A woman in a fur-trimmed coat is shown in profile, reading a book. The background is a textured, light-colored wall. The text 'the lonely crowd' is overlaid on the image, with 'the' and 'lonely' in white and 'crowd' in red.

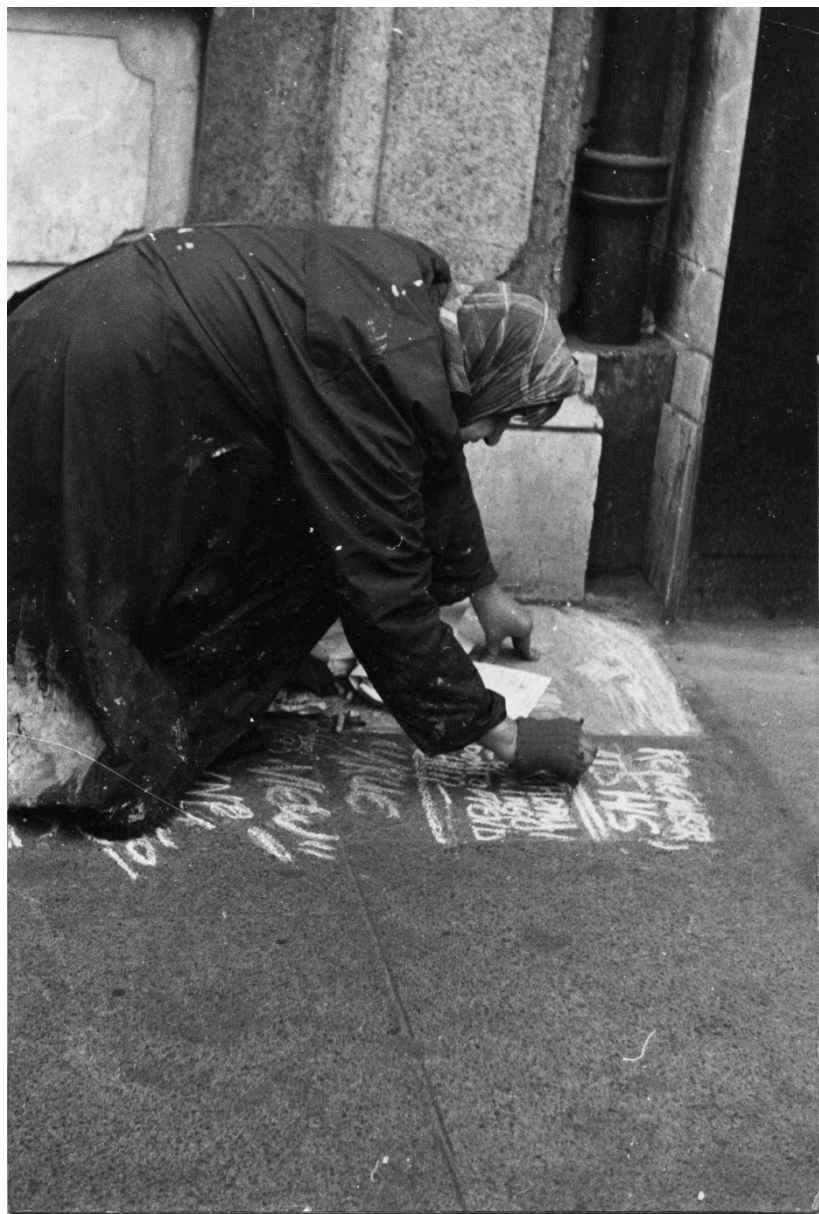
the
lonely
crowd

issue 2

THE

LONELY

CROWD



The Lonely Crowd

New Home of the Short Story

Edited and Designed by John Lavin

Advisory Editor, Michou Burckett St. Laurent

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Frontispiece taken from *Camden Market Photos* © Shani Rhys James

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Introduction

John Lavin

When Frank O'Connor gave the title *The Lonely Voice* to his famous study of the short story, it was with Pascal's phrase, 'the emptiness of those infinite spaces terrifies me', in mind. O'Connor thought of the short story as a writing which did not embrace society, a writing indeed where society does not and perhaps *cannot* work. He used the term 'submerged population groups' to describe the characters who inhabit the pages of short stories, meaning voiceless people who are forgotten by society at large in much the same way as a drowned village is forgotten by the city dwellers who drink the water that has flooded it. Characters like Gogol's famous overcoat-wearer, Akakey Akakeivitch, or the isolated, bereft Bridie in William Trevor's 'The Ballroom of Romance'. Or a people like O'Connor's own people, the Irish, a race whose genius with the short story form O'Connor put down to the very fact of their submersion.

This new magazine aims to make a home for these submerged voices and for the infinite spaces in which they dwell. And, of course, to provide a new platform for the many authors who choose to write about them.

