
Bray Arts Journal

Issue 7

March 2009

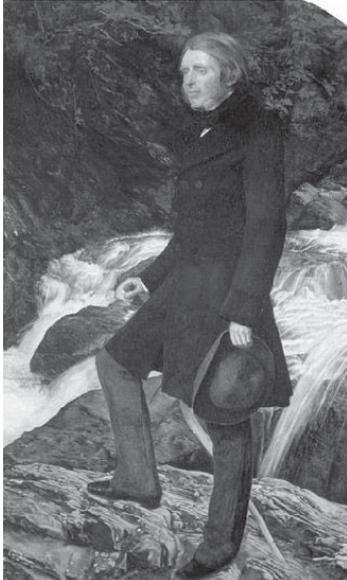
Volume 14



Of King's Treasuries

“Neither does a great nation send its poor little boys to jail for stealing six walnuts; and allow its bankrupts to steal their hundreds of thousands with a bow, and its bankers, rich with poor men’s savings, to close their doors ‘*under circumstances over which they have no control,*’ with a ‘*by your leave;*’ and large landed estates to be bought by men who have made their money by ... altering the common highwayman’s demand ‘*your money or your life*’ into ‘*your money and your life.*’

Sesame and Lilies
John Ruskin



John Ruskin 1819 - 1900

This extract from a lecture by John Ruskin in Manchester in 1864 has an uncanny resonance with the incredible revelations concerning our own bankers and money men. In his lecture Ruskin was making a case for a nation investing in Libraries, Art Galleries, Museums, Gardens and places of rest. These would be ‘accessible to all clean and orderly persons at all times of the day or evening’ and free of charge.

“... it is...better to build a beautiful human creature than a beautiful dome or steeple,” he concludes. In other words, invest in people and not “things;” is anyone listening?

COVER



This month’s cover is one of Angela Anderson’s haunting images from her upcoming multi-media exhibition at the Signal Arts Gallery.

To find out more about the exhibition go to page seven

Bray Arts Meeting

Monday February 2, 2009
review

The February meeting opened to a night of howling winds, lashing rain and bitter cold. Nothing daunted, the brave supporters gathered to enjoy a wonderful night of theatre, art and music.

The Bray Arts Theatre Group, winner of the recent one-act Drama festival in Bray, opened the evening with a rich, poignant and masterful performance of “The Lasts Act is a solo” under the direction of **Derek Pullen**. **Rosary Morley** was the winner of the Best Actress award of the entire



Derek Pullen, Rosary Morley, Jimm Fehilly, Martin Davidson

festival for her outstanding performance of the role of Laura Cunningham, an aging, renowned actress living on her memories and waiting to die. Rosary was supported by the ever popular **Martin Davidson** as her earnest nephew desperately trying to take care of his aunt while respecting her need for dignity. Laura Cunningham is expecting a visit from a leading film producer, played by **Jim Fehilly**, who disappoints her when he reveals that she is being asked to take a silent part in a play and not in a movie. The brilliance of the actors and the high quality of the production combined to transport the enthusiastic audience into the fading world of the great actress, sharing her poignant scenes and tragic disappointments as the unavoidable conclusion drew inexorably closer.

Paul Flynn presented his life’s work of painting and sculpture. Fascinated with people and how they present themselves to others, Paul depicted a wide variety of social



scenes including those of ladies parading the latest fashions and personal idiosyncrasies captured in oils, acrylics and Water Colour. He described his tribute to Samuel Beckett with a major portrait of various likenesses of the great artist. His admiring audience enjoyed his colourful representations of horses, riders and punters at ladies days, and other race meetings. He described his fascination with

the Burren and how he used dry stone walling with its colours and textures as windows on the Burren. He captured the fresh colours of the small flowers peeping out of cracks in the vast grey rocky landscape. Many of his works have been sold and are now in private collections.

