

# Crannog 10 winter 2005/2006

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All submissions to:

**Crannog Magazine**  
**Galway Language Centre**  
**Bridge Mills**  
**Galway**  
**Ireland**

editor@crannogmagazine.com  
www.crannogmagazine.com

Published by  
Galway Writers' Workshop

ISSN 1649-4865

Typesetting/Layout by Wordsonthestreet WOS<sup>tm</sup>

Cover design by Sandra Bunting

Front and back cover image: "Cladach21" by Gwen O'Dowd

Crannog acknowledges the assistance of Galway City  
Council



# CONTENTS

<b>Kathleen O’Driscoll</b>	
Street Song .....	4
Solstice .....	5
<b>Betsy Carreyette</b>	
First Breath.....	6
<b>Ciaran Parkes</b>	
Christmas In July.....	7
<b>David Hopes</b>	
A Man Moving Toward His Prime .....	8
<b>Noelle Lynskey</b>	
Final Chapter .....	10
<b>Andy Johnston</b>	
Elegy For Joe Murphy .....	11
<b>Kevin Higgins</b>	
The Cat’s Point Of View: A Prose Poem For Karma .....	12
<b>Susan Millar Du Mars</b>	
Zelda Fitzgerald Holding Her Cat.....	13
<b>Gerardine Burke</b>	
Lost opportunity .....	14
<b>Eoghain Garvey</b>	
Driving Home .....	18
<b>Geraldine Mills</b>	
Energos.....	20
<b>Emily Cullen</b>	
Some Day I May Be Aunty ‘Em’ .....	21
<b>Sandra Bunting</b>	
Skinny-dipping With Aunties .....	22
Old Man With A Cane .....	23
<b>James Martyn</b>	
Planter .....	24
<b>John Walsh</b>	
Derek And Jenny .....	25
<b>Tony O’Dwyer</b>	
A Poem .....	31
<b>Eamonn Lynskey</b>	
Too Much Talk About The Muse .....	32
Towards An Understanding Of People	
Who Talk To Themselves .....	33
<b>Majella Cullinane</b>	
Virago .....	34
Last Seen .....	35
<b>Catherine Heaney</b>	
The Reclaim .....	36
<b>Daniel Pendergrass</b>	
Istanbul Street Scene, V.....	37
<b>Dave Lordan</b>	
At Oscar’s Wilde’s Grave.....	38

<b>Jan Schlegel</b>	
One For Sorrow .....	39
<b>Jarlath Fahy</b>	
deep beyond all telling is grief .....	40
last words of an insolvent .....	41
<b>Patrick Hewitt</b>	
Searching For Yolanda .....	42
<b>Brid Ni Chonghóile</b>	
Glaschú .....	47
<b>Jerm Curtin</b>	
Penny .....	48
Dusk .....	49
<b>Livia Viitol</b>	
In The Darkening Watery Mirror .....	50
In Autumn .....	51
<b>Mary O'Rourke</b>	
A-Z Of Love .....	52
Hello To Love .....	53
<b>Margaret Faherty</b>	
'Til Death Do Us Part .....	54
<b>Michael Farry</b>	
The Sally Basket .....	58
<b>Stephen Shields</b>	
The Dark .....	59
<b>Breid Sibley</b>	
Catch The Moment .....	60
<b>Thomas O'Connell</b>	
Prequel .....	61
<b>Maureen Gallagher</b>	
Skellig .....	62
The Cleaver .....	63
<b>Pete Mollineaux</b>	
'Missing' .....	64
<b>Kevin Donnelly</b>	
Him .....	65
<b>Michelle Gallen</b>	
A Cheap Day Return .....	66
<b>Patricia Burke Brogan</b>	
Cygnet On Burnt-Out Afternoon June 4, 2004 .....	70
September In The Burren .....	71
Weather Forecast In September .....	72
<b>Laura Chalar</b>	
Departure .....	73
<b>Liz Arnett</b>	
Quitting Jimmy .....	74
<b>Sean Donegan</b>	
Requiem 1 .....	79
<b>Biographical Details</b> .....	80

**Street Song**

**Kathleen O'Driscoll**

---

The children  
are singing carols in the street,  
angels in tinsel halos,  
shepherds in tea towels and dressing gowns,  
a wise king in paper crown,  
little brass band on school chairs.

Teachers in Santa hats conduct,  
one very cross when Dennis joins in,  
small cold hands clutch buckets for coins,  
their placards say  
To Russia With Love.

An old brother beams  
behind his ancient camera.  
My heart breaks  
again.

**Solstice**

**Kathleen O'Driscoll**

---

Earth is afraid.  
She wonders  
if she will wake tomorrow.  
She cannot hear the hooves  
of her wild horses.  
Her hounds are silent,  
her last bird's evensong  
almost inaudible,  
in a bloodstained shred  
of occluded sunset.

**First Breath**

**Betsy Carreyette**

---

The sun is sinking into the Atlantic.  
Drawn across the stony strand  
my bones are wrapped  
in folds of tangerine silk  
and though I am slipping with the sun

I am also rising  
through the earth of a new day  
amid a criss-crossing of roots  
to be born into fields of yellow irises  
where I will spread wide my petals  
to cup the first breath.

## **Christmas In July**

**Ciaran parkes**

---

You didn't like the sun,  
with your pale skin,  
your vampire affectation  
for love-bites over kisses,  
your dark clothes in summertime,  
your trick of hiding  
your face behind your long hair.

To make it cosy,  
to make you happy,  
I lit a fire  
on a July evening,  
let the warm sunlight  
strain against the curtain,  
put on a CD  
of Christmas music.

We lay on the carpet,  
the out of season heat  
melting our clothes off  
like presents opening,  
like Christmas crackers  
quietly exploding.

**A Man Moving Toward  
His Prime**

**David Hopes**

---

*Róisín Dubh, Galway*

1

Tell them they would get more poets in here  
If they turned the music down.

2

A man moving toward his prime  
has a few things to consider.

When to allow himself to be seen weeping.

Stroking the hair of the beautiful children,  
letting them who watch extrude the gesture  
through their innocence, their shame.

When to point at the shape in the water  
and shout, when but to watch  
the gray seal cruising before night,  
two silent hearts under the  
dark crook of the heron,  
amid the white flash  
of the fish of the rivermouth.

How I love you. . . how I love you  
heart sings over and over.  
When to let that pass,  
when to make it open like the blast  
through the seabird's bill,  
haunting and turbulent,  
impossible to locate.

3

"Van Morrison doesn't sing so well after all"  
says one boy to another at the bar.

A man moving toward his prime  
would not think such a thought.

Bellow up there on the hill  
between the water and the gray stone.  
Scatter the magpies.  
Ripple the Corrib away from you  
so the gray seal feels you, though he hunts alone.

4

Considers the moments  
so beautiful the uttering thereof is absurd:

Nimmo's Quay at twilight, the gray seal  
after salmon in the river,  
the terns and cormorants following the bright road of  
it,  
heron homing over the deep, one shadow,  
the flash of the fish,  
wavelets white between the wind  
and the powers of the deep.

Looks back to the dark town  
brightening from inside, to the  
single scallop of light high over.  
Those voices. The stories taken up again.  
The word you know for "home";  
the word unknown to say why you were born  
so far from it.

He is the one who stands his ground

Slipping in, browsing  
Your familiar nooks, lured  
To spaces cobwebbed with spirits, and  
That surging whiff of fresh print;  
Your walls autographed by  
A world of faces  
Leaving their trace of belonging,  
The solid cool of cast bronze, seductive  
Shadows of carved oak, moments  
Captured by framed light.

The thrill of the new  
limited edition, specially  
Signed, bound in your personal touch,  
Wrapped with a pleasant  
Slán abhaile from herself;  
Her sons, in step, in  
The shrewd shoes  
Their father moulded.

No virtual world can  
Replace this  
Adventure through  
Your rambling  
Artery;  
This gem,  
Moving with the times,  
Leaves Galway now an ordinary city

**Elegy For Joe Murphy**

**Andy Johnston**

---

The undertakers had his cheeks puffed out  
And lips; turned concave into convex  
Round his mouth so that he seemed  
Far less so streamlined as he looked in life;  
A victim of abuse, of joblessness  
And of the general immiseration, insecurity  
That workers are the general victims of  
In Celtic Tiger Ireland and the world  
Except to add that the scourge of tinnitus  
Was added to his last ten years or so.

And yet all this did not subdue his spirit:  
He'll be remembered long by all his friends  
'Specially young friends and comrades – girls and boys  
–  
Attracted by his authenticity, his kindness,  
His willingness to argue issues out  
While never 'speaking down' to these young 'hotspurs'.

Though never going beyond utopian socialism  
Joe was an inspiration none the less  
Not as a theorist but as a general worker  
Who kept on thinking till a heart attack  
Closed down his brain, his heart, his gentle love.

We'll remember him forever, as a stream of sunlight  
Spreading across our shoulders and our backs  
To re-assure  
In moments of dull tedium, tiredness, despair.

**The Cat's Point Of  
View: A Prose Poem  
For Karma**

**Kevin Higgins**

---

It's hardly surprising she hates  
having her temperature taken.  
I mean, how would you like it,  
if some people you'd never seen before in your life  
suddenly stuck a huge glass tube  
up your backside  
for no apparent reason?

    The last time that happened to me  
I found it very disturbing indeed.  
And the bastards never even  
came up with the money.  
I chased them for weeks,  
but it was a complete waste of time.

**Zelda Fitzgerald  
Holding Her Cat**

**Susan Millar DuMars**

---

Start with what is there.  
She is leaning forward slightly,  
the cat's paw draped faithfully  
across her arm.

Start with what is there.  
Skin pale and smooth,  
in flat, fading afternoon light.  
Angry bones beneath.

Eyebrows artfully shaped-  
how can I make you see her eyes?  
Picture black storm clouds-  
no, never mind.  
Just picture eyes.  
Sharp and dark,  
wary as you can imagine.  
You'll be about halfway there.

Her expression welcomes  
but does not trust.  
Her lips have considered a smile  
but decided against it.

That is what is there.

But what receives that gaze?  
Her husband? Her book?  
A bottle? Flames?

I ARRIVE AND the hotel is sleeping. I have my own key to the side door and I open it soundlessly. I tip toe down the long marble stairs to the kitchen. I love this time from six thirty to seven when I feel like the only person alive on the planet. The kitchen with all its attractions lies dozing in the morning light.

My friends think I'm crazy - nice crazy. They joke with my ex asking, 'Is it because she is more turned on by making a *soufflé* than by you that you got dumped?' He doesn't mind. We were always better mates than boyfriend and girlfriend. He usually retorts, 'She'll be the next Nigella Lawson, you'll see.'

I love my job. I took my holidays from school at the beginning of May, three weeks early, and started immediately. I'm only doing menial jobs at the moment. I load and unload the dishwasher, peel potatoes, carrots, turnips anything peelable, wash lettuce, worktops, saucepans, sinks, anything washable. I'll have to be here for another while before he allows me to touch food. But I don't mind. Alan, the chef, trusts me enough to give me a key to let myself into the hotel in the morning. That's what matters.

My sister says he gave it to me because he lives in staff quarters on the grounds of the hotel and doesn't have to get up as early when I do his dirty work for him. I have the frying pans warmed up, toasters plugged in, cloths out of the dryer, everything ready to go when he arrives. But I know it's because he understands how passionate I am about the whole cooking thing. It is *he* who is doing me the favor.

