

Five Words

Volume XIV

poems from the

8th Five Words International Poetry Competition

and from

Ó Bhéal's live event Five Word challenges

April 2020 to March 2021



On the occasion of Ó Bhéal's fourteenth Anniversary

12th April 2021

featuring winning & shortlisted poems from the

8th Five Words International Poetry Competition

plus

poems from live event Five Word challenges

(13th April 2020 - 8th March 2021)

Ó Bhéal would like to acknowledge the following organisations
for their valued support during our fourteenth year

Colmcille
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The Long Valley
The Arts Council
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UCC School of English and Digital Humanities
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Forum Publications
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and to the house eMCees, board members, audiences and poets

Mile Buiochas!

Limited Edition published in 2021 by Ó Bhéal Ltd.

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‘le gach bó a buinín agus le gach leabhar a chóip’
(to each cow its calf and to every book its copy)
- *Diarmuid, 6th C. High King*

Editing, Design & Typesetting by Paul Casey and Daniel Smith

printed by SPRINT-Print

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Five Words

Volume XIV

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FOREWORD

The 12th of April 2021 celebrates its 657th event and fourteen years since Ó Bhéal's beginnings. It's also one year since we produced our first virtual event to continue our programme during ongoing pandemic restrictions. While we still cannot foresee a precise return date, we are reviewing this regularly and hope we can make a return to the Long Valley by late 2021 or early 2022, depending it seems on how life under the emergent vaccination regime will develop. At the time of this publication, the 9th Winter Warmer Poetry Festival is still scheduled to go ahead in November 2021 as another virtual event, following the unexpected success of our virtual festival in 2020.

We incurred a notable loss in public donations in 2020 which were fortunately offset against no-longer-required accommodation expenses and despite the continuous efforts to increase our Arts Council funding, levels have remained unchanged since 2018. We were successful in our application for Digital Capacity Support and able as a result to implement new quality digital delivery systems for our online events, including broadcasting facilities via Vimeo Livestream. We continue to anticipate logistics and support required for hybrid events once we return to a live setting, especially as our 2020 programme increased our international audience significantly (including participants), which we intend to maintain and grow further. We retained our Foras na Gaeilge and Colmcille grants in 2020 and our crucial revenue grant from Cork City Council Arts Office has also fortunately continued unaffected.

Both of Ó Bhéal's International competitions ran successfully in 2020/2021, with an increase in entries obtained for both the Poetry-Film comp (288 from 49 countries) and the Five Word Competition entries (776 from 35 countries), which allowed us to maintain prize money levels and to provide an important increase in judging fees.

Ó Bhéal's 2020 *Unfinished Book of Poetry* project and its Cork-Coventry twinning exchange were both successful and well-attended considering their move online. This included the publication of our fifth edition in the *spoken worlds* series: *southern syllables*, featuring Molly Twomey and James Crickard. Cork City libraries also commissioned Ó Bhéal to lead workshops with homeless writers, culminating in a new publication, *Homeless Moments*, launched at a special socially-distanced event attended by contributors, the Lord Mayor and library staff at the Cork City Library.

We are very grateful to all who supported us during our fourteenth year and we cannot wait to continue with our regular events as soon as conditions allow.

Paul Casey
Director
Ó Bhéal

“That is when you feel most alive in your life, when your thinking moves ... What I do in order to think is just take five things. It could be the five books on my desk or five words at random ... and try to make the mind move from one to the other. Just the connection is where the thinking happens.”

Anne Carson

8th Five Words International Poetry Competition

SHORTLIST

Winner

Sinéad McClure (Ireland) *A Rook Longs For A Badger*

2nd Place

Jill Munro (England) *The Chagallisation of Joan*

3rd Place

Laura Theis (UK) *What you meant when you
promised we'd go to the circus*

Other Shortlisted Poems

Sinéad McClure (Ireland) *Held Back*

Tamara Miles (USA) *Both Ends*

Jane Salmons (UK) *In his jacket pocket*

Eóin Condon (Ireland) *Crossing*

David W Evans (Jersey) *Lightfastness*

Jane Salmons (UK) *Girl Missing*

Tamara Miles (USA) *Else*

Glen Wilson (UK) *Inferred and Implied*

Sarah Salway (Northern Ireland) *Night Flight*

Sinéad McClure

First Place

wheel cold knit snow grass

A rook longs for a badger

Where did the badgers go?
We miss their cuts—
the cold wheels rut in snow
the nose-sized pockets—
knit these fields for years.

Now we must peck deeper
for our worms
through new wet grass
frosted in ice
our feathers liquorice-black
in the slick soft Irish winter.

Rook calls;
Don't cull
all should be full
for nature to persevere.

Cull
and fall
towards a constant winter.

Jill Munro

Second Place

icon warm lodestar bind tune

The Chagallisation of Joan

All Saints Church, Tudeley, Kent

To herald in autumn, she places drying chrysanthus in clear glass
on the window ledge beneath Chagall's church staining of pastel spring,

oblivious to her obscuring of his iconic mule, not seeing golden light,
lodestar bright, fall on the hops and empty poppy heads arranged last week

until quiet steps of brogues on flagstones change to the ringing clop of hooves.
Joan feels a gentle current's lift, a happy floating begins to unbind her

as she rides the deep red horse elevating from the vestry floor.
She hears a distant scrape of violin strings in the bow-dancing

of a goatly tune and swims in indigo, turquoise seas,
caught in a non-drowning tempest, unfolds vivid wings and flies

to Christ's right shoulder, a butterfly, an angel, she does not care,
just wants the purple-violet rise of air, a harp to pluck, a flute to play,

to be part of this glassy patchwork, to be awash in a multi-coloured quilt.
Joan has captured the husks of nature in a vase – now she's the warm yellow

of an oak leaf that's opened, lived, then fallen.

Laura Theis
Third Place
speck spill lover over silver

what you meant when you promised we'd go to the circus

the spotlight is a pinprick
of sun through the blinds the lion

is a calico kitten asleep on the
windowsill the trapeze

is an empty bag slung over the back
of a chair the dancers are all

specks of silvery dust
the sad clown is me

spilling half of my coffee onto my
whitest dress because my hands are shaking

the magic trick is the lover
performing a very arcane

disappearing act

Sinéad McClure

Shortlisted

strange word breathe triangle skin

Held Back

You spoke in strange patterns.
A jigsaw of words
with round edges.
I could hear your chime echo
through the school hall,
a tin triangle resonant and rising
above the adolescent hum.

Some would mock
your odd vernacular,
side step your spittle
to ape your strange gait.
But you were one of us
and we always
put those who thought otherwise, straight.

It's almost forty years,
I can still see you—
nothing pales—
swaying beside us
on those twisting feet,
vowels held midair
the clearest laugh of all.

Tamara Miles

Shortlisted

tunnel sky virtual heartbeat black

Both Ends

for Betty Jane Hamilton Allen

It is as if you are in a tunnel,
grandmother,

and I must crawl through rat and ruin
to find you in the black.

We are about to be born.

Then, it will be necessary
to introduce myself.

Lady, I am daughter
to the cradle-boy who cried
for you while he waited
for new parents.

You never really knew
either of us, but now I visit
your last apartment
in the virtual world.

Boren Street, Seattle,
on Pill Hill.

How did you go so far
from home? How did you die?

Tamara Miles

Shortlisted

tunnel sky virtual heartbeat black

Lady, I will speak to you
like the ghost of Hamlet's father.

You hold the sky
with all its answers.

I am closer now ---
I hear your heartbeat,

quick and anxious
as my father's in his crib.

Jane Salmons
Shortlisted
level lace fire text matter

In his jacket pocket

A packet of Marlboro Reds,
Kleenex (extra large),
three Trebor mints (extra strong),
betting slips, a deck of cards.
Swiss Army knife complete with
corkscrew and spearpoint blade.
A number scrawled on a post-it note.
Photograph of a busty blonde
with hand span waist cinched
in denim and lace. Mobile phone.
A wedding ring. Confused regret,
at that foolish text, that sordid matter.
Eurostar tickets to Paris (unused).
Maxed-out credit card. A key.
A small space for his boyhood dreams –
Route 66, Cadillac, the next Ali.
Fire in his belly. A lighter.
A hole through which his level
head and dignity have slipped.

Eóin Condon
Shortlisted
precipice loud red night oxygen

Crossing

Back there.
I remember.

The bridge crossing and river rescue.
Young lives cast off their precipice, into the water.

I remember.

Friends pushing life preservers askew,
away from themselves, not worthy,
wasting oxygen.

Back there.

Those who did not do it right,
stuck on embankments of muck,
encompassed by shame and embarrassment. No luck.
I suppose it was hard to see at night.

I remember often in the early hours,
after my shift,
stopped at the red light,
before crossing, looking at flowers,
fastened tightly to railings with a clip.

Loud memories preventing sleep.

David W Evans

Shortlisted

curl east heron bloom oblique

Lightfastness

Mr Turner sees the light. Remembers where, what day it was,
dusk or dawn it matters not. A curlew call is caught beneath
this sketched out memory of heat.

He fetches up king's custard on his brush - the sun blooms,
clouds catch fire. Mr Turner steps away, he's seeking snuff.
The oarsman's splash, the business of insects, the banks flowerless.
It's all here like it never was.

An extra guinea would have got the Earl a majestic bird –
a heron - here close to the willow or maybe one in flight shifted
by a whickering horse? Flash of grey, stripe of white,
black plume oblique as a tar's pigtail.

Mr Turner tilts the world to suit his eye. Flipping east
for south. Heads or tails. Turning round the sky, he bids
the sun rest and rise wheresoever he may please.

The Earl can shift the earth. Release the sea to flood a trough of land,
rubbing salt in the scar of his new canal. The aristocrat has his bank,
Mr Turner has his brush. Comes down to this, always did:
thems who make and thems what buy.

Mr Turner is Mr Booth in reclusive moods. And in reclusive
moods he rows mid-Thames until them what wants him's gone.
And when he's good and gone – what then? There'll always be an Earl

of Egremont. They number 'em now to tell 'em apart.

This current one's number three. And number three the world
will always know. The future's common tongue will recall

David W Evans

Shortlisted

curl east heron bloom oblique

George Wyndham, patron of the modern art.

And Mr Turner? Like red lake, a green and a geranium shade,
he was great in his day when freshly applied and oh! the sunlight,
the storm and rain, luminous fog, and the power of sea...

All's made to fade. Even great Claude will flake and fail. And while he'd
wager heaven's not destined to harbour the two, they're bound to meet
betimes strolling the columns of a dead earl's catalogue.

Mr Turner feels a chill. Thoughts of death and failing Claude.
He throws a log upon the grate, pinches snuff and watches
with a painter's eye the eighteenth-century give way to steam
then smoulder into burn.

Jane Salmons

Shortlisted

dandelion rough rain antidote skill

Girl Missing

They found nothing in the allotment shed bar a whiff of stale fags and paraffin
a stash of rain-soaked, smutty mags. They scoured the rough patch of land
beyond the flats with sniffer dogs, dredged the pond, tied pink guilty
ribbons to lampposts, lit altar candles and prayed. They said
to vanish without trace was out of character. With flimflam
skill, they shammed a pledge on tv, cried soft
cozening tears. An antidote to shame.

