



FourXFour

Poetry Journal

Issue 25 Spring 2018

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The First Moth on the Moon

Darren Reihill

Darren Reihill is predominately a spoken word poet who began performing over the last year. He is a member of *The Thing Itself* which provides a platform for new and seasoned performers to share their passions and experiences.

Darren currently lives in Enniskillen.

Safer Havens

I amused myself
looking for beauty
on a crowded street
where puddles
keep skipping feet
dancing with character
wet socks singing
of the drawer,
the floor
the tumbled sum
of adventures done,
of nights
unsure of the source
or where to pour.
I gaze,
wanting more
than these tired eyes
can afford,
a windowpane's
reflected frame
where everything's on offer
Except an offer
to cannon this dreamy tide.

A land-locked lover
adrift in wonder
low on provisions
only flare-seared steak
and tied rudder
with plots to curse
and words to blunder,
I take on liquid
and marvel
at these segments of peace
as they loom and pass
only to be spurned
by an undercurrent
of a world rushing
without a plan
in which
you remain you
and I...
remain.

Subtracted Arachnids

There's been a dead spider
on my floor
for the last three weeks,
I think it's the same one
I wouldn't like to
make assumptions
have any
sweeping notions
about my high-strung
seven-legged friends,
they're always coming and going
well...
maybe not Leg Less
yeah,
I named him,
after my fashions
for a reason,
He's the reason I give
when people ask
why haven't I got a cat yet,
As if this flat
needs any more wild-lives.
He's started gathering dust,
he can be quietly rigorous
in his habits,

I guess some things die hard.
Maybe someday
I'll give him to the dark place
he's always run to
with his siblings and scrapings
my tasteless offerings
a graceless embrace
before his family
starts to eat him.

Soul Lines

I got lost,
in a half-note
as it battled
with breath,
with the last
unreturned
silence.
I'm washed
Cleansed by a rhythm,
of a beat
that isn't,
my own.
Thinking
in a time-less sublime
Punctured by a terse truth
an uttered nuance
of a piercing flute,
a daunted rhythm
that shelters from bombs
in concave tombs
acoustically sound
and sound
sound

Bird Brains

I've lived in this room
my entire life
When we moved here
last year
we were still young
with dreams that the ceiling
would get bigger
but
we grew up
and apart
While you caressed the window
I made marks
to the door
Our ways were the same
but your route
was quicker
You saw so much of the pane
while I rinsed tea-leaves
you drip-drew futures
In those times of closeness
forced captivity
it seemed
enough
to think

that we always
thought
of each other
The tapestry of our lives
hung by a thread
then fell like a feather
I could pick it up tomorrow
and see if you're still there
We could share
a flame-tail retreat
and beat it
to the country

where there's room to escape
where there are rooms
to spare

Gaynor Kane

Gaynor Kane lives in Belfast with her husband, daughter and dog. Mainly a writer of poetry, she has had work published in *Atrium Poetry*, *Boyne Berries*, *Sixteen Magazine*, *Panning for Poems*, and other journals and anthologies in the UK, Ireland and America.

In 2016, Gaynor was a finalist in the annual Funeral Services NI poetry competition, and commended in the Glebe House poetry competition. In 2017, she came fifth in the Annual Bangor poetry competition. Gaynor is currently working towards her first poetry collection.

Gaynor is a member of Holywood Writers' Group and on the executive board of Women Aloud NI. She also volunteers for EastSide Arts during their summer festival and the CS Lewis festival in November.

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Barometer

Every visit, I tapped it religiously
as if godly power
or magnetism were at work.
Couldn't pass through
the hallway without studying

its face. Like yours, it displayed
the atmosphere, the weatherglass
predicted fair or rain, dry or stormy;
a gentle pat would see the needle
swing from one to the other.

Just as a hug
would thaw you,
crow's feet and laughter lines
breaking the ice.

The lock

Discovered in a dusty drawer
 below forgotten single socks,
I can't resist the challenge
 of working out the code.
Listen to the click, click, click
 of teeth nipping past the pin.
Listen for the tock of the clock,
 as the dials rotate.
Listen for ticks of numbers falling
 in place and your combo clunk.

You meet my nose with coldness
 and the scent of blood,
new-borns, and his collection
 of copper coins. Mother's
gold charm bracelet with clover,
 wishing well, clog and key.
Or her grandfather's old toolbox,
 a cacophony of giants:
screwdrivers, chisels,
 claw-hammer, hacksaw, caulk.

