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A New Ulster

FEATURING THE TALENTS OF Cliff Wedgbury, Lisa McAree, Saeed Salimi Babamiri, Daniel Pickering, Joseph A. Schiller, Rosie Johnson, Gavin Bourke, Sean Rowan, Sangita Kansal and Jennie E. Owen **EDITED BY AMOS GREIG**

A NEW ULSTER

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This edition features work by. Cliff Wedgbury, Lisa McAree, Saeed Salimi Babamiri, Daniel Pickering, Joseph A. Schiller, Rosie Johnson, Gavin Bourke, Sean Rowan, Sangita Kansal and Jennie E. Owen

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: CLIFF WEDGBURY

. Cliff Wedgbury is a Cork based poet living in that City for the past fifty years. He was born in London and a member of The Greenwich Poetry Society during his teenage years. Previous work has been published by Belfast/Lapwing in two collections, “Kiss” and “A Lingering Adolescence.”

black scarf

i'm still wearing the black scarf
you knitted for me in 1969
we froze for weeks in unheated bed-sits
reading shelley under thin blankets
two prisoners of love in our own arctic gulag
even in bed we kept our clothes on
and spoke tender words in clouds of
misty condensation

when spring came to hampstead heath
you gave me the cold shoulder
and went off with a boy named justin

so just in case there is the remotest chance
you would ever think of me
across this vast expanse of time
your black scarf
still keeps me warm
when a cold wind sweeps across
the city skyline
and something melts inside my heart
as i remember your cheeky smile
and crooked tooth

by

Cliff Wedgbury

by oxford circus

you stand before me
in stunned surprise
becoming more lovely
as recognition
lights your eyes

we parted with remorse
when dark clouds gathered
and winter filled our hearts

but now
as we balance on the curb-stones edge
the traffic a thundering river
we acknowledge that kindly affection
as time suddenly slips away

leaving two flustered actors
rehearsing a restoration play

Cliff Wedgbury

tea with dad

lost in the heat haze
of a backyard sunday
he would sit and gaze
across a steaming pond
of a china mug

talking in that cheerful way
where truth surfaced easily

as mum hoisted wet white sheets
like familiar sails on a still horizon

Cliff Wedgbury

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: LISA MCAREE



Lisa McAree, originally from Ballybrack, Dublin, lives in Carlow and is a member of the Carlow Writers' Co-operative. Her poem, *Ardmona Gardens, Turf Lodge* was published in *Step Away Magazine*. In 2019, her poem, *Parted Clouds*, was 'highly commended' in the Doolin Poetry Video Competition.

Lady Mid-day

She's a shadow under grey skies,
she dances without moonlight.

And she is beauty unrefined -
in another realm she's adored, bejewelled,

holds the gaze of crowds from a stage.

On the stony, stained pavement

she pulls on her cigarette,
holds her arms in arabesque,

pirouettes, punches air for the encore.

She's in search of a man –

a uniformed one seizes her,
removes her, like darkness covers

shadow, in the name of peace.

Lisa McAree

Off Raglan Road

In the Smithfield Tower of double-glazed silence,
the old dream begins again.

The pages flip slowly, then slip through the grate,
melt into the excrement of the city.

In summer it's ripe, as I stutter through streets
that run parallel to *Anna*, before crossing over.

A busker sings himself hoarse, braves the Dublin
wit from passing gurrriers. He strums out requests
from punters on his *Washburn*. On the cobblestones,
his case is unfolded - between the percussion of coins,
the odd note floats. I follow him to a lane off Raglan road.

In the morning, blue silk lies on the bedsit floor, the remnants
of red wine is in coffee cups, as his calloused fingertips
move across my back. I have sinned, I sin,

I will sin again – on my dry tongue, within my flesh.

I feel the impression of a metal cross on my right palm.

I seek redemption in the ritual of cloves and hot port,
the days have bled together in blackout after blackout.

I head south for the Shanganagh shore. My eyes,
mascara-stained, shut on the bus. Beneath my eyelids,
an image of Mary, untouched, cloaked in pewter,
mocks my hangover. The glaze of summer sinks
behind the sea. I lie, gin-soaked, on the midnight sand.
Waiting for the tide.

Lisa McAree

Dora

(After Dora Maar)

Against a backdrop of black satin,
there was blood between the roses
when we met. You collected
it as memorabilia for your showcase –
a gallery of the losers of war –
along with a vial of stolen tears.

Anti-war, as oil on canvas,
you're a violent instigator between
the sheets of your bed, any bed.
Another muse, imprisoned on a chair,
melancholy preserved, a reflection
of yourself, every stroke you make.

Post electric-masochistic rituals,
I remain undissolved, broken
from the frame of cubistic erotica,
darker self-portraits, restored and lifted
by the colours of the Luberon.

Lisa McAree

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: SAEED SALIMI BABAMIRI

Saeed Salimi Babamiri is a Kurdish translator and poet. His published books in Iran are “Half an Apple” and “The Mouse’s Wedding” a play and a story in verse, both for children. He has many other translations waiting to be published. His major long translation from Kurdish into English verses is “Mam and Zeen” by Ahmad Xanee. It is known as “Kurdish Romeo and Juliet” which is ready to be published.

Your Hair

Nowadays it is your hair,
That makes headlines, goes on air.
One threatens it, and one cuts it,
One makes a flag from it;
On top stands a shining red.
From it I make songs and poems,
Thread by thread!

Poem by: Kurdish poet K.D.Azad

Translated by: Kurdish poet and translator Saeed Salumi Babamiri

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: DANIEL PICKERING

Fiction by Daniel Picker has appeared in *The Abington Review*, *The Kelsey Review*, *The 67th Street Scribe*, *The Adelaide Literary Magazine*,(NYC), and *Scribe of Macaulay Honors College CUNY*. Nonfiction by Daniel Picker has appeared in *The Georgia Review*, *Harvard Review*, *The Sewanee Review*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Copperfield Review*, *The Oxonian Review*, *The Irish Journal of American Studies*,(IRL), *The Stanford Daily*, *Rain Taxi Review of Books*, *Middlebury Magazine*, and many others. Daniel Picker is the author of a book of poems, *Steep Stony Road*, and won *The Dudley Review Poetry Prize* at Harvard University. Daniel's memoir "Eat Your Good Lamb" on studying with Seamus Heaney at Harvard appears in *The Oxonian Review* of the University of Oxford where Daniel studied English after studying English at Harvard. Daniel's poetry has appeared in *Sequoia: The Stanford Literary Magazine*, *Elysian Fields Quarterly*, *Soundings East*, *Vermont Literary Review*, *Folio*, *RUNE: MIT*, *Ireland of the Welcomes Magazine*, and *The Dudley Review* at Harvard, among many others.

YOUR HANDS : B. Elsie Haney Picker-Zinni, April 25, 1929-April 25, 1998

I

Your Uncle had agreed to become
a Catholic beside his mother on her
deathbed. Your brother John too was
a Catholic. Your mother Mary, her
middle name Elsie was what she
used believing Mary unlucky was
blind when she passed from her
one daughter, “Betty” we always
knew as mom, ma, mother.

Elizabeth was your name,
and Uncle Frank called you Bette,
dad Liz, Joe Lisabetta, or
Elizabeth gone from us
forever now but always with us.

II

I remember standing near you

watching you peel carrots with
the split steel paring knife, slit
peels falling in the plastic, true
strong strokes revealing the fresh
sweet core I could chomp on before
running outdoors. Or, chopping fresh
celery for your famous Thanksgiving
turkey stuffing late the night before.

