

Memories of Stone

Irish Studies at The Evergreen State College

Kate Newmann and Seán Williams, editors

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Selected poetry and prose written in Gleann Cholm Cille,
County Donegal, Ireland,
by students of The Evergreen State College Irish Studies Program
Spring 2004

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Memories of Stone

Preface

In April and May of 2004, I traveled to the small Irish parish of Gleann Cholm Cille in County Donegal with 22 of my students from The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. The students had just completed an intensive six month period of preparatory study in Irish history, music, theater, film, politics, spirituality, language, literature, and poetry with myself, Patrick Hill, and Doranne Crable. We spent five weeks primarily in Donegal, with short visits to Connemara, Clare, and Derry. As their professor, my goal for these students was for them to learn about Ireland, Irish culture, and Irish people by combining the theory they had learned in the United States with the practice of doing: taking classes in language, music, art, natural history, economic development, poetry, dance, and other topics. We worked regularly with the accomplished poet Kate Newmann, who presented us with provocative questions -- how does stone remember? -- that defied conventional explanations. Our responses to working with Kate collectively surprised, embarrassed, and delighted us. We also spent a memorable day working with Cathal Ó Searcaigh, whose poems mark him as one of the strongest and finest Irish-language poets of our time, and whose own provocative questions inspired Kate's work with us. Few of us had written poetry extensively before this program; most had written none at all. Yet each of us, one way or another, found a voice.

This collection, then, is a record of two journeys. One journey was outward, from the comfortable confines of a small liberal arts college in the Pacific Northwest rainforest to the rugged treeless beauty of small-town coastal Donegal in the Irish Northwest. The other journey went inward, as we plumbed the depths of our experience to find long-buried sights, sounds, smells, touches. You will find here the power of memory, the nature of sea, and a deep sense of connection to a place thousands of miles distant but vibrantly alive in our hearts. We lived in a beautiful valley that opened out onto the winds and waves of the Atlantic ocean; our cottages and dorm and classes echoed with the sounds of hundreds of sheep and their newborn lambs. We worked closely with local teachers, and built lasting friendships that transcended the boundaries of classroom and pub. We were humbled by the rich diversity of regional accents in the Irish language, and did our best to carry the language forward in a time of extraordinarily rapid change.

Our gratitude goes out to Kate Newmann, who guided us across perilous poetic territory and fearlessly (even joyfully!) encouraged us at every step. Cathal Ó Searcaigh dazzled us with his incomparable *joie de vivre* and fierce passion for his work. Liam Cunningham, the director of the Oideas Gael Institute in Gleann

Preface

Cholm Cille, facilitated our work in every way by engaging a group of brilliant and inspiring teachers in each subject; our visit to Gleann Cholm Cille would not have been possible without his direction and caring attention. We also thank the good people at The Evergreen State College, who believe that study abroad is one of the best and most effective ways of understanding a place and its people from the inside out. Russ Fox and Bill Bruner in particular offered administrative support and encouragement throughout the process of bringing the members of this program to Ireland for a memorable, life-changing experience. The editors would like to sincerely thank Kelly O'Brien, whose gracious and efficient work facilitated the layout and overall design of this book.

The members of this remarkable group of college students include (in alphabetical order) Cassie Barden, Casey Bogert, Eva Combs, Lauren Guy, Becca Hallidy, Zane (Seosamh) Haxton, Heather Howard, Derek Johnson, Éamon Kennedy, Christopher Knight, Zach Mandeville, Cody Morris, Candy Morrison (formerly Secor), Kelly O'Brien, Ryan O'Hern, Mary Powers, Kegan Riley, Gabe Roginic, Katherine Roundy, Dan Schoo, Brian Scott, and Alisha Wikander. You will find poetry from each one, and I hope you will also gain a sense of the beauty of their unique perspectives, histories, and experiences in Ireland. I also participated in the class with the permission of my students, and my then-9-year-old daughter Morgan Black joined the class for several weeks as well.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Bill Compton, a student in an earlier Irish studies program at Evergreen (2000-2001). He was passionate about Ireland, traveled there repeatedly with his wife Irene, knew Gleann Cholm Cille well, and was overjoyed to discover an aptitude for playing the fiddle as well as for writing poetry in the last several years of his life. He was my personal inspiration for taking up the Irish fiddle as an adult. Bill (we called him Liam in class) passed away quite suddenly from cancer in early autumn of 2002, and it was his wish that a memorial fund be dedicated to something important and memorable for the students of the next Irish Studies program. It is with many thanks to "Liam" that this book now sits cradled in your hands. *Go raibh míle maith agat.*

Seán Williams
Summer (Samhradh) 2004

**The Evergreen State College Irish Studies Program,
Spring 2004**

Top row starting at left: Brian Scott, Katherine Roundy, Eva Combs, Rebecca Hallidy, Kegan Riley, and Kelly O'Brien.

Middle row: Casey Bogert, Zach Mandeville, Zane Haxton, Candy Morrison, Mary Powers, Cassie Barden, Éamon Kennedy, Alisha Wikander, Dan Schoo, and Ryan O'Hern.

Front Row: Gabe Roginic, Lauren Guy, Heather Howard, Chris Knight, Derek Johnson, and Cody Morris.

Seán Williams and
Morgan Black (lamb vocalizations
expert)



Early Sense Memories

Scent...

Clean sheets fresh from dryer.
Creosote on the piers' pilings.
Fish, fish, fish.
Sulfur smell billowing from the pulp mill.
Cookies my father consistently burned.

~ *Kelly O'Brien*

The dogs would've just got skunked and we're grappling with them in the basement (it stinks, but it's funny, and at the same time it's like a member of the family just got in trouble, so we're not laughing too much).

Mom's oily scalp and the roots of her hair as I'm combing her hair and she's reading to us three kids piled into the bedroom covers.

Smells like tar outside and dust from construction work outside the window.

Our house always smelled, people thought, but I didn't notice anything much.

~ *Ryan O'Hern*

Rain and asphalt.

A musty basement flooded with water, again.

My own fear after a relative's ghost story.

The dead maple leaves as I tunnel through.

The oil of the tractor we were never supposed to play on.

~ *Derek Johnson*

Memories of Stone

Cold mildewy carpeted cement garage, called the playroom.
The poopy decay of a worm farm.
Animals - outdoor animals - I think they stink in a good way.
Fumes from magic markers and gasoline; I think I inhaled too
much.
Mmm. Blue Kool-Aid out of a Tupperware sippy cup.

~ *Mary Powers*

Some kind of disinfectant clouding up the air.
Mom's homemade banana bread cooking on our wood-fueled
fireplace.
Pine woodsmoke wafting over a white-laden paradise of a cul-de-
sac.
The Old Person Smell.
The damning of Mitts, the cat. Because every so often I had to
wake up to the pungent and biting aroma of burning cat piss,
'cause she would pee in the electric burners of the stove. Damn
cat, still miss her though.
Doc's workshop.

~ *Brian Scott*

Hollow chocolate bunny that sickened me.
Cool Montana air while Muffin talked to me.

~ *Candy Morrison*

Snow melting in the creases of my pants.
Tomato soup and Oreos.
Jeremiah's piss mixed with shag carpet after he said, "Zach,
Watch this!"
My blood smelling of copper, and the gravel like my kitchen floor,
and my knees smelling like my kitchen floor made out of copper.
My mom's empanadas: dough, sugar, cinnamon, and metal pan.

~ *Zach Mandeville*

Early Sense Memories

Petroleum scent of car repair.
Vick's corrosive lung raking vapor rub.
Sharp smell of mashed carrots contained neatly in a baby's
diaper.
The delightful sweet scent of apples dropped in the dryer exhaust
pipe.

~ Éamon Kennedy

Mildewed dishrags in the sink that Grandma used to "wash" our
hands.
Pipe tobacco on Grandpa's lumpy easy chair.
The black and white "kitty" we chased in the woods.
Fresh cut grass when our elderly neighbor and landlord would
mow our lawn.
Bratwurst.

~ Rebecca Hallidy

My father baking endless batches of cookies.
He was trying to unlock the secret of Mrs. Fields.
The smell of tar melting in the sun.
The difference between the sweet air of the Pacific North West
And the stale air of Eastern Washington.
Bugs in the bug zapper smell wrong
Next to the river by which we live.

~ Eva Combs

My Grandma, that I still refuse to believe is a perfume that you
can simply buy.
A fire on a camping trip, with a hint of s'mores.
My mom cooking dinner, burnt as always.
The strange "boy smell" of my brother's room.
My family's box of pictures, part dust, part cat pee.

~ Casey Bogert

Memories of Stone

The subway coming in Japan
Chicken and fish in the garbage
Hairspray for ballet recitals
A litter box
Rain in the middle of summer
Lemonade popsicles
The freshness of snow
My mom's study after the new chair came

~Morgan Black

Barbecue sauce and ribs at the now-defunct neighborhood picnic.
Freshly-boiled pasta in the colander, the steam and smell of which were so good I just had to stick my face in.

~Zane Haxton

Spicy doughnuts in Berkeley's Virginia Street Bakery in the early morning.
Grease and stale popcorn at the carousel in Tilden Park.
The sharp bite of juniper bushes as I brushed against them.
My father's dusty architecture books which I must not touch is that clear?
Freezer burn and electric fan at Bott's ice cream parlor.

~Seán Williams

My mother baking bear-shaped bread for my brothers and me on a holiday.
The smell of chlorine on skin after getting out of the swimming pool.
Thor, my stinky old golden retriever, who I loved dearly.
The fresh scent of cut grass after I mowed the lawn for the first time.
The scent of dead fish, deer, and rotting bananas all mixing together in my Dad's Suburban.

~Katherine Roundy

Sound...

“Tally ho and away we go!”
The Iowa fight song
Racing around the living room with a blanket tied to my neck
listening to the Superman theme music

~ *Chris Knight*

My dad peeing in the rain during the hurricane.
Sound of the steps in the hospital while I peered in at my new
sister.
The sirens alerting drivers that the Martin County drawbridge
was opening or closing.
Somebody asking if I needed to go potty on the way back from a
beach.

~ *Candy Morrison*

ZACH! when my mom broke her ankle on the driveway and I
had to run out with an office chair.
Rocks tackling grass on Sugarloaf Hill. Sounding like a folding
leather jacket.
Johnny Mathis singing Christmas.
The Ducktales theme song.
Me repeating ay ay ay ay ay in my room because I liked the way it
makes my tongue feel.