Did I mention that it's because the chef is my older sister's boyfriend that I got the job? He has known her for two years and is very handsome. My sister's taste in men is fairly good but I don't know what he sees in her. I feel mean for thinking like this. It's because of her I'm here doing what I want to do when most of my friends are still bulging out of their knee socks and uniforms, their noses stuck in books studying for their summer tests.

---

Mam was against my coming and not just because I'd be missing school. She doesn't approve of 'the cook' my sister is going out with. And she is a feminist.

The whole chef thing confuses her a little. The kitchen was a woman's domain for years. Now that food is in and big money can be earned, cooking has become *macho*. Women are ditched again. I thought she would be pleased that I, as a 'wannabe chef,' had got the job I wanted but I think she hoped my love of cooking was a passing phase and was thinking more in terms of brain surgery or rocket science.

When Mary Coughlin became Minister for Agriculture, my mam looked as if she had won the lotto. I can't understand why she wanted such a mucky job but Mam says I'll get sense when I get older. If that's true, why hasn't she sense? At weekends and on holidays she wears clothes that are up to her ass. My father doesn't even like them on her. He always ogles my friends though. I love Mam but I wish she wouldn't try to look like a teenager.

Thinking of clothes reminds me how let down I felt when I had learned that I wouldn't be an assistant chef immediately. Then my disappointment was lessened by the fact that I didn't have to wear whites, cap and all. Instead I could go to work in tight jeans that make my bum look sexy. A change from my baggy uniform. I see Alan licking his lips as he arranges the food on the plates.

When it's promised warm like today I wear a halter neck with bare arms and bare back. Since I've started working, I buy my own underwear. I bought a thong yesterday and you'd think, when you look at me wearing trousers, that I have no panties on. I've also got rid of the sports bras, the ones Mam bought, made of stretchy cotton that are like a bandage round my front. My new one, a wonder bra, looks great. It raises up my boobs and gives me a cleavage. I'll miss my sports bra at school though. It didn't let me bounce when I was playing volleyball and basketball. School! It seems ages since I was there. Now I have bigger fish to fry!

I know all the regular customers. Because the kitchen is downstairs, there is a pulley that goes up to the dining room and the waitresses send down the orders. The chef

## Crannóg 10

makes them and the two full timers put them in place. When there is a special customer in, like a politician or a priest, the headwaiter puts a note on top of the dirty plates to let the chef know to be particularly careful with his presentation.

Sometimes, when this happens Alan hands me the 'special plates'. Cathy, one of the permanents, shakes her head when he does this, rattles her bracelets, writhes and squirms in her pink dress as if she wants to throw it from her, and flashes him a beguiling smile. He touches her lightly on the backside before he stares at me and winks. His eyes are as brown as the bogs in my geography book.

When he asks me how I am and explains how he made a particular cake in the shape of a house for the local auctioneer's birthday, I feel really important and I get a funny tingling feeling in the pit of my stomach. A nice feeling. An exciting feeling. Not like the one I get when my sister drops into the kitchen when we're not busy, to say 'hello'.

My sister is gorgeous. I lied earlier. She is like Miss Ireland. Tall, slim, lots of fake tan. Full lips. Her coming here annoys me. This is my place. Though she is more interested in 'Cathy of the pink dress' than me, she still makes me feel self conscious and guilty. When she leaves, I no longer enjoy my imagining over the potatoes. Visions of myself in a beautiful pad with heated swimming pool, disco bar, state of the art kitchen, cooking Alan's dinner for him using an original recipe I had included in my recently published cookbook, all go up in smoke. I hope she doesn't suspect about him and me.

As morning becomes midday, I'm getting hot and sweaty. I spend my time cleaning up and wondering what Alan would look like in my thong. I'm glad when he stands near me but I'm also glad when he's miles away. My neck is out in blotches and my hands are shaking. What's wrong with me? Somewhere in my mind I visualize myself kissing him and feel his Saturday morning shadow scraping my skin. When he goes to the loo, I creep up to the chef's chair and stroke the cushion still bruised by his weight.

That night my dreams are unfamiliar, full of confusion, angst, excitement. He takes my hand, leads me to a table

full of cream cakes, rubs his finger along the filling and feeds it to me. He licks his lips and whispers he loves me.

And then it is early morning, between six thirty and seven, the time I love most. I'm at the hotel, wide-awake and dressed. I hold the key to the side door in my fist but I don't open it. Instead I move on, past the shuttered restaurant, the deserted reception and the tarmacadam car park. My heart leads me towards the boundaries of the grounds to the wall beyond the tennis courts where I know I will find Alan's mobile home.

But something is wrong. I hear it when I put my ear to the bedroom window. It's a weird mixture of sound. Grunts, moans and a repetition of names. 'Alan, Ala..n.' The woman's voice gets louder and louder.

'Cathy. Jesus. Cathy.'

Suddenly I want to go home, back to school, back to my sports bras. I stare in the window and see buttocks, a crumpled pink dress and her hair on the pillow, the gold braceleted arms.

I can't even feel sorry for my sister whose boyfriend has cheated on her. Or angry with Cathy. I wanted to do the same but didn't get the opportunity. I sob and sob as I run past the hotel's side door, home.

My daughter sits beside me,  
driving home after midnight  
from Dublin to Galway.  
She is curled up,  
with her head against the window  
her feet under her,  
breathing softly,  
perhaps sleeping,  
perhaps listening to the song on the stereo  
a late flowering Leonard Cohen  
hymn to perversity.  
I am thinking of the university,  
mulling over a meeting I had yesterday.  
On an intercity bus  
along the same road,  
a few days earlier,  
I had looked out  
over the hedgerow tops  
on a broad view of the fields of Ireland,  
all laid out,  
the empty fields,  
the lush fields,  
the ditches and trees,  
the houses, the driveways,  
the tractors and cars,  
the doomed cows  
in loose confederation,  
nearly all facing the same direction,  
and a few horses  
facing eternity,  
I guess,  
which is in every direction.  
She thrives on introspection  
and has great gifts of self-containment

---

I glance across at her -  
she doesn't move.  
The car drives smoothly,  
overtakes easily.  
Headlights appear,  
approach  
and are gone.  
Out of sight,  
beyond the hedges,  
in the black soil of a north facing field,  
my father lies, home at last  
after his long adventure.  
My daughter is still,  
till finally stirring -  
surprised to be home so soon.  
A lazy moon  
creeps over the rooftops.  
She smiles tiredly  
over the car door  
and we check out our street together.

*(For Joan)*

Born where the world looks out  
to Aran and beyond  
it is the first sound you hear  
before your birth eye opens to its pulse  
its upswell, each wave washing  
over you like amnion.

You grow to its cadence,  
liquid scent of blue, of green  
its shape of salt on light.

Drawn to its lifeforce  
you capture the silver pull  
of neap and flood  
as it falls into the ends of the earth  
pulls itself out again.

The sea in your ear, your eye,  
to course through you from hand to brush  
opening one wave over the other  
foaming onto rocks.

You look beyond and it lifts  
out of the deep to show itself to us.

**Some day I may be  
'Aunty Em'**

**Emily Cullen**

---

Some day I may be 'Aunty Em'  
sporting a wicker hat  
with globulous plastic fruit on top.  
I may be that cycloptic aunt  
with one eye ever magnified,  
making sense of footnotes  
that carry me off  
to a precise world.  
Or I may be that aunt  
some refer to as 'vamp,'  
sprayed into leather trousers,  
recalling that Blondie and Chrissie Hynde  
left the punk men behind,  
living it up and kicking it live  
with a younger generation  
who see me as a grand-dame type  
just like Marianne Faithfull,  
unfazed by alienation,  
laughing in the face of those women  
who think I should know better.  
Whatever type of Aunt I'll be,  
convention won't sit easily with me.

**Skinny-Dipping  
with Aunties**

**Sandra Bunting**

---

Always at midnight  
they'd traipse through trees  
giggling and loud from rum.

We'd follow them  
across the road,  
down weathered steps  
where we'd shed towels  
and melt into a high tide,  
the sandy sea a cover,  
a caress like silk on skin,  
sparkles of plankton-green  
scattering at every stroke.

We joined these women,  
our aunties, that first year  
our breasts peaked like rosebuds  
in introduction to  
another kind of freedom.

The only ones to protest  
artificial light on the shore road,  
yet refusing to state their reasons  
at the public meeting in the  
Protestant church hall,  
they stood on top of the old wooden steps  
the night the street lights were first turned on,  
clutching towels tight  
around their shivering bodies,  
the usual raucous silent.

Then turned their backs  
and headed for home.

---

**Old Man With A Cane**

**Sandra Bunting**

---

He struggled across the bridge,  
each step a creak  
to see the salmon jumping  
and I wanted to call  
to make them leap  
just for him.

It wasn't necessary;  
his eyes weren't good.  
He took vague shapes  
in the Corrib for salmon,  
saw the flash of silver as  
they broke the surface.

### **Planter**

**James Martyn**

---

*At a more minor key, homesickness and nostalgia are also Honeysuckle states.  
From: The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies.*

He told me that it was an elm tree,  
how the elms were dying everywhere  
but mine was looking healthy and alive.  
Took three small honeysuckle shoots,  
and planted them to climb the lilac tree,  
then he walked amongst the weeds;  
naming them as winter heliotrope,  
it had haunted my corner for years  
and offered competition as a cure:  
fresh grass would kill it off, drive it  
underground. Explained to me how  
he was a planter who'd come west,  
met his wife on a forest path while  
looking for new challenges; raised  
a family; all scattered to the winds;  
spent his time now finding patches  
of old woodland lost among the pines;  
believed these places were for saving;  
new battles to be fought. How his wife  
had died but her plants kept him going;  
how she'd loved her growing things,  
he'd bring her slips from off the shrub,  
and she'd nurse the saplings, talking  
to them like friends, feeding them,  
her green-stemmed children, lulling  
them to fullness and how this care  
had filled their garden. He missed her.  
The honeysuckle evening brought her  
back, wild woodbine around him now;  
he would fill the world with her scent.

**Derek and Jenny**

**John Walsh**

---

DEREK. JENNY. Derek and Jenny. It sounded like a formula, a combination. With a deeper meaning. So Derek hadn't left. Only last week I talked about him. About the shop. I thought he'd packed it all in and disappeared back to California. And Jenny was the same Jenny I knew. Miss Walking Encyclopaedia. Miss Minor Detail. As if it mattered. His Jenny now. By association redeemed. The symbiosis made her seem less bad. Configurable. Of course I wasn't saying that. I wasn't saying anything. All in the mind. My mind, where it belonged. No one else's.

I tried to figure out did he look older or younger? The beard was groomed. The hippyness was gone. He smiled at me sanctimoniously.

'Now you know who I am.'

'Derek.'

'Yes. And this is Jenny.'

'We've met.'

Jenny smiled in undertones, in unaccented Victorian dimensions.

I bet they're not married. I bet she gets to pay the bills. Back then the way he introduced her name. Jenny. His latest, greatest discovery. She sounded like a night nurse. Or Meals on Wheels. Someone you'd expect outside Moon's on a drizzly Saturday afternoon, selling flags. For the Lifeboat Association. Save our Souls. The kind of person even I would give money to. The Jeanne D'Arc of Shop Street. Evidently she'd saved Derek's soul. That mercenary piece of plastic he kept in his hip pocket.

'So you're still here.'

I thought if I say nothing, he will say something. Reveal all. I really should have studied psychology. Next time I will.

'Yes still here.'

