

The Bangor Literary Journal

Issue 14



Featured Poet: Lynda Tavakoli. Featured Artist: Sam Finnegan.
International Feature: Writer, Catherine Graham. Plus, exceptional
poetry, flash fiction, art and photography from our contributors.

Cover image: Part of Sam Finnegan's 'Selfie Series'.

Editors' Welcome

Hello, and a very warm welcome to issue 14 of The Bangor Literary Journal.

We are delighted to showcase a wide range of wonderful poetry, flash fiction, art and photography for you to enjoy.

Our featured poet for this issue is the fabulous Lynda Tavakoli who has just published her exceptional poetry collection *The Boiling Point for Jam* with Arlen House. Lynda chats with us about her processes, influences and how she feels now that her collection is in the world.

In addition, it is with great pleasure that we feature international writer Catherine Graham with the launch of her new publication. We have published a selection of excerpts from Catherine's new book *Æther: An Out-of-Body Lyric* for you to enjoy.

Finally, our featured artist is the wonderful Northern Irish creative Sam Finnegan, who discusses his inspirations and processes. You will also get to see a selection of Sam's amazing new series of portraits and drawings.

The FORTY Words Competition is now open for submissions and we cannot wait to read your mini-poems and mini-fiction pieces. Details of the competition are available at the back of this issue, and you can enter the competition via our website.

Thank you all for your continued love and support. We hope to see you all soon.

Paul and Amy

Paul Daniel Rafferty

Co-Editor



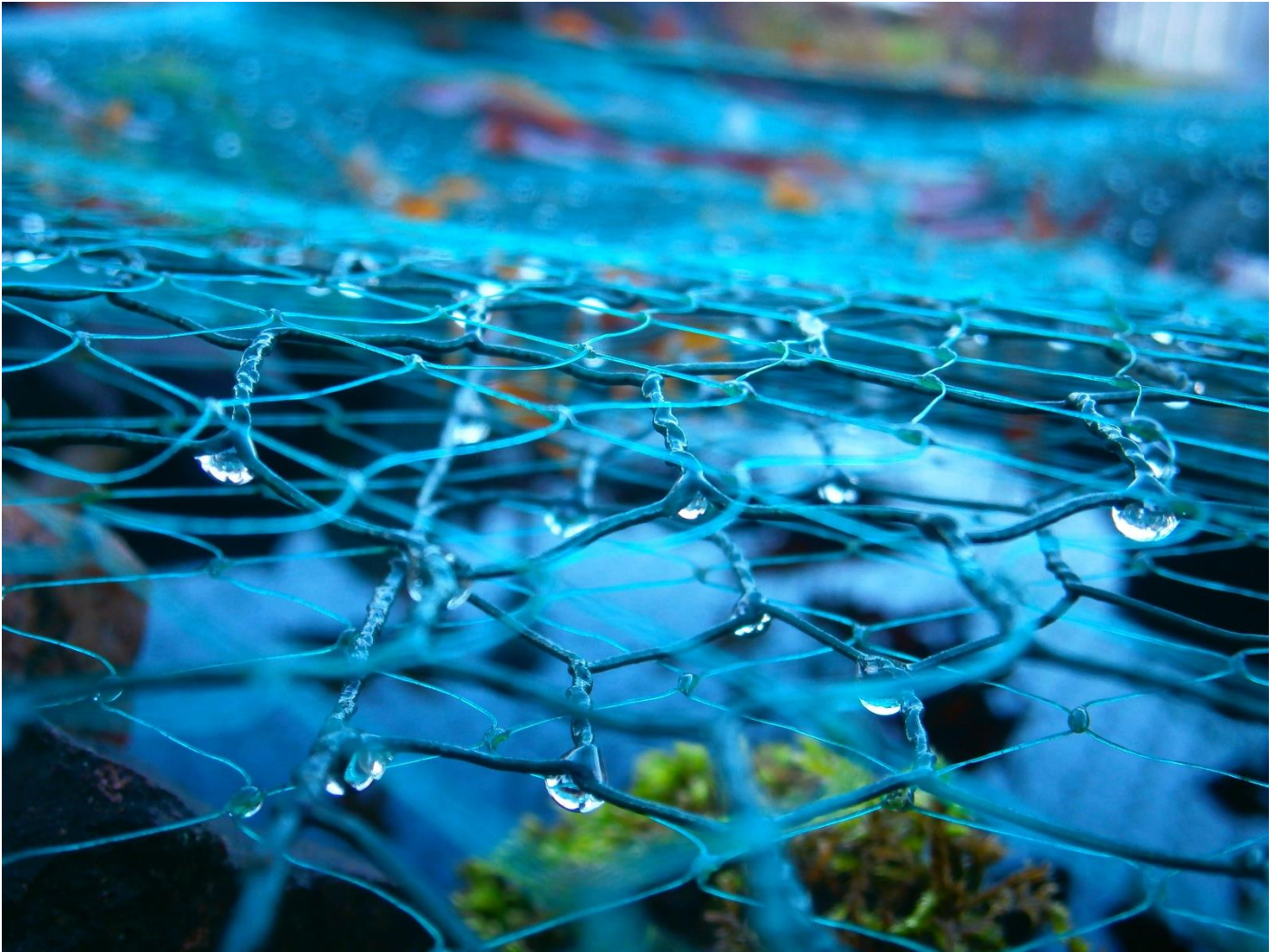
Amy Louise Wyatt

Co-Editor and Author of *A Language I Understand*



Contents

Page 4	Photography	Sven Kretzschmar
Pages 5-6	Poetry	Patricia Anne Moore
Pages 7-10	Poetry	Charlie Pettigrew
Pages 11-14	Featured Artist	Sam Finnegan
Pages 15-16	Flash Fiction	Kristina T. Saccone
Pages 17-18	Poetry	Lisa Reily
Pages 19-20	Poetry	Kevin Conroy
Pages 21-22	Poetry	Iain Campbell
Page 23	Art	Gaynor Kane
Pages 24-27	International Feature	Catherine Graham
Page 28	Art	Sarah L Dolan
Pages 29-30	Flash Fiction	Ellie Rose McKee
Pages 31-33	Poetry	Iona Starrs
Page 34	Art	Susannah Jordan
Pages 35-36	Poetry	David Butler
Pages 37-38	Poetry	Billy Fenton
Pages 39-40	Flash Fiction	Bríd McGinley
Page 41	Photography	Morna Sullivan
Pages 42-43	Poetry	Robin Holmes
Pages 44-45	Poetry	Mary E. Ringland
Pages 46-47	Poetry	Peter Adair
Pages 48-49	Flash Fiction	Paul Gray
Page 50	Photography	John Winder
Pages 51-52	Poetry	Damien B. Donnelly
Pages 53-54	Poetry	Carolann North
Pages 55-56	Flash Fiction	Izabela Ilowska
Pages 57-58	Poetry	Matt Hohner
Pages 59-66	Featured Poet	Lynda Tavakoli
Page 67	A Language I Understand	Amy Louise Wyatt
Page 68	Competition Call	FORTY WORDS



Caught

A close shot taken at the edge of my parents' garden pond. Each autumn, they cover the pond with nets and other grid pattern materials to keep leaves from falling into it. I love the bluish hue of the scenery and how the drops cling to the points where wires connect.

Biography

Sven Kretzschmar hails from Germany. His poetry has been published widely in Europe and overseas, among other outlets with *Poetry Jukebox* in Belfast, in *Writing Home. The 'New Irish' Poets* (Dedalus Press, 2019), *Hold Open the Door* (UCD Press, 2020), *Voices 2020* (Cold River Press, 2020), *The Irish Times*, *Ropes*, *Live Encounters*, *Drawn to the Light*, *Das Gedicht*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Wordpeace* and *Selcouth Station*. He was awarded 1st prize in the 'Creating a Buzz in Strokestown' competition in 2018 and he was shortlisted for *Allingham Poetry Award 2019*, *Over the Edge New Writer of the Year 2019* and *Saolta Arts Annual Poetry Competition 2020*, special mention in the *Desmond O'Grady International Poetry Competition 2020*. Further work is forthcoming in *100 Words of Solitude* (Rare Swan Press, 2020) and *2 Meter Review*. See more at: <https://trackking.wordpress.com/> and Instagram: @sven_saar_poetry

Born in Belfast, Patricia Anne moved to live in Killaloe, Co Clare in 1992 .She began writing poetry at that time as a member of Killaloe Writers' Group. She has had poems published in various journals in Ireland, Denmark and Canada, including 'Stony Thursday'. She particularly enjoys reading her work, and has recently(November 2020) been a guest reader on the poetry platform, "Not the time to be silent" curated by Siobhan Potter and D'or Seifer.



Extra careful eating pears

A tooth wrapped up in a tissue, under my pillow,
The fairies brought a sixpence during the night,
Half a crown to hansom a new coat
A fortune in my pocket.

Statues loomed in the upstairs hall on the way to the bathroom
But a nightlight burning diamond blue was a comfort.
A dog grate in the drawing room downstairs
Burned embers where stories and magic happened.

Auntie Lily had necklaces of orange coral with beads like teeth.
She trimmed her toenails and smoothed her corns,
After giving her feet a soak in a mustard bath
Under the eye of Blessed Martin de Porres, who kept mice out of the kitchen.

In the big room opposite the kitchen across the hall,
Uncle John mixed soil and compost in a wooden sieve .
We climbed up to the garden across the tiled back yard
Where a pear tree stretched across a sunny wall, waiting to make fruit.

Later, my Dad explained that a baby came, from a place inside my Mummy that was called a womb.
The womb he said was the shape of a pear when you cut it in half,
And the seeds inside were where the baby grew. He didn't say how the seeds got there.
So, for years, I was extra careful, eating pears.

By Patricia Anne Moore

Poetry

Charlie Pettigrew

Charlie Pettigrew is originally from Armagh but now lives in Barcelona. He began writing poems in late 2019 and has had many accepted in literary magazines, such as Abridged, Honest Ulsterman, A New Ulster and PoetryBus Mag.



An cailín damsha

For Ann

You were like quicksilver,
in the swift and light steps you made,
skipping
and turning faultlessly,
within the chalked hopscotch squares.

