

THE BANGOR LITERARY JOURNAL



Issue three. 30th June 2018

Featured Poet: Colin Hassard

Featured Artist: Alice Wyatt

**Outstanding poetry, flash fiction, artwork
and photography by contributors.**

Image: 'Scrabo in Evening Glow' - collagraph by Alice Wyatt

Editors' Welcome

Hello and welcome to issue three of The Bangor Literary Journal.

You are in for a treat with this issue. Not only do we have wonderful hand-picked poetry, flash fiction, photography and art for you to enjoy, but we also have three features!

Our featured poet this month is the celebrated Colin Hassard, who recently came Runner-Up in The Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing. As our featured artist, we have the fantastic and hugely talented painter and printmaker Alice Wyatt talking about her journey as an artist. Our third feature is an international one, with renowned writer Catherine Graham chatting to us about her recent adventures in Northern Ireland and more.

We really hope that you enjoy what you find here in issue three. Summer's here and it's the time to relax and engross yourself in some creative loveliness!

Amy and Paul



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Featured Poet

Colin Hassard



Welcome, Colin! First of all, can you tell us about your main inspirations as a poet?

My main inspiration for starting to write poetry was Robert Frost. I was introduced to his work in my A-Level year and he was the first poet whose work I found accessible. It's only come to my attention recently just how many poetry collections I have by American poets, with the main three being Bukowski, Plath and Carver. Writer's block isn't something I necessarily believe in, but if I'm struggling to get into a poetry mindset, some alone time with one of those three usually helps me focus. Aside from the Americans, I've recently acquired Brendan Cleary's first collection, 'The Irish Card', which I think is amazing and full of humour. Louis MacNeice's 'Autumn Journal' is another of my favourites. There is plenty of inspiration on the local scene too. Moyra Donaldson and Stephen Sexton are continually creating very interesting work, as is Paul Madder. The more I talk, the more I'm remembering. I can't not mention the awe-inspiring Kate Tempest. I better stop or we'll be here all day!

What have your biggest achievements been in performance and poetry?

This year has been great so far. I was Runner Up in the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing and was selected by Eyewear Publishing as one of the Best New British and Irish Poets. For someone like me who has come from a performance poetry background, I still don't quite believe that I belong at the 'literary table'. But I've brought my own fold-out chair and packed lunch so I'm sitting here anyway until I get told to leave! When I first started out around 2010, I was quite successful on the slam scene. I was Ulster Slam Champion a couple of times, as well as winning the the Belfast Book Festival Poetry Slam, the Culture Night Slam and the Belly Laughs Comedy Poetry Slam. I have wonderful memories of those nights, but they were a long time ago now. I'm onto the next challenge now!

What events/ performances/ readings/ workshops have you in the works for the rest of 2018?

My main focus is a short tour in August and September to support the release of a spoken-word music album that I've recorded with my band Dirty Words. The tour and the album are both called 'Age of the Microwave Dinner'. As well as the album launch, I'll be showcasing some of the poems I've been working on following the receipt of funding from the Arts Council NI at the end of last year. The tour starts on Friday 10th August at the Eastside Arts Festival and I'm really excited to be part of their line-up. August is also the same month that I'm back on BBC Radio Ulster as the resident poet for the second series of the 'Science & Stuff' show. Then in September, the '..Microwave Dinner' tour rolls into Armagh and my hometown of Banbridge. There's also the small matter of getting married in July, so the next few months will be, as they say in Banbridge, wild busy.

Where would you like to see yourself in five years' time?

Rich and retired and living in California! But more realistically, it would be a dream that someday I'd be able to sustain life as a writer. I tried it a couple of years ago when I took voluntary redundancy from a long-term office job I had. It was a great experience working as freelance artist for around 6 months; I was hosting workshops with schools groups, and involved in creative community projects in places like Dungiven and Armagh, as well as touring the festival circuit and hosting gigs. But in that lifestyle it is difficult to remain

financially stable and to plan for the future. These days I have a “proper” job which I enjoy, but will keep writing, and learning and developing as a writer, and see what happens. The Arts Council NI, and in particular Damian Smyth, have been extremely supportive of my poetical career. In September this year, I have to present a collection of poems to them as part of the SIAP funding they were kind enough to give me. These poems will, hopefully, be published in a pamphlet and then who knows. The future (like the poems) is unwritten.



Biography

Colin Hassard is a poet from Belfast. He has twice been Ulster Poetry Slam Champion, and in 2018 was Runner Up in the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2018 and selected as one of Eyewear Publishing's Best New British and Irish Poets.

Colin is resident poet on BBC Radio Ulster's 'Science & Stuff', has toured his own show and regularly performed at major Irish festivals including Electric Picnic and Lingofest, and was the Writer-in-Residence for the NI Human Rights Festival 2015. Colin is currently developing his first collection of poems with support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

YouTube link for 'My First

Words': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVBuaiYD9mM&t=7s>

You can follow Colin on social media: Facebook: www.facebook.com/colinhassardpoetry

Twitter: @ColinHassard

Instagram: @ColinHassard

At a Red Light

It's just after five o'clock on a Friday afternoon
and I'm stopped at a red light.
In front of the car, two teenage girls in school uniform
are chatting and laughing as they cross the road.
It's the time of year when days are getting longer,
and anything seems possible.

As the news on the radio segues into the traffic report:
crash in Blackley – one driver dead, the other critical,
I think of the delays and diversions,
the late dinners, the orchestra of indicators,
the inevitability of such things, call it fate.

But everything remains possible.
The girls could fall in love. The city could crumble.
It may never rain again.

The lights change. Music comes on the radio.
I put the car into first gear and drive.

by Colin Hassard

Flowers

I hear the scrat of soil being split & lifted –
scattering like clumps of rain,
& follow the sound to my bedroom window.

My mother is kneeling by the flowerbed, planting bulbs.
With hands unhardened in my father's gloves
she rakes the soil knowing what colours will bloom

& when. On a clement April afternoon, she is planning
for summer; painting the garden by numbers; removing
winter as carefully as a surgeon removes cancer.

I watch her like the dove she calls Scruffy
who waits on the bird-house roof each morning
for the ashtray of mixed seed.

Like Scruffy & the bees & the insects
& my father cursing each splutter of the lawnmower,
I can only be a guest in her garden.