I'd always rather wolf the work
in progress than patiently waiting
for tomorrow or dinner. Even eating
fresh cut pieces of Italian bread
then dipping in steaming sauce led
you to shoo me, get away, from work.

III

In the morning I heard the familiar
fork against turquoise and white
china bowl, then the call, light
just breaking, "I'm making French
Toast!" With that she was sure
I'd rise and I did rushing downstairs
for hot breakfast with butter and sugar,

juice, jelly or syrup many mornings spent.

So now there is only silence,
no music of the silver and everyday
china. The fine china in the dining
room never stirs, unheard the sliding
glass-paned china closet doors, today
everything is still, not alive, quiet.

IV

On rainy Sunday afternoons
there was *The Children's Film Festival*
with Kukla, Fran, and Ollie, or with June
“Funny Girl,” and once alone at the Shore
out on Steel Pier with the ocean
crashing below the boards you sipped
“Espresso” after “Oliver” was enjoyed.

These last months had left us all
alone much, once to watch “Manhattan”
in black and white; we smiled at the end
in that second to last hospital
where you often felt tired and wished

to rest. So I'd go home alone,
shooed out again from you to no home.

V

In that last hospital in your old
city, Philadelphia they pushed you
through sleek corridors past your two
favorites, colorful prints of Van Gogh
and Renoir. "You're with all the biggies,"
I jested to you flat on your back, told
no bypass surgery today though
in good spirits responding
"I'm one of the biggies!" laughing,
right at home at Temple, my father's
university in this city you two once
called home when you two were together.
Now I walked beside you the Monday
after Easter wishing we were back home.

VI

A few weeks later, the day before
your birthday you asked, "Not much
traffic today?" A few days before

you said from your bed, “If I go
give this ring to Robin, and the sapphires
to Meg,” when I didn’t wish to believe
you could ever go. But you gave me
a few dollars for the “*Sunday Inquirer*”
and asked for “fudge from Bayard’s
Chocolate House,” and I asked, “light or
dark?” and you said, “both.” “But
they won’t let you have it.” “I’ll
sneak it,” you said that late afternoon while
I helped you eat fruit, sip juice; heard words.

VII

After Jeff returned from hospital
by mid-afternoon I waited for neighbor
to visit you on your birthday. For
fudge I went downtown to Tanner Street,
around the corner from the hardware
store where I bought a plant, deep
yellow-orange marigolds, then the call.
We rushed across the Walt Whitman
Bridge then up the Schuylkill
to Roosevelt Boulevard, then down Broad
to see you in hospital. On your

birthday in a state of shock eyes
blind, but hearing and holding my hand.
Your strong soft hand squeezed mine hand.

VIII

The marigolds I planted in the frontyard
near where the old maple was which
reached up high in the sky before
my window by which I would lie
on my bed reading or writing or
dreaming before I sensed deep within
you were coming down the hill,
soon to be home, and I'd rise
to see you pull up beside
the curb with Joe or dad since
you didn't drive. That tree's long gone
and a younger thinner one grows nearby
but still I can't find any reason to arise.
Though the birds chirp by light lit window.

Daniel Picker

THAT LAST APRIL DAY

That afternoon in bright Spring sun
we ambled down the gravel path
and over lush grass seeking shade under
the tall old grey trees. Past the stones
and bushes to the canopy where some
would sit and the Pastor intoned our
prayer requests. My father placed a rose
in red on your pale grey-blue casket,
then we helped my stepfather up to
do the same. I felt the cool cloth
in my hand as I placed fingers, palm
to say goodbye, that last April day.
We read of your mother, brother, uncle,
daughter, grandparents, names carved near-by.

Daniel Picker

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: JOSEPH A. SCHILLER

Joseph is a high school social studies teacher in Houston, TX USA, where he lives with his wife and three sons. Writing and painting is his side passion. He recently published his first fiction novel, *Upon the Arrival of Dawn*.

Panic

By Joseph A. Schiller

A twitch. Just a quick twitch. The slightest, imperceptible jerk of the right index finger. Unnoticeable. Subtle. A bit of movement from the left middle toe. Quick spasms. Followed by the right eyebrow. Random. The body slowly, gradually, stirs one small muscle and involuntary shudder at a time. Sensations flutter, struggling to return. Awakening. Consciousness is blurred and inconsistent. Sporadic. Foggy. Weak.

Wubh...? Uhb...? Confusion.

Breathing gradually strengthens, though retarded. Heavy and inconsistent. The pace quickens slowly. Fitfully. Incrementally. Deep, intermittent gasps for breath. Inhaling stale, earthy air. A stagnant quality. Occasionally choking and coughing with every attempted gulp. Trying to fill the lungs, but never quite enough. Urgency. Growing increasingly desperate. Strained.

The right hand begins to move with every ounce of strength available. Inching. Sensing. Inching gingerly centimeter by centimeter across the front of a pair of jeans, feeling the denim fabric. Something coarse. Gritty. Rough to the touch. Shivers. Shivering. The air is cold and musty. Dank. Malodorous.

Wha...? Whe...? Confusion.

Hard. Rigid. Uncomfortable. Sharply aware now of a stiff, unforgiving surface below. Left hand immobile. Stuck. Lying pinned underneath. Useless.

Hurting. Pain. A severe migraine. Becoming increasingly conscious of a dull, throbbing ache in several places. Discomfort. Bruising.

Uuuuuugh! Confusion.

Trying, with a marginal increase of strength, to bend the left knee upward ever so slightly, propping it up with the foot. Tortuous. Scooting it back along the surface below, making a scratching, dull scraping sound. Then...thump. Thump.

Heart rate increasing. Intensifying. Fluttering. Beginning to race. Breathing becomes rushed, quick, and convulsive.

Where am I? What is this? Panic.

Slowly opening the eyes, blinking rapidly. Adjusting. Dark. Pitch dark. Nothing. Void.

Something grainy occasionally sprinkles down on the face. Unable to wipe it away. Helpless. Immobile. Confined.

Hey?!!!! Hey?!!!! Panic.

Tormented. Impossibly difficult to twist, to turn, to shift about. Failing to move much at all. Claustrophobic.

Fear. Terror. Intense horror. Imagining the worst. Visualizing the absolute worst. Jerking. Twisting. Muffled screaming, swallowed by the void. Choking. Throbbing.

Heeeey...?!!! Hey?!!! Panic.

Fighting. Struggling to move. Very little strength. Banging a knee. Crying. Banging. Crying. Thud. Thud. Thud. Sand continues to sprinkle down as in an hourglass—heart rate pounding. Anguish. Misery.

Exhausted. Dizzy. Faint. Breathing slacks. Gasping. Weakening.

Help!!!!!! What the fuuuu...heeeeeeeelp!!!!!! Anger.

Sobbing. Tears continue dribbling down. Sadness. Intense malaise. Questioning. Frightened.

Choking. Wheezing. Shortness of breath.

Stop. Stop. Slow it down. Figure this out. Think. Think. Denial.

Slowing. Breathing slacking. Declining. Eyes close. Meditative. Processing. Picturing the

situation. Reasoning out potential options. Contemplative.

Nothing. No. No. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Trivial. Renewed streams of tears run down. Failure. Defeat. Depression sets in.

Ok. Ok. It's ok. It'll be ok. Acceptance.

More sand falls. Migraine sharpens. Breathing grows inconsistent. A burning sensation grows in the lungs. Unbearable.

Shame. Heartbreak. Regret. Profound regret. A meaningless life. Worthless. Valueless. Forgotten.

Not right. Not fair. Just not righ...

Seizing. Gasping. Convulsing. Gasping. Gasping. Gasping.

Blacking out. Out. Loss of consciousness.

Kaaak. Kak. Ka.....k.....

