





# Crannóg 16 autumn 2007

## Editorial board:

*Sandra Bunting  
Gerardine Burke  
Jarlath Fahy  
Tony O'Dwyer*

*Published by*

**Crannóg Media  
Galway Language Centre  
Bridge Mills  
Galway  
Ireland**

*editor@crannogmagazine.com  
www.crannogmagazine.com*

*ISSN 1649-4865*

*Cover images: Barrie Cooke  
Cover design: Sandra Bunting  
Typesetting/Layout: Wordsonthestreet*



*Printed by e-print Ltd. Dublin*

*Crannóg acknowledges the assistance of:*

*Galway City Council Galway Language Centre Mill St Study Centre*



## CONTENTS

<b>Arthur Leung</b>	
Leave No Trace .....	4
<b>Patricia Burke Brogan</b>	
Scorched .....	5
<b>Eileen Casey</b>	
Brown Bird Bottle .....	6
<b>Maureen Gallagher</b>	
New Walk .....	7
<b>Mary O'Donnell</b>	
Fadó Fadó .....	8
<b>Breid Sibley</b>	
Musing, While Drinking A Cup Of Tea In Galway	
After The Water Crisis In August 2007 .....	13
<b>Eamon Lynskey</b>	
The Lifeachrist .....	14
<b>Betsey Carreyette</b>	
Birthsong .....	15
<b>Celeste Augé</b>	
The Gap That Opens Up .....	16
<b>Kate Campbell</b>	
Flood .....	17
<b>Barbara De Franceschi</b>	
Between Migration .....	18
<b>Sean Donegan</b>	
Broken Promises .....	19
<b>Grace Wells</b>	
The Muezzin's Call .....	20
<b>Edith O'Nualláin</b>	
An Ghlaio .....	21
<b>Susan Connolly</b>	
A Shooting Star .....	22
<b>Eithne Cavanagh</b>	
The Perfume Bottle .....	23
<b>Patrick Deeley</b>	
Dandelions .....	24
<b>Aiden O'Reilly</b>	
Under The Light .....	25
<b>Mary Rose Callan</b>	
Fishing With Ben, Aged Four .....	29
<b>Sandra Bunting</b>	
Contaminated Heart .....	30
<b>Mary Mullen</b>	
August Lament .....	35
<b>Glynis Gertsch</b>	
Edgehaven .....	36

<b>Dominic Taylor</b>	
Big Brother .....	41
<b>Betty Thompson</b>	
Cream .....	42
<b>Bunny Dees</b>	
The Scarecrow .....	43
<b>Aideen Henry</b>	
Penumbra .....	47
<b>Nicholas Messenger</b>	
Breasts .....	48
<b>Claude Seignolle</b>	
The Man Who Could Not Die .....	49
<b>Jarlath Fahy</b>	
Muttly Buttons .....	51
<b>Mary O'Rourke</b>	
Trapped .....	52
<b>Mary Wilkinson</b>	
Johnny Wife Talk.....	53
<b>Peter Guy</b>	
Baptism Of The Sun .....	56
<b>Tim Goldstone</b>	
The Incomers .....	57
<b>Kevin Donnelly</b>	
Autumnal Place .....	58
<b>Bibliographical Details</b> .....	59

**Leave No Trace**

**Arthur Leung**

---

Each time I close my eyes, let me own  
the green shower strangers taste together,  
smell the beaming breeze that vacillates  
between the vermilion and indigos  
of leather ferns on a lichen swamp spied  
with mud-skippers. Among the baritones  
of cicadas, a clamour of hungry flies  
and mosquitoes in crescendo fades to rock.

Latent giggles of an earthly couple,  
I follow footprints barely visible  
understanding I am now in love,  
refuse to turn my head and see wings  
in my pupils, liqueur along heartbeats  
and pass the chanting rocks, waving crabs,  
soughing figs and broken kite that flees,  
owning them and leaving as they are.

---

**Scorched**

**Patricia Burke Brogan**

---

*For Geraldine and Peter*

Geraldine brings me her portrait,  
victim of a Christmas house-fire,  
'Girl with guitar', oil on board.

My brushstrokes, no longer luminous,  
are batiked by brackish smuts,  
encrusted with paint-cinders.

Fired aeons ago in earth's cauldron,  
pushed up by volcanoes, my chromatic pigments  
transformed once again by intensity of heat.

I scrape away scumble on forehead  
on nose, on chin,  
uncover highlights on cheekbones.

Through a haze of singed crimsons,  
raw siennas, cadmium yellows, ceruleans,  
girl and guitar become visible.

Vocal chords and fingers move,  
she strums her rock' an' roll rhythms,  
we harmonize her song.

**Brown Bird Bottle**

**Eileen Casey**

---

A bird with an eye span  
round as the rim of a brown bottle,  
long crouched in sleep  
at the back of my tongue;

wakes in a flap of feathery sails  
silk to taste  
for all their senseless flight.  
A brown bird swoops

through that thin tunnel of breath  
down to the nesting pit  
where many the fledgling hour  
was pushed off the edge  
of that steep cliff  
where whole days were lost  
like a shipwrecked crew  
tossed on the rocks below.  
A bead-eyed bird  
preens itself, waits  
for the wind to rise, waits for sightings  
of a reckless flag  
hoisted to the lips of morning.  
These sea changes do not come.

A brown bird  
whose sailing feathers are sleek  
as glass glinted in sunlight  
pours out the last sour drop  
of a song I am no longer  
eager to hear or fill my throat  
or belly with.  
I open the door of its cage

and let it go.

---

**New Walk**

**Maureen Gallagher**

---

No orchids here, nor violet  
celandine or wild rose. Only  
the sea, the sea, spread out  
like a ream of eastern silk  
shimmering to the strand  
expansive, lightly pocked.

I miss my bog road walk,  
decked with fruit and flower,  
the snare of the insect-eater  
on the winter worn path,  
the cuckoo's call in April.  
My old life achingly over.

But look! An oystercatcher  
hop-scotching over pebbles,  
scarlet beak torching the sand.  
The heron on solitary watch  
waiting by the shore's burn  
at sunset. For love to return.

He waited in the car-park three floors beneath the shopping centre. His daughter Katy had promised to meet him there at three thirty, leaving enough time for the usual crawl across the M50 to their home, just beyond the suburbs. It was now four o'clock and no sign of Her Nibs and the over-sexed fourteen-year old Sorcha who was her current Best Friend.

He'd read the newspaper, had absorbed the columnists' views on everything from the Middle East to current national prosperity and immigration. He flipped his phone open and laboriously texted with big fingers: Where r u? Fone me NOW. Dad. He now quite enjoyed the abbreviations of the mobile phone, even using them when staying in touch with Joyce, his wife. Today, she was at the hairdressers for her bi-annual mortgage-sized haircut. It was left to him to bring the two girls, on the last Saturday of the summer holidays, across the city to the southside shopping haven that drew them like bees to honey.

After a few minutes, he decided to phone Katy. He waited, then tutted as her voice cut in with the usual cutsie stuff about not being there right now, but leave a message and if you're lucky I might, just might get back to you!...

As so often of late, he could feel his heart pumping with anger. It was always an anger that had to be suppressed. Any word from him and Joyce would modify it, making less of his admonitions and advice, sometimes even in front of Katy, urging him to encourage rather than inhibit. He understood where she was coming from. Both of them had long memories of feeling small, a well-absorbed sense of inconsequentiality learned in childhood when parents and teachers sang in perfect harmony to the wisdom of the Irish version of an education. There'd been a lot of humility, not being seen to be big-headed, and certainly no showing off.

He got out of the car and slammed the door shut, then clicked to lock. The escalator went up five or six levels before he arrived at what was supposed to be a ground floor. The place was humming with its eager constituency of women and yet more women, groups of young fellows in blue and white striped rigger shirts, gaggles of tanned young girls in high-street couture t-shirts and pearls. Pearls, for heaven's sake! When he was

young only his girlfriends' mothers would be seen in pearls. Now pearls were the far edge of cool. Katy wore them too.

He scanned the vast mall. Where was she? Should he find an information desk, get her paged? Could he do that? And would she hear her name over the babble of discriminating, magpie-eyed shoppers? He observed the crowd, focusing occasionally on a bag-laden woman in casual wear. Cliché as it was, they'd all come a long way, and he wasn't so sure he liked the distance.

Katy could do with a spell down in Limerick with his uncle Seanie. A few nights at the farm in Clonfadó would open her eyes. It sure as hell opened his, thirty-five years ago at the age of fifteen, when his parents took a trip to London and thought it a good idea to renew family relations by sending him down to Seanie's place. That was how he discovered East was East and West was West, and as far as he was concerned the twain would never meet. He had reeled through the seven days in a state of quiet shock at his parents' misjudgement, appalled by the savagery of his uncle, who had inherited Clonfadó House. It took a year before he could even begin to forgive his father, not alone for sending him there, but for having a brother like Seanie, whose wife lived in fear of things he could only guess at, and whose children – his cousins – were a pitiable crew, dragged up by Uncle Seanie's begrudging, swearing, ebullience. It was like something from a jagged satire by Myles na gCopaleen, except that it was real, so real he quaked.

They had no indoor toilet. In the centre of every room hung a single, unshaded light-bulb. The strong tea tasted strange, acrid. The reason for this he did not discover until his sixth day in Clonfadó when he noticed Aunt Eylie pouring the water in which Uncle Seanie's two eggs had been boiled, into the teapot. When he timidly enquired about this procedure, Aunt Eylie whispered that it saved on electricity. No need to boil water twice, she said, her cheeks flushed.

He found it difficult to get to know his cousins. One of the two girls was impudent, a year older than he, well able to stand up to her father, who favoured her. She would throw him long, unsettling, glitter-eyed looks that made him feel oddly naked. Bafflingly, she also shared that particular gaze with her father. The other girl, like her mother, was mostly silent, embarrassed and perspiring. The boy, the same age as he, had a severe cast in one eye.

‘Ah, sure the fairies got to that fella!’ Uncle Seanie would roar at mealtimes, ‘an’ he should’ve bin dhrowned at birth!’ Then he would laugh, his voice cruel and triumphant as his only son scowled.

When he got back to Kildare, he wept with relief and rage, and challenged his father about it.

‘Why did you send me there? Why? WHY?’ he blubbered, the urgency of the question rising over his tears.