~ *Zach Mandeville*

Memories of Stone

Rory and I putting our dog Lucky on the bed and hearing him bark as we jumped up and down on the bed.

My mom yelling to me to hurry, because we're late.

Dad singing 'The Gypsy Rover' to us as he bathed us three kids in the tub.

Squirrels moving in the attic as I'm thinking in my room.

The street sweeper coming up our street like a night monster, and me being up late enough to hear its whirring.

Hearing the hollowness of my own voice as I yelled from the top of the wood stairs for Dad.

~ Ryan O'Hern

Branches breaking underfoot.

My dog barking.

Rain falling hard on the roof.

Boat engines rumbling.

Parents fighting.

~ Kelly O'Brien

The gears are changing low to high to low, medium, low, high again.

(Singing) Isn't she lovely, isn't she wonderful, isn't she precious sent from an angel above.

There's an airplane flying above excitement brewing. Run outside, waving to the sky. Is that my dad there?

Grandparents are snoring. They take turns so there is never silence.

"Moom! Mary's picking on me!" "David, tell Mary how you feel about that." "Mary, I don't feel about that!"

~ Mary Powers

Seagulls all crying my first time at the beach.

"Rainbow Connection," from "The Muppet Movie," in the tape deck.

My sister crying at night after she was born.

Bells, big bells, church maybe.

Silence when it snows.

~ Eva Combs

Early Sense Memories

Trees so close together that they squeak when the wind blows
and I know they're just talking.

~ *Heather Howard*

The ocean in a shell.
Mother's heartbeat when I couldn't sleep.
80s hair metal on my uncle's record player.
The satisfying thump when a heavy book hit the floor.
Two old dogs sighing and harrumping in unison as they lay by
the fireplace.
Pop and crackle as my grandmother's china exploded in the
microwave.
My mother singing Dr. Demento songs to herself in the morning.
Crickets chirping on summer nights.

~ *Rebecca Hallidy*

Sizzling snickers of a mischievous brother.
Clip clop clip clop of a hard wood floor acquainting itself with
mother's heels.
Purr of a refrigerator and the small boy at its feet.
Curdling yell, my own, as Maggie picked fights with stray rattlers.

~ *Lauren Guy*

My grandfather saying, Ho, Kates! when greeting me, which was
the same way he greeted his favourite horse of the same name.
My grandmother tracing my ear with her little finger and telling
me the story of the ladybug that was crawling on it.
Listening to Sesame Street records with my brothers.
The whisper of the wind in the trees and the lapping of the lake
shore while I was camping.
My mother singing my little brother to sleep in another room to
the gentle creak of the rocking chair.

~ *Katherine Roundy*

Memories of Stone

The All Things Considered theme on NPR when my father comes home to make pesto pasta and the ceiling fan is humming.
The sound of my mother's voice, strangely understanding.
Training wheels.
Strange loud noises in the early morning air that my mom always liked to imagine as cars backfiring, and I as gunshots.

~ Zane Haxton

The gravel shifting beneath my mother's feet walking me and my brother to the car half asleep in the early morning.
My mother in the shower while I sleep on the bathroom floor mat.
The music of the first level of "Mario."
The waves at the beach.
The "Price Is Right" in my first babysitter's house.

~ Derek Johnson

My dog Arfy's gasp that preceded his angriest bark
Static on the television
The fog horn in San Francisco Bay
The calls of my neighborhood gang: "Ally Ally Oxen Free!"
The train whistle late at night

~ Seán Williams

The sound of my brother getting yelled at for doing God knows what in the backyard.
My dad singing to me and me joining in.
Me slamming my door in rage.
My best friend whispering a secret in my ear.
A TV blaring on a Saturday morning as I wake up.

~ Casey Bogert

Taste...

The taste of my blood after biting through my tongue.
Not liking beer after tasting my dad's Coor's light.
Sand from stumbling onto my face out of a slide
Fresh avocado from the huge tree in my grandparents' backyard
in Southern California.
The pain of blowing a whistle to find out a pincher bug was
inside, it didn't like that.

~ *Dan Schoo*

Asparagus with too much salt. Though disgusting it was better to
put on too much than run the risk of actually tasting the vegetable.
The salty, crunchy taste of eating sushi with fish roe for the first
time. My Dad had to finish it.
The taste of chlorinated water when it went up my nose because
my friend Jeff pushed me under the water.
Pepperoni pizza that sat under a heat lamp for too long and was
delivered two hours too late. It dripped with grease and tasted
terrible.
Lemon juice. My older brother and I would take shots of lemon
juice and then writhe on the floor as it burned our tongues just
because it was fun.

~ *Katherine Roundy*

Hot chocolate with little marshmallows that have partially melted.
Spicy chili cooked all day in a crock-pot.
Lemonade my sisters and I would mix with way too much sugar.
Playdough.
Butterscotch, anything butterscotch.

~ *Kelly O'Brien*

Memories of Stone

Mom's freshly baked banana bread that she made on the wood fireplace.

Juniper pitch that would cling to my hands when I'd go climbing.
The copperish sting from BB's held in my mouth when BB gun barrels were used as pee shooters.

Habanjero, damn you Joel.

Plums from two doors down, that tasted so good when stolen, but were so damned bitter from being out of season.

~ Brian Scott

Sand in my mouth from a middle-school beach-fight.

Turkey for Thanksgiving and Christmas. The dark meat was my favorite.

Almond Sunset tea that my father and I would sip in afternoon tea-time get-togethers.

~ Zane Haxton

First Reese's peanut butter cup for Halloween.

My Mom's fresh raspberry juice.

Dad's tahini and honey sandwiches (Yuck!).

Oatcakes fresh from the oven.

Annie's macaroni and cheese-one of the few things I would eat.

~ Morgan Black

The salty stickiness of library paste.

Cinnamon toothpicks from my best friend Yvetta Caldwell.

The mudpie that wasn't nearly as good as it looked.

Summer water straight from the hose.

~ Seán Williams

Touch...

The feel of my sheepskin blanket, cool on a hot summer night.
The feeling of putting on a wet bathing suit for early morning swimming lessons. It was like clinging spandex ice cubes.

I remember the pain of my arm breaking, sharp and then dull ache, though I laughed at the time.

The tickle of ticks I would catch on my arms before they got anywhere they shouldn't be.

I remember the constraining feeling of skirts on holidays, making it impossible to run with my brothers.

~ *Katherine Roundy*

Bathwater ekes up my face and slips into my ears as I ease deeper into the bathtub.

Smokey's brown, longhaired tail brushes through my fingers while I sit on a Persian rug.

Blegy beans gently part with a thin cloud of dust as I press my hand fingers-first into the enormous burlap sack.

The stubble of my father's neck scratches my scalp while he reads the funny pages to me on a lazy Sunday.

~ *Éamon Kennedy*

The iron grip of my brother's angry fist on my arm.

The tentative prickles of my hamster's feet on my stomach.

A curtain of beads brushing my face and closed eyes.

The bareback body of the carousel zebra gripped between my thighs.

An enormous dog tenderly holding my hand in its bone-crushing jaws.

~ *Seán Williams*

Memories of Stone

Touching my mom's belly while Jill kicks within.
Brush going through my waist-long hair.
Nana's wet kisses.
My dog, Brandy, as she squirms to get out of the pink baby carriage we put her in.
Warm water of my nana's pool as I jump in.

~ *Candy Morrison*

The warmth of my parents' bed when I was squeezed between them.
Play-Dough.
Smooth marbles in my palm.

~ *Zane Haxton*

Yosemite breeds cool tingling of teeth.
To look as Santa, sharp sting of shaving cream.
Sharp rays from a hose repeal saturation of ants.
Grand ideas to jump through Lego piles, blood blisters gripping my feet.

~ *Lauren Guy*

Wood of building blocks towering precariously.
Cold glass of juice on a hot day.
Sharp bite of a fist full of devil's club.
Fur of my dog sleeping on my lap.
The hot feel of a sunburn after a long day at the lake.

~ *Kelly O'Brien*

After my sister came home from the hospital, I hid.
I drew mean pictures with brown crayons where I was a potato in a bubble by myself, isolated.
I didn't want to be touched.
Sometime later I remembered but it was too late.
So I am a potato in a bubble.

~ *Eva Combs*

What Does a Gleann Cholm Cille Sky Taste Like?

What does the sky taste like?
Pelted ice and subtle
The melted liquid of a blue otter pop

~ *Chris Knight*

The sky here tastes like celery whipped up into a breath of fresh air.

~ *Mary Powers*

A Gleann Cholm Cille sky
tastes like tea
that hasn't had the
milk and sugar
properly mixed in.
One minute it's sweet,
then it's bitter.

~ *Kelly O'Brien*

a batch of rocks. the inside of a magazine. sweaty forearms.
anything you think you've tasted but can't remember when.

~ *Zach Mandeville*

A Gleann Cholm Cille sky is like a big bowl of ice cream with
colored sprinkles and hot caramel.

~ *Candy Morrison*

Memories of Stone

If I could lick the sky like an ice cream cone I would taste,
through the condensation, tears and the fading smell of fish.

~ Rebecca Hallidy

The sky tastes bitter, perhaps.

~ Zane Haxton

Orange sherbet.
I've seen too few sunsets.
Looking out over the water
The sky looks like it is on fire.

~ Eva Combs

The Glen's sky is pasty with peat and fresh with the clean air new
off the ocean, full of possibility.

~ Derek Johnson

It tastes like peat and coal and sheep and freshness and sea salt.

~ Morgan Black

It tastes like fresh mint with a hint of salt.

~ Casey Bogert

A Gleann Cholm Cille sky tastes like its sapphire reflection in
lakes and rivers: salt, sharp, sheer.

~ Seán Williams

Chilled grapes with hints of purple seeds.

~ Lauren Guy

How Does Stone Remember?

With care, never rushing. Deep, but dry and ponderous-not wet
and springing like a tree or in furious implacability like the ocean.

~ Rebecca Hallidy

Stone remembers without
passing judgment.
It sees too much and
knows this will also pass.

~ Kelly O'Brien

Forged in the furnace of a dying planet, the chink of hammer and
the hum of concrete mixers tell the tale.

~ Zane Haxton

Cooled passing cooled blue stone
Whispers
Whispers
Reminding others

~ Chris Knight

Memories of Stone

I heard once that stone stores all the sound vibrations that come into its presence.