She tells my father that her knees are sore,
& he brings her cushion from the garage.
When the lawnmower rumbles, I close the window,

ashamed not to know the names of the flowers.

by Colin Hassard

First published in CAP Anthology 2018

thoughts on the air-raid shelters of Turku

them russians are coming
run down to the shelters
bring a diary and your best blanket

if them russians don't get you, the frost will
if the frost don't get you, it'll be them russians
tell them lies

say the finns have grown a desert and are learning to fight on sand
say the saunas are packed with heavy artillery
say the moomins are homicidal

are them russians still black and white and red all over?
lure them in or lure them out
whichever is more shrewd

they don't like the rye bread & the karelian pies
the salty liquorice & the liberalism
leave an empty bottle of milk on the doorstep

you were right to be on your toes
them russians are coming
it'll take a nation of jittery blondes to stop them

by Colin Hassard



Bird, Zomba Plateau, Malawi

Taken from Zomba Plateau, Malawi overlooking Zomba City

Biography

Yvonne Boyle has been writing for a number of years and has had a range of poems published in a variety of magazines and anthologies: Literary Miscellany, Ulster Tatler; the title prose poem in 'Cobalt Blue', Dunfanaghy Writers' Circle (2016); the online 'Holocaust Memorial Day Anthology' (2016); the online 'A New Ulster. The Hidden and the Divine: Female Voices in Ireland' (2017); Poetry in Motion Community Anthologies 'Matter' and 'Resonance'; Bangor Literary Journal and 'Spring's Bride'. She was awarded the 1st Sam Overend Award for Poets and Writers (Spoken Word Competition), Seamus Heaney Poetry House, Bellgahy Bawn (2016). She has had poems exhibited at the Blackberry Path Art Studio, Bangor (2017). She worked as a CAP Artist-Facilitator in their Poetry in Motion Schools Project, September-November 2017. She is a member of Women Aloud NI. She also enjoys taking photographs and has had some 'readers' photos' published in local papers

I'm a journalist and newsreader with the BBC in Belfast. I write creatively in my spare time – poetry and plays – because they allow me to use adjectives and tell the back stories behind the news. I've had poems published in the CAP anthologies in 2016/17 and 2017/18 and a short play in The Incubator. I live locally by the sea, with my family.



For mothers
(To be read over a glass of wine)

In the smoking shelter at work
We mothers, who raised our children without the kindly influence
Of Insta, Facebook or even internet;
Who pulled the books from the bedside in the darkest hour
To see if her crying was our fault – because it had to be -
We gather,
To shrug and frown and admit
We were probably not doing it right.
Exhausted, we let them cry, turning up daytime TV
In our pyjamas. At three. In the Afternoon.
Eyes closed, we told ourselves it would be all right
If the dog had licked her biscuit before she did.
Drink ordered, we waved them off to play in Spanish squares
At night, with others whose German, French and English parents
Were also ordering lust-laced gins.
Work shattered, who fed the neighbourhood – again –
With frozen's finest, organic vegetables rotting in the basket,
Because that weekend resolve disappeared in paperwork. Again.
Let's not even approach the teenage years
Our darkest hours of doubt and bitterness.
But we guilt- smoke
(As we have since their primary school days when the unblemished child
Teaching them condemned us) and shake our heads
As our fine, strong mothers did.
And start to speak of their successes – these offspring, now students
Workers, parents themselves.
And one of us perfects it
"Benevolent neglect"
And we agree to stick with that.

by Ann-Marie Foster

Tobias Radloff

Poetry

Tobias Radloff is a writer from Germany who lives and works in Belfast, preferably with a cat on his lap. He has written several novels, short stories and poems in both German and English, and is a winner of the Daniil Pashkoff Prize. He's still thinking about a witty last line for his biography.

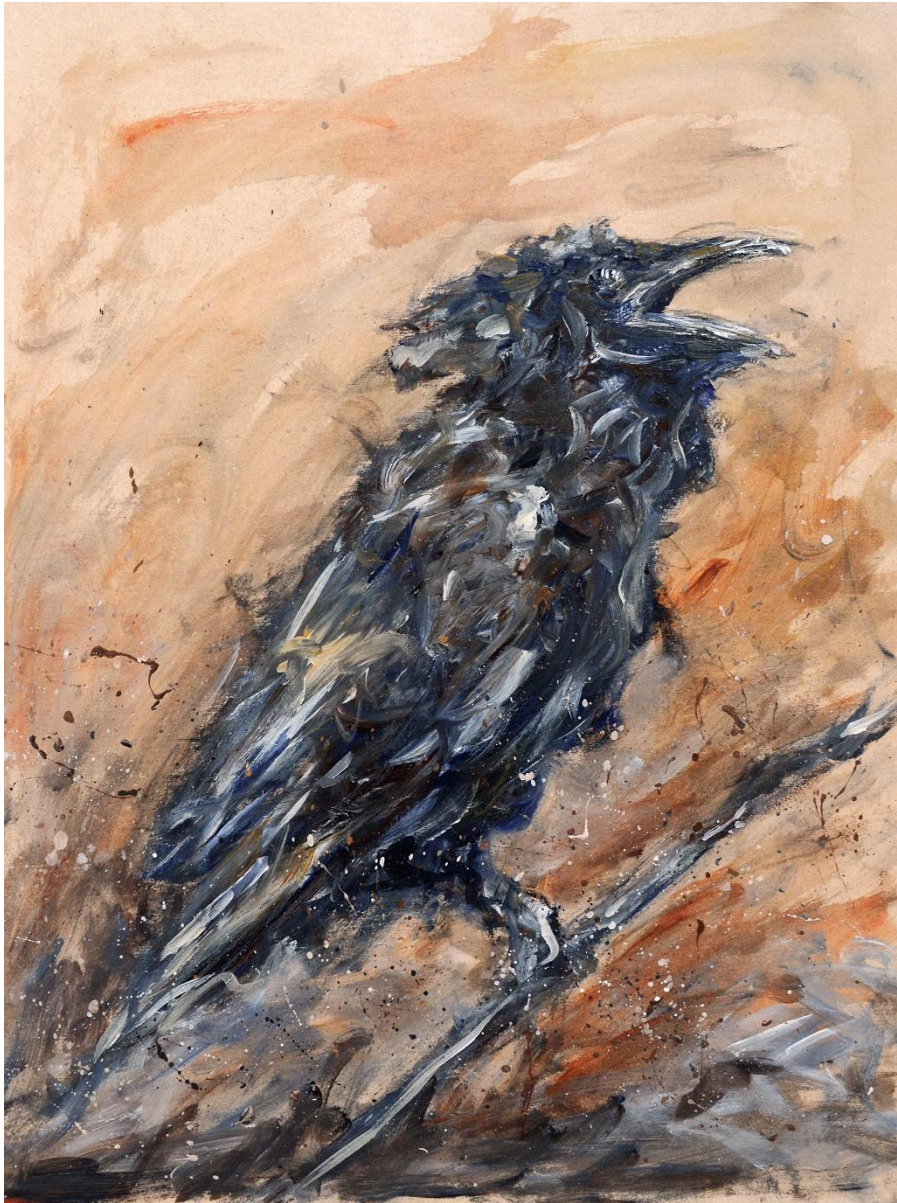


Served

Homeless Roy Brown
robbed a Louisiana bank
took a single \$100 bill
to cover food & shelter
returned it the next day
'Mama ain't raised me no thief.'
Fifteen-year sentence

Paul Richard Allen, Ph.D.
mortgage firm CEO
bank & wire fraudster
to the tune of \$3 billion
"I apologise most sincerely
to the financial community."
Three years and change

by Tobias Radloff



The Morrígan (Battle

Crow)

Acrylic on wood. The Morrígan : Goddess of War & Fate. The Morrígan is mainly associated with war and fate, especially with foretelling doom and death in battle. In this role she often appears as a crow.

