

Five Words

Volume XVII

poems from the

11th Five Words International Poetry Competition

and from

Ó Bhéal's live event Five Word challenges

April 2023 to March 2024



On the occasion of Ó Bhéal's seventeenth Anniversary

8th April 2024

featuring winning & shortlisted poems from the

11th Five Words International Poetry Competition

plus

poems from live event Five Word challenges

(10th April 2023 - 11th March 2024)

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

Colmcille
Foras na Gaeilge
The Long Valley
The Arts Council
Cork City Libraries
Cork City Council Arts Office
UCC School of English and Digital Humanities
The Munster Literature Centre
Forum Publications
Dunnes Stores
Poetry Ireland
NUIG Galway
Arc Publications
JustABallhop
Paradiso

and to the house eMCees, board members, audiences and poets

Thank You!

Limited Edition published in 2024 by Ó Bhéal Ltd.

Copyright on the work contained herein remains with each respective author.
Copies of each poem require the prior consent of the respective poet, and copies
of this collection require the prior consent of this publisher.

‘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*

Design, Editing & Typesetting by Paul Casey

Back cover image (glass award) designed by Michael Ray

Printed by SPRINT-Print

This is an ISBN-free publication

Copyright © Ó Bhéal Limited 2024

www.obheal.ie



Five Words

Volume XVII

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	1
-----------------	---

11th Five Words International Poetry Competition

<i>Shortlist</i>	4
Derek Sellen (<i>1st</i>)	5
Mary Anne Smith Sellen (<i>2nd</i>)	7
Laura Theis (<i>3rd</i>)	9
Alison McCrossan	11
Brian Kirk	13
Laura Theis	14
J.A. Speta	15
Mary Louise Kiernan	16
Kevin Conroy	17
Marcella Remund	19
Tracy Newlands	20
John D. Kelly	21
Biographies of Shortlisted Poets	23
Judge Theo Dorgan's Comments on Shortlisted Poems	27

Five Word Challenge Poems

Rosalin Blue	33
Pam Campbell	35
Karan Casey	36
Jeff Cottrill	37
Margaret Creedon O'Shea	41
Jim Crickard	45
Antonio Di Mare	46

CONTENTS

Five Word Challenge Poems

Massimo Elijah	49
Niall Hearne	53
John Horan	55
Jennifer Horgan	56
Róisín Leggett Bohan	57
Mona Lynch	58
Matt Mooney	59
Adrian Neville	60
Mary O'Connell - <i>In Memoriam</i>	61
Lauren O'Donovan	63
Rosie O'Regan	65
Seán Ó Treasaigh	67
Catherine Ronan	68
Roxane	72
Philip Spillane	74

Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea 3, 30-32, 79-80, 89

International **Poetry-Film** Competition Shortlist 2023 81

International **Poetry-Film** Irish Selection 2023 83

Five Word Challenge Winners 2023-2024 85

Guest Poets 2023-2024 85

Ó Bhéal **Publications** 2023 87

Ó Bhéal **Winter Warmer** Poster 2023 88

FOREWORD

The 8th of April 2024 marks Ó Bhéal's seventeenth year in existence, and our 696th event (not including Winter Warmer festivals). *Five Words Volume XVII* features shortlisted poems from our 11th Five Words International Poetry Competition, along with the winning entries from Derek Sellen (1st), Mary Anne Smith Sellen (2nd) & Laura Theis (3rd). Remarkably, Derek has won the competition twice before, and Mary Anne has won it once. Marcella Remund, another shortlisted entrant, is also listed among our alumni competition winners. This year's judge, Cork poet Theo Dorgan selected an outstanding shortlist from 480 entries (representing 16 countries).

2024 sees a continuation of Ó Bhéal's ever-improving hybrid mode of delivery, along with a noticeable increase in audience and participant numbers. Following the success of our All-Ireland event at the previous festival, the 11th Winter Warmer expanded its Sunday programme further to include an electrifying showcase of local open-mic groups in Nano Nagle Place.

Our core Arts Council Grant for 2024 sees a small but very welcome 10% increase, especially due to the constant rise in accommodation costs, digital and insurance overheads. We retained our Foras na Gaeilge and Colmcille grants, which remain unchanged in 2024 as does our cornerstone revenue grant from Cork City Council. Public donations in 2023 again saw a slight increase, with featured guest poets' fees at the Winter Warmer being bolstered to a minimum of 250 euros.

Ó Bhéal's International Poetry-Film competition was equally successful in 2023, with its shortlist of 30 films chosen from 208 submissions (representing 33 countries). Two screenings of fifteen films were simulcast whilst being projected in-person, and for the third time we included a special selection of Irish poetry-films.

Ó Bhéal's 2023 *Unfinished Book of Poetry* project launch was a superb event and saw a well-attended launch at Cork City Library. Poems from the anthology were yet again included in Cork City Libraries' *Poetry in the Park* series (as were our Winter Warmer guest poets). The Cork-Coventry twinning exchange was as vibrant and fruitful as ever with an lively exchange of poets, John Watson & Devjani Bodepudi who visited Cork, with the reciprocal visit paid by Rosalin Blue & Cathal Holden.

The Ó Bhéal community was deeply saddened by the passing of long-time regular and local poetry legend Mary O'Connell (RIP).

We are very grateful to everyone who supported us during our seventeenth year.

Paul Casey
Director
Ó Bhéal

*“And when blind sleep drops on the spying senses,
The heart is sensual, though five eyes break.”*

Dylan Thomas

Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



11th Five Words International Poetry Competition

SHORTLIST

Winner

Derek Sellen (England) *against cartography*

2nd Place

Mary Anne Smith Sellen (England) *Gardening in the Otherworld*

3rd Place

Laura Theis (England) *imagine a field*

Other Shortlisted Poems

Alison McCrossan (Ireland) *Inheritance*
Brian Kirk (Ireland) *Storm Glass*
Laura Theis (England) *self-care für unsichtbare*
J.A.Speta (USA) *To Be Done Before Anything Drastic*
Mary Louise Kiernan (USA) *A Tale for No Tail*
Kevin Conroy (Ireland) *Out of the Woods*
Marcella Remund (USA) *Rapture*
Tracy Newlands (Australia) *For Sam Lawler, Who Used His Gun*
John D. Kelly (N.Ireland) *Leaving Ursa Minor*

Derek Sellen

First Place

map polish dawn random oxygen

against cartography

Take a map by the scruff of its folds,
snip the wires of its grid,
interrogate it until it confesses
how it has scrawled itself across the wilderness,

has tinted the world
with pallid blues and greens and browns,
given icefields and deserts
the polish of names, noosed hills in contour lines.

Keep it in isolation, no visits
to Streetview or Kartografika.com,
treat it badly, rumple it and trample it
so that mountain ranges tumble into the creases.

Accuse it of misrepresentation,
sentence it to shredding at dawn,
show the mortality of landmarks and cartouches,
nothing but ink on fallible paper.

Governments will demand compensation
for highways that have wandered over cliffs,
for cities sunk into swamps, border guards
dizzy with amnesia, landowners arrested as squatters.

Derek Sellen

First Place

map polish dawn random oxygen

Tell them to breathe deep
the oxygen from liberated forests, to feast
on anonymous vistas, step with the impudence
they deserve over fallen NO TRESPASSING signs.

Quick! before long-legged theodolites
march over the ridge, deeds of ownership
parachute down, flags sprout on summits,
bulldozers and diggers storm the defenceless valleys.

Captured, say with innocence to the judges:

All I did was in imagination.

There are no maps there – the mind runs free as a river
tracing its random course towards the boundless

Turn away when they show you
the geography of your brain,
every illuminated crinkle plotted on a screen.
Keep your faith in bare unmapped existence – if you can.

Mary Anne Smith Sellen
Second Place
flight flood peace herb post

Gardening in the Otherworld

(For Derek Jarman's garden at Prospect Cottage, Dungeness)

A life story, love story, written in flesh, flower and thorn,
an otherworld sown into stone, seeking a way to thrive
in a shifting desert of shingle and salt spray, upon most meagre
sustenance. To garden here is a lesson in what will survive.

Everything takes flight - the sky and the sea, pen across page,
film through reel. In this auditorium of unhindered horizons,
there's nowhere for the sky to hide its untidiness, its streets
of cathedral clouds. Nothing to break the journey of the sun's chariot
from dawn to dusk. The anywhere of night awash with a flood of stars.

Driftwood posts, the steeples of this open shrine, lift the weak
and the stunted heavenwards. The twisted forms of wartime iron
now clad in peacetime demob suits of sea-pea, and the dog rose
has not had its day. Held between flint-stone teeth are a softness
of flowers, with names that read like chants or prayers:

Sage and Rosemary (for long life and remembrance)

Rue (the herb of grace)

Breath of Heaven

Yellow Archangel

Mary Anne Smith Sellen
Second Place
flight flood peace herb post

To garden here is to cross the boundaries of borrowed land,
for love, for passion, to know loss, to plant your own heart and soul
for others to find, for the bones of ideas to form shapes in their minds,
and with survival always just beyond how far the eye can see.

