



FRONTIER FOLK

ART, WRITINGS AND DRAMA FROM
RADE'S PROGRAMME 2010/11





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FRANK TRACY AND MERCHANTS QUAY SCOUTS.



INTRODUCTION

The RADE creative writing group meets in a spacious room with tall bright windows and a high ceiling supported by thin silver pillars, seated in a circle, surrounded by paintings and sculptures in various stages of realisation. The finished works of those who went before us are everywhere; each piece, totemic of a RADER's personal journey, now stands as an invitation to new adventurers. Images and photographs torn from magazines and catalogues are pinned-up, with poems on the walls, like treasure maps, puzzle pieces or messages from newly discovered lands.

RADERS have an edge when it comes to creativity because they are taking a fresh-eyed look at themselves, and their place in their world, in a way that most of us never do. Seeking understanding, they have entered "the foul rag and bone shop of the heart", the secret place WB Yeats identified as the source of inspiration. In the words of another poet, Thomas Merton, they have embarked on a voyage to cross "the abyss that separates us from ourselves". This is what makes RADERS into real 'frontier folk', genuine pioneers. They are courageous and yet each one has admitted their vulnerability – which is the knowledge that separates true heroes from fools – so any posturing is futile. It is a great relief to step into that kind of company.

RADE has a ban on making excuses, but there is no meanness in this. RADERS treat each other with the tenderness, respect and loyalty of people who meet in trust. Their sense of purpose gives focus; their experience, insight; their sense of humour, perspective. These are traits we would all benefit from developing, but in particular they are crucial qualities for every artist to learn.

When the project director, Mick Egan, invited me to work with the creative writing group he emphasised that the programme was not about 'therapeutic writing', but rather about challenging people to write well. That is what drew me in. Decent art has no room for excuses; the big room where we met was no place for excuses. The beautiful truth is that writing – when approached in this way – is replete with therapeutic rewards.

Together we explored forms, genres and voices. We observed and pretended, remembered and imagined. We enjoyed singing and playing, we were broken-hearted and hilarious, and we had vigorous discussions about the merits of different writing. Thankfully we didn't always agree, but we continually learned from each other.

Writing well demands a journey of commitment. Sometimes we are blessed, and words come spontaneously, as if spoken by a stranger who taps us on the shoulder in a saloon and whispers in our ear. But this won't happen until our courage has earned the stranger's trust, because his truth is precious and not to be shared with fools. It tells us where the gold is buried. I met some brave people at RADE, and this book is a sample of the treasures they unearthed.

Malcolm MacClancy

September 2011



BIRTHDAY.

‘IT’S YOUR FORTIETH,
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE, LOVE?
I’LL GET YOU ANYTHING YOU WANT,
DON’T WORRY ABOUT THE COST.’

SHE SAYS,
‘OK, I WANT A DIVORCE.’

‘JAYSUS,’ HE SAYS,
‘I WASN’T PLANNING
ON SPENDING THAT MUCH!’



JENNA
THE WHOLE WORLD STOPPED

I don't remember a happier moment than the first time I held my daughter. The whole world stopped. The calmness between us. The eye of the storm. The wonder and magic in all of her. The endless chances and opportunities that lay in wait. No anger, no ups, no downs, just love and a strange sensation that of course at the time I couldn't put into words. The feeling of unwavering, unconditional love. True love in its deepest, dearest form. Me, so near to being a child myself. Adult only in my own mind. Child in my words and actions, and yet here she was, ten perfect little toes and fingers. We must grow up together.



'FEED ME'
by MARTIN



'TRICK OF COLOUR'
by GLENN

MARY
OLD MAN

There is an old man that lives in a doorway across from the flats. He has been there for a couple of years and he sleeps on a cardboard box and a sleeping bag and a black bag over it. He wears a long coat. He is very dirty and has grey hair and a long beard, and he never smiles.

GARY
OLD TREES

Old trees grow strong and tall
Old rivers run more wild and wide
Some old people grow lonely
With no friend or love to hold

SIMON
HOME

My grandmother's home was a small house with a back and front garden, red brick, three bedrooms. My favourite room was the kitchen and the scullery behind. There were a few cats which I really loved and I had a way with them, I was told. Living here meant warmth from an open fire. Meals around a kitchen table, conversation and other important rituals, throughout the day. I suppose I felt wanted and useful when I was there. I remember once my grandmother lost one of her diamonds out of her engagement ring, from fifty years before. It had been missing for months. One evening I was sitting on the rug in front of the fire, watching *Hawaii Five-0* when I saw something small glisten on the black furry rug. I picked up the small shiny diamond. "What's this!" She could not believe it. I had found her diamond.

JENNA
40TH BIRTHDAY

Jane sat at her office desk, gazing out at another wet dreary Dublin day. It was her 40th birthday today. Not that she'd be letting any of her colleagues know. Being a lot older than the other girls in the office often left her feeling out of the loop and lonely, not helped by the fact she was the only one single. "I wonder will I ever meet anyone," she sighed over her usual morning coffee. She was suddenly snapped back to reality by the usual girly giggling from the other girls in the office, which she guessed was, as usual, at her expense. She had come to the stage now where growing old alone seemed inevitable. There was one man she had always held a torch for: Jim, in accounts. The only problem was so did every other single girl in the place. She would often watch the younger girls with envy as they threw back their long shiny locks and laughed flirtatiously. She stopped wearing make-up to work long ago. What was the point?, she thought as she went out for her lunchtime smoke, exchanging a polite nod and smile with Jim as she always did. But today was different, or maybe she was going mad, but she was sure he'd given her a little wink as she returned to her office.

As she passed the gaggle of twenty-somethings, there was no giggling, and there on her desk was a simple red rose and a note that read, "Dear Jane, Let's have dinner. Jim." Maybe she wasn't a plain Jane after all.



SIMON
AN AGEING WILLOW

An ageing willow
It's image unsteady
In the flowing stream

DARREN
THE MOON

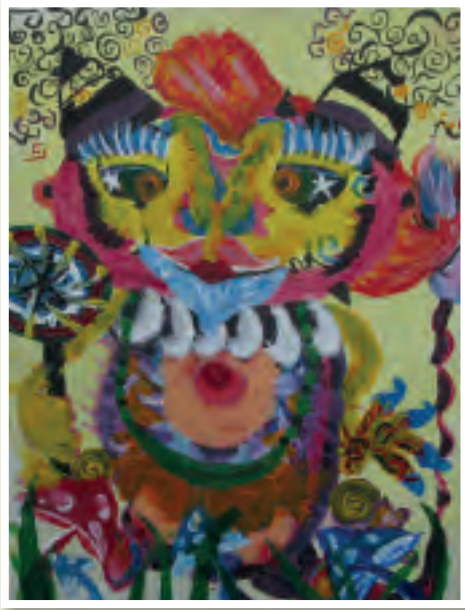
The Moon is round and sometimes full
And sometimes half, and then it's sometimes not there at all
That's similar to myself

DARREN
DREAMER

I was eight years old when I was going to Warrentown House the following day with the recommendations from both my psychiatrist and my parents. I don't remember going to bed that night. I do remember what happened after I fell asleep. I remember waking in a musty graveyard with wild hogs roaming around. I walked towards the middle of the graveyard and came across a big temple with big doors. With a large bang, the door burst open and out came this gargoy-le-looking dog that had fists. It came towards me and I woke up screaming.

