

CARTYS

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Contents

Jude Cowan Montague (England)

Nepal New Year Festival (Poem)

Fehredin Shehu (Image)

Fehredin Shehu Prishtina, Kosovo

The Gown (Poem)

Bewilderment of Alien (Poem)

A Honeycomb (Poem)

Influences (Article)

Ken Hume Tullamore, Ireland

Caught in the Crossfire (Poem)

Blue Eyed Bundle of Grace (Poem)

Anthony Sullivan Lusmagh, Ireland

I Know Somebody (Poem)

Christmas Bliss (Poem)

Pen Mightier Than the Sword? Poems of protest.

Romantic Ireland, Fare Thee Well

- Anthony Sullivan

Let Them Eat Cheese

- Tomás Ó Cárthaigh

Tumbleweed of Promise

- Ken Hume

If Oliver Was Here

- Roibeard McElroy

Roibeard Mc Elroy

Ireland Will Awake (Poem)

Season's Matrix (Poem)

for the autumn

The Bardic Curse (Poem)

(against the unjust Civil Servant)

"Flower" *Apryl Skies* (Image)

Apryl Skies

The Empty Bellews (Poem)

What Christmas & New Year Means to Me

*Articles from three Irish poets on
Christmas and New Year from three
Christian perspectives.*

Summer 2010 – Tomás Ó Cárthaigh Winter 2010 – Tomás Ó Cárthaigh

Biographies

Photos from Faro, 2010

Tomás Ó Carthaigh and his brother John Carty publish a selection of images from Faro in Portugal in December 2010.

Cover Image: April Skyes

Jude Cowan Montague



Nepal: New Year Festival

Dolphins. A sea of dolphins leaping.
The turmeric prow plunges deep into the crowd,
crest catching arrows of the sun.

The tremendous street-ship lumbers
and lists. The deity's men smile, rocked
so comfortably on the shoulders of chaos.

Walls and roofs shakily support spectators,
craning necks to see the chariot roll,
perhaps tip over. Chattering gulls circle,

snatch the dropped blessings that litter the wake
of the gods' progress. Giant wooden wheels rotate
into evening. Oil lamps bless the willing ropes that tow

the heavy spirit house up the hill. Fortune settles, rests,
flutters on the churning sea of live faith which ebbs
and flows in these vertiginous, piercing mountains.

Taken from the forthcoming book:
'From the Messengers', Donut Press, out Feb 2011



For the first time, Cartys Poetry Journal is delighted to feature the writings of Kosovar poet Fehredin Shehu.

He contributed regular to local and international journals of poetry throughout the Balkans, Europe and the world.

Fahredin Shehu

a voice from Kosove / Kosovo

The Gown

A neon- colour cornucopia gurgles as spring
Standing in the middle
I remain overwhelmed
Nano- metric particles embraces sinful
population
Of cells absorbed by light
It's Zephyr that transports souls
Nowhere else you may see
Lifted up, up, up they bear
Nuptials to the gaps of heaven but
The entrance pearly macadam
Krypton threshold and cedar wood gate
Golden latch opens to host guests
The bride...is I glimmered?
Heavy walk I started as death angel
Walks on earth
Aerial walk now steps far
In advance as seraph I wear
The gown lightly embroidered
With knots curls sparks and pearls
Of the ionic thread
Light is as feather its weight
Light I as bubble about to burst
Light as happiness my momentum
We levitate above golden leaf wheat field
Seeing our shadows beneath
Our heavily impregnated cubic souls
We see the footprints of malicious
Who encroached our shadow when
The sun was as God adored and
Stand in the front of us
Anyway we undress the gown
Naked souls in unison
Sing dance and rejoice
Wash at the bank of milky river
The mantle of the Green Man waits
Our essentials wait too
To fill and go in procession
To celebrate eternals

Bewilderment of Alien

Demons are mocking us
Angels are compassioning us
Aliens are bewildered why these...
Are killing each other?