Your colour has me thinking
of boulders along the edge
of Belfast lough, where
O'Neill's red hand alighted
after being cleaved and hurled
from sea to land. Or mountains
of fossilised rocks,
stacked at the docks.
Coal carted, then scooped
in spade loads into sacks.

You are tugboat shaped,
my thoughts go large.
To Arrol gantries and liners
nesting within skeletal stocks
until fully formed. Rivets
struck like rhythmic heartbeats.
Chocks lodged in place to stop
them slipping out to sea
until waters broke and ships
were birthed by tugboat midwives.

Everything was monochrome,
chalk, smoke, firebrick, slack.
The dunchers, dungarees,
grubby hands and faces

at clocking-off, men's boots
 still gleaming with pride.
Pride passed down paternally,
 reflected on shiny surfaces,
until the yard was boatless, barren,
 and the gates all locked.

The first time I saw him cry

We were eating fish and homemade chips
deep-fried in the best butcher's lard
when Jonny from up the street knocked,
said Tony had to take a call.

So, Daddy put his boots back on -
lingering to tie laces, as he'd taught me
with black liquorice strings - before
parading up the hill, round the dogleg bend.

Pritchard's hallway, heard half a conversation:
How did it happen? Where is he now?
Tell my Mother I'll be down on the first bus.
Thank you for letting me know.

Holding his hand, we retraced our steps,
looked at the setting sun, falling into the docks.
You're Granddda's dead; then he carried on,
thinking that was enough said.

American Gothic

Porch pots of mother-in-law's tongue
speak of the great mid-west, monogamous
marriages, the American dream. Straight
and narrow like weatherboard,
the crisp white pin-tuck of his shirt,
a corrugated barn, puckered lines
of the couple's lips, pristine prongs
of a pitchfork, and his direct glare.

She wore her grandmother's cameo,
the only heirloom. Straw-coloured hair,
tied back, framing her forlorn face,
gaze slant, looking towards a distant town.
A careless wisp, willows down the side
of her long neck. Not portrayed, is that he
inherited his mother's forked tongue
and had given a lashing for this simple sin.

Five weeks later, the UPS guy leaving
a parcel on the porch, sees the mister,
flat on his back, pitchfork prongs
piercing the bib of his dungarees, penetrating
his chest cavity between the ribs. Open eyes,

matt raw umber. Open jaws, flies shuttling
between ochre teeth. White cladding
now a splatter painting in deep cadmium.

Caimin O'Shea

Caimin O'Shea is a performance poet and songwriter currently residing in Belfast. He began song-writing as a teenager in his hometown of Enniskillen and recently took to writing and performing poetry after an eye opening first experience at Dublin's LINGO festival.

In the three years since beginning his poetic journey, he has been featured on the Near FM radio programme *Best of LINGO 2016* performing his debut performance piece *A Girl Dancing*. In Feb 2017 he formed *The Thing Itself*, Enniskillen's first regular spoken word poetry night, which has run throughout the year with great reception. He was a finalist in the 2017 All Ireland Poetry Slam.

When he isn't poeming he plays music in a folk duo and an Irish ballad group, works with an online magazine and is recording his debut album and thinking sombrely about his novel that will never be finished...

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Papertrail

Sometimes I forget
I'm just a scattered mind
Along a blazing papertrail
Whose beauty is lost
To ever refreshing pages

I find myself
Amongst the slim wooden sheets
Adorning the bed
Awaiting a would be reader
As roses will a would-be lover.
It is here that purpose lies.

A Girl Dancing.

Seventeen hours
Two buses
Two taxis
Two-
Hundred miles
And a few more by feet,
A world spun through red eyes
No sleep, nothing to eat.
Circulate
Fresh cells
As soldiers fight
to get well
In the swell
Of a blood transfusion,
I am under no illusion
This night
Will be hard pressed to enjoy.

One pint
One cigarette
First in weeks
Fresh tar,
And already
I'm propping up the bar,

As matchsticks
Prop up eyelids
Minus craic
Thus far,
Then that old creeping feeling
Comes-a-crawling
And-a-stealing
From the black-ness
In the back-ness
Of my mind,
Hello depression
My old friend.

But just then
The band strikes up
Plays to amaze
Yet the crowd
They just shoe-gaze
Sullen hip-poseurs
Too cool to react
To music's hook
Lost in a blur
Of snap-chats
And face-books
And I judge harsh
But perhaps may-be
They're just like me

Too weighted down
To simply be.

