

# Crannóg 14 spring 2007

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**Midlands**

**Andrew Caldicott**

---

Time crawls here.  
The evenings in particular  
stretch beyond physics,  
drawn out on a plain sky.

A minute,  
a year outside, slips uncounted  
between the wingbeats of a crow  
idling over the canal field.

At the water's edge  
grassheads  
like straw flamingoes  
brush the unmoving surface.

---

**Wild Flowers**

**Sean Donegan**

---

This Spring I will no longer pick wild flowers,  
rather adopt a patch of flowering clover,  
luscious green and blooming purple.  
I will resist the urge to mow the grass  
and eagerly await the lawn to fill up with daisies;  
delight in a sunburst of burnished buttercups  
and allow myself to be held spellbound  
by a roadside spattered with scarlet poppies.  
I will search near tree stumps for the shy lily of the valley,  
greedily inhaling its sweet and heady fragrance;  
patiently await the arrival of ox-eye daisies,  
and never forget a woodland floor  
covered with the blue hue of the first bluebells.  
I will climb down river banks looking for clods of primroses,  
each one snug and lemon-yellow;  
scan the fields for a distant headland  
all ablaze with early gorse bushes,  
scenting on the breeze their coconut bouquet.  
Right where they appear I will welcome the arrival of honeysuckle,  
cowslips, dandelion and fuchsia;  
keeping my eyes open for the first sight of gentian,  
larkspur, meadowsweet and montbretia;  
foxgloves, hawksweed, thistle and violets,  
each one gladdening my heart with the joy of their arrival.  
From now on I am going to be more attentive  
to Spring's urgent growth everywhere.  
This Spring I will no longer pick wild flowers;  
every vase filled with the memory only of last year's profusion.

(1)

Along our garden hedge  
a Russian Vine, grape-white, luminous,  
echoes ballerina tutus from Moscow, from St. Petersburg.  
Berberis, crusted in burgundy frills,  
protects nests of blackbirds, goldfinches and robins,  
shelters the rosebush - memorial to our dog, 'Brambles'.  
A passionflower raises its crucified heart  
above textured rosemary and coriander.  
Cobwebs trail magic traps on fennel, mint and sage.

(2)

Beneath the earth,  
a mirror-image hedge,  
dark life of meshed roots,  
in multi-cultured richnesses,  
draws word-colours  
from Pushkin, Akhmatova,  
Amergin, Eibhlin Dubh,  
Seamus Dall and Aodhagain.

---

**Fál Dan II**

**Patricia Burke Brogan**

---

(1)

My blunted shears struggle  
to free convolvulus-strangled rosemary,  
enmeshed horseradish, spearmint,  
oregano, marjoram.  
Arum lilies, stamens yellow with pollen,  
imprisoned by twisting manacles,  
bend their cadenced stems.  
Rhythms of fuchsia's blood-clots fall  
on ochre clay,  
sucked dry by anaemic climbers ..

(2)

My pen squelches on whiteness,  
a dissonant baton  
on minims, crotchets, quavers.  
Words tangle and disappear,  
rooted in time like the ghosts of swallows.  
My song is tuneless,  
but I go on scratching,  
cutting through to set free,  
that concerto of light and colour,  
that hidden poem.

**Feadóg**

In the blackened field,  
Light whistles the windowed house  
Back from the brink.

**Dugort**

Not to do down '*dubh*'  
But black is not the answer,  
As '*dumha*' proves.

**Ceist**

One by one by one,  
Glimmering windows light up  
My mirrored question.

**Three Haiku**

**Mary Redfern**

---

Despite those late frosts  
the tree we planted grew strong;  
you give me a hug.

White wave tips ride high  
on this cool sunless morning;  
my washing is dry.

Swallows, welcome back!  
Last year's nest is still filthy,  
just as you left it

**Haiku**

Mary O'Rourke

---

Sublime the white cloud  
Moves swiftly across the sky  
Leaving cotton wool

Violent skyline  
Thunder to burst your eardrums  
Lightning streaks brightly

Sing your melody  
Tuneful soulful merrily  
Be a symphony

Choir sings in the loft  
Hitting high notes easily  
Celestial tunes

Music lesson starts  
Pupil waits eagerly  
For the sonata

The land lies fallow  
Overworked for years  
Now resting in peace

Foliage withering  
Crisp on the newly-mown lawn  
Dance at harvest-time

Exhibition time  
Prints hand in the gallery  
Awaiting comment

---

**Mechanical Graffiti**

**Brian Lindsey**

---

Robert Lowell  
Loved control  
And all his life  
He made ex-wives.

Theodore Roethke  
Gave his house key  
To a willing co-ed  
Whom he much later wed.

Sylvia Plath  
Wanted a laugh  
But what did she do,  
Marry Ted Hughes.

Ted Hughes  
Did abuse  
Thinking better  
Wrote Birthday Letters.

W. H. Auden  
In an attempt to broaden  
Crossed the Atlantic blue  
And perfected the clerihew.

---

**James Joyce Is Following Me**

**Sheila Knowles**

---

he's been haunting me  
for about 30 years now  
and the son of a bitch  
just won't let me be

I grew up  
throwing rocks  
from the top of his tower  
in Sandycove  
I drank my first flagon of cider  
and had my first flush  
of teenage passion  
outside the walls  
of his hallowed  
manuscript museum

We brushed shoulders briefly  
when I was in college  
but I managed to avoid him  
by tucking Samuel Beckett  
under my arm  
and flitting through  
*The Dead*

Next time he turned up  
was in the Berlitz newsletter  
turns out  
James was a language teacher  
for a while  
between bouts of onomatopoeia  
genius  
and desperation  
no doubt

So I've decided to buy Ulysses  
I've no intention  
of reading it  
but I'll give it pride of place  
on the bookshelf  
and maybe he'll remember  
his salary  
and just leave me  
the fuck alone.

**That Face**

**James Martyn**

---

It was never a nightmare - no,  
something more magical than that -  
you, Michael, on piano,  
the thinning hair,  
your heavy glasses perched,  
turning to the band with a  
run, calling up a tune  
and on guitar that man from the daytime  
soap, fingers flexed,  
while the separated mother we both know  
surprised me there  
behind the drums, running ripples  
through the skins,  
and you, Margaret, at the mike  
and not a hospital in sight,  
striking up some jazz classic,  
all wild hair and attitude,  
while at the back,  
that fifth face I cannot  
bring to mind,  
no matter how I shift  
through the angles of the light,  
nor the instrument,  
something curved, sharp-edged,  
of metal maybe -  
strumming, watchful,  
trying hard to be part  
of the scene, pretending  
to hold the tune.

---

**Death of a Revolutionary: Ted Grant (1913-2006)      Kevin Higgins**

---

The last time I saw you  
I was twenty five. You were the old coat  
at the edge of the demo, saying 'No!';  
your plastic bag  
still packed with propaganda,  
but the world going the other way.

Now, your legendary tea mug  
finally stands at ease.  
The morning papers come,  
but you do not open them.  
About the bombs now  
demolishing Baalbek and Tyre,  
you have nothing to say.

The past is a Northern seaside town in winter;  
the cheap hotel, the abandoned pier.  
You on a platform jabbing the air,  
haranguing the boy I was: "Comrades,  
we live in a period of sharp  
turns and sudden changes."  
My every thought, part  
of your master-plan.

The future is the match between Switzerland  
and the Ukraine, which rattles  
away on a distant TV.  
I sit by the water  
in this town of Sunday painters.  
I do not say, as you did:  
"We have kept the faith."

**Credo**

**Gerard Hanberry**

---

Although I believe in nothing now  
except the joy of your hand on my bare  
shoulder each and every  
blessed morning  
it is more than enough,  
more than all the marble floors  
and vaulted domes of Christendom.

For sure the time will come when  
one of us will wake to loneliness,  
its cold breath filling a bedroom,  
fumble with buttons, walls falling away  
in slow motion, all bearings melting,  
no more north and south,  
but that shrivelled world is for another time.

Tonight a full moon sits high in its crow's nest  
above the tattered rigging of the clouds.

There are stars, whole galaxies,  
and the darkness of the universe,  
and the darkness beyond the universe.

---

**Choreographer, Aged Two**

**Mary Rose Callan**

---

Eight jigsaw pieces, all various  
shades of a blue girl on the verge  
of dancing, the exact blue

on the box you push to one side,  
for you have no need of pictures,  
you follow the colour of finger-tips,

swivelling arms and legs  
until your girl's a Picasso  
dancing on the edge of blue.

**Flying Over Ireland St Bridget's Day**

**Kevin Donnelly**

---

Flying over Ireland the morning  
Of St Bridget's Day, the sun  
And I rise to meet and enlighten  
One another. It by light  
And I by word... a Plato  
Encounter in the sky.

It shows a flash of river down below,  
A river whose name I know and  
Where the fishing's good. And I know  
That road, the abrupt right turn  
At the old stone bridge. The fallen  
Tree there still holds the kite it caught.

