

# NIMSIR



'Autumn faded into barrenness; the leaves lay brown and sodden in the strath. Here and there a straggling bunch of mountain-ash berries gleamed scarlet among the skeleton branches; ruddy haws presaged a severe winter.'

- Elizabeth A. Sharp, 'Frost', *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal*,  
Winter 1896-97, page 59.

# Aimsir:

## A Seasonal Journal



# Samhain 2023

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*Note from the editors.*

As we write this, December has passed us slowly into the sharper arms of January. The nights are clear and long, the mountains are swept brown with dead ferns. We write this with the memory of Samhain faded behind us.

And yet, the celebrations of seasonal festivities that we share with you in these pages are, perhaps, more deeply necessary now. In this, the harshest part of winter, it is possible that we might find a great deal of comfort in the simplicity of older traditions. In the winter issue of *The Evergreen* (1896-7), Edward B. Koster writes: 'Under the fog, which dims the objects and penetrates them with its chill, wet breath, everything lies hushed and quiet' (p.27). Under this breath, we too are hushed and quiet. The hushed and quiet mouths of a people who are waiting out the winter, who are waiting out the cold. And it is the binding force of tradition that comforts us as we wait.

As editors, and more importantly, as people, we have faced a difficult number of months ourselves, and as a result, our publication of Samhain was delayed. Although this was disappointing for us, it also provided us with a degree of distance and space from our work that allowed us to reconnect with it on a deeper level upon our return. To come back to it, inspired by the beautiful work of our contributors, and all the ways in which seasonal traditions can bring diverse groups of artists together. These hushed and quiet moments, under the fog of painful change, have slowed the gears of productivity within us, and allowed us to spend time *being*.

As such, rather than rushing into this new year with a constant focus on growth and gain, we might take the time we have been given to sit with ourselves in these dark months. To sit with discomfort, with pain, with fear, and to understand that this too, brings about a form of growth. It is a deeper growth, and one that takes longer to cultivate for that very reason.

Samhain is a time that brings the issue of subjecthood, of being, into our collective psyche, challenging those rigid representations of personhood and identity that anthropocentric structures uphold. At this time, boundaries are weakened, human and nonhuman subjects are closer in appearance because of guising traditions, more meas is given to the idea of local superstition. Animals and objects are graced by subjecthood; the insects that move through the heather plants, the ground that feeds them, the stars above them. But why stop here? Why not seek to live a more



holistic, embodied life in which we allow our identities to be fluid, changeable things, connected to all around us?

The pieces in this issue are charged with all the vivid hope of this idea - this idea of the self as a mutable part of a wider network, something that might move between all the varying perspectives of subjecthood, as and when it chooses. They express a mode of being from which much can be learned, and to which we feel a great deal of closeness. We hope you enjoy them.

Thank you to all of our wonderful contributors, and to all the artists who made this issue possible.

Aisling agus Ursula



AIM-SIR: [*noun, fem*]

weather, season, world, time, tense





**Dog Star**

Fred Johnston

One New Year's Eve  
We who are bachelors had nothing to do  
The night was glary, starstruck and cold  
And we drove hard into the frozen boglands  
To buy poitín as a New Year's gift -

We had tea in a house  
Where the doors were never locked and outside  
It was easier to travel by row-boat than wheels  
Without knowing it we were on islands  
And someone sang an old song

The road back was black  
And the bog and hills black-on-black  
Painted by a blind painter in a dark room  
Up on a hill a sharp prick of light  
Like a pinhole through the canvas

A house of ingenious smallness  
Stone to the roof, corrugated sheets up there  
And a single candle lit on a poor table  
A man in his suit in his whole length  
On the neat bed, another watching

From out of a thick stillness  
Not lonely but bone-strong in a night watch  
Cut from the dark beyond candle's reach  
Under the monstrous constellations  
The whimper of the Dog Star.



When a generally no-nonsense man tells me  
He'd lamped after a fox on his farm one night  
Out-foxed him in a bush and found a human child's face  
Staring back at him

You consider that either he was midnight drunk  
Or he had stepped over a threshold unawares  
And witnessed the unimaginable or the unseeable  
Made flesh and the fox

Out of fear had transmuted himself into something  
On which he knew his hunter would take pity  
And clearly it was not a fox at all, a changeling  
Perhaps, but not a fox -

Out in the pub-lit carpark our fat cars  
Huddled and purred, full of devices that can talk  
To obliging satellites, little miracles of chips and fuses  
Gossiping in silicon and bytes

Their doors unlocking as if by themselves  
With a very satisfactory cluck, sidelights signalling  
To come in from under the white mad constellations  
The blind light of dead stars.



**Divination**

Fred Johnston

"I will be thy Gwyde."

- John Dee.

In the no-wheels caravan we'd made our home  
By a single candle and bottles of cheap beer  
A deck of playing cards, nothing Tarot  
Well into the wee cold unsleepable hours  
Harried by an unforgiving winter wasp  
The caravan rocking and rolling in a wet storm -

No women ever came there, I remember that  
None invited out of the musical pubs, the place  
Stank of unused maleness, private fretting -  
What woman would have lingered? None.  
And every day like every day; at night the cards  
Would crack like knuckles on the gummy flat

Table-top, a chart of irregular stains and spillage  
Fag-burns where the single candle played lighthouse  
To all the accidental drowning, the surfacing  
And the certain sinking; and we sitting like dry  
Bones, brittle as bone, waiting to be found  
Rapping the table in hopes the sound might surface.



Annas a' Mhonadh Rìoghail ruadh  
tha na h-apartements sgeadaichte –  
cnàmhlaich, bana-bhuidsichean,  
peapagan, peapagan, peapagan.  
Tha an nighean bheag rim thaobh  
a' cumail mo làimh, gam stiùireadh  
ri gach fear dhiubh: 'Seallaibh, uncail Robbie,  
seall!' Tha oidhche Shamna teachd dlùth oirnn.

Tha oillt dham thachdadh air an oidhche  
is naidheachd às ùire bho Ghaza -- mar Bhàbeal  
tha cànan a' spreadhadh aig an naidheachd

a' taisbeanadh nan clann marbh,  
is leth-mharbh,  
salach le fuil  
is ùir is spruilleach,                      am pàrantan a' caoidh,  
is Iosrael air ospadal a leigeil. Ospadal

agus sgoil. Chan eil ann

ach breisleach agus pàistean  
marbha. Chan eil ann –

Caidribh a-nochd, mas urrainn dhuibh, ur clann.







**Meadowsweet**

A. Joseph Black

James inhales deeply. He can smell the fragile perfume of meadowsweet, undercut by the tang of wild garlic. At one time he could have identified every wildflower here. He knew all the common names, and the Latin ones too. Moira had been so impressed. But not now. All the Latin has gone now, and most of the rest. He can only remember some common names. The funny ones like bedstraw and mouse ear, or the poetic ones like Star of Bethlehem and love-in-a-mist. But he doesn't know many anymore, not the way he used to.

Across the bay he can see limestone cliffs, slush white against the pulsing azure sky. Sweat smarts his cracked lips. The heat is infernal.

"They'll find you here James," he hears her say, the voice as thick as honey dripping down through the hot thin air. "You need to keep moving."

"Moira? Where are you, love?"

"Keep moving."

He looks down at his thin white legs, burning under the sun before his very eyes. They won't carry him any further.

"I think I'll stay here Moira. I can't go any further. I just can't. Where are you, love, can you stay?"

"Stay here with me, Moira."

James lies back in the warm grass. Around his head, tiny white starburst blossoms tremble in a tender breeze.

"Traveller's Joy," he says softly. "Clematis vitalba."



**An t-Eadar-theangadair**

Johana Egermayer

Uaireannan, bidh amharas a' tighinn orm  
gu bheil e fada anmoch mar thà,  
gu bheil na beàrnan eadar na trì cànan  
fada ro dhomhainn is ro mhòr.  
'S ann leatsa a tha an dithis aca bho thùs,  
fhuair mise dhaibh ach iasad.  
An dà chànan seo, agus na rinn thu leotha –

oir chan urrainn dhomh neo-leughadh  
na coisrigidhean do dhaoine eile,  
na rannan gaoil a tha a' dearbhadh  
gum mairidh cianalas is cùram gu sìorraidh bràth.  
Bidh na geallaidhean clò-bhuailte sin, air aimhreit,  
ag ath-ghairm na mo cheann, mar chagar fiatach.

Aig ìre seo, bhiodh e furasta aideachadh  
nach urrainn dhomh ach a bhith  
ag ath-aithris, a' strìochdadh, agus a' trèigsinn.

Ach is dàna leam, is bhithinn dàna ort,  
is chanainn gu bheil cothroman fhathast ann:  
seilbheachadh na brù-chainnt,  
mise a' cur do fhaclan air mo theanga,  
gan slaodadh a-steach gu ionad eile,  
far a bheil thu air chall gu loma-lèir,  
is mo stòr-sa a' lìonadh suas le gach lid'.  
Tha e do-dhèanta an tasgaidh seo a thoirt air falbh,  
chan urrainn dhut, fiù 's ged a dh'fheuchadh tu.

Oir tha an t-eadar-theangadair coltach ri faileas,  
doilleir, gun guth air leth, agus buileach sleamhainn.  
Cha robh mi air mo mhealladh, oir tha e fada anmoch mar-thà.  
Dh'imrich na faclan. Chan eil tilleadh ann.





**Oisean a' Cur Fàilte air na Gaisgich Frangach a Bhàsaich air Sgàth na h-Athar-thìre**

Johana Egermayer

*As dèidh Anne-Louis Girodet (1802)*

A rèir choltais, chan eil neach (no eun) buileach cinnteach  
ciamar a fhuair iad dhan dealbh seo,  
ach, air sgàth 's gu bheil iad ann mar-thà,  
tha iad deònach gu leòr  
an suidheachadh seo a bhuileachadh.

Ar gaisgich a thuit sna blàir:  
peilear-musgaid ann an Rivalta,  
slige ann an Catalonia,  
gunna-mòr aig Raismes.  
Ach, do chuid dhiubh,  
cha b' e blàr a bh' ann dha-rìribh,  
ach galar, gràin, no tubaist:  
guim-muirt ann an Cairo,  
cnàmhainn ann an Acre,  
caitheamh ann an Wetzlar.

Fear dhiubh, b' e ailtire a bh' ann, bha fear eile na bhàrd,  
àrsadair aig an robh ùidh ann an eachdraidh Cheilteach  
is bha e a-mach air crom-leacan agus tursachan:  
b' esan a bu chòir bhith toilichte sa chuideachd seo gu h-àraidh.  
Fear Èireannach a rugadh ann am Barra an Teampaill,  
Kilmaine Cròdha, is cothrom aige faighinn a-mach  
ma tha Oisean Èireannach no Albannach.

