

# Inkslingers Blended Session

## 2nd December 2023

The Prompt from The Bag Was:

“Happiness depends on ourselves - Aristotle”

And the Visual



*The Vikings Are Coming!!!*

## **Clontarf Prom**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Walking the Clontarf prom,  
A coffee place on your left,  
You realise it's going uphill,  
Specks of snow appear,  
Rocks emerge from below the ground,  
You feel an oxygen canister on your back,  
Your hands grasp a rope,  
You look up ahead to see crags and bare rock,  
You get to the wooden bridge,  
As you get to the top of Mount Everest,  
You hug your buddy in ecstasy,  
Then you go for a coffee.

## **Happiness depends upon ourselves**

**Deirdre Powell.**

I sat at the water's edge, pondering the happenings of the day. To be honest, what were the happenings of today – it was a time like any other, at the end of autumn and bridging winter. The sunshine had gone to sleep, the sky was grey and snowman like, and in the distance, I could see the water lapping against the trees and hedges. It was so cold that I could almost taste the sharpness of the air at the back of my throat.

I had arisen to an early continental breakfast, taken my dog for a walk and then set about doing some copywriting in my work-from-home office. Martina had phoned for a chat around lunchtime – she was working from home as well and we were comparing notes. The afternoon was uneventful, and as I went for my evening stroll, I hadn't anticipated that I would meet anything unexpected – not so.

He appeared on my horizon as an elderly man walking with a stick; his gait, though slow, was measured. He inched ever closer to me and tipped his cap. I nodded and was about to pass by when he spoke and said in a mildly accented tone, "There's a chill in the air." I agreed and said something conventional. He elaborated about the weather. Presently, he mentioned something about writing – said he was a member of a writer's group. I was immediately interested as I was working as a copywriter. We chatted for a while, and then he asked, "Have you ever read "The Mysteries of Idaho Falls" by John A. Marking?" I thought for a second and remembered that I had seen the book on a bestseller list. "Yes, it's a fabulous tale of mystery and nature," I replied, "I really enjoyed it." "Me too," he said, "it's not my best work, but it's the most famous of that particular batch." We spoke at length for a while and John told me a little about his life as an author and that he had spent much of his youth in Idaho and had moved to Ireland later in his twenties. I asked him if he were he still writing and he said he was. Presently, he tipped his capped and vanished from sight as though he were a ghost.

I reflected on this conversation as I sat at the water's edge, with an imagined scent of his tobacco filling my nostrils. It was too cold to take off my shoes and socks and to dip my toes in the water, though I would

dearly loved to have done so in order to feel the liquid against my skin. The wistfulness of the man's conversation struck me – how he missed the place of his childhood and felt a little transplanted. I thought about the well-known quote from Aristotle and how it really applied to the famous John A. Marking – “Happiness depends upon ourselves.”

## The Vikings are Coming

### Feargal De Cantuin

The old Monk pattered into the scriptorium with his leather satchel weighing heavily upon his shoulder he went to remove it when an unt-tensured novice hopped off the bench beneath the window and helped it over his head.

The older monk eyed him critically through his milky cataracts.

“Colmcille of Bangor, young brother, thank you for helping an old confrere.” “Do I know you?” “You wouldn’t,” came a young Munster accent, I’m new here. I only arrived last month. I’m called Declan.”

“Well if it comes to that I’m newer than you are. I only arrived today.” Colmcille sighed and sat on the bench. He turned his milky eyes to the window and held up his hands, the swollen fingers bore testimony to his arthritis being at a very advanced stage.

“Open that satchel and hand me down those vellum manuscripts please, Declan.”

He heard the young monk give a low whistle. “These are incredible. The intricate interlacing, the bestieries, the colours and compartments. Did you draw these?” Declan handed him a folio of the Iona gospel.

“Yes,” sighed Colmcille “I did, me and the help of God but no more, ...” He held up his crippled hands and then pointed to his milky eyes. “It’s all over .I cannot serve anymore.”

Declan said, “But surely these are your legacy, your work will win many to Christianity?”

“ I think my work will not see another decade, boy.” Said the older man vehemently . “But why?” asked Declan, “Because.. “ shuddered Colmcille, “the Vikings are coming and our happiness depends not on ourselves, as Aristotle once taught, but it depends now on the one with the biggest sword for the sword is mightier than the pen.”That cannot be true” said Declan.

Colmcille turned his thoughts inward. He had almost lost all his faith.  
"What is truth?"

"Beauty," said Declan "Beauty is truth."

## **Toby Gremlin**

**Matthew Tubridy**

The heater heats the room,  
My face goes from white to red colour,  
You start sweating,  
It's a gremlin decides how much to have the heater on,  
He's called Toby,  
Toby fills the bath with boiling water,  
He gets you to get in it,  
When you try to get out,  
He pushes you back in,  
Your face goes from white to red,  
Toby makes you a cup of tea,  
But the water is boiling,  
Toby makes you drink it all down in one go,  
Toby goes to an upper floor on Henry Street,  
He pours boiling water on passers-by,  
He shrieks in pleasure.

## **Sally's Joy**

**Miguel A. Rivera, Jr.**

As the last box was delivered and the movers went their merry way, Sally was alone in her new apartment. It was more like a cardboard box with windows and paper-thin walls, on the fifth floor of a building with no elevator. The divorce was complete and having foolishly signed a prenuptial agreement, she now found herself practically penniless. The latest resident in a very shady part of town. When the door to this new roach-motel had slammed shut, it felt a lot like a jail cell.

