

THE MOULDY BIKE



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Foreword

By Willie Gilsenan

"Your talk", I said, "is surely the handiwork of wisdom, because not one word of it did I understand" -O' Brien

Some quip. I wondered what wisdom there was in having the brass to call this journal, 'literary', but I needn't have worried once the first few submissions came in. After numerous, spluttering stop-starts, the pieces began to flow and out of it came what is here'th'be'there'now *The Mouldy Bike*. There is a certain wisdom in naming your novel, piece or whatever have you after the work is done. I can't remember heeding this with *The Mouldy Bike*, to be honest. The name of the journal and its contents are, I think anyway, in concord together, the earliest pieces received almost informing the spirit of the editorial.

Two things were very humbling. One, sifting through the quality of the work that make up the finished article was incredible, there's some brilliant humour and honesty in the pieces. Two, the endless patience of Matt, Orla, Ruth, Gally, Sam and more. I owe ye big time boys and girls!

Alack, I'm going to leave it there because you need to get going on these literary steamboats. I may have bored you already. But stay awhile longer! This is the good stuff. It blew me away and it will blow you away too. We will be back again in the coming months for some more *Mouldy Bike* adventures, so don't read them too fast! Here is a presentation of the young Irish talent out there that is oftentimes disappointingly underrepresented.

Oh, and we are running a little competition. To the person who can find the most typos in the following pieces, we will reward you with a non-

redeemable €100 voucher for O' Nolan's Bicycle Emporium who have branches in every county town in the country as per the latest *So You're Tracing Your Irish Roots* (1987), with which you can recklessly spend on a variety of pedal-propelled-paraphernalia; "Saddle-up and Get Your Asses Down to O' Nolan's Bicycle Emporium". To the runner-up, you shall be richly rewarded with a position at The Mouldy Bike Press, as an Intern Editor. Your publishing career looks green. Good luck!

Playdates

By Daniel Galvin

Me and Joe used to invite friends over after school
under false pretences.

We promised we'd play tip the can.
We promised we'd play football.
Instead we had them act in short films
which we co-wrote as we went.

We had Reilly stripped to the waist
on location in the ruins of a nearby famine village.
He played a superhero
doing push-ups in some long-dead family's living room,
swinging from trees in their garden.

He protested and protested
said it was stupid and none of his other friends did this
but he was outnumbered and lacking vision.

Liam played a crazed puppeteer
in a documentary charting his rise and fall.
We taped socks to his hands for the puppets.
When the fame gets too much, the puppeteer unravels,
so we pinned him down and tickled
until the madness came through.

Working with amateurs proved frustrating.
Little Michael was useless as a Western lead.
Blind without his glasses, devoid of charisma, timid as shit
we had him smoke five of my father's John Majors
until his performance developed some grit.

Quiet Ken was awarded our most challenging role-
unable to convince us he was not a method actor
he mimed the Velvet Underground's 'White Heat. White Light.'
into a blinking lens for three and a half hours
until he finally winked at the right time.
Then we made him drop acid, strip to his jocks
and cluck like a chicken in the coop
with the rest of the chickens.
Then we made him lay an egg.

Brendan got bit by an aggravated dog
in a failed escape from the plantation.
Brian took the beatings like a silent champ
in a piece which tackled domestic abuse.
Timothy refused to do the shower scene.
William cried and went home.

Mom found the videos and deleted them all,
Rang Joe's mother and a counsellor.
Now I don't see Joe anymore

and nobody comes over after school.

Tip the can is shit alone

so I kick the ball through every window in the house

and go inside to watch *Le Regle du Jeu*.

Style

By Daniel Galvin

After Charles

Went for a pint to get things moving,
read Bukowski at the bar for inspiration.

All that came to me-

Bukowski's a miserable prick.

I shrugged and tipped out for a smoke
to find him appraising me
from behind a bottle of terrible American beer
his eyes oozing contempt for my soft face
un-punched by life.

He gobbled a curse in my direction
and the closest I got to poetry that day
was when I pinged my cigarette hard off his nose
with style
then took the bottle to his skull
with even more of it.

Cars and Dismissal

By Leah Keane

Where some families have a dining room
to talk about big issues, the Keane family has the car.

Not one car necessarily, different ones
over the years, each one slightly less shitty than the last,

and the thing is
that you're in cars a lot,
so it could happen at any time really.

Maybe one trip you're just in the mood
to talk to your Mam about the fact that you love boobs.

Or a bit drunk, she's driving you home from the pub
and it slips out — that you really really like it when girls get their nips out.

You see the real thing is
that you don't believe in big issues
and you often talk in monotone,

so it's quite likely that this is how the conversation would go:

“Well.”

“Well.”

“Were ye busy today?”

“Ah. It was alright.”

Seat belts on then silence for ten minutes.

There are some poorly kept bushes on a roundabout.

It reminds you of your own poorly kept bush.

“Mam, I think I’m gay.”

I don’t think she’d mind.

One night she was drunk,
ended up coming home at around three o’ clock.

I was in bed in my brother’s room downstairs
because I thought I heard mice in the attic.

I heard her rummaging around in the kitchen for a while.
Then she was on the phone with someone,
so she went outside the backdoor to have a smoke —
a habit of hers since I can remember.

Later she must have noticed
that an extra light was on downstairs,
so in she came and sat down
half on top of me by the edge of the bed.

And oh how she lamented.
She'd had a horrible lovers' quarrel
with her partner of nearly twenty years —
a retired Eircom installation man,
who loves taking her out to dinner on Strand Hill
and talking about his bladder and the neighbours.

And I said, "Sure you'll get back together."

"No, no. Not this time."

She let out a drunken sigh.

"Promise me, Leah that when you get a bit older
you'll marry a nice, rich man who'll take care of you
and then you'll never have to work a day in your life.
A man...

or a woman, I don't care, as long as you're happy."

Of course they got back together two weeks later,
but those words gave me enough

to make me feel secure.

The Keane family has the car for big issues.

Like that time when I was nine

And Mam told me that Nana was dying.

