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CONTENTS

Tommy Murray	<i>Foreword</i>	4
Tommy Murray	<i>Figurine</i>	6
Michelle O'Sullivan	<i>The Wishing Box</i>	7
Orla Fay	<i>Night Aria</i>	8
Benjamin Burns	<i>between times</i>	8
Philip Quirke	<i>Flowers</i>	9
George Shorten	<i>Word Thief</i>	9
Joe Fulham	<i>night scented stock</i>	10
Teresa O'Donnell	<i>Riches</i>	11
Alan McKean	<i>Unforgiving</i>	12
Catherine Hastings	<i>Obsession</i>	13
Kevin Higgins	<i>The Great Purge</i>	14
Anne Maher	<i>The Birthday</i>	15
Richard Cahill	<i>On my Father's Leaving</i>	16
Paul Egan	<i>Jimmy</i>	17
Bernadette Scales	<i>Dying with Indignity</i>	23
Lizann Gorman	<i>The Hub</i>	24
Anne Crinion	<i>Chimney Breast</i>	24
Bernadette Scales	<i>Outside the Poet's Garret</i>	25
Sinéad Mac Devitt	<i>The Carousel Begins</i>	26
Rory O'Sullivan	<i>The Kingdom of Evernight</i>	27
Bláithín Allain	<i>November</i>	28
Kieran Furey	<i>How God Sees Ambition</i>	29
Dan Daly	<i>A Night in Provence</i>	30
Eilis Foran	<i>Autumn 1979</i>	36
Jane Clarke	<i>Waterways</i>	37
Michael Farry	<i>Searching</i>	38
Kimberley Gwilliams	<i>Tears</i>	39
Isolde Stapleton	<i>The Only Thing That's Real</i>	40
Frank Murphy	<i>From the Wellington Monument</i>	41

J. J. Steinfeld	<i>When It Is Folly to Write of Beauty</i>	42
Jumoke Verissimo	<i>Still breathing (for Darfur)</i>	43
Chris Major	<i>Untitled</i>	44
Margaret Galvin	<i>The Showrooms of Savile Row</i>	45
Kate Dempsey	<i>Regeneration</i>	46
Olutayo K. Osunsan	<i>In Africa</i>	47
Arun Gaur	<i>Indifference</i>	48
Patricia Byrne	<i>Any Trace</i>	49
Dermot McGarthy	<i>Boyne Poem</i>	53
Brendan Carey Kinane	<i>Nightscape</i>	54
Susan Gilbert	<i>Spectrum</i>	55
Eamon Cooke	<i>Mayo Without the Lights</i>	55
Frank Joussem,	<i>Grandpa Sold Colours</i>	56
Eve Devereux	<i>Swans in Flight</i>	57
Patrick Dillon	<i>Winter Cattle</i>	58
Notes on contributors		59

Foreword.

I am delighted to be associated with this first collection of work from The Boyne Writers' Group. Over the years as facilitator to Meath Writers' Circle I have edited a number of collections. This however is different in as much that it includes writers not only from outside the county but also from the world beyond.

So we have writers from France, England, Canada, India, Germany and Nigeria, all helping to give it a truly international flavour. From nearer home we have contributions from a number of counties including Cork, Mayo, Tipperary and of course Meath.

The overpowering impression formed from reading the work is of a group of people actually aware that aside from the hustle and bustle of everyday living there is another world, a world of creativity and imagination. It is clear too that one of the aims of the editor was to make the work a blend of new and well-established writers and as such to provide a forum for a wide range of styles and talents.

The eternal themes of love, death, childhood, pollution and the longing for solitude are well to the fore while Kate Dempsey's angle on married life in "*Regeneration*" will certainly set minds thinking. There is humour here too in Susan Gilbert's "*Spectrum*".

Reading these I couldn't resist the temptation to cherry pick, especially on coming across the imagery in Michael Farry's "*Searching*" – Down a dim lane a vacant house stared glassless", or the graphic attention to detail in Paul Egan's

story “Jimmy”.

The styles too cover a wide range, free verse, blank verse and the prosy poem tending to dominate at the expense of iambic and syllabic verse. If this magazine can convey to writers and readers alike that there is a world of creativity and imagination just waiting to be explored then it has justified its publication.

Tommy Murray
February 2007.

Trim author, Tommy Murray, has had many books of poetry and prose published. His latest poetry volume is “Counting Stained Glass Windows” and his “Voices of Meath” was published just before Christmas. A winner of several national awards for literature his poems have also featured in the U.T.V. documentary, “Valley of the Kings”.

Figurine.

For years you stood in the shade
Unnoticed
Surviving several changes of wallpaper

Between the chipped milk maid
And the Cap-di-monti granny

The contours of your crinoline rigid
Hair set permanently under the cold glaze

Wide-eyed, aloof, alone in your world
Of bric a brac and dust

A lady of leisure too
Except for the odd job
Propping up a postcard
A paperweight

Until you fell
And picking up the pieces
We discussed your origins
An arm here, a leg there
And the aristocratic head still smiling

Spent nail-biting hours tending to your wounds
Moved you into the sunlight
Now, we change the wallpaper to match your eyes
Take you gently by the arm
Blow the dust from your shoulders
Pull your leg.

Tommy Murray

The Wishing Box

Is open and inside you will see
Butterflies, white feathers and
A bag of green stones, malachite.
There are loose squares of paper
And on each one are things you
Wrote while looking in the mirror

*Like a quiet angel,
You inherit things.*

*These things will save your life,
Love, truth, being.*

*It will always be two,
It was never just one.*

*Stop feeling insufferable,
Impatience will destroy your life.*

*Write three wishes & put
Them in the triple box.*

The last one simply says,
Loves wish.

Michelle O'Sullivan

Night Aria.

There is a fire aflame.
There is a girl with a heart.
There is a birth.
There is an earthy name.
And I'm floating down the river
that goes on and on and on -
I'm drifting along.
And I'm sleeping on the grass
where the night air is cool,
where the stars are cooling in velvet.
Before long I'll be dreaming.
I'll be in your heart,
like an old jaded song.
I am empty to be quiet,
silent to be heard,
lost to find or to be found.
There is no image wide enough.
I am humbled by the profound.

Orla Fay

between times

To my last breath on a howling wind
I would like to slip, between times
and see that storm blow in, and my
age old eyes witness my skin turn to dust
and my last words on a howling wind
catch between the bare winter branches
of a tree, flung against the sky.

Benjamin Burns

Flowers

Take a one-hour-per-exposure record
of a flower unfolding. Then run it fast.
This is our love. I want it to last.

Attend to the minutiae of affection:
gestures, flowers, sweet nothings,
hooking a lock of hair around your ear.

We have done the hard work
of love. Now gentleness
is the most natural thing in the world;

here I scatter rose petals, lavenders;
all the flowers are unfolding,
each in its season.

