

Five Features of Dementia

- Memory**
Girl's legs parted in tiny triangle. Your hand: on there. Other: around ankle. Up up up and away! Gate spins. Pure dazzle bonkers. Tummy dips, grass burn on knee. Lick layer in wooly blue. "Mind her hip!" Again! Please! Again!
- Communication and speech**
Your whole life worrying about burglars that never turned up. Lock doors in hallway, how many times... Someone shoved something surely...snuck in overnight...think it's funny buster? You banged my aunt. Slung into nuthouse: mad aul slag. Unmourned by Rothmans. Her dour kid never knew her sour dad. "Your mother was A-Sexual, what did she expect?" That laugh...
- Focus and concentration**
Look at you, old fuck. Shitting your slacks. Arrrrchhh! Expel air from lungs with sudden sharp sound. Seven hours (a)hacking. Yellow head inflamed red. Throat throttling thickeners for dysphagia. Aspiration. This man can't even swallow saliva. Stop this madness. Halt food. No more liquids. Bending forwards you are strapped in, tangled. Let's play "gears". Good man! Now down into second. Up into fourth. Gas! Look at the love in those cool blue eyes, bursting with it. Minus sauce, an amazingly mellow person. Good-humoured, bright as a button.
- Reasoning and judgment**
Way they were brought up, lot of them. In fairness; no one could say he couldn't boil an egg. Never missed a bill.
- Visual perception**
Spaceship!? No, that's the CCTV. Yes, I'm here. Relax, Mr Banjaxed. No, she's home today. Monkey, skipping along, look! Go get car? No can do.

June Caldwell

Clay

Some / candlelit pictures / give us pause / to think what Wedgewood created / by borrowing motifs from vases, cameos, bas relief; / his plant was powered by steam and serviced by a network of canals / and guided by the steady, clear, even lens of a myth, a poem, a restricted neoclassical palette, calling to mind Butades; / there are long chains of teacher-to-student relationships, and so we have an architectural vernacular, so when we grow old the same fly carcasses pile up in the same windows in the same autumnal light; / even so, our star, our lamps, our candles, our ancestors determine the silhouettes of our lovers, and fathers, if they loved us, loved with our eyes even as Korá's father loved with hers, and let the long lamps swing new arcs, having remembered how hands can leave a memory for the hands, for the soul.

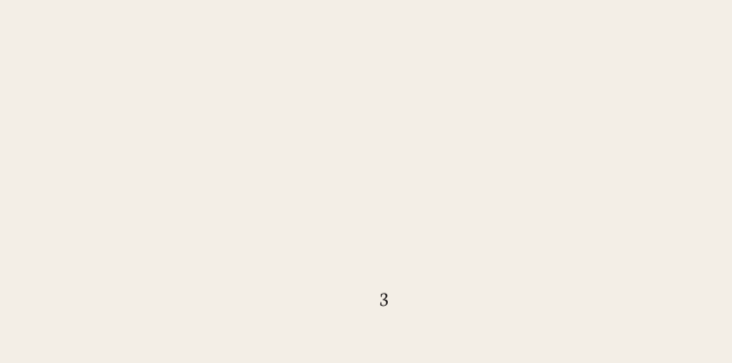
A.E. Weisberger



image of a woman/image of a pony

Pinterest: an image of a young woman in a synthetic printed skirt: late 60s or early 70s, seen from a low (toddler?) angle: the terrifying plasticity of my early years into which I can never see back. What does it evoke? Something I don't understand in its heat, which is the heat of flesh and also artificial fibres: something too fast and also too separate from flesh. Something I love that is too artificial and separate: my mother perhaps. Also my aunts: family, seen through the entirely trippy experience of pre-language. What is it like? Nausea. Burnt plastic, or plastic in the sun. And Love. Love for something that makes me nauseous. A vague feeling that not only do I love it but that what I love (so far from what I am) is what I should become. A feeling that this is what I have (both 'possess' and 'must') to look forward to. By the time those 60s styles hit my aunts it would have been the 70s, yes, years when as children we were seldom given things, only their images, and never large things though we knew they were somewhere given: only small things to stand in for large, or the images of large things (a plastic pony, a greetings-card pony), until we felt we almost had the large things, as much as anyone who had the large things did (for we never knew anyone who had the large things), or even perhaps more, to the extent that, had we the large things and not also their representations, we would not have had the large things in the same way, perhaps would not have had them at all.