Later when you danced,
you moved to the dance's ancestral voice.
Back, ramrod straight,
arms rigid at your sides,
breaking with instinctive grace and power
into the centre of the stage-
your costume, a blur of purple and yellow.

For one so small and slight,
your percussive, mesmeric rhythms
tapped out a visceral music
on the wooden boards-
the metal cleats of your shoes,
like ancient drumbeats
of bone on bronze.

And your very lightness of frame
gave you purchase
above the other dancers-
the high kicks,
the swirling cape,
held you suspended
for a moment longer,
in time and space-
a still photograph of a hummingbird
in flight.

By Charlie Pettigrew

Cuneiform

For BMcW

1.

I watched you in our Primary class,
immerse yourself in the messiness
of watercolour on paper,
as the flimsy sheet rebelled
and folded in on itself,
under the water's weight.

Your brush moved confidently
between the sockets of the painting set
and the jamjar, once pure and translucent,
now murky with the turbulence
of warring colours.

Each wave of paint crested,
then fell back, like an ebbing tide,
leaving watermarks
of your imaginative life,
to dry in the pale sunlight.

2.

Your paintings, now, are cuneiform,
training the eye to read
the lost language of waves.
Markings scratched, and left
on compliant canvas
by the stylus of learning and experience-
brazen colours of an exuberant mind,

restless, like the breaking light
storming your studio.

By Charlie Pettigrew

Featured Artist

Sam Finnegan

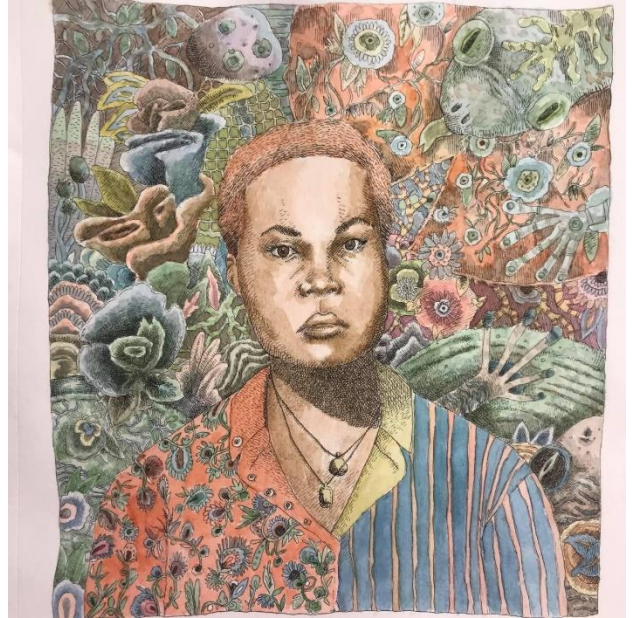


Biography

Sam Finnegan is an illustrator, specialising in high detail ink work. His work has been published and featured internationally and he is the proud owner of an extensive collection of dry, empty pens.

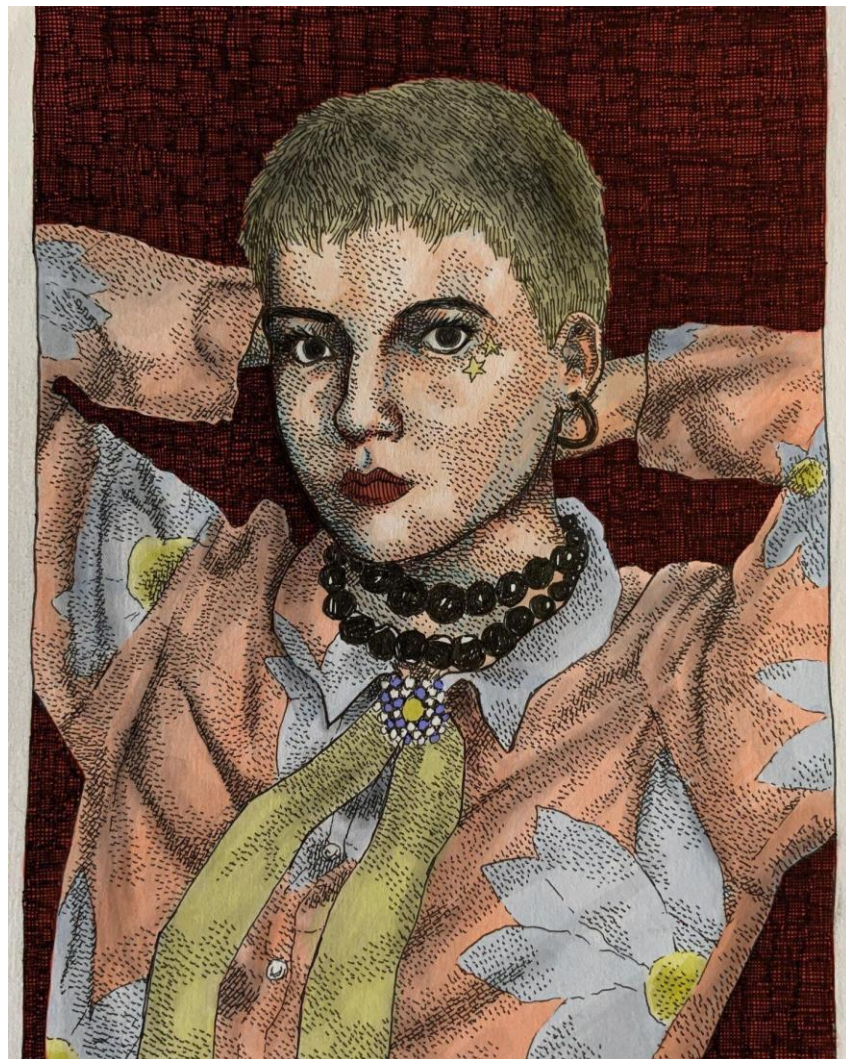
Many thanks for joining us to chat about your work Sam. We are delighted. Firstly, can you tell us a little bit about how you got into drawing?

I've always sketched, mostly when I should have been paying attention in class. I only really started to take it seriously when I got to university and once again found myself sketching instead of doing assigned reading. A friend of mine at the time showed me "American Splendour", a movie about the autobiographical comic writer Harvey Pekar. He couldn't draw to save his life but he had this rotating roster of cartoonists that would illustrate his stories, all little slice of life shorts and observations. It was Robert Crumbs art in the comics that completely enthralled me at first; his weird demented cartoon style. And then I started looking up his more recent work; his sketchbook collections and his gorgeous high detail ink renderings. His crosshatching style really drew me in and I spent hours and hours trying to replicate it. Those hours became weeks and months and years and now I'm here, still feverishly drawing as much I can.



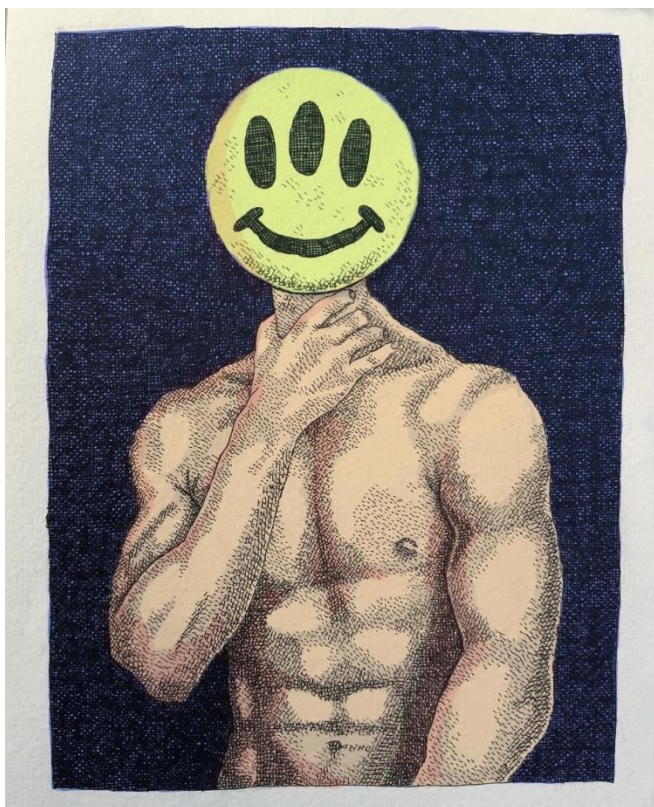
Who or what would you say are your main inspirations?

After Robert Crumb, I started to get more and more into those alternative, underground comic creators of the 60s, before falling in love again with the alternative movement of the 80s and 90s where I came across artists like Julie Doucet, Dan Clowes, Nick Abadzis. I also love the work of Albrecht Durer, William Hogarth, Egon Schiele. I'm completely in love with Francisco Goya. I volunteered in a second hand book store for a while and had access to a lot of artist collections and biographies. I have a storage unit filled with all my texts.



You obviously love portraiture. Who has been your favourite person to draw?

This is where my awful memory comes in. I tour with a dance show as a performer and when we were working in Paris, our hotel was across the road from this little tea room and comic store. I would go most days to visit before rehearsal and the owner would tell me all these stories of cartoonists he'd come across. Turns out he was Robert Crumb's French publisher for a little while during the 90s and showed me all these rare sketches he had. He also had a sketchbook specifically for visiting artists to fill a page in where he had work by Crumb and Julie Doucet, so he offered to let me draw a sketch in it myself. I nearly threw up with excitement. I drew a portrait of the owner and I hate the fact I can't remember his name.



Sam, can you tell the readers about the materials and processes that you use in your artwork?

Oh I wish it was very sophisticated and complex sounding but it is literally just staedtler 0.05 pens and uni pin 0.05 fineliners and has been for about 9 years now. I use whatever paper feels right with the pen, usually watercolour paper or something heavy. As far as process goes, it's pretty much I keep sketching until I get the idea of something I want to develop further. I draw for several hours a day. I draw when I'm with friends. I get anxious when I don't have a sketchbook and pens on me.