Philip Quirke

Word Thief

She'd have capricious
Stolen out of your mouth
And mangled, party style,
Out to applause and again
Each a variation of course
Out to this great room-
Sized world of hers.
Three years old – word thief
Never gives back
Never done giving back

George Shorten

night scented stock.

it was something she did.
late summer nights
going to the front garden
in her nightdress to
breathe in the sweet fragrance
of night scented stock.

wrapped in fumes of
drink, her mouth greased,
pieces of fried chicken
wedged in her back
teeth, she swayed
like a great flower, taking in
the night's sweet smells.
why did she do it?

because it was the night,
wrapped in earthy sweetness,
as she stood amongst
those tiny bursts of
blue and purple flowers;
that was how it was,
momentarily.

not a mother and wife
tied to kitchen sinks or crying prams,
lost in thought about other times,
confounded by life's dumbing down;
not filled with querulous contempt
for neighbours or unfeeling spouse,
not afraid

but standing in her nightdress
in the front garden loved by God,
smelling the night scented stock.

Joe Fulham

Riches

At birth endowed
With silver spoon,
This mantle you wore.
Not knowing the world -
Its cloak unfitting,
Unaware of life's game
Betrayal unfolds,
In tattered pieces
Your fortune dispersed.

Other riches you own,
Swan like, innocent,
Above muddied waters
Graciously moving,
Poised, head held high.
A voice well spoken
Tutored, soft and low,
Gently inspiring
Spirit unbroken.

Teresa O'Donnell

Unforgiving

The dent in the pillow
Where your head lay,
Has gone.

A lonely brush
The last memory
Of your scented hair.

The mirror that held your reflection,
No longer shines
With your smile.

Your coat
Hangs empty
In the hallway.

An emptiness
Hangs over me
Like a damoclean sword.

Unforgiving loneliness.

Alan McKean

Obsession.

He wants to live inside my skin
I shift to left and right
backwards and forwards
to escape his burrowing need.

He wants to live inside my skin
to set up tent in there
with his Dubliners CDs and bike magazines
and hydrocortisone one per cent.

He'll bring it all in there
and cook pots of coddle
boiled onions
back bacon and curly cabbage.

There isn't room in there
for his mother's old towels
his splashed-on Brut
and half-baked Republican sentiments.

I rub in Boot's factor 50
and run across the desert
checking my skin for bites and holes
and keep on running.

Catherine Hastings

The Great Purge.

An argument in which there was no
such place as Switzerland;
time to do unto others
and have it done to you.
Some woke up with their
throats cut; others
never came back
out of the bathroom.

But mostly the punishments were road-signs
that read: *Topeka 560 miles*,
or *Welcome to East Sussex*, as we scattered
to become after-dinner speakers;
hair-spray salesmen in southern Illinois; or
end our days with nothing to declare
but our neutrality.

Hard to believe we were all
once in the same room, saying things like
“socialist transformation of society”;
and then downing pints for the cause
on perfect Thursday evenings,
when the world was new
and *would* belong to us.

Kevin Higgins

The Birthday

Every other year
When the card
Is dropped
Through the letter-box
Mum grabs the remote
Raises the sound level
On the t.v.
Like a barbed wire defence
Counting the seconds.....
Face down
Back and forth she rocks.

I know you're hiding
In the doorway, Dad,
Hoping
We'll be thrown together
By chance
I would love
To walk up
Behind you
See your face
Jump up on your shoulders

I'm not allowed out
At this stage
We no longer live
On the right side of town

Counting the seconds....
Face down,
Back and forth Mum rocks
As the Birthday Card

More often than not
With the wrong age
Is dropped through
The letter-box.

Anne Maher

On My Father's Leaving.

I still can remember him leaving the house:
how he pushed himself up on his elbows
(which must have used most of what strength he had left)
to take what he knew was his last look around.
I saw in his eyes no sign of despair,
no terror or rage, not even annoyance,
but surprise that this death about him unfolding
had him at its centre and not someone else.

As out to the yard he was wheeled on a stretcher,
through the garden he'd nurtured as if a small child,
past all the achievements of sweat, blood and tears,
his tidy, neat kingdom from stubborn ground prised,
what I failed to do and since have regretted,
was to stop in their tracks the ambulance men,
to help him sit up, then a moment withdraw,
and allow him a last look all to himself.

Richard Cahill

Jimmy

One of Jimmy's few pleasures in life is an ice cream, any flavour will do, he is not fussy. Eating it is probably the most exercise he gets in a week. Call when he is asleep and he seems to sense the presence of a Brunch and wakes up in its honour. Give Jimmy a drink and he will keep going, he never knows when to stop. Sometimes he coughs it up or ends up burping and full of wind. He never says much and appears to have no time for idle chatter. His vocabulary is limited to just one word and when he says "what" you hope you have his attention but you can never be really sure. Someone once told me no matter where you go the only word you need in any language is "maybe", it commits you to nothing and leaves you open to everything. Jimmy must have heard half of that conversation and decided he could achieve the same with "what".

When he is awake he stares at you intensely and each time he blinks the mood in his eyes seems to change. Within five minutes he can be happy, sad or couldn't care less and still have said nothing. Music was his thing; hum a song and off he'd go, he'd sing "The little shirt me mother made for me" and the family would run for cover. He always finished his meals and whilst he never licked the plates the patterns were always faded. He was always smiling until the deafness came and he adjusted to life half hearing and in some ways opting out.

Forest Gump may have been his idol because whilst Forest walked across America he seemed to walk through Ireland. He even managed to cycle from Belfast to Dublin in a day but that was a long time ago. He swam 365 days a year in the frozen sea. He loved Christmas Day when all the

young guys went for a swim cheered on by their young girl friends who thought they were brilliant, brave, beautiful and daring. He could never understand how they never noticed an 80 year old wrinkly who swam 365 days a year.

Jimmy gave me many things. He taught me the difference between right and wrong. He taught me to be firm and never be walked on or do the walking. Independence was his thing and strangely for a working man in the 60's and 70's with six mouths to feed he was a conscientious objector to nixers.

I often thought he was a saint. He went to mass once a week and said he prayed for me. He gave to charity, his Pioneer pin was a permanent fixture as was his Gold Pelican for giving blood more times than he would say. He never seemed to spend money on himself.

We said the family Rosary until he became fed up of horseplay, catcalling, laughing and the general carrying on which seemed to mar this religious occasion. On Holidays in Tramore to our eternal embarrassment we would sit on the wall along the side of the road as he gave out the Glorious Mysteries. He couldn't have cared less about our teenage worries, he felt proud as he said the family that prayed together stayed together.

Jimmy loved to gamble, he talked a lot about it and had a bicycle which beat a track to the bookies on a Saturday afternoon. One Saturday it was stolen and never replaced. The bookie was probably behind the theft to save himself from all the paperwork behind the shilling trebles and sixpenny Yankees between each race.

Apart from the horses and being eternally good he had two other vices, swearing and women. I have been known to have a salty tongue. He never liked this, said I was a corner boy and when I was small often hit me a clip on the ear or put me to bed for dirty talk. He swore just the once. He was acting strangely when I arrived to collect him for a walk on the beach one Tuesday and he told me to F**** off. So I did not misunderstand him he repeated it again several times and finally again in slow motion just in case I misunderstood. Well I had to F**** off, it was what he wanted that night but he never asked me to again.

