
 dozed in cheerful lodgings
 with creaky stairs
 lumpy beds
 and marvellous spider webs.

Then sitting by a river
 just outside another Bally-town
 I pondered on my love letter
 to our Emerald crown.

Notions of poetry, music, romance
 all things sweet
 clash with Ireland's reality.
 A country full of snobbish greed-fiends
 and advancement sluts.
 Can you hear the cries of "pull the ladder up"

Our great poets have made Ireland a 'She'
 Dark Rosaleen, Kathleen Ni Houlihan
 we declare our love to thee.
 Alas, I hate you with equal measure my love.
 So this is my ode to Ireland.
 A beauty with two faces.

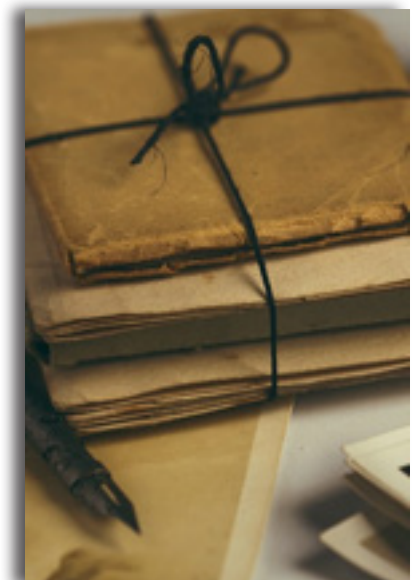
Equinox

The flowing ink
 from my pen,
 enables me to exist
 like burning hell
 in a warrior's belly
 or the dried blood
 on the killer's shirt

I am part of history
 Answerable to a scurrilous god
 with deaf ears,
 and eyes full of contempt
 I am treacherous,
 always prosperous.

I am the voice
 that whispers in your ear
 reminds you
 that your family isn't close
 your home is modest
 I am the light bulb
 pinging in the dead of night

I am your thoughts
 so full of righteousness,
 arrogance and hypocrisy
 Full of intelligence
 without insight
 Oblivious to the notion
 that it is yourself you are trying to save



The Honey Jar

Walking, underground,
in a land beneath the weak.
Ticketless, emotionless, journeying on regardless.

I am a ghost of sorts.
I am not at the helm of all my voyages.
Nor do I care for the destinations, explanations and ten thousand untruths,
rotten to the core our delightful fruits.

Bitter as the lemon, twice as potent.
A bloodied poppy plant or a squared shamrock.
The stench of greed slashes my nose and burns my throat,
my country sold again,
from the traitors to the gloating neighbours.

We are lost now.
I wonder of what tourists take photos in Temple Bar
and we like the bee shut away in a jar.

Six Feet

Clanging tones
of a resentful cleric
admonishing tired sinners
An effigy of a fictional healer
looks down upon a wooden box
centring a grief orgy

Fond farewells
choked back tears
to the soil bestowed
The venerated other side
or a destination
we don't know

Drunkards proclaim
the virtues of the departed
Sweet music
to the ears of the sorrowful
Nonsense and insight
A corrupted snakebite

A decent chap
and a sound fellow was he
Gallant, reliable, old stock
a kind so rare
He would never hear such words
if his lungs still held air

He may go north
the brochure recommends
Or south
were he bothersome
A mercenary
who failed to make amends

To heaven
No not for me
This bliss
they eulogise
I would tire of
eventually



© Kenneth Nolan

Matthew Rice was born in Belfast in 1980. He now lives and works in Carrickfergus, County Antrim. He is currently studying for his BA Honours in English Language and Literature. Rice has published poems in magazines and journals on both sides of the Atlantic, including *The Asheville Poetry Review* and *The Honest Ulsterman*. He was one of six new poets showcased in a special reading organised by Poetry NI and Poetry Ireland. His work was chosen for the 2016 Community Arts Partnership anthology, *Connections*, funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. He was long-listed for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2016. Matthew has recently finalised his first collection of poems entitled *Door Left Open*. He was shortlisted for the FSNI National Poetry Competition and is one of Eyewear Publishing's Best New British and Irish Poets for 2017, selected by Luke Kennard.



The Wineville Chicken Coop Murders

Having read the report
in a history book and then
found myself in a nightmare,
I felt I'd deserted him by waking.
In my dream multiples of light
flayed gently through the wire
of the chicken coop
and gathered in his nine year old eyes,
so abused that silence opened for him
like an invisible embrace.
And in my waking I wondered,
when they brought the blunt edge
down on his sleeping head,
from what dream had death
forever woken him.