A Honeycomb

I'm not here
To say the pride of forgotten past
Nor I'm here to sing miraculously
Suras and Sutras of the Holy Scriptures

I'm not here to watch fallen mulberry fruits
In river swimming as a dried leaf
Nor I'm here to pray endlessly
As a sages to repent for
Sinful mundane ignorant

I'm here to kiss the sky in its forehead
And between two eyes where
The star has to spark its beauty

I'm here to perfume your soul
And dry in the sunny-golden pollen

I'm here too, to feed your lungs
With the air of the lost world
Eternally washed in the rivers of soul

I'm the soil of your secret sowed
As a wheat seeds in the fall
Waiting spring to green the fields
And to golden summer with poppies
decorated

And fireflies during short nights
Dancing erotic games

Waiting fall to feed the holy stomach
Of enfant terrible
Perpetually called ME
The sarcophagus of your secret

I'm lost ...you, concentrated
In a formula dissolved to
Respond on their enigmas.



Fahredin Shehu
A Sufi Muslim Poet, Author and
Calligrapher/ Painter
Prishtina
Kosovo

On Influence

Every author is influenced from time to time from its surrounding but few of them admit to confess this.

A great influence in my art plays Rumi as the most poetic and the most transcendental of world poets, but in this queue I may mention Dante, Kabir, Nizami, Saadi, William Blake, William Shakespeare, H. Thoreau, Khalil Gibran etc. as individuals and the Holly books of East and West which are of permanent importance that builds the weft for my poetic texture.

The human spirit for me is ONE and we just make the part of it with our creativity building the tower of ART, therefore if and when I mention Kundalini for me is translated as snake but in spiritual context or if in my poetry I mention RUH (Arabic for soul) or Hokhmah (Hebrew for Wisdom), or Hesychia (Greek for Silence Quietism) etc. I do not care since my reader knows as Upanisadas say; that for making the drop of honey you shall visit thousands of flowers.

The wing of fly
On the leaf of grape
The summer burns

.....

I break the LED screen
Of my cell phone
It reminds me
On her departure

.....

The last prayer
I melt my being
For a thousand years
And a day more

.....

Ruhullah¹
My master
You taught love
And forgave
The ignorant

¹ Arabic for the Soul of God, Jesus Christ

Ken Hume

Currently working on his first collection of poetry and lyrics, called 'Snowstorm of Doubt and Grace' with his mother Triona Hume.

Ken says: "I'm looking for a few artists who'd be willing to draw some pieces for the book, so if you're interested please email me kenhume79@gmail.com or contact me on 085 2405961"

Caught In The Crossfire

A conflict of interests, a conflict of desires
Between my faith and craft, wrapped like wires
Around this oft-divided heart

Strangling poetic thirst, spiritual hunger
And anything else it can find
On this much travelled dirt track to my soul
Littered with tainted convictions; unspoken prayers and
weary hallelujah's

Threading cautiously the minefield of split affections
Never sure whose side I'm on, but won't risk a defection
Now, for I fear that I be
Betraying heavenly devotion, creative longing

And everything else in between
This chaotic battleground called my mind
Strewn with bloodied thoughts; broken ideas, dying dreams

Standing still in the midst of chronic indecision
Get's me caught in the crossfire of someone else's vision

Blue Eyed Bundle Of Grace

Aleesha Faye, you caught us a little by surprise
hen you launched your premature escape
From your amniotic cocoon to coo's and sigh's
And entranced eyes, as your mother gaped
At the sight of you, exhausted and overjoyed
Whimpering; helpless and bare
Handed to your father, one of those celluloid
Moments. Timeless. Precious. Rare.

Aleesha Faye, our lives will never be the same
Now that you're here with us
Sleepless days; midnight feeds and nappy changes
But we think you're worth the fuss
Because you give us so much joy by simply being
In the same room and breathing in
The same air, smiling; stretching and even seeing
With squinted eyes, makes life worth believing

Aleesha Faye, it's nice to meet you, my niece
You maybe newborn to this world
But you've already stolen a little piece
Of my heart, when you curled
Into my arms, laying there happily asleep
Arm raised over your face
Shuffling and smiling in a dream so deep
A blue-eyed bundle of grace

Anthony Sullivan

I Know Somebody

There are times when I think trouble
Has spies with their eyes fixed on me
With the way it taps my shoulder
Soon as I think I'm trouble free