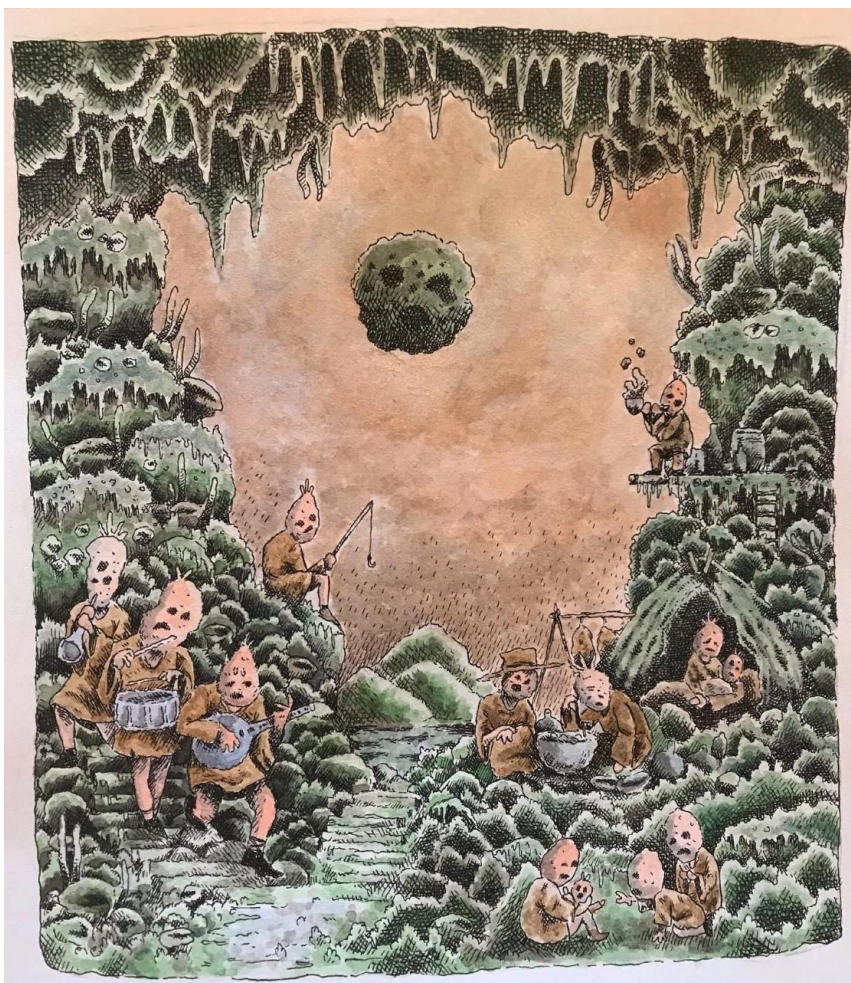
What have been your biggest highlights so far as an artist?

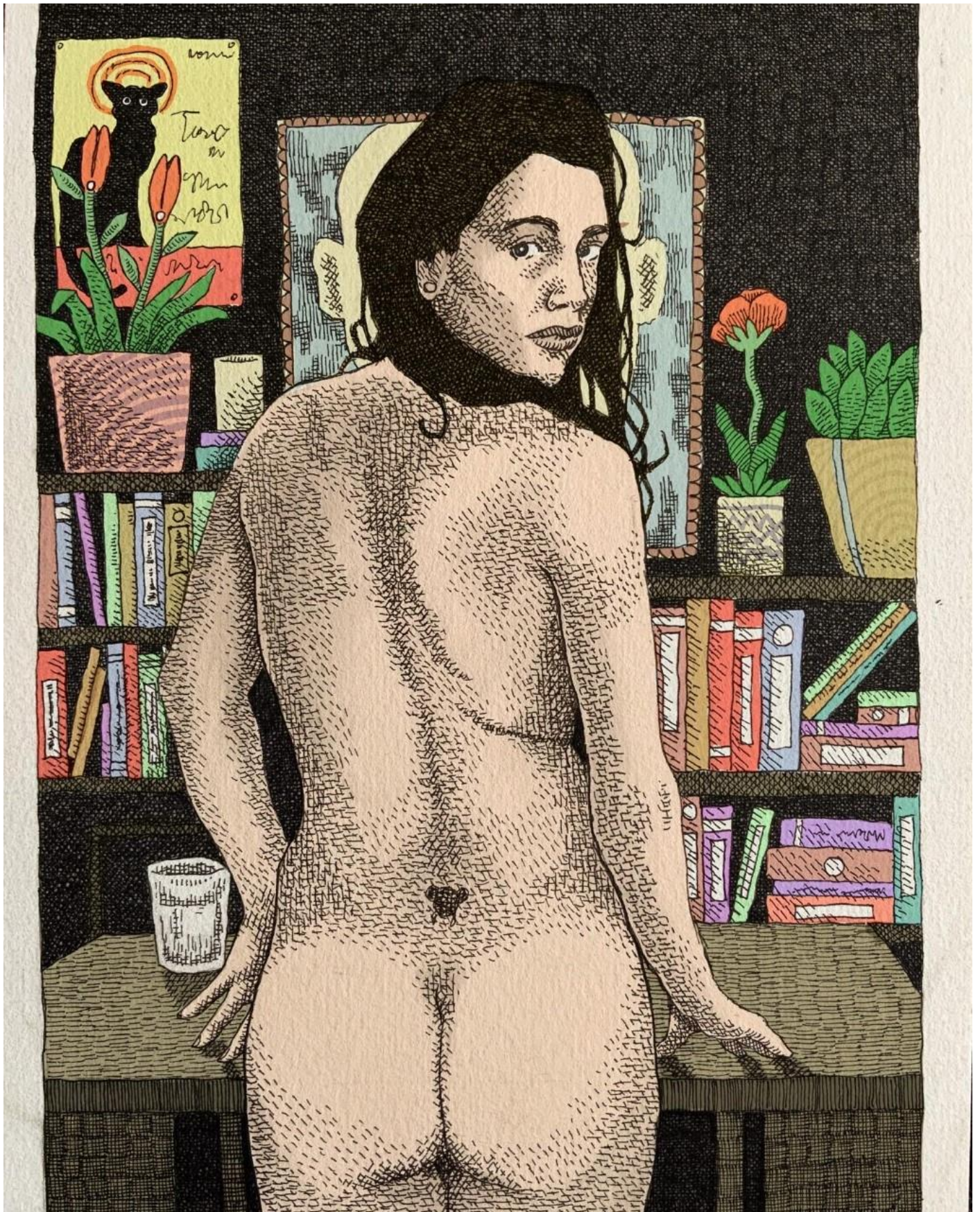
I had a couple comics of mine published in an American comic anthology a couple of years ago. I drew a selection of work to accompany a book published by Choreographer Oona Doherty which was a huge project for me. Again, with how bad my memory is, there's a lot of highlights I'm forgetting. I had a piece displayed in the toilet of a cafe once and I think that's maybe my favourite place work has been displayed. Just above the cistern.

Finally, what are your plans for the next year? Have you any exhibitions or projects on the horizon?

Just surviving lockdown with my head on straight like everyone else. I've almost finished my first sketchbook collection which I'll be publishing shortly. After that, another collection and I'll keep trying to improve. Until I'm happy with the quality of work I create. Which will hopefully be never.

Follow Sam on Instagram: @samcfinn





Kristina T. Saccone crafts flash fiction, creative nonfiction, and visual art. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Dwelling Literary*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Flash Frog*, *The Minison Project*, *Nightingale and Sparrow*, and *Unearthed*. You can find her on Twitter at @kristinasaccone or haunting small independent bookstores in the Washington, DC, area.



On Fridays

Tilly leaves Daniel at chemo and drives to the shore. Windows down, salty air washes the stale cigarette smell of their decades-old sedan. She steps up onto a bench, searching a few extra inches of horizon for that spot where the sea meets the sky, the precise blue-green she always loved in his fathomless eyes. She can't leave until she finds it. Then even when she's late to pick him up from the hospital, even when his cheeks are the color of foam cresting on the waves, even when his eyes are at low tide and his lips look too dry to kiss, she has what she needs to make it through another week.

By Kristina T. Saccone

Lisa Reily is a former literacy consultant, dance director and teacher from Australia. Her poetry has been published in several journals, such as Amaryllis, London Grip, The High Window, Panoplyzine, Channel, HCE Magazine, The Sunlight Press, and The Fenland Reed. You can find Lisa at lisareily.wordpress.com



not the same woman

space-time,
connectedness; every single thing
interrupts every other;
I cannot separate myself from my body,
except in dreams.

I burst open a capsule with scissors;
powder sprays across my pyjamas.
at least I'm cutting down. I haven't seen the doctor
so I'm getting better.

I take an antihistamine, hide the hair
on my pillow, pull tufts from my head
to save it from falling, everywhere;
I find clumps of gold and grey about the house,
sweep them into tidy piles.

my blood thickens; it's slowing me down.
I have tests in a week. I cut and count pills.
my head is on fire, my skin is burning.

we make plans, but I get anxious;
anxious to go out, then anxious I cannot.
just imagining it drains me;
the woman who once did everything,
is gone.

I've let you down, again, and I cry
because you do not understand me.
deranged, foggy, teary, exhausted, confused,
actually, no, I'm fine. counting, cutting,
swallowing; every pill, every meal, and moment
adds up to this: nothing.

in my mind, I am going somewhere;
I run for the bus, take the stairs, walk our dog,
look forward to company, eat out at restaurants;
there's no one I like much these days anyway.

I throw money at doctors,
because money means hope to me now;
I surrender my titles: dutiful daughter,
committed friend, partner; too weary
to argue my case. but in my dreams,
I absolve myself, and I am forgiven,
for having nothing left to give.

By Lisa Reily

Kevin Conroy has been published in The Irish Times, The Stony Thursday Book, One by jacar press, The Galway Review, the moth, Tales From The Forest, Skylight 47, THE SHOp, Southword, Burning Bush II, Boyne Berries, The Blue Max Review, The Curlew, Sixteen Literary Magazine, erbacce, The Runt magazine, and appeared in the Ireland Chair of Poetry Anthology 2020, Poets meet Politics & Hibernian Writers anthologies. His debut collection is to be published by Salmon Poetry.



