

THE BANGOR LITERARY JOURNAL

ISSUE 18



Featuring the 2022 FORTY Words Competition winners; exceptional poetry, flash fiction, art and photography.

Photograph: 'Parting the Clouds' by Paul Daniel Rafferty

Editors' welcome

Welcome to Issue 18 of The Bangor Literary Journal.

We are delighted to showcase two wonderful features in this issue.

Firstly, enjoy the work of selected writers who responded to our writing challenge based on a 1960s Lava Lamp advertisement. We had a groovy time selecting these weird and wonderful responses.

Secondly, read the sixteen shortlisted pieces that were chosen for the 2022 FORTY Words Competition. The competition was fierce and every little gem was closely and thoughtfully edited by the writers to have maximum impact using minimum words. We are delighted that Stephen Smythe won this year's fiction section and David Atkinson was our poetry section winner. Huge congratulations to both of them and to everyone shortlisted and placed in the competition.

And of course, this issue is packed to the brim with excellent poetry, flash fiction, artwork and photography from our talented contributors.

Thanks as always for your continued support in making The Bangor Literary Journal what it is.

Amy and Paul



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**FEATURE
FORTY WORDS COMPETITION
WINNERS**



The shortlisted and winning pieces from this year's competition.

Fiction Winners

Stephen Smythe	Klepto	WINNER
Réaltán Ní Leannáin	Generations	RUNNER UP
Jacob Surface	Grandpa	HIGHLY COMMENDED
Yvonne Boyle	Skyfall	COMMENDED
Réaltán Ní Leannáin	Tattoos	SHORTLISTED
Stan McWilliams	House Band	SHORTLISTED
Lisa Marie Lopez	Keepsake	SHORTLISTED
Stephen Smythe	First Date	SHORTLISTED

Poetry Winners

David Atkinson	Pressed	WINNER
Seamus Mc Dermott	Silk Eyelid	RUNNER UP
Linda McKenna	Found Poem	HIGHLY COMMENDED
P. W .Bridgman	Union Jack	COMMENDED
Hildred Crill	Last Call	SHORTLISTED
David Atkinson	“What Is to Be Done?”	SHORTLISTED
Robin Holmes	Recital	SHORTLISTED
Verity Peet	Always go to dinner first	SHORTLISTED

Fiction Winner

Stephen Smythe

Stephen Smythe is a Mancunian writer of short fiction and poetry. Stephen completed an MA in Creative Writing at Salford University in 2018. In recent years he has been shortlisted and long-listed in several prestigious competitions including the Bridport Prize (Flash Fiction), 2017; and the Bath Flash Fiction Award, 2018. He was second in the Bangor Literary Journal FORTY WORDS Mini-Fiction Competition in 2019, and shortlisted in 2020 and 2021. He was third in the Strands International Flash Fiction Competition, in 2021, and received an Honourable Mention in the same competition this year. He was also shortlisted for the Ninth Annual Bangor Poetry Competition in 2021. He is currently writing a Novella-In-Flash.



Klepto

Bridget took stuff from her work colleagues' desks after they'd gone home. Pens, post-it pads, sweets, even family photos. People suspected her, but couldn't prove anything. When the company introduced hot desking, Bridget became confused and sometimes stole from herself.

Réaltán Ní Leannáin was formerly a Lecturer in Education in Queen's University Belfast. She is presently Dublin UNESCO Irish Language Writer. She was first published in 2011. Her blog <https://turasailse.blogspot.com/> will direct you to her work



Generations

My mother left a copy of 'Dear daughter' under my pillow when I was eleven. Discreetly. The tiny little pamphlet never told me there'd be days like this, blood spilling through layers of cloth. No daughters, either.

Highly Commended Fiction

Jacob Surface

J. W. Surface emerged from the University of Indianapolis in 2013. Currently, he teaches mathematics to brilliant high school students during the day, and writes poetry and fiction at night. He is indebted to God for blessing him with these two rewarding passions, and to his wife for putting up with his consistent, strange nonsense. His poetry has appeared in *Etchings Magazine* and *The Ekphrastic Review*. You can follow him on Goodreads.com and Instagram.



Grandpa

When the Alzheimer's came, he said it was like someone would walk into his brain and shut off the lights.

That's when I started to see him...

Standing there.

By the window.

Watching.

Waiting.

Not knowing what for.

Commended Fiction

Yvonne Boyle

Yvonne Boyle has had a range of poems and short stories published in a variety of magazines, books and online anthologies including the online Bangor Literary Journal and *Washing Windows Too: Irish Women Write Poetry*. She was an NI Arts Council Support for the Individual Artist (SIAP) Awardee 2018/9. She is a Causeway Coast and Glens Councillor.