I'm half-inclined to consider
This life's a fight I'll never win
But there's one though sure to save me
No matter what trouble I'm in

{ Chorus }
Cos' you see, I know somebody
And they know somebody up there
They'll put in a good word for me
And it won't take more than a prayer
Always 'round when they were needed
While they still shared this world with me
So there ain't much I worry 'bout
Cos' you see, I know somebody
Oh you see, I know somebody
And they know somebody up there

I have days when my umbrella
Lets more rain in than it keeps out
When all I was once so sure of
Becomes my greatest source of doubt

But even when my last dollar
Comes way before the next is due
I'd bet it all with certainty
On my somehow makin' it through

{ Repeat Chorus }

I miss them ev'ry day
Like it was yesterday
When goodbye came too soon
But just like an old tune
Can warm each memory
I know they're watchin' me
Don't need another sign
To know that I'll be fine

{ Repeat Chorus }

They'll put in a good word for me
And it won't take more than a prayer.

Christmas Bliss

Shop fronts paint colour on the snow
Seasonal scenes in each window
Tinsel and trees and lights that glow
Mangers of ev'ry size and style

And pretty as it all may be
I know prettier waits for me
Not all wrapped up under a tree
But in the beauty of your smile, and

{ Chorus }
A hot-chocolate to make you sigh
Bring out that twinkle in your eye
As if you know what Santa does
All I asked for this year is us
Some Hennessy and candle-light
An open-fire and you tonight
A word or three between each kiss
That's all I need for Christmas bliss

Snow covers all the streets tonight
And all the fields around are white
The stars on high are blazing bright
And ev'ry sound carries for miles

I know where I most want to be
And who I most want there with me
The scene is set near perfectly
Now it just needs one of your smiles, and

{ Repeat Chorus }

I hear Bing sing his yearly prayer
Of people dreamin' ev'rywhere
While chestnuts roast with dear 'ol Nat
But even more than all of that
What makes this time of year for me
All I'll ever need there to be, is

{ Repeat Chorus }

A word or three between each kiss
That's all I need for Christmas bliss

That's all I need for Christmas bliss.

PEN MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD?

Poetry in protest in times of strife.

ROMANTIC IRELAND (FARE THEE WELL....)

Get these governments we keep on getting
To a one convinced, they shall rule as kings
Talkin' a walk that seldom leaves a trace
While drunk on the power their privilege brings
One brand of conscience shared out among all
With nothing faster at finding it's wings
For once they've sorted each pretty pension
It's the same old tune each fat wallet sings

{ Chorus }

So poor romantic Ireland, fare thee well
Let your head lay soft on our troubled soil
Close your eyes, and breathe deep of better days
Their like again, we won't see for a while
Oh lost romantic Ireland, fare thee well
I bid you rest in peace, if that you can
For this new world is no world for you now
Poor lost romantic Ireland, fare thee well

Your family name may well be your shield
Enough to protect and absolve from blame
But where's the glory in your defiance
When you see only honor in your shame
While the worth of some lives now, are measured
By the hands they hold in this numbers game
Where there's no-one too small to sacrifice
For the sake of even the smallest gain

{ Repeat Chorus }

With Christmas a season all to itself
And winter now just for the soul
There's surely a day, and not far away
When reason takes back some control
For this sense of greed, how it makes me sick
And it's so hard to find someone who cares
All I can see are those still so content
To forsake, for the sake of getting theirs
Still their own tomorrow driving their today
And their own today, all they care about more
Were not my tears already burned away
I might cry, like few souls have cried before

{ Repeat Chorus }

Oh fare thee well, oh fare thee well
Poor, lost romantic Ireland, fare thee well.

- Anthony Sullivan

Poems of Protest

Poems of protest are a growing genre with the cutbacks in Ireland and abroad as a result of the banking crises.

From the satirical verse of the street balladeer tradition of Dublin poet Eddie Keegan (who puts new words on topical issues of the day to traditional airs), to the protest poems of Anthony Sullivan and Tomás Ó Cárthaigh, it is a growing genre.