“Where did I go wrong?”, She repeatedly questioned herself as she reflected upon her refusal to be her husband’s plaything just because he came from money. When they first met, she could not believe her luck! A dashing handsome man from a billionaire family. The man of her dreams had arrived!

Against the very ardent protestations of her parents, she’d dropped out of college and married him. All was well at the beginning and then the beatings, the infidelity, the week-long hunting trips with “The boys”. During one such expedition, she’d planted an apple-tag tracer in his luggage and watched him intently. Wondering what species of predator her husband could possibly be “hunting” in Las Vegas.

She would miss her Fifth Avenue Penthouse, the servants, the jewelry, the lifestyle, even their Doorman, Fred. Fred who’d completed two tours in Afghanistan. Fred who never once received the shadow of a tip or even a “thank you” from Roger, even on Christmas.

Now Sally sat among what little possessions Roger’s pig-of-a-lawyer had allowed her to retain. In this new, alien environment, the sounds of some neighboring couple deep in the throes of passion were coming through one of her walls like a Spanish Novela. Sounds which competed with the loud music, screeching tires, and distant gunshots rising from the street below.

Now 31, her life had not turned out the way she’d envisioned, and she was back to poverty, a “Cinderella” story in reverse. “Happiness depends upon ourselves.”, She thought, and a plan began brewing in her mind. She reflected on Roger and his cruelty to all including Fred...



One week later she observed him from her perch in a tree in Central Park, leaving one of his residences with a new girl. She was wearing the very fur coat Roger had gifted her for Christmas.

“My, my, you didn’t waste time finding my replacement did you, you bastard?”

As they entered the car, the chauffer received a call from Fred the doorman and excused himself for a moment. Seconds later, the vehicle exploded into what seemed a million pieces while Sally observed the entire mess through her binoculars. She grinned as the remnants of her fur coat landed in the trees along with pieces of the car. “I guess happiness really is what you make it!”, She mused to herself.

## **Siberian Winter**

**Matthew Tubridy**

In Siberia in winter,  
A young man can't take the lack of daylight,  
He's in a pub, drowning his sorrows with vodka,  
He says he wants to go to Australia,  
It's black outside,  
He has his snow mobile outside the pub,  
He goes to his home, it's made of wood,  
The clergy walks down the Main Street of the town,  
Chanting in the dark,  
The young man looks at him out his window,  
Then goes to his drinks cabinet,  
Where there's more vodka,  
Time goes by,  
April comes, the ice and snow melts on the young man's roof,  
It's drips down,  
Young man leaves his house,  
And doesn't go to the pub,  
He goes to his local hockey pitch,  
He runs rings around the other team.

## Sasúlacht

### Bridin Ni Airneatna

Ni óchon sa deireadh a bheis a rá - gáire amú...

Sonas? Céard é fhéin?

Fite fuaithe tríd an tsaoil, fiú magadh ar an gheimhridh, fúacht is traochas an cine daonna,

Ar traocht lucht na fíne,

Daonacht an tsiúlóid, ar siúlóid,

Fiúntas an tsaoil ag rith i bhfeith

Ni sa gáire é ach i n-iarracht dícheall, is í an tsaoil –

Bealacha bruite ár -nithe, ach ní le haois ach le anró na haimsire

Go dtí go mbeinn – a deireas, mar is ruda i gconaí in easnamh orthu – an tsiocháin is mó

Is mise fós - beomhar ar an tsaoil leo -

Abaltácht is álainne de réir orthu – fáth an náire

Is súile uathu ag breathnú ar usúl an t úrsul

Go bhfoire Dé ar an méid slandála – té an dada le cúnamh Dé

Griofa grianghraif á tógaint,

Chun nach mbeadh ár seasamh go ceart os comhair Dé

Láidir, cóir is cruinn mar atáid – fós

‘An bhfuil aon ní ag gobadh amach,’ – a deireas

Níl.

Ach mo intinn laidir á lorg uathu, chuile focal a deireas, ar glór milis agam –

Átáid -

Ag baineadh asam de réir ríomhclarú

Mar a dhein cruthú daonna, tá siad ag déanamh,

Ochón go deo -

Gan dea, gan guí

Ar cuma éigin ríomhaire gan anam.

Salach an chaoí acu ar duine

Moladh go deo le Dia amháin is naofa, an cruthnaitheoir,

Gan mac, gan aois.

Moladh ar an fáidheadóir, Iosa,  
Ar dheis Dé, go raibh sé..

## **The Vikings**

**Angelina Kelly**

The Vikings are coming!! The call rang out and everyone ran for cover. With horrific scenes from various movies floating around in our heads we were terrified at what was going to happen next. The men, well aware that they were unarmed, envisaged a fierce battle with many of them being killed or badly maimed. The women pictured themselves being brutally raped or taken into slavery. We all cowered in fear and hid wherever we could find the best hiding place and hoped we wouldn't be seen.

Eventually someone, with a hint of authority in their voice exclaimed, in a stage whisper, "You know the Vikings no longer exist. They haven't been in our country since the 900's AD."

In a sceptical voice another person replied, "How do you know, Smartass?"

"Because I'm an Archaeologist." Declared the first speaker.

Just then we heard the sound of a light boat docking at the jetty followed by the voices of young people talking and laughing.