MARY
BELLA

I remember this day because it was the best day of my life when this family came and rescued me from the Dogs and Cats Home. I got a lead put on me and they signed a few papers. We hurried out a door and got into a thing that moved. There were two kids sitting beside me. I think that is what they are called. We got to a house. We went in. There was a little bed in the corner, and food and water. Well, I remember sleeping at the end of the little girl's bed every day. They would feed me. It was very nice, and when the little girl came home I would get a rub. But she would put me in her doll's pram and put the clothes on me. I was like a little person. I think they are called babies. I did not mind as she was just showing her love, and the other kids would sit with me and play this game, and I would just sit and watch. When I heard them go in the door, I would jump down and run to the door because my owner would come in with treats, and I'd jump all over her just to tell all of them that I love this home. Because they do everything for me. They bring me out when I have to go to the toilet and when I feel like a walk. My family, I love them dearly.



UNNAMED
by JENNA

DARREN
PUPPY

Someone at the door. Someone at the door. Someone at the dooorrrrr. Wait, it's gone silent. Right, give a moan, that'll work hrrrrrhrrrr. *Where's me little dog, Shadow?* Yes, yes, yes, quick, chase me tail. No, run over and jump into his arms. Ah no, put me down, you're holding me like a baby. Right, right, think. No, bark and bark at door. Yes, he's put me down. No, no, I was bluffing. Hey, hey, what are you doing? I didn't even get a chance to bite them chairs. Bark at them, he'll probably drop them. No, he still has them. Where're you going? Where're you going? Where you going? Where're you going. Bang, swoosh, swoosh, bang. No, I'm not going out there. Alright then, wait. Wait, I'm coming. Not staying here by meself. Rrrrrrrrr, why are you leaving them here? Where're you going? Where're you going? Back home? Ah no, don't put the table in that place. Alright, wait I'm coming. Ah, you stupid woof, you stood on me paw. *Ah, I'm sorry fella.* Yeah, you will be. What is he doing going back home again? Right, I'm home and I'm not going back out there. Sounds are scary. No, you can bring them annoying black puffy things over yourself. Right, give him the confused look and stand your ground. Ha, it worked. Hey, where're you gone? He's back. He's back. He's back. Cling, cling. Food, quick go mad for a minute. Yes, food. Can't eat it fast enough. What's he doing in there? Let's check. No, he's just sitting there. Food again. Finished. Right, have to get up to where he is. I'll get up and lie on him and I'll dominate him, rrrrrrrrrrr rrrr. Right, come on, don't let me fall. Yes, victory, I'm up. Getting tired. Time for bed.





PUSHING THE BOAT OUT.

JOHNNY STARTS TO CHANGE
OUT OF HIS OLD CLOTHES
AND INTO NEW SMART CLOTHES.
HE'S LIKE A BRAND NEW MAN.
TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED.
TWO YEARS OF COUNSELLING
AND FRESH AIR DOWN THE BOG,
AWAY FROM TEMPTATION.

HE DID IT. HE GOT CLEAN.

WELL, LOOK AT YOU!
ALL FIT AND HEALTHY LOOKING.

OFF THE METHADONE AN' ALL?



JENNA
FIELDS OF AMETHYST

A tiny hand
 Envelopes my finger
 Freshly cut grass tickles our nose
 You inhabit my mind
 Having breakfast
 Tears in my cornflakes
 A giggle to myself at lunch

SIMON
MUD PUDDLE

Mud puddle
 Gas bubble
 Bluip!



'SEASONAL WISDOM'
 by SIMON



'HOOK HEAD' by JOHN

Page 12: 'GALWAY HOOKER' by JOHN

DAVID
THE HEADLESS SWAN

The headless swan to my joy
 From beneath its wing
 Appears again full-bodied
 To sip a sup of water

MARY
HAIKU

Winds blow hard
 Sweeping over little Ireland
 A pushing sound

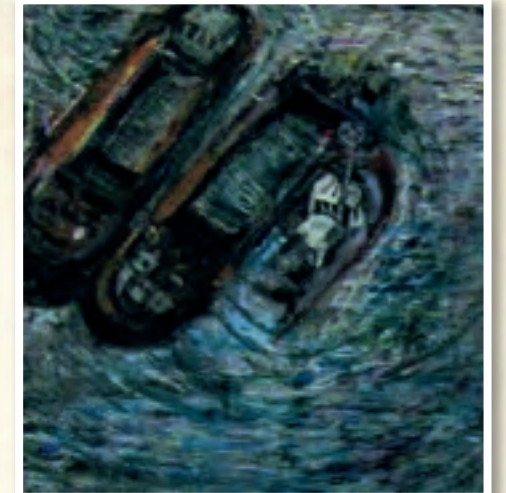
FRANK
TRY ANOTHER GAME

I went to Coláiste Mhuire – studied through Gaelic. Then went to Trinity, did my B.A. in English, history and psychology. Worked for a few years as a teacher, then went back to do a H.Dip. And then had to emigrate. 1983, that was it: no work. Lived almost 15 years in New York. Just like now. Easier maybe. First job, washing dishes. Second one, building sewers. But as an illegal alien – what could you do? Five years in Trinity and you dig sewers. We did what we had to do. Anyway, I wound up living 15 years there. I was young, so I lived with it. But I became a heroin addict. I screwed up. I'd married a doctor, but 15 years with a junkie, she'd had enough. Still miss her, and my life became worse. Would love to change back time, but too late.

You don't think you're hurting anyone, you don't think you're even hurting yourself, but when you lose your job, your wife and most of your friends, you start to think again, and then you get locked up. Banged up abroad – you start to think, is it really worth it just to get high? So you rethink, you try another game. I have to try again. You never give up, you can't give up. Just keep trying and hopefully it will work. I'll try again. It's all I can do. I want to clean up. I want it bad. I've had it up to the neck. I want it to work, otherwise I'm killing myself and I don't want to die. With a bit of luck, I'll win the fight.