Cú Chulainn -The Hound of Ulster (opposite)

Acrylic on wood. Setanta achieved his name at the age of seven when he killed the watchdog of a blacksmith named Culann. Setanta said to Culann since your hound is dead I will guard your house now so from then on he was called Cú Chulainn which means the hound of Culann.

**Artist Statement**

Stephens' work is an exploration and an interpretation of rural and urban settings and is a search for beauty both natural and man-made. He hopes when people see his work they will be encouraged to see beauty in everyday places in the city and aspects of their surroundings that they wouldn't normally pay attention to, be it people, landscapes, the urban, the suburban, the rural or just daily routines. He explores the ordinary and the everyday and is inspired by the light, colour and mood of Irish landscapes and their ever-changing scenes. As he says "I paint what I know!" Most of his work is an exploration of places he knows well: the city streets of Derry and Dublin, or the rural and coastal areas of Inishowen and beyond.

Eunice Yeats is a Belfast-based freelance writer. Having grown up in a County Meath village very near Dublin, she then lived in Belgium, Japan, the United States, and South Africa, as well as spending long stints in London. Her fiction writing often explores a sense of place and of solid ground.



Staying

11pm, Delaine checked everything. Passport, boarding pass, airline-approved re-sealable bag for cosmetics. Lights out, she tapped a final text in the glow of her phone screen: I don't want to go.

1am, she was startled from sleep by a lingering moth launching itself against her mouth. In the darkness, Delaine pulverised it in disgust and panic. Bedside lamp on, she saw the dust of its wings on her pillow. She tore the pillowcase off.

3am, wide awake, she checked her messages. One unread text: Don't go.

4am, Delaine watched the slow movement of clouds implying rain. Abruptly, a thunderstorm started like a tantrum. She got out of bed to close the skylight against the machine-gun clatter of its downpour.

5am, birdsong, addled dreams. I don't want to go. Phone. No new messages.

6am, Delaine's mobile lit up, vibrated, and pip-pipped. Though already awake, the alarm agitated her.

7am, getting dressed after showering, humidity hung its vapour on everything. Delaine regarded her hopeless hair. Another day, another ponytail. I don't want to go.

8am, the airport taxi was 15 minutes early. Outside, the cabbie says to her, "You're in your slippers, love." Delaine smiles at him. "I'm not going. Sorry."

by Eunice Yeats

Niall McArdle's work has appeared in the *Irish Times*, *Banshee*, *Spontaneity*, *Honest Ulsterman*, and *Phoenix Irish Short Stories*, and has been broadcast on RTÉ Radio. He has been shortlisted for the Hennessy Literary Awards, the Francis MacManus Short Story Competition and the Cúirt New Writing Prize, and is the recipient of an Arts Council of Ireland bursary. He lives in Dublin.



Posterity

To be a figure in a painting,
a caked and smeared
collision of pigments
reeking of oil, conjured, weightless,
subject to the hardness of the brush,
the sniff of the critic,
the snotty gape of the child or
worst of all,
the barely a glance or farting sigh from the guard
passing on his nightly rounds
must be a sort of endless death.
Posed and frozen bent at the knee
your face a rictus of a smile or a grimace or a sneer.
There is no honour in a portrait.
The National Gallery is full of despair.

by Niall McArdle

Marilyn Timms

Poetry

Marilyn Timms is a writer and artist living in Gloucestershire. Her poetry has been described by Alison Brackenbury as 'a collection of brave and unexpected adventures, with intoxicating, sometimes threatening colours ... poems of war are particularly sharp and well-informed. Her writing explodes with energy.' Her collection, ***Poppy Juice***, was launched at the 2018 Cheltenham Poetry Festival.



Handshake, 1963

You are a strange man.
Your slenderness, coupled
with your silent, unhurried walk,
carries an erroneous suggestion
of fragility. On Tuesdays,
you practice martial arts.
Trailing fumes of lemon balm,
you prowl the corridors,
doling out excessive courtesy
to every pupil you meet.
We think you are a little weird.

When I interrupt your chemistry class,
you greet me with a slight bow,
extend your hand; hold mine
for the duration of the message I bring.
I stammer under the intense scrutiny
of your pale eyes. You thank me.
After receiving another bow, I leave,
red with embarrassment,
feeling strangely valued.

A year later, we meet unexpectedly,
follow the identical ritual, as I explain
how I am faring since I left school.
Your coffee-coloured hand is cool in mine;
the long tapering fingers, the manicured
nails, exactly as I remember.
A woman passerby spits at us.

by Marilyn Timms



Bradeshaw Stone

A detail from The Bradeshaw Stone, which is the oldest tombstone in Bangor Abbey church.

The stone commemorates Thomas Bradeshaw, who died in 1620 and was buried in the ruins of the old abbey (just at the time Lord Clandeboye was making arrangements for the building of a new church on the site). Part of the inscription has unfortunately worn away but the remaining portion reads: BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD FOR THEY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS AND THEIR WORKS .HEIR LYIS THOMAS BRADESHAW SOME TYME BAILLIE IN BANGOUR WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE SIXTH OF IANUARIE 1620 .MEMENTO MORI. A 'Baillie' is a term for a civic officer in the local government of Scotland similar to magistrate or alderman.

The centre panel of the stone (seen here) depicts three figures in Jacobean costume, the thin waists and the ruffs, and the 'Baillie' with his cap. are surmounted by the initials of each: the first, T. B. (Thomas Bradeshaw); the second his wife, A. R.; and the third, his daughter, A. B.

[The artist Lenka Davidikova was inspired by the carving and has re-imagined the figures in a mural at Queen's Parade on Bangor seafront].



Bangor Abbey Steeple

The steeple of Bangor Abbey church looking up from the inside. The steeple was added to the 14th century tower in 1693 during a renovation of the church. A monument in the tower is in memory of James Hamilton, Esq. and his wife Sophia Mordaunt who were responsible for the renovation. Also in the walls of the tower are two small stones which record that the Churchwardens in 1693 were John Blackwood and John Cleland and that a certain Francis Annesley gave the sum of £5 towards the raising of the steeple.

Biography

Gifford is a Diocesan Lay Reader in the Church of Ireland serving in Bangor Abbey. His worldview influences both his photography and his poetry, and he uses these to explore subjects which he feels most deeply about whether it be issues of politics, justice or spirituality. He argues that it is when Christianity becomes too literalistic that the troubles usually begin! The mystery that is God cannot be imprisoned in dogma and doctrine. Gifford has had work published with Lagan Online, has read poetry at events throughout Northern Ireland and exhibited his poetry and photography at a variety of exhibitions.