The Results

By Joseph A. Schiller

Ethan stepped up to one of several elevators of a high-rise of medical offices and clinics and promptly indicated he wanted to go up with the corresponding button. He only had to wait a few moments before the elevator made the expected ding sound that traditionally accompanies its arrival before the door to the elevator too opened before him, as if welcoming its latest guest with open arms. After stepping in and selecting the button for the fifth floor, the door of the elevator quickly closed and subsequently began to climb quickly upward as directed. The building did not seem to have a soul within, Ethan noted, besides the security officer sitting behind the reception desk on the first floor. As he moved down the empty hallway toward his destination his footsteps almost created an echo as he walked.

When Ethan finally found the door to the clinic at which he had an appointment, he paused. His hesitation was only momentary but was enough to make Ethan feel embarrassed by the cautionary impulse. *You're being silly.* Almost to overcompensate, he stepped into the clinic waiting room as if his arrival were somehow greatly anticipated, only to find two other guests looking up uninterestedly at him from their seats. Ethan took a few awkward steps up to an electronic interface screen on the other side of the small room.

Approaching the display in the wall triggered a series of electronic noises from the device before a surprisingly life-like female voice sounded. "Welcome. Please place your right wrist face down over the biometric scanner. This process may take several seconds. Do not lift your wrist from the screen until directed to do so. If you have any questions or require assistance, press the 'Help' button."

Ethan pulled the sleeve of his shirt covering his right arm a bit to his forearm and promptly placed his wrist down upon the small glass screen as instructed. A bluish-green light moved quickly back and forth under the glass, flashing as it did, indicating the device was reading the identification chip just under the surface of his skin.

After a couple of seconds, the woman's voice returned. "Welcome, Mr. Malvic. You are now checked in for your appointment. Please take a seat, and your name will be called shortly."

Pulling his sleeve back over his wrist, Ethan turned and took a seat along the side of the wall a few chairs away from one of the other two patients, exchanging a compulsory smile and nod as he

did. He remembered from his initial visit just how thoroughly clean and sterilized the clinic was maintained, with a hint of disinfectant lingering in the air. *Or, perhaps they pump something in through the ventilation system.* Either way, all he knew for sure was this was a level of cleanliness impossible for a person to achieve. *They are clearly using a humanoid service.*

There would only be a few minutes at the most to wait. One of the benefits of the advent of automated medical services over the past century was the addition of increased efficiencies, one of which was that appointments started and ended with remarkable precision with physicians, nurses, and reception staff being replaced by AI. There was also the added anonymity and sensitivity as well. Patients entered through one automatic door and were ushered out another when finished. What Ethan could not reason was, however, with all of the tremendous advancements that had been made, why there was still a lingering necessity to ever physically visit a clinic just to receive the results of a set of lab tests. Ethan's profession, that of a school teacher, he reasoned, had long since migrated online for virtual or asynchronous lessons. In his short six years as a teacher, he never had, and would never meet any of his pupils face-to-face. *If I can collect assignments from home, I can certainly get these lab results sent to me digitally.*

Eventually finding himself alone after the other two patients were called in for their appointments, Ethan had a quick moment to himself in silence before the automated voice came over a speaker to announce his turn. "Mr. Malvic, please step forward and enter. Room 5 has been prepared for you."

Stepping forward as requested, Ethan walked up to a door that lead into a back hallway which then led into a series of small spaces. When he was standing directly under the door, a sensor was triggered and the door slid open, allowing him to enter. Ethan walked about halfway down the hallway until he found the entrance to the room labeled with five, and the door to the cubicle opened immediately revealing a small capsule with a single chair facing a computer interface.

Ethan took one step forward to the chair but stopped, and just stared down, the door closing behind him. He slowly, gingerly, moved toward the chair, reaching out to grab the back of it as if to pull it away and sit, before pausing again. *You wanted this. Remember that you wanted this.*

Finally sitting down, Ethan faced the screen and adjusted himself in the seat, almost squirming as he did. Electronic beeps sounded from the interface before the AI-generated voice spoke to him. "Mr. Malvic, Please place your right wrist face down over the biometric scanner. This process may take several seconds. Do not lift your wrist from the screen until directed to do so. If you have any questions or require assistance, press the 'Help' button."

Much more reluctant this time, Ethan reached forward to rest his right wrist upon the glass biometric scanning screen. He noticed the anxiety rising within him. After quickly having his identity verified, Ethan waited for the interface to respond. "Mr. Malvic, thank you. The result of the examination you requested are now available. A printout of that result is forthcoming. There are eight minutes and twenty-eight seconds of time remaining for your appointment. Feel free to use the

remaining time to review your exam results. We know you have alternative service provider options, so thank you for trusting us with your business. Should you have additional needs in the future we hope that you will consider our services again.”

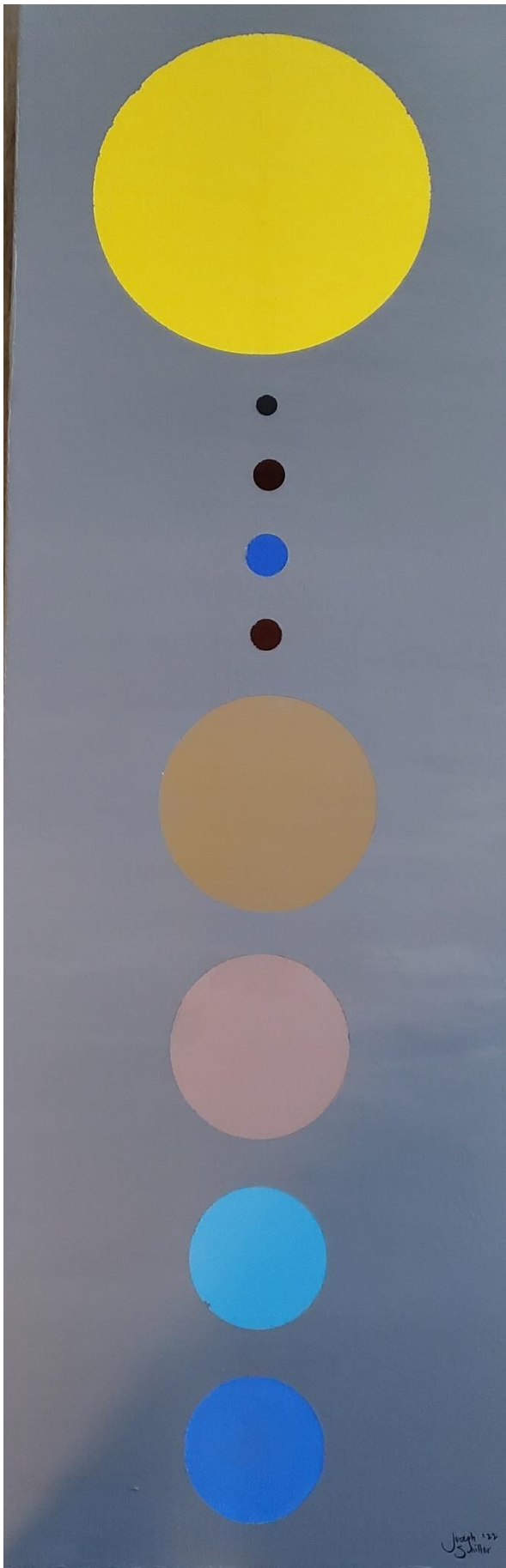
When the AI-generated voice had concluded its message, a brief whirring sound came from within the interface before a small piece of paper was released from a slip in the device. Ethan did not immediately reach for the exam results, but rather, sat back in the chair, leaning and stretching backward, slouching a bit. He turned his face to look up at the tiles of the ceiling and closed his eyes, taking slow, deep breaths. Ethan felt his heart pounding in his chest. Several more long breaths passed in and out before Ethan sat forward again to face the wall monitor. He sighed, then extended his hand to take the slip of paper sticking out of the module. *Just take it.*