Out she came with it, in a calm, sympathetic voice, “Leah,
Nana’s very sick and she’s not going to get better.”

I had been sitting in the back seat,
and when I started crying
she urged me to come crawl into the front
where she hugged me very gently against her
with one arm around my shoulders
and the other resting firmly on the wheel —
all the while she never stopped driving.

I’m not worried about being excommunicated,
not from any church or even from my own family.
I suppose my biggest fear is dismissal.
You always hear talk about “phases”,
and as someone who has seemingly no solid foundations for what I feel,
that fear is all too legitimate.
I’ve never kissed a girl or even been in a proper relationship.

So the problem is,
how does one communicate a fact without any sources?

It's more difficult.
She'll ask, "Well, where's this woman then?"
and I'd rather avoid all that.

So should I come out now
or wait until I've met a girl
who'd like to drink tea with me
and watch bad TV.

A girl who's sweet enough not to cringe
when she reads my poetry,
and would not be opposed
to having sex in weird places

Or drinking in quiet bars
that play the Rolling Stones,

And if you haven't dismissed me yet,
I promise to propose as soon as I get my car.

I Will Arise and Go Now

By Samuel Ford

*I will arise and go now, and go down to the fridge,
And a small breakfast build there, of egg and sausage made:
Nine baked beans will I have there, a mug of Barry's Tea;
And slurp alone in a fug of marmalade.*

William Butler Yeats, "The Big Fridge of Inisfree" in *Selected Poems*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2000).

I tend to arise earlier when I know that there are decent breakfast things sitting in the fridge downstairs. No, not even breakfast things: it's the sausages that really matter. The first thing I do when I awake is to visualise that fateful second shelf and recall what was sitting on it the day before. Certain sausages will drastically accelerate my willingness to get up into that day, whereas others will repel me back to sleep with their awfulness. For example: a pound of sausages from Troy's of Moore Street will have me leaping out of the bed like a fresh nun at dawn. "Rise and shine and give God your glory-glory!" I shriek internally as I go bounding down the stairs. On the other hand, a packet of Denny, Galtee or any other industrial nightmare sausage will send me straight back to sleep with a moan or a melodramatic palm to the forehead. Ugh! Why get up for that rubbish when you could turn over and have a few more REM mini-sleeps? I have developed a visual scale to help explain this point more clearly, provisionally entitled The Sosso Scale.

Perhaps in years to come it will be as indispensable to science as the Beaufort Scale for wind force, or Giuseppe Mercalli's scale for the intensity of earthquakes.

(In ascending order of merit)

Denny/Galtee - Industrial filth. More flavour to be found in your average ashtray. Sausages should not be a memento mori but these ones act as a constant reminder of your mounting irrelevance and inevitable death. An unsettling shade of pink. Score: 1

Tesco Finest - If this is their "finest" then Tesco need to try a lot harder. Boo! Score: 2

Glenshallagh - A truly nauseating sausage. For some reason, they are infused with bacon or black pudding. I might well want those things with my breakfast but as separate entities alongside the sausage component as opposed to inside the sausage itself. Score: 3

Brannan's - A truly dull name for a truly dull sausage. Makes one think of Bran Flakes or Brennan's Bread Today. Has anyone ever rejoiced after a biteful of Brannan's? No, they have not. Score: 4

Granby - the taste of the Dublin tenements of 1911. Flavour palette includes Older Man's Unwashed Foot, Crumbling Floorboard and Blocked Chimney. Slightly more exciting than 1-4 at the very least. Score: 5

Superquinn - For many people, this is the ultimate sausage. Indeed, the texture is good and the flavour is decent. That said, I find them slightly overrated and the supermarket itself no longer exists. Score: 6

Kearns - A reassuringly brown sausage when compared with the upsetting pinks of 1-6. Pleasant to behold both cooked and uncooked. An earthier taste than the others and perfect with tea. Score: 7

M&S Rarebreed - “Burn everything English except their coal!” (Jonathan Swift). You won’t want to burn these fellows because whatever forgotten English piggos they use are spectacularly delicious. Quite unlike any other sausage on the market. Swallow your pride (and your Sinn Féin membership card) and get down to M&S. Score: 8

Etherson’s - A wonderful sausage from Cabra. Just the right ratio of pork to rusk. Serve it up with ketchup or a bit of Ballymaloe relish and you will be singing / crying tears of joy all morning. A lot of butcher’s sausages would be around this mark (e.g. Troy’s). Score: 9

Byrne’s - Pole position goes to a sausage that has ceased to be. Byrne’s of Phibsborough smoked their own sausages onsite but the place closed down about three years ago. This mythical smoked sausage of my youth is remembered on a curious Facebook page called HAM Maker. Perhaps there is a sausage somewhere in Dublin that might someday come close. If so, I have yet to find it. But we live in hope. Score: 10

So yeah. I like a snossidge in the morning as part of my morning routine. I like to think that I am part of a hallowed tradition of sausage enthusiasts from the pantheon of Irish literature. Indeed, when WB Yeats won the Nobel Prize in 1923, he cooked up a sosso feast for himself and his wife:

Early in November [1923] a journalist called to show me a printed paragraph saying the Nobel Prize would probably be conferred upon Herr [Thomas] Mann, the distinguished novelist, or upon myself. I did not know the Swedish Academy had ever heard my name. Then after some eight days comes the telephone message from The Irish Times saying that the prize had indeed been conferred upon me; some ten minutes after that comes a telegram from the Swedish Ambassador; then journalists come for interviews. At half past 12, my wife and I are alone, and search the cellar for a bottle of wine, but it is empty, and as a celebration, we cook sausages."

Yeats' syntax is very ambiguous: is he celebrating his Nobel Prize win or is he celebrating the fact that there was no wine in the cellar? What of the quality of the sausages? Where would he have placed them on the scale? Alas, we will never know because he is with O'Leary in the grave.