The Polar Bear

Belfast Zoo, 1988

There is something
Entirely human
About him
Facing the wall;

Alone in the corner
Of the enclosure
By the falling water,
Rocking from his back paws

To his front paws
In heart-breaking repetition –
Locked in the remnants
Of some old routine,

In a cold land, far from home.



793

"Who could have foreseen
those hatchet-buriers
would land on our shore,
with their distant tongues
and temperament.

'A change will happen',
my father had said
the night before,
breath-blowing the room
into permanence."

Myrtis

He was a spirit
looking out in terror
from a corpse, but
Thucydides himself survived;
and his account of the Plague of Athens,
his sardonic humour evident,
imparting that old Athenians remembered
a rhyme that predicted with the Dorian War
would come a 'great death'.
Death meaning 'dearth', according to some sources -
dearth where a spirit once huddled
in the vacated skull
of an eleven year old girl whose bones
were discovered in the mass grave
in Kerameikos.
They have reconstructed her face,
resurrected her in the name of science;
they have given her hair for the style of the time
and named her for the common Greek.



© Matthew Rice

Tunnel

*Age walks on our faces -
at the tunnel's end,
if faith can be believed,
our flesh will grow lighter. -*

Robert Lowell, 'Ulysses and Circe'

My head fell forward,
bowed
in sleepy thanks.
The train rock-a-byed
into the heart of the morning.
Window to window, space was filled
with the sound of student static,
moments passing like hours.
When I came to at the station
I felt different,
emerging wide eyed from
the mind's tunnel.
Out the corner of my eye, the sudden
sunlit shadow in the paned reflection
plumed like smoke;
but it was just a man,
head lifted,
the same momentary wonder
sketched upon his risen face.

Three Hares

*'They were trees, and trees don't weep or ache or shout.
And trees are all this poem is about.' -
from 'Two Trees' by Don Paterson*

What direction
that trio of brown hares took,
spirit-bounding across my sight,
has nothing so much to do with omen
as with any Boudica style tit for tat.
They disappeared around the cafe corner:
into mystery, perhaps,
but still wholly in the world -
and that was that.



© Matthew Rice

Simon Costelloe was born in Co. Laois Ireland. In 2014 he graduated with a B.A. from Athlone Institute of Technology. He currently works as a teacher for a private school in China. Previously his poetry has been published in *Tales from the Forest* and *Oddball Magazine*.



When do Wolves eat Girls and Grandmothers?

Mostly when the memories
 whisper ripe
 beneath old scalps,

when
 the oven of their brain
 drips clues breadcrumbs
 to the lacquered columns of their dreams.

Sleek
 his mad dog mouths pervades
 their creeks their brooks,

slipping
 onto paths of spectre lobes & chiffon youths
 whaling snapping

at their daisy gussied boots.

After he snares you will see him
 tearing them down
 transparent begging
 to the shadows of his heels

their days will leak up & down
 his pale hate jowls-

the hoisted priest
 flipping coins
 to little tongues-

my mother
 breaking horses in her field-

my grandfather
 sniffing mustard gas in his.

Why do I eat Girls and Grandmothers?

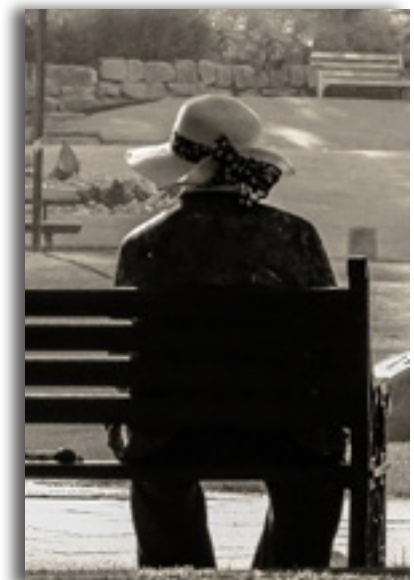
For the cotton cortex that nestles,
 a sandune collapse,
 behind their century eyes.

My lustrum creeping,
 hours and afternoons,
 minutes and miles,

white and tender
 I smash them to sparks
 I gnaw the ribs absolving time.