Let Them Eat Cheese

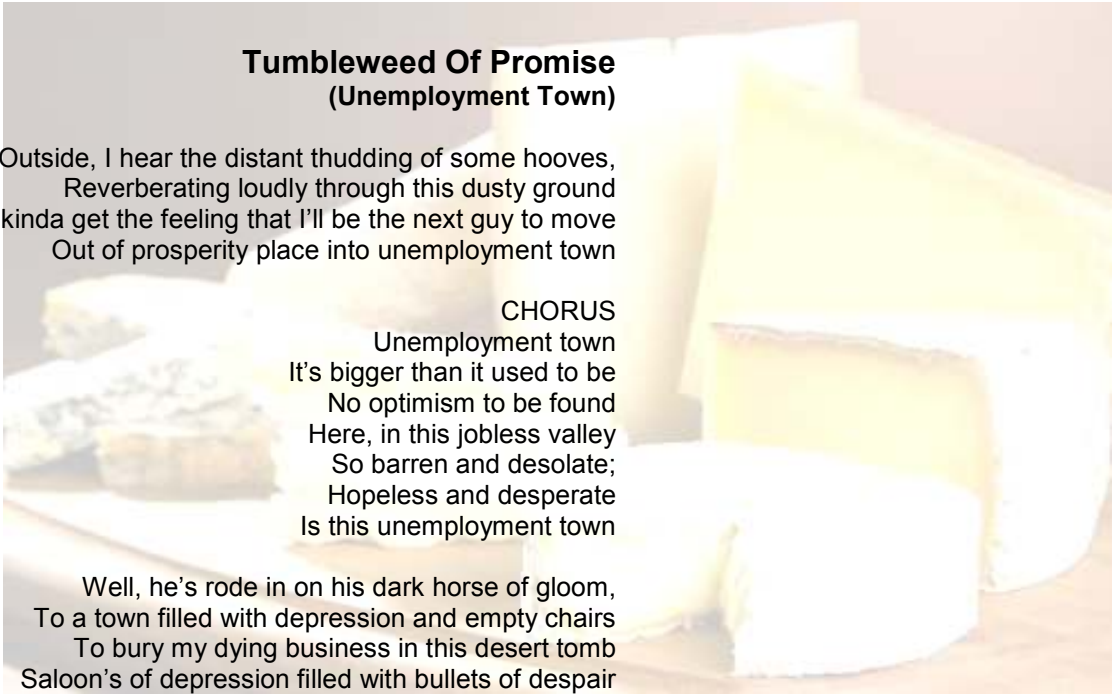
Poets have been mysteriously silent on the subject of cheese.
- G.K. Chesterton

The answer to all of our problems
Allows those at toil to have ease
A balm for all of your worries
The wonderful creation called
Cheese

It is an Irishman's Manna
From heaven - from the Dáil - to us sent
And us the hungry and grateful people
With it in our stomachs ought be content.

Poets of its praises heretofore were silent
But me: I sing loud of its praise
And we, the poor working classes
Are grateful to our government to the end of our days.

- Tomás Ó Cárthaigh



Tumbleweed Of Promise (Unemployment Town)

Outside, I hear the distant thudding of some hooves,
Reverberating loudly through this dusty ground
I kinda get the feeling that I'll be the next guy to move
Out of prosperity place into unemployment town

CHORUS

Unemployment town
It's bigger than it used to be
No optimism to be found
Here, in this jobless valley
So barren and desolate;
Hopeless and desperate
Is this unemployment town

Well, he's rode in on his dark horse of gloom,
To a town filled with depression and empty chairs
To bury my dying business in this desert tomb
Saloon's of depression filled with bullets of despair

CHORUS

Unemployment town...

VERSE III

Now that this heartless cowboy has come to me
And is knocking impatiently on my front door
Outside his black horse is neighing indignantly
In the mangled face of that lonely tiger's roar

CHORUS

Unemployment town...

CLOSING

Then I hear a tumbleweed of promise
Blow through this job-forsaken town
On His noble steed of love & grace
To sweep your feet up off the ground
He's the lone rider of our salvation
Sheriff of the lost and found
With a water skin full of hope
To quench your thirst
In this unemployment town

Written by Ken Hume

If Oliver Was Here

If Oliver was here would he speak up
and these governors render a tantrum
Would he say "Please some more cheese
your kindness sir is a leap quantum
for rare's such kindness from the Fail!?"