*

Although the idea of a Welsh-based short story magazine had been percolating in my mind for some time, it was my attendance last Autumn at the famous Short Story Festival held in Frank O'Connor's home city of Cork, that helped to crystallise my thoughts about the idea, and also to strengthen my determination to make it happen. Asides from the pleasing seriousness with which the short story was treated as an art form throughout the festival, I also became more aware than I had hitherto been of the incredibly fertile tradition of the Irish literary journal. The Stinging Fly, The Moth, The Dublin Review of Books, Gorse, The Penny Dreadful, The Incubator – these are just a few of the extraordinarily high quality contemporary publications available not only to readers but importantly to fledgling Irish (and international) writers. I also met the new editor of The Stinging Fly, Thomas Morris, while I was at the festival and subsequently interviewed him for Wales Arts Review. Morris happens to be Welsh and so he has a particular interest in the Welsh literary scene. He told me how much it dismayed him that there were so few magazines in Wales accepting unsolicited new fiction, saying:

How can you have a national literary culture if there are so few places for emerging writers to publish? ...An interesting exercise: googling 'new voice in Irish fiction' gives you 36,000 results. Googling 'new voice in Welsh fiction' gives you zero. One could draw a lot of conclusions from this...

I took this point very seriously. While Wales' two main independent publishers, Parthian and Seren, both commendably accept unsolicited manuscripts – a rarity in the world of modern publishing – and while the Welsh literary

scene is producing some exceptional work at the present time - as the recent Wales Arts Review event at the London Short Story Festival amply demonstrated - there is also little doubt that Morris was right to bemoan the scarcity of Welsh journals currently, or regularly, accepting unsolicited submissions. Even though, as Fiction Editor at Wales Arts Review - a publication which consistently champions the short story - I am able to publish around twenty to thirty new pieces of fiction a year, these are almost always commissioned pieces, and so more often than not by writers who already have a reputation. Put simply, the Review, by rightly covering so many areas of the arts, simply doesn't have the space to publish a significant amount of work from unsolicited submissions.

And so The Lonely Crowd was born. Since we announced a Call for Submissions in January of this year, we have received well in excess of a thousand submissions, many from new Welsh authors (the magazine is, however, an international one and open to submissions from anywhere in the world), confirming the notion that the writers are out there, they just need a platform. Since January we have published forty-seven new pieces of, even if I say so myself, extremely high quality fiction and poetry in our two print issues to date, and a further twenty-nine on our website, thelonelycrowd.org. Proof if proof were needed that not only is the short story once again an increasingly important, widely read form, but that there are many lonely voices out there, looking for a way to be heard.

John Lavin
Editor, The Lonely Crowd

Cardiff, June 2015

Futuretense®
Nuala Ní Chonchúir

'It's actually good that you're a foreign national,' Donncha said. He leaned back in his chair, hands behind his head, elbows splayed like wings. Cock-of-the-walk.

Maria smiled down at him; the smile hurt her cheekbones. 'For what reason?' she asked.

'The clients like it when the descriptions sound a bit broken-Englishy. It's sexy, you know?'

'I'm Irish. I'm from Galway.'

Donncha snorted. 'Yeah, OK.' He shuffled papers on his desk and Maria dipped from foot to foot, weary of standing. 'Listen, when you're writing, think effervescent.' Donncha waggled his thick fingers. 'Think staccato.' His skin was the same mottled, churlish pink as a cow's udder; Maria wondered if it smelt of milk and dung. He swung in his chair and pulled himself to stand, his belly pouching forward, slack. 'Welcome aboard, yeah?'

Maria hoped he wouldn't try to shake her hand; his bovine fingers would be too much, too much altogether. She nodded at Donncha, lifted the basket of perfumes from his desk and carried it out of his office to her own. She sat and picked out a grenade-shaped bottle; she imagined throwing it at Donncha's temple and the nice thwack it would make as it hit flesh. She conjured the rainbow of bruises he would be left with, the welts and, eventually, the scabs. She twisted off the lid and sniffed deeply.

Indigenous Cities
Matt Rader

I wanted to show Annie a painting by Jack B. Yeats
At the Galway City Museum, but we arrived late
And tired to our hotel. A large Irish wedding reception
Occupied the ballroom and the lobby was a melee
Of jacketless men whose ties had come undone,
Women holding their high heels in one hand, parents
Wrangling their bleary, drunken children toward
The elevator. By then, I had no heart for paintings.
It was mid-May and though the days were long
In the North Atlantic, it was dark and rainy
That Irish evening. I'd always had a sense growing up
In Canada that May was like an exposed eyeball,
An insomniac's eyeball, an eyeball open too long
To the light, but it's a simile I'd never cared to pursue.
When you drive north in the North during spring
And summer, you don't so much get closer to the sun
As not as far away. In the winter, when you drive
North you can feel the curvature of the Earth
As the warmth of the sun weakens on your back.
I'd had the sense that evening leaving the Flaggy Shore
For Galway that we were no longer as far away.
We'd had to stop for directions half a kilometer
South of University College Hospital. I asked a man
Who stood smoking in a doorway, a burnished gold
Chain connecting his lapel to a pocket-watch
In his breast-pocket – this was the kind of anachronism

Bs

Eley Williams

I was awake for three reasons.

One: you live near a tube stop and it was firing up for the first journey of the day. Two: there's a bird in the tree outside your window and it was shouting at your house. I don't know what kind of bird it was nor the type of tree. Thirdly: you'd trapped a bee beneath a glass last night and forgotten to let it out. You'd slid a postcard of Vienna beneath the glass. It was not actually a glass at all but a washed-out jar of Nutella so the bee was drunk on a whole night's worth of staring at the sights of Vienna and the ghosts of hazelnuts and sugar, *dink-d'ink-dinking* its head against a transparent wall on the bedside table. Trapped beneath your arm, I blinked at it.