One man who was very concerned about sausage quality in his time is the great Brendan Behan. In the following extract from his autobiography *Borstal Boy* (1958), he is clearly still smarting after a very negative culinary experience at the hands of a stingy English rentier:

This landlady was mean and as barren as a bog. Her broken windows would be a judgment on her for the cheap sausages and margarine she poisoned her table with, for she was only generous with things that cost little cash, locking hall doors at night time and kneeling down to say the Rosary with the lodger and her sister, who always adds three Hail Marys for holy purity and the protection of her person and modesty, so that you would think half the men in Liverpool were running after her, panting for a lick of her big buck teeth.

Brendan Behan literally smashed up this woman's windows after a mediocre breakfast. This may seem extreme but, like Brendan, I am liable to say and do rather mean things after a bad banger. Which is why starting your day with a 6+ on the Sosso Scale is so important. Cheap sausages are POISON! If you are a member of the propertied classes, be sure to provide your lodgers with good quality sausages as otherwise you may find your good name – or indeed your windows – severely damaged.

The anticipation of a really good sausage can be enough to get you singing, a universal truth we see personified in Captain Boyle in Seán O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924):

BOYLE: [...] Breakfast! Well, they can keep their breakfast for me. Not if they went down on their bended knees would I take it — I'll show them I've a little spirit left in me still! (He goes over to the press, takes out a plate and looks at it) Sassige! Well, let her keep

her sassige. (He returns to the fire, takes up the teapot and gives it a gentle shake) The tea's wet right enough. (A pause; he rises, goes to the press, takes out the sausage, puts it on the pan, and puts both on the fire. He attends the sausage with a fork.)

BOYLE (singing):

When the robins nest agen,
And the flowers are in bloom,
When the Springtime's sunny smile seems to banish all
sorrow an' gloom;
Then me bonny blue-ey'd lad, if me heart be true till
then—
He's promised he'll come back to me,
When the robins nest agen!

(He lifts his head at the high note, and then drops his eyes to the pan.)

After an argument with his wife, Captain Boyle is determined to scorn the sausage she has left for him but, as we see, his resistance lasts all of two seconds (they must have been at least an 8). I looked up “When The Robins Nest Again” on YouTube and, while it wouldn’t be my first musical choice while frying up a solitary “sassige”, I can certainly identify with Boyle’s instinct to glance lovingly at the pan as the entire operation nears completion.

Seconds later, at the sound of approaching footsteps, Boyle “whips the pan off the fire and puts it under the bed” for fear that he might end up having to share his breakfast. As it transpires, it is merely a passing sewing machine salesman:

BEARDED MAN: You don't happen to want a sewin'
machine?

BOYLE (furiously): No, I don't want e'er a sewin' machine!
(He returns the pan to the fire, and commences to sing
again.)

As a resident of Inner City Dublin – I live 1.1km from Mountjoy Square where *Juno* is set – I can assure the reader that this an occupational hazard that continues to this day. The underside of my bed is black from the amount of times I've had to hide a frying pan from hungry sewing machine salesmen who stroll into my lodgings unannounced.

No discussion of sausages in Irish literature would be complete without a nod to James Joyce. 7 Eccles Street, the fictional home of Leopold Bloom, is just 650m from my front door and the fictional Dlugacz's butchers of Upper Dorset Street is even closer again. In Chapter 4 of *Ulysses*, we follow Bloom on his mission to procure breakfast materials for himself, his wife and his cat:

He halted before Dlugacz's window, staring at the hanks of sausages, polonies, black and white. [...] The shiny links, packed with

forcemeat, fed his gaze and he breathed in tranquilly the lukewarm breath of cooked spicy pigs' blood.

[...] He stood by the nextdoor girl at the counter. Would she buy it too, calling the items from a slip in her hand? Chapped: washingsoda. And a pound and a half of Denny's sausages. His eyes rested on her vigorous hips.

[...] The porkbutcher snapped two sheets from the pile, wrapped up her prime sausages and made a red grimace.

—Now, my miss, he said.

She tendered a coin, smiling boldly, holding her thick wrist out.

—Thank you, my miss. And one shilling threepence change. For you, please?

Leopold Bloom is too distracted by his neighbour's "vigorous hips" to notice her atrocious taste in sausages. Denny's is a 1 on the Sosso Scale, lest we forget... the absolute *wurst*. Indeed, the old dirtbird hopes his own transaction will be conducted quickly so that he can catch up with his neighbour and walk behind her "moving hams". Filth! It was on the strength of this oh-so-fleeting passage that Denny chose to provide substandard sausages to 10,000 people on the 100th anniversary of Bloomsday in 2004. They set up tables all along the median of O'Connell Street for what they called The Bloomsday Centenary Breakfast, dispensing 20,000 sausages, 10,000 rashers and 2,000 sticks of black and white pudding. (I for one am glad I was not present).

What of Samuel Beckett? Terry Eagleton provides an answer:

Those starved words, gaunt bodies and sterile landscapes of Beckett's dramas may well carry with them a race memory of the Irish famine, a catastrophe that was the slow death of language as well as of one million people. The famine decimated the farm labourers and small tenants, who made up most of the Irish speakers, and using the language in post-famine Ireland rapidly became a symbol of ill-luck. It is possible to read Beckett's meticulously pared-down prose as a satirical smack at the blather and blarney of stage-Irish speech. Beckett hoards his meagre clutch of words like a tight-fisted peasant, ringing pedantic changes on the same few signs or stage properties like someone eking out a scanty diet. There is, perhaps, a Protestant suspicion of superfluity here, in contrast to the extravagant expenditure of a Joyce, the linguistic opulence of J. M. Synge or the verbal gluttony of Brendan Behan.

In other words... not a sausage.

Shared Toys

By Ruth Ennis

My sister was the shiny new robot
That Amsterdam craved. They wanted to play
With all the wit, speed, and superpowers
She had. All of that which was taken for
Granted in the land that stays fixated
On nineteen-sixteen. But they sent her on
Too many far-away missions; too much
Time with other robots 'til she missed her
Placid teddies with the emerald eyes.
So she came back home.

