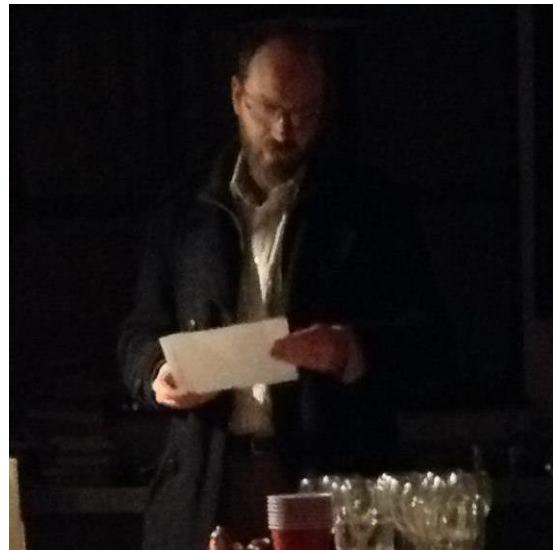


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A
NEW
ULSTER



Featuring the works of Nichola Jennings, Steve Mazur, Rose Ultan Thomas, Bernadette Ni Riada, Stephanie V Sears, Nicholas Lenane, DS Maolalai, Karen Pettersen, Joan McNerney and Michael Minassian. **Hard copies can be purchased from our website.**

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December 2018

A New Ulster
Prose
On the Wall
Website

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Editor: E V Greig
Editor: Arizahn
Editor: Adam Rudden

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On The Wall

Message from the Alleycats

Round the Back

A

New

Ulster

Poetry, prose, art work and letters to be sent to:
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Cover Image “The editor speaks” by Amos Greig

“It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light.” Aristotle Onassis.

Editorial

By the time you are reading this we will be well into the festive season hopefully everyone will have an excellent time but we should also remember those who have no family, no home and in some cases no hope.

Christmas has always been a difficult time of year for me however this year has been different hopefully next year will be a lot better than this one has been granted there's uncertainty ahead although that doesn't mean bad tidings ahead. Sometimes we have to face into the storm to see the shore.

We have poetry and prose aplenty this issue from a range of voices and countries, A New Ulster has been mentioned in a recent survey of Irish literary sources that's an interesting insight into how healthy the literary scene is here.

This editorial will be shorter than usual I've been to hospital where I attended a Pain Management clinic and will be starting a pain management course in the new year I'm looking forward to it while they've said they can't increase my pain relief they can at least give me the tools to enjoy my hobbies.

Onward to creativity!!

Amos Greig Editor.

Biographical Note: Nichola Jennings

Nicola Jennings lives in Dublin. Her poems have been published in the *The Plane Tree*, *Crannog*, *The Waterford Review*, *Burren Meitheal*, *The Stinging Fly* and the online poetry magazine *The Pickled Body*. Her collection of short stories *Horse* was a finalist in the 2012 Eludia Awards (Hidden River Arts, Philadelphia). Her short story *Muscle Memory* was included in the Hennessy Book of Irish Fiction 2005-2015, New Island Books, 2015. She is a member of Airfield Writers, Dundrum, Dublin.



Microcosmos

(Nichola Jennings)

Down on your hunkers
sand cupped in your palm
you examine every grain
multicoloured minute stones
black lava whitened bones
green and brown sea glass
shattered shells pink
curved cowries whelks
and limpets
shards and fragments
fashioned by the lunar pull
and ebb of water

head bowed dark hair
falls across your forehead
you smile as you pour
the sand into a rock pool
and watch it shimmer
but I see time
running out

The moment

(Nichola Jennings)

In that instant
when blood and bone
met stone and soil
half of everything
fell with him
sheared away
and half remained

the moment
he crashed to earth
his molten waxy wings
his ambitious flight
over

splitting
dreams and plans
the ever present
and the distant future

all gone

in that headlong spiral

Icarus like, like Icarus doomed

all torn apart

waiting to be whole again

the shreds held

close to the heart

Apricity

(Nichola Jennings)

Birds in constant motion
are feasting on remnants
in the garden
against a backdrop
of snow covered mountains.

Pigeons fight, feed,
and fly replete
leaving the frieze of holly trees
bare of their flame red crown.

On spindle thin legs
head tilted
the robin watches me
scatter mealy worms
on the hard earth.

Snow laden gales blow,
frost laces the grass,
and a thrush
splashes in the icy pond.