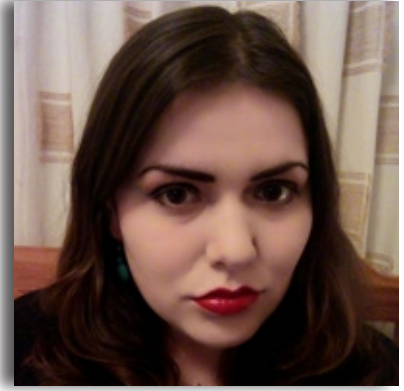
Finally, eating my absence
 I don their face, escaping
 every axe iron hospice,
 leaving families to find

a meek drip of blue
 an eighty year child's mind.



© Simon Costelloe

Alice Kinsella is an Irish writer. She holds a BA (hons) in English Literature and Philosophy from TCD. Her poetry has been published internationally in a variety of publications, including *Headspace magazine*, *The Fem literary magazine*, *Poetry NI Holocaust memorial anthology*, *Poethead*, *Icarus*, *The Galway Review*, *Poethead*, *The Sunday Independent*, *Flare* and *Skylight47*. She has work forthcoming in *Headstuff*, *Hungry Hill Wild Atlantic Words anthology*, *The Ofi Press* and *Boyne Berries*.



Dust

Watch this body
It is the only one
Expanded and contracted
With time.

Watch pieces of it fall like petals
A nest of hair in the shower drain
A lunar hangnail swept beneath the sofa.

It was built from nothing
But love and stardust.

Feel it disintegrating, daily.
Watch it melt into the earth
Leaving nothing behind but love.

Shadows

It is not worth admitting but I must
That too often I feel like an animal
Not always, just the odd time, some time
Once every few times.
Pieces of me are threatened, shrunk and
Snarled at by the white heat growing in my veins
My sharp mind, potential, curriculum vitae
Fade into impersonation of what I could be
I become pain pulsating rivers of it
Shoots of blood ripping through me
Parts of myself falling away from me
I bend head over breasts, curl into myself
Let the scream of my tongue wind into my ears
Until my body is noise, heat, motion.

In moments like these, what I feel above
All else are shadows, shadows of what I could be
Without the weighted chains of woman
Within without the shadow in the depth of me
That shadow of life, or lack of it.



Bedtime prayer

There are some things that visit me at night
That whisper secrets long after they're dead
They do not care that there are stars alight

And blackness is their home, kept out of sight
Wriggle between covers, beneath the bed
There are some things that visit me at night

They're thoughts of Armageddon, eternal quiet
The fate of the world when the sun turns red
It will not matter then that there are stars alight

And thoughts of God cannot make things all right
Disbelief's caused every tear that's shed
These are the things that visit me at night

When priests told me of the deity's eternal might
They never paused to think what's in my head
They did not care that there were stars alight

Burning in my brain, sparking the fright
Going over things that have been said
Knowing there are things that visit me at night
That do not care that there are stars alight.

Graffiti

Initials - mine and yours,
(That could be anyone's)
Demanded our preservation.
Letters forged into fresh
Bleeding wood,
Splintering underhand
As we could not carve them
On our teenage hearts.

Sometime later,
(though some time ago)
I visited the site
To see the imprint of a
Time dissolved -
Our time.
I thought maybe I had lost
My way somewhere in the lanes
Of memory
Before stumbling upon
The awkward stump
The wound not young, already healed.
Saw dust washed away in winter rains
A sapling growing nearby
To drink leftover light.
I wonder what became
Of the letters.
Disappeared into heat
Flakes of ashes now
Melting into spring soil.



Seashell

The woman is a shell now.
Though not rough or worn by rocks.
No jagged edges or algae stains,
Just white and lovely
Filled with echoes of the sea.

Her alabaster cheeks are
Plump like pillows, pale,
No throb of waves to flush them.
Her lips rest puckered,
No kiss of life to press upon them.

The woman lies empty now.
In a bed of black kelp tendrils,
Lids smoothed like summer sands.
She floats only in dreams now,
The sea no longer beats for her.

The bones of it.

Start it with a rush- of love flesh ideas
Keep it building feed it with all the things that you feed yourself
Grow inside, let it fill you 'til you're bloated cannot keep it in
Let it fall into the world and explode until you cannot control it
Tame it softly kill the bits you thought you loved
Pare it back pare away the messiness
All that's left- the perfect bones of it
The ones that last forever- show us to be all the same.