My best friend in school was the fastest grey
Race car I've ever met. Speeding between
Her careful, articulate English and
Her rapid, passionate Polish, she built
The motorway between her imposed home
And her memory of home. Sometimes she
Has two homes, sometimes she has one or none.
Sometimes she has a pit stop and nothing
More. Her wheels keep spinning; directionless.
She's looking for home.

That Syrian boy who sat in the back
Of an ambulance is a rag doll. He

Watches the war-figurines clash and boom
With each other. His fabric arms flop and
His marble eyes can't cry. He has been tossed
And thrown in games of no pretending, but
Now the game-maker has no interest in
Building a new world for him. The rag doll
Hopes to create a new home for himself
But can't lift his arms.

A Co(s)mic Foray on the Infinitude written for landscape

By Daniel Mulcahy

Within the clasp-shut suitcase is

a bag of balloons:
deflatable moons

Inside of which are
clowncars stuffed with
collapsible bikes like crumpled
leaves scabbed with the corpses of nuclear
submarines in psychedelic yellow tones

within which squat scuff-haired
children squinting beneath bulbous
brows downwards upon a sparsely forested

Mountainrange with fully integrated
billygoats eating tiny smoke-chimblied thatched
chalets on whose scratchy roofs perch a motley assortment of
crows infested by dogs sporting fashionable pouches full of cats and cat
kindred that purvey
stalls selling recreational vehicles and cloakrooms and too many haberdashers
to count not to mention the

towers of precarious jelly tots and vegetarian confectionary and bon bons and
pom-poms and human skulls that crowd around the
spirits of homeopathists juggling elephants and ziggurats flailing towards the
zeppelin-bathed metropolis floating high beneath the fountains of
Living light streams scintillating across a grimace of cloud –

shooting over goathorns and mountaintops
sneezing out of noses and portholes and valveholes and glovecompartments,
swelling out of the moon until it fair seemed fit to burst

beyond the span of the suitcase lid that never

could

quite

close

Writing to the Drum Beat

By Jack Taheny

So he walked home from work, right down the hill where the old man collected the floored cigarette butts. On the third street over there were the two Rottweilers that scared him just as much as the first day, despite being chained up so far out of reach. So he crossed over to avoid them like he always did, looking back at the sound of each bark. Taking the two letters he dropped them into the letterbox outside the post office.

It was cold, and his hands were tucked well into his jacket pockets. There was a large hole coming through the left pocket. He poked his finger through it thinking, "I'll just fix it tomorrow". Nearing the apartment, he grabbed an eight pack of beer and a few cans of tuna fish. The thought sickened him but he had better things to do than cook. Maybe tomorrow.

His street looked like the kind where families snuggled in by the warmth of a fire, but that was not his world. The key was giving him trouble again. He shoved the weight of his body into the door twice before it gave in. Someday the lock was going to give but he would worry about that when it happened. He was never a man to cause fuss and the lock was just the right side of useless that it didn't bother him.

There was an envelope under the door. He picked it up and took it to his room at the top of the staircase. The air was colder in there than that it was outside. Inside his small kitchenette he opened a tuna can and a beer. He ate the tuna fast, standing over the sink, washing away the fishy taste with his beer. If he had tuna again he'd probably be sick. He would cook some potatoes tomorrow and make something nice, maybe even light a candle on the table.

Finally, he could sit down at his desk, so he brought the rest of the beers and turned on his small dim lamp. He took the envelope out of his pocket and left it at the edge of the table, grabbing a pen and paper to begin writing. This was his favourite part of the day. But tonight there was something about the sound of the wind coming through the gaps in the old windows. The sound cut through him. He finished a beer and cracked open another. He tried to write but the whistle of the cold wind was so distracting.

Just then the floorboards started to shake, almost making his teeth chatter. The college kid next door started blasting some heavy techno again. The vibrations shook his letter onto the floor. He picked it up and held it under the lamplight. Beneath the white of the envelope there was the faintness of bold red capital letters. He could guess what it said. He knew that whether he opened it or not he would still be sitting in the exact same seat, drinking the exact same cheap beer and writing what was probably the same story just with a different set of words. The techno became muted; he had heard this song played before. The drumbeat was coming. He opened his fifth beer; it didn't matter what they thought.

He dropped the envelope into his wastebasket and began to write again. The words began to flow well, he was writing to the drum beat and the chair was shaking beneath him. The beer was helping. He wasn't going to let the wind or the big bold red letters ruin his favourite part of the day. He finished far after midnight and took down two new envelopes from his top shelf and addressed and sealed them.

In the morning he woke and lay there listening to the wind seeping in. He walked to the sink and drank a large glass of water. The two sealed envelopes were on the table and he took them with him. As he walked to

work he poked his finger through the pocket in his jacket and thought “I’ll just fix that tomorrow”.

An Attempt to Keep Up with A Champion

By Morag Dine

I can't remember the last time my shoulder didn't hurt

First steps after sleep crunch

And

Click

And it takes the morning for my bones to warm up

Still

My body's movements mesmerise even me

Springboard flooring softens the arthritic blow

Mirrored walls allow for perfection of extension and

I'm still trying to get the perfect French whip

Stunted growth gave way to shin splints

A pointed finger in my back gave in to cancer

But at least he corrected my carriage before he left

I remember

Dancing on concrete with nothing to protect young bodies from fracture but
leather just thick enough to be opaque

We weren't allowed to dance outside

Not because it was damning

But because

It would ruin our pumps

My toes click as loud now as my heels once did in heavy shoes
Jigs and reels distort into being told I was too fat to be a champion
Too huge to jump high
But my kicks were stronger than any fairy
My strength too wonderful to be controlled
A pre-pubescent powerhouse
Suffocated with wigs and legs of mahogany

I let rip

The first time I danced to cry was my rebirth
I didn't care about being too sore to compete
Who cares about trophies when you can make such beauty
with only your
Pained
Tender
Feet

Days of Dennis

By Jack Lawton

Nov 3, 2003:

I wasn't prepared for the loss of my usual routine heading into college. The old rhythms and movements. I felt lost without it, to be honest with ye, like I'd lost some core structure that the rest of me was hung around. But I made up for it fairly quickly. I've built up a new schedule and a new me has become to form around it. Always thought it'd be the other way around.

