



FourXFour
Poetry Journal

Issue 13 Summer 2015

Nigel McLoughlin
Natasha Cuddington
Reggie Chamberlain-King
Matthew Rice

Editorial

For those of you with triskaidekaphobia, *noli timere*. Welcome to Issue 13 of FourXFour, unlucky for some perhaps, but we do not believe in such follies as luck. Instead, we believe in continuing to bring you top quality writing from some of the most intriguing and enticing poets within Northern Ireland, both new and established.

This issue comes to you almost in fragments: indeed, three of our four enclosed poets (Nigel McLoughlin, Natasha Cuddington and Reggie Chamberlain-King) are displaying extracts from larger works in one form or another. We're delighted and honoured to be able to bring you distilled sneak previews from their work, and look forward to seeing the larger works *in toto* elsewhere in the future.

Elsewhere here, if that isn't too much of a paradox, you're find further new work from Chamberlain-King, as well as Matthew Rice (whose father, Adrian, we published back in Issue Nine). Enjoy as a whole, but the serving suggestion is entirely up to you.

Regards and happy reading,
Colin Dardis, Editor

Back issues available for free download at:
www.poetryni.com/fourxfour.html

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Nigel McLoughlin

Nigel McLoughlin is Professor of Creativity and Poetics at the University of Gloucestershire. He is the author of five collections of poetry, the latest of which is *Chora: New and Selected Poems* (Templar Poetry, 2009). He co-edited an anthology of emerging Irish poets, *Breaking the Skin* (Black Mountain Press, 2002) and in 2013 he edited a special issue of the *Journal of American, British and Canadian Studies* entitled *Creative Writing: New Signals, New Territories*.

Since 2008, he has been editor of *Iota* poetry journal. His early work was twice short-listed for the Hennessy Award, and his first collection was placed in the Kavanagh Award. Over the last twenty years his work has appeared in prestigious literary journals in North America, Australia, Japan, and Europe.

His work is featured on The Poetry Archive:
<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poet/nigel-mcloughlin>

from Vanishing Point

IV

searching the light corner of sleep
in the corner bed where a pillow
has slipped across the child's face
just in time to slip across the carpet
and to lift it and instead
of padding back to the window-
side bed doesn't bother his head
but curls up beside the child
to prevent future accidents
it might be thought by the casual
omniscient observer that there
is proof for a universal narrative
where everything hangs together
some way when we least expect it

V

and when we least expect it some way
things have a way of acting on us
take an hour sitting waiting in a car
looking up Glenworth Street and watching
two kids breakdance in the traffic
when the lights go red for no other reason
than they can even though one of them
is missing his right lower leg
and has a metal prosthesis
on which he pivots and flips himself
on his axis from hands to foot and back
again while waving and smiling
at the cars who stop and rev engines
and would happily drive over them

VI

or the drivers happily driving over
out on the golf course later
talking about the bloody refugees
and the fucked up state of the economy
and how they're all to blame
and want them all sent back
to wherever they came from
after all they came back after
years on the lump in London
or the graft of tatty-hoking in Fife
five of them then away to the 19th
to sink a few before home
and crawling in late to lie
where the stars are distant

from Event Horizon

10.

pistons of lilac combine their rigidities
of colour to a felicity of thorn
the doze of each is an insulator
shaming the occurrence of every eye
that catnaps its way through this life

there is a stave where data is
broken across the turret of a cactus
wait and catch it in a tinderbox
and the whole desert blazes
burning off catastrophes mid-slick

the world is our coroner
a heart in thrombosis slogs away
like a carburettor to rebuke
plagues of enmities
regimes that backbench
millions to the dole's anthem

oblivion might be yours
lush as honey

Natasha Cuddington

Natasha Cuddington was born in Saskatchewan in 1974. She is a graduate of Concordia University, Montreal and Queen's University, Belfast. Her reviews and translations have appeared variously in *When the Neva Rushes Backwards: A bilingual anthology* (Lagan: 2014), *Cyphers* (Dublin), *Poetry Ireland* (Dublin), *Modern Poetry in Translation* (Oxford), and *Metamorphoses: the journal of the five college faculty seminar on literary translation* (Amherst).

Her poems, including excerpts from "Shadowjumpers Jackarabbit" have appeared variously in *Irish Feminist Review* (Galway), *Cyphers* (Dublin), *can can* (Dublin) and feature on the *Seamus Heaney Centre's Digital Archive* and the *wurm im apfel* podcast.