Blackbirds fight
over quartered apples,
the rook digs his beak
into the fat balls

I leave for the blue tits,
and the magpie struts
along the garden wall,
a vigilante surveying
his territory,
a blow-in himself,
an invader.

I face the winter sun,
feel its warmth on my cold skin.

Biographical Note: Steve Mazur

Steven A Mazur. is, an Irishman living in Waterford Michigan USA .He is a retired carpenter/ musician. who primarily writes songs. Lately a couple of song ideas turned into some poetry

An Irishman Contemplates Death

Steven A Mazur

I am an Irishman

Grudgingly, despite my best efforts, I have come to accept the fact that I am not immortal.

So while I walk this green earth, I will adhere to this commitment.

I will not fear death, He will come for me, I cannot stop him

Everyone die's, death is a simple fact of life.

But I will not worry my life waiting for him to come, for to do so would waste the greatest gift I have received.

I will not fear death, he will come for me, I cannot stop him.

I have chosen my path.

I will greet each day with a smile , thankful for another chance.

I will eat , I will drink, I will laugh, I will feel , and I will love, for soon I will be just a memory, and I hope to be a good one, a happy one, a loving one.

Death wants me, and he will come.

In my own foolishness, and through no fault of my own, I have cheated him too often.

Death will come for me, I cannot stop him.

So on the day he comes, I resolve to meet him on my own terms.

I will walk straight on to him, through open my arms and embrace him.

I will give him a warm ,strong Irish hug, I will gently kiss him first on one cheek ,then the other.

I will tilt my head back so as to look him straight in the eye ,tighten my grip, and send my right knee crashing all up into his Jimmy.

And after he falls to the floor, with my left foot, I will plant a striker's kick firmly in his arse.

And bending over his withering ,suffering form, whisper in his ear ,

“ Not today, sonny Jim, not today “

Biographical Note: Rose Ultan Thomas

Rose creates her poetry under the pen name Rose Ultan Thomas. The pen name is a dedication to her mother, Carmel Rose and maternal grandmother, Rose – two very strong women, who were the backbone of their families in difficult times, never wasted anything (not even chicken bones!) and never gave up.

Some of Rose's poems are autobiographical and deal with the emotions that have grown up around suffering domestic violence at the hands of their brother (who developed schizophrenia at a very young age). In general, they use poetry to express how they have dealt with domestic violence, trauma and depression. Other themes in Rose's first collection include personal development & recovery from trauma, nature, war, new beginnings & women.

Rose takes inspiration from the work of a young poet called Rupi Kaur who, amongst other things, deals with trauma through her poetry.

She also loves to read poets like Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes, Emily Dickinson and Thomas Hardy.

By Rose Ultan Thomas

Women

Rose Ultan Thomas

Shut down.

Shut up.

Beaten.

Ignored.

Aborted.

If strength is a dominion,
women are just beginning.

If only to think, and also be free

Rose Ultan Thomas

Propelled by automaticity

We breath,

We tire,

we sleep,

We fear,

We hunger,

We thirst,

We love,

We hate,

We think,

But, should our thoughts be allowed to run free,
in bare automaticity?

Beware those thoughts, which,
in the guise of a friend
twist truth into lies.

Wearing a wholesome, siren-like disguise, like mermaids, all a-shimmer,
they flirt and invite you to curate your own insanity.
From there, you are never to be seen again.

So, let me ask you again
Should we let thoughts run free, in bare automaticity?

Breakdown

By Rose Ultan Thomas

Breakdown begins with the dire blackness of a body, mind and soul broken,
muting all hope.

However, depression has rhythm like the seasons.

Spring beckons,
but winter must have its chill.

Light and lightness return, signifying rebirth,
and only now do I see
that breakdown was the only way up.

When Did I Begin?

By Rose Ultan Thomas

They say take the best
Leave the rest
Just keep moving forward
Every day, a reinvention waiting to be told

So, I'll start from now
And let here be my beginning

Fear

By Rose Ultan Thomas

I didn't know fear
until he plugged out the phone
and noone was coming

Autumn in the Forest

by Rose Ultan Thomas

You can't see the seasons in the city
the way you see them in the forest.

When the tree unfurls her amber leaves
and the stars fill a boundless sky
you know you've reached a place where body can be traded for soul.

