

Five Words

Volumes I-VI

poems from the first six years

Ó Bhéal's live event Five Word challenges

April 2007 to April 2013



poems from the first six years

300 Five Word Challenges

(16th April 2007 - 8th April 2013)

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for their valued support over the years

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to the house eMCees
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audiences and poets**

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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*

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Five Words

Volumes I-VI

“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

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FOREWORD

The publication of *Five Words Vols I-VI* on April 14th 2025 coincides with the launch of *Five Words Vol XVIII*, the final edition in the Five Words anthology series - celebrated at the final (and 709th) Ó Bhéal event. The first six editions of *Five Words* were printed and stapled by hand. As *Vol VII* was the first edition to be published in hardback, the decision to combine the first six stapled editions into a single hardback made sense, so that all 18 years of publications could form a robust set of volumes on the shelves of local and other poets, as well as in libraries, including to date Cork City libraries and the Poetry Ireland library.

Prior to the inauguration of the Five Words International Poetry competition in 2013, *Five Words* only contained a selection of five word challenge poems each year - poems written at Ó Bhéal during the evening's warm-up exercise. After 2013 the anthology was expanded to include the winning and shortlisted poems from the international competition, which by contrast offered a full week to complete each submission, as well as offering prize money and a glass award created by glass artist Michael Ray.

In addition, all eighteen editions, from *Vol I* to *Vol XVIII* are now freely accessible as pdf ebooks on the Ó Bhéal website, via its Five Words Competition page. The website is intended to become a perpetual archive of audio, video and textual poetry publications, which include performances and events of 709 Ó Bhéal events, twelve Winter Warmer poetry festivals and a number of ebook versions of Cork's annual *The Unfinished Book of Poetry* anthology series, which arranges workshops for and publishes new poetry by Transition Year secondary school students from five schools each year, curated and edited by Ó Bhéal. The website also features a selection of poems from the project which were chosen for Cork City Libraries' *Poetry in the Parks* series.

A heartfelt Thank You! to everyone who has contributed to *Five Words* over the past eighteen years, for all the vital donations and to the brilliant audiences and writers and artists who made it what it is.

Sláinte 's Beannachtaí,

Paul Casey
Director
Ó Bhéal

On the occasion of Ó Bhéal's first Anniversary

16 April 2007 - 7 April 2008

50 open-mic sessions

Vol I

"Five words in a line."

Gertrude Stein

Dean Adedipe

Winner - 28th January 2008

portrait buffoon buffalo vast bland

Portrait So Bland

Thundering buffaloes

Thrived across the plains so vast

Hunted in hundreds for their tasty hides

Driven by self perpetuating shallow buffoons

Their thundering was their voice, their native tongue

Their real ones kept wagging in protest

Lopped off into cooking pots

Portrait of deforestation, depletion, extinction!

Mankind always writes for this planet...

A story so bland.

Paul Casey

2th July 2007

art pithy rain steadfast clunky

Apple Art

If rain is the art of clouds
I can no longer stand steadfast
accusing apple trees of being too pithy
Or too clunky with their fruits

Though when rain is the art of apple trees
I will stare straight at those clunky clouds
imagine their jealousy
and pithy them.

Paul Casey

14 Jan 2008

building slam shoe body glass

Slammed

While building these words
drawn black from the glass
the giant foot of Murphy
has entered my body
to wear it like a shoe,

is lifting me up now before you
toes wriggling for comfort behind my eyes
to pause and perfectly aim
this excuse for poetry
at your expectant stare
only to stamp me down
as a seal of approval
for the McNamara slam.

Alan Coakley

Winner - 22nd October 2007

rhyme balloon giraffe glass epidermis

Untitled

It's time for another poem
An attempt to top this night of balloons
And giraffes hitting lights
And fifteen beautiful beings
Shedding their social selves
Like a thin layer of epidermis
And reveal their soul

To bring forth words that fill my soul
And my mind like a glass
And happiness will be mine
the rain outside will not deter
And I am done deferring
I absorb the joy and the pain
I thank you from a place deeper than the brain

Alan Coakley

Winner - 10th December 2007

barn peril useless fidget posit

A Modest Position

It's a perilous state of affairs
All of us sitting in chairs

We should sit on the floor more
I often think to myself

Look at the school system, for example

All of these kids sitting in chairs
It's a deeply perilous state of affairs

Leaning back they quickly fall
And suddenly a kid is sprawled in the hall

It's useless now to bawl
"Jesus boy, were you born in a barn?"

So to prevent this from happening
I posit that we sit on the floor

At least until the age of eighteen or more

Alan Garvey

26th November 2007

capricious cork Louisiana coffee ceramic

Moonshine

Is it the moonshine around Louisiana
that stills the night, an old bowl singing
its ceramic glow on the bleached bones
of cowboys and rustlers or decrepit tin cups
dug up and used on makeshift rifle ranges
or snakeoil's tincture of rose-coloured view,
a chance for a rancher's daughter
after too many bruises and tears?

Her father's drunken fists sway under
the clear promise of liquor – the bottle's
apparent transparency, whose cork passed
into the same dirt as the fingers that held
the plough and worked the land. Capricious
is the night in Louisiana, throwing the folds
of her cloak around a luminous peephole.

Anne-Marie Grandfield

16th April 2007

tootie complacent hypnotic beauty obtuse

Weeping Willow

I sit there complacent and still,
I feel the warm sun against my skin.

I watch the beauty of a weeping willow,
As it's skinny branches bend and twist,
A feathered breeze brushes by.

I fall into a hypnotic state,
As the green leaves fall,
Hitting a silk lake,
Creating ripples,
That suddenly disperse.

I hear the muffled voices of Tout Te,
Enjoying this day.

I lazily close my eyes and lay down,
As I close out the obtuse sounds of the world,
As I turn away from life,
As I switch off,
As I quietly sink away.

Anne-Marie Grandfield

1st October 2007

Cashel Tara towerhouse hello broken

The Rose

I sit broken in my towerhouse,
heart gone,
happiness gone,
life empty,

I sit perplexed and disorientated.

why?
why sing a soft hello in my ear,
why walk with me on the sandy banks of Cashel,
why sit with me on the hill of Tara,
filling me with dreams,
livid and alive.

falling, falling....falling.

now I'm left in silence,
now I'm left with broken dreams.

I placed that white rose,
so perfect so pure,
on you last night.

soul empty,
hollow,
true and true.

why did you leave me?

why?

Daw Harding

28th January 2008

portrait boffin buffalo vast bland

Untitled

Not being
a buffalo boffin
I thought
the vast portrait
rather bland.

WINNER - 25th February 2008

deviant nuts red breakthrough teacher

Untitled

His nuts were red
after his breakthrough
with the
deviant teacher.

Seamus Harrington

7th January 2008

serendipity cog wife love water

Untitled

“To cog from a book
is cheating” he said.

His wife mused for a while

“To cog from several books
is known as research, love.”

“You always threw cold water
on my notions, love”

“Only the dusty dry ones.”

“How clever you are dear

How lucky I am

Serendipity is my middle name.”

Niall Herriott

26th November 2007

ceramic capricious coffee Louisiana Cork

Mixed Signals

On a liner from Cork to Louisiana
Sipping coffee from a ceramic mug
I felt capricious when lovely Lana
Gave me a warm seductive hug
On a liner from Cork to Louisiana.
Then from beneath my feet
She pulled the feekin'rug
When she told me sweetly that
She was waiting for – Diana!
Wasn't I the mug on the way to Louisiana.

Niall Herriott

17th December 2007

eyes sloth brownie tears crystal

A Jungle Saga

I felt the eyes of the jungle on me.
It raised the hairs on the back of my neck.
Deeper I plunged in search of the last sloth.
Then I was lost, a gibbering wreck.

I swam a river, terrified of piranhas.
I stepped on a snake, it was twenty foot long.
I ran like hell through thorns that ripped me.
Every turn I took I felt was wrong.

All I had to eat in my rucksack
was a stale inedible left-over brownie
(unlike the delights made by Jennifer).
What a way to go for a townie!

I'd heard of a tribe in these parts
of the Amazon who liked human meat.
The tears started to roll down my face
when their drums began to beat.

Then I remembered my magic crystal.
It had saved me from many a grisly fate.
I gave the crystal a timely rub.
And here I am in the Long Valley at eight.

Jennifer Matthews

Winner - 26th November 2007

capricious cork Louisiana coffee ceramic

Downriver

Your suggestion of coffee was capricious
but I took it to be cosmic,
and read into the ceramic cup
every future I wished
you would be.

But coffee grounds aren't wine corks,
promises aren't guarantees,
and a look in the eye isn't sincerity.

Our words washed downriver
on watery conversations
and deposited all our nothings
into silty fans at the delta-
the escape mouth-
of something more powerful
like the Mississippi River
and its threatening caress
running down the spine of
Louisiana.

Its waste could make
a fish of me, send me
to the ocean with no hope of
sand bags keeping me
at the home where
I thought I'd be.

Jennifer Matthews

10th December 2007

barn peril useless fidget posit

Before Harvest

Useless, empty enormous space
inhales allergens, stale and stifling.
All is gone while you are away.
Letters fidget in my mind.
Letters fidget in my mind.
Letters lying to a page-
forcing you away, demanding you
stay- despite the peril
of lost hair, ripped sins.
Invited invented worries posit
possible grievances - farm tools for harvesting
potential parables of you and me, this endless story again and again.
I fill this barn we raised with
hate and praise.
Whether end it again, or stay,
this house of shit and hay
remains.

Mel O'Dea

28th January 2008

portrait boffin buffalo vast bland

Untitled

the boffin calculated the
Schrödinger equation probability of a
buffalo crossing through a solid wall
drinking vodka and floating through the miasma the
buffalo walked through the walls of a vast citadel
imagining a portrait of the buffalo growing and growing through his
Hamiltonian probabilities the buffalo shimmered
on the outside of some CERN Geneva calculations...
the boffin, floating in his vodka haze realised that
ultimately the endless steam of calculations was somewhat bland and
spun with the buffalo in some
probability wonderland...
there is no such thing as a free lunch

Edward O'Dwyer
Winner - 17th September 2007
soldier leaves golden exit quiet

His Quiet Exit

He takes his quiet exit from life,
the soldier who survived the war;
takes his quiet exit from life
like leaves that withstood wind and rain
with no business invading summer;
takes his quiet exit from life,
falling as and when he was meant to,
to the ground, gently down, golden, in the autumn.

Edward O'Dwyer
Winner - 10th March 2008
map egg head epitaph shoe

Epitaph to a Night

There is a map
I could use, if I chose to -
I could find the way
quite easily to the place of your desire,
but then I'm a man,
and won't show the weakness
of admitting the need for directions.
The shoe doesn't yet dangle
furtively on your foot,
You're fully dressed,
still in your earrings, even.
The night has turned on me
like an egg-timer
the moment I realise
I've not even persuaded your fingers
to relinquish their hold
on the champagne flute.
In the morning, I may
compose an epitaph to this night;
I expect its passing
shall be something I will mourn.

Finbarr O Mahony

Winner - 21st January 2008

dust lust frivolity ventriloquist ashes

Untitled

I fell in lust with a ventriloquist.
Who had a heightened sense of frivolity.
She threw her sultry voice like hot ashes.
And rode my sex crazed body to dust!

18th February 2008

campanology crapulous hope prink gutter

Untitled

I was lying drunk as a punk as usual,
in this familiar gutter.
I was suffering from a major dose of crapulous.
Morgans spiced rum, rebel red ale, beamish stout.
You name it, I drank it all!
My head was pounding, due to the campanology
of the Shandon Bells.
I think I ought to prink myself up.
But it was no bloody use!
I hope somebody will pick me up and carry me home!
Fuck! Why did I have to drink so much?

Jessica Peart

February 2008

eschatological eejit tribunal gasbag Paisley

1999

One year after the Good Friday Agreement
and we're still crucified, hanging around
Eschatologically in 1999.
In the deadlock of a tightening
Feeling at the base of the throat
Where the top button of a paisley
Shirt pinches Adam's Apple
Hanging from a tree to be shot
Over the head of the son of William of Orange
and God help William of Orange's son shine
And the fruit of Adam's loin breathe
Not shade their expression in lies
Lining tribunal toilet paper
Or racketeers' coffer
But drop the shit, the arms
And with the last wind
Of the wailing gasbag pipes
Pin all hopes for a resurrection
Or Easter Sunday, not Eejits' Sunday.

Jessica Peart

June 2007

noose yeti invective ridiculous strangle

Untitled

That forest there was cut down to make a ship
They said was needed more than air itself
When the rain was falling two cats and two dogs and two moose
Noosed together to release Co2, breathe oxygen
For the next time there's vegetation they can eat
And then progenerate in purity, new.
And though the yeti – the abominable demon –
Tried to wrestle with the gush from God
That swamped him with invectives,
Made him gargle repentance til the last drop of lament
Spewed from him and he drowned and left the world to come.
But then when Victor Frankenstein realised
the natural sciences craved more variety
And copped the clue to simulate it,
Out came the Yeti from a clandestine laboratory
In Switzerland and ran riot round the alpine
Mountain range swearing he'd strangle Victor, his father,
Inventor extraordinaire, irresponsibly ridiculous
As modern science still continues to be,
And claims that clones can live genetically speaking
Perfectly in pure Paradise, out of the Ark like o2
Eating only alien food, those ready made meals,
The cardboard carbon copy of test tube lives
That the GM people live, two-by-two without abuse
Or dysfunctional tales of traditional family life –
Their spines shortened and upright.
A long way we have come from the two moose
Roped together and slung over Noah's shoulder
Up the ramp to the ark where they unravelled
And then around in loving spirals in double helix strands

cont overleaf.

Jessica Peart

June 2007

noose yeti invective ridiculous strangle

cont.

Of DNA, making babies on the dark sea journey
Into light, where the ropes that train the good and chosen to go on like that,
Can be left down in the sand like a line we used to draw,
To note development of our evolving species.
No longer needing to tow the kingdom of the animal
Into line, it needs its liberty to loose itself from do-knots,
And not do what it says on the box.
In the cage where those ropes would only twist
And strangle the freedom crying man.
Have we made it? Not Yeti.
A long way to go while modern science eats itself.

Meghann Plunkett

4th February 2008

what Limerick lightning tender crow

Untitled

I have been told that to truly know
a man's character you must judge him
by what he does when no one is watching.

When I am alone I have been known to chain-smoke,
Crow on the top of my lungs until my voice cracks,
Laugh to the point of farting, dance insanely to
Madonna, wonder what love is, converse with myself,
Recite short limericks, check my email compulsively,
Wonder what I am doing with my life, smack my own
cheeks, pick my nose, pray, make inspirational banners,
plan my own funeral, break things, watch for rain, long
for tenderness, look for lightning, roll joints out of bible
paper, plot to take over the world, masturbate, write poetry
wonder what love feels like, wonder if I have fooled everyone
into thinking I am strong, lie, think of lies to say, believe my
own lies.

What kind of man am I?

Meghann Plunkett

Winner - 31st March 2008

transformation fee register flea bicycle

Playing Possum

When waking-up feels like death
from my bed I sleep all day
to confirm my own weakness.

On days like these my mood-swings register
And drag me by the molars, I am violently bound
by a straight jacket of bed-sheets, my
half-dreams are shock therapy stinging my
twitching fingers reasonable.

This is my transition.

My bed sheets, my layers of cloth and blankets
are familiar with this ritual, they
never ask me for an explanation, never
question my integrity.

On days like these, when an inanimate
cushion seems to know me best, seems
to know what's best for me,

I am cranked like bicycle gears

I am boiled like a pot of water and purified

I am a rechargeable being. My outlets
are accessible enough, fist full of vices
clinking against bus fees saved up just
in case I need to flee.

Every so often I light a candle for myself,
say a few words in my memory, refer
to myself in the past tense:

She was a good old girl, infatuated with
heights, found it important to remind
herself of her own mortality, death
was the only thing that kept her dreaming.

Annie Power

18th June 2007

hurricane ferklumpt orgasm obstinate death

At Your Mercy

You speak like a hurricane
An uncontrollable orgasm of words
Leaving me ferklumpt, gazumped
Bewildered at your obstinate refusal
To let me be
My will dies a death
And I succumb to your storm.

Annie Power

2nd July 2007

art pithy rain steadfast clunky

So-called Summer

The July rain is steadfast
Its determination to soak me
As steely as the colour
Of the skies above

I want to wear my flip-flops
And leave my clunky shoes
At home until the Autumn comes
When full of envy, it turns the green
To gold and red and brown
And scatters a carpet of leaves
Turning my footpath into an artform

Then the rain can come
When I am armed with clunky shoes
To squash the pithy fruit
Peppering the carpet
And slosh through puddles and pools
Of Autumn rain

Raven

Winner - 18th Febraury 2008

crapulous campanology hope prink gutter

Untitled

Once again
from Corpus Christi
to crapulous chip feeds
cold from last night
Saturday's roar
The weekly rip belly to spine
with Sunday worship
campanology in conflict with tinnitus
pop idol piety invite us
Gucci crucifix
in a humility of diamond chips
all prink
preen
primp
the pious
the publican
and the pimp
little difference at this point
with hope not too late
between pennies lost
to the gutter
and the collection plate

Sinéad Ryan

Winner - 23th July 2007

medieval ok amorous damsel wings

Ain't No Distress Babe

Get thee thy filthy
Paws away – You cur!
I am no dainty damsel
Awaiting rescue
From thine not so amorous advance.
You empty headed dollard
That you think it ok
To clip mine wings
And curb my flight.
I'm a medieval chick
With attitude.
And I will fly.