That glacial smile. No. That smirk. It didn't go anywhere. Just sat there on his face like the Cheshire cat. I'd never

---

## Crannóg 10

really liked him. I lie. In a way I had. He intrigued me. How he got away with it. Because obviously he did. Did, do, done. Derek was a conundrum. The final missing word in an almost complete crossword puzzle. No one had him. No one knew the answer. How many letters? Five. Give me that clue again. Walks, talks and sucks blood. Vampire. Too many letters.

D - E - R - E - K.

'I thought you'd gone.'

Second try. Would he take the bait? I knew he could run rings round me. It was inborn. My mother hadn't breastfed. People like Derek got it in wallops, double scoops. Then all that sun from day one. The iniquity of being born in Ireland. Relegated to the outer corner of the western hemisphere. England's own personal little Rainman. Hopping along beside her like Dustin Hoffmann on a leash. But I am getting off the subject. Derek. The smile just sat there. Immobile. Uncreased. Why didn't he take it for a walk?

'Gone where?'

He was still doing it. Mind games. It was only the beard thing that had changed. Derek hadn't.

'Back to the States.'

'Back there? What for? They're all begging to come over here. Want to have a peek at my list of women friends looking for patriation? I've been inundated since Bush got himself re-elected.'

He flashed a look at Jenny. A call for clearance. Jenny smiled a farsighted okay.

Derek rates himself as a womanizer. It boosts his self-image. We all have our blind spots. Derek's is as big as the recent eclipse.

'Any money in it?'

This is Derek speak, his sole criterion. The rubber stamp of his existence.

'Unfortunately not.' He forced a grin.

I didn't believe him.

Derek and I had lived together. For a very short time. The emphasis was on the very. It was a case of necessity. Sheila had kicked him out. A politically correct thing to do at the time. I listened to the whole sad, sappy story. Not from Derek. From Sheila. She was the one to suffer. Derek sailed through. The way he sailed through his whole life. And Sheila's. And mine. And was now in the process of Jenny's. We agreed on two weeks. It became a month. Two, three months. When he finally left, I did a Tibetan meditation on it. Om. Very Om. Sheila took up being gay. For a while.

The Cheshire cat licked its right paw. Inspected those flick knife claws

'And yourself?'

'Same old story.'

Obviously he was not going to say much. Not with Jenny beside him. Derek plays his cards close. The odds were stacked against him. My full house to whatever he held. The only thing he had up his sleeve was he knew I didn't know how much exactly did Jenny know.

About the night we brought Maureen and Paula home. Amazed I even remember their names. One month two weeks into our cohabitation experiment. The weather was foul. They were soaked. Bugged down with guerrilla rucksacks and arctic clothing. I had the car. Derek had pity.

It was the way he drooled when they stripped in front of the fire. It wasn't normal. Derek's drooling. The stripping was class. Pure undiluted eroticism. Angels from heaven could not have done it better. But this is not the place for detail. Derek started talking nonsense. Broad hints. Quirky. Not nice. Maureen and Paula giggled. I don't think they noticed really. I thought, maybe it was alright. Maybe I was odd. But really I'm not. My basic instincts are right on course. His eyes were twisting in their sockets. Myopic. That smile was all over his face. Dripping down his chin. One minute he was playing tig with both of them. Harmless fun but getting it on. His hands were everywhere. All the places mine itched to be. But mine still clutched the plus-three-token free Oxo mug. Then the

## Crannóg 10

Cheshire cat forfeited its grin. It growled and pounced. From out of nowhere. Derek lost it completely. It wasn't pretty. I had to drag him off.

Jenny pretended to be out of hearing. But she has Secret Service ears. In fact Derek and Jenny are the perfect blend. Penultimate boredom. Suicide is next. Jenny is a Specsavers' assistant. She adjusts vision. And she attends my yoga class with pious regularity. She has the breathing off to a tee. I pant. I blame my childhood. Everyone does. I bet Jenny does. And I bet she doesn't know what I know. But I can hear alarm bells ringing. That Derek and I are in some way connected does not equate in her monocular mind.

'You gave up the shop?'

'Had to. Zhivago cut the ground from under me. The books looked so sad the Revenue were feeling sorry for me. I felt embarrassed.'

Derek sniggered. He likes his own sense of humour. "The Lone Whistle" was as sad a place as it never sounded. Derek stood on parade duty behind the eye-level counter, wearing his army surplus anorak in lieu of heating. If you wanted the Grateful Dead or the uncut "Happy Land " (I bet you don't know this), The Lone Whistle was the place to go. Derek knew everything there was to know about avant-garde music. But nobody was interested in finding out. Not from Derek.

So where does Jenny come into it? Derek knows a good thing. After I pulled him off Maureen and Paula and before I finally kicked him out a month later, Derek started dropping Jenny's name in our umbilical conversations. It sounded as if she had all the qualities Derek desired in a woman, cling-filmed for freshness. And most of all, she hadn't a clue about the real Derek. I could tell they had gone through mutual debriefing. Which of his sad stories had he sold her? It was take-your-pick.

'So you two know each other.' Jenny's words were medical card quality.

'We go way back.' A gem of a one-liner.

Jenny's eyes were deep pools of interest. Begging for more. About the real Derek, the man who hitchhiked into her life and commandeered her hopes and dreams. Whom she clings to as the architect of her apotheosis. Because Derek works in mysterious ways, the hand of the unforeseen.

'You must tell me about him.'

Derek's smile dropped a tone. The sympathy orchestra swung into action. He started on about not having eaten. I could hear the tears of the violins. Jennie shifted into mother mode.

'We should go. We must get you something to eat. You must be starving. We'll get together again another time. Then you can tell me everything I want to know.'

Derek's smirk oozed victory. Not over Jennie. Not over the world. Over me. In our little internecine skirmish, he had come off better. As he always did. As he always had to. It was just another of the defects he had accumulated on earth. Jenny spirited him away, to nourish him with caring food. Not realizing how close she was to revelation. But her time had not yet come.

After the mauling episode, Derek went on silent standby, drooping in doglike repentance. He wanted me to cajole him out of it. To shift the pain in my direction. But I waited in the wings. Determined to let him play this one out. With even the rudiments of psychology I knew he was manipulating. Side-stepping his issues. I ignored him. I got a padded envelope from Maureen and Paula. A Norm Iron calendar with nasal close-ups of Ian Paisley. In appreciation of my saving their skins, both literally and euphemistically. Derek got no mention.

I bumped into them the next time in the Róisín Dúbh. It was John Spillane's one ninety-nine gig. "Dunne's Stores Girl" was climbing the charts and everything as John says so far so good. Derek made a bad show of being pleased to see me. The twitching of his cheek muscles registered otherwise. Jenny never shows much of anything. I wonder what goes on in their moments of sexual parsimony. Does she become the

## Crannóg 10

frenzied type? Does she moan and sigh and chew his ear lobes? Or does she run middle eye sight tests as Derek reaches falsetto? I am left to wonder.

Then Jenny went off to the bar. Derek was psyching himself up. I could feel it.

'You won't tell her will you? She doesn't need to know.'

I wondered should I let him sweat just a little, give him slack then spin him on the hook. A vindictive streak was tempting me.

'I won't. You're right,' I obligingly capitulated. 'Jenny doesn't need to know. I'll let her have the pleasure of finding out herself about your dark sides.'

I smothered the rest. That it might add lustre to their patently mundane liaison. Spice it up a notch or two. I tried to imagine Jenny in black brittle leather. The crack of her apostolic whip scorching his tanned skin. But no success. No picture.

John's Orca whales abandoned Cork and made it out to sea again. But Galway's counterparts got themselves all eyre-squared. All hell was loose. Vagina monologues on the rampage through the latin-quarter streets. Unambiguous sexual antics in unguarded dim-lit discos. Window-shopping nudity on Merchant's Road. The Sodom and Gomorrah of the West was flashing its unbridled lust.

Then the Galway Advertiser frontspread unleashed its bombshell. "Super Sex Shop Snaps up Kenny Lease. Private booths, the hallmarks of confessionals. Daring window display for High Street."

And there was Derek. The beard a George Michael nuance, enhancing that redemptive look. His promise: New relationships for the New Ireland. With discount sexual aids for every pocket. Derek's mission was revealed.

And Jenny's smile glucosed across the page. Translucent eyes, varifocal and antiglare. My house of cards world toppled, my inner vision blinked. Derek. Jenny. What Jenny didn't know was neither here nor there.

**A Poem**

**Tony O'Dwyer**

---

Some days a poem will tell you,  
In just the right way, how to live.  
Then you may lose the poem, forget  
What it had said and feel empty in  
The place the poem was.

Then a bird, a robin, maybe, or a sparrow,  
Will flitter onto the ground outside your window,  
And ruffle itself in a small pool of rain;  
You will feel its freedom and its delight  
In its freedom and begin to resent your weighted self  
Observing all of this.

You may remark how simplicity seems  
To have such power and is driven by the flywheel  
Of its own singleness; has strength in its lightness,  
Its thin strands, coiled and several, teased out  
Like wisdom or common sense, only newer,  
As if born in the moment.

Then you will want to become the bird;  
To be driven only by the presence of water  
And air; sustained by crumbs;  
To be quick, to be able to dart from danger;  
To soar and to feel joy.

This is the way a poem speaks,  
Through its coloured plumage of words,  
The alternative language of things.  
You hear as a child hears, in delighted metaphor;  
See shadows created by the casualness of light;  
And you begin to know.

**Too Much Talk  
About The Muse**

**Eamonn Lynskey**

---

Too much talk about 'the Muse' when talking  
poetry and difficulties thereof.  
Too much thinking that, besides the poets,  
anyone anywhere really gives a toss.

The time has come, therefore, to see off Milton.  
And his 'Sisters of the Sacred Well'.  
Forget the classic 'invocations', tell  
the truth: a poem is like an aching tooth,

and nothing more. A vague uneasiness  
that stabs the root of memory, sets up  
a constant phrase that throbs long into night  
when sleep fails and the driving rain

interrogates the window and it seems  
like day will never break again. And were it  
just a tooth, it could be pulled. But root  
of poetry? How? – And so next morning down

to Milton's surgery, reclining chair.  
'I knew you would be back' he says. His muse  
(in white, beside him) hands him torch and probe.  
'I've tried out various forms,' I stammer. 'Thought

if I broke free from scansion, stanza, verse –  
you know, all that old-hat Olympus style...'  
The muse and Milton smile indulgently.  
'They all say that,' he laughs. 'Now, open wide...'

**Towards An Understanding  
Of People Who  
Talk To Themselves**

**Eamonn Lynskey**

---

They have great regrets, these people who talk  
to themselves on public thoroughfares, communing  
with their dead – to whom no recompense  
or just atonement now is possible  
for wrongs inflicted when the tides were high.

Living enemies surround them too,  
so hence their re-enactment of the sharp  
retort they should have thought of at the time,  
instead of moments later, on the stairway,  
argument lost, the heart a raging torrent.

Heads bowed in the presence of their ghosts,  
they will address the pavements, stand in silence  
in the traffic isle and at the kerbside  
while the lights change and the passers-by  
decide to step around them. They will never

raise their voices over rush of cars  
and buses. They will murmur liturgies,  
and broken monologues, a sigh, a sob  
betokening the absence of a son,  
a wife, from whom too much was asked, too long.

Come evening, they will stand behind the curtain,  
watch the streetlamps flicker up and turn  
to find the room is peopled out again  
with shadows, mute, but waiting for the word  
was left unsaid, the act that could have stanchd

the wound, the thing could have been done that moment,  
moment now so distant, moment now  
so many tens of years ago, an island  
several seas away, where – could they beach  
again its shoreline – everything could be changed.