Ach an e sin ris a bha iad 'n dùil,  
an àite beatha mhaireannach air nèamh?  
'S dòcha nach robh, ach chan ann leotha a bh' an roghainn:  
snìomh an Seanailear fhèin an duais dhaibh,  
agus mar sin, fhuair iad maighdeannan gleansach  
le làmhan geala, acrach, deònach gan tarraing fodha



## *Aimsir*

dhan saoghal-ciaraidh seo a tha glas, trang, is dùmhail:  
sìth-bhrugh aibhseach, mìltean is mìltean fon talamh,  
far a bheil am blàr a' leantainn gu sìor-sìorraidh,  
an turas seo gun chothrom teicheadh dhan roinn eile.



**Na Faclan a Fhuair Mi Bhuat**

Johana Egermayer

Thòisich mi liosta air an fhòn-làimh,  
ris an cuir mi  
na faclan a fhuair mi bhuat:

*Frazzled*

*Picket*

*Hijinks*

*Gamut*

*Kilter*

*Slough*

*Faltering*

*Unbuilding*

Saoilidh mi  
dè 'n eachdraidh 's urrainn dhomh cnuasachadh  
bho na faodailean seo,  
dè 'n dàn 's urrainn dhomh faisneachadh  
leis an ulaidh seo de bhrìghean.

'S dòcha gun lorg mi  
beàrn ann am balla agus leac a chur orra,  
gum faigh mi seud-lann airson gam falach,  
no fuaighidh mi poca dìomhair airson gan cumail dlùth.

Tha mi gan toirt bho do bheul,  
greim nan greimeannan:  
oideachadh,  
rùsgadh,  
fuasgladh.



There's a story about Fionn mac Cumhaill you haven't heard.

There is a time when the earth leans away from the sun and demands a last, dazzling pageant of colour before slipping us all into the dark. Leaves reveal their most luxurious shades: burnished copper, blood red, sunbeam yellow. Theirs is a most beautiful death—fluttering down to sleep as a crackling carpet while the bare fingers of their beloved branches stretch, weeping, towards an indifferent sky. It is then, at the sunset of the year, in the woodlands of Sligo, that you might see him.

A double-headed stag.

Everyone knows the story of Fionn mac Cumhaill's first wife: how Fionn found a deer while out hunting, and his hounds, knowing her to be a woman enchanted, refused to kill her. (This was a lesson he may have done well to remember.) How he brought her home and she transformed into a woman. How An Fear Dorcha enchanted her once more and she disappeared, this time with Fionn's unborn son. How he searched for years, and while he never found Sadhbh again, his hounds once more refused to kill: this time a fawn. His son, Oisín.

Everyone knows the story of Fionn mac Cumhaill's second wife: how she was offered up to Fionn mac Cumhaill as a great prize by her father, the High King. How Gráinne fell in love, instead, with the beautiful Diarmuid, and ran away with him. How she begged Fionn to save Diarmuid, gored by a boar, with one sip of water from his magical hands. How he refused until he was shamed by his own grandson, but by then, it was too late. And then they were married, after all.

It was there, in Sligo, that it happened: that Diarmuid died in her arms, and she swore revenge.

You can hear her best, in the whistling wind between the newly-stripped trees, as she guides you toward the stag and whispers, look closely.

There he is, russet like the leaves strewn upon the ground. They are known for the violence of the rutting—locking horns with their brethren, fueled by an unnamable aggression. This stag was clearly the victor; he now wears his challenger's rotting head as a crown, the rest of its body torn away long ago. Their antlers are laced together, inseparable as lovers. The loser's dead, filmy eyes forever gaze into those of the living stag, forever block all else from his sight.

*That's what really happened, she whispers to you. Who would believe that a pair of hounds could stem the tide of bloodlust such as his?*

He went mad, she tells you. All those years, hunting. He never found Sadhbh, true enough. But he did find An Fear Dorcha and demand his own enchantment. And he found Oisín, his son. His son, just a fawn. His son, who had



the years with Sadhbh that Fionn never had. His son, who knew where she was, must have known, had to know--and wouldn't tell him.

So he forced it out of him.

Or tried.

He attacked with all the force of the Fianna's greatest warrior; you would expect no less. He locked himself to his son, pressing into his skull as if he would crack it open and snatch the secret out of it. He poured forth his rage until his son's head was torn from its body and rested, finally, to become carrion. A peace Fionn himself would never know.

What does he think, as he wanders the forests, able to see nothing but his son's blank stare? Has the guilt seeped in yet, staining everything like blood? It is impossible to see his eyes, just as it is impossible for him to see even where he takes his next step.

Does he think of the peace that he denied Diarmuid, of the peace he forced upon his son?

Does he think of the bitterness that ate away at Gráinne's heart as she married him, the bitterness that forced her to find An Fear Dorcha herself and ask him to unspool the threads of time, to set the earth spinning backward to the days before death?

Does he think of the hounds?

He must, now. Where once they caught the scent of humanity in Sadhbh, in Oisín, they sense nothing in Fionn mac Cumhaill.

As they close their teeth around his neck and pull him to the unyielding ground, he will close his eyes for the last time upon the unblinking judgment of his only son.



**Death's Domain**

Annie Bell

Red and russet leaves sail  
down to kiss the damp soil. A peal  
of distant bells sounds pale,  
as chill air lays a pall of mist  
on the landscape. It must  
be so. The dank and moist debris  
decays - a witch's brew.  
And over the dark brow of far  
off hills, a sense of fear  
comes creeping from all four sides. Crows  
sated, three hooded crows  
observe: a woman cries and grieves  
by her ancestors' graves,  
while over sunken groves, the moon  
casts shadows on all men.  
The world, now Death's domain, must die,  
as living beings do,  
'til night gives way to day. While wet  
earth nurtures Brigid's white  
flowers, be patient. Wait, and feel  
ancient wisdom unfurl,  
lest Donn's foul hand befall your soul.



**Where Birds Won't Fly**

Ruby Nixon



Dwi ddim yn sicr, go iawn,  
Os dwi'n credu bod y llen rhyngom  
Yn teneuo heno.  
Yn ddeallusol, dwi'n meddwl, siŵr o fod,  
Bod terfyn ar fodolaeth - a dyna ni.

Ond dwi'n deall hefyd  
Bod creithiau colled wedi'n hir yrru  
I ddyfeisio dulliau o deimlo'n agos atoch.

Fe'ch gwahoddwyd i eistedd am swper:  
Dewch o'r gwynt, dwedom,  
Dewch at y bwrdd -  
I wleda fel y bûm, fel er stalwm,  
Cyn nabod gwacter trwm eich bwlch.

Ac ar y noson gyfrin hon,  
Dw innau, hyd yn oed,  
Yn cynnau cannwyll, yn eich cofio,  
Yn agor calon, jyst rhag ofn  
Y ca' i gip ar hanner symudiad  
Tu draw i'r llen.





## Ysbrydnos (Spirit Night)

I don't think I really believe  
That the veil between us  
Thins tonight.  
Intellect says (almost surely)  
That existence is finite – and that's it.

But I understand too  
How the scars of loss have long  
Driven us left behind  
To find ways to feel close to you.

We invited you for dinner:  
Come in from the wind, we said,  
Come to your seat –  
To feast as we were, as we have been,  
Before the heavy emptiness came.

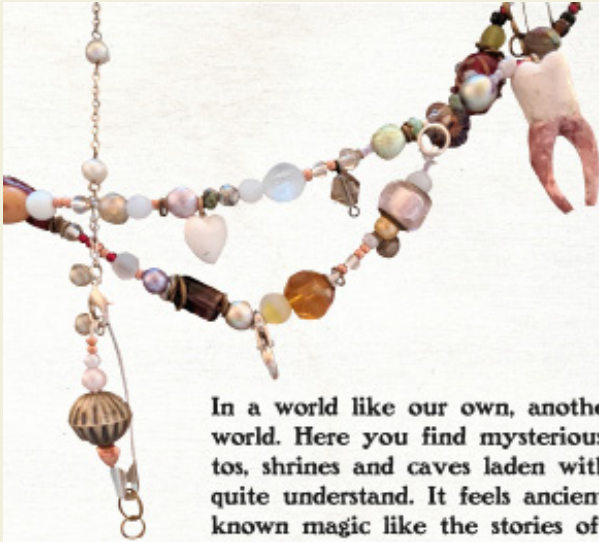
So tonight, even my semi-cynical soul  
Will light a candle and remember you;  
And I'll open my heart: just in case  
I see something move  
Beyond the veil.











In a world like our own, another exists; The Other-world. Here you find mysterious structures of grottos, shrines and caves laden with symbols you don't quite understand. It feels ancient and full of unknown magic like the stories of stonehenge.

You wander the lanes finding oddities and little trinkets leading you on a trail. It's like the tooth fairy got lost and meet her demise? Or is this her home? Are these folkloric characters real and not as sweet as they sound? Or are they just that - folklore? Is this some post-apocalyptic world? Or maybe a world before humanity as we know it.

You keep catching glimpses of.. Something, but reluctantly move on. There's what looks to be a glowing shrine at the end of the trail, in the mouth of a little cave as the path ends. The items are bizarre. Are they safe to touch? Some areas and items look familiar or historical, but some you don't recognise at all, they're different from anything you've known. Are they ritual, devotional, sacred? Cursed? Or even just everyday items from a world you've never seen?

Is this real or is this place a dream? Or a nightmare. You can't be lost as you never knew where you were in the first place. It must all mean something.

You take note of what you've seen, gathering any information you can, just in case.



## Iomadh Rud Nach Saoil Sibh

Nathaniel Harrington

Cò nach eil eòlach air a’ phort ud — tha nead na circe-fraoich anns a’ mhuileann dubh, sa mhuileann dubh, is mar sin? “Port cho math ’s a chaidh a dhèanamh riamh,” a chuireadh air uaireigin.

’S e an Donas fhèin a rinn e — sin a bhiodh iad ag ràdh, co-dhiù. Chuala mi an sgeulachd nuair a bha mi òg: dràma nan seann làithean, nuair a bhiodh sagartan gam falach ann an seòmraichean dìomhair, a’ dol a-mach air an oidhche gus nach rachadh an glacadh leis na h-ùghdarrasan Sasannach, no Pròstanach, co-dhiù. Cha do chuir mi fhìn cus earbsa anns an sgeulachd, feumaidh mi a ràdh, ged a tha e tarraingeach, am beachd-smuain gu bheil ceangal dìreach eadar sgaradh-pòsaidh Henry VIII is top 40 hit Canadach sna 90an. Bangair a th’ ann an “Sleepy Maggie” fhathast, a dh’innse na firinne — co-dhiù, sin a bha mi a’ smaoinichadh ro làimh. Chan eil mi cinnteach a-nis.