Higher still, the sun and I,  
The longer, larger view: the pilgrim  
Road to Clonmacnoise, the esker,  
The glacier gouge, holy sites  
High on hilltops, dark of purpose,  
But open to the morning sun as I,

This morning, flying over Ireland,  
St Bridget's Day, marvel  
At the sight of the edge of earth  
As Ulysses, out of the sight of land  
And standing at the mast, saw  
As far as the eye can see.

---

**Totems**

**Celeste Augé**

---

*(after Emily Carr)*

The sun enriches these women  
standing like poles in the shifting light,  
carved sincerely from mother wood,  
each slash of the chisel removing  
what is not needed, the shavings  
scattered over stone and fertile ground.

They move without seeming to. Trust  
that nothing has come to each woman  
without loss, that each chip holds a name:  
Ernest Is Gone, Rebuild Your Home  
One More Time, Do Not Pass Go,  
Do Not Collect €200, Sister's Turn Today.

The women wait for rain, marking  
the start of the season with a hopeful dance.  
Their babies have faces like wise old men.  
Big wooden hands cradle each child,  
hands so full of tenderness, they had  
to be made twice their normal size

to contain their latent gifts.

**Raindrops Through The Cedars**

**Peter Guy**

---

Feints of blue,  
The afternoon rich with your presence,  
Through tears of what not knowing is,  
The moment founders on the weave red  
And skin bursts of rain  
Along the Eglington Canal.

It is almost as if in passing,  
You have taught me the virtue  
Of lunatic lust and knickerless nights  
In the back seat of my Cortina with  
Leonard Cohen.

Bollock balled  
I felt like Captain Oates going out and  
Saying that I may be some time  
The ether of our bodies proudly exposed  
Amidst coverlets and parted chemise,  
My last thoughts of you  
Perched like some tiny god of  
The en-suite bathroom shaving light  
Was  
'Fuck me, that's a twenty foot drop pet -'.

Hey, that's no way  
To say goodbye, but at least  
The concupiscent moon  
Had the good sense to fuck off for itself  
Before the morning brought your  
Hapless husband home.

---

**Passing Through Richwood, West Virginia...**

**Peter Guy**

---

She postures in the kitchenette,  
Flashes of blonde, check skirt  
Pleiades, nebulous scatterings,  
Sweat-itches of stocking tops,  
Uncrossing her tongue, *click*,  
Bubble-gum delish dish, swoons  
In her cherry topped, dress me downs.

Swell hum-boat snatch fantastic lover-girl,  
Knickerless poppy-socked you,  
Chick-teen tipped savour me juicily eyes,  
Body as white-night as a shot glass of liquor,  
May stand there all delight, a soaker sweet,  
A sight petit, little barely eighteen years old.

My hands trace the concupiscent lips,  
The switch-snap powder pink nipples,  
Picture postcard coke bottle queen,  
Thirty-buck hand job supreme,  
Posturing in the kitchenette, *click*,  
Hurt me, I whisper, let me be touched  
With jealous rages, hurt me, so I may know  
A love, not cheap and bought at an hourly rate ...  
Uncrossing your tongue, *click*, a bored sigh,  
Look mister, well worn phrases, but  
I cannot offer any more than what you see...

**Open Mic**

**John Walsh**

---

The microphone crackles  
as he croons his Robbie William's song,  
millennium tie dangling, chewing gum.  
The M.C. hikes the volume, no one listens,  
even his best friends don't.  
But getting up there is all that counts  
and a bottle by the neck on the house.  
So put your name down on the list.  
"Is Emer coming up for us tonight?" the M.C. roars.  
"Is she here? Last week she was too pissed."  
The dramsoc guys jeer and hiss.  
Emer is doing her make-up in the jacks,  
so Connor takes the mic till she comes back. Pouting  
like James Dean he murders Heaven's Door.  
Then Emer strips her BT top,  
her red bra sparkles, the dramsoc guys scream.  
At the open mic you can do your thing,  
be the person of your dreams,  
all that matters is to be seen.  
Even if it's all been done before,  
we yell when Emer takes the floor.

---

**Ultramarine**

**Ian Revie**

---

*For Peter France*

These are the cadences of bruises, the darker echoes of the sea.  
They are the bitter sea-marks of all wreckage  
Left among smashed molluscs like the tesserae of a mosaic

Once assembled beneath the feet of the dignified and now  
At sea split and swirling in turmoil like light  
And water moon-and-wind-whipped to a protean carpet woven

Perhaps by a weaver sustaining a blow or squall of the weather's utterance  
sudden, dark and suggesting depth. Ultramarine, beyond the sea,  
Is Trenet, Darren, Sinatra waiting for me with my tie unstrung

By other Penelopes. In this darkness, in this amniotic blue  
Can there be a waveform or pattern of interference  
Taking the particles home, loading a weak force to a wave's intensity?

---

**The Airshow**

**Maureen Gallagher**

---

Lilac time. Not the least whiff of war  
in the skies over Galway Bay. Girls  
sucking lollies gawk as the handsome  
US commando, the leader of the pack,  
pumps testosterone astride a Red  
Arrow in the striking June airshow,

that much fêted family event, show-  
case for the beauty of imperial war-  
birds skimming the waves, blood-red  
trails of vapour igniting young girls,  
delighting all. He knows how to pack  
a punch, the bold GI, holds to ransom

the militant air trapped in troublesome  
bolshie balloons, those dissident show-  
stoppers at Nimmos Pier. Backpacks  
are searched for the hardware of war,  
weapons of mass destruction: the swell  
of ninety-nine sheaths. Not to mention red

herrings. Did someone murmur *on red  
alert?* Back at the beach the awesome  
power of the fleet, so alive in the swirl,  
the tigerish purr of the Top Gun 'show  
the bastards' display. References to war-  
fare are strictly no-go areas as packed

lunches are munched, any link to Iraq  
disallowed by unspoken pledge. 'Reds'  
stand by as the men in blue wage war  
on a few dozen balloons with pins, some  
with knitting needles. It's a bit of a show,  
grown men bop-popping like little girls

at a birthday party. A few teenage girls, distracted, take in the successful sack of 'deadbeats' (kids, grannies in tow). 'What's the deal with flying a few red balloons?' they want to know. Some US Strike Eagles roar, as if in a war-

zone rout. Showtime in Haditha. Red rage unfurling into young and old, packed in, bunkered. Some collateral damage. War.

**With Family, Not Surfing**

**Eoghain Garvey**

---

We glide  
in, on this cold water,  
or do not glide in -  
tumbling into shore.  
Mountains dwarf  
the dunes before us.  
A wave collapses  
and we surface,  
laughing,  
wet with love.

In new water  
we stay shallow.  
The current  
tugs at us,  
pushes and pulls us,  
messes about  
with us. We are nervous,  
together,  
of the rigour  
of this tide.

---

**Eyes**

**Eoghain Garvey**

---

*(a mother's death in Afghanistan)*

The camera fixes  
on his rags,  
beard,  
the hooked stick  
leaning against a low wall  
and the distant  
hovering sunset,  
then pans  
to the three children  
huddled in a doorway  
whose eyes,  
the only part visible,  
wait  
for his silence to end,  
for the words  
that will change everything.

**Polish Blues**

**Brian MacNamara**

---

**One By One...**

At an old railway station in Lodz, a city remembers its fallen sons and daughters.

A name

on a page

crossed out.

**Lemoni s Christening**

Celebrated in a family home some sixty odd years afterwards.

Her BIG day

that is, to her, a day

just like any other.

**The Old Table Legs**

A relic lingering on of former Jewish times

Crafted lovingly,

shrouded in mystery,

can laugh once more today.

---

**Interrupted Football Matches**

**Stephen Farren**

---

The sound of dogs barking  
always gave them away.

Children were on the street  
before the land rovers

came into view. While they  
sped along the street, rocks

rained down like massive  
hailstones. Being children

we only remembered  
the football matches

interrupted by soldiers  
on patrol, as they walked

through the field with weapons  
raised, pretending to shoot.

All across the black Irish Midlands the head  
Of Saddam Hussein jolted, swayed, on the front  
Seat of the car

Shut-eyed on the front page of the *Independent* –  
Every twitch of the wet breeze through the vehicle  
Moved a papery cheek

We drove with one headlight at half-power  
Through villages fretting the Country 'n' Irish  
New Year nights to death

Lost like children in a maze of drenched fields  
That sogged and slapped all the way to a cloud-  
Filthy horizon –

Through Granard under a squad of lights someone  
Had hung a copy of the *Statut des Juifs*, and in  
A crossroads village

We stopped to let Franklin D. Roosevelt nod his  
Approval: then we heard the screech of Drancy  
Wagons shunt into Athlone

And the wind became a bomb hitting a bunkerful  
Of children and women, and at Ballinasloe  
Fatah took American

Money and weapons, posed for the cameras,  
And belly-crawled away to erase the peoples'  
Government of Hamas –

And nowhere did anyone hold up a hand and say  
*Stop!* I had a clear run to the edge of the world  
I was Pinochet

And Margaret Thatcher, disappearing the rule of law,  
Old friends: I was having my kidneys torn out in a  
Mobile Chinese clinic

Before we reached Craughwell. But I was free  
To drive forever without roadblocks. I was the wind  
Skirting round

The inside of my car, lifting the pages  
Of the *Independent*, bloating Saddam's cheeks  
Until they resembled

Those of a child struggling with a boiled sweet;  
I was a car-bomb, I went off in my own head  
And heart

I went inside my skull in search of shackled men  
In orange jumpsuits and found myself, riveted  
To a fuselage of bone

We drove anxiously looking for an entrance  
Around the tribunal of my own mind, scuttering  
And complaining

Ghetto-blasting over the suicide bridges of the West,  
Each anointed with the stigmata of a teenager's foot  
On the stone rail –

Mustard gas pleated the wooden floors of the  
Dance-barns near Oranmore, the car's loud heater  
Blasted shrapnel dust

Round my legs, the grey pulp cheeks bloated,  
Subsided; I was a red-faced priest buttoning his  
Fly in a cloud of whimpering

The black weather would not stop, it came on  
Under the trees, every headlight a laser, the road  
A runway

And we took off, up into a bleating Irish night  
Full of atrocities, nightmares, blackly green  
Flying low over history

And I sharpened my gombeen skills as murder's  
Yes-man, with an answer for everything –  
The newspaper blew everywhere, blinding me.