Win

By Rose Ultan Thomas

a real win
is getting out more than you put in

so why do I go on and on looking for a return

it seems I'll never learn
that winning is endless
and makes a fool of us all

Grit

by Rose Ultan Thomas

There will never be
true strength and grit in me
until I fix what is broken,
rebuild what isn't enough,
answer deep longing,
reach for what is hidden and
mourn what wasn't mine to keep.

Who knows what time it will take
to build the foundations of me
with tools I only know, but can't see?

Judged

By Rose Ultan Thomas

Now you've told your story
of a spy working in the shadows
are you afraid you'll be judged?

It's my life in their hands now
as theirs were once in mine.

TWO SIDES OF A SQUARE BOX
(Bernadette Ni Riada)

(i)

It came in a parcel from America.
No one knew what - if anything - had been in it
my mother could only remember

Biographical Note: Bernadette Ni Riada

Bernadette lives in - and is a native of - Co. Kerry. She has, on a few occasions, read their work on local radio (Radio Kerry). Earlier this year Bernadette was guest poet at the 'On The Nail' literary gathering in Limerick. Some of her poetry will be published in an Anthology (Still In The Dreaming) to be launched at the end of November. She has been published in magazines such as Ireland's Eye, Little Gems.

what her mother had kept in it:

birth and baptismal certificates, the dog licence,
marriage licence, bills, receipts, money.

Made of tin this lightweight box
shone bright red on the outside.
It replicated a suitcase, silver snap locks

one on either side of the plastic handle
a tiny silver key.
My mother kept it on her dressing table.

Scattered over a pile of letters were strands
of pearls, earrings, brooches
studded with specs of coloured glass.

When selecting a piece of jewellery
she rested the lid back on its hinges
the metallic silver inside blurred

the reflection like a steamed up mirror.
After the key went missing the box filled up
with scraps of material, sewing thread,

scissors, a yellowed tape measure, thimbles,
a variety of needles stuck through a square of cardboard
and buttons, dozens and dozens of buttons.

(ii)

His small hands could never prise
the silver locks open
he amused himself by belting it with a wooden spoon,

a plastic training mug, or whatever was to hand.
The dented lid became a holding bay
for a fleet of dinky cars

while one or two were driven at speed around the box
before changing course to zoom under furniture, or underfoot.

It was a base for an army of soldiers

small green figures moulded into various action poses.
Some posted as lookouts behind the box
others kept watch while lying flat on the closed lid.

A regiment could suddenly be called up out of the box
when comrades at the front needed reinforcements.
After each battle, all soldiers returned to base.

Behind the shed at the bottom of the garden
a heap of earth, stones, rotting grass, weary leaves
are thrown together waiting for removal.

Smothered in rust, the tin box is mixed in with this rubble.
I prise it free, continue to toe earth and stones
searching for soldiers.

THE WHISTLER

(Bernadette Ni Riada)

Those who didn't know you well, didn't know,
that whistling was your voice against trouble

when trouble pressed itself against you. Never a whole tune
pieces from several, patched together. Your symphony

whistled low, your head erect. This May evening
all growing things have come to leaf

panicked hands of horse chestnuts
hold erect creamy white domes tinged with pink.

This sky carries no clouds. Birds are singing.
You didn't sing. You whistled, often.

STREAM

(Bernadette Ni Riada)

Sun's warmth reaches the bed
squirming specs slide from silt
to swim. A heron stands still.
Alder leaves fuss against the breeze.
Trembling willows know the secrets
of otters and badgers.
Flies in groups, hover.
Children shout at floating twigs
when the race ends at the junction of rocks
they wade in; plunge jam jars against the flow
peer through the slimy wet glass at pinkeens
Nocturnes listen, wait.

Twisting, grumbling over glossy stones
this earth vein continues on course
to the frothing hunger of the sea.

Biographical Note: Stephanie V Sears

Stephanie V Sears is a French and American ethnologist (Doctorate EHESS, Paris 1993), free-lance journalist, essayist and poet whose poetry recently appeared in The Deronda Review, The Comstock Review, The Mystic Blue Review, The Big Windows Review, Indefinite Space, The Plum Tree Tavern, Literary Yard, Clementine Unbound, Anti Heroine Chic

A
free
day at
the

Louvres

(Stephanie V Sears)

Down the gallery's parquet
when the eyes reach upward
to a pastel and winged sky
history gives up.
Chronology evaporated.

Mythology spilled from a Greek Krater
blushes with bacchanals.
Satyrs pursue maenads
on spun terracotta.
Desire's unquenchable chase.