Sinéad Ryan

10th December 2007

barn peril useless fidget posit

Stroke

You posit a new position
While useless muscles fidget
In useless wasted ripples
Of non-movement.
Your mind exists – In constant peril
Your sanity and reason
Occasionally soar free
From the empty barn that is –
The now confines of your life.
Your eyes plead for a new position
So I face you to the window.
They plead for so much more.
I lift you, move you wash you.
I help you, love you and destroy you.
I reshape the cage of your existence
And in my own
I slowly die.

Barbara Smith

10th December 2007

barn useless fidget peril posit

Untitled

It was in the useless barn
that the poet met his peril:
he fidgeted while he thought
how to posit the way out
of the high stack of haybales.

As he pondered the problem
he saw eggs in a small clutch:
browns and speckled creams.
Ah, he thought, breakfast--
not such a useless barn after all.

Matthew Sweeney

25th February 2008

deviant nuts red breakthrough teacher

Untitled

The deviant teacher with blood-red eyes
taught that skulls had evolved from coconuts
and claimed this as an evolutionary breakthrough

Desmond Swords

June 2007

consciousness big-bang plug cheese moon

BASHRA BOP

A dog crate noon bark
splinters the butter gold sky
spread like tomorrow's
moon soaked cloak
revealing
- washed racked and hosed bare
of silver -
cheese yellow indents
viewed through a green
eyed cat lens.
Sound glances glisten
move distance
peeling beneath lid
flesh landscapes
reeling towards steak knot points;
common called conduits to
the known less lightless night squawk
of mule bray toy broke weights
hung until hanging fairly strung
between two nowheres
edge butt to
butt edge
without touching voids
of concentration
nailed like steel cork plug spears
into the railing earth of vacuum.
Fat squeal rope ways carve
leaden air
cull cream star spirals
once a whip pitted intelligence

Desmond Swords

June 2007

consciousness big-bang plug cheese moon

yet to litter the earth.

But when?

When did the graph

trot plotting awareness start?

Back when the big bang began?

After? Before?

Is consciousness just

tall story all

shored up by trance brick reality walls?

Something else?

Less? More

or

- like a fish bolt side scream

lucked to snag hook some net of

pure caught dumb chance -

is it knowledge

buried in language?

Dominic Taylor

4th February 2008

what Limerick lightning tender crow

Limerick Rap

Limerick, Limerick
Tear it down brick by brick
Don't miss a trick
Feeling homesick
Signed in lipstick
Take your pick
Get rich quick
In Limerick, Limerick

Limerick, Limerick
Short end of the stick
Call in sick
Rhetoric
Lay it on thick
A hat trick
A neat trick
In Limerick, Limerick

Limerick, Limerick
Your a tender chick
Must be something karmic
That's another yardstick

Drop kick
Chop stick
Gotta be lightning quick
In Limerick, Limerick

Limerick, Limerick
Not in our bailiwick
On your broomstick

Dominic Taylor

4th February 2008

what Limerick lightning tender crow

Double-quick

Dipstick

Critic

Use the control stick

In Limerick, Limerick

Limerick, Limerick

Like to be a peacenik

Two crows one brick

Get weird Al Yankovic

What ever makes you tick

Heal the sick

That should do the trick

In Limerick, Limerick

TC

11th February 2008

falcon pocket bicycle kids daring

The Fall

“The daring legs o’ you! The daring legs o’ you, miss!”

Sr. Fachtna’s falcon eyes

swooped with fatal precision

upon the quaking knees of Monica Murphy.

One of six kids - all frightfully nervous -

just like their Ma, Margery -

with the stash of Valium in one pocket

and the multi-coloured hard boiled sweets in the other.

Of course everyone knew that sorry saga -

the inevitable demise of the Bog Road Murphys,

after Jimmy “Six Bob” flung his Da’s bicycle

through the convent’s Sacred Heart of Jesus stained glass window.

Patricia Walsh

7th January 2008

serendipity cog wife love water

She is Below Water

She is below water now
The burst water pyre covers her grave
Wherever she is, she's well pickled
By the acidity
Recognising the fact
That she was in love once
That she was someone's wife
But not mine;
I was just a cog between men
While she was just
The serendipity
Of my labourious half-life.

Patricia Walsh

28th January 2008

portrait buffoon buffalo vast bland

On Not Being an Artist

If I had the wherewithal
And talent in that direction, I
Would paint a portrait in your honour.
Like Dorian Gray, but lovelier
It would have hit home like a charging buffalo
That belonged to your life.
The problem is of your being framed to derision
And some idiotic boffin would try to explain
Your likeness, not doing justice
To your life with me
Nor as bland as the age that is his
Vast as the blossoming love
That frames us two

Mark Whelan

4th February 2008

what Limerick lightning tender crow

Untitled

What Limerick
made a lightening crow
tender?

Five Word Challenge Winners 2007-2008

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| 16 April | Jamie Ross |
| 23 April | Anthony Jackson |
| 30 April | Cozy |
| 7 May | Cozy and Paul McGrath |
| 14 May | Amanda Neri |
| 21 May | Rodney Quinn |
| 28 May | Draven |
| 4 June | Amanda Neri |
| 11 June | Gene Barry |
| 18 June | Anne-Marie Grandfield |
| 25 June | Jennifer Lynch |
| 2 July | Sinéad Ryan |
| 9 July | Amanda Neri |
| 16 July | Gavin Ryan |
| 23 July | Sinéad Ryan and Annie Power |
| 30 July | Sinéad Ryan |
| 6 August | Gene Barry |
| 13 August | Gene Barry |
| 20 August | Kate Ryan |
| 27 August | Ronan |
| 3 September | Gene Barry |
| 10 September | Billy Ramsell |
| 17 September | Edward O'Dwyer |
| 24 September | FionnBarra and Edward O'Dwyer |
| 1 October | Gene Barry |
| 8 October | Séan Tracy |
| 15 October | Lillian Corbin |
| 22 October | Alan Coakley |
| 5 November | Daw Harding |
| 12 November | Sinéad Ryan and John Ryan |
| 19 November | Alan Coakley |
| 26 November | Jennifer Matthews |
| 3 December | Mel O'Dea |
| 10 December | Alan Coakley |
| 17 December | Gene Barry |
| 7 January | Martine |
| 14 January | Edward O'Dwyer |
| 21 January | Finbarr O'Mahony |
| 28 January | Dean Adedipe |
| 4 February | Alan Coakley |
| 11 February | Séan Ó Laoi |
| 18 February | Raven |
| 25 February | Daw Harding |
| 3 March | Lucy |
| 10 March | Edward O'Dwyer |
| 17 March | Jennifer Matthews and Seline McCarney |
| 24 March | Trish Casey |
| 31 March | Meghann Plunkett |
| 7 April | Aoife Casby |

Guest Poets 2007-2008

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 11 June | Gerard Sheehy, Edward O'Dwyer & Noel Harrington |
| 18 June | Perciphone Petticoat |
| 25 June | Adam Wyeth |
| 2 July | Gina Ferrara & Jonathan Kline |
| 16 July | Ian Horn |
| 30 July | John Liddy |
| 6 August | Martin Farawell |
| 13 August | Terry McDonough & Diarmaid Moynihan |
| 20 August | Perciphone Petticoat |
| 27 August | Seven Towers (5 poets) |
| 3 September | Gene Barry |
| 10 September | Seamus Harrington & Mel O'Dea |
| 17 September | Gerry Murphy & Angelique Everitt |
| 24 September | Louis de Paor |
| 1 October | Dimitris Lyacos |
| 8 October | Sandeep Sinha |
| 15 October | Keith Armstrong & Paul Summers |
| 22 October | Mark O'Flynn |
| 29 October | Mags Traenor & Steven Murray |
| 5 November | Billy Ramsell |
| 12 November | Anamaría Crowe Serrano |
| 19 November | Poetry Chicks |
| 26 November | Alan Garvey |
| 3 December | Helen Kavanagh Ronan |
| 10 December | Barbara Smith |
| 17 December | Buddy Wakefield, Katie Wirsing & Andrea Gibson |
| 7 January | Teri Murray |
| 14 January | Jessica Peart |
| 21 January | Cliff Wedgbury |
| 28 January | Neil McCarthy |
| 4 February | Mark Whelan |
| 11 February | Gearoid Mac Lochlainn |
| 18 February | Raven |
| 25 February | Gary King |
| 3 March | Trish Casey |
| 10 March | Desmond Swords |
| 17 March | James Kelly |
| 24 March | Kevin Higgins |
| 31 March | Derek Mahon |
| 7 April | Eugene O'Connell & Matthew Geden |

On the occasion of Ó Bhéal's second Anniversary

14 April 2008 - 6 April 2009

50 open-mic sessions

Vol II

“five flowers five

(six are in a room's dark)

all five are one

flowers five flowers and all one is fire”

e. e. cummings

Rosalin Blue

30th June 2008

Pucchinos humidity shyness rainbows reconstructing

Untitled

I

reconstructing
our rainbows
over shots of pucchinos
their humidity
damping our shyness

II

Humidity rising
in Pucchino's caf
casting rainbows
on wet skin –
shyness
reconstructing our relations.

Rosalin Blue

24th November 2008

horse Dingle Roscommon drinking balcony

To Dingle

Riding my Horse
from Roscommon
to Dingle

'cross rivers 'n' meadows
long roads
length'ning shadows

keep goin keep goin
my Ross
here I'm coming

Longing to be with you
nevermore single
there on your balcony

drinking to Dingle.

Rosalin Blue

16th February 2009

ecstasy sound presumptuous perplexed pumpkin

Ecstasy

This pumpkin has the potency
for ecstasy.

You stick your hand
into the juicy, seedy slime
you mash and smooch
as the juice drips down your wrist
smooching sounds of joyful mushing

Then suddenly it all
turns black
as you – perplexed
in your ecstasy
of touch and sound
– presumptuously high –

hear someone say
“...but it’s real bad for you.
It’ll kill you.”
And you
— fly

Brid Buckley

Winner - 8th December 2008

ring stool niche snake distribute

Apples

The serpent distributed apples with the deftness of experience,
he'd worked with this niche in the market before.

"Everyone sells themselves, at the end of the day" he said,
shedding another skin to show, most innocent sheen of flesh.

"I live in your imagination" he hissed but it came out a whisper

"I live in your dreams" he whispered but it came out in a hiss.

He was beautiful, of that there was no doubt,
his seven faces changed depending on which angle,
but the wind never caught up with him,
his body moving with the silken snake slither of sand over stone.

And knowing his form, she took his gifts anyway,
and grumbled as to injustice of her having to take the blame again.

Adam's voice was heard ring, an Echo in the distance, but not by her.
His words were a stool to a throne compared to what she'd glimpsed in the river.
The red apple in her hand rippled as a breeze blew over the water
Her red cheeks grew crimson
the appleskin broken.

Brid Buckley

Winner - 5th January 2009

Christmas happenstancially definition muppet new

Muppets

I talked like a muppet,
felt someone's foreign fingers had been pressed up my back,
and someone else was doing the reacting for me.

I had bumped into you happenstancially.
Stunned, I could only move around in my circle around you, looking in other
directions.
You did the same and we clinked glasses but missed our point of contact.
We had needed a sound to break the dense silence that had stepped in between us.

You'd come to my christmas party, a guest on my guestlist
but when you embraced me we were strangers, yet strangely familiar.
Recognizing our own averted eyes and failed humour in each other,
we just couldn't get over ourselves.

Teetering on the edge of something new,
lost without our dictionary,
our definitions of where we lay on the maps of each other,
of what we both saw in the mirrors
we decided to stay undiscovered,
to not step out of our frames,
a frog in our throats,
a pig in our blanket.

Brid Buckley

Winner - 9th March 2009

woman lazy tomato puzzle power

Sunbather

Lazy like a tomato in the sun,
the half-ripened woman
turned from her back to her front,
lay for stretched hours letting
rays puzzle over her glittered skin.

She swam down deeper into herself,
felt each touch of sand a separate thing,
listened to drumrolls of ocean
that lay within and without her.

Til Time tided its way up the beach,
and someone she knew came to cast a long shadow,
someone with power to baptise
or someone with power to drown her.

Paul Casey

23rd February 2009

pretentious tiger largess hand random

Untitled

The pretentious campaign
to loot and pillage en masse
under the great banner of
Posterity for All
was at hand

Largess everywhere except where
it mattered. Large ministers.
Large promises. Large internal
bonuses and large tax breaks
for large businesses

But the co-ordinated insult to
and defamation of
celts and tigers
began to rake its toll
so secretly they made a pact

to slowly but randomly expose
every last bastion of pretence
And it didn't make the slightest
difference in the world

Paul Casey

2nd March 2009

falling bones verb Heineken wine

Corked Wine

Make no marrow about it
A good bottle of Merlot,
preferably a Cork vintage falling
featherlike through your throated
pathway of poetic tastebuds
is far better for your bones
any old proverbial day
than a chemically cursed Heineken
(that scourge of Murphys and Beamish)
seizing up your sacred source of syllables

Suzanna Cosgrave

6th April 2009

topography step motion yellowed lambent

Untitled

Taken

by the yellowed lambent current

we tread

out of step

our motion keeling starboard

what topography

is this

that lures us onward

Anita Daly

9th February 2009

Crawford spontaneously lime spectacle purple

Art Exhibition

The plan to go to the Crawford
went ahead.

We sit on the benches provided
in the exhibition room,
spontaneously talking about a blend of colour,
art analysis.

Seaweed different shades of purple
confidently banter,
art critics,
watch the tacky lime with our eyes
banter; about art criticism,
follow the spectacle with our eyes,
Our minds our hearts,

themes of the exhibition.

And banter about art criticism.

Anita Daly

9th February 2009

silence toaster ostrich window bizarre

Alarm in the dark

I saw a toaster
dumped by a warehouse gate
and on the corner of the toaster its trademark,
a picture of an ostrich,
was gleaming in the street - and moonlight.

On top of this toaster was a spider,
it looked bizarre,
with a young and shy demeanour
thank goodness
for I was frightened too.

Niall Herriott

Winner - 7th July 2008

celestial bracelet spanner silence Jaysus

BIG BANG

First there was silence
Then celestial fireworks
Exploded in the void
Set off by The Grumpy
Big Guy in the sky
Because he was lonely.

Forget evolution
And all that old guff
Jehovah formed a man
Out of clay begod!
And then nicked back a rib
And behold there was woman!

That really put a spanner
In the works, as Eve asked
Adam for a bracelet
In return for an apple
She plucked from the tree
Of knowledge and the result
Was original sin
And there's been lots
Of big bangs since then.

Later God sacrificed
His only son Jesus
(known as Jaysus to the Dubs)
To bring us to our senses.
And if you believe all that
You'll believe anything boy!

Niall Herriott

9th March 2009

woman lazy tomato puzzle power

CUSTARD PIES AND SQUISHY TOMATOES FOR 'THE SUITS'

for International Women's Day

The last thing you'd call Woman is lazy.
Women do two thirds
of the work in the world
so it's a puzzle they're not in power.

Maybe we need a revolution
with tomatoes and custard pies not guns.
Nothing like ridicule for pomposity
at this perilous hour.

Give the fairer sex the chance
of running the planet
instead of ruining it
like the present shower.

Niall Herriott

8th September 2008

floods ostriches apocalypse movies of

DISASTER MOVIE

When the floods came
And cars not only floated
Down Pana again
But inebriated poets
Were trapped in the Hayloft
For seven days and seven nights,
Some people said it was
The Apocalypse,
Let's enjoy it while we can.
Others said "it's just the movies,
Hollywood can do anything like."
These were the ostriches
Burying their heads in their pints.
Others believed in the power of prayer
But no matter how hard they prayed
The floods rose higher and higher
Until all that was left of the centre of Cork
Was Saint Finbarr's spire.

Eamonn Lynskey
Winner - 23rd February 2009
pretentious tiger largess hand random

With apologies to Walter de la Mer!

“Is there anybody there” cried the bankers,
“Who will lend us a helping hand?”
”We’ve spent our largess,
“And left everything in a mess,
”And no one’s buying property or land”.

There’s no one in here that will help you.
We thought you knew what you were at.
You were all too pretentious
And now the the Tiger’s up and left us...
And I can’t get the last word ‘random’ to fit in,
fuck it!

Jennifer Matthews

7th July 2008

celestial bracelet spanner silence Jaysus

A Fine Mess

The celestial bracelet of
the milky way spells
nothing like silence.

The stars wrench and creak
like old houses.

Holding what? Dust, gas, fire...
filling, indigestible elements,
spanners of space,
distracting and expanding,
bloating and killing.

Confrontation of that oldest
question:

Jaysus,
who made this mess?

Jennifer Matthews

1st September 2008

rumble flavour light hand poke

Night-Familiar

The flavour of your hand
with its warm, salty taste
is night-familiar.

It lays there, not doing anything,
beautifully.

This stillness muffles rumbles
of distraction.

There is no need.

There is no need.

I poke the covers with my toes
so that they cover us
more completely.

This lightness I did not know:
these curving shapes,
these holding patterns,
these snores and kisses,
these tastes
without distraction.

The flavour of your skin
is so familiar.

Jennifer Matthews

2nd March 2009

falling bones verb heineken wine

Bones

Falling from the mouth of an old god—

like unutterable words,

like a rejected sacrifice,

like rotten verbs.

Falling from hot god mouth

cracked and sucked clean

and left in a pile

at the old god's feet.