Bees can see in UV light so we must have looked like a ridiculous disco. The bee head-banged an answer, eyes all honey-combed and asterisk-star-kaleidoscopic. Outside, the bird shouted a little louder.

The bones of a pigeon weigh less than its feathers. Scientists at Arizona State University discovered that older honey bees effectively reverse brain-aging when they take on those nest responsibilities typically handled by much younger bees. Starlings only exist in America because a man wanted to introduce to the continent all the birds mentioned in Shakespeare's plays. I always thought that birdsong was supposed to be lovely but here was this blackbird-slash-thrush-slash-starling-slash-finch going full alarm-alarum crazy.

The Courtesan's Call

Eluned Gramich

I was bringing Mother's supper tray down to the kitchen when unexpected guests arrived at the hotel. I knew immediately that they were from Tokyo. Not just from the car's license plate, which I could just about read if I climbed onto the kitchen counter and stretched my neck out of the window, but also by their clothes and haughty manner of walking. The woman got out of the car first. Her skin luminous and white, tight, like the taut curve of a porcelain bowl. She was very thin and steely, not thin like my mother is from sickness and lack of exercise. Despite the thick snow on the ground, she made her way elegantly to the hotel reception in heels with nothing more than a silk shawl protecting her from the freezing air. The man was not much taller than her; muscular, so that the black suit he was wearing clung to his shoulders, the collar uncomfortably close to his neck. His face was obscured by large sunglasses. They left their suitcases and snowboards in the car for me to bring in later.

Strictly speaking, the unexpected couple had missed dinner. It was past six-thirty and our hotel policy requests guests to reserve by five o'clock at the latest. It was getting dark. The blue winter sky wilting under oncoming night. The birds and squirrels I fed each morning were probably asleep in a nook somewhere, fighting for survival. I'd put out more seeds and walnuts for them in the morning, taking care to shell and cut them beforehand. Every day the number of animal visitors to my windowsill dwindled. Those who did come ate more

Fireball
Susan Maier-Moul

for Michael Taussig

Those beautiful patterns which through men's souls are conveyed into their cunning hands, come from that Beauty, which is above our souls, which my soul day and night sigheth after.

-St. Augustine

1

Once upon a time, a long time ago, before social media, before mobile phones, and even before email: it's 3 a.m. on a college campus. The criss-crossing magic of the world is configured with less well understood technologies.

The coed dorm is quiet. Maybe there's a guy staggering in a hallway of the men's wing. There's a low, cinematic light from the exit lamps mixed with the colors of the overhead fluorescent, flickering in its hum of loose bulb. Whenever the hum briefly quiets, wing beats can be heard fluttering: a moth inside the plastic shade. The first year pre-meds, the ones who

mean it, are long sleeping. It's too early in the term to be pulling an all-nighter.

This unexceptional hour turns head over heels in a loud crash, an emphatic tumult, a clamor composed by the proximity of objects to force. A bursting coffee mug, a shattering pencil jar add their ringing to avalanching thuds, the sprongs and pinging of metal changing pitch as wall brackets change their nature and give way, cascading one shelf through another, collapsing to the desk where order has reigned. Organization is set to whimsy under a splayed *World Civ* and *First Year Chem*. The maelstrom ceases.

One overturned water glass, an unbroken survivor, rivers impossibly. Water trickles, water drips, water trips musically over the edge of the desk, spat spat. A spilling lambent stream soaks notecards scattered on the floor between two beds on opposite sides of the room.

“Belladonna—” says one sleeper, thrust from dream.

“My god,” says the other, “did somebody just throw a brick through the window?”

From the untouched bed a curly head is dragged up by its own sheets and a twist of shoulders. “Fuck,” says the head. “It's your bookshelf. Was your bookshelf. Thank god it's not mine.” The sleeper turns her back to the mess. “Leave it 'til it's light.”

The voice in the other bed is muffled amid the purgation, “Is it the end or the beginning?” She tries to look, too, but cannot lift her head. “Room's still spinning.”

“Put your foot on the floor. Go back to sleep.”

Two Poems
Cal Doyle

Goodbye Horses

In the end we would become more than horses, more than hind
quarters
to be slapped and brushed by men-folk only five foot nothing
tall, or projected
into monitors to implicitly embody the sensation one feels
when drinking tins
of moderately-priced supermarket lager, or smoking that first
cigarette

in the amber light of eight o'clock in the morning, or slipping
into your denim
trousers after you and your secretary fucked one another
senseless in some
motel room six miles outside of town in the middle of a
workday afternoon. No.
We learned to speak your alien tongue. Our teeth stopped
growing endlessly

Covenant
Mary-Jane Holmes

Her husband calls it a Gin Palace, she prefers Pleasure Boat. Either way, it's a strange choice of dwelling for the desert. Her husband helps the newcomer jack it up on cinder blocks and railway sleepers in the vacant lot next to theirs, prow arrowing the border. She watches them from behind the half-pitched kitchen blinds, resting their beers on the chromed thwarts, their hands smoothing the curve of the gunwale. When she hears the bang of the screen door she looks away, returning to the task of kneading corn masa into tight bullet-shaped tamales, her fingers yellowing in the dough.

