

The Bangor Literary Journal

Issue 9: Open House Festival Edition

August 2019



Featuring: 40 Words Competition Winners; New Work by Women Aloud NI; Writer and Poet Anne McMaster; Artist Les Sharpe; Poetry, Flash Fiction, Art and Photography by Contributors.

Editors' Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to the very special issue 9 of The Bangor Literary Journal, which is part of Open House Festival.

With what is probably our biggest issue yet, you will uncover two fabulous interviews with contemporary artist Les Sharpe and writer and poet (amongst other things) Anne McMaster.

It is also our pleasure to feature selected work by the talented members of Women Aloud NI. In this particular feature, you will find stunning poetry, flash fiction and memoir.

In addition, you can read the work of those shortlisted for the 40 Words Fiction and Poetry Competition and delve into the work of our fabulous 2019 winners, Anne Tannam (poetry) and Marilyn Timms (fiction)!

And finally, as if this wasn't enough, we hope you thoroughly enjoy the exceptional poetry, flash fiction and photography by our other contributors.

See. This issue really is full to bursting point with talent! Enjoy every bit.

Amy and Paul



Amy Louise Wyatt



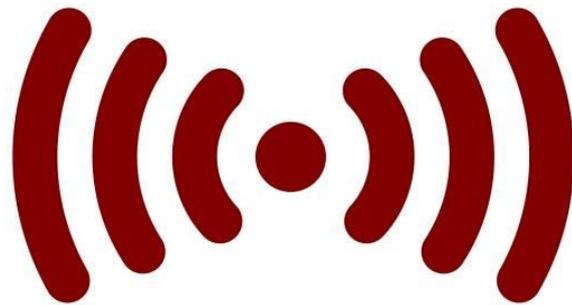
Paul Daniel Rafferty

Contents

Pages 4-16	Women Aloud NI	Feature
Pages 17-18	Brian McCourt	Photography
Pages 19-20	Cath Humphris	Flash Fiction
Pages 21-22	Iain Campbell	Poetry
Pages 23-31	Anne McMaster	Featured Writer/Poet
Pages 32-33	Anne Donnellan	Poetry
Pages 34-35	Angela Graham	Poetry
Pages 36-37	James Coffey	Flash Fiction
Pages 38- 42	Les Sharpe	Featured Artist
Pages 43-44	Gordon Gibson	Poetry
Pages 45-46	Maureen Hill	Poetry
Pages 47-48	Lucinda Trew	Poetry
Pages 49-77	40 Words Competition	Feature
Pages 78-79	John Hicks	Poetry
Pages 80-81	David Spicer	Poetry
Pages 82-83	DS Maolalai	Poetry
Pages 84-85	Michela Esposito	Flash Fiction
Pages 86-87	Angeline King	Poetry
Pages 88-89	Kerry Buchanan	Flash Fiction/ Photography
Pages 90-91	Edward Lee	Poetry
Pages 92-93	Sally Michaelson	Poetry
Pages 94-95	Michael Durack	Poetry
Pages 96-97	P.W. Bridgman	Poetry
Pages 98-99	Susan E Lloy	Flash Fiction
Page 100	Bangor Poetry Competition	Call

Feature: Women Aloud NI

WOMEN ALOUD NI



Women Aloud NI is an initiative which aims to raise the profile of the women's writing scene in Northern Ireland. This feature showcases writing by selected members of the group, working in a range of genres- from poetry, to fiction to memoir.

Follow Women Aloud NI here:

<https://www.facebook.com/WomenAloudNI/>

<https://twitter.com/WomenAloudNI>

Abattoir

Let's take this word
and undress her.
Heave off those surgeon's boots,
un-pop the fastenings
of the boiler suit so stiff
with blood
and see what's underneath.

Are you surprised?
French knickers, slip-seamed stockings
that wrinkle when she bends
her little foot.
But look, turn her around,
unhook that saucy basque and
see how her back is marked.
Old weals in Royal Icing ridges
and fresh ones pink
as the abstract splash of cruelty.
You could run your fingers over her
ruined pelt,
feel her muscles twitch
with pleasure
at your touch.

If the word could talk, she'd say,
I'm just a little piece of flesh,

and so are you.

by Heather Richardson

Father Time

Remember the lavender jungle
Of mother's potato plant?
Leafy explosions enveloped stony paths
Leading to a future unknown.
Happily I scavenged a perpetual present
Of gold green excess,
Rose bushes, too profuse to be pretty,
Cast off silk petals in a fragrant carpeting of the senses;
The darkest recesses of the rockery hidden
Repressed by childhood buzzing in pink bushes
Pollinating young lives with growth, hope and always.

Memory crawls out now
From those dark unknowns
Freed by tightly trimmed tree skeletons,
The neat straightness of linear paths
Aiding Time march quickly on
His ghostly footsteps echoing –
'Nearly done, Daddy' –
You see yourself beaming sunlight on the past
Only to be cooled by the grey clinical light of the present:

Him gone, into the earth
Only the hedges you now cut
In neat boxes, to store memories in;
Grief's constant whispering prevalent
Above the stilled soil
Flowers wilting with discarded hope
And you, the sunlight, dulling
Setting for the coming night.

by Kendra Reynolds

Easter

after Mary Oliver

I have spent last week digging
a hole in the sand.
Every morning I pick up
my plastic trowel
and set to it.

a scrape means sand
a crunch means shell
a thud means rock

I dig around carefully
until I can lever it out just so
and throw it into the sea
with a satisfying splash.

Every evening the sea
fills the hole with water and sand,
re-arranges the rocks.
Every morning I dig the hole again.

sometimes with the channels
sometimes with a moat
sometimes with a tomb for a crab

How was your Easter break?

You asked,
I dug a hole, I said.
What did you do?

by EV McLoughlin

Welcome to Belfast

It was always bad when you heard the bang before the sirens.

That day I heard shooting before the bang before the sirens.

Standing with my back to a fifteen foot high window in my office in Belfast's Central Library, I was ringing a colleague to ask if she had heard gunfire when the explosion went off It was 1976 and I had just started my new post as Children's Librarian with my shiny red Mazda neatly parked in the library car park.

My friend was thrown across the room and I can only imagine the terror of the kids from the flats who had been rushed out of the children's library, just in the nick of time. The car bomb had been parked right outside the back gate. Almost every window on the Belfast Telegraph side of the building was blown out, but not, mercifully, the one under which I had been standing. Picture six floors of glass falling down into the car park.

We had to evacuate, of course, and then stand on what would become a familiar spot on the corner of North Street, waiting for the all clear.

Welcome to Belfast!

by Liz Weir

Reclaimed

'The Dead were Anna, Helena, Hugh, Jane and Archibald, being all God's Lovely Loans'
Walter Harris, *The Antient and Present State of the County of Down*, 1744

Feather light, or standing surprised
on their own two feet, the lovely
loans are reclaimed back to sleep,
stowed for eternity in God's pocket,

and we pray hard to believe that
now they are sparrows and lilies;
swaddled in shawls of silver,
outshining even Solomon,

that all those others, stitched
into cheap linen, wrapped in plastic,
interred in the bodies of dead
mothers, will share in the fading

carved gifts of Anna's eyes,
Helena's strong grip, Hugh's smile,
Jane, the wriggler, always on the move,
Archibald laughing at his own hiccup.

by Linda McKenna

A Stroke of luck

Felka knew most of the regulars at her pitch outside the bookies. Some smiled and spoke, others gave her money without meeting her eye. Most ignored her.

He was one of those. He swaggered, a cigarette at the side of his mouth and hands in his pockets.

Today was different. He grinned as he came out of the bookies, holding a bunch of notes.

'Coin for luck sir?'

'Clear off back where you came from. Bloody immigrants.'

He wheeled round. 'Did you say something?'

'No sir.'

Life had been tough back at home. Felka had decided to try her luck in the UK. It wasn't easy here either, but at least she had a roof over her head and this good pitch. When people were unkind she muttered a word she knew.

It was weeks before she saw the man again, struggling out of the bookies on crutches, his leg in a cast.

'What happened to you?' said another man.

'Slipped down some steps. Nasty break they said.'

'Bad luck.'

'Then the wife pranged the car. And the TV broke down.'

Felka smiled at him.

'Coin for luck sir?'

He slipped a pound into her hand.

'Sure, why not?'

by Linda Hutchinson

A Late Bonding

You murdered potentially precious moments
with your desire for perfection;
you – impatient, dour, stern –
I – seen not heard, nervous,
squashed by fear and the mantra
You just wait til your father gets home;
dreading car lights on gateposts:
your arrival – my terror.

Hindsight helps empathy: father of five
by thirty-one, poor pockets, solace in sports.
Tainted memories now surrender to shared time:
our magical connections with night skies -
Orion and the *Big Bear* giving us the eye;
tear-dripping laughter at daft one-liner jokes;
fearful fascination with Mitchum's finger tattoos –
Love wrestling *Hate* in your favourite Film Noir.

You loved my harmonies to *Plaisir d'Amour*,
I melted as you sang Val's *The Special Years*.
You brought gifts: fresh-caught fish from Ardglass rocks;
foraged mushrooms – sautéed and piled high
atop bread fire-browned on Neptune's trident toasting fork;
treats of American comics from the City Hall
magazine stand – DC's *Wonder Woman*, Marvel's *Thor*
and the captivating *Classics Illustrated*.

Was it your renowned recitation of *The Man from God
Knows Where* that gave me my love of words?
Did your joy in your old Box Brownie lead
to my 'backs 'n' bums' pics with my Instamatic?
The rebellious act of sowing renegade wildflowers
into a cultivated garden surely came from you;
singing with Sinatra, gasping at Fred and Ginger did too.
The passing years gave witness to our new understanding...
In Love there is Forgiveness,
In Forgiveness... Love.

by Paula Ryder

Night-feed

Sharing the wolf-light
barely awake, my full breasts
ache for practiced lips
(the Breastapo expectant faces
told me that *breast is best*)
I now can't think,
I fumble a tired nightdress.