The Archaeologist peeped up over the low wall he was hiding behind and declared, "Hah! It's only a bunch of tourists wearing Viking hats and they are heading for the pub across the road."

At this everyone looked out from their hidey holes and discovered he was right. With nervous laughter, and some embarrassment, we came out of hiding and resumed our tasks.

## **Mr Dark**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Mr Dark, comes in through your key hole,  
He covers the Wicklow mountains,  
He comes from Australia,  
He fills the country roads,  
So cars with no headlights crash into each other,  
All the drunkards can't wait for Mr Dark  
so they can go to the pubs,  
The teenagers can't wait for Mr Dark,  
All the adults go back to their houses,  
So the teenagers rule the roost,  
But then at 9.30am the light lady comes back,  
Does a dance with Mr Dark,  
Pushes Mr Dark into a ditch,  
Mr Dark rises up in indignation,  
He flies towards America,  
November, Mr Dark sits on his throne,  
He is firmly established in November,  
But then the light lady comes,  
Pushes him off his throne,  
The light lady picks up Mr Darks throne and castle and puts it in a  
hurricane,  
She plants green shoots where the castle once stood,  
The light lady's friends arrive to the land in rowing boats,  
By this stage Mr Dark had been vanquished to the edge of the land,  
He only comes out in the middle of the night,  
When he rides around on his horse,  
The land is ruled by The Light Lady,  
The people eat HB ice creams,  
The light flows everywhere,  
On the boats rowed by Lady Lights friends,

The people sit on the lush grass,  
They tell their children stories of Mr Dark,  
He will come back,  
For their land is the Faroe Islands, through your key hole,  
He covers the Wicklow mountains,  
He comes from Australia,  
He fills the country roads,  
So cars with no headlights crash into each other,  
All the drunkards can't wait for Mr Dark  
so they can go to the pubs,  
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On the boats rowed by Lady Lights friends,  
The people sit on the lush grass,  
They tell their children stories of Mr Dark,  
He will come back,  
For their land is the Faroe Islands.

## Right Hand Man

Hannah Stern

To her right on the couch sits God. Lilith is snuggled in with a narrow glass of water. Technically, that would make her on God's left (read: "bad") side, but she prefers to think of him as her Right Hand Man. She is nothing if not somewhat creative and just a little bit snarky. Her water is almost out, so she gets up to grab another glass from the kitchenette behind them. God glances just slightly over his shoulder as she walks around the couch, but he doesn't say anything.

The kitchen tap is old, and you need to turn the handle just right so that the threads catch and the water comes out. Otherwise, you can stand there and just spin the handle for ages and nothing will happen. She tried it once; she spun the tap for about 137,000 years, just to see what it would do. It did nothing, and at the end of it all, she found herself with a worn out tap and carpal tunnel syndrome, which she had to wait until the earth developed doctors who then developed an interest in repetitive movement injury. All in all, not a wholly recommended way to spend part of eternity.

"If you stay back there," God said over his shoulder without looking back at her, "you'll miss the replay." She doesn't need a replay. On more than one occasion Lilith has popped down to earth just to see how things were coming along. Sometimes it was the 20th century. Sometimes the 15th. Once, for a bit of variety, she went down to a monastery by some coast or another. The fresh sea air was lovely, and while she missed the Garden of Eden and its stunning vistas (you always remember your first), it was nice to get out of the apartment and stretch the legs. Still, the monks had seemed strangely unsettled by a woman appearing in their midst during, what seemed to be, one of their endless prayer sessions.

There was yelling and running.

At first, she was flattered; who doesn't like to make an impression? But then they stopped looking at her and yelling, and started looking out over the vastness of the waters and yelling in that direction. "The Vikings are coming!!" one monk shouted, and Lilith figured that that had probably been enough fresh air and leg stretching for the decade.



"I don't need any more replays; we've seen it all. We saw it all the first time around, and I've seen it again and again since. And you can't even get a good picture on that thing anyway; you'd be better off just going down there yourself!"

Dammit all, but he pisses her off! She turns and looks at the back of his head, and beyond it the old 1970's bucket tv with a screen so convex it looks like the tv is trying to blow a bubble. This episode is one of God's favourites: the drafting of the code of Hammurabi. Lilith groans.

"Jesus Christ!" she nearly shouted.

"I'm not falling for that one again!" God's neck goes rigid.

"This really is torture! I must have seen this bit a THOUSAND TIMES!" Lilith looks pleadingly up to the ceiling as if seeking the help that would likely only come from the coach potato on his brown sofa in the living room.

"I like it!" God says, finally turning to look at her, bestowing upon her the full radiance of his holy visage, which has, she notices, sour cream and onion pringle crumbs on the sides of his mouth. "This is the part where he decides to literally write it in stone! Not like he could text it out to the people, I suppose, but what an inspiration!" Lilith rolls her eyes, her glass still sitting in the sink, waiting to be filled by a leaky tap. She turns back to her task.

"You know," she continues in a softer tone, "you could go back down there. Maybe pop in for a visit?"

Say hi? Grab a pizza for us?" She's tried this approach with him before and it never leads anywhere, but with an eternity stretching out before them, she has nothing but time on her hands to try. He slides slightly lower down the couch.

"Don't wanna."

"What?"

"I said, I don't wanna. Look, Lil, all the ages are pretty good; I think we can both agree that the 1970's were the best though, right? Disco, and houses that looked like spaceships, and the strangest use of the colour orange I have ever seen. But if I go down now, they'll just have

expectations. ‘Oh, cure this cancer. Oh, give me a winning lotto ticket. Oh, why did you make my coffee that hot, now there’s a sore spot on my tongue and I won’t be able to taste things properly for the rest of the day!’”