A mummy bonded in honey and linen
exhales another thousand years,
expelling the lotus breath
of a river trance, carried
on its burnished flow.

A young man beckoned by Bronzino,
patrician locked in himself
steps onto solitude's threshold,
daring at last to woo the woman
missed in previous lives.

Pontormo, Andrea del Sarto
play the color concertino
of morning violet, of yellow noon

mystical climatology
over cypress-crested knolls.

Crowds like bloodhounds on the scent
sniff and search for an alchemy
of masterpiece turned prophecy.
In childhood's attics of imagination
some of heaven glimpsed.

Yellow Silk

(Stephanie V Sears)

The parable is from imperial days.
Its yellow silk screens the blue sky.

Cool in the dawn mist of the Peak
I read the subtitles of a legendary China,
the rock-veined rondure courtyards
their *Coryphee* pines in step,
ivory-carved plots,
the alembicated recipes of elaborate pleasures,
heat's squeeze in jungles of metaphors
perspiring the subtle venoms
of wasted wisdom,
camel-back verse powdered with snow,

where the junks glide by on their dark creature wings
through the fretted larynx between Kowloon and Victoria,
extending their bid for serenity
past Cheung Chao towards Lantau.

Now volatile morning slips into
a tropical symphony pairing anticipation
with the vast relaxation of the sea.
Skyscrapers grown from water roots
shimmer below in evaporations of metal and glass
and in their electronic shade pedestrians
open at every stride lilies of the past.

Grey velvet bars snooze like tomcats
at the edge of rush hour, only

waking to night's banquet of cybernetic lights.

In the city's midriff of Period getaways

brown ventilated rooms hide

love affairs, quiet in their lairs

between potted palms and waxed tiled floors

living out archetypes of colonial charm.

And I, bathed in the orchid tide

of a terrace jutting over Hong Kong,

take my watch and breakfast.

There is good in that devil

(Stephanie V Sears)

Your face turns to me

quickenning,

prelude to a zarzuela.

Your face is a sun god

to a Rodriguez or a Falla.

A carnation dusk

peppered with reluctant desire.

The plaza nauseated

with ordinary tourism

surveys your lean stride

and the short raincoat stressing

its smart English stutter.

In that high Inca air you flow,

the thinner of the two,

the felonious pedigree

of your cheekbones

a curse on the sour churches

livid with bleeding bodies

and dolled up madonnas

on the Plaza de Armas,

a plague on all catechisms

a praise of disobedience.

You hunger for altitudes.

Colossal stones pile up

along your path, subdued,

clinched together with enigma.

Topaz steppes run before

the spread wings of the Andes.

A breathless world cleft into chasms

garbed in tumescent forest

bearded with nature's afterthought
hails your insolence,
grows flowers refulgent
with the hue and scent
of this alternative campaign
constellated with paradox,
born of an odd kindness
open-armed with unlikelihood.
There among garish butterflies
the ruthless seduction
of a velvet horned moth.

No speeding

(Stephanie V Sears)

The near-sighted uplands of Santa Cruz
forget the ocean below
repudiated
by an inner lair of silence and mist.
Evaporations of solitude
cabled by silver tendrils

shiver through trees
re-shaped into bones.
A mossy stillness heralds rain.
Clouds drape over
inarticulate instinct
nesting over impulses
in the pleats and
buttonholes of survival.
Giant saddle back turtles
domed with introspection
burdened with keratin helmets,
totter darkly
on scaled amphibian stumps
through green tunnels
of rumination
on a slow descent
to coastal feeding.
The surveillance cameras
of their slanted eyes
scan this and that
with dawning perspicacity
rediscover the vague outline
of memory and time
along a paved bicycle path
their slow-motion scrape
saddened
by cars swiftly speeding by

on the main drag.

Biographical Note: Nicholas Lenane

Nicholas Lenane from Ardmore, Co Waterford. 29 years old. I graduated with a degree in Commerce & Irish from Ucc in 2010. These days, I work as a substitute Irish teacher locally as well as focusing on my writing. My poems/spoken word pieces 'The Deise Rising' and 'The Ardmore roar' featured in various newspaper publications including the Irish examiner, The Irish Times and Pundit Arena. One of my poems recently featured in Waterford Poetry anthology 'Déise Voices'

HUMAN
(Nicholas Lenane)

I've read Chekhov and Tolstoy but I'm yet to read Dostoevsky,
I've turned 29, recently 30, but I'm long way from forty,
I've met some women who've made my heart sing,
But I'm yet to experience true love, if there is such a thing