The last item of the evening was a warm, vibrant musical presentation by **Mia Parsons** and **Evelyn Campbell**. Their songs and music brought the evening to a gentle end. Mia displayed a rich, expressive voice - singing without accompaniment and showing how a voice can be used as a



Mia Parsons

Evelyn Campbell

musical instrument in her moving rendition of the old Irish poem whose title translates as: "I am stretched on your grave". Mia was joined by Evelyn Campbell who accompanied the singing with her Guitar and voice. The two brought the evening to a close with a rousing encore.

Cearbhall E. O'Meadhra

Preview : Bray Arts Evening Mon. 2nd Mar 2009

Another great evening of stimulating conversation, Stories, Visual Art and great Music is in store for you at this upcoming Bray Arts Evening.

PHYL HERBERT came to the act of writing much later in her life than she had planned.

The desire to write was always there. One of her fellow students on the M.Phil in Creative Writing Programme at Trinity College said 'you were always writing in your head.' Phyl knows now that there is more to writing than thinking about it and the last few years has taught her that the process is about hard work and revision and rewriting.

Teaching and theatre occupied her working years. During her ten years of teaching in the Dublin Prisons, she taught Creative Writing and Drama. She devised many plays and won the best producer award in the P.J. O'Connor radio drama competition.

Phyl also worked with various theatre companies, both devising and directing plays. It is only in the past few years that she has started writing fiction and at present she is working on a collection of short stories.

Pat Conroy creates magical drawings. His exquisite drawings of Irish buildings, old ruins and his own imaginative creations are wonderful examples of art based on brilliant craftsmanship. Pat will talk about his inspiration and compulsion to produce this beautiful work.



Music:

Who has not heard of **Sonny Condell** and **Robbie Overson**. Sonny and Philip King set up Scullion in the late seventies and were joined by Jimmy Moran and Greg Boland. Some time later Jimmy and Greg left and Robbie Overson joined with Sonny and Philip.



Sonny Condell

Robbie brought his unique Spanish guitar style adding a new twist to Sonny and Philip's songs. In the late 80's the band went into semi-retirement occasionally

playing one off concerts while Condell concentrated on a solo career. Philip King became a TV producer while



Karen Casey and Robbie Overson

Overson played with many bands including Eleanor Shanley, Sean Keane and Karen Casey.

Good Friday

By Lauren Norton

Weather. Warm enough to turn us out of doors for a quick jaunt down the town, before it shows its true colours,

and sends us home again - hoods full of hailstones, hands pink and frozen, enclosed around their own warmth.

Upon return, the new rake was prong way up in the yard, mother was sheltering in the doorway, looking at her watch

and the blue again sky. *Christ died at three o'clock* she said,
as I shook the hardened rain from my clothes.

Now she's back at it, tearing through the ground roots. A pair of Marigolds joins her body's jagged effort

to that slim implement with its teeth sunk in the turf. I wonder if that mid-afternoon flush of faith makes it

any easier. My brother wanders in saying his cheese tastes like ice-cream, *lapse* hangs at the door of my ear.

Nick's Dreamsong

By Lauren Norton

At a Best Western in Indiana,
Nick watched a Jim Carey movie
With his brother Jack
And his sister Jill.

To show the film before dinner,
Certain scenes were cut, or skewed,
No back-arcing screams wrenched through
A hundred identical rooms.

At bay, at bay,
The sameness of the halls,
The lights always on,
At bay.

Jack nearly broke his crown,
When Carey's mouth clenched around the word
"ASS" and the censor piped, "butt!"
The siblings reeled and clutched their sides,
No more unlikely sound could
Emanate from that yawning shape.

Odd what appears two miles inland after a tsunami,
Driving through the rice fields north of Sacramento
Nick swore he saw a carrack,
A seizure in the arc.

In Marin,
Nick's father has taken to laying floorboards,
Cultivating vines on land long
Resigned for housing the uber rich.
His lawyered hands grapple
With an endless list of Sunday projects -

The natural corollary
To finding Jack's bike,
Propped on its kickstand
On the Golden Gate bridge,
And no Jack in sight.

