

A close-up photograph of a mossy branch against a dark background. The moss is bright yellow-green and covers the branch in a dense, textured layer. The background is dark and out of focus, with some light-colored, possibly rocky or snowy, elements visible on the right side.

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Olive Broderick  
Lynne Edgar  
Paula Matthews  
Nandi Jola

# Editorial

You'll notice that this issue contains a quartet of woman poets. Whereas more by accident than design, we think this is a great opportunity to address the brilliant writer and work carried out by female scribes within Northern Ireland.

For our mind, women are leading the way in contemporary poetry in the North. With Sinead Morrissey recently winning the Forward Poetry Prize; to established names such as Moyra Donaldson, Deirdre Cartmill, Ruth Carr, Halliday, Maria McManus and Paula Cunningham; to emerging writers such as Erin Halliday, Geraldine O'Kane and Tory Campbell. After a scene which some say has been over-dominated with males, it's fantastic to see attention and merit being given to female voices.

We're delighted to bring you four more names to this mix: all at differing stages of their writing careers, but all offering excellent work, insightful and evocative verse that we hope you enjoy and add to your favourites.

Regards and happy reading,

Colin Dardis, Editor

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## Olive Broderick

Originally from Youghal, Co. Cork, Olive Broderick travelled to Northern Ireland to undertake the Creative Writing MA at Queen's University Belfast, settling in Co. Down in 2003.

In 2009, she was one of the Poetry Introduction series readers and won a Hennessy X.O. Literary Award, Emerging Poetry Category for the same year. Her first publication - pamphlet 'Darkhaired' (Templar Poetry, 2010) - was shortlisted for a Michael Marks Award. Olive acknowledges the support of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

She has a writing studio (2014) at the Farmyard of the National Trust's Castle Ward property as part of the Castle Ward Arts & Crafts open studios initiative - [www.castlewardartsandcrafts.com](http://www.castlewardartsandcrafts.com) .

## Ice

This is the season when no decision  
is watertight. This morning you tell me  
the sun is bright there, but in your garden,  
ice in barrels is frozen inches thick.  
At midday, on the river walk, puddles  
are solid. Fallen leaves are petrified  
and artfully displayed inside  
a frame so strong it can withstand my weight.  
The stripped branches of the willow are rigid.  
A mallard cry echoes as if this place  
were empty. An ice sheet attached  
to the river bank slowly narrows. Ice will yield  
to the laws of water. When it releases,  
fractured surfaces will, once again, breathe deeply.

## Austerity Times

When the captain calls  
*'brace, brace'*  
you can't remember  
what you should do

You are now alone  
in the air  
and the whole world seems  
to be falling

You are surprised at the speed of  
your thinking  
none of which amounts to much when  
you have no control

Instead you look to your  
neighbours  
one-by-one, you all adopt  
the brace position

Head to knees - your own arms embracing  
a quiet kind of descent  
silent calls for help and then the heart reminds you  
what you truly care for

and through a dent in your  
damaged craft

flies the winged companion of this mad  
uncertainty

willing

miraculous  
things  
to  
happen

## The Difference Between Hope & Optimism

In his watercolour of a Tall Ship close-up,  
the artist uses gold for sunlight on crossbeams.  
On my windowsill, pink roses in a glass carafe, wilting.

Outside, against the sky, a couple of pigeons  
intertwine throats, step back to face each other,  
twist to face in the same direction on their stone gable.

Different from spring encounters on roofs and railings:  
I don't know where this is going, lower my eyes  
to my computer, search for quotations on hope,

only now decide to revive the best of the roses.  
Noting that discarded blossoms may be the artist's quarry.  
Noting the thorns on their stems are not less sharp.



## Full Moon, Pre-Eclipse

I take my cue from the moon

This moon

December Moon

Full Cold Moon

Oak Moon

which shows up early  
is at its most visible  
is not going anywhere

seems unaware of the shadow  
that is coming to mute its light

has done nothing  
to prepare for the spectacle

a coincidence that its full beam  
will radiate around the edges  
of the shadow that will pass  
with the ordinary movement  
of the galaxy

This moon  
whose wax and wane  
is a beautiful illusion

This earth  
whose spring does not  
keep to anyone's schedule

## Lynne Edgar

Lynne Edgar is from Derry/Londonderry. She began writing in 2005 when she embarked on a Creative Writing course with the Open University. In 2010 she received an award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to take part in a Poetry Mentoring Scheme through LitNet NI, during which she was mentored by Moyra Donaldson.