Football training is Monday and Wednesday evenings. This is my favourite part of my new life, if only because it's the most familiar, the main holdover from my old one. Was important to me to find some sort of terrain I could navigate, feel at ease on, before I headed into the wilderness. Though I'm playing with new people it's easy, comfortable territory. Same plays, same rhythms, if you squint the pitch could almost be the same one from Carrick. Always worried about what I'd talk to these Dublin heads about but I find myself having the same conversations with these lads as the ones back home.

That small bit of familiarity helps me face the rest of my week; busy but still filled with unknowns. Classes between nine to five Monday to Friday. Introductory geography classes where they talk to you like you're an alien from the far reaches of space - which, for me, is useful. GEO10030 - People, Places, Regions. GEO10055 - Humans and the Environment Throughout Space and Time. Far out. Taking down every single syllable out of the lectures mouth the first week and settling for about half of it the following weeks. Doing it right this time.

Hour breaks in between for study, assignments, talking rubbish outside lecture halls, trips to Centra for chicken fillet rolls. Mayo, lettuce, and tomato every time, and a can of Sprite. This lad Vinny has started calling me the Creature of Habit which I hoped wouldn't stick - but it has, and I'll never admit it to the lads but it feels good to be known enough to have a nickname.

Out on Wednesday and Friday nights to the nightclubs, and any other night I can get away with. These are the most unreliable parts of the routine - anything can happen. Different places every night, different people every time. But a routine begins to emerge here too, some sort of structure to contain the chaotic element. Drinking in the student residences til some poor soul of an RA has to become our villain and kick us out. Staggering into the nightclubs until those of us who are drunk enough to realise what horrible places they are leave, while those lucky bastards who are drunk enough to enjoy it sally on into some questionable decisions.

This is a wildness I never had back home. I drink a bit but I don't like to lose control. Prefer to watch everyone else explode around me. It's fair entertaining, and I'm always able to remind them of their crimes the next morning when they can't remember.

Film club screenings Tuesdays night and meetings Thursday mornings. Science society right after on a Thursday and regular events on Mondays. Student union meetings throughout the week. Political organising on a Saturday, when I have the time. Was never much into politics before but this

war in Iraq craic sounds fairly stupid. Met this one Alicia at a rally who wants us to do a radio show together.

This schedule keeps me moving and rolling over and through different moods and personalities, but it keeps me from thinking about back home so I'm throwing myself into it. I can't move fast enough.

February 3, 2007

The last year. Where the fuck did that come from? Snuck up on me like an assignment due date. I'm viewing the end of this year with a similar feeling of nausea. Like I haven't done near enough. But I've kept busy. Working part-time at Harvey Normans off campus. Shite fucking craic with a group of pricks but it puts money in my pocket. And I'm only there two days of the week. Miss a few classes for my Monday shift but I make it up just about. Still counting down the days til I can leave. On the positive side I can offer girls deals on dining tables, chairs and stools, cabinets, DVD players and much more, see in store for details! This tactic is rarely successful. Vinny calls me Go, Harvey, Go now and I want to hit him.

The rest of my schedule is as hectic as first year. Dicey's on a Tuesday (always shite). Workman's on a Wednesday (50-50 chance of shite). Dtwo's on a Thursday (pure shite with occasional showers of dry shite). Pub crawling on a Friday (shite clearing up with occasional craic spells), usually, and Hangar on a Saturday. Alicia gets us some x on the odd weekend, just so we aren't abusing the alcohol too much. Variety is the spice bag of life, as Vinny is fond of slurring to me at 3:30 on a Thursday morning. This one he likes always goes to Workman's and he always gets blitzed due to the nerves. An unhealthy

relationship with substances, as I'm fond of slurring to him while anxiously rolling something at 4:19 on a Thursday morning.

Yeah, the college work goes by the wayside. But I've worked last minute essay panic attacks into my regular schedule, so I can handle it. They say the best two thousand-word essays are composed in under thirty-eight minutes and are about 80% quotations. I get everything in on time, don't I? Been to about half my classes this semester, which is good for me. Sure, when will I have a routine like this again?

October 16, 2009

Usually in work around nine thirty or so, I'm often late though. Out around five, or just before. Might smoke a bit, have a Lidl microwave dinner (they have a new roast beef one that tastes like whoever made it almost gave a shit). In my defence neither Mam nor Jamie Oliver have done their jobs correctly and taught me how to cook. After dinner I might go for a few casuals with Alicia and Vinny. Head back to ours and watch a *Blue Planet* or something. Show us something different. Fucking mad stuff under the sea. Get through a bit more of the weed. Stay up too late for work in the morning but sure, fuck it. Don't need to be in top form for Harvey Norman's anyway. Sometimes I catch meself thinking in the Harvey Norman voice and get genuine fucking scared. It's only for the time being anyway.

Living for the weekend like one of those motivational cat posters your divorced aunt always emails ye these days. Break out of the bonds of the routine then. Take a tab of something and hit the nightclubs. Run wild around the streets. Getting into fights over positions we never held until that

moment. Doing impressions of one of those blowfishes off of *Blue Planet* that no one else understands. Laughing at jokes we don't entirely understand. Tell girls in bars that we're David Attenborough's illegitimate children. Making friends with tomorrows strangers. Screaming and shouting, making and erasing memories almost simultaneously. Recharging something drained by the week and tossing away something accumulated by it, too. *Richard Attenborough is my Dad, I swear to fucking God.* Thought it was David? *Ah, fuck.*

Spend the next day spiralling on the couch and eating a carbon copy of some burger first cooked in 1986 freshly delivered by the local chipper. Reading a look of pure disgust in the delivery man's eyes as he sees my 3:30 pm pyjamas. Worth it though, because these nights deliver some kind of satisfaction my not quite nine-to-five doesn't deliver. We take the fourth weekend of every month off the drugs, y'know, so it doesn't become a habit or anything. Taking something harder every now and then. Only on the odd special occasion. Didn't believe it could get any harder before. But it does.

