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We had a long winter,
a cold spring.
Today, in sandals,
long blue skirt
and skimpy blouse,
I feel such peace,
sun warmed
on a rock
by the sea.
Yesterday, a pair
of glistening magpies
tried bravely,
noisily,
to move the orange cat
off their patch.
Sometimes I'm like that.
Now I give in,
just sit.

The Music

Kathleen O'Driscoll

In Memory of Kevin Garvey

Greg singing 'Forever Young',
the flowers,
the tears,
the sun,
everything for you
but you're gone
not far away, we felt,
from your grand, hippie wake.

We spilled onto the street
outside the Sacre Coeur
with decades of memories.
The music lived until dawn
in The Cottage and
we were all in love again.

**A Wino Goes Back
To Cabbagetown**

Sandra Bunting

I trailed seediness
along blackened bricked streets,
gave off whiffs
that dogs couldn't resist,
talked to myself,
raved at the world
and no one paid me attention.
It was where I belonged.
Nice things happened here.
Coins from passing strangers
could buy time out of the cold
in the Greek's greasy diner.
I solved life's problems,
exposed conspiracies
in the Maple Leaf Tavern,
and woke up from the night before
in someone's unkept backyard,
a racoon washing my ears.
Hushed morning made me tiptoe past
front gardens with rows of cabbages.
The first wave of students
lived almost like with us
in small grimy rooms.
They drank at the same
watering hole and often
bought us drinks
and let us entertain them
with our wisdom.

But the world of commerce followed.
The tavern went for houses.
It was the end long before
the Mercs and BMWs moved in.
I go with changes of weather.
Here now I am afraid to touch,
can hardly move.
Everything is too clean.
Knowing me, I'll set off
the neat coloured alarms on houses
of glass and power-washed brick;
pretty , with fronts full of flowers
and foreign ornamental trees.
But not mine anymore.

Splodges of furze, cadmium and saffron
aflame on viridian thorns, edged with burnt-out-earth,
Spring's guard of honour
for the rush of the Galway train.

In Louis Copeland suit, a man,
gold-watched, chunky-ringed hand, mobile to ear,
turns his back to the man with the burnt-out face,
plots his move on The Financial Times.

The man with the burnt-out face,
skeletal torso disguised in washed-out clothes,
takes a vodka-bottle-paper-wrapped from his back-pack
and with a flaming smile, raises it,
offers it.

Luggage

Patricia Burke Brogan

Mary Ann heaves two bags
on to the Galway train.
'Books, books, bagfuls of books.
All the time I read. All the time.'

She stares into the murk
of her paper teacup
and opens her heart-book.

'My son, Jason, he's an addict.
He burned his house down,
burned his wife and children too.
He wants me out. Out of my own house.
All night long I read. All night long.'

'Bagfuls of books. What kind of books?'
'Mills and Boonses, Mills and Boonses.'

At Tullamore she steps into blackness,
dragging her bagfuls of books
with her bagful of pain.
The train pulls away, wheels keening,
'Mills and Boonses, bagfuls of books,
Mills and Boonses all night long.'

Translated from the French of Frederic Le Bonhomme

In the modest commune of Saint-Servais, birthplace of the writer Anatole le Braz, there rambled not so long ago an old beggar called Job Coucou. He went by no other name and had, so far as anyone knew, no other profession than going from door to door begging for a slice of bread, which he'd hide under his rags. Perhaps, if each man has his story, then Job had his and a few besides. A real character; he turned up around Easter.

Not such a daft question, really, when you consider that Job hadn't been inside a church since the day of his baptism.

As usual, Job headed for Kebernes, a farm at the top of the village, home to admirable people who were both pious and charitable. In fact they'd just slaughtered a pig the day before

and there was no shortage; pate, sausage, streaky bacon, pork joints. Not hard to imagine that Job ate himself silly. He hadn't eaten, not merely for days, but perhaps a whole week, and festivals and the like were rare and, let's be frank, a complete novelty for the old boy.

Sated and happy, Job got himself together to leave with his usual thank-yous, blessings, and the rest, when out of nowhere the farmer's wife appeared and tossed at him a very unexpected question.

"Tell me, Job. Why don't you do what everyone else is doing? You don't go to Confession and have a good Christian Easter for yourself?"

Not such a daft question, really, when you consider that Job hadn't been inside a church since the day of his baptism. Born in misery into a life of the same, he, not unnaturally thought he would die in misery too: he did not give himself things to care about, nor give himself any earthly problem beyond that of begging his bread. Before answering, Job thought a moment or two. Then he said:

"Ah, my good lady! How could I possibly go to Confession, for I would hate to have to enter a church dressed in rags, as you can see."

"Fair enough," said the farmer's wife, "You have your reasons and I appreciate that."

"Well," said Job, "What I've said is good enough, surely. Maybe if I were dressed as well as everyone else, I would feel better in the presence of the Good Lord."

He'd said one word too many. The good woman hopped in immediately.

"Say no more! You'll do your Easter Duties like the rest, for my husband has a suit, good as new, which he's too fat these days to wear. You'll wear it right away!"

No sooner said than done; Job was obliged to dump his festering clothes and dress himself, comparatively speaking, like a prince. The suit fitted him wonderfully, it might have been made to measure.

"Look at yourself," said the farmer's wife, "The suit's yours and now you can go along like the rest and do your duty like a Christian.

"Yes, of course," mumbled Job. "Don't worry, I've got the point."

So it is that old Job makes his way towards the market town of Saint-Servais. No one he passed on the way recognised him, the change was so startling. Even he stopped now and then to admire his new trousers and corduroy jacket. He was both happy and warm in this new get-up; but the closer he came to the town, the more ill-at-ease he felt. *God's blood*, he told himself: *I'd prefer still to be wearing my rags and not be under any obligation to go to Confession, and what am I going to do? I'll have to go over all my sins, there are so many I can't remember them, or even half of them. Anyway! I don't have to go. I'm a free man. I do as I wish!*

But then right away Job thought of the farmer's wife who had so often fed him, given him to drink, and he was remorseful and pensive: *If at any time she should get to know that I didn't carry out my Easter Duties – and you can be sure she will – that's the end of those mouth-watering bowls of soup, streaky bacon, and the rest, in Kebernes. Fair enough*, he told himself. *I'll be wise for once and do what everyone else does and show willing!*

And so Job entered the church of Saint-Servais.