Forget-me-not

Heartsease

Immortelle

Laura Theis

Third Place

field disturb imagine abstract ruby

imagine a field

imagine a field
disturbed by nobody

imagine the firs
that grow beyond it

and the furry spirits
they shelter

imagine a late hawthorn ruby on
bare spined branches

dirt puddles
frozen into abstract paintings

imagine yourself walking
into this scene

and lying down
on the cold ground

imagine what colour
the sky would be

Laura Theis

Third Place

field disturb imagine abstract ruby

and how many
sharp winged birds

you'd witness
crossing above you

imagine closing your eyes
and your retinas painting

an afterimage
of avian patterns

you've made such a habit
of seeing yourself as a prisoner

but look at this picture of you
surrounded by free things

how you fit right in

Alison McCrossan
Shortlisted
hold ordinary code shift nuclear

Inheritance

It's probably in my genes, ordinary -
A daughter to parents who lived

through rationing, second world war,
hard workers and poor.

There is a structure in biology, a nuclear
envelope, whose critical function is to protect

genetic material within a cell. I'd love to know more.
How environment got in, the very worst elements,

and twisted the code until solace came to me in a bottle
for a short while, but then turned

and swallowed me like I was dirt in the night.
How I was called years later to this, the shift -

believing in nothing I found myself on my knees,
praying to anything, something.

How a creep of violets unfolded, bluebells in April,
candles on the horse chestnut, blossoms alight;

Alison McCrossan

Shortlisted

hold ordinary code shift nuclear

how I try now to find the words
for what has been given to me, and go for

holding blocks for a soul.

Every day how I work so hard for the love of it all.

Brian Kirk

Shortlisted

wind sleep limit glass story

Storm Glass

His daughter cares for him these days.
One time she thought he walked on water,
now the decks he tramps are not his own –
not decks at all if truth be told. He pauses
by the locked door in the hall and taps
the glass and squints to read the story
of the skies. You cannot know the limits
of the world until you weigh anchor, strike out
for the horizon. Some nights when he can't sleep
he listens for old voices in the wind, and when
the voices rage – eyes closed – he knows
the glass is clouding, a storm is on the way.

Laura Theis

Shortlisted

trace thorn cover new listen

self-care für unsichtbare

listen if it gets bad you must
cover yourself in old mown grass
trace the lines of your face
with a horsetail stalk
stick your bare feet
into an unknown river
step on something sharp then
pull the thorn out of your own toe
even though the angle is awkward
put a little plaster on it and say
there - good as new

J. A. Speta

Shortlisted

hedge hide word drop spirit

To Be Done Before Anything Drastic

Feel squirrelly; hide this in a joke.

Put some words on cream paper. Erase them.

Finger drum a mermaid opera

watching kernels pop. Sweep them from the floor

when the bowl drops. Stop shaking. Trim the

hedges until it rains. Ponder lightning.

Resist holes in the spirit and dare

to make a plan.

Saturday. I will swim on Saturday.

Mary Louise Kiernan
Shortlisted
squirrel twin wait ripe find

A Tale for No Tail

A squirrel is a squirrel is a squirrel, you tell yourself...

*...until you spy the one with no tail
catapulting from limb to limb to limb across
the old twin-trunked tree. How could it have no tail?
Caught in a snap trap with no way out but to chew it off?
A tangle with another critter? No matter, there are chores,
errands, work to do. Yet...you wait. This rodent races light.
Could there be a pair? Do squirrels have twins? Triplets?
Twin sheets getting ripe. Finishing with the washings,
you find No Tail twining itself around a birch branch
see-sawing. Its tail hair sought for fly fishing lures.
Did someone yank the tail and run? In his shed,
your uncle chopped tails of caught plump mice
to collect bounty. For years, your No Tail
springs up, down, around the tree.
How long can a squirrel survive?
Then you find a new home where
your garden grows riper, riper.
Pulling at weeds, you ignore
two full-tailed grey squirrels.
You search the word squirrel.
Its roots sprout from Sciurus,
skia for shadow, oura for tail,
Greek for "a squirrel sits
in the shadow of its tail."
Once again, you recall
the squirrel with no tail,
only to ponder the why
of why you wonder....*

Kevin Conroy
Shortlisted
distort wing fissure recycle ratio

Out of the Woods

In the middle of my life I went into a dark wood – Dante

I

Woods of the Archeopterisian forest
where a tree falls that is not a tree
in a wood that is not a wood
falling that is not falling –
as yet unconceived, unnamed; but ambered-ants
and tunnel-traced detritivores in leaf fissures sense,
use, eat, decompose, recycle, increase and make
the meaningless dawning flow.

II

I am wise to these woods –
the indifference of trees,
silence and no song,
no blooms, no signs, no wings;
skeletal leaves in the duff,
apricot amnesia of chanterelle,
brambles scraping my clay skin
harshly picked and picked in the dark.

Kevin Conroy

Shortlisted

distort wing fissure recycle ratio

III

I am wise enough, wiser than my stone heart,
than floating flashbacks, divine mountains
with their rifts, faults and faithful flowers.
I know that spores suck life from death
and the woods' ratioed whispers make seasons turn;
my listening wise enough to go light, keep on
through slough that bears no weight, out
to where the eye, though its corner's tear distorts,
sees clearer at the edge of woods.

Marcella Remund

Shortlisted

red remember neighbour shatter cross

Rapture

I'd like to say when I see red, I feel the fire
and blood, the exquisite sacrifice of martyrs,
bones shattered against the cross, or that

ecstatic, I feel a pentecostal dove, circled
in flames, alight in the nest of my hair to
anoint me with its post-ascension wisdom.

But when our neighbour comes to the fence
with a pot of red begonias, I remember how
last summer you floated cinquefoil blossoms,

scarlet stars in a cut-glass bowl on the kitchen table,
and this, red stars adrift in a sky of water,
is all the rapture, all the blessing I need.

Tracy Newlands

Shortlisted

ghost ignore steam generation wild

For Sam Lawler, Who Used His Gun

Ignore the ghost in the corner.

Great grandfather was buried in
hallowed ground,
though
God
knows
how.

From generation
to generation
the curse is passed.

We live like steam and
die like wild flowers –
limp after the ecstasy of
one
day
in
light.

Sam's grandson keeps
one
bullet
by
his bed.

Ignore
the ghost in the corner.

John D. Kelly

Shortlisted

music aware access rare signal

Leaving Ursa Minor

I Be's Troubled; Muddy Waters

Stay in the light. Stay in the light.

It's like a warning – a double-
flashing signal – when
you say it softly (twice) before
I leave The Bakehouse; before

I lean over the counter; before
I put my dark, woolly-hatted head
closer to the low-hanging
shade – try to make light of it.

My brain is like a black hole
sucking photons. But the rare
illumination that leaves your lips
be's so easily understood.

I soon become aware that I am
no longer troubled as Muddy was
when he sang; and I'm not stuck
in the black-stuff like a homesick

Paddy. It's not all Greek to me.

John D. Kelly

Shortlisted

music aware access rare signal

Your voice sparkles clearly
as if from a distant constellation,
as if from stars that guide me

in the ancient ways of navigation.
And I wonder how you steady me
and I listen to how the music
changes from major . . . to minor.

I think of Cole Porter as I walk
through a portal – a signposted
access that takes me aback, then
back – again – into the sunlight.

And I can see, once more, that
I am the space where I am:
a jigsaw piece that be's at the seat
of my sitting. I am at my writing

eating buttery, sourdough toast
and pondering that – sometimes –
I do not be at the opening of a door
(as I now know it), but at a barrier to it.

* *Ursa Minor Bakehouse is an artisan bakery and cafe in Ballycastle, Co Antrim*

Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

Derek Sellen

First Place



Derek Sellen, from Canterbury, UK, has written poetry, short stories and plays over many years. He has read his work widely, in the UK, Ireland, Germany, Italy and, in better times, Russia. His writing has won many awards including Poets Meet Politics, Poets Meet Painters, the Wirral Festival Play Competition. His work has twice won Canterbury Festival Poet of the Year and twice previously won Ó Bhéal Five Words. His collection *The Other Guernica* (Cultured Llama Publishing, 2018) was a finalist in the Poetry Book Awards 2020.