Daniel Wade is a poet from Ireland. His poetry has been published in *Optic*, *Limerick Revival*, *Wordlegs* (e-publication), *The Stony Thursday Book* (ed. Paddy Bushe), *HeadSpace Magazine*, *the Seven Towers 2014 Census*, *the Bray Arts Journal*, *The Sea* (charity anthology in aid of the RNLI), *Sixteen Magazine* (e-publication), *The Bogman's Cannon*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Zymbol*, *The Runt*, *Headstuff*, *The Fredricksburg Literary Review*, *The Lonely Crowd*, *A New Ulster*, *FLARE*, and the *Hennessey New Irish Writers'* page of the Irish Times.

Dun Laoghaire Inventory

Even long-time residents call it a ghost-town.
Some still say, with a sore vestige of pride,
that it's *their* neck of the woods, and no-on else's.
Everywhere else, history wears a raiment
of steel and clotted blood. Here, it's flanked
by red and green lighthouses, the Venetian
clock-tower's steely chime, and the new library,
colossal as a flagship. The name of this place
was once Kingstown – and, despite all
you might think of it, a kingly town it remains.

The Maritime Museum bows its shingled head.
A busker amasses coins in his guitar case.
Waves stumble in salty collapse, white trenches
harvested by an outgoing hull. Rocks and ruin.
The sun grows old before its time, a fountain
pisses against the wind in the People's Park,
the obelisk loiters greyly in the red-gold distance,
the Irish Sea's gauzy breath purges the dark.
With every year, another shop seems to shut down.

You know the place by heart, the ripe heat
of your twenty-one years fed and fuelled
by a consoling roster of names: Mulgrave Street,
Marine Road, Windsor Terrace. Let's assume
you want to remain here, your brain slowly fossilising
to grey matter, until one day you're just another bag
of tired, mildewed bones, the yeast of old age
varnishing your biceps, each day an hourly forest
to hustle through, and sleep the cocooning reward.

It's no longer the Dun Laoghaire of your youth.
Why should it be? Walk the Metals on any
given night; expect to see tumbleweed flit by.
Erasure forces the hand of time, decades mix
and mingle like embers and earth. The beer
turns your silver tongue rusty. The shadows are
precious, rangy and cast-iron, hosed down by sunshine
and rainfall, seasoned by a foghorn's fruitless plaint.
You try loving them, as you try loving Dun Laoghaire,
as best as your meagre heart will allow.

Your Move

Your move:
fan yourself with a beer mat at sundown,
fill the wine glass up far beyond its containment,
play with yourself when I'm away at work,
horde the correspondence -

texts and scribbled notes, memos from the front,
a liturgy of what you need or want
that only I can give or hunt down for you,
that rare first edition, a crumpled love note.

Soon enough I'll be home. I'll try not to wake you.
For when daybreak shifts over the girder-grey pebbles
in the side-yard, the sun will gloat evenly to itself

and rinse our home of darkness in chilled flux.
Lock your bare, supple arm to my body. Rub the sleep
from your kiss. Let the warmth mould and calm you.

Don't be afraid, my love. It's only me.



June, Provence

I.

The road is tasselled with vineyards and vine-stalks
green as springtime, the sweat of olive and pear
soak my t-shirt through, and the starlings fly in flocks.
The famed friction between mistral and midsummer
has yet to arrive, but blood irrigates the soil
of this tourist's Eden. A slow-burning haze
warps the far-off Luberon, and the lofty windmill,
with blades long as the old law or sunrays,
built to grind out cereal or barley, stands
like a milestone on the hot ridge. My twenty-fourth
summer. I might grow to love this sultry province,
birthplace of troubadours, its cypresses staring north
like a Van Gogh nocturne, the mimosa's natal wince
at my touch, the bulk of fate forcing my hands.

II.

Such barefaced sentimentality has little place
in the world, yet even the small farmhands here
show a care to the groves that money won't replace.
Earth-scarring winds whisper loudly to the lavender,
and the bullfrogs' snarl is chronic as clockwork.
It is June: the beer tastes frothy and calm,
the last peach harvest is over, gates with electric
bolts lie open, dry palls of dust rise like the fine atom
of a genie, and the ruby hover of a dragonfly
specifies the hour when the shutters on the upstairs
window slam their displeasure at my tenancy
of the villa in rippled wind, jolting me unawares.
I am a failure who has had his taste of triumph
in that sun-drunk sky, this aged pasture of wheat,
the swimming pool's blue shimmer, a late-blooming nymph
unripe for flight, in boneless recoil from the heat.

Smoke Poem

Grey street-level hoodie
radioactive sheen of the church dome

Ahead of me, a long stiff-legged walk home
no more rotgut to sip from my hip flask
and each Georgian doorway dribbling at the mouth,

still up for a laugh even as I adopt the old pose
of a breast-plated king harnessing
his charger for a final, sombre gallop

under the smoky heavens.