And when he leaves

these bone words fossilise

in the ground and lose their use,

become objects of history.

These forgotten, unexcavated prayers

buried under the wasted day

after mortals build un-sacred fires

leaving singed debris,

fag packets, crushed Heineken cans

dropped from the mouths

of wasted mere men.

Mary Mullen

23rd March 2009

silence toaster ostrich window bizarre

An Ostrich's Eye is Bigger than It's Brain

George patted the ostrich burger nice and thin
Put it in the toaster oven, and gazed out the window.
'That was the damndest thang...one shoe: wham,
Right over my shoulder. Then another one, boom.
Everythang they do over there is bizarre, but ma daddy
Taught me to duck and smile at the same time...'

Aoife Naughton

Winner - 6th April 2009

topography step motion yellowed lambent

Untitled

I wonder if what they say is true
That people send out a certain light
That a woman stooped at the Centra vegetables
Can smile and be something luminous
That a bald bus driver, looking in the mirror,
Can say one euro thirty and be lambent.
I suppose it's something leaders have in spades
A kind of yellowed splendour
That bathes the instep of certain schoolgirls
On Oliver Plunkett Street.
Or maybe it's just me getting sentimental again
Seeing angels on the street.
Since when was that a topography of light?

Gréagóir Ó Dúill

2nd March 2009

falling bones verb Heineken wine

A German soldier at Monte Cassino

the dry bones need wine,
the only verb is falling,
Heinie can't survive this.

Rosie O'Regan

19th January 2009

anthology horse water tap monster

Untitled

The anthology of hedonism
When you lead a horse to water
and he drinks the lot
Thinks you *sub equidae*
A mere monkey's uncle to tap for sweet hay
and grooming
A provider of plentiful plots
Stands looming with intention
Whinnies
Reveals his monster erection
Then gallops off across the fields
Chomps what he wants
and sows his seeds.

Stephen O'Riordan

10th November 2008

barn useless fidget peril posit

My Battle of Bannockburn

I'm no patriot!

And I'm no hero!

I'll fight no war for freedom and peace

I'll hound no terrorist in sandy doons

I'll deliver no hardening speech to shaken platoons

But I'll slit any throat!

I'll take my guns to any nun

I'll fight for my ice-cream

On Bannockburn

Christy Parker

9th March 2009

woman lazy tomato puzzle power

Untitled

The inherent power
Of tomato soup to motivate
Must never be
Underestimated
A woman,
Faced with
The puzzle
Of how
To remove
Her lazy husband
From his prolonged
Position
On his couch
In front of
The television,
Discovered that
A pot of the said
Tomato soup
Poured down
The neck of
His shirt
Instantly
Produced
The required
Momentum.

Fiona Riordan

17th November 2008

cathedral pram petrify yoghurt charming

Mass

They stream out of the cathedral
After mass and clasp together as
Beads in bracelets,

To chat about the sermon
And how the new priest seemed
Determined to petrify. Words

About hell and how the devil
Would be a charming man
Sweeping us off our feet effortlessly.

The words curdle in the pews like
Yoghurt left too long. But

The message relaxes out in the open
On the cathedral steps. Seeming less
Important in sunshine and amongst friends.

The woman with the pram says
That to be honest she wasn't even listening.

Fiona Riordan

Winner - 16th March 2009

ghost march Padraic chair surprise

The Will

Everyone watched the ghost march into the room.
Like he owned the place.

I suppose he had until he died.

But ownership was now to be decided
Amongst the family.
Uncle Padraic,
Aunt Josephine,

And the other one who sat
With his back to the fire in the easy chair.

The one which was a bargain on E-bay.
But which didn't recline.
It just had a lever.

So it was quite the surprise
When he rested his hand on it
And toppled back, straight into the flames.

It was a shame.
But at least now they could split the house.
50:50.

Lorna Shaughnessy

9th March 2009

woman lazy tomato puzzle power

IYDB

Once she realised the power had gone out of his power-hose,
she promptly set him to work in the lazy-beds
while she sat back and watched the tomatoes ripen
from the top of a monkey-puzzle tree.

Joe Sweeney
Winner - 21st April 2008
fight isobar somewhere fizzle donkey

Untitled

Somewhere over the rainbow Ryanair are experiencing unusual problems.

'Cabin pressure is several isobars too high' says the Captain.

'Would the couple with the knives fighting in the aisle please sit down!'

The aircraft guages begin to fizzle and flicker.

'Put that fire out someone!'

'And who brought that donkey unto the plane?...Is it..?'

'Is it Michael, Michael O Leary?'

'Yes captain, my captain. Don't worry. It's just another one of my advertising gimmicks. You know the sort of thing. Ryanair will do things Aer Lingus won't. All creatures are welcome here. Giddy up there, Neddy. Giddy up!'

Joe Sweeney

Winner - 5th May 2008

truant garlic Jesus serendipity moose

Untitled

One night I awoke in the middle of the night and realised I had left the radio on.

They were playing a repeat of Ryan Tubridy.

I switched it off, and fell asleep again.

I had a dream I was in vampire town. I saw a figure coming down the street on a donkey. Salvation. I thought it was Jesus, but as it turned out, in a most disappointing reverse of serendipity, it turned out not to be a donkey, but a moose. And on it was Ryan Tubridy, chewing garlic, and talking non-stop.

'Playing truant from RTE, are we, Ryan?' I said.

'Yep. Taking a break. Giving the nation a break in fact. Thought I'd break loose on a moose. Any excuse. You know yourself.'

Joe Sweeney
Winner - 15th December 2008
jellyfish Uh-Oh timber Australia cajole

Untitled

When Brian Lenihan heard he was minister for finance, he said: 'Uh-Oh!'

Brian Cowan showed him the forest ahead, handed him an axe and
Lenihan got chopping.
Timber! Timber!

Down went the old people, and the vaccines and the schools.
Timber! Timber!

We need new timber alright - To build a new cabinet.

Lenihan tried to cajole us saying we should be patriotic.

Now our young people who used to have jobs in the building industry
are heading for Australia.

Was that the patriotism Lenihan had in mind?

They'll all be on Bonsai beach, jobless, among the surfer and jellyfish.

I think I'll join them

You could get stung worse at home here in Ireland now as the two Brians go
into second gear and get out the chainsaws!

Richard Tillinghast

Winner - 19th January 2009

anthology horse water tap monster

Waterside

Monsters lurked there,
or so it seemed to us in those days—
where trees hung over the banks of the river.
It was as though a whole anthology of threat
was on tap,
hidden among the willows and water oaks.
Pike cruised,
and flexed their deadly jaws.

Huge water-beasts roared,
wallowing in their thick hides in the shallows,
half-hidden amongst the papyrus and bulrushes.

I wanted to be out of there,
up in the sunlight,
running with the horses,
gulping white silence into my lungs

Patricia Walsh

20th October 2008

ecumenical Valparaiso garrotte semi-quaver apple

Untitled

Eve had the right idea
Garrotting Adam with the object of his desire.
An apple, so plush, so luxurious.
She only had to see
The semiquaver on his lips
Uttering ecumenical truths
Ignored, fought over by all
From Valparasio to Eden
Which paradise came first?
Eventually we work out the answer
The kitten tangling itself in the wool
Of old age, unravelled, stoic
The skill of being confused
Remains with us
Tangling and strangling us on every scale

Five Word Challenge Winners 2008-2009

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 14 April | Daw Harding |
| 21 April | Joe Sweeney |
| 28 April | Meghann Plunkett |
| 5 May | Joe Sweeney |
| 12 May | Gene Barry and Morna |
| 19 May | Wes Wallace |
| 26 May | Seline McCarney |
| 2 June | Brid Buckley |
| 9 June | Eileen Kerrigan and Andrew Lane |
| 16 June | Seline McCarney |
| 23 June | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 30 June | Matthew Sweeney |
| 7 July | Niall Herriott |
| 14 July | Alan Coakley |
| 21 July | Alan Coakley |
| 28 July | Gene Barry |
| 4 August | Louis Mulcahy |
| 11 August | Jennifer Matthews |
| 18 August | Alan Coakley |
| 25 August | Jennifer Matthews and Stephen O'Riordan |
| 1 September | Michelle |
| 8 September | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 15 September | Brid Buckley |
| 22 September | John Ryan |
| 29 September | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 6 October | Jennifer Matthews |
| 13 October | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 20 October | Joe Sweeney |
| 27 October | Raphael |
| 3 November | Maeve |
| 10 November | Andrew |
| 17 November | Brid Buckley |
| 24 November | Matthew Sweeney and Brid Buckley |
| 1 December | Brid Buckley |
| 8 December | Brid Buckley |
| 15 December | Joe Sweeney |
| 5 January | Brid Buckley |
| 12 January | Wes Wallace and Jennifer Matthews |
| 19 January | Richard Tillinghast |
| 26 January | Anton Cullen |
| 2 February | Brid Buckley |
| 9 February | Anonymous |
| 16 February | Aaron Lewis and Aoife Naughton |
| 23 February | Eamonn Lynskey and Peter Lucy |
| 2 March | Kevin Mullgrey |
| 9 March | Brid Buckley |
| 16 March | Fiona Riordan |
| 23 March | Stephen O'Riordan and Kate Huguelet |
| 30 March | Niall Herriott |
| 6 April | Aoife Naughton |

Guest Poets 2008-2009

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 14 April | Ó Bhéal Poets from Five Words - the first edition |
| 21 April | Miceál Kearney |
| 28 April | Ian Horn |
| 5 May | Fred Johnston |
| 12 May | Eileen Sheehan |
| 19 May | John W Sexton |
| 26 May | Seán Callahan and Randall Maggs |
| 2 June | Colette Nic Aodha |
| 9 June | Harry Zevenbergen |
| 16 June | Tim Wells |
| 23 June | Aoife Casby and Celest Augé |
| 30 June | Dominic Taylor |
| 7 July | Ronán Ó Snodaigh |
| 14 July | Desmond O'Grady and John Liddy |
| 21 July | Matthew Sweeney |
| 28 July | Niall Herriott |
| 4 August | Paddy Bushe |
| 11 August | Dairena Ni Chinnéide |
| 18 August | Oran Ryan and Ross Hattaway |
| 25 August | Billy Ramsell |
| 1 September | Knute Skinner |
| 8 September | Robyn Rowland |
| 15 September | Leanne O'Sullivan |
| 22 September | Felicity Heathcote and Seamus Cashman |
| 29 September | Gabriel FitzMaurice |
| 6 October | Barbara Smith |
| 13 October | Aideen Henry |
| 20 October | Anne-Marie Glasheen |
| 27 October | Keith Armstrong and the Honeyfeet (Jazz Quintet) |
| 3 November | Diarmaid Ó Dálaigh and Tony Desmond |
| 10 November | Mary Noonan and John Mee |
| 17 November | Jon Morley and Tony Owen |
| 24 November | Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin |
| 1 December | John Walsh and Miceál Kearney |
| 8 December | Alan Titley |
| 15 December | Pat Cotter |
| 5 January | Dave Lordan |
| 12 January | PJ Brady & Lisa Marie Johnson |
| 19 January | Grace Wells |
| 26 January | Alan Jude Moore |
| 2 February | Macdara Woods |
| 9 February | Eabhan Ní Shúilleabháin, Gwyn Parry and Declan Meade |
| 16 February | Martin Daws |
| 23 February | Eamonn Lynskey |
| 2 March | Gréagóir Ó Dúill |
| 9 March | Susan Millar DuMars and Lorna Shaughnessy |
| 16 March | Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill |
| 23 March | Mary Mullen |
| 30 March | Lothar Luken |
| 6 April | James Harpur |

On the occasion of Ó Bhéal's third Anniversary

13 April 2009 - 5 April 2010

50 open-mic sessions

Vol III

"I can't write five words but that I can change seven."

Dorothy Parker

Rosalin Blue

10th August 2009

blasphemy cac angel saturated orgasmic

Blasphemy

The angel
scampers up
from all four
dusts herself down
and checks her wing
– broken.

Her white feathers
– stained
blood-red
with a black
smooch of cac.

Someone down there
had spoken a curse
– a blasphemy
of the heavens –
and got the
death sentence for it.

– So she fell
down down
saturated from the tears
of loving relations
about that blasphemy
of a law.

Picking herself up
she watches out
for help,
but no-one there
to carry her
out of the mud.

Raising her eyes
the angel feels
all the orgasmic
heavenly powers
seeping away –
seeping away...

Rosalin Blue

23rd November 2009

eternity moon awkward translation camel

Incomparable

It takes eternity
riding through the desert

under the frying moon
a silvery sphere
on a star spangled sheet

rocking slowly
on the awkwardly
swaying animal

swinging lulling me
nearly to sleep

It.....takes.....eternity.....

to ride

through

this

desert
on

this

camel -

under the freedom of the desert sky.

There is no translation.

Rosalin Blue

29th March 2010

oak lungs wind pixie champion

The Old Oak

The old oak tree like a half-lung
stretches out into the mist,
catching every tiny droplet
in the silence of the night,
so still – no wind around.

In the gnarled and winding roots
under dark and tiny caves
pixies raise a feast
for the breathing of the oak,
old and bent half-lung –

champion of life.

Miriam Casey

Winner - 2nd November 2009

stagger vase rumbled attic fence

Ode to an Irish Vase

Every scene more thought provoking
Than a Grecian urn,
1845, the famine year,
Rumbled stomachs
Caught
In the attic of their hunger
Making them stagger
to the next fearful fence,
The point of no return,
Starvation,
Poor fragile forms,
Broken Pottery,
Unearthly poetry
As the pain takes shape,
Emaciated structures
Shouldering their suffering scenes.

Paul Casey
27th July 2009
map chaos slug hairdo chair

Untitled

A slug wid really weird hair
do come inta Ó Bhéal, stood right dere
Causin' chaos 'n screamin' 'n hoots
We had to map out all de escape roots
And we couldn't get Joe off de chair

31st August 2009
sea dog crass herald light

The son of the hound of the sea

Fell ashore at first light
After a night of vigorous efforts
To rid himself of scales and tails
Which now feed fish beyond the bay

With a selkie-crass howl he heralded
The arrival of his new two-legged form
A Dog-Man born of sea faeries
Mac Cu Na Mara
The son of the hound of the sea

Paul Casey

5th October 2009

sock monster room sick conundrum

Untitled

I fed fourteen socks into it
After two hours of chewing,
As it slowed to its final belch
I lowered myself, hard-eyed
in the soft washroom
expecting what all victims
of the sock monster might expect.

I counted them out, one by one,
video camera framed perfectly to prove
the phenomenon to the scientific world,
I counted. I counted again. I counted
Still again wondering if I should have
placed the camera more surreptitiously,
and hung my head in defeat. Fourteen
socks came out. What a conundrum.

Donna Coogan

Winner - 31st August 2009

sea dog crass herald light

Untitled

If I may be so crass to say
This is a shagging dog's life
And not of my choosing.
Going out to sea
For months at a time
My salted mind loosing.
Hark the bleeden herald angel sings
Black out the light
This night's for boozing.

Jeff Coogan

Winner - 15th June 2009

blue interest hedge awkward amazing

No.1

My interest in amazing blue hedges
Was awkward as I trimmed its edges

No.2

The most amazing hedge caught my interest
I felt awkward and blue as I leaned against it

Marie Coveney

1st March 2010

retirement honour tidy veil tickle

Time

In my retirement I'll take the veil
honour my God,
tidy and sweep my cell clean.

I'll slow time down –
naming planets and stars
in the sky.

The mountain stream rushing the stones
quick with dippers –
slows in the delta.

Anita Daly

1st February 2010

city consumed port inebriated clutter

Simon

Who is that down there in the
port of Cork? Partially hidden, a
body under the duvet
on the concrete quay,
beside the number two bus route.

Easing in the light blue dawn
does he feel vaguely the damp beneath him?
Does he listen to the suck and slurp
of the brown river? Does he decide
it is time, for the first

drink of the day? Not long after
Christmas. From under the duvet the charity
workers have left him, he produces
his Bailey's Irish Cream. His only
and most precious possession.

They can keep their duvet. Maybe they
will use it to keep another body warm
through another night. He, still, already, inebriated, turns
to his drink not looking at the bus,
Weather beaten wrinkled, lived in face.

Anita Daly

1st March 2010

retirement honour tidy veil tickle

Work in the Bookshop

A thoughtful tickle on the surface of my mind
Helps me tidy the shelves;
With a little tender touch
Search the heaps of books
For something to help
A foreign mother
To teach her 3 year old child
to count in English
This is honour under a veil of practicality
this might even be enjoyed until retirement.

Phelim Doran

Winner - 15th February 2010

mind jellybeans matter rose warts

Untitled

Rose rejects all matter
It's been in her duffel coat
Her bosom, her friends moan
At her cosmic loss, her float. Sunk

Rose's men project this angst
onto their cats. Her teeth chatter
Why won't she give away to the body!
Who gives a damn about the soul

Rose has a son. He's 22.
To wage war on his mother's undenied stance
He lives off putrid hard-boiled jelly beans
With sour milk. He's broken out in rank warts.

What is matter? Never mind? What is mind! It doesn't matter!!

Seamus Harrington
Winner - 18th May 2009
nominate detritus late red strand

Untitled

Detritus is strewn

Along the shore.

It looks like a dump

Sluiced by a tsunami.

No question of a nomination

for Blue Flag status now,

the strand is busy

waders pick and peck

sort and sift.

It's June;

scavenging gulls

make sortie raids, squabbling

and wheeling.

A lone mongrel trots by.

Dusk comes late.

At least the Red Tide is not visible.