She has been recipient of several awards from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, including the Artists Career Enhancement Scheme. Together with Ruth Carr and Word of Mouth Poetry Collective, she hosts the "Of Mouth" Lunchtime Reading Series at Belfast's Linen Hall Library.

from Parhelia / Grace

39.

WHAT makes an autonomy,

Saint-like /

Has She acted a Monster

Upon circumstance

Care is taken from us

First,

And beyond repair,

a Hastening /

of doubt.

ONE gave birth in plastic /

Pool so as that Chaos of blood

were easily clean&

dungeon /

Where Humans wring of you its citizen

Water was There

a

Colour of Eyes&

CORNER or perpendicularity

Look don't

Look /

as the Crowd

gathers&

Barefisted fighters

Stage Their theatre at the Street

Where peopled, vacant cars /

Plumb batons&

aplomb

bars

SON LOOK at us Not One

to peer through /

the shattered Window Not

Even This

shock of

Morning /

flourish Gulls or sun Makes

Us Anything Other

Than what we

are

Reggie Chamberlain-King

Reggie Chamberlain-King is a Belfast-based writer, broadcaster, Musiphilosoph, and humble savant. His first novel, 'A Poisoned Chalice For Charlie', was received warmly by the back of a drawer. He has worked previously with the staff of the BBC, Ulster Bank, and Royal Mail and may do so again. He also makes regular appearances on public transport.

Mr. Chamberlain-King frequently standardises the grammar and use of prepositions at *The New Escapologist*, where he also refines the few mixed metaphors into their finer component parts. He is also the usual librettist and songwriting partner of Mr. Martin White and his *Mystery Fax Machine Orchestra*.

Mr. Chamberlain-King is available to write, speak and expound, if asked nicely. Even requests made discourteously will be considered with all the good grace he can muster.

You can email Reggie at reggie.chamberlaining@gmail.com and should feel free to do so.

Now I'm Really Expressing Myself

(rustle of pages)

Now I'm really expressing myself:

Speaking to and from the heart

With no prescription, plan, or...

(page turn)

...written programme.

This is how it sounds to hear the word

Unfettered, free from thought,

Free from fear of fail-- of fail-- free from fear of feeling.

This is how emotion sounds... No, I'll start that again.

(page turn)

Now I'm really expressing myself:

Speaking to and from the heart

With no perscription- perscription-- prescription, plan...

Now I'm really expressing myself:

Speaking to and from the heart

With no prescription, plan, or...

(page turn)

Written programme.

This is how it sounds to hear the word

Unfettered, free from thought,

Free from fear of feeling.

This is how emotion sounds...

(page turn)

Do you hear it?

Not the scratch of stylus on the foolscap sheet

Not the lowing groan of laboured thought

The creaking of experience under the weight of learning
No! This is expression being set free,
Not by the pen (*sound of pen scribbling*)
Not by the quill caught.

(page turn)

Now I'm really expressing myself:
Heaving my heart into my throat
Feeling flowing freely, unburdened,
Undirected by learned reference or quote,
So full of sound and fury
But signifying nothing.

--- Can I try that again?

Horse, as a Verb (A Roundelay)

This sun-soft day, through country courses,
Let us horse there, you and I,
On the gentle hummock by
These tame and timorous rivers' sources.

Horsing, then, of all the forces
That may horse us from on high:
Here they horse in short supply,
This sun-soft day, through country courses.

"Horsing horsed the time that horses!"
I horsed myself and horsed you why.
"O, Horse! My Love," horsed your reply,
"And horse not horse the horses,
This sun-soft day, through country courses."

And Her Little Dog Too

I saw a beautiful woman walking a beautiful dog:
Her eyes were brown
and they pulled down towards the edges,
while her mouth turned up a little into something of a smile.

I liked her legs and how they ran,
her hair and how it ran.
She had a coat that looked like it lay loose around her body.
It had no buttons, though, in the cold, her nipples showed,
discretely in a line.

Her fingers tensed within the leash's leather loop;
her neck was sharp and straight;
her feet pawed and played only briefly on the street.
And I wondered whether her white withers should be so
high
Or was that the beauty in them?
The dewlap slipped beneath the soft chemise;
The breasts that bobbed so lightly off the ground;
Her muzzle pointed proudly to the breeze;
And hips that swivelled just the wrong way round.

