

# Twin Skies

*poems from Cork and Coventry*

Edited by  
Paul Casey and Raef Boylan





# Twin Skies

40 poets from Cork-Coventry

twin cities exchanges (2008-2020)

an *Ó Bhéal & Here Comes Everyone* initiative

edited by Paul Casey and Raef Boylan



**We are Cork.**



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(Lady Godiva statue sculpted by Sir William Reid Dick

Christy Ring statue sculpted by Seán MacCarthy)

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“We came into the world like brother and brother; And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.”

William Shakespeare

“I believe the only people who truly experience and test the application of equality are twins.”

Janis Joplin

# Contents

Foreword	1	
Adam Steiner	3	SL/ABB/ED
Adam Wyeth	5	The Great Friend
Afric McGlinchey	7	The attic and the id
Ali Bracken Ziad	9	The Bridge of St Patrick
Andrea Mbarushimana	11	Gisozi
Antony Owen	12	If Boris Johnson had a cuppa with my Nan ...
Aysar Ghassan	13	In Plain Sight
Barry Patterson	14	An English Man in Cork
Benjamin Burns	16	Fortune
Billy Ramsell	17	You ask for something beautiful
Cal Doyle	18	Allegory of a duckling
Ciarán MacArtain	20	Circumspect
Colm Scully	22	God's Footballer
Conor McManus	23	Love Poems to Kristina Ehin
Emilie Lauren Jones	25	Things We Decide Are Beautiful
Jane Commane	26	The Nine Times that Women did ...
Janet Smith	27	Eleven was to be other
Jayne Stanton	28	Sin É
Jen Matthews	29	Advice to a Coven
Jim Crickard	30	Sex in the Housing Crisis

# Contents

Jonathan Morley	31	South Campus
Joseph Horgan	34	I Love a Man
Julie Field (aka Julie Goo)	35	Dear Society
Kathy D'Arcy	37	13.12.18-1-6 On Becoming (Mud)
Mal Dewhirst	38	Reading in the bombed-out bookshop
Martin Brown	39	The Old People in the Trees
Matt Black	41	Let us celebrate cultures
Matthew Geden	42	Nomad
Michael McKimm	43	Daffodils
Michelle Delea	44	double room to rent in Cork
Molly Twomey	45	Liz's Kitchen
Paul Casey	46	Grammar CV
Peter Raynard	47	The Fall
Rab Urquhart	49	The West awash
Raef Boylan	50	First Visit to Cork
Saleha Begum	51	Saleha Begum
Sarah James	53	Where Earth and Air Merge
Shaunna Lee Lynch	54	Meditation
Stanley Notte	55	Spirit of '79
Sue Cosgrave	57	Child of the World
Writers' Biographies	59	

# Foreword

A sui generis anthology, *Twin Skies* represents the 14th year of poetry interplay between the cities of Cork and Coventry. The 40 poets whose work appears here have each visited their respective twin city on at least one occasion to share their well-crafted words and unique experiences. A significant number of friendships and poems have resulted from these exchanges, resulting in a distinct and invaluable tapestry of cultural interconnectedness. It should also be mentioned that this anthology is published on the occasion of Coventry's designation as UK City of Culture 2021, a serendipitous and apt circumstance. Cork was designated as City of Culture in 2005, a cultural touchstone from which Ó Bhéal eventually emerged as an institution dedicated to the promotion and wellbeing of poetry and poets, an entity well-matched by its experienced Coventry counterparts.

Almost every year since 2008, two or three poets have travelled in each direction, with each visit including two readings at independent events, visits to Lord Mayors' chambers as well as to a number of cultural and cherished locations. 2020 was the first year in which the exchange had to be confined within the realms of the virtual, with online readings and zoom visits. Whilst not an ideal scenario, the spirit of the exchange was able to continue. As 2021 ultimately presented the same limitations, we decided to take advantage of the opportunity to create an anthology, which would in turn act as catalyst for reuniting the poets involved to date - by way of two collective readings at our respective online events. The book is also available and free in eBook format, at the Ó Bhéal website.

Since 2009 Ó Bhéal has co-facilitated this exchange hand in hand with an impressive succession of invested partners in Coventry (which along with Stalingrad was the world's first twin city - and Cork's first twin). These selfless cultural ambassadors include: John Morley of Heaventree Press (& Night Blue Fruit); Antony Owen; Adam Steiner of Silhouette Press; and Raef Boylan, editor of *Here Comes Everyone* and event organiser of *Fire & Dust*.

Acknowledgment is due to the city councils of both Cork and Coventry for their ongoing support, as we continue to drive and develop our invaluable relationship for its benefits to poets and writing communities from both cities. Since 2008, the exchanges have been documented across a series of collective reviews by the participating poets, which can be viewed on the Ó Bhéal website at [www.obheal.ie](http://www.obheal.ie).

We hope you enjoy this selection of talented writers.

**Paul Casey & Raef Boylan** (Editors)

Ó Bhéal & *Here Comes Everyone*



# Twin Skies

## Adam Steiner

SL/  
ABB  
/ ED

The doing of work  
Is done to us  
Machines born to meat,  
Minutes driven by blood

Slapped slab  
Onto slab  
Grit grinding hands  
Tilting at dominoes

Monolithic by the minute,  
Day becomes days  
A razor raging  
After its edge

Atlas shirks his spot  
Turning the hour round  
About his hands until  
It rolls away from him

I say: *They are too hard*  
They say: *you are too soft*

But for uneven accents,  
Determined to trip you up,  
You would not fall so far  
From a fingernail's breath

Hinge-flipped shadows closing  
Upon burial wedge  
Folding time into its thinning end

Final last words set:

*TO THE ANGLE OF INCIDENCE  
AT WHICH THE HOURS SUPPLIED  
COME TO ZERO  
AND CANNOT ACCURATELY  
BE ACCOUNTED FOR*

Over the shoulder inertia creeps  
Treads its own heels  
Chasing the worker's shadow  
to vanish with the distance.  
Until sun decides  
Being begins again

Undo the flag  
Punch-out  
The clock.  
Its two-faced display  
makes the world turn  
One-way only;  
Towards work  
And after,  
Knowing that even when  
Work is done  
It must be done  
To death.

*Never Work! From work even the strongest horses die*  
- Czech proverb

# Adam Wyeth

## The Great Friend

In the Autumn of 1244

a young Muslim scholar of Konya  
met a new arrival who'd been travelling

throughout the Middle East.

This stranger put a question to the scholar:  
it remains one of the great mysteries.

Whatever the question,

the young scholar lost his breath and fainted.  
When he came round the two talked and became

locked in a stream of endless dialogue.

Inseparable, they spoke for days without human need –  
like two musicians riffing, each one taking over where

the other left off in a state of pure discovery.

Late one night, mid-discussion,  
the friend went to attend a knock at the door

and didn't come back.

The young scholar fell silent and vowed never  
to speak again unless his great friend returned.

He had fallen into what is known

as the deep well of meditation, the narrow  
tunnel of mortal contemplation.

For months, not a word passed his lips.

Then on his darkest night he looked up  
and let out a savage howl. As he screamed

he found a new voice forming.

The next morning, he headed to the market square  
and began to speak. Poetry and parables poured out:

You are the sky my spirit circles in.

My soul is from elsewhere. He started  
to sway and outstretching his arms whirled around,

spinning between food stalls,

weaving teachings out of chickpeas; forming fables  
about burnt kebabs. A large crowd gathered,

some started to swoon and dissolve

into laughter, others moaned in ecstasy  
and cried. One young man began writing

his every word down.

The Konya scholar had lost all simile  
and became the thing itself: the lover, the beggar,

the parched earth, the unfurling flower.

He continued turning into the small hours,  
his great friend returning through him.

A mute moon smiling in the wings.

\*from *about:blank* (Salmon Poetry)

## Afric McGlinchey

### The attic and the id

No stair to take me there, just a drop down ladder  
that vanishes after my vanishing feet. A spider abseils  
a single thread among the dust motes, to a landing strip,  
with chitins that intuit when to cling and when release.  
No dinner tonight; I am dining on silence and other  
senses, while I journey along my own silk road.  
No inclination for bed. I sleep poorly anyway,  
and here is respite from the pressure even to try.  
Instead, I'm dipping into your latest story.