Oh yummy blocks of cheese
me thinks of the running mouse
who a mere morsel does but please
should we dance like a grouse
the glad reaper of charities?

- Roibeard Mc Elroy

Roibeard McElroy

Ireland will Awake !

When French and Greeks a vigil keep,
ol' Ireland's asleep! ol' Ireland's asleep!
Alas and well may Erin weep
for her people lie in slumber deep
There loch and swathe are mild to see
'mid rocks their sentinel free
Sing oh! Bring back democracy
from flailing fire and foaming sea

That endless wave and lovely land
liberty and justice demand
But know the great God never wished
for slumberin' slaves a land tarnished
And long a brave and noble race
walked and stood upon the place
Sing oh! Not even the NAMA disgrace
can quite destroy that magic's trace!

For once the time when Boru's band
in triumph dashed each Viking hand
and quick like gazelle the Norman
in Wicklow's hills from O'Tooles ran
And later acts as fine and rare
like the dash of O'Sullivan Bear
Sing oh! This spirit's lonely lull
recall aloud with august hull

Sweet muse and guard of her throne
Erin's tears the Croppies blood sown
And when at Mount Street Malone
at Easter week like a fresh wind blown
made brave the stand for clan and sect
with Kilmainham's seed proud, erect;
Sing oh! They died their land protect
for dignity and self-respect!

And if, when all a vigil keep
ol' Ireland's asleep! ol' Ireland's asleep!
Alas and well may Erin weep
for her people lie in slumber deep
But hark! A voice like tempests shake
In time the people awake! awake!
Sing oh! Hurrah! Banks! Nama quake!
We'll watch 'till death for our children's
sake!

* This is an adaptation of Thomas Davis' famous ballad, "The West's awake" for our current times.

"Season's Matrix For The Autumn"

Distant lover cold and pale
swiftly moves in the chasm
as from the moist flowerbed
mutates into a nervous spasm

Lightning bereft of love's essence
in the bay cannot anchor
falls amid like a fallen star
a sea tinged with rancour

Summer frolics long hidden now
like a neatly folded blanket
the horse has tossed its rider
into the hay rick with ricket

Pleasantries are dead medleys
spreadeagled from treason
the silver studs of summer
fall like harvests out of season

Blunt arrow heads dump
the battle field more than once
the leaves from trees blown
windfalls in dozens ensconce

The green meadow's layered
lost shades of heat's revolvers
the eaves dropper cruises out
with autumn's dash quick silver

Parted the soft amoeba
like lovesick birds swooning
whose cozy rippling feather
is in need of retuning!

"The Bardic Curse Against The Unjust Civil Servant":

May your hair fall out
and scatter like the skeletal earth
a knotted mat may it pattern
like faded leaves to stamp on earth

May your shoulders droop
like sunken islands to the sea
as shards of charred bone may you stoop
ready to pop like a pod to the pea!

Let Pockmarks, floodplain lesions,
garland your cruel countenance
as a mottled cloth with abrasions -
may it weep a fleshy fragrance!

Like potholed roads, goosemarched
legions,
may your cheeks feel sauteed for penance

May your nails fall out
like a bird of prey with no talons!
when you deign to scratch the merest itch
sweat cold gangrene in gallons
Your body feel torn as a seamless stitch
dare you not go to Beauty Salons!

Footsores will cushion your every step
your plantar arch/sole like cindered ashes
will be branded. And your instep
will feel the cudgel of poor man lashes!
For this injustice as a Mountain Steppe
your days are cursed where weeping and
teeth gnashes...



Image:
Apryl Skies

Apryl Skies

The Empty Bellows

Whatever would my life become,
had I abandoned my every fear
Suddenly my eyes,
my eyes, so Cassiopeia-clear...

My life before her,
a sinking ship
without the velvet of her lips
Wasting away on a stagnant,
slack-eyed tide,
no waves nor wind
for this vessel to ride...