Seamus Harrington

25th May 2009

switch turquoise ubiquitous embrace bones

MAY 2020; The Hayloft.

Somebody's at the dimmer switch
as the lights go down
again the ubiquitous arms
creep softly around me
try to embrace my tired bones.
I grimace, a flash of my teeth brace,
the turquoise filling glints
in the strobe. Animated, X-Ray.
A whirring clicking purr sounds
from his hidden pocket.
"Scuse me" he withdraws
as though stung.
"Forgot to switch off my Geiger Counter".

1st March 2010

retirement honour tidy veil tickle

Untitled

It no longer tickles his fancy
"Your Honour; he wishes to plead
early retirement from that sort of thing"
"He would love to draw a veil
over the untidy Don Tidy incident".

Niall Herriott

8th June 2009

beer follow pheasant blue Jamaica

REGGAE RULES OK

Feeling blue
shedding a tear
coz my woman left me
after a windy night of beer
and roast pheasant to follow
in Jamaica here,
when the ghost of Bob Marley
seemed to appear
singing “no woman no cry
...no woman no cry”

Niall Herriott

Winner - 17th August 2009

special translate weave glór ripples

AN TEANGA

The special role of the Irish language
in the twenty-first century could be
a whole world away from the rigid
Gaeilge of the classroom.

It might be to weave a *glór* of poetry and song
amidst the frantic clinking of the cash tills,
the whoosh of cruise missiles,
the whoomp of suicide bombers.

It might be to translate the love of nature
and the nature of love for the clinical zealots
of empires, corporations and emirates
and the empty prelates.

It might be to send out
spreading ripples of hope
an teanga tingling through
a torn tense world.

Jennifer Matthews

Winner - 22nd March 2010

gesture pint armchair tree Irish

For Brandon

He stretches.

His arms are tree branches
gesturing, open-fingered
towards the clear mind
of a desert sky.

I sit at his roots.

He sits wherever an armchair
opens up for him,
never homeless.

Never attached to floorboards,
kitchenettes or cars.

He adopts religions, accents, countries, regions,
tries them on: Irish, Indian, Californian ...
and discards them
like fancy dress costumes.

Lives loved and taken off.

He moves on,
his needs only measured in pints and shoes—
the most basic containers—
before lifting off, flying
to a place he'll inevitably
love, leave and love again from afar.

Mark Noonan

Winner - 1st February 2010

city consumed port inebriated clutter

Classy

We met one night
on the bus out of the city,
both having consumed too much
or enough of something -
both thinking that each thought
that the other one was pretty.

She said her mind was full of
clutter, floating on a lake of port.
She then threw up violently,
and asked me to report.

I said: You're drunk and vomiting,
and making a general mess!
Although I like that sort of thing,
which of course I freely confess.

She was a classy bird, though,
which she later illuminated -
saying *Darling, I'm not drunk -
I'm ... inebriated!*

Colin O'Donovan

Winner - 15th March 2010

rose spring scaffolding research bug

Untitled

With an Angel at my shoulder & a rose at my feet,
I went rat-tat-tatting down the spring sprung street,
Past the man on the scaffolding, past the mice in the church,
Round the corner up the alleyway on a quest of research,
How I wish I had somebody warm so I could sequester a hug,
My sweet lady, lady, lady, lady, ladybug.

Rosie O'Regan

Winner - 5th October 2009

sock monster room sick conundrum

Odd sock conundrum

I am a black sock monster
I live beneath your bed
When you exit from your room
I raise my smelly sock head
I cover every inch of ground
My movements are quite slick
Can disappear at the slightest sound
In truth I am quite sick

Winner - 19th October 2009

October eternal knitting serendipity lostness

Untitled

She sits knitting lostness
Into an unravelling
Making something for someone
She can't remember
Who or what or why
Her fingers move
The leaves forever
Fall
Filling the room
With eternal October
Serendipity slips a stitch

Tina Pisco

Winner - 1st March 2010

retirement honour tidy veil tickle

A Housewife's Lament

What honour is there
in retirement from
a life making things tidy?

Where is my golden clothes pin?
My mounted broom?
My trophy dish cloth?

Will my husband and kids
even notice that I'm gone
before the laundry piles up
and blocks the front door?

Where is my Adonis,
tickling my veil
with feathered fans?

Dangling grapes above my lips
as I lie back, contented
and content on a bed of roses?

I take your white
Y-fronts from the dryer
and fold them once again.

I could tell you more
of my pain, but
it's time to collect the smallies

from playschool.

Colm Scully

Winner - 7th September 2009

teller rain cape-clear captain bunny

Bunny Carr

I heard you call over the airwaves last night
From a programme broadcast 30 years since.
Deflected off a star in the Cassiopeia constellation.
Returned to Earth on an unimaginable chance.
You talked of a rainy Summer in Ireland.
Of the harvest ruined and emigration rife.
You mentioned a Ship's Captain being lost off Cape Clear
And the Baltimore lifeboat, still searching into the night.
If there is a woman working with you in that Studio
Tell her life has changed unalterably for her kind.
Equal opportunities for females now
And we've had two women Presidents since your time.
It's nice to hear your voice again Bunny.
Your nice soft polite tones are a welcome change
From listening to Tubridy deriding our Taoiseach
Or listening to Joe Duffy in discourse with people deranged.

Colm Scully

12th October 2009

juju crone blank comprehensible solstice

Winter Solstice at Newgrange

An Incomprehensible stillness filled the air.

As if switching on the light,

Brightness jettisoned through the gap and flooded the chamber.

All within gaped dumbfounded at the indescribable magic.

As if some old Crone had cast her Juju spell on the assembled chosen ones.

The Minister of Defence, The CEO of Fás, the Ceann Comhairle
and the visiting Saudi Arabian Sheik.

John W. Sexton

Winner - 5th April 2010

gypsy leather-mini tinted paper conveyor

What the Road Held

The gypsy drove a leather Mini,
its snakeskin hull squealing at every bend;
its tinted windows the stretched membrane
of an afterbirth, a gelatinous lochia thin
as paper; the perfect conveyor of companions
sleek as rain, slight as a breath, three packed
in the backseat shouting turns to the right,
to the left, STOP: a red light, a child,
a cat, a sheath of fog grey as cancer

Mark Stout

5th April 2010

gypsy leather-mini paper tinted conveyor

Untitled

As I waltzed around in my leather-mini
I enabled my mind to flow to the underground,
My tinted glasses ploughed the darkened conveyor belt,
The gypsy in me carried through the crystal ball,
Rock, Paper, Scissors... wisely chosen,
I am the inept forsaken goblin,
Proud of the words spoken

Joe Sweeney

Winner - 24th August 2009

august insomnia abbatoir may secret

Guilt

We lie in the orchard staring up at a sky rich with apples and stars.
It is August.

The May blossoms have long since blown,
the red fruits weigh in the twilight,
black berries are tangled along the wall.
We picked some earlier but they broke in the abbatoir of our hands,
bled away through our fingers.

We have crushed our secrets between our bodies.
We lie now, two insomniacs, in the aftermath, in the silence of night,
unable to dream, unable to sleep, utterly awake
while the world around us slumbers effortlessly - wishing
we could put the berries back on the branches.

Joe Sweeney

16th November 2009

chrysalis wall parasol beautiful memory

Untitled

I have a beautiful memory of that summer of you and I sitting beneath a parasol in Antibes beside an old stone wall over which the bougainvillia was spilling and I wanted to come out of my shell, to tell you something, to flex my wings, to escape from the chrysalis of my fear, become a butterfly of abandon and hope, and the sun went down and the moment passed and I didn't dare to eat the peach...

The moment is there inside me still, a painting, an idea of sun and bougainvillea and sunlight and a butterfly that never made it unto the canvas.

Wes Wallace

11th May 2009

flowers lollipop trickery tumble hello

Untitled

Hello jelly baby twin zygote of knowledge
Infusoria and foraminifera
Tumble along brush border and ciliated membranes

Lollipop sticks to your lips and you
 crunch it down to splinters
Feisty with your friends and hip to
 their simple trickery
You test their baby knowledge and decorate
 backpacks with graffiti flowers

1st June 2009

sunshine laughter dogfight living candidate

Untitled

Behind the candidate
Of the dogfight laughter
Living in the sunshine
Laughter in the pubs
Pubs full of cussing lads
Candidate smiling from a series of telephone poles
In the sunshine
Dogfight laughter breaks out from behind the bar

Wes Wallace

19th October 2009

October eternal knitting serendipity lostness

New England town, late October

I took a walk down a wet street
Left a candy wrapper settle on the cement at my feet
The whishing sound of passing cars
And the silence that follows –
Tar paper houses with a radio playing somewhere
like a dead leaf
echoing lostness
Eternal streets
Chainlink fences and basketball courts
Corner stores with domino awnings
and lottery cards for sale
Paper ghosts and witches nestle in aisles of Hersheys kisses
and candy corns

Winner - 7th December 2009

anthem sunshine brick elation cabbage

I sing the cabbage brick elation

I gaze at my cabbage with elation
And sing while eating his rotund laughable leafness
Anthem and canticle I sing to his noble name
And sunshine streams down like liquid gold over my grateful eyes
As I gaze admiringly upon this glorious sight
And simultaneously munch on its crunchy green leaves

So much depends on a little green cabbage
As I go my way among the crumbling brick and wonder why

Patricia Walsh

5th October 2009

sock monster room sick conundrum

Untitled

Alone I am, spreadeagled and solitary
On this bed, sick of the masterstrokes
That invade the room with impunity.
This monster of obedience lurks
Like a widowed sock, or the conundrum
That individuals do when, they alone, concede.
The shaft from the ceiling invites us in
An exclusive invitation to eternity.
To grasp the celestial nettle with faith
That underwrites the celestial dismissal.
God! Rescue me from your followers!
God! Rescue me from the silken threads
That anchor me, for the sake of being
Spreadeagled alone forever in my room

12th October 2009

juju crone blank comprehensible solstice

Untitled

The slapstick blank
Of a yielding sun
Burning into solstice
Paying tribute to the crone
Though we alone are manifest
Or not manifest at all
Except through the ju-ju
Of blundering symmetry
Comprehensible only
To buffoons of the present
Archaeologists like me.

Cliff Wedgbury

12th October 2009

juju crone blank comprehensible solstice

hiking to puck

It was the shortest day of the year
at four o'clock the sun began to rise above the rocks
warming the tent canvas

his mind was blank
why was he sleeping out at three thousand feet
on a stony ledge?
did an old crone disturb him in the night
with whispered words
her magic
her ju-ju?
strange sounds had entered
his midnight dreams of beautiful women

now that the crimson light had returned
it was all so understandable
for a shaggy mountain goat
had joined him in his solace

he laughed
pushed it away
rolled up his sleeping bag
and slowly followed the wandering animal
in the direction of Killorglin

Five Word Challenge Winners 2009-2010

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| 13 April | Rosie O'Regan |
| 20 April | Karen O'Connor |
| 27 April | James Foley |
| 4 May | Christy Parker |
| 11 May | Rosie O'Regan and Aoife Naughton |
| 18 May | Seamus Harrington |
| 25 May | Edward O'Dwyer |
| 1 June | John Ryan |
| 8 June | Joel Finkle and Paul Casey |
| 15 June | Jeff Coogan |
| 22 June | Rosie O'Regan |
| 29 June | Jericho |
| 6 July | David Rowe and James Foley |
| 13 July | Seamus Harrington |
| 20 July | Edward O'Dwyer and An Capall Dorcha |
| 27 July | Patrick Cotter |
| 3 August | Miriam Casey |
| 10 August | Jennifer Matthews |
| 17 August | Niall Herriott |
| 24 August | Joe Sweeney and Cathan |
| 31 August | Donna Coogan |
| 7 September | Colm Scully |
| 14 September | Jennifer Matthews |
| 21 September | Tobias Manderson-Galvin |
| 28 September | Jennifer Matthews |
| 5 October | Rosie O'Regan |
| 12 October | Cliff Wedgbury |
| 19 October | Rosie O'Regan |
| 26 October | Neil McCarthy |
| 2 November | Miriam Casey and Paul Casey |
| 9 November | Matthew Sweeney |
| 16 November | Ger Heffernan |
| 23 November | Donal O'Flynn |
| 30 November | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 7 December | Wes Wallace |
| 14 December | Seamus Harrington |
| 4 January | Aoife Moylan |
| 11 January | Aaron Carroll |
| 18 January | Aoife Moylan |
| 25 January | Paddy Doyle |
| 1 February | Mark Noonan |
| 8 February | Maitín O'Briain |
| 15 February | Phelim Doran |
| 22 February | Teri Murray |
| 1 March | Tina Pisco |
| 8 March | Alan MacGuire and Áine |
| 15 March | Colin O'Donovan |
| 22 March | Jennifer Matthews |
| 29 March | Jenni Galvin |
| 5 April | John W Sexton |

Guest Poets 2009-2010

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 13 April | John Ennis and Ó Bhéal poets from Five Words Vol II |
| 20 April | Karen O'Connor and Rick Mullen |
| 27 April | Rosemary Canavan |
| 4 May | Dave Rock and Stephen James Smith |
| 11 May | Anamaría Crowe Serrano |
| 18 May | Thomas McCarthy |
| 25 May | Janice Fitzpatrick Simmons |
| 1 June | Gerry Murphy |
| 8 June | Ger Reidy |
| 15 June | Frank Golden |
| 22 June | Jon Morley, Mike McKimm and Tony Owen |
| 29 June | Máighr ad Medbh |
| 6 July | Aibhe N  Ghearbhuigh |
| 13 July | Aidan Murphy |
| 20 July | Frank Dullaghan |
| 27 July | Frances Cotter |
| 3 August | Pete Mullineaux |
| 10 August | Joseph Horgan |
| 17 August |  ine U  Fhoghl  |
| 24 August | Nigel McLoughlin |
| 31 August | Tommy Frank O'Connor |
| 7 September | Keith Armstrong & Rense Sinkgraven |
| 14 September | Liz Gallagher |
| 21 September | Bernadette Cremin and the Munster Slam Championships |
| 28 September | P draig Mac Fhearghusa |
| 5 October | Robyn Rowland |
| 12 October | Terry McDonagh |
| 19 October | Robert Gray and Alison Croggon |
| 26 October | Backra Men and Denisa Mirena Piscu |
| 2 November | Gabriel Rosenstock |
| 9 November | Maurice Scully |
| 16 November | Enda Coyle-Greene |
| 23 November | Six Whitehouse Poets from Limerick |
| 30 November | Joseph Woods |
| 7 December | Meg Bateman |
| 14 December | Gearoid Mac Lochlainn |
| 4 January | Patricia Byrne |
| 11 January | Eugene O'Connell |
| 18 January | Simon   Faol in |
| 25 January | Chris Agee |
| 1 February | Matthew Geden |
| 8 February | Marian O'Rourke |
| 15 February | Liam   Muirthile |
| 22 February | Teri Murray |
| 1 March | Nessa O'Mahony |
| 8 March | Kate Dempsey |
| 15 March | Brid N  Mh r in |
| 22 March | Paul Grattan |
| 29 March | Gerry Hanberry |
| 5 April | John W Sexton |

On the occasion of Ó Bhéal's fourth Anniversary

12 April 2010 - 4 April 2011

50 open-mic sessions

Vol IV

“When words are scarce they are seldom spent in vain.”

William Shakespeare

Rosalin Blue

12th April 2010

rock alt skin feet holding

Religion

The rugged rocks
on which I stand -
skin of the Earth.
holding me firmly.

Salt licking my feet.
the waves -
a watery cohesion
wrapping the Planet blue.

I skim the even pebble
- time compressed
and licked away -
across the Ocean skin.

One...three...seven, eight
ebbing away to infinity
as my skin ripples
with goosebumps.

My eyes raise,
as the Giant Goddess
smiles with me -
tiny particle of Earth.

Rosalin Blue

Winner - 26th July 2010

dance tree drive wordless pentecost

Summer Hop

Wish I was there -
In my mind I drive
the way over
the Red Mountain
my soul longing
eyes stretching to see
far far the dancing tree.

Away away
to where you're dancing
wordlessly
under the dancing tree.

My dance with the leaves
straw under my feet
into the branches
under a blazing blue sky
is a prayer all night.
And a pentecostal light
melts into my third eye.

John Bracken

Winner - 28th June 2010

pterodactyl banana horripilation mormon flower

The Mormon's Predicament

A Mormon from the great Salt Lake City
In Utah in the U.S.A.,
Espied a most large pterodactyl,
So what could the poor Mormon say?
Through fear he developed a state of horripilation
And while recovering, to while away the hours,
He ate some nuts and a banana,
And on his table was a vase of nice flowers,

But the nuts drove the poor Mormon bananas.
And he said "Will somebody tell me please,
Why do the people who suggest some of these Five Words
Try our intellect to so subtly tease?"
Still and all we blend them in with an effort,
Though our patience is nearly all past,
And we complete a poem with those Five Words,
And come to the final word at last.

Oliver Broderick

Winner - 29th November 2010

hell frozen ring limbo heaven

Untitled

In the deepest pit of Dante's Hell
Sat a frozen pope, grimacing,
His fisherman's ring glistening,
Shining with cruel darts,
Darts that fired their dazzling rays
To the topmost zone,
Where petty sinners in suspense
Are held by weakest cords
Of silk and gossamer
In the almost painless state
Of Limbo,
The very threshold of Heaven.