You dispensed with socks and sense, took to night  
spots and hookers, gambled away all your belongings  
in twenty minutes. I compare my small life  
with your adventures, and back I go, to our foray  
into those African clubs, where slim-hipped girls  
crossed legs seductively, flashing thigh and crotch,  
and stared at you, the only white man.  
You took my hand, startled the floor with moves  
you learned from mambas and black rhythm...

this reminding me of last night's reggae in De Barra's,  
decades falling away, and the wall he pushed me up against  
to kiss me, starting a thrill I haven't felt  
in years, that was just as quickly quenched  
when he spied his ex and, desisted. And oh!

I miss your nonchalance, forbidden glance that left  
me in no doubt, and leaves me wanting still.  
Pulse is in the mind, more than the body. I find  
that I touch strangers more easily than family.

Let me return to the memory of that surprise  
kiss, and perhaps another if the glass is full  
and lights are low. He wants me younger, too,  
a man-thing, primed to desire the taut  
and thin – and I disappoint – but can swerve  
his thoughts to lust with the erotica of words.  
From you, and this spider, I learn the language  
of a web, feel ready now to leave the attic,  
drop down to begin my weaving.

\*first published in *Poetry Ireland Review*

## Ali Bracken Ziad

### The Bridge of St Patrick

We walked on her for many years  
Three culverts of text unfolded

Her faces faced the dam kissed waters  
Like words of the oft-time read.

She lay and watched the whole place burning  
And watched it grow all over again.

“Sure she nearly drowned”.  
All the lads up on the hill

Said they had her in their prayers.

The men in yellow vests came

One day at a time,  
They took her down.

Mathew said he saw her being put together again.

They stopped one day,  
A ship rose from the deep stench of the Lee,

Brown waters drenched and tickled the reflecting light,  
It cut little rapids on the tall ship's wooden body,  
Trying to get back to its brown-green home.

Not one Corkonian believed Matthew  
When he said he was sure he won a glimpse of its name.  
Just a cod they said.

No wonder they undid the knot of the bridge:  
To allow room for herself through they thought.



She said he said the name,  
Something along the lines of Theseus.

And they laughed.  
Sure no wonder we love you Matthew.  
They said he was a rogue just like Mr O'Connor.

He's got more stories than sense.  
Sure didn't he say once  
The smell of MacCurtain Street was better than sex.

All faces frowned at that.  
Of course, he'd say that,  
He's got no taste.

So that was the day they closed Patrick's Bridge.

If you stand on her midpoint,  
Look up at Shandon,  
Or gaze down towards Brian Boru,  
You know you're at the centre of the universe,  
And everything beyond is just a rumour.

Of course you do,  
You're from Cork,  
Born and raised arrogant.

The day they opened her up again,  
I didn't recognise her Jimmy.

And I wondered why she had a man's name.

\*previously published in *The Quarryman* and *Atlantic Currents*

# Andrea Mbarushimana

## Gisozi

Yesterday's heron shrieks the end of sleep  
right through my skull –  
all spiny barbs waiting to soften into feathers.  
A house-girl making breakfast.  
Noses blow dust, taste tangled with eucalyptus.  
We count mosquito bites, eat bread that's toasted  
on the plate, while we wait.  
The fizz of welding across the street has stopped.  
Strange birds hide in the copse where the brick man stacks his bricks  
among trees that count their lifespan in dawn choruses.  
A tiny lizard escapes from my daughter's shoe,  
and rhythmic church song hypnotises a congregation down the street.  
We rise through air like soup, using the shortcut.  
There's a breeze up here that bends the trees to gossip.  
Down across waste-ground, turn right  
past the battle of the band widths, past the data shacks,  
the track stops, Chez Venant –  
her mansion built on helping couples with their sex lives.  
When we get back from the bar – brochettes and consequences –  
he's still making bricks,  
hoeing the clay,  
patting it into the same mould,  
stacking them up.  
Later when it rains the whole tower vanishes.

\*first published in *Fatbergs* (Knives, Forks and Spoons Press, 2021)

## Antony Owen

### **If Boris Johnson had a cuppa with my Nan from Willenhall**

I picture Boris arriving at my Nan's with a spray of daffs from Esso.  
She'd nail off the price and thank him with the oil of her lips.  
This is not a fair trade, for my Nan was a street fighter.

She'd offer him a seat, the only one, and she would sit on the ottoman.  
He would crack a joke about Turks and she would laugh at him.  
She'd laugh at him every time he spoke and when he did not.

My Nan would offer him broken biscuits from the market and he'd decline.  
She would break open the Family Circle box and offer him the best,  
he would decline and war would be declared now they're open.

"You come in my fuckin house with limp dick daffs, sit on my dead man's chair,  
quip racist jokes, turn your nose up at my broken biscuits you flopsy fucker.  
You let me open the good stuff and let the air get to them, you ungrateful sod.

Those daffs are your policies; those broken biscuits are Brexit; that ottoman is  
Britain,  
stuffed with different colours with whites on the top; and that tea was from  
Amritsar  
and it will stain your teeth like bullets fop-haired men like you gave orders to  
fire."

If Boris Johnson had tea with my Nan there would be anarchy in a tea cup.

## In Plain Sight

The supermarket with which I have earnt most loyalty points is sincerely committed to reducing its reliance on plastic packaging, sources locally where possible, limits the import of food from overseas on fuel-guzzling airplanes, preferring to use more sustainable road or rail, provides easy-to-follow practical tips on how to minimise waste, celebrates accreditation from a host of internationally respected not-for-profits with swirly come-together-over-me logos, has a dozen or so 7-foot tall, aisle-long refrigerators *none of which have doors* keeping meat, fruit, dairy, sushi, veg and ready meals perfectly chilled 24-7-365 in hundreds of its larger stores, nationwide.

\*previously published in *Magma* and *Here Comes Everyone*

## Barry Patterson

### An English Man in Cork

Oh Cork, to arrive in a new city is to meet & greet, to be met, to be greeted,  
so hail!

A stranger in your streets was busking with his pen  
Listening to the bells & the birds & the buses & the rhythmical shouts of the  
paper lads,  
Sat outside by the post office with a coffee watching the world go by  
Bought a cap, ate sausages, drank some ale, made new friends.

I saw you in a silver, riverine morning light of dream-like swift whistles  
I saw you where your grey clad quay bristles with cranes, hums & fork lift  
exhalations

I saw you where the stark, pale horns of crescent shell-sections litter your  
ancient seabed curb

I saw you with gloom clouds coming sea-wise over green hills to divulge  
Atlantic rain

I saw you in the poet's face where Quain's stone horse-head stares out from  
an upstairs bar

I saw you where your red brick monster church calls out its primal, ancient  
cry

I saw you where your pub-beat laughter has risen to hold the yin & yang of  
stout & German weissbeer to a 5-bar

I saw you as I was walking back up the hill at 2am, lit by the cool, old moon  
hanging in the East, Oh Cork & I loved you!

I saw you where your tiny golden wren is still shouting its thousand year  
song from the museum wall

I saw you where the zig-zags & spirals of the Cape Clear stone were singing  
of the unseen sun

I saw you shivering in the West Wind, in Cobh Harbour, clutching a paper package tied up with string  
I saw you in an old great coat with a Webley revolver in a leather holster over your hip  
I saw you shot, starved, exiled, lost at sea, singing of a distant land  
I saw you where your polished, granite tigers' nests rub shoulders with the boarded up & paint peeled houses of neglect  
I saw you in the tangled rust vertebrae clamping phone lines to a street light stem  
I saw you all red & white & shiny in Mike's Diner, eating a fish supper to the strains of Glen Campbell, drinking a can of 7up.

You're a heron-flap over St. Patrick's bridge in the near-dark  
You're a quiet clearing in the park  
You're a banjo-ukulele in a shop window  
You're a dark eyed girl behind a bar.  
You're a motorist waiting at the narrow exit of a side street  
You're a hooded crow tearing holes in the turf like there's no tomorrow  
You're a byzantine parking permit  
You're a bullet-shattered square of discoloured glass in a shrine to struggle  
You're a moorhen chick walking on lily pads with black stick legs.

Oh river loving, hill clad city of broad boulevards & busy side-streets  
All spires & silos, a guild of cupolas, isle-city of music & poetry  
I salute you, I sing to you & I offer my praise to you & to all your folk!

*July 2010*

## Benjamin Burns

### Fortune

Famous when dead,  
that's the dream!

How sad to waste one's life  
on self-promotion.

And if fame never comes  
who cares? You're dead.

There will be robins  
and their descendants.

## Billy Ramsell

### You ask for something beautiful

But how?

Now all the meridians have slackened  
and the time-zones between us  
put on centuries each hour?