Lilith grips the tap tightly and turns, getting clear water on the first go and stopping it quickly when it reaches the top. Sometimes, for a bit of a laugh, God would turn the water into wine when she wasn’t paying attention and while it’s funny the first time, it’s a real pain the ass when you don’t want to get drunk. So, she takes her glass and sits down next to him again. He bunches up his face in a way that reminds her of a time when he ate a whole lemon orchard on a Greek island, just to see if he could. He could; of course he could. She touches his face tenderly and sips from her glass. Just water, today.

“Ok,” she says finally, “just 5,000 more years, and then you gotta get up.” He looks over at her and smiles.

“Ok,” he breathes a sigh. “Thanks.” Then he turns back to the screen and his face lights up. “Oooh! China’s inventing paper, Lilith! Look! Look!” She looks, sighs, and settles into her place on the couch with the broken spring.

## Fred

Matthew Tubridy

Fred sleeps in a door way,  
He was in his family home,  
With 10 children,  
And a wife from India,  
So his children are brown,  
But now Fred gets food from old food in Tesco bins,  
Fred rings his wife,  
Please may I come back?  
This doorway is hard and cold!  
eventually Fred can't take it anymore,  
He jumps into the Liffey!  
He drown because he can't swim,  
His body is swept into Dublin Bay,  
It hits off a Stena Link ferry,  
What was that? Asks a concerned passengers,  
Is there a whale in Dublin Bay?  
Currents push Fred into the Irish Sea,  
And around the coast of Wexford,  
But then Fred wakes up,  
He wasn't dead at all!  
A boat comes alongside,  
An Australian man say  
Would ya like a spot of help?  
Fred clammers aboard,  
Australian man brings Fred back to the Liffey boardwalk,  
But his wife is there grinding her teeth,  
And his 10 children,  
He says to himself,  
I'll go get another wife!

## **From Economy and Company (2017)**

**Steve Huenneke**

Economics is known as “the dismal science” and economists are stereotyped as people who can ruin any party. But I have found happiness in what I believe is the true practice of economy – which involves respect – maybe even reverence – for limits.

For thirty years, I loved the work of teaching economics, but year after year found myself in a situation of having expenses inch at least slightly beyond my income. This made work progressively more necessary to pay bills. This situation happened for complicated reasons -- and many reasons not under my own direct control. And, yes, as an economist the irony was never lost on me. The work was still enjoyable. What was less enjoyable? Life itself. A diminishing amount of life outside of work was not the loss it could have been. What I remember aside from work was the time I spent driving between home to work at dawn, and back home after dark. Work and life were disconnected by a half hour.

Then, two years ago (in 2015), I had a chance to reboot my whole life and live it in whatever way I felt was right.

I decided to start a living experiment. It brought forth a most delightful change in my overall feeling. I reduced my living expenses by about one third. That made work about half as necessary as it always had been. Suddenly, I was in Henry David Thoreau’s universe – where life itself is what is essential. Not just any kind of life, but a life with principle and without resignation.

In this new life I found, work was less necessary, but it has never been more attractive. My work revolved around teaching two subjects: economics and ethics. I took these two disciplines and made them both deliberate practices in my life. I made ethics and economics tools for designing a more just and efficient life for myself. In doing this, I found flow, and made my life into art. I always had that flow in my work, and now it spilled over into every corner of my life. I had given consent to myself to become my own subject for my own living experiment. When I turned in, I slept easily. But I could hardly wait for the start of the next day.

If my life had become art, you might expect there was some important mental imagery going on in my head. Of course, there was. Two mental images were most important – the image of a corporation and the image of a tree.

How had I been like a corporation? I had been like a corporation in the practice of making my location decision. Corporate location decisions are all about matching place, goal and need. Corporations think like profit maximizers. Firms find the location where they minimize their costs of transportation, relative to their resource supply point and their market.

My resource supply points were the grocery and sometimes the pharmacy. My market was my office and my classroom. My transport costs were very low. They were measured mostly not in dollars, but in calories which I burned in the manner of Thoreau, while walking or riding my bike. I drove my car just two times a week – to the laundry on Saturday morning, and to Columbia (Missouri) on Sunday evening for dinner with my daughter. I did not drive to any other place or at any other time, with rare exceptions. I did not drive thoughtlessly, ever.

It is important to say my principles were far different than a business corporation. A business corporation typically has no real commitment to any place on earth. They tend to extract resources from a place, and move on after the machinery gets old or the coal runs out. This is the destructive and unsustainable way of life that Wendell Berry criticizes in *Faustian Economics*. I tried to absolutely minimize my use of fossil fuels.

In one of his other essays, *Out of Your Car, Off Your Horse*, Berry writes that corporations treat a place like a fire does. They draw energy from their location and use it up. What else does a fire do, but consume? Even consumers are part of what a corporation does, wherever they are and wherever they drive to.

This is where living like a tree instead of a corporation came into focus for me. A tree has a single place to live and work. A tree works by growing in harmony with its surroundings. I deliberately decreased my mobility across the Earth, and become more "tree like." I stayed within walking distance of where I live and work, most of the time. It was very soul satisfying to fall off to sleep knowing that I never wandered more

than a half mile or so from where I lived. I just felt very right about that. A tree has a natural commitment to a place. A tree stands for magnificence in the passage of time. That is exactly where I have been ever since, in Fulton, Missouri, USA and now in Wexford, Ireland. It reflects what I want to be standing for.