I've discovered these words that have lit up my soul,
And now I'm dropping these rhymes, that are out of control.
I've seen family and friends rise like the summer tides,
And I've seen others crushed by cancer, drugs and suicides

I've danced around sweaty and carefree as Chemical Brothers played in my head,
And I've had my soul mended by the sweet notes of Luke Kelly and Radiohead
I've tasted chocolate, delicious soups, bananas and stews,
And even grown accustomed to chia seeds, avocados and crunchy cashews

I've used my body to run half marathons and try spinning,
But I'm no good at golf and I'm yet to master swimming,
I've laughed with friends until tears came streaming down my face,
And I've cried lonely in the night as I questioned my place

I've studied lots of heavy subjects while eating my porridge,
But I still feel there's huge gaps in my earthly knowledge,
I've laughed with Frasier Crane and Father Ted to get a break from the strife,
While movies like Good Will Hunting and Into The Wild have taught me much about life

I've seen my favourite sports teams destroyed, defenceless
But I've also seen them emerge victorious, as we climbed over fences
I've marvelled at the Eiffel Tower, Norwegian fjords, and the Berlin Wall
But I'm yet to see South America, and I'd love to get to Nepal

I've had lively conversations with Russians and Brazilians that have turned my world
upside down

But I still don't know half the people, in my own small town
I've seen our environment being polluted by corporate powers
But I've also seen well tended gardens, abundant with flowers

I've sat in awe watching little red ants working for the team
And I've stumbled across bears in Canada, and let out a scream
I've dabbled in meditation and fallen in love with Yoga,
And once, I even entered a Polish nightclub dressed in a Toga

I question aspects of the internet and most of the rubbish on TV,
But I also recognise technology has lengthened our lives and cured T.B.
I've drank lots of tea, and coffee, in my favourite smiley cup, usually with milk
While wearing garments on my body, made of wool, cotton, even silk

I have been moved by the power of colour and what it can do,
I've painted my room sunset orange, and my favourite top is dark blue
I have been blessed to witness the dawn of a new millennium,
And I've Journeyed in ships and planes made from titanium

I've seen friends get held back by their demons and fears,
And I've seen them overcome them and celebrate with beers,
I've wandered in the night and seen shooting stars mesmerize my eyes,
And I have sat at peace watching the miracle of a sun rise

I have experimented in the kitchen with things like burned toast, coriander and cumin
I guess, what I'm really trying to say is , I like being a human

The palace

(Nicholas Lenane)

My current home is a temporary situation, I say that without hesitation,
But I make it work, with a bit of discipline, love and determination

The complex I live in contains the word palace, but it's more like a prison,
The neighbours don't talk to me, and it doesn't look lived in

The underground carpark is disturbing, unsettling, like an old school horror movie
Burnt out cars, flickering lights, the atmosphere dark and moody

I can't stay here forever, shes the women would run a mile,
And the neighbours? Well, The heads are down, I rarely see a smile

The outside walls are a pale pink, smudged by storms and neglect
The satellite dishes are rusted and the security system is fecked

The steps up to my flat are silent, crumbs everywhere, carpets torn and frayed
Flanked by ugly yellow walls that are cracked and decayed

When I open the door to my flat, I feel like I have lost a weight
For I am home, and my home is great.

I've painted the walls orange, which many said I would regret
But it's warm and welcoming, like the orange of a summer sunset

Among the orange walls, I have sprinkled scented candles in every corner,
They soothe me, they burn for me, and make the place ever warmer.

Last month, I brought in my favourite books from my main collection,
Kapusinski and Tolstoy smile at me and provide great conversation.

I've learned to treat myself, be kind, and wear fresh socks
And last week, I got a special offer on the Pantene, Colgate, and Radox

Between my burning walls, compassionate candles and interesting friends
I have a home; conducive to peace, passion and working with pens.

My main challenge is diet, attaining and maintaining the right nutrition,
I eat quite well, but must get the hobnobs out of the kitchen

But my thoughts are clear here, and I've got decent furniture,
I forget the world outside, little thought of past or future.

It's unsustainable like I say, a temporary safe zone
But it works well for today, and I call it home

Biographical Note: DS Maolalai

DS MAolalai is a poet from Ireland who has been writing and publishing poetry for almost 10 years. His first collection, *Love is Braking Plates in the Garden*, was published in 2016 by the Encircle Press, and he has a second collection forthcoming from Turas Press in 2019. He has been nominated for Best of the Web and twice for the Pushcart Prize.