Now they've melted down the statue  
of the physicist in the square!

Now the lavender is burning in piles  
with the poppies and those little blue flowers  
no one ever really knew the name of.

Now every *atelier* is shuttered  
and every banjo skinned with dust  
in the department of silences.

Now the database of wind  
holds every optimistic kiss I settled on your belly  
and Tarragona, our city of bonfires,  
our city of casual drug-use and vinyl  
is consigned to the archive of snow?

\*first published in *Poetry London*.



# Cal Doyle

## **Allegory of a duckling**

vernacular cinema  
casting authority

catching my quiet eye  
killing of an evening

glove the morning  
these quiet

interceptions  
dubbed

peripheries of desire  
at midnight in Italy

or London  
Turin maybe

easing in the sleuth  
suspect turncoat

ravished & relaxed  
at midnight

quiet asylum  
queer lean

Edwige Fenech, we somehow love you!  
get up!

something to do with midnight  
my quiet misreading

plexiglass with reflection  
falling fashion

crystal murk  
skin of a lizard

prince of lack  
your always know who it is

but it isn't  
as the language never fits the frame

## Ciarán MacArtain

### Circumspect

Go get your four hours and a shower  
And come talk to me about burning candles  
Depressed handles  
And creaking gates.

It's basic,  
But it's complete in its own way.  
Let's face it  
It's a feat how the shoeprints on paths play  
No intention to deceive  
Just wanting to receive  
A clean image  
Of what your thoughts say.

Might text ya back by Monday  
I've had a slow Sunday  
I hope to explain it to you one day.  
Come talk to me about feng-shui  
We might connect.  
Flexing on your inward breath.

Stay cool and calm and circumspect  
When fools and shams come floundering  
Listen in above the din  
The pools in gaps are widening.  
The rules of maths sound silly when  
The chosen paths are narrowing.

Listen, The Pope's gone taroting  
We've no answer for your sparrowing  
We make the inside of a hollow ring  
For our faith in superstition  
Dropping subtle propositions  
Here, hear me me out, chicken  
You'll have what you always want  
When you always have.

Sounds so sad now,  
And seeing ya like this,  
Aught make me feel bad now.  
You always lived it, breathed it,  
Dissected it to pieces,  
As rich in a fair deal dealt as Croesus  
In gold.

In sickness and in health  
We're growing old.

## Colm Scully

### God's Footballer

Will all the players play again in Heaven  
who played that day upon the Farna pitch?  
Will those who scored that day be scorers even  
when life's long sun has reached its final ridge?

And at the back will I as yet be stationed  
too dull a touch to form a strong attack?  
Although my skill is weak my heart is patient,  
through life I seek what in my youth I lacked.

Will they be there, the boys who picked the teams,  
still picking teams and playing two up front?  
I see myself in my deluding dreams  
among them, Players' Player of the month.

Skill shows no fairness, glory always came  
to those whose left foot made me look a fool.  
Will God pass me the ball on my last run  
or leave me out, just like he did in school?

# Conor McManus

## Love Poems to Kristina Ehin

I

I watched as you walked in  
You were more beautiful than your portrait.

I am love you whispered.  
I am love, I am love, I am love  
You whispered with your eyes  
And together we sung harmonies unsung  
You a she-fairy whispering with your eyes  
And I, I a wordsmith without a tongue.

You left early to catch a red eye  
And hinted that you might return  
But you left a memory scar

And all week long I played with sticks and leaves on your body.

II

Since you left I dreamt  
of rats and fish and  
squadrons of space ships  
in endless numbers  
Grey and suspended  
moving slow and silent  
eternally passing.

And of You  
stretched naked on a  
beach of damp cobbles  
beneath dark clouds  
And I, I scrawling 'Love,'  
with a mud-tipped stick  
on your body.

### III

Word came  
that you were out  
And like-minded souls  
Joked about my obsession.  
But it hasn't faded  
and You emerge once again  
to show me your ego  
To show me deftness of pen  
But I love you not for your poetry  
(Piff! what good is poetry to me)  
But for your form, and to listen to  
the illiteration of heart trembles  
when your name is mentioned  
and my mind your portrait conjures  
Fine featured, silken, platinum doll,  
Close woven fabric of life  
Without curse or stain –  
But how can I tell for sure from  
one fleeting glance,  
Shimmering  
Silken  
Lover of the Moon.

## Emilie Lauren Jones

### Things We Decide Are Beautiful

*Inspired by The Lampedusa Cross (2015, British Museum)*

*After 'If In America' by Ed Bok Lee*

If salt water sodden bodies  
thrash towards shore lights –  
lungs gulping, muscles burning,  
screams reaching land first,

if splintered promises are pulled  
from the frothing mouth of the sea  
and faded layers of paint rubbed  
smooth by strangers' prayers,

if the misshapen limbs of an  
overpriced, undermaintained raft  
can be bandaged, set in place,  
held up and declared beautiful

then why do we hide the empty  
vessels of our fellow humans  
in unwanted rooms,  
offer them nothing but tinned food,  
and spare coat hangers to hold  
the peeling layers of their stories?



## Jane Commane

### The Nine Times that Women did something of Note

1. When she bit through the pith and chose knowledge over hero worship.
2. That time it was nothing to do with her body, or anything her body had done or could be blamed for.
3. When she took all of those ofs, mother ofs and daughter ofs and wife ofs, and carried them in a knotted hessian sack to the top of the hill and opened the sack's limp mouth and let them all fly free.
4. When her name was written off and written out so she dipped a finger in calendared blood and wrote the red X of her name on their doors.
5. When she wore her chatelaine girdle-hanger hung with the key latch lifter, shears and drop spindle – hers is the property, she will cut the hair, sharpen the knives, light the fires.
6. When she was a nursemaid to rebellion, clean sweeper of insurgencies, forger, chief pot-stirrer in the fiery kitchens of revolution.
7. when she rode in in breastplate and chainmail; when she rode in naked; when she rode in utero inside a great wooden horse; when she shouldered the rifle to protect her sisters and sent the soldiers fleeing like hounds into the woods.
8. The time she concealed about her person a pen and paper, a pocketful of isotopes, a pirate galleon, a strange electronic noise, a previously undiscovered galaxy of stars.
9. Every time she found a pleasure all of her own and saw a brand-new colour on the reverse movie-screen of her shut eyelids.

\*first published in *Butcher's Dog Magazine*

## Janet Smith

### Eleven was to be other

Learn Latin in a home sewn skirt. Knit a jumper  
one shade too dark for Shakespeare. Write lines  
by candlelight (the electric is off again). Feel

guilty for three decades because the Official  
school Blazer cost 11 shillings and sixpence.  
Bear the weight of other girls' giggles. Fall in

love with the only boy in scuffed up shoes.  
Hate blue eyeshadow. Wear it anyway (it's  
the easiest to steal from the boots No.7 special

display). Cut off all your hair. Wear the high  
necked purple satin party dress. Buy some  
dungarees. Slide easily into Northern Soul.

*\*runner-up in the 2017 Write-a-Bridge competition*

## Jayne Stanton

### Sin É

We steam on barstools  
read between slogans on a plastered ceiling  
tune to the cuts and grace notes in banter  
binge on ambience, high on E minor.

Coburg Street, past midnight, soaks  
in sodium light. Rain beats time  
on bodhran umbrellas, my spine  
a river of running quavers that stick  
to the soles of my sensible shoes  
so I high-step the home stretch.

Framed in doorways on Wellington Road  
crinoline ghosts wear mirrored skirts  
that flirt with moonlight.  
Guest house stairs are in rising fifths.  
My top floor room's a tall ship, exploring  
the lilt in the Lee's liquid fingers.

\*first published in *Beyond the Tune* (Soundwrite Press, 2014)

# Jennifer Matthews

## Advice to a Coven

You're tender in your evergreen black:  
I too wore a disappearing act  
once upon a time  
when I was (and wasn't)  
a child. I shadowed  
boys with angry origin-stories  
who sprayed anarchy  
symbols on anonymous walks  
rule makers never attended.  
Be advised, you will not thrive  
in their confidence as confessor:  
you are not a vessel for their pain.

