

## Poetry Series

# Clifton Redmond

- 20 poems -

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### **Clifton Redmond (7-4-1982)**

Clifton Redmond was born in 1982 in a small rural town in Co. Carlow Ireland called Hacketstown. Born into the tough economic times of the eighties. POETRY IN MOTION

DISPLAYING a turn of phrase as sharp as his butchers knife, Oakley Grove resident Clifton Redmond has shown himself to be a gifted poet even though he has only seriously dedicated himself to the craft for less than a year.

"I started it about last August," says Clifton. "I've always been interested in music and lyrics. I stumbled across a poetry website which helps people to start writing poems and I said I'D give it a go and see what feedback I got."

With poems like Race The Wind, which tenderly recalls his youth spent playing with his late brother Thomas, or Fifteen Years, which peers into his life spent working in the halls of an abattoir, Redmond shows a serious talent for words. The 31-year-old says his love of language has grown over the years since he left school and took a job at Kepak meat processing plant in his native Hacketstown. "I went into transition year for one half-day and I didn't like it, so I left. I got a job as a butcher and I've been there ever since," says Clifton. "I was very lazy. I've had to learn it all myself as I went along."

Redmond started by writing a poem each morning rising at 6am to spend an hour with his words before leaving for work. Now, his morning ritual has expanded. "I pen a first draft, leave it for a day or

two and work on it again, " he says.

Citing the likes of Dylan Thomas, Anne Sexton and Seamus Heaney among his influences, Redmond has already self-published a collection of his work called RACE THE WIND.

"I decided to put something together, something solid. But I have another book ready and waiting in the wings if I can get the support of a publisher."

The long tradition of celebrated Irish poets may have found someone new to carry the touch in Graiguecullen

Works:

Race The Wind

## **Che**

Armed with bayonets and books  
haunted by yourself  
you climbed  
the highest hills and cried

Is the truth of men  
written in the stars  
or hidden in the pages  
of the manifesto?

Was it truth you saw  
or a charlatan in rags  
dressed as freedom

That burned in the ocean  
like wild fires of  
uncontrollable lust  
for truth  
as the man stood  
pissing on the lemming seed

Many young men salvaged  
pulled from the edge  
the frontier of death  
and enticed them to destiny

Saving lives of the many  
cheating death  
as on the battlefield  
you saved a life

A young man wounded  
you dragged from death  
with five infants  
too feed and raise  
and a wife crying in the mud

And sent him  
all the way to the slaughter  
armed him with hope  
of a better world  
a revolutionary lamb  
driven blind to his end  
as if his death had been planned

On that slab of stone  
I see the alter  
of your post existence  
where they offered your bones  
as commodity  
to the capitalist god

Wild black locks hidden  
beneath the black cap  
a soldiers jacket worn  
eyes lit with the visions  
and hands stained  
with the blood  
of ten thousand men

Bolivia might have been  
a cruel deceiving mistress  
where your hope was lost  
and your life stolen

But you died a heroes death  
at the hands of the enemy  
a stone cast away  
on the waves of eternity

Ambushed in the forest  
handed to death  
bayed by destiny  
destroy the revolution  
and reignite it

And the young man  
with history  
at the barrels end  
cried "Go ahead boy  
kill me, im just a man"

Clifton Redmond

## Children of the bog

Here  
lies the past  
dead  
the poor forgotten children of the bog  
that found no solace in the harsh swamps  
buried down in the blackened soup  
the holy well of the bog lands

Now  
they lie like stones  
frozen  
strewn into the soft murky pulp  
where the bull rush grows  
stretching like stalky flowers  
gathering on the unmarked graves

How  
deep they lie  
forgotten  
in their muddy sodden holes  
with the mighty oak trunk  
the chalice and the branch  
counting no moments they lie still

Time  
heaps on the sod  
caged  
among the peat stones  
and the torture of the year's  
perfect preservation in the heart of the land  
forged and grieved by no man's eyes

Gone  
into the earth  
forever  
ground and cemented as the sun gutters  
and forges layers of decomposed earth  
into the pudding soft belly of the bog