His father looked helpless, and shrugged.

‘I didn’t know it would be like that. Honest, son. Seanie rang me a month ago ... first time in five years ... so I thought ... and he offered to take you ... I thought it would be a holiday. I meant no harm.’

He meant no harm. Even so, harm was done. He would never inflict the equivalent on Katy, even if she needed a root up the arse from time to time and thanks to her mother never got it.

He sighed. Where would he find her? He texted her again. By now, he was walking quickly past various shops, Tommy-this and Ralph-that, Harvey-something, House-of-something else. He was afraid to take the plunge inside for fear of what he’d find there, yet they were just shops. Places where people bought things. But all he felt was anxiety. He needed to be in a land, a safe haven that lay somewhere between the chosen impoverishment, the spirit-wreckage of his uncle in Clonfadó and this new, bewildering zone which people embraced frenziedly. Where did he fit in, he and Joyce, who remembered the old days when everybody was smacked down? Now, reward was automatic, for the stupid, the passive and the evil, and everybody dressed like characters from a Southern California soap series.

For a moment, he heard his own inner rant, saw himself in Grumble Mode, all his own, once-young, man’s laughter long long gone from him.

He glanced to the left, into a lingerie shop. Just as he was about to force his eyes to glide away from the sight of so much feminine apparel, he saw them, Katy and Sorcha at the checkout, handing over their purchases. Joyce had told Katy to get herself some new underwear, he remembered as he entered the shop, approaching them. Their girl was growing. Soon she would be a young woman. He imagined her in the future, a slightly intimidating Amazon to the faint-hearted, but otherwise grace and ease on two legs.

Already, he could hear the giggles. He had long ago conceded that most young females spent a lot of time amused at very little, as if they carried a built-in radar primed to receive the comic and the absurd so that they could break their guts laughing at it.

Sorcha spotted him first and hissed something in Katy's ear. There was a sudden rush of activity between them as the items purchased were hastily deposited into bags. The girls approached him.

'Hi,' Katy smiled up at him. 'I know my phone was switched off. I didn't mean ... I forgot, Dad.'

'That's okay love. I found you. That's the main thing.' He smiled at her, then glanced amiably at Sorcha.

'Have a good time?' he enquired.

The girl stared frankly up into his eyes.

'Oh John, we had a really cool time of it. Savage!'

He took a deep breath. What had happened to Mr.? Before he could say anything, he noticed how she held his stare. Who had taught her to look at a middle-aged man in such a way? His mouth tightened and he said nothing. He looked straight ahead as they walked down the long mall towards the lift, pacing himself, trying not to react so much.

The girls whispered and laughed, responding to everything they saw. As they went, he noticed how the eyes of men of all ages rested briefly, assessingly on both girls. Katy suddenly darted into one shop, a gleaming bazaar-like haven where accessories were sold. The residues of childhood were in her still, the need to rush towards the beautiful, the magical, trusting in all she saw.

Eventually, they reached the car.

'You have to see what Katy bought!' Sorcha announced as they flopped into the back seat.

Katy shot Sorcha a venomous look. So some things were private.

'Go on! Show him!' Sorcha urged, trying to grab one of the shopping-bags.

'Piss off, Sorcha!' he heard his daughter warn, but then she laughed despite herself, maintaining a firm grip on the bag.

The journey home was subdued. The girls shared an earpiece each from Katy's MP3 player. Every so often one of them would say something. No matter what was said, laughter followed. Despite himself he found that charming.

That night he called in to say goodnight to Katy. She was stretched out on the bed, supporting herself on one elbow, book in hand. At least she still reads, he thought approvingly. Then his gaze fell on something. His daughter noticed and frowned, eyes darting desperately down to the bottom of the bed. But it was too late to conceal the tumble of airy fabrics that had caught his attention.

Thongs. Thongs worthy of a pole-dancing professional whether in Bangkok or Allenwood, scraps of meticulous adornments, with rudimentary triangular and transparent front-pieces, silky ribbons that could have been woven by fairies, and the finest of satin strings holding all together.

He left the room before steam hissed from his ears. He would speak to Joyce, who was so busy trying to paddle a middle way between their daughter's childhood and womanhood that she was in danger of pushing Katy out into a youth-lacerating, un-signposted savannah. Then he changed his mind and turned back, roughly slamming the bedroom door wide.

'Never, EVER, wear those things with a mini-skirt!' he thundered, gasping at the thoughts of what the child was being allowed to do to herself. A projectile of spittle whizzed out of his mouth as he spoke. Katy spotted it, but it did not amuse her. Instead she shrank back, suddenly timid.

He left the room again, ignoring his daughter's alarmed cry as she attempted to follow him. 'Dad! Dad! I didn't mean anything ... they were so pretty ... and cheap too!' she pleaded.

'No matter, no matter ...' he gasped, 'Just be careful!' he called back over his shoulder, lest she would see his eyes, ablaze with the twin passions of love and anger. Had the world lost all sense of the real, native radiance of that creature known as 'girl', that unadorned work-in-process which was womanhood in bud? He thought of all the young girls, oh the young girls with their fabulous bodies, the little fripperies out there with which to adorn them, and of all the men, of any age, of whom he was one, struggling to be men.

**Musing, While Drinking A Cup Of Tea In Galway  
After The Water Crisis In August 2007**

---

Breid Sibley

I sit outside the cafe,  
Sipping Green Keemun Tea  
From the hill country of China.

Women appear before me  
In green, blue and fuchsia robes,  
Ornate headpieces  
Wicker baskets on their backs  
Plucking the tender green leaves  
A rainbow moving down the hillside.  
Fermentation... Tea-Clippers in the wind...

I find myself at the Japanese House  
In the Children's Museum, Boston, Mass.,  
With my two young sons  
At a ritual tea ceremony  
Eight Hundred and Fifty years old...

An autumnal gust wakes me from my reverie.  
Two children walk by on the cobblestones  
Pink, green and blue balloons  
Rising from their hands.

**The Lifeachrist**

**Eamon Lynskey**

---

*(Religious Education, Dublin, c. 1963 AD)*

Take out your LifeaChrists and open up  
page 49 I think ... Yes, 49 ...

I see a lot of people there without  
their LifeaChrist in front of them. Where's yours?  
And you. Where's your LifeaChrist? — Right!  
Seasagaí suas na daoine who forgot  
their LifeaChrists. There's no excuse: we've done it  
every Monday since September. You —  
Where's your LifeaChrist? Oh, you forgot?  
Sín amach do lámh. !!  
Now maybe you'll remember next Monday?  
And you? The same. Lámh amach. !!  
Pure and simple thoughtlessness. And you? —  
O, you! Do I remember you forgot  
your LifeaChrist last Monday too? Amach.  
!! And you? !!  
Now. Suigh síos gach éinne. And don't anyone  
come in again without their LifeaChrist.

Right! Open up page... yes, page 49,  
and those who have no LifeaChrists themselves  
look into the LifeaChrist beside you. We  
were on the second paragraph ... Yes  
the second paragraph. 'Jesus teaches us  
the need for mercy'. You, there — Read!

---

**Birthsong**

**Betsey Carreyette**

---

Daughter, when you were born  
not only did they set the hounds against the fox,  
they declared war on an unarmed nation.

Recovering bloodstained uniforms,  
they wired us to a monitor.  
Scant time for the lotus meditation I'd prepared  
as we were jostled towards the starter line

and a wail, I was told 'not part of the procedure'  
rose, not from my body,  
but through it,

compelled me to bare teeth  
and curse all who attempted to corner us

as I exiled ourselves to the shower  
and drew silver circles of spray  
around my bulbous form

where we were seized in  
the vice of a volatile earth

and separately cast  
across an ocean whose iron waves smashed  
a passage  
to a distant shore

where a blood-streaked sun  
was crowning.

**The Gap That Opens Up**

**Celeste Augé**

---

What do you do when the laughter leaves you,  
when the wind has been knocked from you  
too many times and you're all dressed up  
and your little girls are in their best dresses;  
when the tide makes sense,  
with its pull, its tangle of weeds  
pushing up against the pier  
and all you have to do  
is step off?

**Flood**

**Kate Campbell**

---

Rain soaked fields  
Surrender to the swollen river  
And land becomes lake.  
Cattle, like water buffalo,  
Drink in their own image  
Upside-down in the sky.

**Between Migration**

**Barbara De Franceschi**

---

they live at the edge of paths  
in the cracks between  
one culture and another  
their souls take note of exile  
when they speak  
the language is like a hawk  
unable to circle familiar terrain  
they swoop upon our sameness  
cloning insensible to adjustments  
we panic with our clueless eyes  
undress them with irreverence  
through the cracks they grow  
strange fruit for the gathering

---

**Broken Promises**

**Sean Donegan**

---

The place-names fall leaden from the tongue,  
Verdun, Gallipoli, the Somme;  
So too Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen,  
Dachau, Kosovo;  
then Rwanda, Israel, Lebanon and Iraq.  
Derry, Enniskillen, Omagh.

Wars, relentless, endless.  
Yet all the while we keep mumbling our mantra,  
war never again.  
*Broken promises litter the years,*  
over and over, again and again and again.

**The Muezzin's Call**

**Grace Wells**

---

Crossing the Suir at Ferryhouse,  
passing the frosted orchards,  
a sound in the throat rises,  
resonating voice of the land.  
Passing the red acacia, this ullulation  
sweetens to a note. Passing the holly  
red with berries, passing the hotel entrance,  
aware they hear me, the health-club visitors,  
the chambermaids, the waking sleepers,  
past the last yellow leaves of the fingered  
birches, past the woman  
whose face has caved in with sadness,  
beneath the only mistletoe for thirty miles,  
over the Gashouse Bridge, through  
the November morning I go, one note  
rising up and out of me, over the town  
calling, calling the world to prayer.

---

**An Ghlaio**

**Edith O'Nualláin**

---

Aréir  
tháinig Sí ar ais,  
na focail Uaithi  
ag foluain san aer.  
Agus bhí Sí  
ag glaoch m'ainm  
go ciuin, go caoin,  
go seasmhach  
mar shoith ag cnaíomh  
ar chnámh nach  
scaoilfeadh sí leí.  
Aréir  
chuaigh an Mháthair Dorcha  
isteach ionam  
agus thóg Sí seilbh  
ar m'anam.

