



OUTBURST 7

Jean O'Brien.

Mary O'Donnell

David Mohan

Liam Duffy

Diego Morelli

Ram Krishna Singh

Margaret O'Donnell.

Laura Broomfield

David Redmond

Steven Byrne

Colm Reynor

Kerrie O'Brien

Christina Murphy

Eamonn O'Neill

-

Welcome to the new look Outburst, we hope you will join us on the journey to the edge of the known world of literary exploration. We will continue to privilege the core values of Outburst, namely to encourage new writers and innovation. But we are of the strong opinion that it is time for a revolution in the publishing of Irish poetry, one that will reflect, not repress, the exciting new voices that are emerging in this post-Heaney phase. Too many long shadows distort the Irish imagination, and too many influences have wielded their power over the fragile voice as it strives to be heard. We encourage you to break those shackles and to begin a new era in the history of Irish poetry.

We will continue our short story section. But it too needs major rehabilitation. We don't need corny narratives; the narrative is dead. We are looking for at least the deconstructed narrative, but ideally the Beckettian as opposed to the Frank O'Connor.

The visual arts section may pose problems, but if we get worthwhile submissions we will consider them. We will include a poetry review section if and when we are sent publications worthy of review.

We want you to join us on this trip, but be patient. Mistakes will be made, as in all revolutions, but the intentions are awesome! Keep in touch with us on our Facebook page.

Submission Guidelines

We accept submissions all year round and will consider works from most genres. Excessively violent or sexually explicit writing will not be considered. We are mainly interested in the following:

Short stories or flash fiction (Up to 4,500 words)
Poetry (No line limit).

Book reviews (Up to 1,000 words)

Guidelines for text based submissions

1. Please send all text based submissions as an email attachment and name the file as follows: title – author.
2. We accept text based submissions in .doc, .rtf, and .txt formats.
3. Include a brief biography of between 20-40 words with your work.
4. Let us know if submitted work has been published elsewhere, we will accept previously published work in some cases.
5. A maximum of four poems, two pieces of flash fiction, or a single story per submission, please.
6. Prose submissions to be sent to submissions@outburstmagazine.com.
7. Poetry submissions to be sent to outburstpoetry@gmail.com.

Poetry books for review to :

The Editor
Outburst Magazine
Irey
Ballyfin
Portlaoise.

If you are working on something which falls outside these categories, or that you feel might be of interest to the magazine, feel free to send it in.

Look up our Facebook page for updates, news and discussions.

Black Bird

It sings unseen in ebb of trees
at the end of our backyard.
A sort of suburban nightingale
that might be a blackbird
with ambition, or with just

a voice of ashes
to match this evening sunset.
I hear it out as far as I can,
letting the flow of its music
pass over me, as though

its song were the brush
of the wings of dusk.
Its call crosses the garden
and says without words
that soon the earth

will put on darkness,
and every one of us
that live in shade of houses
must shut our eyes
and go to bed.

David Mohan

David Mohan has been published in *The Stony Thursday Book*, *Abridged*, *The Moth*. He won the Hennessy/ *Sunday Tribune* Poetry Award, the 2008 overall New Irish Writer Award, and the 2009 Over the Edge Writer of the Year.

Country music

Vulgar
dirty
tractor wheel sex
so rough
the trailer
is huckle-bucking.

From the radio
at breakfast,
to the open car windows
on hot sticky days
and the remote
bar and lounge
with its show bands
and line dancing
on weekends
(as if they weren't fascist enough).

He drinks tequila
she talks dirty in Spanish
and the mud

isn't the only reason
to keep your boots on.

Liam Duffy

Liam Duffy is a student of Public and Social Policy at the National University of Ireland, Galway, where he was the editor of their Writers Society's magazine the Sharp Review. He recently took a break from Ireland to check out the poetry scene in Finland and study at the University of Helsinki. He has most recently been published in the anthology Emergency verse, Poetry In Defence Of The Welfare State, The Irish Left Review and has a poem forthcoming on Wordlegs.com, as well as reading at the West Cork Literary Festival 2010 as part of a reading dubbed: Irish Poets: A New Generation

.Hunting Truffles

Throw out the maps, the charts, the plans
go like truffle hunters out from dusk to dawn,
sniffing and searching under trees
in damp woods; the willows, oaks, elms.
Dig for White Gold imbued with the taste
and tang of earth, of pepper, of fungus,
breath in the musky smell.