Grant Burgess

24th January 2011

conundrum shoelace whirling drape nuts

Too Far

They call me cold to the
Docks or bits of earth
Where I call them
Conundrums or other such
Words built to
Dispel or tell them I've
Walked too far.
And too far is never far
When nooses like shoelace
Face me down and make me
Bend to pick the whirling dust
Up in fingertips lost.
But I've walked too far.
And I'm heavy with sweat
And bet my coat that
There are miles that can't
Be counted.
So I'll drape my skin on the
Rail and fall pale to the
Ghost with hair like a handful
Of nuts, or a handful of nails.
But I've walked too far.
And she can't call me down, and she can't
Call me out and
She freezes when she speaks.
And her voice won't stop
Just quieter and quieter
Until, finally, I see that
I've walked too far.

Paul Casey

7th June 2010

mule blessing coffin stone free

Free

My great

- to the power of a thousand coffins -

grandparents

rode no mules through the vast forests

of stone-age Ireland

In a dream I met them

adjusting a spiral time-piece

towards the blazing solstice

skyline

A touch closer

Paul Ó Colmáin

Winner - 6th September 2010

september sweetbread concussion owl miscellaneous

The Challenge

Our September poetry mission,
to produce of the top of our head.
a poetic case of concussion?
a literary plate of sweetbread!
to devise from thoughts subcutaneous,
form the depths of our heart and our soul
- including the word, “miscellaneous”-
Jaysus! I’ll be here ‘til the lark meets the owl!

Sue Cosgrave

24th January 2011

conundrum shoelace whirling drape nuts

Shoelace to the Shoe

You're nuts
said the shoelace to the shoe.

If I had a foot, I would put it down.
You know me; be it pain or pleasure

I hold it all in.
But now, of a sudden,

I feel the need to unravel;
Let It All Hang!

It's your fault we're in such a fix.
Your life's a conundrum

of imbecilic trudging
draped in muck, dipped in shite

your sole
shredded by the sharp eddies

of a stream you once crossed
long ago, never to return.

How did we end up here
(the two of us, conjoined)

three feet above the ground
whirling whirling

our fleshy heart
cooling by the minute.

Marie Coveney

Winner - 7th March 2011

queen gold visit Ireland potato

Untitled

I love British Queens

They're the best potatoes in Ireland.

Smooth skins turn gold in the oven.

When I visit my sister she always says,

'I'll throw some queens in the oven.'

Ross O'Donovan

13th December 2010

sloth horse lock silence ruinous

Man or Myth

How many Hands Measured,
that Wooden Horse
From Trojan Mythology,
Or was it Norse?
It was Greek of Course,
So stop questioning yourself
And Let Lost Leviathans Linger Loosely,
In Silence.
From that Lock and Key Theory,
A Catalyst of Ruinous Sloth.

Julie Field

Winner - 21st February 2011

light heart goat food snotty

Untitled

They say the way to a man's heart
is to fill his belly
or is it the other way around?
Anyway, I decided to lure
him into my steamy kitchen
all soupy eyed
with citrus promises
The food was placed on a candle lit table
and he winked a
smile of approval
but as he nibbled
and gulped
and spat and spoke
my stomach churned
as Romeo took the
shape of a goat
patches of blue cheese
nesting in his beard
his snotty nose glistened emerald
he blew out the candles
with a boisterous berp

Julie Field

7th March 2011

queen gold visit Ireland potato

Goodbye Éire

A potato too many plucked from the ground,
the farmer with the Golden Hair shakes his head
before studying the lines on his hands...
on his left, he sees a map of Éire
on his right, he sees his Mother's face
a true Queen
a lady of the fields
she will visit him in his sleep
she will tell him what to do.

Finbarr Finnegan

17th January 2011

crubeen dance slight fast eerie

Untitled

Douglas Street and around
We who were imports from
the top of the land.
Nicholas hill was a challenge
from the fast one among us
He would bet his lot
while we drank ours
We would end the night
together in Kiely's Chipper
Greasy crubeens with
the hair still on.
That wee dance I had with
the slight, curly haired girl
had me thinking of more
until I heard her friend say
My, he's an eerie one
don't you think, home alone

Jim Fox

Winner - 19th April 2010

leabhar clown bus feet match

Untitled

In Leinster we don't say defeat,
OK, Kearney is a clown.
Some say he has no feet,
But when the chips are down
His boot will bring us up to scratch
His vital points win every match

So all our flights are cancelled
What is all the fuss?
When we get to Paris
We'll go there by bus
Is Landsdowne Road an Ivory Tower?
NEVER.. i mo leabhar

Joseph Healy

13th December 2010

sloth horse lock silence ruinous

Ode to Charlie McCreevy

“I’m not responsible for my country’s ills,”
said Charlie, “All I did was to help the
horse industry. Not my fault the country is in
such a ruinous state. Getting lock-ed every night.
Sloth and greed.”

Silence in the room.

Broken only by the click of the guns.
Firing squad commander’s orders.

“Ready...aim...fire...BANG.”

I awoke from my daydream.
The bailout book had
fallen off the shelf.

Niall Herriott

Winner - 7th June 2010

mule blazing coffin stone free

IT'S PURE MULE ...LIKE

Life is a feckin' mule.

No matter which way you push it
or pull it, it wants to go the other way.

Until you're in the coffin
with a gravestone at your head,
a jug of punch at your feet -
free booze alas too late in the day.

Yeah life is a feckin' mule
but we still keep blazin' away.

Niall Herriott

5th July 2010

mayor mere mare silk elephant

KARMA

Ah India of silk spices and samsara,
elephants adorned with golden trappings
on their noble heads
mere mortals like us
passing through from life to life

Behold the mayor with jewelled turban
riding on his magnificent white mare.
In his last life he was a forest ant.
We all get a chance to come up in the world.

Noel King

Winner - 21st June 2010

stately provocative blood banksters gnaw

Weekend in the Country

That night in the stately home,
in the room bigger than their own

flat in London, in the four poster bed
with ornate blood coloured drapes,

they made love, and she woke
with him wishing to gnaw at her ear.

A provocative moon was just disappearing
and dawn breaking on his thoughts

- the worry that he must tell her that back in London

the banksters were moving in on the flat;
that in his pin-stripe suit

he had sat in the park the last
nine weeks and four days,

not even feeding birds.

Helen Lindstrom

Winner - 18th October 2010

run procrastination aubergine fluorescent whiskers

DESIRE

“Run,” he said.

“Run to me!”

His whiskers were fluorescent
with desire.

His body glowing
swelling like an aubergine.

Procrastination was not
an option.

Jennifer Matthews

Winner - 21st March 2011

defenestration asterisk courgette insatiable milk

An Airing

Demonstration of your pug confidence
is your odd reticence
to allow me in--so you can keep me in
this sick condition, this
constant remonstrations
for any tiny sin--asterisk!

Read 'sin' as 'being human'

Instead I witness
your defenestration of girls
and dinners, of gifts
and philosophers. A rejection
of everything that is sweet
to me, turned curdled milk
in your bowels,
in your gullet.

Take my courgettes,
my eggplants, my olive
oil & innocence--baked
mellow into a homely dish.
An offering as indulgence.

Even this--through the window.
Your appetite for rejection
insatiable. The sound
of broken glass, this sadistic hymn,
is sending me back
down the aisle.

Paschal McDonnell

Winner - 26th July 2010

dance tree drive wordless pentecostal

Untitled

A babbling brook gossiped its wordless way
‘Twixt grassy banks; a merry dance it did portray
Whence sweeping round a horse-shoe bend it overflowed
Descending like the Spirit Dove
Upon a willow tree that was dying dry.
Weeping Disciple-like ‘pon the Pentecostal.

Afric McGlinchey

Winner - 14th June 2010

hello tight enter aphrodisiac thingamagig

Cupid's portal

It was one of those nights
and every few minutes
a boy would enter,
shift his tight pants in that way -
these days I find the least
gesture an aphrodisiac -
and instantly I would imagine
one of those ardent young admirers
of Socrates; flights of fancy
in his wandering eye
as he lazily passed his hand
over a young thing's
thingamagig
while uttering the most
erudite and elucidating passages
of poetic philosophy
until the audience was half-lidded
to a swoon. And so the evening passed,
mine and that
of Socrates, aeons ago,
somehow crossing in some
liminal moment, long enough
to say hello.

Afric McGlinchey

7th June 2010

mule blazing coffin stone free

Lament

I will never be free
here, where home is a stone coffin
and the sound of laughter is never heard
and a mule is the only company
blazing over the dust
in his wretched fury
similarly
unfree.

Matt Mooney

10th January 2011

shoes glass rocket sleep lettuce

Rabbits

In a secret field, nesting on a hill,
Where time it seems is standing still,
A warren of little rabbits sleep:
In burrows very quiet they keep.
At evening on the grass they graze-
Not on lettuce leaves, their craze.
No shoes they wear on dewy grass,
Nor do they ever use a looking glass;
White tailed, furred without a pocket:
Can disappear as fast as any rocket.

Michael Pattwell

Winner - 11th October 2010

objective feline clipped pansy withering

THE CAT ON THE WINDOWSILL

Ignoring the objective
Of dressing the windowsills
With flower-boxes
To keep the piddling feline away
We clipped the pansies
Before they started withering.
Soon they were all gone
And the Tom came back
To reclaim his pissing perch.

Tina Pisco

Winner - 1st November 2010

requiem red necklace seep drain

Girls' Night Out

Your red blood seeped down the drain -
smeared lipstick on a Saturday night.
Pearls from your necklace filled the bath
with opalescent balls of light
that danced in the shadows of the rain.

Demented drunk, I held you.
Turned on the shower and laughed
when you shrieked and thrashed,
relieved that this was no requiem.
Just another celebration of our friendship
gone slightly pear-shaped.

Tina Pisco

Winner - 31st January 2011

discombobulation obstreperous elevator lang professional

Discombobulation

It's that sinking feeling:

when the elevator clangs
and the lights go out,

when your suitcase isn't there
and the conveyor belt stops,

when you're on the lang
and you meet your mother,

when your tax is out
and there's a road block ahead,

when professionals heave a sigh
before they speak,

when the guards knock on the door
in the dead of night,

when the obstreperous child
you dragged down the street, has vanished...

and your mind flails like a
beached whale, like a hooked worm,
like a hubcap bouncing into darkness,
as you try to force Time back to when
the world made sense;
but you fail.

No words come out
of your bone dry mouth.

You can only stand there,
arms outstretched, gulping

like a goldfish.

Niamh Prior

Winner - 10th January 2010

shoes glass rocket sleep lettuce

Untitled

I see you there
slumbering silently on my shoes
in the hallway.
You always told me you
sleep like the dead.
I didn't believe you
until now.
Nor did I believe you
about the shoes.
'I like them very much', you said.
'Okay', I said.
'No, you don't understand', you said.
'I like them - inordinately.'
The first night I wore stilettos
you went off like a rocket.
Now you lie there
clutching my Dubarrys
lettuce scattered all around
with ketchup besmeared beard
one sole still touching your tongue
an empty glass by your side.
Now I understand.
You like shoes.

Michael Ray

Winner - 30th August 2010

house mandolin teenagers ransack perplexed

Untitled

In this mandolin of a house
five perplexed teenagers
begin to pluck
the finely tuned artwork
from the inlaid walls.
High in the fret-boarded attic
its ransacked cries
leak out through the tiles
into the night.

Rosie O'Regan

Winner - 24th January 2011

conundrum shoelace whirling drape nuts

Nuts

I go whirling through the night
dancing toe to knee
across rock raw conundrums

A cold cloud curls
a dark iris round the full moon

Watches me drape myself
over and over
bramble, bog and sense singing

one shoe on
one shoe off
one shoelace tying me to this tree

as the nuts fall down

7th February 2011

yo-yo shadow fall february myopic

Untitled

You yo-yo back to me
and I let you fall
into myopic february shadows

Stephen O’ Riordan
Winner - 5th July 2010
mare mayor mere silk elephant

Ideal Position

I should have been a jockey,
with this mere meagre slight frame of mine
I should have been a jockey,
with my taste for silk
I should have been a jockey,
with my pastime of mounting mares
I should have been a jockey,

But I’d rather be Mayor,
and be paraded on high through Patrick’s Street
perchance on an elephant,
perhaps have effigies of me - unburned of course
hoisted to the pinnacles of
Shandon Steeple
The Elysian
& The North Cathedral

My manifesto shall be sent to each Cork homestead
and my election slogan?

‘How bad could I be’

Micheál dé Roiste

Winner - 28th March 2011

cáilín sin-é ar-seachran liquorice beag

Untitled

Chonaic me cáilín deas trasna an chúntar

Shiúl me i dtreo

Bhí mé beaganín nerbhíseach

Ní raibh mé abalta caint di

Mar bhí mo intinn ar seachran

Ar luas lasrach, thóg mé

liquorice as mo phóca agus

tabhair dom í

Thosaigh sí ag gáire

Sin é

Colm Scully

Winner - 14th March 2011

gaddafi leaf cornered exchange millisecond

Gaddafi's Tomb

An oak facade or maybe teak. Three feet high with sturdy legs.

Lovely cornered leaf design.

A little gold knob to open its door.

Deep inside it's stained and dull.

Perhaps it once smelled ugly and stale.

A fashionable piece to hold a commode

In exchange for placing under a bed.

Dare I say in 1910

My grandfather rushed from his iron stead.

In a millisecond he found relief.

Then eased back into his restful sleep.

Now I think I'll ship it off

Pack it up in foam and straw.

Send it down to Benghazi's shores

To serve as a cask for Gaddafi's ashes

My small effort to serve the cause.

John W. Sexton

27th September 2010

culture fire cloud tentacle decisive

Made Man

A yeast culture was best,
she discerned (after many tries),
to encourage the growth of fungal cities
on her boyfriend's skin

Asleep

(Soundly now for five years),
his mind was a thick cloud
(condensed through accumulated dreaming);
his tongue, lolling sideways across his face,
was a pointed tentacle with seven shallow cups.
In his left eye was a green fire,
a blue flame in his right.

The skin
would be the work
of many years,
but she was decisive
in her method;
and she had plenty

of time

Mark Stout

Winner - 12th April 2010

rock salt skim feet holding

Your Eternal Home

Holding onto the coffin-side,
A tear trickles down my weary cheek,
The mourner's feet embrace the ground - in unison,
We lower you into the grave
Like a rock filled satchel,
The rain sand-blasts my skin,
We pray for you in your eternal home,
Reminds me of the salt mines of Wieliczka
With the chapel covered in candles,
Today, the pebbles skim across your lake
which engulf in a watery bed,
Listen to the trumpets playing,
Calling you onto the runway of the after-life.

Joe Sweeney
7th March 2011
queen gold visit Ireland potato

Untitled

We climbed Knocknarea to visit Queen Maeve's Tomb.
Just you and me and a wind that would skin you.
We stood and held each other,
and looked over Ireland,
until the sun changed the clouds
from gold to the colour of blood.
As we descended the sun was gone,
the land shadowy as history.
We shared the last of the potato crisps
On that old bog road,
But we were still hungry...

Joe Sweeney

21st March 2011

defenestration asterisk courgette insatiable milk

Untitled

“I have removed” my editor said, over lunch, “that asterisk on page twenty four.”

“You what!?” I said. She did not reply.

Her mouth was too crammed with courgette.

“That asterisk,” she gnashed. “On page twenty four. It’s history.”

Then she went on eating, quite callously I felt.

She demolished a huge steak, assassinated an extra portion of chips,

reduced whole bowls of vegetables to terrified trembling strands.

She was insatiable.

“I want that asterisk,” I said.

“No!” she said. “It goes.”

So I threw her out the window.

After this impromptu defenestration I looked down at her remains in the street, remorsefully. Who was going to do my editing now?

O well, I thought, no use crying over spilt milk.

Patricia Walsh

Winner - 27th September 2010

culture tentacle fire cloud decisive

Untitled

His idea of culture
Began and ended
With the solemn back catalogue
Of Ozric Tentacles.
Enlightened, yet decisive
I put the collection on the fire
And the resulting cloud
Is his reward for evermore.