*Tha iomadh rud nach saoil sibh sa mhuileann dubh, sa mhuileann dubh — siud a tha am port ag ràdh.*

Tha e fìor.

Ràinig mi a’ chrois-rathaid faisg air meadhan-oidhche. Bha mi air a bhith a-muigh, aig an taigh-sheinnse le caraidean, is chuir mi romham coiseachd dhachaigh. Cha robh obair agam an làrna-màireach is bha an t-sìde math — blàth gun a bhith ro theth, is bha na speuran soilleir is na rionnagan a’ deàrrsadh os mo chionn. Cha robh ach corran-gelaich ann, ach bha solas gu leòr ann airson an rathad fhaicinn. Bha deoch no dhà orm, is bha mi a’ mealadh na h-oidhche.

Stad mi aig iomall an rathaid gus an seallainn an dà thaobh, is b’ ann an uair sin a chuala mi e: ceòl. Bha fìdheall ga seinn an àiteigin. Sheall mi mun cuairt is mhothaich mi do thogalach air taobh eile an rathaid. Feumaidh gun robh e ann roimhe, ach cha robh mi air a thoirt fa-near gu ruige sin. Seann sabhal, shaoil mi, no rudeigin coltach ri sabhal.

Chaidh mi thairis air an rathad. Chan eil fhios agam carson, ach gun robh am fonn car tarraingeach. Cha robh mi eòlach air, agus ged nach e sàr-fhìdh-lear a th’ annam chuir sin beagan iongnaidh orm fhathast — bha dùil agam gun aithnichinn e, co-dhiù. Bha rudeigin neònach mu dheidhinn, mun fhuaim. B’ e fìdheall a bha mi a’ cluinntinn, bha mi cinnteach, ach bha feart annasach anns a’ cheòl — an toiseach shaoil mi gum b’ e hardingfele a bh’ ann.

Bha fuaim a’ chiùil soilleir, a dh’aindeoin an neònachais is nam bal-la-fiodha timcheall air an togalach. Cha b’ e sabhal a bh’ ann, chunnaic mi a-nis, ach muileann. Bha còir agam tionndadh air falbh sa bhad nuair a mhothaich mi sin, ach cha do smaoinich mi air an sgeulachd — is ged a smaoinicheadh cha robh mi air



a creidsinn.

“Eil cuideigin a-staigh?” dh’èigh mi. Cha do sguir an ceòl. Choisich mi timcheall a’ mhuilinn gus an do lorg mi an doras. Ghnog mi air is dh’èigh mi a-rithist. “Am faod mi tighinn a-steach?”

Cha d’ fhuair mi freagairt, ach shaoil mi gun do dh’fhàs an ceòl na b’ fhiadhaiche. Dh’fheumadh gun robh am bogha a’ dannsa air na teudan — ged nach robh am fonn àbhaisteach, bha e follaiseach gum b’ e sàr-fhìdhlear a bha ga sheinn. Dh’fhosgail mi an doras — bha iongnadh orm nach robh e glaiste, ach cha do stad mi airson smaoineachadh air — is thug mi ceum a-steach.

Bha am muileann dorcha. Ge b’ e cò bha a’ cluiche, bha e coltach nach robh feum aca air solas. Stad mi taobh a-staigh an dorais, air mo ghladadh leis a’ cheòl fhad ’s a dh’fhuirich mi gus am fàsadh mo shùilean cleachdte ris an dorchadas. An ceann greis, thòisich mi a’ mothachadh do chaochlaidhean ann: bha an t-àite na bu duibhe an sin, na bu soilleire an seo. Cha b’ e sgàilean a bh’ ann: bha meanbh-sholasan a’ dannsa san adhar. Cuileagan-sionnachain, shaoil mi, ach cha b’ e sin a bh’ anna, na bu mhotha, ach dùrdain bheaga solais chnàimh-ghil.

Thionndaidh mi mun cuairt, agus airson a’ chiad turais dh’aithnich mi ìomhaigh fhaondrach san dorchadas, a’ gluasad mu mo thimcheall ri gluasad a’ phuirt. Lean mi i, a’ tionndadh còmhla rithe, is chunnaic mi dà phuing dhealraich a’ coimhead air ais orm.

Chan eil fhios agam cò, no dè, a bh’ ann, is chan eil mi idir airson faighinn a-mach. Ach innsidh mi seo dhuibh — cha b’ e an diabhal, ged a thuigeas mi gum b’ fhasa a bhith a’ creidsinn sin. Ge b’ e dè bh’ ann, cha b’ ann a’ goid anman a bha e. Sheall a shùilean orm on dorchadas, is ged nach fhaca mi ach an dà shùil, bha mi a’ faireachdainn barrachd — mar gun robh mi air mo chuariteachadh le aodainnean, ag amharc orm. Agus an uair sin thionndaidh iad air falbh. Ann an dòigh, b’ e sin an rud a bu mhiosa: gum b’ urrainn dhomh fìdreadh, nam chnàmhan, gun robh a’ bhith sin gu tur coma. Cha b’ ann air mo shon-sa a bha i a’ cluiche a’ phuirt eagalaich, sgriosail, mhiorbhailich ud. Dh’fhairich mi an spàs sa mhuileann a’ fosgladh mun cuairt orm, a’ sìneadh thar chrìochan an togalaich gu falamhachd bhith-bhuan is chaoin-shuarach. Thàinig tuaineal orm, is dh’fhairich mi mar gun robh mi a’ tuiteam far na talmhainn. Thionndaidh mi nam èiginn agus — chan eil fhios agam ciamar — fhuair mi greim air làmh an dorais. Tharraing mi air, is sgiorr mi a-mach às an togalach.

Dh’fhàg mi am muileann, nam spreòchadh an toiseach is an uair sin nam ruith, is an ceòl ud fhathast ag ath-fhuaimneachadh nam chluasan. Fiù ’s le m’ anail nam uchd cha do sguir mi gus an do ràinig mi, leth-uair na b’ anmoiche, doras an taighe. Dhùin mi air mo chùlaibh e cho luath ’s a b’ urrainn dhomh. Cha d’ fhuair mi cadal idir an oidhche ud, ’s mi nam shuidhe air an leabaidh leis na solasan uile



air, a' feuchainn gun a bhith a' cuimhneachadh air an fhalamhachd sin.

Nuair a b' urrainn dhomh — seachdain às dèidh na h-oidhche sin — dol faisg air a'chrois-rathaid a-rithist, cha robh sgeul air a' mhuileann. Dìreach feur, mar nach robh dad ann riamh. Fad diog shaoil mi gun cuala mi ceòl-fìdhle a-rithist, ach cha robh ann ach a' ghaoth.

Tha am fonn fhathast a' lionadh m' inntinne, ge-tà, nam dhùisg is nam chadal. Thig e dham bhilean gun fhiosta dhomh. Agus nas miosa buileach: tha mi ga chluinntinn o dhaoine eile a-nis. Tha mi a' tuigsinn a-nis ciamar a sgaoil “Am Muileann Dubh” ged a dh'fheuch an sagart ud ri thoirmeasg.

*Tha iomadh rud nach saoil sibh sa mhuileann dubh, sa mhuileann dubh.*  
Is ro-fhìor sin.



*Aimsir*

**Esanella**

Lianne Wilson

gans pub kamm  
oll an tan ynnov  
oll an tes ynnov  
a dheu 'mes  
yn unn tareanna  
yn unn tareanna  
my a yll y weles  
y hwra chanjya puptra  
tommhe bys yeyn  
mes an gomolen a wannha  
ha vansya a wra  
y'n gwav





**Exhaling**

Lianne Wilson

with each step  
all the fire in me  
all the heat in me  
comes out  
thundering  
thundering  
I can see it  
it will change everything  
warm a cold world  
but the cloud fades  
and disappears  
in the winter



*Aimsir*

**Where Birds Won't Fly**

Ruby Nixon



**After 'Leaves'**

i. m. Derek Mahon

Callum Irvine

I like to think he was sat at a desk, like this  
with the clear sound of a poem in his head.  
It's some autumn day, the sound of leaves  
filling the silence between where he began and now,  
where he gets at what he really wanted to mean:

the futures we never found?  
the words we should have said?  
the places we could have seen?  
the lives we could have had?

Prisoner of his own undoing, he'd scribble,  
and maybe by the time the streetlights came on  
he'd close the book, and leave  
taking with him all the lines that could have been.



At least he had a suit.

A scramble to find one. I thought we'd have to buy new but the lad he lived with found it under his bed, dropped it down. Taking it out of the plastic, it's the same one he wore to a cousin's wedding years ago. Had he worn it since? Would it even fit? I thought he was beginning to fill out last Christmas. But the undertakers said they could pin it and make it tidy before the wake. In the end there was no need, it fit grand they said. One less thing to worry about.

It's been all go since we got the call. The lads drove up the morning after, before the dawn. Terrible having to wait so long but it gave me time to get the place in order. Neighbours were a great help, the house hasn't looked this good in a long time. And just as well since there are people coming to the door I don't recognise at all. The house is private for the last night. Maybe that was a mistake. It's just the three of us rattling around now, trying not to look at it.

I picked it out myself when the lads were waiting to take him home, polished pine with gleaming gold handles. Beautiful, all things considered. Probably far better than where I end up. But I don't want to look at it, this morbid cradle. Instead I'm shuffling in circles, moving objects an inch at a time, the little memorabilia of life. 'A hen with an egg', Dónal says. We don't laugh.

I'm looking for things to fuss about, now that my usuals are gone. He was always a constant worry, more than the other one. He was living his own life, always so separate. I didn't know much about it but that only made me fret more. I thought there'd be time to get to know him as a man, maybe when he settled down, moved home. Maybe it would've been easier with girls, but boys, my boys at least, don't run back to Mammy when there's a problem. But I might know what to do. No one asks me anymore.

Now the worst has happened. I feel everything you're supposed to but there's a dizzying sort of freedom as well, may God forgive me. He's safe now and all my worries - about this one at least - are at an end. What will I be without them to keep company throughout the day?



He does look handsome, they did a great job in fairness. I spotted a few good-looking girls in the contingent of friends who came down and Dónal nudged to stop me staring. I tried talking to them and they seemed a lovely bunch, very polite. They made gentle jokes about how he must have been a handful when he was younger, a rebel in miniature form. ‘My boy?’ I wanted to ask, ‘with the quiet half-smile and the notebook?’ But I agreed with them instead. I know him, I wanted to say. I know him better than anyone. But that would be a lie.