From this you will know there are no
absolutes winnow your memories,
unstitch your loves, ruffle your senses,
dream of the Spanish Virgin,
Virgende los delores, resplendent in velvet,
her crown glowing gold and then throw
them all like windlestraws out onto air
and see what floats and see what falls.

Jean O'Brien.

Jean O'Brien is the current winner of the biennial Arvon International Poetry Award, judged by the Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. She also won the 2008 Fish Poetry Award. She has published three collections of poetry, her last being *Lovely Legs* (Salmon Pub. 2009) and has a new collection due in September. She tutors in creative writing in the Irish Writers' Centre in Dublin

.

Mirages are fallen cultures

Mirages are fallen cultures
Treasure Islands are for
the occasional guest
friend of a friend
in a prophetic stance.

Threenesses harpooned by Zen
As you dream that I am dreaming
As you state that I am an artifact

The time of awaking is posing;
- statues, hold your breath.
Diego Morelli

Diego Morelli

“victorgodot” is the pen name of Diego Morelli, a poet and blogger living in Berlin, Germany. He self-published a chapbook, “Dramatic Frogs”, and he maintains blogs of poetry in English and Italian.

REVELATIONS

Widening cracks, leaking roofs
choked drains in the courtyard
water logging and myriad
such small things make rains a pain

there's no romance in rainbow
I can't shape colours of morning
morning shapes my colour:

I'm the victim of my views
that shape my head each day
realities and yoga conspire

drinks and pills deride from clothesline
flowers and trees speak in grey
compost of years oozes no wisdom

whatever the poetry, it stinks
idols on the beasts and cattle
overload the carriage
I can't deliver the burden

prostrate and worship
touch the feet , foolishness
make me small , frustrate
sitting in the dust , degrade

it's long fog , with blurred sight
virtually blind, no seer
no revelations

RAM KRISHNA SINGH

Ram Krishna Singh, Ph.D. teaches English language skills to tertiary level students in a technical university in India. He has written more than 150 research articles, 160 book reviews, and 36 books, including *Sense and Silence: Collected Poems* (2010), *Using English in Science and Technology*(2010), and *Mechanics of Research Writing* (2010).

GOTH PERSEPHONE'S MOTHER ASKS HER TO DO THE MESSAGES

Persephone dear, run you on out, bear the buds with care,
they've wintered deeply and today you must dress the season.
Over there, drab hedges in need of blackthorn studs,
the chain metal of early dew, cast your tattooed arms
over the chestnut, it's wind-chilled since the high hedge
was cut, alone on the field's edge, you'd wonder
at the man that sprays and plants, so that sister earth
has scarcely a breath between seasons.

But run you on out Persephone, gently, mind,
along the gardens, along night streets
where cherries tremble, and rowans
fear the boys with knives and needles,
alone since the older men have left on journeys,
sequestered behind high walls, foot-deep metal doors.
The lads need us, you flooring them in black boots,
skirt flouncing your hips, make-up like poppy pollen,
shove it up the nose of spring, let her snort it high!

Fill these baskets Persephone dear, to the windy streets
of cities, towns, rush on to where the young are deserted,
we must not fail, but play a concert in yellow and purple,
our optimistic tartans, bagpipes of the branches
hailing life in sun and rain, wee birds on the march
and singing contrapuntal. Away with you, Persephone,
lift the garment of spring, bloomers and g-strings,
slips and dangling under-things on every tree, hedge, field,
bannering out this morning across the provinces!

Mary O'Donnell

Mary O'Donnell's first three poetry collections (Reading the Sunflowers in September; Spiderwoman's Third Avenue Rhapsody; Unlegendary Heroes) were published by Salmon Poetry. The 2003 collection September Elegies was published by Lapwing Press, Belfast and her selected poems, The Place of Miracles appeared in 2006 from New Island Books. A sixth collection, The Ark Builders, appeared from Arc Publications UK in autumn 2009 and in 2010 an anthology of Galician women's poetry in translation – To the Winds Our Sails: Irish Poets Translate Galician Poetry – which she co-edited with Dr. Manuela Palacios, appeared from Salmon Poetry.

