Bray Arts Journal

Issue 6 February 2006 Volume 11



EDITORIAL

St. Brigid (452 -524) is one of the best known and most famous



saints of the early Celtic church. She is honoured on the 1st Feb. each year. There was however an earlier Brigid, a high priestess of a group of female druids who resided in Kildare where St. Brigid's monastery was founded. This earlier Brigid was a deity of wisdom, poetry, fire and the hearth. It would appear that the old celtic religion had a much closer affinity with nature, its moods and seasons. So is it simply a coincidence that for this months journal there emerged a deluge of poetry and crea-

tive writing. Is the old deity still at work? Personally I believe that nature has a much greater influence on us than we might think and thank the deities for that, particularly Brigid, the deity of poetry and of course our two literary editors Anne Fitszgerald and Eugene Hearne who are obvious deciples.

The Heavenly Banquet
Ascribed to St Brigid of Ireland
Translated by Sean O'Faolain

I would like to have the men of Heaven in my own house; with vats of good cheer laid out for them. I would like to have the three Marys, their fame is so great. I would like people from every corner of Heaven. I would like them to be cheerful in their drinking. I would like to have Jesus, too, here amongst them. I would like a great lake of beer for the King of Kings. I would like to be watching Heaven's family drinking it through all eternity

Front Cover : Cerianthid Anemone Connemara by Marine Biologist and Underwater Photographer **Sarah Varian**. Pg 7

ARTSPEAK AND GOBBLEDEGOOK.

The debate has not ended just yet; Shane Harrison writes :-

The meaning of art debate is a cul-de-sac and has been for the best part of fifty years. The problem is that advocates of 'abstract art' and other supposedly cutting edge forms of the last half century have swamped the debate with verbiage, usually jargon-laden and indignant. In terms of lively conversation this has proved about as helpful as pouring water on a drowning man.

This problem is also evident in other forms. The elevation of one-hit-wonders to the pantheon of musical greats, the publication to mass acclaim of illiterate celebreties, and the dumbing down of tv and film are a few amongst the many manifestations of the relentless seep of stuff and nonsense. However, literary, theatre and film criticism have held on to their principles, whereas art criticism has sunk in the morass of its own making. Why?

Rather than engage in a vast meaning of art debate, let's instead consider one item raised by Lorraine Whelan. Lorraine adamantly disagrees with the notion that there is no way to describe abstract work. Unfortunately, there is no escape from reality. Once something is abstract it is automatically placed outside general discourse. Try talking about an abstract painting as you would about the works of Heaney or Hemingway or Spielberg; or Leonardo, Renoir and Ballagh for that matter. Avoid phrases of the touchy feely variety: it speaks to me of intense emotion, or there is an evocation of inner calm, or it resonates with the postmodern zeitgeist. Such phrases are legion - but what do they really mean? The excess of jargon in art criticism is the main cause of the mystification of a subject which need not be all that difficult.

The visual arts can be seen as a language. This language is clearly understood by the viewer because visual imagery is innately accessible. As John Berger puts it "The child looks and recognises before it can speak." The viewer does not need to have the words of the language translated. If the visual artist is being coherent, they, at least, should be obvious. The syntax and semantics of visual imagery are not always so accessible.

The syntax of painting is best likened to its compositional and juxtapositional arrangement. The artist's skill in achieving aesthetically pleasing arrangements is as indispensable as the use of grammar is to the writer. Successive revolutions in the visual arts since the Impressionists have contributed to an erosion of a recognisable grammar and encouraged the prevalence of incoherent art.. It is not that the revolutions themselves were wrong, but that the concept of revolution has been institutionalised, leading artists to falsely assume that experimentation and self-expression are ends in themselves. Semantic meaning doesn't get off the ground without an intelligible vocabulary and grammatical code to power it. Daubs, splashes and lines cannot generate meaning of themselves, they must be organised into recognisable shapes. If there is nothing of human interest then what can we say of it?