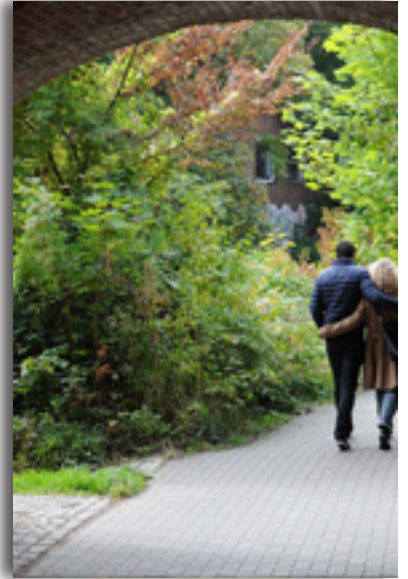
If there is a God, His sense of humour
is woeful. Otherwise, it wouldn't be forever
pissing rain here, even in the sunlit months.

Spare some change, or smokes?

Just wait 'til I give you an hour's head start
the misty, fleeting drizzle of Ranelagh
slobbers to my skull

smoking the path of a long walk home
in swathes of stiff-legged sleet

left to seethe, and linger.



To Love You

For Anne

To love you is to love the world again.
 I want the rumpled bedsheets
 and your careworn scent as I arrive home.
 To love you is to love the heavens again.
 I want your eyes, your lips' fiercely warm welcome,
 your breasts stirring like swallow chalices,
 soft, wet, letting me in; I want your aching, thumb-
 hardened nipple, the open blaze between your legs.
 To love you is to love the great waters again.
 I want to kiss the peach-soft skin of your neck,
 push your hair's raven peak back, trace the vale
 of your cleavage where my tongue will dance.
 To love you is to love the dead earth again.
 I want your cheek's throbbing blush,
 your throat panting out sighs at my thrust, your fount
 of kisses smoothing my dry lips and limbs over.
 To love you is to love the day and dusk again.
 And whatever may yet fall between us,
 no kiss of yours will ever be enough,
 no flame of mine will dim, no pillar will cave;
 for I want the temporary oblivion as only you can give.

Salvors' Reach

In response to Baudelaire's 'L'Homme et la mer'

No, not brothers, or even foes, but dependants,
 And even then, certainly not forever. For some,
 Ocean is a sleepless mirror to be overcome
 Or stilled. Grey-green sluices surge in segments,

Inky calm roils back the tide. The sunken heart
 And dredged soul, both locked to its labour,
 Confound it for a gold-stashing neighbour,
 Sea-traffic tossed long as litanies on a chart.

Chasmal master and fleshy slave, ill-at-ease
 With clumps of bronze kelp tonguing the brine
 Like smugglers, murky as a plunged bloodline.
 It does not serve our soft-focus fantasies,

Stoked by songs. Beyond the salvors' reach,
 Strapwork smearing rust over its agate-
 Strung lunulae, reef-grooved, waves set
 To rattle stones with the suck of their drainage,

The calm they bring to us illusory and brief.
 Mercy is small here. Fog, hellish spurts of rain,
 Make its drive of death knowable and akin
 To the hearts of men. Or so you wish to believe.

Man is a tourniquet for leechings of harmony,
 A windbound anchor clinching the basalt.
 His works are swallowed by the cold rise of the sea.
 The upsurge brims, crashing to a halt.

Roisín Browne lives in Rush, Co Dublin; she is a member of The Ardgillan Writers Group and is an attendee at the Gladstone Readings in Skerries. She has recently been longlisted in the Over the Edge, New Irish Writer of the Year competition 2016. Her poetry has been published in *Creative Writing Ink*, *A New Ulster*, *The Galway Review*, *The Flare* and in the forthcoming *Proletarian* issue from *Mgversion2*.