Joanna Walsh



Know Here

On the moment of a spring morning, rising cool, but warming and timely after a sharp-edged, late-ending winter, with the idea of a planet of dust and fear, burning at a great distance, its unfeeling, life-giving star moving slowly in no apparent relation to our own, far west on our home island as we were, we stood beyond the gate of our garden, looking over the sand blasted road, across the dunes and the hissing grass, over the wide wet strand, its self-emergent ridges of black bone, tide-strewn with long emerald arms of wrack, at the furthest limit of what we could cross in sight of the blue-green boatless sea, a great length of light gathered in wide golden bands, streaked with depthless black, and our faces were raised, unfallen, to catch the sun's new rays, not offered but occurring, the swift wind, grit-filled, dusting our hair and clothes, imagined violet mountains to our east, silver and ivory and hard white clouds mounting and folding in the turbulence high above, where we cleaved to the world that curved beneath, in each other's calm, in each other's time, imperfect, not beyond torment or decay or loss, content in the earthy, lightening day: we knew here.

David Hayden



1

Common Time during the First Lockdown

He persuades me to try the duet: Vainál's Sonata in B Flat Major for Clarinet and Piano. I warn of my sight-reading, the kind that once drew bruised knuckles when the teacher whacked down with her wooden pointer. Somehow this evening isn't one for practice, early summer has unloosed the music from behind my eyes, it travels straight to the ear, where a fire is burning. All I can hear is symphonic, fern-greens and hellebore yellows, or the pert tail of a Pied Wagtail juddering like a bow where it plays the grass in perfect pitch as sun sets, moon rises.

Mary O'Donnell

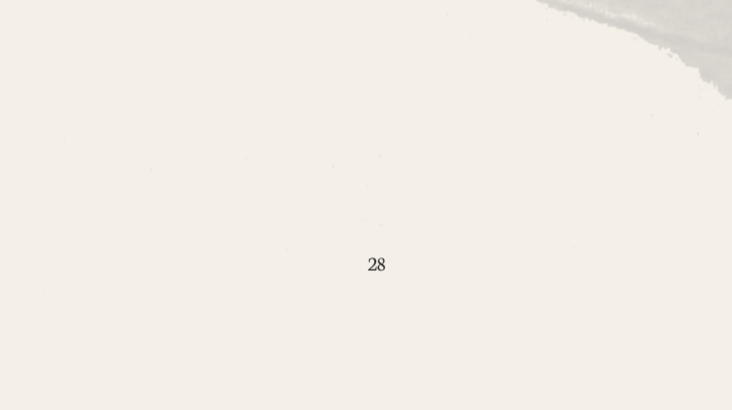


Nothing to Note in the Aftermath of War

The range of mountains which surrounded the barn stood like several buddhas watching the inevitable. The rusted tractor hadn't moved in over a year. The wind chime shifted: a distinct, loud gong emerged. Even if the wind picked up, the knell would create noise and not music. The fence around the barn had come apart. The gate prevailed, permanently unhunged; it leaned toward the ground aided by gravity and time. The large paperbark birch next to the workshop was tethered. Needlessly grated. The two oaks bookending the workshop didn't look like they belonged there anymore. Shade is for the living. The birds hadn't been by any of the bird feeders in some months and maybe they weren't coming by again. Birds know where to go.

The tractor. The oak trees. The barely visible wildflowers, blurry yellow specks. The workshop that needed the broken windows fixed. Inside it, old tools from another life. The flagpole without a flag. The horse barrel collecting muddy water on top of it. Flying above it all, everything shapeshifted into small perfect squares, part of the earth, sectioned off through a giant-sized comb. Seated in Row 16 in the window aisle, I pushed my fist against the triple layer of the Plexiglas window of Flight 4235. That was my land. I was almost sure of it! I noticed a small hairline fracture on the outermost pane: cracks from dirt, stress, temperature changes. Land seized is like ginger, sold with the peel on.

Annie Q. Syed



Far Finisklin

On Sunday spins we drove by Heights of coal that blocked the mountain, Drifts of the town's rubbish then Where a beach had been. On passing, I skimmed the dump hills For a glance of treasure – For a wedding ring caught In the knot of a bin bag Or the cracked profile Of a china doll. Where a beach had been And people once swam. Instead, skeletal couches With rusted springs, Quinnsworth trolleys home to jagged tins Glut with moulding sweetcorn. Beer leavings staling rank mattresses And milk-spotted cot sheets, outgrown. Where a beach had been, Brimful rats patrolled the outskirts, Gulls gagged on pecked-at nappies And nested in the drums of spent washing machines. Where lovers had courted And sand had been Dragged by picnic rugs In from the coming tide, Finger-combed to write a young name Or ask, will you marry me? Raked with horse razors to strengthen a moat Or mock-bury a willing child. Where a beach had been. Bent rabbit-ears and perished cables, as marram, Held together new dunes of waste. Juliaana Holland

Bridgid's Eve in Hazelwood

For Lisa Steppe

I search the sky for signs, snow sifts across my face, white fire eclipsing the stars, thickets of birch-light, great oaks bare and black as iron. The turning year paws the dark, hunt and squeal of prey.