A smooth, slack arm swung passed the croup and tail,
another held out stiff in front...

Then, with a sudden tug, the one had pulled the other from
my life.

An Extract from The Stuffed Owl: An Epic Digression Upon, As Well As The Cause and Result of, Writer's Block.

*"...untired comforter,
The presence even of a stuffed owl for her
Can cheat the time..."*

- 'The Stuffed Owl', William Wordsworth.

"I rejoice that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men... They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all [men] have."

- 'Walden', Henry David Thoreau.

I, in perturbation, scanned the attic, resting on the
emblematic
Bird of night that now is static, nailed in state, when once it
flew.

Thus entering my sight's arena, this totem of the wise
Athena

Tugged a little on my vena cava and aorta too;
For my lyric inspiration, like the owl, was fixed there too
Fixed in place, when once it flew.

There, perched upon my writing desk, a comic hint at the
grotesque,
Struggling to be statuesque, its wings askance and legs
askew.

What ghoul would dare to taxiderm him! This philosoph
amongst the vermin.

His glassy stare that makes me squirm in, in this room
without a view.

That glassy stare that seems resolved to put across his point
of view

But convey the point to who?

Deformed by permanent repose, he seemed to scrutinise my
poesy,

Looking down his beaky nose, he gave a look hard to
construe.

It was as if the bird were taunting with its belletristic
haunting,

The silence just a way of flaunting a secret truth only he
knew.

What could be the mystic truth that only sand-filled
creatures knew?

His countenance gave not a clue.

Matthew Rice

Matthew Rice was born in Belfast in 1980. He has published poems in magazines and journals on both sides of the Atlantic, including *The Echo Room*, (edited by the Brighton-based Northern Irish poet, Brendan Cleary), and *Iodine Poetry Journal* from North Carolina, and in various online publications.

His work deals with themes such as loss, land, death, life, childhood, memory, the political landscape, and the everyday. His poetry also contains historical elements, and draws on the mythological to filter contemporary concerns, attempting to bring them into sharper focus.

He is studying for his BA (Honours) in English Language & Literature and is currently assembling his first collection of poems. He lives in Carrickfergus, County Antrim.

The Sacred Tree

They have taken the great Spotted Elk
Out of the snow and pinned his spirit

To the sacred tree at Wounded Knee.
All along the crooked gulch

Soul-prints are untouched by fresh flakes
Where hope is scattered

Among frozen, blizzard-bitten bodies.

There is no centre any longer
And the past will not let go of itself;

Like the infant, not knowing
Mother is dead, still nursing.

Book-Shaped

The growing sound
of an engine, coming closer, homely
as the crackle of a wood-stoked fire.

The hum of his voice beneath the floorboards,
stairs creaking gently every other step
before the slot of landing-light

widens across the carpet
and he bandies a book-shaped,
brown paper bag around the doorframe -

Don't read it all tonight, get to sleep before the birds.

Then the wink as he leaves,
the door left open just enough

for the light to touch the words.

The Weight Of A Rock

*to the end they will look at us
with a calm and a very clear eye ~
from "Pebble" by Zbigniew Herbert*

The rock in my hand
is unconcerned by the human value

I place in its symbolism,
that the weight of a rock

is easier borne than the soul,
by being inside my fisted palm

or how light it feels to me.
It is impervious to the tightening of my fingers

and, when I open my hand,
the swelling emptiness it leaves.

The Catch

The smell of coolant
and wet sawdust
take me back
to the little cottage

where I'd watch his television
after a day at the school desk.
The local fishermen
would call in now and again

with a catch for him,
a respectful tip-the-wink
to one of their own,
only age keeping him off the sea.

That day it was crabs,
still alive, moving their legs
like spiders out of a damp plug-hole.
I gawped, hairs stood up.

The smell of ocean filled the room,
turned it into a ship's galley.
He came in from the kitchen,
teasing me with them, now dead,

a screwdriver through the eyes,
a quick hoking-out
to mush the brains -
his old arthritic hands

themselves crab-like.
Sometimes, he told me,
he'd forgo the tool
and put them in the freezer

to lull them to sleep,
dull the senses before dunking them
into the boiling water.
That day he seemed an overseer

of torture to my youthfully ignorant eyes.
I came home to find my father
beaming over a catch of his own,
clacking over one another

in a yard bucket
on the kitchen table.
Got them from old Billy,
Look at that, he said.

Fresh from the depths.

Thank you for reading!



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