In the clover field behind the
school, swallowtails and
red peacocks flutter.

Their secrets float
away on the
breeze like
dandelion
clocks.

Tamara Miles
Shortlisted
flare zoom fox cloud edge

Else

Twenty-five years ago, today,
my baby of twenty-one weeks in the womb
rose to the edge of else on a cloud.

A flare of grief in the holding,
how she looked like my other daughter,

only mute and still as a nurse's face.

No one knows what to say as we zoom
into our shared losses,

marked by that little creature of the gods,

who slipped honest from my arms
like a fox to her own wild woods.

Glen Wilson

Shortlisted

flinch tryst stream pitch mint

Inferred and Implied

they would return late at lunch,

pregnant moments apart,
the only traces of their tryst-

the chapped lips, over-combed hair
and the crunch and scent of mint.

Everyone else had got some shard of it,
we jig-sawed the tale together in their absence,

someone caught a whiff of them on a smoke break
in the yard, burning through the filters,

amongst the din and clanking of the pipes
of the off-balance boiler-house,

another passed them entwined near a stream
as roots as thick as boughs of different species,

wrapping tighter with every spiral,
it ruined that path for us all.

I saw them myself while out for a run, parked
by the rain sodden football pitch,

Glen Wilson

Shortlisted

flinch tryst stream pitch mint

a cauldron steaming and ablaze,
the suspension getting fully tested.

But it was that complicity I felt one day
leaving work at the same time as him

and watching his wife in the car waiting,
youngsters loud in the back, I flinched when

I overheard her ask '*How was your day?*'
and he replied '*Oh the same old same old*'.

Sarah Salway

Shortlisted

rain fiction round turn paper

Night Flight

I was flying home, but my body clock
refused to turn the right way,
and as the plane rounded over rainclouds
like endless motel pillows,
even the films were tired fantasies.
I studied the stranger next to me,
the way her hands clasped at the folds
of her blanket so the material
became a pineapple in her lap, the tremble
of her lip with each papery breath,
tangles of hair on her neck,
her square thumb and once, her tongue
darting out to lick the edge of her teeth.

I played with my seat,
tipped myself back
until we could almost be in bed together,
the two of us laughing
over breakfast, lunch, love,
and when the steward wheeled the trolley
for a final supper before landing,
I picked up two fruit juices,
placed them carefully side by side.
I pictured her smile when she woke,
how I'd tell her this was no dream,
and that home was just a direction,
a fiction anybody could write.

Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

Sinéad McClure

Sinéad McClure is a writer, radio producer, and illustrator. Her poetry has been published on Poethead, Live Encounters ~ Poetry & Writing, Crossways Literary Journal, The Cabinet of Heed, Dodging the Rain, StepAway Magazine and The Ekphrastic Review.

Sinéad has also written 15 dramas for the National Radio Children's Service, RTEjr Radio on the themes of conservation and Ireland's natural heritage. She often revisits these theme in her work and has a particular interest in wildlife conservation. In December, 2020 Sinéad received a Professional Development Award from the Arts Council of Ireland to fund mentoring and research towards building her first poetry collection.

Sinéad lives in rural County Sligo, with her husband and their two border collies.

Jill Munro

Jill Munro has been published in major poetry magazines including The Frogmore Press, Popshot Quarterly, The Fenland Reed and The Rialto and her work has also been anthologised by The Emma Press, Candlestick Press, Paper Swans Press & Calder Valley Press. She won the O'Bheal Five Words International Poetry competition 2017/18. Jill's first collection 'Man from La Paz' was published in 2015 by Green Bottle Press. She won the Fair Acre Press Pamphlet Competition 2015 with 'The Quilted Multiverse', published April 2016. Jill was awarded a Hawthornden Fellowship for 2018. She lives and writes in the depths of Ashdown Forest.

Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

Laura Theis

Laura Theis grew up in Germany, moved to the UK a decade ago, and writes poems, stories and songs in her second language. She has an MSt (Distinction) in Creative Writing from Oxford University. Her debut poetry collection 'how to extricate yourself' (Dempsey&Windle) was selected as the winner of the 2020 Brian Dempsey Memorial Prize by the Poetry Society's Paul McGrane. Her work has been widely anthologised, appears in a variety of literary journals from Strange Horizons to Mslexia, and was published in the UK, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Canada and the U.S. An AM Heath Prize recipient, she has also won the Hammond House International Literary Award for Poetry and the 2020 Mogford Short Story Prize. She was highly commended for the 2020 Acumen Poetry Prize and the 2020 Geoff Stevens Memorial Poetry Prize, as well as a finalist in over twenty other international literary competitions.

Tamara Miles

Tamara Miles lives in South Carolina and enjoys a quiet day out on the backyard swing with two marvelous dogs running here and there. She teaches English, Humanities, and College Skills at a small technical college, and has been doing a 100-Day Project of completing a painting a day since January 31. Her companion, David, has to find his way through a maze of canvases. She looks forward to the next O Bhéal contest.

Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

Jane Salmons

Jane Salmons is from Stourbridge in the UK. She was a teacher in the sixth form college sector for nearly three decades and now works part time as a consultant teacher trainer and private tutor. Her poems have appeared in many webzines, journals and anthologies including Poetry Salzburg Review, Ink, Sweat and Tears, The Ekphrastic Review and The Emma Press Anthology of Illness. Her first pamphlet, entitled Enter GHOST will be published with Dancing Girl Press later this year. In addition to writing poetry, Jane enjoys creating handmade collage art which she sells online and at craft fairs.

Eóin Condon

Eóin Condon is based between the McGillicuddy Reeks and the Sliabh Mish mountain ranges in County Kerry, but a native of the Waterford and Kilkenny border. He received his BA in English from WIT. He took lockdown as a chance to finally start writing and currently has a lovely job working with children who have intellectual disabilities. He has recently been published in Sonder Magazine.

David W Evans

D W Evans was born in Newcastle upon Tyne, and grew up in county Durham and Northumberland. Study and then work, principally in public-sector posts, took him south to London, then Brighton and eventually the Island of Jersey.

His poems won the Alan Jones Memorial Prize in 2019 and 2020, received a highly commended award from the Acumen Poetry Competition and was shortlisted for Ó Bhéal's 7th Five Words International Poetry Competition 2020. His poems have also appeared in the Frogmore Papers, Proverse Mingled Voices and the A3 Review.

Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

Glen Wilson

Glen Wilson is a multi-award winning Poet from Portadown. He won the Seamus Heaney Award for New Writing in 2017, the Jonathan Swift Creative Writing Award in 2018 and The Trim Poetry competition in 2019.

His poetry collection *An Experience on the Tongue* is out now with Doire Press.

Sarah Salway

Sarah Salway is a novelist, tutor and poet based in Kent. Her latest collection of very small poems, *Let's Dance*, is published by Coast to Coast to Coast, and her book of flash fiction, *Not Sorry*, will come out with Valley Press in October 2021.

Her website can be found at www.sarahsalway.co.uk

Judges' Comments

Grace Wells

A Rook Longs for a Badger (Sinéad McClure)

From the nearly 800 entries, I created a long-list of about 100 poems. All fine pieces. All submitted within a week of their crafting. I wanted poems which gave no hint of their genesis, no glimmer of the short time-frame they were conceived in, or of the five words that prompted them. Poems that really were poetry. About fifty entries fitted that description. They all deserved to be shortlisted. Many could have won. But I chose 'A Rook longs for a badger' because the poem so neatly, so lyrically addresses my politics. They are the only politics I believe we need to be exploring now. It is ever shocking to me how human-centric we are. How little nature exists in our collective thinking—even the thinking of poets. For years she's been a sideline in the competitions I've judged; so few writers have given her even a glimmer of regard. Here's a poet who isn't just writing about nature, she's thinking as the creatures do. This type of thinking is the moral task of our times. But we won't get there by being lectured; we need to be seduced. How beautifully A rook longs for a badger calls come hither.

The Chagallisation of Joan (Jill Munro)

Many quirky delights returned me over and over again to The Chagallisation of Joan. Many of its lines don't quite make sense in the same way that Chagall's images reveal an other, altered reality, which doesn't quite make sense, but surely improves our lives. The poem leaves me standing before a stained-glass image, taken into its vibrancy to become 'part of this glassy patchwork, to be awash in a multi-coloured quilt'. I was reminded of once standing in St Carthage's Cathedral in Lismore, looking up at the Burne-Jones window-glass, and being similarly transformed. The liminal metamorphosis that artworks can engender is beautifully, memorably captured here.

Judges' Comments

Grace Wells

What you meant when you promised we'd go to the circus (Laura Theis)
I always feel a judge's final winners are ultimately only personal choice. Any of the final twenty poems in my shortlist were well enough crafted to win the competition. But the ones I picked were the poems that resonated most with me. How well I recognize the territory of disappointed romance in what you meant when you promised we'd go to the circus. But what I love is the unique way this universal experience is portrayed. Failed love tends to look the same in poems, but this meander through circus metaphor addresses the pain of heartbreak, and provides leaps of imagination which transform the hurt and gild it with significance.

Held Back (Sinéad McClure)

Held Back is a poem of defiance. I was very drawn to the combination of defense and compassion that runs as a strong backbone through the poem's core. From such sentiments community is made possible. I admired the way the 5 words conjured the remembered friend, and how the poem simply, clearly illuminated a relationship of protection and affection.

Both Ends (Tamara Miles)

The voice that speaks through Both Ends feels utterly compelling. It's steady, unapologetic. It won't be silenced. There'll be no more secrets in this generation. But the clarity of voice does feel like it's been born from the hurt of secrets and denial, from loss and grief. There's a poignant balancing within the poem, a reckoning, a righting of old wrongs.

Judges' Comments

Grace Wells

In His Jacket Pocket (Jane Salmons)

The idea of exposing a character through what they carry in a pocket isn't new, but it's so well done in *In his jacket pocket* that I was repeatedly awed by its success. The list of items, leaves us with a strong sense of the jacket's owner. Their dubious life echoes regrets all of us carry. I love how the list of tangible objects leads the reader into the more nebulous ideas of 'level head' and 'dignity'. And the way that such qualities might indeed slip through a hole in a pocket.

Crossing (Eóin Condon)

Crossing lands the reader fully within the painful experience of suicide-watch. The telling feels real, painful, and the poem's form successfully echoes that stark pain. The slightly angular lines jut out at you. The pace is ragged like breath under duress. I'm brought in, there in the night, in the dark water. And I'm going home late, knowing others won't be. I'm right in the experience. I argued with the last line; I wanted to change it. But even so the mood of the poem, the weight of it in my hands. I couldn't let go.

Lightfastness (David Evans)

Lightfastness. A great many fine stories were told in this competition, but so many I had to let go of for one reason or another. Yet I could not surrender *Lightfastness*. How marvelous to be magicked into the eighteenth century, to be rowed out with Turner into the middle of the Thames. A short novel within a poem. A century within a poem. And how arresting the gift of the final lines, this being able to watch 'the eighteenth century give way to steam/then smoulder into burn.'