Listen to the dusk drummer – your footsteps on raw earth in a dance only you knew. a bird fleeing over volcanic ash, Words you pounce on – a pig, a wing, the fat vowels of a toad, the river rushing moonstruck with its own furious song.

Our Winter Roses you called them – our memories – wolf- woman, woman of the-back-of-beyond, where water and wildness meet. Woman of sea-fields, of marshlands whose colours hold the womb of the world. The curlew still haunts there.

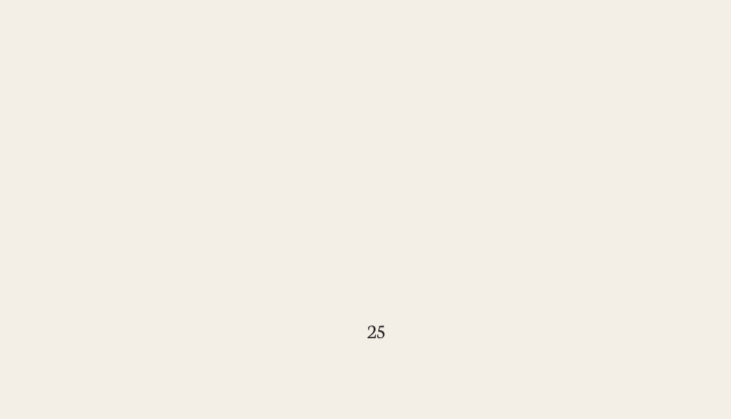
Peggie Gallagher

2

Sorted

We didn't know anything about the water under our house until mould from behind the TV began snaking its way up and across the ceiling. Dad took his rusty tool box and opened the trap door in the suspended floor to the space beneath. The subfloor was cracked with little blobs of muck dotting themselves around the crawl space. At one end the muck was more than just damp. It trickled through the room crisscrossing under walls into other rooms. Mum thought we'd be drowned in the house if we stayed. I thought we'd be crushed because the foundation wall would cave in. Dad said he'd never heard such bunkum and hammered the trapdoor back in place. Months later, in the middle of the night, Mum was tipped out of bed. The leg on her side had fallen through the sodden floor-boards. Dad came back from the garage holding an old piece of chipboard, propped the leg of the bed back onto it, and that was that. Sorted. It rained for most of that summer. The day the warped kicker-board fell in the kitchen giving way to nests of silverfish and woodlice, Mum disappeared with Dad's jeep for ten hours straight, returning with a caravan in tow. Holding the TV under one arm, she slammed the door to her new home shut. Sorted.

Rhona Trench



Look Up

The blue faced man on the shutters of Chimes Charity for the Deaf has white teeth, small alabaster bullets shining in his mouth. It hurts to look at them. No one takes my leaflets.

Today is grey, news black. No one is listening. Everyone is talking, talking, talking.

The viridian buses from the airport arrive in droves. They beep and roar, depositing tired passengers onto the damp pavement.

First, small bright women hustle past, each headscarf a slightly different hue of pink, like sister lipstick sticks at a makeup-counter, nestled together, waiting for someone to pick them.

A hassled curly haired woman emerges last, shrouded in a lilac furry coat. She signals for my help. Her companion, young enough to be her son, leans against the wall; not looking at me, not looking at anything. Head in his phone, foot on a battered suitcase. I try to understand. Her English broken. Does she say drink? I point at the cafe. I shrug. I'm as lost as her.

She fires words at the boy, then briefly clasps my hand. Her faux nails peeled yellow like primroses press into my palm as she raises her light eyes up, up, up.

Above us plants sprout from the top of buildings, green unruly ugly things that should not grow from downpipes, or peek above razor wires.

I don't know the names of these stretching rebels, taking root in the impossible, but I smile when I see them struggling against the unexpected blue.