She has also written three novels and two collections of short fiction, most recently the short stories 'Storm Over Belfast' (published by New Island Books). A member of Aosdana, she teaches poetry part-time at NUI Maynooth. Further information at www.maryodonnell.com

HOME

In my mind
I dig my hands into the moss of you
I sit in fields
and listen to the gorse pop its seeds

In my mind
I walk into your cold rough seas
your seaweed hair
streels around me

In my mind
I walk the Dublin streets
listen to the softness
of your voice

In my mind
I inhale the tang of you
your life's blood
mingles with mine

In my mind
I hear the struggle
of how you were
and who you are now

Margaret O'Donnell.

Margaret O'Donnell is Irish, but has been living in San Diego, California, for the past seven years. She has been nominated twice for the Sunday Tribune/Hennessy New Irish Writers' Award (once for a short story, and once for poetry) and had pieces published in newspapers in Wales, and in San Diego.

F, 27, Roscommon

She crossed her arms
And gripped the hem
Pulling skywards,
Her sweater peeled off
And revealed beneath
Mottled spools of flesh.

Up over her breasts,
Encased in a once-white bra
And finally up
Over her large head
Freed a clammy red face
And armpits not so fresh.

Unclasping the bra
Releases a heavy bosom
At the front and back
Next off are her jeans,
Holding up rolls of fat
She draws in her breath.

Pushing open the button
Brings a long exhale
The zip slides easily
Less so the denim
Over hips so wide
And thighs of such depth.

She kicks off her shoes
Lays waste to wrinkled jeans
And off with sweaty socks

A glance in the mirror
At dimpled arms and
Legs damp and red.

A man's large t-shirt
With no original owner
Provides some cover
Against no one else's gaze
And climbing under the duvet
She sleeps alone in bed.

Laura Broomfield

Laura Broomfield Poetry is an entertaining hobby that allows Laura to remember observations, or to imagine lives. Laura has had a number of poems published in anthologies previously.

Becoming a saint

In spite of the halo, becoming a saint
is not the same as sunbathing.

Long ago, when pencils and matches were common,
and rivers were always cold, even on the hottest days,

you could see right through a thin slice of lemon
just enough to read in Genesis what the serpent said,

which was not really meant to cause trouble,
just some fun in a garden that had

no *keep off the grass* signs. Life could have been
lovelier, if God hadn't been so needy.

David Redmond

Born in NJ, **David Redmond** moved to Massachusetts to teach fine arts at Merrimack College long ago. He is a sculptor, painter and writer and serves as a contributing editor and reviewer for Art New England Magazine. He still teaches at Merrimack, but would rather live in Scotland .

Poem of the month competition

October results

IS THIS REAL LIFE

Dancing through mine-fields, running barefoot to auto-erotic death,
am I the only one here who feels half alive?
When the reflection in the silver platter was never the person you felt
you were.
When the golden light coming over dark hills hits that side of your
face you never see and you're left thinking, is this really me?
Lifting up your shirt to reveal heart shaped bruises and self-inflicted
love bites, is this real life?
Is this a dream of a dream of a dream, butterflies and hurricanes,
chaos and theory, and me, alone, with something inside yearning to
break free and my mortality keeps me infinitely depressed, oppressed
and always obsessed ?
I found God at the bottom of empty liquor bottles, and the
devil seeks me with each passing moment that I consider the futility
of heart-attacks and the beauty of symmetry.
My white whale swims in my bloodstream, call me Ishmael, is this
physiology? Is this all just a series of electrical currents, double-helix
philosophy and a placenta gene-pool?
I want to know what rotting flesh smells like, is it like death in winter
or grass in summer?
Is it me? Or was it always about you?
Am I a lamb to the slaughter or an embalmer to the laughter?
There has to be a reason for almost most of this!!
Would I choose to die in a sanatorium alone after a series of stroke

like blackouts or to die in the gutter burned by the white light of
some deity's graces?
I do know I will never figure anything out here standing naked in my
father's shoes.
I am all teeth and no wisdom.
Nothing to excess and everything in moderation is a great way to live
a life, its neither famine nor feast, S&M nor feet.
It's you and it's me, it's the chemicals in our bloodlines and it's the
relationships we destroy between days filled with filthy children and
jacked-up pensioners.
You wouldn't believe the morose thoughts that I think.
I think I want to fall, weightless, carefree.

Eamonn O'Neill

Balance

I perch - witless
If I kneel
as you ask

Will you steady me?