JOAN
SWIMMING GOGGLES

My son is ten years old. His school has organised for his whole class to go swimming every Thursday for six weeks. I have been told that he needs a swimming hat or else he won't be allowed into the pool. He is so excited about going swimming, and he has asked me to get him some swimming goggles as well. I am just praying that I have enough money to get him a swimming hat and goggles because I don't want to disappoint him.



'THAT SINKING FEELING'
 by PETER



'ROSE'
 by JOAN

DARREN
DIALOGUE

Bernie: All these bills have to be paid, John, and today!
John: Bernie, I know, and they will.
Bernie: How?
John: I'll work something out.
Bernie: Oh right, so I'll just sit here until the bailiffs call at 5pm, while you get the money? You know this is the end in more ways than one for us.
John: What do you mean?
Bernie: It's over. Now I've said it in words. It's been actually over for a long time now, but these bailiffs taking everything today might as well take you as well.
John: So, is this what you want Bernie?
Bernie: It's gone beyond what I want, John.
John: You're giving up, are you?
Bernie: We've both given up on each other long before now.
John: Before the bailiffs get their paws on it, my guitar, my CDs are coming with me. If I can't have you, I'll take what matters to me. Goodbye to Golden Lane and to you, Bernie. You keep the dog.



'METHADONE'
by ALBERT

GLENN
A LIFE OF CRIME

Sitting here with my head in my hands
All I can think of is the judge and the packed courthouse
Picking up the pieces, the morning after the night before

GARY
COURT

– Look, Miss, just answer the question please?
– Well, I...
– Just yes or no.
– But he's twisting everything.
– Answer the question, Miss: Yes or no?
– I'm all nervous. Stop shouting at me!
– It is a simple question, Miss, please. Give us the answer.
– Em ... yes.
– Now, Miss, that wasn't so hard, was it?
– You should respect your elders.
– Silence! Silence! Another outburst and I'll give you 30 days. Just stay quiet and speak when you are spoken to.
– But how can I stay quiet and speak?
– Thirty days. Take her down.



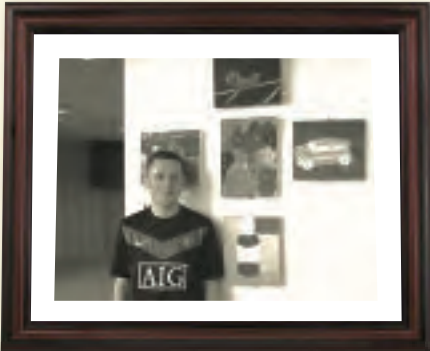
'DEEP BLUE'
by MARTIN

GLENN
I'M A DEEP SLEEPER

Open the duvet. Put my feet on the floor. Looking down, I got such a shock. They weren't there before, those pink socks. Take it easy. Don't panic. Think where did you go the night before? But I never went outside the fucking door. Pink knickers and skirt and a bra? What's going on? Fuck's sake. I open the door. This is not my room. It's the room next door.



'RETRO'
by ROBERT





BUCKETS.

**AT THE END OF A JCB,
THERE'S A BUCKET.**

**AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW,
THERE'S A BUCKET.**

**AT THE END OF THE DAY,
THERE'S A HOLE IN THE BUCKET.**

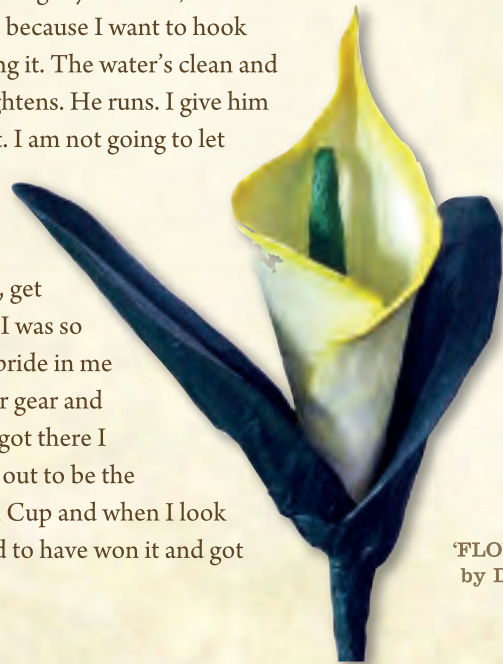
**AT THE END OF YOUR LIFE,
YOU KICK THE BUCKET.**

**THERE SHOULD BE A
BANK HOLIDAY FOR BUCKETS.**

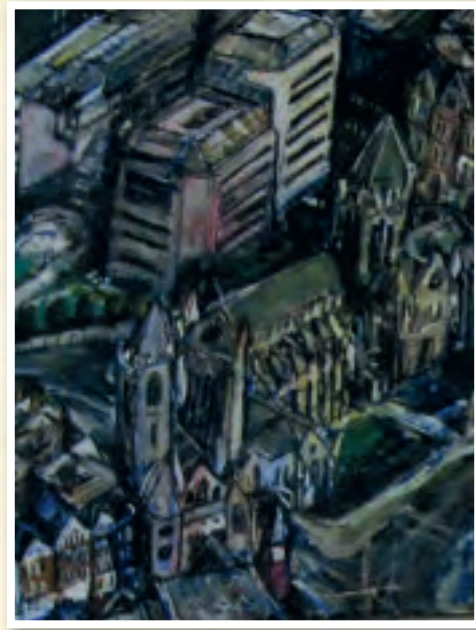


GLENN
THE STAUNTON CUP

It's March 17th and fishing season started last night at 12 o'clock on the Dodder. I'm 16 years old now. Again I will enter the first competition of the year, the Staunton cup. I came so close last year, but this year I will win it. The last few weeks I have been down here sussing out the best spots. I found it up past the waterfall in Rathfarnham. It's a great little spot, in from the road. There's plenty of trees. So myself and my mate Chester head off early. The meeting place is the Dropping Well pub's car park. We have all the bait and the fishing tackle. All day there and the fish weren't really biting. It's time to catch some minnow. After I had caught about ten, we started to head up to the spot at the waterfall. It's starting to get late. We only had about an hour till the weigh-in. Suddenly I see this really nice-sized trout, about one and half pounds in weight. So I cast in with my minnow. It's a good cast. The sun is shining on the water. It's just right weather. Then, as I am spinning my minnow, I see him taking it. I let him swallow it because I want to hook him well. I can see him swallowing it. The water's clean and shallow. I strike him. The line tightens. He runs. I give him line. He's putting up a good fight. I am not going to let him get away. After I play him for a few minutes, it's time to land him. All goes well, and I get him into the net. Quick, Chester, get the scales. When I weighed him, I was so happy: 2 pounds 3 ounces. The pride in me is overwhelming. We pack up our gear and head for the weigh-in. When we got there I showed off my fish and it turned out to be the winning fish. I won the Staunton Cup and when I look back, I was – and still am – proud to have won it and got my name engraved on it.