“Must know something we don't.” her husband laughs swinging wide the fridge door in search of another can. She hands him his lunch box and pressed coveralls and he squeezes her round the waist so hard she feels the tide of air buffet her ribs. He takes his keys from the table and the rifle from the porch. The dark circumference of the barrel bobs his goodbyes at her.

When the truck becomes a curl of dust against the outcrop of horizon, she sets aside the mealing stone and smooths her hair glossy again. She wraps the remaining tamales in parchment paper and steps out into the late afternoon heat-haze. The neighbor is standing on the afterdeck, hitting golf balls towards the crackle-glazed arroyo where a clamor of ravens pull at carrion. The shots scatter them and they two-step after each aimed flash of white until one talons

An excerpt from The Castaway Lounge

Jon Boilard

Applejack sits in the truck and watches Hoyt light his uncle's pond ablaze using matches and a gas can that's supposed to be for his lawnmower. The fire smokes and burns, somehow smells like birch bark, doesn't do much else but kill mosquitoes and catfish. A cold wind strips leaves from the trees across the way where early swamp maples bend and a picket fence snakes along the hillside.

Good enough, Applejack says through the open window.

The two men drive around with cigars, stop at the Conway Inn to drink beer and play cards with the Jablonski brothers, whom everybody in town calls the mental twins. Hoyt wins ten dollars and they go to the Castaway Lounge for amateur night, billed on the marquee as *five beautiful girls and one ugly one*. A new blonde named Suzanne sure isn't the ugly one. Applejack takes her out back behind the curtains and gives her a fistful of money. Once he's settled in the chair Suzanne makes a face and says he smells like her daddy's old mechanic shop. He tells her, yeah, he just got done wrenching on his MGB. His hands are so dirty she won't let him touch her and he wishes he'd showered. But she does a pretty good job to a couple songs by Hank Williams Jr. and by the last line of "Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound" she has dropped her bra,

The Mobile Librarian Claire Savage

As the door clicked shut, Beryl felt a thrill race through her, as if she'd just stepped onto a fairground ride.

Today, she was Hannah Greene—spy, informant, clandestine femme fatale. She shook off Beryl, slick as a snake slipping off its old skin, and stepped into the cat-suit clad Hannah. Of course, Hannah wasn't *really* wearing a cat-suit. She had to *blend in*. But Beryl liked to think that she might be wearing one underneath her humdrum, 'one of the hive' ensemble.

Today, Beryl was Hannah and right now, Hannah was a bee—buzzing beautifully amongst all the other drones while it served her, but aiming straight for the queen.

Her heels clicked across the tarmac as she severed ties with her mobile haven and slid seamlessly into a melee of unknown characters. She was soon surrounded by office workers and bankers and—well, who *knew* what else? People zipping in and out of each other's way, mumbling into their hands, or lost in the rhythm of thrashing music plugged into oily ears.

Hannah Greene strode forward with head held high and a glint in her eye.

A tall, thin man with a camera and an auburn beard stole a single shot of Hannah Greene as she cut through the crowd. Her white-blond ponytail pointed like a dagger down her back; her side profile thin as a page, barring the extended red-tipped toe of her high-heeled shoe.

No Refund, No Return

Alan Bilton

Aside from the feet, the shoes were pretty good: nice strong heel, stiff leather upper, fine stitching throughout. I mean, okay, my toes were a little cramped, and the laces pinched when pulled, but still - with a bit of walking in, they'd be fine. The feet were more of a problem though. Discoloured nails, grazed ankles, greenish skin: ah, such a state! I placed the two feet side by side on the kitchen table and carefully examined them. One left, one right - size ten, I guessed, same as the shoes. Two hard corns on one sole, some kind of blister on the other. A not altogether pleasant odour. I looked in the bag, shook the box, checked the receipt. Nowhere did it say anything about the provision of two second hand feet. What was I supposed to do with them? After a while I put the shoes on my feet and the other fella's feet in the box. Then I caught the first bus back to town.

Alas it was pretty busy, with only a couple of seats near the back. Still, I pushed my way through, trying not to think about the smell coming from the box - a little like over-ripe yogurt. Some guy in a bobble hat seemed to be staring at me, maybe one of the young mums too. But what could I do? I pushed the shoe box to the far end of my seat and tried gazing nonchalantly out of the window. When an old woman tried to sit next to me, I pointed to the shoe box and shrugged. What was I supposed to do about it? Inside the blackened toes were curled up like slugs.

Three Poems
John Freeman

Swallows

Cool morning, scorching afternoon. A walk
through yellow fields, now across this farmyard.
On one side of the path in the air, a twitch,
a flicker, then another flicker, winking
in and out of gaping semi-darkness.
I step aside under a towering doorway.
Up there in the gloom, among the rafters,
a concentration of blackness is stirring
around a bubbling centre of dark life.
Back at the bright entrance there are four, five,
six chances to unriddle the sudden blur,
the curving wings, forked tail, flashes of white,
snipping sounds like a busy hairdresser's.
I blunder back out into the daylight
and rejoin my companions where the path
opens on a deserted lane. Above us,
on telegraph wires in swags over a hedge,
a row of them seem queuing to be admired,
silhouetting on blue their slinky grace.
Then there are cream teas in a farm garden
while, at the periphery of vision,
shadows are swooping against walls, and beyond
living shapes transforming wires to staves,

whispering their music into the darkness
of memory like a nest high in a barn
they will return to, summer after summer,
into which, from the paths of careful thought,
I will step aside to be astonished
again as they explode out of nowhere,
past me, to the dazzling summer sunshine.