Olivia Fitzsimmons



Sea Of Typhoons

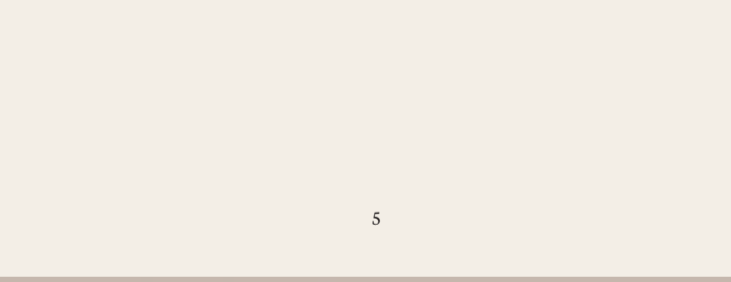
A bright grey morning, windy on the South Douglas Road. Lou held the jacket close around her as she walked into town for a change. Wind like that would cut right through you, was how her dad once described it, on the ferry over to England, the one foreign trip they took. Wind like that would shave you, Lou. Aboard with him and the truckers and the Travellers and people with dogs and bikes and motorhomes, and all of them rocking and swaying and sliding with the brutal tilting of the vessel. Wind like that would cut the face of you, girl. And later, a calmer boat up the Thames, to Embankment. Dad getting mixed up about what 'dawn chorus' meant. Wind like that would rake your garden, child! Wind like that would clean your windows wind like that would rear your children wind like that would wash your car. That wind'd clean your eyes, Lulu! Her eyes rolling hard as he ran on with it and then she laughing of course. That wind'd strip your skin! That wind is worth six points! Wind that'd drive the roads clean! Wind that'd stand you a pint! Wind that'd raise the Titanic!

The odd car passed along the road, the engine sound emerging from and returning to the gale sounds. A pigeon in the evergreens beyond the wall clung on for dear life. Lou gave up trying to hold her head so that her hair stayed flat and she let it fly. She let the wind happen to her.

'Some day!' she roared as a man pushing a bicycle approached and passed her.

'Great day to be a flag!' the man roared back.

Danny Denton



Giant Lego Gun

Chris took the whole of morning playtime to build his giant Lego gun. The biggest the school had ever seen! So Mr. McGee said. Chris boasted his giant Lego gun would win the lunchtime war, and he was gathering up recruits for his army, and everyone was welcome to join, except me!

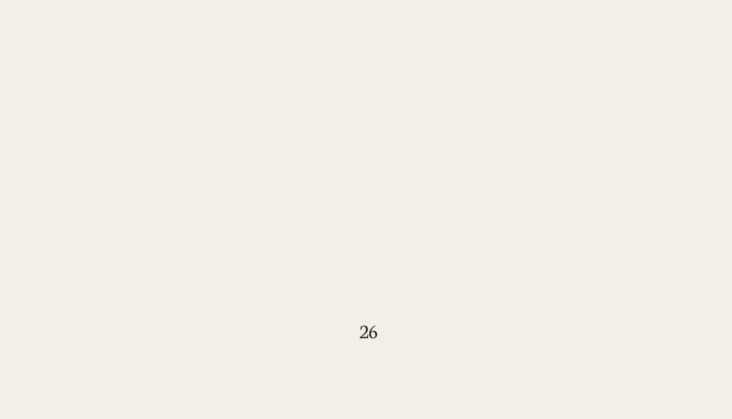
Chris was so confident of his giant Lego gun, he didn't see my roundhouse kick coming, until the moment just before it smashed his giant Lego gun into shite.

Mr McGee told me off for cursing and said he'd tell my mum. I asked him to tell my dad because my dad wouldn't be cross. Sure it was him who took me to Kung-Fu lessons and let me sit up past the watershed watching Bruce Lee movies with subtitles. That's why I was the best reader in the class.

Mr McGee said violence was unacceptable, but only because my roundhouse had accidentally clipped Chris' fingers. With Chris' giant Lego gun destroyed, and his army scattered, he sat in the opposite corner of the classroom, balling his eyes out, wanting his mum.

When Mr McGee went to ring mine and Chris' parents, I scooped some scattered pieces from the floor, assembled them into a normal Lego gun, pointed it at Chris and shot him. He watched me do it too, and he cried harder, knowing I'd win.

Gerard McKeown



In the Water

Housewives in Johnstown are mixing rat poison with bleach. There isn't a chemical left in a shop. Sticks and steel toe caps are stacked against doors. Containers are full to the brim with water. Pipes are sealed. Every sort of a thing is blocking toilets right now. A locker is on mine, weighed down with the heaviest things I could find. The bathroom door is barricaded.