Stretching the walk out of her legs,  
she cupped an apron bearing food;

the moving rock of her, abundant, solid -  
gathered like thirst under her tongue

as she turned bends, already familiar  
with the myth of the road,  
its developing narrative.

Calming its momentum, her eyes  
introduced an ensemble of rusted gates,  
a cow straying  
through sorrel, a lintel of clouds

at the skull of a hill she mounted  
with ankle boots and woollen socks.

Boughs plaited by wind and rain cave  
to the buttress of her  
as they traced her steps  
down the same ground decades before  
when a hunger not forgotten brought  
her off the road,

to a hovel with a small stream -  
the culmination of a splintered history.

**Last Seen**

**Majella Cullinane**

---

*A strong wind actually could enter you  
and sometimes you get the feeling of having  
lost your bearings. (Ted Hughes)*

No way to guess how a barred window  
might be a grace -  
against a storm slashing  
the sky with twisted light,  
thunder roaring like artillery lines.

Cursive rain assaults the street,  
barges into barrios where women  
in protest beat pots and pans.

There goes the fish market  
through the air, past the last-minute  
rush of kids selling their wares,  
before it really strikes,

a wind last seen, sliding its forked tongue  
through a net, tugged at my chest,  
tightening a bolt there, just an inch -

until there is no way to say  
we have not taken shape somewhere else.

Hurricane winds drive waves up the street  
To crash on first floor walls of offices and restaurants,  
Disappearing behind gaping windows,  
The shutters half unhinged  
Clattering to the frantic rhythm of the flood.

No voice ghosts from these interiors,  
No movement glimpsed in shafts of light that  
Dart from off the water,  
Only shadows,  
Deep like mud and thick with tragic secrets.

Suddenly, haughty, confident and black,  
A wild pig pokes his head out from the darkness,  
Snout twitching, sniffs,  
Seems to approve,  
Then with a dainty move slips into the water  
And proprietarily swims down the street.

**Istanbul Street  
Scene, V**

**Daniel Pendergrass**

---

'Describe your dream house for me,'  
said the bag lady in Galata  
whose stockings sagged a bit around the ankle.

"Like a teahouse," I said,  
"where the parrots fly from rafter  
to rafter and the afternoon breeze

billows the hanging curtains."  
Well enough for me to fake a reply  
on that long, empty expatriate street

while I waited for a ride  
and she for any answer to whatever  
question crystallized into one of the many

languages I later learned she spoke.  
But at the time I knew nothing, and she merely  
turned slowly and made her unsteady way into the  
night.

**At Oscar Wilde's Grave**

**Dave Lordan**

---

Who stole the angel's glory?  
Still, you've got the rarest grave in Montparnasse,  
Granite teeming with lipstick kisses,  
A shoal of petals in a mountain lake,  
A cloud burst of tropical fish.  
And taped to a withering rose there's a note:  
*Thank you for teaching me that I was good.*

I kiss the teacher too,  
For you are more than welcome  
To the imprint of my gaping mouth,  
If I can stay awhile in reverence  
To watch my wet gift fading,  
November sun licking my lips.

## One For Sorrow

Jan Schlegel

---

**I**LAND. He is a heap of matted feathers and broken hollow bones at my claws. I keep nudging him with my black beak, and he moves – if I keep nagging. He belongs to me as I belong to him.

It is the time the leaves start to turn from green to yellow. Our home is old, in the crown of an ancient tree with leaves that are shaped talon-like. It grows spiky round things that fall and sometimes turn brown on impact. They don't taste so bad when you are hungry. We cemented our home up there with crumbly and sticky ground we got from the secret place near the lake. I remember finding this perfect spot. I remember building the home. I felt safe there. I raised my babies in there.

Now I don't want it. I don't need it. I won't need it. I don't want to need it. I will. Mated for life, but bound to find a new partner if something goes wrong. I never thought something would happen to us. His pure white belly is dirty with mud; the once glossy black has lost its metallic green and violet shine. The bronze green and all the other iridescent colours are now lifeless on his still form. If I keep nagging...

He is, was quite old. I am, was not his first partner. I wish I could have caught him. I wish I could have cushioned his fall. I know, I will always see him falling - at a strange angle, hitting the horizon that stretches between the too straight and naked trees. I will always hear the snapping. See the blue sparkle. We have rested together on the trees without branches. They seemed safe.

I was in the air then, not caring if some newly made-up couple moved into our home. I did not care if it belonged to me anymore. Because by not belonging to him anymore, it was not worth keeping and fighting for. I will need to find a new partner, build a new home. These things happen. Just like some feral cat will get him, unless he responds to my picking at him. He will not. I am aware of this.

I have eaten and fed my babies similar things, dead things by the big black stretch with the shiny moving lights. They were more damaged, usually. I don't know why he fell. We don't fall. We glide, flap, sail, fly! Even when we are hurt. Something is wrong. Move!

**deep beyond all  
telling is grief**

**Jarlath Fahy**

---

deep beyond all telling is grief  
lighter than a razor blade  
heavier than a reef

it catches you on its creaking  
swing and tosses you forth  
In its metal chair

pitched back you sink holding  
on to its linked chain its  
creaking seat

wave after wave until your beat  
and ball in throat you die  
like the great dog

and are somehow changed to  
a boy with a hurley stick  
scribbling his name on  
a litter bin

or a group of men in county  
council jackets on rubbish  
detail tomorrow being  
st. patricks day

**last words of an  
insolvent**

**Jarlath Fahy**

---

my god your breasts are gorgeous  
at least that if nothing else  
now that the banks have foreclosed on me  
though my assets have dwindled  
i can still admire yours  
what I would give for an hour in your bed  
though I'm in the red  
i'd go puce  
i'd go purple  
i would break a thousand barings  
like old nick  
bet on a million futures  
for a moment  
for a peak  
for a touch  
for a feel  
for a feak  
i know your shining nipples  
would make the crippled walk  
the blind see  
the dumb talk  
the deaf hear  
the dead rise up  
and come home for their tea  
i thought I was bankrupt  
i thought I was broke  
but I am rich beyond all measure  
my cup runneth over because  
your cups runneth over  
and by the way I have a large cheque due next  
wednesday

**Y**OUR MESSAGE (furtive was it not?) was received by me in Dublin last Thursday evening. Delightfully *raffinement* as it might be described in the 75th arrondissement of Paris, and very much to the liking of a man searching pour *complicitie de corps et d'esprit*.

For some reason, which is not biblical, but perhaps has something to do with a recent fleeting encounter, I want to call you Martha. But the "feisty bird" whom you describe yourself as suggests to me that you might reject such a name. May I, for the time being, call you Yolanda?

Let me tell you about an experience in a Mediterranean city. It was just a couple of weeks ago in a restaurant near the Placa Reial in Barcelona.

The woman sitting a few tables away in the restaurant in the Carrer Vidra is burning. Her hair is a tangled organised head of flames, a crimson yellow. Her cheeks are glowing like embers in a furnace. Her cool pink blouse envelops her burning bosom, but without conflagration. It is Exodus again, Yolanda, "the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."

Occasionally, I catch her eyes which are a sea of flame and interest. As her back undulates, a gap emerges between the bottom of her blouse and the top of her dark jeans allowing knowledge of her body. She is forever moving in her chair, conversing energetically with her friend.

She is burning. Although I can not see her nipples, I know that they are two red-hot cinders. Her breasts are full in the two loose cups in her blouse, which is stretched tight across her back.

Sitting with her is a slightly older woman. Her hair is short and black, with just occasional streaks of grey. She wears glasses with thin metal frames, and is dressed in a silk work shirt, and gives the sense that she is familiar with the cultivation and harvesting of chestnuts and figs and olives. She is relaxed, and, smiling easily, gives complete witness to the incandescence at the table.

---

They are sharing a large jug of sangria, that sweetened drink of red wine with fruit, named from a word in the Spanish so suggestive of blood. There are some plates of tapas on the table.

I cannot keep my eyes from her. I feel the flood of the sublime light which she is shedding. I bathe in it.

By what laws does this young woman live, what laws sustain her? What laws, I want to ask you Yolanda, sustain the soul that inhabits her body?

When she gets up to leave the restaurant I notice a ring on her fourth left-hand finger. Somebody has married her. I watch her as she disappears into the half-light of the city square, a pulsar through the night, sending out regular bursts of sexual energy, a sensual supercharged aura. Where and how does she sleep, Yolanda?

The following day I am at the Estacio de Sants railway station for a short journey up the coast to Mataro.

A woman gets on the train.

She is weeping uncontrollably. She rushes to a vacant seat. Sitting by the window she covers her face with her hand, and leans her head against the window pane. Her face is almost invisible, covered by her jet black hair. It is a Monday morning in July in Barcelona.

Her chest is heaving heavily. She is a heavily tanned woman, Yolanda, in her early forties I would say. In one hand she holds her train ticket. She carries no luggage.

She is trying to reconcile herself. I see the pain of some terrible loss.

She succeeds in regaining a little composure, and permits herself some glances around the carriage, her eyes forlorn, long vistas of desolation.

Just then two musicians, a cellist and a banjo-player, join the crowded train. They play a version of the Beatles tune *Those were the days*. At this the woman breaks down again, and goes into a deep sobbing.

The two musicians, unaware of the woman, drive the tune harder and harder, speeding up their playing into a frenzy. The woman is in pieces, and is distraught.

## Crannóg 10

She again covers her face with her hand, and seeks deeper protection in the corner between the back of her carriage seat and the windowpane.

Having completed their tune, the musicians collect money from the passengers, before disembarking at the next stop.

The woman succeeds in controlling herself for a second time, and then appears to drift into a sleep of repose.

She is wearing a blouse with bright colours, blues and yellows and white. One can see her in the Mango department store on the day she bought this garment, confident and poised as she regards herself in the shop mirror, anticipating the kind of days which these delighted colours suggest. For sure, Yolanda, she did not buy this blouse in tears, nor did she buy it to shed tears in. Now the colours are saturated in grief.

For this morning she has clearly suffered grievously, and there is nothing she can do. The rending sadness of life is visible.

Out in the country again, the carriage is lit up by strong sunlight, the violent light of Spain as Hemingway has described it. The woman again lifts her head, and looks around. On her alluvial face there are dried up streams. Her eyes are two ponds on a grey day in late autumn.

It is still only July, but the year is already beginning to take its toll. Last night as I sat in an open-air restaurant one leaf and then another drifted onto my table.

Yolanda, I read your message on Thursday night. With the words "clandestine assignations are all dangerous but often very rewarding," you have distilled a potion. Your words are a fertile rain. I can sense again the Februarys of my youth.

I look out the hotel window. The city is once again a gallery, a vista of expectancy.

You remember a week last Friday morning, Yolanda, when that completely blue sky we had been waiting for all summer finally arrived. As I walk from Merrion Square to an office in Lower Leeson Street, I become aware that a Barcelona blue has enveloped the streets and the buildings. Some where along Fitzwilliam Street a tall young woman emerges from an office some 100 paces away, and walks on

ahead of me, black Spanish hair, white blouse, and black jeans, her hips moving in harmony with the perfect day, you know that reciprocating motion, Yolanda, a suggestion of considerable amplitude; an amplitude of form and structure, answering to the mind, as Lamb put it.

Those rear cheeks are a full cargo, a cargo laden with treasure of great value, with goods of an extremely delicate nature.