Camden Market Photos
Shani Rhys James

-

with an introduction by
Jo Mazelis

'Camden Market Photos' by Shani Rhys James
Jo Mazelis

As much as the early 1970s are remembered for the explosions of sound and colour in music and fashion, for David Bowie and Hot Pants, flared jeans and glitter, many British people still existed in a world of tweed, trilbies and flat caps, of threadbare black gabardine, of suits and braces and darned socks, smelling faintly of mothballs and sweat and lavender.

As a student in 1972 artist Shani Rhys James roamed Camden Market with a camera in search of images which she used as a source for her paintings. Her goal in taking this collection of images was not to create documentary or street photographs, with time however these pictures have accrued value as a social record. Amongst the characters captured by Rhys James is one famous, or rather infamous woman – Miss Shepherd, the subject of Alan Bennett's 'The Lady in the Van' soon to be further immortalised in a film due for release this autumn. Here is Miss Shepherd down on hands and knees engrossed in her task of chalking bible tracts on the pavement, but aside from the fact she is writing on the pavement she looks no more eccentric than the other people Rhys James photographed. As Shani Rhys James explains, 'I used to come home from Loughborough Foundation course each weekend, homesick and longing for London. We lived in Camden Town and I stood all day photographing these characters with a Russian Zenith camera in Camden Market. Miss Shepherd had a stick beside

her and started to threaten me with it, but I kept on taking photographs!’

The function of photography shapes its aesthetic result; these pictures were never meant to stand alone or deviate from their role as a reference for paintings – that the original negatives were lost or discarded along the way was evidence of their unimportance for Rhys James. Yet the prints she made remain, some of them showing signs of wear and tear, kept in boxes and unseen publicly until now. That these reveal a post war London that is still bruised, impoverished and tatty, its people scraping a living amongst the bombsites and ruins of Victorian and Edwardian grandeur, where eccentrics were accepted as a natural if slightly dysfunctional part of the fabric of society, was in many ways unintentional on Rhys James’ part does not detract from their aesthetic or historical value.

The following photographs are all Copyright © Shani Rhys James



An extract from Limestone Man
Robert Minhinnick

NINE

"Even my old man looks good".

1

Coughing? said Jack Parry. That's the sulphur. That's the sulphur penetrating your mask.

I don't wear a mask, said Richard Parry.

Hear that, mam? said Jack Parry. Hear that? No masks. Typical.

No-one wears a mask, dad. The very idea seemed ridiculous to the boy.

No. They don't care who they murder. Want to know why? Because there's always somebody willing to take their place. To fill the dead man's shoes.

So Jack Parry had told his son everything he knew about sulphur. When Parry thought about it now, years later, it wasn't his father's words he heard. The words were his own. But it was Jack Parry's voice that pronounced them.

You'll come home, said Jack Parry, and straightaway you'll need a bath. Your mother will say supper's ready, yellow cheese roasted on the coal fire. But you'll lock the bathroom door and pull the bolt. In your teenage shame.

You'll put the hot tap on full and the cold tap on full. You do

Mask Kate North

Sarah arrived at the farmhouse and noticed the mask as the owner showed her around. She hated the way its eyes followed her about the dining room. The owner was talking her through the cutlery and the crockery and Sarah could see it lingering in her peripheral vision. Then, when she was being shown where the car keys to the Citroen were kept, she watched as the mask's reflection wobbled across the glass of the patio doors.

The owner drove off in her yellow people carrier and Sarah waited a few minutes before making her way back to the dining room to have a closer look. She lifted it from the nail on which it was hung and was surprised by its lightness. It was made of papier-mâché. She had expected it to be formed of clay or even carved stone. The mask had been painted with acrylics. Its gypsy persona had huge buggy eyes and a funny little mouth that looked like the silhouette of a fat butterfly mid-flight. It wore a ring in its nose and a delicate little headdress.

Sarah spent the rest of the afternoon unpacking and picking up supplies from the high street down the road. By early evening she was ready for a snack. As she entered the dining room, carrying a plate of bread and cheese, she yelped and actually did a little jump upon seeing it again. She could not do two weeks in its company. She took it off the wall and laid it face down on the sideboard. There.

I Thought There Was Time
Katie Straw

It started with the tick of a clock

Tick.

“Go on, do it,” he said. There was laughter from behind.

“I don’t want to,” she replied, not looking into his face; instead she stared at the sodden grass in which she was knelt.

“Go on,” he taunted; the boy behind him didn’t look at her. She sobbed.

The hole itself wasn’t exactly dark, but the emptiness of it was crucial to the fear it induced. It lay there, cold and empty; waiting for the cold and empty company it was built for. She swallowed the panic sticking to the back of her tongue. The afternoon light bathed the bottom of the hole in shadows.