Judges' Comments

Grace Wells

Girl Missing (Jane Salmons)

Everything about *Girl Missing* is haunting. The eerie descent down the page, the diminishing curve of words, beautifully narrating the distancing from the drama, while at the same time emphasizing the loss, the absence. All that's missing floats on the breeze like dandelion clocks. I didn't completely 'get' the narrative, but I didn't need to. The images, the mood were sufficient. I was left thoroughly unsettled, much as I am each time a real child goes missing.

Else (Tamara Miles)

Else. Sometimes a single line or a phrase, sears a poem to my heart. A small perfect arrangement of lines somewhere can let me overlook glitches or disorders that I would otherwise reject. Bewitched, I'll want to carry a phrase with me, and keep it forever. *Else* concludes with such lines. The loss of the unborn child is exquisitely captured. I am stilled over and again. Reminded of the power of poetry. Its necessity. Its healing.

Inferred and Implied (Glen Wilson)

Inferred and Implied is a perfect short-film or documentary of an office affair. Its secret makes everyone complicit. The reader is locked in too, ensnared in the claustrophobic lie. I visualized photocopiers and harsh lighting that aren't even mentioned in the poem, but the piece is so well wrought that a whole world balances here, and a mini-drama of feeling is expertly contained.

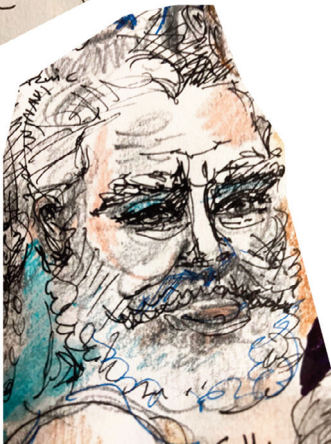
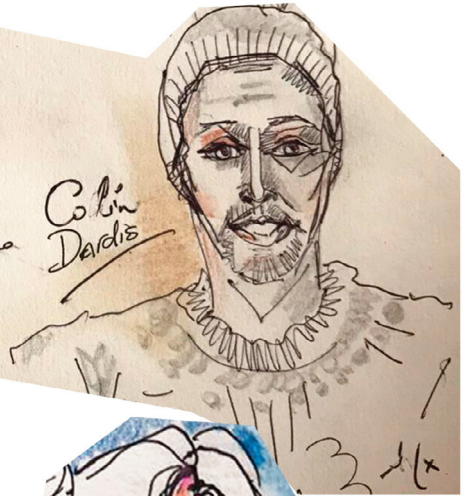
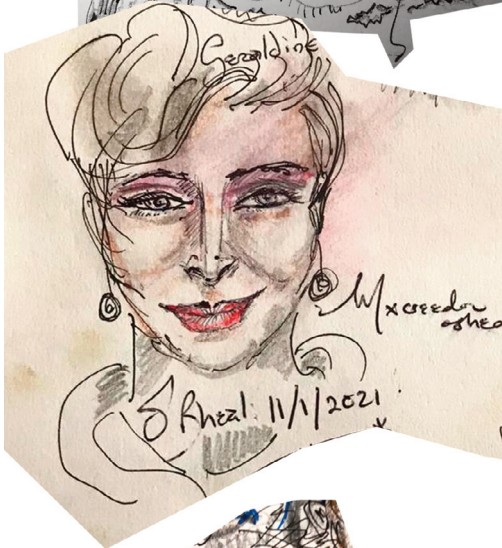
Night Flight (Sarah Salway)

Night Flight delights and entertains me each time I read it. I suspect it charmed me because I remember such flights. The poem captures the intimacy of spending time with a stranger, and how the imagination behaves; as if the smallest gesture could traverse the impossible distance between two lives, and set them on one course. How true the final lines are, home is just a direction, a beloved 'fiction' each of us creates daily.

Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Alicia Sometimes

Lockdown Poems

afterlife room trick invert blackbird

Bird Calls

We're keeping an invisible chart
delineating the days between every

face to face conversation. We begin
to get creative in confinement: turn

ourselves into maple origami, fashion
hammocks out of blankets, craft vessels

from old vinyl. Shape bread into words.
Invert every room. We are undergoing

lasting transformations. It's impossible
to listen to Charles Mingus when standing

still. You just want to scoop yourself up
and parachute from on top of the house

as sonorous notes chase you, freefalling.
Each breath outside becomes triumphant.

Anything to nurture the fierce yearning
the longing for touch, even predictability.

We reach out and deliver daisies and cake.
Envelopes with wine red pencil marks. Trick

Alicia Sometimes

Lockdown Poems

afterlife room trick invert blackbird

cards with faces. We stretch out our ears into
the afternoon sun listening to the blackbird.

They sing in sparkling paragraphs. No
thought of yesterdays and tomorrows

and any afterlife. But we do. Always
carrying this extended memory with us.

Constructing our own symphonies
of everyone's shared experiences—

united tapestry of single notes

Rosemary Norman

Lockdown Poems

sharp touch curve dance map

TILL FURTHER NOTICE

there will be no
map-dancing on buses,

that game you play of
won't wait –

on the first one along
never mind

the number, but if it fills
overmuch

or hits a touch of traffic,
off. Repeat, i.e.

walk most of the way.
There will be no

map-dancing on buses
empty for all

but necessary travel.
Why would you

even if not forbidden,
since they run

on time? Map-dancing
is over now

at least until the curve
of new infection

flattens. Go if you must
but look sharp.

Jessica Whyte

Lockdown Poems

dandelion rough rain antidote skill

Aftershock

During our weekly doorstep ritual
my nephew tapes a dandelion to a cocktail stick,
posts it through the window's slit.
I press my face to glass, cut out the glare,
to catch a glimpse of my newborn niece.

Driving home past verges left uncut,
which burst with rough beauty,
the May sun flares too bright in a flightless sky.
In the absence of aeroplanes and rain
seedlings gasp in dusty beds,
the dandelion dies in the night.

While we learn new skills: French knitting,
basic Mandarin, piano scales, how to use
a sourdough starter, how to lose
control, adapt to the lack of human touch,
laboratories bustle behind glass,
watch the world change in a microscope lens,
pipette fear into Petri dishes.
We wait and wonder if they'll discover
an antidote for loneliness.

Each waking brings another aftershock.
We count the days in dandelion clocks.

Lucy Holme
Lockdown Poems
fibre poem ginger apart blind

One Task A Day

Begin German lessons or Latin. Something you don't need.
Spruce kitchen cupboards, eject skeletons from the closet
eat more fibre, fewer carbs and juice your rotting spinach
(to eliminate needless waste.)

Write a story based on the contents of your fridge
rewrite an old poem about your pets' blank faces, from a fresh angle.
Think daily of your goals, how you can realise them.
When all of this is over.

Speak at night to your demons. Sense their joy now they have you to themselves.
Learn to pronounce new words, for use at parties you won't attend.
Set out to Marie Kondo, end up deep in the mating rituals of woodlice
and of squid. Loathe yourself, your stupid list, your petty discomforts.
The constant compulsion to succeed on paper and in the opinions of others.

Clean home, clean eating, clean teeth, a clean sheet
once life resumes and you rise from the dust, ego intact.
When all of this is over.

You sign petitions to bring murderous cops to justice
but keep scrolling in pursuit of your objectives as the world falls apart.
Consider it a luxury to be colour blind when you are white but still
you must get *summer body ready* and on the list for online
VIP events where people sit on virtual panels and eyes can't meet.

Create a smaller version of your former existence *in situ*
complete all tasks on this exhaustive, exhausting agenda
to read back aloud with satisfaction.
When all of this is over.

Brenda Welborn

Lockdown Poems

nest clear stitch shadow spring

Grandma's Prayer

Who's that knockin' at the door dear Lyza
Who's that knockin' at the door?

See that shadow round the moor there Lyza
See that shadow round the moor?

You be careful if you go out Lyza
You be careful, think a spell.

Clear from Covid you must hide well Lyza
Clear from Covid hide you well.

If I die now don't you cry my Lyza
If I die now don't you weep.

I'll be stitching on the old quilt Lyza
Grandma's love for you goes deep.

This nest's yours to have forever Lyza
This nest's yours, your soul to keep.

Spring is comin' round the corner Lyza
Spring is comin' go to sleep.

Jill Munro
Lockdown Poems
capsule wind mix season bloom

Bubble Sestina

We are now allowed a lifeline, a capsule,
we can meet – granny, baby – relax, begin to unwind
with people who weren't allowed to be in our mix,
in a time when we lost one whole season
when the bluebells were in bloom
when mashed brains were locked inside a bubble

a time when anxiety began to bubble
over, when our homes become extraordinary capsules,
when we peered out at inscrutable gardens, attempting to bloom,
after months of rain, storms, wind,
when we lost hours, days, weeks, April, May, seasons,
when there were no meet-ups, no hope to mix,

when strong, plain flour and water were all we'd mix,
then wait for yeast to ferment and bubble
with a bit of sugar and salt to season
locked in our bread-baking capsules
when freshly risen crusty loaves gave us wind,
caused colour to cross wan cheeks, make them bloom.

We quaffed pink rosés in full bloom,
another gin and tonic would be mixed
and at bedtime we would wobble, wind
our way up to our bed, rest in a warm duveted bubble
like weightless astronauts in their tinny capsule
circling as they watched earth's change of season.

Jill Munro

Lockdown Poems

capsule wind mix season bloom

But the world continues to turn, we cannot halt seasons
and there will again be roses, they will bloom,
flowers will emerge, buds from green capsules,
petals of pink, of peach, orange, a floribunda mix,
a riot of colour, a fragrant, joyous bubble
even when battered by early summer's wind.

And are there any answers blowing in this wind?
Is there any rhyme or reason to this June season
when we're unlocked, released to form a bubble
rekindle friendships, allow love to bloom,
mingle, socialize, rave, kiss, cuddle, mix
again, choose one single, special other capsule.

Don't let it burst, this bubble, let no second ill wind blow, let our
time capsule last, let's always remember when we couldn't mix, hug –
that dreadful season when a single touch did not dare to bloom.

Sarah Murphy
Lockdown Poems
invent lens spring wild refrain

This Morning

The air this morning was different, though my routine
Was the same – a school day, making porridge, brushing hair.
The air was new and smelled of Spring, as if the world was in
Flow, had invented a new lens with which to behold things,
Had reset somehow, gotten over itself and was lighter – had
Switched off the news telling it loudly of its decline and
Was listening to music instead.

And we danced while loading the dishwasher, our
Small wild refrain to this new type of day.