Mary Anne Smith Sellen

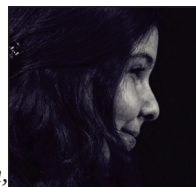
Second Place



Mary Anne Smith Sellen is a poet and painter from Canterbury in Kent. Her work has been recognized in competitions, including 1st Sentinel Literary Quarterly November 2017, and 1st Ó Bheal Five Words Competition 2019. She has been widely published, both in print and online. Her first full poetry collection *The shape of our lives* was longlisted in the 2023 Indigo Dreams First Collection competition. She is currently working on poems for a new pamphlet. Mary Anne is a regular reader at events and festivals.

Laura Theis

Third Place



Laura Theis's work appears in *POETRY*, *Oxford Poetry*, *Magma*, *Rattle*, *Mslexia*, and others. She received the Alpine Fellowship Writing Prize, the Oxford Brookes Poetry Prize, the Poets&Players Prize, the Hammond House International Literary Award, the AM Heath Prize, the Mogford Short Story Prize, as well as a Forward Prize nomination. Her poetry debut was the winner of the Brian Dempsey Memorial Prize, an Oxford Poetry Library Book-of-the-Month, and an Elgin Award nominee. Her collection *A Spotter's Guide To Invisible Things* won the Live Canon Collection Prize and received the Arthur Welton Award from the Society of Authors.

Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

Alison McCrossan

Alison McCrossan is from Cork. Publications include *Southword*, *Stand*, *Orbis*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Abridged* and *Crannog*. She was longlisted in The National Poetry Competition 2022 and shortlisted in The Bridport Poetry Prize 2023.

Brian Kirk

Brian Kirk has published two poetry collections with Salmon Poetry *After The Fall* (2017) and *Hare's Breath* (2023). His short fiction chapbook *It's Not Me, It's You* was published by Southword Editions in 2019. His poem "Birthday" won Listowel Writers' Week Poem of the Year at the An Post Irish Book Awards in 2018. His novel *Riverrun* was chosen as a winner of the Irish Writers Centre Novel Fair 2022 and was shortlisted for the Spotlight First Novel Award 2023. www.briankirkwriter.com

J.A. Speta

J.A. Speta is from the American South. He works in Senegal as a Volunteer in the United States Peace Corps. He has self-published three collections of poetry: *The Lackluster Pressure of Lips*, *Blackout*, and *Distance Makes the Heart*. He also maintains *The Adaptations*, a book-and-film review blog at theadaptations.substack.com.

Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

Mary Louise Kiernan

Mary Louise Kiernan, the proud holder of dual Irish American citizenship, is twice published in *The New York Times*. The recipient of a 2015 poetry prize from Arizona State University, her poetry appears in numerous print and online journals, with two poems translated into Italian. *The Gift of Glossophobia* (Kelsay Books) is the title of her full-length debut poetry collection. To read more, visit marylouisekiernan.com.

Kevin Conroy

Kevin Conroy has been published in *The Irish Times*, *The Stony Thursday Book*, *One by jacar press*, *The Galway Review*, *the moth*, *The Bangor Literary Journal*, *Drawn to the Light Press*, *Tales From The Forest*, *Skylight 47*, *the Poetry School website scroll*, *THE SHOp*, *Southword*, *Burning Bush II*, *Boyne Berries*, *The Blue Max Review*, *The Curlew*, *Sixteen Literary Magazine*, *erbacce*, *The Runt magazine*, and in the *Ireland Chair of Poetry Anthology 2020*, *Poets meet Politics & Hibernian Writers* anthologies. He was a runner-up in The Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award.

Marcella Remund

Marcella Remund is originally from Omaha, NE, transplanted to South Dakota in the U.S. Her work has appeared in *The Briar Cliff Review*, *Jabberwock*, *Poetry Ireland*, *Pasque Petals*, *Banyan Review*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Quartet*, and other journals and anthologies. She is the author of three books, *The Sea is My Ugly Twin* and *The Book of Crooked Prayer*, both by Finishing Line Press, as well as the forthcoming *Hysterian* (Finishing Line, 2024). For more info visit www.marcellaremund.com.

Biographies of Shortlisted Poets

Tracy Newlands

Tracy Newlands is a writer, printmaker and educator. She spent her childhood in Bourke, which she describes as "a flat, hot, vivid place". Without TV reception, evening entertainment was her father reading bush ballads aloud. Holidays were spent ranging the land around Glen Innes in the New England tablelands with her cousins. Later she moved to Sydney. Tracy holds degrees in Medieval History, Education and Psychology, and taught at Sydney University and the University of New South Wales for over a decade before having children and moving to high school teaching. She has two daughters, two dogs, and one husband.

John D. Kelly

John D Kelly lives in Co. Fermanagh. His poetry has appeared widely in literary magazines and anthologies. Among several awards, he won the Listowel Poetry Short Collection Award and also the Desmond O'Grady International Poetry Competition, in 2020. His manuscript was highly commended in the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award 2016 and he was a finalist in the Montreal International Poetry Prize, 2022. In 2023 he was awarded 2nd prize in the Plaza Audio Poetry Prize, judged by Anthony Joseph. His first collection: *The Loss Of Yellowhammers* was published by Summer Palace Press in 2020.

Judges' Comments

Theo Dorgan

First Place
against cartography (Derek Sellen)

I thought of the Hopkins poem 'Inversnaid' when I read this, and of Brian Friel's 'Translations'; a championing of what is wild and wayward, what is not to be confined inside the grid of maps and by extension inside a reductive frame of reference. A beautifully extended and mastered metaphor breaks free into a hymn of praise, a celebration of 'unmapped existence'. Masterfully handled.

Second Place
Gardening in the Otherworld (Mary Anne Smith Sellen)

The sheer exuberance of the words, the flow of attention and the interplay between what is seen and what thought the seen thing evokes, these things delighted me. Derek Jarman's garden in the shadow of Dungeness power station was, among other things, a celebration and an act of defiance. The poem does him, and the garden, a beautiful justice.

Third Place
imagine a field (Laura Theis)

An adventurous and persuasive invitation to the reader's imagination — and a corrective to the rather trite clichés of contemporary journalism, a rebuke to the idea that humankind is somehow outside nature. We, too, can be "free things", and if we trust our imaginations, as this poem does, we can "fit right in".

Judges' Comments

Theo Dorgan

Inheritance (Alison McCrossan)

A neat and tidy reflection on how a life can be recovered, of gratitude for the salvific given. Great last line.

Storm Glass (Brian Kirk)

A metaphor perfectly carried through, a humane and loving poem of understanding, not a superfluous word. A fine piece of work.

self-care für unsichtbare (Laura Theis)

I like the way this poem plunges right in with its remedies for unspoken and unnamed trauma — an attractive air of magical thinking about it.

To Be Done Before Anything Drastic (J.A.Speta)

A spell and a recipe against doubt and hesitation, this poem carries itself lightly yet understands that in certain frames of mind, the little things can be the biggest obstacles.

A Tale for No Tail (Mary Louise Kiernan)

Like the squirrel it celebrates, the mind in the poem springs from thought to thought, agile, alert to and acting out its own curiosity. Quite correctly, it comes to no conclusion... but it's neatly done.

Judges' Comments

Theo Dorgan

Out of the Woods (Kevin Conroy)

A meditative and philosophical poem of a kind that is, perhaps, distressingly rare now. A rich internal music helps slow the poem down to the speed of reflective mind.

Rapture (Marcella Remund)

A bright-lit poem, perfectly capturing the spark that leaps the gap when one thing irresistibly suggests another in a flash of pure joy.

For Sam Lawler, Who Used His Gun (Tracy Newlands)

A clever frame of musical reference, a playful and illuminating take on the verb 'to be', a gentle and sophisticated reflection on affliction and cautious optimism.

Leaving Ursa Minor (John D. Kelly)

It is a high and fine art to say as much as this poem does in so few words. The spare and stripped back diction, the sense of hard-won restraint, is what makes the poem so moving.

Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Rosalin Blue

13th May 2023

ring ricochet mukluks pores beamish

Add Flames to Fire

Black is the night,
an upside down pint of Beamish.
Snow blankets mountain slopes.

Campfire casts a tiny spot of light,
quivering among rugged ridges
into foot-hills, dark and vast,

Where we sit, sweating
in bearskins, mukluks pulled under,
to cushion the cold from below.

Stories and songs break from pores,
drip from our tongues,
add their flames to the fire,

Circle the hearth in a ring of friendship.
Black is the night above our heads,
white, the surrounding cover.

Our laughter ricochets in echoes,
beams a spark of hope
into the bleak mountain-side.

Rosalin Blue

8th January 2024

hope therapy electricity clouds neon

The Only Star Left

Clouds hover lower
over the planet these days.
Heavy hearts and minds
walk head-down.

Even emotions weigh,
when all perspective is gone.

Neon-lights stutter
in stroboscopic flashes.
Shielding our eyes, the
brain twitches at entry point.