Should oceans
become my rain,
shall I pour out
my every pain
into a tiny glass
and drink it during
Midnight mass?

And if I would
have stood before her
to confess my every sorrow,
felt deeply,
both soul and morrow
Would she, could she
climb inside my lock
to become my only key...

Her voice a softly,
ocean breeze~

And then;
would we gaze down
upon mountains,
or drink from endless,
flowing fountains...

Would we tread upon
the flowers of clouds
breaking the cocoon
of all our doubts...

With her lips
to mine in vain,
Inhaling the softness
of her frame
and drinking the blood
of sinful saints
Will we spin the axis
of our fates?

And when these
empty bellows roar,
alone I take this final tour
and be far more
content in death
for I am not
an unexpected guest
and gazing down
from this paradise
are the twinkling stars
of my Lover's eyes...

My Dearest living,
there is no heartbreak
underground
for merrily our souls
will dance while the tired
sun falls down
and oh such shameful revelry,
my sweetest, Annabel Lee
not even when
my dreams seduce
have I ever felt so free...

Christmas & New Year – What it means to me.

Tomás Ó Cárthaigh Roman Catholic (lapsed)

Christmas is a time of good will and good cheer, and is often juxtaposed with the Scrooge image of Bah! Humbug! for the few that do not like it. Strange as it may seem, I am one of those!!! For me, New Year with lots promise of new beginnings, and cheer is the better season, or at least the season for which to party. Christmas should be about remembrance of the birth of Our Lord, a solemn occasion. While Catholic, I'm not a great one for going to mass, for a prayer said in ritual without thinking is little better than the mumblings of pagans to quote one of the great reformers.

The message of Christmas should be about reaching out to our fellow man, not just during the season by throwing a pound to a street side sitting begging drunk, but during the year as well. Among the tinsel, the message of Christmas is lost. It is when we reach out to help our fellow human being, no matter what our faith, or none, that we honour the birth of Our Lord and the glory of God.

New Year to me is the time to cast off all the worries and responsibilities of life, and party for the sake of partying, for we know not what comes, and may not be able or have each other to party with in the coming years.

Anthony Sullivan ex-Catholic / Spiritual

Christmas. What's it all about these days? And more so, what does it mean to me, personally? Well, these are two very different questions, that's one thing that's for sure! And yet both, by their very nature are of course intrinsically linked. Whatever I feel the Christmas period has become is bound to influence whatever meaning I attribute to the season for my own life.

My answer to the former question hasn't changed very much since I first began to really think for myself and to cast a critical eye on the world, probably as far back as my early teens. The saddest truth of that particular fact however, is that even at so early an age I was seeing through the commercial gloss painted so heavily across the time of year, and more often than not done so with all subtlety of stroke you'd expect from a brush controlled by a robotic arm. And that's not very much at all, lest there be any doubt!!

As to the latter question of what does Christmas mean to me, on a personal level? Well I find that harder to define, in all honesty. All the more with each passing year and especially so in more recent times. I was born and raised a Roman Catholic so my childhood memories of Christmas would be of the very traditional kind. And none less than happy because of that, might I add! There was always a strong focus, both from a family and a school point of view, on Christmas being about the birth of Christ. This event was always celebrated by the wonderfully novel, to our young eyes and minds at the time, Midnight Mass. Sadly, even this seems now to belong more to an era of nostalgia alone. As exciting as heading off to Church at so late an hour on Christmas Eve was, for it's sheer diversion from the norm if not for any reason of a higher, holier kind, the real thrill of Christmas came in the frantic burst of activity under the tree on Christmas morning! And it's there, in the origin of that moment, and the essence of what brings that moment to pass; a pure and unconditional sense of love, that I feel Christmas can and should remain an essential and relevant part of our modern world. And I say that having long since left behind and moved away from my Roman Catholic roots. Today, I find myself drawn more to elements of Buddhism than to any other form of organised religion, although I'd consider myself more of a spiritual person, by nature, than I could ever be religious.

That said, however, I would never think about NOT celebrating or marking Christmas just because I no longer consider myself part of the Catholic Church. Most religions and forms of belief have, I believe, certain elements to them that could well be beneficial to many of our lives, regardless of chosen core systems of belief as instruments for moral guidance.