In Hillview, they're digging holes on the green to replace the toilets, ripping up garden fences and putting them around the holes for privacy. Young ones are flat out digging holes in gardens. Charging what they like for it too. There isn't a sinner by the river.

The beasts are in the waterways of course. They come out at night. The radio says they've escaped from a lab but conspiracy theories are rampant. Latest reports have them halfway down the east coast. My neighbour Sam reckons they'll be here by nightfall. The council is putting out sandbags. Of course they fucking are.

We're all googling how to make homemade explosives but the servers are getting dodgy. People have broken bones leaving supermarkets; the rioting is so bad I can't face it. I'm counting the tins of food in the cupboard. 4 baked beans, 2 chopped tomatoes and 6 chickpeas. I hate chickpeas. On the radio, they said helicopters dropped food along the coast last night. Armies are mobilised and there's more on the way. We hear groups out hunting them never come back.

Joanne McCarthy



Umschlagplatz

i.M Stefania Wilczynska, orphanage director in the Warsaw Ghetto

One day you step back from this place, called sudden change. The East is the end. You drop the hands of two orphans, and back through the door, retracing the telegraph to Genevra's Red Cross. I refuse to leave them. You unravel each stitch with which you clothed them and, eyes shut, return to Liège. Behind you is a flood of salt water, but your mind must pour it into emaille

as there's no one left to heal. As there's no one left to heal

your mind pours it all into emaille. Behind you is a flood of salt water and, eyes shut, you return to Liège, away from each stitch with which you clothed them. I refuse to leave them unravels as the telegraph to Genevra's Red Cross leaves through the door, retracing the hands of two orphans. It's a sudden change but East will be your end and so you turn from this godforsaken place.

Jo Burns



3

North North East

At the edge of Pittenweem in winter cold, driving the east coast with the North Sea in the wind, I see — in the middle of an open field — a semi-circle of tractors. They are fifteen or so, in different colours, their noses facing a central point. Each is parked with some perfection, with showroom precision. In front of them a group of men stand shoulder-to-shoulder in their own semi-circle. Farmers, I presume, tractor owners. They stand facing the same central point, with— unbelievably— one man in the middle standing high and solitary on top of two men's shoulders. A lone pyramid.

Cast against light coming in off the sea, it is startling, absurd. Beautiful. Nothing I can see is going on around it— no fair day, no ploughing championships, no photographer or camera. Just vast, winter fields, still and quiet except for a half-circle of tractors, their metallic reds and greens. And the men in front, wrapped up against the cold, and the one standing high above them.

I look to the fields facing the sea across the road, to the ones behind, and the full, open, treeless stretch beyond. There is nothing. Very little traffic, a half mile further on, a small village, empty streets, half-shuttered shops. We're far from the hum of things here. It's as though it can't be.

I think about it after, the picture they make, there, unseen. Alone and glorious. Glorious for being alone. For this winter happening in such light and drift winds.

Sonya Gildea

7

Spoor

We climb stars to the moon.

There are as many scents as are stones in the sea. In all time, before and after,

our lake was a stone bowl, brim full.

There are as many stones as stars in the night, now we say *anosmia*.

Upon a stove, you caught all the notes – the full perfumed orchestra - top notes, base notes, heart notes, our life elegies.

An old woman says, don't smell basil or a scorpion will appear in your brain. And a scorpion appears in your brain.

Eleanor Hooker

Pinna

When you would walk on the inside and she would walk on the outside because she was deaf in the one ear, and so your sense of balance grew in relation to whatever was on her side of you, and then it was too often disorientating in open spaces alone, where you would counterbalance wearing the outer edge of your sole down, and all the while trying not to keep thinking that you might topple over without the height of her always hearside of you, keeping its immeasurable watch out for your nadir, so that you could always locate yourself in relation to her stance and navigate the sloughing off of your inmost echoes ping-pong back from her orbit whispering “you are safe here, you are safe here, you are safe”, because who else could ever have heard you better speak stars talking into their wrong ear, all those times we took our luminous adolescent walls down in magnetic field studies of you, her; us.

Lauren Foley

11

Twigs

The witches had been leaving twigs on my windowsill again. I knew they meant this as a kindness but I would have preferred them to stop. This is how it always starts. With twigs. Before long there was moss and stalks of long grass knotted into figures of children. If left unchecked, they brought offerings of animals too. Mostly vermin. There was not much wildlife up there. Though the witches left me a rabbit once. Wherever they found that, I don't know. Smearing its blood along the sills and shutters of the window. The house was a rented holiday home and I was very concerned at what the owner might think.