Then in the darkness I see
A shining light
Amongst the crowd
That pulls me
From the brink,
A girl dancing
Like no-one is watching
No phone
No friends
No drink,
So I stand and admire
Her bright attire
With nothing left
To give,
And watch
The only person
In the world
Who's not forgotten
How to live,

In that moment something changes
Brain chemistry re-arranges
I start to move
Feel the music

Get my groove
My second wind,
The gentle hand that lifts the chin
And I want to talk to her,
But this is not a romance.
No swell of heart
Or fire of loin
I'm not thinking with my groin
I just want to stop her
And say
Thank you for being,
For anyone who suffers knows
The gratitude you feel
For those
Who send the darkness fleeing.

But I look and she is gone.

My love of art it reignites
And for three days
And for three nights
Ten venues
Many miles
Too many drinks
No food
Four-score poets
From the page

To the street
To the stage
I embrace.
Yet at every turn
I see the trace
Of a girl dancing
In the corner of my eye,
Always talking to someone new
Slinking, in and out of view
But every time I try to talk
She disappears
Before I do.

At last
We meet
But it's too late
I'm too far-gone
To articulate
The simple thanks
And when I try
I see two guys
Out of nowhere
Pull her near,
Perhaps they've got
The wrong idea
But their eyes say I
Should disappear

As I turn to leave I overhear
A whispered word
Brought to my ear.

Oh my fuck.
She's selling them gear.

Rewind
Double time
Through a weekend
Of rushed cameos
Energetic
In every bar
Each five second chat
To every passer by
Who was in a fact
A passing buyer
Alerted
By her stark attire
And I see
The energy
Of a girl dancing
In a new light
She was never
High on life
Like some innocent fool
She was busily breaking

The cardinal rule
The prime directive
Of all enterprise
She was high as fuck
On her own supply.
But I guess..
If she was...
Then as well
So was I.

Brother

Dear brother
I see you
Are in a dark place
The echo chamber
That screams and shouts
It's a slaughter house
A bed of nails.
That perpetuates
Ideological war
Where warriors
Hide behind alphabets
And language is
The lowest common
Denominator
Where everyone is
Always right
And even atheists
Have faith
That they are never wrong
Oh how I long
For you to get out
Of the comments section

Beeswane

A crinkled plastic two-leet
Dimpled in the middle
Brown viscous dew drops
Cling to the inside
Collect, collide
With a slosh of flat coke
At the bottom

That's the bait

A fat buzzing bumbler
Resting on the dull grey
Of a lamppost with U-T-H
Scrawled on the side
Seduced
By the sickly sweet
Nectar, intrigued
By familial chorus
Of the trap

In it goes
Twist the cap

A task of black
And yellow

Bees and Wasps
They're all the same
All bastard stingers
Set to ruin the games
Of a childhood
Summer day

The drunken anger
Of a half-fermented fruit

Within another bottle
Maybe fifty, or more
Writhing inside
Not sure how they died
Suffocated or stung
In a fight to the death
Over sugar, space or breath
In the crowded delirium

Starting with the blood rush
Of something dangerous done
A simplistic revenge
This hunter's thrill
Followed by a guilt pang
At the senseless frantic
Dancing of death

Then it's sadness
Disgust
Contempt

Now that I look back
The question looms
Like a threadbare sword
If ignorance is innocence
Are we just children?
With bottle caps in hand
To twist and seal
Away the guilt
Of how we treat the land

Eyes closing blindly
To a pesticidal genocide
Of tiny things
With broken wings
And desperate stings
Without whom
There are no flowers

No fruit of knowledge

In the name of
Queen convenience
A dancing sickness

Fast becoming
Our own
Plastic prison

Will Donnelly

Will Donnelly was born and raised in Belfast, and continues to live there. He draws a lot of inspiration from traveling and exploring new places, often opting to write whilst on the airplanes, buses and trains that come with the adventure. Will writes with the intent of returning home with poems and experiences to share with the Poetry NI community.

His style of writing and spoken word performance is often rhythmic, drawing influence from musical artists such as Kendrick Lamar. Will's subject matter seeks to address current issues within society, providing a personal perspective on subjects such as mental health.

Will aims to create poems that are fragile and imperfect in nature, with the hope that someone is able to relate, and maybe feel some solace that they are not alone.

You can get in touch with Will by sending him an email:
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Cheekbones

She stands at six feet tall
Delicately balanced as an African mother giraffe sporting
stilettos on a tightrope
From Paris to London, every catwalk she has conquered

She stands at six feet frail
As fragile as your brittle grandmothers beloved antique
From the Congo to the shrine,
She dare not walk where the cat walks.

Steak or chicken, darling, what will it be my love? Neither.
A daily gallon of water and half a salad for her
A beauty so prominent in the exposure of her cheekbones,
Her ribs would agree,
She is everything you wish to be
In magazines and in dreams.