Still  
within the cradle of the moor  
they lay  
cursed by themselves as their brown faces  
spurt no blood nor pagans smile  
in the mouth of the mother they succumb  
like statue children stale and stone  
portrayal

Clifton Redmond

## **Desire**

Drunk,  
in some dimension  
lost and uncoiled  
starring at a blank reality  
unable to escape  
hands and feet bound  
love or some strange stigma

Lies,  
the sweet kisses  
those soft scars  
like jagged tiny shards  
rip me to pieces  
from the inside  
and every sentence is a tightrope

Love,  
now that's easy  
gaping mouths  
sucking out vain reality  
drowning in forgiveness  
two corpses  
hanging from the ceiling of rejection

Death,  
its waiting there  
beyond sorrow  
along the corridor of self-loathing  
the yellowed silence  
the candle has burned  
and we lie in wax pools

Clifton Redmond

## Digging

I have spent my life digging,  
digging, the ravaged spade  
in fertile soil too rich for graves

Worn and relentless  
in the garden of my tears  
I have existed there  
years then years  
have passed  
and I have tired

Scraping the dirt away  
layer upon layer  
deeper  
into the soul

I crave the reflection  
of an untapped well  
deep in the conscience  
where shadows dwell and flicker

I have watched my father  
stand in that same garden  
burying his reality  
in that same soil

Piling on layer upon layer  
to scared to dig  
scared of the truth  
or the wells reflection

He refused  
to be found  
in a coward's frenzy  
he resided

And he laughs as I dig  
calls me the fool  
he mocks my belief  
and I resent

Maybe I will hit a spring  
and unleash  
the waters of redemption

Or perhaps I will dig forever  
until the spade is worn to nothing  
and my bones fall to dust  
inside the dark endless hole

Clifton Redmond

## First confession

When we were six years old  
innocent to life's evil  
partial to youthful mischief  
ignorant to confession

Our teacher one day told us  
to go to the parish priest  
for our first confession of sin  
perhaps then we may start anew

We made our way  
down the long lane  
the granite stone twinkled  
bathed in the sunlight

Our round faces shining  
awash with innocence  
merriment and folly  
was our need and endeavour

Our voices rose unchallenged  
upon the breast of early spring  
captured by the hour  
marching like an army of ants

We were free and untamed  
broken from the drudge  
the dragging soulless feet  
of a never ending school day

The lane neared its end  
as in the distance stood with pride  
the great spire of the chapel, reaching  
our freshened cheeks enchanted in awe

As the parish priest stood waiting  
hands squeezed tightly by his side  
upon his face a venomous stare  
sternly with open eyed fierceness

From his obsidian eyes grew  
a most daring scornful stare  
draped in his ebony shroud  
that hung from an ivory noose

Our mad stomp abruptly stopped  
we were free no more  
the fresh gleam had frozen  
as he led us like lambs to slaughter

We filed in slowly and frightened  
the church of god was vast

washed in an eerie silence  
a dead chill laid upon the air

The bile consuming scent  
of burned out candle smoke  
still frozen in their waxen pools  
ghosts whispering in the vestry

Asked to confess for innocent sins  
kicking dogs or apples stolen  
twenty five years since I have been  
now many confessions I could have told

Clifton Redmond

## **For whom does the bell now toll**

For whom do your tired eyes yearn  
in your life of hours dying as the hope  
your choked speech spits a pattern not clear  
that you and you alone can hear

For whom do your cold eyes weep  
clutching your beads of a chained faith  
just you and your god  
alone for so many years  
not caring for the faces that disappear

For whom are your thoughts so many  
the hours you had were few now less  
from death's hand you hide but how  
you feel it hover above you now

For whom do you hold regret  
wishing confession to all you harmed  
as your skin pale and heart beats none  
the life without love is all but done

For whom does the bell now toll  
a soul of bitter stubborn greed  
a fool who cared for not but power  
but left with none in their final hour

For whom does the bell now toll

Clifton Redmond

## Heading West

Jet tracks in the open sky  
sailing slowly, west

Its ivory tail  
like a centipede

Like a streak of chalk  
the perfect line  
but fades and grows  
and sometimes dies  
swallowed by a jealous cloud