Do any of them nurse more private, tender memories in their grief? What I would give to unlock them for a day, to see him as they did. I always figured him for a bit of a romantic. Was I right? I’d met two of his girlfriends before, both foreign actually, but lovely girls. But nothing lasted. It’s different now, I know, people don’t settle down as young but time was ticking on. And he didn’t realise how little time he had left. Perhaps it was for the best.

It’ll be strange bringing him to church tomorrow, two decades since he last set foot in one I’d say. But he was always going to end up back here, no matter what he might have thought.

Himself is quiet. I don’t know if it’s sunk in at all, he’s just going along with it. Once this is over, I suppose our day to day lives won’t really change. He didn’t come home much the last few years so it’s Christmas really that we’ll notice the difference. But he is affected. He’s a great one to jump into any arguments but when Pádraig starts on me about the arrangements, he leaves the room without a word, slipping out to tinker with something or other.

Usually the arguments are between the boys and their father so it takes a beat to register that I’ll be dealing with the one left behind. He’s angry, angrier than he’s any right to be but then I suppose that’s all part of it too. He’s been stewing in a private thundercloud for days now, silent and watchful through all the proceedings.

‘He’ll be a great comfort to you’, the neighbours keened but truth is I’ve barely looked at him. He’s Dónal’s son through and through, down to their constant sniping. We were the diplomats, rolling our eyes together and escaping to the kitchen to make tea when they started. True, I was alone more often than not for the last few years, but I always knew I had an ally. Now I’m truly alone and neither of them can see it.



*Aimsir*

“I can’t believe you went ahead with the rosary”, he says, his voice choked with rage.

“What else was I supposed to do?”

“You know he didn’t believe in that shite. He’d have a fit if he knew you were having a Catholic funeral.”

“And what’s the alternative? He was baptised in the church and he’ll be buried there now. That’s the way of it.”

“Do something he would have wanted!”

“Like what?”

“Tell stories about him, have his friends share something.”

“And we did that. That’s what a wake is for.”

“No, but -” He trails off, losing his words. “We should have done what he would have wanted.”

“Well, we don’t know what he would have wanted. Young men normally don’t leave instructions.”

“You know he didn’t believe in God, Mammy”, he half-whispers.

It’s serious now he’s calling me Mammy and my words are strangled, struggling to break free.

“We don’t know that. You never know what’s in someone’s heart.”

The slam of fist on the table doesn’t make me jump. Maybe nothing can shock me anymore.

“It means nothing. It means nothing. Fuck. All. And if he could talk to us now that’s what he’d say. But he can’t, because he’s nothing, he’s nowhere, he’s gone and we’ll never see him again, not in this life and not in the next because it doesn’t fucking exist and if it did he wouldn’t be there anyway because he thought even the



notion of God was a joke. And you have him lying there barely recognisable in his suit in a box with a crucifix on it.”

“And how would you like me to bury him?” I ask. No, I scream. When did I last raise my voice?

His jaw twists, his fist curled so tight the knuckles blanch. He’s not used to seeing me lose my cool but don’t I deserve it, this once?

Another breath, and the fingers unfurl, head dropping down to his chest. His eyes scrunch up and for a moment I think he’s going to cry and I’m strangely relieved. I haven’t seen his tears since I could lift him up to me. Maybe he hasn’t cried at all since then, you know how boys are. But when his eyes open they’re dry and his voice is steadier than mine.

“It’s not about us. We have to think about what he would have wanted.”

I thumb the oil cloth on the kitchen table with my nail.

“I don’t know what he would have wanted. I haven’t the foggiest idea really. Do you?”

A tight, fast shake of his head, lips flattened out in tension.

“I didn’t think so,” I croak in a whisper. “He’s a stranger to me, to this house we built and he grew up in. He left it and only death could bring him back. Now he’s as silent about his thoughts as he ever was. I don’t know what to do with him. I’m his mother but I don’t know what to do. Now it’s too late to ask.”

What follows isn’t really silence, it reveals the other noises we choose to ignore. The refrigerator buzz, plugs droning softly, the entire air hums with signals we can’t see and I wonder if I’ll hear true silence in the grave. Can my youngest hear anything now? Was I right or was he?

“It’s not just you Mam. I can’t say I knew him very well either.”

“Better than me anyway.”

“Maybe but only in those snatched moments. A few pints at Christmas, a quick dinner when I was passing through town. I never made time for him, even



though I was the one with the car. I always thought he'd move back eventually."

I shake my head. "No. No, if I'm honest with myself I was a fool for thinking he would. But I never asked him why. Didn't want to think about it. And even if he did come back, what would I have done? Hoped he'd come over for dinner once or twice a week? What would we have talked about? I never knew what to ask."

"He wasn't one for the chat with me either. We had work in common but that was it really. A bit about music and that but he was always into artier things. He had his friends and his life and he seemed happy with that. I never thought we'd have to make another decision for him."

Out the window the landscape fades to black in the coming evening, the outline of the trees barely visible against the last inky blue of the sky. Leaves still cling to the branches, their link tenuous in the writhing wind.

"At least we know he loved it out there", I offer. "Maybe that's why I was always thinking he might come back. He'd get lost in the country for hours. And sure I'd never have to worry about ye."

A dry ghost of a laugh escapes him. "Jesus yeah. We'd spend practically all our summers out there. Even if it was raining, that cejit would sometimes slip out."

"The muck off him when he came back!" The old indignation rises and briefly, I see a way out of here. One day I will be bothered by the disobedience of a small child again. Then the polished pine reflects in the window and normal disappears. I want to step into the dark that lies outside, be enveloped in it. But my son is here. Everything else waits.

"At least we had this place in common."

"We did", I murmur back, thinking back to when me and himself were courting and would disappear into the trees, where we couldn't hear the call of our parents to help with what needed to be done. When we couldn't slip away, I'd find notes secured carefully under a pot outside my window. They'd live in my pocket and every time I heard the whispered rustle of paper, an electric thrill ran through me. I didn't open them until I was safely away, slipping down next to the bog to unwrap my gift,





The sentiments were exactly what a young girl wanted to hear, exactly what was needed to convince myself to say yes but Dónal never spoke them. Perhaps he was never able and I didn't really mind, it was enough to know they're inside him. I still have the letters somewhere. He found them once and asked me about them over tea, amusement in his eyes. Delighted to learn his dad had a hidden sentimental side. I blushed, flustered. There was nothing more in them than you'd find in any garden variety romance but I still couldn't reconcile the idea of my son reading them. Now I'm glad he did, glad he got to see that side of us. I wish I'd told him more about it but, to me, those words belong in the open air.

My other son moves suddenly, with purpose, to the back door, donning thick boots and rain jacket, grabbing the large flashlight that's always waiting.

"What time are we leaving tomorrow?"

"McNallys will be here with the car at 10."

A firm nod of the head and he leaves, the torch bobbing until it melts into the darkness. I didn't even think to ask where he's going, moving with such determination. Or maybe I just didn't have enough in me for the spark of curiosity. I have only one job tonight.

Burning more wood, keeping the room warm. I think of a prodigal son coming in at Christmas time, hiding his lean frame inside an oversized jumper, happy to see the warmth of the hearth. Secrets hidden behind his smile. I sit near him now. Important he won't be alone tonight, the last thing I can do for him.

At some point I drift, waked by the gentle lift on my elbows of men leading me to bed. I bat them away, but the hands on the small of my back are insistent.

"You go to bed now Tina. Me and the boy will stay up with him the rest of the night."

"The fire - "

"I got more wood Mammy. We'll keep the fire going and tell a few stories. We'll wake you in time to get ready."

I'll never be ready. But when the softness of the pillow meets me, so too does the thought that my men are together, warm, under this roof. This house is safe, built



## *Aimsir*

by those who knew how to make things last. I dream of the three of them building something together.

First, blissful ignorance. Then a panic from before; am I too late? But no, the clock says seven and a light trickling underneath my door says the others are still keeping watch.

A welcome wall of heat hits when I open the door, an unusual feeling for an autumn morning in this house. Whiskey rasps at my nostrils. Sure if they couldn't drink this night, when could they? But they're still awake inside.

The mess. Wood shavings and tools everywhere, a mockery of the neatness carefully prepared before. The fire's as big and hearty as I've ever seen it, fed by piles of pine. Splinters all over the carpet, the handles and crucifix in a heap. The end of an axe sticking out from under the couch. Why bother hiding it now? The two of them sit, hunched, glass in hands, steely in gaze. Behind them, a new coffin, my baby lying in a roughly hewn box of black bog wood.

"It's something we can all agree on", Pádraig says quickly. "He loved this place. Bury him with all the prayers you like, but give him one thing that's his."

Everybody has already been to the house, seen the coffin. How to explain this...? I beg my husband silently. Don't let me have to deal with them again.

"Well it's like this now", he begins, with all the nonchalance of a bar stool story. "I saw this eejit on the way to the bog with this mad idea at god knows what hour last night. He didn't even know you had to dry the wood before you could use it, can you believe that? Well, I said, as it happens I have a raft of it in the shed to sell on when it's ready. It was your brother who helped me dig it up in the first place so I don't mind him having it."

"And you helped him with this...thing?" My voice does not sound like my own.

"Sure look, he's never been that good with his hands and it was clear he was going to do it anyway, so if it's going to be done it might as well be done right. It's not like we can return the other one so what harm?"

The two of them face me, united for once. I step toward the box, hands to the wood. It's a good job for a fast one. Smooth as they could make it. They'd knocked



some shape to it but it still looks like a gift from the earth itself, delivered by a forgotten god of the land.

“You didn’t even put a blanket around him.” I start to cry again. Not because of the box but just because. I shake; one cold hand in my left and one warm in my right, and me in the middle not sure which one to let go of first.

Pádraig returns with two soft quilts, ratty old things that I’d had since the year of dot but they’re warm and I hope they smell like the house. His father lifts him as gently as a baby as I tuck them underneath. I smooth down the suit before swaddling him as best I can.

If it was anyone else, I’d have prayed to Our Lady. But instead I think of our local holy well and the saint whose name it bears. She is of this land, as he is. It’s her graveyard he’s going to now. I ask her to protect him instead, whether in heaven or in the ground.

As one, we lift the new cover and slid it over. It’s beautiful in a rough sort of way, this rescued wood that will carry my unknowable son to the unknowable world.

The place is tidy, at least, by the time the car came. We’re ready, black to match the coffin, sitting in a row, our eyes looking straight ahead. A puzzled pause and the man in the suit carries on. I suppose he’s seen stranger things. We leave the house, together.



**Laoidh an Leth-Fhèinnidh**

Sgàire Uallas

Ach Oisein bhinn a' bheòil mheala,  
ge fad o chlaonadh m' aigne bhuat  
le teagasg teòma Phàdraig,  
mo chridhe dìl cha d' fhàg e dhual  
mu choinneimh suadh na Ròimhe.