I am wary

You are unknown to me
a gift unfolding slow

A crannóg step
hidden, yet felt

I'll find you - in the end

It is my duty
my debt precedes me

Carved in the hand

Holding me

Kerrie O'Brien

Night Kiss

Lips blossom, soul kisses
Hungry and plump. Flesh

sealed fat pockets pucker
pucker pucker-mark
sins into skin pores,
fleeting and flying.

Here there are no
Kisses lasting longer
than themselves. It's all
about the tongue and
spit wrestle before
names remain forgotten.
Spoilt honey dew, tastes
Linger in the mouth,
for days, dangerous
and toxic, leaping
outward and staining
shiny mirror panes.

Christina Murphy

Congratulations to Eamonn, Kerrie and Christina .Many thanks to all
who submitted entries. The future of this venture remains uncertain
while we continue the restructuring of the magazine, which is our top
priority.

**Thanks to all our poets for submitting
their work.**

**We are now open for submissions for
Number 7.**

Fiction

Tangential

So now I hear that some record company executive has decided it's time to release a greatest hits album. To be honest I always thought we contributed comparatively little to the advancement of late twentieth century music and I wouldn't be surprised if the critics realise it now, second time around.

But anyway (readers out there), my good friend Jed who works for this publication has prevailed upon me to write a piece about my experiences with *Minima Moralia* so please forgive the indulgence. [I trust you Jed to edit in any important facts and edit out any incorrect, libellous, or otherwise undesirable ones. (Be a darling!) Also, if this is too long just cut whatever you need to – heaven knows it can only be an improvement! OK. Better ignore the first bit. Article starts here...]

My involvement with *Minima Moralia* commenced sometime in late 1996. I finished my music degree that year and my parents both died in a car wreck somewhere on the ring of Kerry. Look, the way I see it, in that autumn of 1996, my time was my own to concentrate on pleasure. I had some people who used to get things for me and, if I choose, I could stay in the house for weeks without even opening the shutters. Nevertheless, I occasionally made an effort to get out – perhaps, rather quaintly, I now think, I felt some sentimental need to hold onto a connection, no matter how tenuous, to the world of people. One overcast afternoon, I found myself sitting on the Patrick Kavanagh seat by the canal near Baggot Street. For some reason I was drinking wine. I think after everything I wasn't so disposed to go into the Buttery and hunt out my old dealer, Joe. I waited for him to come to me. Besides, it

made a nice change to get drunk sometimes. Drinking had the added advantage of being an activity as well as a state of mind. It was raining and I must have been soaked when this guy around my age came and sat beside me. I remember his intense expression and how his shrunken faded denim jacket barely stretched around his large bulk. I don't know if he looked attractive – not to me I suppose. I assumed he was going to chat me up – but he said nothing just sat there impassively in the rain, smoking an unfiltered cigarette.

Actually, I'd say he was shy because once I started a conversation we got to talking for a very long time. I think I bought him a drink in every pub between the canal and Dame Street. We talked mainly, no exclusively, about the Velvet Underground – me for the avant-garde John Cale – him taking the Reed was a tortured genius side. I think I won the

argument on the respective merits of the solo work of each but I was probably a bit mellow to care. He was a rough type, deadly pale under the florescent lights and slightly impoverished looking around the mouth – just that hint of ancestors having endured eight thousand, or whatever it was, years of oppression. The sort of person I'd usually avoid actually. Somehow he was still with me when I returned home to Leeson Street early the next morning. I brought him in but, explaining that I hadn't slept for days, I went promptly to bed with four valium and a glass of brandy. He was still there the next afternoon, listening to my Charlie Mingus CD's in the downstairs room where I'd left him. He showed no inclination to leave and I had no desire to talk to him so I excused myself and went to the living room upstairs. I must have passed a pleasant few hours for later (it was dark outside) I was playing a favourite Schubert piece on my violin when he came into the

room, sat on the floorboards and watched. We shared some of his cannabis and he went out and got some chips and biscuits for himself and strawberry ice cream for me. I think he left a day or two later but by then, I had agreed to go to what he called a rehearsal studio in Temple Bar to meet him and some other presumably shabby types. The day was set for something like Wednesday of the following week. He predicted that I would be very impressed by what they were trying to do – expand the boundaries of popular music or something equally dreadful, as far as I remember.