Arrow in the heart of the beast that once roamed free
Rotisserie feast for some rival tribe tonight
Their spoilt smoke tempts her nose, it comes from afar
Envy in the eyes of her tribesmen as they starve,
Shiver jealous under glistening stars

An ugliness so prominent in the exposure of her cheekbones
Her ribs would agree
Ironic, she is someone that you wouldn't want to be.

Starry Texas Sky

Like a swift brush on the easel,
I see a stroke of red in the horizon.
Before my virgin eyes,
A starry Texas sky.
Accustomed to, a blush of blue,
Beautiful gradient, neon hue,
What's out there, it's dark so...
not a clue.
A starry Texas sky.

Passenger side seat, starring at the dwindling stars
Hairs arise on my arms
Reminiscing in my mind the times I told myself I wanted to die
Used to feel so numb, never knew the reason why...
Look where that got me now
A starry Texas sky
My hearts on the line,
Dancing, beating in-between
Flashing lights in tandem
Busted Radio playing country anthems
Johnny Cash & Willie Nelson.

Twinkle. Bit of excitement in my eye
A strip club and a big fucking truck...

My oh my
A starry Texas sky.

Under the moon that looks like a pie
My friend turns, and winks...
"You know I prefer my cowboy's with their zipper down"
I said ok...
Zimmer down
I'm now afraid to close my eyes
A starry Texas sky.

Stopped at the rest stop
Time to get some gas
Fill up the tank, waiting for time to pass
But a lil beauty caught the corner of my eye
Where u been, where u going?
It's funny over here I'm not so shy
Hesitant on her reply,
...I'm met with a toothless smile....
With you honey, If you got a 5
Or a piece of crack...
Heck, this is life under the
Starry Texas sky.

Full of thinking about the young woman
And how we're probably more alike than she'd like to know
Her forever chasing a high, she'll never quite capture...

and me chasing the reasons for why...
I'll never know the answer...

Now I tell stories of a starry Texas sky.

Big oz steaks
Regrets, mistakes
Oil race
In mates, in-mates
Pastor beats the case
Masturbates
Makes another bastard, basket case
Master race
We worship God in a land of snakes
No apple trees
But there's Applebees, Apple stores
And monopolies
This drive is too long, stop I have to pee!
In fact I have to leave, leave me in the Desert please
I have to see what the other side has got for me, when I'm
 obsolete
What is God to me?
Faith, monogamy
Finding harmony in astronomy
I looked into his eyes for the first time
In Iceland when I saw the northern lights

Now I'm here, under stars wondering why I
Can't fathom the purpose of this life,
What is my fate tonight, if I fade tonight?

Whatever's gonna be will be
Fuck it, I hope this isn't the last time I see
A starry Texas sky.

The First Moth on the Moon

Every human is born to live, I guess that so much is true,
the world will spin, the universe wins and that's all we can do.
Just like that off the moth that is born to fly north just to land up on
the moon:

NASA by the masses, unqualified astronauts that skipped the how
to be a moth 101 classes, some of them are misguided too!

With more ASBOs than GCSEs

Some are more in-tune...

With a PhD in astronomy and a passion for the stars and the
moon...

But butterflies are cuter. My sister has one trapped on her
computer... a screensaver,
their advertisements for perfection, that is their blessing,
rulers by day but by night their safe in nesting.

That's when the moon will live, and the brave but misguided moth
takes flight,
the exact moment you flick on your light
and step outside to ignite a cigarette...
and in it jets, it's dream deferred
when you hear the bing.

the moths fragile wings, crack and split up in an instant, like it took
a shot of caffeine...
a fatal attraction to this artificial light - the moth is just confused...

You see it really lusts for the moon,
it has no choice but to follow the light
their dream to pursue, their purpose, they're all alike...
but they come from different places... from Belfast to Baghdad,
from Shakespeare, to Zulu tribes that shake spears,
everyone is gifted.....

Though they never had dads too, imagine life in a cocoon, only
to be born and laughed at, by the beautiful butterflies that bloom in
the limelight and have sight on fame, riches.
Their bourgeoisie family dwell on the finest flowers and they get all
the love the world could give,
whilst you have the impossible mission to make it to the moon!

Knock-knock, Mr Moth, I am your butterfly boss and here's what
you shall do,
come work for me, I promise you the moon!...

Mr Moth agrees and ends up flying around a tree, that's lit up
beautifully indeed, but he is working for someone else's dream.

A lot of us get distracted in the grand scheme of loops and we lose sight off what we love to do, there's no promise that the moth will ever make it to the moon,

Easy going when the light you take for granted is already lookin' good...