Your face turning to peer
eyes so fervid
toothless gums rhythmic,
pulling, pulling, pulling,
you're a bow to my violin.
A cacophony to my life,
but tonight,
in a Portstewart bungalow,
you're a fragrant melody
quietly echoing.

by Anita Gracey

Lola

The Brazilian sun sparked in the highest point of the sky, scorching skin and turning the sidewalk to lava. As Lola set off on her daily walk, her nostrils filled with pungent city smells. Passing the end of an alley, she heard a soft whining sound and took a detour to investigate. Pulling apart fruit store garbage revealed an infant, swaddled in a grimy rag, wrinkled skin and squirming. Lola gently lifted the bundle taking care not to hurt it. Their eyes met, the baby cooed.

There was a hospital only four blocks away. She often walked past it and knew people would be coming and going. Often the staff had flashed her warm smiles, she decided that was the best place. On arrival at the steps, Lola rested the baby in a shadowed corner. Out bounced a young male nurse. Lola noticed he smelt of antiseptic. The nurse looked down with a frown as he noticed the bundle. Just as Lola was turning to leave he bent down.

'Good dog' he patted 'I'll take care of the baby now'.

by Gaynor Kane

A Childhood Memory

brought on
due to a dish
served to my
mother
by the nursing
home's new
cook from Catalonia.
I was assured her
anec amb figues
is a delight
if not a little
rich for some
of the residents.
Mum was transported
to the house of her childhood
where her mother liked
to experiment in the kitchen.
She remembered
the aga
the maid
the storeroom
the butcher
the bird bath
the curtains
her big hearted dad.
The new cook is a sorcerer to be sure;
the incident transfixed me.
Such glee in the midst of a fading mind.

by Wilma Kenny

**Heather Richardson** **Poetry**

Heather Richardson is a novelist, poet, short story writer and occasional textile artist. Her most recent novel is *Doubting Thomas* (Vagabond Voices, 2017). She lives in Belfast.

Kendra Reynolds **Poetry**

Kendra Reynolds completed a PhD in contemporary literature at Ulster University in 2018 and has a forthcoming research monograph being published by Routledge later this year. She has also started to publish some of her poetry in journals and collections, including the *Honest Ulsterman* and *The Paperclip*.

E.V. McLoughlin **Poetry**

E.V. McLoughlin's writing was published in the *Blue Nib*, *Awkward Mermaid*, *Bangor Literary Journal*, *The Writer's Cafe*, *Rat's Ass Review*, and *Honest Ulsterman*. Her poems were longlisted for Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2016 and shortlisted for the Fresher Writing Prize 2017. E.V. lives in Co. Down, Northern Ireland.

Liz Weir (MBE) **Memoir**

Liz Weir is a storyteller and writer based in Cushendall, Co Antrim. She has told stories on 5 continents, has written various publications for young people and is now working on a memoir.

Linda McKenna **Poetry**

Originally from Dublin, Linda McKenna lives in Downpatrick. She has had poems published in a number of journals including: *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Crannog*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Skylight 47*, *A New Ulster*, *The Blue Nib*, *Four x Four*, *Dodging the Rain*, *The Bangor Literary Journal*.

**Linda Hutchinson****Flash Fiction**

Linda Hutchinson writes stories of various lengths and has written a novel for children which may find a publisher one day. She enjoys life, love, family, reading and writing.

Paula Ryder**Poetry**

Paula Ryder is from Antrim. Her poem “Dancing On” is in the CAP 2019 “Poetry in Motion” Anthology; “Unpresidential” was published by the Belfast Festival of Ideas and Politics and “Pilgrimage” was short-listed for the Fifth Bangor Poetry Competition. She has read at numerous Poetry events, her next being for the EastSide Festival in August 2019.

Anita Gracey**Poetry**

Anita Gracey has been published in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Washing Windows – Irish Women Write Poetry* (Ed. Eavan Boland), *The Honest Ulsterman*, *The Poets’ Republic*, *The Blue Nib*, *CAP Anthology* and *Waterways Story-making Festival*. She was shortlisted for the *Over the Edge New Writer of the Year Award* in 2018.

Gaynor Kane**Flash Fiction**

Gaynor Kane is a writer and amateur photographer from Belfast. Her poetry pamphlet on burial rites and last wishes is due out in November with Hedgehog Poetry Press.

Wilma Kenny**Poetry**

Wilma Kenny is an award winning writer from Belfast. She has been published in *The Blue Nib* and in a publication by Arlen House Press. Recently she was the winner of the Waterford Writers Competition 2018



Clare Island shipwreck, County Mayo

This image is of a shipwreck, 'high and dry', on Clare island in County Mayo.



Dunseverick Coast, County Antrim

This image was taken of the rocky coast at Dunseverick in County Antrim. Using a long exposure, the movement of the waves created an ethereal atmosphere.

Biography

Brian is an amateur photographer living in Bangor. Finding it almost impossible to leave the house without a camera, his favourite subjects range from Irish landscapes, to sports events and music concerts.

Cath Humphris

Flash Fiction

Cath Humphris lives in the Severn Vale, Gloucestershire. She's had short stories published by Grist and Rubery Books. She teaches creative reading and writing groups, and writes a weekly blog at <https://cathum.wordpress.com/>



The right path is always waiting

My sand-glass was purple crystal and he smashed it after the eggs boiled to rubber. I bounced one off his forehead and told him it was irreplaceable. He bought flowers and apologies when he returned from work.

A week later a parcel arrived, addressed to me. Inside was an identical egg-timer he'd seen on the internet. It came from China, but was made of plastic, new and shiny, no chips or crazes on the even surface. I threw it back to him, crying, 'catch,' not waiting to see if it hit the floor.

I packed everything else. All I needed fitted in two bags.

I unclipped the handle of my case and trundled it into the road. Neighbours came out to watch.

He said, 'Come back now.'

I shrugged my rucksack into position, and moved on.

The route was long. For miles there were no sign-posts. I wasn't worried. One evening I filled my shoes with champagne, but they were worn thin. It leaked out.

I still wish someone had filmed it, one of my best moments.

by Cath Humphris

Iain's poetry is inspired by his love of the landscape and the sea, often intertwined with a tale of someone he has met, or of a journey he has undertaken.

He has had work published in the Blue Nib, The Honest Ulsterman, Lagan Online, the Bangor Literary Journal; and most recently in 'Find', the Poetry in Motion Anthology which celebrates the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2019.

He has been a regular entrant to the Bangor Poetry Competition, short listed for the past five years, runner up in 2014 and commended in 2018. He has read at Bangor's Open House Festival, Aspects Festival and is a regular contributor to Poetry NI's Friday nights in Belfast.



Vinyl Replay

I once called here most Friday afternoons;
a musical emporium vying for attention with
footfalls, free games and borrowed dreams;
a carousel of sound, where I might See Emily Play;

idle time, to flick through album sleeves for one
with a kaleidoscope of psychedelic faces,
while you minded the turntable and the till;
your long hair, black, like reflected vinyl.

Radio Caroline was my compass point,
its pirate broadside of music rocking the tides
of fidelity before fading on a hundred miles of moonlight.
Years later I called by again, glancing back in time.

You smiled and mentioned a memory,
suggesting I once browsed here on other days
and other ways, but even then I did not dare
to tell how often I had remembered you.

by Iain Campbell

Featured Writer and Poet: Anne McMaster



Anne lives on a small farm several miles outside a small mid-ulster town. A former lecturer in California and NI, she's now a professional voice artist, editor, poet and playwright who is delighted to be artist in residence for a forest. She's a professional member of IWC and a member of Women Aloud NI. Her poetry has been published in the USA, Canada, the UK and Ireland.

Hi Anne, thank you so much for chatting with us. Firstly, can you tell the readers what areas you work in?

Hello! May I say, first of all, that it's both kind and generous of you to give me this opportunity to talk about my work – so thank you! I spent 22 years lecturing at both university and FE level in the US and in NI – in English Literature and many aspects of Performing Arts; literature, photography, creative writing and theatre are what I'm hard-wired to do and so they influence most of my work today. I walked away from full-time employment in 2016 to change my lifestyle, to write and to return to freelance work. On paper, it looked like a totally crazy thing to do, but I couldn't be busier or happier. I'm running bespoke creative writing classes, I'm developing my own photography projects, I'm designing brand new arts courses, I run my own theatre company, I became the Artist in Residence for a forest in 2018 (how cool is that?) and I've recently started working as a professional voiceover artist. I also work as senior editor for CAET International Arts Journal - based in Beijing. In July, I was asked to join a team of arts professionals who'll be implementing an exciting arts and culture strategy for Derry City and Strabane Council – so I get to give something back to a city and a town that were my second homes for many years. I'm writing too – working on two poetry collections and a novel. My first poetry collection will be published in 2020. Every day is different. And each creative challenge is fresh and new. I am the luckiest person I know.

Looking at the range of genres and creative arenas that you have worked in/ currently work in- what is your favourite? Or is it impossible to choose?

I'm afraid it's absolutely impossible to choose! One artistic discipline often melds into the other, creating a gorgeously productive synergy, so I try to leave myself open to working across a number of creative arenas. As a kid, I completed my piano grades; as a student at university, I supplemented my meagre income by playing the piano in art galleries and restaurants. When I began writing plays in my thirties, my knowledge of music translated itself into devised theatre productions linked to music and movement. This past autumn I worked alongside a composer to produce a play for voices remembering the Battle of Messines and the construction of the Island of Ireland Peace Park. I'm currently working with the same (very talented!) composer and a film maker to record the sounds of nature in my local forest and to develop those as a soundtrack (with a voiced script of spoken word poetry) for a short film. That common thread of music has run through so many of my other creative passions and enhanced them all.

I know art teachers say that there are all kinds of ways to develop an eye for what we see around us so that we can capture it on the page, but I know my limitations. I love the visual arts, but I utterly accept that I can neither draw nor paint to save my life! I dealt with that by learning photography. As a shy teenager, I went to my local chemist – he was photographer for a local newspaper – and asked him to teach me all he knew about developing and printing photographs. And bless him, he did. I don't need to use those particular skills any more – I carry both my iphone and a digital SLR with me these days and capture images instantly – but my spatial awareness of blocking actors onstage and layering the space with performers and light has allowed me to build well constructed, balanced images. I use many of the recorded images for my ekphrastic poetry and other photographs have been printed in a number of literary and art

journals.

You have recently been awarded an Arts Council award. Can you outline the project you are working on for us?

