

From Glasgow to Saturn

The University of Glasgow's Creative Writing Showcase



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A Word from the Editors

Welcome to Issue 27, the last issue for the current editorial team.

When we stepped into the role of editors last summer, our guiding principle was to print the best writing we received: to select only the work that excited or intrigued us, made us want to go back and read it again and again. We wanted the magazine to maintain its punch and power.

From Glasgow to Saturn was originally conceived as a platform for the creative writing department at the University of Glasgow, providing, in particular, an important outlet for the new talent that arrives each year on the prestigious MLitt course. But the magazine has grown to be much more than that, now attracting submissions and a readership from the wider university community and its alumni. With a strong online presence, *From Glasgow to Saturn* has gained a reputation and a following far beyond the walls of the university: no longer local and inward looking but global and outward looking.

During our year-long editorship we have strived for a balance between producing a magazine that serves the university community and one that maintains enough punch and power to draw back in the University of Glasgow writers whose careers are flourishing. Looking through the list of contributors for the five issues we have produced over the year, we are confident that the magazine has reflected the full diversity of the university, publishing work by current students and the recently graduated, by staff members, and by fully-fledged published writers. In this issue itself we present work from current MLitt students and recent graduates, from the university's Centre for Continuing Studies and from students within other disciplines. In these pages Glasgow-based writers jostle for your attention with writers as far afield as New York City. We're also delighted to present another fascinating *Quick View* feature from extraordinary poet and roofer William Letford, whose first poetry collection *Bevel* will be launched at the 2012 Edinburgh International Book Festival.

Our last task as outgoing editors is to offer the warmest welcome to the new editorial team, Kevin Scott, Shaunagh Jones and Calum Maclean, and to thank them for their enthusiastic assistance in putting together this issue. Issue 28 will be their first issue and will be published in the autumn. For now, we hope you enjoy reading this, our last.

Paul Deaton | Siobhan Staples | Megan Primrose

Nettles

by Fiona Wilson

Bearded them, then, on the far cliff's edge,
a faint and a prayer to the never-never;
bearded them, then. But not quite.
A rough breeze held them shilly-shallying together.

No doubt, my grandfather McGregor,
famous for grasping the point,
would have had something to say at this point,
no doubt, no doubt, something or other,

whereas all I have is this feckless rash,
this flaming sleeve of words —



Here and Now

by Fiona Wilson

Familiar form, the dochen,
ferrous flowers and corrugated leaves,
its unglam here-I-am
and on the highest, rusting tip,
a bullfinch feeding off it.

Extract from 'The Few'

by Cathy McSporran

The Few is a young adult novel set during the Second World War, about a group of adolescents who discover they have magical powers. In this extract, two of the children, Maggie and Colin, have stowed away on their father's fishing boat, not realising he is going to help at the Dunkirk evacuations...

The English Channel, May 1940

'Maggie, I don't feel very well.'

'Sssh.'

'But –'

'Ssh. He'll hear you!'

They'd spent the last hour crouched in the large galley cupboard. The cramp was bad enough. But now things were getting worse: either the weather had turned or they'd reached rougher water, because great humps of waves were lifting and dropping the *Susan* like a cork. And Colin, who could get poorly on a millpond, was starting to whimper: 'Maggie, I really don't feel well.'

'Sssh.'

'But Mags –'

'Sssssh!'

'I think I'm going to be sick...' And then he was, splashing Maggie's ankles and filling the cupboard with stink. Maggie said a word her grandmother would have smacked her for, and pushed open the cupboard door.

She scrambled out into the cleaner air and the comparative brightness of the galley. Colin tumbled after her, mumbling apologies. Maggie was on her feet first, and her eyes cleared; and what she saw in the hatchway made her fall back, bumping against her brother.

Their father loomed in the hatchway; his face was terrible. 'What the *hell* are you two doing here?'

Colin, suddenly much younger than twelve, pointed at his sister: 'She said you couldn't boil an egg.'

Maggie kicked him, but her father's dreadful gaze was already turning to her. 'It wasn't just me,' she cried, suddenly a lot younger than sixteen. 'It wasn't just *me!*'

Before her dad could answer, there was a booming sound from above, like a big wave hitting the sand; the *Susan* rocked crazily, nearly throwing them off their feet. Dad snapped, ‘Stay below,’ and disappeared.

The two of them looked at each other in the dim, sick-scented galley. Eventually Maggie shrugged: how much more trouble could they get into? ‘Might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb,’ she said, and followed her father. Colin was right behind her as she emerged onto the deck, out into the bright sunshine and a rolling cloud of smoke, and they saw what they had come to.

Dunkirk was burning.

Three huge cones of smoke towered over the beach like black tornadoes. Dull orange fire flickered at the bottom. Burning chemicals caught the backs of their throats – there was a mucky brown haze over the choppy sea and the dun-coloured sand. Maggie and Colin had seen the French coast before, on trips with Dad; they had watched the waves swishing regularly across the bay, fanning out calmly onto the sand. But now the sea pitched and struggled under them, stirred up by boats. Dozens of them, large and small: from wooden rowing-boats to a great shining steel destroyer, about a mile off, somewhere the sun was breaking through.

Maggie glanced to starboard and almost screamed: there was a wall of iron a hundred yards off, too close. Dad was waving his arm at it, impatient. Maggie and Colin looked up the metal wall, and saw an arm waving back from amidst the gun-muzzles peeking over the side; saw the huge letters, *HMS Grafton*.

One of ours. Relieved, Maggie turned back to the beach, which was now only fifty yards or so off. There were long lines of fence-posts there, hundreds of them, forming straggling lines across the sand, each post topped with a dull metallic sheen. Some of them stood in the sea, half-submerged, as if caught by the tide. They must be some kind of defence line, she thought; until she saw they were moving, each post shifting, making the line wriggle like a snake. They weren’t fence-posts at all; they were men. Soldiers, standing in long ragged lines across the beach.

Colin appeared at Maggie’s elbow. ‘What are they doing?’

‘I think they’re... queuing.’

Colin blinked. ‘Like in the post office?’

Maggie started to giggle. She couldn’t help it; it was all so *polite*. ‘They’re just... waiting their turn - ’

There was a droning sound overhead, nasal and unpleasant. The lines of men flattened themselves onto the sand. Something like a metal kite flashed overhead; Maggie and Colin

looked up at bright metal wings marked with swastikas. The fighter skimmed over them towards the shore. There was a rattle of popping sounds like fireworks, and little bursts of sand hurried up the beach in a zig-zagging line. The soldiers were moving, breaking out of their orderly queue, but they weren't quick enough. The zig-zag crossed the line of men, there was a haze of red, and some of the soldiers began to scream.