He had a hospital appointment in a few months with a specialist and they would tell us what was wrong with him. We thought we knew already but needed it confirmed. He went to a funeral and in the funeral home Jimmy asked my aunt the widow “what happened to your man who wasn’t well”. “He’s in the coffin,” Alice said and somehow saw the funny side of this sad situation. My uncle Aidan who lay in the coffin would have laughed his head off if he had heard this, being a very good natured man and a bit of a joker. This was like his farewell ... a little humour to liven up a sad occasion.

I got a call, he was in hospital for a day or two, When I went to the ward he was on a train travelling around Killiney Hill and looking out the window My Mother was at the bedside. Jimmy would only go if she came too, he wanted to keep an eye on her. He was worried about his money and felt she would spend it when he was out of sight. He was in hospital for two hernias. The doctor could not understand how Jimmy never complained about the pain as he walked about. He said it would cripple any man.

Jimmy was delirious from the medication and saw no one in the room, I knew he was unwell and had been waiting to see a specialist for some time. The doctor knew this and also confirmed Jimmy had tried to escape saying it took four security men to hold him down. The doctor told me the more serious problems would be dealt with at the specialist's appointment in three months time.

"I would like him to be seen by the specialist tomorrow" I said after consultation with the family. "Not possible" said the Doc, "It's gotta be" said I. "Sorry" said the Doc. "Well" I said "I am very sorry but I will be leaving him here till he is seen". "It will be three months" said the Doctor. "That will be alright" I said "He won't eat a lot". I never did a lot for him before but I reckon he would have loved this Thursday night showdown, he gave me my stubborn streak. The Three Months became a day and he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Now we knew what was wrong officially and he could get help.

Let's get back to his vices and the women. One day I told him he had kicked up a fuss and annoyed a lot of people. He was embarrassed and said, "Oh this probably happens all the time". Later he apologised to two very young nurses, they smiled, said they understood and took him for a shower. He came back all smiles and looking a very happy man. One day he sat beside me in the care home and never spoke, he was medicated and had no interest in anything I tried to say or do. After half an hour a nurse passed through. I asked her would she take him back to his room, she agreed and went to talk to his good ear. "Jimmy" she said in her seductive eastern European accent, "would you like to come with me?" After a couple of "Whats" he seemed to get the message. "Of course I would love," he

said. He sprung out of his wheelchair bright eyed and bushy tailed and walked out linking the young nurse. He broke his silence, turned and winked as he left saying “You wait here I won’t be long.”

Alzheimer’s is something which can only get worse and sometimes I think Jimmy and his mates in the care home are the abused of the new century. We have rid the country of most other forms of abuse but the elderly really have no voice and are usually dead before the next election.

An ignorant Matron home ran one care home on very business like grounds. She fixed a spot on the ceiling to look at if she ever spoke at you or pretended to be concerned. She told us the pain Jimmy complained about was imaginary. I never in my life ever heard him complain of pain before. My brother tried to explain to the doctor about the pain. “I will deal with the patient thank you”, he said and turned away. I suppose it was a comfort to the doctor that his patient was deaf and senile and not his Father. If he got his diagnosis wrong he could bury his mistake and claim it was not his fault. He could say the patient couldn’t answer his questions when he tried to help.

Jimmy seemed to like the canteen in the home, it probably reminded him of McDonald’s, and he loved it there. Before he left his home of 47 years he took his wife out for her tea nightly for several months to McDonald’s. Once or twice when he went walkabout he was traced to McDonald’s. As he sat in the canteen alone one night long after mealtime I saw he was crying. “Will you bring me to see my Mother ?” he asked, “She is a lovely woman”. It’s hard to tell someone of 84 their mother passed away forty years ago.

He forgot about his mother like he forgot his name, like he forgot how to smile or open his eyes or how to walk or how to talk, he forgot his life, he forgot his songs, his swearing and his women.

You could write forever about Jimmy and his life but I wonder has he a life now. He waits to meet his maker and just seems to go down hill.

He sits in his chair strapped in just in case he tries to escape, he can't walk, can't talk, can't sit up straight and can hardly open his eyes. When you sit and hold his hand what can you say or do. Every so often as I wonder is he alive or dead and breathing he does something which startles me. Six weeks ago my daughter and myself were with him and as we said our goodbyes a hundred times over in the hope he might respond he lifted his hand and waved goodbye.

People talk of heaven and hell. The most sensible thing I heard was that hell is here on earth and after this there can only be heaven. I believe God is too good to punish people no matter what they have done for all eternity. The main question I ask myself is this and it's a long one. Jimmy swore once, he flirted, he wore a Pioneer Pin but overdosed on Mi Wadi, he blinded us with his Gold Pelican Pin, prayed on the side of the road, sang silly songs and gave good example but why does he deserve this horrible end?

Paul Egan

Dying with Indignity

Haunted face, startled eyes, drawn mouth,
He lies on a trolley
In a corridor of a big hospital.
Sick man, disorientated, shamed, pained,
At the end of his days.

He is eighty-three now.
When he was thirty
He went to England
To feed, house and clothe his family
Who were left behind.

He returned when times got better,
Educated his children
Loved and respected his wife,
Never missed a day from work,
Paid his taxes, liked his neighbours,
Helped them when he could.

He died in the corridor
Of that hospital
His family around him.
His daughter asks:
“What did he do
to deserve this?”

Bernadette Scales

The Hub.

Thin skinned and apple
core centred. you wait for
me to shed my skin.

But patience got the better
of you and I dragged layer
after layer until

I was still left with
nothing, no essence,
no substance, nothing centred.

Lizann Gorman

Chimney Breast

Abandoned in the overgrowth
Standing erect with dignity
Once the hearth and the heart of the homestead
All that is left of a forgotten family
A landmark reminder of the frailty of life.
No smoke in the chimney.

Anne Crinion

Outside the Poet's Garret.

Two white runners swaying softly,
High on an ESB line.
Did Mercury lose his way outside a Galway pub
The fiery course of his flight, so rudely shattered
In our searing light?

Inside the pub, in a dimly lit garret,
Apollo's disciples
Celebrate mournful and happy muse,
Most musical wordsmiths.

Outside in the searching breeze,
The wingless shoes
Create a dance in space,
Round and round they fly
Swirling, swaying,
Unleashed desire, longing,
A shadow of one dear face.

Bernadette Scales

The Carrousel Begins

At last it was mine,
This Sunday afternoon.

March sun seeped through kitchen blinds.
The well worn path
Stretched ahead in the millennium light
To God knows where.
Violets ushered me along
While reliving moments
With the music of Spring.

At the beginning of a carousel,
I wait in anticipation
For scene two,
Embracing French-Canadian waves
Beginning to speed up
Flying
Faster and faster
Until time to shimmer and
Float into the sky,
Still lighting the living room.

As it fades,
Your footsteps many miles away,
Come closer and closer,
Echoing the sizzling sound of
Seafood stir fry,
For the rebirth of the
Carrousel of Life.

Sinéad Mac Devitt

The Kingdom of Evernight

I'd like to build my castle,
Far from road or lane,
Safe from intervention,
Untouched by social stains.