As a poet, I've only been on the NI literary scene for just over 3 years, so I was absolutely delighted (and truly gob-smacked) to receive a SIAP Award from the NI Arts Council in 2018. This project lies very close to my heart. As a former farmer (I stepped into running the family farm full-time when my father had his hip broken by a cow) I'm combining aspects of historical research into my own family farm, delving into the confluences between theory and practice (exploring rural life in 20th and 21st century Northern Ireland from literary, historical, eco-critical and eco-psychological perspectives), recording and documentation interviews with local farmers and farm-workers who remember life on small farms and, finally, producing of a collection of poetry linked to my research. Of course, the cross-pollination of artistic disciplines comes in here too; I've been spending the past year photographing farmlands through the seasons.

Anne, you live on an old farm. I know the readers would love to hear all about your daily life (and your writing life) at your farmhouse.



My daily life at the old farm is a very quiet one and I couldn't ask for better than that. A core reason for my leaving full time employment was to come back to the farm and spend some serious writing and renovating time here; I have around ten acres of land, the old farmhouse itself and then concomitant byres, sheds and buildings that make up the full farm. It's in mid-Ulster, so it's neither sexy nor trendy, but I adore the fact that I'm living in a heavily rural area with a wonderfully old-fashioned way of life. When I changed careers in 2016, one of my first actions was to take off my watch. I've rarely worn one since. So much of my work still involves being precise and exact (timing poems to read, working in a recording studio,

developing film story boards or playscripts while working with musicians) but here at the farm, it's completely different. I have the luxury now (which I don't take for granted) of doing much of my work from home. If I don't have meetings or workshops to attend, I build my day around the available daylight here. I write here too - outdoors during daylight hours. I think it's a legacy of spending 20+ years working in dark theatres with no natural light! I'm hungry for daylight now. Unless it's absolutely bucketing with rain, I'll take my morning coffee out to a knackered wee bench under one of the old sycamore trees and that's where I'll begin my writing day. I'll be there all winter too, wrapped up in thermals, wellingtons, a work coat and a warm hat. At night, I'll work in one of the wee bedrooms at the back of the house that I've turned into an office space. I'm a night owl, so I can happily work through into the wee small hours of the morning.

A huge part of my creative process involves the farm – not only being in the physical surroundings of the house but looking after the land. I now do as my father once did; I walk the land through the seasons. That means checking the maintenance of hedges, noting if any fields need drained or cleared, or if any old trees need brought down before they fall in a storm. I'm miles from the nearest town, so if a tree crashes down during the winter, my access to the rest of the world is cut off! I spent several days last year working with a wonderful neighbour (who has a tractor and chains) to haul fallen trees off the road. The farmhouse I live in is the third McMaster farmhouse in this area; the first one was built in the 1600s at the very brow of a hill overlooking the valley. I guess those folks realised that being open to the elements wasn't such a good idea, so in the late 1700s they cleared some land and built a farmhouse (on the site where I now live) and then the 'big' farmhouse was added to that site in 1900. I still have the plans that were drawn up when a scullery and pantry were added to the farmhouse in 1940 – and also have the notifications of the building being fitted for electricity and getting their first telephone. I know the corners of this old girl like I know the contours of my own hand.

Who is your biggest inspiration as a creative?

I'll always begin with Orson Welles; a man of wit, style and complete creative audacity. I know he was a complete and utter pain to work with, but I love his thirst for words and images and he managed to work successfully across theatre, radio and film. Because I cross disciplines in my own creative work, my influences come from many genres. In no particular order, I'd say: Dorothy Parker, John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Tove Jansson, Russel Thorndyke, Ray Bradbury, Margaret Atwood, Philip K. Dick, Douglas Adams, the Brontes, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Raymond Chandler, Philip Larkin, Philip Levine, James Wright, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters and Elizabeth Bishop. Then there are the poets of nature and the ritual of the land – John Clare, Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Patrick Kavanagh, Jen Hadfield, Jane Clarke, Mary Oliver, Wendell Berry and Robert Frost.

Throughout your career as a lecturer, theatre director and writer, what has/have been the highlight/s?

Gosh – that's a question and a half! My most recent memorable poetic experience would've been reading my work in front of Brian Keenan at the final evening of the amazing *XBorders:Transition* programme held in the Irish Writers' Centre in Dublin – then having him search me out later to talk at length about what he'd heard. He's an utterly inspirational man and it was a privilege to talk with him. I've only been involved in the world of poetry for just over three years, so receiving grants and funds to help continue and develop my work have been wonderful new experiences – it's heartening to have someone telling you that they like your work and they'd like to help you produce some more! To that end, I've had wonderful moments of opening emails and letters informing me of



bursaries and grants – I’m deeply grateful to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, The John Hewitt Society, the IWC for benefits of their professional membership, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for both their 2018 SIAP Award and their joint funding along with IWC for the *XBorders: Transition* programme. These have inspired me and challenged me and I’m truly grateful for the opportunities they’ve given me. I’m continually inspired to do more!

My two careers as a Performing Arts lecturer and playwright have run in parallel for over 20 years and a great deal of that work has involved helping others to gain their creative confidence and follow their passion. That’s where I’m at my happiest. Memorable moments? Receiving a shrieking phone call at 8am from one of my second year students on the day she got a letter informing her she’d won a place at Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Watching proudly as another student (who’d struggled outside of ‘traditional’ drama colleges for almost a decade) took her place onstage in the West End hit production of *The Ferryman*. Grinning quietly at Jamie Lee O’Donnell (always a star in my book) as she was launched into the stratosphere with *Derry Girls*. Having a student who’d once failed his first course with me (he then joined me two years later with a totally changed attitude) call me early in the morning to let me know that he was one of the creative team who’d just received an Emmy for their special effects work on *Game of Thrones*. They’re out there in their hundreds – my past students – doing all kinds of great things (not just the things that make headlines) to set the creative world on fire. I’m incredibly proud of every one of them.

Finally, Anne, can you tell the readers what you have on the horizon?

A number of creative projects are filling 2019’s horizon and several seem to be sneaking over into 2020 too! My SIAP-funded research into small farms and rural Ulster has been a very moving creative and personal journey for me – I’m gathering together a number of new poems created from my interviews and research undertaken with organisations and individuals across Northern Ireland. I’m completely delighted (and rather terrified) to be working on a chapbook-length collection of poetry due to be published by the wonderfully enthusiastic and supportive Hedgehog Poetry Press in 2020.

I’m still having great fun with my bespoke creative courses (I love helping others to find their confident and creative voice) – *Make Do & Mend* proved really popular in 2019 and is already booking up for the new season. I’ve also been working on developing *The Leonardo Project* – an exciting way for writers to explore and enhance their creativity. I can’t wait to launch that!

With my theatre cap firmly on, I’m about to co-design a bespoke Holocaust awareness project (the first of its kind) for schools in Northern Ireland. I’ve also been working with a creative poetry project in New York: I was due to travel to the USA at the beginning of September for a first reading of my work and to lead some workshops, but thanks to my gammy knee asking for attention, I’ve been able to delay this until the spring. I may yet get to experience New York in the snow!

Instagram: @rosehillfarmergirl

Twitter: @Rosehill_girl

Facebook: @Annie Rose, @Anne McMaster and @The Old Farm at Rosehill

Walking Home from School

We walked the last mile home each day;
three small girls, satchelled – often scratched –
from playground races and farmyard games.
In spring, the hedges burst with flowers;
bluebells rippled past us down the steepest banks
while we drew sweetness from the primrose hearts
and stitchwort laced our way.
I walk the road now on some quiet afternoons
and visit trees – now aged and tall –
that we once jumped from; played around.
And sometimes, if the day is true,
I press my face against the weathered, gnarled bark
and hear childish voices, still.

by Anne McMaster

Cross Country

There's a moment when, in the desert south of Vegas,
I turn up the music and begin to sing.

These broad, flat vowels lie heavy in my mouth like stones
but my notes dance up into the open sky.

*She is handsome, she is pretty,
she is the belle of Belfast city;
she is courting' one, two, three,
please won't you tell me, who is she?*

That day, I recall, I sing my way across the desert –
bare toes curled up against the dashboard's edge
tanned arm braced against the window
skin sprinkled with Nevada dust and salt and sweat.
My eyes are narrowed against the unremitting blue
as I am carried near and far from home.

Early next morning at the desert truck stop

I lift my eyes from my first strong coffee of the day
to watch huge rigs smoking around me like prehistoric beasts
or mighty dragons that have tumbled low –
their great chrome wings folded tight and close –
fallen out of a darkly-starred and icy pre-dawn sky.

by Anne McMaster

The Trees, the Wind, the Golden Day

*A linnets who had lost her way
Sang on a blackened bough in hell,
Till all the ghosts remembered well
The trees, the wind, the golden day.*
James Elroy Flecker (died aged 30 in 1915)

Cages once held you in your thousands, little one;
your golden song a bitter-sweet reminder
to those who held you in -
an echo of the freedom they and you had lost;
and you were past remarkable for what had gone.

The sun-washed lowland meadows, disappearing now,
have turned these days to grasslands –
cropped close in winter as in summer –
no more soft protection from the autumn stubble
and your way of life is gone.

Your call still lures men to you;
of the trees, the wind, the golden day.
There is such sorrow in the capture of a creature
whose colour fades within the cage
while the liquid beauty of its song remains.

by Anne McMaster

First published in the anthology 'Watch The Birdie'.



Anne Donnellan

Poetry

Anne Donnellan was brought up outside Ennis and has been living and working in Galway since 1980. She attends the Kevin Higgins poetry workshops. Anne has been published in the NUIG ROPES Literary Journal, A New Ulster, The Linnet's Wings, the Clare Champion and the Galway City Tribune. She was a featured reader at the March "Over The Edge: Open Reading" in Galway City Library.



Horse Power

We spared no care for the horse
longed for the tram car spin as youngsters
slithered on creosote flat planks behind our bachelor uncles
raw Iron wheels clobbered every cobble
battered our inside fluids
hammered thunder to our gum roots
as we clung to pitch fork, hooks and binder twine
pounded in perfect time
along the rough road to the meadow.

Reins in hand, red jawed
handkerchiefs draped on balding heads
uncles guided their placid power beast
while we tumbled and tossed in the short spikes of green
with clink of lever and pulley they heaved hay from the field.

Homeward to barn we hopped on the back
our spin smoothed with hay, soothed we sat
fingered the tar scented yarn of the tram
dangled our pigskin sandals from the edge
till we leapt away as our uncles turned left
waited for next time.

September that year the horse died from gripe
to the knackers yard his final ride
no more tram car spins for us.