Last night  
She came back,  
Her words  
floating in the air.  
And She was  
crying out my name,  
softly, gently,  
insistingly,  
like a bitch gnawing  
the bone she won't  
give up.  
Last night  
the Dark Mother  
entered me  
and took possession  
of my soul.

**A Shooting Star**

**Susan Connolly**

---

Feet wade the dark,  
eyes seek light,  
the sky a tree

laden with stars.

Orion's Belt,  
the Pleiades,  
like pictures  
in a gallery.

I lean right back.

Memory sudden

as a shooting star:

5am, how the freezing

winter nights

woke us;

our warmth

rocked us to sleep.

---

## The Perfume Bottle

Eithne Cavanagh

---

On tip-toe I used to root  
in the high up drawer  
of your dressing table,  
inhaling wood-powdery dryness.

That square perfume bottle  
in its velvet cushioned box  
lay unopened there for decades  
among trinkets, cards and letters.

Was it thrift, or something else  
that made you save the perfume  
while dabbing cheaper scent  
behind each ear?

From a loftier angle I sort through  
the minutiae of your effects.  
the label, faded, but still goldy  
proclaims 'Chanel' in elegant lettering.

I break the seal.  
The cut-glass stopper tosses  
shards of rainbow on the wall,  
releasing a heady surge of musk.

Again I scrutinise the bottle  
as if it could reveal to me its mystery  
or explain your need  
to keep it by you until death,

...a fragrant unction to carry you away.

**Dandelions**

**Patrick Deeley**

---

The longest yields a three-foot  
root; the shortest squeaks a snaggy tail.  
Sod and spade, where would I  
be going? Not out with the diners  
tonight. The bouquet of restaurant  
will have to do, breeze-borne

from four doors down. And this lawn,  
lit with dandelions. Their stalks  
break bitter milk on my skin;  
they give nothing unless they give  
everything - the withheld  
scrap comes up in clusters. And I,

levering them through tangles of grass  
with meticulous gentleness,  
lull myself into believing I loved them  
in an earlier time. There seemed  
to be room then, abundance of  
wildflower places, but these were weeds

still, they brought me to my knees,  
I cursed tillage, the big darkness  
fell, the first stars twinkled,  
the world wheeled by, suiting itself  
until I forgot and was forgotten, and grew  
alone, and knew this was natural.

---

## Under The Light

Aiden O'Reilly

---

They have taken my parents to the re-education camp. "Go easy on them," I said, "they are old and come from a village."

"We mean them no harm," they answered, "but their ideas offend us all."

When I visit them - twice a year at least - they are delighted. Yes, they are keeping well, they have satellite television now, they have vitamins and skin creams, duvets instead of blankets. It is a pleasure too for me; they no longer treat me as a child. When my mother cooks I can show her how to use the settings on the oven. I like to listen to them talk about the old days; they have a precise memory of names and extended family connections. I have amazed my colleagues on occasion by telling them that, for example, a second cousin is related to a famous politician. "How do you know these things?" they ask. I tell them straight out.

It's no shame to have parents in the camp. It could happen to anyone.

"It gets cold here," my mother says, putting on a shiver. "Water forms on the walls and runs down." "Condensation," my father nods his white head, "poor air circulation. It never did that before the big change."

"No," I tell them, "you just haven't learned how to adjust the settings." That's always the way. They forget too quickly the discomforts of lighting a coal fire, just like they forget how much time they wasted washing things by hand, scrubbing floors, standing in line at the post office.

My mother's voice drops. She leans toward me in the dark living-room. Out of habit they never switch on the lights until the last daylight is gone. "You wouldn't believe the things they are telling us now." Stay longer than an hour and they begin to speak freely. They think I am one of their party. I lower my eyes and say nothing.

"They say the Vatican is abolishing limbo. The baby souls go straight to heaven."

I scraped my foot along the skirting. Examined my fingernails. Things are worse than I expected.

"And all the prayers I said through the years, what becomes of them?"

"I'm sure they'll be . . . reassigned," I said.

"Aaagh," she made a noise of dismissal. Father shouts from the kitchen, "The potatoes need teeming." He swaps pots on the rings and fiddles with

controls. My mother joins him in the kitchen and they make a drama. Steam rises and they forget to switch on the ventilator.

Dinner is proceeding nicely when my mother starts again.

"They are telling us that now one man will be able to marry another." I say nothing to encourage her. My father pushes down the potato with the back of his fork. He was never a thinker, but he had his progressive views as a young man, and greeted the early stages of the change. I have seen photographs of him at a demonstration in the sixties. I do believe he has gotten more reactionary since entering the camp, more silent at any rate.

"And you're not allowed wear a cross at work. Do you wear a cross at work? And young Gilligan who set fire to the plant was sentenced to get counseling. Counseling, so he can find himself. I know the kind of counseling he deserves."

"The economy is going downhill because people are not spending enough. It's wrong to save, so they tell us." It's my father this time, he doesn't like my mother to monopolise the conversation.

I bear through it as best I can. Before I leave I fix whatever needs fixing. The timing switch that wards off thieves needs adjustment. The silicone sealing in the windows leaks in spots. I set up the instant dial on the telephone yet again. No matter what goes wrong they will obscurely hold the new regime to blame and fail to see how comfortable they really are.

When my mother was fifteen she swore devotion to the Mediatrix of all Graces and chose St. Joseph to intercede on her behalf for the souls of the faithful departed. In the five years she worked in the post office she earned enough to pay half the down payment on a house. (Nobody knows this outside the family.) The electricity came and when she prayed her eyes were fixed on the flickering red bulb and not on the sacred heart above. When it burnt out one night she knew what it was to fear for one's mortal soul. The night vigil invested her with the courage to address the priest as he left the sacristy. Child, he told her, if the flame strengthens your faith then yes, God is in the flame. But if you want to switch it off that is also right and fitting.

In the townland my father came from a local man hammered holes in a disc of galvanise and ran a pipe to the outhouse. He was the first in the province to build himself a shower. The people sniggered in their hands. Only the children dared to point and say "There's the man who stands up naked to have a wash." And when his wife passed, "Do you think . . . ?"

So you see there is good reason to forgive them. And when I meet my colleagues at the re-education centre - it should be abundantly clear that that is my real employment, and my parents will never read this anyway - they are full of understanding. Understanding, yes, but judgement still has to be made. Am I to treat them more leniently just because they never had the power to enforce their ideas? But we are not grim about our work. We crack the whip of irony, look on benevolently, and wait for them to come over. One irreverent joke would be enough to have us laughing good-naturedly with them. Lighten up, that's all we're saying, lighten up and you're already half-way out of the camp.

Inside the re-education camp they cluster with their own kind at sheltered corners. I see them from a distance, necks stretched toward each other, nodding. Their eyes gleam, the wind carries the rustle of whispers. A few steps closer and they dissemble with loud greetings, genuinely hearty. They are shameless in their dissimulation. This bothers me; it shows the depths of their deviancy. I am made to feel like a child who has blundered into a conversation that doesn't concern him. "What was that?" I ask, but the question gets lost in the greetings. I don't pursue the matter: it's not a constructive way to proceed.

They are hungry for ears to listen to them. It's ugly to see their bony fingers tremble with lust and the spittle rise to their lips. There's only a few years left to die, why do they have to spoil it?

Sometimes though, I can see they want to make me proud of them. They have been scrupulously friendly to every girlfriend I introduced, no matter what her race or habits. They tell me, as though it could possibly interest me, that the noodles from the local Chinese take-away are a very healthy food, delicious, nourishing.

"That Mr. Larkhill is a friendly chap. He was looking at the way I was chucking at the window catch. 'Oh no *Madame*,'" - my mother was clearly impressed by this word - "let me show you how to do it. And he took out a hand drill and bored another hole just a fraction of an inch further along. You'd want to see the way it works now. As smooth as I don't know what. My name is *Mister* Larkhill, he told me." She gave a nod I had last seen when I called by with news of my graduation.

"And he sat there where you are now and drank tea without milk and instead of biscuits he asked if I happened to have a square of chocolate."

Mr. Larkhill is from Mali and is as black as coal dust. He sweats terribly, and the whites of his eyes are splintered with red. I know what raced through my parents' heads. I know the ugliness that stains them through and through. Yet when I relate the story of Mr. Larkhill it will go to my parents' credit. The colleagues will laugh and say the old pair are at last getting in tune with the times. *No*, I want to tell them, *you should hear what they really think*. I keep my silence, half because there is little sense in being meticulous with such hopeless cases, and half, perhaps, out of sentimentality.

---

**Fishing With Ben, Aged Four**

**Mary Rose Callan**

---

I'm cutting a fish: not cod  
frozen in breadcrumbs, or a fillet  
of salmon with a day to go  
before its sell-by date, this  
is a scorpionfish, breathless  
colour you wouldn't dream of naming.

It doesn't flinch  
when I thread a needle  
and pierce its jaw forever open  
in a yawn that could start  
a whole room yawning, even you  
standing on tip-toe, ready

for the swim of your life  
with a fish tied to the finger you plunge  
through kitchen and hall  
flooded with Caribbean water  
I didn't cut from pages  
of *National Geographic*.

## **Contaminated Heart**

**Sandra Bunting**

---

“We can’t afford you but we need you,” was how the young City Councillor greeted her. “We’re expecting a lot.”

Not only did Sharon feel unwelcome, she was immediately thrown to the feeding frenzy of the press. The city hall conference room was full of journalists who appeared ready for the kill. However, used to fighting both government agencies and the media, she was well able to handle them.

“We’ll be doing all in our power to find the source of the contamination. I assure you I will be working day and night with city officials. In the meantime, continue to boil your water.”

What was it with Councillor Duff? He’d sat next to her the whole time but left it up to her to field all the tough questions. ‘Politicians! Always the same. Passing the buck,’ she thought.

She was so busy answering that she hardly got a look at the councillor. Glancing at him now, she noticed he was attractive, tall, strongly built. From her research into the city’s water problem, she’d read that Jim Duff was the most eligible bachelor in the city. No doubt he would stay that way with such a nasty personality.

Sitting back to collect her thoughts before taking another question, she noticed the bottles of spring water on the table and poured herself a glass.

A camera flashed in her face, blinding her for a moment. It made her realise how tired she was. She had flown to the capital that morning, rented a car and had hardly had a break until she arrived in the city for the press conference.