“She’s too afraid,” one of the girls crooned; her voice like a cat’s wail in the night time.

“Afraid of a little mud? Ah, poor baby!” the other girl cackled.

Ben came forward and knelt beside her, his blue eyes made of frost.

“You don’t have to.”

She twisted her neck to the left. His face was too close to hers; she could smell his breath. Without a smile, his lips parted in half a pout. His curly, brown hair formed an uneven fringe over his eyebrows. Her blonde hair blew across her face.

“I mean it, Hannah. We don’t have to.”

He was older than her, by a couple of years. He used to go out with her friend’s sister. When they were in primary

Two Poems
Sue Moules

POSTCARD FROM THE ALGARVE

He signs it *Ciao Clive*,
the card with its pre-typed label
and his fountain pen hand writing,
doing as I asked at the funeral,
keeping in touch.

He's an old man now,
but like his dead brother thinks himself young.
Another card from his trip down the Nile,
the sapphire sea postcard from Goa
where he gets his teeth fixed.

It was lucky he was here for the funeral,
it fitted in around his life of travel.
How inconvenient death is
his brother would have joked,
memories of their mother's tragic death.

A coffin covered in flowers
music playing , words said, Surreal,
but the dead don't see this.
They are already in the ghost world,

while we hold their histories.

He never offered any support,
or asked for a keep sake.
Yet sends these postcards,
when they cease to arrive
I'll know he's gone, the link lost.

The Roll of the Sea

Mark Blayney

The heat dropped rapidly: in seconds it became winter, and the brown leaves turned white but did not fall. The lights went out briefly, Ella stepped forward and a circle of light formed around her.

Two whiskies, also in a pool of light, as she slipped backstage.

‘How did it go?’

‘Tiring.’

‘It didn’t show.’

A flicker of surprise. ‘Were you there?’

He nodded, a rare flash of smile. ‘I crept in at the back. One of the girls on the door turns a blind eye; I think she likes me.’

She smiled glassily, cut the whisky with most of a glass of water and drank a large mouthful. ‘You shouldn’t give me whisky... I’m always thirsty.’

William drank his neat, and she felt a tug of impatience in her stomach as she glimpsed the dark hairs folding invitingly beneath his shirt cuff, the cufflink a bold, inquisitive oblong of silver.

Maria cooked asparagus then lamb, its rump pink, glistening, sagging on the plate temptingly. Simply served, with a few onions and grilled courgettes, as if they had been rummaged as the meat was being cooked and tossed in to add colour.

Spider
Susmita Bhattacharya

“And this is the Andar Mahal,” the guide said, pointing towards the arched doorway with a flourish. “The ladies lived here. No man was allowed to enter, except for the prince, of course.”

The group followed him in. Their footsteps echoed on the cool stone floor. Pigeons roosting on the high vaults fluttered and gurgled, their reverie broken by the sudden activity down below.

“I lived here, with my mother and sisters until I was twelve,” said the guide, his kohl lined eyes twinkling. “I’m related to the prince, from my mother’s side. When my father passed away, my mother was invited by her cousin to be part of her entourage.”

Paula rolled her eyes and looked at her husband. He seemed to be taking it all in, like the others. She tapped her foot impatiently, wanting to get on with this boring tour and return to the hotel. A cool drink a swim was what she was looking forward to. She didn’t care about crumbling palaces and mouldy paintings. And certainly not this tour guide who was taking them all for a ride with his pathetic attempts at convincing them he was royalty.

“Poppycock,” she whispered to her husband, who was leaning forward to catch every word the guide spoke. Paula looked at their little group. All pensioners, like herself and Tony, travelling the world before ending up in an old age home. She sniffed and turned her attention back to the guide.

Three Poems
Chrissie Gittins

The Needful Inner Life of Birds

I must walk quickly, with a frenzy of intent,
before the sand becomes devoid of crustaceans.

I must fly over glass waves spying shoals of fish,
only then can I dive like a rocket.

I must stand with my wings high in the air displaying
my white flashes, impressing.

I must shit on the French windows of the artist
as she looks out at sea.

I must lay my eggs in a nest of broken white shells
in the middle of a tombola despite the boy on his quad bike.

I must glide with balletic grace around cliffs,
skirting the cavern, startling the tourists who rest at its rim.

Someday the Moon May Fall
Patrick Kavanagh

By the time he eventually finds her, he's exhausted from the heat and his corduroy trousers and heavy sports coat have become a burden.

She's towelling her hair and so doesn't notice him arrive.

O – can you roll me a cigarette? she asks, emerging from under the towel.

I bought *real* fags, he says and gaily waves the unopened box about.

Richmond! I can't smoke those, they're *rank!* Seriously –
Okay, okay. I think I've got some backy left.

Not crumbs?

Not crumbs – jee suss.

Can yah roll me one? I'm still wet.

He folds himself down unto the sand and begins to construct a cigarette. She sits beside him now and begins to rub cream into her arms and legs.

He spots an old guy sunbathing a little distance from them; the guy is clearly taking great pleasure in watching her oil her limbs. His skin is leathery with tan, as though he's been badly varnished, and he wears fuchsia Speedos and mirrored shades like an American cop; his hair, too, is inky with dye.