There is a sense of nobleness about her, reminding me how the poet in his ballad *The Spanish Lady* felt that in all his life he "ne'er did see a maid so sweet about the soul."

Her hips oscillate, a plumb line, defining an exquisite rhythmical movement of perfect measure and proportion. I breathe emancipation.

Remaining overnight in the Hotel St. George, I go to bed with an issue of *Le Monde des Livres*. The photograph on the first page captivates me. It is a black and white study of the writer Lydie Salvayre. The way she reveals her thighs interests me deeply. But it is her face which gives all the interest to her thighs. Otherwise, they could be the legs of any model, of any pop-star.

The dress is also excellent. You will agree when you see it? But it is her face which says everything. There are complete mysteries to be explored in her thighs. And her face says this, tells you this without any doubt.

Her face suggests many sensual things but I imagine that these sensual mysteries are only available to a very few.... the specially chosen. A man might place his hand between her thighs a thousand times and he will always learn new things. Her mystery is inexhaustible. I am sure of it.

Below the photograph is a caption which proposes that "engagement and subversion" is suggested. Engagement and subversion: yes Yolanda, it is this and other things is which I need to experience with a woman.

Tell me Yolanda: are you a woman who likes to write, who needs to express herself in words - written words? Are you driven, driven by a compulsion to snatch some thing desperately fleeting, and capture it on a page.

Are you married, Yolanda. And if you are, do you feel that there are sexual experiences which you have never had.

## Crannóg 10

Do you have a tight behind, with curves which wonderfully fill a tight black trousers, like waitresses who work in fashionable Italian restaurants, whose black hair is resonant of black Italian grapes.

Is your tight behind matched by a severe face, and do you wear glasses which suggest that you look at the world in a way which expects the highest standards in art, in work, and in sophistication.

Do you wear a mid-riff length leather jacket and blue denim jeans which...well, yes, are in excruciating harmony with those immaculate tight curves of your rear.

Do you sit alone in restaurants and read Proust and Kundera and Antunes?

Are you in pain? Are you pained sometimes by the lack around you of an understanding of the breathlessly crushingly sensual nature of the world?

Do you like the sun? Have you lain on a Spanish beach wearing only a thong which was almost invisible, yet your severe face gave mystery to everything, covered you, accentuating and heightening the sense of your womanhood.

Tell me about yourself, Yolanda. I am searching everywhere for you. Of course, I have seen you many times, but always at the other side of the street, or a few seats away from me in the theatre. Now that you are at last reading this message.....

**Glaschú**

**Bríd Ní Chonghóile**

---

Ag súil sráideanna Glaschú  
D'airigh mé croí na ndaoine  
Bholaigh mé a nádúr  
agus ina a gcuid siúile stair a muintir

Ghoill muintir Glaschú orm  
D'fhág siad marc orm  
Thaispeáin siad dom an nádúr daonna atá cailte  
Ach i réim i nGlaschú  
An mbeidh mé in ann dul ar ais théis an taom a  
mhuscail sibh ionam?  
Dhúsigh sibh mé muintir Glaschú  
Agus anois airím sibh uaim.

**Glasow**

Walking the streets of Glasgow  
I felt the heart of the people  
I smelt their nature  
and in their eyes, their people's history.

The people of Glasgow touched my heart  
They left a mark on me  
They showed me the human nature that is lost  
But that prevails in Glasgow  
Will I be able to return after the awakening?  
You woke me people of Glasgow  
And now I miss you.

When the young girls found happiness,  
they dressed it up in nostalgic clothes  
and taught it to skip down the street  
in ankle socks and Clark's shoes,  
clutching a handful of old coins, hefty,  
generous, no-nonsense money.

When the young girls became women,  
hefty, generous, no-nonsense women,  
they kept on looking for happiness;  
they could never understand its skipping away  
like that, with no explanation,  
taking with it what it didn't own.

**Dusk**

**Jerm Curtin**

---

Dusk was a tall lady I'd never talk to,  
a city woman, rose plumes  
about her neck and hems of gold.

But she was walking up our road.

Now the sky was inkier  
and knowing in its look,  
the colour rose in the heather;

when she stepped through the steam  
from the cooling towers,  
it was the tidal brown  
of a port river,  
by a city or a town  
where ladies who were tall and clad in pink  
would walk into the dark at their leisure.

**In The Darkening  
Watery Mirror**

**Livia Viitol**

---

*Translated by Ilmar Lehtpere*

In the darkening watery mirror  
some bird-eyed woman  
is raking up the last splashes of light,  
the echo of the corncrake's cry  
caught in her breast.  
Raking the soul,  
raking the flesh,  
raking herself,  
until the rain,  
the last fervent secret lover  
of summer  
kisses the cry  
to death.

**In Autumn**

**Livia Viitol**

---

*Translated by Ilmar Lehtpere*

In autumn  
the ceiling of the chamber of my heart  
becomes a surging sea.  
A big golden full moon  
is reflected on the water's surface  
when fishermen in early morning  
sail away from the shore.  
Out at sea a Näkk is sitting on a stone,  
singing like a Siren  
on the ceiling of the chamber of my heart.  
I find a rusty key on the shore  
and fit it to  
the heart of the lock of the chamber of my heart,  
fearing that the Näkk would flee.  
In the morning there is a boat on the shore,  
a big silvery fish on the floor of the boat,  
its gills straining in the air  
like the wings of a bird before taking flight.  
Holding my breath,  
I open the door to the chamber of my heart  
and see the fish throw itself into the air  
and escape into the depths of the sea.  
In autumn balance is born  
on the ceiling of the chamber of my heart.

*(Näkk - An Estonian water spirit in the form of a woman)*

Adorable, attractive,  
You beguile me.  
Beloved, bewitching,  
You conquer me.  
Charming, caring,  
You disarm me.  
Delightful, devilish,  
You engage me.  
Energetic, enigmatic,  
You flatter me.  
Flamboyant, frivolous,  
You grasp me.  
Gregarious, gallant,  
You honour me.  
Haphazard, higgledy-piggledy,  
You infuriate me.  
Inviting, intimate,  
You join me.  
Jocose, jealous,  
You kill me.  
Keen, kindly,  
You love me.  
Laughing, lavish,  
You manage me.  
Magnanimous, magnetic,  
You nourish me.  
Noble, novel,  
You overwhelm me.  
Opinionated, ostentatious,  
You peeve me.  
Purposeful, passionate,  
You quiver me.  
Quirky, Quixotic,  
You revive me.

Reliable, restful,  
You sustain me.  
Sensible, sensitive,  
You touch me.  
Tender, tenacious,  
You unnerve me.  
Unerring, unswerving,  
You vitalise me.  
Vibrant, vehement,  
You woo me.  
Winning, wonderful,  
You X-ray me.  
Xenophile, Xciting,  
You yearn me.  
Youthful, yielding,  
You zephyr me.  
Zealous and zestful,  
You amaze me.

**Hello to love**

**Mary O'Rourke**

---

I don't need you any more  
Now I can begin to love you  
Love your silly ways  
How you always straighten pictures  
Even if they're hanging in someone else's house  
Maybe I'll even love your nervous cough  
And the way you crack your knuckles  
I'll learn to love the way you're always right  
And we'll laugh at one another  
No, I don't need you any more  
It's time for love.

---

**'Til Death Do  
Us Part'**

**Margaret Faherty**

---

CANDLES GLIMMERED on the altar. That night too there had been candles. Thick guttering red candles in wine bottles.

*'I will go unto the Altar of God.'*

*Fuck Cork gin.*

*'Unto God who giveth joy to my youth.'*

Some youth hers from now on. *Bridie marvelled again at the power of gin. What a fool she'd been.*

Apart from the first few pews, the church was empty. Fourteen on her side. Twenty two on Charlie's. 'No need to feed the nation', her father had decreed. 'Ara go on, Matt', her mother had begged, 'In seven months time, you don't want the whole village talking about Matt Costello's only daughter's shot gun wedding. Do you now?' 'Do you think, woman, that a few sandwiches and drinks could quieten their tongues,' her father had jeered, but he'd eventually agreed to a small reception. They hadn't consulted Bridie.

The girdle her mother insisted she wore under her beige wedding dress pinched. Her swollen feet spilled out over beige plastic shoes. Charlie hadn't wanted her to wear white. 'Because of the way you are, love, it could bring us bad luck', he'd mumbled. Bridie couldn't care less what she wore.

*'Happy is the husband of a good wife; the number of his days will be doubled.'*

A good wife! 'God, Bridie, it'll be great coming home every night to you and a good dinner,' Charlie'd said the night she'd told him she was pregnant.

*'A silent wife is a gift of the Lord and there is nothing so precious as a disciplined soul.'*

'Don't argue, keep him happy in bed, have babies, cook, clean, wash and iron.' And I can guarantee you a happy marriage', Fr. Seamus had said the day her mother brought her to him to discuss the wedding.

*'Remember O Lord thy servants'.*

She remembered little of that party in Charlie's cousin's house in Galway. She'd never been to a candle lit party

---

before. And neither had she drunk gin and tonic before that night. Unused to any kind of alcohol, Bridie hadn't at first liked the taste, but, after a few sips, she'd found it okay and hadn't protested when Charlie kept refilling her glass. The day after the party, she'd lain in bed, whilst every now and then, the bed floated up to touch the ceiling. When she was feeling better and her shame had lessened, she'd asked Charlie if they'd gone the whole way. He'd scratched his head, 'not too sure myself, Bridie maybe we only got up to a bit of calf licking.'

'But you should know, Charlie,' she'd pleaded.

'With all that whiskey inside me', he'd slapped her back. 'What harm is it itself if there's a little Bridie or Charlie heating up in the Aga. Isn't it past time we tied the knot?'

Had he deliberately taken her to his cousin's party to get her drunk? For three years, he'd been pestering her to marry him, but Bridie had hoped to string him along for another few years while she continued to flirt with the few half eligible bachelors in Kilcarrick.

'You're like Katie McGraw's dog', her mother was fond of saying, 'You go a bit of the road with everyone. You're getting on you know, Bridie. Remember you'll be twenty six next birthday. And God knows you're no beauty. You'd better settle for Charlie before he leaves you for a slim, pretty, young girl with nice ways and neat features. Nowadays, marrying a girl that'll be coming into a bit of a farm and a small huckster's shop isn't what it used to be.'

*'Now all good things come to me together with her and innumerable riches through her hands.'*

'You're lucky you're an only child with such thrifty parents, Bridie, you'll come in for a fair bit one day,' Charlie'd said more than once.

*'And thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son.'*

Please God, oh please, don't let the child have Charlie's runny eyes or my hooked nose.

The night she'd told Charlie she was pregnant, he'd jumped up from the sofa where he'd been half asleep, 'Great stuff. Mighty. We'll get Fr. Seamus to do the job. The sooner

## Crannóg 10

the better,' he'd clapped his hands. And Fr. Seamus, with the help of her mother, had arranged everything in double quick time.

'That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour not in the passion of lust.'

*Not lust! No. Gin, Father. Cork gin.*

In 1968 women, even ones like her living in the back of beyond, didn't have to marry because they became pregnant. There was always adoption. But how, for seven months, could she have put up with her parents' nagging? Or how could she, as her stomach blew up and up, have continued to serve those hairpins coming in to her father's shop to gawk and giggle.