Wendy Hunter

Lockdown Poems

steep swift essence single crest

Bizarre Covid

How Long do We Keep Our Distance?
Has Covid Completely Changed Our Way?
Will The Curve Flatten or Stay Steep?
Can This Continue Climbing Every Single Day?
When Do We Put An End To This Crazy Crest?
Do We Watch It Erode The Essence In Every One?
Should a Solution Be Found So A Vaccine's Shared Swift?
Is This How The Human Race is to be Run?
Sanitized Sundays
Masked Mondays
Twisted Tuesdays
Weirdo Wednesdays
Topsy-Turvy Thursdays
Flipping Over Fridays
Single-File Saturdays.
These Are The Weeks That Are,
During Covid, How Bizarre!
HOW BIZARRE!

Shirley Anne Cook

Lockdown Poems

afterlife room trick invert blackbird

Disappearing Act

The day before you
died, you showed
me that trick again –
the one where you
inverted a cup over a coin
to make it disappear.
Baffled, I would
find it under a vase
or dish in the dining room.
Once you even plucked
the coin from Gran's ear.

I don't give up hope
that I will find you
again somewhere
in the afterlife.
You'll still be smoking
your pipe and whistling
the same old tune,
'Bye Bye Blackbird.'

Paul Cahill
Lockdown Poems
steep swift essence single crest

plus ça change

We travelled to Saigon
On honeymoon
In twenty sixteen.
The shock of the city grated
With the quiet peace of Siem Reap.
And the people there wore masks!
Face masks
Like in the hospitals at home
Or on the telly
Walking the streets
With Doctor Who designs and Hello Kitty
Fashion accessories.
“*That’s mad*” we thought, back then
On honeymoon

Our curve was steep and swift
And flattened
A tidal wave without a crest
Good people politely acquiesce
Face coverings
Muffling our essence.
We all are single now
Behind the masks
Between the Beats
The honeymoon is ended.

Paul Cahill

Lockdown Poems

steep swift essence single crest

Having said all that ...

It's funny how we recognise

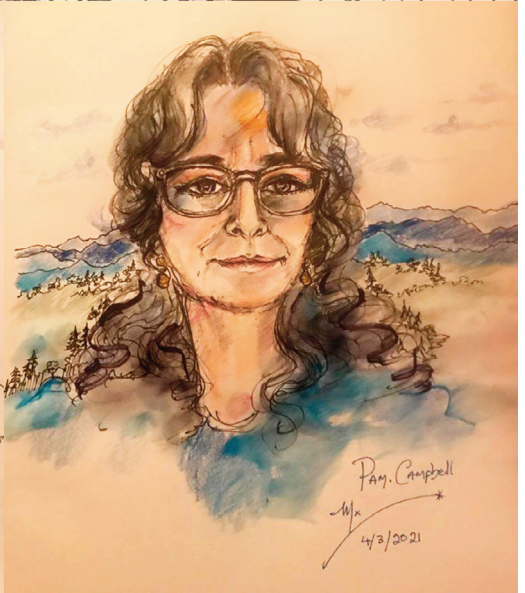
Casual acquaintances

By looking at their smiling eyes

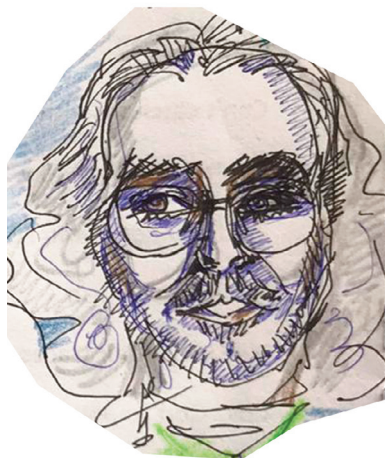
We still can see

Our indomitable humanity.

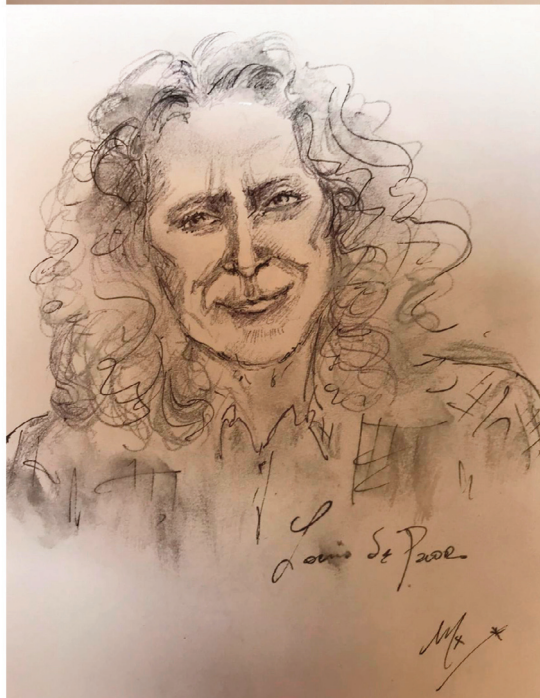
Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea

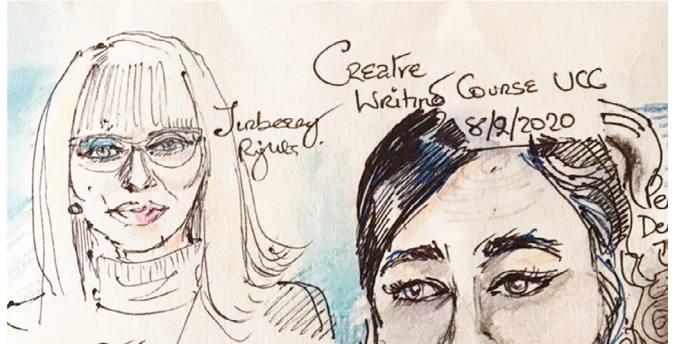


Caitiana
Ni Cheirdigh Mx. *
(11th May)



Laura S. P. Mx. *
Mx. *

Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Creative Writing Course UCC
8/2/2020



Peggy



Lauren



HEAT IS MURDER



Kornelia Mak

Dee Allen

12th January 2021

schadenfreude rushing vapouriser slalom experience

Untitled

This year 2020
Year of the rat
Left us rushing
Toward apocalypse
With multiple causes
Unseen vapouriser of billions
Without warning
Coronavirus leading the charge—
Humanity travelling on slalom course of ice
To the end most disbelieved

Some wildfires here,
Some super storms there,
Tail end of tyrannical
American rule right in the middle—

Gone is the schadenfreude*
Spewing from orange face,
Repeated by loyal
Flag-waving, red cap bigot followers

And here's to hoping

Gone will be our increasing isolation,
Our lockdown *situation*—
Vaccines are appearing, pharmaceutical lab
Works-in-progress—
I'll trust one
When the new vice president
Herself takes a needle shot—

Cédric Bikond

13th July 2020

magic time qualms onion loony

The Intruder

Every tick of the wrist watch was a layer off to the end.

Forever gone, along with some of his humanity,

his hope for a future to come as stipend

This was no magic, but far beyond science.

His group applied something they hardly understood,

too desperate to act in good conscience.

They thought themselves out of Time,

thus focused all attention on the result

that they thought solution, really the ultimate crime

A laboratory for chapel, a pedestal for altar

They sacrificed the "sullied one" with no qualms.

After all, loony creatures do not falter.

He entered the machine and exited the world,

watched his mortal shell peeled like an Onion

while the tall hand on his watch was a hanging Damocles sword.

At the end that he reached

there wasn't nothing left, not even his former self

but the duty to keep open the gate of the domain he had just breached.

Cédric Bikond

Winner - 10th August 2020

eldritch grapefruit shoehorn moon pig

The Unwed

She knew she belonged to that bunch,
the four-legged always hiding,
Making a joy of everything
as if they were never concerned

She had prayed her entire life
for those 3 to enter it, as her family
had so far failed to shoehorn her
into humanity

She would dance under the Moon at the night's unholy hour - yelping and calling
for them, maybe?
Slept near the pig's pen prior to a day with a suitor, hoping it would give a whiff to
her fragrance.
She would play pranks on the household, mixing tree barks and grapefruit peels in
food it did not belong.

Yet nothing worked better than
when the three, her soul-brothers
showed up as she spoke in tongues,

invoking eldritch forces to come
rescue her from
a potential union she deemed unnatural

And the foxes came, all fur and fangs!

Cédric Bikond

Winner - 10th August 2020

eldritch grapefruit shoehorn moon pig

They played their part, fierce and wild
as if it was their mission,
Took her away gloriously
along with everyone's breath

She is really gone.
To this day, the town still speaks of the one
who appears at full moon.

Marian. The unwed.

Rosalin Blue

13th July 2020

magic time qualms onion loony

Time is an Onion

This time is an onion
its spicy layers coat
a cloak of magic fabric to unfold
its many textures
rough and smooth
diaphanous as silk

Unlayering the layers
my qualms evaporate within
revealing the sharpened
sickle of a sliver
in the midnight fabric of stars

Cutting through my skin
piercing me to tears
releasing my deepest inner
to fill the air with
memories of bittersweetness

This time is a witness
to the magick of silence
the charm of slowing down
to the coat of an onion
wrapping my worries
in smooth silver silk

Rosalin Blue

9th September 2020

count moonlight lasagne breath fume

Counting Icicles

*Commemorating the fall of the German wall 31 years ago
whilst 83 years ago, Kristallnacht broke over the land*

As I count the icicles
refracting my breath
in the moonlight
the steam of my lasagne
fumes like clouds
rising into the cold air

I see splinters of
broken crystal – millions
in the dark night
refracting the years
of heavy history today
still weighing

As every year I count
the bricks taken
from the fallen wall
What followed was rape
the rape of a dissolving nation
still quantified in tax unto now

Over thirty years today
politically unified
While we still carry the war
on our shoulders
But what have we really done
oh, what has it all brought?

Rosalin Blue

11th January 2021

movement slip cave lilac scone

Sacred Sea

Motionless I rest
my body on the earth
rocky and rough

The cave over me
spans its shelter rugged
black against blue sky

Branches of a lilac
overhang from above
their vines of blossoms
a draping curtain of scent

Before me stretches
the vastness of the ocean
eternally in motion
the movement of each wave
creating crowns of light

And before I know it
I brush the last crumbs
of my scone from my chest
and slip into the waves

Cold and refreshing
to body and mind
as the sacred sea
embraces me entirely

Rosalin Blue

8th February 2021

witness weeds circle purple ground

Breaking the Ban

after The Panther by Rainer Maria Rilke

Our bare feet
have walked
a warm circle
on the cold tiles
of the kitchen ground

Like the panther
in the cage
we pace, treading
towards a future
stagnant in the now

With cat's eyes
jaded we blink as we
witness the weeds grow
slow as rising swirls
of purple smoke

If we could
as we would
we'd take our bare soles
and tread a circle
in the meadows

Where we would light
our fire and let
the purple haze rise beyond
the pupils of our eyes
beyond the field of vision

Rosalin Blue

8th February 2021

witness weeds circle purple ground

And we'd bust
that cage 2 x 2 x 2
and break out
from the stagnant now
break the ban, the circle

And wake the panther's will
from its benumbed silence
Slip through its pupil's veil
and conquer
the world again

Raef Boylan

13th July 2020

magic time qualms onion loony

Half-Baked Philosophy

If time was a cake,
it would be a few crumbs
dirtying the plate
Desperate finger darting,
pressing, trying to collate
a sense of the taste

Not even a chunk
or a stingy sliver
You pretty much got
handed the candle,
already burnt out

And it's more like
stabbing at an onion
in the dark –
tears, wild guesses,
vague sense of purpose
The result: mostly scars

Place it all in a pan
and fry up your qualms

Vanished like the cake,
vanished like magik
Melted away;
time feeds only panic

Raef Boylan

13th July 2020

magic time qualms onion loony

Time stings like the onion

Time eats up resolve

Time spoils everything

Time ain't cake

(and those weren't crumbs) –

it's just mould

Pam Campbell

10th August 2020

eldritch grapefruit shoehorn moon pig

Twilight's Edge

The buck moon casts
sectioned shadows,
parting water oak leaves
like a grapefruit
ripe for a suckling pig,
shoe-horned
in the blue-black
of summer's twilight.