(Tram car was hay cart for bringing home trams of hay).

by Anne Donnellan

Angela Graham

Poetry

Angela Graham is a Welsh-speaker from Belfast. She has had a long career as a film-maker in Wales (BAFTA, Foreign-language Oscar entrant) and was a Professional Tutor in Documentary Practice at Cardiff University. Since 2018 her poetry has appeared in *The North*, *Infinite Rust*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *The Ogham Stone 2019*, *The Bangor Literary Journal*, *The Open Ear*. The poet Glen Wilson has chosen her to receive a year's mentoring from September, aiming for a collection. An award-winning short story writer, she was nominated by Crannóg for the Pushcart Prize 2019 and her short story collection *A City Burning* is due from Seren Books in 2020. She is completing a novel on the politics of language with the support of an award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. @angelagraham8 <http://angelagraham.org/2018/10/my-work-in-2018/>



Re-entry, Ulster – on the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon Landing of 1969

Ma feither caa'd Wee Tam's *The Mune*,
Fer the eyefu' frae the gutter o' *thon Deil's Den*,
The mair, tae a weefla, *Iniquity*, a stern kirk-wurd,
Glamoured thaim cowp'd *Deil's Ain*.
Yit, canny, A luik'd ap tae Him, the Lord
That wrocht the stars, the mune.

But thon ither god, the Yankee wan, ris then.
A lairnt new wurd – *Trajectory, Jettison* –
And I sloughed off my pleghmy, chagrining *ain*.

Fiftie year on, wisied-ap, A'm bak tae yirth agane.

TRANSLATION

Re-entry, Ulster – on the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon Landing of 1969

My father called Tam's pub *The Mune*,
Citing the view from the gutter of that *Deil's Den*,
Though, to a boy, *Iniquity*, a solemn, churchy word,
Shed glamour on those fallen *Deil's Ain*.
Shrewdly enough, I still looked up to Him, the Lord
Who made the stars, the moon.

But that other god, American, rose then.
I learned new words – *Trajectory, Jettison* –
And I sloughed off my own – my phlegmy, chagrining *ain*.

Fifty years on, and wiser, *A'm bak tae yirth agane*.

by Angela Graham

James Coffey

Flash Fiction

James Coffey is a retired civil servant in Coventry. He has been writing short stories for a little while but has graduated to Flash Fiction because he likes the idea of saying more by saying less.



Triptych

In the first picture the grey haired woman has a gentle but tentative smile that is both sad and knowing. Her languorous gaze seems to yearn for a distant place far behind the gaze of the viewer.

The second picture of the woman is a sudden shock of violence. Her head is thrown back, her blackened mouth agape, her eyes scream, and the sinews of her neck shriek. She seems trapped within the picture's frame.

He shudders.

In the third painting the woman is worn and harrowed. Her gaze is blank, directed again to a point somewhere behind the viewer. He intuits that she is in the presence of death. He wants to believe that she is at peace as his reluctant gaze is drawn again to the second picture.

In the accompanying text the artist describes his mother's death as grief for him and relief for her.

Grief and relief. He dwells on the words and remembers the endless grief of her suffering and the terrible expanse of relief when she was gone.

"It was something like this for my mum", he says.

"And for mine," she replies taking his hand as they walk toward the next gallery.

by James Coffey

Featured Artist: Les Sharpe



Les Sharpe is a contemporary artist, living in Belfast but currently based in Boom! Studios in Bangor, Co. Down. He has a degree in Graphic Design from The University of Ulster but for the most part, managed to avoid becoming a graphic designer. His earlier painting career was focused mainly on representational landscape but for past 7 to 8 years, has progressed towards an abstract, experimental style. He works in variety of media with great emphasis on colour and texture and in many cases, introducing found and donated objects. Les has exhibited widely throughout Northern Ireland and has paintings hanging in private collections worldwide.

Les, we are delighted to chat with you today. Your work is renowned for its phenomenal use of colour. What is it that draws you to work in such a vibrant way?

Perhaps it's because I am such an optimistic, sunny person. I used to have a stall in St. George's Market and customers would generally be drawn to my work by the vivid colours and textures. I would tell them that my mission statement was to "dispel the grey gloom of Northern Ireland". We do have an awful lot of grey, miserable days that need counteracting.

Probably more to the point is that as a child of the psychedelic era I saw the world evolve from beige to multi-coloured bliss. Also being a lover of Greece and Spain and having spent a lot of time in both, it is impossible not to be affected by the wonderful Mediterranean light that enriches everything it touches and brings the world to life in a riot of colour. It is such a contrast to what we are used to here.

What three words would you use to describe your style. Can you explain these to us?

Dynamic, Expressive, Imaginative. It's difficult when you try to condense something like a painting style down to 3 words, but those I've chosen will hopefully give some value to it while avoiding the usual clichés.

Dynamic because I think that my work is charged with energy. Generally, when I work, I have music on all of the time. I think this comes through in my work, giving a rhythmic and almost dance-like feel to a lot of my pieces.

Expressive and not necessarily "Expressionistic" as in the historical art movement sense. Since moving away totally from anything figurative or representational, I now paint and create with total freedom. As a result, the aspect of fun and play and to be honest, allowing my inner child to come to the fore, has released me from all sorts of restrictions and inhibitions.



'Space Between' by Les Sharpe



Imaginative - I have always been blessed with a great imagination and have been an avid fan of sci-fi and fantasy for longer than I can remember. I suppose, from that point of view, there is perhaps a fair bit of escapism in my work. These days, I prefer to draw on my inner 'mindscape' rather than the real world of landscape and people. I love the idea of people looking at my work being encouraged to use their own imaginations to see the possibilities of what might be there.

'Ah Yes!' by Les Sharpe

What inspirations would you define as being the most significant in your artistic career?

I mentioned the psychedelic era earlier and for an old hippie, it would be hard not to have been influenced by everything that was happening throughout the late sixties and early seventies. There was an explosion of creativity occurring then in all fields, visual arts, music, film and so on. I was like a sponge absorbing as much as I could.

I was attending art college then as well and so became more aware of art history but again I was drawn mainly to more modern painters rather than the classical ones. I loved colourists such as Cezanne, Van Gogh, Kandinsky and so many others and of course this was also the time of Pop Art.

Can you tell the readers a little bit about the processes and mediums that you use in your artwork?

To say I work in mixed media is a bit of an understatement these days. Apart from the traditional materials such as acrylic (and it seems strange now to refer to plastic paint as traditional), I use all sorts of inks, pastels and paints, building up layers of colour. The supports vary as well using everything from standard canvas to foils, fabrics and recently, CDs and vinyl records.

I love texture as well and will incorporate many different substances in my work to achieve the desired effect. Again, with these, I tend to avoid the commercial products sold over the counter. I prefer to use organic substances a lot such as poppy seed, millet, tea leaves and also just trying new things such as fabrics and wallpaper samples.

A lot of my “paintings” are also constructed from found or donated objects which can range from plastic bottle tops to computer circuit boards. They call it up-cycling these days. I just enjoy the process of taking everyday objects and turning them into extraordinary creations.

My works are best described as experimental in that I never settle on one particular “style” or technique as I am continually trying new things out while generally avoiding a lot of the commercial products that are available. I suppose again, it’s my big kid inside wanting to see what happens if you do this or that and mix things up a bit.



Les' studio space at Boom! Studios, with works in progress.

For anyone starting out as an artist, what words of advice would you give them?

I have had many careers throughout my lifetime, mostly successful, but the one thing that has always been important to me is the fact that if I was not enjoying it, I moved on. The problem with being an artist is that it is never just a job but more a way of life and not necessarily an easy one. It's one of those impossible questions to answer when someone asks why we artists do what we do? The answer sometimes is simply that "it is something inside of us that just has to come out".



'Discworld 6-5' by Les Sharpe

These days though, there are a lot more possibilities of getting your work out into the big, bad world through technology and social media. The world has shrunk to some extent but at the same time, the competition has increased so you might have to be patient not to mention a little bit lucky.

What I would say is that you believe in yourself and what you are trying to achieve. Be prepared and willing to adapt when necessary but for the most part follow your own instincts and also do not fear failure. We should all learn so much more from our mistakes and move on.

You have exhibited widely and curated many exhibitions. What is the most challenging aspect of bringing an exhibition together? Also, what is the most rewarding aspect?

The biggest problem I come across is finding decent venues with lots of footfall and parking close by. Also, my work doesn't necessarily fit with the Northern Ireland notion of what "art" is so most of the more traditional type galleries are unsuitable.

I have no problems working under pressure or meeting deadlines and I'm very good on the organisational side of things as a result of experience in previous careers. So, putting together a solo show doesn't phase me at all.

I am involved in quite a few artist groups and collectives and really enjoy pulling together group shows. I think the most interesting part of this is the fact that the artists involved are so completely different in terms of style, choice of subject matter and so on. It is a joy however, to bring it together and make the exhibition flow in terms of colours and tones, creating a sense of identity and cohesion.



A recent demo that Les completed as part of The Creative Peninsula.

On a final note Les, can you tell the readers what projects you are part of in the near future?

My problem is that I haven't learnt to say no and as a result, I get drawn into so many different things. As I have said, I am involved in various artistic groups and so I am always programming events, exhibitions and outings. I am also a director in the Puffin Gallery in Ballycastle and probably should be doing a bit more there as well.

On a personal level however, I am reviewing my situation regarding solo shows with a view to looking further afield for future exhibition possibilities.

Further into the future, I have an ambition to create a full-sensory type installation containing visual arts - paintings, sculpture, video etc, but also soundscapes, music, and even smells and aromas. All I need is a rather large empty building, lots of funding and a few willing and talented people to get involve. The easiest part is the last bit and already, I have at least 3 or 4 artists/musicians buying into the idea.

In the meantime, I will just keep on experimenting, creating and having fun doing it.



'Discworld 12-4' by Les Sharpe

Follow Les here:
Website - www.lessharpe.art
Facebook - Les Sharpe, Art
Instagram - lessharpe123

Gordon Gibson is a Scottish writer, living in Ayrshire. After 20 years as a lecturer in higher education, he now writes full-time. His short stories and poems have appeared in a number of print and online journals and anthologies. A selection of his published work is showcased in his blog at <https://ragmansbugle.wordpress.com/>



Supermarket, Tuesday Morning.