As electricity zaps our motions,
trauma triggers tears,
where therapy has broken off
more, than we deserved.

Hope is the only star that's left.

Pam Campbell

11th December 2023

film conspicuous discombobulating blue spacer

Glazed

Blue was the film glazing the glass
discombobulating mother and child.

Black thundering smoke the spacer
between mother and child.

Bomb-blasted heartbeats
discombobulating mother and child.

Blue was the film glazing the glass
conspicuous between mother and child.

8th January 2024

hope therapy electricity clouds neon

HH212

Baby star, you are just shy of 50,000 years,
hope-found therapy in a telescoped night sky.

You burst black-red electricity between your poles,
neon pink punched clouds throughout.

Karan Casey

Winner - 8th April 2023

still brittle door anniversary quake

Only in the door

Only in the door

Quaking at the thought of the anniversary

Like a cactus still brittle

From twenty years of neglect

Jeff Cottrill
9th October 2023
hell pixelated dinner devil foot

Dinner with the Devil

I had a three-course dinner with the devil in Hell.
The appetizers were flat, but the main course was swell.
It had a sweet taste, but with a touch of spam.
It was spicier than chicken wings, bolder than lamb.
I asked the devil, "What did you put in this dish?"
He shook his head and answered, "To know, you don't wish."
"Oh, come on," I whined, "tell me what's in this dinner."
He rolled his eyes and said: "The foot of a sinner.
Some pimply kid in Cork that I caught masturbating.
My demons sawed his foot off and left him there, grating
His teeth in agony and pain. There – are you satisfied?"
I shrugged and I said, "Honestly... I think you lied.
I've had sinner foot before, and this is way better."
"Okay, fine," said the devil. "It starts with the letter
P, but I swear that it's nothing too gross."
"Platypus," I guessed. "You're right." "Thank you, my host!"
Then he poured some cheap wine, and we got pixelated
And I went to *Yelp!* and made the devil's cuisine five-star-rated.

Jeff Cottrill

13th November 2023

ring ricochet mukluks pores beamish

The Pizza Face

It was a cold and dark Saskatchewan day
When I thought I heard a small object ricochet
Off the tree that stood ahead in the road
And land on the ground where it had just snowed.
I took a swig from my Beamish and ran
To see what was lying there – that was my plan.
My Mukluks brought me there as quick as they could
To that tiny object lying in front of the wood
And I saw a small ring – an old wedding ring
Which had dented the tree from its wild flying fling
And I heard a voice cry, “Go away, you old bore!
I won’t stay married to a man with such pores!
Look at you – I’ve never seen pimples like those!
Wash your face for a change, it looks really gross!”
Then I saw the poor man trudge away in the snow.
His face looked like pepperoni on pizza dough.
His wife drove away in a fancy sports car
In the arms of a man who looked like a movie star.

Jeff Cottrill

11th December 2023

film conspicuous discombobulated blue spacer

A Day in the Sex Life

sung to the tune of The Beatles' "A Day in the Life"

I saw a blue film today, oh boy
About a spacer who so confused
He was discombobulated by sex
He didn't know what to do
He didn't know how to screw

And yet he still remained aroused
The rise in his trousers was conspicuous
But still the women laughed and laughed
His confidence had to fade
Now he couldn't get it up when all the porno music played...

They could not turn... him... on...

Jeff Cottrill
12th February 2024
boulevard church ghost yard pink

Spooky in Pink

On the bleak boulevard
Sits a quiet church yard
That remains undisturbed – you would think,
But 'round every midnight
Passersby get a fright
From a ghost who shrieks: "I LOVE TO WEAR PINK!"

The spirit frolics and prances
Performs macabre dances
By the graves in the yard with a wink;
And he shows off his hats
And his gloves and his pants
As he declares once again: "I LOVE PINK!"

"Look at my pink shoe!
My pink pantaloons too!
Can't get enough of this colour – it's my kink!
With this pink leiderhose
Every other ghost knows
That I'm the one who always wears pink!"

Since he saw the *Barbie* movie
It's the colour he finds groovy
And his quirky reputation won't shrink;
So the next time you're in town
Take some time to walk down
To the yard with the ghost who wears pink.

Margaret Creedon O'Shea

8th May 2023

ciúnas clatter love rain little

Whist.

Ciúnas a chroí.

Hear little drops rattle

The tin roof

Of our loveshack.

The heat of the beat.

Moulded symmetry

Sum of curves

that trace your back.

The Calm wait ...

for the clatter that brings us back.

Simple and immense.

Ná bí buartha.

Druid liom a chroí.

Ag closaint leis

na deora meidhreacha fearthainne.

Ar ár sháimhín só

in ár shuí.

Margaret Creedon O'Shea

11th September 2023

beat slant contaminate guitar dizzy

Interloper

He beat a quare sight, an eejit.

Slanting in sideways into the snug
regular anoraks wrinkled their noses.

He took Hurdie's seat.

"Next he'll take his song and sing it -

Contaminate the ancient order of The Set List.

Townie- Feens of the streets think the rest of us are Trogladytes"

He shifted, drew his secret weapon from beneath his coat.

A baby guitar -A *Dobro* he called it

And he started.

Pizzicato like a fiddle in a band pit

Running up and down capo and fret.

Slowly then he plucked it.

Heads cocked up a bit.

He strummed as they hummed The Ballad of Ballyragget.

And up it worked into a sweat.

The crowd went west - surged to the snug, full heft.

Sweat and excitement. The session ignited.

Out came a bouzouki, a box and a flute.

All in synch.

A *cibeal* in *Peppers*, started by the quare flute.

Never doubt the slant of a galúit.

He's a maestro, tuned into rhythm and root.

All bow for the accidental visit of The Eejit!

Margaret Creedon O'Shea
12th February 2024
boulevard church ghost yard pink

Birthmarked

Sipped cortados near the Sorbonne.
Went native in the Latin quarter.
Monet-pastel floral frock.
Sweetheart neckline.
Crisp tulle skirt swished
As she crossed
Silk clad legs.
Bone Cameo profile sunglint.
Warm breeze ruffles pink cherry blossoms.
Dreaming back to last night's film
"Bittersweet"- *He has such a look of Nelson Eddy.*
Now ...limp wet cherries wilt on church yard.
Wet spring. War begun.
It seemed a sepia time, long-gone.
Ghost eyes of a nineteen year old girl.
Brutal home birthing. Kettle boiling.
Fire in her bedroom. Torn gauze strips.
Unclean time...
Six week wait to be deigned to bless.
To cleanse the stain that birthmarked her nightdress.
Still ...
His eyes melt. He cried when he saw her.
Held their babe in his arms.
He'll always be Nelson for me, Non?

Margaret Creedon O'Shea

11th March 2024

block icing crawl goodness tragedy

Night visit

No ode to goodness is this
The tragedy that
I can't block.
The sadness of each nightly visit.
Crawls through dreams.
Drawl & mock ...
Nocturnal cynic's lullaby. Knock. Knock.
Could a therapy doll evict you?
Swap Creepy Doll for Goldie Barbie.
Sugar coat magic frosting.
Cream a buttered- life vanilla.
In vino veritas, I guess that
This art of *Schadenfreude*, ...damaged joy,
Is no match for *Freudenfreude*, ...success enjoyed.
Perhaps night angst is rich -
Begets the best place of Art.
Perhaps your nightly visit
Draws this Swansong from my heart.

Jim Crickard

8th May 2023

quiet clatter love rain little

'Redecorating'

Although I've thrown out the cane under the stairs,
I sometimes feel the old owners of this house,
wonder about their obsession with brown fixtures...
Did they crave the earth, or was it the past? Longing for lakes of sepia...
The quiet backdrop of inoffensive magnolia expresses itself
in every room. It must have been love for the unextraordinary

Little by little the shelves came undone
then a sudden clatter
I peer behind and get sucked into a void of floral wallpaper.
I close my eyes and dream of when I'll water gun the walls
with Ochre, Emerald, Gatsby, Courtyard Cream
Reigning as the Queen of this technicolour kingdom

Winner - 12th June 2023

acerbic solstice pitchfork beauty sausages

The Devil's Sausage

Dyslexic satanists have graffiti'd city hall with "all bow for satin"
they fantasise about the devil's sausage, hotter than habanero
they long for the devil's saucisson, the beauty of the burn
turns them on, vindaloo lover, kiss of liquid fire on their lips
finding enlightenment by lighting cigarettes off the burning bush
eternity is one long solstice swivelling on the devil's pitchfork
crepuscular cretins whispering acerbic nothings

Antonio Di Mare

12th June 2023

acerbic solstice pitchfork beauty sausages

Intruder

Summer solstice,
eating the best youth,
the time is an acerbic circumstance,
the pitchfork is the water which breaks the stone with perseverance.