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The venerable saints themselves were certainly surprised to see himself walking, with some dignity, towards the confessional, but no one was as surprised as the Good Lord's *cure*, who recognised Job only by his voice, a sincere enough voice too, in which he ran off a litany of sins. One after the other after the other: stealing spuds from the barn at Valentin, turnips from a barn somewhere else, an egg or even two from old Catherine, even straw to put into his clogs the good priest said to himself: *He keeps this up, it 'II be nightfall and I won't have confessed a quarter of my parishioners.*

He interrupted Job.

"Right! Very good! You will say twenty Hail Mary's and your sins are forgiven."

I see, thought Job, no one's fool. *And I'm not half-finished. It appears that one can even bargain with God Himself.*

Adopting a stern tone, Job announced:

"I'll tell you what, Father, twenty's too many. Take ten and we have a deal."

Now the good priest did not wish to squabble with a man who spoke so frankly; and it came to pass that the whole of Saint-Servais experienced the great joy the following morning of seeing old Job Coucou head in great solemnity up to the altar, to do his Christian duty.

No surprise that within an hour the whole town knew what Job had pulled off. So for a very long time afterwards, his antics were a subject of conversation, and whenever one haggled in business, it was customary to throw in:

"No! Twenty's too much. Take ten and we've a deal."

(from the collection of poems and tales, 'La Voix de l'Arcoat,' by Frederic Le Bonhomme. Published by Atelier Liv'Editions 2005. 'Histoire h Job Coucou' describes a beggar of the same name who lived around 1930 in the area of Callac, Mael-Carhaix and Rostrenon, in Brittany. He did odd jobs for food and lodging and was often two or three times a year at the same farm. Frederic Le Bonhomme was born in 1911 at Kergrist- Mo'e'lou, the youngest of five children whose father was killed in 1915 on the Belgian Front. A poet and story collector, Le Bonhomme died in January, 1994 and is buried in the little cemetery of Kergrist-Moe'lou.)

Happy

Aoife Mannix

In this birthday of Christmas lights,
keeping what I always wanted.
Smooth wooden floors,
the time to believe in music.
Brightly coloured cushions,
the sudden silences of birds,
an understanding of snow.

More than any icing on any cake,
I have now under my skin
the feeling that I am loved on this earth.
It's a wish come true that blows
through all the years of my uncertainty,
not knowing my own name,
and being so afraid to say these letters,
to commit them to the paper,
to register the truth.

A decade since I gave up my shadow,
stepped out from the wallpaper,
refused to be a vampire.
In the sheer innocence
of walking through St James Park,
your talk of baker's sons, bass guitars,
people who want to make you something else.

You showed me how to quit
the tyranny of explanations.
These days I listen to the rhythm
of our footsteps
down this path of our own making,
and I am no longer afraid to grow old.

Mammoth bones, did I form you?
Did I put you in the ground?
Like Alice, have I dreamt you?
When waves broke on Land's End
did I push the swell, and
did I cleave the cliff?

Did I create the world, code it and pack it?
Did I contemplate the unreality of the thumb,
a one-eyed dinosaur neck,
almost extinct, lonely on its own, but
opposed, and making the L in the hand, stand up?

Did I crack the cranium of early man and
store his remains in the strata for you to find?

If I see it first and name it, is it mine?

Then I am the explorer of my own land:
Rare and savage, with
scars of discovery already planned in my heart.

Eve

Lara Eastman

Forced to quilt clothes from a patchwork of leaves,
I missed the unashamed touch of the sun, the breeze.
He said he'd kill me and I survived,
I thought my lesson was nakedness.
Then my Cain tore my Abel apart,
I wished I had not been spared.
Lodged here in my gnawed chest,
the lesson is that hearts are apples.
Now I am a story sleeping in a book.
Look! Unkept words are indigestible.

Elegy

Robert James Berry

The rivers are tired of drowning
the trees fall to their knees weeping leaves

gales sculpt monumental follies
like hoveled in granite heads of kings

and all the rock strata, seamed with evolution's invalids,
the spent of creation

hide a past the sea has deleted
or mistranslated into sunshine

like shored-up yawls, beach-litter
and big statements of sun-smitten wood the ocean will have.

Cities not yet conceived on the volcanic sand and mangroves
that reach east where bush, where mud solemnize

shall all obey the decades, that are milestone suffrages
for time to pick clean.

Until I, keeper of these esoteric runes
hear the swell breathe

over our graves already fingered by river water
over the surf's irascible cuss

and read an augur in the round, shore pebbles
ingrained with dark.

Out

John Walsh

I bet the chestnut sellers at Atocha station wished the cold spell would last; but the flaky February snow melted in the air. New York they dreamed of, fingerless mittens, purple veined noses and honking cabs. Just so roasted chestnut sales would go up.

In Casa Labra you stand your ground,
tuck your arms in and guzzle down
the pickled tuna, the battered cod
-tajada de bacalao-
as quickly as you can. It tastes so good.
I was expecting sawdust on the floor,
an old man in the corner dribbling spit.
Not this mix of glamour and business sleaze.
The staff were waiting for the rush to ease
before the next hungry wave rolled in.
"It's freezing outside," I think they said.

At Lhardy the doorman pointed to my briefcase.
"Tuck it safely under your arm," he meant.
Every pick-pocket at Sol was waiting to filch me.
His long dark coat flapped as he held the door open,
suspiciously I thought. He'd have had a heart attack
had he known how much cash I was carrying.

But I wasn't in the talking mood
and still had to find the Moorish quarter.
The new mayor was spending all the city's money
to get it into shape. For the Olympic Games or City of Culture,
I couldn't remember which. Next time round Madrid.
It's the easiest underground in the world to ride.
Without a word of Spanish I was able
to make it back to the hotel, where the concierge
handed me a note saying you had rung while I was out.

"For Marta"

**The Farthest I Have Ever
Been From The Sea**

Neil McCarthy

They can talk of Thailand as if nobody's ever been, of Bondi Beach as if it were deserted, uninhabited, of Boston, Cuzco and Rome like they were villages just down the road, out past the Statoil Station, the cemetery, keeping going until you pass Harney's Tavern and there, 2 km shy of the proposed new by-pass that will never happen, is the rest of the world.

The rest of the world is East Berlin to some, motionless in mid-Eighties madness, black and white politics mapped as colours in a Weetabix School Atlas handed down seven times, each with a different covering of our mother's worst wallpaper, or brown paper. The rest of the world happens on TV, in newspapers, in other people's photos, tales and grievances and then, one day, it will catch you off-guard.

February 2006, and I sit reading Chekhov in a Korean restaurant in Melbourne, occasionally drifting from the book, writing, thinking about Russia and remembering the time I stepped off a train in Krasnoyarsk – the farthest I have ever been from the sea; thinking about distance and years and Ireland, and realising that what I've just written won't matter a shit on my return, when I see again the smile on my sister's face and my nephew fetches his dinosaurs to play.