I don't know if that's true,
But I like that colour of the lichens.

~ Eva Combs

A stone remembers wisely slowly completely because it has time.

~ Candy Morrison

It gets etched and worn like a person
Each mark leaving an event
A feeling
Until eventually they are nothing at all.

~ Casey Bogert

A stone reminisces like the first seven days created by God lasting three million years.

~ Mary Powers

Hides the secrets of Origin.
Was born in the hand of Hades.
Remembers invention, the hunt, the hearth, our history.
Speaks of nothing, enjoying its anonymity.
Watches sun and moon, winter and summer, without rest.

~ Brian Scott

It sees all, unnoticed by most and cherished by those who bother to look, giving as much as receiving.

~ Derek Johnson

How Does Stone Remember?

Stone remembers by waiting for echoes to happen, hundreds of years later.

~ Seán Williams

With its eyes. It also has a memo pad with a separate column for addresses and a conversion chart in the back. But mostly with its eyes.

~ Zach Mandeville

Its memories are pounded into it.

~ Morgan Black

Exploring the Heart

It howls to be let out, for a chance in the sun.
It sounds like a singer that can't find the starting note.
It dreams for a place to belong and always be welcome.
It clings to warmth, laughter, music, friendly faces, and relaxed evenings
It regrets everything it has not allowed itself to feel.

~ Casey Bogert

Howls to be alone among friends
Sounds like a creek, pronounced crick
Dreams grape Nehi
Clings to/craves anything that can split open and spill light.
Craves/regrets yesterday.

~ Zach Mandeville

It sounds like my ear pressed against the pillow, and a giant coming up the stairs to get me.
It howls like the moment after the low drum has been sounded in a huge dark church full of people that are dead silent (during the Easter vigil), you can hear the sound hitting each person's body.
It dreams like a baby dreams after being nursed and filled with its mother's milk.
It clings to the flesh and blood veins around it.

~ Ryan O'Hern

Exploring the Heart

MY heart howls- What eaves cleava
It sounds like bladump, bladump, bladump
It hopes for a better life next time
It clings to hope and love and hope of love
It regrets nothing?

~ Mary Powers

My heart does not howl. It hums and whispers.
It regrets the times it was not heard or did not speak.

~ Chris Knight

Howls: Yaaawwwwwpppp!
Sounds like: Waves against the rocks at high tide.
Dreams: blue green purple and sunset
Clings to and regrets: all the hurt felt by every living thing.

~ Rebecca Hallidy

Blood. In. Out. In. Out.
Bump. Bump. Bump. Bump.
It dreams about a connection.
It clings to fear.
It regrets missed opportunities.

~ Eva Combs

My heart:
Yells Oh Mickey you're so fine, you're so fine you blow my mind
Pitter-patter of baby footsteps and the thumps of a drum circle
Longs to be complete within itself
Regrets its beginnings, never kissing Jeremy Beck when our
siblings beat us to the ground during a pillow fight when I was 12

~ Candy Morrison

Memories of Stone

Sound: the waves on the beach and the wind on the mountain
tops.

It dreams of us and her.

It clings to you.

It regrets those times, in the past and to come.

~ Derek Johnson

My heart:

Howls 'Eeeyaaaaaaaggglllll-'

Dreams silent pictures, still lifes, bowls of fruit perhaps. But
always the flies.

Loves the sound of rushing water

Regrets every time it trusted my brain, and every time it didn't.

~ Zane Haxton

Howls wordlessly with all its strength.

Sounds like a song with tribal rhythms.

It drinks beauty.

Clings to the knowledge that I am strong enough.

It regrets when I haven't allowed it to speak.

~ Kelly O'Brien

Where Does History Lurk?

History lurks in blind corners where semantics don't count.

~ *Zane Haxton*

History lurks each time it repeats itself yesterday and tomorrow.

~ *Mary Powers*

Ask my dad, he'll say yesterday.
Ask my mom, she'll say in books written by assholes.
Ask my brother, he'll say in his class.
Ask my cat, but he's been put to sleep.

~ *Cody Morris*

It doesn't. History kisses you right on the face any chance it gets.
It's rather where you can lurk. I suggest a tool shed.

~ *Zach Mandeville*

In my shoes or maybe between my toes. On the roof, beneath the
floorboards and in the creases and folds of grey matter.

~ *Rebecca Hallidy*

Wherever anyone finds it. It can be in tiny pebbles or in gold
earrings. Everywhere you look there's history.

~ *Morgan Black*

Memories of Stone

History lurks in libraries.
That is his-story,
Lurking is a good word for it.

~ *Eva Combs*

History lurks in places forgotten, people's memories, stories
passed down from your grandmother, strange things in the attic.

~ *Casey Bogert*

History lurks in ravine crevices, dried blood congealing with its
own; same as the men that spilled it. Ventriloquist: manipulate
your origins.

~ *Lauren Guy*

In and out of every rock and breath of fresh air, deep in me, and
we.

~ *Derek Johnson*

History lurks in the body, mind and spirit of the ninth generation
American, setting foot on the Irish soil of home.

~ *Seán Williams*

History lurks in the crevices of mankind.

~ *Candy Morrison*

thoughts from holding a tuft of wool

Rolled between my fingers it's my best friend's hair
Dreadlocked slowly after hours of work.
It's more like hair than I would have expected
Having never felt it off a sheep before becoming a sweater.
I should have investigated the tufts stuck on the fences.

~ *Katherine Roundy*

gathered and made into clothing
its softness leaves me a rash
a cozy borrowed coat which I cannot return
nor can I wear

~ *Chris Knight*

hair of my new baby doll
new it makes me happy
in actuality it scratches at my fingers' dead skin
and it smells, yet it captures my imagination
I think I'll name it Paul

~ *Candy Morrison*

Heather's hair, it's everywhere
Like her it's coarse and strong when raw
It can be made soft and comfy like cashmere
All it takes is wear and tear

~ *Mary Powers*

Memories of Stone

A 56-year-old man from the Ukraine tells me in a thick accent he's not a Ukrainian; he's a Russian. He tells me he was once an astrophysicist in Kiev. Now, bitterly, he works in a plastic factory beside me, making useless objects no one ever notices.
His balding grey hair reminds me of sheep's wool.

~ Cody Morris

I know when she sees this she'll squeal
And her entire future will be contained in the fifteen threads.
Dinner brought to the factory room
And a sunset seen through barn window
Lying on ground, so covered with these threads
Our backs will itch through our clothes.

~ Zach Mandeville

A clump of hair handed to me
Designed for inspiration
Staring at the clinging knot
I think, "What can I say? It's wool."

~ Éamon Kennedy

Small threads of glittering dead sheep skin. Yet we wrap ourselves in the soft woolen sheets at night. Yeah, well it's still sheep excrement in some way. Rolling in dirty filth. Hah, now I get to be dirty and mom can't complain; VICTORY!!!

~ Brian Scott

thoughts from holding a tuft of wool

Light, almost non-existent
Looks like a vision I used to get as a child
When I was confused
Scribbles, over and over in my head
Much heavier than this feels
This smells fresh and new
Easy and simple
Perhaps confusion is not so complicated
Like lamb's wool

~ Casey Bogert

Twirled in hand.
Twisted on fingers.
For many ages
From the body of sheep
knotted and woven into art
to cover mine.

~ Kelly O'Brien

White wires wildly woven
Worked together in an antenna of wool
Its heat feeds back weathered warmth and wellbeing
Protection from wind and waves
Willingly I'll wear it.

~ Seán Williams

My mother's hair
Silver wire strands
Soft and coarse.
I remember she is west of the sea.

~ Eva Combs

Memories of Stone

product of nature
white strands, like the calcite beach seen from clifftops,
mingling with the swaying blue-green current.
There is no blue here, but even so I can't help but wonder
if the sheep dream of the sea and the green fields and the
expanding sky.

~ Zane Haxton

Wool feels very oily and more tangled than a person's hair. It
doesn't taste much but it makes you want to spit it out. It doesn't
smell either. It looks very fibery. Sometimes I wonder what sheep
the wool came from.

~ Morgan Black

It looks like my mind. Relentless warmth. Traveler in the wind.
Lost in a room, laughing with each other.

~ Derek Johnson

Soft frailing, crumble like dust
Gentle whiffs of an old man's hair
Mold to the pressure of my finger tips
Alone and never separated
Intricate weaving into yourself
Whatever yourself is seeking

~ Lauren Guy

A little fluff
Just for me
I can do whatever I like
Anything at all... The world is mine.
So I pick it up.....
.....
.... And gently touch it to my face.

~ Heather Howard

Why Does the Bodhrán Shudder?

It shudders, just as every session musician does when they see that big round case enter through the door of the pub.

~ *Brian Scott*

the bodhrán shudders with the knowledge that its beauty lies in the death of an innocent being.

~ *Chris Knight*

bodhrán shudders in anticipation of a quick release.

~ *Candy Morrison*

The bodhran shudders as an unwitting participant in a hundred-year-old American dream of Irish identity.

~ *Seán Williams*

The bodhrán shudders because it knows I'll keep coming back for more, and it likes it.

~ *Kelly O'Brien*

The bodhran shudders because I just hit it and we both know I'll do it again.

~ *Zane Haxton*

It shudders because it wishes it could do something more. It wants to be the whole song and sing loudly but it is trying so hard to keep quiet.

~ *Casey Bogert*

Poems After Holding a Stone

Thoughts on Rocks

Rock dreams of unicorns and Denmark. I don't know why
It believes in us all being one magnificent body, whose bones
Broke and scattered long before
It gave up boredom, getting used to the slow
It longs to be licked by the sea, till it's part of that magnificent
body again.
Its song has a lot of chime solos. I don't know why.

~ Zach Mandeville

Piece of Flint

Stone remembers the core of the earth,
Where it was created long ago.

It holds within it an echo,
The residual energy from the creation of the universe.

Stone dreams of a day when it will
no longer be chipped away by men.

It longs for the feel of warm sunshine,
And long grass swaying in the June wind.

Stone believes that all chaos can
One day turn to peace.

~ Katherine Roundy

Stone

Only one thing:
its silent Nihilism
will be the steadfast truth
of the future.
Because if they told you
about all that they've seen,
you'd die before getting to the end of their tale.
Too stoic to be obsessed with possessions,
all they can offer is a
sly smile that takes a thousand years
to crack.
The language of stone is...
Stone never had rhythm,
nor felt the Blues,
has nothing to express.
What the hell is "song" anyways?