Peter Adair

Poetry

Peter Adair has won The Translink Poetry Competition and The Funeral Services NI Poetry Competition. Two poems were shortlisted for The 2018 Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing. His poems have appeared in journals and anthologies.



Life-Support

Five years ago today
you are dying

all over again. I sag
down the corridor of sighs

listening for the rise
and fall of breath, the dying

pulse of the hospice, then see
rose petals lilting

to the floor while plastic
tubes sprinkle

your body's
withered garden,

your mind unreachable
in its last dream,

your absence
from this long countdown

to God knows where –
an afterlife, your hope;

or nothing, nothing...
your life-support switched on

again where dying never
ends for those who wait.

by Peter Adair

Olivia Fitzsimons is a northerner living in Greystones, County Wicklow, Ireland. Her flash fiction has appeared/forthcoming in the *Honest Ulsterman*, *Crannog*, *Boyne Berries*, *Cabinet of Heed*, *Solidalgo*, *FlashBack Fiction* and *Deracine*. In 2017 she was shortlisted for the Sunday Business Post/ Penguin Short Story Prize and long listed for the Fish Short Story Prize 2018. Her flash 'We Don't Understand The Machines We Have Created,' was shortlisted for the Retreat West Flash Fiction Prize in 2017 and will be published in the Anthology, *Impermanent Facts*, by Retreat West Books later this year. She was recently selected for the WORDS Ireland/Wicklow Co Co National Mentoring Programme.

@oneflawediris



Mother Forest

The fabric of their skin became the forest, the forest became the fabric of their skin.

It drew them in with every nettle sting, each bramble scratch, and whiff of gorse, the catch of pine. Delayed with hawthorn prickles and unsightly midge bites each braided mossy knee. Claimed the stone scraped palm, every climb to the sky, every tumble into autumn leaves, each whole black beetle under bark.

Dazzled them with rising rut of deer, surprised with every edge displayed, bonded every drop of blood tapped from grasping holly berry bite.

Enticed with bittersweet mouthfuls of fraughan, disappearing on swollen smiles. Entwined them with lone birdsong calling, returning. Beguiled with countless rivers crossed and streams convulsed by giggling feet, small fingertips swished along its current.

Whole moments, captured, held forever in trees tall. Kept like whispers, feelings forgotten in fallen banks, hidden in upended roots ripped from their sodden home.

All this, all here, felled by the storm that never stopped coming. All of that, all of that, kept woven, waiting, for the return of their bruised imperfect hearts.

by Olivia Fitzsimmons

Steven John

Poetry

Steven lives in The Cotswolds, UK, and writes flash, short stories and poetry. He's had work published in pamphlets and online magazines including Riggwelter, Reflex Fiction, Fictive Dream, Cabinet of Heed and Former Cactus. In 2017 Steve won the inaugural Farnham Short Story Competition and has won Bath Ad Hoc five times.



The Waller

I pass the waller from time to time
on the high, remote faces of the fells.
I hear him before I see him, the 'plink plink' of his tools
on the lichened stones, like the call of a bird.
He's mute to most but over the years
has spoken solitary weather words to me,
'damp' or 'fair', nothing more.

No-one knows who's paid him
for the long threads of wall he's re-stitched,
embroidering the bitter landscape
with his hard, grey lines.
I've never seen him eat or rest
or wear anything to keep out the cold
other than an encrusted tweed jacket

Even when the wind has cut my face
like a blade. Today the fells are fleeced
with a crinkling of snow.
I bid him a good day and observe
his cragged hands knead a rock
as a baker would mould his dough.
The waller nods to the thin blue sky

and says it's 'crisp'.
He taps the sculpted rock into its place
as if reforming the granite rind.
As I walk the 'plink plink' fades to silence
When I turn he's disappeared,
absorbed into the stone
and bones of the country.

by Steven John

Sarah Kelly

Poetry

Sarah Kelly is an emerging writer who lives and works in Cork. Her poems have appeared in recent editions of *Banshee Literary Journal* and *The Honest Ulsterman*.



Ophelia

It will scrape, trail decaying roots. Avid harvester of gasping things.

Roads may be impassable.

It will tear telegraph poles, cut nerve supplies, cables whipping air like clipped guitar strings.

Many homes may be without power.

It will weaken trampolines, pram wheels, teats of babies' bottles, sweeping, sweeping.

Such objects may become missiles and should be secured carefully.

So, for twelve weeks,

I scorned sushi,

snubbed pineapple and papaya,

clawed for concoctions of cramp bark and black haw root,

clamped my hands about you,

but could not batten the hatch.

Catch the sound of

low

frequency.

Yet,

there is something about a

hurricane

And the slackening aftermath.

Hollows follow.

Gaps for growing.

So, I wait for you to pass, little eye.

Ophelia.

I could have called you that.

by Sarah Kelly

Antoinette Bradley

Poetry

Antoinette Bradley is a member of the Flowerfield Writers, she writes poetry, prose, memoir, short story and travel. Her Published work includes: CAP Anthologies of 2016, 2017 & 2018 (shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney Award). Short story in 'On the Grass when I Arrive.' She is currently working on a full-length piece of creative non-fiction 'The Iconoclast'.



If a tree falls.....

He has turned off his ears
they lie deaf on the open sill.
He is post -aural,
to the leaves' rustle, to the bacon frying,
to the blue- bottle and the wood pigeon,
to the scurry of shells
dragging along the shore.

He has never told her
that the clouds sign to him; that once
he got high on the scent
of a torn tomato,
that he always knows the way home;
never spoke of his Geiger counter eyes
moving over the mouthing faces,
burrowing for the buried lie.

The pro-found gift he cannot share
with her -
tracking her way by GPS,
boasting fluency in many tongues
never finding her Rosetta stone,
the truth beneath the noise.
The code remains uncracked.

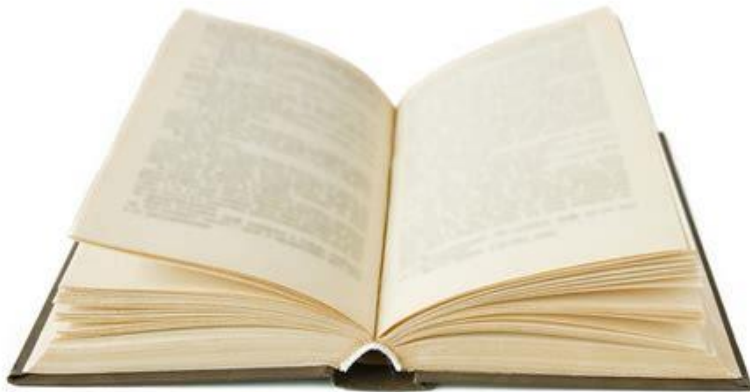
He wants to say,
Turn off your ears,
find your own way home-

by Antoinette Bradley

James Smart

Flash Fiction

James Smart is from the North of England and is studying an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Glimmertrain - where he won an award for Best New Writer - Spelk, Reflex, Friction, Spilling Ink and elsewhere. He has been shortlisted for the 2018 Commonwealth Writers Short Story Prize and is working on a novel. He tweets @notjamessmart.