'FLOWER'
by DAVID



'CHRISTCHURCH DUBLIN CIVIC OFFICES'
by PETER

JOAN
BAG

My favourite niece had lots of bags
She gave me a present of the biggest one
To hold my smokes for when I'm gumming
To keep the kids' sweets till after dinner
To hold my money safe in the drop-in centre
To keep the bills so they don't go missing



'ROSE'
by LIZ

JENNA
COLD

I remember how it feels to be cold
To not have enough of what you need to be warm
To walk and walk and never get anywhere
To tire before the day begins
Yet so restless when the day is ended
I remember how it feels to be a childless mother
A brotherless sister and a fatherless daughter
I remember how it feels to be alone
To be scared, to feel naked when fully clothed
All these things I remember
I could try to forget, but I don't
I keep them there in a little space
Not to bring them out or let them bring me down

DAVID
SLEEPING BAG

My sleeping bag, precious like gold,
On cold nights that have passed
I would so tightly hold
Like a comrade, a shield in so many ways
Not only from the storms that the heavens made
But also from the madness in the land of blades
Rolled up tightly, it took the blade.



**PATRICK MC
REALITY**

Baseball bats and hammers
Scars and bruises
Hiding behind a shutter
Wish I could pull it down for good

**DARREN
ROUNABOUT**

I go up to a roundabout and don't know which way
to go. Up? Down? Around? Or sideways?
Shall I drive or should I just try and stay alive?



'MINI'
by GARY



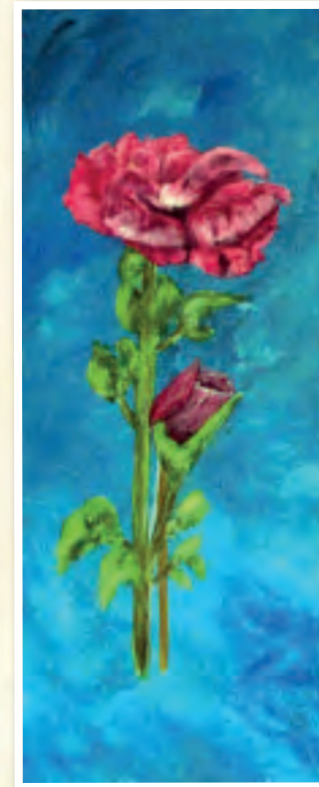
'INVERATH PENINSULA'
by PETER

**MARTIN
SLUG**

Ever wondered what happens when you die? Is reincarnation true or not? Well, it was for me as I found out. For all my sins and troubles, I've been reincarnated as a slug. A SLUG! Someone has definitely got it in for me. Definitely. Oh well, enough of the poor me's – I'll save that for another day. Best get on with doing what slugs do, which is, WHAT? I look around me through weepy-gooey eyes, in fact my whole body is gooey, slimy, puss dripping off me. I am lying in a muddy wet hole with what looks like a rock on top. Great! Reborn as a slug under a flat rock. I don't know! In front of me I see a large opening, light is shining through. I can see a great big forest and I am starving, though not cold. Maybe being covered in slime has its benefits. After what seemed like hours, and much slithering and crawling, I finally made it to the top. What I thought to be a forest turned out to be grass. On the way, I bumped into a snail. Literally, the goo flew off me – really, I must slow down! Beyond the grass I can see what looks like mountains of cabbage. That's where I'll go.

**SIMON
WAITING**

Puddles reflect rows of houses
Chimneys line up against a grey sky
Small suburban waiting rooms
Filled with big ideas.
Waiting.



'ROSE'
by MARTIN

**PETER
HAIKU**

A rain of sweat
Across my back
And this the dead of winter

Rain dancing on the roof
I used to drink her in
Now I just drink



'FULL IRISH'
by NICHOLA

**MARY
EAT**

I eat all types of sweets in bed at all hours in the
night and when I am lonely I eat lots of them
and make my stomach bigger. I do think that I
am growing some more of me to keep myself
warm at night.

**PADDY D
THE ICED BUN**

The wilderness laid bare
Covered in icy snow
No bears, no birds
No cold wind, just biting



EVERYBODY MUST GET STONED.

GUARD THUMPS DUSER
ON THE HEAD WITH HIS BATON,
WHICH BECOMES THE
FIRST DRUM NOTE OF THE SONG.

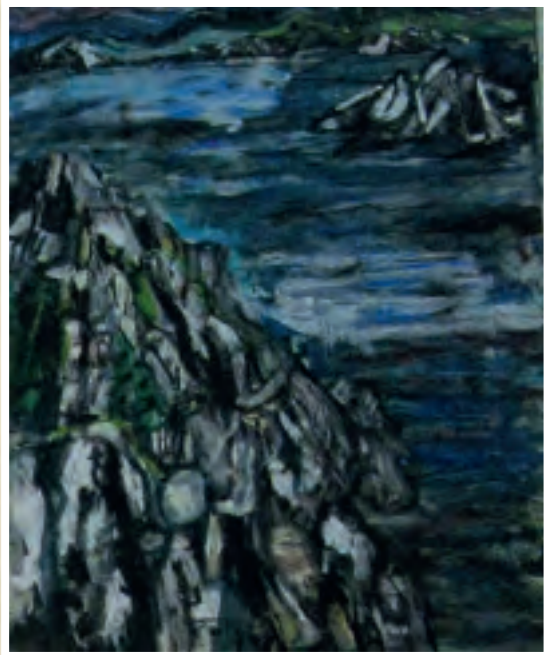
HE CONTINUES TO BEAT HIM,
KEEPING THE DRUM BEAT
THROUGH THE FIRST VERSE.

MORE OF THE SET IS BROUGHT ONSTAGE
AS THE CAST SING AND PLAY KAZOOS,
WHICH ARE HIDDEN IN GIANT JOINTS.



DAVID
COLONEL SANDERS AND TWINKLE

The cannon roars. The matchstick missile hits Chief Little Big Cloud full in the face. It then takes out another six Indians. Colonel Sanders shouts, "Send in the Cavalry and finish them off!" With a big swish of a dog's tail, the battlefield falls to its knees. Colonel Sanders gets licked. Not by the Indians, but by his dog, Twinkle. It was time for Colonel Sanders to take a break from the battlefield and take Twinkle for a walk. "Come on Twinkle, we'll tidy this lot up later before Mam gets home." And we head to the fields at the back of our housing estate.