The mouth clenches in some terrible expression,
The words come tumbling after.

There is a glamorous poverty in Bohemia

After a painting *The Artist's Studio*
by Sir John Lavery, National Gallery Dublin.

By Shirley Jane Farrar

I married an exotic bird and there she muses
in my lofty studio.

She is doing what women do -
holding a pose, playing the crowd.

Our maid - Aida - makes a pretence
of carrying forbidden fruit.

My wife is cutting edge, ahead of her time,
arm candy, pointing her crimson shoe,

putting her best views forward,
a beautiful woman in the big picture,

her velvet arm, warm around the shoulder
of our daughter Alice.

I stand in the background watching
my stepped-over daughter who looks for all the
world

past my love, queen in her blue feathered cap,
feathering her nest as the grand piano, silent,

drapes a silk across its back.
Hanging in the darkness on the wall -

The Hero on horseback, while Rodney,
my faithful greyhound, guards in stone.

the city shook, schools and hospitals crumbled;
only the infants in their incubators were spared.

Elsewhere their anger oozes still,
the slow-cooling fire that sculpted enigmatic
causeways,
pitch their wits against elements.

Ambush

Brutality was not
what sprang to mind in the afterglow.
Neither of them saw it coming
as they dressed hurriedly and walked,
without touching, to the car.
But it stopped him in his tracks
when the words *this is pointless*
sprang from the shadows

Next day when he asked
she could not recall the words on her lips,
but felt the rawness of the wound
they had opened point-blank.

AGGIE 'n' US

By Hugh Raftery

Mrs. Bergin or Aggie as she is generally known is a large, large person who might be sympathetically described as forceful but is in fact a belligerent bitch of a woman. Sometime, somewhere, Aggie formed a bad opinion of men and it was no secret that in her opinion they should all be bagged and drowned at birth. She was the ogre of our childhood and now as grown men, when we can't avoid her, we tiptoe carefully in her presence and none more so than her son.

Colm Bergin is very heavysset and is an extremely lazy individual with a fundamental fear of work that is matched only by his absolute terror of Aggie. Such energy as he does expend is directed solely at surviving her attentions. For instance, he knows absolutely nothing about boating or the sea but that in no way hindered his impulse to buy a twelve foot row boat complete with oars and a small, well abused, two stroke outboard engine. It's just perfect, he had said, obviously picturing balmy days of sea going pleasure, perhaps some fishing or maybe just idling, at a considerable remove from Aggie. And it worked for him. Most days through the early months of that summer we would watch him coming or going on the water, his big frame made bigger by a life vest, looking awkward and out of place in the little craft, the small engine smoking and puttering, the prow of the boat riding high and crooked in the water due to his considerable weight leaning against the backboard. He would smile and wave grandly at all those he passed. He looked comical and we gave him hell which he took in good part. Still no one was ever brave enough to take him up on his offer of a 'turn around the bay'; it seemed too damned dangerous to us but he was sublimely happy to be out of reach. So it came as a surprise one Saturday afternoon when Aggie turned up at the dock with Colm in tow.



Torching the Brown River.

Lorna Shaughnessy's first collection explores the nature of loss, the possibility of change and the ephemeral world of relationships. Her heart is her true barometer as she weaves a delicate web of verse. This assured collection, with its arduous sense of enquiry, crosses borderlines of time and space, speech and silence, mapping the poets creative journey, with an eye firmly on the rear view

mirror. Noel Monahan

Causeways

Snow on Popocatépetl, the Sleeping Woman
yawns and stretches, a half-moon smiles
crookedly as the last lights go out in the valley
and parched city licks the hillside.

A blurred photograph falls from a wallet,
lovers seated on basalt columns an ocean away,
her arms bind his chest in a tight girdle
as though her life depended on it,
as though he could stop the wind
that whips their clothes and hair.

In eighty-five the gods thrashed in their graves,

What use is Art?

by **Majella Breen**, MA, H. Dip (Community & Adult Education)

We were sitting on the seawall, about six of us, me and Pat Conaty and Suds Dolan and a few more, enjoying the sunshine and planning our evening.