The breath
of the Eldritch
drifts in with the tide,
fills the river,
and overflows,
erasing form
not yet swallowed
into the night.

Pam Campbell

12th October 2020

b-flat ghosts premonitions honey choir

The Fog

drifted over riverbed. Grey-white ghosts,
in formation, marched to the rata-tat-tat
of B-flat, smoke on an unhearing
unseeing earth.

My granny, kin to premonitions,
salted the door, stoked the fire,
and drew me close.

*They've come for the honey-tongued
ones, child, to save our souls. A holy choir
marches tonight. Rata-tat-tat
rata-tat-tat.*

3rd March 2021

goddess sanity cynical birthday woman

Needle Woman

goddess of stitch and beamed support:
holding babies, lovers, and strangers
in the small cynical curl of troubled space,
tugging and tearing at your sanity.
Your breath—the light and the dark of day.
Oh, carver of birthdays of others! Stitch
an underpinning of yours.

Margaret Creedon O'Shea

11th May 2020

penknife book bleak love friggin

Carving Trees

Friggin' hope you're available for our timetable.

So busy saving your world.

Dear, I feel you are less frequent and able

Bleak horizon for the older gal.

When at ten, we carved our names

Inside a timber heart

Still there on that sturdy tree-

Two ellipses, cut apart

shot them through with an arrow

Screwed both halves, soldered firmly

Life can pull and push to start.

Paddy Galvin wrote

of his little *Red Penknife*

That scribe of crimson prose.

Books of love seared my heart

Mary his auburn muse.

There's always a twist of sadness

And pain for each fresh pleasure

No craic if it's routine

Pour it freely. Use no measure.

Tóg go bog é

Is druid anseo chugam

Lig duinn ár gceol croí a sheinm.

Carve a love poem with this penknife.

Is Cogar dom do rúin -

Let us whisper of lasting love

Is éalóimid go ciúin

Margaret Creedon O'Shea

10th August 2020

eldritch moon pig shoehorn grapefruit

Counting Moonpigs [or: Taking stock]

You shoehorned yourself into my regular life
One night beneath a moon of grapefruit
That shone through a still iced cocktail
There came a twist of lemon
The scattered light,
Acidic citrous pigments filtered-
Shot through my gentle palate
The old world order of the regular
Shifts to an outer orbital
Of the eldritch
That strange paradigm
that was yours and mine
When I hear the Moonpig,
I think of silent seas that lap by craters,
Tranquil before the rancour of surprise
Sometimes it is fine to be obsolete
Somehow the regular is beautiful
Full, spent – calmly winding down
No dramas. No pigs fly past my portal.
I'll sit back on cruise control
And dock
And I'll leave you to take stock

Margaret Creedon O'Shea
8th February 2021
weeds ground purple circle witness

Purple

They weeded out the witnesses.
The purple sunken eyed. ---- Circled them & counted them.
Fingered the fragile.
Rounded them up from their hallowed ground.
Corralled them to cell block 11 for correction.
Irons out all remaining resistance.
But quietly, one carved
A Polish officer carved a face. A burning heart. The sacred heart.
With nail to file the icy wall.
He rose above & soared beyond.
Purple of the bruised.
Crushed purple of the royal.
The colour purple – once worth more than gold.
Wear this stain with pride.
Bear witness for my creed.
Now I feel the ridges of your carving
Braille them in your memory.

Margaret Creedon O'Shea

Winner - 8th March 2021

goddess sanity cynical birthday woman

All Hail

On this day
To the warriors, the ladies,
All Hail.
The suffragettes the Amazons
The gladiators, The trail blazers.
The enclosed. The cloistered
Who offer it all up
Sip by sacrificial sup.
To the goddess Venus
In her birthday shyness
Arcing from her shell
Forever frozen – alabaster
Like a pearl
The Botticellis, the Toulouse-Lautrecs, The Gustav Klimts
In Brocades, in jewelled colours, in cloaks of mosaic
In stucco light relief. In Gold leaf.
To the social activist reformers, cynical of the suits.
Who maintain their sanity
Challenge complacency. In pursuit of ubiquitous sloths.
To the puerperium, The vessels of the seed.
The silent in their waiting chamber.
To the vocal. Tough when they need to be.
All mothers are Amazing?
Some struggle to stay sane.
To those with discipline – Fair play.
To those who fight their trials every single day.
Who stay to battle in their painful corner

Margaret Creedon O'Shea

Winner - 8th March 2021

goddess sanity cynical birthday woman

To Goddess Danu

To the Deity of the Paps

The Woman of New Grange

Who welcomes sun at solstice, some at Equinox.

To Brigid of the cross

St Gonait of the albino deer, of bees.

To that domestic goddess on a budget

While himself slinks off for beer.

Well done to all the women.

Who made me what I am.

To my beautiful daughter Miriam

an example. An inspiration

To judge Judy, Kamala, to Oprah

To every trafficked woman. Every prisoner of conscience

All Hail.

Michelle Delea

Winner - 11th May 2020

frigging penknife bleak book love

The Parcel

I don't care for gift-wrap

Polka-dotted pink and purple plastic
Dizzying ribbons with impossible knots

I hate trying to wedge a fingernail
Under frigging hidden Sellotape

But when the colour of cardboard
Glow through the glass of the hall door

I cannot wait to wrestle its corrugated flesh
Get a penknife to the bleak black duct tape

Then, like the uncracked spine of a new book
I force fold it in half and jump on it in socks

Feel all of the air in its pockets
Half it and half again

When I grow up, I slide it carefully
Into the recycling bin

Michelle Delea

Winner - 12th October 2020

b-flat ghosts premonitions honey choir

vicarious

do you remember it
the boy on your laps
your knees pointed together
cupping his head?

the premonition –
it's been melting over the years
spilling over the edge of my desk
still a glistening string of honey

the ghost of the boy in the painting
became real in bits and pieces
his shoulder first
then his chunky little legs

the choirs of instinct
filled up my sleep
the night he arrived

a b-flat was x-ed
on the centre of my staff
denoting the key
I'd live in without him

Michelle Delea

Winner - 8th February 2021

weeds ground purple circle witness

Rehabilitation

Twice, you've had to learn to walk.

Once, on turning one.

Twice, these twelve months gone.

Resting on the rubber circle,
crutch poled to the ground,

avoiding the weeds
that cling and drag.

On your skin
are patches of purple.

In the playground,
where we both are shaking,

I witness you take
your first steps again.

Augustina Adéolá Jekennu
10th August 2020
eldritch grapefruit shoehorn moon pig

An accident

Eldritch desire
If I could describe it,
I would not know where to start...
I guess imagine... a pig...
with a rash on its back,
unable to itch...

Seeing a shoehorn within reach
but it has no thumbs, so can't lift it
A romantic evening sitting on a hill,
with someone you like to look at
and played so right to get a poke at
and the sky is covered with pink clouds
similar to that pink you see in grapefruits
needing to toot
just a little... you know toot toot?
but scared that if you toot a bit too hard,
you might have an accident...

anyway, we have a serious drought happening
and I never thought I had any sort of addictions
but experiencing such restrictions
is having me look at myself a little more closely than usual
and the things I did that became habitual
anyway, eldritch desire, is just as best as I could explain it.
I am a pig with no thumbs, and a rash on my back.
No fun.

Augustina Adéḡlá Jekennu
Winner - 14th September 2020
cockroach thread sip cascade strand

Tokes and sips

By that point, a sip of wine was no longer enjoyable.
Everything tasted bland, as she found herself unemployable.
Each strand of hair, no more care, stringy like polyester thread.
How much longer was she supposed to bear isolation? and boredom?

Stubborn as a cockroach,
well, that's what people always called her. Resilient.
But 6 months of being 90% alone has humbled her.
Or more like crumbled her. Rumbled her.
She stumbles to the coach.

A cascade of emotions that have
no release whatsoever anymore.
See how far she has strayed?
Laid there, legs spread wide and feeling inhuman.
Closer to an alien that does not belong in whatever this mess is.

Rolls around her stomach that never existed,
stinking of neglect and loss of self.
Roaches, is what she rolls.
Tokes all day, is the new routine.
Tokes and sips of bland wine.

Augustina Adéolá Jekennu
Winner - 9th November 2020
count moonlight lasagna breath fume

My muse

As we count the stars under the moonlight
Smelling your sweet breath next me feels right
Inhaling the fume of your aftershave has me light
I know tonight
At least before the skies get bright
We will be laying in bed like lasagna sheets and we might
If all is alright
And you like the sight
and you feel quite the same as I do
Maybe we might have a slight bite or two
And we'll finish up in the bathroom
or the living room
you choose my muse.

Augustina Adéḡlá Jekennu
11th January 2021
movement slip cave scone lilac

Human lacking human touch

Vulnerability, and slip ups

Dear Human lacking human touch

Sometimes working like a sieve for the minor things

Yet can maintain fluidity of our movement

and half indecisiveness, desperately wanting to live

but questioning if there is anything left to give

a second round or more.

fighting the need to cave in.

Carrying the aura of a lilac, resembling confidence

blooming boldly and early in spring.

and on the morning after the nights where things were really turbulent

Tea would be ready, and perhaps a scone or cake or buttered toast.

Gaynor Kane

11th January 2021

movement slip cave scone lilac

Baking Disaster

Too much lavender – a lilac scone;
movement made the souffle cave in;
she slipped on spilt milk.

11th January 2021

movement slip cave scone lilac

Setting Sail on a Boat called Barnacle

Ebb and flow movement slapped the slip
as he lowered the rib into water—
painted lilac by a red-velvet sky
dotted with cheese scone clouds.
He loaded up the picnic and set off
for the cave, to the curlew's clotted call.