Forcing himself to look at what was printed on the paper, Ethan read,

5 years, 3 months, 2 days, 6 hours, and 24 minutes



Dot series by Joseph A. Schiller



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: ROSIE JOHNSON

Lapwing has published four books of Rosie's poetry since 2010. In her fourth, *Six-Count Jive* (2019) she describes her recovery from ten years of CPTSD into a world of natural beauty and happier life. Recent anthologies include *Her Other Language* (Arlen House, 2020), the Northern Irish section of *Places of Poetry* (OneWorld, 2020), *American Writers Review 2021: Turmoil and Recovery* and Live Canon's *126 Project* where 126 living poets responded to Shakespeare's 126 sonnets. Usually Rosie had written in 17-syllable micro-poems but is expanding into longer, narrative poems these days. She reviews for London Grip and facilitates writing groups. Born in Belfast, Rosie lives by the sea in Kent. <http://www.rosiejohnstonwrites.com>



On a scale of one to ten

The questionnaire slips to the floor.

A gust from the window spins it and years ago my son's boat

drifts on the town pond more and more out of reach.

A tear rolls down my cheek. Is this me now,

where questions pared of all sensitivity

rate me formally beyond normality

on a scale of one to ten?

My inner song replies, 'Just go, those questions aren't for you, you're coming

through. You've had a bad case of bad, bad husband but you're not sinking.

Life shines in you, clinks round and light in your fingers, new minted.

Savour it with fresh-baked rolls floured, mallow-soft, plump.

Feel it slobber you like a month-old puppy climbing up your

sleeves to suck your ears. Be bold. Let new days laugh

away old fears. You're smiling, look, first time

in years air rushes into you deep. Don't

think, don't waste this precious,

brief today, don't even pray,

just let your hands

fall open.'

In the cool of this hottest day

Another day closes its

sunset eye.

At least it watched me writing.

How do I write joy? Peg

phrases

on pages like washing in the sun.

Tonight, I will wear party black,

celebrate

the death of past ordeals.

Turn over any heart. Count

nicks, scars.

Admire the flinty shine. The weight.

We hew more truth with our pieces than

wreckers

ever wreak in breaking.

Blackbird threads notes through this frayed

evening's quilt,

stitches the day together.

In the cool of the close of this

hottest day,

I sense my life begin.

Rosie Johnson

Happy the woman (a response to Horace and Dryden's Happy the Man)

Happy the woman whose body's her own -

loosened

in moonstone sea foam.

Happy the woman whose sweetest days

stroll with the tide's roll,

calmly sway.

Happy the woman who sings, jives,

sashays

in her own private cabaret.

Happy the woman alone with her keys.

Her shoulders

ease. Hard won peace.

Rosie Johnson

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: GAVIN BOURKE

Gavin Bourke grew up in the suburb of Tallaght in West Dublin. Married to Annemarie living in County Meath, he holds a B.A. in Humanities from Dublin City University, an M.A. Degree in Modern Drama Studies and a Higher Diploma in Information Studies from University College Dublin. His work broadly covers nature, time, memory, addiction, mental health, human relationships, the inner and outer life, creating meaning and purpose, politics, contemporary and historical social issues, injustice, the human situation, power and its abuse, absurdism, existentialisms, human psychology, cognition, emotion and behaviour, truth and deception, the sociological imagination, illness, socio-economics, disability, inclusivity, human life, selfishness and its consequences as well as urban and rural life, personal autonomy, ethics, commerce, science, grand schemes and the technological life in English and to a lesser extent in the Irish Language.

He was shortlisted for The *Redline Book Festival Poetry Award* in 2016 for 'A Rural Funeral'. 'Unanswered Call' was published in the September 2019 issue of *Crossways Literary Magazine*. 'Sword Damocles, Falling' was published in the October issue of *A New Ulster* in 2019. He was invited to read at the *Siamsceál Literary Festival* in October 2019. 'Louisburgh, County Memory' was highly commended in *The Johnathon Swift Creative Writing Awards 2019*. 'Our Tree' and 'Getting On' were published in *Qutub Minar Review International Literary Journal* in 2019. His first book of poetry (sixty pages) was shortlisted for the International *Hedgehog Poetry Press (UK) Full Fat Collection Poetry Competition* in 2019. 'The Power in Abuse', 'Beyond Bone, While the Jackdaws Watch On' and 'Fair Trade' were published in 2019 in *A New Ulster*. He won the international *Nicely Folded Paper Trois International Poetry Collection Competition* in 2020 for his book *Towards Human* which will be published by *Hedgehog Poetry Press (UK)* in late 2022 worldwide.

'The Past is Present Tense', 'Transcending Mind Movements', 'The Breaking Waters of Catharsis', 'The Never Heard' and 'The Death of The Shepherd' were published in the *Decade Edition* of *A New Ulster* in 2019. 'Aloneness', 'Underneath A Wicker Cross', 'A Life in Our Times' and 'At Mercies' featured in the April 2020 issue of *A New Ulster*. 'Shivered' featured in *A New Ulster* in Spring 2020. 'A Rural Funeral' was published in the U.S. literary journal *Writers in the Know* in 2020. 'Before and After Johnathon Swift Was Born', 'Malaises', 'My New Eyes', 'Turning Corners' and 'The Mornings After Admission' were published in *A New Ulster* in 2020. 'A Life in A Time' was published in the U.S. journal *Tiny Seed Literary Journal* in 2020.

'The End of Their Affair' and 'Beyond Bone, While the Jackdaws Watch On' (2020 Version) were published in *Poesis Literary Journal* as well as 'In the Dead Heat' in July 2020. 'Dream of Consciousness' was published in *E-Ratio Postmodern literary Journal* in 2020. 'A Mourning Burial', 'Through the Rain' and several other poems were published in *Prachya Review Bangladesh 2020*. 'The End of Their Affair' and 'The Past Coming Through to The Present Moment' were published in *Qutub Minar Review* in 2020.

'Before Love Was Legal' was longlisted for the *Ken Saro-Wiwa Poetry Award* in July 2020 and was featured in a Maynooth University anthology published in November 2020. 'Off Life-Support' was published in an anthology created by the *Siamsceál Literary Festival 2020*. His third poetry collection *Answered Call* (81 Pages) was shortlisted for *The Hedgehog Poetry Press (UK) Selected or Neglected International Poetry Collection Competition* in May 2020. 'Dreaming in The Liminal' and 'What If' were published in *Poesis International Literary Journal* in autumn 2020. 'Looking for An Eye in The Sun' was published in *Chiron Review* November 2020. 'Anew' was published in *Iris Literary Journal* in Texas U.S in 2020. 'Travelling Community' and 'Eye Opening' were published in *Qutub Minar Review International Literary Journal* in 2020.

'In the Dead Heat', 'The Slowest Walk', 'Dreaming in The Liminal' and 'Our Child' were published in Poesis Literary Journal in 2020. 'Rhapsody for The Future' was published in *Writers in The Know* Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S. 2020. 'Rhapsody for The Future' was published in *October Hill Literary Journal* New York City in October 2020. 'Sea Change' was published in *Litterateur Defining World* literary journal in India in September 2020.