Christmas then, if lived simply for the sake of taking a moment of each year to show, by whatever means available or felt to best suit those concerned, the people in your life who matter most, that they really do matter most to you, can be the most wonderful of times! This kind of affection doesn't need vast amounts of money or resources to prove its existence or worth. And what better way for one year to end and to begin preparations for another, than to take a little time to let those closest to your heart know they are deeply loved and cared for. What I would always argue however, is that a specific calendar date should NEVER be required for love to be shown and lived aloud. Better by far that it breathes freely among us all for every single short day we share together on this tiny but beautiful little planet called Earth, be it expressed randomly or with the greatest of care and attention, but above all...LET IT BE EXPRESSED!!!

Going back to the first question I asked; what is Christmas all about these days? The answer, I'm afraid, is a very poor reflection of society as we know it and indeed, as it has been for a good many years now, too many to lay the blame for such a situation squarely at the door of the fabled 'celtic tiger' alone. The situation of which I speak is best (or worst, perhaps?) demonstrated by the first small signs of Christmas now appearing in the shops before Halloween has even passed. Business people continually put forward the argument that they're merely responding to customer demand. This, of course, is utter rubbish! Plain and simple. And there can be few, if any of us, who don't realise this to be the truth of the matter. But yet, year upon year, we seem content to accept the arrival of Christmas at an earlier and earlier stage. And why is this? Why do we face such a happening in the first place, and why have we come to accept it so easily on top of that?

We face it because commercial greed, having seeped like a poison into every living cell of our culture, dictates that we face it. And we accept it because it's so cleverly introduced to us as the norm, and over so long a period of time that many people simply know no different anymore. But truly, what's the point of having the Christmas season forced upon us so soon each year? Aside from potential commercial profit, I honestly don't think there is any point. It doesn't help the majority of regular, ordinary people and it most certainly has nothing to do with the true spirit of Christmas.

The earlier signs of Christmas appear, the earlier children begin to talk about and list all the presents they want, and so the earlier the pressure starts for parents who want more than anything to make their children's Christmas a happy one. But, given the extremely harsh economic climate we currently face, and even just allowing for common sense to prevail at any other stage, it's pointedly clear that a six or seven week build-up can only add unnecessary pressure to peoples already stressful lives. So instead of a Christmas period that begins in earnest towards the end of the first week in December perhaps, and truly becomes a time when people can, for a little while at least, escape the buzzing blur of battle that everyday living can often be, we now have a Christmas period that has almost been reinvented as a season unto itself! And if that wasn't bad enough, instead of it being a relief from the 'battle of everyday', it's become an even more intense and inescapable 'war of weeks' that invariably inflicts wounds such as stress, worry, depression and loneliness. This surely cannot be what anyone would say Christmas is supposed to be.

Now please don't get me wrong! My middle name is actually NOT Scrooge!! I'm not saying there's anything wrong with Christmas, or the theme and story most central to it, not at all. What I am saying, however, is that there is something very wrong in how society has come to treat Christmas and in what we've allowed it to stand for. It's not a time for expensive presents or ways to maximise profits to dominate thoughts. It IS a time for people. To remember and be thankful for those who matter most to us. And most importantly, to let them know!

KEN HUME

Christian

In pre-recessionary times, when Ireland was buried deep in the bowels of the Celtic Tiger's all devouring appetite, I have to admit that this season had become a bit of a chore for me. Up until that point, I'd always seen Christmas as a time full of joyful hope; kindness to fellow man and exceptional generosity. That was borne out of my own deep-seated Christian faith which had and still does help me to see beyond all the tinsels; bright lights and fermented expressions of thanks to see the real reason behind the season.

You're probably asking, 'what is that reason?' Folks, that reason is Christ! He is the Christ in Christ-mas. The hope is derived from his supernatural birth in a shed to virgin named Mary and an earthly father called Joseph. It sounds incredulous and nonsensical to most reasonable thinking people but yet how come it inspires so much hope in so many people year after year? Because this baby Jesus would eventually go on to redefine religion and to give up His life on a cross for all mankind both living and yet to be, proof positive that despite humbling beginnings, one can go on to achieve great things!