Apex

My father and Father Christmas disappeared the same day. Before the first snow fell on Christmas Eve, two of the three most important men in my life were gone.

Thankfully, Senna didn't crash until '94.

I found them arguing on the landing: Mum in her nightdress, Dad in half his Santa outfit.

'It's over,' Dad said.

Instead of sleigh-bells, I listened for the sound of his Vauxhall speeding away.

Mum put me to bed and said, 'It's time you understand that I buy everything that goes underneath that tree.'

What she meant was that she was realer than Santa Claus.

Later, Senna came off on Tamburello corner and hit a concrete barrier at two hundred and eighteen kilometres an hour.

'The fault must've been with the car,' Dad said on the phone. 'Senna wouldn't have failed such a simple manoeuvre.'

He wouldn't tell me where he was calling from.

Each Christmas since, we get a synthetic tree. I watch for silhouettes on the roof. Mum asks me what I want and I say, 'Cash.'

I'm saving for driving lessons. I've come to realise how fast the future can arrive; how I should prepare for every turn and corner.

by James Smart

A South African Poet and Writer. Nandi had just finished Vagina Monologues Belfast tour and her next work "The Absent Daughter" a Memoir will publish in the Autumn 2018. Nandi is a Poet and Storyteller in the Belfast Mela this year 26 August, her work with Cinemagic "A Time To Stand" is out and will be featured through NI raising awareness on Racism. Nandi sits in Hate Crime Think Tank for Northern Ireland.



Hair

Not a single day goes by without someone petting my hair
I mean hands on; I explain to those close to me that my hair is attached to my head,
Which is attached to my neck, which forms part of my body, yet no matter how I try to
explain?
My sheepish look attracts more hands.

It sparks a much needed debate about identity,
Intolerance and difference.
My friends can't come to terms with that word 'Black'
They choose to settle for 'Dark Skin' or 'Brown Skin' they would even say 'Tan'
Thus bringing their ignorance to my history, and 'Black Struggle'

It seems that I don't like my hair, at first, there is a ritual to it
An embrace of a struggle, solidarity, history, but most off all reclaiming.
My hair is a symbol, a statement and the more young boys and girls shout 'don't shoot' the
more it becomes entangled in the liberation struggle.

My hair is a liberation flag in the struggle of being the only black child in my school
It is my defiance at the eyes that look at me with hate
My hair my confidence, my roots
It is decolonisation
Angela Davis and woman of struggle embraced theirs

My hair was not built to be hidden under a weave, to be straightened
It is built to be seen, it demands to be seen
It is iconic...
My hair.

by Nandipha Jola

Patrick Sleven

Poetry

Patrick Sleven lives in Stockport and has been writing poems for many years. His work has appeared in The Interpreter's House, the Manchester Review, Degenerate Literature and he was highly commended in the Westport Arts competition 2017 as well as the Gregory O'Donoghue.



Settling Things

..... and there were stray ones,
and twos, and threes – they had to be balanced
as well. If pressed I'd have guessed
about sixty – from glances
at plastic bags, from memories
of him gasping – just get me the four – a reflex
that made everything alright.
Maybe it cleared up
the inhaler that rouletted to silence
in the glass ashtray he'd kept – sometimes
it's quieter to leave things in full view
so a question doesn't appear.
That's how everyone knew
your name and number were scrawled
on the envelope
in the dust. Visible now
in its absence – like the last sip –
a thumb's width headlining
the top of the glass, on the only table
by that only chair
in front of the single bed – surrounded
by a wall of one-hundred and eighteen cans
and you, you'd have poured them away.

by Patrick Slevin



Still Waters

Inspired a poem of the same name which has been accepted for publication by *Poems for All*. The still evening waters of Strangford Lough, taken from the Portaferry Road

Biography

Karen is an enthusiastic weekend snapper who enjoys capturing images from the natural environment mainly around the Ards Peninsula.

Featured Artist

Alice Wyatt



Hi Alice, thank you for chatting with us today about your work. Firstly, can you tell the readers, when you first realised that you wanted to become an artist?

From as long as I can remember I always loved doing art. As a small child I would doodle, draw or colour-in with pretty much anything that would make a mark. When I discovered paint, my small world became a much richer place, full of all the possibilities that colour opened up to me. I never looked back. I was hooked. Art was in my soul.

What influences inspire your work?

A lot of my work is inspired by Gustav Klimt, who was one of the founding members of the Vienna Secession which came about in 1897. I love the way Klimt used a lot of random pattern in his pieces, as if the pattern was as important as the subject matter itself. When I am painting or printmaking I also find that I work in this way- by creating random pattern in the subject. This can be seen in many of earlier nude prints and also, in my tree collagraph prints and my paintings, where the tree branches become so randomly over-worked that they are almost in danger of becoming claustrophobic. But this (I hope) is also what gives them uniqueness.

Two other artists who have influenced me are Camille Pissarro, the Danish-French Impressionist/ Neo-Impressionist, and French Post-Impressionist Georges- Pierre Seurat. I am heavily influenced by their use of their pointillism and attention to light and shade. However, I also hugely admire the Impressionists for their bold use of colour and beautiful thick impasto brush strokes which also strongly impact my work.

I like artists who have gone against the rules, just as I myself do. I break the rules through my strong use of colour and the fact that when I create a 'landscape scene' I often do it in portrait format. The nature of my subjects, which are usually trees, allow me to zoom in on the height of the trees, I do landscapes in a portrait format. The nature of my subject allows me to zoom in on the tallness of trees.

As an artist who works in two disciplines, do you think that they complement or compete with each other?

That is a very interesting question. I work in the areas of painting and fine art print-making. Many purists see these as polar opposites of each other, as print-making requires you to be tight, meticulous and precise; while painting allows you to be free and experimental. However, for me, they are very similar; for me,



they have many of the same qualities; for me, they complement each other. For example, within both mediums I can extract the textures that I want to achieve- one through the use of the building of layers of paint; while in print-making I do this through the building of layers upon my collagraph board.

Up until I did A Level as a mature student, I had always viewed myself as predominantly a 'painter'. However, it was when I started my Foundation Diploma in Art and Design at what is now SERC, that I was first introduced to print-making. From the very first moment I saw the process, the technique, the materials, the equipment and the thrill of the print coming through the press, I knew immediately that I wanted to explore this medium further. I loved it. I couldn't stop thinking about it, it became my passion alongside painting.