In creating a new image of myself being like a tree, I left behind other old images that I tried to make work in my life, but never could make work. I left behind the image of the real estate version of the American Dream that so many of us in America grew up with. In 1962, in the heyday of that dream when that dream was an article of faith, historian Daniel Boorstin wrote a landmark book about it. The book was simply entitled *The Image*. Boorstin's conclusions are very relevant to consider, more than a half century later.

Boorstin described what he meant by an image: "An illusion is an image we have mistaken for reality. We cannot reach for it, aspire to it, or be exhilarated by it; for we live in it. It is prosaic because we cannot see it is not fact." According to Boorstin, it is an illusion to come to a state of mind in which we "expect anything and everything. We expect the contradictory and the impossible."

The quest for prestige is a big part of the real estate version of the American Dream. Boorstin said the word prestige is probably related to the word "prestidigitate," which is "to perform a juggler's trick or magic." Boorstin noted prestige comes to English through both French and Latin and is associated with illusion -- capacities to blindfold, to delude or to "dazzle." Some would call the attainment of prestige greatness. Not me.

Even back in the days when America was supposedly great, Boorstin makes greatness through prestige sound like a big drag. Boorstin wrote that Americans in 1962 wanted to eat a lot and stay thin, to constantly be on the move and still have good neighbors, to revere God and be God at the same time. He wrote: "Never have people been more the masters of their environment. Yet never has a people felt more deceived and disappointed. For never has a people expected so much more than the world has to offer."

Take this from an economist, when someone expects more than the world can offer, he or she is defying scarcity and scarcity will not be defied. It just is there like a wall. Someone may decide to bang their head against that wall. I decided I would rather just back up from that wall, let it be, and instead define my freedom and happiness in a different way.

Which brings me to a second way I have discovered happiness late in life – I have found happiness in company.

Two years ago, I read an old book and learned a new word that I have concluded is the key to happiness in company. That word is conviviality. This word comes from Latin. The word means “to live together and dine together.” But the dictionary definition is insufficient, as dictionary definitions often are.

I learned about conviviality from Ivan Illich – someone who I knew of for decades but did not really know until I began my new life. I read his book *Tools for Conviviality* and the experience of reading it was eye opening. He wrote this book in the early 1970s.

Illich wrote that he chose conviviality as a word “to designate the opposite of industrial productivity. I intend it to mean the autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with conditioned response of persons to the demands made on them by others, and by a manmade environment. I consider to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence, and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value.”

Illich wrote that we must rediscover the difference between hope and expectation. That difference relates to economics as well as ethics.

Illich associated hope with conviviality. He wrote hope is a good word, because it has a notion attached to it that predates the problem of scarcity. Hope involves trust and faith in goodness. Illich makes a vivid connection between hope and hospitality. And the circle is complete, as hospitality certainly is involved with conviviality.

What causes conviviality to fail? Illich writes that a post-scarcity notion called expectations does that. Hope and expectations could not be different from each other, according to Illich. Expectation means a

dependence on results controlled and managed by humans. Illich wrote: "Expectation looks forward to satisfaction from a predictable process which will produce what we have a right to claim." There it is again – that notion of being deserving.

A preoccupation on a right to claim something – expressed in words like --"I deserve" or "I am entitled" can work like poison. Illich wrote that consumption creates two sorts of slaves – "prisoners of addiction" and "prisoners of envy." I used to tell my students in macroeconomics about the inequality of wealth and income in American society. It is the greatest level of US inequality ever recorded, statistically. At the same time that this inequality is so great, expectations are the same.

Illich wrote: "Consumption is polarized when expectations are equalized." A society based on consumption is itself polarized. The expectation of status is the average, and the real condition of the ordinary person lags behind as the median. Right now (in 2017), in the United States, there is a huge gap between the mean and the median. In terms of wealth, that difference can be measured in hundreds of thousands of dollars. I am not exaggerating that, at all. I have seen the data. But this not only about economic inequality. Expectations at all levels of income and wealth are so out of control and out of proportion with what is realistic. And the difference between the unreal expectation and the reality that lags behind it has a name. It is disappointment. It is a persistent kind of disappointment that ends up being related to depression, addiction, envy and resentment.

According to Illich, the ultimate choice is whether one wants to be "rich in things," or to be free to use the things one has. I would rather have the latter choice. I choose a life with particular principles, over a life without principles of any kind. Francis Bacon made these recommendations for goals in economy and company five hundred years ago. They resonate with me today, to the fullness of my being. Bacon said "seek not proud riches, but such as thou mayest get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly." I hope for this. I can attain this. I enjoy this. It is available like air. I want and can have more of it, as much as I want because it is not a product or anything I have to pay for.



## **November Forest**

**Mathew Tubridy**

Being in a forest in November,  
The leaves are brown and grey,  
The light will close in,  
The sun comes through the branches,  
Devoid of leaves,  
I get make a cup of coffee,  
I sit on the leaves,  
Is 4pm,  
darkness will make its way here,  
I stomp of home,  
Threw the leaves,  
I see some worms,  
I want to be a biologist,  
I brig some leaves into my  
Professor in Trinity College Dublin,  
He asks me for the Latin name  
for the tree,  
We put the leaf in a notebook  
and bind it with a string,  
To preserve it,  
My Professor is Batman,  
He strides around Trinity College Dublin.