Become thuggish.  
Name your place and take root  
in full view of the stonewalled saints.  
Look to the life of the barely invited,  
the patron of thriving:  
she is rioting every morning  
from cracks in the schoolyard walls!  
Her purple stars jump skyward,  
light-seeking from bendy stalks.  
Her name is an incantation  
for strength in the harshest of places.  
Raise up your voice now:  
*Campanula, Campanulaceae.*

## Jim Crickard

### Sex in the Housing Crisis

We are the generation of born-again virgins  
headboards disturb housemates on shift work,  
Air-traffic controllers should be included in rent  
to coordinate times to get the ride  
Landlords can afford to support our sex-lives  
and change carpets once in a while

We are the generation of born-again virgins  
Like ships in the night, we work to survive,  
but we are no thirty-year-old cargo boats...  
anchored in the harbour, waiting for labour,  
we are Ferrari red speed boats  
with miles to go before we sleep,  
miles to go before we sleep.

We are the generation of born again virgins  
Nothing kills the mood like mildew  
home-sense is built on the backs of millennials  
fumigating probate houses  
converted into one-beds  
with constellations of mould  
and half their salary paid  
to make out on an old couch  
facing a microwave

We are the generation of born again virgins  
If you're living with parents you can forget it  
unless you can face breaking their trust  
and explain condoms in the toilet-drain.  
We must not forget about our parents' sex-lives  
afraid their carefully considered bed springs  
will be heard by their thirty somethings  
Let's give the government hell for  
this inter-generational dry spell!

# Jonathan Morley

## South Campus

*Jewel stairs, therefore a palace. Grievance, therefore there is something to complain of.*  
— POUND

bái lù

白露 [*White Dew Spreads*]

Beneath the gum trees  
recalling— what?— ginger beer,  
cocoa, lemonade—

qiū fēn

秋分 [*Autumn's Boundary*]

Bats are leaf-shadows  
whirling and whirling in those  
grey shapes where trees were.

hán lù

寒露 [*Shivering Dews*]

Breeze cooling your skin:  
谢谢 whispers the old tree,  
好 agrees the owl.

shuāng jiàng

霜降 [*Frost Comes Down*]

Fewer Fan Bingbangs:  
she fades from Tantan and Tinder  
usurped by new filters.

lì dōng

立冬 [*Start of Winter*]

Old men strung along the Pearl River  
at dusk, their erhu lowing on their knees.

xiǎo xuě

小雪 [*A Little Snow*]

Secret path behind the tennis courts  
speckled with yellow leaves— where thirteen blackbirds  
feast among the yellow stars of the fallen starfruits.

dà xuě

大雪 [*Much Snow*]

Banyan trees, whitewashed  
pose like brides for photographs  
in their new white gowns.

dōng zhì

冬至 [*High Winter*]

“We can’t have Christmas this year,  
because of the trade war.”  
Outside my classroom  
a screw pine slowly explodes: smashed green-and-gold baubles,  
her keys strewn like abandoned lego bricks.

xiǎo hán

小寒 [*Rather Chilly*]

Last night’s wind and rain  
have blessed old Sweep-the-Road with  
a carpet of pink flowers.

dà hán

大寒 [*Very Cold*]

Essays, piled knee-deep:  
sparkling, solid, slushy, spoof.  
Colleagues are aloof.

lì chūn

立春 [*Start of Spring*]

Grey skies, smoke-ghost streets.  
LUCK! signs blush on grey shutters.  
Rats dance, the grey kings.

yǔ shuǐ

雨水 [*Rainwater*]

Old folk stretch in damp gardens,  
toddlers march in cold classrooms.

jīng zhé

驚蟄 [*The Startling of the Insects*]

Crone, why gathering  
the fleshy 木棉 flowers  
this spring morning? “Soup.”

chūn fēn

春分 [*Spring's Boundary*]

A red-whiskered bulbul bobs,  
flashes, flirts, dips his inked crest  
whistling a ribbon of song—

qīng míng

清明 [*Clear Brightness*]

Silver-haired, the boys  
return; to burn paper i-phones  
on their parents' graves.

gǔ yǔ

穀雨 [*Good for the Crops*]

Surveillance cam crouches like  
a hunting heron in the rain.



# Joseph Horgan

## I Love a Man

*for Sean Gallagher*

I love a man who drinks whiskey for breakfast  
and you have to be a gifted kind  
to love a man who drinks whiskey for breakfast  
and write a poem  
for a man who drinks whiskey for breakfast  
or imagine flowers and a midnight dance  
with a man who drinks whiskey for breakfast  
who has so much of the cosmos inside him  
that he drinks whiskey for breakfast  
whose love is the love of a bear in the high forest  
drinking whiskey for breakfast  
who travels the snow line in a vest and pants  
drinking whiskey for breakfast  
who lies but is not dishonest is true  
and drinks whiskey for breakfast  
who would gather the lost to him in laughter  
as he drinks whiskey for breakfast  
making them all feel gifted enough  
to love a man who drinks whiskey for breakfast.

forthcoming in *In Praise of Urban Living* (Salmon Poetry)

Julie Field  
(aka Julie Goo)

Dear Society

I am a homo, homosapien  
I am attracted to other homos, homosapiens  
I am a member of the LGBTQRSTUVWXYZ community  
a group of people in society  
segregated by our sexuality.  
I am not queer, I am here, and I am me.  
If my honesty offends your inability  
to accept that I am free  
to love the essence of femininity, well  
I do not apologise, for beauty lies in the eyes  
of the beholder, and will hold her.  
Her curves have been moulded to fit  
the pieces of my life society which  
you have jig sawed apart  
we fit together like art  
but our love is no  
exhibition to be stared at.  
And if you are to say to me that  
'God made man and woman to make child',  
I respect your right to be so black and white  
but I am grey, and I also pray that  
one day you may awake to see  
that black and white blends to make me.

I am exhausted society from trying to suit you  
my spine aches contortionist pains  
from trying to fit into this closet,  
from which I emerged terrified and alone,  
back into my family home to sit my elders  
down and reveal to them what felt like bad news.  
But why should I, society?  
Come crawling to you to accept me?  
When it is you who should come crawling in apology  
for building that closet and forcing me in it!  
Innit?  
Why is it that you accept men to hold guns, but not hands?

## Kathy D'Arcy

### 13.12.18-1-6 On Becoming (Mud)

*(soft, sticky matter resulting from the mixing of earth and water,  
information or allegations regarded as scandalous)*

What is eaten emerges at length  
on the surface, becomes

a creeping softness, a flaking away  
where sea meets land, a place that is neither

endlessly eaten, crunched and spat out again,  
no man's land, there nor not.

With each swallow I am softer, take form  
in the slow sink-gulp of a lugworm's hole

as a thing neither water nor land, neither  
formed nor not, taking sometimes

the form that surrounds me.  
Lying for a while on the surface  
you take the form of what surrounds you,

having form or not, taking sometimes  
what is neither water nor land, nor either

the slow sink-gulp of a lugworm's hole;  
with each swallow you are softer, take form

in no man's land, neither there nor not.  
Endlessly eaten, crunched and spat out again,

where sea meets land, a place that is neither,  
a creeping softness, a flaking away.

The surface becomes  
what is eaten, emerges at length.

## Mal Dewhirst

### Reading in the bombed-out bookshop

In the bombed-out bookshop,  
we separated prized pages,  
rough leaves, sized and shaped;  
we recreated the stories as best we could,  
made a new sense from drowned ash paths  
that twist between the burnished timber  
stacks, the fire shelves that fell before tales  
glow drifted from night, to fog, to dust.  
Spent hours with found poems,  
as fonts merged, we flowed our moods,  
searched for lights, fed an anger  
with the spit of glue, bindings oozed  
from their spinal wounds.  
Among the scarred thinking, scared pens  
spill sacred words.  
After the metal rain,  
this was as much of a truth as any.

## Martin Brown

### The Old People in the Trees

*I see one!* shouts my son excitedly.  
*And me!* joins in his younger sister.  
My eyes, no longer so sharp, keep to the road.  
We're in that part of the country  
where old people climb trees.  
no-one knows why, least of all them.  
If they even recall what they've done,  
it's with puzzled wistfulness  
rather than reasoned recollection.

The authorities gave up on prevention long ago,  
preferring now to market the phenomena  
as a unique tourist attraction.  
Falls or injuries are rare,  
people appreciate their limits,  
choosing smaller trees, or lower branches,  
but always ones with a decent outlook.  
Younger people used to grin,  
before admiring, then wondering  
if they will ever join them.  
The guidebook tells us that  
it is usually the over-seventies,  
that latent agilities, or ladders,  
assist each climber, and that  
people generally descend,  
unscathed, after an hour or two,  
as if nothing has happened.

In the evening, we go for a walk  
in the woods. The children spot several  
old climbers, try to speak to them.