Abstract paintings speak an unaesthetic language. They suffice for interior decoration or as commercial items which can be exchanged for profit. If money talks - so too do abstract paintings, and they all say pretty much the same thing. There is commercial advantage to this homogenisation; just as mass produced music reaches a mass audience; bland abstract paintings can reach a high price at market so long as they don't say anything uncomfortable about the real world. They are ideal corporate art.

Representational art is intelligible. By using recognisable shapes it can construct meaning or even narrative. By doing this it can effect catharsis or excite an emotional and intellectual response. It has meaning and you can talk about it.

Wittgenstein said: "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." We can never speak of abstract painting but don't worry about it. Let's keep quiet on the subject and let it rest in peace.

Champagne and Chocolates

By Carmen Cullen

My Aunt Delia Murphy, famed ballad singer and wife of Tom Kiernan, retired Irish Ambassador to the United States, passed away in 1971. Thinking about her I feel I am composing an identikit picture of a relation I hardly knew. She comes into my mind as a question mark. I wonder are we alike?

I have heard her sing and seen photographs of her recently, commemorated on television and in old books I am researching. She invades my consciousness like a flower. Her perfume won't go away. She was wife to an ambassador but a gay sort.



She was unconventional, nobody could match her sense of fun, of love of life and I suppose she had her unhappy times, hidden now in layers of time.

Deep down I think I am envious of her, because she came to fame

so easily whereas I have to struggle. Like her I enjoy the idea of being wined and dined. She had an existence of champagne and chocolates, I imagine, but where does the real truth lie?

My mother Angela was a better singer, my father said when I was a child and pride burned in my heart. I hardly knew my mother. She died when I was four but the memory of her lingers as brightly as the song of a nightingale.

Delia and Angela Murphy both recorded on His Master's Voice, in the nineteen forties and early fifties. Delia continued to become a celebrity, entertaining a packed hall of spellbound listeners at war-time concert in Belfast, for example, while the city was bombed outside, or entertaining in the Vatican while her sworn to secrecy accomplices smuggled allied airmen through their neutral state.

All about me I see in the generations who followed her, the kind of person she could have been. Her great grand-daughter in Australia sings sweetly and beautifully. One of my own daughters has an exuberant nature I'm sure is similar. More importantly the artistic qualities she and my mother possessed have been passed on to us. The two sisters have been followed by a generation of writers musicians and visual artists. It is a legacy better than money. If this is all the formidable pair has succeeded in giving, I for one am grateful.

Delia and Angela were children of a large and wealthy Mayo farming family. Her father had been to the goldfields of Klondyke and Leadville Colorado and returned to buy the local Big House. The girls of the family were all accomplished musicians. From her earliest days Delia became enamoured of the ballads of wandering journeymen, minstrels and tinkers

singing round the campfires of their locality. Their songs had spirit truth and guts, Delia decided. Sometimes they might be bawdy but they were never dull and they became an indispensable part of her repertoire.

A brilliant student, Delia took degrees in both Arts and Commerce in University College Galway. There, at a dance she met Dr. Thomas Kiernan, Economist and Author. Shortly after her graduation they were married and when Dr. Kiernan received his first diplomatic appointment, Secretary to the Irish High Commissioner, they went to live in London.

She was quick to make friends. Amongst them was John McCormack, the great Irish tenor, then at the height of his fame. In the home of musician, Herbert Hughes in London, McCormack asked her to sing a Gaelic song, Una Bawn.. At the same party a representative of HMV was so impressed by her interpretation he offered her the opportunity to record some Irish ballads. Her recordings became numerous, including such well known favourites as "If I were a Blackbird" and "The Spinning Wheel". In no time at all Delia was top of the top twenty in Ireland. Dr. Kiernan's illustrious diplomatic career brought the family all round the world and Delia outdoing her husband in the personality stakes, sang in concert wherever they went.

In 1941, towards the end of the war, Thomas Kiernan was appointed Ambassador to the Vatican and Delia gave a farewell concert in the Father Matthew Hall. She looked beautiful and sang brilliantly. Europe was embroiled in the horrors of war and it must have been a poignant occasion It might have seemed to some listening to her that night that it was the last time they would hear Delia Murphy and they lapped up every note and gesture. It was not the end for Delia of course and her personality and courage shone out even in German occupied Rome. She worked tirelessly in the secret and highly dangerous 'spies parlour' escape network operated by Mons. Hugh O'Flaherty-the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican.