My armoury of music,
Shall serve to fight no wars,
And tapestries of poetry,
Will hang from every wall.

My throne room will be furnished,
With treasures of the mind,
A fountain of imagination,
And above all else, mine.

It will be night time here forever,
Sky lit by stars and moon,
Resting in my darkness,
Safe in solitude.

And I'll ride upon my dragon,
from mountain top to bay,
And marvel at my vast estate,
Where mortals dare not stray.

Agents of deception,
Devils, goblins, ghouls alike,
Practice not their evil doings,
In my land of Evernight.

And in my quiet kingdom,
Angry fists will ne'er be made,

And swords with intent malice,
Shall never once be raised.

No war will ever rage here,
No blood or tears be spilled,
And Seraph spreads undying love,
Over mountain, moor and hill.

Rory O'Sullivan

November.

Night has come, she sees his eyes-
He feels so black, she seems too white:
In crystal dreams he grows to life,
In back-street films, he shines a knife.
And she's so sweet, too swell to kill,
But still he tries to break her will –
To hold her down – to keep her still.
He hears her fear how cold the blade,
He wipes her tear, he cuts her vein.
Oh smell the pain of her warm pulse!
And make the stain come like a blush!
“It's time to die or live by me.”
He lets her lie so breathlessly:
She's fainting slow, in fainting light.
And darkly now with closing eyes,
A smile asleep upon his lips,
He bends to her as if to kiss,
As if to wish her in a whisper,
As if to hold her
Tenderly.

Bláithín Allain

How God Sees Ambition.

A summer morning sun was shining
through my curtains when I woke.
Through my curtains I saw an insect -
spider, earwig, or whatnot -
slowly climbing up the curtain,
silhouetted by the sun.

It climbed its hard, precarious zigzag
until at last, laboriously,
it neared the top.
I yawned and stretched and tugged
and down the insect plunged
to where it should have stayed.

I let it live
to crawl upon the floor.
I could, of course,
have sought it out.
That would have been curtains
for it all right!

I wasn't bothered.
What business had an anonymous insect
climbing my sun-riddled drapes?
What difference did it make
to me or it, whether or not
it reached the top?

Kieran Furey

A Night in Provence.

The Cote d'Azur it certainly was not. It looked more like the Cote Grise as we sped along in the train through an early afternoon mist on our way to Nice. I was in the pleasant company of my classmates who were spending a week in Antibes learning French.

It had been a trying morning in the Centre International d'Antibes. Maybe those language theorists were right after all. They reckoned that it was more difficult to acquire a second or third language after puberty and especially in adulthood. From the cosy carriage, I gazed on the Mediterranean waves crashing grey-haired on to the shore. What a change! The previous day's luminous blue sparkle had been replaced by a hoary pallor.

“Tu pedale dans la choucroute Dan”, said Carol. Everyone laughed. I smiled to myself as I recalled teacher Dominique's flamboyant gesture and her dramatic delivery of that now famous line, when I totally misunderstood one of that morning's exercises. She told us that it meant “to be all at sea” or “to be lost” and it summed up my day perfectly.

Our sightseeing in Nice was sadly curtailed by a very untypical, dull, wet day. We sought refuge in a bar for much of the evening and then adjourned to a restaurant in the old quarter of town. Soon the damp smell of drying clothes was suffused with the aromas of meat, fish and wines. I made my apologies after the Nicean salad and went off to locate a cash machine. It was still wet and miserable. On the way back, I must have taken a wrong turn. No matter which of the little streets I took, I couldn't find the

second course. In my confusion, I concluded that it was better to return to Antibes and await my colleagues.

The train was warm and soothing. I settled back in my seat, the train moved off and I drifted westwards towards Antibes.

When I opened my eyes, things seemed to be different. The carriage wasn't as full and many passengers were rousing themselves from sleep. Strange! "Antibes?" I inquired.

"Non! Non!" the woman replied as she hurriedly disembarked.

"This is not Antibes", said a helpful young man, "It is Les Arcs. The train stops here." A station worker told me that I was sixty kilometres north west of Antibes and confirmed that there was no return train that night. A feeling of perplexity and bewilderment then turned to a blush of horror. I asked him where I could get a taxi. He pondered my request, then shook his head saying it was a long distance. He rambled off about his business.

No one seemed to be particularly concerned at my situation. Thankfully it wasn't raining but it was a very cold October night. The place had a pallid, eerie appearance as if it were covered with the thinnest veneer of frost. Even the streetlights seemed to cast an ashen hue. The sharp, hard wind nipped at my face; I pulled up my collar and fastened the buttons.

It appeared to be more of a large village than a town. It was only 12.30 am and though some windows were lit up,

the place seemed to be deserted. An occasional noise and voice could be heard coming from the rail station. I found two bars - sadly closed - and a hotel. I felt re-assured. A nice meal, a glass of wine and a comfortable bed lay beyond the door.

Meanwhile I returned to the station. At worst I might have to spend the night there. I was shocked to discover that it was locked and appeared to be abandoned. I sat on the bench but the cold soon gnawed at me. I had to keep moving so I wandered back up to the village. I would book into the hotel. There wasn't a sound or movement. I went to the door and knocked. I rapped and knocked ever louder. The noise echoed down the street but it didn't rouse a soul. There was a flash of light. A car zoomed past and a dog barked in the distance.

I tried the railway station again. It was 1.30. I was thrilled to find two station workers leaning against a railing. "Bonjour", I said trying to raise my spirits. In a combination of French, English and desperation I outlined my predicament. They shrugged and offered some unintelligible advice before wandering off into the bowels of the station. "Merci." The silence in their wake was woeful.

I walked over to the monument dedicated to the Allies and the French Resistance fighters of World War Two. It was opposite the hotel. The whole town was stone-cold-still. I rent the quietness with another unsuccessful assault on the hotel door. Had it been prophesized that a dreadful and dangerous man would descend on their town that night? Were they hiding in the cellars while they awaited the police? Sadly it was becoming very apparent

that you couldn't get yourself arrested in this town. It was going to be a long night!

I took a walk up a little side street and I came into a very impressive though bitterly cold and deserted square-La Place Charles de Gaulle. At the end of the square stood another hotel, the large and imposing Hotel de Ville. Redemption! I knocked on the door. I thumped it. I pounded it. I hammered on it. But the Hotel de Ville wasn't taking bookings either.

I sat disconsolately on the bench opposite the hotel. The anaemic, blanched barks of the trees frosted the centre rectangle of the square and deepened the sense of chilly gloom. The last silvery leaves of Autumn shivered in the pasty light. I closed my eyes but the icy shivers wracked my legs and arms. That dull, thudding headache that comes with cold, tiredness and hunger added to my disquiet. I remembered that same feeling from all those years ago when as an eighteen-year-old part-time soldier, I spent a whole night awake on guard duty with the FCA in Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee.

The memory and the experience galvanized me. I got up and marched around the square. I circulated. I square-bashed. Place Charles de Gaulle was now under the control of E company, Kerry FCA, Southern Command. I announced myself to the Hotel de Ville once again, saluted in farewell and marched off.

It was around half past two a.m. I tramped back to the station. On the way I sat down outside a brasserie and called my imaginary waiter.