*Why are you up there?* my son demands  
of one smartly dressed old gentleman, who  
glances down, then shrugs, before resuming  
his gaze outwards, as if being summoned  
by his own private skyline.

\*first published in the *Barnet Poetry Anthology*

## Matt Black

### Let us celebrate cultures

In the light-show of the lampshade in Sereena's sitting-room  
In the choreography of spanners in Dave's garage  
In the gallery of reds and yellows and blues on the shelves of Tesco's  
In every kitchen, every bar, every sitting-room, every Spa

In karaoke, bingo, hip hop and anime and U3A meetings, in cricket and opera  
In your collection of souvenir tea-towels which includes one featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger  
For every individual is their own live and unique City of Culture

So let us rise free from living under shadows  
When the Culturistas arrive for a year with all their promise and razzmatazz and money  
And let us shine anyway, through it all, in all our own blazing glory  
And let us be the proud heroes and heroines  
Of comedy and tragedy, in all our own dramas, kitchen sink or high falutin'

For this is our City, our love and pride  
And beyond this year of fuss and joy and trumpets and stamping feet  
All our lives and interests and passions and beliefs  
All our cultures will live on here forever

In the light-show of Sereena's lampshade  
In whatever blood and sweat and grief and joys  
You and you and you and I put into our daily lives  
And whatever wonders or blunders or glorious ordinary things  
We have made and will go on making forever.



# Matthew Geden

## Nomad

Your eyes glitter like Arabian sand,  
shimmer in the desert heat unusual  
for an Irish summer as you sit

quietly enveloped in the charms  
of an SUV waiting for the kids  
to cross the playground threshold.

Raybans prop on your head, an extra  
pair of eyes scanning the skies  
through the sun-roof, you plan

to take the herd across the peninsula,  
will pause to graze at a roadside  
oasis on the way and drive by watering

holes to spend the night with the Children  
of Lir. Tomorrow you will wobble on the cable  
car, spell out in stone the word for home.

## Michael McKimm

### Daffodils

The Council in its frugal simple stealth  
planted them last autumn, those green  
and high-viz volunteers pushing little  
mines into leaf-flat mud, and now as if  
a switch was flicked they've detonated  
all over roundabouts, along the sides  
of roads, on brick-raised strips of grass  
that cushion the estates – blocks and bands  
and concertinas, yin and yang and shooting  
stars, trailblazers brightening the feet  
of lampposts, there to catch the winter-weary  
cold bus window eye with the joyful  
wild and singular announcement *This Is Spring*

flooding like a river through the churchyard  
thick as a wheat field in West Ham Park  
snow-survivors reaching heads up to the trees  
with a raucous here we are we made it please make room  
we are the sunshine fallen from the sky, we are  
the darkness let to bloom.

## Michelle Delea

### double room to rent in Cork

In the photo of the bed at the awkward angle  
with the lamp clicked on in the corner  
there's a poster of the world on the wall –  
the one with golden countries you scratch  
tediously with a knife, coin or dried-up Biro.

North America appears totally conquered.  
Southeast Asia, too.  
A train-line tore through Europe at a speed  
that's left some peels wedged  
in the skirting and carpet  
below the border of the map.

Though it's been hoovered today.  
Even the windows have been opened.  
Lemon walls and pine boxes, their corners  
dulled with clouds of damp.  
The tenant in the doorframe  
wishing to push the walls apart.

# Molly Twomey

## Liz's Kitchen

*Why did you become vegan?*  
To avoid Battenberg on my birthday,  
a leg of turkey at Christmas.

But I say  
*I can't remember*  
*what a ladybird looks like.*

She adds so much butter  
to her toast, glides the knife  
along her tongue.

Says she had a daughter like me,  
watched her run suicide drills  
with a fractured hip.

Found fists of her hair  
in the washing machine,  
a tooth in the sink.

*Here*, she throws me her phone,  
a red ladybird  
like a clot of blood.

\*first published in *The Stinging Fly*

## Paul Casey

### Grammar CV

I can't tell my ups from my downs  
or my lefts from my rights I confess  
but I'm good with my verbs and my nouns

No matter the city or town  
I'm a permanent emotional mess  
For I can't tell my ups from my downs

I can see how egotistical it sounds  
And it's not that I'm trying to impress  
I'm just handy with verbs and with nouns

Times I can't even tell smiles from frowns  
I'm a sociopath-geek, more or less  
who can't tell his ups from his downs

I've no patience for working with clowns  
Much prefer to be sure than to guess  
To be fair to my verbs and my nouns

I can tell my dark greens from my browns  
And can still tell a no from a yes  
So why care for my ups or my downs  
When I'm good with my verbs and my nouns?

# Peter Raynard

## The Fall

*after Jonathan Glazer*

the men, faces masked look up  
to the man who clings to the tree  
the rustle the rustle  
sweet oak you know  
the gloaming year  
shouts about shake the tree  
see the leaves shake him down  
see him drop  
the men they know you know

bark & dance there he lies  
a shivering sin, gather round  
kick & punch, stretch him  
out, thumb his throat, smile  
at the flash, snap/snap  
the men they know you know

snatch him up, noose his neck,  
the stench the hole below  
the falling rope the hissing rope  
the weight of the man  
the smoking rope against the wood  
its lash in the dark.  
The men they know you know

look down at the gloom  
the dark of the hole  
ghost of the fall  
the silence below,  
away they go  
the men they know you know

alive alive oh!  
square light above  
the glean of his face  
the stretch of his legs  
make steps of the hold  
arms will not fold  
as he goes

he climbs to the light  
the men they go  
he climbs to the light  
the men they know  
he climbs to the light  
they think they know.  
You know?

## Rab Urquhart

### The West awash

The wave throws the cliff-face back at itself,  
chipping and grinding. Pieces of cist and flint,  
rolled and spun together with force and flung,  
hitting, cracking, splitting and sparking red light  
and green, gold, and incandescent blue, rebounding,  
mixing; becoming liquid, becoming particle,  
molecular, phantasmal.

Kinetic flame licks cliff base, lightening flickers  
illuminates fissure, tunnel and vein.

Thunderhead breaks overhead, the already  
wet becoming waterlogged, runnels and rivulets  
swell and flood; hillside shifts, cliff face frowns,  
then slowly, then more quickly starts to slip,  
to fall down, one hundred thousand tons of  
soil and rock with half a field and a wall on top,  
gone.

Drowned.



# Raef Boylan

## First Visit to Cork

Imagine a soundtrack of poetry.  
Friendly (chirrup) crossing-lights (chirrup)  
to pedestrians, traffic, each other  
through the (chirrup) (chirrup) night –  
like equipment supporting life.  
Warm introductions, the craic  
as Tullamore Dew meets ice,  
meets coffee, meets lips; poetry.  
My foreign feet that beat the street  
a little faster, livelier; powered by buskers'  
multicultural concerts on every walkway corner;  
poetry. The most talented of talkers –  
a people unafraid of passion, politics,  
laughter, literature; poetry. Rhythmic swigs  
of the Beamish, the Murphy's, riverflow-  
conducted; tacet ghosts of boats, the merchant ships  
of Ireland's Venice, glide down residential roads;  
poetry. Mild affront, cacophony, as clumsy Englishman  
orders a Guinness; bashful sips, comedic quips,  
clink of glasses; poetry. A whole city humming  
with potential, with poetry; poetry!  
Poetry.

...Did I mention the poetry?

It bridges nations      arcs across the Irish Sea;      an enduring chorus.  
The twin voices      of two cities      intertwined.  
Every year,  
turning up,  
tuning up  
the words.

## Saleha Begum

### We are Hope

Red dyes stain the skies with a great fat lie.  
We never spoke to God.

We said—  
we are the scientists  
creators, inventors.

We are leaders  
with lay minds,  
widowed from discourse.

We are the imams  
with bloated bellies  
and excessive monologues.

We are customs,  
ruled relentlessly,  
lavishly protected.

We are freedom  
but not responsibility.  
We are love, scratching its shades  
into the Oz of misty eyes, greying hair  
hauling the cloak of night too soon.

Always too soon!

We are human but not humanity.  
We are seekers of knowledge without truth.  
A race without unity:  
Stripped,  
distressed.

We are fear.  
Fatherless,  
abandoned.

We are children of broken bonds  
traversing in maps of clutched palms.  
We enter into love, removed from sorrow.

We are hope.  
We are love.  
We are amalgamation.