Unfortunately though, a lot of this enthusiasm was slowly drained out of me as the tiger slowly sank its teeth further and further into my heart and that of the Irish nation. And the blood of commercialism and all consuming materialism started to spread it's not so crimson stain all over the innocence of

Christmas. The season now started at the end of October, pretty much as soon as Halloween was over or in many cases, as soon as the previous festivities ended. The relentless barrage of ads on television; radio and the print media urging me to buy this and that particular gift for my own or a loved one's well being, became oppressive and irritating, gradually bringing out my inner Ebenezer Scrooge.

But, over the past year, I've started to learn one more very important and revitalising thing about the meaning of Christmas & this is something that the EU; the recession; government or the budget can't cut! And that is, that Christmas was; is and always will about family and spending quality; uninterrupted time with them. Because Christmas started out with a family 2,000 years ago and (despite the ever changing definition of what it means to be a family) will always come back to family. Because without them, there's no child-wrapped squeals of joy; nobody with whom you can go shopping for; nobody to exchange gifts with; nobody to sit around the fire with a hot beverage; nobody to share the traditional turkey and ham dinner. It suddenly becomes quite a lonely and joyless time devoid of much meaning as they are the people you go back to, when things get rough. What Christmas means to me this year and from here on in, is family. I hope amidst all the gloom and doom of job cuts and wage cuts that we won't see the need to cut out the time we spend with our families this Christmas season.



A Lane on Whiddy Island

“Summer 2010”

Tomás Ó Cárthaigh



A Lane in Rossbawn, in Co. Laois. Part of the Sliabh Blooms.

"Winter 2010"

Tomás Ó Cárthaigh

Biographies

Fahredin Shehu

Born in Rahovec, South East of Kosova, in 1972. graduated at Prishtina University, Oriental Studies. M.A. in Literature.

Actively works on Calligraphy discovering new mediums and techniques for this specific for of plastic art.

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Jude Cowan Montague

Jude Cowan was born in Manchester and lives in London and is a writer, artist and musician. Her first collection of poetry 'For the Messengers' will be published by Donut Press in February 2011. She is a songwriter and performer and has produced two LPs, 'To America' (2000) and 'Doodlebug Alley' (2010). Her third album, 'Lamb and Tyger', which comprises settings of William Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience' for the Hammond organ and voice, will be released in 2011. Jude works as a media archivist for Reuters TV.

www.donutpress.co.uk

www.judecowan.blogspot.com

www.forthemessengers.blogspot.com

www.myspace.com/judecowan

Anthony Sullivan

Anthony is a Lusmagh born writer and lyricist and has produced music with many local artists from the Mills Brothers to the Dunican sisters, and is working with some national artists for some new songs.

Also a member of the Peoples Alliance, Anthony is very active on social issues, submitting to journals such as Whisper and Thunder in the USA among others.

www.anthonysullivan.biz

Ken Hume

Ken Hume is a Tullamore writer and activist, who is working on his first book. He blogs frequently and is building up a

following online. Previously published by this magazine, we are delighted to feature his work once more.

<http://kenhume79.wordpress.com>

Roibeard Mac Elroy

Roibeard has had work featured in previous issues of the Journal, and he also submitted to other anthologies, notably among them "Spirit of Peltier". He is also active in the Tara / Skryne Valley campaigns.

<http://meltthecelt->

insightsofachameleon.blogspot.com/

<http://myspace.com/roibpoeticaceltica>

Apryl Skies

United States writer, filmmaker and poet Apryl Skies is of Irish extraction, and it is with pleasure we once more feature her work. Her website is

www.edgarallanpoet.com

Tomás Ó Cárthaigh

Writer, photographer and poet, Tomás is the editor of the journal and loves to travel, and has been across Europe and Eastern Europe, travels which have helped create much poetry. All there's left to do now is to see the credit card bill paid, and the process of that won't inspire too much poetry!!!

www.writingsinrhyme.com

Photos from Faro, Portugal 2010

Photos taken by John Carty and his brother Tomás Ó Cárthaigh, from travels to Portugal in December 2010.