Words are hungry of clouds,
burning in flames as sausages on a barbecue,
intruder is the possibility to fall asleep in the arms of the summer,
beauty hidden in the morning frost.

Intruder is the colours of the autumn,
let the body learn again how to rest,
roots in the veins of the hands,
a dream written on the pages of a book.

Antonio Di Mare

10th July 2023

necklace jazz glorious insecurity peace

Sound of leaves

The wooden necklace of the baby,
had a carillon melody,
colourful as an electric jazz.

At the feet of the moon,
astronauts and scientists were following the dance of the stars,
there was a silent peace in their eyes,
whispering to the planets words of interstellar sand.

"Insecurity" before the storm,
courage after the rainbow,
counting the colours of Jupiter rings,
unendless will be the glorious sound of the leaves on Mars.

For a few moments the necklace of the baby,
was reflecting the light of the moon,
and still the planets will kiss the sparkling sunset,
reflecting the light of the big bang.

Antonio Di Mare

9th October 2023

hell pixelated dinner devil foot

Cozy Place

A dinner in a cozy place,
a vivid fire,
prepared with meticulous passion,
the flames shine as even hell could be a nice place to stay for a while.

Two bottles of wine,
not too far a dog watches everything with severe judgement,
tender is the first bite of cold,
on a foot of distance the time can melt as long as a whisper of beauty can reclaim it.

The snow has already captured the pixelated geography of the upcoming winter,
snowflakes are disposed as a military corps,
the perfume of burned wood is everywhere in the house,
there are few instances where even the devil deserves some rest.

Massimo Elijah

10th April 2023

still brittle door anniversary quake

Untitled

The raindrops may clatter

But they are little

And if we're quiet enough, my love

We can hear them one by one

10th July 2023

necklace jazz glorious insecurity peace

The Courage to Freestyle

Riffing is reckless

But sometimes what's written can't measure the message

Like seeking for something that's precious

Or losing a necklace while wearing the necklace

Losing the tempo but keeping the beat as it stretches

The say that the method of jazz is no method

But even the legends of jazz would say method is needed to fly free while still netted

What is so glorious about rising untethered?

With no rope just prove that one's faith is unfettered

Efforts to prove I'm secure

Only leave me at insecurity's pleasure

Security means safe, but does it mean settled?

Still, when there is peace

Before even asking, the question is settled

Massimo Elijah

14th August 2023

ginger seek breath horse polymer

Untitled

All plastics are polymers
But not all polymers are plastic
DNA is a polymer
You can't make it, only match it

And a horse is a horse
You may say: but of course!
Though no two horses
Run this life the same course

A seeker is a seeker
But when they find, are they a keeper?
If there's no promise that a knower
Has more peace than a believer

Ginger is a root
But it is also is a flower
Bitter is its taste
Although healing is its power

Life lives underground
And in the sky and still survives
Even underwater
All must breathe to stay alive

Massimo Elijah

11th December 2023

film conspicuous discombobulate blue spacer

Untitled

To think I have to be a mystic to see magic is ridiculous

The miracles of life are not hidden but conspicuous

I do not have to be a dreamer or a spacer

To know I do not know enough to not believe in something greater

The mind is so marvelous but also loves to complicate

Attempts to reassemble only tend to discombobulate

I spent my life thinking but discovered nothing new

My only answer to why is the sky blue is: cause it's blue

You may say it is sunlight mixed with hydrogen and oxygen

But I say it's the film of the eyelight that I caught it in

Massimo Elijah

8th January 2024

hope therapy electricity clouds neon

Untitled

Love woke me up today from dreams that I sleep on
So I get up, put my head and my eyes and my feet on
Clouds in the sky look soft enough to stream on
The sun shines with yellow so bright it counts as neon
The brightness of its rays becomes a hope I can beam on
Hope's an electricity that my heart can beat on
Gratitude is therapy and gives strength to keep on
I have more love and grace than I can even speak on
People who uplift me and an earth I can lean on
Love woke me up and brought me here...so may it lead on!

Niall Hearne

Winner - 8th January 2024

hope therapy electricity clouds neon

Untitled

The neon sign that spelt hope
flickered then stopped
I stopped
going to therapy
I was feeling well you see
at the time
until it all slipped away
and then I had to lay
down
and the clouds floated over me
storms coming
casting electricity
I was sort of
over me
and there
still
I lay
passing day after day
I let the earth kiss me
and soak my clothes
ancient wells sought to travel through me
and in time they would water moss and stone
and soon wild rabbits deer and wolf will roam
the worms took up residence in my pores
and turned my skin to soil
each seed nurtured
eased previous troubles or toil

Niall Hearne

8th January 2024

hope therapy electricity clouds neon

I passed each solstice in solace
and over aeons the daughters of the sea
laid a blanket over me
and set me free
from friendly eye or smile
even then
I kept in their minds a while
but now
an island I lie
in time they wrote me songs and tales
then they too grew old
I've seen their death
I've seen their life
I heard all stories they told
in silly swollen pubs or by homestead fireside
and I'd smile
slowly
at their voyagers setting sail
they saw stones falling to the sea
they called me dead
but I've woken now
for I was only sleeping you see.

John Horan

8th January 2024

hope therapy electricity clouds neon

Untitled

My name is neon
Clouds of electricity
Flume up my nostrils
We've long lost this city
The particle snowflakes
Swoop to avoid me
AI is handy till you want something useful
The tinsel flashes all night long
It's always Christmas
We're boosting the economy again
My circuits need rewiring
I've got to see the sentient therapist
A mechanic in the old days
But who remembers them?
There's no hope for us
But it doesn't matter
You can't sell a feeling
You can only program it.

Jennifer Horgan

Winner - 11th March 2024

block icing crawl goodness tragedy

Dirty Article

This is a contact I cannot block.

This is my own country.

Where once I heard goodness

I read the shock, the tragedy

of my sex. Babies buried

under fallen women. Women

given new names and a hiding

for straying beyond the home.

Straying from their household

duties. Icing birthday cakes

for little children born

of God-bound marriages.

This is the voice in my ear.

My forever-contact.

My constant ringing.

It is the voice of my country,

my place. I crawl into the margins

of a notebook, but see still

the words on the page

– their power.

Róisín Leggett Bohan
Winner - 9th October 2023
hell pixelated dinner devil foot

apéritif

one eye stark
staring hell

straight into the gut
of its pixelated

pre-dinner apéritifs:
mojitos, margaritas,

sinuous sips of sex
on the beach

while the devil's
ulcerated foot taps

out time with bat
-winged phonetics.

not easy
for the living

ear to hear,
too hyped up

on sucking life
through a paper straw.

Mona Lynch

Winner - 11th September 2023

beat slant contaminate guitar dizzy

Untitled

Hurray, I'm off the housing list, gifted a site by the council, dizzy with delight.
Now I can build my cabin. I will arise and go early, go to the bank, the builder.

Not for blocks, but clay and wattle. Good enough for the Ashanti people, good
enough for me. I will have a garden. Mike is making a hive for my honeybees.

I will grow my food, my beans in a row. I will have peace there, dropping quietly,
not the drip drip of leaks, and the scuttling of cockroaches.

I will sit in my garden, with my Aldi water feature, relaxing to the beat of my
guitar under the slanting sun. The neighbours will envy me, my bee loud glade,
as the cars swish by on the contaminated Innisfree Rd.

Matt Mooney

11th December 2023

film conspicuous discombobulated blue spacer

Homemade Flight

Now when you're on another flight into Egypt
since Gaza's south is no longer safe
as they were told by the Herodian
whose reprisal for invasion
has become the slaughter of the innocents

You do not want to be conspicuous
Under any circumstances
While drones are out to discombobulate
And disembowel you
Anything resembling human movement

And when out of the blue
means fire and brimstone
down upon your head
suddenly it's as if you are part
of a crowd scene in a film

bombarded off the face of the earth
and if you are left to live
you just sit there
be you man, woman or child
shot down, half dead

feeling for your body parts
looking at what's left of your world
like a spacer
Shell-shocked
Dazed to death

Adrian Neville

12th February 2024

boulevard church ghost yard pink

Untitled

A yard of pink yarn in the boulevard ditch

Lost like the ghost of a long-ago game

Played in the yard of a derelict church.