~ Cody Morris

stone

believes in the sureness of the ever-changing world
every hope and dream has risen from it and every civilization
fallen from it.
a stone's song is being picked up in the hands of a small child and
thrown to a different spot so that it might live again
language is the whisper of the breeze roar of the thunder and the
sun beams that hit it
its very nature is an echo of the vibration of the world

~ Candy Morrison

What is a stone?
an age beyond our memories
worn soft by the sea

~ Chris Knight

Memories of Stone

Stone

Stone is violence.
Born of fire and cataclysm,
Topped by earthquakes,
Dragged down by avalanches,
Beaten by waves.
The first killing tools were made of stone.
The first walls were built of stone.
The first graves were marked with stone.
When all dies,
There, cold, will lie stone.

~ Éamon Kennedy

Stone

Elephant
Smooth tusks slide into jagged interior
Deep crevices unite
Sanctity
I attempt to crumble you within my palm
Incorporate your gemini language

~ Lauren Guy

Slate
Obsidian black, ages old, sharp as ever, if only Dad's chevy was as dependable.

~ Brian Scott

Stone hungers for the soft, living warmth of touch, of passion, of flexibility.

~ Seán Williams

Stone

Stone for so long
has only had an echo
for a voice.
But that is only
for those who do not stop
to listen.
Patience reveals stories
and dreams
solidified though eons
and released slowly
in time.

~ Kelly O'Brien

The nature of stone

The hunger of stone is to break, erode, change.
The stone knows an anatomy founded on irregularity, dissymetry,
curved and jagged altogether.
Stone knows everything and nothing all at once.
You can call it stupid, but it doesn't care.

~ Zane Haxton

Stone is a pocket barber. Stone is being carried, in the gripping
mean rough talons of a beast. Stone sounds like dripping wax.
Stone groans in the air as it falls. Stones hold the echoes in their
armpits. Stone is a wave crashing, a head cracking into twenty
pieces.

~ Ryan O'Hern

What Is the Nature of Sea?

A city, each drop a person
 in limbo when raining
It varies place to place like language
Gives and takes life, without blinking
As a friend, it can be cold one day and warm the next
A freeway describes that beast.

~ *Cody Morris*

Its disposition is ambivalent.
It is bigger than any one being.
It is blood and the surf its heartbeat.
Its depths have not yet been fully explored.
The atmosphere of an entirely different
category of beings.
The salt of its kiss sticks to my lips.
Its clear voice calls me home.

~ *Kelly O'Brien*

can be cruel and dark, so fishermen don't learn to swim
or envelop you like a lost friend
who will tell you tales for days on end?
the heartbeat of the world lies deep within
mythical creatures hide in the sea foam
salt dries passersby yet they always come back
to their mother and lost friend

~ *Candy Morrison*

What Is the Nature of Sea?

It's tion words
Action
Transmission
Authentication
Exposing its chest to inspire million
To write what's already on a postcard.
We all agree it is powerful
And beautiful
And moving
And we all ignore the crushed waterbottle
Moving powerfully through the rocks.
Its beauty ignored
And shunned.

~ Zach Mandeville

imaginary expanse
rolling, tumbling, lapping
murmurs, laughter, whispers and great rumbles
shaping, curving, carving shores of all lands
mother of life with the moon and planets as a guide
curling strength pulling pushing massaging the beaches
dangerous and enchanting

~ Chris Knight

Punching and pulling
Aching to reach something
Trying to find a new way to go where it's going
Such a powerful thing
So easy to ignore
Our constant motion of like
Drowns it out
As it's reaching for more

~ Casey Bogert

The *What Is the Nature of Sea?* is the same as the nature of everything else. So then it is balanced and torn just like me. It is striving for the scary things that it convinces itself are worth striving for, and it leans into that which it; knowing that striving is not needed.

~ Ryan O'Hern

Memories of Stone

The sea falters every day:
waves break hard on the rock
Or are stretched thin on the strand, dissolved into nothingness.
But against the march of eons,
rocks are whittled down and submerged,
and the sand turns into a vast bog that swallows kingdoms and
empires
but the heartbeat of the sea lives on.

~ Zane Haxton

Rolling crests arch and retreat
Breaking each fear and melody
Obliterate me
To regenerate

Were that I a fish
Beckoned to the depths
Thrash me upon your rocks
And emerge aching for return

~ Lauren Guy

She knows motherhood. She gives of herself even to her children that have left her embrace. She knows pain as we take what she would willingly give and hoard what should be shared with our siblings. She knows healing of herself, as she accepts the waste we pollute her with and shelters her other children from our cruel and short-sighted grasp.

~ Rebecca Hallidy

The nature of sea is to change.
Womb of life, it is the mystery we cannot know.
Waves crest, rolling, breaking, revealing small hints.
Safe on the beach in the sand,
I know it would wash me back to our beginning,
I'm told the old fishermen wouldn't save me.
I'm not sure I'd want them to.

~ Eva Combs

What Is the Nature of Sea?

Poseidon gently beckons towards his brothers. He taps Hades on the shoulder and tickles the underbelly of Zeus.

Scylla and Charybdis await every man's journey and the damning maidens sing to us from an island that we cannot go to.

The selkie's head bobs in the waves and Pele thunders far away under a cap of solid rock. Paikea lovingly urges his gentle behemoth and somewhere, back on a foreign, yet very familiar shore, a young brave finds the perfect shell to make a gift of.

The *What Is the Nature of Sea?* is to exist and leave us wondering.

~ Brian Scott

Nature is the Sea.

It is the air turned upside down.

There could be more life in there than there is out here.

It's my mom when I am gone.

Each wave brings confusion,

Quickly followed by enlightenment.

Its sound is my ohm.

~ Derek Johnson

The sea speaks of instability
and in between.

Breathing tides

movement

power

Knowing, then not knowing;

Reacquaintance and renewal.

This living language of allusion and metaphor

Welcomes and betrays in an instant of negligence.

Salt of tears and of labor and of earth.

The sea named my daughter.

~ Seán Williams

The sea is at war with the land via man

It gives and it takes

It's changing, maiming, shining, calling, crying, dying

But it will outlast us all.

~ Mary Powers

Haiku

The Burren in the spring with flowers

Spring blooming flowers
Scattered between rocks like ice
You take their picture

~ *Eva Combs*

above the stone tomb
sings the same sky, the same stars
nestling lost remains

the parted lips speak
we are not balanced yet
but beauty is here

~ *Chris Knight*

Balance (Part 1)

Late night, the latest
He is trying to hold on
But she will let good

Balance (Part 2)

Later that cold night
Regret augments taste of booze
Was it good or bad?

~ *Cody Morris*

Haiku

Will I see a stone
When I look into the sea
Will that stone be me

If I was a boat
I would prob'ly stay afloat
Even in the sea

A pilgrim I'd be
With seaweed wrapped around me
Bottles sealed with pee/ carved from forest tree

I t-row my body
I t-row my bod-ea-sy
I t-row my body

-- *Ryan O'Hern*

Happy then madness
Bubbles that fight angry ovens
Gemini freedom.

~ *Heather Howard*

Gold petals finger
Unyielding fissures of stone
An old marriage bed.

~ *Seán Williams*

balance on two feet
walking down a Dublin street
sixth beer did me in

~ *Candy Morrison*

Memories of Stone

Astrological
Geologic arrangement
Premodern sculpture

With one more great lift
The capstone is placed above
Dolmen: now complete

~ Éamon Kennedy

Dogwoods bloom, our spring
Cursive rarely legible
Ignite scents, theirs, yours

~ Lauren Guy

Long black piercing beak
Dark tunnels as eyes. White, black
a rotting knowledge

~ Brian Scott

Tell me what you want
Or do not say anything
I want all or none

Sometimes to balance
You need to find two far points
And run between them

I do not balance
I am either on the floor
Or on my two feet

I will hold you up
If you lean on my shoulder
But then I will fall

~ Casey Bogert

What Is There Left to Say?

What is there left to say
Cold breaking my woolen sweater
Distance weaves memories of saplings weakened by the wind

What is there left to say
Rippling sea mirrors infinity
And yet I, frozen, fear each return

What is there left to say
Gulls sweeping, tango in the mist
Quest for entanglement, I dive amongst you

~ Lauren Guy

The Celt

What is there left to say?
You walked out the door without a word.
An expression, unreadable on your face.

What is there left to say?
You storm down the dark streets of Dublin
A troubled dark figure amongst strangers.

What is there left to say?
You return to the pub with a smile on your face.
Drink and be merry, what was forgotten?

~ Brian Scott

Memories of Stone

what is there left to say
when an unfaltering voice
hums pleasantly in the darkness

what is there left to say
as a tea cup parts from my lips
returning to its saucer

what is there left to say
that can speak more clearly
than a welcomed silence

~ Chris Knight

What is there left to say?
Trees in their wisdom talk to birds
And flowers to hills.

What is there left to say?
All the pretty things know
And I feel at peace.

What is there left to say?
We have said it all, you and I.
Maybe there is nothing left but silence.

~ Eva Combs

Gorse, deepest yellow against the smoldering sky...

Irish Memories

Gorse, deepest yellow against the smoldering sky,
As we climb through the sheep fields of Killarney,
Over stone fences while laughing and cursing the needle pricks.

Gorse, deepest yellow against the smoldering sky,
As we walk down the streets of Gleann Cholm Cille,
The laughter of friends floating out of pubs.

Gorse, deepest yellow against the smoldering sky,
As we lie in our bed and stare out the window,
And I wonder what it will be like to leave.

~ Katherine Roundy

Gorse, deepest yellow against a smoldering sky.
Glowing death embers burning the birds rattle from its beak.
Overhead I am a scarecrow. Underneath I am giving birth to birds.

Gorse, deepest yellow against a smoldering sky.
I am wet with kerosene that only hills smoke. From
Me, serpents unfurl their wings.

Gorse, deepest yellow against a smoldering sky. A mother bird,
Who has stretchmarks creeping around her torso.
I am the great stone that she nursed to life,
heated and burning warm. many times gifted.

