### Circadian

The swimming pool was built in the fifties by the Boy Scouts and their leaders. It harnessed the tide, making a place to bathe, free of the surrounding rocks. By now neglect has taken hold. The foundations, steeped with salt, make weak limbs of the walls. Waste festers in the fractured ramparts and rats forge homes in its spreading caves.

A woman comes every day to swim. Often at noon with the cathedral bells ringing on an easterly draught. Later times in summer. A still day sounding the brush of loose cattle against the gorse. The clatter of hooves on the escarpment, their sweating bulks licking salt from its crannies. Her hair is cut tight to the weathered nape of her neck. She lifts her dress over her head and levers off her ankle boots against a stone. She wears a simple chain and underwear. The scar of appendix and the opaline marks of childbearing gleam on the sag of her belly.

She ties her dress to the rusting ladder and eases in, unflinching. Cutting through the length of the pool, she inclines towards a breach in the ruptured wall and swims out. Beyond the bay and the overhang of its whitethorn trees and mountain eclipse. To a noiseless place where she can drift, held by the cloudy measure of the sea.

There her unwound body quarries stifled words. Feels them scale the rungs of her spine. Clamber her spleen, burrowing an impatient way to the lungs. Under the water's skin she soon hears her muted tirade, feels the wring of her dampened pleading. Some strangled release until, every day, the current returns her.

7

Julianna Holland

### The Lights

There was a storage room under the stairs in the Lights with a shelf of board games and puzzles, Monopoly and draughts, the boxes frayed and repaired with yellowed sellotape. There would be missing pieces, half a deck of cards. There were sun-faded towels hanging from brass hooks. A feel of long-gone summers to the room, sand carried into the house beneath your feet. The smell of sun cream. She opened a shoebox of photographs and newspaper cuttings.

lady captains day at Sand Park Golf club

the bride wore a dress in silk taffeta with diamante inset

She knew she was intruding on someone else's history but she didn't care. She was tired of her own. She imagined a family coming in off the beach, a summer storm darkening the windows. They would play board games in front of a driftwood fire. There would be laughter, dry lightning in the sky out beyond the lighthouse. She would be wearing a summer dress.

She found an embroidery of wild mustangs. They galloped across a yellow stitched background. She brought it out and put it on the wall beside the kitchen.

In early February she went for a walk on the beach. On her way back she sank to her knees in the sand. The tide started to come in around her. The beam from the lighthouse passed her at timed intervals. She smoothed her skirt around her knees. Everything around her was in motion. There were hailstones in the air. Wind swaying the marram grass. Clouds blew across the moon. The night was a dance and she was going to sit it out.

Eoin McNamee

### At Oyster Lane

At the verge of the road beneath the southern face of Knocknarea, Oyster Lane drops steeply seaward. Briars arch and embrace before the laneway opens suddenly to the West where the channel flows, touching the round brown stones of the shore.

Beyond that channel, sealbanks sprawl across the bay to Beltra, sandy islands supporting colonies of black, white and beige. Pups sit and wobble and watch. Young seals dive and play. On Charlie's Rock where his webbed feet cling, a cormorant's wings are spread above the tide. Awaiting the silver gleam, bird and seal anticipate another dive on shining sea-trout, ending the momentum of their movement upstream past the Inishes at Breeogue and onwards to the weirs and waterfalls of Ballisodare. Older seals sit stately as the incoming tide rises about them, their heads gradually disappear. Seeming never to have moved they re-appear as the water recedes, as if to take a curtain call.

The seals make constant stolen sounds - like humans they mutter and moan, like wild geese they honk, like dogs they bark and growl, like wolves they howl.

Most eerily of all they wail, conjuring the cry of the banshee in a lament that rises and spreads and soars...

The sheer cliffs of the mountain at Culleenamore hold the long notes of their wailing, and in rocky crevices the sleep of ravens is disturbed.

Maura Gilligan

### from **Kingfisher Bridge**

A dog had spent three days on the mountain, caught on a tiny outcrop of rock, halfway down the cliff-face. Her howls could be heard reverberating across Glencar valley but no-one could reach her, neither from above nor below. She had run away from her home in Ballintrillick, following a despairing scent. She had tracked to Benbulben mountain, passing the derelict stone schoolhouse, passing the ancient maw of Diarmuid and Gráinne's Cave, where thousands of years ago the hunted lovers had lain low before their dawn's tragedy.