## Where Earth and Air Merge

Startled by the creak of my bike,  
a kestrel swoops across the wet tarmac  
– a glimpse of something red  
and still warm from living  
gripped in its beak.

Its quick-winged silhouette  
against the sweet sunset disappears  
into the dark of a thinly leafed tree.

My shoes have soaked up an hour's downpour,  
with no roots to diffuse this,  
no bark resistance to winter winds,  
no sleek-feathered glide in rhythm with the weather.

My focus shifts back to my body's weight,  
hunched over the handlebars,  
gasping into the sharp hill before me.

Flesh numbs to one with the pedals' push onwards,  
creak by aching creak like a rusty dream.  
I wonder what it is to be rain, bird or tree –  
to exist in continual flow  
between earth and sky.

# Shaunna Lee Lynch

## Meditation

Sometimes  
I sit real still,  
close my eyes  
and see galaxies within.  
on each breath  
the planets rotate  
as I float through the cosmos  
in a meditative state.

Body fills with stars,  
luminous spirals sparkle  
through my veins  
merging with the Milky Way,  
I sway  
through constellations.

Detached from the mundane,  
I escape in space  
and gain perspective—  
I am a pulse  
in an infinite universe,  
a part of something bigger.

Then the door bell rings,  
I return to Earth  
and hide from the TV license inspector.

## Stanley Notte

### Spirit of '79

*after The Two Tone Label*

Every Friday night  
and Saturday morning  
when the young at heart  
come together  
to twist and crawl  
out on the streets  
this dirty old town  
drowns in hairspray  
blank expressions  
bright lights  
and alcohol  
the sole salvation  
of the young, the black  
and the gifted.

At 4 am Jeanette  
a skinhead girl  
she's going  
'They're all out to get you  
They're all out to get you.'  
while bad boys  
make monkey man noises  
their requiem for a black soul  
over and over again

'Why,' you're wondering now  
'does this concrete jungle  
do nothing but drop pressure  
to get a job on the rat race?'

'Why,' you're wondering  
is Free Nelson Mandela  
on my radio?'

'Why does the Government man  
believe our land of hope and glory  
can promise this ghost town  
'Better must come.'  
when the dawning of a new era  
is such a long shot?'

When everyday  
the young, the black and the gifted  
hear the mirror in the bathroom  
whisper 'I can't stand it.  
They're selling out your future.'

And 'prospects' are mere calling cards  
for the government whose overture  
of 'It's up to you to get a job.'  
what's that!  
is an embarrassment when our house  
has no money and tomorrow's dream  
is forever one step beyond  
tomorrow being just another grey day.

So, shut up Mr Government Man.  
You don't know like I know  
that in the middle of the night  
the shadow of fear  
is the only noise in this world.

How the doors of my heart  
tighten up when the whine and grine  
of facing situations too much  
for one too young tells me my dream  
is in deepwater.

How when dawn arrives  
I get busy  
doing nothing  
everyday

Saturday night, Sunday morning.  
The lonely crowd on the streets again.  
This – believe me – is their dream.  
Running away from the everyday  
with a night on the tiles.  
Running away from situations  
too much for one too young.  
Running away from the madness  
of the mirror in the bathroom  
whispering 'I can't stand it.  
I can't stand it. I just can't stand it.'

\*first published in *Proletarian Poetry*

## Sue Cosgrave

### Child of the World

You are bone, child;  
you are muscle and sinew, too.

You are bone, child;  
you are flared nostrils and swift feet.

You are bone, child;  
you are eyes blue as pools lit from within.

You are bone, child;  
knit strong by your mother,  
and all mothers  
that went before her,

You are bone, child,  
nurtured by your father  
and all forefathers to the beginning of time.

You are hair and skin;  
you are fluid like time,  
water coursing through your veins  
nurturing oceans.

You are that little frown  
that puckers your brow,  
you are fingers, child;  
fingers that shall grow to delve into the world,  
exploring myth, shaping reality.



You are toes, child;  
Toes that shall root you  
into the fertile soil of tomorrow.

You are soul, child;  
Elusive, like air, as tangible as laughter,  
a fury, a tempest  
and a calm;

freedom, perhaps.

You are fist, child;  
A fist that releases goodness and mischief  
in equal measure.

You are heart, child,  
and that rumbling feeling in the gut  
that links every atom of your being  
to the universe, seen and unseen.

You are smile, child;  
a smile that cracks the clouds open  
for the sun to break free,  
to bless your wide brow,  
to warm your heart;  
child of the sun,  
it is she who names you,

Child  
of the world.

## Writers' Biographies

**Adam Steiner** studied philosophy at the University of Aberdeen and writes about music, street-art culture, architecture, and transgressive fiction. He has written articles and reviews for *Hong Kong Review of Books*, *The Quietus*, *Headstuff*. In 2020 *Into The Never: Nine Inch Nails* and *The Creation Of The Downward Spiral* – a deep dive into the cultural impact of the seminal album was published (Backbeat Books). His first novel is *Politics of the Asylum*, a nightmare vision of the NHS (Urbane Publications, 2018). For more visit @BurndtOutWard / [www.adamsteiner.uk](http://www.adamsteiner.uk)

**Adam Wyeth** has four books published with Salmon Poetry. In 2019 he received The Kavanagh Fellowship Award. Adam is the author of *Silent Music*, Highly Commended by the Forward Poetry Prize and *The Art of Dying*, an Irish Times Book of the Year. In 2013 Salmon published his essays, *The Hidden World of Poetry*. In 2020 Adam received the Arts Council Ireland Literature Project Award for his forthcoming collection *about:blank* (autumn '21), which has been in development with the Abbey Theatre as an immersive audio work. Adam teaches online creative writing courses at [adamwyeth.com](http://adamwyeth.com) and [Fishpublishing.com](http://Fishpublishing.com).

**Afric McGlinchey's** collections are *The lucky star of hidden things* and *Ghost of the Fisher Cat*, (Salmon Poetry), with Italian translations published by L'Arcolaio. A surrealist pamphlet, *Invisible Insane* (SurVision) appeared in 2019. Winner of a Hennessy and other awards, Afric received an Arts Council of Ireland Literature Bursary to write an auto-fictional prose poetry collection, *Tied to the Wind*, forthcoming from Broken Sleep Books in August 2021. [www.africmcglinchey.com](http://www.africmcglinchey.com)

**Ali Bracken Ziad** is working on a debut chapbook, *Place and People Without*. He has been published in *Spoken Worlds: Exhaling Ink* (Ó Bhéal, Press 2018), *Writing Home: The 'New Irish' Poets* (Dedalus Press: 2019), *The Quarryman* (2019, 2020), *Atlantic Currents* (Loom Press: 2020), and *Southword 40: New International Writing* (Munster Literature Centre: 2021). He was the 2017 Munster Slam Champion, finishing fourth in the National Slam Poetry Championship final of the same year. In November 2018, Ziad represented Cork in the Cork-Coventry Poetry Exchange. He is a Barrister-at-Law degree candidate, holds a BA in literature, and an LLB in law.

## Writers' Biographies

**Andrea Mbarushimana** has recently completed poetry commissions for Theatre Absolute's *Humanistan* and the *Digi Poems* project for the BBC Contains Strong Language Festival. Her poems were featured in a sound installation at Dresden's Tzschirnerplatz for the festival of womens voices, *Dei Funk Wuk* earlier this year. *Fatbergs*, her third poetry pamphlet was recently launched by Knives Forks and Spoons Press. You can find out more about Andrea's publications and projects at: [andrea.mbarushimana.com](http://andrea.mbarushimana.com)

**Antony Owen** is from Coventry and author of eight books of poetry often focusing on conflict. His book *The Nagasaki Elder* (V.Press) was shortlisted for The Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry. He was an Armistice poetry award winner in one of the categories for The British Army Poetry Competition in 2018 for his poem "A black nurse tends to wounds". His work is translated in several languages including a bilingual collection out in 2021 called *Phoenix* (Thelem).

A Coventry resident, **Aysar Ghassan** took part in the Cork-Coventry Twin Cities Poetry Exchange in 2019. His poems have been published in *Magma*, *Strix*, *Under The Radar*, *The Interpreter's House*, *Here Comes Everyone*, *The Lampeter Review* and *Abridged*, and in 2020 he headlined the 2020 Kenilworth Arts Festival. This year he has undertaken commissions as part of BBC Contains Strong Language 2021 in partnership with the British Council, ComExposed, Page Poetry Alive, BBC, Coventry City of Culture Trust, Writing West Midlands, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Voluntary Arts. Aysar is currently a Dynamo mentee with Nine Arches Press.