There was only one stop. Just entering the county, there were two quaint village pubs side by side. Going into one, dark and wood-lined, she had a sandwich and tea. When she got up to pay, she noticed large containers of water behind the bar.

“Are you affected the same way as the city? The water I mean.”

“No, we have the other yoke,” the old man behind the bar replied. “The e-coli. Been boiling our water for years.”

Another question from a journalist brought Sharon back to the conference at city hall.

“Dr. McLaughlin, what is the time frame for finding a solution?”

“Well, although I have been previously informed of the situation, I have only just arrived. I’ll be starting on the problem first thing in the morning,” Sharon said. “I will be issuing regular reports.”

“But when?”

“We all agree the sooner the better. Let’s leave it there.”

After settling into her hotel room, Sharon went down to the pool and swam her daily lengths. She was tempted by the spa and soaked up the heat in a room with light therapy and a fountain. She felt soothed by the sound of the water and her mind drifted back to the desert where she had worked to find water and create irrigation systems. Fountains in those areas were a pleasure beyond compare.

When a maid came to her room to deliver bottles of spring water, she was reminded not to use the tap water, not even to brush her teeth. The advice wasn’t necessary. Sharon knew everything about water. She had made a list of facts she knew. The sewage treatment plant had been in operation for ten years. Since that time all the local beaches had received a blue flag. She pulled back the curtains and looked out onto the tiny medieval streets of the city centre. ‘Medieval,’ she repeated to herself. ‘Perhaps it’s the pipes.’

The next morning she rushed to city hall to get a map showing the location of all the old lead pipes still in use.

“You’ll have a time of it figuring them out. Many of the old ones, we don’t know where they go at all. It’s like a puzzle. I suppose they all fit together somehow.”

Sharon shivered. In other locations she had had to descend into the sewers to see where pipes went, to look for leaks. She hoped she wouldn’t have to do this here.

“Councillor Duff will certainly be relieved if you find something,” said the engineer as he passed over the plans.

“He’s not very friendly, is he?”

“Not friendly? He’s one of the nicest people I know. He is beside himself with worry over this water situation. You can’t have a city of 80-thousand with no clean water. Not to mention the tourists. ”

Sharon brought the plans over to a clear counter and laid them out. She was studying them when Jim Duff walked in.

“Found anything yet?”

“Give me a chance. It’s my first day on the job. And you really threw me into it yesterday. I hadn’t even officially started.”

Although still full of worry, he seemed to take on a gentler expression.

“Sorry. It’s just that people are desperate to have safe water.”

“Wait, what’s this building? There are pipes dating back centuries here. I’d like to have a look.”

“It’s called The River Tower. It was there to keep a record of fisheries. It’s not used now except for storing old bits of rope and things like that.”

“Well, I’ll start there anyway. See where these old pipes go.”

The councillor arranged to get her keys to the building and drove her up to the entrance.

“I have a meeting. But be sure to phone me if you find anything.”

“I don’t have a mobile with me.”

“It’s not far from your hotel. Ring from there.”

His arm brushed against hers as he opened the car door to let her out. Sharon felt a spark of heat course through her.

“Good luck,” he called as he drove away.

The gate to the tower walkway, a rickety wooden foot-bridge, was secured with a rusty padlock. Sharon struggled to open it, bracing herself against the strong wind that blew up from the bay. The building itself had another large padlock. Trying several keys on the big chain Jim Duff had given her, she was successful on the fourth go. Sharon watched cormorants dive from a slip on one side. Ducks and seagulls congregated on the other side. She could even see fish, big ugly ones she couldn’t identify.

Armed with binoculars, she climbed the twisty stairs to the top. The sky was streaked with pinks and oranges, contrasting with the deep mauve of the hills across the bay and more vibrant in reflection on the water. From that height Sharon could see swans in the basin ruffling their feathers, settling down for the night. On the beach, a dog ran after a stick and closer, people milled across the footbridge that led into the medieval centre of the city. A few moments before, she’d seen the head of a seal dart up among the currents of the river, having followed fish in from the sea.

Sharon was aware of the importance of water. She had lectured women in rural Latin America to breast feed instead of mixing formula in dirty bottles. She tried to get them to stop washing clothes with strong soaps in the rivers. More importantly, she fought with communities to secure clean

water supplies. This city was not in the third world. However, the water had been tested and judged unfit to drink. Sharon was hired to find out why.

Looking out the windows from what seemed to be similar to a lighthouse with no light, water was everywhere; on the bay where sailboats raced in the wind, in the rushing river and the quiet canals. Sharon felt as if she had finally found her spiritual home. She could never live far from water. She never failed to fall under its fascination. Perhaps that's why keeping the world's water clean had become both a job and a crusade. As a consultant she had been on every continent. It was a shame what man had done to his environment. Water was life.

She wondered where Jim Duff was and if she would be able to spot him when he came out of the meeting. He'd seemed nicer today.

Little birds were lined up on an electricity line bobbing up and down in the wind. Others were flying in patterns in the sky. It was such a beautiful natural place with hardly any industry. Yet the irony was that even this place was spoiled.

Then she saw it. Coming out of a pipe near where she had seen the fish was a stream of brown liquid sludge. Mullet swarmed around the effluent. Ducks and other water birds swam up and huge river rats slinked down from the wall into the water for a feed. It wasn't the main source of contamination but at least it was one problem area identified. Tomorrow she would test the water. She'd go back to the hotel and phone the councillor.

However, just then, a man in a city uniform came across the walkway, clicked the padlock into position and did the same at the gate. Oblivious to her banging on the window, he walked towards town.

As night fell Sharon grew cold and miserable. She sat huddled on the floor, prepared for an uncomfortable stay. Desperate to go to the toilet, she averted her gaze from the windows with the vision of water all around. She tried thinking of the hot jungle she had hiked through in Latin America and started to name the birds and animals she had seen there to keep her mind off her predicament. Tapir. Slough. Toucan.....

To pass time, she looked at fish hooks, nets and fisheries maps. Old record books tracked the salmon that swam upstream. Another monitored vessel movement. The river and canal was full of activity during the last few centuries. There were mills, distilleries, stone-works and warehouses, all depending on the river for transport or energy.

A heron perched on the bank outside the tower, resting before the last bout of fishing for the day while there was still light.

Sharon thought of the old quote: 'Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink.' She was determined she would make the water in this place good again. Most of the time the water would make a recovery. However, there was that arsenic leak from a gold mine and dioxins in a landfill site from illegal dumping of toxic waste. There was nothing drastic in this city though. She was sure she could make things better.

Suddenly she heard a noise downstairs. Someone was trying to open the lock. Sharon looked with trepidation at the door as it creaked open.

Was it someone with sinister intent? Just in case Sharon hid under an old canvas sail.

'If it's not a psycho,' thought Sharon. 'I'll hug whoever it is. I have to get out of here.'

Jim Duff had a look of concern as he walked through the door. He was caught off guard when Sharon ran to him with her arms out.

"I called your hotel and they said you hadn't returned. I didn't think you were the type to be out partying all night."

"And why's that?"

"You strike me as much too responsible for that."

"I thought no one was coming."

He stroked her hair.

"I can afford you now." He told her the meeting he had with national politicians had resulted in more funds allocated to finding a solution to the water crisis."

Sharon smiled. "Absolutely delighted. But meet me at the hotel. I have to rush to the toilet. By the way, I have some news for you. I found something. It is not the main problem but it is a problem. "

"We don't want to lose you so soon."

"Don't worry," Sharon smiled. "I think I will be here for a while yet."

The lights from the city brightened and people strolled out to greet the night.

---

**August Lament**

**Mary Mullen**

---

In Alaska, fireweed bloom  
salmon cook in the canner  
aspen trees shimmer in a zephyr,  
and jewelled broccoli grows tender  
in sweet pea filled air.

Peggy transforms gentle cabbage  
into coleslaw, boils new potatoes  
and welcomes nights  
almost long enough to sleep  
— if you want to.

The promise of berries  
in lower slanting sun  
cushioned within balmy lichen  
quicken her force  
as she prepares dinner.  
Outside the kitchen window  
spent salmon fight upstream,  
exhausted.

Friends land with raspberry cordial  
and halibut ceviche.  
My old mother shoos a sauntering moose  
away from the garden with a tea towel.  
The feast is spread.  
Conversation dances, forks clatter.

Here, I want to—but rain and longing wake me.

Thunder stuttered. The church spire stabbed up against a dark sky. Sunlight on harvested fields, square and hedge-rowed, surrounded the village.

Arthur forced his fingers, inked with blackberry juice, through the tear in his shirt. His finger tips moved gently through the coarse hairs covering his forearm. The tear, too small for his thick fingers, ripped. With saliva he tried to smooth the material back into place but the edges kept lifting. Tears clouded his eyes. Then he noticed a mended patch near his cuff. He smiled, lips moving back from the clutter of uneven teeth, his unshaven cheeks creasing.

“Mum. Mum will fix it.”

He began walking towards the village, the first splat of raindrops spurting up a dance of dust from the path.

“Hallo Arthur. Get some good ones?” asked Mr. Todd, the grocer.

Arthur pointed at the full, black fruit in his bucket and bobbed his head vigorously.

Mr. Todd placed three cigarettes on the counter. Arthur put them, one by one, into his dented silver cigarette case. The grocer stepped back and folded his arms.

“Go ahead then, Arthur.”

Arthur held the open cigarette case at arms length. With a deft movement of his fingers he snapped it shut.

“Well done, Arthur. Off you go. Mind to go home to dinner after.”

Rain had brushed through the village, leaving the streets damp and steam rising. Men clustered outside the bookmakers as usual. Arthur joined them. He pushed his cap off his forehead, widened his stance. He stood there, smoking, nodding when the men did and slapping his thighs too. A car, like a black bug, moved by slowly.

“The new bod. Up at Hollows”

“Got hi’self voted onto the village council so I hear.”

“Retired doctor?”

“One of those couch ones. Not see *him* at the bookies.”

“Oh, I don’t know. Takes all types.”

Arthur lit his second cigarette and blew a perfect smoke ring.

The garden of The Hollows was dark. Yellow light from downstairs windows penetrated only to the edge of the back terrace. Arthur had climbed the stone wall as he always did and now leaned against a tree. Contentedly he watched the movements in the house. It had been up for sale all winter – a long time to stand in the dark garden, waiting for the windows to light up as before.

