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Editorial board:

Sandra Bunting
Gerardine Burke
Jarlath Fahy
Tony O'Dwyer

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editor@crannogmagazine.com

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SUBMISSIONS

Crannóg is published three times a year in spring, summer and autumn. Closing dates for submissions are: January 1, May 1 and September 1. Reading Times: Nov 1-January 1 for spring, March 1-May 1 for summer, July 1-September 1 for autumn. Submissions sent outside these times will not be read.

POETRY: Send no more than three poems. Each poem should be under 50 lines.

PROSE: Stories should be under 2000 words

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- *Ensure each poem begins on a new page.*
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About The Cover

The images on the front and back cover of this issue of Crannóg are from *in absentia*, a web-based writing project that uses the Google Maps API to address issues of gentrification and its erasures in the Mile End neighbourhood of Montreal.

In recent years many long-time low-income neighbours have been forced out of Mile End by economically motivated decisions made in their absence. The neighbourhood is haunted now, with their stories. Our stories. My building is for sale; I may be next. Faced with imminent eviction I've begun to write as if I'm no longer here, about a Mile End that is no longer here. The Mile End depicted in *in absentia* is a slightly fantastical world, a shared memory of the neighbourhood as it never really was but as it could have been. *in absentia* is a map of the sudden disappearances of characters (fictional or otherwise) from the places (real or imagined) where they once lived.

*What traces do people leave behind when they leave a place?
What stories spring from their absence.*

"To you our newest not-yet neighbours, in response to the letter you left in every mailbox on our block: yes, of course, we understand that there will be some noise – we might have bought the place ourselves had it not needed so many renovations. Your note didn't mention that there'd be trucks blocking the alleyway for four months. All day we listen to your contractors cursing in between bursts of jackhammer and bandsaw and we mourn the passing of what used to be. Your backyard used to have an ancient wooden door sagging blue askew amidst a retinue of vines clinging to a crumbling cinderblock wall guarding an oasis of lazy Brown-Eyed-Susans. All that's left is a backhoe clawing after a basement. Every day we walk the dog through the mud from the hole you've dug. We remember the first time we met you. You told us you bought the place because you'd fallen in love with the garden."

J. R. Carpenter, *in absentia*, 2008.

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It's the same dream as before. The one where she and Joe are drinking tea from giant, pink Alice in Wonderland cups they have to hold up with both hands. Her legs are twisted around his as they half-sit, half-lie on her grandmother's green tartan picnic blanket at Ocean Beach. The sound is turned down but they are laughing and spilling tea and then laughing at spilling tea. A red and white polka dot umbrella protects them from the sun while Marcel Marceau performs a private show for their eyes only. He is Joe's favourite mime artist but only because he doesn't know any others.

Jade's eyes flicker open and see nothing but black. She shuts them again waiting for something to register. She waits but there is just a vague realisation that she isn't meant to be lying here on damp, cold concrete ground. Something makes her think she has fallen and she tries to shift her limbs around to see if anything is broken. She's sure she has seen people do this in films. Her right leg is bent under the weight of the left. Both arms are splayed on either side of her body and her neck is twisted in a funny direction to the left. Slowly moving bits and pieces of herself she completes a mental check-list to see if everything is present and correct. Stale dusty air hovers around her nostrils and she wonders if her new skirt is torn. Her arm starts to make its way down towards her leg to find out but it gives up half way there and resorts to lying limply across her stomach. She feels numb.

Jade, she thinks to herself, you have to get up, find out where you are. Jade. The name everyone thinks is so exotic but is really only the result of an atrocious handwriting mistake by the midwife that filled in her birth registration details. It was supposed to read Jean after the women on the maternal side of her family. When she was younger her mother always tried to call her Jean but Jade always refused to answer to the name. And with no other daughters to right the official wrong, her mother had to accept there would not be another chance to continue the family tradition. Jade smiles as she thinks how much she likes her name. She likes the sound of it when people say it out loud, the images it conjures up in other peoples minds. She thinks her life would have been a bore if she had been called Jean. Then again, if she had been called Jean, perhaps she wouldn't have ended up here.

Moving her head to the right, Jade looks up and becomes aware of two lines of light projecting into the dark from a narrow window high up on the wall. She squints trying to make out where she is but can only see lumpy outlines in the darkness. She

realises she doesn't have her glasses. She needs her glasses. She isn't sure how long she has been lying here but, at this stage, thinks she should probably shout for help. She wills her voice to work but her throat contracts and she can only manage a hoarse whimper. The effort makes her drowsy and she closes her eyes. Pictures start to flit around behind the naked lids. A rainy funeral. Attic antiques. A small white house. Ocean spray. It reminds her of...she doesn't know...she can only see glimpses. She can't work out what going on.