Revolt

Kevin Higgins

His world cracked like a brandy glass,
when she said she was leaving, had
met a man not yet beyond repair.
The universe chuckled and moved on,
not wishing to afflict the mocked. Now,

he texts her to say he thinks he left
his life's work in the back of her car; and
though the rabble-rouser she married
vanished around 1975, he's still against
poverty on Wednesdays. She replies

she should have known: inside
yesterday's perfectly sculpted revolutionary
was always today's paunchy liberal who slugs
his cabernet, and watches daytime TV
with an elderly Labrador named
Adlai Stevenson, the Fourth.

Byron In Venice

Liam Guilar

(The poet in Exile)

The debris of a city in decline
Slops at the crumbling steps
As the sun sets over palaces
Even dusk can't dignify.

The clock strikes, he puts down the page
And calls for servants, suddenly
Cannot remember if he is to meet
The opera singer or the serving maid.

He knows his part, and plays it well.
Negotiates the muddled choreography,
Pretends to passion, remembers not to yawn,
His hands run free, his mind completes the rhyme

And afterwards he hurries back
To coax these stanzas to their climax
And then reclines, to watch the sun
Reveal the ruins he inhabits.

He scrawls defiance on the blank of time's indifference,
Graffiti on the walls of history.
He has explored the tangled pathways of his heart
And written travelogues for those who stay at home.

If that leads here, to age and desolation
The fading light, broken on the Grand Canal,
Where life is repetition, and even lust grows stale.
The boys and women he has loved

The friends he misses as he dines alone,
Faded signatures on bundled letters,
Locks of hair, old arguments the night returns.
If it leads here; beyond the poem, what remains?

An aging face, once beautiful,
Staring through its own reflection,
Soliciting an audience
To dignify the commonplace as art?

before you left mammy dreamt
of losing a child in galway
searching the streets only to find a lily
the most beautiful lily she had ever seen

the last time you were home
you wanted to go everywhere
up ballygaddy down the curragh
out the weir road round ballymote

we lost you in galway
not in the streets but in the regional hospital
your five year old body in the white coffin
in a communion dress you never wore

after you left mammy took to crying
daddy took to drinking
with a vengeance
and we carried on

**the man who was haunted
by beautiful smells**

jarlath fahy

the man who was haunted by beautiful smells
was one of my fathers very dear friends
he dined til nine he dined til ten
on rats bones an guts of wren

he liked the leg he liked the breast
he liked them blind straight from the nest

he made his money on young boys bums
he made his money on old mens gums
he made his money on tinkers tin
he made his money on young girls sins

at night he slept in a wardrobe drawer
he complained his hunchback was sore
he steeped his sharks teeth in an enamel basin
you'd like to kick his fuckin face in

he drowned all our pups he strangled all our kittens
he had their guts for garters and their pelts for mittens

he cocked a hoop when the chicken flew the coup
as I said he was a devil for rat soup
wren went to his head
his mouth was always full and his napkin red
all his ink was blood all his parchment skin
you couldnt shut him out and you couldnt shut him in

he ended up in ballinasloe when he didnt take his pills
for dancing with his mothers skeleton over the connacht hills
on an ice cold night that would make you shiver
they found him belly up in the suck river

Yesterday you killed our brother.
We are gathered here in protest.

You see us
Among the other birds
Marvel at how we stretch our wings
To the autumn sun.

You tie a cord around our necks
So you can retrieve the fish.
That is how our brother died.

We are gathered here together
On the South Shore
Curlews in the field behind us
Shovellers on the rocks.

**Sinbad, The Loughrea
Library Cat**

Breid Sibley

Through the long hot summer days
We had our rendezvous
In the library vestibule.

Your lithe body
Responded to my touch
In stretches, and twirls.
A black beauty
Your sapphire gaze was magic.

The trees are bare now
Silver barked
I visualize you
Regal in the flickering candle light.
I want to take you home
But I am a wanderer.
Would you be content with my nomadic lifestyle.

The Taste Of Candy Floss

Alanna Johan Blaney

She was holding my hand tightly whilst I pulled against her, eyes and mouth gaping with desperate excitement. It was my first time at the fair.

We had seen it arrive this morning, my mother and I, on my morning walk to nursery. She had ushered me on as I pressed my face between the black, iron railings that circled

We walked hand in the town-park, watching with hand, my mother and I, fascination as the lean, scruffily-enjoying the burnt dressed men set up stalls and scent of deep-fried unlocked rides. I had never seen sugar wafting from anything like this before! I strained various snack stalls my eyes trying to look further away, where I could just about see

caravans with women hanging out washing and children playing. I asked my mother, crossly, why I had to go to school and they didn't. Her reply: 'because you're a good little girl'. I don't think I was convinced, as I remember her promising, as she prised my already grubby fingers from the rails, to take me after tea. She was true to her word.

But despite my preliminary fascination, nothing could prepare me for what I saw that night; I think I actually gasped at the sight! Whilst my mother paid for our tickets, I found myself giddy, head spinning at the transformation; the local park, whose usual highlight was the rickety roundabout in the far corner, now boasted enough neon flashing lights, brightened by early dusk of autumn, to make me feel as if I were in another world all together. I was in love!

We walked hand in hand, my mother and I, enjoying the burnt scent of deep-fried sugar wafting from various snack stalls even as it mingled with the petrol fumes of various rides from which the exhilarated screams of teenagers and older children pierced the night air. This is how I remember her: shoulder length brown hair being blown around by the October wind, her pupils dilated and cheeks flushed in exhilaration, as childlike and innocent as I was. She was smiling and laughing and pointing with me, indulging me in

every game and calorie-laden snack I craved. Perhaps she had known and had purposefully spoilt me.

Hours passed, and we had soon exhausted all but the last two stalls, having already sampled every sweet and savoury snack my mother would allow, and successfully bullied her into joining me on every ride I was tall enough to try. Not yet beaten, my mother knelt down next to me and whispered in my ear, her breath warm against my cheek:

“Have you ever tried candy floss?”

I shook my head, putting a hand to my mouth in expectancy. With a naughty grin my mother pulled me over to the penultimate attraction, where a woman, much bigger than her, with greasy hair and pursed lips, stood behind the table stirring something in a big metal machine. Unable to see what, the mystery served only to excite me further. Upon instruction, the fat lady pulled out a large pink cloud on a cardboard stick, and swapped it with my mother for a pound coin. She turned to face me and, leaning forward, my mother held the mysterious sweet out to me and invited me to pinch a bit. I did so with eager anticipation, and watched her smile at my delighted expression; it was delicious, dissolving in my mouth almost instantly and leaving only a sweet tongue and sticky hands as reminders of its existence. She delicately placed some between her own lips and we giggled together at the experience.