'SKELLIG' by PETER

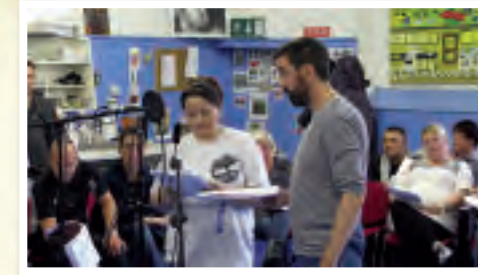
Page 24: 'LUNAR' by GARY

NICHOLA
CAT

A cat climbed in the window of my flat
She sat there purring, skinny as a matchstick
Her coat as black as a winter's night
My sandwich had got legs and walked
She was licking her lips
I'd only popped out for two minutes
She must have wolfed it down
That was my dinner and I was hungry
As a train with no coal

GARY
DUMB MUTT

The circus dog, small, brown, black
A lovely, little creature
Some would say dumb mutt
Doing what it's told for a biscuit
Rolling over for a biscuit
Standing on two legs for a biscuit
But who's the dumb animal?
We do the same for cash
Difference is only some of us are wagging our tails



PETER
DECEMBER 29th, 1942

My comrades in arms and I are short of everything, and I don't mean creature comforts. We are stuck here in Stalingrad completely surrounded by the Ivan's C Russian soldiers – Commies every last one of them. Our unit is luckier than most in that we at least got our winter clothes before being cut off. But when you're out the whole time in this damnable cold country, the chill getting right into your bones, it doesn't matter what you wear. You can't sleep for more than thirty minutes at a stretch for fear of freezing to death.

This might be bearable on its own if it were not for the lack of food. One slice of bread and one cigarette per man per day, not enough to stop the snarling of one's stomach for more than the briefest of moments.

My only desire is for a letter from home and a hot meal, just so long as it has meat and salt, so we could have a break from the cold and hunger, however short, while we read a few words from home.



DARREN
LETTER TO SANTA

Dear Santa, I know I was a bold kid, and I'm naughty, and I'd change it if I could, but I made an appointment with a psychiatrist and he told me that because of all the stuff that happened as a kid, it led to me playing up. In my note, I am letting you know, because I am suing you for unfair prejudice because it wasn't my fault I was playing up. So I know you don't come to kids after the age of thirteen, but seeing what kids gets today, I reckon you owe me a Playstation with 250GB and an Xbox with the same spec, plus every game that's been released. Santa, I'm sorry to say you have been served.



GLENN
CALM EVENING

It was a dark, cold evening
Much quieter than usual
Sitting here dragging the last bit of life out of a smoke
The sound of it cracking like kindling



"THREE'S COMPANY"
by GLENN



MARY
THAT DAY

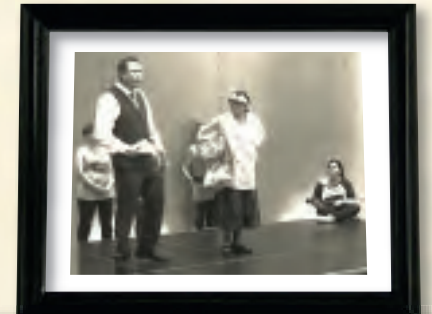
That day I went on drugs
That day I thought all my worries were gone
That day I thought I was untouchable
That day I just did not care
And that day changed my life.

GARY
BALL AND LANE

One foot on the bus, my mind is down the lane
Will I, won't I? Will I, won't I?
That old ball and chain
I've had a shitty week, stuck in a deep dark cloud
Can someone whisper in my ear
The directions to get out.



"HOME"
by MARY





PROPER DA.

THIS HERE IS
JOHNNY CASSIDY.
STRUNG OUT ON HEROIN,
BENZOS, DOPE, THE LOT.

HE'S BEEN LIVING ROUGH,
ON AND OFF,
FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS.



DAVID
MY FIRST FISH

I can't sleep with excitement. I'm going fishing with my Da in the morning. My Da bought me my first fishing rod in Clifden today. We're on holidays in the west of Ireland, staying in my Gran's holiday caravan. My two sisters and I think it's really cool. Besides being Indians, we get to stay up as long as the grown-ups. "Only cause you are on holiday," my Mam used to say, but the real reason was we had to wait until the grown-ups were finished playing cards, cause they were all sitting on our sofa bed.

I looked out of the window again to see if I could see one of those leprechauns my Da was telling me about. Everyone else was asleep, but I wasn't scared. My Da told me they were only tiny and had loads of money. Mind you, I got a bit of a fright when I heard a big groan from the front of the caravan. It was darker inside the caravan than outside. I soon realised it was my Da getting up. I was already dressed, but fearing he wouldn't take me fishing if he knew I hadn't slept, I got under the duvet and pretended I was asleep. A few minutes later, my Da shook me and said, "Are you ready to go fishing, son?" He didn't have to shake me twice. Before the kettle was boiled, I was standing beside him with my fishing rod and ready to go. My Da smiled and said, "Give us a chance to get a cuppa into us, son." After a cup of tea, my Da and I headed off to the lake.

The sun was only starting to rise. I can't remember the last time I was up this early. Mam usually has to drag me out of bed for school. We had to cross bogland to get to the water's edge, and by the time we got there, my new yellow wellies looked older than me. My Da showed me how to cast the line out, and after a few tries I got the hang of it. Each time I'd try and cast the float out further than before, but wasn't expecting what happened next. I got a tug on the line. "Da, Da," I shouted, "I think I've got a fish." My Da put his rod down and came over. "Don't panic, son. Don't lose him." He held onto my shoulders so's this monster wouldn't sweep me off my feet. After what seemed ages, I got the fish out of the water. My Da was laughing, "It's only a baby, son." I'd caught a small rainbow trout. My Da suggested we put him back in, but there was no way. My first fish was coming back with us, so I could show my Mam and two sisters.

I felt bad for my Da that day. He hadn't caught anything, but he caught loads of fish in the past. Today was my day. When we got back to the caravan, my Mam was frying breakfast. My Mam and sisters made a big fuss and made me feel special that day. My Mam cooked the fish, and we all got a small piece with our fry-up. I was only seven years old, but for the rest of the day my Da made me feel like a man as he told all the local fishermen how his son caught his first fish today.



'JAMES CONNOLLY'
by DAVID

SIMON
BLACK BIRD

Black bird
Head tilted
Yellow beak
Open wide
No sound

DAVID
ADDICTION

I woke up on a bed of stone today
Dignity, pride faded away
A head full of blur
Body full of ache
I am cold, yet it is warm – body shakes
An empty bottle lies beside me
How I wish it was full
I arise to go and ease the pain
And the madness is, to do it all again

MARY
DROPPING OUT

My fella gives me a B for last night's dinner. An A+ in bed. My son gives me thumbs-up, but he said, if I put my mind to it, I could improve and get an A, and my little girl has given me a pass. But wait till they learn I'm dropping out altogether.