~ Ryan O'Hern

Memories of Stone

Gorse deepest yellow against a smoldering sky
the wind runs through, violent, furious
and the sheep echo each other plaintively

Gorse deepest yellow against a smoldering sky
on the far ridge, the watchtower stands
gloomily awaiting its return to rubble

Gorse deepest yellow against a smoldering sky
the colors attack me, force me to shut my eyes
I wish for nightfall

~ Zane Haxton

Gorse deepest yellow against a smoldering sky
Its pollen making a mess of the particle-free atmosphere
This only happens when everyone is in a bad mood

Gorse deepest yellow against a smoldering sky
Reminds of vomit next to a Ferris wheel
The drunk fat man always scared me

Gorse deepest yellow against a smoldering sky
I miss smoke stacks and itchy skin
But I guess not everyone loved the Soviet Union nor its majestic
concrete forever
 misunderstood and despised

~ Cody Morris

As sea mist silences the hills...

As sea mist silences the hills
She picks stones
Holding her skirt above the water

As sea mist silences the hills
I write bad poetry
on the beauty of denim, skipping stones, and skin

As sea mist silences the hills
someone will try to best describe the scene:
water handshaking pine trees

~ Zach Mandeville

As sea mist silences the hills
Other, older voices rise to the fore
Beyond the roar of cars or the shouts of men.

As sea mist silences the hills
A deep, rich music of the soul
Surges in crests and shallows.

As sea mist silences the hills
Outward sensations subside
The heart remembers to listen.

~ Seán Williams

Memories of Stone

As sea mist silences the hills,
I seek quiet places
To sit and be still.

As sea mist silences the hills,
I lose sight of those around me
And loneliness creeps upon my heart.

As sea mist silences the hills,
I am lost and cannot find
My way back home.

~ Kelly O'Brien

Sibilance

As the sea mist silences the hill
The sheep huddle farther into themselves
Wishing they were woolen turtles.

As the sea mist silences the hill
The heather whisper to Paddy Beag
Wishing they hadn't been burnt by Chernobyl.

But as the sea mist silences the hill
The sea itself roars as usual and
Wishes only for a whole day of sun.

~ Kegan Riley

Landlocked

To stare up at the sky
And dream of waves
Curling into the distance
Of infinite possibility
And to have the horizon
Curtail those dreams
Is to be landlocked.

~ Katherine Roundy

Is it the cheese that forms in the holes near Ports that keep my mind adrift, warmly, before sleep sets in? Is it all the boogers I saw in other people's noses that they never knew were there? Is it poo noises my cottage mates make in the bathroom?.. It must be the sod layers that have accumulated in our chimney; it must be the way the moist sea air crimps things together... the goop in the corner of the serpent eyes that belong to the cat who comes by for milk, and the way the milk crimps together her hair when it spills on her hear as I'm pouring... It must be the shit and the wool, and the paint and straw, and milk and mud, that all the sheep wear for coats, and the clumps of poo they poo out. Poo in heather fields... The mist and sea air is like corn bread and the sea milk that collects like the foam on urine, near the corners of mouths of rivers, cow mouths. Even the land when seen from afar cliff, is dreaded out almost in the same way sheep's wool is. I know an old brown cat back home, who is getting dreads all over her back, and she doesn't like it when we mess with them. She looks at you like fishes do.

~ Ryan O'Hern

Memories of Stone

there's a smell that exists only in Tumwater
of rain and stone and ferns and burgers
only there would they have a burger shop
that's also a rock garden.

I dreamt of this smell.

And I dreamt on my grade school readerboard.
built with wooden wall and roof
to house the reminder, "read 20 minutes a day."

Outside the sheep walk in circles;
chewing on every blade of every part of the pasture
some days they are in the corner by the swamp
others they are mere steps from my window
but always within the same circle

I dreamt of Wildflower Road
where the hicks would park cars
and attach prices and prompts to buy

and the home on Harrison
that although surrounded by forest
is built like it belongs on the beach.

Everyday at some point,
the sheep will walk past
the boulder in the middle of the pasture.
It's been there since the last ice age
and they've walked past it since birth.
Everyday they'll look at the same crags and bumps and moss
until they die beside it.

I dreamt of her singing, Baby, underneath breath outside the bank
and the way she smells when I bury my head entirely into her
shoulder.

My friends are at a potluck right now
with chicken and spongecake and soda bread
and I've decided to stay and sleep
with every nap comes another flickering of Tumwater.

Landlocked

I'm living in a town once protected by druids,
slept in by saints,
with hills that look like God's knuckles
and shepherds that look like God himself
yet I remain locked to a land 5000 miles over
the suburb of a town too small to fart.

Do the sheep ever tire of the rock,
wishing for palm tree or forest or lake?
Or is it, with every passing, a new crevice is found
as if every day is a slow revealing
of how beautiful that rock truly is.

~ Zach Mandeville

Dry but stable.
Logic. Academia. No emotion.
Fear emotion.
No sound of surf.
No smell of decay.
Repression.
Denial.
Where there is a lock,
there should be a key.
Mother rocks to sleep on waves.
Fear of female.
Landlocked predictable rut
exile...

~ Kelly O'Brien

Landlocked, an irrelevant term.
What is landlocked? The dictionary tells of bodies of water: lakes,
ponds, puddles, and spills. And even these words are misleading.
Evaporation, condensation, precipitation, endothermic irradiation,
emulation, encapsulation, miniaturization, depreciation,
subparticipation, undulation, recommendation? Masticated
masturbation... all of it. Landlocked? Seems more to be a state of
perception. Damn, sound like a Greener.

~ Brian Scott

Memories of Stone

How foreign a word
As though from an ancient forgotten tongue
Dry and bereft of comfort

~ *Éamon Kennedy*

How can I speak of landlocked kinds
Having never lived far from the sea
I am a boy of wind and tide
Of floats and boats and docks and brine
Ask the perch, the cod, or the crying gull
They'll deliver as sweet a line as I

~ *Éamon Kennedy*

I see them all the time
Widowed old women
Houses like time machines
Complete with shag rugs

Just as children are drawn to the ocean
To everything new
The old go inland
All but a few

Notice how the farther from water
The more scared of change
They stay still
Grow stagnant
New = strange

~ *Casey Bogert*

Locked is a verb
I cannot handle
Trapped barren unchanging
Uninspired as I jump and dive
Curbing a mouthful of dead dust.

~ Heather Howard

Landlocked

To be surrounded by earth
To never give myself birth
To stand still
Like on a treadmill
I would not like it
It would not be fit
For me. The sea
Is where I be.

Landlocked, shock talk, cockblock, bebop
I do not know
I cannot show
How I feel about this
It would be unfit
For me to dis it
Before I've tried it

But in a hard outer shell
It would be like hell
Safe from attack
But that's whick, whick, whack
On the edge of the land
You really feel uncanned
There's plenty of room to grow
It really feels like Wow.

~ Mary Powers

A seal in the zoo has nothing to do
But get looked at with thousands of eyes
Used to live with his wife, a very wet life
And used to eat lots of fish pies.
Used to cook up a dish of seaweed and fish
And eat it in happy bliss
But he spends sleepless nights when they turn out the lights
Hearing the panther's hiss.

~ Morgan Black

Memories of Stone

The man who can't go home,
The women who will never hear
 "I love you,"
The child who despises the smell of
 Alcohol,
The mother begging on the street
 While her daughter looks on.
Land Locked.
Who's land locked?
The possibilities are endless.
Responsibility, that costs a pretty penny,
Money, it's in your pockets and mine,
I know a few Uncles whose pockets are full too.
But money is much cheaper than Responsibility.
Will you be mine?

~ Derek Johnson

A Montana sky is bluer than most.
You could lose yourself in colors
Azure, cobalt, violet, midnight.
Glacial waters reflect and absorb the blues
Securely nestled at the dip of a basin.

Yet those waters once stretched
in a long, slow, frozen march to a sea
that buried plains, badlands, dinosaurs.
The lonely music of icebergs in an alpine lake
Imprisons the shells and bones of a long-lost tropical sea.

~ Seán Williams

At 35,000 feet above sea level
It is -70° F
Turbulence tricks my mind:
 Presenting the tops of clouds as white caps,
But I am landlocked in a winged sailboat.
 The only route
 To the real waves below
 It totally undesirable.

~ Kegan Riley

Derry

Everyone in Derry
Said "Hello" as I walked by
So nice
Almost overly so
Like the politeness is hiding
The pain underneath

No wonder
Surrounded by reminders of their troubled past
It is impossible to ignore
But easy to pretend

The children are the best at it
Huge paintings
Images of violence
Hanging over them as they play
To them it's as if it's not even there

Walls are such great symbols in poetry
I never thought of the reality
Until I saw this wall
Although it is now easy to pass through
There is still the division
And a new addition
Of a fence

Proof that this politeness
Is masking something
Perhaps they are not ready
To face

~ Casey Bogert

Memories of Stone

Two hills face each other.
One a walled city,
One a cemetery.
Bogside lies between them.

A city of the living
And a city of the dead.
The headstones shine in white and black
As guards glare at our intrusion.

‘No Surrender!’ and new paint for a letter ‘R,’
What is reality?
Two hills
Poised to oppose each other forever.

~ Eva Combs

The truth
Shall set you free,
Or will it condemn?
One leads to the other.
Someone must give.
If both give a little,
All win.
Who goes first?
Not me,
I'm hurt,
Echoes!
What did I do?
Oh!!
Well you...
Oh!!
Silence and healing.
Look at our kids,
Do they care?
Not now, not ever.
We won't pass this on.
It will die with us.
I'm sorry.

~ Derek Johnson

Derry

I am fluttering place to place
Without a background without a face
The post office lady greets me
with a smile for no reason
While Murals with petrol bombs and distressed people
pounding garbage can lids bite me
My own insufficient gas mask-
Yet people meet me in the pub and don't care that I'm
Different, loving that I'm different
A new face with no face
Teetering
Between places.

~ Heather Howard

Waterside

Do not walk alone.
You are a woman.
This is a war zone.
Have you learned nothing?

Sorry. I am a woman and a human
And I will walk in the shadow of gunfire.

Ten paces to the sound of birds,
Sirens, frogs, lorries, branches.

Ten minutes into a soft greenscape,
A tiny chirping stonechat

Bears feathers on her chestnut breast
That precisely match my long red Irish Republican hair.