The aisles are filled with couples just like us.
Old habits endure. After a visit
to the cash dispenser or Post Office,
we pensioners convene in droll discussion groups
beside the counter where the dead fish stare.

Neat in our pastel rainwear,
we navigate this strip-lit treasure house,
helping ourselves.
We hobble on pierced metal sticks,
or steady our fragility
with elbows on precarious, floundering trolleys.
Determinedly, we shuffle, stretching out
to gather our habitual requirements.

At length we reach the checkout, where we load
meagre provisions on the moving belt,
while tills call out, one to another,
plaintive birds, lost in a mist.

Enduring partners, past the need to touch,
concealing love or enmity behind
a mild facade of feigned distraction,
we slow the progress of the urgent others:
the middle-aged with just eleven items,
the giggling teenage lovers on their phones,
young mothers with ungovernable children,
a fidgeting, exasperated queue,
impatient, each with somewhere else to be.

But, unconstrained by tightened lips
or breath too sharply drawn in,
we pensioners entrust our goods
to ancient plastic bags, making no haste,
and, having met the day's full obligations,
meander, wordless, to an exit.

by Gordon Gibson

Maureen Hill

Poetry

Maureen Hill is a retired teacher who lives in Belfast. Her work has been published in various anthologies and in magazines such as Magma, The French Literary Review, Orbis, Abridged, The Stinging Fly, Crannog, and The Honest Ulsterman.



Blue

You gave me blue to expiate a quarrel -
a field of cornflowers seen between tower blocks,
car screeching to a halt,
' Now just look at that!'
You knew me so well.

You gave me blue to cancel distances,
a call with Jack Jones' *My Baby's Got Blue Eyes*,
Picasso's blues and Vermeer's lapis lazuli in the Prado,
Le Train Bleu and irises for a birthday,
Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* on a rainy London evening,
Leonard's *Raincoat*
under blue skies in Inishowen

Now fading blue backlights take you into dark.

Let us be done with blue.

by Maureen Hill

Lucinda Trew

Poetry

Lucinda Trew lives and writes in Charlotte, N.C. She studied journalism and English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is an award-winning speechwriter. Her poetry and nonfiction work have been published or are forthcoming in The Fredricksburg Literary and Art Review, Mulberry Fork Review, Pinesong, High Shelf Press, The Mighty, Charlotte Viewpoint, BluntMoms, Boomer Café and Vital Speeches of the Day. She is a recipient of a 2019 North Carolina Poetry Society Award.



Gate 41D: The ear is a delicate structure

Across two airport seats he rests,
head in her lap, leaning into
a sun of skirt and skin

she tips a vial into tendered ear
counts – one two three
drops – and done

she has read the bottle's cummerbund
of caution – brow creased –
the ear is a delicate structure

a labyrinth of alpine curves, caverns, wispy
plains of frond-like cells that quiver
with the summons of sound –
a name, a song, a sigh –
sending charged currents
to bones frail as starched lace

the ear is a delicate structure
a motherboard of balance, equipoise
but dizzying too – drops teasing
like feather or fingers on spine
equilibrium undone

the ear is a delicate structure
sensitive to touch, lips, tongue
that send tremors through a whorly web

the night they met she leaned in –
whispered
wine-warm and close
whispered
sending a frisson of flirtation
that twined its tremulous way
through curves of cochlea
whispered
and everything else fell away

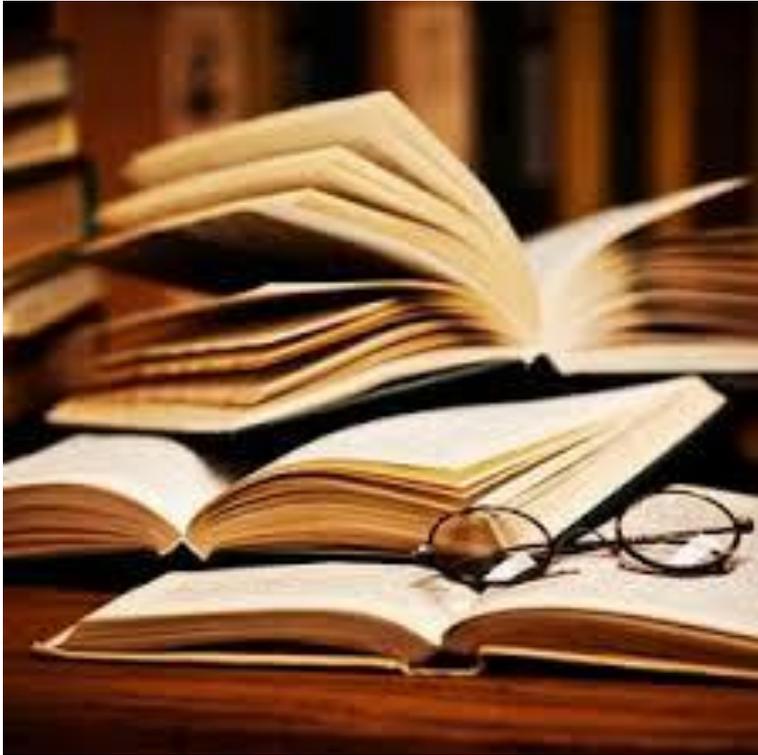
the drops are for balance, easing the trip
as the earth falls away
he shudders
holds tight
steadies himself
for flight

by Lucinda Trew

Susan E Lloy

Flash Fiction

Susan E Lloy is the author of two short story collections, *But When We Look Closer* (2017) and *Vita* (2019). Susan likes to write about unconventional characters and context. She lives in Montreal.



Skin

I sit at a terrace of an outside café. A sizable potted plant diffuses the sunlight, yet it feels like I could fry an egg on my forearm. I watch the gazelles stroll along the boardwalk, their compositions gleaming in the midday sheen. These garlanded creatures look festive with their tattooed hides. The eye can get lost within an abstraction, symbol or text.

I wonder what they'll do when one grows tired of a lover's monogram. A sacred message that no longer holds truth or a likeness of a place and time they wish to forget.

I examine my old skin in the shadowed light, which has the appearance of tired lace. What will become of those body modifications when the dyes and pigments no longer hold their veneers? When the skin has reached its zenith? Illustrated epidermis dissolving into unrecognizable disorder.

For now I drink their mirth. Observing as they caresses arms and legs. Lifting a shirt to display a hidden brand. Age will be upon them one day. Burnished skin will be their foe. Will they cover the fatigued semblances with long sleeves and slacks or proudly flaunt them with faltering limbs?

by Susan E LI

Feature: 40 Words Competition

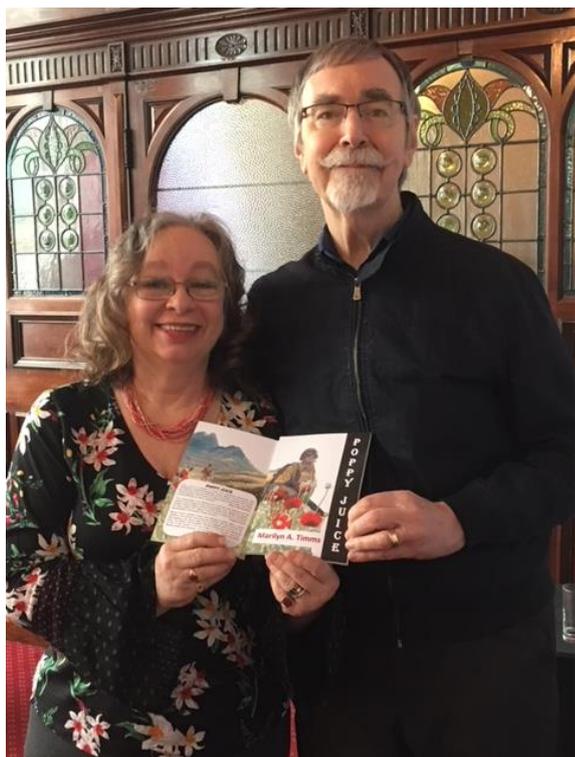


Featuring the Winners and those placed in this year's 40 Words Competition.

Winner: Marilyn Timms

Flash Fiction

Marilyn A Timms is a writer and artist living in Gloucestershire. She is delighted to have been invited to read again at this year's Cheltenham Poetry Festival. Her event is entitled ***Tell Me The Truth About Love***. Marilyn has been happily married for 52 years and hopes to find the answers in her poetry collection ***Poppy Juice*** and in her new collection ***Both Sides of the Coin***.



Winning Poem

Atonement

Once, daffodils grew shoulder-high, swallowed fingers, owned my heart. I never saw them shrink. Today, daffodil-children with shuttered faces languish in supermarkets, tightly swaddled in blue elastic bands. Penitent, I offer them a semblance of life in an Oxfam vase.

By Marilyn Timms

Second Prize: Stephen Smythe

Flash Fiction

Stephen Smythe achieved an MA in Creative Writing, at Salford University, in 2018. He was shortlisted for the Bridport Prize, Flash Fiction Category, in 2017, and was longlisted for the Bath Flash Fiction Award, in 2018, and was published in an anthology of the Award's best writing, later that year. He has worked in local government public relations for most of his working life, until taking Voluntary Early Retirement. In recent years he has worked in a number of jobs, including two years as a residential worker for young people in care.



Cold Call

“Wait!” Dad shouted down the phone. He put on his specs. “That’s better, I can hear you now!” He listened silently, frowned deeply and then hung up. “A conservatory?” he snorted. “Your mother would kill me – if she were alive.”

by Stephen Smythe

Third Prize: Dee McInnes

Flash Fiction

Dee graduated from Leeds Trinity University with a degree in English and Media. She has had flash fiction published by Reflex Fiction, Splonk and The Bangor Literary Journal, and is an aspiring crime novelist. Originally from Derry ~ Londonderry, she lives in Ballymoney, Co. Antrim. *Author photo taken by Malachi O'Doherty.*



The Spirit of Inishfarnard

At the edge, gulls shoot the breeze.

“I’ll jump with you,” she says.

We stone plummet, hitting hard water. I release her hand and strike out for the shore.

In the shallows, the stretched nets are alive with fish.

by Dee McInnes

Highly Commended: Linda Hutchinson Flash Fiction

Linda Hutchinson writes short stories and Flash Fiction and has recently completed her first novel for children, inspired by the early life of her grandfather. This year she has been involved in Poetry In Motion, teaching Poetry to children in two Belfast schools. Linda is a member of Women Aloud NI and enjoys attending literary and arts events.