Massimo Lavelle

Winner - 14th December 2020

shadenfreude rushing vaporizer slalom experience

Untitled

Shadenfreude means my pleasure at your misfortune
As though your loss somehow adds to my portion
But that's assuming we rejoice and suffer in proportion
And that our relationships are born of an inverse absorption

But I don't think that's the situation, least not in my experience
So many times another person's joy has relieved me from my weariness
Or pain that I've felt that makes another's pain seem serious
As though the fact that we're connected is as clear as a mirror is

But don't let me fool you, like you I'm a fool too
Rushing in where I shouldn't tread, and stepping over doo doo
Saved by grace with no faith God or ju-ju
Just a little truth that I'm not sure is too true

I have no vaporizer, I smoke rolled tobacco cigarettes
Slaloming through my addictions, getting stuck at their intersects
I have lost my message, still I thank you for your interests
I tried to use these words with a point that I think still connects

Massimo Lavelle

12th January 2021

lilac slip cave stillness scone

Untitled

One of the most beautiful sounds

That I've heard in my life

was the voice of Jeff Buckley

As he sang:

Lilac wine, is sweet and heady like my love

A beautiful song to slip into

To allow the walls of my mind to soften without caving in

Music is a beautiful way to find the stillness of repose

without denying our desire to pulsate

as beings of movement

So instead of wine and a pill in the evening

or coffee and a scone in the morning

I'll take music anytime of day or night

As my favorite way

to find eternal rest

in a finite moment.

Massimo Lavelle
8th February 2021
weeds ground purple circle witness

Untitled

I once heard someone say
That the path is less like a tight-rope in the air
And more like a circle on the ground that one tries not to step over too often

I was talking with a friend last night
Who said that pretending there are no weeds
Does not do justice to a garden
Just like pretending there is no room for improvement
Does not do justice to a work of art
Or a friend

In my life right now
The area where I could use the most improvement in
Is fitness

I am young and healthy enough to act carelessly
But too old to pretend that my body is immortal

While I enjoy the freedom of being my own being
I stop to recognize that the power I think is mine
Comes from whatever life force
That keeps the waters cool and makes my body warm

That keeps the skies blue and makes the violets purple

Róisín Leggett Bohan

8th February 2021

weeds ground purple circle witness

-swallow-

I navigate nature through siphoned circles
within this sea
unearthed water weeds witness my nether ness

I dive in, my anchor ground less
abalone shell opens
and in purple velvet I swallow an eclipse of you

Melisa Mauriño

12th October 2020

b-flat ghosts premonitions honey choir

Spring in Bflat

It was not a dream nor a premonition.

The future was that abstract presence
that gave substance to the absence that remained
from our common past.

You released your ghosts in the back yard.

Each ghost rooted and became a wild flower.

We gave each flower a name,
as we had done before with bliss and failures
so many times without giving it a thought.

The Bflat note grew in the spring air
and a herd of bees

became the humming choir of existence.

And though there were bees and ghosts and memories
to build a new idea of the future
the grey hive, battered in the corner like a withered sun
had no honey but the mark of a shoe
and a leak of uncertainty.

Ada Miles

10th August 2020

eldritch moon pig shoehorn grapefruit

The Moone Pygge Leaveth, or Kubrick's Lament

when Kubrick grew his
moonpig he thought it
would be the size of
an average grapefruit

but the eldritch thing
bent like a shoehorn
bent like a shoehorn
was as big as he

one day the moone pygge
it left its lab pit
size of a Kubrick
and off the thing flew

sad Kubrick, sad Stan
stared at the empty
moonsty and swearing
switched off the lab lights

Ada Miles

14th December 2020

vaporiser schadenfreude rushing situation slalom

i slalom with a vaporiser of schadenfreude

i slalom with a vaporiser of schadenfreude
but not schaden free: it takes its toll
i am a vaporiser of schadenfreude
and when the rushing is at its maddest
the situation is this:
i slalom with a vaporiser schadenfroh,
harm-happy. negative coping patterns, innit?

11th January 2021

movement slip scone lilac cave

They Went Into the Woods and Down

they went into the woods and down
a cave all made of scone
the movement ripped at each gown
a slip and they were done!

Hansel and Grettel, mummified
will safely rest for years;
as flesh that's never putrified,
a tale that spent its tears.

they laugh and tell us all hello
from well beyond the veil,
where lilac blooms and in the glow
the dead walk happy-pale.

Kornelia Mlak

8th February 2021

weeds ground purple circle witness

Homeless

I was on the ground
when they found me.
Green weeds, stemmed from yellow
and orange, like a flame,
if I chose to look at it this way.

Their leaves had holes in them,
small circles. A neat
bite of a snail,
a punch hole pattern
for my grave's decoration.

My freezing was not witnessed.
They found me dead.
A seated ice sculpture
pinned to the brick wall.
They surrounded me,
and grew around me.
Extended purple bells at their tips
and ring them each night,
to show everyone
that they remember.

Brendan Mulcahy
Winner - 11th January 2021
movement slip cave scone lilac

Things are Looking Up

The golfer Trump's in a sand trap
See that movement shuddering in his niblick
From his lilac panties to his mouth full of crap
He's beyond being saved - he's gonna cave
I click my fingers and he's scone

8th February 2021
weeds ground purple circle witness

Untitled

After the coal went
the Valleys died.
Convolvulus circled the slag-heaps.
Purple bindweed strangled the camouflage saplings.
The weeds had won.

Fast forward and witness Rhondda take another hit:
"Inequality reaps highest Covid toll in South Wales"
The Guardian reads.
When you're down on the ground
you're best placed to take another kicking.

Lauren O'Donovan

14th September 2020

cockroach thread sip cascade strand

Insecticide

Success. Another death;

One less enemy.

I wonder for a moment:

Will its mammy miss it?

I take my oozing trophy

and thread the rope through it.

I need another sip of strength,

Liquid fire: an old and only friend.

I collect the strand of corpses

and string it up all around.

A cascade of broken cockroaches.

Now. That'll send a message

to those entitled crafty bastards

Lauren O'Donovan

12th October 2020

b-flat ghosts premonitions honey choir

Premonition

The kitchen is fed, the bills are clean, finally

I sit down with a cup of tea and honey.

Instantly, a howling screech pierces me;

the baby or a house-appliance premonition?

Immense relief, the monster-angel sleeps

while a choir of cats scream orgy.

I turn back to my novel, a minute at last

For me. I bask in the glory of silence.

Broken immediately by a ghostly wail,

“Mooooooooooooooooooooom”,

Rings out to haunt the corners of the house,

Pitch perfect in B-flat;

precisely tuned to my personal station.

Fuck it,

I'll just pretend I can't hear her

Lauren O'Donovan

9th November 2020

lasagne count moonlight breath fume

Recipe for a Sonnet

If you wish to write sonnets like Shakespeare:
you first need to pull random words from air,
No, first you need a glass of wine or beer;
only then fortuitous words appear

like lasagna or golf ball or bluebells,
But avoid nouns like purple or orange,
And make sure you count up the syllables
or you'll end up with nonsense junk just like:
antidisestablishmentarianismorange. Next,

You must wrest with thoughts contemporary,
Like does 14 lines rhyme with moonlight,
Then work a, b, a, b, til you're crazy,
And fume poesy til you starve for fresh breath.

But, let's face, it no one here is Shakespeare,
Most of all: me, this sonnet has made clear.

Lauren O'Donovan

8th February 2021

weeds ground purple circle witness

What's in a name?

A weed is not a weed

Until someone decides:

Indeed.

This is a weed;

a virtueless,

valueless

weed.

Just creating a mess

because it grows

in this recess

or that circle

reserved for the overdressed:

like the royal-purple hyacinth

or the tresses

of a peach climbing rose.

But the truth is,

Everyone should know,

The only difference between

a weed and a rose:

the place it grows.

Michael Ray
Winner - 13th April 2020
virus brick shiver pier silent

Untitled

Give me a set of bricks
and I'll build you a virus
with windows and a door for leaving
Give me a silent shiver
and I'll meet you on the first floor
beside an unused brick with the word water stamped into its frog
Give me the love of a good world
and I'll show you a small pier reaching out into a lake
where a shoal of fish are swimming
into silver

Catherine Ronan

14th September 2020

cockroach thread sip cascade strand

At Last

Between strand and lough

Lies the bog

Where a cockroach crawls

Over the last thread of night

Scurries for shelter

As witches take

The last sip of sloe gin

Under the magical hawthorn

Spirits and spells cascade at dawn

I find you at last

Dia dhuit - a ghrá mo chroí

Catherine Ronan

Winner - 18th September 2020

hydro tango place culture dowry

My Personal Ad

I am a hydro Pisces

Willing to tango

I want to take you

To an exotic place

Full of mirth and mischief

Downtown culture

Underground jazz

Artists painting in the rain

This is donkey jacket CORK!

I offer you erotic exotic

And a little psychotic

But no dowry

Sorry!

Colm Scully

12th October 2020

b-flat ghosts premonitions honey choir

Daydream

Ghostly choir of honey bees
swarm to the world's last hive
buzzing a funerary dirge
in B flat.

A premonition?

Máire Stephens

8th June 2020

spaghetti storm elucidate exactly carbon

Spaghetti Strips of Language

Spaghetti strips of language,
Coiling, entwined, entangled,
Whirling in my brain, mind lost
In the morass, the mess of otherness.
Cold carbon copies of logic explain nothing,
Neither enlighten nor elucidate
Storm's turmoil ever twisting,
Resisting my understanding.
What exactly is its purpose?
To toil, to strive,
To know another's thoughts?
To feel another's pain?
Spaghetti strips of language
Eating at my brain.

Máire Stephens

13th July 2020

magic time qualms onion loony

Onion Tears

Past time to cry sharp onion tears.

Past time to dwell on qualms and fears.

To feel grief sliver lodged within my soul.

To feel no sorrow only cold.

Yearn for the spark to set afire.

Yearn for the magic of desire.

But mask I wear and mask I'll keep.

These are not onion tears I weep.

Máire Stephens

8th February 2021

weeds ground purple circle witness

Widow's Weeds

Wearing widow's weeds

Laid him in the ground

Wearing widow's weeds

Walked slowly back to town

From dust to dust

Full circle

Wearing widow's weeds

She nodded and acknowledged

The condolences offered

The platitudes proffered

From dust to dust full circle

Wearing widow's weeds

Returned to her home

Wearing widow's weeds

Now at last alone

No one there to witness

Her bruises turned to purple

No one there to witness

the smile upon her face

No one there to witness

Her tearing widow's weeds

Molly Twomey

Winner - 13th July 2020

magic time qualms onion loony

Omelettes

I fry rashers and onions to remember you
cooking me omelettes. No qualms

in your black boxers,
your spine like the chain of a pocket watch.

My god, I wish we'd been given more time.
The silver of the ring you got me stained my skin,

turned it a kind of grey, but I left it there,
despite the hives, the itch. It was a kind of magic,
how purple it went. Not until then—

did I think of the bruises, the blisters
how my body cracked in your fists.

How the words, *I'm sorry*, slipped
from your left to your right palm
 like an egg
and I the skillet, burning underneath.