Big Brother

Every boy should have one, to step
toot sweet into his footprints, to fool
the savage fiends tracking in the jungle
although one following foot can stir
the wasps' nest and boy! is he running
for help, for Reckitt's blue bag; revelling
through the pain of being dubbed Lionheart
withstanding the poisoned arrows.

And every boy returning home
in tears, all his marbles lost,
should get six matching snow-white jewels
from his brother's hand; treasures to keep
until, playing Keepsies, all are dead ducks
and a comeback from the shame is made
scouring pots beside his tent –
the magnet for a weekend's drenching.

Every boy should brave the Clodagh,
daring leaps into the torrent,
springing stealth shark attacks
as cunning manoeuvres for the gallant
to rescue distressed village damsels -
whether called for or not.
The prize of approval, his eye of praise,
and a place on the woodeners with Katie.

Every boy should have a brother
to stand by in a graveyard, holding
his own boy, as they brave the memory
of a father's open hands, playful eyes,
and footsteps to follow; an ear to the words
passing down the line -
when all is said and done,
the game is never up.

By Kevin Conroy

Iain Campbell has read at the *Open House* and *Aspects Literary Festivals*; had work published in *The Blue Nib*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Lagan Online*, and the *Bangor Literary Journal*. He is a 2020 SIAP award recipient from the Arts Council NI.



Going home

It was an Indian summer;
they were still garnering the harvest
after midnight, the old moon resting
in the new moon's arms,

tractors criss-crossing country lanes,
neighbours' spotlights splitting
stubbled tracks, shadows dancing
between the reaper and the corn.

The doctors told me he'd be gone
by Thursday. They didn't know him
for he wanted to watch one more game;
what to do, in between, but wait?

Injury time, he called it.
After the kick and the chase,
paused there on the five metre line,
between quick breath and the dust.

"I think we have the beating of them",
he whispered hoarsely,
"you'll be there?" I nodded,
he smiled back.

Later we sang our anthems
along the terraces, and later still,
with harvest home,
he called time.

By Iain Campbell

**Elephant**

Elephant is a piece of lockdown art, painted in watercolours. Gaynor has been painting bright and cheerful pictures as an escape.

Biography

Gaynor Kane lives in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where she is a part-time creative, involved in the local arts scene. She writes poetry and is an amateur artist and photographer. In all her creative activities she is looking to capture moments that might otherwise be missed. Discover more at gaynorkane.com Twitter @gaynorkane / Facebook @gaynorkanepoet / Instagram @gaynorkanepoet

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. Michael Longley praised it as “a work of great fortitude and invention, full of jewel-like moments and dark gnomic 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 a finalist for the Sarton Women’s Book Award for Contemporary Fiction and Fred Kerner Book Award and won the Miramichi Reader’s “The Very Best!” Book Award and an IPPY gold medal for Fiction. Her poems have been translated into Greek, Serbo-Croatian, Bangla, Chinese and Spanish and have appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Glasgow Review of Books*, *Exile Quarterly*, *Poetry Daily*, *Poetry Ireland*, *Gutter Magazine* and anthologized in *The White Page / An Bhileag Bhan: Twentieth Century Irish Women Poets* and *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol IV & V. A finalist for the Montreal International Poetry Prize, her poems have been nominated for the 2020 National Magazine Award by *Exile Magazine* and she recently won the Arc Award of Awesomeness. She teaches creative writing at the University of Toronto where she won an Excellence in Teaching Award. A previous winner of the Toronto International Festival of Authors’ Poetry NOW, she leads their monthly book club and is also an interviewer for By the Lake Book Club. Her second novel, *The Most Cunning Heart*, is forthcoming. Visit her online at www.catherinegraham.com and @catgrahampoet.

Photograph by Marion Voysey.



ÆTHER

an out-of-body lyric

CATHERINE GRAHAM

In *Æther: An Out-of-Body Lyric* Catherine Graham has created a luminous homage to family, to cancer and to the strange windings of truth. Swimming through time and space, Graham introduces her mother, her father and herself and the cancers that pull them apart and bring them together. Memories mesh with visitations and multiple stories unfold of pain and loss, hidden tragedy, forgiveness and growth. With an otherworldly delicacy Graham stitches it all together to create a book-length lyric essay of lingering and profound beauty, a paean to the complexity of love and survival.

Extracts from *Æther: An Out-of-Body Lyric*

Only after I sell the quarry do I understand its pull.

A back-to-Eden forest surrounding a water-fed limestone pit.

A wheelchair-accessible house, and a view

no matter which window you look out from,

a summer green landscape to help

with healing, and sunsets to practice goodbye,

winter-beauty too, the quarry grows a lid, fish

torpedo-sink, trees reveal antlers

and we skate above the dreaming blue.

Standing in the shower you lift each arm, one at a time –
you know how to do this, you've had years of practice –
you tamp each breast

as your mother once tamped the earth

after planting pink petunias, tender

and firm around each freshly rooted stem –

tamp, tamp, tamp.

You feel it. God, you feel it.

It's the size of a pea.

The weight

of one hundred mattresses –

stacked on top of you.

Mom, you taught me to be quiet. To hold silence like a gift. To listen before speaking my thoughts. Yet you kept so much inside. All I have is the language of your hands. The ringlet curls in my hair, the pink tutu, the spring forest green curtains and calico gingham quilts. That sweater you purchased during your last trip across the border to Buffalo before the ambulance took you away to die. Pneumonia. New-moan-ya. Was it worth it? The sweater I can

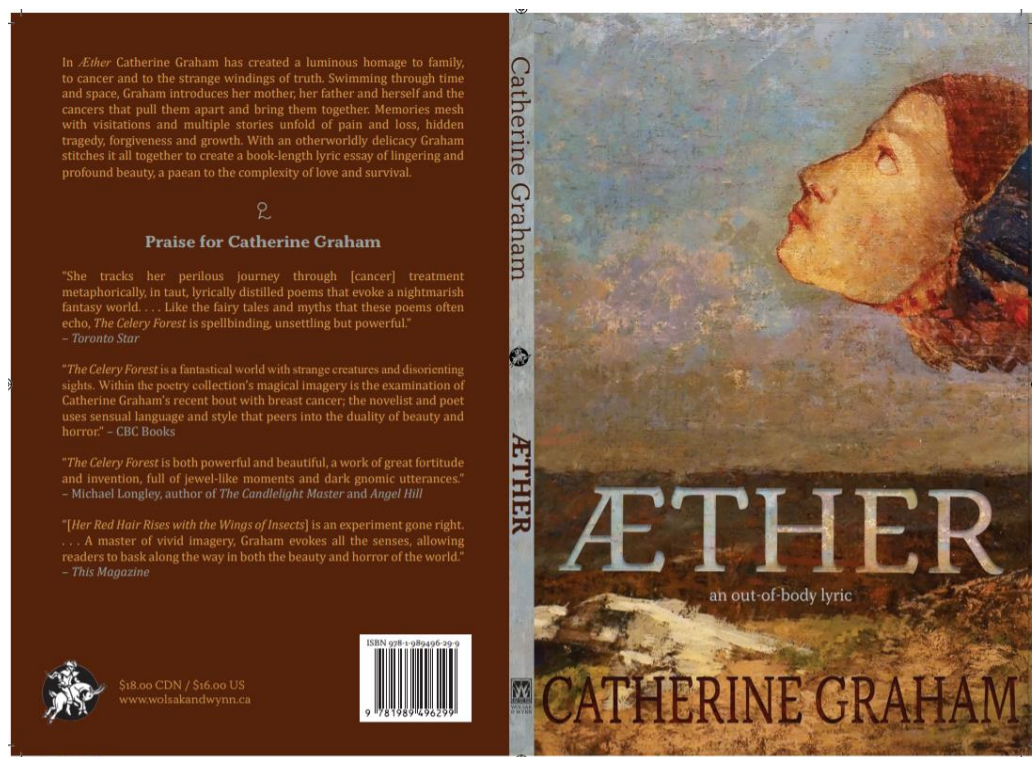
never wear (unwrapped the day after your death) because it's covered with grief. The holly-rimmed gift card with your shaky handwriting – *for cathy, love mom* – I can't throw out. The only writing I have from you.

You like the way your hip bones are protruding, the knucklebone feel of jutting out. You require bras with a smaller cup size, tighter notches on belts. You are pushing your body back to childhood, to that flat-altered state, to a time with dolls and tutus and the *grrrr* of mother's Singer sewing machine. You are glad your period has stopped. You are good at managing your hunger. Proof you are strong like your cancer-fighting mother now lying on a rented hospital bed on the other side of your bedroom wall.

But you are cold. Always. Just like your mother.

You had close friends when your parents were alive (though your mother was dying). Now, no friends. Grief, you learn, is a toxic substance; repellent and water-heavy, you can't wade through it. Waves smack back. Massive energy is required just to stand there. Lying down is what the dead do. It's what you want to do. Lie down, away from the waves whacking memories at your face, dripping with the absence of future memories. Who will walk you down the aisle? Who will help you care for your first child? Who will squeeze your knee and say, *Attagirl!*

By Catherine Graham



You can purchase a copy here: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Aether-Out-Body-Catherine-Graham/dp/1989496296>

Visit Catherine online at www.catherinegraham.com and @catgrahampoet.



Tray Circus

This image was created using poster paint and pen.

Biography

Sarah L Dolan is English, lives in Scotland and is a long distance member of Cross Border Poets which began life in North Wales. Thanks to lockdown, Sarah has been forced to face her fears of technology and has come to realise most people are rubbish at it anyway. She hopes you have had the opportunity to embrace a new challenge. For a sneaky peak of some of her work visit lemoninkproductions.home.blog

Ellie Rose McKee is a writer from Belfast. She has had poems published by Arlen House, Nine Muses Poetry, and Poetry NI; has had short stories included in Women Aloud NI's 'North Star' anthology, The Bramley, and The Scarlet Leaf Review; and has been blogging for over ten years. www.ellierosemckee.com Ellie Rose McKee's novel 'Full Term' can be purchased here: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Full-Term-Fighting-Matters-Trilogy-ebook/dp/B08X3R7335>



The Last Love Song

When Liam first penned the song—*The* quintessential Song; so-called “anthem to a generation”—he’d been a nobody, and couldn’t possibly have imagined where it would take him.