On reaching the crest, she hadn't stopped. The scent calling, she pursued, across the flat bogland, weaving a line between the scut heather and hare's tail cottongrass.

She reached the disused barytes mine, with its rusting buckets, and twisted iron ropes. She paused at a brown pool there, drank quick, then continued, sprinting, nostrils dilated, tongue slapping between black jaws, foamed saliva dripping over her golden coat.

She ran right over the cliff edge on the other side, having no familiarity with the terrain she found herself in. She landed unharmed on a narrow grassy shelf protruding like an open palm from the face of the limestone cliff. There she remained, three days and nights, her yelps echoing around the valley, skimming off Glencar Lake, unsettling the swans who left their lakeside nest and huddled in the black middle.

The sky had been brimming with stars at night, dewdrops were diamonds on each of the mornings. By the third dawn, her barks were nothing more than hoarse whimpers, her breath shallow. There had been talk of shooting her where she lay, but no-one had yet to follow through.

10

Niamh MacCabe

## The Magic of Stones

### Ι

In the warm and shallow pebbled waters Of a bay on the south coast of Crete I chanced on a flat stone stamped With the likeness of a human skull. I thought its nose had a Phoenician fierceness, Sharp as that of an Easter Island bust, But neither of us could tell if the pattern Had been inscribed by nature or design.

### Π

Hunched against a darkening gale, We scrambled across jagged shelves of basalt On the northwest coast of Ireland And stumbled across a fossil fragment That looked to me like a prehistoric eel. When we passed it from hand to hand We could have been sharing millions of years But neither of us knew enough geology to say.

### III

Your father the alchemist prised apart The rough halves of a Moroccan stone

### Bringin' Home the Cows

We were sent when we were small to get the cows; "An' take the dog, he'll bring them to the gate" A tongue-click later and Floss was at our heels, As if he knew 'twas milkin time.

An' we took our time... Over the street Turn down towards the sraith. Floss ran on ahead was half way down the field when we got to the gate.

We rounded up the lazy ones; Still lying in their nests and chewing cud, The morning dew was rising from their backs Like the fog lifting from the bottom meadows.

When they rose we leapt into where they'd lain The fragrant flattened grasses warmish from their bulk We curled up and felt secure; The moment passed, we got up and slowly sauntered home.

They knew the way, Their bulgin' udders bursting to be milked. The old cows took the lead. Mutinous heifers quickly pucked in line. With the walkin' they began to dung; The skittery dung of spring grass.

In the barn we slung chains around their thick warm necks

12

### from The Coast of Leitrim (a work-in-progress)

Living alone in his dead uncle's cottage, her name was Katherine, which was maybe not what you'd expect for a Polish woman and with the burden lately of wandering but lovely.

> in some regards made for life. He wasn't exactly setting the night on fire at the damp old pebbledashed cottage on Dromord hill, but he had neither a mortgage nor rent to pay, the cottage being a straight inheritance, and there was money also from when his father went the road, a bit more again when the mother joined him, also the redundancy payment from Rel-Tech, and some dole. He had neither sister nor brother and was in fact slightly stunned at such a young age to find himself on a solo journey in life. He had pulled back from his friends. too, which wasn't much of a job, for he had never had close ones. He had worked for eight years at Rel-Tech but more and more he found the banter of the other men there a trial, the endless football talk, the foolishness and bragging about drink and women, and in truth he was relieved when the chance of a redundancy came up. He had the misfortune in life to be fastidious and to hold a certain fineness of emotion. He drank wine rather than beer and favoured French films. Such an oddity this made him in the district he might as well have had three heads up on Dromord hill.

### from Down Off the Mountains

The man took the steep winding road down to the sea. A threequarter moon gave out just enough light, and a stiff breeze blew through the hedges and trees. The one who saw him from the window of the widow's cottage blessed himself. The widow lying in her bed shivered and pulled the woollen covers above her bare shoulders. The man himself had one of his hands buried deep in his coat pocket. The other hand loosely held the bottom half of a broken oar. He hadn't been this way in years, and he might not be back for a very long time.