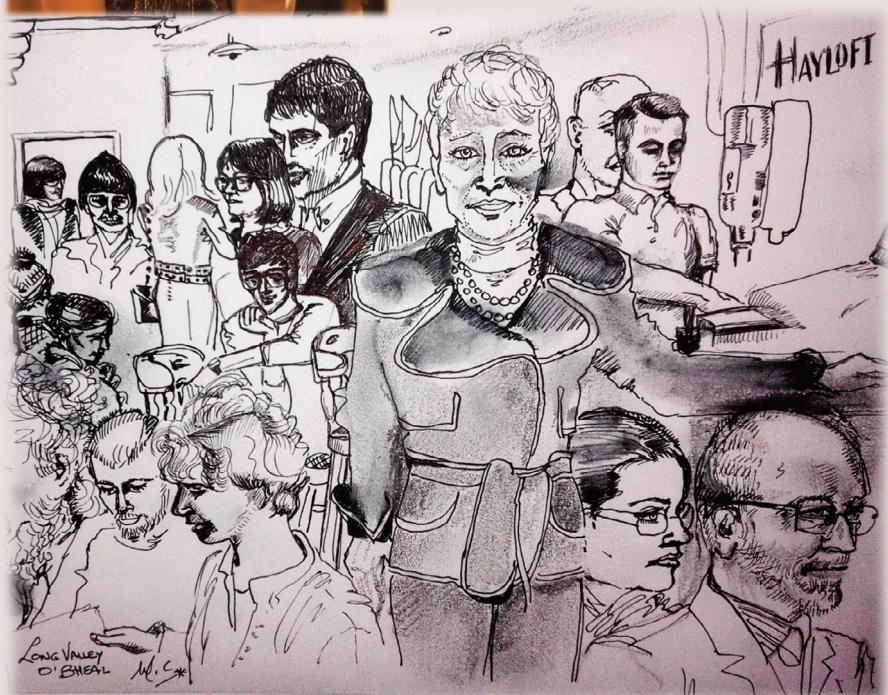
Maybe a girl will come to reclaim it

But maybe the cemetery

Has already claimed her

And a scarf will never be knit

Mary O'Connell - In Memoriam



Mary O'Connell - In Memoriam



Lauren O'Donovan

13th November 2023

ring ricochet mukluks pores beamish

From the Aleutian Islands to Point Barrow

The fox shoulders open the door to the bar,
leaving a violation of cold into a hot room,
before the door ricochets off the stop

and bangs shut again. The fox stomps snow clumps
from her threadbare mukluks, approaches
the bartender — an old wolf with one eye.

The fox calls for *that* drink,
the one that reminds her of the moon —
that quality of light that travels through the air

down to stroke the forest's witchy hair. “Beam-ish,”
offers a badger dressed in a woollen three piece suit,
sitting on a stool at the bar. The badger

pushes his glasses up his snout. ‘Beamish,’
he repeats and the fox nods. The wolf pours
a whiskey neat, his lone eye screaming

what he thinks of stout. The fox takes the glass,
salutes the badger, knocks the golden juice in one.
Thirteen o'clock rings out

from a featherless owl with talons long and twisted,
curled in to pierce the heart of each foot. By the fire,
a kindness of juvenile crows scream.

Lauren O'Donovan
Winner - 12th February 2024
boulevard church ghost yard pink

They Once Were Doves

On Holy Trinity Boulevard, through a drizzle-thick day,
a pigeon with one twisted, club foot rushes me
in an avalanche of feather. I dive to the broken cobbles,

eliciting a torrent of laughter from teenagers
munching mushrooms, loitering with a calculated ennui
in the churchyard. If robins are the messengers

of the dead, I wonder what ghost possessed this pigeon.
What missive from the underworld it felt urgent enough
to deliver in my face. On my knees, cheeks hot pink

with the judgement of misspent youth, a jar of light mayo
tumbled from my dropped groceries rolls to a stop
at the Virgin Mary's feet. The pigeon lands

a safe arm's length away, locks one bulging brown eye
on mine, and shits a biblical flood of white faeces
all over my spilled carrots.

Rosie O'Regan

12th June 2023

acerbic solstice pitchfork beauty sausages

Bitch

Hers was an acerbic beauty
an eclipsed Summer solstice
a pitchfork in my sausage

12th February 2024

boulevard church ghost yard pink

Mad Mary

I've walked this *boulevard* my whole life.
Excuse me? Boul-e-Vard, excuse you!
My whole life, this boulevard.
That block of stone there?
A ghost church, empty
Sunday to Sunday, except
for pigeons, an' me sometimes
draped in me pink blanky
dancin' on the altar.

An I'll tell ya something for nothing
I think Mary quite liked sex
she was never meant to be blue.

Rosie O'Regan

8th January 2024

hope therapy electricity clouds neon

Rain

In therapy I talk of clouds, of how their neon linings keep me awake 'til sunrise,
the way that light flickers through the window before I fall, and of how
the electricity of those morning dreams is my only colour.

I am a cloud machine, I say
rain waiting to fall
my hope a seed
in the ground

14th August 2023

ginger seek breath horse polymer

Bolt

Somewhere, out beyond
the fields of polymer
wild horses run, seek
for nothing, save the air
they breathe, one another

ginger tails fly, paint
the wind, and
are gone

Seán Ó Treasaigh

Winner - 8th May 2023

ciúnas clagarnach love báistí little

Untitled

Clagarnach báistí

A little ciúnas please

Did I hear you say

You might love me

Catherine Ronan

Winner - 14th August 2023

ginger seek breath horse polymer

TFW

Polymer me this,
polymer me that,
but is that Ken
in his new sun hat?

Waiting for Barbie
to arrive on her polymer horse,
his chest tightened
and his throat felt hoarse.

Breathe, he said
as we seek the dream,
licking ice cream off each other
in the next movie scene.

JJ Fisher Price was the director
with an enormous ginger beard.
Scene two, Act 1, boys and girls.
Time to get TFW!
- Totally Fu**ing Weird.

Catherine Ronan

11th September 2023

beat slant contaminate guitar dizzy

Star Signs

Oh, how you work that guitar,

Scorpio style.

Beat me into submission,

every time.

I am slant Pisces,

thrumming shamanic drums

to make you dizzy.

Ready to mate and contaminate!

Catherine Ronan

13th November 2023

ring ricochet mukluks pores beamish

A New Kind of Heaven

My love is coming at you

like a ricochet.

Stuttering out of a

lonely, lazy, revolver.

My mukluks are not

suited to this land of

dusty hardy bucks,

but I am willing

to get into the ring

with anyone who will

not serve enough Beamish

to the squeamish until

it sweats out through

all our pores and bores

redefine Nirvana!

Catherine Ronan

11th December 2023

film conspicuous discombobulating blue spacer

Orbiting 2023

It is Christmas time again
and I find our chance encounter,
discombobulating in the bright lights
of Smyths and the shine from your
recently veneered teeth!

You used to look like Hannibal Lecter
in the film, *Silence of The Lambs*,
but now with your conspicuous
hair transplant and searing blue contacts,
you look like Bradley Cooper!

All gifts from Santa, you quip as
you climb aboard the mother ship
of your ex-girlfriend.
Spacer, I say and you reply,
takes one to know one!

Roxane

13th November 2023

ring ricochet mukluks pores beamish

Warmth

It's that time of the year.

Short days, spare daylight, strong winds and rain. Again and again and again...

Please, let's have a minute of silence to lay to rest all my non-waterproof shoes....

It's a fact: though I said I would, I did not yet invest in a pair of Muckluks

- whatever the spelling is.

Some people - like the famous Amelie on the Parisian canal St Martin - love ricochets. Well, on my end, I'd rather jump, with both feet in big puddles and splash water on everyone, myself included.

[Shout-out to my nephew and nieces, my favourite audience for this activity, but obviously, not aware of this livestream as it's way past their bedtime.]

Back to focus!

Do you know why I love walking in the rain and wind?

It's a free spa: my face is smooth, my pores are washed, I'm glowing!

Sadly, I don't have the privilege of a fireplace at home...

The solution for warmth is heading to the nearest pub, getting cosy next to a ring of ambers and savouring a well-deserved pint of ...

Na ... not a Beamish. Don't you dare even mention a Guinness.

My treat is definitely a Murphy's.

Roxane

13th November 2023

ring ricochet mukluks pores beamish

Block

I don't think people perceive enough the power of the "Block" button on social media.

Rumours, prejudice and bullying crawl through screens and keyboards, melting your peace like icing on a cake left on a windowsill.

You become defiant, scared, insecure.

More than you could probably already be (sorry, this sentence doesn't make any sense. What a tragedy !)

Oh! Those wonderful trust issues because of people you never have and never will meet in person. Or maybe you did, actually.

They're just hiding, under fake names.

Ghosting isn't nice, *as they told me*.

It's the act of a coward, *as they told me*.

Blablabla...

Maybe it is. Maybe there's cruelty in it. Maybe I'm not as innocent as I look.

But I deserve to sleep at night, to wake up light-hearted, without dark clouds from these memories.

Casting a spell to become invisible to some people isn't yet operational. So thank Goodness for the "Block" button!!