**Frankfurt**

**Allan Jude Moore**

---

From the U-Bahn to the Konstablewache  
your hands fed me grains of snow.  
The cathedral spire pierced the sky,  
your mouth overran me  
and sparrows broken from a fistful of ice  
fell to the ground like stones.

The stairway wept locusts and tears of poisoned gas.  
Death leaps from your forehead.  
I remember you cried:  
In no time everything can be destroyed.

---

**Dressed As A Goddess**

**Sandra Bunting**

---

The grant application for an assistant looked good. If all went well, he could have another person working with him before Easter. However, for the moment, it looked as if he would have to lock up the place as usual for a month and leave it to Mrs. O'Hehir to look after. A month off to do research was part of the agreement when he took up the job. January was a quiet month. It was good to get away from the endless rain and fierce winds of the west of Ireland. Every time he came back, his friends would rhyme off a litany of illnesses they had suffered and overcome.

Home. Home for Dr. Geoffry Mulvihill was his place of work. The purpose-built, modern building in the centre of town came with the job. He remembered his footsteps sounding through the empty rooms as he walked through the new museum for the first time. There were only two instructions: fill it and look after it.

He had lived up to his part of the bargain. All his creativity, contacts and powers of persuasion had been used in fundraising. There was not one grant application that he did not look at and try to find out how it could relate to the museum.

Filling the building was not a problem. There was a hodgepodge of items left over from the old museum. People had been generous about donating what they thought was important to their heritage. Whatever opinion he had on these items, he respected the wishes of the residents and devoted a room in their honour. Added were artefacts sent down from Dublin and items put aside by the local council after a decree from Europe to conserve all important artefacts and monuments. Other rooms were stocked with purchases made when there was money available.

His one indulgence – going back to his days as a lecturer in Egyptology- was a small room, a cubicle really, where he displayed a few statues of Egyptian Goddesses: Nut, Blast, Isis. Although more aesthetic than valuable, they were not without worth. Contacts made during his research month had paid off and allowed him to purchase minor treasures on the museum's delicate budget.

The room had proved popular but not in the way the museum curator could have imagined. He printed up a leaflet with details on each of the statues together with some general information. Not long afterwards, women started coming to visit the 'goddess room' to meditate. Dr. Mulvihill found out that a local woman had started a 'goddess workshop'. Her brochure stated 'Find the Goddess Within. Ten Week course on how to improve your life by finding the power'.

Geoffry tried to counter the so-called nonsense by writing scholarly articles, which he printed and distributed. He also gave interviews to the press. These

measures, however, did not deter what he called the 'goddess group' from their enthusiasm over his special room.

The board was pleased with his progress on fund-raising and acquisitions. Looking after them, however, was another matter. Each item had to be categorised, valued, restored (if applicable) and displayed. A fortune was spent on a security system and insurance premiums went up with each new purchase. The building and the items needed regular cleaning, something he had overlooked when he told the board he could handle everything himself. He just let the dust pile until he realised he was entitled to hire someone to clean.

Mrs. O'Hehir kept the museum spotless ever since. An older lady, she knew how to dust without breaking artefacts and how to keep out of Dr. Mulvihill's hair while he was working. It was almost as much a home to her as it was to the curator. She would often be seen scrubbing floors late into the night, no question of overtime pay. She would go about her work with pride and a sense of responsibility. There was one room however she would not go into.

"Those hussies!" she said. "Just a bunch of naked women dancing about!" To his amusement, Dr. Mulvihill discovered she was talking about the Egyptian statues. So he took care of the little goddesses himself. One day thinking about the ending of his paper he was to present that week, he looked in on the room to give it a quick clean. In front of the statue of Nut a woman with long caramel coloured hair stretched her arms above her head. She was completely naked.

"Where are your clothes?" asked Dr. Mulvihill, trying to look down at the floor but not succeeding.

The woman ignored him.

"Listen," said Dr. Mulvihill. "This kind of thing is just not acceptable. I suppose that crazy woman told you to look for the goddess within. Well, you won't find anything here. You have to go."

The woman lowered her arms gently, sighed and looked at the curator.

"I am the one who tells women to look for the goddess within". She put out her hand for Geoffry to shake. "June Constance".

He shook her hand, averting his eyes from her pale shapely body.

"I'll be in my office" was all that he could manage.

Later June, now clothed, sat down in the chair opposite his desk as he told her the significance of each goddess statue. He was surprised at how much she already knew. Although he still felt her views were a load of nonsense, he had a new respect for her.

He left the next day for Egypt. There was mention of a goddess on a newly found tablet that could form the basis of a new paper. Perhaps he'd bring back a statue or some other item of antiquity. Leaving everything in the capable hands of Mrs.

O’Hehir, he packed his laptop. There was no need for clothes. Some of his clothes were stored in Cairo with his guide. Anything else he could buy. Things were cheap in Egypt.

At the airport in Dublin, a call came from the Council telling him that the funds had been approved to hire a new assistant. There was a catch though. To receive final approval they needed to supply the name of the likely candidate. As Dr. Mulvihill didn’t want to put off his trip, he left it up to the Council to hold interviews and hire someone, outlining the kind of person he was looking for and what he needed him or her to do.

\*\*\*\*

The trip to Egypt was fruitful. Not only did Dr. Mulvihill get enough research material for another paper but he was bringing back a tablet covered with ancient hieroglyphics, engraved with the picture of an Egyptian goddess he had yet to identify. Besides that, he’d got warmth in his bones, colour in his face and felt relaxed and refreshed. He was ready to start back at the museum.

He arrived back on February 1st, the beginning of the Irish spring. The daffodils would soon be coming up even though the weather wasn’t noticeably milder. It was the *Fhéile Bhríde*, the feast of Bridget, herself a goddess, patron of poets. Mrs. O’Hehir had things opened up. The heat was on, everything was clean and coffee was made.

“Welcome home,” she said. Then corrected herself, “I mean, welcome back.”

“Glad to be back,” he looked at her tenderly, “. . .and home.”

She smiled.

Dr. Mulvihill took a parcel wrapped in newsprint out of his briefcase and gave it to the woman.

“Oh, Doctor. You shouldn’t have.”

Peeling off the newsprint revealed a silver teapot very much like an Aladdin’s lamp. Unconsciously, she rubbed the side. No genie.

“It’s for mint tea.”

“Thank you so much. And I’m sure it will do nicely the ‘Barry’s’.”

Formalities over, Dr. Mulvihill was anxious to get on with his work. He opened his laptop on his desk and transferred files to his desk computer. A pile of correspondence in his in-box begged for attention. He unzipped a pocket of his laptop bag and took out a package wrapped in newspaper. He tore off the paper, brushed his hand across the tablet and became lost in its mysteries.

The tablet would need a special stand and perhaps a glass enclosure to protect it against deterioration. That was something to organise right away.

Dr. Mulvihill walked towards the goddess cubicle. The fact was that he had missed the statues: the mystery of Nut, the playfulness of Blast, the beauty of Isis.

However entering the room, he almost dropped the new stone tablet. Instead of the sleek forms he expected to see, each of the statues was dressed in its own knitted costume: booties, dresses, matching hats. Isis even had a miniature handbag.

"Mrs. O'Hehir!" he called. But she didn't answer. It was a big place. She could be anywhere.

Dr. Mulvihill left the statues as they were for the moment. He put the tablet on the floor while he took measurements for a glass case in the room. Perhaps all the statues should have better protection.

He was back in his office, working on designs and measurements when a knock came on his door.

"Ah Mrs. O'Hehir, do come in."

The door opened.

"You!" he said.

A hand went out to him.

"June Constance, your new assistant."

Dr. Mulvihill couldn't speak.

"I'll ring the Council," he managed after a while. "There must be some mistake. I left instructions on what I wanted."

"Exactly. Major in Archaeology. Postgraduate in Heritage Studies."

"But..."

"They thought I'd complement you. I know more about the Celtic stuff." She smiled. "I know a little about your area too. Egyptology is fascinating."