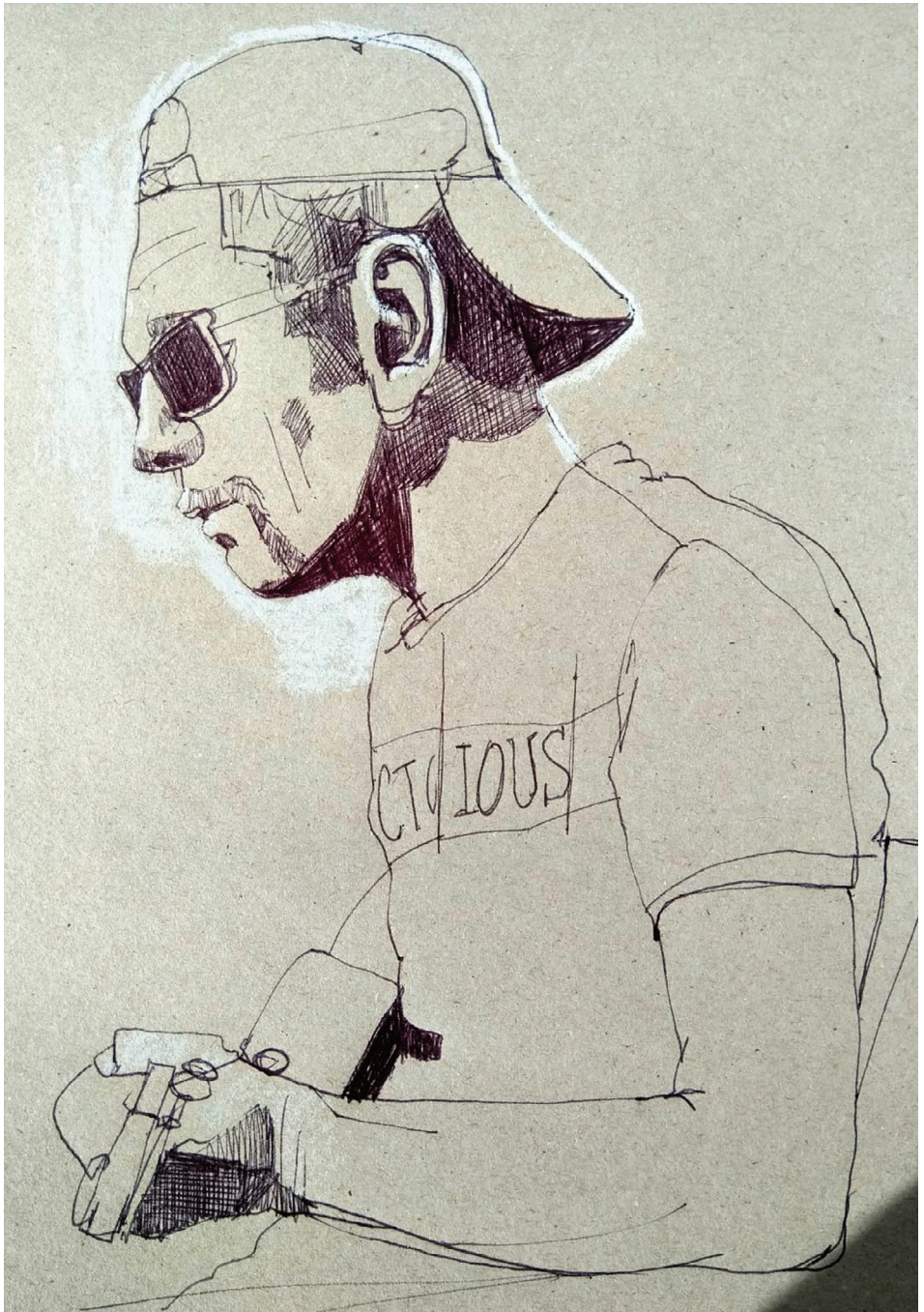
Rab Urquhart

11th January 2021

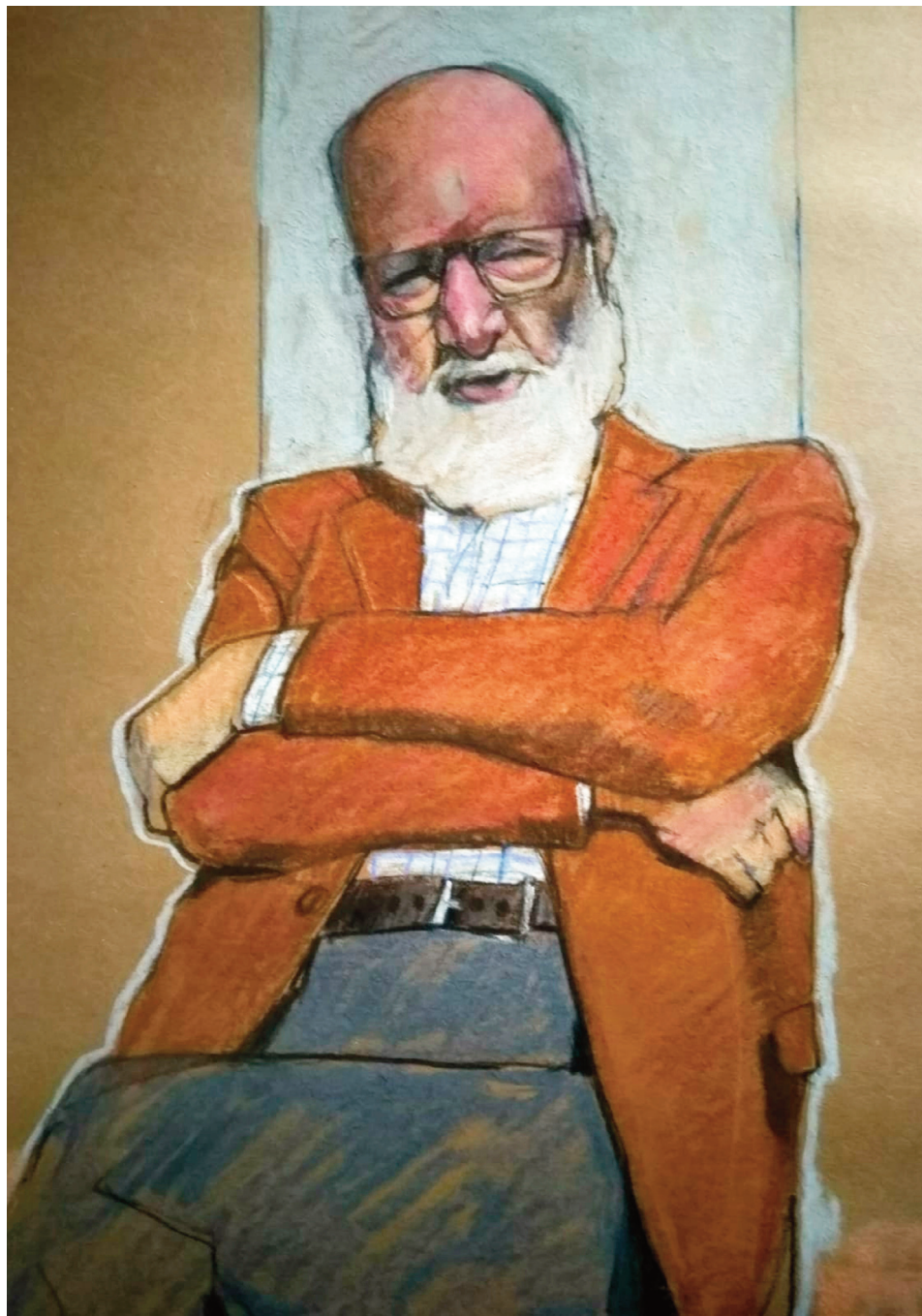
movement slip cave score lilac

Untitled

The Bruce noticed a spider as it slipped down it's silken thread, he watched as it climbed back up then scuttled down the rock face, before launching itself into space, swinging, trying to reach the wall on the other side. He watched as it repeated its efforts, over and over, inching closer, until finally it succeeded. Leaving the cave he plucked a Lilac for luck and headed for Scone. Thus was the movement begun.



Sketches by Eileen Healy



International Poetry-Film Competition Shortlist 2020

Screening A

available now at vimeo.com/484927508

Patrick O'Laoghaire (Ireland)	<i>Beo</i>
Hanna Komar & Conor Rotherham (Belarus & Ireland)	<i>To the Wind</i>
Caroline Rumley (USA)	<i>Twenty Times</i>
Marco Joubert (Canada)	<i>La prophétesse / The Prophetess</i>
Peta-Maria Tunui, Waitahi Aniwaniwa McGee, Shania Bailey-Edmonds, Jesse-Ana Harris, Lilián Pallares, & Charles Olsen (New Zealand / Spain)	<i>Noho Mai (WINNER)</i>
Noel Connor (England)	<i>A First Victim</i>
Gary White (Ireland)	<i>Banana Club</i>
Dave Richardson (USA)	<i>Sinkhole</i>
Josta Hopps (Sierra Leone)	<i>Homeless</i>
Thomas Pollock (UK)	<i>In the Year of Not Caring</i>
Pat Boran (Ireland)	<i>Rhododendron Gardens, Howth</i>
Luc O'Rourke (Ireland)	<i>Tickled Brain</i>
Stephanie Cobban (UK)	<i>Dealer</i>
Simon Daniels (Ireland)	<i>The 3 ME's</i>
Andrew Curtis (England)	<i>A Plague On All Our Houses</i>
Peter McCluskey (Ireland)	<i>Staying Home</i>
Janet Lees (Isle of Man)	<i>My head goes to bed, my heart stays up late</i>
Lauren Cullen (Ireland)	<i>Girl in Photography</i>
Fiona Aryan (Ireland)	<i>Cherry Blossoms</i>



International Poetry-Film Competition Shortlist 2020

Screening B

available now at vimeo.com/485096007

Pamela Falkenberg & Jack Cochran (USA)	<i>Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird</i>
Martin Kelly & Ian McBryde (Australia)	<i>Lake Writing</i>
Haley Hnatuk (USA)	<i>Don't Look At Me</i>
Stuart Pound (UK)	<i>Maharajah</i>
Sekou Browne (USA)	<i>Keep Your Flowers</i>
Douglas Tyrrell Bunge (Ireland/Scotland)	<i>Parts of the Day</i>
Erica Goss (USA)	<i>I've in the Rain (Ho nella pioggia)</i>
Marieta Landkroon (Netherlands)	<i>Φ (phi)</i>
Angharad Gladding (New Zealand)	<i>On the Couch with My Depression</i>
Marie Craven (Australia/Argentina)	<i>A Glimpse from the Gutter</i>
Wendy Pye (UK)	<i>Have you seen Kai?</i>
Ian Gibbons (Australia)	<i>Colony Collapse</i>
Paulina Dana (Argentina/Canada)	<i>They Call It Love</i>
Oliver Fallen Bailey (Ireland)	<i>The Key</i>
Daniel Wesseik (Israel/ Netherlands)	<i>The Driver</i>
Mary Barnecutt (Ireland)	<i>Lieder</i>
Máire Dinny Wren & Seán Ó Domhnaill (Ireland)	<i>Ar an Bealach 'na Bhaile</i>
Cris Fells (UK)	<i>Fork as Significant Other</i>
Pat Boran (Ireland)	<i>A Man Is Only As Good</i>