If you listen carefully  
you can just about hear  
its constant hum  
and distant echo

Every day I watch them  
sailing, slowly  
like a snail comet  
through the wide untouched sky

And I take a breath  
or sometimes sigh  
in vague reflection  
of that brush stroke  
dragged across this vast blue setting  
the canvas of my heart

But if I keep my stare  
eventually  
as everything  
it disappears

The common sight  
of all those dreams  
giving chase to the sun  
sailing slowly, heading west

Clifton Redmond

## His Morning Ritual

I remember him best  
my father  
in those early hours  
rising with the sun  
as if disturbed from his slumber  
abruptly rooted from his place of rest  
while the house slept.

All but me  
alone in my single cot  
listening to the first sounds of day  
and he, ever persistent  
a clockwork man, rising  
just before the neighbours cock.

How he rumbled urgently  
down the thirteen steps of the stairs  
with a cough and a grunt he started  
reaching for his razor.

Into the wash basin  
he searched  
busily through the soap suds  
with his badger hair brush  
his mouth held in an awkward hush.

His frozen stern face  
unflinching  
as he scraped away the memory  
the burden, of yesterday  
with skill and grace  
his concentrated frown  
lost in the silence.

Rising with a cold flush  
having bargained with the mirror  
a younger man now looking back  
with a new day laid out before him.

Clifton Redmond

## Innocence

Note: As I sat on a bench in Cork and watched the children play  
I wrote this thought down and built the poem from it afterwards.

"If only their energy could be harnessed  
that herd of wild children"

Innocence

And there it is, innocence  
alive among the climbing bars  
swinging loose from the swings  
and climbing those mighty ladders.

Sliding down the slides  
Into the landscape of a new world.

Just beyond the sandbox  
lies the wilderness of youth  
where adults only gaze upon  
and never dare to wander.

As you watch on you realize  
that you miss that pure elation  
of sliding down  
into your next dream  
your next adventure.

Climbing to the stars  
or the top of your own personal castle  
where you have been declared king  
and all below must fall before you.

And it's there in the wailing of the child  
its deranged song  
a hymn against time  
that white noise chorus.

Nothing can keep them from their goal  
no scraped knees nor bloody nose  
as they tumble and leap  
and know no pain or evil

I look upon them  
with more than a small amount of jealousy  
that ignorant innocence  
and nothing to hold them back.

Clifton Redmond

## Memories

Memories are like dust  
they gather in the corners of the head  
in thickened clots  
with years they pile  
layer after layer

Cluttering your mind  
the untidy nest

Until one day  
some doctor oozing  
subtle grace  
armed with a smile  
and 'generosity'  
falling from his mouth

Looks you in the eye  
and sees pain  
the hollowed out holes  
that see no evil, only hurt

Asks you straight  
in his all-knowing voice

"Why do you have no broom  
you're temple needs a broom  
to sweep away the clutter"

'But I have just the cure'  
and wipes them all away  
cobwebs and tears  
with just a page  
from his prescription pad

And promises emancipation  
with sure conviction  
and kindly gestures for his fee

Clifton Redmond

## **North of a rural town**

On a humped stone bridge  
north of a rural town  
beneath the green hills  
at the walls end

Where a valley strewn  
and a glacier dragged  
forked through the dunes  
in an anxious sweep

The scattered granite spits  
above on a green sleeve  
soft splints of sand stone  
almost hidden in moist moss  
In the garden of eternity  
where all her children sleep  
cradled in her sullen arms  
watching over sunken fields

And she stands there in the distance  
shouldered by a fading sky  
above the muttering currents  
that whisper in the rapids

Where a bard cries tears  
into hands like scratched wood  
whiskey drops splashing  
on his hobnailed boots

Crying for the wind to stop  
and leave him less reminded  
but the daisy shins shimmer  
as the thistle weeds wave

Clifton Redmond

## **Race The Wind**

We ran together free and careless  
through fur and rush as though the same  
our youthful feet dancing on the bog  
as we tried to race the wind

We feared not the darkest night  
as we called the call of men  
Imposters not on this wilderness  
as we raced the wind again