He made his way along to the end of the road, stopped there a moment at the top of the cliff, inhaled the salty air, gazed at the sea and its quiet turmoil, then slowly began the climb down. The descent was steep and dangerous and he walked with caution. When he reached the bottom he stepped onto the broad beach. The boat was already there. It was pulled up just far enough on the wet sand to prevent it from floating away. The one sitting in it was faced towards the sea and did not notice him approach nor the broken oar in his hand. Out beyond the rocks which jutted up out of the water, a seal briefly surfaced. The one in the boat stared out towards it and seemed unaware of the oar swinging through the air until the sudden shock as the flat wooden blade made contact with the side of the head, and then the pain and the blood and the falling away.

Gerard Beirne

fineness of the weather.

morning in June. It was true that the grasses of the fields of the mountain had all the week swayed in a kind of continental languor, and the lower hills east were a Provencal blue in the haze, and the lake when he lowered himself into it was so warm by the evenings it didn't even

seem like France. We wouldn't be used to it. Passing out from it. Ambulance on standby.' His words blurted at the cool burn of her brown-eved stare. She didn't lose the run of herself by way of a response but she said yes, it is very hot, and he believed something at least cousinly to a smile softened her mouth and moved across the brown eyes. He had learned already by listening in the café that Kevin Barry

Rebirth

once more.

blue raincoat.

At thirty five years old, Seamus Ferris was

'It's like France,' he said to her one sunny

make his midge bites sting.

'The heat,' he tried again. 'Makes the place

him and making all sorts of wishes.

13

He lifts the bag of bulbs and carries them to the blue ceramic pot.

I breathe and consciously look to where the sky meets Benbulben,

The rain comes in erratic gusts and he pulls on the hood of his

The trowel is already there, fixed in the clay. He lifts it out with

a sharp tug and begins to make small protective pockets, dropping the bulbs in one by one. I shift in my chair to a more comfortable

position. I can only imagine the smell of the damp, musky earth.

When he is satisfied with the first pot he moves on to the next.

Daffodils, tulips, snowdrops and hyacinths will appear in a few

months and I'll wait with a yearning for the promise of green shoots.

A renaissance of sorts. The rain is still pouring and I hear his

footsteps on the gravel. I get up to make us a pot of tea. It is more for

the ritual, the comfort, than the thirst. I am setting a tray just as the

door opens and I catch the scent of the mist and the crisp breath of

life. I know in that moment that time is not stagnant, that already

the bulbs are altered and the process begun and I am given

17

I am sitting inside by the window, wrapped in a blanket, watching

its shadowy shape familiar through the clouds and I am grounded

thoughts in the night, Seamus Ferris had fallen hard for a Polish girl who worked below in Carrick. He had himself almost convinced that the situation had the dimensions of a love affair, though in fact he'd exchanged no more than a few dozen words with her, when she named the price for his flat white and scone, and he handed it over, maybe shyly offering a line or two himself on the busyness of the town or the

And awed us with the crystalline growth Gleaming like white diamonds Or hope from the once-darkness We marvelled at the old magic of stones, At how they can change, become new in their aging; At how even magic must change.

11

Declan Burke

Home

What does the word mean? In the Concise Oxford Dictionary 'home' is: 'Dwelling-place; fixed residence of family or household; Native land of oneself or one's ancestors'. Between you and me, though, (And Freud would have loved this) When I first read 'dwelling-place' I thought it said 'duelling-place'.

Brian Leyden

### **Bog Disco**

It should have been the old bloomeries of love during the slow-set: disco lights like Morse Code baubles roaming our sequins, skirts and shirts but some smart aleck two plastic, parish seats away from me belches and says: 'Boom. It's the erection section.' So I make tracks swift, double-door into a true breather of a night. The Plough, dazzling points floating in the sky.