Skyfall

I saw Dad fall off the roof. Awaiting the ambulance, he said *'Put on my good trousers!'*
His strong boots saved him; outcome - staved ankles. Ordered to rest, he started driving in
his slippers. *'Don't tell your mother.'*

Shortlisted Fiction

First Date

Stephen Smythe

Her profile said she was sapiosexual, but she dressed like all the other women in Wetherspoon's. 'It means I'm turned on by intellect,' she explained, necking her cut-price Stella and belching in my face. 'Any chance of a whisky chaser?'

Keepsake

Lisa Marie Lopez

Seashells wash up along the sand. Astrid takes one home as a keepsake. In bed, she holds it against her ear. Sounds of the ocean greet her in the morning. Outside, mourning doves scatter like seagulls.

Tattoos

Réaltán Ní Leannáin

The red and black snake becomes a pastel angel, becomes a black cat with bright green-glittering eyes, pitter-pattering down her arms. Covering the white raised scars of her life, nearly. Not quite.

House Band

Stan McWilliams

I played in a band. Once in public. In our church. Under the pulpit on deep blue thick carpet. Two guitars and drums. Suited and nervous. Our song? 'The House of the Rising Sun'. Stony faces. 'Thanks'. Then the sermon.

Fiction Shortlist Biographies

Stephen Smythe

Stephen Smythe is a Mancunian writer of short fiction and poetry. Stephen completed an MA in Creative Writing at Salford University in 2018. In recent years he has been shortlisted and long-listed in several prestigious competitions including the Bridport Prize (Flash Fiction), 2017; and the Bath Flash Fiction Award, 2018. He was second in the Bangor Literary Journal FORTY WORDS Mini-Fiction Competition in 2019, and shortlisted in 2020 and 2021. He was third in the Strands International Flash Fiction Competition, in 2021, and received an Honourable Mention in the same competition this year. He was also shortlisted for the Ninth Annual Bangor Poetry Competition in 2021. He is currently writing a Novella-In-Flash.

Lisa Marie Lopez

Lisa resides in the U.S. She's had short fiction published in various publications including Blink-Ink, Potato Soup Journal and 50-Word Stories.

Réaltán Ní Leannáin

Réaltán Ní Leannáin was formerly a Lecturer in Education in Queen's University Belfast. She is presently Dublin UNESCO Irish Language Writer. She was first published in 2011. Her blog <https://turasailse.blogspot.com/> will direct you to her work

Stan McWilliams

Stan is a Donegal-based writer, originally from Ballymena. A parent of three grown children, a farmer and wind farmer, his writing takes inspiration from a rural environment, his Antrim and Leitrim roots, and a wide range of life experiences across the globe. After a career, encompassing engineering, teaching and farming, Stan started creative writing in 2019 and has produced a series of short stories, a mixture of memoir, family related tales and fiction. His work has been published in the Leitrim Guardian, in Fingerpost, Ulster Scot's publication Yarns, and has contributed a number of readings at a Tenx9 events. Drafts of the stories are in his regular blog <https://thecurlewscall.home.blog/> He is a member of the Derry writing group "This writing thing ...".

Poetry Winner

David Atkinson

David Atkinson, Belfast poet, with work published nationally and internationally, and broadcast by the BBC. He has published two collections, *Thomas* (2005) and *Black-eyed Peace* (2014), including the Pushcart nominated poem "Hunting for the Aurora". He was long-listed for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2017.



Pressed

i.m. Nathan

It took me
an hour to iron
the suit and shirt

I laid out
on my bed,
that I left

instead of a letter,
because I didn't know
what to say.

Poetry Runner Up

Seamus Mc Dermott

Seamus has had a poem published in The Madrigal Literary Magazine February 2022, in the fifty word poem Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter editions (2019 –2022) of Little Gems Magazine, the 11th edition of Crossways Literary Magazine June 2021, and in issue 15 of The Bangor Literary Journal. Seamus has been shortlisted in The Bangor Literary Journal 2021 Forty Words Competition, the Allingham Arts Poetry Competition for 2020/21 and a poem highly commended in the Frances Browne Literary Festival 2021.

Seamus has had a video-poem selected for screening at the Blooms Day Film Festival 2022, Reel Poetry / Houston Texas 2021 Film Festival, the Ó Bhéal Poetry Festival 2021 and the international film festival MOPIFF 2021.



Silk Eyelid

You see the despair in my eyes.

A galaxy of stars fading in yours.