A colossal boom shook the boat: the *Grafton's* cannons had fired. The German plane began to haemorrhage smoke, twisting and turning in the air. The men on the shore scattered, some up the beach and some down to the water, as the fighter struggled but kept on its trajectory downwards, and then exploded on the beach in a cloud of smoke and sand and fire.

The men who'd fled down the beach were in the water now, pushing away from the flames and out to sea, as if they meant to wade to Dover. Some of them were up to their chests, and didn't seem to be stopping. They'd rather drown than burn, Maggie thought. She turned to her father, who was at the wheel, to point out the wading men; only then she noticed the change in the engine sound, realised that the *Susan* was tacking sideways. Dad was turning the boat around, away from the shore. 'Dad,' called Maggie, 'what are you doing?'

'Taking you two home.' He had to shout over the shots, the cannon fire, the roaring of the fires. 'What d'you think I'm doing?'

Maggie looked back at the men in the water. They had noticed her, in spite of all the noise: heard the last thing they'd expected to hear, a girl's voice; seen the last thing they'd thought to see, a girl's bright red plaited hair, shining even in the grubby cloud. They were pushing towards the *Susan* now, shrugging off their packs; they were stretching out their arms, to Maggie. 'Dad, they're right there,' she cried.

He wasn't looking, deliberately not looking. 'I'm getting the two of you home.'

'We can't just leave them!'

'I told you to get below!'

The men were much closer now; Maggie could see their faces. 'No.' She hoisted herself up, threw one leg over the side. 'Dad, I'm getting them! I mean it!'

She didn't really mean it, of course; not really. But Colin started to wail, 'Don't, don't!', and Dad held out a hand to placate her: 'All right! Just get back down! And get below!'

Maggie obediently flattened herself to the deck. Her father left the wheel, and reached overboard with both arms, tipping the *Susan* to starboard. He came up pulling something like a huge brown fish; dumped the gasping man onto the deck and reached over for another.

The boat tipped again, so low that a hand grabbed onto the side right above Maggie's head. She jumped up and held out her arms. A man's face, wide-eyed and staring like a

frightened horse, looked back at her; hands grabbed onto her and she pulled, painfully, until with a lot of tugging and scrabbling, the man rolled over the side and onto the deck. He lay there, panting and staring at her. Maggie heard her Dad's voice, angry but (for once) not with her or Colin: 'Help the others!' The first man he'd pulled aboard was getting up, reaching over. Colin was only a few feet away, trying to pull an enormous man on board but being pulled closer and closer to the water himself. Maggie said to the man at her feet 'Help the others,' and as he scrambled to his feet she lunged for Colin, grabbing the big soldier's arms just before they both fell backwards into the sea.

And then there were more and more of them, crowding onto the deck in their sopping-wet khakis, their eyes frantic and empty of thought. They piled into the galley, in a row on the bunk. They filled every inch: the *Susan* was riding so low in the water Maggie could reach overboard and put her hand right into the water. And still there were more.

'That's enough,' Dad said at last. He was looking at a man with a moustache, a man with extra patches on his shoulders. 'We'll capsize.'

The man nodded, and roared: 'That's it. You men in the water – off with you! Wait for the next boat!'

It was an upper-class accent, the voice of command; but even that wasn't enough. The gripping hands kept coming. But the men who were safely in the boat shoved them off, unwrapping their clutching fingers or just hammering them with their fists. Still the reaching hands; now there were pleading voices, calling things Maggie couldn't hear and didn't want to. It wasn't until the officer shouted, 'Shoot the next man who tries to board,' that the clutching hands finally disappeared.

Wallowing impossibly low, the *Susan* heaved itself around and started pushing away from the beach. Maggie kept still, wedged against the port side by soaking uniformed figures. Colin was over to starboard, tiny among the hulking men; Maggie smiled at him reassuringly, starting to feel reassured herself. The coast of Dunkirk fell away, five hundred, six hundred yards. A thousand.

The men's panting breath was slowing now; their faces relaxing, dull with exhaustion but human again. Quite a few faces were looking at Maggie and Colin. The officer – a major, Maggie saw, now that his badges were drying out – said, 'What the bloody hell are these children doing aboard?'

'Stowaways.' Dad glared at Maggie, who looked guiltily at her feet. 'Hid down below.'

'We just wanted to help,' Colin said. Some of the men laughed; one of them patted his shoulder. Dad ignored them, said: 'They're going right back to Dover.'

The major shook his head. 'Put them onto the *Grafton* with us. Then go back to the beach.'

'When I get my children home safe.'

'They'll be safe enough on the *Grafton*, man!'

Dad jerked his head towards the other destroyer, the one a mile off. Flames were blossoming from its hull. Things were falling into the sea, burning things. 'Dover,' Dad said.

'Dammit, man, this is an order!'

'I'm not in the army, mister.'

The major seemed to be struggling with himself. He looked at the other men, who were looking away. Obviously Dover sounded good to them, but they weren't about to argue with an officer. Eventually the major said to Dad, 'Now look here. You've got one last chance before I commandeer this boat.'

'Do you know how to pilot it?'

'For God's sake, how hard can that be?'

'The port stabiliser's defective,' said Dad, lying smoothly about his perfectly-maintained craft. 'Do you know how to compensate for it? Where to thump the motor if it goes belly-up?'

'You've – got one last –'

'Dover first.' Dad turned to look at the major. 'Drop off my kids. Then I'll go to and fro your ship as often as you want.'

At that point the *Susan* sailed clear of the smoke, into the sunshine. They were nearly past the *Grafton*, looking into clean blue sky. There was the faint drone of a plane, somewhere far above, but no-one noticed; because they could see the line of white on the other shore. The white cliffs.

The men cheered, and the major gave up. 'Very well. Dover –'

The cheering stopped and the drone became a roar, and dragon-wings flashed overhead. Something dropped about twenty yards off, and the *Susan* heaved to starboard as the sea erupted. Maggie saw Colin thrown sideways, saw his head smack against the side, saw the man beside him pull him upright. She was drenched in cold water as a wave broke over the starboard bow, but she was too wedged in place to move or to fall. She saw three men around her father clouded in a reddish haze; they, and her dad, who had been standing precariously balanced as he talked to the major, flew to starboard and over the side. His boots stuck up in the air and he vanished.