I didn't feel that I was betraying my 'painter' persona, instead I saw it as another string to my bow. The harder I worked, the better my prints got and within a year of selling my work at exhibitions, I had saved up enough money to buy my own printing press. This printing press has been a good friend to me, and it is the same one that I use today. It has given me almost twenty years of collagraph prints.



When people ask me which medium I prefer, I say I enjoy both equally. I could never see myself as not doing either. Sometimes I will not paint for months at a time and solely print; but then, there is a little niggle that starts small and builds to a point where if I don't get my paintbrushes and easel out, then the feeling will eat me alive. But then I always get pulled back to printmaking- the intaglio qualities, the layers, the textures, the carving – yet not really that much different to the process of painting where I layer impasto strokes.

With a collagraph board, sometimes I get so engrossed that I will sit for hours without taking a break, using the knife as a pen to draw and cut into the board. Some larger collagraph pieces that I have worked on have taken up to twenty hours to complete and that is before the printing process, which involves hours upon hours of working with oil-based inks and soaked Fabriano paper. Once, an extremely large lino cut that I was exhibiting in Belfast, took me forty hours to cut out!

I never feel torn between my two disciplines, instead I let them both teach me how to open myself up to expressing myself in different ways.



'Cascade'
Collagraph

What are you currently working on?

I have just completed a collagraph print of an Irish Oak tree. I feel very privileged to have been asked to have this included in a book, as part of the Light 2000 project. Also, I have completed a body of new work which is currently being shown as part of 'A Sense of Place' exhibition alongside artists Linda Murray, Paul Daniel Rafferty and Amy Louise Rafferty. This exhibition is in North Down Museum in Bangor and runs until the 22nd July.

Finally, Alice. Where do you see yourself in five years?

Quite honestly, I really don't know. Hopefully, continuing to do what I love doing most- exploring the landscape through my love of colour, texture and patterns. It is important to me that people can emotionally connect to my pieces and as long as I can achieve this, I will keep going. I have plenty of ideas in the pipeline and I continue to find inspiration in my surroundings and the magic within the landscape, which I know will never fade.



(
Right) Alice's work which is currently at North Down Museum.

(Top) One of Alice's collagraphs which explores the tallness of trees.

(Below) 'Scrabo in Evening Glow'- collagraph.



Alice Wyatt

Biography

email-alicewyatt60@gmail.com /Facebook- Alice Wyatt

Alice is Bangor based painter and print maker who works from The Blackberry Path Art Studios. She is inspired by the local landscape and loves to explore textures, colours, shadows and lines in her work. Many of Alice's works are based on Crawfordsburn where she grew up. Her work often deals with the inter-play of light and shadow.

She completed her Foundation Diploma at SERC and fell in love with print-making, completing several courses at Bangor Print Workshop. She then bought her own press and has continued to work mainly in the medium of collagraph.

Alice has exhibited throughout Ireland and has had several successful solo exhibitions. Alice has exhibited in Belfast Castle, The Linenhall Library, North Down Museum, The Apelles Gallery, The Yard Gallery, The Saint Patrick Centre, The Harlequins Rugby Club, The Blackberry Path Art Studios, The Curve Gallery and Malone House to name a few.

Permanent collections include The Ulster Independent Clinic and private collections throughout Ireland, the UK, Europe, Australia and Hong Kong.

Recently Alice was selected to have her artwork exhibited throughout Northern Ireland and published in a book as part of The Light 2000 Project.



Alice with her work at North Down Museum.

Cath Barton

Flash Fiction

Cath Barton is an English writer who lives In Wales. She won the New Welsh Writing AmeriCymru Prize for the Novella 2017 for *The Plankton Collector*, which will be published in September 2018 by New Welsh Review under their Rarebyte imprint. She has been awarded a place on the 2018 Literature Wales Enhanced Mentoring Scheme and is currently working on a collection of short stories inspired by the work of the sixteenth century Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch. Active in the online flash fiction community, she is also a regular contributor to the online critical hub Wales Arts Review. @CathBarton1/ <https://cathbarton.com/>



Birds on a wire

She stood at the sink looking out of the window. There were two birds on the telegraph wire, silhouetted against the evening sun, their tail feathers sharp in outline. They lived in the same world, she and the birds. It made no sense. Nothing made sense to her any more. That birds could fly. Fly across continents. People too. Just like that, with no explanation.

He had been gone two days. He would be in Australia by now. If that was really where he had gone. Had he even said it? She shook her head, as if trying to get water out of her ears. When she looked again the birds had gone without a sound – there was just the black line of the wire across the vividness of the sky. She stood there for the time it took for all the colour to drain away. In Australia it would be morning. One of those bright mornings filled with brash birdsong. Mornings which made you feel glad to be alive. So he'd said.

She filled a glass with water from the tap and drank it, slowly. Then she put it down on the draining board. And turned from the window.

by Cath Barton

Ross Thompson

Poetry

Ross Thompson is a writer from Bangor, Northern Ireland. His work appears or is forthcoming in publications such as *The Honest Ulsterman*, *One*, *The Island Review*, *4 x 4*, *The Freshwater Review*, *The Wild Word*, *Popshot* and *Memory House*. His poem 'Postscripts' is included in *The Poetry Jukebox* in Belfast.



Van Der Graaf

Just for giggles, the toughest nut in Science class
removed the earthing strip from the Van Der Graaf
generator the teacher had prepared before
the lesson, and waited in anticipation

for him to enter, the lab coat upon which
his pupils dared to hang crocodile clips swinging
behind him. "Safety first, boys," he said, then set down
a polystyrene ceiling tile and waltzed forward.

He switched on the robotic lollipop. It buzzed
like a beehive before an intruding bear.
The class fell quiet as the ocean floor. He went
to place his hands onto the metal dome, as if

faith healing or reading a crystal ball, and screamed
bloody murder when the Van Der Graaf unloaded
a million volts of unbridled power sufficient
to raise the dead. Some boys laughed as a thunderclap

zapped him into doing a Pentecostal dance.
Other boys stared agog as he was fused and shocked,
and a pelmet of hair flocked around his bald spot.
He collapsed onto his stool, smoking a little,

shaking and jabbering in a broken Antrim
twang. A student as shy as summer rain sidled
up to the board where he casually undid
an equation by adding a few rogue numbers.

by Ross Thompson

Alison Armstrong

Poetry

Alison Armstrong has been writing for many years and has been long listed and short listed for several prizes/awards. Last year she won a Northern Writers' Award for fiction and was commended in the Bath Flash Fiction Award. She lives and works as a teacher and painter in Lancaster.