**Barry Patterson** is a writer & performer living in Coventry, UK. Originally a science teacher he has worked in museums & nature reserves & these days his alter ego the Wild Man of the Woods is Britain's widest travelled & longest running green man performance. He is a well known figure in Coventry's poetry scene & an Honorary Bard of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids. Since 2013 he has self-published 3 pamphlets of poetry, 2 of which sold out. His most recent publication, *Land Mandala*, describes journeys through sacred landscapes in England, Tibet, Scotland & Bhutan.

## Writers' Biographies

**Benjamin Burns** is a poet and audio-visual artist from Sligo who is based in Cork City. He was joint-winner of the All-Ireland Poetry Slam 2016, going on to represent Ireland in the 2017 European Poetry Slam in Brussels. In 2019 he released his debut single, *Single Use Plastic*, a satirical synth-pop song from the perspective of a piece of non-recyclable plastic waste. More can be found on his website: [benjaminburns.space](http://benjaminburns.space)

**Billy Ramsell**'s most recent collection of poetry, *The Architect's Dream of Winter*, appeared in 2013 and was shortlisted for the 2014 Irish Times / Poetry Now award. He lives in Cork where he co-runs an educational publishing company. He took part in Ó Bhéal's first poetry exchanges with Coventry in 2008 & 2009.

**Cal Doyle**'s work has appeared in *Prelude, gorse, The Stinging Fly, Poetry* (Chicago) & *The Free Press Anthology of Irish Poetry*, as well as other magazines & journals. He's read his work at many events & festivals including Yes, But Are We Enemies, The Lifeboat & Poetry Ireland's Introductions Series. For a number of years he served as poetry editor of *The Weary Blues* (New Binary Press) and more recently he has been poetry editor of *The Stinging Fly*. He lives in his hometown, Cork.

**Ciarán MacArtain** is a poet, theatre and performance artist from Glasheen in Cork City. He is Artistic Director of Strive Theatre, creator and manager of The Crossover and a member of The Choke Collective. He has written poetry prolifically since 2011 and has performed his work extensively both nationally and internationally. His work has been published in a variety of journals, zines and anthologies. He loves going on creative journeys with other artists to explore what unique and interesting things can be made in collaboration. He is in the process of publishing work for his first collection of poetry.

**Colm Scully** is a Cork Poet and Poetryfilm maker. His poems have been published recently in *Cyphers* and *Philosophy Now* and he won the Cúirt New Writing Prize in 2014. His collection '*What News, Centurions?*' was published by New Binary Press. His films have been selected and shown at festivals in US, Europe and Asia, and you can view them at: [vimeo.com/user29903251](http://vimeo.com/user29903251)

## Writers' Biographies

**Conor McManus** is a writer of short stories, memoir and poetry. He has had work published in; *Southword*, *The Moth*, *Crannog*, *Stinging fly*, *Force Ten*. He has read on RTE radio, and in the U.K. as part of an artist exchange programme. Has had his story; 'Tea Break' read by a troupe of actors in public performance at the Glens Centre Manorhamilton. He has been short listed for the Fish short story competition on two occasions and won a bursary to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre. In 2020 he published a debut chapbook, *Boy*, with a bursary from Roscommon County Council.

**Emilie Lauren Jones** has performed at a variety of events and venues across the UK (and virtually in Ireland!). Previously published in *Under the Radar*, *HCE* and *Riggwelter*. Widely published in anthologies, including: *Half Moon Books*, *Beautiful Dragons Collaborations* and *One World Publications*. Commissioned poet for UK City of Culture 2021, she runs regular writing workshops for both adults and children. Emilie holds an MA in Creative Writing from the University of Birmingham. She runs the #WeSpeakPoetry YouTube series and is part of the current Nine Arches Press 'Dynamo' scheme. [www.emilielaurenjones.co.uk](http://www.emilielaurenjones.co.uk) Social Media: @emilielaurenxx

**Jane Commane's** first poetry collection is *Assembly Lines* (Bloodaxe, 2018). Jane is editor at Nine Arches Press, and co-author of *How to Be a Poet*, a creative writing handbook. In 2017 she was awarded a Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship.

Originally from West Yorkshire and formerly a scientist, **Janet Smith** is a writer of poetry, prose poetry and short prose. Longlisted for 2019's National Poetry Competition and prize winner in the Hippocrates poetry competition her publication credits include *Verve*, *Red Squirrel*, *Abridged*, *Under the Radar & Comma Press*.

**Jayne Stanton's** poems have appeared in numerous print and online magazines, and anthologies including *Best British & Irish Poets 2017*. She has written commissions for a county museum, University of Leicester's Centre for New Writing, UoL poems for International Women's Day 2018, and a city residency. A pamphlet, *Beyond the Tune*, is published by Soundwrite Press (2014).

## Writers' Biographies

**Jennifer Matthews** lives in County Cork and holds an MA in Creative Writing from the University of Northumbria, Newcastle. She was selected for the Poetry Ireland Introductions Series in 2015 and a pamphlet, *Rootless*, was subsequently published by Smithereens Press. In 2016 she was highly commended in the Patrick Kavanagh Manuscript competition, followed by a shortlisting for the Irish Times/Hennessy Award in 2019 for her poem 'Monsters'. She's proud to have counted herself among the Ó Bhéal regulars in its early years, while she was still resident in Ireland's true capital: Cork City.

**Jim Crickard's** poetry is camp, entertaining work that explores culture, sexuality and identity with a hint of colour. In 2019 he was selected by Poetry Ireland for the inaugural Versify series, and performed to a sold out show at Dublin Fringe Festival. He came second in the 2019 All Ireland Poetry Slam Final (and is working through his feelings about it with a therapist). In 2018, he won the Cuirt Spoken Word Platform and was awarded a slot to perform at Electric Picnic. In 2020 his poetry was broadcasted on RTE Arena.

**Jonathan Morley** ran The Heaventree Press in Coventry after graduating from the University of Warwick. He currently teaches creative writing in Guangzhou, South China. His collections include, *Euclid's Harmonics* (Ink Sweat & Tears Press, 2016) and he is the winner of an Eric Gregory Award.

**Joseph Horgan** was born and reared in Birmingham of Irish immigrant parents and has lived back in Cork since 1999. His latest books are, *People Who Don't Exist Are Citizens of a Made Up Country*, a collection of essays on migration published by Eyewear, London, and *Ghost Radio Transmissions*, an image/word/sound collaboration, published by Harbour Lights Press, Kinsale.

**Julie Field** (aka **Julie Goo**) is an established Spoken Word poet from Cork City. She was crowned Munster Slam Champion in 2012, and won the Heart of Gort Slam in 2019. Goo has performed her work on numerous stages including: TedX Cork, Winter Warmer, Ó Bhéal, Body and Soul, Electric Picnic, Cork Midsummer Festival,

## Writers' Biographies

Indiependence, Live at St. Lukes. Julie Goo has numerous videos and poetry films on her YouTube Channel, and updated info on her Facebook Page. Julie is widely published in the Irish Language under the name 'Julie Field'. Coiscéim published her debut collection *DÁNA* in April 2021.

**Kathy D'Arcy** is a Cork poet and feminist activist recently relocated to Iceland. Her collections are *Encounter* (Lapwing 2010) and *The Wild Pupil* (Bradshaw 2012). She was Chair of the Cork Together for Yes campaign and created the 2018 edited collection *Autonomy* which raised funds and awareness for that campaign. Kathy has just completed a Creative Writing PhD, for which she received an Irish Research Council Postgraduate Scholarship. She has worked as a doctor, a support worker and a creative writing teacher. Kathy is part of the Fired! #WakeUpIrishPoetry and SAOI movements which seek to challenge inequalities in Irish poetry. [www.kathydarcy.com](http://www.kathydarcy.com)

Poet, Playwright and sound sculptor, **Mal Dewhirst** was born and lives in the English Midlands, he was the first Staffordshire Poet Laureate in 2012/13, exploring the county through poetry, he is known as a poet of place. His work has been published in magazines and anthologies in Europe and America and appeared on the BBC. His plays focus on creating original productions in unusual spaces and include *At the Crossroads*, *The Fell Walker*, *Mausoleum* and *Dr Johnson's WikiWords*. He developed the award winning Polesworth Poetry Trail and represented Coventry on the Coventry-Cork literature exchange in 2011.