The *Susan* righted itself as the bomber skimmed upwards, away from the steel wall of the *Grafton* and its thundering guns. Maggie shoved through the men around her to where

Dad had gone overboard. She was ready to tease him – his boots flying up in the air like that, it looked so funny! She couldn't see him, though. He must be too scared of the bomber to surface. 'It's all right,' she called, 'it's gone.'

Behind her she heard the major: 'Any sign of them?' She didn't hear the answers, though, she just reached down and splashed at the opaque choppy water. What was he *playing* at? 'Dad! Come on!'

She was reaching for an upside-down metal helmet, which was bobbling along like a toy boat – Dad might be underneath it, trying to come up! – when the wailing sound began. A falling, screaming sound. The men beside her craned their necks up to the sky, like rabbits who've heard an eagle. Their eyes were wide again. A word went around them: 'Stuka.' It jumped from one man to the next – 'Stuka. *Stuka.*'

The major's shout cut them off as the dreadful wailing cry became louder, louder. 'Get this thing moving! You there! The engine!'

Maggie was still scanning the water; she felt the engine start. 'No!' she cried, 'no, I haven't found him yet!'

No-one seemed to hear. The major's voice barked again, 'Full speed! Steer for the ship!'

'No! Don't! My Dad –'

'Get us *moving!*'

The *Grafton's* guns boomed again, but the scream of the siren got louder and louder. Maggie was still splashing at the water's surface, trying to swoosh a big piece of debris out of the way, when she heard someone cry out, a child's cry. She looked up for Colin, but it was one of the men beside her. She smelled urine. Now there were heavy splashing sounds; some of the men were throwing themselves into the sea, trying to swim away in their heavy uniforms. The man who'd cried out was standing up, pointing: '*Oh God help us!*'

Maggie looked up. A plane was falling towards them. The fall was controlled: a dive-bomber. It was screaming as though it were being tortured, and it was pointed right at the *Susan*. It was small, with funny fat little ankles, like a toy. But the men on the boat were scattering before it like swimmers from a shark. Its nose was grey, like a shark's – it even had painted teeth around its nose. It was looking at her, grinning.

Maggie stood up. It was headed right at them; it was headed for the patch of water where her father had fallen. Where he was still waiting, obviously, still submerged – but he didn't know about the plane! Maggie stared at the Stuka, and gathered all her strength. Electricity crackled around her hair as it unwound from its thick plaits. Oblivious, Maggie focussed on the plane and screamed '*Go away!*', thrusting out both hands to ward it off.

The Stuka flipped over backwards, nose to tail, as if a gale-force wind had caught it. It dropped its little bombs like turds, but they fell into empty water, and the fountains that roared up were harmless. The plane itself kept flipping, over and over, until it hit the sea in a massive burst of water, its wing scything into a packed rowing-boat. There were more screams now.

‘Mother of God,’ the major said. He wasn’t looking at the remains of the dinghy - he was staring at Maggie. She ignored him, and the screams, and turned back to the empty sea around the *Susan*. ‘Dad! Dad!’

‘Freya,’ a voice beside her said. ‘Freya.’

It was Colin. He was beside her, staring at nothing. The side of his head was bloody. One of the lenses of his glasses was broken; his eye was cracked from side to side, staring into empty space. ‘Freya,’ he said. ‘She is coming. Freya.’

He was alive and in the boat: Maggie had already stopped listening to him, was looking all around. Maybe Dad had headed back to the beach? He would, surely he would? ‘Dad! Dad!’

The engine was starting. The boat was moving away. ‘No.’ She turned to the man beside her, ‘Wait!’

The man gazed back; it was the pity in his eyes that broke her. ‘I’m sorry, lass,’ he said.

‘No! Dad! Dad!’

‘I’m sorry,’ the man said. He pulled her into his arms. ‘There, lass, I’m sorry.’

She was still screaming into his shoulder when they reached Dover.

Call and Answer

by Fiona Wilson

If I understand correctly, to open the book is to crack the spine, is to bend the back, is to prick the bubble, is to scratch the surface, is to strip the bride, is to tick the box, is to crush the glass, is to click the remote, is to snip the ribbon, is to lift the bride, is to steal the cherry, is to burst the dam, is to pick the lock, is to cock the piece, is to slice the page, is to close the rhyme, is to grasp the bird, is to flip the bird, is to flick the vein, is to fire the round, is to break the heart, is to burn the track, is to score a point, is to make the point, is to make a name, is to leave one's mark.

But

isn't it also

to strap the willow, to thread the rhyme, to live the child, to crick the code, to crash the glaze, to tick the pulse, to sin the hymn, to crotch the needle, to strop the pride, to guest the gist, to gift the cuff, to pack the luck, to kick the peace, to sluice the page, to raise the village, to chase the rhyme, to crock the spin, to flap the bard, to happen the book, to fleck the line, to flare the round, to broach the hurt, to bairn the trick, to shirr the pen, to mate the pain, to mark the man, to lift the mirk? Love,

just say the word, just say the word.



The Watcher

by Sheila Millar

He watches for her from the shelter of a garden skip. The school is quiet until, at five past three, the bell rings and children swarm into the playground. He sees her as she runs out of the building with others. The sound of laughter drifts across to him as the children huddle together, sharing the day's news and secrets. Within minutes the chaos quietens, parents collect their charges and she is alone.

He peers over at her, narrowing his eyes as he squints through decaying foliage. Her blonde hair is loose and tangled; her skirt just above her knees and a little navy cardigan covers a white shirt. Something sparkles at her wrist. The white socks slide down to her ankles. From where he stands he cannot distinguish the colour of her eyes but he knows they will be blue. Behind her the playground is quiet; the doors to the school have closed.

She stands beside the gate, suddenly forlorn, and looks towards the end of the road. Four or five boys, about her own age, walk past with sports bags, calling to each other and she smiles at them but does not speak. A frown troubles her little face. She moves from one foot to the other, holding her bag in front of her with both hands. She looks up and down the road and waits.

He clenches his fists then relaxes, rocks his head from side to side to relieve the tension in his neck, thrusts a hand into his pocket where he feels a few coins and a set of keys. He juts his chin out and eases the tightness of his collar. His thumb rubs along the side of his index finger until it burns. He nods as he continues watching.

The child turns towards the school building and seems inclined to go back. A woman approaches from the direction of the High Street: the child glances up. Her shoulders sag as the woman hurries on without pausing. Sighing, the child puts her bag on the ground and hoists herself up onto the wall where she sits, leaning forward, her hands pushing down against the wall on either side of her body. She kicks her heels against the roughcast. A woman comes from the back of the school with a small boy and they stop to speak to her. The child shakes her head and smiles repeatedly until eventually, they leave her. A red car slows at the corner and a pale face looks out at her from the passenger seat. The car moves on. She turns towards the school again but remains where she sits. A janitor checks doors and windows.