Air steud-eich bhàna Mhanannain  
ged thaistleadh à d' dhèidh gu guanach  
mo mheanmna lasrach tograch,  
mo chogais 's i dh'èigheas luath-stad  
ro thìr nuadhaich na h-òige.

Gun glac i 'n gradadh na sriantan  
's gun siab i leis a' ghaoith tuatha  
gu deas gu tìr tha crainntidh,  
tioram, caingeis mu do bhruadar,  
's gun suim dhed bhuadhan sòsa.

Air aineol san talamh sgagach  
cuirear Bòinn is bradan bhuaipe,  
is imfhios tobar challtainn,  
airson seann-sgeul mara ruaidhe  
is facal cruaidh Iehòbhah.

Ach air cho teann is daingeann greim  
an leabhair luim air m' inntinn fhuar,  
fòs gun iarr mi gud innis;  
lem anam gur binne do dhan  
na briathran buan a' Phòil ud.



## Deireadh an Fhoghair an cois a' Bhàigh

Sgàire Uallas

Falt fiadhaich nam bachair fogharaidh  
—làn na bracha—  
a' fadadh mìle lasair  
le ainteas gus an taisbeanadh  
am bastalachd na Samhna:  
gun stamhnadh a' crùnadh,  
gu teanndainn gu tionndadh  
gu crannadh, gu mùchadh,  
gu lùbadh le fàillinn;  
tuaran  
a' duaichneadh 's a'  
tuiteam  
air luasgan a-null,  
a-bhàn, a-null,  
gu mireil san *danse mbacabre* ud  
gus an caithear ach na cnàmhan,  
loma, cruaidhe,  
is uaill an aigheir seacte mu làr:  
macnas a' mhearain-bhàis  
am mearbhall na ràithe.



*Aimsir*

**Úll agus Aithne**  
*do Karl*

William James Ó hÍomhair

*Ar uair mo bháis  
caitear mé  
anuas ón spéir  
ar uair mo bbreithe  
beirtear mé  
in atarlú na beatha*

Casann tú liom go luath ar maidin  
le breacadh an lae ag dul i léithe  
agus laethanta ag dul i ngiorracht

trí cheobhrán ceathach cloistear duit  
cnámhchroitheadh na nduilleog caite  
an t-aon fhuaim atá le haireachtáil

gach gliogar acu mar lámh dhofheicthe  
ag scríob thar gairbhéal uaigneach  
ag impí ar chrainnte a thorthaí a ligean anuas

D'fhan tú ag faire ar feadh na hoíche  
le feiceáil cad a thabharfadh an lá le fios  
faoi cad atá i ndán san am

éiginnte seo

sínim chugat mo lámhsa

agus úll geal im' ghlac  
agus feictear duit ina chruth cruinn  
an uile aithne atá ag teastáil uait  
san am

éiginnte seo



**Where Birds Won't Fly**

Ruby Nixon







*Last light on seed heads*





**The Last Wolf of Ossory**

Mia Vance

*Bitch*, he says,  
and I grit my teeth.

I bristle, spit and grin til cheeks split.  
I howl, throw back my cowl of hair,

I hear the moon call me by  
my other name, her mother tongue;

a snout, a brow, a paw comes clawing up  
from gut to throat, climbing

from the bottom of the bog of me;  
all froth and fog, she bodies forth

whole forests in her fur,  
all the words I've swallowed in her maw.

I am unhooked, she shakes me loose,  
she scatters me like water from her back—

*Bitch*, he says,  
but oh, we will out-winter him.

We will winter him  
out.



**Capall Uisce | Water Horse**

Mia Vance

It was nothing like I thought it would be.  
There was no wave flinging spray,  
no summer sky skipping pieces of itself  
across the sea, no thundering  
of hoofbeats in the surf—  
not like there were in the stories.

No, it was November.  
Midday kept a full moon in its pocket.  
I was walking by the bayside  
when I saw it, stopped to watch.

It nosed up from the loam in the gloaming,  
needled first one finger-foreleg, then the other  
from the mud, hauled its great black head,  
its curve, its open mouth  
into the air, nostrils flaring.

It dredged itself—all hoof and hide and hair—  
from low tide's empty heaviness,  
shook the brackish mantle from its back  
and stood.

Its breath a ghost afloat  
about its shoulders: the only thing  
that moved; a scent stretched thin  
in the quiet between us, while around us  
darkness thickened.

It did not call my name  
the way they do in dreams,  
but waited, swung its head to fix  
one inky eye upon me, drew me  
like a dark moon draws the tide.

Willingly, I went down from the solid rock  
of shore into the ebb-tide's open mouth,  
stretched first the fingers of one cautious hand  
and then the other toward the murky river  
of its mane.



I took five or six good steps before I sank—  
up to my ankles, down to my knees—  
the earth itself turned undertow, a sudden,  
almost-liquid quickness.

The *capall* turned its head the other way,  
cast the dark pool of its other eye upon me,  
watched me slip, hips to ribs to armpits  
in the mire; flicked the dark whip of its tail  
without a sound.

It turned – its nose, its neck, its flank, its hip,  
its backside – pointed west and stepped  
into the first dark froth of rising tide.

As the bay began to fill, it drifted off,  
dissolving into drizzle, mist, a dark smudge  
disappearing in the distance.

Alone, I scrambled for a handhold,  
but my fists would fill with nothing  
but this slick, this wet regretfulness.

Then, finally — just before my fingers,  
chin, and nose went under — there it was  
at last: the keen, the storied thunder.



Nuair a bhínn ag múineadh, aon dalta ina raibh méid áirithe cumais, thugaimis aghaidh a luaithe ab fhéidir ar an aimsir ghnáthchaite. An aimsir is áisiúla sa Ghaeilge, a d'fhógraínn go searbh. Níorbh fhada go bhféadfaí an rud céanna a rá faoi gach teanga a bhí fós ar marthain.

Ach ní mhúinim a thuilleadh. D'imigh sin agus tháinig seo.

Dar le David Hume, Albanach, fealsamh, ní féidir dul ina mhuintín go n-éireoidh an ghrian ar maidin. Gach seans go n-éireoidh, ach ní heol dúinn é. Níl dlí ar bith a deir gur gá do rudaí leanúint ar aghaidh ar an dóigh chéanna a leanadar go dtí seo. Fad na gréine uainn, luas an tsolais, bhíodh a leithéidí á dtomhas agus á seiceáil go seasta ag eolaithe ar eagla – óir is eagla a bhí ann – go dtiocfadh athrú ar na gnáthshonraí.

Chuirí i leith Hume go mba shampla eile é den bhfealsamh sotalach ina thúr éabhair ag cumadh castachtaí nach mbaineann le gnáthshaol gnáthdhaoine. Cén mhaith domsa breithiúnas a thabhairt? I bpluais dhubh faoi thalamh a chónaímse faoi láthair, tús éabhair ann féin ar bhealach contrártha.

Taibhrítear an méid seo dom, áfach. Fadó fadó, in Éirinn, mar a raibh cultais bunaithe ar adhradh na gréine, ní foláir nó go mba dhíol faoisimh gach maidin. Cad eile a spreagfadh an grá sin don ghrian ach sceimhle na hoíche a mhairfidh choíche? Agus taibhrítear rud eile dom ar an mballa romham. Fadó, in Éirinn, is leor fadó amháin, bhíos féin ann an tráth sin, shocraímis an t-aláram ar an bhfón ionas go ndúisfí sinn in am don obair – uair an chloig roimh bhreacadh an lae i lár an gheimhridh, ceithre huaire ina dhiaidh ar theacht an tsamhraidh. Ansin théimis a luí, ár dtailte slán.

Ní hí an mhinicíocht an t-aon slat tomhais a dheimhníonn an gnáthrud. Breithiúnas luacha atá ann chomh maith. Fear agus bean le chéile, sin an gnáthrud. Bod san fhaighin. Bod san fhaighin. Bod san fhaighin.

Nuair a fhéachaimid ar chultúir i réigiúin nó i réanna eile, is iad na gnáthrudaí is mó a chuireann uafás orainn. Bíonn déistin ar bharr déistine ann nuair a fheicimid ainghníomh á ghlacadh go réchúiseach ar nós cuma liom.

Cleamhnas agus pósadh faoi aois an dá bhliain déag. Gadhairfheoil ar phláta. Margáil faoi sclábhaí.

Litiam fola sa ghuthán ar a scaiptear grianghraf príobháideach. Buillíní aráin á gcaitheamh amach as ollmhargadh tráthnóna. Cupán deirce. Ceannbhrat ciúin.



Craiceann donn. Craiceann donn. Craiceann donn.

Fadó fadó, is beag difríocht a dhéantaí idir an fhantaisíocht agus an réalachas. Chreidí go raibh déithe éadmhara i mbun coimhlinte sna fláithis, go raibh dragúin ar marthain sna sléibhte, go raibh slua sí meidhreach míthrócaireach sa lios. Ní dhéantaí dealú gear idir an fíorscéal agus an finscéal. Níorbh annamh an t-iontas an tráth sin.

Le teacht na réabhlóide eolaíche, daingníodh rialacha na cruinne. Ruaigeadh creidiúintí nár luigh leo go gort na mbréag. Le teacht na réabhlóide tionsclaíche, rinneadh atáirgeadh meicniúil ní hamháin ar tháirgí ach ar laethanta oibre, ar nósanna siamsaíochta, ar shaol agus ar thimpeallacht an duine. Bhí brí láidir lom úr leis an ngnáthrud, agus is é a bhí searbh.

San Eoraip ar dtús, tobar na nimhe, a d'aithin ealaíontóirí agus fealsaimh a raibh tite amach. D'fhógair Viktor Shklovsky, Rúiseach, teoiricí liteartha, go mba é dualgas na healaíne sa ré tionsclaíoch rud coimhthíoch a dhéanamh de gach gnáth. Rinne scríbhneoirí grinnscrúdú, mar sin, ar mhionsonraí an tsaoil, cur chuige a bhain buaicphointe amach nuair a chuir an Seoigheach cruth eipice ársa fantaisí ar ghnáth-thaithí gnáthfhir ar ghnáthlá i mBleá Cliath.

An coimhthíú céanna a bhí mar bhonn leis an osréalachas, gluaiseacht a thuig nach ann don ghnáthrud ann féin, nach ndéantar gnáthrud de rud go lonnaitear i gcomhthéacs sóisialta é, mar a rialaítear a fheidhm agus a fhiúntas. Scartha uaidh sin, i gcomhthéacs nua nó ar foluain leis féin, tugtar aiteas is aduantas an ruda chun solais. Ba le Comte de Lautréamont, Francach, file, íomhá a úsáideadh mar shainmhíniú na gluaiseachta: áilleacht an chruinnithe gan choinne ar bhord máinliachta idir inneall fuála agus scáth báistí.