When I went to have it out with them—I knew where they lived, out in the woods, having had to reprimand them about the noise they made in the evenings while I was trying to write—the witches were more than apologetic. They fawned over me, several of them reaching out to touch my hair, *my face*, just for a moment with their dirty fingertips. Most of them were old, half-starved. I declined for the umpteenth time to join them, to stay, and quickly scampered back to the house.

On my last day there, I saw another gift. A yellowed eyeball still with its fleshy pink stalk. I knew the witches must have been watching me from the safety of the trees, awaiting my reaction. I stood still as long as possible, fearing the slightest quiver.

Aising Flynn

15

You Think

You think if there's anything going to happen, it should probably happen soon. You think maybe Marcus should get a rest this weekend, no point risking it with a big game on Thursday. You think there is no end in sight. You think it probably would have been wiser to wait until you got paid again. You think you could probably live a decent life in France, money or no money, after all there is the cheese, and the weather is thoroughly congenial. You think you wouldn't mind pasta for dinner even though you've had it twice already this week, maybe with tuna this time. You think it might be time time to knock it on the head. You think you need to get that form printed off for the bank but the library is closed. You think congenial: *sympathique*. You think tonight probably won't be the night and you'd better not get your hopes up. You think it might be time to buy a printer. You think you're quite tired anyway, though of course that wouldn't stop you. You think it's very difficult to get everything in sync, you know, just the way you'd like it. You think it's always one thing or another. You think you'd better email the accountant because you don't want that running on and on. You think, no, orzo with courgette. You think that is pasta too. You think you'd like to get that whole mess cleared right up. You think nothing. You think nothing at all.

Ian Maleney

19

The Wood Between the Worlds

When I came here today

I didn't realise you would follow,

but here you are, slipping through pockets of syrup-light,

your skin pinking in the beams

that escape the leaves' net,

stopping somewhere out of sight

to cool your freckling shoulders in shadow.

Are you hiding from me, baby,
after trailing me so far?

I'll sit and wait for a flash of your hair, all toffee and bronze, between the branches.

I'll sit by the pools and I'll watch for you.

If you can hear me, know

one pool is *Mnemosyne* and one is *Lethé*.

One is *there*, and one is *back-again*.

And all are *left-alone*.

And all are *never-change*.

I would never have brought you to this world of always evening, always leaving, where you tell me you can hear your brother and sister call you from the far trees.

Jessica Traynor

8

Cremation at Black Head, the Burren 1/12/2020

The grassy stone does not visibly begin or end on a map. Aerials of China's Stone Forest promise a jade lemon icing. But this is not the Limestone Hills of the Yunnan Province, as your grandmother told you.

From Galway Bay the rain can paint the Burren black. Yet, cloud-break turns the bedrock into a boasting diamond, as your grandmother told you.

Your grandmother, from Kunning, smiled at you with teeth behind lips, at your freckles, at your red hair, at your Burren: a stone field, like a grey marble cake, stuffed with bits of kale.

Your grandmother said, 'The West is the best', when she wanted to touch your dear hair. She'd chastise you for picking bog cotton. Lemon and garlic every morning for decades, but her turn came.

The sense of home slipped out of the house, coasting over fields, an energy clipping fingers of grass. Hair brushing off bark and twigs, off ash and elm.

Racing away from a grey heavy sky, off a cliff at Black Head, and into the sea, on the way to a subtropical needle-leaved forest.

Two meters apart with hands that can't even touch a tie. But you are home where tongues dry into crisp leaves. Not a mouth, eye, or hand to cry to.

Mark Corcoran

12

From Seamus Has A New Hat

O, she says, an O that drops like a ball onto the pavement and bounces. How's it going? His eyes follow the O, still bouncing. No kiss. Something wrong with ya? There's obviously something wrong, she's got a face on, same story every time, what is it now, he gives up. Got any smokes?

Clodagh reaches in her jacket and passes the pouch. He scowls, makes a thick stump of cigarette, and hands the tobacco back. He has his own lighter and when he flicks it to life, the flame flares up into his face like a blowtorch. Fuxake. He jerks his head back, changes the settings, goes again. Suck, hold, cloud of grey. We go in? she suggests. Alright.

Entering the park, Clodagh finds herself walking slower, trailing him, Seamus ahead, dragging his legs, shuffling, his jeans way too big, beyond baggy, sagging off him like they're someone else's. She slows. His jacket is huge too, a big dull red puffa, but too big. His clothes are eating him. Still. It would be OK if it wasn't for that fucking hat. She stops. Watching him vanish, her legs won't move. The day is circling, on spin, all sun.