Liam Clancy has described Delia Murphy as a pivotal figure. She adopted the Irish ballad and gave it her own unique interpretation. She was responsible for taking up an essential element of Irish traditional music before it was lost, transforming it and transferring it into the present for the benefit of generations to follow.

The only occasion I did meet my Aunt was on a visit of hers to our family hotel in Templemore, Co. Tipperary. The hotel was spick and span for the occasion and we children were scrubbed and shining too. I was not allowed to go to the train to pick her up. There isn't room in the car I was told, she'll have too much luggage and though I threw a tantrum my father stuck to his guns.

Our sitting room was upstairs and I recall waiting at the top for her to appear.

At last laughter and voices came from the street. She made a grand entrance and I ran down the stairs to her open arms. I experienced awe, that such a gorgeous, scented person had come into my life, that she was my aunt and that she had bent down to greet me at my own small level.

I have been feeling the same awe ever since.

Poetry

Ohhh...

By Hugh Rafferty

night shaking siren thunder dark dust quaking under pain fear after shocks lost found distant knocks hope help risky tight life death

The Infinity Pool By Alma Brayden

rescue

light

We swam close together breaking the smooth surface, far out to the invisible rim but I edged away and lost you when you chose the loneliness of limitless horizons, your laughter wafting wind chimes in the air.

All Grown

By Mairead O'Sheehan

Evening is pulling in slowly,
Night shudders in the wings
like a prima donna waiting for her cue.
Red beetroot juice
splashes on my page.
I am conversing with intangible thoughts.
Each grown child gone down
their own separate road.
Once a roast spat in the oven
potatoes sizzling in juices
a crumble bubbling in syrup
laughter and conversation
binding us
now a salad and white toast
my tight dinner.

The prima donna enters with a white moon as an encore. The telephone rings

Necessity

by Pauline Fayne

Although for fifty years she has been as close to him as his very skin there are days when her cheap scent drives him to the attic room where light jigsaws through a dust-curtained window and the rocking chair, creaking in rhythm with his bones, dulls the irritations of daily familiarity.

Robert's Stomping Ground

by Linda Maio

Steel November sky reflecting water, wet clouds. Frost's fir spruces.

Baking Berry Conversation

by Linda Maio

Berry picking with my boyfriend's Aunt Sheila, Oregon coast, Summer 2004. Touches of prickles, light wind, blue and white beach houses. Trying to fit in, I pick more berries than I make small talk so we can make a pie.

Saffron Warmth

by Alan Boyd

Processing feet glide on Irish marble curious faces peer through glass - anticipatory, anxious to touch, to feel the generous smile of one whose goodness fills this holy place, where many faiths meld as one, in meditation. I hold the door as robed choir passes and view the scene as it unfolds behind. A surge, a wave of need, reaches out its fingers as this holy and saffron sage gives his eye, a connection of synchronous reassurance. diminutive, he approaches, colour amidst white, nearer now and radiant smile all-sided. I seize the moment and reach out my hand, his grip, smooth and warm in this ecclesiastical In disbelief, I bow then speak his name, as minders envelop and he passes through to the blacked-out car in waiting readiness

on to more souls who seek his serenity.

This moment gone, now with me for ever.

where there is no rush.

On-Line Shopping by Brendan O'Brion

Tuesday morning the sex-in-the-van man comes round these parts also on Thursday afternoon.

Dates in diaries marked with invisible ink not wanting our husbands to think, anything.

Males are away making executive decisions planning budgetary revisions fantasising about secretary's breasts.

We don't mind in the least being rushed off our feet apart from Cedric resident househusband at Number Twenty Four.

'Him Indoors' we call him, doesn't get out much, what with three young kids and all, though he has a killer recipe for plum & ginger chutney, allegedly.