Más san inchinn a tharlaíonn gach rud, is ann a d'fhéadfadh tuilleadh tarlú. A mbraitheann na céadfaí, a stóráiltear sa chuimhne, a gcumtar sa tsamhlaíocht – ní mór an díle a scagadh. Ní féidir gach rud a ligean isteach thar thairseach na feasachta. Coinnímid guaim orainn féin, murab ionann is an gealt. Cuirtear ó dhoras an tromlach nach mbaineann le hábhar.

Ach cé a shocraíonn an t-ábhar?

Tá an saol ag geáitsíocht ach ní thugtar faoi ndeara. Tá an saol ag screadaíl ach ní thugtar dó cluas.

Nuair a bhí an tóin ag titim as an saol, nuair a bhí an phraiseach ag leathadh ar fud na mias, ní raibh uainn ach sábháilteacht na ndeasghnáth, na ngnáthrudáí. Dhéanaimis iarracht leanúint díobh chomh fada agus ab fhéidir, ach bhí an sólás ídithe astu. Cén mhaith dúinn Oireachtas na Samhna tráth a mbíodh óstáin na tíre lán de theifigh ó na ceantair chósta? Cén teolaíocht a gheall dinnéar na Nollag nuair is don bharbaiciú a d'oir na dálaí lasmuigh? Cén taitneamh a bhí le baint as Craobh na hÉireann nuair a thiomnaítí nóiméad ciúnais ag tús gach cluiche don mhíle is déanaí a cailleadh le tart nó le tuillte nó le radaighníomhaíocht?



Tráth ar baineadh uainn an cupán tae féin, nuair a thosaigh an chiondáil fuinnimh agus uisce, b'ín an lá ar thit an tóin agus go raibh sé ina chac i gceart, dar le mórán. Bailíodh sinn isteach sna hallaí móra soláthair choitinn (ní fhéadaidís sólathar díreach a ghlaoch air). Idir babhtaí gola is troda, d'imrímis cluiche le féachaint cé a d'fhéadfadh cuimhneamh ar an rud is neafaisí a bhíodh ann sa seansaol. Samplaí a ritheann liom: an spiel a deirtí go tapa ag deireadh fógraí raidió; na t-léinte a dhéantaí go speisialta d'óiche na gcearc nó do chóisir na bpo; málaí caca do ghadhair.

Ansin luafadh amadán éigin ceol na n-éan, thosódh óinseach eile ag caoineadh, agus b'ín deireadh leis an spórt go ceann tamaill.

Cad is gnáthrud ann domsa i mo phluais?

Dorchadas, cinnte, cé nach é an t-aon rud é. Feicim an t-uafás sa dorchadas céanna. Aislingí ildathacha, cuimhneacháin chumtha, cumadóireacht tugtha chun cuimhne. Ach is é an dorchadas a bhíonn ann den chuid is mó. Lasadh, lonradh, múchadh, agus gan tada le fada arís.

Téim amach ó am go chéile, uair sna naoi n-aird, nuair a mhaolaíonn an teasnach. Cé go mbíonn blas ar an mbeagán, ní leor an caonach i gcónaí ná drúcht na mballaí. Díol iontais a dhifriúla agus a bhíonn an tírdhreach. Is léir go mbím scoite ó imeacht na séasúr anseo sa phluais. É sin, nó tá rithimí nua i réim. An uair is déanaí, ó bhéal na pluaise, chonaic mé crainnte arda trópaiceacha, lochanna agus seascainn thíos sa ghleann. Measaim gur le hainmhithe na glórtha sin. Mo ghraidhin iad. Ní foláir nó go bhfuil borradh faoin saol arís. Ach titfidh an tóin as seo chomh maith, luath nó mall. Atfaidh an ghrian, nó clisfidh an Bhó Fhionn le hAndraiméide, nó sínfidh an chruinne féin rófhada go bhfillfear ar an gcaithnín ónar phreabamar an chéad lá riamh.

Sin é an deasghnáth. I ndiaidh an taibhrimh is déanaí, an dorchacht an athuair.

Ar uairibh, i bhfólús na pluaise, sílim gur mise an caithnín sin. Mise an neamhrud, an síor-rud, ag deireadh na feide. Feicim siar uaim mar shlabhra an uile ní a tharla is nach raibh iontu ach seal agus deirim, mar a déarfá tar éis dreas cainte lán de scéalta nuachta is smaointe scaipthe a bheith tagtha chun críche, críoch gan chonclúid:

Sin iad na rudaí.



**Where Birds Won't Fly**

Ruby Nixon





The rock is sea born, found out of the west country. She is grey and upright, two perfectly round ditches for eyes at the top of her head. She can understand what I think of when I see her, she is my surrogate and my holding cross. Her face, a sheeted ghost, a child tired of life, remembering the other ways, waiting. She is heavy for her age-an age unknown to me and an age impossible to assume. When I hold her, I am the only girl left in the world. The world has been bombed, sleeping in its atomic wake, vibrating with radiation, shimmering in its own darkened way. I





am a pilgrim-steadfast on my route, trying to make out the sacred from the scared. I will not be deterred from my path. My body is weeping from the sores and burns, but I am wild now. I think of the saints and Gods, the holy sites built on holy sites built on holy sites. This is what I will do now that I have nothing else to do- I will become devoted and devout. During the blast, I disappeared into a cave. I awoke next to her. My very own Venus. A relic from time herself, cut from shoreline, the lapping of salt against stone until girl appeared. I do not immediately put her into my pocket. Instead, I think of whether this is right. Do I throw her back to the waves or does she wait in the rocks. I understand everything has will and wherever I go now, too will she. I understand the ice age and its caves, full of art, of women carving women, of lions trying on the humans, I understand the stone and wood and firelight.

In the firelight of the blast, I hold her up and imagine my God. Out into this new England, I bring forth my new religion. One day when the fall out stops and the wheat grows again and all of this is forgotten in some children's rhyme, there will be a university hall calling me history. My remains will be taken to the museum where all the other ancestors are. They will welcome me and say Hello stranger in ways I had never been taught. I will belong in a lead box to stop me from biting. My ghost girl stone will also be found, clutched to my chest, a new shoreline made of bone. She will be gifted a beautiful name fitting for such a girl from the old times 'mysterious', 'unknown'. In the future every other child girl born, will be called such in her honour. A class register full of small religions. The lecturer scoffs at my creation and cannot see the value in what I discovered so deduces it has no value. If only they had seen the blast. Ghost Girl Rock doesn't care, she can remember the congregation, the women wrapped in wool, eyes made of clouds, creating new prayers and new hymns and new cathedrals. Temples made out of air, air static with particles like old televisions pressed against cheeks. In the museum she is a saint and the students come with pencils in hand, making pilgrimage to their favourite artifact.



Tháinig cnag ar an doras an oíche sula bhfuair m'athair bás. Ní minic a thagadh cuairteoirí chugainn agus chuaigh m'athair ag an doras láithreach go bhfeicfeadh sé cé a bhí ann. Ach duine ná deoraí ní fhaca sé. Ag seasamh ag leac an dorais, scrúdaigh sé an méid a bhí amuigh sa dorchadas, ghlaoigh sé amach 'Halló?' amháin fánach, gan freagra a fháil ach an ghaoth ag séideadh tríd na crainn arda a bhí i gciorcail timpeall an tí. Cé gur mí Lunasa a bhí ann, bhí nimh san aer agus dhún sé an doras amhail is nach ligfeadh sé isteach an fuacht.

'Ar airigh sibhse cnag ar an doras?' cheistigh sé mo mháthair agus mo dheartháir a bhí sa chistin istigh.

'Cinnte, chuala mise trí bhuille cúpla nóiméad ó shin,' arsa mo dheartháir Seán, é ag sortáil mirlíní i ngrúpaí ar an talamh. Ní raibh focal as mo mháthair, a bhí ag leagadh an bhoird ag ullmhú don suipéar. D'fhéach sí síos ar na sceana agus foirc ina lámh aici, dath an bháis ar a haghaidh ag cuimhneamh siar ar an uair dheireanach a chuala sí cnag ar an doras gan duine ar bith ann.

Bhí ár dteach suite sé mhíle ón gcéad theach eile, gan timpeall orainn ach páirceanna, coillte agus liosanna sí. Ní fhéadfadh do dhuine teacht chuig an áit go héasca. Ní fhéadfadh do dhuine éalú ón áit go héasca. Bhí an cuairteoir gan choinne ag dó na geirbe ag Daid. D'ardaigh sé a chaipín agus a chóta a bhí crochta ar an mballa agus amach leis arís chun go bhfaigheadh sé an lámh a leag cnag ar a dhoras. Tincéir ag iarraidh rud éigin a dhíol b'fhéidir? Nó comharsan i dtrioblóid ag lorg cabhrach? Bhí gualduibhe na hoíche tite agus ní mórán daoine a bheadh thart, go háirithe gan solas leo. Tar éis leathuair ag siúl suas síos an bóithrín, ag cuardach an sciobóil, ag fiosrú gach cúinne agus coirnéal, d'fhill sé ar an teach.

Fear mór clainne é mo Dhaid, i gcónaí ag iarraidh muid a chosaint agus a choinneáil sábháilte. Is cuimhin liom fós nuair a bheadh obair an lae déanta aige, shuíodh sé síos ar sheanchathaoir mór a bhí aige sa seomra suí agus bhaineadh sé de a bhróga. Shleamhnaíodh sé sall sa chathaoir chun spás beag teolaí a chruthú domsa, bhuaileadh sé bosóg ar an gcuisín agus thugadh sé cuireadh dom, 'suigh isteach dod'



chúinne anseo a leanbh'. Is cuimhin liom fós an grá agus an sábháilteacht a bhraith mé sa chúinne beag sin.

Nuair a chuaigh sé ar ais sa teach an oíche sin, gan sásamh a fháil, shuigh sé síos ag bord na cistine agus líon mo mháthair cúpán tae dó. I ngan fhios dó go raibh sé ag ithe a shuipéar deireanach.

An tráthnóna dár gcionn, bhí boladh breá cócaireachta sa chistin agus mo mháthair ag réiteach cáca donn. Chaith sí súil go neirbhíseach ar an gclóg - ba cheart go mbeadh mo Dhaid istigh ó bheith ag crú na mbó faoin am seo. D'airigh sí gleo amuigh sa chló agus rith amach, a croí ina béal aici, fios maith aici nach mbeadh rudaí riamh i gceart arís pé rud a bheadh os a comhair. Nuair a chonaic sí m'uncail Éamon ag rith ina treo tháinig laigeacht ina glúine agus thit sí ina cnap ar an talamh. Bhí Daid imithe. Timpiste le bodóg chantalach sa bhleánlann. Níor féadadh aon rud a dhéanamh faoi.