The soft stroke of my palm on your closing silk eyelid,

I try to catch your last warm breath in my hand.

Poetry Highly Commended

Linda McKenna

Linda McKenna's debut poetry collection, *In the Museum of Misremembered Things*, was published by Doire Press in 2020. The title poem won the An Post Poem of the Year in 2021. She has had poems published in, among others, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Banshee*, *The North*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Crannóg*, *Acumen*, *Atrium*, *One*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, the *Bangor Literary Journal*. She is working on her second collection.



Found Poem

I scavenge discarded quills,
use a rusted razor to cut
new life into waste; sonnets
need black ink for passion,
print needs copper and lead
to anchor rumour to the page,
crushing gathered gall nuts,
I turn again to work.

P.W. Bridgman's third and fourth books— *Idiolect* (poetry) and *The Four-Faced Liar* (short fiction)—were published in 2021 by Ekstasis Editions. His writing has appeared (or is forthcoming) in, among others, *The Antigoniish Review*, *The Moth Magazine*, *The Glasgow Review of Books*, *Grain*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *The Galway Review*, *The High Window*, *The Maynard*, and *Skylight 47*. Bridgman has given live readings in Vancouver, Victoria, Belfast, Dublin, Glasgow and Melbourne.



Union Jack

Jack's life was grindingly dull.
Then Banksy stopped by.

Jack woke to the Pope on horseback,
sporting a nose-ring and red mohawk,
gracing his south wall.

If only his geraniums hadn't been stepped on,
Jack might have left it be.

Poetry Shortlist

Safety Pin

Hildred Crill

Begin with piercing,
the prick, the drop

of blood. Who's safe?
Close the loop, coil

back on the self
as if danger and safety

could be one device
for our convenience.

"What Is to Be Done?"

David Atkinson

My son asked me
why we didn't build a house
for the man begging
on the street.

I asked him why
he didn't share
his sweets
with his sister.

Recital

Robin Holmes

Buoyant mistle thrush,
sensing warmer days, recites
his back catalogue.

Always go to dinner first

Verity Peet

I created, overstated, baited and waited.
You rated, contemplated and instigated.

We related, titillated and infatuated
Navigated and fornicated.
Elated.

Then we went for dinner.

You masticated.
It grated.

I hated, prevaricated, deviated.
You dissipated, obliviated.

I masturbated.

Poetry Shortlist Biographies

David Atkinson

David Atkinson, Belfast poet, with work published nationally and internationally, and broadcast by the BBC. He has published two collections, *Thomas* (2005) and *Black-eyed Peace* (2014), including the Pushcart nominated poem “Hunting for the Aurora”. He was long-listed for the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing 2017.

Hildred Crill

Hildred Crill is a poet and translator. Her poems have appeared recently in *Long Poem Magazine*, *Ploughshares*, *Ambit*, *The North*, *The Moth*, among other journals. She lives in Stockholm.

Robin Holmes

Robin Holmes believes that growing up on a small hill farm in the Mourne Mountains has been a deeply formative experience for his writing. In his poetry he explores themes of the natural world, the life of birds, the changing seasons and man’s problematic relationship to the environment. His work has appeared regularly in the *Bangor Literary Journal* and the annual *Community Arts Partnership Poetry in Motion Journal*.

Verity Peet

Verity manages Portico Arts and Heritage Centre in Portaferry.



Dhows off Lamu.

These traditional vessels are still used to carry people and goods along the east African coast, Gulf States and, when the currents are favourable, western India.



Lamu beach runner

A study in motion taken during a trip to the east African island of Lamu in 2014. There are few cars on the island. People are accustomed to walking, running and using donkeys.

Biography

William Beattie Smith is a retired public servant from Belfast. He worked for the Department of Health supporting voluntary action, community development and action against health inequalities. He is official biographer of Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children. Over the past year his poems have been published online by Cephalopress (Brighton). His first collection in print, *Irregularities*, has been available since March 2022 from Blackstaff Press.

Poetry

Nick Allen

Nick has published one collection and three pamphlets of poetry. His poems have appeared in magazines including *The North*, *Stand*, *Interpreter's House* and they have been included in several anthologies, the most recent of which is "We're All in it Together: Poems for a DisUnited Kingdom" published by Grist at Huddersfield University.



the holy gannet

bears the rigid crucifix of itself aloft
this lone dauntless traveler
absolves the bay

magnificent in its Magdalene robes
admonishes the steadfast land
climbs and hangs

before pulling in death-tip wings
folding its orthodox self

becoming the dagger
calamitous and deliberate
driving the stake of itself

into the oceans
glistening flesh bringing
benediction to the multitudes

by Nick Allen

Flash Fiction

Anne Daly

Anne Daly is a writer who lives in Co. Meath. Her short fiction and poetry have recently appeared in *The Waxed Lemon*, *The Cormorant* and *Ellipsis Zine* Issue 11. She won second place in the Allingham Fiction Prize, 2021. Her debut pamphlet *Triptych* was published by Alien Buddha Press in April 2022.