June 6, 2013

Find the drug. Use the drug. Then a blank space, a big empty cozy blank space.

Repeat *ad nauseum*. Every day is the exact same, variations on a single droning melody that didn't offer much room for variation in the first place. Vinny has a lead, or Alicia has a lead. We're all sick of the sight of each other at this stage.

Scrap some money together, somewhere, always eventually finding something. Pay the bills somehow, pay the rent somehow. Owing money to almost everyone we know. Sometimes not paying the rent but always finding some new place to disintegrate in. Every time panicking that last time really *was* the last time, that this is the one where the wheels finally come off and the whole thing reaches the inevitable crater we all know we're careening towards. Secretly hoping that it will finally all fall apart and be over. Unable to truly believe that it could be over, that there could be anything else.

But somehow, we always keep going, for another couple seconds, minutes, hours. Years have passed this way. I do not allow myself to count how many. Keep searching, keep scrapping. Find, consume, find consume. We have regressed to hunter-gatherers. Don't stop to think what's next beyond the next step - finding it or using it. No future, no past. Only this. Haven't spoke to Mam in a few weeks - wait, let me check my phone - five months? When did that happen?

Place is a kip. Place is always a fucking kip. Where am I going to fit cleaning in, or anything else? I'm swamped.

April 9, 2017

I divide the day into breaths. One in, one out. On the good days, activities grow in the cracks between each. I count ten breaths, I walk into an NA meeting. I count thirty breaths, I might get five hours of sleep. I get up very early these days. In the end, breath was the only thing I could depend on to come with any regularity. So I set everything by them - trying to build the bones of a routine around them, that soft pull in, that emptying release out. I

go for a run three times a week now. I am awed by the size of this achievement and ashamed that something so small has come to mean so much to me.

Also reached a point where I can eat three times a day, almost every day. These are the events I can plan around. They are easy to manage and see coming. Mam comes by for dinner twice a week. Go to the cinema the odd time. Coffee with my sponsor now and then. Therapy once a week. Still getting used to this. What's to tell? It's the same old story.

Texted Alicia when I saw *Blue Planet 2* was coming out. She didn't text me back.

I'm left with a lot of time to myself, unfortunately, which I attempt to fill with cooking or cleaning. Maybe a phone call if I'm feeling adventurous. I keep ringing Vinny out of habit, before I even know what I'm doing, sometimes even get through the dial tone before I realise the size of the mistake I have made, stumbling through a wrong number conversation, sorry, sorry, well right number, wrong time, sorry... Few minutes of deep breathing after that.

On the bad days old things begin to crowd around again. The old routines. So I focus on the new one. In, out. In, out. Dependable. Like clockwork.

A Review of 2018 - 2038

By Fionn Phelan

I couldn't get any border of Brexit

2018 saw another chapter of the most nihilistic erotic novel ever written: “Pulling Out, Hard or Soft? A Brexit Story”. Nearly two years on from Britain’s infamous vote to leave the European Union, it still dominates Irish news every day. The same stagnating story has been stuffed in our ears and smeared across our eyes – I sincerely feel as if no one cares anymore. It’s painful to watch. I rather watch a teenager’s withdrawal campaign from heroin than Britain’s withdrawal from the single market. There are still a lot of questions yet to be answered. The first one being: Why? Why is it ever dominant in the daily lives of the Irish people, when we had nothing to do with the decision made, and furthermore our opinions were not sought after? Why is the freshly healed wound of the war-torn north of our country at risk of a jagged scalpel abrading the delicate scab of compromise and diplomacy, inevitably resulting in the laceration reopening in quite a horrendous fashion? To answer these questions, we must first establish the mentality of the Brexiteer. In doing so, I will cite the lyrics of the song, in which the extra-terrestrial worm (one of many, who have taken Theresa May as their host) at the head of the ‘Human Assimilation Department’ chose to employ in order to relate to the people. This worm was undoubtedly fired, as she didn’t as much relate to “people” as she did to a scarecrow with Parkinson’s. The song is of course, Dancing Queen and the lyrics read:

*"You're a teaser, you turn 'em on
Leave 'em burning and then you're gone
Looking out for another
Anyone will do"*

Believe it or not, but ABBA have perfectly assessed the inner-psyche of a Brexiteer. Simple, they don't care...leave 'em burning and then you're gone. This is obvious in their attitudes towards Northern Ireland. This is the first time in decades that, the ghastly business across the Irish sea has properly imposed on the daily lives of the British public – and they don't like it. The Irish Question?!? Questions such as, what's an Irish? And who gives a fuck about them? The empirical braggadocio which seen Saxon armies siege most of the world's lands and treasures still pumps through the veins of the Brexiteer – along with a high percentage of Strongbow and little chunks of pastry. This is echoed in a study recently published by the Future of England organisation. When asked whether "the unravelling of the peace process in Northern Ireland" is a "price worth paying" for a Brexit that allows them to "take back control", 83% of leave voters said yes. Is this surprising? Not really. It's like that one uncle at Christmas who has one too many 'Whiskey sours' and starts talking quite colourfully about the Kebab restaurant owners down the town. We all knew he felt that way and it was just a matter of time until he said it! Furthermore, the ever melancholic mantra concerning the strength of the Union, from the DUP falls on deaf ears, as the same study concluded that a meagre 25% of Brexiteers believe tax raised in England should be dispersed to Northern Ireland to better their public services. That's got to hurt, right?! The DUP must feel like a red-haired stepson at this stage –

unwanted and unloved, no matter how hard they try. Given all of this chaos, I can't help but think of the future.