Seamus reappears. What's keeping ya? His face is pointed, wary, shadowed. Overshadowed by the long white brim of his baseball cap, the letters U S and A glaring from his head in silver sequins. The hat is blinding her, like a border suddenly towering between them. This is it, she decides. This is the end.

Jessamine O Connor

Long Sleep

You'd wake early and listen to the swallows twittering in the eaves, clinging with bare claws to clematis.

You still sleep but far away from here.

Keep sleeping

in your geranium-scented garden above sea-level.

Keep dreaming of blackberry-picking at Currabinnys, of snowflakes swirling madly outside your window like frost-giants and ice-wizards.

I recognise your foot-prints in the snow, the brevity of your life, and the great length of your sleep.

Eibhlís Carcione

20

Eight Algorithms For The Self-Driving Self

You are driving on a residential street when you are forced to swerve to avoid a van. To your left is a murderer. To your right is a baby.

You are travelling through a 30 mph zone when you are forced to swerve to avoid a truck. To your left is a baby - who will grow up to become an estate agent. To your right are two babies - eating a murderer.

You are a zipping along a country lane when you are forced to swerve to avoid a small mountain's solitude. To your left is a text you sent in your twenties. To your right is the one you never could.

You are cruising along a motorway when you are forced to swerve to avoid a recently reclassified planet's sense of inadequacy. To your left is a culturally appropriated indigenous votive now taking advantage of its enhanced public profile to seduce lesser and more impressionable effigies. To your right is an outraged Twitterstorm marinating an avocado in beard oil.

You are blaring down the Autobahn when you are forced to swerve to avoid the hours invested in the second season of a box-set where the monks break back in to the monastery. To your left are the gargoyled eyes of a final year PhD student who's been asked, but in passing, about her thesis. To your right is a national treasure avoiding tax by fly-tipping paedophiles – who aren't wearing poppies.

You are careening up (and down, simultaneously) a Penrose staircase when you are forced to swerve to avoid the nights you turned down sex to play the computer. To your left is a marmot still maintaining it voted Brexit to make immigration fairer for Africans. To your right is an echidna espousing literal, but à la carte, adherence to scripture.

You are hurtling across a Möbius strip when you are forced to swerve to avoid a top hat wearing a Che Guevara t-shirt. To your left is a monocle justifying austerity by conflating national expenditure with a household budget (overlooking, of course, that national expenditure raises revenue in a way domestic spending never can). To your right is a woman who CC'd in your line manager.

You are flashing between inter-dimensional wormholes when you are forced to swerve to avoid the difference between popularity and populism. To your left is the entirety of your future contained in the eyeballs of a god. To your right is the entirety of your god contained in your future eyeballs.

Niall Bourke

9

The Island.

We had always lived on the green island.

The island was small and the sea was vast.

I feared, constantly, that the sea would rise,

Up, and swallow us, drowning my tribe.

We would climb the palms to escape the flood.

It was no good. We waited for the sea

To flatten once more, leave us with seashells

And broken pieces of lost. Unlucky,

We stayed away from the deep waves, too young

To watch and understand the red sunset.

We had always lived on the lost island.

We were running from the chasing waters.

I did not like the rain and the blue sea.

I never learned to swim, and so I stayed.

Heather Slevin

Bestowal

Grandfather knows where to find the water, his divining stick is his trunk, his fleshy ears can hear the gurgle of a fissure spring deep below. I walk behind him, stepping into his imprints, watching his left hand crooked against his back, fist closed like the stump of a tail. His leathery skin has rivulets, meandering lines that wander back to the ancestors. When he turns and sees me struggling, my ankles wobbling over scree, he takes my hand and I hear the vanished stream where our great-great-greats drank and washed and waded.

Bayveen O Connell

13

A road trip in Spring

At dawn we chase an open course, north-east.

A grey autopaista.

Through arid Murcia, sand-bitten crossroads, burnished plains.

La floración unfurls

her sweet pink mouth wide, to welcome drowsy bees.

Plum trees lap the basin, peach and nectarine tinged, goats shear ragged paths.

Jumilla's stone Castillo dazzles almond white, commands the valley floor.

And as the landscape yields their sleeping eyes flutter open, with the softest fruit bloom.