“Holy Jesus,” Suds said’ “wouldja look at tha?” There was something in the timbre of his voice that made us all turn and stare as one at the dockside, where Aggie toggled out in rain gear and a lime and scarlet life vest stared back at us. Colm waved at us but we took little notice because the venom in her stare rocked us so much that Pat almost tumbled in to the water. We were too far away to catch her words but I watched her lips move and I’m sure she said ‘idle fuckin’ pricks’ or something along those lines. It was enough to make us put our heads down but we continued a furtive watch on them as they prepared for sea. It was strange but I thought that Colm actually looked happy as he handed his mother in to the boat. It was quite a sight, like one elephant taking a larger elephant through the steps of an intricate ‘pasa doble’ and it was enough to start Suds sniggering and soon we were all at it, at least until I came to my senses.

“Shut up,” I hissed, “for fuck’s sake you’ll have her over here.”

We tried to be quiet but things at the boat got worse. Aggie was now settled at the back but the boat was wobbling badly and Aggie was being splashed as Colm tried to keep his balance while he stood over the engine and pulled the starting cord without result. He pulled again and again with greater force and as he grew more agitated and Aggie got wetter our sniggers turned to belly laughs. At last the engine caught and with great difficulty Colm began to squeeze in alongside his mother; their two big backsides taking up most of the seat and leaving only a narrow awkward access to the steering arm. We were beyond laughter at that stage; I was trying to catch my breath, Suds was weeping and Pat was wheezing something about ‘pissing his drawers’. When Colm got settled their combined weight forced the rear of the boat down until the gunwale was almost awash and the prow was sticking up at an angle from the water. Aggie was roaring and Colm was shouting and we were helpless. They got it sorted by leaning forward until equilibrium was restored and it was in this position that they cruised slowly past us, heads down, backsides up and Colm barely managing to control the steering. But he did manage to wave at us with his other hand and to give us his usual smile. Aggie did not wave or smile, she stared at us, her head turned upwards at a painful looking angle and her eyes implacably murderous. We tried to keep straight faces and the fear helped but we could not and we laughed in the face of terror.

They cleared the dock and we were watching them move in to the bay when Petey Thompson who worked one of the fishing boats approached us. He was trying to look serious and barely suppressing a smile.

“Ye should be ashamed of yourselves, so ye should,” he said. “Here we have the raw material of tragedy and ye’re makin’ fun of it.”

He seemed surprised when we laughed even harder and soon enough he joined in.

God, it was the best craic we had all year.

While carrying out a routine evaluation with a student, I recently found myself completely floored by the above question.

As the co-ordinator of a back to education and training programme for Traveller women, I am obliged to ensure that the participants understand the course content meets their needs and assists their progression.

The programme is based around core skills such as literacy, numeric and I.T. skills. However, informed by education-ists such as Maxine Greene¹: we endeavour to include the opportunity for creative expression and have run various art related modules.

I felt admonished to “Stick to the facts” as headmaster Gradgrind advises in the opening of ‘Hard Times’ by Charles Dickens.

Thoughts regarding dominant values, the hegemony of hard skills over soft, flooded my brain: all utterly useless in terms of a response. I stuttered and stammered and the best I could come up with was that some of the students on the course enjoyed doing art.

Recovery time was short as the next issue of the day presented itself for resolution and by the time I was driving home that afternoon my mind was occupied by something entirely different.

Unknown to my conscious self, however, I had stored the question away in a quiet recess of neurons. Normally I sleep through the night but at approximately four o’clocks in the morning I awoke from the symbolism of my dreams feeling elated by what was now obvious to me.

A couple of days later I set some time aside in my class and wrote on flipchart: What use is Art?

The programme participants came up with the following responses:

- *Using imagination*
- *Relaxation*

The first response was particularly gratifying for me to hear, as the title of the aforementioned Maxine Greene’s book is ‘Releasing the Imagination’ and this is precisely what we seek to do.