Philip Spillane

Winner - 10th July 2023

necklace jazz glorious insecurity peace

A Glorious Mess

I still remember
The worst jazz band
Of the jazz festival 2014.

A glorious mess.

The basin was drunk,
The sax did not turnip,
The double bassist was in a choking fit
from a necklace tightened around his neck
- Don't fret; he was fine
Just added to the glorious disaster.

The drummer was insecure.
the rhythms and harmonies were a way off,
He duckfooted an alien tempo
A sham to the bossa nova.

Yet, there was some piece to the chaos
The skat man was dynamite;
skipidied stunts that slapped through his chops

Till he shut up.

Still to this day, they shall go unnamed
The worst jazz band at that festival
So bad; it was glorious.

Philip Spillane

Winner - 13th November 2023

ring ricochet mukluks pores beamish

Warning

She can read fortunes
In empty Beamish glasses,

If the foam makes ringed spirals - marriage,

Or if the black stuff is full of pores
as large as eyes - watch out!

She barks - "if you see a mukluk, run"
Her head distorted by the pint glass.

Shaking my head I pick up the empty pint
and say - "What the fuck is a mukluk?"

Pisssshhhhhhh!

The glass ricochets
In my hight hand,

I spit, I jump, I swear.

Somewhere I hear a mukluk - laugh!

Philip Spillane

Winner - 11th December 2023

film conspicuous discombobulating blue spacer

Picture House

These images
Are discombobulating,
open cuts
Made across a film reel.

The cinema projector
blinks blue.

We are a waist of the
Spacer generation.

In the dimness
Living in the darkness,

We talk over the movies
Or smooch behind the seats.

During which,
Your lips
Were my spotlight.

Till a conspicuous
"Husshhhhhhhhh"
Comes from next to us.

The lights come on,
My arm was numb around your shoulder

Philip Spillane

Winner - 11th December 2023

film conspicuous discombobulating blue spacer

The hand deep in your hair.

“Sorry”

But we didn't care.

It was 2004

Long gone,

Strange how time crawls.

Yet I left the past around the corner.

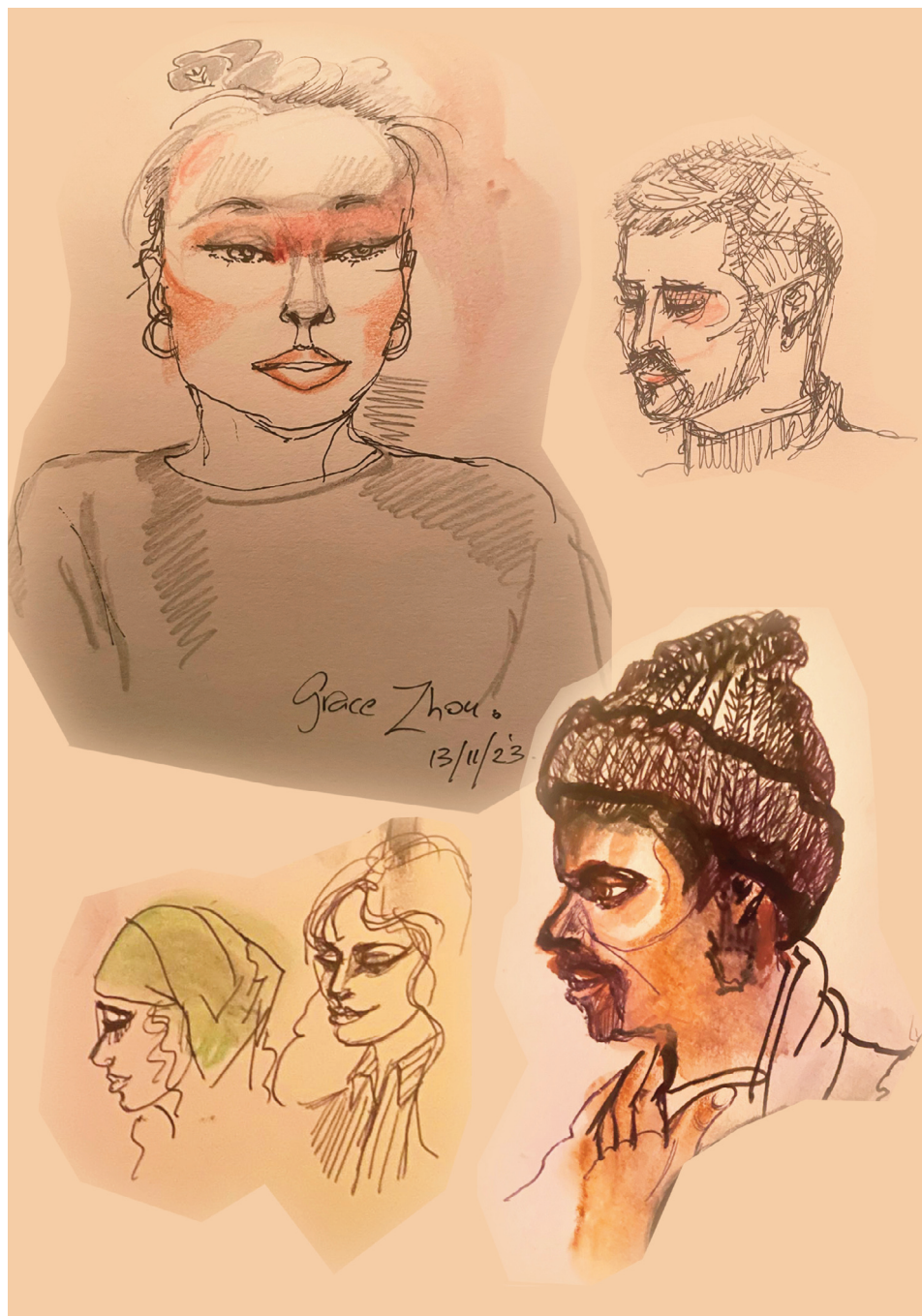
The picture house is a ghost town now,

As I think of the ghost of you.



The Long Valley Bar

Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



Sketches by Margaret Creedon O'Shea



International Poetry-Film Competition Shortlist 2023

Screening A

available now at vimeo.com/888316466

Sandra Vazquez (Mexico)	<i>Fleeting Seasons</i>
Dawn Westlake (USA)	<i>For the Skeptical</i>
Tristan Crowe (Northern Ireland)	<i>Scartin' Midges</i>
Haniyyah Nauzeer (England)	<i>Marcasite</i>
Pamela Falkenberg & Jack Cochran (USA)	<i>Cancer Alley</i>
Carine Iriarte (France)	<i>The Torrid Zone</i>
Angie Siveria (Germany)	<i>Museum Under Water</i>
Douglas Ridloff (USA)	<i>Growth</i>
Fiona Aryan (Ireland)	<i>A Red Negligee in a White Vanity Case</i>
Philippe Robert Jean Talavera (Namibia)	<i>Be a Man</i>
Anne Ciecko (USA)	<i>Petrykivka</i>
Oksana Shchur (Ukraine)	<i>Troianker / Tiger Lilies</i>
Meghann Plunkett (USA)	<i>Eve</i>
Grace Wells (Ireland)	<i>Samhain, Wisdom</i>
Janet Lees (UK)	<i>Blame the Fox</i>



International Poetry-Film Competition Shortlist 2023

Screening B

available now at vimeo.com/888400057

Diana Taylor (UK)	<i>Paddington Maeve</i>
Jim Haverkamp (USA)	<i>The Voice in Isabel Fleiss's Office</i>
Steve Smart (Scotland)	<i>Veleva veleva</i>
Matt Mullins (USA)	<i>Beatnik Sermon</i>
Sinéad McClure (Ireland)	<i>Becoming Bird</i>
Winner Kate Sweeney (UK)	<i>To Be Two</i>
José Luis Saturno (Mexico)	<i>The Torrential Melody</i>
Ambre Vanneste (Belgium)	<i>The Snowglobe</i>
Flora Xie (New Zealand)	<i>Supernova</i>
Kathryn Darnell (USA)	<i>Acer</i>
POETAQ (Japan)	<i>π(Pi)</i>
Axel Clévenot (France)	<i>Klopp – Pierre</i>
Claire Kinnen (USA)	<i>Signs</i>
Suzie Hanna (UK)	<i>God's Favour, Anne</i>
Mischa Andriessen & Arjan Brentjes (Netherlands)	<i>Samuel</i>



International Poetry-Film Competition Shortlist 2023

Irish Selection

available now at vimeo.com/888128119

Natasha Duffy	<i>The Citizen's Wife</i>
Margaret Kilcoyne	<i>Lumberings of Lughnasa</i>
C. Michael Payne	<i>Lines in Memory of my Father</i>
Daniel Heaphy	<i>Current Affairs</i>
Éamon De Burca	<i>Night-Time</i>
Tristan Crowe	<i>Oot Here Mae Lane</i>
Polina Cosgrave	<i>Currency Exchange</i>
Niall Cuddy	<i>Sometimes I Pray for Bad Fun</i>
Edwin Mullane	<i>In Omos de San Francisco</i>
Philip Spillane	<i>The Spider's Industrial Age</i>
Grace Wells	<i>Grass</i>
Jennifer Redmond	<i>Drift</i>
Maeve O'Hair	<i>Making an Orchard</i>
Matthew Thompson	<i>Swimming Lesson</i>
Saara Vuola	<i>honeybutter</i>
Cormac Culkeen	<i>Sometimes They Come Back</i>



12th

Ó Bhéal



poetry-film
competition

Ó Bhéal's 12th Poetry-Film Competition is open for submissions
from 1st May - 31st August 2024

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 2022

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 2024
One winner will receive the festival prize for best poetry-film

Free to Enter!