*'For who can find a virtuous woman for her price is far above rubies?'*

Had her parents' sorrow and shame at her fall from virtue been as real as they'd pretended? 'Well...' her father's greedy eyes had been fixed on her stomach. 'An artificial insemination official, especially one with a bit of a farm, is a fine catch for a girl like you, Bridie. Especially considering the state you're in. And he'll be a great help with the cattle. Save us a bob or two. Yes indeed.'

'Will you take this man to be your lawful wedded husband, to have and to hold in sickness and in health until death do you part?'

Death! No. No. Not until death. Suddenly she knew she couldn't bear that. Later, she'd think of something. She'd have to. If only she had the courage to stand up and shout '*NO I've changed my mind.*' To run down the aisle and out of Kilcarrick for ever. But, as her mother was fond of pointing out, she'd never had much of that commodity. She hadn't even had the courage to go to boarding school in Galway where her aunt was a nun. Nor afterwards, the courage to leave the village and get a proper job in town. 'Maybe it's just as well you're still living at home', her mother had said one day when they'd had a row, 'you were born without guts.'

The ring pinched as Charlie forced it over her swollen finger. In the sacristy, her cousin's camera clicked as they signed the register. Little groups of people huddled together in the room behind the pub. Through a blotchy mirror

advertising 'Woodbines,' she watched Charlie, resplendent in navy blue suit, pint in hand, slouch by the piano.

Despite the disapproving click of her mother's teeth, Winters Tale in hand, Bridie leant against the grease-spattered brown wall to take off her high heels. Was marriage giving her courage? Or was it that nothing mattered too much anymore?

*'Three months gone if she'd a day',* cousin Delia whispered to the village nurse. *'Ah, go on, Delia, you'd never think she had it in her.'* the nurse giggled. *'Two',* Bridie, who'd crept up behind them, whispered, *'But don't let Da hear you or he'll make you pay for your drink.'*

*'A toast to the happy couple. Raise your glasses to Bridie and Charlie.'*

As Fr. Seamus raised his whiskey glass, a familiar feeling that the room was closing in on her filled Bridie. The same feeling that had often made her run from the house for air. She started to walk out of the pub, but only found the courage to go as far as the 'Ladies'.

After the reception, Fr. Seamus drove them to Galway station. The movement of the train winding its way through the Bog of Allen lulled her into half sleep. The words *'Dunne's Stores Better Value Beats Them All'* and *'Unto God who Giveth Joy To My Youth',* mingled and echoed in her head. Beside her, Charlie, mouth open, snored.

In Dublin, the rose patterned walls of the hotel bedroom closed in on her as the walls of Charlie's house would close. Very drunk, he didn't stir as, thanking God he'd enough of the farmer in him to always deal in cash, Bridie emptied his pockets. At the door, she turned and whispered, *'Til death do us part.'*

**The Sally Basket**

**Michael Farry**

---

My trade was thatching,  
But sidelined by slate and tile  
I spent that August in the shed,  
Weaving supple sallies  
Into a light sciathóg.  
While you watched in wonder  
I bent and twisted  
Pliable yellowing rods,  
On the briar frame.

I taught you to avoid  
The split, the crack  
Respect the natural bend  
And keep the corners smooth;  
I taught you to conceal  
The joins, make all look one.  
Because you listened patiently  
And even wove some rods  
I entered the basket in your name  
At Beltra September Show.

The half crown prize,  
Though noted in the Champion,  
Was soon spent and forgotten,  
But long after I was gone  
Forty years later you wove  
A pardóg of midland willow.  
It was misshapen, almost oval  
But you hung it up on show,  
No prize this time but pride.

**The Dark**

**Stephen Shields**

---

Call me  
two eyes that rake  
from the skies  
in the south, in the west,  
that bicker and wail

Call me  
the worm at your lip  
as you sip  
from spring water  
at the river's cradle

I am  
the palsy of men  
in barren birth tearings  
while their land  
is flayed by strife.

I am  
the caustic war frenzy  
of a hero, the din  
of his chariot  
advancing on foes

There is  
a reeling host  
scorching hills,  
brute avarice  
trailing the Dark.

Wide awake now  
You are ready  
For the beauty  
Of the Coast road  
Oranmore.

Breathing gently  
To the rhythm of the bus.  
The white wind turbines  
On the Slieve Aughty Mountains  
Like that magical time  
Long long ago  
And the red and orange  
Blue and green pinwheels  
Turning as the wind  
Danced around them  
On just such a Mayday.

A grey partridge  
Lying dead on the road  
His life corridor  
Cut off by the motorway.  
Sky larks and meadow pipits  
The leaping Water Sheerie  
Disoriented by the wind farm  
The fragility of the wetland  
The bogburst even before the landslide.

**Prequel**

**Thomas O'Connell**

---

She is a silent movie  
Playing in the train  
Window, saying something

I watch from my  
Comfortable seat, waiting  
For words to appear;

White words on black  
Telling me her  
Dialogue, instead

The train jerks, and  
The scene shifts  
And there is no piano music.

Little Skellig comes into view:  
a jagged tiara, studded  
with gannets. The boat tilts. The  
umbrella at my feet stays put -

a relief, each of us fear  
fully aware of the ocean's  
ravenous indifference.  
On Skellig Mhichil, a steep climb

presses wavering joints into  
service. Eight beehive huts on top  
leave us breathless, relics of  
ascetics once subservient

to the will of an avenging  
God. We capture each other in  
noughts and ones, a millennium  
and more between us and them.

But still the same questions: Why  
are we here? Where are we going?  
What's it all about? Kitiwakes  
rant from an altar of campion.

## **The Cleaver**

**Maureen Gallagher**

---

I have a cleaver  
with a ten-inch stainless steel blade.  
Razor sharp.

I keep it out of sight  
until the need arises,  
as inevitably it does,  
at the recollection  
of some regret. Then

I raise it high over my head  
and using both my hands to bring it down,  
with a mighty whoosh through the air  
I swing it hard

and split the villain  
with exquisite precision  
from cranium to crotch  
in two near-perfect halves.

No one mourns  
for what we're looking at is one consenting adult.  
In any case, the result is always bloodless.

**'Missing'**

**Pete Mollineaux**

---

Marking thirty years,  
the Film Society's choice  
set in Pincochet's Chile,  
starred Jack Lemmon  
as a man finding it hard to believe  
things had got that bad.

I left the cinema terrified;  
sure I was being followed.  
Was glad to get home.  
Fell into bed like a child,  
welcoming the fog of sleep.

But in the mist of dreams,  
I was haunted by that scene  
of a horse in the night  
running over the dark cobbles  
out of control.

The next morning,  
woke up feeling  
I'd been hit in the face  
with every newspaper printed;  
staggered to the mailbox,  
only to find it  
full to the brim  
with blank postcards.

**Him**

**Kevin Donnelly**

---

I wonder now if he still roams  
The world seeking the ruin of souls.  
We used to pray at the end of Mass:  
"St Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle"  
Against that questing old red rogue  
Out to entice us with candies  
And fruits easy to steal, and  
The cheap peeks when Jane bent over, and,  
The furtive feel in passing;  
And lumpy naked ladies on playing cards  
Fondling skinny men in black socks.

My guess would be that he is retired,  
Or semi so. Business has been good.  
The bumper crops of deaths last century.  
The wars, the camps, the bombing from the air.  
The old rusting pitchfork leaning by the gates;  
Both cloven hooves up on the fiery stove,  
Reports from an overworked Charon:  
The queues! the queues! Death undone so many.  
God sought, too, but at a disadvantage,  
With 'musts', and, 'don'ts, and, 'thou shalt nots'.  
Hard when you are free in summer sun all day,  
And in the leap from dock to water, and  
The smell and warmth of hugged earth when hiding,  
And the small fire roasting potatoes in the Lot:  
The grassy mound under the willow down by the weeds.

But there is beauty still,  
Compassion and the pain.  
No longer need to name them now.

Just consciousness in time  
And our sprung- from- dark beginnings,  
Our wayward, random return.

## **A Cheap Day Return**

**Michelle Gallen**

---

**M**Y ALARM didn't sound that morning. I'd wakened up five minutes early, my body clock stubbornly attuned to routine. Martin's sleep-limp body was warm against mine and bright sunlight flooded in through the cheap, flimsy curtains neither of us liked. I lay there quietly, counting down the last few minutes of peace, then I switched the alarm off seconds before the radio was due to crackle into static life. I gently climbed out of our single bed and Martin turned over and claimed the entire mattress. It was already warm, so I dressed for the heat that would eventually smother the city. I was quiet in dressing, silent in case I woke him. I left the room and closed the door softly.

I was never hungry in the morning, but I knew that hunger pangs would strike later when I wouldn't have time for food. I forced myself to eat toast and drink coffee. They lay heavy in my reluctant stomach. It was quiet outside - the city had not yet begun its daily grind. The apartment was dull in the early morning light. I loved it in the evening time when the room was flooded with sunlight and I could curl up on the sofa, basking like a cat. The pure blue sky shining above the warehouses was not yet dulled by smog, and promised another long hot day.

I applied my make-up, painting the face directed by our staff handbook - I was to look pretty under artificial light, yet natural and attractive to customers. It always felt like too much, my face slick with make-up. But I knew it was necessary. Our staff uniform and the fluorescent lights bled the colour from natural faces. Once in uniform, the lipstick could never be bright enough or the foundation tan enough. As I packed my purse and touch-up make-up into my bag, an enthusiastic radio DJ advised his listeners to head for the beach. I switched off the radio, slung my bag over my shoulder and stepped out the door.

---

The sunshine and the morning were at their brief best just then. The traffic had not yet swollen to constriction and the heat was comforting, not the sticky blanket that would descend shortly. It usually took me ten minutes to walk in to work, or seven on a Saturday when the traffic was lighter and I could dodge across the road more easily. I didn't want to go to work. I never did. I never wanted to enter the building where the staff rooms held our identical blue uniforms in identical cream and brown lockers under identical artificial lights. Our staff canteen, lockers and toilets were underground - we had no daylight. But even upstairs in the store, there was no daylight. The windows were blocked off and occupied by fashionable headless dummies, who sunned themselves while dripping with price-tags. Sometimes I would ask the customers what sort of day was it. Too hot, too sunny would usually be the answer. They were always hot and sweaty, bad-tempered and smelly. The air conditioning rarely overpowered the smell of over-heated bodies and tempers. One day the heat was relieved by a thundery downpour. From inside I heard the crash and crackle of the storm, watched as the store filled with customers looking for shelter. I went up close to them so I could smell the rain on them - a fresh, clean smell, that shortly dried out to a stale dampness that sweated through the store for the rest of the day.

I had loved the anonymity of the city at first. We had loved walking down huge streets, no-one noticing or caring about our presence. Orange street lamps were often the only witnesses to our actions at night, while our mundane little lives were swallowed up in the vast city bustle during the day. I had initially loved the pastel tranquillity of our little rented home too. It was number 122, a one-bedroomed apartment in an 'elegant' new development. 'Tastefully landscaped' patches of garden took the naked edge from the concrete car park and security gates. The walls of our apartment were painted a subtle peachy shade. The grey carpet covered every floor, except for the plain white tiles of

## Crannóg 10

the minute kitchen and bathroom. The thin curtains were the same soft grey as the carpet. When I sat alone in the sparsely furnished living room, I felt tranquillised, cocooned. We rented a television, opened a cable account, and were introduced to a world of never-ending quiz shows, big money prizes and American talk shows. I never saw our neighbours, apart from the indistinct, silent shadows of the evening or the identical, smartly-clad briefcase carriers of early morning.