When you wish upon a star...

Shooting stars graffitied the sky; wishes were whispered. Poppy's cat came home. Ted's fists were still. Molly passed peacefully. Little Jack's temperature reduced. Susan's partner got lost for good. All the babies slept all night, and the sun rose again.

by Linda Hutchinson

Eileen O’Sullivan lives in West Cork, Ireland. She has been published in the Incubator and From the Well local Library anthology, as well as being a regular contributor to open mic sessions in a local literary gathering.



Online Dating Profile

Female, fifty, divorced, childless.

Like: Autumn and my dog, Biggles.

Dislike: Winter and men who tell their wife they don't want children when they know she does, before running off with someone half their age because they got her pregnant.

by Eileen O'Sullivan

Shortlisted Flash Fiction

Susan McCullough

Chosen

Your eyes startled me. Vivid blue.
A transparent gaze that owned me from that first look.
I passed you. Felt you watching me. Waiting for me to choose.
I named you Sky and stroked your thick, warm fur.

Julian West

Forty, thirty -nine

Forty, thirty-nine. The marketplace is crowded, more crowded than usual. Thirty, twenty-nine. Whenever there is a pause, people think it is going to end. Sixteen, fifteen. They have to be taught, again. Eight, seven. Giving my life. Three, two, one.

Anne O’Leary

Travels with Fairy Lights

She seeks Instagrammable memories. He holds her bag, points her phone, fans a breeze for her curls. She handstands in bikinis by waterfalls, arranges fairy lights around her meals in restaurants. He wonders if he’ll be included in her pictures.

Patricia Storey

The Crossing

Mary was on the ferry. How could she keep it? Soon graduating in Law and opportunities beckoning? Halfway across the Irish Sea she felt something loosen. Blood gently seeping. ‘Jesus’, she thought, ‘after all that, is this how it ends?’

Julie Sheridan

The Seating Plan

She plops into the chair from stiletto height. Tulle rustles, lemongrass wafts.
Not an intellectual, he thinks. Too many sequins.
‘Joanne.’
She offers a hand.
‘Thomas.’
He shakes.
Phone and beard: his modern-day shields.
‘Barba tenus sapientes,’ she mutters

Susan McCullough

Susan McCullough is a retired teacher, married with three adult children. She has been writing for a number of years, inspired by the countryside, animals, local history and the everyday eccentricities of life. She was placed in the Brian Moore Short Story Awards and her story published in the Belfast Telegraph. She is one of the founding members of a writing group, who meet once a month in Belfast, to encourage and provide constructive appraisals of each other's work.

Julian West

Julian lives in Dublin, Ireland. He is a former winner of the James White and Aeon awards.

Anne O'Leary

Anne O'Leary lives in Cork. She has been published in *Fictive Dream*, *The Drabble*, *Jellyfish Review*, *Dodging the Rain*, *The Nottingham Review*, *Spontaneity* and *The Incubator*. She won the Molly Keane Award 2018 and From the Well 2017, was runner-up in the UCC/Carried In Waves Competition and shortlisted for ColmTóibín International Short Story Award 2016 and highly commended in 2017. Twitter @wordherding; blog: anneolearyblog.wordpress.com

Patricia Storey

Patricia is an Anglican bishop in the Church of Ireland, married with two grown up children, a grandson and a golden retriever! She enjoys walking, swimming, reading and creative writing.

Julie Sheridan

Julie Sheridan is an Irish writer living in Frankfurt, Germany. She is the editor of Open Bookcase, an anthology of writing by Frankfurt-based writers. She teaches creative writing as an extra-curricular activity at the European School Frankfurt and is currently working on a novel for children.

Winner: Anne Tannam

Poetry

Anne Tannam is a Dublin poet with two collections: 'Take This Life' (Wordonthestreet 2011) and 'Tides Shifting Across My Sitting Room Floor' (Salmon Poetry 2017). Her third collection is forthcoming with Salmon in 2020. Her work has been featured in Poetry Jukebox, The Irish Times and RTE, and in numerous literary journals and magazines. A spoken word artist, Anne has performed at festivals and events around Ireland and abroad including Electric Picnic, Lingo and The Crow Festival in Berlin.



Winning Poem

on her fifth anniversary

I'm not saying
I won't write
anymore poems
about my mother

I'm saying
for now
it's my father's
slow beating heart
that pulses
through me

a metronome
steadily clicking

down

the months
the days
the minutes

by Anne Tannam

Second Prize: Clare Marsh

Poetry

Clare Marsh lives in the Weald of Kent and is an international adoption social worker. She is an active member of local writers' groups and has recently completed MA Creative Writing at the University of Kent. She has enjoyed success in flash fiction, poetry and short story competitions and is now assembling her first poetry collection.



Holy Teeth

After school the Catholic Repository
lured in St Mary's flock with sherbet fountains,
and gobstoppers – led us into temptation
among crucifixes and rosaries.

No golden ticket for me,
instead the whining dentist's drill –
my amalgam stigmata
more enduring than belief.

by Clare Marsh

Third Prize: Patricia Bennett

Poetry

Trish Bennett crossed the border to study many years ago, and was charmed into staying by a Belfast biker. They've settled themselves near the lake in Fermanagh, and try to keep the noise down in their bee loud glade.

Bennett writes about the shenanigans of her family, and other creatures. Sometimes she rants. She was a finalist in several poetry competitions in the past few years, including North West Words, The Percy French, Bailieborough, and The Bangor Literary Journal. She's won The Leitrim Guardian Literary Award for poetry twice, and is a Professional Member of the Irish Writers Centre.



The Agony in the Garden....

They say gardening calms the mind,
makes a body feel...well,

when I sweep that yard,
hack back another shrub,

haul a barrowload to the bin,
for the umpteenth time;

I feel,
I've moved the housework outdoors.

by Patricia Bennett

Highly Commended: Ellora Sutton

Poetry

Ellora Sutton, 22, is a museum gift shop worker living in Kingsley, Hampshire. Her work has been published by *The Cardiff Review*, *Blue Marble Review*, *Lemon Star Mag*, *Constellate*, and the Young Poets' Network, among others. In 2018 she was commended in the Winchester Poetry Prize.



Selfless Love Poem

Holding her hand & I

can feel the tiny bones
wing or wind, gale force
glass in her fate lines
fate crags, coast lines
every heartbeat is *free-*
dom
fireworks, starlings
squeezes tighter

& I let go.

by Ellora Sutton

Commended: Gifford Savage

Poetry

Gifford Savage is from Bangor, Northern Ireland, has had work published with Poetry 24 and the Lagan Online publication 'The Power of Words: Poems for Holocaust Memorial Day', was short-listed for the Bangor Poetry Competition 2018 and has read at events throughout Northern Ireland.



Left Hanging

“Do it quickly,” friends said.
So suits and coats were
removed from hangers,
drawers emptied,
garments donated.

But there it is still.
An old cloth cap on a hook.
Or is it me
left hanging,
unable to let you go?

by Gifford Savage

Shortlisted Poetry

Anne Casey

sideshow

an orangutan walks on two legs
wears a suit, forms speech
people follow in awe
& adulation

use his words
to perform inhuman acts
forgetting that an orangutan
can learn to walk & talk but that

doesn't make it human

Sam Windrim

Summer

Strawberries For Sale.
500 yards ahead.
Strawberries For Sale.
200 yards ahead.
Strawb-

Meg McCleery

Damask

Amid the thundering din of the
damask loom and the smell of oil and toil
in a Belfast factory
she wipes the sweat from her brow.
With aching limbs she weaves her magic:
The Silk Road's a dream world away.

John Caulfield

Observance

A crowdsome gathering
it was that morning
of overcoats
and turned up collars
umbrellas shadowing unfamiliar faces
bowed in indistinct conversation.
Then silence
as I took a shoulder
and bore the weight
of unmade memories
and regretful utterance.

Lorcan Byrne

Provence, Summer 2007

Our self-gifts:
bag of thyme, scoop
of sea-salt, framed array
of knots for their fastness
and strength.

But things have become unhitched.

I walk the pier, holding on
to the bitter end,
my anchor lost,
on dry land
but adrift.

Anne Casey

A journalist/editor, media/communications director and legal author for 25+ years, Anne Casey is author of *where the lost things go* (Salmon Poetry 2017, 2nd ed 2018) and *out of emptied cups* (forthcoming from Salmon Poetry in July 2019). She is Senior Poetry Editor of Swinburne University's two literary journals and has won/shortlisted for poetry awards in Ireland, the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia. Poems in—*The Irish Times, Entropy, apt, Murmur House, Quiddity, The Incubator, The Honest Ulsterman, Stony Thursday Book, Into the Void, Autonomy* anthology, *Cordite, FourXFour* and *Burning House Press*, among others.

Sam Windrim

Sam Windrim is author of *The Limerick Lexicon* – the first ever dictionary of Limerick slang and *Ammemorium – A Forgotten Rebel's Tale* (Manchester Metropolitan University Press). You can find his work in such publications as *Readers Digest, Weekend Magazine, The Limerick Poetry Broadsheet* and *The Daisy Cutter*. He is currently losing the will to live whilst editing his first novel.

Meg McCleery

Meg studied at QUB and UUU and is a former College lecturer in English Literature and Media where she taught and developed literature courses validated by Q.U.B. She also ran Creative Writing classes in Belfast Community and Women's Centres and later Book Groups at Crescent Arts. She was awarded Highly Commended Poet in the Fifth Aspects Bangor Poetry Competition 2017 and has had poetry published in *The Bangor Literary Journal, Poetry Now, Poetry Anthologies* and the 2019 CAP Anthology Find. Originally from Belfast, Meg now lives in North Down.

John Caulfield

John began writing in 2014 as his way of coping with the loss of his wife Eileen. In 2015 he started taking classes in the Crescent Arts and there found a love of writing poetry winning a bursary to attend the John Hewitt summer school in 2016, the encouragement and experience he gained there helped so much in his writing. John has been long listed for the Seamus Heaney award for new writing and has had poems published in the Poetry in Motion anthology, The Angry Manifesto and No Tribal Dance. John has also enjoyed writing flash fiction and has had a play Passing On performed at The Crescent Arts and The Seamus Heaney Homeplace as part of CRUSE Bereavements Reflecting on Loss event. In 2018 John self published his first book of poems entitled Journey.