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



McNamara Slam Winners 2023-2024

10 April	Karan Casey
8 May	Seán Ó Treasaigh
12 June	Jim Crickard
10 July	Philip Spillane
14 August	Catherine Ronan
11 September	Mona Lynch
22 September	“Audience Participation” (an improvised collective)
9 October	Róisín Leggett Bohan
13 November	Philip Spillane
11 December	Philip Spillane
8 January	Niall Hearne
12 February	Lauren O’Donovan
11 March	Jennifer Horgan

Guest Poets 2023-2024

10 April	David Ross Linklater, Alison McCrossan & Glyn Matthews
8 May	Darragh Ó Caoimh and Dairena Ní Chinnéide
12 June	Sarah Hymas and John O’Donnell
10 July	Gail McConnell and Gerry Boland
14 August	John Watson and Devjani Bodepudi
11 September	Ceaití Ní Bheildiúin and Ben MacCaoilte
22 September	Qui Qarre and Leon Dunne
9 October	Leah Naomi Green and Jane Robinson
13 November	David Nash and Grace H. Zhou
11 December	Don Paterson
8 January	Daragh Fleming and Sarah Barnsley
12 February	New Creative Writing from UCC
11 March	Tania Haberland and Michael McKimm

visible tortoise sunny fascinate psychotic caravan
birth new mind fibrous coffee ocean sock orange
swelter antique beer slat cozened thirst pleasure
tale fern slim abstract write oval map yesterday
sense room detail between song advice spark
tinsel surface hoarse spot incandescent
wall grey south
alert pass response boom bang sleep length flare
regret twist vague ice water reflect wish pollen
infuse pop bronx hail strain yard bad hope
double late measure switch empty crow cousin
water
plastic urchin grain sound shelter distill cloud cork
tangent nerve daken spiral number social
blade wood love erode plane distort chair balance

12th 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 9th April 2024 to 28th January 2025,
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 2025 and invited to read at Ó Bhéal in Cork
on the 14th of April 2025.

This year's Judge is Lauren O'Donovan

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



Ó Bhéal Publications 2023

The Unfinished Book of Poetry 2023
featuring poems by

Myah O'Brien	Chelsea Ní Chéilleachair
Grace Hourhan	Ceola Ní Shluaigh
Solène Halligon	Leah Norberg
Leah Davis	Malena Jolie Baake
Arden Mallari	Leah Hartigan Hurley
Arissa Mallari	Megan Houlihan
Emma Browne	Bonnie O'Mahony
Katie Bruen	Sandra Murphy
Charlie McCarthy	Iska Bernauer
Priscilla Isidor	Alice Stockley
Emily Nora Spillane	Clodagh Murphy
Róisín O'Sullivan	Mira Thomas
Denis Gavrya	Shóna Power
Hannah Lucey	Andrew Maume
Senan Nakajima	Daire McStay
Ellen Curran	Hugh McGinn
Evie Burke	Ian Crowley
Lea Delauche	Jack Bugler
Lily Ní Shúilleabháin	Kieran Barry
Aoife Ní Chianáin	Leo Porion
Naíoise Fitzgerald	MacDara Tobin
Chulainn Ó Tuama	Ronan McCarthy
	Robert Barry

The Unfinished Book of Poetry 2023
poems from five **Cork** secondary schools

Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council
Arts Ealaíona

LIBRARIES
LEABHARLANNA

Ó Bhéal
www.ohbeal.ie

A Cork City Council Arts Office, Cork City Libraries and Schools Project
in partnership with Ó Bhéal

A Cork City Council Arts Office, Cork City Libraries and Schools Project
in partnership with Ó Bhéal

"Praising loves and language, adroitly rhythmical with a rested, assured voice. Readable on a bed of grass or at bus-stop, Holden's poetry will have you noticing a bit more beauty in nature, and nature in people, before getting home to stargaze." - Michelle Delea

"Bilingual poet Rosalin Blue is known for the quality of expression she brings to her performances. Her writing is visceral, as she imbues each word with deep, personal meaning, revealing the wonder of the female body, taking zoomorphic inspiration from nature, all the while casting her acuity on the mysterious. Expect to be entertained, challenged and moved by a poet who has proved an inspiration to many." - John Michael Tynan

Rosalin Blue Cathal Holden

spoken worlds
circles and cycles

Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council
Arts Ealaíona

Ó Bhéal
press



the 11th

winter warmer poetry festival

FEATURING POETRY READINGS/FILMS/WORKSHOPS
LIVE MUSIC, OPEN-MIC SHOWCASE

24-26th November 2023

Nano Nagle Place, Cork & via live stream
Free event, all welcome

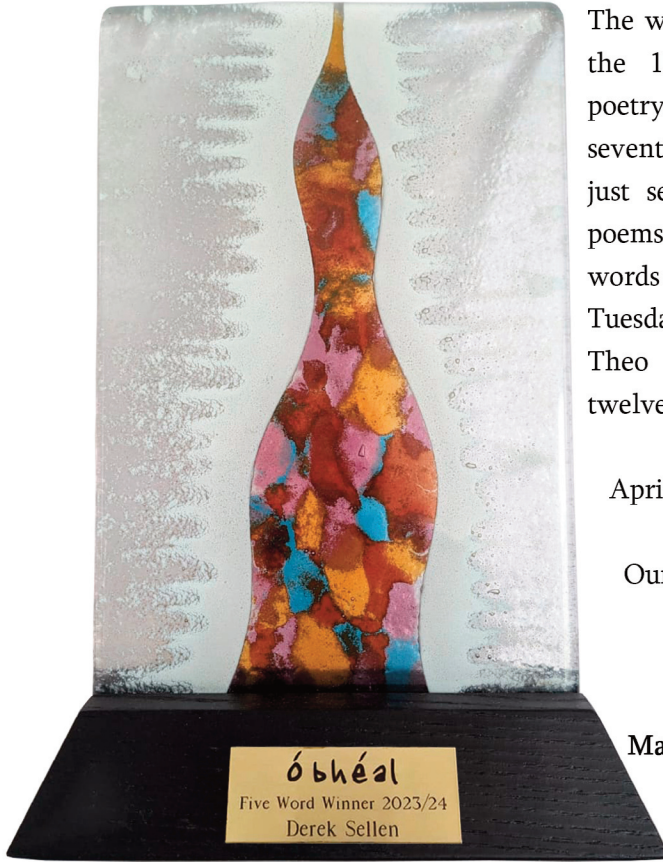
Eiléan Ni Chuilleanáin • Fred D'Aguiar • Rónán Ó Snodaigh
Sarah Clancy • Vona Groarke • Aindrias de Staic • Rody Gorman
Dylan Brennan • Jessica Traynor • Emma Must & many more...



FULL PROGRAMME &
LIVE-STREAM STAGE

@obheal.ie IG: obheal





The winning poems and shortlist from the 11th International Five Words poetry competition feature in this, our seventeenth volume. Entrants are given just seven days to write and submit poems which include each of the five words offered on our website every Tuesday at noon, over 42 weeks. Judge Theo Dorgan selected a shortlist of twelve from 480 entries.

April 8th 2024 is the 696th Ó Bhéal.

Our congratulations to winners ...

Derek Sellen (1st)

Mary Anne Smith Sellen (2nd)

Laura Theis (3rd)



Poems from Ó Bhéal's Monday evening events, Five Word Challenge poems written since April 2023, are also included, as are sketches of guest poets and regulars made by resident artist, musician & poet Margaret Creedon O'Shea. The five words used in Ó Bhéal's live events are provided spontaneously by those present on the night and the winner is chosen by audience response. While these compositions are written within 15 minutes and may be considered first drafts at the time of initial sharing, writers may make minor edits to their poems prior to publication here. Sometimes they appear in journals, collections and other publications. The Five Word Challenge is also known as the McNamara Slam, conceived by poetry aficionado and emcee Gerry McNamara.