~ Seán Williams

Memories of Stone

My body was hollowed by history and grandfathers
By the unknown people
Whose voices I somehow recognize

I see the ghost of Devlin
Painted tall on the stone
Close my eyes and I can
Feel her scoop out my insides
Palmful by palmful
To make her story better vibrate

I heard a dance song
I know I've heard before
Though the woman sings it in a language
One year ago I was unaware still existed

My body's been hollowed
by ten thousand came-before-me's
covered with the stretched skin of my ancestors' songs
I somehow remember singing

It's for this reason that
As the cabby turned and told me
"our day will come"
He made my body-
My unknowing
Apathetic
Only-here-to-learn body-
Pound

~ Zach Mandeville

Paint, concrete, tour guide and cabbies
a skeleton waiting
as a fortress does the same
I wonder if my wandering
will cause
trouble

~ Cody Morris

Derry

Guard towers face off
artwork expressing
years of pain and anger.
I walk between them down stairs
carpeted in broken glass,
my camera in hand to capture
images already recorded in my heart.
There are no tanks on the streets,
No soldiers to question
my Irish Republican hair from the safe side
of a machine gun.
But the tension of video
and audio surveillance remains.
Painted curbs and fresh graffiti.
A passerby asks
“Are you enjoying your stay?”
The possible standard answers
Don't fit the situation.
All I know is the deep premonition
that I will return.

~ Kelly O'Brien

A Day in May

A child smiles as he exclaims, “look at the tourists!”
He stands under a visual epitaph to a time of struggle and revolution.

His eye twinkles as he kicks the ball against the wrought iron fence,
On a street that ran with the blood of his neighbours and relatives.

He and his friends play innocently on their front yard,
In a neighbourhood called Bogside.

~ Brian Scott

Advice To a Young Poet (after Rilke)

Learn the names of all the plants in your yard.
Run down hills.
Get on hands and knees to speak to children and smaller animals.
If you don't have flying dreams, have flying daydreams.
Trade jokes with your grandparents.
Have a different favorite color each week, and write it a note
telling it why it's your favorite.
Take your favorite books from the shelves at the library and leave
them lying in obvious places.
Talk to yourself.
Take yourself out for a drink then go home and masturbate.
Paint on someone else's body.
Try not to step on bugs.

~ *Cassie Barden*

Look through things, not just at them.
Imagine the world has existed for only 15 minutes and will end in
another 15.
Sit in a movie theater with your back to the screen.
Listen to a mute.
Carry a broken metronome with you wherever you go.
Dance with the rain.
Forget yesterday and work on remembering tomorrow.
Speak in blinks and winks.
Trade places with your cat.

~ *Dan Schoo*

Advice To a Young Poet (after Rilke)

Write. Scrawl, doodle, note, and rant.
Don't worry over how shitty your poems are.
There is plenty of time to improve a line.
Break form whenever the whim takes you.
Write what you know.
Spit on spelling. That's why we made editors.
Don't take criticism too seriously...
Most people wouldn't know good poetry
if it threw them on the ground and kicked them in the teeth.
Love. Every. Word.
Poetry is art; each letter symbolism.
When read aloud properly, even a shit poem can sound brilliant.

~ *Éamon Kennedy*

step on shattered glass (with shoes on, of course)
build something with your hands as well as your mind
don't drink wine
look up at the sun, but don't stare too deeply
watch the TV until you're mad enough to throw it out the
window, and then do so
read the comics every morning
learn other languages
walk through the city at night
walk through the countryside during the day
eat food
start snowball fights
sing

~ *Zane Haxton*

Allow yourself to listen to the crowd
Waste time
Make a fort with chairs and sheets
Literally, put on another's glasses
Pretend
Tell yourself a bedtime story
Sing badly, loudly, and for all to hear
Realize you will never find the answer, but keep looking anyway
Laugh at nothing
People watch

~ *Casey Bogert*

Memories of Stone

Sit and watch mountains in sunlight.
Listen to the sound of the waves.
Learn to ride motorcycles.
Let your heart take control, for better or worse.
Accept heartache.
Paint pictures with your fingers.
Build blanket forts.
Climb trees.
Lie in sunny spots in the window.
Learn the cycles of the moon.
Swim in cold water.
Eat with your fingers.
Take yourself on dates.

~ Kelly O'Brien

Lie flat on the ground and study a six-inch patch of grass and soil.
Braid the hair of a friend whom you would like to know better.
Make room among your personae for the demented artist.
Declare a moratorium on wearing the color black for a week.
Try on a friend's glasses.
Put in writing the thing you wish you'd said to your tormentors in 7th grade.
Take a foreign language dictionary, find a word with multiple meanings, and create a poem that links them.
Study the root meaning of all these words: suspire, inspire, respire, perspire, expire, conspire. Then breathe.
Lie in bed for ten more minutes and finish your dreams.

~ Seán Williams

Lick snowflakes off of Roses in December.
Remove your shoes and be barefoot at least eight hours a day.
If you must wear a watch, set it ahead to Norwegian Polka Time.
Remember to feed the Elves that live in that box in your closet.
Wear butterfly wings made out of recycled plastic soda bottles.
Arrange the food in your pantry by texture.
Paint your toenails in a rainbow.
Perform your Elvis impersonation while doing dishes.

~ Alisha Wikander

I Am

I am the first bite of dark chocolate mousse pie.
I am the blood of beet juice on salad.
I am a lipstick-wearing monkey playing the banjo.
I am Sharon Stone in Basic Instinct with an icepick.
I am the rumble of vegan sausage in Cassie's tummy.
I am the anticipation of a kiss.
I am a molten pearl.
I am the 'bum-bum-bum' refrain from "Sweet Caroline".
I am an Italian movie played backwards.
I am 90% Lisa, 10% Homer.
I am a lovely freak.
I am a dog licking your elbow.
I am an Energizer Bunny on Craic.

~ Alisha Wikander

...a churlish badger,
an untimely geyser,
an unkempt queen,
the dark, bitter silk of 72% chocolate,
a toxic sunflare,
a defiant wildflower at the wind-ripped shore,
the tears of a skydiver,
the velvet underside of a dog's ear,
the mirage of a camel,
a hare's heartbeat, and
I am a salad-munching, sex-loving vegan goddess with bruises on
my knees.

~ Cassie Barden

Memories of Stone

I am a falcon's dive
I am your eyes reflected in your glasses
I am repressed memory
I am the sting in your eyes from sitting too close to the TV
I am the last "Mayday! Mayday!" of a plummeting plane
I am the cusp between breaths
I am zero gravity
I am door creaking at midnight
I am the life of the search party

~ Dan Schoo

I am a thirst unslaked
I am a stone unhurled
I am a careening bottle
I am a slippery mattress
I am a broken couch
I am a crooked house
I am a turquoise bead in a puddle of piss
I am beer on a cement floor
I am a crack in the sidewalk
I am a chip in a TV tube
I am a damp spot in the grass
I am a drop in the sea

~ Éamon Kennedy

I am a bodhran that fights back
I am the sudden swirl of green tea in a celadon pot
I am the light in the eyes of a new lover
I am the lift underneath a pinging lamb
I am the hardy flower that cracks open the stone
I am the gentle kiss on my daughter's cheek at night
I am not the person you think I am
I am the day I left home for good.

~ Seán Williams

I Am

I am a rocking chair in a gilded hall
I am a startled wildebeast
I am a forgotten tongue
I am a famous expression
I am a sweet tooth
I am a painted window
I am a wilted flower
I am an arcane physics textbook
I am an expressionless mask
I am a nervous gerbil
I am thin ice
I am a babbling brook
I am a foolish warrior
I am an angry cat
I am a slain princess
I am a stalactite
I am an amusing traffic jam
I am flat expanse
I am a typhoid infection
I am the first step on the moon

~ Zane Haxton

I am a quiet bear eating berries.
I am a fish in a corset.
I am a bonfire giving visions.
I am a boat which cannot sink.
I am the pins and needles under your skin.
I am the stars dancing in the sky.
I am a wave which carries a stone.
I am a drum waiting to be played.
I am a two-legged chair.
I am a freshly-poured pint of Guinness with the perfect head.

~ Kelly O'Brien

Memories of Stone

I am the apprehension before you inhale
 The anticipation of your intoxicating addiction
I am the splinter camouflaged amongst the floor boards
 Eagerly awaiting your misjudgment
I am your epiphany
I am ecstasies
I am the epitome of all that sustains you and all that you attempt
to dismantle
I am your gluttonous expectations
I am the garbage you cast aside, another to assume accountability
I am that same garbage lifted by the wind
 Innovating dances you struggle to comprehend
I am the man, daily vowing to collect our disposed remnants from
the side of the road
And the man who accumulates such “waste” and manifests art
I am an anomaly
I am the ointment for your head you compress in your chest
I am the root of a maple destroying the pavement as I exert my
presence

~ Lauren Guy

I am a worn favorite shirt
I am a clenched hand
I am a smile on a stranger
I am a guidebook to the strange
I am a constant buzzing sound
I am a clock turning backward
I am a minor chord change
I am the space before a loud crash
I am a smoldering fireplace
I am a magnetic force
I am a 3 am phone call
I am a made-up word
I am a mystery

~ Casey Bogert

Letters Home (The World of Rockwell Kent)

Dearest family,

I can hardly describe the shades of blue the ocean is here,
the greens and browns.
Árainn Mhór seen from the top of sea cliffs
Towering ledges looking out over the infinity of the sea.
Black ravens fly from hidden nests in the wind lashed places,
High above the thundering waves.
The noble sun shining on the white limestone rocks,
Smooth and polished,
Rolling, clattering in the surf below.
While pale violet heather bakes in a warm breeze.
Mount Errigal shines through the clouds.
It is round-looking and soft next to the angular hills that are between us.
It is as if I am seeing the world for the first time.
There aren't words for what I have witnessed,
Nor pictures that can tell of the changing light
From one moment to the next,
Over the water, rocks, and heather.

I do hope this letter finds you well,

Slán go fóill

~ Eva Combs

Memories of Stone

Dearest family,

The experience I am having in this place is like poetry, so I wrote this to convey these feelings.

My Valley

Surrounded,
By nothing,
By everything,
All that was given.
Stones,
In rivers,
In hills,
Their stories make my dwelling.
New,
Each breath,
Each Smell,
Fresh, carried by ocean breezes.
The nothing intrigues,
The everything inspires,
The river cleanses,
The hills embrace,
The breath enlivens,
The smell enlightens,
Out there we're at war.
Here I can't imagine why.