Thing was, he wasn’t so sure he wanted to be taken anywhere. It wasn’t that he was ungrateful, it just didn’t feel... *right*.

The words he wrote, all that time ago, had been sitting on his heart for weeks. It was an elegy. An anthem for grief, if nothing else, and putting it on the page—letting it escape his mouth, and fingers on keys—he’d borne his soul. And it hurt, but it was necessary. Keeping it inside had been killing him.

But now... Now, it was the song he was expected to both begin and end sets with. The one he not only couldn’t escape, but felt forced to repeat and repeat and repeat and—*God!* Wasn’t one post-mortem enough?

He couldn’t take it anymore. Sure, his agent would probably skin him alive, but Liam was resolute in his own mind. He was going to go out there, sing *The Song* like his life depended on it and then stop, and let the dead rest.

By Ellie Rose McKee

Iona Starrs is a 20 year old, second year student at University College Dublin, studying English Literature and Film. She is originally from North Antrim and is working towards a career in writing and film directing.



If You See Her, Say Hello:

(ORIGINAL)

In the archway on a cold rainy night,
Early-October on the cobbled streets by my tiny home.
But your eyes stood out, electric blue against the sandy blond,
Me, shining silver and heavy rock, treading my mark in the ground,
In the fading sunlight we talked,
Tattooed lyrics and flowers and a common ground,
Trojan lungs and a good style,
Against the calloused fingers and broken brown boots.
A cold cast over as we walked towards the end,
You offered me a coat, but I forever humble said no,
Did you think about me after?
When they locked us in, you should have seen me again.
When left alone it all consumes. Playing on your mind.
Digital noises and musical notes, even in the days after.
Guitar chords and a raspy voice.
Inky fingers and dungarees.
It did all matter to me,
But did it to you?

(ERASURE)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

But [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] end,

[REDACTED]

Did [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] it [REDACTED].

[REDACTED], even [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] matter [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ?

By Iona Starrs



Almost Done

Februllage is a challenge to make a collage each day through the month of February. This piece was a collage created in response to the "Leaves" prompt.

Biography

Susannah Jordan earned an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from Queens University of Charlotte. Her writing has appeared in *detritus*, *The Drabble*, *Santa Fe Writers Project*, *101 Fiction*, *50-Word Stories*, and elsewhere. Her artwork and photography have appeared in *FERAL: A Journal of Poetry & Art*, *3Elements Literary Review*, *Cotton Xenomorph*, *Riggwelter Press*, and *The Tishman Review*.

David Butler's second poetry collection, *All the Barbaric Glass*, was published by Doire Press in 2017. Doire is to bring out his third collection, *Liffey Sequence*, later this year. Awards for poetry include the Ted McNulty, Feile Filiochta, Poetry Ireland / Trocaire, Maria Edgeworth and Baileborough prizes.



Tentative

Wraithlike, a wafer moon
fades into day's cerulean.
Fledgling Spring has spattered
the whin with egg-yolk.
Earth is unfurling, tasting
with crocus and tête-à-tête
the prophetic air.
Like sacramental water,
sunlight lightly sprinkles
the crown of the infant year
while convalescent March
bewildered
shuffles about in slippers.

By David Butler

Poetry

Billy Fenton

Billy Fenton lives outside Waterford City and he writes poetry and short stories. His work has been published in the *Irish Times*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Crannóg*, *Honest Ulsterman*, *Abridged*, *Bangor Literary Journal*, and others. He was shortlisted for a Hennessy Award in 2018, and was a runner-up in the Waterford Poetry Prize 2020. He was chosen as a mentee for the Words Ireland National Mentoring Programme in 2019.



Apples

In Bradley Whelan's garden,
I police the kitchen window,
for a shadow, a passing colour.

Bernard climbs the plumpest tree.
Edges out on to a branch,
legs dangling either side.

When he reaches the saddle,
he moves his body up and down,
one arm high - a cowboy in a rodeo.

Apples fall like the batter
of summer rain. We pile
them into buckets.

Gallop across fields.
Through gates. Like Cain and Abel
returning from Eden.

Apples for sale, we say,
at the door of number 63.
Ye've being robbing

orchards, the woman says.
She bends down to look.
Her breast through a sag

in her dress. She smiles,
pushes it shut. How much
for a dozen, she says.

By Billy Fenton

Bríd McGinley is a writer from Co. Donegal. A latecomer to writing, her fiction has appeared in *The Bangor Literary Journal*, *Flash Flood*, *The Bramley*, *Sonder Magazine* and *The Honest Ulsterman*. She has an MA in Irish Literature in English from the University of Ulster. @BridMcG



Night-time in the Garden

There he is, my human, with his strobing flashlight and long-snouted camera clicking like an angry hen. Tonsured stripe of grey hair; maybe we're brothers.

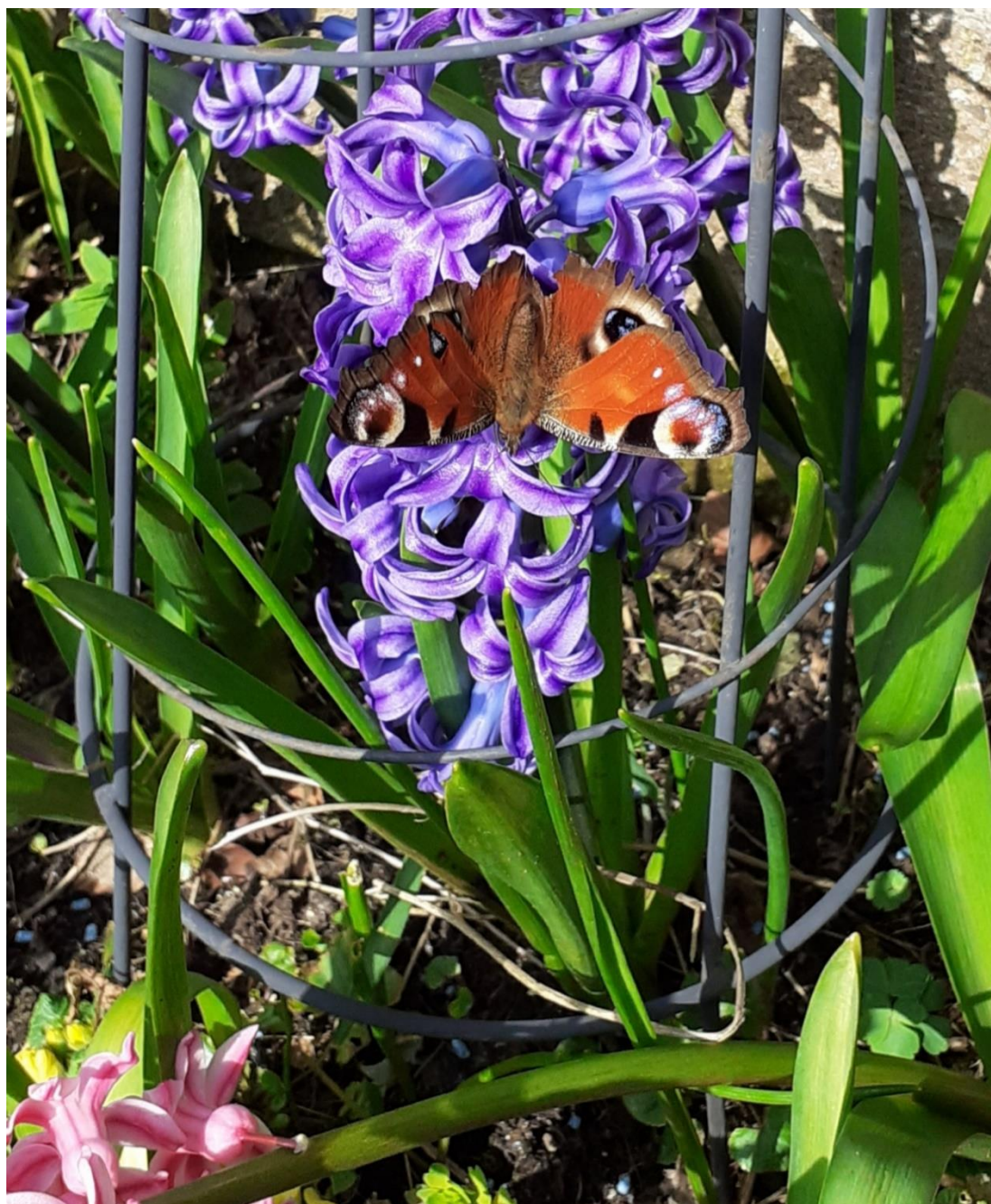
'Quick, it's the badger' he shouts. More humans gather, gawk. My human is aggravating, but his garden is magnificent. Utterly unkempt. Luxuriant moss harbours leather jackets, grubs, worms, easy pickings. Only problem is him, always prowling, blinding me with his light.

'Wow, glorious creature.'

So tiresome. Don't they know nights are short? They're not foraging for their lives, their cubs' lives. Now my human comes close. Too close. My fur bristles against the hedge. His dank, warm breath on the night air smells fusty, like my sett. Hope my cubs are safe—the fox is prowling, must hurry. My human trails a yellow hose. Why? It spits, splutters, and a sudden torrent of pinprick missiles assaults my nose, my eyes; humans laugh, I roll, slip-sliding under the hedge, flip-flopping on the surging stream, grappling for life, for my cub's lives. Never realised water was my enemy.

Is anywhere safe? Thing is, the garden is vast, and my human doesn't use it, doesn't care for it, doesn't eat grubs or worms. No, he's not my brother.

By Bríd McGinley



Stopping By

Stopping By was taken in Morna's garden last spring during the first lockdown, when she found so much solace in beauty at the back door.

Biography

Morna Sullivan has always had a love of stories. She is a member of the Coney Island Writers Group, Co. Down and the SCBWI Belfast group. She's won a few writing competitions, has had short stories and poems published but is still chasing that elusive publishing deal. <https://www.facebook.com/mornawriter/> <http://mornawriter.blogspot.co.uk/> <https://twitter.com/mornawriter>

Robin Holmes is a retired former social worker who now jointly leads the Causeway U3A Creative Writing Group. His work has appeared regularly in the CAP's Poetry in Motion journal and he has been shortlisted in the past three Annual Bangor Poetry Competitions.