Lorcan Byrne

Lorcan Byrne lives in Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland. He is a short story writer and poet. Nominated for the Hennessy Emerging Writer Award on two occasions, his stories have been shortlisted for several awards, including the Colm Tóibín International Short Story Competition (2017) and the Doolin Short Story Competition (2017). His story 'Cactus Blossom' was shortlisted for the Francis MacManus Short Story Competition on Ireland's national radio station, Radio Teilifis Eireann, and was broadcast in October 2017. He graduated from University College Dublin in 2016 with an MA in Creative Writing.

John Hicks

Poetry

John Hicks is an emerging poet who writes in the thin mountain air of northern New Mexico in the U.S. He has been published or accepted for publication by: *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *I-70 Review*, *First Literary Review – East*, *Panorama*, *Midnight Circus*, *The Wild World*, *The Society for the Preservation of Wild Culture* and other journals and anthologies.



Standing Still at Night

Went outside to look at the stars tonight.
Best display since we came here.

Longer we waited, more we saw. Picked out planets,
constellations I can't name yet. East, the moon

coming up stood our shadows on the wall,
the wall of the house we've chosen in these late years.

Across the creek a dog pitched its voice into the night,
got a coyote serenade. Noticeable variety in their voices.

A train's diesel horn sounded down near the Rio Grande.
All stopped as though to listen. Maybe respect.

Movement in the branch shadows of the dead tree
where the road ends. An owl. Nature's query.

Stillness and darkness: eyelids of sight.

by John Hicks

David Spicer

Poetry

David Spicer has published poems in *Santa Clara Review*, *Synaeresis*, *Chiron Review*, *Remington Review*, *unbroken*, *Third Wednesday*, *Yellow Mama*, *The Bookends Review*, *The American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Gargoyle*, and elsewhere. Nominated for a Best of the Net three times and a Pushcart once, he is author of one full-length poetry collection, *Everybody Has a Story* (St. Luke's Press) and six chapbooks, the latest of which will be *Tribe of Two* (Seven CirclePress), to be released in September 2019. He lives in Memphis, Tennessee, USA.



Her Wise Words

You must be telepathic, said beautiful Miss Lewis, freshly graduated from the teacher's college. Her blonde hair and green eyes dazzled me and every boy in General Science class. I smirked a lemony smirk worthy of any ninth-grader who hated the weather, the elements, the stars. I decided to study for her last test, finished lightning fast like a baby Ben Franklin, slapped it on her desk before the smartest kid in the room did. Miss Lewis gazed up like a surprised debutante who couldn't believe she'd heard a friend burp and said, *What? This doesn't smell right.* Later, she handed me the results with the red oval at the mimeo page's top. *This sucks*, I said. *Why? You cheated*, she said, *just like all year.* *Oh yeah?* I said. *I've never cheated! I want a retest!* Loudmouths repeated, *Retest! Retest! Retest!* Miss Lewis frowned, *Ok, Mister. Retest. Tomorrow in class.* I grinned like a sly pawnbroker. *You got it, Miss Lewis.* I studied all night, during homeroom, and lunch period, strutted into the room like a wise-assed rooster and retook a harder test. She read my answers and scribbled a blue 100. *You must be telepathic*, she said. *This proves you can excel if you apply yourself.* I said, *What do you know, Blondie?* She knew a lot, but I never focused unless a teacher inspired me with Elmer Gantry fervor. Decades later, I heard she earned a Fulbright and taught at the Sorbonne. Me? I edit articles about culture, laugh like a punk at *The Blackboard Jungle*, write poems, and think of her.

by David Spicer

DS Maolalai has been nominated for Best of the Web and twice for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016) and "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019)



The pedestrian.

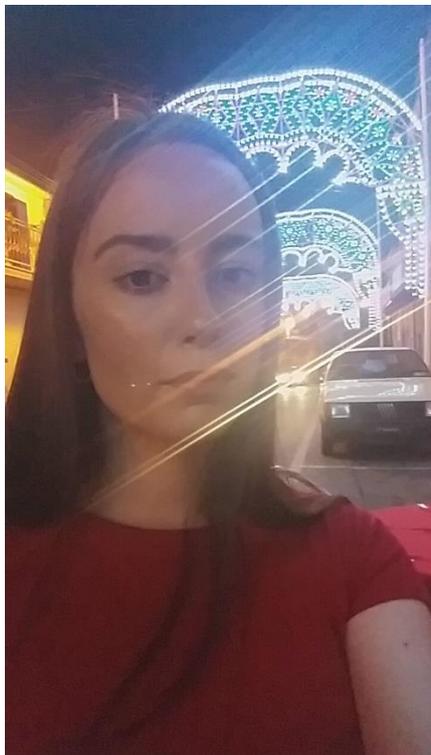
the boots are tight. they skin
the sides of my feet like old
onions, making snakeskin slivers
as they scrape along the sole. and the air is bright
and it taps on o'connell st, crossing the bridge
like the side of a shining lightbulb. and today is wednesday,
April 10th. I've taken a day off work
for no reason at all. I look to the liffey
and think of words
I won't write down - send them shooting instead
over houses
like empty beerbottles. tomorrow
I'll limp
but right now
my shoes fit like gloves, squeezing the shape
of my footfall. the world is
a cracking crabshell, sticky with juice
and steaming with potential. I feel alright
right now.

by DS Maolalai

Michela Esposito

Flash Fiction

Michela Esposito is from Dublin. Her writing has previously been published by *The Galway Review* and *Trinity Journal of Literary Translation*. She is currently an MLitt candidate at the University of St Andrews, Scotland.



The Prodigal Daughter

My mother saved her breakdown for my return, which I should have suspected, but didn't. In the car coming home my father repeated how happy he was, how fine he was, and that she was eagerly waiting. When the moment arrived, the door was thrown open and she burst into tears at the sight of me. I put my arms around her and hushed, it was alright mam, I was back now. The next few days were unimportant. I bought a wreath from the women on Grafton Street and scoured the shops for some presents. I took my grandmother's hands in mine and promised I wouldn't be leaving. I lit candles and was brought out of church sobbing, under my father's arm. People asked how it was to be home and I said it was grand, lovely. Time passed, I was asked for forgiveness. I said I could mother no longer. Upon my departure I gave flowers and thistles; we said our goodbyes without thinking. Within a few hours I was drunk and thriving. We are our mothers' daughters.

by Michela Esposito

Angeline King

Poetry

Author of contemporary novels *Snugville Street* (2015) and *A Belfast Tale* (2016), Angeline King will turn her hand to anything involving words, including essays for the *Irish Times*; a history book, *Irish Dancing: The Festival story* (2018); a museum exhibition for MEA Council (2018) and an illustrated children's book called *Children of Latharna* (2017). Angeline's first poetry submission, *Harvest Home*, appeared in Ulster University's *Paperclip* (2019) and *Latharna Danced* won the Eden Project competition (2019). Angeline has a BA Hons in Modern History & French and an MA in Applied Languages & Business and has worked in international business for 17 years.



Hymn

Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light,
and I was pure when you
shimmied your hips on the stage heralding a bible:
Six, listening closely to your rhyme,
my face upcast like
a little candle burning in the night.
You said I was a sinner and
I knew even then that
in this world of darkness, so we must shine,
you in your small corner and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, first of all for him
and I was primed when you
hollered hellfire and damnation:
Nine, knowing your rolling rhyme,
“Come with me and give yourself up to the Lord!”
Well he sees and knows it, if our light is dim:
girls don’t go into wee rooms
alone with men, didn’t you know?
He looks down from heav’n to see us shine,
you in your small corner and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, then, for all around;
and I was percipient when you
appeared charging a fee and pointing:
Twelve, irritated by the resounding rhyme
that violated my skin.
Many kinds of darkness in this world abound
and we walked out
for the captain knew well that
sin and want and sorrow; so we must shine,
you in your small corner and I in mine.

Jesus’ hands are kind hands but that’s a different hymn
And I was blooming when you
belted your blood red book:
Fifteen, listening to whispers whirl about
what you did to the girl too afraid to cry out in the city.
Repelled by the blood and
your lack of Grace
I knew even then that
in this world of darkness, so we must shine,
you in your small corner and I in mine.

By Angeline King

Kerry Buchanan

Flash Fiction and Photography

Kerry Buchanan is a retired vet, stable hand, carer and dreamer who wrote her first novel in 2014. She has numerous short stories published online and in print and has occasionally been lucky enough to win prizes – and the competitions weren't even fixed. www.kerrybuchanan.co.uk



Here Be Dragons

I share my home with a dragon.

Her talons are twisted, the bones fractured and deformed. Her tail is kinked, gangrenous from being imprisoned in a cramped space, kept in the dark when dragons need sunlight for skeletal growth.

A maiden fair heard of her plight. She rode forth with anger in her heart, confronted the ogre, besting him with words, and freed the dragon. The dragon cowered away, wary and afraid; she had lost the will to fight. To live.

El Chapo was the dragon's given name. Perhaps the ogre thought it suited her, with her baleful stare and bristling beard, but the maiden named her Elektra, for the vengeful princess of Greek tragedy.

At first, Elektra knew not how to hunt. Too weak to move, she slumped across a branch, bathed in light to heal her damaged bones. The maiden, weeping, brought food to her, coaxing her to eat.

That was then.

Now, Elektra races across the earth, her contorted feet a blur as she chases down her prey. She climbs and digs, sharp eyes constantly alert for locusts and roaches. Her scaly skin glows with health.