We can live a lie, fake happy like this it's where we should...
Be, but in actuality a life is wasted for it is not lived.

A butterfly that flaunts its wings and only lives for attention, that's ugliness, an Achilles heel in the shell of beautiful armour, we're not all born into butterflies some of us have to work harder; fly longer, reach the moon and don't settle for shorter... distance.

It's worth every inch
cause when you make it to that moon,
you own every nook and cranny,
even bring your granny, make her proud
make your voice heard,
never allow your dream to be deferred.

Colours / Colors

I wonder
What this world would be like
Without colour.

Complete and utter, grey scale
Kind of like
It's all white and black... and
Black and white.

Sounds pretty grim, I know.
Until you imagine:
The ghetto, that was once illuminated by the red and blue
Flashing siren
From the police car
With the baby in the cot,
Their fragile eyes look to the ceiling
Excitedly watching the colours come flooding in
I wonder if that's the very moment their screws let loose...
What you grow up around is what you are accustomed to.

In this world without colour
I wonder if we'd stop feeling blue
Stressing out, pacing, "aw we have so much to do..."
So much to prove
Deadlines to meet

So much to lose

Well I wonder if we lost colour
Would you know the baby from the mother?
Would we truly be able to love one another?

My Nigerian friend came to study at my campus,
I wanted to represent this country well
Showed him and his father my best manners
Took him to my house
Took him to my granny's
Our friendship grew
Treated him like he was part of the family
Then one night he went to Dominos... on his own
Waits on his pizza
Drunk man staggers in from the cold
Around 20 years old
Such a hard lad - brittle and bold
Calls my friend the n-word...

That word doesn't exist in this world anymore
But true story told
When my friend told me this
So much anger rose,
Feeling sick to my core
Not only did he call him that word
He slurred more...

Told him to leave the country, he isn't welcome anymore .
To "fuck off and get out"
My friend stood floored
Took it to his heart.

He spent the remainder of his time
Indoors
Paranoid
Thanks to the words of hate and prej-u-dice
Though those words can sometimes define our country's
government all too well.

You see in a world without colour,
Stuff like this doesn't happen
It's a thing of the past
As history is rewritten.

What was once:
Blood on the leaves
Turned to simple rain drops-
Peacefully coating the trees
Leaving Nina Simone singing about peace

And the reign of the once powerful emperor
Falls to his knees to appease
The former servants
For there is no darker skin

To exploit
With new power to anoint...

And we are equal in our voice...
And our choice
Is the same
There is no high ground
There no... low lane
There is no upper hand
At the cost of a darker skins pain
No hate fueled campaign
Ku Klux Klan...
Nazi...
Shame... shit
It may be grey but at least everybody is on the same plain
...

When I travelled to Mississippi I met a young man, about
my age
We exchanged our stories--
Come to think of it...
Seemed I had all the glory
As he hadn't much to say
Other than he grew up in the 'hood'
How he'd see the police every other day
Farther in prison
Mother working hard, Walmart making minimum wage

He never travelled too far
It was like he lived his life in a cage
All the people his age, where in a gang
Or they died
I don't know why
He was tied
To such a place
Filled with fear, filled with hate.

I was feeling brave, asked him
Why don't you and your mum just leave?
There's some opportunity out there for you
Trust me,
Scholarships, jobs, internships, you like music, right?
You can volunteer at a studio and work your way up...
It's possible!
These terms to him must be make-believe
It's ingrained in him he can't achieve
...
He turns to me...
In spite, anger in his eyes
There is no scholarship for a nigga
Like me
I ain't gonna be no Michael Jackson
I ain't gonna be no Michael Jordan
I'm ain't busy rapping
Getting money from recording

Playing sports

I ain't no Tiger Woods

I ain't gonna be the first black man on the moon

As far as the police concerned

I'm just another target they can shoot!

....

His words hit deep

Because what about me?

I can go anywhere my heart please

No police trying gun me down

No one's racist against me

This happens all over the world

The lighter skin...

The better you do

No need to buffer the truth

I travelled to China

The men who had had darker skin tones have a big disadvantage when it comes to getting married, their often left single

They're walking about with umbrellas in the sun because no one wants to get a tan

I had People run up to me to take pictures like "He's the man"

You're deemed a celebrity strictly due to skin tone
Those who are darker are treated
Like shit.

That's why I imagine a world without colour
But that isn't going to happen
Rainbows are too good
So what about a world where we are all equal,
Would that do?

Thank you for reading!



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Editor: Colin Dardis

Produced in Northern Ireland

A Poetry NI production

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