To date her work has been published in various publications, including *Poetry Ireland Review*, and in October 2011, her first collection of poems, *Trapeze*, was published by Lapwing. In 2012 she co-edited and contributed to *Shared Spaces*, an anthology of poems produced by the EU Peace III programme.

Though primarily a poet, Lynne also enjoys writing short stories and drama, and is Secretary of Derry Writers' Group.

## Citizen of Geneva

Idling on the island of Saint Pierre,  
she tiptoed around four toadstools,  
then toppled on the fifth,  
where underneath, unknown to her,  
the hermit, Rousseau, rested.

There was a loud oath, a curse,  
issued in earnest; then out he rolled  
from the miserable wreck  
of his curious shelter.

And there,  
among a row of fungus umbrellas,  
he saw her  
for the first time.

She didn't mean to linger  
but his hunger hooked her.

His vulnerable look,  
nurtured through years  
of unworking the knots  
of tangled philosophies,  
belied his claim of deep peace,

as if somewhere down the line  
a snag was left undone,  
a puzzle left to trouble him.

For two whole months, he taught her  
to hear truths of her heart,  
and in the evenings  
she would lick his weary bones  
and trace the length of his spine  
with the velvet touch  
of her index finger,  
till the tips  
of his brows  
fell apart.

And in the end,  
when he found  
she'd become  
a burning necessity,  
he left for Paris.

## The Journey

The clack of wheel on track  
and rhythmic sway of carriage,  
once agreed by us, as strangely sensual,  
is nothing now.

And I remember,  
as I catch sight of a newborn calf,  
unfazed by the train's hoarse horn,  
that you said  
baby *everythings* make me smile.

My eyes stay fixed  
till hawthorn hedgerows hide him.

Then a child, wrapped in her father's coat,  
head on his lap, hums 'Away in a Manger';  
I smile then, it's hard not to; it is March.

March, and I should be  
leaning across you, giddy  
with the wicked contemplation  
of a weekend *airing the cottage*.  
I should be marvelling at the puffs  
of magenta and steel grey cloud  
that hang above Binevenagh;  
pointing out her tree-layered skirt  
*in this seasons shades of smoked green  
and mauve*, and you should be here,  
laughing at my girlie perspective.

\*

That night, when I last saw you,  
the forecast was woeful.

You smiled and squeezed my waist  
as I unhooked the Lorikeet chimes  
from the porch, fourth night in a row.

*There's not a whiff of wind,* you said.

I took the tangled pipes  
and swayed them by your face;

*a whiff of wind,*

*a whiff of,*

*a whiff,*

I whispered, wishing  
my feeble spell could make you stay.

You pressed your lips against my head.

A silent blessing?

*Anyway, I'm away,* you said.

        Within the hour,  
you were dead.

## Idols

It's not because he resembled Clint that she loved him.  
She said Clint was crap; her Ronald was never that;  
and though Clint emptied saloons of all but the gorgeous  
who didn't drop dead, her Ron was streets ahead  
of him. He was no poncho'd honcho, she granted,  
but he could easily paste Clint flat on his back,  
no smoking Smith & Wesson required;  
just a hint of a threat and there'd be fists,  
fast drawn from his hip pockets;  
he'd knock the block off anyone  
who messed with his blessings.  
She said in his sock soles,  
he stood six feet tall,  
but above all,  
he was  
fit.





there were no forged receipts  
for fake piano lessons to veil illicit sessions  
in a town miles from home; just enough  
fib to fit a dalliance devoid of romance,  
for theirs was an unglamorous pact  
shaped by deeper allegiance  
and uneven need -  
a fictional hour  
would cover the deed.

At least Flaubert powered it up  
to full throttle adultery;  
blessed his lovers  
with reckless disrespect.

But no alibi's  
worth trying after 9pm;

and, not for the first time,  
*this* Emma  
remembered *that* Emma's fate  
and wept  
as she slipped off  
her white satin lace  
to lie  
in the bed she made herself,  
waiting  
on her husband.

## Paula Matthews

Born in 1977 and raised in Belfast, Paula Matthews has completed mentoring through LitNet NI with leading poet Moyra Donaldson, and is working on her first collection of poems.

Currently employed in social work, Paula is due to start a Masters in the University of Ulster later this year which has a focus of creative writing.

## Real Wedding Picture

No calla lilies when we pledged love.  
We had a wreath to mark the spot.