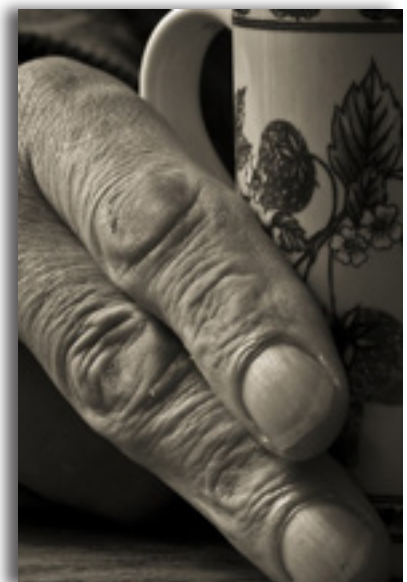


Buttering

He skims his hands around the white lid
snapping up the plastic lip
- a *shush* escapes on opening.
A clotted cream sea of adhesive revealed,
perfectly formed no lumps or bumps
takes the granite-coloured gauge lightly
in his right hand.
The tile, 6x4 Spanish and pearl, facedown, rests easily
on his left, a thumb and crooked little finger
hinging it in place.
He deftly dips, shaves the sea
and polka dots it rapidly on the ceramic.
He looks up, to see if I see
his green eyes lively,
'that, is called buttering,'
he says.

A Selection of WWII Book Titles

Survivors
Returning Home
Behind Closed Doors
The World at War
All Hell let loose
If this is a Woman
Gone to Ground
Dark times, Decent men
Millions like us
Journey to nowhere
- The End of the Myth.



Refuse

I don't
 want to hear it on ignition
 feel Twitter alerting my bag
 hear the *Jesus* murmurs
Ben was there last month
 clashing with the canteen cutlery
 see the news breaking
 of a white truck on a Blue day
 by distraught palm trees
 tinfoil bundles
 buggies
 beating us down
 rolling number counts
 stomachs plunging.

I don't
 want to start the car today
 to weep to Adagio for strings.

Moshing Meerkats

Looking back-
 I wish I'd been in that crowd, said Geldof.

Standing down, looking up, a fag hanging off my lips,
 fresh beer pores.

A sheet of sweat for a vest, trampoling in my scuffed black docs to
 raise my floppy verboten head above the parapet,
 to see our silhouettes

hazed, blazed shadows, digits dancing
 on six string wires, whacking drumsticks, drainpipes prancing

The backbeat to my chest beat
 moshing meerkats, melting
 in some dark, dank, glorious Dublin cellar.



Sailor

*I'm all at Sea, he said
as the afternoon tilted sideways
Winched wastings whirlpool
and drag my anchor bones
beyond the Reef*

*Plummet, pillaged
by the days that trip me*

*My Clocks have stopped
'twixt sun and wave
waterlogged and wet
the wheelhouse rounds on me*

Salt drawn drops settle bitter on my tongue

*I need to see the Sea, he said
as the day it overturned.*

Montbretia

Remember
when you parked up and we got out,
me quickly from the back
in a Mork & Mindy t-shirt
pink cotton shorts with holiday runners.

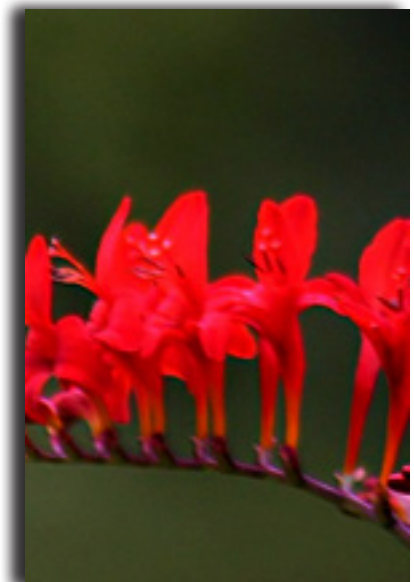
Grandma, slower from the front,
her soft varicose legs encased in 1940s tights,
settling on the gravelled ground, as you
easily took the length of her arm and stood her up.

I stayed beside our new white Peugeot,
the envy of my pals, while you both
silently faced Iveragh waters,
home five decades before.

The stoic stone bungalow
now a steroid dosed design
all metal beams desert grasses
anonymous glass, home
to someone not from here.

The sing-song clatter had emigrated west
the brown bread days long eaten
bellowing beagles no longer hunting hares
births and wakes at the end of their cycle

She latched her clear blue eyes
to the wild orange colouring the roadside,
a start of a smile, shying
that reminds me of home.



Elizabeth Ní Ruanaidh is now based in Ireland after living for many years in England and Scotland. She has only recently dipped her toe into the art of poetry writing. She is a yoga teacher and is working towards launching her own business in 2017.