Elaine Cosgrove previously published on Poethead and in Transmissions, Dedalus Press

15

And mother did the milking. Head buried in the soft indent above the udder, Struggin' frothy milk into a bucket, While hopeful cats caressed her heels and shins

We brought them back again when all were drained. Slappin' their backs to get them goin'. Stopping at the gullet So they could drink their fill and skitter more. Rose Jordan

Memory in Two Locations

(after Christopher Middleton)

Ridged steps of the schoolbus

Ramapo reversed in the mirror

And blades of crabgrass already

stiffening one cold afternoon.

Forking Roscommon loam

My accent clanging the fields

To die – uninflected

As churchbells in the

steeple near the digger do.

Griefs ploughed in, my mother

Still with time enough -

A naked mouth

In such North Jersey light

Descending the rubber

14

Surfing At Streedagh Strand Site of a Spanish Armada wreckage

During sea-salt of winter surf, remembrance of lineage acts like zinc on the blood that swells from a creviced nick beside my thumbnail.

Streedagh Strand pulls out her linen towel and I become warm dough on the seafloor when their bodies appear blood-strewn bits on grain.

Five hundred wiped-out sailors beat, robbed and stripped ashore by local savages hungry for wealthy bones and soaked goods falling like crumbs from their dying.

A good savage attending only to castles and mountains De Cuellar said of O'Ruairc who gave the Spaniards fresh-cut reeds to sleep on, rye bread to eat

in the Breffni mountains where they hid. My soft hands roughen to withstand whip of board, cold knife in December tide earthing me straight to the skin.

18

Elaine Cosgrove

previously published in The Penny Dreadful and in Elaine Cosgrove's Transmissions, Dedalus Press

Armada

We all say we'll come back, some day. 'It's a place to be from.' We are fair-weather friends wearing fishhooks at the corner of our mouths; the line tugs every few days, months, years. We bleed in brief, sharp fits, and look back.

To a jigsaw-piece coast in the elbow-crook of a teddybear island. On one side, an old, stone nipple, smelling of warm moss and summer shadows. On the other, a steamer-ship latecomer, carved by ice and tear-wrinkled. No, he says. Yes, she shudders, and they pull apart.

Between them falls a silted lakebed, sun-rotten reeds; the tide slips away and up comes a town, river-split, like a fresh loaf of bread. There are sunken galleons out there, somewhere under the

horizon. They creaked and blew across the ocean, but span

# Line buckled - to blow flax flowers hither and thither Then frittering the map For a daughter, the more to live. Alice Lyons

momentum to be carried along.

**Emma Purcell** 

### Morgue Parking at Night

I took you out of the hospital shortly after you decided you were dead. The doctors seemed a little uncertain. Best not to interfere. Best not to question you - I'd learned that.

Sat you in the front seat of the car. I thought I'd take you 'round some of the old spots. You didn't seem...dead; although you were clearly not in the mood for conversation. You took a walk 'round the supermarket, and stood barefooted in the bright, bonewhite light. You stared into the freezers and seemed, somehow, displeased. I spotted you surreptitiously running your fingers through the coiling mist. Then you glanced away as though someone had called you. Your eyes flicked elsewhere, as, perhaps, they

We went for drinks like we used to. We could have talked of old times, but it just didn't seem appropriate. Instead you worried about decay. Was there any discolouration? Could I recognise 'slippage'? Was there a proliferation of blow flies? I said you looked fine, and, as always, you didn't believe me. We went to the fair ground and sat on the merry-go-round, until you said you didn't want to be around people anymore. As the evening wore on, your shadow lengthened.

### **Stolen Dress**

I was walking through a vast darkness in a dress studded with diamonds, the cloth under them like chain mail-metallic, form fitting like the sea to its horizon. I could hear waves breaking on the shore and far off concertina music drifting over the dunes. What was I doing in high heels in sand in a diamond-studded

dress that had to be stolen? Fear washed through me, as if one of those waves had risen up and, against all the rules of waves, splashed me from the shoulders down. I was wet with diamonds and fear. A small boat held offshore with its cold

### An Sruth Geal, Ballinafad

### Once the main road to Sligo, now verges encroach, lazy with scutch, tarmac puddling the same hollows as must have bumped our family car

passing each July full of sleeping bags, sleeping budgie, slobber dog, mewing cat and five wide awake children bursting with holiday hopes.