'Aloneness' was published in the American Literary Journal *Brief Wilderness* in September 2020. 'Rhapsody for The Future' was published in *Writers in The Know*, U.S. 2020. 'Cut with Blunt Knives' and 'Inflow' appeared in *The Non-Conformist Magazine* in September 2020. His ninety-page manuscript *Anew* has been accepted for publication by *Atmosphere Press* as well as his manuscript 'What If?' in *North America*. 'Towards the Headlights', 'As the Evening Fell' and 'Dovetailing' were published in *Poesis Journal* in Autumn 2020. 'Eyes Gone Black' was published in *From Whispers to Roars Literary Journal, An Arts and Literary Magazine* 2020.

'As the Evening Fell' appeared in *Tiny Seed Journal*, U.S. 'The Heavy Weight Champion' and 'Crow Lives On' were published in *The Non-Conformist* 2020. 'Cut with Blunt Knives', 'Inflow' and 'Broken Dolls' appear in the Autumn Edition of the U.S. literary journal *Harbinger Asylum* 2020. 'Was So Sudden' was published in *The Non-Conformist Magazine, U.S.*, December 2020. 'Purely Malignant', 'What If', 'Overhead' and 'Dreaming in The Liminal' were published in *A New Ulster in 2020*. 'Living with Death' was published in *The Non-conformist* in Autumn 2020.

He was shortlisted and subsequently commended in the *Jonathan Swift International Creative Writing Awards* for 'The Night She Held My Hand' in October 2020. 'Enduring Beasts' was published in the U.S. Journal *Shift A Journal of Literary Oddities* 2020. His epic poem (Eight Pages) 'Unremarkable' was awarded a place for *the Proverse International Poetry Prize* Hong Kong 2020 and is published in a university anthology in China, published April 2021. 'Dublin is Here', A thirteen-page epic poem is published in *Modern Literature* in India.

Gavin was highly commended and awarded second place for an unpublished manuscript in the *Hedgehog Poetry Press (UK), Local Dialects International Poetry Manuscript Competition* in November 2020.

'Confucius For King' was published by *Litterateur Defining World* in India in November 2020. 'Still Birth' was published in *Poets Choice* India in 2021. 'Two Way Mirror', 'The Lighthouse, on The Green', 'Rain at Night', 'The End of The Summer', 'How to Be?' and 'Let the Day Begin' were published in *Modern Literature* in India 2021.

'The Most Brazen Wins' was published by *Harbinger Asylum Press (U.S.)* in 2021. 'Hadn't Noticed the Birds for Years' was published in Autumn 2020 in *Wingless Dreamer* (India) and was a finalist for their *International Poetry Award 2020*. 'Endless' was published by *La Piccioletta Barca* in February 2021. 'First Tour' featured in *Better Than Starbucks* in February 2021. 'The Night She Held My Hand' was published in *Writers in The Know* Minneapolis, U.S. in 2021. 'Living with Death' was published in *The Non-Conformist, 2021*.

'Late in The Day' was published in *The Non-Conformist* 2021. 'Mirroring in Time's Eyes' and 'Continuums' were published in *Poesis* 2021. 'Morrison Archetype' was published in *October Hill Literary Journal New York City* in February 2021. Gavin was shortlisted for a single poem international poetry contest with *Hedgehog Poetry Press UK* 2021. 'Crossed Lines', 'Looking Back, Bone Dead and Soon Gone' and 'A Meeting with The Riverman' were published in *A New Ulster* 2021. 'To See If I Was Alive' was published by *South Dakota State Poetry Society* in February 2021.

He had the following poems published in *Modern Literature* India, 2021, 'So I Shot Myself in The Face', 'A Snapshot' and 'Delicious Apple Tarts'. His poetry was selected for *Rattle* poetry critique of the month twice, livestreamed in March 2021 and October 2021 (United States) 'Through Drying Eyes' was published on the blog for WINK Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States in 2021. 'When the Healing Begins', 'To That End' and 'Covered' were published in *Poesis Literary Journal (U.S.)* in Summer 2021. He was a semi-finalist in *Tatterhood Review (U.S.)* International Poetry Competition in March 2021.

'I Dreamt of Clocks' and 'Open Door to the Dreamworld' were published by *Poesis (U.S.)* 2021. 'Before' and

'Defaulted' are published in *The Hong Kong Review* in summer 2021. 'Rhapsody for the Future', 'Purely Malignant' and 'The Prettiest Little Things' were published by *Aura Literary Arts* U.S. in 2021. 'Childhood Watersheds' was published in *Poet's Choice* India in Spring 2021. 'The Writer', 'So I Shot myself in the Face', 'A Snapshot', 'Mattress Mick' and 'Inhuman' were published in *A New Ulster* in 2021. 'I Took the Train Today' was published in *The Meath Chronicle* in April 2021. 'Working A Shipwreck' was published in the *The Seattle Star, (U.S.) 2021*.

'At The Edge' was published in *Harbinger Asylum (U.S.) 2021*. 'A Disused Railway Line in Navan Town' was published twice in *The Meath Chronicle* in May 2021. Gavin was a semi-finalist in *The Button Eye Review (U.S.)* international winter poetry contest in May 2021. 'The Spectacular Spire', 'Black Art', 'Treasure Chest', 'The Wonders of Weaving', 'Sawn', 'Your First Summer's Love', 'Between the Lights', 'Down Memory Street' and 'My husband Had A Miscarriage' were published in the U.S. poetry journal *Poesis* in 2021.

'At The Tallagt Parade' was published in the Echo Newspaper in June 2021. He was shortlisted for the *Wingless Dreamer International Poetry Competition* June 2021 for 'Broken Dolls'. 'Looking For the Eye in The Sun' featured in *Chiron Review*, New Haven (U.S.) in Summer 2021. 'Your Right to Live' was published on the *WINK* blog Minneapolis, Minnesota, (U.S) 'Private Oratories', 'The Getaway Lake' and 'Lakeside and Back' and 'The Sound of Bereavement' were published in *Poesis* Literary Journal (U.S.) 2021. He will have a forty-poem collection published in India in 2023 for worldwide distribution.

He featured as a spotlight artist with *Aura Literary Journal* in Autumn 2021 (U.S.) 'The Sacred Hill of Tara' was published in *The Meath Chronicle* in Summer 2021. 'Because the Night Was Over' was published by *Wingless Dreamer in 2021* in an anthology. (U.K.) 'Times and Time' and 'Covered' were published by *Sortes Magazine, Philadelphia* U.S. in 2021. 'A Genuine Hector Quine', 'Stuck for Now', 'Revolutions of a Cycle', 'Memories Matter', 'One Summer Evening at Donaghmore Church and Round Tower', 'Seaside', 'Private Oratories' and 'Lakeside and Back' were published by *Poesis* International Literary Journal (U.S.) in 2022. 'Molly Malone: A Dublin Statue Poem' was published in *Poets Choice*, India, 2021. 'Addiction is an Illness', 'In Darkness', 'Down by The Ramparts', 'Anna Livia's Home' and 'Alternative Life' were published in *A New Ulster 2021*.

'Mobile Home' and 'Vacancy for A Lighthouse Keeper' were published in *Poesis* International Literary Journal (U.S) in 2021. 'Poolside' was published by *Wingless Dreamer* (UK) in 2021. Long poems 'Getting Through' and 'Other Sides' were published by *White Wall Review*, Toronto, Canada in 2021. 'Upon the Sword of Change' an epic poem was acted and performed as part of the *No Bars Community Project Competition*, Leicester (UK) for poetry on the theme of incarceration and is now available on Instagram and was published in an anthology in September/October 2021 available for purchase on Amazon worldwide.