The first dark dance –  
piper played in mourning.

No photos, no flower girls, no sunshine.  
We stood in rows in rain.

Our legs gave way,  
but hands were clasped and promises exchanged.

We forged a path through deep dug earth and dust,  
lead away from sad tracks formed in dirt.

It was a giving of each other in death's wake.  
Chasing shadows in a summoning of light.

## The Fine Grey Dust

Think of the house falling down,  
wearing away, gradual decay.  
Or those cloistered ruins,  
Cathedrals turned to picnic places,  
for children dreaming of princesses.  
Inside and outside mingle to dust,  
powdery world of dove grey  
smudging the edges off buildings,  
forgetting names, faces, feelings.  
Enriching the earth, then fading.

From the ground where the house stood,  
a tiny green shoot.

## Croup

You wretch at midnight, bring up blood.  
I turn the tap, "Wee man, alright,  
Breathe in steam, your throat will open."

My throat constricts.  
I make sure I stay behind you;  
The very feet I stand on, shaking.

## Nature Directs It

I remember our fortnight in Alvor.  
Thank God for breakfast tequila,  
sardines, the marina.

Later, in Cyprus,  
you said you were shocked when your Dad died,  
but we are designed to survive.

Finally, Canada.  
Niagra,  
Water, vastly powerful, plunging,  
in quantities we hadn't prepared for.  
You tried to talk,  
but the fall drowned you out.

You died beside the sea.  
It made no sense when I found you,  
the seabirds were soaring and singing.

\*

Winter proceeded, icing the deluge.  
I stayed inert, shot to my bones,  
diminished, progressing...

This is the watershed.  
Nature directs it. I discover  
I'm designed to survive you.

# Nandi Jola

Nandi Jola was born in South Africa and grew up under the apartheid regime. Resilient and defiant, Nandi started writing poetry at the age of fourteen; however it was her "prison without walls" in Northern Ireland from her experience of trafficking and exploitation that has compelled her to continue writing .

Nandi founded the 'nandijproject' in 2010 with the vision to tackle women trafficking and sexual exploitation by their husbands. "When I see a mess, I just want to turn it into a message through testimony. I believe there are testimonies to be written, for every shattered soul there is a shelter for hope; all the scars can be turned into stars. "

Nandi has exhibited in the Long Gallery in Stormont parliament building, and as a motivational speaker and storyteller, has given radio and TV interviews to many local media outlets. She describes herself as thought provoking, yet soft spoken.

[www.nandijproject.com](http://www.nandijproject.com)



## Seeds of Africa

Seeds of Africa  
scattered all around the world  
affected, infected, but never defiled  
Your teeth are so white  
your skin so dark  
your beauty stands out  
What is your hair made of?  
what is the colour of your blood?  
you amaze nations  
The click of your tongue  
the rhythm of your body  
so many languages  
So many cultures  
yet the sun shines on you all  
arise and blossom  
seeds of Africa...

He who walks in my shoes...

... has the strength of a lion,  
roaring from continent to continent;  
has sharp teeth to protect my young,  
the speed to reach opportunities,  
a warm heart to love.

He who walks in my shoes  
counts the blessings behind them,  
walks in the footsteps of defiance  
inheriting the seed of the Xhosa.

He who walks in my shoes  
has the wisdom of history,  
as a tree that produces its own fruit...  
...so he who walks in my shoes is a she!

## Broken Promises

When you have walked through the hills;  
when you have seen so many fields;  
when you can tell a story or two;  
when you can't walk back to where you started from,

it feels like broken promises.

Then you think maybe the end is closer than the beginning,  
you think it's the end of the tunnel,  
yet all doors are closing on you;  
is hope tangible or faith visible?

It feels like broken promises.

Do I undo what I have done?  
Un-believe what I believe?  
Hate what I love?  
Curse the blessing?

It feels like broken promises.

I am a Xhosa

Amakhosa are a storytelling tribe:  
Nongqawuse told of a story of white man  
coming with buttons looking for our diamonds.

Distinguished by their clan names.  
Amangqosini can be traced to the Sahara Desert.  
Xhosas tell the time from the sun.

I can walk on my bare feet for miles.  
I put my child on my back.  
I balance a bucket of water on my head.  
When I click my tongue, I amaze;  
it's not a click, it's my language.

When I dance, I stun:  
my bum is big,  
a perfect bed for my children.

**Thank you for reading!**

**4 X 4**

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