Of course, I forgot all about it. There was more to life. In fact, around that time my life had taken on a whole new wonderful dimension. I had never felt so good. In my waking and sleeping dreams, I felt light, almost weightless, as I floated beyond oblivion and into a place of blinding light. Love. I fell

in love, was loved, loved others, loved to be loved in those dreams. My mind opened and the cumbersome weight of me, my ridiculous essence, flowed out and merged joyously with others unknown and unknowable. Heroin had opened the gates of my inner heaven. I had tried smoking it only once or twice before but that week a friend of Joe's had come by with what was really a good-sized parcel of the stuff. So there I was, totally tucking in, madly in love with my imploding mind, when rocker boy and pals called to the door wondering where I'd been. They had their instruments and took them and me to the downstairs room. For a long time they played their guitars and sang, before I was prevailed on to accompany them on the violin. None of them was interested in heroin at that stage but they did get through a case of my parents' wine. The evening was greatly to their liking and they decided to make me a member of the band. My protestations mustn't have come out

as forcefully as I hoped and the inevitability of it all overwhelmed me. Besides, I felt so good – why not go along with it if it made them happy?

They used to come in Paul's van and take me to rehearsals and then concerts or 'gigs' as they called them. At first, we were always in dreadful places like the Fleet, JJ Smyth's, the International Bar but later things seemed to pick up and we were in Whelan's, Vicar Street and even the National Concert Hall. Sean wrote songs about his life and sang them as well as playing an ancient battered guitar. Paul played rhythm guitar and Siobhan played keyboards and sometimes there was another fellow [Was his name Brian, Jed?] playing drums in the background. [Jed I know we must have had a bass player, though I cannot think of his name – could you fill it in please?] During those heady days when I

fell in love with heroin, I suppose you could say that the concerts with *Minima Moralia* were the only other thing that I did. Sean once read out a newspaper article about us – it concluded that, aside from the name, which the critic found to be pretentious, we were good. Apparently, Sean wrote majestic and beautiful songs with a power and lyrical beauty beyond his years but it said that I was the sensation of the band. I remember how cross Sean was when I laughed at that. Soon after there were lawyers and legal contracts, long boring spells in a damp recording studio, make-up and photographers, TV and radio. By now, the band seemed to be spending most nights in my house. They lost themselves in the upstairs rooms and I don't think they bothered me too much.

About a year later, soon after the second album, *Commodification*, came out, a teenage boy from somewhere in

the midlands killed himself – apparently because of some verse in one of Sean’s songs. I remember because Sean said it was over then and there was a period, maybe months, when I was left in peace to follow my solitary pursuits. Those days, people had started calling to the door to sell me heroin - they had other names for it but I knew what they meant. None had the elegance or grace of a Joe but, not wishing to appear rude, I purchased avariciously from them all until Sean and the others came around one night with a new song - apparently, it was about the dead boy. I couldn’t really follow the rather trite lyric but it seemed it had made everything OK. There was to be a new album and we were to go to America on a promotional tour.

I was so content with my life in Dublin and now they were trying to take it all away from me. With something like

amazement, I saw myself smash up some of my things and fling Sean’s old guitar out the window – I don’t think he could use it again – but it was no good. Sometime later, I found myself on a plane to New York. An ugly mob had taken our pictures as we got onto the plane in Santry but our arrival in New York was much better. We were met by a smooth young black man and immediately taken to a glitzy cocktail lounge where an impressive selection of drugs was made available to us. Sometime after a long black car took us to a hotel in what they called the downtown. I had bought some Hunter S. Thompson and Tom Wolfe especially for the occasion though I couldn’t concentrate and ended up throwing the books out penthouse hotel window. I passed on dinner with the others but later that night, inverting the advice of my travel guide, I took a cab down to Washington Square. I tried some of the local marijuana and found it very good. I even drank a pitcher

of lager in a crowded corner bar before returning to my double-glazed and air conditioned suite.

They made us go on TV in America but we let Sean do all the talking. After the first show, there was a party and a young guy who looked like a tall Tom Cruise gave me a pill to try. I don't remember much more of our time in America. I notice on the band website that I became the focus of the media coverage. How horrible. While I retreated peacefully inwards, they were photographing me, filming me and writing about me all the time. Much appears to have been made of my 'alarming weight loss' – was I heavier before? I don't remember. Tom Cruise used to hang around a lot then - I do remember him and his little orange pills and his encyclopaedic knowledge of American jazz. On one occasion, I think we spent about two straight days talking about Miles

Davis' jazz-fusion compositions though I've no idea what we said. Another thing I recall about those months in America was not being able to get much heroin and trying that awful crack cocaine once or twice.