At this point I wrote up my response:

- *Using symbolism*

As human beings we have the ability to think in the abstract and to use symbols to represent our ideas. Letters, numbers, images, sounds all having the ability to be used as symbols.

Recently my organisation (Bray Travellers Community Development Group) published a booklet of stories by our programme participants. The Art tutor and I chose the illustrations for the individual chapters from etched prints created by the women.

I asked the class why they thought we had chosen images of a butterfly and birds to illustrate the chapter called 'Travelling'. The following is a synopsis of their responses.

Butterflies and birds can fly. Flying represents freedom; creatures that fly find it easier to roam. Specifically in this case, what is being represented could be the freedom of travelling or the freedom to travel. An important point is that there can be more than one interpretation of what is being represented.

¹ Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the Imagination: Essay; on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Signal Arts Upcoming Exhibitions

The Palimpsest of Home

A Multi-Media Exhibition by Angela Anderson
From Tues 3rd Mar to Sun 15th Mar 2009
Opening Reception: Fri 6th Mar 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.



Angela is tracing the idea of home and its meaning to her and others. She worked in a local authority housing estate, from which the residents had long since been rehoused; but were still surrounded by the neglected and abandoned buildings that had once been home to them all. She examined their idea of home, what it meant to them now and what it had symbolised during the years they had lived in this area.

Faoi Bláth

Photography Exhibition by Jane Talbot
From Wed 18th Mar to Sun 29th Mar 2009
Opening Reception: Fri 20th Mar 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

The work for this exhibition concerns taking a fresh look at the everyday plants around us. From the mastery of design that makes the humble buttercup to the swirling



complexity at the heart of a sunflower. The 37 varieties of flora in this exhibition all grow in the west of Ireland and each are examined with microscopic intensity, exposing the vivid sensuality and voluptuous abundance of nature. All the exhibited images are taken outdoors in natural light and are straight shots without any digital manipulation.

Light Shadows

Photography Exhibition by Rachel Randall
From Tue 31st Mar to Sun 12th April 2009
Opening Reception: Thur 2nd April 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

The work for this exhibition deals with the fragility and transience of human life through nature. The autobiographical aspect of the work offers an insight into the art-



ist's way of thinking. How the permanence of the photograph can translate our experience into images and record what is momentary, rendering the intangible into something more real. Light causes a physical sensation and an intellectual emotion in all of us, as humans we respond to light. This work explores how we react to light and shade, and the associations that they encompass.



Burn After Reading is the latest of the Cohen Brothers films. Everything they do is quite watchable and this comedy is no exception. A computer disk containing some sensitive government information is lost in a fitness centre. Two employees find the disk and try to blackmail the originator of the information. Most of the actors put in good performances. This isn't a laugh out loud film but the situations are quite humorous and very

believable. The paranoia portrayed is not just American but could take place in any country where those in power think that any sensitive information that shows any government in a bad light is a government secret.

Submission Guidelines

Editor : Dermot McCabe : editor@brayarts.net

Creative Writing Editor : Anne Fitzgerald :
afitzgerald3@ireland.com

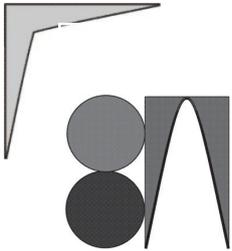
Email submissions to any of the above or post typed submissions to

The Editor BAJ 'Casino',
Killarney Rd. Bray,
Co. Wicklow

Deadline 15th of each month.

Bray Arts website : www.brayarts.net

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*Arts Evening Monday 2nd Mar 2009
at the Heather House Hotel Strand Road 8:00 pm
5 Euro / 4 Euro Conc. Everyone is welcome.*

Phyl Herbert : reading from her short story collection.

Pat Conroy: Of Castles and Dragons. Pat presents his beautiful drawings of castles, ruins and Dragons

Sonny Condell and Robbie Overson: More magic from two renowned musicians.

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