The Chameleon

Tonight I thought of the chameleon
that you brought back like a trophy.
By chance you had found it,
by the side of the road.
It was dying, you said.
But, like a child, I was filled
with the drama of your arrival,
convinced that we could save it.
I had never seen one before,
the perfect smallness of its form.
I thought a chameleon should be bigger somehow,
like an iguana.
We put it on the low wall,
on its side in white dust,
no longer able to stand.
We watched its breathing
quick and small.
Its magnificent turning eye,
still turning.
Its tail
coiled round –
unable to cling to branch,
nor any thing, save itself.
Its life slipping away quietly
with each rapid breath.
Its four tiny feet, sticking out
from where we placed it.
Opposable toes, half-curved,
silent beginnings of an unmade grasp.
We tried to revive it with water –
the futile drip of the hose.
And as your hand left mine
I watched its colour
change
from the brown of its arrival
to the white of surrender.
Or a last camouflage
against the bleached pallor of stones?

Two complete colours
in the space of one skin.

by Alison Armstrong

Shona Woods

Flash Fiction

Shona Woods grew up in Trim, and holds a BA and MA in Sociology from NUI Maynooth. Her first short story was published in Boyne Berries in 2017. She has another forthcoming in Crossways Magazine. She lives with her husband and two young children in Dublin.



Strawberry Field

Without an introduction, the man in wellies became known as Beef. Kate and I took our places on the same row. I knelt down and rummaged through plush leaves for the heavier plumper strawberries. We took our break by a dormant trailer, with bricks replacing wheels, stacked high enough to crawl under in a shower. Eating our sandwiches and guzzling Fanta through straws chewed flush, on the grassy dune flecked with dandelions. The sunlight was a freckle trapper. The boys played charades; and although we knew the answers, we didn't offer them up. Reluctant to curb the fun.

The work was a Chinese burn on our tender backs. A boy lobbed a few strawberries. Go'way to fuck Brady, shouted the target. Beef emerged from sly patrol, pointed his thumb behind him and shouted Go home! Brady smiled as though it didn't matter, put down his bucket and gave us a thumbs up on his way out. A hero's exit. Another was caught with fruit stained jeans, vowing he'd slipped on jam at home. A few others had enough and left. And we watched them diminish down the dirt track, then disappear into their own heat hazes.

by Shona Woods

Maurice Devitt

Poetry

Winner of the 2015 Trocaire/Poetry Ireland Competition, he has been runner-up or shortlisted in Listowel, Cúirt, Patrick Kavanagh, Interpreter's House and Cork Literary Review. He is a poet of international breadth, having had poems published in the UK, US, India, Romania, Australia and Mexico, and representing Ireland at the Berryman Conference in Minneapolis, and at the Poets in Transylvania Festival. He is also the curator of the Irish Centre for Poetry Studies site, a founder member of the Hibernian Writers' Group and has a debut collection upcoming from Doire Press in 2018.



A Football Dynasty

In the months after Baggot Street
your bedroom became
a *School of Soccer Excellence*,
where, with your grandstand
view of the green, you watched
me play and, afterwards, explained
the dark art of *making space*,
while I, a ten-year-old know-it-all,
nodded impatiently, eager for you
to listen to my well-rehearsed
monologue, delivered breathlessly
from the rocking-chair
in the corner - how United
had beaten Sheffield to go top
of the league and how Best
and Morgan had run them ragged -
while you, pillow-propped
to false attention, said nothing
and I was still too young to know
what had just passed between us.

by Maurice Devitt

Ali Whitelock is a Scottish poet and writer. Her memoir, *'Poking seaweed with a stick and running away from the smell'* was published to critical acclaim in Australia and the UK. Her debut poetry collection, *'and my heart crumples like a coke can'* is published by Wakefield Press. Her poems have appeared in *The Moth Magazine*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Gutter Magazine*, *NorthWords Now*, *The Poets' Republic*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *The Red Room Company*, *Beautiful Losers Magazine* and *The Pittsburgh Quarterly* (July 2018).



the treeless hill.

*(i remember the day they took nanny away on the stretcher;
grampa running after the ambulance man not sure what to do;
mute panic spiralling from him like a twister; the tent poles
of his world collapsing one by one by one.)*

i still have the photo of him sitting in the garden inside
the old red phone-box mum bought when british telecom
were selling them off cheap. she kept her spades in there,
her trowels, her garden rakes. mum loved the garden.
grampa loved it too.
we lived on a treeless hill.
the wind tore across it like my father's murderous
breath ripping heads off daisies leaving bewildered
stalks poking from a bloodless lawn.
when nanny died, grampa came to live on the treeless hill.
he didn't do much those months. just stood on the hill
smoking staring smoking some more.
mum took him on a cruise; a change of scene; fresh sea air;
a new place to smoke. he had his photo taken with the captain.
when i look at that photo now, it's not grampa's best navy blazer i see,
nor the pink garland around his neck celebrating the sea princess's arrival
into hawaii; but the slow puncture of his grief leaking
soundlessly from his soul.
when he got too frail to stand up to the wind on the hill
he took to sitting inside the phone box among the spades
the trowels, the garden rakes and from his quiet, windless
interior, smoke fag
after fag after
fag.
all too soon he got too frail for the phone box. ended
up in the hospital. my sister rang every night from london
to ask how he was. the night after he died i picked up the receiver
and heard myself tell her he was fine. i have never been one for delivering
bad news. when i hung the phone back on its cradle
i wandered out onto the treeless
hill, carrying the terrible lie, searching
for somewhere to hide it.

by Ali Whitelock

International Feature

Catherine Graham



Catherine Graham is a Toronto-based writer of poetry and fiction. Among her six poetry collections *The Celery Forest* was named a CBC Best Book of the Year and appears on their Ultimate Canadian Poetry List. Michael Longley praised it as “a work of great fortitude and invention, full of jewel-like moments and dark gnostic utterance.” *Her Red Hair Rises with the Wings of Insects* was a finalist for the Raymond Souster Award and CAA Award for Poetry and her debut novel *Quarry* was shortlisted for the Fred Kerner Book Award and won an Independent Publisher Book Awards gold medal for fiction. She received an Excellence in Teaching Award at the University of Toronto and was also winner of the International Festival of Author’s Poetry NOW. Her work is anthologized internationally and she has appeared on CBC’s *The Next Chapter with Shelagh Rogers*. Graham has read her work at the Seamus Heaney HomePlace, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Crescent Arts Centre, Open House Festival, Bowery Poetry Club in New York City and Thessaloniki International Book Fair. Visit Catherine at www.catherinegraham.com. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram @catgrahampoet

Hi Catherine, thanks for chatting with us. Can you tell us about your work and what inspires you?

It was through loss that I found poetry or perhaps poetry found me. I was studying psychology as an undergraduate at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario when I lost my parents. My mother died Christmas day of my first year, my father in September of my last. As a shy introvert I kept things inside. To help me cope with the overwhelming grief a therapist suggested I keep a journal. Writing things down allowed me to frame and understand the wild range of emotions that accompany bereavement. Though it wasn't a cure, it helped me move forward.