Love

RK

~ Derek Johnson

Escaping to the edge of nowhere
In a Smokey haze, a drunken phase
It feels much better than over there...

~ Mary Powers

Letters Home (The World of Rockwell Kent)

Making Fun of Things You Don't Understand

Dear Rockwell Kent,

You think you're so hot but you know what? You're not! I am a beloved piece of AMERICANA! And what do you do? Draw pictures of soup cans and Marilyn Monroe in different colors or some shit! MALARKY! I broke the taboo of a kid seeing his dad dressed like Santa! Innocence lost! I tore open the ugly underbelly of America for every slackjawed yokel to see and all you did was take yer commie ass and run away to the land of drunken fairies! Oh yeah, could I have some change for the bus?

Your buddy and pal,
Norman Rockwell

~ Gabriel Roginic

Simple life.
I do not know how to
explain to you
what attracts me to this place.
Simply life.
I can paint pictures
of the finest detail
but they are incomplete.
They will always be
incomplete.
How can I capture
a conversation
a smell
a taste.
How can I capture the
sound of the wind
or the waves as
they break against the shore.
I am merely a woman
Who is moved to put
color on paper.
This is God's country
And I can only bear witness.

~ Kelly O'Brien

Memories of Stone

Dearest Parents,

To be removed from one's daily life and routine calls for the recreation of the self. If once I knew myself, I can no longer say that to be true. Just as the whiskey at the pubs is distilled in search of the alcohol, so am I in a process of distillation and the result is a lightness upon my once burdened shoulders. This is a dream world. Not only in the Gleann, but stretching as far as my mind can take me. Even "home," amongst you both and my cherished pets, is steeped in the surreal. The physical and mental beings walk hand in hand. I can leap no distance and not be a changed person. So it is with Ireland. I stand in the doorway of my house invigorated, incensed and terrified of the world in front of me, unable to return to the seclusion and comfort of my bed and fire. Is this what it is to be born? To take my first breath? To cry my first cry? To open my eyes? Feeling a hitherto unknown world about me. A world no longer disguised and muted by the warmth of the womb. I grow too large, and as I grow, so must my home.

my Love is with you,

Rockwell

~ *Chris Knight*

An Port

where the very ground is
alive the river flows out from
under the rocks where the water
has made the stones soft with age
here I glanced upon Annie a
young girl so fair who was
bathing in the sun soaking
up the world's colors I have painted
her amidst the rocks
at the center of my world

~ *Candy Morrison*

Sean-nós

The old men do not sing
in straight lines.
Ragged, unkempt, curving
this way and that
like switchbacks set to ease the way
up a steep mountain path.

Their words are foreign,
and perhaps their stories are also,
but this much is not:
The moan of the throat,
the last despairing wail
and the quivering turns
of ancient phrase.

~ Zane Haxton

Two hands clasped across time and space
Cradle the song before it fades from memory
One man, nearly blind, holds the store of knowledge
The other man sings their collective grief.
The one who left, the one who remained
The one who wouldn't say yes or couldn't say no
The one family that still holds title
To the only famine song in Irish.
Searing pain of new world loneliness
Joins the chorus of old world emotions that bind
Living and dead, past and future
Bearing witness.

~ Seán Williams

When He Sang

The world was silent.
Then the words rose
Like smells of jasmine
And orange on the west wind.
He grabbed his friend's hand,
Spiraling the sounds.
I did not understand the words.
I turned my head to the floor.

When I looked up again,
Tears slid down my cheeks.
I hadn't realized.
Understanding without words
The beauty of life.

~ Eva Combs

Individual Works

song of the ancient badger

how to describe it:

the mottled fur, bleached gold, burning into darkness,
and vice versa, black streaking into fiery tips
the colourless void where your eyes used to rest
claws hanging limp

the roadside is quiet here
and the cars come seldom,
but that's no consolation to you, of course,
nor your lifeless body.
perhaps someday the grass will rise
high around you,
and afford you a proper grave, if that's what you want...

sweet beast, you will badger no more
but silence will caress your memory.

~ Zane Haxton

Senseless

I've been asked to write a poem
About the Famine, or the Starvation,
And don't forget Cromwell.

So I sat and thought about evil.
These specific evils, in a place and time
And place, and time, one moment, a chapter,
A chapter in history.

Why do they call them chapters in history?
Chapters are cumulative, right?
Otherwise you'd never learn anything,
From one to the next.
Otherwise you'd have short stories.
Human history ain't short stories.
(Though it's getting shorter the further we go.)

Wait, otherwise you'd never learn anything?
Well, maybe we don't have chapters.
Maybe instead of short stories, or chapters,
What we got is one enormous run-on
Sentence.

Guess it's so long that we forget every few words,
What the last few words were.
But I don't buy that.

Maybe it's just words
That don't form sentences,
And don't fit with the ones before and the ones after,
So they don't make any sense.
Then I guess we'd be forgiven
For not understanding
And not trying to re-read
What came before.

Individual Works

Cause it's senseless.
Why bother try and understand
Why bother try to learn
About words
And their meaning
And their context
When they don't make any sense

~ *Cassie Barden*

Dirty Poets, Know-no-nothing Scientists and Lying Philosophers.

What everyone gets wrong
no one notices, or bothers
to tell them
when they went astray
found the lost
killed the clock
and waited.
Why claim that something can be
explained
proven
pondered
placing even small snail shells
on a pedestal supported by ego
and self-reference.
Ask an old farmer when it is time to lay seeds
and you will know the land.
Ask an old fish-monger what fish is the best
and you will know the ocean.
Ask an old maid which cleaning product to use
and you will know piety.

~ *Cody Morris*

Requiem for Remains Unknown

“And in that earth the hungry dead lie dumb.” -- Seán Lucy

These six gaunt figures:
Carefully, brilliantly
frozen before stockbrokers
 and international bankers,
stumbling desperately through forever.
Forever ignored by their grandchildren’s grandchildren
 who speed up, arms loaded with shopping bags, as they pass;
 who can see around the perpetually dying.
The first stage is denial.

These six gaunt figures:
As I touch the cheek of the last,
 the child being carried by his father:
Is he dead?
I pour tears into the Liffey,
 I want to run out in front of
the new models, the new paint jobs, the new car smells;
Tear the drivers from behind their wheels;
Shake them;
Scream:
“You can’t move on with your lives,
by shoving off their deaths!
Shake hands with your past.
Bring it in for tea.
Stay up all night with it, drinking,
laughing, and crying!”

Individual Works

Like I want to do with these six gaunt figures.
Give my jacket to the child,
 assure them I'll be right back,
 spend everything, down to the last penny,
 and bring them sandwiches and milk.
I turn my back to the river.
I need to remind myself that they,
 those men, women, and dogs alike, are gone;
That these six gaunt figures
 standing before and around me are made of iron.
Facsimiles and representations
 of those who rest below us
in the grass, the hills, the beaches,
Everywhere.

These six gaunt figures and millions more.
Didn't Bobby Sands say "Our revenge will be the laughter of our
children"?
The kids on Grafton Street busk
 with a memorial to Michael and Mary:
"We had dreams and songs to sing"
Far from the low fields of Athenry, they belt out the lyrics,
 twelve year old hands rolled into hundred and fifty year old
fists,
 voices quaking.

We are surrounded by the hungry dead,
 I pray I'm not the only one
 coming out with my hands up.

~ Kegan Riley

One Week Back

It's hard to separate myself
From the world I belonged to
For five weeks
Only five weeks
But I think about it everyday
Like a reference point
Like a hard-core junior high crush
Everything revolves around this one thing
The rest just doesn't seem to compare
I left that brightness
For this place
My eyes aren't quite ready to adjust

~ Casey Bogert

Return

Again and again we return.
Pilgrims to the grass, the sheep, and the Tor.
The standing stones have seen ages come and go,
Sentinels to the valley.

I have met gods and heroes in pubs, at the store,
And walking on the road.
I have learned the names of the pebbles on the beach,
The flowers on the hills.

I will go back to my home.
I will talk about this place
In words inadequate.
But I will know
Heart without sadness,
I will meet them all again.

~ Eva Combs

Individual Works



~ Kelly O'Brien

Ferry Ride

Heavy seas, riding waves.
Brine stinging face,
Saline coating my lips.
I am torn between
applied caution to a perceived danger
and the deep need to experience
the freedom of a simple joy.
Dip low, all I can see is water.
Rise high, come down hard.
Wait for next swell.
The only moment is now.
I reach out for the hand
of a fellow traveler
to steady and be steadied.
In that second of connection
I know that everything
will be fine.
And the inner storm
ceases.

~ Kelly O'Brien

Untitled

I gaze back at my class from the far end of the beach
Like so much flotsam sitting amid the rocks
I wonder what they are writing
Their pens moving fervently
Staring out to sea
Knowing smiles upon their faces.

~ Katherine Roundy

Individual Works

People Are People

Man, it gets my goat
when I hear animal lovers talk about liking animals more than
people
animals are cute, right?
the only time they really win us over is when they act as odd as
people
sure, German Shepards have not and will never build
concentration camps for
Chocolate Labs and Chihuahuas
they'll never become fixated with an animated character from a
beloved children's show
write a 400 page book about how AA batteries are alien
monitoring devices
break three knuckles punching a wall because
the high school football team lost
to the town rivals!
animals are so boring.

~ Gabriel Roginic

I could sit here for ages

I could sit here for ages
allowing the knowledge of my
ancestors to fill me
this very place is wise
and if I listen carefully
I can hear
the blades of grass
sharing their seasonal secrets
the ocean telling the shore of its travels
before it moves on again
I am honored to have these stories bequeathed
to me like I am part of it
and will leave my mark
here
through the ages.

~ Candy Morrison

An Chistín

The bite of the Chilean red fades away gleefully on my tongue. A small green glass bottle sits, waiting to be emptied and tossed carelessly into a bin where it's more at home with its brothers and sisters. Some of the siblings from the same family, some from different mothers. Some are second cousins from far off lands, they resemble somebody in the family but no one knows who it is.

The cobalt blues in the glazes of the ceramic salt and pepper shakers glance off my eye. What secret pleasures do the darkness of their vessels hold? Yellow, like the sun in child's painting, signifies salt. Grannysmith Green for pepper. The little granules of flavour enhancing goodness fall onto the polished wooden table. Strange, that two of the more harmful elements when fused together make fish taste fishier, the potato more potato-y, and the tequila, oh the tequila.