Psithurism

For I have bathed in
the tides of forests,
as you may, each morning
in the chilled winter sea.
Not for me an electrocution
of the senses, a saline sledgehammer,
but a still undressing of the mind,
an exchange of clothes, a
putting on of the silken robes
of wildness, an imbibing
of the scent of pine, larch
and spruce, wild garlic;
the fermenting freshness
of all flora, each breath a
a purge into purity.

And whether with birdsong,
in spring's surging symphony,
or the strangulated lament of
a solitary winter straggler,
such accompaniment
delights always; audible
above the trampling underfoot
of twigs, squelch of leaf mould,
my steps in a bossa nova beat
with each breaking breath,
and always, always, the
regiments of upright trunks,
branches, leaves, swaying,
striving, straining towards
a celestial ceiling; recruiting
me to enlist
 with
 their
 soft
 seamless
 psithurism.

By Robin Holmes

Mary E. Ringland writes poetry and prose. She runs the East Antrim Writers Group, and her short stories have been published in a variety of local publications. She is currently in the process of completing her first novel, due for publication later this year. Mary is also a keen amateur photographer and spends most weekends photographing the landscape on the beautiful Antrim Coast.



Doom, Zoom, and Collateral Damage

Dan would like a shout out for his lovely wife Sophie.
She needs all the support she can get.
They call her an ICU angel.
He calls her his sweetheart.

I cross my fingers for the lovely Sophie.

Sheree is having a girls night in.
Virtual, of course.
She should be off clubbing in Ibiza,
instead it's FaceTime, Prosecco, and a screen full of pixilated pals.

I zoom

Dan is having a boys night in.
Virtual, of course.
He's putting on a brave face; drinking beer,
eating pizza, and making do with vintage footie.

I binge on a box set

Ben and Stuart have just finished making a wildlife pond,
planting Hellebores,
and doing household chores.
Now they're sat in their garden pretending to be in Spain.

I dream of better times to come

Gerald and Jean are hunkered down in their conservatory;
painting Garden gnomes
and guzzling homemade gin.
It helps stave off the lockdown blues.

I consider cracking open a bottle

Nina and Travis exercise like maniacs
and give tantric sex a go!
Is all that malarky *really* good for your endorphins?
Apparently so!

I miss your touch, your smell, your gentle caress

Liam and Polly cancel the wedding for the third time.
Little Lucy is missing her nana Dora.
Lovely Margery is 65 today; on her own, without a party, without a hug.
Lorna got hooked up to a ventilator late last night.

I have a panic attack

Dan is one of twenty-five people at Sophie's funeral.
No underlying health conditions, they say.
Our ICU angel, they say.
But Dan's lovely wife and sweetheart gets buried later today.

I weep

By Mary E. Ringland

Peter Adair's poems have appeared in *The Honest Ulsterman*, *PN Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Boyne Berries*, *The Bangor Literary Journal*, *The Poets' Republic* and other journals and anthologies. He has been shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing. He lives in Bangor, Co Down.



The Seven Drinks

The first drink is a Chubby Checker
twist of wheels in the night.
The fat man spins us round
like a 45-disc gone wild.
My father sings off-key.
He doesn't remember me.
In the back, clinging tight
mother and child
pray to see the light.
There's a burp like thunder.
We might lift off from the ground,
sink like a wreck
in Dublin Bay,
when Chubby hits the high note
and trips across the stage
and skids past car lights
that croon like Mel Tormé
then swerve and honk
in mono rage.

And so –
no one-hit wonder –
my father lives to drink
another day.

By Peter Adair

Paul lives in Belfast. He is retired after working in the charity sector for over thirty years. He is interested in painting and music and is new to creative writing. He particularly enjoys the challenging succinctness of the short story and flash fiction.



Spring on Tory

It was a gallery of your imagination. Each painting suggested a wet, wild, windswept Atlantic landscape, the foam seeming to pour off each page. They were simple distillations of maritime disasters and island life and yet they defied any simplistic notion of the romantic or the primitive. You'd once said there was nothing romantic about boats fighting with crashing waves and winds. You knew the reality.

Rock rugged, rooted in the oil there were earth browns, pungent greens, deep sea blues and froth foam whites, conjuring up a precarious and precious island belonging. 'Something for an old man to do', you said. Your best years apparently behind you. What naive nonsense that turned out to be. You said, seeing the artist paint, 'I could do better'. You weren't over the hill yet.

The legend took over of course with tales of donkey haired brushes and lengthy titles pencilled for posterity into the corner of each painting.

I was pulled back from the Tory island sea spray and the wind and rain hitting my face by the yawning gallery attendant.

Closing time.

I left with the taste of saltwater on my tongue. A winter on Tory was your creative spring.

By Paul Gray



Murlough Strand

Murlough Strand is an iconic view of the northern Mourne mountains in County Down, Northern Ireland. This image was taken on a cold January evening, just after sunset. The black sand ribs draw your attention to the peak of Slieve Donard.

Biography

John Winder is a landscape photographer working in both colour and black and white. He began creative photography 40 years ago and enjoys trudging around outdoors, hauling camera gear, and spending time behind the tripod. He has art work previously published in *The Bangor Literary Journal* and *The Fly on the Wall Press*. He enjoys walking, the cinema and sailing.

Damien returned to Ireland in 2019 after 23 years in Paris, London and Amsterdam. His writing focuses on identity, fragility and connection. His daily interests revolve around falling over and learning how to get back up while baking rather delicious cakes. His short stories have been featured in A Page from My Life/Harper Collins, Body Horror/ Gehenna & Hinnom, Coffin Bell & Prismatic. His poetry has appeared online and in print including Black Bough, Barren Magazine, Impspired, Neurological, The Adriatic, Fahmidan Journal, Anti-Heroic Chic, Fevers of the Mind, Bealtaine & 2 Metre Review. His debut poetry pamphlet Eat the Storms was published by The Hedgehog Press in Sept 2020 followed by his Stickleback in Jan 2021. He's the producer and host of the poetry podcast Eat The Storms. Twitter @deuxiemepeau / Tiktok @eatthestorms / Blog <http://www.deuxiemepeaupoeetry.com/> Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/damiboy/?hl=en> / Podcast <https://open.spotify.com/show/0mOECCAcx0kMXg25S0aywi> / Eat The Storms <https://eatthestorms.com/> / YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/deuxiemepeau/videos>



Diving In at Quai de la Seine

Je t'aime,

tu sais, you said, à la terrasse

where divers jumped into worn water

that wasn't even warm anymore.

Dégueulasse, I thought, how willing we are

to slip into currents others already caressed;

his stream, her flow, their bath, those breasts

waiting at turned tables to be tasted,

seats still stained with the scent

of the previous participant's perspiration.

Je t'aime, tu sais, you said, on that terrasse

as couples climbed out of the cinema

and let go of hands; holds the darkness

held so much easier than the cold

light tossed back from those worn waters

of Villette's basin where divers descended

into things previously tasted.

Je t'aime, tu sais, you said, and I, embarrassed

by a lost breath, held my chest

as if something was reaching down inside

to pull out the air from the organ

while you glanced around at other tables

with other offerings. *Je t'aime*, you said.

Je sais.

By Damien B. Donnelly

Carolann North is an award-winning poet and doctor of English literature at Ulster University. Her poetry is on permanent exhibition at C.S. Lewis Square, Belfast. She has been funded by ACNI, the Department of Communities, and the University of Atypical, and is a member of the Irish Writer's Centre. Most recently, she was the editor of *Phenomenal Women: A Creative Writing Collection* which aimed to highlight the voices of female ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland.



Career Day

My dad used to fix TVs for a living.
He worked off the Crumlin Road down some back-shack, ramshackle place
that was made only for men.
Heaving with parts, so tiny you thought they were dollhouse toys –
Princess capacitors and fairy ICs.
I made myths in that room, fuselit fairytales,
and my dad; the giant who fixed the village.

In the evenings when he drove us home the door would already be knocking.
He'd head out to neighbours, missing Cilla Black or Jeremy Beadle;
come home, late, still carrying his heavy steel case –
(the one I could never quite lift) –
and sit down to his own, old television.

The TVs got cheaper to make and harder to repair. That was the sign of it,
and the case was going done by the edges –
(How do you break steel?)
He retrained, worked on bigger engines on factory floors that didn't build dollhouses.
He kept on with the neighbours though; known as "Davy, who fixes TVs"
and I, his daughter,
always searching the inside of things,
trying to make them work.

His office is a bedroom now
(Mum never liked the mess)
but in woodwormed corners he still hides hordes of magic;
precious Princesses cared for by a giant
so big he carried worlds home in his pockets to his neighbours.
Stomping cracked pavements in darkness
to bring the village light,
A man; a myth of phosphor dust,
Soldering through waning nights.

By Carolann North

Izabela Ilowska holds a PhD in English Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Glasgow. Her work has appeared in *New Writing Scotland*, *Gutter Magazine*, and *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine*. She lives in Warsaw.



Learning to Travel

When I was a child, my grandmother used to tell me stories set in various European cities: Paris, Budapest, London. Her descriptions were always very graphic. She mentioned names of streets and squares, parks and coffee houses. She described people who lived there: their physical appearance, clothing, and gestures. Quite often she would throw in words or phrases that sounded foreign to me. I kept my eyes closed and listened. Sometimes my grandmother would pause and ask me if I could see the places she talked about. 'Use your imagination,' she encouraged me. I squeezed my eyes shut even harder. But all I could see was darkness. My grandmother suffered from frequent migraines and panic attacks and was afraid to travel. She never flew in an airplane, she never drove a car, she was never abroad. In fact, she rarely travelled beyond her hometown. I remember her sitting on a bench in her garden with a book in her hands. 'Why don't you sit down next to me,' she would say. 'Let me read a few pages to you. It is the most beautiful city I have ever seen.'