Then something rips into her consciousness causing her eyes to jump open. Up until this minute she wasn't aware of feeling anything. Now, her muscles are starting to tighten as she feels sensations returning. Pain sears through her lower body. She doesn't know what it feels like to be stabbed but thinks the feeling can't be too far removed from this. Jade feels hot, cold, sick, faint, everything together. She wants to find her glasses and she wants to cry. Her theory about movies and checking limbs seems stupid to her now. The pain tells her she must be broken. She must be broken in many places. It becomes almost beyond her to tolerate the pain but there is nothing else she can do.

She tries to call help again but it doesn't work. It doesn't do anything for the torturous hurt and it doesn't bring rescue. When she tries to move her right leg out from under her left, the pain sends excruciating volts of agony through her body. She is afraid to take anything other than shallow breaths and squeezes her eyes shut trying to remember something good. Maybe if she thinks happy thoughts it will help. Happy thoughts, Jade, there's got to be a life time of them in there. She settles on Granny Jean's rose garden. She loved the sweet smell and the peony petals that trailed around the outside of the house through the higgledy piggledy garden and back to the side porch.

Jade thinks about how she used to sit out there on the porch with *Ballet Shoes*, her favourite book, when she was told to keep out of the way. Keeping out of the way meant avoiding Uncle Tom. He went on the war-path once a week when he got rent from his tenants and blew it all in one monstrous whiskey binge. She tried to shake away his ravaged beard from her memory. Something else now. Another rose garden. From her favourite class. From English. *Footfalls ... down the passage we didn't take ... toward the door we never opened into the rose garden*. Something like that. She can't remember the full verse. This isn't happy. Those lines always make her sad. Jade shivers, tries to move to get more comfortable and is rewarded again with the prize of pain.

Tears spill and her memory starts to return. She remembers a train journey, a coffin, not feeling sad when she knows she should have been. She thinks for sure she

was up there somewhere and now she is down here. It all seems like so long ago, but how long was it? Searching, she remembers an open trap-door. Did she come through it? It must be fifteen feet up to the roof over her head. She looks up but there is only a faint glow in the gloom. Nothing to indicate anyone is up there trying to save her. The notion is strange to her. It's the first time in her life she wants to be saved and there is no other word to use because the pain is inside her head now and she wants to sleep. Sleep and be saved. Anything but have to tolerate ...

Screaming. Someone seems to be screaming her name. She finds a small voice to reply *I'm here, but I can't find my glasses*. The voice shouts back that someone called James is coming. Why does everyone always have to shout, wonders Jade? And who is James?

Rattling then. She is aware of rattling to her left from what sounds like a steel door. Keys, chains, pounding. Is the pounding outside or deep within her head? There are no individual parts of her anymore, they are all just blended pain. Should she be afraid of James? She knew a James once and he was a bully. Or was that a Jean? She doesn't care anymore. She wants the door to open, the rattling to stop, the pain to go away. She just wants to be back in the white house by the ocean.

The door crashes open. Bright light splits through the dark and she sees a man dragging a black case with him. He stands over her. Jade presumes it is James even though he doesn't look familiar to her. He thrusts a syringe into a tiny glass tube and empties the contents into her leg, straight through her new skirt. She thinks he's smiling at her but she can't be sure. Something flows through her veins. She recognises him, but it's too late. Jade feels rushing relief. Then floating. Then nothing.

VISITORS

EAMON GRENNAN

At first it's a distant persistent barking, like dogs in a city after midnight. Growing closer, a falsetto yapping fills the air until the cold December sky is darkened by them, a hundred or more wild geese on the wing. In one slow glide they are an arc of brown wings down to where I know there's water, a pond paling in late light that will at their landing blacken with floating goose bodies. Out of some northern nowhere they've wind-sailed to settle overnight this station on their way south, a surface that will take their reflections, the eager image of geese that know by the feel of air and tilt of wind the cold season sniffing at them, ice-teeth snapping. Come morning, the pond will be under blue sky and harried cloud only a vacant ragged circle of water reflecting blue sky and harried cloud, the sun a blind white eye blazing in it. It will wear an air of bleak abandonment, be a winter feeling that will start from the surface to harden and harden, thickening to its own opaque, glassy silence without them.