'Still waiting?'

'I'm okay,' she calls and turns back to the street. She takes a sweet from a pocket in her

skirt and makes much of unwrapping it. She seems to chew it for a long time then searches her pockets again.

A sudden rush of youths behind him breaks his concentration: he is startled and, muttering under his breath, he curses after the boys, but she has not seen him. He breathes steadily again and rubs his finger. He watches as her hair is lifted across her cheeks by the breeze, her hands quick to hold her skirt down. He stares, struggling to fix the details he cannot distinguish from this distance: searching for freckles or dimples, imagining rosy cheeks. He rubs at the back of his neck. He will move soon.

A flurry of leaves catches her attention as they swirl round the bag at her feet. She jumps down from her perch on the wall and lifts the bag, searching through it. She brings out a book and, leaning against the wall this time, she opens it but does not read. Instead, she continues to look up and down the road and chews at her lower lip. She blinks rapidly and brushes the tips of her fingers under each of her eyes.

He breathes out and continues to rub his finger. He must go now. A fine drizzle is beginning to fall and the sun clouds over. He glances in both directions before moving out from behind the skip and stepping onto the road, continuing to watch as he walks forward.

He almost smiles when she looks up hopefully. She is winding a strand of hair around one finger. He does not flinch when the hope fades from her eyes. There is a yellowing bruise under one knee, a mole at the base of her throat. She has drawn blood from her lip which is brightly swollen. He fixes his gaze on her face absorbing her features and her expression. The movement of his fingers becomes faster as he sees the smattering of freckles on her cheeks and the tangle of lashes as she blinks. A muscle twitches under his eye and he flicks his tongue over his lower lip. He stops in front of her, forcing her to look up at him.

‘Hello.’

Kelvindale

by John Horn

Beneath the bridges
where few people go
mostly joggers passing by
straggled graffiti,
dispersal of human debris,
sodden cartons, empty cans
a rusted supermarket trolley
upended as if weary of being
and items of indeterminate grime

here surreal juxtaposition
of trendy blue bistro
and broken down arch
inhabited nightly
by winter homeless

here the muddy murky river
drains down,
its current split and curled
by stone pillars,
propping up the upper world
of Kelvin Bridge or Kelvin Way
where a father lifts his little girl
to see down to the big water;

then on to the gallery for lunch
of carrot and coriander soup,
small crusty roll,
a pat of butter in golden foil
and a medium cappuccino
where at the table opposite

douce ladies of a certain age
sip tea
discuss the imagery of Conrad

or where upstairs
a dad tells his lad to get his paints out
when he gets home
as he could paint as well or better
a toy aeroplane on display
at six thousand pounds.



Plasticine Monsters

by Alan Gillespie

Our conservatory stores up the heat of summer afternoons, so that at night, when the sky is dark and the garden drops into shadow, it's as warm as a greenhouse, while the rest of the house is cold. And when I can't sleep for being tormented by the dream, I stand in the muggy conservatory and the heat takes me thousands of miles away, back to Afghanistan. The dream is an unwelcome ghost, visiting every night, growing more lurid with every rendition. Images of slit skin, filthy fingernails and dull steel flash uncontrollably through my mind, until the shifting shapes in the garden hedge scare me back inside to the cool of the sitting room.

It's two years since I was in Kandahar. Two years since I managed a night's sleep. Two years since Jones was killed, alongside too many others. Their names roll off my tongue. Murphy. Corrigan. Doherty. McIvor. Dunton. Muirhouse. Jones.

Jones. His name always catches in the throat.

I never had the dream during operational deployment, when I was in the desert. Maybe I was too focused for nightmares then. Maybe I never slept more than ten minutes at a stretch.

The first time was the day after we left Kandahar. We were loaded into a coach straight from the plane and told that we were out of danger, our families were waiting for us back home, and we could congratulate ourselves on a job well done.

On the dusty road we had time to think, for the first time, about those who had arrived with us in that hot stinking country but had returned alone. It wasn't a time for congratulations so far as I could see.

It was then that it happened. My head rocked forward and my eyelids drooped, more a trance than a sleep, and my mind twisted into such horror that I could've kissed that fucker Hovis when he grabbed my hair and smacked my face into the bus window, waking me up. The first thing I saw was water, green and blue, frothing at the tips of the waves as the bus trundled on.

'Oh, fuck off,' I scowled.

Hovis, sitting behind, exploded with laughter. It was a familiar, bullying laugh. One I'd used myself and regretted. One night, in the darkness of a perimeter guard hut, we'd about pissed ourselves when one of the lads got a paper cut on his cock reading a porno in the toilets – right on the fucking helmet. The cut got infected and the poor bastard couldn't wank for a week. We laughed like fuck that night. You either laugh or cry.

'Alright lads,' barked Sergeant Stanley, pointing his finger between Hovis and me. 'Cut

it out.’ He made his way up the aisle, hanging on to plastic handles as the road dipped and hugged the coastline. ‘I’ll stop this fucking bus and wait here while the whole fucking lot of you run up that fucking mountain and back down again.’ Sweat dripped from him. ‘You can do whatever the fuck you like when we get there, but while you’re on this bus you’re under my command and you’ll bloody well shut the fuck up.’

‘Yes sir,’ said Hovis. I repeated him.

The sergeant unbuttoned his collar. ‘Can somebody open a fucking window or something? Christ.’

The bus motored on, winding through shady woodlands, water glistening to the south. A steep slope ran away to the north up a dry mountain. The sun and the heat were trapped inside the bus, even with the windows open. Someone near the front vomited into a bag. The smell quickly perfumed the air.

‘Were you having a nightmare?’ asked Woods, sitting next to me. Sitting in Jones’s seat.

‘When?’

‘Before. When you were asleep. Before he woke you.’

‘I don’t think so. No. I wasn’t.’

‘Your eyes were flickering open and closed.’

‘Were they?’

‘They were rolling into the back of your head.’

‘Were you watching me sleep or something?’

Woods glanced down. His fingernails were chewed and the cuticles scabbed over with blood. Despite the heat, he didn’t unbutton his combats.

After four hours, the bus slowed and stopped outside a whitewashed complex. Balconies and wooden shutters framed the windows. Palm trees sashayed in the breeze. The sergeant shook us all by the hand as we disembarked. Carefully. Cautiously. The tarmac felt strange, like a rug that could be whipped away without warning. We filed out, glancing from side to side and keeping close to the man in front.