“Monsieur, café au lait s’il vous plait.” The white plastic chair seemed to entice and draw the cold. After a minute or so it tightened its grip even further. I pulled the coat tightly around my shoulders. I couldn’t sit any more. I had to keep walking. Would I walk the sixty kilometers to Antibes? I wondered should I borrow a car? I sighed for home and the family. Were my classmates from Antibes scouring the country, alerting land and sea rescue? I hoped not. I never did like a fuss. A bin lid rattled way off down a side street.

At the station I laid down in the doorway. I stuffed the sheets of an old newspaper inside my jacket. I pushed my wallet deep into my trousers pocket and put my head against the door. But an even sharper coldness started in the toes, then crept up the legs and gathered in the buttocks. I closed my eyes. I became aware of the stale smell and the icy feel of the glass against my face. The thudding headache and the awful coldness grew in intensity.

I leaned over to the little slit between the sliding doors. I felt the faintest heat but its deceptive promise merely accentuated my growing pain and unease. What if I fell asleep and froze to death? Is this the spot where they would leave the flowers, much to the annoyance of the stationmaster? Rose would be adamant about that. I smiled inside and got up. I had to keep moving. It was a little after three.

I walked for the rest of the night. The whole town was mine. I promised not to look at the watch, but I couldn’t resist. Ages later, it was twenty to four. It was as if time had stalled. I walked around the square, past the fountain, under the clock tower and up and down the main

street, Boulevard Gambetta. I gazed in the shop windows but couldn't stand still for long. I felt vulnerable and alone. I'll never forget it. I prayed.

I spent the final hour of my ordeal rambling around outside the train terminal. The door opened at six. I was insensible to any emotion. I went in, sat on the bench, closed my eyes and waited for the incipient warmth to envelop me. At 6.15 a.m. I finally made contact with a fellow human.

“Aller simple a Antibes, s'il vous plait”. I lay back in my seat. I could feel the rising heat. The train headed off eastwards towards Antibes. The sun was rising in all its red warming splendour over the Alps. It was a beautiful day. It was heaven!

My colleagues hadn't been the slightest bit bothered. That morning they had concluded I slept out. I went along with the charade. But that evening at dinner I told them about my night of misery in Les Arcs. They were stunned and were even more shocked when I told them that I would return there one day and spend at least one night in the wonderful and imposing Hotel de Ville.

“But Dan,” advised Eamonn, “The Hotel de Ville is the town hall.” “Tu pedale dans la choucroute encore Dan”, said Carol. We all laughed.

Dan Daly

Autumn 1979.

We all think that we were there –
Perhaps we were - the evening
After, in the damp autumn air
The blood congealed and someone
Carefully sprinkled earth over it.

The churn
And rev of a reversing float,
The shine of her yellow raincoat,
Invisible to rear view, too small,
Dipped on the road and under –
The lorry's crawl, and
The whole world rent
Asunder by a child's cry and a
Jarring metal scream;
And all the mothers
In all the houses around
Heard the sound and
Blessed themselves and prayed;
For we all played
On Saturdays in the kerbed
And tarmac court.

Then we learned how worlds capsize,
Though not ours, yet – we were
Dead shadows her mother glimpsed,
Mirror images she stared at.
Our play
On cold autumn days rang out like the
Hammers across Calvary;
Our voices were the whoop and yell of soldiers
Dicing for clothes.

Eilis Foran

Waterways

A hot afternoon in July,
bees and butterflies colonise the buddleia,
the garden flows down to the river.

Father turns hay,
Mother stirs raspberry jam.

The latch on the gate gives a well-oiled murmur.
Just turned four, Luke pushes the pram.
Water up to his knees tingles his warm skin.

Emily gurgles. Hers was an easy birth,
slipping out with a smile
for their expectant faces.

His foot hits a rock,
the pram tips,
drags him under too.

Still
she keens to the cold waters.
“Give them back” “Give them back.”

Jane Clarke

Searching

Beyond the brink of well-pressed town
we parked beside the swimming pool,
and crossed the wire and the wall
into the wilds of no man's land
along the disused railway line
between Blackwater and Windtown.

Our rows unravelled as we scoured
boggy gripes, thorn thickets,
thistle clumps, entangled briars
flagged with scraps of blown debris.
We probed, fearful of finding,
pilgrim sticks our sole support.

Down a dim lane a vacant house
stared glassless, roof ribs bared.
We entered through a gaping door
and found nothing but embers,
floor strewn with detritus of excess,
smashed bottles and drained cans.

Astray ourselves we slogged
in ragged groups, groping and grubbing.
Eventually in eye high reeds
we stopped before the water's brink
where we could hear but not see
Blackwater rush to Boyne embrace.

Relieved to have failed
we reformed, plodded foot-sore
back to the bleak roadside.
Two scratches on my left hand
seeped blood, a thorn tear
on my black overcoat. Later

we stared at her, pained but peaceful.
She ignored the wilderness
and chose instead familiar water
bordering well-ordered parkland,
where once clergy congregated
to embark for eastern missions.

Michael Farry

Tears

If there's no shame in crying
Why is it tears that we hide.
If everyone does it
Why do we search for pride.
Why do we stand tall, refuse to be weak
Refuse to give in.
Why do we keep fighting
Never let anyone win.
If there's no shame in crying,
Then why is crying punishing
If there's no shame in crying, why does it hurt
Why do tears sting.

Kimberley Gwilliams

The Only Thing That's Real.

I'll hide you in my iris and I'll feed you my remains
And the only toy you'll play with will be your own disdain.
I'm not the kind to be too kind unless I get something too,
And you might see this as a flaw but at least I can admit it's true.
I'm happy when I'm angry and I'm angry when I'm not,
The only thing that might just save you is a silver arrowed shot
(Into the heart I play like a cello)
I'll hide behind a crowd of arachnarexic girls,
Just don't expect me to tell you they're human beneath their frills.
I'm just another flaw and you're just another whore,
And I will keep you hidden until you learn to adore.
I need to make you hate me, then I will not be alone-
You'll be my arachnophobic anaerobic clone.
At night we'll say goodbye and I will set you free
But I know you'll crawl right back because you need to feed off me.
Your eyes are imitations of a beggar's precious gems,
Your skin is paling yellow and it's rotting like dead stems.
I'll crown you with a cross and a rose I've crucified-
I'll never forget your true beauty when you died.
My precious little infant, my sacred little child,
I'll hold you now and wrap you up in flowers and nettles wild.

Forever these walls will hold your screams.

isolde stapleton

From the Wellington Monument.

The parish church
Bells ringing out
The measure of the day
A Mass perhaps,
The Angelus
Or someone
Passed away.

And everything
About his place
The steady hand
The measured pace.

Impatient
Waiting to be off
The columns turned
The moments
Passed.

Dressed, for
The Phoenix Park
And a good cigar
The woods laid out
The town below.

And eyed it all
The shadows cast
Cold colours
And the world
Away.

Frank Murphy

When It Is Folly To Write Of Beauty.