It was such a relief to get back to Leeson Street in the spring of 1998. The phone and electricity had been cut off and the hall door was covered in garish fan graffiti. I hunted around under the floorboards, found some coke and hashish and retreated to my bedroom. I had a suitcase of Hershey chocolate bars and a box set of Tchaikovsky's Complete Symphonies recorded by the Oslo Philharmonic so I was neither bored nor unhappy when Sean let himself in some time (days?) later. We had sex that night for what I think was the first time. He really threw himself into it, declaring his undying love for me but I really had no interest. [Sorry! Is this

a little TMI, Jed?] After a decent interval, I tried to calm him down so I could get some space but he made long speeches and grabbed me and shouted and cried – I think he even slapped my face. The whole thing was very unpleasant – I remember feeling heavy and weary, like somebody had just switched gravity back on.

He wouldn't leave so I did - staying in a place nearby on Baggot Street for a night and then in The Clarence Hotel in Temple Bar. I was quite happy there but then, one morning at breakfast, the waiter brought over a morning newspaper and compelled me to look at Sean's photograph. They said he was found dead in my house. An inquest to follow. Suicide suspected. Fans in shock. With something that may have been relief, I headed for home. A big-handed young man purporting to be a police officer blocked my entrance,

insisting on my answering several long-winded questions before permitting me to enter. There was an unpleasant chemical smell in the air, rust-coloured bloodstains in the bathroom, clod-hopping policeman boot prints everywhere and, worst of all, my entire collection of drugs appeared to have been removed by the philistines.

Still, it was good to be home. I sat down in my Dad's big old armchair by the window overlooking the long, overgrown back garden and located a small plastic packet of coke in my jacket pocket. I was free. Tomorrow I would track down neat suave discreet Joe. Tomorrow I would play my violin just for me. Tomorrow I would again fly somewhere between the earth and the stars, alone and free.

[Jed I suspect the tone of this may sound too callous for your readers but I'm so tired – can you make whatever changes are necessary sweetie? See you in The Ely sometime soon. XX Sadie]

Steven Byrne

Steven Byrne is from Dublin and has published stories previously in the Stinging Fly and Incognito. He co-wrote and co-directed a drama, broadcast on RTE's Storyland, and has scripted an audio CD box set 'Irish Myths and Legends,' voiced by Ronnie Drew. He is currently working on a novel.

Them Three

They stopped and listened. The sound came from up ahead where the road bent and the trees were dark and jagged against a pale and puffy sky. “D’ye hear it?” Danny finished his smoke and flicked it away between thumb and forefinger and watched it land and fade.

“Yeah.”

“Yeah.”

“Sounds alive doesn it?”

“That’s defo an animal or sum’n.”Taller than the other two Morgan took the last drag from her smokeand threw it into the bushes that huddled along the roadside. Jay followed it with his eyes. “No smokes.” he muttered.

“Were you not behind the prefabs today?” Danny said.

“Shuda scabbed one ye dope.”

“Was there bu’ Bates came around an’ stung everyone, I legged it though.”

“Master Bates.”

Jay chuckled.“Interferin wi’imself all day in his office.”

“Reckon it’s a cat,” Morgan said.

The day was darkening and smelled of the earlier rain, the

damp earth. Their breaths misted before them and vanished again in the damp air. “Cum om.”Danny walked ahead. The other two followed. They watched him look about as if trying to find the origin of a voice whose origin was in the dying light of the day itself, and they watched him abruptly become still and cock his head like a bird might. They came up beside him. A cat lay there curled and wet and broken.

“Jaysus.”

“It’s in bits.”

“It’s dead.”

“Clearly not, ye def.”Morgan spoke through her fingers yet with a force that made the other two look at her.

“It’s dead.” Jay said again.

“Shudup.”

Jay tucked his thumbs behind the straps of his schoolbag.” Sorry bu’ the things been squashed by a car or sum’n. It’s dead.”

“It’s not squashed just...”

“That sound its makin...” Danny said.

“Yeah it’s cominou’ its arse. Cumom.” Jay took a step back.

He looked at Danny and he looked at Morgan but he didn't look at the cat. Nobody moved. The cat's ribs like bony fingers clenching and unclenching.