By Izabela Ilowska

Matt Hohner's poetry has been awarded numerous national and international prizes, including first place in the Doolin Writers' Weekend Poetry Prize in 2018 and being shortlisted for *The 2014 Moth Prize*. His recent publications include *Fahmidan Journal* and *Prairie Schooner*. An editor with *Loch Raven Review*, Hohner's collection *Thresholds and Other Poems* (Apprentice House) was published in 2018. His next collection will be published by Salmon Poetry in 2022.



**Poem for the Dead at Tuam Beginning
and Ending with a Line from U2's
"11 O'Clock Tick-Tock"**

I hear the children crying
from Tuam's soil, finger
bones clutching earth
where a breast should be,
mud filling mouths instead
of milk, gnarled roots weaving
through ribcages to silence
the harp strings of their breath.
I hear them cracking under
the weight of shame levelled
by an angry God made of men
most unkind, the grief in a
mother's voice, the faint echo
of their name soaking into silt
where an ear should be to hear it.

And what of the ones unblessed,
gone before sacrament, limbo-
bound to an eternal nowhere,
stolen sons and daughters of no
God, lost in the bureaucracy
of heaven, unwritten in the ledgers
of the saved, in the silence of time?
What now, but to see their faces,
fathers spinning off into space,
mothers' womb scars bearing
witness like ancient stories
written in ochre deep on the
walls of dark places and kept
safe? What now, but to take up
the chorus of the dead wandering
on the salt wind, floating over the
windowsills of the living, singing
soft as wings, *take me home?*

By Matt Hohner

Featured Poet

Lynda Tavakoli



Lynda Tavakoli lives in Baillies Mills, County Down. Her poetry and prose have been widely published in Ireland and across the world. She was winner of the Eason/Downtown short story competition, The Mencap International Short Story Competition and The Westival International Poetry Prize. Her poems have appeared in The Irish Times and been translated into Farsi and Spanish. She is the recent recipient of an Individual Emergency Resilience Programme Grant awarded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. *'The Boiling Point for Jam'* Arlen House, is her debut poetry collection.

Hi Lynda, thanks so much for chatting with us. Can you tell the readers a little bit about your writing journey? When did you start? What have been your biggest influences?

It's a real pleasure to have a chat with you about my writing Amy, and thank you for inviting me to be the featured poet for this issue of The Bangor Literary Journal. When I read about the journey of others, whose enthusiasm for writing began when they were young, I feel slightly embarrassed that I didn't share that kind of vocation. In fact, it still surprises me that I can string a sentence together because all I was ever interested in at school was sport and (to some



degree) music. I ended up teaching both, but creative writing, poetry etc were the furthest thing from my mind in those early years. Consequently, it was quite a surprise when, at the age of forty something, The Belfast Telegraph published a short obituary I had written for a friend which was followed by a regular column of human interest stories in their Female magazine. Not long after that I signed up for a creative writing class in the Island Arts Centre in Lisburn and it was there that I began to broaden my scope and dabble in various types of writing genres. My favourite was, and still is, the short story and I eventually published 'Under a Cold White Moon', an anthology of fictional short stories combined with my BBC 'My Story' stories that had been broadcast on Radio Ulster. 'Attachment', my first novel, was an experiment in non-conventional style after which came, 'Of Broken Things', a novel set in 1920's Ireland. Eventually poetry arrived at my door but only sporadically because it is the genre that I struggle with most, probably because it takes more of an emotional toll than anything else. For inspiration I regularly return to, and re-read, the poems of Mary Oliver or the novels of Kent Haruf, but there are many Northern Irish writers who I greatly admire and who continue to prove what a mighty little country we have here, in terms of literary prowess.

Your new collection of poems 'The Boiling Point for Jam' has recently been published by Arlen House with rave reviews. What would you pick out as the main themes in this collection?

Thank you, I've certainly been delighted with the responses to the collection thus far. There have been a number of influences running through the poems, ranging from my family upbringing and the relationships therein, to the much wider themes of war/conflict, refugees, the Middle East and anything in between. So, an amalgamation of subjects that I hope will prove interesting in some way to my readership and the hope that at least one of the poems will have a meaningful connection with somebody. Already a few of the responses I've received flag up the honesty of the poems and I have no argument with that because it's the only way I can write. The poem Forty-three Grams, for example, is about losing a baby and may seem too personal for some, but it's how I felt at the time and being less than honest about those feelings of loss would be disingenuous. The collection, as a whole, opens with dementia poems about my dad, aunt and to a lesser extent, my mum. Anyone who has experienced dementia in their family will recognise the pain, the love, the frustration and ultimately, the guilt involved in that whole awful scenario, often extending over a period of years. There is a connect, too, with the history of 'before', and the sequence of poems that follow try to balance up the sadness of endings with my profound gratitude for the blessings of having a kind and wonderful family.

Those who know me are aware that my husband is Persian and I've been fortunate to have visited Iran a number of times. I have had the good fortune to hold residency in a few Middle Eastern countries and it was inevitable that some of the poems would reflect this. Plenty of other folk have written very comprehensively about the politics thereof, so I have tried to avoid that aspect of things myself and instead hone in on the effects of adjusting to a different cultural



environment and missing home. Also, I have included a number of refugee poems that attempt to recognise the heartache of being forced to leave one's own country to find succour in an alien and often hostile environment. Beyond this, many of the poems in the collection have simply been prompted by something I've read or have seen on the television but I am always cautious about that these days, when so much of what we're exposed to can be, to put it kindly, rather less than the whole truth.

How did you go about bringing the collection together? What were your processes?

At home I have dozens of poetry collections, either bought for myself or received as presents from friends. Some I return to often and others perhaps not so much, but I worked my way through all of them when deciding how to 'format' my own collection. As previously alluded to, my poems have been loosely set out in themes, not necessarily in a formal way but hopefully in an easy flow of connection. Regarding the choice of poems, that was rather more challenging. I have been fortunate that a number of my poems have won a few significant awards so it seemed sensible to shortlist them first. Out of about a hundred remaining poems I then started the process of elimination and forced myself to be ruthless and unsentimental about my choices. The balance was hard to get right and I still don't know if I succeeded in that but certainly most of my decisions were cemented after a meeting with Damien Smyth from the ACNI who very generously offered me some valuable critique and advice at the time.



Lynda, what has been your personal experience of 'writing during lockdown'?

On Friday 13th March last year, I arrived home from the Middle East on a journey that took me through three International airports (Muscat/Dubai/Dublin). The following day, while it was relatively fresh in my head, I wrote a rough diary entry about the whole strange experience and this was eventually published on the Slugger O'Toole website who use my non-political articles quite often now. So I suppose that was my first act of writing in lockdown but I never really felt a great need afterwards to pen much else about the subject, as others were managing to express their feelings more succinctly than I ever could. In fact, much of last year was spent not writing at all but editing and

re-editing poems for 'The Boiling Point for Jam' and later, editing the anthology, 'Beyond Borders', for my writing class. Something I am sorry about, is that lockdown curtailed the launch of my collection but hopefully there will be an opportunity later in the year to have separate launches in both Belfast and Dublin. I should add that I was honoured to be a guest on RTE's The Poetry Programme and for a poem of mine to be used on the Words Softly Spoken podcast that followed.

You have been very successful as a writer. Can you tell the readers what your most memorable experiences have been so far?

My most memorable experiences have been the ones I hadn't anticipated, starting with that surprise inclusion in The Belfast Telegraph and ending here, as a featured poet in such a well-regarded Literary Journal. Winning both short story and poetry competitions in Listowel stood out because the Listowel Festival is so prestigious and I sat between Colm Toibin and Joseph O'Connor during a special recording for Sunday Miscellany at the event. But you know, sometimes it's the simpler things that really touch you,



like when a complete stranger gets in touch to say they have been particularly moved by a piece of writing, when they obviously didn't have to. It doesn't sound that important but for someone to take the time to acknowledge your work in that way, well, it shows a generosity of spirit that needs to be recognised and appreciated.

I'd like to point out here, that I've received more than my share of rejections over the years. It comes with the territory and is probably best dealt with by a gracious shrug of the shoulders and a moving on. On the positive side, I once had a poem that I had submitted to at least four publications, each time rejected (and not always kindly), but it finally won an International poetry prize. Which all goes to show that what is an empty purse to some can be a treasure to someone else. So, never give up as you may just have chosen the wrong outlets along the way.

Finally, the joy of finding a publisher who has faith in you, cannot be underestimated. Alan Hayes, my publisher from Arlen House, supported me right from my initial submission and that belief has fed into everything I have subsequently written.

It has been a pleasure chatting with you Lynda. Just to finish, can you divulge what you have in the pipeline?

One of the hardest trials during the pandemic was what occurred in the care home sector. I cannot imagine what it must have been like not to be able to have physical contact with a loved one, including family members with dementia whose lives thrive on human touch. As I've previously alluded to, dementia affected my family deeply, and I began to wonder how I could write, in a more uplifting way about the subject. When my aunt Lily was in a care home in Lisburn, the family kept a series of diaries documenting her well-being, etc from day to day. Nothing too detailed, but a record of a fading, clever mind and a body that finally succumbed to old age. I had also created a memory book which, as time passed, Lily asked me to read to her every single visit and she was able to hold on to, if not the present, then the solace of a distant and loving past. So my idea is to combine the two in some form of book and work with one of the dementia charities to create something that others might find comfort in. That's the plan anyway.

Here are poems pitch-perfect and assured, where sharp and tender observation is brought to us in strikingly vigorous language. From the intimacy of personal loss to war and its cruel consequences, from Fermanagh to Tehran, the poems in Lynda Tavakoli's *The Boiling Point for Jam* are always surprising, always true, always made more by her choice of image and her unfailing lightness of touch. A remarkable collection.

– Geraldine Mitchell

The Boiling Point for Jam is an accomplished body of work from a poet whose reverence for nature is a constant and comforting aesthetic. In poems which explore themes of innocence and experience, Lynda Tavakoli's empathy with smaller everyday miracles is both inspirational and nurturing. A lyrical sensibility thrived from the sturdy roots of a rural upbringing gifts glimpses into an authentic world familiar yet fresh and original. These poems traverse time and place, steeped in an emotional temperature that chimes in mind, body and soul. With language delicate as a blackbird's song ('Kitchen Comforts') right through to visceral grief, 'suit pockets spilling nettles/and the sea-spit dully freckled/in your hair' ('Shooting Pigeons'), this poet transforms the subtlest observations into powerful epiphanies.