I now wish we could have eaten that candyfloss together forever, but inevitably something else caught my eye, the only ride my mother hadn't yet refused: the ghost train. The voice of the man operating the ride broke through our laughter, his voice drawling continuously, so practised it could have been a recording.

“Last ride of the evening ladies and gents! More ghouls and beasts than you can poke a stick at! Enough to terrify you and keep you awake all night! Hop on now before it's too late!”

I couldn't help myself, the candyfloss abandoned as I dragged my mother over, pleading pitifully “Oh Mummy, can we please? Can we, can we, please?”

“I don't think we can, honey” She shook her head sadly “You're not big enough yet.” We both looked at the cartoon

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cut out. His hand was held at the 4'6" mark, a speech bubble hanging from its mouth like the cigarette the ride-man held between his lips. But I was determined.

"But you can still go on mummy! I'll wait here for you! You can have fun and tell me what it was like!"

For a few moments my mother was silent, obviously shocked by my altruistic outburst, but it didn't take her long to find more excuses.

"But I just can't leave you on your own honey -" She was interrupted by the ride-man's indeterminable accent, whom I had been unaware was listening to our conversation, naïve to the attentiveness of a salesman.

"Now, I can look after her, m'am, I have three young 'uns myself. And you can trust I won't be running off and leaving my ride here as a free for all."

What happened next, I've never been quite sure. I know they spoke for a while; my mother shaking her head and smiling sweetly as she refused his offer whilst he coerced with great practise, ruffling my hair and talking fondly of his own children who perhaps I had seen playing earlier. I watched them like a game of table-tennis, my head flicking back and forth between my mother's flushed cheeks, and the ride-man's pierced eyebrows and straggly long hair. I don't know how, but he persuaded her.

Before she went, she knelt down, pressing the candy floss into my small palms and her lips, still tacky, against my cheeks, whispering in sweetened breath.

"I'll be right back, honey, just wait here for me with the nice man."

I nodded.

"Do you promise you'll stay put?"

"I promise, Mummy."

She turned away with reluctance I couldn't then understand and climbed into the novelty shaped carriage. A button was pressed and with a shudder it started to move. She waved to me, seeming nervous, though still smiling. I waved back, stuffing more candyfloss into my mouth.

And then I waited.

The ride-man, whose name was Jim, showed me the buttons he used to operate the ride. A carriage, the same as

my mothers, came out into the open air and a courting adolescent couple stepped out, clutching each other tightly. Jim answered my questions on whether the hoops through his eyebrows and ears hurt. This time a small family emerged, the mother and father talking loudly while the child ran in circles. I ate some more candyfloss. An empty carriage went past. I waited some more. Teenagers again: two girls in short skirts and high heels. Jim offered me some of his cola, but I was happy with my candyfloss. Another empty carriage. Jim kept talking to me, but seemed to become nervous. He called over a man who bore such a resemblance I took him to be his brother, who promptly disappeared behind the ride. Another empty carriage. When Jim's brother returned I had finished my candyfloss. He was shaking his head and ran to a nearby caravan. The air was becoming quieter and I could see people filtering out the gates. Another empty carriage. A tide of night-fall swept across the park as the rides got switched off one by one, the darkness seeming to be swallowing us as it moved ever closer. Another empty carriage. My stomach felt tight and funny; the ghost train was the only one still on. Jim suggested we kept waiting for my mother in a caravan with his family. She wouldn't want me getting cold. I nodded dumbly and he picked me up and carried me over. I watched the ghost train over his shoulders as we bumped along, the lights finally shuddering off as we reached the caravan door. I felt hot-headed and dizzy, the knot in my stomach being pulled tighter. Something was wrong.

Jim introduced me to his wife, his eldest son and the brother I had seen earlier. I sat on a fading sofa, fiddling with my hair and biting my lip. His wife made me hot cocoa whilst Jim whispered to her at the stove. As I drank from an orange mug, I answered questions.

'My daddy doesn't live with us. I don't know where he is.'

'No, I don't have any brothers or sisters.'

'I don't know any other family.'

It was decided I would sleep in the caravan tonight, and we would keep waiting for my mother tomorrow. Obediently I agreed, and drowsy from the warm milky drink that lay heavy in my stomach I fell asleep almost straightaway,

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though I tossed and turned from bad dreams all night, awaking the next morning tangled in my duvet.

I waited with Jim all of the next day. And the day after that, but every night would end the same, just me watching those empty carriages.

I don't remember any police, social services, or anybody else coming to get me; I just know it was decided I would stay with Jim and his family as they moved around the country. I learned to run the rides, fry doughnuts, even spin the candyfloss, though I no longer had a taste for it. Every year we came back to the town-park, with the black metal railings and the rickety roundabout that got replaced a few years later. I always found myself standing by the ghost train, watching and waiting, just as I promised. I couldn't forget.

If you ask any child their biggest fear, you will receive an array of answers worthy only of a child's imagination: spiders and snakes and ghosts and goblins. None of those are real monsters though. I know that now. I know the truth. And I would give anything to stop the nightmares, and to feel my mother's hand, warm and sticky from candyfloss, tightly clutched in my own, just one more time.

Lehinch

Tony O'Dwyer

Lehinch

Is a crab holding the sea in its pincers

Of black cliffs – a sea that hums

In its own slosh

Like a daydream in the shell of your own skull

That tingles and creeps

And scurries along the bone of the sand

Where the wooden-handled spade of summer

Digs in the soft brown skin

And the smile of the breaking wave fills

The length of the day

Where the painted bucket of childhood

Lies upturned

And the trembling castles within,

Crumble, waiting to fall.

The blades of grass are all visible
There's space between the rooftop
and the crane,
and cool fingers
let loose on the avenues,
brushing leaves, raising dust,
disturbing sweet wrappings.
The earth is hard
for the boy digging up bait,
for the man and boy still kicking a ball
in the school grounds.
Curtains close.
The crane is a narrow bridge
or a tightrope.
Clouds part
like in a Russian movie
and stars are there.

**Famous Artists Visit
Dublin, 1984**

Eoghan Garvey

And maybe
the disappointment in Ellsworth Kelly's eyebrows
or Joseph Beuys' shifting posture
rearranged something with the city's energy,
allowed currents to flow
towards more abstract pleasures,
abstruser destinations
which,
whatever they turned out to be,
would at least be arrived at
in loose fabrics,
with languid, slender companions.