I didn't go to work that day. When I came to the junction I normally crossed to walk up the hill and into the store, I stopped, turned, then headed towards the bus station. It was thronged with tired commuters, clutching newspapers and walking silently towards work. I bought a cheap day return, and boarded an almost empty bus to Wicklow. After the doors snapped shut, it crawled through the heavy city traffic and grey estates, until suddenly we were on empty roads, coasting into the countryside. The driver opened the bus door and the fresh air and country smell flowed in. The green fields and trees were lush and full, and as the bus began to take on local passengers, it filled with conversation.

I had never been to Wicklow. When the bus dropped me off in the middle of its small, irregular town, I stood self-consciously alone for a few seconds, before following a sign for the sea. It was already very hot, but the breeze kept me fresh and cool. I slipped my shoes off and walked barefoot to the end of the small stone jetty. I sat there with my feet dangling over the edge, letting the sea hypnotise me with the slap of lazy waves against the small boats moored in the harbour. Then I stripped down to my T-shirt and knickers, left my clothes and bag on the jetty, and jumped in. I swam aimlessly, lazily, and the sea washed my face clean. I floated with my eyes closed, feeling the heat of the sun and reviving cool of the water. When I climbed out, I lay on the hot stones of the jetty until the sun dried my clothes and hair.

I did nothing much that day: I wandered through Wicklow's shrunken medieval streets, its tourist shops, climbed the hill recommended by the Bord Fáilte Tourist

Information Board for its stunning view. I ate in a small tourist friendly pub, watching the barman flatter the foreign couples and their children in the hope of a tip. The pub walls were adorned with a picturesque framed version of Wicklow's history. I ate my dinner at a window overlooking an old arched bridge and the river that rushed down to the sea. I caught the last bus home. It was almost empty, and I fell asleep with the flicker of sunshine through leaves on my face.

I never told Martin about that day. The few hours that I was late were put down to overtime and a drink with the girls. He asked about my sunburn. I said I'd got it sitting in Stephen's Green during my lunch hour. He mentioned that I should get a mobile so that he could contact me if I were late. I agreed, said I'd get one whenever we could find the money, maybe next pay cheque. Then we sat and watched the television together. The window was open but the curtains drawn against the setting sun reflected off the television screen.

**Cygnets On A Burnt-Out  
Afternoon**

**June 4, 2004**

**Patricia Burke Brogan**

---

Cover me with your wings.  
Gather me under your heart-feathers.

Shut out the tumult  
of screaming metal birds.  
Not our sisters,  
not our brothers,  
but dark angels spewing terror.

Trapped in this inferno,  
we swim underwater  
with salmon, mullet and trout  
to Augustine's Holy Well.

Marl of mud comforts us  
from blasts of flame,  
from blasts of blue,  
from blasts of dirt-white.  
Obscene graffiti  
scars flesh of Loch an tSáile,  
bruises the heart of our dying world.

War-gods Cromwell, Hitler, Stalin  
return to torture carved angels  
in the cathedral of St. Nicholas.

Cover me with your wings.  
Gather me under your heart-feathers.

**September In  
The Burren**

**Patricia Burke Brogan**

---

Above Castle Gregan's lawn,  
within an amphitheatre of folded limestone,  
swallows perform their ballet of farewell.  
La grace sautéé and pas de deux fill the air  
as a wagtail, in dress suit,  
conducts the orchestra of wind and rain-cloud.

**Weather Forecast  
In September**

**Patricia Burke Brogan**

---

Sooty tufts on tree-tops  
in Westport woods,  
a crows' Press Conference.  
Then a myriad of wings swing away  
to pattern evening sun and sky  
with dark squawks,  
but soon return to settle arguments  
for one night.

**Departure**

**Laura Chalar**

---

One hand on your cool face,  
the other whitely gripping  
a well-travelled suitcase where sweaters  
and boots heap in hopeless consortium.  
No time for tidiness, an hour  
from this hour that tugs at words  
hurriedly turned into kisses.  
Let the grimy boat be sailing  
and a bloated moon escort me  
all the way back to where later  
I'll lie with eyes unseeing  
on a cold unbroken bed.  
Long stretches of life await me,  
brimming with voices and faces  
not yours; I brace myself against longing  
for your mouth's trace on my skin.

Have our shores at last begun  
to close towards one another –  
what estuaries might the wind  
in my hair cross at your bidding?  
Some nights the air will not stop  
glowing with uncivil questions.

But you, I wish you the taut  
bright skies that cross over Sundays,  
the stubborn song of my heart  
lingering under your fingers,  
rooftops awash in steep light  
and an endless stream of mornings.

There are so many things  
I want you to have.

SHE WASN'T used to the idea of quitting. Deciding to start something, that was how it usually went; she was constantly making plans. But to stop -- this was puzzling. Did she have to start something as well, to fill in the gap? A cigarette lasts for a few minutes, several times a day. No other activity really fits that space. Even when dieting, she'd been able to substitute: a fruit instead of a chocolate, a baked potato instead of fries. But no smoking, and nothing in its place -- Jesus, it made her giddy.

The only other decision comparable to it was breaking up with Jimmy. He was now in her bathroom, showering. She'd caved in. Like with the cigarettes, nothing quite replaced Jimmy. She'd tried morning jogs, binging on ding-dongs, painting, cooking nice meals -- this last idea being the occasion on which she'd finally answered the phone. Nice meals only make sense for two. She'd quit Jimmy for four days when she decided to cook eggplant parmesan. When she'd heard his voice, a rush like nicotine melted inside of her, and she told him to come over. They went to bed with full bellies as though they'd never been apart. That was two weeks ago.

Today was the second day without smoking. It was really more important than the first day, if she could go by how it was without Jimmy. The first day is so exciting, you feel proud of yourself, but at the same time you still think it's just a little break. On the second day, you have to decide if you really mean it. She looked over at the packet of Marlboros and got out of bed without touching it.

She began making toast for two and a pot of coffee. She timed it so that she was just putting down the cups and plates when Jimmy came out, freshly dressed, wet curls dripping around his face. He walked straight to the food.

"No orange juice?" he asked, and bit into a slice.

She flinched. "You can get it yourself," she said, and added, "You might be thankful for what you have before pointing out what's missing."

He stopped chewing. "Oh," he said. "Yummy toast."

---

She shook her head. "Too late now."

They sat for a few minutes, slurping and crunching, she was smouldering, he was floundering. He said, "You really do make the best cup of coffee."

She noted this statement and considered how to judge it: a flimsy peace gesture or proof that he deserved the benefit of the doubt? She felt resentment lodged in her chest like a block of cement, but she sighed and decided to let it go. The urge to start an argument was nearly as strong as the urge to smoke -- she wanted to avoid both.

Besides, they'd been through all of this before: he didn't expect her to serve him food, or to wash his clothes, or to do the dishes or vacuum the floor. She just did it all before he had the chance. The truth is, he didn't do any of these things nearly as well as she did. On the rare occasion that he did help around the house, she ended up going back over the job he'd done. However, he'd promised, when she took him back, to be quicker off the mark with the housework.

So, after breakfast, she resisted the urge to clear the table. She left the dishes, and the crumbs, and the empty cups, all right where they were, and waited over on the couch for Jimmy to do the honours. But he just sat down next to her and turned on the television.

She didn't say anything about it. She didn't want to nag. She'd give it half an hour -- maybe he was waiting for the news to finish -- before she mentioned it.

When the news finished he turned off the T.V. "So what's on the agenda today?" he asked her.

She groaned. "Aren't you forgetting something?"

He looked at her blankly. "Is it someone's birthday?"

"No, there's something you're supposed to do now, over at the table."

He walked over to the table and shuffled through some bills in a pile. "I don't see anything here."

"Jimmy, the dishes! You're supposed to clear the table!" She'd meant to say it gently, but her voice was a little too loud.

"Ok, ok, calm down. I'll do it now."

He took all of the dishes to the sink and washed them one by one. He didn't fill the sink with hot water and rinse them

## Crannóg 10

all at the end, like she would. He left the water running as he washed, which pretty much guaranteed that there'd be none left for her shower afterwards. It was okay, she thought, she could take her shower later. But then he started stacking -- putting the plates down flat on the rack instead of upright in their slots, and balancing the cups on top of them in a pyramid. They'd all fall for sure. She looked away, breathing deeply to get past her craving to fix them. Finally, he rejoined her on the couch. She could see over his shoulder that he hadn't wiped down the table.

He looked satisfied with himself, and obviously expected her to be gratified, so she hid her disappointment with a smuckery kiss on his cheek. At least he was trying.

Another point about Jimmy was that he hardly ever worked. He always had a way of getting money, bussing tables at a restaurant for a few weeks before throwing in the towel, selling a few of his belongings, getting a gig playing country songs for a few nights. He'd never asked her for money, but sometimes when they were out together and wanted something, she'd end up paying for it. On this day, they decided to go for a walk down at the beach. It was the end of summer, not blistering hot anymore but a nice heat, penetrating your clothes without causing need to strip them off. While they were walking, arm in arm, not talking much, she looked over at him and smiled, and he smiled back. They seemed to fit together, his shoulder in just the right place for her cheek, and she remembered how good it could be with him. So she bought them some ice cream. They continued their walk with locked arms, licking their cones with their free hands, inevitably smearing some on their faces. Jimmy wiped her cheeks with his napkin and kissed her on the forehead. The seafront was busy with other walkers, rollerbladers, packs of young men and hordes of young women, but Jimmy pressed close to her and leaned his head against hers as he chewed the end tip of his cone. She was the only person in his field of view.

Later they went out to dinner at an actual sit-down restaurant with entrées and desserts. When the waiter carried away the bill stacked with Jimmy's cash, she completely forgot about an after-dinner cigarette.

The evening was going so well. They went for a drink. She wanted the night to keep getting better and better. The only thing that could make it better would be to hear Jimmy say something romantic. This was the kind of thing that Jimmy rarely did. But the timing felt right that night. She just had to open a door.

She asked him if he saw the two of them together in ten years' time. He cleared his throat pointedly. He said, "How can I know what will happen in ten years' time?" and looked away. She explained that she wanted to know if he was there for the long term. He said, "It's been two years now, what do you think?" He started drinking his beer fast, long draws and big gulps. She groaned. It wasn't working. He'd come so close to giving her what she wanted all day, but he wouldn't go that one step further. He would never fully satisfy her. She watched the tiny bones in his jaw work as he ground his teeth. She reached out to caress his shoulder and felt a stone slab beneath her hand, no trace of the tenderness from the afternoon. Why couldn't he just ask her to marry him? Suddenly she felt hot, and was growing hotter, like her whole body was swelling into a flaming comet, and the ceiling was opening up above her, and she was going to fly whether she wanted to or not. She opened her mouth to ask another question but instead got up from the table, grabbed her coat and purse, and walked out.

She was on the street, fumbling for a cigarette. She ran into the gas station across the street and bought a pack. She twirled off the aluminium foil tab, broke open the box, had one in her mouth with a lighter poised, ready to strike, when someone pulled the cigarette right out of her mouth. It was Jimmy, eyes wide, and he threw it on the ground brutally.

"What the hell is the matter with you?" he asked, eyes flashing under the sallow light at the gasoline pumps.

"I need a cigarette," she said, and tried to slide another one out of the pack.

He grabbed the pack and squeezed it in his hand, crushed it. "No you don't. Why did you run out on me? What the fuck have I done wrong?"

## Crannóg 10

She started to cry. "I'm just so sick of you!" she yelled. It was ten o'clock on a Saturday night, one or two cars gassing up. Jimmy pulled her by the wrist.