The two of us were six feet tall  
though we reached barely four  
although the ditches slowed us down  
we raced the wind once more

We grew up to be different men  
reminiscing upon fields of play  
we always said we'd take the field  
and catch the wind some day

For now the age has caught me up  
as death took hold of you  
Someday I'll take upon the field  
and catch the wind for you

Clifton Redmond

## **Self war**

War  
the definition of self-infliction  
the taking away of all that he loves  
swiping the beauty from his hands  
throwing bombs and taking cover

Hate  
bleeding its sin into his rivers  
soaking into every pore  
flooding the corridors of the mind  
and drowning the soul in blood and tears

Acceptance  
the half will of the tired man  
who has lost the strength to fight  
whose bones are weakened  
his eyes have grown tired and heavy

Death  
the only conclusion that is assured  
escaping the torture of the self-war  
an end to the unwanted struggle  
his eyes close to the beat of the march

Clifton Redmond

## Starved

Perfect lines  
perfect space  
Perfect formation  
but nothing

Nothing to inspire  
no well to draw from  
when the truth runs dry  
the lie grows

I plead with you, come fourth  
and feed the hunger  
that lives here  
deep inside me

You were there  
feeling the same pain  
as lust is born  
from deaths longing

Enlighten me my friend  
give me what I need  
feel me  
and my fragile torment

Glare with me  
blindly  
across the vast dead canvas  
behind the mask you wear

For what  
must a vial be  
but to hide such beauty  
from the pleading eye

Cut deep  
to pierce the wounds  
that bleed the waters  
of pure pain

Unleash the thirst  
of raw emotion  
that rains religiously  
from every pore

That spawned the past  
and then at last  
it's gone  
there's nothing more

Clifton Redmond

## **The burden of hate**

It's that split second after  
when his dark skin is pointed out  
when the sniggers and the jeers  
are more than just banter.

He too hates that skin  
that singles him out  
the obsidian cloak  
that god cursed him with.

But he has learned their hate  
wishing his bones away  
dreaming he'd wake up  
from a white man's nightmare.

Rubbing his head he'd laugh  
at the damned unwanted life  
he felt no man should ask for  
being judged before we speak.

But when he dares to look  
into the taunting mirror  
at his tight curls  
he wishes were a noose.

I hear them laughing  
at his paled hands  
"you tried to scrape it off  
they say it with a snigger".

And he tightens them  
into an angry silent fist  
with the pumped veins growing  
like roots of crawling ivy.

I watch them swim in ignorance  
taunting him, mocking him  
each snide remark  
a jagged little blade.

Tearing him down  
piece by piece  
he is always outnumbered  
and not one of us stands in.

And still I watch in shame  
a voyeur with no tongue  
feeling his grief  
but never speaking.

Deep inside his eyes  
i know his hope is dying

the beaten down man  
his head left hanging.

With hatred surely growing  
seeping deep into his soul  
he longs for them to see  
that our blood is all the same.

Clifton Redmond

## **The Monster That Comes With Night**

Fear

fear is the last pod of innocence  
the waking of a child  
a frightened child buried beneath the covers

Praying

praying for that monster to subside  
see the terror ripe in our eyes  
to fall to his knees and die

Please

'please let his blood run cold'  
my mother cries and guards her young  
and I listen to that song in my head

it's in that song i hide

Scared

scared as we huddle in that dark room  
our bodies shiver in unison  
as the stair case creaks and the monster climbs

Mumbling

mumbling profanities as he trudges upwards  
no place to hide in the last bedroom  
nothing but the peaceful song inside my head

it's in that song i hide

Strength

strength keeps me from breaking down  
and showing him the fear he craves to see  
I must show the strength my mother shows for me

Dead

dead he lies when he finally falls  
into the pit of his creation  
and we too scared to even look at his sedated body

And i no longer need to sing

Gruel

gruel still streams from his gaping mouth  
his foul hole oozing a few days drinking  
where the monster grew from a man that day  
let him choke for air is all I pray

Beneath

beneath those covers waiting for light  
to pierce the corner of my window pane  
those tiny facades to bring me from darkness  
those moments I feel the fear fall away

Shame

shame will cover him when he comes too  
and quiet regret that the monster showed his face  
all brought by those small facades of light  
and he will try to make it right

Fading

fading shadows take away the fear  
where ghouls and ghosts should be  
as all day I watch that sun sailing west  
dreading the sight of the shadows dying

Knowing

knowing that the darkness will return  
and that stench of whiskey will waft again  
up along the staircase and evade the dreams  
of the sleepless child who longs to scream in the night.