JIMMY
WET RAG

When I was about 7 years old I was playing with a friend from next door. We were throwing a wet rag at each other. But when I threw the rag at him, it missed him but broke his mother's window. I panicked and ran away, thinking I was going to get into trouble. I hid under a park bench all night. The neighbours and Gardaí were looking for me. The milkman found me about four in the morning and brought me home. My sister fainted. My mother told me everything would be ok. The neighbours and Gardaí were happy I was ok.



ALBERT
HELLFIRE CLUB

When I was younger, around 11 or 12, and also into my adolescent years, I can remember my Da bringing us up to the Hellfire Club. It was so exciting travelling in the van, a load of us thrown in the back, with the older lucky ones in comfort in the front, the smell of me Da's cigar wafting into the back. When we got there, we'd all jump out and assemble together. We began the long walk up. Me Da told us a story on the way up about Lucifer, the Devil, and card games. I was rattling. When we arrived at the top, there were big empty buildings. Other people were already up there. After a while, we sat and had a picnic and told stories. At the end of the day, we'd begin our long descent down.



'URBAN BUDDAH'
by SIMON



'LOVE ON THE WING'
by DARREN

JANINE
THE CHERRY TREE

My Uncle Bob was always telling my Uncle Will to sweep up those leaves there blocking the gate. Now, this tree was beautiful. I remember one time, back before my Nanny passed away in 1998, I was playing around this huge cherry tree and there was red sap coming from it and I stuck my finger in it and ran into the kitchen. "Nanny, Nanny, my finger's bleeding," and she cried, "Oh Bob, Will, quick, quick, Janine cut her finger." Nanny washed my finger under the tap and my uncles looked for plasters. I was trying to keep a straight face. I never did tell my Nanny I was playing.

I went back up to Nanny's after the summer holidays ended one Saturday night and I realised that the huge 35-year-old cherry tree was cut down. There would be no more juicy cherries for my brothers, cousins and I to eat anymore. I asked Nanny what happened and Nanny was upset. She didn't know till it was too late. My Uncle Bob cut it down because Uncle Will wouldn't sweep or pick up the leaves.

GERALDINE M
POLED

At lunch time, Dave was coming back from the shop and he spotted Jenny. He swung the car around and flew over to her.

– What's your game?, he said angrily.

– I'm not in the mood Dave, I'll see you later, she said, still upset, but he didn't notice she was upset. He was too self-centred to notice anything like that with anybody, including his poor old mother. He couldn't believe what she had just said.

– Listen babe, hop into the car and we'll buzz off, he said, trying to be nice.

– Look Dave, she said, I'm not in the humour, right! She was getting angry.

– Don't get fresh with me, bitch, or I'll slap you one. He was angry now. It's not my fault, it's the time of the month for you, he said, just to patronise her.

– What, she shouted. No, but it's your fault that I'm not ...

And she ran off into the safety of the school. He just sat there and thought about what had just been said. He didn't get it. About ten minutes later the penny dropped: She's poled, the fucking stupid bitch. Dirty slut, he thought.

– Well, it's not mine, he said out loud. When I get that bitch I'm gonna kill her.

He was pissed off now. He thought she wanted to trap him. He was so wrong. Poor Jenny, who was only thirteen, a baby! Having a baby! For her, when she met Dave, it was fun. She never thought a few months later she'd be pregnant. It was all too much for her. A few days went by and Dave finally rang her. They met up and went somewhere where they could talk to each other without fighting. He asked her was it his. And she broke down crying, sobbing.

– Yes, yes, I've only ever been with you, Dave. She had thought she loved him, but she knew now they didn't love each other.

– Look, we're going to be fine, Jen, we're going to your



'FLOWER' by GERALDINE M

parents. She looked up at him, tears streaming down her pretty face.

– I'm scared, Dave. They had to go to her parents. They couldn't make any hasty decisions. When they arrived at Jenny's Mam's house, only the Mam was in. Her Dad was in work. Dave said:

– Hello, Mrs Bell, I'm David Murray, I have been dating your daughter for a few months now.

Jen was scarlet, what was he saying, "I'm dating"? It just got worse from then. He went on to say that she was pregnant. The room was quite. Then Jen's Mam started screaming obscenities.

– You wait till your father gets home.

Jenny burst into tears. Dave then turned around and says

– Ehh, we don't know whether we're keeping it or not.

– What, shouted the mother, and have you got the money for that or are you going to get a little flat and settle down as a family, eh?

Dave got a fright, he didn't pick up on the sarcasm. He went to say something and, with that, Jen's Mam screamed at him to get out, now. She roared. He ran out the door. In a way he was happy he didn't have to sort out anything else. Jen's Mum went over to her daughter, put her arms around her and said:

– Don't worry, doll, we'll sort this out without that Dave.



DEFIANCE & HOPE.

AND THEY WANDERED OFF,
ZIG-ZAGGING ALONG THE COBBLESTONES,
OUT OF THEIR HEADS,
DISAPPEARING INTO A BLURRY HORIZON
OF ALCOHOL AND HEN PARTIES.



ALBERT
MY EARLY LIFE

When I was four years old, the doctor discovered I had scoliosis. My Ma was devastated, because before that I had already been in and out of hospital. When I was two, I had to have an operation on my eye, and when I was three, I had to undergo surgery on my toe. When I was diagnosed with scoliosis, I – as a child – wouldn't have understood. The burden would have been on my Ma and the rest of the family, but mainly my Ma. I had to wear all these pads stuck onto my back. They would be connected to this blue box, like a briefcase. I could carry it around with me. Electricity would pass through these pads and into my back to try to reduce the pain and straighten it. After a few years of this, the doctors decided it wasn't working, so the next step was a back brace fitted with straps. I wore this for 12 hours a day for five years, but still no change. I was 14 at the time, nearly 15. They decided they would have to operate on me, cause if they didn't do it soon the consequences would be dire. By dire, I mean I would have to walk around with a major hump on my back and be hungover for the rest of my life.