# **Glencar Sheepshake**

This may have been the very turn where one of us triumphed

# Your wound red brand worthy of a plastic Jesus suits this first Irish place

to have ever heard the exploding sound of gun powder.

You munch right on as the downpour persists,

leaning on rowan bark

patient as this valley.

Outfield, a lame ewe

trips toward a feeder -

an allover shake

I never knew sheep

and suddenly performs

both of you soaked through,

themselves into circles and sank in the dark.

Now, four lanterns guide our way through the night, to backstreet smoking gardens and grief-swallowing rivers. Some of us jump. Because of the empty shops that blow up in yellows and pinks and exclamation marks, then deflate and became grey. Booming buildings of concrete nothing, encased by nothing, selling nothing. Traffic that only travels one way, in a tightening loop.

We came streaming out of yawning churches to bury our plaid and ties - and stopped, on the first step after an escalator. Even Yeats didn't know which island was which, how could we find our way. We fell into long, taut mornings and evenings of itching feet; our fingers soiled by wanting, and each other. We sat still too long, and the sadness came rolling in on a red tide.

So we wound ourselves up to slingshot away, finding the smell of other people's houses, other lives, other lanterns. Some trickle back. Because of the salt. Always on the air, the salt. Scrub raw and renew.

Sheila Armstrong

at Animal, Vegetable or Mineral or spotted our fiftieth Red Cortina. Both parents now across the Lethe

see how the road still floods here at Ballinafad bridge; keeps bright our memory stream.

Eithne Hand

could do. Her mottled face stares at me briefly

> sharing three seconds of saturated resilience.

Eithne Hand

20

Strangely, it seemed the longer it got the less of you there was. In the cinema you seemed most comfortable - propped awkwardly beside me. Strange for one who had been so full of life to have abandoned it so completely. Then again, it was just like you to approach a situation with such complete commitment. After the cinema you seemed...deader, and I had to carry you back to the car. You whispered something very softly all the while, and I was cautious not to notice how dead you were.

We drove up to Lookout Point. You stood there, gently silhouetted by a twilight city skyline. Strands of your black hair flicked and swirled as the wind whipped about your adumbral form. The thieving breeze played you softly like a wind-chime and stole my voice just as I tried to say all I needed to say. Things like: you caught me changing my skin, I was so naked that it hurt to touch you. Or when you left it was like a light went out. Or our silence is the absence of your laughter.

You stood, already lost, giving yourself entirely to the dusk. You'd become one with the evening shadows. And gradually, as darkness settled in, I realised I was alone.

21

Patrick Karl Curley

always had.

yellow light pointing a long watery finger at me

while the stolen feeling of the dress sparkled my location out into the universe. *Thief! Thief!* came an interplanetary cry, causing me to gaze up into the star-brilliant firmament, for it wasn't just a sky anymore. It had taken on biblical stature. How had I gotten into this dress, these unruly

waves, this queasy feeling I would be found out? Time to run! my heart said. pumping away under its brocade of diamonds. Strange vacancies had accumulated after all my sleep-plundered nights. Thief! Came the cry again, as if I should recognize myself. And I did.

I flung those high heels into the depths, took up my new found identity, and without the least remorse, began to run those diamonds right out of this world.

Tess Gallagher from Is, Is Not, a forthcoming collection, Greywolf Press, May 2019

### Stolen

Standing by the fence at the end of my garden, I'm reminded of where I grew up in the city and the sprawling fields behind my parents' house that somehow every year sprouted a herd of cows overnight. They drifted through summer in the ripening grass, resting on hot days in the shade of massive elm trees, either close by with heavy breathing and the smell of cud and dung, or, dreamlike, in the distance with flat and angular rooftop silhouettes beyond. I would often sneak in and sit close to them and being North Side Dublin City cows, they never got excited. I graduated from penny toffees to stolen cigarettes and each year the new herd made the field their own and would amble by the bottom of our garden each evening just to see what the boy at the edge of their world had to say to them today.