LAKE SUPERIOR

SEAN CARABINI

When she thought of it, she could still see the view
From the Jefferson Street living room
Down
Through the gaps
Between the old wooden houses
On the London Road.
It was not snowing. It was not raining;
Nothing but endless lake –
More than she could see in any direction –
Like translucent glass

Beneath the haze of a clear evening.
The city had since razed the houses
And extended the I-35
Out to this lakeshore property
Attracting grey industry, cheap food and loud cars.
Standing here now, I can still see the lake.
It hammers out towards all that is distant
As if steel in a foundry
Poured from the summer heat of her memory
And worked to the brittle winter of my own.

She swims
Beneath the summer sun
While the ice forms
On my heavy winter coat.

STANDING AT KARNAC

SANDRA BUNTING

on viewing prehistoric standing stones in Brittany

We've become stones in a field
solidly planted in a seafaring land,
standing tall and still so long, so long a time
we've forgotten what we're supposed to do.
Are we clues to ancient mysteries
or signs of future wonders? I don't know.

I only remember the old days when I
used to dance and make eyes at the one
called 'La geant', our child laughing by the fire.
We hunted well, were good gatherers.
We loved when the sun went down,
made the Gods lonely because of that.
And now we stand.

I have watched women dancing
in their velvet robes and lace coifs
and try to join in but I can move less
than a tree, can not sway with the wind,
fail to hear the rustle of leaves around me.

I refuse to believe it is a punishment.
Though hard, the world and its beauty
renewed our happiness daily.
I prefer to think we have a purpose,
whatever it may be, protecting perhaps
this one little green world
until all danger has passed
and we can dance, dance, dance again.

THE VIRGIN STATUE

NUALA NÍ CHONCHÚIR

And she will still be there, tall as a toddler,
static in her wooden cave, table-bound,
queening it over the piano where mice tinker,

over an empty, many-coverleted bed,
the clock, hollowed out of chimes,

over a sea of mats, the black-and-white TV
– conduit to this century – blank-screened, silent.

Her eyes mad with sorrow, she misses, maybe,
the mingle of fried spuds and Coty, the ghosts of dogs,
the May-long worship at her shrine.

Biographical details

Peter Branson lives in Rode Heath, South Cheshire. A former teacher and lecturer, he now organises writing workshops. Until recently he was Writer-in-residence for "All Write" run by Stoke-on-Trent Libraries. He has had work published, or accepted for publication, in *Acumen*, *Ambit*, *Envoi*, *Magma*, *The London Magazine*, *Iota*, *14*, *Fire*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Poetry Nottingham*, *Pulsar*, *Red Ink* and *Other Poetry*. He won first prize in *The Envoi International*, a second place in *The Writing Magazine Open* and highly-commended in *The Petra Kenney* and *The Speakeasy* competitions. His first collection, *The Accidental Tourist*, was published in May 2008.

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.

Michelle Cahill's poems have appeared in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Asia Literary Review*, *Island*, *Southerly* and *Drunken Boat*. Her collection of poems, *The Accidental Cage* was shortlisted in the 2007 Judith Wright Prize.

Andrew Caldicott has won poetry prizes in Ireland and the UK, and his work has appeared in a number of journals including *Crannóg*, *The Stinging Fly*, *West47 Online*, *Revival*, *Boyne Berries*, *The Dawntreader* and *Trinity Poetry Broadsheet*.

Seán Carabini is a Dublin-born and bred author. He had his first book, *Sticking Out in Minnesota: A Dubliner's Journey* published by Appletree Press in Spring 2009. Seán's writing resumé also includes writing for *The Irish Times*, being selected as a winner of the 2006 Weekend Blend short story competition on Newstalk Radio and having a (very!) short script selected as part of the Vertigo Theatre short script festival in Oregon.

J. R. Carpenter is a Canadian writer of poetry, fiction and electronic literature, originally from rural Nova Scotia, now based in Montreal. She is winner of the QWF Carte Blanche Quebec Award (2008), the CBC Quebec Short Story Competition (2003 & 2005) and the Expozine Alternative Press Award for Best English Book for her first novel, *Words the Dog Knows*, published by Conundrum Press (2008). "in absentia" was created with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts. It was presented within DARE-DARE's Dis/location: projet d'articulation urbaine 2008. Her electronic literature has been exhibited internationally and can be found online at: <http://luckyssoap.com>

Laura Chalar, a lawyer, writer and translator, was born in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1976. She has published a poetry chapbook and a volume of short stories; two new collections, of poetry and stories respectively, are forthcoming in 2009. She is Contributing Editor of *Versal* magazine, published in the Netherlands, and coordinator of a Uruguayan poetry blog.