A rustle beside him announced the nightly foraging of a hedgehog. He knew it would hoist itself up the terrace steps for the scraps the house owners put out. The hedgehog paused to swallow a snail. Arthur chuckled. He remembered when he had stood here and a snail climbed over his boot. The trail had left a gleam that shone in the light from the windows.

The hedgehog tumbled from the step, lay paddling its legs. Arthur moved forward to turn it over, his huge shadow squatting on the terrace. The kitchen door opened and an oblong of light fell onto the terrace. Mrs Weller held a dish in her hands. Arthur moved backwards. Something wrapped around his head, shrouded his shoulders. He shook himself, grunted, heard the snapping of pegs. Mrs Weller screamed as sheets and underclothes thrashed with movement. Suddenly the shape was gone, blurred into the trees. She rushed into the house. The key to the back door turned in the lock.

Arthur dropped from the garden wall to the street and began running. He snaked behind some trees. He tugged at his collar. A white garment dangled in his hands, rough fingers hooking at the lace.

“Nice thing.”

He folded it carefully, put it in his pocket. Then he shook his head.

“No, Arthur. No”

He draped it over an elderberry bush, lifted his head to listen to an owl hoo-hooing and turned for home.

Mr Weller pulled the car over to the verge in one of the endless lanes they had meandered through that afternoon. Rapacious foliage blotted out the light and high banked hedges hid the landscape.

“I’m afraid I can’t start it, dear,” said Mr Weller, closing the bonnet. “We’ll have to use shanks’ pony.”

Mrs Weller clicked her tongue in exasperation. Her husband had no idea of the direction they should take. She slammed the car door.

“Let’s get on with it then,” she said. “At least we can try to get home before midnight.”

Arthur stood at a field gate with his back to the road, his arms resting on weathered wood.

“A farmer. I jolly well hope he can help us.” Mrs Weller’s feet were burning. Her nylon petticoat was fierce with friction from walking.

“Hello there,” called Mr Weller.

Arthur turned. Despite the heat, he wore a jacket. Frayed cuffs ended well above his wrists. He took his cap from a pocket and put it on. His smile was very friendly.

“Our car gave us trouble down the road. Won’t start. Could you direct us to the village?”

Arthur lifted his cap and turned back to the gate.

“Louder,” said Mrs Weller. “He’s hard of hearing.”

The pitch of Mr Weller’s voice rose.

“The village? Edgehaven. Which direction?”

Mrs Weller walked up to Arthur.

“Surely to goodness you can point out the direction for us?” she said and took firm hold of his blackberry stained sleeve.

White fingers, thought Arthur. Like fat worms on blackberries.

Mrs Weller shook her head and let go of Arthur’s arm. Suddenly he pointed.

“Oh good. He’s caught on,” said Mr Weller.

“Took him long enough. Well, let’s get a move on then, this heat is threatening to poach me.”

Arthur watched them round a bend. He crossed the lane and squeezed through a hedge onto a very dusty path. In ten minutes he would be at the bridge leading into the village. He knew the Weller’s walk home would take much longer. Mrs Weller wore shiny shoes.

The afternoon light had lost its sparkle when the Wellers entered Edgehaven. Arthur sat on the stone wall of the bridge. As Mrs Weller limped past him, trying to keep the weight off her blisters, his face creased radiantly.

Not dusty, the shiny shoes.

A bucket of summer’s last blackberries stood on Mr Todd’s counter. The galvanised sides were smeared purple, the bruised fruit welled juice. Next

to the bucket were three cigarettes. Arthur patted his chest pocket. His brown eyes were confused.

“Steady on, Arthur. Try your other pockets,” said Mr Todd.

Arthur only patted his pockets harder, banging dust from the tweed.

“Perhaps it’s at home. Better ask Mum.”

Arthur turned to the shop doorway and lunged out.

“Hang on, your ciggies.”

But Arthur had gone. Mr Todd shook his head.

“Not like Arthur to forget his cigarette case.”

Mrs Weller pulled the drawing room curtains tightly closed.

“I found this today, lying near the garden wall.”

Between two fingers she held up a cigarette case just long enough for her husband to glimpse it. “The gardener told me it belongs to ... that Arthur.”

“They told me at the council meeting he’s harmless,” said Mr Weller and opened his newspaper. “He lives quite peaceably with his old mother and does odd jobs round the village.”

“Harmless? I don’t for a minute believe that. He’s up to something.”

“Best forget about it, dear.”

“No, George, I will not. I’m missing things off my washing line,” said Mrs Weller.

Mr Weller turned a page.

“Underclothes, George.”

Mr Weller lowered the newspaper.

“You know what that means I’m sure. Something has to be done. You have influence. Use it for goodness sake. And when you return the cigarette case, make it unmistakably clear that he has no business being in my garden.”

The council meeting room was hot. Snow had fallen and the central heating was overcompensating.

“I’d like to know where it’s going to stop,” said Mrs Weller.

“I’m not sure that there’s anything to stop,” said Mr Todd. “We’ve always got along right fine with Arthur.”

“May I remind you that he didn’t take the slightest notice of my husband’s order to stay out of our garden.”

“Yes,” affirmed Mr Weller. “I’ve since seen him on two occasions, just standing there.”

“Mrs Weller, we’ve never had any trouble with Arthur,” said Councillor Burton. “I can’t believe he has suddenly begun, and I quote: ‘running amok, trampling around in gardens, plundering washing lines.’ And his Mum has looked round his bedroom and no ... articles of clothing were found.”

“His mum *is* getting on, John,” said Councillor Eaton. “Must be ... 70? She won’t be around for ever either. We’ll have to face that sometime. Why not now?”

“Todd has worked with Arthur for a long time,” said Burton. “Possibly he knows him better than we do.”

“That’s still no judge of what he may be up to,” said Eaton.

“Exactly,” said Mrs Weller. “These things start off harmlessly enough and when they escalate, no one can look themselves in the face because they failed to act decisively. I demand that something be done. Now.”

“I won’t be party to it,” said Mr. Todd. “Arthur’s been around for donkeys years and never a murmur of complaint. It’s just stirring a hornet’s nest. Decide how you will – I’m not for it.”

The door let in a wedge of cold air as he left the room. Outside, trees rooted in the heavily falling snow, stood mute, their accustomed shapes altered by the burden on their branches.

The church spire speared into a cold sky. The spring thaw which had been forecast had not arrived. Snow and ice clung to the village. The men outside the bookmakers looked down the high street as Mr Todd came out of the grocery shop.

“It’s past ten.”

“They be coming by right enough.”

“He’s not going to like it being away from the village I can tell you.”

“’Tis not right. Taking a man who canna defend hi’self and boxing him in some home.”

“Here they come.”

A car, sleek as new steel, rounded the corner. It slowly passed the men. Arthur’s face was at the rear window. He held up his cigarette case and they saw him snap the cover closed. Mr Todd raised his hand in a wave. The car moved down the high street, crossed the bridge.

Mr Todd went into his shop and shut the door. He turned the closed sign to face the street and pulled down the blind.

---

**Big Brother**

**Dominic Taylor**

---

I was not surprised to hear  
that your new laptop

was army issue,  
that it could be dropped  
on the floor without breaking

because mechanical things  
of any kind

never did last long in your hands.  
Cars disintegrated,  
domestic appliances refused to work;

watches, cameras all went on the blink;  
doors were known to fall off hinges

as you walked through  
as if overwhelmed  
by your energy.

That same energy you brought to work  
everything was 'blitzkrieg'

like an advancing Panzer division  
laying waste to everything in its path.  
Your visits to the gym

were you against the weights  
your metaphor for life.

No path of least resistance  
was ever taken,  
head on you tackled everything

including yourself,  
knowing that the greatest challenge is within.

**Cream**

**Betty Thompson**

---

I'm whipping cream with a balloon whisk  
out on the verandah.  
Across the grassy fronts, our mingled lawns,  
a girl hurls a ball to her dad:  
it arcs, she strikes the air and spins.  
This is how they play.  
I whisk slack cream, fill it with air.  
As darkness falls, the hurl brightens.  
The cream lightens in my bowl, the whisk slows.

---

## The Scarecrow

Bunny Dees

---

For the first time in a month it stopped raining, so we got on a bus and headed for the countryside. We walked along a path by the river. A duck landed, with feet like water-skis, and Eva asked me if ducks could fly really fast.

‘Apart from a diving hawk, they are the fastest things in the sky’ I told her.

‘Even faster than those little dart-shaped ones?’ she asked.

‘Swifts’ I said. ‘They just flit about and look fast. In a straight line, you can’t beat a duck.’

She was quiet for a while, and I knew from the way she was holding her head that she was thinking about something.

‘Do you remember that time, when you told me that cows can reach fifty miles an hour over short distances?’

‘That was just a joke’ I said quickly. I’d refused to cross a field full of cows once, and Eva had called me a coward. I told that lie because I have been terrified of cows ever since a herd of them charged at me when I was a boy, on a farm outside the bleak Cornish village that I grew up in. I escaped by jumping over a huge stone wall, as high as the great wall of China. I have no idea how I managed to do it. I landed headfirst in a patch of stinging nettles.

‘It’s nice to feel the sun again, isn’t it’ I said, throwing back my head and holding my arms out.

‘It is’ she said. ‘It really is.’

We crossed a little wooden footbridge, into a golden field.

‘What’s that?’ Eva asked me. She’s a city girl through and through is my Eva.

‘It’s wheat’ I said. The wheat looked as dry as straw, big brittle heads flopping over with the weight. There was a Range Rover lurking in the hedge that separated the wheat field from the river. There was nobody in it. Eva asked me what it was doing there, parked in the hedge, almost like it was hiding. I told her that it was probably joy riders.

‘It happens a lot out here. The kids get bored I suppose. They drive them through the fields and then run off. They must steal all kinds of farm stuff; tractors, muck spreaders, you know.’

‘At least they don’t set fire to them, like they do back home’ she said. Her hair trapped the sun like a million fibre-optic strands. Gold and silver and copper. It had been cut and dyed yesterday by a hairdresser called Michelle. I’d asked Eva how much it had cost and she’d said ‘eighty pounds.’

‘Eighty pounds!’ I’d said.

Eva had been very quiet all through dinner.