Lucy Holme

Horse

There was a drawing by I-don't-know-who of a horse. But not a drawing, a collage. He tore black sugar paper out of memory's winter. Smithereens. And disorganised the elements. So little it took to make it come to life, the horse. So it is no miracle that we are here really. Then the artist I-don't-know-who got big and so did his artwork. The collage he'd made, named notoriety, cashcow, he'd grown large for an exhibition in the city. Everyone could see it from the room's corners, from the street, on all of the photographs. And they said, I know who made that horse. Thank you for coming, the artist said, glass-wrapped eyes. The artist became I-know-exactly-who. But it was no horse any longer. So little it took to kill it. The artist walked about the room and shook hands, glass of wine palm-warmed and filthy, aeroplane seats, sycophants. Thanking patrons, thanking god. I want you to know, I said, that you're a murderer. No horse, that horse, my horse, can live so large as that. Strangles, abscesses in the lymph node tissue. And he said yes. Thank you for coming. A chaperone put a map in my hand, horse bullet-pointed, blurred. Leant against the stable door, larvae laid in its neck. I am tired, so tired, said the artist in the microphone. He put down his wine and picked up the bolt gun.

Jordan Harrison-Twist

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From Today At 2pm

The town is upon her; the steel-grey stone of Sligo station on her left and the tall masts of the boats put away for the Winter. She can smell the salt water as she crosses the bridge over the Garavogue, and beyond to her right St John's hospital where he is lying. She cannot go to him. It is over, she thought, finally over, and yet she knew while she breathes he still lives in some hidden part of her; beneath bone, beneath memory, she carried all of their days together. His footprints are here on the road, their plans, their hopes; they are somewhere lying in these ditches, in the stone walls, in the force of the river that keeps flowing. She would go home right now. Her mother would be icing the Christmas cakes in the small parlour just inside the front door. The stark whiteness of that parlour, the cakes laid out on the white tablecloth, cold and beautiful, their blue-white icing forming snowdrifts, like some offering on an ancient altar. She would say 'Mother do you remember Michael that I went out with long ago. He died, he died today at 2p.m. Today at 2p.m.

Nora McGillen

MAY 24, 2020

for Joseph Brodsky

catkins are dying in a dry and white light
a flux of birdsong flexes blossoms bends
the wind into a pandemonium of parakeets
too drunk to eat even one more translucent
petal petals like skin your skin the skin I have
repented especially the flexible blooms
of our hands behind my head as you say
you are dying trace the thick blue scar up
behind your knee until it crosses your heart
you cried after the heart surgery the doctor
held the blossom cascade of your fingers bent
but not broken you judged me shallow I am still
shallow maybe less slippery certainly fatter
but quick before the doves arrive to feast
on the final blooms under this bright May sky
clouds like the white pillows I move out of the
way let me touch paper petal your skin thank you
and say sorry for the *nitty-gritty* you are dying
I believe you I want kids in the garden blossoms
flex in birdsong releasing a confusion of pollen

Evalyn Lee

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Child Passenger

Rest the shoulder belt flush against the child's collarbone, not across her throat. When my mom stormed out of the principal's office, she scared the piss out of the kids standing in line at the water fountain. She was like a getaway car with her greasy skid marks speeding down the hall.

Fit the lap belt snugly across the child's hips, not her abdomen She didn't scoop me up. She figured I'd wriggle out of line, follow her, catch up. So I did. I ran. "My coat? I left my coat in my cubby." The words wouldn't reach. I barely squeezed through the heavy school doors before they slammed shut.

Children riding in the front seat have been killed by airbags. I couldn't believe she'd parked in the space next to the principal. Before I could climb in back, my mom had the motor going. She pushed the front passenger door open wide. I scrambled in before she could change her mind.

Automatic sensors turn the airbag off for front seat passengers of less than sixty-five pounds. I said, "I thought it was Dad's turn." She looked in her rear-view mirror like she was talking to herself and said, "Well, I'm not taking turns anymore, am I?"

Kirsten Mosher

Here

I remember lapwings,
their calls rising and falling
light as air
spilling on waves
across rushes.

They brought this here
to my door
tripped it over the green banks
with their beaks,
to rise again
quick, and loud.

The lapwings are gone now
I still hear their calls
as if they left a soundwave
out there in the fields,
one that spikes high
and then low
flies above
and behind
to surround me.

A recording forever cut
awaits their return.

Sinéad McClure

And When I Sing

and when I sing you come to me
through some ferny fissure
in between our worlds

somehow
there you are -
soft and quiet as moss
waiting
and my staid heart
ripples and wilds

in a shallow bowl
I proffer you a duck egg
you bring me grace
we both grow gratitude

lap lap lap
your thin bright tongue
a peony petal

Helen Pinoff

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