'The Apex of Never', 'Sea Saws' and 'Mirroring in Time Eyes' were published in *Poesis* Literary Journal (United States) 2021. 'An Autumn Evening in Navan' was published in September in *The Meath Chronicle*. It is currently published on the *Meath Chronicle* Website. He currently awarded a place in a major international poetry competition based in China for his poem 'The Tusk' which features in an international anthology in 2022 published in China.

Gavin was a finalist of the Dream Stones of Summer Writing Contest 2021 with *Wingless Dreamer* (UK) for his poem 'Poolside'. 'One Autumn Evening in Navan', 'A Night Away' and 'To the End' were published by *Poesis* International Literary Journal in 2022. 'Times and Time' and 'Tires' were published in *Sortes Literary Journal*, 2021, Philadelphia, USA, they were also read by the editor at the launch event in October 2021.

His poems 'One Autumn Evening in Navan' and 'Closest to her Heart' were published by *Poesis* Literary Journal in 2022. He is currently a semi-finalist in a major international literary competition based in China, for his full-length poetry collection manuscript (145 Pages) 'Evangelical Heart'. He was shortlisted and subsequently Commended for *The Jobnathon Swift International Poetry Award* for his poem 'When He Went In'.

He was shortlisted and subsequently Highly Commended for *The Manchester Irish Language Group Poetry Competition 2021* for his poem in the Irish Language 'Ár Dubh Linn, Ár Baile Átha Cliath'. His poem 'In The Company of a Clock' was published by *Flat Brush Review* (U.S.) in 2022. 'On the Nightshift' is published in an anthology published by *Wingless Dreamer* as is 'Bonfire Night'. 'The Constant Candle' and 'The Duke of Somewhere' both published by *Wingless Dreamer*, India in Winter 2021 in separate anthologies. 'Today', 'Happenings' and 'Waiting for Words' were published in *A New Ulster* in December 2021.

'Christmas is Coming to Navan' was published in the special Christmas Edition of *The Meath Chronicle* in December 2021. 'Paltry Trade' was published by *Writers in The Know*, Minneapolis, Minnesota in Spring 2022. 'Living Myself to Death' was a finalist for the *Black Roses Dark Poetry International Poetry Competition* with *Wingless Dreamer* in India and features in an anthology. 'Better Days Ahead' was second runner-up for the *Let's Begin Again International Poetry Competition* with *Wingless Dreamer* in India and features in an anthology. He made a shortlist of fourteen Poets with *Hedgehog Poetry Press UK* for his two spring poems 'When All is Spring' and 'On a Day, I Caught The Sun' which feature in a Spring Poetry Anthology. His poems 'After Hemlock', 'Writing Time', 'When I opened The Tin of My Grandfather's Carpentry Tools for The Very First Time', 'What Comes to Mind' and 'Time Out of Time' were published in *A New Ulster in Northern Ireland* in print and online, spring 2022. 'By The Dodder Weir' was published along with a print interview in *The Echo Newspaper* in April 2022. 'Under The Eye of The Moon' was published by *Litterateur Tv* and *Qutub Minar Review* in April 2022. He was first runner up for 'At War with Silence' with *Wingless Dreamer*, India for their International Oxymoronic Poetry Competition and features in an anthology. 'On Clogher Road' is featured in an anthology entitled *Vanish in Poetry* with *Wingless Dreamer*, India as was 'They Say It's Who You Know' in an anthology called *Erotica of Eternity*.

'Anatomical Perfection' was published by *Wink*, Minneapolis, Minnesota in Autumn 2022. He had several poems published in the Spring edition of *A New Ulster* in print and online, 2022. 'I Miss Chris Cornell' was published by *Poet's Choice*, India in Summer 2022. 'The Metaphor of Morning' was a finalist for a competition with *Wingless Dreamer*, India and features in an anthology sold worldwide. 'St Dominic's Bridge' was placed second with *Wingless Dreamer*, India, in a global poetry competition in May 2022 and is published in an anthology sold worldwide. 'All Alone in The Garden of Eden' was also placed second with *Wingless Dreamer*, India, in a global poetry competition in May 2022 and features in an anthology sold worldwide. 'Our Tree' was published in *The Echo Newspaper* in June 2022.

'The Bull' was published in *The Meath Chronicle* in May 2022. 'I Dream of The Dead' was shortlisted with *Wingless Dreamer*, India in June 2022, in a global poetry and features in an anthology which is now sold worldwide. Gavin had a full collection manuscript of poetry shortlisted by *Hedgehog Poetry Press*, UK in a global poetry manuscript competition called, *White Label First Poetry Collection*. He made a shortlist in March 2022 in a global poetry competition with *Hedgehog Poetry Press* and features in an anthology published worldwide. He was tweeted about on the *Dublin City University Alumni Website* in May 2022 with links to his page with *The Non-Conformist Magazine* in The United States.

He has several poems featured in *Poet's Choice* in India which will be sold worldwide in 2022. 'When The Waters Are Dragged' was shortlisted with *Wingless Dreamer* Publisher in India and features in an anthology. 'First Time in Saggart', 'Zip-Wiring from The Hellfire Club' and 'Watersheds' were all published in *The Echo Newspaper* in July/August 2022. 'A Nightmare' will appear in the next issue of *Free State Review* (U.S.) Autumn 2022. 'The Return of Autumn's Breath' features in an autumnal themed anthology published by *Wingless Dreamer, India*, 2022. 'Midnight on Montpellier Hill' was published by the *Echo Newspaper* in October 2022.

He is currently working on his thirteenth poetry collection. Gavin is also a multi-instrumentalist and has been a songwriter, composer and guitar teacher for the past thirty years. He plays Classical/Spanish guitar, acoustic-electric guitar, bass guitar, jazz guitar, electric lead guitar, banjo and bouzouki. He has written songs, music and lyrics,

recorded albums, collaborated with many musicians and songwriters and has performed in venues all over Dublin. He begins a PHD in creative writing in 2023.

After The Darkness

When someone takes their own life and the grief begins
its starts to crack the breastbone
gets under the skin slowly
crawls into the bone-marrow like black ivy
and won't let you go
until it halts you and your unable to continue for some time.
Left with a whole series of questions
What if I had said this or that or not?
What if I had done this or that or not?
Would it have made a difference anyway?
It inks itself into the whole body like a scarification tattoo
that won't let go, a permanent indelible pain
so you have to be patient
and allow that grief to eventually subside
though it will never fully go away.
Just enough to allow you to go your own way in life
to live on so to speak.
All of us who knew the person are post-suicide for life
though we become more compassionate through our own suffering
we might top up the cup of a homeless person outside a shop
we learn to be more grateful we didn't suffer so much in life
we become grateful for the gift of life itself

perhaps in a way we never did before.

There has to be light in our own tunnel

and we can and do find this after the darkness

that life is for the living and we will continue to live it

in the loving memory

of our loved one we have lost.

Gavin Bourke

Old Ghosts

Old ghosts reveal themselves through the cracks in cyberspace
faces first, profiles, times, places, memories, drunkenness
lost lives, lost loves, the dead speak to us in different ways
streaky rashers, striped red canopies and arch-top umbrellas
illustrations of the past in electrical interconnected spaces.
They evoke emotions too, anger, sadness, joy, happiness
those moments now gone forever swallowed up
by time's ability to never repeat itself and we are required
to reconcile ourselves with this, we don't look the same now
they don't look the same anymore that is if they are still living.
We may be separated from them, disconnected so to speak
the relationships having died years earlier
our emotional state is stirred by their echoes
we feel pain, guilt, regret and perhaps anger
before we recalibrate and appreciate and express gratitude
for where we are, what we have and have achieved since
there may be reminders in life like our children or theirs
we cannot go back only forward
cannot live the same time and place again.
It is simply impossible as the clocks tick and the pendulums swing
it is up to us what we do with all this stuff that is brought up
and unleashed by the myriad of memory cues available to us.
Do we want to go down those roads again and contact them?