They siphoned us through a lobby into a vast tent, clean but shabby, with laminate floor and ceiling fans. There were couches and an opening to an outdoor swimming pool. A well-stocked bar glistened with bottles in the sunshine.

‘Listen up,’ shouted a large man in a linen shirt. His voice was absorbed by the canvas, reassuringly English. ‘You’re here for 48 hours. The dorms are through the back. The pool’s outside. This is a private complex and you’re the only residents, so don’t worry about

bumping into any Club 18-30 reps.’

A few men nudged one another. ‘That wouldn’t be so bad,’ said Hovis beneath his breath.

‘And nobody will be permitted in or out so don’t try your fucking luck. The bar’s stocked. Help yourself. Have a drink. Have a chat. Keep an eye out for each other. We will *not* police you. If there’s any rumbling, keep it friendly. Remember we’ve all got family waiting for us at home. I don’t want to see anybody getting carried away. We’re here for seventy-two hours and then it’s home. Understood?’

‘Sir, yes sir,’ we said as one.

‘Welcome to Cyprus,’ he said.

Administrative duties took up the first hour. Name. Next of kin. Mental health issues. I was handed a timetable with the plan for our social reintegration. Workshops designed to ‘facilitate the transition from an operational environment to a normal and familiar environment’: in other words, an attempt to stop us from going fucking nuts when we were finally free of the desert, and found ourselves tucked up in semi-detached new builds, sharing double beds with unfamiliar women and going on the school run with awkward kids.

I could already imagine the uncomfortable, sticky hours we’d have to endure: ‘Reintegrating Into Family and Working Life’ was a mandatory class: role-playing and group work, probably with coloured pens. ‘Anger Management’ wasn’t compulsory but would be well-attended. We’d all been bottling up frustrations and grudges from the sandpit. I didn’t expect ‘Suicidal Awareness’ would be so popular: the ribbing you’d get for attending wasn’t worth it.

The inescapable truth was that we were no longer in Kandahar, where a good day meant simply that nobody new was dead, and we had best get used to it, fast.

Drained from the coach trip and grateful for the peace, I headed for the dorms. Only a few others followed. Sergeant Stanley was one. He no longer had any jurisdiction over us. He dragged his feet and headed for a bed in the far corner. ‘I’ve been responsible for the safety of you lot for nine months,’ he told me. ‘Trying to keep as many of you alive as I could. I’m exhausted. Tell the others that if anybody wakes me up, I’ll fucking kill them.’

He lay down and turned his back on me, dead to the world. I kicked off my boots and sunk into the mattress, thinking about my wife and my mother, and forgotten things like rain and puddles and roundabouts and ambulance sirens, which became the sound of screaming and the smell of spilled blood and Jones, Jones, Jones.

I slept. An image of my own face materialized, reflected in a cracked mirror. My hair was bunched up in a brown fist, bunched up like a posy, stretching my face, exposing my throat. Dry skin flaked around my hairline, spots of dried blood stung my lips. My eyes were weeping, bloodshot and unblinking.

I searched the image of my face in the mirror. There was a man next to me, holding me. His breath was sour.

Beneath, my neck was long and green: a flower on a stalk. Beads of moisture dropped. I dared not move. My face flamed like a rosebud. Long, polished shears moved towards me. They opened like a claw around my neck. My throat gulped, wiggling from side to side, trying to escape, to run from the shears, the snap, the snip, the slash, the slice, the sever...

I awoke, upright, sweat clinging to my skin. The dorm was silent. My heart thumped. I looked at the clock – I had slept for twenty minutes. I splashed cold water on my face and changed out of my combats. The dream was already drifting from memory; but it would return.

The camp was awake. Hovis and his crowd had settled at the bar, serving themselves cold beer and big measures. Others loafed on the couches, keeping their thoughts to themselves, eyes darting around. The only man to venture to the poolside was Woods. but he wasn't floating in the water or resting on a lounge. I watched his slim figure patrolling the perimeter, which was walled off high on all sides, examining the bricks, hands behind his back.

I walked to the bar and poured a glass of beer. Hovis stepped aside to make way for me.

'Alright, Ronnie?'

My name is Ross. Ross Corbett.

'Hovis,' I raised my eyebrow. Nobody called him Grant Brown, except perhaps his mother.

'Your wife'll be looking forward to seeing you,' he said. 'She'll be fed up fucking the postman by now.'

He flicked his tongue into his cheek, pleased with himself, already preparing his next one-liner.

'Yeah, and your dog'll be fed up fucking your missus.'

He stopped smiling. 'You're a funny guy, Ronnie. Pity your sidekick isn't here. Think I might have to keep old Mrs Jones amused when we get back. A comforting shoulder, and all that. Give her a mark of respect. All over her face.'

I put my drink down. Eyes watched me. 'Shut it.'

He straightened his back. 'I don't have to take any orders off you, pal. Don't fucking

tell me what to do.'

'And thank fuck I don't have to give you any orders,' I said, and clinked his glass with mine. 'So cheers to that.'

Hovis was itching for a fight and although I wouldn't give him the satisfaction, he hadn't long to wait. I was sitting by the side of the pool, dipping my feet and skipping through the photo album ingrained in my mind of blood-soaked sand and severed limbs and murdered mothers. I heard the tent reverberate with noise, chairs scraping and voices cheering. A circle formed around two men: Hovis and Woods, who stood stiff and furious. Someone shoved Woods and he lunged, throwing both his knuckles at his opponent's head. Some of them landed, dull whacks of fist on bone.

There was a collective breath and then Hovis threw his body forward, thumping Woods, knocking him down, stamping on him, hissing through his teeth.

'Whoa, whoa,' said voices, as blood appeared on the floor in thick drips. 'That'll do.'

As quickly as it had gathered, the crowd disintegrated. The victor returned to the bar, back-slapping, joking. Others lost interest and returned to their beds and drinks. I pulled Woods to his feet.

'You okay?'

'Yeah,' he said. 'Fine.'

'I'll have a look at that nose.'

It was broken. A clean break with lots of blood. I wiped and straightened it between my thumb and forefinger, the gristle creaking like old metal.

'You shouldn't pay attention to that idiot,' I told him. We were sitting on opposite bunks in an empty corner of the dorm.

'I know. I just...he said...' Woods sniffed and looked me in the eye. He hesitated, words wrapped around his tongue; and then decided to speak after all.

'How many men have you killed, Ronnie?'

I sucked air in through my teeth.