It was a cool dusk when I found them motionless, all pointing in one direction with their wildness billowing around them in steamy plumes. They were staring at the car that had stolen into their field, tinted black and half submerged in the yellow sea of late summer and they were mesmerized by the awesome cracking noises trapped in the stillness between them, the car and me. A hollow explosion sent a ring of black smoke rolling into the sky chased by an orange ball of flames and the herd charged away into the distance with the rumble of their hooves fading forever.

Kevin Keely

### Resurgam

Archaeologists carry messages between the dead and the living. For two centuries a beech tree wound its roots down through the burial. When eventually toppled by winter storms, the root system snapped the skeleton in half, raising the torso up into the air but leaving the leg bones undisturbed in the shallow grave below. Days later the skull mysteriously disappeared, surviving only as an eggshaped imprint in the earth. The deceased had been afforded a Christian burial - head to the west, feet to the east. It may have been a somewhat hurried affair as a rock at the base of the grave was never removed, tilting the corpse onto the right side. Weeks later the osteoarchaeologist identified a young man from the mangled remains. He was 17-20 years old and markedly taller than his contemporaries. He had good teeth, blemished only by occasional traces of plaque. Notches on four teeth in the upper jaw spoke of an activity or occupation now lost. Vertebrae in his lower back told of someone involved in heavy manual labour since childhood.

His early death was a violent one.

Twice a knife had been viciously thrust into his chest. Shielding himself as he lay on the ground, he was stabbed through the palm of his left hand. The efficiency of the attack pointed towards an assailant trained in hand-to-hand combat who had met inexperience. Months later the radiocarbon laboratory placed this man in time: he had lived and died in 11th or 12th century Sligo. With little or no English, he would have known his final resting place as Cill idir dá Abhainn, 'the church between two rivers'. His bones are but fragments of a once full life.

### Split Rock

You slash your lightsaber through the air and slice open the rock. You check around it. Tiny animals grow under it. Whole housing estates of beetles and woodlice and spiders. They live on fungus and lichen, yellowed and greened by the sun. You collect some beetles in a jar and give it a leaf for a roof. Your mother is in the back garden freaked out by it contents. She thinks one of the spiders is caught in her underarm hair and screams and leaps trying to shake it off. She likes to garden half naked but she always wears gloves and wellies. You go back to the rock and climb to its top. You lean down the split middle and scrape off some lichen with your nails. Something sharp gets under one nail too much and you shout 'fuck'. Your mother pops her head over the wall. 'Fionn, you're grounded.' You tell her it's not fair and explain about the nail. Now you're giving her lip and she double grounds you for a month. 'Fucking bitch' you shout not caring if she grounds you for the rest of your life. You don't want to speak to her ever again. You walk through the crack three times, then sit in its middle and wait for it to close. You'll show her how sorry she's going to be when you're gone.

Rhona Trench

# Street Sibyl

I saw the messages before I ever saw her, taped to insides of windows, on the door, pen scrawls, asking to be left alone, show respect, stop spying. On backs of envelopes and paper bags, sentences multiplied - no more breaking broken bottles - syntax and synapse collapsing.

Hers was the last terraced house before the station. Kids crowded there for buses, smoked on her wall, shifted against her gable, dropped crisp packets and cigarette butts where she'd tried a garden. Brazen ones banged her door and ran. Out she'd come with a shrill cry, sweeping brush in hand, headscarf tied under chin, a portly shape in floral dress stumbling after them. A house hag, sibyl, cailleach.

One autumn, she painted the house silver, took a tin of red paint to the side and began. Injustices, dates, and names bled down the wall in the November rain. She wrote into the dark, intent, telling. Words wrapped to the front of the house, down the door, between windows, a body shrieking.

By January, in the amputated light, frantic thoughts spilled across the threshold onto the path into the street. Sentences truncated and jagged, in paint, in pencil in chalk, smeared by footfall and wheel track of passing suitcases, spiralled out and broke on strands that faltered back to her door.

And then it stopped.

Once, drunk and alone, I stood in the faded text, read on her path loneliness - nobody - and on her glittering wall weather lore - when sparks fall from stars - and there in the dark all her broken lines seemed an architecture, the makings of a nest that might hold against storm.