'You don't give Nectar Points?' we dare say not like the man from Sainsburys who delivers all day Friday.

We smile as van man shoots off, indulging the hours until cold reality sounds his horn in the driveway.

Woburn Abbey by Martha Woodcock

Orange sunset stretches ahead —
Deer silhouette a magically Texan sky.
I drive slowly to avoid their brown bodies.
Dark horns on the horizon —

Vienna boat trip 2005 by Martha Woodcock

Because I do not understand boats or the ways of captains and sailors, I have no idea what is happening.

Why we are waiting and why two huge steel ships are blocking our path on the water.

Seats like trains - two opposite two, an elderly couple finish soup with a slurp, our cutlery inviting a late lunch.

We are covered in from hot summer sun above, but it finds us at the sides.

Still air. Insects whiz by as we write and read quietly,

Linkby Francis Cotter

I secure the billowing clothes to the line, pegs between my lips.

Through the window I watched you, expertly filling a line, pulling against you pegs clamped in your mouth.

It was a habit I thought old fashioned, unnecessary; a housekeeper's way.

Now those whitened, worn pegs are as precious as a touch of your fingertips.

My lips impress upon those anchoring hinges that knew your lips too.

Link to our last kiss in my house, when I helplessly gave you mouth to mouth, frantic lips on still ones.

At Rest

by Éamonn Ó Múchu

Through a half-open gateway a path leads to an oasis of restful peace.

Here I gaze at headstones weather-beaten, naming the lifeless at rest.

Now free from the constraints of time I listen to the whisperings of trees.

Sweet Sorrow by Hugh Rafferty

Through the moving window a last haunting glimpse beautiful you walk with languid grace nonchalant in the rush hour crush turning almost at the edge of loss to show the slow secret smile on your morning after face.

And Still You Stand an ode to the Black Castle by Frank O'Keeffe

Long ships passed your promontory and horned Oestmen from far flung seas with warring oars passed through your mists of time. What sagas were told by the men of old, those heroes long dead.

And still you stand

Birthed by Fitzgerald blocks you rose impregnable, an all seeing bulwark, you have seen it all, through Kings and raiders and the wild O'Tooles you stood Tall and proud granite strong on your all round perch.

And still you stand

You wept at death and hunger and mourned for Melancholy Lane as fiery Coote burnt the holy place And human torches screamed in the dance of death And Mantan's jail spewed forth its dangling death.

And still you stand

Stark stalwart bastion of unknown strength Ominous on sentry guard seeing, hearing and stark against the moonlit sky, your black power Unknown, proud but aged in crumbling majesty

And still you stand.

FIT UPS

BY FRANK O'KEEFFE

The strolling players have been around longer than man can remember. Ever since the first man stood up and performed in front of an audience. From the ancient Greeks to the popular Commedia dell'arte theatre, evolved from fixed venues, to the players who took to the road carrying their props, costumes and talents to the towns and the villages. In Ireland and England these bands of actors and entertainers were known as the fit ups. An appropriate name because that is exactly what they did. They arrived at an available venue and set up their drapes and backdrops often suspended on a pair of interlinked goal post style timber battens. I had the pleasure of working with two travelling fit up companies.

The first company I worked with was in Scotland, now long defunct, it was known as the Kinloch players. We toured the village halls in the Highlands bringing to the populous such epics as East Lynne and Maria Martin and The Red Barn. This was interspersed with song and dance, known, rather grandly as the Variety show. The second company I worked with in Ireland was, however, much grander. We brought Shakespeare to the towns and villages of Ireland. Having said that we also did more ordinary dramatic productions. Yes I had the pleasure of working with the great Anew McMaster, known affectionally to all as 'Mac'. Mac was one of the last great actor managers in Ireland. A brother in law of Michael MacLiammoir, Mac had played major Shakespearean roles in Stratford on Avon. A powerful barrel chested man he had the

greatest voice projection of any actor I have ever worked with. Effortlessly he would reach the Gods in the Gaiety. A magnificent resonant voice expelled with ease, he would put to shame many of the school of mutter mumble modem inaudible actors. Before I joined the Company a young English actor had returned to the Uk. He was called David Baron, better known as Harold Pinter. For a very modest salary we toured from Killaloe to Mullingar.