Would there be any point?

Would it make any real difference to our lives now?

We evolve with our identities reconstituting themselves everyday

our brains and bodies are older by the day

and our consciousness is in a constant state of evolutionary flux.

Is there a time and place or room for old ghosts to come back into our lives?

Gavin Bourke

On A Night I Thought I Was Going To Die

My heart was racing
much faster than usual
I was sweating profusely
I was convinced
perhaps I would have a heart-attack that night.
My life began to flash before me
events and people, faces and places
you know, all the usual stuff.
I even started to think about differential calculus
I could not slow my breathing down anymore.
What if tonight was my last night alive?
I placed my shoes neatly beside my bed
closed my eyes slowly in anticipation of something else
could feel the pillow and the mattress beneath me mindfully.
I worked out integers and trigonometry to relax
and vectors last.
My mind kaleidoscopic in its paradigms
like dreaming wide-awake.
I took my last breath before I fell into a deep sleep...
I was so surprised when I woke up at twelve o'clock
and the sun was shining brightly without a cloud in the sky
P.M. not A.M.

I had to check the clock again and again
after twelve hours of sleep.

For the very first time in my life

I was grateful for everything I had

and for the gift of life itself

this was the very definition of gratitude.

Gavin Bourke

The Black Torch

From generation
to generation
it is often in transition
on subconscious levels.
What people do with this shame
is not often up to them.
It can be acted out or upon
a distraction
from feeling it
can regularly
lead to addiction.
Like an intergenerational
illness or sickness
passed on like a black torch
the darkness inherited.
The blackness
of that shame
creating a void
that always needs
to be filled.
Though that is not always
a possibility

in this life.

We would do well to name it
analyze it and deconstruct it
in order to overcome it
in our journey towards human
and the whole fully-realized self.

Gavin Bourke

The Night I Dreamt I Met Seamus Heaney in The Abbey Theatre

He came straight over as soon as he laid eyes on me
he told me he had read some of my work and was a fan of mine
we talked away in the foyer for a few minutes before the show would restart.
He said if only I could see the light and brighten up my work
he went on to say that I should write about what is beautiful in life
and that then I would possibly be able to give a collection of my poetry
as a Christmas present, mentioning the great Michael Harding
he also mentioned his protégée Paul Muldoon as an example to me.
Seamus stood there uttering more words and sentences
coming out of his mouth like drops of pure gold
his kind eyes squinting behind his spectacles
crowned by a full, thick head of white hair.
He was sound to talk to as you would expect, kind and gentle
I knew his voice well from having watched his televised interviews
a tall man, he must have been six-foot-five or over.
I told him I could not help my work and that I had been scratching for the light as of late
he said I must keep trying to do that and that I would get there eventually if I just kept at it
even though I was honest with him telling him
that I only write what comes to me and if some of it is dark then so be it.
We did not have much time left together
as the interval to Translations by Brian Friel was almost over
though I could see his point and appreciated his perspective on the light

before it was time for us to part.

He gave me a hug and told me to keep up the good work
saying I was a natural and had real potential.

He said goodbye at this point and re-joined his friends

when he walked through the door to the theatre and his white hair went out of view

I instinctively knew I would see him again soon.

Gavin Bourke

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: SEAN ROWAN

Sean Rowan. is a 21 year old writer from Derry/Londonderry. He currently studies English at the University of Galway in Ireland. Sean has been interested in writing from a young age, specifically writers and poets from Ireland, most notably Seamus Heaney and Brian Friel. Given the mental health epidemic that is currently taking place all over Northern Ireland and his home town, his poetry focuses on those who do not have a voice to speak about their experiences with mental health, specifically adolescents. Sean firmly believes that poetry can be a tool of healing, a hand that reaches out across the divide and offers a voice of comfort and empathy, letting people know they are not alone.

Going to work

I work to feel the knotted hands of God on my back
So that when long days lead to absent nights
I can fog my mind in blindness.
I work to know that my rest is earned,
And although it never is,
Though the monotony hounds me,
I can't help but go a little further
A sad attempt to meet a metaphorical maker.
Yet, open and closed
Like the mouth of a feeding beast,
The trivialities are sometimes gorged by beauty,
Like those late summer nights,
When the breeze drags me home,
A little weary,
And I see the crows
Come to settle in their rookeries.
An orchestra of sound,
And a gathering hum of dark feather and claw
Crowding to discuss their day
In woods that stood for centuries.
I rise and settle with them,
And it comforts me.
Our days have become such
That we greet each other
At dawn, and dusk.

Sean Rowan

It stays the same

And everything the way I had seen it
 Began to change.
 I grew taller, broader,
 My childhood pets past away
And the nest could no longer support my weight.
 I can cry for impermanence,
 But it's wiser to remember
 That when the past with its chisel
 Comes to hollow out your chest,
That you were there, and let it run its course.
 Thinner, greyer, maybe a shell
 Of the man you were in youth,
 But nevertheless happy,
 And although in the morning
 The boy in you is surprised
 By his reflection in the mirror,
He recognises the light in your eyes,
 It stays the same.

Sean Rowan

Out There

There, out among the grass and wind
The night falls broad like a bulls head,
 There by rivers and sycamores
 Childhood was born into nature,
 It was born into rabbit warrens
 And badger dens,
 It was folded among white water
And hid in the petals of snow drops.
 There, there was peace,
 And for a long time
 Was a sanctuary for flightless birds
Who dropped from a nest of worry,
 And although years past,
 In spite of tarmac
 And bedrooms beside traffic,
The mind seems to find a way to return there.
 Alone it sits, not thinking,
 The body not doing,
 The eyes one hundred miles away
Flickering through pages with no interest,
 There among the rushes,
 Along the drains,
 There with the dogs and the cattle
 That call by midnight,
A purpose hangs in the sky like fire.

Sean Rowan

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: SANGITA KANSAL

1.

MY STRANGE NEIGHBOUR POEM

Julie lives round the corner
Is almost my neighbour
Lives next to the noisy Baker
And is a prolific hoarder

She has long greying straggly hair
Her large dark eyes suspiciously stare
An unusually shaped figure
Her breasts grow ever wider and bigger

Whilst visiting Julie one is always met by an apology
'My house is a mess, I'm trying to clear it up I am so sorry'
The next time you see her she says it again
But it remains exactly the same

You can hardly get through the hallway
Every room is filled with furniture, books, crockery
All gathering dust blocking your way
This is how she lives day to day

If you try to have a conversation
You are usually met by fiery opposition
Julie loves to contradict
For the sake of it

Has been banned from a charity
Where she helped the elderly
For criticising and chastising over zealously
Under the guise of unwelcome integrity

She keeps relaying they are unethical
Dodgily ripping off the Council
This implausible narrative bores you to death
The story is regurgitated in depth

Julie sings in her Church choir
This exercise fills her inner desire
Like a Nightingale in a chorus
Her voice is notably sonorous

She loves her jungle like garden
This is her real passion

Spends her time in it for hours
Watering, nurturing and talking to flowers

She dated Brian for years
Often complaining being driven to tears
Her life revolved around him
But he did his own thing, conveniently fitting her in

2.