28

Lament	Sixteen Years On
(in memory of Thom Moore)	
for Aidan Mannion	Through blotch cheeked,
	teeth ground hours
Exiled into homecoming	beyond the other side
you sang a landscape.	of night's inked spaces
	you arrived slithering
That train left too,	into the metalled light
the exile's place exiling in turn	of a delivery room.
indifferent to a prophet.	A pencil tip of day
Sligo's dreaming sand,	traced on April horizons.
unable to provide	You lay, tiny blood-glazed thing
for voice and hand.	sluggishly stirring on bared belly,
	air thickened with relief.
That raw March Saturday	
we reminisced you	I took the proffered blades
	and scissored, a red-green rope
in The Record Room,	of umbilicus, sinew tough,
as someone high on Knocknarea	surprisingly resistant,
	releasing you fully into new elements.
in sidelong gloom	
tipped an urn with ease	Sixteen years on today, you stand
	sun eyed, clear skinned,
and your last plume	already beaming down
fanned, singing on a bitter breeze.	on my six feet,
	voice octaved below,
John Kavenagh	and those endless, splayed arms
	widened in ever ready hug
	- a giant Condor tenting its young.

# The Violin

John Kavenagh

25

After a line by Michael Longley Stained with blood from a hare,

long-since written into the ripple of the grain. Listen to the slow rasp of the bow

how it searches out

picks the lock

cave we slept in, furtive days hunting our next meal, like the scouring eagle above the clean edge of the sea.

Bloody Sunday

(In Memoriam Jackie Duddy)

It is 2010 and I am declared innocent 2010 and the whitethorns blooming. For thirty-eight years I have been marching towards the Guildhall. I am seventeen years old And do not show fear.

This is the car-park of Rossville flats. It is 1972 and no snowdrops bloom here. The gasp of the guns and the whisper of prayers, A bullet from behind pierces my chest 'Father if it be possible let this chalice pass from me.'

It is 1972 and they are carrying me, 1972 and snowdrops cannot bloom here. Staggering, stumbling, breathless, they carry the Bogside, they carry the truth. In their holy hands I am almost home safe.

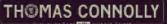
At McHugh's shop they will lay me on the pavement, And I will cease to breathe. But I remain here in the concrete. I am a grief that is bottomless I am a rock in Derry's wall I am rain falling on the Bogside I am St Eugene's bell tolling I am a snowdrop waiting to bloom.

# OUR SPONSORS

26







### The Horseshoe

Whatever detour brought us here, the depth of the gap is our measure. This high up, cleft above cleft, stacked columns plunged with gulleys, shale plates tipped sideways where the ice slid off.

> Across the valley's chequered patchwork scored lines divide forest from field.

High summer; the air hums, its blue

Dearest, have you forgotten the dark

combed into every fold of green.

that walled-up bawl of grief,

and slides in like a thief.

It can strike anywhere; in a strange land

a crowded room, a dark auditorium

Peggie Gallagher

salt-scald, feral gravid as a mountain stream.

Peggie Gallagher

Marion Dowd

Una Mannion

Nora McGillen

is produced by A Country Under Wave in association with Tread Softly ..

Printed by Tiger Print, Sligo

### Landscaper

It was perhaps his last conversation with Charles Harper. An hour of utter mischief and memories then talk fell upon the work.

27

Somewhere in all that Sean McSweeney said "I allow my condition have the paintings emerge just so..."

So, years of "condition" wresting control of his life, his hands, was just another way for his work to go!

When it was time to leave we helped him stand - He would bloody well walk his old friend to the door.

At the threshold he steadied himself let go of us gently, like we were paper boats

Seconds later waving back to him from the gate and the man, beaming, was still as stone.

Earthed by a hand on the frame of his studio door it was all of Maugherow

bog pool, briar lane, stone wall and field slopes trembled slightly in summer light,

with the spatula tip of Ballyconnell knifing up a new colour neap-tide

Malcolm Hamilton

### from When Light Is Like Water

On the weekends or my evenings off, Eddie would pick me up and we would zoom through the countryside, his Triumph gripping the road, the hedges pressing in with their full summer growth. We went for oysters in Oughterard and smoked salmon in Westport. He took me to a castle in Kerry and another in Donegal, and to big country houses and tiny little pubs, where in dark nooks we canoodled over milky pints. He took me to an island of beehive huts, to the Shannon, to a bistro the far side of a border checkpoint where helicopters hovered overhead. He took me to an abattoir, and I saw the blood running down the gutters and met a man in spattered coveralls who was charmed by my interest in slaughter.