As a bullet whirrs past your ear
like an enraged animal in the bewildering night
it is folly to write of beauty
to fashion lovely poems
to sing lulling songs
to begin a prayer or finish an accusation
even to hint at a greater anything
a something supernally more
just trace the outline of mortality
and retreat to the bare bones of antiquity.

As a bullet grazes your thoughts
draws blood and sense from your rhythms
harsh snappy words are in order
and ugly unqualified images
like the piss of a wounded animal
lying at your side
encumbered by all of animal history
you thankful for the whirr
for the grazing and its pain
for the difference between you
and the unfortunate prey.

J. J. Steinfeld

Still Breathing (For Darfur)

we exist against the selection of hunger
our gauntness a voice more vocal than the media

we live in a world that cursed the era of hitler
but now bows into the memories of his passion

we stand albeit bent resisting to fall to extinction
although the days of our lives seems to swing

into dark years and our life is a gasp of rotten air
we hold up the bland lives thrown at us

we float in the depth of shallow emotion
to keep our sanity soldered with brokenness

although insanity and death are the choices
left in the basket of our humanness

our minds fights to breathe amidst
the constellated anger of a craving people

we keep up against the dearth of everything
even though pain is scarce and vacuum is a resort

Jumoke Verissimo

Untitled.

4 weeks and
I've got a hell
of a nose,
hope I don't
take after him.

3 months.
I know they're young
and haven't got much,
but at least I'm warm
and well fed,
don't like hearing
the shouting 'n' screaming,
the constant crying.
I mean,
what is adoption anyway?

6 months.
I feel pretty
alert today.
Had a hell of
a journey,
jostled about a bit
still,
it's gone quiet now.
Wish they'd call
me something other
than 'it',
use my name-
'Foetus',
and,
what is abortion anyway?

Chris Major

The Showrooms Of Savile Row.

After mass The Blue Donnell eagerly
applied himself to the Fashion Competition
in *The Sunday Press*.

Meticulously he rated the models 1-10
for style and elegance and poise,
assessed their outfits
like a catwalk commentator.

We wondered at this preoccupation
until one Sunday afternoon
my father shouted over the flurry
of the abandoned dinner that Blue was listed
amongst the winners of a bespoke suit.
For weeks we looked for signs
of grandeur concealed
under his torn and putrid gaberdine.

He silenced all our talk the day
he swanked up to the front pew
in his exquisite hand-made suit,
tailored to compliment
every line of his worn body.
We took in the cashmere two piece,
the double-breasted jacket
with single vent,
agreed that The Blue left them all standing
but my father specified
the Bank Manager and the priest.
Blue, a reticent and awkward sort,
received the compliment like a gentleman
born to the showrooms of Savile Row.

Margaret Galvin

Regeneration.

The reason why
there's so much dust in this Hoover bag
is that we renew each cell in our bodies
every seven years -
skin and bone, fat and muscle,
heart and mind, you name it, is shed.

Everything about you from when I first knew you
is replaced.
So when I say
you're not the man I thought you were,
you're not.
And I am not the girl you married either.

But what I can't figure is
if my brain is in this restoration,
why can I still remember
everything you said
everything I did
the night we met?

We drop our body crumbs together.
Scratch the itch.
They gather under the furniture
finger with lip, knuckle with rib
and I suck them up
with the Hoover.

Kate Dempsey

In Africa.

I

In Africa silence and sound are one,
The sun and rain do rein together
And we the people live and die at once.

II

The silence of thin rain droplets tiptoeing on tin roofs,
The sound of heavy women married for years
Weighing the weather to determine whether rain or shine.

III

Children whisper that a lion is being born somewhere
In the concealed mystery of the African savanna,
Under the shade of an enigmatic tree surrounded by sun and rain.

IV

In Africa mighty kings are born when rain and sun clash
Over the footpaths and the tin or thatched roof of tattered houses.
Shamba boys are born under the exact conditions too.

V

In Africa everything meets; the past and the present,
Modernity and the wilderness, old and young, today and
tomorrow,
White and black, slavery and freedom, and of course cultures.

Olutayo K. Osunsan

Indifference

At the Dawrpui Church
the baby-brunette's hair mingle
with the hair of her mother.

She is indifferent to
the scores of hands of Magi and Moses
flung into the air
under the varnished woods
where the clergy-man sits.

Deep grooves of her almond-eyes
still gleam with shed tears.

Another kid
slung on the waist of his mother
doesn't cry.

His almond eyes have red outlines.
His white iris dip into the blue of water
like two big eyes on the facade
of a Nepalese temple
in a picture post-card.

Arun Gaur

Any Trace.

The ladder is the first thing I notice in the photograph; five rungs visible above the shaft out of which they had lifted the three inert bodies - victims of a gas leak - an hour earlier. How many more rungs of the ladder had my grandfather climbed down that morning to reach his two colleagues? What was he thinking as he moved, rung by rung, into the blackness below? His hands would have grasped the ladder tightly, causing the muscles to bulge on his arms, like when he cut oats with a scythe in Lios Ban - one of his ten fields at his home place in Turlough.

Albion Street, Manchester, 9.30 am, 28 July 1938.
Somebody - unknown - had written these words at the bottom of the photo I am now holding.

In the picture a woman with a scarf is standing across the road from the accident scene, leaning against a wooden hoarding, her two hands clasped to her face. Another, younger looking woman, wearing a pretty floral overall is handing a jug to one of the workmen. Something about the way she is standing suggests that she would flirt with the men at another time. The long black arm of a crane juts into the air, as if exhausted from the effort of hoisting the bodies from the bowels of the street. An elegant metal street lamp shines above the shaft, like a lighthouse looking out to sea at a stricken ship. Three men in soft cloth caps - one pointing downwards - look into the gaping hole, as if searching for a sign from the departed men.

As I look at the picture, over six decades later, the scene reminds me of a sign I had once seen at a railway

station: You'll never see this man again who sat across from you. Better to look away.

On the morning of the accident he would have walked from his lodgings, leaving the indent of his head on a pillow, and - under his bed - a canvas bag which held all the belongings he had brought with him on the boat from Ireland. He would have walked along Albion Street, hemmed in by the red-brick walls of the terraced houses on either side. Perhaps he would have thought of how different the street was to the narrow road at home, bordered by the dry stone walls he had built; the road that curved up the hill to Lios Ban, where he would shortly cut the oats he had planted in the spring. Little did he think that he would return home earlier than expected.

Had any trace of his life been left behind in that city street? Did those, who witnessed what happened that morning, tell the story to their children and grandchildren? Or, was the episode in Albion Street something that was talked about for a short while and then forgotten? Was it a passing thing, like the trail a snail might leave on the ground or a long tail of water on a window pane after a shower of rain?

The evening of the accident a Garda from Ballymoe cycled the three miles to Turlough with a telegram for the Murphy family. John Murphy travelled to Manchester to accompany home his father's remains. A representative of George Chandler and Company - Joe Murphy's employer - attended the funeral at the Parish Church of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. Hundreds of mourners packed the church. At the funeral mass the choir sang out: Dies Irae, Dies Ila, Solvet saeculum in savila and

the congregation intoned: May perpetual light shine upon him and may he rest in peace.