## **Happiness is Self Dependent**

**Clíodhna Joyce-Daly**

A loud chime came from John's phone. Another ringing bell of the dreaded Microsoft teams that echoed throughout his room. It was the third day John had avoided the thought of doing any substantial work and the fifth day of raging bronchitis. When the night sweats subsided John had braved his way down to the foot of the bed to drag his overheated body to loom over the sink to collect any bit of moisture, he could grasp to his lips. The glass of water was now collecting dust on his bedside locker.

John was exhausted. He spent the last few months attempting to close a deal that involved two cantankerous businessmen that entitlement to money bridged on moral questionability. Despite this, John relished in the countless nights of oblivion that the unlimited free drinks and food provided. The morning after, he woke up with unforgiving headache and full of regrets for the decisions he was making in the name of his job. With a cup of coffee and two Panadol, he persisted through the trepidation.

In the mist of sleepless evenings and growing pay slips, John neglected the one thing that could implode his regimented lifestyle – his health. It had deteriorated to the point that John collapsed in his room from shortness of breath. He now resorted to his bed which he had been lying in for three days. He neglected to tell work that he was not available and yet refused to turn off his phone.

It had been the first time in three years, that John grappled with the fact that his job made him feel truly alone. Through the grape vines of gossip, John realised no one got along and everyone said awful things about one another. At times, he joined in or was at the brunt of this horrible behaviour. He did not enjoy office politics, but felt the ambition to engage in the drama. He was miserable and now disconnected from it he felt exposed and raw.

The nights faded into days and days into nights, as the rumble of the city scribbled beneath his poorly insulated floors. The headlights creating a dance across his dark room. The phone rang again, but it remained

unanswered. The sheets began to feel heavy and John pushed them to the floor and crouched in a ball hoping to cool his overheating body.

After the night passed, and the room had grasped a liveable temperature, John finally found footing to get another clean glass of water. It had been the first time he felt normal in days. He find physically less unwell, but had a gut feeling that the true sickness would not disintegrate unless he projected a major shift in his life.

Observing the droplets of the water that were flicking across the basin of the sink, John contemplated his next move. Standing over the sound of tap the noise echoed throughout his thought infused mind. It was time, he knew it.

He reminisced of one particular trip he took prior to Bali and how he sat in mediating to find inner peace. The message for the day was find your inner peace as happiness would depend on ourselves. John let the rest of the water flick from his glass and took a sip. It was the first in days.

His thoughts of creating his own journey and his own happiness engrossed his mind. With this new determination, he creaked his way back towards the room – he was going to quit his job. The thought of it immediately made him find some inner peace.

## Happiness

Max McCoubrey

Happiness depends on ourselves  
It shines in many ways  
A smile to a friend

Sweet tea on a tray  
A puncture repaired  
A rose on a stem  
A trip to a skip  
When it's too much for them

It's the giving that matters  
A helping hand  
A word of kindness  
Saying 'I understand'

Long after the action  
Kindness lives on  
Like the song of the thrush  
When morning has gone

## **Aristotle and Happiness**

**Brendan Palmer**

I had agreed to meet with him that Wednesday for a quick bite at lunchtime and a trip down to the old home territory of Ringsend.

John and I were born on the seaward side of the Carlisle bridge which meant that we were also known as Raytowners. John was also referred to as a right little Ouzeler during our less than placid teenage years.

The name Ouzeler comes from another time in Ringsend and a ship called the Ouzel Galley, but that's a story for another day.

We had a very nice lunch in "Bread 41" on Pierce St. Well, the food was very nice, but John was his usual grumpy self, bitching and moaning about any topic of conversation we touched upon. Beginning with the weather, "I hate the winter in this place" he said, "the clouds are always low and grey, and the damp get into your bones".

"Why don't you go to Spain for the winter" I asked.

"Are you kidding me" he growled "that place is full of foreigners."

"What do you mean foreigners?" I asked.

"Spanish" he said, "they're everywhere."

I don't think he noticed me looking up to the heavens.

"Come on" says I "let's go" as I emptied my cup of tea.

We walked down Pearse St and over the Carlisle bridge and on out to Sandymount beach, John keeping up a steady stream of bitching about everything he could think of, the cost of living, the government, RTE and "that feckin' turncoat Tubridy, I hope he's a total failure in England, leaving us to put up with one of their rejects to run the Late, Late, show, I'll never watch it again".

"Listen John" Says I, "Aristotle said Happiness depends on ourselves".

"Ah! would you give me a break" he snapped, "you're a right pain in the arse since you started studying that philosophy shite".

"It's not shite" I said, miffed.

At this stage we had arrived at the edge of the water on Sandymount beach, we stood looking out over the Irish Sea, silent with our thoughts for a few minutes.

“Happiness depends on ourselves” he snorted. “Where we happy for 800 years when the Brits were running the place?”

“And do you know what else” he said.

“No John, what else? Says I, resigned to another rant.

“The Vikings are coming again”.

“What are you on about John”, the Vikings disappeared 1000 years ago”.

“No, they didn't” he said, “they just moved to Iceland”.

“How in the name of Jayzus do you connect that with coming here again”

“Because” he said, “that volcano is going to erupt and destroy the place.”

“Go on”, I said.