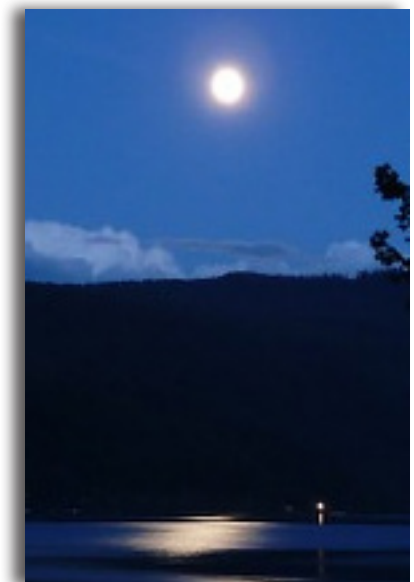
Hymns to the Silence*

Burley trunks and crisped bushes lace
black stygian lake.
Silvery orb'd super moon ripples its surface.
A luminous portal to the underworld.
Its lulling lapping song;
wind snapping through branches.
I close my eyes and listen to
Hymns to the silence.

Lamb

Hand-in-hand
Garbed in Sunday best
They walked apace
Like sheep to pasture.
Sonorous bells summoning the flock.
Outside carved doors
Men huddle like conspirators;
Attending their own private Mass.
Scanning the suited faces
The child shrinks, heart sinking
As their eyes locked.
He strolled over
Wraith thin
Swooping in
Demanding "his kiss".
The Mother laughed weakly;
Politely baring her teeth
Through lipstick red lips.
Pulling the child in front,
Looming over
He makes his steal.
It was a different time then.

*Van Morrison



© Elizabeth Ní Ruanaidh



So Much Depends

So much depends on nurture.
Enjoying the Sun
Until he starts gnawing on contention's bone.
The Tarot's Fool steps out into his world.

So much depends on nature,
on grit and inner metal.
Some lives unravel
Others' unfold.
As Fortune's Wheel spins.

Snapped

Josephine, standing by the bird feeder.
You look so sweet. Head tilted
Upturned curve of your mouth
Lit up with a slick of lipstick.
Amused eyes.
Comfortable shoes
Tweed skirt and long sleeved blouse.
Short sleeves would never do!
Eternity and Wedding rings wedded to your finger.
Framed by the verdant undulating hills.
You stood
Like Venus in her clam shell
A gentle woman
Caught in time.
Photographer unknown.



Karma Train

Your personal train is coming
down the tracks.
It travels inexorably.
No room for manoeuvre.
Road kill inevitable.
Only the conscious see it
And steer their course to avoid the bloody mess.

The Street That I live On

The seagulls' piercing calls in the early hours
These winged residents are the 'big birds'
Out-ranking the pigeons.
With a grim inevitability the occasional 'poor cousin'
Falls victim to the wheels of the bin lorries on their nightly rounds;
Flattened like birds suspended from hooks in London's Chinatown;
Their disembowelled remains pasted onto the shiny obsidian cobbles;
Cigarette ends and bottle tops peppered among the deeply riven gaps.
This narrow sliver of a street has an industrial rhythm.
Taxis, tradesmen, suppliers all daily visitors.
Concrete apartments sandwiched with metal roller shuttered lock-ups.
The back-sides of 'who knows what' premises.
No showcasing here.
The Turkish Social Club with its' Turkish and Irish emblems neighbours
A recording studio where musicians 'hang'.
The gothic red and black shield of the Art Tattoo parlour;
The 'greasy spoon' fusion café;
The ubiquitous corner convenience store;
The Money Transfer business where the 'New Irish' send money 'back home'.
The hostel, the hotel and hostelry.
The early morning smells of piss and rotting detritus
Addicts crouching in doorways and alcoves
The homeless now and then bedding down for the night
At times the grimness slaps you in the face.
It's a street with hard edges.
Yet amongst all of this
From unexpected heights
With the ebullience of a child playing hide and seek
Comes the green burgeoning of Mother Nature in all her glory.

Eldhose Alias is a seventeen year old, still stuck in Secondary School. He was born in Kerala and brought to Ireland when he was nine. His love of poetry started when he read Edward Fitzgerald's translation of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. T. S. Eliot is currently his favourite poet (it's always changing). And he is delighted by the chance to be published anywhere other than his school or church.



A golden heart makes fire

Sitting on the red porch,
where the red paint is fading,
with a lit oil lamp emitting
a lonely golden and oval barrier,
I take in the golden colour
of the oil lamp no electric
bulb can ever imitate.
I fall in love with the
golden light of the oil
lamp which makes my
black eyes golden and
the garden visible.
There is a solitary rose
in the weed-ravaged
patch of mud we call
'The garden.'
I look at the rose
then the rubber fields
then the rose again
but the rubber fields
cannot be ignored
because the oil lamp,
the oil lamp lights up
everything, everything
including the mosquitos
coming from the rubber fields.
The mosquitos are
fat, scarlet-black and
plenty in number
despite the thick myrrh.