– Eileen Casey

Here we find poems that could hold their own in a collection by any well-established poet. Take 'The Big Freeze' for example with its beautiful ending in crow dialogue – 'as one by one they picked words from the earth/and rested them upon the other's mouth/like a coming melt of snow', or the arresting 'Forty-Three Grams' which stands out as one of the finest poems I have read in a long time, or in 'The Boiling Point For Jam', exploring the celebration of endurance and the wading into the ordinary with a small promise of hope. There is a hint of Larkin's 'An Arundel Tomb' here too in 'Unearthed' – 'A coupling of corpses, not yet dust/years passing across them/like ghosts through open portals/unearthing more than just a smatter of bone'. These are earned poems forged in everyday experience that will resonate with anyone who exists on this side of the semi-permeable membrane between what some take for granted and the other. Words are carefully chosen from the tool box – 'waiting only for the joy of their release' – in this refreshing collection from a new voice well worth reading.

– Ger Reidy



Cover artwork by Emma Barone



Lynda Tavakoli

THE BOILING POINT FOR JAM

Lynda Tavakoli
THE BOILING POINT FOR JAM

Buy Linda's collection here: <https://www.bookdepository.com/Boiling-Point-for-Jam-Lynda-Tavakoli/9781851322497?ref=grid-view&qid=1606781540648&sr=1-2>

Queen's University Blog: <https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/dementiafiction/2021/03/05/the-boiling-point-for-jam-by-lynda-tavakoli/>

Forty-three grams

Too early to name you were too unfinished
in the womb for anyone to love but me.
At fourteen weeks your stubbed appendages
denied you somehow proper meaning to the world,
yet I imagined then the promise of your touch
and flying fingers someday glancing on piano keys
or toes that curled like leaves in winter after frost.

Behind those swollen sockets
I would never know the colour of your eyes -
if they were brown or blue or hazel like my own.
But somewhere past a sea of years
I watch you dance beneath a saffron sky
on meadows crusted yellow in a summer sun
or hear your footfall whisper soft on winter snow.

Yet now your nearly heartbeat grieves in me,
its pulse the baby miracle I never knew.
Just three and forty grams -
a single letter's weight of life unfinished
in the womb. Too early then to name
so I completed you inside my head
and loved you just the same.

Winner of the Originals Poetry Prize, Listowel

By Lynda Tavakoli

Kissed

I am fifteen,
smoking in a hay barn
with a boy I hardly know,
the day stretched behind us,
the fall of evening
passing shadows through gaps
in corrugated tin.

It is madness,
this risk too far,
as I taste the smoke-spill
on his mouth and wonder
at the old man's dog
outside on the concrete,
untroubled by the fading light.

Runner up, Blackwater International Poetry Competition

By Lynda Tavakoli

Is this what I do?

On a corridor of fresh-painted magnolia
sunbeams stroke from velux windows
onto freckled carpets, while a television
talks too loudly to itself in someone's room.

I find you sleeping, head sagged
as on a mis-hung coat hanger, hair,
just brushed, still full of war-time curls,
a legacy that did not pass itself to me.

I say your name, see the reluctant
wakening of your eyes, the disappointment
you had not slept your way to heaven.
You have told me this before.

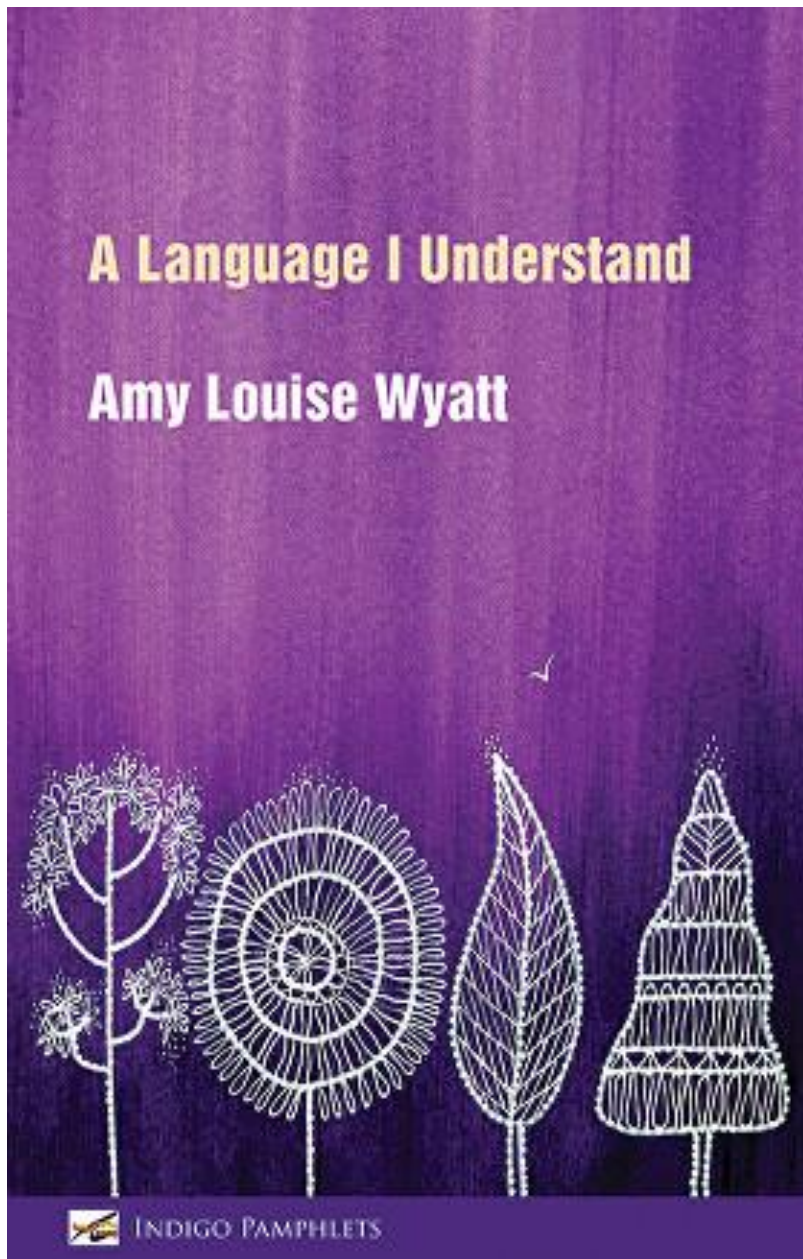
Today we talk of blue dresses and funerals
and how you love my coat, and how
you love my coat, the colour redolent
of something already scudding out of view.

You ask me now if this is what you do,
just sit and wait, and wait and sit,
the resignation in your voice
the hardest thing for me to bear.

For in this room, that thief of time
has measured out its false remembrance in
the ticking of a clock, as the past becomes the present
and the present loiters somewhere in the past.

First published in The Irish Times, Hennessy New Irish Writing

By Lynda Tavakoli



'A skilled and intuitive poet, Wyatt understands the tactile nature of sensory imagery. In her curation of personal artefacts, she holds each talisman, totem and relic up to the light so the reader can clearly view the significant people, places and memories that have been sewn into the fabric of these poems. Wyatt's miniature worlds pulse with a subtle, affecting power.'

Ross Thompson

Author of 'Threading the Light'

'In this much awaited debut pamphlet from Wyatt, the reader is gifted a world full of hedonistic delicacies – the smell of tarnished neglect, the sound of horses' hooves on cobblestones, the sting of lemons and budgie bites. At the end, the reader can say "that is 'A Language I Understand'".

Gaynor Kane

Author of 'Venus in Pink Marble'

Available to purchase from:

<https://amylouisewyatt.com/books/> (signed copies with bookmark)

and

<https://www.indigodreams.co.uk/amy-louise-wyatt/4595121212> (direct from publisher)



The FORTY Words Competition 2021 is now open for submissions. The deadline for submissions is 30th June 2021.

For this competition there are two categories:

A MINI-FICTION CATEGORY: ENTER A PIECE OF PROSE ON ANY TOPIC, IN ANY STYLE, AS LONG AS IT IS 40 WORDS OR LESS. (TITLE AND WHITE SPACES NOT INCLUDED IN WORD COUNT)

A MINI-POETRY CATEGORY: ENTER A POEM ON ANY TOPIC, ANY STYLE AND WITH ANY AMOUNT OF LINES OR STANZAS, AS LONG AS IT IS 40 WORDS OR LESS. (TITLE AND WHITE SPACES NOT INCLUDED IN WORD COUNT)

Please email your entries to thebangorliteraryjournal@hotmail.com with the heading 'FORTY WORDS SUBMISSION-Name'. In the Body of the email, please include a short note, brief biography, author image, contact details and your PayPal transaction code. Your submissions should be attached in a separate Word document, with no trace of your name, as they are read anonymously. Each entry should be put into a separate Word document- so if you are putting forward four pieces, then four separate documents should be attached. You can enter both categories as many times as you wish- but please state at the top of each word document if the piece is POETRY or PROSE. Your entries should not have been previously published online or in print and must be your own original work.

You can enter from anywhere in the world. Open to both established and emerging writers.

Deadline for submissions: **Midnight 30th June 2021**. The shortlist shall be published on our website and on social media in mid- August!

Prizes:

First prize for each category: The winning pieces of poetry and prose shall be featured in The Bangor Literary Journal, alongside a feature about the winning writers. The winners shall have the opportunity to read their winning pieces at an upcoming event and be presented with their framed certificates and a piece of original artwork; plus other reading opportunities in 2021/22.

Second prize for each category: Your piece will feature in The Bangor Literary Journal, you will receive a certificate and you will be offered reading opportunities.

There will also be a commended and highly commended list for each category, with reading opportunities.

It is £3.50 to enter a piece of poetry or prose or enter two pieces for £6, or four pieces for £10. This is a fundraising event to help us cover the costs of our website; our launch events and if there's anything left over, it will go straight into promoting the journal.

<https://thebangorliteraryjournal.com/forty-words-competition/>