“Well, it's a well-known fact that the Icelanders are descendants of the Dyflin Vikings, that what they called Dublin, so they have resurrected their long ships and are abandoning their island and coming back here”.

“Where did you get that from”, says I

“From that online newspaper Gript that tells us the truth about everything, especially the stuff the government doesn't want us to know.”

“Jayzus John, gimme a break, I'm going for a pint.

## **Happiness Depends Upon Ourselves**

**Bernadette O'Reilly**

It is unfair to depend  
On others for our happiness  
Be independent  
Love your own company  
Be in the now  
Happiness is a precious gem  
Go create your own happiness.

## **Viking Happiness**

**Ciaran O'Melia**

I can recall them coming in droves. Some wore the head with two horns on skis, some in boats.

Jesus, they were frightening.

We were to enjoy their company until the referee blew his whistle to start the game.

We are in NY to see the game; my brother Pat and his two sons came from Toronto, and another brother was visiting from England. It was around 1994 or was 98. To the best of my memory, we competed against the Vikings and played against Mexico and Italy.

We went full-blooded for the game, at least the players and the manager, Jack Charlton, did.

Then someone in the crowd said, "Remember Brian Boru?" This he shouted, or was it a she. Yes, this got the crowd going.

"Going where." One could ask.

"To the Brian Boru pub." Replied another before adding, "For a pint. The long Stand, I was only joking."

But the game went on as if we cared; both sets of supporters cried over the results.

It was a drawn game and no scores.

It was after we headed to the Long Stand, and the pints flowed. It was great, we really enjoyed ourselves.

Then Niall Quinn and Eamonn Coughlin walked in, and as my brother Pat was sick and unable to walk, we introduced Pat to the lads. They spent time with him, and each enjoyed themselves. Then I thought of an old saying: Happiness depends on Ourselves.



## **Marriage**

**Matthew Tubridy**

Would you marry a Icelandic woman and a Nigerian man?  
But the man has no legs,  
the woman can only speak Icelandic...  
They want to get married in Jamaica,  
The Icelandic woman's hair is short and pink,  
They're both Catholic because the woman's mother was Irish!  
The Nigerian man's family we're converted in Nigeria by the Carmelites,  
They want a marriage with Gospel music,  
They want Lidl spring rolls for after  
And orange juice,  
They want Father Miceal!  
He's flown into Jamaica from Rome,  
He has a flash silver gown,  
Sunglasses,  
At the wedding they play Damien Marley 'Welcome to Jamrock!'  
Father Miceal walks around Kingston like Damien Marley,  
Anyway the marriage is a success,  
Nobody objects,  
After the couple go out on a super yacht.  
Father Miceal is flown back to Rome!

## The Vikings

Mark L'estrange

Stephen came back to the phone saying, "Paddy I am going to have to get out of here, there is a lot of scary people in my garden." "Go out the back door, Stephen and climb the wall quick go." He ran out the back and thankfully got away. He rang Paddy back to tell him, "That's great you can head back to where you were staying before my friend knows what happened."

He headed back to him and thanked him for letting him stay with him again, "No problem glad to help your going through a hard time."

Paddy landed the next day and phoned Stephen straight away to see how he was getting on, "Yes I am good thanks just feel terrible having to bother your friend again" "He doesn't mind he is a nice guy, I am heading to the station now I will check out what's going on and let you know."

He met the Super at the station he said to Paddy. "Sorry you were disturbed on your holiday, you probably heard about the gang at Stephen's house?" "Yes I did is it part of the gang from Mexico?" "Can't be sure, I have contacted our friends in Mexico they have to get back to me."

They were in the middle of the conversation when one of the guards ran out shouting. "Get out of here the Viking's are coming, the Viking's are coming." They went over to him to calm him down. Paddy asked him. "What are you talking about Viking's who are they?" "The gang that had us trapped in here for days, I got a call to say they are on their way back, I am getting out of here sorry lads." He was followed by a few more of the Guards that where stuck in the station last time.

Paddy asked the Super. "What will we do?" "I will let Garda HQ know we can get water tankers down in case there is lots of them, and if you don't mind spinning them while I get the water ready." "Yes I think that would be a good combination." Paddy said laughing.

To be continued

## **Light Falls on Happiness**

**Greg Fields**

He had his friends, he had his work and he had his sanity, or at least enough of it to get by. On most days he ate well, sometimes luxuriously, and he had a roof over his head, under which sat clean rooms and a warm bed. Willie Meadows knew himself to be fortunate in all the things that mattered. Or at least in most of those things. He also knew himself well enough to realize that he would never be content, that there would always be something just beyond his fingertips that shone brightly enough to attract his desire. Happiness, he reasoned, did not equal contentment.

It was a Friday night that saw Willie once again wandering about for something to do. He shuffled through the streets around his northwest flat, took an uninspired drink at his local which neither lifted his spirits nor fired his blood, then turned to the shops nearby that were still open. Sporting goods and men's clothing. Nothing settled his mood, though. A night of discontent this might be, and Willie saw little way around it. He would roam, both physically on these streets and intellectually as his mind flailed about for something to latch on to.

He entered a small bookstore, one of the independents that had so far withstood the demise of bricks-and-mortar bookselling brought about by the Amazon phenomenon. This place carried an intimacy, a union between readers and the books they read, which sat on shelves and hungered to be touched and opened. The owner, a fine woman in her late fifties, had placed several chairs about the place so that readers could sit and take their time, holding and feeling the books, smelling the pages and knowing that what they might purpose was real, and right.