Five Word Challenge Winners 2010-2011

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 12 April | Mark Stout |
| 19 April | Jim Fox |
| 26 April | Estera Mianowska |
| 3 May | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 10 May | Fred Wildman and Levi Dewick |
| 17 May | Thomas McCarthy |
| 24 May | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 31 May | Katie |
| 7 June | Niall Herriott |
| 14 June | Afric McGlinchey |
| 21 June | Noel King |
| 28 June | John Bracken |
| 5 July | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 12 July | Jennifer Matthews |
| 19 July | Paul Casey |
| 26 July | Rosalin Blue, Paschal McDonnell and Niall Herriot |
| 2 August | Sue Cosgrave |
| 9 August | Paul Casey |
| 16 August | Caroline Lynch |
| 23 August | Matthew Sweeney |
| 30 August | Michael Ray |
| 6 September | Paul Ó Colmáin |
| 13 September | Diarmuid Fitzgerald |
| 20 September | Michael Ray |
| 24 September | Alan Egan |
| 27 September | Patrician Walsh |
| 4 October | Richard Walsh |
| 11 October | Michael Pattwell |
| 18 October | Helen Lindstrom |
| 25 October | Paul Casey |
| 1 November | Tina Pisco |
| 8 November | Rosie O'Regan |
| 15 November | Patrick Cotter |
| 22 November | Patrick Cotter |
| 29 November | Oliver Broderick |
| 6 December | Stephen and Ruan |
| 13 December | Joe Healy and Afric McGlinchey |
| 10 January | Niamh Prior |
| 17 January | Catherine Ann Cullen |
| 24 January | Rosie O'Regan |
| 31 January | Tina Pisco |
| 7 February | John Ryan |
| 14 February | Ross O'Donovan |
| 21 February | Julie Field |
| 28 February | Órfhlaith |
| 7 March | Marie Coveney |
| 14 March | Colm Scully |
| 21 March | Jennifer Matthews |
| 28 March | Micheál de Róiste |
| 4 April | Michael Ray |

Guest Poets 2010-2011

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 12 April | Ó Bhéal poets from Five Words Vol III |
| 19 April | Pádraig MacAoidh, Joy Dunlop, Angus Peter Campbell and Shona Masson |
| 26 April | Aifric MacAodha |
| 3 May | Vincent Woods |
| 10 May | Camille Martin |
| 17 May | Richard Tillinghast |
| 24 May | Carlos Reyes |
| 31 May | GMC and Bubba Shakespeare |
| 7 June | Paul Perry |
| 14 June | Afric McGlinchey and Maureen Gallagher |
| 21 June | Noel King |
| 28 June | Quincy Lehr |
| 5 July | Antony Owen and Barry Patterson |
| 12 July | John McNamee |
| 19 July | Elaine Feeney and Dave Lordan |
| 26 July | Seosamh Ó Guairim |
| 2 August | Jerome Kiely |
| 9 August | Kevin Higgins and Susan Millar du Mars |
| 16 August | Caroline Lynch |
| 23 August | Maurice Riordan |
| 30 August | Marcela Sulak |
| 6 September | Áine Moynihan |
| 13 September | Celia de Fréine |
| 20 September | Christodoulos Makris |
| 24 September | Fergus Costello |
| 27 September | Patrick Chapman |
| 4 October | Nell Regan |
| 11 October | John Corless |
| 18 October | Roderick Ford |
| 25 October | Jazz Poetry Night (Ó Bhéal poets and the Heery Galen Bonino trio) |
| 1 November | Jennifer Cendaña Armas |
| 8 November | Poetry-Film Night |
| 15 November | Caitríona Ní Chléirchín |
| 22 November | Maggie O'Dwyer |
| 29 November | Olive Broderick |
| 6 December | Biddy Jenkinson |
| 13 December | Paul Durcan |
| 10 January | Ian Wild |
| 17 January | Catherine Ann Cullen |
| 24 January | Órflaith Foyle |
| 31 January | Pól Ó Muirí |
| 7 February | Mary Kennelly |
| 14 February | Gerry Murphy |
| 21 February | Nuala Ní Chonchúir |
| 28 February | Cherry Smyth |
| 7 March | Simone Mansell Broome |
| 14 March | Ciaran O'Driscoll |
| 21 March | Geraldine Mills and Lisa C. Taylor |
| 28 March | Philip Cummings |
| 4 April | Mary Madec |

On the occasion of Ó Bhéal's fifth Anniversary

11 April 2011 - 9 April 2012

52 open-mic sessions

Vol V

"Yblessed be god that I have wedded fyve!"

Geoffrey Chaucer

Rosalin Blue

11th April 2011

sundries anniversary milk kaleidoscope glass

Lifelong

for my grandparents

My glance wanders across
the landscape of our life
across our odd collection
of sundries along our shelves
from over the years.

I pour some milk
into my coffee
and top up your tea
to the colour you like.

We do not speak much
any more after knowing
one another for so long.
Our eyes gazing, listening
to the radio, the TV.

Sometimes you tell a story –
one I haven't heard
for a while. It's like
a looking-glass
into your past – and ours.

We've steered our boat
through times
so hard and rough
survived together
and became old.

It's our 40th anniversary today
and I still love
looking through the
kaleidoscope of our lives.

Eimear Conboy

Winner - 6th June 2011

lemon fish pipe extraordinary harp

Untitled

You may have a face like a fish,
but there is no point
in being bitter about it.

You have eaten your last lemon
my dear,
for now it is time
to concentrate on your
extraordinary musical abilities.

Who cares how you look when you
play the harp so well?
Now put that in your pipe and smoke it!

Kathryn Crowley

5th March 2012

tortoiseshell apple match heave insidious

Untitled

Beautiful tones on a tortoise shell

Crystal clear water

Earth blessed well

Cosy range oven

Apple smell

Comfort cooks in every batch.

Natural patterns

And pleasures weave

Emotions take over

I feel my heart heave

Now they want fracking

Another long match

Insidious greed

Multinational hatch.

Jack Brae Curtingstall

2nd May 2011

umbrella may mischief bin-laden map

Good and Evil Cannot be Contained in a Song

Bin Laden killed a long, long house
and then killed two.

In May my love, my one true love,
was born, and I was too.

I found a map

for those in pain

to find a dry way

through the rain,

for times, sometimes,

umbrellas aren't the thing

and mischief breaks

the Golden String.

Joan Dargan

Winner - 23rd January 2012

parapet prognosis sheer waltz wings

INCURABLE

It was from the sheer joy
of the death-defying waltz,
Doctor,
that I sprouted wings
at the edge of the parapet.
I don't mind the bandages.
It's always the same prognosis.

Emily Davis-Fletcher

26th March 2012

conviviality spring jar haircut flower

Untitled

I cannot get over his belly,
a proud, pale flower blooming in my absence.
Though he swears he barely survived this last Spring of Loneliness
while I was away,
he soaked in jar after jar of Beamish,
his cheeks grew ruddy from the pub's sunny conviviality.
The haircut I don't mind,
but I can feel his belly
coming between our reunion.

Simon Deasy

18th July 2011

mirror earth blood whiskey sky

Bluebird

Birth I wrote
and drew a line through it
as he said
It's Earth!

The opposite of Earth is birth I thought,
my mind intervened
as seen images
of brown wet waves
falling in six-foot holes
stole from the now
from where our minds flicker
like us in all of this
flickering
like flecks of silt in a rolling wave
or souls in a galaxy
or stars in a black sky
mirroring me
of any given Sunday sitting
in a tinted glass canteen

Someone comes to sit by my side
and the side of all that is hidden
beside the bluebird that weeps
whiskey on its wing

And we sit there
side by side and silent
in our tinted glass-house
where nothing ever grows
like petals
having fallen from their flower.

Simon Deasy
1st August 2011
horse tinfoil quiet soap legacy

My Love

My love's legacy is a tinfoil flower
I keep it inside of me still
prize it out through the quiet hour
my immortal man-made tinfoil flower,

She carved one once for me
in a bar of pink soap
but my hands have been dirtied
and cleaned and dirtied since then

Like my horses
born wild
reared and then broken
taught to lean heads to their feeders, gently,
well they have regressed
and may bite you and buck you
and run if you rub!

Flowers bloom and then die
but not mine
not my love
as I've shaped it,
flimsy thin tin
That will not weep
nor ever wilt.

John Downes

Winner - 12th March 2012

scramble blister green fanta sponge

Untitled

no fanta at this bar
only green pints on st patrick's day
so busy a scramble for glasses
broken glasses everywhere
clean up the spillages
with a filthy sponge

Cal Doyle

29th August 2011

birthday clouds solidarity hurricane tulips

Untitled

You always said
that I knew nothing
of solidarity, for instance,
on yr birthday I had a hurricane
perform cloud origami:
it folded them up into tulips
and you didn't speak to me for a week
because I had so easily surrendered
my means of production.

Cal Doyle

11th July 2011

door accordion kick perspex sunburn

Untitled

After your fifth pint
the accordion broke
in your heavy hands.
You said: "I'm goin outside
gettin me some Perspex."
You drunk. As you left
the door gave your arse
a mighty kick & you hopped
back in. Then, well, as you do
you dropped your trousers
and folded over, like a page
your pendulum head
upside-down hung
about a foot above your feet,
you said: "Look at that, la,
now my sunburn is complete."

Julie Field

11th July 2011

sonorous neck tranquilizer wham bespoke

Ketamin

A smirk

A sniff

A rolling of the eyes

And wham

On the floor

The vein in his neck

Bouncing

Bouncing

In sync to the tick tock

Tock tick

He thinks he might be sick

All over his bespoke couch.

Horse tranquillisers are totally overrated

Julie Field

Winner - 26th March 2012

spring haircut jar conviviality flower

Untitled

One evening in spring,
aged one and a half,
my eyes beamed with conviviality
my heart melted at the smell of cocoa.
My mother perched me atop
a cushion atop a chair,
there I sat to the
snip snip snip.
Damp curls hit the kitchen tiles
and all the while
I smiled into space
with a plan to place
my detached curls
in an empty jar
with some water, honey
and a sprinkle of sand.
I imagined the golden flower
I would hold in my hand.

Alan Foley

11th July 2011

door accordion kick perspex sunburn

Untitled

I see the door
no more
after i hit the bloody floor
'neath a perspex little light
so i get up for my fight
and i pumped his nobbly nose
with a kick below my toes
he rose
and he screamed a blaring flare
with his chest up in the air

the little dicky jimmy's son
i played him like th'accordion
he didn't know rule number one
i punched him in the naval place
his chest blew up and smacked his face

the next day he was crying
his nerves had never learned
his eyes were screaming with sunburn
when then my heart did turn

Niall Herriott

16th January 2012

pendulum surely fifteen wastrel latin

JURASSIC CLASSICS

Surely this is the swing of the pendulum.

After fifteen years the Latin I learned
from a Dominican inquisitor
under threat of the split cane
was entirely gone.

All my hard work undone.

Virgil revolved at speed in his grave
dismissed me scornfully
as a lazy wastrel

until I started learning Spanish
another form of modern Latin
with the influence of Arabic
and a few other tongues thrown in.

The pendulum swinging back.

David Hynes

Winner - 20th February 2012

candle fence redemption hurting map

Redemption

En Guard! I cry with foil in hand
'Cos I'm the greatest fencer in the land!
I grip my sword with the least of ease
As my courage flickers like candles in the breeze
For you see I'm hurting and weak in the knees
But my life has been mapped out to this point
So maybe I'll just slay, then go home for a joint.

Mark Killen

Winner - 12th September 2012

car nobber glass stalk red

Nobber

In me car

Cheap vinyl upholstery

Steamy sweat pulses

Trickles on the glass

My bawdy stalk

Rub red

On tight denim

Nobber?

Sure if I only had the chance

Ciarán MacArtain

Winner - 9th January 2012

pudding subtle chrysalis understatement weird

Peaks and Valleys

Captive in your crystal chrysalis,
I try to invade, to talk
I'm not into asian cuisine
but girl we're taking a walk
Yeah it was a good line
But baby it wasn't mine

“Don't look at me like that”, you say
Well how would you like me to look at you darling?
Like you don't stumble through the peaks and valleys of my mind?
“You're weird” Yeah I'm subtle too babe
“Oh really, I never realised I had checked into the understatement hotel.”
Well cast the play, director
“I don't know, this is hard.”
Yeah it is, but baby you can't
have your pudding, and eat it.

Jennifer Matthews

5th March 2012

tortoiseshell apple match heave insidious

Old Doll

She always aspired to a life decades older,
chose tortoiseshell frames
for glasses, read only classics, looked
at gymnastics and cheerleading and dances
as pastimes too insidious
for her excellent taste at an overripe 16.
Aiming for aging, heaving her voracious youth
into the dumpster in exchange
for something safer, something quieter,
she never gave in to the apple
in any bad boy's eye. (Beyond
the secret recording of their names
in liquid procession, in endless notebooks--
litanies of opportunities contained
and discarded.)

Her notebooks drying out, becoming
tinder, lined on bookshelves,
over drawers and drawers filled with matches.

Bernadette McCarthy

Winner - 11th April 2011

sundries anniversary milk kaleidoscope glass

The Anniversary

The anniversary of our blessed union-

Your milk-white sundries lounge in the palm of my hand.

The kaleidoscope of our mottled love

Turns in the cracked bedside glass.

Afric McGlinchey
Winner - 31st October 2011
tree baby jazz speckled veer

Stray notes

We met at the Speckled Tree.
They'd swept away the sawdust
for her jazz solo;
a baby grand in the corner,
smoky notes trailing memories
that slayed me.
Just enough sleaze
for the cool
enough craze for the pickled,
who swayed and veered towards
long balloons
hanging from a blue ceiling.
I held my glass tilted,
but not so it spilled.
Of course, you knew
exactly
when to move in
for the kill.

Afric McGlinchey

Winner - 3rd October 2011

peripatetic optimism passive bench flamenco

Untitled

Most of the poets I know
are peripatetic, prolific, quick
– not one of them passive –
but with an optimism that flares
like a peacock's tail, or the frothy
swirl of a flamenco dancer's skirt.
Not even the corrosive lash
of a sarcastic critic's tongue
will stem the tide of their enthusiasm.
They adhere to their art
as a cowboy does to a bucking bronco
– although less energetically so.
As the sun sets in the slow dusk,
they sit on their bench, study the crunch
of homeward-bound footsteps,
and even if the rain comes down,
they don't even flinch.

Tom Moloney

Winner - 16th May 2011

silence map palace green bottle

Singularity

Where is the legendary bottle, God,
The one that you shook over your head,
The one before time that fizzed,

And as you opened, exploded,
Rocking your palace in the heavens;
The one that broke the silence,

And all that was left for you to do?
...to map the land, the seas,
The lie of stars.

On corking the empty, you coloured the world –
Luscious green over one little land;
Then you made it an island.

Gerry Moran

Winner - 26th August 2011

champagne kilkenny pain picnic freedom

Some picnic!

If you go down
To the woods (Kilkenny woods)
Today
You're sure of a big surprise
For there you'll see
Midst oak and ash tree
A scene that will
Puzzle the eyes:
Teddy bears, teddy bears
Guzzling champagne
As they work themselves up
For their latest campaign
For bear-naked freedom
From humans inane
From the god-awful pain
Of claustrophobic toy shops
Cloying children
Over zealous mams
Clammy prams.
Some picnic!

Nora Neville

Winner - 1st August 2011

horse tinfoil quiet soap legacy

BANBURY CROSS

Ride a quiet horse to Banbury Cross

Put soap on the saddle

and tin-foil under your arse

and pass on the story

as a legacy

Micheál O'Coinn

31st October 2011

tree baby jazz speckled veer

Untitled

Beneath this
Leafy black canopy

Speckled

With childhood dreams
Falling

One
By
One

I stray
In thought

My mind
Like a gramophone

Beneath this
Midnight

Skipping
To a jazzy
Refrain

Arbor
Pensive
And
Scared

Refrain

Refrain

Like a new-born
Baby

In this

A world of
Would-be

Word

Michael O'Callaghan
Winner - 19th September 2011
bureau apple word next basement

Untitled

At the Euro Bureau
I stood in queue, read the signs:
'No Smoking.'
'No Funny Business.'

"Next!"
Not my turn yet.
I am cast in this role by forces grey and pointless.

'No Entry'. The words writ red and bold
on basement black... beside each other!
'ENTRY'..... 'NO!'.

"Next!" I move myself
to where the bored assistant waits
and whisper..."Apples!"

He looks askance, amused.
"Apples?"
I say the word again with more intensity:
"Apples, apples,
I want apples"

"We do Euros here, I'm sorry,
This is not an apple orchard,
This is a Euro Bureau.

Would you like some Euros?"

I pause, considering...

"Are they fresh?"
"Crisp and fresh."

"Good. Forget the apples.
Euros are just fine."

Michael O'Callaghan

24th October 2011

president stone wolf word tempo

Untitled

There is a stone in Mecca
where pilgrims circle for many days,
expurging sin -
stirring the cycle of renewal
into fresh adventure.

There is a stone in the forest
where wolves stand
under the November moon
to utter ancient, howling prayers.

In the beginning was the Word
and the word was Stone
and the earth was a dark stone -
turning in tempo round a shining star.

Do we live on a fallen star,
on a stone out-cast into darkness?

I read the news of the child in Foshan -
stricken, sidetracked, under traffic trampled,
until a tattered woman came to comfort her.

Is the heart a stone, a fallen star?

Oh powers, oh precedents!
oh presidents, dark forces - rescue us!
come hear our ancient howling prayer:
stir warmth in these cold pilgrim hearts,
shine light in this dark forest and
deliver us!

Jamie O'Connell

Winner - 11th July 2011

door accordion kick perspex sunburn

Untitled

The door to the sweet cupboard
was lying in smithereens,
but accordion to her son
he hadn't kicked it in.

But from her perspex-tive
he sunburnt it off its frame,
with a pile of tinder
and a naked flame.

Sean O'Riordan

12th December 2011

rubbish tolerance nose wife molasses

Stuck On You

My tolerance was a by-product of my

Love for you.

You are so refined.

Like molasses

Sweet, golden & delicious.

Like a good wife

You stuck by me through

Thick & thin.

Only holding your nose as

You scattered my ashes

In the Big Blue Bin.

Aidan O'Shea

6th February 2012

glow bubbles bleeding orion fire

Cosmic Conundrum

Out there in the night sky
Other worlds tilt and glow.
I cannot believe that their light
Takes days, months, years even
To hit my optic nerve.
Great balls of fire they are
Farting with bleeding bubbles of toxic gas.
They seem to like each other's company
And huddle together in clusters
Like goats, ploughs and other everyday objects.
One's called Orion, whose name is Greek to me.

Winner - 5th March 2012

tortoiseshell apple match heave insidious

Eden

In that primeval garden
Before they felt the need for
His and hers figleaves to match,
A tortoiseshell serpent hissed insidiously in Eve's ear.
'twas then they shared le crunch.
God replied with a hell of a heave-ho.
The Fall of Man is not so much
About the apple in the tree
As the pair on the ground.