There were at this time several other touring fit ups, now I'm talking about mid-late fifties, travelling the country, but nothing, as I thought as grand as our upmarket Shakespeare. I must have been a conceited prat at that period and I was to be humbled by one of the masters of fit up the great and talented Frank O'Donovan, later renowned as the much loved Batty Brennan of "The Riordans". Frank had toured the length and breath of the country with his company staging variety and melodrama with singers, comics, dancers and actors.

There were at this time several fit up companies on tour, among them the Daniels-George and Dorothy, the McFaddens, Vic Loving and Bill Costello. They plied their craft in remote villages and sea side venues and survied and paid their artistes without the benefit of any Arts grants.

I think we, the Shakespearean actors stupidly considered ourselves somewhat superior to our Variety brothers. It was only when I worked in a play in the Olympia with Frank that I realised how little I knew and how much I had to learn from a true master of his craft. I learned more from Frank during a short run of a play than I'd learnt in my entire time at a top London drama school. I miss the buzz of the fit ups and I pay deserved tribute to the masters who brought so much pleasure and good theatre to the people.

UK CHAMPION POET 2005/6

Peter Donnelly / THE RACKER

Winner of the Farrago National Annual Poetry Slam

"Clever, humorous, marvellous" ~ Sunday Tribune

available solo or with

Joe Giltrap, The Voice of Ireland

"Thinking man's Celtic music" ~ Sunday Express

as GILTRACKER

e: mandpdonnelly@eircom.net

In the past eight years, THE RACKER has done 180 radio programmes and has performed at about 550 venues in Ireland, England and America.

THE RACKER's poems, mostly comic, cover such topics as Sheep, Tennis, Sex, Oysters, Smoking, Monarchy, Midsummer, Christmas, Terrrorism, Joyce/Yeats, Hurling, Dracula/Halloween, Swimming, Dublin/Wicklow, and the Blues. Most were commissioned for Ireland's Radio 1; all the commissioned pieces were repeated on pick-of-the-week programme *Playback* and

have often been repeated since. On Christmas Day 2004, for the same station, he presented a one-man show of his comedy poems, THE RACKER'S CHRISTMAS CRACKERS.

SUNDAY INDEPENDENT: A witty raconteur. Radio as it should be.

SUNDAY TRIBUNE: Joyce himself would have loved this tricksy wordplay. Clever, humorous and articulate. Marvellous fare! Remember the name: Peter Donnelly. Write in and ask for more of the same.

BRAY PEOPLE: The spellbound audience never took their eyes off Donnelly.



Donnelly/THE Peter RACKER has performed his poems at The Focus Theatre, Dublin and The Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray, often at the Joyce Tower, Sandycove, in a film about James Joyce, and at many London events: repeatedly for Shortfuse at the Camden Head, Islington and Poetry & Jazz and The Cellar at the Poetry Place, Covent Garden, as MC/comedian in comedy clubs, musical shows, London Irish nights,

and as WB Yeats at the Purcell Room.

On December 16th 2005 he won the title of UK CHAMPION POET 2005/6 at the annual *Farrago* National Poetry Slam in the George Bernard Shaw Theatre at RADA.

Peter's acclaimed World War II play A WOMAN'S WARTIME had its 50th performance at Lauderdale House, Highgate Hill last November. Also at Lauderdale, in December, was CRACKERNIGHT with The Racker Donnelly and Joe Giltrap, The Voice of Ireland: a duo now known as *GILTRACKER*.

Peter recently released his first CD, RHYMES OF THE RACKER: £10/•13 including p&p from mandpdonnelly@eircom.net or London 0208 341 9094.