"And all that nonsense about 'the goddess within'?"

"That too! Part of me."

Taking his glasses off to rub his eyes, Dr. Mulvihill sighed.

"Do you think you could at least keep your clothes on?"

The woman laughed.

"I hope I will still be able to visit the 'goddess room'," she said.

The curator remembered his last visit to the room and burst into gales of laughter.

"What's so funny? Can I go in there or not?"

To her puzzled look, he started laughing again. "Only when clothed," said Dr. Mulvihill, picturing the statues and their knitted outfits and then imagining his new assistant in similar attire. Perhaps she could get a matching orange and lime green knitted handbag that Isis was now sporting.

"Mrs. O'Hehir will sort you out," he said. "You'll see. We'll all get on just fine."

---

**Neighbour**

**Alan Weadick**

---

He appears, disappears,  
Without so much as a nod,  
Leaving my clammy hands to cool  
In the evening breeze,  
Into one of two hundred,  
More or less, identical  
Green doors.

Some day, though,  
To the accompaniment  
Of rising water  
Or through great heat  
From a furious sky  
We will pick our way,  
With delicate steps,  
Across the rubble.

Carrying blunt tools,  
And flickering torches,  
We will make tentative sounds,  
As we go searching through  
Our common ground.

---

**Skin And Stone**

**Davide Trame**

---

After the red-brown clay of the fields  
and the olive trees that stood quiet and defiant  
in torrential rain, shower after shower,  
in the eye of the storm grazing the asphalt,  
the sea town was a feat of stone shining,  
our feet filled with polished white that seemed  
lightened from within.

The sirocco roar was a throat's clamour in the walls  
where foam clapped, slashed, the crumbling stucco  
of the closed hotel in fading red stood like a cheek  
facing the waves with an unmoving blank gaze.  
On the street behind the glossy slabs of grey-white,  
our feet tasting what memory would withhold,  
grey-beige with sea blades glancing at each turn  
stung by sunlight then, at last, a chink cut  
in the clouds' violet dark.

And grey-white slabs by the sea on which the dog ran  
and rubbed her back at once in a frenzy of paws  
while you shouted in the roar, and I couldn't hear you,  
- it's not only stone, look, come, it's  
a dead sea turtle, there, upturned, same beige  
among weeds and debris - and I took in  
the glossy belly in shreds and the neck skin  
and the head's shape, the stony throat.

- A sea turtle claimed by earth -  
you kept repeating while we walked  
back to the car in a crowd of pines,  
upturned dark green arms,  
the sea's iris following us,  
roaring with skin and stone,  
these perpetual reminders.

---

**At Kilmurvey Beach**

**Stephen Shields**

---

*(Summer 1995)*

Eyeballed, you are structured on the wind,  
rigid but for fan and wink of feather,  
plotter of the strain and stretch in weather  
devising new heights you ascend.  
I breathe your pivot and your bend,  
taste the salt in your ride on air,  
name your moment, named like prayer:  
Prayer, a parabola of wing and wind.

Carious rockmouths dribble in futile bite,  
gnashing waves bow backs, then press their lips,  
sift and glaze the tint of this still life.  
Reds, browns, yellows lift and bloom as polyps.  
On each orison remnants glitter in retreat,  
innocent rainbows stooped by talons of the deep.

*an ghaoth aduaidh  
bíonn sí cruaidh  
is cuireann sí rath  
ar ghealtaibh*

Dúbhoíche dhúchroích  
mo *bhrolly* mar sciath  
thar cheann a iompaíonn  
súirí Bhuile gaoithe

Ní cás liom an greann:  
níl fearthainn *funny*  
gluaisteáin dom bhá  
le loig bháistí

Ligim liom féin  
le sruth na báiní  
slogtar m'amhrán  
ag gealaigh na Gaillí

*an ghaoth aduaidh  
bíonn sí cruaidh  
is cuireann sí rath  
ar ghealtaibh*

---

**The Stillness Of Trees**

**Susan Connolly**

---

Here, in this wilderness,  
we learn  
the stillness of trees.

From a high branch a bird  
welcomes us:  
'Forget the world!'

A strong, silent  
presence...  
It must be the trees.

I'd love to be like them,  
birdsong haunting  
my branches.

My spirits brighten.  
Strong, silent trees  
watch us leave.

And that high, hypnotic  
voice calls out:  
'Goodnight!'

---

**Fantasy At Fifty-Six**

**David Curtis**

---

Still, dead air  
and heat-white skies  
inspire neither nest nor song:  
the grackles do their chattering at dawn,

then are gone;  
a mockingbird  
sings at night from the cherry,  
alone, unheard by most, inside, weary,

drawn to air-  
conditioned rooms.  
This is sterile July, noon  
of the year, one might think, and all too soon

spent and gone.  
We juxtapose  
warmth with life, with joy, with birth,  
but one degree too much, we find, is death.

Not a breath;  
when all is ripe  
fecundity is fever  
of midsummer pandemic. The clever

save their breath,  
withhold their seed  
abiding in shadows till  
urges are urged again in dearth, by chill.

---

**The Carraroe Avocado**

**Aoife Casby**

---

First it rotted.  
Then I took the seed  
from the black flesh  
and soaked it.  
I waited for any  
muscular root  
to break the faultless shape.

I planted it here.

There are gentle moments  
when I pass by,  
judder a leaf with the hem  
of my dress  
and wonder if it recalls  
the humid rainforests,  
raucous birds and sunshine.

---

**Part Of Me**

**Susan Millar DuMars**

---

.. is here amidst the glasses  
and shiny hardback covers, part of me toys  
with my fork and orders the watercress soup,  
smiles  
into the blue evening, white sails caterpillared across the Marina.  
Part of me blinks at the TV actor,  
the singer-songwriter, the Nobel Laureate.  
Every conversation is a Gerber daisy,  
opening to the sun.  
Here in my lace shawl,  
legs swinging  
beneath the heavy tablecloth;  
the child allowed at the grownups' table.  
Part of me is here by the grace of God  
and good people, friends in common,  
amidst the thick perfume  
of coffee and cleverness.  
Success is a white  
stranger on the stairs  
who might, or might not,  
be beckoning.

Part of me is still  
at home in silence,  
thin smoke drifting  
from an extinguished candle.  
My toes curled in damp socks,  
the bed a tattered raft.  
Part of me makes instant anything,  
envies the microwave bulb  
its definite glare,  
wonders if I'm still emitting  
any rays at all.  
Mutes the phone

so when it doesn't ring  
it is only part of my plan.  
Part of me  
talks to myself  
about waiting for busses  
that never come.

And wherever you are,  
how ever many people  
slurp your words, and  
pat your back;  
how ever many hulking cars  
line the kerb, waiting to take you  
anywhere you want to go ...  
part of me is always  
climbing in beside you.

And part of me is always  
somewhere else.

---

**Making All Things Well**

**Pauline Murphy**

---

Walking beside the winter sky  
doing some ordinary thing.  
But where is my father going in this wind?

Back to the place of stars in the dark?  
To his absolute faith in mystery?  
To the unknown?  
To the promise of God?

He gave me the burning bush of the sky  
where winter stars  
reveal the possible,  
promise the impossible.

He is making calm the tangled debris  
carried by the winds,  
drawing out of chaos  
stems and branches,

finding ways to shelter  
the smallest plants,  
so that nothing will hinder  
the garden's coming into life.

He is walking beside the winter sky,  
my father, making all things well.

---

**Networking**

**Anna McKerrow**

---

All it took was one open eye  
strobing the Atlantic, and one fertile  
Venus-girdled mind to house that gaze firmly, and plant it hard;

On contact, Perspex ladders, grids and matrices formed from the  
ocean, crossed land in vast bridges and  
railed our talk back and forth,  
a covert mirror mask,  
almost undetectable, a glassy sheen,  
gleaming, fast with secrets.

You know me by these networks; you shall know me by my works,  
My deepest red, made rose, carried to you by words that phase lightly in time zones  
foreign to me and all comprised of all the sea salt in between;  
We merge at a midpoint horizon, at tropics seen only in the mind's eye,  
And you hum and haze, broadly material,  
singing always of glorious reconciliation.

---

**The Gift Of Wings**

**Breid Sibley**

---

We sip mate through the bombilla  
Our Sunday evening ritual  
String together pearls of memory.  
My daughter points to the horseshoe  
Tell me, she pleads her hazel eyes shining  
Of the Mountain of the Horses.

I bring her close and begin ....

‘My life moved in rhythm  
Like the gentle motion of the spinning wheel.  
Mammy’s love enveloped me  
Like the soft fleece of our mountain sheep.  
Those last few days  
Before I set out for Argentina  
The white fluffy heads of bog cotton  
Danced an Amhrán Slán  
I rolled the barrel  
Deep into the Mountain of the Horses  
Washed my clothes  
Hung them to dry in the pine scented air  
Walked to the ridge  
And imprinted the view on my mind.  
Hen Harriers skimmed  
Fields of tangled growth  
‘Come sit by me,’ Mammy said.  
She reached in the cedar chest  
Withdrew a cerulean blue shawl  
Knitted in blackberry stitch  
Laid it across my back  
Caressed my shoulders  
And gently said  
Your wings will help you soar.  
Reaching back into the aromatic wood

She took out an iron horseshoe  
Her lined hands  
Placed it in mine  
Put it in the shape of a 'U'  
Above your fireplace  
It will bring you luck  
From the Mountain of the Horses."