Tina Pisco
Winner - 24th October 2011
president stone wolf word tempo

Occupy Yourself!

Il n'est pas trop tard, mais il est grand temps...

At this time, this time of
yours and mine. At this
time this time of stones
and bones. At this time
this time of wolves and
words. At this time, this
time you need to heed
this tempo, momentum,
bound in the rhythm,
bound in the beat,
bound in the heat
of all these people
on the street;
Calling for justice,
Calling dissent,
Calling: WE ARE THE 99%.

At this time, this time,
this tempo, this beat,
this rhythm, this time,
this time, this heat,
this time, this time, this momentum,
bound in the rhythm,
bound in the beat,
bound in the heat
of all these people
on the street;
Open your eyes.
Open your ears.
Open your mouth
and repeat:

“If not now, when?”

“If not here, where?”

“If not me, who?”

Niamh Prior

Winner - 18th April 2011

challenge pride pelican celebrate marsh

Avian Advice

Rise to the challenge
Carry your pride hidden
Like a pelican's dinner
Stored for later.
One day this festival
Of life will celebrate
What you have to offer
As you emerge from the
Marshes
After stealing so quietly
For years.
The moment will come
When you open your beak
They see what's inside

And applaud.

Michael Ray

2nd May 2011

umbrella may mischief bin-laden map

May

Bin laden sat with a bowl of cheerio's
half-eaten in his lap.

Outside under an umbrella sky
May danced through puddles
making ripples in her black boots;
mischief mapped across her milky smile.

5th March 2012

tortoiseshell apple match heave insidious

Change

He rowed his tortoiseshell boat
across the apple of her eye.
Beneath the heave of his knees
a cloud of mackerel broke his stroke,
no match for the insidious swell
he turned turtle, fell through their glittering mind.
His vestigial gills long since consigned
to pockets for loose change.

Michael Ray

27th February 2012

scissors unicycle undulating coarse unemployed

No Matter

It didn't matter that the wing-nut
on the stem of his sprung saddle
had flown through the grating of the bridge
or that he spat coarse language from his lips
as his unicycle bounced down the steps
crushing his meat and two veg,
or that the scissors that his wife
had accidentally left in the right-hand
pocket of his trousers
were working their way into his upper thigh;
it just didn't matter, because the trick
cyclist's job in the local government office
was filled and he was no longer unemployed.

Sinead Ryan

6th February 2012

glow bubbles bleeding orion fire

Orion Saw – I Slept

The glow of Orion
Shone like a fire
That night,
Blazing over you and I.
Over you in a hot bus
Rocking over rough Ugandan roads
And over me
Safe in my Irish bed.

That night – I saw dreams
And while Orion blazed
You lived nightmares -
Bubbles of fear
Bleeding like poison
Through your mind.

I lay in my warm Irish bed
While the same glow of Orion
That softened my dreams
Shone it's light
On your nightmare
Of machete madness
And still – I slept.

Colm Scully

Winner - 17th October 2012

constitutional protest illicit tabernacle dingle

Tabernacle

Tabernacle O'Connor cut out the lettering from the papers with precision.

He was used to such work.

Removing the headings from the unsold "Kerryman"

on a Sunday evening in his mothers shop.

This blackmail letter would unwind the guts out of his arch enemy.

The parish priest of Dingle "Canon O'Tuama".

He would refer to the illicit undertakings with the parish funds,

and perceived long glances at altar-boys in the front row.

Whether they were true or not was irrelevant.

The priest might protest, but he knew that the mud would stick.

Tabernacle felt sure that money would be forthcoming.

What might be the use of the Very Reverend going public

and claiming his constitutional rights.

Not in the present climate where a whiff of scandal hung over any religious,

like flies above a dung heap in summer.

Revenge will be mine, thought O'Connor,

as he pasted the letters together on the page.

Revenge for lumbering him with that horrible nick name,

since he robbed the altar wine from the vestry

all those years ago.

Joseph Sweeney

Winner - 25th April 2011

peace resurrection love freedom shoes

After

The day the Berlin wall came down they were chanting -
Peace, Love, Freedom. Then the bulldozers came and mortar tumbled down
and the dust rose as if the souls of all the hapless victims were resurrecting,
free at last. We gazed hungrily to see what lay on the other side.

When the dust settled we saw that the other side was not much different
from this side. Our shoes were covered in the dust. And we couldn't see out
the windows of our apartment the next morning with it. It lay, clinging like
a grey veil to the glass, as if not wanting us to forget. But it was preventing us
from seeing what was going on out there.

So I half -opened the window and leaning out used a white cloth
to wipe a space clean so the light could get in and I could dream
of another resurrection...

Joseph Sweeney

Winner - 28th November 2011

sonorous neck tranquilizer wham bespoke

The Wasp

Nat King Cole was singing on the car radio: I was walking along, minding my business, when love came and hit me in the eye. Wham, Bam, Allagazam, wonderful you came by!

What a sonorous voice Nat had.

The power to seduce and tranquillize.

Bespoke to sooth the stresses of the motorway.

I turned my car radio up louder.

Unfortunately a wasp

disturbed by the decibels

got loose in the car and landed on my neck!

Wham! Bam! Allagazam and goodbye!

Winner - 2nd May 2011

umbrella may mischief bin-laden map

Who but Nostradamus...?

I believe there is a map of destiny drawn by the great Cartographer in the sky, showing the vagaries, the topography of fate. And when the rain of vengeance falls there is no umbrella to protect those, like Bin Laden, who have made mischief. Come what may,

after havoc and evil, justice will have its say.

But who - except perhaps Nostradamus -

could have foreseen that, ten years after the burning of the

Great Towers, vengeance for the deed of Osama

Would come in the reign of Obama?

Patricia Walsh

6th February 2012

glow bubbles bleeding orion fire

Untitled

In the cold glow of the receding fire
Your bleeding hips stain the parquet floor
Bubbles like a witch's brew.
This is all on command of the constellation
That is Orion, no less.
You're lucky not to be in Mercury's retrograde
Then you'll be in trouble.

Five Word Challenge Winners 2011-2012

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 11 April | Bernadette McCarthy |
| 18 April | Niamh Prior |
| 25 April | Joe Sweeney |
| 2 May | Joe Sweeney |
| 9 May | Micheál Roche |
| 16 May | Tom Moloney |
| 23 May | Micheál Roche |
| 30 May | Niall Herriott |
| 3 June | Eimear Conboye |
| 13 June | Grant Burgess |
| 20 June | Bernadette McCarthy |
| 27 June | Rosie O'Regan |
| 4 July | Joe Sweeney |
| 11 July | Jamie O'Connell |
| 18 July | Stephen Anonymous |
| 25 July | Bernadette McCarthy |
| 1 August | Nora Neville |
| 8 August | The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr. Terry Shannon |
| 15 August | Oliver Barrett |
| 22 August | Julie Field |
| 26 August | Gerry Moran |
| 29 August | Ruadhan Lawlor |
| 5 September | Simon Deasy |
| 12 September | Mark Killen |
| 19 September | Michael O'Callaghan |
| 23 September | John Carmody |
| 26 September | Munster Slam Champion - Fergus Costello |
| 3 October | Afric McGlinchey |
| 10 October | Michael O'Callaghan |
| 17 October | Colm Scully |
| 24 October | Tina Pisco |
| 31 October | Afric McGlinchey |
| 7 November | Lorcan Murray |
| 14 November | Afric McGlinchey and Paul Casey |
| 21 November | Joe Sweeney |
| 28 November | Joe Sweeney |
| 5 December | Conor Cleary |
| 12 December | Jennifer Matthews |
| 9 January | Ciarán MacArtain |
| 16 January | Michael O'Callaghan |
| 23 January | Joan Dargan |
| 30 January | Michael O'Callaghan and Tina Pisco |
| 6 February | Micheál Roche |
| 13 February | Cal Doyle |
| 20 February | David Hynes |
| 27 February | Alison O'Grady |
| 5 March | Aidan O'Shea |
| 12 March | John Downes |
| 19 March | Cathal Holden |
| 26 March | Julie Field |
| 2 April | Adrian Scanlon |
| 9 April | Seán Bent |

Guest Poets 2011-2012

- 11 April Ó Bhéal poets from Five Words Vol IV
18 April Pat Borthwick
25 April Rita Kelly
2 May Anne-Marie Fyfe
9 May Michael Farry
16 May Kathy D'Arcy
23 May Richard Halperin
30 May Siobhan Mac Mahon & Sabrina Piggott
3 June Robyn Rowland & Lynn Saoirse
13 June Jennifer Militello
20 June MC Mupéad agus Jimmy Penguin
27 June Luca Artioli, Andrea Garbin, Fabio Barcellandi & Dave Lordan
4 July Bicycles with Umbrellas
11 July Ailbhe Darcy
18 July Paul Maddern
25 July Pádraig Breandán Ó Laighin
1 August Michael McCarthy
8 August Malcolm Dewhirst
15 August Aidan Hayes
22 August Maeve O'Sullivan
26 August Grace Wells at the National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny
29 August Mary Melvin Geoghegan
5 September Geraldine Mitchell
12 September Rody Gorman
19 September Rab Urquhart
23 September John Carmody for Culture Night
26 September Sarah Clancy and the Munster Slam Championships
3 October Shirley McClure
10 October Tom Conaty
17 October Seán Hutton
24 October The K.F.C. Trio and Ó Bhéal poets for Jazz Poetry Night
31 October
7 November Salmon Poetry's 30th Anniversary
14 November Poetry-Film Night
21 November Stephen Murray
28 November Tina Pisco
5 December Kerry Hardie
12 December Doireann Ní Ghríofa
9 January Carol Ann Duffy & John Sampson
16 January Helena Nolan
23 January George (Daw) Harding
30 January Louis de Paor
6 February Adam Wyeth
13 February Liz O'Donoghue
20 February Jimmy Cummins
27 February Jill Battson
5 March Colm Keegan
12 March Rita Ann Higgins
19 March Peadar Ó hUallaigh
26 March Patrick Moran
2 April Kerrie O'Brien
9 April Leeanne Quinn

On the occasion of Ó Bhéal's sixth Anniversary

16 April 2012 - 8 April 2013

51 open-mic sessions

Vol VI

*“A child of five would understand this.
Send someone to fetch a child of five.”*

Groucho Marx

Rosalin Blue

11th March 2013

candle swan hopscotch horse orange

Night Ride

The wind in the willows is blowing
The moon in the night shines the way.
Can you see the lonely rider
seeking his route through the maze

The town stretches out like a hopscotch,
his horse bounds along with its hooves
not touching the numbers, eyes focused beyond
ride horseman and horse in the moon.

And when they come to the water
that gleams in the darkness ahead,
across he can see a dim candle
guiding the way with its light.

It flickers alone in a window –
He's longing to reach his home,
as over the black looming waters
and under the orange full moon

slowly passes majestically great
bowing, a silver-white swan.
The horse and rider both stand in awe
before they break back to the road

Riding the hopscotch out past the willows
to the candlelit house in the night
lying asleep in the glowing moon –
Will they make it home safely tonight?

Rosalin Blue

29th October 2012

residue moon hairy marble syncopated

Full Moon Myth

Under the silver residue
of a moon-robed
cloudless night

a syncopated siren-song
rises from a secret place
into the full-moon

shining like a marble
eye of the sky
– allforeseeing

The siren softly combs
her hairy silver head
sitting on her ancient tor

in any river or near shore
luring the boatmen in
like she has done for aeons

Eric Bosse

Winner - 11th June 2012

socks gluttony spring absurd driving

Untitled

After three days of history,
museums, tours, pickpockets,
and gluttony in Dublin,
We paraded our students
like a dozen ducklings
saddled with absurd luggage
five blocks through the rain
to meet our bus.
Only here it was not a bus,
it was a coach, and on it
there was no one to coach us
through driving on the wrong
side of the road.
In an hour we tumbled
from the coach into the mist
at Glendalough
with ninety minutes
to wander through
the mystical rain.
Then we curved south
through the Wicklow Mountains,
through more rain,
and through the odor
of our own wet socks.
The driver said it has
rained like this all spring
and shown no sign of letting up.
He released us
to the sidewalk,

to the rain,
to find our way
to the dorms.
Someone grumbled
about the weather,
the accents,
the differences between
Gaelic football,
football, and soccer.
Team America has landed.
Be kind to us, Cork. Be kind.

Stephanie Brennan

30th July 2012

incognito triangle psychotic rain cider

It Washes Us Clear

after Leonard Cohen

The rain falls down
on last year's man
that's a triangle on the table
and a cider in his hand
there are fifty shades of rain
enough to turn the same man mad
enough to make him
quite psychotic and
wonder if he's had
too many highs
and low fronts
enough to make him go
through a skinless skylight
incognito.

Eileen Casey

7th January 2013

peace dark visible hat ubiquitous

Dark Ubiquitous

I keep coming back to Pat Cotter's hat
how it flapped over his listening ears
like secret doors in a children's book.
I keep coming back to that night in Ó Bhéal
Pat Cotter's hat, fur-lined as language,

warming the risible,
each ubiquitous visible.

Paul Casey

6th August 2012

stanza tissue eggshell basket ripple

No time like Now

To avoid your five-word poems
ending up in the wastepaper basket
with those usual used tissues,
scribble at least one stanza

from the gut, warts and all
contrasting with a second
unbroken, eggshell verse
that cracks from the hip

Then the third
a punchy, memorable image
that sends applause rippling
through the audience

Finally twirl an inky @ sign
onto the back of your hand
so the moment you're home you'll remember
to email it to submissions@obheal.ie

Paul Casey

Winner - 3rd September 2012

sunny slugs integer split society

Untitled

Me and Ger were friends
Life was sunny
But Ger was into slugs

the worst of society

The slugs
weren't so integer
so we split

Winner - 18th March 2013

slim random octopus daffodil crikey

Untitled

Sunny-side up Slim O'Sullivan
the seafood man
sold a second-hand octopus
down the English market
on Sunday
to this random dude
called Daff O'Dill Donovan,
a decent dope dealer addicted to calamari.
He had a notion he could turn it into a hookah.
Crikey.

Conor Collins

27th August 2012

discombobulated amoeba cloud troubadour dull

Discombobulated Clouded Mutterings of a Dull Amoebic Troubador

I need to find another cell
To cure me of this amoeba hell
In Beamish, I found elixing nutrition
Freeing me from this dark cloud of discombobulated affliction
No longer I, a dull troubador
But may relapse if, I 'ere say more

Kelly R. Damphousse

23rd July 2012

escape booze reality ice rain

Hockey Season Ends

The former champs skate off the ice,
heads bowed, eyes unfocused.

Happy to escape
the boos that cascade from the stands.

Their team's long reign has ended.
Reality sets in.

"Next year!" they shout...

Emily Davis-Fletcher

7th May 2012

love pipes may kindle wrapping

Tantric

For the whole of May,
I go to class to learn to breathe and move with love
I take the homework literally—
wrapping us in a blanket to
rekindle intimacy,
eating strawberries by candlelight
with great care and affection for the first hour

then one of us has to go
and we must balance on the toilet
in this great sack,
bursting pipes,
splitting us
into two strays
competing for air
and sex

Emily Davis-Fletcher

2nd July 2012

builder glorified magpie glitter rain

Untitled

The past is a glorified builder of young,
sunny days with ice cream
I spent walking a trim cemetery
killing hours with dates
of birth and death.
A magpie picks glitter out of gravel
and catches my eye
in time to throw him the end
of my cone before
the rain comes.

Cal Doyle

14th January 2012

minnesota whiskey chair fog cheese

The Great Fog of '96

My flat was bare --
the perfect venue to smoke
as much marijuana
that was physiologically possible
with that student from Minnesota.
The "Great Fog" of '96 they called it:
as potent as whiskey, as thick as
cheese. When the fire
department arrived they found
us both naked standing
on chairs trying to change
lightbulbs, while discussing the nuanced
nature of the mating-rituals
of the lesser-spotted human.

Julie Field

Winner – 2nd July 2012

builder glorified magpie glitter rain

School Raffle

one for sorrow

two for joy

three for a magpie

four for a cuddly toy

five for a microwave

six for glorified kitchen utensils

seven for glittery girly pencils

eight for a bob the builder raincoat

nine for a book

by an unknown poet

Niall Herriott

4th March 2013

coffee map pink lyric birthday

CONSOLATIONS

One of the best things in life
is the smell of coffee percolating in the morning
and the pink...pink...pink
of the brew dropping in the coffee jug.

And to complement that,
the lift that comes from
an intricate Bach Concert on Lyric FM.
The map of the rest of life
is easier to navigate
with a start like that
on one's seventieth birthday.

Helen Kavanagh-Ronan

10th December 2012

song chair tender oak grandfather

Untitled

A song for me, a song for him
He sits, he stares, he sits, he moans.
He rocks, he smiles, his life is sold!

But time enough for rocking in that bloody chair;
Time enough for rocking when we're old!

Not so tender that song,
Not so tender his face;
But chiselled like oak.

Never a soft song from over Magnetic Fields,
Never a soft song from an out of place Grandfather
About to croak!

Grant March

22nd October 2012

like crazy toilet symbol disturbance

Disturbance

The wrong door!

Crazy foreign toilet symbols, like!

Garry McCarthy

Winner - 23rd April 2012

soppy brilliant loudspeaker hellion pancreas

Untitled

Who the hellion picked the word... Loudspeaker?!

I'll work with it anyway, I'm hungry for words: they call me the noun-eater,

I gobble down brilliant adjectives,

'Til my pancreas can't handle them,

I get all soppy romancing the language,

I be maulin' the words like as if they're a sangwidge!