The path we were walking on had recently been mowed, I could feel sharp spears of stubbly grass jabbing at my toes through my sandals. A narrowboat chugged lazily on the river, with a little black dog running up and down on its roof, barking at the obstinate looking cows on the opposite bank. One of them was bigger than the others, and I couldn’t see any udders. It seemed to be glowering over the moat of the river, following me with its eyes. Then Eva stopped so suddenly that I bumped into her.

‘Look!’ she said, pointing at something in the field. There were two birds. They were flying about a foot above the ears of wheat, chasing each other in a tight little circle. They looked like pigeons.

‘What the hell is that?’ said Eva.

‘Oh, it’s a scarecrow. It’s a mechanical thing, look.’ I looked at them through a pair of binoculars that were slung around my neck, even though they were only about ten feet away. ‘Yep, definitely pigeons’ I said, almost shouting. Binoculars have that effect on me, and mobile phones. I scream into a mobile phone as if it was a tin can with string coming out of it. It drives Eva mad, especially if we’re on a bus. The pigeons were on the end of narrow metal arms. They were revolving quickly around a central pivot.

‘How strange’ said Eva.

‘It’s because the wheat’s ripe now. There’s two times when the wheat is vulnerable to birds. When they first plant the seeds and now, when they’re ripe.’ I took one of the wheat-ears in my hand and showed it to Eva, scrunching the seeds free with my fingers. ‘Packed full of protein, see.’

‘Hmm’ said Eva. ‘It’s funny though.’ She was looking at the spinning pigeons and frowning. I looked at the pigeons through the binoculars again, they were as big as vultures. ‘They’re real pigeons, but they’re dead’ I

yelled. They had stiff outstretched wings and broken necks and floppy heads. They were attached to the spinning metal arms by wire.

‘They’ve usually got little bells on them, around their necks or on their feet. I suppose they must have fallen off due to the centrifugal force.’

Then I heard a coughing sound coming from behind me, in the hedge. I turned round and took a step forward, expecting to see a swan’s nest, because that’s the noise they make when they’re protecting their young from a fox. Or a big terrapin! I’d heard that they’ve become quite a menace since that Ninja Mutant Turtle craze a few years ago. People would flush the little ones down the toilet when their children got fed up with them, and now they were huge things, the size of satellite dishes, prowling the river like armoured gunboats. I was just about to tell Eva, but a man poked his head up from behind a camouflage net. Then another man did the same thing. They rose slowly, only a few feet away, right there in the hedge. They were young and they were dressed in army gear. They had sunglasses on. They were coughing in a theatrical kind of way, holding shotguns.

‘Ahem. Just keep moving’ one of them said. The other added ‘don’t worry, we won’t shoot you. We only shoot pigeons.’ They looked amused. One of them was grinning from ear to ear. ‘They’re decoys’ he said, pointing at the pigeons, hardly able to contain himself. I nodded and mumbled something and we carried on walking. I held Eva’s hand, but she wriggled it free.

‘They must have heard every word you...’

‘I know’ I said, closing my eyes. ‘You don’t have to tell me.’ It could have been worse, I suppose. I could have said that crap about the Ninja Mutant Terrapins out loud. Eva put her hands on her hips and cocked her head a little to one side. Her hair swung as gently as a velvet curtain. I opened my mouth but nothing came out of it, so I closed it again and braced myself.

‘So, you thought that by seeing two pigeons flying round and round in little circles, just above the wheat, the other birds would be put off and wouldn’t.....’

‘Alright, alright’ I said. ‘I know.’

‘It’s ridiculous, if you think about it. You really imagined that there’d be a load of birds sitting in a tree, looking at all the lovely ripe wheat, feeling hungry and wanting a nice dinner, but those two pigeons flying in a little circle would.....’

‘Yeah yeah, OK’ I said.

‘Oh, hang on a minute though, hmmm, let’s see.’ She was really enjoying herself now. ‘I suppose it could have been some sort of pigeon warning signal, flying really fast in a tiny circle - *exactly* the same speed and *exactly* opposite another pigeon doing *exactly* the same thing - to indicate to your feathery friends that something’s poisonous, or there’s some terrible hidden danger.’

The image of a lurking badger in a field of wheat flashed through my mind, but I didn’t say anything. I adjusted the straps on my backpack and looked at a tree in the distance. It was a Plane tree, or maybe an Oak or a Willow or a Lime. I looked at it through the binoculars for a while, not that it mattered of course. If it hasn’t got tinsel and little lights all over it and a fairy on top.....

‘Do birds actually eat wheat?’ Eva asked. Then she thought about it for a bit and said ‘is it really wheat, or is it something else. Like corn, or oats, or maize, or barley. I mean, what’s the difference then, country boy. How can you tell? I’d love to know.’

I looked at the ground and didn’t say anything. A fat bumblebee had settled on some honeysuckle and I was seriously thinking about stamping on it. Two gunshots, like a whip-cracks, echoed through the valley behind us.

‘What will they do with the pigeons, after they’ve shot them?’ She was almost dancing with delight.

‘They’ll make a pie’ I said, then I added ‘short crust pastry, with mushrooms and cream’ before I’d had chance to think about it.

---

**Penumbra**

**Aideen Henry**

---

Often when you make love  
your mind wanders all over:  
Castlerea, Kiltimagh, Durus.

Your body routinely follows  
its flock memory  
to the arrivals hall.

Had you known it would be  
your last time together,  
you would have stretched it out for days;  
dryroasted it in strips on the rocks,  
salted it in parallel lines from hooks  
on a tarred timber frame,  
smoked it with peat and willow,  
poured it with marinade  
into labelled pre-warmed glass jars,  
with lids to vacuum seal.

**Breasts**

**Nicholas Messenger**

---

I was at a poetry reading once, a long time since,  
when a fatuous young man got up to proclaim  
he'd heard too many poems that day with breasts in -  
woman's breasts, resplendent breasts, the plenteous breasts  
of Mother Earth, the white breasts of a maiden shamed  
as soft as doves, as pale as moons ...  
As if you could compose two verses without breasts in and be twenty,  
any more than you can think of one without the moon  
in. But then, he was only trying to out-do the others.  
Well, it came out of a corner of my thoughts tonight.  
The moon was in the air again above the icy alley  
like a young girl's breast, in fact,  
and I caught myself complaining : there have been too many poems today  
with moons in – frozen moons, refulgent moons –  
and snow for saying a woman's breasts are white as.  
Actually, the only poems that aren't about the moon  
are ones about your breasts  
which are white and soft and circular as moons.  
The nipples are a colour that is neither pink nor brown.

---

## The Man Who Could Not Die

Claude Seignolle

---

*L'homme Qui Ne Pouvait Mourir from 'Contes Fantastiques de Bretagne'.*

*Translated by Fred Johnston*

Often, we give the devil too much credit. Sure, I hear still the sniping of the people of Pléguien, when the old man, wrinkled, stern, went by; who, despite his considerable years, tirelessly tramped every corner of the country.

I was very young; it was long ago, but I always hear the predictable comments.

“Ah! Where is he off to this time?”

“You couldn’t ever be at peace! Already, in my grandfather’s day, he dragged his gaiters around everyone. . . .the Devil will never let him go!”

“True enough! . . . Our grandmother maintained that in her grandmother’s day he was already around, old then and curious about everything. Work it out, if you can, that Peeping Tom’s age. What sort of evil pact did he sign up to? And who knows whether it won’t be the ruin of us all!”

This is the sort of thing each and every one thought, and said.

He, though, indifferent, doubtless immune to the collective nastiness, went about quietly, stopping, sniffing the air, and observing the tiniest detail of people and things, even if it all seemed to vex him. His age? Impossible to tell. It was sworn to you a century, perhaps longer, and with that ancient parchment skin, it was possible. But he hid it, like a sort of shame. And sad with it . . . very sad!

All that was told of him and his incredible age, topped off by his contact with the Devil, didn’t overwhelm me, but somehow held an attraction for me because my curiosity demanded that I get to the heart of mysteries that flitted past. I knew, without knowing, that this man had become a kind of living legend.

The old man inhabited a low-roofed shack of stone flags; a wart stuck to the cemetery and honeycombed into the thick wall, quite close to the ossuary. It was hard to find him taking it easy, particularly in that dive that a dog would turn his back on. But I had patience; so that one day I succeeded in surprising him there. His feet were sticking out. He was asleep.

I knelt down and crept inside to gaze upon him as at a miracle or a revelation: this old mummified Satan, sleeping in a holy and saintly shrine! He snored like a satisfied man. Flies scooted over his face and hands. The

depth of his sleep was such that he let the irritating creatures be, and slept off, it seemed, all the weariness of humanity.

Awkwardly, I stubbed my foot. He woke, but, instead of staring at me sharply, he turned himself towards the bottom of his pit and spoke to the wall as if it were a living being.

“What more do you want of me?” he said in a tired voice.

“I’m sorry,” I offered, dragging his gaze towards me, the culprit.

This made him set upright, and, amazed that I had dared to approach him, there in his virtual tomb, he indicated to me to get out quick. I saw he was afraid, not of me, but of something, because he looked again at the cemetery wall, and this time with alarm.

“Go! Get out!, he whispered with the urgency of a shout. . . Get out! One of them is going to come right now!

Baffled, I looked around me at the wall. It was half-open through a moss-lipped crack. You could see the entire graveyard, full of crosses, but otherwise empty.

“Go, you damnable boy!” he spat at me even more forcefully, between clenched teeth.

Now if I didn’t move, it was because I was paralysed with curiosity. And, too, I could see that the old duffer was all ears for what had come to him from out there.

For my part, it appeared to me to be a shrill humming; like keening, and, to my ears, echoes of syllables shattered by desperation . . . . . Such that an image of Hell forced itself upon me and I was terror-stricken.

In spite of my terror I listened and I thought I made out something like:

“Go right away!. . . the little girl’s place . . . my daughter’s house . . . . try to find out if her fiancé will bring her the lower field. Go, and come back quickly and tell me . . .”

I stared as hard as I could. There was no one anywhere. No one but the old man and myself.

He rose, robbed of sleep, and said to me before going out:

“ Now you know, lad . . . .They won’t let me die. They are dead, but they’re still curious to know what’s going on among the living. Perhaps you never knew that the dead are like that! I should never have accepted their offer: almost two centuries that they have held on to my portion of death so that I will continue to live and be their eyes on earth . . .

\*

When I consider that in the village they treated him as the Devil’s sidekick.

How ignorant people can be!

The Devil down there?