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Ar feadh trí oíche is trí lá rinneadh m'athair a thórramh. Bhí comharsana agus clann ag teacht is ag imeacht le bia agus deoch, paidreacha agus comhbhrón. Bhí monabhar íseal leanúnach idir paidreacha agus sioscarnach, caint agus cúlchaint ón gcistin tríd go dtí an seomra suí, síos an pasáiste cúng go dtí an parlús ag cúl an tí. Is ansin a bhí m'athair álainn sínte amach ina chulaith Domhnaigh, meascán mearaí de chathaoireacha seasta go hómósach ar nós saighdiúirí ar imeall an tseomra. Bhí an seomra plúchta idir an corpán agus an seanbholadh ó na soithí poirceallán a bhí ar taispeáint ar na seilfeanna. I lár an aonaigh bhí mo dheartháir, naoi mbliana d'aois agus gan tuiscint cheart aige ar bhás. Nóiméad amháin bhí sé crochta suas ar ghlúin aintín éigin nó buailte go grámhar ag comharsan ag rá leis gurb é 'fear an tí' anois. Bhí an cuma air go raibh sé breá sásta leis an bhfreagracht nua seo, nó b'fhéidir go raibh an síúcra ón Club Orange ag tabhairt misneach bréagach dó. I gcomparáid leis sin, bhí lagmhisneach ar fad ar mo mháthair. Bhí sí suite ar nós dealbh ar an gcathaoir ar thaobh na lámhe clé den chónra. Paidrín á chraitheadh ina lámh aici agus a liopaí fáiscthe le chéile. A béal binn ina thost. Ar thaobh na lámhe deise bhí m'uncail Éamon ag déanamh liú mór caoineadh agus é cromtha ar thaobh na cónra, a chaipín ina lámh aige ag clúdach a shúile nach raibh ag silleadh deoir ar bith.



Ar an oíche dheireanach sular cuireadh m'athair sa chré, luaigh mo dheartháir Seán an cnag a bhí ar an doras cúpla oíche ó shin. Mhaolaigh an monabhar agus an sioscarnach sa pharlús. Leag bean éigin a cúpán síos ar a fochupán. D'fhéach comharsan linn agus seanchaí, Tom Ó Cualáin thall ag mo mháthair, 'Meas tú ab í a bhí ann?'

'Cé atá tú ag caint faoi?' bhí mo dheartháir níos fiosraí nuair nár thug mo mháthair freagra do Tom.

'An bhean sí, ar ndóigh' arsa Tom go sotalach, ag ardú gloine brandy chuig a bhéal. Is drámatúla an scéal, is fearr é dar leis, agus seo an t-ábhar cainte is mó a thaitin leis.

'Ach nach ndéanann sí sin caoineadh agus liú agus olagón sula bhfógraíonn sí go bhfuil duine chun báis?' arsa Seán go soineanta.

'Ní chaithfear gur caoineadh atá ann,' arsa Tom, 'faigheann clainnte difriúla foláirimh dhifriúla ón mbean sí,' bhí a fhios aige go maith nár thaitin an chaint sin le mo mháthair agus fios níos fearr fós aige nach raibh an neart aici chun stop a chur leis.

Nuair a d'fhéach sé timpeall ar na daoine ar fad a bhí ag tabhairt cluas éisteachta dó sa pharlús, shuigh sé siar sa chathaoir chun go mbeadh sé ar a chompord. Bhí sé ag baint taitneamh as an aird seo. D'ardaigh sé a ordóg, 'Muintir Uí Bhriain síos an bóthar, deirtear go bhfeiceann siad solas beag bán ar nós lampa amuigh sa ghort amach rompu, gan aon duine ann. An lá dár gcionn, seacht ngeall air go gcaillfí duine acu.'

Dhiúg sé siar an braon deiridh den brandy agus shín sé amach a lámh le athlónadh a fháil ó dhuine toillteanach. Chloisfeá biorán ag titim anois. D'ardaigh sé a mhéar thosaigh, 'Boladh deataigh a fhaigheann Pat Ó Flatharta agus bíonn a fhios aige go bhfaighidh duine dá mhuintir bás go gairid ina dhiaidh sin.' D'ardaigh sé a mhéar láir, 'Cloiseann mo mhuintirse torann ar nós leoraí ag teacht síos an bóithrín, ach ní thagann rud ar bith.'

'Cén rud a dhéanann ár mbean sí?' arsa Seán, an créatúr bocht scanraithe ag an gcaint anois. D'ardaigh mo mháthair a cloigeann agus labhair sí den chéad uair, 'Buailéann sí trí chnag ar an doras,' a deir sí.



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Ní raibh corp m'athair fuaraithe sa chré nuair a bhog m'uncaíl Éamon isteach sa teach. Le aire a thabhairt do mo mháthair, a deir sé. Leis an bhfeirm a bhainistiú, a deir sé. An fheirm chéanna ar a chaith sé féin a óige, an fheirm a raibh sé ag súil le fáil in uacht a athar ach nach bhfuair sé, mar gur ag m'athair díograiseach, d'ílís a fágadh é. Ach anois fuair sé a sheans. Chuir sé a lorg ar gach rud san áit gan mhoill.

D'athraigh sé na páirceanna a bhí in úsáid ag na beithígh, chuir sé síneadh leis an mbleánlann. Fuair sé réidh le cró na gcearc agus dhíol sé na cearca ag an margadh. Scaip sé a shíol níos fairsinge ná sin arís; bhí triúr páiste ag mo mháthair lastaigh de thrí bliana, agus í go maith sna daichidí ag an bpointe sin. Íde na muc is na madraí a thug sé do Sheán agus do mo mháthair chiúin bhocht, a chaill a misneach ar fad. Tharraing sé Seán amach as an scoil luath chun é a chur ag obair ó dhubh go dubh, Domhnach is dálach. Ach ní fheadfadh dá thiúr féin rud ar bith a dhéanamh mícheart. Mhill sé iad sin, bhíodar leisciúil, sotalach, agus rinne siad aithris ar an dímheas a léirigh Éamon do mo mháthair. Is minic a cheistigh mé cén áit as ar tháinig an nimh seo a bhí i m'uncaíl. An é go raibh an dearg-ghráin aige ar m'athair mar go bhfuair sé an fheirm? An raibh sé in éad leis mar gur phós sé an cailín a bhí dúil aige inti le fada? Pé cúis a bhí lena sceimhle, bhí sé ann riamh. Nuair a bualadh mise le droch-thinneas eitinne agus gan mé ach trí bliana d'aois, is cuimhin liom mo mháthair do mo thabhairt chuig an ospidéal go rialta chun leigheas a fháil. Oíche amháin bhí mé sínte amach sa seomra suite, lag tinn agus drochbhail orm nuair a chuala mé m'uncaíl ag labhairt le mo thuistí béal dorais sa chistin.

'Ní bheidh airgead agaibh le bia a chur ar an mbord sin go luath má leanann sibh oraibh leis an gceaic seo siar is aniar ag an ospidéal. Glac leis gur le Dia atá sí anois agus stopaigí den tseafóid,' bhí sé ina sheasamh sa chistin, ag bualadh dorn ar an mbord lena phointe a threisiú.

'Ná labhair fúithí ar nós go bhfuil sí imithe cheana féin,' a d'fhreagair m'athair, 'tá níos mó daoine ag teacht as an eitinn ná riamh, tá seans mhaith aici.'

'Muise, má cheapann tusa go dtiocfaidh biseach ar an gcailín óg, lag sin, tá tú chomh dúr le slis,' chuir sé a chaipín ar a cheann agus amach leis. 'tú chomh dúr le slis,' chuir sé a chaipín ar a cheann agus amach leis.



## *Aimsir*

Ní dóigh liom gur thug mo mháthair maithiúnas d'Éamon riamh do na rudaí a dúirt sé fúm an oíche sin. Agus is cinnte nár thug sí maithiúnas dó faoin saol dorcha, duairc a ghearr sé uirthi nuair a fuair m'athair bás. Fiche bliain a chaith sé ar an bhfeirm le mo mháthair agus mo dheartháir agus an triúr eile. Fiche bliain lán le díoltas, crá croí agus anró. Ach, fiche bliain tar éis bás m'athair, ar Lá Nollag, bhuaíl taom croí m'uncail suarach agus tugadh faoiseamh do mo mháthair. An bronntanas Nollag is fearr fós.

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Caithfidh mé a rá gur ábhar lúcháir dom an trí chnag sin a bhualadh ar dhoras an tí an Oíche Nollag sin. Bhí mé in ann mo mháthair a fheiceáil trí fhuinneog na cistine.

D'fhéach sí i mo threo nuair a chuala sí an cnag - táim nach mór cinnte go bhfaca sí mé. Agus an raibh sé sin meangadh beag gáire ar a haghaidh an uair seo? Í ag súil le saoirse a fháil ón bhfear seo a bhí á céasadh.

Bhain mé sásamh as an gcnag sin a bhuaileadh, sásamh i bhfad níos mó ná an ceann a bhí orm a dhéanamh an oíche sula bhfuair mo Dhaid bocht bás. D'aithin mé an eagla ar éadan mo mháthar an oíche sin, bhí sé feicthe agam cheana. Chonaic mé é an oíche a bhí mé sínte amach tinn, tar éis éisteacht le caint dhiúltach m'uncail. D'airigh mé cnag déanach sa tráthnóna, 'Cé a bhí ann, a Mhama?' a d'fhiafraigh mé di nuair a d'fhill sí orm. Bhí deora ina súile aici, bheir sí ar mo lámh agus dúirt, 'Ná bí buartha faoi a stóirín.'

Bhí an ceart ag m'uncail nach bhfeicfinn mo cheathrú samhradh. N'fheadar cé hí an bhean sí a bhí ann romham, a d'fhógair mo bhás féin ach is mise atá ag coinneáil súil ar mo mhuintir ar fad anois. Ní caoineadh ná olagón a dhéanaimse, ach dornán beag le mo lámh – cnag cnag cnag - agus imeacht liom san aer.



**Beacon Light**

Mark Stewart

The harvest long gone from field and meadow,  
thus tilts the sun away from the embrace of  
the Earth, as from a lover parted; the pale disc  
a beacon lost in the mist, circling the rim of the  
world like a wrecker's lamp; the glancing light  
never edging far from the narrow domain of  
dawn or dusk, a spectral host in the penumbral  
glow illuminating, in fitful embers, the winter sky.