From the Pampas where we are now  
The breeze wafts my words  
Northeast to the Mountain of the Horses.  
My daughter snuggles closer  
Wrapped in the cerulean shawl  
Ceibo-pink ribbons through her hair  
Another pearl on the string  
Of precious moments shared.

Just down the beaten track  
Under the Sicomoras  
A payadores sings to a milonga rhythm.

**Love Song**

**Kathleen O'Driscoll**

---

The veneer has worn off  
this old love.  
Time carves  
to fine bones  
of worth,  
dear frailty,  
heart breaking  
bravery,  
hidden in layers  
of hurrying years.

---

**I Say Good Morning To My Truck**Mary Byrne

---

The evening I met him I had just run out of the house because of a strange and disturbing impression.

It was Sunday night, post-dinner you could say. I eat sporadically and when really hungry I go up to *Les Platanes*, a bar-restaurant with a comfy ageing blonde woman and food you'd die for. The *Changement de Propriétaire* sign has been draped across the front for years. The interior décor was obviously once designed for a Chinese place, all red flocking and whorls. This is confused with some North African objects, by way of a statement, I suppose, or else in search of a clear sign that isn't Chinese.

But to get back to me for a minute. Although it was a winter's evening, I still had all the curtains open. I like to do that because, paradoxically, it deters the nosy-parker across the yard, who spends her time hanging out the window chain-smoking. I like to catch the last of the sun reflected in the windows opposite (I face east, it's cheaper), and spot individual lights as they come on, and finally to appreciate the fully-lit ensemble of the other buildings around. I fantasise about occupants of those rooms that peek around the corner of our yard, rooms whose shutters stay closed for days on end, then open to expose the cheap ceiling chandelier in all its glory, while three sets of men's laundry are clumsily and hastily festooned around the window to dry. Since we're on the edge of the city, some of these hotels serve as coach-stages for happy families on their way to Euro Disney, but others tell a different tale, are called "*meublés*" and house people down on their luck whose rent is paid by social services because they can't pay the now exorbitant Paris rents.

So there I was, seated at my table – big table for someone who never eats at home – drinking something, and flicking through a magazine. In the big mirror - big to give the illusion of space, create an Alice-in-Wonderland other room I can never reach – in the big mirror, I suddenly caught sight of a high-rise block that was actually behind me, across the gardens to the back of our building.

It caught my eye because it seemed to have moved nearer. In fact it seemed to me, for a whole moment, that it was approaching our building at a fair speed.

*Get a grip*, I muttered to myself. Without verification or reflection, I grabbed my coat and headed out to the street, skipping down the stairs without even waiting for the lift.

Outside it was colder than I expected, with a searing wind. Few people were abroad. I remembered hearing a weather forecast about snow on low ground, expected avalanches, traffic bottlenecked, ski resorts full to bursting.

The usual pre-Spring scene.

I headed for *Les Platanes*. The usual fug of warmth, good food and drink greeted me. The habitual hangers-on were around the bar, with a few new faces from the hotels round about. The talk batted around this and that, politics and habits, with the occasional guffaw or sneer from us or the man behind the bar, who seemed to have no end of glasses to dry. Maybe it's an obsessive-compulsive thing with him. The ageing blond came and went from the restaurant tables, mothering late customers – mostly single men from the hotels roundabout – and smiling a homely smile. Some of the men at the bar had plastic bags of shopping at their feet, baguettes peeking. That meant they'd perhaps been there since the Sunday morning market on the canal. Nobody seemed drunk or disorderly. I always reckoned this was due to the presence of the motherly blonde.

There comes a moment, in *Les Platanes*, when you know it's time to go. The glass-drier behind the bar and the blonde never actually say anything, you just begin to feel uncomfortable. It's related to some unseen control that keeps everyone from getting drunk and shouting and becoming aggressive. You know it really is time to call it a day when the Algerian – yes, the sublime French food is cooked by a North African – finally slinks out of the kitchen and slides towards the door, as if trying for invisibility.

This is the moment when I pay up and go, for I can't be bothered having my last drink ruined by some unseen, unbidden haste.

I scrunched my shoulders and collar up, headed out into the now sub-zero temperature for what I call home. Ahead of me, equally hunched, was a small dark man carrying a plastic bag of shopping. As I levelled with him he looked up, and I recognised him as one of the men from the bar, men I normally consider to be just numbers, ships that pass in the night.

I said "Good Evening," recalling a phrase of my father's: "Whiskey talks."

The little man smiled and moved into step with me, and I wondered if greeting him hadn't been a bad idea.

"Back to work tomorrow, *hein?*" he grinned. "Actually, I never do anything else only work. When one job is finished, the boss calls me on the mobile and away I go again. Never see home. I have a *meublé* here and another in Cherbourg." His attachment to his rented rooms - he made them sound like Riviera properties - reminded me vaguely of student bedsits in northern cities, of men who came to collect rent late on Friday nights, counting the cash slowly and entering it in a notebook, each room with a rat in a trap sitting on his bed, waiting for the man to knock.

“Not that home is any great shakes either,” he said. “I come from St Georges de Bagnoles, a miserable place - two houses and a church.”

He paused. I hoped he wasn't going to cry or something.

“Trucking is a strange existence. You have no friends, no family.” This didn't seem to upset him unduly. “Ended up in all kinds of trouble.”

I thought of the influence of the homely blonde. I wondered how much drink he'd taken. He didn't appear drunk.

As if he had read my thoughts, he said, “We can't drink from Monday to Friday, you know, not a solitary drop.” He scraped his thumb under his front teeth, to indicate a barren scene.

His baguette was taking a beating - squashed under his arm and beginning to fold in two. I couldn't help wondering what it would taste like in the morning.

His story was complex. There was a lot of it, and I didn't follow it all – not because of drink but because of his diction.

However, somewhere in there I got hooked.

“*Tu m'énerves*,” he had said to a gendarme. The commoner mortal didn't normally tell gendarmes they were annoying, but I imagined truckers have a longer leash than the rest of us. The gendarme hadn't got the message, had insisted on more papers and a full inspection of the truck. I'd seen these cops in their bike gear on motorways, their knee boots affirming that they wouldn't suffer fools lightly. The trucker had finally lost his patience and roughed up the gendarme, catching him by his jacket and shaking him.

He was silent for a moment.

I waited, studying his diminutive appearance, searching for the toughness I hadn't noticed before. I marvelled at the hidden treasures and even major dangers to be found bottled up, standing beside one at a bar or in the street.

“Married five times,” he said.

There had been one daughter.

“Grew up without me around.”

He hadn't seen her from babyhood to grown woman. Most of the rare times he was home, she was in bed asleep.

“You're not going to waken a kid at 2 a.m.,” he said, “for your own purposes.”

There also seemed to have been some major piece of bad luck, a bigger background he hadn't got to yet. He was getting stuck into his story now, and I hoped that his discourse was heading for some dénouement or other, before we froze to death in the windswept street.

We paused at a corner and faced each other. I felt like one of the wedding guests who'd run into the Ancient Mariner.

I hunted my memory for what he had already said, but couldn't find any major thing I'd missed. The incident with the gendarme had just been a rite of passage.

I made suitable noises. I wanted him to spit it out.

My attitude seemed to encourage him.

His mother stood to him through all of it, he went on. He lived with her and turned all his money over to her, unlike his brothers. I imagined a whole family of diminutive pent-up violence. I thought of a wife, children, money trouble.

But it wasn't any of these.

Now his diction cleared, as he declared, "Shot a man stone dead. Did five years for it."

He didn't wait to see what effect this would have, his confidence in me already assured.

"We all carry a gun, you know?" – he waited to see if I knew.

I nodded, lying, and hiding my surprise at the occasions for violence that sail blithely past us daily on roads and motorways.

"Well we carry big sums in cash, for one thing and another. For the truck, for repairs, for petrol, for accommodation and food, for urgent cargoes, whatever."

He wasn't even in his truck when it happened. One night, in some provincial town or other, a chap in an anorak with the hood up had noticed him in a shop or a bar and followed him home to his *meublé*. "If he knew I was a trucker, he knew I'd have a wad of money. I could hear his footsteps behind me. I was near the door of the hotel when I heard him come at me, fast, from behind. I was ready for him. I drew my gun, turned, and shot him dead."

He studied my reaction. I was suitably impressed.

"Self-defence all right, that was no problem. It was what I'd done to the gendarme that complicated my case. Sent me to a shrink. A female. Screwed her as well. She was dying for it. Strictly against the rules, but mum's the word."

I tried to imagine a shrink who'd be dying to make love to this small violent man at the risk of losing her job and career. Yet he was strangely convincing. Perhaps she'd fallen for it too. Or perhaps he really was an innocent.

He giggled.