Instead

I will hide in that song again.

Clifton Redmond

## **They will never walk alone**

A tribute to the 96 people that lost their lives in the crush at Hillsborough, and also to their families that still live with the hurt.: 15 April 1989. You'll never walk alone.

On April fifteenth nineteen eighty nine  
upon the Yorkshire path  
the liver bird made its way  
hand in hand they sang

Too praise their mighty heroes  
the crimson army  
searching for their throne  
and sang you'll never walk alone

Upon the field of Hillsborough  
there was no battlefield  
in the Sheffield grass  
the game that never was

But death in the crush  
and football lost its meaning  
the cries grew from home too home  
together no one walks alone

For the sad unneeded loss  
justice been fiercely sought  
but still the fight must be  
for those ninety six angles

Who look on with pride  
as the heavens hears their song  
its echoes shook the nations bone  
the dead will never walk alone

Ninety six poor souls  
perished on that fateful day  
and still the justice flames burn  
forever in our hearts we cry

They left to watch a football match  
hand in hand forever more  
they didn't make the journey home  
but they will never walk alone

Clifton Redmond

## **Time eating time**

I am tired right now  
as i watch the clock  
that hangs on a wall  
just time eating time

As I try to gather  
the fumbling thoughts  
that I stutter upon

And align them in rows  
just a daily routine  
boredom or madness  
you be the judge

Watching that clock, breathing  
inhaling the present  
exhaling the past

Its long arms lapsing, overlapping  
patiently burning the moments

Three long fingers pushing time  
forward and absurd  
dreaming the future but ever patient

The time is taken by time  
and it never stops  
long before you existed  
and long after your demise

Time will forever be  
moment then moment  
forever time eating time

Clifton Redmond

## Today

Today I woke up and tasted summer  
the rich hues and haunting breeze  
that the morning chose, as my gift  
like sprite songs that rung from bursting trees

And I guess I have some kind of god to thank  
perhaps some nameless god, on his knees  
with no eyes in the pods of his unseen face  
just hollow holes where eyes should be

Should I praise this faceless eyeless fellow  
for the unfamiliar rays of his so called light  
should I build a towering sculpted statue  
and dedicate it to myself in spite

Should I raise my head and greet strange faces  
and avoid the places where shadows might be  
should I share my stories with the bone idle  
that litter the walls of the local streets

Today the world will be my oyster  
and I shall be like a new sewn seed  
in love with nature and its lustful glory  
but beneath the sunshine I'll still be me

Clifton Redmond

## **When I paint my masterpiece**

There it is right in front of me  
the perfect poem  
a masterpiece  
like a silk thread tapestry  
woven by the hands of a master.

My eyes are in disbelief  
at how it meanders on the page  
glowing as I bask in its structure  
the sheer clarity  
as I discover the workings of his mind.

Actually inspired  
as I stutter  
wading through his old verse  
this mad scientist of the past  
cutting words and dicing them.

Pulling them apart  
and making them dance like a puppeteer  
with stanzas hanging from a string  
the simple intrusion of the great crowd pleaser.

Arranging them and stretching the syllables  
wrenching the vowels  
throwing commas like daggers  
into this idea of a poem.

And he must have stood above it  
the finished product admiring his creation  
wondering if death should follow his greatest success.

Achieving perfection  
and fading in a whimper  
the last scuppered words  
'my work is done'.

But no such luck for me  
as I drag my pen through the drivel  
the mundane flicker and fuss  
of a mind full of rust.

And I hope someday  
far off in the future  
I finally clear out the clutter  
in the broken down mind.

And shout eureka  
as I find that same elation  
relief that I'm finally done.

When I paint my masterpiece

Clifton Redmond