PREVIEW OF ARTS NIGHT MONDAY 6TH FEB

SIGNAL ARTS PRESENTS

'PERFORMANCE'

An exhibition of paintings by Stephen McKee Tue 14^{th} Feb to Sat 25^{th} Sept



Stephen was born in Dublin in 1961. He is a self taught artist who took up painting four years ago. His mentor is the famous hard edge artist Cecil King who, like Stephen, was a collector of art prior to becoming an artist himself.

He has previously had a solo exhibition in the Olliart gallery in Monkstown and has exhibited in group shows in the Hallward Gallery, The Guinness Gallery and the William Frank Gallery.

His solo exhibition in the Signal Art gallery is based upon the theme of Performance. 'As lovers and clowns we strut upon the stage until our own final performance'

Opening Reception: Thursday 16th February 2006

'CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS'

An exhibition of underwater photography by Sarah Varian 28^{th} Feb to 11^{th} March.

Sarah is an Irish marine biologist and underwater photographer who has worked on a wide variety of conservation projects, including work as a marine protected areas scien-



tist in Africa and New Zealand. She is now devoting much of her time to raising public awareness and understanding of Irelands marine environment, using her marine images as an aid for outreach.

More information

about Sarah's work:

<u>www.marinedimensions.ie</u>

Opening night: Thursday 2nd March 2006 (7pm-9pm)

Sean Garvey: Sean who hails from Kerry is one of the most renowned singers of traditional songs in Irish and English. Bray Arts has been very privileged to present Sean on a number of occasions and each time he has totally captivated the audience. We look forward to hearing his unique and captivating music.

Leo Cullen, novelist and short story writer has a gift; a gift of telling stories in a way that instantly engages the listener. It is no wonder therefore that he is such a popular Radio broadcaster and the recipient of awards too numerous to mention. It is a great pleasure to invite Leo back to read for Bray Arts. Leo Cullen was born in Templetouhy, Co Tipperary but is now living in Monkstown where he is working on his next novel.



A big welcome to **The Popular Front**. This young band first hit the Dublin music scene in September of 2005. Theyíve been gigging extensively in venues such as Eamonn Doranís in Temple Bar and The Harbour Bar. The band is currently working on their first EP due for release in March. Two band members, Milo McMahon and Dan Barry, will perform their own songs which have been adapted from their usual electric to acoustic set for Bray Arts.

Video Voyeur /Harold Chassen

The Perfect Catch (European title) is a remake of the film Fever Pitch based on Nick Hornby's book of the same name. Directed by the Farrelly Brothers who transposed it from London to Boston with baseball replacing soccer.

Lindsey meets Ben in the winter and they form relationship but when spring comes she realises she is other woman to Ben's first love the Red Sox. I waited for this film to come out because of the Farrelly Brothers direction and it was based on Hornby's book. I didn't see many similarities between the two films but found it enjoyable anyway.

SOLUTION TO LAST MONTHS SUDOKU

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	1	7	8	3	2	5	6	4	9
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	5	8	9	7	1	3	4	6	2
	3	1	7	2	4	6	9	8	5
	6	4	2	5	9	8	1	7	3

Submission Guidelines

Editor: Dermot McCabe: bacj@eircom.net

Creative Writing Prose/Fiction Editor: Anne Fitzgerald:

afitzgerald3@ireland.com

Poetry Editor: Eugene Hearne: poetrybray@yahoo.ie

Email submissions to any of the above or post typed

submissions to

The Editor BAJ 'Casino',

Killarney Rd. Bray,

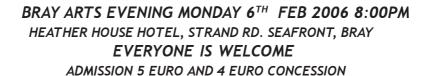
Co. Wicklow

Visual material: Photographs by Post. Digital Images by

Email or CD in JPEG format.

Deadline 12th of each month.





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THE POPULAR FRONT :- A YOUNG TALENTED BRAY BAND BRINGING YOUTH AND ZEST TO BRAY ARTS.

SEAN GARVEY :- THE RENOWNED EXPONENT OF TRADITIONAL SONGS IN IRISH AND ENGLISH. UNIQUE AND UNFORGETTABLE.



Bray Arts is grateful for the support of Bray Council, Wicklow Council, CASC and Heather House Hotel. Printed by Central Press

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