I have jumbled memories of the earliest summer I can recall. I am standing outside our home with my father, John, who is on a ladder throwing pebble dash plaster with a trowel on the outside walls of the new house. It is across the road from the cottage where he - and his father before him - had lived. I think it was around this time that I had noticed a black-framed certificate hanging on the wall of my parents' bedroom in the new pebble-dashed house: In memory of the heroism of Joseph Murphy, who died as a result of efforts to save human life at Manchester in 1938. My Hero Grandfather.

But my clearest memory of that summer is of a bright August day - cutting the oats with my father at Lios Ban. Here, the two of us, seated side by side on the horse drawn mower, circled the field in large swathing movements, felling the ripened crop. When my father's hands grasped the ropes to rein in the horse, the muscles on his arms bulged; it was like when we pumped air into black bicycle tubes.

'I'll show you how to catch the hare like your grandfather showed me.'

I got more and more excited as the circle of standing oats grew smaller and my father slowed the mowing movements. We both watched without a word. A grey-brown hare sprang from the standing oats, long ears alert as he stood - startled for a moment - then leapt forward. We got a glimpse of its white belly as he ran towards the gorse hedge.

‘Quick, you can catch him if you throw salt on his tail!’ laughed my father. ‘Ah, he’s got away.’

The hare had disappeared into the gorse hedge – vanished without trace. For a long time afterwards I tried hard to hold on to the picture of the disappearing hare in my mind.

I watch my father’s hand resting on the patch work quilt of the sick bed - sinewy, pale and thin-wristed. Above the bed is the framed certificate, sent from Manchester. Earlier in the week I had spent a day at Castlebar Library, searching the microfilm records of the newspapers of summer 1938. I searched in vain for coverage of my grandfather’s death. The only record of him that I could find was in the Census of 1911: Joe Murphy, his young wife and their baby son, John, were recorded as residents of Turlough. The newspapers had many other tragic stories of summer 1938: a young woman charged with capital murder for the death of her baby; a Mayo youth drowned while bathing at Rose-on-Wye, England; a County Sligo farmer swept out to sea by strong currents. But, there was no trace of the story of my grandfather and his heroic deeds in a place called Albion Street.

I leave the sick room and take the path behind the house between the fields, mouthing the name of each as I pass: Ait Abhaile, Lios and Uisce, Craggach and Lios Ban. On either side of the path are the dry stone walls which grandfather had built over the years. At the top of the hill I reach Lios Ban and the harvest field of four decades earlier. It is like I am there again, stretching out my hands to catch the fleeing animal. But there is nothing there.

I retrace my steps back from Lios Ban and down the hill, aware of the glimmer of light from the sick room.

They bury him on a drizzling Tuesday afternoon in the family plot, next to my grandparents. With taut ropes, they lower the coffin into the black hole and I cannot bring myself to look down. From the hill-side cemetery I can see long rows of stone walls stretch out into the distance, leaving a long snake-like trail on the landscape. When I walk away from the grave I leave footprints on the path from the sticky earth clinging to my shoes.

Patricia Byrne

Boyne Poem

No thundering cliffs of wild heather here.
But dreamlike nature, suave, genteel and seductive.
Ripples of blue in the wide expanse,
Concealing imaginary salmon, swaying water lilies,
And souls, who ended their earthly journey,
In the syrupy undercurrent.

She is proud of her long life,
Her place in a small nation's history,
A sacred keeper of bloody secrets and nefarious deeds.
Cradled in the arms of this county Louth town,
Her escort to the sea, and witness to an unfading beauty.
In timeless majesty, for generations past, and yet to come.

Dermot McGarthy

Nightscape (For Brian)

A yawning oak:
Caricature-whittled
Frost-fingers
Snatch at horsemen
Of the gods of Dana -
Riding.
Sough; and a stooping
Bough at agony with itself,
Curls - a ram's horn -
Gnarling the hog
At hiding
In a butt
Of Hawthorn:
A discarded dandy-brush
Combing through tangle
By trudge and by trog.

Beyond the hedge,
Regard the high air
Where the Tuatha de Danaan
Glide; Join
The dots and Orion
Hunts the Great Bear
From dusk till dawn
And down a sable Serengeti
As a moon-bright bauble
Vaults the sputtering, spangle
Of Boyne.
My little dog
Bones-in,
Prick-eared; guttural
As Reynard rails
The hoary still;
Solitary,
On Girley bog.

Brendan Carey Kinane

Spectrum.

In the golden morning I gasp at his beauty.
I hear giggles and gurgles, see immature legs,
Chubby pink thighs, sock on one foot,
Baby fat face, he wears nappy and vest.
The cat purrs next to him; playmate and toy.
Non-spill beaker of warm milk; early morning joy.
Streaming light pouring a spectrum of colour,
Dribbling on his jumbled up life,
Glistens in the wet of a big pink tongue,
Content with his syndrome, my eight year old son.

Susan Gilbert

Mayo Without The Lights

Imagine Mayo without the lights –
Ballina, Westport, Castlebar
Melting at night to a landscape

Of rough fields, desolate roads
Dark conspiring trees
All haunted by the darker sea.

Restore, restore
The bright buzz in the bars.
Restore our shared electric vision!

Eamon Cooke

Grandpa Sold Colours

Grandpa sold colours
paint for the poor
wallpaper for the well-to-do
but he wore grey every day

he knew the names
departures and arrivals
of every passing train
but he never took one

whenever I wanted to travel
he always gave me some extra
to dine in the restaurant
trading in his rainbow money

for my tales of steaks
cut in big stations
apple pies munched flying
high over the Rhine

blurred visions of my journeys
feelings of a life in transit
I collected for my forebear
who travelled only in his mind

Grandpa sold colours
teddy bear dreams for rich kiddos
grey coats for the Copperfields
but for me they were all free.

Frank Joussen

Swans In Flight

Pale morning sunlight
Swans rise out of the bay,
Low flying past my window
Wax white wings flapping.
Valkyries to Valhalla
On Good Friday morning.

Memories surface
Swans on the Boyne
Majestic, aloof downriver
Breasting the current.
A sentinel of reeds and rushes
And lacy fronds of willows.

High on the hill
Silent bells of the Church spire,
Eerie stillness inside.
Shrouded statues guard the
Ice white altar.
Through the rose window
Pale morning sunlight
On Good Friday morning.

Eve Devereux

Winter Cattle

There were three of them
And their house was gone
The mother, her daughter
Some sort of son

God knows how they managed
Offspring without staff
Their bodies harsher, taller
More proud of hardship than delight

Their skin, that heirloom
Was mushroomlike - in colour
The nature of their minds
Was lank. Their sayings hopeless
Quite satisfactory and dank

Jolly with scones, good old gin
They hoarded newspapers
Bickered over library books and cats

And on the beaten roads
Went forth in single file
Chair boned, features nasal
Emotions nasal

Going past the people
Like beasts on the road
Giving them nothing but hip bones
That, and the image of their pain

Patrick Dillon

Notes on Contributors

Bláithín Allain is an Irish citizen living in Brittany, France for the past twelve years. She is in charge of a bilingual drama association and also teaches English. Her poems are personal reflections on life, death and love. They also deal with the darker aspects of contemporary society as well as marginal populations.