That ol creep is totally fuckin pervin on yah, he whispers.

O gawd, I know. Before I went in for a swim he came over and asked if I'd rub some oil into his hairy, old, perverted back – She scrunches up her face.

He *never* did!

The Old Fashioned Hat
Dan Powell

In spite of the fact today is no kind of anniversary, I decide we should eat out tonight. I am sat alone at the kitchen table, my back to the window, a mug of coffee cooling against my palms. The heating is off, has been off all day, and behind me the thick autumn cold presses its face against the double-glazing. I feel its breath on the back of my neck.

I change into my dark blue dress. Its long sleeves hide my cannula scars; its gypsy skirt covers the worst of my sagging figure. I spike and volumise my 'mature woman pixie cut' into a pale imitation of my stylist's efforts, apply foundation, eyeliner, a thin coating of cherry lipstick. The face in the mirror is both familiar and wrong. These days I see my mother staring back at me more than I see myself.

Radio 2 keeps me company as I perch on the edge of the sofa, my coat fastened about me, and listen for Anthony's key in the door.

'What you doing sitting in your coat?' he says. 'Why isn't the heating on?'

He leans in close, presses his warm dry lips to my cold cheek.

'We're going out.'

Contributors

Alan Bilton is the author of two novels, *The Known and Unknown Sea* (Cillian, 2014) and *The Sleepwalkers' Ball* (Alcemi, 2009), as well as books on silent film, America in the 1920s, and contemporary fiction. His new collection of short stories, *Anywhere Out of the World*, will be published by Cillian in late 2015. He teaches literature, film and creative writing at Swansea University.

Susmita Bhattacharya's debut novel, *The Normal State of Mind*, was published by Parthian in March 2015. Her short stories have appeared in several journals and magazines in the UK and internationally, one of which has been nominated by Structo for the Pushcart Prize and one has won highly commendable prize at the Frome Festival Short Story Contest. Her short story, 'The Summer of Learning', was recently featured on Radio 4.

Mark Blayney has published two collections of stories, *Two Kinds of Silence* which won the Somerset Maugham Prize and *Conversations with Magic Stones*. A regular MC and performance poet, he's a National Poetry Slam finalist and has been published in Agenda, The London Magazine and Poetry Wales. His third collection *Doppelgangers* will be published by Parthian in October. More info at www.markblayney.weebly.com

Jon Boilard was born and raised in Western New England, and has been living and writing in the San Francisco area since 1986. More than 50 of his short stories have been published in literary journals in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia. Boilard's "Green Street Incidents", first appearing in *The Sun Magazine*, received a special mention in the 2011 edition of the Pushcart Prize Best of the Small Presses series. A past winner of the Sean O'Faolain Award, Boilard has also seen

several of his pieces earn individual small press honors. His new novel *The Castaway Lounge* is published by Dzanc Books.

Cal Doyle's poetry has most recently appeared in *The Stinging Fly* and *gorse*. New work is forthcoming in *POETRY* (Chicago). He lives in Cork.

John Freeman's *White Wings: New and Selected Prose Poems* appeared from Contraband Books in 2013. Previous collections include *A Suite for Summer* (Worple Press), and *The Light Is Of Love, I Think: New and Selected Poems* (Stride Editions). Stride also published a collection of essays, *The Less Received: Neglected Modern Poets*. He taught for many years at Cardiff University and lives in the Vale of Glamorgan.
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Chrissie Gittins' two poetry collections are *Armature (Arc)* and *I Dress One Night as You* (Salt). Her third pamphlet, *Professor Heger's Daughter* is published by Paekakriki Press, while her new and collected children's poems *Stars in Jars* is published by Bloomsbury. She is represented on the Poetry Archive and in the British Council Contemporary Writers directory. Unthank Books will publish her second short story collection *Between Here and Knitwear* in November.

Eluned Gramich completed an MA in Creative Writing at UEA in 2012. Straight after graduating, she moved to Tokyo for 2 years on a Daiwa Scholarship. She recently won the WWF Cymru Prize for Writing on Nature & the Environment for her memoir of Japanese life and landscape, 'Scenes from a Hokkaidan Life'. Eluned has had short stories published in *Planet* (Autumn 2013) and *Stand* (Spring 2014). A Japan-themed short story, 'Oku Hanafu', came out in *Rarebit: New Welsh Fiction* and another, 'Pulling Out' in the *Seren* anthology, *New Welsh Short Stories*.

Mary-Jane Holmes is chief editor of Fish Publishing Ireland. In 2014 her work was shortlisted for the Bridport and won the 2014 Dromineer Prize. She is an article contributor for *Flash Fiction*

Chronicles, has work published in Prole, Firewords Quarterly, The Incubator, Journal of Compressed Creative Arts and other reputable places.

Patrick Christopher Kavanagh has worked with artist, Shani Rhys James MBE, producing poems in response to her recent exhibition, The Rivalry of Flowers; that work was subsequently published in the Seren Books anthology, *Florilingua*; his poem, 'Alcyone' was selected by Daljit Nagra to appear in the PBS Student Poetry Competition Anthology 2013, 'Have a Nice Time, You Are Nearly There'; his short story, 'Colour & Noise' was selected by Aesthetica to appear in their 2014 Creative Writing Anthology; as a freelance Editor he has worked with author, Francesca Rhydderch on her debut novel, *The Rice Paper Diaries* (Seren, May 2013); Patrick is currently a PhD Candidate at Aberystwyth University.