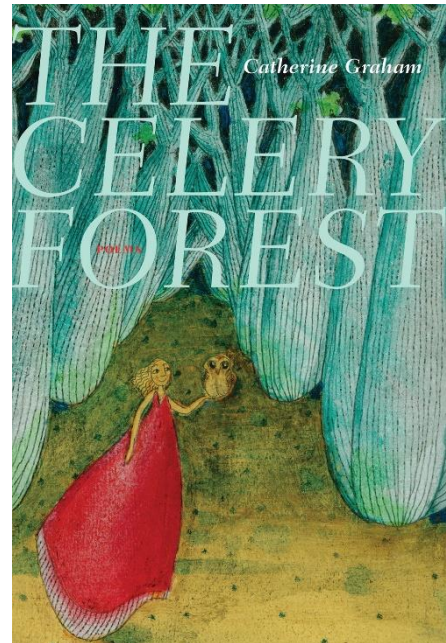
One day I started playing with the words: images, phrases, memories of my parents and the water-filled quarry I grew up beside. I was so absorbed with the activity I entered time and time went away. This was different from letting things out on the page. I was energized and excited by the experience. I worked up the courage to share some of these word creations with a family friend and she told me I was writing poetry. Until that moment I had no idea. This awareness changed my life. Since then poetry has been my creative centre.

The word quarry derives from the Latin *cor* "heart." It's the central image of all my writing and the title of my debut novel. A quarry is a man-made landscape that's blasted into being to become something else, much like how grief blasts a hole into us, an absence we're forced to cope with. An altered landscape, we are never the same.

When my fifth poetry collection *Her Red Hair Rises with the Wings of Insects* was going to print, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Coincidentally, I was the exact age my mother was when she died of the disease. This was both unsettling and strangely comforting.

Shortly after the diagnosis, I saw a piece of artwork titled, "With an owl in a celery forest" by Cora Brittan. The image of a girl in a red dress holding an owl at the entryway of a giant celery forest captivated me. My partner John Coates kindly bought me the mixed media piece. It now hangs in our bedroom.

The image of an oversized celery forest in contrast to the smallness of the girl spoke deeply to my health situation. It became a visual way for me to understand something that I couldn't quite verbalize. One day I started playing with the image through words. Out of this exploration came the poem, "Cancer in the Celery Forest." More poems came afterwards which led to the creation of my most recent poetry collection, *The Celery Forest*.



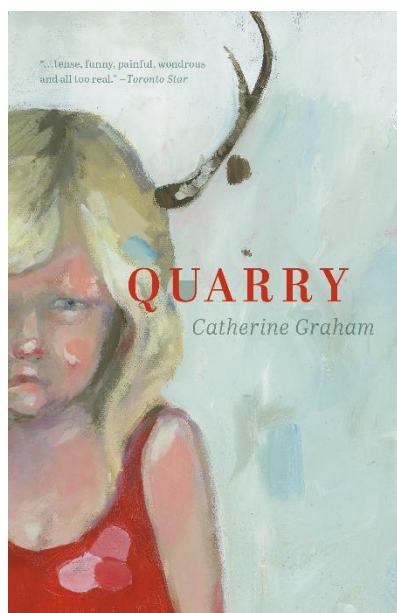
Catherine, you were recently in Northern Ireland. Tell us a bit about your visit and what else you have been up to.

I did much of my poetic learning in the '90's in Northern Ireland and I'm a great admirer of the poets in the north and south: Michael Longley, Seamus Heaney, Joan and Kate Newmann, Paula Meehan plus many more. When a relationship ended, despite my deep love of the place, it was time to return to Canada, my original home.

In August of 2017 I toured the UK with a group of Canadian poets. In addition to readings at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester and University of East London CapLet Series, we read in Northern Ireland at the Seamus Heaney HomePlace, Linen Hall Library, and Bangor's Open House Festival. Being back in Northern Ireland after seventeen years was a healing time for me. It allowed me to reconnect with writer friends like Michael Longley, Joan and Kate Newmann, Mel McMahon and to make new ones as well. This May, Kathleen McCracken invited me to read at Ulster University with poets Moyra Donaldson and Tory Campbell and then thanks to an invitation from Keith Acheson, I read at the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast with poets Kathleen McCracken and Julie Morrissy. I was thrilled to read my work at a venue where I once heard Allen Ginsberg read, a full circle moment.

What other events or readings are on the cards for you in 2018?

I published two books last year: my debut novel *Quarry* and a sixth poetry collection *The Celery Forest* so this past year has been busy with readings and festivals both in and outside of Canada. I was honoured to receive news that *Quarry*, in addition to winning an Independent Book Publisher gold medal award for fiction was shortlisted for the Canadian Authors Association Fred Kerner Book Award so I will be reading at that event in June. I'll also be heading to Montreal in July to read at the Resonance Reading Series and then back to Toronto to read with Kathleen McCracken at Knife/Fork/Book. At the end of July I'll read at the Love Poetry Festival in Toronto.



In addition to ongoing mentoring, I'm just finishing up a teaching gig at Humber College's Creative Book Publishing Program and I will be back teaching poetry at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies this fall. I'm currently leading a monthly Book Club for the International Festival of Authors and the *Hamilton Review of Books* will soon be publishing my interviews with the Griffin Poetry Prize International winner Susan Howe and Canadian prize winner Billy-Ray Belcourt. Between writerly commitments I'm working on a second novel, a creative non-fiction book, and poems, always poems.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Celery-Forest-Catherine-Graham/dp/1928088414>

<https://www.amazon.ca/Quarry-Catherine-Graham/dp/0995185816>

The Woman in the Grand Canal, Dublin

That night the conch shells appeared.
Unwrapped from their paper cocoons,
they opened the sea and with a trick
of the inner ear, this came to me—

She fell into water that wasn't there.
Beating back her arms like wings
our wings like arms lifted her out—
a halo she climbed out of and away from.

Masks

Nature wore only one mask—
Since called Chaos.

Ted Hughes, *Tales from Ovid*

I entered Chaos through the plastic mask
of anesthesia. Styx to bones that don't break,
just the lessening landscape beside a nipple
that never milked yet puckers pink. I need

a deeper slit on the left to secure clean margins
plus a sentinel undercut—Hospital déjà vu,
a dawn reentering as Sun dreams. No nail polish
on hands. Baby-naked beneath a stiff blue gown

falling open at the front without a pre-op grip.
How summer dissolves spring and autumn into masks
that seasons make from spin and tilt. I am made

more uneven above the heart. *Wake up!*
Maternal presence never felt since her Christmas
death. The age she died hiding inside me.

from The Celery Forest (Wolsak and Wynn, Buckrider Books)

by Catherine Graham



Bangor Town Hall

Drone photograph of Bangor Town Hall in Castle Park.



Bangor Marina

Drone photograph of the beautiful Bangor Marina.

Jordan took these photographs of Bangor, Co Down in Northern Ireland with his drone. They capture two very recognisable landmarks within the town from a bird's eye view, allowing the viewer to experience both the Town Hall and the Marina from a perspective that they never have before.