Monica Corish worked and travelled widely in Africa. before moving to North Leitrim in 2005. She spends her time writing, painting, and leading writing and visual arts workshops in the North-West. She is the Featured Poet in the Spring 2009 edition of *The Stinging Fly*; her memoir writing was featured on the Quiet Quarter and on Sunday Miscellany; and she is currently working towards her first collection of poetry, with the aid of Writing Bursary Awards from the Arts Council and Leitrim Arts Office.

Norman Darlington lives in Bunclody, Co. Wexford. He is Renku editor at *Moonset Literary Newspaper*, and his work has been published in *Crannóg*, *The SHOP*, *The Scaldy Detail*, and numerous international journals and anthologies, both in English and in translation. He runs the online collaborative poetry centre The Renku Group renkugroup.proboards.com. Samples of his published work can be found on his website Xaikou.com.

Malcolm Dixon is originally from Liverpool, but now lives on the Kent coast. His fiction has appeared in numerous literary magazines such as *Ascent Aspirations Magazine*, *Literary Salt*, *Grain*, *Aesthetica*,

Mairéad Donnellan lives in Bailieborough, Co. Cavan with her husband and two children. She is a member of the Cavan/Meath Lit. Lab. Some of her work has appeared in this year's *Windows* and *Boyne Berries* publications.

Tom Duddy lives and works in Galway. He has had poetry in a number of Irish and British magazines, including *Magma*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Smiths Knoll*, *The Dark Horse*, and *The Rialto*. A chapbook, *The Small Hours*, was published by HappenStance Press in 2006.

Jarlath Fahy's first collection is *The Man Who Was Haunted By Beautiful Smells* (Wordsonthestreet 2007).

Kevin Graham has a poem forthcoming in *The Stinging Fly*. He lives and works in Dublin.

Nicola Griffin lives in East Clare with her husband and dogs. When not working she spends her time writing, playing flute, gardening and boating. Her freelance work includes copy editing, website design and teaching traditional flute. She has just completed an MA in Writing at NUI Galway.

Rachael Hegarty was born and reared in Dublin. She was educated in Holy Faith, Finglas, University of Massachusetts, Boston and Trinity College Dublin. A recipient of Arts Council Bursaries and writing scholarships, she was nominated for the 2004 and 2006 Hennessey Prize and short listed for 2009 Francis Mac Manus Prize. She teaches at Parnell VEC and the Trinity Access Programme. Her most recent publication was in *Our Shared Japan*, an anthology of Irish poetry.

Kevin Higgins is co-organiser of Over The Edge literary events. He facilitates poetry workshops at Galway Arts Centre; teaches creative writing at Galway Technical Institute and on the Brothers of Charity Away With Words programme. He is also Writer-in-Residence at Merlin Park Hospital and the poetry critic of the Galway Advertiser. His first collection of poems *The Boy With No Face* was published by Salmon in February 2005 and was short-listed for the 2006 Strong Award. His second collection, *Time Gentlemen, Please*, was published in March 2008 by Salmon. One of the poems from *Time Gentlemen, Please, My Militant Tendency*, features in the Forward Book of Poetry 2009. A recent poem of his, *Ourselves Again*, appeared in *Best of Irish Poetry 2009*. His work also features in the *The Watchful Heart – A New Generation of Irish Poets* (Ed Joan McBreen, Salmon Poetry) & next year will appear in *Identity Parade – The New British and Irish Poets* (Ed Roddy Lumsden, Bloodaxe, 2010).

Orla Higgins lives in Galway city and has recently completed the MA in Writing at NUIG. She won the 2009 Over The Edge Fiction New Writer of the Year competition and was a featured reader at the Emerging Writers Showcase at the 2009 Cuirt International Festival of Literature. Orla is currently working on her first novel

Reynold Junker's writing has appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. His story, *The Volunteers*, was included in the anthology of Hitchcock's personal favorites, *Tales To Make You Quake And Quiver*. His short story, *Dancing With The Jesuits*, was awarded first place in the Catholic Press Association's Best Short Story category for 2008. His memoir, *Subway Music*, about his growing up Italian and Catholic in Brooklyn, New York was awarded first prize in the Life Stories category of the 16th Annual Writer's Digest International Self-Published Book Awards competition.