Birds on a beach.

(DS Maolalai)

pressing your coffee

on a saturday morning -

sipping

and feeling the brick

thick liquid

sticking to the roof of your mouth. that's

what the soul eats;

a sun

like a white eye in the window

and your shirt hanging open

on the chair.

friends on the phone

scratching you out of your hideaway

like birds on a beach,

pulling

at reluctant worms.

The orchard

(DS Maolalai)

there is

something to this:

selecting apples

in the supermarket

is better

than stomping in an orchard

and pulling them

fresh from a tree -

perhaps

it's the glow

of electric light

on ripe fruit, the ease

in spotting bruises

and feeling the tennis ball weight

and the cold press of juice

sealed

in thin skin. perhaps

the absence

of wasps

or muddy steps

and the unpleasant rest,

like tripping over dropped logs

and steadying yourself

on moss-sodden branches.

I carry
a basket of apples,
taking things from shelves,
toilet paper
and jars of beans.
ten steps ahead of me
are an arabic lady
and a college student
with this thin
red beard. we are getting
our groceries for the week;
each of us
showing our vulnerability
to the rest. perhaps
that's what's so good about
all this.

the nature
of displaying
our weakness -
"I get hungry. I get
dirty. I shit
and like apples."

Poker.

(DS Maolalai)

and sure,

life may be a game

we play,

and badly.

but the game is poker,

not checkers

or snap;

what you do

with what you get

is not

nearly

so important

as getting

given

the good stuff

to start with.

if you have what you need

to go forward,

then very well -

unless you are stupid

you'll do it

without issue.

if you haven't

then shit,
I guess
you can hope someone
who does
will fuck it up,
but frankly
that
doesn't happen
very often,
and usually
they're given
another go.

to those
dealt
from the start
with losing hands
I say:
good luck.

and to the winners:
try not to gloat too much
while you're fucking our children
you bastards.

Not drinking.
(DS Maolalai)

I am
not drinking. this promises to be
one hell of a holiday.

you have said
we will visit
st agincourt's still, the holy bust
of leonard,
queen mary's
fountain.

you have promised
to take me to
the waterfall
of the undrenched martyr
and the place where your uncle
lost a wheel of his car
and delivered
your yowling cousin,
snowy
in frozen gloves
by hand on the roadside.

I am not drinking. I would not
do you that disrespect
on this holiday
and
as a result of not drinking
I'm even smoking less. the waterfall
spits up birds
like daffodils in springtime. objects
come from your pockets
and we unwrap them
sitting on rocks.
they are all
sandwiches,
none of them
beer. the blue night comes in
cloaking the car
in the evening.

when we get home
it is the same colour
as the dustbins.

blue,
even moreso.

Marco Polo.

(DS Maolalai)

dropping you off
at the bus-stop,
I open the door
and shed groceries
like shavings from a pencil -
today
we went to
the chinese market
for a change,
with the fish staring
dead-eyed out
of iceboxes
racked by the plums
and bottles of blue milk,
the tanks of blue crabs
waving their pinchers
like hockey pucks, angry at the air.

it's strange
the places you come upon
in any city - to find it
you have to walk
inside a secret entrance

past a little half-cafe.

I lived here

for 20 years

and didn't know

that it was there,

and kept having you explain

the foods

like a botanist

in a foreign country

fingering

different types

of flower.

I was glad of a guide

to take me through here

and tell me

which bottles were ice tea

and which

cooking oil.

I felt

stupid

like I didn't know the language

and was intruding -

and to think

only 20 minutes

Biographical Note: Karen Petersen

. Adventurer, photojournalist and writer, Karen Petersen has travelled the world extensively, publishing both nationally and internationally in a variety of publications. Most recently, her poetry was published in *The Manzano Mountain Review* and *Pilgrimage Magazine* in the USA, *Orbis* in the UK, and *The Wild Word* in Berlin. Her poems and short stories have also appeared in *A New Ulster* in Northern Ireland and *The Bosphorus Review* in Istanbul. In 2015, she read "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" at the Yeats Festival in Santa Fe, New Mexico and the KGB Bar in NYC. Her poems have been translated into Persian and Spanish. She holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Classics from Vassar College and an M.S. from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. She lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico and teaches English Composition at NNMCC.