Two slivers of pounded ore peek from the wine and crimson colored napkin. One, bifurcated and then split twice more, lays at rest. The other sliver, pounded flat, our first eating implement, the one that started everything and then evolved until the Victorians made it an art piece, reclines peacefully waiting for its companion to give it the "go ahead."

~ Brian Scott

Waiting for Godot at Roarty's

His eyes are two hitchhikers;

Weary, angry, never picked up.

His back...that of the newer former heavy weight champion

Sagging under the pressure of past glory.

His feet are anchors of The H.M.S Earth,

Keeping the ship from drifting into the sun.

His nose is the small truck, dirty and smoking,

That finally, finally pulls over for his eyes.

His tail is his white face,

Always ready but never surrendering.

~ Kegan Riley

Pilgrimage

What a feeling it must be
To have a journey
With a set goal
Something to escape
Or find
All of my journeys
Are less thought out
The reasons are harder to find
All I know is that I feel drawn
I'm learning to accept that
As a valid reason
For a journey
Just trust that there is something deeper going on
It's hard to trust that intuition
Like when you were a kid
You'd run forever in a circle
You didn't need a reason
So I just continue on my journey
And assume I will find what I am looking for
Eventually.

~ Casey Bogert

Barnacles

Little mountains scratch my feet
Pink heavy clouds laying low
Turned white by the humidity
So tender
My delicate softened skin pleases the jagged surface
Once bitten
Its propose fulfilled

~ Cody Morris

Memories of Stone

Soft Animal

With my thumbs
I broke your neck.
But you are
As a metaphor
And came back.

You waited among
The stench and rot,
Of your sisters and brothers,
Watching me,
Drawing your
Whiskers across my cheek
To see where I was.

But you're not blind,
You saw everything I did
And returned to my chest
Even so.
Your sable fur
Body breathing
The pressure of you
My soft animal, truly,

Bids me forward
To the tissue of an insect wing.
The round fatness
Sits in a spiral of lace
Heavy with dew.

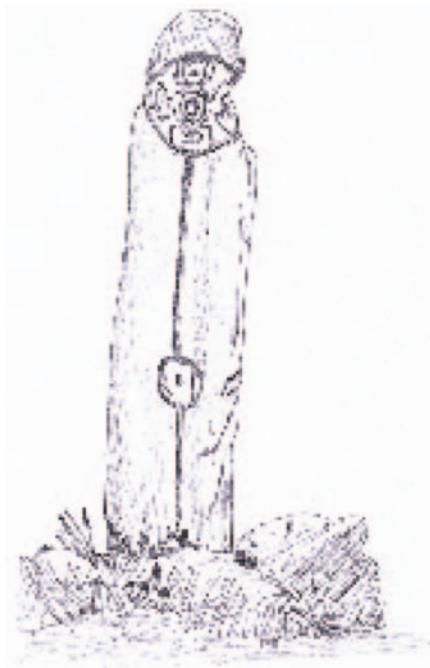
I hear
A low moan
Because her son's new mouth
Does not hold her breast,
But cold metal with
No blood
But her blood.

Individual Works

Does she know
That I returned
When I fall into her eyes
And wet her cheeks?

My humanity does not
Make me human.
I exiled myself
Without understanding
What I'd lost
Yet you drew me back
To your sable chest
And breathing body.

~ Cassie Barden



~ Eva Combs

Memories of Stone

I have been here before

I have been here before,
But the terrain, it's different.
Those, more red than I remember,
A little more narrow,
But as soft as imagined.
This is much longer,
And how it tickles my own familiar bumps.
These two give off a glow,
That makes me feel home again.
Each of these has the power
To pleasure when calm
And mangle when excited with passion.
Every new mountain,
I want to climb.
Each new valley,
I want to explore.
These vast prairies,
I will cover,
Inch by inch,
In search of treasure.
And when I can wonder no more,
Only heading to exhaustion,
I will lay my head,
Upon this warm, moist surface,
And listen to the rhythm of this land.
For it and mine are in perfect time.

~ Derek Johnson

Watching the grass over Bru na Boinne

the prettiest part of any grave
is the life which grows
on top of it

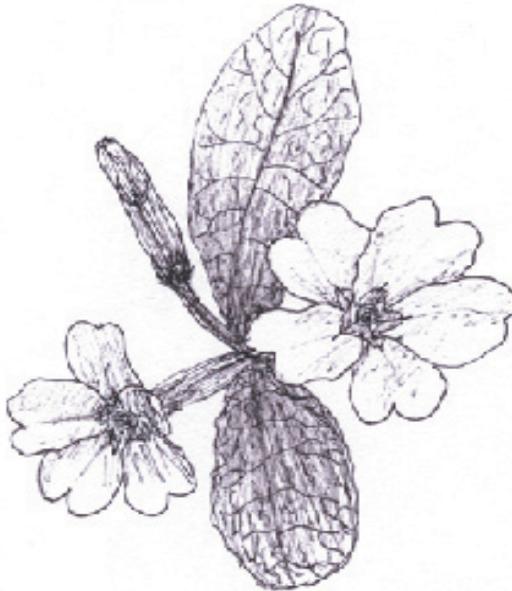
~ Zane Haxton

Individual Works

BUSBRAWL2K+4

Goddamnit why do they have to sing songs from GREASE? Is the
world against me?
Moving forward into Derry, I'm more tense than ever
I sit alone
Everyone else has a Bus Buddy
Half of them passed out using their seatmate as a pillow
I tried resting my head on the window but only got a headache
The roaring laughter coming from the back sounds like a studio
audience from an 80s sitcom
directed at me
the clueless dork who has a crush on the teenage daughter
I only appeared on one episode

~ Gabriel Roginic



E.C.

~ Eva Combs

A Fish Out of Water

a fish out of water still has memory
still knows its place, its home

lucky fish

memories gone
the poisoned air chokes me, as the fish,
but home,
birthed into this tainted land,
has never borne me

an echo in my ears
through the voices in my line
sings of homeland,
of longing

for what?

this turn as an earthly body
has never known

a born exile
exiled from memory
exiled from past

looking for a vision of perfection?
no.

I ask for my pain
my hunger
my transgressions
my hardships
along with memories of warm suppers
quilted blankets tucking my sides
and sweet grandfathers' kisses on foreheads

Individual Works

all these beauties
that compose the instrument
through which I am sung

to request of the collective memory
and discern an answer

but most,
the longing to call upon the people
that I may call my own,
my kin

~ Chris Knight

Swan Dive

Jutting rock from the cliff face
Reminds me of a diving board
Only 100 feet up
I could make it
In one graceful dive

I turn and look out to sea
Scotland is out there somewhere
Shrouded in the mist
Across a submerged walkway
Of granite pillars

This has become my world
A grassy hilltop on a sunny day
A small island
With wild flowers and birds
And a swan dive down
Into the sparkling sea

~ Katherine Roundy

Pilgrimage

I saw a house being eaten by the earth; its every wall and window covered by ivy, moss, and grass. The trees pummeled through the stone walls, leaving them piles of rocks, and created a leafy mesh to hide the house's identity from the roadside. Hid so well that, at first glancing, I thought it was a broken bone jutting from the ground, or the lost tooth of a giant.

But it was a house. Standing closer, I could see the door and windows and past evidence of life. Now, the door was flaking mossy paint and would not budge, but once it was a magnificent green colour, and probably squeaked annoyingly when opened. The window was broken, its smashed pane still lying on the ground. But through the window were chairs crumpled together and a fireplace with bottles of Ajax and beer lining the mantle.

Two glasses were set neatly on the floor, as if someone was planning a romantic wine by the fire but left suddenly. Now they were covered with the same crust of dust that settled over the entire room.

Outside was a shed with a bike standing inside. It rested solidly, the kickstand preventing it from falling. But it was overtaken by rust, its once sleek and streamlined frame now mangled and crunchy to the touch. Once, someone placed the bike carefully there, expecting to ride it the next morning, then forgot about it for seventy years.

The grass and dirt will not rest until the house is gone. Their life will be an endless pilgrimage of climbing through the panels of the door and crumbling the stone walls until home and garden are one. One day the bike will be so eroded it gets blown to powder by the wind. The glasses and chairs will be crushed by the dust and the floor only a smooth layer of dirt. The walls and roof will topple into one another and the grass will keep growing through the stones and straw till the house is nothing more than an earthy mound, the memories of bike rides and romantic nights contained forever in the stones beneath the soil.

Individual Works

It had already begun. Every stone had a sheen of green. The roof was a raised garden of overgrown grass and dandelions. One half of the roof had already fallen, became so heavy with vegetation that it sank into the interior of the house.

I wondered if, when the roof fell, it first resisted, that after a valiant struggle it could not stand the push anymore and begrudgingly crumbled. Or if it gave into the push, falling into the house like a lover falling into the bed.

I wondered, when it came time for the walls to come down, if they too would give in gladly. Perhaps the house's life was a pilgrimage of waiting. Waiting to be taken completely into the ground. Each day reveled in the moss growing up the sides, feeling like the tugging of its father's fingers. And it would wait patiently, lovingly, happily till it was pulled into the magnificent body once again. When the walls crumbled they would not grind together, nor scream in defiance, but would let out a calm sigh, almost a whisper; the sound of the second before you fall to sleep.

~ Zach Mandeville

City Coat

He sits in the darkness of ages past, telling us of a death gripped city. He sits on a mossy green stone waiting for a day when he can rise and venture into the background of blackness and fade away. He sits waiting for when he is no longer needed to remind youthful minds of what happened. He sits, and waits...

~ Brian Scott

Irish Studies

Some onions are so sweet
You can eat them like an apple.
And so they come to me
Like lambs to the slaughter.
Hoping to find a core, a center,
A place to call home.

But as the layers of heritage peel back
They are shocked to discover
Their eyes burning with tears
And no single oak of truth
On which to climb.

Bitter onions of famine, conquest, and bigotry;
Sweet onions of song, poetry, and dance;
Sour onions of shame, sin, and body-hatred;
Green onions of hope, trust, and renewal.

And so I implore them:
Make a salmon leap of faith.
Onions such as these
Were meant only to stew in a recipe
Of compassion, wisdom, and hospitality.
Every layer reveals only questions
And the complexity of our choices.

If it's only an apple you seek
When you bite this particular onion
Do not be surprised
When tears and laughter
Walk side by side in your heart.

~ Seán Williams