A tall soldier with gangly legs.

A masked man with green eyes.

Four in a jeep travelling at speed.

A boychild with a gun bigger than his torso.

I shook my head. 'I don't know. It doesn't matter.'

'Don't you think about them? Think about their families? Children? Parents?'

‘No,’ I said. ‘They were the enemy. Besides, did they stop to think before killing McIvor, or Muirhouse? Were they thinking about Jones’s children when they sl - ’

The name snagged in my throat.

A flower on a stalk.

Woods was pale. His eyes seemed too small for their sockets; dried out in the heat. The bridge of his nose and his cheeks were taking on the early shades of yellow and purple that comes with all good bruising.

‘Look, you’ve seen all the classes they’re running here, haven’t you? Sign up. They’re bound to help. I’m going to them as well.’

Woods nodded, drops of blood splashing the floor between his feet.

‘And your wife, she’ll be needing her husband home. A good man. A strong man.’

His eyeballs darted from side to side.

‘We’re going home. You won’t have to worry about that wanker Hovis or how many fucking towelheads you’ve killed. It’s finished.’

Woods nodded his head, lay down, and closed his eyes.

I woke early the next day. The morning breeze was fresh and salty, blowing out the Union Jack as though it were a handkerchief. Blowing the limp body that hung from a balcony rail, toes dipping in the water. I found them both, bloated with alcohol, purpled from fighting.

Woods, dangling by his neck, barefoot.

Hovis, drowned in the pool, floating face down.

Two more names to roll off my tongue.

In the morning, when sunshine reveals that the shifting shapes are nothing, I feel happiest. My wife brings breakfast into the conservatory, rubs her toes against mine under the table, and my little boy is full of the astonishment that comes with every new day of childhood. The heat dilutes. My nerves are like a tide now, coming and going with the rise and fall of the moon. Today I will telephone Mrs Jones. Then I will telephone Mrs Woods. And then I will telephone Mrs Brown.

It’s two years since I was in Kandahar. Two years since I managed a night’s sleep. Two years since Jones was killed, alongside too many others. Their names roll off my tongue. Murphy. Corrigan. Doherty. McIvor. Dunton. Muirhouse. Jones.

Two Kisses

by Louis Pilard

In the car.

The eyes of the girl
who isn't yet my girlfriend
reflect in the golden green
morning fields,
eyelashes in the horizon,
forest smoke in the breath
of early autumn fires
the cool sharp wind
inhaling the crackling dry tobacco
eyes and skin as fresh as dew
droplets on fleshy leaves.
All we know of each other
is movement and breath.
As she reaches out
into the prickly air
and steps out of the car
the rumbling of my stomach,
the motor groaning and turning,
she turns back with silent smile
presses her lips on my shoulder;
the sharpness and instinct
of rain and dawn
charge through me

On the pads with Mark.

Lungs heavy drenched in oxygen,
sweat streaming

steaming and bursting drips,
pistons pumping punctured ribcage
he dances around swift,
steps back and forth
left, right and back and
all I can do is follow,
throwing one, two hook backhand
not enough air to think
arms thick as pipes
ears popping
legs floating,
Mark screaming
c'mon ya jessy
faster, hit me,
aye that's it, punch me,
get in close, dinny let me hit ya,
geez a kiss! He steps out
turns back, a rushing blur
grabs my head spinning, spinning,
holding me close
his sweaty lips smack my cheek,
he laughs, steps back
and punches me hard in the face.

This Is It

by James Carson

Hey Nate, just had to let you see this. Can you believe it? Yeah that really is Cher with me and Andy!!!! And you know what? She's a really nice person. I mean she must have had like a thousand requests for photos that night but she was totally cool. Andy says she's one of his best clients. Now you know why her skin looks so good!!! How's life with you?

Numb would probably do it thought Nathan, as he prepared a birthday bouquet of rose hyacinths. Everyone had their own theory. Marsha, Rick, the girl at the launderette. Then there were his Facebook buddies, advocating meditation, drugs, alcohol, religion.

He put the finishing touches to the bouquet. As he carefully placed it on the table behind the counter, Nathan heard the door swing open and Marsha breezed in, a broad smile on her plump face.

'Hey baby bro, how's it going?'

'Quiet,' said Nathan. 'Oh, but Mrs Davis called again about her daughter's wedding.'

'That damn woman! It's like she doesn't trust me.'

His sister then embarked on a litany of updates about her customers and friends: Mrs Turner's aches and pains, Tammy Rae's latest mishaps with her car, how old Betty Norman couldn't care for the dogs, which was why Marsha had to close the shop Tuesday afternoons so she could take Punky and Spunky to the dog park.

She paused for breath and grinned.

'Hey, babe, guess what I got you!'

Nathan tried to stifle a grimace as she presented him with another book on dieting.

'Yeah, uh, thanks. But look, you don't have to keep spending money on this stuff. I know how to lose weight.'

It seemed an age since he'd been able to button up his jacket.

'Hey, can't I look after my little brother?' Marsha threw a meaty arm across his shoulder. 'Nathan, I'm worried about you. Since Josh... you've been really been piling on the pounds.'

Nathan nodded as he grabbed his cap and wind-cheater.

'I gotta go, else I'll be late.'

Hey there Nate I gotta tell you first!!! Me and Andy just got an invite and you'll never guess where!!! Clue - she's the greatest star on the goddamn planet!!! That's right I'm going to Liz Taylor's frigging

birthday party!!! Can you believe it! OMFG so pumped about this!!!

Nathan traced out the shape, while stealing glances at the sample page. He flinched as the slender reed pen scraped across the paper. Tightening his grip, he fought to control the pen's path. He paused and compared his work to the sample Maher had written. Nathan's effort seemed a poor relation, an inky reproach.

'You're still holding it too tight,' said Maher, elbowing his way into Nathan's space. 'Like this...'

His fat fingers took the pen from Nathan's hand and demonstrated the correct technique.

'You have to relax your hand.'

He lifted Nathan's wrist and shook it roughly.

'And don't stick your tongue out while you're writing.'

Maher's piercing green eyes observed Nathan as he made another attempt at encircling his fingers around the slender pen.

'Too vertical!' said Maher's deep, smoky voice, as he manhandled the pen downwards, ignoring Nathan's little yelp of discomfort.

'You're doing this...'

Maher mimed a wobbly path with the pen.

'...when you should be going like this...'

Maher took the pen, dipped it into the little blue pot, and began to write. His pudgy hand seemed instantly metamorphosed from a bunch of bananas into the wing of an elegant bird. Within seconds he'd transformed a blank space into a vision of intricate beauty.

'See? It has to be natural. Like you and the pen are a single breath.'

Nathan compared Maher's work with his own. His effort seemed not so much a breath as a spasm.

Maher heaved himself down from the stool. In his long, red galabeya, the bullet-headed, stocky man looked to Nathan like an enormous loganberry.

'Ok, I'm gonna take a few minutes to get a cup of coffee. I want you to try that again. Work on the medial form of Zhoa. That's one of the easier letters, and then try the final form of the letter Ghain.'

Nathan rose from the tilted desk. The soft afternoon light was like a presence in the room, illuminating the studio's whitewashed walls. He stood before the gallery of Islamic calligraphy – a Qu'ranic manuscript from the fifteenth century, inscriptions from a Turkish mosque, a Persian poem in the shape of a tiger. He returned to the desk and picked up his pen.

OMG!!!! Me and Andy stayed at Michael's place last night!!!! We had chicken salad and then peach cobbler! Prince told us about film school and Blanket asked me what I got for Christmas! Played the Wii with Michael!! He says Andy's saved his life!! Unfrigganbelievable!!!!!!!!!!

'You're not gonna convert, are you? Tell me you've not found Allah.'

Nathan grinned. He'd guessed this would be Rick's reaction.

'Sure, you'll see me at the bar in my chador.'

Rick snorted,

'That place! You know it still beats me how *The Advocate* called Bloomington the fourth gayest city in America. I mean, one friggin' gay bar in the whole town. It's hardly Frisco! But we've still got a great theatre scene.'

Nathan saw where this was going.

'No, Rick.'

'Come on, Nathan! We're doing *Sweet Charity* next month, and I could really do with another guy in the chorus line. And something like that would get you back in the groove. Hiding yourself away with a bunch of dusty old manuscripts isn't healthy. Mmm, and speaking of healthy...'

Rick's eyes followed a tall, trim guy ordering a bagel.

'Now *he* can dip his nib in my inkpot anytime!'

Nathan set down his cup of camomile tea.

'Look, I know Islamic calligraphy isn't exactly up there with musical theatre in Bloomington's cultural calendar. But I like it. It helps me... get out my own way. And I'm definitely improving. When I got my work back from Maher this week it wasn't nearly so full of red corrections. And this week I'm starting on nashki script. That's the cursive writing style that formed the basis of modern Arabic print.'

Rick turned his attention away from the guy at the coffee bar.

'My friend, you really need to get laid.'

Hey Nate! Check out our place in Palm Springs!!! Zsa Zsa Gabor used to live just across the street and Barry Manilow's place is two blocks away!!! I'm really missing Andy, but he has to be in LA for Michael. Can you believe it's just three months till his comeback concert? Did I tell you I'm invited!!! Michael's not feeling so good, but he'll be just fine with Andy there to look after him. When I got sick last month he gave me some of Michael's medication and WOW!!!! That stuff really works!!!! I don't know what I'd do without him; he's such a caring man!

Nathan knew Josh didn't mean to be cruel. Hell, maybe if the boot was on the other foot it would be Nathan sending excited emails about the high life with his Californian sugar daddy. He was happy for Josh. It was just that he seemed to have forgotten all they'd been through.

When Josh tested positive, Doctor Garrow had tried to warn Nathan about what was to come.

'You'll start off hoping for a miracle, and end up praying for a good night's sleep.'

Sometimes the fevers were so bad Nathan had to change the bed sheets three times a night. And when Josh started to lose weight, he began calling himself 'the dead man walking'. But Nathan wasn't a quitter. He started Josh on a new diet and exercise regime, he immersed himself in research, got to know the latest therapies, became obsessed with Josh's T-cell counts.

Josh never expected to make it to the millennium, but Nathan never gave up hope. Not even on that awful November night when Josh stopped breathing.

Hey Nate, check out me and Andy and you-know-who!!!! Can you believe it??? A small-town Hoosier with the King of Pop!!! He's been working real hard for the concerts, but he still took the time to sign a whole crate of CDs for Andy. What a guy!!!!

Maher was telling Nathan about his latest commission.

'So, I got this Mafioso call.'

His voice took on a clandestine tone.

"Well, this is the United States Post Office. Uh, we want to talk to you about something." So, I asked them what's it about? "Uh, we can't tell you what it's about."

He refilled Nathan's cup from the pretty white coffee pot.

'So, I told them to come out to Indiana and meet me here.'

Nathan was enthralled. This was the latest twist in the winding road of Maher Mohammed's fascinating life. In between lessons, he'd told Nathan about how his early life as a metalworker in Ohio had been turned upside down after a holiday in Morocco. Returning to America, Jay Wilson learned Arabic, converted to Islam and changed his name to Maher Mohammed. After two years in Istanbul he became the first westerner with a licence in Islamic calligraphy.

Maher told Nathan all of this in his slow, matter-of-fact way, as if his extraordinary change in circumstances was entirely to be expected.

'So, the guys from the Post Office came out and told me I had to sign a non-disclosure agreement. The Post Office is cool. So, I signed the agreement and then they told me they wanted me to design a stamp for Eid al-Fitr.'

Nathan frowned.

‘For..?’

‘It’s the festival at the end of Ramadan. Now, I’m trusting you with this, Nathan. If stamp collectors get to know about it, the market will freak out. So, next week they want me to go out to San Francisco with some ideas. You been to San Francisco?’

Nathan smiled.

‘Oh, yeah.’

Like an uncertain morning light, things had slowly started to change. Shortly after the doctors brought Josh back to life, he began the combination therapies. By the spring, the walking stick, which Josh had called ‘the beginning of the end’ was discarded. His skin began to take on a healthier glow, and he started cycling – cycling! – to the gym. Tentatively at first, then with greater certainty, Nathan and Josh began planning their new future, starting with their first holiday in ten years.

As they toured Alcatraz and wandered through Golden Gate Park, ‘the deathwatch years’, as Josh had called them, seemed far behind.

The last night of their trip, they went to a French restaurant in Sausalito. The prices were eye-wateringly expensive, but Nathan insisted that they should celebrate their new life in style.

The rest was history. And geography too, once Josh decided to remain in California with Andy. In one sense, it was hardly surprising. Andy was a charmer. That night in the restaurant, he quickly seduced Josh, while shooting Siberian glances at Nathan.

Back home on his own, Nathan had Googled Andy’s name. When he learned that he was known as ‘the dermatologist to the stars’, Nathan realised he’d lost Josh forever.

Nate, oh my god, the shit has really hit the fan here. Paparazzi outside the house 24/7, We haven’t been able to get out for two days. And Andy’s acting real weird. I mean we’re both devastated about poor Michael. But Andy’s going crazy – keeps saying things like ‘They’re gonna have my ass for this’. Nate, I’m really scared.

Nathan thought Maher was calling to cancel another class. He’d missed the last four lessons because of Maher’s growing number of commercial commitments.

‘The business has gone totally crazy. And the Foundation for Islamic Art in Honolulu wants me to be their artist-in-residence. I wanted to tell you first.’

For a moment, Nathan was possessed with the ludicrous notion that Maher might be about to ask if Nathan would go with him. He tried to stop the cellphone shaking against his

ear.

‘I’m sorry, Nathan, but this is where we part company.’

Hey Nate!!! Boy did I luck out!!! And just in time. Got to the airport and the news channels were all over Andy. Man, that bastard was pumping Michael full of shit!!! So looking forward to seeing you again. You know what they say; you can’t keep a Hoosier from home for long! I’ve missed you so much, baby!!!

Nathan sipped his coffee and savoured the smell of grilled mackerel wafting from the riverside. A saffron moon hung over the city, illuminating the minarets. He thought of the proverb Maher had taught him. *Coffee should be as black as hell, as strong as death and as sweet as love.*

Hey Josh, hello from Istanbul. What a beautiful city this is! I’ve been to the Hagia Sophia and the Topkapi Palace, and the food is just out of this world! Tomorrow I begin my lessons with the sufah master of calligraphy. I just cannot believe I’m going to be living here for the next two years! Sorry to miss you when you got back. Hope you can find somewhere to stay in Bloomington. Marsha says if you need a job, one of her customers could use some help with her dogs.

A Study of the Lover through the Seasons, Portraits with Different Lighting Effects and Flowers

by Andreea Roş

i.

Your bones are trying to run away from you,
they sprout under your skin and, sleeping next to you, your spine
seems the knotty bough of a peach tree in the rain, bent down
by the wet heaviness of petals. I hope they'll stay here,
just a little while longer, it's almost morning.

ii.

The roadsides are crimson and the fingers of my thought
long to caress the trembling bud that hides behind the branches
of your ribs, I think you call it heart. If I could pry
it open, I'd paste the petals in my poems and write
about the callowness of red poppies and lanky limbs.

iii.

The desolation of your blazing white chrysanthemums,
alone on the window sill, begs to be told in words I no
longer have. At home their sweet scent is reserved for
the dead, you'd give them to any lover. It's raining
like it rains in any language and I'm waiting for you.



The Quick View

with William Letford

Why do you write?

It's what I decided to fill my time with, and I like everything that goes with it. Reading. listening, looking closely, stealing bits of conversation. It's become so much of a habit I feel my life wouldn't make sense without it.



What are you working on at the moment?

Never let the juice out of the bottle. Let's say...a story.

What is your writing routine (if you have one)?

No routine. Although I keep reminding myself I should get one. If I have a full day off to write, it's up early, music in the kitchen, two cups of coffee, a little bit of dancing then gerron. It beats lifting bricks.

Who is your favourite writer?

I have many. Too many to list here but let's say Jack Gilbert because I think he doesn't get enough attention.

What book do you wish you'd written?

If I'd written *The Grand Design* by Stephen Hawking, *The New Penguin History of the World* by J.M. Roberts, *The Strange of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, and the ancient Indian Hindu text, *Kama Sutra*, I'm sure I'd be an interesting dinner guest.

What book / books are next to your bed?

At the moment it's *Chasing the Sun* by Richard Cohen.

Best piece of writerly advice you care to share?

Roger McGough wrote me a letter when I was young. He told me to, 'KEEP WRITING!' I don't think it can get more simple, or truthful, than that.

Thank you William

Author Biographies

James Carson is from Glasgow. His stories, articles and reviews have been published in magazines and anthologies, in print and online. James is currently studying Creative Writing in Glasgow University's celebrated MLitt programme.

Alan Gillespie lives in Glasgow, Scotland. He has not been published in Gutter Magazine, New Writing Scotland or in the Edinburgh Review. He is not a recipient of a New Writers' Bursary from the Scottish Book Trust, and he has certainly never performed his work at the Edinburgh International Book Festival¹. His debut short story collection will not be published, by anyone, anytime soon. Say hello at <http://twitter.com/afjgillespie>.

John Horn is originally from Glasgow but has been living and teaching in Dumfries and Galloway since 1979. He is currently a member of the Crichton Writers and has had both poetry and prose works included in a number of publications including Scottish Arts Council sponsored *Both Sides of Hadrian's Wall*, the Dumfries and Galloway Arts publications, *Dragon Song* and *Southlight* (issues 7, 9 and 11), the Crichton Writers' 2011 anthology *A Banquet of Writing*, the Dumfries Writers' delightfully quirky pamphlet *The Fankle* and the Lockerbie Writers booklets *Network* and *Soul Songs*.

William Letford lives in Stirling. He has received a New Writer's Award from the Scottish Book Trust, an Edwin Morgan Travel Bursary, and is a graduate of the MLitt at Glasgow University. His debut collection, *Bevel*, will be published by Carcanet and launched at the Edinburgh book festival in August.

Sheila Millar lives in Ayrshire. She graduated from Glasgow University's Faculty of Arts in 1991 and recently returned to complete an MLitt in Creative Writing. She enjoyed a brief spell as co-editor of *From Glasgow to Saturn* and is working on a final edit of her first novel. She is currently being supported and inspired by Glasgow University Writers.

¹ *From Glasgow to Saturn* is delighted to report that since Alan submitted this biography he has been accepted for the Edinburgh International Book Festival's *Story Shop 2012* and will be performing a piece of short fiction in the Festival's Speigeltent this August.

Cathy McSporrán has an MLitt and a Phd in Creative Writing from Glasgow University. She is currently a tutor in creative writing and poetry in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education.

Louis Pilard is a third year Politics and Literature student. From the ancient village of Juniper Green, 300 years of history in the making. Slightly paranoid.

Andreea Roş moved to Glasgow from a foggy town in Transylvania two years ago to do a joint honours MA in Comparative Literature and English Literature. She writes and translates poetry.

Fiona Wilson grew up near Aberdeen and was educated at the University of Glasgow and New York University. She now lives in New York City and teaches at Sarah Lawrence College. Her poetry and essays have appeared in *New Writing Scotland*, *Poetry Review*, *Pequod*, *Markings*, and elsewhere.

Thank you for reading.



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