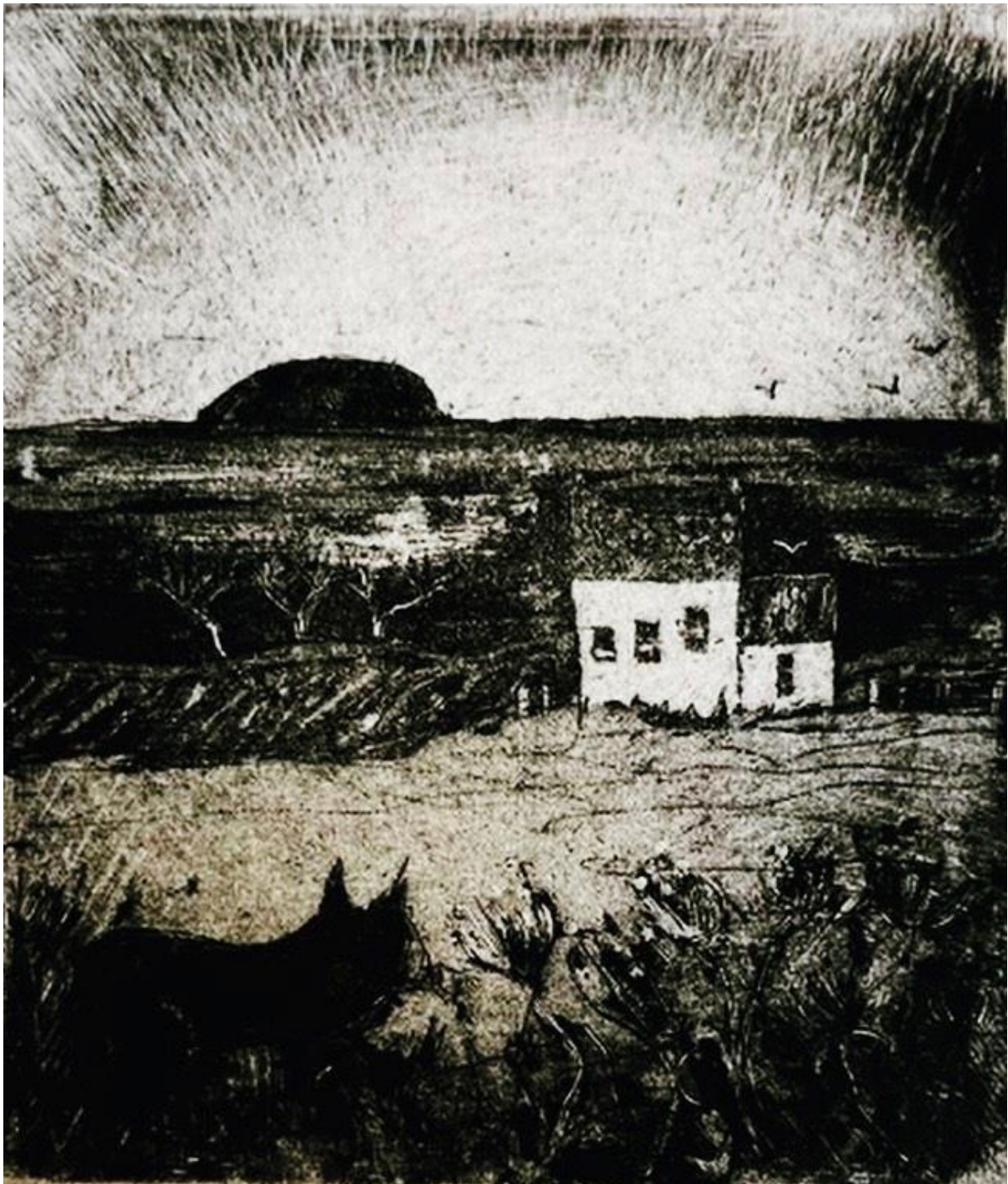
Glass Buoys

Brushstroke petals, pregnant with pink, map the curve of my daughter's cheek as she blows bubbles beneath them. The plastic stick shouts an *O* as it is dipped into the sudsy liquid and held up to the sky. Circlets of soap and water clasp arms around her breath. Floating across the garden, they bloom rainbows as they pass, drifting off on a cloud scattered sky.