"Then she stood up for me in court – I was upstanding, honest, all that sort of stuff. Which was true. The boy's family were all there too – the mother and all, looking for compensation. How were they to manage without him, that kind of thing."

We hovered in front of a door, which turned out to be the hotel whose back peeked onto our yard. Single men of all colours made their way around us through the Art Nouveau doors to the cheap-chandeliered interior, grunting anonymous greetings at each other and us, a minor hold-up in an organised existence.

The bitter black wind blew up stronger from the wilds beyond the city boundaries, and I knew I'd soon have to head for home. I made a shift at taking my adieus, but he wasn't finished yet. He was getting to the important bit.

"Every morning, I have a hearty breakfast and I head for my truck. I go round it, check everything outside. Then I get in, pat the seats, look around, smell it all -"

He studied my face carefully.

"and I say 'Good Morning' to my truck."

He started moving towards the hotel entrance.

"And I drive off, a free man," he said, as he swept through the wrought-iron doors.

The cold wind bundled me home. Before lighting the lights I looked outside. The high-rises were not so much moving nearer as floating.

There we were, all glowing and floating, like tall ships on a night sea.

**Cycling Downhill Very Fast**

**Ciaran Parkes**

---

Cycling downhill very fast  
on a bicycle made of wood,  
trees and houses rushing past.

Every breath could be my last,  
wooden bicycles aren't that good  
cycling downhill very fast.

The front wheel shaking like a mast  
in a storm, a raging flood,  
trees and houses rushing past.

I think of wounds, elastoplast  
and losing several pints of blood,  
cycling downhill very fast.

In my face an icy blast  
of freezing wind and bits of mud,  
trees and houses rushing past.

By speeding lorries unsurpassed,  
I'd stop this bicycle if I could,  
cycling downhill very fast,  
trees and houses rushing past.

---

**at the Slobberers Convention**

**Jarlath Fahy**

---

at the slobberers convention  
its ok to be a fool  
fall on your faces flat  
trip on your laces own  
be tied tongued  
get out of bed side wrong  
two legs left  
thumbs all

got a bottom square  
a top round  
too fat bloody  
too thin blinkin  
deficiencies welcome  
come right on in  
limps lisps ithches  
psychological twitches  
droopy eyelids dodgy britches  
gammy shins

shiver sweat break wind  
piss yourself or shit  
be old confabulate  
shake from head to toe  
wheelchair friendly  
cancer friendly  
don't have an answer friendly  
come right on in we don't care  
bring your creaky share  
your sickest sin  
at the slobberers convention  
all are welcome in

what was I thinking of anyway  
my tracksuit trousers blown out like balloons  
pissing behind a furze the dog sliding into a boghole  
*well done mr veldon*  
and what was that other name leydon  
on the first of august I look up lugh  
on the internet now that's a coincidence  
and that fella with the evil eye  
who'd frighten the living daylights out of yah  
*balor the bollox* he'd make all the dogs bark within forty miles of him  
a bad sort an out and out bastard

the wind rushing through the reeds  
the young dog biting at and gagging on them  
pup pup pup jumping into every boghole dog-hole  
what was I thinking of  
a dark cloud like a fishermans cap  
moving over the sun  
*you lugh skip to my lugh*  
that song from my childhood  
*the boy I love is up in the gallery*  
*up in the gallery...there he is ....*  
*cant you see waving out his handkerchief*  
and that old sham from the *good old days*  
with the auctioneers hammer and the big words  
and the hankerchief

a bit of a castle called the three sisters  
staring at me from a distant hill  
or was it a hilly distance  
a mile or two of bog between us  
and three larks trying to hit the sky's ceiling  
rising sparks of song  
the wind in the reeds rustling like plastic bags

or an old womans blue bloomers  
with the white frills  
dancing this way and that  
and them all plucked out like a wind sock

what was I thinking of  
that night when the galvanised shed went  
bang bang bang all night  
and I in me bed and the image of that man  
with the club feet wind in every pleat of his worn dark suit  
cycling his black bike towards the high cross  
and the nice holy face on him  
and the two gammy spawgs  
as he exhaled and pushed down on his pedals  
red faced with the exertion cheeks swollen  
as if he was the wind bloated and suited and good hearted

the wind is now raising a hoop  
and that song about the boy I love  
being up in the gallery *rooneys electrical shop*  
*and pump* and how we used to sneak into  
the attic and all the tubes from the old radios still  
in their boxes collecting dust  
anyway that was it standing there on the unsteady bog  
my tracksuit trousers filling up with gods good wind  
ready to take off like a balloon or my grannys blue bloomers  
and slap you in the face

**Path From The Ocean**

**Paul Keenan**

---

Strolling back the length  
of The Spit  
a man-made strait

built of boulders:  
spent lava, granite  
topped with raked gravel,

we spot two seal cubs,  
agile, spirited,  
bobbing off the waves

onto low rock.  
Sanguine enough,  
these young ones

briefly raise  
their whiskered nostrils  
towards us, then shuffle

round to face the sea  
again, adjusting  
their fatty bulks

to the ragged rocks  
for the night.

\*\*\*

The waves slap the stones.  
The seals mournfully croon  
or babble?

The gathering dusk  
heavy with the smells  
of lichen rock,

salt on sand, seal piss.  
The breeze shifts  
to strong glacial wind.

In the weakening light  
the sea takes on the brownness  
of the seals slick wet backs

and under gathering cloud  
a pewtery light lingers  
in the harbour.

It's time now to leave  
to drive back towards  
the wash of town life.

## A Deep Cup, A Stone Bowl

David Hopes

---

A deep cup. A stone bowl. The bowl shivers with water. Sometimes the water is green and sometimes it is brown, or ablaze with the beaten gold and silver of the sun and moon. Storms come and waves push out against the rim of the bowl, and the power of the storm stirs the deep, but not to the very bottom, not as far as the seals can go. The seals can go to the foundation, to the stillness of the shivering bowl.

Spirits plunge even deeper, beneath the rock that is the roof of another world. No one writes of them.

The water beneath the waves is dark and cold, and though some think there is silence, there is not silence, but the murmuring of storm overhead, and the singing of the whales at its edge, where the bowl empties into the sea. In the deepest deep it is dark and cold, and if you are very young you do not go there, but, if you are very old, you might, seeking in your last hours the secret which must lie at the bottom of the world, and lay your body where it is never to be seen again, but enfolded into the deeps forever. Whether you dive to the deeps or loll in the green shallows or drowse on the sunset beaches, you are at home, and this is a good thing.

The seals come into the bay because the fish do. The fish come into the bay because the River Corrib cleanses the town, and the bread that the swans miss and the trash that the gulls miss, and the bodies of the swans and gulls at last, drift down into their mouths. Plus, the salmon born in the great Lough Corrib must get there again to bear their young. Nobody knows why. It is the way things are.

It's a dirty place, the city of men. Some of the fragments falling through the water are good, and some are bad, and the fish choose what they want, and then the seals choose them. Salmon drive the little fish to the shallows, and the seals come behind, hunting both the great and the little. Most can be swallowed with one gulp, and this is good, for one can swallow and plunge on for the next. The salmon in their first trip to the salt sea can be torn to pieces. But the salmon go up out of the bay at last and no one knows where they go. When they come again, they are old and wise, and the seals will not touch them, but let them pass into the secret ways of the sea.

Wherever there are fish the seals are ready to catch them. To catch fish is the best of good things, for one is strong and swift, and no fish in the bay can get away if one is determined. The basking sharks are longer than five seals, but they do not hunt, neither are they hunted, and if one tries to play with them, they turn away and lose

themselves in the deep. They are old and solemn, and some think they were kings in the lost forests before the seas came. No one knows what they are thinking.

Long ago the seals sunned on the rocks at the mouth of the river and let the sweet waters cleanse salt from the rims of their eyes, but they come to those rocks no more, because of the town and the people. The rocks that knew them are gone now, under the earth or under the waters, and the stone slabs there are worked by the hands of men, green under the water and black above. You cannot climb them, and if you did, you would not understand what you were seeing all around.

But the seals still come to the bay at morning and at evening, when the tide is high. They lift their grey heads above the water and look, and on one side there is a long arm of the town twinkling with light like a clutter of stars, and on the other side there is a lump of town twinkling with light like a fallen roof of stars, and among the lights the men pass, sometimes close to the water, sometimes far from it, seldom looking at the right place at the right time. There are males and females among the men, and it is the males that are the big ones, as it is among the people of the bay, and the pups are held by the long hands of the females and allowed to peer over into the dark bay water, at fish or at swans, they think, not imagining the eyes peering back at them from the dark of the waters and the shadow of the smooth stones. Long ago there was friendship between the people of the stone and the people of the bay, but then there was war, and even now that there is no war, friendship has not returned, but only sets of eyes peering one at another, out of different elements, in mutual wonder and incomprehension. The children of men make a strange cry and come running, arms outstretched.