No. Just ordinary people.

---

**mutty buttons**

**Jarlath Fahy**

---

mutty buttons you're a pig  
kicked our dog trixy in the ribs  
with your dirty big hobnail boots  
for no reason other than  
badmindedness

empty vessels make most noise  
every day we hear you in the lane  
kicking your hobnails off the stone  
you think you're great

in your butchers apron  
with the strings of sausages  
and pudding round your neck  
you're not clever you're just thick

what does it take to stick a knife  
in a pigs gullet or shoot him with a gun  
if i were big enough i'd knock your  
head off with a stick

or hang you from the arch with  
your own sausages  
i'd make you squeal like the pig you are  
and chop you up in slices  
and put you in the shop window

though you'd taste shit  
and there in the centre  
on a stainless steel plate  
i'd put your ugly head

**Trapped**

Mary O'Rourke

---

We were fed up  
Bypassed security  
In our nighties  
Took a taxi  
Bought some whiskey  
The DTs are unbearable  
When you are drying out  
It's more craic  
To have a swig, just one  
Lots of us are here  
'Cos of boozing  
We're different  
We understand each other  
We're hiding  
Behind the bottle  
How can I tell the doc  
About the abuse  
The violence  
The loneliness  
It's my sixth admission  
Always the same  
I'm sober for a while  
Then I go on a binge  
Forget the pain  
Forget too what it's like  
To dry out  
Here we share our stories  
Among ourselves

Not with *them*  
They wouldn't believe  
The half of it  
Like the way I hide the Smirnoff  
In my perfume bottle  
Or how I make two dishes of  
sherry trifle  
At Christmas  
One for me  
A lot stronger than the other one  
How I swallow half a bottle of  
mouthwash  
The days I make it to work after a  
session  
Escape or discharge  
Whichever comes first  
I'm up for it.

---

**johnny wife talk**

**Mary Wilkinson**

---

**M**other-in-law no look at me when she talk. She look over me but maybe it because she taller than me. Mother-in-law smile with her mouth closed and never with eyes. I do not know if she always like this but she this way now. I call her Mother-in-law respectfully and she laugh. This is only time she laugh. When she laugh I see her teeth. Sometime she get lipstick on them. Blossom Red. She say to me, 'Sukie you should wear lipstick. You are a woman now'. Mother-in-law say this like it a rule.

Johnny say, 'take no notice of Mother-in-law, this is way she is'. Johnny say, 'I love you Sukie, your lips naturally Blossom Red. They are cherry blossoms in springtime dancing in breeze'. Johnny got good job. He work in newspaper office and he very smart. I meet him first at restaurant. He come there at lunch time for Tofu with Chinese leaves. Each day Tofu with Chinese leaves. Large pot of green tea. When he come in restaurant I go to kitchen to tell Father, Johnny here. Johnny have table near window. He always sit alone. He use chopsticks well. He tell me best food ever in restaurant. He smile at me and look at me when he talk like I somebody. He ask me how come I have funny name of Sukie and then he say, 'only teasing'. He say, 'only teasing' like he touching me with his mouth and he run his lips along my arm up to secret place back of ear. My face go red. But Johnny smile all the time. When he ask me out, I want to laugh out loud and when I tell him yes, a thousand stars fall out of me onto Johnny's head. But that because Johnny good man. He like Chinese food. He smart.

Father no mind I go out with Johnny. All he say is, 'you good daughter, what I do without you in restaurant when you marry Johnny'? Father knows these things. He say 'you have many children in this country. You be happy'. Father believe in good fortune for me.

When Mother-in-law come to visit I make Johnny house extra clean. I scrub floors and put clock out that she give for wedding present. She not know clock bad luck for Chinese. First thing Mother-in-law do is look for clock on mantle. Then she go sit on futon and ask for cushion for her back. She say, 'Sukie, Johnny need more than Tofu to eat. I bring you recipe book with all things Johnny want to eat'. I take book and when she gone I put it away in back of drawer. Johnny shake his head at me but all he say is, 'come here Sukie I have something for you'

and he feel warm like boiled dumpling in bowl of special sauce from restaurant.

Johnny has lot of friends from newspaper job. I no understand why they talk louder to me than to Johnny. They bend heads to me and their voices rise out of them like wild wind on mountain top. 'What do you think of this country', they shout, 'do you enjoy it here?' 'How interesting'. Everything always very interesting to people from newspaper office. Johnny not notice them raise voices to me only he say, 'he very proud I his Sukie'. When Johnny go on trip for newspaper job and leave me to be alone I think of him all of day long. After I clean house I go to sit by window with tea and I sure I see him out on street. I know lot of men could be Johnny but for eyes the colour of Jade. Johnny have smooth eyes washed by abundant meadow of life. At window I think that some day I try to learn to talk like a Johnny wife talk. Then I be the perfect Sukie. I would say things that Johnny wife say, 'Darling. More wine darling. Is not the dinner delicious Darling? Hello Veronica, instead of, Hello Mother-in-law. I love your pearl's Veronica. Where did you get your fabulous bag Veronica? I love it. Lets makes a shopping date, I'm free on Friday'. But words like that will never come out of me. They only in dream. I forever stuck in Chinese.

One day Johnny say, 'Sukie let us have big party. We invite all our friends even Mother-in-law'. He says, 'we must invite Mother-in-law or she feel bad'. I say nothing. I think only bad thoughts, they sound like thunder in my mind, they are dark clouds sweeping across my eyes. She come to house many time when she know Johnny not home. She walk in like it her house. She ask me where clock go and I tell her it in repair shop. She look in kitchen presses and ask for tea. 'Why you not have real tea' she scream at me and then she throw special Chinese tea, gift from great uncle, down all over clean floor. She say, 'Chinese food bad for Johnny, get a clue Chink'. Maybe she say think, but I not sure. She shout at me, 'you so lucky to get my son'. I try talk to her and tell Mother-in-law that she must see how I love Johnny, how Johnny love me. She shake her head and point her finger to big pot of stew she put on stove top and say, 'you heat this up before my son come home. Low simmer. Occasional stir'. After she leave I give it to dog and his belly swell up like fat pig. He lie down and he not move until night creeps into sky and silver fortune cookie moon hang over house.

On dinner party day I start to work at six o clock in morning time. I prepare all dishes that Johnny want to eat. I make Singapore noodles and Duck with

special black bean sauce, Tofu szechwan, secret recipe, in family, many generations. Kitchen so full with dishes it look like restaurant and I am waitress once more. Doorbell come alive all night long with Johnny friends coming for party. They fill house and talk loud and drink lot of wine and smoke cigarettes. They talk about politics and laugh, it seem, for no reason. They throw their arms out and wave at the air. Mother-in-law stand in corner of room with woman name of Jackie in tight dress like it her skin. She call Mother-in-law Veronica and she remind me of big black crow on post, with purple beak, waiting for darkness to come. Sometimes she take out small mirror from bag and put Blossom Red on lips and then run her fingers across her face like she checking to see it all there. There so many people in room that it could be in crowded street on market day and when I look for Johnny he far away from me other end of market.

In kitchen the sound of voices is angry sea that rushes over shiny shore on stormy day. Like strange sea I sometime dream when I lie beside man called Johnny at night. In Chinese dream all words flow lightly into me and out of me like the water without seams. But in my dream I become stuck in murky and deepening tide pool and my hair, black seaweed spread on pillows of water, wraps itself around my naked body. I many times see Father in dream. At sea he is alone, fishing off small boat, bent and tiny in colour of rainbow clothes. I, his only daughter, say, 'help me Father or I will drown'. He does not turn. He does not hear my cry. I scream out loud to him, 'Father, I am drowning, slipping into dark water, my seaweed hair pulls me down'. It is only then he turn and wave to me and his face so bright and full of joy that it dazzle me and make me remember the sunshine caught on summertime wind chimes. Again he turn back to his duty and like strong young man pulls from water a giant fishing net heavy with words, a bulging net of sentences and meanings I want to understand. Then with great knife Father cut net and many million words float across water to where I lie. I reach out to them for they are to salvage me from all bad fortune, but when I do they crumble in my hands and fall like ribbon of sand to ocean bed far below.

**Baptism Of The Sun**

**Peter Guy**

---

*For Meg*

The pines are shivering into the wind, break, break,  
They sing in repose across the fields gilded with pindrops of rain...

I'll think of you and the faraway towns that lie between,  
The contours of the mountains that map the boundaries of my heart  
I'll think of you some night, when the moon is an apostrophe of pewter  
As you lie there on your side, your fingers screening your eyes,  
Your face as casual in sleep would seem to reflect the motion of your  
dreams...

And in the silence broken only  
By a drifting moon echoing through the darkening plains,  
Would say and softly say again,  
*Te recuerdo como eras, crepúsculo cayendo en tus ojos...*

I would think of no reason to wake you, would leave you be,  
Your autumn hair, swirling with the scraps of a late evening rain  
Is to me the sun as it sets in a basin of fire  
Or the breaking light of the sky in the morning west.

Allow me some day to fall asleep in your eyes,  
And wake to the sound of your voice by my side,  
Let me live though memory in another place  
Never the less for blue skies or the teeth of a wrecked  
South-western freight car. Framed in motion, indented shadows  
Mountain snow heaped in angering floes and  
Your eyes telling me all I'll ever need to know...

---

**The Incomers**

**Tim Goldstone**

---

The incomer's wife  
Takes a shortcut home  
Walking at twilight,  
Through Teifi Marshes:

A nest of echoes  
A rattling  
A tombstone wink,  
The old craft:

A muddy voodoo  
Stalks the swamp  
Sucking fiercely,  
Just behind her:

Singing loudly  
Plainly and well  
Would clear her nerves,  
But it's not in her nature.

**Autumnal Place**

**Kevin Donnelly**

---

It is snowing. The first thing I see,  
Throw back the covers and I sit up,  
Through the window, the snow softly falling.

Through the morning rituals, falling.  
Standing at the window, the warmth  
Of the coffee, sparse on the ground, falling.

At work at my desk, the subtle  
Change of light, softer, snow  
On the ground now and snow still falling.

The snow falling so neatly in the woods.  
The black stoic twist of trees. Snow  
Riding on their branches and falling,  
Uncaught, between. Night, black of window,  
The light touch of the snow and the melt.

The snow and I alone this place  
And falling through the night.