In my mind, the bubbles become buoys, the clouds, the sea. Handblown Japanese glass used to keep fishing nets afloat. Restless on the waves, they would unlatch from the gills of their nets, circling the North Pacific, burnished amber by sunlight and brine.

Her mouth flares laughter, air filled and buoyant, as she tries to catch the bubbles. Buds of colour unfurling over spinnakers of blue. Tendrils of hair weave a rope that anchors her to me. Her voice, a vibrato of sifting currents, guiding me ashore.

By Anne Daly



The Todd's Rodden (The foxes lane)

Etching with Aquatint

About the image

Inspired by a story recorded in the original history of Islandmagee written by Dixon Donaldson, by the same name.

A clever fox outwitted the hunt by jumping off the Gobbins Cliffs and grasping a whin bush with its jaws, so as to swing into its lair on the cliff face, meanwhile the hounds on his heels crashed to their death below . Eventually the local huntsman Mr Mckeen discovered his cunning plan, cut the branch and Mr Todd also perished.

This occurred on the farm where I live and my very old farm deeds show the field closest to the cliff top titled “The Todd’s Rodden”.

This account was further taught as part of the National Curriculum in Ireland. I am lucky enough to have a photocopy of the lesson.

This artwork is an etching with aquatint. It was created using a copper plate, acid baths, rosin, and ink then the finished product is created using an old original printing press located in Belfast Print Workshop. It was inspired by a historical story about a fox outwitting the local hunt during the 1800’s.

Biography

Audrey Kyle is a contemporary watercolour artist who works from her studio on the Gobbins Cliffs in Co Antrim. She also runs workshops from her studio which is open by appointment. She produces original watercolour commissions, prints and a selection of cards along with some etchings and mixed media pieces. Her work can be viewed at www.audreykyleart.com and social media .

Poetry

Geraldine Fleming

Geraldine Fleming retired early from an all-consuming career due to ill health. Bereft of purpose in life she found herself drawn into a past interest in creative writing. She is a member of the North Coast Writers Group in Northern Ireland and loves to write.

Her poetry and prose have been published in a number of anthologies and journals. In 2019, she was Highly Commended in the *Bangor Literary Journal Poetry Competition* and in 2022 two poems were published in *Community Arts Partnership Anthology, Threshold*. Her poem *cartographer* was also long listed for the *Seamus Heaney Award*.



haven of hope

the glass boat of woes pitched
 shearing loose its moorings
 grimly singing a dirge of despair
 of passage across realms
no other sounds take shape

 the mind's darkling sea of sorrows
 pulverises
 brutalises
 atomises
 without conscience

 on sighting the shore
 insecurities quell
 with the chime of sanctuary
isolation is repelled

 the stillness in this moment
and the next persists

 taking light steps onto firm land
you emerge

steadied

by Geraldine Fleming

Poetry

Sue Steging

Born in Liverpool, Sue Steging now lives in rural Northern Ireland, on the banks of the Agivey. She writes mainly poetry, mostly about the world around her, her efforts generously supported and encouraged by family, friends and local writers' networks. Her work has been published in various journals and anthologies.



At Knockoneill Court Tomb

grass moths flutter stirred by our crossing a tussocked boundary
stumble stones

we surrender to not knowing what belongs

to then or them these builders interring one human perhaps with so much care
until peat came made its own arrangements burying foundations
smothering cultures with the fallen greens of years the deaths of trees

today except for a few plantations here and there the hills are bare

they make an arc a shelter offer rocky embrace to a memorial that now
whatever the intention

aligns only with a stand of steely turbines

mesmerised by rotation we meditate on their future as our forerunners
might have wondered what the dead would see through a grass moth's eyes

all the grave goods gone no evidence remains we leave while lichen stays
sets its own slow circles on the stones

at Knockoneill Court Tomb

by Sue Steging

Swallows

Why do the swallows
 darting back
 bring memories of you?

I feel a pull
 the continental drift
of lives and times
 we counter
 now and then
with songs to
 signal
 as swallows do
that we still share a map.

 Once we built a common nest scooped
 up leftover stuff to fill the nooks and
 ledges
 as swallows do
 then cushioned it with salvaged fabric
 feathered ornaments of the day.

It's habit now
 in spring
 to think of you
to trace the once familiar
 flight path of our friendship
 as swallows do
 and share some tales
 of where and how
 we flew.

by Sue Steging

Kevin Dardis is an Irish storyteller and musician based in Nuremberg.