One of us would stand
out on their own,
you were the oldest
and usually the one

to stand there,
telling us to take
giant steps or fairy steps,
or stop moving, like statues.

We'd move slowly
across the grass,
eager for our chance
to control the world,

or stand frozen
in strange positions,
knowing they wouldn't
last for long.

Tree fruit

George Shorten

That boy showed me with busy hands
How to teach him horse chestnuts
With feasting eyes, how I should
Instruct him in paring off the shell.
Then I, who should have been at work
In my oak office revising time
Was allowed to make the all important cut.

A diamond bright morning,
a gift into autumn
if it weren't for spite,
spoiling for a fight.
Waiting.

Tabby zapped on tarmac;
bullyboy crows garrulous;
stone walls squinting;
a vindictive wind hissing: Winter! It's Winter!

And the snarling office sniper,
with the Padre Pio sticker.
Waiting.

Camelot

Maureen Gallagher

*I'm the king of the castle,
You're the dirty rascal!*

The house became them in the end,
everyone mentioned it.
When the split came
they agreed they'd hold on,
put a partition up if needs;
it was big enough to contain both egos.

Camelot. Once a paradise
for a king and his Guinevere,
a palace on a hill -
a height from which to look down -
now a battlefield: a war fought with gibes,
sharp as the knives they specialise in
(the best culinary tools),
although they're not contemplating carnage,
merely cuts, deep hurt, the odd covert gash -
many wounding years ahead.

For seven years I've searched
for the final film we'd seen
before the end of winter,
the final winter as we knew, even then;
you felt it was a watershed

Now I've found it again, Cold Fever:
a Japanese commemorating his parents'
death, set in wintertime, in Iceland;
whiteness without end, driving blind,
snow swirling; drifts on all the paths,

throwing the protagonists off course,
roads hidden and treacherous underfoot,
fears everywhere and the need to cling.
But you liked the light shots best,
sunrises on towers of burning ice;

the true cold of a no-holds-barred winter.
You loved the honey-run of light
along the ice-fields, geysers bursting
unannounced, the exhaled hiss of steam,
the side-by-side, hot and cold sensation,

windblown candles burning on the floes,
their souls carried over in that pale light,
a son's prayers uttered to a chosen god,
a libation poured in the torrent;
the unstoppable race to the ocean.

Six Haiku

Sean Donegan

The boy soprano
soaring towards his highest note:
ecstasy for all.

In the dim old church
a canticle of sunshine:
the stained glass window.

The creaking hinges
on the broken stable door
craving attention.

A beam of sunlight
passing through the narrow chink:
galaxies of dust.

Acres of bluebells
covering Inishmurray:
soft sounds of the sea.

The children's playground
rusted solitary swing
beating out the time.

We could always strike out
for the mountains above
or wander the dusty villages
but it's bumper-to-bumper out there
and the price of juice.

The dirt-track is filling up with four-by-fours,
where are they all going in this heat?

Anyway, it's been done,
it's been done,
so let's just lie here,
open the blue port-hole in the gable,
there is nobody listening, never was,
nothing drooling from the tall grass,
lie, lie, hear the carillon...

The long-dead stars will still be pumping tonight
and you can be naked,
so can I,

keep your mobile numbed,
it's an island after all,
we're not fully in control!

Chakor

Stephen Shields

Ungirdled of gravity
you grapple for silver's
mirage of light

Birdsong in a ricochet
of moonbeams, you yearn
and still you sip

No honeydew, no nectar,
no branch to perch, you flit,
forever you covet.

Morning: web of feathers
husk on the pavement
pale eyes blind

You ebb as the pulse
of sun crests
the thighs of day.

I am seduced
by this America:
my blonde friend
drives her convertible
over Brooklyn Bridge
out to Long Island
where young people gather for music
and volleyball,
talk of the Dead
and going to
Tucson.

I smile at everyone –
another symptom
of reality gone astray.
A guy asks me
to Vermont
for the weekend
and I go!
And loved
the stonedness
of it all, the fires
at night, the songs,
though I huddled
in my sleeping
bag and was glad
when we hit the road.
I drove half-way
home barefoot
in his van that fired
on only one cylinder.

Gas Station

Sheila Phelan

It was upriver, near a bridge
with commuter traffic
and a skein of moorings
where locals kept their boats.

On an island of its own,
you could pull up either side
just like an ordinary gas station.

A girl worked there
all summer in a bathing suit
and shorts. She looked
cooked, she was that brown.

She handled everything,
and if you were alone,
helped moor the boat
but never said much.

Lodged in memory now
an island in oblivion,
though I only drove
upriver once or twice.

The burning surfaces are alive
and life in recall is both
near and far like a reflection
of the world in mirrored glasses.

Silent sleep finally
finds me,
my rigid body at
last limp.
Loosening my
sorrows, dropping
into my coffin
of dreams.
But again my sleep is
disturbed,
as you are a
relentless master.
Your image, charred
onto the walls of my
eyes, burned into my
retinas,
blinding me,
binding me.
And the ropes
and the tightening
grip return and
I am
your slave,
alive
and dead
in this dark
house
without doors or
windows.

The Fox

Ann-Marie Spittle

Blacked lifeless sockets stare at me
From the recess of the shelves
Held there in frozen moment
He stares at me
The thief of the woodlands
Stalker of the night
Purveyor of small deaths
No more will his call be heard over the air
As the moonlight falls
On the darkness of ages
Or scurry about while prey is in their beds
Resplendent in the sleep of fools
Who seeing no evil fear none will come
Until his call breaks their blanket of sleep
And they are caught in the trap of white
What end did you brave
To transform into a hanging cloth
Empty skin that has no life in it
Save the memories of your adventures in the dark
Etched in the russet hues of your death
While I look on with the eyes of childhood
And see you as you used to be
Then you wink at me
And slinking off the hook like a flat fish
You make your escape out the window
"You child! What is the answer?"
And I am back to the classroom tomb
That holds your withered remains
Among the dust of children

The crowd won't wait
Tell a joke, man
Take a deep breath
Walk to the stage

The crowd roars now
Smile through the tears
Act like a clown
You're good at that

Take a deep breath
Pick up the mike
He shakes and frowns
A sweat bead falls

He wipes his brow
Please speak to them
It's a full house
Don't let me down

I took the risk
"Well, now," he says
Then he looks down
"A joke for you"
I know he'll freeze
Nerves will take over

More sweat beads fall
Pour out your soul
Talk about your life
Let them see you

Sieve out the jokes
Feed them a line
Now it's too late
They point and stare
Go home and purge
You're good at that.

Started in the cold courtyard
of the Columbus hotel,
Stockholm.
Rainstorm on rainstorm,
Running through the rain
in the Old Town.

