

GALLERY

Thomas Morris

C21H3005

Commissioned writer essay to accompany the exhibition *Oh My Demigod*
at Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, March 24 - April 30, 2022

Thomas Morris is the TBG+S Commissioned Writer for 2022. He is a Dublin-based author and editor from Caerphilly, South Wales. His debut story collection, *We Don't Know What We're Doing* (Faber & Faber) was chosen as a Book of the Year by The Guardian and The Irish Times. It won Wales Book of the Year, The Rhys Davies Trust Fiction Award, and a Somerset Maugham Prize.

Morris devised and edited *Dubliners 100* (Tramp Press) and is Editor at large at *The Stinging Fly*.

Temple Bar Gallery + Studios Writing

Commission invites ground-breaking Irish writers to create a series of short texts inspired by the exhibitions at TBG+S. We are interested in the space this can open between disciplines and expanding possibilities for how we write about art.

Previous TBG+S Writers include Nicole Flattery (2021), Ian Maleney (2020), Annemarie Ní Churreáin (2019), Doireann Ní Ghríofa (2018), Gavin Corbett (2017), Claire-Louise Bennett (2016) and Sara Baume (2015).

The texts are available to download from www.templebargallery.com and printed copies are available in the gallery.

Temple Bar Gallery + Studios is supported by



Lying on her bed, her legs spasming, the blood in her arms gurgling, her veins twitching, she felt wave after wave of something awful passing through her. She didn't know what her body was doing or why she was crying. Every part of her was lit up, as if someone had left all the lights on. She googled until she found an article entitled "Cortisol Flooding". She read: *When your body thinks it's in danger it produces adrenaline, for fight or flight but sometimes the system get out of whack and perceives danger when there is none.* Afterwards, her calves were so tight, and her joints so stiff, that it hurt to walk down the stairs.

She was so used to accommodating others that the idea of speaking up, saying how she felt, seemed to her violent, like throwing a bomb. She couldn't throw a bomb, so she swallowed the bomb, and found herself watching endless hours of YouTube, and reading twitter threads by people she hated, and repeatedly refreshing her gmail, and googling more symptoms and syndromes, and skim-reading harrowing message-board tales of other people's pain, and scrolling and scrolling through Guardian articles and scrolling and

scrolling through BBC News stories and scrolling and scrolling through Instagram photos—and then onto the dating apps, where she was swiping and swiping and swiping until her wrist ached, and then back to refreshing, refreshing, refreshing gmail, just waiting for some ping, some thing, to lift her out of it, and then, disconsolate, back to YouTube, her spirit sapping by the gigabyte. She wanted to leave the house, go outside and feel twigs snapping underfoot, but she kept coming back to the computer, laptop, phone.

This went on for days, until one evening, for no reason she could discern, something shifted. She turned the router off, turned her phone off, put her laptop in a drawer, opened the door, and walked down the hill. The sky was wide, a marmalade sun dappled through the chinks of the hedges. Her heart strained against her t-shirt, and some inner force—life, perhaps—began surging through her, rippling her skin, tingling her face. Whatever was inside wanted to be let out. She found herself at a gate, looking onto an empty field. There was no one around. In the dirt she toed a line with her boot and said to herself: when I cross this line, that's it, no going back,

I'll start again. She didn't know if she would do it, but the tide was rising high and she stepped over the line, put her hands on the cold gate and—screamed and roared and raged. Afterwards, as she bounded home, she felt so light, so unencumbered, so very fucking strong.

Though that night she stayed up till 3am re-reading old emails. She logged into dormant accounts, as if convinced that somewhere in an ancient inbox, there was some explanation, some hidden message she should have seen but never saw.