Why There Are Mountains

There are only so many stories in the world and they are buried in the ground. You just have to dig a hole and put your hand inside. You open your fingers and feel around and after a time a story will come to you. You should always dig your hole somewhere a bit higher up because when you take a story, the land sinks a little. The Danes were the first to find out about the secret. Then the Dutch found out and that is why Denmark and the Netherlands are so flat now. They've used up all their stories. Shakespeare knew the secret and when someone found his diaries hundreds of years later, they told the Queen and she started making eyes at Asia. At countries we now call Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. Soldiers and generals traipsing off there had nothing to do with money or power. It was all about stories. The tales of Nepal are waiting for Nepalis to dig them up, however. Interlopers, explorers and conquerors don't understand the soil there. Only the natives do. That is why the mountains have survived.

By Kevin Dardis

Poetry

Julie Stevens

Julie Stevens writes poems that cover many themes, but often engages with the problems of disability. She has 2 published pamphlets *Balancing Act* (The Hedgehog Poetry Press, 2021) and *Quicksand* (Dreich, 2020). Her next collection will be *Step into the Dark* (The Hedgehog Poetry Press, 2022). Website: www.jumpingjulespoetry.com.



Ice Cubes

How they won't let you bite
right into their bellies.
A suck, lick encourages the melt,
or hold it in your palm and feel
the thrill run through your fingers.

How they become me.
Take every drop of saliva
and mix with their own,
shock my mouth and sink
to sting my insides.

How they disappear so quickly
as I watch them fall,
try catch their cold hearts
in this open glass.

How they add light to my drink
bounce on their swell,
then leave, as soon as they
notice I've gone.

By Julie Stevens



Sunday Stroll

The distortion of two women walking on a rainy Sunday afternoon lends an ethereal (almost watercolour) mood to the outing.

Biography

Mary Wilkinson is published in Poetry Ireland Review, The Irish Times, Books Ireland, West 47, The Dublin Quarterly International Lit. Review, Writing the Mother Memoir (Tell Tale Souls), Listowel Writers' Week Winner s Anthologies, Lyric FM's Quiet Quarter and RTE'S A Living Word Anthologies, The Galway Review and The Waxed Lemon (Image). She is a Pushcart Prize nominee 2020 and won the 2022 Reflex Press Novella Award. Her novella, Quotidian, will be published in Spring 2023 with Reflex Press.

FEATURE

WRITING CHALLENGE

The “in” gift
of the year!



18.95 26.95 29.95

*Lava
lite*

They're like wild—way out! It's the flabbergaster that can't be ignored! Eerie, ghostly color plus scintillating, sinuous motion . . . ever-changing—ever-different—never predictable. It's the most different gift you can give or get. See our full selection of models and colors while they last! From 10.60 to 149.50



*The lite of a
Million Moving Shapes*

We asked writers to participate in our writing challenge by responding to this advertisement for lava lamps from 1967. Their pieces of writing could take any form. Read our selected pieces here- they are grooovvy.

I imagine them as problems
morphing and melting
as problems tend to do
I watch them change and grow
in the dead of the night
while others dream in restful slumbers
at times there might be three
or four
vying for my attention
until eventually they dissipate
and give way to another
it strikes me though
perhaps most importantly
that they are all fleeting
there is no eruption
and one by one
I watch them melt away
until finally I fall asleep

Rebekah Crilly is an aspiring poet from County Antrim who dreams of finding an audience for her words. Her inspiration ranges from the monotony of household chores to the wonder of the garden snail. You can find more of her work on instagram @rebekhacrilly.

The lite of a million moving shapes
See, they can't be ignored
Ever-changing, ever-different
The most different, the most scintillating
Wild motion in full colour
Flabbergaster gift
The lite of a million moving shapes

Ivona Coghlan works in McClay Library at Queen's University Belfast. She studied Creative Writing with the Open University. Ivona has had a short story published online by The Blue Nib and hopes to continue to share her writing.

It would
tell a tale, of
a girl in hippie flares
with crazy Corkscrew hair,
of teenage nights, bubbling with
psychedelic delight, unaware
of the effervescence
within, and the
new Life
soon
to
begin.

Mary is a prose writer/poet from the Antrim Coast, near Larne. She is a regular participant in poetry slams and has performed her work at various online events, such as Oooh Beehive and Lit Up. Mary has previously been published in the Bangor Literary Journal and CAP 'Over the Threshold'. She is currently in the process of completing her first novel.