'WORK IN PROGRESS'
by GERALDINE M

PATRICK Mc
SMILIN' FACES

Devil, devil. Hell,
You labelled me so.
What the fuck do you know?
Smilin' faces, happy as can be
I know you want the same as me



JENNA
HAIKU, KIND OF

A frosty February rose on stone
Thorns and tears glistening

PETER
HAIKU

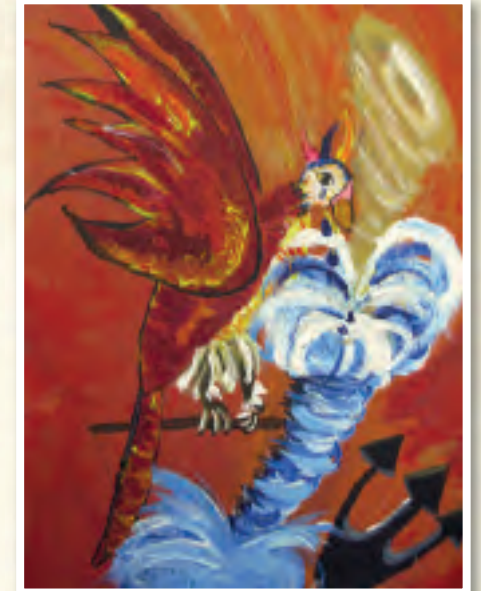
Spring, everywhere erupts
If it could just
Evaporate tears

MARY
POEM

The day I stop being there for you is the day I close my eyes
forever.
If I died and went somewhere far, I'd write your name on
every star
So everyone can look up and see that you're friendship
means the world to me



'FLOWER'
by MARY

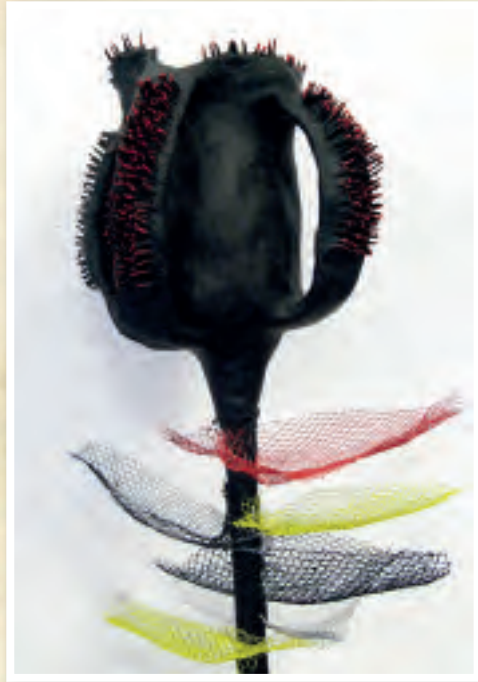


'TEARS OF JOY'
by JENNA

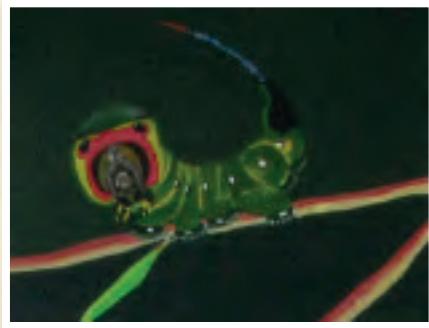
ROBERT
AGEING WILLOW TREE

With the gentle blowing wind
The chimes all singing
A beat of dripping water
Soft howling in the distance
Orchestra of sounds gently
Flowing through my ears

Words that say so much
Flowing under the blue skies
During the April winds
An ageing willow tree
Beaming light through
Its tired old green arms.



'DUTCH NAILOR'
by ROBERT



'SMALL BUT DEADLY'
by DAVID

DAVID TSUNAMI – BURIED ALIVE

Day nine, the stench of the leaking sewage is becoming unbearable. Gran's finally gone asleep. She hasn't slept in two days and I know she's in a lot of pain. Her toothless smile lifts my spirits and I can't help but think that her cat-like snores are keeping the rats at bay. This is not the first earthquake my Gran's lived through, and only for her being so well-prepared, we wouldn't even have light. She always kept a torch, batteries and tinned food in the cupboard. She told me it was for when the Americans invaded again. I'm not laughing now.

My right leg has become numb and I don't think that's a good sign, but at least the pain has gone. I think the noises outside are getting louder, but then I thought that yesterday. Gran finally wakes and asks for some water. We've only one bottle left between us. "Can you hear that noise?" she asked. The noise of a jack-hammer was definitely getting louder. I started to shout as loud as I could. Gran tried too, but her cries for help sounded more like a forced whisper. They finally heard our cries and I turned to Gran and said, "We're going to be alright." The concrete beam above us started to rise and a blinding light shone down over us. All I could make out was shadows of firemen. They took Gran out first, then carried me out. The noise of the screaming sirens sounded to me like a lullaby. I closed my eyes and smiled.

PADDY COMING OUT

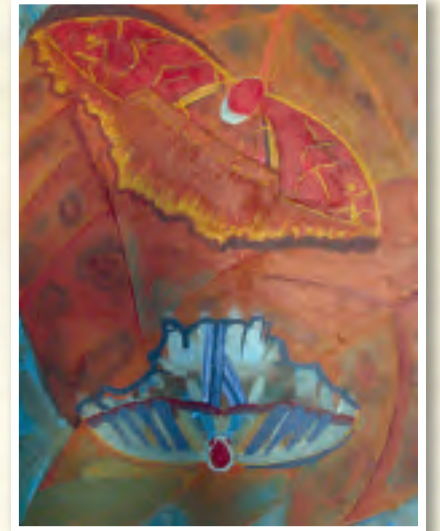
I am deep in the earth where no one can see
I'm cold and lonely in a place I don't want to be
It's dark, you see no light
I close my eyes, I pray to be strong
So I can lift myself up and into the sun
I stand tall, as tall as I can
And there it is, the beautiful sun
I'm up, I'm out, I feel so free.
I'm dancing in the wind
This is where I want to be

JIMMY SON

There was a young man from down my way
Who just found out he was gay
His mother said son
Dont worry, you're young
You're father was always that way

GARY WIDE-EYED

I'm goin' up the hill for Fredrick Street
T'wards the bright hot light of the sun
I closed my eyes to the dry summer heat
But my face still feels it and burns
I blindly to the shadows turn
And off my familiar streets I flee
It was when I got in to the darkness
I could open my eyes and see



'BUTTERFLY'
by GARY



'YOU'RE SOME TULIP'
by DAVID



'BURNING HEART'
by GLENN



CULTURE NIGHT.

– RE-LAX - YOUR - SHOULD-ERS.

– I'M - TRY-ING - TO!

– CON-CEN-TRATE.

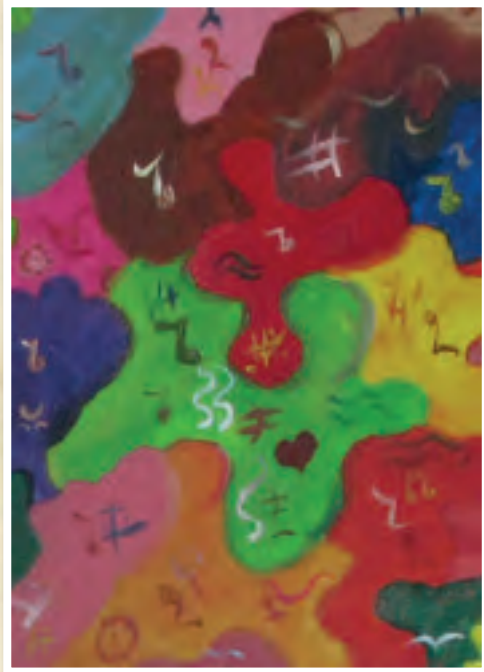
– I'M - DO-ING - ME - BEST,
FOR - JAY-SUS - SAKE.
THEY'RE - ALL - LOOK-ING - AT - ME...