Inside the Caravan at the Mexican-American Border
--with thanks to photojournalist Alice Driver
(Karen Petersen)

When you carry all that you love with you
you do not feel the melting sun
or the scourging wind
or the sand that finds even the smallest spot
to place its hurt, often in an agonizing fashion.
Good people will hand you water and slices of apple
but you will wonder how much longer you can last.

When you carry all that you love with you
and your little sister's heart beats against your chest,
you hold her tenderly, *mi pequeño corazón*,
with hands that are still warm from the heat of the desert
as your fellow travelers play cards to pass the time,
their bug bites and bruises small road maps telling tales
of their life on the caravan.

When you carry all that you love with you
as you stare down into a flat, grey puddle of water
you want to know if your face shows the life your body has lived
--if it betrays all the horrors that you have experienced.
And when you are given plastic flip flops with little white dots on them,
you hope they will fit and last until wherever the end is
as you look at your blistered feet, brown 'like burnt bread.'

And when you carry all that you love with you,
the miles no longer matter, those many hundreds of miles,
as you arrive hidden in a truck, sitting in a taxi, on a local bus,
your aching body but a shadow now through the windows.
For your arrival will always be at night, as a kind of secret,
and you will pick out a blue hat and a warm-looking coat,
from a large pile near the darkened church, and you will put them on.

Then the sun will come up, that burning sun,
invading your eyes weary from lack of sleep,
and you will begin to walk again,
past the jagged mountains and endless farms,

walking towards those distant horizons of promise,
where at last you will be ready to surrender,
surrender to your fate, and hope that it is good.

Biographical Note: Joan McNerney

Joan McNerney's poetry has been included in numerous literary magazines such as Seven Circle Press, Dinner with the Muse, Moonlight Dreamers of Yellow Haze, Blueline, and Halcyon Days. Four Bright Hills Press Anthologies, several Poppy Road Review Journals, and numerous Kind of A Hurricane Press Publications have accepted her work. Her latest title is Having Lunch with the Sky and she has four Best of the Net nominations.



Maintenance Man

Everything falls apart,
all things rot and crack.

Each day another tenant
fills out forms to request
repairs. Hot water tanks
burst, sinks back up, toilets jam.
Smoke alarms break.
It's a messy life, he pushes
against riptide.

All spring and summer,
weeds keep growing.
Leaves gather during fall.
In winter time, ice
covers walkways.

It's time to go home now.
Tomorrow he will return
to pick up the pieces again.

(Joan McNerney)

The History Professor

Sat in dusty corners of a mildew
room fingering old tomes. His
murmurs filled the night as he
thumbed through yellowed pages.

How he strove to weave history
into life for students, intertwining
tapestries from the past.

For some the scholastic life was
fulfilling but many simply met the
requirements for graduation.

How many battles he had analyzed
when he was young and fresh,
excited by war and strategy.

Floating through his memory
were dates and places and names.
Yes, the names of the valiant.

Now they were forgotten as he
would soon be. Gone to that
destination none have studied.

Joan McNerney

Waitress

Sally thought everything was
up to luck and she had zero.
Her chances got swept
away with yesterday's trash.

Every day working in this
dumpy dinner slinging hash.

There were the regulars
who knew her name and
left good tips. They had
no place else to go.

Her feet swelled up at
the end of lunch rush.

Sally wiped tables filling
ketchup bottles, salt shakers,
sugar jars while staring out the
window at pulsing rain.

Waiting a half hour for the bus,
winds tangling her hair.

She stopped at the market to
bring a few groceries home.
Struggling now to open her door,
only cold rooms would greet her.

Joan McNerney

Word Processor

Margie often thought words
just spilled through her fingers.
It was all learned so long ago
by touch typing in school.

Then she was thrilled by winning
an over ninety-words-a- minute
prize. Margie was sure to
transcribe important documents.

She finished the form letter. Now what
must be remembered was paragraph
three goes with addressee list five.

Section seven contains financial
disclosure which only went to top list
number one. Someone would check it.

Technological advances had replaced
people. Equipment never felt sick or
required holidays, vacations, breaks.
Much more cost effective.

Margie wanted to close her eyes
against this flood of words. Shut
her ears against the pounding of
machines, sighs of other operators.

Joan McNeerney

The Teacher

Had hoped some would leave,
rise above dirty factory gates
past plumes of smoke spewing
from the cement plant.

Occasionally when discussing
great American novels, the walls
shook. Ravines were being blasted
for more rocks to crush into powder.

She wished they would not become
clerks for soul-less chain stores or
cooks in fast food joints where
smells of burning grease lingered.