“Are yiz comin or wha?”

Danny turned to Morgan. Something in him that he didn't know, knowing something in her that she didn't know. No words. So he said nothing. Just the keening of the cat, and the cat in cold relief against the cold concrete.

“We could bring it down the doctors.”

“You for real?”

“It jus' broke its leg, a vet could fix it.”

“Jus' broke its leg, its other legs, and its neck by the looks of it. It's dead.”

“It's not fuckin dead.” Morgan's fingers clenched at her mouth and then moved around her neck to scratch at her shoulder, like an antic imitation of strangling herself. Jay shook his head. Danny said, “How we gonna bring it down the doctors ye mad t'ing?” Jay laughed. Danny ignored him.

“I'll carry it.”

“You'll carry it all the way down the doctors?” Danny wasn't

looking at Morgan, he was looking out over the road and the fields and the grey line of the horizon. The grey smudge of the clouds.

“Gonna rain.”

“I'll carry it.”

“Go for it.”

Jay threw up his hands and slapped his thighs. “Weirdos.”

zzz and moved one hand around the head of the cat. Soslow she moved as though she and the cat and the road and the world itself might collapse beneath her. The fur along the cat's shoulder blade was peeled back slightly. There was blood there. She kept looking at it. Her other hand moved under the cat's rear. Then she tried to lift it. The cat made a sudden motion with its mouth and snarled and Morgan screamed and fell back. Jay was laughing from somewhere behind her. She was angry. Angry at who, what? She looked at the cat. The image of Tracey McGrath crying when she found a johnny in her pencil case kept interrupting the image of the cat. Weak. I'm not a cat. She stood straight. The straps of her schoolbag had slipped from her shoulders. She shrugged and shifted them back into place.

Jay had stopped laughing. “Are yiz righ' for fuck sake.” Danny didn't answer. Morgan was scratching her shoulder again.

“Yegonna stay with the cat,” Danny joked, “ring an ambulance?”

“Don’t wanna leave it here... dunno.”

“We could kill it.” Danny wasn’t sure he had spoken the words. The thought hadn’t formed fully in his mind, instead just an abstract curiosity, like someone else was in his head with him. Then he imagined putting his foot on the cat’s neck. Kingadacats. Morgan was looking at him. He scraped the ground with the sole of his shoe, half laughing, half waiting for someone else to say something. Jay half laughed too. The situation confused him. Morgan and Danny and the cat confused him.

“Ye gonna kill a cat jus’lyin there like that?” Morgan said.

“Dunno. Sure it’s fucked anyway.”

“It’s a she.”

“Whatever. Be doin it a favour.”

Morgan let the breath out of her lungs as though some hidden part of her had been suddenly punctured and then bent again to pick the cat up and stopped. A crow was there not two feet away. Not there and then there as though whispered into existence. They watched it. It watched them. Danny imagined himself windowed

behind one of those black glass eyes: The world black and white and grainy like an old movie, like everything was scratched into being. All sound scratched too, and all movement jerking and stuttering. What does it see? Death. Same as me. He imagined his foot on the cat’s neck again. Not the same. Morgan stamped her foot and the crow flew off. Jay walked up to Danny and punched him in the arm. “It’s gonna rain. I’m goin.” He walked off. Danny made to sneak up behind him and kick him when he heard a shriek. He turned. Morgan was holding the cat in her arms.

“No way.”

“Her claws are diggin into me.”

Morgan could feel the cat breathe in her arms, and she could feel the deepening twilight and everything it held breathe with it. Danny thought she was smiling. They just stood there.

Then Morgan said, “It’s cold underneath. Is there blood on me?”

“Jaysus.”

Danny took off his schoolbag and laid it down backside up and said, “Pu’er on this we can carry it like a stretcher.” Morgan looked at Danny and then looked at the bag. She placed the cat down

on the bag. Her hands were shaking. There was blood on them and blood on her coat sleeves. “Shite,” she muttered, “me ma’s gonna kill me.” Danny laughed. “Wha’ we like?” Morgan laughed too. The cat whined its banshee whine. They walked. Little steps. Danny ahead, Morgan behind. Jay was walking back toward them with his phone to his eye pretending to take pictures in exaggerated motions, like some boy lunatic newly released from his straight jacket and delighting in the freedom.

“Kodak moment or wha?”

“Take one photo an’ ill punch the head off ye.”