Land of the free

The year is 2020. The 'Reeling-in-the-Years' episode portraying this remarkable year, will be rather short. It will begin with a montage of Conor McGregor's most recent and most remarkable super fight. Between his meteoric rise to fame accompanied with the constant influx of vast amounts of money, Conor naturally lost his mind. I'm sure being followed from room-to-room with a wheelbarrow of cocaine can't help, but there were other mitigating factors to the unravelling of his sanity. One day, while 'pulling handbrakes' in a Lidl carpark in his brand new Bentley, the former Champ-Champ heard a news report on the radio. Irish rail were plugging a new express rail service from Dublin to Cork which they shamelessly coined as 'unstoppable'. Conor took personal offence to this. He felt he could stop the unstoppable (as he had done so many times before). He demanded a one on one against the train. Irish Rail ran with it. "*Conor is a master of promotion, this being one of his most humorous outings yet*", a spokesperson for the rail service announced. However, McGregor was not kidding. After a 4-month long press tour and numerous sponsorship deals, the superfight was on. The 'Unstoppable Express' was set to depart for the first time from Heuston station at 9.15am and Conor was due to intercept it on the tracks between Portlaoise and Portarlinton. He planned to "Knock it out in the first", whilst avoiding being "taken to the ground"... by the forthcoming *train*. All of his fans, still thinking this was just some kind of promotional joke for his latest brand of whiskey, came in their thousands to watch the spectacle. Conor

fuelled by the desire to be the best (and *cocaine*), was ready for his latest challenge. He had never been more serious in his life. Unsurprisingly, ‘Reeling-in-the-Years’ didn’t televise the collision and not to spoil it but the train won. First round TKO. The ‘Reeling-in-the-Years’ producers poetically concluded the montage with the Johnny Cash classic – Folsom Prison Blues.

The second part of the episode will begin with a camera attached to a drone hovering above Washington DC, reinforced by the musical stylings of Bruce Springsteen as the soundtrack. Then a caption will appear on the screen and will read “2020, the year democracy died”. After staying awake for a 72 hour period, binge-watching Game of Thrones and living off a diet consisting of energy drinks, chicken nuggets and the blood of children – Mr Trump grew paranoid. Fearful of the growing popularity of superstar and all-round nice guy Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson – POTUS had him beheaded on the steps of the White House like Sean Bean at the end of season one (SPOILER!!). It was live streamed on all platforms; I was appalled and gave it a thumbs down, viva la resistance. However, it was not a picturesque beheading, if there is such a thing, due to the sheer size of the Rocks neck it took quite a few swings of Trumps now notorious “*Celebrity Execution Sword*”. Dwayne Johnsons renowned and revered slogan made famous during his wrestling career, “*the peoples elbow*” was tarnished forever as Trump literally threw his sawed-off elbow to the people. The irony was lost on the President.

That was to be the last episode of ‘Reeling-in-the-Years’ as reliving the events of the past no longer had a warm nostalgic feeling. It hurt too much. Now, the year is 2038. You’ll be relieved to hear Donald Trump has stepped down as president after nearly five terms in office and has rescinded his delusional desire to construct a wall across the Mexican border. You must be thinking, how relieving it is to hear that Mr Trump has by the grace of

God found enlightenment and stumbled across a dearth of humanity. Unfortunately, you would be wrong. Trump resigned not out of humility, the only reason for the Donald stepping down as President of the United States is because he has adopted a new role as the leading Russian General in the brigade, which Overlord Putin has so poignantly named, “сестры дяди Сэма” (The Uncle Sam Fister’s). But why give up on the wall you ask? Trump is spearheading a much more pressing infrastructural feat, the construction of a bridge from Alaska to Russia out of materials imported from China and the bodies of those who oppose him...and those who don’t follow him on Twitter.

The Boy Who Cried Wolf Act of 2032

However, more domestically, Ireland faces its own challenges. The gap between rich and poor has become unfathomable. The pale has returned and I don’t mean there has been an influx of ex-pats. The homeless crisis once crippling our nation is no more, thanks to some bold policy formulation by Fine Gael. Taoiseach, Daniel O’Donnell made the decision to end homelessness once and for all... by ending all the homeless. The country music legend and now dictator made the judgment to reintroduce the Wolf into the Irish ecosystem. Alas, this was not just your regular wolf, these were genetically produced wolves. You know, smarter than your average wolf. There were variant other idea’s like, “Increase expenditure on social housing by taxing huge transnational corporations” or “restrict foreign aid and invest it into domestic catastrophes” etc., but the wolf idea cost less money. “WOLF! WOLF! WOLF!” they chanted in the Dail. Accompanied with a curfew for all of those whom had homes of course, “The Homeless Boy Who Cried Wolf Act of 2032” went swimmingly. Now with the plight of the poor rid

from public view the elite's rejoiced, by composing a 30ft effigy of Brian O'Driscoll composed of avocado skin and bonded together by the chunks of hair coughed up by the wolves. However, what was to come would have the bourgeoisie of Baile Atha Cliath choking on their pumpkin spiced lattes in horror. The hundreds of genetically mutated wolves who had done the bidding of their masters were now exiles. They had served their purpose. Now homeowners could stroll from boutique to restaurant without worrying if the stench of the poor will latch onto their garments like leeches to a vein. The wolf community was vilified and forced out, into the margins of society. It was here in the peripheries of acceptance, the wolves made a formidable ally – the boggers. They too had been discriminated and mistreated. Both communities felt the metaphorical whack of the elitist backhand. "How can one's soul grow and flourish, if constantly cloaked in a shadow of snobbery", Wolf B. Yeats wept, the orator of his pack.

The Bogger Community (i.e. People of the bog) desired recognition as a minority group, accompanied with adequate facilities and support from the state to maintain and celebrate their heritage. The Wolfs wanted to eat people. A beautiful friendship was forged!