Sometimes we just drove and drove, to a waterfall or a piece of land he hankered after or a high-up boreen with a particularly fine view. Everywhere cottages crumbled. I had the foreigner's eye-acquisitive, ignorant, romantic-and I would say as we passed, "What about that one? Do you think that could be fixed up?" and sometimes he would laugh, and sometimes he would weigh the possibilities, and sometimes he would tell me a story about who owned the land and the intractable knot the deeds were in. And I would be astounded that such places should be let go to ruin as though they were nothing, that you could buy a plot with a sea view for less than you'd spend on a car.

I recall a single midnight downpour, parked in Eddie's car above the beach at Rosses Point, the world through the windscreen a rich black smear, as though painted in oils. Otherwise, it was the sort of summer when every day dawned clear and blue, and the seas glittered in the sunlight. The sort of summer whose extreme rarity every person I knew attempted to impress on me, so that a certain unreality attached itself to those months.

Molly McCloskey

Excerpt from When Light Is Like Water, Penguin, Ireland

### **Cautionary Tale**

An old bear would come into the village at the beginning of winter and settle down in a warm corner behind the bake-house wall. There he would sleep the cold months away contentedly with a smile on his face. The villagers passing by would glance at the old bear and be cheered by his smiling countenance. Until one day a young girl in a red cape came, looked at the bear, and said, 'I bet he is not as cuddly and happy as he appears. I bet he is dangerous.' So she poked him with a sharp stick. The bear waved it off without opening his eyes. She poked him again. Again he waved it off, still smiling, as if he were ridding himself of a bothersome fly. So she poked harder until he woke up. When he opened his eyes that were irritated by the red glare of her cape, and realised the young girl was poking him with a stick, he flew into a rage and chased her down the street. The last words she was heard to utter, before he sank his teeth into her windpipe, were, 'I told everyone he was dangerous, and no one believed me.'

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Jack Harte

### Tenebrae i.m. Leland Bardwell June 28th 2016

Lessons of Darkness taught by the Russians.

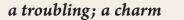
Mandlestam, back from the gulag in his dog-hair coat, with She'd-tell-me-where-to-cut the line - his wife Nadezhda

Chekov, from the mantelpiece, deaf to our chorus. Sad-eyed lady of the low lands way past midnight.

A tattered Proclamation on the bathroom door, and the Via Dolorosa in black.

Sorrowful mysteries scoured for hours; the father, cryptic crosswords the son.

Mary Branley



After the snow, she said the magnolia tree wouldn't flower and fretted she'd have nothing to look at. He bought a bird feeder, a fine mesh one filled with tiny dark seeds, and hung it from the thinnest branch. He turned her chair to the window, and all that week she watched for yellow flashes on the small wings that flitted between the boughs. On the last day she held up a hand and counted on her fingers.

Nine, she said. If we'd known.

He took down a book to find the collective noun for goldfinches, but the answer was sad and full of portent so he kept it to himself. When she was gone, he turned her chair back to face the room For days he waited at the window, but the birds didn't come. He found the feeder on the ground, mesh casing nibbled open, contents scattered. He couldn't tell the seeds from the flecks of shit the mice had left, and when he took a yard brush to them it scrabbed strips off the lawn. She had been wrong about the tree, though. White starry blossoms had burst from the bare bark, a fortnight later than usual. Their fragrance thick and sweet and waxy, an old lady scent.

### **Cormorants**

They fly over like flagships of the devil with messages between the dead.

Fighting to keep a straight line they bring news to Ulysses,

then back again to Lethe with his letters for the boatman.

Only the cormorant is allowed into hell. That's why he stands with his wings out



Louise Kennedy

on an unsheltered rock imploring the heavens

to forgive him for all that he's seen and heard.

### Dermot Healy

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