“Wha? Tallaght Echo job this.”

Danny laughed. “Tallaght nut job.”

“Seriously though,” Jay said, scratching his head, “Wha’ the fuck like?” His narrowed eyes directed the words toward Morgan. His narrowed eyes didn’t look at the cat. Morgan had no answer. Or she had no words to express it. She was aware of her anger. It clung to her like the cat’s claws had done. The cat just left like that on the side of the road. I’m not a cat. She wondered if the driver of the car had felt the impact. She wondered if the cat was better off never being born, if being born was a decision made, a decision made and then forgotten. The ghost of the cat’s claws still pricked the skin of

her arms. She clung to her anger, not the anger to her. At the silence Jay shrugged and put up his hood and walked on ahead.

A hazy rain began to pimple the air. The road turned again and dipped and the fields fell away. Houses appeared. The street lights beginning to burn, small yellow halos in the haze. A car passed and the rain could be seen heavier in its headlights. Big drops began to fall. Jay stopped and stood in against the wall under the trees that overhung the road. He was looking out from under the trees and up into the rain when the other two stopped beside him. He watched them almost warily. They put the bag down. Jay put his palm out and let the rain fall on it. “Yizgonna walk down with that? In this?”

Danny shrugged. He too looked out from under the trees and up into the rain. He heard the rain on the leaves above, a soft patter, like quickening footsteps. He didn’t hear the cat. He turned to Morgan. She was scratching her shoulder. “She’s dead.”

Danny wondered when exactly it happened. A moment, alive and then dead. Something felt hollow, empty. The air around him. The cat. He expected more. He looked down at the hollow cat. He thought about how he had said he would kill it.

Morgan began to walk off. She turned. She didn’t look at the cat. “Cumommigh’as well walk, it’s not gonna stop.” Danny gave her

a funny look. "Mebag." He pulled his bag from underneath the cat in a rough jerk and the cat flopped over, like it was grappling at some feigned remnant of its lost life.

"Ouch. Mustagotta good smack."

This hidden side of the cat revealed its ribcage like small white teeth emerging from bloody gums. Bits of fur scraped away as though by a child with a blunt tool. Eyes vacant, seeing nothing yet in them could be seen a dull reflected image of the world. Morgan put her hands and sleeves out into the rain to wash them. For the first time Jay came within touching distance of the cat. He leaned in to get a better look. Dead. Easy to be dead. Easier than dying.

"Here, giz your bag."

Jay didn't answer.

"Giz your bag."

"Wha?"

"Ye stupid. I'm not keepin this. I'll put me books in your bag."

"You can carry it."

Danny took the bag and put his books in it. He threw his own bag up over the wall into the trees. A rivulet of rain had begun to flow

past. Fallen leaves bunched against the wall. Wet and withered leaves of faded autumn shades that seemed somehow brighter than they should gathered there against the wall, gathered beyond the dead cat. The little river a little Acheron. No ferryman, just them three.

"Cumom will yiz." Morgan said, rubbing her hands together in the rain.

Danny was already walking toward her. "Get riddat that coat. Cats blood on it an' all."

"It'll wash off."

"No it won't ye mad t'ing."

"I'll wash it off." Danny smiled and shook his head. "Hang on. What's he at?"

Jay was using his foot to push the cat over the rivulet, close up against the wall. He picked up handfuls of fallen leaves letting them fall from his hands without real intent, only feeling, leaning a little as though listening, as though the cat or the leaves or the action itself would reveal to him some hidden part of himself, the world, his place in it. The cat now covered in a tumulus of leaves. He would always remember covering a dead cat with leaves, and always remember wanting to do it, and that would be enough.

He shrugged when he reached the other two and said, “It looked...” He trailed off confused. Morgan didn’t hear him. She was looking at her hands. “Be grand just to die in your sleep, wouldn’t it?” Danny said. Nobody answered. They walked out into the wet, the rain, the night crowding around them in speckled darkness. Not far down the road Danny began to laugh, and then Jay began to laugh, and then finally Morgan. Each unsure at what it was they were laughing at, and that made them laugh even harder. The sound ringing out into the night like a drunken choir, youthful and mysterious.

The End

Colm Reynor.

Colm Reynor works as an engineer and lives in Tallaght, Dublin. He was recently chosen for the Lonely Voice readings in the Irish Writers Centre .

The End