When he was a child, **Martin Brown** was abducted by aliens. Almost immediately, a group of space marines were sent to snatch him back. They succeeded. Undeterred, the aliens abducted him once more. And so on. This to-ing and fro-ing went on for years, with the result that Martin now regards himself as equally at home both on Earth and on the planet Zibblesnox, with friends, magazine subscriptions and a spare pair of underpants on both planets.

## Writers' Biographies

**Matt Black** lives in Leamington Spa and writes for adults and children. A specialist in commissions, he is a joyful mischief maker, a serious entertainer, a reluctant grown-up and a celebrationist. He was Derbyshire Poet Laureate (2011-2013). His play *The Storm Officer* toured in 2020 and his most recent collection is *Sniffing Lamp-posts by Moonlight* (Upside Down, 2020) which is all poems inspired by dogs, based on his one-man show *The Snoopy Question*. He is currently Research Poet-in-Residence for the Dog's Trust.

**Matthew Geden** was brought up in Coventry, moving to Kinsale, County Cork in 1990. In 2020-1 he was Writer in Residence for Cork County Library and Arts Office. His collections include *The Place Inside* (Dedalus Press, 2012) and *Fruit* (SurVision Books, 2020). A new book is forthcoming from Doire Press in 2022.

**Michael McKimm** lives in east London. He has published two collections of poetry, *Still This Need* (Heaventree, 2009) and *Fossil Sunshine* (Worple, 2013), and his poetry has appeared in anthologies including *New Poets from the North of Ireland* (Blackstaff, 2016). He has edited two anthologies, *MAP: Poems After William Smith's Geological Map of 1815* (Worple, 2015) and *The Tree Line: Poems for Trees, Woods & People* (Worple, 2017). He lived in Coventry for a number of years and is honoured to have been part of the inaugural Cork-Coventry exchange. [www.michaelmckimm.co.uk](http://www.michaelmckimm.co.uk)

**Michelle Delea** is a multi-disciplinary creative from Cork city. She has been a regular contributor to Cork artist collectives in the past, which have featured her poetry, performance art and choreography. She has an MA in Architecture from CCAE. Michelle has performed at multiple events including Voulmentin Literary Festival, Shannonside Festival, Townlands, Electric Picnic and most recently Live @ St.Lukes during Cork Midsummer Festival. Michelle is an advocator of collaboration and maintains an experimental approach to the arts.

**Molly Twomey** has been published in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Banshee*, *The Irish Times*, *The Stinging Fly*, and in 2019, she won the Padraic Colum Poetry Prize. In 2020, she won the Waterford Poetry Prize and was featured on RTÉ's Arena. In 2021,



## Writers' Biographies

she won the Eavan Boland Mentorship Award and was awarded an Arts Council Literature Bursary. She is currently working on her debut collection.

**Paul Casey's** collections are *Virtual Tides* (2016) and *home more or less* (2012), both published by Salmon Poetry. A chapbook, *It's Not all Bad* appeared in 2009 from the Heaventree Press. He edits the annual *Unfinished Book of Poetry* and promotes poetry in his role as director of Ó Bhéal, in Cork.

**Peter Raynard** is the editor of Proletarian Poetry: poems of working class lives ([www.proletarianpoetry.com](http://www.proletarianpoetry.com)). He has written two books of poetry – his debut collection *Precarious* (Smokestack Books, 2018) and *The Combination: a poetic coupling of the Communist Manifesto* (Culture Matters, 2018). His third book of poetry will be published by Nine Arches Press in 2022.

**Rab Urquhart** is a twenty year veteran of the Cork / Edinburgh cultural interface. Asked about this in a recent interview Urquhart responded; 'Cork / Edinburgh? Let's talk about Cork / Coventry instead.' He then proceeded to talk for the next twenty minutes about the benefits of the twin cities program and the fact that Coventry and Cork were the first (for Cork). In a later interview Urquhart was asked about reports that he had dropped poetry in favour of music, to which he responded: 'I'm looking for the music in poetry and the poetry in music,' and on tracks like 'Get down boy', 'The sermon', and 'Psalm 23' his band of merry pranksters deliver the goods.

**Raef Boylan** is a life-long Coventry resident and writer. His poetry and fiction have been published in various anthologies and magazines, and he has headlined at events such as Positive Images Festival, Pure&Good&Right and Leamington Poetry Festival. Most recently, he has been working on commissions for Theatre Absolute, the 2021 BBC Contains Strong Language Festival and BBC Radio 4. Full of love and support for Coventry's writing communities, Raef is organiser/host of monthly poetry gig Fire & Dust and chief editor of award-winning magazine *Here Comes Everyone*. He was part of the Cork-Cov twin cities exchange in 2019.

## Writers' Biographies

**Saleha Begum** is an English tutor, mental health and wellbeing mentor and has previously facilitated art and poetry workshops for young people as a way of healing, free expression and building relationships. Her first collection of poetry *Ruptures and Fragments* (2012), explores the very nature and fragility of the human mind. Presently Saleha Begum is looking forward to being a mother, something that once seemed like a distant dream is becoming closer.

**Sarah James** is a prize-winning poet, fiction writer, journalist and photographer. She is author of eight poetry titles, an Arts Council England funded multimedia hypertext poetry narrative > *Room*, two novellas and a touring poetry-play. Her poetry has featured in the *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *The Forward Book of Poetry 2016*, as a café mural, on the BBC, in buses and in the Blackpool Illuminations. She also runs V. Press, an award-winning poetry and flash fiction imprint. [www.sarah-james.co.uk](http://www.sarah-james.co.uk)

**Shaunna Lee Lynch** is a Cork-native writer, performer and director. She has performed her poetry at many events around Ireland and abroad including Cork City Culture Night, Electric Picnic and First Fortnight. In 2019 she won the All-Ireland Slam Poetry Competition. A graduate of Ireland's Conservatory of Music and Drama, she has been involved in many theatre and film projects over the past decade. She wrote the play *Wishful Thinking* which ran as part of the Dublin Fringe Festival 2019. Her work is a humorous pop culture parade that challenges the mundane and examines the sacred. For more: <https://shaunnaleelynych.com/>

**Stanley Notte**'s work has appeared in print, on radio, on Lagan Online's *Poetry Day Ireland MixTape* and most recently the Cork Community Art Link St Patrick's Day Poetry Project. Stanley is a regular on the Irish festival circuit, and has provided support to Stephen James-Smith and Linton Kwesi-Johnson. In 2019 Stanley toured southern Ireland with 'The Truth Is...' , a poetry performance about his journey through depression. His poetry films have been screened at a variety of festivals, and *Mrs Xavier* placed 3rd in The Doolin Writers Festival Video competition. For more about Stan visit: [www.stannottecreations.ie](http://www.stannottecreations.ie)

## Writers' Biographies

Born in Russia, **Sue Cosgrave** spent her formative years in the United State, Iraq and Finland. After travelling extensively in Asia and the Americas, she worked in various parts of Africa before settling in Ireland. Sue has a Masters in Creative Writing from Lancaster University and her work appeared in the *Cork Literary Review*, *The Five Word Anthology*, *Can Can, Abridged*, *The Irish Examiner*, *Stark*, and *The Bone Orchard* among others. She was nominated for the Wisehouse International Poetry Award and featured as a guest reader at various events both in Ireland and abroad.





*Twin Skies* was published to commemorate 14 years of poetry exchanges between twin cities Cork and Coventry. Our connection through poetry began in 2008, exactly fifty years after the cities first became twinned. Each of these forty poets has visited their respective twin on at least one occasion to share their verse with a community of like-minded writers.

Adam Steiner  
Adam Wyeth  
Afric McGlinchey  
Ali Bracken  
Andrea Mbarushimana  
Antony Owen  
Aysar Ghassan  
Barry Patterson  
Benjamin Burns  
Billy Ramsell  
Cal Doyle  
Ciarán MacArtain  
Colm Scully  
Conor McManus  
Emilie Lauren Jones  
Jane Commane  
Janet Smith  
Jayne Stanton  
Jen Matthews  
Jim Crickard

Jonathan Morley  
Joseph Horgan  
Julie Field  
Kathy D'Arcy  
Malcolm Dewhirst  
Martin Brown  
Matt Black  
Matthew Geden  
Michael McKimm  
Michelle Delea  
Molly Twomey  
Paul Casey  
Peter Raynard  
Rab Urquhart  
Raef Boylan  
Saleha Begum  
Sarah James  
Shaunna Lee Lynch  
Stanley Notte  
Suzanna Cosgrave