Far out, away from the town, the rim of the bowl is grazed and shattered. There are many rocks one can haul up onto for a feel of the sun, and many fingers of the sea where one may enter the body of the land, the stone on all sides, in search of something, long ago, beyond memory-and imagine one is a creature of the stone and grass, lumbering on four limbs over the cruel hills in that merciless wind, or as the men do, on two limbs, tall and raw and exposed, forever looking out and over as though the thing one sought were far away already, and receding. The sea is easy, sometimes, and there is much to think of between the abysses of water and air.

The seal pup knew his father as the great one at the end of the rock, gray and old, with one eye pale and the other dark as the vales of the bay. His mother kept her body between the pup and his father, because he was as dangerous as he was great. The dark eye he could see out of and the pale one he could not, and he kept turning his thick neck from sea to land and back, so he would know from which direction danger was coming. Other males wanted to sit on the tip of his rock, a golden one, distinct from the grey ones all around, but he would not let them. A male would come

out of the water and his father would roar at him and he would roar back. His mother would crowd close to him so he would be protected, then, but the pup squirmed out of her protection so he could watch the battle. His father always won. He knew he would be doing the same one day, first the young seal lunging out of the surf, teeth bared, and then the old one, launching from the heights, with his great body like a fall of stone. Sometimes there would be blood and gobbets of flesh left on the rock, and gulls fell out of the air to snap them up.

Now the pup was fishing for himself sometimes, and sometimes when he scampered back to the warm rock, his mother looked at him vaguely, as if, had he not returned at that exact moment, she might have forgotten him forever. But she remembered at last, and when she came out of the waves at evening she still brought him fish, stronger and colder than he could find yet, and squid with their long arms still wrapping his snout when he began to eat. The sun passed over on its long road, and the bay was golden with him, until he sank in red and purple. Stars hung over the world, the bodies of the seals were asleep on the rocks. There were lights on the hills sometimes by night, and the pup knew they were men, but the lights crossed the hills and did not come down to the water, and he closed his eyes and slept.

He had no way of knowing his mother was very old, even older than his father. When she died it was not in the usual manner of their kind, but in her sleep at the side of her last pup. When the pup woke, he saw his father looming over himself and the body of his mother, like a darker stone set upon the stone. He had sensed his mate's passing, and stood watch until the light of day, as if making sure, as if tending the hope that the first rays of morning would revive her as it did all the world. But she lay still under the sun, and the great bull his father began to push her body with his snout. The pup got out of the way, then followed behind as his father nosed his mother off the slowly warming rock and into the bay.

He continued following as his father pushed the body into deeper water. The body hovered briefly at the rim of the waves before it sank. His father did not leave her even then, but pushed her along the stony bottom toward deep water. Deeper and deeper the old bull went, diving again and again as he exhausted his air supply. The water over them turned from gold to bronze to verdigris to blue and blue-black, the pup tagging behind the whole while, diving deeper than he ever had, swimming farther out than any pup his age, his fear in abeyance because his father was there, and his father was a floating island, a cloud in the water, greater even than the terrible fish flashing far out at the edge of the sea. At last the old bull was finished pushing, and his mother mingled her body with the spirits of the deep, who keep watch over the roots of things.

Gulls flapped noisily away when they returned to their boulder, father and son. The other cows were gone fishing with their pups, and there was quiet at the edge of the water, except for the water itself. What was the bay saying to itself all the time, over and over since the beginning of the world? The pup lay as close to his father as he dared. The powerful bull was stretched to his full height, sniffing the air. But he did not this time turn his head from bay to land, watching. Both his blind pale eye and his watchful dark one were closed. A sound came from inside the fierce body, a sound that was like the murmur of loss in the pup's own, and it gave him comfort. The sickle moon and all the stars moved over the bay that night, which itself moved in its bowl like a rocking cradle. The pup dreamed of his mother moving below, a spirit among the spirits in the deep, guarding secrets which will open to the light at the end of time. The bull his father did not once move but to look over the waves and call.

At daybreak, before his father was awake, the pup slid off the rock and into the water. He entered a cloud of mackerel that had been feeding near shore, and the bay took care of his belly for a time. He swam. He swam so the morning sun put a shadow of himself on the calm water in front of him. He was swimming west, and toward the open sea. The land climbed up higher on his right, in the distance pushed up into sloping mountains. The land went up as the water went down. There must be secrets there, too, over the pinnacles of stone, moving in the blinding light as the seal spirits moved in sightless dark. There was a roof above this world, and maybe above that another sea and another air quick with sun and moon, and maybe it went on forever.

The day was hot, and the pup dipped his head away from the fire and the mountains. It was green down there, and cool. The stones of the bottom lay only his own length beneath him. Before him lay an island, and beyond that another island. He could hear the water flowing between the islands like waves sloshing between the bodies of gigantic seals asleep on the spires of the deep. He thought he might swim to the island. He thought he might go at least to the borders of the Great Sea, when he caught a movement on the shore to his right.

It was a man, a boy, probably, though it was hard to judge the size of a man when there was only the sky and the sea around him, and twelve mountains behind. The boy was standing on the shore with his mouth open. The pup was used to seeing people, but he was not used to people seeing him back. But the boy saw him. His eyes were so wide and brown they almost looked like a seal's. The boy had a long stick in his hand, and a line on the stick. The line rose from the water. The boy had been fishing. Five mud-coloured flounders lay on the grass beside the boy, one still

moving weakly in the cruel air. The pup understood this. The boy was a fisher like himself. A good one, too: five fat flounders.

Perhaps the greed in his eyes was visible to the boy, or perhaps it was longing for contact that led the boy to throw one of his fishes to the seal, the one that was still flapping weakly. Before he realized what he was doing, the pup had snatched the fish and began tearing it with his strong teeth. It was warm from the sun. The boy smiled. The boy was making sounds the seal did not understand. The boy ran along the shore as the seal moved in the surf, until the seal stopped, and they stood again eye to eye, one still in the water, one still in the blaze of the light. It was a pup looking at a pup. The seal wondered where the bull was, where the father was who would protect the boy if a shark came up out of the sea, or a dark storm hit suddenly from the east.

The dying flounder gave one last shudder in the seal's jaws, and then he dived into the cool of the sea. When he came up he was a long way out in the waves, but the boy was still watching him. He lifted his hand and waved. Maybe the water was clear enough that the boy had watched him all the way. The seal sank so only his brown eyes showed above the wavelets, but he did not swim away until the boy picked up the four remaining fish, turned his back to the sea, and began climbing the hill, whose stones flashed white as the crests of the breaking waves. It was hard going on land, clearly. The seal wanted to cry to the boy to come down where all is soft and cool and the water lifts you up when you are weary. That the boy would come back to this spot he understood without knowing why. He would come back too-for a flounder, for a handout, maybe, or maybe not for that at all.

The grey herons were stalking the rim of the bay. The moon was so close that if you stuck your head beneath the waves you could see the rim of it rising up the heavenly road in emerald and silver, still too secret for the people of the stone to see.

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**The Ring**

**Aideen Henry**

---

I select a soft brack  
'with ring'  
they cut thick slices  
smather in butter  
chew tentatively  
until the ring is crunched

The victor cheers  
while the two bachelors curse  
all the brack they ate  
for nothing

I wonder why my children  
value the ring  
when they shuttle weekly  
between parents who struggle  
to be free of it.

---

**In Future**

**Gavan Duffy**

---

It was more like remembering a past that  
Hadn't happened yet  
Than imagining my future.  
I saw it as  
A kind of old fashioned tomorrow  
Black and white, with dated clothes.  
There I would be facing the camera  
Head on  
My mouth set like a buckle in the centre  
Of my face.  
I would read history with excitement  
As if it were breaking news.  
I would spend my evenings scribbling  
In a notebook  
With a fountain pen.  
Its nib a silver claw scratching  
At the page as the pen slowly bleeds  
To death.  
I would sleep flat on my back on a half used  
Double bed. Body as rigid  
As a hand placed on the Bible.  
My wife (their mother) would be passed.  
My favourite picture of her placed dead  
Centre of the mantle.  
Taken in her brief respite as we walked  
On a winters beach  
She would be wearing a thick black headband  
Like a blindfold pushed up off her face.  
She would allow the wind inside her  
Coat, relishing the delicious shiver  
It brought.  
I would gently chide her and re-button her collar  
Walk her home once more.  
After that I would suddenly become old

My eyes would point downwards  
My hands feel like cold cups of tea.  
The past would become the present  
The future something to be  
Regretted in advance.  
I would succumb in public, a short  
Desperate little drama. Onlookers would watch  
Each other to see who would take responsibility  
Angry at my  
Putting them in that position  
Vowing to live in the moment  
And to stop missing what they had  
Never had.

## **Biographical details**

**Celeste Augé** was born in the backwoods of Northern Ontario, Canada in 1972, and moved to the West of Ireland in 1984. Her poems have been published in a variety of British and Irish journals. She recently published a chapbook *Tornadoes for the Weathergirl*.