Susan Maier-Moul is a writer and photographer based in New York. She won the 2014 Sean O'Faolin Short Story Prize for her story, 'Pleasure'.

Jo Mazelis is a novelist, short story writer, poet and essayist. Her collection of stories *Diving Girls* (Parthian, 2002) was short-listed for The Commonwealth Best First Book and Welsh Book of the Year. Her second book, *Circle Games* (Parthian, 2005) was long-listed for Welsh Book of the Year. Trained at Art School, she worked for many years as a freelance photographer, designer and illustrator. She has won prizes for her short stories in The Rhys Davies, Allen Raine and PenFro competitions. Her stories have appeared in many publications and broadcast on Radio Four. Her novel *Significance* (Seren, 2014) won The Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Award, 2015.

Robert Minhinnick is a prize-winning poet, novelist, short story writer and essayist. He has won Wales Book of the Year and the Forward Poetry Prize. He has read at literary festivals around the world.

Sue Moules has been published widely in literary magazines including Poetry Wales, New Welsh Review, Planet, Ambit, The North, Orbis, Ambit and Roundyhouse. Her work has also appeared in many anthologies: *On My Life* (Honno), *Exchanges* (Honno), *Poetry Wales 25 Years* (Seren), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (Cinnamon), *The Voice of Women in Wales* (Wales Women's Coalition), *Of Cake and Words* (Cledlyn), *A Star Fell From Orion* (Peter, Bridge and Stephen), and *Poetry From Strata Florida* (Carreg Ffylfan Press). She has published three poetry collections: *The Moth Box* (Parthian), *In The Green Seascape* (Lapwing), and *The Earth Singing* (Lapwing). She also published a joint collection *Mirror Image* (Headland). She is a member of the poetry performance group Red Heron.

Nuala Ní Chonchúir was born in Dublin, Ireland, she lives in East Galway. She has published four short story collections and one chapbook of flash, *Of Dublin and Other Fictions* (Tower Press, USA). Nuala's critically acclaimed second novel *The Closet of Savage Mementos* appeared in 2014 (New Island); it is shortlisted for the Kerry Irish Novel of the Year Award 2015. Under the name Nuala O'Connor, Penguin USA, Penguin Canada and Sandstone (UK) will publish Nuala's third novel, *Miss Emily*, about the poet Emily Dickinson and her Irish maid, in summer 2015.
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Kate North is the author of *Bistro* (2012), a poetry collection and *Eva Shell* (2008), a novel. She is interested in urban life and the impact of technology on writing and identity. She is also interested in communicating scientific and medical subjects through creative writing. She teaches at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Dan Powell is an award-winning author of short fiction. His debut collection of short fiction, *LOOKING OUT OF BROKEN WINDOWS* (Salt, 2014) was shortlisted for the Scott Prize and longlisted for both the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award and the Edge Hill Prize. He is currently a First Story writer-in-residence.

Matt Rader is the author of three collections of poetry published in Canada and the book of stories, *What I Want To Tell Goes Like This*. He teaches in the Department of Creative Studies at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. His most recent work is the poetry pamphlet, *I Don't Want To Die Like Frank O'Hara*, published by Baseline Press in London, Ontario.

Shani Rhys James is a Welsh painter based in Llangadfan, Powys. She has been described as "arguably one of the most exciting and successful painters of her generation" and "one of Wales' most significant living artists". She was elected to the Royal Cambrian Academy of Art in 1994. In the 2006 New Years Honours she was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for "services to art".

Claire Savage is a copywriter/journalist who has been published in Northern Ireland's short story journal, *The Incubator*, as well as the arts ezine, *A New Ulster*, the NI Community Arts Partnership's 2014 poetry anthology, and the Blackstaff Press website. In June 2014, one of Claire's poems was performed in Belfast as part of a Reading and Writing for Peace project. In July 2014, Claire received a National Lottery-funded grant from the Arts Council NI to write a collection of short stories and poetry.

Katie Straw is a new writer from Nottingham. She has a First Class Degree in Creative Writing from the University of Derby, is training to be a teacher of English at Secondary Level and lives with her Partner, Tom, who is also a writer from the University of Derby, and her young Son, William. She is currently working on her first novel 'Remember me?', which is about family and identity.

Eley Williams A former recipient of the Christopher Tower poetry prize, Eley Williams has had work printed in *The White Review*, *Ambit* and *Night and Day* journals and has a chapbook 'Sketch' available from Annexe. She has twice been shortlisted for *The White*

Review Story Prize, and she is currently a Visiting Lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London.

About the Editor

John Lavin has a doctorate in Creative Writing from the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David as well as an MA in the Teaching and Practice of Creative Writing from Cardiff University. He is the Fiction Editor of Wales Arts Review and edited their anthology of short stories, *A Fiction Map of Wales* (H'mm Foundation). He is also the co-founder and former Editor of The Lampeter Review. His own short stories have appeared in various places including The Incubator, Spork Press, Dead Ink and in the anthology, *Secondary Character*.