Travelling across the Geat land
towards Kobenhaven,
With first class half empty
and the coffee free.
Wondered why the Wehrmacht's Grendel
never conquered the Scylfing.

So peaceful now.
Where was the mighty Scylding soul
when the Angels roared ?

Empty my head quick
of justed juggled judgment.
Never so relaxed,
here amongst Beowulf's thanes.
The land too flat for highlands.
Can't help dreaming of the fjords,
And their mountains.

I am a seafarer
drinking at the benches,
Sailing happy in the horned ship
down the harbour,
Glimpsing the Mead hall through the mist.
Listening in raptured silence
to songs of the favoured scoop
more proficient in his art
than this thin tortured amateur.

You slept so much it scared me.
But never more sure,
was I then,
of what I am.

**On Approaching
One Hundred**

Michael Massey

My remaining middle-aged son
lives at home, hears voices.
They tell him never boil
an egg, never wash a cup.

From couch cushions a snarl
of fur snaps at the hand that feeds it,
that still steadies a daughter's misshapen
weight shuffling to Sunday mass,

remembering the other daughter
whose heart flopped in a surgeon's
hands, and the son who plunged
from life too soon, too soon.

And you come round here
telling me I should jump for joy
now that I'm old enough to lob
a stone into my hundredth year.

Listen. Either my God's forsaken me
or I'm being punished. Still.
Like the long years spent
cracking stones into wooden boxes.

My Good Lady

Alan McMonagle

I think my good lady – and she is a good lady – is starting to worry about me. She says that parts of my mind are unable to keep tune with the day to day rhythm of life. Recently she has taken to buying me socks with the days of the week branded onto the soles. To keep me informed, she says. Each day has a different colour. With a thick black marker she also labels the various meats I freeze for a future day. Minced beef is marked with an M; pork chops with a P; diced lamb with an L. Lest I forget what I have to eat, I'm told. Then she pinches my skin. 'Just checking,' she says when I tell her it hurts.

I think I can trace this extra concern back to the night when a neighbour rapped at our door and told me our car was sitting in the middle of the road. 'Are we still going away for the weekend?' We live in a hilly estate and the car had rolled down our driveway and I asked her, trying to steer the conversation in a different direction. It was now blocking the way. It suddenly hit me that I had forgotten to apply the handbrake after driving home that evening. God knows how long it had been sitting out there. Thankfully no traffic was passing when it rolled down.

'That's it, you're not getting the car,' she said to me when the car was safe in our driveway once more - with its handbrake tautly sprung.

'Are we still going away for the weekend?' I asked her, trying to steer the conversation in a different direction. I knew she was looking forward to our trip to the glens. The mountain air always took her mind off the demands of her job. She had been working very hard lately. And true enough, as soon as I started on about forest trails and crystal lakes she forgot about my defective mind. Temporarily at least. But I knew my occasional lapses genuinely concerned her.

The following day I called her at work because I needed the car. 'I'll only be twenty minutes,' I pleaded. I called in to her office, collected the keys and drove as far as the cathedral car park, which was very convenient for where I had to go. I did my message and when I got back to the car the registration plates were gone. Front and back.

Crannóg 11

'What,' she said as I handed over the keys, 'you're not even gone twenty minutes.'

'I told you I wouldn't be gone long,' I said to her and she frowned.

'Who would have thought it,' I continued, 'from the cathedral car park of all places. Front and back. They were fast movers. Probably watched every move I made.'

'We'll have to get new plates for the weekend,' she said.

'I bet they're planning a heist,' I said.

'What? Who is planning a heist?'

'The guys who took the registration plates.'

'You're not getting the car.'

'I don't need it,' I said and I walked home.

When she pulled into the driveway that evening, the car was fitted with a brand new set of plates. That's the way she is. When something needs fixing it gets done. There is no shilly shallying about. Instant coffee they call her at her parents' place. One time her mother passed favourable comments to a pair of knee high boots she was admiring in a shop window and scarcely had the boots time to bask in all the attention lavished upon them than they were whisked away right before their admirer's eyes. And by the time her mother got home, there they were, waiting for her in a tall box on the kitchen table. There were no prizes for guessing who was responsible. 'Lord save us,' choked her mother performing chest compressions as though a calamitous deed had just taken place. With great fanfare she was encouraged to try on the boots. They fitted like a glove.

On Friday night we packed for our trip. I packed for the weekend. She packed for a six-month cruise.

'Where do you think you're going with all that,' I said to her.

'Is that all you're bringing,' she said back.

Later, when she thought I wasn't looking she threw more things in my backpack. While at the same time, I emptied hers.

On Saturday morning she was pouring water over the car battery cells. Recently, the cells had acquired a sinister habit of drying out which meant that it was difficult to start the car sometimes. It had happened on our last trip away and we were very lucky in that a guy in a jeep beside us had with him a set of jump leads that he used to power up the car again. It was he who had given her the tip about watering the battery. But today we were safely on our way, a four-

hour drive to the far side of the country ahead of us, towards the glens and lakes and misty mountains and to cap it all it looked like the sun was going to make an appearance.

I insisted we share the driving and after we pulled in for a tank of petrol one hour into our drive she reluctantly let me take over.

'Give it some welly,' she said to me as I eased off the clutch.

'I'm trying,' I said, 'but nothing happens.'

Which was true. I pressed down on the accelerator as far as it would go but the car chugged along as though it was stuck in first or second gear. Then it stopped chugging. Then it stopped.

'There's something wrong with the car,' I said.

'What's wrong is that the pump that transfers petrol from your tank to your engine has broken,' said the mechanic that we managed to get a hold of. 'Is there much petrol in it?'

'We've just put a full tank in,' I said.

'We'll have to drain it out. I hope you weren't planning a long trip. It's an awkward part to fix.'

It was also an expensive part to fix.

'Maybe we should think about getting a new car,' I said later that night when we returned home, having had to cancel our weekend, but she was too tired to answer.

The following morning I woke early, decided to let her sleep on and walked the four miles into town where I bumped into my friend Mike. I hadn't seen him in a while and he suggested we go to Sunday Jazz. I sat back and enjoyed the music and happy thrum of conversation around me. It reminded me of groggy mornings from the night before in the not so distant past. When we used to meet Mike a lot more. He had so many stories from his days in London, sad and funny at the same time, but he always made us laugh the way he told them.

'How's the good lady?' he asked me and I told him about our aborted weekend.

'I don't think she's going to be in a very good mood today,' I said, 'and she has an unbearable week ahead of her at work.'