Afric McGlinchey

23rd April 2012

soppy brilliant loudspeaker hellion pancreas

A rose-tinted egg

The vixen snapped and caught a feather
which fell, erectile, to the ground.
He cupped his hands like a loudspeaker,
roared at the hellion who had bombed
all our hens into oblivion
until there was only Matilda left.
Slowly he scooped her up, to find
her bleeding a brilliant crimson
from her crushed and bulging pancreas.
The silliest thing – she’s just a chicken,
but earlier she’d been sitting on my lap
while I sipped a Merlot, and now
I felt choked up and soppy.
She couldn’t walk, but, too chicken
to do the deed, we cradled her
into her hen-house, fed and gave her water.
In the morning, she rewarded us
with one rose-tinted egg.
And I can’t help it; the tears are coming now.

Afric McGlinchey

Winner - 17th September 2012

ricochet spinach delirious eggs boomerang

Untitled

Stout is romantic, very emotional,
it has to cry over
the top, slip like the slither
of egg white or creamed spinach,
can become quite delirious after
the glass ricochets off
a Heineken bottle, left
by the last occupant of this table
and I know what'll happen –
the kiss on its lip
will boomerang back those emotions,
and in a few pints or more,
the drinker will echo those feelings
until, maudlin with melancholy
and empty pockets,
he stumbles into the street
looking for love in all
the wrong places.

Winner - 30th July 2012

incognito triangle psychotic rain cider

Naked

Cider-soaked, they breeze
through incognito rain,
body-painted cyclists
in a secular eden,
past psychotic guards
and irrelevant triangles
like palamino horses
fleeing ground,
breathing green.

Wagner Miranda

4th March 2013

coffee map pink birthday lyric

Sofia

if I were to write
about the sincerity
my heart is dipped in
I'd be writing about you

ordinary words would turn into beautiful things
And the mess of my feelings
in a graphic form would finally
find a shelter in this senseless world

a coffee stained map, a sigh for love
a poem on the walls of a sacred place
a birthday in Versailles

I remember your dress,
a unique pink almost daring to be red
just like your pretty face
after a charmer's compliment

I would write your real name,
picture the real you
unafraid of the intensity
of my lyric yet defiant ways

here we are, face to face again
your today's lips kiss me just like yesterday
sending shivers down my spine
old as love, we live again

with memories and wine

Michael O'Callaghan

Winner - 25th March 2013

pestilence horse beehive nervous mirror

Untitled

There was something indefinable in the Roman air.
Something missing perhaps?

It made him nervous, the General,
yet this long afternoon was calm,
the servants absent on siesta, resting,
while his horse, Titanius, usually the first
to notice the slightest disturbance,
was also calm, his head held still and high,
reflecting the calm of the day in his nonchalant eyes,
his movements, slow -
the swish of his fine-groomed tail.

The bee-hives hummed -
“a perfect little empire,” he thought,
“a mirror of all the world.”

But something made him nervous,
his nostrils twitched, dilated,
sniffing the becalmed air...

“Maybe the Christians are plotting again,
questioning the Empire, questioning the Emperor,
the Gods, the Deities. By Jove, is nothing sacred?

”A plague on them, this pestilence of wide-eyed
holier-than-thou ‘believers’, undermining everything,
longing for ‘martyrdom’...”

Was it he alone perceived this plague?
It was time to quash this insidious rebellion;
Destroy it now, he thought, or be destroyed.

Michael O'Callaghan

Winner - 8th April 2013

optics gradient beak four screen

“De mortuis nihil nisi bonum”

“Nothing but good
shall be said of the dead”
for life is a tough ‘auld burden.

But two events concurred today:
someone suggested that strange word “beak”
and this morning a strange bird died. Strange,
for I always imagined her nose as a beak
her tongue as rough as a parrot’s

for when she had learned to speak well enough
this shopkeeper’s daughter from Grantham
parroted stark Rape-enomics, wups,
Reaganomics I mean, in a voice that drowned
all dissent with repetitive squawking.

This was no lady of gradients.
Hers was the black-and-white logic
of power and war. Almost four terms she served.
After the nightmare and chaos of Labour
her advent was welcomed by many. Some even said:
“well done girl - no strikes, no beggars, no whingers,
no miners, no giving an inch.”

And maybe some day I will look back
through rose-coloured optics, but Maggie, for me
you were always the Lady of Iron, cold and rusting,
a comical daft spitting image.

And now that your screen has finally fallen
you’ll lie in the earth with the rest of us,
Maggie, welcome home.

Grace O'Donoghue

9th July 2012

spill anachronism fathom island regret

Fire seems brighter on the mainland

I am an island.

I stand.

My own, separate, stagnant land.

Surrounded by

Sensual, spilling,

Lapping, pawing waves.

And I can't fathom,

Why I am stuck in

My non-viscous form.

Whilst others lap, change.

And I an anachronism, plopped

In the deep blue storm.

And I mourn.

I regret the days

Spent on my island.

So I repent.

I spill

I spill emotions

I spill out of my clothes

I crave sensuality

And affection

Physical affection

Pawing, caressing,

Like the waves that used to lap on my island.

You can't fathom the needs I have

The bursts.

The bruises.

The pain.

All things I need to mark my days.

Grace O'Donoghue

9th July 2012

spill anachronism fathom island regret

But I still spill.

Inappropriate social blurts.

My sentences like anachronisms

Hang in the awkward, silent air.

And you stare.

And I regret being that girl.

The one who spills.

Craves.

Lives life,

In inappropriate taboo filled days.

So I retreat to my island.

Cap what I had.

But every so often

I allow myself to spill

into the waves

And dance with the fire of the main land.

Grace O'Donoghue

Winner - 16th July 2012

pleasure incandescent frozen blue pharmaceutical

The Thaw that Holds

Sometimes we are frozen,
Sometimes we are cold.
Locked in statuesque poses,
Lips blue from lack of human contact and hold.

But sometimes,
With someone,
We melt.
Pleasure unlocks, defrosts.
Allows open space for an intimate face.

And sometimes,
it grows.
Incandescent bursts of connections and lust.
Emotions appear from under the layers of defrosting,
Thawing the meat of our souls.

And sometimes,
It breaks.
Hearts, silences, connections fade.

Which is why sometimes,
On a Saturday night,
The pharmaceutical call of a dressing gown, chocolates and wine,
Is stronger, safer than returning to the frozen cold,
Stronger, safer than returning to your thawing hold.

Mairead O'Donoghue

18th February 2013

house flame mirror horse flamboyant

Alan Binley I'll be your babe

I was in love with him
his name was Alan
he resonated of beauty and flamboyancy
the subject of this poem

O dear Alan
an ocean of mystery
drunk with the loneliness of his situation
I peeled away the dead layers of his stinky conformity
and we danced danced danced

Others like sheep followed us onto the dancefloor
oh Alan my sweet love
perambulate me about
let us dine tonight and fill the world
with stars from our eyes

Rosie O'Regan

7th January 2013

peace dark visible hat ubiquitous

Again

mizzling rain makes all opaque
only layers of shape visible
paled silhouettes with no detail
mist ubiquitous

the trees are deep blood brown
dark veins in white water skin
make peace seem possible
allow me to taste it

I remove my hat
walk silently and away
get lost, behind frosted glass
merge with the rush

and hush of traffic
more wave than ocean
more ocean than cloud
our separation contained

rapt in moist air
we fall apart
while being put back together
again

Sean O’Riordan

Winner - 1st October 2012

nostril horse mane blue injection

BEAST OF BURDEN

In the main
he wasn’t into horses
except of course his wife
with her long face
and sad blue eyes.

And she was of course
that pack animal
we all need
to carry our load.

Unburdening ourselves
we see
the nostrils flare
as the lethal injection
draws near.

Aidan O'Shea

28th May 2012

foil map lime ocean convoluted

Untitled

Pukka Sahib Mountbatten, Viceroy of India
Sat in the shade of the veranda
Overlooking the Indian Ocean.

He sipped his gin and lime
Confident that the sun would never set
On the map of The British Empire;

Blissfully unaware that a nondescript man named Gandhi
Clad only in a giant towel
Convoluted round his private parts
Would foil and shatter the Imperial dream.

Derek O'Sullivan

Winner - 21st September 2012

apple happiness culture mayo energy

Distant Orchard

I ate an Apple in an orchard in Mayo.

I closed my eyes and envisaged the tree it grew on.

The taste, the burst of energy, one bite, two bites,

I was reduced to happiness at the culture, the beauty of life itself.

Tina Pisco

Winner - 29th October 2012

residue moon hairy marble syncopated

Samba in the Shower

Your wet feet slap

a syncopated beat

on the marble,

as shampoo residue

cascades over your back.

A flash of flesh

shimmies to the right,

shimmies to the left,

like a hairy moon

under Niagara Falls.

Niamh Prior

25th June 2012

random percolate lemon bus tree

Untitled

Through breaking waves
your windblown words
became disjointed sentences
random syllables in white water.

Still, the ones that landed
cleansed me, left me fresh as
lemon juice
strong as a tree.

All morning your words
percolated my mind
until, while saying our goodbyes,
they came together
condensed and complete
and I felt like I'd been hit by a bus.

Niamh Prior

3rd September 2012

sunny slugs integer split society

Slugs

A society of slugs
rained down on my dreams
last night.
Fat black number ones
integers, sliming their way
through my sleep
feelers out, avoiding sunny
happy patches,
dragging me behind them
until I split from myself,
sat with them in dank rooms
and admitted they were part of me.

Michael Ray

15th October 2012

petrified water ice-cream chaos tortoise

Untitled

She's up to her waist, licking lips.
Tortoise flavoured, she says.
Her thin wrist telescopes
from a red woolen cuff,
offers me the dripping end
of a long brown cone.
I push through churning water;
a petrified fish,
trapped in the moment
before leaping the falls,
hangs between us
like a sign-post
pointing to chaos.
My mouth opens,
I lean, kiss
the ice-cold
creaminess
of her gift.

Michael Ray

11th February 2013

devil dexterous rain garden droopy

Valentine

My devil garden flowers,
all day they wait for rain
to cool their phosphorus petals.

Will fingers find a way here,
where air is sulphur, dexterous
at changing its integrity?

They appear droopy
in this yellow vapour;
look it's gathering.

The flower-heads are smouldering,
it must be that my valentine
is drawing near.

John W. Sexton

Winner - 28th January 2013

weight dyslexic paralysed sweltering destiny

“e”

She wrote a chalked moon on the board,
its lower corner eaten by the night.

“e” she said, “this is the small letter e”

“e” we all said in unison

“e”

e sat in the midnight of the blackboard

“e”

I could feel its weight
crushing my dyslexic mind;
its forehead, like the forehead of a whale,
butting my noggin.

“e” they all said in unison,
all of them sweltering in the destiny
that small letters call out in their sleep.

“e” said the yeast in my brain,
my tongue paralysed,
my jaw pressed shut by the chin of the moon.

Susan Sheehan

21st May 2012

fresh squeeze noble instant stereotype

An Instant Stereotype

Fresh in each moment,
Noble in my spirit,

squeeze joy through my being,
in an instant universe.

Stereotype me at the cost of your dreams and mine,
And you die in an instant,

over and over,
how can I help you if you don't let me?

You must learn to love.

Joseph Sweeney

Winner - 21st January 2013

south ale tangent review interval

South, To a Warmer Place

It is winter in Denmark.

In a riverside bar an old cold Dane sits.

I should have gone south to a warmer place.

In the brief intervals between ales and wines and spirits
the old bachelor reviews his life.

Thoughts blow in drifts through his mind
with the snow outside...

I should have gone south to a warmer place.

A man with an accordion in the corner breaks out
Into song for weekend tourists *

“Wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen...”

The old man orders another drink
raises his eyes to the bartender.

I should have gone south to a warmer place.

Joseph Sweeney

Winner - 18th February 2013

house flame mirror horse flamboyant

Flame

At the heart of the flame the truth is burning
inside the autumn house a shadow turning
with a candle, in a mirror a painting of a horseman,
a huntsman, in flamboyant red, above a kill
casting a cold eye on life and death.

The moon is drifting, the season turning
deep within the flame, the truth is burning.

14th January 2012

minnesota whiskey chair fog cheese

Misplaced

Barman, there's a fog in my whiskey
and crumbs of cheese goddammit!
And this chair is wobbling about.
How - how many whiskeys did you say I had?
Where did you say this is?
Minnesota? Where the hell is Minnesota?
For God's sake, I'm meant to be in San Diego.

Five Word Challenge Winners 2012-2013

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| 16 April | Stephen O'Riordan |
| 23 April | Garry McCarthy |
| 30 April | Paul Casey |
| 7 May | Ceaití Ní Bheildíúin |
| 14 May | Cathal Holden |
| 21 May | Míceál de Róiste |
| 28 May | Dominick Donnelly |
| 4 June | Rosalin Blue |
| 11 June | Eric Bosse |
| 18 June | Micheál de Róiste |
| 25 June | Jennifer Matthews |
| 2 July | Julie Field |
| 9 July | Míceál de Róiste |
| 16 July | Grace O'Donoghue |
| 23 July | Grae Rose |
| 30 July | Afric McGlinchey |
| 6 August | Quitterie Gounot |
| 13 August | Pascal McDonnell |
| 20 August | Sarah Kentish |
| 27 August | Conor Collins |
| 3 September | Paul Casey |
| 10 September | Cal Doyle |
| 17 September | Afric McGlinchey |
| 21 September | Derek O'Sullivan |
| 24 September | Cal Doyle |
| 1 October | Séan Riordan |
| 8 October | Brian Keane |
| 15 October | Grant March |
| 22 October | Rab Urquhart |
| 29 October | Tina Pisco |
| 5 November | Michael Ray |
| 12 November | Jennifer Matthews |
| 19 November | Paula Cunningham and Paul Casey |
| 26 November | Miss Anonymous |
| 3 December | Míceál de Róiste |
| 10 December | Cal Doyle |
| 7 January | Cathal Holden |
| 14 January | Annette Schiebout |
| 21 January | Joseph Sweeney |
| 28 January | John W. Sexton |
| 4 February | Maighread O'Donoghue |
| 11 February | Heather Hakvaj |
| 18 February | Joe Sweeney and Paul Casey |
| 25 February | Marilene Dawson |
| 4 March | Patrick Cotter |
| 11 March | Richard Tyrone Jones |
| 18 March | Paul Casey |
| 25 March | Michael O'Callaghan |
| 1 April | Richard Hawtree |
| 8 April | Michael O'Callaghan |

Guest Poets 2012-2013

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 16 April | Poets from Five Words Vol V |
| 23 April | Fiona Clarke Echlin |
| 30 April | Sheila Fitzpatrick O'Donnell & Joseph Healy |
| 7 May | Ceatí Ní Bheildiúin |
| 14 May | Fergal Gaynor |
| 21 May | Roger Hudson |
| 28 May | Séamus Barra Ó Súilleacháin |
| 4 June | Ross Donlon |
| 11 June | Pauline Fayne |
| 18 June | Anne Le Marquand Hartigan |
| 25 June | Gerry Boland |
| 2 July | Clíona O'Connell |
| 9 July | Mark Conway |
| 16 July | Anatoly Kudryavitsky |
| 23 July | Áine Ní Ghlinn |
| 30 July | Harry Clifton |
| 6 August | Hugh O'Donnell |
| 13 August | Janet Smith & Jayne Stanton |
| 20 August | Eleanor Hooker |
| 27 August | Marie Coveney & John Saunders |
| 3 September | Kit Fryatt |
| 10 September | Mícheál Ó hAodha |
| 17 September | Alex Skovron, Andy Kissane and Alison Wong |
| 21 September | Séamus Fox |
| 24 September | Ilya Kaminski |
| 1 October | Louis Mulcahy |
| 8 October | Colm Breathnach |
| 15 October | Lillian Allen |
| 22 October | Raven and the Dan Walsh Trio |
| 29 October | Denise Blake |
| 5 November | Afric McGlinchey |
| 12 November | Poetry-Film Night |
| 19 November | Paula Cunningham |
| 26 November | Tom Mathews |
| 3 December | Diarmuid Johnson |
| 10 December | Gillian Clarke |
| 7 January | Eileen Casey |
| 14 January | Peadar O'Donoghue |
| 21 January | Winter Issue of Southword - Six Poets |
| 28 January | Bernadette McIntyre |
| 4 February | Karl Parkinson |
| 11 February | Anne Fitzgerald |
| 18 February | Jame Lawless |
| 25 February | Niamh Boyce |
| 4 March | Cahal Dallat |
| 11 March | Joe Steve Ó Neachtain |
| 18 March | Maurice Devitt & Orla Fay |
| 25 March | Ann Joyce |
| 1 April | Barney Sheehan |
| 8 April | Jessie Lendennie |



Five Words

Five Words Vols I-VI is a combined reprint of the first six volumes of the *Five Words* series, featuring five word challenge poems penned at Ó Bhéal between April 2007 and March 2013. The original six volumes were hand-printed and stapled, followed by our first perfect-bound edition, Volume VII. This special edition will allow all 18 years of poems to share shelf space on equal terms, in their perfect bound form.

The five words used in each of Ó Bhéal's live events have been provided spontaneously by those present on the night and the winner is chosen by audience response, as directed by the emcee. While these compositions are written within 15 minutes and may be considered first drafts at the time of initial sharing, writers have often made minor edits to their poems prior to publication here. Sometimes they have appeared 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.