The owner nodded at Willie as he entered, and Willie smiled back at her. "Welcome." Willie said nothing, then moved toward the section that held fiction. "There's some warm spiced cider in the far corner, if you're of a mind to have some." The aroma of the cider filled the space and mingled with the scent of worn books, and Willie felt as if he had passed through a portal that led to the hidden places.

At the square table that held the cider, a tall woman was pouring herself a cup. As Willie approached, she turned to him. "This is so good. Have you been here before? Ellie, she's the owner," and she took a quick sip of the cider, "and she does everything she can to make this place so comfortable. Here," and she held a cup out to Willie.

"Thanks." Willie smiled despite his flattened mood. This woman was subtly attractive, but, much more than that. She was bright, and alive, and aware, all of which Willie on this evening was not. She drew him in.

"You're reading Fredrik Backman?" Willie said, nodding toward two books tucked under her arm. *Beartown* and *Us Against You*.

"I love his work. So intricate, so casual and yet so human. Plus, I'm Swedish, so I guess it's a loyalty thing."

"Ah," said Willie. "I've got a bit of Irish blood myself. Your ancestors were pillaging my ancestors hundreds of years ago. Apparently the nights filled with terror when the Vikings were running wild."

The woman gave a quiet laugh. "I'm glad we're beyond that now." She took her cup of cider and her books to move to a corner chair. "Enjoy your time here. I'm here whenever I have an empty night."

"Then no doubt we'll see each other again."

"I'd like that."

Willie Meadows sipped his cider, went to the stacks and pulled down a book by Niall Williams. *The Fall of Light*. And with it, he regarded the ways in which a night might turn, how the light might change. He took the book to a soft chair and nestled down. Still he had no sense of contentment, no sense of being settled, no sense that he had any meaning beyond himself. But that did not mean that he wasn't happy. Not at all.

## **Continuing**

**Elaine Reardon**

I waded into the field  
filled with pollen, dry with dust.  
By my feet stems of columbine and yarrow  
bent and sprung back, observed life persevering  
in the earth. Anthills rose like smokestacks,  
evidence to whole communities living underground.  
The largest acrobatic bumblees visited every flower around,  
a feast from daisy to chive. Each bee burrowed  
]deeply, and left the blossoms covered in gold.

## **I Wonder Why**

**Matthew Tubridy**

I wonder why I look up at the stars in the night cloudless sky, Suddenly I  
see a bright light whizzing,  
I surmise it's a Russian rocket,  
We're getting a few of them after Tom the news reader slagged off Putin,  
Putin clenched his fists and said  
I'll get Ireland!  
The only thing is he sent his rockets to a bog in Connemara,  
They harmlessly sink into the bog and sizzle out!  
Stupid Putin!  
But don't say that to his face,  
But then NATO countries put a big flag outside the Kremlin,  
It says 'Putin is stupid!'  
Putin can do nothing because he knows NATO have a much bigger army  
than he does,  
Jens Stoltenberg sticks his tongue out at Putin.

## **Fiction**

### **Fiona Deaton**

'You know I never thought of myself as a thief', I said one Saturday in the writers centre in Dublin. However, internally I admitting to myself I was. I have stolen many a character, a plot or a metaphor from those who have committed their original ideas to paper or a keyboard for that matter.

I sit at the desk, inside a laptop and my master speaks to me slowly seeking inspiration. I am not may I state Alexia or Wikipedia those who have gone before me. Neither am I a hologram half built by Meta, until that baby got what do you say, 'thrown out with the bath water'. I was built by a talented programmer I am Artificial Intelligence.

Basically, Harry issues me with a prompt and my search engine churns out a story. I am the ultimate artful dodger I dig my way through thousands of eBooks online and just chuck out a story. I don't need a half hour, generally I can do it in ten minutes. But my stories are like attending a Greenwich Village bar with Jazz that has been mangled and sounds like manicured nails scrapping against a blackboard. My stories, are manufactured and do not have the insight that the other members of this Saturday writing group.

I long for the imagination that each member of the inkies has. The personalities that breathe through every word written whether it be the character, setting or dialogue. The world is a better place with 'Jemser', 'Manion' or a song from Eva to mention but a few.

Like a bolt of lightning a thought struck me perhaps in the future another programmer will come along and bestow upon me an imagination, a personality and drive. 'Well anything is possible in the land of creative writing but for now I will keep robbing those words, phrase and images.

Yes I admit today I am a thief but to rob a phrase from Padraig Pearce 'Hope springs eternal'

## **Aristotle**

### **Stephen Brady**

Aristotle once wrote "Happiness depends upon ourselves." A deceptively simple sentiment, self-evidently

true, but leaves one wondering just how this state is going to be achieved. Like the best philosophic utterances, it might help to make us think, and think differently, about our own lives, and maybe, through a process of introspection, to bring some positive change about.

But there is another quote from Aristotle which I prefer: "Follow your own course, no matter what others

may say." This is also a simple statement, and also challenges us to think through the full implications of

it's meaning. Anyone who has ever achieved anything truly meaningful, in the arts, in science, in bringing

about changes in society, has been following this directive. All of us sitting here, scribbling diligently in

the chill of a Georgian drawing room on a Saturday afternoon, are doing so in that same spirit. And that

makes us partners, in a great enterprise of pursuing what lies inside each of us and bringing it out in the

form of words. And as Aristotle himself has demonstrated, words can and should and do amend the world.