Elektra has chosen to live.



by Kerry Buchanan

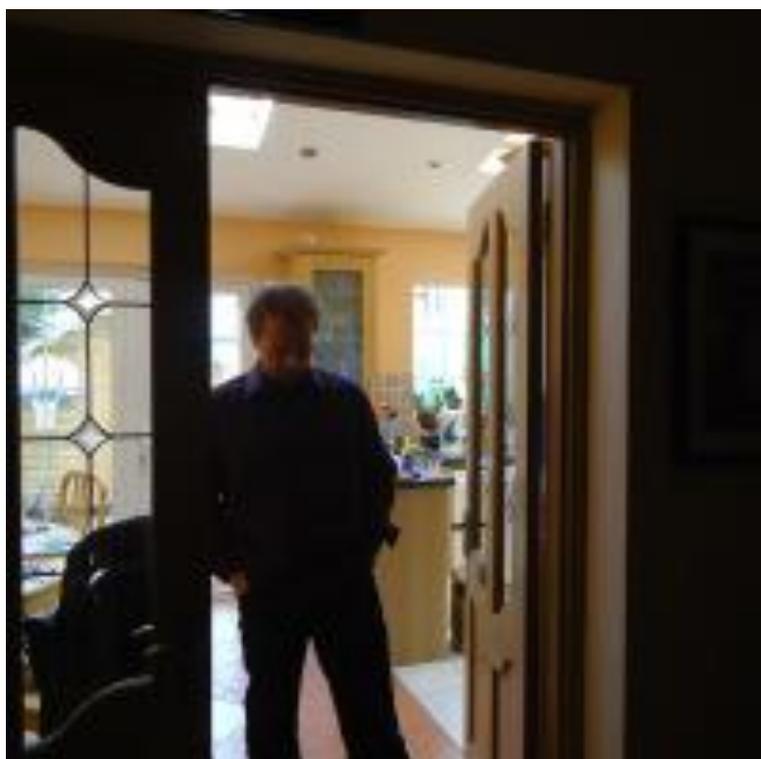
Edward Lee

Poetry

Edward Lee's poetry, short stories, non-fiction and photography have been published in magazines in Ireland, England and America, including The Stinging Fly, Skylight 47, Acumen and Smiths Knoll. His debut poetry collection "Playing Poohsticks On Ha'Penny Bridge" was published in 2010. He is currently working towards a second collection.

He also makes musical noise under the names Ayahuasca Collective, Lewis Milne, Orson Carroll, Blinded Architect, Lego Figures Fighting, and Pale Blond Boy.

His blog/website can be found at <https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>



To Find Meaning at the End

The sea kisses my toes
in a way I have not
been kissed
in years. Did it
make the choice
to be here,
on this edge of forever,
just as I have?

Or is it nothing more
than a shapeless eternity,
prisoner to the moon
and gravity, metaphorical eyes
blinded by the salt
in its nonexistent veins,
indifferent to the sand
it steals, the rocks it smooths
into eventual nothingness?

Does it even feel me there,
as I enter it, simultaneously eager
and scared? Can it
taste the salt
from my own wounded eyes
as I search
for some kind
of welcome disguised
as a goodbye?

by Edward Lee

Sally Michaelson is a Conference Interpreter in Brussels. Her poems have been published in Ink, Sweat and Tears, Lighthouse, Algebra of Owls, Squawk Back, The High Window, The Bangor Literary Journal, and Hevria



White Flag

(to my brother Alan)

I only knew your toddler legs
sturdy in white socks
from the photo in the frame :

drumsticks coiffed
with paper toques
tossed in the dressings tray

by nurses Mum and Dad
left you with.

by Sally Michaelson

Michael Durack lives in Co. Tipperary, Ireland. His work has appeared in journals such as Boyne Berries, Skylight 47, The Stony Thursday Book and Poetry Ireland Review. Publications include a memoir in prose and poems, *Saved to Memory: Lost to View* (2016) and a poetry collection, *Where It Began*, published by Revival Press in 2017. With his brother Austin he collaborates on a programme of poetry and guitar music and they have produced two albums, *The Secret Chord* (2013) and *Going Gone* (2015.)



A Patch of Darkness

Forty paces, give or take, from our front door
to Moroney's black-and-white TV;
the first ten bathed in kitchen window light,
the final twenty lit by a public lamp
above a crossroads public water pump,
a patch of utter darkness in between.

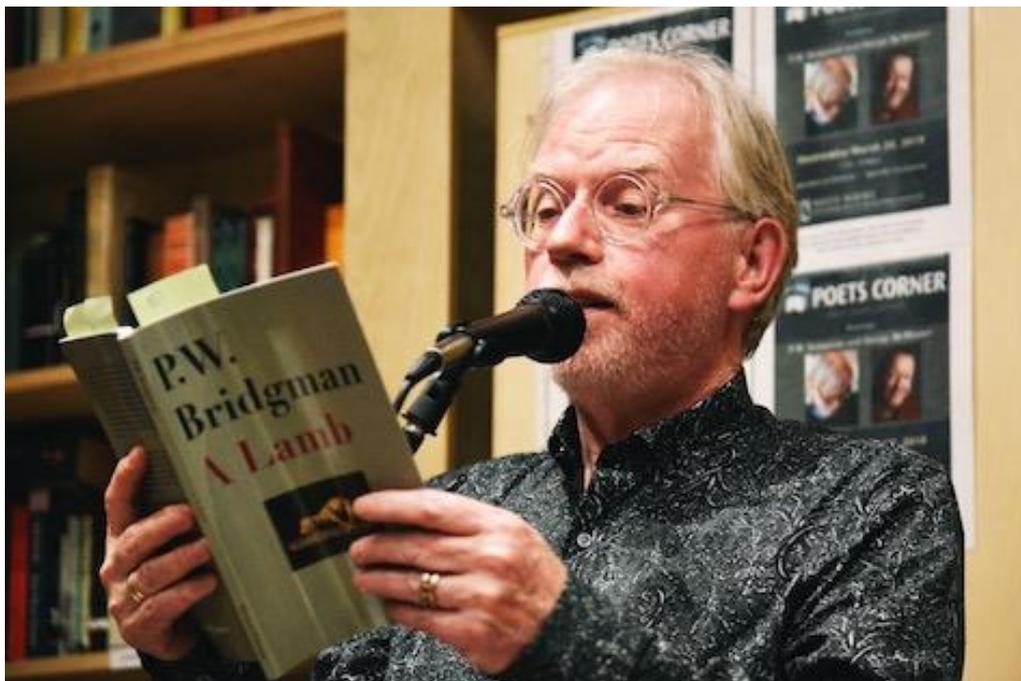
They say that darkness is mere absence of light,
a gravelled path the same morning as night.
But tell that to the bandits and assassins,
to the sly beasts lurking in the bushes.
Tell it to the boy hotfooting heart-in-mouth
to catch *The Fugitive* or *Arrest and Trial*.

by Michael Durack

P.W. Bridgman (a pen name) is a Pushcart Prize-nominated writer of poetry and fiction who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He has earned undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in psychology and a degree in law. In 2018 he was one of nine participants in the intensive writing summer school program offered by the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen’s University, Belfast — an experience that he says was a defining one in his writing life. Bridgman has done many public readings of his work at literary venues in British Columbia and abroad (including at the United Arts Club in Dublin, the Tchai Ovna Teahouse in Glasgow, the Open Studio in Melbourne and, most recently, the Accidental Theatre in Belfast).

His writing has appeared, or is forthcoming, in (among others) The Moth Magazine, The Honest Ulsterman, The Glasgow Review of Books, Poetry Salzburg Review, RIC Journal, The Galway Review, The Banqor Literary Journal, Litro UK, Litro NY, The High Window, Pif Magazine, Praxis Magazine, Grain Magazine, The Antigoniish Review, Ars Medica, Ascent Aspirations, Patchwork Paper, The New Orphic Review, London Grip, A New Ulster, Easy Street, Section 8 Magazine, Pottersfield Portfolio, The Mulberry Fork Review and Aerodrome. His works have won prizes or been finalists in several competitions, both in Canada and overseas, and some of his short stories and flash fiction pieces are represented in anthologies published in Ireland, England, Scotland and Canada.

Bridgman’s first book of short fiction, entitled *Standing at an Angle to My Age*, was published in 2013 by the independent Canadian literary publisher, Libros Libertad Publishing Ltd. In September 2018 his first book of poems, entitled *A Lamb*, was published by the independent Canadian literary publisher, Ekstasis Editions. A second collection of Bridgman’s short fiction is nearing completion. A second book of his poems is also in preparation.



A Family Gathers

The table had been laid with fiddle-back cutlery,
some of it engraved "JSO." Hallmarks confirm plate, not sterling.
Dishes, some chipped, display the family arms—flag unfurling,
a red hand, words in Irish the blonde Canadian boy can't decipher.
Bowls rimmed in red and gold, chipped like the tureen.
Napkins, some fraying—like the tablecloth—tolerably clean.

There had been a grievous omission from the old man's will.
There was no appetite round the table to make it good. None at all.
This JSO from Toronto—his first time in their midst—sits next to Ball,
the solicitor. Across, half-sisters avoid eerily familiar, luminous blue eyes.
There are awkward silences, little coughs, little straightenings of hair.
Little point denying it: not with that cleft chin, those eyes, that skin so fair.

The widow combs her memory for a trace: anything, *any* kind of clue.
She had never questioned his fidelity, not 22 years ago, not ever. "Can you
possibly understand what you're doing to this family?" she finally exclaims.
Ball touches her arm, gently. "Now, Eibhleann. The boy mustn't be blamed."

By P.W. Bridgman

Susan E Lloy is the author of two short story collections, *But When We Look Closer* (2017) and *Vita* (2019). Susan likes to write about unconventional characters and context. She lives in Montreal.



SKIN

I sit at a terrace of an outside café. A sizable potted plant diffuses the sunlight, yet it feels like I could fry an egg on my forearm. I watch the gazelles stroll along the boardwalk, their compositions gleaming in the midday sheen. These garlanded creatures look festive with their tattooed hides. The eye can get lost within an abstraction, symbol or text.

I wonder what they'll do when one grows tired of a lover's monogram. A sacred message that no longer holds truth or a likeness of a place and time they wish to forget.

I examine my old skin in the shadowed light, which has the appearance of tired lace. What will become of those body modifications when the dyes and pigments no longer hold their veneers? When the skin has reached its zenith? Illustrated epidermis dissolving into unrecognizable disorder.

For now I drink their mirth. Observing as they caresses arms and legs. Lifting a shirt to display a hidden brand. Age will be upon them one day. Burnished skin will be their foe. Will they cover the fatigued semblances with long sleeves and slacks or proudly flaunt them with faltering limbs?

by Susan E Lloy

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL
BANGOR POETRY
COMPETITION IS NOW OPEN.

WE ARE ACCEPTING POEMS
ON THE THEME OF
'ELEMENTS'

This year will see the **Bangor Poetry Competition** take on a slightly new format. We are now accepting poems on the theme of '**Elements**' which is part of **Aspects Literary Festival**.

The deadline for submissions is midnight of 30th August 2019.

See website for full details.