**Aideen Barry** was born in Cork in 1979 and Graduated from Galway Mayo Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Fine Art, with Distinction in 2002 and an honours MA at the Institute of Art and Design Technology, Dun Laoighre, Co. Dublin. She has been awarded the Tyrone Guthrie award for 2007 and the Best Experimental Film Award at the Silent Light Super 8 film festival in Cork and the Hewlett Packard Award for her 2002 Degree Show. In 2003 she had her first international solo show in The Centre Cultural in Paris for "Bloomsday". Her work "*The Futility of Conveying Emotion*" has been shown in Paris, Lorient, London and Shanghai. In 2004 she received the top prize at The Claremorris Open, adjudicated by David Thorpe of the 2004 Turner Prize. Her work is in the Galway County Council Collection, The Office of Public Works and the Irish Consulate offices in Shanghai, China. She recently showed in the 2006 Kilkenny Arts Festival, Tulca Season of Visual Art and the 2006 Dublin Fringe Festival. She is a member of the Tulca Board of Directors, a Board member of "House Projects" (an Artist led initiative), a Director of The Galway Civic Trust, a Director of the new 126 Gallery in Galway and a member of Arts Space Studios Galway. She has just been appointed as the West of Ireland Representative for the Visual Artists Ireland. She lives in County Galway.

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

**Patricia Burke Brogan** is the author of the internationally acclaimed 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 in November 2005 prior to moving to the Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire. It was staged as part of Galway's Project '06 in July 2006. The script of the play was recently published by Wordsonthestreet, Galway.

**Mary Byrne** divides her time between teaching, translating and writing. She has had short fiction and poetry published in RTE's Lyric FM, *Irish Press*, *Sunday Tribune*, *Irish Times*, *Cyphers*, *West 47/Cuir Annual 2005*, *Phoenix Irish Short Stories 2003* (ed. David Marcus), *Faber Book of Best Irish Short Stories 200*, (ed. David Marcus), forthcoming, BBC (Radio 4 & World Service), *Orbis*, *Stand. European Geologist. Dalhousie Review*, *Long Story Short* (ezine), *Queens Noir* anthology (Akashic Press) forthcoming October 07. Awarded a Hennessy Literary Award 1986 and *Bourse Lawrence Durrell de la Ville d'Antibes* 1995.

**Andrew Caldicott** lives in Wexford. His work has appeared previously in *Trinity Poetry Broadsheet* and *Precursor*.

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

**Aoife Casby** has been published in *The Cúirt Annual*, *Divas!*, *West 47*, *Crannóg*, *Ropes* and *The Cork Literary Review* and was short-listed for the *START Poetry Chapbook Award*. She has an MA in Writing from NUIG

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

**David Curtis** is the author of *Update from Pahrump* (1992) and has published poetry in numerous journals and magazines. He is currently a professor of English at Sacred Heart University, in Fairfield, CT.

**Sean Donegan** has been published in *Crannóg*, *Markings*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Journal of the British Haiku Society's Blythe Spirit*, *Time Haiku*, *London*, *Spirituality*, *Ireland's Own* and *Galway Now*. His work has also been broadcast on RTE Radio 1.

**Kevin Donnelly** is temporarily living in Paris studying French and springtime.

**Gavan Duffy** is from Dublin

**Jarlath Fahy** is a former member of The Focus Theatre Group. His first collection is forthcoming from Wordsonthestreet.

**Stephen Farren** is from Derry, but currently lives in Barcelona where he teaches English. He has previously been published in *Crannóg*, *Default*, and *Black Mountain Review*.

**Maureen Gallagher** lives and works in Galway. She's had poetry and prose published in literary magazines worldwide and broadcast on RTE. Her work has been anthologised, most recently in *Van Gogh's Ear*. She's been shortlisted for poetry awards many times, most recently the Dunlaoire/Rathdown 2006 Poetry Now Award. Maureen's website can be viewed at [www.maureengallagher.net](http://www.maureengallagher.net).

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

**Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh**. Is as Ciarraí ó dhúchas d'Ailbhe ach tá sí buailte fúithi sa Ghaillimh le tamall. Uaireanta, bíonn sí ag maireachtaint sa Fhrainc, ach tá sí saghas bréan de sin anois. Tá sí ag iarraidh filíocht a chumadh leis na cianta.

**Peter Guy** is engaged in a Ph.D at the National Center for Franco-Irish Studies, at ITT, Dublin. He has been published in *West47*, *The Burning Bush*, *Iota*, *Poetry Nottingham* and *Poetry Monthly*, and had a chapbook of poetry published in 2002.

**Gerard Hanberry** is working on his third poetry collection. He teaches English at Colaiste Einde, Salthill and is currently teaching Creative Writing (poetry) at NUI, Galway.

**Aideen Henry** has previously been published in *Crannóg*.

**Kevin Higgins'** first collection, *The Boy With No Face*, was published by Salmon in 2005. It was shortlisted for the 2006 Strong Award and was Salmon Poetry's best selling book of 2005. A collection of his essays and reviews, *Poetry, Politics & Dorothy Gone Horribly Astray*, was published in December by Lapwing. His second collection of poems, *Time Gentlemen, Please* is due from Salmon.

**David Hopes** is a poet, playwright, actor and professor at the University of North Carolina. His latest book is *Bird Songs of the Mesozoic* from Milkweed Press.

**Fred Johnston** is a poet, critic and novelist. He has published eight volumes of poetry, a collection of stories and three novels. He is manager of The Western Writers' Centre. He was appointed 2004 Writer-in-Residence to the Princess Grace Irish Library in Monaco.

**Paul Keenan** was born in 1963 in Armagh City. His poetry has appeared in numerous international literary journals including *Poetry Scotland*, *Poetry Greece*, *Deep South* (University of Otago, New Zealand) and *Social Alternatives* (University of Queensland). He is a lecturer at Trinity College Dublin.

**Sheila Knowles** has recently returned to her home country of Ireland after spending 13 years living and working in Germany as an English teacher. She's been writing poetry for a few years and has had poems published in a number of on-line and print magazines. She has been the poetry editor at [www.inditecircle.com](http://www.inditecircle.com) for the last 4 years.

**Brian Lindsey** is from Augusta MO USA

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

**Brian McNamara** has been previously published in *Crannóg*.

**James Martyn** is a poet and fiction writer. He has been published in *Crannóg* and the online magazine *WOW!*. He was nominated for an Hennessy Award and shortlisted for the Francis McManus Award.

**Susan Millar DuMars'** first collection, *The Wellspring Wife*, is due from Salmon in 2008. *American Girls*, a volume of short stories, is due from Lapwing in 2007.

**Alan Jude Moore** was born in Dublin in 1973. His poetry has been published in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Stinging Fly*, *The Burning Bush*, *ROPES*, *Crannóg*, *Kestrel*, *Poetry Salzburg Review* and in translation by Italian annual *Pelagos*. His fiction has been twice short-listed for the Hennessy Literary Award and published in various journals. His collection of poetry, *Black State Cars*, was published by Salmon Poetry in 2004. A selection of poems from *Black State Cars* was published last year in translation by the Moscow literary journal, *Novaya Junost*.

**Pauline Murphy**'s work has appeared in *Writing in the West* and *The Cúirt Journal*. She was awarded a scholarship to attend The Poet's House.

**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*.

**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.

**Mary Redfern** is visual artist who also writes poetry. She has long admired haiku, for its strong visual quality, its close association with the natural world, and its relevance to every-day life.

**Ian Review**'s work has appeared in *Leviathan Quarterly*, *Orbis*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Zed 20*, *Poetry Scotland* and *Atlanta Review*. A first collection *The Walrus Tusk and The Dancing Bear* was published by Akros Press in 2002.

**Stephen Shields** has been published in *Markings* and *Crannóg*. He has an MA in Writing from NUIG.

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

**Davide Trame** is an Italian teacher of English, born and living in Venice. His poems have been published in literary magazines in the U.K, U.S. and in Ireland in *Black Mountain Review* and *The SHOp*. His poetry collection, "Re-Emerging", was published as an on-line book by [www.gattopublishing.com](http://www.gattopublishing.com) in 2006.

**Dolores Stewart**'s first collection *In Out of the Rain* was published in 1999 by the Dedalus Press. Two collections in Irish followed: *'Sé Sin le Rá* in 2001 and *An Cosán Dearg* in 2003, both published by Coiscéim. Her most recent collection is *Presence of Mind*, published by Dedalus, 2005. She won first prize in the 2003 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Féile Filíochta International Poetry Competition in English - the Irish Times Perpetual Trophy - as well as second prize in the Irish category. She was runner-up / Gaeilge in the 2003 Samhain Smurfit International Poetry Competition, and in the Strokestown International Poetry Competition, 2004. As part of a cultural exchange programme, *Turas na bhFilí go h-Albain*, she took part in a tour of the Western Isles and Glasgow in November, 2004. In 2005 she was granted a residency at the Heinrich Böll cottage on Achill Island.

**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 *Johnny Tell Them* is published by Guildhall Press, Derry.

**Alan Weadick** lives in Dublin where as a member of Claptrap and Second Banana theatre companies he acted in and directed productions of Beckett, Pinter, Yeats, Synge, David Mamet and others. His own stageplay "Knock-Off" was produced in Crypt Theatre, Dublin and Cork Arts Theatre. He has had poetry published in *Books Ireland*, *The Burning Bush*, *Nth Position*, *The Argotist Online* and *Roundtable Review*.