'Listen man,' said Mike with emphasis, 'that girl is worth a million dollars and she's got the receipt to prove it.'

'Don't I know it,' I replied, 'she's very good for keeping the receipts of things.'

Crannóg 11

'You should do something this evening to make up for the weekend. Hit the town. There's nothing like a bit of cha cha on a Sunday night.'

Mike suddenly stood out of his chair and performed a little dance move. He pinched his nose and wriggled his body. He looked like a drowning man. But I liked his idea so I strolled down to a restaurant she really likes and booked a table for two. It's in the old part of town and inside has the feel of a cinema. There are posters of her favourite movies on the walls. The food tastes as good as it looks and there is a music bar across the road I thought that maybe we could hit afterwards.

'I have to go into work,' she announced when I rushed home to tell her.

'On a Sunday,' I said in disbelief.

'The security cameras are down,' she said.

'What if we had been the other side of the country,' I said.

'Well it's just as well we weren't now, isn't it?'

I decided to cook a meal for when she got home. I called her office and asked at what time she expected to get away. 'I should be home by eight,' she said in a heavy voice.

I opened a packet of spaghetti. I found some garlic, Tabasco, basil leaves and very lazy chillies. I cried as I cut through an onion. I chopped a carrot into luminous discs. I sprung the lid on two tins of cherry tomatoes. It all went in the pan. It looked like soup.

As it gurgled away, I set the table, dimmed the light and opened a bottle of red wine - to let it breathe. 'Something is missing,' I murmured.

She was not happy when she arrived home. I asked what was wrong.

'This job is the pits, people are no good, I feel like jumping off a mountain.'

'Have a glass of wine,' I said to her, drawing a chair, 'dinner is served.'

'I could get used to this,' she said wrapping spaghetti around her fork. 'What did you put in it?'

'Whatever was there,' I said.

Then she took up this business of jumping off a mountain. 'Did you know I always wanted to do a paraglide?' she said to me. She had a few other ideas as well and she wavered from one to the other as they came to

her. Abseiling. River rafting. Kite surfing. She wanted to do it all. 'It must be the wine,' I said to myself.

'I know,' she said, as though she was agreeing with me, 'we could do a sky-dive.'

'From an aeroplane,' I said to her gob-smacked.

'No, from a submarine. Of course from an aeroplane.'

I didn't say a lot after that.

When she finished her spaghetti she licked the plate. It didn't need to be washed. 'I could get used to this,' she said again. 'What's for desert?'

'Next time,' I said and poured us another glass of wine.

I always forget something.

After that, a few more things went wrong with the car. The wipers became very noisy. Parking one night, I tore the handbrake out of its groove. And a twelve year old boy took it for a spin out the back roads but the guards got it back to us again after a mighty chase. 'I once reversed a continental lorry across a narrow bridge,' the boy later told me.

I started cooking a little more. I found it very relaxing. Coming in late from work she seemed to look forward to what I served up. After some wine she always made me promise to do a sky-dive. And we had huge wedges of Romantica for desert.

A lot of the time she asks to see the soles of my feet. She spot-checks to test do I know what kind of meat I've left out. And this pinching business has progressed to a persistent scratching. 'I'm just giving you a little rub,' she says when I complain. But I don't think she realises how long her nails are.

Last night in bed she mulled over her latest visa bill. 'We need to get a shredding machine,' she said tearing the bill into tiny pieces. 'Why?' I asked. 'Because our identities could be stolen,' she replied.

That's what she's like, my good lady – and she is a good lady – that's the sort of thing she is liable to come out with. I think I'm starting to worry about her.

Your scars were minutia compared
To the vastness of your smooth, lightly birthmarked skin.
You left, and I kept seeing them in my mind:
X marks across your shoulder blades.

I tell you that your scars are beautiful,
Words once told to me that changed my life.
They are your stories, I whisper.
One cannot try and hide his past.

Our fingers became entwined and
You kiss me inside the valley above
My collarbone. I shudder.
You have a beautiful mind, you murmur.

Omitting this moment, I have never been speechless.

I remind myself that it was better
To have passion for one day than
To never have felt any passion at all.
But you keep surfacing in my mental oceans.

You worry that the night we spent together
Represents promiscuity,
Some sort of personal blemish
Or call of bad judgment.

I worry that the night we spent together
Represents something other than promiscuity,
Some sort of lapse of judgment in
Letting someone get that close again.

I hover over you on my way to class,
Listening to the velvety tones of The Album Leaf:
One earphone in you, in me.
I cannot stop thinking how beautiful you are.

I know you have stories that I have never heard,
You have secrets that I may never know.
But at this moment it either does not matter
Or my cognizance of their presence is enough.

In bed we both bend and
Form angles, struggling to
Fit together, bend together.
No one wants to be alone.

I imagine your sleep,
Your dreams creating us into
Rubenesque characters with
Too-large fingers and infinite flesh.

I kiss your shoulder blade.
Your neck moves slightly
You remain in dreams.
My secret. X marks the spot.

Mary dreamed Frankenstein from disparate parts
One of them Byron's size.
Shelley thought eyes her nipples in a dream
That Polidori could not analyse.

Afloat asleep in amniotic waves
George Gordon needs no orthopaedic boot
Dreaming of days at Oxford with his bear
Which was creation's lord, and which was brute?

The great insomniac who dreams them all
Whose contemplation fixes stars and suns
Smiles on his son who gave the world Don Juan
As on a convent full of sleeping nuns

Looks in the heart of the old shabby bear
And sends him dreams of marzipan and buns.

Biographical Details

Alanna Johan Blaney was born in North London. Her first published piece of work was a poem in the 1998 Future Voices anthology at the age of 13. She recently won first prize in the David St John Charitable Trust annual Summer Ghost Story competition for the short Story 'Sophia'. She describes her writing as overtly descriptive, generally with a dark streak and a twist of surrealism, taking inspiration from the oddities of her mind and her partner.

Robert James Berry lives & writes in Auckland, New Zealand. His work has been widely published. *Seamark* (Ginninderra Press: Canberra, Australia), his third collection, was published in late 2005.

Sandra Bunting's first collection of poetry, *Identified in Trees*, has been recently published by Marram Press. She lives in Galway.

Patricia Burke Brogan is the author of the internationally acclaimed play *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 on 22nd November 2005 prior to moving to the Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire. The script of the play was recently published by Wordsonthestreet, Galway

Catherine Davies (often confined to her three-letter nickname, Cat) is currently studying for an MA in Creative Writing. She is a Manchester-based stand up comedian. She is currently writing her first novel, a multi-faceted urban drama set in the 1980's/90's. She has a background in drama and media.