Benjamin Burns was born in Hastings, England in 1990, but has lived in Geevagh, Co. Sligo, for the last 15 years. He is a member of The Moylurg Writers who are based in Boyle, Co. Roscommon.

Patricia Byrne, a native of Co. Mayo, lives in Limerick. She started creative writing two years ago. She is an award winner at Dromineer Literary Festival, has had short stories broadcast on BBC Northern Ireland and poetry published in the annual literary journal, *Stony Thursday*.

Richard Cahill from Tipperary has been writing poetry for just over a year. One of his poems will appear in *The SHOP* – a magazine of poetry later this year.

Brendan Carey Kinane is a company director living with his family in Athboy, Co. Meath. He has published a number of poems in the past. Apart from writing, his interests include ornithology and the natural world.

Jane Clarke won second prize in the 2006 Francis Ledwidge Poetry Awards and has had two short stories published. Her imaginative landscape was shaped by the Roscommon farm where she grew up and she now lives with her partner in county Wicklow.

Eamon Cooke has had poetry published in magazines throughout Ireland. His first collection *Berry Time* was published by Dedalus Press in 2002. Recently retired from Meath County Council, he now lives in Kells.

Anne Crinion, a native of Trim, Co. Meath, is a retired photographer who enjoys painting and more recently has begun to write.

Dan Daly, a founder member of Boyne Writers Group, was born in Kerry. A teacher, he has been principal in Robinstown, Co. Meath since 1979. He has been writing as a hobby for many years and has had poems and articles published in *Meath Chronicle*, *INTOUCH Magazine* and *Sunday Independent*. He also paints for pleasure.

Kate Dempsey, Maynooth, Co. Kildare has been previously published in *Poetry Ireland*, *The Shop*, *Coffeehouse*, *Stony Thursday* and the anthology *Backyards of Heaven*. She was short listed for the Hennessy New Irish Writing in the emerging poetry category and won the Cecil Day Lewis award for both poetry and a one act play.

Eve Devereux was born in Navan but has lived most of her adult life in Dublin. She has had poems published in *Suburb Arts Magazine* and *The Fountain*. She was highly commended in Meath Libraries Poetry competition (2004) and has read her script on R.T.E's *Sunday Miscellany*.

Patrick Dillon grew up in Termonfeckin, Co. Louth. In 1997 he got a scholarship to a summer workshop at the Poets House in Donegal. In 2002 he was selected by *Poetry Ireland* for their *Introductions* series. He has given several readings over the years and has just finished writing a novel called *The Cup*.

Paul Egan a founder member of Boyne Writers Group, is never short of an opinion. A native of Dublin he lives just outside Trim.

Michael Farry, a founder member of Boyne Writers Group, has published three books on the history of his native Sligo. Poems of his have been published in *Crannog*, *Revival* and *Carillon* magazines and a poem of his was short listed for the Sligo Scriobh Poetry Competition 2006.

Orla Fay, Dunderry, Co. Meath has a degree in English and History and a diploma in Montessori education. In the past she won the *Meath Chronicle/Bookwise Short Story Prize* with *The Magician* and the Drogheda Creative Writers Adult Poetry Prize with *Death of Love in Autumn*. She is passionate about writing.

Eilis Foran was born in Galway in 1976 and works as a research scientist in NUI Galway.

Joe Fulham lives in Ratoath, Co. Meath. He has had poems published in *Cyphers*, and in British, American and Italian publications. He also has a poem included in the Oxfam Poetry calendar for 2007.

Kieran Furey, born in Co. Roscommon and currently living in Longford has published about 200 poems and has had work in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Shop* and *Cyphers*. Competitions won include the Allingham Short Story Competition and the Spanish language section of the Dun Laoghaire International Poetry Competition.

Margaret Galvin is a Wexford poet whose work has appeared in a number of literary journals in Ireland and the UK. She won both the Brendan Kennelly and the Smurfit Samhain Awards in 2003. Her third collection of poetry, *The Waiting Room*, was published in 2005 by Doghouse Books, Tralee.

Lizann Gorman, Ballina, Co. Mayo has had work published in: *The Mayo Anthology* edited by Richard Murphy, 1990, *Force 10 in Mayo* edited by Dermot Healy, 1991, *The Mayo Anthology 4* edited by Michael Gorman, 1994, *Years of Mondays*, 2004, *Crannog 12*, 2006, *Present Tense* edited by Macdara Woods, 2006. She was shortlisted for the Strokestown Poetry Prize, 2006,

Arun Gaur is a freelance journalist, a photographer, a travelogue writer and a book-reviewer. He lives in Panchkula, India. He has had poetry published in *Ariga*, *Sol Magazine*, *Poetry Magazine*, *Ygdrasil*, *Eclectica*, *42opus*, *Orbis* and *Poetry Salzburg Review*.

Susan Gilbert lives in Nobber, Co. Meath with her two children and the family cat. Her lifelong love of reading has developed into a fascination with words and writing.

Kimberley Gwilliams is a 17 year old student studying A level English, GCSE Maths and BTEC Skills For The Working Office at the Royal National College for the Blind (RNCB) in Hereford. She is a keen writer and aspires to one day become an author.

Catherine Hastings, a founder member of Boyne Writers Group, lives in Summerhill, Co. Meath. She is currently undertaking a diploma in creative writing.

Kevin Higgins's first collection of poems *The Boy With No Face* which was published by Salmon in 2005 was short-listed for the 2006 Strong Award for Best First Collection by an Irish Poet. Kevin teaches poetry workshops at Galway Arts Centre. Kevin's poem, *A Brief History of Those Who Made Their Point Politely and Then Went Home*, features on *Life Lines* – a poetry CD in aid of Oxfam. Kevin's second collection of poems, *Time Gentleman, Please*, is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry.

Frank Jossen, a German grammar school teacher who writes exclusively in English has had poems published in a number of print magazines, e.g. *Pulsar* (U.K.), *Southern Review*, *Ulitarra*, *Imago*, *The New England Review*, *POET*, *Poetry Today*, in anthologies published by *Poet Works Press* (Florida) *World Poetry* (India) and in numerous ezines.

Sinead MacDevitt was born in Navan, Co. Meath. She has studied Speech & Drama and Montessori teaching. Her work has appeared in *Extended Wings* and *Heart of Kerry*.

Dermot McGarthy lives in Drogheda, Co. Louth. After graduating from U.C.D. in 1987 he taught English throughout Europe and the Far East. Since 1996 Dermot has been a lecturer of Communications in the Dublin Institute of Technology. He has been writing short fiction since his late teens and for the last six years has been writing poetry.

Alan McKean, from Lancashire, is an accountant and a 55 year old grandfather of two. He started writing three years ago, has contributed to www.footballpoets.org and had a couple of pieces published in small magazines. He has also been featured in *The Poets Letter* anthology of new voices.

Anne Maher, Killucan, Co. Westmeath is a member of "The Mullingar Scribblers" which was founded in the year 2002 and has fifteen members at present. They meet regularly on a Monday night at the Mullingar Arts Centre.