Of strong Christian faith she wanted to marry
Brian ended it in a hurry
Fed up of her being jealously possessive
Up and down like a yoyo; she is a depressive

They remain friends, he likes her cooking
She keeps trying to hook him in
But has had to come to terms, it is what it is
She will never truly be his

Refuses to work, her excuse she's bipolar
But her real issues revolve around anger
Habitually signing on at the Job Centre
Does not find employment, behind with bill payments

She sacrificially spends time with her grandchildren
Spoiling them no end
Sadly, they only have her and their mother
Are estranged from an absent violent father

Julie continues with her same never- ending cycle
Finding solace with her Bible
Unable to reflect and change
Hence, for her failure, it's the others she blames

Sangita Kansal

POEM ABOUT MY FRIEND EMILY

Everyone's endearing friend Emily
Humorous genuine and friendly
Is nice but common as they come
Greets all by saying 'Hi how are you hun'

A smiley open face
Wears lycra leggings and tops of frilly lace
High heeled shiny pointed shoes
Surprising her feet don't bruise

Loves to socialise and frequents the local pub
Speaks to each and everyone
Knocks back the gin and tonic, gobbles all the grub
Then whizzes off to a night club

It feels like a zoo in her house
A mischievous dog, three cats, a cacophony of noise
A loquacious parrot in a cage
Each time I talk it swears in rage

She is a prolific hoarder
Each room is full of clothes, crockery and furniture
No place to sit except the floor
It makes my bum very soar

An unlucky history with the opposite sex
One never knew which twit would be next
David was an extravagant philanderer
Lazy Mark constantly out of work, Tony a hedonistic gambler

Then she came across Ben who never loved her
Treated her like his mother
Slavishly carried out mundane chores
Cooked his tea, washed his hair, mended his dirty drawers

Slyly promised to marry, even gave her a ring
Emily continued to naively cling
But he never took her up the aisle
This deception continued for a while

At her wits end she had it out with Ben
Both argued and fought at 12am

Round and round a wheelie bin they went
The disturbed neighbours pleaded 'Please go in'

Sangita Kansal

Ben ended up in the Magistrates' Court
Faced a gruelling trial, but short
Found not guilty
Far were too many inconsistencies

She ended it after this episode
He was not a decent bloke
Ben unhappy he'd lost his motherly carer
Perhaps he should have been fairer

Emily on a speed date found John
They clicked, he was the 'the right one'
Ben jealously begged her to come back
Pulling her tongue out gave him the sack

Emily and John now live by the Sea
With all three felines, parrot and dog Daphne
She continues to socialise and hoard
Loves her new life and isn't bored

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: JENNIE E. OWEN

Jennie E. Owen has been widely published online, in literary journals and anthologies. She teaches Creative Writing for The Open University and lives in Lancashire with her husband and three children. Jennie is currently working on a poetry PhD with MMU.

Attending Service

Grief thief,
circling the Obituaries
like a crow to the corn.

Black plumed
and satin wood faced,
you lean in to embrace

to comfort, and nourish
yourself on tears for drink
and sighs for breath

the tragedy
is yours to feel, surely
more real than theirs.

Professional dirge
follower, chest beater,
tear out your hair,

scream out.
Then leave, go home,
to your tea and television,

as they rip out their hearts
over the cold funeral meats.

Amateurs.

Jennie E. Owen

Sometimes

I leave the milk out all day,
until the carton bloats,
opens with the warm sigh
of sickly babies,
coagulating sulphur.

You think I forget.
I don't.

Do you discover my name
in coffee rings? Spilt sugar
trailing comfort for the ants.

Fingerprints in thick
dust are the evidence

I leave for you.

I don't forget.

I just want you,
to remember.

Jennie E. Owen

The Fire

We like to think we're not so obvious
in our house. We don't even peek,
and if we do, it's invisible to the street.

Three doors down, they're out
in dusty slippers and dressing gowns. They
shout on the phone, wave hands at the neighbours,
hand out tea. They cheer

when the first engine arrives.
Or perhaps like us, they're fanning
the fire. After all, it's a bargain bonfire night,

where the sparklers are the owners, whose
shadows dance and dazzle as they pray
that the blaze,
that the blaze won't spread,
that the rain,
that the rain will come,
that they will wake in bed,

they shake
one another by the shoulders,
their voices whine like scorched tin
ringing through the smoke

Go stir the children! Let them feel the heat
through our own front door, on the skin
of the glazing. Watch how quickly it all goes up!

Jennie E. Owen

EDITOR'S NOTE

The first issue of 2023 it feels odd writing those words considering how badly 2022 has been for so many, I've lost contact with a number of writers and artists from places such as China, Turkey and Iran. The world seems to stagger from one calamity to another without pause and January hasn't been much different.

A friend's father went missing during the cold snap here and we took part in the search for him, teams came from all over to look hundreds of volunteers all pulling together for a singular purpose to find this one man. Sadly we didn't find him in time and we are all still reeling over that. Still, we've persevered and continue to provide a platform for artists around the world. As you may have noticed we have been sponsored by the ACNI I've been granted a SIAP so that I can continue to work on the magazine and several other projects.

I've tried to remain Apolitical while working on A New Ulster but the world and the harsh brutality of it all slides me ever closer towards Leftwing policies, here's hoping 2023 is a better year than January has been so far..

Happy reading, good health, and keep creating,

Amos Greig (Editor)

LAPWING PUBLICATIONS

'IN A CHANGED WORLD'

Over the past number of years technology has transformed poetry publishing:
shop closures due to increasing operational costs has had an impact,
to put it mildly, shops are reluctant to take 'slow moving' genre
such as poetry and play-scripts among other minority interest genre.
The figures given a few years ago were: we had 5000 bookshops in the UK-Ireland
and at the time of the research that number had dropped to 900 and falling:
there was a period when bookshops had the highest rate of 'High Street' shop closures.

Lapwing, being a not-for-profit poetry publisher has likewise had to adjust to the new regime.

We had a Google-Books presence until that entity ended its 'open door' policy
in favour of becoming a publisher itself. During that time with Google,
Lapwing attracted hundreds of thousands of sample page 'hits'.
Amazon also has changed the 'game' with its own policies
and strategies for publishers and authors.

There are no doubt other on-line factors over which we have no control.

Poetry publishers can also fall foul of 'on consignment' practice,
which means we supply a seller but don't get paid until books have been sold and
we can expect unsold books to be returned, thus 'remaindered'
and maybe not sellable, years can pass!

Distributors can also seek as much as 51% of cover-price *IF* they choose
to handle a poetry book at all, shops too can require say 35%
of the cover price, which is ok given floor space can be thousands of £0000s
per square foot per annum..In terms of 'hidden' costs: preparing a work for publication
can cost a few thousand UK £-stg. Lapwing does it as part of our service to our authors.

It has been a well-known fact that many poets will sell more of
their own work than the bookshops, Peter Finch of the Welsh Academi
noted fact that over forty years ago and Lapwing poets have done so for years.

Due to cost factors Lapwing cannot offer authors 'complimentary' copies.
What we do offer is to supply authors with copies at cost price.
We hold very few copies in the knowledge that requests
for hard copies are rarely received.

Another important element is our Lapwing Legacy Library which holds all
our retained titles since 1988 in PDF at £4.00 per title:
the format being 'front cover page - full content pages - back cover page'.
This format is printable as single pages: either the whole book or a favourite page.

I thank Adam Rudden for the great work he has done over the years
creating and managing this web-site.

Thanks also to our authors from 'home' and around the world for entrusting Lapwing with their valuable contributions to civilisation.

If you wish to seek publication please send your submission in MW Word docx format.

LAPWING PUBLICATIONS

POETRY TITLES 2021

All titles are £10.00 stg. plus postage from the authors via their email address.
PDF versions are available from Lapwing at £4.00 a copy,
they are printable for private, review and educational purposes.

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Mr Lane lives in England-UK and due to the recent death of Mr Gohorry
Mr Lane will be the contact for this publication: