

Inkslingers Blended Session

25th March 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“We Do Things Differently In This Century

And the Visual



Along The Banks...

Moriarty's university

Matthew Tubridy

We are in Moriarty's university, they say,
Woooo! Yeah!
The proper students walk past,
They have done their Irish lesson,
They hear people go Wooooo Yeah!
They always followed the rules in school,
They're off to the canteen fo lunch,
In their world they're taught maths,
The rules of maths,
 $X + Y = T$
Their called Shay and Robin,
They made their maths teacher hop, skip and jump in school,
Because they got 100% in their state exam,
So they went on to do maths in university,
The only problem is they must pass Moriarty's gang on their way to
maths class,
The Woooooing and Yeah! We're on MDMA!
Before I start I must say MDMA is a psychedelic drug!
In the recesses of a university,
Is a horse that went gallop gallop with the rest of them,
Is a book you must read,
Is someone who is cooperating,
Why don't you learn Irish?
Then there's Moriarty,
He's a massive eagle over UCD,
I shall show you the way out,
He has MDMA in his pockets,
The lectures goes to the room full of so called students high on MDMA,
Now now, do your Irish homework,
The so called students mutter,
In another planet,
The lecturer sits down and takes out a book,
Now now, follow the prescribed lesson.

We Can Do Things Differently

Elaine Reardon

In early Boston years, lights shown out over the harbour from the Custom House into the Atlantic.

Lights twinkled along the Charles River into Cambridge and into the centre city with shops and hospitals. It was a small bright place filled with the learned, students, factory workers, grocers, with new immigrants coming every decade, finding housing in the old neighbourhoods so that the North End of Boston changed from Irish and Jewish to Italian, and now to just Italian-Expensive.

The back row apartment houses are now condos, and boutique hotels, the small bakeries filled with thin crust pizza, loaves of steaming to breads, and cannoli. Spring fills the windows with marzipan Easter treats.

The outdoor markets still hold sway in the early morning hours, for those ready to buy produce and fish at 6AM.

What has changed dramatically, in my lifetime, is the infrastructure. When my father and his brother signed up for World War at the Custom House, it was the tallest building around, he said, right by the quays. It remained the tallest building in Boston until 1965.

The Custom House was an icon, bringing history into a sharp focus, a short walk from Paul Revere's house and the Old North Church.

In 1975 Boston' skyscrapers rose to new heights with the John Hancock Building completion.

On State Street, close to the harbour and old North End, old brick building were replaced with

modern high rises filled with offices. Faneuil Hall, an old historical market area, where the country's founding fathers met, was remade into a new marketing scheme filled with shops and eateries, bridging the business district and Old North End, adding lights, traffic, and more tourism to the area.

Skyscrapers tell stories of commerce and business success, of money changing hands. But when I now see the skylines, especially at night, I

wonder at how much energy is used each night to light all those empty buildings. I also think of signs in Dublin Ireland, another booming town, that proclaim that we should get rid of the cranes, the giant cranes that are building up the skyline, re-fashioning neighbourhoods, sometimes for housing, other times for tourism and commerce.

This week we were given clear scientific dismal accounts of Earth's resources, her polluted environments, the atmosphere heating up, the ice melting at the poles, and extinction.

Our last years.

When do we say it's time to back up- that our empty skyscrapers do not all need to be lit from head to toe?

Closed for the night Dunkin Donuts, gas stations, and similar shops could close their lights when they close their businesses for the day-and simply leave security lighting on for safety.

This could be a beginning, perhaps, if it were a world-wide effort. We know the cost. Will we be like Nero? How long can we hold onto a scorching fiddle?

The Queen's Gambit

Steve Huenneke

She had herself a day
A long day
And this was
The takeaway
An unusual fairy tale
In an old newsreel
In a fractious age
She held a royal flush
She bet us we all could agree
Life is not a get ahead rush
But some thing just
So slow and steady
No not only about the money
Though she had plenty
Topping the upper crust
In fact actually
Her picture made the public trust
Because she was the Queen
Because she was the Queen
She made this gambit
Her opening move
Done so plain and so different
For the lots with smaller pots
Who still had to pay the rent
And make many sacrifices
She said her life would be
In black and white
Given in so few words
Not about divine right
But divine responsibility
Her one four letter word
The queenly cliché, duty
She'd homed in on it
Despite her fame

She narrowed the frame
She led and did
What she was called for
No wonder
So many mourn without even watching the TV
Feeling the loss of some real axis mundi
We'll wither with her
Walking from garden to grave
Knowing further
Knowing the world we used to know
How it just doesn't turn anymore.

The Cooing of the Mourning Doves

Greg Fields

Cooney turned his back to the rising sun and made his way down wind-blown streets littered with shreds of newspaper and fast-food wrappings that tumbled through the gutters. A poor night's sleep, and the continuing elegy of a mourning dove in the tree above him led him to abandon any effort at rest. An elusive concept during the best of times, 'rest' now meant for Cooney only the immediate absence of tension. Nonetheless uncertainty and discontent bubbled constantly just below his surface. He could not hide this, and so he spent most of his days now in an aimless ramble around his dirty city.

Too long he had done this, and on most days he felt beyond his years, made old by the lack of warmth, the lack of comfort and, most of all, by the lack of purpose. He had once been a brutal young man, taking what he could by guile, by strength, and by force. But what had it served him, really? All he had managed to do was steal the means to bring himself to another day, and the need to steal again. But in the contorted values of the street, his ability to bridge the years, to live as he had for so long when most fell away into incarceration, madness and death, brought him a respect he could never have earned elsewhere. This was where he belonged, and he knew this. Even so, such knowledge brought him scant comfort.

'An elder statesman,' he mused to himself. 'I've become an institution.'

It was to the mission that he wandered this morning, a safe haven for coffee and a muffin, which he needed, and a soft prayer from Fr. Cleary, which he didn't. It took the abiding of one to secure the other, though, and so Cooney took his place, bowed his head and waited for the reward. It did not matter that the muffin might be a day or so old, or that the coffee came too cold for his liking. What mattered on these mornings was that it was there at all, and he did not have to steal it.

Across the way sat a young man he had not seen before, as tattered as the rest, but going on about who he was and what he was going to do. "I love this city," he said too loudly for those around him who really weren't at all interested in hearing him. "Do you know how many rich people there are in this city? Businessmen and lawyers and doctors, and

not a damn one of them has a clue. They don't see us, and they don't know me. We're invisible, and don't you see how that's all to our advantage. Come and go as we please, and take what we want, and still they don't see us. And after this quick meal, I'm back out there again. God, I love this city."

Cooney regarded him slowly. He had seen others of this stripe, all coming and going with a bravado borne of fear. It was never that easy. There was the taking, perhaps, but then, after the taking, what did you really have?

"You know, lad," he at last said, interrupting the other's soliloquy. "There are better ways to live."

The younger man snorted in reply. "And if there are, old man, why aren't you living them?"

"Because I can't. And neither can you. We're sewer rats, lad, scurrying about for pieces of bread and the discards that other people don't want. But it's who we are."

The other flinched and arched his hand toward Cooney. "I'm no rat, old man. And your day is done. These streets, this life, belongs to the young ones who are strong enough to take what they want. We do things differently now. And I'm so different from you that we might as well be separate species. Man and rat."

Cooney took his napkin and his cup, then rose from his place. "We're no different, lad," he sighed. "You just haven't learned that yet. But you will. And when you do, you'll look at things a new way. You'll be sad, I'll wager, and you'll be less likely to beat up the things that stand in your way."

The younger man glared up at Cooney, who continued in soft voice. "You're young," he said slightly above a whisper. "And you're a fool. I hope some wisdom comes to you before you spend yourself into these streets and have nothing left."

Cooney tucked away his garbage, then up the stairs to the exit. He would spend the day in the square. It would be nice enough to sit outside, a cup by his feet to beg silently for the discards of those who passed him by – the businessmen and the lawyers and the doctors.

There was nothing else to do, and soon enough the day would end, and he would be left once again to the rumbles of the night, and then the mournful cooing of the sad doves.

In life

Matthew Tubridy

In life you can be as dramatic as you like,
You May splash the paint on the wall of canvass,
You may record as many albums as you like,
Sing like Nirvana,
Drive a truck around,
Drive a motorbike around Ireland,
You can make an impact,
You can eat a big burger,
You can be a doctor and give odd people pills,
You can cook people's dinners all day,
Or serve people's dinners all day,
You can build a city with concrete,
Call it after your name,
Have your statue in the middle of it,
You could be a soldier who children are told about,
You could kayak around Ireland,
You could study the plants, the geology,
Study the volcanoes,
The avalanches, ocean currents,
You could be Number 1 in Ms Craig's Geography class,
Raising your hand to the ceiling,
Getting A's all round and becoming a doctor.

Alyssa

Catriona Murphy

Alyssa regarded herself in the mirror. Analysing the blood stains smudged on her face.

The tent entrance flapped and she caught glimpses of the Sahara outside. Dark dunes were duly lit by the waxing moon.

All new pursuits were done during that time.

And all dark deeds were done at night under her watchful gaze, so the sun god did not witness and curse her tribe and bloodlines and bring shame to her lineage for the violence she brought to men's doorsteps.

She could still hear her kin's victorious roars outside. The men were hooting and calling by the firelight, asking for Yaha, the snake King, to join in on their celebrations.

A glow in Yamina's pocket, beneath the black veils of her killing robes drew her eyes.

The jewel would bring great honour to her family, mend the broken bond with her mother that had shattered many years ago, by a disagreement over an arranged marriage.

Yamina loved the desert too much to love another.

The feel of the night wind through her hair, the soft hiss as it brushed the sand, whispering night-time truths for her ears only.

She'd been in love since a child.

Elder Anya said she was destined to be a priestess, to bathe in milk and draw down the moon to heal the sick.

But first, she had to mend the broken bond.

A quiet agony accompanied her everywhere she went. It scrunched behind her deadpan expression, and a little girl cried inside for her mother. Yamina's heart sank. Her lack of matriarchal connection was a unique pain, an incompleteness. She couldn't share this night's win with her mother.

But the jewel held powerful abilities that could transform.

She washed the blood from her face, pulling off her head scarf and desert goggles.

In the shadows of the tent, stepped out another shadow.

A man dressed all in black, with darkness in his eyes and a pallor so white she wondered if he was ill.

Perhaps he was.

He stared at Yamina.

'Who're you?' she asked, pointing her half moon sword at him.

'A god of the desert,' he replied coolly. 'And you have something of mine.'

A Red Sportscar

Matthew Tubridy

She wants it to be red,
Aunty Maeve makes apple tart with her green cooker,
When it's cooking she wishes it have blackberries in it,
She goes out into her garden and looks at her car,
It's a Ford but she wishes it was a Skoda,
Aunty Maeve looks at the film ghostbusters
and wishes she lived in New York,
Not on a farm,
She can't land on anything,
She drives into Limerick city but then wishes she was in Cork City,
In the city she gets a bun in a coffee shop,
She wishes she was eating a bun in New York,
And her husband! She wishes he was wearing a suit,
Was an accountant in Dublin,
Drove a red sportscar.

Five Hundred Years From Now

Miguel Angel Rivera

“Oh, crap!”, were the only things that Bobby Banner could utter as he stepped out of the ship and looked at the roasted landscape. As far as the eye could see there was nothing but utter destruction where the tall buildings of Manhattan once stood. The once proud times square so full of tourists, mischief, and assorted thieves, was now a graveyard of stone. Weeds popped up everywhere and the silence was creepy enough to inspire Olympic-level diarrhoea in even the stoutest of folk.

The time machine thing had actually worked but Joe hadn't provided any instructions or titbits of wisdom that could prepare him for what his eyes were drinking in. Odd four-winged birds filled the skies above looking down hungrily for a meal and Bobby felt the instinct to hide among the overgrowth that had taken over the concrete and asphalt jungle that was once New York City. Everywhere there were the remains of a once semi-functioning society, now a broken memory. Rusted out cars littered the streets and ravenous, animal-like sounds echoed in the distance. Bobby was concerned that he would soon be on the menu, and it was quickly becoming clear to him that his “once-friend” Joseph Felder, had used him as a guinea pig for this temporal experiment and he'd only travelled five hundred years into the future to be an hors d'oeuvre for some overgrown sewer rat's descendant.

As those thoughts bounced around his head, he began unholstering the nine-millimetre pistol that Joe had provided for him. “The one good thing this egghead did!”, Bobby considered. The presence of that weapon seemed to make this quite place even more silent. Just then a large-headed fellow in what was essentially a jumpsuit walked up. His skin was grey and dry as chalk.

“Please put that relic away and relax, Robert. We do things differently in this century.”, Was what left his dry lips, and what caused Bobby to freeze, mouth agape, unable to utter a single syllable. This being's feet did not seem to be making contact with the ground and there was no logical explanation as to how he knew Bobby's name. Several dozen more like this fellow began to appear, seemingly out of nowhere.

One of the other beings addressed the one in front of Bobby and asked, "Shall we place him in the habitat with the others"?

"No", the one in front of Bobby responded. This one is different."

Camino de Santiago

Matthew Tubridy

Mick is on the Camino de Santiago,
He has a pilgrim passport,
Gets it stamped wherever he goes,
He has a big smile on his face,
He sleeps in the Albergues,
Like a log,
He gets up early,
Then walks,
He looks at his guidebook to see where to get food and a bed for the night,
His walking companion is called Polly,
They get cafe con leche,
Mick asks Polly 'What would you like in this cafe?'
Mick does extra long strides threw Northern Spain,
He laughs to Polly,
He sleeps in all sorts of beds,
In his sleeping bag,
He went to Decathlon for equipment,
Polly went too, she got a wide brimmed hat,
'I'm from Australia!' She says in a Ozzie accent!
Do we need mosquito repellent? No!
But we definitely need blister patches,
I'm an Irishman! Mick explains!
To confused Americans,
That's why I'm putting my knees up so much!
My physio told me to do it,
I have a go pro on my head, streaming back to the physio in Mount
Merrion,
Ciaran the physio cheers me on.

We do things differently in this century

Ciaran O'Melia

"It's the devil an all," said Seamus, although he was not in the group conversation.

"Who asked you." Trimble replied to a chorus of negativity, which included a few choice words like "Eff off"

"You, walk into the bar and says out loud, what do you think of dat," Seamus replied but was not finished, "so I assumed you were talking to the bar in general terms."

Silence settled over the bar, till Jamie says, "He's right, in any way we do things differently in this century."

"What century is this in anyway." Said Ron, who was off the drink for Lent, but sounded plastered.

"It's the twenty or twenty first, I think or close to it, maybe the 22nd, Jesus, ye have me there, what does it matter in anyways." Said the man in the corner who was plastered.

Ron was satisfied at that and said "I'm ok with that, but getting back to the image, what do you think it is?"

"I'm telling you it is the devil," Seamus repeated himself, but takes a breath before finishing off,

"Ye see the three six's, a dead giveaway."

Ron who is the next thing to a religious person in the bar, even though he effs and blinds like a sailor, asks

"Where do ya see that."

"On his ear."

"Who said I'm on my ear." Said the plastered one from the corner.

"No one," said the holy roller

"Somebody said I was on me ear." He said before continuing, "I want everyone to know I am not drunk or on me ear, I am a teetotaller."

"Since when." Seamus interrupted.

“You mind your own business, ye’re only a runner in.” Said Jamie.

So Seamus left the bar, turned left, and as they were loading the caller with barrels of porter, and the street grate was up walked and danced quick as a flash around the opening.

“Jesus you’re a terrible man, saying that to that man who was inoffensive and well meaning at the best of times. I would go after him and apologize.” Ron said to Jamie.

Jamie did what he was told, but he did not know the grate was up. He has yet to be seen.

But there is great singing from the cellar, Dingle Dangle.

Existence, Reproduction

Matthew Tubridy

The generations come and go,
The citizens of Dublin,
Buried in a Glasnevin cemetery,
What did he do?
Ran a bakery,
He was told if he wants move out
of his family home,
he needs to make money!
He set up a bakery on Cork Street,
He employed 19 people,
On his grave stone it says 'baker'
Beside the rest of them family,
One was a ballet dancer,
Another a builder,
They mourned the death of their parents
before they died themselves,
He strode up Henry Street,
Coat tails swishing,
He went into Dunnes,
Take a trip around Glasnevin cemetery,
Ballet dancer here,
Dentist there,
What happens to them all?
They all rise from their graves and go back to being what they were,
Bus driver here, ballet dancer there,
No I'll do this says one of them, I'll Man the cash register in Arnotts,
Do you not go around in a horse and carriage?
Can I not park my carriage on O'Connell street?
I'll be a politician in the Dail and bring in rural electrification!
I'll be a famous politician!
I'll run the city's public baths,
I'll take your money at the cinema,
I'll cut turf up the Wicklow Mountains,
I'll go off and fight the Nazis,

Better than lying in Glasnevin cemetery,
Walking around the cemetery,
Hello Ballet dancer.

We do things differently

Bernadette O'Reilly

We do things differently
In this century
We do things differently
Since my childhood days
We do things differently
Since my teenage years
We do things differently
Since I became an adult
We do things differently
Now in my autumn years
We do things differently
Our world is in chaos
We do things differently.

The Artist

Michael O'Brien

Everything in the park appeared still and beautiful to him, a bee seemed to stop in mid-air and he could see its tiger-like colours in microscopic detail, and the pollen on its legs. He was amazed to see its smaller wings at the back were connected to the forewings, he had never noticed the two sets of wings before. He could hear the individual clicks that followed each other to make the buzzing sound.

The bank had been on numerous times threatening to close his account and repossess his small shop. God how he regretted buying this effing thing five years ago, everyone told him it was a bad idea, supermarkets and franchises ruled the day, there was no place for a sole trader, but he didn't listen and steamed ahead. The guy selling him the shop filled his head with talk of building sites starting up and coming to this shop for the deli, breakfast rolls and salads. The first year was good but the last three and a half years had been hell, working his ass off seven days a week, eighteen hours a day and he was still in the red. His wife had called, the card was stopped, the kids needed new books for school, new shoes, the school trip, were his kids going to be the only ones not there?. His car was off the road a month now, couldn't afford the repairs, when the bank and credit union refused him further credit he asked his best friend for a loan, telling him as honestly as he could the trouble he was in. Five grand he'd taken, and he wasn't in a position to pay that back either. The woman who helped him at the deli counter told him not to worry about her wages, to pay her when he could, she just loved getting out of the house, the humiliation of it.

He had gone to the doctor a month ago with pains in his chest, after all the tests they put him on heart meds, which he just laughed at when he saw how much they cost. He'd been feeling dizzy and breathless, just stress he told himself after getting a letter from the bank threatening to repossess his house. So he went for a walk in the park, beautiful little sanctuary, birds, trees, ducks, and an artist drawing flowers at the edge of the pond. He envied the woman drawing, she seemed so care free with a cap beside her filled with coins passers-by had left. No overheads for her, no rent or rates, just carefree living off your talent. He heard the artist

tell a bystander she preferred to draw still life, he had asked her if the money she got was enough to live on. She smiled telling him she didn't need much, she had worked in a bank and hated every second of it, leaving after the most miserable year of her life. Her father had lambasted her for this, telling her she couldn't live for free, so she was forced to take other jobs that never lasted, she started alcohol and other drugs but found her art was the best escapism. She couldn't do anything else, and didn't much want to either, she had her tiny flat, her flowers and her art, and she was as happy as a, well as an artist with a tiny flat and flowers. Sometimes the right road doesn't pay that well, but the peace comes from knowing it's the right road, and peace is priceless. She was talking to another man but he felt she was directly addressing him, which was strange as she wasn't even looking at him.

His dizziness dropped him, he woke up surrounded by a crowd and a medic kneeling beside him, he rubbed his eyes and moved his limbs, just checking he was still alive. Yep, this was still life, it was all still here, the trees, the flowers, the beautiful smell of cut grass, the birds singing, and his debt and the people who were chasing that debt, yeah it was still life alright. He noticed something was different though, he felt peaceful, something had happened to him during his little fainting spell, that woman made her living through her art, her life was her art. He couldn't draw but he could make his life his art, the day would be his canvas, his actions the subject, his mood the background. He asked to see the artist, he wanted to buy one of her paintings, the people kneeling over him looked behind and around, nodding to each other. There was no artist, not in this park according to some of the regulars. Maybe she left when all the commotion started.

Along The Banks

Stephen Brady

He sits
Moulded to the bench
Intrinsic now
To the bank of the canal
A crumpled face
Looks sardonic
On the beer cans
and condoms
and nappies
and needles
and fast food containers
peppering the undergrowth.
Along the bank
that lonely tarmac path
how many lives
have winked out in the dark
and disappeared.

A young man
Ginger, smiling
Picture on a lamppost
Last seen near this spot
In 1999.

Billy

Matthew Tubridy

Billy spends his nights beside the Clontarf Road,
Listening to the buses go by,
You get Dentists in their Mercs,
'I wouldn't like to be the inhabitant of that tent' Dentist says,
Then there's the community games but the loser has to sleep in a tent
beside Clontarf Train Station,
In the local schools those who fail at maths,
Must sleep in a tent beside Clontarf Train Station,
Tommy shivers, He has his maths book with him in the tent,
He regrets not doing his math homework,
He turns on his camping light,
X by Y is T,
His teacher pays him a visit,
'Hello there!, he says, Do you regret not doing your homework?'
He smacks the side of the tent,
Tommy didn't get proper camping equipment,
So he is shivering,
It was school equipment,
Given by the PE teacher,
Every hour a teacher comes down to Tommy and other failed students,
And bangs on their tents,
Then there's Ralph, who did his Maths homework,
He sleeps in a plush 4 poster bed,
In the same bed as his maths teacher,
In fact every student who does their maths homework
gets to sleep in a massive bed with their maths teacher,
About 10 of them in the same bed,
Back in school the successful students do a dance with their maths
teacher, in the car park,
They follow his movements,
X by Y = T
30 students following their teachers dance,