Mama

Joseph Linscott

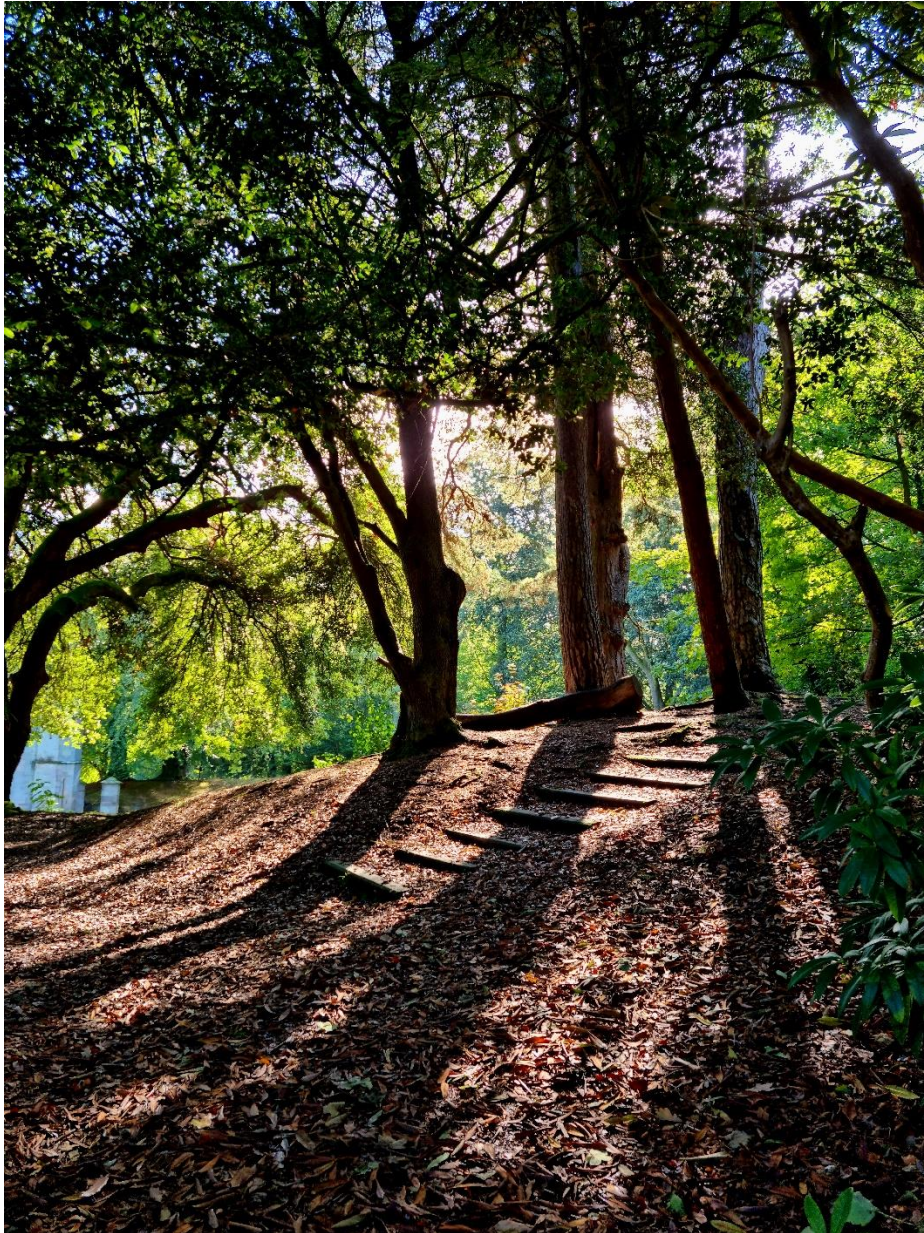
Mama, you said not to let it spill out. That it'd go wild and crazy and I wouldn't know what to trust, what with the shadows hovering round the wall. They taunt me; tell me I'm no good; whispering things in my ear. I get flabbergasted. No Good. Mama. They're everchanging. Each day I feel I'm ever different and never seeing right ways up or sideways down. I don't know why or can't seem to cry now, Mama. Where else do I go but down and up and around and around. I'm a million little shapes, Mama. All you ever wanted molded from yourself. I'm it. I promise. I'm the gift you always wished for, little as I am. Little as you thought. I came to be the littleness growing inside you. I wish you were here, Mama. Cause me less pain to beget this violence. These voices altering their tones like their shapes now sunk in the walls. Ghostly emanances, like you said you saw in my eyes the day I was born. Your little gift that can't be ignored.

Joseph Linscott is a teacher and writer currently living in Denver. Originally from Maine. His writing can be found in Helen, Sporklet, and others. Find him on Twitter @JosephALinscott.