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

Lara Eastman lives in Essex. She has an MA in Creative and Life Writing.

Jarlath Fahy is a former member of the Focus Theatre Group. He read from his work recently at the Voices from The Tower lunchtime readings in Galway's Fisheries Tower and at an Over The Edge Reading in Galway City Library.

Maureen Gallagher's work has appeared widely in Ireland, Britain, Canada, The United States and New Zealand in *The Sunday Tribune, The Shop, Poetry Ireland Review, Crannóg, West 47, Orbis, Envoi, The Rialto* and others. Her work has been anthologised, most recently in *Divas* (Arlen House publishers). She was nominated for the 2005 Sunday Tribune/Hennessy Award for poetry

and shortlisted for the Dunlaoire/Rathdown 2006 Poetry Now Award. She was a prizewinner in the New Writer 2002 essay competition. Also in June 2002, she was a finalist in the Dublin Writers' Festival/Rattlebag Poetry Slam. Her work has been broadcast on RTE's Rattlebag and on Flirt FM.

Eoghan Garvey, originally from Monaghan, lives in Galway.

Liam Guilar was born in England but currently lives in Australia. He has had two print collections of poetry published: a chapbook, *The Poet's Confession* and an "award winning" book: *I'll Howl before you bury me*. A CD version of the latter was released in 2005, with sound files which combine readings of some of the poems with traditional music. Details and samples at: <http://www.ipoz.biz/titles/howl.htm>

Gerard Hanberry's collection *Rough Night* was published in 2002 by Stonebridge Publications. He has been shortlisted for the Hennessy Award, Strokestown Competition and Firewords City Award. In 2004 he won the Brendan Kennelly Poetry Prize. His second collection, *Something like Lovers* was published by Stonebridge in 2005.

Kenneth Hickey is from Cork. He has had poetry and prose printed in journals in Ireland, the UK and the US. He has also had several rehearsed readings of full-length plays by Moving Parts Theatre at Carr's Café, Paris, France. His video shorts have been screened at the Cork and Foyle Film Festivals. His awards include The Full Length play award at the Listowel Writers Week in 2005 as well as being short-listed for the PJ O'Connor Awards and the South Tipperary Chapbook Awards in 2003 and 2004.

Kevin Higgins lives in Galway. His first collection *The Boy With No Face* was published by Salmon in February 2005. In February 2006 he received an Arts Council Travel Award to do a five stop reading tour of the US Mid-West. On the basis of his first collection, Kevin has been chosen by Strong Award judge Thomas McCarthy to read at the 2006 Strong Reading at the Poetry Now Festival in Dun Laoghaire. Kevin's poem *A Brief History Of Those Who Made Their Point Politely And Then Went Home* was nominated as one of the 'favourite poems of 2005' by contributors to the prominent UK-based website <http://www.thepoem.co.uk>. With his wife Susan Millar DuMars, Kevin organises the Over The Edge: Open Reading series in Galway City Library.

Fred Johnston is a poet, critic and novelist. He has published eight volumes of poetry, a collection of stories and three novels. He is currently editor of The Cork Literary Review. He is manager of The Western Writers' Centre. He was

appointed 2004 Writer-in-Residence to the Princess Grace Irish Library in Monaco.

Ronald Kaplan was born in a small town in Southeastern Minnesota. After attending The Perpich Center for the Arts, Ronald moved to Chicago to pursue a degree in psychology. He has been published in an anthology and several literary journals.

James Martyn is a poet and fiction writer. He was recently nominated for an Hennessy Award.

Anna McKerrow has written for *Smoke: A London Peculiar* and has had poetry published in *Sentinel Poetry Quarterly* as well as others. Six of her poems have recently been made into short films by students at the Central School of Speech and Drama.

Alan McMonagle lives in Galway. His work has appeared in *Galway Now, Virtual Writer*. He is a featured writer in the Jan-Mar '06 edition of *West47online*. He has also been long-listed for the 2006 Fish short story prize.

Aoife Mannix is an Irish poet. Her first full collection of poetry *The Elephant In The Corner* was published by Tall Lighthouse (www.tall-lighthouse.co.uk) in 2005. Her chapbook *The Trick of Foreign Words* was published in 2002. Her work has been published in numerous anthologies and magazines as well as being broadcast on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 4, London Live, Resonance FM, and the BBC World Service. More of her work can be found at www.spoiledink.com/aoifemannix.

Michael Massey is a writer from Kilkenny

Tom Mathews is a cartoonist, painter, critic and poet. His most recent book *The Best of Tom Mathews* was published by New Island Press in October 2005.

Neil McCarthy's poems have appeared in numerous magazines and journals such as *Crannóg*, *The Shop*, *iota (UK)*, *The New York Quarterly (US)*, *Southern Ocean Review (NZ)*.

Kathleen O'Driscoll's poetry collection is *Goodbye Joe*, Caledon Press. Her short story collection is *Ether*, Caledon Press. She has been published in the anthologies *Pillars of the House*, Wolfhound Press and *The White Page*, Salmon Publishing. She has had five short stories broadcast on RTE and she wrote and directed the short film *Berlin Blues*.

Tony O'Dwyer is a poet and fiction writer. His work has appeared in many journal, magazines and anthologies. His poetry collection *Off Guard* was

published by Bradshaw Books, Cork in 2003. He is co-editor of Crannóg Magazine. He is poetry editor of the online magazine WOW! www.wordsontheweb.net. He is a partner in Wordsonthestreet Publishers www.wordsonthestreet.com.

Ciaran Parkes has been published in *The Shop, The Yellow Crane, Crannóg* and elsewhere.

Sheila Phelan has previously been published in many magazines and journals.

Amber Coss Sawyer wrote her first poem at age six. She was first published in 1986 in *The Poetry Center Anthology*, now known as *The Patterson Literary Review*. Her poem, *Honey Succulence*, will appear in the upcoming erotic poetry supplement of *Poems Niederngasse*.

Stephen Shields is from Athenry. He has had poetry published in *Markings* and *Crannóg*. He has an MA in Creative Writing from NUIG.

Breid Sibley has been a prizewinner in the Baffle and Cathal Buí poetry competitions. She has been published in *Ropes, Crannóg* and *Time Haiku*.

George Shorten is a medical doctor working in Cork. He has published poems in magazines and anthologies.

Ann-Marie Spittle is a University administrator. She is studying for a BA in English literature with the Open University.

John Walsh was born in Derry. He has been published in *Flaming Arrows, Black Mountain Review* and previous issues of *Crannóg*. He is Baffle 2005 2nd prize winner. (www.baffle.ie). His first collection of poems will soon be published by Marram Press, Galway.