– I - AM - SICK - TELL-ING - YOU,
WILL - YOU - RE-LAX...

– YOU - FUCK-IN - RE-LAX!

– I'M THE GREAT MASTER.
I DON'T NEED TO RELAX.
I AM RELAXED!





'PUZZLE' by NIAMH

Page 42: 'MAD HATTER' by DAVID

SIMON BOOK

A book sits on the shelf, there
Darkness on either side
Inside is a story
Life's story
Darkness at either end
Before and after
A book sits on the shelf
For now

JACKIE CREATIVE WRITING

Got into RADE at 12.05. Creative writing was great today. I don't usually get this class as I am always at the doctor and then with the counsellor. But today I got half of the class. We heard how to write a short story and we had to write one. I enjoyed this class a lot, and I wish I could do counselling on Mondays instead.

MARY OUR TAI CHI ROOM

You come up the stairs and you come through a blue door. It is a square room. The walls are blue and white. There are two windows and around the room there are books, painted pictures, tables, chairs and art stuff. We have two guitars and a water tank so we don't have to bring in drinks. We do our Tai Chi every morning in this room. There are two silver poles and, when doing Tai Chi, they get in our way. There is a white wardrobe at the back of the room. It has marks on it. What it is there for, we don't know.

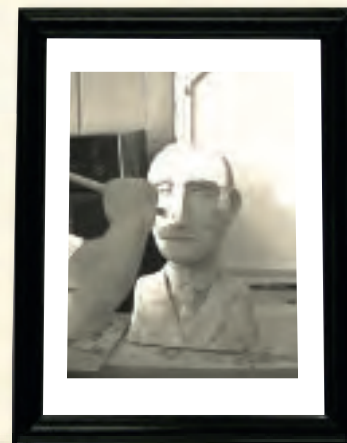
GLENN THIS ROOM

I think blue is calming.
It's got lots of room
It's always warm
There are some really nice artworks
The high ceiling gives it a light echo.
When nobody's talking and windows are closed, you can lightly hear the world outside.
Looking at the window
I see lots of buildings outside.
It's quite relaxing. Looking around when nobody's here
You can just imagine the participants here because you know where they all sit.



'FLOWERS'
by JENNA

'BUDDING
TODDLER'
by JANINE





DARREN
THIS ROOM

Energy flows through this room with all the different people using it. This room could tell a thousand stories, good and bad or otherwise. The different atmosphere, music filling the air, arms moving, legs wobbling. The two-tone colours all around – blue and white – send out a sense of freedom to discover our own talent within these walls. The air is filled with a light rose-filtered fragrance, emanating from the girls’ perfumes. The whistle of the breeze, then a silence descends on us all within this room. The discovery of oneself through an ancient Chinese art. Within this room, arms touching off paper. Hands put to the use of art, writing. Arms used as an expression of language.

JANINE
FINGERS AND TOES

I’d rather have fingers than toes,
Because when it comes to picking my nose,
I can’t get my toes up my nose.



JENNA
FAIRVIEW PARK

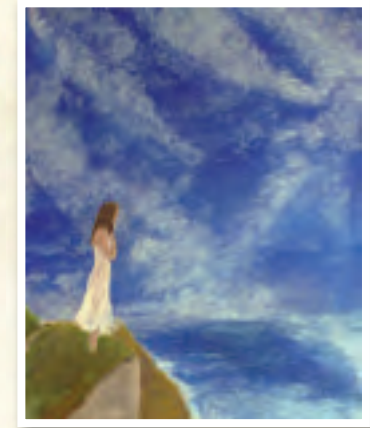
Finally, fresh air would clear my nose and all the city’s grit and grime was gone. Running for the sake of running, and laughing till we cried. All my brothers and little me. We had the ability to put the world on hold. Branches for swords. Gallant knights riding BMXs, wind blowing their hair back as they rode to save me, the princess, from the capture of the evil king who had locked me in a jungle gym jail. When I think of it now, it’s like a different person’s life. We forgot our troubles there, and forgot who was or wasn’t at home. We could be kids. My favourite place was Fairview Park.

JACKIE
SEAN

As I sat in the park, looking at my son playing with other children, it was great to see and hear the children all laughing out loud. As the time was getting on, I knew it was time to go home. I remembered how loud he cried and screamed – No, Mammy, just one more time! But I knew I would have to grab him, screaming and kicking. So I cajoled and promised him I would bring him to McDonald’s on the way home. Oh, how glad I was to see him smile in agreement.



‘BENBULBEN’ by PETER



‘THOUGHTFUL’
by MARTIN



‘WHEN, WHAT, IF’ by PATRICK MC
‘ALTERNATIVE FLOWER’ by ALBERT

GARY
THE GIRL IN COURT

The skinny rake of a thing. She barely had the strength to stand up straight in the dock. Old ripped cardigan with a big burn in the back. I could actually see the red t-shirt underneath. Well, I say red, it wasn't actually all red. It had black stains, white stains, and her jeans they must be ten sizes too big. Surely they never fitted her, but they did. I'd seen her only months earlier. She was three times bigger than she is now, poor girl. Is she afraid of soap or something? The grease in her hair, you'd think she stuck her head in a dirty chip pan. I have never seen someone rot away so quickly. She was a pretty girl. She could have been a model. Not now though, the only thing she could now model is shoes or socks. Poor thing.



'SEVEN MYSTERIES'
 by GLENN

GERALDINE C
LINE DANCING

When I was small, I used to love the PE room in school. I used to do line dancing. I'd wear my blue jeans, blue shirt tucked into them, and my ankle boots with the fur around them. I loved when there were lots of us in a group, all doing the same routine. I loved hearing the country music loud, and the group of us trying our best to stay together with the steps. I felt like I belonged there, that I was a part of something. Especially wearing the denim outfit. I felt like a cowgirl with the shirt tucked into my jeans. But I wished my boots sounded louder on the wooden floor.

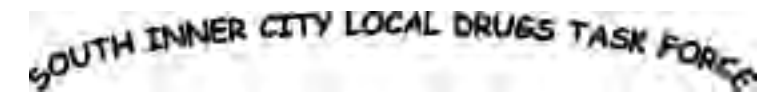


'HAND OF LOVE'
 by JOAN



'SUNFLOWER'
 by LIZ AND MARTIN

THANKS





RADE

RECOVERY THROUGH ART/DRAMA/EDUCATION