Winter Warmer Poetry Festival 2020

Featured Guests

Thursday 26th November

Chiamaka Enyi-Amadi | Siobhán Ní Dhomhnaill | Karthika Nair
Julie Morrissy | Musawenkosi Khanyile | Ellen Hinsey
Alba Cid | Brian Kirk | Susan Musgrave

Friday 27th November

Natalya O'Flaherty | Mike Garry | David Wheatley
Jean Boase-Beier | Mary O'Malley | Sinéad Morrissey
Rachael Hegarty | John McCullough | Chris Mansell

Saturday 28th November

Jane Clarke | Ranjit Hoskote | Mary Jean Chan
Tongo Eisen-Martin | Jacob Polley | Imtiaz Dharker
James O'Leary | Nuar Alsadir | Robert Sullivan

Sunday 29th November

Deborah Moffatt | Niall O'Gallagher | Ceaití Ní Bhéildiúin
Jo Burns | William Wall | Dunya Mikhail
Florencia Milito | Proinsias Mac a' Bhaird | Iman Mersal



The 9th Winter Warmer Festival is scheduled for 26th-28th November 2021

Thursday 26th Nov

AMHRÁIN
EALAINE
GHAELIGE

IRISH
ART
SONG



Dáire Ní Mhealláin
& John Hess



Andrew Gavin



Ana Sokolovic



Garrett Sholdice



Chiamaka Enyi-Amadi



Siobhán Ní Dhomhnaill



Karthika Natir



Julie Morrissy



Musawenkosi Khanyile



Ellen Himsy



Alha Cid



Brian Kirk



Susan Musgrave

Friday 27th Nov

AMHRÁIN
EALAINE
GHAELIGE

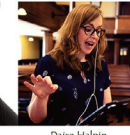
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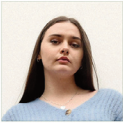
Dáire Ní Mhealláin
& John Hess



Linda Buckley



Daire Halpin



Natalya O'Flaherty



Mike Garry



David Wheatley



Jean Boase-Baier



Mary O'Malley



Sinéad Morrissy



Rachael Hegarty



John McCullough



Chris Mansell

8th góbháil
winter warmer
an online poetry festival from Cork, Ireland
26th-29th November 2020
www.obheal.ie/winterwarmer

Sat 28th Nov
Many Tongues of Cork
presented by
 Joanna Pulkapati

GOOD DAY NEWS
 Saranda Mukhopadhyaya
 Asmae Ourkaya

college
 Celine Thrane
 Ngobizitha Vella

Susanne Araya
 Ray Greene (ISL)

Sat 28th Nov
Closed Mic Set

Featured Poets for 2020
Augustina Adéola Jekennu
Máire Stephens
Ada Miles
Massimo Lavelle
Pam Campbell
Eoin Hurley
Melua Maurino
Doc Janning
Kerri George Simpson
Láuren O'Donovan
Susanna Triffletti

Sun 29th Nov
góbháil
2020
poetry-film competition
OFFICIAL SELECTION
Poetry Film Competition
2020
Competition Shortlist
Screenings 1 & 2

with thanks to our sponsors

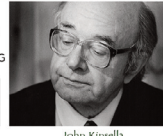
Saturday 28th Nov

AMHRÁIN
EALAINE
GHAELIGE

IRISH
ART
SONG



Dáire Ní Mhealláin
& John Hess



John Kinsella



Gavan Ring



Jane Clarke



Ranjit Hoskote



Mary Jean Chan



Tongo Eisen-Martin



Jacob Polley



Imtiaz Dharker



James O'Leary



Nuar Alsadir



Robert Sullivan

Sunday 29th Nov

AMHRÁIN
EALAINE
GHAELIGE

IRISH
ART
SONG



Dáire Ní Mhealláin
& John Hess



Jonathan Nangle



Daire Halpin



Deborah Moffatt



Niall O'Gallagher



Ceatín Ní Bhéidáin



Jo Burris



William Wall



Dunya Mikhal



Florencia Millito



Proinsias Mac a' Bhaird



Iman Mersal



McNamara Slam Winners 2020-2021

13 April	Michael Ray
11 May	Michelle Delea
8 June	Ray Hanrahan
13 July	Molly Twomey
10 August	Cédric Bikond
14 September	Augustina Adéḡlá Jekennu
18 September	Catherine Ronan
12 October	Michelle Delea
9 November	Augustina Adéḡlá Jekennu
14 December	Massimo Lavelle
11 January	Brendan Mulcahy
8 February	Michelle Delea
8 March	Mags Creedon

Guest Poets 2020-2021

13 April	Derek Sellen, Partridge Boswell
11 May	Caitríona Ní Chléirchín and Louis de Paor
8 June	Mick Delap and Alice Lyons
13 July	Daragh Breen and Jonathan Davidson
10 August	(Twin Cities) Emilie Lauren Jones and Matt Black
14 September	Julie Breathnach-Banwait and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill
18 September	Chandrika Narayanan-Mohan & Shaunna Lee Lynch
12 October	Kobus Moolman
9 November	Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe, Mícheál McCann & Ashley O'Neal
14 December	Alice Oswald
11th January	Geraldine O'Kane and Colin Dardis
8th February	Peggy McCarthy, Lauren O'Donovan, Róisín Leggett Bohan, Daniel Galvin and Kornelia Mlak
8th March	Sandy Yanonne and Laurence McKeown



Ó Bhéal's 9th Poetry-Film Competition is open for submissions
from 1st May - 31st August 2021

International submissions are accepted for any poetry-film under
ten minutes (English subtitles are required for non-english language films)
Entries must have been completed since May 2019

Broadly speaking, a poetry-film is the translation of a poem into
film form, by way of interpretation that features the entire poem,
either visually and/or audibly

Up to 30 shortlisted poetry-films will be screened at
Ó Bhéal's Winter Warmer Festival in November 2021
One winner will receive the festival prize for best poetry-film

Free to Enter!

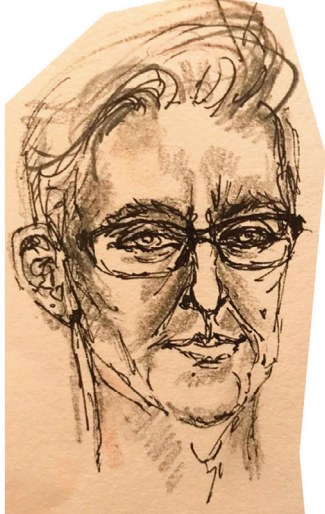
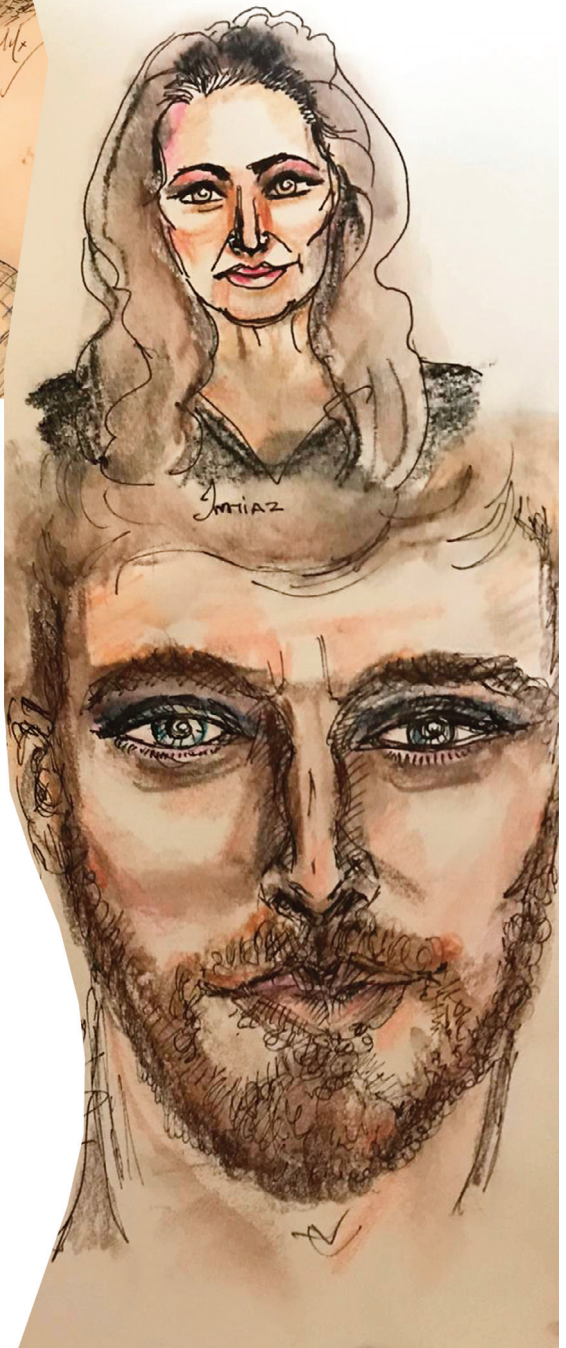
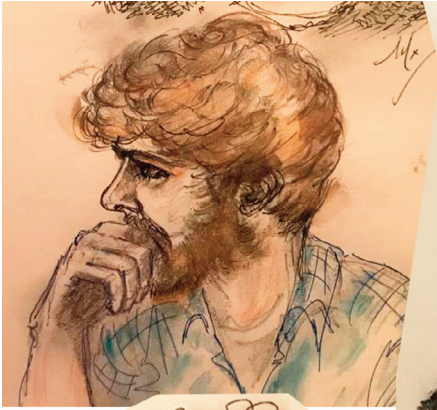
For submissions and guidelines visit: www.obheal.ie/poetryfilm



Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



9th

Ó



bhéal



Five Words Poetry Competition

1st Prize €750

2nd Prize €500

3rd Prize €250

Have you tried the Five Words Poetry Challenge?

It's only €5 to enter ...

Every Tuesday from 13th April 2021 to 25th January 2022, five new words will appear on the Ó Bhéal website. Entrants have seven days to write and submit a poem which contains all five words.

The winners and shortlist of 12 entries will be announced in March 2022 and invited to read at Ó Bhéal in Cork on the 11th of April 2022.

visit www.obheal.ie/fivewordscomp
for this week's words, guidelines and submissions



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The 14th anthology of Five Word poems features the winning poems and shortlist from our 8th poetry competition. Entrants were given seven days to complete their poems using the five words posted each Tuesday. Judge Grace Wells chose a superb shortlist of twelve poems including 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners, as well as a special selection of standout lockdown poems. April 12th 2021 marks over 650 Ó Bhéal sessions.

Our congratulations to this year's overall competition winner **Sinéad McClure!**

Poems have also been included from Ó Bhéal's Monday evening (live) Five Word Challenges, held online since April 2020, as have sketches of guest poets and regulars made by two local fine artists: Margaret Creedon O'Shea and Eileen Healy. The five words used in Ó Bhéal's live Monday evening challenges are provided spontaneously by those present and the winner is chosen by audience response. These spontaneous compositions are written in 15 minutes and should be considered as first drafts. Often they are developed further for journal publication elsewhere. The Five Word Challenge was conceived by poetry aficionado and emcee Gerry McNamara.