Steve Longfellow is a graduate of the Vermont College MFA in Writing Program and teaches a little composition and creative writing at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. His poetry has appeared in *Café Review*, *Diner*, *Edgz*, *Locuspoint*, *Talking River*, *Underground Voices*, and *Drunken Boat*.

Mary Madec lives in Galway and has published widely in Ireland and recently in Britain and the USA. She won the Hennessy award in 2008 and her first collection, *Maeve's a Legend* is due from Salmon in 2010

Helena Mulherns lives in Co. Wexford, Ireland. Her short fiction and poetry has been published internationally in anthologies, magazines and literary publications. She spent the best part of a decade working as a writer and editor with UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and Afghanistan. Her most recent work was shortlisted for the 2009 Francis MacManus short story award, and she is currently completing a novel.

Nuala Ní Chonchúir lives in County Galway. Her third short fiction collection *Nude* was published by Salt in September 2009. She has poems and an essay in *The Watchful Heart – A New Generation of Irish Poets*, edited by Joan McBreen (Salmon, 2009). Nuala was chosen by The Irish Times as a writer to watch in 2009. She was recently shortlisted for the European Prize for Literature and she was one of four winners of the Templar Poetry Pamphlet and Collection competition. Her pamphlet *Portrait of the Artist with a Red Car* will be published by Templar in November. Website: www.nualanichonchuir.com

Billy O'Callaghan is the author of two short story collections, *In Exile* (2008) and *In Too Deep* (2009), both published by Mercier Press. Winner of the George A. Birmingham Award, the Molly Keane Short Story Award and the Lunch Hour Stories Prize, his fiction has appeared in *Absinthe: New European Writing*, *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Existere*, *Pearl*, *Southword*, *Versal*, and numerous other literary magazines and journals around the world.

Liam O'Cléirigh has been published in many periodicals and magazines such as *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Antigoniish Review*, *Cyphers*, *The Stinging Fly* and *Orbis*.

Mick Ransford has been published in *The Sunday Tribune*, *Cuirt*, *Comhar*, *West47*, *Poetry Ireland* and the US magazines *MeThree*, *Whim's place*, *Able Muse* and *Down In The Dirt*. He's a regular contributor to Irish radio. His work has appeared in school textbooks and in several anthologies, including the critically received *These Are Our Lives*. He won the Galway Now short story competition, was shortlisted for a PJ O'Connor Award and a Hennessy Emerging Fiction Award.

Tom Sigafos writes novels, short stories, scripts, and travel articles. Five of his radio essays ("An American Scrapbook") have been broadcast on RTE Lyric FM. His crime novel *Code Blue* is distributed on amazon.com. His work has appeared in *America's Horse*, the magazine of The American Quarter Horse Association, in Ireland's *Horse & Pony* magazine, and in *Creative Holidays Magazine*. He has lived in County Donegal since 2003.

Gianni Skaragas was born in Northern Greece, Macedonia. He graduated from the Drama School of the National Theatre of Greece and studied at the Aristotelian University of Law. He has published four novels in Greece, including *Surface*, which recently appeared in French translation. His short stories, essays, and other writings appear regularly in literary journals and newspapers throughout the Hellenic world and Europe. His English play *Prime Numbers* premiered in New York on February 2009.

David Starkey directs the creative writing program at Santa Barbara City College and has published several collections of poems from small presses, most recently *Starkey's Book of States* (Boson Books, 2007), *Adventures of the Minor Poet* (Artamo Press, 2007), *Ways of Being Dead: New and Selected Poems* (Artamo, 2006), *David Starkey's Greatest Hits* (Pudding House, 2002) and *Fear of Everything*, winner of Palanquin Press's Spring 2000 chapbook contest. He has published in literary magazines such as *Antioch Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Crannóg*, *Cutbank*, *Faultline*, *Greensboro Review*, *The Journal*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Nebraska Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry East*, *South Dakota Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Sycamore Review*, *Texas Review*, and *Wormwood Review*.

Steven Wade received an honourable mention in the Lorian Hemingway and was a finalist in the Glimmertrain Short Story competitions (2006). He was awarded second prize in the Biscuit International Short Story Competition (2008), and received an honourable mention in the Short Story Radio Competition (U.K. 2009) He was shortlisted for The Fish Short Story Prize and West 47 Online Short Fiction Prize (2009) and was nominated for The Hennessy New Irish Writing Prize (2008).

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