Tubular Bells

Taken in Bangor Walled Garden.



Steps

Photographed in Castle Park, Bangor.

Biography

Paul Daniel Rafferty is a poet and photographer from Bangor. He works from The Blackberry Path Art Studios.

Flash Fiction

Christina Hession

Christina Hession is a native of Dunmore, Co. Galway. She has an MA in Creative Writing from UCC. She has been short-listed for the Listowel Writers' Week and Saolta Arts Poetry for Patience writing competitions. Christina has been broadcast on Radio One's Sunday Miscellany and A Word in Edgeways.



Wish You Were Beautiful

My husband, the mourner-in-chief, has the good grace to look uncomfortable.

Lady Bountiful, dropping off platters of pulled pork and one pot casseroles, since the news of my ignominious death broke, will mistake it for mourning. It's a real aphrodisiac.

Grief groupies Caroline and Kathleen, are in pole position an hour before the service begins.

- Going off to that place in Turkey, pretending to be with her pals.
- I never heard the like. What possessed her?

The funeral bell tolls forlornly. My spouse fixates on the vases of oriental lillies perfuming the sanctuary. Anywhere, but my photograph on the coffin. At least the congregation were spared his eulogy. Not much you can say, when your beautiful wife dies from a botched Brazilian butt lift. Tell them about identifying me to the acned attendant in the Antalya morgue. Finding screenshots of the messages in my cerise shell suitcase. Hidden among my lacy Victoria's Secret shapewear.

The postcard with the Nazar Boncuk – the blue evil eye, which arrived home before I did.

- Weather here, wish you were beautiful.
- Have a big surprise for you, when I return.

By Christina Hession

Poetry

Lisa Rea Currie

Lisa Rea Currie is an emerging writer from County Down. In her day job she works in heritage and themes of place and past often appear in her writing. Her work has appeared in Black Nore Review and The Storms.



On Earth as it is in Heaven

In damp halls on hard benches
we looked up, not around.
Not of this world, ready to leave
at the trumpet's sound.

Cheek pressed on cold walls,
praying to untangle roots.
But my rebellious spirit grew,
fed with the fruit of life and knowledge.

Slipping through the narrow gate,
I climb to salvation.
Lungs burning, I pass sunshine speckled gorse,
soft earth transient beneath foot.

I summon courage,
step onto the rock.
It accepts me.

By Lisa Rea Currie

Poetry

Kate Maxwell

Kate Maxwell is a teacher and writer from Sydney. She's been published and awarded in many Australian and International literary magazines. Her first poetry anthology, *Never Good at Maths* (IP Press) was published in 2021, and her second anthology (*Ginninderra Press*) will be forthcoming in 2023. Kate enjoys writing in many genres including speculative fiction, flash, YA, and poetry. Her interests include film, wine, and sleeping. She can be found at <https://kateswritingplace.com/>



Rupture

Breath breaks;
closes like a fist inside his lungs
 as he plunges into
blue-green skin of deep.
Bends torso, thrusts feet
into a loose-limbed splutter,
 bubbles, silt, and
leaving in his wake.

He is seeking treasure.
Seeking the submerged
yet still unknown: something
silver, sharp, or mythical
to illuminate his too-dark world,
 so thick with seaweed
and secrets, blur of movement,
slip of tail

and the cold briny horror
of imagined teeth,
barnacled fingers snatching
from below. Silence prickles
ears and nose as he rams resistance
 but water: its liquid palm
heavy as lead, presses head,
forcing back

when fingers, like small fishes,
 probe too far.
Laboured kicks won't breach
the lock of bubbled deep.
Chest bursting with familiar
surrender, he gasps
back to surface – again:
 betrayed, and buoyant.

By Kate Maxwell

Collaboration

Phil Wood & John Winder

Phil Wood (poet based in Wales) and John Winder (photographer based in Northern Ireland) have been collaborating for a couple of years after re-establishing contact with the help of the Bangor Literary Journal Editor. The purpose of the collaboration is to explore lines of communication between art forms. Each work consists of a photograph and a poem, one work an organic development from the other. This is a collaboration between a poet and a photographer seeking to cross divides. They have developed a set of 40 photograph/poem pairs and would like the opportunity to show case some of this work. There is a natural conversation between each piece that proves boundaries can be crossed.



Cosmetic Rebecca

Cosmetic Rebecca

A passive pink

On pastel office days,

A raucous red on clubbing night,

But her chapel hour lips

Kiss candy clean.



By Phil Wood & John Winder