They taught them how to hunt in packs, how to kill a man with their teeth and how to avoid detection – and in return the wolves taught the cuclhies how to howl. The armies of the damned had arrived at the Red Cow. So, it had begun. One warm winters evening (remember - climate change!), the people of the bog rode in on wolf-back wearing nothing but vests and a new sense of pride within their community. It was a spectacle like no other, as if it was a forgotten story from the Book of Revelations or as if they just left it out because it's just too mad to describe. Inevitably, they took the city. Pah, son of Pah, spoke on behalf of his fellow countrymen and

women post-battle:

“Now we own a city that was both symbolic and instrumental in our previous marginalisation and discrimination, however unlike our predecessor’s this land is free to all people...and beast alike”

A single tear rolled from Pah’s black eye, slid down his cheek and landed on the tongue of one of the wolves. It could have been Wolf B. Yeats, I don’t know, they all look alike to me. Nevertheless, it was a striking moment. *“My first act as King of the Bog....as King of all men”*, Pah continued, *“is to supply every man, woman and child with a hang sangitch”*. The crowd erupted with a deafening cheer of elation. I was unaware to what a ‘hang sangitch’ was. Perhaps some sort of culchie sexual act, I pondered? In order to fit in, I immediately grabbed the closest man to me and began choking him and vigorously rubbing his crotch. He kindly informed me a ‘Hang Sangitch’ is a type of bogger cuisine – notably, he took a good 6 or 7 minutes to correct my mistake.

“Nare a cow nor heifer here Pah”, I heard a woman bray. *“Tis more meat on my hole than there is in this place Pah!”* another gentleman exclaimed. The newly appointed King of all Men and Beast received a dart of reality like an arrow in the chest. With no meat for ‘sangitches’ he would of lied to his people and they would soon perish. Pah knew what had to be done. His eyes slowly diverted to his fatigued and wearied companions resting on the steps of the GPO. All 10,000 of the bidders instantly acquired the same thought, but all were too reluctant to say it. Except for one, Pah’s son – Patrick (he prefers to be called Pah). He stood upon the mound of bodies, that the Wolves had helped his people manufacture and said the infamous line which would

exemplify the boggers forever... *“Lads!!! The Wolves!!!”* he thundered to his people, *“Maybe the Wolves know where we can find meat!!!”* The hordes of culchie folk screeched in agreement. Surprisingly, the wolves did not know.

The boggers soon starved to death. The wolves then ate there remains.

Please donate to NI Relief fund

Now years on, up and down the country bionic Healy-Rae-bots infest our cities and patrol our streets encouraging people to drink-and-drive, all the while criticising the validity and even the existence of the technology which created them. The Healy-Rae-bots are temperamental and completely incoherent, as are all Kerry people irrespective of their possession of organs or not. The Midlands are a barren wasteland, where those who possess remorseless aggression prosper and the weak fall into the peripheries to starve and subsequently be eaten by their offspring. Brothers marry sisters, all the while serving Pagan God's – so it hasn't really changed within the 20 years since 2018. However, thanks to the fortuitous and impeding gift of Climate Change, Ireland enjoys the weather of the Philippine's now. The average Caucasian Irish man now has the skin complexion of a varnished hurl; absurdly we are blindingly pale from the elbow down, like a sort of reverse farmers tan. We haven't coined a word for the phenomenon yet. Britain (or what's left of it) now sails around the globe avoiding every other country as much as possible, all the while powered by the tired arms and legs of the immigrants who remained post-Brexit. The Good Friday Agreement has been held up well throughout all of this, held up by physically pinning the document to the entrance of Stormont by the sharpened bones of Gerry

Adams and Arlene Foster as a reminder to how futile peace is. The scenes of Northern Ireland resemble that of a nightmare once more; however, families in Aleppo and Palestine have been kind enough to take in refugees from Edenderry as far as Newry.

Don't worry, 2039 will be our year.

Biographies

In order of appearance

Grace O'Doherty is a 23-year-old writer from Wicklow. She is doing an MA in Writing at the National University of Ireland, Galway, where her focus is poetry and fiction. She is currently working on her first collection of short stories.

Daniel Galvin is a 22-year-old writer from Co.Cork who lives in Galway. He has had his writing published by The Moth, The Rose, Pulsar, Hidden Channel, Cold Coffee Stand and The Scum Gentry. He came first place in the Spoken Word Platform at Cuirt International Literary Festival 2017 and won the May 2017 Sunday Slam in Dublin. He has performed poetry sets at Electric Picnic. Daniel studies Writing at NUIG and is currently working towards his first collection.

Leah Keane is a native of Castlerea, County Roscommon. She is a final year student at NUI Galway where she is studying English, German and Creative Writing. She has studied poetry under Alvy Carragher and was longlisted for the *Over the Edge New Writer of the Year* competition in 2017.

Sam Ford is a 26-year-old tour guide, writer, performer, unreconstructed pigmeat enthusiast, etc. He studied English and German Literature in TCD and hopes to go on to do a Masters in Urban Studies in UCL this autumn. He lives in Broadstone, Dublin 7.

Ruth Ennis is a recent UCD graduate with a BA in English with Drama. She is an amateur filmmaker and aspiring children's literature writer. She has written for the UCD Observer, UCD Caveat Lector, Dublin Theatre Festival, Children's Book Ireland and The Blue Nib. She had once skipped season 4 of Breaking Bad without noticing until the series finale.

Daniel Mulcahy is a final year Creative Writing graduate from NUIG who depressingly enough still lives with his mother. He has performed for Cúirt, Notions and the ghost of Yeats at Thoor Ballylee. Several of his poems have been published in Skylight 47, the Galway Review and untitled. He hopes you enjoy his work, if only to laugh at it.

Jack Taheny is an English and Drama graduate from UCD. Originally from Sligo, he now resides in Vietnam where he writes and produces music, while sometimes finding the time to pen poems concerning the bane and beauty of life.

Morag Dine is a Theatre and French student in Trinity College, Dublin. She works as a director, writer and choreographer. Her most recent theatre credits include: Movement Director, Halleloo (Samuel Beckett Theatre, 2018), Director, Far Away (Samuel Beckett Theatre, 2017), and Director, Swing (UCD Memorial Hall, ISDA 2017). She recently won the Judges Discretionary Award for Movement Direction at the Irish Student Drama Awards and is still trying to bring this into every conversation she has.

Jack Lawton is an English and Film graduate from UCD. Originally from Waterford, he is Galway's problem now, penning screenplays.

Fionn Phelan, 22, a mid-kind of man from a mid-kind of land. I come from a long line of orators, such as Oscar Wilde-Phelan, WB Yeats-Phelan and more notably, Donald Trump-Phelan.

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