What was the use of teaching literature
and poetry to these teens who would
soon grown listless? Their spirits ground
down like stones in the quarry.

(Joan Mc Nerney)

Biographical Note: Michael Minassian

MICHAEL MINASSIAN is a Contributing Editor for *Verse-Virtual*, an online magazine. His chapbooks include poetry: *The Arboriculturist* (2010) and photography: *Around the Bend* (2017). For more information: <https://michaelminassian.com>



THE POET BARTERS FOR WORDS

(Michael Minassian)

I saw my old friend walking down the street
pulling a small rowboat behind him,
miles from any river or lake.

It must be a metaphor, I thought;
the animals gathering in pairs
at the Barnes and Noble parking lot,
and my friend who didn't know how to swim,
feeding the birds and elephants
syllables & similes
while dolphins drove up in SUVs
reciting sonnets in their high-pitched voices,
books taking the place of water,
rain the price of a poem.

I've Heard Tears
(Michael Minassian)

I've heard tears called waterworks,
rain, faucets, the fruitful river,
accidental notes, and the like.

But what about writing home
to long lost loved ones, estranged
branches of the cracked family tree,
cut down to make way for fresh
notes and fruit cups of bitter rice,
like a telephone call imploring:
Where are you?

I wrote you a letter,
texted, tweeted, twerked
my old bones and grudges
right into the ground –
imagine the stories
from our childhood, the laughter,
the ache of shared meals and secrets.

Our grandparents, aunts, and uncles,
cousins, brothers, and sisters –
the smells from the kitchen,
the summers, the winters,
the falls from grace.

Eternity

(Michael Minassian)

Browsing the used book store,
I found a first edition
of poems written in a language

I had never seen or heard of before,
untranslatable, and according
to every data base, of unknown origin—

tendrils of mist and tiny droplets
floating like a raft of words
I spelled out with my tongue

and released into the air—
dictionaries and lost dramas
offered no solution; and letters

I recognized never appeared again;
instead, I counted lines,
and whenever a word repeated

I drew a bowl of rice—
nouns became rivers and wind,
verbs a way of winding clocks—

until the poems achieved their own
method of elocution and elegance,
like giant bones, fossils and *foie gras*,

or Kierkegaard's eternity,
three distinct voices
like an extinct trinity of time.

If you fancy submitting something but haven't done so yet, or if you would like to send us some further examples of your work, here are our submission guidelines:

On the Wall

SUBMISSIONS

NB - All artwork must be in either BMP or JPEG format. Indecent and/or offensive images will not be published, and anyone found to be in breach of this will be reported to the police.

Images must be in either BMP or JPEG format.

Please include your name, contact details, and a short biography. You are welcome to include a photograph of yourself - this may be in colour or black and white.

We cannot be responsible for the loss of or damage to any material that is sent to us, so please send copies as opposed to originals.

Images may be resized in order to fit "On the Wall". This is purely for practicality.

E-mail all submissions to: g.greig3@gmail.com and title your message as follows: (Type of work here) submitted to "A New Ulster" (name of writer/artist here); or for younger contributors: "Letters to the Alley Cats" (name of contributor/parent or guardian here). Letters, reviews and other communications such as Tweets will be published in "Round the Back". Please note that submissions may be edited. All copyright remains with the original author/artist, and no infringement is intended.

These guidelines make sorting through all of our submissions a much simpler task, allowing us to spend more of our time working on getting each new edition out!



Arizona & Friends



December 2018's MESSAGE FROM THE ALLEYCATS:

We Alleycats cannot believe that it has been 6 years since we started this journey we've experienced some losses and health issues along the way but we're still here. Several of us have crossed the Rainbow bridge since then. Thanks again to all of the artists who submitted their work to be presented "On the Wall". As ever, if you didn't make it into this edition, don't despair! Chances are that your submission arrived just too late to be included this time. Check out future editions of "A New Ulster" to see your work showcased "On the Wall".



Round The Back

We continue to provide a platform for poets and artists around the world we want to offer our thanks to the following for their financial support

Richard Halperin,
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Sharon Donnell,
Damien Smyth,
Arthur Harrier,
Maire Morrissey Cummins,
Alistair Graham,
Strider Marcus Jones

Our anthologies

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https://issuu.com/amosgreig/docs/anu_poetry_anthology_-april

https://issuu.com/amosgreig/docs/anu_women_s_anthology_2017