**Only to Rot**

Mary-Kate Barrett

Berries emerge as blooms begin to wither  
the beauty of their blackening, brief  
before they are torn from tender tethers  
flesh becoming fruit in another's feast.  
Like fledglings and field mice  
who find their way amidst the thorns  
safe in the thicket from hungry eyes  
who stake their claim on skittish forms.

Or the girl who plucks the bramble's ripest gift  
risking the sting to savour the sweet  
pried from her lips by a lover's kiss,  
his stained tongue marking her defeat.  
All fall prey to the world's sharp tooth,  
what a waste of summer youth





**Where Birds Won't Fly**

Ruby Nixon



## Biographical notes

**A. Joseph Black** - A. Joseph Black is from Carnlough in the north of Ireland and writes short stories and flash fiction. Over forty of his pieces can be found online, in literary magazines and in print anthologies. He was runner up in the Colm Tóibín International Short Story Award in 2018 and 2021 and two of his stories have been published as chapbooks in Australia, in 2017 and 2019. His short story 'A Little Cloud' was The Irish Times New Irish Writing for January 2020 and in 2021 he won the Arts Council NI-funded Finding Your Voice competition run by Bloomsbury Publishing and Writers & Artists. His work has recently appeared, or is upcoming, in *Púca*, *The Martello Journal*, *Howl* (2022) and *The Belfast Review*.

**Abigail Brodie** - Abigail Brodie is interested in early human history, ancestor friendship, nature-led learning techniques, alternative history telling and conspiracy. Her practice is based in organic materials found in outdoor spaces due to a fixation with the magic of disappearance. Abigail often works alongside family members and loved ones to create collaborative, intergenerational art. Currently she is working with the human urge and compulsion to look for rocks, value rocks and keep rocks to develop it as a form of therapy.

**Annemarie McCarthy** - Originally from Cork, Annemarie works as a travel editor when she's not writing or reading fiction or on the road.

**Annie Bell** - Annie Bell is from Essex in England and moved to Co. Waterford, Ireland in 2019. She works as a journalist and radio presenter. Annie is a poet, novelist, and award winning writer of short stories. Since moving to Ireland, she has rekindled her love of playing the guitar and has begun writing songs. Annie's writing has been published in a number of literary journals, including *The Waxed Lemon*, *The Kleksograph*, *The Wilfred Owen Association Journal* and *The Poet*.

**Callum Irvine** - C. R. F. Irvine is a poet and doctoral researcher at the University of St Andrews. Alongside his academic work in poetry and lateness, he has been commissioned to translate poetry and to contribute to *The Dark Horse Magazine's* Festschrift for Douglas Dunn.

**Caomhán Ó hÓgáin** - I mBaile Átha Cliath a rugadh. Idir Cluain Dolcáin agus Cill Droichid a tógadh. Bhain céim ollscoile amach sa Bhéarla agus sa bhfealsúnacht. Duine de Ghaeil na Bruiséile. Craoltóir le Raidió na Life. Scríbhneoir le cois, cá bhfios.



**Elen Ifan** - Elen Ifan began publishing her writing on instagram as @ystlum ('bat') in 2019. She is interested in making sense of the world through the sounds of words - much like a bat makes sense of its surroundings with its sonar calls. She published her first poetry pamphlet, *Ystlum*, with Cyhoeddiadau'r Stamp in 2022, which follows the cycle of the year from September to September: beginning with an ending, journeying through dark months towards new light, new growth, and an appreciation of all that has passed. She lives in Cardiff, and is a Lecturer in Welsh at Cardiff University.

**Fred Johnston** - Born in Belfast in 1951, I was educated there and Toronto, Canada. My most recent collection of poems is *True North* (Salmon Poetry, 2019/) I received a Hennessy Literary Award in 1972. With Peter Sheridan and Neil Jordan, I was a co-founder of the Irish Writers' Co-Operative in the 'Seventies. I founded Galway's annual literary festival, CUIRT, in 1986. Recent poetry and prose has appeared in *STAND*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Spectator*, *Cyphers*, *The Dalhousie Review* (Can.) *The Moth*, *The Stinging Fly* and *Southword*.

**Johana Egermayer** - Tha Johana Egermayer air a bhith ag obair mar neach-rannsa-chaidh agus eadar-theangaiche. Dh'ionnsaich i Gàidhlig nuair a bha i san oilthigh. Tha i a' fuireach ann an Alba.

**Juliet Gaskell** - Juliet is a recent Leeds Arts Uni graduate and multidisciplinary artist. She is interested in trinkets and oddities, and how love and meaning can be imbued onto any object to make it special, such as objects on shrines and altars. Juliet takes a huge amount of inspiration from her interest in witchcraft and pagan seasonal celebrations, along with media influence from films and music, and reflecting on complicated emotions or traumas. Her work as Silver Persephone Art involves a mix of mediums, from jewellery making, sculpture, lino printing, cyanotype and zine-making.

**Kathrina Farrington** - Kathrina Farrington is an attorney who lives and writes in New York City with her cat, Evie.

**Lianne Wilson** - Lianne, bardic name Niwlen Ster meaning 'nebula', is a queer Cornish poet, writer and artist who comes from the moon 'mountains' and alcopop pools of Clay Country, Kernow. She writes in what should have always been her mother tongue, Kernewek (Cornish), with translation into English. Her work has thrice been awarded recognition by Gorsedh Kernow and been published in *VAINÉ* magazine and various anthologies. It explores language, identity, chronic



## *Aimsir*

illness, rebel bodies and raised voices. She often returns to the wheel of the year for inspiration.

**Mark Stewart** - Writing with a social and environmental conscience; hoping to redress the balance in favour of Mother Nature. Often found deep in the woods of magical realism, in the company of wolves and other metamorphic creatures, or in the literary edgelands not far from the sea. Although I live now on the South Downs, my literary roots are firmly Celtic, having their home in Irish soil. Also learning to live with a cancer diagnosis and how even this experience can shape and influence my writing.

**Mary-Kate Barrett** - Mary-Kate Barrett is a writer from between the mountains and the sea in the west of Ireland. She works as an online content writer and has a bachelor's in creative writing from NUIG/UG. She has an endless love for travel, but mostly writes about home. Other poems can be found in *ROPES* and *The Galway Advertiser*.

**Mia Vance** - Mia Vance, named Valedictorian and Poet Laureate of the University of Oregon's CAS graduating class in 2022, is proud to have earned a Master of Arts in Writing at the University of Galway in 2023. Her previous work has had the honour of appearing in the pages *Unbound Journal*, *Vox Galvia*, the 2022 *OPA Verseweavers anthology*, and issue 17 of *Skylight* 47. In addition, her poetry has been performed at the Big Foot Poetry Slam, the Oregon Country Fair, Arts Alive 2020 and 2021, Over the Edge Open Mic, the Living Poetic Poetry Open Mic, Lime Square Poetry Open Mic, and Poetic Pints. Born in California and living in Galway with her husband and son, Vance's work explores the relationships between home and migration, landscape and lineage, lore and language, politics and place.

**Nathaniel Harrington** - 'S e sgrìobhadair is acadaimigeach a th' ann an Nathaniel Harrington. Tha a' chuid bàrdachd air a foillseachadh ann an *Dàna*, *Poblachd nam Bàrd*, *STEALL*, agus *An Naidheachd Againne* (cuairt-litir a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich Ameireaganaich). 'S ann à Boston, Massachusetts a tha e, ach tha e a' fuireach ann an Canada bho chionn 2015.

**Ruby Nixon** - Ruby Nixon (b. 1999) is a visual artist experimenting with photographic processes, analogue printing and storytelling. She is interested in the folklore of Britain and the historic relationship between people and nature. Reflecting on spaces she has lived and visited, Nixon creates work that draws upon the importance of her experience of the land. An element of her artistic practice



focuses on socially engaged practices, working collaboratively with communities to produce and curate art. She is particularly involved in engaging people who otherwise may be unable to access art, encouraging participants to create work that reflects personal experiences and beliefs.

*Sgàire Uallas* - Sgàire was born and raised in Ontario, Canada, where he still lives with his wife, his son, and his little dog. He is a lawyer in English, but a creative writer in Gaelic. He is particularly interested in the myth and lore of the Gaelic people.

*William James Ó hÍomhair* - Gaillmheach is ea William James Ó hÍomhair – file dátheangach, ceoltóir, agus teagascóir atá ag cur faoi i bPáras na Fraince, ag obair leis an Centre Culturel Irlandais. Tá ról lárnach ag an dúlra ina shaol agus ina shaothar. Tá réimse leathan suimeanna aige, agus é go mór faoi anáil na n-amharc-ealaíon chomh maith le filíocht idir chomhaimseartha agus chlasaiceach ó theangacha éagsúla. Déanann sé iarracht na céadfaí uile a thabhairt le chéile ina chuid saothair chun an dúchas agus an duine a chur faoi chaibidil. Foilsíodh dánta dá chuid in *Icarus*, *An Capall Dorcha* agus *Channel*.

*Úna Nic Cárthaigh* - Tógadh Úna Nic Cárthaigh i gCloch na gCoillte in Iarthar Chorcaí agus tá sí ag cur fuithí anois sa Ghaillimh. Bhain sí BA sa Chumarsáid amach le hOllscoil na Gaillimhe agus Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas ó Choláiste Mhuire Gan Smál. Tá dúspéis aici i ngearrscéalta, splancfhicsean agus filíocht i nGaeilge. Foilsíodh dán léi san irisleabhar liteartha *Howl*.



## Notes

*Cover art: Grace Kenny, 2023.*

(i) *Otherworld - Juliet Gaskell*

Otherworld was made to explore the idea of places and objects being made sacred or holy by the love or care people have for them. It explores the boundary between reality, dreams, imagination and the veil separating them.

(ii) *Where Birds Won't Fly - Ruby Nixon*

The landscape surrounding the Staffordshire Moorlands is defined by its folklore. Through her project *Where Birds Won't Fly*, visual artist, Ruby Nixon, explores the history and mythology surrounding the ancient tales of a mermaid that lives beneath the surface of two pools in the Staffordshire Moorlands. The folklore rumours that the pools, six miles apart, are connected by an underwater tunnel. Cattle refuse to drink from them and birds will not fly over. The stories of how the mermaid ended up here vary from a sailor bringing her in-land from the ocean, to an accused witch being drowned here and subsequently haunting the waters. Regardless of how her fate sealed her within these depths, one theme remains consistent in these narratives: a historical dehumanisation of the female presence. Nixon's practice documents myths of the landscape entwined with theories of the other, using a multitude of mediums including analogue film, physical printing, archives and digital processes. The photobook blurs the borders between truth and fiction, playing with fragmented narratives that investigate misogyny and abstract feminism.