## **Biographical details**

**Celeste Augé's** poems have appeared in various Irish literary journals. She lives in Co. Galway

**Sandra Bunting** grew up in Canada and now lives in Galway. Her poetry collection *Identified in Trees* was published in 2006 by Marram Press. Besides poetry, she writes fiction, works in journalism and is involved in printmaking, batik and silkpainting.

**Patricia Burke Brogan** is the author of the internationally acclaimed plays *Eclipsed* and *Stained Glass at Samhain*. Her collection of poems and etchings *Above the Waves Calligraphy* was published by Salmon. She received a 2005 Arts Council Bursary in Drama. Her monologue *Requiem of Love* had its World Premiere at the Town Hall Theatre, Galway in November 2005 prior to moving to the Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire. It was staged as part of Galway's Project '06 in July 2006. The script of the play was recently published by Wordsonthestreet, Galway.

**Mary Rose Callan's** second poetry collection, *Footfalls of Snow* was published by Bradshaw Books (Cork) in 2005.

**Kate Campbell** studied French Literature at University College London before moving to France where she co-founded and edited a review of contemporary poetry. Having completed a Masters degree in Textual and Visual Studies at Trinity College Dublin and Paris VII, she now lives in Dalkey, Co. Dublin.

**Betsey Carreyette**

**Eileen Casey** is a poet, fiction writer and journalist. She has had three poetry installations, 'Seagulls' (Tallaght Community Arts Centre), 'Reading fire, Writing flame' (Aras an Chontae, Tullamore). She was awarded the solo exhibition and Tyrone Guthrie Award from Offaly County Council, 2006. She was short listed for two Sunday Tribune/Hennessy Awards, Poetry (2004) and Fiction (2005). Her poetry collection is due from New Island, 2008.

**Eithne Cavanagh** teaches creative writing in Dublin. Her poems have been widely published in Ireland and abroad. She won First Prize at the Boyle Arts Festival in 1997, the George Moore Gold Medal in 2001 and 2nd Prize in the Francis Ledwidge Competition 2005. Her first collection *Bone and Petals* was published by Swan Press in 2001. She has participated in the Poetry Ireland Introduction Series. She is a long-term member of Rathmines Writers Group.

**Susan Connolly's** first collection of poetry *For the Stranger* was published by Dedalus Press in 1993. In 2001 she won the Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry. She lives in Drogheda, Co. Louth.

**Barrie Cooke** is a member of Aosdána and the Royal Hibernian Academy. He has been based in Ireland since 1954. Nature is his chosen environment and subject matter. He has also painted a number of nudes. He has collaborated with a number of prominent poets including Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes.

**Patrick Deeley** was born in Galway in 1953. His collections are *Intimate Strangers* (Dublin, The Dedalus Press, 1986); *Names for Love* (The Dedalus Press, 1990); *Turane, The Hidden Village* (The Dedalus Press, 1995); and *Decoding Samara* (The Dedalus Press, 2000). He has also written stories for children, collected in *The Lost Orchard* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 2000). He lives in Dublin.

**Bunny Dees** grew up in a village in Cornwall, but now lives in Bristol where he is a shift worker with the City Council. He started writing short stories a few years ago, and likes to write late at night, when the house is silent. His last three stories have all been accepted for publication, much, he says, to his delight and astonishment.

**Barbara De Franceschi** lives in Broken Hill, a small mining town in outback Australia. Her works have appeared in literary journals and anthologies Australia wide, on-line USA and Switzerland. Her work has been featured on Radio National's *PoeticA*. She has also read her work live to air on ABC Radio. Barbara was recently included in the Thylazine Foundation's ([www.thylazine.org](http://www.thylazine.org)) *Australian Poets at Work Series*. Her first collection *Lavender Blood* was published in 2004.

**Sean Donegan** has been published in *Crannóg, Markings, Poetry Ireland Review, Blythe Spirit, Time Haiku* and in the USA.

**Kevin Donnelly** lives in Galway and is completing the novel, *Ash Wednesday*.

**Jarlath Fahy** is a former member of The Focus Theatre Group. His first collection is *The Man Who Was Haunted By Beautiful Smells* and is forthcoming from Wordsonthestreet in November.

**Maureen Gallagher** was shortlisted for the inaugural *Flat Lake* poetry competition recently. Also this year she was longlisted for both the *Aidan Higgins* prose competition and the *Cinnamon Press* poetry competition. She's had poems recently published in *The Journal* and in the US anthology *In Our Own Words*. She has poetry forthcoming in *Free Lunch* and in the *Cinnamon Press* poetry anthology. Her website can be viewed at [www.maureengallagher.net](http://www.maureengallagher.net)

**Glynis Gertsch** was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and now lives in Switzerland. She got rid of her TV a few years ago and things have been looking up ever since! She has been broadcast on the BBC, published in South Africa and various small press magazines in England, won a couple of prizes and had a couple of stories on the Internet.

**Tim Goldstone** has had poems and short stories published in various magazines including *The New Welsh Review* and *Stand*. His story *Special Brew With Rosie* was included on the BBC Babyfather website. He is a recipient of a Welsh Arts Council short story masterclass scholarship. He has read at the Hay-on-Wye Festival. He has several micro plays performed at the Madcap Theatre, Milton Keynes.

**Peter Guy** is completing his PhD in Franco-Irish studies at ITT Dublin. His poetry has been published in a number of Irish journals - *Cúirt47*, *The Burning Bush*, *The SHOP*, *Crannóg* - as well as in Britain and America. He is currently working/labouring on a novel.

**Aideen Henry** lives in Galway and lectures at NUI, Galway. Her work has been published in *West 47*, *Crannóg* and *The Shop*.

**Fred Johnston** is a poet, critic and novelist. He has published nine volumes of poetry, a collection of stories and four novels. His most recent novel, *The Neon Rose*, was recently published in the UK by Bluechrome and his new collection of poems, *The Oracle Room* has just been published by Cinnamon Press. He was appointed 2004 Writer-in-Residence to the Princess Grace Irish Library in Monaco. He is manager of The Western Writers' Centre.

**Arthur Leung** has recently completed a postgraduate programme in creative writing. His poems have appeared in creative writing anthologies and poetry journals. He lives in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China.

**Eamon Lynskey** has had poetry published in *Crannóg* and other magazines. His poetry collection *Dispatches and Recollections* was issued by Lapwing in 1998. In 2006 he was nominated for The Sunday Tribune/Hennessy Literary Award for New Irish Poetry.

**Nicholas Messenger** won the Glover Poetry award in New Zealand in the 1970's. In 2006 he had poems published in *About The Arts*, *Blackmail*, *Boloji*, *Coffee Press Journal*, *High Altitude Poetry*, *Identity Theory*, *Jacket*, *Monkey Kettle*, *Off Course*, *Pulsar*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *Web Poetry Corner* and *WOW!*. He has had a few small one-man shows of his paintings.

**Mary Mullen** is an Alaskan who now lives in south County Galway. Her work has been published in *We Alaskans*, *Sunday Miscellany*, *The Stinging Fly*, *West47online*, *the Cúirt Annual*, and *The Cork Literary Review*. She is working on a poetry collection and a memoir.

**Mary O'Donnell** was educated at St. Louis Convent Monaghan and later at Maynooth University where she obtained a degree in German and Philosophy. Her first novel *The Light-Makers* was named the Sunday Tribune's Best New Irish Novel in 1992. Other novels are *Virgin and the Boy* and *The Elysium Testament* (Trident Press, 1999). She has published five collections of poetry. *The Place of Miracles* was published by New Island Books in 2006. A new short story collection is due in 2008. Short fiction has appeared in many notable anthologies, including *Brandon Irish Short Stories* (1998), *Phoenix Irish Short Stories, 2000*, *The New Younger Irish Writers* (Sceptre, 1994), *Scéalta* (Telegram Books UK, 2005), *The Hennessy Book of Irish Fiction*, and *The Clifden Anthology*. Her work has also appeared in *The Mail On Sunday* and *The Irish Times*. She was a prize-winner in the V.S.Pritchett Short Story Competition in 2000. She is a member of Aosdána and lives near Straffan, Co. Kildare. [www.maryodonnell.com](http://www.maryodonnell.com)

**Edith O’Nualláin** is a creator of textile art and mixed media. Many of her embroideries and mixed media pieces have been exhibited abroad and hang in private collections. Her favourite ‘modus operandi’ is to combine visual imagery with poetry.

**Aiden O’Reilly** spent seven years in Germany and Poland and is now based in Dublin. He has worked variously as a mathematics lecturer, translator, building-site worker, IT teacher, dark-room technician, and technical writer. His work has appeared in *Galway Now*, *Whispers & Shouts*, *The Stinging Fly* and *The Dublin Review* among others. Since returning to Ireland he has discovered that he is a media-zero flat-profile with no connections.

**Mary O’Rourke**

**Claude Seignolle** was born in 1917 in the Dordogne. He studied Breton folklore before committing himself to recreating stories based upon the legends and traditions he unearthed, thus developing a style of story which has scarcely been repeated, neither completely fiction nor heavily folkloric. An archeologist by profession, his tales are steeped in acquired folklore.

**Breid Sibley** has been a prize-winner in the Baffle and Cathal Búí poetry competitions. She has been published in *Ropes*, *Crannóg* and *Time Haiku*.

**Dominic Taylor** is from Limerick and is closely involved in the White House Poetry Revival. He has had work published in *Revival*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *Boyne Berries* and *Microphone On* – the White House anthology. He is also a songwriter and produced two albums of his work.

**Betty Thompson** was born in Dublin and lives in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. She studied poetry and creative writing at the University of Bristol and Bath Spa University. Some of her work has been published in magazines and broadcast on radio.

**Grace Wells** first book, *Gyrfalcon*, a novel for children, won the Eilis Dillon Award and was an International White Raven’s Choice. She was selected for Poetry Ireland’s Introductions Series 2003 and her poetry has been published widely in Ireland. A selection of work, together with an interview, was recently featured in the University of Chicago’s *Contrary Magazine*. A second novel *Ice-Dreams* is forthcoming from the O’Brien Press.

**Mary Wilkinson** lives in Galway. She took first prize in the 2004 Listowel Writers’ Week Originals Competition and second prize in 2002. Her writing is regularly featured on *Lyric FM*. She has had her work published in various journals and *The Irish Times* and her one act play *Glass* is currently in circulation.