I enjoy the smell
of incense in the air
and the burning oil
as I ignore the mosquitos
sucking my grandmother's
blood, as she heats up
water for my grandfather.

I admire my grandmother
as she heats up water
in the front of the house
with paper and fire.
I thought for a moment
that the fire in the paper
which lights up her face
like the oil lamp must
light up mine,
make it golden like hers
when she heats up water.

The method of heating
is primitive and beautiful
in its primitivism;
The fire is blown larger
and all is smokey in smell
from the sacred act
of enlarging a flame.

The smell of her labour,
I think,
is far more beautiful
than a church can ever be
and the fire, the fire
which breaks out
of my grandmother
lights up more, far more
than my oil lamp can ever,
Ever hope to achieve.

But the sacredness
of the labour becomes
repugnant as
I smell my grandfather,
his intoxication and anger,
and I disturb my
grandmother's labour
to talk about life;
my baby brother in a cot,
my day in school,
my dream job,
my mother,
mine.

I hear the poison
from my grandfather
and continue talking
about life in general
to my grandmother.
The water is fully heated now
and the fire from my
grandmother captures
the beauty of a sunset
in the steaming water,
and her pain.
I sense the pain
in my grandmother's heart
and eat a cheap sweet
I got from my neighbour
I was saving up for a
special occasion.
It is sweet, then bitter,
then sweet, because
I make it so.

Just like the oil lamp
and the golden fire.

Harrison Whittle was born January, of 1990, in San Francisco, California, and grew up in the East Bay. He graduated from the San Francisco State University Creative Writing Program in the summer of 2015, and currently works at a local pizza restaurant. He first began writing poetry in High School at the encouragement of a teacher. He has been writing as a way to keep his thoughts organized ever since. In addition to writing, and to feed a rampant hunger for physical activity, Harrison does boxing, road biking, and circuit training. When he's not writing, exercising, or working, he spends his time composing electronic music of multiple genres. He also organizes and puts on DJ-driven events in Oakland, California.



A Girl in Class

The girl quietly knew
everything; stared fiercely at smiles,

and being a quiet girl, she seldom
spoke. From holes
we dug ourselves, we could barely hear the girl

above our monotonous metal pushing, dirt shoving.
The girl quietly knew everything;

she took time to measure
in her details and punctuations, coagulating
reality was her talent

no one envied.
The girl, from

our tall ladders,
could have looked loud;
hurricane lips, streaking
flash-flood eyelashes;

but we saw

another mirror
to preen in,
a quiet, ignored

waterfall mist.
She spoke
one day,

one time, I remember,
“words are precious,

and I think people abuse them.”

Reflections on Love

Letter for a Heart

From,
Myself

I'll speak as I remember.

That you,
space, and I; we are mostly made
of empty.
But I choose to see the less
that makes us more.

Like infinity, love does not fill;
so I'll continue to pour,
for there's no loving us apart.

I'll dream, patiently
amidst endless trees.
I'll dance, stuck
in some light, with dust.
I'll sleep, still
in my prayer that it's ever enough;

that it's OK to sometimes leave

beauty un-teethed

without experience

For,
You



Simple as 1,2,3

Hey
there, you.
What's your name?

We
should fall
graceless as love
for
the ground
has no limit.

I
am humbled,
and unlike time
(whose
selfish infinity
only takes; holds).
I'll
stay breathing
just for you.

Boxing Match

The black dress fits perfect.
Skipping down the back, and up,
the fabric; light
as a scent on skin.

The black dress fits perfect;
how shadows touch
edges so intimate.

Eyes on the dress watch passions
dance and duel around
a ring. Hiding in bright defense,

the shadows cross, tempt, hook,
and love
to get caught in front of an audience.
That's how they connect, sweat; Live.

The black dress fits perfect
this savagery of physicality;
These wrapped hands of heat
that touch
steel made in breath,
and the infinity between two
pressing.

The black dress fits perfect;
the absence of light,
when defined line kisses defined line.

In our rings commitment to blood and bells,
I mull beatings of the heart
and strive to perfect
form, like a darkness at the center
of intimacy;

like the black dress that fits perfect.



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