"Don't make a scene. Jesus, let's go somewhere where we can talk."

She wrenched loose. "No!" Something vibrated through her veins, and she couldn't hold back. "I already tried talking to you!" She began to sob. "Now you want to talk? No, I think -- " she choked "-- I think we're just going to have to accept that this isn't going to work out."

He looked at her with his thin lips pursed. He ran his hand along his chin. For a moment, his eyes darkened and she thought he was going to start crying, too. But then he looked down and his voice came out low and sharp, "Fine. I give up," he said. It was almost a growl. "This is what you wanted, to fuck it all up. You win." He shook his head of curls and turned to walk off. He threw the crushed pack of cigarettes at his feet. She ran over to see if any of them were salvageable.

There was one. A little bent, but not broken. She put it in her mouth and held up the flame. She looked at Jimmy's silhouette, hunched, shuffling up the sidewalk, and remembered the ice cream. The block of cement in her chest twisted. She felt dizzy and breathless. She stood there for a few minutes, the cigarette waiting to be lit, trying to make up her mind whether to run after him, whether to smoke it. That's the problem with trying not to do something, she thought, is that it changes the rules for everything else. If she threw this cigarette down and ran after Jimmy, she'd be a different person. It would mean not everything was his fault anymore, it would mean she really did want to be with him, it would mean she'd never smoke again.

Then again, she thought, this is only day two.

**Requiem 1**

**Sean Donegan**

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So I'm not going to compose a symphony before I die,  
not even rise to a violin or piano concerto.  
Write a song that will make it into the charts,  
paint a landscape masterpiece  
or sculpt another David.  
Do something - anything - that will free me  
from this tedium.

In vain I scratch the surface of my days  
in hopes of finding something of real consequence.  
The hoped-for answer now nothing but a faint echo of the  
question,  
"Is this all there is?"  
Who knows, perhaps there is hope for me yet.

But no, it appears that I must be content to wait out my days,  
live on in hope maybe or opt for reconciliation.  
No time now for the luxury of regrets.

So far my fifteen minutes of fame have not arrived.  
Could it be that Warhol got it wrong?

## **Biographical details**

**Liz Arnett** is from Miami, Florida but has been living in Galway for some time. She writes fiction and poetry and has had both published in *Crannóg*.

**Sandra Bunting** is based in Galway. She writes poetry and is experimenting with an online novel at [www.sandbunting.blogspot.com](http://www.sandbunting.blogspot.com)

**Gerardine Burke** was recently shortlisted for the Francis McManus Short Story Competition and for the Fish Historical Short Story Competition. Her story *Alienation* was broadcast on RTE Radio 1. She has read her work at the Over The Edge Series of Readings at Galway City Library and at the Voices From The Tower series of lunchtime readings in Galway's Fisheries Tower. She is a member of the editorial Board of *Crannóg*.

**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 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2005 prior to moving to the Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire.

**Betsy Carreyette** has been published in *West 47*, *The Burning Bush*, *The Lantern Review* and *Crannóg*. She featured in *Anthology 1*, the anthology of Galway Women Poets, published by Annir. She recently gave a reading of her work in Sheridan's Wine Bar. She is studying Art at GMIT.

**Laura Chalar** is from Montevideo, Uruguay, but now lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has won several awards in poetry and short story contests, and has had her poetry published both in Uruguay and the UK. She edits the poetry section of the literary magazine, *Letra Nueva* and the cultural section of a neighbourhood periodical in Montevideo.

**Emily Cullen** comes from Co. Tipperary and is a Government of Ireland doctoral fellow in English at NUI, Galway. In 2004, she directed the Patrick Kavanagh Centenary celebrations and was selected by Poetry Ireland for their 'Introductions Series'. Emily's first collection, *No Vague Utopia*, was published by Ainnir in 2003. She is also a qualified teacher and performer of the Irish harp.

**Majella Cullinane** received the *Sean Dunne Young Writer's Award* for poetry from Waterford City Council in April and in July was awarded an Irish Council Grant to study for an MLitt. in Creative Writing at St. Andrew's University, Scotland.

**Jerm Curtin's** poetry was highly commended in the 2004 Boyle Arts Festival Poetry Competition and received a commendation in the 1996 Dulwich Festival Poetry competition. He was a prize-winner in the 2002 Feile Filíochta competition.

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

**Kevin Donnelly** lives and writes in Galway. He has read his work at the Over The Edge Series and recently read his entire *Craigville Beach* series of poems at Scribbler's Café.

**Margaret Faherty** has been published in a number of magazines and has won a number of prizes. She is getting her novel ready for publication.

**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.

**Michael Farry** a native of Coolaney, Co Sligo, is a primary teacher now living in Trim, Co. Meath. He has researched and published historical studies of his native parish, the War of Independence and the Civil War in Co. Sligo. He is at present working on a series of poems dealing with life in Sligo during the Civil War

**Maureen Gallagher** has poems, short stories, and criticism currently in *Chapman, The Shop, Poetry Ireland online(Features), Criterion, Ropes, Galway Now, Artfest Anthology, Divas anthology* and forthcoming in *Free Lunch*. She was nominated for the 2005 Sunday Tribune /Hennessy Poetry Award. Her poetry has been broadcast on RTE's Rattlebag.

**Michelle Gallen** was born in Country Tyrone in 1975. Her work has been published in Irish and British anthologies and magazines. She was awarded the Orange/NW Short Story Award 2005. She is currently completing a poetry collection and book of short stories.

**Eoghain Garvey** was born in Monaghan but spent primary school days in Barna before moving to Dublin. He now lives in Galway.

**Catherine Heaney** is from Galway and a member of Galway Writers' Workshop. She has had stories and poems previously in Crannog. She recently featured in an Over The Edge Reading in Galway City library.

**Patrick Hewitt** was born in Limerick city. He lived in many parts of Ireland, before settling in Galway in the mid-1990s. He works as a continuing education facilitator

**Kevin Higgins's** first collection of poems, *The Boy With No Face*, was published by Salmon in February. Earlier this year he was shortlisted for the 2005 Sunday Tribune/Hennessy Award for Emerging Poetry. In May he was awarded a Literature Bursary by the Arts Council. He is co-organiser of the Over The Edge reading series. He is also a widely published critic, and has reviewed books for publications such as *Metre*, *Books In Canada: The Canadian Review of Books* & *The Galway Advertiser*. He was a founding co-editor of *The Burning Bush* literary magazine. In 2006 he will do a series of readings at universities in Missouri and Kansas, and new poems of his will appear in *The Recorder: The Magazine of The American Irish Historical Society* and on a major international fundraising CD for Oxfam.

**David Brendan Hopes** is a poet, playwright, actor, and professor at the University of North Carolina, who spends as much of his life as he can in Galway. His latest book is *Bird Songs of the Mesozoic* from Milkweed Press.

**Andy Johnston** is originally from Mayo. He lectured for many years at GMIT. His chapbook, *The Spirit's Too Much With Us*, was published by Poetry Monthly Press in 2003. His selected poems is due shortly.

**Ilmar Lehtpere's** translations of Estonian poetry have appeared in a number of publications in Ireland, the U.K., and the U.S. A volume of his translations of Doris Kareva's poetry will be published by Arc Publications in the U.K.

**Dave Lordan** is a 30 year old native of West Cork, now living in Greystones. He is the recipient of the 2005 Patrick Kavanagh Award for Poetry. His poems have been widely published in magazines and journals at home and abroad and he has done numerous readings. More examples of his work can be read on his website at [www.freewebs.com/davelordan](http://www.freewebs.com/davelordan)

**Eamonn Lynskey's** poetry has been published in many magazines over the years. A collection, *Despatches and Recollections*, was published by Lapwing in 1998. He was awarded First Prize in the recent 'Poetry on the Wall' competition organised by the South Dublin County Council Libraries. His work appeared in *The Sunday Tribune's New Irish Writing* page recently.

**Noelle Lynskey** facilitates the Maple Poetry Group in Portumna, and works with children in schools and libraries. She has previously been published in *Crannóg*

**James Martyn** is a Galway writer.

**Susan Millar DuMars** is an American writer living in Galway. Her poetry and fiction are widely published. This year, she received an Arts Council Bursary for her first short story collection, *"Stupid Slim Neck Audrey Hepburn Dreams"*. In Autumn 2005, Lapwing published her first poetry collection, *"Everyone Loves Me"*.

**Geraldine Mills** has published two collections of poetry *'Unearthing Your Own'* and *'Toil the Dark Harvest'* with Bradshaw books Cork. Her collections of Short stories *'Lick of the Lizard'* was published by Arlen House in Sept 2005. Her Poem *'Pearl'* was recently highly commended in the single poem category of the UK Forward Prize.

**Pete Mollineaux's** collection of poetry was recently published by Lapwing. He acts as MC for the annual Cúirt Poetry Slam.

**Brid ní Chonghóile** is an Irish language writer who lives and works in Galway.

**Thomas O'Connell** is a librarian living in the mountains of southwestern Virginia. His poems and stories have appeared in *Gator Springs Gazette*, *Magma* (forthcoming), *Tarpaulin Sky*, and *Mad Hatters' Review* as well as others.

**Gwen O'Dowd** began exhibiting in the mid 1980s, notably at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin in 1984 and at the Butler Gallery, Kilkenny in 1989. She has since exhibited regularly in Ireland, Britain, continental Europe and North America. Some important group exhibitions in which she participated in recent years were: *Poetic Land - Political Landscape*, which toured Britain, and *Re-Dressing Cathleen: contemporary Works from Irish Women Artists* and *Eire Land*, both at the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College in 1997 and 2003 respectively. O'Dowd is represented in the collections of the Arts Council of Ireland and Northern Ireland, AIB Bank and the Irish Museum of Modern Art and many other Corporate collections, as well as in various Private collections in Ireland, USA, Europe and Japan. She is a member of Aosdána.

**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's** first collection *Off Guard* was published by Bradshaw Books, Cork in 2003. He is co-editor of Crannóg Magazine. He is editor of the online magazine *WOW!* ([www.wordsontheweb.net](http://www.wordsontheweb.net)). He is also co-owner of the Literary Publishers, *Wordsonthestreet*. ([www.wordsonthestreet.com](http://www.wordsonthestreet.com)).

**Mary O'Rourke** has published two collections of poetry, *My Mirror was Cracked* 1999 and *It's All Happening*, 2004.

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

**Daniel Pendergrass** has poems placed or forthcoming in *Van Gogh's Ear*; *The Chiron Review*, *Snow Monkey*, *Ascent*, *The Blue Mouse*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Miller's Pond*, *Shampoo 21*, *Paint the Sky with Stars*, *Shampoo Stars*, *OD Mag*, *Unlikely*. Travel writing has appeared in *Travelmag* and *Hackwriters*.

**Jan Schlegel** grew up in the north of Germany and is currently living in Galway City, where she works as a translator. She recently published a chapbook of short stories and contributed to the Fiction Clinic Chapbook.

**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*.

**Livia Viitol's** latest volume is *Läti pääsuke* (2002), which includes the two poems published here. In recent years she has been translating Latvian poetry into Estonian, and in her capacity as Deputy Director of the Vilde and Tammsaare Museum in Tallinn has done research into the emigration of Estonians to the Crimea at the end of the 19th century. Some of her poems have appeared in English in *The Stinging Fly*.

**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](http://www.baffle.ie)). His first collection of poems will be published in March 2006 by Marram Press, Galway